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Sam Lackey

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Baby Steps

by Sam Lackey

They get us into human life,
And back,
And finally, even out.

At first they spill, irregular,
Like toys across the floor,
Just barely taking us
Along the waves of shimmering air
And into someone's arms.

But soon they're changing everything.
We see the world, up front!
Not just along the ceiling
With faces floating by.
Or in the wake that stretches out
As mother navigates the furniture
And grocery aisles.

No! Now we meet the coffee table
Eye to eye. My God, we have a point of view!
And we must find our way
Between "untouchables."
But not for long.
They're all put up that night
In celebration of
Our long awaited entry in
"The race."

But baby steps are quickly left behind
For those more measured.
Ones that we shall need,
To stay between the lines.
And then, at last,
Long strides and glorious leaps
To catch, or to escape, the times.



Still, there are places off the road,
In darkness,
Where amidst the shards of broken glass
And twisted metal of a dream
That broke apart on impact
With a heart,
We try to stand and get away.

But then, an ancient voice begins,
“You just don’t get it, Child.
See, this is quicksand here. Stand up to run
And you will only sink. Feel that. You’re driving
Yourself down, right now.
Learn to be still.
Get low.
Stretch out, half in, half out, you’ll last a good long time.
You’ll hardly feel the glass if you are still.
You’ll see most things by looking up. See there.
Along the highway’s edge.”

And yet, in silence, when the moon has set,
A light comes racing through the underbrush.
You have been missed.
A hand comes through.
Last link to solid ground?
Who knows?
But, there’s no mistaking the familiar words,
“Just baby steps. That’s all. I’m halfway
In the swamp myself. Just baby steps, and we
Can ease our ankles free.
Just baby steps.
And soon, you’ll be with me.”

