

THE LIGHT GATHERER

When you were small, your cupped palms
each held a candlesworth under the skin,
enough light to begin,

and as you grew
light gathered in you, two clear raindrops
in your eyes,

warm pearls, shy,
in the lobes of your ears, even always
the light of a smile after your tears.

Your kissed feet glowed in my one hand,
or I'd enter a room to see the corner you played in
lit like a stage-set,

the crown of your bowed head spotlit.
When language came, it glittered like a river,
silver, clever with fish,

and you slept
with the whole moon held in your arms for a night-light
where I knelt watching.

Light gatherer. You fell from a star
into my lap, the soft lamp at the bedside
mirrored in you,

and now you shine like a snowgirl,
a buttercup under a chin, the wide blue yonder
you squeal at and fly in,

like a jewelled cave,
turquoise and diamond and gold, opening out
at the end of a tunnel of years.

CAROL ANN DUFFY *Carol Ann Duffy*

