

*Simon Armitage*  
The Patent

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Last night in the shed he was working late,  
perfecting light,

inventing the light-bulb that lasts and lasts.  
He believes in lamps

which as well as giving an instant shine  
will illuminate over and over again

and, far from being dim, the prototypes  
are surprisingly bright

and functional too, being fused  
for domestic use.

But the light-bulb people are up in arms.  
They haven't come this far

to be put in the shade, outshone  
by a light whose licence they claim to own,

by a lamp they invented themselves,  
then shelved.

So they're hitting back with a cunning device  
which works in reverse,

which soaks up colours  
and light until darkness occurs.

Known as Obscurity Bulbs  
these dense, inky blobs

are available in a range of marques  
from *Evening Murk*

to *Endless Midnight of Fathomless Depth*.  
They're very left

field, almost like art,  
and the trade-magazines are pushing them hard.

Which leads us straight  
to a city, a town, a blotted-out street

whose residents blink  
at the clues in the crossword, squint at the book

they're trying to read.  
Although... in a garden shed across the road

there's a glint. A man works late  
perfecting light,

his hand cupped like some secretive priest  
of the ancient past

protecting a flame in the night.  
His face in a bulb of glass, like an astronaut.