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A City on Fire

Maddy Wendell
Colby College

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I. green leaves shift by the window, branches too far to scrape the sides as the train whizzes like a lethargic firecracker, whistling and wheezing across the countryside. she wonders at how fast the train chugs, her mother turns and smiles – here she can forget the bombs dropping on london, the fact that the one-room schoolhouse she attends has multiplied with refugees from the city on fire. her father flies for her, spread wings stitched to his blue uniform, as she runs through the small town, old manor always rising on the hill beside the graveyard.

II. I sit and wonder at the green passing my eyes much more quickly than it did when she was a girl. my granny turns, white hair poufing and smile gleaming – here I can remember when we walked from her house to the old manor on the hill beside the graveyard. the city on fire has been rebuilt – we walked through the cobbled streets and rose our eyes to the tops of history.

III. well not quite – the city on fire has moved, and here we can forget the screams of the people on fire. too bad our senses can’t travel across oceans to find the burning city to help the ashen people. too bad we can’t multiply the little girls and boys in the one-room schoolhouse, because the schoolhouse is a nation and the little girls and boys hold the night in their skin.