A Vision in Spring

I sat on the porch, watching the spring

Blue skies, green grass, yellow sun

Birds, tulips, weeds

I looked at the trees--pale green newborn leaves

All well with the world.

But suddenly

The screen in my mind, on which the eye projects

Bent, buckled

Twisted out of shape

Without losing its sharp focus

Stretched, tore and rent apart

And in the opening only blackness.

The green was pulled off to the edges

And I was left

In the dark,

My God! I cried. What Happened?

Where am I?

I cannot see a thing!

And a voice answered: Yes, you can

Sharp, clear cut: there are no echoes in space

No reverberations, either

And I saw where I was. Far in space

The dark pierced by pinholes of stars

more and more, all around

And I felt: not too much

Mostly emptiness.

Density oh point two atoms per cee cee

(Must be on the fringes)

Point six gamma, magnetic

And some high energy particle flux

With assorted photons. Mostly, three degrees absolute

And pretty isotropic, as far as I could feel.

What is this, I cried? What sort of place?

You know quite well, He said

Out among the stars

watching the universe.

And why? I cried. I cannot see anyone

On the radio bands all is noise

No A-Em, no Eff-Em, no pulse code modulation

Nothing. No spaceships either

No spacewarp or supraluminous drive

And no little green men.

There are no little Green men

He said

There is no life in the universe except

On that little green planet of yours.

In other universes, yes

But that's outside your dimension

And there is no spacewarp

Your people will never get to this region

Too far.

So why bring me here? I said.

Just to show you what you are up against:

Cold, vacuum, empty vastness

Not that you need them. You have

A pretty good place

Six days it took me to fix it up. Wasn't easy

You have to get all the interaction constants just right

Before you put it all together

Or else it won't go. Then you must set it off

Just in the proper way.

Only your ignorant biologists can think life will start alone

By itself, as soon as all ingredients are mixed.

Really, it was quite a job. Six days

And I got so tired

That I took the seventh off.

But it's a nice world

And it's developing very well, just as it was meant to

Unless you people burn it up

Or use it up, in some foolish way.

Every process has its latent instabilities

Only your ignorant philosopher can claim

That everything is preordained. It isn't

(I have made sure of this).

Anyway, try to keep it going

Remember that it's yours

And there are no spares.

Now, to put you back

He said, and round the rim of vision

Shades of pale green came rushing from infinity

Joining together, closing the gap

Like a moving picture run backwards

As when you put in the cartridge upside down

(As you can do on newer models).

The trees straightened

Found which way was up

Quivered

Twitched a bit

And were back as they always have been.

And my wife was looking at me strangely

"I was wondering what has happened to you"

She said

You were sitting there just staring into space

And for a moment it seemed

As if you just weren't there.

David P. Stern 23 May 1972