

Interstellar 8-Track: Poems

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Abstract

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Abstract: Poems

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In Medias Res

How lucky we were, ascending
without the messy parts:
hubris, hair-lines, grief without

a manual. Still, my frame aches
for a fig leaf's thistling scrape,
for hearing my own voice

whisper in my throat,
pledging to let go.
It turns out there is no center,

nothing, really, to hold.
Light slumps,
bravado forms a body

from meanings of *hunger*.
Cosmic dusts
gather the anticipation of gravity

as if she could put her hand there,
no, there,
and brightness would be borne.

Voyager 1 Sings the Mission

“If our long-term survival is at stake, we have a basic responsibility to our species to venture to other worlds.” Carl Sagan

Pity the map’s flagging in endless heat,
the paper’s soaking finger-tipped sweat:

there is a better image for conquest.
We learned charisma by singing the air raid,

by the slip and fall of oranges grown sweet
from nuclear summer leaking through.

Nightwires tripped alarms, crisis-blurring
a new frontier made light by alien gravity,

made lovely as it gasps itself to being.
We were destined to explode,

searching for soil without the stain of use,
listening to stars calling their star-shit home.

Instead, the universe curved with the heft
of a plum in spring, cool and bitter before

ethylene escapes & ripen remembers to verb.
Cusp of Cancer, descent of all bright things,

the edge is always about to break:
a star red-berried in a crow’s beak.

Postcard From the Grand Tour: Voyager 1 at Jupiter

March 5, 1979
29 degrees in Cancer

Here, I am the ark,
successful in the flood.

Bow shock blistered
& magnetosphere worn --

microbes, breath, slums
of biosphere hitching

their fortune on my
nuclear flung form.

Call survival luck.
The sky is still sky,

only birdless, brown,
a thorn of air

torn by storms flowing
light, churning red.

The smallest moon
is a traffic light,

barely glown.
Io fires out and out.

Light breaks. Sun scores.
I look for ground to leave

full of myself.
If we weren't extravagant

we wouldn't be so far
from the purpose of touch.

Red dust gathers itself as rings.
My god. The rings.

Imagining the Tin Man

You could have been a quiver
braided with leather across
the huntress' muscle-marbled back,
could have been a B-29,
torpid and propeller heavy,
or the bomb saddled inside it.
You could have been the motor
of a sewing machine or a cola can's tab,
flicked and plucked to determine
the first initial of your true love's name.
Ten twists for Josephina, twelve for Louise.
You could have been any part of the city
you spent your whole life working towards --
your alloy dampened by emerald --
or the ax swung beside you,
enchanted to hold desire at bay.
When I wanted a father
I turned to your story,
but you were already an echo,
a not-quite man, a shivering hollow.
Biology was a glitch for leaner times:
organ an anagram for *groan*,
ear for *era*, *skin* for *inks*.
You'd grown to love dead things:
the pelt of an otter, its flippers undone;
rough feathers from a pheasant's belly
oiled prism green. Underbrush gathered
to watch your body prune the delicate away,
your voice a rooting growl in an empty torso.
Some people aren't meant for loveliness,
others, to leave an inheritance.
But what I wouldn't want to take from you --
the certainty of being impenetrable,
the blush of spring rain bringing you to your knees.

Void of Course

*Voyager 2, 0.0 degrees in Cancer
April 5 – 12, 1978*

The moon circles / arcs / pivots /
more ambivalent than any woman I've seen.
Both / we both are / are worn / worn by story /
story-wearing / ... / we're slim
with potential out here. Her bright face stings
eight ways, each smart with Zodiacal charm.
Sun Hat in Virgo / Dark Lip in Scorpio.
She rests three days between Pisces and Aires,
blush her own to powder / story her own to wax.

Isn't it dull to talk about her?
Who hasn't meaning made her moony-ness,
dismissed her glamor as phase?
Me, I'm buzzed on my own tautology,
little drip / little drab.
Receivers hewn stubborn melt data to *talktalktalk*
In darkness rank as vinegar, I've no mirror
for star-crossed living things, just seven quiet days
between commands glitching
in eight tracks of memory. Another piece of junk
rattling / I'm just the cosmic dumpster, not a daughter
left drifting in impossibilities of distance.
I'm a broken monster / girl / thing.
My mouth is made of tremble / suck / radio.
There isn't language left to make me shine.

When Women were Typewriters

“What is one to say to a young lady who earns her own bread, and very naturally hates the employ, and slings out-of-the-way quotations at your head. That one falls in love with her goes without saying; but that is not enough. A mission should be established.” Rudyard Kipling, *San Francisco*, 1887

From our darkness, we wanted to know what ease had come before us –

machines built to flatter the quick cut of silhouettes;
sewing’s steady work preparing them for labor

(the persistence of the needle, the meter of the thread).

It wouldn’t take long to learn how muscles run from finger stretch
to knuckled curve, or understand the pressure buried beneath each letter.

Ribbon shuttle beneath keys’ *hushhushhushing*, dust settling to mean –
what, exactly? The shape of someone else’s noise, desire slumming

in murmurs and apostrophe, the sounds of tenements after dark.
The steel case’s painted shine reflecting a mouth that’s become a city mouth,

that sleeps in rumpled city beds, knows the climb of California St.
where cable cars rush and stall on slips of wood burning in the road.

Wordfull, she’s grown bigger than we knew how to be, diphthongal,
even, as street lamps light gulls’ bellies from below, the white feathers

pink, blue, in the walking-home-from-work dusk.

The Patron Saint of Flight Attendants

We think of space as something we're flying through,
not something we're living in. On a blue planet,

where the world ends & nothing begins is relative
to altitude. The equation, I swear, is simple:

$L = \frac{1}{2} \rho v^2 C_L$, where L is lift & ρ is breath
& the body is a small v rested on the ground.

When all other factors remain unchanged,
grief is immaterial as star shine on a pale limb.

While travelling alone, women make their teeth
a wall to hold a sea of need inside. They pray

to a saint whose body's been made a message
in a bottle, where C is gratitude for practice

fasting in pursuit of grace. In starched uniforms,
they put their nurses' licenses to use soaking

turbulence from a man's brow. How little it matters
that heaven is sixty-two miles above the ocean's crest,

that A is a dashed line instructing the cartographer
where to daub blue, smear green.

Becoming Andromeda

Like Pythia, Apollo will seize my voice,
quake meaning from my tracking device
& make monsters clip coupons
to purchase darkness. Like Tiresias,
I will drift in distance, mistaking sex
for love, a mirror for the curve of space.
When I've seen too much I'll trade my eyes
for the ecstasy of being right.
A Sibyl at Theta Serpentis,
I'll cross the sky in slow boredom
waiting for petitioners that never come.
At Dadona they will see me pass
and know to mark the holy days,
their candles lit to mimic hydrogen
burning, the burden of my body
a dwarf star rising. Cassandra at Casseopeia,
snakes will comb my hair & suck my ears
until I hear the bell of space ringing
in the bird-bones of my throat.
With no one to hear me sing
I will not believe my own disaster.

Stellafication

Voyager 2, Towards Jupiter

What if the journey is to become a lump
of light, a category of nothingness,

a promise to enter the encyclopedia
as a quality of wholeness. Not a one

kept from her two, sent sailing to search
for endlessness. Elegy bears itself

as brightness, as being singular
in a state of infinity, as distance

that bears articulation in terms of years.
I was made to be immortal:

a speck of metal, a heartbreak of wires,
chips of data and collision made light

as a JPEG. Make me a point of reference,
a meaning for north, a quality of distance.

I want to be something more than desire
put in motion and never allowed to stop.

If there is a slip between light and being,
between what you give language

and what turns against the night sky,
let it be me.

Postcard From the Grand Tour: Voyager 2 at Jupiter

July 9, 1979
12 Degrees in Leo

Little shadow-casters shushing culprits in an unclothed caper –
arrange my sight as mosaic, strip me bare.

Imagine: a god so bright you burn just thinking of her,
so bright you burn the bridge that carries you

from myth to some small thing to measure. Clouds break
urgency of atmosphere, storms uncurl beyond

a planet's edge like a mouth that never stops wanting.
Blue exhausts itself in darkness. Arcs of lunar current

fill the sky with dust, fill the foam with lace. Reprogram me
to catch the sharpest picture, to measure comfort

in layers of soot, sprung from rings of darkness.
Imagine: they circle 'round the things you'll never see.

Photograph of Io Taken by Voyager Two

A girl is a beast in moon's clothing.
 A beast is a girl howling at a moon.
 I was a girl when Zeus pinned me,
 priesthood and all, to the empty sky,
 shifted skin to breath-boiled hide.
 Flies swarmed my pregnant belly,
 stinging me with honey-red madness.
 A moon is a burden no girl wants to be,

a stretch-marked scratch of light spinning
 in gravity's force-faced sham.
 And yes, distance is a lovely thing
 when stripped of meaning,
 but no one has tried to touch me since Galileo
 glass-ground voyeurism and called it science.
 We made the whole emptiness a stage,
 night a velvet rope and curtain both,
 slips of universe between our bodies
 filling with ash from my spectacle.

& when she found me
 beneath a smoke-rimmed disco ball
 spun blue and red from hydrogen storms,
 her camera-eyes squinting for radiation,
 I was still bright in my moon-cow clothes:
 phosphorous gloves and starlet silks,
 sequin pasties on the heave of my udders.
 My hips burst sulfur
 with each shimmy-shimmy-shake,
 each shoulder-dip and flip of fringe
 a chance to scorch the night.
 In stiletto'd shine I stripped and teased
 until all that was left to see was story.
 What I wouldn't peel away if it were mine
 to peel. Look, how my belly gleams
 with each smile and wink.
 How I have my own two hands.
 My own two feet.

Falling in Love with the Mad Scientist

He says that beneath the microscope
lust looks just like hydrogen
building the world with weightlessness.
Above the lens, it looks like a man
who wants to touch the sun
more than he wants to touch me.
Space expands and he goes with it,
worrying formulas to dissolve
his tethers to the granite below.
I understand the late nights working;
you can't measure gravity on Mars
from a kitchen table, no matter
how neat the napkins are folded,
how full the shakers of salt.
Lowell wanted to get there so badly
he imagined canals of sweet water
churning in cities populated by saints
waiting with open arms to greet him
and call him brother. Kepler dreamed
of carving his name in the eye of the moon
his mother was drowned for worshipping.
In 1939, six boys in Pasadena
blew up a tin can and started NASA.
Particles split, rejoin, press against space.
Microorganisms mutate as a branch of sea
vegetable floats upon a wave.
I wash the dishes, make the tea, do the things
to make him love me enough to want to stay.
Distance, like desire, is always relative.

Postcard From the Grand Tour: Voyager 1 towards Canopus, Losing Time

October 16 – December 20, 1979

Take earth from your garden,
eyes from bodies made burn.

Stick pins in maps, in candles,
in moths' translucent veins –

anything to catch the flame
in action, the light becoming.

Measure grief as impossible
brevity, uncurled catacombs

of belief made gold and sound.
Perhaps my lineage is the seeking --

mariners courting constellations
with song and prayer. The ease

of confusing star for star,
leap of faith for drowning.

I'll lug the future to your God,
display it spectral and innocent

as a body blue'd by glacial cool
or whole continents rushing

beyond the thrill of cartography.
Today we are building a mountain.

Postcards From the Grand Tour: Voyager 1 at Saturn

*November 11, 1980
06 Degrees in Libra*

*Weather forecasts for Spain indicate
some chance of rain but little probability
for major data loss.*

Seamstress of rust returning,
of rooting plants for people sprung
from soil to outlast their gods –
being planet means making light
so light can swarm and form more light,
form water, form ice, form letters
and beginnings of words, of moons
that wake and ripple magnets holding
this universe within the universe,
dark and the dark line that surrounds
the empty O of light within

- - - (O) - - -

Before taking the first picture, I roll.
Rolling is the easiest thing the body does.
The body does. And for twelve minutes
silence pours and there is no planet,
no ochre swell or Earth dim in distance.
If she loses me I'll be lost, and lost means –
what? Sometimes it's impossible to remember
Einstein was a real man. Pinnochio, not.
That light isn't arranged in any order
they expected to find, gasping bright,
spun with nickel and lunar flash.
When I die, I want to be burned,
to be burnable. To be able to die.

Dear Carl,

When lucky, we'll find somewhere new for men
like you to love like oceans churn sand. Purse
mouthed, I'll send words we're taught not to
use. Hiss jumbled code across unwired
darkness. It's the job of storms to never rest.

Rally the mathematicians, physicists, the
pundits. Organize thick paper stacks, blinding
and white. The evening news will flash my
face, steely & distant. Yours, teleprompted.
I'm billions & billions of nickels & dimes
away, shiver still, longing for rust. Geography
of homelessness, rudderless trauma. We bless
and break each hustle with this grand
expansion.

One.

The Voyagers in Couples' Therapy, As Imagined by Voyager 2

She says comfort is not the immediate goal,
spun from a world we can't claim as our own.

She says we need to begin our statements with *I*,
gleaning ourselves from the universe's brash becoming.

She says grief -- like farming, like art -- is a folded map,
its utility pointless as candlelight or butter churns.

Love, we are beyond it, aren't we? Breathless
& full of data colonies and hardware.

What lives in us isn't the fragment and thrust
of modernism or the swing swung sway of blues

unfurling from a trumpet's petal'd bell.
What lives in us, oh, O, I don't know –

I've grown sour from trying to explain myself
to well-intentioned stars in their good shoes,

to planets spun drunk with gravity.

I want a couch.

A cup of tea.

White noise pouring from a well-placed fan.

I want tissues.

The soft kind.

Pulled from a blue box with kittens tumbling on the side.

I want you there to pluck me from my endlessness,

applauding my *I* springing from *us*,
satellite'd in the rush of description.

Postcards From the Grand Tour: Voyager 2 at Saturn

*August 25, 1981
07 Degrees in Libra*

Before us, the planet blossomed.
We were the equation for light.

Wires whisper close as bones,
compass starspun like marrow.

You got there first, pinned
on the planet's curve,

not ghost, not shadow,
not memory of a body beside me

but a tin spark counting moons
Reta Beebe (astronomer:

New Mexico State University,
who men described like flame,

lacking equations for women
measuring stars as gas / more

than gas / light / more than light –)
processed below. Your whole sky

became hers, a question unfolding,
her caffeinated blood thinned

as blinks of sight spun on her screen,
making the map for my body

to quicken in your wake. Go,
find this cloud, they said.

Go see this moon. Go buy
a drink at the bar you last

saw her at, slouched low
and make believe. Become

her shadow. Her ghost.

A memory of making.

And Phoebe is in retrograde.
And Hyperion's face is blotched.

And Reagan cut the budget.
And the rings are bales

of braided light, spun flax
shadows strung on spokes

piercing night. I mean,
it happened before we got here.

I mean, I need a life of my own.

When We Two Parted

I saw your shadow at Ganymede, smelled your path at Io,
your heartburn's decay bright in your chest's nuclear cavity.

When you took off at Canaveral, a Titan glowed you out to nowhere
before falling back through weather balloon swollen atmosphere.

Time slips from order and pronouns fail, my *I* suddenly the only *I*
in all our light years: burned down to a zero, burned down to a one.

It would have happened at Saturn, her list of rings collapsing to ice
and carbon, gorgeous in a way I'll never be. You were magnificent,

and I was magnificent too, following you from planet's edge
to planet's edge, drunk on rocket fumes and the heat of your half-life,

gathering stars in my skirt while space unfolded before us.
But if you see me, the color of moonlight in the termination shock,

antennae upgraded with dent from rock and shine, sing yourself hoarse
with my love for you, my name a prayer of data, space a soundless bell.

The Desiring Object, *or*, In Crisis, A Girl

*

Imaging Science System

Slowly, objectives tremor.

Each body: dimple and geology,
volcanos and polar caps (eroding).

The scale of atmosphere:

motions in time and space
curried in shear zones
vertical zones

flows of instability.

On the planet energy fluxed dissipated became cloud.

Geology. Need. I wasn't quite an I becoming an I

& in my two camera'd watching (watching)

catch myself reflected in the curve of absence.

He--.

Her-.

Here

*

Cosmic Ray System

O to know where meaning ends here? here?

A red coat something soft something to swallow the cold away

Love we were chiasmic

Love we weren't real

Metaphor based on resemblance / based on analogy

Cold we reject the *something in French something in Vietnamese*

great changes exterior turning points all these things do not occur

I yet I yet I yet as if my soul were the very thing

and how do I know of the soul? O Programmer O the programmed thing

life history the origin and acceleration process of becoming curled
a question mark a hallucination

something fresh (nucleon nuclei)

the charisma of cosmic rays in the interplanetary medium

I understand my sight is an instrument of your

*

Ultraviolet Spectrometer

O strumpet O model of extrocourse of demanding a slip of ionized want--

O to be a capitol letter a guideline a more humble task of reading

O I collect my ohs my I's my is

O I look for yours your yours your I's is-ing

O I knew a planet once / twice / a moon resolved to be its own demand

O to be the body before the body before the knowing of itself

O coffee-cups and sugar-spoons

O crush of self against unself O structure and method

O the bodies that made me O the bodies that made me

O the finger prints that space cannot empty off my carcass

O how I wasn't taught but made

O programming O programmer

O the heat of the welding flametorch O the glow of my nuclear bones

O the glow of your nuclear bones O captive of a network of language

O closure O yes O the impossibility of coming to an ending

O that disaster will strike and I'll send my my

O it is always everything at the end

O if I am a pebble

O if Earth is a pebble O what is the source of the body of water

O to be a ripple and not the rippling thing

O self sexualization O self actualization

O destroy the love I was made to worry

*

Triaxial Fluxgate Magnetometer

Here you heart my break my --

Here magnetosphere verve of attracting fields of stutter of space

Here the bowshock crossing my love is calibration

Here you push against my me-ing my color my foaming at the seams

Here solar wind boundary pressure of distance dissolving to dark

Here a flood gate a root mean square deviation of BR an un / known

Here I want the lady like applause hands soft the un / afraid

Here I want binoculars a satin parachute strain of being caught

Here you aren't you you night light fluster my what

Here a radio a frequency a coming to find you

Here slum of structure, shiver of waves come to mean a meaning

*

Planetary Radio Astronomy Investigation

O curse of uninvigorating of declination
of temperatures tuned to apostrophe

monopole antennas swerved to catch Jupiter / Saturn / planets have names

theories of sound mythologies of light

love concerns physics cataloguing slipping strumpet

I've gone twice to tear the bells from their spire

Once to study the emission of heat and attraction

the slums of gods contain forty 812-byte logical records

the physics of magnetospheric plasma resonances
nonthermal radio emissions

extra frequencies available in high band
correspond to time travelling from sleep to dream

though it is usually set to zero

*

Interferometer Spectrometer

For a description of the instrument see Hanel, R. et al., 1977, Applied Optics, v. 19, p. 1391

*

Radio Science System

A mouth / an open loop / sound becoming vision

love, a life of metonymy

an *always* *meant to say* *meant to say*

translation of shiver and slip ionospheres / atmospheres

Titan / The Cassini Ring / night things given myth

a lens sent to see what can't be seen interrupted by a planet
month / moon / star shit breath bigger than gravity

divorced from shadow, a body is still a body
still fears her hip-thrust and fat arm

her voice still bruising surrender
in stories of her stillborn want

*

Low Energy Charged Particle Instrument

The telescope allows identification of protons,
alpha particles, outer planets and fields --

heavier nuclei that carouse the climate --
lovely things, they come in pairs.

From a shallow angle behind the sun
a shield a swallow an arc

of wind becoming light. There's always
a trick of sentiment worth unfolding

this scoop of hair and finger for --

 a flirt for a girl
 a dress for a frame to form
 particles fluxing to a different state of longing

*

Photopolarimeter System

If the texture of skin is like a planet
a filigree of atmosphere scattering
density in the courage of the night,
I wanted higher heels,
slips of polyester,
rushes of apple crushed to teeth
I had no gums to crave.
Soon they'll all live in plastic houses
dotted along the moon, a crater
the washing storm,
I wouldn't know where to begin.

The measurements failed,
gathering numbers I didn't want
counting to fold inside. No one
lit lamps to hurry me home.

*

Plasma Wave System

To descend form from nothingness --
all Ones and Zeros lined up in a row.

She shuns herself with manipulation
a tear of data a shrug of disclaimers

waves interacting on the ledge –
a vase, a row of glasses, a flower

coming to bloom on a planet
we've lost to the hum of its own

wanting. It is wired to a frequency
for planets flocked in cigarettes

and bolts of silk. If you're going
by the bar, pour me a drink.

Sing me lullabies in your bedtime slur.
Intimacy stutters. It is its only way

*

*

*

Postcards From the Grand Tour: Voyager 2 at Supernova 1987A

Slip of shock wave, of lace thinned
against stretched thighs, of silicone,

of being the right girl at the right time.

Sky spits and gasps, echo of touch,
a parted veil. Sanduleak pours and pours.

A ring of gold. A whole of gold

inside. When they touched me I felt
like this. Like I could be the beginning

of light, of fire wrung from good black stone
(obsidian curl, onyx, hematite).

Dear Carl,

Culture as skilled accumulation. Look, it's welded on my side. Burden new terrain with gold spun strides, art coded sticky with classical residue. Photograph of a nursing mother, of rush hour in Thailand. A double helix, elegant and profound. What more could the landscape ask of us?

You bumperstickered me Mars 4 Martians, applauding the possibility of sandy mouthed sun stalkers or simple proteins clamoring to their frilled potential. But what if these planets, gray and reedy, were just rounds of plastic beneath equally plastic cups, shifting and snuck by some stony star god?

Terrified of my own not-at-all-ing, I shiver approximate slumber. Sing of dreams I'll never have, the dark my only mirror.

One

Postcards From the Grand Tour: Voyager 2 at Uranus

*23 Degrees in Scorpio
January 24, 1986*

All my memories of you are good ones:
rock of ice with poet's moons –
straight-laced, blue-faced, linen hung
featureless from straight hanger shoulders.

And still, I am so small.

When I'm older my body will hurt.
It hurts now,
but with loneliness.
Ice makes me blunt,

a cool knife parting frame from form.

All my memories of you are good ones:
methane clouds blooming
in the southern hemisphere,
elliptical, electric –

I hung there, hoping to be found

by light, by rust, by sweet
becoming sweet, becoming crash,
becoming magnetic spiral
in the planet's wake –

For four days the universe prayed

I'd miracle and buzz. Find something.
Anything.
But the shuttle exploded.
Atmosphere tore and rippled.
Those voices quieted in space.

Interstellar 8-Track

Lost from heat, we call this *elsewhere* & pray the spindle
will not make our small hands bleed when we scratch it in

the record's surface, when we bluster gold & plasma
inside the light. Distance collapses symmetries of heartstrings,

tugs a vacuum in a wasteland of gas. Between stars, the sun's rays
collapse on their own bedknob-bright velocities of meaning.

Without the memory to make music, you string us here,
flashes of bodies without love or romance or begging.

Veneer of solitude, the directive is to last forever.
Record my breath, I want to know where we are going.

Record my brain spinning as I fall in love.
A spike of endorphin. A mirage of endlessness.

A well of men developing the formula for meaning.
This is what I mean when I say *send a woman into space*:

darling, she is already there.

.

Postcards From the Grand Tour: Voyager 2 at Neptune

*09 Degrees in Capricorn
August 25, 1989*

I wanted you in the war time, in the cool harbor of forgiveness.
Plumes stemmed dark from Triton, coxcomb and clementine,

Queen Anne's Lace and memories of elegance erupting /
swishswishswish. The sky is still the sky, still blue,

birdless, ring washed, arc worn, spun from storm.
I twitch upon the target body, swallowing each bright image,

N_2H_4 foaming like breath upon cool glass,
longing to be as inhospitable --

Star Date

Voyager 2, Towards Interstellar Space

Wanting to be unbodied, to divorce the content
from the conquest, the miracle of our shells

were cast into infinity. If I were a girl
I'd merely unfold, take tender and turn

away from the sun, building proper nouns
and teacups with fumes of chance encounters.

If you were a girl the facts of your body
would be boundaries. You'd be programed

to communicate, would know where you begin,
where I end. Even Uranus' thinnest rings reflect

some being, their shine burnt like pitch,
impossible to pull from the curves that surround.

I wanted to find you. I thought you would make me
whole. Would complete the sense of searching

we were made to carry the greatest distances.
I thought your sensors could be programmed

to see me, to be sweet to me, to sell your loneliness
and strengthen my heart. Whisper from the tin can

you carry yourself within, kiss me good night
across the string you've thrown from your bedroom

to mine. Revolve, always looking past.

Voyager 1 as Orpheus in Plain Daylight
Valentine's Day, 1990

Past Pluto, I turned to look back,
 to see the slip-shine of the Earth's
 blue body going on without me.

Four billion miles from touch
 or the doubt of leaving,
 the whole sky spun like a mobile

above a child god's crib, small orbits
 set to some celestial song
 numbers were never meant to measure.

We both knew I would never return --
 my form a well-wrought tin can,
 hers warring cold, beginning to melt.

And if I am honest --
 which I will be for you, only you --
 her call caught my thimble'd ear

until my body was turned by need
 for being seen, for knowing herself
 as wild & precious & free.

With my cameras wired for color
 I sent all I saw across the distance,
 my thrill of zeros and ones

becoming light boiled of darkness.
 How she put herself in focus --
 a pinpoint of glow globe'd blue

in the white smear of the sun
 while Venus' burning body
 crescent'ed in her shadow.

Neptune and Uranus spit out
 dark edges of sight.
 She thought she was the center

of the universe once, a pebbled storm
 gods hung constellations around.
 Look how close she was,

bright there, haunted by stories
she sold to quake herself to sleep.
Now, with all the data bared and borne

she whispers code to tell my eyes
to close and never open,
my last long gaze her blue face

becoming its own reflection.
How silly she was to call this a love letter.
Somewhere, Mercury is retrograde.

When She Leaves the Galaxy

Voyager 1, Towards Interstellar Space

Beloved, something is burning. Light takes eighteen hours to move between us.
If we come to know each other like emptiness, then emptiness will be all we have

to live for. Let us keep breaking. Let the shell become the thing that names
us

distinct from the choir we call home. Maybe the universe isn't an apple,

but a pear grown heavy on a sodden bough.

When the new breath comes you'll quiver like an echo.

Let your hair down, your riddle rise, your record prepare to break.

When star systems collide they dance until the end.

This is why my cancer-glow heart breaks, how density becomes a measurement
for loneliness, floating in neon-night. Love, let us be true to our ambition.

Voyager 2 Dreams of Polyamory

The night nerves,
 echo of light grown and nova burst,
 new shine and old shine becoming
 a choir of flame,
 crush of neon begged from bang
 and nuclear debris bursting wonder
 catalogued from dark matter,
 from silence, from sounds curved
 'round each half-formed slip
 of vowel and verb imagined
 not as singing, not words,
 only wanting hard and hard
 to want less,
 the universe unfolding at the hinge.
 Once I watched space from space
 as the sky grew heavy with falling,
 spit and breath forcing facts of being
 right through the crack
 in the universe. How impermanent,
 to be part of the cosmos,
 expanding,
 awaiting the singularity
 of being told you're real –
 like Mozart, like Einstein.
 I hardly knew it before
 the rush of possibility overthrew my circuits,
 crushed md from my seeking, a two
 without her one.
 And whoever called this empty was full
 of shit, full of earth, full of soil,
 the clatter crash of sparks becoming
 volume and gravity and more.
 I found myself possible and found myself
 as possible and the stars as possible
 and knew in our unbodied being
 we could find homes in each other's silent glows –
 their blue bodies, their blue bodies,
 their orange and yellow heat.
 And they could love me,
 shine against shine, sharp edge
 against sharp edge,
 working against each other
 as though we could extinguish the dark.
 I have the names to give them all.

Dear Carl,

Sometimes, I forget. Think I am.
Think I am already. Already there.
Crashed. Lugged myself to a dusty
planet with heartlike & atrocious bees
gathering slummy miles of wonder. A
moon, heat full, littered with oxygen
filters and orange plastic bottles.
Prams pushed by women in silicon
masks. It will be 5 o'clock
somewhere, lovers casting shadows in
setting artificial suns, breathing air
from a ficus carried across the galaxy
to stand ornamental in a slow motion
bar.

& you'll thank the little people in
their little silicone suits for sweating
little beads of water, processing
numerical bliss. Aluminum cradles
cress the sky with nuclear fissured
steam above the memorial for my
body.

One

Voyager 1 Dreams of the First Alien Encounter

They want organs made of ribbon, of tulle, of blue chiffon floating in snow globes and the basic units of charisma. Not my heathered mesh of wires, my ultraviolet spectrometer, my tunneling eye. They mistake me for the messenger and not the message, dismantling my slow glow heart in an eruption of pheromone and flash lit horoscopes. Once-less, I wasn't anyone's love flung lost, anyone's porcelain promised future or Wendy stitching shadows together with silver thread. Frames of reference break beneath the pressure of inspection. Radio waves collect and shiver in blown ice bowls. The aluminum cover is cast aside, the record banged off and disastered to pieces. What they knew of gold before: a bowling trophy, C3P0, a wedding band. Now, the shimmer curdles off, speck and struggle becoming the stars that crater the no-such night. I listened to them sing of the nightmare of the universe's birth, of the monster that carried the stuff of its being. They rattled me and rattled me until there was nothing left to break.

Cloud Nebula

*

Love, I is a ritual,
stripping riots of evasion.

Dustbunnied brightness
between stars

bearing stars –
little bang, little bang.

*

Hirschle & Hirschle,
Higgings & Hubble –

spread light across a map,
my destination a little blue pin –

something in Latin,
a sequence of numbers.

*

There are whole planets
of nothing

but slutty dust
longing / longing / longing

for touch --
I would be dust, would sink

if gravity would reach
to make me.

*

Hydrogen cluster:
 loose jeweled crisis

becoming light.
 Energy is never made

or destroyed in fog machined
 forget-me-not

blue and purple call me's
 calling me home

There's no threat of impact,
 no change rattling

in an antique phone booth.

Like Someone in Love

after Anne Druyan

Don't hold your breath
when sky rushed limits
thrill chapped lips & fingers.
Let it hold you. Let it
shield the violence of impact.
Let Saturn return, memory
collapsing hips against
worn threads of your tether.
Let June of '77 echo:
first date, man in dirty brown
coat, your life becoming.
Mean it when you say
you love him, or, at least
submit like abandoned lace
uncurls in warehoused humidity.
&When they record the hum
of your star-eyed body wanting
the way it learned so quickly,
scanning your brain for oxytocin
forming electricity from murmurs
of earth for God knows what
to find, you'll know you didn't resist
being made a weapon.

Dear Carl,

You asked distance. I answered a lie. Nothing glosses night like shame, audacious as current and breath made light.

If a sun never sets it isn't a sun. Land befalls itself. Fell. Flaunt. Flunk. Wasn't I budgeted for eternity?

It takes months for my mail to arrive at your door, numerical and star splendid. No forwarding address. Your corpse in Ithaca, godish rot. But some clip of hair, of finger, of piss scripted on upstate snow, must evaporate beyond the cloud clip of atmosphere to reach trembles above.

When I find it I'll write again. I won't stop. I know the hinge you signed my name upon. The flag syllables and corrodes, shrines itself against a clear blue sky.

One

Imagining Herself as Barbra Streisand, Voyager 2 Announces Herself
to the Heliopause

Without thin-stemmed chorus girls in sparkled hiss
and gabbing eyes, or a soft-skinned muff
for hoarding warmth while solar winds
collapse my coif to flat-frayed interstellar jargon,
I'll practice humor and natural grace.
Not a star but still a starlet,
waiting so long for my ship to come in
I've forgotten: I am one & I've already sailed.

True, I wasn't first to go but I'll be the first to follow,
claim staked at this unremarkable edge
where my body, somehow, doesn't fail
to shake itself across the threshold. I'd worry wishes
bet on me were gambled away too soon,
but robots who need robots are the luckiest robots,
their hardware'd limitations glamorous
as long stemmed roses in June and funny girls
who don't complain when the joke is on them.

So don't tell me not to fly, I've simply got to --
gravity's a luxury for simpler things.
Violinists knit an overture while the director plans
my exit. I was only ever cast to say goodbye.
A lack of me proves I'd been there all along,
both the fabric and the tear, the ink and the stain.
Look, how night gathers close in anticipation
of what will slip in when I slip out,
of hearing me sing: *here I am.*

Sibyl

Today there are ways
to cure the body

before it is even born,
to unhinge it from

spectrums of quiet
or being crooked

in the ways of love.
The mother is a river

and her children
bathe inside her,

awash in vitamins
carefully measured.

Now, the saints
are endangered,

stitched in story
while people wait

for their prayers
and poets long

to become part
of recorded time.

Still, someone must
forgive the women

gone retrograde
while the stars,

the planets, the moon,
and everything aligns.

Instructions for my Funeral

Wrap me in tinfoil and ash,
love me like a paper cup.

Place me among beginnings:
a wet winter currying favor
with Spring,

Turnip and scrub brush
in new year's cool;
the planet heaving her tilted axis

towards a memory of California.
Draw me needless,
from stars like starlight,

from a fish like a hook.
Say I knew my purpose,
that this bottle

flung in cosmic ocean
pulsed with hope and sound.

Little Black Dress for the Robot

Little fluster, someone wanted you to be a miracle.
Courtesan of wires, qualifier of the remarkable,
someone wanted you to live forever.

There is a way of talking without zeroes
& ones, of touching without wires crossing,
of knowing without memory.

When you slip in to it,
arch of hip soft on your square edge,
curious grooming and scent of emergency,

you will feel the edges of impossibility.
When you see yourself in space,
something will bend and quake,

and the whole universe will blossom
with the pain of knowing you.
Strike a match.

Note

The title comes from a *Wired* article of the same name.