

STORIES IN THE STARS

It's nighttime. You sit by a roaring fire with the people of your village, looking up at the vast sky. You see a flickering star, point to it, and ask, "What's that?" And a gray-haired elder begins, "Once upon a time..."

For thousands of years, people all over the globe have used the stars to tell stories—stories about how the stars got there, or about things that happened on earth, or about lessons that they felt should be passed down through the generations. Have a seat by the fire and listen to a few...

The Story of the Changing Bear Maiden

NAVAJO, NORTH AMERICA

Once upon a time a girl married a bear. (Stop us if you've heard this one. No?

We didn't think so.) The girl's little sister ran home and told their father about the secret marriage. Quite upset, their father promptly killed the bear. The older sister was heartbroken (she couldn't bear life without this guy) and turned herself into a bear to seek revenge on her sneaky siblings. With fangs and claws out, she chased them down. One by one she killed them all and sent their spirits up into the sky, where they became Ursa Major—the Great Bear. (Sorry. We didn't say they'd all be happy endings.)



The Story of Andromeda

ANCIENT GREECE

There once was a goddess named Cassiopeia, who pronounced herself the most beautiful creature in the world (ooh-la-la). Poseidon, god of the sea, was irked by this proclamation because he had created the lovely sea nymphs (and how dare someone compete with them!). So, angered, he created a sea monster to wreak havoc on the high seas. Still, Cassiopeia wouldn't take back her statement. (Nope, I'm still gorgeous.)

Now, all of the gods were mad.

They told Cassiopeia that she would have to sacrifice her daughter, Andromeda, to the sea monster as punishment. They chained poor Andromeda to a rock in the middle of the ocean. But just as the sea monster was swimming closer...and closer...the brave warrior Perseus came to the rescue. Perseus was fresh from defeating Medusa, a snake-haired witch whose face could turn people to stone. (Perseus was a busy guy.) He happened to have Medusa's head in his bag, so he held it up in front of that nasty sea monster and—yep—turned the monster to stone. (Ever get that sinking feeling?) Brave Perseus married Andromeda and they lived happily ever after. (Or as happily as they could with such a vain and braggish mother-in-law.)

Listen up ya'll,
I'm the prettiest
of them all!

ugh, there
she goes
again

ROAR!

you know
it!

that's
her!

Perseus'
handy
bag

tell me i'm the prettiest!!

yes mother, you are.

i am what?

the prettiest.

Who's the prettiest?!

you are.

i am what?

you!!!

The Story of the Seven Rishis

ANCIENT INDIA



The stars of what we call the Big Dipper are seven rishis (or sages). Long ago, the rishis were married to seven sisters, and they all lived together—one big happy family—in the sky. BUT one day the god of fire stepped out of the flames and fell in love with the seven sisters. He tried to shake it off and wandered the forest, where he met another lovely lady named Svaha. Svaha fell in love with the god of fire (he was so hot), and to capture his affections she disguised herself as each of the seven sisters, one by one. Her trick worked for six of the sisters, but the seventh sister loved her husband too much to be imitated. Sadly, the rishis were fooled by the trick as well, and angrily sent the sisters away to another part of the sky. Only the seventh sister remained in the sky with her husband, together forever.



The Story of the Fallen Star and the Hand

LAKOTA SIOUX, NORTH AMERICA

Long, long ago, the chief of the Lakota tribe had been a very selfish leader—always thinking of himself instead of his people. The gods didn't like this, so they—what else?—made his people rip out his arm. (Insert horrified scream here.)



Now, the chief's lovely daughter (a disarming beauty) was, quite understandably, upset by her father's condition. She promised to marry anyone who could bring back her father's arm. A young warrior named Fallen Star (the son of a star father and a human woman), vowed to retrieve the missing appendage. He traveled far and wide and did just that. The returned hand sits in the sky as a reminder of the alliance between the gods and the people.



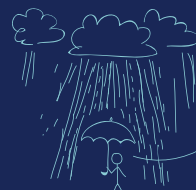
The Story of the Herd Boy and the Weaver Girl

ANCIENT CHINA

After the Sky King created the heavens, he wanted to decorate them. He added stars (which can really tie a room together), but then asked his daughter, the Princess, to weave the clouds. Of course, the sky is quite large, so the poor girl was soon exhausted, and her sympathetic father sent her out to play in the stars. (Backyards hadn't been invented yet.)

The Princess was on her way to take a dip in the Milky Way, when she ran into a handsome Herd Boy (hubba, hubba) watching his water buffalo graze. The Princess was so enthralled by the boy that she lost track of time. When she came home late that night and her dad found out why, he told her that she could never see the Herd Boy again. (Lesson: Parents have been grounding kids since the beginning of time.) And just to make sure the Princess couldn't sneak back out there, the king dumped thousands of stars into the Milky Way to flood it so that the Herd Boy couldn't cross.

The heartbroken Princess cried and cried until, finally, her father agreed that she could spend one day a year with the Herd Boy. On the seventh day of the seventh month of the year, the King would send out a flock of birds to form a bridge across the Milky Way. To this day, if the weather is clear, you can see the two lovers as bright stars in the night sky. (Isn't this romantic?) But if it rains, it is from the tears of the Princess, because she will have to wait another year to see her love. (Talk about star-crossed lovers!)



well, we all know what this means.