

The Moons of Jupiter

by Rachna K.

When Ramirez starts moving inside me, I know I'll be blind for the rest of the day. Something unstable with my optic nerves or, as Dr. Santoor described it to me, transient bitemporal visual loss as a physiological response to sexual activity. And I sat in his office staring at his raised eyebrows, jealous of his droopy vision, unable to believe if there's such an ailment.

Ramirez grunts and comes. Then he arches his back, shifts his weight next to me, his skin moist with sweat and pleasure. It's strange, this movement of visions: the changing color of his hair with light and the width of his wrists, his fumbling fingers on his iPhone. E-mails, texts in black and white, the rings of Saturn as his screen saver. He talks about the sixty-seven moons of Jupiter, the ones he has seen: Europa, Callisto, and Io from the observatory in his home. He describes their shape and diameter, the cratered ice and sulfur, the colors that have no names, the spectrums we cannot see. I recall the colors of my last meal: salmon pink and arugula green on a crisp white plate. Ramirez turns and looks directly at me as if I am a distant object too. He is a muscled beauty. I wonder what size boxers he wears. I wonder if I should tell him about my blindness.

The room is half-dark and humid after he leaves. I turn my face to the window, not knowing when my blindness will return. A few fat drops of rain hit the glass and form veins of water running over each other. I walk towards the kitchen. The light drapes around me like gauze. There's salad, cartons of orange juice and milk kept side by side in the fridge. My hands inch towards a plastic bowl that seems to shrink and expand. I adjust my distance, even though I know it won't help. The blurred image is exhausting.

By the time I curl up on the couch, the rain is working hard on the roof. Maybe I should've asked Ramirez to stay. Clouds settle in my eyes. There is a color ahead of me I can't describe. The Discovery Channel is on. The narrator is talking about a species of sea slug that discard their penis after sex but regrow it the next day. *Wow*, I say blindly, like a traveler who has found company.

When I wake up in the middle of the night, the blindness is gone. The TV is still on, and a dim light is seeping through the shades. Dr. Santoor mentioned my eyesight will recover once the blood supply to the optic nerve is restored, might take a few weeks or a few months. I think of my parents, who live in India, where it's sunny and bright right now, a large, blinking eye of land and sea that stretches between us with darkness and light trapped in it.

The cicadas are shrieking for company when I call Ramirez. In the distance the sky is clothed with golden light extending over the wet grass, the wooden fence, and the electric poles. I can tell he's staring out the window like I am, the phone cupped to his ear. *Callisto will be visible tonight; do you want to see it?* he asks. *Yep*, I say without any hesitation. A gibbous moon hangs at the horizon, dulled by the sun, and for some reason I imagine my mother growing fragile in my arms. The moons of Jupiter waxing and waning. The itch of color in my eyes vanishing after another instance of sex. As if none of it is real. Except that it is. Just like the blindness that'll follow. And the light that'll return, strangely renewed.

