

SPACE AND CONNECTION

In the beginning, the child is grown inside a liquid nebula. Without the nuisance of gravity. This space ticks with the song of creatures under a still sea. Fleishy walls seep the muted swell of voices. Light is dark or reddish as when eyes are closed against the sun. This space is no-thing, the last place where awareness is purely metaphysical. The womb is contained and vast, expanding and yet confined. It is the closest the child will ever be to the universe.

Everything aligns and, just like a star, the balance of forces compress enough to squeeze the child out. Suddenly there is nothing but space and unnamed sensations. She does not know the feeling of her skin against cloth, against latex gloves, against her mother's skin. At first, the infant does not differentiate herself from the mother. The child is a sun. At least that is how her marrow understands things to be. The mother is a moon. Space exists in the gaps of things, spreading into soft folds, into the crook of an arm, into the time it takes to answer a cry. As sensation gives way to the space the infant becomes a giant gaping mouth, opening, expanding, gulping life. Consuming it as if it is never-ending.

The infant grows into a child and the child swings in her spaces at times sure of everything and at times sure of nothing. The mother weaves in and out of the fabric of the child's experience. The child does not notice the folds and creases, the dark spaces where her origin story is threaded with that of the others. The spaces between weft and warp expand and contract. The child grows, as we know, not always elegantly. For the mother, the fabric is distorted. Those cozy folds and air pockets are not innocent. Those spaces are speckled with dust particles, remnants of interstellar

events (reactive, radioactive, radiant). Embedded within the weft and warp is the mother's own mother and so on. Space becomes shared across dimensions, reaching back to where the threads are no longer visible. Past each mother in turn, until we arrive at the first mother.

The maw of separateness devours the thread that connected the child to the womb. To the knowledge of the universe. To her bodily wisdom. The steady orbit of childhood gives way to a careening, a flight path skewed, sometimes coming into land, sometimes not. The child grows into an adolescent. Space rushes into everything. It's between herself and all the others: parents, siblings, friends, lovers. There is even a murky space between what she thinks of her self and what she wants that self to be. This space stretches and snaps, goes slack then taut, twists and turns and like the universe is eternally expanding without her noticing. Until there is an interstellar event (reactive, radioactive, radiant), and she is exploded into a million shards of matter. Debris litters the spaces of life now, floating untethered before coming together again. The child grows into an adult, into a mother.

For the mother, the body is no longer a private space. It will never return to a time where it had its own story. The mother moves from a body whose spaces are known, understood, regarded, and defined to a space where the body is unidentified. It reveals new secrets as if all this time it was hiding things. Space is no longer a feature of the mother's life. She lives in spacelessness. Her body, her mind, her soul will be shared from now on no matter the trajectory of the child. Even a mother estranged or grieving lives in a shared space where no one can hear her cries even if they are cries of love.

Alongside this space is another. It is enormous. Larger than anything else that exists in this universe or the next. It expands at a velocity that overwhelms. This space is invisible, a private universe shared only with her infant. It is everywhere but nowhere. It is space beyond love. And yet the universe of the mother is confined. Here space becomes something to fight for. There is never enough of it. Obligations fill the once soft folds and creases of the once warm and welcoming fabric. Space is narrow and momentary. To capture it requires an exhausting awareness. A vigilance for the way the light falls on leaves, the ripples of a still sea, a perfectly made cup of tea. These moments suffice, become joy, mostly. These are her spaces now. She is never again alone with herself.

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