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Lantern Love

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Lantern Love

I.

Fan the flames that smolder
in that coal mill in your chest
But let your spirit burn
Churning blazes into song
The smoke turns gears
as it rises in your throat
Don't be afraid
to raise your voice.

II.

Your charcoal eyes are wide
You can't deny the scars he left
By the wild, roaming tongues
Of flames that seared your skin.

Now, the pain's half-lit
But it makes you wince
Every time you think of him
Movie reels turn, guttering
Black and white images, flickering
Dark spots where your memory fails.

A coal mill crumbles to ashes,
Smoke pours, fruitlessly
From your jaws, a raw scream

You always thought
You were a martyr
Burning for his sake.

(But, Honey, was it for him?
Or was it for the way
he made you feel?)

III.

You burned brightly enough
To light the night-turned Roman sky
Nero never ran out of fuel
For his precious torches.

He would have crucified the sun
If he could have made it burn
For him alone, a lantern
In the vaulted sky.

(Words from a wise man:
Be your own savior while you can.)

IV.

There was a carelessness
To the way he held you.
You were a means to his end.
He wanted to love,
And you wanted to be loved.

A love like that
Can't turn turbines, can't spin cogs
That churn out constant currents,
Steady strings of energy
Beaded through copper wires,
To light the night-turned
City skyline.

A love like that is born
Beneath the ruffled wings
Of darkness, the strewn
White sheets from his bedroom
Where it surges and steams;
A raging machine.

And in that moment,
The single-room apartment
Became the center of the universe

A mushroom cloud burst into color
From the seams of the horizon
A nuclear loss of control.
A flash and a blackout.

The street lights guttered
And went out.

V.
The city is dark
The city is dark
At the heart, but at the edge
Telephone wires fray, loose
Ends run sparking fingers
Over the branches of a pine tree.
Fire's light shimmers
Grimly in the glossed windows
Of steel structures.

The city screams like a teapot.

The city burns
But not for you.

VI.
In the center of the universe,
Your Nero fiddles
As the city burns.

VII.
You dream
Of steam engines.
tation found in vegetables such as sweet
potatoes, cantaloupe, and carrots.