

“It’s beautiful”

written by Holly

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By Holly Lisle

Some moments define us—define a place and time, who we are to ourselves and to each other, what we are about. And those moments we hang onto desperately, because they come unexpectedly, they are so fleeting, and if lost, we lose a part of who we are with them.

In the course of planning out my writing for the night, I was considering how many memories would slip away over the course of a very long life, and realized how many of them would be memories that mattered—that were defining. How much we would lose if we lost them.

And a memory of my own came sharply and starkly to mind. My youngest child was three, and he had been playing with one of those plastic toy stethoscopes that are, frankly, useless. I had a real stethoscope, and I thought he might like to hear through one that worked. So I put the softest earpieces on it, and called him over. I fit the earpieces into his ears, and held the stethoscope bell to his heart, and let him listen. He grinned at me as I said, “That’s your heart.”

I then put the bell of the scope over my own heart, and said, “That’s my heart.”

He stood there, transfixed, an expression creeping over his face that brings tears to my eyes even as I write this. I watched him, wondering at the serious look in his eyes, and after what seemed a very long time, he said, simply, “It’s beautiful.”

Three years old. He was hearing the music that had been his first symphony, the sound of his existence before there was

light or air, which had been echoed again and again while I nursed him.

I had never heard him say those two words about anything before. Thinking back over our eleven years together so far, I cannot remember ever having heard him say them since.

They were, simply, his words for that moment—for the two of us and who we had been to each other before we saw each other's faces. Who we were right then.

How we see the world changes in these defining moments, and it never goes back to the way it was before. For me, forever more, the words "It's beautiful" will conjure the face of my three-year-old son, wide-eyed and motionless, leaning just a bit forward, listening via an old blue stethoscope to the beating of my heart.

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