

Imposter?

by [J. Barrie Shepherd](#) in the [March 1, 2017](#) issue

This smudge and smear of ash feels
smooth and soft—the brush of feathers,
angel’s wing—the lightest, slightest touch
to have to bear upon my brow.

With all that lies ahead I had anticipated
something coarser and less comfortable,
the cindered scrape and friction of a burning
that can destroy in its transforming.

These remains of last year’s palms may prove
too gentle for the testing weeks ahead, too slight
to lead the stumbling way beyond the olive trees,
the ragged hill, the shattered grave, the garden.