

# Bruce Bond

## Underworld

Last night a page from my childhood caught fire  
and turned up to see if I was watching.  
I too looked up crying *mother*, the way a star  
looks up at the earth in the distance.

What do you say to the woman with ears full  
of smoke and anguish, full of the story  
she never wrote. Last night I tried to call  
emergency though she was on the line.

Then the floor began to part, brightly, like a book.  
Next day I went through my library  
and thinned it. What do you say to the mother  
who bends her spine into a question, she

who brings her child the *memento mori*  
of a first word. And last. What comfort then.  
What of the crack in the floor opening  
like an eye to witness the death of all things,

even books. I always wanted to die  
in a house, a book. I always loved the hearth  
fire inside the books, even as they shed  
their skins, horribly no less, turning up

to consume the house of my childhood.  
There's comfort in the flesh, the earth,  
the things that make us, molten at the core.  
Comfort in the story that takes us in.

If only I could look through the body  
like a page, to die another's death and live.  
To be every story is to find yourself  
in none. It's what suffering teaches. And fire,

fire too is a house. Some days a Buddhist  
temple. Others a library reading itself.  
But mostly, these nights, it's a mother's flesh,  
she who grew so heavy with the world.