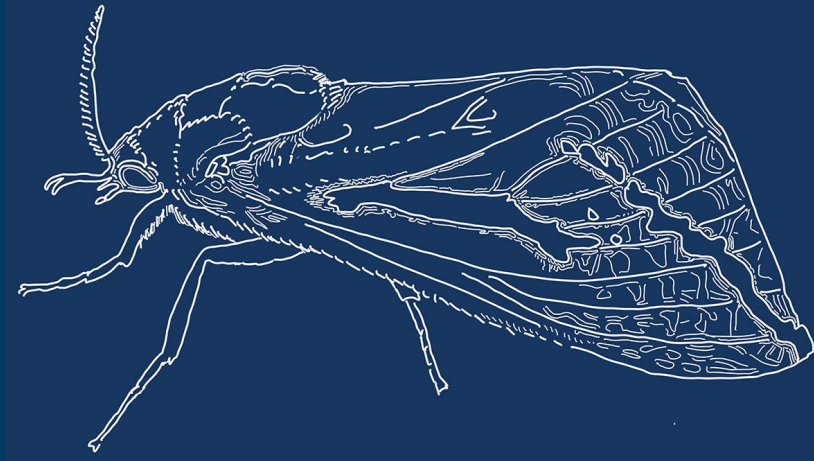


# *The Cloak*

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### **The Cloak**

How do we fly between worlds? Between dark and light, between Earth and sky? Come closer, let me show you my cloak. Feel how soft it is, how delicate and shining. Everything I remember, everything I know, is stitched into the fabric.

Once, I fell to Earth. I was tiny, just a seed. I landed like a raindrop and sank into the soil.

I was a long time underground. From that seed, I grew into a grub. I woke in my tunnel, and moved a little, and thought I was alone in the dark.

But we're never alone. Under the surface, even in darkness, there is life. So much life, bedded deep in the skin of the world. In the soil, among the roots, with the microbes and mycelium, we live and grow together.

Close by, all around, I felt the presence of a great tree. I took nourishment from roots and soil. I could move a little more, up and down in my tunnel. As I moved I listened, and I heard my siblings moving close by.

*Here we are*, they whispered. I heard the beginnings of a little tune.

Listening, I remembered the sound of my siblings falling beside me. I wasn't alone. I was one of thousands, tens of thousands.

We fell together, and we landed like rain. We burrowed into the ground, one beside the other.

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My siblings kept on speaking as I grew. They told me a story about a cloak of light: our map and our home. And I remembered it. Remembered catching a glimpse of sky when we fell. Points of light like raindrops receding above us. I heard my siblings wriggling close by, getting ready to rise. But I couldn't go with them, not yet. I had work to do.

*Never mind*, my siblings said. *We know how to wait*.

I heard the creek running underground. The water soaking through the soil, bringing sustenance to the big tree's roots, to microbes and mycelium, and to us. I felt its strength. And I began to stitch.

This is how I made my cloak.

From scales so tiny, it would not matter if you had eyes or light to see.

In patterns I borrowed, unique to me.

Alone in the world, and never alone on this Earth.

At every hour of night and day.

With patience, and with care.

My cloak holds my story. I speak it as I stitch.

My siblings whisper: *When you fly, your story will sing*.

Finally, I made a casing to protect myself and my work. My body turned the soft earth into something hard and strong. And then I waited.

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One day, a raindrop falls to the ground above me. Just one at first, and then another.  
I smell dust and petrichor. I hear all the life in the soil moving, awake.  
I shift and rise, wriggle in my tunnel. Is it my time at last, after long years of slow making? Will my cloak be ready? I can only try.  
I stretch my body, aim for the sky.  
Emerge from my tunnel, pulling the casing with me.  
Then I emerge from the casing, too.  
Just me and the cloak I made, unfurling.

*Fly*, my siblings say.

When I shake out my cloak, my song opens. The rain falls all at once, in a loud thunder, and I rise.  
Below my wings, every drop is a new seed descending. Above, the points of light draw me on  
towards my family. My story, made below ground, begins again in the air. Some of my siblings are  
there before me. Wrapped in cloaks of their own slow making.

*Sing*, they call out.

My song is beautiful. Each note in it is mine alone, but sung in chorus. For a day and a night, I sing  
my story, and it falls like the rain. And when I have finished singing, I fly home. My cloak knows  
the way. I wrap it around me, every stitch a memory. And I shine in the night, shine with my  
siblings beside me.

*There is no darkness here*, my siblings say. *We always knew that we were sleeping stars.*

Far below, our little siblings buried in the skin of the earth are waking, beginning their own cloaks,  
learning their own stories. They wait for the next big rain to come. And we wait for them to join us.

So our small lives open and return, open and return.

Wrap my fine cloak around you. Let this story protect you.  
Now begin your own. With patience, and with care. Stitch by stitch.  
One day, you will sing it.