SANTOS ROJAS

Prologue - Text Message (received within the last hour)
Age: 14

> TEXT FROM ANGEL HERNANDEZ: Santos - they've shut the school down "temporarily." I saw the soldiers come to take your father away, my brother, and several others from the village. They were packed into buses and some say they've been sent to Guantanamo Bay. There is a curfew every night, and I had to hide this phone to let you know. I do not know how much longer I will have it. Shit. Someone is pounding on the door. Vaya con Dios, my friend.

End of Prologue

Scene 1 - Charm School, and Up, Down, Top, Bottom, and Strange Quark School too…
Age: 14

Well, it works! Just like your theory said it should. You're not quite sure why some of the measurements are what they are - they don't quite match the math. They've *always* matched your math before. But, for now, you're moving in some direction, away from Earth, at about 1.1*c* - just faster than the speed of light. Take that, Alberto! There's a new master of physics, **Senor Einstein**, and it's me, Santos Rojas. A skinny 14 year old kid from Cuba, working for the important **Morgan Lee**, deeper in space than any astronaut has ever gone.

Deeper in space. Away from Earth. Away from Angel, your best friend, your confidant, your partner in all those things that a 14 year old would get in big trouble if Mama found out. Away from Mama, Papa, Tio Jorge, and all the cousins. Away from Earth. Cuba has been hard on people for a long time, since the Communists, but your family is a special thing - and you're flying away. On a ship with five other people, and one of them's a little kid.

The engines, they are yours. You try to keep **Sasha** from beating on them with a wrench trying to fix things. The engines, they are delicate. They need a careful touch.

They say you see math like Mozart heard music, touched by the hand of God, to see the beautiful infinities of the Universe. You were taking college level math courses at 8; you'd be almost done with your Master's program now, if you took the time to study something other than math. They've been talking about just awarding you a PhD., given that you already have a Fields Medal and Breakthrough Prize in Mathematics - two of the highest awards a mathematician can receive. All this was due to the generosity of **Morgan** and Rowan Lee, who discovered you at a lecture **Morgan** gave in Havana. (Mama and Papa were stunned at the UEC$3,000,000 from the Breakthrough Prize.)

Eight months ago, you realized how to break Einstein's speed of light barrier. **Morgan** was really excited, but asked you to keep the math quiet, for now, because there were factions on Earth that might use it to hurt people. Mama agreed, when you talked to her about it. So you spent your time translating the math into something that **Sasha** could build - **Sasha** is actually very good at converting **Santos**-speak into something that invokes your physics. You really like **Sasha**, except when they hit the equipment repeatedly with a wrench, swearing in Russian.

That's why you're here, in space, on *Alexandria*, the ship. Well, ***Alexandria*** is also the AI running the ship. The two of you had long conversations as you tuned and refined your engines. You'd been talking about a test flight, just to see if the engines worked. I mean, you'd tested everything except actually moving, and it was all good, and **Morgan** promised you'd be able to visit Angel…

Then there was the text from Angel, about how it was all going to shit. Then there were the klaxons, the alarms, the rush to slam the airlock closed, the frantic rush to an acceleration couch, and the crushing hand of gravity. ***Alexandria*** said it was evading nuclear missiles! Then someone flipped a switch, **Sasha**'s engine kicked your physics into action, and Senor Einstein was passed like he was standing still. ***Alexandria*** wants everyone to go to the bridge. You're running from the Earth, running from the UEC, and getting farther and farther from everyone and everything you've ever known.

End of Scene 1