

sestina to be burnt

between spinning moon and sun's constant burn,
like a ravenous inferno, or volcano's mouth melting,
you creak as you hoist dense platforms of gold
mined from the cortex of your mind. splinter your shoulders
beneath the weight of it all. though your death rattle is distant,
you are heavy right *here*, sighing, as I count the ringlets at your temple.

the two of us, bent over the altar, trembling in the shade of the temple.
gnash your teeth and tear your clothes *now*—rome is burning
to the ground as we sleep. can you hear the distant
beating of the drum? it's coming and we're *coming* and you melt
me down. destroy my impurities. bury me in the hairs on your shoulder.
stray embers burn kisses into your body, and you shine like gold,

or star-death, or steel. if we have our pick of the poison, choose gold.
sometime between the big and the bang, a flame ignites your temple;
it devours your freckles and brains and, yes, the hairs on your shoulder.
when you are ablaze, you scream my name, and my heart just *burns*
and smolders, black smoke suffocating, your once-gold locket melting.
our apocalypse is orgasmic. our joys are cataclysmic. no wonder you stay distant.

under the gauzy guise of sleep, I can make out your face, distant,
in the jumbled language of a dream. your *voice* precious as gold—
so rare in these times. we share a burial shroud; over time, we melt.
we decay and feed worms. we fertilize a fermented shrine. the temple
draws hissing crowds, orthodox protesters. we'll burn
for all eternity, but see my totem in this nightmare? I bite your shoulder

so I'll remember that you lived. I'll chisel urns from rib and shoulder,
only you are worthy of holding your charred heart. this is the distant
future, though. it won't be soon. for now, I'll be the one to burn.
my seraph, horrific and miraculous, what worth has myrrh, or gold,
or frankincense when compared to you? from dust, your temple
is enacted. the cornerstone? my *sternum*. allow me to meld

my mismatched bones to yours. I can see that you're melting
as the sweat moistens your brow, furrowed like that twisted shoulder.
shoulder the weight no longer. see the pulsing vein at your temple?
i will crack my spine so that you may *live*. for atlas, I am but distant
memory—easy to forget as he spins moon, and sun, volcanoes into gold.
sometime between big and bang, you will spark, and I will burn.

you rise, twisted and melting in your sheets, and shake off a distant
nightmare. slept funny on your shoulder. when you blink you see gold
torn from temple doors. *everything dies*, you say, *everything burns*.

