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Travelling Light

by Gill Hilton

Mr and Mrs Photon were on holiday in a parallel universe, in Swanage,.

I should explain that Mr and Mrs Photon constantly move at the speed of light, or they cease to exist. So, of course, this is what they do: who wouldn't?

Moving around Swanage at the speed of light is, I believe, a lot of fun. Lucy and Ray Photon always had a ball. Every year, they spent a fortnight oscillating along the seafront, out across the sea, up into the stratosphere and back again. They could do just as they pleased, and the change of air did them both good. Their holidays together reminded them of how tightly they were bonded to each other. At moments they were hardly able to believe their luck.

On this particular holiday, through some aberration of the universe, they became separated from each other. Lucy Photon suddenly and horribly became aware that she was travelling, at the speed of light, alone.

Almost simultaneously, something nebulous drew up beside her.

"Mrs Lucy Photon?" it enquired.

"Yes," said Lucy.

"I have an Amazon Bad News package for you."

"I'm not expecting a package," she snapped, "and I'm actually rather busy just now."

"Sorry, ma'am," said the package-bearer, "But now that I've made contact with you I have to give you the package."

"Can't you just tell me what's in it?"

"Er, yes. I can actually," and the deliverer recited the contents of the package: " 'At 17.56, Mr Ray Photon stopped moving at the speed of light. He no longer exists. Commiserations, the Amazon Bad News Team.' "

"I don't want this package!" Lucy almost shouted.

"I'm afraid it's non-returnable. Sorry ma'am," said the deliverer, and was about to pull away.

"Wait!" she cried. She was thinking very quickly. She was bright, even for a photon.

“You've just caught me up. If I make a temporary sub-atomic bond you,” she continued, “you can take me faster than the speed of light, can't you?”

“We're not allowed to give lifts to customers, ma'am. It's strict Amazon policy.”

“Oh, come on,” she said. “Fuck Amazon. Think how much they owe the entire universe in unpaid taxes. Please. Look, what's your name?”

“Sherwin,” he said.

Life had not treated Sherwin too well so far, but he knew right from wrong, and he was prepared to fuck Amazon to help someone who'd just received a Category Three Bad News package. It took no time at all for their electro-magnetic energy to fuse and, just as Lucy had hoped, when she moved faster than the speed of light it caused time to temporarily reverse and she returned to the moment just before she and Ray had become separated. She disengaged herself from Sherwin and slipped back into her quantum bond with Ray. He was oblivious. She called out her thanks to Sherwin, but the speed of sound is so ridiculously slow that there was no hope of it reaching him. 'I'll give him a five star rating on the Amazon feedback page,' she thought. But for now there were more pressing matters.

She spotted the clotted cream fudge shop on the seafront before Ray did and held onto him with all her might as they sped past it at the speed of light. So this was what had distracted him from maintaining the speed upon which existence depended: lingering outside a bloody fudge shop! She would have words with him later, but for now she was radiant, with something beyond physics.

The following week, Sherwin decided to fuck Amazon again. He chucked in his crappy job to become a mental health nurse.