Excerpt From Hypotheses/Measurement

(Vera steps back from the table and makes her way across the stage. The Lab goes dark as the Care Facility alights. The Doctor sits where she left him, still mouthing words silently. The returns to her wheelchair.)

DOCTOR

(As if finishing his sentence.)…from last time we met, don't you think?

RUBIN

The light.

DOCTOR

Is it too bright? I can close the shades…

RUBIN

(Vera gets agitated.) No, no, wrong question! Where am I? Have I been here before? Is this… Cleveland?

DOCTOR

Vera, Vera, everything's OK. You're right here with me. This is my office. I know it's not much, but it's a quiet space where we can talk. And we are definitely not in Cleveland.

RUBIN

The lab.

DOCTOR

Yes, the lab. Do you remember something from working in a lab? I can't say that I remember anything from my time in labs, but my work was always with people, not data.

RUBIN

That's not true. You convert people to numbers.

DOCTOR

Only as a representation of what I see.

RUBIN

Stars…people…no difference. You change what you see when you change how you see.

DOCTOR

Interesting point, Vera.

RUBIN

Not my point. His point.

DOCTOR

Who's he?

RUBIN

I don't belong in this lab.

DOCTOR

This lab? We're not in a lab.

RUBIN

Right answer, wrong…

(The Doctor opens a folder and reads it.)

DOCTOR

Oh, perhaps you're talking about one of the labs you worked in? Well, I can see how you felt unwelcome. Women were treated differently back then. Princeton wouldn't accept you because you are a woman. It says here that the Palomar Observatory didn't have a ladies room, so you stuck a little paper skirt on the men's room icon every time you used it. Wonderful!

RUBIN

They didn't expect to see it.

DOCTOR

They didn't expect to see you, Vera Rubin! You opened the door for an entirely new generation of women astronomers. You're a pioneer in so many ways.

RUBIN

I opened the door to the rest room.

DOCTOR

It says that you studied the rotation of far-away galaxies. Is that the lab you were talking about? You measured the speed of stars. Fascinating.

RUBIN

No, no, that's not what happened. Missed it the first time, then noticed something missing. Unchanged the change.

DOCTOR

Unchanged the change? I'm sorry, Vera…

RUBIN

So…beautiful……graphs of stars…lines moving like the heartbeat of the universe.

DOCTOR

You saw that through your telescope? I don't think I've ever seen anything through one other than my eyelash flicking across the lens.

RUBIN

Not a telescope…a specta…something…

Pictures. We measured pictures.

DOCTOR

But what did you change, or un-change?

RUBIN

So much missing. So much empty space.

DOCTOR

Missing? The data you collected changed how we think about the Universe. Do you realize how important you are to science?

RUBIN

Right answer, wrong question. Right answer…

DOCTOR

What's the right question? What should I ask?

RUBIN

Where am I?

DOCTOR

You're right here.

RUBIN

No, I'm lost.

(The Doctor silently continues his side of the conversation. The Lab alights. Michelson is seated his table and begins speaking in mid-sentence.)

MICHELSON

…and we just haven't found it yet. But I know it's there. We all do, and we've known it to be true since long before the scientific method gave us the tools to put it to test. It's just a matter of designing the right experiment. We will keep looking. The measurements will follow.

(Vera turns to him, then back to the Doctor in confusion, then gets up and walks to the The Lab. The Care Facility fades to black.)

RUBIN

I've been here before.

MICHELSON

It's like you never left, my friend. Please…

(Michelson gestures for her to sit, which she does.)

MICHELSON

Aren't you happy here?

RUBIN

I think so…I…

MICHELSON

You know that we've prepared this experiment many times together. We have the capacity to measure every distance, every moment, then correlate, check, and recheck the results. Everything objectively observable and repeatable. Everything true.

RUBIN

Yes. I remember looking, over and over and over again. Image after image. So much data. I remember my hand was so tired from using my calculator.

MICHELSON

Ah, calculators. I'm working with Ed Morley. He's a chemist and he's good with numbers, but he's so humorless that you might mistake him for a machine. Do you remember working with him?

RUBIN

No, this lab isn't…I haven't…my calculator was smaller.

MICHELSON

Morley isn't a tall man.

RUBIN

My calculator was a TI-59.

MICHELSON

That's a strange name. Is it foreign?

RUBIN

No, it's…I don't know for sure.

MICHELSON

They're a necessary evil when we're measuring light from so far away.