

## Snowfall

It was early afternoon when the snowfall began. It started imperceptibly as the sky turned from its usual winter blue to a dull slate grey, and down by the lake the wind was a little sharper.

At first the snowflakes blew in with the waves, so faint and misty they seemed part of the spray flying up as the breakers dashed against the frozen sand. The wind, which usually spent itself wailing up and down the beach and making futile dashes against the bluff, began to come in gusts, as if it gained more power from the waves as they rose higher and higher.

By dusk the beach had disappeared into the lake. Waves were foaming at the foot of the bluff, now and then leaping up to snatch at one of the seedlings growing low on the bank. A birch tree which stood rooted in the sand was torn by the waves until it seemed that its slender trunk must snap in half. The wind was raging up the bluff now, beating the smaller trees against the ground, sending piles of dead leaves into powdery whirlpools, and howling furiously as it gained the flat land above and rushed toward the town. The snowflakes followed, swirling with the wind, then falling to the ground and losing their shapes as they melted into pools of water. A lone grey squirrel, apparently the only creature on the bluff, heard the warning of the wind and turned to scamper off to his nest.

Before the sun had entirely disappeared, the storm had taken over the village. The wind trumpeted through the streets like the invading armies of medieval tales. Human beings had hurriedly closed their shutters and built up their fires, and the only visible sign that the town was peopled by anything other than the noisy wind was a feeble lamp-light trying to pierce the darkness. Not even the brash sparrows had remained out to defy the storm.

Then the snow came to cloud the town in white mist. The snowflakes had changed as they made their journey from the lake. Their watery vagueness was gone, and they attacked as a myriad of conquerors, whirling in intricate formations before they fell to cover every surface with a white stillness.

For hours the storm raged, until at last the wind withdrew, screaming on its return to the lake from which it came. The darkness faded as the moon came from behind a cloud

and outlined the snow so that it held a phosphorescent glow. The storm was gone, and now there remained only the snow, sealing the town in a vacuum of cold and silence.