

We Look into Fire

by Gail DiMaggio

August to September and something's shifted. Maybe we're bored, maybe we're not so young, maybe we're waiting for some final, safe arrival.

Weren't we promised a moment of arrival?

It's cold too early, he says and builds

a fire. I take to reading horoscopes, to Tarot cards on the coffee table, see myself in the Queen of Cups while he insists he's Taurus so *Where's the card for Taurus*. All month, every night, the fire burning itself up, and the two of us watching with less and less to say.

October,

we feed our restlessness
into a camping trip. I think we're headed
for the Catskills, but he turns south for West Point,
and I find myself

beside him on the edge

of a manicured space called The Plain
watching row after row of the young
burning to serve, to be uniform,
to be in formation under the bronze
gaze of statues—six wars, six generals—
all our synchronous human lives
spent in repetitive motion.

Another night,

another fire. This time camp fire,
and right away it doesn't satisfy us,
doesn't fill us up. We keep hauling in
the dead wood tossing it, heaving it into the leap
and the roar, hypnotized past midnight

by fire-flakes that stream upward
into the maple where they flare
and scorch the leaves.

Buddha says
everything is burning, though probably
he means some other combustion—
invisible to my ordinary eyes. But
I don't have time
to look into it. Things keep slipping
from my hands—this book, that glass, last year's
summer, next year's blizzard.
And here inside a mountainous dark,
I can't help myself, I'd rather
look into fire. How do I suffer
this icy minute
when I am such brief fuel?