

**A BLAZE INGLORIOUS**

I don't care if I never see anything like it again.  
Like a moth, I was compelled to the flames,  
me and everyone else, just standing on the sidewalk  
staring up at what we thought was an empty  
building, when there—at a window—a figure  
in one of the windows, blackly silhouetted, then  
poof — he was ablaze—at least I think it was a he—  
it was hard to tell with the body engulfed in flames.

And you know how you see something awful  
and you want to look away, but you just can't?  
There's nothing for it; you stay bonded to the spot  
even though every cell inside you is shrieking:  
*Stop gawking—nothing good is going to happen,  
leave now before it gets worse*, but you don't,  
and I didn't. At first, it seemed as if the guy  
was going to fall back into the building.  
But he must've made a kind of herculean effort;  
and abruptly, he crashed out of the window  
and shot through the air like a flaming arrow.

I don't think he made a sound, maybe he  
couldn't by then—that thought was unbearable.  
A fireman said he was dead before he hit  
the ground and they were hosing him down.  
The air smelled sickly sweet as if there had  
been a campfire, not a building burning, and  
certainly not a person, no, not a person.  
As if all of this weren't bad enough—and as  
time goes on; I'm not even sure I saw this—but  
as the blazing figure pitched out of the window,  
for just a second, I think I caught a glimpse of a  
tinier silhouette falling back into the building.

ON WAYS OF LEAVING

**your leaving scars me still**

(after rob mcLennan's *the girl from abbotsford*)

two years one month four days  
i waken, my hand on your pillow  
still lonely for your warmth

your cat curls at my feet  
but is still not my cat does not  
purr ever — awaits your return

i continue to lose weight  
food does not interest me  
nothing does really –

i am holding your taste  
like a verb on my tongue  
afraid to swallow your tense

i wonder how long it takes  
for wounds to fully heal  
and if scars ever fade

perhaps they are all  
that keep me here remind  
me of you that i was loved

ON WAYS OF LEAVING

**WOLF, MY WOLF**

(in memory of Farley, my wolf  
2001 - 2015)

Oh, my wolf—  
You howl down the moon.  
Raising your lupine snout,  
your beauty slays the night.

Remember how you ran from us  
afraid at first to trust  
that we would love you, never leave?  
Oh, my wolf—

We scoured the concrete jungle  
and all the yards, near and far  
every time you ran, just to hear  
you howl down the moon.

Once we thought we'd lost you  
for good—you were gone so long—.  
Then driving through dusk saw you  
raise your lupine snout

Far out in a field, near a forest's edge  
I was sure you would cut and run  
But I called to you, and you came to me—  
Your beauty slaying the night.

## ON WAYS OF LEAVING

### LEAVING TO ARRIVE

She gasses the old mauve Buick at the last self-serve on the way out of town, smacks at droning but harmless bugs landing on the stalk of her smooth white neck and keeps shifting; stands with one dirty barefoot covering the other then switches.

She watches the numbers flip over on the gas pump, notes the ping announcing every gallon added, and jerks the nozzle out before it's finished. A faint dribble of fuel scents the air, as the excess runs down the side of the car.

Bill paid, she sashays back to the car, refreshes, *Sweetheart Pink* lips in her rearview Pops the clutch puts it in first, and peels into the night, the dust chasing her out to the two-lane the only evidence she was ever there.