

Maybe it makes sense for a black hole to yield another black hole. I know what happened, but I don't remember it.

I imagine it like this: they arrive home from a party or a gig. Alice and her boyfriend. They stumble through the front door. It's a cool night and Alice is bundled up, house keys jangling from one finger as she makes her way down the hall, flipping light switches. My bedroom door is open, room empty. She calls for me. She tells me she's home. There's no answer but the silence doesn't feel dangerous because it's not really silence, it's her and James kicking off their shoes, setting the kettle to boil, turning on the stereo. Conversation rolling on. They're still joking, then they're slow-dancing, and I am not there. It is right that I am not there. They're newly in love and this lounge room is a hallowed space. I am not a thought until much later, after they've gone to the bedroom. Then, some hours later, Alice wakes needing to piss. It's very early morning, still dark, before magpie hours and rubbish-truck hours. She puts on her ratty blue dressing-gown and steps, sleep-stunned, down the hallway and out to the backyard. The outdoor dunny never feels crueller, more antiquated, than in the middle of the night. The plastic toilet seat is cold, the slate tiles are cold. The bald light bulb turns her thighs a jaundiced colour. It shows up the cobwebs stretched overhead. She waits until the last second to switch it off, lets her eyes adjust to the dark backyard. And in the lake of yellow light she sees a bundle on the lawn. It's a pile of blankets, it's a puddle of laundry, it's the curved cartilage of an ear. It is a body, me; not dead but cold, because I've been outside since an unknown time the previous night, and it scares her.

Later, I'm embarrassed about this, but mostly I'm so sorry, because it would have been terrifying. She's barely twenty and has never heard of catatonia. But she's a pragmatic person, Alice. I imagine she panics, thinks I've OD'd, covers me with a blanket. Runs inside to wake James. Tells him not to phone triple-oh because she knows I don't have ambulance cover, nor the money to pay for it. She is a good friend. They both dress in a hurry. James carries me fireman-style to the Mitsubishi. When he turns the key in the ignition, the radio sings out, and they both jump. He shuts it off abruptly. Alice is talking to me and to James in a normal voice, but she is shaking and her face is wet. He drives the couple of hundred metres to the Royal Melbourne, and Alice sits in the back with my head in her lap, stroking my forehead like a mother.

These are all things I imagine, not things I report. In this scenario, I'm a black hole. I know I'm wearing a T-shirt and knickers. But I can't picture my face. I don't know if my eyes are open or closed. Maybe my jaw was clenched, maybe slackened. Maybe I was talking. Maybe my lips were tinged blue, my fingertips purpling from cold.

A black hole is not nothing. It is a place where gravitational fields are so strong that light cannot escape. It's a collapsed star that draws in particles of dust and gas. It swells and grows. It looks like an absence: it's not visible as anything but a blankness. We only know a black hole exists by studying the effects it exerts on things around it. Its mass is concentrated at its centre. This is known as singularity.

In this scenario, I'm a black hole, but so is that night, and so were the weeks that came after.