

# Malibu Fire, November 93

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AMY REYNOLDS

The air smelled of houses  
burning in the November wind.  
The baby's hands were hot,  
his face blotched with viral sores.  
He couldn't stop crying,  
overwhelmed by the maddening  
injustice of autumn heat,  
and chicken pox.  
I curled against him on the bed  
where we could look  
out at the eucalyptus trees  
tossing in the hot wind.

At my back, t.v. reporters  
recited the names of neighborhoods  
and canyons now in flames,  
Malibu Canyon, the Palisades,  
Topanga Canyon Park where  
my husband and I had married.  
That day the lilacs were blooming,  
clouds of silvery lavender  
against the April green hills.  
As we said our vows,  
a red dog, a flame dog  
ran across the hillside,  
brilliant fur flashing,  
a flame of love in the grass.

A flame dog.  
A flame dog flashing  
like a flame of destruction  
in the dry grass of November,  
igniting the eco-logic  
of mesquite and sage.

The baby's cries slowed,

eyes finally closing  
as he stroked my breast,  
fell asleep in the curl of my body.  
All I can do is mother one child  
while the world burns.