

THE ODD SPOT

I'm not sure when I became aware of the odd spot at the bottom of my garden, close to the dead and earthy smell of the compost heap. I seem to recall that the first time was one of those early spring mornings, when you wake for work in the dark and can, on some special days, catch the sun's rays rising through the early morning mist in a silver trail, like that left behind by a snail on a pale pink rose petal.

I seem to remember that on some days that odd spot shimmered in a way that was not synchronized with the rest of the garden, was in fact slightly *behind* everything else that surrounded it. Leaves that rustled in an unseen breeze were pulled sideways on their stems, but the leaves inside the odd spot waited just two or three seconds before they too were blown in the wind.

I watched a butterfly one precious morning as I sipped my tea. It fluttered round quite happily, flitting from one wildflower to another in the shade of the trees. As I watched it moved within the odd spot and settling on a flower that blew and I knew I would have to take

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The morning was clear with the promise of a warm day. The trees had developed their first leaves that were still that brilliant, luminous young green, before the summer's heat had faded them to a deeper and more resigned hue. I could quite clearly see the spot as the sun's dappled rays made it easy to see the delay in motion that I thought of as the *behind*.

While I was still a safe distance away, I took a stone and threw it into the centre of the odd spot. As it crossed the threshold it faltered mid-air, then dropped normally before disappearing in front of me. I cautiously approached and as my stomach churned in uncertainty there was a small blink of intense white light and the butterfly I had watched just minutes earlier flew out into the brightening day. Looking none the worse for its experience it flew helter-skelter away across the open fields.