

THE DEITY and you

By Ephie Hauck

WHY WE LIKE IT: *One of the reasons we like this 'story' is because it reminds us of the many artistic possibilities short fiction offers. In this case, there is no real plot, no setting—except by inference—no mood or atmosphere and most importantly, no characters, as we've come to understand them. There is the Deity posited against a single human being and the actions of each—though sometimes parallel—never intersect. We like the author's deliberation with language: formal, poetic for the Deity; pedestrian prose for the mortal. The 2nd person singular voice that delivers the narrative is almost a third 'character' but again, non-referential. This POV acts as a neutral presence and imparts a luster of gravitas. Especially wonderful is the author's use of visually designed word configurations drawn from concrete poetry, onomatopoeia and the use of bold-face font for contrast. A powerful hybrid that addresses dimensional questions while remaining both innovative and moving. Quote: 'Existence roars, and The Deity calcifies the noise. It hardens like toffee. From solidified screams, The Deity pulls rock and bone and earth.'*

You are born on February 15th, 1980. This makes you an Aquarius, which indicates that you possess great willpower. According to Horoscope.com, you are also intolerant to any and every type of change. Mostly, you prefer clear and logical rules. This is probably why, around your seventh birthday, you decide that horoscopes are made for lonely people.

The Deity is not born at all. The Deity begins to exist only when he chooses to.

Divinity sits in the nothingness he has birthed himself into. And Divinity wants more. This is because, despite not being an Aquarius, The Deity will prove to also possess great willpower.

When he stares into the absence, it's a lot like you closing your eyes as a child.

Press your palms into your eyes.

This is what nothing looks like.

Listen.

Now, stare.

Stare deeper into the absence,

it is hiding things you have never looked for

See the patterns swirling in the dark

Cosmic blinking

This is the difference between observation and creation.

The Deity understands. And the Deity creates.

You do not. You think about how if you keep your head down too long, Mrs. Sandy will think you're sleeping again and call your parents. Looking so deeply into nothing is making your head hurt, anyway.

The Deity bends silence into sound.

You open your eyes.

The teacher meets your gaze and calls on you.

Existence roars, and The Deity calcifies the noise. It hardens like toffee. From solidified screams, The Deity pulls rock and bone and *earth*.

Mrs. Sandy makes her way over to you. She asks, in her dripping sweet drawl, “Why do we exist?”

You look to your classmates for help, but no one meets your eye. They’re all staring straight ahead.

Earth shivers. The absence is cold.

Mrs. Sandy smiles so sweet it makes you wonder if you’ll get a cavity. “There are no wrong answers,” she purrs. This is a lie. You know this is a lie, because Mrs. Sandy gave you a 67 out of 100 on your vocabulary quiz, and that means you are definitely capable of wrong answers.

The Deity is not. To the universe, it gives the gift of law.

OBJECTS IN MOTION MUST STAY IN...

RELATIVE TO THE....

UNLESS ACTED UPON BY A...

The universe obeys.

You obey, too. “We exist,” you mutter, voice trembling, “Because we can. It’s not like we have anything better to do.”

The Deity does not create life. The Deity does not need to.

“Good! Very interesting answer” Mrs. Sandy exclaims. Then, she extends her smile to the rest of the class. “Everyone, turn to page 87.”

The Deity understands the conditions of agency.

Your class groans. They do what they’re told, anyway.

The Deity allows life to create itself.

The Deity gifts the cosmos the power of perception. Passage. The cosmos names this

TIME.

You are four years old and walking down the street when you first discover creation. Every streetlamp you pass is a towering giant. The neighbor’s dog is barking from behind a white picket fence, but you aren’t fooled. You know a werewolf when you see one.

When you tug on your mother's dress, eagerly pointing at all the monsters, she laughs.
You've always had *such an active imagination*.

At nine, you still use a sound machine to help you sleep. It makes everything crisper.
Surreal. You listen to the rain pounding on a tin roof, or ocean tides sweeping over you. Crickets
chirping in the moonlight. For some reason, the noises of nature

make you feel more alive

**The Deity is no longer very busy. All that is left to do is to sit and watch his work
unfold.**

To be honest, you didn't want to join the Little League. But Dad said it would be fun, and
Jimmy from baseball camp said he was joining, too, so it's not like you really had a choice.

You have never seen so many strangers in your life. Rephrase: You have never seen so
many strangers *watching you*. Dad is waving from the front row, but you pretend not to see him.
Coach always says it's important to filter out distractions.

Timmy Rodgers is the pitcher. He throws the ball to you, and your whole team groans.
It's coming fast- too fast. You can feel them collectively accept defeat.

CRACK!

Bat hits ball hits sky and GASP. The baseball is so high, it might be better if the sky just keeps it. Your teammates scream with excitement, and for a second there isn't a single bad thing in the world.

The Deity has never played baseball.

You're seventeen, and things are no longer looking up. You lay on your bed, staring up at the ceiling and tracing the popcorn patterns. Mom and dad are screaming in the other room, something about mortgage payments and college and how they shouldn't have gotten married in the first place. It's all the same at this point, so you just blast music through your earbuds until you can't hear them at all.

Floating.

Floating

Floating

Condensed stars feel a lot like static

The universe is breathing

Make it stop

PLEASE MAKE IT STOP

The Deity is lonely.

You first encounter observation in college. You're in your dorm room with Andy from Iowa. You're trying to study for that psych exam on Monday, but Andy just doesn't get the hint. He's nice, and fun at parties, but he just won't shut up about college football. You're about to tell him as much when, suddenly, the lights snap off.

"Andy?"

"Yeah?"

"I think the power is out."

Andy and you stumble out into the hallway to look for candles. Your dorm is on the top floor, so this is no easy task. From the corner of the hall, Andy laughs. He drags you to a ladder with a broken lock.

"Hey. It's to the roof! Let's check it out. Please?"

You shake your head no. Andy asks again. You repeat yourself: no. Andy pleads, falling to both knees and begging you to come with him.

And this is how you find yourself up on the roof.

You've never seen so much untouched starlight. Every individual celestial being is a freckle in the sky.

It's too beautiful for one moment, so you squint your eyes until your vision blurs. For the first time in a long time, the reality of *existence* rubs against your heart.

If only it wasn't so far away.

The Deity has found a quiet nook in the corner of space and time. He sits there, wondering. Wondering why he created all these beautiful things. Wondering why that wasn't enough. After all this *everything*, what could possibly come next?

It's an unfamiliar feeling, this feeling of the unknown. The Deity doesn't like it. It makes him feel unplugged.

The stars flicker, but no one knows.

You first experience The Deity at 36. Your child, the one you pinned your happiness on for nine months, is gone. She never got the chance to observe. To create. Resentment rattles through your bones.

Who could do this? Who had the right? Or the power?

How could anyone be so cruel?

After that, the years begin to blur.

42 is 51

is 59 is

68 is

At 70, the monsters begin to come back. You see them in the corner of your vision. Feel them twisting underneath your bed when you get up at night.

BIO: *Ephie Hauck lives in Nashville, Tennessee and loves to write poetry and fiction that explores the obscure patterns of human behavior. Ephie won second place in the 2018 Belmont Poetry Contest, was a finalist in the 2019 Nashville Youth Poet Laureate competition, and has been published in Lunch Ticket Magazine.*