

Caught in a Webb

A cold, quiet NASA lab,
alone
sipping a psychedelic cocktail
and browsing MAST,
scrolling through images of ancient galaxies;
stars shrouded by curtains of cosmic dust;
nebulae formed from supernovas
bursting billions of years ago:
gestated in plasmic cavities on the outer reaches of space.

Its majesty is interrupted by
another sip of peyote, then
another slow, seductive
spin of the scroll-wheel, noting
a tickle behind the forehead,
a feeling of lightness
of flying

space

he's ejected into it's dark, formless void,
suffocating,
reeling from its emptiness;

then pulled in
no longer staring at a screen—but through a scope,

he's reminded of his younger years searching for Venus,
measuring distances on a celestial map,
approximating angles,
keeping a single eye locked on the lens

and suddenly an image comes into focus:

a new planet,
much like ours, and deeper...

Past the layers of thick, clandestine atmosphere.
Past the jealous clouds, blocking out the evening stars.
Through the skeletal branches of a deciduous tree,
and panels of glass lining the second story catwalk:
a woman walks down a hallway wearing
a red sweater.

Her tawny hair drops perfectly around her heart-shaped
face, flush with blood and beauty and mystery
and the whole universe,
which closes in around her.

Who is she?
Who could she be?