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## Down to the Atom

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*Sometimes, puzzles come in the form of stories. To solve them, you have to notice the important elements of the story and keep an eye out for anything seemingly random or out of place.*

He pressed the button. And he shrunk. Yes, he shrunk and shrunk, first reaching the size of his desk, then the fat cat sitting next to him, then small enough to be comparable to a mouse. And yet he kept shrinking, past his beloved bookshelf, containing his most prized possession: the 44 novels he wrote in his lifetime, the golden watch he got for his last birthday, still ticking, the Monopoly board still on the ground, with play money still scattered on the floor. He saw the pair of dice, a 5 facing him on one dice and a 5 on the other, with his metal hat token on Boardwalk, while the ship still sat woefully in jail. He kept shrinking and shrinking and shrinking. He saw the strands of carpet fused into the ground. Yet he kept shrinking. Now, he could see the woolen fibers making up the carpet. Still, he kept shrinking. Dust particles turned into merciless giants. Bacteria became fearful wiggling creatures. He made a mental note to clean his carpet when he came back, if he ever did. Then he saw it. The atom. He checked his stopwatch. 68 seconds. The hot soles of his shoes burned his feet. He resisted the pain and faded into the thick forest of atoms.