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What Happened to Fire

Rodney Gomez

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1.
In the alley, a boy
would fly
a fish-shaped kite

its nylon mouth
and feathery anus open
to air.

What held him there—
a single red fin

along a row of withering
gray spine, like a flame
still flickering
in ash.

In those days
you expected fires

wind that could calm
every thrumming nerve

even among ruins
even in the sky.

2.
By the berm
where someone was stabbed
in Garden Park

every Sunday
a pair of black-bellied ducks

would beg for crumbs

and though a mile north
they could have fattened

themselves on throwaways
they remained.

They would waddle
in the shade
of a lime tree

shape rinds into scythes
in their brown beaks
for the sparring.

3.
What everyone remembered:
monkey bars, whirligig
and steel pigs stuck

with coils a super
clairvoyantly thought
to paint yellow

since what happened
only exists now
in newsprint.

We were offered a wisp
of devil there
and when we said no
we were beaten until

all that remained
of our wormhole vision

was the blue cupola

of the movie
theater, smoldering
in its own shadow.

The last thing I said
before going under
was a treatise on fire
so near my tongue.