

“The Abyss Between One and Two” by Izzy Toy Rettke

Think of numbers not as objects, but short hand for locations. An infinity of infinities implies no start and no end. A location is larger than what is considered real.

You are me. I am you.

There is a branch of mathematical logic called set theory, concerned with collections of objects. Distinct individuals come together under the name of a single units.

Rewind.

You are a subset of me. I am a subset of you.

In making us logically equivalent, our elements must be one and the same.

You trace the star-maps of the Taiyangshou system and nurse your wounds. I leave your door closed so your mother never comes. You grow old on the Mars III station and never know my name.

I read the scripture of dead Ayuzoan scholars, and stare at sigils said to drive learners to insanity. You do not appear to me in dreams or fevers or waking visions. I remain at the monastery and die in Mount Toulsia's eruption.

Rewind.

You open my eyes and see yourself. I open your eyes and see me.

In proving two sets are the same size, each element in a set must have a unique correspondence to an element in the other. Sets of this nature are equal but not identical. In this way, two infinite sets may go on forever, never overlapping or growing larger than the other.

You train for your starship position for 15 years. I complete 257 oil paintings
539 pastel drawings, and 1,112 ash sketches of a face no one has ever seen.

When we meet it will be no surprise.

You kiss a stranger in a 2059 Rivian pickup truck.

A tornado narrowly misses your home. One month later I spin a frictionless
glass stopper on a spacewalk and it remains in motion until the heat death of the universe.

Rewind.

I stare into the center of a black hole and see the back of my own head.
You particularize into the maroon glow of an event horizon.
My life-essence turns to liquid in a slipstream drive experiment
and is remade into a nickel-iron asteroid.
Your skin falls off in chunks after exposure to Merten beams.

In Gerog Cantor's theorom of cardinality, the set of all subsets are necessarily of a greater measure than the set which contains them.

You choke on smoke and watch the last butterfly stall in cocoon.
I escape the atmosphere with no way back.

Your mother does not see you off.
I can see the fields going gray with ash.

Your crew are screaming but no sound comes out.
My cabin is empty and there are no hands on deck.

In an infinite set with infinite iterations, each cardinal is larger than the previous. Informally, this theorem lends the idea of variable sizes of infinities.

Rewind.
Ten thousand times you have died upon atmospheric entry.
Ten thousand times I have choked to death on this outlying orbit.

You tell me your planet is dying and I believe you.
I tell you my planet is starving and you can count the ways.
New molecules form in the space between our mouths.
I know how to repair your world. You know how to rescue mine.

We correspond the difference between us.
I tell you, *there is no start and no end.*
You tell me, *think of numbers not as objects, but as short hand for locations.*

I am you. You are me.
When we meet it will be no surprise.