On January 19, 2000, a fire raged through Seton Hall University's freshman dormitory, killing three students and injuring 58 others. Among the victims were Shawn Simons and Alvaro Llanos, roommates from poor neighborhoods who made their families proud by getting into college. They managed to escape, but both were burned terribly. AFTER THE FIRE is the story of these young men and their courageous fight to recover from the worst damage the burn unit at Saint Barnabas hospital had ever seen. It is the story of the extraordinary doctors and nurses who work with the burned. It is the story of mothers and fathers, of faith and family and the invisible ties that bind us to each other. It is the story of the search for the arsonists--and the elaborate cover-up that nearly obscured the truth. And it is the story of the women who came to love these men, who knew that real beauty is a thing not seen in mirrors.
Personal Review: After the Fire: A True Story of Friendship and Survival by Robin Gaby Fisher

January 19, 2000 the campus of Seaton Hall was vaulted to the national news when a fire raced through a freshman dorm, killing three students and injuring fifty eight others. Robin Gaby Fisher was assigned by her editor to follow two of the injured students. Shawn Simons and Alvaro Llanos are roommates and the most gravely burned. After The Fire painstakingly follows the two from the moment they became aware of the fire in their dorm to present day. Fisher introduces us to two young men who were roommates by chance, but friends by choice. Taken to Saint Barnabas Hospital burn unit they were in the care of Dr. Hani Mansour and his experienced staff of nurses and therapists. Mansour’s background and training led him to New Jersey where he had established one of the nation’s top burn units. The staff he has assembled was prepared to battle along with these two young men to help them reclaim as much of their lives as they could manage. Local police worked tirelessly to find the cause of the fire and to bring anyone responsible to justice. The result of that investigation is the only disappointment in this book.

The two young men...Shawn and Alvaro are the heart of this book. Their struggles to heal and reclaim their lives drive this book. Two bright, attractive and all around nice young men they had already bonded as roommates when the fire changed their lives. During the grueling recovery process the two were each others best sounding board, boosters and prodders. Each had a supportive family but sometimes turned to each other for help no one else could provide. Their families also struggled with the changes the fire wrought and the fears of not only loosing their sons, but the fears of what life after their hospitalization would bring. Alvaro and Shawn are a study in courage and grace....seeming ordinary young men, who, when faced by seemingly insurmountable odds, battles back to not only survive, but thrive. I will not soon forget them.

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