

## MARS YEAR 84

Nearly twenty Mars years ago, the extraordinary story of two children who discovered life on Mars heralded the beginning of a new era for the Marineris Colony and all humans living and working on the Red Planet.

Now, after many years, researchers have uncovered documents from the Marineris archives which shed new light on the discovery and the events that led to it.

Those documents are published here together for the first time.

What follows is a story like no other...

28<sup>th</sup> May 2060

Dear Brand-New Diary of Adventure,

Today was our very last visit to Gran before our epic mission to Mars. Mum and I travelled there on the air tram, like usual. Did you know that air trams travel really, really fast? I looked it up on the map app on my webspectacles as we sped over the tall tower blocks and green parks. At one point, we got up to 147mph!

I asked Mum if that's how fast we'll be travelling through space. She said that the rocket will be much faster – over twenty thousand miles per hour!

Twenty thousand! That's mega-fast. That's stomach-churning, brain-melting fast. Sometimes, when we're on the air tram, I play games to make the journey more fun. Today, I imagined that I was a space pilot, speeding through the galaxy. Outside the windows, stars and planets zoomed past, blurring into streaks of light. An alien spaceship approached with lasers beaming but I was ready to zap it into another dimension as soon as it got into range.

"Pow! Pow-pow-pow! Pow!"

"Oh Jazz, you're not shooting aliens again," said Mum as the other people on the tram stared. "We like aliens!"

I explained that they had us cornered in the outer spiral arm of a distant galaxy and that I had no choice.

Mum said that I should at least try to bring one back alive so that she could study it. That's what Mum does for a living. She's an extraterrestrial-life researcher - an alien scientist.

I performed a lightspeed U-turn to capture an alien fleeing the shattered spaceship in a life raft.

"Humm," Mum said, pretending to investigate my captured alien. "It has bug eyes, seven legs, a spiky exoskeleton and liquid brains. This is like nothing I've ever seen before, Jazz. We could win the Galactic Discovery Prize for this."

"Do you think that's what the alien life on Mars will look like?" I asked.

Mum laughed. "I doubt that they'll have seven legs. In fact, I

doubt that they'll have any legs at all."

I spent the rest of the journey thinking about Martians with tentacles and suckers, and some that crawled over the ground like slugs. When the air tram finally got to Sunset Heights, we released our seven-legged alien back into the wild and hopped onto the platform.

Gran lives in one of those old-fashioned retirement villages from the 2020s: all glass and steel and curving walls. When she isn't racing her friends around the courtyard on her hover scooter or throwing street parties on weeknights, she's in her top-floor flat, gazing through her binoculars at the happenings down below or inviting people over for curry so hot that it blows your head off.

I could smell Gran's curry as soon as we got upstairs. Even before the front door opened, my eyes watered.

"My brave girls!" said Gran, throwing open the door. That's how she always greets us, even though we've never done anything as brave as she has - well, until now. Gran was wearing pink, fluffy slippers, khaki trousers and a dressing gown covered in parrots. "Off on an adventure to a new

world! What I wouldn't give to be coming with you." Gran said that she had made us a proper meal to send us off. "There'll be lean pickings in space," she said. "No cheese, no meat, no chocolate fudge cake..."

Mum pointed out that the technicians on Mars make good lab-grown beef, and I said that we'll eat insects because that's what they're farming out there.

"I've eaten plenty of insects in my time," said Gran. "They were delicious when deep fried in sweet-and-sour sauce. I'll send you my recipe, shall I? Did I ever tell you about the time when I ate toasted rhinoceros beetles in the Amazon rainforest?"

# Questions

1. Look at the first section of the text. From where were the documents uncovered?

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2. The first section ends with the line: "What follows is a story like no other..."  
What effect is this designed to have upon the reader?

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3. What does Jazz use her webspectacles for?

To see better

To go faster

To look up  
information

To imagine aliens

4. Find and copy a phrase which suggests that Mum and Jazz typically use the same means of transport to visit Gran.

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5. How can you tell that this story is set in the future? Give **two** reasons or examples.

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6. What does Mum imagine about alien life forms on Mars?

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7. Jazz describes the speed of travelling through space as "stomach-churning". What does this suggest about the way it makes her feel?

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## Questions

8. What impression do you get of the relationship between Mum and Jazz? Support your answer with evidence.

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9. Describe some of the food that will or will not be available in space, according to Gran.

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10. What impression do you get of Gran's character? Use evidence to support your answer.

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