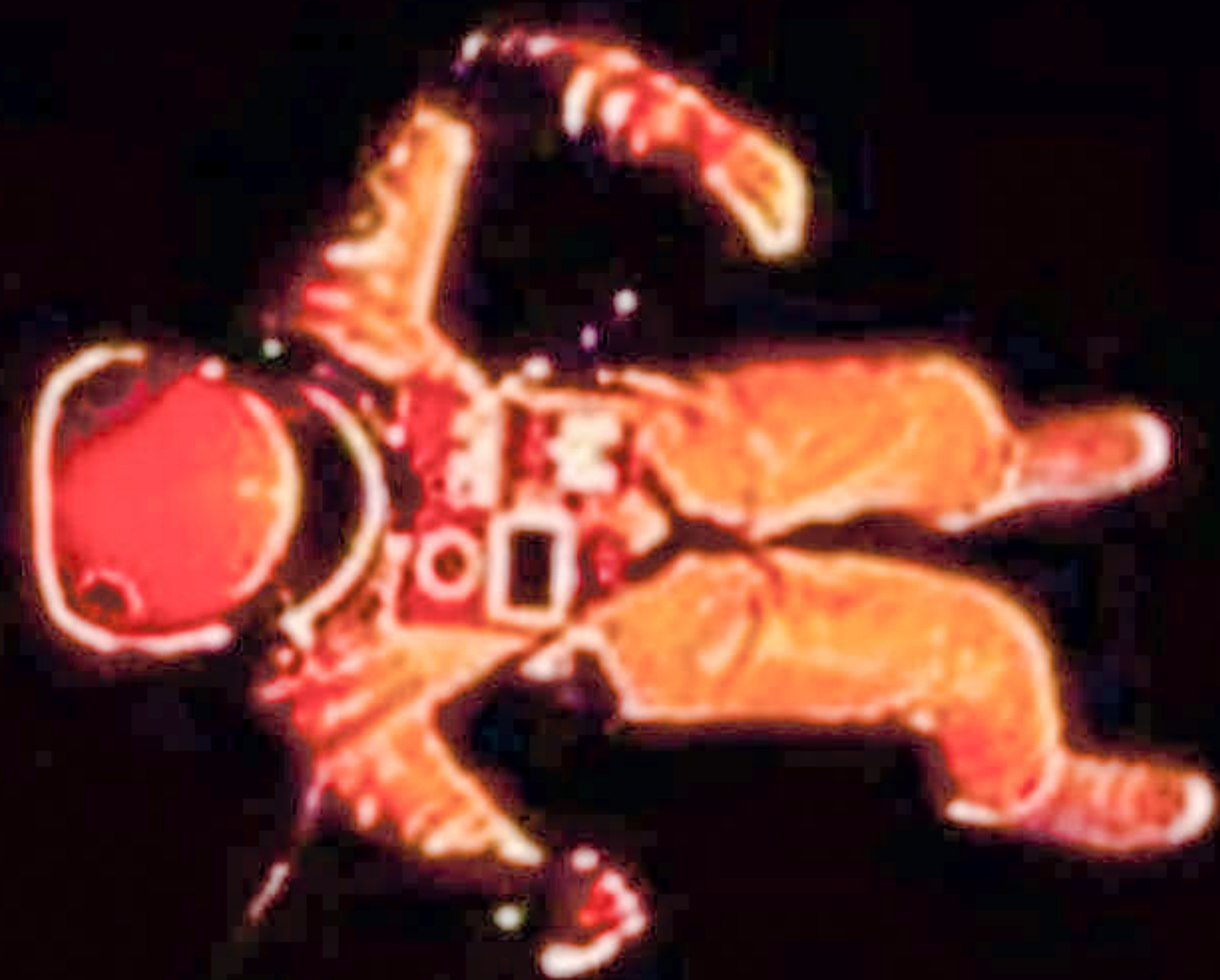


# GRASS & STARS, PLANETS & TREES



FATIMAH AKHTAR

*I am going to die.*

As the darkness consumes what is left of my consciousness, I remember when I was young and my mother used to tell me stories of her hometown – I don't remember where it was. But I remember always wanting to see it. I imagined as she told me her stories; the grasses, the trees, the color green surrounding her. And then the color green was surrounding me: that was what I'd imagined. But nothing around me was green. Nothing is. In fact everything is so black, right now. There are no grasses or trees in space! There's no green in space!

I recall back to when I decided to become an astronaut at sixteen years of age. My mother always talked about the flowers she saw and the grass she slept on. I wanted a life completely different from that. I wanted something big. I wanted to be bigger than her. I wanted to go her higher than she ever did.

I suppose this is irony. I did go much higher. So much higher that I didn't even have my foot on the earth that grew her green grass. Yes, *her green grass*. I wanted to be different from my mother. Looking back, all I ever heard from friends, family, anyone and everyone how we looked so alike, how I was so much like her. How I was basically my mother. But why would I ever want to be that weak lady that let a man subdue her into a corner, why would I want to be the lady that let a man kill her?

Yet, I became the lady who let everything else kill her. My ambitions, my dreams, everything I lived for. I think for my mother, my father was her dream. For me, my dream was space.

And in space is where it ends for me.

I can feel the level of oxygen in my tank dropping further. Every breath becomes harder to take in. I don't remember when I got separated. But now I am. Everything has begun to merge in with the black. Like everything used to be merged in green in my mother's stories. I wondered about that green. About the stories she told. I never let her know of course. I made sure to let her know how weak I thought she was. I made sure to show her I wasn't. But when I was afraid, while she had held on, I had let go. She held on to my father, I let go of the ship. I don't know where I am. But I know there's nothing green here.

*I guess I made it.*

But now my head is dizzy and I want to confess that I wanted to see the green. She told me so much about it. I used to dream about it every night. Not of the stars. But the grass, the trees and the flowers she told me about. But I was so afraid. I was so afraid of becoming her. To become what I hated so much in her.

*I can't breathe.*

My mother should never have forgiven me for leaving her, for abandoning her. But the worst part is I think she did. I am going to die and my mother forgave me. I never wanted to see the trees, and she forgave me. She wanted me to see the stars.

And I wanted to tell her that:

*"Mother, I think I made a terrible-*

WORDPLAY

Earlier today I revisited your corridor;  
J'Adore L'Eau Cologne Florale  
infested the scene, floated the fireflies;  
like dust snaring the darkness.

The scarlet traces of the curtains  
still danced with the feeble wind.  
My eyes caught their every step  
and reminded me of your elegance;  
and how cruelly the light impeded my gaze  
when you once walked down that corridor.

Only once.

ADNAN FAKIR

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# Like an Ocean

AZMAN ANJU KHAN CHOWDHURY

Your beauty washes over me  
And drowns me in a wave of fervour.  
Your prevalent stream grasps hold  
And draws me into a turbulent ocean.

Enigma lies deep inside,  
A prodigious mass of life  
Where your soul swims with mine,  
Touching deep within my skin.

I hear your voice calling me  
Like seagulls singing on the ocean breeze,  
A melancholy melody of craving,  
That longs for a special place to be.

Each deep breath I take,  
Salty sobs mantle me,  
Yearning to be with you,  
Through the night and day.

Like glinting asteroids of the nightfall  
And incandescent glow of scraps in the field,  
Your charm floats me to a place of peace,  
Replenishing me with ecstasy.

