***A Bird’s Eye View*** inspired by Virginia Woolf

Leaning back in my chair, my body melts as my heavy eyelids slowly collapse—my mind flutters. Looking inside my skull, I see the constant firing of all my neurons. An eagle eye’s view of a city, at the edge of dusk and nightfall, dotted with lights each constantly flickering on and off without pattern at different times than the billions of others. Despite the randomness, images emerge playing in succession like a movie. Each chapter is a short film blending into the next through some vague connection, but I don’t care—I’m just watching from above.

I’m not the only one watching.

Three Grateful Dead bears on my desk. Little wooden figures about half the size of my thumb sitting in an arts-&-crafts-y wood box with my name written on the top: “to: spencer.” I love receiving gifts. As I watch her place the box in my hand, I stare at it for a while. Each one of the billions of lights joins in synchronicity—illuminating all at once, the night sky is instantly filled with the warm hue of candescence just like the cul-de-sac that sat in front of my old house became brilliant with a strike of lightning at midnight. Opening the box, I unclip the flimsy gold metal hinge. Light is pouring out of it. The dam’s concrete walls disintegrate as the torrent strengthens. Three Sankara Stones are smiling at me. The Temple of Ecstasy. My eyes are golden in their reflection. The lights return to their randomness, and I watch images emerge again. “WOAH,” “This is amazing,” “Thank you!” I don’t know what to say or how to react. I hate having to receive gifts.

A toy train sits on my monitor. My name is on the side in all capitals but not from a marker or crayon—it’s the train's name too. With its paint starting to wear away at the edges, the wood underneath exposes itself—a humble brag of its age. It’s older than me. Sitting on the carpet of my old house, my hand is wrapped around the train. It follows the wooden train tracks my brother, my sister, and I laid down for them. Each with a train in our hands, we drag them up the hills and push them down. They derail and fall onto their sides. The lights flash in harmony again. Soaring high above the city, I watch as it grows. This city is smaller than the behemoth it is now. I am now gliding through the streets. The collective is gone; now, I can see each bulb with its beautiful warm glow. They sit on window sills and out in front of shop windows boldly for everything to see. Their candescence spills into the streets—a wildflower meadow where each flower is a reflection of the bulb in a puddle or grain of sand or shiny pebble at peace on the sidewalk. The city, lacking many of the high-rise buildings that exist now, is free. There are no billboards advertising perfume with half-naked women. There are no jumbotrons forcing sugar and artificial pleasure into my consciousness. A car can drive straight without stopping. Liberty is in full effect.

“The wait is finally over.” A newspaper, with a nice view of the top of my head, hangs from my wall. Its distinctive blue color is plastered all over it. Its distinctive memories are plastered across the city near the brightest bulbs. I am sitting on a counter with him to my right. We are walking around a table, pool sticks in our hands. I am on the top bunk—sleeping above him. I take my finger off my lighter and run away from the fireworks fizzling on the asphalt. We watch them explode as my Mom stares at us in disappointment. I am sitting on a dock with him to my left with our legs hanging off as our feet barely reach the water. The soles of my feet sit perfectly on top as if I am walking on it. A cordial comfort in silence—that's how you know you've found somebody special. As I sit atop the high-rise, I am omniscient. I can see every bulb and hear every conversation in the streets. There are only a few others that tower over the city with this extremity.

A wax paper wallet covered in Japanese art. It has a few indents where I tested its claim of being “impossible to rip”—it didn’t lie. It watches me like the rest of my desk, but when I look towards the city the lights don’t react. Most of them turn off with only a few bulbs staying on but remain as dim as they can be. As I walk through the city, it’s now a shell of its former self. From the vibrant bustling city it once was, in an instant, it’s dark. Everyone has fled for their lofts. The streets have entered their after-hours. It might be raining too. Anyone daring enough to explore at this hour would be swallowed up by the unrelenting cityscape as each dark alleyway and the few streetbound manics ensnare them. It’s a great wallet though.

Two wooden cabinets are sitting on my desk facing each ear respectively. These are special. With them perched high above, paint brushes float towards the lights one note at a time. As they approach, the lightbulbs brighten. Starting to paint, the brushes smear and smudge the city. A potter, like the expert he is, smashes his clay to rethrow it into a new piece with impossible curves and alluring details. With their final strokes, the brushes disappear. Now, I glide down towards a small boat in the middle of the newly rethrown ocean. As I look around, I see the illumination of infinite candles surrounding me. The billions of wispy flames pierce through the night sky as they reflect off of the water. A neighborhood of a million boats have replaced the concrete buildings that sat here previously. As the brushes threw the city deep into the ocean, only the best managed to float. I watch as people swim toward other boats. I hear laughter. I see love. I watch as a few friends wrestle. I hear the splashing of a group playing tag on a sandbar. I taste the air ripe with salt. Sky lanterns gently float toward the stars creating a dome of unbounded brilliance.