

“Spanish Dancer”

By Rilke

As in the hand a sulphur match, first white,
stretches flicking tongues on every side
before it bursts in flame—: so in the circle
of close watchers, hot, bright, and eager
her round dance begins to flicker and fan out.

And all at once it is entirely flame.

With a glance she sets her hair ablaze
and whirls suddenly with daring art
her whole dress into this fiery rapture,
out of which, like startled snakes,
her bare arms stretch, alive and clacking.

And then: as if the fire grew tight to her,
she gathers it all up and casts it off
disdainfully, with imperious demeanor
and looks: It lies there raging on the ground
and keeps on flaming and does not give up—.

But triumphant, self-assured, and with a
sweet greeting smile she lifts her face
and stamps it out with little furious feet.