

JOEL M. TOLEDO

WILDFIRE

The matchbox used to be empty.
Hollow, but did hold the promise
of content. Banana leaves the maze
that will house spiders. Test the weight
of web: trail leading to the source.
Children's eyes open wide. All asleep

wakes to pandemonium. Why disturb the asleep?
The automatic is capture; failure's empty
hands mean fumble, discovery of source.
The victor receives the envy, the promise
of game. What's gained is heavy, weight
of matchbox, scuttle inside the maze.

What amazes are the fingers negotiating maze
with the lid uncovered, spiders still asleep.
Roused from slumber, this carried weight
which sags the stick denounces all empty
as pointless play. Spiders the promise
of spin and glory. Conquest is source

of this course. The weak become source
of youth's fortresses. Innocence a maze
now solvable. There's always promise
in endeavor. The winner now asleep.
The other, dead. All this spelling *empty*
as the agreed-upon catch weight.

Gunshots. Shells losing weight
as bullets begin penetrating source.
The idea is now the goal, and the empty,
the pure, scrambles like spiders escaping maze,
crawling on skin, wake up and startle both asleep

and the playing dead. They all want to avoid the promise

of fire, of flame, annihilation. *Promise*,
declares the shooter. His claim holds weight
in the wait for massacre. And in the wake of the asleep,
the accounted-for deaths, I struggle to pinpoint the source:
I think of my many childhood don'ts. A matchbox is not a maze
nor is it a toy. The moment you touch it, you are opening the empty

promise of the hollow. Matchsticks reside in that maze
and the flint sparks a weight that will never fall asleep.
Matchbox is premised on danger; it's no empty source.