

The server at my local tells me all viruses arrive on this planet via comet

and I think to myself *that's actually a new one to me* but I want her to keep telling me about these streets in the 70s, when they were tired of picking up those little propeller things dropped by all the female trees and so they ripped them up and planted only males. “Now there’s just *so much pollen,*” she says, “with nowhere to go and it gives everyone, even people without allergies, allergy attacks.” I do feel it, the tiny feathers behind my facial bones, my streaming nose, I thought maybe it was the cat, but this is helpful, now I can blame it on the tree patriarchy. It’s been so damp and I don’t think we’re getting sick from comets. She goes on, says that when the vibes are good at a party, that’s the stars being just right in the sky both at the time of the party *and* at the time of everyone’s birth at the party or at least the ones who also feel like the vibes are good. That circles are alien technology, that we’re this close to knowing how to travel through time, geometrically. I look up but it’s just cloudy. Somewhere, there’s a shard of ice in a vacuum with my name on it. An earth sign, I imagine myself more susceptible to gravity. The place where I was born went out of business; my parents met in a hospital that shut down due to poor profitability. Here, all the obvious conclusions about markets and suffering. Now my mother’s sick as hell, but my father’s rich and she’s on Medicare. I want to write something about the town where I grew up—I say this explicitly to the grantmaking authorities—but it’s one of those postindustrial revival zones and what am I going to say, that I stole a pack of cigarettes and then visited the new vegan café? For decades, I was tethered to a 180-mile-long cord spiked down along the Schuylkill. I swung along it in a big arc, half of a big Saturnine ring. When it broke, I was cutting up my mother’s food for her, unscrewing all the caps on the juices and such. My father looked at me from across the glass breakfast table, his face long gaunt from grief, and said *you’re going where?* No one actually decamps to Canada until they do, and I did it to increase my profitability. The sky is still cloudy. There were some real jerks at this restaurant but the server is optimistic, says she can feel the energy rebalancing. I trace an arched figure in the air with my hand and I end up pointing at the ground, which I guess is to say that if you, poet, think that the comet virus thing is funny, stop looking to the moon to speak your sadness into being. It feels like truth but it’s just the promise of escape, the tug that moves the oceans but cannot lift even our fingers, these coins of stone we carry.

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