

## The Insomniac Past the Witching Hour

by Ashley Crout

A door twists open on its hinge, and the soul I hold  
in the whites of my eyes slides into the night. It lifts  
into place within a constellation of blinding white fires  
seen as small and usual from our distant beds like punctures  
in a dark fabric, the death shroud of the day before.

I watch over a world twisted in bed sheets, bless the sleepers  
in their rest, but it has been years. Duty can steal too much  
from you. I have given away my glow, that blue at the center  
of flame. I curve across the dark night by night like a bone  
weary moon. What would I want if I could have what I wanted?

In the pre-dawn hour, I wish to lie alongside my body again,  
to press my essence back into its house and belong somewhere.  
But when you are desperate, you drop details. I forgot to close  
the door that traps the past in its place. Now the gone world  
and its ghosts fly in and out of my mouth. If I could speak,  
I would curse them backwards. But language only moves  
in one direction. It is too late to change a dead conversation.

Still I hear them talking, their ragged mouths breathe at my neck.  
They keep me awake. This is why my soul rises over me  
all of every night. I am running in place. I escape this body  
that is adhered to the earth. But ghosts have lost the abilities  
of the physical. Their ears have fallen off. Please, I am tired  
all night. I have been tired of you all my waking life.