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Blackout

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Winner of *Exile* Prize for Poetry

Blackout

Little blue bolt on a split wire—
shock in the dark, my corrupter

of clocks—

you quiver once then kindle flames
that lick the bark off evergreens,

one's broken bough

unbound you from your artery,
so blow the grid and burn the tree

till block by block the dark

will dawn along these gravel roads
and cars crawl home on the harness

of their highbeams. Let the tiki

torches dot the lawns. Let screen doors
swing with laughter and lukewarm beer.

Next door

my neighbors cuss the curfew cop,
someone shoots roman candles off

their roof and cheers.

I'm home, upstairs, stripped to nothing
but my underwear and running

in the dark. My lips part—

I plunge towards the emptiness
where a bed should be, its mattress

the net beneath an acrobat

blindfolded, free: my fall is like
the time it takes a match to strike
and singe

the sheets: I am a comet streak
or spark. I will end incomplete.

--Derek Mong '04