1948

Waiting for Stella

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WAITING FOR STELLA

Morris at five back from the office, pushing
The sixth-floor button, fitting the notched key,
And settled in at length with a cup of jasmine
Tea in a damasked chair built for his bones,

Knows not whether to be in a fret with Stella
Making him wait, or just let peace soak in
From these exclusions and discreet inclusions.
A long wall glows with books. Over the mantel

The one abstraction out of a million suited
Least to rile his clear fastidious soul.
Who could imagine, lost in a howling desert
Of brute commodities and senseless brick,

This... coral-hushed lagoon, this cell against
Contagion sealed? Here you can sit and watch
Through thinnest glass the stupid monster heave
His sparkling coils and hear him stertorously

Breathing, safe this side from the idiocies
And daily-swallowed indignities, the gross
Chatter of monkeys that have learned to walk
And talk and cry but not to feel. O draw

Thick curtains, open the Misanthrope, or take
A stiff shot of Aurelius, and be still!
... No good, Morris! Wisdom will not lay
This heap of jangled nerves. Only that step,

That voice can now confirm the dream and close
This circle round you. Drum on the table, man,
Your furious and childish SOS
And crack your knuckles until Stella comes.

JOSEPH WARREN BEACH