

## GRAPEFRUITS

On top of the T V set  
I notice a single grapefruit  
on a light-blue plate  
and know without asking  
that Alice can't eat it  
and guess she bought it  
during the hot weather

for grapefruits don't die easy  
not like shrivelled mandarins  
pock-marked peaches  
or apples with the wrinklies

I understand this inability  
to eat grapefruit  
the splash in the eyes  
the bits of sour flesh  
in a cold teaspoon  
the grit of unmelted sugar

Alice moves the pot-plants  
looks out of the window  
says the stars are quiet tonight  
Then at midnight catches me  
watching her and understands  
I think her lonely  
and burns the toast which  
she doesn't normally

As I leave her flat  
she says don't come back  
and leans on me  
don't come back tonight  
don't make a noise  
use the stairs...  
the lift clangs slowly up  
I like its whine and mirrors  
its fresh grease smell

(cont.)

I open and shut the heavy  
wrought-iron gates  
begin the slow progression down  
past other service-flats  
other still lives  
for if not grapefruits  
dried flowers  
a set of red cushions  
Swiss chocolates  
dolls on sideboards

I walk home  
Saturday night with rain  
splashing cars and party-goers  
a clustered night of scents  
and Alice in the mind  
I know she's sitting in the dark  
doing what she does best  
meditating towards magic

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The lift smells of fish and chips  
a hall light flickers  
a swarthy murderer  
requests a cigarette  
we exchange pleasantries  
He says he'd kill for Lazio

I ring the bell  
Alice is eating an orange.  
her mouth ribbed with skin and pith  
you were gone she says  
almost an hour  
almost a record

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