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Wildcard

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Chaudhuri: Wildcard

WILDCARD

Diya Chaudhuri

*If you hurt inside, get certified, and if life should
treat you bad . . . don't get ee-ee-even. Get mad!*

—*The Killing Joke, Alan Moore*

for (but not about) Z. Graves

We live in a city that has never worn a summer
or washed in a clear shower. We've lived
wintered lives. What's changed around us:
license plate designs, 3G technology,
popular flavors of brand-name ice cream.
Tomorrow the mayor will fuss at his cuticles,
then announce that sadly, but again, there is no room
in the budget for a teachers' raise. A babysitter
will ignore a child's skinned knee because the skin
never broke, only blushed. In some gravelly quarter
of town, I will think of my favorite quilt
as I gulp at coffee, a fish gasping on a pier.
You might be crouched over a water main,
loosing toxins that leave fish Cheshired and cherry-lipped,
but otherwise delicious. You might be in a condemned apartment
that doesn't look so bad, watching your staff
strip a woman down to warm, bloodied flesh, gag her, bind her
at the ankles and wrists while you wipe down
the lens of your camera. You'll be what you've always been, dear.