

The Big Bang

A Ravenous Romance™ Panamour™ Original Publication

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This book is a work of fiction, and any resemblance to persons living or dead is purely coincidental.

I took the paddle holding the electronic controls to rotate the great dome and position the telescope. Ours was not the oldest observatory in the country, and it wasn't the largest or most prestigious. But it was well respected: It was the observatory where the great Edwin Hubble, the astronomer the orbiting space telescope is named for, did his pioneering work on variable stars.

There was an odd clicking sound, as if the gears were hitting something. I climbed up to the catwalk circling the base of the dome and gave a quick inspection. There was nothing wrong I could see; just the clanking of old machinery. I climbed quickly down again and went on with getting everything set right. When the scope was positioned accurately I moved my eye to the eyepiece. There they were, shining bright and steady.

I was alone in the observatory, as usual. The night air was chillier than I expected. I pulled on an old sweater and went back to the telescope.

Nights for a working astronomer can be cold and lonely. It never occurs to most people, but observatories are not heated in the main, domed rooms where the telescopes are. Heat would cause the lenses to expand, making the images we see and photograph distorted; and warm air would create heat waves, causing further distortion. So we work in the cold, in the dark.

I always liked it that way. From my earliest memories, solitude amid the beauty of the universe gave me more comfort and solace than anything I knew.

The door opened. In the darkness I couldn't see who was there.

"How are your binary studies tonight?" a voice called: Dr. Colvin, the observatory director. He was a famous astronomer, and one of the architects of the Hubble Space Telescope. I heard his cane tap on the floor as he approached me.

“Good evening, Dr. Colvin.” He was in his 70s, half-crippled and mean. I was terrified of him.

“I’m just taking a shortcut to the other dome. Go right on with what you’re doing,” he said, hobbling past me. His cane tapped eerily in the night, like some kind of predatory insect. At the second door he paused. “Good night, then.”

“Good night, Dr. Colvin.”

His cane tapped. The door slammed. I moved my eye back to the eyepiece.

My special field of interest was double stars. I was never quite certain why, but for as long as I can remember the binary systems that dot the universe fascinated me. Two stars, flaming, bright, vibrant, circling each other in a slow majestic dance. They move too slowly for us to see their stately bolero, of course; but we know it happens. I always thought of them as lovers.

My favorite binary is Albireo. It is one of the most famous double stars in the sky, discovered centuries ago. The primary star, Albireo A, is a brilliant, vivid yellow. Its companion, Albireo B, is the deepest, richest blue. I was writing my umpteenth paper on their inexorable interactions. .

I watched them that night, as I had a thousand times before, and pretended that if I watched long and carefully enough I could see their lovers’ dance. Their colors through the telescope were as brilliant as ever.

Astronomy was a natural for me. I was always a loner, not to say a geek. Tall, skinny, forced to wear pop-bottle eyeglasses, “nerd” is the role I was born to play. Other kids always made fun of me. That continued right through college. If there was ever an outsider, it was me.

I took refuge among stars, planets and galaxies. I never told anyone that I found the thought of these astral bodies’ slow, stately dances irresistibly erotic. That would have been too weird, even for me.

Gazing at Albireo for the thousandth time, contemplating its nature and the erotic pull of its two halves, Dr. Walt Majera came in. He's another one who spent long, lonely nights at the observatory.

Walt could not have been less like me. He was a few years older, in his early 30s; medium height, thick blond hair, deep green eyes, indescribable good looks. And he had an easy manner that made him fit in with almost everybody he met. He was good at all the social games that are part and parcel of working in the sciences, charming board members and so on. I was hopeless at them. Thankfully, my inability to be cool never seemed to matter to him.

Walt's specialty was galaxies. He had made a lifelong study of colliding galaxies, of which there are quite a number. Again: not like me. I found comfort in the ultra-slow, stately dance of two stars. Walt studied violent collisions involving billions of stars.

"Jerry, hi." In the dim light of the observatory he smiled and waved. "How's it going tonight?"

"Oh, the usual." Walt's presence always turned me into a stammering fool.

"How's Albireo?"

"Same as always. That's why I love it—it's always there, always the same, always reliable."

He laughed. "Galaxies are even slower and steadier."

"I know it." We lapsed into an awkward silence.

"How's your life been outside work?" he asked kindly. "I never see you anywhere but here."

"Every night, I'm here." I looked away from him. "I don't guess I have much of a life outside this place. Just my apartment and my cat, Hoyle."

Walt groped for conversation. My social ineptitude made him feel awkward; I could tell. He shifted his weight. "Well, I just came up to get these photographic plates," he finally said. "These

new ones, from the Hubble. Something's up with NGC 1316. I think I've found a new supernova."

"Cool."

He took the plates, put a hand lightly on my shoulder, said goodnight, and left.

I had tried a hundred times or more to tell myself it was my love of the stars that meant so much to me. But I knew that seeing Walt every night—well, most nights—was a big reason I loved my work as much as I did. I wished it wasn't so chilly that night. Without my sweater, I might have felt his hand on my naked flesh.

* * * *

One of the more unpleasant chores in astronomy involves cleaning. Most people would never guess it, but the insides of the great telescopes have to be cleaned periodically—especially the older ones. Dust creeps in inexorably. It can cling to the inside of the objective lens, which is the big, main lens at the front of the instrument. When that happens, there is nothing for it but to crawl inside the scope, wriggle along its tube up to the lens, and clean it by hand.

Our main instrument, a 30-inch refractor, was made in 1917. The observatory itself was built a decade earlier than that. So from time to time one of us had to crawl inside the telescope and do the cleaning.

It was my turn to do it again. I showed up early one afternoon in sweats and sneakers, ready. Walt was there, also dressed down, to help.

On one side of the telescope, near its attachment to its pier, there's a manhole. Walt and I unscrewed the bolts that hold it on, and Walt lowered it carefully to the floor. Then it was my turn to go in.

Mountings for the great scopes are precision machinery. They are carefully balanced and precisely designed to allow for accurate tracking of stars and planets moving across the sky. I had to be careful not to damage the machinery or do anything that might disrupt the balance.

Head first, I slowly shimmied in. The tube was just wider than a man. Any claustrophobic person would go mad inside. The air inside was stale. It smelled of rancid machine oil. I looked up the tube at the great lens, my only source of light. Walt was supposed to go up and shine a spotlight in for me from the outside. Where is he? I wondered.

As if in answer, I felt a hand on my thigh. Then another, on my backside. Walt's hands. I was going in slowly, but not having any trouble. There was no reason for him to be touching me that way. And the way he did it—the position of his hands on my body—wouldn't have been much help crawling into the scope, anyway. I felt him caress my leg.

He laughed. "You're not wearing any underwear, are you?"

Not at all certain how to react, nervous as hell, I kept crawling.

Inside the tube, it took me nearly two hours to get all the cleaning done. From time to time I saw Walt, standing in front of the great lens, holding the spotlight and watching me with a smile on his face. The first time I saw him there, he waved. I smiled feebly and waved back.

What is happening? I wondered, panic-stricken. He seemed to be giving me more attention than the situation called for. We had been friendly enough, but we had never really... My mind wasn't really on getting the dust off the lens.

When I finished cleaning the inside of the lens, I shimmied back down the length of the tube to the manhole and came out. It wasn't comfortable. I had an erection, or at least a semi-erection, the whole time I was inside. Walt did that. He helped me out of the scope, putting his hand on

my butt again to steady me. When I finally managed to climb down, he was standing there, watching me and smiling the biggest smile I had ever seen on him.

“No underwear,” he said. “And a hard-on.”

I felt horribly awkward. Is he hitting on me?

“Here,” I said. “Help me get the cover back on.”

“Sure.”

Side by side, we lifted it into place and refastened the bolts. Walt stood very close to me—closer than seemed appropriate. At one point he dropped a bolt and bent down to pick it up; his backside rubbed against me. When he stood up, he had that same grin on his face.

It took us a few minutes to finish. There wasn’t much talk. I kept wishing I had the social skills that would have helped me deal with the situation.

When all the work was done, we stood a few feet apart, facing each other. Neither of us seemed to know what to say. Walt finally asked if I’d like to go out for a drink. “Or better yet, dinner. It’s getting on toward suppertime.”

“Walt, I—”

“Yes, I touched you, Jerry. I’ve been wanting to for a long time. Are you going to complain?”

I had always wanted him to do what he had done. I simply didn’t have the words to say it.

“Complain?” I asked. “Why would I complain?”

“Astronomy isn’t exactly a gay world. Even for scientists, most of us are pretty repressed.”

“I never knew you were...”

“Gay. Say it. You must have seen me staring at you from time to time.”

“At me? No! I’m so, so—”

“I’ve always been attracted to the nerdy type. It’s half the reason I went into astronomy. I’m sorry if I acted out of line. Should I ask you to excuse what I did?”

“No. Not at all.” There was a smear of grease on his cheek. Somehow I found the nerve to step close to him and rub it off. “To be honest, I’ve always wanted you to... I never knew you were... You’re half the reason I love working here.”

“Me?” The information seemed to catch him off guard.

“The first time I came here, for my interview, I saw you in the hall and thought... and thought...”

“Don’t be silly. Let’s go and eat, okay?”

* * * *

We headed to a little pizza joint not far from the observatory. The waiter showed us to a booth at the rear of the place, and Walt and I sat facing each other across the table. I still felt incredibly self-conscious. Walt ordered a pitcher of beer, and I downed two glasses almost at once.

Walt seemed amused by my awkwardness. “Why don’t you try and relax? I don’t bite, after all.” He grinned. “Unless you want me to.”

I stammered “I do,” and looked quickly away from him. “Where’s the waiter?”

Walt reached across the table and put his hand on top of mine. “What do I have to do to get you to unwind?”

Probably, er, I don’t know.”

“Look, this is no big deal. A few years ago, I was exactly where you are now.”

“I’m sorry, Walt. It’s just that I—I’ve never—nobody knows this about me.”

His fingers massaged my hand. It felt wonderful.

“If you don’t stop that, Walt, I’m going to come in my pants.”

He grinned. “Nerd. Save some for me.” How could he be so casual about this? I had spent my whole life hiding, and here he was being so open. It excited me to no end.

He turned serious and he lowered his voice. “So I’m the first one you’ve ever told? I’m flattered.”

“You knew. I know that you knew.”

“Let’s just say I had my hopes.”

Our pizza came. I was too nervous to talk much, so I sat and ate. When I was on my last slice, Walt asked me to join him back at his apartment.

I froze. I wanted to, more than anything in the world. But I had been trained too well. All I could say was, “N-no thanks.”

I saw disappointment in his eyes, but he tried again. “Come on. I just live a few blocks from here. We’ll both have to be back at work tonight. It’ll save you a longer trip.”

I hated myself, but I said the words anyway: “No. Really. Thanks a lot for the invite, but no thanks, Walt. Really.”

He hesitated. “You sure?”

“Y-yes, I’m sure.”

We went our separate ways. I felt awful. I sat in my living room staring at the TV, petting Hoyle, not even noticing what was on. For so long, I had wanted Walt. Wanted him to touch me. Hell, I wanted him to kiss me, and I knew it. I had seen the look on his face. He thought I was crazy. He would never try again. *Why should he?* I thought bitterly. *Why should he waste a time on a guy he knows is so uptight?*

But of course I was being too pessimistic. That night, it happened.

I was spending the night taking long-exposure photos of some binaries in the constellation Delphinus. The sky was clear, the air wasn't too cold, and everything was going well.

Walt came in. Even in the darkened observatory, where I could see only his faint outline, I knew it was him. He hesitated by the door. I assumed it was because the afternoon's events made him as self-conscious as they did me.

"Jerry," he said. "Nerd. How's it going?"

"All right, I guess." I groped for something to say. "Uh, how are you?"

"I'm just fine, if a bit frustrated. Have you seen any photographic plates around here that might belong to me?"

For some reason, this neutral topic of conversation made me tense. "Plates?" I responded. "No, I don't think so."

The timer beeped. My exposure was finished. I switched on a faint work light.

"I thought these were of NGC 1316." He held out a couple of photos. "But they're of ARP 271, another pair of galaxies altogether. I've been looking everywhere for the right ones."

"Oh." I felt like such an idiot. All I could think of to say to him was, "Oh." He doesn't know how lucky he is that I was too uptight for him. "If I see them, I'll let you know."

"Thanks." He smiled. "What are you working on?"

"Oh, just my usual binary studies."

He took a few steps toward me. "Listen, Jerry, about this afternoon."

"Oh, don't give it a thought. As far as I'm concerned, it never happened."

He stopped a yard in front of me. "But it did. And I meant it. I meant every word I said."

"I, I—"

"Shut up and let me kiss you."

“I—”

Before I knew what was happening, Walt had me in his arms, his lips pressed to mine. His tongue snaked into my mouth.

I pushed away impulsively. “Walt, not here. What if someone comes in? What if Colvin—”

“Will you relax, for Christ’s sake? If Colvin’s even in the building, he’s sound asleep at his desk or busy drinking his daily dose of vitriol. Besides, you can hear him coming a mile away.” He reached for me.

I backed away. “Someone else, then.”

“We’re the only ones working tonight.”

I froze. I realized I was doing exactly what I’d promised myself I wouldn’t.

Walt stood watching me. “I’m sorry, Nerd. I really—”

“Don’t be.” I moved close to him. “It’s just me being me. Lifelong habits die hard. Where were we?”

Walt took me in his arms again. “We were here. The hell with NGC 1316.”

“Mm.” I pressed my lips to his. I felt his tongue on them. When he pushed it into my mouth and touched mine with it, I melted.

“Walt,” I said between kisses, “I’ve wasted so much time reading Sky and Telescope.”

He kissed me again. “It was time well spent, Nerd, if it taught you to kiss like that.”

“I’ve never—I mean, not ever before—I mean, you’re the first...”

“You’re joking. You’re a natural, then. I can’t wait till we get to the more advanced stuff.”

He held me tighter and we kissed again. In the midst of it, I realized I was leaning against the control paddle. The dome above us was revolving, spinning at top speed. Watching it sometimes made me dizzy. Not that night. I glanced at it from the corner of my eye.

Reaching the controls to stop it would have meant breaking our embrace. I considered it for only the briefest moment. I had been waiting for this kiss my whole life. Who cared if the damn roof was spinning? Let it spin.

I felt Walt's hand slide down my chest, then down to my crotch. It took every bit of self-control I have not to come then and there. He groped and found my zipper and started to open it. But—

“Wait.” I pulled away from him. The dome stopped whirling. “Colvin's been on the prowl a lot this week.”

Walt was grinning. “So?”

“You know him, Walt. All you have to do is look at him to know how disagreeable he is.”

“So?”

“Stop saying that. God only knows what he'd do if he caught us like this.”

“He'd think I'm one lucky bastard.”

“Walt.”

“Oh, all right. But I've never known him to go walkies this late at night. It would throw off the timer on his pacemaker.” He tucked in his shirttails.

I laughed. “He needs a pacemaker. Seeing us would give him a heart attack.”

“Good.” Walt leaned forward to kiss me again. “Nobody likes him. It would be a service to humanity.”

“I'm serious, Walt. He would never approve. He's almost certainly a Republican.”

He sighed. “You had to say that word. There goes my hard on.”

“We could go down to my office.”

“Or mine. I have a bottle of rum in my desk.”

I smiled. "Rum never agrees with me."

"So much for compatibility."

"Come on."

He looked around. "I really ought to find those plates. I have a deadline for the article I'm working on."

"I'll help you look, then. Do you have any idea where they might be?"

"Over there, I think. I've been using the bottom drawer of that file cabinet where we keep the spectrograms."

"Let's look there, then. But we better find them quickly. I want more of what I just tasted."

He took a step toward the files. "I've never known it to fail."

"What are you talking about?"

"The nerdier, the sluttier. It's a law of nature, like gravity."

I slapped him playfully. We laughed and went to the file cabinet. Walt immediately got down on his knees and started rummaging through the drawers. "Damn. I've got NGC 1350A, 2207, 3153, 6745, everything but what I want."

"While you're on your knees..." I hesitated but decided to blurt out what was on my mind.

"...There are better kinds of connected pairs than galaxies." I moved my crotch close to his face.

I don't know where I found the nerve.

He laughed. "And you were the one worried about being caught." He unzipped my fly and took out my dick. An instant later it was in his warm mouth. I came a lot sooner than I wanted to; but was unable to hold back.

"God, I feel like the sky's still spinning above me," I panted.

Walt laughed and said I was pretty quick on the draw.

“I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be. Anything to save unnecessary labor.”

“I’ve been waiting for that so long, so many years. And to have it be with you...”

Walt fluttered his eyelashes and pretended to fan himself. “Why, Suh,” he drawled, “you sure know how to turn a lady’s hay-id!”

My spirits sank. “Please don’t talk like that, Walt. I want you as a man, not as, you know, Bette Davis or somebody.”

“Relax, will you? We are both men. And I’m guessing the neither one of us would have it any other way.”

For the umpteenth time, I felt a fool. “Sorry, Walt.”

It was his turn to give me a little slap. “And stop apologizing for yourself, will you?”

“I’m sorry. I mean,” I groped for words, “this is so odd. There can’t be many gay astronomers.”

“You’d be surprised.”

“Anyway, I want to, I want to...” Instead of finishing the sentence I dropped to my knees in front of him, got his cock out, and sucked. He smelled so sweet. His cum tasted so good. I wanted him in my mouth forever.

* * * *

We weren’t able to see each other the next day. Walt had some commitments he couldn’t break. But that night...

It was overcast. Normally that means no work can get done, at least with the telescope. But there are always papers to be written, photographic plates to be checked, and a dozen other routine chores. There are people in the field who love doing that kind of work; some astronomers

never even look through a telescope. But I'm a hands-on scientist, so the telescope is my first great love. I always disliked going to the observatory on cloudy nights.

That night couldn't have been more different. Walt would be there. I wanted more of him: more of his hands, arms and lips. More of his cum. I wore my best casual clothes and made sure they were clean and neat.

But he wasn't there. Not under the dome, not in his office, not in any of the data processing labs. I looked for him with mounting disappointment. *If he couldn't be here*, I wondered with sinking heart, *why hadn't he said something?* I went to Colvin's office and asked Patrice, the secretary, about it. In all the time I had worked at the observatory, she had always seemed to disapprove of me. She was about to leave when I caught her. It was lucky for me she had worked late.

"Dr. Majer?" she asked. "No, no one's heard from him."

"He isn't sick, then?"

She shook her head. "Not that anyone knows. I have to run now. My last bus leaves in ten minutes."

"Is Dr. Colvin in tonight?"

"Of course." She grabbed her purse and headed for the door. I said goodnight to her and toyed briefly with the idea of asking Colvin if he had heard from Walt. But it was always best to leave the old man alone. His universal disapproval made Patrice seem warm and cordial.

Suddenly the door to his office opened. We stared at each other.

"What are you doing here?" Colvin could not have sounded more disapproving if he'd known about Walt and me.

I lied smoothly; I'd had years of practice. "Just getting some office supplies."

“Oh.” He glared. “Patrice!”

She was gone. The old man hobbled after her, shouting her name down the hall. She had too much sense to admit she’d heard him. I quickly grabbed a few pads of paper and headed back to my office.

My monitor stared at me blankly. I should have been working on my paper, but all I could think about was Walt. Where is he? I worried. Why didn’t he tell me he’d be late?

The office door opened. Walt stood there, grinning sheepishly. His clothes were filthy. There was a smear of grease on his forehead.

“How awful do I look?” He asked.

“Awful? You look terrific. Frightfully butch.” He laughed at my joke. “Where have you been?”

“My car broke down. And my cell phone died. I had to wait almost three hours for Triple-A to get to me.”

“You’re lucky I wasn’t with you,” I said. “I’m useless at fixing cars. I can’t even change a tire.”

“That’s okay. The mechanic they sent out had a very nice cam shaft.”

For the briefest instant I thought he was serious; then I realized. “Seriously, Walt, I didn’t know what to think.”

“Think that I want you. What else matters?”

“Well, there are a few binary stars that have come to my notice.”

“Stop it. I’m going to my office to get cleaned up. Are you using the scope tonight?”

I shook my head. “Clouds.”

“Good. We can send out for sandwiches, and I can lecture you on what happens when two galaxies meet.”

“I already know. They shine more brilliantly.”

“And you can teach me about the interactions of two stars in a binary system.”

I leaned back in my chair. “I never thought anyone could make astronomy sound suggestive.”

He bowed. “At your service, sir.”

* * * *

I sat at my desk and worked on the paper for a while. Walt would be coming back soon enough, and it was bad enough that we were—what would you say?—conducting our affair on the observatory’s time. I made a *mental* note: *No more of this on the foundation’s time*. We had our lives waiting.

That last thought sent a chill through me. Walt had been open about himself for a long time, it seemed. *What if I’m just another fling for him?* I wanted love. If this was not that...

Work was useless. I couldn’t concentrate. There was a source I had to check; an old paper on eclipsing binaries by Edwin Hubble. It wasn’t all that important a footnote, but these things matter. I hoped a quick trip to the observatory library would relax me.

The library was in the basement of the building. I went down the old metal stairs, listening to my feet clatter. At least there was not much chance I’d run into Colvin down there.

The lights were on. I looked in the door. It was Walt. He was sitting at one of the tables, working his way through a stack of old monographs.

“You’re here.”

He smiled. “I decided that I ought to get at least a bit of work done before we...”

“I had the same thought.”

“Conscientious, that’s us. I just heard the weather forecast on the radio. They’re saying this cloud cover will be breaking up in the next couple of hours.”

“Good. I can get even more done.” I looked around to make sure we were alone, bent down and kissed him, then headed back to the stacks where the Hubble paper should be.

The stacks were a mess. Nobody had bothered to replace books in their correct spots. Scientists. When I finally found what I was looking for—three shelves away from where it belonged—Walt had finished his research and left.

Later on, needing a bit of a stretch, I decided to stroll over to his office. He wasn’t there. *Maybe he’s up in the dome...*

One of the secretaries was in the hall, carrying a huge stack of old issues of *Sky and Telescope*. It was odd; they usually didn’t work so late. She smiled at me. “Can you give me a hand with these?”

“Sure, Amy.”

“I think I bit off more than I could chew.”

I laughed. “No problem.”

We got them to her desk, and I helped her arrange them in order. She thanked me and asked, “Were you looking for Dr, Colvin, too?”

“Too?”

“Everyone’s been looking for him. Nobody knows where he is.” She straightened the stack of magazines.

“Maybe he left.”

Amy shook her head, then shrugged. “His car’s still in the lot. Oh well, he’ll turn up.”

I lowered my voice. “Try looking wherever cranky old scientists go to hide.” Then I went on my way up to the dome.

It was so odd. Two other secretaries, an intern and an associate astronomer, all passed me, looking for Dr. Colvin. Normally it was considered a blessing when he wasn’t around. His annual vacation was a vacation for all of us. But this wasn’t at all like him.

I reached the dome. And, as I thought he might be, Walt was there in the dark. He looked up at me, switched on a tiny, dim work light, and smiled. We stood in a small circle of dim light, but it was enough. Above us, the vast emptiness of the dome was pitch black except for the slit for the scope to see out. Starlight filtered in.

“I thought you might end up here, Nerd.”

“You’re lucky it’s me and not Colvin. Nobody seems to know where he is, and everyone’s in a dither about it.”

He shrugged. “Maybe they just haven’t looked in the right place.”

“Obviously. Kiss me.”

He got to his feet and crossed to me. “Not so very long ago, you’d have looked around like a paranoid before you said that. And then you’d only have whispered it.”

“I said kiss me, damn it.”

He did. And his kisses were as warm and sweet as I remembered. “Now I want to shout it, Walt.”

He reached up and unbuttoned my shirt. “Mm. Chest hair. Sexy.”

“I thought you—I thought we were supposed to prefer smooth guys.”

Walt laughed. “Conformist.” He leaned down and nibbled my chest hair.

Aroused, I tore my shirt off. “Now my nipples.”

He obliged, chewing them and tonguing them like a hungry pit bull. I groaned with pleasure.

“Walt, that’s fantastic. Let me try.”

He was wearing a polo shirt. He pulled it over his head, and I immediately went to work on his nipples, first licking, then nibbling. When I heard him groan softly I knew I was doing something right.

I reached down for his belt buckle. He let his jeans fall to the floor. I dropped to my knees. Walt wore black bikini briefs; they smelled of him. I caressed them with my tongue, savoring the smell and texture of the combed cotton. Then I slipped them down and began sucking. His skin was warm and smooth.

“Ooh, yeah,” he moaned. “Now deep throat it.”

I tried my very best to take as much of him as I could. But he was too big. I looked up. “Sorry.”

“It’s all right, Jerry. Practice makes perfect.”

The words excited me even more. “Will I be getting a lot of practice?”

“If I have anything to say about it, you will. My turn.”

I let him undress me. He used his mouth on me. Everywhere. He was able to take more than I could. It made me feel self-conscious.

He stood up and kissed me again. “Now,” he whispered. “Turn around.”

I did, a bit nervously. I had always heard it hurt, at least the first few times. But I felt Walt got down on his knees again. Then I felt his tongue rimming me. It was the most wonderful thing I’d ever felt. He went deeper and deeper, and I could feel myself opening up for him.

He stood. We were both naked except for sneakers and socks. He put his arms around me and kissed my throat.

“Now,” he said in low, sweet voice. “Are you ready?”

If it was going to feel anything like what he’d already done... I murmured, “Mm hm.”

He went in. Slowly, gently at first. It took me a moment to get used to it. For the briefest moment I wasn’t sure I liked it. Then...

He filled me up. As he slid in and out I felt pleasure like nothing I could have imagined. He reached around and began playing with my cock as he fucked me. I became rock hard in an instant.

“My stars!” The voice came from somewhere in the darkness above us. I was in such ecstasy I assumed I must be hallucinating.

Walt stopped and pulled out of me. “Who’s there?” he called.

Again the voice came. “Just as I suspected,” Dr. Colvin cried from the catwalk above us.

“The two of you have been acting so peculiar these last few days.”

“Quick!” I whispered to Walt. “Get dressed!”

Walt didn’t move. “Don’t worry about him. Let’s finish.” I felt his lips on my throat again.

I pulled away. “Not with him watching.”

“Think about it, Nerd. You might find it exciting.”

“Walt, will you listen to me?”

He took a step out of the circle of light and reached for me.

“I said no! What’s wrong with you?”

He stroked his body and whispered, “Let’s give him a show.”

Suddenly I relaxed. *What do we have to lose?* Colvin would see that we were fired regardless.

We kissed again before returning to our sucking and rimming. I bent over and spread my legs

Walt went in slowly. He started to pull out, then went in again, deeper than before. The feel of him in me was thrilling. I gasped for breath, having all but forgotten Dr. Colvin was up there in the dark, watching.

“Walt,” I whispered, “I love you.”

His voice came to me softly. “I love you too, Jerry. I feel like I always have.”

He fucked me harder and harder, deeper and deeper, all the while reaching around to play with my cock.

Colvin’s voice came from the darkness above us, a distant whisper. “Yes! Yes!” He urged. I couldn’t think.

I came, followed a moment later by Walt. We moaned together. And kissed. And above us on the catwalk, Colvin moaned too. “Ohhh!”

Walt pulled out of me and stepped into the circle of light, his cock still hard. He looked up at the spot where Colvin’s voice had come from. “There! How do you like that?” He took my hand and pulled me after him, and we kissed again.

I heard Colvin’s cane tapping, then his footsteps as he climbed down the ladder from the dome. I looked around for my clothes, but they were scattered across the floor. Colvin joined us in the light.

“Get dressed, both of you. That is enough.”

We got our clothes and started climbing back into them. Colvin stood and watched us.

“Boxers,” he said with a faint note of disapproval. “In my day, it was jockey shorts. Finish dressing and meet me in my office in ten minutes, both of you.” He turned and in a moment was gone.

I looked at Walt. “What on earth was that? Why should he care about our underwear?”

Walt buttoned his shirt. "Maybe he has a fetish."

"Be serious, Walt."

"I am. He pretty clearly got off watching us. Voyeurism, underwear, and who knows what else."

I pulled up my socks. "This is...that wasn't..."

"Hm?"

"Well, that wasn't the way I'd have expected him to act, that's all. Do you have any contacts anywhere that might get us new jobs?"

"A few. Do you?"

"One or two. We'll have to find a place where they need two people. We're connected now, like binary stars."

"Or colliding galaxies. Come on. We better get up to his office."

The door was open. We walked right in. Colvin was seated, looking like a stern schoolteacher. His face was pure granite; not the least trace of anything human. I knew we had been out of line, but I had had some faint hope Colvin might go easy on us.

"Sit down, gentlemen."

We sat, side by side, facing him directly. Neither of us said a word.

"I hope you understand," he said, twiddling his fingers, "that what you did earlier tonight was quite unacceptable."

"Yes, sir." Walt spoke; I was too nervous. I wanted to say something about him jerking off as he watched us, but I knew it wouldn't have helped.

"I would be quite within my rights, and quite faithful to my duty to the foundation, if I were to dismiss you both immediately."

I relaxed a little.

He fixed his gaze squarely on me. “I am especially disappointed in you, Jerome.”

“Sorry, Sir.” My voice wasn’t more than a whisper.

“However...” He leaned forward and smiled. “However,” he repeated, “the incident is not entirely without precedent.”

I glanced at Walt from the corner of my eye, and he was as bewildered as I was.

“Has either of you,” Colvin asked, leaning back in his chair, “ever read a good biography of Isaac Newton?”

I shook my head. Walt muttered “No, sir.”

“You are not aware, then, that Newton spent his final years on the faculty at Cambridge, attempting to seduce male students?”

Stunned, I said, “Newton was—was—?”

“It would appear so, yes.”

Walt spoke up. “What does that have to do with us?”

“You have always been such an impatient man, Dr. Majer. That ill becomes someone of our profession. We must think in millennia, not seconds.”

“But—”

“Patience, both of you.”

This was growing unbearable. I wanted it to end. But Colvin was not about to be rushed.

“I first came across the information about Newton when I was an undergraduate. And I filed it away, as intelligent people often do with facts that are not immediately useful.”

I found my voice, and my nerve. “Where exactly is this leading, Doctor Colvin?”

He smiled. “Patience, remember?”

“Sorry, Sir.”

There was a carafe of water on his desk. He poured a glass for himself, then offered to pour for us. We both shook our heads.

He downed his water in one gulp, set down the glass, and stared at us again. “I remembered it when I was on my first job, working as an assistant to the great Edwin Hubble. I helped him with his research on variable stars.”

Walt reached over and took my hand briefly, squeezed it, and let it go again. Colvin stared up at the ceiling, lost in his reminiscences.

“Hubble was a brilliant man. Eccentric, but I was devoted to him. Then one night I was at the eyepiece of our telescope, studying some Cepheid variables. I felt someone move behind me. When I turned to look, it was Hubble. He put a hand on my shoulder. ‘You are a beautiful young man,’ he whispered to me. And I was, back then. You would never think it to look at me now, but then...”

He smiled, an old man lost in his memories.

“I was nervous, you understand. Having so great a man say a thing like that to me... Having my boss say it...” He poured himself more water. “Before I quite realized what was happening, we were kissing. Then making love—right there in the observatory. So you see,” he put on a wider smile, “I understand perfectly what possessed the two of you tonight. I have been there myself. I have never told anyone this before. I hope I can count on you both to be discreet.”

We muttered, “Of course, Sir,” in unison.

“But we must have no more of this canoodling here at the observatory. Find yourselves a secluded place in the park, the back seat of a car, or better yet, a good soft bed.”

“Yes, Sir.”

“Now get out of here, both of you. Get back to your offices and get back to work.”

“Yes, Sir.”

“And no more nonsense.”

“Yes, Sir.”

We stood and walked from Colvin’s office without another word. In the hallway outside, we paused and looked at each other. We laughed self-consciously.

“They’ve been telling us for years that we are everywhere,” Walt said with a grin. “I guess that’s truer than I thought—even among the stars.”

“I never knew you were such a romantic, Walt.” I giggled. “Can you imagine what Patrice would think if she knew her beloved boss was a...a...”

“Sodomite?”

We chuckled. Walt put his hand on my shoulder and we walked back to our offices. I sat down at my desk and tried to concentrate on my writing, but the night had been too eventful.

Walt called me just before dawn.

“Colvin just left,” he said. “Meet me up in the dome.”

“But Walt, we promised him—”

“Meet me.” He hung up.

I went up to the dome. Early morning light—what the novelists call purple dawn—shone in through the slit in the dome. The place was freezing. I got there just before Walt.

We kissed.

“Has it occurred to you that Colvin got off watching us?” Walt asked.

I nodded sheepishly. “We probably gave him the biggest thrill he’s had in decades.”

Walt took a step toward me and put his arms around me.

“Don’t, Walt. We promised him we wouldn’t.”

“So?”

“We got away with this once. We were lucky. Let’s not push it.”

“Be serious, Nerd.”

“But Walt—”

He grabbed me and kissed me. “I’ve wanted you for as long as you’ve worked here.”

I kissed back. “Me too. But—”

“Shut up and get undressed.”

“Walt, for God’s sake! It’s freezing in here.”

He kissed me again. And again. I was lost. It was too wonderful. He reached down and began unbuttoning my shirt. I put my hand on top of his. “We shouldn’t.”

Walt looked into my eyes.

We could not have been more alone. The sky was lightening quickly. I could hear the sounds of birds, cheerily chirping their morning songs. The day staff would be arriving soon. Out of the corner of my eye I saw Venus shining brilliantly. Venus: goddess of love.

I reached down for Walt’s cock. “The hell with Colvin,” I whispered with a grin. “The hell with the foundation.” I kissed him hard. “Let’s fuck.”