

Internal Combustion

By Noah Caldwell-Gervais

Editors' Choice Winner, Poetry

Snow piled on the black vinyl roof
I open the door, the snow falls down
Covering the armrest, power seat controls
In hills of white, windows grey, buried
I'm sitting with my gloves on the dash
In the deep burgundy embrace of the
Omni-directional power driver's seat
Watching the snow on the steering wheel
Melt from the heat of

The fire started in the gas tank
(According to the police report)
Which is appropriate, in a way
Twenty-five gallons of gasoline
For thirty years, burned too—
A city of dinosaur bones pumped
From a Chevron in Silver City, NM
From a Valero in Mena, OK
From a Texaco outside Memphis, TN
From the station down the street
From where we lived, Jack's Gas
Where Jack would smile and pump
It all himself, always happy to see

The grill of the car fell off, or maybe it melted
But it wasn't there when I went to see the
Wreckage in the impound lot, what was left of
The long, black Lincoln that cruised nightly
Down the streets outside my apartment
With roommates, friends, with her,
All four headlights illuminating the freeway signs
Tempting us further into the undiscovered world,
We don't need a hotel, hell, we'll just sleep in

The backseat was always so comfortable, really
More of **a couch than any other car seat I've sat in**
So far back, so much foot room, so much leg room
Room for legs and feet entwined, writhing
Just like a couch you could hear the springs rattling
See the windows fogging from the warmth of

The flames gutted the whole thing, everything
So flammable, the cushions, plastic, woodgrain
It must've happened so quickly, but a woman
Who heard the explosion, she said
That when the fire reached the front of the car
(Which is where the fusebox is)
The horn stuck on, wailing its death throes
Into the night until the flames melted the whole
Horn assembly, which I never had to use myself,
People would always clear out of the way when they

See it burn, now
The flames a roaring tide of headliner
Black paint turning to black smoke
Rivulets of glove compartment running
Like red, toxic tears—windshield shattering
See it burn, then
Roaring down freeways, highways, driveways
An ancient, rattling luxury golem
Given gas, sweat, oil, blood, love
See it as it burned for me