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Three Stories for Claire and Henrietta

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Three Stories // Alison Schuppert
for Claire and Henrietta

[Cancer]
The thing about disease is it doesn't care who you are. You try telling Cancer He can't take the life of a woman in Baltimore or a 13-year-old girl.

[Scared]
At one end of the city a girl sleeps soundly in her rainbow bed while another trembles in fear falling on the bathroom floor.

[Scientific Revolution]
Henrietta lay lifeless as the knife excised her body. Like a saw slicing skin in rhythm, a meat cutter, the ten blade harvested eternal life.

[1969]
The horizon, indistinguishable in shades of mountain gray and blue, lights ablaze at the opposite end of the spectrum. Hundreds of red and yellow trees have sprouted in pyramid formation in the middle of the ocean. The space shuttle
reaches higher and disappears-
the sun has not yet risen.

[Beginnings]
Before there was the falling girl, the woman
what was the world?
Before the people, before the monomer cells,
before the brilliance of innovation- a space ship
soaring
like lighthouses in the sky?

[Microscopy]
Even the most infinitesimal of microbes,
Staphylococcus aureus or a dust mite, effectively
invisible,
can become visible. Harmful, harmless
this tool does not discriminate.
The pathologist peers over the microscope, exalt-
ing.

[Death]
She lies in a bed near Hopkins
in Baltimore. She knows
they didn’t get it.
They didn’t get it at all.

[Assembly]
What is attraction anyway?
After the chaos came the conference of atoms forming subunits like rain reaching for the ground. Some forces can’t be fought.

[2003]
Something is lighting the sky brighter than the sun – a meteor shower in the middle of the day. The rainbow girl watches enthralled by the sight.

[Taken]
They took her into space, you know. Stole her, violated her, spread her across the world. Like peanut butter she would not expire. Like the tides, she just kept coming back to life.

[Relativity]
A collider in Geneva recently propelled particles past the speed of light. What happens if every theory made to make disorder orderly is false?

[Understanding]
We know they took her into space,
they say. Our HeLa is still alive in labs worldwide, they say. She is dead we know she is dead, they say.

[2003- Columbia]  
What if the meteor shower wasn't really a meteor shower?  
What if the rainbow girl watching understood that seven lives ended that day, longingly loving space anyway?

[Cycles]  
A line. Linear with a beginning and an end.  
Join the opposing sides and a new shape forms-a circle. Beginningless. Endless.  
The rainbow girl wants to pretend it's still a line.

[Tragedy]  
Teenagers- only children, really flocked to school,  
only to hear the name of their missing, falling girl called every. single. day.

[Vengeance]  
The rainbow girl wants to kill You though You cannot die.  
To be physically maimed, burn at the stake, drown-these are the fates You deserve.
[Funeral]
There are the stages of grief all adults know. Disbelief and Denial. Isolation. Anger. Eventually acceptance. *Think of Me* plays on as adults witness a form of sorrow they do not comprehend—children singing *Phantom* for their friend.

[Evolution]
Perspective is always changing so how does anyone ever gain it? Elusive, like a chameleon shifting colors like the crack in the tile that went up in flames.

[Expansion]
The universe and Cancer are one in the same. Always growing larger and engulfing Like a person, good and evil coexist within A black hole, the sun, a dead body, a promising treatment

[Baggage]
Looking at this rainbow girl no one would know she lost a friend to Cancer or loved space until that day the day she couldn’t see she’d grown up. *Think of Me* played on...