

CHAPTER 1

Greetings Earthling,

My name is Dethbert Jones and I'm 10.63 years old. I live on a planet called Crank that's in a galaxy nine million light years away from the blue planet you call "Earth," and I really need your help!

I've just joined a club called Space Cadets, which is a bit like your "Scouts," but instead of learning to tie knots and start campfires, we're taught to fly spacecraft, and disintegrate weapons of mass destruction.

Something Space Cadets has in common with Scouts is we can earn badges. One's called "Cosmic Correspondent." To get it, we have to find a pen pal from another planet. I think the idea of writing to an alien sounds cool, so I had a look on "The Everything" (a bit like your



“The Internet” but 100 billion times bigger), which told me our species are very alike. I ran a personality advisor application, and it turns out we’re a perfect match.

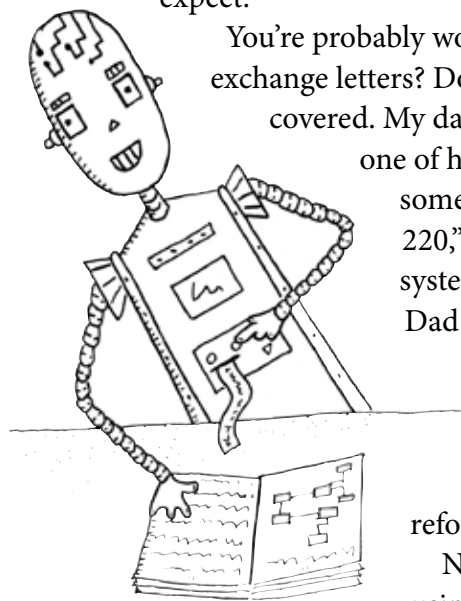
For example, I see from your file that you enjoy cooking. I also love baking tasty treats and made a scrummy snapple pie yesterday. I never got to taste it though, as while it was cooling, my horrible little sister Shriekfest jabbed her pudgy fingers into the crust. Mum tried to convince me it would still be okay to eat, but I’ve seen where she puts those mucky little digits. Of course Shriekfest wailed like a siren when she was caught, and Mum soon forgave her (far too quickly in my opinion).

I notice you also have a sister, though she’s older than you. I wish I were the youngest so I could get away with stuff instead of always having to set a “good example.”

Write back and tell me the sort of things you do to upset your older sister. It may give me the heads up on what to expect.

You’re probably wondering how we’re going to exchange letters? Don’t panic—I’ve got that part covered. My dad’s a scientist/inventor, and one of his work friends came up with something called “The Mailington 220,” which is a universal postal system I’ve set to directly link us up. Dad says it breaks down particles into anti-matter and sends them to the destination of your choice. On arrival, the item you’ve sent instantly reforms into its original shape.

Note: *Never* send any living thing using this method. The inventor,



Dr Brainfreeze Macmillan, thought he might save himself a bundle on airfare and tried to post himself to his aunt's house on the other side of Crank for a cheap holiday. Unfortunately, when he reformed one of his arms was firmly attached to his forehead—not a good look (although handy for reaching things off high shelves I'd imagine).

Generally it's completely safe though—the radiation you'll absorb from opening my letters should only make a *few* of your teeth fall out.

Haha, joke! That hardly ever happens.

Anyway, I hope you'll agree to be my pen pal. If you want to write back to me, just use one of the special packets I've enclosed and press the green button.

I've got to sign off now as my best friend Andi Social is dropping round so we can do our quantum physics homework together. I'm sure he copies a lot of the answers off me, but he's a robot and has a calculation chip installed, which comes in handy.

I hate quantum physics, don't you?

Your new friend
(potentially),

Dethbert Jones.

P.S. Please accept this gift of a popular Crank sweet called HOLOMUNCH.

