

In the Beginning

*Seven Entirely True Tales
of
How the World Was Created*

by
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In the beginning, there was a Question.

But there was no one to answer the Question as the Question had just arisen out of something that was nothing because how can something exist before the beginning? Right, now that that's clear . . . there was a Question and no one to answer the Question.

The Question traveled by itself through the Universe (don't ask me how the Universe got there) looking for an answer, but could not find one anywhere.

"This can't be all there is," the Question said, exasperated after a few millennia of searching. Then it had an idea.
"Maybe I can create someone to answer me. Then I'll have my answer!"

The Question thought for a while about what to create. Rummaging around in its studio (don't ask me how the studio got there), it found some elements lying about. "These should do the trick!" it said enthusiastically, though it really had no idea. Not one to be deterred by inexperience, the Question continued with aplomb. "Let's start with some round things!" it said, as the Question had just realized it was quite fond of round things.

First it made some large balls of gas, which were not that helpful as their commentary was rather ambiguous. Then it created some balls made of rock but those were not very bright. The Question then tried water balls but getting an answer out of a water ball was like herding cats - not that the Question knew what "herding" or a "cat" was, but it thought it was a good comparison nonetheless.

Finally, the Question got it just right by mixing a combination of gas, rock, water, and some fire the Question had stolen from a particularly obnoxious star when it wasn't looking. The Question was surprised to find that when it put all four substances together they started interacting in a marvelous way, creating a ball with deep blue expanses of water, vibrant green and brown continents, and white flowing clouds.

As it had been seven long days of work, the Question felt a nap was in order. After asking a star to wake it up in an hour, it dozed off . . .

. . . and woke up a billion years later, give or take several hundred thousand.

"Why didn't you wake me up!?" the Question asked the star angrily, as it was apparently irritable after napping. "I told you to wake me in an hour!"

"I don't know what your problem is. It has only been twenty minutes!" the star said indignantly and then refused to speak again.

The Question fumed for a moment and made a mental note to never trust a star with time. It forgot its anger, however, when it saw the ball it had created from all of the elements a billion years ago. It was beautiful, full of green growing things and things that walked around on various numbers of legs and furry things and flying things and things with scales. And then the Question saw them, odd furless things that walked on two legs and talked!

“Finally!” the Question exclaimed, “I can get my answer!”

So the Question went down to the ball, proud of its success, and approached some of the odd furless things. “Um, excuse me? Pardon? Can I ask you something? Uh . . . hello? Wait! Darn it! Why isn’t anyone paying attention to me?”

The Question, much to its dismay, realized it could not be seen or heard by these odd furless things and was starting to feel rather down and dejected when it had another idea. “They can’t hear me, but they can hear each other,” it thought. “They can’t see me or feel me, but they can see and feel the earth, the air, the water, and the fire.”

So the Question asked the elements, “Please carry me with you! Help me be heard by the odd furless things that talk!”

The elements, being generally agreeable, agreed. Over time the Question found itself living quietly in the rocks and whispering in the wind. The Question could be heard in the river’s flow and in the rumble of ocean surf. It could be heard in the crackling of fire and then in the odd furless things themselves as they ate and drank and breathed in the elements.

The Question was pleased to hear itself arising in the minds of the odd furless things and as it did, the odd furless things started asking the Question, and answers (finally!) started to arrive.

But the Question soon realized its plan had a problem: no matter how often the Question was asked or answered, it

was always still present. So the odd furless things never stopped asking the Question and looking for the answer.

Despite this problem, the Question realized it was enjoying its time on that particular ball and decided to settle in, worry about that issue later, and enjoy itself in the meantime. It had learned that from the odd furless things.

And so it was.

In the beginning, there was a Star.

Don't ask me how it got there. We all know stars like to be spontaneous and I certainly didn't put it there. But there it was. Over time, other stars had also spontaneously manifested from who knows where, as options were limited. But because they were so far apart they couldn't easily interact and, after a few million years, the Star was feeling bored and lonely. The Star desperately wanted some company. Not that it wasn't enjoying being an exploding ball of gas but that kind of focused lifestyle can get rather monotonous over time.

Unfortunately, communication was proving to be difficult as the telephone, e-mail, and even carrier mail had not yet been invented. So the Star was left with few options. It tried yelling but its voice became so hoarse it had to stop. And no one had the heart, or the means, to tell it sound doesn't travel well through space. The Star tried flashing its light like Morse code but the other stars just ignored it, thinking it was just being an annoying show-off. Finally the Star gave up, resigned to combust and flicker alone for the rest of its long life.

Then, one day, as bored and lonely as ever, the Star decided to pass a few million years by playing connect-the-dots. Using its imagination, it drew lines between its fellow stars. At first its line creations were rather dull: squares, triangles, zig-zaggy lines, and such. But over time something odd started to happen: from the Star's rather uninspired artistic endeavors, greater things began to grow. An odd looking triangle became a goat. A line with a curve at the end became a very large and unpleasant looking

scorpion. Creatures continued to emerge from the Star's imaginary drawings: a swan, a dove, a centaur, a fly, a fish, a toucan, a serpent, a giraffe. Then furless and featherless creatures who talked and stood on two legs began to emerge: a hunter, a queen, an archer, a maiden.

The Star was pleased that there were now creatures who could hold a conversation, but they didn't seem interested in the poor Star. The hunter and the maiden in particular were only interested in each other. And the Star was soon forgotten - not that it minded when it came to the scorpion. Much to its dismay, the Star realized that playing connect-the-dots was entertaining in the short term but didn't create anything lasting: as soon as it made a new creature, the creature left. The Star needed a way to keep the creatures around so it could finally have some meaningful conversations. After a few million years the Star felt like it had a lot of useful things to say about space, internal combustion, and the like. And there was another problem. The creatures had begun to drift aimlessly around the cosmos and were getting a little unruly. They needed a place to live and something to do to keep them out of trouble. The Star looked around for some options and, seeing the large balls that liked to orbit it, had an idea.

The Star started sorting through the balls. Most were not very interesting, being made of rock and gas. But then the Star noticed one particular ball that looked different from the rest. This ball was blue, green, and brown and had pretty white things floating around it. "This should do nicely!" the Star said.

“Heeeeey!!!!” the Star yelled to the creatures, “Over heeeeeerrreeee!”

And somehow, miraculously . . . okay, maybe just because I said so . . . the creatures heard and went to take a closer look.

“What?” asked the hunter, being a constellation of few words.

“I’ve found everyone a home!” replied the Star.

“Looks a bit . . . rustic,” the queen said, her lip curled in disdain.

The scorpion had a less discriminating point of view and, seeing a nice big rock, scuttled happily underneath. The giraffe saw the leaves on the trees and went without hesitation. The fish followed suit by joyfully diving into the sea. It wasn’t long before all of the animals had gone down to the ball to live.

The archer and hunter, seeing that the ball was now richly populated with animals, went down to do some hunting. The maiden, seeing the men go and realizing there was no one left to admire her, went next, avoiding the disapproving glare of the queen.

“Not going?” the Star asked the queen.

“What’s in it for me?” replied the queen.

“Well, how about I put you in charge?”

“Hmmmm.” At that, the queen perked up a bit. “Maybe with some nice curtains . . . ,” and went down herself.

The Star was thrilled. “Finally! Some lasting entertainment,” it said, and settled in, shining happily on the beautiful blue and green ball.

And so it was.

In the beginning, there was Time.

But Time had stopped. Not for any good reason, just because it felt like it. None of the stars, a nearby black hole, or a very large ball of gas could convince Time to start again. And they tried, because the stars had stopped flickering, and the black hole had stopped absorbing light, and the ball of gas was getting awfully backed-up.

No one was happy, but Time was stubborn. “Don’t I get a break every now and then?” it asked petulantly.

“For god’s sake man,” said one particularly bold and irritated star, “what are we supposed to do in the meantime? Get on with it!” But the more they implored Time to start again the less it was inclined to do so.

“Besides,” it said, “what am I for anyway? All you stars do is flicker and play connect-the-dots. The black hole is quite a mood-kill if you ask me. Who came up with that one?” As no one wanted to confess, Time continued. “And you, very large ball of gas, do you really have something pressing to get to?” The ball of gas looked sheepish and shrugged, though not really as it didn’t have shoulders. “See! What does everyone really have to do? What am I for then? Why am I even here? What’s the point?”

Thus Time invented the very first existential crisis, and wallowed in existential misery for a respectable amount of . . . ahem . . . moving on.

Finally, one particular star, the one next to a pretty green and blue ball, though of a solution. “Um, excuse me,

Time? I have a reason for you to exist. Look!” The star showed Time the blue and green ball with all its odd creatures.

“Look over here, see this one?” the star said, pointing to fish in a lake. “And over here, the one with wings,” it said, indicating an eagle poised dramatically above the water. “This one was just about to catch and eat this other one.”

“Or this odd furless creature,” the star said, pointing to a man with a spear, “this one was going to try to put that long pointy object into this furry one over here,” the star said, pointing to a bison. “Marvelous, really. Who would have thought they’d come up with such an entertaining way to spend time? But now that you’ve stopped, we won’t see how it all turns out.”

Time was intrigued. It looked with curiosity at the eagle, poised above the fish, about to strike. It examined the man with the spear hunting the bison. Then it saw a couple of odd furless things with their faces together. “What are these ones doing, exactly?” Time asked the star.

“Ah yes . . . well . . . that’s . . . ahem . . . ,” and started to blush as only stars can, which is to say, dramatically.

“When the odd furless things like each other . . . well let’s just say . . . oh dear . . . LOOK OVER HERE!” cried the star. Not wanting to explain, it had found a school of dolphins for distraction. Sure enough, Time was inevitably delighted.

“Well, I must admit, I’d like to see how all of this turns out. You say these things jump?” The star nodded and

smiled in a way it hoped was encouraging. The stars and the black hole and the very large ball of gas held their breaths. “Very well,” Time said, “I will start again.” They let out a collective sigh of relief.

Time started. The stars resumed their flickering. The black hole absorbed some light just for old time’s sake. The very large ball of gas did whatever balls of gas do. And the creatures on the blue and green ball resumed their lives, much to the delight of the nearby star and its new companion, Time.

And so it was.

In the beginning, there was a Loon and a Dancer.

Why? Because I said so, so there they were.

The Loon was there to create the world. The Dancer was there for entertainment value. So as the Loon drew up preliminary plans, the Dancer danced around and around.

At first the Loon found the dancing to be highly entertaining, with perhaps the exception of the modern dance interludes which he found somewhat baffling. Then he realized there was a problem: it is hard to take off when someone is dancing around you constantly, and in order to create, the Loon needed to fly. “When is she going to take a break?” he thought. But several centuries had already gone by, and since they were well beyond the seven-day deadline for creators anyway, the Loon had lost all sense of competitive ambition. It also didn’t help that as the Loon had been spending all of this time on the ground, he was growing fatter and lazier as time went by.

One morning, only five hundred and twenty-two years after the seven-day deadline, the Loon thought, “Well, maybe I should get on with this.” He cleared his now quite ample and round throat. “Um, excuse me?” he said to the Dancer, who didn’t respond or miss a beat. She was in the middle of a wonderful tap number. The Loon felt bad about interrupting her but mustered up the energy to try again. “Um, miss? Miss? MISS? MIIIIISSSSSSSSS!” he said, getting louder and louder and finally wailing the last one rather impressively.

The Dancer slowed the tap down in surprise, as this was the first time the Loon had spoken to her, and, she was embarrassed to admit, she had forgotten about him entirely. “Um, yes?” she asked. “What is it?”

“Oh finally!” cried the Loon, happy to make some progress at last. “You know I have enjoyed your dancing tremendously, although you’ll have to explain the modern dance number with the kazoos and donuts . . . Anyway, now that I have your attention, I have some important work to do, worlds to create, creatures to design. And I’m well past my deadline. You see, I need some space to take off and fly. And you have been dancing in my way all this time. Would you mind standing a little aside, maybe dance over there?”

“Well of course.” said the Dancer, “Why didn’t you say so in the first place?” The Dancer moved, more like jiggled, aside. The Loon, free at last, spread his wings, flapped them a few times, took a few optimistic steps that could only have been called quick by the standards of a turtle and . . . went nowhere.

Being prone to denial, the Loon shrugged it off, attributing it to lack of practice, and tried again. He took a few faltering steps and then lost his footing, rolled bill-first onto the dirt and landed feet-up. The Loon, much to his growing chagrin, had to roll from side to side a few times before he had enough momentum to right himself.

The Dancer, done with the jig and not sure where to take the program, noticed the Loon was having trouble flying. Wanting to be helpful, she suggested, “Maybe you can’t fly

because you're so fat," as social nicety had not yet been invented.

"Yes, well, how embarrassing," said the Loon. "Looks like I've put on a pound or two."

"Looks more like thirty."

"And who asked you anyway?" the Loon said irritably. "Now what am I going to do?" he lamented. "I'm already five hundred and twenty-two years late with nothing to show for it! What will the Council think? They'll never trust a loon with creation again! I'll be a disgrace!"

The Loon, never one to miss an opportunity for theatrical flourish, tried to swoon, but in noticing he was already on the ground he had to settle for merely lying down in a more dramatic manner. The Loon was feeling rather sorry for himself and was regretting the last two hundred or so donuts he had eaten when the Dancer did something entirely out of character - she stopped dancing.

"Maybe I can help you create!" she suggested to the Loon.

The Loon snorted rather rudely. "I don't think so. You see, creation work is a highly skilled position, taking years of training and education. It's quite rigorous actually and . . ."

"No, that's not what I meant," the Dancer said, fighting the urge to roll her eyes. "I can help you lose weight. Then you can fly and create again."

“And how do you plan on doing that?” the Loon said, afraid she was right and not liking where this was going.

“You’ve been watching me for over five hundred years,” she said. “During that time I have been dancing every day and night, non-stop. You must have learned something by watching me. So now, you dance. Besides, I’m ready for a break.”

The Dancer lay down and instantly fell asleep.

The Loon sighed, knowing he had few options if he wanted to redeem himself. “Well, I guess it’s worth a try. Where shall I begin?” He tried a few steps of a waltz, then moved into a foxtrot. Much to his surprise, the Loon soon found he was having a good time. He started humming to himself as he moved in a circle around the sleeping dancer.

After just a few days rotating through the slower dances, the Loon was feeling more energetic and lighter. He decided to try an electric slide. After a few months of electric sliding the Loon was feeling great. He had lost twenty pounds and was soon going to be ready to fly again.

The Loon danced through a lindy hop, some jazz steps, a tap number (hard to do with webbed feet), and finally the Loon had exhausted all but one form of dance, modern! He paused for a moment, feeling a bit foolish, but then said, “Why not?”

The Loon started moving this way and that, with no obvious pattern or form. He extended his head, moved it to

the left and the right, swirled around in circles, rolled on the ground, and sprang up again. To an outside observer the Loon, perhaps not surprisingly, looked a bit crazy. But the Loon felt something new as he moved this way and that. A strange feeling, a buzz, started in his feet, then moved up his body and out his wings, then shot through his neck and filled up his head. The Loon jumped off the ground, flapping his wings, and took off with an excited yell! Then the Loon began to sing. As he sang and danced and swirled about in the air the Dancer woke up. She saw the Loon and smiled. He was finally doing his job!

The Dancer started dancing and took up the song. The Loon and the Dancer did this for days, seven to be exact. And when they were done, a new world had sprung up underneath them, a beautiful world made of music and dance.

The Dancer stopped dancing and smiled at the Loon, who had settled back on the ground once more. “Job well done,” she said. The Loon blushed. “It is rather marvelous, if I do say so myself,” he said. “Well, I guess that’s it then?”

The Loon spread his wings and took to the air again. He took one last look back and waved at the Dancer, who waved back before starting to dance again. The loon flew away feeling very impressed with himself.

And so it was.

In the beginning, there was a Ham.

As in meat. Just lying around, which was very curious as there was no one to put it there and no pigs in the Universe to speak of. But there it was.

It was a cured ham, which is an odd thing for a ham to be. But we're glad to hear it.

And a pair of tweezers. An odd pair of objects, one could say. But as there was no one to make that observation, no one did.

And a note. The paper variety. With some writing on it. It said, "Please don't eat the ham. I'm saving it for later."

Now, who had written the note and for whom it was intended is beyond me. But nevertheless, there it was.

And a nut. The kind that comes from trees, which hadn't yet been created.

A mysterious assortment of objects, one might say, if one had existed.

Did I mention the canary?

No, by the look on your face, I see I did not. Yes, there was a canary. How it got there I can't say. But there it was.

And a mouse. Scurrying around, establishing precedence.

Did I mention the mole? The animal variety. Probably not, as it had been underground and just poked up its pale, whiskered face through a hole in the floor. It had been woken up by the sounds of the mouse and the canary who was now singing. The mole had come to the surface to see what all of the commotion was about.

Then, much to everyone's surprise - except perhaps that of the ham and the tweezers, who were hard to surprise - in walked a muse. The Greek variety, of course.

She took one look around and shook her head, "How do they expect me to work with this?"

The mouse took some offense at that but quickly forgot as a chunk of cheese appeared out of nowhere.

The muse shook her head once more, making disapproving clucking noises which the canary found intriguing. Then the muse shrugged her shoulders. "I guess it will have to do," she said with a healthy dose of resignation.

So the muse started her musing while the canary sang, the mouse scurried around, and the ham continued doing whatever ham does.

It didn't take long for everyone to get bored with each other, because, after all, how were a ham, a pair of tweezers, a note, a nut, a canary, a mouse, a mole, and a muse going to pass the time together?

Luckily, their boredom was soon alleviated by the appearance of a dromedary.

At that, the muse stood up and said, “Forget this.”

And so it was.

In the beginning, there was a Pickle.

The kind you eat. Though there was no jar, or pickle juice, as the Universe wasn't paying much attention to details in those days.

The Pickle was in the process of becoming self-aware, apparently an important step in the evolution of consciousness. So we can be proud of the Pickle for taking such a leap.

Not that there was much a pickle could do with self-awareness. It just floated in the void of space, being a pickle. But as it turned out it was a very *contented* pickle, because along with self-awareness it had already determined that the key to satisfaction is acceptance of circumstance. It was a very wise pickle and apparently a fast learner.

So the Pickle spent its days in blissful self-awareness, just being a pickle and not worrying about doing tasks that would require appendages, or creating things that would require a brain, or how it was going to eat without any internal organs or a mouth and all related bodily accessories.

But then one day the Pickle found itself in a pickle. It could feel it was on the edge of something. Something big. After living so long in pickle-transcendental bliss, it felt its first glimmer of dissatisfaction. To be honest, transcendental bliss was getting a bit boring. Despite not having appendages, a brain, any internal organs, or means of locomotion and absolutely nothing to do as a result, it

found that being a transcendently blissed-out pickle wasn't all it was cracked up to be. The Pickle wanted more. In that instant, the bliss faded and the Pickle saw itself as it was - a pickle floating in the void of space. If it had senses it would have become aware of how cold and unpleasant it was to be floating around in space. As it didn't, the Pickle had to resort to imagining its unpleasant circumstances; and as the Pickle had an active and vivid imagination, the results were undesirable to say the least.

The Pickle soon realized a world without bliss may not be such a good option after all, and it desperately tried to take all that dissatisfaction business back. But it was too late for the Pickle. Unable to regain its former bliss, the Pickle instead felt an all-encompassing despair.

It went on like that for quite a while, until the Pickle had the good fortune of running into a constellation that had recently been created by a bored star with questionable artistic ability. The constellation later to be known as Cassiopeia noticed the distress of the Pickle and took pity on it. She picked up the Pickle and ate it.

Little did she know but Cassiopeia had a food intolerance that just happened to be pickle (the Universe is mysterious in that way). Eating the Pickle caused quite a digestive disturbance. In fact, Cassiopeia found herself running around frantically looking for another constellation in the shape of a toilet, or at least a basket; neither of which, unfortunately, had been created. She finally found a quiet corner of the galaxy where there were no other stars present, opened her mouth, and out came a billion little bits of Pickle with accompanying juice.

The Pickle bits and juice, though, had changed while in Cassiopeia's stomach. It may have been too late for the Pickle itself, which had been mostly destroyed in the process, but what the Pickle hadn't known was that deep inside it still had the bliss, and after being digested by Cassiopeia, only the bliss remained. As the bliss was spewed across the galaxy it took form and became the planets and stars as we know them.

And so it was.

In the beginning, there was a Note.

The musical variety. But as the Note was a solitary note, it was lonely. It traveled through the Universe looking for other notes. But it was all for naught as none others existed.

That is not exactly true. You see, there were no other notes like that Note, but it wasn't as if no other notes existed. The Note just wasn't looking in the right places. It looked around planets, in star clusters, and in nebulae, but it was missing the most obvious spot.

That is not exactly true. It was missing the least obvious spot as it wasn't really a spot at all. It was a non-spot. Though it was the most obvious non-spot, so there was no excuse for missing it.

That is not exactly true. You see, the non-spot was, to be honest, in a place most would not choose to look - inside a black hole. That's where all the other notes had found themselves after a night in the constellation of Pan they would all prefer to forget. On the way home, caught up in singing a rather tasteless song, they got too close to the black hole and were sucked in.

There, predictably, they remained. And if one should ask how all this happened before the beginning, I would point out that one should not.

So after the Note had looked in every other possible location, it realized, much to its chagrin, that the only remaining option was the black hole. The Note let out a

rather melodious sigh and approached the black hole - not too close, mind you - with what it hoped was a friendly air.

“Um, excuse me?” it said to the black hole, which didn’t respond.

The Note cleared its throat and spoke louder, “UM, EXCUSE ME?”

The black hole didn’t respond again, in what it hoped was a more pointed manner.

The Note mustered up all the volume it had, and yelled, “UMMMMM, EXCUUUUUUSE MEEEEEE?”

“You’re not going to go away, are you?” the black hole said with the tone of the often oppressed.

“Well, I’m sorry to bother you. But I’ve looked everywhere else. You see, I’m a note, and I can’t be the *only* note in the Universe, as that would make music rather boring, so I was thinking that maybe . . .”

“My, you do go on,” the black hole interrupted.

“Well yes, I suppose I do, but as I was saying . . .” The Note was usually not so tactless, but it was quite nervous being so close to a black hole and found itself unraveling - not a word you want to use for how you feel around a black hole.

“I heard you, and you think you can find your other notes here. Yeah, yeah, I get it. Everyone blames the black hole.

Can't find your keys? Go ask the black hole. Lose a planet or two? Go ask the black hole. And not only that, if it was just that I could take it. But there's always a *tone* when asking me, that *tone*, as if I did it *on purpose*. Well then, if you don't want your things consumed by a black hole, *don't leave them near one* is what I would say. If anyone cared to ask. Which they don't. No 'How are you doing today?' just 'Where's my planet?' in that *tone*. I'm getting quite tired of it."

The Note didn't know what to make of this. "I'm . . . sorry?" it ventured.

The black hole sniffed, though not really as it didn't have a nose. "That's the first time anyone has ever apologized to me."

As it occurred to the Note that an emotional black hole was even more dangerous to be near than a calm one, it continued hastily, "What I meant to ask was, because us notes can be rather irresponsible, *entirely of our own accord* mind you, and you being an *innocent* bystander in all of this, *entirely not to blame* for how irresponsible the rest of the Universe is, maybe you were the . . . *unwitting*, mind you . . . recipient of some other notes? And maybe, if you were, I could take them off your hands? Unburden you if you will? You could probably use the space?" The Note trailed off, fingers crossed, though of course not as it would be silly to imply the Note had fingers.

"Quite right, quite right," the black hole said. The Note was happy to hear its voice had calmed considerably. The black hole continued, "I could use the space. It has been

rather crowded in here after that last solar system wandered too close. Let me see what I've got.”

The black hole rummaged around inside for a while. “Ah yes, here we are,” it said. “I think these are the ones you’re looking for.” The black hole found the errant notes and threw them back into space.

The notes, still a bit groggy from their trip to Pan, squinted at the sudden light (relatively speaking). And then, realizing they were free, joined the Note in an excited, and melodious, rush.

But the black hole wasn’t done with the notes. “While you’re here, you may as well take some things, souvenirs if you like,” the black hole said. The notes weren’t sure what it meant by that until, much to their dismay, the black hole started pushing planets, asteroids, and odd metal contraptions in their general direction. The notes dodged these objects as best they could.

It wasn’t long before there was quite a mess of celestial objects outside the black hole. The Note could see the black hole was not going to stop anytime soon, and the objects it was expelling were starting to have alarming gravitational effects on each other. The Note could see it had created a problem and, being the responsible type, wanted to do something about it.

The Note gathered its new companions and said, “We need to get the black hole’s mind off this souvenir business. Anyone know any songs that could calm it down? A lullaby perhaps?”

“I’ve got one!” one note said, and, after consulting with the other relevant notes, started playing Rock-a-Bye Nova. Granted, what is soothing for a star is of questionable relaxation value for most everything else, but it was worth a shot.

The Note thought the song might be working, as the black hole had paused to listen for a moment. But it didn’t last. The black hole resumed ejecting celestial objects while mumbling about how everyone expects it to take care of their junk.

“That didn’t work,” said the Note, thinking a change in strategy was in order. “Maybe something more entertaining? How about a polka?”

There was some enthusiastic support for that. The relevant notes gathered and started playing a rousing polka.

The black hole again paused to listen. “Where’s all that noise coming from?” it asked irritably. It picked up one of the metal contraptions and shook it a few times to see if the noise would stop. When it didn’t, the black hole started picking up asteroids from a cluster and shaking them in a similar fashion, holding them up to its ear, which of course it didn’t have. Unfortunately, the polka only made the black hole even more agitated, and now instead of just ejecting celestial objects, it was tossing them around maniacally.

Also, in what may have seemed to be progress, the black hole had totally forgotten about the notes. This was only of

temporary benefit to the notes themselves as the black hole, now entirely disinterested in maintaining good public relations, started throwing asteroids, planets, and metal contraptions toward them with complete disregard. In order to dodge the celestial objects, the notes had to scatter, each one letting out their tone while doing so. The result was a random, unpleasant garble of sound.

The Note realized it was only making things worse and had began planning a getaway strategy when, miraculously, the black hole paused and said, “Now that is what I call music!” But since the black hole had stopped throwing celestial objects, the notes had stopped dodging and the sound had stopped. The Note, not wanting the black hole to resume throwing, called to its fellows, “Do it again! Don’t stop!”

“Don’t stop *what?*” one note asked irritably as it didn’t appreciate having asteroids and planets thrown at it. “That was just random noise!”

“No, no, the black hole liked it!” exclaimed the Note, “Just keep going!”

The other note was about to protest when it saw that the black hole was going to resume tossing celestial objects and changed its mind. “Alright everyone!” it said. “Let’s do it!”

All of the notes started sounding randomly, and sure enough, it worked! The black hole finally relaxed and listened happily for a few hours before dozing off.

Once they heard the black hole snoring, the notes stopped, exhausted, and left as quickly and quietly as they could. The Note was happy to be with its fellow notes, and the other notes were happy to be out of the black hole.

A nearby constellation had heard the randomly played notes and was enthusiastically jotting down the composition. “Brilliant!” it said, “Clearly a break from tradition that will revolutionize our concept of music as we know it!”

The constellation next to that one sniffed dismissively, “Maybe a *break from*, but certainly not an *improvement on* tradition. I’d take a nice solid polka any day.”

“I’ve always said you lack vision,” the first constellation said.

“And you lack *good taste*,” the other retorted.

What ensued was a silence, but not just any silence, a profoundly pointed silence that only two constellations who have spent billions of years together can create.

From that silence many worlds were born.

And so it was.