

*TATIANA BONCH-OSMOLOVSKAYA*

**Paul Erdos**

he was an alien  
a descendant of Martians who landed  
on what once were Austro-Hungarian highlands  
they didn't like the surroundings  
but local girls were impressed by their appearance  
so it happened  
the Martians flew away before the baby was born  
pureblood Martians couldn't breathe fat terrestrial air  
for them life on Earth was unbearable

how had he survived? no one knows  
possibly on mathematics  
he spoke with a terrible accent  
loved spicy food  
never settled on land  
rarefied air of pure mathematics  
made him as close to Martian atmosphere  
as he could reach on Earth  
gave him a chance

he inhaled and exhaled mathematics  
so people around him exhaled it  
together with him  
it went viral  
five hundred and four of them  
then others together with them  
six thousand five hundred and ninety three  
then others with them  
thirty three thousands six hundreds and five  
then others...  
up to thirteen links in a chain  
in every direction  
until it exhausted the total number  
of those who do mathematics

he was writing and writing and writing  
papers as if otherwise he'd disappear  
he had travelled from one place  
of condensed mathematical science  
to another all his life all these years  
as he self-measured his age in two and a half  
billions rotations of the Earth around the Sun

when he exhaled for the very last time  
suddenly after giving a talk  
at a conference  
they found in his pocket a ticket  
not to Mars but to another  
mathematical conference  
now equally inaccessible