

mist

But if they were not used to swerve, all things would fall downwards through the void like drops of rain, nor could collision come to be, nor a blow brought to pass for the first beginnings.

- Lucretius

SHE STARES OUT from her second-floor window, listening to the clock but not yet prepared to look at it. *I need to leave*, she thinks. *But not just yet.*

The window frames the same scene as always: the upper stories and rooftops of the drab houses across the way, angled chimneys reflecting the unobserved process of settlement and decay; the verdant row of mature oaks just beyond the houses,

forming an uneven band of green above the dull gray and black rooftops; the tendrilled branch-work of an adolescent willow, spilling over the window's right edge, the rest of the tree set somewhere wide of her view and therefore non-existent; the power lines and telephone wires, traversing the pane at soft angles. All else is sky, a uniform shade of gray, the kind of sky from which rain threatens, but never falls.

Against the dark green of random foliage and the black of vacant windows, an incredibly fine mist can be just barely discerned. The mist is so soft that it is at first indistinguishable from that point where vision, lacking a suitable object, breaks down and turns on itself, the limit of perception becoming somehow perceptible, an infinite field of dots and spots and transient colors. The air being otherwise completely still, the mist falls earthward without the slightest obstruction, heavy and slow.

For a moment, even though she already knows it won't last, she feels it: new constants, new limits with their attendant hierarchies, have been introduced into the physical universe, displacing the mathematical hegemony of gravity and the electromagnetic field.

This is her world. Closer, heavier, and much, much slower; it barely moves. *It's because of the mist*, she thinks. *It's steady and uniform, it fills space and so banishes time.*

She inhales deeply, then lets her breath out slowly. A creator's breath. Her shoulders rise, straighten. She opens the window with the tip of her finger, effortlessly. Kneeling, she rests her head on the sill, letting her arm dangle from the open window. Gradually, the skin and fine hairs of her arm become attuned, like her eyes, to the impossibly delicate mist falling upon them.

I need to leave, she thinks. *But not just yet.*

Her eyes closed, she welcomes each atom of mist, the elementary particles of her universe, to her cheek.
She waits.



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