

LIGHT TALES COMPETITION  
*the winners of 1<sup>st</sup> edition*

Gianna Batistoni | Basar Erdener | Giorgio Cattano | honourable mention to Paolo Portaluri

FONDAZIONETARGETTI



1<sup>st</sup> prize | *Albaluna - Moondawn*

by Gianna Batistoni

## Albaluna

Era l'ora del crepuscolo. La luce e il buio si incontravano su una linea di confine che dava l'impressione d'essere un territorio più vasto; un'intersezione dove le caratteristiche non si fondono. Come nei quadri di Caravaggio. Ci sono creature che vivono solo di notte e si dicono animali notturni. Altre creature vivono, invece, solo di giorno e dormono di notte per recuperare energia vitale, chi con la testa sul cuscino, chi con il capo sotto l'ala, chi come può. Ci sono poi strani esseri della cui esistenza ci si accorge solo al crepuscolo, strani ibridi di creature diurne-notturne in cui le caratteristiche non si legano e che restano agli occhi di tutti, prevalentemente, strani esseri.

Lei usciva quando il giardino di casa cominciava a coprirsi di una luce polverosa che trasformava velocemente i fiori e le cose in qualcosa dal contorno sempre meno definito, ombre tridimensionali sempre più scure. Lei era un drappo di seta chiara che il sole ingiallisce e consuma. Lei aveva dentro di sé un'armonia che nessuno poteva ascoltare, come uno spartito senza chiave musicale. Lei era un dipinto dai mille colori in una stanza buia. Lei aveva un nome che portava come il titolo di una storia. Si chiamava Albaluna.

Albaluna era una bambina dai capelli del colore dell'alba, la pelle chiara del volto era fine e

## Moondawn

*It was dusk. Light and darkness met on a boundary line that gave the impression of being a bigger area, an intersection where features do not blend together. Like in Caravaggio's paintings. There are creatures who only come out at night, and they are called nocturnal animals. Other creatures only come out during the day and sleep at night to recover vital energy – with their heads on a pillow, or under a wing or however. Then there are some strange beings whose existence can only be noticed at dusk. Strange hybrid, diurnal-nocturnal creatures whose features do not fit together and who are basically strange beings in everyone's eyes. She went out when the garden of the house began to be covered with a dusty light that quickly transformed the flowers and other things into something with increasingly ill-defined outlines, three-dimensional shadows that became darker and darker. She was a drape of pale silk that the sun yellows and consumes. She had an inner harmony that no one could hear, like a score without a clef. She was a painting with a myriad of colours in a dark room. She had a name that she carried like the title of a story. Her name was Moondawn. Moondawn was a girl with hair the colour of dawn, while the pale skin of her face was fine and translucent. She was a doll of tissue paper, a fragile doll no one plays with for fear she might shatter at the slightest touch, turning into*

trasparente; era una bambola di carta velina, una bambola fragile con cui non gioca nessuno per la paura che possa frantumarsi al primo tocco, trasformandosi in mille coriandoli che anche un vento leggero potrebbe portare lontano. Gli occhi avevano il colore di una lacrima che riflette il cielo e il leggero strabismo era ben nascosto da ciglia bianche e folte.

La stanza dove Albaluna passava gran parte del giorno aveva una finestra che veniva aperta soltanto quando la bambina era altrove; la luce in sua presenza aveva un'origine esclusivamente artificiale e si diffondeva tenue dalle tante lampade che la nonna aveva cominciato a collezionare da quando Albaluna era stata riconosciuta fotofobica. La nonna di Albaluna aveva avuto una sorella albina che quando usciva doveva coprirsi per difendersi dalla luce del sole con grandi occhiali scuri e che l'intero paese, piuttosto piccolo in qualunque direzione lo si percorresse, aveva preso ben presto a additare come fosse un fenomeno da baraccone. Così Albaluna, che era stata affidata alla nonna fin dalla nascita per una lunga serie di sfortunati eventi, era stata cresciuta e custodita fra le mura di casa, in quelle stanze dove il sole non entrava da anni per più di mezz'ora al giorno e luce era fatta solo grazie agli interruttori.

Albaluna riceveva l'unica visita di una maestra che nel pomeriggio andava a trovarla per seguire la sua istruzione e, è facile fare il conto, la maestra era l'unica persona che Albaluna conosceva oltre alla nonna e a qualche vecchia zia. Albaluna non aveva mai visto bambini e guardandosi allo specchio si era fatta la strana idea che la razza umana cambiasse colore crescendo, che i bambini fossero piccoli frutti acerbi e che, passato il tempo neces-

*a mass of confetti that even a gentle breeze might sweep away. Her eyes were the colour of a tear that reflects the sky, and a slight squint was well hidden by thick, white eyelashes.*

*The room where Moondawn spent most of her day had a window that was only opened when the child was elsewhere. The light around her was exclusively artificial, and shone dimly from the many lamps that her grandmother had begun to collect when Moondawn had been recognized to be photophobic. Moondawn's grandmother had had an albino sister who had to wear a big pair of sunglasses whenever she went out to protect her from the sunlight, and who the entire village – which was pretty small whichever direction you went in – soon started pointing out as if she was a circus freak. And so Moondawn, who had been put in the care of her grandmother from birth due to a long series of unfortunate events, had been brought up and kept within the four walls of the house, in rooms that for years had not received more than half an hour's sunlight a day and where the only light was the kind that could be switched on and off.*

*Moondawn's only visitor was a teacher who came to her home in the afternoons to supervise her education, and it's not hard to work out that she was the only person Moondawn knew apart from her grandmother and a few elderly aunts. Moondawn had never seen any other children, and looking in the mirror she had formed the strange idea that human beings changed colour as they grew up, that children were small unripe fruit, and that when the necessary ripening period had elapsed, she too would have long light-brown hair like her teacher. No one had taken it upon themselves to dispel this belief, not even the teacher. No one had ever explained the reality of things to*

sario alla maturazione, anche lei da grande avrebbe avuto lunghi capelli castani come quelli della maestra.

Nessuno si era mai preso il compito di toglierle questa convinzione, neppure la maestra; nessuno le aveva mai raccontato la realtà della faccenda, dicendole che i bambini non maturano e che la specie umana non ha un unico colore. Che i bambini, gli uomini e le donne sono tutti uguali solo in quanto bambini, uomini e donne. Che l'uguaglianza si misura sulla parità e sul rispetto dei diritti e della dignità e che il colore è solo un elemento che arricchisce la bellezza della natura. Che la luce, poi, non dovrebbe far paura a nessuno, poiché la luce è bellezza perché contiene tutti i colori del mondo. Che anche l'alba e la luna hanno un colore e una luce e che anche lei, Albaluna, aveva il suo e che per nessun motivo al mondo avrebbe dovuto sperare di cambiarlo.

Poi un giorno accadde che, all'arrivo della maestra, Albaluna vedesse qualcosa di più piccolo che la seguiva nel corridoio, mentre la donna proseguiva per andare incontro ai saluti della nonna, superando la stanza delle luci in alabastro dove lei l'aspettava. Qualcosa di più piccolo si fermò sull'entrata della stanza e guardò Albaluna dritto negli occhi e con la bocca spalancata di un pesciolino fuori dall'acqua sputò fuori una vocina bassa da paura che si alzò soltanto sull'ultima parola: «E tu chi sei, un FANTASMA?».

Albaluna gli fece quasi coro «E tu chi sei?», già rispondendo a se stessa tra mille pensieri che forse quello era un adulto molto piccolo o un bambino che aveva già cambiato colore.

Due pesciolini si erano incontrati fuori dall'acqua, perché acqua, lì nella stanza delle luci in alabastro, non c'era.

*her, telling her that children don't ripen and that the human race does not have just one colour. That children, men and women are only equal insofar as they are children, men and women. That equality is measured in terms of rights and dignity and that colour is just an element that enriches the beauty of nature. That light should not frighten anyone, because light is beauty, containing as it does all the colours of the world. That even dawn and the moon have a colour and a light, and so did Moondawn, and for no reason in the world should she wish to change it.*

*Then one day, when the teacher arrived, Moondawn saw something smaller following the woman down the corridor, and as the teacher went to greet the girl's grandmother, walking on past the entrance to the room with alabaster lights where Moondawn was waiting, that something smaller stopped in the doorway, looked Moondawn straight in the eyes and with a mouth wide open like a fish out of water spat out with a frighteningly low voice that only went up on the last word: "And who are you, a GHOST?" "And who are you?" echoed Moondawn, already answering her own question in a whirl of thoughts.*

*A very small adult, perhaps, or a child that had changed colour. Two fishes had met each other out of water, because there was no water in the room with alabaster lights. "My name's Bruno and I'm a boy," he said. "I'm Moondawn," she said some time later. The time it takes for a fish to learn to talk. Bruno went off not long afterwards with the teacher, who did not even do her lesson that day. The grandmother accompanied her to the door, and when she returned Moondawn decided it must be very cold outside because she was trembling. There had been no lesson. Or perhaps there had. Moondawn now knew*

«Mi chiamo Bruno e sono un bambino», disse lui.  
«Io sono Albaluna», disse lei un po' di tempo dopo. Giusto il tempo che un pesciolino impiega per imparare a parlare. Bruno se ne andò presto insieme alla maestra, che quel giorno neppure fece la sua lezione. La nonna li accompagnò alla porta e quando tornò nella stanza Albaluna pensò che fuori doveva fare un gran freddo, perché la nonna tremava. La lezione della maestra non c'era stata, o forse sì. Albaluna ora sapeva che esistevano bambini di un altro colore e che era bello guardarsi negli occhi tra bambini, perché sembra di capirsi senza dire niente. Dopo quella sera, la maestra tornò, ma sempre da sola. E Albaluna da allora pensava spesso a Bruno e gli parlava come se avesse accanto un amico invisibile, ma non immaginario. Bruno era un amico invisibile lì nelle stanze della grande casa della nonna, ma per renderlo visibile, pensò un giorno Albaluna, non si doveva poi andare troppo lontano. Era dunque l'ora del crepuscolo e Albaluna imboccò il corridoio buio fino al portone che si apriva sul giardino. Fu la nonna ad aprirle la porta. Le ombre scese da poco sul giardino avevano aperto la finestra ai suoi profumi, Albaluna salutò le rose che il caldo della giornata aveva sgualcito e poi uscì dal cancello, che non aveva mai varcato da sola prima di allora. «Andiamo, Bruno non deve essere troppo lontano da qui», disse Albaluna a se stessa come un'esploratrice che deve trovare il coraggio di fare il primo passo verso un luogo sconosciuto in cui però è sicura di trovare un grande tesoro. La strada verso il paese era dritta e costeggiava il bosco, quando cominciò

*of the existence of different-coloured children, and that it was wonderful to look into another child's eyes, because it seemed possible to understand one another without saying anything. After that evening, the teacher always came on her own. Moondawn thought about Bruno often, and talked to him as if she was in the company of an invisible but not imaginary friend. Bruno was an invisible friend there in the large rooms of her grandmother's house, but to make him visible, thought Moondawn one day, it shouldn't be necessary to go too far. Dusk was falling then when Moondawn walked down the dark corridor to the door leading out into the garden. Her grandmother opened the door for her. The shadows that had just fallen on the garden had opened the window to its perfume. Moondawn greeted the roses crumpled by the heat of the day and then went through the gate that she had never ventured beyond until that moment. "Come on, Bruno can't be all that far from here," said Moondawn to herself, like an explorer trying to muster the courage to take the first step into unknown territory where, however, she was certain of finding a great treasure. The road into the village was straight, running alongside the wood. When it began to get dark, Moondawn realized that courage was a few steps behind her. In the absence of light, everything was unrecognizable, and the night-time blackness enveloped her, forcing her to move carefully. It also made her think. There was no moon that night, and the stars were too far away to light up every world, whether exterior or interior. Yet if someone had seen her there, they would have realized that Moondawn had a light of her own. She was a paler shadow on the edge of the tarmac, and her eyes shone, as if from high above two stars had descended onto her face, between her forehead and*

a calare il buio Albaluna si accorse che il coraggio restava qualche passo indietro. La notte che ormai riempiva tutto quello che le stava intorno, poiché intorno tutto era nero e irriconoscibile nell'assenza di luce, la faceva procedere con cautela. E la faceva pensare. Era una notte senza luna e le stelle erano troppo lontane per illuminarle ogni mondo, esterno o interiore che fosse. Eppure, se qualcuno avesse potuto essere lì per vederla, si sarebbe accorto che Albaluna aveva una luce propria, era un'ombra più chiara sul bordo dell'asfalto e gli occhi le brillavano come se due stelle da lassù le fossero scese sul viso, tra la fronte e le guance, ai lati del naso.

Da qualche parte doveva esserci la strada che percorrono le macchine, dove di notte si snodano e si annodano lunghe stelle filanti di fari soffiati dalla velocità. La strada, dove c'erano le luci colorate delle insegne dei negozi che ti chiamano a mangiare i gelati, a comprarti scarpe e abiti nuovi, a entrare nei cinema e a trovare il rumore di tazze e bicchieri nei bar. Anche la casa di Bruno doveva avere una luce che l'avrebbe chiamata ad entrare. Una luce da sbirciare dalla finestra, la luce di una famiglia che consuma la cena intorno a un tavolo mentre in un angolo brilla una tv accesa. La luce di una maestra in pantofole che legge un libro e di Bruno che gioca sul divano. Una luce che si spegne solo prima di dormire. Invece, Albaluna adesso sentiva la luce di un cuore sempre più piccolo che batteva forte, una luce debole, lontana quasi quanto le stelle.

Dentro di lei scorreva, più che il sangue, la paura. Il malessere che il buio le dava era diverso dal dolore fisico che le procurava la luce abbagliante del giorno. Era il malessere dell'ignoto. La luce dona visibilità. La luce fa conoscenza. Se ci fosse stato anche soltanto il chiarore della luna a illuminare il suo cammino, Albaluna non avrebbe perso la de-

*cheeks, and on each side of her nose. The road used by cars had to be somewhere, the place where long stringy stars of speed-blown headlights knotted and unknotted in the night. The street with the colourful lights of shop signs that called out to you to eat an ice-cream, buy shoes or new clothes, go into a cinema or in search of the sound of cups and glasses in a bar. Bruno's house must also have a light inviting her to enter. A light to peek in on from the window, the light of a family eating dinner around the table while a bright television glowed in a corner. The light of a teacher in her slippers reading a book and of Bruno playing on the sofa. A light that only goes out when it's time for bed. But Moondawn was now aware of the light of a shrinking heart that was beating wildly, a weak light, almost as distant as the skies. Fear rather than blood now seemed to be coursing through her.*

*The disquiet the darkness gave her was different from the physical pain caused by the shining light of daytime. It was the disquiet of the unknown. Light provides visibility. Light reveals things. If there had just been the glow of moonlight to light up her path, Moondawn would not have lost the determination she had felt just after leaving the house. Now she asked herself: "Where am I going?", "How far away is Bruno?", "How much further am I going to have to walk?" and, finally, "Why didn't I remain in my garden?" and "Why wasn't it enough to stick to the company of my roses?" All of a sudden, almost as if a spell had been cast, a star seemed to descend from the sky right in front of Moondawn's nose. But it wasn't a star, it was a firefly. Moondawn began to follow it, first at a trot, and then running flat out, laughing together with her heart which no longer beat with fear. And the firefly was her guide, taking her first towards the road with chasing headlights where*

terminazione che sentiva quando era uscita. Ora, invece, si chiedeva «Dove sto andando», «Quanto è lontano Bruno da qui», «Quanto dovrò camminare ancora» e, infine, «Perché non sono rimasta nel mio giardino?» e «Perché non mi è bastato stare da sola con le rose?».

D'un tratto, quasi per incanto, sembrò che scendesse una stella dal cielo per arrivare davanti al naso di Albaluna. Ma non era una stella. Era una lucciola, che Albaluna cominciò a seguire quasi

correndo, infine correndo e ridendo insieme al suo cuore che non batteva più di paura. E la lucciola fu la sua guida, prima verso la strada dove si rincorrevano i fari e le insegne coloravano finalmente la notte, che non era più buia, poi verso una casa che aveva l'entrata illuminata e una luce da sbirciare dalla finestra, la luce di una famiglia che consuma la cena intorno a un tavolo mentre in un angolo brilla una tv accesa. La luce di una maestra in pantofole che legge un libro e di Bruno che gioca sul divano.

C'era anche il nome della maestra nella luce bianca del campanello che Albaluna arrivò a suonare mettendosi in punta di piedi. Quando la porta si aprì, l'accolsero stupore e abbracci. E quando la luce si spense, nella camera di Bruno, si accese un soffitto di stelle fosforescenti molto più vicine di quelle che stavano fuori nel cielo. Era arrivata l'ora di dormire e di accendere la luce bellissima dei sogni di due bambini che non avrebbero smesso di giocare insieme mai più, lì sotto le stelle fosforescenti o nella stanza delle luci d'alabastro a casa di Albaluna. Non avrebbero smesso di giocare neppure ad occhi chiusi nel buio della notte.

*the shop signs finally coloured a night-time sky that was no longer dark, and then towards a house with an illuminated entrance and a light to peek in at from the window, the light of a family eating dinner around a table while a bright television glowed in a corner. The light of a teacher in her slippers reading a book and of Bruno playing on the sofa.*

*There was even the name of the teacher in the white light of the doorbell, which Moondawn managed to reach up to and ring by standing on tiptoe. When the door opened, she was greeted with amazement and open arms. And when the light went out, in Bruno's bedroom a ceiling of phosphorescent stars much closer than the ones in the sky outside came on. It was time to sleep, and to turn on the beautiful light of the dreams of two children who from that moment on would never stop playing together under the phosphorescent stars or in the room with alabaster lights. They would not even stop playing together when they were fast asleep in the darkness of the night.*



2<sup>nd</sup> prize | *How I started to see*

by Basar Erdener

## ***How I started to see***

*I needed to be on time for the conference and just because of that my alarm clock did not run that morning. The bus I should take didn't come because the front tire of my bicycle had been punctured some time ago. I couldn't remember where I put my glasses because my contact lenses were out of date. And then I had to rush out of the house without losing too much time. That is why, right now I'm sitting on the stairs of the front door. My cat is restless inside and I'm waiting for my girlfriend to arrive from abroad. I did left my keys inside. However I am still amazed by what had happened earlier today. I am still under the awe of this miracle! I was looking at my own eyes that made the whole difference of this day. I was listening to them carefully as they talked.*

*There I was among a lot of people earlier that day, sitting at the last row, panting with interrupted breath cycles and with a totally blurry vision. You already know why. I couldn't only differentiate the sexes of the speakers from their voices, yet I sometimes even doubt that. The reason why I was there was independent from my own will. As usual. The presenters would be our prospective clients and my boss had forced me to act as an agent.*

*"Information is everywhere as long as you are there to collect it", he explained. I did not understand but didn't oppose either.*

*It happened when I was there, totally pissed off with my very poor eyesight. Again. I normally perform this routine every morning when I need to look for my glasses but this time I don't know how intense my anger was. It was totally out of my control when suddenly appeared two funny eyeballs in front of my eyes. My eyes looking at my own eyes... what a maze! Imagine a mirror with selective reflection. There were two eyeballs of my own just as close that even my poor eyesight wouldn't fail to see. They were staring directly at me. I was startled. Then with a very slow fashion they started to float naughtily around me. I think the darkness prevented other people to see them or it was just a naïve justification of my madness. Who has talked with their eyes before their eyes before? Please reader, tell me that I am not alone! Yes, they talked to me just like they have talked to you before.*

*"We don't see anything", they said to me in a slightly echoing voice and identical expressions. Just like twins. I was speechless at first trying to understand if I really had four eyes at that moment. Those talking eyes were mine; physiologically there was no doubt about it. However, I was still able to see with my own eyes. I checked them with my hands, closed them shook my head and opened again. Not so soon, I yielded to the reality and carried on...*

*I couldn't obviously ask them what they were! I could only ask what they wanted.*

*"We don't see anything", they repeated ignoring my question.*

*"Sorry", I could utter. "It was my fault to forget my, I mean, your glasses at home".*

*"We do not mean that we don't see anything right now. We don't see things normally. They didn't sound complaining but rather explanatory. So we are here to inform you about your habit of accusing us every time, this is just unfair!!" Their funny behavior had suddenly transformed into abrupt anger. If I had those looks when I am angry at someone, god help the correspondent. I was just very scared of those looks of mine at myself.*

*But I was puzzled. "I guessed you owe me the answer now", I said. "If you don't see, what is the whole story then? and more importantly what is your function? why shall I trust you? why shall I trust what I see?". My questions were straightforward and tempting, I really want a satisfying answer to all this craze. This madness should have some story behind.*

*The answer was very soon and meditating... "It is your mind that sees, not us. It is your MIND..."*

*They kept repeating this sentence over and over again. They were hilarious, rolling and floating all around me. One would think it as a joke, even more a mockery. I didn't enjoy the scene that much but I couldn't help thinking on the answer. What does it mean to see with your mind?*

*how different is it from what I had being doing all my 28 years of my life with my single pair of eyes and over-disturbed vision? Finally their sarcastic show diminished after my slightly unlucky morning and strange afternoon. Even more, I had lost all my concentration for the conference. Without my attempt to ask, one of my eyes came close to my ear and whispered: "Follow me...". Leaving the meeting and eventually my career aside, I didn't wait the other second. The other eye chased after.*

*Just the opposite of my annoying and dark morning, it was a very bright and sunny day. We stopped by the park next to the meeting venue. The colors from the earth and nature were brightly shining, the spring had spread all the beauty in front of our eyes. Small kids were playing around with joy and passion. It was a shame that I had not realized that park was this large and beautiful before, I often pass by it on the motorway, mostly disguised by a cloud of cars. Now it was with all its vastness, colors, liveliness and brightness in front of me.*

*And there was something very special with the light today. Or maybe something that one does not realize unless he thinks about it. The clouds were dispersing the light in a very relaxing way into the sky. The sun was casting shadows from the trees that were in movement by a tasteful breeze. The greenness of the trees, the redness of the flowers and the blueness of the sky were in such a harmony that I wanted to close my eyes and fully breathe in this freshness. I never felt like this for a very long time in my life before. I loved it even if I closed my eyes the light was still passing slightly through my eyelids and I never lose the sensation of lightness. That was a truly amazing moment...*

*Now you all wonder where my naughty eyeballs were. Well, when I opened my eyes they were not there anymore. And to be perfectly honest, I did not even had a slight temptation to look for them. The first reason was that I already knew this madness would end at one time and secondly I was enjoying the exact moment far more than sparing time on thinking about them. However, here comes the most striking point of this episode for me: whatever happened happened but as a result I ended up in a completely different location as if I was tele-ported from darkness to light and eventually to life. I felt the transformation from a very poor eye-sighted man to a perfectly visual enthusiast. I suddenly started to take care of details, colors and shapes more than before. This is not because my eyesight is miraculously perfected. Not at all... Instead the reason was that I wanted to see. I simply craved to see, unlike before when I was trying deliberately to blur my eyes and trying to find excuses for not seeing properly. I felt this transformation down inside my MIND.*

*And as I was meditating on what happened earlier today in front of my door, my girlfriend arrived, we had beer together, the cat was happy but I became restless. This is the story of how I started to see...*





3<sup>rd</sup> prize | *Una luce sola - Just one light*

by Giorgio Cattano

## Una luce sola

Mi alzo presto la mattina, quando i raggi del sole iniziano a filtrare fra le tapparelle. La parete bianca alla destra del mio letto s'illumina di tanti frammenti di sole. Sugli spigoli dei mobili brillano farfalle di polvere e la mia camera poco arredata si riempie di vita.

Mi piace rimanere ancora a letto. Alzo il cuscino dietro la schiena e guardo. A sinistra, attraverso le tapparelle, brilla il sole dall'oriente: limpido, forte, è il gallo che annuncia il nuovo giorno agli uomini. Ma gli uomini, i pochi che non sono ancora partiti per la villeggiatura, dormono. Hanno corpi pesanti che opprimono contro i materassi i loro stessi sogni di fuga.

A destra la medesima luce si proietta sulla parete. Filtra attraverso la polvere dei vestiti, delle scarpe, della mia vecchiaia, una luce solo per me. Cento, mille puntini di fuoco vibrano sull'intonaco, sono una finestra su mondi esotici e lontani, che vado esplorando di giorno in giorno. È la magica televisione dei miei sogni.

Questo schermo funziona gratis, sfrutta tutti i raggi del sole, dagli infrarossi agli ultravioletti. Negli ultimi tempi l'immagine s'è fatta più bella ancora; dicono siano i raggi alfa, non più trattenuti dall'ozono. E allora benvenuti raggi alfa. "Ciò che è bello non può far male" mi diceva da piccolo mio zio, frate Assenzio. Me lo sospirava nell'orecchio, come diffidando di quei volti seri che v'erano intorno. E la

## *Just one light*

*I get up early in the morning, when the rays of the sun begin to filter in through the rolling shutters. The white wall to the right of my bed lights up with lots of slivers of sun. Butterflies of dust glint on the corners of the furniture, and my barely furnished bedroom fills with life.*

*I like staying in bed a bit longer. I prop up the pillow behind my back and watch. On my left, through the shutters, the sun shines from the east: clear, strong, it is the cockerel that announces the new day to human beings. But the few that have not yet left on holiday are asleep. They have heavy bodies that weigh down their own dreams of escaping into their mattresses.*

*On the right the same light shines onto the wall. It filters through the dust of my clothes, my shoes, my old age. It is a light just for me. A hundred, a thousand specks of fire shimmer on the plaster, a window on exotic and distant worlds that I explore day by day. It is the magic television of my dreams.*

*This screen costs nothing, and exploits all the rays of the sun, from the infrared to the ultraviolet. Recently the picture has become even more beautiful, apparently because the alpha rays are no longer blocked by the ozone. Well, welcome to all alpha rays. "What's beautiful can't do any harm," my uncle, Brother Assenzio used to say to me when I was young. He would whisper it in my ear, as*

sua barba ispida, che mi frusciava nel padiglione, era uno scroscio di risa che mi guidava alla scoperte delle cose.

Quest'estate pare rimarrò l'unico abitante del grande edificio. Vanno via tutti, anche i Pasqualotti, quelli del cinquantasettesimo piano nord, quelli che il sole non sanno nemmeno cosa sia.

Mio figlio dice che al mare mi annoierei. Ma lo so che è per via di sua moglie.

A me non spaventa rimanere da solo quassù. Mi dispiace solo per Erica, mia nipotina, non poterla vedere per così tanto tempo. Ed anche lei, che mi è tanto affezionata, penso ci soffrirà. Mio figlio le ha comprato un materassino a forma di delfino per conquistarla alla vacanza. Ma io le vedo negli

occhi la malinconia che nasconde dentro. E poi che scelta di cattivo gusto andare al mare con un delfino di plastica! Lo sanno tutti che ormai sono estinti.

Rimango ancora un po' ad osservare i puntini mentre penso a queste cose. Penso che non dovrei prendermela tanto, il mondo va avanti e le cose cambiano. Chi sono io per volermi opporre alla ruota della vita ?

I puntini si spostano verso destra, inesorabile il tempo scorre. La mia televisione va spegnendosi.

Sono partiti tutti, per ultimi i Pasqualotti. Ho visto dalla mia camera la loro macchina uscire dal recinto e allontanarsi verso sud inseguita da un riflesso di sole.

L'orizzonte è tornato spoglio e l'aria secca restituisce alla superficie la polvere alzata dalla loro fretta. Mi affaccio alla finestra e sventolo la mano a quel puntino lontano, senza aspettarmi risposta.

*if distrustful of the serious faces around us. And his hairy beard, which rustled in the lobe of my ear, was a burst of laughter that guided me to the discovery of things.*

*Apparently I will be the sole inhabitant of the large building this summer. Everyone is going away, even the Pasqualotti, who live on the fifty-seventh floor on the north side and who don't even know what the sun is.*

*My son says I would get bored at the sea. But I know he says that because of his wife. I'm not afraid of being on my own up here.*

*I'm just sorry about Erica, my grand-daughter, not being able to see her for so long. And I reckon she'll suffer too, she's very fond of me. My son bought her a dolphin-shaped water mattress to win her over to the holiday. But in her eyes I can see a hidden melancholy. And what bad taste it is to go to the sea with a plastic dolphin! Everyone knows they're now extinct.*

*I watch the specks for a little longer, thinking about these things. I think that I shouldn't be so offended. The world moves forward and things change. Who am I to wish to resist the wheel of life?*

*The specks move towards the right as time inexorably passes. My television is going off.*

*Everyone has left. The last to go were the Pasqualotti.*

*From my bedroom I saw their car going out through the fence and heading south followed by a reflection of the sun. The horizon is bare again, and the dust stirred by their haste is returned to the surface by the dry air. I go to the window and wave at that distant dot, without expecting any answer.*

*I am alone now.*

*The day passes slowly. Clutching on to the skyscraper stuck into the ground, we float aimlessly in the infinite.*

Ora sono solo.

Il giorno scorre lento, mentre io, avvinghiato al grattacielo, e questo, conficcato nella terra, galleggiamo senza meta nell'infinito. Per lo meno la mattina ho la televisione di luce che mi distrae accompagnandomi in mondi remoti.

La notte invece è terribile. Il tempo si ferma e non c'è sogno che possa smuoverlo. Inerte, ascolto il silenzio mentre sento entrare il buio a svuotarmi la testa. Vorrei essere matto e invitare qui mostri e fantasmi, per ballare con loro. Ma la pazzia è cosa rara. Mi sento solo.

Allora esco.

Accendo la mia vecchia abatjour sul comodino. Porta ancora una di quelle antiche lampadine a incandescenza, già da tempo vietate. Questa, tra l'altro, è l'ultima che mi rimane.

Sul pianerottolo il silenzio è assoluto. L'ascensore, visto che sono rimasto solo io, l'hanno disattivato. Le scale paiono interminabili, e quando ormai penso di esser in un incubo dove non vi è fine alla discesa, ecco finalmente il grande portone blindato. Lo lascio aperto, visto che in questo periodo anche i predoni sono in vacanza, con i loro mille bambini.

Mi allontanano fuori dal recinto. Sono un centinaio di passi fino al vecchio copertone che mi serve da panchina. Con il fazzoletto bianco, che porto sempre con me, tolgo la polvere del giorno. E con un lungo sospiro, mi siedo.

Il grande edificio si erge desolato sulla terra brulla. L'orizzonte è poco definito, terra e notte si mescolano in una macchia grigia senza riflessi.

*At least in the morning there is the television of light to distract me, to take me to remote worlds. But the night is terrible. Time stands still, and no dream can shift it. Inert, I listen to the silence as I hear darkness entering and emptying my head. I wish I was mad so I could invite in ghosts and monsters, and dance with them. But madness is a rare thing.*

*I feel lonely.*

*So I go out.*

*I turn on the old lamp on my bedside table. It still has one of those old incandescent bulbs that have long since been banned. Apart from anything else, it's the last one I have. On the landing there is absolute silence. As I'm the only one left in the building, the lift has been shut down. The stairs are interminable, and it seems there will never be an end to the nightmare of the descent. But then finally the large reinforced door comes into sight. I leave it open, given that even the thieves and muggers are on holiday with their brood. I venture outside the fence. It's about a hundred steps to the old tyre that I use as a bench. With a white tissue I always carry with me, I remove the day's dust, and with a long sigh sit down.*

*The large building stands desolately on the barren land. The horizon is a blur. Land and night come together to form a grey, opaque stain.*

*A hint of a breeze and its light rustling on the surface are the only signs that anything is alive.*

*And then there is that light up there, in one of the building's thousand bedrooms. A faint light because of the distance, but distinct. Someone lives up there. I can't see him, nor do I think the person up there can see me. Yet this certainty of their being someone else is enough to satiate my lonely soul.*

Un filo di vento e il suo lieve fruscio sulla superficie sono le poche prove di qualcosa di vivo.

E poi c'è quella luce lassù, in una delle mille camere dell'edificio. Una luce lieve per la distanza, eppur distinta. Lì c'è qualcuno che vive. Non posso vederlo, né penso che la persona lassù possa vedere me. Eppure questa certezza di un altro è sufficiente a saziare il mio animo solo.

A volte mi pare di scorgere un'ombra, ma potrebbe anche essere la fuliggine, che nella distanza fa vibrare la luce.

E ripongo il fazzoletto che istintivamente avevo alzato in segno di saluto.

Me ne rimango così, per un po'. Poi la stanchezza mi prende e inizio a sentire la notte umida sospirare tra le ossa. È tempo di fare ritorno.

Le scale in salita sono ancora più lunghe. Arrivo in casa esausto.

Abbasso le tapparelle, lasciando appena aperto il tratteggio di fori per il sole di domani. Mi metto a letto e spengo l'abatjour sul comodino.

Mi addormento quasi felice, pensando a quell'uomo seduto sulla ruota. Anch'egli solo, poveretto.

*Sometimes I seem to glimpse a shadow. But it might just be soot making the light shimmer in the distance, and I put down the tissue I had instinctively raised in greeting.*

*I carry on sitting there for a little while longer. Then tiredness gets to me and I start feeling the damp night sighing between my bones. It's time to go back in.*

*The stairs are even longer going back up. I arrive home exhausted. I lower the shutters, leaving the holes just open enough to let in tomorrow's sun. I lie down on the bed and turn off the lamp on the bedside table.*

*I fall asleep almost happy, thinking of that man sitting on the tyre. He's alone too, poor chap.*



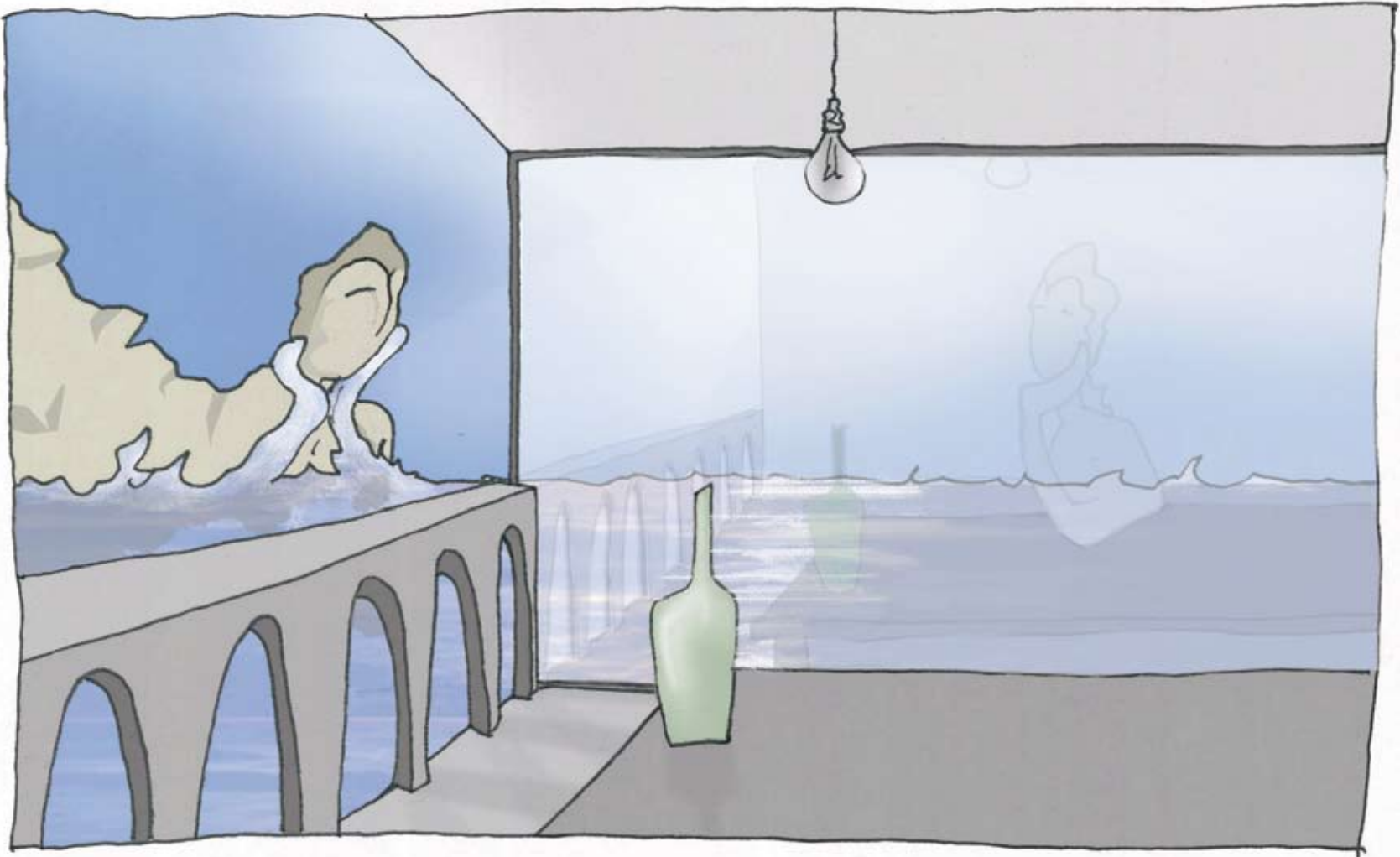
honourable mention | *L'incontro*

by Paolo Portaluri



in un'eternità di ombre e luci  
solo pochi momenti di equilibrio.  
si fondono interno ed esterno  
si incontrano l'uomo e la sua natura











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