



The Cosmic Connection: How Astronomical Events Impact Life on Earth

Jeff Kanipe

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In this sweeping tour of the cosmos and our place within it, acclaimed science writer Jeff Kanipe shows the many ways we are connected to the vast universe we inhabit. Long before our apelike ancestors dropped from the trees and began playing with fire, even before the Sun emerged from its chrysalis of dust and irradiated its brood of planets, numberless and nameless astronomical events affected Earth and its emerging life-forms. Our chemical makeup—from the iron in our blood to the calcium in our bones—derives from stars that lived and died hundreds of millions of years ago. Comets have showered organic molecules into our oceans, and asteroid impacts have wiped out predominant species that lived before.

Tracing the whole natural history of how events in the near and far universe have influenced life on Earth today, and how they might influence life in the future, Kanipe, with unparalleled eloquence, explores a host of intriguing questions:

- How the Earth's orbit and inclination have triggered past ice ages
- The role ancient supernovae may have played in mass extinctions and genetic changes
- How a slight but persistent dip in solar output contributed to a multicentury cooling event called the "Little Ice Age"
- How ancient asteroid impacts pressed Earth's evolutionary reset button and how astronomers are striving to make sure that it won't happen again
- The widespread effects that our Sun's changing galactic environment has on life and climate

Kanipe also reflects upon the possible societal effects of alien contact, a type of cosmic intervention that some astronomers believe could happen within the next few decades. His elegant, jargon-free descriptions of the truly "big-picture view" of life on Earth will fascinate and inform everyone who has an interest in astronomy, the evolution of our planet, and the future of humankind.

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