

“A Brief Reflection on Human History”

Josephine Dominguez

2022

Flash Fiction

Donating your very essence to keep what remains of humanity alive and well:

A worthy cause.

Fast.

Painless.

Year 254 on an indefinite mission to a Planet B, multiple generations of space children unexposed to sunlight or fresh air. Pale, brittle husks cursed to a life of metal and machine. Entertainment consists of a library most have already read front to back and an abandoned gym. The old TVs have been out for the past decade, the power consolidated to fuel the ship. There are no meals; we are fed through IV, no flavors or anything. No one wants to live in this hell, and no one needs to.

When passengers reach maturity, they can donate themselves. Their reproductive cells will be saved for future generations, their nutrients converted to food, their atoms broken down and used as fuel.

At 22, I have lived enough.

As I lay in my final resting place - a cold metal table in the extraction room - I think about the activists I read in literature; individuals that put down and even gave up their lives for the greater good.

I don't know if this counts as activism, but it puts my mind at ease.

The whirl of the machine and the clasps around my wrists and ankles seal my fate. The air buzzes with electricity and the table warms.

*They said it would be painless*, I repeat to myself.

The chamber is lined with blinking lights and traces. The door shuts behind me, and the table grows uncomfortably hot.

I ponder existence beyond death, and if there is a God, why put his creation through this mess? Or gods. Or nothing at all, I suppose.

Needles snake along my body and suddenly jam themselves into my veins, delivering a scorching liquid. The heat floods into every vein, every vessel in my body, slowly breaking apart proteins and cells. I writhe and scream, the restraints holding me back.

*Inaction*, I manage to think as a molten hand grips into my neurons.

*They knew about Earth's fate, and did nothing. "It's not our problem, we will be dead", they would say.*

And so it is ours.

The truth is, I don't want to die.

I am screaming and thrashing and my molecules are coming apart and I do not want to die.

*We have been drifting into inky black nothingness! For generations! Is this it? Is this what everything has come to? A recycled torture chamber of biological material floating in space?*

*How selfish can you be to leave your descendents with your garbage? I live indebted to a generation and a planet I will never know. I am angry! I want something, anything to live for!*

But my eyes glaze over, and the pain reaches a plateau. I lose feeling in my fingers and toes. The sensation of touch seeps out of me and I lay motionless. I cannot remember what it is like to see. My hearing thrums into a dull nothingness.

I am exhausted. I hope this pain was worth it. I hope I can be useful.

At last, the heat settles into a pool of static. There is no feeling of a body. White noise fills the space around me and my atoms buzz along with it. DNA unravels and slinks into air. The molecules slosh and dissipate and fizzle away, rain pittering against a hot surface only to evaporate .

I reserve whatever consciousness I have left to imagine -

I am an activist -

And there is static.

I am nothing but my ancestors' wrongs -

And there is light.

And I do not want to die -

And there is nothing.

And I will die for nothing.