

The Night the Fire Came

He howled so loud that his lungs collapsed.
He leapt, a day glow angel, and his bones buckled.
He begged to run back and retrieve a picture –
the people therein long since dead.
His native tongue returning in an instant;
the words spoken just as quickly,
each floating fleck of ash weighing as much as a brick.

The strategy was to use containment bursts
so that only one Brooklyn brownstone's insides
would give way.

He recalled the old lessons – close your eyes
and pray to God so that the dark will pass more quickly.
Sing songs of praise and you'll feel joy in spite of sorrow.
If you suffer tragedies well, all of your sins will be forgiven.
Keep tradition and your name will be held in esteem.
If you believe that God is real, all misery can be endured.

When the flames began to recede, a column of smoke
followed; a structure of dust supplanted the structure of stone –
looking for something to hold on to.