

## India Harris

### [Somewhere on the mantelpiece inside your house]

Somewhere on the mantelpiece inside your house,  
I stand motionless within a frame. Wading fearlessly through  
the cold receding sea, with hair the colour of honey  
obscuring itself across my vision, and in the air my grey  
scarf waving like a distress signal—fossilised. The camera light  
flashed seconds before waves flooded my boots, water breaking

into damp dust around my knees and my smile breaking  
into laughter, before stumbling barefoot back to your house.  
I remember you called me *a diamond in a world of coal*. A light  
through the mist, softly luminous and guiding people through  
the sourness of their own oceans. But drinking warm earl grey  
tea with you, all I could taste was pure happiness and honey.

Summer swam round, and the bees spread rumour of honey,  
but all I could hear was the smash of lights inside me breaking,  
and the low buzzing of machines beneath the steady gaze of grey  
hospital walls. Roses in empty wine bottles unfolded in the house,  
anxiously mourning red petal fingernails. You looked sadly through  
me, and I was left swallowing saltwater streams under fluorescent light.

Autumn in Cambridge, and the stars wouldn't shed me as much light  
as they did over the sea. I lay awake and kept them company with honey  
sweetened coffee, a palimpsest of limbs and layers leafing through  
pages upon pages of poetry. My blurry eyes resisted breaking  
concentration until the walls dissolved around me, the small house  
of my room washed away on a tide of sleep. Suddenly I'm running. Grey

wolves behind me and I'm running, running from the grey  
teeth breathing just beyond my shoulder blades. An unsteady light  
is flickering between needling trees; history assures me it's a house.  
If I can only reach the red front door, porridge warm with honey  
sits upon the stove, and my Grandmother will love me again. Breaking  
slowly, I'm about to knock when the dream drops my hand through

the air, and back to the little room where October seeps through  
the window frame. The city is a puddle of glistening yellow and grey,  
and everybody has wolf-eyes in the rain. Their irises keep breaking  
me, and so I build myself like honeycomb. Wax might create candlelight,  
but for now my light is stored, and the slightest knock bleeds a honey  
that will never wash from my hands. I guard myself like a honeycomb house.

I wonder about your house by the sea, and how long that photo remained through  
the year. You tell me my honey hair is darker now, and my eyes are a deeper grey.  
You tell me it's difficult to love a light, when every darkness is a reminder of their breaking.