

*RM Vaughan*

**A Wise Host Snuffs A Guttering Candle**

Or risks entry, subliminal, via eddies of dew, other moistures,  
of fainting, conch-coloured ghosts - the weaker sort of affreet  
and imp, demons without agency but for finished wick smudges, radiator leaks,  
the moleskin of bats, any ingestible fur.

A careful lamplighter worries but does not chase the dumb  
heat that plods behind all candescence. He knows the threat  
in Energy, how the veiled travel on wainscot thermals, wasted  
steam, between the click of dominoes. He knows that nothing expends,  
only changes. But to what?

Germes, yes, to infernal spores and hairy pollens. All manner of gnat  
and mite - spooks in sheets, and between. To the fat-and-sugar pong  
finished gum spreads as it dries (another favoured wind of jumbies, pupil  
sprites), to the skin on stale lard, aired treacle. To all the tickling whiffs we cover  
with joss sticks, and the sounds, the accidental jazz (crinkling

plastic, the wheeze of can openers, first bites into jawbreakers)

wee furies depend on, ride like fleas on shoe leather.

To vessels for the vile, the spectral, the red of iris and fang.

How stupid we are, we who do not discard, double quick, the wrapper

(a transparency, and thus a window), who leave embers red, and wax liquid,

and still wonder by what beacon, down what rivulet, hazard finds us.

I did not, did not take my sparking candles to water, did not bind

each square of cellophane with black thread, did not bury

my apple cores, bread heels, candies chewed to oil. I did not, did not

remember the smaller evils, their lock picking tricks. Poor host

am I, rich in mischief.