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Insomnia Burns

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INSOMNIA BURNS

Marge Piercy

The warm waters of sleep
will not rise around my aching body,
will not wash me gently into oblivion,
close over me and let me not be
for a while.

How can there be peace within
when there is no peace without?
Governments reek of blood old
and new, and the stench of dying
chokes my throat.

There are a few just wars, but mostly
everyone who doesn't duck fast enough
dies, the dogs, the camels, old
men playing cards, the babies
in overturned cribs.

Sleep has left me like an angel
of feathered calm deserting the hope-
less. Yet hope too with the gnawing
rasp of something still to be done,
also keeps me awake

as the night stretches to a horizon
of distant fire. Now once again,
there are ashes on the wind
ashes with bits of bone and hair
falling on my bed
falling in my mind.

