

# THE SQUINT

Serena Solin

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For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

*1 Corinthians 13:12*

The world  
Through a window  
& with me  
The lepers & vices  
The sighs & belches  
The tragically ill  
The condemned & the frozen  
Raynaud & Down

All of us  
Correspondents  
The cordoned-off  
We train our eyes on the vicars  
Spectacled & drowned

& so poisoned  
So radoned  
So fulfilled  
So  
Intramuscular  
& burdened  
& so neurotypically  
Felled

But hit the brakes fast—look!  
& the altos catch the drift  
& so degrades all living analysis  
The broken rubber seals  
All the leaks & all pipe fittings  
& all immodesties  
From where I peer  
Through the lychnoscope  
I see

I go down beneath  
Where the smoke issues  
I wake up conductive  
Arguing with a roach over  
Which of us owns  
My fucking sandwich  
I wake up in nests  
Infinitely breached  
Bleeding (hissing  
Loudly expanding, ah  
No it's just the radiator)

I go down beneath  
I crawl through the metal bull  
Which is the entire project's  
Boiler  
The source of all heat  
& all lies

& inside the belly  
Of this gigantic manmade whale  
There is a squint, too

But through it one is supposed to see  
Only fire  
Though currently  
Not  
Sent here  
As I was  
To reignite the pilot light

Darkened  
I see the stamps passing  
Hand to hand  
The test strips  
& the pneumatic tubes

& puppy pads  
& numerous other synthetics  
By which one sees into the Eyes of Loneliness

Which are by the way  
Not your eyes

Don't worry

Through the lychnoscope  
One sees still  
What one might expect  
The Chalice & its Appurtenances  
But the man who raises it  
To his lips—drinks

Each of us has done  
Something unspeakable  
To be here

(Though it appears  
That those who would observe the altar  
Freely, unencumbered  
By our jailhouse window  
Have already moved on  
& so, at the Chalice  
We are the only ones left looking)

From the Squint  
I see a horrible flatland

The  
Man  
Sacrifice  
Bird  
Arrowhead  
Sandwich

The one whose death commands  
Hundreds more

& the one who makes none  
Into eternity supporting him

& then the story is sugarscrubbed  
Which undoes nothing

& they are gone a generation  
Before the settlers arrive

Who is with me?  
I am alone, but  
Uniquely accompanied  
The air I breathe is controlled  
By a switch—switch  
Would turn to fire  
All the air & then  
Every molecule inside me  
There's a man standing by that switch  
We have worked together for years  
We have gotten drunk many times  
We nearly speak each other's languages  
My safety is of  
No small concern to him  
Yet I am the one in the belly  
It is my turn  
I remember, last year  
When I stood by the switch  
As he crawled  
It felt like nothing

Ornamentation on the hull of a ship  
A complex story borne out in carvings  
We've waited seasons to be confirmed

In the beliefs we had about the ones who  
Chiseled us from hematite so jokingly  
We laugh less looking at the moraine

The glacial tracks on God's arm  
They may dance, but we're stuck on this  
Cruiseline—this time, to watch them

Raise the form, spilling barnacles & sewage  
Overhead bursts the snowy owl  
The final dream of a captured spirit

Ends, the canal just ahead, darkly lit  
Before it is dragged ashore by the harbormen  
& loaded & driven to the 24 hour scrapyard

& then the service becomes terribly loud



But before  
When it ferried souls on less than holy rivers  
I crawled through the hatch & through the porthole  
Saw the enormous mechanical octopus  
& felt it score the soft metal underbelly:  
Death, in the impossible depths beneath, & joy  
& language marked in passing—but then  
Another ship went by & I saw you  
Looking through your respective lychnoscope

Later on, we arrived in America  
& a long time went by of frozen cotton  
& then we awoke one August in a box store parking lot  
& around us dozens of men still slept in their trucks  
& a woman rolled shopping carts in preparation to open  
& there were no voids or bayous, nowhere to go  
Where the reifications of civilization weren't  
Except inside, where air was frigid & penetrative  
& among the aisles, there could be no lychnoscope

The building feels me squirm in its belly  
& shivers with pleasure

The old thermocouple lies dead in my hand  
& the bright replacement in my pocket

Sings out—

Suspended in the darkness for three days  
(Forget the journeys of ritual initiates:

Three days to perish of thirst, or  
To blossom & pass from the uterus)

The thermocouple joins me  
To various necrotic appointments

Visits all the public places  
The kernel of life, yet undetonated

Watches a robbery on the deli television  
& conspires precociously

& sleeps, mostly, preparing for a day  
Of sudden & incredible voltage

We are here, at the center of the whale  
Me, of course, & a kitten named Sparkplug  
Who, a few years ago, died of heat exposure  
Or of one of the diseases that afflict the young

He was a small, white & happy machine  
Who now in death speaks in perfect vertigo:  
*Mend & bring the thing online & hear it hiss*  
*All through the descending winter months*

*& through the little window for little flame*  
*See what separates you from the beyond*  
A lesser feat of human engineering?  
Could that be all it is? I turn to ask

But silence plagues the iron room  
& I gaze alone through the lychnoscope

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