

## Peter Sparks

### Sestina

Abyss. A nanosecond's blazing light,  
The herald to a straining fecund mass  
Unleashed. A tongue of blinding, whipped flame  
Sears all before, while bearing all we'll know;  
Its megallanic stream expands to form  
A Universe of fire. One second's past—

Matter explodes. Growth's spiraling has passed  
The comprehensible. A lash of light  
That forges, through its surge, the casts of forms—  
Icons for us—of weighed and measured mass  
Ten billion years from this. Yet few'll then know,  
Or knowing grasp, those glaciers of flame.

To measure scale for such a furious flame?  
Dark Matter reels. Imagine it just passed,  
Expanding in a bubble that you know  
Soaped Titan in his bath. He loved the light  
Refracted—'til it burst—became a mass  
Of scum. For us, lost Space and Earth and form.

Within our bubble, Hubble shows the forms  
Of roiling supernovae; helium flame  
From Alpha Caeli's rim; the Pleiad mass  
Of gas and dust that veils, then flickers past  
A Milky Way of twinkling roseate light—  
Shape-shifting, whispers 'there is more to know'.

Imprisoned in this cauldron we must know  
How miniscule we are, before we form  
Idea that we have any power to light  
One candle's guttering sickly flame  
And peer. Myopic view, fragmented past  
And impotent. Neutrino looks on Mass.

So was the project worth it? Should we mass-  
Protest the by-pass if the Vogons know  
The earth is mostly harmless, with a past  
Of telephonic hygiene? It never forms  
Intelligence, to burn a gem-like flame.  
If you are last to leave, put out the light.

We studied mass, created form,  
And looked for no eternal flame.  
Just passed on far more heat than light.