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Consummation

Diane Reynolds

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Consummation

A tincture of flame hems the wedding dress: aura
testing innocence, particle
hung in the bride's cheek.
From her feet a blush will climb a geometric stair
to a caloric, serial heaven. Better
to marry than to burn, they tell him.
She doesn't see Cunegunda walking
the redhot ploughshares, rescuing herself
from branding shames, doesn't think of being
eaten alive, or, alive, of taking forever
the fire's name. She knows that everything that enters
holds its peace, is married utterly
in tongues.

Whether to be changed slowly or quickly,
to be lit up like a book or a terrace of roses
in a bonfire, to be the flash in the sky or the heart.
The secret of its ability to instruct lies in its willingness
to contradict itself: bad fire; good fire; now comfort
and now apocalypse.

Stirring the soup she doesn't think of St. Francis
before the Saracens or of the three in the furnace
proving their love or of the sexual habits
of the pyromaniac.

She's thinking how the soup must love the vegetables
to take them in its arm and count their perfect numbers,
arriving at their square roots, adding them
to itself until they are invisible as it, supreme;
she's thinking that somewhere in the world
Jerusalem and Troy go up perpetually in holocaust,
that Ixion turns forever on his flaming wheel,
secure, an offering.

She'll serve the consomme, finished and clear,
a wheel of lemon floating on it,
and think about colorless ash, transparent broth,
the salamander incognito in his fires.