



By Joseph



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P

On top of Mt. Sharp, 225 million km away, the Curiosity rover carefully perched on a ledge jutting out from a cliff. It slowly lowered its arm and plunged the scoop into the soil, raised the red dirt, and dumped it into the CIMERA. The oven showed that the rock was sedimentary. Sedimentary rocks can only form with water. Therefore, this rock was evidence of Mars having water on it sometime in its history. “But could it exist now? Probably not,” thought Richard Cook, who was the manager of the Curiosity mission. He stared at the analysis results displayed on a huge screen. Is it evidence that life was, *or is*, on Mars? At first, when the rock was still forming, there maybe could have been intelligent life. What if the intelligent life forms found ways to survive in the arid environment? “Nah, not possible,” Richard thought.

It was everywhere, on the front page of the newspapers, on radio, on television, and strewn about the Internet. There were all kinds of talk about the rock on Mars. People interpreted it. Some thought it was some geological event without water that caused the forming of it. Others thought it was traces of liquid water there. Joe hoped it was evidence that life on Mars not only existed before, but still did.

Joe was a perfectly normal 9 year-old boy. Though he did have a more crazy and imaginative mind than most people. One day on the playground at school he talked about his wish with his friend Charlie, who was even crazier than Joe. “What do you think about the happening on Mars?” asked Joe.

“Well, I personally think it was some geological event.”

“Really?” questioned Joe, not convinced.

“ACTUALLY, I THINK IT’S MARTIANS!!” shrieked Charlie, causing everyone else to stare at the pair. The two strolled away slowly and everyone returned to their activities.

“Um, Charlie, I think that too.”

“Sure!” They walked silently after that.

The next day was Saturday. Joe sat quietly at his desk, his hand scribbling furiously at a piece of paper. He wrote: *Dear NASA, I personally think that the rock on Mars is really a Martian fossil.* Just before he finished the last word, a crash came from below. “It’s your friends me and the others!”

“Charlie, Seeger, Awonder and Frank,” thought Joe. They were here for the same thing.

R

Two miles underground on Mars: The Martians were alarmed. They had a direct link to the news on earth and they saw the news from their home planet. Even though most earthlings didn't believe the theory of life on Mars, some did. The more that did, the more danger it was to the Mololos (their word for their people).

Nfgraw was enraged that his parent (Martians only have one parent) didn't listen to him when he suggested the idea of collaborating with earthlings. She simply stated: "That's ridiculous," a clear indication that the conversation was over.

Almost all the Mololos felt threatened. If you stood in the oxygen-filled tunnels, you could feel the tension buzzing around you. The whole civilization separated into two parties. One party suggested to hide from earthlings and retreat deeper into the underground. The other party suggested the opposite.

Meanwhile, back in the lab on Earth. . .

“What is the world is that?!!!!? There de --”

“It seems to be some kind of ... fossil.” The lead geologist interrupted. Curiosity had unearthed a rock, or whatever it was, in the form of grotesque misshapen hand. It had long, spindly twig-like fingers coming out of a central ball-thingy. The ball was whitish in color while the “fingers” were more grayish. Richard though it was more hand like than ever now as he closely studied it, his face mere inches from the monitor. “A green little person’s hand,” he thought, “who is fat.” He chuckled to himself.

All the people in mission control were looking through the rover’s eyes and at the rock/fossil. “We will have to study this ... rock closely.” Richard announced. Once again Curiosity took the rock and dumped it into the CIMERA. It baked the rock and collected the gases released for the sample.

“I-I-It’s contents s-s-seem to contain everything th-that an f-f-fossil has,” stammered a geologist.

“But that’s impossible!” yelled somebody in the crowd. Whispers spread across the crowd.

“All right everybody, calm down. This may only be a fraud. It could be a rock with similar chemical content and shaped by the wind into this shape.”

“That’s right!” Some people thought.

“It may be a thing of a coincidence!” Richard said, “We should probably get this on the news. Remember to add what I said!”

It was a commotional time. The news got many people excited or discouraged. Now walking along the street, a careful listener could hear the word “Mars” in pretty much every conversation. That was what it was like now.

The whole Martian society was in turmoil. Everyone tried to convince their neighbors to change their opinion to match one's own. The civilization had a huge conflict brewing between the Mololos who wanted to collaborate with the humans and the Mololos that had the urge to hide. Nfgraw took the collaboration side. He was pitted against the fearful, reactive majority opinion. Even more people turned away from his point of view when the rover dug up one of the corpses from the collapse incident from years ago. The urge to hide came from the "fight or flight instinct." Since they couldn't fight, they had to do the flight part.

But Nfgraw was beyond instinct. He reasoned that if the two planets could work together, earth would not go the way of Mars. Others argued that it was no concern of the Mololos what becomes of the earth. Nfgraw thought that if Earth and Mars could collaborate, it would make them both stronger. Rather than fearing the unknown, he trusted that each society could learn and evolve from what the other had to offer.

Joe sat in his living room thinking. “What did this rock/hand/fossil mean? Are there really Martians? Is there any chance of going to Mars?” All these questions coursed through his head at the moment.

“It’s me.”

“Him again,” Joe thought. Without waiting at the door, Charlie barged in, followed by Awonder, Frank and Seeger. “Come in here!” Joe cried as he opened a closet door. Before he jumped in, he quickly grabbed a flashlight. He went in the closet and closed the door. He turned on the flashlight and tied the end to a clothes hanger. “Are you thinking what I’m thinking?” asked Joe.

“Well probably...”

“I think so...”

“Of course!” (You can guess who said that.)

“What are you thinking then?” Frank burst out. He had the most sense in this weird group.

“I’m thinking that,” Joe paused. “Martians are real!” said Joe, suddenly excited.

“I’m thinking that, too.” Everyone else murmured (except for Charlie who simply said “Duh”).

“Let’s see what each of us has to say!” Joe said eagerly, barely breathing from the rush of exhilaration.

“What can we do about this?” Frank thought out loud. “No one will believe us if we say Martians exist, and we totally can’t go to Mars. What are we going to do?”

In the dark, musky room of the library, Richard and a few other scientists sat at a computer, typing away. “It seems that there were a few disturbances on Mars as recent as 1958.” One of the scientists trailed off. “Even though we have discovered more evidence than ever, there is still only a 3 sigma possibility of

Martians currently existing. Not enough to be classified as a discovery. Unless we have some solid proof there are life forms on Mars, there is no chance of making a breakthrough.”

“We have to research this deeply.” Richard ordered, “We really have to make it a discovery. We’d be in the history books.”

Nfgraw sat in a hover pod above the stadium. Thousands of the Mololos waited silently for the council meeting, Nfgraw wondered how he had gotten to be here at such a young age. He had been arguing with other Martians about how to deal with the humans. Some had been swayed a bit, but others stood firmly, then came the council meeting where people could state their ideas and the council would think about it. Lots of people also came for the same reason, to argue one side or the other of the human incident. Nfgraw thought maybe only he stood on the side of collaborating. The roar of the crowd brought him back to reality. Another person had finished with a speech about how humans discovering them was bad.

It was his turn. Nfgraw's stomach did flips in his body. He spoke, "My fellow Mololos, I know you want to run, I know you want to fight. But now is not the time for such. Now is the time to bind with humans and use our unique qualities to help one another. Remember our legend. We were once a powerful civilization. We had abundant resources, but we, the Mololos, grew careless and spent our planet even when we tried to protect it later. We downgraded to this underground life. In our history is Earth's present. We need to work together to prevent each other's downfall. Mars provides the wisdom. Earth gives the place. We could do anything!"

There was no clapping, no cheering. No booing either. Just silence. The Mololos were contemplating deeply on what Nfgraw had said.

"That may be worthy of consideration," a council member finally uttered. Suddenly the crowd erupted. It was too noisy to make out what anyone was saying. Then a silence gradually reappeared, as everyone reached the end of their train of speech. The announcer came on the floor and said, "The meeting will be cut short." No one argued. Nfgraw smiled.

“Hmmm... This is bigger than I thought. NASA of course can’t do it, but I think Space X can, maybe,” Joe wondered out loud. “If there really are Martians, they could help find a way to send us back. But if not, that would be unfortunate.”

“I think we should sleep on it,” Frank announced to the rest of the group. “Good idea,” said Joe, Awonder, Seeger and Charlie in unison. Everyone went to their home and reflected deeply, and as they fell asleep, amazing dreams ran through their minds.

The next day they came back. “Let’s vote,” Joe said. “Who wants to go?” Nobody raised their hands. “Who wants not to go?” Nobody again. Joe sighed. “Who doesn’t want to raise their hand? Well, that’s everybody.”

“I propose we contact Space X first and see if they can really build a vessel that can take humans to Mars,” Joe suggested.

“Let’s do it right now,” Awonder agreed.

“Great!” Seeger cheered.

After searching the web for Mr. Musk’s email—Elon Musk was the chairman of Space X—they sent the following letter:

Dear Mr. Musk,

We would like to propose a symbiotic partnership, in which you build a space vessel to send us to Mars. Everyone here volunteers to be part of the crew. Personally, we have a theory that Martians exist. All of us are willing to risk our lives to prove our assumption. We need a craft large enough to be able to carry five people and hold enough supplies for them. It would be best if the trip would be short.

From, the five kids typing this, Joe, Awonder, Frank, Seeger and Charlie

“It’ll do,” said Awonder.

Back at the Pasadena lab

“Hello? Yes, yes, no, bye! Rendezvous Opportunity-Curiosity at precisely 0:00 Martian time, 12:40 GMT - 8h. The rovers will meet at Mt. Sharp. Please maneuver the rovers there. They will trade samples to be further analyzed by the other rover. Curiosity will give the mysteriously hand-shaped rock-fossil object to Opportunity to verify classification of the mineral content.”

12:40

“Ah-ha!!! Sandstone and rust, calcium...” Cook said as the words appeared on the screen. “Calcium,” he repeated. “Bone, Ah-ha! Bone! Martians! Though, it just maybe is limestone. But in any case that means water, and therefore life! Mars was covered with water sometime. I’m going to send humans to Mars and prove life exists on the red planet!” The skeptics could see there was no stopping him.

He then phoned the organization “Mars One” to discuss taking a crew to Mars.

On Mars

The big voting was about to begin. The tension in the crowd, swelled up like a balloon. “Will you vote for this? Or that?” The entire crowd was literally a buzz in discussion of such a crucial decision. This vote would decide how the Mololos would handle the humans, whether to regard them as a threat, or companions. Since this was too big of a topic, the council could not solely decide on such a thing. It had to be shared with the public and decided by referendum. The polling room was huge, with an area of 200,000 sq ft. It had to be so grand because this was the place of voting for the entire population. There were many floors, ten in all. There were huge lines of people waiting to vote. Nfgrow knew many had been moved by his speech but he did not know whether they had changed their minds. All of his neighbors he had already tried to personally convince but the entire population, that was out of reach for direct, personal contact. There were holograms of ads for both sides, but the Run & Hide side (as the collaborators had nicknamed them) had many more.

The results were coming up. On a huge holoscreen, the numbers came up. 1,409,753 hide to 98,637 collaborate. A loss, a landslide. Nfgrow sighed.

“Aha!” said Joe, “I have received an email from Elon, saying he would be happy to make a vehicle to send us to Mars. Since that is already what they are doing, so long as he got part of the credit and profit, if any. He will meet at the hotel downtown today right now. “Let’s go!” Joe yelled.

At the hotel

“The engine’s thrust should be powerful enough just to get out of the Earth’s atmosphere, and a bit more. That should leave enough fuel to go out of Mars’ outer orbit and into a lower orbit.” Elon said. “I could build a spaceship like that probably by next month considering the time my company has already spent on this. The only astronauts will be you guys. Sign here and we shall go to Mars.”

At the construction site

“WOW! Amazing!” Charlie marveled. “We get the whole rocket?”

“Well, the space you get is a tiny chunk up there. Most of the rocket is fuel to send you people to Mars. Her name’s Rednow-3. A fine one if you ask me. You will go to Mars quickly because a lot of fuel is left over after escaping Earth’s gravity and that will speed you to Mars. It will be a 7-day trip. Your spacecraft will orbit for 2 days while you tiny people will explore the surface. Then the craft will return back to Earth via an auto return program that mission control will start.” Mr. Musk explained. “To be clear, I can’t design anything for you to get back to the orbiting ship from the planet’s surface though.

Joe thought one last time. In short, he was about to leave Earth and land on an entirely different planet with only a day of air and no way of coming back. But he had no regrets. It was his life goal to really *do* something. This would fulfill it completely.

“Robert Reagan, our vice president of machining, came through with great idea for the rocket. We’re ahead of schedule and it’s going to be finished with it in a week. Let’s tour it now.” Mr. Musk said.

The five guys entered the craft. It’s a cramped space with nothing except lots of Velcro dots and thousands of switches and wires, copied from the Apollo crafts. “Nothing interesting,” Awonder commented.

“Well, let’s go out and visit the Space X lab,” said Mr. Musk.

Meanwhile, in the jet propulsion laboratory

Richard was in his office. He was talking to the director of Mars One. “With our previous efforts, we could send a high-quality robot to Mars in two weeks,” Bas Lansdorp said.

“Could you send a man?” Cook inquired.

“No. That would take a long, long time,” Lansdorp replied.

“Can you work on a robot?”

“Yes, but it will have to be advanced so it should take two months.”

“That cannot be done. It would take too long. Why don’t we two, together, upgrade the hardware on Opportunity?”

“Good idea! Opportunity is already at a good spot to find signs of life. Good-bye!”

Richard went to his computer and typed a note the main software person:
> Opportunity is ready to upgrade, right? RSVP.

* * *

At the launch site, one week later;

A huge rocket stood. It was looking over the field and cast a shadow over the whole supporting tower. It contained a new set of cameras for Opportunity.

“Impressive, eh?” asked the main engineer.

“Yes, very.” Richard answered.

T-minus 48:00

Joe was talking to Frank about their day's training. They had been under going tests and exercises for about a week now. Some were labor experiments and others where the scientists tested how many seconds the kids could go around a giant centrifuge without puking. The whole space program was all over the national news. People viewed it as the frontier of space travel. But today was different. They received proper astronaut training where they could learn the controls and such.

"That was hard, wasn't it?" Frank confessed.

"Yeah, who could know about every single switch in the pilot room? There must be a gazillion switches in there, well, maybe a thousand," Joe responded.

"Who cares? I think we're auto piloting the whole way," Frank replied.

"Oh, we can't do fancy tricks or anything?" Joe guessed.

"Probably not." Frank rolled his eyes.

"Oh. That is a great disappointment. So we *really* can't crash the rocket into the moon?"

Frank shook his head and sighed. At that moment, Charlie and Seeger rushed in. "We had an argument over what the Martians really are like," they said.

Frank held up his hand for them to be quiet. "Let Awonder settle this." They found him at the NASA lobby.

"Do you really think we will ever come back?" wondered Awonder out loud, a tone of apprehension and concern in his voice. "I mean there may be Martians, but we only have a limited supply of oxygen in any case." Awonder was a great strategist, a chess master who carefully planned his every move, and only ever proceeded with certainty. This situation did not quite fit that approach.

"I seriously don't know," replied Joseph, also starting to reconsider.

R

A series of protests followed after the voting. Even though protesters were few and weren't big commotions, the police put Nfgraw under watch since he was seen as a leader of the Collaboration Cause. Everyone on this city near the surface were packing up and retreating into the deeper reaches of the planet. The Mololos had special pods to put their luggage in. Then they would throw it down a shaft connecting to the new city. Nfgraw didn't exactly do this. He did put his belongings into a pod, but wheeled it to a cave on the edge of the old city. He was waiting for the kid. The kid who made it to the national news, the kid who was tomorrow, coming to this place, the kid who he was about to meet. During the Mololos transport, Nfgraw snuck away into his cave and furnished it. All he would do was wait. When the kid and his crew would arrive above the cave, Nfgraw would get an air tank (which he packed) and meet them out there.

He still had his doubts, what if, the rocket went into trouble? What if the rocket crew simply didn't want to come because of the risk? There was no way of telling. But he hoped they would arrive in 5 days or else his air supply would run out. He believed so strongly in the possible symbioses with humans that he risked his life to meet them, just as they were doing. He hooked up an air tank. He sat and thought. This was a dangerous act with the risk of being seen by the guards. But if he was to convince everybody through a long campaign, it would take several months, and he still might not succeed. If he did though, the crew would have long since died. No, staying here was the best choice. "So now I just relax!"

The rocket was about to launch. In one minute, it would blast off. As Joe sat in the cockpit, doubts raced through his head.

T-minus 50

“What if the rocket malfunctions and we’re lost in space?”

T-minus 40

“What if the Martians aren’t there?”

T—minus 30

“What if we don’t find the Martians?”

20

“What if...?”

10

“What if...?”

9...The rocket was shuddering now.

8...Joe sat back.

7...It was almost the moment.

6...Almost

5...Joe’s finger started to move.

4...It hovered above the launch button.

3...2...1...He pressed it. “*Rednow-3 secured for lift off.*”

Fooooooooom!

Joe was suddenly pressed back, as if being pushed by an invisible hand. Joe felt the rocket lifting up. The roaring sound filled his ears. A clicking followed. Stage 1 deployed. Then . . . nothing. They were in space. He heard his crewmates undoing their seat belts. He followed suit. Joe floated up. He carefully pushed and pulled his way to the main cabin, his body floating through the cabin in zero gravity.

Seeger was already there. “We made it,” he simply said. The rest of crew grappled their way through all the machinery and got into the cabin.

“So, are you sure this is the floor? Not the ceiling?” Charlie said, pointing down. “Do we have to get up to get down, or get down to get up?”

“Ummmmm...I’m not sure.” Awonder responded, “But that’s a funky question.

Lunch time

“I’m not sure how to eat this,” said Joe. They all got a lunch tray (with Velcro!) and put what they wanted to eat on it. But they had no idea how to open the packages. The crew all tried to suck the stuff out.

“It works!” Seeger exclaimed, as he slurped up some roast beef. He swallowed. “Nasty.”

Rednow-3 was orbiting around Mars. Joe, Seeger, Awonder and Charlie went onto the landing craft while Frank took care of the mother ship. He would join them later. The landing craft was deployed and Joe took over the controls. He carefully landed it. There was a bustle inside the craft as the crew put on their spacesuits. Joe opened the door and took a step. A cloud of red dust wafted upwards like smoke billowing slowly from a freshly blown out candle. “Another small step for man, another huge leap for mankind,” the others stepped out from the craft. They walked along the dusty surface. All of them scanned the dusty surface.

“See anything?” Joe asked.

“Nope,” responded Seeger. Just then, a small figure emerged above the horizon.

“What’s that?!” Awonder gasped.

Nfgrow spotted them just as they touched down. The cloud of dust made the craft easy to see. He went out of his cave to meet them.

“This encounter could make history,” Joe said, “*if* this is successful.” Joe chased the thought of failure away. But still, a bead of sweat glistened on his forehead. He urged the group onward.

Nfgrow could make out tiny figures now. He quickened his pace. He nervously fingered the shiny metal translator on his belt. This encounter would make history.

Joe could see the Martian now. 100 ft...50...25...10...5..., the figure was in front of him. He reached out a hand. But one final doubt raced through his mind. It was dangerous to assume the Martian was friendly. It could have been up here to eliminate the threat of humans. After millennia of peace, they didn’t want to be

disturbed. But it was too late to turn back. The Martian took the hand. “Hi,” said Joe. The Martian didn’t react. All was going well.

Due to their, motion sensors, both Curiosity and Opportunity were observing the historic exchange in this very moment. Since both rovers couldn’t malfunction at the same time, the likelihood of Martians increased dramatically. The footage could be trusted since it was verified twice. The news blared out a conclusion—Martians exist.

Back on Earth...

There was a huge uproar. Because of the present communication technologies, people in every corner of the world knew about this amazing discovery. Not only was it the subject of all newspapers’ headlines, but it was on the internet and television. Even the ads on Broadway Street became the pictures and short videos Curiosity and Opportunity took of the first Martian-human encounter. Scientists were working overtime, tracking every step of the crew on Mars. But they didn’t expect the next move they made...

Nfgraw took the group down to the cave. It was limestone with a few drops of water clinging to the roof. A dim electric light lit it. The supplies were stacked in a corner. “This is all your race has got?” asked Joe.

“No. There are many cities below the crust.”

“And just you?” Joe questioned.

“The rest are elsewhere.”

“Doesn’t seem like a huge welcome party.”

“Well...It is practically forbidden to make human contact.” Joe raised an eyebrow. Nfgraw saw this gesture and continued. “We had a vote and the final decision was to move deeper into the ground.”

“So why are you meeting me?”

“Well...I thought that meeting you would make a collaboration of Mars and Earth. We could help each other in times of need and share technologies and information. But, I am not going to be handing a photon laser to you right now.”

“Sure,” said Joe.

“Can I have a photon laser?” asked Charlie.

“Um...no.” said Nfgraw, confused.

“He’s like that,” Joe whispered into Nfgraw’s hearing organs.

“How in the world did you survive on this planet?” asked Awonder, finally getting somewhere.

“A long, long time ago, like 3 billions years ago, Mars had oceans and plants and pretty much everything like Earth. At that time, Earth was still developing. Our people, the Mololos, gobbled up all the resources like you Earthlings do now. After ten thousand years of this, Mars was depleted of its resources. There was a huge drought and only a few Mololos survived. The weather got worse and sandstorms raged across the planet. They decided to live underground. The

survivors gathered all their machines and dug a tunnel system. They lived down there and survived, again. They mutated regular edible plants to feed on chemicals mined out of Mt. Sharp and several volcanic vents, like the ones you have on the ocean floor. They produced the things we needed to live; oxygen and food but the food, it's not that delicious (meaning horrible). So here we are, in exile but not in exile.”

Everyone sat in the cave, silenced by the old story of the planet they were sitting on. Awonder broke the silence by saying, “Let's head underground.” There was a general chorus of hoots and shouts as they decided to visit the territory of the Mololos.

The five went deeper and deeper into the cave system. There were caves large and small, sandy and rocky, and some oxygen-filled and others not. After traversing through huge sandy field, they reached the abandoned city from above. It wasn't really a city, just a cluster of tunnels weaving through each other. The cavern was faintly illuminated by the glowing walls. "Bioluminescent bacteria." Nfgrow explained. "They feed on Mololo waste. Faced with extinction, every element of our planet which survived developed multiple symbiotic relationships." In the center of the complex, there was a spot of nothingness, a giant hole in the ground, where no light could penetrate. "Down there," said Nfgrow.

"Are you serious?" asked Seeger, staring down into the depths.

"Yep"

"How are we going to...get down?"

"By jumping!"

"How deep is that hole?"

"1678.64 km"

"&#!?@\$?"

"Yep. Gravity will suspend you in the center while special synthetic magnetic beams drive you. We will reach the entrance of the new city. So, jump."

Joe jumped after Nfgrow, who took the lead.

"Whhhhahooooo!" Joe screamed.

"Stop shouting!"

"Sorry"

Then it suddenly felt like they weren't falling. A strange force pushed them along. The five reached the mouth of a tunnel. It was the gate to the new city. At the end of the tunnel, there was a huge cave city hall. Two wandering guards escorted them into the chamber.

“Delegates from Earth,” they announced.

“Ahhhhh,” a voice boomed. A chair slid into view and a figure materialized.

“So you want to negotiate with the humans?” The Mololo said, directing the question towards Nfgrow.

“Yes, Mr. President.”

“So you want to negotiate with the Mololos?” he questioned the Earthlings this time.

“Of course,” responded Joe.

“You two shall henceforth serve as ministers of the two planets’ collaboration. So, there!”

“He is very direct and quick,” whispered Nfgrow. The guards came out again and took the five to a room in the complex. They would stay there for a few days before heading back. The room was relatively sparsely furnished compared to a regular Earth room. There were only a small table and a bed. Joe laid down and drifted off into a uneasy sleep.

Joe woke. He looked around the unfamiliar room and remembered. Joe got out of bed and went out of the room to get the others. Nfgraw was already up and about. “Let’s go” he said. They walked out of the council building. Nfgraw led Joe into an alley.

“Where in the world are we going?” Joe asked.

“The downloading center,” Nfgraw replied. The store was just really a kiosk with a port on the side. Nfgraw took out a little device and plugged it in. There was a jumble of noises. After two minutes, he unplugged the device and handed it to Joe.

“Hmm?” Joe said, confused.

“A video of the history of the Mololos,” Nfgraw explained. They then headed back to their rooms.

The next morning, after a quick breakfast (choked down), three guards came and took the kids to a teleporter. The door closed and a humming became evident. There was a bright flash of light and they were back at mission control. “What the...!” the director said. The mob had landed right in front of his chair.

“Umm, we’re back from a delegation mission?” Joe said, unsure.

“You were on video!”

“Really?”

“Yeah! Curiosity & Opportunity both caught the exchange on camera! You met Martians!” said the director, pointing at Nfgraw. “And you even brought one back here!”

“Okayyy...let me tell you what happened.” Joe unloaded his story and finished, “and here we are.” The director stood with his mouth open. “There also this.” Joe dug around in his pocket for the device. Nfgrow made a strange sound and a hologram appeared.

“The Mololos lived in glory for 2,500 years until our civilization collapsed,” a voice said. “It was due to rising temperatures, climate change, and many other reasons. We got reduced to 1,000 people and were forced underground. We see that the planet Earth is headed toward similar fates, though it might not be too late...” the video ended. And it was all filmed... and sent to the media.

E

Two months later, 4/5/2013, at the jet propulsion lab at 6:00 pm, Joe sat at the desk in the Interplanetal Diplomacy Foundation building. In the past month, he had created the first interplanetal department in the history of Earth. The staff consisted of 5 members, the crew of Rednow-3, and 5 Martians, including Nfgrow. The other two were council members who had abandoned their post to fill in this critical duty. This newly created foundation was the group who interacted with each other and organized trading between Mars and Earth.

It was perfect. The Martians had technologies and knowledge while the Earthlings had resources. With their cooperation, they both were getting stronger. The humans brought some trees and water to Mars so it became greener. The Mololos had efficient ways to get power, so Earth's pollution was healing too.

Today was the usual day. Letters were sent in from humans requesting wind turbine designs. Mololos had sent holograms requesting oxygen. Joe got back to work. He was busy now but not as much as before. Then, the news companies had requested him for interviews. His face was all over the news. But the rage had died down a bit. People knew there were Martians and had gotten used to it.

Joe started to pack up to go home. Then he heard a sudden knock at the door. Joe got up from his chair and impatiently and said "Come in." The door opened and Nfgrow stepped through. "Come with me," he said. Nfgrow led him outside to the warm air of California. The stars began to poke out as the sun dipped below the horizon. A few stars seemed to split out of another brighter star. "Ahhh. The shipments have come." Nfgrow said. The flashing dots got brighter and bigger, moving away from the planet known as Mars. Joe started to speak. "This interaction is the key in human development. You had the courage to do what no others had done. You met a human, even though everyone else opposed it. You made a meaningful link between the planets. You are a true great Mololo."

Right there was a brief moment, shared by two historical people, and through them, two different planets. They looked into each others' eyes and said "let's do it."

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Martians (Mololos) live in the oxygen-filled tunnels all around Mars and in the center. They once were a prospering civilization but collapsed into poverty. They eat some strange foods made from the plants they farm. Those plants use chemicals mined from Mount Sharp to grow. I took the inspiration from the tube worm and bacteria that live at the bottom of the ocean. Also, some inspiration from the events happening at the time I wrote this book. Curiosity had just touched down and was making lots of news. Later, SpaceX launched its Dragon rocket to send supplies to the I.S.S. While at school, my teacher told me about Mars One, a international collaboration to colonize Mars. Opportunity is the only working rover on Mars except Curiosity. Find them at:

http://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/mars/main/index.html

<http://www.spacex.com/>

<http://applicants.mars-one.com/>

The Mololos mined their water from the ice caps and gathered the moisture from the air. Because the resources on their planet are so rare, they use energy to create the most important materials. Everything else they recycle from their wastes. The energy comes from the geothermal rods placed in several volcanoes. The rod is made of a special kind of metal that directly converts heat into electricity. It provides sufficient energy for all the Mololos. The entire population of Mololos is really quite small; only about one thousand. They live in little clusters scattered around the planet. Kids, don't try this at home—scorching the ozone layer, depriving Earth of its resources, etc. just don't try it. The city that Nfgraw lives in has 300 people, the largest population of a city. Now that you know about Mars, would you like to live there?