

The Birth of a Star

By Chris Rose

June 5th 2006

Henry looks carefully into the telescope which lets him see far, far away, as far away as the distant nebulae on the far edges of the Milky Way. Henry is an astronomer. He looks at the sky, and at stars in particular. Even though he spends much of his time looking at detailed computer reports, which are just lists and lists of numbers, his favourite thing about his job is looking through the telescope. And today he is very excited. He isn't sure yet, but he thinks he has seen a dense cloud which might be the beginning of a new star.

July 5th 2006

Henry is still looking for a tiny point of light in the sky. He checks the lists and lists of numbers that his computer produces, and tries to make sense of them. He tries to turn the basic data into an image, a picture of the star he hopes to see, but it is not yet possible.

He arrives home feeling tired. His wife Anna sits down next to him. "I've got some news..." she says.

August 5th 2006

Henry is so excited about being a father that he has forgotten about his star. Anna is feeling sick and tired. Henry is no longer thinking about nebulae and clouds and gases. He is thinking about pushchairs and nappies.

September 5th 2006

Anna and Henry go to the doctor. Anna has an ultrasound scan. Henry is used to seeing distant images of planets and stars and clouds, and now he looks at this image. It almost looks like a cloud, but it is much clearer. He can see the outline of a head, the features of a face. And he realises that this means much more to him than the distant stars he is used to looking at.

October 5th 2006

Anna finally starts to get fatter. Henry is feeling terrified. For the first time now, he realises exactly what it means. In a few months time, he will be a father.

November 5th 2006

Anna looks at her tummy and now starts to feel that there is another living person inside her. She thinks about Henry's job, and remembers how excited Henry was a few months ago when he thought that he could see a new star.

December 5th 2006

Henry thinks that Anna looks a bit like a whale, but that she is very beautiful anyway. He thinks that next Christmas everything will be very, very different.

January 5th 2007

Anna feels like she wants to sleep all the time. She feels like the baby already wants to come out. The baby is kicking her from inside. She feels like a football. She can't wait to become a mother. Henry calls her ten times a day on her mobile phone.

February 5th 2007

It can take as long as ten million years for a star to form, but Henry doesn't care about seeing his star any more. He knows that although he may be the first person to see a new star, it is impossible for him to see the birth of a star, from its beginning to its appearance. But he doesn't care because a new star has just entered his life.

"But we haven't thought of a name!" says Anna, holding the tiny baby in her arms.

"I have" says Henry. "I've got a beautiful name for her."

"What is it?"

"Stella. Let's call her Stella."