



## Andrea and the Package

Andrea sat in a small room, in a small flat, in a small town. She had been here for nearly four months. Most people would have been suffering from cabin fever by this point but Andrea was not most people.

The room was warm and stuffy. Thin curtains covered the windows and cast a dim light over the sparse furniture. Apart from a desk, chair and a laptop, the room was empty but Andrea did not care.

Four months ago, she had been instructed to come here to monitor events above the planet and she had done just that. She stared at the computer screen day in and day out, waiting for the message to come. When it did, it was short and to the point, 'collect package 46.129768, 25.88355'.

Andrea closed the laptop and left the flat. It was the first time she had been outside since she had arrived and she did not know that it had been snowing. Outside the block, she found her car and got in. For the last month, the temperatures had remained firmly in the negative and, when she turned the ignition, the car did not start. She tried again and again until the rusty Trabant choked into life and she pulled away, kangarooing down the road as the car warmed up.

Snow was piled up beside the main road, leaving the tarmac visible and revealing many pot holes. The little Trabant slalomed through them, skidding slightly as it did so. After almost an hour, Andrea turned onto a winding road that led up a dormant volcano. Tall trees flanked the road and showed Andrea where to go. The car spluttered upwards, belching out pollution until the road ran out and she had reached the mouth of the extinct volcano. A sign welcomed her to 'Saint Anna's Lake' but she did not pause to admire the frozen water in the crater.

Andrea took a spade and the laptop, and set off on foot to the coordinates. Snow covered the ground and was knee deep in places. When Andrea reached the forest, walking became easier. Most of the snow was on the branches of the trees and little had fallen onto the frozen earth.

It did not take long to reach the coordinates given to her but something was wrong. She arrived at a large clearing but it was covered in virgin snow. Nothing had been here for weeks. Andrea sat down on a fallen tree and opened the laptop. She connected it to her mobile phone and was immediately able to access the internet.

For the next hour, Andrea sat in the cold analysing the data she had been sent over the last twelve hours and reading through details of a recent meteor storm. She took this information and made several calculations until she reached the answer. The coordinates she had been given were wrong. She needed to get to 45.868378, 25.770572.

One hundred and twenty seven minutes had passed since she had received the message. This was never meant to have happened and the situation was now urgent. She ran back to the car and drove the Trabant as fast as it would go over the winter roads. On a number of occasions, the car skidded across the tarmac but Andrea kept control; narrowly avoiding trees and piled up snow.



Forty one minutes later, she entered the small town she had previously left and drove to its outskirts. She parked the car in an empty road, took the spade and ran onto snow covered fields towards the trees in the distance.

As she neared the coordinates, the snow became deeper until she reached a drift high above her head. She dug through it and found herself standing in a circular space enclosed by a wall of snow. The ground was wet and muddy as all the snow had melted. In the centre, buried under the mud, she could see something silver glinting in the winter sun.

A noise distracted her from the object. She looked around and walked cautiously towards the sound. With every step, it became louder and louder until she was standing right above it.

Andrea bent down and looked at the source of the noise carefully. It was a baby dressed in a silver outfit. She put her hands under its arms and picked up the tiny child.

The package had been successfully located.

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