

# **ABSOLUTE ZERO**

**POEMS BY DAVID LUNDE**

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# Absolute Zero

Some nights I think that the stars  
have died

Already died and these bright photons  
left over

Just waves of luminous spaghetti seen  
end on

Millions of years from now will abruptly  
just stop

But I will never know being already  
dead too

Before all the old light is used up  
and you

Whoever you are that remain planted  
on Earth

Will watch the last red-Dopplered quanta  
so weary

With distance weighted with despair  
too tired

Even any longer to be but their message  
is clear

At last and you are the ones the  
only ones

Who will ever truly understand this  
and believe

That all any person, plant, microbe, fire,  
or rock

Has ever done was to busy itself  
with dying

And by now the ambient temperature  
of space

Having held steady at 3 degrees Kelvin  
almost forever

Begins to fall toward the black hole  
of zero

And what will you think as you feel  
yourself go

Wherever all of everything and the light and dark  
have gone

# Tycho

*(Tycho Brahe, 1546-1601)*

Tycho tended to lose his head,  
and that cost him his nose, not quite  
the dueling scar of preference,  
but Tycho, not one to fret  
over the worthless opinions of others,  
put on a bold new face  
with a nose crafted of silver and gold.  
I think he must have had that kind  
of total self-belief that captures  
cultists, with a P.T. Barnum twist.  
He so impressed the King of Denmark  
(in spite of—perhaps because of—  
the full-grown elk which never  
left his side) that he funded,  
just for him, Europe's best observatory.  
Tycho used it well to disprove Pythagoras,  
Plato, and lickspittle Aristotle  
who said that all beyond the moon  
was changeless, eternal, and so  
could not explain the nova Tycho saw,  
nor the comet six years later  
which broke the crystal spheres  
and freed the stars forever.

Imagine him at Prince Rudolph's table,  
feeding tender turnips to his elk,  
his dwarf Jepp scuttling  
after scraps beneath the board,  
and meanwhile pumping Kepler  
for his math, while Johannes,  
in his turn, cajoled from Tycho  
data to back his Laws...  
or think of Tycho's changeless grief  
for the elk that broke its leg  
on the palace stairs and died,  
think of Tycho taking off his nose  
and falling into bed to weep  
beneath his new-found stars each night.

## Dear Schrodinger

Regarding your comment,  
“I don’t like it, and I’m sorry  
I ever had anything to do with it,”  
...quantum mechanics, that is,  
well, gosh, we’re all sorry  
about it, but there it is: virtual  
particles keep effervescing out of &  
back into the quantum foam (read  
nothingness) unless some random  
energy pulse empowers them  
with reality; particles that once  
were intimate with each other  
still act out their marriage after  
separation, however distant;  
their positions are statistical  
abstractions, never being more  
than 50% probable & even at  
36 nanokelvins they refuse to  
be less than a skidmark; electrons  
go on leaping from one orbit to another  
without crossing the space between;  
so you might as well stop  
bitching and buy cat food.

## Plate Tectonics

The continent sinks  
earth wrenches open  
hell yawns at his feet  
magma rises  
from its own ashes  
the magnetic poles  
switch places  
a choleric wind  
occludes the vision  
dawn withers  
in the tumbling mountains  
ice begins  
its aggression  
the poet  
begins his ode  
to structural deformation.

## Song of the Martian Cricket

I shouldn't come out here  
so many nights, turning  
my faceplate to the black sky  
with the tasteless, artificial air  
whispering in and out of my lungs—  
the only sound besides the directional beep  
from Marsbase below, a subaudial promise  
of security, but not comfort.  
It's not the pressure suit I mind  
so much, not even the bottomless  
black bucket of stars—I miss the moon  
pregnant with promise, and the light,  
grassy breeze coasting over the hill  
to blow the soft strands of your hair  
across my lips, and the sound of crickets  
grinding their legs with need. Still,  
I come out too often and stare  
into the abyss of years, then rise,  
feeling almost bodiless in the low gravity,  
and drift back to the floodlit dome  
small and forlorn beneath  
its protective covering of dust.

# Singularity Song

Sometimes I imagine I can hear it,  
That sub-subsonic thrum, a B-flat  
57 octaves below middle C,

orders of magnitude below the threshold  
of even an ocean-spanning  
sperm whale's song,

a bass below bass audible only  
by inference, the cosmic drone note,  
last vibratory groan of swallowed

stars, a ripping of atomic bonds  
on such a scale it makes your  
bones ache light years distant.

I do not think it is merely noise,  
not just the seeming signal  
of a pulsar's regular static strobe,

but a ululating throat-song  
that singularities willy-nilly  
sing each other, a call

that signals all the other singular  
deep-voiced singers that still  
another galaxy has fallen in

upon itself, and the space  
it once defined now contracts  
to zero, drawing with it

the formerly receding fundamental units  
like a balloon deflating, and then,  
when the holes have swallowed

all the all there is,  
they foreshorten space with warps,  
drawing together into a point

so small it's just  
here(t)here gone,  
a metaparticle leaping

to a higher state, and then,  
in a single heave disgorging  
the ripened energetic seed

of a spanking new universe  
with a metacosmic squall  
that someday will inform

other hapless lifeforms that once,  
at a quantifiable time and distance,  
they were born and doomed to die.

## Dark & Light

It's night of course;  
it always is, isn't it? Universal,  
and I speak literally. Dark  
is the natural state of things—  
dark matter, dark energy, making up  
ninety-six percent of the universe  
we think of as our own

& the light  
we survive by and worship  
nothing but a trivial aberration,  
despite the dependency of such entities as us.

Yes, let there be Light! Ah, the Glory!  
that brings forth life upon the sludgy stones  
kludging lonely in the dark...

each luminous object expelling its substance  
into the dark, quantum by quantum—  
light the visual manifestation of decay,  
like corpse-light, a celebratory sort of sparkle  
surrounding indomitable entropy.

## Port City Lament

No man can go where the deep ships go.  
We curse our human flesh that bars the way  
and stare at stars that we can never know,

stars as bitter-bright as methane snow.  
Our cyborg Pilots bring us tapes to play—  
no man can go where the deepships go.

In Port City taverns the holos glow  
with vibrant worlds that make old Earth seem gray.  
We stare at stars that we can never know,

at worlds on which our vat-spawned children grow,  
while robot mothers tend them at their play.  
No man can go where the deepships go,

but only load, repair, refuel, and tow,  
and wipe his hands and speed them on their way.  
We stare at stars that we can never know.

We curse the bread, we curse the dough,  
we curse the God that made us from such hapless clay.  
No man can go where the deepships go:  
we stare at stars that we can never know.