

## Excerpt from *Cosmological Considerations* p 239 to 246

(Roger is in his final year of high school and Lesa has become pregnant)

The allocation of time to research was severely diminished. What was worse, Ray found that he did no longer disparage that fact. Sometimes he would go into their office after setting his current novel aside to find that Lesa had been working away on her own and seeming to enjoy it without him. He felt increasingly as though he just slowed her down.

She would josh that he had gotten so far ahead of her that she had to work to just catch up with organizing what he had already figured out. But it wasn't true. Ray knew that it wasn't true, and he knew that Lesa knew it too.

At about that time when Major league Baseball Spring Training began once again, the commissioner called to tell Ray that he had been nominated for the Hall of Fame in Cooperstown. He would accept if he were selected, would he not?

"Of course, but there are rules. I haven't met the criteria," he insisted.

"The criteria are clearly at the discretion of the committee. You're having played in that game ten years ago made it easy to bend the rules just enough to get you nominated."

"But is that the right thing to do," Ray asked.

"Of course it is. The primary criterion is that no one should be excluded whose absence would be egregious."

"What about Pete Rose and Barry Bonds?"

"Don't go there, Ray."

So he didn't and following selection he had an appointment for late July in Cooperstown, New York. That hullabaloo took over and stole more time from a timer that was winding down. The press, the family, and the Mariners were all demanding time. Everything stole time from his slowing timer now, Ray noticed and abhorred it. It is more noticeable when, after returning from each interruption, what you were doing no longer works as smoothly as before, if he even remembered what it was that had gotten interrupted.

After Roger and Ellie had administered their own Midas touch to the State basketball tournament, baseball began for Roger and softball for Ellie. This was what Ray loved to watch. The weather was warming. He made many of the practices. The coaches always wanted Ray there to help with batting practice. Roger had every aspect of the game down pat, but several of his teammates needed considerable help with hitting and Ray was able to make tolerable hitters out of a couple of them.

Ray remembered the dream. He had loved playing baseball more than any other sport. His domination in other sports had been nothing compared to his abilities in America's pastime. He sat in the bleachers now watching before a game on one occasion. Julie was sitting with him.

She was there on one of her many visits through Lesa's pregnancy. She was indeed just one of the family who both Ray and Lesa welcomed with open arms each time she came. She had foregone running for office and her candidate had such a commanding lead in the political race that she was not required to provide much in the way of support. She would help Allie with her bid for office, with the two of them spending hours together sometimes on planning sessions, but she always came to the kids' games with both of them.

"I would love to have got to see you play baseball in high school, Ray," she said. "But after that first summer I always got up there after your season was over, so all I ever knew was what people said about it."

“Me too,” he replied laughing. “But I’ll tell you what, Julie. You watch Roger, and you’ll be looking at me. When he plays, his reactions to every situation are exactly what I see myself doing – the way he moves his feet, the way he throws, everything. Even when he pitches to close out games, the ball moves the same way. His slider has the same movement, his curve drops just the same – everything. It’s weird.”

“His home runs?”

“Yeah. Them too – every time. He is walked more than any high school player who ever played the game; I swear. If there’s anybody on base, they walk him. If there isn’t, he steals bases and scores anyway. He’s better than I was at stealing bases. He’s uncanny.”

“Do you feel like it’s him being inducted into the Hall of Fame?” Julie asked in her considerate way.

“Interesting,” Ray said, although he didn’t know why.

Lesa came and sat by them. “You two just previewing the game?”

“Oh, hi Lesa,” Julie said. “No. Ray was just telling me how much Roger’s abilities resemble what he used to do up the canyon.”

“Sometimes I wonder how much of that is just senile remembrances,” she responded cheerily.

Words hurt – those did. Ray went silent as the two women continued chatting. The game got underway with Roger doing what Roger does. Ray got up and walked down to stand behind the backstop alone to watch.

When the game was over Ray went to his car to drive home with Julie, the way they had come.

“Ray,” Julie said as soon as they had got into his car. She reached over to stop him from starting the car just yet. “Lesa was really sorry about what she said. She was just teasing you. You know how much she loves you.”

Ray looked over at the deep dark loving eyes and could not avoid looking on down to where her cleavage was interrupted by the large heart-shaped pendant that said so much about so much. It’s brilliant flashes as sunlight glinted off the many facets of the diamonds and sapphires focused additional warmth on him. The spiraling alternating red and clear sapphires with gold between begged to be held in the palm of one’s hand. He reached over to slide his fingers into the cleft and under the heart, closing his hand over it. It just fit his palm. It was his contribution to the design of the hearts – it should just fit his palm.

“And you know how much I love you too.”

“I do,” he said. “Both of you. And I know how much of my ability to comprehend even love that I am losing. Even my models of you two are eroding with the general demise of myself. Julie, have you lost much yet?”

“I don’t know, Ray. You see, I never had the extreme abilities with which to compare my losses.” She smiled. “You have probably forgotten more than I ever knew, but you’re still so far ahead of me or anyone else that I love just sitting by you and hearing what you have to say.”

“Well, if that’s the criteria, we’re both doing fine then.”

He felt better. He let go of the pendant feeling the bulges on both sides of the cleavage on the back of his hand as he let her heart fall back into place.

“I wish you had one of these to carry me around in if I go first.”

“How about if I promise to carry yours around in my pocket if anything happens to you first? Would that work?”

“As long as it’s the inside of your front pocket.” There was the smile.

“That’s where it will be.”

That night Lesa cried telling Ray how sorry she was for having made him mad by using the term “senile” – that it was the last thing she would want to do. They both knew that he was brilliant, she said.

“Lesa, Lesa, Lesa,” he began. “I don’t remember getting mad; I’m not sure you’ve ever made me mad. You didn’t do anything wrong. As long as you can tease about my senility, I have nothing to fear. And as long as you tell the truth about it like you always do, I will respect you as the one I love. So let’s not hide facts from each other, okay. I don’t know how bad it is, but I’m not so far gone that I don’t notice that I’m not what I once was, even a short time ago, and I know that you notice it as well. There are some things – like loving you, and making the odd, cute remark that I do as naturally as ever still, but I think the physics is over for me. Sadly, it’s all about physics.”

Lesa started to say something, but he stopped her.

“I don’t mean it’s over in the sense of enjoying it. I really enjoy what you’re doing and being a party to it. I understand the brilliance of the new things you’re putting into that study and I can help review it. But I can’t get these neurons to establish any new paths; they just prefer the old ones. You have to cut the new trails.”

“Oh, Ray, please hold me.”

He held her and all the loving emotions and machinery went into motion and performed admirably.

With the bulkier aspects of pregnancy, Lesa was burdened down with her concerns of the coming labor and now for Ray. She talked with Julie about the need for her to come to stay before long.

“I worry about Ray,” Lesa said. “When Sharon comes it will be awful.”

“Me too. Sharon could be a bit brutal in his condition don’t you think?”

“She’s my doctor though. I don’t really know how to handle it. Will you stay on and maybe just go on long walks with him and maybe to some Mariners games, or just anything that takes his mind off this new baby? I know you’d rather be more intimately involved with the baby, but this thing with Ray is really important to me.”

“No, Lesa, I wouldn’t rather be involved with the baby,” Julie said. “You’ve never been fooled about how much I love Ray. As much as I love you and am thrilled about the baby, Ray is why I’m here. If you don’t mind my hanging out with Ray, then my dreams will have all come true. But you’ll have to tell Ray it’s okay. You know how he is.”

So Lesa talked with Ray about what was going to be happening here shortly with Julie. She would be here for good long before Sharon came.

“You think I need a babysitter?”

“Oh, Ray. Don’t. I just know Sharon gets on your nerves and I know why.”

“Why?”

“Okay, so I don’t know why, but I do know that she does and that’s all that matters. Sharon will only be here as long as I have to have her, and then we’ll have her go back to her life. She’s doing me a real favor, Ray.”

“I know she is. I can handle it.”

“I know. Anyway, Julie’s going to be here too to run the house, so you can help her, and I’ll try to keep Sharon out of your hair when she comes.”

So that’s the way it happened except that it happened earlier and had very little to do with when Sharon would come. Lesa told Julie she needed her full time earlier in the spring than they had planned. Of course Julie had come up to visit several times already, including their Christmas

celebration, before that, and to help Allie on several occasions. But this time when she came, it was for good – well, at least for the foreseeable future.

Lesa had taken the opportunity of Julie's coming permanently to inform Ray of one last secret she had withheld. She had promised last fall to never keep any more secrets from him, but because of all that had transpired as well as her perception of Ray's failing condition, she had not been able to bring herself to share this final one.

The evening that Julie arrived, she broke it to Ray and Julie. As she had thought he would be, Ray became violently angry and in the end was left devastated. Lesa tried to convince him that what she had held secret was a direct result of her extreme love for him... and would he please, please, please forgive her?

Then a couple of days later, partly because Ray insisted, Roger was told. Roger's reaction was perhaps less predictable, but even more violent than what Ray's had been. His anger was almost beyond measure and it was days – if not weeks – before a more or less normal rapport could be established between mother and son and between Ray and Roger, neither being comfortable with the other.

The overall tension in the family unit was hard on Lesa and she knew that Ray was not ever at ease with her anymore. She only hoped he would be again soon. So Lesa encouraged Julie to get Ray out of the house walking and doing things. As for her, she wanted to get as much out of the way as possible on this investigation into the cosmological effects of scattering in the intergalactic medium, to which he now seemed incapable of contributing. Although when he got over the first waves of anger and humiliation, he was still helpful in criticizing her work when she had made some progress.

Ray spent some time working on what he would say at the induction ceremony that would occur at just about the same time as the baby was due. Ray didn't want Lesa's help on it at first, preferring Julie to criticize and comment on what could be said, although eventually Lesa seemed to get through to him that this would be like her speech in Stockholm where she had had to go without him. He would have to go without her this time, but his family would all be there. Julie could go if he wanted.

Ray and Julie became very close – closer than either had ever dared dream – walking along beaches or through the woods. Once they even spent a day going up to the North Cascades to spy on their old stomping grounds. They got out and trekked the woods with the same ferns and rain forest foliage they remembered from that first summer they had met. They picnicked and lay together sleeping on a blanket Julie had brought. She held him next to her so tightly that it brought back the memory from the previous fall when they had fallen to sleep on his and Lesa's bed and awakened clutching each other. Now they clung to each other unabashedly for a while after having awoken, looking into each other's faces peacefully.

"Ray, it is so wonderful to be able to be with you in our advancing age and be relaxed about it, isn't it?"

"Vintage matters, doesn't it?" he asked rhetorically as he grasped her heart-shaped pendant and then let it go to fondle her breasts the way he had always wanted to – the way she had always wanted him to.

"We're senile old fools, aren't we?" she said smiling at him.

It was much later in the summer that Sharon had come barging into Julie's room unannounced to ask her something or other. Ray had been in there lying with Julie on the bed resting, both with their heads on their hands looking up at the ceiling talking about old times or recent times, or

something. Ray thought about their picnic and other more recent similar experiences he and Julie had shared and was glad Sharon had not barged in on something like that.

“What the hell is this all about?” Sharon exclaimed storming out of the room apparently outraged.

Ray was startled by her reaction and had started to get up.

“It’s all right, Ray,” Julie said, pulling him back down. “Just stay here. Lesa will come in; it’s all right.”

After a considerable amount of yelling and then some time of more calm discussion off in the kitchen, Lesa did come. She was smiling when she came in and sat on the edge of Julie’s bed. “It’s all right,” she said, just as Julie had said she would. “Thanks for not mixing it up with Sharon. She’ll be all right too. You guys just keep lying there. I’ll open the door so Sharon will see that there isn’t anything secretive going on here behind anyone’s back.” She bent down, her huge belly a tremendous inconvenience, to kiss Ray. She put a hand over on Julie’s arm. “It’s so nice to be with you both. After Margie comes and Sharon is gone, we’ll have great times together.”

So the summer of demise and discontent progressed on into late July.

Ray had gone to more Mariners baseball games than he had attended in all the years the Mariners had been in Seattle. He had gone the first year they had been in Seattle in the old Kingdome that had seemed like a miracle of construction at the time – later, of course becoming a miracle of destruction. The first game he had attended was for him a realization that playing in that venue was what he had wanted more than anything else as a career. Jonesy had been home for some reason and had got tickets for a game for the two of them. Helen had made a point of being up the canyon at their mother’s places while Jonesy was in Seattle and then returned immediately to Seattle when Jonesy had gone to the canyon. Ray had realized more than ever before how little Jonesy appealed to him too – it wasn’t the run in they had had, or the fact of Jonesy’s having been drafted instead of Ray. It was just *him*. He was not an enjoyable person to be with.

With Julie now, it was so different. To be sitting next to someone who shared one’s outlook on life, who enjoyed the same things, who respected you, and whom you respected – loved, in fact. It was just fun grabbing handfuls of popcorn from the same bucket with someone whose very touch contributed to the pleasure of the occasion, with someone you loved.

Roger and Ellie went with them sometimes, and once Lesa and Sharon came too. On one of those occasions Ray had thrown out the first pitch, and then later spent an inning or so up in the broadcast booth.

Then the Hall of Fame induction ceremonies came and went. That whole experience so overwhelmed Ray that it became engulfed in murkiness so that he could barely remember any of it. He guessed he had said what he had had prepared. His children had said they were proud of him. But he had stumbled coming off the stage. Maybe that was it. He didn’t like any part of the memory.



Then Margie arrived.

She came like the symbolic locomotive in the old literature full of promise and portent. She was loud and colicky. Whereas Roger had been stout from the beginning, Margie was dainty, wiry really, highly strung, and noisy. That was what he remembered.

Sharon left very soon having fallen out dramatically, first with Ray but then also with Lesa. Julie stayed on. Julie never left; she couldn't leave after Ray and Lesa died so tragically, leaving that dear little girl.