

Flaming June

by

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Frederic Leighton, Oil on Canvas, 1895

Summer-time, late afternoon.
The girl is enjoying the island's view.
But her vision gets hazy, and her eyelids heavy,
boiling under a terrace canopy.

Of course she is Erinna, the tenth of the muses,
the ancient Greek poet from Telos,
lost and forgotten in history.
Forever nineteen years old.

During her suspicious sleep,
Michelangelo's *Night* feels threatened,
And the Sun, near the end of his trip,
sticks red stamps on her milky face.

Heat waves;
her translucent dress is on fire.
And her long copper-brown hair,
like pet boa snakes.

She is dreaming
of friendships, opportunities, childhood.
But she looks rather uncomfortable;
What if she is not sleeping?

She is a girl that knits and uses the loom.
But now her thread is running out—
it must be an oleander overdose,
or some anesthesia that won't wear off.

However,
she will follow Juliet's steps,
whose cheeks got their blush back,
before she wakes up from her poisonous nap.

She will wake up from her siesta,
gasping for air, as she replays her fever dream:
her best friend, young like her,
alone on the other side of the island.

But not to worry;
They'll get to meet later tonight.

Poet's Note

“Flaming June” is an ekphrastic response to Frederic Leighton’s painting of 1895. The poem combines description and interpretation, asking you to see it as I see it. the poem was written out of my love for the art of painting, but also my desire to raise awareness about ancient Greek female poets who have been forgotten.