

An Hour With A View

The room is Victorian, a burrow of masculine repose. Like all great, and personal spheres, it is without angular, lightless corners, but rather a chamber of smooth transitions. The ceiling, a patterned arch, effused a warm incandescence that lent both an embracing comfort, and an invitation to discourse.

A soft baroque curled around the decanters, and the smell of timeless leather bindings mixed with fine tobacco to saturate the senses.

Two stately chairs, deep with elegant wear stand before a tender fire, and direct the occupants towards the far boundary of the room, which is not there.

Without lay the universe, not so much at once, but a swimming depth that draws you over the precipice. By some mixture of magic, and technology, the entire wall is absent, and replaced by the enormity of space from low Earth orbit. Below spun their home, and everyone else's.

From two hundred miles up, the Earth is huge. An oblique perspective conjures the impression of a rough cloth: the clouds burs, and snags. Following the eye to the horizon, an infinitesimal gradient of hue begins in the ocean's deepest cobalt, and carries to the blackest black known.

Beneath the clouds lay the geography classes of youth. Map lines from the mind's eye give dimension, and humanity to vast brown patches. Peninsulas, and isthmuses leap out; coastlines, lakes, and mountain ranges demand a closer study.

In the north Atlantic, a swirling cloud mass bespeaks of terror brewing, and nature's fury. Thunderheads spike up against the vaporous panoply, and remind us of relative might.

Off to the terminator, light prisms through a slender rime of atmosphere, and splinters into a thousand cynosures. A full Crayola box.

Looking straight down, the outer banks of Australia's Barrier Reef rear up from below the sea, their three-dimensional pinnacles, and ridges standing like ancient battlements. At the edge of human vision, an assault from the sea can almost be inferred.

An instant later, a shooting star crosses our view like some incoming menace, and burns with an edgy sparkle as it vectors down gravity's pull. An ageless struggle: nickel-iron vs waiting oxygen, the latter a true heavyweight.

Twelve minutes earlier in western Siberia, a forest fire raged, its smoky plume crossing the continent, and mottling the sea below us.

One planet, eternal motion, Gaea. From this point of view, it moved, and resounded as a single organism. Beautiful, and rare.

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