

The Light the Dead See

By Frank Stanford

There are many people who come back
After the doctor has smoothed the sheet
Around their body
And left the room to make his call.

They die but they live.

They are called the dead who lived through their deaths,
And among my people
They are considered wise and honest.

They float out of their bodies
And light on the ceiling like a moth,
Watching the efforts of everyone around them.

The voices and the images of the living
Fade away.

A roar sucks them under
The wheels of a darkness without pain.
Off in the distance
There is someone
Like a signalman swinging a lantern.

The light grows, a white flower.
It becomes very intense, like music.

They see the faces of those they loved,
The truly dead who speak kindly.

They see their father sitting in a field.
The harvest is over and his cane chair is mended.
There is a towel around his neck,
The odor of bay rum.
Then they see their mother
Standing behind him with a pair of shears.
The wind is blowing.
She is cutting his hair.

The dead have told these stories

To the living.

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