

**BILL NEUMIRE**

**Firemen's Practice Burn House**

Maybe you're thinking of crying at the news  
because you can't pronounce the names  
of the cities where children are lined up

lying in the street, wearing T-shirts  
with American actors  
& they aren't children anymore

because they're dead & their city  
is burning & has always been  
burning & the envelopes from your credit

card bills are too close  
to the stove's orange circles where your pasta boils,  
the kind you make

when the man who protects you is coming over,  
but the men who protect us, don't worry,  
have their axes & their hoses & they light

the ghostly building again to practice breaking  
inside her many hells, her many languages  
of interior monologue & some of them will fail

because they will see the way  
she always stares at the nearby river of sleep,  
the way she's not there anymore

because what she wants is not there  
because death is like protection  
from what you know

& maybe you cry there in the brittle evening  
whose silence reaches the pitch of alarm  
whose leaves imagine themselves

as smoke dancing apart in the sky,  
sifting over the broad bloody shoulders  
of the men who protect us

some crying

names they can't say.