

Air-Earth-Fire-Water

AIRBORNE

[AIR]

by Sheila Cowley

[February 13, 2018 draft]

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ALONZO, in a lab coat, in a small car.

The DANCERS are traffic at rush hour stopping and starting, idling and trying to change lanes.

ALONZO

I am a scientist of motion. . . So rush hour, in particular, it grinds me. Since I'm in a car that isn't actually moving.

This happens every day, when I am going to the lab or heading home. I know no matter when I start, there's gonna be a point - or many slow and sticky points - when I am in a fast lane, at a standstill.

I try to think of something that's not, 'What the what the what, come on!'

Because that doesn't help. I know, because I study movement - I have scientific proof that shouting doesn't move things forward. You might think it does - you shout, and someone jumps. But it's their muscles and their bones that move them, not you yelling.

It is - okay, this. You see? This muscle? It's amazing, right? I mean, it's elegant. It's simple. And incredibly complex. This triggers this and that's connected to - okay, I could give you the scientific names. But people tend to run away, when I start doing that. Which is another way of causing things to move.

By running, sauntering - or shimmying. You can sashay because of this, right here. It's intricate, it's teamwork. All these muscles pushing, pulling, swiveling and shifting, just to let you do a move like - see? Ta. Dah.

But right now, I am stuck. The car's in drive, my foot is on the brake, come on. I feel the pull of gravity that's yanking, tugging, plucking, dragging all my muscles and my bones just down down down, it's clutching at my ankles, holding me onto this planet.

I mean, you can't knock it, right? 'Cause otherwise it would be very difficult to eat a sandwich, find your socks. I mean if socks and your salami are all flying through the air, that's chaos. So you need a little gravity, to walk the dog, to eat spaghetti without startling somebody with a meatball.

But still, when I am at a standstill, I enjoy a little - gravity vacation. I imagine gravity just rolling back a bit, like hey, you're gonna get a break here, loosen up a little. And your bones don't feel so heavy. You are rising, up, it's nice, right? Try it. Just imagine you are lifted. All those heavy, tired things that drag you down and stick you to the ground - they just let go. And I am bobbing, I am wafting. 'Cause how often do you really get to waft, right? Feel your weightless supple muscles, you're skyrocketing. Yeah, you are airborne. It's nice, right? Try it. Just imagine you are lifted. All those heavy, tired things that drag you down and stick you to the ground - they just let go. And I am bobbing, I am wafting. 'Cause how often do you really get to waft, right? Feel your weightless supple muscles, you're skyrocketing. Yeah, you are airborne.

What a lovely thought, you're borne up, by the air.

Uh oh - hang on, traffic's moving.

Happy landing.

The DANCERS surge away.

- THE END -

PHYSICS BOOGIE
[EARTH]

[August 12, 2018 Draft]

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*MARI is winding up a tedious class,
addressing a group of bored students.*

MARI

Okay, question 9 - momentum. Write that down - mo-men-tum. The quantity expressing, yes, the motion of a body -

*ALONZO rushes in from the previous
play, finds it hard to stop himself.
The DANCERS catch him.*

MARI (CONT'D)

Okay, that guy, sure - plus his velocity. And question 10 -

The dancers sag.

MARI (CONT'D)

Come on, I know that gravity and entropy are in full force this week. But you gotta keep in mind that gravity - and the ability to boogie - that's what's spinning you around this shiny universe.

(Alonso)

Okay, maybe not that guy. But you - yeah, you are orbiting the Sun with all you got.

And really, dance is physics, right? Believe me, dance is, hey, biology. And chemistry, ooh, yeah. . . what question are we on?

The DANCERS don't know, and don't care.

MARI (CONT'D)

Hey, do you think that you can make it through the day without some physics? What's it stuck you to the sofa? Why can't you get out of bed?

No, really, why? 'Cause I do physics every day and I could not get going today, I mean, wow. Okay, let's move on to the lab work!

MARI snaps her fingers - a viola player.

*The DANCERS illustrate each concept.
MARI joins in as she feels it. ALONZO
makes a vague attempt.*

MARI (CONT'D)

Momentum. Let's see that again, but groovy.

Good, okay, acceleration.

Okay, okay, partial credit. Let's see that swerve you into centrifugal force.

Oh, yeah, gimme a little torque.

And back to gravity - don't stop, just surf it, baby, use it.

ALONZO slowly topples over, falls asleep.

MARI (CONT'D)

And that drags us into the law of inertia. If a body is at rest, it will remain at rest 'til your alarm goes off, you hit the snooze, you hit the snooze again, you stay at rest until a force - like, say, your mother - acts upon you. Very snazzy.

Okay, action and reaction. Yeah, I see this play out in a lotta staff meetings. To every action, there will always be an equal - opposite - reaction. Good, that's good.

Sometimes the laws of up and down and sideways, they can feel a little - unreliable. They're not, believe me! But I know that sometimes, it feels like the edge is shifting.

Like I need to be out on that dancefloor, and the Law of Universal Gravitation isn't kicking in! Any two bodies, and it doesn't matter where, got an attraction on each other. That's a law! It's universal! How come you don't feel the energy I'm generating here, and recognize that in the give-and-take of gravity you need to get on over here and say, 'You wanna dance?'

Yeah, those are times when physics doesn't seem like it is working. But you know, experiments, you keep accumulating data. And then when it works - you got a curve, it fits into another curve - and this fits into that and this part here, oh, that's what that's for - baby! Physics! Chemistry, mm hm, biology. . .

'Cause hey, this is a gorgeous corner of the universe, it could be worse, right? Up and down and sideways. Round and round with you.

Everybody Paso Dobles to the campfire.

- THE END -

FLICKER
[FIRE]

[March 2, 2018 Draft]

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MARIO in a lab coat, with an apple.

MARIO

Everything is everywhere. And nowhere.

I'm right here. But - where are you?

That's the thing with quantum physics, that sends gals, or guys, whoever - in a whole, the opposite direction, at a party. When you ask me what I do and then choke on your canape when I say even I am not completely sure.

Sometimes I miss the - physical - in physics. Purple clouds unfurling, objects flying past your face. Things, that you can stir, and squeeze. And measure. Quantum physics, it scares even physicists, right? Because you can't touch it, you can't - hold it. And it never does return your calls.

You don't even know exactly where each atom in you - is. Crazy all the times that I can't get up off the couch, when every particle of me is - dancing. I got a parking ticket just this afternoon, even though I tried to tell her that the molecules that make my car up, they were never all there at the same time.

Like this fire. It just can't hold still. It's here - and there. And okay, hopefully not everywhere. But even when it stays in one place, it is - flickering.

Quantum physics pretty much says things are unpredictable. Precarious. I think we all get that. Just read the news. Or try and find a sock that matches.

I am real, I touch, I feel, I fall in love. And watch him walk away, I watch her suddenly remember an appointment, when I try to explain I am positive and negative - and neutral. I am neutrons, protons and electrons - I'm electric. Every molecule of me is storming seas of chaos, random maelstroms.

Still, how come my hand can't reach across the feet between us, and just, touch you?

Well, maybe someday scientists will figure that one out.

So what I do, after a hard day at the lab trying to calculate exactly, and precisely, how chaotic life is - I pick up an apple. Feel it in my fingers. Take a bite and when you do it's just so clear that it exists, right? It is physical and real, it's full of juice and snap, the smack of apple living. It's alive. And so am I.

So when I do not know what I'm doing with my life and come on, really, I did laundry - how are there no socks that match?

(MORE)

MARIO (CONT'D)

I take a bite of apple and remind myself that I'm made up of oceans, all these tiny seas just surging, rising up inside me. So even when I look like I am holding still, I'm not. And when you come right down to it, I'm everywhere. And no matter how you think about it, I am here.

- THE END -

TIDAL PULLS
[WATER]

[March 1, 2018 Draft]

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LIA in a lab coat.

*The DANCERS are the fish, the water,
all the wiggly things.*

LIA

So. The ocean. A deep subject, right? That's my favorite joke. Since I was three. The waves and splashes, rolling on the sea. And going under. Setting sail. So deep you can't believe it.

I mean, I believe it, I'm a scientist. But even me, it's hard to cope with water that's so deep and dark you pretty much have got to wear a spacesuit just to peek at. I mean, a submarine? You might as well be in a rocket ship to Mars. You can't feel the water swirl around your skin when it's so deep. And me, I want to feel my fingers in the currents.

So I study, in my day to day, the shallows. I wade around the shore, me and the pelicans, the ibis-es? Duck! Yeah, that's my second favorite joke. Okay, it's true, I spend a lot of time alone in hip boots. Which I like to think are 'hip' like groovy. Practical, as well as stylish.

Hey, it's worth it, if it gets me out into the water. 'Cause when you look down it's full of - floaty things and wiggly things. And poky things and undulating - things. Right here, around my ankles, it's the vasty ocean depths, close up. Jam-packed with itty bitty creatures who are all hard at it, having itty bitty romances and battling to get their lunch.

I spend most of my time looking down and trying not to squish things. But you gotta look up now and then and see the sea. Okay, my third favorite joke, right? See the sea.

Funny, on dry land you can hold still, you can just - stop. But in the ocean, it's impossible - the tide is tugging at you, and the sand you're standing on keeps shifting. Even ankle deep, you feel the Moon. It's yanking at you.

I got my toes in a tidal pool, tiny fish are tickling my toes. But what I'm feeling is incomprehensibly enormous galaxies, orbiting each other at unfathomable distance. They are crazy big and crazy far away, and irresistibly attracted to each other. And to me. And you. And you, too.

It's like when you're at a party, all these people surging round you, pushing, pulling. And you catch a glimpse, you hear a half a sentence, somebody across the room - but you feel a connection. And you have to get a little closer.

So I'm down here, in the water. And those galaxies, are beckoning.

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So, hey, I tell you, come on in - the water's fine.

LIA wades into a galaxy of DANCERS.

The tide comes in.

- THE END -