

When heat had swept its sultry fingers swift across my cheek
And crackles' crisp cacophony my torpor's temper tore,
I woke to find my world's walls contagious in their flame.

But seeing that the passageways forbade a quick escape
And knowing well the distance from my chamber to the door,
I thought, for comfort's sake, to face my death where I had lived.

Just then it seemed I heard a voice or spoke the thought myself,
Though at the time I'm sure I felt the latter to be true,
Which told me, very vaguely, "This is not where you should pass."

"Friend, right you are," was my reply, if only to the fire
For through the smoke I caught a glimpse of my solarium
Where all the plants could offer nat'ral comp'ny for my end.

So braced against the burning smoke that beat against my lungs
And scarcely scarred by flapping flames that lapped against my skin,
I moved into the outer world that I had kept within.

There, sunlight twirling in the heat convinced my intellect:
Than where I stood amidst the flames but underneath the sky,
No mortal plan could orchestrate a better place to die.

"If true or not," the voice that was perhaps my own returned,
"Your quick conviction concerns how you'll cast your final thought
But ignores all the time you'll spend awaiting overwrought."

As if a finger 'neath my chin directed my eyes there,
I spied nearby a corridor to which the way was clear.
"So while you wait," the voice went on, "engage remembrance here."

To keep my nostrils well below the house's toxic pall,
I crept along the ashen floor across my sunlit pyre
To my ephemera-filled hall and entered in a crawl.

Believing that the second time the voice was less my own,
I looked around me to assess the place that it had led
And saw in frames along the walls the people I had known.

As if to wish a last farewell I viewed them each in turn
And crossed into a library of my collected works:
The useless cant for naught but the pretensions they might earn.

Thus pained by toil's transience I skittered from the waste,
In shock to find myself before the door to my release.
"My life's within these walls!" I hesitated with caprice.
But, "go," I heard a whisper say, "with trust and prudent haste."

Though readers of the modern age have doubts of Him above,
And I, for all my searching, have no concrete proof Thereof,
Still, nonetheless, suffice to say what drew me out was Love.

Upon Waking

by Justin Katz