

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 –

Night.



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

Alone.

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.



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



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



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.



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.



even dimmer

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



your name is



-?