Fire Like Silk

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She is a dancer.  
Pink satin-clad feet are her storytellers.  
The spotlight and wooden floor beckon her solo performance. 
Her heart pounds as she takes center stage.  
Her soul craves the kinship between movement and music,  
pain and pleasure,  
feet and floor,  
artist and audience. 

She is a dancer. 
Though her limbs are less limber,  
her inner grace, passion, and desire still move  
to the symphonic voice in her head.  
She still sees herself dancing, from a distance now,  
like a child watches the ballerina twirl inside a jewel box. 

She is a dancer.  
She exchanges the painful hours  
of toes banging en pointe  
for endless days  
of fingers tapping out words.  
The desk light and white space beg a new solo performance,  
for another unseen audience.  
She chooses metaphors over movement. 
She gives up the dancer’s excitement at the curtain call  
for the writer’s more permanent thrill  
after she dances across the printed page. 

She is a dancer. She takes to the stage. For she has a story to tell.

Five-years-old I reached  
for the stove burner flame.  
A gorgeous orange silk  
ripling under a pot  
of water roiling for tea.  
I stroked the fire and she  
licked my finger, timid  
and wavering.  
I coaxed her off the stove  
with matchsticks and Dad's  
Marlboros. I took the flame and she  
warmed my pocket change.  
That autumn the leaves of her  
own coloring curled black
There’s a restlessness inside of me that paralyzes and provokes me; what do I want? I demand from myself answers to questions smothering in their enormity.

Want is a spectacle of shining teeth and double-edged desires, dressed in petal-soft pleasure and notions of cotton-candy comfort; want opens its maw and swallows my mind, raging to be felt. I know it has invaded me, has tainted my edges and insides with ambition unreasoning. It twists within, curls in my gut and stretches through my limbs. It cries out for glory, for fame and fortune and television prosperity. I want to want less, but the restlessness paralyzes and provokes me—what will you do with yourself? Make of yourself? Take the world and make it yours. Make it what you want. What do you want?