

EASTBOURNE

*“A different sky, new worlds to gaze upon,
The strange excitement of an unfamiliar shore...”* Alan Mencken

After my uncle, the expat country squire
Succumbed to his second bout with cancer,
I came to Eastbourne, the family emissary

The call came at end of term
And I, who had not flown solo for decades,
But always with my husband, my children
Or other people’s children
Found myself on British Air
sitting next to a guy
Consumed by his laptop.

When I got to the drowsy old resort town
I marveled at my hotel, the Lansdowne
A Victorian lady across from the stately Grand.

That night, when I couldn’t sleep I sat
Before the vanity gasping at the reflection
That stared back at me—
“This woman looks so old,” I said aloud.
I dressed and left the hotel, taking in its
smell of smoked meat and old wood.

I crossed the empty street and climbed
up to the promenade,
Then walked down to the beach,
Digging my toes into the sand
Fingers of light splayed like a rainbow hand
behind the pier beckoning to me;
Far in the blue, the lighthouse seemed to wink—
The wind was whispering in my ear
“My dear, lay down the layers of weariness
Lie down and when you rise, the tide will come in
The sun will come up
And you can sing at the funeral.”

by Claudia Beechman
chant2z@verizon.net