

# Night Light

*Dixie Partridge*

*"...artificial light tempts us to forget the meaning of night."*

—Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Discoverers*

With a neighbor who couldn't tolerate light,  
I took stairs in the dark,  
felt for knobs and shapes  
of cabinets in windowless rooms. At home,  
more and more I left off switches  
and felt a vigilance in the eye's  
delicate instrument: by day we forget  
other presences that move in beside us after night  
has had time to soften everything,  
and shadows seem to dissolve *into*  
rather than out of existence. . . .  
In the dark we remember the pen  
left in its certain spot, but forget  
the obvious: on our way to retrieval  
trip over the chair.

I sit without lights and hear sounds of leaves  
crisping in wind, a clock's tick  
enlarged from another room.  
Books on their shelves rise  
like a whole range of mountains, and I think  
of my father, once a high-wilderness guide,  
awaiting dawn's first tinge from a bedroll;  
or skies like the many shades of bruises;  
how I learned to love bittersweet  
from the darkest chocolate.  
Around me, a sense of past scenes ripens  
to a climate that shapes what is  
and is to come. At times daylight  
recognitions seem misperceived, the forgone  
fused with what's real  
and what's out of sight  
into some great continent. . .  
undiscovered, unexplored.