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How to Properly Fold and Insert a Letter into an Envelope

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Lantz: How to Properly Fold and Insert a Letter into an Envelope

HOW TO PROPERLY FOLD AND INSERT A LETTER INTO AN ENVELOPE

Nick Lantz

All the forest fires start
with some poor sap burning

love letters in an abandoned
campsite.

Maybe while he's driving away
from the ashes he thought he put out,
he imagines parts of his life falling away

like spent booster rockets as he roars
out of some self-made crater.

You and I would be burning the world by the acre
if not for the intervention of the door
that I close behind me to keep
from being cruel, like the valve of a heart that keeps
the blood flowing in one direction.

When we are silent, that silence is an empty parking lot
visible from space.

I get up early, you go to bed late.
You cultivate orchids that look like discarded

wedding dresses. Those orchids fold

and unfold themselves. They do not throw magazines
at the wall. They don't refuse to look you in the eye.

In the Atlantic Ocean, there is a nuclear submarine,
and in that submarine is a safe. And inside that safe

is another safe. And inside that
is a sealed envelope.

And in that envelope is a handwritten letter telling
the submarine commander
what to do if his homeland is burned

to a cinder. Some days, I don't know
whether I wish I was the submarine, the commander,
or that letter. Some days, yes,

I wish I was the smoking homeland.

At night the smoke detector in our apartment
goes off for no reason. And who remembers
what I said
or what you said? When we awake

to its shrill proclamations, it's only
us, standing in our worn-out underwear, scared
then laughing.