

*construction/paper*

by courtney marie

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i build myself a deep nest.  
collect kindling, fiberglass strings,  
scraps of priceless tinder gathered like matches,  
photographs and dead grass.  
newspaper clippings  
and countless volumes of evergreen stored on  
bookcases that might as well be cedar branches.  
i live in a dry summer.

postcards line the wall.  
ships sailing, trips without my echo,  
reminders that now  
i may never leave this place, at least  
not for a long time,  
too long to make sense  
of where the time has gone,  
or how my ticket, that tiny twig,  
was lost  
and how you (at the last moment)  
caught your breath  
and the scene shifted:

plumes of smoke change their course,  
chasing the ghost of something beautiful.

it is easy to love what you do  
when what you do is pretend.  
we avoid using the word *burn*.  
i have copies of the letters i've sent,  
and the ones i haven't.  
i have an empty cigarette pack  
wearing a hand drawn map  
i have napkins with haikus  
i have a penchant for glowing embers.  
i have a bad habit of saving dry leaves like sawdust  
in every corner of the room  
and studying how to start fires.