

To Start a Fire in the Rain

You must use your own name for kindling, and not be afraid
to sleep outside, away from the shell of the cabin left
when the neighboring farmer let his prairie burn jump

the ditch. You must listen to his cows yelling all night,
the coyotes snapping brush beneath their padded toes, catching

your flashlight in the mirrors of their eyes as you move
on the wobbling legs of a newborn calf around your tent,
patching leaks and checking to see that the fire has drowned.

You must hear, somewhere, something rusty trying to move
and in the morning you must burn to a point like sumac,
for summer is done