**it feels like flames**

The soft nights mentioned in the song

quietly crooning from my computer speaker

must feel like this, I imagine;

the hum of the crickets and

sweet trills of late night mockingbirds

blowing with the breeze through

the final window that remains cracked

in hope of relief of August heat;

the record still spinning on the A-side

where I forgot it, needle having reached

the middle long ago, still maintaining

the slight wobble of the warped vinyl;

light from the candle I bought

that one time we went to the farm store

(the one with the baby chicks);

they said it smells like apples but really

it smells more like sun-ripe peaches.

When I lit the wick and held the match

in my hand, I thought of late summer nights

with my family, my older cousin,

fifteen at the time, showing us how

he could put out a match with his tongue.

I could never get it close enough to even try:

I had been too afraid of burning a hole

right through, and never being able

to eat soup the right way again. Maybe now,

seventeen and wiser, I could do it —

learn to eat fire, become like the circus folk,

run away and show off my newfound skill

to crowds of children, wear bright colors

and have an infinite smile, my laughter

another eternal sound on the breeze —

but the match flickers out before I

have my chance. Would that I

could breathe fire into the sky

like God making the stars. How am I

to make joy within the void of night?