

Chapter 7

(Monday, July 30)

Randy returned from Florida the same day Tahir Aziz returned from Saudi Arabia.

Terri had felt lonely while Randy was on vacation even before her mother left for Arizona. This past week with her mother gone too had been even lonelier. Their big house seemed very empty during the long evenings. However, she had gotten really good news just after her mother left last Monday. Randy had called at the boutique from Florida and told her that we would be returning today. She was so excited this morning that she was continually looking at the clock, wondering what would be the most likely time he would call her.

He had actually gotten in late last night. However, it had been well past midnight and far too late to call Terri. This morning he went to his office, but was quickly overwhelmed with things to do. Dr. Cooper, the physics department chairman, called him into his office and told him about the death of Dr. Baker. Wes and Randy had to meet for several hours to plan and organize the department meeting with the new graduate students the following week. Several students who were going to be in his undergraduate E&M class also dropped by at various times to talk about the course. They seemed to be much concerned about the mathematical level it would require and wondered whether they should be reviewing anything before the semester started.

Randy finally called Terri at the boutique about three o'clock.

"Hi Terri, how are things?"

"Hi! Boy, your timing is great. I was just feeling a little down in the dumps, you know with my mother gone and all. And I've missed you."

She instantly wondered whether she should have added that last comment. Was she being too forward? Apparently, he had not taken it that way.

"I've missed you too. Sorry it took me so long to call, but this has been one miserable day. You say your mother is gone?"

"Yeah, she left last week to visit her sister in Arizona for a few weeks. We had so many other things to talk about when you called that I forgot to mention it."

"Well, maybe this will cheer you up. I've got a great idea, something for us to do together, if your interested."

"Are you kidding? Of course I'm interested. What's your idea?"

"Well, the August meeting of the American Physical Society is in Chicago this year, at The Drake Hotel, no less. It's this coming weekend. There are a couple papers I want to hear. Would you like to come with me?"

"Wow! The Drake! Yeah, I'd love to!"

"Great! I'll book two rooms for us."

"Will I be able to attend the meetings with you?"

"Of course."

"What's the subject?"

"Quantum gravity, what else?"

"You think there'll also be some time to sightsee?"

"You bet. Chicago's my home town. I'll show you some of my favorite places. Might even show you the house I was raised in and where I went to high school."

"I'd like that, Randy, I really would."

"Can you leave early Friday morning? The first session I want to attend is in the afternoon at three o'clock."

"Yeah, I can do that. It won't hurt the boutique any to be closed an extra day this week. I'll just put up a sign that we'll reopen on Monday."

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(Friday, August 3)

The Drake Hotel is in downtown Chicago, about a hundred miles from CIU. Since 1920, The Drake, as it is called, has been a Chicago landmark, a premiere hotel and symbol of white-glove elegance. Heads-of-state have stayed there. It boasts 535 rooms, including 74 luxury suites. The rooms have breathtaking views of the Chicago skyline, and many of them have a view of Lake Michigan. The hotel also provides four fine restaurants and twenty-four-hour room service. Guests can also take advantage of a well-equipped fitness center and a number of specialty shops. In addition, the hotel has two full-size ballrooms and can handle conferences for up to 600 guests.

However, The Drake has another distinction. It is on Michigan Avenue at the northern end of Chicago's famous Magnificent Mile. This stretch of Michigan Avenue extends roughly from The Drake south to Upper Illinois Avenue and epitomizes shopping elegance with world-renowned stores and boutiques, including Macy's, Saks Fifth Avenue, Brooks Brothers, Lord & Taylor, Bloomingdales, Marshall Field's, and St. John Boutique. It is also the location of the Chicago Water Tower, built in 1869 and one of the few buildings to survive the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. Michigan Avenue is just three blocks east of another famous street: "State Street, that great street," referred to in Frank Sinatra's song, "Chicago."

Randy picked Terri up early Friday morning, and they arrived at The Drake at eleven o'clock. He pulled into the parking area on East Walton in the Drake Towers. From there they walked into the main lobby to register.

"Just look at this!" Terry exclaimed. "I've never been in The Drake before."

It's beautiful."

Indeed, it was. The opulence was breathtaking. The lobby was the size of a small ballroom, and its high ceiling was decorated with elaborately carved crown moldings. Two large chandeliers sparkled overhead. Another smaller chandelier overhung the check-in desk itself. They were walking on plush red carpet, but it only covered the perimeter of the lobby. In the center, a carpet of a paisley print was inset. The focal point to which the eye was drawn consisted of a single, large, ornate table in the middle of the lobby with a gigantic bouquet of flowers on it. A massive, tiled fireplace adorned the long wall on the left, flanked by two gorgeous ferns. Various tables and sitting chairs were tastefully placed around the walls. Soft, classical music was playing in the background.

Terri laid her hand on Randy's arm with a look of concern. "Randy, this must cost a fortune."

"Well, I wanted to do something special with you. Anyway, the department is reimbursing me for part of the expense."

They registered and were escorted to their rooms by two bellboys, who also carried their luggage. After they opened both rooms and deposited the luggage, Randy tipped them, and they left. The two of them walked into Terri's room.

As with everything else at The Drake, the room seemed to radiate elegance. Its furnishings created a warm, welcoming image. In addition to the double bed with its richly colored bedspread, these included an exquisite, high-backed settee behind a marble-top coffee table. There was also a server with drawers and a large wardrobe, both of highly-polished mahogany. The heavy, luxurious draperies were pulled back with wide, lace-trimmed sashes and topped with large valances having a complex scalloped design. A six-foot fern in one corner added to the overall ambiance of the room. The large windows faced south, affording a fantastic view of the Magnificent Mile along Michigan Avenue.

Terri moved close to Randy and put her arm around his waist, leaning against him. "I can't believe this! It's so amazing, almost like I'm dreaming."

He put his arm around her shoulder and hugged her. "But it's true--we're here, for one night at least. Let's enjoy it. Why don't you freshen up, and we'll have lunch in about a half hour. The session on quantum gravity starts at three."

They had lunch in Drake Bros.' Restaurant. The maitre de seated them at a table-for-two next to a window overlooking East Lake Shore Drive. However, as much as Terri enjoyed the elegance of The Drake, it began to pale as she contemplated being part of a conference of the American Physical Society. Her love of all things academic began to consume her as never before. Imagine: she was actually going to be sitting in a room full of world-class physicists listening to a paper dealing with original research in quantum gravity. And she would be there with Randy.

The session on quantum gravity was one of the smaller events of the conference and was held in the Erie Room. When they entered, Randy shook hands with a number of physicists he knew. However, since he was with Terri, he made no attempt to sit with any of them. He found two seats near the front of the room at the end of one of the tables.

The speaker was Dr. Ariel Reznik, an Israeli physicist from Ben-Gurion University. Terri listened attentively as he spoke, but understood very little. However, that did not bother her. She simply enjoyed listening to knowledgeable professors speak about work that expanded the boundaries of knowledge. Nevertheless, she had anticipated some romantic hand-holding as they listened. That did not take place. Randy was focused entirely on the paper being read. But she understood and accepted that. After all, his academic persona was one, one among many, she reflected, of the traits that so attracted her to him.

The meeting, which concluded with a question-and-answer session, lasted until almost five o'clock. This time they tried the Cape Cod Room for a light dinner.

"Well," Terri asked, "was there anything helpful in that lecture?"

"Yeah, he had a few ideas worth exploring. A lot of what he said was going over work already done by others."

"That must be one of the hardest parts of doing research--keeping up with what everyone else is doing."

"It's called keeping up to date with the literature. It's not so much difficult as it is time-consuming, but it's absolutely essential. Reading the journals, attending conferences--the time really mounts up. Plus there's doing your own work for publication, writing grant proposals, and teaching classes."

"But you enjoy it, right?"

"I love it."

She reached out across the table and touched his hand. "I can tell," she said smiling.

As they were nearing the end of their meal, Terri was getting anxious to walk down the Magnificent Mile.

"So what about this Magnificent Mile? Are you going to take me for a walk or not?"

"You bet. I've been looking forward to this myself."

They soon finished eating, left the hotel, and headed south on Michigan Avenue. This time they held hands.

They crossed over to the other side of Michigan Avenue. The first store they entered was Bloomingdales, a six-level department store. Naturally, Terri wanted to see was the women's department.

"Look at these prices!" she commented. Terri held out a denim miniskirt for Randy to see. "One hundred ninety dollars," she exclaimed. "Sort of takes your breath away, doesn't it?"

"Actually, I think seeing someone in that skirt would have a greater effect

on my ability to breathe."

She scowled at him, and then began to laugh. "Well, I can see I'm not going to get many objective comments from you. So let's really upset your equilibrium. I want to look at the lingerie displays."

Terri looked things over in a very professional way. "Of course, many of these lines are more expensive than what I can carry. But some of the others here I do have, and these prices are really marked up. But I guess this is pretty expensive real estate here. The overhead for a store like this must be astronomical."

"Nothing less, I'm sure," Randy added. He began looking over the sexy displays. Suddenly, he grabbed a hanger and pulled out a black, short-sleeved babydoll nightgown and matching short pants with ruffled leg bands. "This is really cute," he said. "Ninety eight dollars."

"It is cute. I like it. But I would sell that for around thirty dollars."

After leaving Bloomingdales, they continued their walk down Michigan Avenue, stopping at Water Tower Place, Lord & Taylor, and Saks Fifth Avenue. They also looked around in Victoria's Secret and had a really good time joking around with each other.

By the time they headed back to The Drake, darkness had fallen. "You can sure see why they call this the Magnificent Mile," Terri commented. "The stores, the lights, the glitter, the glamor--it's just fantastic!"

"It is all that. I've often enjoyed just walking down here window shopping. But I've got another place I'd like to take you. It's even more romantic."

"Romantic?" Her eyes brightened.

"Very. You can get the best view of the Chicago skyline from the east out on the Lake."

"You mean we're going swimming, or are we going to rent a boat?" Terri quipped.

"Neither, Miss Smarty Pants. Come on, let's get the car, and I'll show you. We need to drive there."

Randy headed south on Lake Shore Drive through Grant Park and passed beautiful Buckingham Memorial Fountain, the jets of water glistening in spectacular multicolored lights. Chicago is the home of a number of world-class museums and other historic landmarks. Clustered together just south of Grant Park were the Field Museum of Natural History, the Shedd Aquarium, Soldier Field, the Adler Planetarium, and further south, McCormick Place and the Museum of Science and Industry. However, the Planetarium was Randy's destination, and he turned east onto Solidarity Drive.

The Adler Planetarium sits on a circular piece of land at the northeast corner of a large, L-shaped, man-made causeway projected eastward into Lake

Michigan and then southward. The east-west portion terminates at the Planetarium, with Lake Michigan on the north and Burnham Harbor on the south. The north-south portion of the causeway is called Northerly Island.

At the end of the inbound side of Solidarity Drive, one veers slightly to the right and then continues in a circle counter-clockwise around the Planetarium. Parking is allowed along the outside of this circular part of the drive, each car facing outward toward the lake. However, Randy drove around the circle and parked on the north side of the building facing Navy Pier.

When they got out of the car, Randy took Terri by the shoulders and turned her to face west. "Isn't that the most beautiful skyline you've ever seen?" he asked, keeping one arm around her. "We're effectively out on the Lake here, and I've always thought the best view of the skyline was from the east out here."

Terri was awed by the magic of the place. The stars overhead, the spectacular skyline to the west, and the gentle sound of the waters of Lake Michigan rolling in against the causeway.

"You understated how wonderfully romantic this would be." She slipped her arm around his waist as he continued to hold her close to him.

"But there's more. We're going to see a star show."

"I've heard about them, but I've never seen one. I understand it's like sitting under real stars, and it's as instructive as a course in astronomy."

"It's all that and more. It's the quintessential combination of academics and romance, a surprising link really. Wait'll you see. Let's go in. The show starts at eight o'clock."

That link was not so surprising to Terri. Ever since her years at CIU, academics had affected her in a romantic way. She could hardly wait to see the nature of the link Randy was referring to here.

The Adler Planetarium is operated by the Chicago Park District. The building itself, like the drive around it, is circular with a large domed roof. It is constructed from beautiful, polished granite, giving it the appearance of marble. There was a large flight of wide stairs leading to several sets of magnificent copper-colored doors. Unfortunately, however, patrons no longer entered the museum through those doors.

The word *planetarium* actually refers to the sophisticated projection unit in the Star Theater, a large, round room with a dome ceiling that occupies the center of the building. This particular planetarium was developed by Dr. W. Bauersfeld from the firm of Carl Zeiss in Germany. It was the first planetarium erected in America and had been donated by Max Adler of Chicago. The museum first opened to the public in May, 1930.

The projector contains hundreds of lights and projects them onto the hemispherical ceiling, simulating the night sky. It is driven by seven motors and can rotate simultaneously around several different axes. The rotations can show the apparent motions of the stars through a single night or through an entire year.

These motions can be displayed as they would be seen from Chicago or from any other point in the world. They can also be displayed as they would be seen at any time--past, present, or future. To identify the individual constellations, the planetarium can also project colored outlines of the mythological figures after which the constellations are named. The motions of the moon and planets can be depicted as well. It was a singularly amazing device for teaching astronomy.

This projector sat in the middle of the Star Theater with concentric rows of specially constructed, theater-type seats surrounding the projector. The backs of these seats were set at a greater angle so that the viewers could easily see the projected sky. The museum puts on a number of different star shows throughout the year, and they were sometimes accompanied by a well-delivered, live lecture. At other times, a recorded script was played.

Randy and Terri walked into the Star Theater and sat down. It seemed that attendance at the star show would be light tonight. Randy had always considered this museum an ideal place to go on a date. The setting is very romantic. When the theater lights go out and the projector displays the stars on the ceiling, the effect is awesome--like being transported to the center of the universe for a brilliant display of the heavens. And those reclined seats are very conducive to sitting close and holding hands in much more than a casual way. Not many couples can resist the magic of this atmosphere.

Sitting there with Randy when the lights went out and the stars appeared, Terri felt her excitement build as the power of nature and the thrill of romance captivated her every thought. Randy was certainly not immune to the effect either. As she leaned closer to him, he reached over and pulled her arm slightly toward him so that he could lace his fingers through hers. They sat there, then, and watched the star show with her hand held in his on the comfortable armrest between the two seats.

After the star show, they walked around the Planetarium looking at the various astronomical exhibits. Occasionally, Randy would make a technical comment. The Star Theater was in the center of the building, so the floor space containing the exhibits was actually a wide, circular corridor around the theater. There were three such levels. The lighting was subdued. That was helpful for the display of astronomical exhibits, but it also created another romantic atmosphere.

As they were walking, Randy spotted one of his favorite exhibits coming up. "Hey, Terri, look at this. It's really interesting."

She looked. "Six scales?"

"Not just any scales. You'll notice they're marked, Mars, Venus, Jupiter, and so on? Well, you stand on the scale, and it will tell you what you would weigh on that planet."

"Why wouldn't your weight be the same as it is on earth? Do you lose weight during space travel?"

"No, not in the sense you mean, but you're really referring to mass, not weight. Your mass is the amount of matter your body contains. You'd have the same mass on any planet. Weight is the pull of gravity, and that depends on the mass of

the planet. Here, come on over to this one." He pointed to one of the scales. "This one is for the moon." He assumed a highly dignified tone of voice. "Now, of course, I would never presume to ask a lady to reveal her weight, but let's just see what you would weigh on the moon."

"Oh, Randy, I don't mind telling you what I weigh..."

"No, no," he interrupted. "Let's just see what you'd weigh on the moon."

Terri got on the scale. "Nineteen pounds?" she exclaimed, thoroughly shocked.

"Sure, the moon's smaller than the earth, so you would weigh less. But here's my surprise: your real weight here is about 114 pounds."

She looked at him with a dumbfounded expression. Then she started smiling. "You've been leading me on! All this gallant talk about not asking a lady's weight. From my weight on the moon, you must be able to calculate my weight on earth. You were hoping I wanted to keep it a closely guarded secret! Then you could spring your trap, much to my chagrin."

"Yeah, and you almost spoiled my fun by volunteering to tell me. It's a simple calculation. Your weight on the moon turns out to be about a sixth as much as it is on earth. Therefore, nineteen times six gives 114.

"I didn't realize how careful a girl has to be around a physicist! I wonder how many other tricks you have up your sleeve."

He hugged her by the shoulder and replied, "You'll never know until I spring them!" Then he laughed. "You know, a number of years ago, I tried to pull this stunt on my mother. She's a bit overweight and never wanted to say how much she weighed. So I tried to convince her to get on the moon's scale under the pretense of cheering her up--making her weight seem so small. But she didn't trust me and wouldn't get on."

"So you've always been devious. And here I had such an illusion built up about you being an ideal gentleman," she added, tongue-in-cheek.

After leaving the museum, they walked around the grounds for a little while, again admiring the beautiful views. There was a sidewalk on either side of the drive that circled the Planetarium. Directly north across the water they saw Navy Pier and the Chicago Lighthouse. To the northwest, they could see the Standard Oil Building, the John Hancock Building and the Sears Tower. The view of the Chicago skyline from this far out in Lake Michigan was indeed spectacular. Slightly southwest, across Burnham Harbor, was Soldier Field. Just south of the Planetarium was the ninety-acre Northerly Island. This piece of land used to be the location of a small airport called Meigs Field. That was no longer there. The old park that had then been limited to the small area north of Meigs Field was now much larger.

They sat down on one of the benches, Randy resting his hand on her shoulder. Looking up at the sky, Terri said, "With all the lights from Downtown, you don't see as many stars as you can out in the rural areas. But we did see a star show tonight, and we're far enough out here that it's still pretty spectacular." He looked up at the stars but quickly refocused on her as she continued speaking.

"This reminds me of a song I used to play when I was in high school...when I would feel lonely." Her voice grew soft as her eyes held his. "I've always thought it was such a romantic song. While it was playing, I used to dream that someday I could say the words...to someone. It's called 'A Thousand Stars in the Sky' and was from my mother's collection. A girl named Kathy Young sang it. She was only sixteen at the time. Here are the words."

*A thousand stars in the sky,
Like the stars in your eyes,
They say to me
That there'll never be--
No other love like you for me.*

*Each night I count the stars in the sky,
Hoping that you aren't telling me lies.
You're with me tonight,
I'm captured by your charm.
Oh, pretty baby, won't you hold me in your arms.*

*A thousand stars in the sky
Make me realize
You are the one love that I'll adore:
Tell me you love me,
Tell me you're mine once more."*

Terri's eyes were moist when she finished. Randy thought his own eyes were pretty misty as well. His heart seemed to have melted. Did those lyrics reflect her heart? Was she saying those words to him? Was she telling him that she loved him? 'Tell me you love me': was this her heart's appeal to him?

"That was beautiful, Terri." He reached around her and drew her into a hug as she wrapped her arms around him. They did not kiss, just held each other close for a few tender moments.

When they drew apart, he wiped a tear from her cheek with his finger. She knew that she had fallen in love with him. She knew it as she was looking into his eyes and quoting the song. The words were coming from her heart. Should she tell him that she loved him? No, not tonight. She sensed that he was not quite ready. She would be content to wait.

Randy took her hand and helped her up. "Maybe we should head back. It's getting late."

Back at The Drake, Randy walked Terri to her door. "This has been the best date I every had," she said softly, as she again looked into his eyes.

"It was for me too."

Her heart began to beat faster as she anticipated his kiss. He reached behind her head, gathering up her hair, and gently pulled her toward him. With his other hand he touched her face, as he continued drawing her closer. She closed her eyes as his lips met hers.

Again his kiss was soft and gentle. She loved the way he kissed her. They were tender, not hard or ravenous or desperate, the way some boys had kissed her. She could feel warmth and affection from him. She felt so right in his arms and wished he would never have to let her go.

In her room a few minutes later, Terri walked over to the windows and opened all the drapes. The room was on the fifth floor, so privacy was not a problem. Drake rooms came with high-speed Internet access, cable television with a 25-inch screen, and even Nintendo. But she was not the least interested in any of these amenities. She put on her nightgown, turned off all the lights and just lay on the bed looking at the lights of the Chicago skyline outside her window. She thought it was the most beautiful site she had ever seen. She imagined how heavenly it would be to have Randy sharing it with her in that big bed.

Emotionally, she was still in overdrive. She had never had a more romantic time. She loved him but wondered what he was thinking, what he was feeling. Was he still interested in a casual relationship? No, she thought, that is not what he wants and probably never was.

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Randy was also lying in bed watching the Chicago skyline. She had quoted from the song, 'A Thousand Stars in the Sky.' Was she telling him that she loved him? Did she want to hear him say that he loved her? What were his feelings for her?

Before their date at the county fair, he had decided to follow his heart...for now at least. Well, if the direction in which his heart was leading him had not been clear enough then, it was certainly clear now. However, somewhere in the back of his mind he had known from that first time at the faculty dinner that she could have this effect on him, so great had been his attraction to her.

The path they were on now would certainly lead to love, if it had not already done so. What should he do? His case against a second commitment had been all but demolished by all the insights he had gained during their date with Wes and Kathy and their date at the county fair. Today his case had been virtually swept away. Perhaps there was little surprise that Terri found what they had done tonight romantic. Probably any girl would who was with a guy she at least had some attraction to. What was amazing was that she found that lecture at the APS meeting even remotely exciting. But she must have: while they were there, she just seemed to have a glow about her. Could a girl who acted that way in a lecture on quantum gravity be comfortable with his academic lifestyle on a daily basis? The answer seemed obvious.

What was still holding him back?

With a wry smile, he wondered which problem he would solve first: how to create a grand unified field theory or what to do in his relationship with Terri.

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(Saturday, August 4)

On Saturday morning, they went to the second session Randy wanted to hear. Then after having lunch at The Drake, they checked out and started for home. However, there was one more thing he wanted to share with her: where he grew up.

They were going west on Grand Avenue as he drove to the Chicago suburb of River Grove, a near-northwest suburb just southeast of O'Hare International Airport.

"Actually, when I said Chicago was my home town, I was using a rather broad definition of Chicago. I was actually raised in a suburb a few miles from the city limit. We're coming to it now," he added. "Have you ever been to River Grove?"

"I've driven through it a few times," she answered. "Never knew anyone who lived here."

They crossed the DesPlaines River and stopped at a red light at River Road. "This was my real neighborhood."

They drove a little farther, made a few turns, and finally stopped in front of a brick house. "That's my house--where I grew up. I guess it'll always be home to me."

"When did your parents move to Florida?"

"My father was able to retire early, and they were anxious to move as soon as they could. They had always wanted to retire in Florida. They've been there two years now." After a pause, he continued, "Let's go to Franklin Park. I'll show you my high school."

He pulled away from the curb and got back on Grand Avenue heading west. In Franklin Park, he turned right on Rose Street.

After a few more miles, Randy said, "Here it comes, on the left."

Terri watched as they approached the large school. "This looks a little bigger than mine. How many students?"

"About twenty-one or twenty-two hundred. During my undergraduate years, I used to come back at least once a year to keep in touch with a number of teachers that I liked and who really influenced me. I haven't been getting back so often during the last couple of years." He watched the school as he drove past it. "Well, I don't want to bore you to tears. Let's hit the road and head home."

Darkness fell as they drove. Terri was surprised at the nostalgic streak Randy had. Well, maybe nostalgia was not the whole explanation. She had just seen another aspect of his love of academics. Naturally, his teachers would have played a very significant role in his life, perhaps his high school teachers most of all. They would have been the teachers who had inspired him to love school and the subjects he went on to study, physics and mathematics. She sensed that with this tour, she had been invited into a very special place in his heart.

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Several hours later, as they pulled onto the street where Terri lived, they noticed a police car. When they pulled into the driveway and parked, a policeman came walking over.

"Are you Terri Lockhart?"

"Yes, I am. What's wrong?"

"There was a break-in at your boutique, Ma'am. We'd like you to come over to the store."