

# SPECTACLE

**EMILY BENTON**

Standing barefoot over hose and sidewalk,  
we search the house across the street:

the doorway we never knocked has lost  
its shape—the screen now off-screen, thrown

into the yard like a child's plastic truck,  
turned to ash by bittersweet orange

flames that lap against a new frame's edge.  
From this vantage point, all smoke is screened—

a kaleidoscopic gray like late-night Channel 3,  
a haze we can't help but watch, having risen

slowly from Sunday's couch, half-reclined  
to an afternoon inside, keeping to ourselves.

We don't speak much—this gathering of old  
and young, in house clothes and garden gloves,

with smartphones raised above the truck  
that arrived ten minutes late to 15th Avenue—

our public square formed by those whose  
names we can't recall, though didn't we pass

them on our evening walks, though we knew  
whose lawn went un-mowed for months.

When the water's all but gone, we carry home  
questions to whittle undone: Who cut

the screen? Who first breathed the fume  
released by an object not meant to burn?

Who burned her palm reaching for the knob?  
Who called the cops, the ambulance, the yellow

fire truck? Who leapt from his couch and ran  
down the block, ax-in-hand, to save the children?