

Cylinder Of Light

Jared Blush stepped into the cylinder of light as if obeying instructions. There was no one around to give any. Perhaps they were coming from somewhere else, somewhere farther away than one might expect, or understand. Jared dipped his left shoulder and went in. He had the distinct sensation on the other side, once his head and hands had come through, that he was not pushing his way into the cylinder at all, but rather that the cylinder was his most appropriate habitation, and that now his task was a matter of pulling the rest of himself into it.

"It's funny," he exclaimed. "I feel a million years old."

"You are."

"Older," Jared responded.

"Yes, a million years does not sufficiently express your age."

"Can I stay here?" Jared asked, pulling his knees to his chest. The question had a curious effect on the cylinder of light; it seemed to contract in response to any insecurity or nervousness in Jared. As a consequence, despite Jared's withdrawal further inside, his toes extended beyond the perimeter.

"Where are my toes?" Jared asked.

"They are still on your planet. You have been here before, but never so much of you at one time. Your events are almost over."

"But I'm only a child," Jared noted, uncertain. The cylinder crept inward.

"Yes, those are your toes speaking."

Jared Blush rose to his feet, hoping to fully inhabit the cylinder of light, to demonstrate the surmountability of toes. He stood perfectly still, his arms pointing upward, his hands clasped. The cylinder squeezed in around him, exposing Jared's shoulders and heels to the enveloping darkness.

"You are not yet a ray of light."

The pronouncement was accompanied by what appeared to be a demonstration: the cylinder continued to contract until it was thinner than hair. By then Jared's eyes were outside it and he saw absolutely nothing; his body awareness was thick and disconnected.

Jared Blush awoke on the fifth day of February in a year whose number was too high for him to count to. He looked at the calendar above his barren desk and wondered what it was, how it worked, why it needed to exist. He put on his sandals with the open toes despite the foul winter weather and proceeded downstairs to the kitchen, where he asked his parents a thousand venerable questions.