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Something Nuclear

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SOMETHING NUCLEAR

ian ramser

The leaves crinkle under our feet as the bare branches of trees loom overhead. It is fall, and as we breathe in the crisp air our exhales let off a faint mist. The sight of trees and blue sky above is seemingly endless. It is refreshing after being in the enclosed space of the city. My nephew and I just reach a hill overlooking miles when I hear it, a waterfall down in the valley. I hear the cascading liquid bubbling as it breaks on rocks, I can almost smell the sweet moisture in the air around it. I look at Finn, and see in his eyes a familiar look, one that I used to give his father, my brother. His quick glance shows me he is excited, a kind of untethered excitement that has no tangible basis, one that you are born with, a bottomless optimism.

We go down to the waterfall and let our thoughts flow away with the endless stream. It lets out into a pool with dark green rocks shimmering underneath. I take off my shoes, and see to it my feet get a good rinse, a baptism of sorts. I think of it as a purification and renewal of my feet, the water takes with it all the memories of places they have taken me, reviving in them a new sense of adventure, an ambitiousness that tingles my toes. Finn sees me smiling as my feet patter on the surface of the pool, and naturally, decides to outdo me. The next moment his head comes out of the falls as quickly as it went in. We're both laughing, and that's when we hear it.

Off in the distance, far away from the cool breeze in the leaves and the birds flitting through trees, I can almost feel it. A dark grey cloud amassing and building, impending its shapeless mass towards our small oasis. In an instant, birds are flying away as fast as their wings can go, winds only felt in hurricanes sweep against us and I know this must be the end. How long was that moment before the complete envelopment of our bodies? A second maybe; I spent it staring into Finn's confused eyes, the ghost of a smile still lingering as it all goes black. We feel the wind take us into its own sort of waterfall, except it is a dark, swirling world of numb mystery, and we felt no more.

A light in the dark,

a burst of sound,

and I am traveling through a tunnel with embryonic vulnerability, I see everything as it passes by with frightening speed, my whole life in accurate precision, every unimportant event and anticlimactic moment seems the most desirable. The quiet creak of a door as I come home after a long day, the feel of spreading strawberry jam on toast, the sight of a dark and rainy road lit up by distant streetlamps. In an obscure way I am living my life over again in seconds, each second just as easily a year as my eyes take in more details than I ever thought possible. The time it would normally take to examine each detailed strand of the fabric of my life is sped up, intensified, as I watch my own self lying in bed reading a book. The wind from the growing breeze outside has barely swept away at my white curtains as another gust of air, embodied with the sunset breaking across the horizon, flaps a little at the page I'm on. My hand comes down to reinforce my place as I suddenly realize I am being watched, not from some abase paranoia commonly felt by nervous minds, but something deeper and with eyes farther away than the universe can even begin to contain, but also right there with me. I am not worried, merely curious of who would care to see me right now, unless it is my own self coming back to visit this memory. It is not the first time I have thought this, and it makes sense because if I ever was to pass away so suddenly, I would naturally wish to go visit every moment, but why a moment this unimportant?

*"A light in the dark,
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