

DISCOVERY

Written by

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SFX: PHONE RINGS.

ANTON: Bethany! How is the research going?

BETHANY: I need confirmation of a sighting. I already sent the data.

ANTON: I see it. Let me crunch the numbers and get back to you.

SFX: CLICK. PHONE RINGS.

BETHANY: Beth speaking.

YVES: I got your message. You saw something around Venus?

BETHANY: Yves! I just sent the data to Anton. Fingers crossed!

YVES: You know it's probably nothing.

BETHANY: I know, but what if? Do me a favor, keep an ear out for chatter about this.

YVES: Will do.

SFX: CLICK. TYPING ON A KEYBOARD.

SFX: PHONE RINGS.

BETHANY: Tell me it's good news, Anton.

ANTON: It's good news. We have no record of the asteroid.

BETHANY: <SHRIEK> Yes, yes, yes! Wow, that's so incredible!

ANTON: So what are you going to name it?

BETHANY: I haven't thought of it. I wasn't expecting to discover a new asteroid.

ANTON: Some of the greatest discoveries are being in the right place at the right time.

BETHANY: So when does it become official?

ANTON: Unless someone else turns in data proving they saw it before you, it is official.

BETHANY: Wow. My mom's going to flip. Where did it even come from?

ANTON: We're working on that now.

SFX: BEEP.

BETHANY: I'll get back to you about that name.

SFX: CLICK.

BETHANY: Beth speaking.

JOURNALIST: This is Brian from Astronomy Now. I got a tip that you guys found something.

BETHANY: Oh! Um, it's a bit premature to say exactly--

JOURNALIST: So you did see something near Venus. Can you tell me what it is?

BETHANY: I think there will be an announcement soon.

SFX: BEEP.

BETHANY: I have to go.

JOURNALIST: Can you at least confirm that it is--

SFX: CLICK.

BETHANY: What do you have, Anton?

ANTON: We've been trying to trace the origin. It's definitely coming away from the sun, but there's no inbound track for it. We couldn't have missed it, it's too big.

BETHANY: How big?

ANTON: Preliminary data suggests about forty kilometers.

BETHANY: That big? No way we missed it, which means...it could be interstellar!

ANTON: Right now, that's our assumption.

BETHANY: That's incredible!

ANTON: It would be the first time we've seen an interstellar body passing through since 'Oumuamua. And we're going to get a good look at it.

SFX: BEEP.

BETHANY: Anton, I'll call you back.

SFX: CLICK.

BETHANY: What have you heard, Yves?

YVES: We're picking up chatter from China and India. Europe is already checking your findings against their systems.

BETHANY: Anton says it's interstellar. Isn't that fantastic?

YVES: Yeah. Uh, did he say anything else?

BETHANY: He said we're going to get a good look at it.

YVES: Preliminary models show the Earth at the edge of possible trajectories, but it's unlikely to actually hit us.

BETHANY: How unlikely? A million to one?

YVES: About fourteen thousand to one.

BETHANY: Oh. Okay, that's still not terrible, right?

YVES: It's closer than I like. We're waiting for the Lagrange data to firm up the track.

BETHANY: Keep me posted.

SFX: CLICK. KEYBOARD TYPING.

SFX: PHONE DIALING.

ANTON: It's definitely interstellar, Bethany. We would have spotted it weeks ago if it wasn't behind the sun and then Venus for so long.

BETHANY: How close is it going to get, Anton?

ANTON: It's unlikely to hit us. You know how sketchy these models are. Wait, the system's updating now. We must have received the Lagrange data.

SFX: KEYBOARD TYPING.

BETHANY: Well? What does the data say?

ANTON: It...it's going to hit.

BETHANY: What? You said it was unlikely!

ANTON: Lagrange changed that. It's on a direct course to Earth.

BETHANY: How long?

SFX: DEAD AIR.

BETHANY: Anton, how long?

ANTON: Twenty-nine days.

BETHANY: No...that's impossible.

ANTON: Look, I'm going to check this again. And then I'll check it again.

SFX: CLICK. PHONE RINGS.

BETHANY: Is it true, Yves?

YVES: Europe and India confirms. There's nothing any of us can do.

BETHANY: No, there must be something.

YVES: Not with twenty-nine days.

BETHANY: Where will it hit?

YVES: It doesn't matter. It's a planet-killer. No one will survive.

SFX: DEAD AIR.

BETHANY: Who do we tell?

YVES: Should we tell?

BETHANY: We have to...don't we?

YVES: Yes...yes. Tell everyone. The world deserves to know.