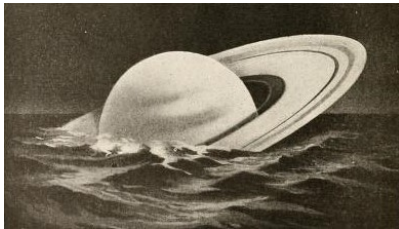


Finding Psyche

By Addison Rizer

Vulnerability has always been something I avoid. As a result, I write narratives about loneliness and disenchantment and isolation. The things I'm feeling but don't know how to express. I don't know, looking back, that any character I've ever written hasn't had some moment of removal from the world around them. I love isolation to engagement stories. I think they speak to how I experience my own humanness. How I want the world to work. How we cycle through these states of being: isolation to engagement to isolation all over again.

Because of this, I often find myself writing about things that are not human. I use them to process my own emotions. I am particularly drawn to astronomical things. Planets and supernovas and moons. It feels, to me, that anything I've ever felt I can find in the stars.



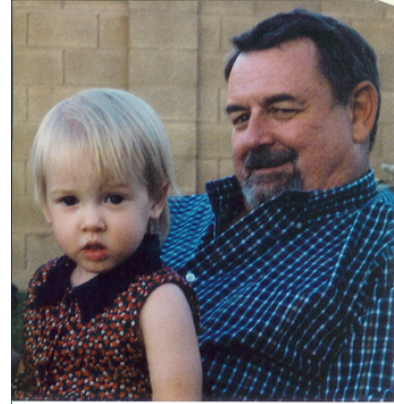
After my grandfather died, my teacher told me that Saturn would float if there was a body of water large enough to hold it. Part of a lesson we were learning, probably. But, I remember how that idea was so baffling to me. It seemed so heavy, solid. But, still, it would float.

My grandfather was always so grand. The smartest man I've ever met, always had riddles for us to solve at the dinner table, crossword puzzles in pen, he had a belly-laugh so loud anyone in the neighborhood would hear him. He loved so loudly, he felt planetary. Then, the cancer crept in. Hollowed him out, I imagined, taking even his bones. But, still, he was always a giant to me.

So, he became Saturn in a short story I wrote years later. "When Saturn Drowns" I called it. In it I write:

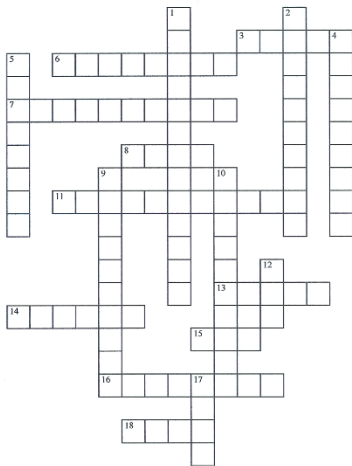
"My grandfather used to cannon ball into the middle of the pool in his back yard. I read once, Saturn would float if there was a swimming pool big enough for it to fit inside. I thought about that when he'd surface, lie face up in the middle of the pool, drifting on the water. My grandfather used to turn to me after I'd been staring for far too long, sun pinking the tip of his nose. He'd beckon, gravitational. My brother and I would go running, trying to make a splash bigger than our grandfather's and failing every time...I couldn't watch Saturn drown."

I didn't know how I felt about my grandfather's death until I wrote that. It was so at odds with the image I had always had of him, this illness that overtook him. How someone so much larger-than-life could disappear like that. I don't know that anyone would stand by while Saturn grew so heavy inside that it drowned. My grandfather, laughing in his hospital bed, sneaking cigars in the backyard while my grandmother wasn't looking, my grandfather asking how *I* was doing the last time I saw him despite the nurses and the IV, despite everything. Saturn drowning before my eyes, my hands too small to save him.



At his funeral, my uncle made crosswords of his life because he loved them so much. I had forgotten. For my last Psyche Inspired project, I made crosswords. Now, looking for photos for this blog post, I discovered the ones my uncle made years ago. It caught me off guard, seeing them. Like making my own crosswords was part of my cycling back around to him without even knowing it.

NY Times-James Rizer Edition



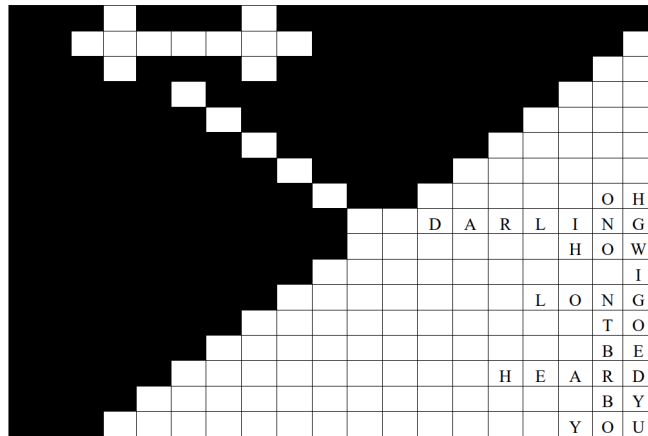
ACROSS

- 3 Family nickname
- 6 Favorite Restaurant
- 7 All-State football locale
- 8 Loyal companion
- 11 San Fran memory
- 13 Tahoe game
- 14 Never a color choice
- 15 Softball like game played with sons
- 16 Birthplace
- 18 Pastime

DOWN

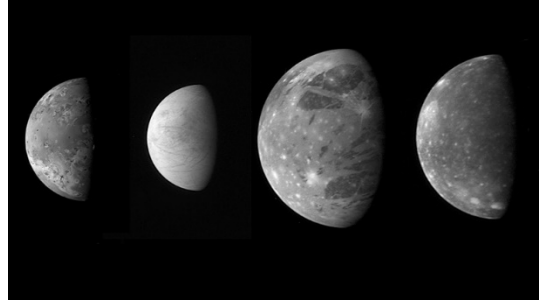
- 1 Card playing exclamation.
- 2 Favorite burger joint
- 4 Favorite riddle..."Louisville" or "Lewisville"
- 5 His paradise
- 9 Beverage for yard work
- 10 Career choice
- 12 Hankerchief monogram
- 17 College loyalty

X-Band Radio



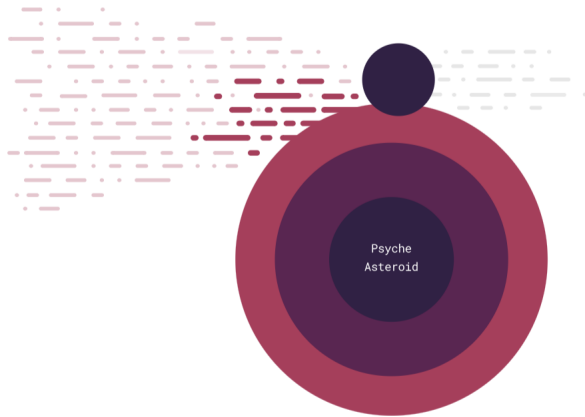
[The Psyche mission will utilize x-band radio telecommunication systems to measure Psyche's gravity field, which, combined with topography images, will provide information to the interior of Psyche's structure.]

In other writing, too, I've used astronomical bodies to convey emotion I'm too hesitant to convey aloud. I've made characters out of the moons of Jupiter. Io, Europa, and Ganymede locked in orbital resonance, Callisto the only Galilean moon to be left out of their cyclical dance. They became Ian, Evan, Gany, and Caleb, the main character, removed from the other's synchronization as they fought. Isolation and disenchantment.



“Here, I was the awestruck stargazer without a telescope. I could only get so close to the things I watched...”

Now, too, I find pieces of myself in Psyche. Isolation. A worry about purpose. Psyche likely meant to be more than just the exposed core it is now. Something bigger and grander, somehow. Psyche losing pieces of itself. Taking a few collisions. Suffering, if it were possible to suffer.



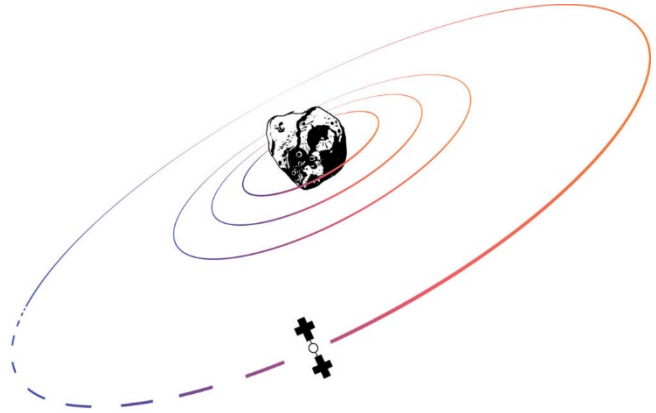
But, too, I find inspiration in Psyche. Despite the collisions, despite the loss, Psyche has become a beacon of hope. A glimpse into our own core, both literally and figuratively. A way to see deeper into our planet, but also ourselves. A vulnerability, an exposure of the soul that will become part of the narrative of humanity. And all not in spite of what Psyche has lost, but because of what that loss has exposed.

The Psyche Mission reveals humans as hopeful creatures. We saw this asteroid and we saw ourselves in it. Built communities around studying it. Learning about it. Rooting for it. We, years ago, named an asteroid after the soul and still, today, it fits somehow. A lasting link through time. We have always seen ourselves in the sky, Psyche a shining example of that. It seems I am not alone in humanizing aspects of outer space. Of finding myself out there among the darkness.

In writing about Psyche, I'm writing not only about myself, nor for myself, but for so many others who feel the way I do about Psyche. I am writing with a community. Sharing with a community. With people who all love this asteroid as much as I do. Who find themselves in

that narrative. In loss and destruction, but also in being found. Psyche has pushed me further into the world while writing about something completely outside of it.

By exploring Psyche, I've explored vulnerability, openness. My own core exposed. Despite hurt, despite rejection, vulnerability is the only way to connection. Isolation to engagement.



Psyche has become a link between me and hope, me and vulnerability, both outside this world and within it.