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A Gleaning; Kindlings

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Ann Fisher-Wirth
A Gleaning

Let the leaf I picked this morning off sodden pavement
while slogging with the dog
through late November Mississippi rain

be a sign for my soul--
I said it would, before I turned it over,
seeking some confirmation.

Deeply gouged, brown around the edges,
yellow in the middle. When I woke last Thursday
from a dream, I floated a long way back

from the marshy edges
hating myself. Hating myself.
And I knew I would die cowardly still.

Once I went to the edges.
The night my father died in San Francisco,
I knew with all the force of my childhood,

if I could go to him, if I could hold him in my arms
and burn him with my love,
he would stir and live.

And though this liquidambar leaf lying just so,
wet, on the formica counter, is beautiful,
I was called to the fire.

I have done nothing useful.

Ann Fisher-Wirth
Kindlings

I will arise and go to my father

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego
stood in the fire and were not consumed.

Ah they were God's boys—
spiky magnolia tips, white-hot lilies.

I was a child and willing, Lord; crouched in the stacks
of Camp Zama Army Library,

I read about the saint-summoned girl
my mother called *that Catholic*.

I was fatwood, and your voice across the flames
would never let me perish.

Today, through steady rain,
words come: *Read these kindlings*.

Luminous dogtooth violets, the sweet *soon-clear*
of the mockingbird. Deep in the pines,

black bark looms

beneath a few last dogwood petals
white as the shifting angels...