

## **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?