

Title: Adoptive Mother Embodiment? Or the Severing of Two into Halves

Author:

"He is mine in a way that will never be hers, he is hers in a way that will never be mine, and together, we are motherhood." – Desha Wood

Adoptive mothers often wonder, "~~W~~what if I had carried you and birthed you? ~~W~~what if you looked just like me? ~~W~~what if you came and grew within my body?" But, the child did not. The adoptive mother did not feel the child ~~kicking~~~~twirling~~ within her or submit to the sacrifice of birth. She did not feel the throes of nausea or monitor each miniscule change in her own body from conception onward. Adoptive mothers must ask, removed from the ever-so-embodied experience of pregnancy and birth, am I really a mother? Disembodied. Disconnected. Invalid. And ~~what to say, to say what~~ of the mother that did carry that baby within her womb? She, too, might feel disembodied, disconnected, and invalid ~~without, if not raising her own child. If not~~ holding her child in her arms. An empty womb paralleled by another woman's empty arms. In different stages, they remain physically alone. The traditional mother trajectory includes birthing *and* parenting the child. Without both, are we simply halves?

You need both, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*. A mother is defined, stemming back to the Old English word of *módor*, as, "The female parent of a human being; a woman in relation to a child or children to whom she has given birth; (also, in extended use) a woman who undertakes the responsibilities of a parent towards a child." Again, the growing of the child and the parenting of one ~~the ultimate embodied~~

Commented [1]: Along with your edits, please write a final contact letter to Pulaski. Paste that letter into a comment bubble here at the side of the MS.

Commented [2]: Dear Ms. Pulaski,

I'm honored to have finished my edits on your piece. It's interesting to see your thoughts on being an adoptive mother and the things you are grateful for versus the things you doubt sometimes. I also love the inclusion of the dictionary definitions. I think it's interesting to see a supposedly "neutral" outside source and the connotations it provides. Your style of writing is very consistent and clear. Many sentences don't need reworked and you show a confident proficiency in diction. However, I think it is your overall piece that needs another eye. Many of your paragraphs repeat themselves and fall on past arguments. It might be better to revisit your piece and write down every point you make, noting each time you revisit those points. Then, reorganize the paper and cut down on areas where you spend too much time on one point. Also, I'd advise caution throughout the piece when describing the circumstances of adoption and birth. Each story is different and not every birth mother wants to be or should be in their child's life. You have a lovely and unique view as an adoptive mother yourself but children, in general, can be a touchy topic to some audiences. Please review the edits and queries I have made. I invite you to respond with any questions you have so that we can work through this together. I'd love to make this piece even stronger and that's only possible with your voice. Though I do hope you rework the piece, let me know as soon as possible about any major changes so I can see your thought process as you move things around. I do think your piece provides a beautifully different version of embodiment. Sincerely,
MacKenzie Blaylock

Commented [3]: I definitely prefer a three-question structure here, but this question repeats the first one. Can you think of another?

~~endeavor, literally embodying another human life~~. A singular mother doing both. Since an adoptive mother does not have both, ~~she struggles mentally with loving a child~~ that, in some ways, is disconnected from her physically. No bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. She suffers the severing of body and mind, when pregnancy would have provided a union. Likewise, the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines adoption as, “~~the taking of a~~ minor who is not one’s offspring into the legal relationship of a child.” Not very encouraging words for the hopeful adoptive mother; she would be *taking* a child that is not her offspring into a legal relationship, not even a loving, parental one. The validity and emphasis remain with bearing the child, according to the definition. Even in an increasingly disembodied world, motherhood through birth represents an area that holds firm. Even the embodied act of holding a child against ~~your~~ chest, cooing them to sleep, rocking back and forth and back and forth in your arms, does not mean you shared embodiment at the start. ~~Some~~ will claim you are not valid, and the disconnected feeling will make you think it’s true. Intrusive thoughts state you are only half.

Commented [4]: While relevant to the overall narrative, embodiment doesn't fit naturally here.

Commented [5]: It is my understanding that you are writing this as an adoptive mother yourself. However, because this is third person, that authority has been stripped at this moment and this line can seem callous and heartless to those who have never experienced it. It needs introduced earlier that you are an adoptive mother.

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Commented [7]: Both "you" and "she" are used as pronouns for the adoptive mother. Stick with one.

Commented [8]: I'd be curious to know the dictionary definition of surrogate and how it relates to this.

What a paradox for adoptive mothers, this half-life. My son reaches for my hand, searching for connection. I hold him against me ~~while;~~ our breathing becomes one. ~~He~~ drifts into an afternoon’s nap, chest rising and falling with mine. We’re in sync. We have reached a state of attunement from time spent together. Human bodies give clues to their emotional states, becoming a representation of the mind. Even though I did not give birth, I have become attuned to my son’s ~~own embodiment~~. I have become attuned to my own body and emotions ~~in parenting~~, and how a parent’s regulation can often directly affect the child. If ~~my heart races~~ ~~become escalated~~, ~~his heart will race~~ ~~will~~

~~become escalated~~. If I remain calm, he will remain calm. He takes cues from my actions and physical state. Is this not embodiment? My emotional state and the bodily signs I exhibit will directly impact my child's emotional and bodily state, as well. Such is the experience of many adoptive mothers, who cradle their children and form life-long, mutual connections. We do not have to give birth to be embodied or be in tune with our children. However, it certainly would have helped. The paradox continues. Adoptive mothers know in their soul that this is their child, but they still wonder how it could have been different~~what they missed. A disconnect between their mind and the body that did not carry the child.~~ The current embodiment found through actively parenting does not silence the thought of *what if*. "What if this was my biological child?"

Commented [9]: How about, "however, we still miss . . ." and fill in the blank with what carrying that child could have done. This will show how it helps.

Indeed, humans are biological creatures. A deep embodiment exists for thoughts such as, this person is my family, this person is my mother and father, this person is me because of our relatedness~~DNA—this deoxyribonucleic acid.~~ Our minds tell us that *this is our family*, because of ~~the DNA in our bodies and~~ the blood in our veins. The pre-installed human connection. Biological parents look at their children and see themselves reflected. The physical traits and similarities reinforce the connection in the ir minds. My son has his mother's exact eyes, but that mother is not me. Beautiful, beautiful green eyes that connect them together. We as humans are biologically and evolutionarily programmed to think this way: my biological relatives are my family. We are also biologically and evolutionarily~~evolutionally~~ programmed deep in our genes to desire procreation. Our bodies whisper to create offspring and progeny. Our minds can determine our own paths, but that doesn't always silence the whisper—especially for

Commented [10]: DNA is not an innate biological knowledge.

adoptive mothers that didn't have that primordial, bodily beginning. To be sure, adopted children feel an innate pull to the biological, as well. The Federal Children's Bureau reports that 85-90% of adopted children want to locate their biological parents. ~~The pull goes both ways, all ways.~~ When we cannot have that connection to our origins, we feel disconnected from ourselves and our identities. ~~Disconnected from body and mind.~~]

Commented [11]: While embodiment is the theme, it doesn't need repeated in places it doesn't exactly match.

Furthermore, adoptive mothers and birth mothers connect to the age-old discussion of nurture versus nature. Are traits shaped by our experiences or pre-determined by our genetics? For the adopted child more than most, the answer remains both. While many children receive nurture and nature from their biological parents, the adopted child lives ~~within a melting pot-a combination~~ (which of course can be influenced by age of adoption). No matter how much an adoptive mother might nurture, her child will always possess innate traits that are foreign to her. Another severing of halves, ~~part from one and part from another.~~ Will these halves be good enough to add up to one whole mother? ~~I speak often~~ to my son's (birth) mother, trying to rustle up a good combo of nurture and nature. We both feel this disconnect. We both feel that we want the full experience, but only get part. We share, as neither of us have both the birthing of a child *and* parenting them. A recent text exchange goes:

Commented [12]: I'm curious to know why you're still in touch with her, often. Is she involved in your son's life? If so, how does this affect her idea of motherhood; birthing, being present, named a mother, yet not a parent?

Adoptive Mother (Me): I sometimes kind of wish I had it all, both birthing a kid and getting the chance to raise them.

Birth Mother: I wish I had it all, too. I know if I had another kid now, I'd be a great mom.

Adoptive Mother (Me): For sure, you would be! Good news is neither of us are dead yet, so there's still time.

No matter which side of the coin you're on, ~~we are predisposed to desire~~ and crave the traditional experience of wanting to birth the child and raise the child. ~~We ask the what ifs.~~ We desire to know the deep knowledge that the other side holds secret. We wonder if the grass is greener on the other side. Who really *wins*? The nurture mother or the nature mother? Well, if you're thinking about this in terms of winning, ~~as~~ opposed to both supporting and loving your child together, then you've already failed. You've become the mother in "The Judgement of Solomon" that would cut a baby in half rather than share, or to "split the baby." Nobody wins if this becomes a competition.

Commented [13]: While I agree that, as stated earlier, it is a biological desire, not every woman wants to have kids. Many especially fear the idea of birth itself.

~~And even though that baby was not split in two, adoptive mothers still feel a divide.~~ They long for the joining of the body and mind that they imagine comes with giving birth—the joining of the infinite love for your child with the honor of them coming from your body. Adoptive mothers frequently report a sadness in not being present for their child's entire existence, a result of adoptive mothers' initial disembodiment. For she was ~~---~~

Commented [14]: Much of these next few paragraphs is beautifully written, but it repeats much of what's already been said. It might be better to find a way to integrate this previously, that way it doesn't feel like you've returned to a dead topic.

- Not present when the cosmos weaved the child in the womb
- Not present to feel the child kick and squirm inside her
- Not present in the grueling act of childbirth, which seems to be a rite of passage

- Not present to hold and gaze upon the perfect child, the moment of birth, from body to placed upon breast
- And, for those that adopted older children, not present for lost years of hugs and handholding and closeness. A physical separation that creates a mental void. Someone else possesses those once-in-a-lifetime embodied moments.

Mothers, in the most fundamental definitions, are tasked with giving life to children. If an adoptive mother does not carry the child, is her experience more akin to that of a father? And, for the birth mothers that can't raise their children, is her experience more akin to a mother grieving the death of a child? Ultimately, the mind that carries so much love disconnects from the body in adoption. Even if our logical minds know ~~s~~ that this is our child, reinforced by the profound emotional connection of mother and child, biology exists. Humans strive for embodiment, be it from that the mother that birthed them or the mother that holds them. One mother does not have to be both, but each child does need both the nature and nurture and full parental embodiment, even if two mothers provide that whole. Only when a child is consistently held and embraced by a loving caregiver will their mind finally settle.]

In the end, no mother represents half. Adopted children receive two whole mothers, having unique connections with both, different embodiedness with both. Mothers embody their children with hopes and dreams, with blood and bone, with beautiful eyes, with love and touch ~~and felt safety~~. Mothers are valid as birth mothers, adoptive mothers, foster mothers, stepmothers, surrogate mothers, kinship caregivers, or any

Commented [15]: Even a biological father is there during the pregnancy period, hopefully helping the pregnant mother. He might not feel embodied but he has a connection to the child before birth.

Commented [16]: I don't think either of these comparisons feel strong enough to include. I could argue with this comparison that at least the birth mother knows her child lives on and can maybe one day hope to contact them again.

Commented [17]: I'm confused by this section. Are you encouraging both mothers be involved? Are you encouraging one to embrace motherhood? Needs cleared up.

other mother figure. Adoptive mothers and birth mothers might feel severed, but they can join together. The either/or can become an expansion of all the wonderful women that love a child. No one must choose. ~~The~~As for the embodiment—or lack of embodiment, disembodiment even, ~~—~~that many of us adoptive mothers feel, ~~—that~~ represents the human condition. Our innate need to have it all, even though we already have ~~it all in~~ the meaningful connections and love of our children. Not everything can be perfectly aligned with body and mind, even though we wish it so. However, as long as we make a good faith attempt to love and let love, we will be okay. As we hold our children's hands and calm their fluttering hearts, we will be okay.

Mackenzie, please copyedit this MS per our class style sheet. When you make your edits, use the suggesting function, not the editing function.

Cosmic Lessons

Like all large cities, Lexington is plagued by light pollution. The excess of light from cars, streetlamps, and office buildings block out the twinkling stars in the heavens above. Even on the outskirts of the city, the inky sky is still devoid of stars, the city's luminescence reaching to the furthest corners of Lexington. Perched atop the hood of my car on the edge of town, I stare at the disappointingly onyx sky with an underwhelming scattering of stars. Though I know it is futile, I still search for the Big Dipper. It is pointless, yet I try to convince myself it's nice simply knowing it is there. The evening chill seeps into my skin and I feel time creeping along. With each second that passes, I sense I should be doing productive tasks such as completing homework, finishing job applications, submitting scholarship forms, or anything other than searching for an invisible constellation.

Alone beneath a vacant sky, my own powerlessness against the eternal onslaught of time clouds my mind. I am but a wrench stuck in the cogs of a clock, disrupting the very space I inhabit. The tiny handful of stars peer down at me, whispering with harsh indifference cruel reminders of my own insignificance. They say to me, *Mourn, for nothing matters.*

They are nothing like the stars back home. In the serenity of my backyard, an immeasurable amount of stars are scattered across an obsidian canvas. It's utterly breathtaking—how vast must the universe be to contain the millions of stars before me? Laying on my back in the soft clover, I spot the Big Dipper with ease and imagine it scooping me off the ground so I can live amongst the stars. With a skirt of starlight, I dance alongside Cassiopeia and

Commented [1]: Earlier the character is lying on their car. If there was a change in position, this needs to be described.

Andromeda, exploring the infinitude of the cosmos. Time is meaningless in this moment. I am untouched by Earth's spin, unbound by simple things like seconds. It feels as if I am the only person on the planet—i—It is just me and the interminable expanse of the universe. I am so small in comparison, so unimportant. The world is unconcerned with my existence, my desires, my dreams. Yet I am not frightened by this perceived indifference. Here, it brings freedom. Here, my life is entirely mine. The constellations smile at me and cheer, *Rejoice, for nothing matters!*

The heavens have told me that cosmic indifference can be both unnerving and comforting. Under a starless sky the universe is cold and apathetic, but when I am beneath the luminous Milky Way, the universe is kind and reassuring. How can it be that such a small distinction like starlight makes the difference between complete discord or harmony of the mind and space ~~harmony of the mind and space or complete discord~~? These differences are what makes embodiment a transitory experience. It is circumstantial and individual to a person's environment, a model of the equivocal interpretations of "nothing matters." There is beauty in these double meanings. "Nothing matters" is both a blunt reminder of cosmic insignificance as well as a soothing expression of freedom. In an infinite universe, there is room for both to be true. I have learned from the stars, *Exist, for nothing matters.*

I remember the night my grandfather passed away. I don't remember ~~most of the sensory details~~—what I saw ~~or~~, what I smelled, ~~etc.~~ ~~but~~ I remember the ~~feeling~~ and the ~~future~~ change of that feeling ~~in the days to come~~. I think it's because his passing wasn't much of a surprise, ~~lit~~ it was the natural ending, to a life well-spent, and ~~a~~ relief from the disease that ravaged his body. Make no mistake, death, as N.T. Wright would say, is no friend of ours[1]. But, with a disease like Alzheimer's ~~(which is what my grandfather had)~~, some wonder when the crossing ~~of death's door~~ truly began. I don't purport to be a leading theologian ~~or~~—an expert by ~~any~~ means. I'm just a woman with an interest in theology, a great love for her God and for her grandfather. With that in mind, I'll ~~admit~~~~start with this~~, I don't have all of the answers. ~~As I study what life and death might mean within religion, I'm realizing that some things are a bit more layered than I thought.~~—I'm still learning and studying—what all of this might mean—realizing that ~~some things are a bit more layered than I thought.~~

Commented [1]: What feeling? What emotion?

Commented [2]: I'm likely going to rewrite most em dashes. These should be used for special emphasis or complicated sentence structures. Without special circumstances, too many em dashes can complicate the readability of a piece.

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~~I'd never given~~~~I remember not giving~~ a lot of thought to ~~this~~a belief I'd held for most of my life: ~~—that~~ my grandfather's soul would go to be with the Lord in Heaven—amen, the end. His body, returned to the dust, ~~—~~would no longer hold value. Every deed, every word spoken in this body wasn't truly *him* in physicality, ~~—anyway, right?~~ It was his soul. His ~~essence~~. His ~~nephesh~~. His psyche. Him. And despite hearing all my life ~~that~~, the dead in Christ will rise, ~~—~~I never truly understood or considered what this belief of ~~resurrection~~ actually meant. I was content with the idea of his soul ~~—~~being him, and this body, this "earth suit," ~~as I sometimes heard it referred to as~~, was nothing but dust.

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Upon meeting Christ at our death, we'd finally be free. ~~Of course, I wouldn't have imagined that y~~Years later, I ~~was now'd be~~ reconsidering those beliefs in light of the moments, days, and years that led to his passing. I never imagined I'd be sitting in classrooms, reading books, and having deep discussions with my husband and professors about the difference between spirit and soul. ~~because~~I guess I never thought there was a difference—and I suppose I believed that no one else thought there was a difference either!

It's amazing what we'll reconsider about a topic when it suddenly becomes personal to us. I'm realizing that perhaps, this is what C.S. Lewis meant in *A Grief Observed*, when he talked about having an "imaginary faith" prior to the death of his wife. Suffering became more real to him with experience, and so, he had to consider things ~~more deeply and~~ in a different way than he did before.

I found out that my grandfather had Alzheimer's disease when I was in the third grade and ~~he died~~~~left us~~ during my later college years. For those familiar with this disease, you can imagine the state he was in at the time of his passing. ~~He had n~~No memory of his family. He wasn't speaking. It's almost like his body was still here, but he wasn't. ~~..d~~Do we then call that death or another form of it? Surely, we can't call it death that easily. He still looked like my grandfather. ~~—~~even if the things that made him so were no longer present. ~~÷ like h~~His smile. His warmth. His sense of humor. His ~~memories~~. I recall a particular ~~memory where he had~~~~experience, of after having~~ forgotten all of ~~his family, but us—his family~~—he was still able to remember the words to a hymn. Fitting,

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being that he ~~used to be~~ was a pastor. There's ~~at~~ the joy in knowing that ~~despite his~~ ~~fleeting memory, in all things~~ God, was never forgotten. Yet, as a granddaughter, I wondered how I could be. How his wife could be? Just when I thought he was gone, he was still there. But how much of him, exactly?

And what does gone even mean in this sense? He's still breathing, here with us—but not. So, perhaps, ~~here~~ you can begin to ~~sense~~ the complexities that I've ~~noticed~~ ~~awakened to~~. ~~Does an~~ ~~is there a sort of~~ attachment to the human body ~~that~~ contributes to the love ~~and sense of connectedness~~ that we feel for ~~and toward~~ our loved ones? Surely there's some level? A smile. For romantic relationships, there are the things that perhaps attracted us to our significant other, ~~such as~~ —eyes ~~or~~ ,lips ~~etc.~~. We associate them with what ~~they present to us~~. ~~we see as well as what they do, what they say...who they are.~~

So then, when we see our loved ones, void of everything we recognize but their physical attributes, —how do we proceed? Can we say that ~~they~~, their very essence has departed and all that remains is the shell that held them captive here? Th ~~is same~~ cage that held them captive to disease ~~and~~, corruption? ~~, and the cares of our broken world—~~ I don't think so.

~~It's hard to~~ ~~don't know that~~ I believe that there's no value to ~~my grandfather's~~ the arms, ~~that~~ circled me to hold the newspaper ~~when~~ as I sat on his lap on Saturday mornings. I don't believe that ~~his hands~~, his body, used to serve the members of his church ~~and~~,

~~to~~ love his family, holds no value. ~~WDo all those things make up the soul? Or was his~~
~~soul~~it in tandem with ~~his~~the body that carried out the actions from his heart? ~~From him?~~
~~His soul?~~ ~~But~~And what of his body?

~~Does~~So, then I guess, it just returns to dust?

Will he be a light orb in the sky forever?

Will he know me then? Remember me then?

Will we be light orbs together? How does one's soul appear outside of it's body? Can it
hug? ~~Most of us know what it is to desire a hug from a loved one, we say things like: If I~~
~~could just hug them one more time...or, if I could just feel their touch again....~~

Perhaps these things won't matter in Heaven.

It took a conversation with my husband ~~—literally as I was writing this essay—~~to realize
that I may not ever know ~~how to~~the answer to how I should perceive the state of my
grandfather before he left. ~~I know that he was valuable—is still valuable to those that~~
~~knew him. H~~But how ~~do we~~to identify where he was in those last days? ~~—w~~W as he still
with us? ~~What would it mean to be gone? Or was he already gone? (Again, what does~~
~~“gone” even mean in this context?)~~ Where does his consciousness exist in a state like

that? I might not have the answers, but I've come to the conclusion that I do have an incredible hope.

Resurrection. The component I was missing, I had ~~also~~ heard about it my whole life but viewed it as a distant thing—something I didn't really connect to this issue.

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~~Resurrection.~~ In missing that, I fear I've missed a key component to the resurrection of Christ. His ~~resurrection~~ ~~m-rising from the dead~~ was significant ~~because~~ ~~in that yes,~~ it signified victory over sin and death, but also because—His resurrection was an

example of a ~~the first~~ fruit of the hope He came to provide. According to this hope, those who died under ~~in~~ Christ, would also rise again at the end of (the days). ~~And although this~~

Commented [5]: I feel that Jesus provided many hopes before his death, but feel free to reword this.

Commented [6]: Whose days? Man's? Earth's?

~~sounds very much like a zombie apocalypse—something far more terrible than hopeful on its face—t~~ The beauty of this lies in the promise of a a new body. The ability to take off

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corruptible and put on incorruptible as Paul writes[2]. No more sickness or, disease.

N—no more death, now our defeated foe. This new body, as ~~explained~~ ~~far as we know if~~ ~~it,~~ doesn't remove our qualities—we don't become "new people." We become restored.

This ~~shouldn't be a surprise—as it would~~ ~~seem~~ ed to be ~~hat was~~ Christ's mission—for all of humanity and for us individually. Jesus himself appeared after His resurrection.

~~remade but retaining the nail prints in his hand. —bodily—yet, he still had the nail prints in~~

~~his hands. My guess would be that it was for Thomas, the one with the reputation of~~

~~being a doubter—often called, "Doubting Thomas."~~[3] Yet this does raise interesting

questions about the details of the dead in Christ—a phrase which simply means,

Christians who died. What exactly does it mean to have a new body, outside of just

sickness and disease being removed?

Will my grandfather's~~his~~ hands be restored? Those same hands that held the newspaper on a summer morning, or gripped his pipe —or turned the pages of his Bible as he prepared for a Sunday morning sermon...Will his smile pull at his cheeks ~~again~~~~be restored~~? The one that accompanied the silly sounds he'd make when I gave him a kiss on the cheek as a child. Will his memory be restored?

My belief is that these things will happen. That Christ's resurrection proves this.~~Based on what I've seen, of the first fruits of the resurrection in Christ I'd say, yeah. Probably.~~ And the hope that it brings is invaluable. The idea that our bodies could ~~mean that much,~~ be ~~that~~ valuable, that we could receive new ones , feels almost mobilizing for the present and helps make some sense of my grandfather's experience. Or perhaps it's a start. ~~His soul, his spirit—his, whatever makes him, him~~—I believe his soul has already been redeemed~~,~~ and rests with God. And God will determine if his body is also important enough ~~God~~ to be redeemed —renewed, remade~~made~~, as well.

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So, I look forward to seeing him again one day —~~—~~Not the idea of him, or the shadow of him, or the *him* I saw in his casket at his funeral. Instead, I look forward with an expectant hope~~,~~ that I will see him well, and that I will see him *whole*.

[1] See N.T. Wright's *Surprised by Hope*.

[2] See 1 Corinthians 15:53-55 for more context.

Brown 7

[3] See John 20:24-31 for more context.

In death, our bodies will unravel. Our thinking will become slow and unclear. Our kidneys will begin to shut down, along with our livers, pancreases, and then our hearts. We won't eat because we won't need nutrients in death. As our bodies unravel in preparation to leave this Earth, so will our souls, tossing memories and artifacts out of their fabric as they are unwound, in every direction as they are unwound so that they are almost indiscernible. I imagine time slows down so much that it almost doesn't pass at all as we work to make sense of a lifetime's worth of memories thrown at us by our souls. It won't slow down in a mechanical way, not in the way we think of when we think of time slowing. It will be slowed down so that decades' worth of memories will play in our heads in two seconds, but the memories themselves won't move quickly.

In life, we tend to separate our bodies and our souls. Humans can oftentimes be all -or- nothing creatures; some of us lead with emotion and heart, and some of us lead with logic and brains. So, when those of us who lead with emotion try to look at life through the lens of the vessel that carries that emotion, they are met with internal confusion. When those of us who lead with logic try to look at life through the lens of their soul, they are left with the same internal confusion. This binary way of thinking (whether it is innate or conditioned in us) is the source of this tendency to separate our bodies and souls. However, the universe doesn't care about our internal struggles, though, and reminds us in death that they are intertwined. They depend on each other to stay alive, so when we die, our souls do all they can to breathe life into our fading bodies. We remember, even if our bodies can't make sense of it, all of the things that ignited us physically and spiritually. And when we inevitably die, our souls will continue on, a final tribute to our physical bodies here on Earth.

Commented [1]: Since this has already been used to begin the sentence, try using a different word. Maybe unwind or unthread?

Commented [2]: What is an artifact in this context? Maybe use dreams or hopes?

Commented [3]: We continue on to actually describe discerning these memories.

Commented [4]: What do we think of? Describe this.

Commented [5]: If not in our heads, then where are these memories playing? I think the end of this paragraph could be reworked to invoke how emotional it could be to see all of these memories.

Commented [6]: I'm understanding this as it is our souls that carry this emotions and our bodies aren't always aligned with this. First, I think "vessel" takes you away from this focus on the difference between body and soul. Second, what is this internal conflict? How are our bodies different than our souls? Does this come down to a battle of needs vs. desires?

Commented [7]: I'd be curious to know how it is innate or conditioned.

Commented [8]: If this is referencing back to the flashes of memories, specify it.

Commented [9]: There's evidence that brain activity continues after a body is officially dead. I wonder if you could fit that in here?

~~In spirit, e~~ Energy cannot be created or destroyed. When we die, ~~I am sure that~~ there is ~~a~~some scientific explanation as to where all the energy goes, ~~something about it~~ transferring out of our bodies and into our environment, but ~~it that~~ doesn't account for the things that make us human. Our rationality, our capacity for empathy, and the love that has been poured into us for a lifetime ~~are is~~ not taken into account in this scientific explanation of where our energy goes. ~~Science doesn't account for the soul.~~ We don't know what death is truly like until we experience it ourselves, and then we are gone. ~~Scientists don't account for the soul. No wonder scientists don't take the soul into account;~~ they haven't experienced death yet. The harmony between our soul and body is evident in death, and if we were given the opportunity to experience this harmony in life, perhaps we wouldn't try so hard to separate the two. ~~All our memories, emotions, relationships, and experiences experienced in our physical bodies are the fabric of our souls, and souls don't die.~~

Commented [10]: Changed to match format of other two paragraphs. Modify, if needed.

Commented [11]: This language makes you sound unsure. If you want to make this stronger, then find a scientific fact to use here.

Commented [12]: We've established this already in previous paragraphs. I think your previous sentence is a stronger ending.