

Light-years and stuff

by [Thomas Schmidt](#) in the [August 14, 2019](#) issue

Here I launch into astrophysics, but
Before I bring up billions and trillions
Of galaxies and light-years and stuff,
Let me just admit my ignorance
At the beginning, because it's the beginning
That caught me, when they explained
About the new orbiting telescope soon to
Replace the Hubble, which will take
Pictures so far into deep space that—
Because it takes so long for the light
To get here from there, and the universe
Is thirteen billion years old—the images
Will represent what happened then.
That's right, we will soon have a snapshot
Of the beginning, although to what end
I'm not sure. I would rather point the thing
The other way and see how it all ends,
But there you go, I don't get astrophysics.
Out near the edge of a middling galaxy,
A smallish star warms my face
And dances on the surface of a tear
From ninety million miles away, while
I fail to comprehend the three thousand miles
That separate me from California,
Or the distance—if that's what it is—
Between me and my daughter buried there,
Much less the billions and trillions of miles
That divide me from you when I try to say
I'm afraid of the dark, of all that space.