

Angel pauses

by [Scott Dalgarno](#) in the [June 19, 2019](#) issue

*Girl Reading a Letter at an Open Window*  
Vermeer (c. 1657-59)

Wanting to know what she knows,  
he enters the painting. She stands  
so still, so long, reading a letter  
by borrowed light. It seems  
she will read it forever.

He hesitates,  
the reflection of her hair gilding  
the window brings to mind the virgin;  
that and the angle of her head  
above the paper, like the tilt of lilies  
in conventional *annunciations*.

The air is pleasing, cool—  
the curved lap of snow on the ledge,  
an amnesty of white.

He takes  
his infinite time. He wants her  
to overshadow him, overwhelm  
him. He wants to carry  
anything she might offer  
for as long as it might take  
him to deliver.