

# Black Friday<sup>1</sup>

My mother died three weeks ago, and through  
the inching increments of loss, I never  
noticed colour leach from you, day after day.  
Now you're in the admissions ward, where there  
is a quiet without a calm: a quiet so  
embarrassed at itself, it invites the storm  
to fill it, and it will.

Behind the screens, a demon's voice shrieks through  
the mouth of a woman, whom I'll see tomorrow  
is human as me, when the drugs allow.  
But though her dealer's her lover, on a night  
as profitable as this, he just can't spare  
the time to stroke her hair and tell her lies  
she needs more than heroin.

Beneath the sheets, there's so little sign  
of anyone, the bed could almost be  
empty, but a head protrudes, and words  
pour out, as it relates how her family brings  
food she doesn't eat or throws up – how  
she cut herself and can't say why – how they  
took her kids away –

before you realise, she has your number  
and will call at all the small hours of night.  
When I return next day, they've cleared the mess  
from Black Friday. I watch them drip your colour  
back into you, drop by drop, and the year  
moves on, on its inevitable course  
into the dark.

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<sup>1</sup> The last Friday before Christmas