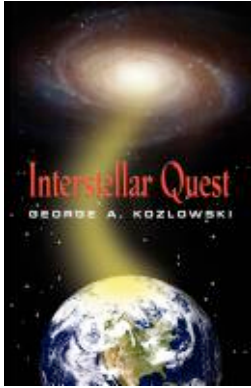




Interstellar Quest

GEORGE A. KOZLOWSKI





Residents of a far out planet discovers rare substances found on Earth. They abduct three language professors (English, Spanish and Chinese) for communication purposes. The three teachers are taken to the planet Gargar, given teaching assignments, and then...

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CHAPTER 1: Search

“Look at that vastness of space. There is no end. That is infinity. It is a beautiful night and I expect our approval documents to arrive any moment, I am always amazed at this endlessness,” the Commander said to his crew, as he pointed to the sky.

Improvements have been made and the preparation and launch sequences are extremely precise. New methods were now used make it simpler to launch into outer space. They entered their vehicle that will take them on this far journey.

The Commander was the last to enter as he waited for the Director to bring him the approval documents.

“Commander, I have the official signed documents approving your probe of the galaxies and in particular the investigation of the distant radio transmissions; finally and there were no objections, only many questions. You and your crew were very comprehensive and submitted details on many possible eventualities that could occur in your journey. You put a great deal of work and thought into your proposal. It was lengthily but you answered all the inquiries. I have been told to assist you in every way during your adventure.”

“Thank you sir, I have gathered all the equipment, provisions and personnel needed for the journey and my entire crew is prepared and ready to start. We were

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waiting for this official approval. We will depart as soon as possible,” the Commander said to the Director of Interstellar Space Travel, as he accepted the documents.

The Commander went to the Command Center and gave the approval to the officer in charge to start the sequence for departure. He then signaled his next in Command to follow him into the vehicle which will travel into the unknown area of outer space. All the personnel were situated in their proper positions in the huge space vehicle which was simply designated as Probe 1. Until the official documents of approval for this unusual space and galaxy probe were signed and delivered, the expedition could not begin and now they were on their way. There were many other outer space expeditions but none were as far away as this venture was expected to travel. The expectation of distance was beyond any long travel into the vastness of the cosmos.

Radio signals of some sort were being emitted from a distant planet or planets or perhaps a galaxy. This intrigued many who were investigating the universe and its millions of assemblages of stars. The sounds and at times very faint pictures were received. This emission of electronic waves indicated that it was possible that intelligent life was producing this. Similar radio waves were released from many other planets but they did not have any intelligent sequence.

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Upon further investigation many of these so-called radio waves were merely emissions from radioactive minerals.

The radio waves that had a type of signal that intrigued the investigators were centralized in the same area and outer space scientists defined the area. They recorded the signals and had cryptographers and decoding computers attempting to decipher the signals. The signals were exceedingly distant and an accurate reading of the signals was extremely vague and difficult to understand.

The resources and ability to produce a viable vehicle for travel through space did exist. The Commander had made several exploratory expeditions into the unknown cosmos. He was an engineer and scientist who designed a variety of vehicles for exploring the unknown areas of the universe. His design and written report of reasons to explore and to convince many skeptics to approve the journey.

The vehicle named Probe 1 departed and entered the void of outer space. It traveled at a speed that was incomprehensible, improbable and unimaginable and beyond comprehension a short while ago. New scientific advancements were being discovered and produced at a perplexing rate that even astonished many of the futurists.

Probe 1 was being propelled by a method that made jet propulsion almost obsolete. A series of small

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batteries had been developed and perfected. The batteries contained an enormous amount of energy they could recharge the depleted battery before it lost all of its energy or power. The battery contained a generator which would recharge a second section of the battery. When part one was depleted then part two would take over and operate the generator that would recharge the first part of the battery as it functioned. Batteries of all sizes were invented and perfected. The battery could function forever or until parts wore out.

Systems of anti-gravitational pull and other methods of propulsion were employed. Probe I contained a vast quantity of scientific innovations that were only dreams a short while ago. Some were never even imagined until they were invented and presented outside of the laboratories and testing areas.

The emissions of the radio waves became intense as Probe 1 came closer to the source. Eventually Probe 1 entered a system of planets that appeared to orbit a huge star. One planet in particular was emitting the radio waves and a variety of transmissions. This planet was among the smallest of the planets in this galaxy.

The Commander ordered that Probe 1 hide behind a planet that did not contain any form of life, intelligent or otherwise. It was positioned to remain hidden from the objective planet and would remain on the unobserved side. The reason was that they did not want to be detected in the event of hostile reaction

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from the objective. It would move with the satellite planet as it rotated around the mother planet and its large central star. The Commander then instructed 5 smaller probe vehicles named Query 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, to explore the planet. Each probe vehicle contained a crew of three. Each of the smaller probe vehicles were assigned to different sections of the source planet. They were instructed to examine the various land and water areas in their assigned area; obtain samples of minerals, plant life and observe any type of intelligent beings. They were not to make contact, only to secretly observe and collect as much information as conceivable. The five vehicles departed on their mission.

From past experience the Commander knew that time was measured in different ways in every galaxy. He was patient as he waited and slowly moved Probe 1 with the movement of the planet that concealed Probe 1. He thought of resting his vehicle on this moving satellite but negated the idea because the surface and the atmosphere were unknown. His primary purpose was to observe the objective planet.

It was a long time before the smaller exploratory vehicles returned separately and at different times. Each of the five Commanders had similar reports as to the size of the inhabitants and the variation in their features and skin colors. Every area had a language and sounds that were different. Every Query vehicle

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did not rush or hurry in their exploration. They gathered a vast amount of information on their assigned area. All the information was recorded and analyzed on the vehicle designated as Probe1.

Query 1 reported that the area covered was large and the language was basically the same. Query 2 had the same report on the language as did Query 5. Query3 reported a wide difference in languages in a small area and Query 4 reported different languages in a large area. They all reported that the planet was covered with many areas of water and the polar areas are cold and frozen. Because of its orbital movement and constant turning it suggests that various temperature changes occur on a regular basis. They all obtained samples of the various soils and waters. The atmosphere was constant and similar to their own planet.

Query 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 gave their recordings of the sounds to the decoders and cryptographers aboard Probe 1. Using sophisticated computers they were able to make a rudimentary alphabet, dictionary and translator of the sounds and words in the report from Query1, 2 and 5. The variety of sounds and words expressed in the recordings from Query 3 and 4 would take longer because of the diversification of the languages. The decoders and computers made a translation of the words that they thought they understood. They then compiled them into a textbook

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for the crews of Query 1, 2 and 5. These three crews went into an isolated section that they called, “Our Classroom” and worked on trying to understand the sounds and the language.

When they thought that they had learned most of the findings and translations, they were assigned to proceed to their designated areas and continue with explorations. Knowledge of some of the language and the communications between the inhabitants would be a tremendously helpful tool. Query 1, 2 and 5 departed on their second exploratory venture into this planet with the knowledge of some of the language and their hope to obtain more information on the planet. They remained for an extensive time period as they secretly studied their area of assignment.

The crews of Query 3 and 4 remained with the cryptographers and attempted to create some type of logical translations.

CHAPTER 2: Harry Davis

Doctor Harry Davis held a Doctorate Degree in Languages and taught at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, Michigan. He was a thirty-five year old, slim man, six feet tall with black hair that was starting to show hints of grey.

This was an exceptionally warm Friday in July as he entertained two friends and their families. They were Doctor Phil Madison a spinal surgeon and Doctor Donald Curtis a Physicist. After high school the three men served together in the United States Marine Corps; then they continued their education at the University of Michigan. They were all the same age and all lived in the Ann Arbor, Michigan area.

The three men were very close friends and associated socially. It was Harry's turn to entertain the families. Harry cooked steaks for everyone and after eating the children went off to play at some game or games. The three ladies disappeared somewhere in the house.

"You know that my brother has a place on Higgins Lake. He is taking his family with him when he goes to Europe next week on some engineering conference and vacation. He is interested in water usage and diverting of rivers for better usage of water. He will be gone until Labor Day, so I am going to use his place

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until then. His place is big and can accommodate many people. You and your families are welcome to come with us. I know it is soon but he didn't know of his trip until a few days ago," Harry said to his friends.

Both men told Harry that they might come up for a week-end.

Harry's oldest boy, Bill came up to the three men and said that he just purchased a new camera that can take pictures that can be enlarged without losing any quality or intensity. He said it is amazing what some things look like when they are enlarged up to 1000% or even more.

Bill took several pictures of the men and took pictures of the flying birds and mosquitoes.

Two days later on Sunday, the car was packed Harry's wife Joan, his two sons, Bill and Bob, and their daughter Sarah were seated and ready to go north. They arrived at Higgins Lake, unloaded the automobile and prepared to vacation for a month.

Harry contacted two of his colleagues who taught at the University and had summer homes in Northern Michigan and made arrangements to spend a day of golfing. They chose a central place near Kalkaska, Michigan on Tuesday. The three men played 18 holes of golf and had a long dinner as they discussed a variety of important and inane topics.

It was about 6:30 PM when Harry and his friends parted. Harry began his drive to Higgins Lake, driving

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a Ford Pickup truck that was owned by his brother and kept at the lake.

Darkness came about 9:30 PM this time of year in northern Michigan. Joan began to worry as usual, it was after 8 PM and darkness would soon arrive. Harry should be home at this time. Worrisome Joan called his golfing friends. They all said that Harry was fine when he left the golf course at about 6:30 PM. They said he had only one bottle of beer with his dinner and didn't appear to be ailing and waved goodbye and tooted his truck horn he as went out of the parking lot.

Joan called the Michigan State Police. They said it was too early to file a missing person report but they had a patrol car in that area and would investigate the route that Harry would have taken and any alternate roads.

The two boys and the girl tried to tone down the anxiety in their mother. Bill tried to console his mother with some pictures that he took last Friday and of the trip up north and at the lake. He was fascinated by his enlargements of the birds and especially of mosquitoes and other flying bugs. This did not alleviate his mother's fears and apprehension.

CHAPTER 3: Xingshai Huan

Doctor Xingshai Huan was teacher of languages at the Qingdao University at Qingdao or as it is sometimes referred to as Tsingtao. He held several degrees in a multiplicity of languages. He also was an interpreter for many high ranking government officials and accompanied them on many trips to various important functions. He was respected for his accurate translations and explanations of the meanings and the intents of a speaker. He always wanted a substitute or assistant interpreter to accompany him on these foreign trips. He usually had one of his top students as his assistant. He was very strict in their behavior and they had to report everything that they did in the foreign country that they were visiting.

Qingdao or Tsingtao is a major city in eastern Shandong Province in the People's Republic of China. Located on the Shandong Peninsula overlooking the Yellow Sea it is a major seaport, naval base and industrial center.

Huan met Ching at a faculty conference at the University. He was attracted to her but at first she ignored him. Eventually they became friends because of the frequency of faculty conferences and they had several dinners together. Romance followed and then

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marriage. They agreed not have children at the early stage of their marriage.

Huan and his wife, Ching, lived in a small apartment provided by the University. Ching was a Medical Doctor and a professor of Anatomy at Qingdao University.

It was early morning this August day as Huan was returning home from his office at the University and was expected to have a mid-morning meal. Huan went to his office at the university to prepare some papers and schedules for the forthcoming fall semester. Ching was preparing a stir fried meal of vegetables and chicken. They were to have a large meal and then go for a bicycle ride through the nearby park and forest.

Ching's anxiety became intense as time moved on and Huan didn't return home. Ching tried to call Huan on his cell phone but did not receive any response only a message that the cell phone was not in operation. She called the local police and reported that her husband failed to return home. The police sent a police officer to her apartment. It was a female officer.

“You notified the authorities that your husband is missing, that is he failed to come home. I must ask you many questions and some may appear to be embarrassing but they are necessary in an investigation of this sort. You may call me Officer Liqin. Does your husband have a mistress? Does he do this often? Why are you concerned? “

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“Please, I want to interrupt you. My husband is a loyal man. He is very punctual. I notified the police when he did not return home at the expected time. I attempted to call him on his cell phone but it was disconnected. I waited a while then I called the police to help me. We were to have a meal and then go for a long bicycle ride,” Ching said adamantly to the police officer.

“I know, I know but I have to have answers to these questions. We must know the entire situation. Are there any unusual circumstances or situations that arose recently?”

“We are both teachers at the University. It is between semesters and Huan went to his office at the University to do some work in preparation for the next semester. He goes to the university on his bicycle. It is one kilometer from here. This apartment is provided by the University. Could we look for his bicycle? Perhaps he fell and is laying somewhere in pain. Can we look?” Ching pleaded.

“Yes, we will trace his possible route. Are you certain that he arrived at the school?”

“Yes, I know because he called on the cell phone and said he wanted to finish compiling the schedule then he will come home to eat and then we can go for our bicycle ride on this beautiful day.”

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“I would like for you to accompany me as we walk and trace Huan’s steps to and from the University. Let us go now,” Officer Liqin said.

The two ladies walked on the street named Shangdong Lu to the University. They looked in all the possible places where Huan’s bicycle could be laying. They walked the one kilometer to and fro several times. The two exhausted women returned to the Xingshai apartment.

“We have found nothing. What can we do?” Ching said as she sobbed.

“We will continue to search and we will help you. Please rest and we will continue the investigation. Perhaps he went somewhere else to buy something to surprise you. Let us wait a while longer,” Officer Liqin said, trying to alleviate the anxiety, fear and apprehension in Ching.

CHAPTER 4: Miguel Alejandro Reyes Alvarez

Doctor Miguel Alvarez a professor of languages at the Universidad Nacional de La Plata located in the city of La Plata, capital of Buenos Aires Province in Argentina, South America. Miguel had been teaching languages. For the previous five years he was an official interpreter for the Argentine Government. He interpreted and rewrote documents and advised government officials, both civilian and military in the proper use of several languages.

He was a tall muscular man of 28 years of age, unmarried. During his college years he aspired to be a soccer player but never achieved his goal. He had the enthusiasm, energy and fortitude but lacked the talent, but he always wished he could be a professional soccer player.

August in the Buenos Aires Province was wintertime with the temperature of 50 degrees Fahrenheit, as Miguel decided to walk to a nearby restaurant on Diagonal 79, Club Espanol and join some friends for dinner.

His three friends waited for Miguel but he never arrived at the restaurant.

“This is not like Miguel. If he could not be here he would have telephoned us or notified us in some way. Something must have happened to him. I am going to

check this out. I am worried,” one of the men said to the other two men.

They all agreed to have dinner then go to his apartment and check with his office at the University. They hurried with their dinner and the three men drove to Miguel’s apartment. There was no answer at his door. The University was closed for the night so they would check with his office in the morning.

His friend, Juan decided to notify the authorities of Miguel’s absence. The local police said they would investigate and said they were not worried because there was no crimes reported in this area but they would file a missing person report after two days and make a concentrated effort in this matter.

Miguel’s friends insisted on an immediate search. The police stated that it is too early to file a missing person report. They said many times the missing person will appear after two or more days with some extraordinary excuse regarding their absence.

His friends tried to locate Miguel by checking with all the people that they knew or heard of that would know Miguel. All inquiries received negative answers.

CHAPTER 5: Where, Who, What, When ?

Doctor Harry Davis slowly opened his eyes. He was strapped in a cushioned chair. The straps appeared to be the type that pilots use in small fighter airplanes. The restraints held his shoulders, chest, thighs and legs snugly to the chair. His arms were free. He looked around and saw two other men in the same type of restraint.

“Hello. Do you hear me,” Harry called out to the two men.

One of the men, an Oriental answered in English with an accent, “Who are you?”

The third man rubbed his eyes and exclaimed in Spanish, “¿Dónde estoy? ¿Quién eres? ¿Dónde estamos?” (Where am I? Who are you? Where are we?)

“No sé. I don’t know,” Harry Davis answered in Spanish and English.

The Oriental man said, “I understand English and Spanish. I am Xingshai Huan, a professor of languages at Qingdao University in China.”

“I am a professor of languages at the Universidad Nacional de La Plata in Argentina. I understand both Chinese and English; however my Chinese is not as good as my other languages. I am known as Doctor Miguel Alvarez,

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“There are many dialects spoken and used in China and within each group of dialects there are variations. I will not get into a discussion of languages. I am concerned about the questions that have been brought up,” Huan answered in English to the two men.

“I am Harry Davis, a professor of languages at the University of Michigan. This is interesting if not amazing. The three of us are language teachers.”

At that moment, three figures that resembled men in military uniforms appeared in the middle of the room.

“Do ... not ... be ... alarmed,” one of the figures said that sounded like it was electronically reproduced and speaking through megaphone with pauses between the words.

The three men, Harry, Huan and Miguel were astonished as they gazed at what could best be described as holograms.

“There .. are ... many ... things ... to ... explain ... it ... will ... take ... time ... you ... will ... have ... all ... of ... your ... questions ... answered,” a hologram said in English and the second figure said the same in Chinese and the third figure repeated the same in Spanish. The voices were spoken hesitantly and extremely mechanical.

“Apparently you speak our languages but it sounds very mechanical,” Harry said to the three holograms.

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“Yes, we are using a computer enhanced translator. (pause) We learned some of your language or languages but there is much more to learn. (a pause) What you see is called a hologram in your world. We are from another world or planet. (another long pause) We do not look as you, so we do not want to frighten you. We assumed an appearance that would resemble people from your world. I can be called One, I speak English.”

Pointing his hand to the other figures, “This is Two, he speaks Spanish and the other is Five, he speaks Chinese. (pause) We do not speak good because we learned the languages recently from our observations and recordings of speakers in your planet and we are talking through a computerized language interpretation machine. (pause) Our correct names are difficult to pronounce in your languages so I will use these names.”

“You can speak in any of these three languages because we understand all three and more. We are all languages teachers at different Universities,” Harry said.

“We know that you are language teachers, that are the reason we chose you,” One said.

“Chose us for what purpose?” Huan exclaimed loudly in English and then in Chinese and in Spanish.

“Please tell us, you do need assistance in grammar,” Miguel inquired.

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“We will tell all to you. (pause) You were chosen because we want to understand your world. You have a large variety of languages and dialects throughout your planet. (a long pause) We sent five Query airships to your planet and the three of you are from areas (pause) that speak a common language for these large areas. Two other exploratory airships came back with a tremendous amount of sounds and languages. (pause) You call these areas, Europe and Africa. It is difficult to explain ourselves until we know your languages. (pause) Here is our Commander he will talk to you,” One spoke again and then the three figures faded away.

Another similar hologram figure appeared and a mechanically reproduced voice said, “I am the Commander of this vessel. (pause) I am speaking through an interpretation computer. It is far from perfect and I want you to understand me. We are going to travel to our home planet. We want you to help us with your languages, and customs. (pause) We will not harm you. You will be returned to your homes. (pause) You are restrained for safety reasons, your safety as we launch away from this galaxy. We will depart very soon.”

“I do not understand this. Do you?” Miguel asked his companions.

“I hope he is speaking the truth. He could be lying to us in order to catch us off guard,” Harry said.

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“We can only wait and hope for the best. They are in command of the situation,” Huan said quietly.

The questions of where, who, what and when, were not answered.

“¿Cómo podemos ayudar?” (How can we help?) Miguel asked in Spanish

“Sí, ¿cómo? (Yes, how?)” Huan asked in Spanish.

Harry, Huan and Niguel looked at each other as the hologram disappeared and unknowingly they nodded off to sleep.

CHAPTER 6: Do the Questions Get Answers?

Harry, Huan and Miguel awoke and discovered that they were in a large room that appeared to be some sort of classroom. They were seated in large comfortable office type chairs and they noticed that they were not being restrained in any way. Miguel arose from his chair to see if there were any restraints or controls.

“We are not tied up. I can move freely, “Miguel said smilingly.

“Can we leave this room? That is the big question.” Huan said as looked around the room.

A hologram appeared and a mechanical voice with frequent almost stuttering pauses said, “Welcome to our world. There is so much to tell you. (pause) Before we can communicate with confidence and trust, it is important that we know your languages; our language would be extremely difficult to learn. (pause) We have a small knowledge of your languages. (pause) We will start there. (pause) The Commanders that you met, known as One, Two and Five and their crews will work with you.” The frequent pauses occurred as the translator device was searching for the correct words.

The hologram disappeared and new hologram appeared with nine figures.

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“We met earlier, (pause) I am One and this is my crew. Two is here and his crew and so is Five with his crew. (pause) I will go with my crew with Harry. (pause) Two and his group will go with Miguel and Five will go with Huan. (pause) We do know your names and much more that is why we selected you. We traveled from our planet located a tremendous amount of distance from your planet in a vessel with smaller vessels aboard. (pause) We called them Query 1, Query 2, Query 3, Query 4 and Query 5. Our names are from the names of the Query vessel. Query 1 that is my vessel went to North America. (pause) Query 2 went to South America. Query 3 went to Europe, Query 4 went to Africa and Query 5 went to China. (pause) We recorded sounds and languages of the inhabitants and determined that certain areas used the same language or a variation of that language. (pause) Europe had a large variety of languages in a small area. Africa was almost impossible to determine any specific language except in a small area and the number of different languages caused us to abandon these areas. (pause) We recorded and studied the languages in Areas 1, 2 and 5. With our on board translators and computers we were able to learn some of the three languages but there are variations and different dialects in your languages. Each of your languages has many phrases that are meaningless or difficult to interpret.”

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"Before you separate us tell us what is going to happen to us," Harry inquired.

After a long pause the translator machine said, "We will not harm you. We want you to help us and then we will return you to your homes. We are also thinking of some reward to give to you."

"What sort of reward?" Huan asked.

"You will talk about this at a later time," One answered.

"We ask that you help us. If you do not want to help us then we will return you to your homes or where we found you. You will then have to explain to your friends and family. They will not believe your story," Two said.

"How long will this be?" Harry asked.

"We measure time in very different way and time moves in a different way here,' a mechanical voice said with many hesitations.

"Help us to learn your languages so we can talk to you without this translator," One said.

"For us to explain and teach our languages will take a long time and then our families will not know where we are and it will be a great burden to them," Huan said in English.

"We understand. We have traveled a long distance. Your world does not know of our existence. I will explain this later but time is different now. We have traveled back in time, your time. Again I repeat, we

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will explain all to you when we can talk without the translator machine," a mechanical voice said.

"I will explain this to you three men. If you stay here on our planet for three weeks, your time, when we return you to your planet then you will be away from there for less than one hour. We travel at a great speed that we go back in time as you understand time. Please help us with the languages because this is difficult to put our words in the translator and then talk to you correctly," a mechanical voice said.

"You appear to be communicating favorably or I should say that we understand what you are saying. I should not say favorably because that implies that we agree with your proposal," Harry said.

"Here is the problem, our translator did not understand everything you said," the mechanical voice said with many pauses.

"I would like to discuss this with my fellow captives," Miguel said looking at Huan and Harry.

"Can we believe this mechanical voice?" Miguel questioned.

"How can we be certain that they are truthful? There is no way. We must assume that they are telling us the truth," Huan answered.

"We are captives here and we are at their mercy. They have control of the situation. If we agree to help them, that is, teach them our languages, then what happens? Will they return us to our homes?" Harry

said with uncertainty as he looked and shook his head sideways.

"I say that we help them. If we don't help them this voice said we would be returned to our homes without any proof of our so-called adventure," Miguel said as he gestured with his hands.

"Let us assume that if we do not assist them then they will kill us. Let us assume that we help them and then they kill us. Let us assume that we help them and they return us and reward us in some way, especially with proof. There are several other probabilities that I could submit. We are uncertain of everything. I propose that we assist them in learning our languages and suffer the consequences or the rewards," Huan said pleadingly.

"I need my books and part of my library for teaching," Miguel said.

"So do I," Harry iterated.

"I also need my library," Huan repeated his need.

"We cannot help you and we are in need of equipment, books and especially our own books," Harry shouted to the halograms.

One of the hologram figures stepped closer to the three confused language teachers. He motioned to a figure on his left and large metal cart appeared.

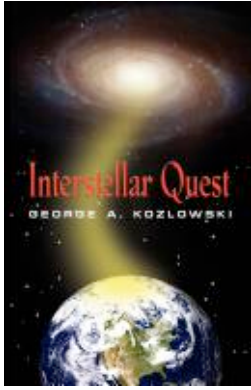
"Inside of this cart are books from your personal desks and libraries. We anticipated this and made

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copies of your personal papers, books and some teaching equipment," a voice from the computer said.

"What... how," Harry said in confusion.

"These are exact copies of the items you have used in your teaching. We made copies of all these items. We will explain all when we are able to talk better. After you teach us your languages we can explain everything. We want to be certain of our explanation that is why we want to understand your languages," again a voice said from the computer.



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