

Save
by Janis Barlow

It took him four years and three months to the day
to save for that car. There was no choice
in the color – take it or leave it, the man said,
a high gloss scarlet with a good engine, slightly used,
having endured the harshness
of only two Bosnian winters. Now fire
pours like liquid from the sky, darts under wheels
with crusted hub-caps, slithering across the wide-eyed
stare of its headlights, over the splotched and dusty
hood, whose surface my son waxed, each week,
to a shine, my son
who I have not seen since the fall,
since his father, too, was taken.
I don't know. Does anyone?
Bombs plummet to my vegetables
in their neat rows, the ragged geraniums I planted in what seems
another life. Our table bereft
of its daily bouquets, the meager harvest
from our garden. Bereft of the quiet,
yet, perceptible hum of a family.
Now I struggle with the weight
of what I can carry: a bundle of handsewn linens, some photographs,
my VCR. What logic in this?
Soon the house will be eaten
by flames, yet, I rescue the VCR.
My son would hate
this fire, hate how it billows, settling over his car like cerecloth,
red paint flowing through the untended grass,
swirling around my feet as I flee,
forgetting my shoes,
forgetting to latch the gate
behind me.