## Light and Shade in the Manner of a Hypnotist

focus. focus. focus. and

**SLEEP** 

My raised hand is no longer a hand it's a lamp – a dentist's lamp – you're tipped back in your chair. Strong smell of latex – the dentist is softly reciting your teeth:

> one eight, one seven, one six fissure sealant...

your gaze is fixed on that lamp

So bright it hurts.

With every second you stare,

that circle of light is burned deeper into your vision – deeper so that even when you're not looking at the lamp, you see its shape imprinted – on the walls, on the ceiling, on the dentist's face.

And when I snap my fingers again you'll find that you *are* that circle of light

You're the sun.

You're the hot, round sun, and you're hard at work burning the mist off a dawn clearing.

All your energy is focussed on evaporating the dew. Steam rising off every blade of grass, off the body of a sleeping doe, the top millilitre of the surface of a lake. Getting warmer, warmer and then –



You're a star suspended in the wide, blank universe.

Alone.

Night.

Sobbing radiation through the void. And it feels as though you're falling. As though you're sinking.

And you are

Not space but water.

You're underwater. Above you is a thick sheet of ice, translucent, blocking the sun like an eyelid that's been frozen shut

and you're falling, slow. A dead weight. A dead whale.

You're heavy. Sinking deeper down into a deep marine trench. and the deeper you go, the darker it is – the deeper you go the darker it is

but there –

Thousands of Antarctic krill. A sudden swarm of Antarctic krill. Their organs glowing yellow-green, pulsing through the dim water.

Heartbreaking,

these tiny bioluminescent Antarctic krill you reach out to touch...

but they're no longer Antarctic krill,

not krill but candles, you're in a shadowy chapel, you're in a shadowy chapel and the only light is coming from the thin tapers, lit that day for the dead. Every taper is a memory.

You have a memory. You take a match out of the matchbox.

You hold both match and matchbox, and as you strike the match –



warm, soft light, floods in from every angle, enveloping you like a soft golden bath, and there's laughter,

you're at a party,



a drink in your hand, you're effervescent, dazzling a small group of strangers in someone's kitchen.

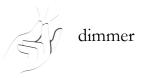
A light emitting diode of a woman.

but here, right here on your back,

is a dimmer-switch, feel it, and every time I snap my fingers your personality dims a few lumens.

dimmer

They're transfixed, but you can't remember how your anecdote ends, it's gone on too long, it's about to run-aground...



You're asking the host about the wine you're drinking. Its origin? Its year?

dimmer

You're asking the price point.

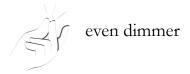
The person you're talking to looks cornered but you're scared to be alone so you keep talking.

dimmer

You've slipped an antique cigarette case into your bag.



You're giving a man bad financial advice while staring at his wife's breasts.



You've switched off their freezer, tipped a whole cake into a draw and closed it.

dimmer

You've poked cress seeds into the thick pile of their carpets and watered them. You've wiped your bum on a fluffy white towel.

dimmer and dimmer

Who invited you? People are wondering. Does anyone actually know her?

Friend of Bill's you say but there is no Bill.

dimmer

And you wonder too, now, how you got here, slamming the door repeatedly against the host's head,

before watching the city, lit and gorgeous pass by

through a police car window.

But it's OK, it's OK, it's OK, when I snap my fingers, it's granny driving



And you're small, you're kicking your little legs on the back seat, like an Antarctic krill.

And the road ahead is tree-lined. You lean your head against the window and watch the dappled sun flicker as the car speeds along.

You close your eyes, and watch the insides of your eyelids change from golden red, to blue-black,

light shade light shade, you whisper.

light shade



You're a sequin, reflecting the strobe on a dance floor.



You're a torch in the hands of a camper looking for his toothbrush in a pitch black tent.

A bunsen burner, forked lightning, a pair of car headlights swinging round a sharp bend.

The underside of a bush, a Hitchcock villain, a tennis player's eyes beneath her visor.



forthright – sear – break – peak – Bougainvillea



thud – soupçon – crush – pearl – bracken

says the dentist.



light shade light shade ... you're whispering still.

You're on a hot train station platform. Flat, hot concrete. Dizzy in the glare, your shoulders gently frying.

light shade light shade.

Look, you've forgotten your name.

You always knew your name but now your name is



