

Holiday Adventures

Seventh graders in Mrs. Quirk's ELA classes worked on a Holiday Choice Board in December. Many students chose to write a short story about an adventurous elf who got lost and is traveling to find the North Pole to find his family. You will find their stories and a space story in this issue of *Middle Matters*.

Unexpected Journey

A Space Story - By: Madilynn Huth

I was in my small apartment getting ready for my part-time job. I got an email on my computer. The email said, "To Dean From NASA, Hello Dean, we would like to inform you that your application to become a part of the Intergalactic Exploration Team has been accepted! We hope to see you at the Kennedy Space Center tomorrow!"

My big, bright blue eyes gaped at the email. I actually got accepted?! I couldn't believe my eyes. I can't wait for tomorrow! That night, I couldn't get a wink of sleep. I pet my cat as it chewed my short brown hair all night.

The next day, I ended up riding the train to work and ran in because of how late I woke up. The first thing I saw was lots of computers; some with pictures of planets, some with new models of rockets, and some with rover models. Then I saw my partner; he was described in the email with black hair, blue eyes and was always slightly cold. I walked over to him and introduced myself. "Hey my name is Dean, your new partner. Nice to meet you!"

In return I got an eye roll and something like "Hey I'm Leo." Followed by a not very welcoming message, "We have a mission soon. I'll explain it. So we are to find a new planet that would be good for humans to live on, land on it, and safely make it back to Earth with data of gravity, oxygen and water. Okay?"

In my head I thought that's a lot but mumbled a quiet okay. I got a stack of papers full of dates and directions and I see the day we leave says 5/14/27. Tomorrow.

When I got home, I packed all my bags to get ready for the mission Leo and I were going on starting tomorrow. I got to work at 5 am sharp so I could get prepared for takeoff. Around 7:30, we got on the ship, Leo in the captain's seat and me in the co-captain seat. Leo turned to me, "Ready for this? It's gonna be awhile till we come back."

I nodded. "Ready when you are."

We blasted off at exactly 7:54 and started our journey. We flew for a couple of hours in silence, heading towards never-seen before planets. We saw multiple green and red planets. Too dangerous, Leo kept saying after every planet we passed. I couldn't blame him. They looked like big balls of smoke and gas. Then I spotted it a purple planet with a green and orange atmosphere. Leo saw me staring at it and flew towards it. As we got closer and closer, I, being the clumsy person I am, accidentally pressed the wrong button. Oh no.

When I tried to get back into the ship, Leo lost control and landed on the planet below us. My brown bangs fall into my face as I did somersaults in the air, trying to get into control. I get scared as I realize there is no way down but to go on a rocket ship. Does this happen to every astronaut? Is this a test? Thoughts flooded my head as I spun farther and farther away from the planet. I suddenly heard a voice in my head. It kept repeating over and over, "The future doesn't belong to the fainthearted, it belongs to the brave."

It sounded like my best friend when he would reassure me when times got hard. It made me feel like I needed to get home, so I had to get on the planet. I talked into the radio in my helmet. "Leo, are you able to get me down there?" No response. "Earth to Leo? Can you?"

Leo finally responds with in his normal cold tone, "I can, but we would run out of rocket fuel. On that thrilling note, I'm on my way."

After Leo got me back on the ship, we crash landed on to the planet. For me, everything went dark. I could hear Leo's panicked yelling, trying to get me up. After what felt like ages, my eyes opened. Everything hurt. I had an obviously broken leg and a migraine. I saw Leo's panicked face as he hugged me in relief. He kept saying repeatedly, "I'm so sorry."

I kept reassuring him it wasn't his fault and finally, after a few minutes, he finally calmed down, and I propped myself against the edge of the rocket. I asked, honestly, just trying to get a conversation going, "Is there any damage to the ship?"

"Yeah," he replied, "all entrances are blocked, and we ran out of fuel."

I looked at him. "So we're stuck?" I got a sad nod in response. Sighing, I leaned my head back. "Any food or water left?" he replied with a simple head shake.

"I can go look for some... but will you be okay alone with a broken leg to defend yourself?" I nodded, and he said a quiet okay and walked off.

I sat there looking at the rolling hills as long as the universe, I finally felt at peace. I sat there looking around and drifted to sleep. After about two hours, I woke up. It was starting to getting dark. My worst fear. I wished Leo would come back soon. I stayed there staring into the darkness, looking for other creatures. I saw something walking towards me and I backed up in fear, thinking the worst. Then, I saw blue eyes and black hair. It was then I realized it was Leo. He walked towards me with a backpack full of food and waters. When he got to me, he plopped down and pulled out firewood and a box of matches and said, "I found a spaceship and trees and I found a flag with a name on it."

"What was the name?" I replied in a curious tone.

"It said Lavenmoon. Also, the rocket I found has fuel, but I don't know how much." My eyes lit up after hearing that.

"So we're not stuck here anymore?" I said, my tone full of hope. He nodded, and I smiled widely, happy to know we could get back home safely.

The next day we woke up around 8 am to go to the ship, knowing we would have to take lots of breaks and Leo would have to help me

Tommy the Elf

By: Madilynn Huth



<https://pixabay.com/vectors/celebration-winter-christmas-3034827/>

Hi, I'm Tommy the elf and I got into a pretty sticky elf-uation. I was on my way back to the North Pole from my kid's house, (Rose; she's a sweetheart) when a very rude bird knocked me out of the sky and knocked of my GPS. (What? Elves have GPS too. Not just humans.) Now I'm lost in a random state. At least I think. I have no idea where I am, but last I knew I was in Wyoming on my way to the North Pole.

I look around. It's around 8:00 p.m. and it's pitch black. I walk around, looking for a sign to the North Pole. There are signs in the sky that point to the North Pole. Trust me, we elves take a lot of ideas from humans.

I see a light shining, indicating an exit to the North Pole and try to

fly, but apparently I messed up my ability to fly too, because I couldn't. The sign said to take the exit to Greenland, meaning I was probably in Northeast Canada. I guess it's not that far of a walk for an elf. So, I started to walk towards the exit.

It took an extra day or two, but I eventually made it to Greenland and got the ability to fly again, which was good because from here on out it's all ocean. I took off at a high speed towards the North Pole. I got there in about an hour. Everyone was looking for me, worried.

I explained the situation to Santa and he made sure he would get me a new GPS. I finally got to go home to my family and rest for the first time in days. It may have been long, but I *loved the journey to the North Pole this year!*

Elf Named Holly

By: Hailey See



<https://pixabay.com/vectors/elf-fantasy-fairytale-magical-36756/>

One snowy December night, there was an elf named Holly who was on her way to her family's home. She was on her way back to the North Pole to meet her family again because she was taken to a family's home for Christmas. Another elf had helped her get there since she was new. Once she was there safe and sound, the other elf had to leave to get back to the North Pole, so Holly was traveling alone and it was up to her to get back. She left right in the morning so she could hopefully get back before dark.

Holly knew she had to go north, so she started flying. She had a very good time with her family and wanted to always be an elf. She was flying for almost two hours when she knew she was getting colder. Somewhere along her travels she got her direction messed up, so she was going the wrong way. But Holly didn't know that.

She finally thought that she was at the North Pole because there was a building ahead. She came up to it, and it was just Santa's old barn for his reindeer but since it was there, she thought she must've been close. She kept going but just made circles around. That's when it hit her. She was at the South Pole! So she got herself back on track going north. She knew she did something wrong. Holly flew for another hour then started to notice her surroundings. She knew she was getting closer. Then in the distance she saw a building and this time she hoped she was at the North Pole.

She flew closer and it was Santa's workshop. Holly was very happy she made it back only getting turned around once. She walked in and her family greeted her at the door. She told them she had so much to tell them. Holly told them about how she got lost and she would have so many stories to tell her future kids and her siblings.



walk. We had a quick breakfast, then Leo helped me up and put my arm around his neck. "Now Dean put no weight on that leg, you hear me?"

I nodded as a quick reply, and we started the long journey to the abandoned rocket. We walked for about an hour before my knee gave out and we had to take a break. Leo grabbed long pieces of wood and rope from his backpack and made a splint so I could walk better. We both chugged a bottle of water before walking again.

We walked the purple rolling hills for hours, but with my limp, it would take at least three more hours to get to the rocket and it was already dark. So, Leo suggested, "We should stop for today and get some rest. We can start walking again tomorrow."

I agreed, and he helped me down to sit against a tree. He grabbed some sticks and made a small fire and began to make our dinner for the night. I leaned my head against the tree and watched as he heated some burger patties and cut some lettuce and tomatoes he had found in a garden we had passed on our way. Leo looked into his bag and fortunately for us, he pulled out a loaf of bread. He put a burger patty, lettuce, and a tomato onto a piece of bread and handed it to me. I took a bite out of the burger and surprisingly it was good, despite how bad it looked. After we ate, he lay down and fell asleep immediately, which made sense since he hadn't slept for two days. I lay beside him on the cold, soft grass, and stared at the stars, feeling a slight sense of calmness before falling asleep.

The next morning, I woke up to someone frantically shaking me. I woke up slightly startled and saw Leo sitting next to me, looking scared. I looked at him and curiously asked, "What's wrong, Leo?"

He replied with a whisper, "Something's watching us. I can just feel it."

I look back at him, slightly surprised by what he said and suggest that we should just get out of here as soon as possible. He agreed and got up before helping me up. Slowly, we started walking towards the abandoned rocket. About two hours later, I heard something move in a bush behind us and looked at Leo, scared, wondering if he heard it too. He looked back at me and slightly nodded, as if knowing what I was going to ask, then put a finger to his lips, signaling me to be quiet. I nodded and stayed quiet, scanning the area with my eyes. I saw something move out of the corner of my eye and pointed to the shadow slowly. It looked me dead in the eye. What is this thing? What's going to happen? Millions of thoughts flooded my head, and I almost fainted from the pressure. The figure started coming towards Leo and I; we took a few steps back trying to get away. With my broken leg, we wouldn't be able to run away and avoid the figure. I started shaking with fear as the figure came closer, only 3 yards away from us. I looked at Leo, my eyes telling him to leave me here and I would find him once it was safe. He shook his head at me, refusing to leave me here alone. The shadowy figure became more clear as it got closer and closer. Step by step. The creature had a human build with messy white hair, red eyes, and a black bodysuit. He peered at us, then spoke in a firm tone, "Astronaut Dean and Leo. Follow me to your ticket back to Earth."

Leo followed reluctantly as I limped behind the both of us. The guy that found us and Leo were chatting like they had known each other for years. I had no idea what was happening. I tried to walk faster to catch up to them, but my good knee gave out and I fell onto the purple grass and groaned in pain. Leo looked back and upon seeing me on the ground, he walked back and asked in a soft voice, "Need a break?"

I nodded reluctantly and sat up, relaxing slightly. The new guy sat by Leo and started a conversation again. After ten minutes, I zoned out. I felt the grass in between my fingers and stared off into space. I felt someone shake my shoulder and noticed it was Leo. "Dean. It's been an hour. Are you ready to go to the ship now?"

I looked at him and nodded, holding out my hand so he could help me up. Once he helped me up, we all started walking again. After an hour of walking, we saw the rocket. The rocket looked newer than the rocket we took to get here. It had a red and silver exterior and the door was a gold color. My eyes lit up, and I stared at it. "We can finally go home!" I said, my voice full of happiness.

Leo nodded, and we got into the rocket. It had a grey interior and four seats instead of two. The new guy sat in the captain's seat and Leo sat in the co-captains seat. I sat behind Leo and buckled up, getting ready for the blastoff. When we got into the atmosphere of Laven moon, I found out that the new guy's name is Pete and he was our boss and the one who sent me the email. I leaned back in the soft, leathery chair as I let that sink in. I then slept since I haven't slept in a while.

I woke up when we were back in Earth's atmosphere. We were dropping altitude too fast for my stomach to handle. It did cartwheels and jumped up and down until we landed by the NASA station. I tried to stand, but my knee buckled and I fell. Leo ran over and asked, concerned, "Are you okay?"

I shook my head no, and he helped me up and carefully guided me outside the spaceship. Outside, there was a huge crowd of people cheering and celebrating the great discovery we had made. We tried to walk through the crowd without getting trampled, but with my leg giving out every two seconds, that was very troublesome. We finally made it through and went into the building. He sat me down in a chair and walked off to find some actual medical supplies. He came back with a med kit and immediately gave me pain medication. It kicked in as soon as I took it and then he pulled out an ace wrap to wrap my leg until we could go to the hospital to get a cast on it. He wrapped it tightly and then helped me up again to get me in the car to go to the hospital. "Leo, I just want to say thank you for all the help."

"That's what friends do, right?" He replied with a slight smile.

"Yeah, it is," I said with a soft smile.

When we got to the hospital, I went straight to a room to get a cast and talk to the doctor about my treatment. The doctor said my treatment would take 6 months because of walking on it when we were away. I said a quiet okay, and he started working on my cast. After I got my cast, he gave me crutches and taught me how to use them. When I walked away, I was stumbling like a newborn cat. I finally got to Leo's car and hopped in. My armpits already hurt from the crutches. This is going to be a long journey.

When Leo dropped me off at my house, I walked inside and collapsed on my couch. I knew I had a lot of paperwork due, but I was exhausted. So, I grabbed my computer and typed out the paperwork I had to do. I wrote about the planet, Laven moon, that Leo and I went to. I wrote about the amounts of oxygen levels, and if humans could survive and thrive on the planet. After two hours, I finally finished and fell asleep. I woke up around five and grabbed my crutches to leave for work. When I got there, I went to my small desk and printed out the paperwork I did last night. I worked for eight hours straight, and on my way out, I bumped into Leo. He smirked and said, "Dean, we have another mission."