**Finding Outer Space**

Annie Blake

So this was it. I told everyone what I was going to do. Children who make up the parts of adults find it hard to understand that leaving is a perquisite for living. There was nothing else to do. Sometimes you just have to know when to fly. I told them they had to stay in my old home.

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The rocket gleamed under the polished sky. I was going to launch into the saffron sun. The Inconel metal was beautiful. I left my fingerprints on it. I felt as shiny as the rocket. I strapped myself in.

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The juddering was stronger than I imagined it would be. I wanted the atmosphere to be in my ears, not around my body. I needed to feel the quickening of my brain splitting in two. My feet were scudding like clouds.

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The earth was tilted and its insides were spilling out. I felt scratches and warm blood against the crown of my head. I had that taste of blood like I was running hard. Liquid hydrogen and oxygen poured into my mouth. My arms were perpendicular to my body for balance.

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This was the place people never come back from. This was the boundary. I have cut the cord. I am warming the earth in my palms like a crystal ball. My human contacts inside are locked under the screen. The black part of the revolving gun is exploding into atoms as pretty as wedding confetti. I thought I was going to cry. I thought my body was going to shake. But I knew it was beyond all that.

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I asked her to sit on my lap. My girl who died from me. She had been waiting a long time. My arms brought us closer together. I breathed into her mouth. I told her this was our chance. To know that she would be saved. That her shame had spalled her into shadows. That it had to do with how they primed her skin. By pasting on their clothes.

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How I needed her forgiveness.

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The magic line was crossed. When you cross it, you know the blackness will shoot you. The stars were made of layers of epidermis. I could hear my mother’s scream. In the shape of a hawser. Boring the calm. My legs were crossed. She was sleeping between them. I breathed in, dilated and positioned her back into my womb.

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All I had to do was stay solid before the bullets spat. My arms peeled off the insulation blankets from the rocket’s chest. That’s when I could feel we were joined in the center and whole. And I climbed into the boat-like eye that swam out of the galaxy’s ken and I was gone.