

ROBERT FROST SAID SOME SHIT ABOUT FIRE & ICE / HOW THE STATE BURNS, BY ZAIN MURDOCK

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Artwork by Egwuh Ameh

& that is when we find out / what ash tastes like—/ & maybe we've been practicing
all our lives, when we'd left / our leftovers in the oven for too long / but that
was all there was to eat / so our mothers said *you bet not waste my damn food*
& we sigh / *yes, ma* & remind ourselves what the color Black tastes like / i think like /
too far gone, worked far too hard, / unwanted / by everyone

& this is when we find out / something about hell / & satan's demon ass
trapped in an ice cube / in _____ it rains
ice / & i can't bother to name the city this time /
they should've never told niggas about dante / at my big age,
i wonder / if every time she poured sweet tea into one of the good glasses /
it really was bits of hell bumping up cold against our lips /

& now is when we find out / how it feels to freeze / our own bodies for preservation
again, we've been trained for this moment / *you take the fish out the freezer like i told you?*
i'm on my way she calls / we didn't / the meat still stiff with ice crystals
when she pulls into the driveway at last / maybe this is the way the world ends,
the wailing sizzle of a tear gas canister / hissing like mean grease / tiny bullets
of ice in her cast iron skillet / standing too close to the stove / too close
/ & then a *pop!* / a *pop pop pop pop pop!* / & splatter