

Moon Bounds

We sat and watched the planes taxi on the runway, my daughter Tarli and me. We breathed the fumes and squeezed our eyes against the wavy haze of the hard sun bouncing off the tarmac. She knew the people inside would soon be landing somewhere thousands of kilometres away. She couldn't grasp how something so heavy could fly; how something so huge could seem so small in the sky.

“Sometimes life is full of opposites, things that shouldn't happen the way they do. Some things are just wrong.” I said. She grinned the gap tooth smile she wore of late. Adult teeth coming. In a baby's mouth. Another wrong. She patted my knee to comfort me. Wrong.

I showed Tarli the clips of Neil Armstrong walking on the moon. She had that face on, the one that spoke of the awe and might of humankind, the way a child can look when they are amazed. The one I wore when she was came into the world twisting a rainy Tuesday in June into the stellar day that my life changed; began.

“I wasn't even born when he did that. Sometimes humans can do amazing things. Super human things.”

And sometimes they can't do anything at all.

“I'd like to walk on the moon, Daddy.”

“If I could build you a rocket ship, I would. I'd fly you round the earth and out to the galaxies that we don't even know about. We'd be safe out there. With the stars.”

We watched him bounce across the craggy surface, listened to him deliver that famous staccato line. Giggled at the heavy breaths, like Darth Vader, bleeps and white

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noise. We made our own white space suit and bulbous facemasks out of bed sheets and bike helmets. Cables and wires and giant leaps. Moon bounds. New frontiers.

Tarli had her suitcase all packed. It was a Dora the Explorer case, one that her nanna had picked out a couple of Christmases ago. Tarli wasn't a stuffer or a squeezer. She was a measured packer. She had folded her clothes and placed them inside. She'd checked the contents of her wash bag and slotted it neatly between her Barbie runners and her favourite book *Pearl Barley and Charlie Parsley*. She was ready.

“Come on, Daddy. It's time to go.”

It would never be time.

At the door to her hospital room she saluted. “Moon landing awaits.”

Before the moon landing there are preparations to make. Days to wait. Hours to cry. Lifetimes to wonder about. Cables and wires and giants leaps. Heavy breaths to take. Bleeps and white noise to fill a room. Moon bounds. New frontiers.

And that is where she'll be waiting for me. On the moon. With the stars. When I am finally able to get into my rocket ship and take off for the galaxies that we don't even know about.