

## The Rift

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i.

We were all one in the beginning. We lived in the same dimension, stranded on this rock together, facing the same darkness. Linked by our origins, we were born as specks, growing atoms, scintilla turned to fully formed bodies, triggering consciousnesses that wobbled between triumph and error.

Later, some of us turned to two, and others stayed as one. Some switched back from two to one and back again. It was hard to keep track in those early revolutions around the sun, but still we were inseparable. Strange affinities drew us close. We shared like properties and marveled at the same cosmic occurrences. Watching stars rise and fall, together we dreamed of what was possible: how far our bodies might carry us in orbit, how tightly our hands could grasp at light and stardust, how widely our vision could take in the firmament.

When we were ones and twos we lived with recklessness because we could. This was when we had hours to exhaust, and the universe was

ours to discover together. Now, time has splintered, branched into different trajectories, and what we share most has shrunk to a distant past we barely remember. At first, the rift between us was just a hairline crack, a concept one believed in and the other was unsure about or refused altogether, but once that abstraction began to take form, once it shaped into a body, the idea made real, we grew chasms if not continents apart. We all were one. Then some of us became two, moved onto three, four, maybe even five, and six. That was when we lost our way to one another.

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ii.

The 2+s are constantly arriving. Barely sustained on sleep or rest, their nights are long punctuated by aberrations, and their days short spent chasing the future. They tote sacks and trunk-loads of miscellanea wherever they go as if their freight were permanently affixed to their bodies. Carrying more cargo, the 2+s tend to leave a breadcrumb trail of small treasures: bright objects that rattle, buzz, chime, and mimic song or velvety items that seem to purr with softness to soothe and comfort. Turned to a means of ferrying, they stretch muscles they never knew they had and wonder at the smallest details that us ones & twos have learned to ignore. For them, the constellations and calendar are completely and inalterably reordered. Their vision eclipsed, they've become satellites in their own galaxy.

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iii.

Some of the 2+s may say we ones & twos live just for the present. Always in departure, time is ours to manipulate. Without the need to be so cautious, mobility incites us, and we enjoy a dizzying freedom not unlike vertigo. We labor long hours without break because we have no

interruptions to pull us away. In idle patches, we busy ourselves, devising reference points at our leisure. We wake when we want and squander sleep as if we have endless reserves of it. The sun still shines brightest in our galaxy. Free to follow the movement of celestial bodies rather than terrestrial, we travel light and tend to leave no trace.

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iv.

At certain gradients it's impossible to distinguish the difference between us and them. To this date, some of the ones & twos and the 2+s still measure sadness and happiness using obsolete standards. These tend to exploit vulnerabilities in our planetary system. They tally the width of power and influence, angling how to acquire richer minerals, newer technologies, and longer life spans. They mine monetary data adding and subtracting sums to find the equation that will lead them to the greatest security and best of comfort.

Still, others practice more primordial methods, taking soundings from the depth of the sky. They test the temperature of belief or the salinity of skepticism. From urban hives and remote settlements, they aim to gauge where we are heading not in this life but for after. Intentions calculated and multiplied by dividends of deed, they believe someone or something beyond computes all matters of heart, mind, and body to reckon the fate of the soul.

For the rest, a shadow of doubt follows us. It slinks into cracks and corners, blackening our vision until we're thrown off course. So we learn to watch with a sideways glance, wary of any straight and narrow trajectory. Fixed to sidestep the obvious, handfuls of us ones & twos and 2+s test the limits of the universe, probing boundaries beyond custom and expectation. Our duty lies with curiosity. We want to know what color a forest exhales? Do fish dream? Can a melody cool or ignite a meteor?

In these short migrations, we ones & twos and 2+s with a sidereal gaze devise new measurements to track the transformation of matter. Sharing a mission and a mutual purpose, still we travel estranged from one another.

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v.

Divided by time and a distance cut so deep and wide, contact between us ones & twos and 2+s who keep a sidereal gaze seems improbable. In the off chance we receive one another's dispatches our transmissions are garbled. We stumble in conversation. Language tricks us, revealing gaps in circumstance and reflecting the stark contrast in choices some made and others refused. Envy and ignorance can easily flare, so we learn to bite our tongues, opting for silence rather than having to defend prerogatives that too often seem at cross-purpose. As if the ones & twos were the anti 2+s, or the 2+s were a natural progression for all ones & twos, and any who didn't follow suit disgraced planetary laws of acceleration.

Though its true the 2+s have only to look back and remember what it was like to be ones & twos, their memories hued with nostalgia or even pierced with glaring flashes of regret, at the same time, we ones & twos can never really know what it is to be 2+s. Crossing over is irreversible. The conversion binding, so ones & twos are forever locked in a singular state.

We were all one. Then somewhere along the timeline we split, and some of us grew to two, three, four, and beyond. That was when we lost our way to each other. Since the initial breach, we remain divided. Facing the same climactic upheavals, feeling as if our galaxy teeters toward destruction, we stand on separate shores and strain to see the other's horizon. Yet despite this unbreachable split, some of us dare to seek the

other out. Knowing space is curved, we follow the logic that truth must bend at some point. So we crane our necks, we pull muscle, and risk exhausting the finite energy and resources we have, angling not to see eye to eye, but breaking ourselves, poles apart, just to live side by side as we once were in the beginning.

**Rashaan Alexis Meneses** was recently named a finalist for the Center for Women Writers' 2015 Reynolds Price Short Fiction International Literary Award and has received fellowships at The MacDowell Colony and The International Retreat for Writers at Hawthornden Castle in Scotland. Her writing has been featured in *New Letters*, *Kurungabaa*, *The Coachella Review*, *Pembroke Magazine*, Doveglion Press, and the anthology *Growing Up Filipino II: More Stories for Young Adults*.