

## GRACE

As I ran across the flat wet sand  
there'd soon be running next to me,  
a girl who ran as fast and free  
as was the wild and rolling sea.

The daughter of the house, she'd roam  
the cliffs and dunes, till autumn fell;  
her name was Grace, and once a year,  
I came beneath her summer spell.

And then, a gap – a year or two,  
the reason isn't clear to me –  
till we returned, one final time,  
to holiday beside the sea.

With knowing smiles  
that made me blush, they said,  
you must remember Grace,  
and turned the handle of a door –  
marked Staff,  
I'd not been through before.

There at the kitchen sink  
                                stood Grace,  
no trace of sand or sea or sky;  
her face a pasty, lifeless white  
                                lit only by a neon light.

Like something stranded  
                                just too high  
to catch the fast, outgoing tide;  
skin bleached white  
                                as white can be,  
far out of reach of any sea.

No longer free to roam the beach,  
                she now must dust  
                and change the sheets,  
for guests who paid to still run free,  
once yearly down beside the sea.