

ABRIDGED 0-97  
STRANGELETS

DARK  
MATTER  
CANDIDATE

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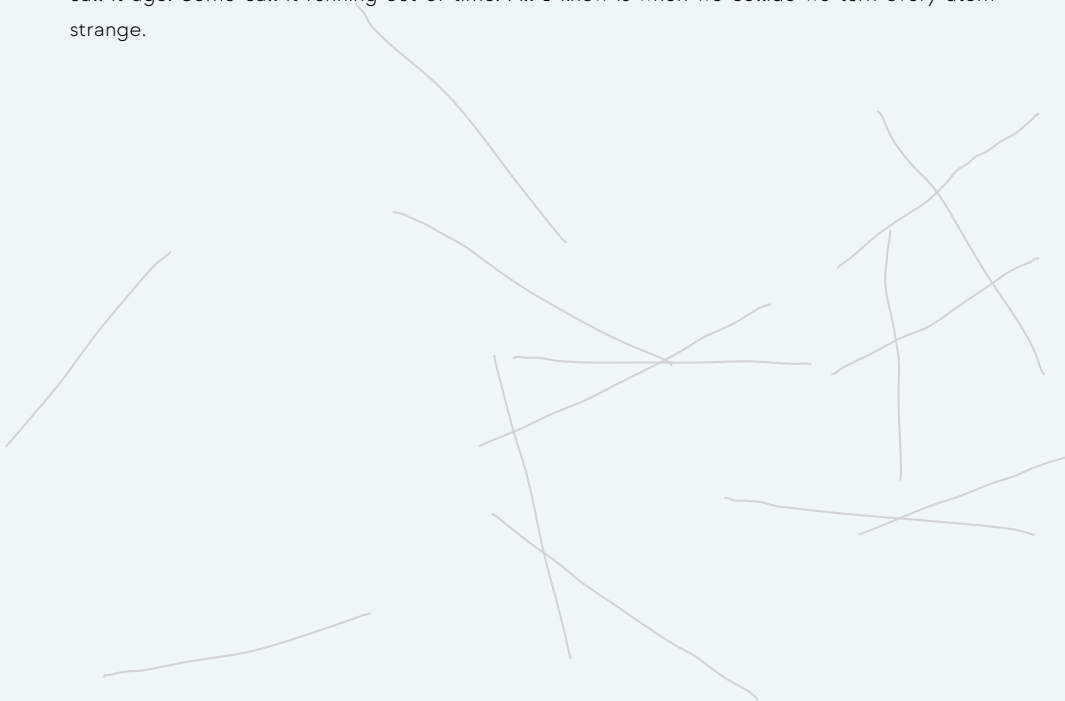


*A poem is a neutrino—mainly nothing—it has no mass and can pass through the earth undetected.*

- Mary Ruefle

# DARK MATTER CANDIDATE

Is my new name for the guy in your DMs who sends romantic songs about doomed love (also the name of the band who wrote the song and their eponymous album), the guy who talks about his suicidal ideation and the title of his poem about his suicidal ideation from his collection about his suicidal ideation, and the nickname we use for the woman who turns out to be his long-term girlfriend. It's the term I insist upon for the people we're romantically involved with once we're over 30. *Reddit, I've left my OH for a DMC, AITA?* This year I'm giving my eras catchy titles to make me feel white girl rich like Taylor Swift. This is my dark matter era, because any of my particles might suddenly implode. This is my dark matter era, because I have been enough injured to be a minor Marvel villain. I'm building a dark matter crew, and we all keep glitching, but if there are enough of us in one place it'll just look normal. Before we turn to darker matters, you seem like the ideal candidate. I wish you'd sit still and have a drink with me. But our particles keep spontaneously decaying and we are both guilty, on occasion, of being in two places at once. Some call it age. Some call it running out of time. All I know is when we collide we turn every atom strange.

The bottom half of the page features several abstract, light gray lines of varying lengths and orientations, some crossing each other, creating a sense of movement and complexity.

# STRANGE MATTER QUESTIONNAIRE

## 1. *Should I Be Afraid of Strange Matter?*

Ah I see the problem is that you could devour me entirely  
but in the process my cells would become yours  
and so we would be wholly unaware.

The way you're smiling makes me think  
this could have happened already.  
Yes - the memories of those evenings by the lake

seem so strangely Mitteleuropean  
when it says here in my biog I'm from Dublin.  
I read online that the strange matter must be

more stable than the matter it desires  
in order to consume it and I look at you  
with your cavernous hunger

and I doubt it can be easy to keep things even  
while dragging all those black holes behind you.  
If I'm somehow part of you now,

I want my own memories back -  
give me the sea at Clontarf,  
the chipped paint of the Poolbeg Chimneys,

clouds folding down like pigeons' wings  
over its two-fingered *fuck you*.  
It's my home and I'd stay quiet just to die here.

*2. Will Strange Matter Attack Me on the Street?*

Yes, but not in the way you expect  
and the effect will be so painful  
it will feel just like living.



3. *Where have I seen this before?*

The fine concrete dust of the Poolbeg chimneys  
is drifting across the bay and into our lungs

but don't worry, the dioxins produced  
by the incinerator next door will probably kill us first.

If even one atom were to turn strange, though,  
one rogue mutated into a wild-god-particle

it might be enough to strip all this away;  
this sinking seafront, these squat Victorian shops,

the laundrette and the coffee places  
and the man with the trip-hazard dog.

Maybe odd things would be left:  
all the left shoes, or all the babies' soothers that decorate

the ornamental cherry tree in St Anne's park.  
Or maybe I'm projecting a logic that's too human

and all that would be left in this wasteland  
are piles and piles of limbs, kilos of flesh,

one hundred thousand scattered teeth.  
Or the stains of bodies burned onto

the ground like grease-paint shadows.  
Now wouldn't that be strange, my love?

4. *In the Gap Between the Poolbeg Chimneys do you see:*

- A. *The sky*
- B. *A uterus*
- C. *The infinite void*

The common denominator is that these are all vessels – the sky can be full of stars, of wings, of stray balloons, of locusts, of rain, of snow, of raised hands, of human beings in dirigibles waving stupidly as a spark catches somewhere in the hydrogen balloon, of bats, of hawks, of anything that can be dropped from a great height – shoes and hammers and nails, oh, it's raining planks and anvils and cats and dogs and pianos!

A uterus of course can be full, of polyps or scars, or amniotic fluid – of eggs! Inseminated eggs! Of babies babies babies! Of cells, both benign and malignant. Of a scalpel abandoned post-surgery. Or a scalpel grown by way of self-defence.

The infinite void is a vessel that can never be filled, but we have fun trying and there is one thing that we know – in it, due to its infinitude, are all the things mentioned above. We hope the babies float. We hope the pianos are not losing their tuning on the event horizon. We hope the cats and dogs don't bite each other as they fall, or plummet infinitely upwards, or bend around the corners of light. We hope the uteruses don't hate us. We hope that wherever it crouches, like an earring in a handbag lining, the strangelet won't hate us either.

### 5. What Flavour Quark are You?

*Quarks are the elementary particles that make up protons and neutrons, and they come in six flavours: up, down, charm, strange, top and bottom. – John Loeffler*

Underneath my skin there's  
Plenty to taste, but that grotesque –  
Don't mind me, I'm too much  
On my own these days.  
When you can, come visit me  
Near the sea and we can  
Carry a breeze back indoors,  
Have a talk about the days before it  
All got so strange between us.  
Rare for us to share a space,  
Maybe for the best. Do you remember  
Some thought we'd infect  
The world, devour it all when  
Really it's the world that's eaten us.  
Angels dance on pins. We flicker  
Nighttime into day and back again.  
Guard yourself against their fear,  
Eat an apple a day, stay weird.  
Tomorrow they'll call us wild gods  
Operating outside the laws of physics.  
Put your hand in mine and let's glitch  
Before we have to say goodbye.  
Oh, and on the question of flavour –  
Too sweet, too hot  
Too much for human tongues.  
On the question of love –  
More than a neutrino.



# IN WHICH I PUSH THE STRANGELET IN A PRAM ALONG THE BULL WALL

On our left, infinite sand, an absent tide,  
on our right, water pummels rock.

This is my notion of calm, little strangelet,  
this old sea wall sunk in bedrock

wearing away a little more slowly than my youth.  
You're sleeping now, the wind whipping

your weather canopy into little peaks,  
and dragging kite surfers over waves.

I would like to teach you something  
before you wake and devour the beach.

There are two orders of object: things in flight.  
Things in stasis, slowly humming.

I am one and you are the other -  
Like a bullet from a gun, you're spiralling out

all I have left is the recoil.

# IN WHICH THE STRANGELET GROWS UP TO BE A STRANGE STAR

Will going macrocosmic  
make you happy?  
There are galaxies so vast,  
that within them a whole star  
is no bigger than a particle.

I imagine it's lonely out there  
in all that subzero blackness  
but then, my frame of reference  
is so small – a patch  
of blue-hazed sky  
between two concrete chimneys.

If you positioned yourself there,  
you could be out  
dismembering galaxies  
while still contained  
within the frame of my longing.

And when you enter  
your cosmic phase separation era  
just send your fast radio bursts –  
I'll pick up my mobile phone,  
watch you collapse on screen.

# OF COURSE WE SHOULD REMEMBER STRANGELETS ARE INVISIBLE

Here I am grubbing  
in the tangible,  
using the dirt under my nails  
as proof of love. When love,  
of course, is just  
a rat-run scorched  
through grey matter,  
a dying mammal's twitch.  
Everything I thought I had  
has passed unseen  
through the universe,  
and I'm shouting at the sea  
*Did you see me?*  
*Did you see me?*

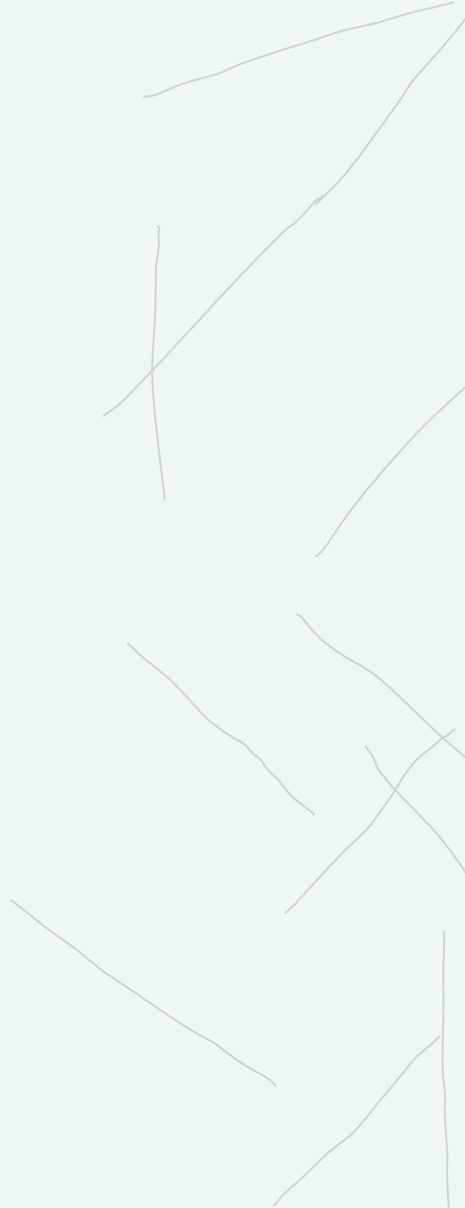
# AT THE FULL MOON BREATHWORK SESSION I TOSS THE STRANGELET INTO THE SEA

*Shut up* Yeats is what I'm thinking  
while the instructor is telling me  
to breathe right into my belly  
because when I'm supposed  
to be feeling the flutters  
brought on by the body's  
new exposure to carbon dioxide  
I'm just feeling you, strangelet,  
rattling in my chest  
while Yeats' words boom inside my head –

*Hearts with one purpose alone  
Through summer and winter seem  
Enchanted to a stone  
To trouble the living stream*

*alone seem stone stream alone seem stone stream*  
I open my eyes and look into the deep sky  
*alone seem stone stream alone seem stone stream*  
The sun hangs in the smog like a lit cigarette  
*alone seem stone stream alone seem stone stream*  
Jellyfish knock against the harbour rocks  
*alone seem stone stream alone seem stone stream*  
The instructor is asking us to hold our breath

In a moment she will tell us  
to let everything go  
into the sullen August tide.  
You're a stone inside me,  
but I'm no stream.  
I'm a pulsing organism  
and you don't fit inside me anymore.  
You're only here  
because I keep calling you home.  
I spit you into the sea,  
and nothing changes.  
The instructor says, *the light in me  
honours the light in you*  
just as the sun blinks out.  
You fill up the Bay. You stare at me.  
The moon is a no-show.





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