

*Nights Like This*

by Warren Brinegar

When the oceans flip upside down and call themselves sky  
and the clouds return to Venus, I stand in an open field  
for a false sense of how bit it all is—my human idea  
of infinity. We all need it, that reassurance of what Big is,  
not so much a size than a feeling. Looking up,  
light traveling 3-million years from a star 3-million years dead  
touches me softly as if to say *Remember me*. The moon  
reflects light from an absent star, our most important one,  
*You need this more than I*. That's what space is—a cosmic giving.

Once, when I was nine, I told Mother I would be an astronomer.  
I meant to say I wanted to be happy when I grew up. *I'm sorry, honey*,  
she said, *but astronomers don't make much money*. What she didn't know  
and what I didn't say is that the sky doesn't understand money,  
doesn't realize its worth when a collapsing neutron star  
erupts into nova—that most selfless disaster.

Now I stand in the field and I think of my mother  
working 30 years at a job she hates—a neutron star, amassing burden  
and complaints until she nearly collapses under the weight.  
And I wonder when she'll explode, spilling herself light-years away,  
eventually reaching me and saying *Remember me*.