Patrick Gotis: Second Place Creative
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To Infinity and Beyond

Space. Some people would say “the final frontier.” Others would say the doors to a new beginning. Freeman Dyson, a man whose thoughts of the cosmos constantly turned his head upward, once wrote in a manifesto on July of 1958, “There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in our present-day science. And we shall only find out what they are if we go out and look for them.”

I propose we continue where he left off. Maybe not so much in the theory of bomb-propelled starships, but in his dream of leaving Earth to explore and colonize the great beyond. Some people would want to remain here, on Earth, their feet firmly on the ground. Yet, there are only so many mysteries left on planet Earth. Freeman Dyson had the right idea and the time has come that we realize where we have left to go.

For as long as man has existed, we've looked to the heavens in awe. What’s out there? What would we find? What wonders await us beyond the stars? Satellites and telescopes give us pictures, mere glimpses that cause more curiosity. Physics gives us insight, theories to the existence of other planets, solar systems, and other natural phenomena. Yet, none of these tools, no matter how strong the magnification, how complicated the calculation, can physically put us on other planets.

Could we one day walk upon green, purple, or even orange grass of another world? Can we pick up shards of ice on the comets that streak through the night sky? Maybe we could live in the hollow of asteroids, with trees, specially grown to survive space, reaching for the sun some AUs (Astronomical Units) away. We could climb mountains higher than Mount Everest, or swim in oceans that cover the entire surface of a planet. Perhaps we could find creatures so large that our whales seem like small puppy dogs.

Many have definitely dreamed of these things and more. And many, like Freeman Dyson on a clear dark night, have given up. Our imagination can only assume what our eyes cannot see, what our noses cannot smell and our hands cannot touch. I wonder, how many people want to hear the echoes of valleys so deep that our voices take hours to return? How many want to taste the nectar of a flower so sweet that every other food tastes bland in comparison? How many would want to smoke leaves that leave them in a state of euphoria for days? Out of these people who would love to watch a sunset that lasts for hours on end? What person would not want to gaze at moons so close that you feel as if you could reach out and touch them?

Unfortunately, as far as we've bodily gone is our own small, gray moon and back, Jupiter, Saturn, Pluto and the rest of the infinite are just dreams- for now. Yet,
everything we’ve done up to now was once the dream of another. Flying through the
dark vacuum of the mysterious beyond in starships propelled by gas, fire, bombs or
whatever the device is our dream, so is our dream the reality of another’s future.
Throughout our history we’ve been exploring the continents and oceans of Earth.
Human nature therefore dictates that once we’ve learned all there is about here, we
continue on exploring to the infinites of space.

For years, we’ve gazed at the stars. And for centuries, the stars have looked down on
us, waiting for the day we ascend to stand beside them. Freeman Dyson may have
given up looking for M-31, the only galaxy outside the Milky Way visible in the
Northern Hemisphere, and his dream of space travel. Yet we can’t deny that
Freeman took some of the first steps toward the stars. Our turn has come to finish
the rest of the trip into the starlit horizon.