

'This essay collection could have only been penned by Lightman, that rare hybrid of physicist and storyteller.' David Eagleman, author of *Sum* and *Incognito*

ALAN  
LIGHTMAN

THE  
ACCIDENTAL  
UNIVERSE

THE WORLD YOU  
THOUGHT YOU  
KNEW

# **The Accidental Universe World You Thought Knew Alan Lightman**



**Alan Lightman**

# The Accidental Universe World You Thought Knew Alan Lightman

The Accidental Universe Alan Lightman, 2014-01-14 The bestselling author of *Einstein's Dreams* explores the emotional and philosophical questions raised by recent discoveries in science with passion and curiosity He looks at the dialogue between science and religion the conflict between our human desire for permanence and the impermanence of nature the possibility that our universe is simply an accident the manner in which modern technology has separated us from direct experience of the world and our resistance to the view that our bodies and minds can be explained by scientific logic and laws Behind all of these considerations is the suggestion at once haunting and exhilarating that what we see and understand of the world is only a tiny piece of the extraordinary perhaps unfathomable whole

**The Accidental Universe** Alan Lightman, 2014-01-14 In *The Accidental Universe* physicist and novelist Alan Lightman explores the emotional and philosophical questions raised by discoveries in science focusing most intently on the human condition and the needs of humankind Here in a collection of exhilarating essays Lightman shows us our own universe from a series of fascinating and diverse perspectives He takes on the difficult dialogue between science and religion the conflict between our human desire for permanence and the impermanence of nature the possibility that our universe is simply an accident the manner in which modern technology has divorced us from enjoying a direct experience of the world and our resistance to the view that our bodies and minds can be explained by scientific logic and laws alone With his customary passion precision lyricism and imagination in *The Accidental Universe* Alan Lightman leaves us with the suggestion heady and humbling that what we see and understand of the world and ourselves is only a tiny piece of the extraordinary perhaps unfathomable whole Praise for Alan Lightman a gem of a novel that is strange witty erudite and alive with Lightman's playful genius Junot Diaz It would not seem possible for Alan Lightman to match his earlier tour de force *Einstein's Dreams* but in *Mr g* he has done so with wit imagination and transcendent beauty Anita Desai

*Searching for Stars on an Island in Maine* Alan P. Lightman, 2018 In this meditation on religion and science Lightman explores the tension between our yearning for permanence and certainty and the modern scientific discoveries that demonstrate the impermanent and uncertain nature of the world As a physicist he has always held a scientific view of the world But one summer evening while looking at the stars from a small boat at sea he was overcome by the sensation that he was merging with a grand and eternal unity a hint of something absolute and immaterial This is his exploration of these seemingly contradictory impulses and the journey along the different paths of religion and science that become part of his quest adapted from publisher info

**A Sense of the Mysterious** Alan Lightman, 2006-01-03 From the bestselling author of *Einstein's Dreams* comes this lyrical and insightful collection of science writing that delves into the mysteries of the scientific process physics astronomy mathematics and exposes its beauty and intrigue In these brilliant essays Lightman explores the emotional life of science the power of imagination the creative

moment and the alternate ways in which scientists and humanists think about the world Along the way he provides in depth portraits of some of the great geniuses of our time including Albert Einstein Richard Feynman Edward Teller and astronomer Vera Rubin Thoughtful beautifully written and wonderfully original *A Sense of the Mysterious* confirms Alan Lightman's unique position at the crossroads of science and art **Mr g** Alan Lightman,2012-10-30 Alan Lightman the internationally bestselling author of *Einstein's Dreams* presents Mr g a celebration of the highs and lows of existence on the grandest possible scale the story of Creation as told by God Once before time existed Mr g woke up from a nap and decided to create the universe In the shimmering Void where he lives with his Aunt Penelope and Uncle Deva he creates time space and matter Soon follow stars planets animate matter consciousness and intelligent beings with moral dilemmas But the creation of space and time has unintended consequences including the arrival of Belhor a clever and devious rival Belhor delights in needling Mr g demanding explanations for the inexplicable offering his own opinions on the fledgling universes and maintaining the necessity of evil As Mr g's favorite universe grows he discovers how an act of creation can change everything in the world including the creator himself *Einstein's Dreams* Alan Lightman,2011-03-02 NATIONAL BESTSELLER A modern classic explores the connections between science and art the process of creativity and ultimately the fragility of human existence A magical metaphysical realm Captivating enchanting delightful The New York Times *Einstein's Dreams* is a fictional collage of stories dreamed by Albert Einstein in 1905 about time relativity and physics As the defiant but sensitive young genius is creating his theory of relativity a new conception of time he imagines many possible worlds In one time is circular so that people are fated to repeat triumphs and failures over and over In another there is a place where time stands still visited by lovers and parents clinging to their children In another time is a nightingale sometimes trapped by a bell jar Now translated into thirty languages *Einstein's Dreams* has inspired playwrights dancers musicians and painters all over the world In poetic vignettes it explores the connections between science and art the process of creativity and ultimately the fragility of human existence **Probable Impossibilities** Alan Lightman,2022-04-19 The acclaimed author of *Einstein's Dreams* tackles big questions like the origin of the universe and the nature of consciousness in an entertaining and easily digestible way Wall Street Journal with a collection of meditative essays on the possibilities and impossibilities of nothingness and infinity and how our place in the cosmos falls somewhere in between Can space be divided into smaller and smaller units ad infinitum Does space extend to larger and larger regions on and on to infinity Is consciousness reducible to the material brain and its neurons What was the origin of life and can biologists create life from scratch in the lab Physicist and novelist Alan Lightman whom The Washington Post has called the poet laureate of science writers explores these questions and more from the anatomy of a smile to the capriciousness of memory to the specialness of life in the universe to what came before the Big Bang *Probable Impossibilities* is a deeply engaged consideration of what we know of the universe of life and the mind and of things vastly larger and smaller than ourselves *The Sirens of Mars* Sarah Stewart Johnson,2020-07-07 Sarah Stewart

Johnson interweaves her own coming of age story as a planetary scientist with a vivid history of the exploration of Mars in this celebration of human curiosity passion and perseverance Alan Lightman author of Einstein s Dreams WINNER OF THE PHI BETA KAPPA AWARD FOR SCIENCE NAMED ONE OF THE BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR BY The New York Times Book Review Times UK Library Journal Lovely Johnson s prose swirls with lyrical wonder as varied and multihued as the apricot deserts butterscotch skies and blue sunsets of Mars Anthony Doerr The New York Times Book Review Mars was once similar to Earth but today there are no rivers no lakes no oceans Coated in red dust the terrain is bewilderingly empty And yet multiple spacecraft are circling Mars sweeping over Terra Sabaea Syrtis Major the dunes of Elysium and Mare Sirenum on the brink perhaps of a staggering find one that would inspire humankind as much as any discovery in the history of modern science In this beautifully observed deeply personal book Georgetown scientist Sarah Stewart Johnson tells the story of how she and other researchers have scoured Mars for signs of life transforming the planet from a distant point of light into a world of its own Johnson s fascination with Mars began as a child in Kentucky turning over rocks with her father and looking at planets in the night sky She now conducts fieldwork in some of Earth s most hostile environments such as the Dry Valleys of Antarctica and the salt flats of Western Australia developing methods for detecting life on other worlds Here with poetic precision she interlaces her own personal journey as a female scientist and a mother with tales of other seekers from Percival Lowell who was convinced that a utopian society existed on Mars to Audouin Dollfus who tried to carry out astronomical observations from a stratospheric balloon In the process she shows how the story of Mars is also a story about Earth This other world has been our mirror our foil a telltale reflection of our own anxieties and yearnings Empathetic and evocative The Sirens of Mars offers an unlikely natural history of a place where no human has ever set foot while providing a vivid portrait of our quest to defy our isolation in the cosmos

**In Praise of Wasting Time** Alan Lightman,2018-05-15 In this timely and essential book that offers a fresh take on the qualms of modern day life Professor Alan Lightman investigates the creativity born from allowing our minds to freely roam without attempting to accomplish anything and without any assigned tasks We are all worried about wasting time Especially in the West we have created a frenzied lifestyle in which the twenty four hours of each day are carved up dissected and reduced down to ten minute units of efficiency We take our iPhones and laptops with us on vacation We check email at restaurants or our brokerage accounts while walking in the park When the school day ends our children are overloaded with extras Our university curricula are so crammed our young people don t have time to reflect on the material they are supposed to be learning Yet in the face of our time driven existence a great deal of evidence suggests there is great value in wasting time of letting the mind lie fallow for some periods of letting minutes and even hours go by without scheduled activities or intended tasks Gustav Mahler routinely took three or four hour walks after lunch stopping to jot down ideas in his notebook Carl Jung did his most creative thinking and writing when he visited his country house In his 1949 autobiography Albert Einstein described how his thinking involved letting his mind roam over

many possibilities and making connections between concepts that were previously unconnected With In Praise of Wasting Time Professor Alan Lightman documents the rush and heave of the modern world suggests the technological and cultural origins of our time driven lives and examines the many values of wasting time for replenishing the mind for creative thought and for finding and solidifying the inner self Break free from the idea that we must not waste a single second and discover how sometimes the best thing to do is to do nothing at all The Diagnosis Alan Lightman,2001-03-13 From the bestselling author of Einstein s Dreams comes this harrowing tale of one man s struggle to cope in a wired world even as his own biological wiring short circuits As Boston s Red Line shuttles Bill Chalmers to work one summer morning something extraordinary happens Suddenly he can t remember which stop is his where he works or even who he is The only thing he can remember is his corporate motto the maximum information in the minimum time Bill s memory returns but a strange numbness afflicts him As he attempts to find a diagnosis for his deteriorating illness he descends into a nightmarish tangle of inconclusive results his company s manic frenzy and his family s disbelief Ultimately Bill discovers that he is fighting not just for his body but also for his soul Screening Room Alan Lightman,2015-02-10 A WASHINGTON POST NOTABLE BOOK OF THE YEAR Alan Lightman s grandfather M A was the family s undisputed patriarch It was his movie theater empire that catapulted the Lightmans a Hungarian Jewish immigrant family to prominence in the South his triumphs that would both galvanize and paralyze his descendants In this evocative personal history the author chronicles his return to Memphis and the stifling home he had been so eager to flee forty years earlier As aging uncles and aunts retell old stories Alan finds himself reconsidering long held beliefs about his larger than life grandfather and his quiet inscrutable father The result is an unforgettable family saga set against the pulsing backdrop of Memphis its country clubs and juke joints its rhythm and blues its segregated movie theaters its barbecue and pecan pie including encounters with Elvis Martin Luther King Jr and E H Boss Crump Both intensely personal and quintessentially American Screening Room finely explores the tricks of light that can make and unmake a man and his myth With black and white illustrations throughout Ghost Alan Lightman,2007-10-23 A stunning novel about an ordinary man s encounter with the extraordinary from the bestselling author of Einstein s Dreams David Kurzweil a quiet man with modest ambitions was taking a break at his new job when he saw something out of the corner of his eye Something no science could explain Suddenly David s life is changed and he soon finds himself in the middle of a wild public controversy over the existence of the supernatural As David searches for an explanation we embark on a provocative exploration of the delicate divide between the physical and the spiritual between science and religion as only Alan Lightman could provide Combining a beautiful narrative with provocative ideas Ghost investigates timeless questions that continue to challenge the truth as we know it **Why Science Does Not Disprove God** Amir D. Aczel,2014-04-15 The renowned science writer mathematician and bestselling author of Fermat s Last Theorem masterfully refutes the overreaching claims the New Atheists providing millions of educated believers with a clear engaging explanation of what

science really says how there's still much space for the Divine in the universe and why faith in both God and empirical science are not mutually exclusive. A highly publicized coterie of scientists and thinkers including Richard Dawkins, the late Christopher Hitchens, and Lawrence Krauss have vehemently contended that breakthroughs in modern science have disproven the existence of God, asserting that we must accept that the creation of the universe came out of nothing, that religion is evil, that evolution fully explains the dazzling complexity of life, and more. In this much-needed book, science journalist Amir Aczel profoundly disagrees and conclusively demonstrates that science has not as yet provided any definitive proof refuting the existence of God. Why Science Does Not Disprove God is his brilliant and incisive analyses of the theories and findings of such titans as Albert Einstein, Roger Penrose, Alan Guth, and Charles Darwin, all of whose major breakthroughs leave open the possibility, and even the strong likelihood, of a Creator. Bolstering his argument, Aczel lucidly discourses on arcane aspects of physics to reveal how quantum theory, the anthropic principle, the fine-tuned dance of protons and quarks, the existence of anti-matter, and the theory of parallel universes also fail to disprove God. **Ten Faces of the Universe**

Fred Hoyle, 1977 *The Discoveries* Alan Lightman, 2010-10-22 An extraordinarily accessible, illuminating chronicle of the great moments of scientific discovery in the 20th century and an exploration into the minds of the remarkable men and women behind them. We know and read the literary masterpieces; how many of us have had the opportunity not only to read but understand the masterpieces of science that describe the very moment of discovery? The last century has seen an explosion of creativity and insight that led to breakthroughs in every field of science, from the theory of relativity to the first quantum model of the atom to the mapping of the structure of DNA. These discoveries profoundly changed how we understand the world and our place in it. Alan Lightman tells the stories of two dozen breakthroughs made by such brilliant scientists as Einstein, Bohr, McClintock, and Pauling, among others, drawing on his unique background as a scientist and novelist to reveal the process of scientific discovery at its greatest. He outlines the intellectual and emotional landscape of each discovery, portrays the personalities and human drama of the scientists involved, and explains the significance and impact of the work. Finally, he gives an unprecedented and exhilarating guided tour through each of the original papers.

**The Island of Knowledge** Marcelo Gleiser, 2014-06-03 Why discovering the limits to science may be the most powerful discovery of all. How much can we know about the world? In this book, physicist Marcelo Gleiser traces our search for answers to the most fundamental questions of existence: the origin of the universe, the nature of reality, and the limits of knowledge. In so doing, he reaches a provocative conclusion: science, like religion, is fundamentally limited as a tool for understanding the world. As science and its philosophical interpretations advance, we face the unsettling recognition of how much we don't know. Gleiser shows that by abandoning Everything Else in the Universe Tracy Holczer, 2019-06-11 In the midst of the Vietnam War, a young girl struggles to embrace change in this tender family story for fans of Cynthia Lord and Wendy Maas. Lucy is a practical, orderly person, just like her dad. He taught her to appreciate reason and good sense, instilling in her the same values

he learned at medical school But when he s sent to Vietnam to serve as an Army doctor Lucy and her mother are forced to move to San Jose California to be near their relatives the Rossis people known for their superstitions and all around quirky ways Lucy can t wait for life to go back to normal so she s over the moon when she learns her father is coming home early It doesn t even matter that he s coming back different That she can t ask too many questions or use the word amputation It just matters that he ll be home But Lucy quickly realizes there s something very wrong when her mother sends her to spend the summer with the Rossis to give her father some space Lucy s beside herself but what s a twelve year old to do It s a curious boy named Milo a mysterious packet of photographs and an eye opening mission that makes Lucy see there s more to life than schedules and plans and helps to heal her broken family The latest from critically acclaimed author Tracy Holczer is a pitch perfect middle grade tale of family and friendship that s sure to delight fans of One for the Murphys and Rules

**The Dream of the Great American Novel** Lawrence Buell,2014-02-10 The idea of the great American novel continues to thrive almost as vigorously as in its nineteenth century heyday defying 150 years of attempts to dismiss it as amateurish or obsolete In this landmark book the first in many years to take in the whole sweep of national fiction Lawrence Buell reanimates this supposedly antiquated idea demonstrating that its history is a key to the dynamics of national literature and national identity itself The dream of the G A N as Henry James nicknamed it crystallized soon after the Civil War In fresh in depth readings of selected contenders from the 1850s onward in conversation with hundreds of other novels Buell delineates four scripts for G A N candidates One illustrated by The Scarlet Letter is the adaptation of the novel s story line by later writers often in ways that are contrary to the original author s own design Other aspirants including The Great Gatsby and Invisible Man engage the American Dream of remarkable transformation from humble origins A third script seen in Uncle Tom s Cabin and Beloved is the family saga that grapples with racial and other social divisions Finally mega novels from Moby Dick to Gravity s Rainbow feature assemblages of characters who dramatize in microcosm the promise and pitfalls of democracy The canvas of the great American novel is in constant motion reflecting revolutions in fictional fashion the changing face of authorship and the inseparability of high culture from popular As Buell reveals the elusive G A N showcases the myth of the United States as a nation perpetually under construction

**Whitey** Dick Lehr, Gerard O'Neill,2013-02-19 From the bestselling authors of Black Mass comes the definitive biography of Whitey Bulger the most brutal and sadistic crime boss since Al Capone Drawing on a trove of sealed files and previously classified material Whitey digs deep into the mind of James J Whitey Bulger the crime boss and killer who brought the FBI to its knees He is an American original a psychopath who fostered a following with a frightening mix of terror deadly intimidation and the deft touch of a politician who often helped a family in need meet their monthly rent But the history shows that despite the early false myths portraying him as a Robin Hood figure Whitey was a supreme narcissist and everything every interaction with family and his politician brother Bill Bulger with underworld cohorts with law enforcement with his South Boston neighbors and with his victims was always about him In an Irish



American neighborhood where loyalty has always been rule one the Bulger brand was loyalty to oneself Whitey deconstructs Bulger s insatiable hunger for power and control Building on their years of reporting and uncovering new Bulger family records letters and prison files Dick Lehr and Gerard O Neill examine and reveal the factors and forces that created the monster It s a deeply rendered portrait of evil that spans nearly a century taking Whitey from the streets of his boyhood Southie in the 1940s to his cell in Alcatraz in the 1950s to his cunning corrupt pact with the FBI in the 1970s and finally to Santa Monica California where for fifteen years he was hiding in plain sight as one of the FBI s Ten Most Wanted In a lifetime of crime and murder that ended with his arrest in June 2011 Whitey Bulger became one of the most powerful and deadly crime bosses of the twentieth century This is his story [Ada and the Galaxies](#) Alan Lightman,Olga Pastuchiv,2021-09-07 Stargazers rejoice In his first book for children renowned physicist Alan Lightman and collaborators with help from the Hubble telescope light up the night sky New York Times best selling author Alan Lightman in collaboration with Olga Pastuchiv brings galaxies close in a stunning picture book tribute to the interconnectedness of the natural world Layering photographs taken from the Hubble telescope into charming and expressive art illustrator Susanna Chapman zooms in on one child s experiences Ada knows that the best place for star gazing is on the island in Maine where she vacations with her grandparents By day she tracks osprey in the trees paddles a kayak and hunts for shells But she s most in her element when the sun goes down and the stars blink to life Will the fog this year foil her plans or will her grandfather find a way to shine a spotlight on the vast puzzle of the universe until the weather turns

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