

Do you want to hear the beginning of all things, child? Do you want to hear the story of our people? Do you want to hear about the Voyager?

*I can't remember what to say back Mama.*

You say back: Tell me the story, Mama. Tell me the story of our beginning. You've got to remember that child. You'll have to tell this story to your children one day.

*I know, I know. Okay. Tell me the story, Mama. Tell me the story of our...*

Beginning.

*Our beginning. I knew that.*

I know honey. I know.

All things were contained in the tinniest of dots, sitting in the void beyond the universe. If you could sit outside and look at it, it looked just as stable as our universe is now. But it wasn't. Inside it were too many dimensions, all twisted and stack on one another. It was like a ball at the very top of the hill. It looked perfectly balanced for a second and then it started rolling down. In the most momentary of moments it split. And that split was so powerful it flung that little universe outwards. Now, years go by differently for different things. My life, your life, the lives of all the people who've ever been born would have seemed like an instant to this baby universe. It was hot back then, so hot that all the little atoms were a plasma soup. But time passed and out of that soup came two things.

*Hydrogen and Helium!*

That's right baby. And as more and more gas and debris bound together they started forming the stars. As those stars aged they forged the other elements and from those elements came-

*Us!*

Eventually, but not just yet. First those heavier elements had to form together over billions of years, flung from stars as they reached the ends of their lives. And eventually these little bits and bobs started gathering together, pulled in by gravity. As they circled one another they pulled closer and closer together until they formed disks around their stars. They collided and accreted and bound together to form planets. Just like the one we're on now.

*Is it time for us to happen yet?*

Not just yet. First, some of the planets need to get big enough to trap an atmosphere and keep it from being blown away by the sun. Then those planets that did had to create the little building blocks that make up you and I. And from those blocks came the very smallest of all life in the universe. Now that life had a long way to go before it could become multicellular and it took a long, long time. But in the end it got there, swimming its way thorough the prehistoric seas. Some of those creatures started moving onto the land, started walking and eating the plants that were growing there. They diversified and changed over eons until—

*US!*

Until our most distant ancestors started using tools.

*Not us?*

Not yet honey. Not quite yet. As I was saying, they started using tools, learned how to work with the land, learned how to keep animals and sew seeds so they would have a steady source of food and finally, they learned how to build. They wandered far and wide across their world and they learned many things. They forgot things too, stopped telling their stories, passing down all they'd learned to their children.

*Why would they do that? Why wouldn't they tell their kids?*

A lot of reasons. Some just didn't think it was important, that it was old and not useful to them. They lived in towns now and the wisdom of their grandmothers and grandfathers was about the roots they could eat and the places where they'd come from. Sometimes there were no children left to tell or no parents left to tell it. Time erodes all things, child. That's why it's so important to keep telling the story. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

They learned how to build and they kept on building. They learned how to fight and often they'd fight with one another. And for thousands of years they kept building and talking, learning and fighting until their world started to feel too small and they began looking to the stars. The stars had been calling them for thousands of years now, but they couldn't imagine getting to them. They were just so far away. But as they grew older, as they grew a little more wise, they figured out a way to leave the safety of the atmosphere. They walked on the planets of their solar systems, they built machines that could walk in the places they couldn't step. And they spread. They spread out far and wide across their solar system, and when that too became too small for them, they found a way to launch themselves deeper into the void. Towards the stars.

They kept climbing, outwards, mapping and cataloging and discovering. Faced with the vastness of their universe they bonded together, they helped one another. Together they built wonders. But there is an end point to all things. No one can escape their time, no matter what you've built, no matter what you've done. And they knew that. All those wonders, all those things, were built in a universe that was spreading out and would continue to spread forever. And as the edges flew further and further from each other, the fabric of their universe grew colder. The stars began to dim in the sky as their light had to travel further across space to reach them. They began losing contact with each other as they all drifted apart.

Now they knew that this would happen and they had been working on a way to stop it, a way around it. But all those plans came to nothing and it looked like they were doomed to fade away into the void, isolated and in the dark.

*But what about us? Were we them?*

Not quite. See, as they studied and thought they found one possible route of escape. Through a worm hole into a parallel universe. Now, no living being could stand the radiation, the heat, the sheer gravity of a wormhole, not even in the most advanced ship they had created. Most of the wormholes were too small anyway, there was no way a full sized person could fit. And that gave them an idea. Instead of trying to save an individual they decided to save their stories. They poured their lives, their thoughts, their histories into a nanocomputer. They tucked it away in a tiny vessel and they sent it off through a wormhole. The journey was rough. It took time for the little vessel to find a safe place to

land. When it did touch down the vessel opened and the nanocomputer began to build. It was tasked with creating new life on this world, our world.

*It built us!*

It did, child. It built our people and all the life on this planet. It waited for us to learn and as we grew so did it. It became fond of us, watching us grow, teaching us about the stories it held inside its memory.

*That's the Voyager! That's who you're talking about.*

I am child. But there's more the the story.

*More? But we're here now. What more is there?*

Our future. Because one day we will need to put our history, our stories in a seed like the Voyager was and send it off through a wormhole. One day when we reach the stars ourselves, when we leave the atmosphere of our planet, we will send our stories out. We will help sew the seeds of a new people in another place. Now you must remember this story, child. So that one day you can tell your children.

*Oh! I remember this part! I say back to you: I will remember these stories. The story of our people. The story of the beginning. The story of the Voyager. I will remember and tell my children. But what if I don't want children? Who do I tell?*

Well, anyone who asks you.

*But what if no one asks?*

Then you must tell yourself. Tell anyone who will listen. Tell the Voyager.

*Doesn't the Voyager already know?*

It's not the knowing of the story that's important, child. It's the telling.