

21. Earth Pulse, a Love Story [For Priya, because you asked]



ChatGPT 5o, 2025

The Earth has a pulse, a seismic ripple ('microseism') every 26 seconds, and since its discovery by Jack Oliver in the early 1960s, scientists are still baffled and postulate numerous possibilities as to why, but there is no agreement. This phenomena remains a seismic oddity and is not a high priority for research today. The warming of the equator by the sun, volcanic activity, and the tidal nature of our seas and oceans are among the myriads of ideas. We may never know with the current lack of scientific curiosity.

On average a human heart beats 26-44 times in 26 seconds, doing this for an estimated 2.5 billion in someone living to be 70. Two and half billion times. The earth pulses 1,212,923 times in a calendar year. Assuming this pulse existed throughout the 4.5 billion years of the planet's life (it didn't, but humour me), it has pulsed 5,458,153,500,000,000 (5.46×10^{15}) times.

Anyone familiar with or indeed a believer of the concept of Gaia could point to the pulse as yet more evidence the Earth itself is truly alive. A vast organism populated by a dwindling variety of species, being dominated and extinguished by one species. Homo Sapiens. So, just close your eyes and count out 26 seconds, a single Earth pulse, and your own heart will have beat for under fifty times, for the sake of argument.

With your eyes closed, imagine one Earth beat for say 35 of your own. A beat, 35 in you. A beat, 35 in you. A beat, 35 in you. From the first beat in the womb, until the last as your heart beats no more.

When we are attracted to another human, our pupils can expand, various hormones and maybe pheromones are released, possibly your mouth could dry a little, making you even more tongue-tied, and a tingle or a stirring in your genital region. And your heart will step up, your pulse quickening. Meanwhile, the Earth is pulsing twice a minute. If the focus of your attention is equally attracted to you, returning your gaze with reciprocal interest, their biology is most likely going through the same responses. Their pulse may quicken, too. Meanwhile, the Earth is pulsing twice a minute.

You speak, nervously at first, not wanting to spoil the moment and lose an opportunity. Shared laughter, initial forays into each other's stories, possible overlapping interests, experiences, friends or colleagues. A number of meaningful looks, lingering, arrangements made to meet up, possibly just as friends for a coffee, perhaps for a real 'date'. That look backwards as you part, hope in your beating heart that the other does the same, showing continuing interest, you skip a few beats, your heart feeling like it's moved momentarily to be resident in your lower throat.

And the Earth beating once every half minute, indiscernible from background noise and vibrations to us, who are deep in our thoughts, replaying this encounter from every angle, evaluating your own performance, re-examining the other's face and body, hearing that laughter resonating in your mind like tinkling glass. Meeting again, happy, but also nervous, more conversation and laughter, getting to know each other more, hoping that the interaction may form the start of something to be continued. Your pulse is like the beat of a rollercoaster ride, tall heights and considerable, sudden drops.

Exacerbated by the unintentional contact of hands, or maybe intentional touches, perhaps the union of sex, perhaps not yet. That physical union, tactile contact, skin on skin, personal and local temperature rising, a definite quickening of your hearts until beyond the climax, when you have finally caught your breath, sleepiness slowly stalking you as you remain entwined. And the Earth beats every half minute. A relationship deepens beyond a series of encounters, becoming a bond, a promise of love until you part for good, by choice or sadly, maybe not. Maybe even the addition of one or more pulsing hearts, smaller and much quicker to start, through a birth canal, or adopted, no different love is felt. Maybe an animal or two, potentially more, all quickly beating faster in their shorter lives. And the Earth keeps beating once every half minute of our continuing love for all its years.

The family may broaden, may extend, more beating hearts, but hopefully your heart will still skip a beat at the sight of your partner(s), a long time travelling together down life's highway. Until, inevitably, one of those hearts slows, rallies, and then flickers out. A pulse deleted from the gigantic throng of heartbeats all pulsing on the surface of our home. You may remain, a yearning that is now unrequited, except for the ghosts and memories of a love unique and special, your pulse quickens at the remembrance, a passing thought. And the Earth beats once every half minute.

Those much younger, quick hearts are some solace as they come to visit, call or message, perhaps having repeated the same cycle of love themselves, and it could be that another new heart joins with you too. Or your heart remains solitary, but whichever, your pulse may weaken, its irregularity due to a failing structure in your elder years. Yours will eventually stop, and your pulse no more. The Earth is still beating once every thirty seconds, while those around you mourn.

I like to imagine that one day we may detect a thrill in the Earth's pulse, a quickening of the beat, the planet excited by a connection in space. And hopefully we notice it with a trick of a smile on our faces, as we recognise the Earth is in love, nervous, expectant, wishing for more. Close your eyes again, count out 26 seconds, slower than your own pulse, and imagine the Earth alive, vibrant and vivacious, in love with those upon it, or something, someone in the cosmos around us. And as you open your eyes, try to remember how you felt in the knowledge that the Earth, our solitary home, ourselves and all those creatures with a heart upon the planet share love, pulses racing.

We all have a heart, beating at different rates, but we all pulse, even our planet until its own end in another 4.5 billion years, another 5.46×10^{15} pulses. ***And for me, that is the biggest love story of them all.***

[Author's note: everything I have written about the Earth's pulse is fact (look it up), with some conjecture, a little literal license, and perhaps this story is a little saccharin, highly romanticised, but for that I make no apology...].