

by: David Clink • for your 2017 Aurora Award consideration (Poem/Song category)

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A Natural History of Snow

For Rio Youers, author of *Westlake Soul*

The hospital grounds, a carpet of incessant snow. Late evening, past visitor parking, the green tears of the great willow have turned to ice. Beyond the willow lies a fairy-tale ocean, a refuge for sea serpents the size of houses, a home to dead, forgotten sailors.

You know the lattice of lights high atop visitor parking are the eyes of an immense alien insect, the rest of its body caught in another dimension. It doesn't understand how it got trapped or how to get free, sentient eyes flickering a distant pain. It watches over the snowflakes, cares for them.

The cold pushes against you, traces of wind. Massive and uncaring, the last family of giants pass by, leaving a place they could no longer stay, invisible to those who don't believe, taking the last relics of magic with them in large leather pouches.

You hover outside a fourth floor window looking into a room where a body lies on a bed, the people gathered there waiting impatiently for you to give up. You turn around, cones of light shining down on snow, the wind carrying a journey of giants. The great willow, swathed in ice, beckons.

You need to follow the giants' tracks in the deepening snow, catch up to them, tell them there *is* still magic in the world, there *is* still love. You want to walk among the wrecks, tell the sailors they are not forgotten. You must find the rest of that alien insect whose fixed eyes cast a light on all that is solemn, unforgiving, and to try to free it, and if that is not possible, stay with it till the end, try to make it understand it will not die alone.