

burns of the third degree

by Jayla Andrews

It started as
a blanket in the cold
something to warm my skin
to melt away frostbite
then it became a coat
a hat
a pair of gloves
I could venture out into snow storms
without icicles forming
on the ends of my hair
it's now a fire
roaring against mismatched logs
dangerous
smoking
warm nonetheless but a caution
I sit by it at night
and extinguish it before sunrise
a fire turns into a furnace
constant heat and warmth
running from dawn through nightfall
screaming through vents and
rising through floorboards
I do not remember the feeling of
coolness on the back of my neck
it's April now
and spring erupts from frozen ashes
waking the sun from its winter slumber
and I can't turn the heat off anymore
it starts to burn
smoke and blaze
like the small fire did
that's when I should have known
the heat wasn't a courtesy
but a warning
for what's to happen when
I no longer desire to be warmed

Jayla Andrews is the Youth Poet Laureate of Allegheny County, 2020-2021.

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