

Anna Pavlichenko

# FOR A COFFEE WITH EINSTEIN

The play



Kyiv

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P12

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The play belongs to the realm of the absurd in the world of drama. The main character, Einstein, a figure of immense influence, exists both as living and deceased simultaneously. He is the creator who altered the world with his discoveries, yet paradoxically, remains a force that challenges the world even today.

The narrative delves into the lives of prominent Ukrainians intertwined with historical events, individuals who left a mark beyond their times. The intrigue lies in the imagined gathering of Albert Einstein, Simon Petlyura, Kazymir Malevych, and Ivan Pulyuj around a single table.

This book sheds light on these exceptional Ukrainians and revisits historical facts distorted over time due to misleading influences. Utilizing historical accounts and delving into cause-and-effect relationships, the work has the potential to captivate a broad range of readers.

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## ACT I: PRAQUE IN APRIL.

*The characters:*

*The ghost of old Einstein –the narrator is Albert Einstein himself after his death.*

*Albert –Albert Einstein a world-class scientist, German physicist of Jewish origin, and Nobel Prize laureate,*

*Salvador –Salvador Dali, an artist, a friend of Einstein*

*Ivan –Ivan Pulyuj, inventor, translator, theologian, writer of Ukrainian origin, Einstein’s neighbour in Prague.*

*Franz –Franz Kafka, Czech writer, and friend of Einstein.*

*Niels –Niels Bohr is a scientist, physicist, Nobel Prize laureate, friend of Einstein*

*Mileva –Mileva Marić, mathematician, wife of Einstein, and mother of his children.*

*Gala –Olena Ivanova (Gala Dali), Dali's wife, is his manager.*

*A screening of the evening city of Prague in the early 20th century projected onto the stage. The stage is set with dimmed lighting, revealing coffee tables and chairs. A man in his later years, dressed entirely in black, steps forward. His face is illuminated while the rest of his body merges with the darkness.)*

**Ghost of Old Einstein:** Today, I reminisce about my garden and Prague in 1911 when my wife and I moved there upon my appointment as a professor at Charles University. Such a comfortable city, unlike the sombre Zurich and Bern–Prague bathed in radiant light even at night. They had installed electricity everywhere, with modern and ecological power stations. Oh, and one could ride trams through the evening streets, witnessing advertisements with diode

illumination like nowhere else. Imagine that—all those lights on buildings and trams crafted by one person. I had the honour of being his neighbour while residing in Prague.

Back then we rented a house in Smíchov with Mileva. On Sunday mornings, we would bring out these coffee tables and chairs onto the terrace, eagerly awaiting our guests. Normally, I was not one to spend money on frivolous things, but Mileva seemed to be in a state of melancholy. The set of chairs and tables complemented the springtime in the garden. Sturdy furniture with forged legs that resembled intertwined grapevines. The white colour added a festive touch. In the garden, apricot trees were in bloom, and the well-tended grass formed a lush carpet. When it was mowed, the air was filled with the freshness of dew, making it even more vibrant.

*(He gazes at a suit hanging on a stand at the edge of the stage.)*

I always had a soft spot for my grey checkered suit, a departure from the usual black ensembles

that graced my days. Oh, I loved to wear it, without socks. Inconsequential as it may seem, some things are meant to remain inconsequential, just like my unruly, wavy hairstyle.

*(He notices an old newspaper, significantly larger than the norm, on the nearby table and decides to indulge in a moment of reading.)*

Ah, the year 1887! I had almost forgotten how this newspaper found its way here. Surely, it was Ivan who left it; I see his article that one day may bring him a future Nobel Prize.

*(He begins reading the newspaper aloud.)*

«The study of X-rays continued. This time, I experimented with platinum-grenadine quinine-coated paper and captured photographs under the X-ray lamp. At first, I obtained darkened spots, but when I tilted the plate at a 45-degree angle, the images became blurred. Then, a thought struck me; I decided to place my hand in front of the plate, turned on the lamp again, and developed the plate. And there it was—a skeletal image of my hand! Following that suc-

cess, I took an image of a guinea pig. The mechanism of cathode rays' action, as I wrote in my previous article in March, proves invaluable for the world of surgery. Physicians can now see the extent of injuries in their patients before conducting any surgery. This will undoubtedly be a groundbreaking advancement in medicine.»

I vividly recall how he emotionally narrated his groundbreaking research on X-rays and his dreams of contributing to the field of medicine. Despite being considered modest by many, he would occasionally burst with emotions.

*(The stage darkens, and a new scene unfolds. The bright daylight brings life to the setting, and several men and a few women sit at tables.)*

**Mileva:** Today we have coffee and strudels, prepared according to the Viennese recipe.

*(She places coffee kettles on the table.)*

**Albert:** (Turning back to his moustache friend) Your moustache has grown even longer than before! Care to win the cockroach race?

**Salvador:** Always clever, Albert. But not everyone is so old-fashioned.

*(He stylishly adjusts his twisted moustache and winks at Gala, who sits at another table across the room.)*

**Mileva:** (Serving strudels to the guests) –Albert, I believe your moustache will also go down in history. (She takes a seat at a separate table with Gala.)

**Gala:** Mustaches, moustaches, mustaches! Everyone talks about his moustache, but I'm convinced that neither in Prague nor Paris are there any to rival his.

**Albert:** Indeed, I am prepared to offer my apologies. How have your creative endeavours been progressing?

**Salvador:** Oh, Albert! Our last conversation truly inspired me. I was contemplating your reflections. *(He gazes intensely, taking a sip of his coffee.)*



**Albert:** I don't recall what I said. Besides, why should I remember what is already written and can be read?

*(He takes his pipe, loads it with tobacco, and calmly observes his conversation partner.)*

**Salvador:** *(Exclaims)* I'm talking about the clocks at the Bern station!

**Albert:** You seem quite agitated. Would you like a pipe? Your emotions and flamboyance are drowning out your voice. Is this the conversation about the simultaneous movement of many clocks on the platform? When the train arrived with the clock pointing at 7? Or did you mean the fact that the embankment rests relative to the train?

**Salvador:** *(Gesticulating vividly)* No, it's something else—time! This «observer effect» has deeply stirred and troubled me!

**Albert:** *(Monotonously)* It's merely simultaneous events. All we can say is that they move relative to one another. There is no absolute time, only different moving reference frames.

**Salvador:** Time!!! I grasped this truth! I pondered it for so long to understand what you meant. And I painted it!

**Albert:** (*Sets aside his pipe*) Well, why didn't you invite us to witness your magnificent creation? This is true art, crafted under the influence of physics, mind you. (*Smiles*)

**Salvador:** I shall name this piece «Permanence of Memory or Soft Clocks.» I depicted them as melting, becoming as fluid as time itself—a victim of time's neglect. And who invented these clocks? It's self-deception! (*He stands up and addresses everyone*) I invite you all to my salon next weekend! (*He starts applauding himself, and everyone joins in.*)

**Ivan:** I wonder if artists at a distance can perceive the same narrative or perhaps simultaneously sense some invisible vibrations. What drives artists to convey similar sensations? Recently, my compatriot presented a painting at an exhibition. On the canvas, he portrayed a person with a large brain, shocked by the realization that

time ceased to exist. Well, actually, it never existed. The landscapes were black-red, with a black hole in space where time vanished. He said the character felt a great sense of horror. He titled the piece «The Scream.»

**Albert:** Each era, regardless of its location on Earth, is not merely expressed in a particular style but carries the same hidden meaning.

**Salvador:** Since we're discussing art, let me share my method. I gaze at an object for an extended period, until it ceases to exist, and then bam! (*He taps his forehead*) It's like a hallucination! Another image emerges from this process, one that nobody else can see, as if it was hidden deep within a maze! (*He winks at Gala, who is quietly chatting with Mileva at another table.*)

**Ivan:** No wonder they sat, «I am an artist – I see it that way.» Perhaps you truly see more, while we scientists stare at our experiments for so long, tediously seeking the truth. I believe there is someone who can perceive cosmic mysteries, what