

MIND TO MIND

*Creative writing that explores the abstract side
of our profession and our lives*

Stephen T. Harvey, M.D., Editor

Then It Was Dark and Cold

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It was a sunny, warm, clear day until brute celestial geometry choked off standard photon dissemination. Then it was dark and cold.

The induction of change in light and temperature sowed confusion in animals. Ants, squirrels, and birds were other species in immediate attendance. Venus was lit to the respective west, and a group of ten to twenty birds swirled to the south in a blender. Incongruity defined their collective flight navigation. I was a little short of breath in the final moments as we waited and probed the western horizon for the approaching silhouette.

The blotting created a kaleidoscope of radiation and psychology, but it was also a session of pure intimacy with the universe. Like a neighbor down the hall or right across the street, the solar system became apparent and knowable.

The show was R-rated for stellar nudity. We freely stared in the direction of our sun, retinas safe from harm, with naked eye: a coming together of our delicate ocular physiology and the personal machinations of the anatomy of a star. Normal left the room for a few minutes. The world was illuminated not from above but from the edges. I swear I heard Jimi Hendrix jamming thunderously with the Utah Symphony, and there were rumors of a troop of local Cub Scouts performing an appallingly graphic skit of Stephen King's *The Shining*. Supposedly cops in town ignored the music and violence and ticketed jaywalkers. White was black, black was blue, and there was corona and pink fire.

Think of a brilliant, full moon—white and stark—against a common black sky. The kind of moon that people chat about, gawk at, and nerds

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analyze. Now color the canvas cerulean and swap the white disk out with a black one. Then ignite the circumference of the hole to burn a million degrees Fahrenheit. The arresting circle could be mistaken for a portal or a maximally dilated pupil, the gatekeeper in the center of the iris evolved to regulate light.

Stars are the source of light and life. Our sun is middle-aged, medium-sized, and emits distinctive white light. The obscuring of this plasma beacon is idiosyncratic in space and time. Today the sun is four hundred times wider than our moon in diameter; it is also approximately four hundred times farther away from us. The production of this eccentricity has transfixed minds of ancients and modern man, alike, with humility and wonder.

Mankind's prefrontal cortex, a province of the brain devoted to executive function and moral reasoning, is the last piece of neural circuitry to come online; this hardware does not fully integrate with the central nervous system until adulthood. The distance from sun to earth is relatively static in revolution whereas the moon is escaping our planet's gravitational tug. Like a child with immature synapses pulling away from parental guidance and seeking emergence, our lunar satellite is breaking free. But for now, on occasion, we can stand in the shadow of these orbs.