

Burn World

I once controlled my feelings until
my better half took off with Carl, a “mutual friend,”
then jetted to Vegas with him, but left as dregs
the house, the car, plus our son Brett
(bless her double-door heart), so now she Skypes
with him, and because he loves her, he’s grateful.
Because I love us, I’m pissed as a kamikaze
spiraling toward some big shebang
taking it all down with me, transforming
who’s left into burn victims.

So go my thoughts in loop-to-loops
above the daily parade
as if a pilot out
of sync again, scaring
the onlookers, about to crash
through today’s remote working
while sipping the chit-chat
with a bitter expresso at Starbucks.

I shove it down
out of earshot like
some jack-in-the-box like
some hermit’s living room stuffed
with newspapers in topsy-turvy stacks,
stuffed down to cross back
to my day from this engine exhaust
as the glass door flaps shut.

With a meeting ahead, I recall as a kid
how my father brought me home from the burn ward
after I tipped a pot of simmered gumbo across my legs,
just eight, and said, “Sal,” he said, “What about ice cream
for lunch today?” Feeling I’d never run as quick
or free, Dad ate with me. Soon enough
those tunnel months evolved to memory.

Done for the day, finally, I detour to a closed park
alongside the sandy strip where we used to picnic
before I learned the routine of evening. It seems
the same, though the river's rough.
I skip some rocks. The rocks plunge.
I watch the river raging.

How did it get so late?
Today wasn't over, yet chimed for calm
on the harmonic clock of habit
with which I manage happenstance
to transform what happens
into what helps—or so I hope—
grateful that I can hear it.

At good night and lights out, Brett asks, "Can
we plan a climate strike for a Friday
like Greta Thunberg, sixteen or so,
who told the United Nations: How
can you jibber-jabber about profits
as the earth burns from
unearthed fossil fuels?"

"Tomorrow, let's explore that door," I say,
then dive into last work emails for the day,
recalling stones too heavy
or too light or just right.

Listen, do you hear the swell?
As if some tidal wave grows
elsewhere, its undertow slithers
past ankles, tugs like a tickle.

Whatever we straitjacket
to toss in a green sack
over the horizon, do you
also sense its approach?