

Forest Fire  
Zachary Tan

The world is as bland as it is on fire. I clutch  
the burning mask close to my face. Hide.

The odor of ash muzzles my face, tearing  
my breath away. The fox with  
emerald eyes peers pure  
at me. Forgive me. Please.

The world is bland, I claim, hugging the stone  
over my heart. Fragments of jade entombed  
in my flesh. It is now the fox with a hole in its chest.

Out of the gloom trots its ashen kit  
engulfed in that same inferno. Look, it says,  
its crimson coat coated in rose buds.  
To me or the fox, I don't know which.

The fox with emerald eyes staggers  
close. The pity in its eyes, palpable,  
quench the sounds of flame. The taste of carbon.  
The light in its eyes: faded. Its last look:

at me. "You have what you want, are you happy now?"  
I refute and bargain. But with it, or myself?  
The fox turns and trots away. No.

Before the kit joins it in ashen air,  
It says keep the heart, you have more need for it than we.