

7. ALPHA CENTAURI

“You’re not telling me that you’re some kind of space alien or something.”

“I’m just saying that my life would make a lot more sense if I lived in the vicinity of Alpha Centauri.”

“What?”

“I did these calculations. I charted my body cycles. I tracked my activities over months. Over years. None of it followed the solar system pattern that we are familiar with. But it did match the occurrence at this remote position in space.”

“It was too far for you ever to reach in your lifetime.”

“In many lifetimes. There probably is no real connection. But if I lived in that place all my cycles would work out right. And my life would have clearer meaning.”

“Does that mean that the story of your life would be completely rewritten in your favor?”

“Maybe. I’m still not sure what it all means.”

“Whatever it means, it sounds incredible.”

“Indeed it does.”

“So how does this work exactly.”

“Deeds that are forbidden under the old coordinates would be permitted with a new mapping. Mindy thinks of me as this weirdo. I suppose that I am. But under a new mapping, she would be older. I would be younger. And things would make sense. She’s just my outer space lover who has been separated from me by the conventions of earth time.”

“She may like pop art, and you may like the Classics. But all that would be reconciled by a few shifts in space.”

“It means more than that. A whole different alignment of events.”

“And it is a direct relationship.”

“Not entirely. It’s the intersection of all these connections that create a new version of time. It helps to revise the story. Just as a slight change in earth time would alter the order of events.”

“How?”

“Imagine that I got off early from work. I could go to an art gallery or to the park.”

“And that would change things substantially.”

“It might. Multiply that possibility by hundred of other possibilities and you have some idea what I’m talking about.”

“You have to quit your attachment to Mindy. No amount of pseudo science is going to make her interested in you.”

“I’m not saying that it is. And I’ve hardly said anything about her to you.”

“There was that whole story of what happened to the school.”

“It didn’t happen to her. It happened to the daughter of a friend at work.”

“But you developed this scenario with Mindy. And it made her more vulnerable to your advances.”

“I was just wondering what might change her mind set.”

“What might get her to like you? She’s a child.”

“My idea about Alpha Centauri was not prompted by Mindy.”

“How old is Mindy? She’s not even eighteen. You’re meeting all kinds of mature women. But you can’t respond to any of them because you’re living on Alpha Centauri time. That sounds ridiculous.”

“But I can’t relate to them. Not down deep.”

“And you can relate to a seventeen year old.”

“She’s eighteen. And I can’t relate to her either. Not on this planet.”

“So you propose this ridiculous theory where she’s of age. That’s the kind of logic that criminals use all the time.”

“That’s the kind of logic that the government uses to keep us in line.”

“So Alpha Centauri is a revolutionary movement that helps you to escape the restrictions of economic tyranny.”

“That sounds good!”

“Seems like nonsense to me.”

“You haven’t seen all the calculations.”

“You’re still not giving Mindy the freedom that you demand for yourself. On this hypothetical planet, she may still not like you. Have you calculated that?”

“She is really not at the center of my calculations. That was just a side project. And in that perfect world, we would share compatibility.”

“She could be a morning person. You could be a night person.”

“Those affinities will align in a new world.”

“You are certain about that.”

“Extra certain.”

“But Mindy is Mindy for all sorts of accidental reasons. She may be driving in her car and hear a song on the radio.”

“She probably listens to her ipod.”

“Exactly. And her ipod is broken. Or she forgot it. And on that day she turns on the radio. College radio. And she hears this song. And it is the one song that sends her into ecstasy. And she starts to listen to all kinds of music just like that song. And the perfect alignment is disturbed by some other intersection of forces that subsides only on earth.”

“I’ve taken that into account.”

“To some degree. But you assume that you are trying to transform some core of self from one space to another. It may not work that way at all. The core might exist to keep the periphery in line. You take away the periphery and the center no longer holds.”

“That is part of living.”

“Living is part of living. And you are trying to take it away!”

“It’s really not like that.”

“How is it?”

“People look for more regular patterns.”

“Like the stars?”

“Like the days, the weeks, the months, the years. Plans for their lives. They coordinate their dreams with the cycles of the sun. Or the moon. Something that is in their proximity. And my proximity has been uprooted. I no longer exist on the earth. I am part of another solar

system.”

“You are utterly convinced of this.”

“This is a conclusion that I have developed from scientific evidence. I haven’t worked out completely what this means for my life.”

“It means that you want to return to your childhood. To a simpler time. And you can’t. Because even that return would be more complicated than you know.”

“I just want a chance to live my life as it was meant to be.”

“Is that how you built your calculations.”

“No, that is a personal interpretation. I just looked at the data. How my life cycles coordinated with the cycles of the solar system. And it didn’t make sense. There was no evident pattern. Then I ran the numbers for this point out in space, and it matched.”

“What if there are no people out there.”

“I’m not being asked to be transported back to my home planet.”

“People have thought about this kind of thing before. Crazy people.”

“But some people just feel so at home on the earth. I don’t. And now I understand why. I don’t know what to do with that knowledge.”

“And on that planet, Mindy’s cycles would correspond with yours.”

“I don’t know. But they might. I’m not thinking about that kind of thing that much.”

“What are you going to about your theory?”

“I could try to live my life differently.”

“Are you going to stop going to work? What are you going to change?”

“I haven’t worked that out. I don’t want to panic. It’s not as if I’ve found a meteor that is going to crash into my backyard.”

“It’s almost the same thing. You’ve discovered this hole in your experience. And you’ve found a way to patch it.”

“I’ve discovered a disruption. But that doesn’t mean that I can actually mend it.”

“You may never be with your Mindy.”

“Mindy makes us much sense as going to Alpha Centauri. Even if we could relate on another planet, there is really no way to transport both of us to this other place.”

“You could tell her about your idea.”

“She would really think that I’m some kind of weirdo.”

“Could your theory have any kind of therapeutic value?”

“How?”

“Restoring the psyche to its natural harmony.”

“That is no more than a metaphor. You might be able to work out the details. But who would do the restoration. The analyst. Then you have a new set of coordinates to consider. Your initial alignment would have been transformed.”

“This seems to be an impossible task.”

“It wasn’t meant to be a task. It was an observation about my experience. And I found a consistent pattern which put things in place.”

“That assumes that you can actually put them in place. Otherwise, it is a simple coincidence.”

“Not entirely. I have proved that my life can be described using a fairly defined pattern.

And that alone is a discovery that could alter how I live my life.”

“You’re back to being the man from Alpha Centauri.”

“Not at all. I only have to learn how to adapt my knowledge to my life on earth.”

“You could sleep during the day and go out at night.”

“My life isn’t out of phase on one plane. It is completely out of whack.”

“You’re just a little crazy.”

“I’m not walking around talking to ghosts. I’m not sitting in my basement trying to communicate with aliens. I’m not running into the street and screaming my testament. I’ve noticed something that helps make sense of my life. And I’m trying to figure out what to do with that information.”

“If you can’t convince me, how can you convince someone else?”

“I’m not trying to convince you. And you aren’t taking me seriously. You’re trying to infer all kinds of other conclusions based on what I’ve told you. The evidence doesn’t fall that way.”

“It’s as if you have these dirty thoughts. And you can’t get away with them on earth. So you devise this home planet that gives you the license to pursue your perversions.”

“There is nothing perverse about this.”

“No more than a science fiction writer who populates a planet with a bevy of beautiful women. Then he can act out all his fantasies without any constraint.”

“My data doesn’t sanction any kind of acting out. It is what it is.”

“But it exaggerates your sense of isolation. And it says that your answer is in the stars.”

“It just may be. You don’t know!”

“I know that you don’t need any other excuses. You’ve got to get out in the world. You have to start to live again.”

“I’m trying. This is the first step.”

“By revealing your alien nature.”

“There is nothing alien about this.”

“So you’re not monitoring the airwaves for messages.”

“That’s my next step. I’m going to see if there’s some consistency in communication on earth that reveal a connection to some other world.”

“See, I told you.”

“I’m joking with you.”

“But if there is a consistency in your habits that relates you to Alpha Centauri, couldn’t the same features be present in our language?”

“Maybe so. And there could be other people who have similar patterns in their lives. But all that is the subject matter of another study.”

“And you’re not going to get involved in that.”

“Not at this point.”

“What are you going to do now? Concentrate on the mating habits of teenagers.”

“I’m going to have a drink and not worry about it.”

“But are you having a drink on earth time or on Alpha Centauri time?”

“I’m having it on my time. I’ll figure out the rest later.”

“Your choice could determine how the stars will align for the rest of the night.”

"I will take that chance."

"You're living dangerously."

"There's always quite a deal of risk in trying to throw yourself that deep into space. But I'm willing to accept the consequences."

"You're going to be a space traveler."

"Yes, I will."

"And little Mindy is suited up and ready to fly."

"She is ready to go."

"Start our engines."

"Are you trying to tell me that your life didn't turn out like you planned it? Whose does?"

"Mindy, is that a rhetorical question? Or is it a question that you really want me to answer?"

"Go ahead: take a stab at the question."

"I had a plan. I wanted to get married. I followed it though. And here we are. It's just that things happened along the way that I had no control over."

"And what are you going to do about that now?"

"I don't think that our lives have spiraled out of control."

"You're still on track with your plans."

"I have a great job. You do too. We have a nice home. What more do you want?"

"I want sanity. I want a husband whose head isn't lost in the clouds."

"I'm not lost in the clouds."

"You're telling me that you are communicating with aliens. How is that not lost in the clouds?"

"I've spent all life working on a communication device that will work out in space. But it's not as if I've heard back from aliens on other planets."

"But you are still waiting."

"That isn't how it works."

"So you're wasting your time."

"That's not how it works either. We're just acting on known data and trying to project an answer based on the probabilities."

"More garbage. Garbage in garbage out."

"It's not as if I'm telling you that I believe in ghosts."

"But you are waiting for the aliens to rescue you from your doldrums."

"I don't need help with that."

"What is that supposed to mean?"

"That I believe in this marriage."

"Why? Because it fits the data. You have a prearranged idea in your mind, and you were able to get me to go along with it."

"I never forced you to do anything."

"You just observed the probabilities, and you figured out what you have to say to get me to go along with you. I could just feel this force rush over me, and there was nothing that I could do."

"That wasn't how it was supposed to work."

"But what if it did. Then all of this is a lie. We're not even meant to be together. You and I are just a lie."

"What I do at my work has nothing to do with my home life."

"How do I know? Next thing, you're going to confess to me that you're from another planet. And then what am I supposed to do."

"If I'm from another planet, you probably are from one too."

"This is no time for humor."

"I'm not trying to be funny. How do you think that I got together with you?"

"I've been trying to remember why. I feel as if my memory has been wiped clean. As if all my life, I've been with you. That we were meant to be together. What have you done to me?"

"Mindy, I did nothing. I just loved you."

"Are you just saying that because it's the right thing to be said?"

"Close your eyes and kiss me."

"Do you know the story about a man who loses his pickle?"

"That sounds pretty crazy."

"The image that you see of the world is something that you have created yourself."

"Is this an expression of the new idealism?"

"What do you mean?"

"Like Berkeley where you create the world in your mind."

"He thought that the differential calculus was bunk."

"I sort of thought the same thing when I was in math class."

"Explain this image that you have of the world!"

"It's what emerges from our instrumental confrontation with the world as it is."

"I don't understand."

"The tools that we use to see the world provide us an image of those tools and nothing more."

"What tools? How can that be?"

"It's like a camera. All that it reveals are the shadows that are reflected due to light's path. There is barely any connection to anything real. You know how photographs lie."

"So this is idealism."

"Not entirely. The camera records a view of the world. It captures all the nuance of our emotions. But it is all in terms of light and shadow. And we supply the belief to go along with what we see."

"So there are no real objects."

"This is not meant to disparage what we see. It just means that it takes the form of the tools that we use."

*"So the camera is like *our tool*."*

"I was simply using the camera to explain things. We are not limited to the camera. It is among our tools."

"What does all this mean?"

"I'm not making a big complicated statement. It's just that we develop a fascination for the tools that we use to see the world."

“Like television.”

“Television could be one such instrument.”

“It sounds as if you are trying to say so much more.”

“I am.”

“Well, explain yourself.”

“I’ve made these calculations about the cycles in my life. I should be living in another solar system deep in space.”

“Deep how?”

“Far away. Like Alpha Centauri.”

“You’re nuts.”

“I just feel the need to explain myself.”

“That’s no explanation. That just makes you crazy.”

“I am saying no to myself. It is an illness. Not a dialogue that I have with myself.”

“What is going on? Why are you so jumpy.”

“That weird guy has been following me again.”

“Are you sure that he is actually following you.”

“He seems to show up every time that I go somewhere.”

“Coincidence.”

“He is following me.”

“He could have a crush on you.”

“Ooh! He’s such a creeper!”

“You shouldn’t accuse someone unless you are radically sure.”

“Sure!”

“You are sure?”

“Just repeating what you said.”

“So are you sure?”

“I think so. He always stares at me.”

“Shyness.”

“Psycho!”

“Imagine other circumstances, and he could be your own Prince Charming.”

“I keep thinking of the circumstances where he is my executioner with a big ax.”

“There is a thin line between love and hate.”

“And I can do without both of them for the time being.”

“The older that you get, the more that you’ll come to understand that there’s something quite psychotic in every guy that you meet.”

“Where did you learn that?”

“My mom told me that.”

“I don’t think that I’m old enough to learn a lesson like that.”

“What’s wrong?”

“He is quite a creep. Way too old for me!”

“But he might care for you more than the boys our age.”

“He’ll start out massaging my neck, and he’ll end up putting his hands around my neck

and squeezing really hard.”

“You don’t know that he’s like that.”

“Have you looked at his hands recently?”

“His hands?”

“They are the hands of a killer.”

“You watch too much TV!”

“And you don’t watch enough. You need to learn how to really judge the modern man.”

“By his weapons?”

“By his devious ways.”

“Don’t you like boys your age?”

“Loads of them. I just don’t want them touching you.”

“Never.”

“Not unless I fee that magical tingle.”

“Imagine what it would be like if an alien came down to our planet. Sure, he might be able to learn the language. But could he ever understand something as simple as hysterical laughter.”

“What should I care about that?”

“It helps explain who we are.”

“And why you have crushes on girls who laugh hysterically.”

“That’s part of it. Why do we find certain things attractive? Pouting lips, fanciful round cheeks, and pensive eyes.”

“It’s biology.”

“It’s more like a language. Images, that might attract us at one point, repulse us at a later moment. All this helps explain what it means to live on the earth.”

“Things that can’t be learned.”

“Of course, they can be learned. But there is a long practice of accustoming the self. An alien is going to get freaked when he shows up in America.”

“So that could be our last defense against an alien invasion. Hysterical female laughter.”

“Perhaps.”

“It sounds like something that is more due to biology.”

“But there could be variations on that original laugh. And babies don’t laugh with that crazy verve. Part of that intensity is magnified by the social group.”

“So now we’re spending all our time dissecting the phenomenon of female hysterical laughter.”

“We could analyze male sports asshole aggressiveness, but this seems so much more attractive!”

“Oh, my God!”

“I concur! Let’s get down to brass tacks.”

“How do we pin laughter down with brass tacks?”

“By studying the variations. All the things that make it individual.”

“Your genetic code.”

“Your personal signature.”

“Expecting aliens to understand human language is like asking fruit flies to create

symphonies.

“So we’re creating violins for tiny beings.”

“Sounds like a philosophy project.”

“If the violins are too small to see, how do we know that they exist.”

“By the tones that they emit.”

“We’re creating a primal sympathy for a revised natural harmony!”

“Sound like noise pollution to me.”

“You’re not being hospitable to our alien visitor.”

“I really don’t like fruit flies.”

“Maybe he could appear in the form of a heavenly light cracker.”

“A mild wafer with a sharp cheddar.”

“I can swallow that!”

“That’s impossible.”

“You just want to talk about those delightful laughing girls.”

“They are our only hope in flagging down the aliens.”

“And if they fail.”

“We fail.”

“I had this very raunchy dream last night.”

“Did you confess it to your wife?”

“It’s not as if I sinned.”

“What happened?”

“This young girl, Mindy. I’ve told you about her.”

“You actually had a dream.”

“It was so weird. She was wearing white cotton underwear, just like I imagined. And she was pulling on her skirt so that I could see the panties hugging that little ass of hers. And I put my hands on her legs. She cooed. It was brutal.”

“You actually slipped those panties off.”

“It should have been illegal.”

“It is illegal.”

“I didn’t do anything wrong.”

“Try telling your wife.”

“She probably knows as much.”

“So you’re not going to say anything.”

“I’m not going to follow through. This is just a dream.”

“It felt so real. As if I was pissing my pants. It was purely naughty. Waking up inside of her. I kept pumping away. And she was sighing. I felt the universe break in two.”

“How did you break with it?”

“Like this turbulent force. I was carried along in the wave. There was nothing childlike in her performance.”

“Isn’t she some kind of dancer?”

“I felt as if I was getting carried up in this tidal wave. It was brilliant.”

“If only you could tell her what you felt.”

“And get thrown in jail.”

"But you said that it felt so real. Isn't that enough to communicate as much to her?"

"What am I going to say: you were the earthquake of my dreams?"

"That's a great beginning."

"You are the source of a world-wide cataclysm."

"Quite an exaggeration. But it just might impress."

"I feel as if I'm getting farther and farther away from my mission. I need to be more gentle with her."

"Tell her that she has lovely eyes."

"With their thick kohl outlines."

"She sounds like a little racoon."

"Part of her appeal."

"So what else happened in the dream."

"Just a mass of liquid. Like a waterfall."

"And you both were carried on by the flow!"

"I got so deep into her that I forgot myself completely."

"Something to share with my wife"

"Along with the hangman's noose that she has prepared for you."

I have been exiled in the place. Far from my home planet with no way to get back. I am trying to accommodate myself to this world. But it does not feel right for me.

I guess that I only have myself to blame. I have been sent her as part of a criminal settlement. I never admitted to being guilty. But this was the agreement that finalized. So now I am a prisoner of time.

"Your jokes aren't going to make any of this easier."

"I could have admitted to it all, and not have been sent to this place."

"Then you'd be in a prison cell. Would that really be any better?"

He is moving from the temporary to the permanent and doing his best to remain that way. He has a number of characteristics that make him the perfect representative of this time shift. All the details are described in his resume which is on his site.

"What do you think?"

"I really love it here. It is so stimulating. I never had these kinds of experiences before. I am so excited to finally be able to use my language skills."

"That is a blessing."

"There is just one thing that makes absolutely no sense to me at all. On occasionally, I hear girls engage in these fits of laughter."

"Hysterical laughter."

"Is that what you call it?"

"I've never seen men do the same thing. Although I do admit that I have seen men do some unusual things."

"You want me to explain hysterical laughter to you. It does have its charm."

"I find it absolutely annoying."

"You're kidding me."

"It is one thing that I absolutely detest about this place."

"It's not as if they are laughing at you."

“I understand that. I just can’t deal with the incredible measure of noise.”

“Noise. You don’t find it uplifting in any way.”

“You may be trying to tell me something with your explanation. But you are having little effect.”

“You might have to be a young girl to really understand.”

“That you do. But I really don’t want to waste my time.”

“There is nothing like that where you come from.”

“If someone acted like that where I’m from, they’d be locked away for sheer lunacy.”

“You mean that figuratively. The lunacy and all that.”

“Huh?”

“Lunacy—being affected by the moon.”

“No, I mean it quite literally.”

“You’re pulling my leg.”

“Of course, I am.”

“I wasn’t sure if you got into that kind of humor.”

“I quite understand humor like that. It’s just that I have no place for hysterical laughter. I don’t think that I really like young women all that much.”

“Young men?”

“They have their own idiosyncracies that I can save for another time.”

“You miss your home?”

“It’s not as if I really have a chance of going back.

“That is a rough one.”

“It is indeed.”

“So you will have to accommodate with our young people.”

“That I will. As much as I can stand.”