

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.