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STRING THEORY

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string theory

Scientists are still trying to find out what makes the cosmos tick.
I don't even know what makes my dad work, bright thwarted man
that he is, would have outdone us all, had he the funds at eighteen,
not been sucked instead into the singularity of the rest of his life,
all that space and nothing to fill it with, no choice but to walk
from here to there, the long way round. One theory suggests
there are several secret dimensions curled up in every particle of nature,
these incredible long vibrating strings at the heart of everything.
Everything: an endless, restless riff, a violent concerto in a minor key
beyond the range of hearing, a song that pulls at the world, is gravity.
Staying still was never an option for beings made of such manic stuff.
I read this in a paper, but dad doesn't, he falls into orbit between the TV
and the fridge, a satellite relaying any kind of noise but hope. Give or take
a few decades, he'll fall back into the quantum soup lab-coats go on about,
the kind without any memory of what it once might have been. I think of
what's wound in him, in us, tighter than DNA, less understood than that
which impels us one slow day forward at a time. The old yarn about
sons worshipping fathers, the way folks thought the sun revolved
around the earth, not vice versa? Well it ended the day he wrote
Do what I couldn't on my birthday card. I was in college. Outside
my bay window the world was a wide unstudied sky, not these
small coiled realities we now think is all we have. I'd not even grasped
the dynamics of colliding lives, fissive trails I wander blindly down.
Dark matter clouds the universe and uncertainty rules it? Could've said that
years ago. I have a theory we become our fathers, however hard we try,
as if this would explain everything. It'll be a while yet before I arrive
at the way he's letting himself loose now, though not quite the same way
time unspools from the reel of physics, more like a shedding of paths,
all possible futures fusing into a grand unified inevitability.
I couldn't either, I'd tell him, when I catch up finally, out of breath,
as we stand laughing, wonder why we ever bothered, on some
long and distant shore on the other side of nowhere else to go.

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