

# Venus

## (excerpt)

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Junior Prose

There was once a little boy who was astonished by the stars. His mother would take him out in the backyard every night, and whisper songs about the sky to him until he fell asleep. They would lie on their backs, and he would pretend to breathe in the galaxies over and over again, in his attempt to become a part of space and time.

When the boy was twelve, his mother told him about how Helios and Selene were the closest lovers in the galaxy, but they could only meet at dusk and dawn. He drew them holding hands wrapped around the milky way, and stuck it on the fridge. One evening, as he was staring into the night, his mother explained about how Perseus and Andromeda's marriage was immortalized in the sky. His awe grew, he wanted to know everything she knew. Once she ran out of stories to tell, she gave him a book about Greece for him to read about how the planets and moons were the Greek Gods. As he looked through his telescope, he recited every name continuously until each planet twinkled behind his eyelids and sleep took over him. In his dreams, the people and the animals in the constellations danced all around in the inky intergalactic.

The boy grew up to be a handsome man who studied the physics of relativity, and became an astronomer of the "starry dynamo of night." He became a man of white suits and fish-bowl hats who burnt their fingertips on whirling suns; who defied gravity and floated through the universe. The man's wonder still grew, even the days he spent staring at nothing but empty black sky.

In one of his days of staring and pacing around on his shuttle, he noticed a woman in the corner of his eye. Far, far, away in the picture of his telescope lens was a fiery woman made of storms and smoky swirls. Her hair grew in spirals; it was evident that she was powerful and ethereal. When he glanced at his coordinates, he realized he had come into the orbit of Venus. She spun in circles; dizzying the man, moving in languid waves. Her skin was as transparent as smoke. When she had noticed the meager onlooker, she paused. Venus towered over his trifling, barren ship, and came to his window with a wide-eyed expression. She tried to put her immense finger to the glass, but the astronaut shouted in fear. He flailed his arms and jumped up and down, trying to tell her with actions that if she melted the glass he would not be able to breathe. She stilled, flames of gas became shooting stars hitting off of the tin ship.

The more she stared at him, the more confused she became. She had never seen anything like Earth, how could one comprehend the impossibility of life? She didn't understand what he was or where he commenced. He spent days explaining evolution, the big bang, all the evidence that could be found in a scientist's library. Eventually, he would show her everything integral about his world. He would play her music through the speakers in his shuttle, showed her laughter, and tried to display pictures of the ocean and how it could look as endless as space.

She had wanted to touch the trees he grew and yearned to feel soil between her toes. She cried the first time she saw roses and couldn't understand why he would choose a life so empty, but he would tell her how he fell in love with the stars and the stories that came with them.

To him, she was his childhood dreams of the expansion of space. Matter and energy colliding and creating the light that willed him to explore places beyond rocky mountains. He could remember sitting under blanket forts and imagining himself soaring through asteroid belts. She was a creation of the marriage of space and time; she was the brightest thing in the sky.

As years past, the man had fallen in love with Venus. And as the years had past, the gleam in Venus' eyes went dull. She told him it was a gift he even existed; miraculous that his planet had enough warmth to sustain life.

To her, he was vigorous and dazzling. She longed to be a part of his world and he longed to be bigger than life itself; to be a part of the universe. She wasn't able to convince him that he was a part of it already. Everytime she tried to touch the astronaut he would pull away from her in fear of burning. Everytime he'd reach out to her his hand would meet cold glass. He wanted to feel her ignited hair and touch her scorching skin. He wanted to give her the Earth and everything that would make her happy.

But as decades past, she wanted nothing more than to be with him. Their sorrow grew in the space between their hands; the love they had was painted in the agony of not being able to breathe the same interstellar. She learned the loneliness in human life; how short lived and so fleeting. She felt miles away from the miracle of Earth; still unable to comprehend the brevity of a human life span. They spent few years together, but those were the years she remembered. They were the blip in her uniformly repeating life. She felt the heartbreak he used to describe so well when he'd leave for Earth for new rations. Her being was weighed with the grief as she orbited the blinding suns. Venus mourned his death until the end of time.