

‘Come to me baby and I’ll never let you go’ by George Eraclides

This is the last soliloquy of Bertram Watts, a mining engineer and explorer of deep space, seeker after fine gems fused long ago in the fires of exploding suns and now reposing in the hearts of dead asteroids - harvested by the said Bertram and set by the best craftsmen money can buy out on the rim. Wholesale prices – so get in early.

OK. Here I am sitting on an asteroid, getting my regular dose of cosmic radiation laced with inspiration, while the universe whizzes by, leaving smears and streaks of colour on my enhanced retinas. What a buzz.

This time-dilation effect is amazing. By the time the black-hole swallows me up (only to spew bits of me out as photons going nowhere I remotely care about), the whole damned show, ‘out there’ on the frontier of my event horizon, will be long gone.

‘Hi Caroline, see those photon beams? It really is daddy waving to you’.

But the joke is not all on me.

There are some advantages in going this way. I won’t be here when all of what there is, plunges into the ultimate entropy, that deathless embrace of ennui.

Meanwhile, you will be seeing me forever, or so it will seem – a strange imprint on this whacked-out universe bequeathed to us by Einstein. You wouldn’t think a little patent clerk from 250 years ago, with stomach-turning dress sense, would be the cause of so much pointless, ‘can-do-nothing’ anxiety. Maybe Einstein is sitting out there somewhere on the Old One’s knee, begging for forgiveness (Newton is also not happy with him). Don’t forgive him. Send him my way instead. The truth will not make you free.

Behind me, my ship cuts a sad and lonely figure against the reddening edge (it really is red; thank you, Herr Doppler) of the asteroid, the one I bravely, stupidly, greedily, landed on.

Let the record show – I did it for the money.

So dear wife, grieving inheritor of my vast non-wealth, I will kind of look at you forever, and you will be looking at me forever, and that annoying Mr Einstein, minion of the Great Engineer, will look at both of us simultaneously from his safe coordinates, maybe shedding a tear (doubt it) or ‘tsk-tsking’ (probably) at this mind-experiment gone sour thanks to butt-biting reality.

Alas, no dilithium crystals here to power up the ship to warp-factor 12 so I can get out of here. I know the engines can’t take it Scotty, but I have faith in you, the finest engineer we never had. Maybe I could even go back in time a little and mine this ‘roid before it got so close to the black beast.

I’ll be gone in a few seconds more so I have to send this pretty fast. Tell all the would-be Kirks and Spocks out there (that’s a joke, proving that the sense of humour is the last thing to die out here) I’ll be laughing all the way down this black gullet.

And tell Caroline to never, ever, take any pretty stones from blue-black strangers in space. Just buy them wholesale.

What a trip. Oh boy...