

# I Love Garbage Cans

By John Roozen

“What is a falling star?” Adam’s father asked.

“I know this,” Adam said. “It’s a meteor.”

“That’s half right,” his father answered. “A falling star is a meteor, but not all meteors are falling stars. So what kind of meteor is it?”

Adam and his dad were taking their usual Friday evening walk around the neighborhood. Adam liked this time. His dad was a scientist at the Boeing Company where they made rockets and other awesome stuff.

His dad would ask Adam really hard questions to see if Adam could answer them—or at least get close. Adam thought of it as a game show where he was the contestant. His dad would also answer any questions that Adam could think of. His dad was smart.

Adam stared up in the sky for a moment, and took a guess. “A falling star is a meteor that is on fire.”

“Nice job, son. You are getting very close. Now tell me why it is on fire,” his father said.

“It is on fire because that meteor is made of burnable... ah, combustible material,” answered Adam. He felt hopeful that his second guess was right as well.

“Not really,” his father said. “Meteors are all generally made up of the same material. Are you ready for the answer?”

“I’m ready,” Adam said, “but do I get half credit?”

His father said, “I’d say you get three quarters credit. Nice job. The falling star is just a meteor that is coming at the earth. We have this special ring of air around our planet. You know the word—the atmosphere. When the meteor comes into our atmosphere, there is friction. Rub your two hands together really fast.”

Adam rubbed his hands like he was washing them really hard.

“Are your hands getting warm?” his father asked.

“Almost hot,” Adam exclaimed, keeping up the rubbing to get them even hotter.

“Your two hands get warm from the friction of the rubbing. Well, the friction from our special air on the meteor is so great that the meteor starts to burn. You’ve noticed how the falling star just disappears all of a sudden?” his father asked.

“Yep,” Adam replied.

His father continued, “Well, the meteor just burned completely up. Very few meteors ever reach the ground before burning up.”

“It is kind of like we have a shield, isn’t it?” Adam added.

“Good observation, son. The meteor would have to be very...”

Suddenly, from up in the sky, one of the clouds lit up brightly. “What’s that?” Adam asked his father.

“I don’t know,” said his father. Adam could tell that his father felt uneasy. They stood staring at the glowing cloud above them. Then, the cloud began to pulse with light, brighter then dimmer, super bright then back to glowing. Suddenly a strong ray of brilliant light shot right down from the cloud onto on his dad.

In the time it took Adam to blink—his dad was gone—completely gone. The ray of light was gone, too.

A terrible shiver of fear came over Adam. “DADDDDD!” Adam yelled with all of his might. He looked up at the cloud and could see that it still glowed. Then the glow got brighter and the cloud began to pulse again. Adam stepped back in fear. He turned and ran towards his house as fast as he could. A glance over his shoulder at the cloud and knew it coming. The light ray!

Adam dashed behind a large tree. *Blip!* The light ray came and the tree disappeared Adam ran further. When the cloud started to pulse again, Adam knew he had only seconds to get away. He dove behind a neighbor's silver metal garbage can along the sidewalk. The light ray hit the metal can and bounced off into the sky. Adam grabbed the garbage can lid and raced for home. He kept looking back at the cloud – running as fast as he could – holding up the garbage can lid like a shield.

He only had a little further to get to his house. He ran like the wind, yelling as loud as he could. “MOM! MOM! HELP! HELP! MOM!” Adam could feel the cloud moving in the sky towards his house. His mother came out onto the front porch, a panicked look on her face. She knew there was trouble from the tone of Adam's voice.

*Blip!* The light came and Adam's mom disappeared. Adam was stunned. He stopped, turned towards the cloud, and stared. He didn't know what to do next. The cloud began to glow brighter. Adam couldn't seem to move. The shock of his parents disappearing was too much for him. *Blip!* The light ray flashed and struck Adam. The world seemed to spin around in his head. He couldn't see anything—until the light stopped.

When he finally focused his eyes, he was in a large room. There across the room was his dad and his mom. Adam could barely see them because of—the tree. Yes, the entire tree,

branches and leaves and trunk, stretched horizontally across the room. Adam shoved tree branches aside using the garbage can lid, which he still had in his hand, and climbed over the trunk of the tree, finally reaching his parents.

All three were so shocked, that they could hardly say anything. They simply hugged each other. After a few minutes, Adam's dad turned and began pounding on the walls of the big room, yelling, "LET US OUT! LET US OUT!"

There were neither doors nor any windows. But there had to be some entrance. They had gotten in there somehow. His mother and father both began pounding on the walls. "Listen for strange echoes that might be a door," his father called out. The walls were all solid. After a while, their hands began to hurt. Soon, they both stopped pounding.

*Swoosh!* One whole side of the room suddenly opened up. There stood a person—of sorts--maybe an alien. Adam couldn't tell. Whatever it was, it wore a white uniform that covered every part of his body, even his face. *Swoosh!* The wall closed behind the alien.

The alien raised his arm and in his hand was a tube—like a long flashlight, which he pointed at Adam's father. The thought screamed in Adam's head, "It's the light ray!" Adam lifted up the silver garbage can lid, still in his hand, and raced towards the alien, holding the lid like a shield.

*Blip!* The light ray shot out of the tube. It bounced off of the garbage can lid—and returned right at the alien. You guessed it. The alien disappeared.

Adam and his parents stared at one another for a moment. No one spoke. Everyone's heart was beating fast.

*BUP!* The alien reappeared, this time standing just a few feet in front of Adam's mother and father. Adam's father reached out to grab the alien. But the alien simply raised his arm causing Adam's father to go flying across the room into a jumbled heap on the floor.

"Wow, what power," Adam thought. But his father never quit. So Adam was not surprised when his father jumped up, yelled in his "I'm gonna get you," voice, and ran screaming at the alien.

Adam noticed the ray tube lying on the floor. He threw aside the garbage can lid and dived for the tube. Quickly he aimed it at the alien, pushed the button, and *Blip!*—the alien disappeared again. Unfortunately, Adam's father was at that very moment, lunging to tackle the alien, and instead landed flat on his belly, grabbing nothing but air.

Adam waited until the alien appeared again. *Blip!* It took about ten seconds each time for the alien to reappear. Adam started to get control. He would zap the alien with the ray tube, wait for the alien to reappear, and then zap him again.

“Keep it up,” his father said, as he examined the wall that had opened like a door when the alien first appeared. He did not find anything except a smooth hard surface.

Adam’s mother came up to his side, putting her hand on Adam’s shoulder, watching the alien come and go. The alien seemed to be suffering from the light ray’s effects. He could barely stand. Adam’s mother suddenly walked past him. “No, mom, that’s where the alien will appear!” Adam shouted.

When the alien reappeared, his mother reached out and grabbed something from the dazed alien’s waist. It looked like a tool of some sort. She pointed it at the wall and began pushing the small buttons on the tool. In a moment, the wall opened like a door.

The opened door revealed a smaller room filled with numerous switches and controls. Adam’s father walked around, examining all of the electronics. He couldn’t decipher anything. There was writing over each button, but in a strange language.

The alien was now curled up on the floor, too weak to stand. Adam stopped zapping him, but kept the light ray pointed at him anyway. Adam’s father decided that he had to try something on the control panel, so he reached for the biggest lever.

A piercing squeal came from the alien on the floor. He began to crawl towards the smaller control room. Adam was just about to zap the alien, when his mother shouted, “No, wait!” She reasoned, “He might want to help us.”

Adam’s father agreed. “He hadn’t really hurt us. Maybe he meant no harm.”

The alien crawled to the control panel, reached up and pressed a button. Immediately the spaceship started to move. Adam wanted to zap him again, but at that moment there was a thud that startled him. The alien pressed another button and a door to the rear of the big room opened up. They had landed and could walk out onto the ground. Adam and his parents again looked at each other, before all three rushed out the door to get off the spaceship.

*Phoof!* The glowing spaceship started up into the air. They watched it go higher and higher.

“Look out!” Adam’s father yelled.

*Wham!* The garbage can lid landed and bounced around on the sidewalk. *Thump!* The entire uprooted tree landed in the street.

Surprisingly, nobody had come out of their houses to see what was going on. “No one saw the alien,” his mother said. “Nobody is even going to believe what happened.”



“Oh yes they will,” Adam smiled as he displayed the ray tube still in his hand.

## **The End**

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