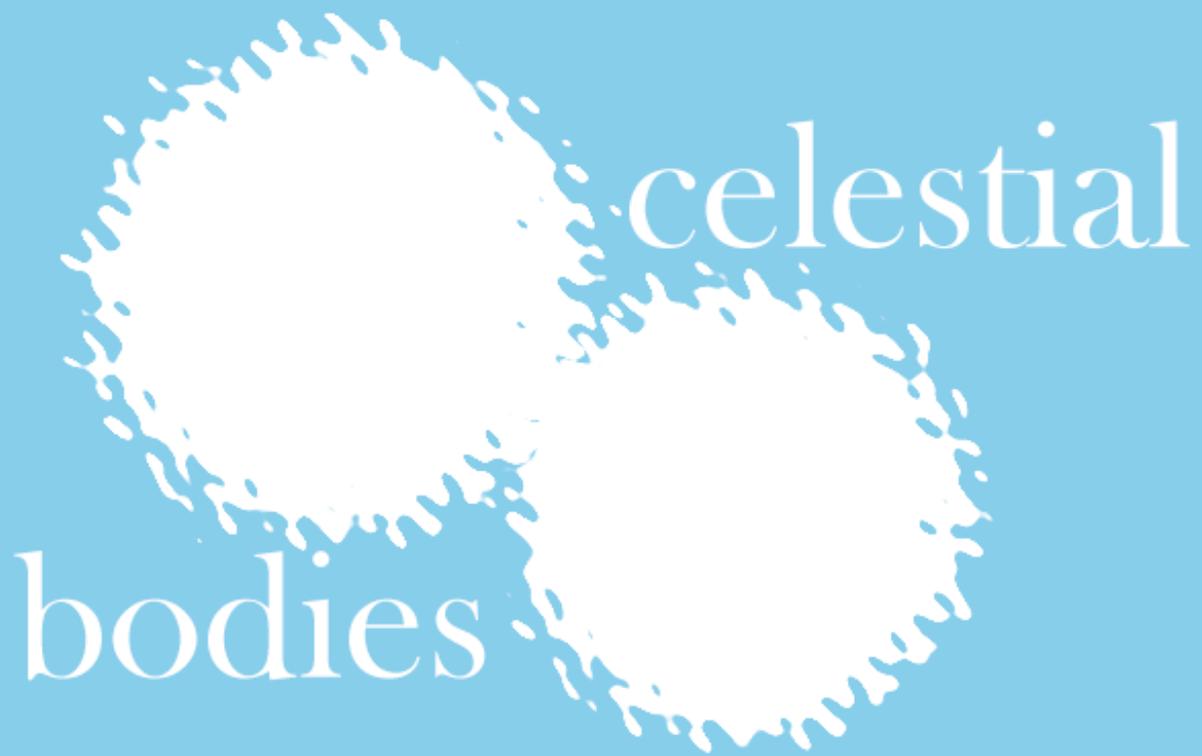


these



celestial

bodies

caitlin gaudio

# These Celestial Bodies

Caitlin Gaudio

*These Celestial Bodies*

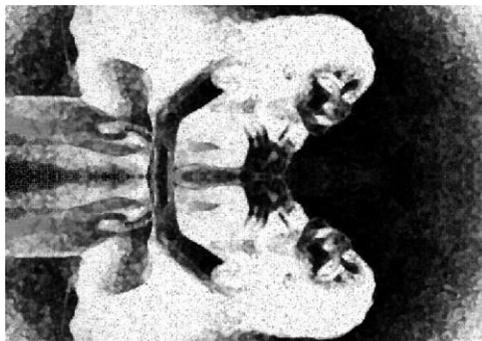
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## **It still haunts me**

You used to look at me  
Like I hung the moon  
And stars

But now  
When your eyes encounter mine  
I see torrential rain  
And cracks of lightning  
In a dark sky

I realize I will never again spend holidays  
In the tropics of your irises

And I lose the pieces of myself  
That ever believed  
Love  
Could be enough

*I hope I still mean something to you.*

## **There is a nebula in your irises**

It is with perfect clarity  
I can recall  
The way your eyes look  
With sunlight glaring off the white snow  
Cushioning the ground

I can trace the pattern of your gaze  
As it transverses  
The pages of your parents' old books  
Covers worn like sun baked leather

The paper crinkles like the lines  
Around your lashes  
When I get your surly lips  
To curl up at the corners

It's almost scary  
When you look at me  
Like no one in the universe  
Could ever be as lovely

To be the sole focus of your attention  
Would create a great temporal rift  
In the universe

When I look at you,  
I swear my eyes must blaze like Altair  
Because you are the place  
Stars are born

## **Lux et veritas**

We were sitting in the back of your parents' car  
Pressed like books on a shelf  
And coursing between us was  
The nervous energy vibrating inside my bones

Connecticut may as well have been another universe to me  
But I hitched on to you  
And managed to experience its full magnitude  
Through edacious eyes

I was caught in a meteor shower of tradition  
Wondering what astral body  
I wished upon to end up here

Your kiss still felt  
Like something I'd dreamed  
In the middle of a New Haven courtyard  
At dusk

I want to write us a chronicle  
As old and rich as this university  
So one day  
When someone digs up the remains of my life  
They hear your name  
Falling off my abiding tongue

## **Your love was the oars**

I don't remember  
The first time I told you  
I love you  
Perhaps it was because  
We both already knew

I do remember  
The first time you told me  
You missed me  
I was fascinated you managed  
To drop an anchor in my water

I was convinced it had long frosted over  
But you rowed through the waves  
Until you reached me  
Resurfacing every time you capsized  
From my blustering blows

Now I've got nowhere left to flee  
You've stolen the option  
To bury my feelings  
At the bottom of the sea

## **I could make constellations out of the freckles on your shoulders**

I love you like the air  
In my lungs needs to be released:  
With burning immediacy  
And comfortable familiarity

I amass memories  
Like sprinkled stars  
Splayed out across the midnight blue

I use my finger to trace paths  
Between the isolated embers  
Reminding me of the person  
Whose skin I know  
Better than my own

I wish I could zip open your flesh  
Climb inside the open cavity  
And understand the language of its anatomy  
Fill in the empty parts

I need you pressed against my skin  
When the cold breath of winter  
Is licking up the base of my spine  
For, even the waves rolling off the sun  
Balk in comparison to your robust heat

**I'm not ready to lose you**

I'm afraid of the dark  
And things I cannot see

I'm afraid of the ocean  
And its ability to swallow me

I'm afraid of distance  
And afraid of time

And if  
As it passes  
You will still be mine

## **You are a fire**

The smell of campfire gave me false sense of security  
A reminder of fall  
When we didn't have impending separation on our minds

Under the suffocation of summer heat  
We were both fully committed  
To living in this fantasy we constructed around ourselves

I submerged myself in the ocean of your eyes  
And continued to pick myself up  
Every time a rough wave took my legs out from under me

We spent endless days in the sand  
As I read stories that were not ours  
And tried to escape reality  
If only for a moment

When August came  
A certain darkness cast over me  
Like clouds of thick smoke  
Forging dizzy paths into the sky  
As they curled off charred logs

I'm trying to smother  
Our uncharted hereafter  
But circumstance acts as kindling  
And neither of us knows how to fix this mess we've created

My hands are blistered  
From clutching the escape ladder  
Your flames flirt with the fragile rope  
Blazing ruthlessly and searing your mark  
Into the places you've been  
Blackening everything your carelessness touches

## **It's your birthday, I can't even cry if I want to**

For weeks,  
I obsessed over finding the perfect present  
One physical object that would convince you  
Things between us were still okay

From where I stand,  
Immobilized,  
Afraid one sudden movement will bring this all down,  
It feels like you're slipping away  
And some idealistic part of me thinks this can be fixed  
With one perfect gift

So I boxed up all my expectations  
Tied neatly together with a green bow  
Adjusting it over and over  
Until it looked as perfect as the happy face  
I composed after a night of pointless fighting

You and I had long become  
Convincing actors in this scene  
Where everything is always fine

But I believe,  
Too soon,  
One of us will say something that can't be taken back  
And, like the fragile tissue paper  
Stuffed inside my little box,  
There will be creases too deep to smooth out  
And we won't be able to pretend things haven't changed

You tore us into a million pieces  
But still  
Confetti of what we used to be  
Won't stop swirling around my head

After you pried open the box with care  
And untied the bow with nimble fingers  
I could feel your arms snake around my waist

Equally unwilling to let us go

As you buried your face in the dip of my collar

*I love you* brushed against my skin

Packing my insecurities deeper into the discarded box

And allowing me to believe

You could still love me like before

## Did I leave my heart in a silver CRV?

A teacher of mine once told me:  
*Never date a boy without a car*  
You weren't yet seventeen at the time  
So I prepared myself to wait

The day you offered me a ride home  
And climbed behind the wheel of your first car  
I knew I was in trouble  
Because it only took  
The first few minutes of our journey  
For the secrets I'd been bottling up  
For half a year  
To tumble into the airspace between us

The energy sparking off us  
Would have jumpstarted  
Your car battery from the dead  
The intensity could have lit up miles  
Of our suburban streets

(That was the first time I wanted to kiss you)

Over time,  
I made your car my abode  
Settled into its soft seats  
And claimed the passenger side  
As my rightful throne

On late nights  
We got in the car out of habit  
And drove  
Accelerating to catch  
Hands on the clock  
And flying blindly  
With no repose

The dashboard knew me better than a diary  
From all the confessions I'd spoken

And our hands intertwined on the console  
Overpowered gravity

But as expected,  
Eventually,  
We ran out of gas  
And I became a stranger in my refuge

Terse conversation filled the space  
Until we were choking on all the words we'd said  
Our drive was not aimless  
You were retracing our regular routes  
And rewinding history we'd written

When you dropped me off at home  
For the last time  
I had almost gotten myself to believe  
That after this ride  
You would no longer be mine

*I hope you failed every exam  
You took that week  
Because you couldn't stop thinking  
The answer to your problems  
Was not A or B or C  
But me*

## **What if I am just an empty space?**

You seared your mark in so many places  
It's difficult to collect  
The pieces of myself that  
Remain unscathed

Now I cringe away  
From the most integral parts of myself  
As if my cells were swapped for another's  
As if they didn't remain at all

I don't know how to feel beautiful  
Or smart  
Or strong  
Because the only time I ever believed  
I was any of those things  
Was when I was hearing  
Your velvet praises  
Pressed into my tender neck  
And seeing my own value  
Reflected in your pining eyes

You loved me more  
Than I ever could  
And now I don't know  
How to be enough anymore

## Hello? Operator?

You never left a voicemail  
On my phone  
And part of me is glad  
I can't dial your voice  
Late at night

I wonder how it would sound  
Pressed beside my ear  
Insidious and intimate  
Snaking past the stapes, incus, and malleus of my inner ear  
Rumbling my skull

Would your words sound detached?  
Like the stiff dialect of anonymous speech  
Teaching me Spanish through school headphones

Would your tone be harsh?  
Biting like the snowflakes  
Sizzling on my raw cheeks

Would the sweetness of your dialect  
Hang heavy over my skin  
Like a sticky coating?

Maybe it would be better for me  
To dictate your digits to my phone  
Allow myself to hear the impersonal rejection  
Of your own voicemail box  
So the electronic beeping can overwrite  
Lingering thoughts of your timbre

## **I wonder if your GPS ever leads you back to me**

For years,  
My soul was your favorite driving route  
Like the back roads of our small town  
You could trace from memory  
On the expanse of my back

Now it's been months since we've spoken  
And I think you'd get lost  
In the detours  
My grieving mind has constructed

Although my territory is unfamiliar  
You are not yet a foreigner

It's been too long since  
The sonance of your name  
Has rung in my ears  
The syllables that once sounded  
More natural than my own  
Now feel alien on my tongue

In some ways,  
It feels like  
You were never here

I pull my curtains shut  
Every morning  
As if they will block out  
The daily thoughts of you  
As well as they block out  
The glare of the overzealous sun

But, I see fleeting fragments of you  
In the periphery of my vision  
And in the forefront  
Of my unconscious  
A realm much happier than this one  
Where we still exist somewhere

Other than my memories

I can't move

From this perdition

For my gears are stuck

Somewhere between reverse and neutral

## **I've become a bricklayer**

I get so lost in my own head,  
Fortified like a garrison,  
I forget  
There is anything outside

The configuration of my atoms  
Which you helped foster  
Has since rearranged  
Into something built up  
By layers of asperity

I don't know how to handle  
The erupting emotions  
Festering inside me  
So I strip away the segments  
That remember what it's like to feel

My memory only functions  
To make me an amnesiac  
Because I must block any recollection  
From my mind  
In order to keep the rest of my body systems  
Running

You cannot wound a person  
Even with the sharpest of arrows  
If they cannot be reached at all

You destroyed me  
And this is the only way  
I know how to get better

## **A bang or a whisper?**

You told me  
I would shut down  
When you left

Because I have a tendency  
When things go wrong  
To implode in the fashion of a dying star  
A stellar-mass  
Pulling in negativity like a storm surge  
And obliterating any remaining light

Do you ever wonder  
If I fulfilled your prophecy?  
Or do you choose to believe  
You inflicted no harm?  
Because I refuse to show you  
The wreckage you've created

If I go silently  
Will it be as if I never existed at all?

## QuickCheck is now the source of my anxiety

After last night,  
I wondered what made me feel that way,  
You or the coffee

Because my unstable hands spilled  
The contents of my cup  
Over the long grey sleeve of my sweater,  
And I could feel my palpitating heart  
Beating too hard  
Against the brittle bars of my ribs

It felt like intoxication,  
Seeing you,  
But the blood pumping through my system was clean  
Neither substance considered a drug  
Yet each had the most addicting effect

I felt alive for a moment  
Under the luminosity of the moon  
And naively believed the feeling would last

All night was spent coughing  
But the tickle in the back of my throat was you  
Struggling to leave my lungs

And the sickness in my stomach was dread  
Because I knew you well enough to know  
When morning came  
You'd disappear again

## **I planted your seeds**

You ripped your roots  
Out of the garden I tended  
And thought you could grow  
Without the nutrients  
You forgot I provided

But when you extracted the bits of soil  
That serve as my memory  
You found more barren parts in yourself  
Than you had anticipated

You haven't found a way to be satisfied  
With the salt of those  
Who hope for you to wilt  
When you can't give them what they need

My rainfall became your sustenance  
And now you come back to beg for drops  
Sapping me of what little I have left  
Because you know I was never able  
To leave you unfulfilled

You know your place in my garden remains upended  
And so, we are fated to repeat  
This growing cycle  
Every year  
At the changing of the sun

## **A new organ has since replaced my heart**

This time  
I love you  
In a bitter kind of way  
Unfamiliar to me

I rid myself of feelings  
So you can't see my unprotected parts;  
Without the traces of vulnerability  
You won't know where to jab your poisonous barb

There's a monster inside my chest  
Scraping at the tissue  
And waiting for its opportunity to destroy you  
Make you just as broken as me

Now I can't stop wondering  
If I spent too long viewing you as the enemy  
To ever let you be my partner again  
And I question why we're doing this

**Is this what coming home feels like?**

My heart hurts  
And for the first time  
In a long time  
It is because you are not  
In bed with me tonight  
And not because  
You feel a galaxy away

In a few weeks  
We will see  
If our love is stronger  
Than just nostalgia  
Or if giving this another try  
Is simply a consolation prize

## **The hardest thing about our story**

Months ago you told me  
*Love isn't always enough*  
That's my line  
But I never truly believed it  
Until the words were escaping your unapologetic mouth

Still, I can't help but think  
Ethereal fates are working with us  
Because of how  
We keep getting pulled to one another  
Lost in the strength of each other's gravity  
No matter how far we've distanced ourselves

Maybe one day  
Things will be different  
And we will be  
Exactly what the other is seeking

Right now  
You're too selfish to care about anyone  
More than you care about yourself  
And I'm too weak to make tough decisions  
Especially when it comes to you

I've found closure  
In the impossibility of us reconciling our differences  
But I still haven't found a way  
To find happiness that isn't tied to you

## **I never did have your appetite**

*Do you want to grab dinner?*

What could be the harm?

This time we'll break bread

Instead of illusions

And maybe share secrets with only our looks

Finding intimacy that comes along

With public places and a familiar crowd

*I thought it would be nice to catch up*

Like I don't already know

The words forming in your mouth

As if they were carved into the planes of your face

Right in front of me

You'll be surprised by how well I still know you

Because you were busy looking away

Every time I paid attention

*Why don't you order dessert?*

We may as well drag out

The courses of this meal

Like we did our relationship

Staying until long past due

You picking up the check

Can't settle the debt between us

Our history hangs like stuffy coats

Across the back of broken chairs

Nevertheless I'm sat here

Ordering another round of drinks

Because of unceasing curiosity to see

If there is yet another way

To sabotage what's left of you and me

*I wonder:  
Will we always be stuck  
In this endless orbit?  
Never quite able to keep each other  
Or keep ourselves apart  
Both left with feelings  
That will only cause us pain*

## **This is me letting you go**

It's quiet  
And that's strange  
Because this place was made for noise  
For blowing whistles  
Cheers rippling through a crowd  
And the thud of colliding bodies

Uninhabited  
This place feels like something else  
A sacred place  
Where I am finally understood  
By silence of the night

This is my favorite place  
Where I feel the rhythm of heartbeats not mine  
And I am more than just one  
A pinpoint of light in a faraway constellation

Memories of an earlier time flood my mind  
The first of November three years ago  
When the world around us swayed on its feet  
And the only thing still standing was you

We were different people then  
And, in visiting this worn out ground,  
I realize there is a reason  
We don't put broken things back together

Still,  
It's nice to think that,  
Like the long dead stars still burning in the sky,  
We exist somewhere  
In this very spot  
So long after our light has been snuffed out

*Seventy-two will always remind me of you.*

Caitlin Gaudio is an undergraduate student at Marist College in Poughkeepsie, New York. After graduating with honors, she plans to complete a Master of Science in Physician Assistant studies. Caitlin has a lifelong passion for literature and various forms of creative writing. She resides in the Northeast region of the United States.