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Aladdin Lamp

Madeline De Frees

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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.