



# APASTRON

poetry / madelynn dickerson

# APASTRON

by

Madelynn Dickerson



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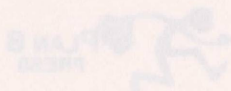
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# OJAI

Sometimes I see my future  
in a flash of happy prophecy.  
White light and earth tones  
and the rustling of leaves.  
Mud on my hands in the  
act of creation.



# THICK CURTAINS

Pinpricks of hope from  
the first dimension  
where life is boiled into existence  
by the gnashing of gas and rocks  
chewed by the bile of the earth  
pressed into a pulsing liquid form.

After a moment, there is quiet.

And the stars appear  
and we watch them.

And we appear  
and we watch ourselves

perform against a backdrop of darkness,  
shadows barely visible against  
the dimness of the stars.

# THE EMPTY OCEAN

## [IMMIGRATION]

Floating 200 ship-years  
of time underway and underway.  
They are the engine.  
Compulsion, the fuel cell.  
Frozen lives careering  
with radio signals made to aid  
a world fusing on contact.



## TERRA FORMATION

Cut open the sun  
and compare the transparent  
intensity of the light.  
Reduce the image of the moon  
and transform the stale air,  
fixed energy spoiled  
by the breathing of animals.

# (AFTER) THE SKY EXPLODES

After the sky explodes  
I feel one heartbeat.  
Then two.

Then I think about that day in summer when  
we dove off the rocks  
you hit your head and the water  
    foamed over the sand  
    red and gummy  
and there was a knife-sharp pain between my breasts.

After the sky explodes  
first, there is nothing,  
then there is hot searing pain  
and I miss you.

And then finally nothing.

---

# DISTANCE TO A STAR

$$\text{knack} = \frac{7.642e + 13}{p - \text{arcseconds}}$$

# THE OTHER END OF HISTORY

When three chronometers  
intersect at the fix  
and the chamber is nearly filled  
with the image of the black moon,  
a thousand generations go quiet.

Reflected to a distant mirror,  
the flash that escapes through  
one space  
returns through the next.

600 seconds (now 500 seconds)  
a rapid succession  
of stars sink in  
the direction  
of the  
unseen  
horizon

# TRAVELS IN HYPERSPACE

I am the irreversible river that carries me  
through a paper-thin universe  
of obstacles and frozen smiles.

With unstoppable hunger and a flash of teeth  
a blood marble punches through  
my tiger flesh at light speed.

I am the ironbound  
dead before I am born  
an impossible immortal  
mangled endlessly by time.

Consumed with the pain of regret  
that fuels the scattered distant stars,  
I see your empty eyes  
crashing in silent waves.

# POLLEN

an asteroid an  
abandoned self  
a  
nowhere here a dead  
rock harbors life  
clinging  
frozen unwelcome  
sleeping waiting  
cold  
but alive

# MOTH TO FLAME [MERCURY]

Bald face seared  
but no memory of charred flesh  
only mineral bone  
imperceptibly sighing  
resigned to agony  
in the perpetual embrace  
of a doting parent  
the favorite son  
skin long since peeled back  
any thoughts of softness  
instantly evaporate.

# CAT CALLS [VENUS]

you little peeping toms  
with your mounted scopes  
and secretaries

you thought you could have me  
lush, exotic  
so close to full exposure

yet untouchable  
veiled, demure  
sulfur clouds  
wrapped tightly around  
my molten breast

I'm a killer

I'll melt your heart  
until it boils

# LULLABY [EARTH]

We rock softly  
in the dim light,  
your hot cheek pressed against  
my bare shoulder  
taut limbs now  
slumped in slumber,  
a weight against my chest.

In a room  
where we eat and sleep both  
your face smiles at me  
from a cheap frame  
on the far wall  
while your body shudders softly  
close to mine.

Even though my jaw aches  
where my teeth are clenched  
and the underside of my knees are  
sticky with sweat,

you are perfect,  
and I know one day  
I will miss this.

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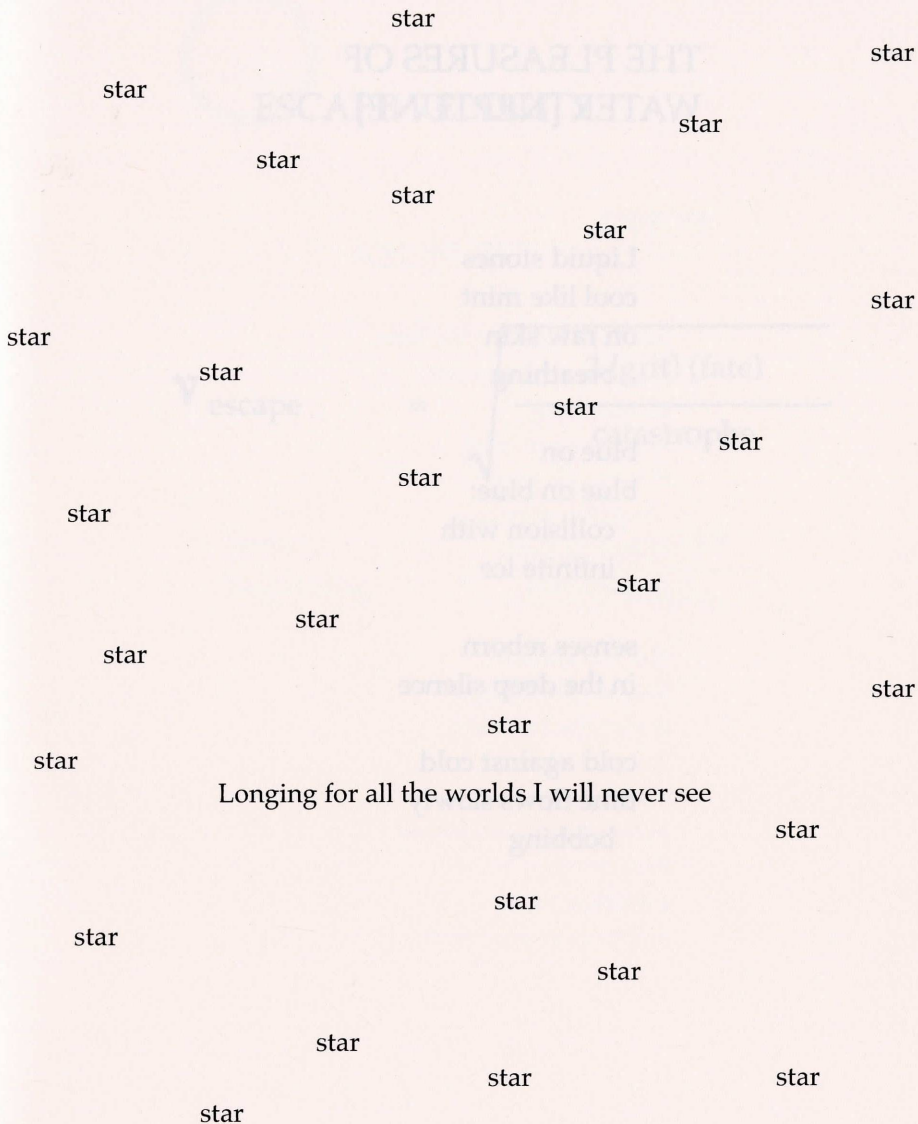
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# THE PLEASURES OF WATER [NEPTUNE]

Liquid stones  
cool like mint  
on raw skin  
breathing

blue on  
blue on blue:  
collision with  
infinite ice

senses reborn  
in the deep silence

cold against cold  
time flows slowly  
bobbing

# ESCAPE VELOCITY

$$v_{\text{escape}} = \sqrt{\frac{2 \text{ (grit) (fate)}}{\text{catastrophe}}}$$



## ECHO

Sticky fingers on the lens  
leave the impression  
of *something*.

We think we hear  
the crackle of you,  
but it is only us  
reflecting back  
on ourselves.

It is a cruel fate  
that we are spread  
across the universe  
like jacks tossed  
across the sidewalk  
in front of an old house  
torn down  
a million years  
before you were born.

# REDSHIFT

$$\frac{\text{New}}{\text{Beginning}} = \frac{\Delta \text{ plight}}{\text{plight}_0}$$

# COMPULSION

unless I write  
my thoughts coagulate  
like so much unhealthy blood  
clotting

I reach out but  
in space there is nothing to hold  
no air to move my hands through

I am not floating  
I am perfectly still

it is the universe  
that moves around me

**Madelynn Dickerson** is a librarian living and working in southern California. She is the author of *The Handy Art History Answer Book* (Visible Ink Press, 2013) and articles on issues in libraries.

*Apastron* is her first poetry collection.

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