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"The Three Breakthroughs That Have
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(Wired)*

We Are Stardust

Where did we come from? I find the explanation that we were made in stars to be deep, elegant, and beautiful. This explanation says that every atom in each of our bodies was built up out of smaller particles produced

in the furnaces of long-gone stars. We are the byproducts of nuclear fusion. The intense pressures and temperatures of these giant stoves thickened collapsing clouds of tiny elemental bits into heavier bits, which once fused, were blown out into space as the furnace died. The heaviest atoms in our bones may have required more than one cycle in the star furnaces to fatten up. Uncountable numbers of built-up atoms congealed into a planet, and a strange disequilibrium called life swept up a subset of those atoms into our mortal shells. We are all collected stardust. And by a most elegant and remarkable transformation, our starstuff is capable of looking into the night sky to perceive other stars shining. They seem remote and distant, but we are really very close to them no matter how many lightyears away. All that we see of each other was born in a star. How beautiful is that?