

FIREFLIES



Frank Ormsby

The lights come on and stay on under the trees.
Visibly a whole neighbourhood inhabits the dusk,
so punctual and in place it seems to deny
dark its dominion. Nothing will go astray,
the porchlamps promise. Sudden, as though a match
failed to ignite at the foot of the garden, the first squibs
trouble the eye. Impossible not to share
that sportive, abortive, clumsy, where-are-we-now
dalliance with night, such soothing restlessness.
What should we make of fireflies, their quick flare
of promise and disappointment, their throwaway style?
Our heads turn this way and that. We are loath to miss
such jauntiness in nature. Those fugitive selves,
winged and at random! Our flickery might-have-beens
come up from the woods to haunt us! Our yet-to-be
as tentative frolic! What do the fireflies say?
That loneliness made light of becomes at last
convivial singleness? That any antic spark
cruising the void might titillate creation?
And whether they spend themselves, or go to ground,
or drift with their lights out, they have left the gloom,
for as long as our eyes take to absorb such absence,
less than it seemed, as childless and deprived
as Chaos and Old Night. But ruffled too,
as though it unearthed some memory of light
from its long blackout, a hospitable core
fit home for fireflies, brushed by fireflies' wings.