

RECIPE FOR A CRAFT STORE PROPHET:

by Vivian Chaffin

Easy and simple recipe for what to do when you have an Angel enter a Jo-Ann's craft store. Be sure to take things slow and be patient with the process! If the Angel appears to you in classic renaissance art form, you are NOT automatically under their all-knowing whim. However, if the Angel appears to have too many eyes, too many wings, too many hands, and not enough time, that's when you know you're a Craft Store Prophet.

YOU'LL NEED:

- 1 stubborn Angel
- 1 job at Jo-Ann's or other local craft store
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of unresolved, bottled grief
- 4 tablespoons of terrifying nightmares
- 2 teaspoons of inspiration
- 2 cups of all-confusing romantic feelings for your cute coworker
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoon of resentment towards your absent (but trying his best) father
- 1 handful of curiosity
- 1 pinch of paranoia
- 1 cup of self doubt
- 3 buckets of glitter (any color)

Once you have all these, you may begin your Do-It Yourself universe process. Additional ingredients may include patience, a needle and thread, and a whole lot of faith. Use as necessary.

READY IN: 3 to 6 months. There's no rush.

SERVES: Yourself and a friend.

Step One: Start with 1 stubborn Angel and 1 job at Jo-Ann's in a store on the corner of Main St. & Magnolia St.

When The Angel addresses you by your full name before you introduce yourself, pretend you do not hear a chorus of heavenly hums ringing in your ears. Pretend you know who they are. Pretend you do not notice how their wings are every color you could ever imagine. When you put on your customer-service voice and polite smile, pretend you do not see the history of the world flash before your eyes. Shake their hand with shaking hands, and brace yourself for the worst to come.

“Have some faith,” The Angel may tell you.

You may say, “I have plenty.”

Countless eyes stare you down. The Angel can see all the memories that are fuzzy in the corners of your brain. The Angel tells you that you’ve been chosen for a reason. This project has the fate of the galaxy depending on it. The fate of the galaxy depends on you.

“I have better things to do,” you say, but The Angel is all-knowing, and you’re a bad liar. You agree to become a Prophet.

Step Two: Take 4 tablespoons of terrifying nightmares and ¼ of your cup of unresolved bottled grief (the other ½ cup will be used later), and mix inside an uneasy headspace.

Once step one is complete, wait 3-7 business days before full Prophet side effects begin. Side effects include: dizziness, nausea, migraines, nightmares where you wake up sweaty and in tears, trouble focusing, and in extreme cases: Death.

“Take it easy.” Your cute co-worker looks concerned after you spend the evening at a diner together. “Text me when you get home?”

“Will do,” you say. You aren’t quite sure how to express to him that the alphabet has become so jumbled that you haven’t looked at your phone in days, that you’re pretty sure a bird has been living in your ribcage, that you are exhausted and your work has barely begun.

There is a statue you pass everyday on your way to work, and it has started to blink. You see the world turn to dust every time you close your eyes. Your shadow begins to act out. You speak to ghosts on the train, and find many have died of broken hearts. Sometimes you try to heal them.

Often you fail.

Step Three: Add 2 teaspoons of inspiration.

Once the effects of the Prophet title are in full swing, you may begin your DIY universe. Choose your materials based off of what sort of universe you'd like to create. Flannel, silks, cotton, and hot glue are most commonly used materials. Avoid overuse of glitter. You pick up a galaxy's worth of craft supplies with your employee discount.

"Starting your project off with a bang, I see," your cute co-worker laughs.

"Yeah," you say, and you laugh too.

Your hands were always built to create. Ever since you were small, playing pretend in your own universes while your mother worked on the quilt that you still sleep with; ever since you learned how to get dirt underneath your fingernails. Your goodnight kisses reignite burned-out stars. You are incredible.

Yet you aren't quite sure if you're supposed to be a Prophet, or some sort of God.

Your Universe needs to be perfect. You cannot mess up a single detail. You cannot afford to stumble. It is your responsibility to craft flawless galaxies with pipe cleaners and hot glue.

The Angel explains that the Deadline for your DIY Universe is two months after you begin to believe in yourself. You aren't sure what that means. When you ask for clarification, they laugh at you, and it sounds like thunder.

Step Four (A): Add the 2 cups of all-confusing romantic feelings for your cute coworker to the pit in your stomach (For added effect, add butterflies as well).

Named after a constellation, your co-worker will ask you on a date to a planetarium. He has a smile that stretches lightyears. You are certain even the farthest stars can see it.

"I used to think the crickets were just the sound of the stars twinkling," he tells you as you take your seat underneath the entire night sky. Little flecks of starlight are reflected in his eyes, which has to be the only reason you're gazing into them like that. "You know, I've always wanted to be an astronomer. I could spend all day looking at the stars."

You could make constellations out of the freckles on his cheeks. His eyes are brighter than the entirety of the milky way. The wanna-be astronomer in front of you seems to hold all of the stars you could ever want to look at.

"Me too," you say, without missing a beat.

Step Four (B): Slowly, add ½ tablespoon of resentment towards your absent but trying his best father.

When you return home that evening, you see The Angel and your cat curled up together. The Angel seems to be creating something of their own. They have construction paper, a pile of googly eyes, your attention, and your good pair of scissors.

“What are you working on?” You ask.

“Nothing, my dear Prophet,” The Angel uses their wings to shield your view.

You pause. “I didn’t think Angels were supposed to lie.”

“They aren’t.”

Your phone rings. It’s your father. For the fourth time this week, you decline his call. As exhausting as creating a Universe is, it is even more exhausting to speak to your father. “Are you okay?” has become a more common phrase than “I love you,” and you don’t have the time to explain to him how much that stings. You wish he’d have just an ounce of faith in you.

“I believe you should answer your father’s phone call.”

“You’re the worst.”

“I know,” says The Angel.

You are too tired to examine the sincerity in their voice.

Step Four (C): Finally, add 1 handful of curiosity to the rest of the Step Four mixture to create a combination of feelings strong enough to open up to an Angel.

“Where do you go at the end of the night?” you ask The Angel. Maybe it’s morbid curiosity; maybe it’s the need to be understood. “Like, is there some sort of afterlife you have to get back to? Are you the supervisor?”

The Angel laughs. “No. I’m supposed to go back to the stars.”

“The stars? Which ones?”

“You haven’t named them,” The Angel says softly. You didn’t know they could speak that quietly. It’s almost drowned out by the hum of their wings. “They’re too far for even your best telescopes to see.”

“They must be beautiful,” you say. If you close your eyes, you swear you can see them.

“Oh, they are.” The Angel smiles. “They’re stunning. They’re awfully lonely, though. Millions of lightyears from anything else.”

They pause for a moment, taking a deep breath.

“But there aren’t enough,” they decide. “There aren’t enough stars in the sky.”

Their words bring that familiar ache to your chest, that certain homesick longing, a nostalgia for stars you will never see. For a moment, you forget you have never lived amongst the stars. They feel so close, and so far, all at once. Their words are a broadcast, a satellite, phoning home to you. It is human nature to connect, to create. Maybe it’s in Angelic nature, too. Maybe they are lonely.

“You don’t have to go back to the stars tonight, if you don’t want,” you say. “I have a futon.”

Step Five: Take 1 pinch of paranoia and 1 cup of self doubt. Mix thoroughly at your own risk.

Reality and your visions and your nightmares have all begun to blur. They’ve become a conglomerate of hopes and dreams and worries and horrors beyond imagination. You feel The Angel’s eyes on your back. You are certain the Deadline is approaching, and yet you are so far from completion of your Universe. You block your father’s phone number, for the time being. You debate on quitting your job to focus on the Project.

The Angel made you a gift. It’s a version of yourself and them, made out of construction paper and glitter pens and googly eyes. It’s perfect. “We’re friends,” they say, and you smile.

“We’re friends,” you agree.

Right now, you cannot focus on friendship. You cannot focus on anything but the Universe. It consumes every waking moment. It consumes your dreams, leaving you restless and tossing and turning.

“If you need help just ask for it,” a chorus of your loved ones remind you. Your mother’s voice is noticeably absent.

Your inner conscious screams at you until you are sure your eardrums are bleeding. You are not good enough to do this alone. You have never been good enough to do this alone. You will fail. You were always destined to fail.

Your eyesight is blurry, and you are nauseous, and you are exhausted, and you are ready to give up. Struggle under the stress until you break, and you punch the mirror in the employee-only bathroom in your local Jo-Ann's.

Your knuckles are bleeding. You don't even notice.

Your reflection has too many eyes. They are all watching you.

Step Six: Throw *everything you've ever cherished* out a window.

Quit your job at the Jo-Ann's.

The astronomer calls your name as you leave, your knuckles still bleeding. You aren't sure what you shout at him, but from the look on the face, it's mean.

You leave. He does not follow.

Step Seven: Add another *¼ of a cup of your unresolved, bottled grief*.

When you were little, your mother would sing you to sleep. You cannot remember the lyrics of your favorite lullaby. You spend a weekend scrawling out the infinite possibilities of the melody.

Step Eight: It is okay if you are too overwhelmed to add anything here. It is best to just *process your emotions*.

The Angel is worried about you. They tell you that they never meant to put this much pressure on you. They tell you that you need to ask for help. They tell you that you need to give yourself a break.

"But the Deadline-" you start.

"There was never a Deadline." The Angel's voice cracks. You didn't think that was possible. How was it possible for something so powerful to fracture? "There was never a Deadline."

Your throat goes dry. "Never?"

"Never," they say.

Usually, when things are too quiet, people will say 'you could hear a pin drop'. This is the sort of quiet where the world could've been falling apart and you don't think you'd be able to hear it. The kind of quiet that wasn't just verbal, but physical. The kind of quiet that ached. The kind of quiet that followed bad news.

"There was never a Project, then?" you say.

The Angel cannot look at you.

“No,” they say.

“Never?”

“Never.” they say.

The kind of quiet that made you hate the silence. The kind of honesty that made you hate the truth. The kind of sincere you wish you could ignore.

“I Fell,” The Angel says. “I Fell, I was Falling, and I wanted to go back. I thought if I could bring them back a Universe they’d let me back. I’m sorry. I’m sorry. You’re my friend and I can’t stand to see you tear yourself apart.”

“We are not friends,” you say. “You aren’t my friend.”

“Okay,” The Angel says.

“Get out.”

“Okay.” The Angel says.

They leave, and you do not follow.

Step Nine: Marinate in your *self loathing*.

Once you are alone, all alone, take a look back at your DIY universe. It may look like a waste of three months. It may look like a bunch of scraps of fabric hot glued to Popsicle sticks and drowned in glitter.

It is.

Once you are feeling adequately dissatisfied with your work, destroy it in a fit of misery.

Step Ten: Add the other *¼ cup of unresolved bottled grief*.

Regret.

Wrap yourself up in your mother’s quilt, and visit her grave. You can let yourself cry. You are not weak for your emotions. You are not strong for compressing them into your ribcage. It is brave to let yourself ache. It is brave to let yourself heal.

You call your father. For the first time in a long time, you admit that you are not doing okay. It is okay not to be okay. It is okay that you feel like you are forgetting the sound of your mother’s voice. It is okay to miss her. It is okay to admit that you are hurting.

“I love you,” your father says.

“I love you most,” you say. You both laugh, and you cry, and then you make each other laugh some more. It is the closest you’ve gotten to home in a long time.

Step Eleven: You’re ready to resume. Add 3 buckets of glitter.

You ask for help.

“Do you believe in Angels?”

It turns out explaining you were working under a celestial being, and building a Universe out of craft supplies for months is harder than you anticipate. Still, he listens.

“Okay,” he says. “I’m following. I feel the need to ask again if this is a metaphor.”

“It’s not a metaphor,” you laugh. You hear an echo of thunder in your laugh.

The astronomer helps you slowly rebuild your DIY universe. He is patient with you, even when you aren’t patient with yourself. The pair of you build planets out of balls of yarn, weave the Universe together with a needle and thread. You have clay under your fingernails. You cut civilizations out of magazines, cities out of the local newspaper. They are glued to the Universe with careful, kind hands.

You and the astronomer dance in the kitchen to music you’ve never heard.

Kissing him is the closest you’ve ever felt to discovering the secrets of how the world works. Grocery shopping becomes a quest. You buy toothpaste and bread and more glitter, and you are happy. Happier than you’ve been in a long time.

When you sit down to write the Rules for your Universe, you abandon astrophysics and complex philosophies. All you can ever do is your best, you know. You have always been enough for this. You will always be enough for this. Maybe you weren’t mentioned in the prophecies. Maybe everything happens for no reason at all. Maybe that is okay. Maybe you will be okay.

Your Universe cannot be ruled by perfection. That’s not quite how Universes work. Instead of defining everything to the tiniest detail, you learn to take a step back. You learn to have a little bit of faith in this project. You learn to have a little bit of faith in yourself.

RULES OF THE UNIVERSE:

by the Prophet and the Astronomer

1. Be Kind. That’s All.

You haven't heard from The Angel in weeks? That's okay, we'll get to that.

Step Twelve: Once it has baked for *two months*, you've finished. Share with your loved ones.

The Angel arrives at your doorstep exactly two months after you begin to believe in yourself.

"I am sorry, Prophet."

Forgiveness is hard to give. Trust is harder to rebuild than any DIY Universe. Still, you persevere. Still, you look them in the eye and tell them that you have missed them. You're certain they can hear the sincerity in your voice.

They are in love with your DIY universe. You tell them that they can have it. They say that they'd rather you keep it.

"A universe is only as good as the people who live in it, and the people who love it, and the people who pour into it." They are watching you with infinitely fond eyes.

"You helped," you say.

"Not really," The Angel replies, and you both laugh. There is lightning in your living room. Your loves are juxtaposed; yours for The Angel is one of those inexplicable wonders of the world; their love for you is entirely human. It's imperfect and confusing and throws cautions to the wind. Despite everything, they are still your closest friend.

Looking back, you can see so many flaws in your Universe. There are paint splatters all over the asteroids, your cat chewed on the comets and the planets are a bit lopsided. You mention to The Angel that there is too much glitter.

They ask if you've ever heard someone complain about a surplus of stars in the sky.

Step Thirteen:

No, you suppose. You haven't.