

A young boy with short dark hair is shown in profile, looking out of a rounded rectangular window of a spaceship. The window reveals a vast, dark space filled with numerous stars and a prominent, glowing blue and white nebula or galaxy structure. The boy's face is softly lit from the side, and his expression is one of wonder and contemplation. The overall color palette is dominated by deep blues, blacks, and the vibrant colors of the celestial bodies.

I SAW THE  
STARS

NEURALSPLYCE

## I Saw The Stars

940 Words

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I could have asked for an ebike on my sixteenth birthday, but public transportation has always been fine with me. No, I yearned to see the stars! I'd read about them in books and even seen videos in Science class. To see them with my own eyes would be more fulfilling than an ebike.

Getting a ride on the hypersonic jets which can fly above the six-kilometer-thick clouds is not something many people can arrange. Fortunately, my Uncle Jack is an astronomer. There aren't many left in the world, and he's one of the few who still peer through telescopes instead of staring at digitized imagery from space-based sensors. My birthday money from Dad, and Uncle Jack's connections, managed to get me onboard a flying observation jet.

Why they call them jets I'll never understand. The scramjet engine is more like a rocket engine and the lifting body shape doesn't 'fly' in the traditional sense. For some reason, old people still call them jets. I've flown on a passenger jet before, but they don't fly high enough to get above the clouds.

That's another thing I can't fathom. My grandfather says when he was young; the highest clouds rarely exceeded two kilometers. If I hadn't seen the pictures, I'd swear he was lying about some places having NO clouds and a clear, blue sky. Can you believe that? A blue sky and no clouds!

I love grandpa, but he's a bit crazy. He belongs to one of those groups trying to reverse global warming. When I ask him what's wrong with the planet the way it is, he jokes about being mad he couldn't retire to Florida, "cause it got flooded when the glaciers melted!"

I always tell him, "If the oceans sank, then you couldn't go on submarine tours of Miami." That was the coolest ride during our trip to Disney's Waterland Park when I was twelve. A whole city underwater with abandoned houses and schools and streets...and everything! The android mermaids and mermen were funny.

Anyway, I was talking about my trip to see the stars.

Uncle Jack got me a seat on an observation flight as his assistant. The environment suit and fuel costs for my weight ran ten thousand dollars. Dad got off easy 'cause an ebike would have cost twice as much.

The takeoff was a rush as we zoomed off the runway. The scramjet engines made a deafening shrieked as we got buffeted by the dense clouds during our ascent. A few minutes later, the clouds receded and the engines' roar faded. Suddenly, we shot out of the clouds and there was nothing but black sky and a thin blue band around the edge of the planet. It was breathtaking. The sky above the clouds really is blue!

Then Uncle Jack pointed out the window as the jet angled down. Thousands of little lights were randomly sprinkled through the sky. Some were bright and others flickered dimly, but it was the colored ones that startled me. I didn't know all stars aren't white. There are blue and red ones too. When I looked through one of the telescopes, I could see thousands of them all packed together into a river of light. Uncle Jack told me it was the outer arm of the Milky Way galaxy. He even pointed out some stars which were really galaxies far, far away, with billions of stars in them.

The captain had us take our seats while the jet skipped off the atmosphere. It wasn't as bad as I thought it would be. For a few seconds, my stomach felt all squished together and then we were weightless for a few minutes. I learned how to do somersaults and to safely push off the jet's hull. Zero gravity is awesome! Then the jet started descending and gravity slowly came back. Some of the other astronomers let me look through their telescopes but I didn't see much. Later, they showed me their time-lapse photos revealing star-filled skies and colorful gases too faint to see.

Oh, this is the best part! I was looking through this one telescope when the whole cabin lit up like daytime. You see, most of the trip had been in the dark to preserve our night vision. It was like someone had turned on a spotlight outside the jet.

I ran to a window and there it was, the Moon! I've never seen anything so beautiful. You should of seen it! It was as big as my outstretched hand and shone with a yellow-white light that made me squint when I looked at it. According to Uncle Jack, it's reflected sunlight, but it sure looked like it was lit up from the inside to me.

In no time at all, we had to come back in for a landing. Looking out the window and not seeing clouds was amazing. The sight of the stars and the moon is something I swear I'll never forget as long as I live. I understand why Uncle Jack picked such a unique career as astronomer.

When I'm older, I hope I can afford to show my kids just how beautiful a night sky can be. Every time I look at the sky, I know that way up above the kilometers of clouds, there are stars shining down on us all the time. I can't see them, but I still wish on them like Grandpa says if I want my wishes to come true. I keep wishing we could all see the stars and the Moon from the ground, even if only for one night. Wouldn't that be something?

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