





Dark Matter

Anna Crandall

I read this article in National Geographic
about “dark matter”

This thing that is the absence of a thing

we know it exists even though we’ve never seen it and we don’t know what it is
by “we” I mean scientists who have spent years, decades, lifetimes
exploring this idea

this not-thing

they have PhDs in not-thingy-ness

and have written papers that I don’t even understand the titles of.

I also don’t understand dark matter so I’m not a good candidate for reading
these papers.

I stopped while writing this and Googled “dark matter/black holes”

because to be honest didn’t know the difference

or the connection

or, is there a connection?

The blurb I read at the top of Google said “scientists may have discovered
indirect evidence that large amounts of invisible dark matter surround
black holes.”

From space.com
which really sounds like a fake website
but the fact is, I'm not going to look into it.
This article in *National Geographic* kept referencing the fact that
the universe is constantly expanding
and I thought "into what?"
I Googled "What is the universe expanding into?" and on some forum
(now forgotten)
I saw an analogy that compared it to a balloon,
how a balloon's surface expands when air is blown into it.
But I still don't understand
Isn't a balloon expanding into a room?
Into air?
Into some other space?
I thought about how we have about 4,000 weeks to live
if we live to around 90,
which already seems ambitious.
If I really wanted to I could understand dark matter
and black holes
and the universe.
How many weeks would it take, to reckon with
(I just Googled, "what kind of science does black holes")
astrophysics.
I know Neil DeGrasse Tyson would help me
he seems kind
he has a kind voice
and his books have approachable titles
and I like to read.
That might be what I have going for me.
But this *National Geographic* article,
I stopped reading it.
I'm still thinking about it.
Sometimes I give up when things get difficult.





Forward Forward Forward Forward Stop.

Denise Sivasubramaniam

Up is not up anymore.
Up and down no longer exist.
Neither does time or word.
There are no more numbers or letters.
They've lost their meaning.

There's only slow, steady breath...

Right side drops like a landslide.
Left side drags it forward... forward... forward... forward...
stop.

I see you in my peripheral vision, seemingly minding your own business while your friends try to solicit me. Somehow, we're communicating, despite not having looked at each other yet. There's a heat coming off you and your intense gaze into nothingness. Soon it becomes obvious that avoiding each other is futile. Neither fools the other. So we look at each other simultaneously and smile coyly. No words necessary.

An hour later, we're upstairs in your bed, after the fact. Sex before words is new for me. I sense it's not for you, but I don't care. I can see you're hiding how much you like me, which is also new. Men usually gush, repelling me to the other side of the room.

You reach into your bedside drawer and pull out a cigarette. *Retro*, I think. My cherry flavoured vape sitting in my bag downstairs. I can see you're older, but not *that much* older.

"Cigarettes?"

"Yup."

"What are you, fifty?"

You laugh smoke out into the air.

"That was good." you say.

And that's the beginning. Simple. Perfunctory. Perfect.

You're everywhere all at once, and yet you never lose your mystery. You pick me up from work, from uni, from home. But the slight smile on your face never outweighs your smouldering energy.

I love you in your work boots.

You love me in my short shorts.

We love each other quickly and we show each other often.

You more than me—traditionalist. Always in control. You need to quietly dominate and I can't help getting turned on.

"We're going to the movies," you say when you pick me up. Or "we're going out to dinner."

I obey with no fuss. Just like I do when you tell me you're going to take me from behind.

Your darkness hums beneath the surface, seductive and steady like a bassline.

The first time wasn't a punch. You were on top of me in bed and I was too tired. You called me a prick tease and I told you to fuck off. You held my wrists down and yelled in my face with the weight of you pinning me into the mattress. You got up quickly and realised what you'd done and came back to me gently.



“Baby, I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to. You know I’d never hurt you,” you say.

I let you comfort me through the aftermath of your sin.

It was the last time it wasn’t a punch. Four black eyes and countless bruises later you ask me to move in and I’m overjoyed.

For a year, our life is a Venn diagram of love and hate. I’m besotted in the in-between. Trapped here with you. They talk about finding the strength to leave. They don’t talk about the shame of not wanting to.

My phone lit up for weeks. Missed calls. Message bubbles stacking up like pleading ghosts. Mum. Lara. My cousin Nick. Names blinking at me until they became just numbers. They slide to the back of my mind like static on a broken screen.

Mom sent a letter. A real one. Handwritten. I didn't open it, just tucked it into the drawer beside the bed. It was love... unbearable.

All of it blurred at the edges. Their worry. Their kindness. I wasn't ready to be seen.

A faint red line changes everything and I pack my bags while you're at work.

I'm going to a safe house where you can't find me. I know you'll turn the world over trying.

The door slams open.

I don't know how you found out but you know. Your work boots hit the timber floor like an execution drum.

I run to the window.

You swipe for me—just miss.

Boots slow you on the trellis.

I hit the ground. I run.

I was a sprinter in high school, but I don't know how long I can keep this pace.

I'm running for the police station. People try to stop me.

They don't understand how strong you are. That only guns can stop you.

You're not behind me. You're inside me. Still.

I run and I run and I run and—

Up is not up anymore.

Up and down no longer exist.

Neither does time or word.

But I have *you* now. You've re-mapped the world just by breathing in it.

The minutes dissolve when you rest against me—small, soft and weightless.

There are no more numbers or letters.

There's only slow, steady breath...

Your head on my chest. Rising and falling. Like waves that won't pull me under.

I put you down in sitting.

Right side drops like a landslide as you reach for a toy, mouth it, then throw it.

Left side drags it forward... forward... forward... forward...

...stop.

Look back. Smile.

Not his smile.

Not anyone's but yours.

You didn't save me.

But you reminded me what safe feels like.

And that is enough.

I am here.

I am whole.

I am yours.





In The Middle Is Amber

Savannah Manhattan

The genesis of Sunday morning
rained a golden skirmish through her blinds

Last night, the room was gilded and exalted
with sepia, ultramarine diadems, and ruby-crowned kinglets

Ivy fed its hands through bookshelves and lamps
Threatening to expose the illusion of language

An imprint of Levi burrowed in the recliner
Craters of his body and his ruminations

In the morning, there was coffee,
smoldering incense, wistful gypsum

Bright beginnings and caravans of spiraling thoughts
The air smelled of past lives, possibly medieval or Saxon

The woman, Amber, forgot about genesis
About beginnings

She only projected into the middle, into
warp speed relationships, and unknown receipts

Last night, she spoke of the sora and the rail
the hijack of the *haliaeetus leucocephalus* and the gradient of the grackle

No genesis, and no omega
From Levi, who understood the vision inside a barbute

His strix's gaze, high and ruminating
Gone by the low of the sun, an imprint and nothing more

Than a trail of missed calls and flocks of migrating thoughts
Awash by a sip of her coffee, everlasting on her tongue



why worry
about the future?
today is
bad enough

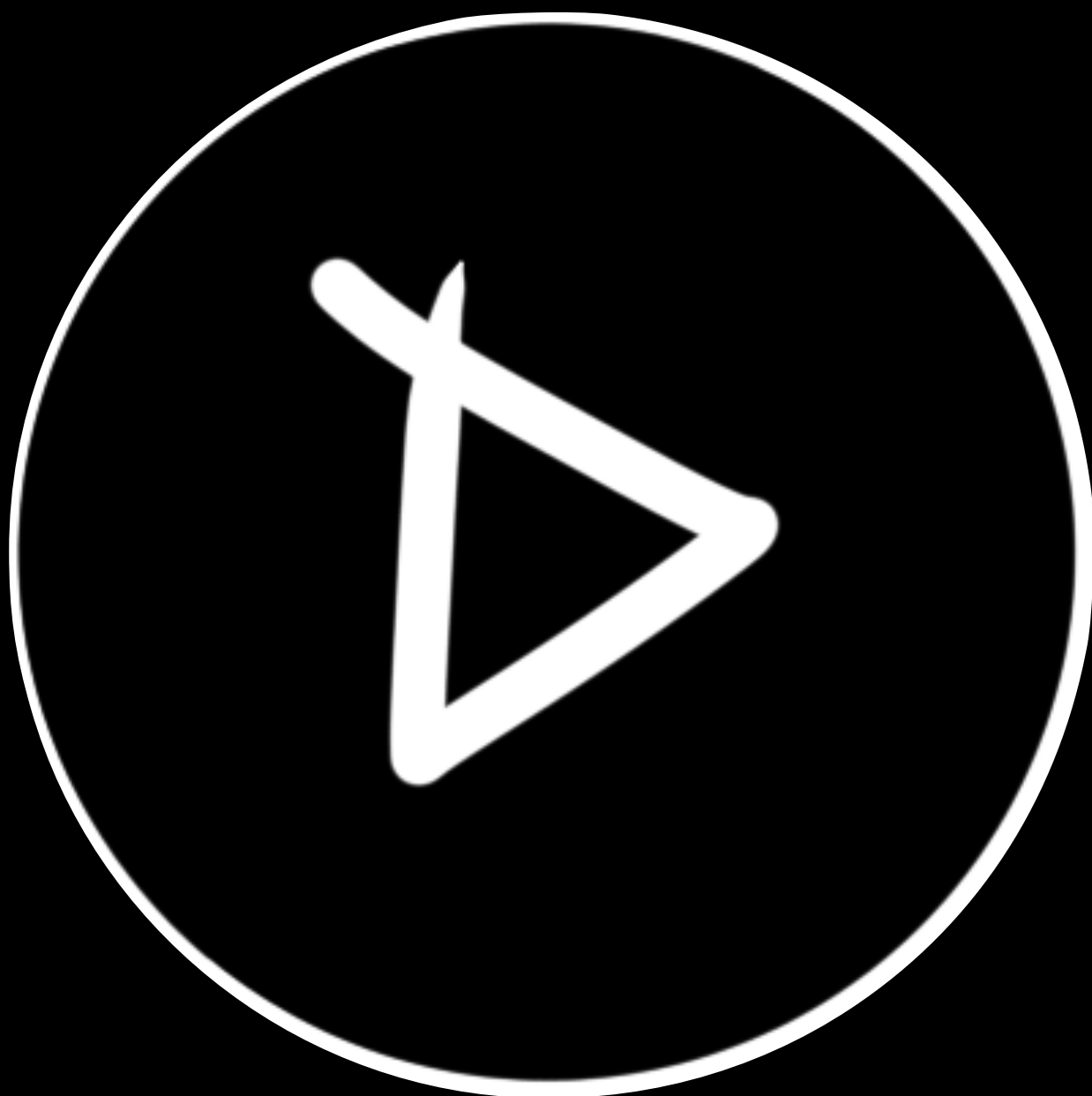
silent
cold
dark sky
moon flowering

Jesus saves
but they never
tell us what
bank he uses

the sun...an eye
without pity
glares down on us

acquiring
despair on the
installment plan.

Joan McNerney



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insta: @minimag_write
book: <https://a.co/d/8bTfxxI>

“Dark Matter” by Anna Crandall
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Website: <https://linktr.ee/marbletrickwire>

“Forward Forward Forward Forward Stop.”
by Denise Sivasubramaniam

“In The Middle Is Amber” by Savannah Manhattan
Insta: @savannahmanhattan
Book: [The Deadname Triptych](#)

“why worry...” by Joan McNerney
Book: [The Muse in Miniature](#)

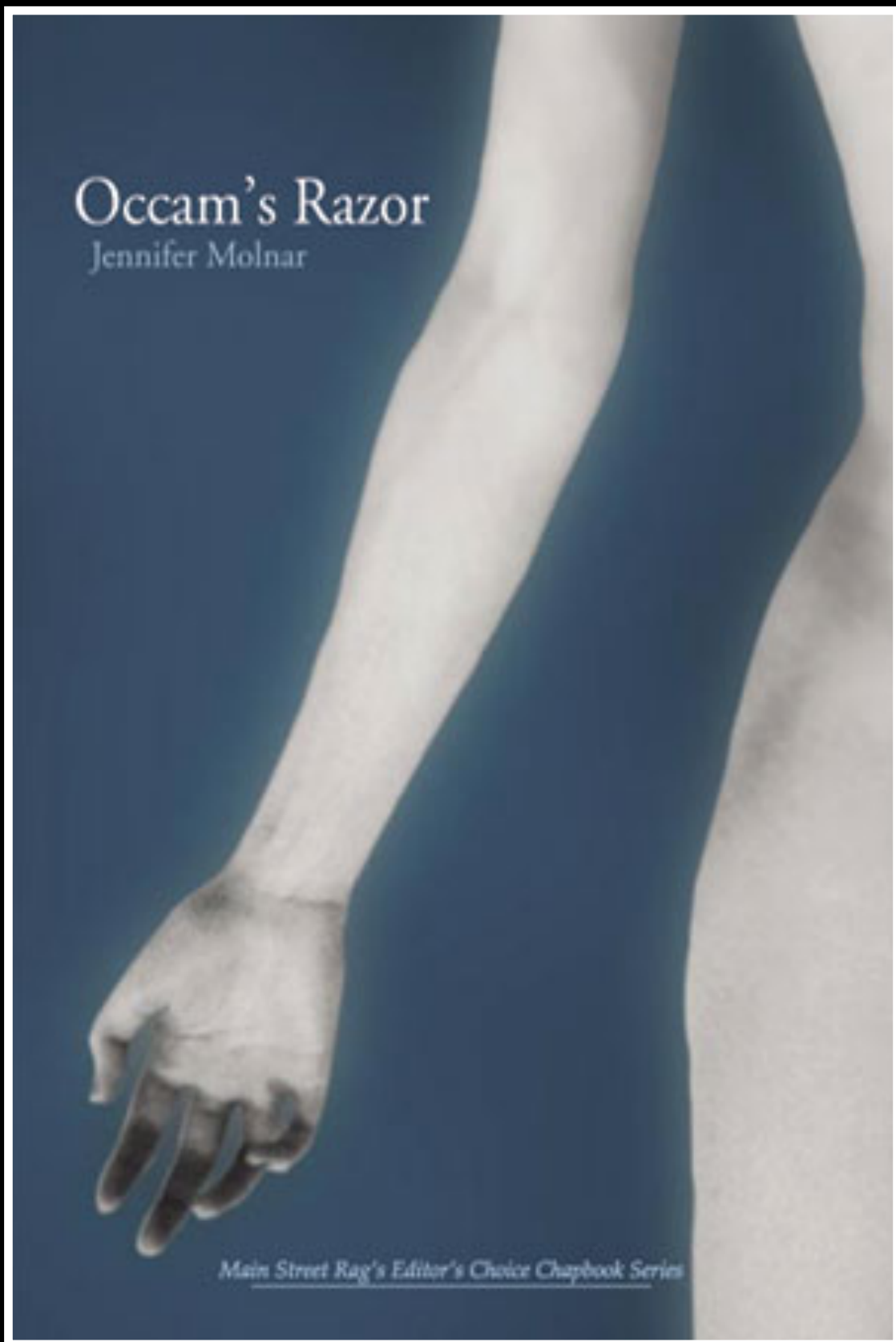
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