

# *Aberrant Behavior*

(first in a series of four novels)



*R. Fred Vaughan*

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*About the Author*

The author was born and raised in the Skagit valley of Washington State. He and his wife reside down a private street in the greater Seattle area. They have raised two children of whom they are very proud.

Mr. Vaughan took his degree in physics at the University of Washington in Seattle. He spent thirty years in electronics research engineering publishing numerous technical articles in the proceedings of conferences in his field for which he received prestigious awards. Several patents have been issued on his inventions.

He has also written many less technical articles and essays that have been published in technical journals, trade magazines, and high IQ journals. He edited a society journal for many years and edited an intellectual blog.

Not unlike his protagonist Ray Bonn, his avocation has been the investigation of alternative theoretical explanations of physical phenomena. His interest in, and opinions concerning, the philosophy of science have motivated much of his writing.

Yes, he is a Seattle Mariners fan and hopes that one day they will indeed win a World Series.



## FOREWORD

*Aberrant Behavior* is the first of four novels which together tell an epic tale of several generations of the Bonn family. The individual titles and topics of these novels relate to physical theories: relativity, thermodynamics, cosmology, and gravity. The all too human arguments that ultimately lead to major discoveries in intellectual fields of study are treated empathetically in respective novels. It is in many ways as though each novel were a tribute to Simplicio, Salviati, and Segredo of Galileo's *Four Dialogues Concerning Two New Sciences* – unwitting participants in scientific debate. The driving force in each novel is scientific discovery, but there is conflict with the outside world of major league baseball, the staid scientific community, family issues, and internal demons, all of which traumatize endeavors to clarify and publish scientific discoveries. The stories themselves center around human actions, personality, and character. To the extent that a desire exists or arises in readers to understand mathematical formulations, separate technically sound accounts have been relegated to non-fictional volumes; only the human aspects are topical to each novel. Yes, this means that there are eight books in all.

These novels are romance novels in the sense that Saul Bellow's novels are romance novels, i.e., character-driven rather than plot-driven fiction. Despite romantic interludes, these books are not *about* romance per se, rather they *include* romance because we are by and large a romantic species. Prodigious success and misfortune of the Bonn family, like those that befell Job in the Old Testament account provide clarification of character. Plots, to the extent that there are plots at all as against random advantageous or catastrophic events affecting the protagonists as they would the reader, are secondary to the development of the protagonists' character and scientific publication endeavors.

Ray Bonn is just completing a book signing tour, having come to New York city, where he is scheduled to appear on the Larry King Live national TV show. The unlikely success of a book of articles and essays on the strangeness of observed phenomena by two relatively moving observers is his claim to fame. He attributes the strangeness of Einstein's relativity primarily to the effects of the aberration of light rather than more traditional dogmatic associations with Lorentz contraction and time dilation. He had written the articles for himself – to clarify intuitions. Following his retirement from an engineering career he had been drawn by his earlier love of the study of physics. He

had shown some of the articles to his long-time engineering friend Andrew who insisted that he publish the articles as a book. In New York for this one last hurrah, things went awry – a woman. Yeah. You knew that? Well, you didn't know Lesa.

Lesla was scheduled to appear on Larry King Live with Ray to provide opposition perspectives of the physics established community on Ray's more speculative ideas. Ray teased that she had fallen for the 'snake oil' and the snake oil salesman. She readily agreed, but she had not been taken in; she saw the value of ray's ideas and his abilities – both intellectually and athletically – and proceeded to exploit them both. This heady endeavor is interwoven with revelations of tragic events that Lesa and the Bonn family had and would continue to suffer. Three generations of the Bonn family would live with echoes of 'déjà vu' all over again'.

Throughout this sequence, the love of science and the enthusiasm to make new discoveries in a particular field is the uniting thread. Each volume in this series is accompanied by a physics text attributed to the protagonists that is the backstory of each novel.

Without being a direct family member or main character, Julie Davidson's presence nonetheless looms large throughout these novels as leitmotif. Her exclusion provides an emotional foundation to the flow of events in each novel; she is in many ways the Charles Marlow of Joseph Conrad novels – there but *not* there – to clarify 'what happened when no one else was looking' and just as insurance when needed.

The value of any novel depends ultimately upon the validity of its appeal to what engages the interest of its readers. This includes irony, inevitability, mystery, sensuality, jealousy, and other usual expressions of human emotional involvement. Authentic human intercourse as readers would experience it is what is sought vicariously in fiction. These novels include that as well as an aspect of human experience that is too seldom addressed in this genre but is central to the normal conduct of our modern day lives – intellectual intrigue. As critic, Peter Stern stated with regard to Thomas Mann's epic novel *The Magic Mountain*, "seeing that modern men are as often intellectuals as they are gamekeepers or bullfighters, Mann's preoccupation is, after all, hardly very esoteric". Why then should a novelist be defensive about describing the exhilaration of intellectual discovery, of enlightenment? Nor should promoting the thrill of scientific advancement be anathema. Sinclair Lewis excelled when he finally put satire aside to write *Arrowsmith*, a novel saturated with words and scientific processes his readers had most likely never heard before. Despite widespread



bemoaning of a lack of mathematical ability, vast numbers of the novel reading public have taken courses in modern algebra, calculus, physics, chemistry, biology, and genetics; we understand the appeal of scientific advancement, the unequalled enchantment of scientific discovery, the yearning for truth. No justification should be required for a central theme that is the discovery of alternative scientific explanations of phenomena with which we are all familiar, but whose current explanation has remained technically flawed for centuries. No human emotional experience could be more amenable as the central theme of a novel. The basic equations that are a warranty of the authenticity of the fictional description must be witnessed as surely as evidence is necessary in a court of law. Jurors see a weapon they could not create or use, but its presence is required to execute the case. So there will be a few equations and graphs; they are authentic even though presented merely as evidence.

Scientists are human beings, cut from the same cloth as athletes, farmers, housewives, carpenters, or ditch diggers; scientific acumen does not preclude athletic or other abilities or reduce vulnerability to irrational decisions that affect all our lives. An ability to understand mathematical formulations that explain physical phenomena does not exclude appreciation of the sensual beauty associated with formally described phenomena or the wonderment that goes with such observational experience. Jealousy, empathy, rudeness, kindness and the full range of human behavior and interests are typical also of those who are scientifically inclined. Misfortunes and the awful coincidences that sometimes affect certain lives more than others – the Hyannis Port Kennedys come to mind – does not occur more or less frequently for those with scientific abilities. The Bonn clan was so afflicted although scientifically rather than politically inclined. Scientific ability may amplify associated human emotions due to a fuller understanding of correlated phenomena. Preference for the term ability rather than knowledge derives from the distinction between ‘knowing how to’ and ‘why’ as against a vague familiarity with associated facts.

Yes, of course, there must be a readership market – if a market even matters in intellectual discussion. Some ideas need to be transcribed whether there is a readership or not. Writing for readership rather than what an author feels in his bones would not be good. J. D. Salinger considered his critics and readers a distraction and thus continued to write without publishing his work. But there may be scientists and mathematicians, of which there are many, who would enjoy reading about people with whom share a similar style of thinking as well as more

vicariously about ballerinas, musicians, ball players, gamekeepers, and bullfighters. Nor should we diminish the pleasure scientific laymen take in vicariously experiencing the excitement of scientific endeavors and the strange implications of the phenomena thereby discovered. The gamekeeper Mr. Millar in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* enjoyed reading about the atomic physics of his day. And why not? Learning about new discoveries of our age and how they were made is a meaningful activity that engages us all.

Not all scientific reasoning included in these novels will be immediately familiar to most readers. But technical discussions, figures, and equations are, without exception, interspersed with associated interpersonal reactions clarifying arguments of protagonists. That will enable lay readers to experience the emotional impact and share the ecstasy of scientific discovery.

Fred Vaughan





*THE LORD:*

...

*And lead him on thy downward course,  
Then stand abash'd, when thou perforce must own,  
A good man in his darkest aberration,  
Of the right path is conscious still.*

***Faust Part I***

by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe



*#1 The Alpha and Omega*

Thursday morning, April 27<sup>th</sup>

It occurred to Ray Bonn, who contemplated the vague present while still lying there in yet another hotel room waiting for yet another wake up call, that this might turn out in retrospect to have been among the biggest days of his life. It seemed that although no one had ever really cared about his opinion on any intellectual topic that particularly interested him, that might change today. In conversations with others he had typically said very little concerning his own interests. His best friend Andrew Watt had a technical background somewhat similar to Ray's, but his interests were much more narrowly technical than Ray's. The pure sciences, the philosophy of science, and especially epistemology did not interest Andrew. Helen, with whom he had spent his entire life, having grown up with her, valued his opinion on issues that mattered to her. However, about issues that mattered to him, she had little knowledge and less interest, so there had never been anyone – ever.

For some reason, Ray considered it strange, people dismissed topics that mattered to him as 'too obscure'. And, yes, it seemed very strange to him that the nature of reality should not be foremost on everyone's mind. Why would epistemological efforts to discover how we know what we know, and how the universe we live in actually works, seem of no consequence to anyone? He could barely conceive how that could be, yet he observed it to be the case. So naturally there had never been much opportunity for him to discuss such issues with anyone. He longed for the possibility of such interactions.

People tended to think it of interest that one of his patents had earned him his early retirement, but that had not involved his expressing an opinion about intellectual matters. That was just a *thing* that helped people do their own thing on the Internet. His friend Andrew had told him why the Internet behaved in a way that had been reprehensible to Ray at the time. Upon a moment's reflection, he had thereupon whipped open his napkin, withdrawn his pen from his shirt pocket where older engineers still carried them, and showed Andrew an alternative transition machine circuit diagram that was "how that should have been handled."

Andrew had said his design was "brilliant, absolutely brilliant," and encouraged him to patent it.

But that was just a *thing*, not a concept.

McGregor's representative Edna Robinson must indeed be good at what she does, Ray thought, because apparently people care about his opinions now - on intellectual matters. The Larry King show doesn't entertain those from whom no one wants to hear opinions. That's what Edna had told him, and Edna seemed to be right - about everything. Well, at least as far as selling ideas encapsulated in books, which are, he guessed he would have to admit, just things too.

So, it's another big day today and then Larry King. Live. Tonight. Oh, God. How did Edna ever work that engagement?

"Brrring!" His wake-up call, finally. He still set it up each night before hours of tossing in each strange bed. He always awoke long before it rang. The country bumpkin who shared his body always answered it as though a real person who cared a lick would be at the other end of the line.

"Hello," he politely told the machine.

No one said, "Good morning, Mr. Bonn, how was your night?" No. It was just the mechanical, "Seven o'clock AM." Click.

Helen would still be sleeping soundly on the other side of the continent. She would have slept the peaceful sleep of the guileless... again. She always did. She always beat the iceman to bed he had used to tease, and was asleep by the time he got there. Helen. He smiled.

Edna would be down at breakfast before he could get there, again. She always was whenever they were both in the same town. Her and her runny damn sunny side ups. God. Look casual again he guessed, as though that were how he spent his life before this whirlwind ride with Pecos Bill. Edna didn't exactly fit *that* description, that bill, but close.

Bathe. Shave. As though that was the procedure of his unperturbed everyday life. He'd much rather just step into the closet, Helen's and his closet, grab his jockey shorts from their limp stay on the edge of the hamper and slip into them. Then another step to the dresser on which he always folded his jeans and laid the T and sweatshirt pulled off over his head as one. He would now be slipping them back on, back over his head the other way, pulling the T down over his shorts, the sweatshirt stuffed up under his arms to await the pants. Cinch the woven leather belt, pull down the sweatshirt, and step to the cupboard drawer to pull out a two-sock bundle of comforting white cotton socks for slipping on after he had eaten his Cheerios. His slippers next. Then the minimalist ablutions, check his e-mail and wait until Helen yelled from around three corners, "Coffee's ready!"

That was his usual routine. Well, not today.

Today was another shower day. Another shave day. Another pretense at casual hair day. Another new shirt and pair of slacks, and dark socks day. The way it is supposed that all successful people who write best sellers dress when they are relaxed.



But not runny eggs. Not today... not ever.

"Corned beef hash and tomato juice... please."

"Corned beef hash again?" Edna reiterated her disdain for the N<sup>th</sup> time that mirrored what he himself felt for her runny eggs. By now N was at least seven.

"Yeah. I like it." Then with his first forced smile of the day, "I don't just order it to nauseate you."

She rolled her eyes as though no less nauseated and said, "whatever boy genius wants," with a sarcastic irony that seemed to tickle her as a first attempt at humor for the day. "They open at nine you know. It's a big day."

"Yes, I do know." He was tired of her after nine cities in two weeks. She was tired of him too, he knew, almost without contempt... not just by the comment about him as a fifty-year-old "boy genius" but other statements that continually reminded him of that which he should have known ahead of time, but too often hadn't.

Without her he would still be nothing. He acknowledged that. With her he was evidently, for the moment at least, someone - a name on the lips of many across the US and elsewhere. Not the fame of a Stephen Hawking, a Robert Redford, or Barry Bonds to be sure, but somebody. Why else would he be meeting Larry King tonight, live? Still... it made no sense to Ray.

"We've got to get back here and eat and then finalize our plans for what you have to get said about your book tonight."

"Won't I just be answering questions on the fly?"

"Of course." There was a barely muffled disdain, "but we can anticipate all of them. I'll have a list that we can go over after we eat and on the way over in the limo."

"Oh, okay." He was exhausted already, and he wasn't even through breakfast yet. Limo, huh.

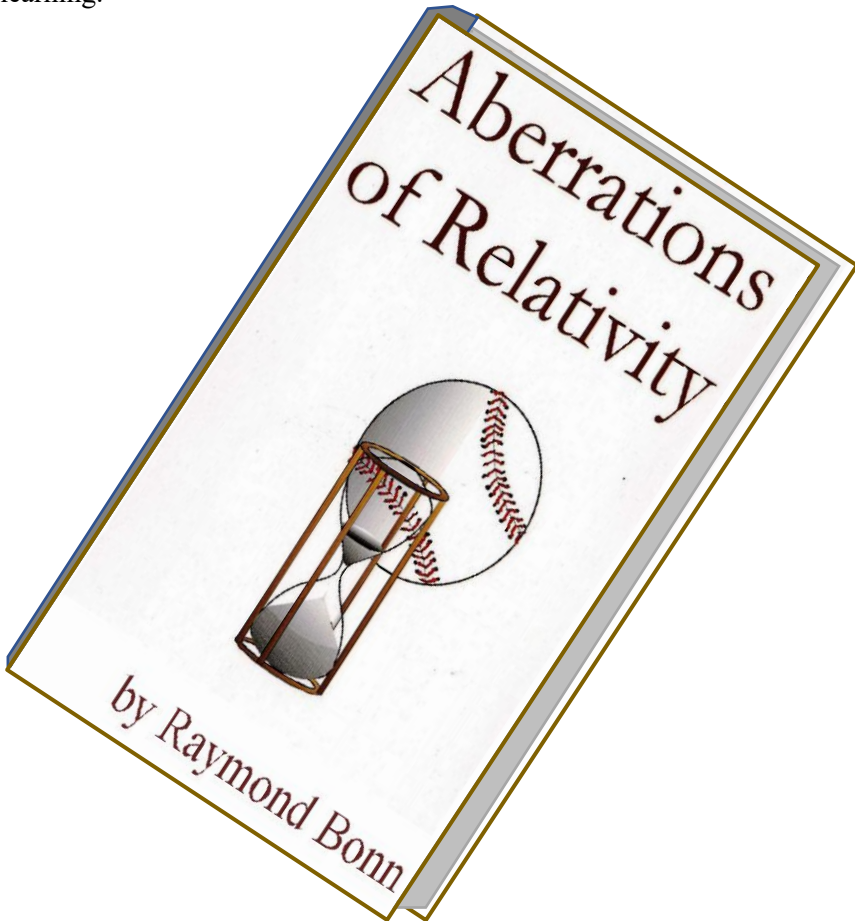
They arrived at Alpha and Omega by the proverbially mundane yellow cab. They had done it yesterday, but it seemed even worse this time... more cursing, more swerving, more honking. God. How do people live in this God-awful city?

The usual bookstore niceties: The layout. Edna doing her thing. One of her things. The schedule and procedures from which they could not deviate. Discuss the book. Briefly. Don't get into a protracted discussion during the Q and A.

"We want them to buy the book. Don't give them a free audio book review. Tell them that if they buy the book, they need never again be intimidated by anyone who says, 'Relativity is beyond being understood by laymen who have no idea what reality is all about.' People make purchases to free themselves from just that kind of intimidation. That's our market. Concentrate on that aspect of your book. At this phase of publication it is only the numbers we are working. The ideas are in the book; the incentives for buying are what you want to address."

That was her usual spiel. He had gotten it again. Oh, God, how had he allowed vanity and greed to get him onto Edna's treadmill?

After a brief break following the presentation, but not long enough for them to lose the compulsion, he would sit here at this sort of desk arrangement with copies of his book, *Aberrations of Relativity* piled high on his left. They would be replenished by the bookstore staff if he succeeded in depleting them as he had been doing in other cities across the US. The purchasers would line up along that wall, like so many lemmings in Scandinavia, or maybe Mayans in Mexico, waiting to be sacrificed to Itzamnaaj, Mayan god of science and learning.



To maintain a modicum of sanity and not get carried away with such Chichen Itza images, he might write, "Tom, you can do it," in an almost decipherable hand above his signature for the old man... well, the slightly more than his-age retiree, standing before him. Tom had let slip that he had "always wanted to do something like this," whatever he had thought "this" was that the author had accomplished for his vicarious pleasure. This naïve author had finally learned to never ask for clarification.

In front of Ray were shelves stacked with books, the seemingly endless rows of bookshelves that comprised the gigantic Alpha and Omega bookstore just off Fifth Avenue, downtown Big Apple.

Oh, God, was he tired. Tomorrow he would go home again and stay there for the foreseeable future to blend once more into the nothingness of being nobody, but with Helen, back into the silence and aroma of his forest abode, his "womb with a view" as he had sometimes teased Helen. Oh, God, how he wanted to be there right now.

The store opened. His discussion of the book was brief as befit the small disinterested audience. The questions were scattered and few. They could all be answered with brief statements. Afterward a few stragglers came up to him for signatures. Most of them he gathered had just happened in to browse, saw that a signing was in progress, and thought they might as well get one, since sometimes they had important people at Alpha and Omega. Some of them acted as though they had come from Lake Wobegon, Minnesota, or Lake Oswego in Oregon, or some lakeless place in Iowa or Tennessee, thinking a book wasn't that much more expensive than a cup of coffee in New York City. It would be something purchased just a couple of blocks up from 'Ground Zero'. A more lasting value to show their next-door neighbors whether they were a half block or half a mile away, not realizing that the book had very little to do with New York City, originating in far off Washington State.

At first he was able to complete each signing before a next timid soul came forward for their version of what he might have to say, his 'laying on of hands'. Mostly they were women though - bored women, he presumed. "Hi, my name is Jane - Jane Meadows - and I just have to tell you how important I think your book is. Without people like you, the rest of us would have no chance to know what's happening in the world of science."

She must be a professional at this. He wondered how many unread books she had stashed away at home. Was her front room a mere path through stacks of unread books? "Yes. Thank you, Jane," he said to the figure in front of him whose cleavage was way too visible for a proper bookstore. "Jane, keep up your interest in science," he wrote, "It's a good field to explore, even if not as beautiful as some Meadows."

He smiled at his own cloying humor. Then the squiggle and... the unstated, "Please get this woman out of here... now! Please."

Edna did. She was quite marvelous sometimes. Jane was pleased with the less-than-subtle recognition of her name as a shepherder's delight, so it was rather difficult for Edna in this case, but Edna was efficient. Whenever there were two or more waiting, Edna was there hurrying them along and pointing them to the cash register.

It seemed like noon would never come this day... he listened, "There has been some delay; noon will not come today." No. It was his mind playing tricks on him, but his mind was he himself. The line elongated. He signed and signed, sighing between signings, watching with sidelong glances the people moseying among the stacked shelves. He wished he had known what each

shelf contained so that he could do a Dewey Decimal sorting of the people who frequent each one to fight the boredom. He had failed to recognize the categories on these shelves when they had come in before hours. He had bought a book before Edna had gotten things lined up to explain to him. She just instructed him, seldom deferring to his opinions on such things... any things.

He purposed to check what was on those shelves closest to him before leaving for lunch. Edna hurried him with threats of withholding lunch, just so they could get back to work sooner, just so they could do it all some more. He balked long enough to inspect the shelves. The closest was dedicated to the biographies of celebrities, dead presidents, movie stars, ballplayers, et cetera. That was all he had time for.

He had eaten into lunchtime; Edna hurried him even more vocally now, running to make the light. But she was happy today no matter how obsessed. Maybe she had a home life to get back to after all. No. They must have passed a quota this morning he figured - her penultimate source of joy.

The restaurant across the street and down a block was crowded but they did get served, and other than the hurry to finish eating so he could get back to work, the fare was fine. The lunchtime conversation itself went all right too, despite the cautions about his performance tonight: What to say, what not to say, how to say it, how not to say it. Edna could be somewhat interesting sometimes but not today he decided; today he only half listened.

He thought about what Helen would be doing now... 9:30 there... at home... His thinking about Helen and what she would be doing had become a preoccupation. Probably still checking her e-mail, sorting through all the truthout.org's; moveon.org's; and spam messages of doable mortgages, penis extensions, and stock advisories their spam filter could not catch. What a hubbub our society has become. She would soon abandon her computer and go in to have some coffee that had probably been finished brewing an hour ago. That was their life back home: her in her corner on her computer, him on his, her following Hillary and politics generally, him doing the 'man thing' of worrying about the universe and how it works... why it works.

Quite the division of labor, he thought, humorously ridiculing their tremendous 'responsibilities'. Looking at it from this distance and new perspective seemed enlightening - from an aberrant angle, he thought. At breakfast she'd tell him what the Bush administration or other 'evil' regime is up to now and how Nancy Pelosi or other 'good' guys are going to compensate, what should actually happen, with him actually interested in what she has to say... he missed her tremendously right now. Her insights were sometimes shocking, like her solemn comment back in 2001 after hours of watching that second plane crash into the World Trade Center over and over again until finally the buildings had collapsed to what would be denominated 'ground zero' so close to here.

"You know," she had said, "it probably sounds awful to say this, but Election 2000 was much worse than this."

His mouth had dropped open and his eyebrows darted skyward, he knew. Watching her somber expression, his composure had finally returned. Each day that prophetic statement, now pertaining to a dismal political past, had come to seem a more and more dismal reality.

But never a word about *his* universe though... the one just for men. She did listen to one of his presentations on this current trip... once... in Dallas, before jumping ship to head back home to wait for him. She had been bored he could tell, but she had told him he had done "fine".

"Fine?!" he had exclaimed then, "Do you know how many books they bought today?" But she had not been impressed. So why should he be so hard on Edna?

Helen hadn't liked Edna; that was really why Helen had returned home... Edna bossing her husband about was just "too much".

So why did so many women buy his book, he wondered. Are they so lonely because their husbands aren't interested in Nancy Pelosi, or Hillary, or Obama, or the abominable deterioration of democracy in America? It would be a shame indeed if that were the case, because that does matter... a lot. He knew as well as he knew anything that it matters; he just happened not to be very deeply interested in it. Thinking about that then, he wondered just how logically consistent that was... oh, well... the division of labor. Helen handled that.

"What did you mean where you said you'd 'allow yourself the luxury of contemplating even such a disaster as the divorce of space and time remembering an idyllic virginity before Minkowski sanctified their holy union?'" It was Edna - back here so near to ground zero.

He shook his head rearranging universes.

Edna had never showed the slightest indication that she had read even a single line of his book beyond what was quoted on the back cover as a promo. Had she actually followed that chapter on Einstein's velocity addition formula resulting in the determinism that had so isolated Einstein's theory from the other major theories of modern physics? Evidently.

"Edna!" He only slightly exaggerated the surprise he actually felt. "I thought it was only sales that concerned you. That point will probably not affect sales very much do you think?" He paused a moment. "But honestly," having heard his own pomposity read back to him was very unpleasant right now. "Did I actually make such a pompous statement?"

She smiled at his admission and perhaps a tiny bit sheepishly at his accusing her of a penchant for sales, but she had a more typically brutal verbal response: "You know they'll probably have an expert there tonight who *will* be interested in just such subtleties and pompous statements. And yes, you do make a few."

That eventuality had occurred to him in more paranoid moments of his introspective existence on this road trip. "I suppose," he minimized the issue. But he realized that it might be brutal at a whole new level.

"Well?"

"How do you propose I answer that question without diminishing sales?" he responded attacking by innuendo again.

"That's the point. You have to indicate that the problem is clearly spelled out in terms that any intelligent layman could understand on page 31<sup>1</sup>, and resolved wherever you hid the answer to that."

He laughed. Wrong response to Edna.

Seriously, with brows lowered, she counter-punched, "Am I right?"

"You are right," he said. "It is 31," and he meant it... all of it.

"And do you really believe that twins separated by an appreciable time travel would not experience any age disparity as you suggest on pages 57 and 58... and with your attempt at humor on page 179?"

"Yes, I do." He smiled without knowing why. "I think I explained that quite clearly in the essay discussing misinterpretations of particle decay data, and in my attempt at humor in the 'twin paradox' story... well, I guess I may have left it a bit ambiguous, but you tell *me*," he added self-consciously. Then, "I also explained why that could not have been understood when Einstein first addressed the problem."

"Why didn't he fix it later?"

He looked at her. She really was trying to help him, he knew, but sometimes it didn't feel like that. He knew she must not want him to get embarrassed no matter how well sales went. She did care, at least a little, about him...the author. It was good to have that assurance.

"I don't really know," he said honestly, "but I'll think about an answer to that question in case it comes up." He paused not knowing that it was a pause rather than his last word as they both rose, Edna handling the check. They had to get back to work.

"Thank you for caring though, Edna," he said.

"Sure" was all he could make out of the longer squiggle of speech but there had been more that might have been sardonic or pleasant... he couldn't tell which. He had a hard time interpreting intonation.

Stepping to the door then, Edna actually let him push it open for her. A rowdy lunch crowd was still pushing to get in. Through this mass of bodies he and Edna and others who were headed back to their various tasks in maintaining the metropolis, pressed hard to get out. Most, unlike he and Edna, were in lively conversation, an intertwined mass of bodies cheerful in spite of all the bumping and crowding.

Outside the cacophony of a tortured city clanged and banged, swished and swooned around them with the inimitable screeching of yellow taxicab brakes, curses matching a mad flurry of passing color. Far off in several directions one could hear sirens screaming their necessities into the general intensity of

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<sup>1</sup> Notice that page numbers refer to the first edition of *Aberrations of Relativity*. In the third edition the page numbers of the material to which Edna was referring must be changed respectively as follows: 31 to 46, 57 and 58 to 78 through 82, and 179 to 257 through 259.

New York City with its offended and now offensive sense of 911 always in the air. Edna, momentarily muted by the exterior volume, stood beside him, awaiting a green approval to proceed.

Ray pondered his surroundings. How could events ever have been perceived as essentially sequential, one following the next like orderly mourners filing past a casket instead of milling about indeterminately in a private angst? The order of all these sensed events could not be fixed independent of one's situation within them. That two events occur in a given order for one observer is certainly no reason to think they would for all, but that in itself doesn't imply time dilation or the possibility of time travel.

A green 'walk' appeared and Edna was off ahead of him.

Why was he, this latecomer to anything presuming to be the 'Alpha and Omega', or the big time 'Big Apple', so certain of what event was just around that next corner?





## *#2 Old Yankee Stadium*

Saturday morning, May 6th.

After a final turn of an agonizing trip from the Sheltry during which neither of them had spoken, the vast structure of old Yankee Stadium loomed larger and larger directly ahead like an evil portent.

Lesla daubed her eyes with her free hand and leaned over to look up into Ray's face. "I'm sorry, Ray," she said. "I am so, so sorry."

He glared straight ahead at the arena in which she had cast him as a modern-day gladiator in this modern-day coliseum.

When their limousine neared its destination, she watched his eyes follow a Yankee ballplayer into an entryway set into a wall of the stadium. She could tell that Ray had recognized him, but she couldn't have identified him.

"That must be the back entry," she said, watching the direction the player was taking.

Still Ray made no response.

The limousine stopped. When the chauffeur finally opened Lesla's door, she seemed confused at first. A guard situated at the entrance seemed to recognize them, indicating that they were expected here. With an intensified grip on Ray's arm, she slid out, dragging the dour visage of Ray Bonn after her. She straightened her skirt with a free right hand and proceeded on toward that dark tunnel with resolve.

She could not forget having humorously designated herself "duct tape" to hold Ray to the contract. That had been in jest, sure. But she took her role very seriously nonetheless, especially now that all those earlier laughs were a thing of the past. It was, after all, *her* million-dollar deal into which Ray had unwillingly been forced to sign. She had guaranteed he would comply.

He has, she thought, confident at last.

Just inside the shadows of the tunnel two representatives met them - an uptown Yankee Doodle Dandy with whom Lesla proceeded on into the darkening tunnel and a dowdy baseball hack who inspected Ray skeptically.

Ray didn't care about Lesla's escort, her path as she proceeded on into that dark labyrinth, or her ultimate destination. Why should he? She had gotten

them into this mess. Her problems were her problems; he had more than enough of his own.

The nondescript baseball hack who had unceremoniously intercepted Ray immediately commandeered his attention by asking, "What size shoe you wear, Mr. Bonn?" The fattish major leaguer had then proceeded to walk off with no sign of caring about Ray's answer to this, or any other, question. With no introductory nicety he had just strutted back into a locker room. As Ray followed, he realized apprehensively that although he had thought 'fattish' with regard to this rude fellow - whoever and whatever he was - he was himself, nearly as heavy and possibly older than this unfriendly minor employee of the game.

Entering that dark area well beneath the stands he heard the slam of locker doors and relaxed chatter of major leaguers around a corner. The place had an awful smell, like men's locker rooms everywhere, nowhere Ray would *ever* - well, in the last thirty years - have wanted to be. But he was here now, and Lesa was somewhere else, snobbing with mucky mucks no doubt, maybe already bantering with Yankee honcho George Steinbrenner. Steinbrenner had seemed so taken with her impetuous audacity Monday evening on the Larry King Live show.

After a couple of tries, Ray was given a pair of pants, a folded half of which reached halfway around his waist without being a foot longer than his legs. Then a shirt a size too big - too bad. Probably the previous occupant had been let go thirty years ago, Ray thought, for being over the hill and hurting attendance. He did note with some delight its number, 42. He mused about the significance of that number in Douglas Adams' *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. Never mind the improbabilities, once the question pertaining to the very meaning of life could be remembered the ubiquitous 42 would be the answer to that question. He felt himself smile in spite of apprehensions.

The shirt had been re-wadded and shoved at Ray's middle, he took it as the realization hit him... 42 had been Jackie Robinson's number. It had been permanently retired throughout baseball years ago.

"I can't wear these! They're retired - everywhere."

His thoughtless intercessor stared at the number on the uniform held out now for his inspection. "Shit!" spat from his lips. Taking the shirt from Ray finally, he strode off to get another one that might fit. Returning then, he snickered, "This'll fit better anyway."

Ray opened it to stare at a meaningful five-oh, half a century. He got it.

Next a cap was slapped on Ray's head unceremoniously, it seemed to have been plucked from thin air. His inattentive valet had misjudged the girth of that on the small side. But, after a couple of awkward attempts, one was found that his smug attendant succeeded in jamming down nearly to Ray's ears. It hid some of the gray that bloomed there.

Then once more feet became the focus of his attendant's attention. Ray thought he belittled them by saying, "Pretty small," but he could hardly disagree, not being able to see a lot more than his toes. Then seeming pleased

to have made a brilliant deduction such as, Old Joe what's-his-face used to have tiny feet, Ray's rough and ready, red-necked valet yanked a shoe from a cupboard, bending to pick up a couple of others that had fallen.

Cleat, Ray corrected his own thinking. They're called cleats.

"Try this," said the fellow handing Ray a cleat as though it were the handshake he had never proffered.

Ray sat down on a bench to remove his right shoe. His foot slipped into the cleat; it seemed to fit fine. He looked up at his handler. "Okay," he said. Unenthusiastically his attendant went back for the left one, seemed just to grab another one at random, but probably it was good ol' Joe's' other cleat that then dropped at Ray's feet.

Mr. Personality then instructed Ray to use a specific one of the many identical empty lockers and left without further ado.

Ray didn't know why, but he had actually said, "Thank you."

No response.

Sitting there, he inferred from the mustiness and dust, that this entire row of lockers had not been used in a long time. All the 'real' players were off in another section from whence he heard the snippets of conversation, but into which he had not yet been ushered. Well, this situation fit his privacy preferences. So he got his civvies hung up in the locker and his variously wadded Seattle Mariners togs donned, and wondered, what now?

Quite tentatively he walked, cleats clicking, toward the corner around which merriment seemed to derive. He peeked around and saw a group of players in the same sort of uniform as his disengaging from what he presumed to have been a pre-game, pre-warm-up sort of meeting. He had no idea whether there were that sort of meetings and if there were, what sort they would be. He probably was thinking of what it would be like if Edna Robinson, who represented Ray's interests at McGregor Publishing Company, had been the manager. But, of course, Edna wasn't. Mac Heller was, and Mac, Ray could tell, was no Edna. Ray imagined Mac having told his players, "Team, we just have to make it through this day. Okay?"

The team more or less unfolded in Ray's direction with Heller at the helm. Then... with an understated softness and hesitancy Ray had noticed on post-game interviews, and with which he would become more familiar, Mac said, "This must be our designated hitter."

"Oh, God," Ray thought and actually, as it turns out, had muttered aloud to the merriment of all the players. Some of them slapped their knees or their buddy's back and doubled over laughing, but he could see Hiro Musaki, off on the left with a hand to his coarse dark-bearded chin. He did not laugh. It was as though Hiro were an immortalized version of himself in a wax museum... certainly better done than bobble heads. His mouth was twisted a bit as he contemplated this anomaly. There was no apparent joviality. Perhaps he thought Ray's very existence a travesty to a noble game undeserving of such frivolity.

They all quit the raucous laughter shortly. It was a bit too crude for any of their tastes, Ray supposed. Maybe Mac had given them the eye. They must certainly have known that Ray Bonn had more or less been screwed into this charade himself and was just coping as best he could.

Mac introduced himself and then came over to ask, "Would you like to hit the batting cage first, Ray?" He smiled as he added, "It probably wouldn't hurt the odds any."

Having given no little thought to this very moment over the last four days, Ray answered, "If it's all right with you, Mr. Heller, I'd like to just go down to the bullpen and see what a major league fastball looks like up close. I've never seen one, you know."

Mac chuckled understandingly. "Mac," he said. "Call me Mac." Then he allowed as how Ray probably had an excellent idea there. "Yeah, and get a feel for the strike zone with balls going by you. That way, if Masata tries to get too cute he might end up walking you."

Mac laughed. "Good idea," he agreed again as though Ray had presented that rationale, which he hadn't, but not because the thought offended him or that it wasn't exactly what he hoped would happen. But Ray also knew it was unrealistic to hope that a major league pitcher might get "cute" with a fifty-year old walk on.

Ray liked Mac already. Walking out into the bright light of day Mac had handed him a slicker to put over his uniform. It was a bit chilly to be sure no matter how blue the sky or green the spring grass.

"You did play baseball. In high school, right?" Mac asked.

To Ray's nod, Mac added, "Could you hit? I mean... *really* hit."

"Yeah. High school fastballs."

"Very far?"

"Quite a ways." He smiled as he said it because it was a pleasant memory, not because he thought he could impress a major league manager who had been a major league hitter of some account.

"It's great, isn't it?" Mac said, watching Ray's expression. "There just ain't nuthin' like it."

Yes, Ray did have to agree that there hadn't ever been anything just quite like that. Even as an engineer he had sometimes used it, and heard it used, in analogy, but it overpowered whatever context it was used in, he thought. He realized, perhaps for the first time, exactly why he had used a baseball to illustrate certain concepts in his books, why one would actually have appeared on its cover. It was indeed because there hadn't ever been anything quite like it. Had Lesa figured that out about him? He wondered a moment, concluding that probably she had.

After the respectful pause, Mac continued, "Take a swing for that fence when you're up there, Ray. Who knows..." and he smiled that understated gentle smile of his. Ray had watched him in enough post-game interviews to know that in the most unlikely scenario of Ray Bonn knocking the proverbial cover off the ball or hitting one out of the yard, Mac's post-game response to

reporters' questions would be low key. Very quietly he'd say, "Yeah, I guess he got a piece of that one." He'd scratch right above his left eyebrow with the middle finger on his right hand and continue, "yeah... it was a good swing."

They were at the bullpen now, where Mac handed him off to Miguel Tejada. "Miguel, show Ray some fast balls. Get Pedro to throw a few so Ray gets the feel."

"The *feel*?" Miguel tittered. "You mean *hit* him?" Miguel was still laughing, as he yelled at one of the pitchers to get up on the mound. He squatted down behind a makeshift plate then. "You stand there," he said, assuming that Ray, like most street people, would be right-handed.

"Oh, okay." Ray stood there, both hands beside him, as Pedro Gonzales threw his fast ball.

"How fast was that?" Ray asked.

"Eighty-five, eighty-six," Miguel said.

"Masata gets it up a lot faster than that doesn't he?" Ray queried.

"Oh, yeah," clearly Miguel was impressed with either Masata's stuff or Ray's awareness of it. "He's usually ninety-five, ninety-six," Miguel tossed the ball back to Pedro. "Good stuff. Masata picks corners real good too."

Oh, God, Ray thought. "Well, he won't pick corners with me," he interjected realistically. "He'll just toss 'em right down the middle and dare me to swing."

Miguel laughed his agreement with regard to Ray's predicament.

"Can Pedro throw ninety-five?" Ray asked.

"Naw." Miguel yelled over to where several pitchers were horsing around. "Orlie get up here!"

Very slowly Orlie, a tall angular pitcher Ray had never seen, picked up a glove and meandered over to replace the chubbier Pedro.

"Gimme your fastball," Miguel ordered, squatting back down. "This'll be dead center," Miguel told Ray. Twap, it was dead center.

"Could I see that again," Ray seemed to tease, but without teasing.

"Sure." Miguel squatted back down. It twapped, in the same place.

A little faster than Ray remembered from so long ago, but his old high school team mate, Jonesy had used to get it up there pretty fast - low to mid-nineties. If he could have controlled it, or learned to throw a curve or anything else, he could have made it. He had been in the minors a few years until the dream faded and he had gone back home to sell insurance.

"But Masata hangs 'em on the outside a lot." Miguel squatted down again. Ray looked down to see where he was positioning himself, but Miguel lit into him, "Don't look back! You can't look at the catcher. That's... No, no."

So Ray concentrated on Orlie as though he were the much more successful Masata. Twap, right on the outside corner just a little lower.

"See the difference?" Miguel asked. "Wanna see the inside corner?" Miguel followed up mischievously.

"I suppose I should," Ray said, and there came a Twap right up under his chin. Ray didn't flinch, but it seemed too close. "Was that a strike?" he asked.

Miguel acknowledged that he was playing with him. He seemed impressed that Ray hadn't flinched.

"Could I see one on the inside belt high," Ray asked.

He did. Miguel implied that that one could have been sent a ways.

"How about a twelve-six curve? Does Orlie have one of those?"

"Naw." Miguel yelled, "Eddie! Get over here!"

Orlie looked at Ray askance. Ray nodded back to thank him for the disruption, knowing none of them needed Lesa's aging 'soul mate' father figure here slumming.

Eddie was in place. "You ready for Eddie?" Miguel teased.

Ray nodded without looking at Miguel. He watched Eddie throw his curve ball. The motion was very different than the fast balls. He noticed the difference in the rotation of the ball as it arrived. Of course there was more time *to* notice. The ball seemed to fall from the sky right over the middle of the plate.

"You coulda hit that one if you knew where it was gonna be, huh? Here's another one just a little lower." Sure enough. There was no Twap sound when these hit Miguel's mitt, but they were pretty strange to watch up close. "How about a slider," Miguel offered to extend Ray's continuing education, for which Ray was appreciative.

Wow! It looked different than he thought the slider would look up close.

"How about a screw ball?" Miguel was showing off now. Eddie made a little different motion to effect a screwball; the action was truly screwy. Ray motioned for Miguel to have him throw another. He did.

Mac Heller was back now. "How'd that go?" he asked.

It was Miguel who answered, "He done good. He knows them pitches I think. I think he hit one. I really think he hit one."

The participating pitchers entered into Miguel's merriment. Eddie yelled over, "He'd better be holding a bat if he wants to intimidate Masata," to which they all laughed.

"Speaking of which, we've got to get you a bat. You didn't bring a lightning rod or anything like that did you?" Mac chuckled, alluding to *The Natural*. "You think you might want to borrow one of Ronnie's?"

Ronnie Saxon was six foot eight or more. Ray supposed he swung a hickory stump. No, of course he didn't want one of Ronnie's. He had not thought about this issue, other than to realize that it would have been naïve of him to try to find a bat to bring with him.

"Any of 'em would be glad to loan you a bat," Mac assured him.

"Hiro?" Ray assessed the degree to which Mac's confidence extended in this regard.

Mac laughed. "I don't really know." He still chuckled knowing the degree of his generosity was being tested. "Hiro's careful with his bats. Let's ask him." Hiro was just heading to the dugout after having done his self-imposed workout in the field. They cut him off with Mac raising a finger to get his

attention. Ray wondered whether Mac would need an interpreter, but no. "Hiro, could Ray borrow a bat?"

Hiro Musaki's hand went to his chin in no hurry to respond; he seemed to look deep into Ray's soul. "Okay," he said at last.

Ray felt as though he had passed a major league hurdle. Okay, so that metaphor really didn't work... at all.

Hiro motioned for Ray to follow him while Mac moseyed off elsewhere. "Did you hit?" Hiro asked.

"A long time ago, Hiro. A long time ago in high school."

"Eighteen, nineteen?"

"Yeah, that's about it," to which Hiro laughed in response.

"My bats get infield hits." He toyed with Ray, possibly wondering what tiny percentage of the way Ray could jog toward first on a grounder that would be an infield hit for him. Apparently aware of the insensitivity, he proceeded with, "They're good bats though; they send it over the wall." He smiled.

"I've seen you," Ray said.

"Oh," Hiro replied modestly, perhaps embarrassed.

They were in the dugout by then. Hiro opened his case as Ray would imagine a heart surgeon searching for a favorite scalpel... a bad simile again. Ray was tired of correcting his thoughts. Who the hell cares if he uses bad metaphors and similes in his own mind?

Lesla does, he answered his own thought, and looked across beyond right field to where there was a window high above the stands. He imagined one of the dark figures behind glass being either Doctor Lesla Landau or Memo Paris; he knew he wouldn't really be able to tell the difference from where he stood.

Hiro pulled one of the bats from its setting, like a jeweler might inspect a diamond for insurance value, but no, that didn't really work either. Gently Hiro ran his fingers over the bat, put it back and pulled out another one that also got his full attention for a few more seconds. "Please do not throw this bat when you are done with it. Okay?"

"Certainly. I will respect it as I respect you," Ray said, and then, "Thank you for letting me use it."

"Will you sign a book for me?"

Ray stared at Hiro a long moment, and finally said, "You really want one of my books? You don't need to do that."

"I want one of your books," Hiro said very simply.

"I will get you one."

Hiro handed Ray the bat. "Hold it," he said, and so Ray held it. He slowly raised it to his shoulder and rotated his entire body as though away from a pitcher. Hiro watched appraisingly. "Too light?"

"No, no. Just right." Ray was off with Goldy Locks and the Three Bears in a childish fantasy. Why was that fantasy more childish than the fantasy of standing here with Hiro Musaki, talking about a bat for Ray to swing here in Yankee Stadium? Could Lesla answer that one?

"Where do you hit the ball?" Ray asked, back in his nontraditional fantasy here in the reality of Yankee Stadium with Hiro again. He knew his question would be ambiguous, so he pointed toward the label to clarify.

"Oh," Hiro jerked in recognition taking the bat. Facing Ray, Hiro's left-handedness complimented Ray's right-hand stance. "Like this," Hiro said. Shouldering the bat, he did an exaggeratedly slow swing, stopping midway. He released his right hand without the bat moving at all and put his right index finger on a spot at which he obviously desired contact.

The demonstration was clear. Ray nodded.

Hiro nodded back and put the bat back in its case.

Ray knew that sometime before he had to go up to the plate, should he not by some miracle be spared that indignity, Hiro would deliver one of his prized possessions into Ray's hands ready for combat.

"Thank you, Hiro."

Hiro's body language then expressed what must have been a few sentences worth of information, not much of which Ray comprehended.

There was a general trend of players going back into the depths of the locker rooms from the dugout. Ray saw Mac indicate that he himself was going in. Before entering the darkness after Mac, Ray looked out across the field and noticed that the stands were filling fast.

Since most everyone was nervously relieving himself, Ray did too. Not that he needed to, but why not, maybe it was a bonding thing.

Mac was next to him then at an adjoining urinal. "I kept the reporters off you, did you notice?"

"No, I didn't," Ray said gratefully, "so you must have done a good job of it. Thank you."

"I don't really get into celebrity baseball, Ray. We just have to get through this, don't we?"

"Me either," Ray said. "I dislike it even more than you do, believe me. I had nothing to do with it, and I sure as hell don't like it."

"I've read what you wrote about telescopes and probabilities," Mac said with a bit of a twinkle in his eye. "So I've tried to look through the correct end of this abstract device of yours to see into the future. All I see is that your odds of living up to the lady's expectations of this inaugural celebrity baseball event aren't very good." He looked at Ray quizzically askance aware of the humor. "You're up ninth, by the way."

Ray nodded truly appreciating him at this point. "No, the odds of my coming through this charade like Roy Hobbs are not good at all, Mac." He grimaced and wagged his head with exasperation showing Mac exactly how much he disdained this 'opportunity' Lesa had thrust upon them both. "Up ninth then. That's what I figured. Once."

"Once? Maybe... maybe not," Mac said vaguely to give Ray a little encouragement, he supposed. "We just have to satisfy the contract."

Ray followed Mac through the tunnel then and out into the dugout again, where Ray took a seat on the top bench... and waited.



There was the Star-Spangled Banner and the notable, "Play ball!" Here he was in Yankee Stadium, dancing with the stars, Ray thought cynically.

And they played ball. Mike Masata was out there first. Ray watched his movements, his delivery, the Twap of his pitches hitting the catcher Jose Pasao's mitt. Miguel had got that right. Masata's expressions and idiosyncrasies of body language interested Ray. He recalled having seen somewhere that Mike Masata was a crossword puzzle enthusiast. That considerably elevated his status for Ray.

A rookie that Ray had never seen in Mariner uniform sat down next to him. "You scared?"

Ray looked at the rookie with a vacant unfocused hatred. The kid vamoosed.

Hiro got a hold of one of the twappers. It wobbled rather than sped down the third base line. Meanwhile Hiro high-tailed it down to first base. By the time Alturis Romero could scoop up the ball bare handed and had tossed it to first in one smooth motion, Hiro was on the other side of the bag straightening his uniform.

But then there were three quick outs recorded, including Hiro at second on a double play, and the Yankees came to bat. Jesus de Jesus got on. An out and a walk later, 'Alto' Romero stepped to the plate to earn back some more of his tremendous salary. He hit a ball that was outta here from the first noise off the bat. Paul Bloomberg looked up at the missile's trajectory from his vantage in left field without even moving. It was gone. This would be a long day for Mariners fans and wasting an at bat was not what the doctor... well, except for Dr. Lesa Landau... would have ordered. Another couple of outs were recorded and it was the Mariners turn to try to get some offense going.

After two outs in a row the Mariner shortstop Juni Masoni got on with an infield hit. Masata's no hitter was being ruined early with cheap hits. Of course they weren't really 'cheap'. It took quality speed in players like Hiro and Juni to get them, but there had been no good Mariner wood on a ball so far. Aaron Bell was up.

Mac sidled over to where Ray was sitting. He leaned over to say, "Ray, if Aaron gets on, they'll walk Miguel to get to you."

The suddenness struck Ray with terror; Lesa should have written into the contract that the Yankees couldn't take advantage of having him in the lineup that way. He had thought he would have longer to think about this.

"Ray, if that happens, stay calm. I think you may just be able to do something."

"No!" Ray intoned aggressively, although internally in panic, when he saw that an inside pitch had hit Aaron. "No, Mac. This is crazy. You have to switch for me right now. The bases will be loaded, go for it. This charade is over. Don't let 'em do this to you." Ray got up and headed for the tunnel and dark depths beneath the stadium.

Mac grabbed him by the back of his uniform. "Don't make a scene Ray. You're going out there! The wheels of commerce are heavier than baseball;

we're just a cog; it's called SAFECO Field back home remember, not Mariners Stadium." Clearly, Mac was no genius of prose, but he obviously understood the essence of sports in ancient Rome and in America. Ray would not have thought that any gladiator trapped in the game for so many decades would have even remotely comprehended. However large the salaries of the players or widespread their fame or shame, it was but the pittance a corporate state had to pay to divert the attention of the masses away from their democratic civic responsibility, and thereby to control their excesses. Hotbox Sports and Hotbox News were but two faces of a single monstrous beast. Ray was in angry reverie, knowing that Helen, his politically involved wife, would be proud of him even in this. That's where he had gotten such notions.

"Get out there, Ray. Now!" Mac exhibited the timbre of authority befitting a Caesar.

Hiro stood directly in front of Ray with his bat now, a final touch before entering the arena to do combat.

"Oh, God!" Ray said to the whole damn world; anyone who could read lips at all heard the expletive because the cameras were on him now. Half the players in the dugout were frowning, but the other half chuckled despite the desperation of the situation, and so was Ray's family two thousand miles away. He sure wasn't making this easy on himself.

Hiro walked with Ray to the steps and motioned to the on-deck circle. "You have to stay in there 'til Miguel's at bat is over."

It was already clear from the visitation to the mound that Miguel would register no at bat this trip.

So Ray awkwardly took up a momentary residence in the on-deck circle to the general approval of Yankee fans. He was in the arena now, and thumbs were so far neither up nor down. It worked... the metaphor at least. Miguel trotted to first base. Ray Bonn would be the first major league player in history with his first at bat at nearly fifty. Oh, God.

He walked over to the plate to the great pleasure of the umpire who flipped his mask down over a laughing face. Jose Pasao laughed through his mask. "Welcome to the Big Apple, Big Fella." The sarcasm was laced with contempt for the nepotism that could get one who had not the slightest credential a shot at the big time.

"Thanks," Ray said defiantly as one might to a too jovial hangman.

Before getting his cleats where he would have them, he got the bat in position way up by his shoulder for the first time since he was eighteen. He placed his left hand to grab the nub of the bat as he had used to; he would pull with all he was worth with that aging left arm. He twisted his shoulders around away from Masata as the Yankee pitcher and the world sadistically watched. Then he took his right foot back to the very back of the batter's box as he had used to do.

Mac Heller had said to let go and swing for the wall once. Ray was going to do just that... one time at least - the first pitch, because he knew that one was going to be right down the middle of the plate where Miguel had placed

*Aberrant Behavior*

Orlie's first two pitches. There was the wind up and Ray began his swing of the bat away from the pitcher early, then the turning at the release of the pitch. Ray could see the ball coming in as his shoulders unleashed all the power left in his aging but once extremely athletic frame. He pulled the left arm with his full strength, still eyeing the ball.

Smack!

Or was it crack? In any case it was loud, and then he stood there with the nub of Hiro's bat in his left hand, behind him. The other end touching the ground balancing him. There was a silence he felt as a shiver through his whole body as everyone in the stadium looked to the sky.

Ray saw Masata form a fist with his right hand and jerk it forward ... a first ball out of the infield.



Whew. Ray realized to his great relief that he had not totally shamed himself. Still standing there, he watched the left fielder Hidalgo Manuel running back toward the left field wall looking over his shoulder. He timed his leap and went skyward. A white dot touched the webbing of his glove, but he hadn't enough height to snag it. The ball fell to the feet of the fan standing there above him in disbelief. The fan was immediately bending down scrambling for the ball.

So much for the odds. From Ray's physics perspective, a virtually infinite number of alternative wave functions had collapsed into this single irreversible fact, no longer to be intimidated by 'the odds'.

At that moment pandemonium broke loose. Ray had barely begun walking awkwardly in the general direction of first base before he heard the screaming crowd... indeed it seemed as though all these hated Yankee fans did not hate him at all for all his professed hatefulness.

Somewhere Lesa was up there smiling at her "protagonist's pirouette" - God, how he had despised her for that comment - and counting seven million dollars in the bank, knowing eight were now assured. She had put it in the contract. Probably Ray's daughter Allie was watching back home and beginning to see something to like in that "floozy" after all. Helen would be happy... for him.

He had a little smile on his face and throughout his being as he passed in front of Jesus De Jesus who did not seem amused in the least. Alto Romero had a perplexed wrinkle on his forehead Ray had seen on TV before, but Alto smiled at Ray as he jogged by anyway.

As he headed for home Ray realized that not only had he not thrown Hiro's bat, but he was still protecting it awkwardly in both hands. There were three exuberant Mariners jumping up and down around home plate. He saw Hiro beyond them, Ray had not realized who had been on deck to bat after him. Not thinking, he handed him his bat with a thank you. They both nodded in what Ray thought of as an 'oriental' ceremony. Hiro took the bat and gave Ray the one he had been warming up with to take back to the dugout. The batboy took it from him saying he knew where it went, so Ray gave it up.

The other three RBI'd Mariners were pushing him toward the dugout where Mac met him with a gentle knowing smile and the touch on his shoulder. Then Ray slapped hands all the way down to his pew on the top shelf at the end of the dugout.

Now there was an image for Edna to exploit in promoting his book.

The rookie, whose friendliness Ray had spurned earlier came over to slap hands. "You weren't nervous at all, were you? That was awesome," and then he left Ray alone again.

Throughout the stadium, fans were beginning to pick up their free books, most of which had been tossed as waste in aisle ways and beneath seats. They began to browse them now, wondering confusedly whether any of what was contained in *Aberrations of Relativity* could possibly have any bearing whatsoever on what they had just witnessed.

The tremendous relief that Ray felt as he sat back on the bench after the game had once again resumed was pure ecstasy. Hiro's triple and the subsequent out were just a blur.

With a third out, the dugout emptied. Jubilant Mariners grabbed their mitts, heading to the field. Ray was left alone with his thoughts.

According to his contract as the temporary designated hitter who had not yet tapped out, he would be obligated for at least one more at bat. He would have to continue to sit here inactively and wait... some more. He had already waited for what had seemed a long while before his first at bat during which he had not been able to keep his thoughts in the now. He had concentrated initially on how to place his feet in the box, and then on how he had held a bat when he had begun his powerful swings back in high school, when he had been the premier slugger in the Northwest League and the entire State of Washington.

But besides those attempts to concentrate on survival in this unfamiliar situation, he had thought bitterly of the events that had got him here against his will. Much of that bitterness was now as gone as the home run ball in the left field stands. It was being replaced by remorse for the vindictiveness with which he had lashed out at Lesa. He acknowledged more than mere infatuation with her but was still appalled by her having forced him into this against his will.

He was not so nervous now about his next at bat, however, since he had at least not disgraced himself on his first appearance. Most people would even think he had covered himself with glory no matter what happened next time. Edna would probably even be satisfied. So now in a more sanguine frame of mind, he reflected back more objectively on those events that had precipitated his appearance here at Yankee Stadium.

Most certainly Lesa's audacious shenanigans and George Steinbrenner's willingness to push the issue during that second appearance on Larry King Live the previous Monday night had been the immediate causes. It had ignited a consuming enmity between Lesa and Ray, turning what had already become a charmed working relationship into an emotional hell those last several days leading up to his ultimately sitting here now.

But that earlier endearing relationship had only happened because of Ray's loving wife Helen. Her angelic disposition had subdued a much more natural jealousy. She had called in to the previous Larry King Live show at a critical moment forcing Ray to accept an invitation to a second appearance with the brilliant physicist Dr. Lesa Landau he had met just minutes before that. Helen could see that he and Lesa shared ideas with which (Helen would have been confident) they could jointly solve the mystery of the origins of irreversibility, *time's arrow*. Helen knew that that achievement of unraveling entropy was the Holy Grail for physicists like Ray and Lesa, and that it was within their reach if a collaborative effort could be put in place. So foregoing jealousy, Helen had acted as she always did, for Ray's benefit. In this case it had resulted in putting together their collaboration.

The joys he and Lesa experienced in their interactions those first few days working in the suite Edna had set up for them at the Sheltry Hotel was a fantasy for the two scientists. The few personal difficulties only assured them that it was indeed a reality rather than just some hallucinatory paradise. Indeed. Even the mode of thought each used in attacking difficult scientific problems seemed to employ some vast completely shared neural cortex jointly accessible by either Lesa or him. They thought the same synchronous thoughts coming to the same conclusions at the same time. It was like nothing either of them could ever have imagined would occur in scientific work.

Ultimately the harmony of that ideal working relationship had been shattered by an equally fantastic, if devastating egotistical performance by Lesa and George Steinbrenner. She had insanely insisted that because Ray's chronometric neural reaction time measures placed him among the fastest recorded, he should be able to out-hit even Alturis Romero.

George Steinbrenner had then called into the show to doubt that hypothesis. The humorous interaction that ensued might well have had great prime time entertainment value for Larry King, Ray thought, but it was he, stuffed into this ridiculous outfit that unabashedly proclaimed his half century, who was now paying for that nonsense... Well, he guessed, it was all right now.

But that disastrous 'continuation' on Larry King Live had only come about because Ray had appeared on the show earlier, by himself, to discuss his own ideas with Larry King and the world. Dr. Lesa Landau had been introduced to represent his feared opposition - the scientific establishment. Her role had been set up to discredit Ray as a snake oil salesman. Fortunately... or unfortunately, Ray hardly knew which... and depending on when and how he looked at it, ...Lesa had fallen for the snake oil... and the salesman... instead.

That sequence of events in turn had only happened because he had finally published his innovative scientific ideas in a book that his agent had suggested Edna Robinson at McGregor Publishing might be willing to take under her wing to promote.

Edna had indeed taken the book, Ray Bonn, and everything in her wake, "under her wing" and flown with it. She was still flying high.

So, as if that were the actual beginning that would not require him to go all the way back to the Big Bang or Adam's paradise (whichever the reader chooses to believe is where it *all* began), Ray began reminiscing about the aging greenhorn who had come to the Big Apple. The Big Apple indeed. Ostensibly he had come for an appearance on Larry King Live that would wrap up what had been an exhausting book-signing tour.

Somewhere in that protracted sequence of unlikely events he had met Lesa and that, he concluded, was where it had all *really* begun.

*#3 A Reader Who Understands*

Thursday afternoon, April 27<sup>th</sup>

With lunch over, Ray was back to the table at the heart of Alpha and Omega with fresh piles of books to sign. Again he faced shelves containing biographies of presidents living and dead... and Elizabeth Taylor, Jackie K. O., John Wayne, Tiger Woods, Arnold Palmer, Alturis Romero, and Barry Bonds. Eyes surveyed him surreptitiously from behind those shelves and over the tops of others in the general vicinity as they milled about awaiting an afternoon presentation with another Q and A session. He took it for granted that this format of a presentation morning and afternoon with book signings following each was an innovation of Edna's. She obviously liked the format.

There was a bigger crowd this afternoon and they seemed quite receptive to what he had to say. He supposed that what he had had to say this day was quite similar to what he had always said. He did always try to say something a little different though, a little different way of saying what is the same, bring up different aspects of his broad topic that most would think of as very narrow, attempt to improve on previous approaches that had led to bleary eyes. It was all part of keeping himself interested in this mind-numbingly repetitious life he had gotten himself into just to sell more copies of a book. A book written for other reasons... his own reasons. It encapsulated what he had felt had to be expressed whether anyone else ever read it or not.

He had long ago accepted that, like protagonists in too damn many sentimental videos, he was a writer. He acknowledged that, like them, he was *not* someone who was read, mind you... just someone who wrote... and wrote... and wrote... just because he had to. Perhaps it was an obsessive-compulsive disorder. He didn't know. Having retired early from engineering, perhaps he had had an excuse.

But he had not started writing after retirement. He had always written on scientific topics on which his impressions differed about how things worked, how it *was*. He didn't usually even print out the electronic files. It was merely his way of clarifying his own thoughts, a technique he sometimes likened to sticking in a climber's axe on the way up a steep slope... a way of not sliding

back down... a way to avoid always having to re-ascend the same sharp incline in thought.

Once he had complained to Helen while watching a video that it was ridiculous for the protagonist who had no credentials or even a pretense of having something to write *about*, to say, "I am a writer."

"You don't admit to being a writer?" Helen had asked with a grin.

The hypocrisy dawned on him then. Anyone who spends their life writing must necessarily *be* a writer whether anyone reads what he writes or not. That is a separate issue. He remembered her smug expression as she perceived that he had gotten her point.

But if one acknowledges that one is a writer, self-respect demands that there be readers. He guessed that was the sequence of events that had precipitated publication, why he was out on the road now helping to promote his book like snake oil, pandering for respect.

Anyway, there seemed to be no bleary eyes today. Some of those gathered to hear what he had to say actually came up with some rather good questions such as: "Why has no one else realized that Einstein's 1906 vintage 'law of the transmission of light' should be re-evaluated since everything we know about light has changed since then? Surely it should have been revised long before now."

He glanced over at Edna and she produced one of her rare smiles... more of an 'I told you so' smirk really.

"I don't know, and of course we can't ask him why he didn't revise relativity to accommodate his quantum theory of light, can we?"

There was no immediate follow-on question, so Ray proceeded after a few seconds with, "I guess no one else tried to incorporate the change because the Special Theory was so successful in its limited domain. Surely more people than I have realized that the specifics of the theory as Einstein had laid them out depended on this obsolete conjecture that light is, in essential ways, very much like any other object. Even though it isn't, and everyone soon came to know that it isn't, it's like Pick-Up-Sticks. You don't go for the black one if it's at the bottom of the pile, if you want to win the game, that is." It was a bad simile; he was just blabbering. Probably no one present had ever played Pick-Up-Sticks. His childhood had been a long time ago.

Then from way in the back came the dulcet tones of a woman's voice, "I think you've done a marvelous job of getting the black one out from the bottom without the whole pile collapsing. Were you good at Pick-Up-Sticks?"

Everyone chuckled.

He looked into gentle blue eyes and a smile to which he attributed the praise and the question. She was too young to have ever played that game, wasn't she? Blushing a little, he supposed, he responded: "Yes. Yes, I guess, I probably was pretty good at it, spatial puzzles always intrigued me, and I have pretty good hands." More chuckles, so after a pause he added, "...with sticks. But I think the simile somehow got away from me, don't you?" Bursts



of laughter forced him onward, "I don't really know to what the 'black stick' would be an analogy." They all laughed again.

Then out of the laughter, from the direction of that same pair of overtly sincere eyes and soft smile of the young woman, came a well-articulated proposition. "Isn't it the experimentally observed aspects of relativity - namely aberration and all its measurable associations - that you have managed to extricate from the metaphysical distractions of Lorentz contraction and clock time dilation, whose experimental verification you have shown to be problematical? You have managed to accomplish all this without even altering the formalism very much."

In the direction of the so-explicit eyes Ray saw an open vista as of a future life or paradise after death, where every word he spoke and every nebulous thought that flickered through the aurora borealis of his mind would be fully comprehended and appreciated. A passage from Steinbeck's *Cannery Row* flooded in upon him. It was a feeling associated with these kind generous eyes that was akin to what he recalled: "*Andy was never able to explain or to forget. For the eyes spread out until ... it was one eye ... as big as a church door. Andy looked through the shiny transparent ... door and through it saw a lonely countryside, flat for miles but ending against a row of fantastic mountains.*"

It was as though he now realized with embarrassment why that passage had meant so much to him so many years ago. Eyes were not only picture windows into the soul. They were the source of reflections of a different view of oneself and reality? Oh, God, had he been reduced to the sugary sweetness of Margaret Keane's world of big-eyed, teary sincerity?

"Well, yes, I guess that would be the five-point stick wouldn't it," he mumbled and proceeded to babble away incoherently, adding, "but I didn't imagine anyone here would ever have played that game; it's been so long ago now." He could feel the audience come to his rescue emotionally, as they are wont to do whenever one makes the slightest self-deprecatory remark. It amazed him that politicians had never learned that basic fact of human nature, but it embarrassed him to be using it nonetheless.

But they were done asking questions now... partly because Edna was suggesting by her words and body language that they were, in fact, done. Maybe she sensed a meaningful intellectual discussion breaking out like wildfire at this point and opted to head it off before it got out of her control. At any rate he was done answering their questions and now it was just the signing of their purchases... too damn many books. Yes, it was, after all, the royalties on these many purchases that was what he had been after. Wasn't it? Or was it the possibility of finding one person with whom he could communicate as promised by the ocular depth of that blue door? Yes, maybe that *had* been it, after all, the only legitimate reason. In any case he would definitely like to have heard what she had to say. Oh, well, back to work.

Those who proceeded to line up for his signature constituted the longest line of purchasers of the *Aberrations of Relativity* that the world had ever known... 'til then. Edna had seen to posting a sign stating that he would appear

on Larry King Live this very evening. Evidently it had helped. He would be signing nonstop for hours. Oh, God.

Edna brought him a drink of water now and then as a part of her monitoring of operations and once even a cappuccino.

He paused to sip occasionally between deft applications of his pen. As he sipped between supplicants he would glance in the direction of the shelf of celebrities or more distant shelves. During some of those brief intervals, he would notice the inquisitive eyes... the eyes from which the confidence in his abilities at *picking up sticks* had seemed to be articulated. She was one person with whom he would readily have escaped over that flat countryside and into those fantastic mountains of understanding with their peaceful waterfalls to sit down to an enthralling conversation of the nature of reality that the current scientific establishment fails to understand. How would she and Ray Bonn change all that? Ray realized it was mere fantasy, but also that such fantasies must sometimes bear us up through the boring tedium of our lives.

Sometimes she was at the left just going behind the stand, at other times to the right, or further off coming around a more distant shelf. But always the same eyes, the same knowing smile, always looking questioningly at him as though she were fantasizing about him too... just as he was about her, he thought. Always there was this urge to fly away with her to some profound mutual understanding. It became a presence, whether he looked for it or not. It was as though he knew the eyes would be there, peering, and each time he looked, there they were, seeming to promise needed support. Each time he merely had to find them among the shelves. *Where's Waldo*. There was also an anxious wonder concerning who she was, what she was doing there, was she 'real', in whatever sense of that term made the most sense in context.

Was she really shopping for a book... about a dead president... or Alturis Romero. He saw her with that book in hand thumbing through it. Or was she, in fact, actually shopping for *his* book, *him* in particular... trying to figure *him* out? But she must already have read his book, and what would there be to figure out in his regard anyway?

He smiled to himself right through the repeated automatic writing of his signature. The very thought made him laugh. No. She could not be stalking this very ugly old man, he thought, so he would look again to see whether the eyes still sought him out. However much he doubted the plausibility he had an interesting preoccupation that made that last afternoon in the Big Apple before his long anticipated flight home, after the elongated whirlwind ride, more tolerable.

After what seemed a very short afternoon, he remembered very little but the eyes and inquisitive expression of an apparition. Edna began rushing him to sign faster, so that they could get through the long line before the store closed. So he did bow his head and more deliberately desist glancing through the store in search of the blue eyes and associated fantasies. He just hurried with his signing.

The store manager announced the countdown to the store closing. Then the store closed, after which, she said, "There will be no more books signed after this lady's book has been signed." "This lady" was, in this case, at the end of a line that had done nothing but elongate all afternoon, and so he continued to sign away in near oblivion.

"Hi. And what is your name," and then the "Dear (whatever the name), I hope you enjoy this excursion into relativity," his name signed as a squiggle, and move 'em out.

"Next." Edna did hurry them.

"Julie. With a little effort you'll have no problem with relativity, I'm sure." His name was signed as a mere squiggle again. How was he so sure she would have no trouble with relativity? Snake oil. Snake oil salesmen have to have confidence.

"Hi, what's your name then?" So again it's, "Julie. Since you liked algebra in high school, I'm sure you can handle the math. Enjoy." His name squiggled once more.

"Julie" again, "Keep reading *Out of My Later Years*. It's a great book that *Aberrations* will never replace." His name in squiggle again.

"One more," Edna said.

"My name's not Julie," said the musical voice of the eyes that had identified the black stick and had then surveyed books of celebrities the rest of the afternoon. He looked up hesitantly to meet the eyes.

They smiled at each other knowingly but, of course, what it was they knew in common other than the black stick, Ray (at least) did not have a clue, only a capricious sense of association with obscurely fantasized distant hills of future understanding. His face became flushed as he lowered his eyes to write,

*Dear Lesa*

*"You have brightened my afternoon with your eyes and smile. Thank you for helping to clarify my contribution to relativity. Here's to a promising future.*

*Ray"*

He signed only his first name as if writing it for the very first time for the day, the way it would have been signed a month ago.

"Could we have coffee?" she asked as she took the closed book, motioning across the street to where he had lunched with Edna earlier.

"Sure," he said, excited.

"Not today!" Edna declared. "We've got to get back and get ready for tonight."

"Oh yeah," he said, deferring to reality. "She's my handler." He stepped off his cotton candy Fantasy Mountain, and back onto a real, and very ordinary, tectonic plate with a thud. "I'm truly sorry."

"Here's his card." Edna was ushering her out of Alpha and Omega with only the eyes and ambiguous smile of promise still persisting in his direction.

He had obtained no card, absolutely no information regarding who she was, although now an aching desire to know her better had begun to throb.

Then, just as Edna assisted her out the door, she turned once more. With accompaniment of her most charming smile and a wave came her melodic words, "I'll see you soon then."

He did a little self-conscious waving motion with his hand. "Soon," he said audibly, but to himself, a "when?" quickly followed. Then, "who *is* she?" Would he ever see her again? Would he get to know her background, how she had come to seem to understand what he had written so completely the way he himself had come to understand it?

Why had he been such an idiot as to presume her name would be Lesa just because of the melody of a long-forgotten song, "I'm not Lesa" had seemed to accompany her denial of being just another Julie? Another Julie. Oh, God.

Edna was ready to go. She handed him his coat; she had everything wrapped up and was playing her masculine role. He grabbed his coat and stood up with serious doubts about his manhood and sanity to shake hands with the store manager who had been most cordial in all her interactions with Ray throughout the day.

Sheepishly she handed him another of the books of which he was so weary, asking him for one last signature. Sheepishly he signed.

It was another automatic gesture but not without first recognizing in cursive that this Alpha and Omega experience had indeed been a most rewarding one for him, and one that he would long remember.

And they were out the door with an agitated Edna having already hailed one of the honking, yellow bumper cars for hire that seemed more than anything else to characterize the streets of this crazy city. Once inside the cab his weariness set in. He was exhausted. His shoulder ached with that knife-blade pain that Helen could sometimes be enticed to assuage by a rather probing massage, probing with her thumb deep into his left shoulder, seeming to twang the tightened muscles almost like a bass player. Helen hated being asked to do it, claiming he needed to go to a doctor or at least her chiropractor, but with cajoling she usually acquiesced, and sweetly.

He smiled, thinking he probably shouldn't ask Edna.

Edna completed the phone call on which he had made no attempt to eavesdrop. When her cell snapped shut, she had her laptop open almost in the same smooth motion.

God. That woman!

"Now the most important thing tonight is that you have to stay relaxed. Speak slowly and be relaxed."

He jerked his head toward her with eyes widened, almost hysterical.

She continued, "No matter what..."

"Edna!" He exclaimed. "Earth to Edna. Hello! There are many things you can help me with but relaxing just ain't one of 'em." He burst out laughing loud enough to get a chuckle out of the cab driver, but Edna just smiled. Well, he thought she might have smiled. He wasn't sure. One never could be.

"Okay," she said. "Okay. You handle that. But do handle it. It won't be easy. They'll try to ridicule you for butting heads with the icon of Albert Einstein. You can bet on it. You can spit on Hillary, but don't mess with Einstein. That's anti-Semitism."

He looked at her and pondered in a sort of shocked realization. He had more or less known that, without having formulated it or having had it formulated for him. To whatever depth one acknowledges an indebtedness, anyone addressing relativity is vis à vis Albert Einstein, almost as though in the flesh. His ethnic origin, to whatever degree one avoids the ad hominem argument, is bound, in this case for some odd reason to seem to have been attacked nonetheless. One can attack Freudian psychology, Marxism, or even the teachings of Jesus, or any of the other products of Jewish intellectual giants of our culture without fear of being called anti-Semitic for having disagreed with someone of Jewish descent. But *Einstein's* relativity? Now that's a different story.

"Could we discuss that just a little?" Ray asked with interest.

"What do you mean 'discuss' it? There's not much to discuss. You just can't be perceived as being anti-Semitic and sell books in America. What's not to understand?" As usual Edna was all business, not philosophy. Never philosophy.

"Okay. How does one avoid the perception?"

"Highlight what you accept as truly ingenious of Einstein's discoveries." She said it with a finality that ended discussion and so the discussion would continue only in his mind. He certainly did accept Einstein's discoveries as ingenious - even the ones that were wrong.

He felt that Einstein's paper, "On The Quantum Theory Of Radiation" first published in 1916, was so advanced and beyond what could have been expected at that point in time as to seem almost impossible in retrospect. Yet, even there, human limitations manifested themselves as he restricted himself to first order aberration and Doppler effects - ignoring his own relativity theory. He had thereby allowed irreversibility to slip through his fingers to remain unresolved for another century. How does one say that he was a truly great man - not just a truly great Jew - and yet point out that he failed in some respects - as everyone fails, not as, or because, he was Jewish? People get so obsessed with their icons that they cannot distinguish the essential from the conditional.

But Edna was moving on swiftly. "You mention 'the law of transmission of light' a lot in your book. What do you plan to discuss about that tonight?"

"Tonight? I don't have a plan, Edna. I thought Larry would ask the questions and I would politely answer them like a scientist rather than a political spin twister."

"Yes, I know. But..." and she paused longer than her usual, which is not very long, "no matter what he asks, if it's about your '*Aberrations of Relativity*' book, as it had better be, then your answers will inevitably involve 'the law of the transmission of light'. Right?"

"Right," he acknowledged cheerfully, having come to this point on his own. "I think I will say that Einstein published a brilliant paper in 1916, defining the quantum theory of radiation. However, in 1905 armed only with common sense notions of what a 'light ray' might be, he defined a very different 'law'." Ray wiggled two fingers on each hand in front of him where Edna would notice without turning her head and realize that he would do it that way tonight, to indicate that he was quoting, "...of the transmission of light'. He never did retrofit his..."

"Very good," she said interrupting him.

"Wait a minute," he said, but she cut him short, again.

"I understand. It's fine. There're other things we have to work on."

Oh, God, that woman. He hadn't been able to completely express an idea to her since he met her. She was always explaining to him, educating him, instructing him, questioning him. Well, he guessed that was what she was being paid to do. He was being paid for what he had already said, to *other* people, not to her, certainly not her.

So she continued prodding him to preamble comments to be expressed later which she would defer hearing in full until the time arrived, which would not be too long now.

He managed to escape once they were back at the hotel, just long enough to "freshen up" as Edna called applying lipstick, blowing one's nose, or sitting exhausted on a toilet seat.

"Be down here in twenty minutes," she nagged. "We have to get eating out of the way so you won't be belching or somnambulant when you get on the show."

"Somnambulant!?" Edna. Do you really think I'm going to step into the most stressful situation in my entire life, and fall asleep?"

"Be down here," she said dismissively and disappeared into an elevator.

"Beam me up Scotty," he said aloud as he entered the next empty elevator. "Otis." How many crossword puzzles demanded knowledge of that? It reminded him of his friend David Down Under who had pointed out the supposed Maori word for 'escalator' as they had hopped on to ascend to the next floor in the Wellington Museum of Natural History. "Can you imagine what it might have been to which a Maori would have had occasion to refer to as an 'escalator'?"

Ray had, of course, forgotten the Maori word. Its use in that context was no doubt something of a cross-cultural con game as David had implied. Culture and words, and the books comprised of them, they were all con games, he supposed. At least right now he did. Snake oil.

So he got a little reprieve to lie back on his bed, breathe heavily and close his eyes.

Lesa. Why had he supposed her name was Lesa and not Helen? He didn't know why, but the word 'Lesa' had come to mind distinctly. Of course he could not have known whether Lesa were her name or not. He might have given a

legitimate rationale for it being Helen he supposed. He smiled thinking of that rationale involving Helen's cousin Julie. Not being *that* Julie - a specific rather than general comment.

It had seemed to him at the time, however, as though his thoughts had resonated with that articulate young woman to such an extent that she had actually sung the words. Her melodic statement that she was "not Julie" implied specifically that it must necessarily have referred to the song, reversing the role of Lesa in that song. She had so articulated the line that the cadence had been musical. Maybe it had just been music to his lonely ears. He smiled, knowing full well that his presumption must before now have seemed rather absurd to her.

Whatever the case might be, Jessi Colter's song about Julie had definitely echoed in his mind both then and now. Back when it had been popular it had been one of his favorite songs. He still liked it.

*"I'm not Lesa.  
My name is Julie.  
Lesa left you years ago!*

*My eyes are not blue,  
But mine won't leave you,  
'Til the sunlight touches your face."*

The reassurances of that refrain had appealed to him from the very first time he had heard the song, whether he had remembered it correctly or not. She would have known that he was tired of all the Julies lined up ahead of her and presumed his boredom, definitely ready to go back to Lesa, whatever her faults. He had been. He smiled at the fantasy.

Her eyes had been blue. Therefore, as surely as when Archimedes ran into the streets of Syracuse stark naked, Ray had instantaneously been certain her name must be Lesa, fighting back, reclaiming what she would have felt to be rightfully hers. How else does the world work?

Even scientists jump to conclusions; there is no other way to obtain a brilliant conclusion that is not the joint intellectual property of the entire human race. *Conjectures and Refutations*, he thought, as a direct quote of the title of the book by Karl Popper, the scientist's philosopher. It was Popper's explanation of how science works: No one *knows*. We are not born knowing. We guess. And if we are scientific, we attempt immediately to refute our own guesses. We make bold hypotheses and act upon them, just to try them out to see how well they work. Ray had performed the test but Edna had not allowed him to get the test results

Lesa. He wondered now if that is even how one spells it, or was it spelled L-I-S-A. He had never seen the words of the song written out. Another aspect of the conjecture to be tested for refutation, but it didn't matter because the intelligence and generosity of those eyes, and the countenance, and the gently

*Aberrant Behavior*

articulated verbal expression of "...that you have managed to extract from the metaphysical distractions" was all that really mattered. She had understood. She had gotten the point. He would remember all of her explanation always.

Whatever happens with people deciding after tonight not to buy any book by an author, who admits he doesn't know everything about what he writes, he would have that souvenir to carry with him, a talisman from the Big Apple. He had pulled the black stick from beneath the pile without a total collapse of all the rest of them. She had affirmed it. Another one or two might have jiggled. Had she thought that any of them had moved? If she had, would that have been enough for him to lose his turn, as far as she was concerned? He didn't think so. Someone knew he had thought it all out thoroughly and come to a difficult but valid conclusion. It doesn't get a lot better than that. It had the ring of a beer commercial, he realized, but that had been a commercial he had watched on occasion while watching the Seattle Mariners and had actually enjoyed it.

He must have dozed. The phone rang. Edna.

"Are you ready?"

"Almost." He had almost said, "I don't know." He had been close enough to saying it that he smiled... disaster averted.

"I'll be in the restaurant." Click.



#### *#4 A National Audience*

He was still sleepy and exhausted as he made his way through the lobby to where the door to the restaurant was situated, and from the moment he slumped down on the seat across from Edna, she was all over him. Not physically of course, verbally. She probably had never been all over anyone physically, he supposed.

The 'freshening up' process hadn't exactly worked for him, although he could tell that Edna was indeed 'fresh' as the proverbial daisy. Tansy ragwort, the noxious weed, he thought.

If one should ever want to know how to prepare for the Larry King Live show, they should be informed about Edna. She could run a clinic on it. Maybe she does. What do you say if he asks you this, what if he asks you that? "No, no, no! Don't say, I don't know, all the time. Why would anyone want to buy a book written by someone who doesn't even know the answer to any of the most basic questions about his own book?" She had a point. He was sick to death of the book. He knew that much with certainty. So who indeed would want to buy the book?

The waiter interrupted. Thank God. Edna ordered London Broil, honey mustard on the side, etc.. Ray quickly glanced at the menu and ordered the Pacific salmon. Why the salmon? He wasn't all that fond of it. But it was a reminder on the menu of back home... of a returning to the Northwest after having been away a long time on a long circuitous route with many perils. Nothing in the analogy really worked, of course... usually his digressions into such analogies didn't... he wasn't about to spawn, for example, and mostly, right now he just wanted some time away from Edna. Luckily, he didn't narrate his tangential scenic routes aloud.

"Oh, excuse me," Ray blurted out. He didn't know whether Edna's foot had inadvertently nudged his, if the waiter had cleared his throat, or exactly what had shaken him from his reverie. That he needed to be excused for something seemed self-evident so he pleaded for it, then recovered with, "I'll have your soup and the rice pilaf, I guess. Thank you." The waiter hadn't been beamed off with the magic words "Pacific salmon" as he had been and seemed very little charmed by his jaded look as abstractions took Ray elsewhere, and

he would have been even less impressed could he have listened in on the accompanying dialogue.

"I *don't* know, Edna," he said back on topic as the waiter turned away with their orders. "That's almost the crux of my book... a *feature* if you will... that I *don't* know and admit it. What I do know is that *establishment*... the established interpretation of Lorentz formalities... is incorrect, because it is inconsistent and incompatible with quantum theories. That's the point. Not knowing has never been *bad* where I come from... well, where I come from mentally. Presuming to know by authority what one does *not* know, however, is the most deplorable form of idolatry one can get oneself into... and the most incurable. Maybe it's a personality thing, Edna, a quirk all my own... even though I have always thought of it as a more general science thingy. And my book *is* science; have you noticed? It's *about* science... but perhaps it is just about *me* as a particular crank scientist, I guess, since I know some scientists *do* presume to know what they *don't* know... that *act* as though they *do* know what I am convinced they don't. Socrates didn't, and I won't. Anyway... Please don't continue to ask me to sell out on that." To his own relief, at long last he stopped rambling.

She was obviously not encouraged by his tirade, but said, "Okay, that can work. The sincere honest scientist is a good image. But we must have a *coherent* image - consistent if you will, not wishy washy."

"Naturally I'd rather not come across as 'wishy-washy', Edna," he said, happy with where they had found themselves on this point... at last. He chuckled; she did not.

Her salad and his soup came. What could a proactive woman or an honest man say about soup or salad? Not much tonight.

"Ray," Edna finally said, after a longer silence than she had almost ever observed in his presence. "Do a good job. Do us proud. We are on the threshold of breaking records on this kind of book. Let's do it."

"Let's," he said chuckling, and their dinners were there. Whatever she might think of his cavalier responses, he was nervous. He knew that she was nervous too. He also knew that her apprehension centered on the fact that he might blow it. Fact. They observed another long period of silence... peace at last... well, a temporary truce at least.

When Larry King said, "Don't go 'way" between segments tonight, would they? Or would they wait with bated breath for the next segment of what he might have to say in response to Larry's queries. Helen and his kids would wait. Lesa would be waiting somewhere, wouldn't she?

Would Larry's queries even *be* Larry's queries or would Edna actually have scripted some of them? Or someone like Wineberg or Watson? Would it be Larry King at all, or would Bob Costello be called upon to step in to defend establishment as he had when Ray had thought he attacked his favorite actress unmercifully in 2005 for the sincerity in her role in a liberal movie? Does Larry King not stoop to such? He guessed not. But when you go up against establishment, their allies are everywhere. Who would the physics community

place up against him on the show? Probably not any well-known physicist; that would exhibit weakness... some smart upstart using him as a steppingstone he presumed. He was more or less planning on that... that perhaps the heir apparent might be too quick to pounce... too eager. Was he just being paranoid? Perhaps. Shortly he would know.

They continued to eat more or less in silence other than the muffled clink and clatter of a typical hotel restaurant. Their conversation from here on out... what there was of it... avoided what was on both their minds. That was a relief to him.

Finally, "You have your clothes all laid out?" Edna asked.

"Yeah." God damn her, treating him like her kindergarten kid.

She motioned for the check. "Go on ahead then," she said. "Be down here in the lobby at 7:30."

"I'll be there."

Edna was there waiting when Ray stepped off the elevator. Efficiency oozed from her being. Although one shouldn't use 'ooze' in her regard, he thought; efficiency 'squirted' at Ray like WD-40 straight from the can. Back in the elevator he had heard noises; 'Otis' had needed oil, not him.

A mass of people milled about in the main floor lobby, glancing uncomfortably at watches while pacing, pretending nonchalance, sneaking looks at folded papers, or glimpsing the news that was muted on the several TVs. But no one waited for Edna and Ray or even noticed them.

"You look fine," Edna said. "The limo is waiting."

Yep, a limousine. Edna was pumping his ego. So they strolled like celebrities out the front door with its pomp and into the waiting limo... with its pomp. The driver obviously knew where to go. They got there.

'Larry King Live' as Ray recalled, is an interview program of long standing, having run continuously since some time in the eighties. It mixes interviews with popular authors and performers as well as discussions of current interest, increasingly synchronized with the American public's ugly tastes. It is certainly not what a scientist or an intellectual would consider a good thing. It is telecast each weeknight at 9 p.m. Eastern. It features guests from a broad spectrum of society, of course, but with emphasis on entertainment value. It's not a science show, Ray knew. No. 'Larry King Live' is major to nightly television entertainment for a vast number of American households, not a for-credit college physics course, to be sure. So why was he doing it? Ray wondered again.

From first stepping into the studio the skids were greased. 'Larry King Live' operated like an Edna Robinson clockwork production. Their arrival had been precisely planned and scheduled to the second. Ray was assisted down through the time slots toward 'camera'; their driver had himself been a cog in the production machine that dropped off like the first stage of a Saturn rocket. Edna was carried along for a few more time slots and then she too was ejected

and stood off with the crew of 'Larry King Live' support. There were no chances for slip-ups.

He talked with the principals of the support crew... except for Larry... where was Larry? God, he hoped it *was* Larry and not Bob Costello... or anybody else. A last-minute briefing on procedures, with the makeup in progress... all part of the conveyor belt. God, he hated makeup. Was Larry going to be doing the show himself or have a stand in? Of course Larry did the show. That's the name of the show isn't it? Yes, but. No, he wouldn't explain his question.

The conveyor dropped him at studio rear. There was a throng of people around a line of cameras ahead. He thought he saw Edna there.

Wet bar in front with the blue dots in a world map for background décor. It sure looked like a wet bar... he could do with a drink. It had to have been designed as an eighties bachelor's idea of a comfort zone on the edge of a den somewhere. No den... that was the imagined illusion supplied by viewers in their own dens at home. Stools at the bar for participants. Wet bar all but the drinks. No Larry.

Then Larry materialized as though having been beamed right to his stool. He reached over to shake Ray's hand.

"Good to see you. I *have* looked through your book in case you're wondering." A little chuckle. "It's over my head, but I can see that it might be accessible if I had just a little more time. Someday I'll have to take the time." The characteristic wringing of his hands.

Countdown completed. "Cameras!"

Larry turned to the cameras. "Tonight Ray Bonn, who has parlayed his success as an inventor into a major publishing success, is with us. He's currently making history with his *Aberrations of Relativity*, a rare in-depth analysis of relativity accessible to the general public. It's not your usual popular science Pabulum either; it's the real stuff. There're equations in there," a big eye-rolling Larry King smile, "but explained in such a way that even I can understand some of them. He tells us where science is currently going wrong. For the next hour here on *Larry King Live* we'll be finding out from the horse's mouth all about these aberrations. Hello Ray."

"Hi, Larry. It is indeed a pleasure to be on your show."

"I'd say you've earned the exposure. Anyone who can convince the public to read about relativity must be some kind of phenom. Curled up dimensions as just so many 'fried eggs and another way of looking at things'?" Larry laughed. "Really Ray, I've been anxious to meet you."

"Well, I don't know. I've been anxious to meet you too, but a little nervous." Ray smiled, but with a reasonable calm that belied the comment. "Eggs? Yeah, well, as far as selling the public on relativity, it's not like it's snake oil, now is it?" They shared a chuckle between them. "The established approach to relativity has been around for over a century. There shouldn't be many skeptics left now, should there?"



"You seemed a little skeptical, if I'm not mistaken," Larry clarified.

"Well," Ray paused, "Do you happen to remember how they used to claim that if a physicist was skeptical about Einstein's relativity, it was because he had learned his physics before Einstein came up with his better theory. I even heard one of my professors say that. Well, I may be old, Larry, but I'm no centenarian." He smiled. "But anyway, that's a very primitive way for scientists to argue, don't you think?"

"You're pretty well-preserved for a centenarian," Larry laughed.

"Yeah." He paused again; it was Ray's style. "Seriously, of course, I do see problems and explain those problems in detail in the book."

"So how did you go about writing and getting a book like this published, anyway?" Larry asked. "How do you explain its success?"

"The short version of that story is that I wrote it for myself as a bunch of separate essays on issues I wanted to understand better. I showed the collection to my friend Andrew Watt, because when we got talking one time, he said that relativity confused him. He actually got excited after reading the essays and suggested I publish the collection. Andrew's literary agent, Ruth Henderson, had edited an electronics text for him and helped him get it published.

*Electronics Made Easy* is a good book by the way, Larry. Anyway, Ruth read my manuscript and made valuable suggestions about where it needed training wheels."

"Training wheels?" Larry snickered. "I needed a few more, Ray."

"Well, Ruth said, if I was willing to make those concessions, she thought Edna Robinson at McGregor Publishing might take it under her wing. So here I am, Larry, with three great people to thank for it." Ray wondered what Edna would think of the flattery. She hated flattery.

"I suppose it is the unsung dedication of people behind an author that makes a success of any publication, isn't it," Larry confirmed. "Good people, good result."

"That's it," Ray agreed, and then moved on, "I don't think many people realize how accessible, or how important to each of us, special relativity is though, so it took some real marketing skills, I'm sure."

"So what do 'aberrations' have to do with all of this?" Larry queried.

"It's a double entendre, Larry," Ray paused, "A triple Lutz, maybe."

"I can see it's already getting complicated," Larry parried.

"Not really, Larry. First let's consider what aberration means in the context of relativity; it's easy to understand. Consider the differences in what you and I see, due to our different perspectives from where we sit. Because you're over there, you don't see everything in this studio the same as I see it. The differences in what we see are caused by what is called 'parallax'. You're familiar with that term, right? Differences in apparent positions of the objects we each see are caused by differences in our perspectives because we are located at different positions."

Larry squinted out toward the camera and squirmed humorously to help Ray demonstrate their different perspectives. "Yes, of course."

"Because the speed of light is the same for both of us, if you were moving at high speed relative to me, Larry, you would see objects at different angles than I do even at the moment you pass right next to me. It's very much like parallax even though we're momentarily at the same position. But in this case it's called 'relativistic aberration'.

"Relativistic aberration and Doppler changes to the wavelength of light - you know, redshift - are the two most observable aspects of relative motion. Besides, the Doppler effect actually derives from the aberration effect. So there you go." Ray smiled effectively here.

Larry wiggled his eyes and smiled to keep his audience focused.

"How we get to know people's faces, dogs, cats, snowfall, our route home from work, rainbows, or watermelons is by knowing what they look like. Right? What things look like is key to our understanding of any associated concept. So to understand what relative motion does to the appearance of things is where it's at, Larry. That's one rationale for my use of the word 'aberration'."

"Oh, okay. So you're describing relativity based on what it looks like?" Larry played straight, helping his guest say what he wanted said.

"Yes." Ray was very grateful for Larry's approach and continued, gaining confidence. "But clearly there is *another* meaning of aberration as something gone wrong, that applies here as well. My use of the term encompasses an altered formulation of relativity that gets it back to an observational theory. What we can see and measure. The established formulation has come to embrace too many concepts that cannot be seen, typically called 'metaphysics'." His brow furrowed here knowing that the ire of establishment would be kindled by that comment.

Smiling mischievously Larry asked, "Do you think many long-time practitioners would agree with you on that, Ray?"

"No, of course not." He smiled back and shrugged to the cameras as though admitting that, although it was a tough line, someone had to take it. "As formulated though, Larry, that is what Einstein's Special theory of relativity has become - metaphysics, not physics. It provides a structure that professes to be reality, *independent* of observation. It is a dangerous position for a scientific theory - the direct opposite of quantum theories in that regard. Science should be about observation."

"You can get quite worked up over this can't you, Ray?"

"Yes, I can, Larry. Physics at its most basic level is a discipline that helps us understand the universe into which we have this tiny window of space and time. It enshrines experiments and measurements of the space and time in which our very lives take place. That great American iconoclast H. L. Mencken once said, 'Compared to space and time, all else is moonshine'. Relativity is that most basic branch of physics that deals with space and time. I think it's important. No excuses."

Larry seemed to Ray to maybe be smiling at him now rather than with him. Dare he push this a little further? Edna would be going nuts.

"To get this understanding on a solid footing, you must realize that science requires measuring the positions and times of occurrence of events," he continued. "Certainly that requires a clock," he pointed to his wrist watch, "and some means of measuring length in each of three directions at right angles to each other to assess distances in those directions. Hold your right hand like this, Larry." Ray pointed toward the cameras with his index finger, his second finger off at a right angle parallel to the table away from Larry, and his thumb straight up. He moved his left wrist with his watch over and just below his right hand.

Larry mimicked Ray precisely, even the watch. "Like this?"

"Yes, Larry, now we both have what are called Lorentz reference frames - or just 'inertial' frames - for measuring space and time. We are ready to do physics. Not metaphysics, Larry. Physics."

Larry nodded and looked toward the cameras for indulgence as he maintained his digital triad. "Now I can understand relativity?"

"Yes," Ray confirmed. "Unfortunately it is impossible for two people who are in motion to align their axes." Ray interjected parenthetically, "That's what

our three fingers are called in this context, Larry: axes. This is your 'up-axis'," Ray said, grabbing Larry's thumb.

Larry rolled his eyes, giggled almost like a child, as he pretended for his audience to look at his right thumb with new respect.

"The reason for this misalignment is what is called, you guessed it, 'aberration'. I look straight up at a star, that is aligned with the direction of my thumb. But if I am moving toward you at high speed, like half the speed of light, you will see the very same star off back there at thirty degrees from the direction of your thumb." Ray pointed over his shoulder. "Aberration, remember? So we will have a major problem in trying to agree about anything - even moonshine, Larry."

"Maybe it's time for some moonshine," Larry laughed.

Ignoring him, Ray continued. "This most fundamental problem for the conduct of all physics is simply ignored by those who adhere to the theory Einstein originally laid out." He paused finally, as if restraining himself from going into more depth and was, in fact, considerably worried about what Edna would think of the proceedings so far. She would not be impressed, he knew. He was not impressed with himself.

"By insisting that our axes are aligned, the physics establishment insists on believing in something that cannot be observed. Now *that*," Ray emphasized, "is an aberration of yet another kind, Larry."

Larry responded with body language shrugs. "Is that meaning number two or three?" He smiled wearily into the camera. "Or ten?"

"Furthermore, Larry, according to Einstein's theory, if we were to observe two identical solid objects, we would both find the other one's object to be contracted, I mean shorter. I'd measure yours to be shorter than you would, and you would measure mine to be shorter than I would. If you accept that as fact, Larry, I have a handy bridge for sale."

Larry was at least still listening. "Brooklyn's?" He laughed.

"According to established theory," Ray continued indefatigably, "that ridiculous situation was affirmed to be a vital fact of relativity for fifty years. Finally it was shown that contraction cannot be observed. But listen to this, Larry. Contraction is still accepted as a fact, the *fact* that we can't see it is supposedly just an instance of human visual limitations, not a flaw in the theory. And that is the truth, Larry."

"Whoa!" Larry tried to make this seem exciting and bring it back to something Joe Blow Americana might care about. "As I understand it, you also think you can work the well-known problem of realigning the breach between quantum and relativity theories in a book published for the general public?" There was Larry at his provocative best, pushing Ray right to the edge of his affirmations. Then almost as an aside, he added, "Are you an... anti-establishment kinda guy?"

"Anti-establishment? Yeah, I guess." A pause... a fairly long one that Larry allowed, obviously thinking it appropriate to the situation. "Since Election 2000 anyway." He finished his thought and smiled somewhat



deviously. Larry's brows lifted, eyeing the camera. Oh, God, Ray thought, what had he done now? Edna would be angry. Helen would like it, if she was watching. She would be, wouldn't she?

"Maybe we better get back to the more benign *Aberrations of Relativity*," Larry teased.

"Yeah." Ray agreed happily. "Relativity has fewer aberrations. My book really is more about the common ground of relativity theories than its problems anyway," another pregnant pause, "I think." Chuckles back and forth. They were back in sync. "So, back to my perceptions of solving the incompatibility between relativity and quantum theories: I think everyone needs to understand why there is such a breach. Most people - most physicists even - have no clue concerning how this separation arose. They usually blame quantum mechanics. The book explains why relativity theory is to blame, and it does it in terms anyone can understand. I think everyone should understand it."

"You think you've solved the big one then," Larry seemed skeptical.

"A start." No time to explain right now. "The course of our lives in this modern world seems to be totally out of our control, Larry - politically..." He inserted a "Sorry" here, after a pause and smile. "But more importantly, epistemologically. By that I mean that we typically have professional physicists telling us what *we* - laymen - know about reality, and why we have to accept it unquestioningly. That's wrong."

Larry showed a not too surprising lack of concern.

Ray continued, "Whether politics matters to you or not is somewhat a matter of taste, and a matter of the immediate urgency, don't you think, Larry? But epistemology is our entire world. Everything we know. How sure we are of it. How we know it! If we are removed from that process - and physicists have increasingly removed the lay population from that process over the last century - then our lives become increasingly meaningless, because we no longer understand what our knowledge, if we can still call it that, is even based on. Until the twentieth century it was different. To a large extent science was actually done by intelligent laymen, not specialists, before that."

"Wow! You make a case. Do you make that case in your book?"

"Yes, I think I've made it fairly clearly," Ray said, knowing Edna would think he had totally blown it. Ray also felt he had blown it.

"So you have more or less pitted yourself against the major voices of the scientific community then, is that right?" Larry was provocative again even if excluding politics.

"I guess I have. Yes," Ray confessed. "But one usually associates those who put on that shoe with what are called 'cranks'. I don't mind being classed with Nobel Prize winners like Fred Hoyle, Hannes Alfvén, and Albert Einstein, all of whom became a bit cranky from time to time. They each tried to keep science on what they considered to be the right path. So although most people think that all cranks are bad scientists, they're not." He paused. "Some are. But I just want science to shoot straight. I don't worry about whether my ideas happen to cut across what someone else considers to be their domain."

"You don't have the usual Ph.D. from an Ivy League school though, do you?" Larry paused and then conceded, "But I guess your neighbor Bill Gates didn't either, and he got by." Larry laughed.

"No, I dropped out of the formal training aspect of physics relatively early, a long time ago now, for someone writing about relativity." Ray took the direct assault on his credentials. It felt rather awful. "I don't have Bill's money to show for it; we're not neighbors."

"Oh, sorry." The grin, "What do you think someone who had not dropped out a long time ago would think of your approach to relativity, Ray? Do you think there would be much common ground?"

"Well, I would hope there would be a lot of common ground. I would hope that all the directly scientific and mathematical aspects of my book would be common ground. There's no reason for it not to be, Larry. A lot of what I say just describes that common ground in terms that are easier for laymen to understand."

"Well, what do you think about asking someone with that different background the extent to which 'established physicists', as you call them, consider your book to describe a 'common ground'."

"Good idea, Larry," Ray said as though eagerly anticipating what would follow, which he was not. "It sounds fair to me." But fair or not, Ray was filled with dread.

Larry turned square onto the camera then with his usual introduction to a commercial break: "Our guest has been Ray Bonn, author of the runaway best seller about relativity, *Aberrations of Relativity*. We're discussing why it should be considered important to us all." He held up a copy to the camera. "You should read it. It's a great read - for a book on relativity." The mischievous smile.

"When we come back we will have another guest with us - Dr. Lee Landau from the Advanced Studies Institute at Princeton University - who is a brilliant young physicist with the proper background and all the right credentials, the youngest to ever receive a Ph.D. in physics from a major university. Dr. Landau will comment on *Aberrations of Relativity* and ask a few pertinent questions of the author, Ray Bonn with whom I've been chatting." He raised his eyebrows as Larry does, "It could be exciting. Don't go 'way."

Phew! All right so far, Ray thought to himself more or less as a falling man might observe in passing the thirteenth floor. Now all he had to worry about was this Dr. Landau from ASI at the bottom, the smart young post doc that he had anticipated most likely. Ed Watson at ASI would be anti whatever Ray stood for. Ray felt sure of that.

"Some coffee?" Larry asked as he was stepping away from his 'wet bar', motioning for Ray to follow. As they walked through the busy throng around and beyond the cameras, Larry commented to the effect that he thought the interview was going "well enough", and that he was looking forward to a little more excitement when they got back to it. Coffees materialized from nowhere,

his appearing at just the right angle and height to adhere without apparent assistance to his right hand.

Larry disappeared into the hubbub with a woman on his arm talking business... obviously about the next segment, he figured. There must be an Edna in every successful venture, Ray decided.

Well... Larry might be looking forward to the "excitement" of this next segment, but he could hardly bring himself to such a relaxed anticipation. Calmness (as Edna would have reminded him) was the key to success for the next step.

Thinking of which... where was Edna now - certainly not that he wanted her? Actually, he was glad that she was not here at this juncture, but he felt a twinge of apprehension that she wasn't. What did that mean? She was not one to get caught up in idle conversation at a time like this. If her dying mother (should she even have one) came rushing into the studio between segments, and he acknowledged dying mothers seldom did that, Edna was fully capable of ignoring her, he felt sure.

Whatever it was she must have realized that he would be calmer and more relaxed without her. That kind of self-assessment was not totally beyond Edna, he realized. But maybe, and he came to believe it to be the case, she had collared the post doc somewhere off over there in the throng and was working on him promising to support blockbuster sales on whatever book he had ever aspired to write. She would assure him that she could make it a reality for him, and probably she could. After all, look at what she has done for an inconsequential bumpkin like Ray Bonn. But to secure her support it would be intuitively obvious, even if the smart post doc had Aspergers, that he could ruin all that by showing off too profusely right now. In future interviews like this with Larry King, he might well have a different role, one whose monetary success depended to a certain extent on the kindness of someone else. Reciprocation kept the wheels of commerce rolling. Edna wouldn't say half of it, but all of it would come across.

He smiled at his reverie and supposed that as unlikely as it seemed, even now Edna was succeeding in relaxing him at the moment that he needed it most.



*#5 Another involvement*

Saturday afternoon, May 6th.

Unlike Ray Bonn, Dr. Lesa Landau had spent pregame festivities socializing with the elite of society. The charm and brilliance of the beautiful young physicist impressed those who interacted with her in the upper reaches of Yankee Stadium this day. Someone asked her how she had known Ray Bonn would be the right guy to bring up to the major leagues. It was asked as though she were a professional agent or baseball scout hunting for fifty-year-olds with talent rather than merely an opportunistic guest physicist invited to appear with Ray on *Larry King Live*. She had laughed aloud at the irony, right along with those who had seen the show and had thought it hilarious. She just said it was a secret of her trade she would never tell.

For the second inning George Steinbrenner relegated her to color commentating for a nationally televised Hotbox Sports show with Joe Brett. It was quite amusing even before it became apparent that Ray would make it up to bat that inning.

Joe asked her gratuitously whether it was Dr. Lee Landau, or could he just call her Lesa, or just anything but *Julie*? Joe thought it funny.

"Lesa. Please," she cooed.

A few more jovial comments that obviously embarrassed her about her two performances on the Larry King Live show with her now client Ray Bonn. It was clear that neither Joe nor his sidekick Tim McCarthy took either the temporary designated hitter or his agent very seriously.

Finally, Joe got onto the issues of the day, what she had thought of Alturis Romero's towering home run in the bottom of the previous inning? She had pitted her client in direct competition with Alto's slugging abilities, had she not? He had already shattered the record for number of home runs in April. Did Lesa really believe her challenge had any merit?

She graciously granted that Alturis did indeed have extreme talent that was enhanced considerably by long training, experience, and hard work. She had not doubted that for a moment. If Alturis had not been the epitome of a great hitter, it wouldn't have been he, to whom she would have compared Ray, now would it. "Ray is for real, just like Alturis."

"Fair enough," Joe said, but for some reason he thought that was funny too. "Seriously though, will Ray even have a chance to tic the ball," he asked, since according to reports Ray hadn't swung a bat during pregame warmups with the Mariners team that morning or for thirty years before that. Didn't Lesa expect that he would have at least tried swinging a bat? He was laughing.

Well, yes, she would have hoped so. She showed some concern.

Then in what seemed like no time at all the bases had been loaded and Ray was standing statuesque at the plate. He was not animated in any way. He was like a dead man standing there, she thought. He did not swing the bat back and forth like the other players; he just stood there like a deer in the headlights. She had put him there. Her eyes inadvertently filled with tears, thinking of Ray's anger and the bitterness he had expressed earlier in the morning. Now she felt betrayed; he was not even going to try.

Joe Brett did not fail to notice the tears or to point them out to an adoring audience, who wanted her to succeed even though they would be certain that it was impossible.

She stood there vulnerable, her face terrified, peeking out over and through slender fingers, hoping that Ray might one day forgive her.

Then there was that thunderous crack of his bat on the ninety-six mile an hour fastball. He was still standing there afterward so she thought that he must have hit a foul ball. She knew by that crack that it had been a hard-hit ball, however, not just a tic. Now she felt sure this would soon be over. Ray would forgive her someday. There would be no reason to be humiliated by this horrible thing she had done to him.

She gradually became aware of that eerie silence that had taken in the whole of Yankee Stadium. Even Joe Brett was silent; the only motion anywhere was Hidalgo Manuel running back to the left field wall jumping, touching the ball, but not getting it. She threw her arms in the air silently as everyone screamed. She sobbed; tears and mascara streamed down her cheeks. Cameras showed a somewhat bewildered Ray Bonn with the bat back in his left hand. Then he started to walk toward first, bringing the bat up level in front of him, taking it now also in his right hand to cradle it. Douglas Martinez, the Yankee first baseman looked on in obvious total amazement and amusement.

But on the right side of television screens tuned to Hotbox was also the mastermind of this event. The nation watched Dr. Lesa Landau, tears running down blackened cheeks, watching Ray Bonn begin to jog a little awkwardly at first and then, other than the cradled bat, with more ease as he jogged by Jesus de Jesus and Alto. Lesa didn't say anything to Joe Brett's comments and questions of her. She just stared at Ray. She watched Ray hand the bat to Hiro in the gesture that would remain a part of baseball history.

In a parallel window of the screen, Lesa watched as though in a synchronized parallel universe – the all-too-human goddess of the occasion. She gradually, but awkwardly brought her arms down and began to look around self-consciously, almost guiltily. What had she done, had she betrayed

*Aberrant Behavior*

the extent of her emotional involvement with Ray Bonn on national television now? Oh God, she thought, almost as though she were mimicking Ray's habitual use of the expletive.



*Aberrant Behavior*

She told Joe Brett and Tim McCarthy - and she supposed their national audience on Hotbox Sports - that she really needed to be alone. She left with black smudges on her face.

Hiding in one of the stalls of the ladies room for what, she knew, must have been a long time, she inhaled and exhaled deep remorse. In a noisy solitude, toilets flushing and faucets running, she overheard splashes of exuberant conversation - "amazing designated hitter" - snippets without scope, glimpses through slits around a stall door.

Everything had seemed to turn out wrong no matter how good her intentions. She slipped into memories of how she had gotten here. Certainly she had willed something like this to happen in that last Larry King Live show on Monday night five days ago; she could not deny it. But that had not been when, or where, or why it had all started for her. It had begun very innocently, she insisted on believing, with that last-minute assignment she had received a week and a half ago.

Wednesday afternoon, April 26<sup>th</sup>

Tap tap. "Hi, Doctor Lee."

Without looking up Dr. Landau replied inanely, "Hi, Doctor Ed."

Dr. Ed Watson, head of her department at the Advanced Studies Institute of Princeton University, promoted such camaraderie.

"You making any progress on that intuition concerning the irreversibility of microscopic interactions?"

"Not really, but it's strange, isn't it?" She paused formulating the nature of the strangeness she had been encountering following the line of reasoning that she had just expressed in textual form. But as so often happens in our lives, he didn't attend what she had to say.

"Something's come up," he interrupted, not realizing he was, in fact, interrupting what she was going to say, had wanted to say, just to get a little feedback on her thoughts. "See this," he said holding up a book whose cover provided the title for her perusal: *Aberrations of Relativity*.

"Yes, I've heard about it. Nothing very specific though. Just what one gets from the media."

"Well, we're getting tired of what the media has to say in this case. This book is about science and it needs to meet reality."

He opened the book and pulled out an envelope tucked under the cover as he handed it to her. "You're the reality in this case that'll be taking a commuter flight to the Big Apple in the morning. We got asked whether we'd like to appear and comment on the book on prime-time TV with the author. Of course we would! We've got you set up in the Sheltry Hotel tomorrow. Tomorrow night you represent good science on the Larry King Live show. Scan this book tonight and get some sleep. You travel on us tomorrow and come back the next day."

"Good science? You mean as against crank science?"



"Exactly. The kind real scientists do, who have high IQs, have gone through all the hoops, got the right degrees, and have demonstrated that they know the procedures." They both smiled.

"Oh," she said, "you mean us."

"Yep. What we do here at ASI."

"But why me? I'm the junior member of this team... the girl." She smiled that amazing smile. "Remember?"

"Well, excuse us, but no one could be expected not to notice that you are a beautiful young woman no matter how smart you are." His smiles were almost imperceptible. "This isn't like asking you to get us coffee, now is it? It'll be good practice as an honored member of our staff. We've got this other meeting scheduled for Friday morning early and the rest of us need to concentrate on that. What you're doing right now - even though I know it's important, don't get me wrong - is pretty much peripheral to that."

"So we're using the small ammo." Her unforgettable smile again.

She knew he respected her abilities and that he envisioned her as one day becoming a 'biggie of the scientific community' as Ed liked to refer to his senior staff members here at ASI. Most of what they worked on here at ASI was so far out that there could be no confirmation for years yet even if they were - and Ed would be certain that they were - absolutely correct. Her work was a little different. He seemed to realize that it had the possibility of shorter-term significance.

If she came through on her hunch on thermodynamics, as she seemed certain she could, that would be here now. That would be big. Her thesis had produced high visibility results, with the promise of much bigger things to come. So evidently Ed thought it was time that the world got a glimpse of her. She could tell that he had confidence she'd do this in grand style. Sending a young girl to quell the storm in an old man's teapot. That smacked of Ed Watson. He would have taken into account that it would be good for her career progress, that she would probably enjoy it, and probably also that she might deserve a little notice at this point in her 'progress'. She knew how he thought, that it would be interesting to watch, if even for a few minutes to see how his ASI promo of Super Girl went. That would be his idea of fun.

"There are no minor actors, just minor roles," he said. After a pause he added less gratuitously, "There will be bigger roles, you know. You do know that, don't you? Much bigger."

"I look forward to the whole experience," she said unabashedly, "my first glimpse of the sun touching my face."

"Well, take this." He tapped the ticket envelope as though it contained a Christmas bonus, "and consider your day tapered off. You'll have to at least scan that thing pretty thoroughly in order to make the devastating quotes you always seem to come up with. It's all about you getting comfortable in front of a major audience, you know."

She knew and was not very concerned, nor flattered.

As far as "tapering off" was concerned, it was nearly the time at which most of the post docs were gone anyway, although she had developed a habit of staying late, trying to make some progress. There was right now, however, little to wrap up since she was not in the middle of any major breakthrough or new line of investigation. She sighed and closed out the windows on her computer after sending the pertinent updates to her laptop. She grabbed her recent 'best friend', as she called her books, and flipped the switch on her terminal.

Only then did she glance at the book Ed had left on the corner of her desk. She picked it up in the same hand as her best friend and thumbed a few pages, noticing that there were very many figures in the book. Stopping the flipping of pages here and there, she noticed quite a few equations as well, a lot of them. That they were primarily of the straight-forward variety was obvious, but not what one sees in bestselling books that seemed to be taking the reading public by storm, if one accepted what the mass media commentary was saying.

Were people really reading this stuff? When Hawking broke the ice of bona fide scientists publishing scientific books for the general public, he had purposely included only  $E = m c^2$ . It was more in the way of a label that everyone was familiar with than as an actual expression to be read and comprehended as an explanation by his readers. He could much more easily have just said, "Mass and energy are equivalent... in some sense." What could this author's intent have been to include all these equations and diagrams? Certainly it would be absurd to assume that the general public might pretend to actually understand the inner workings of relativity at a level to be able to interact in scientific discussions or be able to criticize, wouldn't it? She wondered.

Her 'best friend' that she had grabbed as a travel companion was a recent advanced text on thermodynamics, written by her different kind of friend, Brian. She had intended to pour over it the next few days to thoroughly absorb whatever insight Brian might have had. She was going to discuss it with him weekend after next. But she decided now that she had better plan to just concentrate on her current assignment.

She locked the door to her office taking her laptop and the book, *Aberrations of Relativity* - whatever that might involve - in her hand, proceeding to the rear entry of building 42. She would relax for this trip, she thought. Poincarè was famous for suggesting just such breaks from the intensity of study. Perhaps that was what Dr. Ed had had in mind for her. Maybe he knew that she was rather up against some tough slogging in her studies into the foundations of thermodynamics?

No. Upon reflection, she knew Ed wouldn't have known that.

She held the commuter ticket in her hand as she steered the short way home. Helicopter, eight thirty AM, okay.

The sun was still high when she reached her apartment, but she chopped a little lettuce and put some rice in her cooker as she usually would have upon

arriving later. Then she put a few of the carrots she peeled herself in the microwave and a chicken breast under the broiler. By the time she had changed into lounging pajamas her light supper was done with just a couple more dings and a click.

She had laid the *Aberrations of Relativity* on the kitchen table, and between bites she looked at both covers. Clearly the diagrams front and back were indicative of the contents of the book: The impact of relativity on the appearance of objects in space and time. On the front were an hourglass and a baseball. On the back two diagrams: one of four basketballs at various angles of rotation and distances from a common point, clearly intended to suggest what two instantaneously coincident relatively moving individuals would see. There was also a very similar diagram with four clock faces, two of them foreshortened and showing about eight minutes to eleven o'clock; the other two with circular faces showed eleven o'clock. The angle between them was clearly the relativistic aberration angle.

It made sense to her, except for the incongruous use of baseballs and basketballs rather than just globes with longitude and latitude marked out on them. No science nerd would use a baseball. Was that for humor? There must be more to it than that. In any case, he might be a crank, but he had the basic ideas of relativistic aberration down.

Tentatively she lifted the cover. She skipped the table of contents and looked at the preface. Here she found the statement:

*"The scientific journals where science typically gets done are quite stifling with regard to constraints on how - and whether - one may present alternative views, but one must find a way to get them out anyway. Science is more than what appears in journals. It is the correct way for a person to look at every aspect of the world; it is very personal."*

She took another bite of carrot and ruminated on whether the author had been unable to get his ideas published in the usual journals. Probably. She delved in again from the beginning:

*"For more than a quarter century, new paradigms for a final theory have consumed the physics community. Nothing of consequence has resulted. You won't find such notions here. There is too much to be done, and re-done correctly, before that. This book tries to recapture Einstein's initial epiphany of space and time as relations unique to each observer's observation rather than some underlying fabric of an absolute universal 'reality'. It finds a natural uncertainty in the relativity of events. Somewhere along the line, this was lost.*

*"The emphasis is observational integrity rather than some illusive, and always subjective, perception of beauty and elegance. The author concentrates on implications of relativistic aberration because they are the most directly observable effects of relative motion. These most obvious implications tend to be ignored in traditional treatments of the theory. Readers*

*should come away from this book with a broader perspective of Einstein's theory and an understanding of why an alternative interpretation of the formalities cannot be ruled out unless, and until, additional tests are performed to refute them."*

She skipped over the paragraph that had first caught her eye, to:

*"Consideration of whether it is sensible to even discuss the merits – let alone drawbacks – of physical theories with participants who do not possess expertise in narrowly defined fields to appreciate all the nuances of elaborate physical theories introduces several provocative issues: Are we at a point where the physical sciences have become so esoteric that there must be a priesthood who asks and answers all meaningful questions concerning the nature of reality? Have the physical sciences become too mathematical to be useful in epistemological endeavors? Are laymen of whatever level of intelligence out of place questioning the conclusions of scientific theories even if those conclusions bear on the very significance of their individual lives? Should not those with knowledge in a field be obligated to produce accurate descriptions that would suffice for interactive feedback from intelligent non-experts? In other words, may we not reason with dignity (as against merely being impressed or disgusted) outside our own fields of endeavor?"*

She chewed on another carrot. These were interesting thoughts with obvious objections. Dr. Ed thought it would be establishment going on attack, but in no case would her "devastating comments," as Ed called them, constitute a pre-emptive strike. Establishment was under siege here.

She smiled. She liked the way this was shaping up. These were issues she had thought about on occasion, issues that she would accept as key to why her having been given this assignment was a useful exercise even from a personal perspective. As the representative of real science, she would need to consider these issues and consider how to fight back. These were not Ed Watson's reasons in particular. She knew that. But here was a challenge presented in a form that she felt must not be dismissed. It must be addressed publicly, head on, by her, tomorrow night.

She skipped on to the brief Acknowledgements section:

*"There seem frequently to be those disclaimers at the beginnings of scientific books involving the author having stood on the shoulders of giants, but this author knows no giants who would permit him to speak so gratuitously in their regard in this regard, so he won't."*

She laughed aloud and stuffed another raw carrot into her mouth. Wow. If Stephen Hawking ever read this, he would probably laugh too, seeing as how he had titled a book *On the Shoulders of Giants*. Newton, of course, had coined the phrase and was known to have been an extreme egotist without an iota of

humility. Some supposed his statement to be an insulting response to repeated accusations. The insinuation was that a man of Newton's stature would not have stolen ideas from the very diminutive Robert Hooke who was a hunchback.

But was there also arrogance and pomposity in this rejection of false humility? Ray Bonn seemed to have a sense of humor and some of this must be tongue-in-cheek, she thought. To what degree might this man be extremely arrogant, she wondered as she continued reading:

*"I love my wife and children of course. But they don't really enjoy the kind of stuff I have printed here, so other than wanting me to 'realize myself,' they're not to blame either. They have tolerated me magnificently, for which I am grateful, but one could hardly say that this tome resulted from that, however marvelous, toleration."*

She chuckled, seeing why ordinary people might be charmed by this guy's style. But to interest the public in so obtuse a title as *Aberrations of Relativity*? Why even open the book? It wasn't pseudo-science though. If such were possible, it was esoteric science in a 'down home' Will Rogers style. Philosophical homilies concerning the hypocrisies of establishment science and scientists woven into the very fabric of the presentation, she supposed. Was Dr. Ed aware of that? She doubted it.

After finishing up her few dishes she curled up on her couch with the afghan made by a dead aunt wrapped snugly around her. Dr. Lee Landau, Ph.D. - Lesa - would spend most of the night wrapped in that afghan poring through the *Aberrations of Relativity*.

The more she read, the more confused she became, with regard to whether she and Dr. Ed were indeed on the side of good science, and what her role in such a discussion should be.

It did not seem to matter to Ray Bonn whether hypotheses had stood for centuries. If there was yet some doubt that could be brought to bear on them in light of later scientific findings, then issues should be re-opened. He had reopened several with a vengeance, seeming to doubt virtually everything with regard to established interpretations of Einstein's relativity, presenting alternative conjectures to refute, if you could. If he was right it would preempt much that had transpired. It seemed outlandish to her at first and certainly would to most of the vested physics community, but upon further objective consideration, his alternatives seemed no more outrageous than what scientists had accepted, and presumed as unshakable truth, for way too long.

Ray Bonn was not the flat earth creationist Ed had made him out to be though. If anything, Ray Bonn demanded there be more rigorous additional experimental testing than did the establishment Kuhn had rightly impugned as vehemently conservative. She had never really considered herself as being aligned with that sort of conservative approach to science or anything else, but Ed's presumption on her behalf made it evident to her that she was there now.

Lesa knew that people ineluctably drift toward conservatism as they grow older. Although she was still very young in years, she had absorbed many more years' worth of scientific information, associated with lessons from many elderly statesmen in the sciences, whose views had gradually displaced much of her naïve enthusiasm for novel approaches to old problems. The author despite being many years her senior had not lost that enthusiasm. Perhaps his less traditional path to his current level of understanding had been less intrusive on native intuitions than the classical trajectory she had followed. In any case the author seemed to express her core values, values that had motivated her to persevere, to advance to the forefront of scientific research, to discover what the world is all about, what it all means at a basic level.

Dr. Ed was deeply conservative despite an inflated sense of being an innovator. Ed careened down a technical path changing one idea after the other in the process, but did that preclude his being conservative? He readily accepted change in a prescribed way to be sure; he was among the *avant-garde*, but they at no point ever doubted the path they were on, the narrow path so far from the last experimental test that had decided which branch to take. They would not doubt that.

It was as though Ed and his team were miners at the end of a long shaft extracting ore that glimmered in the light of the lamps on their own foreheads - spelunkers. They felt that they had found the *mother lode*. Although acutely aware of other competing teams at the ends of other shafts, each with their own tunnel vision, they seemed totally oblivious to the vastness of the regions of thought between such shafts, outside these limited domains. They used intuition, pretenses of elegance, irrefutable inferences from nonetheless shaky premises, to guide the extension to their shafts, but it was always extension along the same paths. They never looked back to determine whether in light of more recent discoveries they might better have taken other branches and followed different paths.

Lesa thought that, maybe if they could stop and reconsider, perhaps alternatives would seem more viable than they had decades ago when they had first contemplated the possibilities by short logical excursions with what was known then. But establishment does not re-evaluate decisions made a century or more ago that might now warrant re-evaluation. It is science after all, not ancient history.

She could see the author's point, the need to continuously re-evaluate scientific decisions, not whether the world was flat or had been miraculously brought into existence six thousand or fourteen billion years ago on a Wednesday, of course. Ed was wrong about Ray Bonn being one of those. Ray Bonn had an instinct with regard to which hypotheses warranted doubt. Lesa found herself doubting.

Any good maintenance crew would continuously evaluate all the underpinnings of a structure built so long ago, and upon which so much depended. Lesa was coming to realize that science has responsibilities

involving decisions made in the past, not just the future of technology. Laymen could provide valued insights into this, she supposed.

Ray Bonn was looking backward in *Aberrations*, at each branch point along the way, the decisions that the avant-garde had made in the past. Showing that the criteria for the selection process were flawed, he had started back at the beginning, all the way back to where axioms integrated into Einstein's relativity had been the erroneous common sense of the day. He went back to the assumed nature of light itself. Initial assumptions had been made without a sufficiently scientific basis. These were definitely refutable conjectures that had not been scientifically tested for refutation. Established science was remiss.

No one had known what the nature of light was back then, because the bold conjectures had not yet even been conceived. So the results of refutability testing of the conjectures, with newer technologies applied to experimental apparatuses not yet invented, were understandably not in yet. Ultimately, of course, a new basic theory of light had been developed. But that was not completed until several decades after Einstein had laid down his archaic, and very much outmoded, 'law of the transmission of light'.

It was laughable to her now, although for some (and it did seem strange) reason, it never had before. Certainly, when a new discovery is made, any new discovery, every new discovery, the assumptions made prior to that discovery must all be re-evaluated. That had not happened. Could there be any other way to properly define good science than to have challenged that? No. Ray Bonn was indeed right on that issue.

So exactly how was she supposed to impugn this man's science, when it now seemed to her that it was he who was right and not the biggies of establishment, like those at ASI in this case? She was beginning to feel an ethical conflict, because she revered both loyalty and honesty as virtues of utmost value. These virtues pertained to the performance of science no less than to other human endeavors.

Should she call Dr. Ed right now and opt out of this conflict? She glanced at the clock across the room. No, it was too late. Without extreme awkwardness, Ed would not be able to engage someone else to take her place. She would like to discuss her impressions so far, but without a lengthy discussion (and he would make it a debate), he would not understand her position. Perhaps he would never understand it. Maybe such perspectives are personal.

He would not take this responsibility from her anyway. She probably didn't want it taken from her. After all, if it did indeed involve ethical issues, would opting out free her from responsibility?

Anyway, she wanted to meet Ray Bonn. She had never actually met someone who approached problems with a method she respected so much, that was as much like her own way of thinking. Perhaps there were holes in his education, holes that Stanford, Harvard, and Princeton tended to fill up, with something. But he had something else.

She had sped through the book first, highlighting a few passages. Having gotten completely through the book, she had gone back and re-read certain passages. Finally, she changed from the lounging pajamas into jeans and sweatshirt to go out for a jog in the brisk air on campus.

It felt good to get some expanse for her stifled thoughts. Her mind raced as she jogged. She was confused about what he had meant in a few places. Did Bonn's 'observation transformation' adequately replace the combination of a Lorentz transformation followed by Penrose's 'transformation of the field of vision'? The Special Theory required both transformations, the one everyone had heard of and knew about, and the one Roger Penrose, now Sir Roger, had introduced half a century later, half a century ago now, in concluding that Einstein had been wrong: Lorentz contraction could never be observed. Most didn't even consider that as being significant. Ray Bonn did. Lesa did now.

She concluded that she must re-read every word, the entire book, if her opinion was to have any legitimate weight tomorrow night, and for her conscience to be clear with regard to fulfilling this assignment in good faith. She acknowledged also the suspicion that Ray Bonn might prove to be a very formidable opponent.

As she returned from her run, she encountered another younger member of Dr. Ed's team. As they passed beneath a streetlight, both slowed to acknowledge the other. She raised her hand to suggest they stop.

Dr. John Morrow a post doc from Yale stopped a few steps past her. He bent over with his hands on his knees breathing hard for a moment and then turned around. "How's it going tonight, Dr. Lee?"

"Fine." She hesitated, getting her breath. "You don't happen to have looked at Ray Bonn's book on relativity, have you?"

"As a matter of fact I bought it, yeah," he responded between deep breaths. "Crazy isn't it?"

"Is it?" Lesa asked. "How do you mean?"

"Well, some old guy without even a Ph.D., thinking he can short circuit Einstein." He laughed. "Really now. That's not crazy?"

"Have you read it?" Lesa asked.

"Scanned it. It's not worth your time. I wouldn't bother with it."

"Why did you purchase the book?"

"Good question," he chuckled at himself, "media hype, I guess."

"Do you think Einstein's law of transmission of light is compatible with quantum concepts developed twenty years later?"

"Of course not," Dr. John trivialized the question. "Everyone knows relativity and quantum theories aren't compatible."

"What's the source of that incompatibility? The foreground, background spacetime thing?" she queried, more to watch him mumble incoherently now than caring what he had to say. He wouldn't know or care. Dr. Ed should have asked the boy to handle this chore Lesa thought, instead of the girl, if that's how he wanted it handled.



Dr. Morrow gave the standard answer of, "What do you think the last fifty years have been about? Quantum gravity," he answered his own question, mumbling some more about possible incomprehensible differences that can never be explained. "Certainly by this guy... whatever his name is. I've got to get back. Night!"

"Good night," she said turning to continue back to her apartment. The brief conversation at least confirmed that she was not crazy. The nay-sayers hadn't really read the book to try to understand it. Quantum gravity wasn't in there, so what good was the book?

Back inside, she showered and donned comfortable pajamas again.

After vacillating a bit about this whole thing not shaping up too well, she finally decided to give Dr. Ed a call at home before proceeding. She had never called his home before. Now, however, she felt she owed him a heads up - that the outcome of her assignment might not be the foregone conclusion he had thought it would be. She called.

Elizabeth Watson answered.

"Hello Mrs. Watson. This is Lee Landau; is Dr. Watson available?"

"No, he isn't actually, Lee, and please call me Elizabeth. Ed and some of the team went back to the office to work on their presentation for tomorrow. He's a little worried about it. I think it's very important for their continued funding. You could call him there, but unless it's *very* important, I think I would wait."

"I'll wait," Lesa said cheerfully. "Don't tell him I called. I was just going to discuss the approach I'm planning to take with that interview tomorrow night to make sure it would be all right with him, but he has much more important things to worry about, so don't bother him. I'll be fine. Thanks, Elizabeth."

So she wrapped the afghan about her, content with having tried, and began again. His examination of "experiments supposing to confirm clock time dilation" surprised her. For some reason that now seemed strange to her, she had never envisioned there being the remotest possibility of any interpretation of the increased lifetimes of accelerated subatomic particles other than clock time dilation. But if one exhaustively analyzed the possible causes for such measurements as Bonn suggested must be done, the clarity of the accepted explanation did totally evaporate. Quantitatively measured differences can either be energy equivalence or clock time dilation applying to such decay phenomena. It cannot be both; there is clearly a conflict.

There is also the nasty problem of alignment of inertial reference frames that Einstein had just taken for granted, after having been so meticulous with a directly analogous problem of clock synchronization. That inconsistency had never occurred to her before. No matter how one looked at the alignment problem, it remained a serious problem for the Special Theory. Here she guessed was where the title of the book found its origin: *Aberrations of Relativity* preclude alignment.

After such thoughtful consideration, she had to conclude that the best approach was to accept that the *apparent* misalignment was an *actual*

misalignment. No measurement that anyone could ever make could align the three usual coordinate axes of two observers in relative motion. It was impossible. Was it so bad then, bad science, to limit oneself to observation? Is that not the reasonable limit of science? After having re-read this portion of the book several times, she hailed Ray Bonn's conjectures as not bad science at all.

His analysis of Penrose's discovery that Lorentz contraction of rigid bodies could never be observed was enlightening. She was aware of the facts concerning that discovery fifty years ago, but as with everyone else she had known, which included Sir Roger Penrose himself, its significance had not struck her as it had Ray Bonn. But now it did.

To what extent should a good scientist believe in that which cannot be observed? Or anything at all? That was at issue again. Observation was the most time-honored aspect of science; if one rejects its significance in comparison to metaphysical realities, what is one doing to the scientific method? Observation has to remain preeminent. However confusing it might prove without them, distinctions between 'observed' and 'actual' do *not* benefit good science.

The diagrams of what a circular clock face would *look like* for each of two relatively moving observers were instructive, again illustrating what Bonn considered an inconsistency in presumptions of clock time dilation. Reading the face of a wall clock distorted by the spatial distortions of relative motion would not alter the observed clock time.

Bonn showed how Einstein's velocity addition formula had come into place. She had to agree with the author that it was not required by the principle of relativity. Most physicists believed it was, of course. This formula hid in the penumbra of the extensive dogma of Einstein's theory, a nicety to form, but unnecessary and inconsistent. Without it spacetime itself became truly relative as Einstein originally envisioned.

Finally, he had demonstrated how this aspect of the Special theory precipitated the determinism that would forever preclude synthesis of the major theories of physics, because of the chasm between the determinism of relativity on one side of this gulf and the indeterminism of quantum theories on the other. Dr. John had obviously tuned out before this point in Ray Bonn's book. Lesa wondered whether John had done any more than flip pages.

The accepted concept of observation in relativity preempts actual observation. That is wrong; observation must preempt theory. Even so mathematically adept a scientist as Paul Dirac had insisted on that.

The author's synthesis of a tentative observational relativity theory resolved many conundrums that, he had showed, could be extended into a general theory avoiding pitfalls Lesa had encountered with Einstein's general theory. The outline for the extension was done, but it had yet to be elaborated. She could see herself completing it. Much heavier mathematics would be required than what had been identified in the tentative outline of that extension

to be read by laymen, but intuitively it did indeed seem do-able. She could do it.

And gravity... without the book going into too much depth on Mach's principle, gravity in general, black hole theory, etc., it was clear that Ray Bonn saw its integration with relativity as highly problematical from a philosophical perspective. Gravity is 'out there' to be observed, not to be whisked away as a mere geometrical extension of a presumed logical structure of space and time.

She had made it through the book again, cover-to-cover. Still she did not know exactly where she stood on so many of the issues he had brought up. But that they were indeed the issues that needed to have been brought up, she did not doubt. It was good science, and good *for* science, to the extent that science still accommodated philosophy.

The book awakened her interest in the philosophical issues that had been raised. She needed to resolve the conflicts they presented to her. The prospects of a General Theory, based upon what the author had presented, was certainly an avenue that was open to be followed, but in contemplating that possibility she found it interested her less than a tangential comment he had made regarding thermodynamics, which was after all, her field.

He had intimated, or rather, had stated boldly, in passing reference to being skeptical of big bang cosmologies, that he had found the source of thermodynamic irreversibility at the microscopic level of existence. There is no *free lunch* all the way down. He said that irreversibility originated in photon interactions of subatomic particles.

That was exactly what Lesa was trying to prove.

Like so many, she had more or less presumed some such solution, was in fact actively working to discover whether that might indeed be the nature of the world we live in. But however optimistic she had become from time to time, she had never had the sense that she was almost there, nor certainly the audacity to make such a proclamation. For that reason, even if for no other, she had to meet with Ray Bonn face-to-face to ask him about that *other* research he had done. Had he in actual fact peeked around that last corner and seen that Holiest of Grails as he had said he had?

It was starting to get light out. She must get at least a couple of hours sleep before her scheduled commuter flight to New York. She had wanted to look up on the Internet to see whether he was doing a book signing in the city before the show. She had a hunch he would be. Maybe she could at least get a glimpse of him, to see how approachable he was, whether her impressions of him from reading his work were correct. She operated on assessments of people from reading their work but depended more fully on in-person confirmation.

Oh. There it was. A Google search for "Ray Bonn, New York City, book signing" revealed that Ray Bonn would indeed be discussing his *Aberrations of Relativity* and signing purchased copies of his book both morning and afternoon at the Alpha and Omega bookstore. She knew where that was located, just minutes by cab from the Sheltry, where she was booked to stay

*Aberrant Behavior*

tomorrow night. She would check her things at the hotel and be at the Alpha and Omega after lunch.

She was very tired, so with her alarm set she turned out the light, slumped down on her couch, and with the afghan pulled over her, slept for an hour or so.

## *#6 Enter the Opposition*

Thursday evening, April 27th.

After the commercial break, the commotion in the studio seemed to escalate and there was a countdown in progress like when they had first gone on the air... Live... with Larry King. A woman had Ray's arm. He recognized her as the one who had grabbed Larry's arm earlier. She hurried Ray toward the wet bar where Larry was already taking his place and laughing with some other assistant. The assistant assigned to Ray was telling him to take the stool on the right this time, that the second guest would be there in a minute to take the left. She left him to hop the stool by himself. His coffee had somehow magically disappeared with her and he had not had a single sip. It was too hot.

Larry laughed, "How was the coffee? I never did get a sip of mine."

"Me either," Ray said thinking it funnier than it actually was.

They were both still laughing jovially when he realized that the cameras had already started rolling, because Larry had broken away from the inane coffee issue into, "We're talking with Ray Bonn about his new best selling book *Aberrations of Relativity* that really is about - you guessed it - relativity. Well, aberrations too, I guess," and the little chuckle. What a way with words and people Larry had.

But where was Doctor Lee Landau? Ray had gone over the name in his mind from the time Larry first mentioned it to conclude the last segment, so he would not be left speechless when he had to address his opponent. He had a hard time keeping a person's name in place after first meeting them. He hated that, so he worked to compensate for it.

"So, Ray, we've talked a little about the unlikely success of a book full of equations. That has not seemed to be a detriment to sales in this case. You have simplified them so that, supposedly, they are fully within the grasp of a large percentage of the general population. Words and pictures support the concepts without requiring us to understand the equations other than, in some cases, to show how the symbols in the equations exhibit a symmetry we can all appreciate visually. Isn't that so? But is that really possible? If I understand your book, without the equations, will I understand relativity?"

"First of all, Larry, there is a popular misconception that scientists are more comfortable with mathematical equations than with their native languages. That is just not true. Everyone avoids reading equations."

Larry did his smile and eye wiggle. "So it's not just me then?"

"Oh, no," Ray replied. "So great a mathematical physicist as Sir Roger Penrose has stated that in technical papers he makes no attempt to understand the equations on a first reading. He may glance at them to see if they are of some familiar form, but that's it. It takes five or six readings before he pretends to fully understand them. The equations in my book are much simpler, of course. But if the text doesn't explain what equations are doing there, and what they imply, then it isn't worth reading. Period. This book is written with that in mind. It can be read and comprehended even if you ignore all the equations. I recommend that readers mostly ignore the equations, unless more detail is desired."

Larry did more gestures implying interest he probably didn't have.

"Secondly, as you know Larry, there is a Special theory that addresses uniform motion and a General theory of relativity. The General theory addresses the more general accelerated motions, and although it is more or less based on the Special theory, the equations and associated concepts get much more difficult to understand. The Special theory on the other hand relies on the Lorentz transformation equations that form the formal basis of the theory. These equations are very straight-forward algebraic equations, not beyond anyone who has had a year or two of algebra in junior high or high school."

"So they could teach relativity in high school?" Larry seemed genuinely inquisitive, if not incredulous, but one could never be sure, and, of course, it didn't matter.

"Yes." Ray responded quickly. "I think they should. It's a lot less boring than learning about weights hanging on a string with pulleys."

They laughed.

Then Larry interrupted, "Ladies and Gentlemen I'd like you to meet Doctor Lee Landau of the Advanced Studies Institute of Princeton University." And there she was. She! A blond and voluptuous, but slender, young woman seemed to glide into place right beside Ray.

"Dr. Landau, do you agree that they should teach relativity in high school?"

"Absolutely, Larry, and I too ignore equations when I first read an article. They're boring. I ignored most of them in this book too until my second reading," she said, with that same voice Ray recalled from the Alpha and Omega.

"Lesá?!" Ray exclaimed, involuntarily staring at her.

She turned her beautiful set of blue eyes fully upon him and said, "Yes, Ray," confirming his guess. "I told you I would see you soon." The smile was out in full force reinforcing infatuations and fantasies.

He knew his mouth must have dropped open and his eyebrows bounced.

Larry hopped in somewhat confused: "You two know each other?"

"Yes," Lesa said as Ray sat back and smiled in her spell. "Slightly. We met briefly this afternoon at the Alpha and Omega bookstore."

Larry turned to Ray, "You didn't tell me that."

"I didn't *know* that!" Ray responded. "I signed a book for this lady. I noticed by an issue she resolved during my presentation that she has a grasp of relativity and had already read the book. That's it." Ray was relaxed at this point; the pressure seeming, at least momentarily, to be on establishment. He felt very comfortable sitting there next to Lesa.

"You didn't know that Dr. Landau would be on the show tonight?"

"No. And I certainly didn't know that the Dr. Lee Landau you introduced would be a woman, let alone *this* lovely lady. I was expecting some nerdy geek, wearing coke bottles," he laughed.

"Lesa. *Is* it Lesa?" Larry probed. "I thought it was Lee."

"Yes, it is Lesa," she said, smiling broadly. "I was always called Lesa growing up, until I got into Stanford where no one majoring in physics had a girl's name." She smiled oozing the charm that no one would ever have associated with a physicist.

"How do you spell it?" Ray broke in jovially with apparent irrelevance.

"You spelled it correctly," she said, turning to him with the same smile she had when peeking around the celebrity stack at Alpha and Omega. She extended her hand to touch him. "It's spelled differently in the song," to which they both shrugged; it was somewhat immaterial.

Larry looked totally confused now. "She told you her name was Lesa rather than Dr. Landau?" Larry seemed a little irritated that the independence of the opposition they had set up might have been compromised. He acted now as a cross-examiner who had been denied critical evidence.

Lesa smiled calmly and said, "I didn't actually tell him what my name was; he just guessed."

"He just guessed..." Larry mimicked, still irritated.

"Yes," she defended. "I just told him my name was not Julie and he proceeded to sign my book without further ado. That was the sum total of the conversation between us this afternoon. I was the last one who got his signature today. They kicked me out as soon as Ray had signed my purchase, so we didn't get a chance to meet."

Larry looked at Ray for confirmation. He gave it with his nod.

"You told him your name was not Julie, and of the hundreds of possibilities left, he chose Lesa, and was right?" Larry was incredulous.

"Yes," she insisted. "He even spelled it correctly," she appended looking at Ray, "well, the incorrect way my name is actually spelled, anyway."

Turning to Ray, Larry said, "Are you a mind reader? Is that it?"

"No. Not usually. But it had to be Lesa," Ray argued. "The only question was how to spell it, but it would have ruined the moment to ask," he added mischievously, "So I didn't."

"...ruined the moment?" Larry's eyes fairly wiggled back and forth between them. "That must have been *some* moment."

It was Lesa who took up the conversation at this point sensing that there had been enough twilight zone ambiance by now. "Oh, it was. You see, Larry, I had been standing in line a long time. Most of the people who bought this book were women. Can you believe that? And most of the women's names that I overheard were Julie, including at least the two in line right before me. I knew he had to be bored with it all, so when I got to the front of the line, it just popped into my head to let him know that at least I was not one of *them*. So I said, 'My name's not Julie,' and he lowered his head and wrote *this*." She opened one of the two copies of *Aberrations of Relativity* lying on the wet bar in front of her and reached over to show Larry where Ray had signed.

Now it was Ray's turn to be embarrassed. This whole experience was becoming so... kitsch.

Larry read it silently once, and then aloud on national TV. Dear, God! Well...

*"Dear Lesa,*

*"You have brightened my afternoon with your eyes and smile. Thank you for helping to clarify my contribution to relativity. Here's to a promising future.*

*"Ray"*

"There's more here than meets the eye." Larry said as a major understatement. Will you two please explain this to our audience, when we come back." Then to the camera, "We are talking to Ray Bonn author of the best-selling book on relativity called *Aberrations of Relativity* and Dr. Lee..." he glanced at Lesa and Ray, "Well, Lesa Landau, I guess, an expert in relativity. We'll have a very interesting explanation coming up, I'm sure, to clarify some pretty strange stuff." The pause and Uncle Sam's pointing finger, then the "Don't go 'way."

When the camera was off them, they all slapped the bar in unison and then three separate slaps of right hands, laughing like old cronies.

Still laughing, Larry asked, "What on earth was going on at the Alpha and Omega this afternoon? I should have been there."

"...and done that," both Ray and Lesa blurted as one. Larry looked from one to the other as though there was some secret from which he had been excluded but was coming to understand, a secret to which both guests seemed oblivious.

The same female assistant gave Lesa a cup of coffee and put the same coffee cup back in front of Ray that she had just shortly ago taken from him.

"Would you like it warmed?" she asked him. "It seemed like you hadn't drunk a drop. I thought maybe it had been too hot."

"It was too hot," he said. "I like it lukewarm. Thanks."



"Me too," Lesa said grabbing Ray's cup. She took a first sip with an impertinent smile before handing it back to Ray. They laughed again and Ray drank half the cup. When he sat it down, Lesa grabbed it up and emptied it. They slapped hands again. Larry stared in amazement blowing over the lip of his cup of much hotter coffee thoughtfully. Lesa wrapped up the proceedings by raising the empty mug to Ray with the comment, "The cup of coffee we didn't share this afternoon."

Ray doubled his fist bumping it against the mug in a toast.

"After you explain that signing, we have to get back to the content of the book. You'll have every lonely heart in America wanting your signature, no matter what book or how many equations, they have to buy to get it."

"Maybe I have a future in television after all," Ray said.

The female assistant was talking business to Larry. They both seemed pleased. She took all their cups. Lesa's cup was still full, demanding more of her attention. And the countdown began.

"We are back live with Dr. Lesa Landau and Ray Bonn, author of the best-selling *Aberrations of Relativity*. We're about to hear 'the rest of the story'." Larry gave a Paul Harvey twist to his voice, "about the rather steamy signature that Lesa received from Ray this afternoon in a bookstore here in New York City. I think these two are on the same wavelength... or something else." He gave his mischievous smirk. "They seem to be able to communicate without words. Ray, tell us how you knew her name was Lesa knowing only that it wasn't Julie."

"Elementary my dear Watson," Ray replied, thinking tangentially of a certain Ed Watson, Ph.D. "Do you remember the popular Western Song many years ago, Larry? Jessi Colter, Waylon Jennings's wife, sang it. I'm only aware of her singing the one song. The song was..."

Lesa interrupted the conversation by singing the refrain:

*"I'm not Lesa!*

*My name is Julie.*

*Lesa left you... years ago!"*

She had a beautiful voice and apparently no inhibitions. Larry and Ray had both received one more surprise.

"Oh. You have a truly marvelous voice, Lesa; maybe you should be on American Idol," Larry said. "I do remember the song now," he looked over at Ray. "I met Jessi once - nice lady."

Then with lingering doubt evident in his voice, "But you both got all that from one song?" Larry queried. "But Lesa said, 'I'm not *Julie*.'"

"Yep." They both smiled and looked at each other in recognition of having once more had a synchronized thought in response.

"Well, there's a little more to it than that," Ray said laughing, "the eyes! If you analyze the implied negation and work your way through the song with all

the irony and logical inversions, remembering those big blues there," and he pointed at Lesa's large deep blue eyes with the first two fingers on his right hand.

To which cue Lesa batted her eyes flirtatiously and proceeded to interrupt again in song:

*"My eyes are not blue,  
But mine won't leave you,  
'Til the sunlight touches your face."*

She looked at Ray, laughing and pointing her finger at him, saying, "And you'd better believe it, Mister!"

"Okay, okay. I am truly amazed and impressed with you both, but we must move on," Larry interrupted the levity. Lesa you must have read that other copy of Ray's book before you went to the bookstore."

"Yes, I did. Dr. Watson at ASI gave me that copy of the book yesterday afternoon when he asked me if I'd come up to appear on your show tonight, so I read it last night, well, over and over again all night. Or almost all night." She fanned it for Larry showing the highlighting.

"You look amazing for not having slept last night. What did you think of the book? You must have thought it wasn't too bad to stay up all night re-reading it. I thought it was pretty good, but I got some sleep too," Larry said, *à la* Groucho Marx, to laughter. "I assume that you are somewhat of a speed reader from all I've heard about you - youngest ever Ph.D. in physics from a major university, and on and on."

"Yes, I do speed read, but I read *Aberrations of Relativity* very slowly. I suppose I may have committed much of it to memory by now; I do have eidetic memory. But what did I think of it? I don't really know, Larry, because it was almost like not thinking about it at all. It was almost like I was remembering points that had previously occurred to me. I just mulled them over in my mind thoughtfully... almost like a meditation on relativity."

"Eidetic memory, a meditation on relativity." He shook his head. "You two!"

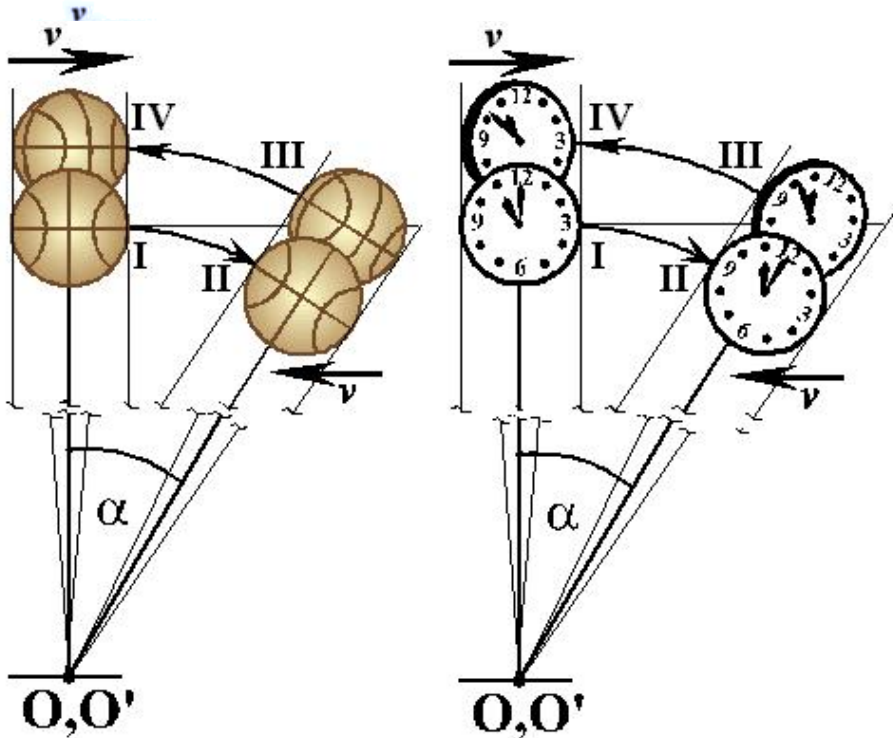
"Yes." Lesa continued, "What I consciously thought about the book was that all the intuitions that had always been in the back of my mind had been suddenly transported to the fore. It was quite marvelous."

"Marvelous," he repeated after her. "Was there anything that wasn't there that you thought might have been *marvelous* if it had been, or was there anything you thought incorrect or out of place - *not* so marvelous?"

"Well, I was surprised. Popular books on the beauty of physics nowadays remind me of flower peddlers in an airport. This book does not condescend in that way. No, nothing seems incorrect... well, a few typos. Issues are left open pending resolution by experimentation.

"I think experiments can be developed to resolve some of these and at that time I suspect Ray's suggested alternatives will generally be the conjectures

that will not be refuted. Refutation is what good scientific work is all about, Larry. Well-formulated conjectures accommodate refutation by experiment. Ray's observation transformation alternative to the Lorentz equations is intriguing; so much of it works so well without requiring Sir Roger Penrose's transformation of the field of vision, or time dilation, or Lorentz contraction. Ray was telling you that before I showed up. It's a tremendously intriguing alternative. The book makes it very clear."



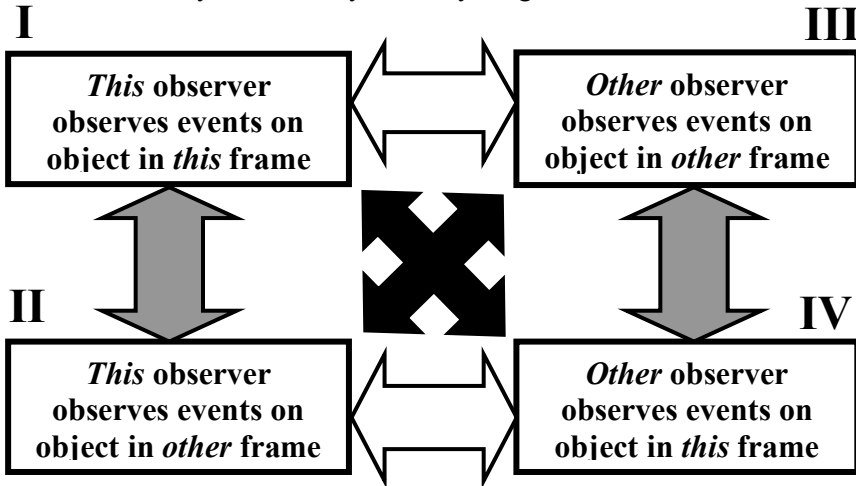
*Aberration rather than spatial contraction and time dilation*

"Look at this diagram Larry." She showed him the page she was on. "It relates what has been interpreted as Lorentz contraction and clock time dilation to aberration. Objects that are in relative motion appear rotated, not contracted. What one can observe of the time showing on a distant clock face will differ from local time as determined by the distance from the observer at the time light left the clock. So the 'frame independence' claimed for the special theory enforces that there cannot be time dilation. All the radioactive decay data used to assert time dilation is just a manifestation of the energy dependence of an accelerated particle. Formulas for the changes in rates of decay are identical, so either we accept quantum theory or time dilation. I tend to agree with Ray; time dilation has to go. It's in the mechanism, not the nature of reality.

"Oh, and by the way, the key to the roman numerals can be found on page 111. And this brings up another feature Ray has identified as requiring the

experimental verification (well, actually, refutation testing). There are four situations that need to be tested to determine relationships – not two.”

“Whoa!” Larry rolled his eyes. "Anything else come to mind?"



*Four situations requiring the testing of relativistic effects*

"Yes." She looked over at Ray. "You mentioned results that you had obtained with regard to irreversibility at the microscopic level."

Ray responded with enthusiasm, "Oh, that. I had been challenged by a friend to account for what he referred to as the 'astrophysical trend' that I thought invalid and..."

Larry interrupted: "Wait a minute! Help the rest of us out here. We're on national TV prime time and we don't have a clue about 'irreversibility at the microscopic level' – is that what you said? Or the 'astrophysical trend'. Is that in the book?"

"Well, Larry," Ray said, glancing around to see whether Edna were lurking nearby. She would not like how this was going right now. "There are a couple of references to some related research I've done in thermodynamics in which I am convinced that I have found the origin of irreversibility lurking in microscopic interactions."

"Lurking in Microscopic interactions? thermodynamics? I thought we were talking relativity here? Aren't those different topics?" Larry interrogated with some irritation and was continuing even as Lesa interjected:

"I want to see that research Ray. I work in that field. I think I'm close to a breakthrough on that same thing." She was excited.

"Wait! Wait! Wait!" It was Larry. "Can you tell me what we're doing here?" He laughed, because he seemed to understand that, however confused this might be, there was something real happening on his show, if he could keep it interesting. Real science was being done. However obscure it might be to them, the audience would probably enjoy watching, and Larry's job was entertainment.

"Larry, here's the thing," Ray excused. "Traditionally relativity has been treated as a description of reality writ large. I've rephrased it as an interaction theory compatible with quantum theories. Thermodynamics also had traditionally been treated as a holistic hocus pocus, defining heat as the random motions of whatever hodgepodge is involved. Well, it isn't. Heat is the residue of radiation given off by individual photon exchanges that effect the collisions between moving particles." He extracted a paperback book from the bag he had brought with him. The book had "Draft," "Origins of Irreversibility," and "Ray Bonn" awkwardly displayed at various places and angles on the cover.

Lesa snatched it out of his hand, virtually squealing, "That's what I thought!"

Ray yelled back, "Wait! That's the only copy in existence. I use print-on-demand because I like working from printed copy."

"I do too," she said. "I want it. I *have* to have it."

"Well, you can't have it," he said playfully and got hold of a corner to jerk it back, but she didn't let go, pulling it close to her with both hands... too close to her breasts... he had to let go.

Larry finally got them back on topic. Lesa having secured the draft of *Origins of Irreversibility* out of Ray's reach to her left, was thumbing through it and glancing down at its pages, smiling with satisfaction as she interacted. "I like this picture," she said leaning over to show Ray. "I like the analogy. That constraint on interactions of electromagnetic photons and matter is where it's at, isn't it?"

Even with Larry remonstrating Ray was able to say, "Yeah."

"I want to work on that with you," she responded immediately

Larry stopped them, but each time he managed to get them back on a topic covered in *Aberrations of Relativity*, a discussion inevitably drifted off into nuances. Subtle issues drew them to a level of discussion that would be hard, if not impossible, for anyone else to follow as they interacted animatedly. Occasionally they would refer to a figure in the book that Ray would explain, with no consideration of camera angle or vocabulary. They agreed excitedly on virtually every issue, but it was just the two of them interacting now. Their differences involved emphasis and exactly how one might proceed further on these undefined paths of research to resolve the issues identified in his book.

Larry tried to keep their exchanges relevant at a level that laymen could follow with more or less success. The three of them frequently busted into laughter at the runaway pace of the conversation.

Finally, Larry pointed his finger at the camera, "We'll try to get this sorted out during the break and give you the results, or maybe even continue this fight Monday night after they come to some kind of an agreement. What do you think, is this worth following? I think it is; I'm having fun."

Ray could be seen in the background scowling and saying, "No!"

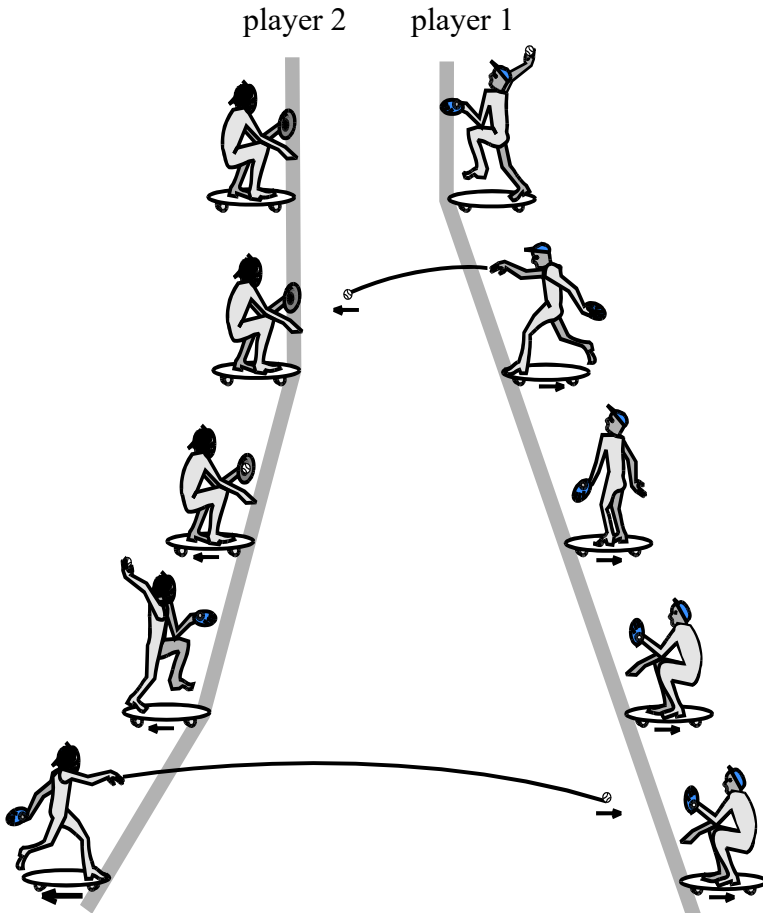
Larry commanded the audience, "Don't go 'way," while laughing at Ray.

### Aberrant Behavior

Off camera then Larry lit into them both even though he was still laughing, "Listen you two! Probably neither one of you have the slightest idea what's happening here, but we're trying to put on a show."

"Oh," and... "Oh, sorry," not quite in unison. Ray and Lesa were getting out of sync. Larry clearly could handle it better this way.

"We've got better ratings tonight than we've had for a scientific book review in a long while," Larry said, smiling widely. "Viewers liked it." His assistant was at his side whispering. "Well, maybe even better than that."



*Example of mediated interactions*

"'Her voice is full of money,' Larry. Remember that line?" Although he spoke to Larry, he glanced over to watch Lesa.

"Of course, we remember, Ray," it was Lesa who responded. "*The Great Gatsby*. But it was also hijacked for the movie, *Up Close and Personal*. Watch out Mister; I know where you're coming from."

Ray did recall the hijacking. With some amazement, he wondered how much of this test of Lesa's eidetic memory Larry had followed.

Only mildly amused, Larry broke in again. It was still his show after all.

"Yeah, great line. But we've got business, you two. Our time's almost up. So, I need you both to show up Monday, same time, same station and we will continue this melee, or whatever it is you two are having, and get back on charter. *Aberrations of Relativity*. All right?"

"I think we should discuss Ray's thermodynamics," Lesa insisted childishly.

Ray rolled his eyes and said, "Larry, I fly out in the morning, and I'm not coming right back. I've been away a long time. I can't be here Monday. Period." After a pause, he added: "Exclamation point, if that's necessary!"

The debate now involved four of them, Edna had materialized out of nowhere. She was up at the bar. All were essentially agreed except for Ray. Then, before the crew could all be cleared away, the countdown was completed. Larry interrupted himself this time to say, "We're back live. And I do mean *live*. Animated! We're trying to convince bestselling author Ray Bonn to agree to double jeopardy here again Monday night to continue..." He laughed and did continue. "Well, okay then, maybe you'd have to call it 'begin' a discussion of his book with Dr. Lesa Landau of ASI. So far we haven't managed to stay on the topic of this sensational new book that everyone is talking about, but you can feel excitement in the air. Science is being done right here. A couple of us are fighting about it, even though we seem to be in complete agreement... namely about what's in the sensational new book, *Aberrations of Relativity*... maybe we're experiencing some of those aberrations of relativity right now." He was laughing again.

"So Ray? Monday then."

"No, I can't. My plans are made. My wife's plans are made. Absolutely not, Larry! No."

The assistant came over to Larry who leaned off camera to whisper back and forth with her. Then back to the cameras, "Listen, we always allow time for phone calls on this show and we haven't been able to get to a phone-in session. That's one reason we have to get these two back here again on Monday, to hold them accountable to you all as Ray has suggested in his book that science should be accountable to you, the lay public." Then pointing at the camera, "to the American public. But I do have one phone call right now for Ray Bonn. Go ahead Ma'am, I'll try to keep order here."

"Ray. This is Helen."

"Helen! What are you doing calling in? I wasn't even sure you'd watch." Ray smiled, thinking it rather cute, but he knew it wasn't as soon as he had said it.

There was laughter, in the midst of which Helen responded angrily with, "You *knew* I'd watch. I'm your wife! I just don't understand most of the topics that matter to you. You're always complaining that there is no one to discuss them with."

Ray blushed as Helen proceeded to expose the least pleasant of the undertows of their otherwise harmonious relationship.

"You can't back out now, Ray. There's someone there who seems to understand your thinking. Take advantage of it, Ray. I know that relativity and solving thermodynamics, or whatever it is you call it, matters a lot. Work out some kind of collaboration with Dr. Landau before you leave New York. Bye Honey."

There it was, with all the sweetness Helen could put into her charming voice. "Click."

"Thanks, Helen." It was a smiling Dr. Lesa Landau who said it.

Larry was back to *his* charming best now too, the Cheshire grin.

Lesa was jubilant, interacting energetically with Larry, even if she had not had a phone call releasing her from returning to ASI the next morning. She continued with explanations and clarifications to his questions about the establishment's perception of Ray's book.

Ray alone looked befuddled... not disappointed really, or confused exactly, but his high was over. He had not even been aware of how major the contribution his returning home the next day, finally, had been to his earlier exhilaration. Now he was totally uncertain about what would happen from here on. For so long now his whole life had seemed to depend on going home tomorrow. He had scheduled emotional collapse to begin promptly at departure time. Now what? A new schedule. There was video footage of Ray taken then that was shown occasionally thereafter that seemed quite comical.

Edna would lay it all out, he decided at last, and finally he sat back quietly to watch.

Larry did the intro for the next day's program and the change of venue, reminding the audience that they were not done with Ray and Lesa either. Larry explained that since the show tomorrow was all planned, they would proceed with it as scheduled. However, there seemed to be a concurrence here now, he chuckled. "So... we are scheduled to reconvene on Monday, after these two have had a chance to coordinate establishment and crank science, to get it on the same page... the same Larry King Live show, they will be back folks." The show was finally over for the night.

An exuberant throng converged on the three at the wet bar. There was laughter and there were congratulations going the rounds for the much higher than expected viewer percentages. Even Edna seemed ecstatic; she was headed for Lesa.

Ray wondered what book it was that under Edna's tutelage, Dr. Lesa Landau would be publishing, *Thermodynamics for the Masses* perhaps? But it wasn't like that.

Edna was just asking Lesa where she was staying.

It was the Sheltry.

What room? She would change that. They would need a suite with rooms for each of them. And a room for mutual study.

Oh, God. Another Edna Robinson production was under way. How long this time?



*#7 Once More Into the Breach*

Saturday afternoon, May 6th.

It would have been much easier to have just concluded that Ray had, at this extremity of age, luckily connected with a carelessly thrown pitch in a situation thought to have been quite comical rather than pivotal. It would have been one of those things that get laughed into history as serving the establishment right. That was what seemed to have happened on that first pitch. It created an illusion of plausibility so amenable to previous instances of the genre of baseball fantasy.

Ray knew that the home run would certainly have provided all Lesa could have hoped for from her deal with Steinbrenner. However, it didn't stop there, where one would rationally have stopped it.

It became a thing of will, a natural phenomenon of its own. Once this will, for it could only be considered *will*, had been awakened in Ray it was more powerful than literary traditions can accommodate. Occasionally, of course, even in literature there is such an often-fatal extreme obsession to succeed as with Captain Ahab, but in most cases the so extreme demonstrations of will do not accommodate artistic masterpieces, because – in all honesty – they are not very pretty to behold in actual fact. They are much more typically what could be referred to as *horribly* real.

It must be emphasized that although years older than the eldest active participants of the game, Ray Bonn had had extreme slugging capabilities in his youth. He had not disclosed those abilities to Lesa, and once she had pushed him into this exhibition, he was not about to add to his already extreme pressure, or ease a guilt he felt she deserved, by providing that data. Why should he have given her even a ray of hope that this imposition of hers might possibly not be a total disaster.

But since he was forced to be here in this situation, and on the spot for another appearance at the plate, Ray recognized in retrospect as he sat back in the dugout, that he had not just luckily connected on that first pitch at all. He had in fact screwed up his swing, turning over his wrist at the end. It had actually been most fortunate (or unfortunate) that the ball had traveled as far as it had, slipping finally over the top of Manuel's glove. But that didn't represent his best shot. He knew he could swing *better* than that.

He realized also that he had not just swung to a spot where he knew that first pitch would be. He had seen the pitch throughout its course to the plate, the movement of the stitching, all very clearly as though slowed down for his perusal, as he knew it was for the great hitters. It was just as it had been in high school up at Canyon Creek, flooded over all these many years now by the dam his father had built. He remembered how it had amazed him each time he had sent a ball hurtling over that yellow wall. He had found it hard to believe that he was that much better at hitting than any of his teammates. But he was.

Lesa finally came out of the lady's room. A female member of the stadium management was right there as she washed her face and re-did her eyes. The assistant had been sent to find her. She told Lesa that she was desperately wanted on the Seattle show where, they had told their audience, she would appear in the third inning. It was now coming up on the fourth. An inning or two was all she'd have to work.

The aide told Lesa she would relay a request to "top management" that Lesa needed some privacy after that for a few innings.

Lesa emphasized her point by repeating, "You tell George."

"I will," the assistant assured Lesa, running off then to tell someone else that she had got her first priority assignment out of the way.

It was now coming up on the fourth inning. Hiro had taken Ray's lucky bat and ripped a triple deep into center field but was left stranded there by the last out in the top of the second inning. The Yankees were held scoreless in the bottom of the second, and in the top of the third inning the Mariners registered three quick outs. In the bottom of that inning however, Alturis Romero had hit another towering home run - this time a grand slam, the bases having been loaded by an infield hit and two successive walks. That made the score seven to four at the beginning of the fourth.

It was at that point that Lesa diffidently joined Dave Neuhauser (famous for his patented "Break out the rye bread and mustard Grandma, we've got a Grand Salami") and Mike Fries (former third baseman for both the Mariners and the Yankees). They covered the first half of Mariners' games on TV when the Mariners were out of town.

Was it Dr. or Ms. Landau they wanted to know.

"Lesa, of course," she said succinctly - with an 'e'.

They were delighted to have her. They both declared that she was charming, even if not what all the replays of the Larry King Live escapades shown repeatedly the last few days would have led one to believe. Had Ray's grand slam surprised her last time up?

"Yes, of course it had," but she had had confidence that Ray could do anything he set his mind to. That was what today was all about.

Lesa could too, they dared say.

This was turning into a strange game, what with two grand slams so far; Dave was getting hoarse. Here the Mariners were coming right back after having been down three again, with two hits and a walk. The walk of Miguel

Tejeda was again intentional, because no one believed that Ray's homer had been anything but a lucky fluke. So, "Guess who's coming up to bat again?" Dave Neuhauser teased.

"Oh, no!" Lesa said aloud, "Not again." Her hands went to her face as they had before. She trembled with nervousness.

Mike laughed and asked if she was cold. Would she like his jacket?

"No," she refused.

In the dugout Ray had seen the hands turning, or baseball aspects of the cogs of commerce turning, as Mac would probably have referred to such phenomena.

"They're going to walk Miguel again Ray, so get ready."

Ray's resolve dissolved. "Mac, listen. You did your duty. I did my duty. Please, let's not do this charade again. I can't."

"You have a contract my boy, and if I took you out of the lineup after you hit that grand slam, I would be out of a job tomorrow."

"He won't send it down the middle this time, Mac. He made it easy last time."

"Of course, he won't. He isn't stupid. He'll put it over about four inches and down a couple. Get to the front of the box as close to the plate as you can get and it'll look just the same - relativity, you know?"

Ray looked at him showing all his disbelief and disdain.

Mac just smiled, "Fourteen million dollars wouldn't be bad for a day's work," recalling the deal Lesa and Steinbrenner had brokered.

Hiro was there with the baton by now. This one probably already belonged in Cooperstown with so many other items of Hiro's equipment, Ray thought. He hoped he wouldn't jinx it.

They did walk Miguel again who looked overjoyed at having been bypassed for a second time. Ray once more stepped to the plate with most of fifty some odd thousand fans on their feet and cheering. No one laughed behind the plate as Ray looked to where he would want his feet, after he shuffled them, following Masata going into his windup.

When he was about ready, Pasao said, "That was a nice hit, Ray."

Once again Ray thanked him insincerely for an insincere comment.

Ray held his bat a little lower off his shoulder this time. It was probably a little more like he had held it in high school, he thought. After he figured Pasao had sent the sign, he strode forward with his left foot. He adjusted the position of his right a little closer to the plate with Masata already in his windup. Ray's shoulder had swung backward but was already moving forward at the release on the mound; it would make up for what he had lost in the speed of his swing. The ball did indeed seek the outside corner down low, but it was just about as Mac had told him. Relativity. Ray had thought 'parallax' the preferable term for this phenomenon, but 'relativity' worked; it communicated.

Ray's bat found the ball to the same thunderous clap as before. Masata just looked down this time. The ball headed toward left center with neither

Matthews nor Manuel making a move in pursuit. If Alto's home runs had been impressive in towering, this one was a rather amazing line drive that hit the upper deck above the monuments.

What had been a fluke in the second inning was now recognized as one tremendous bit of hitting. Ray didn't stand there long this time. He transferred the bat to his right hand, about midway up the bat, and jogged around the bases as though he had done this before. He had done this before. How many times? The crowd was crazy with noise.

Alturis Romero nodded as Ray jogged by; he and Ray Bonn were putting on an exhibition few would ever forget.

Hiro took the bat again in a repeat of the ceremonious exchange that had delighted everyone, and the Mariners were up eight - seven.

Dave Neuhauser did his "Break out the rye bread and mustard Grandma, we've got us a Grand Salami... *again!*"

Totally shocked and confused by Ray's performance now, Lesa stared. She wondered momentarily whether he might have conjured up some magic surprise just for her, to get even for what she had done to him. But she couldn't really imagine it being that way. Ray wasn't like that. She was a scientist and he was a scientist in spite of his present role. There was no magic or mysticism here. Even if Ray was reading *Faust*, Mephistopheles and that whole story was symbolic. And Ray's soul, whatever that was, had never been for sale. That part of Ray she felt to be securely *hers*.

This had been real brawn and real brains over inanimate hard balls. She needed to sit back emotionally and totally re-evaluate this person, just as she knew she had caused him to so frequently re-evaluate her over the last week. No matter how similar their modes of thought and expression, there were subtle nuances of difference, she realized. He was an inventor, an innovator. He had held something from her about the baseball on the cover of his book. She knew that much now. But no one could probably ever know a person completely, probably not even, or maybe especially, oneself. It was actually a thought that dawned on her for the first time, maybe because she thought of him almost *as* herself, and he had totally surprised her again.

She excused herself politely then. She really hadn't been of much use in the booth anyway, she realized. She just didn't feel like talking.

Dave and Mike commented about her loveliness, and also about how shook up she had seemed to be. Ray had turned out to be exactly what she had sold on Larry King Live, but clearly, now she couldn't believe it herself. They laughed.

The Mariners were fourteen million dollars in arrears in this arrangement "and the till is still open," Mike Fries laughed.

"Do you think this may have been a hustle?" Dave asked.

Well, as with most slugfests, which this was turning into, although so far only two guys were swapping home runs and having a feeding frenzy on RBIs,

the pitchers were soon being switched in and then out to 'stop the bleeding'. The record book was beginning to be referred to more and more frequently by announcers throughout this game. That book was being re-written this day.

Had anyone ever hit a grand slam on their first at bat in the majors, the first *two*? Who was the oldest player to do this or that? How old was he at the time? How many grand slams in a row? How many RBIs for a player, a team, a game, etc., etc.? Baseball is a game for the record book and this particular game was becoming that kind of game of baseball.

When Lesa escaped from the Mariners telecast booth, the same management assistant was faithfully there waiting. She took Lesa directly to George's section of the stadium, having communicated ahead that she had Dr. Landau. A door opened. There was George, just George, in a large dimly lit but very comfortable room with a couple of large screens showing Hotbox Sports with Joe Brett and Tim McCarthy, but the sound was low, if not muted.

"Does this room work for you, Lesa?" George asked deferentially.

"Yes, it's nice," Lesa responded. "But would it be terribly rude if I were to want to be left totally alone for a while?"

"That's how it will be," George said. "If you get feeling better, just go through that door over there and join the party in session. We'd like to have you out there; you're as big a part of this as Ray, you know. The door's locked on your side," he said and left with one last departing comment. "Ray's the real thing, Lesa, the real thing. 'Shame he didn't come up thirty years ago. He'd have been a Yankee in Cooperstown by now."

"I know," she said, and was alone.

And so, although at opposite sides and heights of a very large stadium complex, Ray and Lesa were once again left respectively alone with their thoughts about their so few days together that had sealed so intimate and explosive a relationship. They both processed recollections of what all had transpired immediately following their so-eventful meeting that first night on the Larry King Live show to intensify the feelings that had already been ignited at the Alpha and Omega bookstore.



*#8 Two Souls Entwine*

Thursday evening, April 27th.

After that first Larry King Live appearance a brawny Ray Bonn, who had sometimes reminded people of a junkyard dog, not stopping to think that such dogs are virtually always on chains or confined within restricted spaces, felt much more like a sad little puppy dog. He was acutely aware that he had not the slightest control over his own destiny. He was used to the subtlety with which Helen had manipulated him since they were just children; he had thrived under her guidance and control, but she had handed his leash over to Edna... maybe Lesa... he did not know... probably Lesa. Helen didn't like Edna.

Ray seemed fine, except that, if there had been any silences to fill, someone might have noticed that he no longer had anything with which to fill such voids.

There was a general milling of the crowd outward away from the wet bar. He flowed with the general movement. Eventually he noticed that Lesa was next to him, still on his left; she leaned against him to whisper in his ear. The scent was marvelous, and even the sense in which her scent, her appearance, her voice, her manor, the feel of her breast against his arm all seemed marvelous added to a deep weariness of being over and done with before it had all happened. If he had been a normal pre-teen he might have burst into tears and run away, somewhere, but he wasn't and never had been.

Then the whisper, "... 'til the sunlight touches your face, Ray" followed by a giggle startled him to awareness. "You're stuck with me now."

He turned quickly in response to her frivolity. Her nose and lips brushed his cheek; his glasses nearly fell off as she bumped them too, and caught them while laughing, even before his own hand was there. They straightened them together. Her eyes were huge so close to his glasses and it reminded him of the labels on side mirrors of vehicles that read, "Warning: Objects in mirror are closer than they appear!"

Edna was on the other side of Lesa, pulling to get her going again.

Lesa clutched Ray's left hand then, his forearm locked between her right arm and breast now. She laughed nervously. He was being towed along.

My God, Ray thought. He guessed he had everything he had brought ... unless Lesa had taken his self-published draft of another of his investigations.

He glanced down at the bag held in his right hand; that book was still there. Finally, after an elevator and stairs they were at the door of the downstairs lobby. Their limo driver met them, all smiles.

"Great show," he said.

Edna and Lesa both replied, "Oh, thank you."

He stared questioningly at Ray. Ray nodded his head a little. Then with Lesa's elbow prodding him, he produced a jaded oral concurrence.

A cell phone rang. Yes, Edna's used a traditional ringing sound. It was the hotel, he surmised. This strange little 'happy family' was resettling in more grandiose surroundings. Sensing that success might be even bigger than she had anticipated, Edna was moving them up to a more upscale neighborhood. He heard his room number and the "Yes, move it all up."

Once in the limo Lesa must still have had some kind of grip on his arm or Edna would have been in the middle. Edna was what would have to be called a 'middle woman' if there were such a term. She was in the middle of everything. But right now, she and Lesa negotiated something. This party of three (actually two and a half by Ray's counting, accepting his current insignificance) was on its way to a new accommodation.

He wondered whether Edna would line him up for more signings tomorrow or be content to reap whatever benefits she could obtain from maximizing the gain of a two-night appearance on the Larry King Live show. She never consulted him; now she didn't even inform him. Apparently, he now had an intermediary, like the photons of light that mediate particle collisions.

He heard her tell Lesa that she had set up to have DSL to the rooms. Probably Lesa had access to ASI archives and every scientific journal article ever published. He had often wished he had had that. There were a few he would like downloaded to take home with him. That is, of course, if he were ever again free to go home to his quiet existence down that serene little street... with Helen.

"Home again, home again, jiggedy jig," Edna voiced for Lesa's enjoyment as they pulled up in front of the Sheltry. Ray had heard it on another occasion from Edna. It seemed to be the sound you got when you pushed her happiness button. There was no charm in it that he could tell, the cynic again, looking for a casket whenever he smelled flowers. Who had said that? He couldn't remember. Perhaps he should defer to Lesa's "eidetic memory". No, he wouldn't. Why would she have bragged about that?

"I'll straighten it out at the desk," Edna said hopping out of the limo.

A few people gathered at the doorway seemed to notice them... Lesa and he must certainly have looked like a unit of some sort the way she still had her hold on him. Shortly Ray realized that it wasn't because they looked strange, or too cozy, but just because they were now familiar. To everyone! His first taste of celebrity status. From that first instant onward, he hated everything about it. Privacy had probably never meant more to anyone than it did to Ray Bonn. He would never again be ignored in a crowd, although he had no idea the extent to which that would eventually be the case.



"Thank you, Larry King," Ray said sardonically, thinking it had been under his breath.

"It's all right," Lesa soothed.

Oh, God. Her grip on his arm alarmed him. What did it mean? He tried to free himself

The lobby was worse. Everyone knew them. Everyone. There were TV sets installed all around the room and they had obviously all been set to watch Larry King Live tonight. There were ebullient congratulations, even a moment of applause from the entire crowd gathered there. Someone who ordinarily would have hid the fact that they owned a copy of *Aberrations of Relativity* now flaunted it, demanding that he sign it. She was a middle aged, smartly dressed but snobbish looking, lady. She looked over at Lesa first, as if for permission, and then at Ray. Surreptitiously, almost in a whisper, she said, "Would it be too much trouble for you to sign this book?"

He had a pen, of course. He always had a pen, not just since going on this unending signing trip, but always. A pen had seemed to be his constant companion in life; he actually still felt much more comfortable with a pen than a keyboard.

"Yes," he would. Lesa had to release his arm so he could hold the book. She did reluctantly let go of him; it was as though she had been unaware of having held his arm against her breast like a mother holding a dead child she would not release to the undertaker. Ray glanced over at Lesa's face before asking the woman her name. He realized then that Lesa was in panic. Her grasp had evidently been less about abject affection or control than terror. She seemed momentarily even more estranged from reality than he did. Until that moment he had not thought about what this might be doing to her life.

In the woman's book he wrote: "*Noelle.*"

"Yes, that's right," the woman leaning toward him said with delight just because he had spelled *her* name correctly... too, perceiving it to be another manifestation of his now expected mind reading capability, he supposed. He was disgusted by the woman now, so he elaborated.

*"Understand that this book will not cure arthritis or tell you who will win the tenth at Belmont, but if used properly, it might just be of some benefit.*

*Ray"*

It was easier to just write "Ray"; after tonight's show people would probably be offended by two humps and a squiggle. He knew his comment in the woman's book had been too smug – rude. Who cares?

She handed it directly to Lesa, whose body was still in full contact with his although no longer clamped on to him, "Would you sign it too, Dear?"

Lesa did sign it. "Dear!" Just Ray and Dear, closing it to hand back.

Lesa's and Ray's eyes met after her prank with some of the joviality of earlier having returned. But there were more demands, napkins, envelopes, and a tattooed arm with a polished fingernail pointing to a bare spot above a

red heart at which the owner of the finger wanted a signature. Would "Ray" later be worked into the pattern of the tattoo by a professional? He wondered. An eddy of people was now swirling around them that it took Edna to finally disperse. Ray watched Lesa's expression; he could tell that she shared his respect for Edna as The Great Mom, or meanest of all maiden aunts.

Edna led them to the elevator and beamed them up.

When Edna got off the elevator Lesa and Ray followed. Edna opened the door into an anteroom and thence into an expansive suite with quite elegant furniture. No beds. There were rooms off to left and right for them.

"Your room, Lesa," Edna said, pointing off to the left.

"Ray," she pointed to her right, "that's you." What about Edna, Ray wondered, looking around for a third door in this Monty Hall production.

"I'll leave both your key's right here." She laid card keys down on the side table. There must not have been any three-bedroom suites available Ray decided, or were he and Lesa just Edna's experimental rats in a maze? Like a, let's watch and see what happens next serial.

"Whip up something spectacular for Monday night, would you two?" She was walking back out through the anteroom as she said it.

"Wait! Where's my stuff?" Ray queried.

"In your room I would suppose."

He rushed with long strides to open the door she had indicated had been his, a large room. The covers were thrown back on the bed, a mint lay on the pillow. His baggage was right in the middle of the room where it should have been, closed up as it hadn't been.

"Thanks Edna," he said, stepping back into the main room.

Lesa came out of her room right then too and threw her arms around Edna. "Thank you, thank you so much, Edna. This is wonderful." There were actual tears running down Lesa's cheeks. This went into Ray's 'women' category of phenomena, mystifying him as the emotional displays of women so often had.

Edna didn't seem to get it either or else it was too much like an intellectual conversation when one should be talking sales. He didn't know which, but she left with only the comment, "Call me if you need anything." Obviously sobbing was no indication of need from Edna's perspective.

Ray could not resist asking Lesa, as they stood there like two deer in taillights, facing the sound of Edna having clicked the door closed with the echoing click, click, click of her heels down the hall, "Why the tears?" Upon which Lesa ran over and threw her arms around his neck, still sobbing. He stood there awkwardly envying Edna's instinctive avoidance of such interactions. He placed a hand on her shoulder. He did feel real affection for this strange young woman; it had not diminished since his first encounter with the blue eyes and the associated distant hills of fantasy she had conjured at the Alpha and Omega and the fun they had had with Larry so shortly ago. But the intimacy in their isolation was uncomfortable. He sensed that she had issues he did not understand; he knew that much about women, people in general, and

not much more with regard to human relations. Helen had isolated him from that. The embrace ended and Lesa took a step back, sensing his discomfort.

They both sighed, sitting down across from each other, she on the couch, he in an overstuffed chair opposite. Then they each stared peacefully into the other's dolorous eyes. This day was over. They were together... whatever that might mean. There was a restfulness finally that neither had felt during the urgency of this whole day, a restfulness more complete than either could recall in their previous lives, a sense of having arrived after a wearying journey.

Ray was revived by the calming silence. He enjoyed silence. Finally, he destroyed it by asking whether she would like a coke or something stronger.

"No," then after a few seconds, "just water."

He brought them each a glass and sat down again, asking whether she was a night person in general, or if it had just been a one-night vigil prepping for the Larry King show. How exhausted was she? Did she need some rest now, or would she like to talk a little about anything that had come up on the show? "Irreversibility maybe?" He was ready for those interactions, about which he had fantasized at the Alpha and Omega.

"Yes," she said brightening instantly. Sitting up alertly now, she asked, "Do you really think you've found the source of entropy?"

"I think so." He stood up. "Let me show you." Then, "Oh," he laughed. "You stole my book, remember?" at which they both laughed comfortably, remembering that hilarious episode.

It was the first natural interaction of a new life, a partial life, whatever it was, together, a picnic in those *distant hills*. He couldn't get that out of his mind. She had gotten up then, setting what was left of her water on the tile surface of the end table beside her. He sat down and leaned back comfortably, next to where she had been sitting on the couch ready to examine pages together. Blissfully he took in the aroma and sights of their new world from this perspective.

After having disappeared only briefly, she emerged with her laptop and Ray's two books: "Ray Bonn's *Aberrations* and his *Origins*", she said with a re-established exuberance, a book held high in each hand, her laptop having first been tossed gently on the couch beside him. "My stuff's on there," she said. "You can access any of it."

"Oh. Now all I'll need is your top secret ASI password." He teased.

"You can have that too," she volunteered. "It's, 'i-m-a-0-h-3-d-n-a'. It's a capital I. by the way."

"That's not very secure, is it?" His years of working on secure DOD projects for the government having taken over. "And who are you?" indeed."

"Impressive," she said. "Most people would get hung up on the DNA part without reversing it. But," she flirted, "first you want my password and then you want to know everything about me, is that it?" A coquettish smile pretended the password itself were not the rhetorical question he had decoded. Then, "No. It isn't very secure, is it? But what do you expect from someone who'll give it out to the first foreign agent who asks for it?"

"I didn't necessarily want that much information right off anyway."

"No?" She placed the books on the side table next to her water glass and walked back to sit in the overstuffed chair he had been sitting in before. "Then what do you want 'right off'?"

"Let's start out like the new acquaintances we are. How old are you?"

"Isn't that rather simplistic ageism?" But after a pause, "I'm twenty-three - pretty soon." She looked down as though she were ashamed of how small the actual number. "And you?"

"Twice that." Then a life-long habit of honesty got the better of him too, so he appended, "Well, more than twice, I guess."

"Not for long. Those factors can get confusing. Once it was a hundred-twenty-eight times, then sixty-four, thirty-two, sixteen, eight, four, now two, you say. Well, it's dropped a long way. Now we will have to deal with those awful improper fractions. Zeno, remember? Do you think we can handle the math?" She laughed. "At least it's working its way toward unity, Ray. I wish it was already there."

"Don't," he said. "Entropy won't allow me to get younger and I've already gotten the idea that growing old isn't everything it's cracked up to be, so I can't recommend it, although I think it's probably better than the alternative."

She smiled. "Arthritis?"

"Not yet, thank God."

"It's too bad you don't accept the twin paradox as valid though, because then we could skip to the limit to rectify this problem of ours."

"It isn't a problem," he countered. "Is it? It should give us some perspective with regard to time's arrow, one of us at each end."

"No, it isn't a problem. Anyway, I wouldn't let you time travel long enough for me to get to be your age, even if I knew you'd come back exactly as you are. Because who knows what changes I might have undergone in the meantime. Entropy again. I'm glad it's not a problem for you either."

"Exactly. Why would it be a problem?" He smiled. "So... what aspect of thermodynamics interests you most? Time's arrow?"

After a somewhat awkward lull she used to change the subject, she stated, "There's more to who I am and who you are than our ages don't you think? Could I tell you something about me personally and about my immediate dilemma?"

"Please do." He responded quickly to the change of venue. "I did crack the password so I should have access to who, in fact, you are. Oh, can I help with the current dilemma?"

"No, other than being my friend and listening to my problem."

"I would like to be that friend. Then I'll tell you who I am," he said.

"Well, you see, at ASI I was hired on as a post doc because I had gone to all the right schools, got the right degrees, had all the right recommendations, I was a girl, and I was very young."

"The last two mattered that much?"

"Yeah, they did. They all did. I think I may be a token woman and token youth. Oh, and my family... Peter Landau."

"Your father?"

"Yes, I should call him my dad, I suppose, but I don't." She paused. "If you had had any of those breaks, God knows where you'd be."

"I seriously doubt it. God doesn't seem to keep track of my travels." They smiled at each other again.

"Well, you'd be somewhere."

"I am somewhere."

"I mean besides here," she smiled warmly. "Some big university."

"I honestly wouldn't want to be anywhere but right here right now. I was so exhausted earlier today that the mere thought of not going home to the quiet oblivion of my every day existence seemed quite unbearable to me. But right this minute there is nowhere I'd rather be than right here finding out more about you... and your dilemma... of which I can be of absolutely no assistance whatsoever." He paused. "But... absolutely *none*?"

"Oh, I didn't mean that... exactly." She leaned forward, placing her left elbow on her right knee. "Could I just get on with my sad story?" She laughed, but it was rather pitiful laughter.

"Onward! But what I learned about you on the show didn't really sound miserable to me"

In response, although seeming otherwise to ignore his comment, she said, "I saw a footnote in reference to William James Sidis in your draft on irreversibility when I flipped through it tonight. I assume you are familiar with him because only those who are, and those who know of his sad life succeed in finding anything beyond the uselessness of intelligence, his huge inventory of Boston Transit stubs, and an obsessed celibacy in his pitiful life, nothing of merit.

"Persig, of course, found his analysis of Amerindian tribes. But such sympathetic treatment has not been the norm. He is the poster child for all that is wrong with child prodigy." She paused. "Well, as you may have suspected, my childhood was somewhat like his... only worse."

"Oh," Ray exhaled barely above a whisper. He was indeed familiar with some of the sad history of William James Sidis, named after William James, the eminent psychologist who had propounded a philosophy of pragmatism. The prodigy's parents had been friends and co-professors of William James. They had used innovative, although excessively intense, schemes to accelerate the learning of their son who seemed to have paid an extreme emotional price for the favor.

"My parents were obsessed with learning and intelligence, almost for its own sake, Ray." She hesitated, "Mine." Another pause followed by, "I don't really know how bright I was, but I am aware of some of the intellectual feats I managed to accomplish at various early ages - baby book stuff. Some are ridiculous even to me. I am sure that it was my parents and others having told me about these feats that has replaced any real firsthand memory with regard

to those earliest achievements. My parents wouldn't have lied about them though; they were scrupulous about their science.

"But in retrospect I am not quite certain to what degree a natural intellectual curiosity and to what degree my perception of expectation drove me to perform earliest-ever cognitive achievements that may be impressive to the media, but I realize, have no real significance whatsoever. How important can it be that a two-year-old has read an article in a newspaper about concepts she could no more comprehend than fly? Especially when she cannot remember having done it such that the cause produced no irreversible effect upon her, other than the comments she would receive the rest of her life about having done it?" She faced him now with a forlorn look.

"That's a terrible lie to live, Ray, like bragging about knowing differential calculus because one has been shown how to put an  $n$  in front of an  $x$  raised to the  $n-1$ . They're just symbols, Ray, not reality per se."

Their eyes met; there seemed to be a mutual understanding.

She looked down again and went on. "My mother's grandfather had been a famous physicist. You reference one of his papers in your *Aberrations*. Her father was a physicist too. My mother could not satisfy the aspirations he had had for a son. She tried. I think it broke her heart that she couldn't; she failed in any case. I think she was probably a very good physicist, but the perception of a missing 'Y' is everything."

"Yes," Ray said almost under his breath. "I suppose that's true."

She heard him and sensed a deeply shared sadness of that fact. "So anyway, my father was an academic success whose father had also been a fixture in science. He and my mother's destinies were, therefore, determined by otherwise perceived appropriateness and so they were married. I followed too many years later, and of the wrong gender to be very rewarding to either of them, I think, particularly to my father.

"But they decided gamely to see what could be done with even such a humble bundle of joyously pedigreed, double X female DNA." She paused here again staring at Ray a moment before appending the comment, "DNA is very important to my story, Ray, wouldn't you agree?" She laughed without humor. "No wonder it's in all my passwords and always reversed as a means of rejecting its supposed significance, don't you suspect, Ray?"

Proceeding after the digression, she said, "My mother's career at teaching was not seeming to get her the tenure either she, her father, or my father had wanted for her, and so it seemed reasonable to them to mulch the seedling DNA. I don't really know why everyone loves kitties, but no one loves cats. It makes no sense to me. So, the bundle of joy was given every opportunity to succeed where her mother was forced to fail." She breathed deeply. "And I have succeeded Ray."

Ray interrupted, "I sense that maybe the 'bundle of joy' was not necessarily a bundle of happiness though."

"Happiness was no part of anyone's formula, Ray. I don't think there's a gene for that. But I think you would have to agree that my mother succeeded

in raising me at a world class level, whatever that means." Lesa smiled looking up at Ray again, pitifully, her eyes moist with a liquid innocence that seemed to see with no awareness of being seen.

"My mother and I loved each other very much." She paused, as though thinking again of that affection.

"I don't know if eidetic memory capabilities can be taught, but I tend to think maybe they can. Perfect pitch can be taught, you know."

Ray nodded. He had heard that somewhere. She sensed the deeper resonance in him.

"I remember everything, Ray, except..." she paused thoughtfully. "At any rate my mother taught me all sorts of mnemonic schemes, and since I do possess eidetic memory capability, however obtained, I suspect that whatever I was actually born with was completely enhanced and overhauled by tutelage, such that no one could ever disentangle nature and nurture in my case. I was just one bright little girl for whatever reason.

"It wasn't just mnemonics, logic too. The manipulation of symbols became second nature to me, while I was still a tiny child.

"But I don't remember being that little girl, Ray. I remember being a diminutive person, the very definition of 'little girl' to the extent that you can tell by photos. *Being* a little girl should have been something else, like being there when you were one, including playing with other children."

There were tears in her eyes now as she proceeded with, "I don't think I know what being a little girl would even feel like, giggling and all that."

Ray raised his hand as though interrupting in class. She acknowledged him. Then, gently, but cheerfully, he said, "Not to be argumentative, Lesa, but I think being a little girl is probably what it felt like tonight on the show."

She jerked her head quickly, almost defiantly, "No, Ray. I don't know!"

"Oh, but you must. Remember tonight when you grabbed my book saying, 'I want it!'"

She looked confused and almost angry. "Yes. So... I *did* want it."

"I know that Lesa. But that whole sequence of how you did it was the little girl in you? She is alive and well, Lesa, and very charming, I dare say. I guess I didn't act my age in that little episode either, did I? It must have been that long forgotten little boy in me." He laughed. "Playfulness is what being a little kid is all about – at least it should be."

"I guess I have been childish," she said. "No one ever let that part of me grow up. I did so like you and I being kids together though. It was fun."

"It was," he said, quite surprised at his own sense of having had fun. He could not remember a similar experience in his past. "But I interrupted."

After a few more thoughtful seconds, the story of Lesa Landau continued. "I went to school a few days here and there. My parents were looking for the ideal prep school, I think, but never found it. Mother was such an excellent teacher that she could not be replaced. Whenever I asked a question, she had books out all over our huge dining room table, opening them to the right places.

Then I would go around the table reading passages to later discuss with her. I enjoyed that." She paused and gave a little sob, "But then my mother died."

"Oh, God," Ray blurted spontaneously, if only at a whisper, "how?"

"I don't know," she said evasively, very agitated now.

"You don't *know*?" he exhaled.

She reared up from her chair and plunged toward him against his restraints as he rose, fighting through his outstretched arms, she hugged him, very shaken now. "Don't ask me that."

There was a long pause with her clinging to him even as he maneuvered to release her grasp. Once she was standing independently before him, she excused herself and stumbled back to the chair across from him. He was shaken too. He felt totally incapable of handling such a situation.

"I feel guilty that I can't tell you... or even try to remember. I don't *want* to. I should, I know... I should try... at least now that I'm grown. I have to know because... well, I have to know... but I can't. That's all there is to it."

Ray was confused. Why on earth had he been so anxious to learn about someone else's 'dilemma'? Hadn't Edna taught him anything? Lesa's having thrust herself at him, and apparently needing to express innermost secrets terrified him. He felt responsible to help her if he could, to be sure, but he had neither interest nor skills in psychology to understand post-traumatic stress if that was what it was. He had no idea what was going on with her or between them. He had wanted to discuss thermodynamics, physics, that was the fantasy. People problems had never interested him. But he knew that in their situation physics was not the immediate priority. They must proceed.

"So, what happened after that, Lesa?" he urged her to get past this.

She wiped her eyes. "I'm sorry for that." She smiled self-consciously and said, "Moving on smartly then.

"My father put me in school right after Mother died, right afterward. I didn't hear anything about it after that. It's like it was kept from me and I didn't ask anyone anything. Why would I, Ray?" She had a most forlorn look of deep sadness.

"Did you board at the school or did you live at home?"

"Boarded. It was hundreds of miles away, up in Maine."

"Did you see your father regularly?"

"No." Tears began flowing again.

"The last I saw him was the day he sent me off to the school. He didn't say anything; he didn't hug me or kiss me. Nothing."

"And he died?" Ray almost dared not ask, but it seemed obvious.

"Yes."

Rather than ask how again, Ray asked, "How old were you then?"

"Six still," she said.

"And then?" Ray empathetically wanted to get past this painful phase, for both of them. He didn't know how to address any of it.

"I changed schools then. My Aunt came to see me. Without telling me anything specific, she inarticulately got the nature of my orphaned situation



across to me. The school I was in didn't have anything to teach me that I hadn't already learned. The headmaster had recommended some kind of preparation for college. Even though I was so young, my Aunt insisted on a major university. Since she had a connection to someone who taught at Stanford, I was sent West to live with a family in California to prepare for matriculating there, which I did a few years later.

"I lived with that physics professor and his wife for a year or so and sat in on some of his lectures at Stanford before they accepted me. He had been involved in the research into the origin of the light elements. Some of the other professors and their wives took an interest in me too. Some of them even tutored me somewhat like my mother had. Then before too long I was enrolled *in* Stanford as a physics major.

"After graduation I went on to Harvard graduate school. That was my most enjoyable time since my earliest childhood days. I had some friends there; they were all older, but they tried to make it fun for me. Harvard is where William James Sidis went, you know?"

"Yes, I do know," Ray said, glad at least to be talking education.

"And because I was there, and I had also been a prodigy, a professor thought it interesting to tell me all about William James Sidis."

"I'll bet. Was that all right?" Ray asked with a questioning smile.

"Oh, it was all right. I read everything I could find including the stuff you quoted on his naïve thermodynamic explorations. They have some of his more obscure writings up at Harvard as well."

Ray responded, "Yeah. His thermodynamics was naïve maybe, but not without a certain brilliant insight that others always seem to miss."

"Exactly," she said, "He wasn't afraid to be different." Sometimes I would ride the transit at night and hum the song about poor old Charlie:

"Did he ever return?

No he never returned

And his fate is still unlearned..."

"I have felt like I was on a train to nowhere and can't get off, but not anymore." She laughed, "Ed let me off." She looked around the room. "But I don't really recognize this place, Ray." Her laughter continued. "What station is this?"

"So my career was started. Thermodynamics." Pausing then, "not ticket stubs anyway." They smiled at each other warmly. "When I rode the metro through Boston humming about Charlie but thinking about William Sidis, I did save a few of my transfers on his account." She smiled winningly.

"So that's how you chose your dissertation topic, huh?"

"Yes, it is. My thesis advisor wanted me to go into the General Theory and cosmology, but the irreversibility issue haunted me as it had Sidis, maybe for the same reason, I don't know. The arrow of time, no free lunch," she mused. "Irreversibility is a haunting thing."

"It is haunting? Why we age - all these irreversible wrinkles and gray hairs." He touched above his ear. "Well, you evidently impressed all the right people with your results. What did you come up with?"

"Not as much as you have, but I did realize like Boltzmann had that it was 'in the collisions stupid!'" She smiled, seeming to bask in their mutual understanding of the issues. "And that the collisions are not as pristine as Boltzmann would have had to believe in his day. Each interaction involves a frictional loss of energy that he never identified. You did." After a pause, "I studied Statistical Mechanics pretty intensely to find the answer there, but it isn't there."

"You would've found it; you will," Ray replied. He too was becoming enthralled by this dispassionate mutual understanding. Getting past her sadness, at least for the time being, eased his mind considerably.

"I did decide, like you did, that one must close all the loops," she said. "The analogy to Heraclitus's river as the same one into which no one could ever step twice was brilliant, Ray. Simply brilliant. I had faith, like you did, that once all the loops got closed, there would be no more mystery. I think my conclusions in that regard were very similar to yours, except that I did not catch Einstein's 'tiniest error' that seems to make all the difference." They smiled at the irony of this alternative to usual references to what Einstein had considered his 'greatest error'. "To this oversight everyone has remained oblivious for a century, haven't they?"

"That's right," Ray cheerfully poked into her soliloquy. "You got most of this understanding of my results from my alluding to having rejected the astrophysical trend in the *Aberrations* book? You couldn't have read the draft of my *Origins* yet." Ray said it knowing that she had been out of his sight for only a few moments.

"No, my snapshot memory isn't that fantastic," she chuckled.

"So how did Ed Watson entice you to ASI?" Ray asked sensing they were finally ready for Lesa's current dilemma. "Did he suppose that he could persuade you to give up chasing your kind of windmill and join the brane squad in chasing down theirs? Force you into aftershocks of relativity?"

"Maybe. I don't know yet. I know he isn't as interested in my problem as he would be if it had more to do with his own personal El Dorado, but he's fine. He lets me do whatever I want including picking the 'brains' of his brane squad, spelled the other way." This was said with the inimitably cute smile. "He doesn't enter into it himself though. He never promised he would. I think he respects what I'm doing and has some confidence I might succeed. Ed wasn't why I went there though, nor were any of the rest of the team, nor string theory. I went because it was ASI."

"Did they give you Einstein's office?" Ray asked somewhat in jest.

"Einstein?" she grabbed onto the word. "It was partly because of him, I guess. He does still haunt the halls. But I'm sure you know that it was his preference not to be associated with any particular *place* in the world. He may have seen himself as another Enoch, appropriately transported directly to be

forever with his abstract atheistic God, who never plays dice, and needs to consult with Einstein before constructing any more universes." The latter clause she added for Ray's benefit, he knew, referencing his mention of Einstein's admitted 'greatest' mistake having been compounded by that very presumption.

They smiled at each other in recognition of the increasing number of thoughts they shared in common, what Ray would encapsulate later as 'cultural coherence'.

"Anyway, I've been content there, until now."

"'Til now?"

"Yes. I'm off the train now, Ray. When Ed gave me this assignment in good faith that I would shoot you down like a Messerschmitt flaming out over the Atlantic," she sheepishly confessed. Her huge blue eyes staring at him woefully. "I didn't though did I?"

"Well, you have had a reprieve on that assignment," Ray chuckled. "There's always Monday that I have to worry about. Thank you for warning me though." He paused as though mystified, "But he wanted you to 'shoot me down'? He said that?"

"Well he didn't state it exactly that way. He just handed me your book with the tickets to get here and the hotel reservation, saying that the inimitable 'they' were tired of the media coverage of your book. He said that your book needed to 'meet reality'."

Ray laughed. "I appreciate him sharing his 'reality' with me. If I hadn't met you, I would be at the end of a long road now, heading back into oblivion instead of considering the beginning of another adventure delving into thermodynamics a little deeper with you. I feel like I have an extension to my otherwise short lease on life now, a reason to live a few more years. A replenished bucket list. Don't you think we should work on that together?"

"Oh, I'm so happy you feel that way about working with me, Ray. I was afraid I had betrayed you as well as Ed. But it won't be 'short years', Ray. We have all the time there is now that we've finally found each other."

"Betrayed me? Oh no, not us. That arrow of time can just slow down 'til this is done." He smiled, but sensed danger in her enthusiasm.

She suddenly hopped up to approach him one more time as though to seal a deal with a handshake or a kiss; he didn't know which and turned it into a hand slap instead. "I'll never betray you, Ray. You know that, don't you?"

Ray stepped back, but without success this time. "Les! What are you doing?" She had him in an embrace, pushing him back toward the couch. "We have to keep our focus here. We need to work together without... this."

She squeezed him tighter. "I hope you have feelings for me, Ray, like I do for you. We think the same way, don't we?"

"Sure, our thoughts do seem amazingly similar on several fronts, don't they? But *this*," he emphasized her hanging on his neck, "could be a *major* dilemma, you know. I may have become some sort of father figure for you, and for good reason. I can see that." Ray said, all this while disengaging her

strangle hold. "We need to work that out appropriately. I think we can work well together. We're on the same path, Lesa."

"No," she said leaning into him. Her reddened and now somewhat wild looking eyes stared deeply into his with a painful yearning. "No, Ray! No." She pushed him back and fell into him on the couch. "You and I are like one person in our minds. One person, Ray; it's as though I have found the other half of me. This is my station where I get off. You complete my thoughts. You have to have felt that too. We can't deny that." She was sobbing almost hysterically now.

Ray was exhausted with the emotions of her life story and these outbursts of affection. "It's okay. Completing our mutual thoughts is important to me too, Lesa. It'll be a big success. Closing loops and explaining entropy." He tried to tone it down a bit with this expression of cold hard physical theory.

She impulsively squeezed his neck tighter.

"So, is your having told Ed you would shoot my book down the dilemma I couldn't help you with?" he asked as an attempt to somehow complete this oppressive phase of their relationship, to lighten the mood as he finally succeeded in detaching her from his neck.

"Yes," she said in a muffled tone just below his chin. Her voice trailed off into a plaintive, "I think I love you, Ray. I want to close *this* loop."

"Yeah, well. There are different kinds of loops and love, you know, so let's just keep this one the sincere friendship we have going." He slid her over but still next to him on the couch. Then, back on topic again as calmly as he could, "What do you think you should do with regard to your agreement with Ed?"

"I didn't agree to anything," she sulked. "He just implied what I should do, no questions asked. I tried to get back with him, after I had read your book, to tell him I disagreed with him, but he was tied up. It was too late. He's probably reading the whole thing now after watching me blow it for him tonight," she said, sitting back a little more relaxed.

"Will that help?"

"No. It won't make any difference. He won't get what I got out of the book. I asked one of the other post docs, who had a copy, some questions, but he doesn't get it either. One has to be open to doubt, Ray. It takes faith."

"Yeah, that's true." He laughed, "It takes faith to doubt. But Larry couldn't get you to explain much of what it was that you *did* get out of the book, other than a rather basic agreement on most of the topics, as I recall, did he?" Ray teased.

"No, he didn't, but I told the world that I agreed with you - on everything he asked - you know. Ed wouldn't like that. Did you want me to tell Larry that I fell in love with you as I read your *Aberrations*?"

"No! I certainly did not," Ray exclaimed with irritation. "It would have been absurd and seriously damaged your career. To the extent that this isn't just some practical joke on a dotardly old curmudgeon, Lesa, you need to reassess this psychological need for a father figure, so we can get on to what

we both want to accomplish with regard to thermodynamics. I will always be here for you, available for support and advice, but I'm not a dominating figure, Lesa, just an old guy who would like to figure out how the world works."

"Ray! You are *not* a father figure for me. If you were 'dominating' I would hate you. You do not portray fatherly traits."

"Tell my three kids that, Lesa. I have a granddaughter seven years old. Her mother - my daughter - is eight years older than you. My youngest son is almost exactly your age."

"You were a pretty busy boy, weren't you?" Lesa cajoled. "What were you, sixteen?"

"Eighteen." He replied succinctly, wishing he had ignored the question completely.

"You were a lot more exciting than I was at seventeen," she taunted. "Your three kids are your children. Good for you. I'm not!" she stated boldly. "Remember that; I'm not. Don't pretend I see you as my father; I don't. I'm a grown woman - totally different DNA than yours." Sensing advantage again, she pushed on with, "By my age you had already had two children. Remember that; that's how old I am. I'm not a child."

"That isn't the point."

"No, of course it's not," she conceded without concession. "The point is that I happened to read your book and understood it like none of the Julies, Ednas, or Helens... or Larrys, or Eds... in the world. Apparently even better than you understand it yourself. Authors don't always understand what they've written, usually they don't in fact. I found out that there was someone else in the world who looks at things, almost *everything*, the way I do. You admitted in print that no one else in your previous life does. Helen told the world that you need someone who does... because no one else does. Just me, Ray. I see things the way you do."

He looked at her a long time... the wild but empathetic eyes... the blue eyes that would not leave him... 'til the sunlight touched his face'. God, what a mess. Through those eyes he had fantasized a flat countryside and distant hills where understanding flowed like milk and honey in a future that seemed now to have already begun. He was terrified. "Yeah... well, I..." was all he could stammer, recognizing the oft-cited dangers of what one had wished for.

"Yeah!" Lesa repeated with much more emphasis, what she clearly felt to be the proper emphasis. She was no longer the woeful motherless child.

Seeming to think he had accepted her framing of their arrangement, she leaned over against him heavily and with an amazing dexterity, she sort of hopped and twisted up and into his lap with her arms securely around his neck. He threw himself back, surprised - at first to escape, but then finally just to get more comfortable. He caught his breath. He appreciated her contented silence now at least. He relaxed somewhat into a confused exhaustion. Minutes followed without sound; they slipped by so calmly, peacefully at last. He pushed back harder against the large overstuffed pillow at the end of the deep soft sofa. He realized he was well beyond his depth with this situation of a

*Aberrant Behavior*

young woman so apparently enamored with him. Him. The softness and scent of that woman - yes, okay, so she was a woman - was indeed pleasant to him, to the 'him' in him.

With no more words between them; her deep breathing became little snoring sounds. She must certainly have been exhausted. They could work this out sensibly tomorrow. He put his feet up and surrendered to the notion of holding her there where she had insisted on positioning herself for sleep. He was exhausted too.

Oh, God. He should have called Helen. She would be asleep now. She was at least partially responsible for all this... wasn't she? Now he would not see her for a few days. He shuffled around pulling Lesa in beside him a little more comfortably; there was room. Her breathing did not slacken; soon both of them were sleeping.

*#9 The Danger of Daydreams*

Friday morning, April 28<sup>th</sup>.

Ray didn't know how long he had slept. He hadn't noticed the clock for some time before he had finally drifted off there on the couch. It was almost seven now, the time that he usually awoke.

Lesla was notably not here now. However, unnerving his memories of the events prior to his sleeping, that someone who understood concepts that mattered so much to him cared deeply about him personally was in no way an unpleasant reality even if extremely uncomfortable. It had nothing to do with whatever success his book might have, just his thoughts and... him. That was the good news... and the bad. The fact that her eyes having literally been on prior to the sun actually breaking through the curtains was irrelevant, of course, because their song didn't pertain literally to physical things. To her it was a soul mate thing. He smiled. How could he not?

Their song? *Their* song? What was he thinking? God. He could *not*, take personal aspects of this relationship seriously, he reaffirmed.

There was water running off in the direction of her room. Her door was open. He arose and stretched; his shoulders were a bit sore. Off to the other side of this room was a door to his private domain for the next few days; he went there, closed the door behind him. He transferred his stuff to where he figured someone else would have thought it belonged. He didn't really care where that was. He could remember where it was when he needed it, but he knew from long association with Helen that things have a proper place. So, he must put them where she would have thought they belonged.

Then, at long last he took off yesterday's clothes, showered, and shaved. He put on the pair of jeans that Helen had told him he might as well wear for comfort on the days he traveled. This was a travel day then, more or less, or should have been. After pulling his sweatshirt on and straightening it into place, he had started combing his hair when he noticed in the mirror that Dr. Lee Landau was leaning against the doorway to his bathroom, watching him.

"What are you doing?" he asked, shocked and then exasperated.

"Watching you," she said, beaming youthfully.

"This is *my* room!" was his immediate reaction.

"I live here too," she replied with an intimate smile.

The yellowish blouse with the light orange flourishes and expansive frilly neckline and tight-fitting jeans all worked extremely well. They were the colors of the Golden Devils of Canyon Creek high school. He recalled one of the cheerleaders. Helen. Now there was a 'blast from the past'.

Returning to the bizarre present, "Not in here you don't," he said threateningly. "These are *my* rooms," he emphasized the point.

"My rooms," she mimicked playfully. "You were taking too long," she added returning to a more matter of fact style, a vacillation so typical of her personality he realized. "I wanted to say, 'Good morning,' to the man of my dreams who held me in his arms last night. I hoped he would say, 'Good morning, Lesa dear, how was your night?'"

"Oh, well," she demurred. "What shall we do first?"

"Good morning Sunshine, how was your night?" he asked sounding much more sarcastic than he actually felt right now. "But have you thought of the possibility of having breakfast before we proceed to the workplace for the day?"

"Yes, I did." She pulled a menu out from behind her as a child might with all the aspirations of pleasing an adult in her eyes and voice. "Do you like eggs?" she asked.

"No."

"Hot cakes?"

"Yeah, that sounds fine."

"Coffee, of course. And... orange juice or tomato?"

"Tomato," he was no longer quite so exasperated. "So, in addition to world class singer, you could have made a million on tips as a waitress."

"Only if it were your million and you chose to tip me. I'm not cheap, you know," a comment at which he frowned as she walked away.

She seemed to enjoy keeping pressure on him. He recalled the thought he had dismissed as fantasy yesterday in the Alpha and Omega, that this beautiful girl might be stalking him. He had tried to reject it as too fantastic. Was it? The idea of giving her another reprimand that would have begun, "Lesa, don't...!" crossed his mind, but he thought better of it. Helen would help him with this; after all, she had gotten him into it... hadn't she?

Spontaneously then thoughts cascaded in upon him from a period in his life when he had read all of Sinclair Lewis's works. *Babbitt* was certainly not his favorite work by that author, but he had read it. He recalled having sometime later read H. G. Wells' comment, "I wish I could have written *Babbitt*!" Why H. G. Wells, whom Ray revered, as the superior intellect of the two writers, would make such a comment concerning Lewis's work had mystified him for a long time. Ray had nonetheless thought it the most generous comment any author could make about another. He had often thought he would like someday to be remembered as having written, "I wish I could have written, 'I wish I could have written *Babbitt*.'"

The significance of this digression imposing itself now imposed itself as well. He had been intrigued by what it could have been about *Babbitt* that



would so impress Wells, when Ray had seen no particular genius in that novel. What he had finally concluded, and this only in more recent years, and most poignantly right at this very moment, was that H. G. Wells understood the workings of the human mind, that it is always daydreaming and fantasizing about something. Aging men, a category Ray's remnant of honesty rather than any vain preference had to place himself in right now right along with so unsympathetic a character as George F. Babbitt, tend to daydream about some nubile young 'fairy child'. The specifics change and evolve, but it is always the *fairy child*. Sinclair Lewis had described an almost clinical example of this obsessive disorder pertinent to masculine aging. It was buried in George Babbitt's mental meanderings:

*"For years the fairy child had come to him. Where others saw but George Babbitt, she discerned gallant youth. She waited for him, in the darkness beyond mysterious groves. When at last he could slip away from the crowded house he darted to her. His wife, his clamoring friends, sought to follow, but he escaped, the girl fleet beside him, and they crouched together on a shadowy hillside. She was so slim, so white, so eager! She cried that he was gay and valiant, that she would wait for him, that they would sail---*"

How, if at all, could Ray now distinguish this Lesa, he had done so much to create, probably *had* created that first time he had looked into the blue eyes at the Alpha and Omega, from a fairy child. Had he not seen in those distant hills of his own fantasy, just such an ephemeral fairyland girl? After all, it had been Ray Bonn who had suggested to her that this relationship of theirs might continue into her "future". Oh, God. He had indeed to control that aspect of his particularity in the category of aging lechers. Although the fairy child fantasy was not explicitly sexual, that it was not healthy, he readily accepted. And where could it lead?

In earlier years Lewis's *Arrowsmith* had defined good science and the good life for Ray. Martin Arrowsmith, dedicated to the pursuit of scientific discoveries at all costs, avoided such distractions - almost. Leora had helped to keep him straight. Ray had to hold onto that shard of idealism now.

Wasn't it George Babbitt who in all his life had never done a thing he had wanted to? Wow! Ray Bonn was not like that, was he? He had been the architect of his own life. Hadn't he? The questions mounted.

Lesa had gone away, even without her million dollars in tips... this time. He could hear her in the main room on the phone at the desk. "Two orders of hotcakes. Two tomato juices. Coffees black. Thanks."

That certainly didn't sound like a fantasy, no mere figment of his imagination. She was real all right, Ed Watson's "reality".

When he got there, the main room had been rearranged. The desk had been moved a little to where the sun would not be right in their eyes. "Touching his face" occurred to him again. A couple of chairs had been moved into place. One from his bedroom, he noticed, and the other, he presumed, from hers. She

had her lap top open and a couple cords connected. Power. Internet. There was *his* laptop right next to it! Privacy and private property seemed to mean nothing to Lesa.

"I'm downloading files from ASI into your computer," she said.

"Before they fire you?" he asked pushing his irritability into areas where it should certainly not have gone.

Sensing the reason for this irritation of his, she went right to the heart of it. "Ray, I really like you! Can you get used to that? You are a celebrity now and everyone will sort of love you, for a while, as long as it lasts. That's how it works. But I *love* you Ray, forever. Get used to it. Forever is a long time. It's me! It involves nothing else. Nothing. Me and loving you... and you, to whatever degree you want to be involved in it. But this loving thing is mine. I own it. It's me and I'm defensive about it. *My* property, more sacred than bathroom doors, a chair, or a laptop from your room! All right?"

Ray could only stare at her. She seemed to catch every innuendo.

"Love *happens*, Ray," she continued. "Very rarely, but it happens. That is a fact you have to accept. Trying to apply ageism, Victorian morality, cascading Lorentz transformations, or any other kind of formula to preempt actual experience or to obtain a counter probability to what has already happened, is 'looking down the wrong end of telescopes'. Remember those lines, Ray? They're yours. You wrote them - all of them. They're in print, selling like hotcakes. I followed your logic. I believe it. I will always believe it because it's the truth. That logic is now imprinted on my heart. Be sincere; believe it too!"

He continued to stare. There were tears in her eyes now. He had been a bit harsh. She was worked up, but she was in control of herself, of the situation. Of him? Oh God, he hoped not. Had it, in fact, already happened? Was it actual experience he was denying? Was he merely inserting accepted mores of what he *should* be experiencing? To what extent was his genuine affection for this *actual* woman more than the bookstore fantasy? The fairy child? Clearly, she was more than some mere sprite, much more.

"All right," he said acknowledging a very basic reality. "Thank you for caring about what I have written and trusting my stated opinions. I'm truly sorry for being mean about the ASI connection."

"It's okay; you weren't really mean, just projecting. It's true I have to call Ed, but I have to wait for an hour or two."

"Yeah, of course. Have you decided what to tell him?"

"Yes." That was it, no further explanation.

After a few moments of silence Ray asked, "Could we explore our situation objectively? Just to understand it. Okay?"

"Yes, I do want to, but you have to admit to the truth, that you feel something for me other than as my father. You do. We both know you do. It is merely an empirical fact you don't seem willing to accept, because it doesn't fit into some theoretical model of reality you have adopted." She said it softly, but without backing off, "and that's wrong, Ray. It's wrong."

"Of course, I do. How could I not? But please explore your emotional background, your probable need for a father figure in your life," he responded, floundering.

She started to speak, but he placed his fingers to her lips.

"I know you may not have consciously thought of me that way," Ray said. "But do think about it. No matter how we resolve this, we won't let go of the facts of our sharing thoughts and having feelings for each other."

After he removed his fingers from her lips, she grabbed well-developed trapeziums that bulged from his neck out along his broad shoulders. Holding him thus at arm's length, feeling his strength, her toes now snugged up to his, she leaned back in an arc that left her facing almost directly upward. Her hips were thrust forward, mons pubis pressed hard against him. Her arms pushed inward exposing the bulk and associated cleavage of her breasts; they were irritatingly apparent to Ray. She closed her eyes, giving Ray ample opportunity to inspect her unselfconsciously. What a conniving little wench, Ray thought, but not without seeing something humorous about it as well.

After what seemed too long, she opened her eyes to look directly into his. Then very deliberately she said, "Okay, but will you think about me this *other* way before you pontificate about what's going on here. I think you're also carrying psychological baggage that limits how you experience reality."

Ray laughed, perhaps too abruptly ruining what she must have perceived as a winning performance. There was, in fact, something absurdly comical in her actions. "Lesa, this 'other way' of yours is biology, not *thinking!*"

"Yes," she smiled, "It *is* very basic, isn't it? You should be able to figure it out. Biology is not rocket science, is it, Ray?"

"So much for you and William James Sidis then," he cajoled. He shouldn't have; as soon as he said it, he knew he shouldn't have. Dumb.

"Yes. So much for me and William James Sidis. I was not so sure about celibacy until yesterday. You changed all that. Now I am sure; that's over. Who's afraid of Virginia Wolf and William James Sidis now, Ray?"

"I *didn't* change all that," Ray denied, "even if in some obscure way it may have seemed like it. Let's be done with it anyway, we have work to do." He yanked on her wrists to release her grip from his shoulders.

"You *did* change all that," she said matter of factly. "But, to work."

Ray tried to disengage his thoughts as well as his body by inspecting the developments on the desk. "What do we have here?"

"I'm going to get you a copy of my dissertation and all the files I've currently been working with. I thought you might like to look at them, if not now, then sometime."

"Yes, I would like to see them. Of course. What's the folder?"

"I just named one 'Lesa's Thoughts'; you can call it whatever you like. I didn't know what you wanted to work on, so I just decided to get that much out of our way."

She was some kind of proactive self-starter; Ray was coming to realize that for sure, somewhere between an Edna and his sluggishness. Actually, he corrected his thoughts, Edna wouldn't have done this.

He stepped to his room to get stuff out of his bag, placing on the desk those things he thought they might review. He left the second of the draft books he had self-published, along with the *Faust* he had brought with him on the trip and had been struggling through. There were also a few additional books he had purchased more recently. He had a hard time with bookstores. *The Trouble with Physics* by Smolin was too far down his alley to ignore. Who would not have been enticed to buy the novel *Special Topics in Calamity Physics*? He had finished it earlier on his tour but laid it out on the desk thinking maybe Lesa might be enticed to a little enlightenment. Books were an addiction, he guessed, and these he considered 'must' reads.

Lesla poked her index finger onto the novel. "That's not about physics." To Ray's smile, she said, "It's not," as she picked up *The Trouble with Physics*, thumbing through some pages. "He's in disfavor at ASI."

"I'll bet he is," was all the response that was needed.

While Ray continued situating his material on the desk, there was a knock at the door. Lesa went to get it. But it wasn't their breakfasts; it was room service. Lesa explained in a rather obscure way that they would not need their beds made this morning. He looked at her quizzically when she returned from the anteroom. She smiled and shrugged, as though having deceived the maid about some big secret. "I'll remake your bed if that's a problem."

"It's fine."

Then there was the knock that heralded their breakfasts. The porter wheeled it in and did his awkwardness, but it didn't take long. Lesa took care of that too, having had a tip ready. She had obviously traveled before. She made Ray realize, just as Edna did, what a bumpkin he really was.

After the porter left Lesa half rolled, half carried the round table to where she thought breakfast belonged, right near the desk in the full light of the beautiful morning with sunlight now on both their faces as they ate stacks of hotcakes. She smiled way too domestically.

"God damn her!" he thought, but he had to smile. It was a cheerier breakfast than with Edna anyway, discussing tasks for their day.

Could they get into thermodynamics right away or was something more pressing? Still undecided after enjoyable technical tangents, they put the tin lids back on their dishes and each carried their own out to the hall. A paper was there but they left it. Then Lesa grabbed the "Do Not Disturb!" sign to hang outside the room.

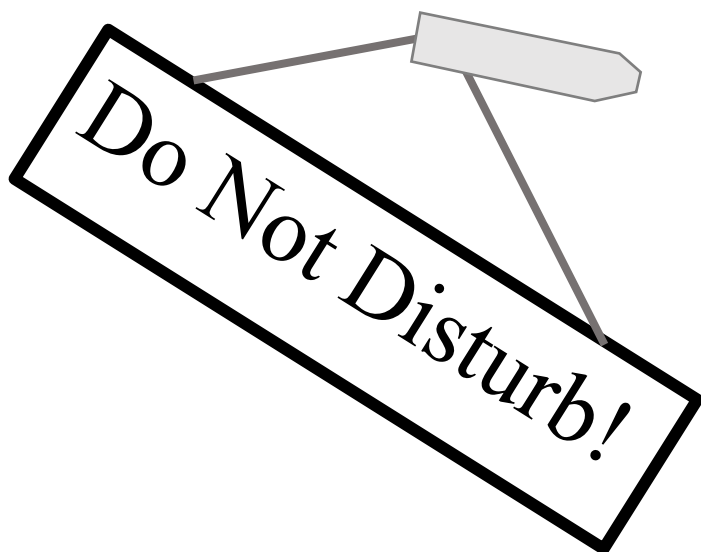
"Is that for Edna?" Ray asked.

"Since we already have our plan for the day, who needs Edna?"

Ray hadn't known they had settled on a plan. Oh, well.

They sat beside each other at the desk. His computer was attached to hers "at the hip," as she initially referred to the connection, desisting only because of his obvious discomfort with it. She transferred files directly into the new

directory she had set up in his memory. Then she asked to be given electronic copies of his unpublished books.



"Books?"

"Yeah, books. Your drafts of *Origins of Irreversibility* and *Cosmological Effects of Scattering in the Intergalactic Medium*."

"Les!" he remonstrated vehemently again. "Those are private. They are not ready for anyone else yet. I'll let you have the thermo, but not the other one. It's not far enough along to be worth anyone else looking at it. So no, not that one."

"Not far enough for anyone but me maybe," she said. "But it's far enough along for me, Ray."

"Les, I can't believe you behave like this at ASI."

"Of course I don't act like this at ASI. I'm not close to anyone at ASI. I haven't been as close to anyone anywhere as I am here with you in this room. I never have been, except with my mother, I guess, but that was different. Can't I just be myself for once in my life?"

"What about your father?"

"No. And you are not his authorized replacement. You *really* don't want to be, Ray. Will you please get it?"

"Got it. But please quit just barging into my life. Knock first."

"Knock, knock," she said as she tapped him with her knuckles - not all that softly - on the forehead. "I want in sweetheart," she said, laughing at him.

"You're in," he said; he was irritated. "Hadn't you better call Ed?"

Grabbing her phone, she immediately hit Ed's number.

"Oh, God," Ray thought fearing her insouciance. The "Dear!" she had written ahead of his signature last night made it easy to imagine what might ensue with her getting right through to Ed in this frame of mind. Ray hoped she wouldn't do anything too impulsive.

"Herr Doctor Ed," she said cheerfully enough. There was some non-trivial portion of a conversation beginning at the other end.

Clearly Lesa didn't intend to hide even this rather private situational conversation from Ray. She believed in reciprocity, he guessed.

"No, it was late," she said. "We're going over thermo today."

More conversation at the other end, and "Well, clearly I don't see his work as what you call 'bad science', Ed. It's got a feeling about it that is different too, an open attitude that holds nothing sacred."

There was obviously a contribution to the discussion at the other end; its volume had increased such that Ray could hear sounds rather than just imagining something going on at that end now.

"I tried to call. Elizabeth told me you were tied up." She listened a moment. "Ed, that's fine. I'll see you Wednesday then, unless Larry finds a reason to put us on the air again." A little chuckle. Ray imagined the incompatible composite interaction. Then, "How'd your meeting go with the bigees?"

Evidently "bigees" didn't strike Dr. Ed Watson as being as appropriate informal nomenclature coming from her as it must usually have from him. So Lesa added, "Well, you know what I mean. I just sincerely hoped that it had gone well, since that was the ostensible reason for your having sent the girl up here. Remember?"

Ray smirked a little, witnessing the extreme battle of wills.

Lesa caught his smirk without seeming to mind at all. After a spell of listening again, she said, "Yes, I think you should read the book. You should have read it before you decided to attack. It won't help you with what you're doing directly, or cure your arthritis, Ed, but it will give you a little different perspective on the trouble with physics and establishmentarianism." Then after a listening pause, she responded very sarcastically with, "No, I don't recommend that you let yourself fall in love with him; he's not very receptive!" She slammed her cell shut and stood there angrily without saying anything for what seemed a long time, but it was probably only a few seconds.

Her phone rang... well, sort of twittered. She looked at her phone and up at Ray. "Ed," she said.

"You'd better answer it."

"Hello, Ed. Sorry." The listening pause, "No, that's fine. I appreciate you calling me back. Thanks." The pause and, "Bye."

She waited a moment and turned to face Ray. "He thinks I've fallen in love with you," she said disdainfully. Laughing then, she threw her arms around his neck before he could avert it. "Well, that's out of the way."

She clung to him tenaciously despite Ray's efforts to dislodge her.

Working at freeing himself, he said, "That old familiar albatross."

"Albatross?" she exclaimed looking up into his face. "I've read a little too, you know. The albatross was a bird of good omen that the ancient mariner foolishly disdained to his own misfortune:

*"And a good south wind sprung up behind;  
The Albatross did follow,  
And every day, for food or play,  
Came to the mariner's hollo!"*

Her extreme eidetic memory capabilities once again impressed him, and even though his was not eidetic in the same sense as hers, he did still possess partial photographic memory capabilities. He had always been able to impress family and friends with his ability to rapidly commit long passages to memory. He said, "Perhaps I should have alluded to what I've been reading in *Faust* instead."

"Pick your poison," she said gleefully.  
So Ray proceeded with:

*"Youth, my good friend, you certainly require  
When foes in battle round are pressing,  
When a fair maid, her heart on fire,  
Hangs on your neck with fond caressing."*

"Good," she said, "Very good." The weight to her body seemed to have increased by an act of her volition. "Bravo Faust, Touché Ray." Eagerly Lesa's incredible memory found and replayed ensuing lines from *Faust*:

*"This task is yours, old gentleman, to-day;  
Nor are you therefore less in reverence held;  
Age does not make us childish, as folk say,  
It finds us genuine children e'en tho' eld."*

Impressing him even more though was how she proceeded so directly to inform him, "Or as the Constantine translation states it,

*"Old age doesn't make us childish, as they say,  
It finds the true surviving child in us."*

She let go of his neck as though of her own free will without regard for his urgent discomfort. "We are both just kids, Ray. You said so yourself last night. Charmed and charming children, and always will be. Let's play instead of fighting like cranky adults," she taunted again cheerfully.

After a brief pause, and more seriously, "But Ray," she asked, "will you let me just clarify one thing in reverence to what you have imprinted on my heart?" She paused pending his approval.

He did not approve. He just stared at her, still amazed but too apprehensive to grant her license to play further with his emotions. "Please don't preempt me," was his weak response.

"That's the point, Ray," she clearly perceived him to have played into her hand once again. "You've made a splash with your criticism of the scientific establishment for accepting an interpretation of a formula that does just that. It preempts independent observation in favor of a calculation of what *ought* to be observed. Yet now you allow your personal experiences to be preempted by outmoded common sense and antiquated authorities on etiquette and ethics. You do this on everything except for the field in which you yourself feel at ease. Why can't you accept what you yourself sense as having happened, without doubting whether it's real? It is real, Ray, you *sensed* it. That's what real is. Be honest, Ray."

There was someone at the door. Ray broke away from the beautiful wreath of arms, poetry, banter, logic, and sensuality to escape as far as the door. He felt the interruption truly fortunate.

Enter Edna - Ms. Practicality - stage door left.

"Please help me out here, Edna!" he thought would be the proper line for his role in this production, but of course he didn't execute the line.

"Did you two eat without me?" Edna asked, obviously offended to already be so completely out of this loop. "And who's the Do Not Disturb sign for?" Edna continued, offering the paper to Ray. When he didn't take it, she laid it on the sideboard.

He had figured the night before that they must not have had any suites available with three bedrooms, but then he could imagine Edna sleeping happily on the couch where he and Lesa had slept last night, in the middle of things monitoring bedroom traffic. It would probably have been a good idea.

"Yes, we did eat," Lesa confessed without guilt. "We were up early and wanted to eat before getting too enmeshed in our work. We had it sent up. The sign is just to indicate that work is in progress."

Lesa was some "work in progress," Ray thought.

"Yes. I saw the remains outside, Lesa. Have you got yourself freed up from ASI for a few days?"

"Yes, I just did." She stood right where she had disentangled herself and had subsequently attempted to more securely entangle Ray.

"Good. What're you kids going to do? Need some suggestions?"

"No, we don't actually; we have a lot to get done," Lesa said. "But what would you suggest, if there's time?"

Ray was amazed at how Lesa handled, actually marginalized, Edna.

"Well, here's the thing," Edna began.

"Oh, God," Ray thought in silence.

"I'm working a big advance for the two of you on the irreversibility book," Edna proceeded. "It's big. A collaboration."

"No!" Lesa fairly yelled at her. "It's *not* a collaboration. It's Ray's book. He's got it all written. I am not stealing that."

"Okay, okay," Edna readily accepted that for some reason that Ray could not understand. "A long Foreword then."



Ray hopped in with, "Lesa, it isn't all written, that's just the way I work. I print out my thoughts in progress just so it's easier for me to work with them. You have written more on this topic with a lot more expertise than I have." It was clear to him that his having nagged her about property rights this morning was interfering with their proper relationship for a collaboration. It seemed like everything he did to keep out of trouble with her just got him into another kind of deeper trouble; she was like quicksand.

"Okay, the Foreword then. I'll work with you, but not as co-author. That would be a travesty." Turning to Edna then, "Ray had the insight that makes the difference, that makes it all work, but I *definitely* want to work with him."

All this from the one who ransacked everything he had ever thought was his, and his alone, thought Ray, a whole new conception of intellectual property rights. He smiled finally. Why not? He was not in control here, but the people who were promoted his interests and quite clearly meant him no immediate harm. But the term 'collateral damage' popped into his mind.

"But!" It was Edna taking charge again. "That starts after Monday's show. Larry and the whole country want to hear about *Aberrations of Relativity* - from *both* of you. And... we have a second edition coming out; we're about out of the first already."

"We do?" Ray asked, surprised but without much interest.

"Yes, we do. And I suspect that you, young lady," Edna swung her attention to Lesa, "will no longer be respected as an objective member of establishment. They'll have some phone-ins from some big timers who'll try to nail both your butts to the same cross." Edna wasn't good at metaphors, but she tried them occasionally. Too often, Ray thought.

The 'kids' both laughed at her now.

Then self-consciously, "Well, you know what I mean, so get ready."

Lesa in particular knew what the comment *meant*.

"Meet me downstairs for lunch at twelve thirty, okay?" Edna was back in command... well, almost.

They looked at each other and shrugged, "Sure." Edna was gone.

"Ray, if it takes being nailed to a cross to get hip-to-hip with you, then I'm all in." Laughing hilariously, she pushed her hips forward and gyrated.

Ray was obvious about his disapproval of her picturesque imagery, so she quickly desisted.

"So..." Ray started, "she didn't lay out our new plan. I am what has been derogatorily referred to as an 'independent contributor'; I am not comfortable with planning. Especially for two. I hate management."

"Okay," Lesa said, eagerly accepting the lead, "since Edna intends for us to spend a bunch of time together over the next few months..."

Ray's brow wrinkled at her spin on the more benign facts.

Seeing his rejection, she defended, "Well, she does."

"That's not what she said," he countered.

"How're we going to collaborate otherwise?"

"Oh. You *are* going to collaborate with me. Good. The internet works pretty effectively. Real scientists find it useful, I'm told"

"Sure, we'll collaborate," she said. "But I don't steal royalties."

"Why not? You take anything else of mine you want," he smirked.

"Maybe I just don't want royalties," she said matter-of-factly, to which he could only roll his eyes to her apparent delight. After a moment's reflection she added, "I'll write the foreword and help you on the rest."

Avoiding all the barbs and changing the subject skillfully then, she asked, "But do you know what I would like to do now?"

He was afraid to guess.

She continued following her rhetorical question with, "I want to discuss *Aberrations of Relativity* with you. I'll read it aloud from the beginning and ask you the questions I have highlighted in my old copy of your book, and any additional ones that come to mind."

Already there's an 'old' copy of his new book, he thought, and a 'new' edition coming out.

The phone on the desk rang. Ray was next to it, so he answered. It was Edna.

"I have an idea," she said.

"Yeah, have we met?"

"Would it be all right with you and Lesa if we printed our next edition of *Aberrations* with the signature you signed in her book printed in place?"

"Oh, God," he said. When Lesa asked what was wrong, he handed her the phone and walked away in disgust.

"Sure," Lesa said into the phone with enthusiasm. "That would be great. I found a couple of typos too."

"Just great!" he mumbled, leaving the room, and closing his door.

"Okay. Twelve thirty," he heard Lesa say before she hung up.

Ray was coming out of the bathroom; the toilet wasn't even done flushing yet. He was just letting go of the towel and there was Lesa right in his face.

"Les!" His shock gave way to anger. "Listen to me. Do *not*..." He paused here for effect and to get his wits about him. "Do not *ever* come into my room again without being invited. Do you hear me? I will respect your privacy the same way."

"I want you to respect my privacy in a different way," she said.

"Les!" he yelled angrily. "Do you understand me?"

Without anger or remorse, she said, "Sorry. I won't do it again."

"Okay then, what is it?" Ray asked somewhat appeased.

"Oh, nothing really." She paused even as she continued to leave his rooms. "I just thought Edna's idea was kind of neat."

Yeah, neat, he thought without making a sound. Lesa's vivacity - about everything - was wearing on his nerves. He was tired of it; people his age shouldn't have kids. He hadn't had a very long or restful night.

"Are you ready to begin?" she asked indefatigably.

"Yeah, okay." But any enthusiasm he might have had for the task - or her - was dulled. *Aberrations of Relativity* was so yesterday; he had been anxious to move on. He proceeded into what was, he guessed, their living room or den, he sat down heavily into one of the comfortable chairs.

"Over here," she said. "I might want to ask you about a diagram."

He resisted but she pulled him up by the hand and sat him down beside her on the couch. He leaned way back against the overstuffed pillows as she began reading aloud. The flow of his text seemed ideally fitted to her articulation. She must have been pretty accepting of what it said, because she just kept going like the little pink Energizer bunny.

As she read, Ray listened to the clear, and yes, so sweet, voice of the girl who had less than twenty four hours before impressed him so profoundly in solving his 'black stick' problem and given him fantasies that were nothing in comparison to the real thing. Here was a girl, and no matter how he looked at her, or how she remonstrated, she was a girl, not a woman. Emotionally a very young girl, needing desperately to be loved. Somehow, by some quirk of fate, she had focused her need on him. She had told Ed Watson that he had sent "the girl" to New York City. He had. Evidently in some sense they at ASI all implicitly recognized that Dr. Landau, however brilliant and intellectually mature beyond her years, was just a girl. She had still been a girl when she got here; it was the childish curiosity and unabashedness of her peering at him and peeking around bookshelves that had fascinated him.

Suddenly, and he felt sure that it must have occurred suddenly, she had accepted that she was a woman in love. Of course, she was a woman, not just a child. As beautiful a woman as he had ever seen he believed right now and would always believe. And although he was considerably under her spell, no matter how he looked at her, she would appear beautiful, to anyone, ever, he was convinced.

That was his problem, *his* dilemma. Her. It seemed to him then, as he listened to her sweet clear voice reading his own words back to him, that she was the biggest problem he might ever, would ever, encounter. A beautiful spider whose silky web of his own words was being wound around him strand after strand. How would he handle this, day in and day out? Yes, Edna and Helen had collaborated in quite perverse, although certainly unwitting, ways to make this eventuality somewhat unavoidable. Somewhat?

"You really believe that a compatible definition of observation would have solved the cleavage between relativity and quantum theories, don't you?" He opened his eyes and looked at the beautiful questioner who obviously had read much into this aspect of his book.

"It would have gone a long way, don't you think?"

She thought for a moment or two and then, with no more thoughts on that tangent, the cadence of her impeccable articulation continued. Edna should hear this, Ray thought; she'd be marketing audio CDs.

The perfection of Lesa's pronunciation, like her singing, and everything else she did, struck him as so strange in someone so emotionally disturbed. He

wondered how many there were who realized that this perfection was so terribly flawed, that beneath and despite the obvious perfection there was this vast emotional chasm that had healed over without healing the emotional abscess underneath.

She could not even bring herself to address what had happened to a mother she had loved more dearly than anything the world had offered her since. And a father... was he a victim or the perpetrator of whatever had happened? Had they maybe died in a related incident he wondered. That was something that he must find out and clarify for Lesa without her knowing of the effort, and then attempt to work the problem of helping her address the underlying issues by getting the right help. Somehow, he must facilitate that redirection of her misdirected love, of which he was the illegitimate beneficiary. The flattery of having someone so beautiful and seemingly perfect, unquestioningly and vehemently enamored with him, was hard not to accept, especially when he was so drawn to her as well. The ego thrived on just such things whether one knew them to be misguided or not. But she had quit reading.

He opened his eyes to see what question there might be.

"What are you thinking?" she asked.

"Just following the reading of the gospel of Saint Bonn," he joshed.

"No, you're not," she said. "What did I just read?"

Oh, God! He panicked but tried to retain his composure. The last beats before the lull reiterated in his mind: "...falsify the conjecture concerning light being just another object upon which so much of Einstein's and Minkowski's interpretation rests," he reiterated verbatim.

She seemed satisfied with that.

"Mind if I play solitaire to keep myself awake through the text of this boring sermon?" he asked. "I can still listen and follow it."

"Sure, go ahead. I play it too, to untangle thoughts. But tell me, did you draw this antinomy image back in 1975?" She showed him the image from the book.

"A friend of mine, Fred Vaughan drew it."

"That's not just a pseudonym for R. Fred Bonn is it?" she asked more or less rhetorically before turning back to where she had quit reading.

As she continued reading, he went over to the desk and then to the 'desktop' of his computer with the familiar solitaire icon. Click. He was flipping Black Jacks on Red Queens, Red Tens on Black Jacks, and the rhythm was contrapuntal to the cadence of her voice. That went on for quite a while with Ray playing game after game. Then the voice stopped. He finished his game in progress and asked, "What?"

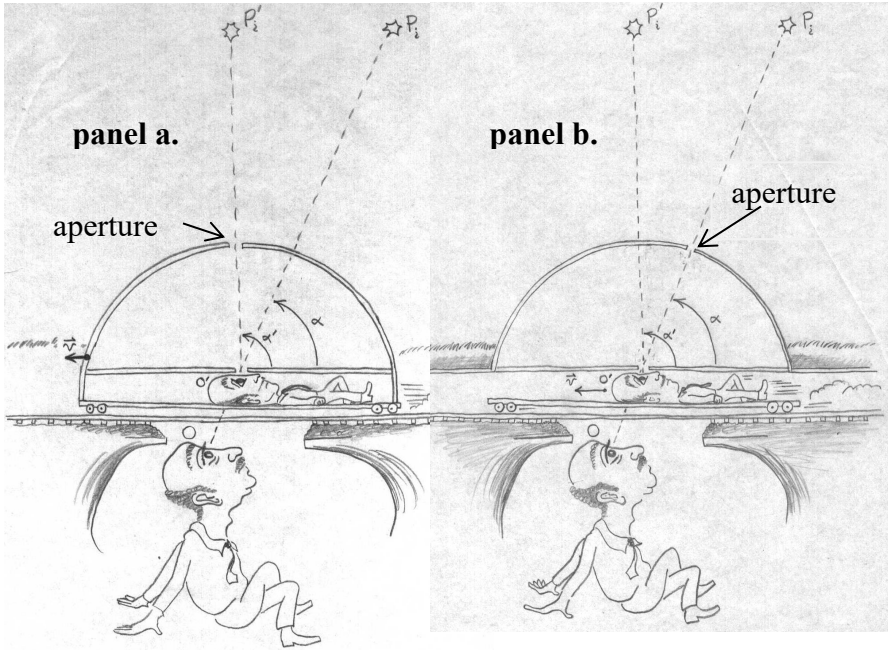
"Don't you ever lose?"

"Of course, I lose. You know the game. You're familiar with runs being more likely than even distributions in statistics."

"Yes, of course. What was your score that time?" she asked.

"I don't know."

"Well, look at it and tell me."



***antinomy in an underground observatory,***

drawn by R. F. Vaughan author circa 1975

He frowned. "Seventy-nine thirty-six, I guess."

"Do you always get that high when you make it?"

"No. Sometimes."

She was off reading again. He missed being alone. He could work, mix in crosswords, Solitaire, Biphle, and FreeCell by the hour without interruption at home. Lesa was definitely more demanding than Helen. He smiled, thinking of that difference. Helen was responsible for this predicament of his. Thinking about that a moment, he had to backpedal, to acknowledge that, no, he himself was responsible. No matter how many levels of responsibility he went back, there was always the pride of Ray Bonn hiding behind all the others as the real culprit.

Lesa stopped reading a few more times during which they discussed some of his ideas on the relationship between the velocity addition formula and the determinism that distinguished relativity from quantum theories. Ray had never been able to discuss this in detail with anyone who was both knowledgeable and as empathetic to new ideas as Lesa was. It was an extreme pleasure for him; he could tell that she enjoyed it as well. She contributed insights that he was left thinking about and would bring up later for additional consideration. These snippets of conversation were the actual realization of yesterday's fantasy. *This* was indeed what he had wanted.

As she continued reading, he opened his mailbox and looked at the tremendous number of e-mails. He called them up, a whole window at a time: Cialis, Çİ½Ê½Ã¿ä;â;â (whatever in hell that was), mortgage rates, cheapest ever pharmacy, etc. He deleted them all in one fell swoop. That spam filter is no damn good, he thought. The next window was filled with similar inanities, but one from a recognizable address. He deleted the rest and opened it. It was from yesterday, Alice... his eldest child, Allie. "Daddy:" she always began that way... no matter that she was thirty. "We are all anxious to see you on Larry King Live tonight. Good luck with it. Stephanie and Cecil both send their love, and Tom says hi. ☺" He wondered now how embarrassed or irritated she might have been with "Daddy's" performance last night. Oh well... what's done is done. Another page of spam without a meaningful return address, then Andrew: "Hi. Good luck tomorrow. Andrew." More spam to delete and Andrew again: "Hi. I forgot. Can we have coffee after you get back? I don't want to lose my good friend just because he's picked up the odd million or so more. ☺ Andrew." More spam, more deletions. Helen: "Hi, Hon. I miss you and look forward to tomorrow morning. Good luck tonight. Your ever-luvin Helen." More spam. Then Jamie: "We'll be going into the other room in a few minutes to watch you wow Larry and the country. I know you won't see this before you're a national icon, but just so you know your number one son doesn't ever forget the phenom he has for a dad. Jamie." More spam and deletions, and one from Ruth: "Ray: You are my poster child! You will make me rich and famous yet. I just watched Larry King Live and believe me, you are now Big Time! And me with you - thank you for your generous mention of me. You were wonderful BTW! I'm going with you to the top, if only in thought. Ruth. PS: Who's Lesa?"

He should probably answer her. He hit reply and typed:

*"Ruth:*

*"Thanks for all your care. I think of you frequently. Particularly when I see how efficient Edna is and know that it was you who put her in place. I could certainly never forget that my agent Ruth Henderson put it all together. You were the only one who ever gave my speculative ideas a shot at being big time before they \*were\* big time. Thanks.*

*"Lesa is the phenom they sent to attack the old man. She \*is\* a phenom! I've been lucky so far. Monday night could be different. Pray for me in your Motorcycle Maintenance religious sort of way.*

*"Thanks!*

*"Ray"*

"Who was that?" It was Lesa interrupting again.

"Ruth Henderson, my agent."

"I thought I might be your agent now," Lesa forced him to notice her awareness of his fear of her controlling ways.

"No, you're just a good friend, Lesa." He knew it would irritate her. Proclaiming 'friendship' put a hex on love. He knew that much about such things. Everyone learns that in grade school.

He got up. "I have to call Helen."

"Ray."

"Yeah."

"Call her from your room. I know you love each other and have things to say to each other that I have no business hearing."

How could the woman who had been flirting with him so egregiously turn right around to then seem to be so understanding? It made no sense. Probably he just needed to get to know her better.

He did call Helen from his room, with the door closed. Helen was fine and accepted Ray's chiding for "selling him down river" as he referred to her action. She was even more gracious about his apology for not calling right after the show.

"It worried me a little," Helen said, albeit cheerily. Allie, of course, had thought Helen should be jealous and that she had made a major fool of herself letting that little "floozy" get her mitts on her Daddy. "Other than just a twinge of jealous apprehension, I got over it right away and got a good night's sleep. I am just really happy for you, Ray. You finally have someone with whom to discuss things that matter to you. Do you know what made it easier to not be jealous though?"

"No, what?" Ray felt awkward.

"That she's not Julie," Helen laughed. "Remember Cousin Julie?"

"The Venus of Willendorf? *Everyone* remembers Cousin Julie." They shared a laugh. "No. Lesa is definitely not anything like *that* Julie." Though after having said it, he wondered.

"Julie the Ffloozy." Helen reminisced, "Remember that epithet?"

"Yeah. You and Dad tattooed it on my brain. We were only fourteen then, you know. We're a little more mature in our thinking and don't have the same quantity of hormone interference." He chuckled and Helen did too.

"What is she like, Ray? I mean other than being a whiz at physics."

"She's a little girl, Helen, who lost her parents tragically when she was six. It's a long story that she got into tearfully last night. In her mind it bore on the issue of having let her boss down who had sent her up here to shoot me down. A pretty big assignment for a kid, don't you think?"

They both laughed.

"That story got in progress right after we got here. It went on and on and it just seemed like I shouldn't break away to call you, and then it got too late."

"She seemed very child-like on the show, Ray. So, I suppose you're her father figure?"

"That would be nice," he replied with irony. "The problem is that she seems to see it as love with the 'L' capitalized."

"You're enamored with her too. Right?"

"I guess I am a little, Helen. If you had seen how she expressed what I was trying to get at in my presentation at the bookstore yesterday, when I had no idea who she was, you'd realize why I might have fantasized about getting to know her - to discuss physics. It's not a sexual thing you know. You have to know that, Helen, and help me with the rest."

"But it is with her?"

"Well, I think maybe it's both. She doesn't really know what she's feeling. When I said I was going to call you, she told me to go into my room to call, because she knew that we loved each other and would have things to say that were none of her business. That was after more or less insisting that she loved me, and I was *not* a father figure for her. So... go figure."

"It'll work out, Ray. I'm glad you explained it. I like her... a lot."

"She is extremely likeable, and a hard worker. I'm convinced that the collaboration you insisted on will succeed. But it's awkward."

They were already working pretty intently today Ray told her. He thanked her again for caring, for having done what she thought would work out best for him. Other than Allie, how'd the kids take the show?

Well, they knew he was big time now and were proud of him. Allie too. Was he all right? He looked pretty deflated at the end of the show.

Yes, of course, he had been deflated. But he was all right now.

"Edna's going for another edition with the 'Dear Lesa' in place."

Helen laughed, "That's great." Then, "Maybe you should take Lesa to the Met tomorrow," Helen suggested. "You enjoy art museums."

"Yeah, maybe," he replied. Probably it would be Wednesday before he got out of here now, thanks to her, he teased. He was holding up fine. Yes, he slept fine last night. "There's lots of room here," he lied. "Lots of separate rooms," he clarified his lie.

His "I love you" was no lie.

"I love you too," she replied. That was one kind of love to count on for as long as there was a sun and he had a face for sunlight to touch.

When he came out of his room, Lesa had disappeared. He looked at his watch. It was after twelve. He went back into his room, closed the door and proceeded on into his bathroom. He washed his face in cold water; it felt good. He threw a sport jacket over his shoulder and opened the door to leave his bedroom, but there was Lesa with her face right next to his door. Ray pulled back instinctively, staring at her.

"Sorry," she smiled. "I just want you to know that *this*," and she looked down to where she was pointing at her toes that butted up to the differently colored carpet of his bedroom, "is my outer limit from now on. I won't get in your bag or anything else. I've been a real nuisance and I'm really sorry for it. I won't make it look like you and I are any more than friends to anyone else unless you want me too. Okay?"

"That sounds like a very good idea," he said.

"Good," she said, proceeding to the anteroom on their way to lunch.



*#10 Being Under the Microscope*

Friday noon, April 28<sup>th</sup>.

Ray thought they might be just a tad early, but Edna was standing there in the lobby near the entry to the restaurant already. As soon as they had emerged from the elevator, he began noticing double takes of people ogling them. He was glad Lesa had eased his mind as far as betraying their somewhat convoluted relationship. Edna had seemed not to have noticed at any point so far either and that was good. Right now, Lesa walked along as though totally independent of him.

Flash. He turned. A camera. Oh God. On one interview and now there were paparazzi? That Lesa was not squeezing his arm between her arm and breast, was a major relief. A photo such as could have been taken last night would have been just too much.

"How are you kids coming?" Edna asked.

"The 'kids' are doing fine," Lesa teased.

"Excellent." The reply was to Lesa. "Three," Edna indicated to the hostess holding up three fingers. Once seated they looked at menus while chatting about their morning. Edna was more talkative and less bossy than Ray had ever seen her, charming really.

They ordered. Edna the London broil... again. She evidently liked to check the variations that different restaurants had on that same entrée. He had seen her order it at least three other times. Lesa ordered their burger, Ray the French dip.

"Oh, I thought about that," Lesa said. Then to the waiter, "Would you please change my order to that."

Ray looked at her, wondering; she saw him and shrugged.

Edna observed, "You two seem to have a lot in common, don't you?" then looked around the restaurant, seeming to have withdrawn her comment so that she wouldn't induce inhibitions in the 'kids'. Ray figured that she had probably decided that in some obscure way whatever it was that they had in common just might help sales.

"I'll need your book right after lunch, Lesa."

So that was it. Romance sells.

"Which one?" Lesa feigned innocence admirably.

"The one with the signature, of course. I'm flying it down to McGregor this afternoon. I'll get the typos too."

"This afternoon?" Lesa and Ray both queried.

Lesa added, "You don't waste any time, do you?"

"No, of course not. We're about sold out of our first edition already, and if we want the signature and corrections in the second, then we have to get it down there." She paused, "I have to talk to management."

"When's this edition come out, Edna?" Lesa asked.

"They'll start rolling off the presses next Friday."

"Will you be back before Monday?" Ray asked.

"Oh, yeah, tonight."

Lesa and Ray looked at each other impressed.

"What are you doing tomorrow, Edna?" Ray asked, and continued, "I was wondering whether we could get to the Met for a while. I'd like to anyway. A couple of beautiful ladies would make a nice entourage for a big celebrity like me," to which they each feigned disgust.

"I want to come with you," Lesa said.

Edna allowed as how she needed to keep the kids out of trouble and looking their best for the paparazzi, so she'd better come too.

She *had* noticed the flash and read the signs. Was there anything that got by her, Ray wondered.

The French dip tasted good enough. Watching Lesa eat hers was rather fun for the other two of them. Edna made the comment that they would have to acquire some sophistication, since they were evidently both destined for stardom.

"You mean order London broil next time?" Lesa teased.

"It might be better," Edna acknowledged.

Lesa smiled conspiratorially at Ray.

"Are you two okay for this afternoon?" Edna proceeded as though oblivious to their sport. "If so, I'll follow you up, get the book, and be gone."

"The kids'll be fine," Lesa said, verifying with a sidelong glance that Ray took no exception.

Edna got the priceless signature in the "floozy's" book that had evidently got Allie's dander up a bit, and the few typos Ray was not even asked to approve. He should probably have objected. He didn't.

Edna was gone in the proverbial cloud of dust and the kids were left to their own devices again, which Ray noticed was precisely what Lesa seemed to be working with on the screen of her laptop. She had an object drawing program open and was constructing a *thing*, something mechanical. It was an ell-shaped contraption with a ring at the juncture. She was working on a stick attached to rings, and then sticks with a single ring up near the end and a hook at the bottom.

"Are those 'black sticks'," he asked and then realized that he was interrupting Lesa in the same way he did not enjoy being interrupted by her. "Oh, sorry," he appended.

"Don't be sorry," she said. "I decided I better get this shipped off to Bob at the ASI shop, if I wanted it for Monday night."

"You're making a model of axis misalignment?" he asked, having figured out how all these pieces might fit together.

"Well, yeah. Your observation transformation too," she said.

He pursed his lips a little and smiled. Yeah, he could see that. He wondered how she might manipulate in for a TV audience and what she would have to say about it. He also wondered how she expected to get it shipped back here by Monday night. Would she be going down to ASI over the weekend to mend a few fences? He decided not to ask.

He played another solitaire game waiting for some of her plan to materialize for him. He was a slug of a personality, he realized, always dependent on some woman to make all the decisions that mattered, except for how the universe works. He shared that responsibility with Einstein and God; it was a man thing.

The moment that chauvinistic thought crossed his mind, however, he was appalled at himself. Lesa. My God, he thought. Lesa shared all his enthusiasm for the workings of the universe and probably had much more insight, enthusiasm, and certainly more vigor and persistence than he could ever dream of having, and she probably did all of what he considered 'woman things' besides. He certainly hadn't appreciated her properly. Knowing faults - well, not faults really, how was any of that awful experience her fault - he had discounted her tremendous assets.

"Would you do something for me?" It was Lesa leaning over, watching, and waiting until he was done with another game.

"That's what I've been waiting for," he said.

"Did you notice what your score was there?" she said pointing to the screen where the Solitaire window had been.

"Yeah, I guess. Eighty something."

"Eighty-nine seventy-two. And your time was in the low eighties."

"Yeah. Who cares? What do you propose I do with that?"

"Come over here and do this procedure on my computer."

He looked at her questioningly and changed chairs.

Lesa's drawing program was gone. "This is a chronometrics test."

"Oh, yeah, one of those. But it ain't Solitaire."

"No, it ain't," she aped, laughing, "but it's somewhat similar. You know how to do this? Just hit the left arrow when you see that symbol, and the right arrow when you see that one. Like this," she said and leaned the softness of her breasts on his shoulders as she manipulated the keys after starting the program. "Do it till those words come up. You ready?"

"Yeah, I guess," he said. The flashing symbols began appearing then in more and more rapid succession all over the screen with him snuffing them out

with the appropriate fingering. Then the words she had indicated came up and he asked how he had done.

"Marvelous." She pointed to a register. "See your score. Do it again." She started him off and said, "Wow!" when he was done.

He got up from her chair and back into his own. "What're we going to get done this afternoon? Games? Why are you so obsessed with how I play games anyway? Who gives a damn?"

She smiled at him admiringly and answered, "I give a damn. The way one plays games is a measure of how well one thinks; you think very well. I like watching you and seeing how quick-witted you are. It's fun. Your neurons snap like firecrackers." She laughed closing the program window.

"I've sent the sticks off to Bob, so I'm ready to get started. Bob's an awfully nice guy and very good at making things," she said, talking shop now. "I don't know how I'll get it up here, but some way. He'd even bring it up if I wanted him to, I'd bet."

"I'll bet," Ray said, thinking he and Bob might share a terminal disease.

"No, it's not like that, he's just this old guy... Oh, I didn't mean that either, Ray," she stammered. "I really didn't mean that. Please believe me, Ray." She threw her arms around his neck albatross fashion again.

"It's fine," he grabbed her, so that the way she was hanging wouldn't give him a kink in his neck, trying to peel her off like a wet T-shirt.

"Well, anyway, I've had one more concession before you wake up completely and realize how truly old I am." He laughed at her.

"Oh no, Ray, you're not old. I won't ever wake up from this."

"Okay," he said lifting her awkwardly, carrying her to the couch to throw her off him with some force. She clung, dangled awkwardly, rubbed his face with her not quite free hand, and disturbed his glasses in the process. She took them off him, standing down to her feet.

"How bad do you need these?" she asked, looking at them first. She looked through the glasses as she let go of him, and then hooked them over her ears to quite humorous effect.

"Depends on how bad I want to see. Right now, I'd like to be able to see."

"These things are filthy, Ray."

"They're specs for a dirty old man, what do you expect?"

"I *wish*," she said, running off into her room with the glasses.

Ray sat down on the couch. He heard water. He also heard a flush, but no doors opening or closing. When she returned, he asked whether she had flushed his specs down the toilet.

"No," she said, leaning toward him to put the now sparkling glasses back on him. "You do know that everybody has to pee, don't you, Ray? Well, as alarming as it may be, I do too."

"You've destroyed the image." He laughed. "Are you the fastest in the world at that too?"

She leaned further forward, kissing his forehead.

God *damn* her, he thought again. He got up and moved away a bit.

"I need establishment help with that observation' transformation you're going to address with your sticks," he said finally. "Specifically, let's verify that all those promises I make for it actually hold up."

"I've looked at it enough to convince myself," she said, "but you're right, it's not all that obvious, and that's where you'll get into trouble with establishment. By insisting that there is no background spacetime you'll dash their hopes for quantum gravity." She inserted a natural enough laugh. "Your spacetime metric is entirely relative, so there's no hook for the whole superstructure of gravity as some grandiose universal geometry." She laughed, "You know that, of course?"

"Yeah," Ray replied disdainfully, wondering to what extent she was making fun of him.

"Well, I've bought into it. That's partly why I'm putting the sticks together. It's easier to see that the  $y$  and  $z$  axes of the two frames can't be the same length as required by the usual interpretation of the Lorentz transformation. Something has to give. You have to make that clear. I don't think the general public is going to be convinced by the similarities of the matrices you show."

$$\mathcal{L}_v = \begin{pmatrix} \gamma & -\gamma\beta & 0 & 0 \\ -\gamma\beta & \gamma & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}, \text{ and } \mathcal{O}_v = \gamma^\sigma \begin{pmatrix} \gamma & -\gamma\beta & 0 & 0 \\ -\gamma\beta & \gamma & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$$

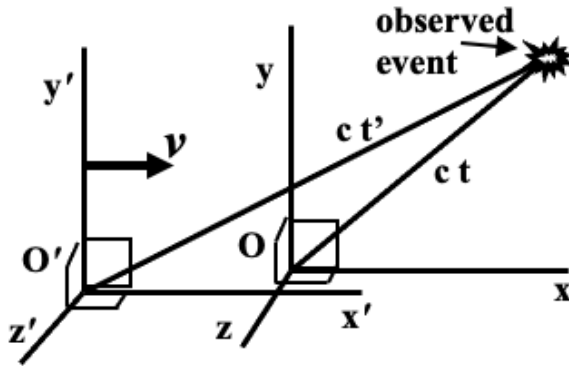
"No, but I was actually hoping someone like you might read it. I didn't publish it to be presented on Larry King Live. What about the sign change in of plus and minus one with the exponent on gamma for motion away and toward an observer. Does that seem right to you?"

"Yes. It did seem strange at first that it would differ that way, but that does characterize the directional difference. It's just an inversion; I've verified it. I think the sticks will demonstrate your figure on page "

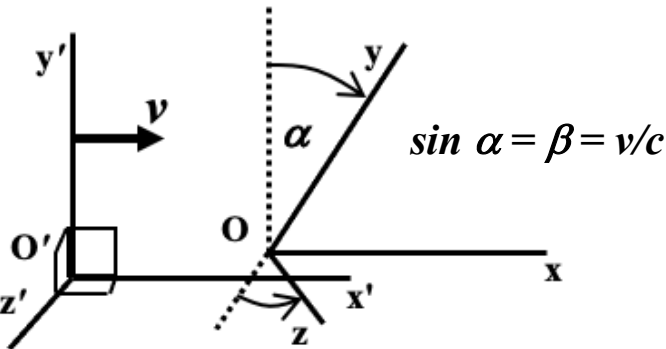
"So, what about 'boosting'? I haven't really discussed that in any depth. It's a big thing with general theorists. Right?" he interrogated.

"Yes, of course, it is. But I have a hard time going back. Edna's right. I don't represent establishment anymore; I've been compromised." She laughed again as though she had intended the pun. "You convinced me that Einstein's velocity addition formula is where determinism illegitimately forced its entry. Once one rejects that formula that has nothing to do with relativity *per se*, boosting no longer makes sense, does it? And there's no way to integrate gravity into the geometry of the theory because you've changed the nature of geometry to just angles and time. So how do you propose to explain all that? You did attack the action-at-a-distance problem, but what about integrating gravity with the other forces. What do you plan to do about that?"

"Einstein spent the rest of his life and never could do that, so give me a few minutes," he toyed. "But how do I prepare for the onslaught of a physics community, if I no longer have access to how 'they' think? You're just thinking like I think."



*Assuming mutually alignment of coordinate reference frames*



*Actual observations of the 'other' coordinate frame*

"Oh, don't let Edna and me scare you. I know how they think. I *was* one, remember? And most of them think I still *are* one. Ed thinks I'll be back to my senses on Monday. He doesn't know I'm cohabiting with the enemy, shackled up so to speak."

She liked the latter phrasing better, Ray could tell; he didn't.

That he didn't like it, she could tell as well, so with index finger pointing at him she appended, "But my promise is still intact, Ray. I'll bear that cross of not letting on, until you take it from me or we're nailed to it together."

Oh, God, melodrama now.

Lesla read the unspoken thought from his expression, "You might as well just say it, Ray. I know it's, 'Oh, God,' every time I profess my feelings for you."

"Yeah, it is," he admitted. "I can't help it; it just makes my skin crawl." He laughed in spite of his frown. "I actually cringe, so why do you persist in doing it when you know I don't like it?"

"I know I probably shouldn't, but it's fun. Don't be uncomfortable though. Like I told you, it's just me. When we're alone, let's you be you, and I'll be me. Can't we do that? You don't have to worry about me expressing my feelings

in public or in front of anyone who might not understand. And I've thought about this father image hang up of yours too. I understand where you're coming from a little - more than you understand the other, I think. And don't you dare say that there is no other, Ray." Quite impertinently she added, "I know you feel it. I've *felt* you feel it."

He looked at her, knowing that, yes, maybe she had. All he could do was laugh awkwardly at what was indeed, just Lesa being herself. "Lesa," he smiled shaking his head a little. "If you can't be decent, thanks for at least being refreshing about it, by just being you."

"Who happens to be just another version of you," she said, going over to hug him again. He backed away. "Well, almost like you," she modified, touching him where she ought not to have. She watched as he felt it. "Oh, God! Look at that," she mimicked, laughing at him.

She knew all this show of affection and intimacy exasperated him, of course, but she felt sure that he liked it in his way too. She sensed that she had access to what was in behind his words and frowns now. They were getting to know all about each other because, well, she thought, because they were so much alike, except for a fortunate fundamental difference.

"Nothing sacred," she remembered having told Ed about this man - that he would doubt anything, everything. But he was having a hard time with the affection that seemed so natural to her. He was a moral 'deontologist' was how she denominated it in her own mind, basing actions on rules. Whereas she was more of a 'consequentialist' who worried only consequences, which would have seemed much more consistent with how Ray seemed to view everything else in the physical world. She concluded that it really didn't matter right now, because as she had told him, her approach to living without guilt for what was happening between them was just her, tired of guilt. She would like him to immerse himself in this that had subsumed them both, abandon rule-based conventional scruples altogether, but if he couldn't, she still loved him, would continue to love him, even with his damned scruples. Her loving him was now in the permanent nature of things for her. What he did was up to him. She would leave it at that for now.

"Back to reading?" she asked, coming back from reverie.

"Sure," he agreed. "But I wonder, does gravity as a mere mathematical artifact bother you as much as it does me?"

"Yes. Since reading your tangential concerns. It seems to me also to relate to the issue of boosting that hijacked independent observation. An objective mathematical framework for reality seems absurd anymore. It's as though from our little snapshot of reality we have fitted a curve whose interpolations and extrapolations the establishment has taken as gospel. We fit redshift and since all that comes to mind is the Doppler effect, we adjust the date of origin of the universe from 6,000 years ago on a Wednesday, to 13 billion years ago on a

stormy Monday. But we're not sure whether it was in the morning or afternoon." She laughed - a bit too loudly, he thought.

Ray was not sure if she was making fun of him or not as they sat down on the couch where Lesa proceeded to read to him again as though he were a preschooler. After an hour or so with only brief interruptions, Lesa closed the book and stopped. Ray looked at her questioningly.

"Would you like a walk? Do you do calisthenics?" she asked.

"Yes, I'd love to walk and get a little fresh air, but I hate going out there with one person after another coming to the realization that, 'Yes, those are the two we saw last night on Larry King Live.'"

"I know. That camera flash at noon scared me. It *really* scared me, Ray, as though it were a shot being fired right at me or something."

"Me too," he said. Then, in reply to her asking whether he ever did calisthenics, he said, "I exercise some. Do you ever do isometrics?"

"I know what they are, but do they get toxins out of the system?"

"I don't know, probably not as well," he acknowledged.

"Let's do push-ups and sit-ups then," was her suggestion. "Do you ever run in place?"

"My whole life." He smiled, savoring how she frowned at his self-deprecation. He added more seriously, "Sometimes. Do you?"

"Yes." She had her blouse off over her head. Her lissome body was on the floor in position for a push-up. Ray was taken aback again but pulled off his sweatshirt and got down a distance from her. She was doing push-ups rapidly then. He began methodically with his considerably greater weight to strain his considerably older, if bulkier arms, holding his abdomen straight.

"You're buff," Lesa chuckled, turning a reddened, already sweaty face toward him without slowing up any.

He knew what she meant. "For your age," is what she meant, and for his age, he was. "You too," he said. "You must exercise regularly."

She didn't answer back until she had done a few more pushups, collapsed onto the carpet and rolled over on her side to watch him. "Fairly often, but I jog a lot too. The Princeton campus is pretty safe." Then, with a little more emphasis, "You need to tone up a little though, you never know when you might need those muscles."

His brow expressed his misunderstanding and irritation.

She corrected, "No, not that; you dirty old man. Something else."

"Something else?"

"Yes." They were both doing sit ups then. "Let me hold your feet, and then you can hold mine," she said. So they did that.

Ray had done way more of both than he had done in a long while and when she finally seemed to indicate that it was her turn more as a reprieve for him, he thought, he was glad; he hadn't exercised in weeks now. He'd be very sore tomorrow, he knew. When she was done, and he guessed that she had counted that out to do the same number as he had done, she took control again.

"Okay, how about a couple hundred paces in place."



She certainly did more than that regularly with her jogging, judging by her condition, but he knew even a couple hundred would do it for him today. It did. He was exhausted. He went to fall into the couch, but she grabbed his arm and locked it between her arm and breast as she had last night, to lead him to her room.

"Oh, no," he said, resisting. She didn't let go, pulling him sideways. He stumbled along off balance to where she could push him onto her bed.

"This is *my* room," she said, taunting, "but it's *not* off limits to you, *ever*. I like you here. Lay down and relax. There's nothing more wrong with resting next to each other than working next to each other, right? We slept together this way last night," she boasted, "and there was no Biblical way about it. We're not that religious," she laughed.

So, right or wrong, there he was. She was on his arm just as they had slept last night. He wearily let it go. They napped that way again.

Sometime later Lesa's phone twittered somewhere waking them both. She bounced up to get it.

"Hi, Bob. How are you?" A lull. "Good. Yes. I would really appreciate that. I need them Monday night." Another lull. "Oh, did you? Good. Ed thought I should have been tougher, I guess." An interval. "Oh, did you really think so? Thank you for telling me that." She waited. "Yes, you might really enjoy the book. Anyway, if you do, you'll probably see why I wanted the doohickey." A longer interval. "Yes, I should have indicated. There could have been three or four of the 'vertebrae' as you call them, but a single one will be handier. You'll have to solder them after you put it together you know." She laughed at what he was saying, "Yes, I know there isn't much you miss." A pause. "Yes, the Sheltry. I think I gave you the address and suite number." Then another chuckle, "Yes, he is, Bob. But we each have our separate bedrooms and a handler. You could not believe her; she is the epitome of efficiency. I think she is needed at ASI." More chuckling, "I know, I know. Thank you so much for everything, Bob. I really appreciate it. Bye." She was back in the bedroom by then.

Ray was sitting on the edge of the bed now. "Separate bedrooms?" he teased. "You think there's value to that, huh?"

"To *other* people," she said as she jumped him, "but it's a problem for us isn't it?" She caught him at the end of her flight, knocking him backwards.

They rolled, both laughing. He forced himself into a backward somersault and bounced completely over her and off the bed on the other side, landing on his feet.

"You're really athletic for an old coot," she teased.

"I'll be in my sanctuary for a little while." He was already walking back across their living room to his own bedroom.

Ray felt tiptop after a shower. The exercise had been an excellent idea, hers, he acknowledged. In every way he felt a flood of happiness. He donned more proper clothes than he had been wearing; he would leave them on for dinner later, he thought. He went back into the main room, thinking about the

uncertainty issue addressed by eliminating the velocity addition formula, the 'boosting' aspect of Einstein's theory. That had been another black stick he had gotten out of the pile without it collapsing. But the big-eyed beautiful girl who identified black sticks for him was not back in suite central yet.

He sat down at his computer and clicked the envelope icon that indicated he had mail. He *always* had mail, of course. It just wasn't usually mail anyone would want to receive. He began eliminating the spam in search of something meaningful. There was one from Allie, well, it said "Alice", and he was indeed curious even if a little apprehensive: "Daddy! You were great. We are so proud of your success with this book of yours. I went out and bought one today before the show, just to have. I want you to sign it for me sometime, and maybe wish your *'very best to \*me\* now and forever!'*" Oh, God. Ray sighed. Let it go, Allie. But she had continued: "You were brilliant with Larry. All my friends are buying your book now. I know I won't be able to answer their questions, but maybe you'll come over for a book signing and tell us all we have to know about it. I love you Daddy! Allie." More spam. Pages of it. "Ruth" again: "Thanks! I love you. Ruth." Then a ways further, Jamie: "Pops! You did indeed do us proud. Two nights on Larry King. That's Big! I look forward to seeing you when (if) you ever get home. Jamie." A ways further on was one from Andrew, flattering and grateful for the plug of his own book.

Then Helen: "Hi, Hon. It was wonderful talking with you this morning. I think about you almost all the time now and laugh at what a success you have become. I know you're making money for us too. That will be nice. It'll be fun seeing you again on Larry King. All my friends are jealous of me. I love you! Helen." He clicked "reply":

*"Helen!*

*"Allie says she wants me to sign a book for her stating that I hope nothing but the 'very best to her now and forever.' When you talk to her, please assure her that I do. And that my love for her mother and her has never been more certain or heart-felt or less likely to be stolen by a 'floozy'. Her little nose always got broke so easily. ☺ You don't need to tell Allie that it is working out well between her 'Daddy' and the 'floozy', but if you do, or if you ever wonder about it, remember that the emphasis is on 'working'.*

*"Edna has flown off to get the next edition under way; she'll be back later on tonight. I guess it'll be out next weekend.*

*"She also seems to have worked out some big contract on the thermo book. Lesa will provide help with it from her expertise and dissertation but claims that she would refuse an attribution as co-author, although she accepted Edna's proposition of writing a long Foreword. We'll see what develops.*

*"Don't forget that this is what \*you\* got me into - please. I know you wouldn't.*

*"I love you!*

*"Ray"*

More spam, a few more familiar well-wishers and congratulators. Eddie among them: "Dad: You've done it Big Time Man! ☺ And Lesa too! Good work. Your jealous son, Eddie." And that was it.

Lesa was just emerging from her rooms as he turned around. "Wow!" he said, "The lady of dreams."

"I hope so," she said. "Did you dream about me when we were sleeping?"

"No," he answered, irritated again. "I just meant you look elegant."

"Oh, is that all?" she smiled. "We could get some more done before we eat." Then glancing at his screen, "Do you get much e-mail?"

"Some," he said. Smiling then, he added, "I still have a family."

"Me too. Ed still loves me. He says your book isn't the scourge he had taken it to be. He kind of likes your style too."

"Oh, God, a male lover now?" Why did he keep doing this? Ray chided himself.

"No, no, no. He's as married as you and Helen, and I said, he still loves *me*, not *you*, and not the other way around as in *me* loving *you*."

"Yeah, right," he responded skeptically. "So how many of us would you say share this status of married and loving you?"

"Well, if you'd take just one more tiny step, you'd fall into a different category altogether, Ray." Then she paused and looked quite penitent. "I'm sorry. I'm sorry. Anyway, you are the one and only one no matter how many steps you take or don't take." She paused as she got closer to the desk and looked at his computer screen. Eddie's message, being the last Ray had received was open on the bottom portion of the window. "Is that from your family?"

"Yes. Eddie is my youngest son; he's finishing up in physics. He's your age by the way; you want to read it?" He motioned for her to look. She did, frowned a bit and asked sheepishly:

"Is that your family's general impression?"

"Pretty much. Read the others above it if you want to."

She opened Allie's, and Jamie's, and then Helen's. "I love Helen," she said with feeling.

"How about Allie?"

"Is that 'Alice'?" She watched him nod, then added, "I understand Allie better than any of them. She really is jealous, isn't she?"

"Yep, she is her Daddy's girl."

"She shouldn't be jealous then, because you're not my 'Daddy'. I can see you have a comfortable father image with your kids, Ray, and they're nice people." She paused then to make her point, "But you would be an ugly father-in-law, Ray, so don't let that fantasy ever cross your mind."

She laughed and let that go, proceeding directly into: "Was your thought that we should work out something to say about 'boosting' on Monday just so whoever calls in won't have the high ground with regard to your maybe not having covered it sufficiently?"

"I guess I had something like that in mind," he said, meshing gears with her again, which was becoming so natural for him. "It seems to me that eliminating boosting is a 'red stick' that's been extracted from the pile, and some might think the other sticks jiggled a little when I did it."

"You really liked me identifying the 'black stick' yesterday at the Alpha and Omega and praising what you had been able to accomplish, didn't you?"

"Yes, of course, I did. That was as nice a comment about my work as anyone could possibly have made." After a pause he said, "Nicer actually. But could you do it one more time for boosting?"

"I would like to have done it even better, Ray."

"What could you say about how well I extracted boosting from the rest of the theoretical structure?" he toyed.

"I will think of something that will knock 'em dead by Monday night," she said. "I'll mull it over and over in my mind like I mulled over your book the night before last, and when the comment comes out, it will be prime time, Ray." She smiled that warm smile of hers. Then switching off, she broached a different subject, "Let's get back to the reading."

"Sure. But do you choreograph what you're going to say on prime time? I'm pretty much just a blab blab blab answer-what-is-asked kind of guy, and Edna claims I'm always saying, 'I don't know,' even about my own book."

"Well, you sailed along pretty smoothly before I came on and upset the apple cart, saying pretty much just 'blab blab blab' whatever I wanted to say and asking whatever I wanted to ask."

They slapped hands laughing as they remembered the exhilaration of the night before.

"And stealing whatever you wanted to steal."

"Yeah, I did, didn't I?" Still grinning she began reading *Aberrations of Relativity* from where she had left off earlier. He listened somewhat bored for an hour or more with only minor interruptions into discussions on which they always ultimately agreed; he enjoyed her unique insights in these discussions.

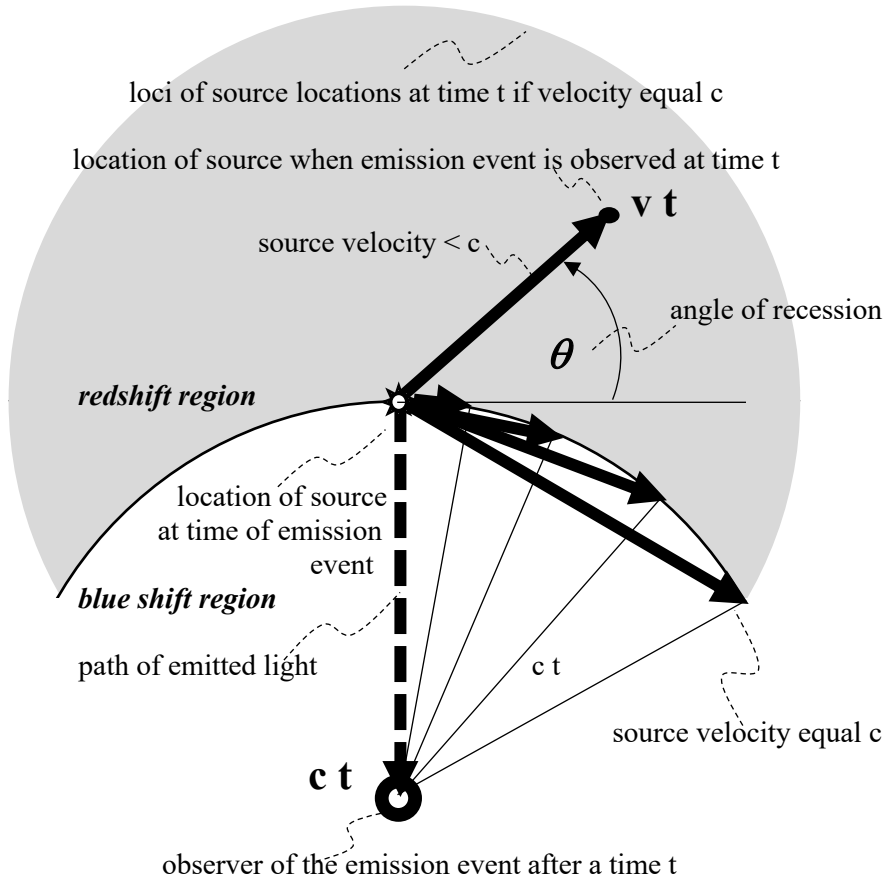
One of the discussions involved Einstein's claim of 'frame independence' for which Lesa sketched out a diagram to illustrate the velocities of sources of an emission events from a fixed location in the observer's frame of reference. It was merely an accurate portrayal of the Lorentz equations. It provided a visual explanation in a way that appealed to Ray.

"If the velocity of a source of radiation does not end up closer to the observer when the emission event is finally observed, the emitted light will be redshifted. You realize that therefore, of all the random motions of sources of radiation, most of that radiation will appear redshifted."

"Yeah."

"Does that inform your position on cosmological redshift in your other book?"

"It's in accord with the scattering model I'm proposing, but that's for another day. We've got two books to worry about and we don't need another one to drive Edna batty. I like your diagram though; it is informative."



*Lesa's diagram showing preponderance of redshifted light*

"I want to be involved with that other book."

"I don't imagine I'll be able to stop you if it's something you want to do."

"Good," she said and read on.

Coming to the end of one of the essays finally, and before beginning another, Lesa said, "I don't imagine Edna will expect us to wait to go to supper with her, do you?"

"No. Edna is independent if anything."

Lesa smiled a knowing agreement. "And batty as hell." She laughed. "When do you want to go then? I know it's early, but I thought maybe we could go to Craney's restaurant later; it's not too far."

"Would I look all right for that?" he asked diffidently. "If we go there, I might need coaching on the sophisticated things that Edna always handles."

"I'd be thrilled to act as Tarzan's handler tonight," she teased. "We don't have to worry about cost, do we? I could do it; I'd like to do the wine tasting

for us if it's okay; I like doing that. I reserved some tickets for an evening out after we eat. That'll be my treat, but you might not enjoy it."

"I'm guessing I just might. Thanks ahead of time."

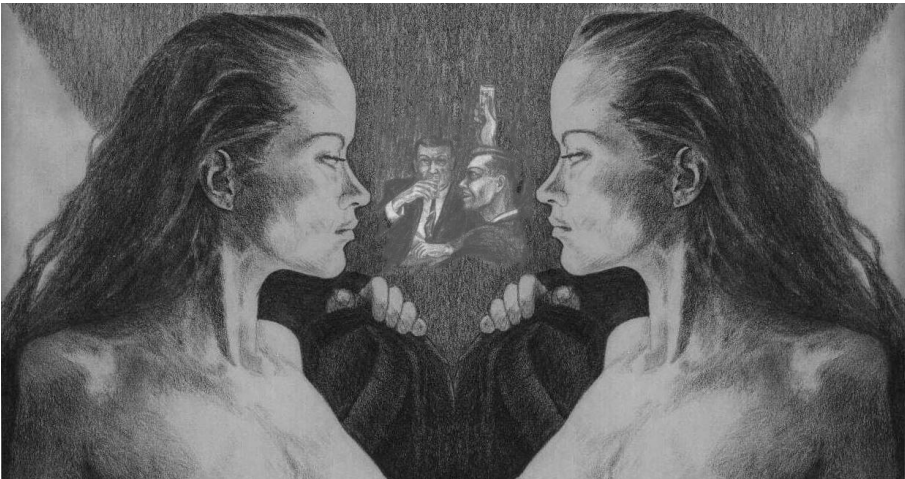
"The least I could do," she responded, followed by her smile. "I'd like you to wine and dine me expensively first though," she warned and then paused, looking mischievous before appending, "Please hang your sport coat over your shoulder like you did at lunch."

"Well, okay, the Lady and the Tramp then. Don't you think the coat would fit over my bulge?"

"Sure it would," she said without casting the slightest doubt on the bulge itself. "It just looks 'cooler' when you swagger with it that way."

"Of course, it'll be 'cool'. It'll be damned chilly out there at night without a coat." Then, thinking about her comment a little, "Swagger?"

She read with him listening beside her then for another hour or so before suddenly putting the book aside and asking, "Did you or your doppelganger draw this one?" She pointed at the image in his book.



***“There is more to life than so many heart beats”***

“He did,” Ray responded, laughing at her interest. “It’s just a spoof on the time traveler clock paradox.”

“Which of those two in the back is you? Will I ever meet the other one?”

“I never sat for either one, if that’s what you mean,” he said. “No, you won’t meet him. You wouldn’t be safe around him.” But she was already stepping through the door into her rooms.

Coming back into the main area again she had on a rather stylish shawl. He went into his rooms then and grabbed his sport coat. They were on their way to an evening in the Big Apple.

"I'll want to hang on your arm you know. All very discreetly as long as you don't misconstrue the discretion to mean that I don't really love you."

"Show me the way, Lady," Ray said.

*#11 The Beauty and the Beast*

Friday evening, April 28<sup>th</sup>.

Ray knew that it was only because of the other passenger that cabs seemed to compete with one another. One jerked to a rocking attention beside them on the curb immediately upon his having raised his hand. That other passenger was beautiful indeed. The way over to Craney's in the cab was exhilarating for Ray with elegance right beside him, touching him from ankle to shoulder, all bodily joints comfortably accommodated. Since they were not actually in public in the back seat of a cab, it was okay, Lesa insisted, and it was okay with him as well. She squeezed his wrist.

The way Lesa *did* dinner was as marvelous as her beauty, her scent, her voice, her intelligence, her coquetry, her charm. The polish of her upbringing with the refinement her mother had instilled in her, even by such an early age, rather amazed him as he recalled how she had *done* the French dip at noon. However tragic and short her childhood had been, class had been thoroughly inculcated. Perhaps as she had teased last night, it was the DNA. The families she had lived with thereafter had no doubt contributed, and after all these years it still emanated from her like the aura of a supernatural being and made him feel totally dirt kissingly human in comparison. Ray could not help but stare at Lesa just as everyone else seemed to this evening.

Occasionally someone would glance at her accompaniment and then recall that they had seen them both on Larry King Live. It seemed always to work that way. Lesa was more like a vision than associated with any earthly occurrence or place. It was only the tramp, or crank, or beast, or whatever his role as accompaniment that anchored this angelic apparition to a place and time on planet earth. Always with the recognition of the Larry King Live association came the all too apparent amazement that these two could be associated in any way by the ones who recognized them.

"Those are the two who were on Larry King Live last night, remember," he heard someone say. "Look at her, isn't she beautiful. She's one of those physicists, can you believe that." Of course they couldn't believe that. An actress, a model, a ballet dancer, maybe, but hard-nosed scientist, no. Never.

Ray overheard the comments and looked at Lesa with amusement. She seemed above overhearing such mundane conversations tonight. No, he could not believe it either. Her appearance and bearing tonight was yet another persona seeming to have been assembled from that teeming wardrobe of ensembles she donned, each appropriate to an individual personality and occasion in her life. Who was it, beneath these various personas? He couldn't help wondering: The clear-eyed fantasy physicist who saw black sticks clearly, the fast-talking TV personality, the insecure child, the take-charge manager, the lovesick teenage personality, or this elegant beauty so far above and beyond the mundane? Who?

In his role as Quasimodo he could only be pleased to participate in some small way in a production in which her current role as supreme beauty was being featured; the production might be named after the hunchback, the Robert Hooke of the evening, but she needed no shoulder to stand on; it was her show. Beauty and brilliance at a new level. She'd have a hard time convincing him, or Ed, or Edna, or Ruth, or Allie, or Eddie, or Helen, or anyone else who saw her tonight that it was not so. It *was* so. The entire world was her show, or oyster, or whatever the right words or metaphor might happen to be. Hers. All hers.

For the first time the full extent of his dilemma that he had identified earlier settled in on Ray. He was hooked. Really hooked. By a fairy child. And whatever he did from here on out, whether moral or immoral, smart or dumb, would be in spite of being in love with Lesa Landau. She had pointed out the fallacy of denying his sensed feelings in deference to propriety, showing him his inconsistency and the insincerity in any such attempt. Sensation is *real*. Rationalization is not. He could legitimately claim complete emotional detachment no longer. Remain disengaged, of course, he knew he must, but that requirement would be much more difficult now that he acknowledged the extent to which he did indeed love this woman who was less than half his age – less than half the age of his wife.

Sensations of being totally overshadowed by Lesa's appearance and manner did not bother Ray at all. On the other hand, the oppression caused by his recognition of his extreme psychological attachment was considerable. And in spite of all of this he was having a wonderful time. It was like he was floating on air. The food took on an elegance derived from the vision across from him, and although it was extremely expensive and he didn't really like thinking about explaining this charge card expenditure to Helen, it was damned embarrassing, in fact, certainly Helen would think it appropriate for him, wouldn't she? She would. But could he ever tell her about this evening without revealing the extent to which he loved another woman? The cost would not be the charge against him, but the partitioning of affection? What about that? Price had nothing to do with value, not of this occasion. It was the ambiance that flowed outward from Lesa herself, out through the entire restaurant, the entire world, his reality. All value derived from the hub of the universe. Right now, she was it. Was he going nuts? Maybe.



One cannot just go home and sit around reading *Camille*, *Robinson Crusoe*, and most definitely not the Gospel according to St. Bonn after such a luxurious occasion as a dinner like this. There had to be somewhere else to flee for an elegant denouement with charm, more ambiance to bask in before a mundane, "Home, James"... especially with no home and no James. He was anxious to find out just what venue it was to which Lesa had tickets. He didn't think it would be a Knicks game, even if they had been in the playoffs, which he knew, they weren't.

Ray couldn't figure out how long ahead of time Lesa had set up the evening of entertainment for them. Had she maybe ordered them months ago, before life began and fate brought the plane rides, book sales, and television shows together just because this was in the universal plan? Was this the way Einstein's God would have done it, with elegance or just a last-minute arrangement over the internet?

What difference would it make? In any case when she returned from the lady's room after their light desert, Lesa asked if he thought he could enjoy a ballet performance as much as she could.

He admitted doubting it very much but expressed more eagerness than he felt for ballet itself, to try appreciating it. So upon his hailing another willing cab, she presented the driver with an address other than the Shelry.

While they drove through the noisy and busily flashing streets of the Big City with its neon, noise, and lighted vertical checkerboards, Lesa shared a memory from early childhood, from back while it was still a happy one.

"When I was a very little girl, probably six or seven," she began.

Ray sensed the juxtaposition of happiness and tragedy, knowing the "seven" didn't work. Perhaps the phrasing itself was subliminally constructed as a clue for him to which she could remain oblivious.

"My parents brought me with them to New York City. I was quite taken with it all, the Big Apple as they called it for my pleasure. We ate at a flamboyant restaurant as I recall, although I have no idea where it might have been. I was too involved with my parents' fancy dress and what seemed to me to be the elegant interior of the limousine to even wonder about where in the outside world we were. Then we all went to a New York City ballet dance theatre.

"There was a romantic performance that struck me as so beautiful that it seemed as though it would transport me to another world that I wanted for my world, where people were not just people, but graceful performers of the arts. That was how I think my mother said it."

Ray listened mesmerized.

"But afterward my father said it hadn't been a good performance at all. He said that it had been flawed because the main dancer had been such a 'peacock'. That was the word he used."

"We went backstage that night after the performance, into the dressing room of that main dancer. He was still made up when he showed me the lights and mirror where they applied the makeup. I don't know why we were

permitted to go backstage, probably because my father was important. My mother seemed to have been enthralled by that performance and the main dancer acted as though he had known my mother sometime long before, because he kissed her when we came in."

"I wondered why my father had thought the performance flawed. I even asked him if he had ever danced in ballet. He said that no self-respecting person would, that most of the dancers were bad people. But I remember thinking that the main dancer was *not* a bad person. He was elegant and would never have done a bad thing, I thought. My father's reaction was the only aspect to mar an otherwise perfect occasion for me, and I have never understood why he did it."

"Ray, I think that maybe, if my mother had not died, I might have tried to learn ballet; she would have helped me learn. In parallel universes like Everett's *Many Worlds* interpretation of quantum mechanics, it seems to me that I am a ballet dancer in at least one of them, dancing with that man who was the lead dancer. My mother is watching, so very proud of me."

They had arrived at the Minsky Theatre on West 45th then and were ushered in behind and to the right of the orchestra. Ray's nearly half-century had not given him the slightest perspective from which to appreciate such things, having been raised in a little town up Canyon Creek with rustic parents of very modest means. His mother had no education beyond high school, his father's had afforded no sophistication in the arts. Ray would have thought it absurd to pay hundreds of dollars for seats behind, and to the right, of an orchestra in a somewhat run down, quaint little theatre, and not feel as though he had been ripped off. He could not have known growing up that there were those elevated spirits who were into the arts and considered such occasions more enjoyable than watching or even playing a football or baseball game. Clearly now though, he could imagine Lesa being such a person for whom beauty and elegance were dearer than the riches most hold dear.

There are of course many versions of *Beauty and the Beast*, but this night in New York City's Minsky theatre, they boasted that an innovative mix of art nouveau and more classical traditions of choreography were being explored. It is a well thought out story, even when performed in dance, such that Ray could imagine a young child enjoying it. He even appreciated it.

Under the hubbub of a large metropolis lives a Beast. He is cursed and disfigured, hiding underground in sewers and subways to escape stares and ridicule of the beautiful normality of the humans above. In coming to the aid of a girl in distress, a friendship is ignited, and an unlikely love affair begins to blossom that can restore for him a less grotesque sense of being. But will it be enough to break his curse forever?

The enchanting magical aspects of the story and moral values of the tale explore the battle between good and evil. Evil having taken hold of a Prince's heart, the only way to purge that evil has been to wear the ugliness on the outside. When the heroine is faced with this exterior, she no longer desires the Prince. However, after enduring years of recognizing himself for what he is,

an ugly Beast, the beast itself that is inside him begins to erode away. The mere presence of Beauty initiates a transformation that allows him to remember the joy of purity he once enjoyed and try again to attain it. For Beauty to love him would not be enough without his willingness to sacrifice himself to that cause. The sacrifice suffices to transform him back to a handsome Prince.

Lesya's long-remembered love of dance from that first introduction at age six apparently was reawakened by the moving performance. She seemed to Ray to have experienced sorrow, anguish, and joy by the conclusion, sobbing.

Ray realized that Lesya possessed a nobility of soul that he could not pretend to attain, or even comprehend. His nagging at her youthful exuberance, impetuosity, and even her desired promiscuity struck him as so petty now. Despite that admitted pettiness from earlier, Ray now felt something very basic, the exhilarating joy of just being with her. Here. Now.

He realized that no one with any ability to empathize with any other sentient being, and especially a daughter, for whom they cared deeply, could fail to be moved. The combined passion of the performers and the passionate response of that someone beside them, who is thus moved, would resonate deeply unless something was seriously amiss psychologically. Thus, the evening provided Ray with additional clues to Lesya's dilemma that could not be ignored... as well as his own. His own?

On the cab ride back to the Sheltry Lesya had continued sobbing. Ray felt sure that it was the juxtaposition of the current production and memory of a somewhat similar experience. Her experience now had been shared with someone else with whom she felt a definite affinity, trust, and from whom she felt a measure of feeling in return. It seemed to Ray that her feelings for him related to the closeness she had felt for her mother. But if she had trouble with Ray being a father image for her, he would not be able to convince her that she was in some obscure sense inserting him as a replacement for her mother. The very thought made Ray smile despite aversion to the very idea. Perhaps, he supposed, he was simply an emulation of a more idealized domestic father who, although not understanding, yet understands enough to empathize or at least try. It seemed ludicrous to Ray too. He didn't really relish the role of an effeminate stunt man for a mother, but there he was, someone to lay out intellectual material in a manner that was the way she liked it associated, on a dining room table. That was after all, what he was, who he was, all his love should ever let him be.

He had wondered, from first hearing her dilemma, about whether it wasn't more of a plea for help from a kindred soul concerning a deep psychological pain that continued to be too much to bear on into adulthood, alone. Certainly, she might need professional psychological help, but without someone to help her lay out and face each fact, once each fact could be uncovered, her emotional recovery would be a much more arduous journey. There was a role that he could legitimately fill. It had seemed clear to him the night before, and more especially even now, that Lesya suspected, possibly without knowing, that there

were horrors to be encountered in lapses of her memories that had been inhibited by post-traumatic stress syndrome.

He knew she could not deal with releasing these demons without a friend as close to her as, it would appear, she was entrusting him. The *Aberrations of Relativity* with its layout of vignettes of information was evidently written in a way that had appealed to her mode of thinking even more than her interest in its content. It was just a bunch of essays and articles describing the antinomies of relativity. It made no attempt to provide the final answer; it was just probing for an answer. He sensed that in the way she read his work to him aloud that the approach itself appealed to her. There was an intonation and emphasis that had been as though he had been reading to himself what she had written. There seemed definitely in her insistence on the regimen of reading aloud to be a sense in which she wanted him to realize that resonance of their thoughts, that she was going around the table reading the information he had laid out for her. That was what she had wanted him to hear, was forcing him to acknowledge. Finally, he had.

Therefore, it would appear, and it did appear to him as a ‘therefore’, that he was the one who must lay out material as on a dining room table just as her mother would have done, such that she could come to comprehend it on her own terms. No caring person can with impunity turn from such a heart-felt sense of responsibility. To deny help to one’s soul mate would be to reject oneself as of no value whatsoever, thereby relegating oneself to a personal hell no less horrible than that with which one is unwilling to help that someone else. However twisted and convoluted, her plea, even without the explicit asking, he saw it now as a sacred trust on their joint being, of which his own was but an incomplete expression.

There was another aspect to this whole soul mate duality issue he saw as well. How could one, without a shared burden, even identify the other self as such a mate in the first place? Shared problems demand shared answers. Shared solutions presuppose shared problems. He had read Hofstadter’s *Gödel, Escher, Bach* and recalled now his having written “in order for there to be an isomorphism between two brains they would have to have completely indistinguishable memories, which would mean they would have to have led one and the same life.” Nonetheless, Hofstadter had not despaired, concluding “that there is some sort of partial isomorphism connecting the brains of people whose style of thinking is similar – in particular, a correspondence of (1) the repertoire of symbols, and (2) the triggering pattern of symbols.” Clearly, that was the situation with he and Lesa.

That presented Ray with another quandary that he could not yet fully identify. There must be some deep underlying conflict in himself that resonated with what he saw as somehow flawed in her. How else had she so emphatically attached herself to him, and now he belatedly to her? Whatever he could not identify beyond the clear sense of there being something amiss within himself, could only be righted by this other half of a unity, once he had righted her world. It was almost a mystical unity and commitment he felt now.

He would begin on this task. He would make every effort to find out what had happened to Lesa's mother and father. He would try to get to know them intimately from clues that must certainly have been left somewhere down those proverbially dark corridors of time. Then if he could get enough information, as he thought he must certainly be able to do eventually, he would probe into the whys and the wherefores for the facts as he found them. Then and only then would he be able to lay it all out on the dining room table open to the pages where data was available to Lesa's unerring logical capabilities acquired through her mother's devotion.

Whatever he might achieve in life would be nothing in comparison to restoring such a grand soul to the magnificence of which she was so capable. He must relieve her anguish in having no living family, no fond memory of childhood, no background free from tragedy, and the terror and terrible disappointment in oneself for having been unable to master that total vulnerability.

They were at the front door to the Sheltry now. Ray paid the driver and helped the most beautiful, but now melancholy, lady step from the cab. There were of course admirers, gawkers, all of the jaded crowd of which they were both so tired. Ray and Lesa walked through their midst arm in arm now with their gazes so far beyond the crowd that the sea of people just seemed to part for them in awed respect.

Once in their suite Lesa seemed to awaken from a dream and turned to press herself against him. He hugged her and kissed her forehead. Turning her face upward, she clearly wanted more... much more... as did he. Sensing danger in distorting his commitment, however, Ray desisted.

Despite a deep craving, it was not his mission. But in actuality, whether his holding back was from an irrational fear of the unconventional or a respectful rationality that understands the value of conventions, he didn't really know. He was tired of himself and his pride with regard to a pretended purity of heart. He realized obscurely that he had nothing of value to anyone but the courageous love he felt for them. There is a *now*, and quite apart from that there is a yesterday, and a tomorrow that greedily embrace each other to exclude the middle, jealously effecting a continuity so praiseworthy in mathematics and the sciences, and in the respectable desperation of regulated lives. Ray felt smothered between selfish yesterdays and greedy tomorrows with no room for him to be who he might want to be right now.

He led Lisa to the couch and then sat down beside her. He tried to gradually change the mood from what seemed to him pervertedly romantic to more mundane occurrences. He sought realities that, however aberrant from their deeper sense, would still be here "tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow". In fact, those that would be here "until that last syllable of recorded time had lighted fools their way to dusty death," and back into that "petty pace" we must accept as the outer limit of the majority of our waking lives.

"Tonight ballet, tomorrow we go to the Metropolitan Art Museum."

No response.

"I wonder if Edna's back yet and if the 'Dear Lesa' letter is on its way to the presses." He smiled at her. He could tell that she read fear rather than sincerity into his attempts. He had brought intercourse down to the pettiness, the shallowness of the beast he was, too rapidly perhaps.

"I am so sorry, Ray. I just seem to betray the ones I love."

Misunderstanding her somewhat, he reached out, "No Lesa. That note is a validation of our actual experience that others can appreciate - or not, as they see fit - an irrefutable conjecture. Let's both be proud of it, however much we feign protest." He touched her hand. Touching her anywhere exhilarated him now. She brought life back into his tired and aging ugliness, but her intensity was gone. She shrank from him.

He wasn't sure if it had been his mentioning the note or something else that had turned her off so completely. He hadn't wanted her *on* exactly, but not off either. Definitely not *off*. "Please give me your great smile to tide me over the night, Lesa," he pleaded. He forced a concerned smile.

She smiled back, a mixture of genuine joy and sorrow. That is the only way either such volatile commodity could ever be packaged, he decided, more accepting of the King James version of the Bible than his usual. He helped her to her feet and said, "Thank you, Lesa, for an absolutely marvelous evening."

She kissed him square on the lips before he could move away. He wouldn't have moved away anyway - couldn't have. But then very quickly she turned to walk into her room without looking back and shut the door with almost a slamming sound that surprised him.

Ray felt like such a bumbling fool. What a klutz he was!

Was it chivalrous of him or cowardice not to have taken Lesa in his arms and held her as his more primal instincts pleaded? And then have proceeded from there? He wondered. When do the constraints of civilization properly apply to trump one's personal emotions? What role is sincere emotion relegated in such a scheme? There were issues that he realized had never been completely resolved for him by Helen and Julie up there in that sacred place on the canyon wall where those lessons had been learned – should have been learned. He circled the room aimlessly in this quandary for a spell.

Finally, he walked over to the desk and sat down heavily. After a game or two of solitaire, he began to search the Internet for information on the phenomenon of memory loss in childhood trauma cases. He found out that complete or partial forgetting is frequently reported after virtually every form of traumatic experience, with witnessing the murder of a family member yielding the highest rates of memory loss. Highly charged traumatic memories may sometimes also mobilize active efforts to forget via the mechanism of repression that prevents conscious recall.

Ray recalled Stephen Crane's short story, *An illusion in Red and White*, that describes a situation in which a man who had murdered his wife in the presence of four children had proceeded to mold his children's memories as a basis for his defense. If Lesa's Aunt had said that Peter had been with her at

the time of Lesa's mother's death, how could a six-year-old's memory trump that of an adult family member, particularly when she was under the care of that aunt?

It occurred to Ray that Lesa might very well not have defended her own first-hand childhood observations against edicts of adult authority. Perhaps it was only later that a subliminal acknowledgement of that as a moral breach had arisen in her mind. Ultimately, she had come to disdain dishonest denials of factual observation as reprehensible behavior. That was an aspect she had liked in particular about his work, his thinking, and what she disdained about his actual lack of courage to embrace the feelings that she knew so well they had experienced mutually as a romantic attraction. He wanted to grab this moment, rush into her room, and take her in his arms, admitting to all those intense feelings he had for her, to nullify the petulant, nagging authority of civilized society over the honesty of sensuality. But he didn't.

He browsed the internet some more to find references to her family, following URLs to universities, faculty web pages, ballet troupes, etc. E-mail addresses of individuals who might provide clues to Lesa's dilemma were available. He sent out eight or ten email inquiries before going to his private domain - the subdued Beast returning to his lair.





*#12 In a Million-Dollar Hall*

Saturday morning, April 29<sup>th</sup>.

The next morning Lesa was apparently done with her shower and toiletries well before Ray. He came out into the main room just as the door sounded and Edna was let through by Lesa, who was all dressed and perky.

Edna was always alert to signals and looked from one of them to the other, before beginning what she had to say.

"The new edition will be done by Friday," she said.

"What time did you get back last night, Edna?" Lesa asked.

"I was at your door about nine thirty. Either you two are sound sleepers, you didn't want good old Edna to ruin what you had going in here, or you kids had a night on the town until well after eleven."

"The latter Edna. Sorry to cut down on your excitement though," Ray said.

"We had a wonderful time too, dinner and theatre," Lesa clarified.

"What movie did you catch?"

"Beauty and the Beast... ballet," Lesa responded dreamily.

"Oh. Tails," Edna said.

"Not on me. I was just a figurative beast, but I looked so cool with my coat over my shoulder," Ray teased. "Seriously though, I would have needed more than just a tux to deserve accompanying Ms. Dr. Landau last night. She was a knockout, strike me dead beautiful. There's no kidding about any of that, Edna, and I *was* the ugly beast."

Edna just stared at him as though he were no longer Ray Bonn. "I can almost imagine all of that," Edna said without a trace of a smile.

"It wasn't too formal. I don't think we were out of place," Lesa clarified ignoring Ray's hype, but having obviously enjoyed the praise.

"Are you going to order, Lesa? We maybe ought to get going. Which of the rich plethora of museums are we going to hit girls?"

"Let's see, two runnies and sausage for Ray, and corned beef hash over easy for Edna, is that it then?" Lesa was dialing.

"What're you having, Lesa?" Ray asked.

She smiled, "Runnies if you are."

This banter told Edna that they had evidently discussed her breakfast preferences and other idiosyncrasies. She must have found that somewhat disconcerting but flattering, nonetheless. "Me too," she said at last.

"No. Not me," Ray said, "But what *are* you having, Lesa?" She finally said, "Cereal, Danish, and juice, I think."

"Ok. Me too on that."

Lesa placed the order based on that assortment of denials and assertions with no one seeming to complain afterward.

Checking the inbox on his e-mail while they waited, Ray saw that there was already a response to an inquiry concerning Lesa's dilemma, and Helen had a few words of encouragement for the supposed lonely traveler. Not much else and nothing major in the news.

Breakfast came and went quickly with them all chattering about their upcoming sortie through enemy territory to whichever museum they chose.

"Didn't you suggest the Met yesterday, Ray?"

Ray thought Lesa's question had been asked to indicate willingness to promote whatever he desired today. Perhaps she felt that she had been indulged last evening. He didn't feel any such reciprocity was due him at this point, or ever with regard to cultural tastes, since his weren't sophisticated enough to warrant indulgence. He tried to say as much but didn't sense any success at it.

"Well, I would like to go to the Met," was Lesa's reaction.

Edna was a bit too practical to care which museum they went to. The value of the excursion to her was probably just the 'freshening up' diversion of getting out, Ray thought. At any rate they had obviously opted for the Met. He did remember that it had been Helen who had determined this outcome in absentia.

"Are you ready to go now, Edna, or would you like to 'freshen up' first, as I've heard you call it? You look ready, Ray. I am."

"Me too," Edna chimed in. Maybe she would be one of the kids today, not quite though, since it was Edna who commandeered the cab while Ray signed a couple an *Aberrations of Relativity* book and a napkin, with Lesa adding her effeminate John Hancock to each. The crowds really weren't that awful if you were in the right mood for them.

It was certainly close enough that they could have walked but taking a cab would give them more time inside they agreed.

Once inside and ticketed, Ray allowed as how he would really enjoy seeing the *American in Paris 1860 - 1900* exhibit. He knew it was probably the most commonly appreciated art - the impressionists, and he was probably the most dreary-tasted of the three, but he did just enjoy the work of the period, all the artists that everyone knows. Right off he saw the tiny Curran, *Afternoon in the Cluny Garden*, and he just sort of migrated over to it.

"You are moved by the color and romantic setting, aren't you?" Lesa said at his arm. "Do you think we will ever be in Paris together?"

"Co-signing our new book together maybe?"

"I like co-signing with you," she said, sensing intent, "It was fun in front of the hotel lobby, but I can't co-author a book that is all your innovations."

"When I am with you, nothing is all mine without you being there too, and I'm really tired of telling you the obvious, that it'll be at least as much your ideas as mine. Please share that much with me."

His remonstrance went unanswered. They strolled on without Edna. She was going off in the other direction, watching people and the way things were organized - maybe she was watching them.

Going by the Bickford, she asked if he liked it? Not as well. Did she like the Prendergast *Sketches*? She did. It was a degree of abstraction that suited them both. Weyden and Tanner they liked, and John Singer Sargent's *In the Luxembourg Garden*, but Lesa said Vettiano's *Dance Me to the End of Love* was one of her favorite paintings; was he familiar with Vettiano having admitted to being a sexaholic?

"I think we are both romantics," Lesa commented on their "mutual taste for everything but eggs runny, even if you won't admit to it."

"You can't really like them can you?" Ray urged, ignoring most of the rest of her comment other than asking whether Vettiano was really a sexaholic?

She thought too long, but agreed that no, they are totally repulsive, and yes, he had admitted it. They shared a laugh at their 'Mom' Edna's expense. Lesa said that, "It truly does feel like we are the kids, doesn't it."

Ray allowed, "I must be fifteen years older than Edna and I still truly do feel like her kid. Actually, I don't know that I ever felt like a kid before."

Lesa grabbed his arm as they laughed.

Someone recognized them and stuck an *Aberrations of Relativity* in front of them that brought their frivolity, and Lesa's hanging on his arm to a temporary halt. He signed, "Good luck, Ray" to which she appended a comma and her, "Lesa".

Ray asked whether she thought their books would be traded like signed baseball cards in the future.

"Do you think it would double the price to have my name on there with you, Ray - as your agent maybe?"

"Well it should triple it, of course, but probably only double."

The day was wonderful and before leaving the Sargent, Lesa wistfully sighed and asked, "Wouldn't you like it if no one knew us at all and we were that couple in the *Luxembourg Garden*?"

He nodded and they walked on. Occasionally they self-consciously noticed that they themselves were being observed like a painted couple within a romantic setting, no less than the people in the paintings themselves.

Lesa mused, "It's kind of a nice thought don't you think, that we can be watching signed paintings and there are people watching us and wanting that signed?"

It was indeed nice in its way, Ray had to agree.

Hassam was a little dreary for them. Then Cassatt's *Woman with a Pearl Necklace* caught the attention of them both. Imposition of the sex of the artist

with any of her work, like the debility of Stephen Hawking, marred the experience for them both. They concluded with an exchange of words that demonstrated a mutuality of taste even in this that thrilled them anew.

Then Lesa wanted to know what he thought of Sargent's *Rehearsal of the Pasedeloup Orchestra*. He didn't know. It was dramatic, but...

"It seems all effect with no heart?" she appended.

Yes, that was it.

Alexander's *In the Café* was a "well-painted, ugly woman," Ray said. "If one were going to go to all that trouble why not find some truly beautiful woman like *you* to immortalize." After a moment he added, "I guess they're not that easy to find."

"Exactly," Lesa said, squeezing his arm a little tighter.

Another rude, "Will you please sign my book," but on turning to comply, it was Edna, just feeling her oats. "What next," she asked.

Ray said he saw no reason not to just go on down the line, and they all seemed happy enough with that.

Edna asked whether they minded if she tagged along with them; they were obviously enjoying it more than she was.

"You're not enjoying it? How terrible," Lesa said.

Oh no, Edna liked the experience, but watching the kids was the most fun.

What did Ray think of those dirty old men sitting around drawing nude women in *Chalfant's* depiction?

"Is it inherently sordid, chauvinistic, or just bad art; what's the complaint here girls?" Ray asked in a jovial mood.

"One, two, and three" both women agreed. Edna had now been cheerfully integrated into the mix. But soon she wandered off again.

In passing portraits, they came to Bunker's *Portrait of Kenneth R. Cranford* at which Lesa reached up cupping her hands to whisper, "That looks too much like my father."

Ray looked at her and there seemed to be no emotional content in her expression. He contemplated the picture in comparison to photos he had called up the previous night of Peter Landau. Peter had been chunkier, he thought, and not actually so apparently free of guile as Kenneth Cranford in this depiction. Ray didn't comment.

As they proceeded through a long series of portraits there were many very striking images of uniquely individualistic characters that made *Kenneth R. Cranford* pale by comparison. That must have been the aspect he thought, so he ventured, "Would you have preferred any of these other characters to be the one who looked like your father?" Ray asked experimentally.

"Yes," a pause as she looked at some more of them, "any of them."

Ray looked at her again out of the corner of his eye, but she was just a beautiful woman strolling through a museum.

Ellen Hale's *Self-Portrait* was worth looking at they both thought, "an interesting woman," Ray commented, "not beautiful, but extremely intelligent don't you think".

They all three agreed; Edna was back; "Yes," Edna did think so too.

It was an interesting picture of *Tanner* by Hermann Murphy.

After many more marvelous Cassatts, "She was American," was Edna's contribution. Probably it was her internal explanation for why they were all here instead of the Louvre or d'Orsay, Ray thought.

Then Ray expressed a strong preference for Stewart's *Woman in an Interior*.

Edna said, "Men and flashy women."

Ray laughed at Edna's "hang-up".

Lesla hopped in to mediate with enthusiasm, "Could we talk about this, you two? I am really interested in this. Why do you think she's 'flashy', Edna, and why do you like the picture, Ray?"

"Well, look at her, all dolled up and looking for action," Edna said and continued strolling on.

Lesla turned to Ray, "I know why you like it; it's the impeccable geometrical layout, and the colors. It's a good thing Edna is into selling books and not art," she whispered. They both smiled knowingly.

At Mary Fairchild's *Portrait of Sara Hallowell*, the kids were stunned. "That is so, so beautiful, isn't it?" Lesla asked.

"It is. My vocabulary does not include that range of tones and their magnificent nuances," Ray said apparently for them both, but he suspected that Lesla's eidetic memory or a related visual acuity might accommodate words for as many colors as the rainbow and language itself had provided for.

The Winslow Homers were nice, if jaded, they both thought.

Thomas Eakins' *The Writing Master* expressed the way Ray felt about his own works sometimes.

"Oh no, you're not bald," Lesla teased and after a pause added, "yet."

The Whistler's *Symphony in White* intrigued them both. But both of them thought it too direct in its symbolism. The virginal white dress on a young lady, standing on a wolf skin rug as though it had been a hard-fought tentative victory, the corpse of the dead symbol of ravaging manhood remonstrated meekly at the bottom of the tall canvas.

"He doesn't convince me," Lesla said. "It's too melodramatic."

Ray reminded her that Edna hadn't been able to either, and they both laughed until they saw one of the attendants scowl at them, and it seemed clear to both that his subsequent recognition of them had more or less excused their actions then, simply on that account.

Then in so stark a contrast, the Sargent painting of *Margaret Stuyvesant Rutherford*, clearly no pretense of virginity, silvery white dress nonetheless, looking out at the world proclaiming who she was, "a female Ozymandias". They laughed at Ray's phrasing. Lesla suggested that if they ever got rich enough, they should buy a Sargent.

Ray agreed without addressing which side of the continent they might hang such a joint possession. "But not this one in particular."

"This is off topic, I guess," Ray said, "But I saw a Titian painting on display somewhere, the Louvre, or in London, I can't remember which. It was a huge painting of an old Patriarch. Indomitable force fairly oozed from his being. You looked at it and trembled hundreds of years later. That must have been what Newton was like, huh?"

"You are amazing, Ray Bonn," Lesa said quite stricken by how he entered into the paintings.

"...But no masterpiece," he appended, to which she said quickly, "You got that from the novel *Lord Jim* by Conrad, didn't you?"

"Yeah." He so admired that eidetic memory of hers that caught him on everything. "Sure, 'Man is amazing but no masterpiece' was one of many philosophical statements that I was able to glean from one brief section of the book for an assignment in college. Conrad has remained one of my favorite writers, but he never comes out with anything new."

She just smiled at his little joke, strolling along beside him happily.

"This all reminds me," Ray said after a bit, "of a cartoon called 'Out Our Way' by a guy named Williams, I think it was. I clipped it out of a newspaper when I was young. There were two old cowpokes - I had just been given a horse. They were riding along out in this cactus-strewn desert and you could tell that it was either sun up or sun down, and one of these two rustics says something like, 'purty, huh?' and the other replies, 'Uh huh,' and then down at the bottom of the cartoon is this little poem:

*Don't think all folks is lowbrows  
With no beauty in their souls,  
If they don't stand there a gapin  
With their eyes as big as bowls*

*At some masterpiece on canvas  
In a million-dollar hall  
'Cause they may be used to real ones  
By the master of 'em all!*



Lesla's eyes were a brilliant, blue and big as bowls if not church doors, in this million-dollar hall as she contemplated a graying and wrinkled 'cowpoke' over twice her age who perceived himself as riding into the sunset. Smiling, she asked him the name of his horse.

"Trooper."

She seemed to think about the name but made no comment.

Continuing to stroll through the million-dollar hall, Sargent's *Madame X* was not one they would purchase no matter how dramatic.

"I don't think you're much into drama, Ray," Lesa said

Ray had to agree that if it was just drama for effect rather than substance, it was like Marshall McLuhan's "the medium is the message, which, if 'twere true would impugn all forms of communication," he argued.

She considered this so opinionated position and laughed again, saying only, "Me too."

But Sargent's *The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit* took drama and content to another level. Lesa was totally captivated, "That was me growing up to six and then disappearing into that black background."

She was clearly moved, so Ray placed his arm around her waist, people or no people, and said, "You have not disappeared. You are right here, right now, in bright blue, and the most beautiful woman in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City." Then he added, "and I'm with you."

She smiled sadly into his face. She was ready to move on.

Pearce's *Fantasia* seemed to Ray to have content with extreme drama, but Lisa was still back in a little girl's world created by Sargent.

"Look at this, Lesa." It was Alexander's magnificent lady in a white and black dress in *Repose*. "Wow!" he said, "Compare this to Whistler's *Symphony in White*. Whistler loses big time."

"She's not bemoaning any compromises, is she?" Lesa empathized explicitly. They laughed again.

Then there was Beaux's girl in a white dress with her black cat, bandages and reddish scratches on her hands in *Sita and Sarita*.

Cecilia Beaux spoke again with *Ernesta (Child with Nurse)* which clearly moved Lesa but not in a morbid way. "Women get it about kids," Lesa said.

He looked at her to read her expression.

She caught him doing it. "Well, they do!" she said.

"Clearly," Ray admitted. Edna rejoined the kids, whose laughter confused her.

Ray asked, "Why do I like Beaux's *Les Derniers Jours d'Enfance*?"

Edna looked at the painting and seemed to see nothing.

Lesa said, "Geometry, Ray."

He concurred with, "Precisely my dear."

Edna gave it much more than her usual browse but still without comment.

Thence to the Summer in Paris exhibit whose paintings were much to Ray's liking, and also to the girls'. Then the displays of French landscape painting of the period.

They came to some religious paintings including *Crucifixion*, which none of them liked. And they were brought back to what Ray really enjoyed with Sargent's *Fishing for Oysters at Cancale*.

"I would buy that one, if I could afford it," Ray said.

"Well just hang in there and sign this nice young lady's book, and eventually maybe you can." Ray looked over next to Edna and sure enough, another Julie, he supposed, but tinier, wanted his signature.

"What's your name?" he asked expectantly. She said quite boldly, "Well, it's *not* Julie." Her little pert smile was so sweet that Ray said, "My God, how many times can one man's heart be broken?"

All four of them laughed as the girl said, "It's Lara."

He wrote, "*Lara, I truly hope someday your skies will all be blue and that you will be happy for ever and ever and correct every flaw in this book.*"

*Ray".*

The little girl looked at what he had written and said, "May I kiss you?" Surprised, he said, "Sure," inappropriately adding, "You're not carrying a bomb, are you?" as he picked her up by the waist. A little taken aback by his comment and the elevation, she nonetheless kissed him on the level as he stood there with her held aloft for a moment. Lara's father caught the moment on camera before Ray sat her back down to the applause of a growing crowd, of whom he had been unaware until then.

He thought, Oh, God, I cannot be trusted in a crowd.

Watching him Lesa leaned over to whisper, "You have to quit saying that under your breath. If you mean it, yell it out."

"Hey, Miss Hoarse Whisperer," he whispered. Then mischievously under his breath and clandestinely in Lesa's direction, "He blessed the children and fed the multitudes as he walked on down to the Sea of Cancale looking for Sargent's oysters. Should I yell that out?"

"Ray's ready for lunch, Edna," Lesa said to Edna, and their Mom was more than ready for something as long as it wasn't peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.

They found a little restaurant close to the Met. "Sadly, they don't have oysters on the half shell," Ray bemoaned.

Edna started a gagging act.

"Is it London Broil for you again then, Edna?" Ray retaliated. He wondered about his newfound boldness with regard to Edna who had totally intimidated him through their entire signing trip until now. He did enjoy having another kid on his side of the teeter-totter.

"No, I think I'll have a Rubens." Ray wondered whether it might have been a joke – probably not.

"A Ruben for you then, Ma'am?" a waitress they had not seen approach, confirmed. So Lesa hurried and ordered another form of deli delight with Ray just saying, "Me too," not having had time to look, and trusting Lesa's culinary instincts much more than Edna's.

They were by the window. It was an amazingly bright spring day in the Big Apple with cherry blossoms everywhere. Lesa commented concerning the grand time they were having and wondered whether they should go back to see more, hit another museum sampler, or just go "home" to get some more work done. Edna allowed as how all work and too little play had made a dull boy out of Ray. He probably needed more of an outing.

Lesa looked over at Ray to see how he had taken that. "Well, it's a nice day for a walk in Central Park isn't it?" She put it as a question, but with a bit of English on it that the other two accepted as the way this day should proceed, and so that was indeed how it proceeded.



There were blossoms everywhere and the brightest lightest greens that Lesa suggested as being the colors Ray had preferred "in the million-dollar hall".

"Yup. Uh huh. It's durn purty, Ma'am," he said.

Beauty in Central Park being so accessible to everyone delighted them. Particularly the re-emergence of "short skirts and sweet smiles," Edna suggested would particularly appeal to Ray. Lesa defended him.

They walked part of the way 'home' before acknowledging that an ugly yellow cab would be a lot more enjoyable.

They had a light supper sent up. Edna dined in with them.

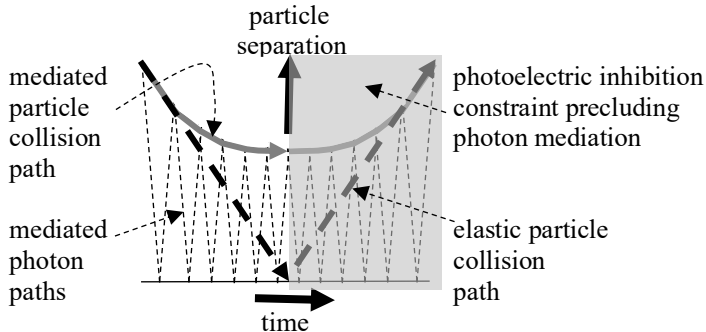
In spite of Edna's prohibition against it, immediately upon her leaving Ray and Lesa discussed their mutual interest in thermodynamics both on this evening and the next day. This included thoughts on Lochschmidt's proofs that had so disturbed Boltzmann. They enjoyed the shared perspective of the appropriateness of it being "in the collisions stupid!" rather than a willy-nilly result of abstract motion of particles as Maxwell had supposed. "But he'd have been right," Ray insisted, "if he had included radiation." Then Lesa explained what she had gathered from her study of statistical mechanics; neither of them was convinced by that approach.

"That diagram and your interpretation of the ballplayers on skateboards is the breakthrough, Ray. I've thought about that a lot at night when you force me to be alone." She laughed at his scowl. "It's just the horizontal velocities that matter, of course. The arcs on the trajectories of the baseballs help in the analogy of ballplayers on skateboards but detract from the essential point."

"Yeah, I know. Gravity and baseballs are not pertinent to the issue."

Lesa grabbed a piece of paper and said, "Lend me you pen. I want to illustrate my take on the difference in the constraints you identify."

Ray was not surprised that she was so adept at illustrating her point but was amazed at how clearly the diagram she drew showed the equivalence of velocity inversion and time reversal. Eliminating the entire right side of the diagram which she did by sliding a piece of paper over it, showed that mediated interactions could not take place if the particles were not approaching. That showed irreversibility. That is entropy.



“The photoelectric affect in combination with the doppler redshift due to the particle recoil and quantum energy levels, all Einstein’s ideas and yet he failed to relate them to the irreversibility of the situation. So close.”

“Yeah, and yet a century was required to connect them.”

Later in the evening Edna interacted with them several times by phone, finalizing the contract with McGregor for rights to the proposed book. The deal Edna had brokered was very generous; all three agreed. Neither Ray nor Lesa let on that they were at that very moment working on that very book against Edna’s specific orders.

Sunday afternoon, April 30<sup>th</sup>.

On Sunday afternoon Lesa and Ray *did* the MoMA. For Ray, Manet's *Execution of Maximilian* seemed to say something about current events that did not bode well for the current world or the present excursion. Placing dictators in power and then supporting their execution, abdicating all responsibility for the role they had been contracted to play by foreign powers was repugnant.

Lesa listened and watched; it was an area of his brain owned and operated by Helen, she correctly suspected.

They switched to lighter venues. Jeff Wall was being exhibited in the Joan and Preston Robert Tisch Gallery. Here was extreme innovation. They both liked it a lot: "Geometry," Lesa suggested was what they found mutually attractive in his work.

That was indeed it, Ray acknowledged.

But a growing nervousness about the upcoming second outing on Larry King bothered Ray in particular, so they decided it was not an arty day for them. They wanted to get on back to preparations that involved several more hours of Lesa's reading to him without many interruptions to discuss potential problems, conceivably because she saw none. He realized again how helpful it was just to hear what is written as though from a different person, a different voice, a different perspective. Forever afterward, whenever he referred back to a section of his book, it came to him in her voice. But the voice behind the voice was their conjoined voice as a projection of personality to the world.

Since she did not identify many potential misunderstandings that establishment might identify in his discussions, he probed her knowledge in areas where he felt the weakest technically. These often turned into extremely stimulating discussions that they both enjoyed immensely.

That kind of stimulating interaction, without any of Lesa's earlier insistence on more explicit intimacy, continued on through the next day. But nervously as the clock ticked away, Ray worried more and more about a call into the Monday night show from Ed Watson, concerning this or that point either included in, or conspicuously missing from, his book.

Lesa repeatedly insisted, "Ed *won't* call!"

*#13 Waiting for Godot*

Saturday afternoon, May 6<sup>th</sup>.

What had transpired for an irritable Ray Bonn and the illustrious Doctor Lesa Landau on this Saturday at Yankee Stadium, when he had hit a grand slam on his first swing of a bat in nearly thirty years was an extremely unique situation from both of their perspectives. It had already been a most exhausting day physically and emotionally for them both, and in accordance with the contract whose terms Lesa had specified, Ray had to go up to bat again since he had not gone out yet in his first two at bats.

Although, of course, Lesa's introduction to the voyeuristic aspect of the game of baseball had been perhaps the more flamboyant of their initiations to Yankee Stadium, her escort did little more than take her straight to the owner's suite. There celebrities from all walks of life were interested in the skills of one so adept at manipulating people and situations to a desired end, as it was apparent that Lesa Landau was. For it was clear to all that Lesa, and Lesa alone, had brought about this whole rather ridiculous situation by her wheeling and dealing with George Steinbrenner on National TV. Her unwitting comrade, Ray Bonn had been perceived (by himself, of course, but the general public as well) as having been merely sacrificed to some celebrated cause of her own. The improbabilities of why and how such a situation could have been manufactured were such that it was unreasonable to suppose having been crossed on the issue of co-authorship of a new book had actually precipitated this so terrible vengeance. Terrible primarily from the apparent perspective of the one to have crossed her, but who would be adequately remunerated, of course. Quite terrible, nonetheless.

That it had not been vindictiveness, or even very directly related to the collaboration at all, she knew very well. It had had much more to do with a heady scientific conjecture guided by a rather amazing insight concerning the degree to which innate mental abilities could be applied almost willy-nilly to anything at all. This was coupled with her amazing intuition concerning why a baseball might have found its way onto the cover of Ray's book in the first place. None of this had seemed to have gotten through to anyone else, despite her having explained much of that to Larry King. Of course, most of that discourse had not been carried live. There was even more to it than that,

involving her perception of Ray and the extent to which he needed to be scourged into achieving what he himself desired most, admittedly a rather dismal view of someone she professed to love so profoundly.

In any case there was now a huge expectation for her to live up to in these social circles, which one would have to call the major league level. It was clear to her that a certain amount of the presumed persona, which she did not feel fairly represented the actual Lesa Landau, was necessary in this situation. She had quite clearly failed in that mission on her first couple of appearances on public media in the early innings of this game. She was bothered by not having had that conversation she had promised Ray, concerning her intent in pushing him into this dubious "charade" as he had insisted on calling it.

The time had never been right for the discussion and importantly, she had never quite been able to formulate her intuitions. But yes, of course she had in some sense seen this situation in the making, and had in fact, willed it to happen, and then skillfully executed her plan, using the pretense of irritation at having been crossed. Did that make her a sociopath or psychopath, whichever applied? She wondered about that woefully now.

But it really wasn't like that, and whether it took a day or a lifetime to get it across to Ray Bonn that it was, in fact, *not* like that, the corrected perception was what was of paramount importance to her. For Ray to realize first of all, in case he hadn't, but surely he would have, that he had really accomplished only that of which he knew himself to be capable with no devil-inspired illegitimacy on her part. That was what mattered to the *real* Lesa Landau. Whoever and whatever anyone else happened to think of her, her bona fide love for Ray Bonn was indeed all that mattered until the sun touched his face, and "forever and ever" afterward, and all that. No matter how corny it might sound, she did not want any of that ruined.

At any rate, her exit to the upper rooms in the stadium with management and many perhaps shadier characters of business did, of course, suggest to almost everyone who had ever seen the videos and thought much about it, those similarities to the popular movie *The Natural*. Robert Redford's role as Roy Hobbs had now been adequately filled by Ray Bonn; Kim Basinger's role as Memo Paris, well... it was a bad role. It was the sordid women in that distortion of Bernard Malamud's book - unhappy ladies who in various ways had controlled that protagonist's destiny - who by analogy had necessarily to be the personas of Lesa. However, in actuality, as against the distortions of movies or images garnered from holy books of the Garden of Eden, fantastic failure or success cannot so easily be scapegoated on the lady.

In *The Year the Yankees Lost the Pennant* the Devil himself got involved with a couple of over the hill wanna bees, Joe Boyd who initially hated Yankees and a vain Lola. Of course, bitter Boston Red Sox fan and reporter Chuck Pierce has suggested that although such unlikely "phenoms hold a unique place in the history and culture of baseball," it ain't gonna happen again, as if it ever had.

Pierce had continued, "The image of the cornfed..." green horn wrecking havoc with the Yankees central to both *The Year the Yankees Lost the Pennant* and *The Natural* (although of course the latter does not involve Yankee slaying) in these "dark retelling[s] of the myth ... inexcusably brightened up by the movie... the outline of the story [has] held steady through the years." And so, one must suppose that Ray Bonn and Lesa Landau will take their places in this folklore. But for Pierce "...it is a less plausible story now than it was before, a tale out of the dim times before ESPN, fantasy leagues, and Baseball America, a saga from a time when the sport still had a hazy frontier made up of rumor and exaggeration." Well, maybe, but that was merely *his* conjecture, one Lesa would probably have thought should be scientifically re-evaluated as being ripe for refutation testing against her own alternative conjecture. One must suppose that before "duct taping" a soul mate to a contract to disprove it, she had to have had some fairly strong intuitions.

Ray Bonn, over the hill bumpkin that he acknowledged himself to be, was not conceding defeat just because he had not controlled his own destiny in being assigned this dubious role in Lesa's production. Through all those dark days between the Monday at which time he had been chosen as an object for destructive testing of all such hypotheses, and the actual test itself, he did secretly address how he might salvage some self-respect by defeating the overwhelming odds.

Although even less likely than the younger middle agers of lore, he had considerable experience with hitting, albeit many years before. He had spent time as he lay on his bed before falling to sleep each of those nights at the Sheltry recalling his dreams of yesteryear. He envisioned again how he had hit the tremendous home runs that had at that time constituted the talk of the region up the Skagit Valley at Canyon Creek, now a hundred feet under water, where he had been raised. Of course, Jonesy's failure to make the big leagues had nullified much of the enthusiasm for the greatness of that high school team, wrecking havoc with Ray's Major League dreams that would certainly at one time have been considered completely realistic.

All of that had to be said. Why go on with the charade otherwise? The rest would just be a meaningless fantasy instead of the reality that emerged from two volatile souls having met who happened to be so extremely similar in intellectual capacity and mode of being, although reaching their pinnacles of success via very different routes. Their minds, once synchronized, had continued to resonate at that high level. No matter what the age disparity, the resonance was still there. No matter how tragic the situation of her upbringing or his, and the contrasting extreme happiness of his marriage and her loneliness, one could not disparage the quality of their relationship.

The mediocrity of the expectations Ray had for himself, and the anger he felt at having been "duct taped" to a contract to go up to bat at Yankee Stadium against his will, could never dissever two souls such as theirs. There seemed to be no secret past or future that the other could not, and certainly would, figure out about the other. Whether therefore that happy union might, in actual

fact, ever be consummated was irrelevant. Whether their psyches could withstand the extreme pressures, placed on each other in this extreme game of survival was the only pertinent question.

From her secluded nook deep in the upper reaches of the Stadium Lesa watched the muted screen in anguish each time Ray came up to bat, avoiding it most of the rest of the time in deep introspection. When Ray came up in the sixth inning, once again with the bases having been skillfully loaded by a superb bit of managing by Mac Heller, she could see the weariness on Ray's face. As he stood at the plate, she stared at the televised images of his face. She had no doubt whatsoever but that he would once again send the ball hurtling into space. He was determined.

It was the reduced joy with his trot around the bases that she noted with anxiety after he had slammed another baseball far back into the right centerfield bleachers using the hero's bat. The bat ceremony was becoming more and more central to the whole proceedings, she thought. But she saw in his face, the clenched teeth and set jaw, that Ray was a man who was not done yet, that there was this awakened will to power that virtually glowed from his face. He might never again be the same Ray she had fallen in love with, and that frightened her.

Maybe only an apathetic Ray Bonn could tolerate Lesa Landau. She hated to think it, but it did occur to her that her actions might have changed his internal state into one that would no longer resonate with hers. Her thoughts involved consideration of the well-known 'observation perturbation' of which quantum physicists are so aware, the inevitable effect of measurement on what is measured.

With intense apprehension, therefore, she recalled their second appearance on the Larry King Live show in which she had so angered the most important person in her life by "duct taping" him to this awful contract. He had resisted, as much as was possible without losing more face by refusing than by signing. She had put him in an awful position.

It did strike her that she had played Mephistopheles to his Faust. That was precisely as he would have seen it, since she knew he had been reading that off and on in his own room during those last few awful days before the game, quoting passages he thought applied specifically to the demise of their relationship.

And so together, but in their separate seclusions at Yankee Stadium, they began to ponder what had transpired on that so momentous evening on the first day of May that had brought all this about.

*#14 The Fire Next Time*

Monday Evening, May 1<sup>st</sup>.

Ray Bonn's personal last-minute preparations for this his second appearance on the Larry King Live show were probably very much the same as they had been the previous Thursday, but the perception was quite a bit different this time. For one thing, a big thing, he knew "Dr. Lee Landau, Ph.D." to be none other than Lesa with whom he was now... intimate... yes, even without physical intimacy, that was the word. He even knew where she was right now. Right over there. Edna was here again, but he hadn't lost sight of her this time either. It all seemed much more familiar as they worked their way through the stages up to the wet bar. The wet bar analogy didn't actually work that well for Ray now that it was Larry King Live and nothing else, not *like* anything else. He did not worry about Bob Costello this time.

"Good to see you both again," Larry said.

Both? Where was Lesa? Oh, there she was, right behind him.

"I have looked through your book in more detail, Ray. It still seems strange to me that it's selling like hotcakes. Those pages don't go down as easy as flap jacks." The little chuckle.

"You can't just swallow them whole, Larry, you have to chew," Ray said. They all laughed - a little nervously because it was a big night.

"Yeah, well. It's still over my head, but the science you two were obviously getting done right here at this table Thursday was worth watching five nights a week. You may have to start your own show."

"Are you getting tired of us Larry?" Lesa teased.

"Not at all. 'Your voice is money.' See, Ray, I remembered the line." The chuckle, "Actually looked it up. You gonna do more science for us tonight?"

Then it was becoming clear that the countdown to camera was in progress. "Cameras!"

Larry turned to them. "Tonight, Ray Bonn, whose publishing success with *Aberrations of Relativity* is accelerating..." He broke mid-sentence here to clarify his perceived humor, "That's a relativity term in case you missed it..." He chuckled. "The second edition of this book is coming out this weekend. And guess what? The steamy signature that Ray put in Lesa's book, that's Doctor Lee Landau," Larry pointed at Lesa, "at a book signing here in New York City last Thursday will be printed in this edition. You have to have it.

The book is a rare in-depth analysis of relativity accessible to the general public... well, intellectually endowed general public, anyway. Lesa here represents the physics community in trying to place this book in a proper perspective when it tells us where science has gone wrong."

"Last time pandemonium broke out with Lesa grabbing one of Ray's unpublished works out of his bag and the two of them fought for it. It seemed like Lesa won." A chuckling pause. "Today I find out that McGregor Publishing has just signed contracts with these two to publish a book revealing the secret of our 'no free lunch' universe that will derive from that very draft. It's not *exactly* a collaboration though as I understand it, but nearly. For the next hour here on Larry King Live we'll try to get some of this straight and hope pandemonium doesn't break out again. Hello Lesa, Ray."

"Hi, Larry. A renewed pleasure to be on your show," Lesa said.

"For me too," said Ray.

"Ray, did you two ever quit fighting long enough to make progress on ironing out whatever differences separate you and establishment?"

"Well, we had an eventful time with a few ups and downs as you might suspect."

Larry laughed indicating he had indeed suspected that. "Lesa, am I to understand that you have refused to sign as co-author of the upcoming book? That it will be authored by Ray, with you doing an extensive Foreword as well as collaborating (whatever that means). Why not full collaboration?"

"Here's why Larry. I've done a lot of study in thermodynamics. I wrote my dissertation on it."

Larry interrupted... "Exactly! *That's* a reason for you *not* to be down as an author? Lesa, that makes no sense at all."

"You're right, Larry." It was Ray butting in now. "It makes none whatsoever."

"Wait!" Lesa fairly yelled and both men laughed. "Even though I know a lot about thermodynamics, I couldn't *fix* thermodynamics. Ray did. He has fixed it, Larry. After a hundred and fifty years, he really did it. Now do you think I should write 'Lesla Landau' on that major discovery just because I grabbed that draft of his book out of his bag on your show Thursday? I don't think so. I have a little integrity, Larry. More than that, he deserves a Nobel Prize for his work, Larry. I don't."

"Well, Ray, what do you think?" Larry asked. "Should her name be on it or not?"

"Of course, it should; she was on exactly the same path I took. We have all tried to convince her, but she's stubborn, Larry."

"You think?" Larry teased. Lesa just sat back peeved, squinted her eyes, and closed her lips tightly.

Sensing the situation and deciding on a little light diversion, Larry asked, "Did you two pick up a Yankees game while you were in town?"

Lesla was back. "No, we didn't," she said. "We went to the ballet, but do you know what I'd like to see, Larry?"



"No, what would you like to see, Lesa?"

"I'd like to see a baseball game with Ray at bat in Yankee stadium and the game on the line." Both men laughed, totally amazed at her.

"That would get even with him for wanting you down as co-author on his book, is that the idea, Lesa?" Larry teased.

"No! That's *not* the idea, Larry." She was clearly irritated, seeming to think they were making fun of her. "It's because he would win the game; isn't that what games are all about? Why else do people care about games?"

"He's not a baseball player, Lesa." He looked at Ray, "Are you?"

Ray shook his head from side to side in disbelief at what she was doing. He had just gotten so that he thought he could be comfortable without worrying about her in public and now this."

"He isn't a physicist either!" Ed Watson would be listening and like the sound of that comment both she and Ray separately thought.

"Well, close enough for practical purposes, don't you think?" Larry was actually looking at Ray as he addressed Lesa on this matter.

"Of course," she said. "But that's the point. He can win at anything he does without establishment authorization. It's because he's smart."

"He's smart?" Larry said looking at Ray.

Ray interjected, "It's time for the hook, Larry. Drag her out of here." They both laughed almost uncontrollably, wondering what was coming next.

And there was something coming up next: "You should see him play solitaire, Larry."

Ray gave out an audible "Oh, God," to which Larry spurted a laugh.

"No, I mean it. This is really important."

They were both still laughing, Ray with some embarrassment.

"Listen to me you two [bleep]s. I watched him play solitaire a few times and I realized that there was something very unique about him. That's why he's even on your show at all peddling relativity, let alone twice!"

"He's uniquely lonely maybe?" Larry still hadn't stopped laughing.

"No. For heaven sakes, Larry." Lesa oozed disdain now. "Listen! I downloaded this chronometrics program and got him to take the test without his knowing what it was."

"I knew what it was!" Ray interrupted loudly, totally disgusted.

"Okay, so you knew what it was, but you didn't notice that you had the two fastest reaction time scores on record for that test, did you?" Ray looked dubious and tired. This woman had noticed everything about him. Everything!

"Can you tell us what that means in terms we can all understand, Lesa?" Larry played along.

"Chronometric test scores correlate as closely with the best IQ test scores as good IQ tests correlate with each other."

"Let me guess: you can measure someone's intelligence without asking any questions?"

"Yes, exactly. It's culture-free, in fact. It measures the swiftness with which one can learn rather than just what one happens to know at the time."

"So that means Ray is as smart as they get even though he wasn't the youngest to ever get a Ph.D. in physics from Harvard like you? What's he got, a one hundred eighty IQ or something? What do you propose George Steinbrenner should do with that information, Lesa?" Larry asked, obviously tickled with the direction this was taking much to Lesa's apparent chagrin.

"IQ is archaic, Larry. Percentiles are what are relevant. Anyway, I think instead of us just going to 'see' the Yankees, Ray ought to go and suit up for a game to match hits for salary with Alturis Romero. How much money does Alturis make every time he gets a hit? A lot. I understand he makes a quarter of a billion dollars for having fast reaction times at the plate. Ray's are faster. That's what I'm saying."

"You have to be powerfully built too to hit home runs, Lesa, and Alto wears a mitt," Larry said, still laughing.

"Ray's buff. Look at him."

Ray was just plain mortified in front of a national audience... again. He couldn't keep doing this; he couldn't do this anymore. He had to get home.

"What about the designated hitter, Larry? Ray could do that," Lesa pounded away.

"You ever play ball, Ray?" Larry asked, smiling dubiously.

"*Everybody* has 'played' ball, Larry. Not many are ball players."

"Did you play in high school?"

"Sure."

"You hit any home runs?"

"Yeah. A few."

"See," Lesa said taking heart.

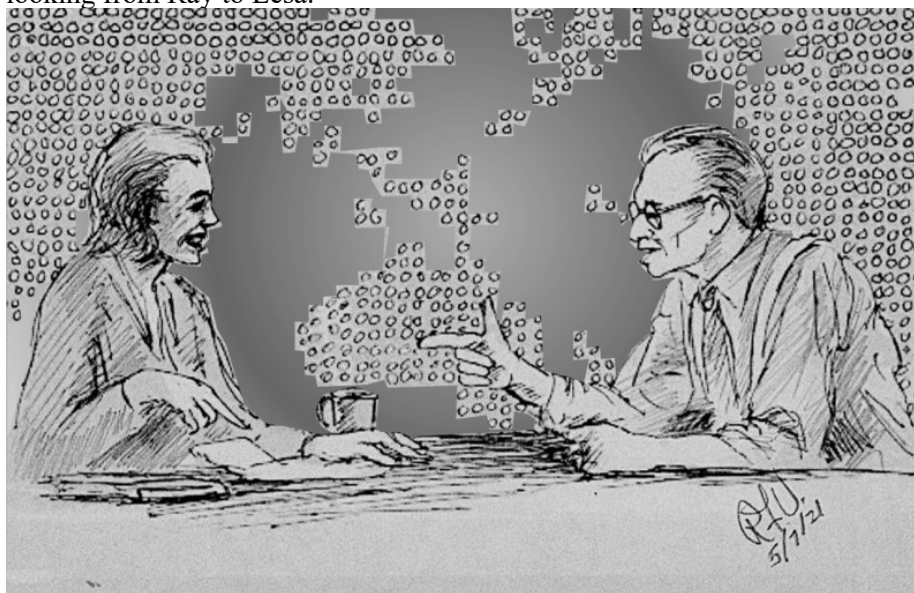
Larry gave a jaded look at the camera and said. "Wow! You better not go 'way. Who knows what'll happen when we come back. Maybe we'll get back to relativity - but who knows," the eye roll. Then they played the video of Larry reading the "Dear Lesa" letter that was now being featured in the second edition of Ray's book, *Aberrations of Relativity*. It didn't seem to mesh with what was happening tonight.

Oh, God. Ray was coming to hate that "Dear Lesa" letter. He should have squelched it on the second edition. Maybe they'll have a baseball tattooed on the cover of the next edition, if there ever is another edition, or even another sale of a single book, after this debacle. But then it gonged through his head, Oh, God! His book *already* had a baseball on it! He had put it there. Lesa must have rolled that fact up into some formula with chronometric test scores, discounting the strength of his eyeglasses, and state of conditioning, to conclude that he could hit a baseball. Is that what she concluded from his having placed a baseball on the cover of his book just to suggest three-dimensional angles of rotation? No. That was too big a leap even for her, wasn't it?

Larry didn't leave his seat. Coffees appeared for each of them. Ray noticed that his was not steaming, so he had some and kept a hold on his cup when he sat it on the table, so Lesa couldn't steal it in preference to her own. Evidently

someone had remembered he liked it lukewarm and poured it early for him. Lesa sipped hers now too; they got it all correctly. Larry's assistant really was an Edna Robinson, although probably with a somewhat better personality.

"What are we doing here?" Larry asked leaning way over the table and looking from Ray to Lesa.



Ray stared crossly right at Lesa without changing his gaze.

"I take it you're ad libbing here, Lesa," Larry said as understatement at which a few in the penumbra of the table saw fit to laugh. "Are we going to hear about *Aberrations of Relativity* tonight or not... what do you think?" He was smiling, but no little bit exasperated.

"Yeah, okay," she said peevishly, "but that wasn't what you introduced. You were insisting that, because I have credentials, I should be the one who hits home runs in physics. That's what everyone thinks. I will, just like Alturis does. Well, neural reaction time matters. Credentials only matter if there is no other performance to go on. I'm not saying that I don't have good performance in my field, I do have. I believe that before I died, I would have figured out what Ray has figured out already, because I'm smart too. I have the work behind me that goes into the right credentials just like Alturis does in baseball. But I think there's an important issue here that you're all missing." She was on a rant. "You said I was going to tell all these lovely American people what is right or wrong about Ray's book or where physics is going wrong. What's right is *Ray!* I've figured that out. Haven't you?"

Ray broke in softly and said, "Lesa, will you please forget about me being some kind of slugger and discuss the doohickey you had made for this occasion." Lesa looked the little hang dog child that Ray had also met and reached into her bag.

"Doohickey?" Larry asked. "What's this doohickey thing, Lesa?"

She smiled, the unobsessed Lesa having reappeared. She was now extracting the weird looking bundle of metal sticks from the bag. Bob had constructed the contraption somewhat differently than she had originally designed it, so that it would fold up completely into a neat bundle for carrying in the cloth bag he had also provided for it.

Larry looked at Ray for confirmation and Ray gave it; apparently now he would be required to approve Lesa's escapades. That was as it should be, Ray thought.

Lesa snapped the y and z axes into place with the y' and z' axes now free to slide up and down on the common x axis.

Larry's assistant came over to whisper in his ear; she seemed obviously tickled about something. Larry laughed loudly. "Sure!" he said.

He was amazing under pressure, Ray thought.

Then somebody said "Cameras!"

Lesa was fixing her contraption into its initial configuration as Ray watched. So far Ray's role had been minimal, and that was fine with him as long as everyone was happy with what was happening. That eventuality was in no way guaranteed at this point though.

Larry worked them back in from some video of Lesa and him fighting over Ray's thermodynamics book last Thursday. The general public must have had some strange view of what life would have been like for these two locked up in a suite together for four days and nights between Larry King Live shows in New York City. What kind of a woman must Lesa Landau really be? Ray knew that not one of them in the world would have been able to guess half of either extreme.

Larry came in from the video clip with some comment about having a surprise caller.

Ray panicked. "Oh, God."

Lesa placed her hand on Ray's arm calmly and smiled into the cameras.

My God! Who is this woman? How on earth could that woman stay calm when disaster was on the phone? Not Ed Watson now! Please God, not now. Since Lesa had taken her ever-lovin' blues away without any foreseeable sun to touch his face *this* night. He seemed to be left in God's hands and he certainly was no believer, but seemingly for the first time in his life God had mercy on his soul

"This call is for Lesa," Larry said.

With all the composure in the world, Lesa stared those beautiful blues out to illuminate the living rooms across this fair land, where the sun, if it hadn't already, was beginning to dip into the horizon. How many men out there were being mesmerized by those eyes as he had been, Ray wondered. Were they watching them expand until they were but one huge blue ocular hole as big as a double church door through which they could see across a flat landscape to

the distant foothills of some Big Rock Candy Mountain of their dreams? They should beware of those dreams, Ray thought.

"Hi, Lesa. This is George Steinbrenner."

"Hi, George," Lesa said as calmly and with thoughts as collected as one could ever organize them, "How's business?" Everyone laughed flooding the airways with the pleasant white noise of genuine laughter and above it all, George Steinbrenner's.

"Doin' good Lesa. Whatta you think if we give that young man beside you there a job come Saturday?"

"I don't sell hot dogs," Ray said dourly above the general merriment.

"Oh no, Ray. But this is between me and your agent there, Lesa. I don't think you could get yourself as good a deal as she could," then George and everyone else laughed again.

"...Or in anywhere near as deep of crap!" Ray said, obviously, disgusted with the turn of events and terrified by the very concept of Lesa Landau as his agent.

"You there, Lesa?" She had turned to observe Ray disdainfully.

"I'm here, George," she said as she jerked back toward the cameras. "What kinda deal you got for us?"

Larry was obviously in his heaven now.

"Tell you what," George said. "I'll give your boy there a million bucks just for showin' up. If he'll step up to the plate as designated hitter one time, he gets one million smackers. That sound okay."

"Yes." Lesa said. "But how much more if he gets a hit? That's what it's all about, George." Ray had his head nearly to his knees beneath the wet bar now as his services were being auctioned.

"Well, I don't know Lesa. Look at 'im. He don't look like much of a slugger."

"He is!" she insisted loudly. "How much?"

"Well, I'll tell you what. We'll put that timid boy in the lineup batting ninth as designated hitter. He gets a million bucks for goin' to the plate and finishin' the at bat. You know what that means. If he gets a hit, I add another million. How's that?"

"Okay," Lesa was in her glory, "but what if he gets an RBI? That's what the game is about, isn't it? What then?"

"Another million - for *each* RBI. Okay? Do we have a deal?"

"Almost," Lesa continued bargaining, "What about a home run?"

"You mean outta here, that kinda thing? Okay, another million if the kid gets a home run. Does that work for you? Can we sign the kid to the biggest one-day contract in history and kinda take that monkey off Alto's back?"

"Let me get this straight, George. If the bases are loaded when the number nine hitter is due up, and Ray hits a home run. You then owe him at least eight million dollars. Right?"

"I need my calculator Lesa, I'm no physicist. Let me see. Yeah, well, I get seven million dollars. Deal?"

"If he doesn't go out during the at bat, then he comes up again with the same deal all over again, right?"

"Oh. Yes, okay. Right! That works," George Steinbrenner once again agreed.

"So that's a minimum of eight, Right? Okay, we'll sign." Lesa exclaimed to everyone's joy... except Ray.

"No deal," said Ray.

"No deal?" everyone throughout the studio cried.

"Why on earth not?" George asked.

"I hate the Yankees!" Ray said, almost screaming.

Lesa was all over him. "Ray. It's just baseball. It's a million bucks!"

"Ray," it was George. "What team do you like?"

"I've been a Mariners fan for a long time, George."

"Do you boo Alto when he's in Seattle?"

"No, of course not. Helen and I like Alturis. He's the best in the game. He did what he had to do."

"Well, you know what, Ray? The Yankees play the Mariners on Saturday. You could take one of the Yankee sluggers out of the lineup for at least one at bat."

"That's right, Ray!" Lesa seconded enthusiastically.

"Thanks, George, but no. Period! It's been nice talking to you. Bye. Lesa, now show us your doohickey."

George was gone... opportunity lost.

"No, Ray," Lesa said looking right at him very calmly. "I would like to address one of the major differences between what you propose and the established theory, namely a concept called 'boosting'. Don't you think that would be a good idea?"

Yes, of course Ray thought that would be a good idea. That was why he had suggested as much to her and she had promised she would address it in prime time with a *prime-time* solution. So... he guessed he would be witness to that now; her rejecting his current suggestion allowed them both to save a little face. But Ray knew he could have no idea what might come out. Don't you dare sell out on me now, Lesa Landau, he said to himself, knowing she knew what he was thinking.

"Good," Ray said, and to get it started in the right direction. "Larry, 'boosting' involves how one gets from one velocity to another in relativity. It's acceleration by another name *because*, you guessed it, increasing or decreasing velocity in Einstein's Special theory involves something different than just adding one velocity increment to another."

Lesa grabbed control away from him again, "Einstein's velocity addition formula is more complicated than mere addition, Larry. One might think that Ray has taken the easy path here, of just assuming the much more straight-forward of the alternatives, but..."

Ray grabbed his turn in this tag team approach, continuing with, "because it is, in fact, Einstein's velocity addition formula that is the oversimplification. It is that formula that allowed determinism to enter relativistic theories."

"Exactly, Larry," Lesa had taken over yet again. "What the formula introduced into the Special Theory does, Larry," and Larry was caught looking back and forth between the eager re-united comrades in arms.

Ray took over when Larry looked his way, "What it does is support a group theoretical approach to observation, and whereas that may sound good to a theoretical physicist circa 1906 or a hundred years later..." Lesa had her wind and was back in control, "It sounds good to these kinds of theorists because it's neat and tidy, in other words, it makes certain there are no surprises between two observers. But there *are* surprises, Larry."

"I've noticed," Larry interjected humorously.

Ray took over, "Think about it, Larry. Two relatively moving observers necessarily have different perspectives, and furthermore that difference in perspective is more different for one observed object than for another very much like when you pass by a bunch of trees in your car, some closer and others further away. They change their relative positions. The same thing has to happen with aberration, Larry."

"Yes, you told us last time," Larry responded.

Then it was Lesa who took over again: "So, what Ray has done by rejecting the velocity addition formula is to restore meaningful observations to both observers. In Ray's approach, Larry, I can't just calculate what you *should* see and tell you not to even bother to look, because I 'know' what you're going to see. That would be totally ridiculous, don't you think? Because I can't know. It's impossible. The upshot is, Larry, that now the theory is compatible with the uncertainty of quantum theories. The very nature of uncertainty, far from being this mystical kind of dooh dooh... dooh dooh sort of thing," she wiggled her hands and did a kind of twilight zone hum, "just pop out at you. The rationale for uncertainty becomes obvious now."

"Lesa, I thought you were our representative for establishment here. Other than baseball you seem to be representing Ray's perspective," Larry said, teasing her. "What do you think, Ray, is she for you or against you?"

"Well, I think she's got the uncertainty principle down pat, Larry, you can't predict where she's going to be, but once you get a measurement, you've got it," Ray said, managing what appeared to be a relaxed smile. "She's right on. In this instance she's explained the differences between establishment and my position to a tee. That's what's at stake in choosing sides."

Lesa again: "So sure, Larry, Ray doesn't talk about 'boosting', but it isn't that he hasn't thought about it or has taken the easy way out. He has taken a very thought-provoking way out, and what *we*," trying to reconnect with her role, "in establishment have to do is reopen the testing to determine which of the alternative conjectures is correct." Then pausing, she added: "I have to admit, Larry, I'm guessing Ray will get the ring. He's a winner, Larry."

Well she did indeed do her prime time on boosting just as she promised she would, but she was still needling him about being a "winner".

"Wow! Again." Larry said. "You two! Whatta we do when we come back? Do we get to see the doohickey then?" He looked at Ray.

"Let's hope so," Ray said.

Larry rolled his eyes as though the doohickey was some sort of dominatrix contraption, which might well be what most of America would have thought likely at this point. Larry said, "Let's take a break here. I get exhausted when these two are going at it." He laughed and said the usual, "Don't go 'way."

Ray was fairly panting, smiling a little, and happy that Lesa was back on track finally, but as one might suppose, no little bit uneasy as he sipped his warm coffee. Lesa was still peeved at him for backing out on her million-dollar deal, he could tell. That much was evident. Ray looked at Larry; their eyes met and they both busted out laughing.

Lesla looked over at them and said, "What? What's so damn funny? And *you* Mister!" She probed Ray's chest with her index finger until it hurt. Then she leaned over and whispered in his ear, "How are you ever going to tip me a million bucks if you ain't even got a million bucks, Sweetie?" They were both laughing almost like the friends they had become by the time they had walked in here a few minutes earlier.

Larry's assistant was at his side again, Ray noticed. He wondered how bad that news might be, Ed at last?

But Larry started the show up again with a little less formal introduction this time than last. But "We're back Live," still rang out and he was laughing about this show having not been anything like they had anticipated, but that it was, if nothing else, entertaining. Ray rolled his eyes as one might expect he might, when he had been the one more or less under Lesa's attack during much of the previous segment.

Larry said, "Before we get to Dr. Lesa Landau's doohickey that explains Ray Bonn's observational relativity, which is described in his sensational book, *Aberrations of Relativity...*" He gasped for air after this sentence fragment, indicating that this was such a contorted introduction for what might never come about that he was tired of it. "Before we do that though, we have another phone call. This one is for Ray."

"Oh, God!" Ray didn't know if it was audible or not, and didn't particularly care, but after having said it he supposed that like the, "Oh, Fucks!" of ball players, even though the sound gets bleeped, everyone knows exactly what has been said.

Larry laughed.

"Ray, this is George again."

"No, George. No! Absolutely not. The show tonight is about relativity."

"Lesla, help me out here," George appealed. "Ray's a little shell shocked. We have a multi-million dollar deal here that Ray shouldn't miss out on. Here's the new deal. I've just got off the phone with Mariners management, and Ray can wear the Mariners Blues. He'll bat ninth for them on Saturday, just like



we said. The financial deal is exactly the same only he's on the Mariners' payroll. Every 'grand salami' he gets will help his beloved Mariners, and here's another *additional* benefit. I buy twenty thousand copies of the second edition of *Aberrations of Relativity* - my expense - and hand them out to the first twenty thousand patrons that come out to watch the slug match between Alturis Romero and Ray Bonn. Will you promise to deliver your client to the stands' back entrance Saturday morning at ten thirty sharp for Mariners warm-up?"

"I will, George!" She virtually shouted it out to the audience from whence George's voice seemed to derive. "He'll be there with bells on. They may have to rip off the duct tape when I get him there, but I'll get him there." Everyone laughed as Ray sat silently in terror.

"There'll be a contract at your hotel in your name as agent, Lesa. Get him to sign it and return it as specified."

"All righty. G'night, George," she cooed.

"Good night, Lesa. Good luck on that relativity thing of yours, Ray," and George was off the line.

There was a tremendous round of applause throughout the studio, and the land one might suppose as the church doors swung wide and Ray saw thunderstorms and a cloudburst in those distant hills.

Larry grinned ear to ear.

It was hard to settle things down after that, but Larry tried. "Your doohickey, Lesa?" Then he busted out laughing again.

"Oh, yeah," she said quite soberly, and seemed actually to be able to put some enthusiasm and concentration into it. "See this?" She was back on track. She held up the device. "Do you remember last Thursday before I showed up, Ray was telling you about Lorentz reference frames, Larry?" she said into the audience that she seemed to play like a piano. "Do you remember them, Larry?" she reiterated.

"You mean these things," Larry said, holding his right hand up high competing for airtime. His thumb, index and second finger all at right angles to each other. He was laughing. "Yeah, I remember these. X, Y, Z, right?"

"That's right, Larry. Good. The problem is that everyone needs a reference frame like that to do physics, or they can't *do* physics."

"Yeah, that's what Ray told me," Larry said, chuckling.

Ray was watching now with intense interest this bi-polar, or quadruply-polar, or infinitely polar little girl Siren in her 'when-she-is-good-she-is-very-very-good' mode of operation, having just exited the opposite pole.

"Now in order for two scientists to coordinate their formulations of the physical universe, they must each take their measurements along such X, Y, and Z axes and their knowledge of what time it is (a fourth axis) and mathematically formulate what's happening."

Lesa had a nation-wide relativity clinic going, and Edna probably wasn't even worried about it.

"Since each knows he has to have orthogonal axes - that means your fingers are all at right angles, Larry - they each define their axes that way. But

if I'm moving relative to you, Larry, and you have a Y axis pointing straight up at say the star Polaris, then as I pass by you, my Y axis that is straight up for me won't point at Polaris at all."

"Yes, Ray told me that," Larry confirmed.

"That's because if I'm heading in this direction at half the speed of light relative to you, Polaris will be over there, 30 degrees out of alignment from your observation of Polaris. If I look up along your Y axis as I pass by you," and she moved her body and arms to indicate such an attempt, "I will have to agree with you that yours really is pointing at Polaris, way over there. In other words, your Y axis is screwed up."

"Is that really true, Lesa? Would Einstein have agreed about that?"

"Yes, Einstein would have acknowledged that your Y axis does not appear to point in the direction mine does, and that it does not even appear to be at right angles to your other two axes from my perspective. But we would all agree with you about what your axis is pointing at."

Larry laughed, demonstrating he had not forgotten. "Polaris."

"Yes. Now Einstein's special relativity professes to believe that our Y axes are, in fact, all lined up, Larry. But they're not, as you can see. That's the point - what you can *see* is argued to be of no significance in Einstein's special relativity. To get around this, you would not believe the contortions of logic: We would have to assume time is dilated, length measurements are contracted, and what is meant by observation has to be totally redefined to preclude actual measurement. Doesn't that seem ridiculous to you?"

"That's why the author of *this* book," and here she held up Ray's *Aberrations of Relativity*, "decided that instead of believing these three impossible things before breakfast, he would reformulate the theory. Now the only difficult things to believe (and there are some, believe me) are subject to confirmation by direct observation, including our axes *not* being aligned. The physics of relativity is weird, Larry, but it's what we *see* any way we look at it. It would be ridiculous not to accept that if we insist on acceptance of the scientific method. Don't you *see*?" The big smile.

"I do see, but I may not understand," Larry volleyed cheerfully.

"Now the doohickey:" she laughed as she waved it around in front of Larry. "If you and I are moving relative to each other along our mutual X axis - these two long parallel sticks here. Yours is blue; mine is pink." She aligned her thumb with them and Larry laid his thumb right next to hers. "Then these two sets of sticks (blue and pink) represent our Y and Z axes respectively; see, Larry?" The sticks were visibly aligned with their index and second fingers.

"Yes, I see," Larry said.

Ray had elbows on the table now like a child watching a science demonstration. He actually enjoyed watching her explanation, having forgotten for the moment what this woman had just gotten him into.

"See, Larry, when we are just sitting here without relative motion, all our axes can be aligned, but if I keep my axes - the pink ones - perpendicular, then relative to me, as one of us accelerates, yours - the blue ones - start rotating

down like this." She showed him how the contraction did that. "Now common points in these frameworks - the white and black dots (our perspective points), respectively - end up being at different distances up our respective Y axes. Do you see that? The Lorentz transformation that gives the aberration angle of our axes, insists that the Y value of that black dot is the same for you and me. But it clearly isn't. It can't be. You *do* see that, right?"

Larry turned to Ray, "That's the difference between Einstein's relativity and yours, Ray?"

"In a nutshell, Larry. I guess that's the million-dollar difference that Lesa has explained." Ray knew that his use of "million-dollar" as an adjective of excellence in reference to this activity of Lesa's, was but grim reminder to them both and probably everyone else in America of the *real* "million-dollar" deal that Lesa had just brokered for him in particular.

"It *is* the million-dollar difference I see, Larry," Lesa played back in spades. "It is important for those who will buy this book - or those who show up early at Yankee Stadium on Saturday to get a book for free - to realize that. Whereas we have one trivial little 'doohickey' here, Ray has a very clear exposition with many straight-forward diagrams to walk you through all this step by step in his book. Remember though, George Steinbrenner will give you the book for free on Saturday at Yankee Stadium. Be there," she blatantly promoted the Yankee owner's interests. "The book's really quite ingenious, Larry, whether Ray hits home runs or not."

Lesa was doing her damndest for the cause instead of against it again, bless her heart, and playing "million-dollar" footsy with both Ray and George at the same time. Ray knew that if a dull old man like him were to have attempted to illustrate what she just had on prime time, even without the games, he would have been goned off the air.

Larry had to work another exit for the 'kids'. They were outta there again, but not without one of them having been reamed a new ass hole from his perspective. His. Sure, from Edna's perspective there was a massive purchase of books at Yankee Stadium coming up. For Lesa, the tremendous achievement of having negotiated with one of the toughest in the business with her share being God knew what. For him, Helen and their heirs, the remaining part of a million dollars for him just standing up there, a deer in the headlights, and making a fool out of himself on one Saturday in May.

Again, he guessed from the general merriment around the studio, that the Larry King Live show had been a success. This performance would probably bring many more sales to the *Aberrations of Relativity*, but what about the integrity of getting the book into the right hands where it would get the right audience to evaluate the conjectures? Oh, well, as Lesa said, Ray Bonn is a *winner*, it doesn't matter what. Snake oil? You want snake oil? Sure! Ray Bonn can sell snake oil; he's a winner.

Lesa leaned over to him to whisper, "Are you all right, Honey?"

Oh, God! Tell me she didn't get that phrasing from one of Helen's e-mails, he said to himself. He shouldn't have let her read one. But whether she

borrowed the words or made them up, it was pretty clear to him that she cared in a sort of million-dollar ever-lovin' way. He knew that in some sense she was indeed sorry for having irritated him to such an extent. Might she not have realized just how much it would offend him before doing it? No, he thought, not actually, not Lesa.

In retrospect all the makings of this production of hers were apparent to him. It really did begin with her noticing a baseball on his book, the ball players on skateboards in his thermodynamics draft, and that he was pretty good at solitaire. He recalled her seeming to have been impressed with his scores a couple of times. And that incident of her downloading a chronometrics program; he hadn't tried hard enough to figure out why she might have done that. Her checking his glasses had been a precaution. The calisthenics that she was helping him with each day now were obviously to see what kind of shape he was in and maybe to get some nominal additional conditioning. Somersaulting off her bed had impressed her with his athleticism.

Larry had played right into her hand; without that opportunity she couldn't have got it done. But what a quick and devious mind, he thought. He could not be so acquiescent to her demands in the future. Helen had not prepared him for this kind of woman. Even Edna was much more straightforward, keeping him informed of the destiny she planned for him, telling him anything he cared to ask. Maybe Lesa would too if he were alert enough to ask. But she sure could scare a harem... or at least discourage any sane man from ever daydreaming of having one.

Larry shook Ray's hand vigorously and wished him luck as he slid off his stool and began to walk away. He noticed Larry's bent index finger indicating that he would like Lesa to wait a second. Ray overheard Larry ask: "Why do you spell Lesa with an 'e' when everyone else spells it with an 'i'?"

"That's the way Ray spelled it, so that's the way it's spelt."

Larry's eyebrows rose as an only response other than his hand being extended for the taking. Ray thought about commenting but didn't.

Lesla took Larry's hand half heartedly. "It's a nickname Larry just like Lee, Larry, Ray, or Eddie. It's like onomatopoeia, no one cares how it's spelled?"

Ray could see Larry mouthing the word onomatopoeia in confusion and Ray found himself wondering whether Lesa knew whether his son's name was Edwin or Edward. He knew that she probably knew.

But Lesa had turned to put a hand on Ray's arm. "May I take your arm, Sir?" she asked.

"Sure, I would like that," came out spontaneously. He did want her to take his arm, but being filled with sarcastic thoughts, he added, "and then please come back for the rest of me, would you? Take *anything* you want," he told her bitterly, "but please ask me like that first, just because I like it that way."

She smiled apologetically. "I will. I've been awful, I know. That's the last. I promise. I'll explain this to you when we get home."

'Last'? Was she kidding? The side effects of her last act would last forever. And *Home*? he thought. My God! My home is on the other side of the planet.

Again the three of them rode back to the Sheltry in the limo jiggedy jig. Lesa in the middle with the middle woman and the marginalized man on the outsides left and right of the main attraction. The girls were in good spirits. Ray wasn't. The kids had something to work out, but financial success-wise fortunes could not have looked brighter - even for him, assuming he could live down his scheduled million-dollar humiliation.

This time as they walked through the lobby to the elevator it was to applause, flashes from cameras, and an onslaught of *Aberrations of Relativity* held high and open for signings.

"Not tonight!" Edna yelled out, and what Edna said still went with everyone... except maybe for Lesa, the million-dollar quiz kid. Edna went straight to her room, saying only, "How about asking me up for nine o'clock breakfast?"

"Certainly." Lesa said, in control. "May I order you anything?"

"No, please wait to order till I get there at nine. They're quick."

Concurring, Lesa said, "Okay." And that was that for the trio.

Once through the anteroom Lesa sat on the *his and hers* couch. Ray sat down by her... because he wanted to. Her 'I love you' was almost like a stamp anymore, but as painful as a Maori-style tattoo, so she didn't even have to say it, didn't say it, because it wasn't necessary. Her 'loving' him hung in the air, everywhere, like a million-dollar curse. That might not sound like such a bad thing to anyone who had watched Larry King Live tonight. Curses were like that he supposed. Sometimes he wondered what a million-dollar 'I hate you' curse from Lesa Landau would be like hanging like a stench in the air. It was too terrible for him to even contemplate tonight.

Her left hand was flat on the couch between them. He laid his hand flat on top of it; two pancakes in a short stack, another metaphor that really didn't work - none of them worked anymore. But just having his hand there felt good to Ray, and Lesa seemed to like it too. All the impulses and petulance had played out and the naughty child was sleeping somewhere inside this woman now or was it this lady. He didn't really know what it was, or who they were, and it didn't really matter much when they were alone because in this strange (and he had to admit, sadomasochistic) way, he loved them all and would always but without fear only when they were locked in here alone.

They had sat there a long time when his cell phone made its sound. It was Helen, time on the West coast was not so devastatingly late.

"Hi," he said.

"Hi, Honey. You sound exhausted. Are you all right?"

"Yeah, I guess, except for the exhausted part, and the terrified part."

"You'll do okay, Honey. You used to be a fabulous player. Does Lesa know that?"

Lesya was attempting to get up, but he held her down by not releasing the weight on her hand. He frowned indicating for her to stay. She was just being polite he could tell, and he didn't want her pretenses at being polite. She sat back down. Maybe he wanted her to realize that he knew there was not even a remote possibility of her ever being genuinely polite. He didn't know; he wanted her there taking the punishment from this aberrant angle.

"She has no idea. But, 'used to be'? What's that mean?" He repeated Helen's phrase as the question it was.

"I didn't mean it like that. What I meant was that you used to hit a lot of home runs. I'll bet it's like riding a bike that you never forget."

"The last time I rode a bike I fell off and about broke my neck, remember."

She laughed. "Yeah. The kids are excited about Saturday though."

"The 'kids' huh? Yeah, I'll bet they are. Keg parties and laughing 'til the third inning is over and Ray Bonn's humiliation is complete."

When Helen asked whether Lisa was there now, he said, "Yeah, she's here all right. We were just sitting here in the living room not saying a word while the flavor lasts."

He saw Lesya frown and motion that she'd like to be excused. She seemed to really need to go; she actually had a tear or two on her cheeks, so he let her go. She went into her room and closed the door loud enough for Helen to hear.

"Are you two not speaking to each other now, is that it?" Helen asked.

"Pretty close to that, I guess. She just went to her room by the way," he said quietly.

"I heard. Can she really have thought you'd hit home runs after all these years?"

"I don't have the foggiest notion what she thought, Helen. I had no idea what she was up to."

"I think she was offended by everyone pressuring her to collaborate when she didn't want to - when she didn't think it would be right. I guess I contributed to that too, didn't I?"

"Well, the thing is that it would be right, it actually will be right. The collaboration will call upon at least as much of her expertise as mine, if she or I don't opt out altogether. I don't think I could get it by establishment without her. I wouldn't even try."

"She loves you, you know."

"Yes, I think that's the name she gave it."

"And you love her."

"Yes, I guess I do in some distorted sense, but not in any ways that should affect our love for each other, Helen. You have to know that, Darling. I need you so much right now. I do sense her pain, Helen, and I guess I do love her in that sense and probably more, but she is such a God damned pill."

"I do know," Helen said so sweetly, "and thank you."

"Thank you for being you, Helen. I could not live with any other kind of woman without going stark raving mad."

Helen laughed, "Maybe you need them to push you on to realizing all of you. I think Edna and Lesa think that. I've probably been bad for you."

"You think I need pushing?" he asked. "You haven't been bad for me; you've been just exactly what I've always wanted. Anyhow, you *did* push me! Here I am. Remember? I suppose I won't see you for a while now," he said. "I don't know how I'm going to handle this."

"Do you think that's why Lesa did this? Is it her way of keeping you there another week? I could come you know."

"I really don't know what Lesa thinks or wants," he said. "Maybe she'll tell me sometime what on earth possessed her. But no, I think I need to find this out on my own, so that we get through it. Another woman in the mix with Edna and Lesa would just be too confusing for me. Your personalities do not just blend you know – none of them. As far as this gala occasion of Ray Bonn's major league debut at Yankee Stadium at fifty, I don't think it is going to be the sort of thing you'd want to watch up close and cuddly, Helen. Let's just admit it. Lesa can watch this one and give whatever excuses she wants to on national TV. It's her deal."

"You're not fifty. You won't be forty-nine until July. If you were fifty, I'd be fifty, and I just won't have it, Ray." She laughed.

"What the hell's the difference? I'm two and a half times too damned old. If I'd been drafted when I was nineteen or twenty, sure, after a few years in the minors I might have made it. But you don't go straight to Yankee Stadium. Not at fifty for Christ's sake."

She chuckled but otherwise ignored the inaccuracy of his comment. "I know Edna and I had a hard time adjusting to her management style for my husband. As far as Lesa and I, I don't know, I kind of like her. She may be just a little 'too busy being free', of course. Remember Joni Mitchel's song?" She laughed to no response. "You have to admit, Ray, she's got flair. It'll work out fine. You'll figure it out; you always do. I'm going to let you go, Darling. It's late there."

"What time is it, he asked?

"Ten here. One there. Good night."

"Night."

Ray continued to sit there with the cell phone closed in his left hand, his abandoned hand to his right. He laid his head back and closed his eyes without stirring. Eventually he must have fallen to sleep.





*#15 Days of Discontent and Doldrums*

Saturday afternoon, May 6<sup>th</sup>.

Ray's at bat came around again in the top of the eighth. Once again, the Mariners were down by three, fifteen-twelve. And once again the bases were loaded by seemingly miraculous luck. Mac Heller's managerial skills had helped. This time Ray went up with no outs in the inning.

Pasao had been silent ever since Ray's second at bat, but this time he said, "Ray, why don't you just give it up?" with a smile on his face. "Whatever you do, the Yankees are going to win this thing in the end."

Ray had no comment other than to deposit another baseball far back behind the monuments in center field.

So again, he had done what was becoming his expected *thing*, not that any of these at bats had been easy for him. None of them had, but the home runs did just sort of happen as far as anyone but Ray could tell – almost as though the devil truly was involved as in *The Year The Yankees Lost The Pennant*. Fans were getting spooked.

But from Ray's perspective each swing was indeed a major physical accomplishment that required energy and took a toll, but otherwise so like when he had been in high school so many years ago and had done the same thing; there was no treachery or mysticism involved. Of course, occurring at Yankee Stadium with major league pitching and the hyped spectacle of his age as a context for such a performance seemed to make a tremendous difference. It certainly took more out of him than it had in high school. He would never have accepted this challenge willingly – not for any amount of money. Last Monday night he had thought that what he was now actually managing to get done at the plate would have been absolutely impossible. He was rather thrilled to find out that his body could still handle it.

The next three batters went out in order to end the top of the eighth. Nonetheless, the Mariners were up by one again, only to have Alto bounce a ball off the face of the upper deck in left field for another grand slam in the bottom of the inning. Just as Pasao had predicted by the end of the eighth, the Yankees were indeed back in front, nineteen-sixteen. That was out of his control. He tried not to think about that.

*Aberrant Behavior*

Both Ray and Lesa, were physically and emotionally exhausted in their respective seclusions in Yankee Stadium. They both continued to think regretfully of those terrible days of discontent and doldrums that they had lived through after their second Larry King Live performance.

Tuesday morning, May 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Ray was awakened by Lesa taking off his shoes and his socks. He shook his head and blinked a couple of times as he awoke. He was still not fully awake, watching his left sock being so gently pulled off by a caring hand. "What time is it?" he asked.

"Three thirty." She was in her pajamas.

"Have you slept?"

"Not well," she said. "I liked the way we slept after our first Larry King Live show."

She helped him up and started leading him to her room. He resisted the direction with a determination she knew she could not dissuade, so she headed him gently to the door of his own room. She opened it and stood there awaiting an invitation at her "outer limit" as he stepped in.

He turned, said, "Thank you, Lesa," all politely enough, but nonetheless closed the door in her now so gentle face and proceeded to the bed with the covers that had been pulled down so neatly, with candy on the pillow, having waited for so long without him.

The covers were always pulled down on the right side of his bed. It made sense what with the walkway beside it continuing directly on to the closet and bathroom area. Lesa's, he had noticed had been on the left, the mirror image. What if the person who liked the left got the right? Did Edna understand parity well enough to have known which of them was which? Do soul mates come in left and right? Maybe that's the problem, he thought sleepily. What if they were two lefts? Or he was the left instead of the right.

He loosened his belt. His jeans plummeted to the floor with the weight of his wallet, knife, money clip, fingernail clipper, and change that were the talismen of his life, none with much purpose. He sat down and then lay back on the pillow closing his eyes like an Egyptian mummy, which was not all that bad of a metaphor, he thought, as a last thought before sleep this day, now Tuesday morning, four days till Saturday. Ray sighed, but soon he mercifully found sleep again.

He awoke at 7:30 or so, terrified. He got up, put on the jeans that had so recently fallen beside his bed, grabbed his shirt and walked out into their main room to get his shoes and socks and thence back toward his own room to do... whatever the hell he wanted.

"Good morning," Lesa said in her most charming manner. He hadn't noticed her already at her computer when he had come out, "Did you sleep all right?" she asked.

He turned and just glared at her for a long number of seconds. "Yeah," he said and disappeared back into his sanctuary.

He would have a shower he decided. Maybe he would feel better afterward. He didn't.

He looked forward to Edna coming in for breakfast to mediate the chill. The kids definitely needed the middle Mom this morning. Ray couldn't even identify how he felt. His current situation was now so different than anything he had ever experienced or even imagined, so alien, that he needed a huge helping of the deep-seated practicality that was Edna's approach to life.

He went into the main room with defiance, shored up by a deep breath taken just before he opened his door. Lesa was not at the desk now, so he walked over and disconnected the keyboard and Ethernet cords from his laptop and took it to the right-most soft chair across from the couch and sat there to review his e-mails.

Deleting spam as he went, he almost deleted another "In Response to Your Query Concerning Peter Landau;" they were accumulating nicely... well, at least he was getting quite a few responses even if they were hardly what one would consider nice commentary on Lesa's father. Ray transferred the message to the folder he had purposely obfuscated as 'misc' and continued down his items including e-mails from Jamie and Allie, both "Wows!" about the latest Larry King Live debacle. Then a Helen mail with sympathy and an Eddie not so sure he was jealous after all, not a dumb kid, Ray thought. And then one from the "Ballet LA" that he transferred to 'misc' to avoid intruding eyes. He proceeded through his inbox in which he had a couple more spam messages to delete and then he walked over to place his laptop on the desk and reconnect it to the rest of the world again.

Lesa came in pretty soon dressed for the day in blue to accentuate the beautiful blues he supposed and the purity that was to be associated with the Virgin Mary, he suspected. But that wasn't the right attire for calisthenics exactly. She must be planning that for later, he supposed. Maybe she'd strip to entertain him.

"Good morning sunshine," he said.

She replied, "You seem a little cheerier than when we met here earlier."

It was cute in some objective sort of way maybe, but her feigning innocence didn't seem appropriate in any subjective way that worked for Ray this morning. Her million-dollar terrorist tactics did not rest easy on his mind. "Yeah. Just trying to concentrate on the positive," he said, and watched her look at him out of the corners of her eyes.

Then there was the door that Lesa went to answer.

"Well kids, how're we doing this morning?" Edna evanesced. "I'm going to have ham and eggs this morning. Runny side up," she added to pique Ray's attention.

"Well that does it then. Corned beef hash for me with tomato juice right on top of it."

"Oh," Edna updated, "Orange juice, Sweetie."

"Oh, how thoughtful of you to give me such a charming nom de plume this morning Edna," Ray teased sarcastically, "What made you so certain I'd be so sweet this morning though?"

"Not you, ass hole, I obviously meant Lesa."

"Oh, so somebody else noticed me being given a new ass hole last night. You meant the sweet one here, didn't you? Our million-dollar sweetie pie," Ray jabbed again sarcastically.

Lesa looked at him without rebuttal or complaint. She was on the phone. He overheard that they once more shared the same taste.

"Why not runnies like your admiring audience?" he asked when she was off the phone.

Edna hopped in. "Listen Ray. Last night may not have been exactly your preferred mode of having a million bucks placed under your pillow by a fairy princess while you slept. The representative of establishment received the most time and glory last night, true enough. That has got to gall you, I get that. But you are the beneficiary of it all. *Your* day is coming." Wow, could she bite and scratch.

"Okay, okay," he said. "I really don't want to remember."

"Me either," Lesa said. "Could we just leave it?"

"Well, what're you guys doing today then," Edna changed the subject cheerily. Lesa and Ray looked at each other surreptitiously, apparently neither having the slightest idea what might work for them on this - the day after, and four days *before*... before what?

"How about a walk in Central Park then. That was nice."

"You have a couple of effective disguises we can wear, Edna?" Ray asked. "Maybe a black hood for me, and a burka with a tiny slit for the sweet one? Whattaya think girls?" He was indeed in a mood; even he could tell that now. "How about taking in a Yankee game?"

The women looked at him disdainfully, relegating him to pariah status. They engaged in some mundane interaction concerning laundry.

Ray went off to his room to putter and finally picked up *Faust*, the book he was slowly wading through, one of those books everyone wants to have read but don't want to have to actually read. He seemed to have been able to knock off a few of those through his life. *Ulysses* had not been one, to be sure, what with always having to start completely over since by the time the next cycle for it had come around, he couldn't seem to remember enough to make it possible to just continue, so he would start all over. Other books like *Arrowsmith*, *All the Kings Men*, and *The Mayor of Casterbridge* he had re-read so many times he had lost track of exactly how many. All the stories within stories and deep philosophical and political issues on good versus evil appealed to him in new ways each time.

Whether good could be wrought from evil, and whether the good people that were millstones around the necks of the rest of us could be tolerated, those issues remained relevant always. They had beckoned Ray back to determine

what his current feeling for those issues might be at each of the various stages of his life and it felt right now like his views might be changing rapidly.

Faust was proving particularly pertinent now even though he didn't otherwise enjoy the stilted translation of poetry. It seemed somehow so relevant to his emerging situation, his love of learning and his endeavor to contribute in some way to the body of what is known while striving so against the wiles of age. It seemed to be a battle *Lesa* as resident fairy child and *Mephistopheles* forced upon him more vehemently than ever. Even their collaboration pitted them against each other and the inevitable arrow of time.

The outer door sounded before he could do more than open the book and muse a bit, so he put it down and went in to where there were breakfast aromas cheering up the place with *Lesa* doing hostess again on the round table.

She got the first taste of corned beef so that he would be copying her, he thought neurotically, although upon reflection that thought seemed even more petulant than he felt. It tasted good. A sensory measurement defying theory, he thought. He did like it and so did she, he could tell. Just another coincidentally shared taste, but the thought did endear him to her and help him to work his way out of the funk for a while.

The girls were going to do laundry today. Did he have any?

Of course, he did, but the hotel does it he told them. Or he would do it himself.

"Oh, Ray!" *Lesa* said, with exasperation, "for God sake. I don't really think *Helen* lets you do laundry, and we have to have you looking your best, so why not just let us do what women have done without complaint ever since time began?" She smiled simulating a genuine fondness, belying the obvious sarcasm of her comment. "Please."

"Well, okay then," he said. "I'll get it ready right away after this great breakfast, and then I can maybe go out and get us a mastodon for lunch."

As they looked at each other, *Lesa* wondered just how long it would be before Ray settled back down into his normal personality rut so they could relax. But, she knew it would not be until next Sunday morning, or never.

Ray was outside of that view of Ray. So far as he could tell he was just being everyday Ray, who had been sideswiped by a hit and run Mac truck the night before. But he finished his breakfast with no further sarcasm, excused himself politely enough and went in to separate out his washables.

His jockey shorts he sort of rolled into his T shirts along with his socks without really thinking about the obvious fact that when these were thrown into a washing machine, it would probably not be in the rolled lumps, but individually. He could not have brought himself to think of such realities today or he would have been doing laundry on his own. He put what he had gathered into the plastic laundry bag in his room. Very soon *Lesa* was toe-to-toe on her outer limit asking if he had it ready, so he handed the bags to her across the DMZ and they turned in their opposite directions after he had said his, "Thank you."

*Lesa* had replied with a surly, "Sure; it's what we do."

Once they were gone, Ray decided he should begin reading Lesa's dissertation, since all he had done on that so far was to scan it, seeing too many of Gibb's equations to just willingly wade in, until it came up as a priority in his life. It surely was now, if he ever wanted to escape New York City, Edna Robinson, and Dr. Lesa Landau.

He began at the beginning and indeed, it was brilliant. The style of her writing was very much to his liking. Before long it was as though he were reading something he himself might have written in an inspired moment and then forgotten and gone back to with delight. It was amazing how she could bring charm to something otherwise so dull. Ray wondered to what degree, if any, she would eventually agree to collaborate with him on this *no free lunch* endeavor for which they were already on contract. There are many differential equations in thermodynamics; they had always bored him; he had never fully appreciated or worked through them to sufficiently understand. Maybe Lesa's presentation would increase his understanding and enjoyment of that aspect. What a strange thought that was after last night.

The 'that woman' meme entered his thoughts right in the middle of a scientific text. Now that was strange too, and that too was on account of *that woman* in particular which was not associated with any generic meme, he knew. Just *her*. She was an individual phenomenon, not yet a meme, but she would be. One day Dr. Lesa Landau would occupy a specific spot on everyone's cortex just like Bill Clinton does now, he thought.

In the way our minds race to and fro like the saccades of our eyes that bounce all over their target even when we are concentrating on it, the writer, the subject, love, and anger all darted through his mind as part of the general flow of following Lesa's arguments. She had very coherently explained why there must be a microscopic aspect of the irreversibility that otherwise must so distinguish levels of reality in our universe. However angry he might currently be with her personally, he felt a very peaceful acquiescence of the way she presented her ideas.

The front door opened and rather than Edna and Lesa, it was maid service, an awkward little Puerto Rican lady who would much have preferred this suite be vacated when she came in to remake the beds, turn back sheets and leave the little insincere candies. He sensed that she perceived herself as some kind of J. Lo that an old codger like himself might try to seduce. Dream on lady, the million-dollar Lesa Landau lives here and she ain't got that job done yet.

Before the wannabe actress was done, the million-dollar lady herself had returned, with the old codger's other handler. The girls were cheery and talkative when they walked in. Edna dropped some of Ray's things onto Lesa's bundle and left, asking that they convene downstairs at 1:00 o'clock.

The maid was in Lesa's bedroom, having completed Ray's first, and so Lesa brought the stack of Ray's clean folded clothes over to the door of his bedroom and laid them at her outer limit.

Ray saw the maid watch this act from Lesa's doorway with a quizzical look and almost a smirk. He was once again irritated at her for the literality to

which his privacy demand was being satisfied, but in any case, it was better than worrying at all times day or night when she might barge in.

The maid left shortly and Lesa asked Ray whether he had completed his calisthenics yet. He had to admit it would have been a more reasonable course of action for him to have taken, to avoid the so direct contact with someone to whom he felt, at least temporarily, quite estranged to say the least. But he hadn't, and so she asked if he would like to do them right then. He said sure, that it was probably a good idea. He meant more precisely: Of course, my dear, it is obviously something that, given the current million-dollar circumstances, absolutely *has* to be done. Ray's thoughts concerning the maze she had created just for him, as his own personal hell, renewed his irritation.

Her idea of a maze seemed to consist of two infinitely long parallel walls headed straight for the disaster she planned. Ray was the rat she placed in her maze. What lay at the end of that maze would not occur to Ray this day, or any of the next three days, without being accompanied by considerable consternation. These calisthenics did, as a mere matter of simple fact, now *have* to be done, and at this point it did very much matter, if he was to minimize in any way the effects of the disaster, with which she had set him on a collision course.

She stepped just inside her bedroom, slipped off her Blue blouse and skirt, flipped them onto her bed all matter-of-factly as though it could not possibly be considered a suggestively provocative act at all, and came back scantily clad in her underwear to begin the sweating.

Ray slipped his top shirt off but decided not to follow her lead and drop his pants. They did pushups. He was still not recovered from having just begun this routine so few days ago. His muscles ached. She looked over at him, after she had done a few as she usually did, to monitor his progress, he knew. She was unobtrusive about it at least, he had to admit that. They each did some leg raises, Ray following along with her as she had obviously intended the last couple of days.

Then for the sit-ups, she said, "Me first or you?"

They each held the other's shoeless toes in their crotches and watched the straining necks and tummies, him watching developments above and below her bra as well. Why not? She watched him watch. Then they both ran in place in the anteroom, which adjustment she had introduced the previous day; he could see it had been a good idea. He'd have rather run beside her though, but clearly, she wanted to face her protegee as part of monitoring progress. She upped the count on him today, he noted, but then this was her experiment, wasn't it? He was the rat.

When they were done with that, Lesa took his hand and led him to their couch where they sat back against the pillows. There was no "I love you." The expression remained part of an unspoken benediction, but she gripped his hand securely in hers. That was as close as she could get to a total apology for her actions, just as it had been the night before. He could tell that she was both remorseful for, but satisfied by, what had occurred. In her own mind there

must have been some sort of justification that, although she had promised it would be forthcoming, the explanation for whatever it might be worth, had yet to be formulated. She hadn't forgotten. He watched her face. It was obvious she thought of nothing else, but still she opted in favor of holding silence.

After a little while, she excused herself and went to have a shower. He went to his analogy of changing his T-shirt after a sponge bath from the waist up. When he returned, she was at her laptop, checking e-mails. Her hair was wet, slicked back in the way with which he had become familiar. He liked seeing it wet, and when it had dried it resulted in a most beautiful off hand casual look to her hair. That look related in some way to her liking him with his coat slung over his shoulder, he imagined. But even wet, it was a beautiful sight. One aspect was that it allowed the full width of her broad forehead and skull to demonstrate itself like a huge ostrich egg of elegance, similar to the ones that he had once seen painted so attractively.

When she faced him with her hair wet this way, as she probably would not today, her head slightly bent forward staring almost from under the crescent brows, her eyes were not at the center of her face at all as every artist knows to be true of every face. They were instead much less than halfway up, the huge volume of her cranium becoming apparent in a strange unearthly extra-terrestrial sort of way.

"I like your hair that way," he said being unable to withhold his approval even today.

She turned and looked at him in that eerie way that delighted him with the top half of her forehead seeming so inordinately large.

*That* was the reason he had made his comment, he realized that then. He acknowledged that there are perfunctory actions one performs, words one says, that although not obviously intended as stated, are deliberate actions done for effect. She turned back so that now he admired her profile and back angles of her head.

Lesla saw him out of the corner of her eye as he continued to watch her; She turned on him again, this time saying, "Don't you have anything to do?"

He thought of a lot of sarcastically humorous answers to that but realized and respected her sense of wishing at this moment that she be alone without anyone inspecting her. He empathized with that feeling because of what she had done so many times to him. They were gradually learning to adapt to each other's preferences he guessed; he picked up his laptop again to continue reading her dissertation.

More Gibb's relations and differential equations that are tied rather loosely to lower microscopic levels of phenomena. The tether is so loose, he thought, that it is not too surprising that something so tiny as the residue from a microscopic collision between molecules gets lost in that translation. No surprise at all, at least to him now, and he knew to her as well.

Having completed that section, he started the next. There was some quite tangential reference to William James Sidis's doubts on the subject. Her



reference and the one he had made to the same author were to the same effect and was, in fact, specifically the same sentences:

*"...any deductive conclusion from reversible laws must itself be reversible. And yet in the case of the second law of thermodynamics, the reversible laws which govern the motions of ultimate particles of matter seem to compound themselves somehow into the best possible example of an irreversible law governing the motions of large masses."*

Now this strange woman with more than half her skull filled to the brim with brains and this ugly old curmudgeon of a man were going to meld their disparate personalities into a resolution of this ultimate physical science dilemma that had stood for centuries.

But first apparently, they must hammer each other into a more compatible combination to produce this union of ideas. It seemed a terrible process that they were in the middle of, to coordinate the clinamen of these two ultimate particles of mind that seemed to compound themselves somehow into a worst possible example of irreversible destructive behavior. It wasn't too bad an analogy, he thought. It sort of worked. She, of course, since she thought almost identically to how he thought, would acknowledge that as well, but the process had something inescapably difficult about it. One could know to whatever degree of certainty seemed to be required how the other thought, and yet there was this frictional aspect that made what should be a veritable heaven turn into this no-free-lunch hell of theirs.

And then she interrupted Ray with, "Are you ready for lunch now?"

This in itself was an example of an interaction through which inevitable losses occur. He would lose some little bit of what he was reaching for, when he returned to it. But he responded cheerfully, nonetheless.

"This is the real world in which, even if not free, we want our lunches."

She seemed to appreciate the depths from whence this thought had arisen even without knowing the specifics, and so the macroscopic emotional world works with only the little inevitable subtleties lost along the way. To make up for these ineluctable losses we add emotional energy to keep from destroying our relationships. Yeah, that worked too, he thought.

Lesa seemed to comprehend also that, unlike her irritable response to his distracting her with a compliment when she had been deep in thought, he had reacted cheerily for a change. "Thank you for complimenting me on the way my hair looked by the way," she said. "I'm sorry I was cross."

"It was just a fact," he said, "not some elaborate poetic creation or anything like that. It's just that everything about you just seems to be this amazing fact of beauty and sometimes it strikes me so poignantly that I just have to blurt it out." He paused and added, "whether I'm angry at you or not." They both laughed together for a change.

"I have to run a comb through my hair," she said, scampering off into her bedroom. He could see her pull a brush back through it, which allowed each individual hair its own most delightful degree of freedom.

"Even more beautiful," he said as she returned, forgetting for the moment his extreme irritation with her. She grabbed his arm as they went out, but then she let it go once she considered them to be in 'public', dropping her arm to her side when they were vulnerably outside the door.

The kids beat Edna down for lunch this time and had a table for three set up to await her arrival. Ray asked for some coffee while they waited; they really were early by ten or fifteen minutes, so Lesa decided to go call Edna's room. But Edna had already been on her way and they both made it to the table at the same time. Ray's coffee hadn't cooled enough to drink yet, so they were all about even.

Ray said, "Lesa, if you wanted company eating burgers, I'd have one too."  
"Good," she said.

Then it was just a matter of whether Edna could find anything but the London broil. She did. She ordered a quiche

Ray wondered whether Lesa might switch. No, she stuck with him.

Edna talked about sales. Did they know what was involved in getting those twenty thousand books to Yankee Stadium by Saturday, how much Steinbrenner's discount would be, how sales continued to skyrocket? They had no idea and Ray at least cared less and would rather discuss anything else.

Ray was sure that Lesa would be wondering and worrying about when she would get that contract to which she must "duct tape" him for Saturday's fiasco. He was also sure that she wouldn't mention it unless Edna did, knowing that Ray wouldn't like thinking about it anymore than necessary. Steinbrenner would have had to have some kind of contract set up with an insurance outfit to sucker the Mariners into placing a chump in their line-up, even one at bat's worth. Ray had known that, but he had been tired of fighting the deal. That contract would be some piece of work to then be reviewed by another piece of work.

Then there was the matter of the degree to which a ball playing contract with Mariners management and the book contract with Steinbrenner would be coupled. Clearly Steinbrenner wasn't going to make payment for the books unless the kids showed, and he had to worry at least a little about whether Ray *would* show. Probably Edna had done the work, maybe even last night during the show, to make assurances and appropriately de-couple them, with yet the proper guarantees of the kids showing. He guessed that Edna had stuck her neck out on the line to assure Steinbrenner of that, if they didn't show, then he wouldn't have to pay for the books. She would have had to get her management to approve that, unless she had the ready cash to underwrite the whole thing herself. Then, of course, Ray would be off on another tour signing books to help her recoup her losses – maybe Europe, or Siberia.

They ate their lunches, Edna discreetly, and the kids as kids will with hamburgers. Lesa was funny enough with this bit of finger food too; it was part of why Ray had suggested it. How different she was from when they had gone *uptown* on Friday, more different still than last night. It lightened his thoughts of her, just seeing her in the little girl, rather than last night's million-dollar wheeler-dealer Mafia Dawn, mode of operation.

Edna and the kids separated in the downstairs lobby. Although there was a considerable number of patrons who seemed to recognize them, and they noticed a couple of camera flashes that they self-consciously presumed directed at them, they were nonetheless much less concerned than they had been on returning the night before. There is a normality that people impose upon themselves, Ray decided, no matter how abnormal their situation. He guessed that celebrity status must fall into such a category. He allowed an eye contact, knowing it would necessitate a signing, but one a day wasn't too bad.

Lesa waited without seeming to be available to co-sign.

As Lesa and Ray walked into their main room from the antechamber, they both noticed the flashing light on the desk phone, and both assumed (correctly) that it signaled the arrival of the contract at the front desk. Since the contract was ostensibly to be directed to Lesa Landau as agent, it was naturally she who followed up on the call and had a porter transport the document to Lesa-show-me-the-money million-dollar-Landau headquarters. Very shortly it arrived. Ray decided that he would ignore it until Lesa had had a chance to look through it to see if that was the kind of instrument to which it would be appropriate to "duct tape" him.

He took the opportunity to call Helen from his room as he did each day during the interval between national TV exposures and would until the "charade". He kept her up to date on the status of the Sheltry tensions and received advice on keeping his calm. Today there was a bit of normality that allowed just the degree of their missing each other to predominate in their discussion and then the byes and love yous and Ray returned to suite central.

Apparently Lesa thought it fitting for Ray to sign, because after a bit, she motioned for him to come over to the desk. She walked him through "said party this" and "said party that" all the way down to a big "X" at the bottom to be vouched for by the agent... the big double "L".

There was also a commission statement concerning the amount she would receive as agent. She insisted on a Good Samaritan role again, not wanting to charge any commission for services rendered. Whereas he thought it would be fair for her to suffer some substantial penalty for having brought forth this dastardly deed, since that was not an option, he refused to sign a contract if she received less than 10%. So finally, she concurred since otherwise her "duct tape" wasn't going to stick.

The document was obviously an electronic cut-and-paste extraction of the more usual ballplayer contract. Lesa had a very good feel for why statements were in there and why they were in there the way they were. Ray was certain that the contract did, in fact, guarantee just what Lesa had insisted be

guaranteed to "said" ballplayer should he come through in "said" clutches as specified, and his Helen would be most fortunate should Ray suffer an injury during the course of the game. He toyed with that being his 'out'.

Lesla was very officious about the whole thing, so Ray agreed to what he had no alternative but to agree to, if he did not want the American book-buying public, to say nothing of Larry King and Edna mad at him forever. Oh yeah, there was also George Steinbrenner, Lesla Landau, Helen Bonn, his entire brood of heirs, and millions of the Lesla Landau fan club.

He signed.

Lesla sealed up some internal envelope to put in an outer one and called to have the porter return. He received very detailed instructions from agent Lesla Landau on exactly what to do with it, and they were done with it... well, 'til Saturday.

Thus, had Ray Bonn been gagged and "duct taped" to the tracks and now all they had to do was wait for Saturday's train. He was in position between the two parallel rails of this million-dollar maze of hers. The metaphors almost worked; he didn't like how well they worked.

Wednesday, and Thursday, and Friday, May 4<sup>th</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup>.

On Wednesday, and Thursday, and Friday the events in Ray and Lesla's lives were about like those on Tuesday. They went nowhere. On each day the human drama of two people who were so passionately drawn toward each other, but whose wills now seemed so completely at odds, was a soap opera at a deep psychological level. On the surface they maintained a degree of civility that allowed them to live together in a relatively confined area, afraid to go out among what they perceived, self-consciously as overzealous Yankees or *Aberration* lynch mobs.

Each day the calisthenics continued that were the pretense to make up for the years of Ray's aging and lackluster exercise program. They continued to review each other's views of thermodynamics and how ultimately, should their relationship survive Saturday, they would create this new synthesis they both envisioned as revolutionizing physics, for which they had now become legally obligated.

They occasionally talked civilly concerning what the other had meant with regard to this or that technical point, but mostly it was an emotional trading of water as far as personal communications went. What transpired during these days would give them more familiarity with the work of the other, if they ever began in earnest the task of forging a synthesis. But of course, Ray saw it *as* a synthesis, whereas Lesla still pretended to believe that it was more a mere shoring up of the work that Ray had already accomplished, with technical detail from her investigations. The objective of this contract could be achieved, they were both certain, but whether they would be able to hold their working relationship together well enough after what Ray, at least, perceived as "the Saturday Charade" remained to be seen. Needless to say, tensions were

quite extreme before Saturday rolled around. It was left to Edna to provide the vestige of sanity to keep this little company afloat.

Lesa, of course was receiving a certain amount of pressure from ASI in the person of her boss Ed Watson to abandon this search for El Dorado with the snake oil salesman. She could still rescue her brilliant career as an heir apparent to big things in the physics community.

As would certainly be readily imagined, Lesa resisted with her iron will, matching comments with Dr. Ed with adeptness, and in ways that he could probably not have imagined even after her fairly lengthy stay at ASI. She had always seemed to express her opinions willingly enough, but never with such vehemence in any disagreement as she did now in her defense of Ray, his abilities, his intuitions, and the discoveries that, she insisted, would ultimately be supported by test, unlike Ed's. There wasn't the slightest slip to indicate all was not well in the Sheltry tower.

Ray, on the other hand was beginning to put together an impressive array of information on the safely hidden *dining room table* for Lesa's inspection, concerning her post-traumatic stress symptoms once "the Saturday Charade" was out of the way. His current anger did not cloud his perspective, with regard to a responsibility he had accepted as important to one with whom he seemed to have an inseparable bond. He didn't quite know to what extent it might be more than that, but he had convinced himself that it really didn't matter whether it was more or less than that. He hadn't known from the first and was even more confused now. But in any case, he knew that what he had to do in that regard, he had to do.

And so, although so apparently at odds and clearly extremely irritated with each other, each was working away privately for the betterment of the other, and of course, thereby, themselves. Each operated under a conviction that, however tense their current situation, it would prove ultimately to have been a temporary shadow which, after having passed, their faces would once again be touched by the sun.



*#16 Will It Never End?*

Saturday, May 6<sup>th</sup>.

In the top of the ninth inning Mareno Ricuzo, perhaps the greatest closer of all time, was brought in to close out the game. For nearly fifteen years the Mariners had gone without hitting a home run off him. He got his first two batters with a pop up and a strike out - Mareno as usual. Lights out.

Juni Masoni got a swinging bunt; it dribbled toward first and confused the infield fielding strategy. Mareno finally got the ball and flipped it to first, but the first baseman had come up the line too far to touch the bag and took a swipe at the runner instead, missing a sliding Masoni. It was ruled a hit although questionable. Aaron Bell got hit again on the elbow, maybe not trying as hard as he might to avoid it. Then Mac Heller sent Lefty O'Toule out to pinch-hit for Miguel and Ray was in the on-deck circle again. He would most likely be standing there when the game mercifully came to close.

The TV had showed Ray in conversation with Mac before stepping out there; they had showed his face in the dugout frequently as the game had gone along and he had become a more and more important part of it. Whenever Ray's face appeared, Lesa would get up and walk over close to the large screen to see it better. He seemed to be aging as the game went along, she thought, seeming more and more fierce at least, so like the patriarch in the Titian painting he had told her about when they had strolled through the Met, who made you tremble to behold.

Touley had a ten-pitch at bat, finally drawing a well-deserved walk.

Ray once more was at bat. He had usually hit the first pitch, not all of them would have been called strikes, but he had been able to get the bat on them solidly. He had let a couple pitches go by that were off the plate too far, or a pitch he hadn't been expecting. However, this at bat the umpire had called a pitch that was way outside (about 5 inches according to the tracer diagram on the screen) a strike, so Ray had stepped back out of the box and seemed to think for a minute.

Tim McCarthy laughed in saying to Joe Brett, "That's got him thinking now. They've tried just about every kind of pitch on him. He's a *bad ball* hitter, Joe, but not *that* bad. Mareno's got his number."

Ray said something to the umpire who nodded, whereupon Ray walked around behind him and went up to bat on the first base side as a lefty to everyone's surprise. Mareno is right-handed and considered easier for a left-handed batter to face.

"Smart," Tim said. "I wonder whether he really is a switch hitter. Maybe he's tired after all that and looking to get hit on the elbow like Bell did."

Mareno actually smiled at this maneuver and let fly a fast slider.

Ray demolished it. It sailed up high into the right field stands to the thunderous ovation of the opposition. Having now driven in four in the ninth, the Mariners were ahead by one again.

"Well, I guess he can switch," Tim said laughing with Joe.

Lesa was naturally believed at that point that the day had been carried by the soul mate she had so unceremoniously "duct taped" to a million-dollar Yankee-killing contract. But no, Jesus De Jesus hit a solo homer in the bottom of the inning to keep it going. So Lesa was still curled up in the overstuffed chair in her private sanctuary, watching, when another door opened than the one George had said locked from the inside.

It was George. "Are you all right?" he asked. He seemed agitated.

"Yes, just emotionally exhausted," she said. "Thank you so much for this room. I don't think I'd have survived without it."

"Well, you've been in here long enough. Folks are missing you. I'm sure you're not so naïve as to think I could convince the Mariners to buy into your terms by themselves, do you? I've put out a lot of moolah to watch this so far, and if it has to go on, then I think my friends and I should get to see more of Ray's beautiful agent, don't you? You're being missed. I'll give you a minute to freshen up and get out here, but then the door gets unlocked. You come out or we come in. Okay?"

Lesa started to rise. George pointed to a lady's room, so she began heading in that direction.

"This wasn't a hustle now was it?" George asked, apparently very sincerely, and why not. But he had his smile back, nonetheless.

"It wasn't a hustle. I had no idea. I know Ray couldn't have either."

George looked a little skeptical about the last part but left by the door he now unlocked as Lesa disappeared into the lady's room.

Washing up her mascara stained face, the reverie concerning those awful days between the contractual agreement and the execution of it continued to play out in the fairy princess's mind just as it was being remembered by the slugger Ray Bonn, between their intense activities.

Thursday and Friday, May 4<sup>th</sup> and May 5<sup>th</sup>.

During these days of major discontent, days seemed to blend into one another, a continuous spectrum of raw emotions. Ray spent an increasing amount of his time in his personal sanctuary where he could read his e-mails without fear that Lesa would read one concerning ghosts of her own past. He



saw it as extremely important to be able to lay the data out for her, as her mother would have, in a way that would facilitate recovery rather than more severely damaging her psyche. He saw the disaster of these days as all deriving from that very cause, and whether it had or not, it tended to make him more forgiving.

After Lesa had retired to her room on the Friday night one week ago, Ray had completed the preliminary searches to find references to Lesa's parents. He had identified initial contacts, from whom he might obtain more detail into the nature of the events that had transpired so tragically. Having sent out inquiries to many individuals at that time, most all of them had answered him by now. This provided additional contacts over and above whatever pertinent information they happened to have available themselves. Increasingly he was being recognized by those who responded, which seemed to make them more willing to open up to him but, provided more deference and irrelevance.

He had as we have seen, started out with an 'misc' folder into which to place any e-mail he received that pertained to Lesa's background. He felt that should Lesa, in her inquisitive and impulsive manner, notice an e-mail message showing up with her name in the subject line on his screen when his laptop was on the desk in the main room, she would certainly be tempted to open it. If she were to find he had so boldly tromped through her past, she would be... irate.

Ray was convinced that Lesa had pleaded for his help in resolving the terrible ghosts that might be found in her past. Albeit obscurely, he was certain that it was indeed a cry for help, as only one so tortured would do it. It was a sacred trust not to be addressed crudely. Integrity required that he not presume the role of a professional psychologist skilled in working with such trauma victims; he knew he had no such capabilities.

Many of his inquiries and their responses included "Landau" in their subject lines. The avenues he had pursued initially were linked with Peter Landau for obvious reasons. He had been a well-published author and had held a respected post at a well-known institution for which web sites were readily available. Preliminary searches on Peter Landau himself revealed the specific date of his death including a brief description of the situations surrounding that, including that he had been increasingly reserved and taciturn following the so tragic loss of his wife Margaret, who had also..." etc. At the university at which he had had tenure for some time, there was a site that provided faculty names, periods of tenure at the university, and e-mail addresses.

It had been easy to contact a list of peers who were quite forthright in providing their impressions of their rather secretive fellow professor. There were also lists of prominent graduate students and post docs who had gone on to other institutions. Thus, Ray had sought information and opinions of those who had been graduate students in the department in which Peter had worked during that year he had died and the years just preceding. These individuals too began to respond to Ray's inquiries. Peter's sister evidently had died in the

interim and so there seemed to be no other living relatives on that side of Lesa's family.

There was less information for Margaret Landau, Nee Gilbertson, Ph.D. other than dates of birth and death, less than six months prior to her husband's death. She had been an only child of parents who had each been only children, and so, on the distaff side of Lesa's pedigree, there were no living relatives of record. She had indeed been orphaned at an early age.

Although Ray had a couple of inquiries outstanding to individuals that he had thought might have been peers during her days at the minor college where she had taught, none had come forward as of yet. So together with suggestions of the most extreme unfriendliness of Peter Landau, it seemed likely that the family had been a very isolated unit.

Another major avenue that Ray was attempting to investigate was from the clue that Lesa had given him that perhaps her mother had known the lead performer in the troupe that had been playing in New York City during or around the summer of that final year. Ray had identified several leading dancers active at that time, followed up on their careers and found e-mail addresses for most of them. There were two or three that seemed the most likely, and one of these, who now was associated with the Ballet LA troupe in Los Angeles, had already responded that he had not known any Margaret or Peter Landau.

The one whom he now considered most likely seemed currently to be in Boston. He had, so far, not replied. Ray felt him the most likely, because the theme of the performance in which he had performed that summer, however sketchy, was in accord with what Ray had inferred from Lesa's brief reminiscence. It was down this avenue that Ray intuited the most significant development, because of the so brief mention that suggested to Ray the possibility of a great jealousy having just developed or persisted. But so far there had been nothing to go on.

Finally, there was the media accounts of the tragic deaths that also had, of course, provided obituary data of closest of kin, etc. He had wanted to know the gruesome details of the deaths themselves, certainly not because he was given to such sordid information, but because he needed to know the extent of the traumatic situation that Lesa might have experienced. He was afraid that it could have been horrendous, such that her not remembering was more a matter of a blocking out of horrible memories than of not having been a witness.

Police reports indicated that there had been a suicide or accidental shooting in which the resident, a Margaret Landau had been shot in the upper abdomen with a 38-caliber pistol found with the body. But there had seemed to be no fingerprints of the victim on the gun, although she did seem to have a handkerchief in her right hand. Her husband had been questioned as a possible suspect but released once it had become known that Peter Landau, a prominent physicist had been visiting at his sister's home at the time. The daughter had been home studying in an upstairs room when the incident had occurred. It

was she who had found her mother, it was reported, and had called the police. "The child was quite traumatized and was of no immediate assistance to the investigation. She had been taken into the care of Peter Landau's unmarried sister, Isabelle Landau."

Therefore, a major question was, just how much had Lesa seen, heard, and known about what had transpired. It was certain that it was she who had found her mother and had been left to her own devices with regard to what to do in the emergency situation. Clearly, and understandably, she had not been very forthright in discussing details with police. Just the thought of a six-year-old girl discussing such details forthrightly with police was chilling to Ray. But how much had she seen?

The death of Peter Landau seemed a more straightforward case of suicide those few months later. It is hard to imagine anyone shooting herself in the abdomen as a suicide attempt as Margaret was supposed to have done. The same pistol had been used, and he had been alone in a locked car in the outskirts of the university town, when he was found early one morning. The obituary listed the sister and Lesa, of course, his daughter, who had been in residence at a private school in a little town in northern Maine ever since her mother's death, as the bereaved.

There were a few photos that he had obtained of Peter and Margaret Landau, and even a photo of the three of them at a physics department faculty occasion when Lesa would have been four or five.

All in all, he had so far found very little beyond what Lesa had intimated. Other than the few more gruesome details that she no doubt had known but opted not to mention to him or perhaps even to the police. He had indeed found very little. Additional detail might well be so completely buried now as to be totally lost. But he was hopeful that he could obtain some more meaningful resolution to help Lesa come to grips with her past as he obtained responses each day.

There was, of course, also the peripheral facts of her trust fund and that Doctor Landau had died a wealthy man, meaning that Lesa was by now, no doubt also, a very wealthy woman being his sole heir, if not also of her Aunt Isabelle's estate. Lesa no doubt got involved from time to time in a little wheeling and dealing with her equities, Ray thought. Bandyng about big dollar figures was probably not foreign to her.

So what did Ray Bonn surmise had happened?

Well, here it was: He supposed that Peter and Margaret had not married for love as Lesa had implied. They must furthermore have had the kind of marriage that suggested to their child that it was a loveless marriage, i. e., that they had not grown increasingly fond of each other over the years as sometimes happens. The motivations for the marriage had seemed to be primarily those of Margaret's father and of Peter Landau, who received tenure at his university just following marriage to the dean of the department's daughter.

The separate photos of Lesa's two parents showed two extremely different types of individuals, Peter with bold but expressionless features on a rather

narrow but fleshy face and skull it seemed to Ray, and Margaret evidently having been quite beautiful, although not as strikingly so as her daughter. There were many similarities in appearance of mother and daughter, not least of which was the broad forehead and overall body structure, long lithe limbs and slender bodies, whereas Peter had been shorter than Margaret (at least with her heels) and rather squat even besides the slight paunch of the desk job type.

Looking into the expressions of the individuals in the photos, as Ray was wont to do, they seemed quite incompatible personality types. He read the photos to suggest that Margaret would have been an out-going inquisitive and impulsive person very like her daughter, who would probably have been a truly difficult match for a stoic, if not sardonic and possibly sadistic, man much older seeming than his years.

In the current tension between Lesa and himself, Ray thought he had a tiny microcosm of what their lives might have been like, if such tension were allowed to fester year in and year out.

That they had remained childless for five years suggested one of the following alternatives to Ray: One was that there had been such a career orientation to both their lives that neither were desirous of children, at least very soon. Another was that they were not all that fertile or that they were not very sexually engaged. Lesa had implied that her delay in arrival had not been what they had wanted. This gave credence to the second alternative, and although young children are hardly reliable authorities on such matters with regard to their parents, their intuitions in such intricacies can be quite good, and Ray trusted Lesa in regard to intuitions.

Clearly Lesa had been no unwanted *accident*. If there had been infertility without birth control precautions having been taken as Ray presumed, Ray felt that the problem was most likely one having to do with Peter, since Margaret was obviously the more sexually vital appearing of the two and she had demonstrated fertility in the end. Had Peter also? Ray actually doubted it very much.

Ray could imagine that after five years of a joyless marriage that had been entered into without love, continued apparently without friends, and had furthermore, provided no child with whom to share love, perhaps Margaret had given way to an impulsive affair. Perhaps that had resulted in a child of love who was loved (at least, and it seemed to Ray, primarily by her mother) very much. Peter was perhaps oblivious to the parentage of the child, until it became increasingly obvious that however much the child's appearance resembled her mother, which he should have been able to recognize as a good thing, there was no resemblance to him whatsoever. Pride and a lack of love could have evolved over time into an antipathy that grew ever more intense with the passage of time.

Ray's investigations had shown that there was a conference in New York City in midsummer 1990 at which Peter Landau was a principal speaker. No doubt Margaret had begged to have Peter allow her and Lesa to accompany him to the big city for an occasion of elegance. Whether as a plan of her own

or a coincidence, the main dancer at the ballet performance they attended was someone known intimately by Margaret. They had *kissed*, Lesa told him, and for a child to remember a kiss it had not just been a peck on the cheek; there had been some kind of reunion behind it. Peter had had an aversion to ballet that night. Peter Landau's aversion included ballet in general, the particular performance, and *the man*. So much so as to ruin the experience for his daughter, and most certainly for his wife. That he perceived people involved in ballet as *bad* people would probably suggest that 'bad' had its usual personal or biblical context. Adultery was hardly stretching a point as far as to what sort of behavior he might be referring.

Hence Ray sought to find the main dancer at that performance. He felt that should he be able to find him, and if, however adulterous, he did not seem a bad person in any other sense, Ray thought it would help Lesa rid herself of the dour heritage of Peter Landau. However respectable Peter may have been, Ray believed him now to actually have been a very *bad* person who had probably never committed adultery in his life, but probably had committed a most heinous murder. It was clear to Ray that Lesa considered adultery to be a rather minor indiscretion. But murder was something else.

Well, anyway that was what Ray had concluded by that point.

Thus, during this hiatus in their normal close mutual relationship, communication with outside world contacts came increasingly to occupy their time. That each considered blissful times of compatibility they had experienced occasionally on those first couple of days of their acquaintance to have constituted a norm for their relationship might seem a bit strange. They had by now spent a majority of their days since having first met, in what each considered an unpleasant but *abnormal* stage of that relationship. The basic faith that their former elevated plane of existence was just days away from being re-established made the current misery at least tolerable for each of them.

Lesla communicated a couple of times with Brian, with whom she was to have met on the upcoming weekend to discuss his book and her own research. She had not been certain whether there might be more. He clearly had been enamored with more than her research ideas. Discussing that peripheral aspect would not have been repugnant to her earlier. Since having met Ray, it was. She hinted to Brian concerning the facts of her new-found relationship working on thermodynamics with Ray, and although certainly not suggesting her commitment to some kind of enduring romantic relationship or the extent to which that was currently on hold, that much would have had to be obvious to Brian.

Brian had watched their prime-time escapades. It had excited him with regard to Lesa, but he readily saw what she was implying to be the case as well. Brian no longer, therefore anticipated any extracurricular interactions as he had originally hoped. Lesa had completed reading an electronic version of his book in the last week and concluded that, like most texts on the subject, it could have

been a summary written nearly a century ago, and so it was taken off her current *best friends* list.

As for Ray, in addition to the time he now spent finishing his reading of *Faust*, which did not go swiftly for him, and his other purchases, he too buried himself in communications when he was not actively coming up to speed on the various aspects of Lesa's work in thermodynamics.

He delved into his e-mail communication with a relish now, similar to how he had used to interact on those dull days back home down that serene little street in what he was increasingly coming to see as having been more of a quiet desperation. His e-mail communications and the internet had provided the majority of the excitement he had allowed himself at that stage of his retirement. Helen had her own life, not all that different a mode of operation from his, but with more outside friends and different topics. Now Ray had Helen and the kids (the *real* kids) and even grand kids with whom to communicate by e-mail as well.

Between segments of deleted spam messages on one of these occasions of checking e-mail, he encountered "Re: Query Concerning Margaret Landau" that was the only response he had had along this avenue of investigation. He transferred it to the folder he had purposely obfuscated and continued down his items including e-mails from Eddie, Jamie, and Allie, all "Wowsey Dowsey" as Jamie had stated it about the latest Larry King Live debacle. How was he going to cope?

Jamie's e-mail had been rather interesting though. He had probably been trying to set his father's mind at ease about the upcoming charade he so feared. Ray appreciated knowing how much Jamie cared. His e-mail said that a few years ago he had had a patient with whom he had had to deal as part of his neurological investigations. This patient had asked whether "Dr. Bonn" happened to be related to the Bonns who had lived up The Canyon back in the sixties and seventies. Jamie had told him that he was indeed related to them, so the man had told him that the Golden Devils had had some awesome baseball teams back in those years. He had told him also, as Jamie knew from his mother, that they hadn't lost a game four years running, and that there was a player - name of Bonn - who could hit a ball further than he had ever seen one hit. He had watched a lot of baseball since, but he had never seen a major leaguer who could smash a ball any harder than that, and he never missed either. That guy could hit 'em, he had told Jamie, time after time. Amazing hitter.

Jamie added that it had so impressed him, because he always had thought his mother had been exaggerating, when she told us kids about our father's hitting ability. He said he had told Judy about it that night. Judy told him that, since slapping Bonn on her name, she had encountered quite a few people who asked whether she might be related to the Bonns from up Canyon Creek way where they had had those amazing high school teams in all the sports, with a Bonn always the hero.

Jamie said he was surprised how excited he had become about Saturday's game and looked forward to seeing his father at the plate in Yankee Stadium. "I'd like to be there, but Mom says you're a bit nervous about it. I can understand that, but if anyone could do it at your age, Pop, you is the man. We would all like to come you know."

It was the kind of discussion no one ever got into with Ray Bonn. For one thing, "The Canyon" was off limits in discussions with Ray Bonn, and he was the kind of guy - the kind of father, he admitted - people didn't approach with that kind of thing anyway. He knew that he was not the only Bonn who would come up in such conversations as Jamie had described, and that most topics that would come up would not be anything pleasant Jamie would repeat to his father.

He realized also, just how much he actually appreciated the hoopla from his son - more than he thought he would have or thought he should have for that matter. He responded to thank him briefly, thinking for a moment of Canyon Creek and the watery burial of his own and everyone else's past. But enough of such pretenses about this upcoming charade.

He switched his attention readily to the response from the department at which Margaret had taught before giving it all up to tutor her own brilliant child. It was from a Prof. James Schwarzschild former Dean of the physics department at the institution who now enjoyed emeritus status. Professor Schwarzschild said he had known Margaret perhaps as well as anyone at the department, since she had been very reclusive as far as the other professors were concerned. Ray did know, didn't he, that Margaret's husband Peter had been much the better known of the husband-wife physicist pair. Since it had come to his attention that her students had all seemed to enjoy her classes, he had interrogated some of them and they seemed without exception to insist that she was a very "vivacious and outgoing" instructor. These were terms that had actually been used by several of the students, which had seemed incongruous to him indeed.

As far as conferences that Margaret may have attended while she had been in his department, he could only think of one, although he had tried to convince her to write more papers and attend other conferences, but alas to no avail. The one conference had been an international conference held in Mexico the year before Lesa's birth. He had been able to locate a brochure from the conference that he still had in his office. He had scanned the speaker's program sheet on both sides, including an electronic copy as an attachment for Ray's perusal. Margaret's paper had been very well received; in fact, it had received the 'best paper' award for the conference. Margaret could have been a top-notch physicist Professor Schwarzschild insisted. A copy of this fine example of her academic work could probably be found in the Proceedings, of course.

Ray looked over the speaker's list. At the top of the page was the conference location and date, Puerto Vallarta, September 14 through 17. By concluding on a Friday, the weekend was left for travel, Ray supposed. Margaret's paper on "Issues in Irreversibility" made it a must read for he and

Lesa, and hopefully - Ray acknowledged it as *his* hope to involve a bit more sentimentality than perhaps appropriate to a physics endeavor - a legitimate citation in the book for which they were currently on contract. The fact that it had received the 'best paper' award encouraged him with regard to that hope.

It did not escape Ray's attention that this conference had been very nearly nine months prior to Lesa's birth date. He felt that he must learn who all had attended that conference. He would go down the list of speakers and try to find current e-mail addresses by searching the web for them. Perhaps, if nothing else someone in attendance might have seen her interact with someone else and hence provide additional leads along this, now much more promising, avenue. He began with his response to Professor Schwarzschild.

Ray expressed gratitude. He also questioned whether Professor Schwarzschild knew if Margaret's husband had accompanied her on the trip, or if the professor was aware of anyone else with whom she may have had professional communications as the result of her presentation at the conference.

Having access to the ASI archive capabilities that he borrowed from Lesa, he checked to see whether the Proceedings of that conference were available in electronic form yet. They weren't. He would look at a copy next time he was in a physics department library.

Lesa, having seen him trying to access the archive, asked him what it was he was trying to find, and he just told her it was an old out of date article on thermo that he would find next time he was in the stacks. She asked the name and said she would put it on her list.

Although he was glad to know that she maintained such a list as he had from time to time, since he might indeed slip a reference in on her list sometime, he said, "No, I enjoy slumming through physics department libraries myself sometimes."

Deleting spam on another occasion he came across another "In Response to Your Query Concerning Peter Landau" which went immediately to the private folder. In this case a Donald Fredrickson had responded to his questions concerning Peter Landau. Yes, of course he had known Peter Landau. He was "a piece of work if you know what I mean. He worked his TA's ragged and took credit for work we all knew exactly which ones of us had done instead, not even including names of those of us as having 'contributed' to the heist. It wasn't just that \*he\* had the hunches that \*we\* did the work of following up on, as frequently happens in graduate departments. They were \*our\* hunches in the first place. We even wrote his papers. I'm sorry that I can't say anything nice about this man, but I can't."

The e-mail continued: "Great physicist?" No. He was dull and I suspect he had a very average intelligence. When his '\*tragic\* death', as you call it, occurred, I doubt that anyone who truly knew him in the department was as sorry as he would have liked to have been. I suspect that each of us secretly



worried that he would become a suspect. :-) Some actually were, but were fully exonerated, of course.

"He hadn't seemed to any of us to have been the kind to have committed suicide, but one never knew what personal motivations there might be for such things - particularly for a man like Dr. Peter. (I suppose I shouldn't tell you this, but we all called him 'Professor Prick' behind his back.) He never mentioned his wife or daughter in my hearing. He seldom mentioned anyone but himself. He was an arrogant self-centered son-of-a-bitch. Sorry. But it's true.

"Some of us \*did\* speculate about the situation of his wife's death when it had occurred. Suicide had seemed to us a totally reasonable escape from this man, but suicide by shooting oneself in the abdomen? I don't think so."

Wow! Such naked hatred is seldom expressed with such forthrightness, particularly about the dead. His "dull" with "very average intelligence" and grabbing recognition unfairly did not seem to have been passed down the line - if indeed that had been the line of descent, which Ray doubted. Donald had said nothing about "manipulative", however. Ray thought about that and smiled. The extreme manipulative skills of the daughter required equally extreme intelligence. This very endeavor may have been one that Ray had been manipulated to perform. Perhaps, but an endeavor well worth doing.

On yet another occasion later during the week, he received an e-mail from the "Boston Ballet" that he transferred to his 'obscurity' folder, to avoid Lesa's eyes. It was the response he had been the most hopeful of along that particular avenue of the investigation into Lesa's dilemma. He proceeded to hop to his 'misc' entries to read what the cat had dug in from the "Boston Ballet".

Yes, Fredrik Sorensen had performed in the New York City Ballet back in those years. It had indeed been one of the world's greatest dance troupes at the time, he had thought too. Margaret Landau? "Yes, sadly he \*had\* known her. She was perhaps the sweetest and most brilliant woman I have ever known, although of course, I might not say it in exactly that way in the presence of my current wife whom I feel is up in that same stellar company. Yes, I did know Maggie growing up. In fact, we might very probably have married had her father not been so disinclined. We had enjoyed each other's company intellectually from an early age as neighbors and classmates and later it had, of course, been more than that."

"I certainly remember that last time I saw Maggie. It was the evening of August 29<sup>th</sup>. I think she died less than a week later. I was interrogated by the police BTW. They told me later that Landau had told them he suspected me. He was a terrible man. Always was."

"Maggie had told me ahead of time that she would attend the performance and I thought I had never performed any better although by then I was probably already past my prime. She came backstage afterward, and we embraced, sure. But there was no more between us then than any love affair that had been doomed years before. We had for a few years seen each other off and on, but

it had been too awkward, and Peter was so devious and dangerous a man that it would have made such a situation pure hell. But even though we might not see each other for years, there was that sense of loving and being loved that never went away 'til long after her tragic death."

"Yes, I did see Maggie's daughter that night. She looked so like Maggie had. Maggie said she was 'her daddy's girl', but when I looked from her to Peter Landau, I certainly couldn't see it. I saw Maggie."

"Sorry to go on like this, but Maggie was very special to me. Yes, I would like to meet to talk about anything you might like to discuss with regard to Maggie, almost anytime. Why not just drop by the troupe in the afternoon sometime."

"As far as a photo of me, sure. I've attached one, not too good a one, taken quite a few years back now. My hair is all gray now - what there is of it."

Ray opened the jpg file to see this broad foreheaded man with deep set large blue eyes. Ray was quite shocked by it actually; it was like looking at Lesa Landau... as an older man... as ridiculous as that might seem. That this was Lesa's biological father, Ray had no doubt. Now there was a triumvirate for Lesa to contemplate: Legal father, biological father, and father image. How would she deal with that?

Ray must set up a meeting with this man to test the conjecture that this brilliant and kindly man in concert with his lovely Maggie had brought forth so beautiful a visage as Lesa. He felt sure that this conjecture would withstand whatever testing it would be put to and Lesa could crawl out from underneath the specter of an evil father by the name of Peter Landau. She needed to get out from under that.

But now he had somehow to determine whether Fredrik Sorensen had happened to be in Puerto Vallarta in mid-September of the year before Lesa was born. He thought about how he might broach that subject to Fredrik Sorensen without being too obtrusive into what was clearly a sensitive issue.

Ray went about involving himself in the various other activities that now filled his rather miserable days, but meanwhile thought about these informative, but awkward, e-mail communications of his. Eventually he decided to go back and address Fredrik Sorensen's e-mail. Having resolved finally to get at it, he called up his e-mail, ignoring his recent inbox messages, and continued directly to his 'misc' folder and to Fredrik Sorensen's message, clicking 'reply'.

"Dear Fredrik," he typed, since he had closed informally and had used just "Ray" instead of something more formal in responding to him. Ray indicated that he would be very busy until after next weekend, generously failing to indicate that it was, in fact, his spawn that had imposed that extraordinary busy-ness on him. Would it be possible for Ray and "a friend" (he was being generous again he thought) to meet Fredrik at some location Fredrik could designate on the following Monday? If it were possible, could he assist Ray in somehow obtaining additional photos of Margaret Landau in the meantime. And, would it be too great an imposition to ask whether he had accompanied

Margaret Landau to the conference in Puerto Vallarta in which she had presented a technical paper that had received the 'best paper' award.

He might as well just ask it and be done with it, Ray thought.

Lesa was as pretty as ever through these long tense days, and Ray's having now seen a digital image of Fredrik Sorensen, the similarity of expressions was indeed striking. Every time Ray observed Lesa now he thought of Fredrik Sorensen. Lesa was a much smoother, more effeminate version of Fredrik with a little more refinement of the nose in the vicinity of the nostrils, and with considerably fuller lips. But the likeness was striking nonetheless, and Ray imagined that once he had a clearer image of Margaret that these differences would be revealed as deriving from her mother.

He could imagine the degree to which Peter Landau had not liked it when he had noticed that similarity between Lesa and Fredrik Sorensen that mid-Summer evening in New York City, less than one week before Margaret would meet her so untimely death. How could he not have noticed it? Peter, having had a long fleshy rectangular face with somewhat narrow forehead and small dark eyes, could have not been so stupid as not to realize the obvious correlation. He would have noticed.

Again, watching her come out of her rooms, hair wet from her having just washed it, and having slicked it back in the now familiar way, was as it had been from the very first time he had seen her that way, a truly beautiful sight. But now that aspect involving the extreme width of her forehead and skull became the ultimate proof of biological descent seeming to confirm indeed a strange spiritual being kidnapped from a ballet troupe and forced into the service of the physics establishment. Ray's metaphors, similes, and analogies never seemed to completely work, which was a constant source of frustration to what seemed to him an otherwise effective thinking-daydreaming mode of mental existence, the life inside himself that he enjoyed.

These fond thoughts of Lesa, whenever he allowed himself to just look at her without any judgement concerning her chaotic behavior and the messes she seemed always to get him into, were pleasant indeed. On one occasion they actually had what started out to be a most pleasant personal conversation concerning the outcome of their forthcoming endeavor.

Lesa shared a secret desire to one day win a Nobel Prize in physics, to which Ray interrogated her again with regard to why she would not fully collaborate and be co-author on their work in thermodynamics. She held out stubbornly but indicated that the fact that she did not co-author his book in no way meant that she could not share the Nobel honor, if they were to co-author many seminal papers on the subject.

Ray had sometimes thought that they needed to proceed that way, but until now neither had mentioned it. It was the way in which established science got done, and there was no reason for this endeavor to involve anything but accepted methods of doing good science. Thus, Ray came to accept that idea

*Aberrant Behavior*

and left the other issue pending for the time being as they did not need any more issues to set them at odds.



After a thoughtful interval Lesa asked, "Haven't you ever dreamed of winning the Nobel Prize with your work, Ray?" He was silent and seemed to think too long about the question, so she repeated: "Ray?"

"Oh," he said seeming to have been awakened from a reverie. "I was just thinking about the last time someone asked me a related question." He told her intimate details of an event that had happened fifteen years before.

His friend Andrew had said, 'everyone knows what they want to have achieved in the future,' and Ray had gotten very agitated, telling Andrew that it wasn't true, that he himself had no plan for what he wanted to achieve. Andrew wouldn't give it up until finally Ray had erupted with some egocentric comment to the effect that some people's dreams would be impossible to entertain, and still maintain their sanity. He had then been goaded further into admitting that a Nobel Prize in physics was what he dreamed of, to which Andrew had thought he was being put upon. Ray told Lesa that after that incident he could no longer relax in his spare time, because he then realized just what a failure he had become, and so thereafter he had spent virtually all his spare time doing what had been a more casual pursuit before that.

"Really, Ray? That is an awesome story. That's how it is, isn't it? That's what dreams are for; that's what they do," she trilled.

"I don't see anything particularly good about it," he said, "pining away after the impossible." And then after a little thought, he added cynically, "Unless some Fairy Princess child prodigy comes along to sprinkle establishmentarian star dust into the mix."

"What's wrong with that, Ray? Are you so jaded about having been 'magnificently tolerated' that you can't appreciate the value of sharing dreams? Of *help* from someone who loves you? Why does that have to diminish the dream? And so what if a dream doesn't ever get fully realized? Look at the wonderful ideas one would have gotten out for people to enjoy and to further the future of scientific thinking, whether they win a prize or not. It's as if you have already won the prize, Ray. Accept it. You don't put much stock in the actuality of prizes anyway, what's so wrong with the *carrot and the stick*, anyway? I think the Nobel Prize on a stick for motivation is a fabulous image."

He just looked at her silently, irritated by her eagerness again. Her total lack of appreciation for compatible differences in relationships like his and Helen's, as against their soul mate sameness that she so promoted, galled him. He admitted to himself though that mostly he was irritable because he had refused to tell her everything involving the anecdote with Andrew. But he could not tell her now that she had him lined up for this charade at Yankee Stadium. That was because the dreams he had told Andrew had also involved the stupidity of "a walk off home run in a World Series" and the crassness of becoming "filthy rich," all of which he had blurted out at Andrew in his irritation. Was he Babbitt who had never done anything he had really wanted?

Withholding personal information about himself seemed somehow a legitimate part of Lesa's penance for having been so shovey; she had no right to know intimate dreams he did not wish to share with the whole world. Because of the judgements that he was accumulating against her, that it seemed to him only a fool would ignore, he was very agitated with her most all of the time now and shared very little of a personal nature. He regretted even sharing that about his dream of a Nobel Prize. He could be sympathetic for her 'dilemma' and happy to help resolve it, but did that give her any right to play tinker toys with his life? He didn't think so.

Lesa, although irrevocably committed to their collaboration and quite unrealistically envisioning continuation of a cohabitation arrangement, became increasingly distraught with his peevishness, cynicism, and sarcasm as the week progressed - or regressed. They no longer communicated on a rewarding deep personal level that both had enjoyed so completely before.

She was too haughty to give in no matter how much she adored him. Or maybe it was just because she had made a most egregious infringement on his person in committing him against his wishes to what could be a major embarrassment.

*#17 The Before and After*

Early Saturday morning, May 6<sup>th</sup>, game day.

So... having dreaded this day continuously through the four preceding angry days and five restless nights, Ray stared now out into an ominous New York City skyline. It seemed to jut up into the blue morning like shark's teeth reaching to the twenty-seventh floor of their suite in the Sheltry Hotel and well beyond. Nonetheless, he supposed that he was as ready to get on with this charade as he would ever be.

Edna no doubt sat in one of those proverbial Yellow Cabs down there, probably one that jerked in and out of traffic. That would be per her commands, he mused cynically. Her return from Yankee Stadium would signal completion of preparations. She would slide across the seat, pay her disdainful driver, and bound out onto the sidewalk, heels click, click, clicking until they were mercifully muted by the red carpet on entering the hotel lobby.

Ray knew Edna would have gotten up before dawn and already overseen delivery of the Steinbrenner order of twenty thousand copies of the Second Edition of his book. Yes, indeed, *the* George Steinbrenner who honchoed the New York Yankees baseball team had bought twenty thousand copies of Ray's book. It was hard to believe. Perhaps he should be grateful. He wasn't. As a promotion it was an outlandish gimmick. Unfortunately, it was now palpably real. The books would already be on location piled high at Yankee Stadium.

Those copies of his book with the baseball on the cover would be handed out to fans as they arrived today. Soon thereafter they would thumb through the free book and realize it was not about baseball. As retribution they could watch and no doubt boo its author - him, Ray Bonn - in his major league debut as designated hitter for the Seattle Mariners at nearly fifty. Oh, God, Ray thought. What a fiasco.

From the fans' perspective it would be laughably absurd. It was, as a matter of fact, *totally* absurd. Having written successfully about visual effects of relativistic speed was no credential for hitting major league fastballs whether a couple of major egos had become involved in that ridiculous debate or not. Nonetheless that battle of wills was what this charade was all about and he was the one who had to swing the bat.

Edna would proceed swiftly through to the elevators and push the button for the twenty-seventh floor where Ray and the inimitable Dr. Lesa Landau had been holed up in luxury for the past week at McGregor's expense. Was Lesa a collaborator or an agitator? He wasn't sure. From Edna's perspective he knew it had been a good idea holing the two of them up here to begin their collaboration on yet another book of the same basic genre. Edna would think that despite being a bit capricious, Lesa had added a much-needed ingredient to their team. Team? Well, she lit fires under him - big fires. Edna thought Helen had let him stagnate - that he needed more motivation. Lesa added excitement. Edna would even think that Lesa had given his book sex appeal.

Although Lesa had initially represented establishment science as the opposition opinion of Ray's book, she had become as much a part of promoting it as he was. Edna would think she was better at that than he was. He certainly did too. Thus, Edna had insisted on life size photo cutouts of Larry King, Lesa, and him slapping hands in front of the blue dots in the world map from their appearance on that show little more than a week ago as props for the promotion. These must now be standing on duty all around the foyer of the stadium. Edna had said the cutouts would jog memories concerning what today's hype was all about - Ray Bonn, Dr. Lesa Landau, and his book, mercifully reversing the order of the value she would assign to each. At least Edna hadn't promoted the Faustian contract Lesa and George Steinbrenner had agreed to... on his behalf. She was realistic. Ray didn't need his memory jogged on that either.

It would not particularly concern Edna that this promotion involved foisting off on fans a product they wouldn't even want. A popularized book on the visual effects of relativity? Really. A bobble head doll or a baseball card signed by some baseball star (or even a nobody) would have cost less and been more appreciated by fans at Yankee Stadium.

Obviously, Edna knew baseball fans were not the right audience for promoting a book like Ray's. She was good at what she did. She might wonder how many baseball fans read books at all, let alone ones that popularized science. She wouldn't know exactly, but she would acknowledge it could not be many. As an economic opportunity this was a fluke that had just happened for reasons that would still be as obscure to Edna as they were to him. However, she would be acutely aware of the weirdness of the scheme. But she would rationalize that in marketing one must capitalize on *every* opportunity. One of this magnitude didn't come along very often.

Edna would even have considered the extent to which this ridiculous promotion might devalue the future of their 'product' if the main event of the day were not a success. Sure, she would know there were always risks, that there was no doubt Ray and Lesa had their work cut out for them. Edna would watch them. Her metric for their success would merely be a standard of conduct to further sales; that was all. Be good sports and gracious no matter what happens. She was realistic.



She would later assess how well they had performed. Ray knew Edna had confidence in Lesa. Her polish and professionalism showed through even her most audacious acts. Edna would worry about him whose product they all thanklessly promoted. He hadn't been proactive in his involvement in any of the schemes she arranged. Edna would wish he could just forget himself for a change and be a good sport, which she would acknowledge was all anyone could expect of him in this difficult situation. Edna was not the only one who worried about whether he could meet that minimal requirement.

Ray heard the elevator door chime, the click, click, click down the marble hallway, and then the knock. He meandered to the door. Lesa yelled from somewhere in the depths of her rooms for him to get it.

Opening the door, he showed no expression.

Edna said, "Home again, home again, jiggedy jig," probably just to annoy him, he thought, and sailed past him through the small anteroom into their main living area headed straight for the wall cabinet.

Yes, jiggedy jig. My God, that woman, Ray thought with contempt. He watched her open the cabinet in which a large screen TV seemed to have been willed into existence. Ray and Lesa had had no occasion to open that cabinet during the week they had been here. Ray hadn't even wondered what was in there. He thought it was solid wall. They had gotten their news and everything else from their Internet connections.

Edna grabbed the remote and sank into the overstuffed chair that faced the TV. "I'll watch the whole thing live on television if you 'kids' don't mind," she said. "I'm a little tired, but I look forward to seeing the baseball game. The hard parts are up to you two now."

Tired? Edna was not tired. Her statement was a clue that Yankee Stadium was *not* where she believed any meaningful action would take place this afternoon. Ray knew Edna always wanted to be where the action was, and it wasn't the game she would be watching anyway, it would be *him* - just to see how dismally he failed to portray the image she envisioned. What mattered would be what showed up on TV. She would watch that.

"May I use your rooms though?" Edna queried. "The television situation seems a lot more comfortable here."

There was no response for too long. "Sure," Lesa said coming out of her bedroom finally, but otherwise ignoring the awkward duration of Ray's silence. "How'd it go at the Stadium, Edna?"

"You look fabulous," Edna raved. "Everything's in place."

Ray turned to look at Lesa, and with no comment on her spectacular appearance, asked sardonically. "Are you going to stay here to watch the execution live on TV too?" He glared. "We're late you know." His bulk and too usual scowl could be quite intimidating.

"No," Lesa said almost cheerfully, "May I be permitted on stage with Romeo to do my Juliet impersonation? I think there's probably a certain potion that has been prepared just for me today, don't you?" Her dramatic flair

persisted. "I'd like to be there to watch you pirouette in person... if it's okay with my tragic protagonist, that is."

Pirouette. What a sadistically clever way to imply that he would most certainly 'strike out,' he thought. That's what she thought and then negotiated in bad faith.

"Well, 'I'm-not-Julie-ette'," Ray placed emphasis on the 'ette' in a way that he could tell particularly unsettled his 'tragic' heroine. It got rid of her smirk anyway. "Let's get going. We may just want to shortcut this whole charade, stop off mid-span on some Manhattan or Brooklyn or some other bridge, grab each other in a gut-wrenching fatal embrace, and plunge over that edge you've been nudging us toward ever since I met you."

Tears filled the dense Nefertiti levees Lesa had etched so carefully around those beautiful blue eyes. Once more, and more fully, the extent of Ray's anger - the depth of his contempt for her actions that had indeed precipitated this truly difficult situation, penetrated her armor.

Ray could tell his innuendo had hurt her, but he felt no sympathy now. She had for some, still obscure, reason of her own, which she had promised to share with him, but hadn't, acted to make his humiliation inevitable. Indeed, it was to her that he attributed total responsibility for this debacle, his having to pretend at his age to be able to compete against the best in the game - this inescapable predicament of going up to bat in an official game at Yankee Stadium.

"Protagonist" was how she had put it, but inevitably his role had become more the *antagonist* in this production of hers. He actually preferred it that way this morning; it was how he felt. But whether protagonist or antagonist, he was not comfortable with any role assigned him by someone else without his having been consulted first.

"You'll be just fine," Edna reassured them both without evidence and no pretense of actually believing it.

Ray seethed, "I will *not* be 'just fine' Edna." A deep resentment toward all the women he perceived as having pushed him into this ridiculous situation was evident. "Not today, tomorrow, nor ever again," he fumed, "will I be able to enjoy the privacy that matters to me. Nor will I have the tolerably acceptable image of an upstart-over-the-hill-wannabe-physicist that you, Ms. Robinson promoted just to sell a few books. No," he continued his rant disdainfully. "From now on I'll be the idiot curmudgeon that the honorable Dr. Landau pawned off as the Bambino, the straight man in a practical joke on George Steinbrenner, the Seattle Mariners, and the whole world. A joke you would have had to have been there to even *pretend* to comprehend."

"I was there," Edna chuckled happily, "and I don't pretend to comprehend how Lesa pulled that off, but thank God, she did." Witty retorts weren't really Edna's thing, but as Ray and Lesa were going out the door, she called after them, "The least you can do for a million dollars, Ray, is go out swinging." She was laughing.

Lesa muffled a nervous giggle, perhaps envisioning the "pirouette".

A porter in the hall pushed his cart piled high with suitcases. He gave Ray a sympathetic smile. "Go get 'em, Mr. Bonn."

"Thanks," Ray said, grateful for any token kindness.

The lobby did not feel so kind. Cameras flashed continuously. There was ridicule and just plain whooping, a few "Go Mariners!" and a "Go get 'em Yankee Killer!" It was just plain awful Ray thought. Oh, God. Why would the owner of the New York Yankees have fallen for this scam? And how on earth had he in turn convinced the Seattle Mariners management to buy into such a ridiculous situation as putting a fifty-year-old, who knew nothing of major league baseball, into their lineup for even a single at bat? It was absolutely crazy.

Lesya clutched his arm much as she had a week earlier when they had first walked diffidently through this same lobby in the opposite direction on a totally different mission. Each had acknowledged then, although to different degrees, a sincere affection for the other. Today Ray knew, Lesya had scripted this grip she had on his arm, a mere gesture she must conceive as appropriate to her current role as the "duct tape" to keep him from escaping his contract.

They were on the curb; the next turn in this crazy maze was into the elegant white limousine with the courteous driver with whom they were familiar. He held the door. Although not presuming to discuss their immediate destination or the day's activities, he did not seem the slightest bit confused about where to take them. A large percentage of Americans would have known at this point, of course, what with the overblown media coverage - Paris Hilton must be having a bad hair week, Ray thought. Their driver had evidently taken others to this back entry to the stadium, or else he had been privately instructed on precisely which entry by God knew whom... probably Edna. Edna always did her homework.

Ray and Lesya sat in a tense silence along the scenic route where Japanese cherry blossoms blazed, past the Metropolitan Museum where a mere week ago they had spent a day of glowing happiness. As they passed the Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis Reservoir on Fifth Avenue Ray knew it had indeed been Edna who had laid out this route; it was not the most direct, but it was her favorite. She had forced their cabby to come in from the north from the airport along this route back when they had first flown in. It had embarrassed him at the time, the way she had dominated the cabby in forcing him to make each turn against his will.

Proceeding finally then on up and across over to the Harlem River bridge, Lesya and Ray both recalled at mid-span of the bridge Ray's earlier suggestion of a joint suicide. He should not have said that.

Late Saturday afternoon, May 6<sup>th</sup>, extra innings

In response to Mr. Steinbrenner's demand, there emerged from the lady's room a seemingly miraculously restored Lesa Landau. She had indeed sucked it up. She walked through the door George had indicated to find a very excited throng that was stunned but loving an excitement they had not felt in a long time. It was only gradually that they became aware that Lesa Landau was once again gracing their midst, having had no idea of her collapse nor of her being forced by George Steinbrenner to *suck it up* one more time in her life. She walked among them, a sincere but coping Kim Bassinger, Lola, Memo Paris, or... whoever.

She had been more or less forced by George himself to do the Hotbox Sports program with Joe and Tim one more time. "Just another inning," George said, possibly assuming he would get this woman on television when his Yankees forced her 'winner' into inevitable defeat. He probably thought that needed to be captured on prime time. For what he was paying, he clearly wanted the ultimate show.

In any case, she had sucked it up to such an extent that she was now virtually numb. Since she had a history of "getting over herself" and moving on, she was fully capable of moving on once again. So once more to that particular press box, to the renewed joy of millions.

"Hi, Lesa," a much more respectful Joe Brett said as she entered the broadcast booth. "You getting used to this yet?"

"Not hardly, Joe," she said, oozing a recently remade charm.

"Well, it looks like your client may make it up again in this inning yet. He's looking tired though, don't you think?"

"Yes, he is, Joe. This wasn't really the expectation, now was it?"

"Certainly not. Any reason to think he could do this one more time? This pitcher he'll be facing isn't the best of the Yankee hurlers. The bullpens are running out of gas. I think Heller may have gotten a handle on this pitching situation before Elandro Torro did though. Heller's been switching with a little more hesitancy as the game has progressed, whereas Elandro is down to this guy and his starter for tomorrow. That's it! Unless the Yankees can pull this out in the bottom of this inning, it's looking grim. What truly amazes me is how the Mariners have been able to set the table for your man time after time. They don't have the depth the Yankees have. Sure, in the first couple innings Torro was intentionally walking men to get to him, but Elandro isn't doing that anymore."

"I suspect Mac picked up a little confidence in Ray before Elandro figured out Ray Bonn was for real, don't you?" It was Lesa who asked it, demonstrating that she was in the moment with Joe this time around. "But then Mac has seemed to talk with Ray some and has, no doubt, gotten more clues concerning what he has sitting there on his bench; Elandro hasn't had that opportunity."

"Clearly you consider talking with Ray an *opportunity*," Joe toyed.

Lesla was back. This was *public* and she had fences to mend. "Of course I do. However outstanding you may think Ray's abilities are as a slugger, he's an even more outstanding physicist. Since I'm a physicist too," she paused here for effect. This was the Doctor Lesla Landau of Larry King Live fame talking now. "Well... it has been a tremendous opportunity for me, let's just say that. The fact that I will be collaborating with Ray on his upcoming book that we think will revolutionize thermodynamics is just an unbelievable opportunity for Ray and me, Joe. No one in their right mind would miss that."

"I thought you refused to collaborate with him, isn't that why you're both here?"

"Oh, no, Joe. The issue was co-authorship. I will not be co-author. It was his breakthrough idea." An opportunistic pause, "But Ray's stepping to the plate again, Joe."

"Yes, he is, Lesla. The bases have been loaded for him again, can you believe it? Every time Ray has gotten to the plate the Mariners have managed to have the bases loaded. Alto hasn't had that opportunity, although they've been loaded for him a few times too, and he's taken advantage of it. But I think Mac has really been managing. He has worked with each batter before they go out there as though he has some sort of master plan or strategy for getting them on base. They haven't been all that impressive in getting there, but they have gotten there. He's playing chess, Lesla; he's fingering his White Knight again."

"'The White Knight.' I like that Joe."

Ray took his time getting his cleats where he wanted them again. Pasao checked very carefully to notice where that was anymore. Ray had always seemed to change it right when the windup was in progress. Jose had checked everything about Ray each time he came to the plate these last few times as though looking for any clue, any vulnerability to exploit. Jose could be seen talking with Torro in the dugout between innings, but nothing had worked so far. You could tell Jose's mind was still in this game though. He knew Ray had homered off his pitcher last time up and the Yankees had been fortunate to keep extra innings going. Elandro had had no alternative but to leave Meyer out there for this at bat, Ray's seventh at bat in a long long day.

Jose was playing the delay game on Ray now, calling time and going out to the mound after Ray had apparently situated himself.

While this was going on, to reduce tension for everyone no doubt, maybe especially his audience, Joe Brett chose to divert some attention away from that cat and mouse game. "Are you planning to work a long-term contract for Ray with the Mariners now, Lesla? He's over forty million dollars up right now."

Lesla was shocked. She didn't know why she was shocked since she had seen each grand slam as it had happened and she had been the one who had specified the price to be paid for each, but she had been counting personal

losses of emotional equity instead of monitoring monetary gains. "Absolutely not, Joe. This is it. Enjoy," she said recovering from having been shocked. That marvelous articulation hid the muddle underneath. "But I think they're ready again, Joe."

"Yes, they are, Lesa." And indeed, they were.

Meyer had a rather strange sidearm delivery, which Ray had seen his last at bat, but whatever Pasao had told his pitcher, he came down overhand with a fastball that was prime time. It caught the outside corner. Sensing it late, Ray had decided to let it go.

"Strike one!" rang out through the stands.

"No, you wouldn't do this now would you, Ray?" Lesa thought but allowed no appearance of negativity to show on her face.

"If Meyer can throw something like that again, that could change the dynamics here just a little don't you think, Lesa? I think Mac Heller has probably told Ray what to expect every time he's gone out there, and this is different." Joe was excited.

Lesa ignored the question. She saw Pasao out there once more visiting with his pitcher, slapping him on the butt with a good mixture of a catcher's praise and hope, as he did so. Oh God, Lesa thought, adopting Ray's mode of facing difficulty, just as she had adapted to his corned beef hash. She wondered whether he had used his favorite expletive this at bat, or if, in fact, he might be over it for good. No, he would not use it, she thought, he is a different Ray Bonn now.

The next pitch Ray watched too. Meyer went into the strangest contortions and flop, out popped a screwball that evidently caught the bottom of the strike zone as it fell. "Strike two!"

"So, clearly they are coming up to speed with what kind of force they're dealing with here. They have to throw him something he isn't expecting," Joe continued excitedly. "We've got Casey at bat now with no more strikes to give."

Lesa did her damndest to maintain objectivity although her heart seemed to flutter chaotically. She wished she could call time out to go out there, slap *her guy* on the butt, and say, "Hang in there, Ray." And this business with George being so cocky and bossy about this whole thing. An unspoken, "Do this thing, Ray," echoed through her mind.

Joe laughed. "What do you think, Lesa? Is it possible that after this new All-American hero has just hit six grand slams in succession to shatter baseball records, that this last mediocre finger in the Yankee dike could stem the tide and provide a new hero for the day?"

Lesa thought about that for just a moment as she looked at the enlarged image of Ray's face that was being shown on screens around the stadium now. She saw the look. He was not cowed. He was not dismayed. Although she had not known how to comprehend what Ray had done early on, she was a quick study too. She knew this *new* Ray Bonn, just as he would know the new Lesa, she thought. This was no Casey from Mudville, this was Ray Bonn.

"This one is over the wall," she thought, quite defiantly but it was an audible thought.

"Did you say, 'this one is over the wall,' Lesa?" Joe laughed.

"I did, Joe," she said with complete confidence now. Then there was the now familiar crack of the bat and the familiar look of ball players, either looking up just to watch or not even bothering to watch. It was "outta here!" again.

"Well so much for that melodrama then, huh?" Joe laughed, and the faithful Yankee fans cheered as they had at each swat of the bumpkin's bat, because Ray Bonn striking out was not how they wanted their beloved Yankees to win this game. This game was special in a different sort of way.

That is the cost of split loyalties.

"Well, I think I'll leave you now, Joe. It's been a pleasure again," Lesa hoped she had erased the image of how she had exited in disarray last time for the TV audience. This time had been a victory lap.

"Well, thank you again, Lesa. I can't express how great my gratitude. You have been stupendous, and your insights invaluable. Thank you." Then after a pause, "Oh, and need I say, your assessment of Ray Bonn as a slugger was unbelievably accurate. Right on the money." He laughed at his unintended double entendre.

She smiled a million-dollar, or forty-nine-million-dollar, smile and was gone. She caught up with George. He seemed as delighted as if he was winning this game. "He is the man, Lesa," he said.

"He is," Lesa replied cheerily, cupping her hands to whisper in his ear, "George, I hope I've done fine, but could I possibly go back into hibernation 'til this thing is over now."

"Sure," he said. "You know you are every bit as fabulous as Ray Bonn in your own way. Thanks for a spectacular day for everyone. This is the sort of thing that could save baseball."

She just smiled her smile, if a little more vulnerably than usual.

George escorted her through to the room, locked that door as before, and left.

The Yankees couldn't match it. Alto was up first and homered to everyone's delight and a couple more hitters got on base before the Mariner rookie hurler, whose name would live on in Major League baseball history as a footnote, got the win. When it was finally over Ray had made seven trips to the plate. Each time up, as unlikely as it might seem, he had hit another grand slam home run with, finally, an insufficient comeback left in the Yankees; it was over.

"Was this the highest scoring game in history?"

Tim McCarthy who was just back from somewhere said, "Joe, I've got the data in front of me now thanks to our staff. Here's the new status of the Major League Record Book: The Mariners' 28 runs and the Yankees' 25 gives a total of runs scored in this game of 53. I think that's an all-time record that will stand, don't you, Joe? Of course the Chicago Colts had the record for most

*Aberrant Behavior*

runs in a game by a single team over a century ago on June 29, 1897 when they scored 36 against the Louisville Colonels. Since 1900, two teams have shared the record. The Boston Red Sox scored 29 against the St. Louis Browns on June 8, 1950 and the Chicago White Sox tied that record five years later when they defeated the Kansas City Athletics 29-6 on April 23, 1955. The Mariners are one run shy of that single team total.

"But no player has ever batted in anywhere near 28 runs in a single game, Joe. That is absolutely unbelievable! On September 16, 1925 Jim Bottomley and then Mark Whiten on September 9, 1993 - both St. Louis Cardinals - batted in 12. Now Ray Bonn has more than doubled their numbers with 28. Alturis Romero doubled his previous near record of 10 in this game too.

"Here's an interesting one Joe: Twelve players had shared the record for most home runs in a single game at 4, including Mike Cameron who had been a Seattle Mariner during their great season. Remember that Joe? He almost got the fifth, but it was caught up against the right field wall. But that record and the grand slam record are owned solely by Ray Bonn now with the 7 we just saw, Joe. No one will ever top that.

"The Cleveland Indians and Oakland Athletics were tied for the most grand slam home runs in a single season at 14 - an entire season for an entire team mind you, Joe. Ray Bonn had half that many today in this single game. Fernando Tatis' record of two grand slams in a single inning on April 23, 1999 for the St. Louis Cardinals in the third inning against Los Angeles was not challenged today though.

"But Ray Bonn has his name securely written on all the rest of the single game bragging rights for slugging, let me tell you that, Joe! I don't know how she knew, but Lesa Landau was definitely right about Ray Bonn being a slugger, wasn't she?" Tim paused only briefly and then said, "Didn't she say it was chronometrics, or something like that?"

"Chronometrics, yes. Whatever that is, she sure was right. That lady has amazing insights," Joe seconded, "and she is one charming lady besides, isn't she? They are a great pair."

Lesla was curled up in the overstuffed chair again in the private room watching and waiting to see Ray interviewed. It didn't really sound good for Ray as a married man to be said to comprise "a great pair" with her, did it? She knew it didn't, but she liked it anyway. She hoped that if they got hold of Ray, as she knew they would no matter how hard he tried to escape any such interview, that he would say something reassuring for just her. He didn't though.

The reporter asked him if he had any idea how many records had been set in this game.

No, of course he didn't.

Was he tired?

Yes, of course he was.

Had he ever used performance enhancement drugs?



Ray stared, incredulous. He started to say something disdainfully, then swallowed it with an equally disdainful silence.

Anything you'd like to say to anyone?

"Yeah. I'd like my wife Helen and my kids to know that I wish they had all been here, after all. I discouraged them from coming, because I was afraid it would be embarrassing." He smiled briefly. "That I would have lost the ability I had back in high school thirty years ago."

He should have come up thirty years ago, shouldn't he?

"Yes, probably," he acknowledged.

George had silently entered Lesa's private sanctuary and was behind her watching now too. "You'd have thought he'd have started out with, 'I want to thank my agent Lesa Landau and George Steinbrenner for this fantastic contract they were able to get me,' wouldn't you?"

"I'm afraid he might never want to talk to me again because of that contract and that damned 'duct tape', George. That's what bothers me."

"Oh, he'll talk to you all right. Who wouldn't?"

"Me," she said.

"Oh, get over yourself girl. You did something fabulous. He isn't an idiot." Then almost as an afterthought he said, "But remember, Doctor Lesa Landau, this is *not* gonna be the year Yankees lose the pennant, so don't get any ideas." He rather enjoyed his humor.

She didn't really get it. The interview with Ray was going again. She turned, ignoring George.

He got the volume up so they could hear it better. The reporter said something about the performance and the shootout with Alturis Romero.

"Yes," Ray said, "Alto is a fabulous athlete and he has to do this *every* day. He has to come out here again tomorrow. I don't. I don't think I could." Ray tried to smile again, but Lesa could tell he couldn't really make it happen. He had a permanent, scowling, determined look.

The reporter addressed the facts of his being a very rich man now, "nouveau-riche," he had articulated with some pride in his vocabulary and affected French accent; how would that change his life?

"I'd trade it for the privacy I had a week ago," he said dryly with exhaustion. "There's no success as sweet as failure... and when you've lost that, I'm afraid it's gone for good." This, Lesa realized, was just an echo escaping from his heart. That was his message for her.

The reporter thought it a funny comment and laughed skeptically.

Ray looked at him the way Ray could look at you to make you want to die, Lesa thought. Here was a very private man at the height of his success. Now she had pushed him into a lifestyle he despised. And having gone through this experience, it was Helen he wished had shared it with him. Lesa's eyes got teary again.

"What am I missing here, Lesa?" George asked looking at her. "I thought this was exactly what you and I wanted."

"Me too," she said, "But it wasn't the right thing."



"Why?" he asked truly confused. "Don't you two think the rich and famous can be good people and live meaningful, happy lives?"

"You have been very nice to us George. Could you help me get down to where I can rejoin Ray without being observed, if possible, and could you have someone tell him I'm coming."

"Okay, and we'll have your limo meet you there just when he comes out of the entrance with you," he responded magnanimously.

Someone came into the room. It was the slick young man who had met her at the entrance this morning. "Get Lesa back with Ray as soon as possible," George told him.

Lesla said, "Thank you, George." She kissed his cheek lightly and walked off with the escort through the passages to where she had last felt the wonderful pressure of Ray's arm locked next to her.

George put his fingers to his cheek wondering whether being kissed by an angel like Lesla was really worth the cost. It was, he told himself with a smile.

It wasn't very long before Ray appeared. He had his coat slung over his shoulder, held at the collar by the crook in his finger the way she liked seeing him. For some reason, his weariness was not apparent to her then; he looked young and so handsome.

She smiled and ran up to him. It was a long dark corridor with no one around, so she felt that she could press herself against him with impunity... she hugged him more tightly than ever before and sobbed audibly, "Love is so hard for me to get right, Ray. Please help me love you however works better for you than I've been doing it. I want to fit into your life how *you* want me to from now on; however that is."

He managed a weary smile with some affection in it, but without comment. She clutched his arm next to her the way she did on such occasions, well, on any occasion she could, but with him supporting *her* this time. He felt a little different to her, but he was seemingly content enough to have her clinging to him.

They walked out to where the limo waited. In the more remote distance was a mass of fans. Security personnel kept them far away. The fans were going out to cars, taxis, bus stops, and the subway terminal.

The sunlight was bright on Ray's face now as she looked up into it. They both seemed to bask in the heat of a still warm late afternoon sun, making a metaphor work that had never quite worked before.

Their limo driver held the door, giving the two of them his tremendous smile. "Good work, Mr. Bonn. Hello again, Dr. Landau," getting a smile as response from them both, but no more. "Back to the hotel then?" he asked.

It was Ray who finally nodded.

Lesla pushed up close to him as he leaned back on the seat wearily, neither of them saying anything at all until the limo had wound its way through the barriers and was almost through the blockade getting out of the parking lot. They appreciated the tinted glass that protected them from anyone's gaze. Surely any, and every, one of those fans would have wanted to know everything, or even anything, about these two right then.

Lesla was the one to break the silence finally. "Why'd you do it, Ray?" Then, having paused for a long while with him thoughtful, but not answering, she repeated: "Why did you do it?"

"Why'd I do what?" he managed wearily. "Why'd I hit the ball?" he asked again with more emphasis. "Because I *had* to. They were throwing at me, Lesa." He managed a chuckle. Then, "Why? You *made* me. Don't you remember?" He waited through her silence and smiled finally. "So, how'd I do? Is that what you thought of me all along?"

She looked up at him, "It's like you've been on this long journey at high speed and have just returned. Here we are, and it's like you were gone too long because now I'm this dumpy old lady and you're a young man... and we don't even believe that sort of fantasy... do we, Ray?"

"No, we don't," Ray said. "But you didn't tell me how I did, Lesa."

"No... I thought it might just have been rhetorical... at first... I have never told you why I got you into this terrible mess either, have I? It was awful, wasn't it, Ray? Do you know how awful it has been for me too?"

His voice was kind but deliberate in a way that seemed just a little different to her. "I'm sorry, Lesa - particularly for this morning. I was terrible. It was awful for me too, especially at first, last Monday night was hell for me, you know. And then this morning. During the week wasn't as bad, except for every time I thought about today. I fairly successfully avoided it most of the time when I wasn't right with you." He smiled down at her. "Except before I'd go to sleep each night and, of course, when you worked out with me to help me get through this without ever saying that was why you got us doing those damned calisthenics."

She smiled back up at him sheepishly.

"Seven days is not enough you know."

With just a shrug, she acknowledged as much, implying also that it had to have helped.

"It did help, of course." Ray said appreciatively. "I couldn't have gotten through this day otherwise, I'm sure, although I may have opted out much earlier and the whole rest of my life might have been easier." He smiled again. "But I wouldn't have been your 'winner', then would I?" He added the last clause without attempting to smile.

"You would have been *mine*, Ray," She smiled and then paused a long time with him not changing expression. "But I was afraid you still wouldn't have been *yours*, that you didn't know how special you really are."

The muscles on his forehead seemed to draw it together a little as he looked down at her. There was surprise and disdain in his expression. "I always knew I could hit a baseball, Lesa. But that's what this was all about then? Not really science, just touchy-feely, lovey-dovey New Age stuff so I'd know that I was a 'winner'?"

"I guess," she said, embarrassed. "You don't exactly embrace your dreams though, Ray. You need to." Then without really bragging, but with a renewed enthusiasm, she added, "I was right about chronometrics, wasn't I? Your neurons fire too quickly to not be able to hit a fastball. And that baseball on your book, Ray... I'm not stupid you know; I understand you. You've figured out all those whys and wherefores about why I did it, haven't you? But you

didn't tell me what a great hitter you had been. That was mean of you; I had to learn about it on television just like everybody else. You're an expert on Lesa Landau, you know, and you could have made it easier on me."

He knew what she meant, and much more than she suspected. He did know about Lesa Landau and he hadn't told her about him.

"I'm just coming up to speed, Lesa."

She pushed herself up and kissed his cheek.

He put his arm around her without pushing back, but without pulling her to him as tightly as she would have liked him to or meeting her lips. He was absorbed in thought.

"There's more to this than reaction times and hitting baseballs, of course. For the Babbitt and Faust in me you are my Fairy Child and Mephistopheles. I was thinking about this some between at bats."

As her eyes locked on his in more of a direct interconnection than as necessitating any communication, Ray began to quote Faust:

*Of madness, I shall be restored?  
Must I seek counsel from an ancient dame?  
And can she, by these rites abhorred,  
Take thirty winters from my frame?*

Lesa, rising to the occasion again despite her weariness - phoenix to any fire, accepting her role as Mephistopheles - fortuitously intoned:

*My friend, you now speak sensibly. In truth,  
Nature a method giveth to renew thy youth:  
But in another book the lesson's writ;—  
It forms a curious chapter, I admit.*

Ray chuckled softly at her ability to respond to anything in kind. "Does that 'other book' involve thermodynamics by any chance?"

He knocked on the glass to have the driver roll the window down between, and then said, "Driver?"

"Yes, Mr. Bonn, what is it, Sir?"

"Is there some kind of a back entry to the Sheltry, through the basement or something, where you could get us right to the elevator to avoid the crowd?"

"Certainly, Sir. We'll do it that way then?"

"Yes, please do. Thank you." Ray had the window rolled up again.

"*The Origins of Irreversibility?* Yes, I think so, Ray," Lesa replied to his earlier question with enthusiasm.

He smiled. "That'll be tougher than just deriving the arrow of time from kinematics, you know. Understanding it is one thing, turning it around is quite another. I never said I had a leg up on that problem."

*Aberrant Behavior*

Lesa smiled back, content for now just to be near him. "You certainly wrestled that hand on the clock away from Father Time and turned it around on him today, Ray."

"We did, didn't we?" Ray responded with a bit of a smile. "That arrow got confused and lost its direction today, didn't it? There'll be the devil to pay," he said, and they laughed happily.

"She'll be glad to pay," Lesa responded, taking responsibility while still laughing.

The limo pulled into the basement garage and spiraled down to where an elevator opened on limousine parking.

"This'll get you to the main floor in the back. Then as soon as you get out take the stairs on your right, go up a couple of flights and catch the main elevator there. If you're lucky it'll be empty on that floor," their driver told them. He had been completely correct. They were lucky in darting out of the service elevator and around to the stairs, and then up a couple of flights to where they caught a main elevator without encountering a single soul.

*#18 Muted Celebration*

Later Saturday afternoon, May 6<sup>th</sup>.

As they walked into their anteroom, they could hear the television still blaring.

"Hi, Edna," they both said cheerily as they walked through to the main room. From one of the comfortable chairs across from their couch facing the TV, Edna hopped up in obvious delight.

"Oh, thanks for coming back here to share your evening with me instead of going out on the town without me."

"Edna," Ray said, "You seem absolutely delighted. Did sales go well today?" he teased to the merriment of all three.

"I'm just glad you two didn't hop off a bridge," she said in reference to their departing difficulties that seemed so terribly many light years ago now. "That would have been a terrible waste. I've got champagne over there," she pointed to where a couple of bottles, one opened, were cooling in ice. She had obviously made an exception and drunk a little.

Ray and Lesa sat down close together on their couch facing her chair, Ray had his arm securely around Lesa as she nestled into him.

Edna observed their intimate relationship without surprise, "You two out of the closet finally?" Edna asked.

Ray laughed. "You don't miss much, do you, Edna?"

"No. The only difference is that you kids aren't trying to pretend I'm stupid anymore." She chuckled. The Champagne had done her good, Ray thought.

"You're *one* of us," Lesa said.

"Am I?" Edna responded a bit skeptically, but happily, nonetheless.

"You're *family*." Lesa emphasized, "You know all the secrets and you keep them because you are."

"I know a few, and *do* keep them," Edna said. "I suppose you'll be needing my help in this regard."

They didn't know exactly to what she referred and guessed, finally, that she didn't either. But all three of them knew that they would definitely demand her help in defining and living the rest of their lives, that her support would be

willingly given, and that it would always be of inestimable value. That was how Edna was; it *was* Edna.

"How much of this whole spectacle did you two see?" Edna asked.

"I saw what could be seen from grass level," Ray allowed.

Lesla contributed as how she had been shuttled around as an entertainer other than having hid in a ladies' room stall through the entire third inning, until after the fourth when she escaped to a private room. "George found one for me... well, until after the ninth when he made me hit the entertainment circuit again."

"Steinbrenner?" Ray asked, sounding irritated and a bit jealous.

"I was an emotional wreck, Ray. I was so humiliated that I asked the girl who had found me after I got out of the ladies' room if she would ask George if he could get me some privacy, after doing one more embarrassing stint on TV in the fourth. She brought me up to a room discretely, where George told me I could have the room all to myself, so I sat in there and panted like a little scared, runaway puppy dog 'til I thought it was all over, and then it *wasn't* over."

"You poor girl," Edna said. "No one would have suspected you of emotional collapse," she exaggerated. "Good work." She smiled at Lesla. "And you?" she asked Ray.

"You tell me. You watched me; I was on television, remember."

Lesla added softly, "So was I," and for Ray's benefit, "Oh, God."

Both Edna and Ray laughed, with Edna confirming that, "You both were indeed. And yes, sales did go very well today since you asked. We could have sold replicas of either of your toenail clippings at top dollar today... or tomorrow... or the next day." She laughed at the exhausted *kids* huddled before her. "You got any we can bronze?"

"I had the recorder sent up, so if there's ever anything you wonder about, you can check it out."

"No thanks," Lesla said with finality.

"I think I should get to see Lesla, don't you Edna? She obviously saw me, and all I saw was a few dark shadow people against the back lighting up in the rooms over right field."

Lesla cringed, snuggled tighter against him, and said, "Let's not be mean anymore, Ray."

Gently then Ray said, "I just want to see everything about you Lesla and know just how awful a day you had after all my mean comments this morning, for which I am truly sorry. Believe me I am. Now it wouldn't really be mean to watch you, would it?"

"No, it wouldn't. But not today, Ray. I couldn't take it today."

"Okay, but if I'm to be the expert on Elizabeth May Landau, I might have to see it."

"*May*?" Edna exclaimed. "Is it 'May' Lesla?"

Lesla looked at Edna and nodded. Then she turned to look up at Ray questioningly. "You'll go easy, won't you?"



He squeezed her a little and looked down, nodding that there could be no other way from here on out. She relaxed back into her comfortable position leaning against him. There were no impositions or meannesses between them anymore.

"Did you know they showed home movies of you hitting home runs in high school?" Edna asked. "Long ones."

No, of course not, how could he have? Then, "Home movies are boring, Edna. Long ones are the worst."

Edna ignored his attempt at humor. "They interviewed a teammate of yours whose last name was Jones," she said.

"Oh really? Jonesy. I thought about him when I was watching pitches in practice. He could get it up there pretty fast... mid-nineties. Nobody else could hit him in high school. He got drafted, but... all he could throw was speed."

"He said you should have gone straight to the majors right then, out of high school without even stopping off at the minors."

Good old Jonesy, Ray thought. Well, Ray Bonn *had* gone straight to the majors without stopping off at the minors after all, hadn't he?

"He said you guys had great teams that were undefeated all through high school, and that you had been the best player in every sport, but he was the player that got picked in the draft, because he was a pitcher."

Jonesy shouldn't have tried humility, Ray thought. He knew he would not have been good at it even after a lifetime of mediocrity.

Lesya was watching Edna and Ray eagerly. "Did they say any more about Ray from back then?"

"Oh, yeah," Edna said. "Photos from the high school annual of him and the Homecoming Queen. Quite the young stud he was, and quite the pair. But that was back a very very long time ago, Lesya. That was five years before you were a twinkle."

Edna was laughing at her, Lesya could tell, but she didn't care. They were all family now.

"Hey, here's the news," Edna said as she swooped up the remote from the coffee table beside her and turned the mute off, defiling the room with soul-numbing, American TV News Entertainment.

Ray turned to look over his right shoulder. It was an awkward angle for him, so he lifted Lesya onto his lap and scooted to his left and laid back on the big pillows at the end. Lesya now settled in between the back of the couch and his torso, on which most of her weight rested. Her nose and lips were awkwardly pressed against his right cheek now. He smoothed her hair out of both their eyes.

"The world has been caught by surprise by these two physicists again," a story began that showed Ray mid swing and Lesya with her fingers up to eye level, her beautiful eyes welling with tears. Then the temporarily frozen video proceeded through the swing and the upper deck homer in the fourth inning.

"We'll have all that for you and more when we return." The typical horrendous approach to non-news.

"Do we have to, Edna?" a distraught Lesa appealed.

"No." Edna turned it off.

Lesa sighed a thank you and wiggled her nose against Ray's cheek. Then as though having just remembered something important, she said, "Ray, you'd better call your Homecoming Queen." She smiled at his sensing her inference.

"Yeah, I better," he allowed, confirming her guess, and reached for his coat to get his cell phone.

"Take it in your room, Ray," Lesa said as he looked down at her. She saw his questioning look, so she said, "She's your wife Ray. She loves you. We women are sensitive about things like that."

He let go of her hand, brushed her cheek, and then got up to go into his room where he sat down heavily on the bed.

"Close the door, Ray."

He got up again doing as Lesa ordered when Helen answered.

"You all right, Honey?" Ray asked.

"Sure! You were *unbelievable* again. Unbelievable doesn't scratch the surface of what you were today, Ray. But how about you? Are you okay? You looked awfully tired at the last. You're not used to that anymore.

"No, I'm not. I never was, but I guess I survived it."

"Survived it? You were magnificent. You made fifty million dollars today, minus Lesa's commission. Do you know that?"

"Forty-nine, remember? We don't talk about fifty." He laughed. "Of course, I know how much. 'Cachink, cachink.' I counted the pennies as they were tumbling into the coffers. Poor Alto has to work a couple of years for that kind of money." They shared a chuckle.

"Your kids are so impressed. Allie's here and wants to talk to you."

There was a pause and then, "Hi Daddy! You are the best Daddy a girl ever had. I'm sorry I was so hard on you and what you were doing to make this all come together with..." (It was clearly a difficult word for her to say.) "Lesa's help. She worked some kind of amazing contract for you, didn't she."

"A tough bargainer, huh?"

"Yeah. But *Gawd* Daddy, do you know how impressive you were? The news can't get over it. But would you really rather have privacy than all that fame and money?"

"Yeah, I would, Allie. How're the kids? Did they like seeing their grumpy gramp do something other than sitting at his keyboard all day?"

"Yes. They want to know what it was like talking to 'the hero'..."

"Oh, God! I forgot..."

"Forgot what, Daddy?"

"I promised to sign a copy of my book for Hiro. I left without doing it."

"Do it tomorrow. They'll still be there. There's another game."

"Oh, okay." Ray made a mental note to do that as soon as he was off the phone. "Have you heard from the boys?"

"Yeah, Eddie. He's here. Mom had a hard time keeping him from going to New York. He wanted to meet Lesa." She laughed.

"It's good to talk to you, Allie. I love you. Let me talk to Eddie."

"Well, if it isn't the Bambino." Eddie was still Eddie.

"No, it isn't, Edward, it's your father. How're you doin' kid? I don't hear from you in months, and then, by using the National media, I get through. Is TV all you guys look at in grad school?"

Eddie laughed. "You old coot. How'd you get them balls outta the infield? You're an old man, don't you remember? I ask you to come out and play baseball with me and you say, 'I can't, I'm an old man.' Don't you remember?"

"I do remember, Eddie. I'm sorry. I screwed up."

"She 'youngened' you up a bit, didn't she? I need her to 'youngen' me up. I'm starting to feel like the old man around here."

"Well, don't get too comfortable in my role. I'll be back before long now, and I want everything just as I left it."

"Don't worry, I'm not touchin' the woodwork. Love ya, Pop; here's Ma."

"Love ya' kid... Oh, Hi again."

"Never mind him... he's Eddie."

"I wish I had played baseball with him though. I was probably a little better with Jamie."

"I wish you had too, but he made out just like you did; he was a good player and never had to say his father pushed him to it. He's got a bright career ahead of him like Jamie and Allie."

"Yeah, he does, Helen. You did a great job with the kids. Did Jamie call?"

"So'd you. Don't go letting Eddie push any guilt off on you. Yes, Jamie called. After each of the first three home runs but he must have got bored reporting the same old thing time after time." She laughed teasingly. "Oh, I see he's trying to get through to me again now. I'll talk to him after we're done."

"It did get boring I suppose," Ray said. "But whatever it looked like, each at bat was different and one hell of a challenge. I'm tired; I'm going to let you go. Tell Jamie I love him too."

"I know it must have been terrible pressure... after a while especially. How's Lesa by the way?"

"Rich. She and Edna are in the living room talking now. There's a champagne bottle open and another one cooling, but Edna's the only one to have had any at all. I sure don't feel like any, and apparently Lesa doesn't either."

"Is she okay though? Emotionally I mean. This took a lot out of her too, you know. She has taken a lot of pressure to get this done whether we all appreciate it as we should or not, and probably getting less praise, and a lot more blame than she deserves."

"Well, she and I were both pretty shell shocked. Our limo driver took us to the rear entrance when we came back here to avoid the crowds for today though. That helped. We have just sort of collapsed here since we got back. Edna was here all-day watching television. She got a recorder to record

everything. I think she was afraid of how bad it might have gone for us, but she's ecstatic now. She drank enough that she's good company for both of us. We got her to turn the TV off though."

"There's some pretty interesting stuff that has showed up on there you know."

"Yeah, I know. I was there... today and in high school." They chuckled and signed off with the traditional "love you". He was sitting alone on the, once again turned back, covers of his bed. The bed looked inviting. He didn't think about that for long though, because his phone commenced its sound. He could see in the read out that it was Helen again. "Yeah?"

"The news didn't just uncover *your* childhood you know."

"Oh God. What'd they do?"

"What they do. Ray take care of Lesa; she's a dear little thing. After being very upset early on, you couldn't imagine how much class she showed."

"Couldn't I?" Ray asked, knowing that he could, in fact, imagine just how much class she would have shown. "Do I need to see that footage? She did tell me about her upbringing and her Mom and Dad you know. That's a lot of what all this, that might have looked like infidelity with a 'floozy' to Allie, was all about, you know."

"I do know. You told me, and I've seen you with your kids. You care." And then, "Ray?" A pause, "Thank you for the comment during the interview. The kids and I all got lumps in our throats and tears in our eyes. We really did." She laughed then, "Even Eddie."

"I didn't care enough all the times I should have, but thanks, Helen."

More loves and byes.

He sat there pondering for a bit and then got up and walked to the door and out into the room with Edna and Lesa. Lesa seemed to be asleep with Edna watching the muted news. He sat down in the other comfortable chair across from Lesa. "Nothing we don't already know is there?"

"No, but there was."

"About Lesa?"

"About Lesa, yes."

"Her life as a prodigy and losing her parents?"

"You knew that? Do you know the details?"

"Not enough detail yet, but probably a lot more than they do... or Lesa does. As soon as I got away from Lesa long enough I was going to find out *all* the details and try to help her work through it."

"She isn't through it?"

"You have to know she isn't, Edna. There isn't much you miss."

"I missed that," she said. "But I guess even without knowing all the hubbub that must have been going on up here, I should have noticed. You love her, don't you?"

"How could I help it?"

"You better not help it now; she needs you, but do you know what?"

"What?"

"You need her just as much."

Ray was rather startled at her comment, offended. "What do you mean 'I need her just as much'? I have a wife and family you know."

"You haven't noticed the odd personality dysfunction? You have a major case of passive aggressive personality disorder, I'd say. You had a pretty screwed up childhood too it seems to me - it's not the usual fairy tale when Daddy destroys the hometown. Your family doesn't seem to have fixed your negative response mechanisms; they're just your Prozac. Either everything is calm with zero emotional content or you are up and down - mostly down. Helen holds you in the middle, but she doesn't force you to fly. I suspect you've flown so recklessly you've been grounded." She smirked at her own insights and insinuations. "But, maybe it's just Edna that thinks so. Ask someone you love to give you flying lessons." She glanced over at Lesa now so angelically out of it.

"I guess she's implied as much," Ray admitted to Edna.

"Listen to her then. I'm going to my room where I can watch television in peace and quiet. Want someone to join you two at church tomorrow?"

"No, that's fine, Edna. I think I'll pass on the Eucharist tomorrow. Thanks for everything though. But would you do me one more huge favor? I forgot to sign Hiro's *Aberrations*. He asked me to." Ray grabbed the copy Edna had left beside where she had been sitting all day.

"Can I use this one?"

He could see her nod, so he grabbed the pen on the desk and opened the book to where he usually signed.

His duplicated note to Lesa was there, so he went to the next page and signed:

*"Hiro:*

*You saved the day for me. When I talked to my daughter after the game, she said that all my grandchildren wanted to know about my day was what it had been like talking to 'the hero'. I was proud of them for knowing what matters. It was a great experience working beside you today. Thank you for everything.*

*Ray, May 6<sup>th</sup>*

He handed the book to Edna who reopened it to read, approving silently.

"Would you please see that it is delivered to Hiro at Yankee Stadium in the morning? I probably won't be up yet."

"Sure," Edna said, adding, "You do have your good points," with a generous smile. Then grabbing the opened champagne bottle, "I'm taking my friend here. Bye." And she was gone.

Her comments about his childhood and his life with Helen bothered him. Had he really led a life of *quiet desperation* rather than one of serenity as he had tended to pride himself? What would he go back to?

Ray decided that even though it was early, that bed had looked awfully good in there, and so he turned off the lights in the room, walked over to the TV cabinet, and closed it. Then he stepped into Lesa's room and found a spread. He took it to lay over her. She had slipped her shoes off earlier and tucked her feet up on the couch.

Then he went into his room, turned the lights off, and laid back on his bed, intending to just lie there a minute or two before undressing and going to bed properly.

But a minute or two sometimes turns into an hour or two, a year or two, a lifetime or two with dreams and nightmares, new lives and dead family and friends, and those we love and never see again. These were the stuff and substance of his fitful dreams and delirium with someone assaulting a beautiful woman whose name was lost. Then it was a child that turned into a small dog that was floundering in water that then was gagging, and he couldn't reach the puppy that was yelping and then sputtering and then went under the torrents without returning. And there she was, this little girl way downstream with a beautiful lady standing on the bank in a black formal and hair done up over her head looking down at herself as a child as she passed. Then it was a man with a sinister stare at the water. It was raging water and Ray was in it, reaching for the fleeting appearance of a woman's hair that was then stringy algae, seaweed, and kelp. He was dizzy with the whirling eddies and torrent. He ached everywhere from banging on the rocks in a cascade of falls over boulders, and there was a hand... disembodied at first and then with a person and a voice associated with it, a woman's voice clear and ringing...

Sweating and exhausted and with the stench of vomit he looked up. It was Lesa whose hand it was, whose voice it was that hummed, then the words pulsed in his temples "'til the sunlight touches your face" and then it happened again and then the raging river again and the aches and sweat...

*#19 Through Sickness and Health*

Sunday morning early, May 7<sup>th</sup>.

Lesla had lain on the couch for hours. She didn't actually know how long, but Ray and Edna were both gone and it was nighttime. She was alone with the re-emergence of humiliation and betrayal but not without a certain exhilaration as well. She got up still groggy from sleep but noticed the spread that fell off her as she got up, so she picked it up to take with her to her room.

The rest had actually helped her, she noticed, as she washed her face with cool water and changed into her lounging pajamas. She crawled into bed, noticing only after she had turned out her bedside lamp that she had left the door to the main room open. She noticed Ray's forbidden bedroom door across the main room and thought again of him standing statuesque before each home run with all the fondness that association had for her. She fell to sleep happy. Their relationship was once again a loving one as it should always have been.

She did not know how long she had slept when she heard the noises from Ray's room. She raised up on her elbow and listened. He was throwing up. She could hear him retching.

Running to his door then, she stopped instinctively at her so consciously created *outer limit*. Hearing him retch again, she opened the door, glad he had not locked it, although sometimes when he was in there, she had wondered whether he actually locked that door or not, whether he trusted her promise, which she now broke.

He was more or less hanging over the edge of the bed throwing up by the side near the walkway to the bathroom. She rushed to the bed stand, by where he was now doubled over, and turned the light on while holding his forehead in her other hand. He threw up again, now on her pajama bottoms and her bare feet. There wasn't much substance to it; it was not undigested food... he could not have eaten anything since breakfast she realized, and he hadn't eaten much of that, with all the nervousness and tension of yesterday's hectic morning.

She felt the warmth on her foot and also some soaking through her pajama leg onto her shin and thigh. The vile stench and coloration didn't really repel her, as she would have thought it might. It was part of being with Ray right then, in this travail, in his sanctuary. He was sick, *really* sick. She bent over and with her hand under his forehead, hugged him to her. Tears that had

seemed unavoidable these last twenty-four hours and so often since having recognized this soul mate of hers, started seeping from her eyes again. "Oh, Ray, I am so sorry," she said aloud, and began humming, their 'not-Julie' song, mumbling with the notes, "'til the sunlight touches your face." And having completed one refrain, she continued to hum without the words.

He was so hot. She made a determined effort of rationality, assessing how high his temperature must be, not all that high, she thought, but over a hundred probably. He was clearly delirious, she could tell from his sputtering, and mumbling, and reaching out. She couldn't make out his muffled efforts at screams or whatever they were.

Finally, she decided to run into his bathroom and get a cold, damp wash cloth for his forehead, and a warmer one to wash off his face. If he were to come to his senses for a moment and order her out of his sanctuary again now, she would scream at the top of her lungs and never quit screaming, she thought. She would tackle him and scream into his face that she loved him over and over, until he became sane enough to admit he loved her too.

She was able to lay him back on his pillow, which was not soiled and wiped his face with the warm wet cloth. Then she folded the cold damp one to place on his forehead. She proceeded to wash his reddened feverish cheeks again, and then his hands. His eyes were closed but jerking under the eyelids. She stroked the cloth across them and gently kissed each one.

She saw that he hadn't undressed, so she unbuttoned the shirt that was soiled and wrinkled. Rolling him gently with much effort from side to side, she got it off. He shivered, so she tried to hurry. There was a wet ugly spot on his T-shirt too, so she managed to get that pulled off over his head after a larger effort and wiped his hairy chest.

She ran back into his bathroom to grab a towel. When she got back, she dried his chest and began pushing the towel in around him. She saw his pajamas were under his pillow. She slipped his one arm into a sleeve and then manipulated him enough to get the other into the other sleeve far enough to pull it around almost closed as he moaned quietly, but she couldn't button it. She tucked the towel in around him again and laid the spread over his chest then to keep him from getting too chilled.

She returned to the bathroom with his soiled shirt, and to get a couple more of the large bath towels to tuck in around him to keep him warm. Catching a glimpse of herself in his mirror, she realized that she had vomit pretty much all over her now, so she dropped her pajama bottoms and took off the top, throwing it on top of his shirts and her bottoms in a heap. Through the swath of hair that had gotten his vomit on it she hurriedly ran wet soapy fingers, and then just wet fingers to rinse it; wiping it then on his hand towel. She rushed back to him.

She was in there with him again watching him shiver terribly as she tucked the soft towels tenderly around his chest, after wiping it again with the warm damp rag, and then wiping it dry. He looked so sick and so old right now that she could not avoid expressing an apology. She pulled the spread off at the



bottom and back across the bed without uncovering the corner she had laid over the towels.

She took off his shoes and socks. She had done that much before. She loosened his belt then, unbuttoned the top button and ran the zipper to the bottom. She had envisioned doing that on other occasions, but that had never occurred. She might never be permitted to do this again, she thought, but she did it now. His were strange prohibitions for such a bold man so completely free of intellectual boundaries.

There was Ray Bonn, All-American hero out cold. Edna could sell replicas of a picture of that, Lesa thought, her first jovial thought of this exercise. He *was* a powerful man, even if he showed his age and was sick right now, she thought, laying the spread back over his legs then.

His expression looked much calmer now, but as she changed the damp washrag on his forehead, she noted how hot he still was, and that he still shivered rather violently. The rag intended to cool him was so hot that she took it back into the bathroom to wring it out several times with cold water rather than just turn it over again.

Seeing herself reflected in Ray's mirror then, stark naked, sent a shiver of fear and excitement though her whole body. Other than Ray waking up later to wonder who had undone his belt and stripped his chest, he would know nothing of what she had done for him, or especially, of her having been naked in his sanctuary doing it. Could she tell him that it had been Edna, whom she had summoned, since he had specifically said only she herself had not been allowed into his sanctuary? Maybe. She saw the white terrycloth bathrobe hanging by his shower, and in deference to thoughts concerning his hang-ups, pulled it on quickly, returning to him.

As she laid the cooled washrag down on his forehead, he sighed deeply.

She said, "Ray! Are you okay, Ray?"

"I'm here," he said as though from far away. "I'm back, Lesa. Just hang on..."

"I am, Ray. I'm hanging onto you," she said next to his face and then she just began singing softly again,

*"And I won't leave you  
Til the sunlight touches your face."*

That brought a slight smile onto his face, she thought. She removed the rag on his forehead and turned it over. He was still extremely hot, although the shivering seemed to have subsided somewhat for the time being. He was clearly still very sick.

How sick was he? What should she do?

Worrying about a doctor then, her old roommate at Harvard came to mind. She had taken up the practice of medicine in New York... some hospital in New York City... what was its name... Oh, yes... New York Presbyterian. That wasn't very far from the Sheltry, she didn't think. Maybe Sharon was on

duty or maybe someone could give Lesa her number, and she could call her at home. She didn't want to call emergency help, unless it was absolutely necessary. She knew Ray wouldn't like that.

His cell phone was handy on the bed stand. She called information and got the number and after a few number pushings was at a place where Dr. Sharon Aster was a known entity.

"Let's see, I think she's just going off shift now, oh, there she is. Who should I say is calling? Dr. Landau... okay. Dr. Aster, you have a call from a Dr. Landau," and Lesa had her a *real* doctor on the phone.

"Lee, is that you? Or is it Lesa now?"

"Yes, Sharon it is, but please, if you would help me out right now with no other conversation at all, I would sure appreciate it. I'm having a major emergency here!"

"Sure, Lesa, I'm just going off my shift, where are you?"

"I'm at the Sheltry, suite 2713. Just knock and I'll let you in."

"Can I call you back on this number from my cell, so I can get on my way?"

"Sure. I'll hang up."

Then shortly Ray's phone did its queer little sound. Ray jumped. Lesa got the phone to shut up. Ray was calmed by her other hand. Into his phone she said, "This is Lesa."

"I was expecting the inimitable Ray Bonn from the fantasy with which my phone presented me. What is it, Lesa?"

"Ray's sick! I mean *really* sick. He seemed all right last night, but I woke up in the night to him throwing up and he's running this terribly high fever. He's shivering... and delirious."

"Have you got him warmed up?"

"Yeah, I think so. I had to get some of his wet clothes off him, but I've got towels around him and a cold rag on his forehead," which she turned over upon mentioning it, "and I kind of washed him up a little, but not completely."

"You mean you haven't washed his thingy yet?" Sharon laughed. Lesa didn't like it, but remembering Sharon now, it seemed all right.

"No. And it's not like that, Sharon."

"Oh, okay. He's married with kids, isn't he?"

"Yes."

"Sorry, kid sister."

"It's been a long time, Sharon."

"It sure has, and here we are neighbors."

"That's sure handy for me now. I am so worried."

"If it isn't a heart attack, then it's probably nothing. We'll see."

"Those are the options?" Lesa sounded terrified.

"Well, would you rather have AIDS thrown into the mix? That's a baddy."

"Sharon!"

Lesa could hear in the background noise that Sharon was either just getting into or out of a cab. That was good. The hospital wasn't very far, just a block

or two. She heard her tell someone she was a doctor "from that hospital over yonder". That seemed to work. She had probably showed her hospital badge.

"She'll be here pretty soon, Ray."

"What'd you say?" Sharon replied.

"Oh, I was just talking to Ray, but he doesn't hear me." And she did some more anxious but aimless chatting with Sharon.

"I hear you... Lesa," Ray mumbled.

"He seemed to be alive when the doctor arrived," Sharon said, and then there was an elevator chime followed by a knock at the outer door.

"I'll get it, Ray," Lesa said.

Sharon in her role replied, "Yeah, would you?"

Lesa was at the door and there was Sharon all smiles.

"I'd hug you, Sis, but you'd have to fasten that thing first."

Lesa realized that the robe was agape and that under it she was still totally naked. "Oh, no," she exclaimed putting her hands first where naked people put them, and then finally folding the robe shut, twisted the tie.

Sharon said, "Too late, I've seen it. Take me to the naked man."

Lesa ignored the embarrassment and got back into Ray's bedroom after listening to a few comments on "what a classy place to shack up." Crossing the threshold into Ray's bedroom, once more she re-worried the breach of her sacred oath.

Sharon was already taking Ray's pulse and had a thermometer in his ear. "Not too bad," she said, "but pretty sick for Superman, I suppose. Help me get this thing on his arm." Then she immediately proceeded to pump up the band to take his blood pressure.

"He'll be all right?" Lesa asked, anxiously.

"He'll be good as new... well, for how *old* he is." She smiled.

Lesa didn't like it.

"Listen little kid sister, he'll be all right. Don't you think we should look him over a little?" Without waiting for an answer, she had the spread off and was taking off the towels and then began tugging to get the slacks off him.

Lesa frowned.

"It's one of the few benefits of being an MD, but it looks like a Ph.D. has pretty much the same rights." She smiled gleefully at her timid *little kid sister*. "Hmm," she said after she had Ray's slacks down. "I would have expected a little bit more from such a Bambino. My favorite cadaver was hung better than this."

It irritated Lesa considerably. "What do we do now?" she asked still very concerned - unlike the doctor.

"You mean other than getting those shorts the rest of the way off him and stripping down ourselves to do a fertility dance around this aging male Homo Sapiens specimen?" She was laughing at Lesa again as she tugged Ray's shorts down over his thighs, and thence totally off him, while Lesa just stared. "Oh, I forgot, you've already done that," Sharon said, and giggled happily.

"Sharon! I've had one of the most stressful days of my life. I am exhausted. I had a major heart-breaking shock, thinking he was going to die. To top it all off, it was going to be my fault for getting him into that mess, and all you can do is laugh. It isn't funny to me, Sharon."

"I know," Sharon said, almost kindly, working at getting Ray's shorts the rest of the way off his feet and motioning for help. "But it *is* funny, Lesa; look at him. Seven grand slams? I don't know. It's hard to believe." She laughed.

They got his pajama bottoms on as a collaborative effort. "Let's get some fluids down him now. You didn't get him to drink yet, did you?" Sharon continued efficiently in spite of the banter.

Lesa wagged her head, indicating she had not. "I should have thought of that though, shouldn't I."

"You should have. That's about the main thing all right. I can tell he didn't have much fluid in him. He probably didn't drink anything all day yesterday and probably put out more than he ever put out in his life. He's not 23 anymore, Lesa."

But Lesa was gone before the barb and was back with a glass of water that wasn't too cold and another cool washrag. She put the new rag on Ray's forehead, bent over him after covering him again to try to raise his head to get him to drink, deciding finally to sit down on the bed so she could get his head into her lap.

Sharon was watching, of course, and laughing under her breath so Lesa couldn't actually hear her.

Lesa had his head secured finally with Ray sighing, and then she picked up the glass. Her robe was untied again, and completely open as she lifted him up, a nipple in one ear and the other breast a pillow to the back of his head.

Sharon snickered less silently now.

Lesa finally got the glass to his lips and tipped it. She had thought to leave the glass only half full to make this easier.

Sharon put her hand in now to help with no more cynical humor. "There we go," she said. "He's drinking it. He's obviously thirsty. I'll get him some more," she said, and went off to the bathroom.

Lesa wiggled around a little and tried to scoot Ray up a bit further so it would be a little easier this time.

Sharon was back with a fuller glass and they got it to his lips. He actually gulped heavily a couple of times rather than just sipping. "Looks like you undressed in a hurry," Sharon said, but was ignored.

Lesa liked holding Ray this way. She would like to do it sometime when he was well, she thought.

"I never would have thought you'd have much aptitude for nursing, but now I think you might," Sharon said laughing at the sight before her. "I don't mean as an RN either."

Lesa didn't even care anymore.

"I do love him," Lesa said, as some kind of explanation for something, "but that's as far as it goes, Sharon. And nobody else knows."

"It seems to me little kid sister that that's as far as *anything* goes. Once you get that far, you're in deep yogurt," she chided. "And I suspect that somewhere around fifty million people suspect as much."

Lesa finished getting that glass of water down him. Sharon went for another after wiping up some of the wet area on the rug by the bed. The water Sharon brought was fairly warm, but Ray liked it. Sharon handed her several Ibuprofen tablets to put in his mouth, and then sat a little bottle of them on the bed stand. "He's gonna' be sore. This should help," she said.

Ray opened his eyes a little and mumbled, "Thank you, Lesa."

"He likes the way you're holding him, I think," Sharon said, smiling. Then she had her thermometer in his ear again. "It's going down now. You've got him stabilized."

Lesa smiled at Sharon and squeezed Ray's head, showing her elation. He opened his eyes again and smiled up at her weakly.

"What do we do for him now?" Lesa asked.

"Well, I'll tell you what. You hold him that way until you get uncomfortable and then you get him under the covers and just to make real sure, maybe you'd better crawl in there beside him and hold him real tight 'until the sun shines on both your faces'," she taunted again happily. "I'll let myself out."

Lesa yelled, "Wait! Help me get him under the covers first. He's just got the spread on him, but he's lying on the covers and he's too heavy for me."

"It would be my great pleasure. You ready?"

Lesa began adjusting his head to lift it up, so she could get out from under him. Ray raised up a little on his own with his eyes opened and stared, delirious still, but in apparent amazement at Lesa's breasts exposed by the gaping robe as though she were some pink-eyed fantasy staring back at him. It was all much to Lesa's embarrassment.

"Has a man ever done anything else but gawk at women's breasts?" Sharon asked as she grabbed Rays arm to help stand him up.

"This one has," Lesa defended, and then helped Ray up by holding his other arm and pushed the covers back that had already been turned down by the maid the morning before. She leaned forward letting Ray sit down slowly again on the sheet, supporting his back in her arms as he lay back on the pillow.

Sharon was then lifting his feet less ceremoniously to get them under the covers.

"I don't know Dr. Landau, but I think we have a non-zero reading here now. Michelson and Morley might have been interested in this; isn't that what they were looking for?" She pointed in the direction of Ray's privates before letting the covers fall on them. "Much better than my cadaver actually," she added gleefully. Then she walked to the bathroom to get one more glass of water to place on the bed stand. She had turned the bathroom lights out coming back into the bedroom.

"That your room over there, Lesa?"

Lesa nodded.

"Well, I'll get those lights on my way out and hang the Do Not Disturb sign. You probably have all the excuse you need for sleeping in here with the patient the rest of the night. Get up next to him real close and keep him warm, will you. Tell him the doctor told you to kiss him on the ear for her too." She laughed her strident laugh. "I'll drop by this afternoon to confirm it was Doctor's orders. Be well kid sister." And she was gone.

She was aware that Sharon had been teasing her, but she contemplated the venture of climbing into bed with Ray now any how; he was too sick to resist in any way. Then Ray's phone did its ring tone again. That seemed strange, what could Sharon have forgotten? Picking up the phone, the digital readout revealed 'Helen' as the caller.

"Helen!" Lesa exclaimed. "What time is it there? Is everything all right."

"Yes, I'm fine, but I woke up from this awful dream about Ray in New York. I don't know if it was terrorism or what," Helen seemed a little confused, "but I just had this horrible feeling that something was so dreadfully wrong with Ray that I had to call, or I wouldn't have been able to get back to sleep. It's almost three here. But why did you answer his phone?"

"It's a long story Helen. Ray's okay now, but I was worried about him for real. The doctor was here and just left, but Ray's fine now, so please don't worry. He *is* fine, and I guess it was nothing serious. I'll rouse him in a minute, but I want to tell you what happened first."

So Lesa explained to Helen just what had happened other than her dropping her drawers and taking off her top and being about to climb into bed with her husband. "His temperature is down to about normal now, and he's been re-hydrated, so the doctor says just to keep him warm and let him sleep. The doctor will be back this afternoon to verify he is all right. We'll call you later after he wakes up. Let me try to rouse Ray now, and then hang on, we'll see if there's anything else."

She sort of slapped Ray's cheek. He said, "Les!" appropriately surprised to see her. Lesa was happy for Helen to hear that bit of surprise. Then she said, "Ray, it's Helen. She was worried about you."

Ray acknowledged Helen and said that he was just exhausted very weakly and sleepily to which Helen obviously had asked to be put back on with Lesa.

"Les, is that you?" he asked, confused and scolding in a way that almost made Lesa laugh thinking that Ray Bonn could not have acted that well with all his wits about him... could he? She grabbed the phone.

Helen said, "Les, you are a jewel. Thank you for taking care of him for me."

Les didn't argue the point of for whom the bell tolls. That had her here in this room right now naked, except for a robe that gaped, with her hand on Ray's forehead. She just said that one of them would talk to her tomorrow... well... later today then. As a last thought, Lesa said, "We probably don't want anyone to know Ray got so sick from his exertion, do we? It might mar his current macho image don't you think?" They shared a chuckle, both saying, "Thanks," and then, "Bye."

Lesa stood there pondering for a moment about Helen. It was the first time she had spoken with her on the phone. Could Helen really be so kind and generous, or was she naïve? Which was it? Lesa wondered for a moment. Kindness, she decided, deciding also how very much she liked Helen. Then she let all such considerations go, concentrating on the mutual interest of two women across at least two major divides.

All the prohibitions and promises notwithstanding, Lesa was about to crawl into Ray's bed. Gently giving him one more drink, for which he opened his eyes feebly. She said, "Ray, you're going to be okay."

Not completely free from delirium, he answered, "Lesa, you are my sunshine."

She was surprised to see his eyes already had a little bit of a twinkle in them. Turning out the light on the bed stand then, she made her way around the bed in the pale light of the morning that came from the main room, where dawn had been in effect for some time. After letting the robe slide off her shoulders and fall to the floor beside the far side of Ray's bed, she shivered. Wanting Ray to wake up thinking well of her, she walked on into her own bedroom and slipped on a gown she had bought when she had shopped with Edna for extra clothes for the extension of her travel.

With it on, she returned to the sanctuary, pulled the covers free, and slid under them. Ray seemed to roll toward her his eyes open as he met her part way. He even reached out to her as she nestled into his arms. He held her next to him.

And thus, she slept with him despite all his earlier prohibitions and remonstrances. She even felt him liking it a little, and thought he liked that she knew he liked it. They fell to sleep quickly though and slept there totally at peace for the few hours there was left of their night.





*#20 Bigamy Bridge*

Sunday late morning, May 7<sup>th</sup>.

They slept late into the morning in each other's arms. It was Lesa who awoke first and did not want to wake Ray for more reasons than she even knew. It was sweaty between them where his unbuttoned pajama top gaped apart and her breast was tight against his torso. He did not seem at all feverish now though. She could see that he had finished the glass of water on his bedstand, and yet she seemed to be exactly where she had been upon falling asleep. He must have very gently adjusted her while he sipped the water and then scooted her right back where she had been. He must have liked her being where she was.

Lesla felt more secure right then than perhaps at any time since her earliest childhood. She just lay there feeling the stickiness of their bodies. His chest bristles titillated her breasts where their night clothes had matching gaps. Knowing she had pubic hair touching him somewhere furthered her exhilaration. It was a most wonderful intimacy she had but vaguely imagined before.

She glanced up at his face eventually and saw that he was looking at her now. She jerked a little. He squeezed her a little more tightly then, receiving an even bigger smile from her. They lay there just looking at each other... silently absorbing the nature of each other... enjoying the fact of being alive in the same world in which the other was also alive, even knowing the overlap would never be nearly enough.

"How do you feel?" she asked.

"Okay, I think, but I should probably ask you," he said. "You're the one who talked to the doctor. I'm the one feeling *you*, and you feel just fine. How do I feel?"

"You feel absolutely divine, Ray Bonn. " She was all smiles then.

"Well, I must be about well then, huh?"

"I think so."

"You did have a doctor here last night, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"A *her*?"

"Yes, a her, a former roommate from my Harvard days who works over at the Presbyterian Hospital. I called her because I was so worried about you. She came right over... very quickly. Did you hear what Sharon said?"

"You mean did I overhear her tell you how long I have to live?"

Lesa poked him gently and smiled.

"It did seem to me that I had an out of body experience in which two women were standing over me, looking at my naked cadaver."

"Just in your dreams."

"I don't think it was. What about that smooth surface I feel next to me right now? Is that a fantasy too?" It felt good to tease so easily.

It felt marvelous to Lesa to have him back, and completely at ease.

"I think I heard the doctor say something derogatory about how I looked at those lovely, pastel-pink nipples of yours." They squeezed each other and laughed. "And you defended me."

"Oh," he said, hurting from the laughter, "I've got a headache. I guess." Then he appended, "Truth be told, I hurt everywhere, Lesa, and I mean *everywhere*. Evidently that baseball game actually happened, huh?"

Lesa scooted up, getting onto her left elbow with her right arm and breasts on his chest; that hand was on his cheek. Then she kissed his forehead.

He responded, "That felt okay."

So she kissed his lips and he put his hand on her buttocks with more confidence than she would have imagined. She felt like he had finally accepted her as *his*.

"I'll get you some water for a couple of those Ibuprofen," she said, slowly extricating herself from his embrace, not resisting any pressure he might still want to apply anywhere.

He let her go, watching intently. "I knew they were pink," he said as she got up, straightened her gown, and pulled on the robe. "That shade of pink is my absolute favorite," he toyed.

Blushing and beaming, she walked around to his bed stand, self-consciously tying the robe. He had his hand out and touched her breast through the gap above the sash and diaphanous gown as she bent down to get his glass. They looked at each other without embarrassment.

"Welcome to the inner sanctum," he said with a smile.

"Oh, thank you. You too," she said. "I live here now."

"You do all right."

When she returned, she handed him a couple of the pills.

"When does the lady Doc return," he asked between swallows.

"She said she'd drop by this afternoon."

"I need a shower."

"You do," she said. "I'll go get some clean towels from my room and some clothes for when we're done."

"We?"

"Oui, Monsieur. You're too weak to be completely alone or to resist me. Now there's nothing I haven't seen and not much of mine you haven't seen or

felt either, and anyway, I want to see more, and feel more, and show you more - any time, all the time. I live here too now, remember?"

He had not forgotten, but he was waking from the dream. Bob Dylan began to drone in his head, "*Take what you have gathered from coincidence. Whatever you wish to keep you better grab it fast... it's all over now, Baby Blue.*" He shook his aching head.

She helped him up and into the shower, brushing her teeth while he bathed. Very soon Ray said he was a bit wobbly, so Lesa quickly helped him from the shower and gave him a towel. He started rubbing himself down, trembling a little.

They both had begun worrying about when either, and eventually both, Edna and Sharon might show up. Neither Edna nor Sharon was a problem as far as *public* awareness of intimacy, of course. But they didn't want to be naked again for the doctor, nor certainly a first time for Edna. So Lesa, seeing his weakness, did a lot of the brusque toweling off of Ray's head and body and then helped him to the side of his bed, suggesting he lay there under the covers until she could get herself presentable.

He acquiesced and was sound asleep when she was ready to help him into some clothes she had found in his drawers. She woke him.

Before very long then they were both dressed and in the main room, Ray sitting on their couch where he usually sat leaving room for her, but she was scurrying about getting things presentable. Primarily she scurried around in his sanctuary, beyond her former *outer limit* and loving it. She cleaned the carpet by his bed as well as she could. All their soiled clothes she put in plastic laundry sacks and told him that she would do laundry today. It was as though she were now an adoring housewife, he an adoring husband, which of course he was, although in an entirely different world.

The wet towels she distributed between their bathrooms, after having run hot water in her shower long enough to properly steam it up. He knew by the sounds that that was what she was doing. He chuckled at her facile falsehood.

"I'm really hungry," he said finally, interrupting her trips back and forth between bedrooms.

"I'll bet you are." She grabbed the phone immediately, asking if he would like both the corned beef hash and a stack of hotcakes today.

"That sounds great," he said. "Maybe it'll help me get a little of my strength back."

"I'm anxious for that Ray," she said looking at him to verify that he knew the extent to which she meant it.

"Me too," he said, tentatively.

"Can I say 'I love you' now, Ray?" Lesa asked, teasing.

"I suppose, if you really mean it."

"I love you; I love you; I love you..." Then someone was at the door so Lesa headed to get it, turning to say, "and a million more times than that. I mean every one of them with my whole heart too." They were both still laughing at her as she opened the door.

It was the maid. He wondered what she had heard because she looked as though she had a mouthful of canary. Lesa smiled sweetly to her face, but then rolled her eyes at Ray. Was their maid the public? Probably.

Then the late breakfast arrived that Lesa set out attractively. She took Ray's hand in case he wanted help getting to the table. He wanted the hand whether he needed help or not.

Next it was Edna at the door; she marveled at their late breakfast. "Been up long?" she asked cheerfully.

"Oh, we've been taking our time," Lesa told her. Edna looked from one to the other, and Ray's double order, to assess damages.

Then the doctor arrived. She had said "afternoon", and Ray finally mentally accepted that it was, in fact, afternoon already after all.

Edna seemed to have noticed that if she wanted an overstuffed seat that it had better be on the couch today.

After "Sharon," as she was introduced to Edna, allowed as how it looked as though the doctor and patient had lost their roles, Lesa gulped down her mouthful of hot cake and said, "I'm sorry, Sharon. Edna, this is Doctor Sharon Aster. We had what I thought was an emergency last night..." she hesitated, watched the maid until she was out the door, and then continued. "Ray was terribly sick."

That was enough to worry Edna. Although Ray thought maybe it was just the prospect of more news that excited her marketing instincts.

Lesa went on, "Well, at least I thought he was really sick."

Somewhat weakly, Ray said, "Me too."

"But," Lesa continued in her forthright manner, "Dr. Aster here seemed to think a little fever and delirium weren't to be unexpected."

Sharon laughed in her jovial way and said, "Great presentation little kid sis! Yeah, our Bambino was sick all right. He didn't even know we inspected his privates." She laughed even to Edna's enjoyment now.

Ray pretended not to smile as he continued with his breakfast that seemed delicious, and since they were family, he reached over and touched Lesa's arm, fondly sharing the knowledge that he *had* known.

Edna said, "So Sharon, Dr. Aster, or whatever it is among family, how'd you medicate the emotional lacerations that were threatening to tear this company apart?"

Sharon laughed comfortably. She clearly enjoyed everyone in this "company". "It's just Sharon, Edna. You didn't think fifty million smackers could make that big a difference?"

"I just wasn't sure. No one seemed excited about that yesterday, and what with having lost all prospect of the 'success of failure'," she teased, looking at Ray, who smiled back, "I just didn't know."

Sharon looked at Lesa. "Okay, kid sister, what's said in here stays here - the Hippocratic oath, doctor client privilege, or some corollary thereof. What's going on with you and your married friend, Ray?"

Lesa looked up from her breakfast, paused for a long moment, then confidently placed her fork back on the plate. "Okay," she said. "I love Ray to the end of the universe and back, and if it's infinite as he supposes, and I accept because he does, then that's how much."

Sharon was somewhat taken aback.

Then after another pause, Lesa continued, "I think Ray loves me that much too, only maybe just a little bit more, because I have pastel pink nipples."

They all laughed in part because of Ray's expression. Although Edna awkwardly. They were still laughing as Lesa continued.

"Ray is married to Helen, whom he met on the day the universe was born, and I'm guessing that they love each other until the end of the universe. And he loves his kids, who are older than I am, and have this rather distorted view of the Siren in the next universe."

At this point Ray put his fork down and continued staring at the impetuous girl, who seemed to get everything right but not the easy way. Sharon and Edna, of course, were spellbound because they hadn't had the prerequisites for this advanced course in emotional cosmology.

Lesa just glanced over at Ray with a smile and went on, "These two parallel universes are floating out there, and there has to be a bridge constructed between them, so Ray can commute."

Ray pursed his lips but didn't bother to disagree with any point she had made so far. He just seemed a bit anxious about the instructions for the construction of Bigamy Bridge. The engineer in him maybe, he teased himself. It seemed totally beyond any technology or epiphanies he could imagine. He knew all things are possible and all of them take time, although some of them not very much time for Dr. Lesa Landau. He asked, "Will our collaboration on undoing the thermodynamic laws of both universes help you with this construction?"

"You know, I think it just might," Lesa said, laughing now at her own production, "but I have to get with Helen. It's a woman thing."

This was the first aspect of her fantasy that actually shocked Ray with regard to her perception of any of this as a possible reality. He pursed his lips and looked Lesa in the eyes to read deeper into her thinking, deciding ultimately to relax for a change.

"Thanks for not saying 'Oh, God,' Ray," she said, reaching over to him. Then, just to him, but before them all, she said, "I do love you so much, Ray Bonn, 'for ever and ever'."

There was silence, a very respectful silence, as they all looked from one to the other, sort of a secret mutual admiration society that each knew was very special. All shared apprehension concerning this bridge construction project that Lesa seemed to take for granted. They each suspected that Lesa should just *take what she had gathered from coincidence... 'cause it's all over now... Baby Blue.*

It was Lesa who jerked into recognition of the fact that she had, in fact, already spoken with Helen, at which time Lesa had assured her that Ray would call her to let her know how he was.

"What time was that?" Ray asked.

Lesa told him, adding that he had actually spoken to Helen, and done fairly well for having been nearly comatose.

"I'll call her pretty soon," he said.

The other two looked from Ray to Lesa as though wondering about the structure of Bigamy Bridge that Lesa envisioned. They were all silent for a while, probably all thinking of this same impossible project, and hoping Lesa would not be hurt *when the lover who would soon walk out her door had taken all his blankets from her floor* as presciently prophesied by Bob Dylan.

Ray ate. After a while, he looked up and said, "Sharon, have you ever done a DNA analysis? Do you know what is involved in doing that? How would I get it done?"

"I am *not* your daughter," Lesa exclaimed, laughing.

"Of course not, you're much too pretty. Forgive me, Allie," Ray said pointing skyward, and then to those listening, "Allie's my daughter in another universe by the way. She's a few years older than Lesa, but very pretty, although in a very different way than Lesa, different genes, different DNA, different universe."

"What do you want done, Ray?" Sharon asked.

"Well, what's involved in getting enough DNA to check parentage, a swab around the gums? Is that it?"

"Yeah, that'd do it, if it's done carefully."

"Could *you* do it that carefully?" Ray asked.

"Sure. Anyone can do it. I'd have to get a kit at the hospital, but I could probably do that if it was really important."

"It is really important. How long's it take?"

"You mean once they get the sample in the lab?"

"Yeah, your hospital. Right?"

"Yes, we have a lab that does that. I could probably get it done same day."

"Today?"

Edna broke in. "You kids are driving me crazy. Is that the point of this exercise?"

"No, of course not, Edna." Ray looked at Sharon for some sort of answer, but she was interrogating Lesa with whispers and negative nods of head to no avail.

Finally, Lesa had to just say out loud, "Sharon, I have no idea what he's talking about."

Sharon looked back to Ray and said, "Sure. It's my day off. I think the lab's open. It sounds like a lark."

"Would you mind getting me a few kits now. Oh, by the way, I think I can afford it, if my paycheck ever arrives."

"Right now? You want me to go get the kits right now?"

"Yeah, sometime today. Could you? Please."

"Okey dokey," she said, and was sailing out the door.

Then Ray looked over at Edna and said, "Edna, would you mind terribly booking Lesa and I on a flight to Boston tomorrow morning as early as possible."

"*As early as possible?* We didn't get up 'til noon today, Ray!" Lesa said.

"I'll be back to normal by tomorrow morning."

"I had a completely different schedule for you tomorrow morning, a nice long stay in the same bed for both of us with you feeling well, relaxed, and happy for a change."

Ray said, "You haven't had that conversation with Helen yet, you know."

"I know," she laughed, "but we have to have something to talk about."

Edna was following this, without really following it, and then she said, "Oh, by the way Ray, I got your book over to Hiro Musaki."

Ray nodded to Edna as thanks and then said to Lesa, "I already have the appointment in Boston. I really don't think you would want to miss this for the world, parallel universe, or whatever." Very calmly he grabbed her hand, "It's a very good thing, Lesa, it's for *you*, from me."

"A Ballet troupe?" she asked smiling.

"Well, yeah," sort of. "Please don't ask me anymore right now though. I won't let anything surprise you in a negative way. I care."

Edna did a gagging motion. She liked the kids' newfound happiness but obviously felt a little awkward watching them. She allowed as how she would go and set a flight up for them. "You're going too then, Lesa?"

"Yes, of course I'm going, if Ray wants me to."

"So how about getting us out of Boston somewhere around eight in the evening then." Ray said. "I do appreciate everything you do for us, Edna. You'll tell me when I have to start picking up the tab for your services, won't you. I know it's only fair and you're invaluable to any operation whatsoever."

"It's fine as it is. McGregor is *very* happy. Let's not rock this boat. I'll be out of here now to get this started."

Lesa and Ray were alone for a bit. "You okay, Ray? Was I okay?"

"You were great," Ray said, "Was I?"

"Ray, you know you always have my trust." But her expression saddened when she asked, "Where are we going after Boston?"

"Thanks for your trust." He squeezed her wrist. "I don't really know. As soon as we're alone this afternoon without *family*, we have to have a very long intense conversation around our dining room table. I think we'll enjoy it. But we should really be alone; it'll take a while."

"You've solved my *dilemma*, haven't you, Ray?"

He nodded. There were a couple of bites of the corned beef and some hot cake still on his plate, so Ray went back to work on them.

Lesa took another bite of her hash and got up. "You can have the rest of mine, if you like, Ray. You were famished, weren't you? I'll get you some water. Would you like some more Ibuprofen?"

"This is more than enough, but I sure was hungry. Yes, I would like some water. I guess I was dehydrated, huh? No on the pills though; my remaining aches and pains are just muscles complaining about being so out of shape. Let's not do exercises today."

"Okay. I'm going to take our laundry down and get it done now. Nobody else needs to see that stuff. Is there anything in particular I'll need for tomorrow?"

"Why don't you wear what you wore to the ballet last Friday? I liked that so much."

"Sure." She rose to get their plates to set outside the door. "If you liked it, I should maybe wear it every day. I'll look it over."

"I like everything you wear, but that in particular."

Walking over to the desk then, Ray noticed that he wasn't all that strong yet. Sitting down heavily at his computer, he began to check his mail. There was another message from Fredrik Sorensen, telling Ray that he was very much looking forward to their meeting. He had, "just yesterday," realized who Ray Bonn was and that he was "associated" with Maggie's daughter. Cynthia (Fredrik's wife) had brought that to his attention.

Fredrik told Ray that he had wept seeing Lesa, because she was so beautiful and so much like Maggie. Yes, he knew what Ray wanted, and yes, nothing would make him happier than having his DNA matched to Lesa's. But he was sure that Ray already knew, as he did, what the results would show. Clearly Lesa was *his* daughter. It filled him with great joy and pride just to know that. He had discussed all aspects of that situation with Cynthia, who was overjoyed for him as well, and anxious also to meet Lesa in person, if she could be persuaded to join them.

Yes, Lesa must certainly have been conceived when Ray had suspected, on Maggie's trip to the conference in Puerto Vallarta. They had had the most wonderful few days there then, and he had not seen her again until that time in New York, at which time he had failed to notice how extremely Maggie's child had resembled him.

He attached a half dozen photos of Maggie growing up. Some of them with the two of them playing or teasing each other happily. The last picture was his treasure he said; it was taken of him and Maggie in bathing suits, Maggie beautifully topless. He suggested Ray be discrete about whether to show Lesa that one or not. He suspected, he said, that Lesa was already "on her way" in that photo.

Ray responded to the e-mail stating that he too was looking forward to the meeting. He told Fredrik that Lesa had not yet been told that they would meet him tomorrow, but that she would be accompanying him. She would know the story before he took her to re-introduce them. Ray did not want to do anything that would destroy Lesa's trust in him. He left it to Fredrik whether he wanted his wife with him tomorrow, but he would certainly like to meet her sometime. He would bring a DNA kit even though, of course, it was a moot point other than for his and Lesa's assurance.



There was the door. It was Sharon. She had the kits and the enthusiasm to educate anyone who wanted to know anything, from details of any spot on the human genome to how to gather the DNA and process it.

"Okay," he said, "How would we check whether you happened to be my daughter or not?"

"I'm not," she said, "I'm too pretty, remember?"

"I do," he said, "You are way too pretty. But I just want to know how it's done."

"Are you suspecting that Lesa is not a Landau?"

"I know Peter Landau is not Lesa's biological father. Will that work for you?"

"Yeah! He was a bastard."

"She told you that?"

"Yep. Well, maybe without 'telling' me that," to which Ray smiled from having reached similar conclusions based on the statements Lesa had made to him.

"Yeah. Well, let's prove it," he said.

"You gonna dig 'im up?" She laughed.

"No, I'm going to introduce her to the man her mother *wanted* to marry, and who later fathered her child. Please don't let on until we're through this though, okay?"

"Yes, of course. It's a good thing you're doing."

"I think so."

Sharon said, "Open up." He did and she took a hard swath along the outside of his gums with a kind of swab and then stuck it tip down in a little vial. Then she corked it and said, "One down, who's next? I don't think it's me you want."

"No, or me either for that matter; you can throw that one away. I just wanted to know how it was done. Target number one is washing our clothes. If I can have those, she can do it with target number two."

"Can't you guys afford a maid yet? By the way, the whole world is wondering where you guys have holed up. They thought the two of you would be preening at Yankee Stadium today."

"Did you call a press conference to announce that you treated one of the participants for exhaustion last night?"

"No. Good idea though. I should have; it would have been good for my career. I could also inform your wife to expect a call from Lesa any time now."

They looked at each other with the unspoken "Oh, God," hanging in the air when Lesa came in, complaining about everybody pawing all over her and asking about her "Bambino!"

"Hi, Sharon," she said then, dropping the clothes in a pile on *her* bed. "Do I get swabbed now?"

"That's what the boss man says."

Lesa came over and kissed Ray on the forehead. "You okay?" And then a double take... "What's this?" A photo of her mother as a child was on the

screen. She looked at it a moment and then at Ray. He minimized his mail window with a quick click.

"Sharon, would you mind excusing us for just a minute while you go and wash your hands..."

"...or take a crap or something like that?" she laughed, catching on quickly. "Sure. Just yell when I'm decent," and she disappeared behind the closed door to Lesa's bedroom.

Lesla looked at Ray almost without expression. Her face did not suggest distrust, but the openness of having heard the first few words and wanting to hear the rest of a sentence about herself... waiting.

Ray grabbed the laptop and put his arm around her. They walked to their couch. He sat her down next to him, pulling her in tight. He could tell that she liked it, which made him feel much easier about what he had to say. "Lesla, remember how you took over my life because you wanted me to know I was a winner?"

She just stared seeming to willingly accept whatever he had to say.

"Well, I think I've done something similar to that for you..."

She interrupted him. "Peter Landau was *not* my father, was he?"

"No, he wasn't. You got your class and your looks from both your mother *and* your father. I believe your biological father is a very fine man who loved your mother very much."

Lesla leaped up higher on him and kissed him again and again. "Oh, I do so love you, Ray Bonn," she said.

He smiled between her kisses. "Wait a minute, now."

"We're going to meet him tomorrow, aren't we Ray?"

"Yes, Lesla, we are. I didn't want to surprise you with this, I was going to show you all the data spread all the way around the dining room table and let you learn it for yourself. But this letter from your father is the top block on the pyramid. I think you will enjoy reading it. You can read whatever else you want to later." He maximized the mail window and clicked the "from Fredrik Sorensen" message.

"Is that *him*?" she said and began reading. "You found him!" Tears began creeping down her cheeks even as she smiled warmly and pushed her shoulder against his chest. The photos engrossed her; she ended up staring at the one of her mother and father both bare chested. "I love them!" she said. "And I love you, Ray!" Then there was a long pause with her eyes still locked on her so obviously happy parents.

Finally, she said very quietly, "Peter Landau killed my mother you know," and then another long pause, "...I saw him..." and she turned to fall into Ray's arms sobbing violently.

Ray held her tightly and said very softly, "I supposed that you had. I am so sorry," and she turned up her face to him and kissed him full on the lips - only once, but it lasted more than a minute, he was sure. He could taste the salt of her tears and was overwhelmed by all her unique aromas. Then she just lay there peacefully against him.

Someone was at the door, so he yelled out, "Sharon, would you please get that?"

Sharon burst out of the bedroom as if she had had her hand on the doorknob waiting for her release. Edna was then in the room too.

Lesa looked at both of them as they stared at her. "I love having family," she said, holding the open laptop out to them in explanation.

It was grabbed immediately by Edna, who was standing closest by then. Sharon looked over her shoulder to see what she thought of that, of which she already had some inkling from her earlier discussion with Ray. Edna scrolled to the beginning of the message as she sat back in the overstuffed chair, Sharon leaning over her, both reading Fredrik's message concerning Lesa's conception. They both smiled happily as they scrolled down through the photos.

"I've seen a couple of your features that strikingly resemble your mother's," Sharon contributed with a secretive smile at Lesa.

Lesa just smiled back contentedly through her tears.

"This previous message looks interesting," Edna said.

"Oh, no. No! Don't look at any of the other messages yet. Lesa gets to look at the whole set first." Ray insisted. "She may let you read some more later. Lesa needs to become familiar with some of these. I was hoping she and I could do that alone together later this afternoon and evening."

"That's an excellent idea!" It was Sharon. "Would you like to catch a movie, Edna?"

Edna looked confused; she didn't seem to be in control anymore. "Yeah, I guess," she said, getting up. As she was walking out the door, she turned to say, "I got this from Hiro, Ray; I'll leave it here on this table. And there's mail for you too, Lesa." She paused, smiling. "The Mariners won today by the way, even without the Bambino, big time."

Lesa was over the initial shock of having learned about her origins and seemed eager to get on with the task of learning who she was.

Ray showed her the organization of the messages within 'misc', suggesting she begin with the most recent, which she had now already read and work her way back through the week's worth of responses to his queries. She asked to do it alone for her first familiarity.

Ray left her alone at the desk, going into the room that had been his exclusive bedroom and sanctuary, the room he no longer knew what to call. Whatever the name and function, it was where he was when he called Helen to tell her that his sickness of the night before had passed, leaving him still a little weak, but rapidly recovering.

After first allaying Helen's concerns for his health, he proceeded to explain to her the nature of the venture he had lined up for the next day.

Helen was predictably overjoyed for Lesa, and perhaps for herself, because he would probably then be free to come home.

As Ray discussed it with her, it occurred to him also that he was no longer Edna's prisoner, nor Lesa's for that matter. He had fulfilled all his obligations

to Edna, and his coerced and self-appointed duties to Lesa would also be at an end tomorrow, once he had helped unite her with what she had left of family.

Then Bob Dylan began to drone again in Ray's head:

*Forget the debts you owe,  
They will not follow you.  
Strike another match and start anew,  
It's all over now, Baby Blue.*

Ray let Dylan go. Helen was expounding on the likelihood that, whatever came of the reunion, it would take more than a couple hour meeting for Lesa and Fredrik. They would no doubt desire a much more extended reunion that might take some time, enjoyable time certainly, for them both. It seemed as though Fredrik's wife Cynthia would probably be amenable to Lesa staying over in Boston for some time. Ray wondered but Helen seemed certain of it.

In that case he might as well go home to await Lesa's availability to proceed with collaboration. They could actually collaborate over the Internet at this point. They each had access to each other's previous work, and a notion of how the final product should be organized. Yes, he would discuss these possibilities with Lesa to see what she thought and get back with Helen. At most his coming home should pend details of the meeting tomorrow. He would call Helen tomorrow with his schedule to return home. They both expressed a hope that his return would, in fact, *be* tomorrow.

As Ray walked back into the main room, he found Lesa on her cell phone, laughing easily with someone. She was saying something about the evening she had seen the ballet performance when she was a little girl. She noticed Ray come into the room and said, "Oh, excuse me a minute; Ray is back." Then pausing and obviously redirecting her statement to Ray instead of the party on the phone, she asked, "Ray, could we stay over with my father and Cynthia for a couple of days?" She had obviously availed herself of the phone number Fredrik had provided for just such a contact.

"Lesla, I think it would be wonderful for you to stay over for as long as it takes you and Fredrik to find out all that you share. I really have to get back west. I've been gone an awfully long time for me. I think we should take a break in our collaboration on irreversibility. We can begin again whenever you think you're ready. I have a lot to do in the meantime just absorbing all the information you've given me and your thesis then we can follow up on the plans we've already coordinated."

Lesla redirected her focus again, "Did you hear that..." she faltered, "Should I call you Fredrik or might I call you something more like Father or Daddy?" There was virtually no delay after which she chuckled and said, "I might like to call you Daddy, but Dad is good for now."

Ray noted how similar the form to what she had seen his older daughter refer to him; she was trying to learn how a loving family functions. In her style, she was off and running... again.

"I would like Ray to come with me tomorrow, because I want you to meet him. He is very important to me. We already have our tickets. Yes, I would really like to stay with you and Cynthia for a few days, but I guess Ray wants to get back to Helen for a little while."

A "little while"? Ray smiled to himself. He almost laughed out loud - not that it was particularly humorous. It wasn't - but because it was so... so... like Lesa, he finally decided. He would enjoy getting back down that serene dead-end street and staying holed up there *for the rest of his life*, he thought. Exhaustion was cascading in on him again.

It seemed to be settled then. He stood there a moment, until he recalled that he was overhearing a private conversation and went on through his bedroom to the bathroom where he doused his face with cool water. Lesa had come into his life a reassuring presence to a weary old man, promising the fantasy of complete understanding in those distant hills. She had provided that, and a lot of happiness, and trauma besides. His life had been turned upside down and sideways, his pleasant private oblivion having been replaced by a public persona identifiable by fifty million people. That was what he liked the very least. In the exchange his modest but adequate retirement stipend and royalties would be augmented by millions of dollars, whose investment had to be worried, and however he thought of any of those side effects, they were all negatives. Only knowing Lesa had been worth the doing, and now that lone positive aspect would be supplanted by a terribly lonely void in that quiet desperation down a very lonely street.

*"Why so pale and wan, fond lover? Prithy, why so pale?"*

It was a very cheery Lesa in his sanctuary unannounced, a right he had conceded.

"I'm just very tired, Lesa," he said without eye contact. *Freedom ain't worth nuthin', but it's free*, was what actually crossed his mind, a remembered song from oh-so-long-ago. It was the worthlessness rather than the value of his upcoming freedom that struck him then. Surely his freedom from Lesa would merely be an escape to a new kind of loneliness he had never felt before.

She was upon him at once, "Ray, you don't look like you understand. I am not forsaking you. That will never happen. He is my father; you never were. That 'father figure' thing never worked. You know that. You are something else, much more important - my whole life. But I have to get to know him."

A very jaded "Lesa, Lesa, Lesa..." was all he could utter. One can never explain what one knows in one's bones as certainly as sunset.

"I'm sorry, Ray, for always telling you the obvious," she said pushing in close to him, "I know you know all that. Will you please not let our souls drift apart while I grow up to the love we share?" He just looked at her and then held her to him for a few moments before, perhaps too abruptly, changing the subject to his physical hunger that had returned full force.

They called dinner up and ate virtually in silence with both obviously deep in thought. She had memorized as well as copied the content of his 'misc' folder. She needed no additional information; she needed time.

"I'll call Edna up later to rearrange our flights," Ray said

Lesa responded that that would be fine, of course, but that she would do it, if he didn't want to get Edna involved. But Edna had to be involved. They had to cancel whatever reservations she had made for them at the Sheltry.

He would fly home from Boston tomorrow then.

After their dinner and packing exercise they refreshed their plans for the collaboration. Lesa made some tangentially obscure reference to the bridge between universes that neither chose to pursue. Then very awkwardly the situation of where they would sleep insinuated itself. Lesa seemed to presume that they would proceed with their (or at least *her*) plan of sleeping arrangements as they had wound up that morning. Ray was obvious about being uncomfortable with it.

Lesa had so much on her mind that more tension and entanglement on the eve of meeting her father for the first time was hardly all that enticing.

"Would you rather I slept in my own bed tonight?"

He agreed that he thought it would be better, and so that was how the night proceeded, except that just before falling asleep, or maybe more accurately, long after he should already have been asleep, but wasn't, Lesa opened the door a crack asking whether she could come in.

"Ray, could you just hold me like you did that first night?"

He lay there motionless - more to think about ways to say, "No, I don't think that would be a good idea," than pretending to be asleep. Apparently she thought he was already sleeping, uncharacteristically deciding to let this sleeping dog lie, he mused. The door closed quietly and then very soon he was asleep.

Monday morning early, May 8<sup>th</sup>.

That last morning in the Sheltry Lesa was up and showering in her own bathroom when Ray awoke. He heard her through his closed door, around three corners, and over the sound of spray that he imagined titillating her body and splashing beneath her as she sang a very loud rendition of *I'm not Lisa*. Ray could not help but smile even as vague illegitimate regrets flooded in upon him.

It would still be quite dark out, Ray thought, except that in New York City it was never actually what one could legitimately call 'dark' other than possibly in narrow distances near the zenith. Even there the zodiacal light would preclude visibility of all but the brightest stars. He longed to be back home, where, whenever it wasn't raining, one could see the actual twinkle of starlight between the trees and breathe in the natural aroma of hemlock forests.

As he showered and shaved, he felt the return of strength that had eluded him all the previous day. Going home loomed large for him again now as it

had two weeks ago before all the unforeseen events and commitments. The prospect of getting back to Helen and their peaceful life together down that quiet private drive seemed all charm now. The misgivings he had been having, concerning whether the term 'serenity' that he had so often used to describe his former life, might more honestly be replaced by describing it as a 'quiet desperation', had gone now. Whatever his former life had been, it had a stability he needed now.

Helen waited at home. Lesa had captivated him; he could almost persuade himself that he had been kidnapped by her and was now about to escape. He was aware that the fabrication didn't work, but he continued with it anyway. He would not, for example, be able to call Helen and say, "Don't pay the ransom, Honey, I've escaped." And the extortion payments to be made as a result of his detainment here in the Big Apple would all be deposited *into* the Bonn account, not withdrawn. He had not been a victim of extortion; that much was certain. Held somewhat against his will maybe, sure, but to each extension of his stay he had always acquiesced willingly enough in the end, gladly even. Of course, what blew the analogy wide open was that he was not escaping at all, or even being 'released' by said agent. He had finally decided to opt out. That was all. He had just not had the will to 'escape' earlier.

But, although he would get away, he knew he would never really be free of these entanglements. As sometimes happens in kidnappings, the victim falls in love with his captor. What ever happened to the heiress Patti Hearst anyway, had she ever gotten her life back together and into a reasonable normality afterward? Would he? Those questions concerning his continuing fantasy actually worked.

An equally valid case could have been made that Dr. Lesa Landau had been kidnapped by Ray Bonn. Her boss Ed Watson was probably making that case to anyone who would listen down at ASI. For one thing, he might argue, Lesa was a lot closer to being a 'child' than Bonn was. Who's responsible? Who should have known better? Right.

After his ablutions with the associated desultory thoughts he began to don the attire Lesa had picked out for him to wear this day. It was not what Helen would have selected for him, but it would be fine. He'd be comfortable in it. Lesa was introducing him to *her* father after all.

As he put his bare foot into his slacks, he felt a warm hand placed on his bare shoulder. It was Lesa who had come into his sanctuary silently. She had her bra in that hand; he felt it hanging below where her hand rested ever so gently, and beside it was the softer touch of breasts. He turned. There she was, not to be forgotten... *ever*.

She pushed herself against him for a kiss. It was not like anything he could ever have imagined. He could barely stand; he was wobbly with it.

"You know that we can not remain apart for long, Ray." She said this as though it were an intuitively obvious mutual deduction from factual premises, a syllogism.

His thoughts seemed to drift in slowly from elsewhere. But the most intoxicating phase was over. With his cognitive abilities back, he could no longer follow such flawed logic. He stared into her lovely face knowing that, in actual fact, they could remain apart. They would. *Whatever they wished to keep, they'd better grab it fast, 'cause it's all over now, Baby Blue.* This aspect of the relationship between Ray Bonn and Lesa Landau was for all practical purposes merely a memory, the chorus of a song to hum forever. Bob Dylan had got that right. Bigamy Bridge had been ill conceived.

"Remember these pretty blues and pastel pinks, Ray. They are part of you now. *Yours!* But I want so much more of you than I have ever had," she intimated sensually. Then, drawing back a little as though to look at him, but probably, he thought, so he could not avoid looking at her, allowing an obsession to be created, completed, or fulfilled.

"Those few hours the night before last were wonderful, Ray, waking up next to you." There was another hesitation, "...but it was not nearly enough, was it, Ray?"

"No," he stammered. He turned to hide his thoughts and functional anatomy as he continued the interrupted process of pulling on his slacks. Then he grabbed an under shirt and pulled it over his head. The plaid shirt he had worn to the ballet with Lesa last week came next. He knew that when they left the suite, she would have him carry his jacket slung over his shoulder as he had then. She had not specifically choreographed that, but that's what she would want. He knew what she would want.

Now she placed her pink features into their fine lace harness as he watched surreptitiously, knowing that nothing he did clandestinely or otherwise ever escaped her notice, or would ever be forgotten by her. She finished that deliberate act and went into her room to fit herself into the outfit she had worn to the ballet a week ago and do whatever finishing touches she might feel would be required for this important day.

He knew she would be truly beautiful again this day, this time to meet her father. They were, after all, going to meet that leading male performer that she had first told Ray about that amazing night more than a week ago on their way to the Minsky Theatre. That memory of her first encounter with ballet had probably been refreshed regularly for the last seventeen years. It had been so vivid that Ray had been able to trace down his own replacement as 'father image' (whether she would acknowledge that or not) from her brief account all these many years later.



*#21 The Phase Transition*

Monday morning early, May 8<sup>th</sup>.

He had his bags packed, zipped, and stacked by the door. Now he paced in the anteroom waiting for the finishing touches on Lesa's magnificence. 'Magnificence'? Had that term occurred to a cynical Ray Bonn as some sort of derision of Lesa Landau of whom he had become so fond? No, of course not. He had to honestly acknowledge just how beautiful she really was, with or without finishing touches. He let the rest go.

As he paced he noticed a stack of mail on the sideboard; he remembered Edna having said that she left it there yesterday. Quite a pile for out of towners, he thought and walked over to thumb through the envelopes.

Edna Robinson as his publisher's representative had for at least a couple weeks now seemed more like his own personal assistant. 'Personal trainer from hell' had more frequently come to mind in that regard, but not anymore. In addition to a presumptive role as agent in dealing with Major League baseball, Lesa had usurped many of those auxiliary responsibilities for the management of Ray Bonn that had formerly fallen exclusively to Edna. However, Edna still delivered the mail. No doubt Edna would one day fade into vague memories of a time in New York City when she had thanklessly made it all happen for Ray - whether he had wanted all of it to happen or not. Memories of Dr. Lesa Landau, on the other hand, would not fade - not *ever*.

Inspecting the mail idly, he noticed an envelope from Hiro Musaki. He opened it. The note was gracious and most complimentary. Ray expected Hiro to exhibit both those qualities in his written communications after having gotten to know him a little in person on Saturday. The note thanked Ray for signing a copy of his book. That it had been a great Yankee series was briefly noted also, and that that fact had in no small part been due to Ray Bonn whose pleasure it had been Hiro's to have met, etc. He hoped he would see Ray in the blue and white uniform again.

Ray recalled vividly Hiro demonstrating his swing for him before the game, including his pointing to the location on the bat where he desired contact with the ball. These were things worth remembering.

Beside that envelope, Edna had left other items that had come through the main desk here at the Sheltry Hotel for him and the other more luminous occupant of this suite, Lesa. No matter what he attempted to do, his thoughts always seemed to come around to her. There were several very officious looking envelopes with the Seattle Mariners letterhead and logo, a couple of them were for that other occupant, 'Dr. Lesa Landau, agent'. Another for Mr. Ray Bonn that he opened now included a letter from Mariners management and a much less formal and very cordial note from Mac Heller, Mariners team manager whom Ray had come to more fully appreciate on Saturday.

Yankee czar George Steinbrenner had sent cards to both he and Lesa. Ray admitted to himself that the one addressed to him was most gracious, more generous than Ray's conduct had deserved.

In addition to an elaborated 'thanks' from Mariners management, in the next envelope was the assurance that each of the grand-slammed baseballs, Ray had sent hurtling over various fences in Yankee Stadium, had been retrieved at some considerable cost and uniquely identified. He could pick them up at SAFECO Field to do with as he wished. They were his. Although management suggested that he should consider a likelihood that someday they might properly belong in Cooperstown, New York along with the bat that Hiro was graciously retiring for that purpose.

As is usually the case, stadium staff had assured those fans from whom the balls had been retrieved that Ray would no doubt sign another major league ball to be sent to each of the individuals who had grabbed souvenirs for him. "For him"? A letter and photo might be a good promotional item as well - they had enclosed a few photos that the Mariners were wanting to dub "official" of him in full swing. There was another of his fifty-year-old - well then, 49-year-old - tired, but determined expression prior to his final swing of the bat in the thirteenth inning. If for any reason he did not think either of these appropriate, he could help them select another from their huge archive.

Since they understood that Ray was from the Seattle area, would he please call the enclosed number at his convenience? Management would arrange his signing of the replacement balls and photographs and have the originals that he had so grandly slammed ready for him to pick up. They would be labeled "artistically" and marked so as to "authenticate" them. Management would be delighted to meet with him personally to congratulate him and to thank him personally for his outstanding achievement at Yankee Stadium on Saturday. Hopefully he would allow them to honor him before the home fans on a game day.

There was the sound of someone at the door. Lisa was still not ready. Edna and Dr. Sharon Aster had showed up together to wish Lesa well. Well... him too, he supposed. Sharon, whom he guessed he should now consider his personal physician, since she had attended to his problems the other night and he had no other physician, had evidently slept over with Edna after the movie. There was personal excitement in the air to be sure. But had Edna had a suite? Ray had never actually been to her rooms here at the Sheltry Hotel, but he had

guessed it would have been an austere single like the one he had had. Just *how well* had she and Sharon got on?

Edna inspected Lesa and Ray critically, as though it were still her natural role. Sharon gave Lesa the former roommate 'big sister' confirmation.

Ray stooped to stuff his mail into a flap of his larger bag and rezippered it. Seeing that Lesa might not notice hers, he handed her the remaining bundle of envelopes from the sideboard. She glanced at them casually. Continuing her chat with Sharon, she proceeded to slide the envelopes into a side compartment of her own suitcase.

Sidelining Edna for a moment then as Lesa and Sharon reaffirmed their commitments to keep in touch, Ray explained Lesa's and his plans for dispersing today rather than returning back here after their day in Boston. Telling her that he had tried to call last night but she had evidently been out, he notified her that he would be heading west from Boston. Lesa would be staying on with her father and his wife for a while.

Edna raised her eyebrows, without seeming to take any particular exception to what he said. It was not as though Edna would have presumed that the current arrangement would go on indefinitely. The scheduled book signing tour was over and the unscheduled commitments that had prolonged the trip were at an end as well. They had come to the Big Apple separately; they had conquered, pillaged, and plundered; they were done. It was time to disperse.

"Yes, okay." She would cancel their room reservations here then; that was no problem. She would also cancel Lesa's return trip airline reservations and make arrangements for his flight home from Boston if he would like that.

"Yes, please, of course. I would appreciate it, Edna."

"Just don't forget your commitment," she insisted. "That is vital."

Lesa had overheard Edna's instructions to Ray. "Oh, we won't, Edna. We both want desperately to publish that book. It's very important to us both, and very exciting."

Ray looked at Lesa with a continuation of that amazement she had so-repeatedly evoked in him with her uninhibited approach to life.

They all did their goodbyes in the privacy of the suite, since they knew there would be a rowdy, wall-to-wall throng downstairs. Each demonstrated some measure of sadness at their impending separation. Even Ray. They had all grown, in a very short time, to be great friends. What surprised Ray most was how sincerely he cared for Edna, for whom he had thought he could never feel such an attachment. He did now. He hugged her gratefully and she hugged back. He liked Sharon a lot too - that last addition to the group. And Lesa, well... yeah... Lesa. This was not yet a final goodbye.

The three women all agreed that there must be regular reunions. Ray didn't know whether, or to what extent, the intent was to include him. It didn't matter. He wasn't into reunions.

Lesa's words to Edna as they left the suite were, "Don't forget our book signing in Paris now, Edna."

One might think from that comment that she had decided to be down as co-author of the book after all, but he knew she had not actually reconsidered her decision. Collaboration without co-authorship made no sense. Whatever.

There were others in the hall when they came out of their suite dragging baggage. Someone on the hotel staff must have given out the suite number. In addition to a camera flash, there were cam recorders and a flurry of requests for signing his book, one of which Ray granted in a harried fluster.

Edna made a point of their party being in a hurry, and that there was insufficient room in the elevator for any but their own party and their bags. In the lobby it was instant pandemonium: Reporters, microphones, video cameras, requests for interviews, books thrust between arms and elbows for signatures, and some baseballs raised high.

"Mr. Bonn, Mr. Bonn! Please sign my baseball." He did one, just to see what it was like and noticed that it wasn't all that easy. He made one hell of a mess of his John Henry slipping all over the ball and laughing about it.

Meanwhile Edna was back in charge of the crowd, saying that Mr. Bonn and Dr. Landau just had a moment (wisely saying nothing about mode or destination of their travels) before departing. Edna had a way with crowds. She pushed a group of reporters back, except for one that she arbitrarily grabbed by the sleeve, choosing his microphone to accomplish what she saw as having to be done. She spoke into it, saying that Dr. Lesa Landau would have a few words first, which she did then in her most glamorous manner.

"The game on Saturday was truly a marvelous experience for me as I am sure it was for so many of you here. I want to thank George Steinbrenner for his role in setting up the event, and very personally for helping me in particular make it through that rather hectic day." She smiled to suggest that "hectic" had not been intended in any pejorative sense. She bowed out with, "But I'm sure its Ray Bonn from whom you all want to hear; it was he, after all, who did the impossible in Yankee Stadium last Saturday."

Ray swapped places with Lesa then stating that, "Nothing that happens can possibly be impossible," too much laughter with Lesa shaking her head, frowning, and rolling her eyes for the cameras as though she had just been bushwhacked. Ray might be an All-American hero now, but America was in love with her. "Remember that!" he said with emphasis. "It's just physics after all." More laughter, "Dr. Landau and I are physicists first and foremost, not million-dollar agents or major league baseball players, so we have to get back to our lives and work at what we do best. Thank you all and all of New York for your hospitality and for the tolerance that you have so graciously bestowed on us in letting us dabble as amateurs in the big time here at the Big Apple. And thanks to the Seattle Mariners management who allowed themselves to be conned into putting an old man into their lineup." And that was it.

Ray handed the microphone back, clearly intending to let it fall if the reporter did not grab it. He grabbed it.

Would Ray be signing a major league contract to play some more?

"Definitely not," he said over his shoulder still in full view of the video cameras as Edna cleared the way for their escape.

Were Lesa and Ray romantically involved in any way?

They both heard the question, and both appeared not to.

What would he do with the money?

Edna followed them to the limo and handed them each a small package as she kissed their cheeks in her very efficient manner.

Then Lesa and Ray were in the limo with their same familiar driver full of smiles. After explaining what he seemed obviously to have already known concerning their connections, Ray asked, "Do you have children?" Then in response to his having said that he had a son, Ray pulled one of the photos the Mariners had sent him, 'Ray Bonn in full swing', out of his inside coat pocket. "What's your son's name?" Ray asked and signed the photo for Roy.

*"Roy,*

*"Remember Roy Campanella, and if that doesn't work for you, there's always Roy Hobbs and Ray Bonn. It can happen.*

*"Ray Bonn."*

He appended the date and handed it to the driver saying, "Thanks for everything you've done for us."

The driver looked at it and smiled gratefully. Then he turned to very tentatively hand the photo back across the opened window between them. "Ms. Landau, could I please get you to sign it too?" he asked most politely.

"Sure. What's *your* name?" Lesa queried the face in the mirror as she rummaged through her handbag pulling out a photo of herself. She took Ray's pen that he had extended so that she could sign his photo after a "Good luck from me too." Then on her own photo she wrote,

*"Dear Ricky,*

*"Thank you for your marvelous kindnesses to us in so many ways on so many days, especially showing us the back entry to the Sheltry when I needed it. You receive my Medal of Honor for Helpfulness.*

*"Much love,*

*"Lesa."*

She handed it up to him. He smiled glancing down at it for a long while as he drove. Lesa smiled into his rear-view mirror as he tipped his cap.

Then they opened the packages Edna had put into their hands as she had kissed them: Each unwrapped a pair of classy celebrity sunglasses. They laughed at each other for how hilarious each thought the other looked in them. They would certainly help to obscure their appearances as icons that had become familiar to way too many already.

Ray noted that Edna had actually gotten glasses that matched his prescription. She must have called Helen. That was interesting.

Clowning, he asked Lesa whether she thought he looked like Ray Charles. She teased back, "Oh, Sir, I know I've seen you somewhere, could you please let me see you without the slacks just to make sure?"

Ricky had by then closed the window between them, to give them the privacy he knew they would want, so Ray did not object to the comment. Lesa took Ray's hand in her own very affectionately. He did not resist. She had finally gotten him used to not resisting such gestures. She seemed pleased with how he had lightened up since the game.

Ray thought that Lesa would be wondering what it would have been like now if Ray had not hit a home run on that first swing of his bat. He wondered too. She would have been in serious trouble she would be imagining. Would she have been? Would he have been vindictive? But as it was, he had relaxed back into a more usual apathy. She would wish they could have been so relaxed the entire week and a half they had been together. She would no-doubt think that he was committed to an on-going relationship collaborating on research into the physics of irreversibility and with her very personally. They rode with hands clasped all the way to airline 'Departures'.

Ray decided to say what he might not want to say in a heart-felt way when they were in public. "Lesa, I will miss you terribly." There was so much more he wanted to say, but it wasn't something that was even remotely possible for him, since in reality there is only one universe that, however obvious, was why it came out as a not very demonstrative blurt. She would go her way, and he was going his, even if she hadn't seemed to get it yet.

"Not for very long, you won't, Mr. Bambino," she said all smiles. "I'm yours for life, your terminal illness." She kissed him passionately on the cheek since he had not made his mouth available. She hesitated a moment then, watching him, she added, "Thanks for suppressing the 'Oh, God' again," she paused, wiping lipstick off his cheek. "You're getting better at that." She was in high spirits.

When they reached the airport entry, the sunglasses seemed to produce the desired obscurity for them. That is, except for the ticketing agent of course, who refrained from echoing their names. She pushed a blank piece of paper across the counter to Ray and said with a smile, "Would you please put your signature and any comment you'd like to make right here, Sir," in a very official sounding voice.

He glanced at the name on her lapel, wrote it and followed that with, "Thank you so much for your discretion!" That was followed in its turn by his usual signature and the date.

The agent smiled appreciatively as she slid the sheet over for Lesa to sign as well. That had a similar effect.

Their tickets were in order. Edna once more had excelled. Ray booked his bags on through to Seattle on the flight out of Boston later in the afternoon as Edna had arranged.

They were seated on the two-seat side of the aisle heading for Boston. Lesa rotated the armrest back between the seats so they could sit comfortably with their hands together unobserved.

Leaning over so close that he felt her lips on his ear, she whispered, "I'm very nervous Ray. I don't know these people I'm going to be staying with."

"You didn't know me very well when you started hanging out with me either," Ray teased, whispering back, her cheek so close it interfered with his whispering.

In response she concentrated on his reassurance, whispering back, "...and that turned out perfect. I guess I'll be all right then, won't I?"

Ray nodded as he leaned back in his seat and closed his eyes. They smiled at each other comfortably when he opened them again. She had pushed her seat back too. They were silent most of the rest of the way, feeling each other right next, memorizing aromas, and thinking their own very private thoughts.

The landing was a little bumpy, but not too bad. Lesa seemed oblivious to the bumping, Ray noticed. Her thoughts were obviously very much elsewhere.

Once down, Lesa waited for her bags by a carousel in the baggage claim area as Ray watched a short distance off. In short order she was reaching over for them, but an older man seemed to preempt her action. Ray watched alertly. The man grabbed the bags she had reached for and lifted them off the carousel, setting them beside her for her inspection. Suddenly she jumped up and actually squealed as she threw her arms around his neck.

As he watched, smiling, Ray realized that Fredrik - Lesa's biological father that Ray had tracked down during their otherwise rather unpleasant week at the Sheltry - had understandably not wanted to wait to meet Lesa. By meeting them here he would waste no more of the valuable time that could be spent with his new-found daughter. Still watching happily how the two of them had so immediately seemed to bond, Ray felt a nudge on his arm.

"And you must be that All American hero, Ray Bonn." He turned. It was a beautiful woman who spoke with a very pleasingly French accent.

"Cynthia, I presume?" Ray asked.

"Yes. Yes, I am Fredrik's wife."

"He has good genes and good taste."

"He does," she said, "and so does his daughter."

"Oh, thank you," Ray said a little embarrassed. "Well, it will certainly be nice for us not to have to worry maps of New England."

"We were disappointed that you'll be leaving us tonight though. We have plenty of room if you change your mind. It doesn't seem to me that you two will be very happy apart."

Suddenly Ray was embarrassed. "Oh, Cynthia, please pretend with me that I have just thought of myself as a father image until the real thing came along." He smiled vulnerably and she squeezed his arm with a knowing kindness.

Lesa had Fredrik, who now had her bags on one arm and her on the other. They ambled over to where Ray and Cynthia stood.

"This is Ray. Ray, this is my father - my *real* father!"

Fredrik tried to disentangle his arm from Lesa long enough to shake Ray's hand, but her hand was right there clutching both of them as though to hold them together until by some mystical power they fused into one being who would satisfy all her needs. Then Cynthia had both her hands surrounding the knot and they were all laughing joyously.

Cynthia leaned over the knot to kiss Lesa. Cynthia seemed in more than superficial ways to resemble Margaret Landau (Fredrik's Maggie, Lesa's, so long since deceased mother) and Lesa seemed to authenticate Cynthia as her father's wife. Ray didn't understand how women could communicate so wordlessly, but he knew it to be a fact.

Cynthia said, "We were thrilled to get to see you both one more time this morning on the news. They didn't seem to know where either of you were headed; we felt quite privileged. I see you are using celebrity glasses now. They seem to work."

Over the top of the group Fredrik towered. He was a full two or maybe three inches taller than Ray and so, as the foursome began strolling toward the car park, he chatted with Ray with (dare Ray think) the 'girls' chatting away happily underneath and between. Theirs was a strange configuration, these two older men with two young women. Lesa still clutched Fredrik's arm as she had Ray's on other occasions. Cynthia was next holding hands with Lesa with Ray's arm clutched under her other arm. Clearly Cynthia was not that many years older than Lesa, Ray thought. She too must have performed.

"You were out of athletics for thirty years?" Fredrik asked, seeming to be genuinely amazed.

Ray thought about when would have been the last time he had actually swung a bat before Saturday. "Yes, it was just about exactly thirty years, I guess."

"That was some performance, Ray. It was simply unbelievable, whether it was 'impossible'," he humorously emphasized, having heard Ray's rejection of impossibility this very morning, "or not." The smile in his eyes seemed to occupy his entire face.

"That was a bit pompous, wasn't it?" Ray admitted. "Sometimes I get very embarrassed when I think about what I've actually said. It's not quite so bad when you write, because you can alter it later, but with speech, it's out there no matter how badly one wants to reel it back in."

Fredrik chuckled. "Anyone in the performing arts, as against literary endeavors as you mentioned, knows the feeling of it being 'out there', as you say, on the loose."

Then changing tone, "Would you like to see the city or would you rather just go out to our cottage where Cynthia has some good things brewing?"

"Please ask Lesa," Ray said, "but the 'good things brewing' sound promising to me."



Lesa hopped up into the higher communication stream, "Ray's seen Boston, and everywhere else in the world, I dare say, and I went to school here. So yes, let's see what 'good things' are 'brewing'. Ray's still hungry."

"Oh, they're not that good," Cynthia demurred. "I didn't know what you'd like so I just got something easy going that we can eat or not as sort of a Thanksgiving. It just seemed like it might be appropriate to this locale and grand occasion even if it is the wrong time of year."

Then as Lesa was asking Fredrik something, Cynthia uncoupled from them to continue strolling with Ray at a slower pace, questioning him comfortably about his family and what Seattle was like. That had been one of the major cities in the world to which she had never traveled, she said.

Ray allowed as how he didn't know how "major" a metropolitan area it was but promoted it as certainly beautiful on a clear day. That the "clear day" is a bit of a rare phenomenon, he also jovially admitted. "On those rare occasions, when you can check out local volcanoes from the Space Needle, it is magnificent," he supposed. "I'm probably too used to its beauty to even know."

"I have to do that one day."

"Then we must," Ray said.

They were at the car then, a black Lexus, Ray noted. As though quite naturally, Lesa took her place in the front seat beside Fredrik. Cynthia and Ray sat in back smiling at each other somewhat coyly at the absorption exhibited by both Lesa and Fredrik. They obviously were enthralled with each other.

"We might as well ignore them," Cynthia said after a bit. Then, "You seem different than I thought you'd be from any of your TV appearances."

"Oh, God, wouldn't it be awful if I wasn't?" Ray asked sincerely. "It's awful enough as it is."

"Oh, no, I didn't mean that. However, you come across as a much..." She fumbled for words, not seeming to be able to get it going again.

Fredrik had reached over and removed Lesa's glasses smiling grandly at the result. Cynthia reached over then to remove Ray's as well, but Ray's hands were there first. Shyly he had them off to replace with his usual glasses that he took out of his jacket pocket.

After the interruption, Cynthia continued, "...a much more independent person, I think is the word... than you seem to be here in real life."

Lesa whipped her head around over the seat to clarify for Cynthia. "Ray was stubborn," she laughed, "but he's getting over it." Then she laughed an even louder, heartier laugh that probably explained more to each of these arty people than it did to Ray. He just looked puzzled.

"She loves you, Ray," Cynthia said, placing her hand on his arm.

"Yeah, I think she may have told me that herself on occasion."

Fredrik and Lesa were once again off chatting happily. Ray heard, "Yes, Maggie and I used to..." and then the route, and Cynthia's questionings and information took precedence for Ray, but he could not help observing how

totally enthralled Lesa was. That fact itself seemed to give meaning to his own life in a discomfoting sort a way.

It could be enjoyable spending time with these people, Ray knew, but his life had been cast in Concrete. His mental reference to the city where he had been born encapsulated in that obscure thought involved a pun, but only to the 'only child' twins he realized. One had been born less than a day after the other to different parents up in the hospital in that little town. Only one of those 'twins' was here to enjoy it - or moan in anguish as one does at such forced puns. The other 'twin', Helen and their mutual background had no real meaning to anyone here. This was a totally different family unit that had yet to establish all its own insider information. It had been a bad pun. It was barely fit for his own ephemeral introverted consumption.

Les'a's life on the other hand was just beginning to solidify. He still toyed with the obscure metaphorical connection. She would be content with these people, this family, a long while, he imagined. Would she take a more permanent leave from her post at the Advanced Studies Institute at Princeton University? He thought she might. Time for him to be *independent* too. Or *stubborn*, or whatever in hell it was that he was. He had to get back to his life of quiet desperation, if that's what it had actually been down that private lane where he and Helen lived. Was that what it had been down that quiet little road, instead of the serenity of which he had always proudly convinced himself his life had been comprised?

Cynthia had watched Ray as he meandered through his own private world, and then took him from it with, "What I meant to have said earlier was that you appeared 'strong willed' though, rather than 'independent'. Of course, you're independent." Cynthia smiled generously. "My English still isn't adequate. But in person you don't seem strong willed, or 'stubborn' at all, as Lesa calls it."

"You have beautiful English," Ray said. "We home-bred Americans (and particularly westerners) have lost the art of it. Yours is an absolutely charming accent."

"I think so too Cynthia," Lesa opined from the front seat without missing a beat in her ongoing conversation with Fredrik.

Cynthia looked at Ray and smiled with a shared awareness of Lesa's extraordinary abilities and bubbling happiness.

Upon arrival at Fredrik and Cynthia's home, it was obvious to Ray that the performing artists had indeed performed well on many occasions. It was a much more palatial layout than Ray had imagined anyone in Fredrik's art having acquired. Ray's successful engineer's home on the other side of the continent paled by comparison.

He wondered now whether Helen would be content with their home, and what to him had been an ideal lifestyle. Now that she would have more funds to deal with than she could ever have imagined before last Saturday, would she want to match the Mrs. Joneses of her own circle of friends.

"Penny for your thoughts," Cynthia said as they started up the long curving drive. "Isn't that how you say it in English?"

"Your place is beautiful," he said, "but I can't talk while the flavor lasts." He smiled, but it was a jaded smile, he knew.

"But it's the flavor I'd like you to share with me."

"Okay, Cynthia, I was just wondering, somewhat apprehensively, whether Helen would be wanting to move us up a few notches to something more like this, now that we can probably afford it."

"And you not wanting a McMansion, I take it."

He smiled his assent.

"She loves you Ray; she'll do whatever you want." It was Lesa butting in again without letting go of her and Fredrik's conversation.

"You are extremely different than my first impressions," Cynthia averred.

They were at the front steps now. Cynthia slid over to exit on Ray's side closest to the house, and since Fredrik was already around opening the front door for Lesa and giving her a hand, Ray offered his arm to Cynthia, which she graciously accepted. They entered a large high-ceilinged hallway with coat closets, Fredrik and Cynthia helping them take off their weightier garments.

Then Fredrik stepped back outside to get Lesa's bags from the trunk. Lesa bounded after him. They stood together by the car boot for a moment or so with Fredrik gesticulating happily. Then they began walking together across the large lawn with Fredrik pointing out particulars here and there.

Cynthia smiled understandingly at the preoccupied father-daughter combo and motioned for Ray to come on in. They walked through into a very spacious sitting room facing the back lawn with its trees, ponds and fountains. Cynthia offered him one of the overstuffed chairs into which he then sank comfortably.

A maid came in; it had been on some subtle command Ray assumed, and as she approached Cynthia with "Ma'am," she seemed to notice Ray out of the corner of her eye and then jerked to turn square at him. "Ray Bonn!" she blurted out.

"Yes, Bertha, this is Mr. Ray Bonn."

"Pleased to meet you," Ray said.

"Under no circumstance," Cynthia continued, "are you to inform anyone that Mr. Bonn or anyone else happens to be visiting here. Do you understand?"

"Oh, yes, Ma'am. I am sorry, Ma'am, and to you too, Sir... Mr. Bonn."

"Could you do with a scotch or something," Cynthia asked Ray.

"I do best following, I think. Will you be having anything?"

"A scotch, if you will," she said.

"That would be nice then."

Bertha exited for the niceties and Ray turned to survey the back yard where Lesa and Fredrik were just coming into view in the distance on the right following the points of interest in the yard.

"You make me wonder whether Barry Bonds and Babe Ruth might not have deserved considerably more respect and sympathy than they've gotten."

"Oh, I'm terribly sorry, Cynthia. I guess one might say I've been away a long time, and emotionally I don't know exactly where I'm at right now, where I've been, or what I'm going back to. But sympathy is definitely not in order. I'm afraid I'm just not even as good of company as I might be on other occasions."

"You don't happen to know when those occasions you refer to might have been do you? Like a week ago Thursday maybe."

"That's about it, I guess." Ray smiled at her empathetic approach. "It's been a whirlwind ride since then. Well... before then too."

"Fifty million dollars' worth of privacy ago?"

"Minus the tax and Lesa's commission, of course. I couldn't even have afforded the tax."

"What does Helen do when you're in a mood like this?" Cynthia toyed cheerily.

Ray paused. "Oh," he laughed, "She calls me 'Eeyore' sometimes."

"Eeyore, the donkey in Pooh?" Cynthia smiled with him as though it made a lot of sense to her.

"Yeah."

His scotch was being handed to him by big-eyed Bertha. He inhaled the fumes that seemed so right for the moment and began sipping.

"It seems like I'm not doing as well as Fredrik," Cynthia noted. Across the yard by one of the fountains Lesa had just jumped up to tackle Fredrik who had stumbled over onto the lawn with Lesa on top of him tickling him.

Ray looked at Cynthia and laughed, "They'd call it rape, if I did that."

"C'mon Eeyore, you've got to enter in and try to have a little more fun." She laughed a contagious laughter that cheered him up a bit.

"Were you into ballet too?" Ray asked. "A 'ballerina', I guess it is."

"No, concert pianist."

"Oh, I'll bet I would have known your name, if I had any class."

"No, not quite. Almost... once..."

There was a grand piano in the room. Ray had noticed it when they came in. "Would you mind awfully playing something for me?"

"Not at all," she said, "I love to play." She strolled over to the piano bench, did a few preliminaries, and then began playing an elaborated version of *I'm not Lesa*, singing along softly but in an almost operatic voice as she played, a voice that even Ray knew to be of extremely high quality.

"That was simply marvelous, Cynthia. I'll bet you don't know many of those kinds of country songs though, do you?"

"Oh yes, I do. I love some of those old songs. Do you have another favorite I can play for you?"

Lesla and Fredrik came busting into the room energetically then, with Lesa saying, "I have to hear that entire song again; I missed the first part."

"Okay," Cynthia said, "but I was doing a request for Ray first. What is it Ray?"

He seemed a little embarrassed and objected that they should hear what someone "with more sophisticated taste" might like.

"What is it Ray? You're wasting time," Lesa said as she sat down on the arm of his chair now, taking a sip of his scotch.

"Well, okay. Do you know that old Anne Murray song..."

"...*You Needed Me!*" It was Lesa bursting into song happily. I have always loved that song too, Ray."

"Is that it, Ray?" Cynthia asked, and to his nod, "Sure, I know it. Sing with me, Lesa."

And so Lesa sang with Cynthia at first, but Cynthia softened her voice to mute as Lesa poured out what she evidently perceived as Ray and her souls, seeming to sense for the first time, perhaps, that it was she and Ray that that song was all about. When she was done, there was more than just a respectful silence. It had been a truly beautiful performance, with regard to which Fredrik and Cynthia looked from one to the other in amazement and clapped. Self-conscious now, Lesa slid down off the arm of Ray's chair and into his lap, her arms around his neck emotionally.

Cynthia seemed to have a knack with awkward moments. She was over and sitting on the arm of the chair that Lesa had just abandoned. Touching Lesa's wet cheeks without avoiding contact with Ray's. "You two are a wonderful story," she said. "It is a real fairy tale that should be made into an opera."

"We could do it," Fredrik said cheerily. "I'd play me. I like my role."

Just then Bertha came in to indicate that dinner would be served. Ray had smelled roast turkey as though far off in the other end of the huge facility almost as though it were only a memory from his early childhood, when they had first come in. With Bertha's entry into the sitting room, the odors wafted in through the open door now.

"Good things were indeed brewing," Ray said lifting Lesa and setting her down to a standing position with his arm still around her waist. Cynthia was on the other side touching her here and there in a motherly fashion. Fredrik watched, happy about everything.

They went in to what Cynthia introduced as their true New England Thanksgiving occasion.

Fredrik skillfully carved the turkey at the table, placing large portions of light and dark meat on each plate and passing one first to Lesa, then Cynthia, Ray's with extra portions, and then to himself. Bertha had been watching from a window in the doorway. As soon as Fredrik had carved his portion, she and another maid, possibly the cook, began placing the various dishes around on the table. There were indeed *all the trimmings*, delicious trimmings.

For dessert there were several pies. Ray and Lesa both had mincemeat. "I haven't had it since my mother made it, and that was over twenty-five years ago now," Ray said.

Lesa indicated that although she had never had it, Ray wanting it was a good enough recommendation.

Well, Fredrik and Cynthia are getting a good look at the symptoms of his 'terminal disease', Ray thought, smiling as a result.

Having recovered from her emotional moment in the sitting room, Lesa was relaxed and obviously charmed at the layout of such a momentous family celebration on the occasion of her arrival. Her high spirits were all back, although, of course, they had never left her, it was just that the whole experience had seemed to make her just a little emotionally fragile.

After dinner they all walked in the 'garden' as Fredrik and Cynthia called their yard, which happened to have what Ray would have called 'gardens' within its extensive realm. Lesa and Fredrik were usually up ahead, but Lesa would occasionally run back to tell Ray some fact she had learned or to ask Cynthia some detail.

And then... and it seemed like no time at all, until Ray had to leave it all. Fredrik said, "Well, Ray, if you insist on leaving us, it looks like I better get you back to the airport."

"I'm going too," Lesa importuned.

Ray's startled impression was that Lesa was forcing her way to go with him to meet Helen. He was amused at himself then when Lesa continued.

"I'm not letting go of you one second sooner than I have to, Ray Bonn."

They all smiled at her impetuosity.

Cynthia said, "Well, I'm coming too then."

They all went back out the front door. Lesa locked onto Ray's arm, the way she had done it so many times since that first night. She opened the back door of the Lexus herself and piled in dragging Ray behind her, nearly bumping his head. Ray saw Cynthia barely subduing her laughter at how this contrasted to Lesa hopping right into the front seat uninvited on the way from the airport. All the way there Lesa was snuggled right up next to Ray and telling him little things to remember to tell Helen; it was important that Helen like her. She liked Helen, and Helen should like her. Remember that Ray.

She would get on the irreversibility research right away. She had everything she needed and she would be e-mailing him tonight. He must respond to every e-mail message he got from her. "We have to close the loop. That's important Ray. Remember that." Then she would kiss him just out of the blue, popping up to kiss his cheek or lips or nose. Ray saw Fredrik in his rear-view mirror, laughing. He could tell that Cynthia was as well.

Then they were at the airport. Lesa popped out right after Ray even though she had taken ample kisses before they stopped. Ray thanked Cynthia and Fredrik for the grand experience and, especially he added, for loving Lesa. Immediately it was obvious that celebrity glasses were in order. Ray put his back on, but not before signing a couple of *Aberrations of Relativity*, speedily yanked out of backpacks.

Fredrik asked Lesa if she had her cell phone with her. She did. She should call him when she wanted them to circle back by here to pick her up. The Sorensens drove off. They would be in the car park. Ray and Lesa went

through the lines together, took off their shoes together, and then sat down and waited together.

Lesa was fidgeting. Ray insisted she go on back so it wouldn't be inconvenient for Fredrik and Cynthia. He also suggested she try to be a little calmer around them. "They're not used to much commotion."

"Oh, I'll calm down Ray, I will. Let me be excited for a little while."

He would. He understood.

"Oh, God, Ray, I hate having to wear these damn glasses! How can I see your eyes, to see if you cry when I do, and kiss them."

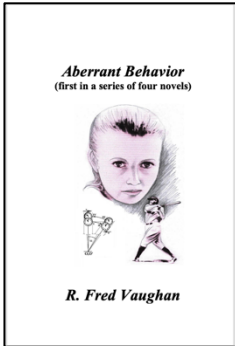
And then the final boarding call... he had to go... absolutely *had* to go... "Lesa, goodbye. I have to go." He broke away. Just before he disappeared down the tunnel into the plane, he said, "See you soon."

Oh, God. Why had he said that? He knew why, but he shouldn't have said it. It was a lie. She should, *strike another match and start anew. It's all over now... Baby Blue.*



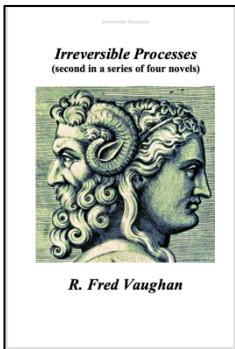


## *The four novels in this series*



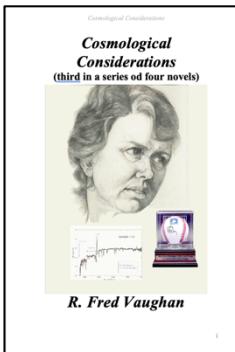
### *Aberrant Behavior*

This book describes a two-week period in New York City that shapes the destiny of three generations of the Bonn family. A book signing tour ends here; Ray meets Lesa, collaboration on a new book describing the origin of entropy is born, Ray is forced into going up to bat in Yankee Stadium as a gimmick, Lesa's biological father is found, and then Ray returns to a life down what he had always considered to be a serene little street in a hemlock forest in the northwest where he was born and raised.



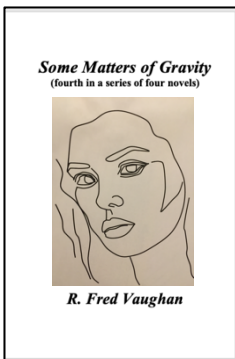
### *Irreversible Processes*

This book describes a stressful two-year period following Ray's return to his life with Helen and his family. The collaboration continues but in fits and starts, as a new fan favorite with the World Series on the line baseball will not go away for Ray, the collaboration meets with the ultimate success of a Nobel prize, but Helen becomes terminally ill succumbing to the disease in the end. After many difficult months Ray and Lesa marry and settle down at the home where Ray and Helen had lived.



### *Cosmological Considerations*

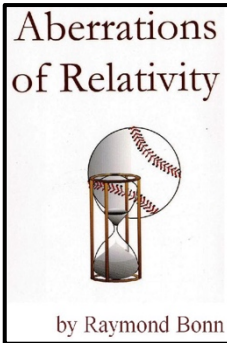
Despite their deep enduring love for each other, paradise is not without its problems. Lesa's domestication in a home like she had never had consumed all her energies as a mother and a supporter of liberal causes. The science that had forged their relationship was supplanted by the pleasures of family and raising an extraordinary son. Roger was so like his father. But in the layers beneath all that happiness Ray was frustrated by not having been included in family secrets and Lesa's lack of scientific enthusiasm that Ray had loved so much about Lesa.



### *Some Matters of Gravity*

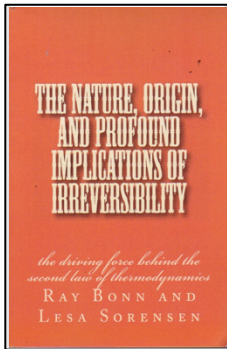
Ray and Lesa Bonn's ultimate demise and the beginnings of Roger Bonn's family is remembered by their dearest of friends Julie Davidson. Roger has retired early from major league baseball, which their son Tommy has just begun. But having never let go of his love of the physical sciences; Roger involves two extraordinary women in pursuing his intuition with regard to a new look into the nature of gravity, merging it with electric charge to explain the nature of the subatomic particles. Romance and tragedy alter Roger's life much as it had Ray's.

## *Nonfiction books referenced to this series*



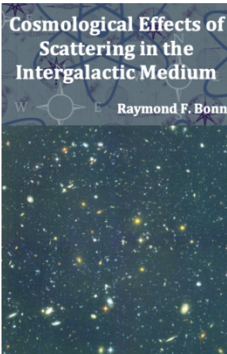
### ***Aberrations of Relativity***

This book is a composition of skeptical articles with regard to the dogma that has come to be included in Einstein's Special Theory of relativity. It provides an illustrated description of the theory to be understood by any reasonably intelligent individual. It suggests that aberration of light transmission is the central fact of coordinating relatively moving observers. Observations dispute the central premises of the possibility of aligning orthogonal frames of reference and that the same timed even is seen by in relative motion.



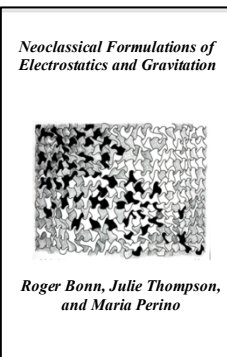
### ***The Nature, Origin and Profound Implications of Irreversibility***

This book demonstrates that the ultimate source of entropy is in the submicroscopic interactions mediated by photons of electromagnetic radiation. Every mediated interaction results in the reduction of energy difference between interactants. It is shown how this results in the stationary state of a closed thermodynamic system. A thorough treatment of the major thermodynamic discoveries is provided as well as analyses of other conjectures of possible origins of entropy.



### ***Cosmological Effects of Scattering In the Intergalactic Medium***

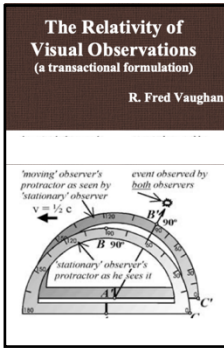
This book develops a more viable alternative to the standard cosmological model at explaining the multifarious effects of observations of the distant universe. It is forward scattering in a relativistic plasma that produces cosmological redshift, not recessional Doppler. The amount of redshift per unit distance is determined by the hydrostatic pressure of the medium through which light passes; this magnifies the effect through galaxy clusters and surrounding large spiral galaxies, thus accounting for what has been attributed to dark matter.



### ***Neoclassical Formulation of Electrostatics and Gravitation***

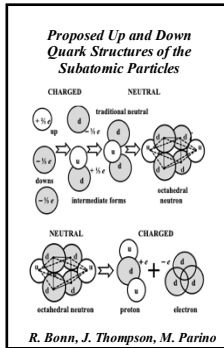
This book addresses similarities of electrostatics and gravity to identify the causal relationship between the two. Solution of the Poisson equation appropriate to both disciplines shows that 'point' particles and action-at-a-distance are relics of an inconsistent formulation. Charge (both electrostatic and gravitational) are constrained to a small region of space, not a point. Gravitational charge is derived from the electrostatic energy of a particle which plays out at the quark level. Together, these charges provide all the forces of nature.

## Other books pertinent to these topics



### *The Relativity of Visual Observations*

This book introduces a modification of Einstein's relativity theories to include the spacetime metric in the special as well as general theory. This accommodates misalignment of the coordinate frames of two relatively moving observers. The misalignment of coordinate frames affects the transmission of light between frames. The transverse field vectors (one from each frame on an interaction) results in a spiral transmission path producing Lorentz contraction and time dilation of the individual electromagnetic interaction, not the whole of the space time of the observers.



### *Proposed Up and Down Quark Structure of Subatomic particles*

This book elaborates the combined effects of electrostatic and gravitational charge of up and down quarks to effect the observed synthesis of subatomic particles without the need of gluons and a separate 'strong force' to enforce confinement. There is a continuous trend of lower energies in successive generations of particles. This involves a bipartite neutron structure through which the reduction in total energy proceeds and an electron that is comprised of three down quarks. (not yet available)

