A Damp Night

The city is quiet. A dog trots by. A man smelling of shit and urine sits under a brightly lit sign window. An empty paper cup sits by his foot. No one is on the street to fill it.

Around the corner, down a one way street, under a stair well, a blob of blankets and old clothes snores, just loud enough to obtain a glance from the dog as she searches for food.

The air tastes crisp from the thick fog that creates a ceiling at three stories up. Sky scrapers penetrate the fog like sharp knives in silver Jello.

A lone police car moves slowly down the street. Offices above are vacated. Empty store fronts promise beer, stain removal and cheap greasy food. The only darkness from these windows comes from the unlit open signs.

The police car slowly continues down the street. The man and woman in front don't talk. They scan the storefronts windows above, looking for movement, but the world is dead.

After an hour, they arrive at the docks. Here, long lines form into deep tunnels with a green glow. Men, women and children stand in line with a few suitcases and down trodden expressions. Slowly the lines move forward. Groups are scanned by beams of light, and arrows light up on the floor.

An older woman pushes two small children forward, following the lights.

Two tunnels down, a large red counter hits zero, and a gate raises from the ground. Those left behind in line scatter towards shorter lines. The ground rumbles, and a man leaning against a pillar stares as pill shoots straight into the sky on a thick black cable.

The man exhales as the police car comes to a stop in front of him. A window rolls down, a visor raises on the unisex armor to reveal young blue eyes.

"Morning Frank."

"Morning Natasha. Yo Jesus. How are the streets?"

The passenger gives a quick nod, and stares at the lines. The young-eyed driver yawns as she speaks. "It's quiet. The devil must still be asleep if the docks are this calm."

"Yeah. The fog is probably keeping him cool. You kids want your coffee?"

Natasha nods and turns up the heater. Frank turns his head up to an open window above with a pale light and steam emanating from it. "Jimmy!" He yells. "Two hot coffees for the heat."

After a few seconds a small panel slides down under the glowing words "Last Chance Quickee Mart" slowly pulsing red. Frank pulls out two metal cylinders

with steam growing from them. He passes them through the open window. Both of the officers pockets beep, acknowledging the transaction.

"See you later Frank, stay dry." The window slides up, and the visor slides down. The police car rolls away and Frank lights another cigarette.

Around port five hundred, Natasha and Jesus are half way done with their coffees. The slowly pull to stop fifty yards away from gate 513-C. All of the doors at Port 500 are closed, except for the C Gate, which has the number two glowing in red above its entrance, and eight dead bodies lie in puddles of blood. Three men are arranged in a Mexican standoff in-between the bodies and the tunnel entrance.

Natasha grabs a shotgun from the gun rack and begins walking towards the trio. "Afternoon gentlemen. Could I have you please lower your weapons?"

A young man in a red jacket with two pistols glances over his shoulder towards Natasha in doubt. His opposite shoulder explodes with a crack, and he and the man to his right collapse. The third drops his guns and pulls the upper half of a body through the tunnel entrance. The counter decrements to zero and the door shuts. The elevator pill shoots to space.

Jesus calls in the report from the car as Natasha watches the pill slide into the sky.

Inside the pill, a man in black jeans and a thick brown jacket sits in his compartment trying to restart the android body. The pill has around a hundred of these capsules, each with a small family shooting into space. They slide up a black cable towards a platform with transports to anywhere in the galaxy. Out there, job offers, adventure and death await.

Young Michael flies upwards towards a seedy platform, the cheapest of the cheap, with the clothes on his back, a broken android and a small phone. He makes a small checklist. What does he need to survive? To repair this piloting android? Where can he get a gun? As the atmosphere thins, and he looks back at the dark planet, he wonders, what did it use to be like? When all of humanity hadn't decided to bet on other floating rocks. He pushes the thought away as he sees the vastness of space, and the hundreds of ships sitting on the other platforms, waiting to take off.

Airplane Cemetery

Throughout the western United States there are large dust fields full of aircraft. Some are full of planes built for World War II, some are commercial planes currently not being used, and others are just planes that have been abandoned to time. These fields are called boneyards, and they have acres upon acres of airplanes.

If you find yourself in Tucson, Arizona on a breezy day, you can take a drive down to the Davis–Monthan Air Force Base. On this base, they have the United

States largest boneyard of planes. All of the planes are unused, waiting for their time to shine with the Department of Defense. Most planes are kept in good condition, but some are in a state of disrepair. Either ready to be turned into parts, or broken beyond repair.

With a call ahead, you can get a tour, and you will find yourself walking past old Air Force Ones, fighter jets, bombers and big transport planes. Rows upon rows of dark grey planes, each identical and baking in the sun. Viewed from the sky, they look like someone had painted a houndstooth pattern across a swath of the desert. Up close, it just feels like wasteful government spending.

This is where Susan found herself on one spring day. At thirty-two, she felt she was finally learning about herself. Enough money from her Public Relations job that she felt comfortable traveling for herself, and she had been waiting for a long time for permission for this tour. When Susan explained the trip to her coworkers, they just did not understand. Arizona was a place folks were usually trying to leave, and here she was going to look at old airplanes? Why? Susan loved looking at storage facilities, warehouses, factories and more, and this was a fascinating use of American tax payer money. The Department of Defense was one of the largest consumers of things, and unless she joined the military, which she had no interest in, this was a rare chance to look inside the machine.

Despite their skepticism and confusion, Susan was undeterred. The night before she checked into a small hotel a ways from the base. She awoke early, obtained a delicious plate of chilaquiles, and drove her rental out to the base. She arrived early to her appointment in a white t-shirt, jeans, black half ankle boots, and a pair of aviators. She felt self-conscious wearing aviators here, would they make fun of her since she was not a pilot? She sat in her car worrying about all of the things at the guarded checkpoint while the guard searched his computer with her passport in his hand. Finally he handed her back her passport, and gave her directions on where to park and where to meet her guide.

Her anxiety and excitement clashed while she sat in an air-conditioned room waiting. The walls had all sorts of photos of planes from World War II until now. Finally a young man in the baggy camouflage uniform that everyone was wearing came in through a door. Introduced himself as a Private Jacob and asked her to follow him.

They went outside and Jacob showed her around on foot. Her guide showed her plane type by plane type. Big carriers, small jets, a field of helicopters, each with red and yellow tags hanging from various areas. Some with canvas wrapped around their engines, others with machines and a few people inspecting them. They walked the long sandy rows of planes. Sometimes they'd stop in the shade of a large carrier for the Private to explain something, and Susan peppered him with questions about how working in such a cool place was. He seemed mostly bored with it all, but answered questions honestly and friendly.

Near the end of her tour, the young Private in his aviators and uniform, pointed out a lone plane in the corner of the base. It was a small propeller plane, and

it looked very rundown. Bleached bright white with faded red stripes on the tail. One hole on the side, which looked like a door used to be there. The cockpit windows had been smashed in, but five passenger windows and a rear door seemed to be intact. Despite all of the windows and wear, Susan could not see inside.

Susan asked to get closer, but the Private refused. Jacob explained that is was a 1978 C-27A Spartan. It used to belong to the Coast Guard, but crashed off the coast of Cuba in the 90s. It was haunted he explained, and no one has gone within five hundred feet of it for over twenty years, in respect for the dead. Susan raised her phone to take a photo, but the Private grabbed her arm, reminding her of the agreement she signed stating no photography while on the base. Apologies were made, and they walked back across the fields, with Susan constantly glancing back until the rows of airplanes blocked the old derelict from sight.

That night, Susan enjoyed a burrito soaked in Mole and a beer as she thought about that old derelict plane. She had sketched what she could remember. She never had much skill for drawing, but its image was so striking to her, she had to put it somewhere.

The next day, Susan goes for a hike, she wants to get a good view overlooking the base. She climbs a hill after sneaking through a farmer's property. The view is beautiful, and she snaps some panoramas with her phone. As she stares out, Susan notices the old plane again. She zooms in with her phone camera, and notices the fence behind the plane is damaged. She feels dragged, as she slowly walks down the hill towards the fence. It's a long walk, but she stops in a the shade of a few trees. She's quite hungry, and realizes that she has gone a long way from her car, and that it's getting late in the day. But as she stares at the old plane, she must keep going.

She finally makes it to the fence import { Cities } from "components/Cities"

Cities

Depression

Depression is a wild experience. Some days, you're doing great. Life is just normal. Some people anger you, some excite you, and some make you happy. But every once in a while, depression is like taking an elevator to a deep dark basement. You'll get out at some point, but for a long time you'll be wandering in the dark. Nothing can make the day good. You might cry, get overwhelmed, be less than normal, it's a constant thing, even if the emotions aren't.

I've suffered from depression for a long time, and some days are worse than others. I've tried a lot of treatments, and many have helped. I don't have deep dark moods with the frequency or regularity or length that I used to, but they still happen.

But I am realizing, that meds and tele-therapy can only help so much when everyone else is dead on your space station.

Three years ago, our trade outpost received a visitor from a new species. It was great! Everyone was excited. They traded with us new technology that increased our ability to communicate in real time beyond the limitations of speed of light. We gave them some cool translator technology. Fun was had.

Alas, unbeknownst to them, they carried a disease that was deadly to humans. It quickly killed about 95% of our station's staff. The last five percent had varying levels of immunity, to which we were able to generate a vaccine and cure. Sadly for the other 20, their decline was so pronounced, they were too far gone for the vaccine to have any effect.

For the last three years, I have been keeping the station running alone. I'm perfectly healthy, and in the last year communications have greatly improved thanks to aforementioned trade, but today is not a good day.

Home, finally. Everyone else is asleep. Marta eats a snack, watches an episode of light hearted television, and gets in bed.

. . .

Today, her day off, finally. She heads to the marina. There, on the grass, propped on wooden blocks, is her dream. The Coconut Traveler. A 40 foot trimaran, deep in the state of repair.

The Landing at Hewey Vale

If you are traveling east on the road to the great city of Tarn, and you are coming from the other great city of this world, Angelino, you will find yourself on top of small mountain. Below you, you see a valley with a huge river. First time travelers may be concerned, because it looks far too wide to easily cross with a wagon or horses, but the experienced merchant or traveler will know, this is Hewey Vale, and Frederick runs a ferry to cross this immense river.

Frederick is an odd soul. His uncle was one of the founding members of the town, and his mother worked in the Grey Hawk Inn until her death five years ago. His father had died fighting for some king somewhere, a shiftless mercenary who only came home to Tarn once every few years to beat his mother and drink too much. When news of his death finally arrived in their small hovel in Tarn, Frederick's mother Arisa said she had had enough. No tears spilled from her eyes, just a fire. She wrote to her brother in-law, and two days later everything they owned was strapped to two horses, and they headed west. "Fuck this city, may every penny pinching grab ass whore fucking man die in a gutter!" she yelled as they passed through the gates.

The road was long, and since neither of them had ridden a horse before, the road was longer and more painful than either Frederick or Arisa had imagined. Frederick was five at the time. They stopped often, stretched, struggled with their mounts, and Arisa tried to comfort Frederick as he wailed of pain in his legs.

Two weeks later, they arrived at the town of Hewey Vale. Town might be generous. It had a nice inn, a few shops, and a sawmill. Arisa's brother in law, Christopher, owned the Inn, and had built it twenty years earlier with his partner Michael. It had five rooms upstairs, and a large bar and common room downstairs. Christopher kindly gave them a room, and in exchange, Arisa ran the bar. Michael and Christopher were amazing cooks, and Fredrick learned to love food.

The town sat at the edge of the Hare River. The road to Angelino goes straight through the town and ends at the dock. The Hare River is fierce, and sometimes boats come down river, but mostly folks just needed to cross it. When Frederick was young, the ferry master was Rosalina. She was a tough old woman, whom Michael always said used to be a pirate. As he grew, Frederick would often deliver her lunch or dinner from the Inn, or wake her up from the hammock she slept in next to the dock when someone at the inn needed a crossing. Rosalina became good friends of Frederick and Arisa, and as Frederick grew older he spent more and more time helping her with her ferry.

By fifteen, Frederick was a strong young lad. He would lift and move heavy freight at the inn, the sawmill and at the ferry. He was good at calming horses on the barge as they crossed, and was beloved by all in the town.

One stormy evening, Frederick was bringing up a new keg of ale from the cellar when Christopher yelled down. "Fred! Go find Ros, merchant here needs to cross in a hurry!"

Fred yelled an affirmative up the stairs, and delivered the keg. As soon as he put the keg down for Michael to tap, he jogged out the door. As the door opened, he was shocked to see a storm had appeared while he was downstairs.

Outside, cold thick rain fell. It was unusual for this late in winter, but Frederick ran through the water. His whole body was wet and shaking when he found Ros (where?). She went with him back to the Inn, and they both stood by the fire to dry off while Ros negotiated with the merchant.

Ros did not want to go out in the storm. "You must be mad, we can't make a safe crossing in this weather!"

"It cannot wait, I must cross tonight". The merchant said in a deeply serious voice. Frederick starred at him closely, and saw the man's unease. "I'll pay you triple your normal rate to cross now. Half upfront, the other half after the cross."

Ros eyed him as she wrung the rain out of her hair. "Fine. Can you keep your horses calm or do you need the kid to do it? He costs extra."

"No need, the two of us should be enough."

"Alright, let's go". Ros borrowed a cloak from Christopher that appeared from behind the bar, and stomped out the door. Fred went and dried off and changed clothes.

Fred must have been upstairs for less than half an hour, when he heard a large bang and the clattering of armor downstairs. He stopped his dawdling and headed downstairs to see the commotion. He slowly crept down the stairs, both excited and nervous. Armor rarely meant something good. It meant rowdy soldiers here to harass his mom, or highwaymen trying to get a free meal. While it had never happened to Fred, he had heard rumors that in times of war, soldiers would come through town and take all the young men and conscript them into the Army. Fred wanted none of that.

But, all was calm in the bar. Christopher and an armored man were talking and pointing down to the river. The front door was wide open and outside he heard men complaining about the rain. The soldier turned and went as quickly as he could out the door. Fred hurried down the steps and closed the door, but not before he saw ten soldiers in full armor with bows and arrows and swords start running for the river.

"What was all that about?" Fred petitioned Christopher.

"Ros is taking a wanted man across the river. Apparently he stole from the Governor of Tarn. Something mighty important and valuable, according the commander".

"Oh! Do you think they'll catch Ros and prevent him from crossing?"

"I doubt it, be careful, but maybe you can make it to the river before they can, you're no doubt faster than men in armor."

Fred looked at him in shock at the suggestion. The idea quickly got his feet moving. As he ran through the rain, he thought about how he loved Ros. She was like a second mother to him. He really hoped this criminal didn't hurt her. He ran hard down the hill. Harder and faster than he had ever run before. He must warn her!

The road to the river was not steep, but it was made of dirt, and with the heavy rain it was slick. While Fred had run the road many times, up and down, he rarely was out in the rain, and even less in the night.

As he got going he saw the soldiers ahead of him with their torches, but he found his steps slipping more and more in the mud. His feat got traction less frequently, and he tripped. And fell. And rolled. The wind was removed from his lungs and he was in pain. He laid there in shock. In pain. He was incredibly cold. Incredibly wet. He did not want to get up. His thoughts of Ros were still thundering in his head. He must warn her.

He rolled to his side and slowly lifted himself, his body in intense pain. The

right side of his chest hurt when he breathed. He held it as he started to jog towards the river.

He got to the shore of the river behind the soldiers. They were yelling to the barge. Ros was pulling the barge across the raging river. The thick two inch rope that spanned the river must be soaked through, but it was still head high, tied to a high post on the pier. Ros must not be hearing them, because she kept on pulling.

Fred stood and watched as the soldiers gave up yelling. Three lit fire arrows, two pulled back normal arrows, and two drew swords walking towards the rope. Fred yelled as the five arrows were released. Fred couldn't tell if the normal arrows hit their target, but two of the fire arrows hit the roof of the merchants wagon. Another barrage was fired and the wagon caught fire. Fred was focused on the flames flying in precision across the night sky, that he was confused when he heard a large splash. He looked to the dock and saw the rope was gone. The two remaining soldiers had cut it loose.

Fred screamed again and ran to the edge of the dock. He saw Ros's barge quickly being taken by the current. The whole barge was on fire. A bright beacon on the river. Two humans jumped off the barge into the river, each swimming in different directions. All of the soldiers were now firing arrows at the swimmers. It was unclear which swimmer was which, but they were both struggling and heading down river fast. Ros was a strong swimmer, but he saw both of swimmers go under a few times, and then neither were swimming any more. The soldiers started heading south along the shore. One yelled, "Find the bodies!"

Fred followed them at distance. His physical pain not registering. He was sobbing. His throat was raw. He had been yelling. What he was not sure, but he could not speak, but his eyes were on the river. Searching. Ros could pop up at any moment.

All night he followed the soldiers. They didn't acknowledge him, but constantly searched the bank with their torches. Eventually they found one body. They lifted it up and up it on the ground. It was a woman. A soldier cursed, put her down, and they picked up their search.

Fred approached the body, not ready to acknowledge what his eyes were seeing. It was Ros. Cold and dead. He laid over her and wept and screamed. An arrow was in her shoulder. Fred wept for a long time.

The sun began to rise, and Fred awoke as his body was shaking violently from the cold and wet. He couldn't control the shaking, but the sunlight hitting his skin felt amazing. Fred's senses slowly returned, and he remembered the night, and the dead body next to him. He stripped off his coat, and put it over Ros's limp body. He couldn't lift her in his arms. Instead he got under her and lifted her like he was carrying a child piggyback. His trudge back to the town was slow and took all day. His body was in immeasurable pain, and his heart was

destroyed.

When he returned to town, more soldiers were there. He went to the inn and dropped Ros's body on a table. Christopher and Michael were gone, apparently out searching for him.

When they returned, the found Fred in front of the fire, still in wet clothes, just shaking and staring into the flames. They gave him an ale, some bread, stripped him, and put him to bed.

He awoke two days later. Ros and the merchant had been buried in the cemetery. One with a headstone, one without. The soldiers had apparently found the merchant's body further down stream, but his cart and the barge had yet to appear. They had bought a horse to send a message back to the city, and then left for another thorough search of the river for the stolen goods, whatever they were.

A wake for Ros was held, and in the following weeks, Fred arose from his stupor. He started by taking a small rowboat, and repairing the rope across the river. Then he built a new barge. It took him all summer. But the fall, the route across the river was open, and he was ferrying folks across the river.

Years later, he built a small cabin next to the dock, and to this day, if the weather is clear, and you are not a soldier, Fred will ferry you across the river. Those in armor though, they are invited to swim instead. # Life by Longitude.

Longitude is the East to West number of your location on the planet. Combined with Latitude (Your North to South number) you can pinpoint any location. Because of the curvature of the Earth, each number is pretty useless without each other.

-122 -> -120

-122.718733,“3711 Skyfarm Dr, Santa Rosa, CA 95403” -122.48314,“2434 26th Ave, San Francisco, CA 94116” -122.401662,“601 Townsend St, San Francisco, CA 94103” -122.39017,“345 Spear St, San Francisco, CA 94105” -122.35084,“300 Roy St Seattle, WA 98109” -122.35053330659868,“601 N 34th St, Seattle, WA 98103” -122.119248,“482 University Ave, Los Altos Hills, CA 94022” -122.090126,“2025 Garcia Ave, Mountain View, CA” -122.08088,“1190 Brucito Ave, Los Altos, CA 94024” -122.07895,“1227 St Matthew Way, Los Altos, CA” -121.95309,“16201 Shannon Rd, Los Gatos, CA” -121.15365,“836 Lassen View Dr, Westwood, CA 96137” -121.144571,“816 Timber Ridge Rd, Westwood, CA 96137” -120.670409,“81 Higuera St, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401” -120.65561,“1591 Slack St, San Luis Obispo, CA 93405” -120.653079,“1 Grand Ave, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401” -120.649669568565,“2074 Loomis St, San Luis Obispo, CA 93405” -120.64809,“2456 Santa Clara St, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401” -120.63599,“1493 Southwood Dr, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401”

- 119

-119.17729,“Camp Oljato”

-74 -> -73

-74.00642,“601 W 26th St, New York, NY 10001” -74.001966,“111 8th Ave, New York, NY 10011” -74.001119,“455 Broadway, New York, NY” -73.992781,“114 5th Ave, New York, NY 10011” -73.991437,“300 Cadman Plaza W, Brooklyn, NY 11201” -73.990711,“122 Bay 38th Street, Brooklyn, NY” -73.984397,“362 15th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11215” -73.976806,“29 School St., Beacon, NY 12508” -73.956634,“125 Green St, Brooklyn, NY” -73.951189,“1059 Bergen St., Brooklyn, NY 11216”

-0.2 -> 0

-0.146364,“Belgrave House, 76 Buckingham Palace Rd, London SW1W 9TQ, United Kingdom” -0.126085,“St George Wharf, London SW8 2FH United Kingdom” -0.089098,“Matisse Court, 18 Featherstone St., London EC1Y 8SL, United Kingdom”

The Light Collective

In the fall of 2025, five Americans started at the University of Greenwich, in London, England. Their studies were different, but met each other in an English class, and became friends over their love of Sculpture, Electronics, Graffiti, and Post-Punk Rock. Other Americans in London blend into other culture groups, as the United States has much less of a defined culture compared to other nations coming into London for school and work. These five though made their own social group, and became fast friends.

Their third year, Luna proposed a project to Chris, James, Cindy and Sylvia. They had been experimenting with low power light sculptures. They presented four sculptures, all smaller than a meter cubed. Luna wanted the crew to build a series of these, and then present them at an art show. How cool would that be? The crew was ecstatic, and dove into the project. Over the next six months they turned out fifty sculptures, all different sizes, shapes, and colors. Some of the sculptures ran on batterys, but most needed to be plugged into the wall.

They shopped their collection around to galleries, not knowing how the art world worked, and were quickly rejected or ignored. Frustrated, they struggled with what to do with the sculptures. Defeated, the sculptures were in piles and boxes. Unlit goblin faces and blue Pikachus collecting dust under beds and on tables. Cindy posted photos and videos of her favorites to various social networks, but got no traction. Sylvia started an Etsy store where she sold a couple, but in general, nothing happened, and the project slowly slid from the crew’s mind.

James invited them all over for a board game night one evening, with a surprise in mind. One by one, they arrived, and all stood shocked outside his building. There, in the alley, was one of their sculptures. Floating on the wall was the surprise: a glowing green polygon unicorn, emerging from a broken surveillance camera. James saw the four of them dumbfounded from his second-story window, and came down.

"It is using the camera's power!" James exclaimed with glee.

Everyone started getting giddy as they went upstairs to enjoy beer and board games. Chris in his excitement, proposed the turning point: "lets put our sculptures all over the city!"

With that simple proclamation, the gang started a slow but effective project. Over two years, they slowly replaced hundreds of security cameras across the city.

It was a hit.

A map of places traveled and lived.

A look into APIs for getting your current location

https://macwright.com/lonlat/

Places this book was written

The following contains a set of vignettes written either during or after I was writing at each of these places. I often used these little paragraphs as a way to warm up my typing and thinking.

Both the bench and chair on my dinning room table.

My small upstairs office desk

Kitchen & Coffee, Beacon, NY, USA

The Beacon Daily, Beacon, NY, USA

Big Mouth Coffee, Beacon, NY, USA

Quiet piano jazz places over the speakers as a line of women discuss the comparative virtues of coffee shops. In front, a trio of hikers coffee orders have been mixed up while they debate which train to catch back into the city. I sit by the front window, lost in my computer screen, as the occasional car drives down the wintery Main St.

Terminal A Delta Lounge, ATL, USA

The patio of room 152, Carambola Beach Resort, St. Croix, US Virgin Islands

The Metro North Hudson Line Train, North Bound

Drunk on wine and sick from running to catch the midnight train, i stare into the distance unable to think in complete sentences. Melissa constantly tosses and turns next to me, completely confident and safe, face smushed against the window. An elderly man talks loudly to our left, while every other row sleeps soundly. No express train at this hour, and at each stop one or two rows awake and filter off the train.

The mask tight against my mouth makes me hot, and electronic music bumps in my skull as I dream of bed at stare at the darkness of the Hudson.

The Peekskill Coffee House, Peekskill, NY, USA

This place is alive! Shaped like a wedge of cheese, a line for coffee is almost out the door along one side of the wedge. A cacophony of tables are full of pairs and triplets chatting over coffee drinks, hiding from the fifteen degree Fahrenheit temperature outside. No two chairs match, no two tables the same. Hand made quilts and paintings scatter the walls. I find an old white table that has one metal chair, and I can barely fit my thick legs underneath. My traditional coffee house order is made: A large black coffee and a pastry. The chocolate chip cookie is the most inviting, so I get that.

My tiny white desk is next to a half high bright red wainscoting wall. The top of the wall has rectangular windows where I watch a young woman in perfectly circular glasses, a black face mask and red curly hair churn out crepes like this city has an addiction to them.

I bought a pound of coffee beans when I got the coffee and cookie, as they apparently roast their own. I picked a Honduras roast mostly because it was a light roast, and had a cute squirrel on the logo. I slightly regret it given how bad the house blend is, but supporting local businesses and adventure is far more interesting than regrets.

The Opus Lounge, White Plains, NY, USA

A cute but weird hotel bar. Listening to couples discuss Valentine's Day, stories of their youth, pre-pandemic endeavors. Most couples are older. One pair is headed to a steakhouse for dinner. The bartender is a kind woman with a loud laugh from Nicaragua. Only Heineken on draft, but a decent bottle list for beers. The chairs are comfy, but the tables are all small hexagons which makes typing a bit difficult.

planes in the sky on birthday

Rocky

A state machine diagram for the game Rocky.

The world tree and its root netwok.

Space Magic

Ring space stations are where the good money is for gravity mages. While Arclight is a perpetually spinning ring with an artificial sun and a constant nine meters per second of gravity, someone always needs a little bit of space magic to fix their problem.

Take the Harbor Boys Syndicate. They started as a small time gang on the docks of Hecate 10. Now they are one of the largest organized crime groups in this sector of space. They are also currently the group that recently paid me to turn off the gravity in the Governor's bed room, which ended me up in my current predicament. The predicament: I am hiding under a table, which is sadly between two groups of heavily armed gristly looking folks. One is the local syndicate boss and fellow gonna, and the other I can only assume belong to the Governor. This was good work, it paid a lot, did not take much time, and no one really got hurt.

I hate yelling, and loud noises. Thankfully I can use gravity to quiet things in my studio, but out here I don't have time to prep those kind of spells. Instead, I start using magic I rarely touch on, but is technically related to my skills: material magic. I've drawn a bunch of circles and lines on the ground underneath me with my black marker, and I really hope I did this right. It has been so long. I push some energy into the circle, and the floor starts to dissolve! Just what I wanted! And then I'm falling towards the exterior of the ring, but thankfully, there is a room below me. That was the third floor after all.

I am running, whether or not they notice, I have no idea, but I do not care. As the saying goes, "Take the money and run!"

I slow down to a walk after a few blocks. No one is looking at me here. I catch my breath, and head to grab a train back home. Comfortable with the money in my account and another disaster escaped.

My studio is in Sector J, down a small alley the locals called the valley of the mages. There are sixteen of us that live in a variety of apartments in the dead end alley. All of the apartments are different, but each door has a large sign with our name and specialty. My sign says: "Hideo Saito, Gravity", and is on the second floor on the left side of the alley at the top of a small set of stairs. Underneath my studio is a small cafe where many mages stop in between jobs, and locals swing by to ask advice, or be friendly.

It is a nice little community, and I felt deeply at home and comfortable in it. I landed on this station once my apprenticeship ended on Bason 6 eight years ago,

and I made friends over ale in this cafe the moment I walked in. My fellow mages are kind, and we share jobs and recommendations and look out for each other. The majority of my jobs involve simple but expensive work, where I correct the gravity inside of space ships, fix apartments in tall buildings with low gravity, or help fix a train's gravity engine. Rarely I would be hired by passing pilgrims looking for mages to help them terraform a new planet, or during lean times, I take jobs from less reputable folks to make ends meet. This is all to say, I keep busy.

A few weeks later, a knock on my door wakes me from some reading. "Who is it?" I yell into the air, and a computer responds with "Unknown Person". Ugh, privacy blocking, just what I need. A lack of identity means either someone rich or someone in a gang. I get up, and slowly open the door. "Hello?"

"Hideo! Great work on the job! I've got more work. Let me in and let us share a drink."

"Mikey." I sigh as I move aside and gesture him in. Mikey is my contact with the Harbor Boys. He's chubby, but I know he can knock a few heads together. As he has done to me in the past when I have lost a bit too much money gambling.

He goes straight to my fridge, grabs two beers, and meets me at my desk. Handing me the beer as we both sit down. "Hideo. I know you like to take time between jobs. But I have got a problem."

"I am still a bit rattled from seeing so many guns pointed at me Mikey. Can you use someone else?"

"This problem is slightly related to you, so I'd prefer to keep it with you."

"Man, I've kept low all month. I haven't done shit."

"Relax, we're square." A sip of beer, and the smile disappears from Mikey's face. "Look, there's another gang pushing on our territory. They brought a gravity mage, and they are messing up the docks. We need you to go repair the wards while we strengthen our forces there."

...

Gangs bring in a gravity mage who is causing turmoil across the station? Stumble onto some kind of conspiracy? # Stones

On the western shore of a lake there rests a red pagoda. This pagoda has a singular stone beneath it. This stone is roughly two feet in diameter, with a sign to the right of it. The sign, in bold letters, instructs you to stay on the path.

I found this pagoda one misty morning while investigating the lake for a new fishing spot. I had cast into the lake at various areas that looked like they might be hiding some trout or bass, but nothing bit. I didn't fish for long, because

I kept seeing the pagoda from the corner of my eye. It was so striking in its brilliant red color. It seemed to be almost glowing.

Each cast, I noticed myself slowly navigating closer and closer to the structure, until I was so close I could see the sign. My curiosity was finally pushed to the breaking point and I put down my rod and walked over. My confusion was great. What path? There was only one stone. I looked around, maybe I was missing something. Nothing in the ground, no stones hidden in the moss or trail ducks sitting in the weeds. It didn't look like the lake had risen and taken some of the path either.

Still confused, I drank a sip of coffee from my canteen, and put it away in my pack. I then stood on the stone and looked towards the lake.

Something was off. Just a minute ago, there had been mist rising from the lake and a low fog in the air. Now there was no fog, no mist, but everything else was the same... until I looked down. Below me, now floating a few feet ahead, was another stone.

Curious, I stepped on it. Another stone appeared in front of me. I was so fasciated, I kept jumping from stone to stone, until after a while, I noticed the lake below turn purple. I stopped abruptly on the stone and looked around. I was not in the same lake. I had maybe stepped ten or so times, and now the lake was purple, and there was only one stone behind me and one stone in font of me.

The lake I stood floating upon now was much different in layout than the one I had left. The shore was much closer, the banks were not filled with reeds but rather black sand. I bent down to touch the water and it was not water at all, but some sort of viscous fluid, also the air was freezing cold, while my body above the stones was the same nice temperature as it was outside when I first got on the path.

Steps

Finds someone asleep on a stone

Leaves path

Gets lost

Returns to path an old person

Path ends? Loops? Loops. Sees self at end of path

Original Prompt: > A writer stumbles upon a mysterious garden that transports people to different dimensions with each step they take. # Thank You

Thank you so much for reading and helping create this book. I've never created anything like this, and your support means the world to me.

Thank you to the following people for contributing to my Kickstarter to make this book a reality.

•

Trio

A young ranger in a quiet wood.
An ancient doorless structure stands in her way.

Rolling hills of grass and grain.
A young mage stands, her hair blowing in the wind, lost in thought.

A glass of beer sits in a small pub, midday in a quiet corner of the city.
A young swordsman drinks and revels in the calm.

A union stands on the precipice.

As the sun sets, the city shivers. Everyone stops for a second to feel the tremor. Deep underground, a bell is chiming. A deep resonate ring, slowly repeating, each time getting louder.

The swordsman looks up from his beer, wondering what the sound is. He stands, leaving a payment on the table, waving to the owner, and leaves the pub. His ears are not great, but still, he feels pulled towards the sound. Downhill, towards the city center, he walks. Fixated on what he believes is the direct source of the noise and vibrations.

When he reaches the center of town, the old town well seems to be the source of the sound. He shifts his leather armor, tightening and readjusting as if he were going into battle. He has three swords on him, and he reaches for the one at his hip as he looks over the edge of the well. It hasn't produced water in the few years he has lived here. As he glances down the hole, nothing glints or moves in the darkness. He stares for a few minutes, sure this is the source of the sound and the vibrations, but he can see no source.

The swordsman feels uneasy, but unsure of what to do. He steps back, and walks to the edge of the square. He takes a seat on a bench, pulls the largest blade from his back, and begins polishing it while staring intently at the well.

Far to the East, deep in the woods, the ranger feels the vibrations. And while she does not hear any ringing, her mind is immediately cleared of what she was doing. This windowless ancient building has lost all of her attention, and instead stares to the West. It is dark, but she feels she must leave now. Her horse waits diligently next to a tree, The ranger mounts the horse, turns it towards the city and heads off quickly.

As dawn rises, she reaches the city gates. She stables her horse, buys a piece of bread, and walks to the city center. There she repeats the same ritual as

the swordsman, without knowing of his earlier actions. She then sits at another bench, staring intently at the well, chewing her bread. Nearby the swordsman notices her, but is still focused on the well.

In the fields to the West, the ringing and the vibrations do not bother the mage, but eventually she notices a pulsating magic within the space before the sound. This pulse wakes her from her trance. By noon, after much walking, she is staring at the well from another bench.

Besides these three, no one else notices the shivers or ringing or pulse any more. Now it is just part of the city's hum, ignored by all.

The stars come out, and the mage stands.

She walks to the edge of the well, and begins muttering a spell. A light emerges from her hands and floats above her. This draws the other two back to the well as the ball of light drops into the depths of the hole.

The three stare as the white light descends slowly.

Minutes pass as the light descends. Finally the ranger speaks up. "Is that spell for light or something else?"

"It is for detect evil, but conveniently also creates light" the mage smiles in response without looking away from the hole.

- **Introduction/Exposition:** Three heroes meet at a well.
- **Inciting Incident:** The mage brings them together to investigate the corrupt magic causing earthquakes and threatening to destroy the city.
- **Rising Action:** The team investigates old dry caverns, fighting monsters, examining the hurt aquifers and geology. The team finds a fort blocking the water.
- **Climax:** A raid and fight in the fort
- **Falling Action:** Discovered plans to steal the water
- **Resolution/Denouement:** water returns, the aquifers slowly heal

Weird Weather

The drone is deafening.

A single sin wave, never changing, is ringing in my ears. Is this real? Is this normal? I do not know. I haven't seen anyone else in a few days.

Was that a change in the sound?

No lights are flashing, but I see the printer roar to life.

If the drone was lower, I might hear its traditional back and forth thwack sound as it slammed left to right, back and forth, vomiting ink as it flew by. But no, I hear nothing besides the constant sound.

I grab the paper as it slides onto its precarious plastic diving board. A weather update from my meteorologist team to the North, in the remains of Montreal. A dust storm has appeared and seems to be heading South.

1. **Introduction/Exposition:** A ruined world, where storms appear out of nowhere that destroy everything in their path. Only weather people can predict them and have become international heroes.
2. **Inciting Incident:** A remote weather station goes offline with no notice. a band of heroes gathers together to go investigate and rescue them.
3. **Rising Action:** The storms in the area are unpredictable, a few members of the party die.
4. **Climax:** The remaining two members of the story reach the remote outpost. The outpost is remaining on the last few people due to power outage and lack of food.
5. **Falling Action:** The team works to repair the generator, and starts predicting storms again. Radios for more food and help.
6. **Resolution/Denouement:** The two surviving members stay on for a year to stabilize the base, and return home forever changed.