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## The Separation

by Mari Syrad

Inside us, a million fibre optic tendrils reach out to communicate with the world. Part laparoscope, part sea-anemone, they flutter and float as if in utero, sensitive to every motion and nuance. In pain, they withdraw; in mirth, their cheeks pinken. They are curious, trusting, naïve. The end of each has a light embedded, like microscopic beacons they glow bright.

We are born not knowing which way to face. Our creators hover nearby, just close enough to ensure safety without dependence, their tendrils quivering with experience,. The cilia communicate, parent to child; teaching love, hope, courage; the prosperity of this relationship is crucial to our survival.

But something went wrong and instead of this tender balance, he reached inside my torso, and gripped each vulnerable stem, hand to elbow as though pulling me out of freezing water, each filament from his body to mine fusing together along every single length. And I clung on for dear life, not knowing it wasn't meant to be this way, not knowing that instead of pulling me out, he was holding me under the cracked ice surface.

After years of this toxic symbiosis, I could no longer cling on. We are being wrenched apart and the tendrils, like newborns, are screaming. Tearing their delicate skin in a slow excruciating separation, they cannot stop it, the love flowing between them faltering, they are gulping for air, they are suffocating.

The child cannot survive alone. Some of the translucent filaments are too damaged to be pulled apart, it's taking too long and some of the tendrils have to be hacked with a blunt knife, there is no more time to endure the agonising separation. The million strong conduits of my life have been massacred and I am down to just one. The final strand, desperate to hold on, begging for help, snaps, and the final light goes out.