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## Robert Champ

### *A Temporary Blackout*

In a stiff wind, the electric has gone out.

Suddenly,

I feel like a nursing baby whose mother  
Has just pulled the nipple from its mouth:

No tv,

No radio,

No cassette player,

No computer.

(If I weren't so old, I'd bawl!)

Still, sitting in this murkiness,

Waiting for the power company

To send out a crew,

I find there is not much trouble

In the silence, not much

Of the old scariness left in the unplanned dark.

Or maybe I am just less cranky

Than I thought—

Or have lived before

In a house without lights

And remember it here with an unsuspected affection,

As you'd remember a cartoon villain:

Black-hatted, familiar, sly.

Could it be that all this quietness and shadow

Are the chaos of withdrawal?

That all this cessation

Holds out no protest?

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I have been taught to honor light  
As the one desideratum;  
To find in the busyness of light,  
Sustained by socket and prong,  
The one connection worth making:

Elaborate interchange of being and doing.

Yet now, unconnected, I float  
From wall to wall;  
Rest easily in the growing pitch-blackness,  
Helpless to resist.

In a blackout, candleless, one finds few options—  
As if one had just died and were learning  
To deal with an unexpected afterlife,  
As if one were a child put abruptly to bed.

## *She and I*

Between the wall and mini-tower case  
She's built her web. Two dozen strands  
On either side, mooring the computer  
To the house. She sits there, confident  
As Roebling in the girders of Brooklyn  
Bridge. She causes no trouble: a neat  
Little housekeeper, neater than I,  
Whose failure to dust has given her the chance  
To build on this scale. Seated on  
The other side, engrossed, I do not notice her;  
Tapping away at the keyboard, connected  
To the case no less tangibly, nor more  
Than she, though without her sense of surety,  
I have no heart to brush away her web,  
To end our mutual dependence on Machine.

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I've come to believe, almost, the web  
Is holding me to the house and to the ground,  
That she has come in from the aeons, a bundle  
Of life, drawn to the case, not blindly,  
But with an intuition that here, in this room,  
Aloneness and the quiet doings of survival  
Are welcome. We are what work has come to,  
Back to the stillness of hunting and gathering,  
And with no reason other than to continue,  
And with no companions except  
The distant others of our kind, abstracts  
Of being as we are abstracts to them.  
And yet, as she dangles upside down, I find  
The creatureliness of us both is a comedy  
We can't surrender, a way of thinking

Back into the nucleus of the body  
Spinning out its notions: a solid thought,  
An instinct with legs running along the strands  
Of a web that widens daily, connecting us,  
Leaving us one, together and yet ourselves.