

Advance Praise for

# THE HOLY UNIVERSE

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“For those of us who have respect for the scientific method—but who also call ourselves ‘spiritual but not religious,’ who seek a spirituality unburdened by the chains of dogma, who seek a deep connection with Creation that is based in awe and reverence for nature and the cosmos—David Christopher has done a marvelous job in helping us reclaim the word ‘Holy.’”

—JOHN ROBBINS, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Diet for a New America*, *The Food Revolution* and others

“Insightful and thought-provoking; connects the dots between challenges faced by ancient cultures and those confronting us today, in ways that inspire us all to take action.”

—JOHN PERKINS, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Hoodwinked*, *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man*, *Psychonavigation* and others

“The story of our shared origins—not just as humanity or even life, but as the Universe itself—must be told again and again for us to come home once more in time and space, to be at ease and connected. David’s telling as a conversation between Sage and Seeker brings the vastness of the story closer to our daily experience. His is a fresh and accessible voice.”

—VICKI ROBIN, *New York Times* bestselling co-author of *Your Money or Your Life*, author of *Blessing the Hands that Feed Us*

“David Christopher has done a brilliant job of explaining the new science of the evolution of life and the Universe. His story helps us view the crises of our time in a new and more positive light and offers a guidepost for the emerging culture of our time.”

—PAUL H. RAY, PH.D., co-author of  
*The Cultural Creatives: How 50 Million People Are Changing the World*

“Truly remarkable—unites a clarity of understanding of what the human family is up against with a poetic story of where we came from and who we really are. David is an artist and an activist, a poet and a prophet. His wisdom is vibrant, moving, and powerful.”

—LYNNE TWIST, Co-founder, The Pachamama Alliance, founder,  
The Soul of Money Institute, and author of *The Soul of Money*

“This book is a remarkable synthesis of modern and ancient wisdom, innovation, and science. David Christopher sheds light on the creative third options that emerge when polarities or opposites are brought together to create a greater whole. Timeless, yet most relevant for our current issues and challenges we face personally and collectively.”

—ANGELES ARRIEN, PH.D., Cultural Anthropologist,  
author of *The Four-Fold Way, Living in Gratitude* and others

“What a magnificent conversation! Given the current state of affairs, it is easy to sink into the depths of despair. But here, the Sage and the Seeker raise questions that plumb our intellects and souls to give rise to the thought that there might just be a way.”

—RICK THEIS, Founder, The Leadership Institute  
for Ecology and the Economy

“This touching story is instructive and hopeful, two very important ingredients for these times. It both reinforced my hope that the Sages of the world are there to help those of us who seek and that our lives are never that far off track—righted by a new perspective, a new possibility, just like those described in this heart-warming tale.”

—CAROLYNE STAYTON, Executive Director, Transition US

“A great fable! A story about story, and what games we humans play on ourselves . . . creating separation and fear out of our imaginations, wasting our creative skills while distancing ourselves from one another and Creation. *The Holy Universe* serves as a roadmap to return to the wisdom of the ancients, before we tricked ourselves into thinking things are different from how they really are.”

—JOHN RENESCH, global futurist, and author of  
*Getting to the Better Future: A Matter of Conscious Choosing* and others

“Profound, delightful—*The Holy Universe* gives life to the scientific creation story unlike any work I’ve seen. I highly recommend it.”

—PEGGY DUVETTE, Executive Director, WiserEarth.org

“David Christopher creates a much-needed bridge between a sense of cosmic wonder and our everyday experience, showing how our understanding of the meaningful unfolding of the Universe can actually inform our day-to-day struggles, questions, and yearnings. Christopher’s writing brings clarity of thought together with a spacious and compassionate view, all in the service of cultural healing.”

—MARY GOMES, PH.D., co-editor of  
*Ecopscychology: Restoring the Earth, Healing the Mind*

“David Christopher is a Kahlil Gibran for the 21st century. His book uses the venerable tradition of the teaching-story to guide us toward a deeper understanding of the Great Transformation that is the setting for our lives. For readers with a spiritual sensibility, *The Holy Universe* offers a cosmic perspective grounded in ecological sensibility.”

—RICHARD HEINBERG, Senior Fellow, Post Carbon Institute,  
and author of *The Party’s Over*, *The End of Growth* and others

THE  
HOLY  
UNIVERSE

A NEW STORY  
OF CREATION FOR  
THE HEART,  
SOUL, AND SPIRIT

DAVID CHRISTOPHER

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This story of the Universe  
is a young story; it is changing  
as we discover and rediscover more  
about ourselves,  
our planet,  
our galaxy,  
our Universe,  
and the Infinite.

So you must hold this story  
with a light grasp,  
much as you would gently hold a bird,  
trembling in your hand:  
not so tight as to harm the bird  
and even willing to release it  
at the right time,  
and let it fly off into history.

— *T H E S A G E*

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# INTRODUCTION

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Like so many people who left the faiths of their youth, as an adult I still yearned to believe in *something*. But just as I found the religious interpretations of the scriptures I grew up with deeply unsatisfying, so too did the cold, factual stories of modern science fail to speak to my spirit. Like the Seeker in the pages that follow, I left the story of the scriptures I was given, but I also couldn't reconcile myself with the "Big Dumb Rock" story of creation put forth by the science of the early- to mid-20th century.

At the same time, I struggled with being in an unjust world seemingly bent on ecological self-destruction. I craved a spiritual direction that encompassed more than self-help, a story that could help me create meaningful work for myself that made a difference in a world of mass extinctions, deep injustices, and spiritual poverty.

So I quit my corporate training job, then my flying career, to seek an outlet for my passion for humanity and for protecting the ecology of Earth that also satisfied my soul and spirit.

During the exploring and teaching I've undertaken in the decade or so since, I've heard the refrain "we need a new story" from many thinkers of our time, who were themselves raised within the worldview of what I call "Modern Mind." They write and talk about how this worldview has created a global society that—for all its technological prowess and brilliance—has become dysfunctional to the point of becoming a danger to itself and to the Web of Life. And there *are* people among them—including Thomas Berry, Sidney Liebes, James Lovelock, Elisabet Sahtouris, and Brian Swimme, as well as "big historians" such as Nancy Ellen Abrams, Cynthia Stokes Brown, Eric Chaisson, David Christian, Joel Primack, and Fred Spier—who tell of a new worldview based on the latest science of the modern world, who speak beyond the traditional story of "pure" science.

There are other writers, thinkers, and activists such as Sherman Alexie, Jeannette Armstrong, Tom Goldtooth, Winona LaDuke, Oren Lyons, John Mohawk, Melissa K. Nelson, and many, many others, who have at the same time struggled to awaken those of us caught up in the overarching Story of Modern Mind to another story that's been there all along.

Many of the ideas of these people were brought into the *Awakening the Dreamer, Changing the Dream Symposium*, created by The Pachamama Alliance in San Francisco. I became one of many facilitators of this Symposium, and I've always loved presenting the segment that talks about the new worldview now coming into being.

But even as I dove deeper into this new worldview, this new story, I felt something missing. I missed the poetry. I missed the cadence and the sound of the scriptures. I wanted more. I wanted a story that also *felt* like the one I grew up with.

So I took my (admittedly limited) understanding of these ideas and fashioned my own telling of the story of creation, one that feels reminiscent of the scriptures and helps me make sense of the profound crises of our times.

It felt audacious, still feels audacious. I present the resulting dialogues to you simply as an offering, most certainly *not* as a final answer, an authoritative text, or as a replacement for all other stories. My own teacher cautioned me to treat this work as “notes on my journey”: thoughts and ideas forming a framework from which I will continue my explorations into the mysteries of life and the cosmos, yet written in a way that feels familiar and warm and welcoming. Of course, this framework will inevitably change as I continue my life's dance, especially as I explore ways of being in and relating to the world that are well outside the norms of modernity.

Although my life now doesn't always flow more smoothly than before this story came to me, and though I still carry some old wounds and concerns, I no longer have a nagging sense of ennui, of alienation, of being lost in a meaningless Universe. These dialogues have helped me make sense of both the science and the spirit, have helped ground me in the cosmos.

Perhaps you may find them useful, too.

—DAVID CHRISTOPHER  
*Palo Alto, July 2012*





# THE GOSPEL OF THE UNIVERSE

“But I don’t *like* her,” said the Seeker’s daughter. “She makes me feel stupid if I don’t play perfectly and I don’t want to go anymore!”

“We had an agreement,” said the Seeker, trying to stay calm, hands tight on the steering wheel. “We agreed that if you take violin lessons, you can go to camp this summer.”

“I didn’t know she would be such a *pain*.”

“Sometimes you have to buck up to follow through on your commitments, even when you find out that some of them aren’t much fun.”

A sullen silence fell between them. The Seeker grimaced, asking himself, *What’s the story here? What’s the story here?*

---

“Tell me, then, what *is* the story behind your desire for her to learn music?” asked the Sage.

They had once again left the coffee shop and now sat on a wooden bench toward the edge of a large park, near a small grove of trees beside an open playing field. Even though it was a little past midday, the Sun had only just started breaking through the morning fog. The sounds of families at picnic tables drifted from across the field.

“Part of it is that I didn’t get a chance to learn to play when I was young, and I regret that,” said the Seeker. “Another part is that we hope it’ll help her get into a good college, maybe make her application stronger.”

“And if she doesn’t get  
     into a good college,  
 she won’t be able to get a good job,  
 and will have to settle  
 for a mediocre career,  
     probably condemning her  
 to a life of misery, yes?”

“I know, I know . . . I see how *that* part is a little crazy.”

“Oh, yes—*any* story you come up with about the future is a little crazy. We’ll touch on this idea later, but for now, recognize that it simply doesn’t serve to latch on to stories about the future, because we really don’t know what’s going to happen, and we end up not paying attention to right *here* and *now*.”

“But I . . . I would feel sorry if she stopped taking lessons.”

“Goodness, yes!”  
 exclaimed the Sage.  
 “Music is important to the soul—  
   as a child, I learned to play and sing;  
   everyone in my family did.  
 It was simply natural.  
 I also learned how critical music was  
   to my grandfather’s ancestors,  
   how it helped them as they struggled  
   through slavery and repression.

“Ah, it is such a tragedy  
 that so many in this culture  
 do not dance and make music.  
   It is as if part of them  
   has been silenced.

“But as to your daughter,  
 it might be useful  
 to think more broadly,  
   to figure out with her  
   how music can be *fun*.  
 Certainly you don’t want to  
   force this on her,  
 but can you renegotiate  
   your agreement  
   with some fun in mind,  
 to the satisfaction of you both?”

“There *is* another teacher, but he’s much  
 further away,” mused the Seeker.

“Or perhaps another instrument,  
 or perhaps singing.  
   Perhaps the second teacher might  
 be willing to travel.  
   Or perhaps you could help her  
 have a conversation with her current teacher.  
   You have options.”

“Okay, I see that.” The Seeker nodded.

“But let’s examine one of your stories:

*If I don’t give my child a leg up on society,  
then she will be at a competitive disadvantage,  
have less opportunity, and will not thrive.*

Is that so?”

“Pretty much . . . especially with the schools  
getting to be so bad.”

“I’ll leave *that* story alone for now.

This story of ‘getting a leg up’—  
while there is a small bit of truth to it—  
causes many families  
to become consumed with directing  
their children’s experiences,  
focusing on how each experience  
might help the child compete.

“But for all you know, she might decide  
on a college that’s not  
difficult to get into.

Or perhaps she’ll decide  
not to go to school at all,  
to follow a calling  
none of you have dreamed of.  
Nonetheless, your family has become  
caught up in this story, turning  
childhood exploration  
into an adult-like competition.”

“Well . . .” The Seeker crossed his arms,  
frowning. He thought for a moment, then  
his face softened and he sighed. “Yeah, I  
guess we do that a lot with her.”

“This is one example of how  
 our small personal stories  
 reflect the stories of our societies.

“And surrounding *these* stories  
 is the overarching Story,  
 with a capital S,  
 that people of a culture  
 tell each other and themselves  
 about what they deeply believe  
 about the Universe  
 and the world around them—  
 where it came from,  
 how people came to be,  
 and humanity’s place in the world.

“This story is in fact so deep  
 that we seldom see it for what it is.  
 We unquestioningly call it ‘Truth.’  
 It is very real in your psyche,  
 and the psyche of all  
 who live within the culture  
 that created it.

“Tell me one part of this larger story,  
 using your story  
 about children  
 and competition.”

The Seeker uncrossed his arms and leaned forward, resting his elbows on his knees.  
 “Children and competition . . . okay, how’s this: Life is a big competition, where there are winners and losers. Dog eat dog, Darwin and that sort of thing.”

“Well, Darwin didn’t *quite*  
 say that; his words  
 have been twisted over time,

but that is  
indeed our story:  
you have to struggle  
and strive to be on top, yes?”

“You sure better, or someone else will take  
you down.”

“Now, what do we tell ourselves  
about where humanity comes from—  
our Creation story?”

“That depends upon your belief system,  
doesn't it?”

“Give it a try.”

The Seeker thought for a moment. “Well,  
some religions say that God created us, and  
we were banished from paradise after we  
disobeyed Him. But then science came  
along and said we evolved through a series  
of random accidents.”

“Close enough.

So here you have two stories:  
one about life being created  
and ruled by an angry God  
and another where life is a random  
and ultimately meaningless,  
competitive struggle.  
Both rather bleak, yes?”

The Seeker pondered. “You know, when I  
was a kid I never did really buy into the God  
story they fed us when we went to church,  
but I can't believe it's all just an accident.”

“You threw out this story  
about the scriptures that was given to you,  
yet you can't reconcile with the

‘Big Dumb Rock’ story, either,  
so that leaves you where?’

The Seeker gazed skyward, past the  
trees on the other side of the field,  
thinking. Suddenly he looked at the Sage,  
thunderstruck.

“I don’t *have* a story!” he exclaimed.

The Sage laughed.

“Well, you *do* have a story, but  
‘There’s got to be a better story than this’  
is hardly a foundation  
for a fulfilling life.”

The Seeker laughed ruefully.

“You see, when the sciences  
of Modern Mind really got going,  
they dismissed the religious,  
mythical, and spiritual stories  
of the ages.

They tried to replace stories  
filled with metaphor and images  
with stories of mere facts and logic.

“But they failed, for facts alone  
don’t go far in feeding  
the part of the soul  
that desires connection,  
loves imagery,  
craves meaning,  
demands metaphor.

“I’ll wager *this* is why  
you feel ill at ease with the world,  
and why a new job,  
even a ‘meaningful’ one,  
would satisfy you for only a short time.

“The sciences of Modern Mind  
 threw out the old stories  
     but didn’t replace them  
     with truly meaningful ones;  
 this lack puts you at odds  
     with your spirit because you *feel* this,  
 you feel the void in the middle of  
 the overarching Story of Modern Mind.”

“Wow. Yeah. I can see that now,” said the  
 Seeker.

“There *is* another story.  
 It draws ideas  
     from newer discoveries of science  
     that have yet to permeate our culture,  
 from discoveries that go well beyond  
     the old scientific stories.  
 It embraces the mysterious  
     and the mystical,  
     just like stories of other faiths  
 that humanity has created through the ages.

“It at once challenges  
 the story of our modern world,  
     or what I’ve been calling  
     ‘Modern Mind,’  
 and shows us a possible path forward.

“Perhaps you would like to hear this story;  
 it might help you to reframe  
 your current predicament.”

The Seeker settled back on the bench. “Yes, I  
 would,” he said.

---

“This story of the Universe,”  
 said the Sage,

“is a young story; it is changing  
 as we discover and rediscover more  
 about ourselves,  
 our planet,  
 our galaxy,  
 our Universe,  
 and the Infinite.

“Does this make sense to you?”

“I think so,” said the Seeker. “You’re saying  
 this story changes as we learn more and  
 more.”

“Yes, and this story  
 acknowledges that fact.  
 While we may be confident  
 of many of the details,  
 details will change over time  
 as we learn more  
 about the Infinite.  
 Each era of Modern Mind  
 finds the ‘absolute truths’ of a previous era  
 antiquated and quaint,  
 not realizing that its own absolute truth  
 will also seem antiquated and quaint  
 in the next era.  
 This story is not the whole story,  
 can *never* be the whole story.

“So you must hold it  
 with a light grasp,  
 much as you would gently hold a bird,  
 trembling in your hand:  
 not so tight as to harm the bird  
 and even willing to release it  
 at the right time  
 and let it fly off into history.”

She drew in a breath, let it out,  
and looked at the Seeker with  
a bright smile on her face.

“Shall we proceed?”

“Yes,” said the Seeker, leaning forward.

The Sage began.

## THE INFINITE AND THE CREATION OF THE COSMOS

---

1.

It was the Beginning of all Beginnings.

It was a time of no time,  
for time did not exist,

a place of no place,  
for space did not exist.

It was a beginning like no other,  
for there was no "before."

There was no time, there was no place;

there was only  
the Infinite,  
and the Unfathomable Mystery.

2.

And the Unfathomable Mystery was all that was to be.

And all that was to be was small,  
smaller than the tiniest particle,  
in the tiniest atom  
in the tiniest  
dream,

although  
there was nowhere from which to see  
how small all that was to be  
was,

for there was no outside, and no inside;  
no here, no there,  
no now, no then,  
no darkness, and no light.

There was nothing

save a whisper of what might be . . .  
an infinitesimal,  
indescribable,  
Unfathomable Mystery.

3.

And out of the Unfathomable Mystery,  
the Infinite called forth unto Itself.

It called forth space.

It called forth time.

It called forth being.

And in that ecstatic instant,  
the Universe  
slammed exploding outward into existence,  
with the jubilant  
and breathtaking  
beauty,  
brightness,  
energy,  
violence,  
power,  
and glory  
of a trillion newborn stars.

4.

It was a perfect explosion.

One trillionth of a second slower,  
and the Universe would collapse back into itself,  
unfulfilled.

One trillionth of a second faster,  
and the Universe would spin out  
dissipating into  
nothingness,

never to create  
galaxies,  
stars,  
planets,  
life,  
nor us.

A perfect explosion.

And in the instance of this perfect explosion,  
the Infinite began a brilliant and fierce cycle  
of gloriously creating,  
violently destroying,  
and gloriously creating once more . . .

As if It knew what It was doing.

## THE SEVEN CREATIONS

---

5.

Out of the fire of time, space, and being,  
 the Infinite brought forth  
 the Seven Creations:

Forces, Particles, and Energy,  
 Galaxies,  
 Stars,  
 Stardust,  
 Planets,  
 Life,  
 and the Web of Life.

The First Creation—

the forces of attraction and electricity  
 together with particles and energy,  
 out of which everything in the Universe  
 would henceforth be created—  
 flashed into existence,

roaring throughout the cosmos  
 as the fabric of time, space, and being  
 raged outward  
 beyond the size of a galaxy  
 in an instant of time.

As the Universe rushed outward,  
 many of the tiny particles  
 flashed together and annihilated one another,  
 swirling in a fire of energy, billions of degrees hot.  
 Yet some of these particles avoided oblivion  
 and persisted.

6.

But all was chaos:  
 these persistent particles

spun entwined within the energy of the cosmos,  
inseparable from its immense fire.

Then the heat within the Universe  
began to subside, ever so slowly,  
as the expansion of the growing Universe  
also began to subside.  
Over hundreds of thousands of years,  
particles and energy  
began to separate from one another.

And it came to pass,  
after three hundred thousand years of cooling,  
that an enormous flash of energy  
engulfed the entire Universe,  
as the forces suddenly—  
everywhere  
and instantly—  
slammed together  
new arrangements of particles,  
slamming them together  
to create atoms of simple elements  
and also matter and energy  
that was mysteriously dark—  
setting the stage for forms of creation yet to come.

Thus did particles and energy,  
guided by the forces  
of attraction and electricity,  
complete their separation,  
and the Universe settled and cooled,  
expanding across immense distances.

7.

For millions of years, the cooling Universe  
expanded as an enormous, undifferentiated  
ocean of atoms and energy.

Then suddenly, these atoms felt the tug,  
the call of gravity,  
and began to arrange themselves,  
spinning  
into a trillion whirlpools,  
a trillion gargantuan clouds:  
spinning into galaxies—the Second Creation,  
with even more immense spaces  
between each cloud.

Within each gargantuan galactic cloud,  
billions of smaller clouds formed;  
within some of these,  
gravity drew in and collected points  
of these tiny atoms of simple elements.

These points grew into spheres,  
which grew larger and larger  
as the gravity within them grew stronger,  
drawing in ever more atoms.

And these spheres became immense.  
Atoms crushed upon atoms,  
growing hotter and hotter  
as gravity grew stronger and stronger . . .

Until the pressure became so great  
that the atoms within these points  
ignited,  
shooting bright energy  
outward against gravity,  
forming a new balance within the Universe,  
as these spheres of simple elements  
flashed  
into the fire of stars—the Third Creation.

The stars within the galaxies  
danced whirling around each other,  
transforming the galaxies  
into brilliant spirals and ellipses

of a thousand colors and shapes:  
spinning,  
colliding,  
merging,  
until the galaxies themselves  
danced into clusters  
of perfect balance.  
And the stars within the galaxies  
began a brilliant and fierce cycle  
of gloriously creating,  
violently destroying,  
and gloriously creating once more.

8.

For billions of years, stars burned brilliantly,  
lived, and died.

Some slowly faded away.

Others died exploding  
with the force of a billion stars,  
into great bright vibrant flashes of energy.  
From within the fire of these colossal explosions  
burned forth stardust—the Fourth Creation.

And stardust—made of new,  
fantastic arrangements of particles,  
new, beautifully complex elements—  
brought forth new and astonishing  
potentials for creation.

9.

Stardust from these vast explosions  
tore through and around  
neighboring clouds of atoms and energy,  
mixing with these clouds  
and collapsing them down  
to create new stars.

More stardust spun

whirling around these new stars,  
and the beautifully complex elements of stardust  
formed new combinations,  
formed simple molecules of stardust;  
these simple molecules themselves joined together,  
forming beautifully complex molecules.

And this stardust fell together to form asteroids, comets,  
and planets—the Fifth Creation:  
offering places for  
these many forms of stardust,  
these new potentials for creation,  
to take hold  
and experiment.

## THE GRANDMOTHER STAR AND THE CREATION OF EARTH

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10.

After many billions of years  
of creating,  
destroying,  
and creating once more,  
in one particular galaxy, one particular star,  
our Grandmother Star,  
exploded violently  
with the force of a billion stars.  
And from the death of the Grandmother Star  
burned forth stardust,  
forged in the brilliant fire of her destruction,  
and her stardust scattered across  
light years of space.

11.

Hundreds of thousands of years passed, as the stardust  
from the death of the Grandmother Star  
tore through and around  
neighboring clouds of elements and energy,  
spinning these collapsing clouds  
back into themselves  
into many new points of light,  
arranging themselves into new stars.

One of these new stars was our Sun.

Bands of more Stardust gathered circling,  
dancing around the newly shining Sun.  
Some of the bands fell together,  
forming into tiny swirling jewels, ringed around  
this brilliant yellow diamond of light.

Thus was the birth of Earth and her siblings.

12.

A fledgling Earth gathered stardust  
from asteroids,  
comets,  
and meteors  
as they collided with her.  
Earth grew hot with these collisions  
as she grew in size.

It came to pass that an asteroid  
the size of a tiny planet  
slammed into her,  
tilting her to one side  
and tearing from her flesh  
what would become her Moon.

And the Moon thus formed  
spiraling out around Earth,  
cooling into a bright silver sphere,  
drifting into a perfect distance—  
not too far away,  
nor too close—  
and serving to keep Earth in balance  
as she orbited her Sun.

For another billion years  
Earth gathered more stardust,  
adding to her forming crust  
and creating her atmosphere,  
which became dense  
with all manner of gasses.

And Earth churned with fire  
and heaved with explosions,  
just like her siblings.  
Some of her siblings flared out,  
becoming lifeless as stones;  
others entered endless cycles of storms,  
and became great gaseous clouds.

But Earth, lovely Earth—  
she swirled around her Sun  
in perfect balance:  
not too hot, nor too cold,  
not too large, nor too small,  
not too close, nor too far away  
from her parent Sun.  
She cooled, her crust riding above  
currents of magma seething below,  
and ceaseless storms filled the seas  
and separated the continents.  
Her Moon pulled  
on these newly forming seas,  
creating just the right amount of tidal flow  
surging back and forth,  
covering and uncovering the shores  
of her shifting continents  
as they moved into just the right places.  
These forces joined together,  
pulling and pushing one another  
in concert, setting the stage for  
the next unpredictable  
creation.

13.

As a cauldron,  
boiling, surging, stirring,  
Earth churned stardust together:  
stardust created in the death  
of the Grandmother Star,  
stardust crushed deep within  
the flesh of Earth,  
stardust pouring forth  
from volcanoes on land  
and from dark, boiling undersea vents,  
stardust thrashed within  
the seas and oceans,

thrashed by the lightning of storms  
 a hundred times more powerful  
     and frightening  
 than any storm since.

Stardust, in the form  
 of beautifully simple and complex elements  
 and simple and beautifully complex molecules,  
     endlessly formed new combinations  
 as if it knew what it was doing.

For millions of years,  
 stardust played and danced and created.  
 As asteroids and comets  
     hurled down more stardust from the sky,  
 Earth poured forth more stardust  
     from her volcanoes  
     and her dark, boiling undersea vents,  
 and pulled starlight energy from her Sun  
     as the cycle of storms carried on.

14.

And it came to pass—  
     perhaps in the shallow seas  
         surrounding the continents,  
 perhaps far down within Earth's crust,  
 perhaps deep underwater  
     near the dark, boiling vents—  
  
 that these beautifully complex molecules  
     gathered together  
     and brought forth something  
     both startling and unforeseeable:

They arranged themselves into a miraculous  
     dance,  
 as if they knew what they were doing.

Stardust joined together  
 in the Sixth Creation,  
     and danced  
 the new dance of life.

15.

Through the dance of life  
 came forth the consciousness  
     and creativity of life:  
 beings  
     aware of their surroundings,  
         moving toward food  
             and away from harm,  
 and beings dividing,  
     bringing out of their own flesh  
     new beings identical to themselves.

These tiny beings of stardust  
 lived, fed on the flesh of Earth herself,  
 and cleaved new beings,  
     over and over again.

Over the millions of years,  
 one creature changed itself  
 ever so slightly . . .  
     Then another, quite suddenly . . .

Into new beings, still very tiny,  
 that found novel ways of releasing  
     the energies bound  
     within the stardust of Earth.

As they transformed themselves,  
 they inscribed their lessons  
     into the sacred coiled codes of life  
     held deep within their cells:  
     lessons on how to thrive  
     upon a glorious Earth.

They shared these coded lessons with one another,  
learning new lessons  
as they spread across Earth.

They filled the seas  
with a diversity of colors and life never before seen,  
as if they knew what they were doing.

And through these infant circles of relationships  
between the tiny beings themselves  
and between Earth and all the beings  
came forth the Web of Life,  
the Seventh Creation.

BEYOND CHANCE AND CREATORS

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The Seeker shifted in his seat, his brow furrowed. "Can I ask you something?"

"Certainly," replied the Sage.

"You've used that phrase several times, 'as if they knew what they were doing.' What do you mean by that?"

A breeze stirred the trees in the grove behind them. The Sage shifted on the bench, adjusting her shawl against the chill.

"What I mean is that something other than chance seems to be driving the Universe, driving it to create; if chance alone were to account for the whole of the Universe, then life might happen only once in billions upon billions of years, yet we find ourselves here after only thirteen billion years."

"But it still *could* happen by chance, right?"

"There are those who argue that point," said the Sage.

"But since the Beginning of All Beginnings, greater and greater order and complexity have emerged at such speed and creativity that I find chance alone a deeply unsatisfying explanation."

"You're saying that God exists, then."

“Not quite. For me,  
 the images of egoic beings  
 conjured by the words  
     ‘God’ or ‘Creator’  
 are small, shadowy echoes  
 that do not even begin  
     to illuminate the grandeur  
     of the Infinite.

“The word ‘Infinite’—  
 or, even better, the phrase  
 ‘the creative force of the Infinite’—  
 better captures the incomprehensible  
     depth and complexity  
 of the processes that drive the creation  
 of galaxies, stars, planets, Earth, and us.  
 This phrase helps me to see  
     and to *feel*  
 beyond both stories—  
     the story of a determined universe  
     and the story of a random universe—  
 to a story of a mysteriously  
     creative Universe.”

“I’m not sure I get it . . . it seems that you’re  
 just substituting ‘Infinite’ for ‘God,’” said  
 the Seeker.

“But they’re not synonymous;  
 the word ‘Infinite’ describes  
     more of a process  
     than an object.”

“What do you mean, a process?”

“The creative force  
 of the Infinite is like  
     the *shape* and flow of the  
 water of a river,

just as it is also the water  
 and the riverbed itself.  
 But here we go . . . can we really  
 use words to describe  
 that which is ultimately  
 indescribable?”

“I think that kind of helped; you’re saying it’s  
 about action and not things, right?”

“Actually, it’s both . . .  
 but our culture stresses  
 the things and not the processes.  
 So it’s okay to stress the idea  
 of ‘process,’ because you’re used  
 to thinking more about ‘things.’

“The Infinite, then,  
 is a creative process that,  
 even as It causes great destruction,  
 also brings amazing things  
 and actions into being—  
 all so wonderful, so complex,  
 that It certainly *acts*  
 as if It knows what It is doing.  
 That is the ultimate and delightful mystery.”

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