

**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 2nd and 19th

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