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Wichita Burning

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WITCHITA BURNING

I know this woman . . . The difference between *Life*
and *a life*: Picture
it all
laid flat, as mercator, on white paper, every city
a black die-dot. A man comes
on a pinto, in the corona of fly-wing sheen,
sombbrero tilted for light to catch
down its brim like a diving preybird, his voice
a chainsaw. And on a whim—the fluctuation
of grain on the market, a nectarine tinge in the air,
the way her breath leavens—a woman
undoes the catch on her doorlock, lets him
in, takes him off
the horse and allows a new half and half
mythological beast in the darkness. He takes her
to Wichita, one black possible splat
on a field of white, that's
her story. But it's how . . . Picture
Wichita burning, people amok, flesh
incadescent, babies like burnt shoats, and a woman
whose hair shot like torched gasoline. And
all this set like a bauble of bad glass and phlgem
amid the constellatory black gems of Paris,
Sioux City, Detroit. I mean
random choice, and how we have to be careful,
please, of whose eye we let cast back the small light
our lives give off, whose
acceptance. We have to be careful
whose dice we blow luck. See,
a man is coming; against the sky like a sliver
of pine off-center in a parquet landscape.
We have to be careful.
He's done in fringe, and star-stitched chambray.
We have to be careful.

We have to be careful.
His breath at the gate says dust / ivory / ink.
We have to make a decision now.