

Reading into Dusk

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"The light can be a curtain as well as the darkness." –George Eliot

On the wood porch I awake
to no sound, but a sense of some change:
light falls across an arm and
I pull back into darkness.
Lying there, only the paper birch
visible in the yard, I watch
our eighteen-year-old near the window.
He doesn't see me: his eyes focus
on something closer—reflection, perhaps. . .
his hand goes up to tidy his hair.
He looks flattened by light.

Distance becomes farther in that moment,
and some verge of unwelcome knowledge
intermits, like that separateness of being
as when a child I passed the Olson house
after dark—no coverings
on any windows. Afraid to pause,
to be seen seeing, I felt out-of-the-world
on a course that couldn't veer home.

Silence enlarges the night yard.
Glare from the windows turns exclusive,
the medium of solitude gone blank,

inconsolable, that small space
between myself and the boy in the kitchen
anesthetic and painful at once,
as if nothing will matter
to the reach of a voice.