

Free Bound by Stardust by Claudia I. Haas

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.