

THE ORPHAN

By Amy Oozounian

The words came simple, flat and unexpected, *"My mother was an artist. She died eight years ago,"* he said.

She decided not to apologize. People always apologize when they hear that someone has died; it never helps.

"What does your father do for a living?" She asked, changing the subject.

"He died when I was two," he replied.

She wanted to know how it happened, but knew better than to ask. She held him around his naked waist and rubbed her nose and lips on his neck. She thought that holding him might squeeze some of the sorrow out of her; the same way pitching a soybean with her teeth would release a salty seed of edamame.

She ran her tongue over the green skin and her teeth pulled the salty bean

out. She held him and buried her head deep, below his shoulder to taste the salt of his skin.

"Tell me the story of your life from the time you were born until now." He kissed her forehead.

"From the time I was born, until now?"

"Yes."

This distraction worked and she talked about when she was a child and where she lived and what her parents were like. That her father was very nearly dead, emotionally, and always had been. That her mother was not very stable either.

He listened. She asked him for his life story in return. He declined the invitation and said he was too hung over to

