

WHAT THE ASTROLOGER FAILED TO SEE IN OUR STARS

poem by Dick Westheimer



Image: "A Lonesome Border" by Carmella Dolmer. "What the Astrologer Failed to See in Our Stars" was written by Dick Westheimer for *Rattle's* Ekphrastic Challenge, May 2023, and selected as an Editor's Choice.

The astrologer told us not to marry.
She said we would burn
one another in an astrological
furnace. She traced her finger

over the spider's web chart
she'd drawn, showing one of our
rising signs made of dry tinder,
and mine, that of a match. Our choice

would be to burn or alternately fall
into a hole so deep that the only way
out would be fire. Of course, not even
this promise of planets in catastrophe

could dissuade us heated lovers
from each other's flesh. We had this
fantasy of one day becoming gray-haired,
shade-tree sitting folk.

But what is a zodiac sign
other than a random pattern of stars?
And what is a horoscope other than
a dowser with no water to find?

And a star? It is the pressing
of the smallest parts of us
until there is fusion, heat where
once was none—and the stuff

of more stars, or maybe, like us,
now a quiet binary, living
out our graying days illuminated,
mostly, in each other's orbit.