Fall 1976

Aladdin Lamp

Madeline De Frees
ALADDIN LAMP

With luck and the slow hand of the lover
I polish the lamp
to its antique glow. Over the ring of incised rectangles where the double wick climbs
I watch the girl
dreaming by firelight. She plucks
the burning pitch from coals, lifts it high as a torch and escapes the small brass picket fence into the next century.

Nothing goes on but the fire. Swirls of opaque roses caught in a slender chimney.
Clear at the heart of the globe’s Victorian shade
she runs with leaping tongues, the steady beat of the trackstar. Small legs
pumping down the block
into the street where skaters gathered and past the great beetle light of the tropics.

Wood spits in the andiron grate. What do apple logs know, too old to catch fire? The pale observer shudders from the cold room toward the milky dawn of Chicago. She says, If I kicked over the lantern would the man up late notice? Already the hillside moon lifts a gnarled trunk in its tongs. Hurricane sweep of barn and town. Sky in the window blazes.