Astrophysical Big Bangs and the People Who Love Them

In this talk aimed at an educated (but not expert) audience, I’ll talk about the largest explosions in the Universe since the birth of the Universe itself: supernovae and gamma-ray bursts. These objects have been studied for centuries and decades (respectively), so I can’t possibly give a thorough talk on either. What I will do, though, is discuss their astrophysical history, why I think they’re cool, and why you should agree with me. Time permitting, I will engage in shameless self-promotion and introduce the cutting-edge research that my coworkers and I are doing in Japan, which is very closely tied to both of these kinds of events.