

"IF STARS COULD SING..."

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EXT. NIGHT SKY

A blanket of BLACK SKY filled with TWINLING STARS. Tonight is a calm filled with the SONG OF CRICKETS. What wonders await beyond those little glimpses in the sky above?

INT. MILITARY BASE - ARIEL'S ROOM - NIGHT

The BRIGHTLY LIT bedroom of ARIEL MCGUINESS (16) is a cluttered mess of a teenage girl in her PUNK phase; Rock n' Roll posters plastered on the wall, laundry everywhere, an uneven STACK OF DVD'S and CDs.

Outside her bedroom window, a MILITARY BASE is seen in the distance. The marching of CADETS is heard outside. Ariel closes the window to drown out the world of the military.

Ariel sits on her bed and gently strums her GUITAR. Ariel is pleasant and quite perky despite her outer black clothes, Ankh necklace and combat boots. She hums to herself as she tries to CREATE A SONG.

ARIEL

(singing, unsure)

Taller than a tree, looking at me
that makes me feel so astronomical,
it's...something that rhymes with
astronomical.

(normal)

Ugh, Eminem makes it look so easy.

KNOCK-KNOCK. A knock at her bedroom door sends Ariel into a frenzy to ditch the guitar and rush to her desk.

GENERAL MCGUINESS

(behind the door)

Permission to enter?

ARIEL

Permission not granted!

Ariel sits at her desk and rearranges her HOMEWORK to appear as though she's been diligently working this whole time.

ARIEL (CONT'D)

Ok. Uh, all clear.

Ariel's father, GENERAL MCGUINESS (40s), enters.

General McGuiness may be a JINGOISTIC and stern militaristic general, but underneath his rough exterior is a GENIAL MAN who cares for his daughter.

GENERAL MCGUINESS
Getting all your homework done,
sweetie?

ARIEL
You know it!

General McGuiness looks over Ariel's shoulder and sees her near blank MATH SHEET.

GENERAL MCGUINESS
You haven't done any of it have
you?

Ariel knows she's caught. There's no point in lying to her father.

ARIEL
You know it. Sorry, Dad. Honestly
I'm as surprised as you are. I
honestly thought being on a base
this boring meant I'd have nothing
to do but my work. Turns out I was
half-right.

GENERAL MCGUINESS
Ariel, it's not that bad.

ARIEL
Yes, it is. This place friggin
sucks. What's there to do or see
around here? The barracks? A buncha
sweaty guys marching in a circle?
It's the same thing in and out here
and my music has really suffered
because of it. There's nothing to
inspire me here.

GENERAL MCGUINESS
Maybe...that's not such a bad
thing.

Ariel's eyes go wide. She has an idea of what he's saying, but she can't believe what her father is telling her. She turns away from her homework and faces him.

ARIEL
What?

GENERAL MCGUINNESS

Ariel, I love your guitar playing. You're good at it, but maybe you should focus your time and effort into something better. More...important.

Ariel scoffs.

ARIEL

My music is important. It's important to me, it's what I'm good at.

GENERAL MCGUINNESS

Just because you're good at something doesn't mean you need to devote your life to it.

ARIEL

You want me to give up on my dreams?

GENERAL MCGUINNESS

Never. I simply think it's time for you to have...more realistic dreams. Do something in life that contributes value to society.

BWOOP! BWOOP! RED LIGHTS flash outside. McGuinness and Ariel look out the window. The entire base is sent into a FRENZY.

A wide SMILE grows on McGuinness. He knows exactly what's coming. Or rather, what's already here.

GENERAL MCGUINNESS (CONT'D)

Ariel, stay in your room.

ARIEL

Is it...y'know...the guy you've been talking to?

GENERAL MCGUINNESS

Not a guy, sweetie. Don't know what it is...yet. That's what makes First Contact so amazing! This should go well...hopefully. If I don't return back, still finish your homework!

McGuinness rushes out of the room. Ariel looks at her multiple pages of math. She writes answers down quickly.

ARIEL

Wow, 7's the answer for each one.
Math is amazing.

She tosses the paper aside and returns to her guitar.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

General McGuinness intently walks through a long and sterile white hallway accompanied by LIEUTENANT ABRAHAMS (30s). While McGuinness is near giddy with excitement to meet the Alien, Abrahams keeps a calm composure.

GENERAL MCGUINNESS

What's it doing?

LIEUTENANT ABRAHAMS

So far he's been in the Contact Room sitting, waiting to talk.

GENERAL MCGUINNESS

He, huh? Well, what's he look like? Classic Grey with the big eyes? Is he one of those aliens that looks like a robot? Oh! Is he in a form that will melt our minds simply by looking at it?

LIEUTENANT ABRAHAMS

Negative. He's like Superman.

GENERAL MCGUINNESS

He has powers?!

LIEUTENANT ABRAHAMS

N...no. He looks human, but is definitely alien. Sorry, sir, didn't mean to mislead you. According to the messages we've decoded from him he comes from a bipedal civilization in the Pavok System.

GENERAL MCGUINNESS

Damn. I was really hoping for the "melt your mind upon seeing it" alien.

They approach a door, the entrance to the CONTACT ROOM. McGuinness and Abrahams take a moment before they enter.

GENERAL MCGUINNESS (CONT'D)

This is it, Lieutenant. First contact with an alien species. Imagine what we can learn from each other, the knowledge we can share.

LIEUTENANT ABRAHAMS

It's exciting, General.

McGuinness braces for something amazing and enters...

INT. CONTACT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

McGuinness and Abrahams enter a bright WHITE ROOM, completely empty sans a TABLE in the middle with three CHAIRS.

At the table sits BARADA (20s-30s), a human looking alien with a big goofy, friendly smile on his face. He stops drumming on the table to wave to McGuinness and Abrahams.

GENERAL MCGUINNESS

Greetings, Galactic Traveler!

BARADA

How you doing?

Barada is not what either McGuinness nor Abrahams was expecting from an Alien Life Form. They slowly take their seats as they visually scan this creature before them.

Barada is calm and very RELAXED in his mannerisms and speech. His artistically WILD CLOTHES from another world mixed with his personality, Barada seems similar to a HIPPIE from Earth.

GENERAL MCGUINNESS

You speak English.

BARADA

Kinda. My species absorbs information faster through watching and listening. The more you speak the more I learn.

GENERAL MCGUINNESS

Ah, so we're not so different. Our species is also interested in the, er, pursuit of knowledge.

BARADA

Va Va! That's why I do this, visit planets. The cultural exchange between worlds is a learning experience unlike any other.

(MORE)

BARADA (CONT'D)

The communications these last few weeks with your translators have been morsels compared to what I desire. I want what makes Earth unique, that's what I hunger for.

GENERAL MCGUINNESS

We have a big appetite as well. Let's start off small, basic weapon designs and maybe we can work our way up to interstellar travel.

LIEUTENANT ABRAHAMS

I would prefer if we can get into the inner workings of your teleportation system. That'll provide quite the advantage on the field.

Barada gives a slight CHUCKLE, uncomfortable with what the assumptions McGuinness and Abrahams are making.

BARADA

Apologies, but you're not ready for those.

GENERAL MCGUINNESS

What?!

BARADA

You've not ready to travel to the stars yet, but you will be soon. I mean one minute your species is building pyramids out of stone the next you have airplanes! Quite impressive.

LIEUTENANT ABRAHAMS

If you're not here to exchange technology then why are you here?

BARADA

I already told you. I want what makes Earth unique. I want your art!

McGuinness and Abrahams are baffled, STUPEFIED even. An Alien came all this way just for their ART?!

LIEUTENANT ABRAHAMS

Your kidding. Your Galactic Council tasked you to come all this way...

BARADA

Galactic Council? I don't represent anything. I'm here of my own accord in the goal of sharing planetary culture. I bring you offerings of the imagination and creative talents of different species to share with you! I also hope to collect Earthling art to bring back with me.

McGuinness and Abrahams share a look with one another.

GENERAL MCGUINNESS

Give us a, uh, moment.

McGuinness and Abrahams step away from Barada to converse privately. Barada stays seated and happily waits.

GENERAL MCGUINNESS (CONT'D)

Art?! I thought he'd be giving us something of value? Who gives a shit about finger paintings from Mars?

BARADA

I'm not from Mars.

GENERAL MCGUINNESS

This is a conversation between me and Lieutenant Abrahams! Give us some privacy.

BARADA

Okay.

While Abrahams and McGuinness speak, Barada presses buttons on his WRIST DEVICE. Barada soon disappears as he TELEPORTS elsewhere.

LIEUTENANT ABRAHAMS

This could still be an opportunity, Sir. We give him some paintings and he gives us weapon designs. We don't have to share any of our secrets.

GENERAL MCGUINNESS

Except he said he's not willing to share weapons with us. This whole thing is a bust. Maybe we can make a play, make him think bombs are our art so he'll...

(MORE)

GENERAL MCGUINNESS (CONT'D)
(off Barada's empty chair)
What the hell, where'd he go?!

LIEUTENANT ABRAHAMS
You did ask for privacy, Sir.

EXT. ARIEL'S HOUSE - ROOF - NIGHT

Ariel sits against the CHIMNEY as she plays guitar. She looks up at the night sky in hopes of inspiration, but has nothing. She sighs heavily and begins to play a sad melody.

In the background, Barada levitates up to the roof, drawn to her song.

BARADA
Va Va! Glorious! This is exactly
what I've been looking for.

Ariel is surprised, but not scared of Barada. In fact, she's fascinated by him.

ARIEL
Wow. Are you...the alien? Stupid
question, you're clearly the alien.

BARADA
Please, call me Barada. Can you
continue? I came all this way to
discover the art of this planet.

ARIEL
Art? That wasn't art, that was me
playing the scales.

BARADA
But it was such wonderful scales.
Please, let me hear more. No, wait,
let me experience this instrument
of yours. Do you perchance have
another?

Ariel smirks.

ARIEL
Depends. You know how to Shred?

BARADA
I can pick it up pretty quick.

INT. ARIEL'S ROOM - NIGHT

Ariel takes her PICK and holds a note on her ELECTRIC GUITAR. Barada watches in amazement as Ariel SHREDS. Barada picks up his piece, Ariel's spare guitar, and responds to her notes in tandem.

It's a GUITAR DUEL. No, a GUITAR DUET.

Ariel leads the melody as she plays a few notes. Barada expertly plays them back. He truly is a fast learner. Let's pick it up now. Ariel performs a more COMPLEX RIFF. Barada does one as well.

Ariel throws a HANG LOOSE sign up to Barada. He is confused for a moment, but throws it back right at her. He's getting the hang of it all.

Ariel and Barada build up their song and end on a MIGHTY CRESCENDO!

ARIEL

Woo! That's what I'm talking about.
Haven't felt like that in awhile.

BARADA

Va Va! How thrilling. A sensation so unique I wish my vocabulary be more verbose to accurately capture this feeling! Such tickling of the ears and a shaking I cannot stop. What else is there? This cannot be all the creative efforts of humanity.

Music Cue: "Sometimes" by Gerry Cinnamon

INT. ARIEL'S ROOM - LATER

Art Montage. During each art event Ariel scribbles on a piece of notebook paper.

-Ariel exposes Barada to different forms of art in her bedroom. They look at her POSTERS OF PAINTINGS like *Mona Lisa*, *Starry Night* and *Girl with Balloon*. Barada is fascinated by each one.

-Barada and Ariel sit on her bed and watch a movie. Whatever the film is has Barada gripped with anticipation. He jumps up and cheers!

-Barada and Ariel share HEADPHONES as they listen to CDs. Barada listens intently to the music.

BARADA

Why does she not simply return the red scarf?

ARIEL

Oh, there's a lot to unpack there.

End Music Cue.

INT. ARIEL'S ROOM - LATER

Ariel and Barada have moved to painting on canvas. Both create abstract art, going more for vibes than realism.

ARIEL

There's place off base that can make cotton candy look like any character you want. I don't know if you call it art, but I think it's cool. We should check it out.

BARADA

Humans are so creative to find art in even confectionery sugar.

ARIEL

Why are you so interested in human art?

BARADA

Not human art, all art! Art is what makes every species unique! Every planet eventually invents the bomb, but not every world has *Space Jam*.

ARIEL

Yeah, I probably should've shown you a Criterion film or something. I'm glad you appreciate the arts, Barada. Really glad you like my music. You have a ray gun you can use on my dad to like it too?

BARADA

I am neither confirming not denying the existence of such a weapon, but why? Does your father not like music?

ARIEL

He likes music, he just doesn't want my focus to be on it and I should instead focus on doing something that contributes value to society.

Barada stops painting. He can hear the hurt in Ariel's words. Barada sets his paintbrush down and looks over at Ariel's canvas. She tries to cover it up, but he can see it all.

Barada likes her work.

BARADA

Ariel McGuinness, you already contribute value to your world; you. You add to the wealth of your species in all you do in your music, your paintings, your...whatever that scrap of paper you've been scribbling on is.

Ariel sees her NOTEBOOK PAPER sticking out of her pocket. She shoves it in deeper.

ARIEL

Not ready is what that is. Still needs another draft I think.

General McGuinness enters Ariel's room. He is both excited and frustrated to find the alien.

GENERAL MCGUINNESS

There you are! We have been looking all over the base for you. Ariel, why didn't you say you captured the invader?

ARIEL

I didn't capture him and he's not an invader! He's a cultured person named Barada.

GENERAL MCGUINNESS

Ugh, not this culture thing again. Look, "Barada", if there is to be no exchange of valuable information then leave my country.

BARADA

I am offering you a valuable trade, General. Your daughter has exposed me to the art of your world and I wish to continue to discover more.

(MORE)

BARADA (CONT'D)

I will share the talents of other worlds with you.

GENERAL MCGUINESS

Bombs or no deal!

BARADA

Your daughter has the potential to heal the world you want to break with your weapons and you try to limit what she can do. You are a foolish man, General. You think yourself Bugs Bunny when really you're a Monstar. Goodbye, Ariel.

Barada leaves the room.

GENERAL MCGUINESS

Bugs Bunny...what the hell was that about?

ARIEL

Barada, wait!

EXT. ARIEL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Barada punches in coordinates into his wrist device. Before he can enter the final sequence, runs up and HUGS him.

ARIEL

Thanks for jamming with me.

BARADA

Thank you for showing me the imagination of your world, even only a sliver of it.

Ariel holds back her tears as she hands Barada the NOTEBOOK PAPER.

ARIEL

This is called a poem. It's not Shakespeare or Robert Frost, just...something I wrote while stuck here and wanted to get my feelings out there. I know it's not good and...

Barada takes the paper.

BARADA

Any expression of emotion is art,
Ariel. I will look to it always
when I begin to miss your planet.

They stand apart. Barada throws up a HANG LOOSE sign. Ariel laughs and throws it back to him. Barada teleports away and DISAPPEARS into the night sky.

ARIEL (V.O.)

If stars could sing what would be
their song?

INT. ARIEL'S ROOM - NIGHT

Ariel finishes her painting while her narration of the poem continues.

ARIEL

Would it be an elegy of blackened
space all around/Or an anthem for
all the far off worlds/Do they weep
not knowing what happens on these
far off clusters/Or do they smile
as they imagine/Imagine the life
and lives that fill these spheres/I
am not a heavenly body, but I
prefer to think/That if the stars
could sing they'd sing of thee and
me.

Ariel places her painting next to Barada's. The two stand next to each other and hold one another up. Ariel looks at the painting, satisfied, and begins to play her guitar, her creative spirit fully reinvigorated.

THE END