

## Three Poems by Alexander Lazarus Wolf

### CONTROLLED BURN

The candle is now only a pool of wax,  
pale as marble, and smoke uncoils into air,  
leaving not so much the scent of hyacinth,

but ash, tendrils that linger, the after-  
thoughts from a flame bound so tightly  
to its wick that it flared into nothingness.

I had known this before, how  
the desire to set a forest ablaze  
leads only to extinguishment,

how the lover must always leave  
when the sex is done, passion unfastened,  
the obliteration of kerosene, a doused fire.

Since then, I've learned to practice the art  
of the controlled burn, to let siphon  
the gasoline, torch the tree limbs, spare

the sequoia, ring the plains with water,  
taper the flame before total disintegration.  
I had not known this before.

The candle is now only a pool of wax.  
Alone in my room, the smoke has dissipated,  
and my mind inclines to linger as did the smoke.

A draft billows the curtains, lilt,  
carries away any scent. The day is waning.  
Where is light to be found now?

I strike another match, light the wick.  
A new flame blossoms, flutters.  
I watch as the wax pools at the base.

### **THE CLASH**

I walked to where the forest's edge sets out  
to seek the tarmac. Thing of order, planned  
avenues that crosshatch through the ploughed land,  
make neat this wilderness that is without  
presiding streetlights or without the route  
that always leads to the same end, a grand  
respite. I survey thickets, then I stand,  
turn around, and leave the forest, no doubt.

I know the life of grit, pine, and briar  
is not for me: I've solace in cement,  
the stalled car in the left lane, and a sky-  
line that rises, dives, in dusk's fire.  
The city breathes; I do the same, content  
to rest among the throngs, as time goes by.

**THE DIVERTISSEMENT**

Today, I watched the lovers walk away.  
A silence carves into my bones. I write  
your name. It's fading, as the days decay.

The sun begins to weaken, and a ray  
now thins, disbands, and I'm without a sight.  
Today, I watched the lovers walk away.

I tossed it down the trash chute, the bouquet;  
its vase shattered. I set your cards alight.  
Your name is fading, as the days decay.

I stare as time flies by, too frayed to pray,  
so I watch the doves: they fail to take flight.  
Today, I watched the lovers walk away.

Strands of light dissolve, a refrain from day.  
The darkness pours in, pools, and I recite  
your name. It's fading, as the days decay.

Alone tonight, I wish there's more to say  
in this world where all ends with loss of light.  
Today, I watched the lovers walk away;  
your name has faded, and the days decay.