

By : Chris Pannell

Night slides

into the city
as soft as the veil his mother would adjust
around her bouffant hair before church

he drives his huge bus gently
up a cut in the escarpment's side,
his good hand on the wheel,
the other cradled in his lap —
he wears a shirt of blues,
savours the squeaks and echoes
of the empty bus
and nothing but inky indigo ahead —
pink clouds in the west, above the lake —
from Concession Street the city
begins to perforate
with electric light

then he remembers: he is responsible —
tonight at those stops, everyone waited patiently
to descend into those lights
to connect with some love, some purpose
before a fault, either in the city's power grid
or in themselves
winks them out

near midnight, he tells his dispatcher
that he's clear (of passengers, of obligation)
he means he's clear of everything,
except a city spread beneath his eye
like an enormous tray of diamonds.

**"Night slides" was originally published by
Wolsak and Wynn Publisher. Chris Pannell's
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