

Letter from Mars

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Commended: 2023 Marysville BookNest Writing competition.

Dear Mum,

I hate to say it, but you were right! I really should have packed more underwear for a trip lasting seven months. The laundry facilities on board are minimal to say the least. I have set up a rotation schedule for each pair to make them last longer. My darning skills may be put to the test!

The first couple of weeks were fine. I spent the time getting to know my fellow travellers. They are a diverse bunch to say the least.

Albert starts each day by asking, "Are we there yet?" After 32 days I was ready to shove him in the airlock and pull the release handle. After 40 days I actually began to look forward to it and spent my time thinking up witty replies to his question, like "Almost only 7 million 4 hundred and 80 thousand 921 km to go". Sadly by day 45 our fellow passengers started hanging round by the airlock when we came out in the mornings, so we decided to give it a break.

The UNO cards you gave me as a parting gift have become so worn out that we have made them all Draw 4's and play our own version of Snap. After playing your card, you can yell snap, even if it doesn't match, but you

have to get your hand on the pile first. Albert almost always wins as he is bigger, taller and has arms like a chimp.

There was some excitement when we first spotted our destination through one of the portholes. The small red speck filled us with a sense of awe and wonder. It soon wore off when, 7 days later it was still the same size. We do play "Spot the meteor" on a regular basis. Albert is very good as he has eyes like a hawk.

It was a tremendous relief when we finally touched down on the Red Planet. The welcoming committee was all lined up by the door when they opened the airlock. They all moved rapidly back with hankies on their noses, making strange retching noises. It seems like Albert's choice of beef Vindaloo for our last in-flight dinner was not a good one. I guess we were just accustomed to the aromas of "home", after 7 months.

It felt strange to be able to walk rather than floating about. The permanent crew here, or Marvelous Martians as they like to be known, put on a Magnificent Mars Spectacular for us. It would have worked better had they not had to wear the giant weighted boots to stop them floating away. It was impressive though to see how high they could kick. One girl got carried away and had to be pulled back down by her Ra-Ra skirt. Albert loved it.

The food here is really good, especially when you consider how far away the nearest supermarket is! They have special buildings where they are able to grow many vegetables, and clone meat from animal cells. The local joke is they have been eating the same chicken for the last 8 years.

So I have to finish up now, Mum, as the next return rocket is about to leave. It will be another month if I miss the post on this one. On a surprise note, Albert and I have decided to marry! It will be the first wedding here on Mars and everyone is looking forward to it. We would love you to come but sadly it will have been over by about 9 months by the time you get this letter.

Please send more underwear and a couple more packets of UNO cards if you get the chance. Hope Grandad's piles are getting better.

Love to you all

Your son

Lawrence. xx