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Reginald Shepherd

MOONLIGHT ON ENDYMION'S SLEEP

My one wish was to see him
whole, unmarred by reciprocity: lips parted
while the eyes stayed closed. I who was nowhere
yet to be seen. Disappearance is a trick

I do too well: it keeps me young, waning
and waxing in counterpoint
with my dark. Trailing winter
clouds of adjectives and attributes (harvest,

gibbous, hunter's; new, first quarter, full, last
quarter, new again), I'm seasonless, present
a single face to every night: in the posture
of submission, exhibition. Blackness

inhabits the dark marias, the brighter
highlands (accounting for my low
albedo, high libido): I keep the light
allotted me and burn to basalt.

*Though the full Moon appears
brilliant through a telescope,
it is a dark object: an incident
of partial sun (my light survives*

my loss of me). My darkness keeps him
young, cures him to chiaroscuro: the day
invisible in all that white, his sleep
one broken-off unending night.