

THE LAST TIME I WALKED WITH THE FLAME THROWER

Cassandra Rockwood Ghanem



IMAGE: E.B.

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When summer ends I reflect on the last time I walked
with the flame thrower. I knew to stay away, by then, my skin

scorched and keloid in places where embers had lodged.
He said he was out of lighter fluid, this time. He said

sorry, he knew how hard the infernos had been on me.
It was a long winter. I told him how I barely moved until spring,

even then my lungs smoke-filled for months at the thought of leaving.
But how I easily forget the way he vanished in the monsoon, how he

would not come if there was even a chance of rain. Of course
when they told me to invite my angels in, that's when I called,

that was when hunting season began, that was when I learned
about two kinds of light determined by the distance in between.

He told me there'd be berries in the deep arid woods. Parched,
my mouth watered and I felt like a desperate creature.

The entire woods will be full of berries, he said, Let's go!
His lips were bright crimson stained, mouth incandescent within.

We went into the tinder, kindling cracking beneath our feet.
It won't be long now, he motioned, Come, blueberries will burst

between your teeth, black raspberries so tart and plump
they drip when you touch them. See my mouth, he said,

and as he turned toward me, his lips parted to reveal
his tongue, a match lit to consume everything.

