

The Burning Bush

For weeks, I searched for a sign that it was over—
my rage or mourning, whichever came first.

I dug holes in the ground and covered the bulbs
with mulch. Then I waited. If something grew there,

I'd know I'd been granted. But earth doesn't respond
like that; there's nothing human in its language.

Words came to me, but they seemed the symptom
of something deeper. And then I saw it: blue-red

in the October sun, the color of a pomegranate
seed when light passes through it, or the amber-red

of a young Arbois, honey-red, yet bitter. It lit
the yard with the intensity of a dream, only I knew

its leaves weren't burning. Neither god nor prophet
it spoke to me, but what it meant I couldn't decode.

Reader, there are those who would say
I shouldn't address you directly, but this is not

that kind of poem—Frostian, dark, with a touch
of sardonic humor. Without you, I speak to the chasm.

Sublime, indifferent, the bush taunted me, its fire-
flecked voices I couldn't answer, its quivering vowels

slaking off heat. How was I to translate? I could say
it represented the untenable, the ineffable,

all that I had faltered or failed in (this gift to you,
my raspy hunger, the miniature graves I dug

in the hope for flower, my sad little conscience
pulling up weeds), but that would be untrue. Listen:

It's nearly winter and the bush is still burning.
In rage or mourning, I have failed you.



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