

Short Story

Mars

THE CLOSE ENCOUNTER

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The close encounter

By:
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They all have been packed for a three day camping in the woods. Nicolaus was their eldest, but not by far. Issac was only two month younger than him and Albert whose birthday was tonight, was eleven month younger than Nicolaus. it's been almost five hours into their journey. They would arrive at their camping site in less than an hour. The site was near a little city on top of a hill inside a thin forest. A perfect place for looking at the stars.

They have been waiting for this event for years. Since they were in the first year of college together, they wanted to go camping. After many years, they finally found the perfect time and place for their night out. "26th to 29th of august 2003, the perfect time for us" this was the exact phrase ALbert used last year, when he found out that on this date mars would be closest to earth in almost 60 thousand years. It was a once in a lifetime opportunity or as Isaac liked to say "once in many lifetimes". They are all equipped for this three awesome nights. They chipped in and bought a new telescope together, a telescope so much more powerful than their little ones. The birthday of Albert also was another reason for them to be together.

After a six hour drive they reached their camping site. There were others in the site too. They found a nice quiet place not too far and not too close to public toilets and also out of reach of other camps. They didn't want to find new friends here, they just wanted to hang out with themselves in those three magical nights.

It was almost 7pm and they started to set-up the camp before it gets dark. They each had two tents, one was Nicolaus tent, a big dark green tent that could stand in front of wind and rain. He bought it many years ago when he was dating Barbara. He wanted them to go camping, so he bought this big tent. At first their plan was to go camping every month, at least in summer. But in all they go camping just once and just for one night. Barbara dumped Nicolaus a week after their first and last camp. "Not that it did anything with what happened in the camp, but it was not irrelevant either" this was how Nicolaus always described it their break up to his two best friends, "better to have a break up than to not having a relationship at all" and this was Issac's reply to every time that Nicolaus would talk about his breakup. Isaac was the owner of the second tent. A little blue and orange tent in which you

could just sleep and sit, just in the middle. It was a mountain tent. A professional one of course. Its height was 1 meter 20 centimeters at its peak. But “it could stand tall in every wind” as Issac liked to describe it. He bought it almost two years ago when he was still with Robert. Robert had a “mountain climbing club”, as always referred to by Issac, and one day, out of the desperate need of finding a relation, Issac joined that club. Isaac had it all planned, he thought if he would join this club, he could get in touch with some girls of the club in the mountain, and then maybe he could have his first relationship. Albert and Nicolaus believed that it was a really stupid idea especially since Robert was always Issac’s rival in college. But Isaac did it anyway. He bought the stuff needed for mountain climbing and joined the club. He went to the mountains two times. Both times there were just two girls in the club, one was Robert’s girlfriend and the other one was his sister Grace Hooke. So Isaac decided not to attend the mountains anymore, and thus he owned some professional mountain climbing stuff, including his tent. Albert had no tent and there was no need for one either, he could sleep at Nicolaus’s tent, there was enough room for both of them. After an hour, they set up their camp completely. Nicolaus parked his father’s car beside the camp where it could also act as a shield in case there was too much wind. Out of all three of them, only Albert had his own car, but it broke down five days ago, and the mechanic couldn’t repair it on time for their camp. So Nicolaus borrowed his father’s beloved car. It was an Opel Astra that Adam had bought it almost nine years ago. At that time Nicolaus was just sixteen years old. But it was the same car that he thought how to drive and the only car that their family-owned.

The last thing they installed was their large, heavy, and expensive telescope. They put it in the middle of their camping area, somewhere in between the tents and the car. After that, they started to prepare some food and wait for the sun to set in the west and let the sky grow dark, so the stars could glow in his vast eternity. And only then they could hunt the red mars with their telescope and take a close look at it.

For their first meal, Albert had prepared three ham sandwiches. Albert loved ham and whenever he was assigned to prepare food, he would

always do the same recipe and make the same sandwich. He never liked anything more than ham. "I wish heaven has eternal ham sandwiches," said Albert. "Maybe your heaven does have them, but for sure Robert's heaven doesn't have," said Isaac, "why not?" asked Nicolaus as Albert was eating his sandwich like it was the first time and he was not listening to them at all. Isaac looked at Nicolaus with a little wonder, "don't you know that he has become a vegan now?" "No, why should I know?", "Yeah why should you", "and why do you know?", "I don't know", "you just said it, how do you not know?", " I mean, I know, but I don't know it as I investigated for it, I just heard it from a friend", "from who?", "whom," said Albert while still eating with appetite, they both looked at him a little and then continued their conversation "you don't know him," said Isaac "at least now I know it's a, him," said Nicolaus with a smile, "yeah, like there's ever a, her in my life," said Isaac "that's because you are just into space and planets, come down to earth and you may find a female friend". They stopped their conversation and kept eating their sandwiches. And after some quiet time Nicolaus said to Albert "and from who is correct, not whom", "no, no, you are wrong my friend, you should use whom in these kinds of situations," said Albert, "no, you are wrong" "no you are" "who is correct?" asked Nicolaus from Isaac "why should I know? I just know that there may be a dead cat in there" answered Isaac pointing to the big box of their telescope. They all smiled and Isaac continued "and you guys don't know it either, so let it go". Nobody said anything for a while.

Suddenly they realized it has been dark for a while, Albert looked at the sky and said "oh god no" Isaac and Nicolaus looked at the sky and said simultaneously "oh, no, not tonight", "it was supposed to be clear sky in these three nights" said Isaac "and clearly it was a wrong data" added Albert. They looked at each other for a moment and Nicolaus started talking with a cheer in his voice, "It doesn't matter anyway, tonight is not the closest encounter, remember? Tomorrow night is the night we have been planning for", "yeah, and we had some other plans for tonight" added Isaac and looked at Albert. "Come on guys, we are in nowhere, what should it matter if it's my birthday, what can we do?" said Albert "we can be happy,"

said Nicolaus “Yeah, and I think we better be” added Isaac “Ok, let’s be happy”, “Ok” then they stared at each other for a little while. “Are we happy now?” asked Isaac “I think so” answered Nicolaus “I know I am happy,” said Albert, “great, that’s all that matters” said Nicolaus “but I think there is a sub text to you being happy” said Isaac, “maybe” said Albert, “Could it be, that” said Nicolaus with increasing cheer in his voice, “I think the answer is yes,” said Isaac, “no, come on guys, it’s not what you think,” said Albert “what do we think?” said Isaac, “I don’t know,” said Albert, “then how is it not what we think,” said Nicolaus, “I can guess what you think” said Albert, “ok then, tell us,” said Isaac, “ok” said Albert and continued “I finally did it” he hesitated a bit and then continued” I asked Mileva out” “and?” asked Isaac “what are you saying man” said Nicolaus and continued “it is obvious what happened next, she said yes, they have gone out on a date, then he asked her to marry her, she said yes, they are living together now and as we are talking right now, she is carrying his child,” “yeah it was obvious” said Isaac “yeah” said Albert with smile and continued “but seriously, she said yes and we will be going out next weekend.” “ It’s very good news, man, I’m happy for you,” said Isaac, “yeah me too, hope everything goes well” added Nicolaus. “Thanks,” said Albert “it may seem silly but from now I’m thinking who is she going to end it” “come on, it’s not something you should be worried about now,” said Nicolaus “yeah, I know it is hard to break up, it was one of the hardest things I have ever experienced, but come on man, you are just going on the first date, don’t think about that part, for now, maybe you could make it and live together for a long time,” said Isaac, “how do you know about breakups, you have never been in a relationship,” said Nicolaus “True” answered Isaac “I have never been in a relationship, but it does not mean that I have never been dumped, actually it’s a little harder to get duped without even dating” “really you have been dumped?” asked Albert “two times” answered Isaac. A temporary silence covered their camp and Isaac continued “seriously guys, I’m not kidding. That can happen. But I don’t want to talk about it, as I didn’t talk till now. So let’s celebrate Albert’s date with his long-lost love, the fair Mileva”, “yeah, and I think I know the best way to celebrate,” said Nicolaus then got up, went to

his father's car, and brought a little box with him. "Oh my god," said Isaac staring at the box "it's been so long" "so long indeed," said Nicolaus, "the dungeons," said Albert "I missed being a warrior fighting against goblins and orcs", "me too," said Isaac, "best birthday ever," said Albert.

They packed their telescope and put it in the big tent and started playing inside the tent. They were up all night playing. The next day, they just couldn't wake up before noon. After eating a meal, Isaac recommended looking around in the woods. Nicolaus put the telescope in the car, locked the door, and left other things unintended, there was nothing good for stealing.

It was not a thick jungle, but still, it was a jungle with hills in it. They found a stream of water. It was not a river but it was not very small either. The sound of water streaming down was beautiful. They stopped there for a while just to hear the sound. Albert was thinking to himself how many years will this water be running here? In a hundred or a thousand years, will there be water here? What if someone in the next one million years stands exactly where he is standing right now and look at this stream? Will there be any sign of this stream here? Maybe the river dries in the next four or five years, but what if it streams for a million years exactly here?

Nicolaus looked at the sky and said "it seems today the sky is clear", "I hope it stays the same all for the night," said Albert. "I was thinking, what are we expecting to see tonight," said Isaac as the other two glanced at him, and he continued "I mean, I know we are here to see Mars, but last night that it was cloudy and we couldn't see it, it made me think, what is it that makes me so eager, after all, I will not see anything unusual, it will be the same picture of mars that I saw many times in books and the internet. There will be no difference in the picture." "I think I know what you are talking about," said Albert "I almost think about the same thing, but then I thought it is not the picture that matters, it's how you see it, I mean here, in this time, with telescope and stuff" "but" said Nicolaus "I'm going to say what I understand from your words, and correct me if I'm wrong" Isaac and Albert looked at him, waiting for him to continue "you guys are saying, if we bring a picture of Mars and look at it in our camp, it is the same as what we

are going to do” he waited a moment and nobody answered him, so he continued “oh, come on guys, it’s not about either the picture nor the place that you do it, it’s about the experience, it’s about the fun, it’s about having something to tell other people about what you love and do” Isaac nodded and added “yes, clearly we can’t go back and tell everybody we looked at a picture of Mars that we brought here with ourselves” Albert interrupted “but what if we don’t tell anybody,” “what do you mean?” asked Nicolaus, “I mean what if we come here and just look at Mars picture in a magazine or even don’t look at any picture at all, then go and tell everybody about our experience of looking at Mars through our telescope,” answered Albert “as I understand it,” said Isaac and continued “you are saying that the cat in the box can not change his output, you look inside the box, and the cat is either dead or alive, but we can change the output, we can be alive in the box but tell people that we are dead inside it, and there is no way for them to check it, they just have to accept our data.” “exactly” said Albert. Nicolaus stopped for a moment, then walked with them again and said “so in other words, not only we can not be sure about what we don’t see, we also can not be sure about what we can see” Isaac and Albert nodded in agreement. “Well that’s depressing,” said Nicolaus. “Why depressing?” said Albert and Isaac continued “yeah that’s just a fact and facts are not depressing,” “the fact that everything can be something else or even, not be at all is depressing in my opinion,” said Nicolaus and Isaac answered “maybe, but the fact that you can’t be sure about anything is a fact that is true, so you can cling to that as the only true thing that you know, and that can not be depressing” “maybe,” said Nicolaus with reluctance “guys, where is the river?” said Albert. They all stopped and looked around. “I thought we were walking by that stream’s side,” said Nicolaus, “we thought too, but it seems we lost it” answered Isaac. They just stood there for a bit and looked around “I think that way leads to our camp,” said Albert pointing in a direction “let’s go back, it is almost afternoon and we must prepare for tonight” they all agreed on that and started walking toward their camp. On the way back everybody was thinking to himself and there was not a lot of talking between them. They got back in less than thirty minutes of walking and

started installing the telescope again. It seemed that tonight there will be a clear sky and it was great news for them.

It got dark and there was no moon in the sky yet. Isaac was looking at the sky with the telescope and every now and then he would say an ahh of wonderment. "It is so much brighter and closer from my own little telescope," said Isaac. Nicolaus was reading a book, he looked at Albert and said "where and when will we be seeing Mars?" "I think, almost in two hours, on the southwest part of the sky, Mars will dawn" answered Albert, "but I think we don't need to be worried about that, Mars will be glowing tonight, so we can see it clearly in this clear sky," said Isaac. They all nodded.

Albert went to the telescope and used it a little, "you can actually feel the sky in this telescope" said Albert and continued "I wonder if there are other beings on other planets looking at us right now", "everybody wonders," said Isaac, then Nicolaus added "I genuinely believe that there are other intelligent beings somewhere in the universe", "but I don't think there will be an encounter between us at least in the next thousand years" said Isaac "I hope not" said Albert "why not?" asked Nicolaus, "think about it" answered Albert and continued, "If other civilized beings travel through the universe and come to earth do they want to just meet us and give us their knowledge? I don't think so, they will take us prisoners and show us at their zoos." Isaac interrupted "but I think it depends on their level of society, I mean think about Christof Colomb and America, in those days people didn't care if another civilization with a new culture is living somewhere else on the earth, they just wanted to grow their empire and find new lands and resources. I mean the land of America was more important than the people living in it and their culture, so that happened the way that happened and almost all native Americans died, whether in war or of sickness. But think if there was a place on earth today that still was untouched with us. If we could find somewhere like that on earth today, we wouldn't just name the land after the first person who landed there and use its resources, of course, we would do that, but we would also care about the people living there, we would try to communicate with them and even help them if we

could. We would even try to find out their culture and use it in our daily pop culture. I think this is the same with aliens, if they just found out how to build interstellar spaceships, and we are one of the first planets they go to, yeah sure we would be doomed, but if there is interstellar travel already in process in another part of the universe, and for some reason, they didn't still care to come to earth, that would be a little different. If they come to earth they wouldn't just look for a planet to conquer, they would look for a new culture to contact with. Our technology would be a child's play for them but that's not the same with our culture. then us, the people of the earth, will be more important than the planet earth, or whatever aliens call it." he hesitated for a moment and continued, "I feel like I'm talking too much now", "sometimes I just want to turn you off, I just don't know how to do that," said Nicolaus.

They explored the night sky for another half an hour and then it happened. Mars dawn was beautiful. Even with the naked eye, it was a glowing point in the sky. "Some people actually believed that Mars would be the size of Moon in these nights," said Nicolaus with a smile, Albert continued "yeah that would be nice," "of course, just for a moment before the collision," said Isaac, "why can't you have just a little imagination?" said Albert and Isaac answered "I have imagination," "I don't think you have," said Albert, "what is it guys?" said Nicolaus and continued "just let it go, your discussion feels like we are in kindergarten," they all continued looking at the sky. Sometimes with the big telescope, sometimes with their little telescopes, and sometimes with the naked eye. "I could sit here and watch the sky forever," said Isaac, "of course sky will not stay like this forever," said Albert, "and look who has no imagination now," said Isaac "I swear to god, if you guys want to continue this, I pack up and go," said Nicolaus, "ok, maybe we don't have imagination, but surely you don't have a sense of humor" answered Isaac. "This is wonderful" Albert interrupted "what?" asked Nicolaus, "the surface of Mars, I mean it is still far away but you can totally see the texture," answered Albert and Isaac added, "Yes, it is really beautiful," Nicolaus continued "you can guess from here that there is no living creature on Mars," "still you can't be sure about microscopic life," said

Albert, "yeah, you can't be sure, but it is almost obvious, there is no life on that planet," said Nicolaus. "But if there was, it would be so cool," said Albert, "yeah, an encounter with aliens is always a cool thing," said Nicolaus. Isaac looked at the two and started talking like he remembered something "you know what I just realize?" "what?" said Nicolaus and Isaac continued "if there is another life on other planets, and I mean intelligent life, and so much more civilized than us that they can actually travel through vast space and come visit us if they exist and if that happens, we are not the ones who will encounter with them, some authorities will do that," "you mean you didn't know that until now?" asked Albert, Isaac answered "yeah I did know that, but I never realized the consequences" Nicolaus started talking with wonderment "oh my god, you are right, the government authorities will communicate with them," "so what?" asked Albert "think about it, who are the government, and I don't mean just our country, any country in any part of the world," said Isaac, "some people who are just thinking about more power and more money, and they are almost never a good presentation of their nation," added Nicolaus. Albert thought for a moment and his eyes widened after a moment and said, "oh, no. that's really bad news," "yes indeed" added Nicolaus, "but who should do that?" said Albert, they looked at each other for a moment and Nicolaus said "I think there must be an organization preparing some people for this special event," "it may not happen for a thousand years, or even forever, but yeah, I'm with you, we must be prepared for that," said Isaac, Albert interrupted "but it is the same as today, who will start that organization? Governments, who will teach them how to communicate? Governments." "it may sound the same, but it is not," said Isaac and continued "when you have time to prepare, and on the other hand, there is still no real situation, the politicians are not really interested in it, so they will not train themselves, and they will not try to influence the training either, because even if they can find a profit in there, it's way into the future and still only a probable thing, not a real thing. So for the people who can literally see just ten years into the future, and I'm talking about maximum providence, still they are not the ones who see a real profit in this", "so then it may never happen" said Nicolaus and

continued "to build an organization that big there needs to be a lot of money and resources, only governments may be able to do that, so if they see no profit in it, it shall not be, and if they see the profit, we should go back to what Albert said" Isaac thought to himself for a while and said "yeah, maybe, but I still believe that there can be organizations like that without the help of governments. I think there can be a gathering between the biggest scientists of the world, they can prepare themselves for contact with aliens. And the day the encounter happens, they know what to do", "wait a moment" said Albert and continued "who said there should be scientists communicating with aliens?" "so who? Politicians again?" said Isaac "or maybe random people from the streets," said Nicolaus with a smile. Albert looked at him and said "I don't know, but I do know that whenever that happens, our science is far primitive for them, after all, they have traveled through stars and we can't go beyond our solar system, so if scientists talked to them, no matter how prepared they are, it will be nothing but laughter for the aliens," Isaac and Nicolaus nodded slowly and doubtfully in agreement. "Maybe politicians are a good choice after all," said Nicolaus, "they surely are not," said Isaac and continued "answer honestly, if aliens come to earth tomorrow, do you really like your president to present you and your country for them?" Nicolaus hesitated and said "No, I'm sure I don't want him to do that," Albert interrupted, "here's a question, If we don't like our presidents, or leaders on a world scale, present us to aliens, why the hell do we choose them as our leader?" "I don't think everybody on earth think like us, and also I don't think everybody on earth chooses their leader," said Isaac "but at least in the western civilization, we believe that we have democracy, and we choose our leaders," said Albert and continued "and I'm sure there is not a single western country that their people feel ok with their leader represent their country to aliens," "I'm with Albert on this one," said Nicolaus and continued "I don't think you need to vote for it, it is obvious, look around you, everybody that you know, some like the president, some don't, but despite that, surely they don't like him or any other politician from any other place in the world to be their representer," "yeah I think deep down we don't really

care about our leadership, we just vote without thinking that much,” said Albert, “I beg to differ my friend” interrupted Nicolaus and continued “I think we don’t have the real democracy that we think we have, think about it, not in our country, but in any other country, how is the voting for president, you have to choose between two or three people, you know you don’t like them all, but you think that maybe this one is less bad. So you vote for him or her, people are not free to choose whomever they like, we have to choose between limited choices that are given to us. So there is never a choice in which you say to yourself, yeah that’s a good candidate to talk to aliens from my behalf, you will never have that choice.” “But” Isaac interrupted “still if you could choose someone like that, a woman or a man who is a good candidate to speak to aliens, who is that?” Nicolaus looked at Isaac, he didn’t say anything for a while, then he looked at the sky where Mars was and said slowly “I don’t know, maybe it would be better to have a god-like Ares who could speak to aliens for us,” “you want the god of war to speak for you?” said Isaac and continued “well man, you have your wish, every politician can do that for you” Nicolaus laughed and said “you know what I mean” “no, honestly I don’t know” said Isaac, Nicolaus looked at him for a bit and said, “yeah, let it go”. They stopped talking for a while and just glared at the sky. It was a nice clear sky, even the blue line of the milky way could be seen. Mars set on the sky, but they stayed up all night and explored the night sky. At a point Isaac spotted Andromeda, they could see a clear nice picture of it in their telescope. “Just unbelievable,” said Isaac and continued “it takes light 2.5 million years to reach us,” hesitated and continued “what we are looking at, is literally a time machine, we are looking at a galaxy on how it was 2.5 million years ago,” “think about all the space between the edge of the Milky Way and the edge of Andromeda,” said Albert, “we really are some unimportant dust in a vast void” added Nicolaus. They just glared at Andromeda one by one through their telescope and wondered within their imaginations. The exploration of the night sky continued till the very first light of the sun. then they packed and went to sleep.

The heat of noon woke them up. It was almost 2 pm when they woke up. At breakfast/lunch, Nicolaus proposed they go a little further with cars today and explore other areas of this place. Someplace that contains fewer people and is more pristine. Albert felt like playing games and Isaac didn't like to go either. Nicolaus canceled his plan at first, but after an hour he got bored and explore the area on his own. He jumped to his father's car and drove out of the wooded area. After not long, he was in a deserted place, he had to drive slowly to avoid any problems for the car on this rough road. The sound of dust and gravel beneath the tires was so comforting for him. There was nothing in his view except for the wooded area in his back mirror. Vast empty space, it reminded him of last night and Andromeda. He felt small in this desert, if he could actually step out of the Milky Way and drive in the car toward the Andromeda, what feeling would he have in that situation. Here, he knew that there were many molecules in front of him in the form of gas, there were many under his tires as soil, he could see the sun in the sky, the desert may seem like a vast empty space, but still, there are many matters in it. And he didn't want to think about the neutrinos and other stuff, the normal matter was enough. But in the void between two galaxies, there are few things that even can't be seen nor felt by a human. Maybe some energy bosons, and of course can't forget about Higgs particle, and last but not least, the dark energy, the biggest unanswered question yet. Maybe dark energy was the real reason for Ives's Music. Unanswered Question was his favorite piece of music of all times. He always thought that there is so much mystery in this music, just like the universe. He didn't know any music theory and didn't know anything about this piece from a musical perspective, but he felt there is a big mystery in this music. He couldn't understand this piece at all, the same way he couldn't understand the world around him. For many years he tried to find meaning in life, a formula to find a hidden thing in the universe. He believed that he could do something that other scientists couldn't do. After years he changed his mind. Life is not about the answer, it's about the question. Life should not be a clear thing where everything has an answer and you know what you are doing, that would be sucky life. Real-life is a messy

unpredictable series of events, and you can't change it very much. All you can do is make some choices that can lead to great changes in your life. Since you don't know the consequence of every choice you make, so it's better not to think about them often. All your life, you will just try to figure out how things work, how the order of things is, and surely you can't find the answer in the end. But it was not the answer we are living for. It's the process of finding the answer. For that, he could really appreciate the sound of gravel under the tires of the car. It was so peaceful. It was the sound of going somewhere slow and steady. He looked at the mirror, and suddenly realized he is getting too far from their camp. He couldn't see the woods anymore. He stopped the car, turned it off, and pulled his seat down, just to hear the silence in the desert. There was no sound around him except the annoying noise that was always in his ear. He really didn't know if everybody heard that noise or not. If Isaac or Albert were here, they would hear the noise he was hearing or they would hear nothing? He could not believe that there can be times when you hear nothing. The world can not get quieter than this, and there is a noise in his ear, so that must be it. There is no such thing as absolute silence. Until you are living and have blood running in your veins. There is the sound of running blood in your ears as a noise. Of course, if you go deaf you would not hear that noise anymore. But it was not for sure. Maybe after you go deaf you just hear the noise and nothing else. After a minute or two, he put his seat in normal position, started the engine, and headed back to the camp.

Albert and Issac were on the finishing moves of their chess when Nicolaus arrived back at the camp. it was wooden chess set with human-like figures. Albert received it as a gift from his parents years ago. It has been a little old, but as Albert always would say, this was what made it so cooler than other chess sets. Albert and Issac played a lot during the last few years, they were equal rivals and their battles would last many hours. Today it was their third game today, both had won one game before and this one was a matter of life and death to them. So they didn't care for Nicolaus's return and continue focusing on their game. There were just a handful of pieces left on the board. It was almost a tie. Isaac had a knight, a roc, and three

pawns while Albert had a bishop, a roc, and three pawns left. It was Issac's turn with his black pieces. Suddenly he said, "oh look, the arrangement of my pawns with the roc and knight on top and king below them is somehow like Orion's belt, isn't it?" Albert changed his view a little to see the board from Isaac's perspective and said "yeah, that's cool. Many times I've seen the pieces arranged as some constellations on the board." Isaac continued focusing on his next move while Albert was thinking about some of his previous games on his wooden chessboard. Isaac started to play suddenly like he found a way to finish the game, Albert tried to figure out Issac's plan but couldn't find anything obvious. So they continued the game, a little faster than before since Isaac almost knew exactly what he is going to do next. In two moves Issac killed Albert's roc by sacrificing his own. Now they both had lost a roc, and after almost five moves it happened. A black pawn could escape from Albert's pieces. There was no way to stop it now. The pawn was just one move from being the queen. The last square before Issac's pawn was black and Albert's bishop was white. Albert thought for almost five minutes and then resigned from the game. There was no need to continue when they both knew who is going to win in less than ten moves.

It was time for an afternoon snack and then they had to install the telescope again for tonight's sky exploration. Tonight was their last night here, they all had a sad feeling about leaving this place. Of course, sleeping on their own bed was a great gift for them, but they just wished to have their beds in a place like this.

The last night's exploration began. They planned to explore more adventurous things than the planets of the solar system tonight. Hercules Cluster, Pinwheel Galaxy, Swan Nebula, and of course the galaxy of Andromeda were their main targets tonight.

It took them almost one hour to find Swan Nebula. Even one degree in direction of the telescope could result in millions of kilometers difference in their final picture. But finally, they could find it. Beautiful majestic Swan Nebula where stars are being born.

“I just can’t believe it,” said Isaac and continued “that we are the only species in this universe” Albert answered as he was looking through the telescope “every day there is a new planet being found that has the same situation as earth, surely some of them have life on them.” “But I think that’s the problem,” said Nicolaus, “why do we tend to think that our body and our shape can be the only intelligent kind of life? I don’t mean lizard man or intelligent turtles living on other planets. They also are like us in many ways and they need a planet like earth to survive. I mean something completely different that can live on a different kind of planet. Think about a creature that will die if it breathes the oxygen.” “that can be possible,” said Isaac. Nicolaus continued “why do we always think that aliens have the same ears and eyes as us. Maybe instead of twenty to twenty thousand hertz they can hear from forty thousand to one million hertz sound waves.” “then we can not actually talk to them,” said Albert, “at least unless we or them make some kind of wave translator” said Isaac and Nicolaus continued “exactly. We can not play music for those guys, our music will just be some kind of noise to them. And think about the same in light waves. What if they see radio waves, or X-ray.” “what if their body's immune to minus hundred-degree celsius and a planet like earth would just burn their skin” said Albert while widening his eyes. Isaac went to the telescope and started watching the Swan nebula. “Yes exactly,” said Nicolaus and continued “anyway, what I mean is that even though we are searching for other earth-like planets, and we are sending out every kind of signal to say we are here, it may be that none of them work in the end. They may live on a planet opposite to earth and our signals may seem noise to them.” “Yeah you are right,” said Isaac and continued while changing the telescope's angles “now let’s find Pinwheel galaxy.” Nicolaus started looking at some maps and Albert went to help Isaac find Pinwheel in the direction they guessed it would be found.

As they were searching Nicolaus started to talk with his eyes on the star map, “I was thinking today in the desert and I think I found my answer to yesterday's question.” “what question,” asked Isaac aiming the telescope at the stars, “the question about who would be better to contact aliens if they

appear to us,” answered Nicolaus, “oh that question, I have an answer too,” said Albert, Nicolaus looked at him and said, “and what’s your answer?” “Well, you know,” said Albert, “I thought that in the end there is no good individual that can represent humanity, so I thought if aliens came to earth, we should just give them internet connection and let them know for themselves who we are.” “Not a bad idea,” said Issac looking at Albert, “The Internet is getting bigger and bigger every day and there is everything you need to know about us. Good news or bad news. Yeah, I think I’m with you.” “but” interrupted Nicolaus “I think when they come to earth, they already have a technology that can observe all our data on the Internet. We might not need to give them the internet, they will have the data before they land on earth.” “Well that’s good,” said Albert “so they know many things about us and maybe even they already know to whom they would like to speak. “They might even learn the language that person speaks and then go to speak with him,” said Isaac, “or her” added Albert. “But still,” said Nicolaus, “I think if they land on earth and somehow contact with us and want to speak with one of us, an artist should go talk to them not a politician, not a scientist not anyone else.” “Why the hell should we send an artist to speak with them?” said Isaac. “Why shouldn’t we?” asked Nicolaus. “Because” answers Isaac with a bit of rage in his voice, “artists are like crazy. They don’t know anything. I would rather a president go talk to aliens than somebody like Justin Bieber or Rihanna.” “Oh my god,” said Nicolaus with a loud voice “clearly you don’t know who is an artist and who is a commercialized show person.” “who do you have in mind then? Mr knows it all” said Isaac with sarcasm. “When I say artist,” said Nicolaus with a lower voice “I talk about a writer like Charles Bukowski, or a painter like Caravaggio, or a composer like Arvo Pärt.” “ok, but why artists? You want them to play piano for aliens?” asked Albert, “No, not that” answered Nicolaus “think about what we discussed before. If aliens land on earth, our technology would be a child’s play compared to them, our social systems would be primitive to them, everything we know and own would be something from their past. But our culture would be something new to them. As Homer and Virgil’s books are still great works for us today, they

will also be great works of art for the next generations of humans in the far future. So they will also be some great works for aliens too. And who better to present our culture to aliens than the ones who make the culture?" they looked a little at each other and didn't speak for a bit. Then Isaac said "but still it is in the condition that aliens are like us. If their ears are not like ours, then our music is noise for them." "I know, we should first see what we have in common. If they learn one of our languages, we can give them that language's best author. If they can hear like us we should send them our best composer or if they can see like us we should send them our best painters." said Nicolaus, Albert interrupted "but how should we find the best person in every art?" "Yeah, how?" asked Isaac, Nicolaus looked at them in wonder and shook his head "I don't know. For sure the ones who should know, know who is the best." "Maybe," said Isaac while looking at the telescope, "but forget that, come look at this beauty." "you found it?" asked Albert, "Yes" answered Isaac with joy in his voice. They all gathered around the telescope and watched the Pinwheel galaxy in 20.87 million light-years away. They didn't even know if that galaxy existed anymore, maybe it was destroyed millions of years ago, but still, the light of that galaxy that was reaching their eyes through that telescope was amazing. They just watched it for hours. Mars also was glowing tonight. After a while, they changed the direction of their telescope to Mars again and looked at it. Compared to what they were looking at tonight, Mars seemed very much within reach. But yet going to Mars was a wish for humanity that could be possible in the future.

They packed their telescope before dawn and went to their tents for the last sleep in the wild before going back home. Before they could sleep every one of them was just thinking about how little they are. They were looking at some vast distances and compared to the visible realm of the universe, they just felt like they don't matter at all. And there is a lot we can't see and we have no idea about.

One after another they fell asleep thinking about the universe and the fact that even Mars with its great red surface, does not matter in it.

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