Rick’s heart dropped as he heard the gurgling of the rocket engines. He was doomed. Here he was, on a super-secret mission to be one of the first people on Mars, and all he could think about was how sweaty and nervous he felt. His hands were shaking like crazy, and the constant noise around him was so annoying it reminded him of a trip to the dentist. He really wished he could be back on Earth instead of zooming through space at a million kilometres an hour! The smell of machines and oil was getting on his nerves too. Everything inside the rocket was blinding white and boring grey, and Rick felt like he might throw up.

Then a robotic voice said, “We are now exiting the Earth’s atmosphere.” Great, now he knew there was no turning back. He had to do this because there weren’t many other options. But when he looked out the window, everything changed. Earth looked incredible, all lit up like a giant marble. It was so huge he couldn’t believe it! Goosebumps ran up his arms, and he felt super excited.

A few days later, while hanging out in the rocket lounge, someone said, “We’re approaching Mars in a few hours! Get your gear ready to be the first humans there!”

“Maybe being in space isn’t so bad,” Rick thought. Then another astronaut said, “I know, right? Space runs in my family—my grandpa is Neil Armstrong!” They quickly became friends and discovered they had a lot in common. Time flew by like a rocket!

When they finally landed on Mars, they cheered and scattered everywhere like little mice. They were pumped to research and explore. Some tried to rescue the rover Spirit, which was stuck in a sand pit, while others used 3D printers to build a cool shelter.

After a few months, it was time to leave Mars because they were running low on supplies. On the way back, Rick felt tingly just thinking about seeing Earth again. He was proud of what they’d accomplished, but he also learned something important: what seemed scary at first turned out to be an awesome adventure, and he made a ton of friends along the way. He realized he shouldn’t judge things just by how they looked!