

LUCIA

Once you follow the evidence... people are remarkably predictable.

DARROW

Not me. I'm completely—

DARROW AND LUCIA

Spontaneous.

He looks at her, taken aback that she nailed his choice of words.

LUCIA

You're cute when you flail. I always liked this place.

DARROW

You've been here before?

LUCIA

Oh yes. I think guys on Bumble see "astrophysicist" and compulsively pick the bar where the drinks come in beakers and the waiters wear unnecessary lab coats.

DARROW

Unnecessary? They use centrifuges to mix fruit with spirits. Spinning at 1000 times the force of gravity for craft cocktail breakthroughs. It's on the website.

LUCIA

Did you write that for them?

Darrow decides not to respond, which is all the answer Lucia needs.

LUCIA

So what do you see as the purpose of your writing?

DARROW

Big question for the first date.

LUCIA

I enjoy poking the prime mover. He seems like he can handle it.

DARROW

I like your confidence. So... my purpose...

(beat)

I want to make words that change everything for the better.

LUCIA

So... great American novel? Hit screenplay? Verified Twitter account?

DARROW

Saturday Night Live. I made it past the second round of writing interviews.

LUCIA

Oh. You're supposed to be funny?

DARROW

Just ask the dozens of dates who have laughed at me.

LUCIA

So. You got me to swipe right. What's next, Mr. Saturday Night Live?

DARROW

What about you? Named any stars lately?

LUCIA

That's astronomers. We predict what's going to happen to the universe.

DARROW

Thought that was astrology.

LUCIA

No, *that* is bullshit. Prescientific nonsense for the gullible.

DARROW

Sounds like something a Capricorn would say.

LUCIA

Scorpio. But thanks for bringing up horoscopes. I was worried we'd miss the first date clichés.

DARROW

So you *do* want to hear my best astrophysicist pickup line.

LUCIA

Your what now? And yes I do.

He swirls his drink and thinks for a moment. She's enjoying this.

DARROW

A cheeseball would compare your beauty to dark matter. Because you're indescribable.

LUCIA

Yawn.

DARROW

A cruder man would boorishly invite you to experience some powerful thrust...

LUCIA

Was expecting a Big Bang joke, but I see what you did there.

DARROW

But I'm neither cheesy nor crude. Plus I like originality. So...

(beat)

Carl Sagan said we are like butterflies who flutter for a day and think it is forever. But if I shared your orbit for one night, we'd form a binary system that would radiate for lightyears.

LUCIA

“A binary system...”

(beat)

I'm calling us an Uber.

She gets out her phone. He is amazed that line actually worked.

LUCIA

So. Your place or mine?

DARROW

Wow. I...um...just thought...

LUCIA

Where did you want tonight to end up?

DARROW

I was just happy with how it was going.

She puts her phone down and takes his hand.

LUCIA

Darrow. *I* like how it's going. You keep up in conversation, have a hell of a way with words, and ... really stellar cheekbones. But I'm a post doc. Only relationship I have time for is my research.

DARROW

I'm not *proposing* or anything. I just...I'm not used to ...everything happening so easily.

LUCIA

You should revise your expectations.

Lucia's phone pings with a notification. She glances at the screen and freezes.

LUCIA

Mother bitch.

DARROW

Um...what?

LUCIA

Fuckfuckfuckfuckfuck...

DARROW

What's going on?

LUCIA

The kilogram just changed.

DARROW

Huh? Like the weight?

LUCIA

The unit of mass, yes. The academy of science voted to change it.

DARROW

...You had an alert for this on your phone?

LUCIA

I have to go.

DARROW

Hold on, why?

LUCIA

Because the mass of everything in the universe just changed.

She taps at her phone, preparing to leave.

DARROW

Um...can I call you?

LUCIA

Sure. Later. Sorry. Right now I have to deal with this.

She goes. Darrow watches her leave, then activates his phone's voice search.

DARROW

What the hell just happened to the kilogram?

SCENE 2

Darrow waits and Lucia enters

LUCIA

I'm getting deported.

She sinks into her chair. Darrow is still.

DARROW

What?

LUCIA

Ken's contact in government...didn't react the way we expected.

DARROW

I thought he was going to pull some strings?

LUCIA

He did. Just not in my favor. As an America Firster, he flagged my case for special attention. An immigration officer was waiting for me outside Ken's office.

DARROW

The hell? But... you have a job, you've got a hearing—

LUCIA

The hearing is canceled. Since I already missed my first one, I'm in violation of my visa... meaning I can be detained pending deportation.

DARROW

Detained?

LUCIA

It didn't come to that, thanks to Ken. After a lot of rather *unscientific* language, he convinced the officer I wasn't a flight risk.

DARROW

...So what happens now?

LUCIA

I leave. I told you.

DARROW

There are steps before that. Attorneys, appeals... we can fight this.

LUCIA

...I feel like this is already decided.

DARROW

No. I'm calling a lawyer, I'm going to get all my notes, you are—

LUCIA

I'm not going to win this, Darrow. I was one of thousands of cases in your government's system. Now they singled me out for special attention. I can tell when I'm not wanted.

DARROW

I want you here.

LUCIA

I know.

DARROW

(beat)

Do you... want to stay?

LUCIA

Did Arrokoth want to become a contact binary? Did the kilogram want to alter its mass? Some things are inevitable... *wanting* doesn't matter—

DARROW

—Do you want to stay?

LUCIA

You're not listening, I—

DARROW

You're not answering. I'm not asking you as a scientist. I'm not asking you as a professor. Forget all the calculations and the modeling and the inevitability of the universe. I just want to know...

He kneels.

DARROW

Lucia DeGaspari, do you want to stay?

LUCIA

...I can't.

DARROW

I'm not asking if it's possible. I'm...asking you to decide.

LUCIA

You are on one knee.

DARROW

I am.

LUCIA

That does not seem arbitrary.

DARROW

Observant as always. This is me, making up my mind.

(beat)

Do you want—

LUCIA

Emile offered me a job. In Montreal.

DARROW

...What?

LUCIA

I'd be tenure-track, fully funded, hire my own team...

DARROW

When did this happen?

LUCIA

When she told me she was leaving.

DARROW

And you agreed?

LUCIA

Put yourself in my place. You're on the cusp of a breakthrough that could revolutionize your field. You get an offer—a *real* job, not just a post-doc—that will give you everything you need to launch your career. What would you do?

DARROW

I'd compare that to everything I'd leave behind.

LUCIA

Oh, like a post-doc job where I don't talk to my colleagues? Like a country who thinks pizza is a vegetable, believes climate change is just Jesus cuddling us closer, and doesn't want me here because of where I was born? Leave all *that* behind?

DARROW

What about us? You want to leave that too?

LUCIA

(Pause)

I... didn't want to have my decision forced. But here we are.

DARROW

You can stay. I can help—

LUCIA

You *have* helped. More than you know. You gave me the words I needed. I mean, I still have to give my talk to McGill before they officially...

She stops herself, but it's too late.

DARROW

What talk?

(beat)

That presentation you were rehearsing...with all the poetry. That wasn't for immigration, was it?

LUCIA

...No. I meet with McGill's department tomorrow.

DARROW

You agreed to this...before your hearing got canceled.

LUCIA

Darrow—

DARROW

How long have you been planning to leave?

LUCIA

I wasn't *planning* to. I just... didn't know how the immigration hearing would go, so I had to be prepared to—

DARROW

Prepared to walk away. Leave me behind. Like this... never mattered at all.

LUCIA

I could never have told my story without you. My leaving...doesn't mean that didn't matter.

DARROW

Did it matter? I mean, in the scope of the entire universe, probably *not*, but—

LUCIA

Of course it did, we just... we had a good time, right?

DARROW

Oh yes, 5 out of 5. Would heartbreak again.

LUCIA

Look. This isn't what I wanted, Darrow...

DARROW

Then what *did* you want? Or are you just grateful you didn't have to choose?

LUCIA

I didn't choose to get *deported*. And agreeing to the talk didn't mean I was taking the Montreal job, but now it's the only—

DARROW

It's not the only way. We can fight this, we can...

LUCIA

What can *we* do, Darrow? We *worked* together. We're not in a relationship.

DARROW

Sorry *coworker*...I should have thought about that before I started *proposing*.

LUCIA

What did you think was going to happen when you got on one knee?

DARROW

I didn't *plan* this, I just—

LUCIA

You just *did* it. Like you do everything. Flick your hair back, crack a joke, and save the day with *straight male confidence*.

DARROW

What can I say? You've got me fucking *pegged!*

LUCIA

There's no need to shout...

DARROW

But you only ever saw me as a *fuckboy* anyway—

LUCIA

You...That's not what I...

DARROW

Oh, it sure as shit *is* what you said. You made up your mind when we first met, knew *exactly* how you'd break it off...

LUCIA

Darrow...please don't...

DARROW

Don't what?

LUCIA

Be cruel.

DARROW

...I didn't want to be. I...

(beat)

I'm sorry I didn't meet your standards, Dr. DeGaspari. I had to settle for your predictions.

LUCIA

...For what it's worth... I didn't think it would end like this.

DARROW

Glad I could give you one last surprise.