

Winter 1992

## Third-Degree Burns

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*Rebecca Seiferle*

## **Third-Degree Burns**

For days, I felt the blister  
growing, swelling until  
my hand held only itself, fingers curled  
around the globe of injury, and when  
the doctor cut it open and the warm saltiness  
ran down my wrist, I looked into  
the peeled-back, naked face of my palm  
and it seemed to wear  
an anonymous expression. The yellow  
lines of fat and the veins bluely  
transecting the raw crimson  
were maps without a country, and it took  
a long time for my hand to remember  
its address, to recollect its usages  
of the steering wheel, the hammer, the ink pen,  
to recompose its white tranquil face, and to forget  
how a stranger had held it  
like a bowl of milk, the skin souring  
on the surface. For months afterward,  
I woke to a burning inside  
my arms, the nerves firing their way  
back to the fingers, and the hand  
at the end of my wrist

reaching for the light switch, measuring  
its way back to the living  
like one mistaken for dead.