

The agony in the garden

by [Peter Cooley](#) in the [April 6, 2022](#) issue

*Raphael, Italian (Umbrian) 1483–1520, tempera and oil on wood*

How happily I, Saint Peter, slept, beside the others  
while Christ sweated blood, asking the Father  
to take the cup from Him. And then—He never asked—  
the angel came, the angel strengthened Him,  
positioned in the sky, wings of flame.  
Now I pass the poem, oranged with fire,  
to my namesake, Peter Cooley.  
He'll tell you why you're reading this.

Thanks, Saint Peter. It's that angel  
first in text, Luke 22:39–46, then in the painting,  
I don't need to call down, ever.  
The orange burns, a cleansing.  
I put my face against the fire.  
There is a way such images really happen.  
There is a way this is not ekphrasis.

When I am trying to pray—or I am prayed  
for the world's contagions, 2021,  
I look up, the angel waits. Always, all along,  
orange of a lit match, unfurling wings.  
Even He needed to be strengthened.