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.