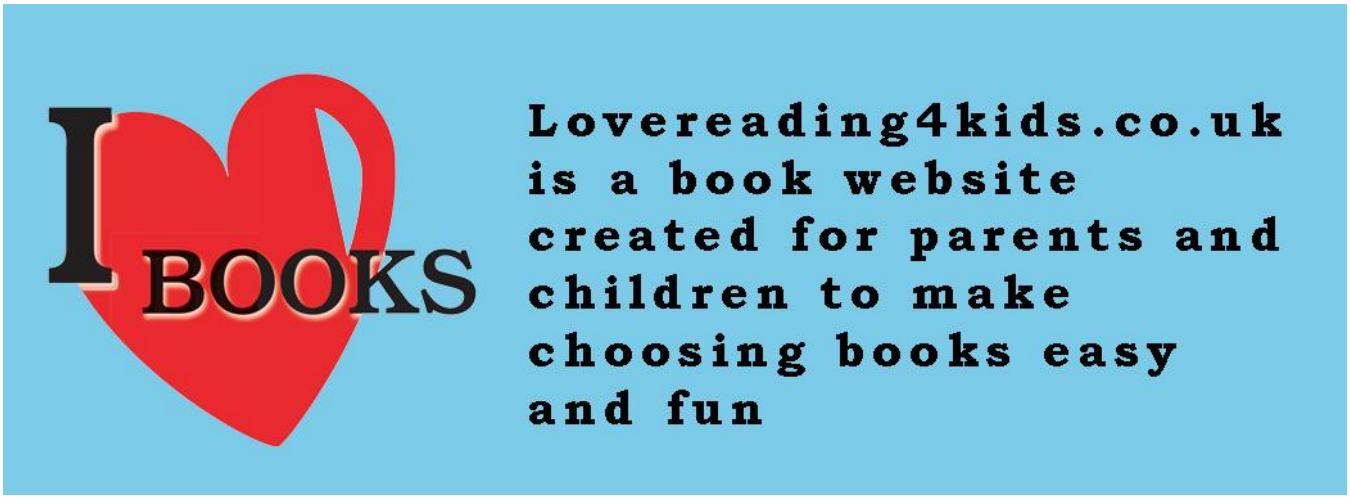


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See You in the Cosmos

Written by

Jack Cheng

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NEW RECORDING 1
6M 19S

Who are you?

What do you look like?

Do you have one head or two?

More?

Do you have light brown skin like I do or smooth gray skin like a dolphin or spiky green skin like a cactus?

Do you live in a house?

I live in a house. My name is Alex Petroski and my house is in Rockview, Colorado, United States of America, Planet Earth. I am eleven years and eight months old and the United States is two hundred forty-two years old and Earth is 4.5 billion years old. I'm not sure how old my house is.

Maybe you live on an ice planet, so instead of houses you have igloos and your hands are icepicks and your feet are snowshoes and you're covered in gold-brown

fur like Carl Sagan. That's my dog. I named him after my hero, Dr. Carl Sagan, who was one of the greatest astronomers of our time. Dr. Sagan helped send Voyagers 1 and 2 into deep space and put a Golden Record on them with all kinds of sounds from our planet, like whales singing and people saying hello in fifty-five languages, and the laugh of a newborn baby and the brainwaves of a woman in love and mankind's greatest music like Bach and Beethoven and Chuck Berry. Maybe you've heard it?

I found my pup Carl Sagan in the parking lot at Safeway, and when I saw him he was dirty and hungry and hiding behind a dumpster. I said, Come here boy, don't be scared, but he was crying and curling his tail because we were still strangers at that point. I told him I'm not going to hurt him, I'm a pacifist, and I guess he believed me because when I picked him up he didn't even fight me or try to run. Then I took him back to my house and my mom was lying on the sofa watching her shows like she usually does, and I told her I got the groceries but I got a pup also and I'll take good care of him I promise, I'll play with him and feed him and give him a bath and all the stuff you're supposed to say.

And she said, You're in the way! So I got out of the way. My best friend Benji's mom would freak if he brought home a pup, but my mom, she doesn't care as

long as I make us dinner and don't bother her when she's watching her shows. She's a pretty cool mom.

I don't know what kind of shows you guys have but the ones my mom likes are game shows and judge shows and shows with five ladies sitting in a fake living room. When I'm at Benji's house we watch Cartoon Network because his family has On Demand, and Benji loves *Battlemorph Academy* and so do a lot of the kids at school. I think that show's OK but I prefer the more classic cartoons like *Dexter's Laboratory* to be honest. That Dexter is one smart kid. I hate it when his sister Didi goes in and messes up everything. I'm glad I don't have a sister to mess up my stuff, especially when I'm working on my rocket.

I do have an older brother though. His name is Ronnie but everyone calls him RJ except my mom and me and some of his old high school friends because his middle name is James. Ronnie's a lot older, he's more than twice how old I am. He's twenty-four. He lives in Los Angeles and his job is an agent, and I know what you're thinking but he's not that kind of agent. He's not a spy or Bond, James Bond kind of agent. He doesn't fight terrorists or bust drug dealers or play poker with super-villains. He helps basketball and football players get shoe commercials. But he does go to fancy parties and wear sunglasses, so I guess it's kind of the same.

Ronnie wouldn't let me keep Carl Sagan at first. He never likes it when my mom and me spend his money on stuff that isn't groceries or bills for our house. When I told him about Carl Sagan over the phone he said, Uh-uh, we can't afford a dog. I said I think we CAN afford a dog because I've been getting the on-sale food from Safeway and making my own sandwiches for school instead of buying hot lunch, and also I got a part-time job helping Mr. Bashir stack magazines at his gas station. I said, I've been saving the money for my rocket but I can use some of it to buy Carl Sagan's food because he's not that big of a dog, and besides, you should come back to Rockview sometime and meet him in person—I mean, in dog—before you make any brash decisions.

That was almost a year ago and Ronnie still hasn't met Carl Sagan in dog yet. But I'm sure when they finally do meet that Ronnie's going to love him because who can turn down that face?

Huh? Who can turn down that face?

That's right, I'm talking about you, Carl Sagan. Do you want to say hello?

Come on boy, say hello.

Carl Sagan doesn't want to say hello. He's just staring at me like, What are you doing? Who are you talking to? Is there a person in there? I don't see a person in there.

There's no person in here boy, it's just an iPod. You

watched me spray-paint it gold, remember? I'm making recordings so when intelligent beings millions of light-years away find it one day they'll know what Earth was like, do you understand?

He doesn't understand. Now he's looking out the window. He's easily distracted.

So then I . . . um . . . What was I talking about?

Anyway, I thought that maybe you guys already got my hero's Golden Record but maybe you don't have record players where you are, or you used to but not anymore. The only ones I've ever seen are the used ones at Goodwill and nobody buys them because iPods and iPhones fit in your pocket better. Also, this iPod can hold a lot more than a record. I already uploaded everything from the Golden Record onto here and there was so much room left, and then I found out you can make recordings too, so I thought maybe I could record some sounds from Earth that you haven't already heard. Plus I'll explain everything that's happening behind the scenes while I get ready for my launch. It'll be like Blu-ray bonus features!

There's SO much I want to tell you guys. But it'll have to wait because Carl Sagan's sitting by the door because he wants to go pee and poop. And I still have to pack everything for my trip! I'll tell you about SHARF and my rocket next time.



NEW RECORDING 2

6M 41S

Hi again, guys! I promised I'd tell you more about SHARF and I'm a man of my word. SHARF is a rocket festival that's happening in the desert near Albuquerque, New Mexico. I'm launching my rocket there in three days!

The official name is the Southwest High-Altitude Rocket Festival but everyone on Rocketforum.org just calls it SHARF. It's an acronym. Acronyms are words made using the first letter of other words, like how NASA is National Aeronautics and Space Administration. In fourth grade we made acronyms from our own names and I used my full first name even though Mrs. Thompson said I could just use Alex. I wanted to challenge myself. The acronym for my name was:

Astronomer
Launches rockets
Earthling
Xplorer
Afraid of spiders
Nice person
Dedicated
Enthusiastic
Rocket enthusiast

I made one for my hero too. It was:

Cosmic
All-time hero
Really smart
Likes science

Everyone on Rocketforum is really REALLY excited about SHARF. There's a post at the top that says OFFICIAL SHARF THREAD and it has SO many replies already. Frances19 said she's dyeing her hair a special color for SHARF and Ganymede and Europa were talking about how much fun last year's was, and Calexico posted a bunch of cool tips about camping, like if you leave your shoes outside your tent at night make sure

you turn them upside down in the morning because there might be scorpions. He said they show up in pairs too, so if you find one scorpion you'll usually find another. They're very romantic creatures.

I already packed my rocket and toothbrush and Ronnie's old tent, and a 2-in-1 shampoo/conditioner because it'll save me some room. I packed Carl Sagan's special kibble also—they're going to have barbecue food at SHARF but Carl Sagan can't eat it because he has a sensitive digestive system.

I still have more to pack but I needed a break, so I came up to the roof of my house. I love lying down on the hood of a car like Dr. Arroway in the movie *Contact* but my mom doesn't drive anymore, so I just come up on our ladder to the roof. I usually come up here at night so that way I'm closer to the stars, even though it's only one story closer.

I like coming up here during the day too though. Our subdivision is on a hill, and when I'm up here I can see really far. I can see the train tracks and Burger King and I can see Mr. Bashir's gas station which has a flagpole outside with the biggest American flag in Rockview, it's SO huge. Way in the distance I can see Mount Sam and the big white letter *R* for Rockview on the side near the bottom. One time before Ronnie's homecoming game against our town's rivals, Belmar, some kids from Belmar High came in the middle of the night and changed the

R to a *B,* and the next day Ronnie was so mad that he ran for five touchdowns and our team kicked their team's butts. I guess their plan backfired.

Sometimes after my mom has one of her quiet days she'll need fresh air so she'll go for a walk, and when I'm up here I can see where she walks. Like right now she's walking toward Justin Mendoza's house, which is down our street toward the bottom of the hill, and when she gets to Justin's house she'll either turn left toward Mill Road or turn right toward Benji's subdivision. I can't see that as good because it's surrounded by trees.

Justin's the one who gave me this iPod, actually! He was a grade lower than Ronnie in high school and he used to come over and play with Ronnie all the time, but he didn't move away after college like Ronnie did. I went over there yesterday to buy the iPod from him for twenty dollars like we agreed, but then he said I could just have it for free because the battery sucks. He went inside his house to get it and I waited in his garage, and I was looking at the Honda motorcycle he's always working on and I squeezed one of the handles, but when I did a screw fell out, so I put it on a blue rag with a bunch of other parts.

Justin came back with the iPod and charger and I said, Hey Justin, your job is a mechanic, shouldn't you be done working on your motorcycle already? He said his problem is he'll think he's done but then he'll ride around on it for

a while and think of something better to do, so he'll take it apart and start over again. I told him he should just download a simulator for his motorcycle like the one I found for my rocket called OpenRocket. It lets me put in different motors and change the nose cone and fins and everything, and it tells me exactly how high the rocket's going to go so that way I don't even have to buy any parts until I'm ready to launch. I told him that's how I designed Voyager 3, my rocket that's going to carry his iPod into space.

Justin said, So it's going to be your first launch ever? And I said that's right, and he said, Shouldn't you do some test launches? And I said, That's the whole point of the simulator, it's so I don't have to, DUH!

Justin laughed and he asked me how's Ronnie doing, and I told him Ronnie's busy like usual with his prospective clients. A prospective client is someone who Ronnie wants to want Ronnie to be their agent, so he takes them out to lunch and he pays for their lunch. Justin said he really looks up to Ronnie, he's always thought of him like an older brother, and I said that's funny because I've always thought of him like an older brother too, and Justin laughed again. He told me to let him know how my launch goes and I said I will, and I told him he might want to check the handle on his motorcycle to make sure there aren't any parts missing.