

# ECLIPSING STARS

Human brains are hardwired to respond to and remember stories. This makes sense of the fact that the most important lessons our ancestors learned were encoded and passed down via myths and legends. The narratives created and told through the Eclipsing Stars seven goddesses unlock mysteries about our solar system that are not meant to be hidden away, accessible only to scientists and high-powered telescopes. The goddesses floating above you, in all of their splendor, have been conceived to dissolve the all-to-common misconception that only certain people can do science. Science is and should be accessible for everyone. Natural events such as eclipses make this clear.

*Eclipsing Stars* is the work of Erie-based artist, Alex "lonesav" Staley, and astrophysicist and folklorist, Dr. Moya McTier, who enjoyed their collaboration in part because many people think of art as inspiration and science as outcome, but for *Eclipsing Stars* science served as the inspiration, in service of the art.

## About the inspiration for *Eclipsing Stars*:

Eclipses are a natural result of orbits in outer space. When a moon orbits a planet and that planet orbits a star, they can't help but pass in front of each other every now and then. This inevitability of nature has fascinated, scared, and inspired humanity for centuries, and our science advanced because our ancestors tried to explain it. On earth, we only get solar eclipses when the moon blocks the sun, and lunar eclipses when the earth shrouds the moon in shadow, but other planets have a different point of view. They may see a star eclipsed by another planet in their system, or maybe by another star. They may be lucky enough to witness an invisible black hole eclipse a mystery object and bring it into view. Eclipses are all about perspective, which means, just like human experiences, there's an infinity of ways to see them.

### Meet the *Eclipsing Stars* Goddesses:



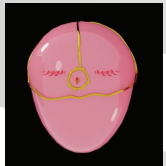
**Lphaj'nia, red dwarf** - She has had to scrap and fight for everything she has, so Lphaj'nia knows how to conserve and endure. While her sisters are still prone to the fits and outbursts they displayed as young stars, Lphaj'nia has calmed down in her elder years, settled down into a state of stoic acceptance. She is content to let the universe evolve around her, while she stays mostly unchanged for a trillion years.



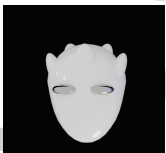
**Sol, sun-like** - As the middle sister, Sol wants everyone to feel welcome. She's reliable and tolerant of others, even craves opportunities to nurture life, but she's strong enough to discipline when necessary.



**Altaira, blue giant** - Altaira was the first bright thing born in the universe, and she believes everyone is entitled to let their light shine without impediment. She is fiercely passionate about looking out for other stars like her, the ones who don't see a point in saving for later what you can use now, so they burn bright and fast. She is selfless, sharing the fruits of her labor (heavy elements) with the rest of the universe so the next generation of stars can live a better life than the previous one.



**Lenea, red giant** - Lenea understands that change is constant, because she herself represents a time of transition. She's lived multiple lives and gathered the wisdom that comes with them, which she will share with others who ask, but she advocates for self discovery and growth



**Maygen, white dwarf** - Like Correax, Maygen has had her life ripped out from under her and been neglected by her sisters, but it has turned her bitter and hateful. She resents her sisters for abandoning her after she burned through her fuel, and she doesn't see a point in trying to do good. When she comes across another star, she sees no reason why she shouldn't steal from the other.



**Correax, neutron star** - Correax loves a party! She was born to burn bright and fast like her sister Altaira, but got burnt out by pressure to work all the time when all she really wanted to do was celebrate! She retired from her role with a spectacular lightshow and now spends her time bringing light and fun to anyone who looks her way.



**Harp, black hole** - Harp is the oldest sibling who wishes her sisters had never been born. She was never called "dark" until they ruined everything with their light, acting like seeing was the only way of knowing when she knew seeing is really just an illusion. Harp gets her revenge by hoarding her family's secrets and choosing when to reveal them because she knows true knowledge is the ultimate power.

## Meet the *Eclipsing Stars* Collaborators



### Artist - Alex "Lonesav" Staley:

Alex Staley is a designer, filmmaker, videographer, actor and musician from Erie, PA. Since 2018, Alex has produced over 200 music videos for local and regional artists. Most of his work can be found on his youtube channel "Lonesav". Alex is also the creator of LONESQUAD, a clothing brand with a focus on artistic integration. As a cinematographer and editor, Alex has worked with Sovereign Ballet and Erie Dance Theater to produce the short dance-to-film, "John 10:10," and the feature length film, "The Nutcracker." Alex has also worked closely with Erie Arts & Culture and Erie Center for Arts and Technology on video projects that support and highlight the organizations' larger initiatives, such as The Views Festival, a place-making initiative with 30 muralists commissioned to help create a safe walking-path for Erie school children.

Alex discovered his love of theater and acting via programs at Erie's YMCA, Erie Playhouse, and Performing Arts Collective Alliance. He can be seen playing the "Band Leader/ Piano Man" in the musical, "Striking 12," in December 2023. As a musician Alex goes by the alias LONESAV, and releases self-produced music as a singer and multi-instrumentalist, playing piano, drums, and bass. His band, SANIS, is a combination of post Punk, Neo Soul, and R'nB'. The group has performed at FEED.art, various Erie bars, clubs, and festivals, and opened for FloRida during Celebrate Erie 2023. As a VJ, Alex has been performing live visuals at FEED as well as weekly events at Erie's King's Rook Club. As part of his community-based artistic practice Alex teaches photography, videography and fashion design to young people in Erie ages 6-16 years via Dafmark Creative Art Center Erie's Public Schools and Erie Arts & Culture. Alex began his relationship with FEED in 2022 as a Sandbox Resident, an opportunity which provided him space and support to install a solo exhibition of his video sculptures, and produce an outdoor block party-style event that incorporated music and live visual projections behind FEED. Alex continues to work with FEED as a Creative Technologist, supporting visiting artists to engineer their installations.

"I enjoy that the laws of the stars are being explained to me by a black woman's voice, a powerful voice that isn't heard in the media nearly enough as it should. Having a black mother, this is the voice of maternity."

- Alex "Lonesav" Staley

### Scientist- Dr. Moiya McTier:

Dr. Moiya McTier is an astrophysicist, folklorist, and science communicator based in New York City, but her origins are a bit more modest... and surprising. Moiya grew up in a log cabin in rural Pennsylvania without running water or TV, which meant she had plenty of time to focus on her studies. Hard work and a lot of luck took Moiya to Harvard, where she was the first person in the school's long history to double major in both astrophysics and folklore. After graduating, Moiya moved to New York to earn her PhD in astrophysics at Columbia University. There, she was named a National Science Foundation Research Fellow for her work studying planets outside of our solar system and the motion of stars around the galaxy. Moiya officially became a doctor of the universe in 2021 as the first Black woman to graduate from Columbia's astronomy PhD program and started pursuing science communication full-time. In her career, Moiya has already given hundreds of talks about science around the world, helped design exhibits for the New York Hall of Science, and consulted with companies like Disney and PBS on scientific themes in their projects. She has reached thousands through her interviews on hit podcasts (Star Talk, Science Vs., and NPR's Science Friday) and tv/news shows (PBS, MSNBC, NY1). Moiya can also be found co-hosting Fate & Fabled, a mythology show for PBS Digital studios, as well as hosting her own podcasts Exolore (about fictional worldbuilding through a science lens) and Pale Blue Pod (about astronomy for people who are afraid of the cosmos). Moiya's debut book *THE MILKY WAY: An Autobiography of Our Galaxy* was released in 2022 to critical acclaim and was named one of Publishers Weekly's best books of 2022. Moiya's mission is to help people understand the world around us better through science and is eager to do that across as many platforms as possible.

One of my missions in life is to break the misconception that only certain people can do science. It's important to me that underserved people get the chance to impactfully engage with the experience."

-Dr. Moiya McTier

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