

Chapter Twenty-Six

“You know, particles collide here, in Geneva.” Ben’s eyes are beaming with a boyish delight. His arm is tucked beneath his head. “It’s a re-creation of the Big Bang...”

He likes to say unexpected things that surprise me, and to watch how I react. He likes to wander amidst the quirky, unexpected places of Geneva, take me to the tiny Ile Rousseau and to look at the jaw-dropping apartment buildings called The Schtroumpfs.

Today, he wants to visit the 17 mile ring of superconducting magnets tucked beneath our feet.

“Are you talking about CERN or is this some new Tantric exercise?”

“Can’t both be true? After all, both involve exploring the secrets of the universe.”

“We can go there, to the physics lab?”

“Yes, we can, observe particles traveling at the speed of light.”

“Fascinating,” I say and loop my arm through his with delight.

“Nonetheless,” he says as he pulls me closer, “we can also rehearse some tantric version too if you would like.” His smile is contagious.

“I’ll think it over,” I say as I tug on the buckle of his belt.

We are at one with the science geeks at the edge of the Swiss-French border as we take a service elevator 100m down beneath a sprawl of generic office buildings to the Large Hadron Collider. It is its own underground world of elite physicists and engineers on bikes circling a 17 mile ring of plates, cables, wires, chambers, and tubes. We are here to imagine protons being flung at each other at close to the speed of light. We are in a huge concrete cavern. It’s kind of like caving, industrial spelunking that is, and I feel like I am on some space mission. Because Ben is beside me, I have a feeling this will also entail a sexy mission of some sort.

The guide ushers us to the side, “It took over 10 years to design and build it.” He is passionate. “It weighs 7,000 tons,” he continues. “Welcome to the world’s largest scientific experiment.”

We all look around the facility in awe.

“But why?” a man asks captiously. “13.25 billion for what?” His arms are folded.

“We built it to help us understand what happened over 13.7 billion years ago. We are trying to re-create the conditions of the very first moments of the universe.”

“The big bang,” Ben whispers in my ear and squeezes my arm. “You know, it doesn’t have to be so complicated,” he urges, grasping my hand. “A bed, some candles.”

I elbow him in the ribs. My whole body is tingling from his breath against my ear and his hand on my lower back. It seems that Ben always has his hands on me, in contact or close proximity with my body, stroking or caressing me. I love it. I particularly adore when his hand is under my hair at the nape of my neck, and he cups the back of my nape gently, massaging softly. Turns out I am much more tactile than I had realized.

The tour guide gestures to the side, “These concrete walls have been erected as radiation shields. There are over 9,300 magnets inside a liquid nitrogen and liquid helium cocktail. That mixture creates a chilly -271 degrees C temperature. We have to make it that cold so that the tens of millions of collisions that happen in a second’s time don’t destroy the facility,” our guide is excited. “We squeeze the protons into beams with a diameter of less than a human hair; one beam one way, then another the other way, and then we make them collide. We break them into pieces in hope of figuring out how the universe works by smashing it apart and looking at the pieces.”

“How fast do the protons go?”

“They go around the 17 miles loop 11,000 times a second. We get photos of these miniature Big Bang collisions over and over again. It is teaching us what the universe it made up of.” He stares over his shoulder at the collider. “Remember, these are just the patterns though. Ultimately, we are looking for the beautiful and simple math equation that underlies these observations.”

“Who works here?” a woman asks from the back of the group.

“Over 10,000 physicists and engineers from 85 countries are collaborating on this project. It’s a melding of nations, global harmony in a laboratory. In 2012 we made headlines with the proof of the existence of the Higgs boson. Higgs, it’s reckoned, is responsible for our existence. It is what gives mass to particles – that’s why it is nicknamed the ‘God particle’.”

“So 13.25 billion to prove that god exists,” the man crosses his arms and laughs to himself.

“That and please know that CERN has already given us the World Wide Web, advances in medical imaging and created particle-beam therapies for cancer. When science and scientists collaborate at this level, there are unexpected discoveries every single day.”

“What are the broadest objectives?” I ask.

“The secret of life and the universe,” he smiles. “Evidence of black holes, dark matter, we believe that it may make up more than 25% of the galaxy. We are looking for proof of hidden other dimensions.”

“Can you talk a little bit about dark matter?” I add in a timid voice, my inner nerd is gleeful.

“From our detailed observations of the universe thus far, we have come to understand that the universe is filled with an unknown substance that we call dark matter. Like many things in physics, we know it’s out there, we just don’t understand the nature of it. We suspect there are unknown subatomic particles involved and we hope to discover those here at LHC.”

“What about gravity and dark matter?” Ben steps forward with keen interest.

So he’s got a healthy inner nerd too... Yes! I smile to myself.

“Yes, that’s an important force of nature... Yet in the world of subatomic particles, gravity has little influence because, in relative terms, it is so weak. It’s really all about electromagnetism.”

Ben whispers in my ear, “In my world, electromagnetism is really just *kama*.”

“What’s *kama*?” I look up at him.

“The tantric word for love,” his eyes soften as he loops his hand through my hair another time; I think he is breathing me in.

“I *kama* you” runs through my mind. I’m too shy to say it, but I smile to myself, thinking it, and am taken aback by new found sentimentality.

Electromagnetism and *kama*. Ben and I are sitting at the main CERN cafeteria discussing particle physics and love. There is a scientist sitting beside us working on her laptop, solitary and

alternately chewing the eraser of her pencil and her thumbnail. There are clusters of physics graduate students huddled together in the sun. There are world leaders here too sitting in a room designated as 'the glass box'. Ben and I can see them there eating salad and talking. Our tour guide recommends that we should stay and eat because many of the most important discoveries of the project were formulated here in the cafeteria, not in the lab.

"Tim Berners-Lee and Robert Cailliau decided to name their project the World Wide Web over fish and beer at that cafeteria," he had said. "So many people pass through there. Nobel Prize winners, royalty, and people like us."

Ben and I have found a table in the sun on the terrace.

"The basis of human consciousness is desire," Ben is saying. "That and electromagnetism, these are fundamental actions in nature. I feel both so strongly when beside you."

The whole tour at CERN was a double-entendre, the laws of the universe and the nature of love fully interchangeable beside the giant particle collider. Ben was beside himself with glee, squeezing me with delight throughout the tour.

"Electromagnetic fields, by your logic, govern the actions of molecules and therefore govern the universe."

"Just like kama governs the actions of man."

"It's all just chemistry," I smile and stretch my arm across the table to caress Ben's neck. He's right, there is electricity here. It is undeniably real. His skin flushes at my touch. I have never allowed myself to engage in the world this way, the fun of sexually charged and playful banter. It's intoxicating here at this table with all of the scientists deconstructing the universe around us.

"The three D's affect everything—desire informs our decisions and ultimately our deeds."

I am called from my nature to add, "What about duty? It can't be just about pleasure all of the time."

“Kama isn’t just about sexual pleasure, Ginny, it’s about our duty to enjoy life’s pleasures, whether it be sex, food, dancing, the feeling of the sun on the skin, your incredibly voluptuous kiss. People think that the *Kama Sutra* is a book about sex positions. In reality only about 1/4 of the book is about that, the majority of the book is about the philosophy of love and desire. How is it that you can accept electromagnetism so readily and doubt kama? What if part of your duty in the world, part of what makes the world a better place is our ability to create art, to read beautiful books, and to practice the art of making love?”

Something about the way he says making love melts me down to my knees. My cognition persists though.

“Art is a concrete thing, a book is a concrete thing, passionate love is this undefinable thing.”

“Like electromagnetic waves. Yet undeniable?” he grasps my hand so fully and passionately that it takes my breath from me.

“Yes, undeniable,” I say because it is true and because I can say nothing else.

We bathe a while in that silence that says more than the talking and slowly he leads me away from the table to a quiet and hidden place on the CERN campus and we make love, no shyness, no inner panic, no awareness of people, of past or of future. He just lifts the skirt of my romper, unzips his jeans, pulls my lower lips down with his thumb and enters me fully. We completely go with the sexual energy rather than fight against it. I wrap myself around him and allow myself to experience fully the flood of emotions and sensations as they build and gather into a full release. I slide my finger through the loop of his belt and let go. No thoughts, just him in me. I am fully undone, shattered into a million beautiful pieces, concurrent harmony and the Big beautiful Bang.