

SALLY YAZWINSKI

### **I Would Set Myself on Fire**

When he was eight my father played with matches and caught fire.  
Even though he's walked it for his entire life, he says we're lucky to  
have this land.

Do you know how many lives I save?  
The scars still look wet on his chest.  
I can change children.  
I've been coated in a horse's birthing blood.

Two policemen raped my father and he smelled his own blood.  
If I had nothing else to burn I would set myself on fire.  
I don't want to have children.  
A helicopter planted rye for us and my father cried as he watched it land.  
My grandmother found my father in the yard and put him out in her  
chest.  
Dump a bucket of cold water on a calf that's not breathing and they're  
easy to save.

Arrowheads in river silt are something you should save.  
I slit a lamb's throat and because it's a holiday I have to drink its blood.  
When the policemen dropped him off at his house they pinned a fake  
badge to his chest.  
I have it in me to set myself on fire.  
We have permission to bury our dead in our land.  
My grandfather said those two were good with children.

*I knew it was coming, in their police car they would always follow children.*  
Whenever they saw him in town they would tuck a dollar in his pocket,  
*to save.*  
Every good and horrible thing that happens to my father, happens on  
our land.  
I helped a man peel the hide off of a cow, I was up to my ankles in blood.

As chief, my father had to pull one of the policeman out of a fire.  
Instead of saying thank you, he patted his chest.

The other was lost in our cornfield in a snowstorm and died holding  
his dog to his chest.

I will always be able to speak to your children.

My father closes himself while under fire.

I found an Azeri girl in a field bleeding after an abortion, she was  
impossible to save.

I rolled her over to let out the blood.

We bury our dead cows in the fields that feed them, bodies under  
our land.

Tell my father not to say something and watch where he'll land.

How would you feel if he had touched your chest?

I have it all inside me too, his blood.

He would love my children.

I don't know who to save.

What would you set alight if you had nothing else to set on fire?

To make room for growth, my father will set fire to our land.

I would be able to hold you to my chest; you I might save.

There's isn't any distance between children and blood.