

The Loneliest of Electrons

When we first met in Cologne [seven centuries ago], our love was pure European alchemy. No science to that attraction. Just a philosophical belief that love and the Classic Elements¹ would carry us. We tried [so vainly, we tried] to transmutate what we had [*All the elements of love, we whispered*] into precious gold. We experimented but ended [with just batches [batches batches] of useless panacea.

Later, after our fifth breakup [the summer of 1661], I rented a threadbare laboratory in a London brownstone overlooking the River Thames and delved into that newest science—dymistry, discovering the smallest things of love and life, which I named atoms.² I studied the parts—protons [secure like your new lovers] hugging the nucleus [you]. In the outer reaches of all of this—the loneliest of electrons [me]—unstable and spinning a sad orbital.

Sometime after the nuclide of our love fissioned for the seventh time [how can that be—I named us *uncuttable?*] during winter in Red Hook 1837, I realized I needed no laboratory—no fancy equipment—to understand acidity and basicity. After so many bad reactions,³ we proved [beyond any doubt] that the crucial things exchanged between acids and bases [or two broken lovers] are just charges [You to me—*Liar!* Me to you—*Whore!*].

1. For us, our elements / only fire—love, lust, need.
2. After the Greek word / "uncuttable." / Our love, I hummed.
3. Broken plates / broken hearts / broken promises / broken hearts.

One last experiment, we pleaded to the other. We consented, then moved to Los Alamos, 1942. I attempted to transform our substances through our interactions with the other [Remember?] *One last experiment*, we said—and meant it. But we failed. We never had the form of energy needed.

After Los Alamos, there were no more chemical bonds of love. Just oxidation. Just reduction. Dissociation.⁴

Over seven hundred years I delved into alchemy, conjectured the science of dymistry, perfected modern chemistry. With all this science, I just spin round and round [the least stable of electrons] and posit, *What if we are atoms?*⁵ [no longer protons and electrons]? *What if I can fuse us?*⁶ *together, like that first night?* I return to the lab, muttering to the useless beakers and Bunsen burners, *Chemical bonding? It is more than repulsion. Can it be more than attraction?*

4. We haven't talk for over a / century. Near enough, two.
5. I named them / "uncuttable," to hold us together. / "Uncuttable," I named / us.
6. You-me.
7. A spring Cologne night—the wind / chilled, the earliest budding of flowers.