

Backfire

Jets, in heat, tremble, lined up for lift
off beach runway over our ocean's draw.

They separate from their shadows,
ripple us, head for plastic-garlanded

seas, become full stops then evaporate.
Maybe they land in the cinnamon sky.

We shudder, though warm, as you do
when someone hops your grave,

second thoughts springing too late.
Flames descend, as tumultuous waves,

plate glass smash, unending drone,
shadows of their former strength.

Semaphores bring them home.
Memories keep them at arm's length.

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powerlines dip for flames to skip
dip, skip, dip, skip

one spark takes all to start that flip
dip, skip, dip, skip

sleeping hills jump up with sparks
harvest flames consume the dark

dip-skip-dip-skip
powerlines dip for flames to skip

*

Fire, be my first and last name,
etched in wood you turn to coal.
Some of us pray to stay the same,
(fire be my first and last name)
not you, change is your middle name,

your currency: in change you trust.
Fire, be my first and last name,
etched in wood, you turn to coal.

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Your foot and fingerprints
groove where you roll
twist/tear/space photoshop
blackface greenery

I walk over to you
seated arms crossed
head lowered chin on chest
asleep though eyes open

lips parted just enough
for flies to crawl in
crawl out, tip of your
tongue pokes out,

retracts, friendly insult
absent taste of air
rattlers diagnose before
sparks strike flames

coroners care when you die
and canine cadaver detectors
we fuss about our next
steps without you beside us.

*

Fire, in the morning, wake
me. Fire, at night, keep
me from sleep. Turn my life
ash for something else to rise.

I take too long to tell you
that I live by the heat
of the life you run from,
cartwheels, tumbles,

hands clamp ears
eyes squeeze stars,
head over heels in
our on-again, off-

again, love-hate,
hate-love, hand over
fist, fists in glove,
head above cloud

cover and no rain
for half a year,
and more sun
than we can bear

bredren, sistren,
trans meet-and-greet,
recluse from furor
private retreat.

Data on Fire (*excerpt*)

Fire tanks phone alerts aimed at homes
spread liberally in fire's customary path.

Fire writes cookbooks for the planet,
with our sprawling cities as its main ingredient.

Fire hires billboards that show its teeth;
ads on stilts at city entrances and exits.

Fire turns up scantily clad at main squares
for all to gawk, capture selfies, post #hot.

Fire sits at the end of a bar all evening
nursing a double of the local overproof scotch.

Fire writes your will and obituary in red ink,
no, lemon juice, meant for fire's eyes only.

Fire rides wild horses, no reins, no saddle:
It's the song, it's the rain that sweeps the plain.

Rock Paper Sza

Fire ain't white
Fire ain't black
Fire gobbles day
Fire wolf's night

Flames gala-Met rich
Flames cover poor
Flames thread needles
Eye-measure double-stitch

Flesh as brushland
People for fabric
No design for sea
Coral nor sand

Earth

As carbon, I have a say in everything,
without exception. You ask how life
began and if there is life after death.
There is no better lab than living
for testing these things. Take me back
to single cell creatures and you still
ask what or who got that speck going?

Take me through a complex organism,
that dolphin decorating the sea,
and you wonder, what next for it?
The gods are in the details!
Make the most of what you have while you can,
does not quite fit Janice Joplin, but, hey,
they call me carbon; I am ordinary

if anything. I see our lives as never
over so long as we are remembered.
I view the soul through a prism,
splintered, kinetic, shape-shifting,
as space permits, as time demands.
There is soul in peeling an orange
without breaking the string of pearls.

Fire Obit.

If you happen in a cathedral

Light a candle for me

If you bake for a birthday

Light a candle for me

If you bury an empty coffin

If you scatter ashes at sea

Light, light a candle for me