

ELSEWHEN

FADE IN:

EXT. SKY -- NIGHT

It is a starry, starry night, far from the congested air and unnatural light of large cities. Peaceful. Primeval. Then something large, dark and wedge shaped enters the sky overhead. In its wake, the stars ripple and scatter. It could be a huge spacecraft, but no, it's a birch bark...

CANOE

Which glides across a large LAKE. The reflection of the stars ripple and sparkle on the water.

A young, beautiful buckskin-clad NATIVE AMERICAN WOMAN paddles the canoe.

She wears a charm of a white bird on a rawhide thong around her neck.

Her ancient eyes in a youthful face look up toward a glow in the sky, where a large COMET arches over the horizon, as the canoe glides toward a mysterious

MIST

Growing, billowing, in the center of the lake.

The mist GLOWS faintly as the canoe enters it, then thickens, enveloping the canoe until it disappears, and the mist becomes...

The billowing CLOUDS of a Spring morning.

There is a break in the clouds, and a V-formation flight of

SNOW GEESE

appears below the clouds, softly honking.

They fly over a small mid-western farm community far below, a patchwork of green, dotted sparsely with farmhouses, and a small white country

CHURCH

A MINISTER'S voice FADES UP.

MINISTER (V.O.)
 ...so, my brothers and sisters, how will
 you spend Eternity?...

INT. CHURCH (1970) -- DAY

TITLE/CARD: 1970

ELIJAH GRANT (LIJE), 8 years old, sitting with his parents, listens to a sermon. Most of the congregation are bored, half asleep, or fidgety, but Elijah is fascinated. He is a serious, studious and bright little lad.

LAURA ELIZABETH AUSTIN (LAURA BESS), also 8 years old, is the only other child in the church paying close attention. She sits next to Elijah, with her parents. She has a bright-eyed, lively intelligence.

They are both geniuses.

They sit entranced, chin in hand, leaning forward.

MINISTER
 ...and what is Eternity? Try to imagine it -- endless time. ...Imagine yourself walking down a road which disappears over a hill in the far distance, and no matter how long you walk, or how fast you run, you never reach the hill. As the Red Queen says in "Through the Looking Glass", "It's a slow sort of country -- ...here, it takes all the running you can do to stay in one place."

Elijah and Laura look at each other, as though thinking the same thought. Laura smiles. Elijah nods agreement, and they turn their attention back to the Minister.

EXT. CHURCH -- DAY

Elijah and his parents emerge from the church. His parents dutifully shake hands with the minister, as does Elijah.

MINISTER
 Brother Grant ...Sister Grant. And how are you this morning, Elijah? I noticed you paying attention to my sermon. I wish all the congregation were as attentive as you.

YOUNG LIJE

Yessir.

MINISTER

Well, what did you think? Now, you don't have to flatter me.

YOUNG LIJE

Don't know how, sir. Flatter, I mean.

MINISTER

I wish more people had that handicap, Elijah.

The little boy looked at the minister the way your dog does when it is trying to figure out what you are saying. He blinked.

YOUNG LIJE

Well, anyway, I'm goin' to read "Through the Looking Glass" again, and Laura Bess and me are goin' to talk it over.

MINISTER

(smiling)

We find our inspiration in unexpected places, Elijah.

YOUNG LIJE

You can call me Lije, Reverend. Most everybody does.

The Minister winks at the boy's proud parents.

MINISTER

That tadpole is a keeper.

LIJE'S DAD

Till he's old enough for MIT, Reverend, or wherever he fancies, I reckon.

Elijah and his parents go on their way.

LAURA BESS chats with the Minister with her parents.

MINISTER (CONT'D)

Brother Austin, ... Sister Austin... Well, Miss Laura Bess, did you like the sermon?

YOUNG LAURA BESS

Yes! 'Specially the part about Time and forever and all. And going down the road? And how that's like forever?

MINISTER

Yes?

YOUNG LAURA BESS

I don't know 'bout Time, but I was thinking, isn't Love s'posed to be like that?

MINISTER

You mean, going down a long road?

YOUNG LAURA BESS

Uh-huh. Forever.

MINISTER

Could be a bumpy road, Laura Bess. Not always an easy one.

The little girl looks at the minister with something almost like pity.

YOUNG LAURA BESS

Don't worry, Rev'rent. There's more than one road.

MINISTER

Well, well, Laura Bess. You never fail to give me something to think about. Thank you.

Laura's parents hurry her along. A line of people waits behind them.

YOUNG LAURA BESS

You're welcome, Rev'rent.

The Minister watches the children leave, still caught in their spell. As he turns to go inside, a quaint little man with a beatific smile waits to speak to him.

QUAINT MAN

Reverend, I'm not familiar with the text you quoted today. Was that from the Old Testament?

INT. FAMILY CAR (MOVING) - DAY

On the way home, Elijah stares out the back window of the car, watching the highway disappear in the distance.

Then he turns around suddenly to look out the front, to watch the highway continuously appear on the horizon.

He turns again to look back, then front, then back again.

His eyes brighten, as he has a Zen moment of awareness, then panic, as he gets dizzy and nauseated.

YOUNG LIJE

Mom!

LIJE'S MOM

What's wrong, honey?

YOUNG LIJE

I feel sick, Mom!

LIJE'S MOM

Open the window. Lean out. Luke, stop the car.

He leans out the window, and throws up. His Mom hands him a handful of tissues.

LIJE'S MOM

Here you go, hon. We'll be home soon.

LIJE'S DAD

You okay, Son?

YOUNG LIJE

I think so. Sorry about the mess.

LIJE'S DAD

That's what a garden hose is for, Son.
Don't worry about it.

EXT. GRANT'S HOUSE -- DAY

Elijah's MOTHER leads him to the small country house, concerned. His FATHER gets out the garden hose to wash off the side of the car.

INT. GRANT'S HOUSE

Mrs. Grant takes her son into the kitchen and sits him down.

LIJE'S MOM

How about a little ginger ale to settle
your stomach, honey?

She pours him a small glass.

YOUNG LIJE

Thanks, Mom.

LIJE'S MOM

That's better, my woeful little man. Now
why don't you go have a little rest, and
I'll call you for dinner.

Lije starts upstairs, ginger ale in hand. His Mom smiles.

LIJE'S MOM

And don't get yourself all wound up,
trying to solve the mysteries of the
universe!

YOUNG LIJE

Somebody's got to, Mom.

As he trundles on upstairs.

EXT. AUSTIN'S FARMHOUSE -- DAY

The Austins arrive home from church at their modest farm.
Laura Bess takes off her shoes and goes dashing off to play.
LAURA'S MOM calls after her.

LAURA'S MOM

You be careful now Laura Bess -- don't go
getting that Sunday dress dirty!

YOUNG LAURA BESS

Yes'm.

And she is off, hair flying, like a little gazelle.

LAURA'S DAD

No slowing that girl down. She's a force
of Nature, that'n.

EXT. FARMLAND -- DAY

With the farmhouse far in the background, Laura Bess swings on an old wooden plank swing, suspended by heavy ropes from an ancient tree, back and forth, back and forth until the movement is hypnotic. In front of her, vast fields and forest.

She swings higher and higher. Each time she swings back, she sees the ground below her feet.

Each time she swings forward, the scene is the same -- fields and forest and sky.

NATURE SOUNDS become softer, almost inaudible.

Then, as she swings forward, the scene before her changes...

EXT. INDIAN TEPEE -- DAY

An Indian TEPEE lies directly in front of Laura. The same young Native American Woman from the canoe crouches over a small fire, stirring a small pot, with her back to Laura. She rubs some herbs in her hands over the pot.

Startled, Laura jumps out of the swing. She stumbles as she lands, falls down, dirtying her dress. She tries to brush the dirt off, unsuccessfully.

She looks back toward her home, but the farmhouse and the swing have disappeared.

She turns back and walks cautiously toward the Indian woman.

The Indian woman's back straightens, as she senses Laura behind her, then turns toward her, wearing the same white bird charm around her neck, her face partially visible, only the trace of a smile.

YOUNG LAURA BESS

H'lo. My name's Laura Bess. What's your name?

The woman smiles silently at Laura for a beat...

LAURA'S MOM (O.S.)

Laura Bess? Time for dinner! Come in and wash your hands now.

Laura Bess turns away from the Indian woman toward her mother's voice, then turns back...

The Indian woman, tepee, and campfire have vanished. Only the empty swing remains, and the farmhouse in the distance. Laura Bess stares around her, perplexed, and a little disappointed, then turns and walks home.

YOUNG LAURA BESS

Well, shoot.

EXT. FARMHOUSE -- DAY

Laura Bess reaches the house, then remembering the dirtied dress, brushes at the soiled spot, but it's perfectly clean.

She looks back one more time toward the swing tree. No one there. She stares in wonderment.

INT. ELIJAH'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Elijah lies in bed, reading "Through the Looking Glass". On the page, an illustration of Alice, resembling Laura, stares in wonderment.

The bedroom is filled with books, including "The Wizard of Oz", and "Tales of King Arthur", a telescope, and bric-a-brac about astronomy and space travel.

Elijah closes the book, then rises and goes to his window, goes out and sits on the porch roof in his PJs.

EXT. PORCH ROOF -- NIGHT

He leans back on his elbows, a clear and starry night above, deep with mystery. He ponders it, concentrating on a particular star.

FLASH CUTS

The starfield ripples slightly, like the surface of a lake reflecting the sky, then a black rift opens in the sky, revealing a dim, very distant comet. A blinding FLASH.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD -- DAY

A glimpse of a teen-aged girl's hair blowing in the wind as she rides her bicycle toward the afternoon sun. FLASH.

EXT. AIRCRAFT WRECKAGE -- DUSK

A glimpse of a mangled piece of aluminum. FLASH.

INT. RADAR SCREEN

The radar trace goes flat. FLASH.

INT. COFFEE SHOP(MOS) -- DAY

In the glass of a bakery case filled with pastries, the reflection of a young woman's face slides into view. She silently mouths the words "Hello, stranger".

BACK TO SCENE

EXT. PORCH ROOF -- NIGHT

Elijah stares at the sky, baffled.

A METEOR slashes across the sky, and PULL BACK TO REVEAL --

EXT. MELLSTROM RADAR PARKING LOT -- NIGHT

TITLE/CARD: 25 YEARS LATER

Adult ELIJAH GRANT, 33 years old, leans back on his elbows against his car hood, looking up at the meteor in boyish wonder.

Behind him looms a radar station at the summit of a wooded hilltop, with an 84-foot-diameter steerable radar dish on a pedestal about 60 feet high. All around it, hundreds of acres of forest, and a small New England town in the background. A signpost reads: "MELLSTROM RADAR DEEP SPACE TRACKING"

INT. GUARD SHACK -- NIGHT

The guard (JIM) greets Elijah (LIJE).

JIM

Evenin', Lije. Pulling a late night?

LIJE

Hey, Jim. Tracking session. Looking at space junk to make sure it's still there. *Boring*. Much more interesting out here -- did you see that meteor?

JIM

Nope. I'll take your word for it. I'm kind of stuck here in this box.

INT. RADAR CONTROL ROOM -- NIGHT

Several towers of electronic equipment and computer screens dominate the room. A large window looks out toward the radar dish. The central console contains the radar controls, with a computer screen showing a radar trace.

DR. EVAN WILLIAMS, (50s), a balding, gentle, droll, research physicist, sits at the radar control console.

Lije strolls into the room.

DR. WILLIAMS
Greetings and felicitations, Lije. Hale
and hearty this eventide?

LIJE
(in a mock Southern accent)
Hay-ul, yes. How's by you?

DR. WILLIAMS
Well, y'know... all this gadgetry gets my
nerves on edge. Machines taking over the
world and all.

LIJE
That ship has sailed, Doc.

DR. WILLIAMS
What do you mean?

LIJE
Happened a long time ago. Didn't you get
the memo?

DR. WILLIAMS
Afraid not.

LIJE
Amazing. A scientist who doesn't trust
technology.

DR. WILLIAMS
*Minuere philosophiam philosophus verus
esse est.*

(off Lije's look)
..."To make light of Science is to be
the true Scientist."

LIJE

Doc, Latin is a music style, not a language. It's dead, Jim.

DR. WILLIAMS

Bite your tongue. Latin is forever. English changes every day. I hardly know what anyone is saying anymore.

Lije pours himself a cup of coffee, then settles in at the radar console, and cracks his knuckles.

LIJE

Yes, well, ...let's light the candles and get started. Our first contestant is... your typical piece of space crap, Object number 104995. What is this?

(looking at a list))

Ah, yes, some widget lost from a space shuttle flight. Probably a \$500 crescent wrench. Rising about... now.

ON RADAR SCREEN

A noisy line across the screen shows a spike in the center, gradually growing, then holding steady.

SAME SCENE - LATER

Lije's coffee cup is nearly empty as he checks another entry off a list on the console. The wall clock reads 1:55 AM.

ON LIST

Lije's finger runs down a list of space objects, their code designations and common names. It stops on "COSMOS II".

LIJE

Next up, an old Soviet COSMOS. Might as well take a nap, Doc. This will be awhile.

And he sets up the radar to track it.

EXT. RADAR DISH - NIGHT

The dish begins to slowly turn toward the satellite.

INT. RADAR CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

A large spike signal appears on the radar screen. It MORPHS into the wall clock, reading 3:11 AM.

Lije takes a sip from his coffee, discovers it is empty, and looks over to the coffee pot, which is also empty.

He stares, almost zoned out, at the radar screen, watching the same large signal spike. Dr. Williams dozes.

Suddenly the signal on the display drops to zero. Lije snaps to full attention.

LIJE

What the hell? We've lost signal. Has the transmitter crashed?

Williams stirs awake, as Lije methodically checks all the instrument panels.

LIJE

No... Power out the wazoo... Computer's still up... So... What... The... Hell?

DR. WILLIAMS

Something amiss?

LIJE

Some fecal matter has struck the air circulation device. ...We've lost track on the COSMOS. I'm switching to manual control ...see if I can find it.

Williams joins him at the console. Lije takes manual control of the dish. After a moment of searching, a strong signal appears again in the radar scope.

DR. WILLIAMS

There it is. Or something like it. Big as a school bus.

LIJE

Locking on now. Let the radar autotrack whatever it is. But I'll bet you that is our lost COSMOS.

DR. WILLIAMS

What makes you so sure? Thousands of objects in orbit up there.

LIJE

Don't know. Just am. We need to establish its track.

EXT. DEEP SPACE

The COSMOS satellite hurtles away from earth.

DR. WILLIAMS (O.S.)

Let's stick with it as long as we can, then.

...and eventually passes in front of the sun.

EXT. MELLSTROM RADAR PARKING LOT -- MORNING

The morning sun nudges above the horizon. A bleary-eyed Elijah and Dr. Williams walk to their cars.

DR. WILLIAMS

Of course you were right. You seem to have an uncanny instinct for this sort of thing. Though why the COSMOS ran away from home is still rather a mystery.

LIJE

It had a mid-life crisis. Whatever. Have to figure that one out later. Need some z's.

DR. WILLIAMS

Don't fall asleep at the wheel.

They both get in their cars, and leave.

EXT. LIJE'S HOME -- DAY

Lije' car rolls into the driveway of his modest house on a wooded country lane. He yawns, then sleepily shuffles inside.

INT. LIJE'S BEDROOM -- DAY

He enters, flops on his bed, and falls asleep immediately. His eyelids twitch from R.E.M. sleep.

FLASH CUTS

INT. RADAR SCREEN

The radar trace goes flat.

EXT. ROAD (1970) -- DAY

Lije and Laura Bess, 8 years old, sit looking down a long country road to the distant hill where it disappears.

EXT. ROAD (1974) -- DAY

Lije and Laura Bess, 12 years old, stand by the road with their bikes. She kisses him.

INT. COFFEE SHOP -- DAY

At the same bakery case, the reflection of a woman's face slides into view, mouthing "Hello stranger".

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL CAMPUS (1979) -- DAY

Laura Bess, 17, on the way home from school. She smiles at us.

TEENAGE LAURA BESS
Hello, stranger.

EXT. AIRCRAFT WRECKAGE -- DUSK

Horribly mangled aluminum.

EXT. ROAD (1974) -- DAY

A girl's hair blows in the wind as she rides her bicycle toward the afternoon sun. The sun FADES TO BLACK.

A PHONE rings.

BACK TO SCENE

Lije reluctantly wakes and answers the phone.

LIJE
Yes.

DR. WILLIAMS (O.S.)
(on the phone)
Lije, you might want to switch on CNN.

LIJE
(Sleepily)
Then again, I might not...

DR. WILLIAMS (O.S.)
Indulge me.

LIJE
Okay. Bye.

Lije turns TV on, to CNN.

CNN REPORTER
...The usual destiny for aging satellites is to gradually fall out of orbit and burn up in the earth's atmosphere much like a meteor. However, in an odd reversal, NASA scientists report that a COSMOS satellite originally launched by the former Soviet Union has indeed left orbit, but appears to be heading into deep space.

LIJE
I knew that.

And he falls asleep again.

EXT. COLLEGE OBSERVATORY - NIGHT

CNN REPORTER (O.S.)
The International Astronomical Union announced today that newly discovered Comet Hsia-Zanjian (SHAH-ZAN-JAN) will be the brightest ever seen by humans.

A physics STUDENT, a hopelessly geeky but sweet guy, looks through the college's 12-inch reflector telescope.

His whiny GIRLFRIEND is not enthusiastic.

GIRLFRIEND
I thought we were going to a movie.

STUDENT
Have a look!

She comes to look through the eyepiece reluctantly.

GIRLFRIEND
All right...

As she bends to look, he stares up at the night sky.

ON COMET

The comet suddenly accelerates, like The Enterprise going to warp speed. It is gone.

GIRLFRIEND

I don't see anything -- just a bunch of stars...

The girlfriend looks up from the telescope to whine.

GIRLFRIEND

Big woop.

But the student stares open-mouthed at the sky, astonished.

EXT. DEEP SPACE

The COSMOS satellite, tumbling furiously, whizzes by, heading into a mysteriously dark portion of deep space. It disappears into the distance.

Suddenly the huge head of the full-sized Comet Hsia-Zanjian, followed by a tail millions of miles long, whips by and follows after the COSMOS.

DR. WILLIAMS (O.S.)

...just gets mysteriouiser and mysteriouiser, doesn't it?

INT. RADAR STATION -- DAY

Lije and Dr. Williams watch a computer simulation of the COSMOS and the Comet's movement.

DR. WILLIAMS

...Here is the COSMOS... and there is the Comet.

LIJE

Both headed for the same point in space, going like bats out of hell. Why?

DR. WILLIAMS

Funny you should ask. Would you believe an extra-terrestrial hijacking?

LIJE

Uh, no.

DR. WILLIAMS

Well, how about a black hole?

LIJE
...Okay, reluctantly.

DR. WILLIAMS
Same thing. The simulation points to a powerful force there.
(points at screen))
Nothing is visible, but there is an x-ray source, one of the tell-tale signs of a black hole. A small one, mind you, but lethal enough. Seems to be moving. Toward us.

LIJE
I see. ...And does this little old black hole qualify as a planet-eater?

DR. WILLIAMS
Well, my best guess would be, yes. And if so, then, *Raptus regaliter*, we're royally screwed.

A long silence.

LIJE
That's damn well not funny.

DR. WILLIAMS
I take no pleasure in it.

LIJE
So, the good news is, global warming won't kill us.

DR. WILLIAMS
No.

LIJE
And there's no way to stop it.

DR. WILLIAMS
No.

LIJE
When?

DR. WILLIAMS
A week, two at the outside.

LIJE
And you're sure of this?

DR. WILLIAMS

Pretty sure. I expect NASA will confirm it.

LIJE

Well, with that bit of jolly news, I think I'm going to go get plastered.

DR. WILLIAMS

May I join you?

LIJE

By all means.

INT. BAR -- DAY

Lije and Williams, a bit in the bag, sit in a dark, gloomy little local bar, filled with the usual denizens. The only sounds are the click of billiard balls, and antique rock music on the juke.

DR. WILLIAMS

So. Any regrets?

Lije ponders.

LIJE

Regrets. Yeah. One.

DR. WILLIAMS

That you didn't finish your doctorate?

LIJE

No.

DR. WILLIAMS

Well, you are certainly brilliant enough. I should know.

LIJE

A photographic memory is not brilliance. Anyway, takes more than smarts, Doc.

DR. WILLIAMS

What, then?

LIJE

Didn't want it bad enough. Physics lost its "fizz" for me.

DR. WILLIAMS

No, I mean, your one regret. Not that it's any of my business. But I'm listening.

A beat.

LIJE

...Laura Bess.

DR. WILLIAMS

Laura. Oh my -- that's a name to stir the romantic in anyone.

He sings, badly.

DR. WILLIAMS

That's Laau-raa, but she's only a dream...

LIJE

Please don't do that.

DR. WILLIAMS

Sorry. Momentary lapse. Won't happen again.

Lije takes a long drink of his scotch.

LIJE

Laura Elizabeth Austin. Laura Bess for short... "The girl next door". ...In farm country, that means a mile or so down the road.

DR. WILLIAMS

She must be remarkable, to have occupied a corner of your psyche for so long.

Lije gazes distantly, remembering.

LIJE

Remarkable? Oh yeah. She tied with me for top science awards in high school, then was invited, invited, mind you, to attend Stanford.

DR. WILLIAMS

Impressive. Was she--how shall I put this--a babe?

LIJE
How very locker-room of you, Doc. I'm surprised.

DR. WILLIAMS
So?

LIJE
Let's just say, on the feminine pulchritude scale, Laura Bess rated a full helen.

DR. WILLIAMS
Beg pardon?

LIJE
You know--the Helen scale, based on Helen of Troy--one ship launched equals one millihelen. All geeks know this, Doc.

DR. WILLIAMS
Oh, I get it. So a full helen means...?

LIJE
Yes, she was a babe, at age seventeen. Glad we got that settled.

DR. WILLIAMS
Hmm. ...And then?

LIJE
(darkly)
That was sixteen years ago. I never saw her again.

DR. WILLIAMS
What happened, Lije?

Lije ignores the question.

LIJE
(abruptly)
Your turn.

DR. WILLIAMS
Beg pardon?

LIJE
Regrets. Cough it up.

A beat. Williams composes himself.

DR. WILLIAMS

Mindy. My dear, sweet Mindy. I lost her
nine years ago, and I miss her still,
bitterly.

LIJE

How...?

DR. WILLIAMS

Auto accident. And I wish I had died
with her... that is *my* regret.

LIJE

I'm so sorry.

DR. WILLIAMS

You wanted to know.

They continue drinking in silence.

INT. LIJE'S OFFICE - LATER

Lije, bleary-eyed, stares at the computer simulation of an
object entering a black hole.

ON COMPUTER SCREEN

The object travels along the surface of a space curvature
leading into a funnel-like well. Then it disappears over the
edge of the curve into the well.

The computer simulation MORPHS into Midwestern country
fields, with a country road replacing the path of the
disappearing object.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD (1970) - DAY

Lije and Laura Bess, 8 years old, sit together by the same
long country road that disappears over a hill in the
distance. They stare very intently down the road. Laura's
eyelids flutter, then close.

YOUNG LIJE

Can you 'magine it yet?

Laura Bess doesn't answer. She seems to be in a trance.

YOUNG LIJE

'ternity? Laura Bess?

After a moment, her eyes flutter open.

YOUNG LAURA BESS

I just 'bout think I can, then I go *all swimmy-headed*.

She laughs, rolls her eyes, and plops against him. They roll in the grass, giggling.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD (1974) - DAY

Lije and Laura Bess, now 12 years old, ride bicycles together down the road, which disappears into the horizon. It is a beautiful summer day.

PRETEEN LIJE

Don't you still think about stuff like that?

PRETEEN LAURA BESS

Like what?

PRETEEN LIJE

You know... Eternity and all...

PRETEEN LAURA BESS

(teasing him)

That's a long time.

PRETEEN LIJE

Yep. As long as it gets.

PRETEEN LAURA

Well, you know, Lije, I'm just a girl.

PRETEEN LIJE

Oh yeah, Laura Bess. ...and Stephen Hawking, Richard Feynmann, and Isaac Asimov? They're just a bunch of guys.

Laura Bess enjoys this, pretending not to understand.

PRETEEN LAURA BESS

Elijah Grant! That sounded like a compliment.

Lije hesitates awkwardly for a beat.

PRETEEN LIJE

...Well, yes. There's nothing *mere* about you, Laura Bess.

Laura immediately stops her bicycle by a small stream. Surprised, Lije does also. She looks him directly in the eyes.

PRETEEN LAURA BESS

Thank you. Eternity is only a logical extension of the idea of time. You think of time as a physical thing, but it isn't. It isn't even the so-called "fourth dimension". You can't prove that time exists at all. So the question of Eternity is meaningless.

A 60's vintage "hippie" VW microbus passes by in the background.

Laura Bess kisses him warmly, quickly, then rides away on her bike, toward the afternoon sun.

Lije watches her, then follows. She seems to dissolve in the sun ahead of him.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL CAMPUS (1979) - DAY

The school day is over, and students swarm out. Laura Bess, 17, carries her books, on her way home. Her figure has bloomed, and she is now a willowy, lovely girl.

Lije, 17, sees her. He stops, watches her coming toward him, gradually emerging from the crowd. Laura stops, and regards Lije quizzically.

TEENAGE LAURA BESS

Hi there, stranger.

TEENAGE LIJE

Stranger than you imagine.

Laura takes his arm and squeezes warmly. Then, in her sexiest voice:

TEENAGE LAURA BESS

I don't know about that -- I can imagine quite a lot.

TEENAGE LIJE

Whoa! May I have a few minutes of your time, Miss Austin?

TEENAGE LAURA BESS

I told you, Time doesn't really exist.

TEENAGE LIJE

Try explaining that to Mrs. Freeman when
your History term paper isn't in on
"Time".

TEENAGE LAURA BESS

(chiding)

Lije...

TEENAGE LIJE

(imitating her)

Laura Bess...

TEENAGE LAURA BESS

Yes?

TEENAGE LIJE

What can I ask for, then?

TEENAGE LAURA BESS

Nothing at all. I'm yours already.
Always have been.

TEENAGE LIJE

Forever?

TEENAGE LAURA BESS

Of course. Whatever that is.

Arm in arm they walk away, deep in conversation and each
other.

INT. LIJE'S CAR (PRESENT) -- DAY

Lije drives, Mellstrom Radar in the the background. He
passes a woman on her morning jog. Something familiar about
her. Nice legs. Fetching derriere.

As he rounds a curve after passing her, Lije looks back, but
she is out of sight.

INT. COFFEE SHOP -- DAY

Lije stops at a coffee, tea, and new-agey organic muffin
shop, busy, full of customers and bustle. The signboard
reads: "Druid Circle Coffee Shop". The thought of the day,
at the top of the menu board, is: "No matter where you go,
there you are." Lije notices it.

LIJE
 (to himself)
 Can't argue with that.

He orders a coffee and goes to look in the bakery case.

While Lije is absorbed in Danish and Donuts, a woman's reflection slides into place in the glass beside his reflection: an adult LAURA BESS (33), the same jogger he passed on the road. She still rates a full helen. Lije senses a presence, and shifts aside to make room.

LIJE
 Excuse me.

Then Lije sees her reflection in the bakery case glass. He slowly turns, stumbles backward. She simply smiles, gorgeous and resplendent in her sweaty running shorts and tank top, hands on her hips like a warrior princess.

LAURA BESS
 Hello, stranger.

Lije, not in control of his voice, stammers like an adolescent --

LIJE
 Laura? Laura Bess?

LAURA BESS
 Yup. That's me. Laura Bess Austin, girl scientist.

Lije barely manages to speak --

LIJE
 Laura Bess. Laura. I ...We ... How? I, I,
 I can't believe you're here. It's been
 ...so long.

LAURA BESS
 I've told you, my love, time and time
 again, Time doesn't exist.

Lije stares, speechless. Laura reaches to touch his face.

LAURA BESS
 I've missed you.

LIJE
 I'm dreaming this, right?

LAURA BESS
 No, I don't think so. But if you are,
 then so am I. Come.

She leads him to one of those large, wooden, uncomfortable
 but intimate booths along the wall. They sit.

LAURA BESS
 Better.

She smiles sweetly, then suddenly pinches him on the arm.

LIJE
 Ow! What was that for?

LAURA BESS
 You're not dreaming, right?

LIJE
 I guess not. How about you?

LAURA BESS
 Oh, dreaming or not, who cares? I'm
 exactly where I want to be.

They look at each other with hungry eyes. After a beat,

LIJE
 There's not a day I haven't thought of
 you... ever since the day I lost you.

Laura looks puzzled.

LAURA BESS
 Lost me? No. Let's just say life took a
 side trip, that's all.

A beat. Lije looks very confused.

LIJE
 A side trip? You went off to Stanford
 and I never saw you again! Don't make me
 say it Laura. The plane, Laura. The
 plane. It went down. You never made it
 to Stanford. Please don't make me say
 it.

LAURA BESS
 Say what?

Lije looks down, composes himself.

LIJE
You're dead, Laura Bess.

LAURA BESS
Well, clearly the evidence points to the
contrary. Here I am.

LIJE
But...

She puts her finger over his lips.

LAURA BESS
No buts.

LIJE
I am dreaming this.

She laces her fingers in his.

LAURA BESS
Really?

A beat.

LIJE
Okay, if I'm dreaming, I don't care
either.

Laura murmurs softly.

LAURA BESS
Remember our last date ...before college?

LIJE
Every nano-second.

LAURA BESS
...Lawson Lake?

EXT. LAKE SHORE (1979) -- NIGHT

Teenage Laura and Lije strip down to their bathing suits. A
blanket is spread on the sand.

LIJE (V.O.)
Yeah, and that special secret spot.

LAURA BESS (V.O.)
Where no one could find us...

Lije builds a fire.

LIJE (V.O.)
Midnight swims...

Laura dashes into the water. Lije follows. He catches up to her in the water. They kiss. After a moment, she breaks away, then dives underwater. A few seconds later, her bikini top floats to the surface. Lije dives after her.

LAURA BESS (V.O.)
Moon-bathing...

Later, Laura and Lije sit on the blanket in the firelight, wrapped in towels.

LIJE (V.O.)
Yeah.

LAURA BESS (V.O.)
The night before I flew to Stanford.

Lije puts a gold chain with his High School ring on it around her neck. They kiss, then look at each other. After a moment, Laura lets her towel drop open.

LIJE (V.O.)
Oh yeah.

They start to kiss and caress each other.

LAURA BESS (V.O.)
Yeah.

Their passion rises to a crescendo -- then a blinding LIGHT shines in their faces. It is a flashlight, held by a DEPUTY SHERIFF.

INT. COFFEE SHOP (PRESENT) -- DAY

LAURA BESS
Then Deputy Dawg rolls up...

LIJE
...and saves us from ourselves.

They both stare into space, remembering.

LIJE/LAURA BESS
Damn.

A beat. Laura ponders, then:

LAURA BESS
Take me home?

LIJE
Uh, sure. ...Where do you live?

LAURA BESS
Without you, nowhere at all.

LIJE
Same address as mine.

LAURA BESS
We have a long, long overdue appointment,
my love. ...Take me home.

INT. LIJE'S HOUSE -- DAY

Laura browses Lije's bookcase, fingering titles "The Tao of Pooh", "Mathematics made Difficult", "The Wizard of Oz", and "Le Mort D'Arthur", stopping on "Through the Looking Glass". She examines it.

LAURA BESS
First Edition, 1872. Wow.

LIJE
It reminds me of you.

Laura picks out another book, "Atomic Physics".

LAURA BESS
Ah, "Atomic Physics". A real page-
turner, yeah?

She opens it, and reads it aloud, seductively.

LAURA BESS
Hmmm. The Pauli Exclusion Principle --
"No two identical fermions may occupy the
same quantum state simultaneously".

A beat.

LIJE
The Elijah Grant Axiom: the force of
attraction to Laura Bess Austin is damn
near irresistible.

Laura tosses the book aside, and melts into Lije's arms. She murmurs into his ear:

LAURA BESS

Well, I am a scientist, you know. Prove it.

LIJE

Can't prove an axiom, you know. It is because it is.

LAURA BESS

Then show me.

LIJE

It would be my pleasure.

They kiss passionately.

INT. WILLIAMS CAR (MOVING) -- NIGHT

Dr. Williams drives down a country lane. He turns into the driveway of his dark, rustic house. He sits for a moment, then slowly, reluctantly gets out and goes inside.

INT. WILLIAMS HOUSE -- NIGHT

The house has the look of a messy, older bachelor's quarters.

The living room is dark. He slowly looks through the quiet house. A painting of a beautiful woman hangs over the mantle.

He pours himself a glass of wine, then sits and gazes longingly at the painting.

Faint MUSIC comes from somewhere outside, romantic and dreamlike--Miles Davis--*I Thought About You*. Her favorite. Surprised, Williams goes to the back door, and glimpses a distant light in the woods.

EXT. WOODS -- NIGHT

He walks on, as the MUSIC grows more distinct.

EXT. DECK -- NIGHT

He emerges onto a clearing with a wooden deck, a hot tub, deck chairs, and a fire in a brazier. In a wine bucket sits a bottle of champagne. Two glasses sit beside it.

Then a soft SOUND comes from the hot tub, like a light splash.

As he turns to look, MINDY WILLIAMS rises out of the water, like Botticelli's Venus -- the woman in the painting, a serenely sexy middle-aged woman. She beckons to him in her throaty British accent:

MINDY
Hello, Pet.

She lolls back in the water, like a mermaid.

MINDY
Join me?

Williams walks toward her, then she fades from sight.

INT. WILLIAMS' HOUSE -- NIGHT

Williams wakes abruptly in his chair. In a fit of lonely despair, he hurls his glass against the wall, and weeps.

INT. LIJE'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Lije is asleep. Laura Bess lies beside him, watching him. She gets up, carefully, not to wake him, and walks outside to the sun deck.

EXT. SUN DECK -- NIGHT

It is a magically starry clear night. Clothed in starlight, Laura looks up to the sky.

LAURA BESS
Star light, star bright, all the stars I
see tonight... I wish I may, I wish I
might...

A very bright meteor goes streaking across the sky.

LAURA BESS
...Why, thank you.

As its light fades,

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. THE BLACK HOLE IN DEEP SPACE

A very dark area of the sky. Hundreds of objects, asteroids, and space debris are hurtling toward one point, which flashes with light dimly, as the objects disappear into the whirling funnel-like maw of the black hole.

The WHISTLE of a teakettle.

INT. LIJE'S KITCHEN -- MORNING

Lije pours hot water over teabags in two mugs.

Laura comes in, barely wearing a man's white shirt. She puts her arms around him from behind, and purrs:

LAURA BESS

Mmmm....

Lije leans back against her, and closes his eyes.

LIJE

I fully concur, Dr. Austin.

She touches him provocatively.

LAURA BESS

Please, Sir, I would like more.

He turns to her.

LIJE

I will never have enough of you.

LAURA BESS

Here I am, Love.

LIJE

Will you be here tomorrow?

LAURA BESS

Do you want me to be?

LIJE

Yes. Stay. I never want to lose sight of you again.

LAURA BESS

Then I will make every effort to be here tomorrow. Is that all? Tomorrow?

LIJE
All the tomorrows there are. But time...

LAURA BESS
Time...?

LIJE
...doesn't exist, I know. But if it did,
there isn't much of it left.

LAURA BESS
I know about the black hole, Lije. Let's
not talk about that now.

LIJE
I'm good with that.

Lije turns away from her to tend to the tea. Laura wraps her
arms around him from behind.

LAURA BESS
Remember our first kiss? We were twelve?

Lije chuckles knowingly.

LIJE
Yeah. You kissed me. I remember it
perfectly.

LAURA BESS
Lije, when you remember something, it's
almost like *deja vu*, right? As though it
happened before?

LIJE
...Yes.

LAURA BESS
...suppose that it has happened before.

LIJE
(laughing)
Then I should know the future. I only
know you are here... now.

LAURA BESS (O.S.)
...*Oh, damn it!*

From somewhere behind Lije a light glows, then quickly fades.

LIJE

What?

He turns to look at her. Laura is not there.

LIJE

Laura? Laura Bess?

He leaves the kitchen, looking for her in the bedroom.

INT. LIJE'S BEDROOM

She isn't there. With rising panic, he looks in the obvious hiding places, the closet, etc. No Laura. Lije stops, alarmed.

INT. LIJE'S KITCHEN

Lije dashes back into the kitchen. No Laura.

Confused, he leans on the kitchen counter. A tendrill of steam rises by his face. He looks down.

There is only one cup of tea, still steaming. Lije whirls around. There is no one there.

He sees the door to the sun deck is open, and dashes out.

EXT. SUN DECK -- MORNING

Lije explodes onto the sun deck. Still no Laura. He looks up at the sky, exasperated. There, shining brightly in the morning sky, is the Comet, large and bright.

Lije stares, not sure if he is quite sane. Then the Comet DISAPPEARS.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD -- DAY

Lije drives like a maniac, speeding down a narrow country road, through winding turns, till he comes to Williams's driveway. He careens in, roars up to the house, and slides to a stop just short of the front porch.

EXT. WILLIAMS' HOUSE -- DAY

He sits motionless for a moment, gripping the steering wheel, as Dr. Williams strolls out, coffee mug in hand.

DR. WILLIAMS

Ubi est ignis?

LIJE

What?

DR. WILLIAMS

Where's the fire?

LIJE

I saw the Comet this morning, not half and hour ago. It's not supposed to be there, right? Well, then it disappeared. Again. About a half an hour ago. And I found Laura, or rather she found me, I guess, and then I lost her. About a half an hour ago, or... maybe I just misplaced her. You think that's possible? I'm babbling, right?

DR. WILLIAMS

Been watching X-Files reruns again?

LIJE

My sanity is in desperate need of a system reboot.

DR. WILLIAMS

I have just the thing. Come in.

INT. WILLIAMS' HOUSE -- DAY

Lije and Williams polish off the second of two bottles of wine.

DR. WILLIAMS

I am reminded of the expression, "Same planet, different worlds."

LIJE

Well?

DR. WILLIAMS

First, you must try to establish whether or not Laura is a real person, and not a ...well ...figment. If she is real, there must be evidence of that. ...A photo, a letter, or something...

LIJE

I know just the place to look.

INT. LIJE'S HOME ATTIC STOREROOM --NIGHT

Lije searches through boxes of memorabilia as Dr. Williams watches.

LIJE

Why did I keep all this ...stuff? This box alone is all high school junk.

DR. WILLIAMS

It's when the hormones awaken, when you feel most invincible. The world is your oyster. Memorable.

Lije finds an old high school yearbook.

LIJE

Ah. Senior year annual. She's got to be here.

He looks methodically through the pages. Then he turns a page, and...

LIJE

There you are... a page all to yourself...

He reads the page.

LIJE

...Oh God...

DR. WILLIAMS

What is it, Lije?

INSERT YEARBOOK

There is a Senior Class photo of Laura Bess, and a caption.

Lije reads it:

LIJE

"Laura Elizabeth Austin -- *In memoriam:*
Let us believe you are on your way to another adventure. It is not possible to think of you as gone from us, but that we will meet again, somewhere in the eternal present."

Lije hands the book to Williams.

LIJE
 ...I wrote that... that epitaph.

DR. WILLIAMS
 What?

LIJE
 I wrote it. It's true. She is ...gone.

DR. WILLIAMS
 Tell me what happened.

INT. AIRPORT DEPARTURE AREA -- DAY

Teenage Lije and Laura Bess, 17, are locked in an embrace. The airliner is seen through the windows in the background. Passengers start to board.

LIJE (V.O.)
 ...She was on her way to Stanford University ...they flew her out to San Francisco for a special interview.

Lije and Laura reluctantly part. She wears Lije's high school ring on a chain around her neck. She mouths the words "I love you" and starts toward the boarding tunnel to the plane.

She stops at the entrance to the tunnel and looks back at Lije one last time, then turns and enters the tunnel.

LIJE (V.O.)
 I never saw her again.

FLASH CUT

EXT. ARIZONA DESERT -- DAY

A smoldering, mangled piece of aluminum lies on scorched ground.

A glint of something flashes in the mangled mess. ...a high school ring, slightly damaged, but recognizable.

LIJE (V.O.)
 ...she didn't quite make it there.

INT. LIJE'S HOME ATTIC STOREROOM

Lije weeps, as Williams comforts him.

DR. WILLIAMS

It may be small comfort, but I do know
how you must feel.

LIJE

...Yeah, I guess you do...

DR. WILLIAMS

It's strange, but I had the most
realistic dream last night -- Mindy was
very much alive -- here with me. It was
so sweet while it lasted. But she faded
and was gone much too soon.

LIJE

I need to make sense of this. If
yesterday was real, then Laura Bess is
alive. But if she is dead, then none of
that could be real. It seemed real. The
senior yearbook couldn't be faked. I
wrote the epitaph after all. I guess it's
normal denial, but I think I never really
believed it. I have to know.

DR. WILLIAMS

I wish I could help you with that.

LIJE

I need to take a trip back home.

He stares at the yearbook.

ON YEARBOOK PHOTO OF LAURA

Her smiling face. The SOUND of jet engines drones, heard
inside an airliner.

INT. AIRLINER -- DAY

Lije sits in a window seat, looking out at nothing in
particular. The yearbook is in his lap, open to Laura's
picture.

The plane does a gradual turn, until the sun shines directly
in his window, blinding him for a moment. As he turns away
from the glare, he hears...

LAURA BESS'S VOICE (O.S.)

Hello stranger...

LIJE
 Laura Bess?

An attractive Flight Attendant stops by his seat.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
 Can I help you?

LIJE
 (recovering)
 No... no thank you. Sorry to be a
 bother.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
 Not at all, Sir. We'll be landing in
 about 20 minutes.

She notices the yearbook in his lap, and flirts, a little.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
 Going to a class reunion? ...Alone?

LIJE
 Something like that. Almost. But not
 quite...

She sees Laura's photo.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
 She's a lucky girl, I think.

She smiles, then moves on down the aisle. Lije mumbles to
 himself.

LIJE
 Not really.

EXT. RENTAL CAR (MOVING) -- DAY

Lije drives down the long country road where he and Laura
 once rode their bikes.

EXT. OLD CHURCH -- DAY

Lije stops before an old, run-down, abandoned church, the
 same one he and Laura Bess attended as children. A cemetery
 lies next to the church.

He gets out of the car, climbs the steps, and walks inside.

INT. OLD CHURCH -- DAY

Looking up to the pulpit, he remembers.

MINISTER'S VOICE
...A slow sort of country...

LAURA BESS(O.S.)
...it takes all the running you can do to
stay in one place.

Lije, startled, turns to see Laura by his side, glowing and lovely in a summer dress, her hair down and flowing around her shoulders.

LAURA BESS
We need to talk.

Lije is speechless, for a long beat. Denying her as real, he turns and walks away, talking to himself.

LIJE
No... no. Not again. Can't be
happening.

He goes to a pew in the church and sits, face in his hands.

Laura follows him. She sits facing him.

LAURA BESS
You think the dress is too girly? I can
change, you know. Or... I could just
eliminate it altogether, what do you
think?

Lije doesn't respond.

LAURA BESS
Hello? Stranger?

He mutters into his hands.

LIJE
Don't answer. Don't answer.

LAURA BESS
"Shave-and-a-haircut...?"

After a long pause...

LIJE
 "Two bits."

He still doesn't look up. Laura takes his hands and gently pulls them away from his face.

LAURA BESS
 Stranger than you can imagine?

Lije finally looks at her.

LIJE
 That's my line.

LAURA BESS
 Oh, good. Much better. I was beginning to worry about you.

LIJE
 How ...are you here? Wait. First, are you here?

LAURA BESS
 Yes.

LIJE
 You said I wouldn't lose you, but I already have -- sixteen years ago. Are you a ghost? Or am I the butt of some stupendously tasteless joke?

LAURA BESS
 No joke. I'm as real as you.

LIJE
 Huh. Could have fooled me.

Lije walks away. He stops for a moment, then turns to her. Yes, she is still there.

LIJE
 Prove it.

LAURA BESS
 What?

LIJE
 Prove you are really Laura Elizabeth Austin.

Laura rises, and slinks languidly to him, every sinew, every sway and swell of her body aimed at one purpose and one purpose only.

LAURA BESS

With pleasure.

She cradles his face with her hands, and kisses him long and passionately. When they finally break, he whispers:

LIJE

Q.E.D., Laura Bess.

LAURA BESS

Sure? Want some more proof?

He sweeps her into his arms.

LIJE

Yeah, convince me again, a lot.

LAURA BESS

You got it.

She starts unbuttoning his shirt, as they begin to consume each other.

EXT. CHURCH YARD -- LATER

Lije and Laura, a little dishevelled, walk outside. The Comet shines in the sky.

LAURA BESS

All better now?

LIJE

Oh yes... But I do have a tiny question or two...

LAURA BESS

Okay. Shoot. I know everything.

LIJE

Really?

LAURA BESS

Sure. I have a PhD from Stanford. Isn't it obvious?

LIJE

Of course it is. How silly of me.
Okay... what was it? Something I said? I
just turned my back on you for a moment,
and you were gone!

LAURA BESS

I'm sorry, Lije... You only remember
losing me once ...well, twice now. There
was a time I thought I would wither and
die if I never saw you again.

LIJE

"Time doesn't exist." Right?

LAURA BESS

Right, only... all moments, past,
present, and future, do exist,
simultaneously.

LIJE

Where? Or rather, when?

LAURA BESS

In multiple parallel universes.
Elsewhens.

LIJE

Elsewhens?

LAURA BESS

Just my pet name for them.

They stroll for a moment by the old church cemetery. Suddenly
Lije stops. A gravestone, marked *Laura Elizabeth Austin*,
stands at his feet.

LIJE

I came here to see that. A dose of
reality. I couldn't make myself believe
you were gone.

LAURA BESS

Well, I was, in a way...

INT. AIRLINER (1979) -- DAY

Teenage Laura sits in an aisle seat, and absentmindedly plays
with the gold chain and ring around her neck.

An elderly couple sits next to her.

The aircraft shakes occasionally, as in rough air.

LAURA BESS (V.O.)

At first it was just turbulence...

The aircraft suddenly pitches and rolls erratically. Passengers scream in panic.

LAURA BESS (V.O.)

But, the plane was doomed. I saw my only escape was to... sort of... step aside...

Laura calmly takes off her seat belt, steps into the aisle, braces herself, then takes a step. She DISAPPEARS THROUGH A RIPPLING, TRANSPARENT CURTAIN.

A blinding FLASH.

INT. ALTERNATE AIRLINER (1979) -- DAY

All is normal and quiet, but not quite the same as in the doomed aircraft. The color scheme and the uniform of the flight attendants is different.

Teenage Laura Bess walks down the aisle toward her seat, disoriented.

OVER THE P.A.:

CAPTAIN'S VOICE

Folks, we'll be landing in St. Francis in about twenty minutes, so please take your seats and fasten your seat belts.

Laura is puzzled, and finds a FLIGHT ATTENDANT.

TEENAGE LAURA BESS

Excuse me, isn't this flight landing in San Francisco?

The Flight Attendant smiles patronizingly.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Yes, dear. That's what *some* people call it. Bless your heart, are you a foreigner?

Laura returns to her seat, puzzled. She reaches for the ring at her neck. It is gone.

LAURA BESS (V.O.)
I stepped aside into an alternate
universe.

EXT. CHURCH YARD (PRESENT) -- DAY

Lije looks skeptical.

LIJE
What alternate universe?

LAURA BESS
An Elsewhen. Luckily, where they do
better maintenance on their aircraft.

LIJE
So you "stepped aside" into an Elsewhen?

LAURA BESS
Yes.

LIJE
And you actually went on to Stanford, or
rather, "Else-Stanford", got your
doctorate?

LAURA BESS
Yes.

LIJE
But... Sorry... I could use a little help
here, with the stepping aside thing.

LAURA BESS
Well, I found I could do it when I was
little. It scared me at first -- I
thought I was seeing ghosts. Then I had
fun with it, for awhile. The people I met
thought I was a ghost.

LIJE
I know the feeling...

LAURA BESS
I learned very fast that this wasn't
"normal", so I stopped doing it, until
that day over Arizona, sixteen years ago.

LIJE
And it saved your life.

LAURA BESS

Yes. But it came with a price. I'm not always able to control it.

LIJE

Stepping aside?

LAURA BESS

I can do it when I want, but... it doesn't last. Something pulls me back to that Elsewhen that saved me. That's how I disappeared before morning tea. Certainly not my choice.

LIJE

That's a relief. I thought it was morning-after regrets.

LAURA BESS

You did not.

LIJE

Might have.

LAURA BESS

Well, I can see that you need some more proof, which I would ordinarily be too happy to present.

LIJE

I sense a "but" coming on.

LAURA BESS

I can't stay here, either. I'll meet you tomorrow, on the road down from Firethorn Labs. I'll be on my morning run.

LIJE

Firethorn? Where is that?

LAURA BESS

Sorry, you know it as Mellstrom Hill. In my world, Mellstrom Radar is mothballed. Firethorn is just across the road.

LIJE

But I work at that radar site -- and there's nothing but forest across the road.

LAURA BESS
I know, but not in my world.

Laura begins to dissolve before Lije's eyes.

LIJE
Oh God, not again.

LAURA BESS
Tomorrow then.

He reaches for her, but she is gone.

EXT. FIRETHORN FACILITY - DAY

The ruins of the defunct Mellstrom Radar sit on the right side of a road cresting the hill. On the left side is a one-story, simple, unobtrusive concrete building.

A sign in front reads: "FIRETHORN RESEARCH FACILITY".

Everything else is forest.

INT. TELEPORTATION LABORATORY -- DAY

The interior is mostly underground, enormous compared to the exterior.

A huge laboratory area is dominated by two eight-foot cubes with portholes, towers of electronic equipment, and computers with three prominent monitor screens.

An electronic HUM fills the room.

Watching the monitor screens intently are Laura Bess, and DR. ALBERT PERICULE (30s), a slightly pudgy man with a permanently smug look on his face. An intellectual diva who acts as though he thinks himself immensely attractive to women.

SAM, a lab assistant, checks through porthole 1, the cube on the left.

SAM
All set.

LAURA BESS
No flies in there, Sam?

SAM
Very funny.

He returns to the monitors.

Inside porthole 1, a four centimeter metal cube sits on a cylindrical pedestal.

LAURA BESS (O.S.)

Okay, Dr. Laura Austin recording.
Teleportation experiment number 2358,
attempting transport of 4-centimeter
titanium cube. Data recording on.
...Initiate transport.

A SWIRLING GLOW begins to surround the small cube. An exotic electronic WHINE starts.

They all watch the monitors.

PERICULE

Something showing in number two.

Sam darts over to check porthole 2 (the cube on the right).

SAM

Okay, it's starting. Looks good.

He returns to the monitors.

Inside porthole 2, a SWIRLING GLOW begins over an identical pedestal, but no cube.

All three watch the monitors, at first with excitement, then uncertainty, and finally, disappointment.

Inside porthole 2, a small, misshapen, molten, metallic blob oozes off the cylindrical pedestal. The electronics shut down with a DESCENDING WHINE. After a funereal silence:

LAURA BESS

Well, that went well. Good thing that
wasn't Sam's pet gerbil.

(laughing)

If they can send a man to the moon, why
can't they teleport a little old chunk of
metal 20 feet?

No one laughs.

(she rises)

Tough room. Look, I've got to take a
break. This has got me *all swimmy-headed*.

PERICULE

It's got you what?

LAURA BESS

Sorry, technical term.

(to Sam)

Write this up, please, save all the data files, and we'll have a look at it later. I'm going for a run, try to clear my head.

She gets up and stretches. As she walks away, Dr. Pericule gives her figure a long, salacious appraisal.

INT. WILLIAMS HOME -- NIGHT

Williams lounges on his sofa, looking at a photo of himself and Mindy as a young hippie couple, as he guzzles wine. There are several empties around him.

The DOORBELL RINGS. Williams ignores it. It RINGS several more times, insistently. Williams ignores it. The door knob RATTLES, then the door opens.

LIJE

Doc? You here?

DR. WILLIAMS

Nemo hic. ...No one here...

LIJE

There is now.

DR. WILLIAMS

Certainly I'm not. Haven't been in a long time.

LIJE

You okay, Doc?

DR. WILLIAMS

No. And you are here because...?

LIJE

Um, well, maybe now is not the time.

DR. WILLIAMS

Out with it.

LIJE

Okay. Do you remember me telling you about Laura?

DR. WILLIAMS

Yes. Unfortunately it reminded me of my own loss.

LIJE

Sorry. It was thoughtless of me.

Williams turns and looks at Lije for the first time since he entered. His basically amiable nature struggles to the surface.

DR. WILLIAMS

No, I'm sorry. That was insensitive of me. Please accept my apology.

LIJE

Yes, of course.

DR. WILLIAMS

You must join me in a glass of '89 Chateauneuf. Extraordinary year. I fear I have polished off all I had of the '78.

Williams finds a glass. Pours wine into it, and hands it to Lije. Williams raises his glass in a toast.

DR. WILLIAMS

To the mermaids -- "...I hear the mermaids singing, each to each. I do not think they sing for me..."

LIJE

To the mermaids.

They clink glasses and drink. Williams nods to the portrait of Mindy.

DR. WILLIAMS

She was my mermaid. And how she could sing! How lucky a man am I, to have ever known her!

He drains his glass. The wine bottle is empty, and he looks around for another.

LIJE

Doc. I found her.

DR. WILLIAMS

Who?

LIJE

Laura, Doc. I found her.

DR. WILLIAMS

Well... that's marvelous.
Congratulations.

LIJE

There's more.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD -- DAY

Laura Bess jogs. In the background, the ruins of Mellstrom Radar.

A Porsche approaches her in the opposite direction, Dr. Albert Pericule driving. He slows down for an leering eyeful, and waves as he passes.

Laura nods perfunctorily to Pericule, waits a few seconds, then looks back.

The Porsche rounds a curve, and goes out of sight.

Laura slows her pace. She looks straight ahead, fixedly.

Pericule's car stops, then turns around, and heads back toward Laura.

Pericule's car comes back around the curve. He sees Laura:

She DISAPPEARS.

Astonished, he drives to the spot where she vanished, and jams the brakes.

INT. LIJE'S CAR (MOVING) -- DAY

Lije drives along the same road, Mellstrom Radar, pristine and operational, in the background.

EXT. LIJE'S CAR -- DAY

On the road ahead, Laura REAPPEARS in exactly the spot she disappeared. Startled by the sound of a car, she looks over her shoulder and smiles to see it's Lije.

As the car nears her, she turns, and sticks out her thumb. Lije stops.

LAURA BESS
Hello, stranger.

LIJE
Where to, Miss?

She hops in the car and kisses him passionately.

LAURA BESS
First things first.

Then she settles in her seat.

LAURA BESS
Nashoba Lake. We can talk there.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD -- DAY

In the distance, Lije's car winds up a mountain road. The Comet glows again on the horizon.

EXT. MOUNTAIN TOP -- LATER

Lije and Laura stand at a mountain overlook, with Nashoba Lake and a wooded valley below. Mountains ringing the lake resemble a circle of large stones.

LAURA BESS
I love this spot.

LIJE
Before you disappear again, why must you go back, or sideways, whatever?

LAURA BESS
Because I don't belong in this world, except in your memory. Here, I didn't make it to Stanford, didn't get my doctorate in quantum physics.

LIJE
Okay...

LAURA BESS

Look, I dodged the bullet, right? But I couldn't return, because there was no life to step back into. My life here ended, and worst of all, I lost you.

LIJE

Yet here you are.

LAURA BESS

And glad of it, but when I step aside, it's like I am expanding part of my world into yours... a kind of dimensional bubble.

LIJE

And that bubble eventually ...implodes, snaps you back?

LAURA BESS

Yes, I suppose. Nice metaphor. But what do I know? I'm just a quantum physicist.

Lije ponders this revelation.

LIJE

Wouldn't there be an alternate version of me in your world?

LAURA BESS

No.

LIJE

No "Elsewhen-Lije" making your tea in the morning?

An edge comes into Laura's voice.

LAURA BESS

No, I said. I looked everywhere for you, even in parallel worlds, but you were nowhere to be found. And what about you? Did you console yourself with some pea-brained, jiggly bimbo? Did you make tea for her?

LIJE

No, but I spent some time with a very charming older woman.

LAURA BESS

Really.

LIJE

The Grief Counselor they insisted I see. She tried to convince me that you were dead. I didn't believe her. I even wrote you letters, stacks of them -- they all came back. But it didn't matter, I just kept on writing, because I could rationalize that you didn't love me anymore, but not that you were gone. I simply knew you weren't dead, just out there somewhere.

(a reflective beat)

Funny. I was right.

LAURA BESS

I'm so sorry, Lije. That was bitchy of me. I've spent my entire career trying to find a way to get back to you, and stay. At Firethorn, I hoped to use teleportation to cross to your world, permanently -- and I knew you were just across the road, sort of. But I've failed. The black hole changes everything. Your world is dying. I can't get you to mine, and there's no time left.

LIJE

...Time?

LAURA BESS

Yes. There, I've said it. "Time". Oh God Lije, what do we do?

Laura fights back tears. Lije folds her into his arms.

LIJE

Let's find our own Elsewhen.

Laura's eyes light up.

LAURA BESS

You already know it! If we can ...if we do ...then you already know it.

LIJE

How so?

LAURA BESS

"It's a poor sort of memory that only works backwards."

LIJE

And?

LAURA BESS

Your memory of the future told you I wasn't dead, despite everyone telling you I was. You were right. Here I am, just as you knew I would be, somehow.

LIJE

For which I am extremely grateful.

LAURA BESS

So, you should also know how we'll find our Elsewhen ...if we do.

LIJE

It's that simple, is it?

LAURA BESS

Well, yes. We can't make the black hole go away, and I can't stay here, so we have to dodge the bullet. And there's one more thing.

LIJE

Of course there is.

Laura kisses him fiercely.

LAURA BESS

I can't stay...

She turns, runs -- and DISAPPEARS.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD -- DAY

Laura runs. Exhausted, she slows to a walk, and looks up toward a hilltop: The Firethorn Facility, and the abandoned ruins of Mellstrom Radar.

EXT. FIRETHORN FACILITY --DAY

Gathering her breath, Laura enters the building using a coded entry card.

INT. FIRETHORN FACILITY -- DAY

Laura shows her I.D. to a guard.

GUARD

Good run, Dr. Austin?

LAURA BESS

High on endorphins, Bobby. Good thing
it's legal.

Laura continues down a corridor.

The corridor becomes a catwalk, with offices alongside. She passes an office with the nameplate, "Dr. A. T. Pericule".

Then, she comes to an office labelled, "Dr. L. E. Austin".

Laura goes in, and closes the door.

INT. LIJE'S OFFICE -- DAY

Lije stares at his computer screen, absorbed in the black hole simulation. Dr. Williams enters.

WILLIAMS

Lije? A moment?

Lije straightens up, rubs his eyes.

LIJE

Sure, Doc. What's up?

WILLIAMS

Well, that's just the problem. Nothing.

LIJE

Say what?

WILLIAMS

There's been zero news about the black hole, haven't you noticed?

LIJE

Been a bit preoccupied, what with Laura Bess coming back from the dead, and all that sort of thing.

Williams completely misses the sarcasm.

WILLIAMS

Oh. Yes. Understandable. Well, I called one of my colleagues at NASA. He wouldn't -- or couldn't talk about it.

LIJE

Oh. That sounds... ominous.

WILLIAMS

Yes. They must know, surely.

LIJE

Denial? Cover up? Should we go public?

FADE UP SOUND of news reporters barking questions.

WILLIAMS

That's a big can of worms to open...

INT. AUDITORIUM (FANTASY) -- DAY

Williams reluctantly stands before a microphone, while a horde of reporters and media vultures fire questions.

REPORTER 1

Dr. Williams! Is it true that a black hole is headed toward the Earth?

DR. WILLIAMS

Yes. I'm afraid that is true.

REPORTER 1

But isn't it true that it is very small?

DR. WILLIAMS

Yes. But large enough.

REPORTER 2

The Earth is really going to be destroyed?

DR. WILLIAMS

In a word, yes.

REPORTER 2

When?

DR. WILLIAMS

Soon. A week, perhaps two at the outside.

REPORTER 3

Couldn't we divert it, blow it up with a nuclear device, something like that?

DR. WILLIAMS

That only happens in the movies.

REPORTER 4

Dr. Williams, how did you feel when you discovered the end of the world was near?

DR. WILLIAMS

I felt that one of you would eventually ask me that idiotic, pointless question.

REPORTER 1

Well, is there anything else you would like to say?

A beat.

DR. WILLIAMS

Sic friatur crustum dulce.

REPORTER 4

What does that mean?

DR. WILLIAMS

"It is thus that the cookie crumbles."

REPORTER 1

Very funny, Doctor. Are you aware none of your colleagues in the scientific community agree with this doomsday story?

DR. WILLIAMS

Yes.

REPORTER 1

...and they feel you may be delusional, in need of ...professional help?

DR. WILLIAMS

For them I offer this ancient advice--
Futue te ipsum, et caballum tuum.

REPORTER 1

Meaning?

DR. WILLIAMS

I would rather leave that as my private message to them.

Two ominous-looking LARGE MEN in white scrubs appear in the back of the auditorium. The reporters VOICES rise, babbling hysterically, like hyenas.

BACK TO SCENE

Williams stares, a horrified look in his eyes.

DR. WILLIAMS

No.

He turns abruptly to leave.

LIJE

Wait, Doc. Why?

DR. WILLIAMS

To give the world several days of dread before the inevitable? That is, if they believed me at all... No. Spare them that, at least.

He turns sadly, and leaves.

INT. TELEPORTATION LABORATORY - DAY

Laura sits absorbed at a computer console, nearby one of the large cubes in the lab.

Dr. Pericule approaches her unnoticed.

PERICULE

Working late as usual, Laura?

Laura is startled, but composes herself quickly.

LAURA BESS

Dr. Pericule. I could ask the same of you.

PERICULE

Al. Or Albert, if you must. We've been working together for almost a year now... Can't you drop the "Doctor"?

LAURA BESS

Okay, Pericule then.

PERICULE

But outside of work, in a social context, that could be different, wouldn't you think?

LAURA BESS

Not really.

PERICULE

Working on this bizarre project must have made me delusional. To think that you and I could be more than professional colleagues...

LAURA BESS

Doctor, please...

PERICULE

You know, I was on the verge of throwing in the towel on this experiment ...until today.

LAURA BESS

What changed your mind? The payments on your Porsche?

PERICULE

You, of course.

LAURA BESS

Beg pardon?

PERICULE

Coming back from lunch today, I passed you on your usual run -- you were in splendid form, I might add, and I saw you --how shall I say this--disappear.

Laura tries to laugh it off.

LAURA BESS

Was that a liquid lunch, Doctor?

PERICULE

Not quite believing what I saw, I drove along your usual route. No Laura. Now here you are.

LAURA BESS

My usual route? Have you been following me? You really do need to get a life, and I need to get back to work.

Pericule looms closer, in her face.

PERICULE

I know what I saw. But... perhaps I could be persuaded to forget it.

He touches her arm. Laura stiffens.

LAURA BESS

Remove it or lose it.

EXT. FOREST ROAD -- NIGHT

Lije, preoccupied, drives his car slowly down a forest road. As it rounds a turn...

A woman suddenly appears in the middle of the road, dressed in buckskin and Indian paraphernalia.

Lije jams on the brakes, too late -- the car goes STRAIGHT THROUGH her, as though she were a ghost.

Lije jumps out of the car to look for her.

In the bright moonlight, she disappears into the woods. Lije follows.

EXT. NASHOBA LAKE SHORE -- NIGHT

The woman comes to the edge of a lake, where a birch bark canoe is beached. She turns and looks back toward Lije -- the beautiful Native American woman from the opening scene and young Laura's vision. A tattoo on her forearm resembles a series of arches.

She launches the canoe and climbs in, paddling toward the middle of the lake.

A MISTY GLOW appears around her, which grows quickly to BLINDING INTENSITY. She vanishes in the mist.

DR. WILLIAMS (V.O.)

Lije? ...Lije?

INT. WILLIAMS HOUSE -- NIGHT

Lije sits on Williams' sofa, staring into space, trancelike.

DR. WILLIAMS

Lije!

Lije doesn't respond. Reluctantly, Williams slaps him. Lije snaps out of it, rubs his face.

LIJE

Why did you slap me?

DR. WILLIAMS

You were, I don't know, out. I didn't know what else to do.

LIJE

Water in the face might have been, well, better.

DR. WILLIAMS

I'll try to remember that. You arrived here like a zombie. What happened?

LIJE

I don't know, exactly. I had a strange encounter with an Indian woman, or a ghost. Some sort of vision.

DR. WILLIAMS

Indian woman?

LIJE

Yeah, buckskin clothing, the whole deal.

DR. WILLIAMS

By Nashoba Lake?

LIJE

Yeah.

DR. WILLIAMS

Ah. The Nipmuc tribe, had a name for it. ... "Waabang-ahki" or ... "Tomorrowland", roughly translated.

LIJE

You've got to be kidding. "Tomorrowland?"

DR WILLIAMS

Well, believe it or not, the name fits. They came to the lake on vision quests, seeking answers. People have also disappeared there, according to Nipmuc legends.

LIJE

Okay. Getting a little new-agey here. There wouldn't happen to be a circle of stones, too?

DR. WILLIAMS

Look at the lake from the air, that's pretty much what it is.

LIJE

You seem to know a lot about this stuff.

DR. WILLIAMS

I'm just a novice. My Mindy was an expert, but she learned it all from her friend Elaine Morgan. Elaine has a small shop near here. Go see her. Oh, and she prefers to be called Mama Kajiwin.

EXT. MAMA KAJIWIN'S HOME -- DAY

MAMA KAJIWIN, a formidable Native American woman, of indeterminate age, with a mischievous sense of humor behind her stony face, sits on the front porch of her store/home, "The Snow Goose".

Lije hops out of his car and walks up the steps.

LIJE

Mama Kajiwin?

Mama sizes him up.

MAMA

Huh. Don't know if Mama here today. Maybe you like to see Elly Morgan?

LIJE

Sure, that would be good.

MAMA

Maybe she not here, either.

LIJE

I'll just talk to you then, if that's okay, ma'am?

MAMA

You talk all you want. And I'm not a "Ma'am". ...How you know about Mama Kajiwin? Who send you?

LIJE

An old friend of Mama's... her name was Mindy. Mindy Williams.

Mama reacts, dropping her stony stereotypical artifice.

MAMA

She passed over almost ten years ago. How do you happen to know her?

LIJE

It's hard to explain. You'd probably think I was crazy.

MAMA

A little craziness is good for one's mental health.

LIJE

I'm a friend of her husband, Evan Williams.

MAMA

Sad man. Mindy and Evan were dear friends. I have known them since they were young, standing with us at a protest in the Black Hills. Come inside.

INT. MAMA KAJIWIN'S HOME -- NIGHT

Lije and Mama sit in a very quaint living room, loaded with Native American products and art.

A fire blazes in the woodstove. Mama ponders Lije.

MAMA

You tell a strange and sad story. What do you seek from me?

LIJE

What did I see on Nashoba Lake?

MAMA

A miracle, perhaps. The arch of the tattoo on that woman is the ahnung-manitou, or spirit-star -- the Comet, you call it.

EXT. LAKE -- NIGHT

The buckskin-clad woman paddles out into the lake, the tattoos on her arm now clearly visible in the moonlight.

LIJE (V.O.)

But she had so many arches, all the way up her arm.

MAMA (V.O.)

You think the spirit star hasn't been here before?

LIJE (V.O.)

Well, of course it has -- we've calculated its period at 175 years.

MAMA (V.O.)

She saw it many times. That is what the arches mean.

The woman stops paddling and looks up at the enormous Comet arching across the sky.

INT. MAMA KAJIWIN'S HOME

MAMA

She was a Nipmuc medicine woman, Ikway Mushkeeki. A great healer and prophet.

LIJE

A prophet?

MAMA

She knew all that was to come -- the white man and the end of our way of life. Such knowledge made her very sad, but she could not change it.

LIJE

What happened to her?

MAMA

She lost her mate, in one of the white man's wars.

One early dawn, she went to the lake...
no one saw her again. They say she looks
for him, here and in the spirit world.

EXT. WOMAN IN CANOE -- NIGHT

The woman is enveloped in a MISTY GLOW, and DISAPPEARS. The glow dissipates, and the calm surface of the water reflects ...the Comet.

INT. MAMA KAJIWIN'S HOME

LIJE

But -- What about Waabang-ahki? People
have disappeared there?

MAMA

(Impatiently)

Yes, yes. Go now, stop wasting your time
with an old woman.

Mama's sleeve slides up slightly to reveal the tattoo of an arch. Lije notices.

MAMA (CONT'D)

You want answers -- go find them. You
know the future. I cannot tell you how
to see. Just see. Go there. See.

EXT. MOUNTAINTOP -- SUNRISE

Lije sits in meditation on a granite ledge overlooking
Nashoba Lake.

EXT. LAKE (LIJE'S VISION) -- NIGHT

The Comet glows out of the darkness, to an almost blinding
brilliance. The image ripples slightly, revealing the
reflection on the lake surface.

Lightning flashes. Thunder builds. In the distance,
something moves in the water. At each flash of lightning, it
comes closer.

It is a lone SNOW GOOSE. A glowing mist envelopes it, and it
fades from sight.

The sky grows dark and scary, filled with lightning and
thunder...

EXT. MOUNTAINTOP -- SUNRISE

Lije opens his eyes in panic, but all is calm.

INT. WILLIAMS' HOUSE -- LATER

DR. WILLIAMS

Fascinating. The Snow Goose is a very significant Native American fetish animal.

LIJE

What does it represent?

DR. WILLIAMS

Renewal, Honor, Fidelity.

LIJE

As a vision of the Future, it's a bit vague, don't you think?

DR. WILLIAMS

Perhaps. Let it stew in your brain for awhile.

Williams sits at his computer.

DR. WILLIAMS

Come. I've been doing a little research into these disappearances.

He brings up a screen. Lije leans over him. On the screen: An outline map of the New England states, with clusters of dots at specific places, and a light scattering of dots elsewhere.

DR. WILLIAMS

These dots represent approximate locations of disappearances. Notice, very dense in only two or three places ...this one in our area. Very nearby.

He brings up another screen: a Mercator projection of the World, with similar clusters of dots.

DR. WILLIAMS

Now check this out, a full map of the World. See any similarities?

LIJE

Perhaps. But this is your show.

DR. WILLIAMS

Let's put on a topological overlay.

He waits expectantly for Lije's reaction.

LIJE

They all seem to be in lower elevation areas. Logical. Deserts, frozen wastes, bodies of water.

DR. WILLIAMS

Ah. Let's look closely at our favorite spot -- Nashoba Lake.

He brings up another screen. Williams points to a ridge which seems to ring the lake.

LIJE

Reminds me of a Moon crater.

DR. WILLIAMS

Our modest version of Oregon's Crater Lake.

LIJE

All these clusters are at the site of ancient meteorite craters?

DR. WILLIAMS

Not all. But a significant number.

LIJE

Craters. Like a ring of stones.

DR. WILLIAMS

Maybe the Stonehenge builders were attempting to reproduce that.

A beat. Lije's eyes light up with revelation.

LIJE

These are portals.

DR. WILLIAMS

Portals to what?

A long beat.

LIJE

Elsewhen, I hope.

INT. AGENT FOLTER'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

In Firethorn Facility, a deceptively ordinary office, with desk, no windows, sound-proof walls, and a surveillance camera on the wall.

Laura, seething with anger, sits opposite government security AGENT FOLTER, disturbingly bland, quietly fanatical. Folter peruses an open file.

LAURA BESS

Why am I here?

AGENT FOLTER

A possible security problem, as Dr. Pericule has described it. If you're indeed able to ...become invisible, if that is what you are doing ...or teleport yourself, the objective of this highly classified project, well, that would concern me. The government has placed me here to ensure top-secret security, and I take my job very seriously.

LAURA BESS

Get to the point, Agent Folter.

AGENT FOLTER

You seem a little agitated, Dr. Austin.

LAURA BESS

If you think I've discovered the secret to teleporting a human being, and kept it to myself, then one of us is deluded, and it's not me.

AGENT FOLTER

Such a discovery would give you great power, wouldn't it?

LAURA BESS

To do what? Take a vacation in St. Barth's without having to pay airfare?

AGENT FOLTER

A foreign power would pay highly for such a secret.

LAURA BESS

Oh, I'm well paid by Firethorn, and money isn't everything.

AGENT FOLTER

(glances over file)

You have always been a bit of a loner.
No close friends. Live alone. Keep to
yourself.

LAURA BESS

Albert Einstein wasn't exactly a social
butterfly either.

AGENT FOLTER

Einstein wasn't an attractive woman.
Ever have a serious relationship with a
man?

LAURA BESS

Oh, I see where this is going. I
wouldn't even be here answering your
inane questions if I had simply swooned
and hopped into Dr. Pericule's bed. This
is his revenge.

AGENT FOLTER

To think that Dr. Pericule would risk his
professional reputation in a fit of pique
over a romantic rejection is a bit hard
to believe, don't you think?

LAURA BESS

Hah. You obviously think that having a
PhD confers maturity and common sense.
Scientists are people too, Agent Folter,
and divas are divas, whatever their
credentials may be.

AGENT FOLTER

But you haven't answered my question, Dr.
Austin.

LAURA BESS

Oh please. I'm not a lesbian, if that's
what you're implying.

AGENT FOLTER

Then you won't mind answering the
question.

LAURA BESS

(reluctantly)

Yes. But that was a long time ago.

AGENT FOLTER
What happened?

LAURA BESS
None of your business.

AGENT FOLTER
Oh. Is this painful for you?

LAURA BESS
Why is this important?

AGENT FOLTER
Just trying to make all the pieces fit.
You're free to go for now, Dr. Austin.

Laura rises to leave. Folter makes a note in the file,
without looking up:

AGENT FOLTER
But don't plan any long journeys.

INT. FIRETHORN CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Laura walks back to her office, passing the laboratory area,
wearing a mask of composure.

INT. LAURA'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Laura enters, closes and locks the door, her composure gone.
She pulls herself together, and casually changes from her lab
coat to her street clothes.

Then she sits at her desk, focussing her concentration.

INT. SURVEILLANCE ROOM - NIGHT

The room is filled with surveillance monitor screens. Agent
Folter, Dr. Pericule, wearing a significant bruise on his
face, and an OPERATOR are present.

On a monitor screen, Laura sits in her office.

AGENT FOLTER
I want to know every move she makes.

As he says this, Laura rises, turns away to take a step --
and disappears from the screen.

PERICULE
I told you! She's disappeared!

AGENT FOLTER
(sarcastically)
No! Really, Doctor?

OPERATOR
She must have left the office. I'll pick
her up in the corridor.

He switches to another monitor. The corridor is empty.

AGENT FOLTER
Find her.

The Operator switches through all the surveillance monitors,
panicked. Nothing. No Laura.

EXT. MELLSTROM RADAR - NIGHT

A thunderstorm rages. Laura APPEARS in the edge of a forest,
across the road from the radar station, now in Lije's world.
She runs through the lashing rain to the guard shack.

INT. MELLSTROM RADAR GUARD SHACK -- NIGHT

Jim lounges in his chair, watching an old sci-fi movie on a
portable TV. Laura, soaking wet, enters the shack. Jim sits
up, startled.

JIM
Good Lord, Miss! Where did you come
from?

LAURA BESS
My car quit on me down the hill. I was
going to meet Elijah Grant -- is he here?

JIM
No ma'am.

LAURA BESS
Oh, shoot. Maybe I got it mixed up where
to meet him. I don't suppose I could use
the phone to reach him?

JIM
Don't see why not. It's a local call.

LAURA BESS
I know you're going to think I'm a
scatterbrain, but could you give me the
number?

JIM
Sure thing.

LAURA BESS
Whatcha watching? Oh, it's *The Day the Earth Stood Still*. One of my favorites!

INT. LIJE'S CAR (MOVING) -- NIGHT

Lije drives through the storm. On the passenger side, Laura towels her hair dry.

LAURA BESS
How is it you happen to have a towel in the car?

LIJE
Possibly the most useful thing to have handy. ...according to *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. Where to, Gorgeous?

Laura snuggles up to him.

LAURA BESS
Take me home.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

They speed through the stormy darkness.

EXT. LIJE'S HOME - NEXT MORNING

The storm has cleared. The WHISTLE of a teakettle fades up.

INT. LIJE'S KITCHEN - MORNING

Lije is in the kitchen, pouring the hot water into two mugs with teabags (exactly as in an earlier scene). Laura comes in from the bedroom, barely wearing a man's white shirt, and puts her arms around him from behind.

LAURA BESS
Mmmmm...

Lije turns around to face her.

LIJE
I'm not letting you out of my sight this time. This feels too much like *deja' vu*.

LAURA BESS

Then we'd better get moving. From my experience, I never know how much time I have before this cosmic bungee snaps me back.

INT. WILLIAMS' HOUSE - DAY

Lije and Laura knock at Williams' door. Williams opens the door. He regards Laura.

DR. WILLIAMS

Dr. Austin, I presume?

LAURA BESS

Laura Bess Austin. Pleased to meet you at last, Dr. Williams.

DR. WILLIAMS

Please, call me Evan. May I assume that Bess is short for Elizabeth?

LAURA BESS

Yep. Country girl.

DR. WILLIAMS

I was beginning to wonder if you really existed, Laura Bess.

LAURA BESS

Well, I'm on a short leash, cosmically speaking. Sorry.

DR. WILLIAMS

So I understand. Come, let me show you what we've found out so far...

SAME SCENE - LATER

They sit around Williams' computer screen, displaying Nashoba Lake.

LIJE

So, maybe the lake is the center of a wormhole, or Einstein-Rosen Bridge, triggered periodically by some astronomical event. Like the Comet, or the black hole, if we're to believe Mama Kajiwin.

DR. WILLIAMS
I'd believe her.

LIJE
Is there a way to test this wormhole?

LAURA BESS
Not if it's a one-way phenomenon.

DR. WILLIAMS
If it's a wormhole, is it a portal to the past, or the future?

LAURA BESS
Anyplace but here...

LIJE
Anytime but now...

DR. WILLIAMS
...And the future isn't what it used to be, either.

LAURA BESS
Since "time" doesn't actually exist, a wormhole takes us to another elsewhere -- which may resemble the "past", "present", or "future".

LIJE
What if we put a radio beacon in the portal? Could we track it?

DR. WILLIAMS
Only if it stayed in our "time".

LAURA BESS
How about a cell phone?

LIJE
Laura! Brilliant.

DR. WILLIAMS
(bewildered)
What?

LAURA BESS
Call the cell phone, answer it, then put it in the ...wormhole, in the lake. And simply listen. Might tell you something. As long as the batteries last.

DR. WILLIAMS

Oh.

LIJE

We'll try it as soon as... uh...

LAURA BESS

...I disappear? Sorry, but it's the way things are. Back to the teleportation lab.

DR. WILLIAMS

You're working on teleportation? How fascinating.

LAURA BESS

And ironic. Now they think I'm keeping the secret to myself. We are nowhere close to teleporting a flea, let alone a human.

DR. WILLIAMS

You must tell me all about it, when we have more "time". But now we need to celebrate.

LAURA BESS

Celebrate what?

DR. WILLIAMS

Being together, of course. Excuse me a moment.

Williams leaves the room, humming an old tune.

Lije notices a particular painting on the wall: A v-formation flight of snow geese, flying over the prairie.

Lije and Laura are drawn into it, remembering.

INT. CHURCH (1970) - DAY

Laura and Lije, 8 years old, sit side by side in the little country church, alone except for the Minister -- a dreamlike quality to the scene. Their hands touch. The Minister preaches, but is not audible. No sound but the HONKING of geese. Laura and Lije look up toward the sound.

The POP of a champagne cork.

INT. WILLIAMS' HOUSE (PRESENT) - SAME TIME

Williams brings out a bottle of Andre champagne and three glasses.

DR. WILLIAMS

The best cheap hooch champagne money can buy, my friends. We're right out of Dom Perignon.

He fills all three glasses.

LIJE

We were just admiring the painting of snow geese.

DR. WILLIAMS

Mama Kajiwin gave it to us. Painted it herself. The Snow Goose is a very special spirit animal. They mate for life. If one dies, the other waits to rejoin it in the spirit world. Soul mates.

Williams pours the glasses and hands them around.

LIJE

Let's have a toast.

Williams raises his glass.

DR. WILLIAMS

Here's to Elsewhen.

ALL

To Elsewhen.

They drain their glasses. Williams turns to Laura.

DR. WILLIAMS

How exactly do you do this... side step?

LAURA BESS

I can't really explain it... I believe it's something I was born with, like true psychics are. Surely I'm not the only person with this ability. Maybe what some people see as ghosts are really glimpses into an alternate universe.

DR. WILLIAMS

Perhaps it's an evolutionary step, no pun intended.

LIJE

Maybe you could show me how you "step aside"?

LAURA BESS

Lije, I don't think...

LIJE

Come on, maybe I could learn.

LAURA BESS

Okay, you already can look into the future, right? So just look sideways instead.

LIJE

Left or right?

LAURA BESS

Right, of course. Left is the Dark Side.

LIJE

Laura Bess.

LAURA BESS

I don't think it's possible to teach, Lije. I believe you either have the "sidestep" gene or you don't.

LIJE

Try me.

LAURA BESS

(reacts to a feeling)

Oh no. ...it's coming, Lije. I've got to go.

LIJE

Damn.

LAURA BESS

I'll come back tonight, 6 o'clock, across from Mellstrom, like before.

LIJE

Be careful.

LAURA BESS
Piece of cake.

They kiss, and she DISAPPEARS. Williams looks on,
astonished.

WILLIAMS
I don't believe what I just saw.

LIJE
Imagine how *I* feel.

EXT. LAKE -- DAY

Lije and Williams sit in a rowboat near the center of the
lake. They put a CELL PHONE in a plastic bag. Lije readies
a radio-controlled model boat.

Williams calls the cell phone from another cell phone.

When the bagged cell RINGS, Lije pushes the "talk" button,
places the cell gently into the model boat, and guides the
boat out across the water.

The model boat sails a distance away, a light MIST starts to
form around it, then it is lost in the mist.

LIJE
Hear anything?

Williams listens on the second cell phone.

DR. WILLIAMS
Just the sound of the motor.

LIJE
It should be just about in the center.

He shuts down the boat motor. They drift in silence.

The mist begins to GLOW.

DR. WILLIAMS
Now a low hum... rising in pitch...

The phone screams a piercing high pitched TONE -- Williams
winces in pain, holding his ear as he drops the phone.

LIJE
Even I heard that! Are you okay?

The tone stops.

DR. WILLIAMS

Yes. Or I will be in a minute.

Lije gingerly picks up the phone. He cautiously puts it to his ear.

LIJE

It's not dead. There's a faint noise,
but I can't quite make it out.

On the cell, the SOUND of something like running water. Lije hands the phone to Williams.

LIJE

See if you can make it out.

Williams listens with his other ear.

DR. WILLIAMS

Sounds like water.

LIJE

Great. Water. What a surprise.

At a distance, the rowboat, Lije, and Williams look very tiny amid the large body of water.

EXT. MELLSTROM RADAR STATION PARKING LOT -- NIGHT

Lije leans back against his car, arms folded, and looks at the stars, trying hard to concentrate...

FLASHCUTS

EXT. SKY -- NIGHT

The starfield ripples slightly, then FLASH.

EXT. NASHOBA LAKE -- NIGHT

The Indian woman rows her canoe toward the center of the lake. There is no Comet visible.

She looks up to the sky, and the Comet suddenly appears.

She looks back toward the shore:

Williams and Laura Bess stand on the shore. A glow from the lake reflects on their faces. FLASH.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD (1970) -- DAY

Lije sits with Laura Bess beside the road.

YOUNG LIJE
Can you 'magine it yet?

YOUNG LAURA BESS
I just 'bout think I can, then I go *all swimmy-headed*.

BACK TO SCENE

Lije lies passed out, beside his car. Dr. Williams tries to revive him.

DR. WILLIAMS
Lije? Lije. Come on, wake up. Oh dear.

Lije wakes.

LIJE
Doc?

DR. WILLIAMS
Yes.

LIJE
Are we still, you know, here?

DR. WILLIAMS
"No matter where you go, there you are."
Confucius.

LIJE
Doc.

DR. WILLIAMS
Specifically, on the asphalt in the
Mellstrom parking lot.

Lije gets up, smiling wryly.

LIJE
I thought it was Buckaroo Banzai who said
that.

DR. WILLIAMS
He did. Just not the first.

LIJE

Well, all I can say is, looking into the Future ain't no fun ride at Epcot, but...

DR. WILLIAMS

But?

LIJE

I think I know what we have to do, and where.

INT. LAURA'S OFFICE -- DAY

Laura sits in her office, immersed in work, desk full of papers, interrupted by angry POUNDING at her door.

AGENT FOLTER (O.S.)

Dr. Austin? Dr. Austin!

LAURA BESS

Enter. The door is unlocked.

Folter bursts in and stands expectantly, like a high school principal waiting for a confession of guilt from a student. Laura waits for him to actually say something.

AGENT FOLTER

All right, Dr. Austin. Where have you been?

LAURA BESS

Right here.

Laura continues writing, not looking up.

AGENT FOLTER

You have been gone ...somewhere. Where did you go?

LAURA BESS

I have a private bathroom here. No reason to leave.

AGENT FOLTER

You're telling me you spent the night here, in your office?

Laura finally looks up, sighs, opens one of her file drawers, and pulls out a rolled-up sleeping bag.

LAURA BESS

This project is very important to me,
Agent Folter. As you so pointedly put
it, I am a bit of a loner.

AGENT FOLTER

Dr. Austin, stop playing games.

LAURA BESS

You first.

She points to the spot on the wall where the surveillance
camera is hidden.

LAURA BESS (CONT'D)

Smile.

INT. SURVEILLANCE ROOM - SAME TIME

A monitor screen shows Folter looking directly into the
camera, not pleased.

The Operator and Dr. Pericule watch the screen, with barely
contained amusement.

INT. LAURA'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

LAURA BESS

At least you had the decency not to put
one in my bathroom. Or did you?

AGENT FOLTER

No.

LAURA BESS

Ah. So I disappeared from your monitor
screen, I take it?

AGENT FOLTER

Yes.

LAURA BESS

Well, I'm not responsible for the quality
of your equipment, nor the attention span
of its operators. I slept in my office
last night. Here I am. May I get back
to work? That *is* why I am here.

Folter goes to the door, turns and puts on a contrite face.

AGENT FOLTER
Sorry to have disturbed you, Doctor.

He leaves, with a faint smile on his face.

EXT. MAMA KAJIWIN'S STORE/HOME -- DAY

Mama puts a sign on her shop door: CLOSED. She hurries back inside.

INT. MAMA KAJIWIN'S HOME -- DAY

Mama opens a hidden panel in the wall, and hauls out a large woven basket. She dusts off the cobwebs, and opens it. She takes out a bundle and unfolds it. Buckskin clothing.

She holds it up and looks at it with a smile, then starts to remove her clothes. A series of arch tattoos runs up most of her arm.

SAME SCENE - LATER

Now dressed as the Indian woman, she takes a large shallow earthenware bowl, and scoops some coals from the woodstove into the bowl. She sets the bowl in the middle of the room.

Selecting several bunches of dried herbs, she rubs the mixture in her hands, and drops it gradually into the coals in the bowl.

As the smoke rises, she closes her eyes and wafts the smoke over herself. After a moment, she looks into the smoke, and blows on the fire.

Sparks go flying through the room. Some land in hanging herbs overhead, which burst into flame. She smiles and continues blowing on the fire.

INT. LIJE'S OFFICE -- DAY

Lije and Williams look at a computer screen. The weather outside a window looks threatening, with lightning and THUNDER.

DR. WILLIAMS
Happening faster than I thought. Not much
time left.

A tremor shakes the building. Lights flicker out, then back on. The computer screen goes blank.

LIJE
It has to be tonight.

DR. WILLIAMS
We still don't know where the wormhole
leads.

LIJE
I envisioned you and Laura Bess at the
lake, before I passed out. And... it's
the only wormhole in town.

DR. WILLIAMS
Certain doom versus a highly ambiguous
escape.

LIJE
Yep, pretty much. Thank you for putting
it in such a *positive* light.

DR. WILLIAMS
It's nothing, really. What I'm here for.

LIJE
You should go now. We'll meet you at the
lakeshore.

DR. WILLIAMS
Right.

Williams turns to leave.

LIJE
But if we don't show up, you've got to go
without us. Don't wait too long.

INT. SURVEILLANCE ROOM -- DAY

Agent Folter, Pericule, and the Operator study a monitor.

AGENT FOLTER
Run it again.

INSERT MONITOR SCREEN

Laura enters her office, changes from her lab coat to street
clothes, and sits at her desk.

For a few seconds she is very still, then she rises, takes a
step -- and DISAPPEARS.

AGENT FOLTER (O.S.)
There! Back up and run it again. Slow
it down, right before she disappears.

In SLOW MOTION, Laura rises, steps, and DISAPPEARS as though
she were passing behind a curtain.

BACK TO SCENE

AGENT FOLTER
You are absolutely sure this isn't an
equipment malfunction? She didn't leave
the room while the recording was stopped?

OPERATOR
I'm sure, sir. What you just saw is what
happened, exactly.

AGENT FOLTER
Put that recording under Top Security.
You are to tell no one about this without
my authority. Understood?

OPERATOR
Yes sir.

AGENT FOLTER
I'm going to have another little talk
with Dr. Austin.

PERICULE
May I join you? She obviously has
knowledge bearing on the teleportation
project.

AGENT FOLTER
Afraid not, Doctor. This situation is
now a highly classified matter of
national security. If you knew any more,
I'd be forced to terminate you.

AGENT FOLTER
(off Pericule's look)
Just kidding. You can watch the monitor
in here, but I'm afraid you can't listen.
(to Operator)
No sound.

Folter leaves the room.

INT. LIJE'S OFFICE -- DAY

Lije sits at his desk, looking out his window at the woods. A torrential storm rages outside.

He looks at the wall clock: 5:50.

He checks his watch, puts on a sou'wester, and leaves the office.

INT. LAURA'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Laura puts away her papers, preparing to leave. A KNOCK on her door. She glances at her clock: 5:54

LAURA BESS

Come in.

Agent Folter enters. He seems too cordial, all smiles.

AGENT FOLTER

Dr. Austin, sorry to disturb you further.
Could you come with me for a few minutes?
Just some details to clear up.

LAURA BESS

If it's only a few minutes. I have an
engagement of a social nature, you might
say.

AGENT FOLTER

Then let's hurry. Don't want to detain
you.

They leave the office.

EXT. MAMA KAJIWIN'S HOME -- NIGHT

Mama steps out her door, wearing a cloak and hood to ward off the rain. A glow builds through the windows from the inside. Mama glances back. The glow gets brighter -- the entire interior aflame.

Mama watches, the fire reflecting on her face, then turns and walks away.

EXT. MELLSTROM RADAR -- NIGHT

The dish and the site are dark except for navigation lights on the dish. The storm rages around it.

Lije looks up toward the dish for a moment, turns and strides away, toward the grove across the road.

INT. AGENT FOLTER'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Laura and Folter enter. He closes the door behind her and quietly locks it. He indicates a chair.

AGENT FOLTER
Have a seat, Dr. Austin.

LAURA BESS
(sits)
You said this wouldn't take long.

AGENT FOLTER
About 12-15 seconds, by my estimate.

LAURA BESS
What?

AGENT FOLTER
From a careful study of the surveillance on you, that's about the amount of time it takes you to focus and disappear to God knows where.

Folter throws a remote switch. Laura's chair traps her arms with restraints and immobilizes her.

LAURA BESS
What the hell!

He puts on a set of sound-proof earphones, then clicks a remote switch. The room is saturated with a painfully loud CACOPHONY OF SOUND.

Laura cannot cover her ears.

Folter takes her chin in his hands and forces her to look at him. He clicks the remote again. The sound stops.

AGENT FOLTER
Notice, Laura, there's no waterboarding here. I like to call it *soundboarding*. Not as messy. Just an old trick from the Cold War days...

He smiles and shows her his remote, then clicks it. The SOUND starts again. Laura can't focus.

The noise is too disorienting. It continues for a few seconds, then he stops it again. Folter speaks as though instructing a student.

AGENT FOLTER

See how difficult it is to concentrate, Laura? We know the particular frequencies which interfere with the thought processes. We can induce fear, panic, and a number of toxic emotions. But I digress.

The SOUND starts again. Laura closes her eyes. He pries them open with his thumbs. The sound stops.

AGENT FOLTER

That's a no-no Laura. Keep them open, or I'll super-glue your eyelids.

Laura angrily stares at him.

LAURA BESS

You little bastard.

AGENT FOLTER

Oh, now that hurt, Laura. Boo-hoo. Little, indeed.

The SOUND starts again.

EXT. MELLSTROM - GROVE -- NIGHT

Lije stands in the lashing rain at the approximate spot of the Firethorn building. He checks his watch: 6:05. He paces, worried.

EXT. LAKE SHORE -- NIGHT

Rain lashes a solemn Mama Kajiwin, standing in her hooded cloak, looking out over the lake.

INT. WILLIAMS' HOME -- NIGHT

Williams drains the last glass of the last bottle of Chateauneuf '89, gazing up at the painting of Mindy on the wall.

WILLIAMS

Can't take it with you.

He tosses the glass into the fireplace, and leaves.

INT. SURVEILLANCE ROOM -- NIGHT

Pericule and the Operator watch the monitor of the interrogation room.

On the monitor, Laura appears to be screaming, then Agent Folter slaps her.

PERICULE

My God! What is he doing?

INT. AGENT FOLTER'S OFFICE -- SAME TIME

The torturing SOUND continues, as Laura screams. Folter slaps her again. The sound stops.

He holds up the remote switch threateningly.

AGENT FOLTER

Concentrate on me and what I say. Do you understand?

LAURA BESS

I understand.

He turns the SOUND back on.

LAURA BESS

(screams)

I told you I understand!

He turns the sound off.

AGENT FOLTER

I may also turn it on for my own amusement. Listen carefully, Laura. I want you to tell me who you are, how you do what you do, and where you go when you do it. Now.

LAURA BESS

I don't know what you mean...

AGENT FOLTER

Wrong answer.

He turns the SOUND on again.

LAURA BESS

(screams in agony)

Liie!

EXT. MELLSTROM GROVE -- NIGHT

Lije looks at his watch again: 6:20.

The storm rages, trees lashing violently in the wind. No Laura. Frustrated, he screams:

LIJE
Laura Bess!

INT. AGENT FOLTER'S OFFICE --NIGHT

Laura stops in mid scream, surprise in her eyes. She gasps for breath.

LAURA BESS
Lije.

She starts screaming again, but stares fixedly at the wall behind Folter. A RIFT slowly appears in the wall. She sees Lije in the grove, focuses hard on him.

EXT. MELLSTROM GROVE -- NIGHT

A RIFT slowly appears in the air in front of Lije. He glimpses Laura trapped in the chair. He focuses hard on her.

He hears Laura's SCREAM, but keeps focus.

Suddenly, the scene before him seems to FOLD along the rift, and ENFOLDS him. He DISAPPEARS.

INT. AGENT FOLTER'S OFFICE -- SAME TIME

Lije APPEARS behind Folter. Laura sees Lije, and continues screaming.

Folter leans over Laura. The SOUND continues.

LAURA BESS
(screaming)
All right! I'll tell you what you want!
Turn it off!

The sound stops.

AGENT FOLTER
Once again. Who are you?

INT. SURVEILLANCE ROOM -- SAME TIME

On the monitor, Lije appears suddenly, his back to the camera, blocking the view of Laura and Folter. In his hooded sou'wester he looks like a monster.

PERICULE

Where did ...that come from?

OPERATOR

I don't know...

PERICULE

Call security.

Pericule dashes out.

INT. AGENT FOLTER'S OFFICE -- SAME TIME

Laura drones in an "alien" voice:

LAURA BESS

Laura Elizabeth Austin is what I am called ...here. I am not from ...here.

AGENT FOLTER

You're certainly not in Kansas anymore, are you, little girl? ...All right... Where are you from?

Laura raises her eyes toward the ceiling. Folter follows her look. The SOUND of dripping water starts.

The water drips from the bottom of Lije's sou'wester.

Folter's look up is distracted by the dripping sound.

From her chair, Laura delivers a vicious kick to Folter's groin. He doubles up in pain. Lije immediately puts him down with a haymaker. Folter lies out cold.

Lije frees Laura from the chair.

They put Folter into the chair with restraints. Lije zips off his tie and gags him with it.

LIJE

Well, I guess that burns your bridges here.

LAURA BESS
How did you get here?

LIJE
Maybe I have that side-step gene, too.
Now can we both get out?

LAURA BESS
I don't know -- yet. Let's start by
getting out of this creepy room.

Laura unlocks the door, and Pericule bursts in. He takes in the scene.

PERICULE
(looks over Lije)
Dr. Austin. What has happened here?
And, ah...who is this man?

Lije steps forward and offers his hand to Pericule.

LIJE
Special Agent Grant. Good thing I got
here in time. Folter is a rogue agent --
out of control. Quite insane. We've
suspected him for some time now.

PERICULE
Well... I was very disturbed by what I
saw on the monitor.
(to Laura)
I'm very sorry for any ...mistreatment.

LIJE
Thank you for your concern, Doctor. We
have the situation under control now.

PERICULE
(notices dripping raincoat)
Agent Grant, how do you happen to be
...wet? It hasn't rained here for days.
And how did you get in here?

LIJE
You wouldn't believe me if I told you.

PERICULE
You can start by showing me your I.D.

LIJE

All right, Doctor. Here's the truth: I am from another ...world. I need Dr. Austin to accompany me there.

PERICULE

Do you think I'm a complete idiot?

LIJE

I don't know you well enough to make that judgement, Doctor, but consider this: You've seen Dr. Austin disappear?

PERICULE

Yes.

LIJE

And you obviously don't know how I got here.

PERICULE

No.

LIJE

And you are working on teleportation. Three improbable things which happen to be true. What is so hard to believe?

LAURA BESS

(takes Lije's hand)

We have to go now.

Pericule slams the door and locks it.

PERICULE

How do you do it? Please. Tell me the truth!

Laura and Lije turn their backs on Pericule and the door.

LIJE

I already told you. You didn't believe me.

LAURA BESS

And, by the way, we don't need the door to leave.

LIJE

(whisper)

You sure?

LAURA BESS
 (whisper)
 Concentrate. And don't let go.

Security guards start banging on the door.

PERICULE
 (suddenly a believer)
 Take me with you!

Laura and Lije exchange a look.

LAURA BESS
 All right, Dr. Pericule. Stand still.
 Be quiet. The ah, ...cross-dimensional
 transfer pulse should occur in about 15
 seconds.

Laura and Lije hold hands and focus '.

After a few seconds, the RIFT appears, they step forward, and
 DISAPPEAR.

Pericule gapes, speechless.

Agent Folter, reviving, struggles in his restraints.

The security guards break down the door and burst into the
 room.

EXT. MELLSTROM GROVE -- NIGHT

Lije and Laura MATERIALIZE in the grove. The weather is
 strangely calm and beautiful. They run across to the parking
 lot, and jump into Lije's car.

EXT. LAKE SHORE -- NIGHT

The storm has stopped. Mama Kajiwin takes off her dripping
 wet cloak, and looks up at the clear starry sky, dominated by
 the Comet.

She gets in the canoe, and shoves off toward the center of
 the lake. She looks back toward the shore, and sees Dr.
 Williams come out of the woods onto the lake shore.

Mama smiles, then rows on to the center of the lake. The
 MIST closes in around her, and she disappears into it.

INT. LIJE'S CAR (MOVING) -- NIGHT

Lije drives toward the rendezvous at the lake.

LAURA BESS
(giggling)
Wish I could have seen Pericule's face.

LIJE
"Cross-dimensional transfer pulse"?
That's almost believable.

They convulse in laughter. Lije puts on "alien" voice.

LIJE
Dr. Pericule! *Klattu barrada nicto!*

LAURA BESS
Well, he bought it. What's the plan?

LIJE
I hate to spoil this jolly time, but we
have to go, now. Tonight.

They arrive at the trail to the lakeshore, and get out of the car.

EXT. TRAIL TO LAKE -- NIGHT

An ominous rumble of THUNDER is heard. Laura suddenly turns horrified.

LAURA BESS
Oh no -- this shouldn't be happening yet.

LIJE
What?

LAURA BESS
I'm being pulled back!

A slight RIFT appears, and Laura is slowly drawn into it.

LIJE
Hold on!

He takes her hand. She DISAPPEARS into the rift, the storm now in its full fury. Lije's arm follows her into the rift.

Lije fights to hold on to Laura Bess. The rift REOPENS. He slowly withdraws his arm from the rift.

Laura's hand appears in his, then her arm, then the rift UNFOLDS, and Laura is back. He wraps her in his arms, the weather around them calm again.

LIJE

Let's go!

They run through the woods to the lake shore.

EXT. LAKE -- NIGHT

The Comet arches over the lake. A mist hangs just over the surface of the water. Williams waits, standing on the shore. A rowboat is beached there. Lije and Laura emerge from the woods.

LIJE

Sorry we're late!

DR. WILLIAMS

Was there trouble?

LAURA BESS

A little.

LIJE

We've got to go. Laura's meter is running.

Lije and Laura push the boat into the water, but Williams doesn't join them.

LAURA BESS

Something wrong, Evan?

DR. WILLIAMS

I just came to say good-bye.

LIJE

What?!

DR. WILLIAMS

There's nothing for me there. Elsewhen is your dream. Without Mindy, I'm just a pathetic old man.

LAURA BESS

How do you know she isn't there, too?

LIJE

Have a little faith, Doc, and get your
ass in the boat.

DR. WILLIAMS

But...

LIJE

And don't spout some obscure Latin
phrase. I won't understand it -- and who
is going to teach me unless you come with
us?

LAURA BESS

Please, Evan. We're not going without
you.

Williams looks down a moment, then slowly joins them in the
boat.

WILLIAMS

Thank you for being so obstinate. *Quod
fiat, fiat.*

LIJE

Couldn't resist, could you?

WILLIAMS

Or as you might say it, *Que sera, sera.*

EXT. LAKE WATER -- NIGHT

They row toward the center of the lake. The mist closes in,
so they can barely see each other.

The mist grows thicker. They row on.

LAURA BESS

Are we there yet?

LIJE

Soon.

LAURA BESS

We don't even know where "there" is.

A GLOW starts to suffuse through the thickening mist.

LIJE

I think the show is about to begin.

DR. WILLIAMS

Oh my. Are you as terrified as I am?

LIJE/LAURA

Yes!

Lije stops rowing and pulls Laura to him. They each put an arm around Williams.

As the mist thickens, and the glow builds, nothing is visible but the faces of the trio.

LIJE

Hold tight!

With their faces close together, eyes locked on each other, the glow builds swiftly to a BLINDING BILLIANCE.

BLACKOUT

In darkness, the SONG of a meadowlark FADES UP.

FADE IN:

EXT. LONG COUNTRY ROAD (KANSAS) -- DAY

A bright, beautiful summer day, on the same country road where 12 year-old Lije and Laura earlier rode their bikes.

A vintage 60s VW Microbus, hippie-decorated with flowers and plastered with "message" bumper stickers, comes wheezing down the road.

INT. MICROBUS (MOVING) -- DAY

A hippie-dressed couple sit in the front seat. They are young Evan Williams and young Mindy from the photo in Williams' home.

He drives, while she looks at the front page of a newspaper.

INSERT NEWSPAPER

The date on the masthead, July 29, 1981. The headline reads: "FAIRY-TALE WEDDING"

With a wedding photo of Prince Charles and an exotic Indian woman in a sari, with a ruby in the center of her forehead.

Further down the page, an article title reads: "INDIAN TRIBES PROTEST BLACK HILLS MINING PROJECT"

A news photo shows two people in a protest demonstration -- in the foreground, a young Mama Kajiwin, and a NATIVE AMERICAN MAN. Both wear the fetish of a white bird on a thong around the neck. Beside them is a young hippie couple, who look strikingly like the occupants of the VW microbus.

EXT. LONG COUNTRY ROAD (KANSAS) -- DAY

Lije and Laura, 12 years old, stand by the side of the road with their bicycles, exactly as before. A stream runs alongside the road.

Laura kisses Lije.

PRETEEN LAURA BESS

...Thank you.

INT. MICROBUS -- DAY

Young Evan and Mindy Williams smile as they witness new love.

EXT. REAR BUMPER OF MICROBUS -- DAY

As the microbus goes away, a prominent bumper sticker reads: "INDIANS DISCOVERED AMERICA"

Another reads: "AMOR, NON BELLUM"

EXT. LONG COUNTRY ROAD (KANSAS) -- DAY

Lije and Laura Bess mount their bikes and ride away, down the road into the sun, side by side, holding hands.

They talk about those timeless things they love to talk about.

PRETEEN LIJE

So, if Time doesn't exist, are we having a good "time" today?

She giggles.

PRETEEN LAURA BESS

No, silly, we are having an absolutely beautiful "now".

PRETEEN LIJE

...Okay, you got me there.

PRETEEN LAURA BESS

I'm so glad...

Their VOICES FADE away in the distance, as the SOUND of flowing water FADES UP.

In the stream by the road, a piece of roadside trash is caught in some stones. It is a battered plastic bag, containing the remains of the wormhole-transported cell phone.

Laura and Lije disappear into the sun, over a distant hill.

A ROAD SIGN comes into view:

WELCOME TO AVALON, KANSAS

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME

FADE OUT.

Though lovers be lost, love shall not;
And death shall have no dominion.

- Dylan Thomas