

NANCE VAN WINCKEL

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*Channel of Sighs*

The gaudy gods try to get  
the lame god, Vulcan,  
to snap loose his leg  
brace. Someone's passed him  
a bonbon. But he won't  
bite. He lives to sulk.  
His new anvil's been smashed  
to smithereens against  
the twilight's jewels.

He sighs into the others' loud  
guffaws. He paces—deep  
in the tedium of the torch, far  
within a mountain's endless  
wheezing. As another lusts  
after a new castratti,  
he fumes over the ore—bitten  
by scale, blighted by mold.

And the coals' hunched heat  
waiting . . . like the white fire  
of stars. He needs to strike  
something. To shuck himself  
back into the bleached  
countryside of his mind,  
where woodpeckers  
drill at a cool red core.