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IMPRESSION: SUNRISE

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Trumpeter

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The house was dark, darker than the night sky above it, whose darkness flickered with stars. Against this sky the house was visible only by its rectangular absence.

Then, in the upper corner of that darkness, a small flame appeared. It flared for an instant and then settled into a wavering spot of light. The flame moved downward and to the left, and from it arose a larger flame, which gleamed faintly off the glass and metal of the lamp that held it. The glow from the flame diffused outward, vaguely suggesting the shapes of the objects around it, and glowed again from the windowpane. The lamp rose into the air and drifted away, leaving the house dark for another minute, until the flame drifted into a window on the first floor. The light settled in the lower center of the window, and from there it glowed out into the night.

Light. Instead of emptiness, instead of inertness, instead of a universe forever night, there was energy, there was action, there was form. Light was the revealer of the universe's secrets, of matter's inside and outside. It was the energy that composed all matter showing its real face. Such energy was the mover that made flow all the events of the universe. And when that energy flowed naked through the air, it also disclosed the eternal forms of the matter it touched.

Light. The light from the lamp gently gathered the shapes in the room around it and carried them away, out the window and into the garden, where they mingled with shapes that had been transported across much greater distances by much greater light. Planets were floating there, and thousands of stars bright and colored. Whole galaxies had been carried here across millions of lightyears of space.

Light. In the glow in the window a new shape appeared, the contours of a human face looking out. Though the face remained mostly submerged in the dark, the light revealed lines of maleness and a thick beard, a forehead on which many years had been written, a cheek, one side of a mouth, and an eye, an eye that faintly sparkled. Light. The eye gazed into the garden, gazed up at the sky and saw no clouds or mist but a clearness through which the stars vividly glowed, and his mouth curled into a smile. Light.

Later, when the stars had begun to fade and the first glow of dawn was rising over the eastern horizon, a door opened and the man emerged. Over his shoulder was strapped a box, and under his arms he lugged a folded easel and a large canvas. He climbed down the stairs and walked between the long rows of flowers and beneath the arches tangled with vines. He pushed through the gate and crossed the road and railroad tracks and stopped by the pond. He gazed at the water still black and the lilies still vague shapes in the dark. He followed the

path along the pond, walking slowly, pausing to consider, and continued up to the bridge and crossed, pausing on it to gaze into the water. He followed the other bank back again, gazing across the water at the gathering light. At a point where fifty feet of water lay between him and the eastern sky, he finally stopped and set down his paint box and set up his canvas.

By the ceaseless turning of the spheres, the darkness of the sky as steadily turned into dawn. The blackness became a dark blue, which faded towards a lighter blue. Other shades appeared, diffuse blushes of pink, yellow, and red, which flowed in size, shape, and brightness, slowly at first and more rapidly as the sun approached. With the awakening sky emerged the colors and shapes of the land, the hundred shades and thousand shapes of green, the textured browns of tree trunks and branches, the yellow of nearby fields of wheat, the bright colors of the flowers around the lake and behind the house. From the planet's dwindling shadow, each object began to untangle its own shadow and spread it upon the ground or upon its neighboring objects, so vaguely now, but soon to grow distinct. The increasing light gave the pond not its own color but every color around it, predominantly the blue of the sky and the green of the trees and lilies, and gave it a dim glow that could intensify into brilliance.

As the light increased, Claude Monet took out his brushes and paints, squeezing blobs of color onto his palette. He stood and waited. He watched the flowing of light and color into the sky and over the land and water. He heard the talking of the birds. Then it came, a point of total light on the horizon, a sudden wave of light over the land. He touched his brush to the palette, lifted it towards the empty canvas and pressed upon it one short stroke of bright yellow.

By the ceaseless turning of the spheres, the darkness of the sky as steadily turned into dawn. All three moons were visible, the nearest glowing a large round icy blue, the other two merely sharp lights. As the growing light turned the air pink and then red, the moons faded. The land too showed a bit of redness, though this was but a vague hue amid the grey. The plains of dust stretching to the horizon were grey, and the rocks scattered upon them were grey. The crater rims were grey, and also the distant hills and mountains. As the sun appeared, it spread a further greyness behind every hill and rock. The increasing heat stirred the wind to sweep the dust into clouds and race them across the land, and this duststorm would grow steadily denser through the morning and take back the brightness of the rising sun.

As the brush strokes added up into the hundreds, forms emerged out of the blankness. There was water scintillating to the sunlight, shining gold and silver. There were green lilies floating on the water, their flowers varying white, yellow, pink, or creme, and they glowed again in reflection from the water. Monet was working quickly, hurrying his gaze from horizon to canvas, his brushes from palette to canvas, for he was seeking to capture a moment, an appearance that could soon change into something else. Instead of drawing sharp lines between objects and homogenizing the colors within each, he mixed dots and dashes of

different bright colors, letting them fuse into luminous patches and bursts of sunlight. This impressionistic style was meant to portray not objects as much as the behaviour of light, the way light made the world vibrant. It was meant to recreate the visual and emotional impact a real scene stimulated in the human eye and brain.

By the ceaseless turning of the spheres, the darkness of the sky as steadily turned into dawn. Already the sunlight was creeping along the ring that surrounded the planet, setting its millions of separate chunks of ice glowing as a single arch. It glowed softly, for the sun was far away. As the planet turned, sunlight also advanced across its surface, which is to say across the outermost layer of the clouds that formed most of the planet's bulk. The clouds welled out of the planet's turbulent depths and formed hundreds of bands that swept across the planet and mixed in giant swirls and spirals, and as the sunlight advanced it set these stripes and swirls glowing with dozens of colors.

Years ago, when impressionism was too new and strange to be accepted by the critics or public, he and thirty other employers of the new style, among them Renoir, Degas, Cezanne, and Pissarro, had held an exhibition in the Paris studios of the Paris photographer Nadar. The viewers had openly expressed their dismay over paintings made of thousands of tiny dots and strokes that blurred together into blotches and crude images, their bafflement at the colors extravagantly bright, overlapping impossibly. One of Monet's paintings in particular, of the sun rising through the fog over the harbor at Le Harve and shimmering in the water, had attracted the attention of one journalist, who took the name of the painting, "Impression: Sunrise", to label the whole group and their style. The name had stuck. Their work was impressionism.

By the ceaseless turning of the spheres, the darkness of the sky as steadily turned into dawn. From the combined light of the trillion stars of the galaxy whose spiral filled half the sky, the waters had flickered all through the night, and as the sun appeared and spread its stronger light across the water, the flickering grew into a brilliant glare dancing with even brighter sparkles. The cresting waves formed a thousand lenses that took the light and focused it into gleams, while the water spraying into the air formed prisms that broke the light apart into its colors. Yet these flickers of color were barely visible amid the vast silver of the waters. The silver was unbroken by any land, not just within this horizon but upon the whole planet. Every sunrise at every point on the planet was the same glowing of light upon water, though of course clouds gave the light many flavors. Like the water whose scintillation revealed its constant motion, the clouds too were constantly flowing, changing position, shape, and thickness, making each sunrise snowflake- unique. The sea, the air, the clouds, everything upon this planet was flowing as steadily as the stars were flowing through the spiral in the sky.

Eager to capture the exact flavor of the moment, he carefully studied the way the light gleamed up from the water, how it carried the colors and reflections

and shadows of the lilies, how it revealed the subtle flowing of the pond. The water of the pond seeped from a channel of the Epte River and flowed through a farther exit back into the river, which soon flowed into the Seine, which, a hundred miles away at Le Harve, flowed into the sea, entering the vast blue flowing that covered two-thirds of the planet. One day the water he was invoking on his canvas would rise into the sky and as clouds drift back over the land and fall onto the green hills of France and flow again down the Epte, through this pond, and flow down the Seine it had traveled a million times before. Monet was capturing one tiny part of the ceaseless flowing of huge forces, the flowing of water, the air, the clouds, the sunlight, the land, the turning of the planet, the flowing of the planet through space, the flowing shapes of the four seasons, and yes, the flowing shapes of life through four billion years.

By the ceaseless turning of the spheres, the darkness of the sky quickly turned into dawn. There was little warning of the nearness of the sun, for the planet held little atmosphere to spread the light. Suddenly the sun was there, small because distant, yet bright enough for its light to enter the crystals of the ice and come out gleaming a vague blue. The sun was mirrored up from miles of ice, ice that was cracked in a flat plain, though in places it was cracked into chasms. The whole planet was ice, mostly gently sloping plains it cracked all over. But on one point on the planet a geological fluke had slowly been constructing a real mountain, made entirely of ice. Here sunrise first becomes visible as a glowing spot afloat in the sky, a point that slowly expands downward into a pyramid, taller and taller, glowing blue. This was the only mountain this planet had ever had, the only mountain it ever would have.

No painter before him had taken as much interest in rendering the fleeting moods of the day. Because one painting might not communicate which colors or glows in a scene were lasting and which were fleeting, he often painted a whole series of paintings of the same scene, each at a different time of day. He would paint the scene from the same angle, from the exact same spot, working on one canvas for twenty or thirty minutes until the light changed, and then he put the canvas aside until the next day and worked on another canvas of the same scene for another thirty minutes. The objects to be painted were almost irrelevant as long as they revealed the changing behavior of light. He had painted a series of the House of Parliament reflecting up from the Thames, of Venice, and of the massive, intricate face of the Rouen cathedral. Yet nature's architecture around his house was quite sufficient in subjects, and he spent years doing dozens of paintings of poplars, poppy-fields, haystacks, his garden, and most of all the pond, which he painted over and over and over again to capture every slight variation.

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Pausing for a moment, he reached into his jacket pocket and lifted out a handful of cherries, which he had picked yesterday morning from one of the Japanese cherry trees in his garden. As he studied the dawn, he placed into his mouth one by one the cherries as round and bright red as the rising sun. Many times he had captured on canvas the green, brown, pink, and red flavors on the sunlight shining on those cherry trees, and as his tongue squeezed open the cherries, he tasted through a different sense the flavor of that sunlight. Monet's canvas had not been the only surface to capture that sunlight. The green leaves of the cherry trees had also captured some of it. The captured sunlight had flowed throughout the trees and energized the raising of water and nutrients through roots and up trunks and branches, the inhaling and exhaling of gasses, the binding of atoms into molecules as learned as DNA, the thousand activities inside cells, and the multiplication of cells into the careful shape and color of a cherry. Each cherry was packed with little pieces of the sun, and as Monet swallowed, that sunlight flowed into him, joining the streams of sunlight already flowing through him, joining activities beyond those within plants. From his heart the sun poured warm red rays throughout his body. In his muscles the sun - in one small eddy of the gravitational currents on which the solar system flowed - pulled against the gravity of Earth to keep his body risen. Within his brain when he awoke this morning the sun had dawned as consciousness, and now that brain glowed with the shapes and colors of the landscape. Through his eyes the sun was seeing itself rising over that landscape, and through his hand the sun was painting a self-portrait.

By the ceaseless turning of the spheres, the darkness of the sky as steadily turned into dawn.

Amid thousands of planets where dawn only stirred up the dust or clouds, of this planet the increasing light stirred cells into activity.

For a long time upon this planet the dawn had been grey, two suns glowing over plains of dust and rock. Then volcanoes had pumped the greyness into the sky, and often the sunlight barely penetrated to the ground. Gradually the clouds had turned from grey to white, and the dawns gleamed upon oceans and lakes. The waters became tinged with green, and eventually that green overflowed the water and spread across the land. From a thin film the green rose into millions of shapes.

Now the dawn was green, not just because the sunlight flowed among the plants and illuminated them from the outside, but because the sunlight was also entering the plants and blending with the thickness of the ground, becoming an intricate flow of energy and matter, a new kind of burning that fused atoms into intricate shapes, including a skin with the texture for greenness. During the night this flow had slowed down, and many of the leaves had drooped or folded. As the suns rose in the sky they also rose from the ground as billions of round and oval and odd-shaped suns, suns glowing bright green.

The canvas was now almost full. Light glowed out of the narrow strip of sky at the top of the painting, and it glowed again from the water. Bright colors glowed from the grass and bushes and trees on the bank, from the lilies and fallen leaves floating on the water, and glowed again from their reflections. In less than an hour dozens of forms of life had emerged from the blankness of the canvas, a reenactment of that greater blooming through which all these forms had arisen. Four billion years ago the surface of Earth had been as blank as this canvas had started out, only plains of grey dust and rock and craters. But as sunrise after sunrise swept over those plains, sunrises adding into years, centuries, and hundreds of millions of years, their energy stirred the dust from the ground and gave it shape and color. The sunlight was a luminous brush that painted the planet, filling every inch of its surface with life. Each morning that brush had stroked across the land and water and added to and altered the living forms and colors, tiny changes that flowed into massive changes. That brush began by drawing a single cell, and it copied that cell over and over until the oceans were tinged green. It spread that green over the land and mixed it with brown streaks to thicken it into the air, the leaves each brush stroke that blended to make whole continents green. In the water that brush painted fish, and then it drew legs on them and swarmed them over the land. It painted some of those animals into birds and colored the skies with them. It painted insects to dot the land. It created many basic forms of life and painted millions of variations on each form, painting each variation over and over again, some of them billions of times every minute. It painted creatures in fantastic detail, inside and out. It gave them every color and mixture of colors. It dipped into the blueness of the sea and fixed that blueness onto the skin of whales. It painted bees as yellow as the biologized sun they harvested. It painted peacocks as walking rainbows to dazzle genes into renewal. It painted on ravens the blackness of space. It painted millions of kinds of eyes to flick open every morning, eyes through which the flowing light was focused into brains, into those grey canvases where all the forms and colors of life were painted again, where the same shape and color took on a different appearance to each species. And then, four billion years into its work, the light painted the shape of a human standing beside a pond, a painter painting the light.

By the ceaseless turning of one tiny planet moving somewhere in space, the darkness of the sky as steadily turned into dawn. The light swept over mountains and plains, rivers and oceans and deserts, all the landscapes it had been

illuminating on this planet for billions of years. It swept across the more recent prairies and forests and marshes, setting them glowing and flowing. And then, as the light flowed into one river valley, it found standing beside a pond a package of trillions of cells, throughout which sunlight pulsed. From the vagueness of night the dawn sketched out the lines of a face, the thicket of a beard, the colors and textures of clothes. Into two eyes the sunlight poured, and after circling through a brain, that sunlight came out again through a hand and affixed itself to a canvas. The light pulsing in those cells powered each shift of the eyes, each thought-bolt in the brain, each stroke of the brush. Those trillions of cells were portraying the behavior of light, not just with paint, but far more profoundly by their very act of painting. Monet is the word for how light behaves after fifteen billion years of cosmic evolution.

The thing he enjoyed most about painting was how it focused the mind, how it pushed aside mental chatter and left your attention filled and vibrant with the present moment, the immediate scene. It was a form of meditation through which the most subtle aspects of the world revealed their majesty.

Amid hills and rivers and wind that had always been numb, amid animals for whom dawn only clocked their daily activities, Monet was a pure, bright consciousness absorbing the universe.

He reached and placed one last stroke of yellow on the canvas, which was also a finishing touch on a much greater canvas.

The ceaseless turning of the spheres.

Within a single galaxy there might be billions of planets rolling steadily onward, and throughout the billions of galaxies in the universe, the number of planets was immense. Since each of those planets was constantly enacting a sunrise somewhere upon it, the universe was crowded with sunrise. The sunrises happened in great variety. The suns were large or small, near or far, single or double or triple, expanding, contracting, pulsing, or stable, colored red, blue, white, or yellow. The suns rose over planets large and small. They rose fast and they rose only one degree per hour. They rose as savage heat or as specks of light barely larger than other stars. They rose over planets whose nakedness to space made the sunrise a sudden burst of light, and they rose through atmospheres that diffused the light into a premonition and then a gentle blooming. They rose through atmospheres of every thickness and velocity and color, and their light was shaded differently by every one, and shaded differently from minute to minute as each atmosphere flowed. They rose through nebulas still settling onto newborn planets, and they rose over planets ten billion years old. They rose over planets of every color and mixture of colors. They rose over landscapes of nothing but craters, and slowly climbed into them. They rose over fields of scattered rock, of sand dunes, of dust. They rose over mountain ranges, and crept into canyons until they glowed from the river at the bottom. They rose gleaming over water flowing as oceans, bays, lakes and streams. Their fire col-

lided with the fire pouring from volcanoes. They rose through snowfalls, and over planets of solid ice. They set off momentary rainbows, and stirred the ancient yet always changing colors of gas planets. And on those billions of planets whose ceaseless turnings had turned them into life, the rising suns printed cells. The suns rose over oceans swarming with fish, over green plains, over forests and jungles, over ponds choked with reeds, algae, and lilies, over skies cloudy with birds, over megaliths and ceremonies, over cities gleaming with millions of suns of their own.

And all of these sunrises, all these innumerable turnings of darkness to light, were but tiny flickers of a much vaster sunrise, a greater coming of energy and activity. This sunrise ended a night that had lasted forever, a night totally huge and dark and empty, containing not one glow of light, not one ripple of energy, not one atom, no activity or matter of any kind, only infinite emptiness. Yet suddenly that darkness had been shattered by a blast of light. The light began as a single point of infinite intensity and at once began to swell, becoming a sphere of brilliant light growing larger and larger, filling space that never before had felt the touch of light. This sphere contained all the energy the universe would ever have and everything the universe would ever become. This was the dawning of a cosmos, a sunrise called the Big Bang, a dawn that would continue to expand until it was so vast that it broke into trillions upon trillions of tinier suns which would bathe the universe with day.

Those trillions of separate suns, each a brush stroke of bright color emerging from a canvas that had been black, blended together to form larger patterns, such as star clusters, spiral arms, galactic nuclei, the various shapes of galaxies, and clusters of galaxies. Yet all these shapes were but details of one larger image, an image billions of light years wide. All those trillions of dots of light combined to form an impressionistic portrait of a sunrise.

The energy set flowing by that cosmic sunrise would take on many forms. In the first instants of the Big Bang that energy dressed itself up as matter. It became the massive flowing of light from stars. It became the momentum that kept planets turning for billions of years and kept them reenacting over and over on a tiny scale the dawn from which the universe began. It became the ceaseless flowing of water, air, and land. It became the intricate flowings in cells and all the activities and feelings of life. It became Claude Monet awakening and rising to meet the rising sun. It enhanced itself into the energy pulsing through his brain and moving his eyes and hands. Through his hands it became a further kind of reenactment of sunrise. In such brains the cosmic dawn reached a fuller illumination, becoming brilliant enough for it to see itself, becoming intense enough for light to fall in love with the changing moods of light on the surface of a pond or the flowing of lights around a galaxy, becoming so penetrating as to reveal all the sharp and subtle tones of light that constantly changed as that roaring sunrise expanded ever further into space.

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