

## Perhaps...

...in the beginning, God was no size at all. Because there was no Space. And no age at all, because there was no Time.

God just *was*.

And perhaps, because she was lonely, God *grew*.

And when God grew, Time and Space exploded into being.

Stuff at colossal temperatures shot outwards, clumping into clouds of burning gas and splashes of red hot liquid. Suddenly God was everywhere, because there was everywhere to be.

And God called Time and Space her *Universe*.

Time passed. Space spread. But still, God was lonely.

(And, with so much Time on her hands, she might even have been a little bored.)

God sighed, and said to the glowing clouds:

“Do you like this Universe I’ve made for you?”

But the clouds said nothing at all.

God said to the splashes of red hot liquid:

“Do *you* like this Universe I’ve made for you?”

But the splashes of liquid said nothing at all.

God waited.

The glowing clouds shrank into hot shining stars. Each hurtling drop of red hot liquid cooled, and grew a rocky crust. Some went spinning round the stars, becoming planets.

“Now this is getting interesting”, said God to herself.

And God said to the stars:

“Do you like the shining light the glowing clouds have lit for you?”

The stars said nothing at all. But God thought *perhaps* she heard them singing, high and faint, across the Universe.

And she said to the planets:

“Do you like the rocky mountains that have cooled to cover you?”

The planets said nothing at all.

But there was a roaring and rumbling, as the mountains threw out great fountains of molten lava, and clouds of ash, and steam, and sulphurous vapours.

From the mountain clouds, rain fell upon the surface of the planets.

God said to the rain:

“Do you like falling from the clouds that the mountain tops have made  
for you? Will you flow into great lakes and seas for me?”

But the rain just rained, and said nothing at all. Except on one planet, where  
God thought she heard the rain whisper “yes...yes...yes”.

Although it might have been her imagination.

God loved that planet, where the rain had spoken to her.

And she called it Earth, because she hoped that something interesting would  
grow in it.

Earth grew cooler still, and more rain fell from the mountain clouds. Icy comets  
crashed into Earth, and melted. Soon the mountains were running with rivers  
flowing into lakes, and seas, and oceans.

God said to Earth:

“Do you like the rivers and lakes, the seas and oceans the skies have  
made for you? Do you like being watered by the rain from the mountain  
clouds? Will you grow something for me?”

Earth said nothing. But when God listened very closely, she could hear a muffled *bubbling*.

Hot lava was squeezing up through the rocky crust at the bottom of the oceans, heating the water, and squirting rich minerals into the muddy mixture.

God said to the boiling mud at the bottom of the oceans:

“Do you like these hot rich minerals the Earth has given you?”

The mud said nothing at all.

But God waited patiently. And something happened.

Something moved.

All by itself.

“Come out” coaxed God. “Come and talk to me.”

And though the creature said nothing, it wiggled a little. And divided in two.

“Well,” said God, “this *is* interesting”.

She watched and waited. Each creature divided into two more, and soon there were hundreds, and thousands, and millions of little creatures swimming around in the mud, feeding on the bubbling minerals, all alike. Or were they? Not quite. Some were a little different. One had a tail. It divided into two more, each with tails. Now there were hundreds with tails, and some had mouths as well. Some started to chase and eat each other. The longer God watched, the more kinds of creatures she saw.

God said to the creatures:

“Do you like the rich warm mud that feeds your wiggling bodies? Are you happy? Does it hurt when someone bites your tail?”

But the creatures said nothing. They went on chasing each other, and dividing into more and more creatures, until there were so many different kinds that God nearly lost count.

And some of them were *green*.

God especially liked the green ones. They rose to the surface, and basked in the sun, and instead of feeding on minerals on the muddy bottom, they fed on sugar they made themselves out of sunlight and carbon dioxide from the volcano

vapours. And best of all, as they made the sugar, they also made oxygen – pure fresh air!

God said to the tiny green plants:

“Do you like the light the sun shines down on you? Are you happy?

Will you make more clean fresh air for me?”

The green plants said nothing at all. But they carried on dividing, and making more sugar and fresh air. Soon the skies and the foamy seas around the Earth were filled with oxygen, and all the ocean creatures kept dividing and dividing, until, from shore to shore, there were billions of them.

God looked closely. She saw that some had little feet. Near the shore where the water was shallow, they used their feet to cling to the rocks. Some grew long tentacles, and caught passing creatures for food. Some had several feet, and walked along the rocks. Some moved by squirting water. Some grew flippers and fins.

God said to the sea shore creatures:

“Do you like the shores the land and sea have made for you? The rock pools left by the tide where the sun warms the water for you? And all the different creatures you have to chase and eat? Are you happy?”

The sea shore creatures said nothing at all, but went on chasing each other, eating each other, and producing more and more of each other, until the rock pools were very crowded.

Some kinds were born who could trap water, and survive high up on rocks that the tides left dry each day. Some kinds were born who could breathe the fresh air the plants had made, and whose feet could carry them over the dry rocks to land.

And meanwhile, the deep sea animals and plants went on growing, with new kinds appearing all the time. Enormous ammonites with shells and tentacles. Soaring sea weeds that waved in the sunlit waters.

Plants grew on the land too, and in the forests, the creatures grew tall. Some ate leaves. Some ate each other.

God said to the great land creatures:

“Do you like the forests the plants have sown for you? The sun that warms your bodies? The cool fresh air the plants have made for you to breathe?

“Does it hurt when you fight each other? Do you weep when your friends are eaten?”

And the great creatures roared with pain and anger. But still they said nothing.

Then, one day, a terrible thing happened.

A gigantic rock from Space smashed into Earth. The forest caught fire with the heat of the impact, and black smoke hid the sun. Earth grew cold and dark.

Plants died, because without sunlight, they could make no sugar. Plant-eaters died, because there were not enough plants to eat. Meat-eaters died, because there were not enough plant-eaters to eat.

God saw the devastation, and she wept.

“Oh my creatures!” she cried, “how can I comfort you?”

But the creatures said nothing at all.

Earth was still. Or almost. Something stirred on the cold ashen floor of the forest. Small furry creatures, who made their own body heat, and kept warm and snug at night inside their fur.

The furry creatures had survived. Their fur, and their own body heat, had kept them warm. Seeds had survived, and green shoots poked through the blackened soil.

Slowly, the forests grew again. And life was good, with the great angry creatures gone.

God said to the furry creatures, as their babies fed contentedly on their mothers' milk:



“Do you like the peaceful forest the Space rock left for you? Do you like the milk your mothers make for you? Do you love your babies?

And, though the animals said nothing, they purred, softly.

The babies grew, and had babies of their own. Most looked like their parents. But some were a little different. Some were born with hands that were good for climbing. Some with tails that were good for balancing. Some had no tails at all. Some could make loud shrieks to warn each other when danger threatened. Some learned how to poke tasty ants out of rotten logs with sticks, and they showed their children how to use the sticks too.

God said to these clever creatures:

“Do you like your forest home? The fruit on the trees? The ants in the logs? Your families? Do you weep when your children grow and leave you?”

The clever creatures said nothing, but their eyes shone.

“Well”, thought God, “these are the cleverest creatures in my Universe, but still no-one has answered my questions”.

And she sighed, and she waited.

And waited.

A baby was born. The baby became a child. The child thought about the tasty ants, and the sticks he licked them from. He thought about his mother, and the sweet milk she gave him. He thought about the trees, and the fruit he ate from them. And he looked up at the stars in the midnight sky, shining on him from across the Universe. And he heard them singing.

God said to the child:

“Do you like the shining Universe I’ve made for you? Do you like the fruit from the trees, and your mother’s milk? Do you like the ants you poke from the logs with your stick?”

And the child answered

“Yes! Yes! Yes!”

“I do too” said God.

“And I love you most of all, because you love what I love.”

And then God asked the child:

“And do you hurt when you fall, and do you weep when you are lonely?”

“Yes”, said the child.

“I do too,” said God. “And now we can comfort each other.”

And through the child's ears God heard the stars singing, and through the child's eyes God saw the shining skies. On the child's tongue, God tasted the ants, and in the child's throat, God felt the sweet juice from the fruit trees. In the child's bones, God suffered the pain of the child's fall, and in the child's tears, God wept with grief.

And God was not lonely any more.

God said:

“Dearest child - will you lend me your hands, and your strong young legs as well? Will you look after my beautiful Earth for me? Will you keep the rain clean, and the skies clear, and the forests green and bright? And all the creatures that roam the land and seas, eating each other and being eaten - even though they do not answer my questions, they are all precious to me, and they are your brothers and sisters and cousins – will you love them, as I love you?”

And the child thought in deep silence.

But all he would say was:

“Perhaps....”