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Overcast

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Overcast

Abstract

She had been gone only a week when she returned. It may have been longer.

I brought something, she said.

She walked in and through the house, and he followed. In the backyard, she held her hands out to him, together, palms up. Like holding them under running water, like cupping something delicate. The pose reminded him of a painting, though he couldn't picture one specifically. He wondered if such an image existed and, if not, how one should. Inside her hands was a pile of plastic stars, the kind that stick to ceilings and glow at night.

Keywords

plants, growing, stars, clouds



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by Aaron Burch

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What we'll do, she said, is plant them. Water them. Let them grow, like in a garden. And when they've blossomed, we can release them into the sky on cloud-filled nights. So, any night we want, we will be able to see a sky full of stars.

Like it was all so simple.

He looked up at the flat, gray sky. What about during the day, he asked.

Her smile flattened, from bracket to dash, and he was happy that his realism had gained the upper hand, but then immediately sad for her loss of enthusiasm.

Water! she said, suddenly. We'll plant a lake or river underground and grow the blue sky itself!

Again, it all sounded so simple.

And then he thought of the sky's blue and what made it so. A reflection of all the water on our planet, someone had once told him. His father? A teacher? A fellow child, making it up, only to become something he still believed all these years later?

What he wanted to say to her then was: Isn't this what got us here in the first place? How, when they'd found those tufts of cloud, they'd put them in her memory box, because they didn't know what else to do with them. Until, one day, they took them out and buried them in the backyard, like a time capsule, meant only to be a shared funny moment and story. But they'd grown, overlarge and too big for the ground, like produce for a fair competition, until finally releasing themselves into the sky like hot air balloons with their ties cut. They'd floated up into the sky and settled there, clouding over their every day.

Why had they never wondered how or where those first seeds of cloud had come to be found? And what would happen when the cycle repeated itself, this time with stars; and how long might it take -- a week? a year?; and what did she think they would do during the star-growing? He looked again at the dull-colored sky, tried to picture it lit with stars, enough to light up everything he saw.

Aaron Burch is the author of the chapbook [How to Take Yourself Apart](#), [How to Make Youself Anew \(PANK\)](#), and the very-soon-to-be-released [How to Predict the Weather \(Keyhole Books\)](#), which is either a collection of short shorts or a novella or maybe something else but, regardless, will include this short. He also edits [Hobart](#).

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