

The Train Arrives at Dawn

by Sanjida Shakhawat

The first sounds of the galaxy was an engine roaring. Not a gentle hum, just enough for a quiet yell, from the old train. The Afternoon Express, arriving just on time, for the dawn of the baby Galaxy.

This Galaxy will be referred to as a station until given a name, as we have visitors travelling in and out, making stops, following the star map, it all seemed fitting. The first people deployed from the Afternoon Express were the workers. Space was a black canvas which they painted stars onto. And after the stars had all lighten up, the worlds can be unpacked from the train.

And now, the residents.

They won't remember, not until a few years of age, about the train. Our new humans housed onto a specific world, brimming with water, coated with leaves, and hugged by roots.


As you grew old, the train becomes a distant memory to you, and the sound of the engine becomes quiet. When the adults feared the thunder, the children knew it was the tired roars of the train. When a series of white moons flew through the clouds, the children knew it was the chain of wheels cascading down the tracks. And how the children just loved the tracks, as they rained through the clouds sometimes. Arches of light, coloured in strips from red to blue hues, disappearing just before hitting the ground.

And just as you regain your awareness of the world, the clouds, the thunder, the rainbows, the moons, you remember what all of those were. And this is when you regain your ticket for the Afternoon Express. What the children waited for, what the adults forgot, what the old earned.

And yet one girl has been on the train. Multiple times. And how could she? The workers never went inside the train, only built it and everything around it. The humans only had two opportunities, when they arrive to Earth, and their departure from it. So how could she?

She was a lonely adult who stared at the clouds and understood they are the fallen steam of the train, looking out for the wheels to peer from them. She waved and knew the conductor waved at her back.

And when the children asked what she was doing, she explained the train to them. Sometimes reminding the young ones of it or making sure the older ones don't forget.



There was nothing she could do when an adult asked.

"I don't see what's so interesting about the sky."

"You will one day."

"What's your name?"

"Eve. Short for Evening."

"No it isn't."

"It's not that strange, or not as strange as my sister's. Morrow."

"Who named you poor things?"

There was nothing she could do when an adult asked.

And one sunset she watched the clouds part, waiting. A child nearby gazed at the stars appearing. She wondered the story behind them. And that was new, everyone always asked about the train, but never the stars.

"They're like the sky's candles." She explained, waiting for the clouds to shift.

"When will they be blown out?"

"Soon. You can help with that someday."

The girl watched as the clouds turned into stairs, and the stairs led to the sky, and a door opened.

"You're leaving?"

"Oh no I'll be back tomorrow. I just have a night shift."

Eve waved goodbye. She continued waving on the clouds, on the sky, and on the train. Although the girl wasn't alone, as Morrow greeted her soon after.

And when the stars all turn off, when the world becomes empty, when all the residents are gone, our station shuts down. The train arrived at dawn, and will leave at dusk