

Out in the inky light-flecked void of space, one astronaut drifted through the dark, assessing his worn shuttle. He was tied in, as to not float off. As a kid he always dreamed of floating in space, and now he was here. As he traveled to different galaxies, he continually searched for life, examining one bare rock after another, but eventually always came back to earth, due to how special it was in the entire universe. Of course there were planets with water, planets with oxygen, but they were always unable to sustain life because of either the g's of gravity, the wrong oxygen number, or the heat index. Right now, he was positioned with his ship amidst a reflection nebula, which is a cloud of gas reflecting blue wavelengths from the stars in the cluster surrounding it. It was a truly beautiful sight. If there can be such a beautiful formation, there must be an Artist.

After the check up, Enrich planned on visiting a supernova, a collapsed star, to charge his ship with the energy waves it gives off. After re-entering the ship's cockpit he set his course for supernova 39/c. Upon exiting super speed a few minutes later, he was assaulted by the force of immense gravity, pulling his ship toward a deathly black hole ringed by streams of red- orange light, bent around the circle of void. Pulling back on the throttles he put the thrusters to their max till the craft was shaking in effort of escaping the force of gravity. But he kept inching forward. A lump leaped into his throat. He had space driven right into death's clutches and he couldn't do anything. Wait, The space drive! If he engaged his nuclear backup engine while diving just to the right of the eye, he might evade the grips of gravity by immense speed, using the gravity to the advantage. As he pushed forward the accelerator, everything went black around him.

BOOM !!!!! As Enrich opened his eyes, he glimpsed immense searing white light through his visor. Well, he was both alive and sitting completely still. Attempting to sit up, he was yanked back down by his seat belt straps and gravity. Gravity meant mass. Good. Exiting the crushed tin can of a ship through the smashed in windshield, he picked himself out of the wreckage, unscathed. Looking about himself, he saw a clear atmosphere of baby blue and a semi-soft terrain of churned brown soil and gray rocks strewn about in the crater he made upon impact. Climbing out of the smoking blackened crater, he almost fell head long down a mountainside. A green mountainside. Around him was tall pine trees clinging to the mountainside, resembling spines on a porcupines back. Magnificent! It was almost as though had been taken out of a picture from earth with it's green hillsides and lakes of blue. But it couldn't be, because He had previously traveled many light years **away** from earth, eventually coming to the blue nebula, where the story started off. The speed of light was THE boundary of speed, so he couldn't have got back to earth in 17 minutes as his clock stated.

Walking along the forest floor, amidst the greenery, the astronaut spotted hundreds of plants and trees, not to mention the phytoplankton in the lake, all of which emit oxygen. When certain rays of light from the sun destroy ozone and water vapor, oxygen is produced. The astronaut recalled this piece of info from his introductory biology course he took while interning at the NASA interplanetary space station, which was orbiting the blue marble. Plants, such as the shrubs the white clad explorer was brushing past and stepping on, use both Oxygen and Carbon Dioxide as part of their photosynthesis, but output more oxygen than they intake. Respiration from animals,

decomposition by fungi, and fuel burning add carbon to the cycle, while photosynthesis from plants and carbon dissolving into oceans removes carbon from the cycle. Although he doubted this was earth: there was a sustainable oxygen and carbon cycle.

The astronaut looked once more over his shoulder searching for the wreck which was now far behind him hidden somewhere in the forest. It was creepy how similar this planet was to earth. Then he tripped, falling headlong into the dirt, hearing a tearing sound as he went. Scrambling frightfully on the forest floor, he picked himself up off the ground, finding a huge hole in his pant leg. Quickly grabbing his patch kit, he slapped some tape over the gaping hole, hoping he wouldn't die of air poisoning from this foreign atmosphere. Standing up fully, he came face to face with a squirrel, which was sitting on a large mossy rock, with a nut between it's paws, while amusing itself at the spaceman's silly performance of flipping himself over a barb wire fence. Looking over his shoulder the spaceman finally took notice of the pointy, barbed wired fence, just a little too late

" Where are 'ya going mister? " Questioned the furry bucktoothed thing, while fiddling and polishing the brown acorn between his mitts, turning it this way and that. The spaceman leaped backwards, surprised at the sound of the animal's voice.

After regaining his composure, the spaceman replied, " Why I don't exactly know where I'm going or where I am."

" Why you're in North America, my sir, and this here is a national park! " the lively squirrel like creature chattered. The astronaut doubted this was earth, as the squirrel said, but there the facts stood: both a gravel road and a wire fence indicating

intelligent life.

Enrich traveled 192 meters before arriving at the flat open land, he noted earlier at the overlook. Out in the rolling fields of green grasses, he noted how everything was so vibrant and alive, as compared to the orange sands of Mars. Fish in creeks, rabbits in the meadows, and eagles in the cloud dotted sky. As he watched, a rabbit feeding innocently on lush green grass was snatched off the ground violently by an eagle, which was only to fly headlong into a lone tree, killing it, leaving both hunter and prey as food for fungi and bacteria, which provided nutrients to the grass. Pretty much everything was recycled. He doubted this was Earth, but there the facts stood : obviously life, and an extremely efficient food chain existed on this planet. What other planet had that?

Looking heavenwards, the white blimp-like astronaut counted 2 black specks soaring in the sky among the sparse cotton ball puffs of clouds. They were a hawk and a buzzard." Say, you birds, how is the weather up there in the sky?"

" Terrific, not too cold, and not too hot. You should come join us up here." The hawk replied. Then the hawk and the buzzard proceeded to burst out in fits of laughing at this hilarious joke.

Ha, if his ship worked he would. It was true, the atmospheric gasses trapped enough heat for life, yet deflected just enough heat from the sun through white, light-reflecting clouds to maintain a cool enough temperature. It was totally unlike Mars, which was too cold for life, lacking the atmosphere or Venus with its extreme greenhouse gaseous atmosphere, making that planet too hot. This planet had exactly the right amount of gravity to contain an atmosphere that could support life. He

doubted this was earth, but there the facts stood: what other planet had this balance of temperature?

These birds could also fly, due to how they were made with lightweight bones, wing shape, and turbulence reducing designs, yet it took thousands of years for humans to understand aerodynamics. What other planet had such intricate details in both its environment and life forms other than earth?

"AHEM..." taking his attention off the birds, the marshmallow looking astronaut with his globular helmet turned around to find a park ranger looking at him oddly, from under his green brimmed Stetson. Apparently he had driven up to the scene on his ATV along a gravel road while he was talking to the birds, without him noticing. Sir, ... I saw your ship crash and I was wondering if you needed a lift." The astronaut then realized this was earth. But how? He must have miscalculated his speed. Popping off his helmet he inhaled the earthy fresh smell of grass. Wow. Recounting what he found on earth really put into perspective: he found so much life sustaining features on earth and so much life. A few planets possessed water. A few possessed the right gravity. But nothing compared to the complexity of home sweet earth. Perfect heat, perfect atmosphere, life, perfectly stable ecosystem, and right amount of gravity. There is no place like home.

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