

Mama, It's Me

By Abby-Shelton Storey

MERCURY:

(Inwardly) 38%. No moons or rings. 176 days. Or was it 177? *(Beat)* Definitely 176. *(Beat)* My mom was an astrologist. An artist. A visionary. To me, she was a caregiver. Lifegiver. Mama. I love Mama more than anyone in the world, and the thought of continuing to live without her is... *(beat)* My mother's greatest pleasure in life, besides raising me, was charting the skies.

My earliest memories with my mother are of us sitting on the tiny terrace of our one bedroom apartment waiting for the sun to set so Mama could "read the stars" as she called it. To me, outer space has always been a little intimidating. All that vast blackness, only lit by tiny balls of light that somehow predict the future and affect behavior. I've never quite understood it. But Mama just had a gift, I guess. I was 23 when my mother got sick. It was subtle at first. She would forget a grocery item or her keys or a birthday. *(beat)* Eventually it became people she loved, places she had lived forever, monumental moments of our lives flowing out of her as quietly as a star seems dim in the sky.

I'll never forget the day she forgot who my daughter was. "That's Celeste, Mama. Your granddaughter." She never forgot my name, though- Mercury. Mercury was always her favorite planet to study. It's the closest to the sun, which means it's celestial pull, whatever the fuck that means, is stronger than any other planet. And for whatever reason, Mercury had a hell of a celestial pull on my mother. *(beat)*

38%. No moons or rings. 176 days. *(beat)* . Your body weight on Mercury is 38% of that on Earth. The day she died, my mother weighed 94 pounds. Mercury has no moons or rings. Growing up the daughter of heroin addicts, Mama never had any rings of her own. A day on Mercury's surface lasts 176 Earth days. A day without Mama lasts 176 eternities for Mercury. For me. My own personal hell. Closest to the sun and so Goddamn far away from the only person who made me feel... the way clouds look.

38%. No moons or rings. 176 days. The last year of my mother's life was spent with her clinging desperately to the only information that the dementia hadn't erased. Mercury. Your body weight on Mercury is 38% of that on Earth. It has no moons or rings. A day on Mercury's surface lasts 176 Earth days. Me. Body weight 38%. Has no moons or rings. Lasts 176 Earth days. Me. Mama, it's me. I'm Mercury. 38%. No moons or rings. 176 days.