

# Sextains

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Howard Firkin

# 1. Hospital

## Black

Black hearted girl, I miss you. Do you know?  
I know. My skin has started turning black.  
I'm burning, cinder hearted one. It's slow.  
It's certain. It's a sooty curtain. This:  
your blank black kisses left me nothing, just  
the taste of tar, lungs full of black coal dust.

## Forever

Forever doesn't last much past the night.  
It leaves its warm shape in the bed, the smell  
of absence on the pillow in its stead.  
It skips out at first light and no one grieves.  
The hour comes when every clock is still,  
when time itself has only time to kill.

## **Sex Stains**

Sex stains my fingers with her nicotine.

I'm yellowing; addiction reigns; and I

am seen as just another of her wrecks.

She says, unsmiling, this is my prediction:

You'll gasp for me as long as you draw breath

and bleat to think you'll lose me after death.

## Tonight

You turned the lights out with a simple flick  
and I went where the shadows go: to night,  
to occupy the zero state: see-sawn;  
the blanks between the words; no width, no height.  
Persistence of your image keeps you here  
behind my eyelids while I disappear.

## Dark

The pain becomes its anaesthetic; each  
incision wells and gapes and grins its scream.  
The waves of pain are dream song, lullaby,  
the soothing lie of losing consciousness.  
As nerves collapse, are shredded, firing pain,  
a cold, blank calmness seeps around my brain.

## Still

Remembering what seems to be a dream  
or dreaming memory: I'm drifting, I'm  
unravelling, perspective shifting while  
I smile to know I'm travelling to you.  
I find you when I just remember how  
to find the place I'm sliding into now.