Once in the backseat, age twelve or so and bored to death by the Pacific Coast Highway, I saw a UFO. I remember two phosphorically bright balls spinning around each other on a fixed axis, hurtling away from the night. *Mom! Dad!* But by the time I had their attention, it was lost in the sunset. At the time the Air Force was still overflying California, slow-rolling down the street like a jealous ex, but with *that?* My mind reeled over the implications. I was certain this would upend my whole impression of the cosmos, soft as it still was. And then I took a brief nap. Fifteen minutes later I was on my phone, and the UFO was something that had happened to someone else.

This is the strategy. It doesn’t work. I wake up to a 10 AM alarm, still in my street clothes and smelling of tunnel. I force myself to get a good look in the mirror — *this* is you, you are *here* — and not to feel the relief when it fogs over.

Over and over I return to what I saw on that screen. I push heedlessly through the metro. At first I keep my eyes dead ahead during the transfer at Century Avenue. Then I cave. I scan the endless, scrolling Mirror Sea displays for any sign of the diving-bell, striding backwards along the moving walkways. *Maybe it’s a common thing*, a visual motif in the Sea I never noticed before. Maybe there’s some mathematical reason. I imagine striding into my meeting with Deng in seventeen and a half minutes and asking about it. *Oh, I was out chasing last night and I saw the diving-bell floating around in the Sea. What’s the deal with that?* I can hardly imagine a faster way to infuriate her.

Twenty-six minutes later I burst through her door. I’m certain she can smell the mania and fatigue on me. I wonder if I still have dried flowers in my hair. Deng says nothing about my tardiness, but for someone who wants no part in my paper, she suddenly has lots to say about that. She slides me a rollscroll displaying nine neat equations.

“What am I looking at?” My voice is hoarse and guarded and somehow askew.

“What do you think?” she asks, mild and nonjudgmental.

”They’re...solutions to a wave equation?” This is an incredibly vague answer, but Deng accepts it cheerfully and then swipes over to a graphing program. There I see something vividly, horribly familiar, undulating and tessellating in place. She stares at me, waiting for a reaction. It takes me ten full seconds to remember I’m not being accused of a crime.

“These are...”

She doesn’t want to say it, and that’s how I know.

“...the diving-bell,” I surmise.

“The inversion capsule you generated in loop-lock with your first patient,” she assents, steering hard around my pet name for the thing. “I’m deriving a version of it from scratch. It will work just the same way, only it won’t be...” *Me.* It won’t be a little piece of me.

“I thought you didn’t want anything to do with this.”

“Well forgive my curiosity!” A new problem always puts her in a nice mood, and she says this theatrically, angling for a laugh. Her smile fades, though, watching me. “Are you all right?”

*Yeah-no-I’m-fine-really, just-didn’t-get-much-sleep-is-all, this-looks-great.* I stumble through five more minutes of this. And later on, I try to make this sound like a parting afterthought: “Hey, could I get a copy of those equations?”

At lunchtime I pace around campus, elbowing through undergrads and glaring at the ones whose getups betray an interest in Ripplechasing trends. I do two circuits, buying a zongzi and a protein bar and eating neither. Something occurs to me: the golden-black spikiness in my head is gone. Was it possibly that microdose of guangpan? Or, just now, staring at Deng’s model in soberspace, was that enough? Or — let’s not be coy about the delusion chasing its own tail around my mind here — did the diving-bell find me in the Mirror Sea this morning, and deliver the inversion then?

What’s frustrating is that there’s a way to get an objective answer about what I saw or didn’t see in the Sea, and it’s right here at YINS. I just don’t want to go up there. But halfway through my third lap, I groan inwardly and call the elevator for the top floor of Building 6. *Please don’t be there,* I pray. *Please be streaming a daychase, or eating a whole bucket of chicken fry and not getting bloated, or whatever it is you do. Just not here.*