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UC Merced Undergraduate Research Journal

Title

The Biology of You

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Journal

UC Merced Undergraduate Research Journal, 4(2)

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Publication Date

2013

DOI

10.5070/M442018416

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Undergraduate



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Joy Inneh is a Nigerian-American born and raised in Sacramento, California. She is a student at the University of California, Merced majoring in Human Biology with a minor in Creative Writing. A fervent writer and a lover of science she hopes to reconcile the two passions in her life somehow. She has written two novels, currently unpublished, and is planning to apply to medical school in the future.



the biology of you

In the spaces between your carbon chains,
in the universes between your atoms,
I swear I saw God
swirling in the dust of your creation.
I kissed your hand. Kissed your veins.
Felt the sinew and the meat and the muscle and the blood
pounding out of your tell-tale heart.

You are a wonder of life.

You are the Earth's green bravery,
colored in hues of ochre and cerulean blue.
You are Orion tightening his belt in high heaven.
You are Andromeda, burning bright. You are the constellations I cannot count –
the Jupiters of old, Mars bright red and passionate.

We are all just dust –
you and I and the dog next door,
the little girl who stares at me at the bus stop,
the old man who haunts the graveyard,
your little sister, and my father,
and the family of rats creeping in your floorboards.

Our protons gravitating, our electrons
colliding, sharing, electrifying.

And how nice that in all this riot, in all this mess, such luck that
my hydrogen found your oxygen, my skin pressed against yours,
my soul found a hollow to fit in.

I whispered once to you in the dark
that they say it is cruel that we must love what death can touch.
You laughed then, threw your neck back and opened your throat to the wind.

You shook me hard, tried to bring reason to the fore and whispered into my ear:

“We do not die. We do not die. We do not die.”

And I knew then that our bodies would fail us and
our chromosomes would unravel and,
our eyes would close and
they would see the great seamless dark.

But our passions – they cannot die.

And your haphazard smile,
your words tainted with care,
the way you walk barefoot over streets too crowded, people too few – these, too.
They cannot die.