

## Arrow of Time

There is a place which does not run by the arrow of time, but by the ticking of a cosmic clock. This clock does not measure seconds, nor minutes, but moments. One moment after the other runs into infinity round the circular face of the clock. Here lies a lonely hillock, a solitary green hill amid vast plains that march on to the ends of the world. Its tranquil reflections are disturbed only by the rays of light lazily stretching across the plains. Their partners, a brilliant wash of colours undulating in the pure sky before settling upon the world. Reds and greens, blues and yellows swirl in an intricate dance as old as the clock itself. The beautiful magnificence pours across the sky and a deep shade of purple merges with the rest. Feeling the gentle caress of warmth, the hill awakens to the sound of silence all around. At first it remembers just that it has something to remember. But slowly, as the fading colours are soaked up by the measureless land, the memories and feelings from a previous time collate and begin to create an unreachable world.

There was once a stream which ran beside the lonely hillock. As invariably as the water flowed, its music played on; for by light and by dark its lively current could be heard. Its music was of a flute playing fast high notes interspersed with occasional mellow chords. To the hill this heralded the existence of a grand orchestra just beyond the horizon. The existence of immovable glaciers, snow-capped mountains and powerful rivers was true in the immortal moment when the stream first ran past. For these wonders existed with the same surety as the silence that had been all around. However, there was a joy far beyond the stream and its possible source; that couldn't possibly have been envisioned by the hill. Their silhouettes appeared over the horizon like a mirage crystallized in time; before the intense gold. The intense gold light rising from the ground as the dark claimed its component colours. The silhouettes were perfect in stillness and form until at once they began to move. Some carried their young, others heavily laden packs and staffs made of twisted wood. The adults moved slowly with exhaustion while the children still played with unvarying energy; all the time following the stream. Their hardy figures grew ever larger until their leader stood at the foot of the hill, exclaiming that they had found respite from the endless flatness and the hill would protect them from the cold winds and the elements. Thrusting his stick into the ground and tilting his head to the sky he offered his thanks to the heavens that the birds and beasts did flock to the stream. Their simple hide tents were set up under the last rays of light and the hill returned to the land of tranquil reflections amid a miracle of unknown origin.

The ensuing morning was ushered in by the same brilliant light that welcomes and welcomed every day. But this time as the hill felt the sensations of emerging into another consciousness it could feel the alien presence of others. It felt the felicity of a multitude and a throng possessing of felicity. All around it lay simple abodes not of hide but of wood and fabric. The people had multiplied and become hundreds where just before they numbered weak. Stout green trees had grown tall across the empty land and berries grew on bushes surrounding the hill. The unvarying notes of the flute had broadened and become slow, deep rhythms defined not by the little stream but by a steadily flowing river. The hill was confused for it did not remember his visitor's arrival. They were so different from anything else in the world that they could not have just grown from the ground. But, as the hill took pleasure in observing a woman fill up a jug of water at the river, it began to remember. A broad smile spread slowly across her face as she in turn watched her children playing and singing. Here they were not so strange but at perfect harmony and the smile was a beacon to the past, something that it had seen before. The song of the morning water retrieval was echoed by others down the river and continued with little variation throughout the day, for it was a perfect melody that lacked nothing. Others would leave the safety of the hill to hunt

and their melody was just as right. There was only beauty to be seen shining from their countenances as their hearts were set only on providing for their people. They would walk off laughing and cheering with their spears casting long shadows across the ground, being the last seen of them until their later return.

Carrying the fruit of their hunt on their backs and between poles the hunters returned. There was a strong contentment as they approached, and calling to their families, then began to gather at the top of the hill. A blessing was offered to the heavens for granting them such fortune and they ate around a blazing fire. The fire shone far and high into the sky and so they could be seen eating from anywhere in the silence. Following this, the young retreated to their homes and the gathering tightened. As the orange illumination of the fire shone upon their complexions the people began to tell stories. Stories about marvellous lands full of wonders, heroic people who committed great deeds, love stories that captivated, mysteries, kingdoms, challenges and even their own origin. The hill could see each story as vividly as the fire which the tellers sat around. The images and sights glowed brightly above and soon became the entire sky. Magnificent sprawling worlds were set out before the humble hill and sights never witnessed upon the world were created. Swirling above was a density of thoughts, feelings and music that permeated the hills essence. In deep appreciation of the grandest orchestra ever conceived it looked upon the people as the very creators they revered. It was upon the story of their origin which all the other stories rested. Their ancestors had travelled across many worlds and moved between them using a mythical world anchor created by the heavens. This story encompassed all the other stories but throughout each they followed a stream. Many tales were theirs to be told and they told them with the passion becoming such a remarkable people. The sound of their voices carried on into the hill's land of tranquil reflections.

Feeling the gentle caress of warmth, the hill awakens to the sound of silence all around. At first it remembers just that it has something to remember but then it remembers the people. All that is left is their memory, like a gentle breeze left behind a gale. The hill remembers how it returned into the world to find that they were all gone. The silence ruled once more, for the people were not bound by the same cosmic clock. They experienced the arrow of time and a straight line can pierce a circle but twice. The stream that had brought them had thinned out and dried. Once more the hill comprehends the cacophonous silence. In its infinite pondering it has and will again grow to understand them. This blessing brings freshness to every experience, without which their stories could never exist. For the beauty of the stories came with constant change establishing a rhythm of flux, like the stream playing the fast high flute notes. At the same time their curse was apparent. They were unknowingly doomed to repeat the actions and lives of their ancestors so each experience was individually fresh, but collectively they would never do anything new. The people were driven on by their destiny and the hopes of discovery. Their restless nature caused them to follow the stream with the same certainty that the clock continues ticking. The silence eventually became a teacher and the hill learned that their discoveries were living in their heads. In this place the light of a million years leaves the ground and rises to the heavens each night. Here the soft song of the hill resides permanently for there is only silence all around. The song rises like the light up into the air and its pure perfect notes are heard from afar. The hills last reflection before the darkness of eternity set in was that the people had told the stories of many others; that they had created vast complex worlds and amazing sights. Yet no one had told their story. And so the hill began; "There is a place which does not run by the arrow of time, but....."

**First Prize**  
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