The World

I was outside, up on Mountain Home Road, late at night. I stood with my back pressed against the passenger door of my car. It was only me out here. The car was not running, and there were no lights around besides the ambient glow of the city below my feet, the evanescent moon and its stars shifting gently through the sky. It was enough illumination to give the mountains of The Enchantments a silhouette, its finer details obscured behind the scattering light. On the hood of the car, a JBL lite speaker turned on but with nothing playing. Thin wisps of fog and snow crawl along the ground in dunelike patterns, formless and fluid as they move across the mountain's crest and down to the valley floor. There were almost no sounds, no crickets, bugs or birds; winter's icy needle-fingers had done away with them months ago. The ground was frozen and lightly frosted, the trail carved out by dozens of vehicles dissecting the shrubbery and brush in such a way that, from above, it would look like a colossal snake pushing itself over the saddle of the hill.

Amongst it all, I still stood, taking it all in. I turned my head from the buzz of the city to the glint and glimmer of the cosmos, the moon, and the blackness behind it all. I scanned the sky, drawing lines between constellations in my head and thinking of the true scale of it all, how incredibly distant it was. I continued looking, until suddenly there was a spot in the sky that was completely dark. As though someone had spilled a cup of ink over it; a large black splotch in an otherwise star-spangled sky. The spot grew, until the sky was empty. Then, it dripped down, out from the cosmos and from the sky into the land. The silhouettes of grandiose mountains shifted and warped and bled into itself and its surroundings until there were no more mountains. No more mountains, no more stars. It only continued, and I could only watch. Silently, the darkness

continued swallowing the environment, snuffing out what light there was and thickening the air into something almost tangible. Soon only the city lights were there, and they too were gone eventually. Gone with everything else. I had not moved an inch, but I was somewhere new. Somewhere where there was nothing. I turned and turned, the conquest of the dark now choosing to claim my senses and perceptions. I lost my sense of direction, of being, of living, until eventually I could not even see myself. I tried to look at my hands, my feet, my legs and chest, all of them gone, formless, shapeless, with the black. I turned around once more, my eyes desperately searching for something to hold in this lawless place. I did not expect it, but they found something. Amongst it all, the dark had failed to claim one thing. It stood there, perhaps 50 feet away, a beacon of reflecting light in a place where light had no rule. It was blinding, as I was so overwhelmed by the darkness. It was unlike anything I saw around me. It was captivating and curious, and I began to move closer to it, my legs growing minds of their own, guiding the rest of my body and mind like a heavy rucksack. I began to see details as the light beckoned me forward, closer to it. Finally, I stood only inches away and got a close look. It looked back at me. It was you.

I looked deep into your eyes as they looked deeper into mine. I saw in them the stars of the sky. The constellations, all moving and dancing in unison. I saw the sun and the moon in the same sky together, flooding it with a warm pink and purple light I had never seen before. You laughed, and in that I heard the birds, bugs, and animals that winter had driven out. They played together, built nests and hives together, shared the land together, and formed a sprawling and diverse ecosystem. I reached out to touch your face, and I felt a breeze wash over me; cool and gentle. It rushed through my hair and billowed in the break of my jacket. It carried comfort and joy on its back, bringing it all to me like blood cells bringing oxygen to the brain. I embraced

you, bringing you into my arms and feeling your warmth, warmth like no other, warmth that not only heated my body but melted my soul, scorched my heart, and set my mind ablaze with passion and love. In the smell of your hair were the four seasons. I smelt warm air loaded with pine and sap, freshwater tossed up into the air in celebration. I smelt the fall, wet leaves riding along crisp air pushed by the fluctuating temperatures. Then winter, and it is dry, frigid air travelling down my trachea and drying it out, my breath now visible amongst the pale white. And just as quickly came spring, the blossoms of flowers, the alpine air flowing down from high amongst the trees on the mountains. Not being able to bear any more, I kiss you, long and deep. I close my eyes, but still I see. I saw it all come back. I saw the darkness recede, pulling its inky tendrils away from what it had taken and exposing it to the dim light of the night once more. In that kiss I saw the mountains form, the rivers fill, the seasons flip by like minutes, the city glowing and bustling as the stars danced high above it, everything whirling around and around until I pulled away and opened my eyes again. You were gone. I stand, with my back against my car, the engine off, the speaker dead, and alone. I looked out at it all again. The evanescent moon. The silhouettes of the mountains. The glow of the city below. You were gone, but still, I was with you. You are my world.