with the light of spring, we calculate the fall

Seth Cable

There was a beautiful shape in the sky, and beautiful things were falling from it. I watched them from the hills, high above our neighborhood, through Jeff's binoculars.

From our distance, they appeared to my unaided sight like fragments of glass or filaments of wire. But under magnification, though, one could discern their distinct forms. There were:

- Movie theaters and baseball teams, men and women in business attire, comically overcomplicated implements of torture.
- Alarms and calendars, children sharing embarrassing secrets, bloodless coups, and the security of a shared humanity.

Buffeted by the wind, these beautiful things coalesced into a cloud, swirled below the beautiful shape, and then sailed away great distances.

Sitting next to me, Jeff asked, “Are those going to hit anybody, do you think?”

Through the binoculars, I inspected the persons in the neighborhoods below. They were gathered close together on their lawns and on their roofs, their faces uncovered and turned upwards, tracing the trajectories of all the beautiful things.

“Oh, definitely, those people are getting hit;” I replied.

It was so bright that day, in the hills where we sat. After the long Northern winter, the late days of April brought a euphoria that swam into your muscles from your sun-toasted skin. It was so vital to finally feel that warmth, even as you watched the beautiful shape filling the air with all those beautiful things.

I sat and watched that shape for as long as I could. Ever since that shape appeared, it was the first thing I would set my eyes to in the morning. And even after the sun had set, I would lay in the dark on my bed, and scroll through an unending ribbon of pictures and stories about it, until I would find myself waking the next morning from another lucid dream.

That beautiful shape was distant numbers, locking together nearly perfectly, but only nearly perfectly. That beautiful shape was an exquisitely balanced melody, repeating nearly identically. But only nearly. And, those errant numbers and notes would always promise some new excitement or dread, arriving immanently. Who could ever bear to look away?

Jeff began to look away. I held his binoculars out to him, on that hill, but he made no motion.

“No thanks,” he said. “I can see well enough from here. Is...uh...is that shape still there?”

“Of course it is,” I replied. “It’s not going anywhere.”
With a sly and superior grin, he admonished me to ‘do my own research’. “Soon,” he said, “there will be a hard rain, and the rain will wash that shape from the sky.”

“Are you sure it’s going to rain,” I asked. “It’s so clear today.”

As if to reassure me, Jeff’s hand found my shoulder. But the pressure he exerted there was unexpected – perhaps for the both of us – and our eyes remained fixed upon one another until the sun finished setting that day.

All of that was back in April, earlier this year, when I was about fifty years younger.