

BIRTHSTONE

It was the only time in my life I gave in
to extravagance, dallied with metaphor:
Those last days before you shipped out
flickered and flared orange and purple,
Our own microcosmic July 4th, you called it.

We looked at black opals-- mined in a place
called Andamooka in Australia, the lapidary
said. He let us hold chunks of the rough--
like fossil fire. You had him cut a cabochon
for my finger and we watched his grinding wheel
expose green lightning in domed catacombs--
something's secret home under a gold shimmer.

The cutter said opal would be wearer-friendly
to me, October born. Each time you kissed me
I saw those colors crazing my deep dark,
harmonic allegro and velvet largo,
barbs of flame counterpointing nocturnes.

Listen, you said when you put the ring on me,
there's a brass trio in there playing
the rainbow, showing you what love looks like.
Think of me when you watch the pretty music.

I did every day. But now I see a burst of red:
What you may have seen in the desert under fire.
Staccato and sudden. Cacophony of fire.
Friendly fire. Blundered light.

I hear the trumpet playing Taps. Shivering blue.