



Image: "Night Train" by Gerrie Paino. "Tracks" was written by Matthew Murrey for *Rattle's* Ekphrastic Challenge, April 2024, and selected as the Artist's Choice.

WILDFIRE DREAMS

poem by Linda Vandlac Smith

at night sleep slides
its matchbox open
sparks old torches
a woodland of flares
twizzling up through
brittle boughs of
dream all wick from
roots to treetops

everywhere lake
laps heat's edge at
the border of what is
and isn't afire what is
wind or what creates
it as smoke makes its
lateral move through
curve of vision nearly

obfuscates a bird risen
from shadow's char
not phoenix but drone
misshapen angel or
ancestor I cry out for
any stranger born into
a wildfire of dreams
only a distortion of

myself parting troubled
clouds making orange
apologies from within
the same dark scowl
that ignites thunderstorm
this incubator of flame
that renews forest
with one jagged strike

