

## *kevin clark*

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### **The Assignment**

How long ago had she demanded  
I walk without her  
the length of one evening,  
my assignment written on the black sky:  
A haunting, I was to repeat her name  
as I walked the pitch circuit.  
There would be no other test.  
A single name, the erotic vocable  
my only companion. Breath-  
after-name-filled breath, not even dry leaves  
spoke beneath my shoes. Days  
beneath my shoes, weeks.  
Soon, the sea change.  
Nerves splayed in silence from my step,  
rays on the invisible plain.  
Did I hover on the bouyant, salted sea,  
a skinless body? I grew  
weightless, like a pioneer  
come to measure  
the distance of his soul  
under the lightless dome  
of the deprivation tank.  
Years swept by like protons,  
white shards on silver.  
Once you enter the pinhole, she warned,  
space expands like a womb.  
Do you want this, she warned.  
I aspired in air, my breath  
no longer her name.  
I was a possession, a word-sheath.  
I was the infinite next.  
In the next town a caution light  
matched my chant. The word  
as inversion, as changeling.  
I followed, as if on a road.  
As if homeward.

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**FOR POETRY**