

Free Bound by Stardust by Claudia I. Haas - Scene 1

Miranda, age 15, has never been able to get over the loss of her father. With her mother remarried, Miranda is shipped off to her aunt for a few weeks. Her aunt tells her about one of her ancestors, Otto Schmidt, physicist who appears to her and tries to help her out of her grief – through science.

MIRANDA

Is it true what you said last night? That when we look at the stars we are looking into the past?

OTTO

I said it was possible.

MIRANDA

If that's true – then the past could be looking down on us. The way we were a few years ago.

OTTO

There are lots of variables. One cannot be sure.

MIRANDA

I need to do that – look down on the world as it was a few years ago.

OTTO

It would be easier to take a photograph and look at that.

MIRANDA

A photograph doesn't have a heartbeat. I want to look back at life and see its beating heart. Is *that* possible?

OTTO

My dear, all things are possible. We are only limited by what we understand so far.

MIRANDA

Suppose I hung a mirror on a star – would it reflect back to me the earth as it was years ago?

OTTO

You could never hang a mirror on a star. It would burn up.

MIRANDA

An inflammable mirror – just suppose!

OTTO

Assuming you could hang a mirror on a star and assuming you can get it there faster than the speed of light – and assuming that a telescope could magnify its reflection - I suppose one could conceive of it. It is rather fanciful. The universe is expanding. Even if you did travel at the speed of light, the light would always be just beyond reach.

MIRANDA

My head is spinning!

OTTO

Physics will do that. *If* – as you say – the mirror was in place and *if* there was a telescope that could easily view what the mirror reflected and if so many other variables occurred – I am sure the laws of physics say that what you propose is possible. But as of today – the laws of physics say that while you can see the past in the sky, you cannot view the past here on earth.

MIRANDA

But the possibility exists?

OTTO

It may be possible in a more advanced time. But not today.

MIRANDA

Don't you understand? That's all I need to go on – knowing that some day in my lifetime – it may be possible.

OTTO

Of course the further you go in the future – the harder it will be to glimpse that past.

MIRANDA

Don't do that! Don't hold out hope and snatch it away!

OTTO

Do you want the science or the fairy-tale?

MIRANDA

I want – the scientific fairy-tale - where the heroine meets her father one last time and talks to him. My happily-ever-after. My hope.

OTTO

I don't deal with hope. If you want to propose a theory to find the past, learn your facts. Analyze what you know. Ask questions. But don't expect an answer overnight. I worked on a theory for decades.

MIRANDA

Decades! I'm only here for a week!

OTTO

A good theory will keep you going for decades. Take what you learn here and carry it home with you.

MIRANDA

But he's here. My father's here. Here is where I need to look.

OTTO

Your theory will be with you wherever you are. It will excite you. Tease you. Consume you. I would wake up with the knowledge that today could be the day that I would make the final connection, the final proof of my theory. Do you want to know what it was?

MIRANDA

No.

Free Bound by Stardust – Arctic, Scene 2

Miranda finds herself in the arctic with her ancestor, the great physicist Otto Schmidt. She's hoping he can help her find a scientific theory that will allow her to see her father who passed away two years ago.

MIRANDA

Nothing's going right! I need to know more. About seeing the past.

OTTO

If something is important to you, then – learn! Delve into your theory. Maybe my theory can help! If you find the origins of the universe, who knows what will present itself!

MIRANDA

There you go again – trying to push your theory on me.

OTTO

It's – unfinished - a perfect jumping off point for you. Someday you could have it published. "The Origins of the Universe" by Otto Schmidt and Miranda Schmidt!

MIRANDA

Alphabetical. Miranda Schmidt and Otto Schmidt!

OTTO

If you say so.

MIRANDA

You're having a little fantasy here, aren't you? Better be careful.

OTTO

You're rubbing off on me! Still, I would like to see my theory in play again.

MIRANDA

You don't want to be forgotten.

OTTO

Is that so terrible?

MIRANDA

But – you have a minor planet named after you!

OTTO

And an island!

MIRANDA

I understand where you're coming from. I'm afraid of the same thing.

OTTO

Of being forgotten?

MIRANDA

Of forgetting. That's why I want to get a mirror on a star, look back in time – see my father. Before my memory of him gets hazy.

OTTO

That could take a lifetime.

MIRANDA

I am starting to realize that it will take longer than a week. And I have been reading. I'm trying to understand. But all I find is endless stuff about fusion and hydrogen and helium. "A star glows because fusing atoms release energy." *That's not what I want to find out!* The stars! They keep secrets! They won't give me anything!

OTTO

The stars have no thought or care about us.

MIRANDA

I *need* to learn how to see what they see.

OTTO

I look at the stars and I want to know their origin. You look at the stars and yearn for the fanciful.

MIRANDA

"What is fancy becomes reality." Didn't you tell me that?

OTTO

You do listen! The fanciful can ignite a spark to encourage the science. But it won't sustain you.
It's the science that keeps us alive on the ice.

MIRANDA

Wouldn't you love a chance to go back? A chance to fix stuff?

OTTO

We can't go back. We are a forward-looking race.

MIRANDA

I like it here. The quiet. I feel – like nothing can hurt me – nothing can touch me.

OTTO

But it is here – where you can be touched.

MIRANDA

Wouldn't it be cool to be here forever – if we had warmth and food and all that survival stuff – just to be here and feel the approval of the stars?

OTTO

Your flight of fancy is showing itself again.

MIRANDA

I feel connected here. I imagine a molecule or two in my body is saying, "Remember when we were up there? Remember when we were in the stars."

OTTO

Such a story!

MIRANDA

But there's truth there, isn't there? There's something in me that came from them.

OTTO

Yes. In a long, roundabout way.

MIRANDA

It's too bad we don't return to them. That would give me a happily-ever-after.

OTTO

You could look at the amazement of the universe as a happily ever after.

MIRANDA

I want a forever connection, you know? That I'd return from where I came and be reunited with my father. I want – a circle. Not a line with a beginning, middle and end – but a circle.

OTTO

All tied up with a nice pretty bow.

MIRANDA

Well ... if we want to dream big! I do feel safe here. For the first time in two years.

OTTO

It's a precarious safety. I am doing all I can to have us rescued. And when I leave, you leave. Immerse yourself in the sky while you can.

MIRANDA

Look!

OTTO

The aurora borealis.

MIRANDA

Look at the colors and shapes. My father used to say they were unborn children playing in the heavens. Can you see them? Little souls chasing each other in a game of tag.

OTTO

They are merely energy particles from the sun colliding with the Earth's magnetic field.

MIRANDA

I like my explanation better.

OTTO

It is sweet. What happens in your story? To those little souls playing tag?

MIRANDA

They are born, I guess.

OTTO

Do they remember playing in the sky?

MIRANDA

Probably not. Too bad. That would be a nice memory to have. Once you're born – the memories are hard.