

Lonely Star

by RV Staff Writer J.C.

Astrid was only three hundred years old, and therefore, still just a kid when it came to the heavenly bodies in her galaxy. It was quiet out in space, and Astrid's neighbors were light years away; much too far to be able to have a conversation, let alone become friends.

She was a beautiful star, twinkling so prettily that she was admired from afar by the populations of animals and humanoids and alien beings on the planets far below her, but the truth was, she was lonely.

Every few decades, somebody might pass by, and Astrid would feel hopeful. A long time ago, a satellite went sailing past her, but when she called out a happy greeting, it answered her gruffly in Russian and continued on its way.

The only thing close to a friend she'd had was a comet who would come close enough during her orbit to talk for a short while. Her name was Halley but she only came by every 79 years or thereabouts, so it was a long time between visits. Astrid missed her.

More recently, a funny-looking fellow with wheels, solar panels and cameras crossed her path, and they chatted briefly while they could. His name was Rover, he'd said, and he was on his way to Mars for an important scientific mission. Astrid had hoped to see him again, but she never did.

The star tried to keep herself busy. She learned several alien languages, she practiced math and physics every day, and she studied the constellations. She also daydreamed a lot, rotating slowly on her axis, humming songs to herself. Her voice was the only thing she could hear in space. The vastness around her was completely silent.

In the distance, a flare of red light was leaving a trail through the cosmos. Astrid perked up. Could that be Halley? Had it been 79 years already? The star glowed as brightly as she could, welcoming her old friend.

Halley finally got close enough to talk. "Good to see you, Astrid!" she called out.

"You too!" called out the young star. "It's been so quiet around here." They had a long conversation about all the news in the solar system over the past century. But too soon, Halley had to once again continue on her way. Astrid couldn't hide her disappointment.

"It's so long between visits, Halley! I'm going to be lonely again without you."

"Cheer up, Astrid," said the comet. "I have a thought. I've picked up several new meteorites in my tail over the last few decades, and I could shake a few off so they stay in your orbit and keep you company."

“That would be wonderful!” cried Astrid. She wouldn’t be alone anymore. Halley shook her tail and several large meteorites floated loose and headed toward the star.

“These guys are a lot of fun,” Halley said. “They broke off from the moon near planet Lolliha where those crazy Lollians often visited. So of course, the meteorites learned all the funniest jokes and the best songs. They will be great company for you. See you next century!”

Astrid thanked Halley profusely, and, even before the comet was out of sight, the little star was already giggling at the silly jokes her new friends were sharing.

Questions

1. Describe one of the objects that passed by Astrid over the years.
2. What was Halley's solution for Astrid's loneliness?
3. What does *profusely* mean here: "Astrid thanked Halley profusely"?
4. We know Astrid by another name. What is it?