## Perimenopause: A Burning Haibun

After torrin a. greathouse

One minute I was walking the perimeter of the pool where the Cub Scouts splashed and shrieked. The next, a snake had uncoiled inside my chest. Not your average, garden-variety reptile. This one prickled, smoldered, burst into flame. Its hood squeezed up my throat and flared into my cheeks, reared against my skull. The boys continued their happy racket. Nobody could tell I was quietly combusting. I looked for my husband and sons in the pool but saw disembodied heads, flailing limbs. Knees buckled. I emanated heat like a red planet. Someone else noticed and rushed up with water. The sweet, sweet relief. Sizzle of dying flames. Ash in my mouth. My husband pulled himself out to ask what was going on. I turned to look at him, eyes like embers accusing, *now at last you show up?* Closed my serpentine eyelids. *You're not going to like this*, I hissed to myself.

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