

ALLISON BENIS

*Dancers with Green Skirts*

In order to make the scream disappear, she holds up one hand to block the other dancer's face, which means she cannot yell *fire* with her hands on her hips (her elbows triangle like wing bones), which means she has no face. A scream is either doubled or disappears.

Her hands reach out as if through a mirror. And the top half of her dress, and the other dancer's fingertips—the way fire moves quickly up green curtains. What touches us will hurt soon. Flames might roll across cabinets like a miniature ocean, a lullaby, a hiss inside a hush.

Or against the living room wall, the fire might be controlled in a single frame and never stop. Just as, when one mirror is held up to another, the reflection cannot stop and burrows a tunnel of reflections. It will be difficult to breathe.

When the world is finally over, a fireman will move through it like a blind man touching his wife's face at night, in order to be certain. The slope of her nose under his thumbs and cheekbones under his fingertips—his hands will cover her face like a butterfly.

I recognize is the reversal of I disappear. If I could only save one thing, the fireman says as he walks, it would be my mother's wooden clock, with the blue bird inside. Time was or time is when it appears. Just as a house appears in his mind, out of nowhere, late at night, lit from the inside, trying to remember itself, room by room, as it burns.