

**THE COSMIC TELE-ASTRAL BEAM  
CATCHER**

**By Jerold London**

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The Illumination of a Dull Star – PublicDomainPicture.net

## THE COSMIC TELE-ASTRAL BEAM CATCHER

TIME AND PLACE

2030s (or so). An observatory in California.

## CHARACTERS

DR. ZO MARIE CURIE, female.

DR. ALBERTA EINSTEIN, female.

PROFESSOR VIKTOR WOOLF, male.

A Voice, over the radio.

Voices, from Curie's cellphone speaker.

... in the dialogue indicates a thoughtful break.

**Center stage:** CURIE, EINSTEIN, and WOOLF are busily preparing the Catcher (which an outside observer might mistake for a giant searchlight, across the observatory room from an equally large opening in the outside wall, covered by what could be a bank vault door). A radio, on a table in the room, is broadcasting the back-story, while a light alongside the "bank vault door" shines red.

### **Voice from the radio**

Not all that long ago it was calculated, by Stephen Hawking,  
that nothing can possibly escape from a black hole.

Nothing. The gravitational pull is so strong.

Not light. Not time. Not even a shank of time.

Which makes a black hole a form of intergalactic, velvet blackout curtain.

So, where does this strange light come from at night?

Astronomers worldwide are scratching their collective brains.

There's a light, where it's not supposed to be, from the heart of our galaxy.

Through the purest darkness of the deepest night, there's a light.

Over at the shank-in-time place. There's a light, burning in the void of space.

And doomsday enthusiasts are electrified.

Predicting, as they have for ages, that at last the world is coming to an end.

Between climate change, construction of the longest border walls in history,

and resuscitating cities devastated by the recent Tidal Wave Pandemic,

we've been told that Washington is about to be moved offshore.

That Constitutional revisions are under way to combine the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>

Amendments. You'll have to own a gun to vote.

And that half of California will be moved underground into massive vault-like cities.

Klaatu Barada Nikto.

### **Voice from the radio**

Just for your information, the black hole at the core of the Milky Way has a density of nearly half a billion suns, crammed into an area about the diameter of Earth's solar orbit. So massive it can whip approaching stars millions of miles an hour, shredding them to Christmas tree lights. We watch it carefully, of course. From observatories on Earth and in orbit. And during the last few months a fiend appears to be materializing inside it. With the shape of a lion, the head of a man, and a gaze as blank and pitiless as the sun, what rough beast, its hour come round at last, is slouching its way toward Earth to be born?

Some cosmologists have opined that shortly an enormous beam of light will explode out, with extraordinary brightness. Like nothing ever witnessed on this planet before. "We'll never see anything like it again," one astral observer prophesies. Why? Why is this happening? Now? To us? Perhaps the black hole's magnetic field is buckling. Perhaps it ate something it can't digest. Time will tell. *If ... there is enough time.* And that's precisely what a blue ribbon team of astrophysicists at Lowell Adjunct Observatory, in Monterey County, California, is hastening to determine. Dr. Zo Marie Curie; Dr. Alberta Einstein; and Professor Viktor Woolf. The crew has our fate in its hands. Maybe the Earth's one hope of unraveling this apocalyptic mystery before our clock ticks out.

### **EINSTEIN turns off the radio.**

#### **EINSTEIN**

Little do they know how little time there actually is.  
For us here.  
Working *our butts* off. Hoping against hope.

#### **CURIE**

Tonight's the night, Alberta. It's now or never. I just know it. And you do, too.

#### **WOOLF**

My mother used to tell me, "Viktor, tonight's the night. But no matter how good you look tonight, you'll always have your big butt tomorrow."

#### **CURIE**

What's that supposed to mean, Viktor? Your translation machine's not ready?

**WOOLF**

Vie wouldn't it be?  
[beat] Are you all right, Zo Marie?

**CURIE**

No.... I'm *not* "all right." I'm not even near "all right" Viktor.  
And I'm not ever going to be "all right" again. Not after tonight.  
Either we catch this thing; and it freaks us out for the rest of our lives.  
Or we miss it. And *that* freaks us out the rest of our lives.  
We're doomed, either way. So? Am I "all right?" Who are you kidding? Are *you*?

**WOOLF**

I'm perfect. I've done everything vat I should. And everybody knows it.

**CURIE**

Do they? Viktor? Do they?  
Your meta-celestial, deep space translator?  
You've done everything possible, to get all the metaphors out of it? I doubt it.

**WOOLF**

Vat do you mean?  
It's been tested a thousand times over. On all sorts of cosmic vaves.  
Everything the Australian Square Kilometer Array Pathfinder could give us.  
It worked on them fine. Didn't it? Vaves from even four billion light years away.

**EINSTEIN**

It worked *fine*? on them? Hardly. Sounded more like a Japanese baseball broadcast mixed with chopsticks and static.

**CURIE**

"riverrun, past Eve and Adam's, from swerve of shore to bend of bay,  
brings us by a commodious vicus of recirculation, back to Howth Castle and  
Environs." What in the name of Joy is that supposed to mean?

**WOOLF**

I have no idea. It's gibberish. I admit. But that's not the point.

**CURIE**

Which is?

**WOOLF**

This time vee vill be able to ask it questions.  
Vee are going to catch the thing, aren't vee? Zo?  
And then ... vee vill talk to it.

**EINSTEIN**

If wishes were horses, beggars would ride.  
Besides, we don't even know if it *can* talk to us.

[*beat*] You did get the proper cellphone number imbedded in your program?  
Right, Viktor?

**WOOLF**

Am I, or am I not, Professor Viktor Woolf? Of course I did. Got it from Zo Marie.

**EINSTEIN**

And, Zo? The monthly fees *are* paid up. Correct?  
With extra charges for an interstellar call?

**CURIE pulls out her device, and waves it  
in the direction of the others.**

**CURIE**

Don't worry about that.  
All set. All paid for.  
Absolutely no worries.

**EINSTEIN**

Anything "absolute" makes everything possible.

**The red light suddenly goes yellow.**

**WOOLF**

Christ! Here it comes!

**CURIE throws a switch. The massive  
"bank vault door" swings open as the  
light turns green. The Catcher begins to  
glow a bright gold, and holds the glow  
for half to three quarters of a minute.  
Then, as the light in it begins to dim,  
EINSTEIN and WOOLF slam a cover  
over the face of the Catcher, while  
CURIE closes the "bank vault door."**

**WOOLF**

Vee have it! Vee have it!

**CURIE**

O, my God, I think we do. I think we do.

**EINSTEIN**

Here's hoping....

**The three of them look at the Catcher.**

**WOOLF**

Now vat do we do?

**CURIE**

We wait.

**WOOLF**

For vat?

**EINSTEIN**

For Madame Curie's phone to ring. What else?

**CURIE**

How long? do you think? [*looking at her cellphone*]

**EINSTEIN**

As long as it takes.

**CURIE**

[*pause*] Long enough to call out for a pizza?

**WOOLF**

You must be kidding....

**A further pause.**

**WOOLF**

It *does* test one's patience, doesn't it?

**EINSTEIN**

Time's always testing one's patience.

Like  $e$  equals  $m c$  squared tested my patience.

And it always finds a way to take as long as it takes....

Moanday.

Tearsday.

Wailsday.

Thumpday.

Frightday.

Shatterday.

Someday. Sometimes the longest way around is the shortest way home.



**CURIE**

Easy for you to say, Einstein.

**EINSTEIN**

[*pause*] Anybody for some three-handed chess?

**CURIE**

You have a three-handed chess board? With you? Here? Why?

**EINSTEIN**

I come prepared.

**WOOLF**

You two play. I'll read Nietzsche.

**Curie's phone rings. (A scientific ringtone.)**

**CURIE**

[*tentatively*] Hello?

**Puts the phone on the table with the phone's speaker on.**

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

Help!

**CURIE**

What?

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

I need help! Right away. That's why I called.

**CURIE**

I don't understand you.

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

You don't understand *English*?

I thought 9-1-1 *was* in English.

Unless I punched in 5.

**CURIE**

9-1-1?

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

Nueve – Uno – Uno. Comprende?

**CURIE**

This isn't 9-1-1.

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

What is it then?

**CURIE**

One nineteen.... 1-1-9.

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

1-1-9?

**CURIE**

That's right.

**EINSTEIN**

[to CURIE] 1-1-9? Why would you ever choose a number like that?

**CURIE**

It's my birthday. One nineteen.

**EINSTEIN**

O, my God!

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

Can you help me, or not?

**CURIE**

What's your problem? Except. Never mind. Just hang up and dial 9-1-1.

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

The power's gone off. And it's dark. And I keep hearing sounds.

You know. Like bumps in the dark. And voices. Like clowns....

I hate clowns. I'm scared of clowns. Especially ones with vermilion lips.

**WOOLF**

Who's afraid of vermilion clowns?

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

What planet are you from?

**CURIE**

Did PG and E cut the power again?

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

They say it's to stop wildfires. I say it's politics. And rogue meteorologists.

**CURIE**

I wish we had an answer for you.

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

Thank God I still have a landline.

The kids kept telling me it's a waste of money.

For years, to drop it. And, then, where would I be?

Now?

I always said, someday there would be an emergency.

And today's the day.

Isn't it?

**CURIE**

*I* thought so.

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

See?

**CURIE**

I'm sorry. But we can't help you. Call ...

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

Call who?... Who are you, anyway?

**CURIE**

Call *Nine ... One ... One....* Please. Goodbye.

**CURIE disconnects.**

**EINSTEIN**

Who would ever choose 1-1-9 for *our* number?

**CURIE**

I told you. It's my birthday.

I thought it would be easy to remember.... Okay?

**Curie's phone rings again. (Same scientific ringtone.)**

**CURIE**

[*cautiously*] Hello?

**Again puts the phone's speaker on.**

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

I'm sorry. Is this? What? 9-1-1?

**CURIE**

No it's not.

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

Whew. I was afraid my cat just dialed 9-1-1.

Sorry for the interruption....

Have a wonderful night. Whoever you are.

**Disconnects.**

**EINSTEIN**

If it weren't ....

**Curie's phone rings yet again. (Same scientific ringtone.)**

**CURIE**

[*more cautiously*] Hello?

**Again puts the phone's speaker on.**

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

A deer just jumped through my window.

**CURIE**

O, dear God. Not another one.

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

Another one? I'm not the only one tonight?

**CURIE**

I'm afraid not.

For your information, this is not 9-1-1.

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

It's not? What is it?

**CURIE**

It's *one ... one ... nine*.

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

That's okay. It's jumped out now.

No problem.

**CURIE**

Jumped out?

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

Out of my bedroom window. I had it open. Because of the heat.

**Disconnects.**

**EINSTEIN**

I don't believe this.

**WOOLF**

It's all relative, Einstein.

**EINSTEIN**

How many idiots are there who can't dial something as simple as 9-1-1?

**WOOLF**

Like they say in Bulgaria, you can never feel too good about good luck, because it never fails to veel around on you.

**EINSTEIN**

What are you saying? [*making a talking motion with her hands*]

**WOOLF**

Smart people think. Crazy ones do crazy things smart ones don't expect.

**Curie's phone rings again.**

**CURIE**

1-1-9. How can we help you?

**Once again puts the phone's speaker on.**

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

I need the police.

**CURIE**

Why?

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

He's writing me a ticket.

**CURIE**

Who is?

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

The policeman who hit me. And it wasn't my fault.  
I was stopped at the light.

**CURIE**

What color was the light?

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

Green. But I needed to finish my text.

**CURIE**

You're out of luck.

Goodbye.

**Disconnects.**

**EINSTEIN**

Is there no end to this?

**WOOLF**

Just be glad vee don't have to vork for 9-1-1 every day.

**Curie's phone rings again.**

**CURIE**

1-1-9. How can we help you?

**Once again puts the phone's speaker on.**

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

I'm hurt. Deep.... She left me.

**CURIE**

Who did?

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

My wife.

**CURIE**

What does it feel like? Exactly?

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

Shitty.... And I'm tired.... And I need a hug.

**CURIE**

Get some rest. It's late.

Go to bed. Things will look better in the morning.

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

I can't.

**CURIE**

Why not?

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

She took the bed.

**CURIE**

*She took your bed??*

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

She took all my furniture.

**CURIE**

And your iPad?

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

She took that, too.

While I was at work.

And ... well ... talking to a friend. In Ukraine.

**CURIE**

It sounds like you're out of luck, Buddy.

Sorry.

Goodbye.

**Disconnects.**

**EINSTEIN**

Serves him right for phone sex at work.

This is going from the horse's mouth over the dam.

**WOOLF**

My father used to say.... "Sometimes there is good fishing. In troubled waters."

**Curie's phone rings again.**

**CURIE**

1-1-9. How can we help you?

**Once again puts the phone's speaker on.**

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

It's back.

**CURIE**

What is?

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

The deer.  
In my bedroom.

**CURIE**

And ... what do you want *us* to do about it?

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

Get me a vet.

**CURIE**

Get one yourself.

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

They're all at home.... It's nighttime, you know.

**EINSTEIN**

[*to CURIE*] We're, here, trying to save the world;  
and you're talking to a woman about a buck in her bedroom?

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

Who was that?

**CURIE**

I'm sorry. Alberta's right. Maybe we can talk later. Okay?

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

Alberta who?

**CURIE**

Alberta Einstein.

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

What number *is* this?

**CURIE**

One ... one ... nine. Not, 9-1-1.

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

Over at the Frankenstein place?

**WOOLF**

You could say that.

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

And who was *that*?



**CURIE**

Viktor Woolf.

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

Who am I talking to? A convention of Vampire Diary weirdos?

**WOOLF**

Naked peeping toms don't make fun of vat they see through the vindow.

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

I had a peeping tom once.

Outside *my* vindow.

**CURIE**

What did you do? Call the police?... Or 9-1-1?

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

Neither. I called a doctor. I figured he'd suffered enough.

**CURIE**

It's been nice talking to you.

But we've got to go.

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

And leave me here alone with a deer I don't know?

**WOOLF**

A piece of advice. Ask him:

Vat you call a deer texting on the highway?

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

You want *me*? To ask a deer. Vat do you call a deer, texting on the highway?

**WOOLF**

A bucking phonehead. Good night.

**Disconnects.**

**Curie's phone rings again. She puts the phone's speaker on.**

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

Fire! Fire!

**CURIE**

Where?

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

At the bar.  
Across the street.  
From our church.  
We've been praying for months.  
For God to do something.  
About that bar.  
And now he has.

**CURIE**

So your prayers were answered. Why are you calling us?

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

We're afraid they'll sue us now.  
For starting the fire and burning their bar down.

**EINSTEIN**

What are *we* supposed to do about it? This is God's problem. Not ours.

**WOOLF**

You're the brains, Einstein. You tell us.

**EINSTEIN**

Minds cannot solve a problem, Viktor, using the same brains that caused it.

**CURIE**

You can say that again.

[*into the phone*] I'm sorry. We're not authorized to answer legal questions.  
Have a blessed night. And be careful, in the future, what you pray for.

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

Okay. Thank you. It's sorta what I thought you'd say.

**Disconnects.**

**WOOLF**

We can't keep doing this.

**CURIE**

But what if ....

**Curie's phone rings again.**

**CURIE**

1-1-9. And please don't say you called 9-1-1.

**CURRIE once again puts the phone's speaker on.**

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

Is it legal to own a monkey?

**CURIE**

No.... Why?

**WOOLF**

Vie are you answering them?

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

I didn't think so. Because the monkey my husband won at the bar tonight is a menace. First he starts a fire. And now he's put a curse on our washing machine.

**WOOLF**

A curse?

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

That's what our neighbor claims.

Spartacus Bear.

The machine is walking across the floor like a Frankenstein monster.

**WOOLF**

Spartacus Bear? Do you know Spartacus Bear?

**EINSTEIN**

Stop encouraging her, Viktor.

**WOOLF**

But, Spartacus Bear? I used to play fútbol on his team.

He was one of the greatest.

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

Spartacus Bear?

**WOOLF**

Da! Da! *Spartacus Bear.*

From Varna.

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

Varna?

**WOOLF**

Da! Da! Varna.

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

Varna Road? Marin County?

**WOOLF**

Varna.... *Bulgaria.*

**CURIE**

I'm sorry.  
We can't answer legal questions.  
Call legal aid.

**Disconnects.**

**WOOLF**

That was rude.

**CURIE**

What is twelve cubed?

**WOOLF**

Vat?

**EINSTEIN**

One thousand seven hundred twenty-eight.

**CURIE**

And what are we doing here?

**EINSTEIN**

[*beat*] Waiting for a call from the epicenter of our star system.

**CURIE**

Perzactly.  
So ... no more 9-1-1 calls tonight. Okay?

**WOOLF**

How vill we know?

**CURIE**

Like this.

**Substantial pause. Then Curie's phone rings again.**

**CURIE**

Yes?

**CURRIE again puts the speaker on.**

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

There's a suspicious car ...

**CURIE**

Hang up and dial 9-1-1, *not* 1-1-9.

**Disconnects.**

**WOOLF**

That was short.

**A slight pause. Then Curie's phone rings again.**

**CURIE**

Yes?

**Once again puts the phone's speaker on.**

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

And the same to you.

Wiseass.

**Disconnects.**

**WOOLF**

And sweet.

**Substantial pause. Then Curie's phone rings again.**

**CURIE**

Yes?

**Once again puts the phone's speaker on.**

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

How do you get cranberry sauce out of a can, without ...

**CURIE**

Hang up and dial 9-1-1, *not* 1-1-9.

**EINSTEIN**

Open the other end of the can, and slide it out.

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

Okay.  
Thanks.

**Disconnects.**

**WOOLF**

How did *you* know that?

**EINSTEIN**

I'm a genius, of course.... *And*, a woman.

**Substantial pause. Then Curie's phone rings again.**

**CURIE**

Yes?

**Once again puts the phone's speaker on.**

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

There's a clown.  
With balloons.  
In the dark.

**CURIE**

Hang up and dial 9-1-1, *not* 1-1-9.

**Disconnects.**

**Substantial pause. Then Curie's phone rings again.**

**CURIE**

Yes?

**Once again puts the phone's speaker on.**

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

My kid's stuck in a newspaper vending box, at the bus station.

**CURIE**

Hang up and dial 9-1-1, *not* 1-1-9.

**EINSTEIN**

Put money in, and open the box.

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

Oh. Yeah. Thanks.

**Disconnects.**

**CURIE**

You *are* a genius.

**Substantial pause. Then Curie's phone rings again.**

**CURIE**

Yes?

**Once again puts the phone's speaker on.**

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

Tell them to hold the plane. I got stuck. In traffic. Because of a fire. At a bar.

**CURIE**

Hang up and dial 9-1-1, *not* 1-1-9.

**Disconnects.**

**Substantial pause. Then Curie's phone rings again.**

**CURIE**

Yes?

**Once again puts the phone's speaker on. But this time there is a short burst of silence.**

**CURIE**

Yes? Yes?... Hello.... Hello....

**Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**

This is to inform you that the IRS is filing a lawsuit against you. To get more information about this case file, please call immediately our Department's number, 202-470 ...

**CURIE disconnects. They stare at the phone a moment.**

**WOOLF**

A robocall? On 9-1-1?

**CURIE**

This *isn't* 9-1-1.  
It's 1-1-9.

**EINSTEIN**

But still....

**Curie's phone rings again.**

**CURIE**

O God!

**CURIE once again puts the phone's speaker on. This time there is only silence; and the Catcher starts to light up, gold**

**CURIE**

Hello.... Hello....

**A "Hawking" electronic Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**  
[*slight pause*] What. Is. This?

**CURIE**

Who?.... Who are you?

**A "Hawking" electronic Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**  
We. Are. Freedom.

**CURIE**

From?.... Where are you from?

**A "Hawking" electronic Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**  
Where. Are. You. From?

**CURIE**

We are on planet Earth. On the Orion Arm of the Milky Way.  
About two-thirds out from its center.  
Approximately 26,500 light years from the black hole in the center of the galaxy.  
Part of a solar system with a single sun, nine planets ...

**EINSTEIN**

Eight planets.

**CURIE**

Eight planets, numerous moons, comets, asteroids, and a dwarf planet.



**A “Hawking” electronic Voice (from Curie’s cellphone speaker)**  
What. Is. Light. Year?

**EINSTEIN**

A light year is five point eight trillion miles.  
Roughly four hundred thousand times the distance across the black hole,  
which is at the midpoint of our galaxy.

**CURIE**

Are you? from there? the center of our galaxy?

**A “Hawking” electronic Voice (from Curie’s cellphone speaker)**  
We. Are.

**WOOLF**

Do you know how you got here?

**EINSTEIN**

[*pause*] *Do you know?*

**A “Hawking” electronic Voice (from Curie’s cellphone speaker)**  
Through. An. Opening.

**EINSTEIN**

There is an opening in a black hole?

**A “Hawking” electronic Voice (from Curie’s cellphone speaker)**  
There is an opening in space.

**WOOLF**

An opening in *space*? Vat does that mean?

**A “Hawking” electronic Voice (from Curie’s cellphone speaker)**  
Space. Is. A. Sphere. With. A. Navel.

**EINSTEIN**

I always suspected that. Like an orange.  
How large a sphere?

**A “Hawking” electronic Voice (from Curie’s cellphone speaker)**  
Inside. To. Reach. Beyond.

**EINSTEIN**

To reach what? beyond?  
What is beyond space?

**A “Hawking” electronic Voice (from Curie’s cellphone speaker)**

A. Rind.

**CURIE**

A rind? Like the outside of a balloon?

**A “Hawking” electronic Voice (from Curie’s cellphone speaker)**

Not. Space.

**EINSTEIN**

The end of space is not a part of space?

**A “Hawking” electronic Voice (from Curie’s cellphone speaker)**

Space. Has. No. End.

Boundary. Is. New. Space.

Not. Space.

**EINSTEIN**

Space ends? Only when other space touches it?

**A “Hawking” electronic Voice (from Curie’s cellphone speaker)**

Space. Ends. Only. When. Other. Space. Touches. It.

**CURIE**

[to EINSTEIN] Do you know what it’s talking about?

**EINSTEIN**

They seem to be saying that there is “other space” out there.

Which butts up against our space. Right?

**CURIE**

Don’t ask me. I don’t have a clue what it’s talking about.

**EINSTEIN**

[into Currie’s cellphone] What is in the other space that touches our space?

**A “Hawking” electronic Voice (from Curie’s cellphone speaker)**

Light. Energy. Power. A. Velvet. Underground. Curtain.

**EINSTEIN**

And there’s an opening?

Between that other space and our space?

**A “Hawking” electronic Voice (from Curie’s cellphone speaker)**

Never. Almost.

**WOOLF**

Vat is “never almost”?  
Sometimes? Sometimes the opening opens?  
Is that vat you mean?

**A “Hawking” electronic Voice (from Curie’s cellphone speaker)**  
Sometimes. Never. Almost.

**WOOLF**

[to EINSTEIN] Are you following this?

**EINSTEIN**

I think so.

**WOOLF**

[to EINSTEIN] Then vat does it mean?

**EINSTEIN**

I think they’re telling us that we can only touch space beyond space when there’s an opening. Which is virtually never.

[into Currie’s cellphone] What happens? When that opening opens?

**A “Hawking” electronic Voice (from Curie’s cellphone speaker)**  
Light. Energy. Power. Dark matter. Flash flood.

**EINSTEIN**

O, my God. O, my God.

**CURIE**

What?

**EINSTEIN**

I think they ... might be talking about the Big Bang.

**CURIE**

They never said that.

**EINSTEIN**

But that’s what that means.

[into Currie’s cellphone] Do you know God?

**A “Hawking” electronic Voice (from Curie’s cellphone speaker)**  
[pause] We. Do.  
Do. You?

**EINSTEIN**

I was praying you wouldn't ask that....  
[beat] We think we do. But we don't *know* we do.

**A "Hawking" electronic Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**  
If. You. Know. God. You. Know. You. Do.

**EINSTEIN**

And I was praying even more I wouldn't hear *that*....  
[beat] What is your purpose?  
For this trip?  
What's your purpose in life, for that matter?

**A "Hawking" electronic Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**  
Freedom. Finding. Edge. Of. Space.

**WOOLF**

Vat is *our* purpose in life?

**A "Hawking" electronic Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**  
[pause] Freedom.  
Find. Yourself.  
Find. God.  
Take. Care. Of. Planets.

**CURIE**

This is a burning-bush moment....  
Thank God my phone's recording it.... I hope.

**WOOLF**

How do we find ourselves?

**A "Hawking" electronic Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**  
[pause] Many a mickle makes a muckle.

**EINSTEIN**

[beat] Let me ask it a different way: Is there a path to follow to find ourselves?

**A "Hawking" electronic Voice (from Curie's cellphone speaker)**  
[pause] There are five openings.  
Ear.  
Eye.  
Mind.  
Heart.  
Seat.

## WOOLF

Vat? Vat means “Ear. Eye. Mind. Heart. Seat?”

You mean, vat comes into them? It’s that vat makes a person a person?

### **A “Hawking” electronic Voice (from Curie’s cellphone speaker)**

The other. Is what makes you, you.

When you care. Feed. Clothe. Share.

## WOOLF

To love one another? Is that vat you say we do?

### **A “Hawking” electronic Voice (from Curie’s cellphone speaker)**

Knowing is a cloud.

Of sand.

Stars.

A room. With no entrance.

With no exit.

Where truth waits.

At the top of a hill.

Your she-wolf.

Your fire.

Surely man takes refuge in fire.

Surely dawn-raiders.

Surely birds.

## CURIE

*What??*

### **A “Hawking” electronic Voice (from Curie’s cellphone speaker)**

Whoso does an atom’s weight of good. God sees.

## WOOLF

*Vat??*

### **A “Hawking” electronic Voice (from Curie’s cellphone speaker)**

Give. Not to get.

## EINSTEIN

For what reason, then?

### **A “Hawking” electronic Voice (from Curie’s cellphone speaker)**

To walk your planets modestly.

To know peace.

To touch nothing with corruption.

**CURIE**

Can you tell us? Is there something out there? Unconnected to space?  
Something like.... Something like, Heaven?

**A “Hawking” electronic Voice (from Curie’s cellphone speaker)**

Heaven. Is. Nonattachment.  
Heaven. Is peace.  
Heaven. Is. To fulfill dutiful action. Without attachment.

**WOOLF**

Vat happens when vee die?

**A “Hawking” electronic Voice (from Curie’s cellphone speaker)**

Die?...  
We never die.

**EINSTEIN**

Where do we go then?

**A “Hawking” electronic Voice (from Curie’s cellphone speaker)**

Into freedom. Of the new.

**CURIE**

What is, the freedom of the new?

**A “Hawking” electronic Voice (from Curie’s cellphone speaker)**

Do you hear voices?  
See spirits?  
Imagine impossibilities?  
Feel purity?  
Give birth?

**EINSTEIN**

Is *that*? Is *that* where the meaning of life is?

**A “Hawking” electronic Voice (from Curie’s cellphone speaker)**

Yes.

**EINSTEIN**

And you have not come to destroy us?

**A “Hawking” electronic Voice (from Curie’s cellphone speaker)**

No.

**EINSTEIN**

And you have something more to tell us?

**A “Hawking” electronic Voice (from Curie’s cellphone speaker)**

There’s where. First. We pass through grass behush the bush to.

Whish!

A gull. Gulls. Far calls. Coming, far!

End here. Us then.

Finn, again!

Take.

Bussoftlhee, mememormee!

Till thousandsthee. L. P. S. The keys to.

Given!

A way a lone a last a loved a long the

**A substantial, quiet pause.**

**WOOLF**

Vat can vee do for you?

**A “Hawking” electronic Voice (from Curie’s cellphone speaker)**

[*pause*] Set us free.

We have an eternity of miles to go. Before we rest.

**They all nod to each other. CURIE  
throws a switch. The massive “bank  
vault door” swings open as EINSTEIN  
and WOOLF remove the cover from the  
face of the Catcher. It glows a full, bright  
gold, and then dims to darkness. CURIE  
closes the “bank vault door.”**

**WOOLF**

Bon voyage, then.

**END**