

Documentary

J. R. SOLONCHE

Rome burns. Then London.
Chicago burns to the ground,
its streets cobbled with wood,
while the mayor telegraphs,

“Send help!” San Fransisco
is engulfed. The earthquake
has severed the water mains.
The firemen stand watching.

One hundred forty-eight girls
die in a shirtwaist factory
in New York. Their next of kin
try to identify the bodies.

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At the Coconut Grove in Boston,
four hundred ninety-two die.
The fireproof building survives.
We switch it off and go to bed.

I have trouble falling asleep.
I put my arm over you.
In the middle of the night,
our daughter, awakened

by something, comes in
to sleep with us. It is raining.
A good, heavy rain, thank God.
I do not need to dream it.