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Homo sapiens' biggest mistake is their belief that they are the only sentient species in the universe. What a foolish idea! Little creatures made out of flesh and blood—it's incredible that they have survived so long. Their little planet is one of billions in the vast galaxy and yet they think they are the wisest of all. My greatest wish is that the species on the small blue planet would know they are not as alone as they think they are. How little they know. Only eight light-minutes away from them is a truly sentient being: a star.

I was a star for over a million years yet it seems like only a few seconds. Those million years, those scant seconds, are what I will record in the Universal Consciousness for future beings to read and learn from.

For many thousands of years I was a drifting consciousness. I watched everything, not tied down to any one place in the universe. I was intrigued by the events that occurred inside a whirling cloud of dust and gas that the humans named a nebula. I watched as some of the dust particles and gases condensed into a spherical shape. Soon the sphere was almost thirty times the size of the star that the Homo sapiens orbited. It was a protostar, the equivalent of a human baby before it is born.

The core of the protostar began to condense more and more. I watched as all this occurred. I watched and I waited. Then life began for the ball of gas: it achieved nuclear fusion. The pressure

that gravity exerted on it was countered by the pressure of nuclear fusion from within.

Suddenly I was pulled forward and for a moment everything was black. Then I began to see again and what I saw was what the young star was seeing. I had become the star. I slowly drifted away from the nebula and found a place for myself in a galaxy the humans named the Milky Way. Far off in the distance I could see the humans' solar system with its yellow dwarf star. I was far larger than that tiny star—I was a blue main sequence star! What a silly name for such a marvelous creature as me. Why did those Homo sapiens have to think up the most ridiculous names possible?

I literally glowed with the energy that was surging within me. I glowed bright blue—hence the absurd name. I don't remember much from that time, but I do remember one thing: that was when I became good friends with the star that the human planet orbited. Sol—for that was the name the humans had given him—and I could communicate over the billions of light-years between us. Our minds were not limited in the ways that humans' were, and so we talked and talked. I recorded our conversations in the Universal Consciousness and they are part of my message to the beings of the galaxy.

I had three asteroids orbiting me. One, a small purple planetoid, had almost achieved sentience. I tried to talk to it all the time but it never answered me. I asked Sol about it and he laughed at me.

Sol: Ra, you can't talk to a planetoid. Even my planets are only slightly sentient. Don't bother.

I had chosen the name Ra for myself after Sol told me some of the human's legends about stars. I thought Ra sounded mystical, and it was a great improvement from "blue main sequence star."

Me: But it seems like the planetoid might be trying to communicate! I even gave it a name: Violet.

Sol: Don't waste your time, Ra.

For a hundred thousand more years I tried to convince Violet to talk. But even after she achieved planet status, Violet stayed mute. Then a horrible thing occurred—my gravitational pull was too strong for the purple planet. She drifted closer and closer to me, and soon a flare from my surface burnt Violet to a crisp. Within a few hundred years Violet was incinerated by my insane heat. I had killed the little planet, and I would never forgive myself.

Sol: Ra, Violet wasn't sentient. You can't kill something if it never lived.

Me: You don't understand. She was sentient. I know it! But before she could communicate with us, I killed her!

Sol: This wasn't your fault. I've killed planets before, and I even killed a sentient one once. It's just an occupational hazard of being a star.

But nothing could console me. Violet had been like a daughter to me and now she was gone. And despite what Sol had told me, it was my fault that she was dead.

I developed a personality that humans would call grumpy or pessimistic. I disapproved of everything, and only Sol's calm discussions kept me from going supernova.

Then one day I began to feel ill.

Me: Sol, what's happening? I'm not emitting much radiation anymore! I think I'm dying!

Sol: Ra, you're going to be okay. You've expended so much energy so fast that you used it all up. You've run out of fuel. I'm sorry.

Me: I don't want to die!

Sol: You won't die. You'll just move on to another form of life.

A few thousand years later, I exploded. A hundred years later the humans would see my explosion as a shining point of light in their sky. I went supernova, and it was painful. My entire being was torn apart. I cried out in pain, but Sol couldn't hear me.

Finally it was over. I descended into a state of consciousness that was barely alive. I wasn't dead, but I was close to it. I was spread all over the universe, my mass dissipated in space. The asteroids that had been orbiting me had been obliterated by my supernova, but I didn't care. They hadn't been sentient.

Then some of my mass began to condense. I regained consciousness, but I felt the oddest sensation. Before my supernova I emitted radiation. Now I was taking it in. I had become a hole in the universe and nothing could escape me, not even light. I tried to talk to Sol once more.

Me: Sol? Please answer me.

Sol: Ra? Is that you? You sound so different. What happened?

Me: I went supernova, and now all my mass compacted into ... I don't even know what I am. I'm a rip in the fabric of space.

Sol: I've heard of this happening, but it's somewhat rare. Humans call stars like you black holes.

And so I became a black hole. Sol only talked to me rarely since it hurt him when he sent me messages. I didn't mean to, but I absorbed a little of his energy each time I listened to him. After a few million years Sol fell silent. I could still see him and I knew he was alive, but he no longer communicated with me.

Over billions of years the planets and stars inside the Milky Way galaxy had moved. I saw with horror that Sol's solar system was drifting toward me.

Me: Sol! I'm here! You have to get away. I'll kill you!

Sol: What? Ra? Where are you? I can't see any stars anywhere!

With a sick feeling of dread I devoured the outer planets that orbited Sol. I knew what was coming next and I didn't want it to happen.

Me: Sol, I'm so sorry. I don't want to do this, but I have no choice.

Sol drifted close enough for him to get pulled into an orbit around me. Like water draining down the hole in a bathtub, he spiraled down toward me. I swallowed him whole and he died instantly. I had killed Sol. I had killed my best and only friend. It hurt so much. Losing Violet had been nothing compared to the agony I was feeling.

I sank down inside myself and let my consciousness leave the black hole. I was a free-floating form in the galaxy once more. Once I send this message out to the universe I will let myself slip away.

Farewell, beings of the universe. I hope no one will have to share my fate.

Earth, 4013—8 minutes later:

“Madame President, I am receiving a signal. It seems to be coming from the black hole we detected.”

“That’s impossible. Black holes don’t emit anything.”

“Maybe our sensors are confused, but there is a transmission.”

“What does it say?”

“It seems to say that we are not the only ones in the universe.”

“What does it say exactly?”

“‘Homo sapiens’ biggest mistake is their belief that they are the only sentient species in the universe. What a foolish idea!’ ”

Earth drifted closer and closer to the black hole that was Ra.

“Madame President, there’s another transmission! This one seems to be coming from everywhere at once!”

“What does it say?”

“It says, ‘Forgive me. I had no choice.’”