

Madame T's Travel Agency

Of course she didn't tell us when she came from, but Madame T sat at the head of the round table and gestured for all of us to join hands. Her mesmerizing black eyes locked onto me for a moment, and then she moved on to each of the other participants, one by one. A restless, fiery young woman grasped my left hand just as I connected with Madame T, on my right. I felt an electric shock, but not like a carpet-shuffle – it was down in my lower back, and more like a vibration than any static shock that I'd ever encountered. In a moment the old man across from me shuddered, and I could feel it, somehow, through my connected hands, in fact, the shudder went around the table in about 5 seconds. A gypsy in full regalia, Madame T stared at a point in space that none of us could see. So far, the séance impressed me, and I kind of knew that this wasn't going to be some kind of Ouija board scam. The gal on my left – her hand was on fire, and her grip was like a vise – she scared me for a moment, but when I glanced at her, her gaze was straight up, and she didn't even know that I existed. Another shudder went around the table, and I heard a sound like the wind that follows a train across the prairie. The table fell away and we were all in a black void of infinite proportions. My left hand was suddenly cold, colder than ice. My heart was beating like a scared rabbit, and I noticed that I'd almost stopped breathing. A small white dot grew from infinitely small to the size of a thimble, and floated among the 8 attendees. They were all "gone," or at least that was my take. And then I looked down and saw us all, seated at a round table, and I flew above the group, in a circle, then a spiral, and then the spiral widened, and the group and the white light slowly vanished below me, and I was quite alone in the void. I felt warm. I felt a warm feeling all through my body. I felt warm in my spirit and in my soul. Light replaced the void. I felt an urge to pee. I looked around and saw the new time and place where I would live forever. I missed you so much, my dear. You were taken away suddenly and without warning and I just missed you like fire, so I paid Madame T for a trip to your universe, and here I am. She only charged me everything I owned, so the price was cheap, compared to being here with the girl I love. Can I look at you? Can I touch you? Are we really together again?

Chapter 2.

She said "I can take you to your loved one."

I said "No, you don't understand – she's dead."

She said "No, you don't understand – there are lots of universes where she is alive yet. And there are lots of universes where you are still with her – just not here; just not now."

Madame T's eyes were quite capable of nailing your head to a concrete wall 20 feet away – they were that powerful. Her Romani or gypsy accent was thick, but understandable. Her dress and demeanor were normal for a middle-age woman. But she was telling me that she could, somehow, put me back together with the love of my life. I stared back, but it didn't do any good – I had no power to control her dual black laser-eyes. She folded her hands in front of her chin and looked at me.

"It only costs everything," she said, "But that's the cost, take it or leave it."

My guts turned over. "A visit to my dead wife, in exchange for everything I possess?"

"No, not a visit to a dead person – a permanent residence in a universe where you and your wife will be together again."

"And it only costs everything?"

Madame T just sat quietly.

I had to say yes. I had to ask a million questions. I finally croaked "How do you know that it will work?"

"Well, that's just it – you have to have faith. It's all legitimate. It's all controlled by formulas and physics. I'm sure you wouldn't understand it, but It just works – moving to alternate universes doesn't violate any laws of science, but there are religions that prohibit it."

I couldn't even begin to fathom the time and space and formulas that would be necessary for a transform like that to happen. Hell, I'm a retired computer programmer – what do I know about moving around in parallel universes? The one thing I did know: Madame T wasn't lying.

"How did you get the formulas? How can I be sure?"

She sat calmly.

I was going to ask her "How come nobody ever heard of anybody traveling to a parallel universe before?" But I realized that the question was invalid because nobody would ever come back and advertise that they went to a better place, and then came back here just to tell people that it worked.

And what did I care about formulas or physics? It either worked or not. If it worked, who cared how?

If it didn't work, who cared why not?

"Okay, I want to see my wife."

"Here are the forms that give me power of attorney for your estate, and all your worldly possessions. Think about it for 48 hours and then come back to me."

And then I was outside in my car, but I don't remember how I came to be there.

The hot Alabama sun looked the same. Grackles were flitting around. A truck rumbled by. A church started an hourly bell cycle.

I forgot to ask her when she came from, and where. Next time, I'll remember to ask. Funny, the idea of a next time – since the whole idea of time is...well it's not definable, that's for sure.

And so it came to pass: I signed the papers and called my attorney and told her that I was of sound mind, and would she please make sure to assist Madame T, if she asked for help. I called a couple of my friends and said that I'd be going on a long trip, and not to expect me back any time soon. They were okay with the idea that I'd be on extended travel. Funny how my attorney said that I wasn't the only one that had called about extended travel with Madame T's Travel Agency.

So look: it wasn't like a click, but a door opened and closed, I know that for sure. I was then/there, and then I was here/now. What it's not: heaven or hell. What it is: indistinguishable/seamless from then/there. But you didn't die here. We're just the same as if, up to that instant, and then the instant after had been stitched together. I just have another chance to be with you more.

Madame T explained that it's supposed to be that way – if you're supposed to go to a parallel universe, then you're supposed to go. This whole thing seemed natural, and not very scary. I guess if I was scared, it wouldn't help, so why bother? I don't know if she was more gypsy or more physicist, but it doesn't make a bit of difference.

And when you and I go for a ride on Sunday and the Alabama sky is that particular shade of clear blue; and I'm holding your hand and loving you, am I supposed to tell you about then/there, or keep my mind on driving in the here/now? Not much choice, my dear, so I'll just keep this little secret to myself.