

Averted Vision

Joanna Ellsworth

There are no streetlights where my cottage hides
within a forest. Nights there grant a cold
permission to the stars who drag along
their lazy arc. Away from manmade glare,
those tiny bubbles pierce the blackest ink
from where they draw their strength—the darkness moves
aside for light—and dimmer stars shine most
when seen from out of sight. Just look an inch
or less away and see it scream to life
as though a thing directly viewed cannot
exist because the eye beholds it. We
are much the same. We pale, become demure
when called upon, but in our DNA
is supernova. Why? What force constrains
our gamma burst? Are we not made of stars?
Our central mass should cause accretion, pull
them—moons and planets, lovers—into us,
ensnaring them with gravity they can't
withstand. Be circumpolar stars, then. Don't
descend below a lesser body's frail
horizon. Flare if there is lightning in your skull,
or pulse with fusion in your veins, or die
to swallow worlds, and leave a hole so big,
so black, that every eye is shut and all
the streetlights ever lit are stilled. Or else,
at least, surround yourself with those who know
to see you from the corner of their eye.