

# CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE

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## SHOUTS & MURMURS

*The New Yorker* JANUARY 9, 2012

On the first day, God created the heavens and the earth.

“Let there be light,” He said, and there was light. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening—the first night.



On the second day, God separated the oceans from the sky. “Let there be a horizon,” He said. And lo: a horizon appeared and God saw that it was good. And there was evening—the second night.

On the third day, God’s girlfriend came over and said that He’d been acting distant lately.

“I’m sorry,” God said. “Things have been crazy this week at work.”

He smiled at her, but she did not smile back. And God saw that it was not good.

“I never see you,” she said.

“That’s not true,” God said. “We went to the movies just last week.”

And she said, “Lo. That was last *month*.”

And there was evening—a tense night.

On the fourth day, God created stars, to divide the light from the darkness. He was almost finished when He looked at His cell phone and realized that it was almost nine-thirty.

“Fuck,” He said. “Kate’s going to kill me.”

He finished the star He was working on and cabbled it back to the apartment.

“Sorry I’m late!” He said.

And lo: she did not even respond.

“Are you hungry?” He asked. “Let there be yogurt!” And there was that weird lo-cal yogurt that she liked.

“That’s not going to work this time,” she said.

“Look,” God said, “I know we’re going through a hard time right now. But this job is only temporary. As soon as I pay off my student loans, I’m going to switch to something with better hours.”

And she said unto Him, “*I* work a full-time job and *I* still make time for you.”

And He said unto her, “Yeah, but your job’s different.”

And lo: He knew immediately that He had made a terrible mistake.

“You think my job’s less important than yours?” she said.

“No!” God said. “Of course not! I know how difficult it is to work in retail—I’m totally impressed by what you do!”

“Today I had to talk to fourteen buyers, because it’s Fashion Week. And I didn’t even have time to eat lunch.”

“That’s so hard,” God said. “You work so hard.”

“How would you know? You never even ask about my day! You just talk about your work, for hours and hours, like you’re the center of the universe!”

“Let there be a back rub,” God said.

And He started giving her a back rub.

And she said unto Him, “Can you please take the day off tomorrow?”

And He said unto her, “Don’t *you* have to work tomorrow? I thought it was Fashion Week.”

“I can call in sick.”

And God felt like saying to her, “If your job is so important, how come you can just take days off whenever you feel like it?” But He knew that was a bad idea. So He said unto her, “I’m off Sunday. We can hang out Sunday.”

On the fifth day, God created fish and fowl to swim in the sea and fly through the air, each according to its kind. Then, to score some points, He closed the door to His office and called up Kate.

“I’m so happy to hear your voice,” she said. “I’m having the hardest day.”

“Tell me all about it,” God said.

“Caitlin is throwing this party next week for Jenny, but Jenny is, like, being so weird about it that I’m not even sure that it’s going to happen.”

“That’s crazy,” God said.

And she continued to tell Him about her friends, who had all said hurtful things to one another, each according to her kind. And while she was repeating something that Jenny had said to Caitlin God came up with an idea for creatures that roam the earth. He couldn’t get off the phone, though, because Kate was still talking. So He covered the receiver and whispered, “Let there be elephants.” And there were elephants and God saw that they were good.

But lo: she had heard Him create the elephants.

“Oh, my God,” she said. “You’re not even listening to me.”

“Kate . . .”

“It’s so obvious!” she said. “You care more about your stupid planet thing than you do about me!”



God wanted to correct her. It wasn't just a planet He was creating; it was an entire universe. He knew, though, that it would be a bad idea to say something like that right now.

He said, "Listen. I'm really sorry, O.K.?"

But lo: she had already hung up on Him.

On the sixth day, God called in sick and surprised Kate at her store in Chelsea. She was in the back, reading a magazine.

"What are you doing here?" she asked.

"I blew off work," He said. "I want to spend the day with you."

"Really?" she said.

"*Really*," He said.

And she smiled at Him so brightly that He knew He had made the right decision.

They bought some beers at a bodega and drank them on a bench in Prospect Park. And Kate introduced Him to a game her friend Jenny had taught her, called Would You Rather?

"I don't know if I want to play a game," God said. But she made Him play anyway, and after a few rounds He saw that it was good. They played all afternoon, laughing at each other's responses. When it got cold, God rubbed her shoulders and she kissed Him on the neck.

"You know what I kind of want to do right now?" Kate said. God tensed up.

"What?"

"See a movie," she said.

And God laughed, because it was exactly what He wanted to do.

They decided to see “The Muppets,” because they had heard that it was good. They had a great time, and when it was over God paid for a cab so they wouldn’t have to wait all night for the L train.

“I love you,” Kate said, as she nodded off in the back seat. “I love you so much.”

“I love you, too,” God said.

And both of them saw that it was good.

On the seventh day, God quit His job. He never finished the earth. ♦

ILLUSTRATION: MAXIMILIAN BODE

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