Nova, the **Littlest** Spark

A fable of finding **self**, community, and burning **brightly** without burning out

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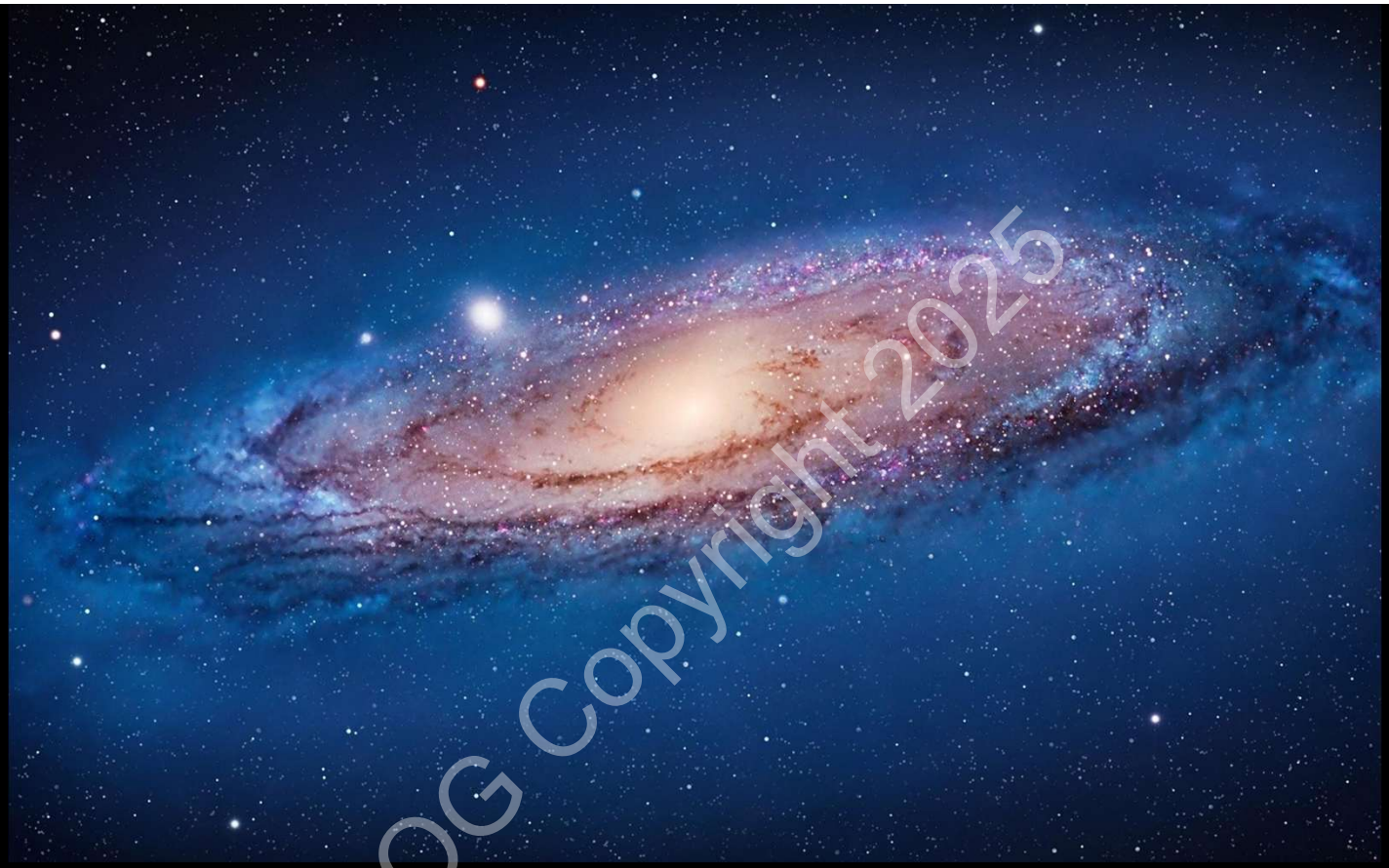
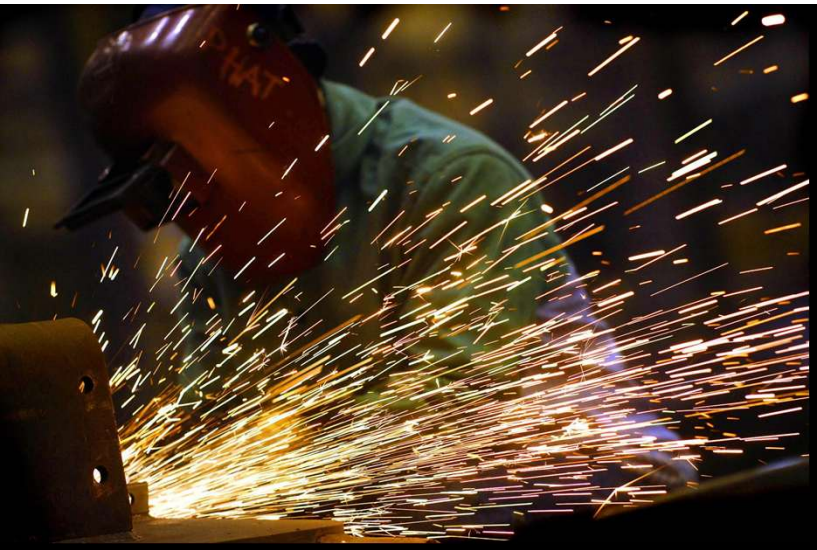
Attention:
This presentation discusses themes of **not belonging, sadness, anger**, and other big emotions. **Take care** of yourself and others and interact with this material in **considerate ways.**



We are all **sparks of energy** in a vast cosmos that seems to say how **brightly** we can burn.



And so it was for **Nova**, a tiny **spark** born from the sudden clash of flint and steel. Though no bigger than the **tip of a flame**, Nova sensed a great, untapped power inside.

Full of passion and energy, Nova **flared big and bright** when it was overwhelmed. And from the very first uncontrolled **flicker**, Nova worried about shining **too** brightly. “What if I **hurt** someone?” it thought. “But if I stay **dim**, will anyone even see me?”

Hoping to find a place to **be seen** and fit in, Nova floated to the gentle flame on a **candle**, nestled on a windowsill. Nova saw **row after row** of candles nestled in the windowsills of houses and thought that they **must** be able to find community in a place where **so many others** had also found it.

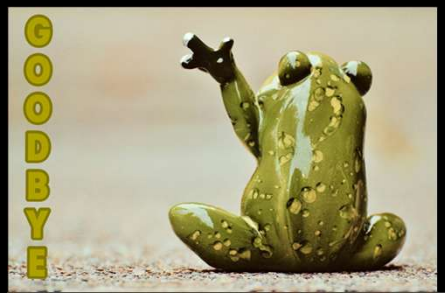
The candle's **warm**, **steady** flame reached out to Nova with quiet acceptance. At first, Nova's heart **soared**!

Nova tried to **match** the candle's gentle light to fit in. And when Nova's energy began to **build**, it held back so it wouldn't melt the candle's soft wax. But each time it did this, Nova felt **stressed**, like holding its breath for too long.

In **denying** its own bursts of energy, Nova felt drained. They were trying to keep it all in, and day after day, the **pressure built**.

One evening, Nova became **so** overwhelmed by the pressure of trying to match the candle's energy, that it let out a **sudden flicker**. The candle's flame **flared** wildly, then **sputtered**, nearly going out.

Guilt and **shame** coursed through Nova's tiny form. Nova said, "I'm making myself **so small** that I'm unable to control my energy and it's **hurting those around me**."



Nova knew it couldn't stay and said a soft and sad **goodbye** to the candle, determined to find a place where it could shine without smothering **itself** or its **surroundings**.

Nova soon wandered by a vibrant and imposing **fireworks shop**, overflowing with gleaming rockets, sparklers, and big sticks of dynamite, all with varying sizes of **fuzes**, just waiting to be set off.

“Here,” Nova beamed, “my **big energy** will finally feel at home!” Even the shopkeeper encouraged Nova to **shine**, saying, “**Light** this place up! Show us your **brilliance**!”

But the shop was a **powder keg** of constant vigilance and unspoken rules. It was so chaotic that one wrong move could trigger a grand explosion. Nova found itself **tiptoeing**, **straining** not to ignite anything prematurely.

But Nova, being so small, felt they had **to prove themselves**, and the pressure to be both **big and perfectly controlled** left the little spark teetering on the edge of burnout again.

Eventually, Nova became exhausted with **constantly** performing while keeping it together, and a **stray flicker** from Nova caught a fuse. The **panicked** shopkeeper splashed Nova with a bucket of water!

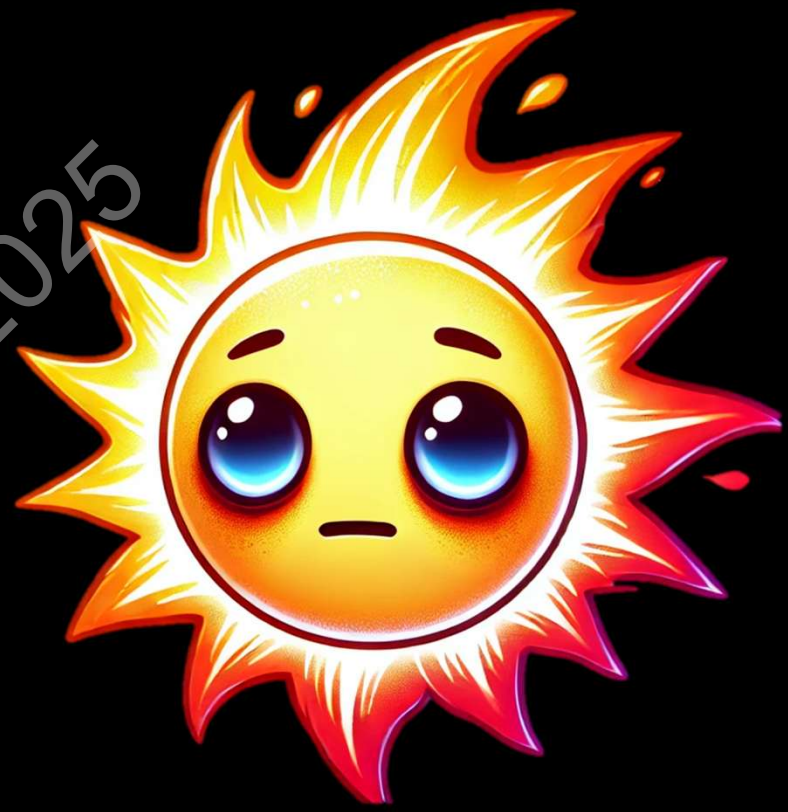
Feeling embarrassed and unwanted, Nova left, heart aching. “They wanted my **brightness**,” Nova thought, “but they didn’t know what to do with how **different** my brightness was.”

Feeling **misunderstood and weary**, Nova sought refuge in a **dark**, **silent** cave. Here, there were no candles to appease, no fireworks to startle—just **cool emptiness**.

Here, Nova **raged** at the unfairness of being different and **not feeling community**. And in the cave's stillness, Nova convinced itself it was better to **burn all alone** than risk failing yet another community.

And as days **blurred** into nights, without space to radiate or anyone to share its light with, Nova's **glow grew faint.** "What's the point of trying to shine with others," it whispered, "if all I do is cause **trouble**?"

"Maybe," it said, "I can just **stay here** and live out the rest of my days in peace."



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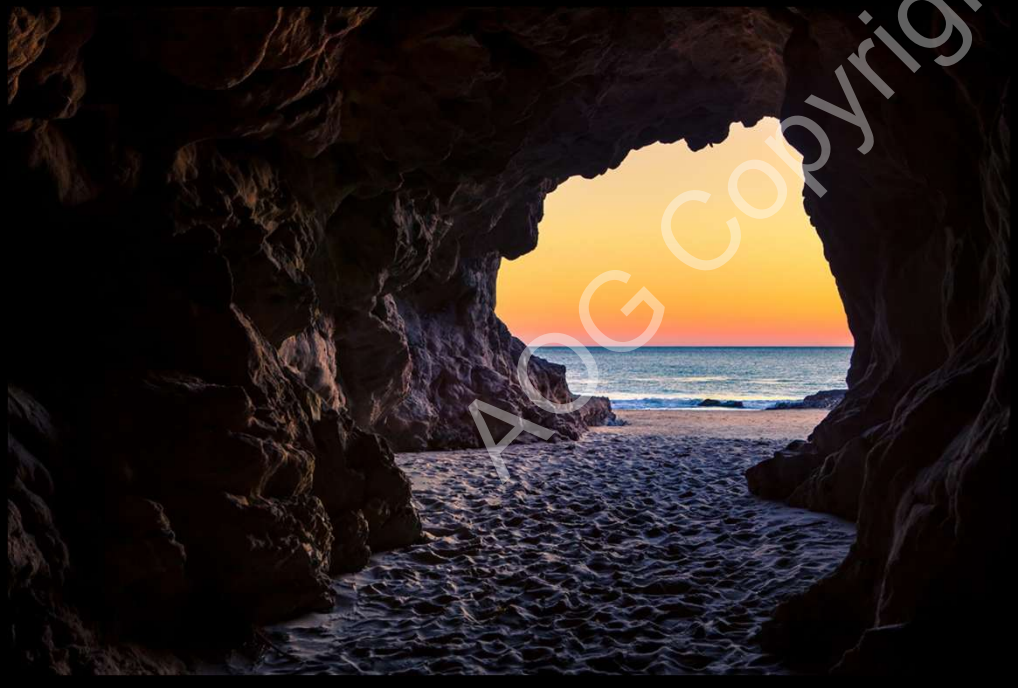
But **slowly**, over time, with **nobody** to interact with Nova's brightness began to gradually **fade**.

After countless lonely hours, Nova realized this **self-imposed darkness** was its own form of burnout—an emptiness that stifled its very essence. So, gathering the last of its light, Nova ventured out again, this time, **determined not to abandon hope**.

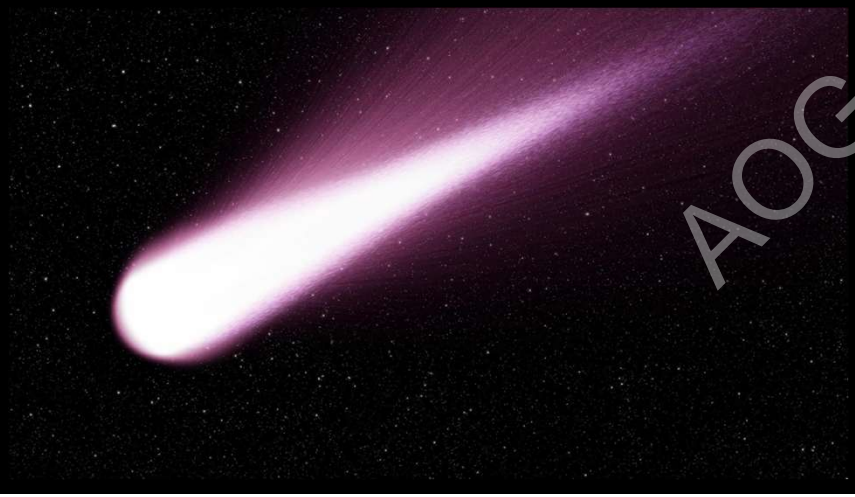


And on that **clear**, **starry** evening, Nova drifted beyond the cave entrance and emerged into a **boundless** night sky. Constellations **sparkled**, comets **blazed** across the horizon, and distant galaxies **shimmered** with cosmic pride.

To Nova’s amazement, each celestial body burned **differently**—some stars pulsed **gently**, others flared in **radiant bursts**.

But **all** were welcomed. **None** overshadowed the other, and they were **all** valued **because** each were different.

A soft-spoken **nebula** whispered: “We all have our **surges** and **stillness**. There’s time and space enough for **every** flame here and in their **own** way.”



A comet with a **blazing** tail added: “You don’t have to **hide** or force yourself to shine a **certain way**. We can handle your **brightness**.”

A wandering moon **drifted** near and said, “Travel with **me** if you like - There’s room for **both of us**.”

A quiet planet added, “You can **orbit** around me, and I won’t ask you to **dim** or to **shine** too bright. Just be yourself.”

Nova realized that in this **cosmic** family, nobody forced it to change. It could release its **big bursts** of energy without shame or worry.

For the first time, Nova allowed itself to **feel** every internal surge **without shame**—letting big excitement flare, then gently returning to a calm glow.

When Nova sensed the edges of burnout, it **reached out** to nearby stars for understanding, learning to **pace its energy** rather than quenching it.

Surrounded by **cosmic companions**, Nova discovered a new kind of radiance: a light that grew **brighter** through **shared** warmth and **mutual** support. No longer did it burn **alone**, nor did it need to **hide**.

All at once, Nova felt a **rush** of happiness and relief. The little spark let its energy flow **freely**, and in one **blazing** moment, it became a **supernova**—glowing **orange**, **yellow**, **red**, and **white** across the starry sky.

The moon and planets stayed **close**, their orbits gently shifting to make space for Nova's **brilliant new form.** For the first time, Nova understood that being **small** didn't mean it had to **stay small** to avoid hurting others. It only needed the **right place to shine**.

Some say that if you **wander** under the stars on a clear night, you can still see Nova's **glowing** constellation, a guide for any spark feeling **too small or too bright** for this world.

And in that glow lies a **promise**: true belonging begins the moment we **embrace** our inner flame and find those willing to **share** in its light—no matter how **bright** or how **seemingly tiny** that spark may be.

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