



Jane Otto

What Would a Meteor Look Like in This Picture?

On a moonless night when I was ten,
my father drove me
toward the outskirts of town
to photograph the sky.

We rode in silence,
as if on a first date,
too shy, even, for small talk—
the amber glow of houses,
a stuttering neon sign,
then a last lonely triangle of light,
watchful as a sentry.

In callous cold,
we walked across a frozen field,
unpacked our gear,
steadied his tripod—
a teepee on the lunar landscape.
When the camera was mounted,
we tilted it back, aimed it toward heaven
until we found Polaris—great Northern Star—
hovering like a god above the airport.

Aperture open like a naked gaping eye,
we captured star trails—parallel arcs of light
that swept across the indigo night.

Now, I am seventeen—
untrained as a morning in May.
As I lie in my bed—
cheek turned toward
the cool face of my pillow—
my father asks me, “What’s wrong?”
When I tell him that I’m pregnant,
the uranium taste of bile clutches as this question—

Great white light, will you guide me with indifference,
blind me with deliverance through the dark night?

Jane Otto’s work has appeared in *Eclipse*, *The Journal*, *Nimrod International Journal*, *PANK Magazine*, *Talking River* and elsewhere. She has spent most of her professional career as a speechwriter for four Nobel laureates and as a grant writer for nonprofits. She is currently working on a memoir in verse titled *At the Home for Wayward Girls*.

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