

In the burns unit, Mrs Danvers speaks of her Mistress

You should have seen us, in our prime. I was her Danny, her Dan.
All eyes were on her – no one can ignore a shooting star
in the heart of darkness – but I cut a modest swash, tie knotted plump
by her clever fingers. I poured myself into her desires. I quenched her.

Then there was him. All she asked was, *Let me shine*.
I warned her: *Men like him will not be outshone; and you, my love,*
are the sun at midsummer. She laughed, thinking I was afraid
she would leave me. *I could have made my life with anyone,*

she said. *I chose you*. There is no victory in being proved right.
It broke me to watch the light of the world stubbed out
at the crude hands of that guttering fop, drawn to her fire
only to stamp it down when in his possession. It broke me twice

when she clung to me and wept. Broke me three times
to know I was all she had. My radiant girl broke me entirely in death.
For years I stumbled through his creeping jealousies, the faint new wife
with clothes as dim as her presence, voice of a trapped sparrow.

The house cracks its knuckles. My beloved pins me to Manderley
and holds me there. I lay my elbows on the windowsill,
press my face into the night, soft and curved as a cheek.
Rage is my whetstone now. She is in water, and I am fire.