



SHOELACES

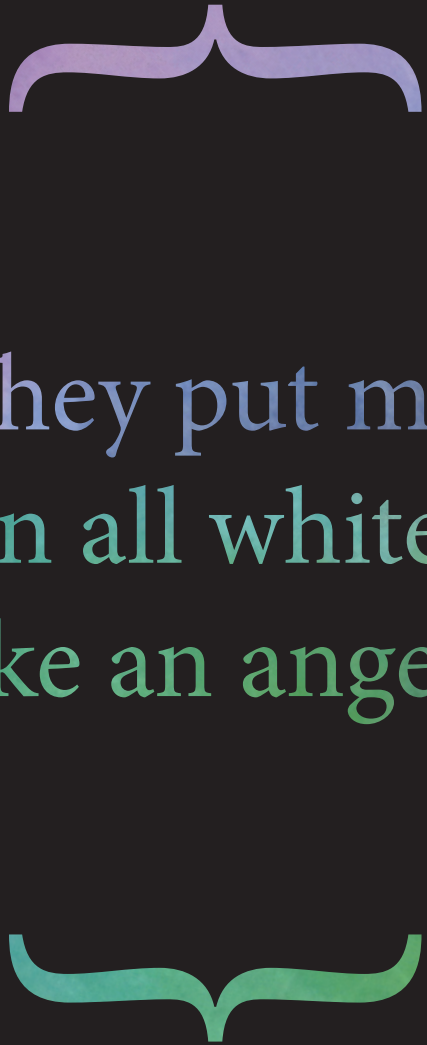
Camille Grady

The end of the world started with a fuzzy line.

We made a thousand straight ones as humanity existed, letters to frames to walls, until they began to fuzz into nothing and suddenly I began to notice more and more gone. No one else seemed to care that all of a sudden the stairs were gone or my credit cards disappeared. I thought someone had stolen them until the person next to me in the café line pulled out a wallet and no cards were in sight.

I waited until the curved edges started to disappear before I began asking people what was wrong with them, before I started telling them that no curves meant no steering wheels and no straight edges meant no pistons and how dangerous that is. When my uncle took his boat out for the day, I yelled that he wouldn't make it back—that the propellers were going fast and the buoys were long gone.

I scared a lot of people, I think. They put me all in white like an angel and the white room I stay in now makes everything seem somewhere between curved and straight, like magic. They tell me that it helps the world around me stay still, but I'm not quite sure. Sometimes my memory disappears and I end up somewhere new. I guess because there aren't any lines



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in memory it always finds a way to come back. There was no way to tell what would go next, so keeping me around with the smart people and the doctors and everyone who knew what to do when bad things started happening was good. Mom comes to see me when she can, but there are a lot of things she has to deal with out there in the world where everything seems to be leaving. The doctors tell her she has to keep her visits short.

It doesn't bother me much. The doctors use me a lot to see if we can tell what is going to disappear next. They stick me in a room with a table and a woman named Sharon shows me cards. I tell her if I can see what's on the card or not and Sharon says that they're trying to find a pattern. I hope that they will soon, because the sooner they do the sooner I get my hairbrush or my shoelaces back.

Everything on the walk to the room is always easy to forget, unless I write what happened in my palm with my finger. It's always like that, except for right before lunch when I'm in the room. They told me that the food will make me forget that things are disappearing. Today I didn't write down what happened; I slept later than normal so my mind was still fuzzy from the food. I think Sharon told a nurse that I'm getting worse. I'm not sure, because the light flickered and disappeared from above me. I guess the bulbs went, since I was screaming for them to turn the lights on and no one would.

The tests were awful; I couldn't see any cards and Sharon wouldn't understand that the lights were gone, why did she want me to say what I saw when I couldn't see anything? I started to ask for a candle but then I remembered that those went in the first wave. Things started like that, waves and waves until finally there wasn't enough to be collected into waves, and then one by one little items disappeared.

After Sharon figured out that I couldn't see anything, I went to sleep. I woke up to people talking over me, I think it was Sharon and a doctor. Normally, they are around when things start going wrong.

There were wrappings around my eyes but if I opened them I could see shapes and outlines. They must have found another way to light everything. Maybe we're back to using wood, but I couldn't hear the crackle of a fire. I guess I don't know much about electricity; there could be another way to make light.

The doctors told me to keep my eyes shut under the cloth, because they have to get used everything now. Maybe there's a new kind of light, a man-made light if there really is no other way to use electricity other than bulbs. They said that my eyes might hurt, but I feel fine. I blinked and was surprised to feel my eyelashes against the cloth. I thought those disappeared with the second wave of curves. Maybe that was why I was asleep in the daytime—they finally figured out why things disappeared and put me to sleep so they could surprise me with everything back in its normal place.

That would be nice. Sometimes I think about what it was like when everything was where it was supposed to be. I can't really remember exactly what it felt like, but I know that nothing was fuzzy, and no one told me to leave or be quiet. Mom says that I'm picked for something else in this life, that's why all of this happened to me and not someone else. She tells me being able to see the end of the world is what is saving us all, and my tests are helping everyone. That makes me smile.

A nurse came in and made me take the cloth off my eyes. She asked me if I can see well, if everything is back in its old place. I got angry and confused. Of course everything wasn't

where it used to be. I still didn't have my eyelashes or even a candle on the table beside my bed. She told me that it was okay, they didn't expect everything to come back all at once. I was even more confused.

She left and Sharon came in, smiling. She asked if I can see again and I told her that I could always see, there was just no light. •