



Close Encounters of the Word Kind

Dedicated to Roddy and the Astronauts

by Gill Hilton

I arrive in a new world of small faces, and though I don't know them they are definitely not aliens but are, I can tell from the hidden message in their greetings, all waiting for an adventure that will carry them in tiny spacecrafts, for which I've not even imagined my blueprint, let alone considered a launchpad (which could be just a notepad) all of which helps prepare me for this space and time and, for all I know, even quantum physics with its particles and quarks and what not, not what you can stand on firmly, or even smell, but something that is felt, crafted out of the unknown, that has been there only since the dawn of time, out of the blue and into print, punctuation and even parentheses (useful sometimes).

But I can tell when I'm safe. I can let go and face these faces. I am taken to their leader, who turns out to be more of a guide. Not telling but showing.

There's a quick briefing and a bit of a countdown and then off we all blast.

I'm not too sure who's in control but I can float in the relative comfort that it's a not NASA (Needless And Sabotaging Anxieties) and when I am smacked in the gob by an unexpectedly joyous illumination which has travelled through light-years of my life, and the dark, to reach this worldly pen of mine and make it dance across the cosmos of my notebook for twenty minutes, I realise that I too am safely in flight and I am silently (mutedly) whirled away through a milk of stars, gathering their dust like pollen on an astral bee, towards a thing that I don't yet know and yet is made of me.

Everyone lands, maybe not with perfect synchronicity, but all in one piece, each with their own piece. The space between us all is spanned by the magic of our time. Words come through loud and clear.

I am struck by the constellations created in the blink of an eye or, in some cases, an iPad. Each one aglow with an elemental interconnection. The stars in our bones. All reflecting the same light in a million different dances.

All too soon it is my turn to step out of my capsule. I'm wearing a spacesuit woven of self-gathered words woven into a slightly fluttering fabric. But it is definitely, finitely my fabrication.

I take in air entirely for the purpose of transmitting thoughts. There's a small meteoroid of worry, but that's ok. I just have to exhale my own imagination into the infinity that wraps us in itself forever. I am not expected to fill it. I already sense that my fellow travelers know the value of atoms.

I think, 'Now they're going to see who I am'. And it is fine, absolutely fine.