Lost in Space:
An Honor Council Academic Trial
Released Spring 2015

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Key:
Confronted Party: Judy Robinson
Confronted Party: Penny Robinson
Confronting Party: Prof. Maureen Robinson
Course: Intergalactic Zoology 200

Pre-Trial:

Judy Robinson and Penny Robinson were Bryn Mawr students in Professor Maureen Robinson’s Intergalactic Zoology 200 class during a spring semester. While grading final exams, Professor Robinson noticed striking similarities between Judy and Penny’s answers. After discussing the matter with them via email, she asked them to report themselves to Honor Council. Honor Council consented to send the case to an academic trial. The trial was run during the summer. Due to the small number of council jurors available, with the consent of all parties the jury was composed of nine members instead of the usual ten.

Fact Finding:

Professor Robinson began by explaining the final exam. It was divided into two parts: a self-scheduled portion taken through the registrar’s office, and a take-home portion. Although the take-home part was open-book and notes, the instructions forbade discussion of the exam until the end of finals. While grading the take-home portion, she noticed strong similarities between Judy and Penny’s answers. Specifically, she stated that both students used similar, very unusual notation in their answers. She estimated that 4 out of 6 questions on the exam showed these similarities (she noticed no such similarities on the self-scheduled portion). She stated that their answers were too similar to be coincidence, and so emailed both asking what happened. Penny wrote back multiple times, giving a very detailed account of the circumstances under
which she took the exam, as well as her thought processes while answering the questions. Judy
gave only a short response, but after a few rounds of emails set up a Skype meeting with
Professor Robinson, during which she revealed that she had collaborated on the exam with
Penny. Professor Robinson said she was thankful for Judy’s honesty, and did not pursue details
of the collaboration during the meeting. She also said that she did not inform Penny of this
corversation.

Penny then summarized her side of the story. She first stated that she took the exam very
early during finals week, as she had to leave campus to catch a flight home. She said that
Professor Robinson had allowed her to finish the exam on her way home, and to scan her
answers to her. She started working on the exam at Bryn Mawr, and then took it with her to the
airport, planning to finish on the plane. Penny stated that while she was in the airport, she
received an email from Professor Robinson saying there was an error in one of the exam
questions, and that she (along with everyone else who had started the exam) would thus be given
extra time. This excited her, as it would allow her to have more time to finish on the plane, and
she called Judy to ask if she had seen the email. When the jurors questioned her further, she
admitted that she discussed some of the exam questions with Judy (with the focus on how
difficult they were), but she stated that this conversation did not affect her answers on the exam
(which she finished on the plane following the phone conversation). Penny explained that she
and Judy were very close friends and had worked on everything together in the class, including
homework assignments and studying for tests. She even said that she would often use Judy’s
class notes to complete her own notes. Thus, she attributed the similarities in answers to the fact
that they worked very closely on everything, and had similar thought processes.

Judy gave a similar statement: she said that she and Penny often studied and worked
together. However, she stated that their phone conversation (while Penny was in the airport)
involved discussing both the difficulty of the exam and possible strategies they could use to
complete the questions (this discussion was triggered by the mistake being identified by
Professor Robinson). She also admitted that she was influenced by this discussion when writing
her answers, but said that neither of them had examined the other’s exam directly.

**Jury Deliberations/Statement of Violation:**

Although the jury agreed that some sort of violation had occurred, many jurors were
concerned that they did not have the full story. Based on comments made by Professor Robinson,
a juror pointed out that Judy did not address her Skype conversation with Professor Robinson in
which she admitted collaborating on the exam. The jury resolved to ask her about this during
circumstantial portion. The trial chair then explained that if further details emerged, any
statement of violation they wrote could be modified at a later point in the trial process. With this
in mind, the jury began crafting a statement of violation for both Penny and Judy, balancing the
desire to be relatively vague, since they felt they did not possess all the facts, with including the
details they did know, such as the fact that (according to Judy) the phone conversation involved
discussing how to answer the questions. Based on these deliberations, the jury consented to the
following statement of violation:

*Judy and Penny violated the Honor Code by not following the instructions of the
professor by discussing the content and degree of difficulty of the exam, which included a*
discussion of the processes and solutions for the exam questions. (9 jurors consented, 0 stood outside)

**Interim:**

Between the fact-finding and circumstantial meetings, the trial chair received an email from Professor Robinson, expressing concern that Penny and Judy’s accounts given during fact-finding were not in line with what they told her during the confrontation. Specifically (based on her Skype meeting with Judy), she stated that she was under the impression that Penny and Judy had talked about the exam in person in their dorm, rather than the discussion having taken place over the phone while Judy was in the airport. She therefore requested that the jury ask Judy about this discussion (of which Penny was unaware). Professor Robinson also mentioned that one of Penny’s midterm exams was suspiciously similar to another student’s (not Judy’s), but that she did not feel it was severe enough to warrant a confrontation. The trial chair also received an email from Judy, asking that she be able to talk to the jury alone during circumstantial, because she was uncomfortable talking about her family issues with Penny present.

**Circumstantial:**

Based on the emails received, the jury decided it would be best to talk to Penny and Judy individually for the circumstantial portion of the trial. Judy started off by apologizing for her actions. She explained that she had begun her phone conversation with Penny with a discussion of the question that contained an error and from there moved on to other questions. She said deep down, she knew her actions were wrong and that she was violating the Honor Code. However, she said that she was undergoing intense stress at the time due to her family’s financial problems. Due to these issues, her family had considered moving her to a public school because it was cheaper. However, Judy said that she really loved Bryn Mawr, and so wanted to earn very good marks on the exam in order to convince her parents to let her stay. She said that she very much regretted her violation, and maintained that she is a very honest person under normal circumstances. She ended her statement by saying she was willing to accept any consequences, but did not want a mark on her permanent record. She explained that her uncle had recently passed away, and she had to work in order to help support his family. Therefore, she did not want this incident to prevent employers from hiring her. A juror clarified that while it could recommend that the incident be reported to graduate schools, it would not appear on any permanent record that employers would see.

The jury then asked Judy a few clarifying questions about the facts of the case. Judy stated that she did discuss solutions with Penny, and that she was influenced by this discussion when writing her answers. However, she was unsure about how much of her work was her own versus how much resulted from the discussion. A juror asked her if she and Penny were still friends. She responded that they were, and have talked about the incident since the confrontation. She also stated that as of the trial, Penny knew she had confessed to Professor Robinson about the conversation. When asked if she had any ideas for resolutions, she reiterated that she was willing to accept any consequence, except a mark on her permanent record.

The jury then spoke to Penny. She began by saying that she and Judy had discussed the exam, and that her answers may have been influenced. She explained that she was very excited
that Professor Robinson had allowed her more time to take the exam (due to one of the questions
having an error). She also stated that she was used to discussing her logic used in her answers
with Judy; she said that they had such a discussion after every homework assignment. Because of
these two factors, she did not realize that discussing the exam at the time was wrong.

When the jury asked if she had changed her answers based on the discussion, she was
adamant that she did not. She stated that she was proud of her logic and was “not that bad” at
zoology, and so did not feel that she needed help to finish the exam. She said that her rough
answers were complete prior to the conversation, and that on the plane she had simply copied
them onto her final draft. A juror then asked if Judy might have had the opportunity to look at
her exam when she was not paying attention; she replied that she did not think so. She also stated
that she did not discuss the exam with anyone other than Judy. She then said she originally
blamed Judy for the violation, but had come to realize that having the discussion was also
partially her fault. She confirmed that she and Judy had talked about the incident since the
confrontation. When asked for ideas for resolutions, she said she would like to share her
experience with others in some way, in order to help people not make the same mistake she did.
Finally, a juror asked if she was aware that she was not allowed to discuss the exam until the end
of finals week (as stated on the cover page of the exam). She replied no, and indicated that she
thought she was allowed to discuss it after she had finished. The trial chair ended the
circumstantial portion by informing the jury of Professor Robinson’s suggested resolutions.
Professor Robinson was in favor of giving Judy and Penny credit for the self-scheduled portion
of the exam, and was also willing to give them credit for the two questions on the take-home that
did not show signs of collaboration. She also said that she felt her trust was restored with Judy
due to their Skype conversation during the confrontation, and said that any resolution involving a
discussion or letter between her and Judy was not necessary.

**Tentative Resolutions:**

One juror was absent for this meeting, but had sent his thoughts and suggestions via
email. The jury began deliberations by discussing possible resolutions that focused on education,
one of the three main trial goals. A juror stated that each party’s violation stemmed from a
different source. For Judy, this incident seemed to be a solitary event brought on by intense
stress, while for Penny, the incident seemed to be brought on by a lack of understanding of when
collaboration was appropriate and when it was not. This seemed clear based on her indication
that she did not fully understand the exam instructions, and by the fact that Professor Robinson
had noticed suspicious work from her before this incident. Therefore, the jury agreed that Judy
and Penny should each focus on these aspects in a letter to the community. The jury noted that
while having Penny educate others about her violation (as she suggested) might be helpful, it
wanted to ensure that she herself was fully educated about her violation before she helped others.
To this end, a juror suggested that she take Haverford’s academic integrity tutorial, and perhaps
help Bryn Mawr with their academic integrity tutorial, which was in the process of being created
(the trial chair agreed to email the dean of Bryn Mawr, asking if this would be a possibility).
Another juror suggested she could also attend future Honor Council abstract discussions, and
then write a letter reflecting on that experience. The jury also thought about having Judy explore
resources for managing stress.
The jury then moved on to resolutions focused on accountability. The jurors quickly agreed that while they should receive all earned credit on the self-scheduled portion of the exam (which showed no evidence of collaboration), they should both receive a zero on the take-home portion. A juror then brought up the possibility of separation from Haverford. Although some jurors believed a semester of separation might be beneficial, as it would give Judy and Penny time to reflect on and learn from their violation, others believed it would be best for them to learn from their violation while taking Haverford classes, so that they could immediately apply what they learned to their academics. Some jurors also suggested separation might seem punitive, because both Penny and Judy both suggested interest in majoring at Haverford, and a semester away might negatively impact their required schedules. Because the jurors were very split on the issue, the trial chair suggested they move on and return to the discussion after a period of reflection.

The jury then discussed whether or not the incident should be reported to other institutions of higher learning. Though a number jurors considered reporting to graduate schools more punitive than separation, one juror suggested that this resolution should be considered as having an impact beyond Haverford. In other words, with Haverford being part of a larger academic community, a jury’s failure to report incidents of academic dishonesty to graduate schools could have a negative impact on both Haverford’s standing in the academic community and the reputation of Bi-Co graduates within that community. To those jurors who felt that reporting could be punitive, another juror suggested that they consider reporting like “checking a box”, that is, an action which the jury was all but obligated to do based on the expectations of the academic community in regards to cheating and academic dishonesty. Based on this line of reasoning, previously skeptical jurors agreed to a resolution suggesting reporting, as long as the wording reflected the idea of Haverford being part of a larger academic community and included a clause leaving final discretion to the deans.

For resolutions focused on restoration, the jury focused on the restoration of trust between Professor Robinson and Penny. This was due to the facts that Penny and Judy stated that they were talking about the case on their own, and that Professor Robinson mentioned she felt trust had already been restored between her and Judy. The jury agreed that the best solution was to encourage a meeting between Penny and Professor Robinson.

Finally, the jury returned to the issue of separation. One juror suggested that they put in a tentative resolution to separate, with the understanding that it could be removed for finalizing resolutions if the parties expressed negative feedback toward it. Another juror suggested it be made more educational by having Penny and Judy’s return to Haverford be conditional on reading the Honor Code, taking the academic integrity tutorial, and attending at least two abstract discussions. A juror also pointed out that they could write their letters following their separation, reflecting on their experience. Although some jurors were still not fully comfortable with separation, they agreed to include it in tentative resolutions with the inclusion of these ideas.

The jury consented to the following tentative resolutions, with the absent juror automatically standing outside consensus:

1. The jury recommends that Judy and Penny receive a 0.0 on the take-home portion of their final exam. However, the jury further recommends that Judy and Penny receive all earned credit for the self-scheduled portion of the exam. (8 jurors consented, 1 stood outside)
2. With the goal of restoring trust between the two parties, the jury recommends that Penny and Professor Robinson discuss the violation and its implications. (8 jurors consented, 1 stood outside)

3. Judy and Penny will be separated from Haverford College for the Fall [year omitted] semester. However, in order to rejoin the Haverford academic community, Judy and Penny must:
   a. Read the Haverford Honor Code
   b. Complete Haverford’s academic integrity tutorial
   c. Attend at least two abstract discussions (8 jurors consented, 1 stood outside)

4. At the conclusion of their separation from the Haverford academic community, Judy and Penny will each write a letter reflecting on the incident and their subsequent experience with the restoration process. In their letters, we the jury ask that Judy reflect on the impact that stress can have on one’s academic integrity, and that Penny reflect on the difference between appropriate collaboration and academic dishonesty. These letters will be released with the abstract, and the jury recommends that they also be released to the Bryn Mawr community. (8 jurors consented, 1 stood outside)

5. Because reporting this case to graduate schools extends past the confronted parties’ relationship with the Bi-Co and into the relationship which they (and the Bi-Co itself) have with the greater academic community, we the jury recommend that the administration report the incidents of this trial to relevant graduate programs. However, we leave it to the discretion of the deans in case they determine that this infraction should not be reported. (8 jurors consented, 1 stood outside)

Resolutions as a whole: 8 jurors consented, 1 stood outside

Interim:

The trial chair received an email from the dean of Bryn Mawr, saying it would be possible to have Penny and Judy review the new Bryn Mawr academic integrity tutorial.

Finalizing Resolutions:

Judy and Penny began by asking for clarification on what academic separation meant. The trial chair explained they would not be allowed to take classes at Haverford, but they would be welcome on campus to socialize, eat at the DC, and attend social events including abstract discussions. Judy and Penny also expressed confusion about what a letter to the community meant and what abstracts/abstract discussions were (Bryn Mawr’s abstract procedures are very different from Haverford’s). The trial chair explained these things, and told them he would send them a link to past abstracts, so they could get a feel for what abstracts were and what letters to the community involved.

With these questions addressed, Penny and Judy said they were okay with resolutions 1-4, but had significant concerns about 5. Judy reiterated that she was under so much stress due to the death of her uncle, and stated she really regretted her violation and did not want it
following her around when she applied to graduate schools. Penny also said she regretted her mistake, and did not want it to impact her life in such a way. The trial chair stated that Professor Robinson agreed; while she felt the first four resolutions were fair, she also had many concerns about resolution 5, particularly because Penny and Judy were both first year international students at Bryn Mawr; these factors made it so they had a different understanding of academic honesty (and of Haverford’s procedures for a breach of honesty) than most.

After the parties left, the jury resumed deliberations. The jurors quickly agreed that they should recommend not reporting to graduate schools; they had been so focused on the objective aspect of the recommendation during tentative, they had not considered what the parties might think of it, especially considering they were first-year and international students. The jurors also felt more comfortable with separation, as the parties had agreed to it and the resolution was designed to be more educational. Finally, a juror suggested a resolution aimed toward Honor Council, encouraging them to work to find ways to educate Bryn Mawr students about Haverford’s Honor Code and procedures (which are very different than Bryn Mawr’s). The jury decided not to recommend that Judy and Penny assist with Bryn Mawr’s academic integrity tutorial, but the trial chair agreed to email them the idea, in case they felt it would be beneficial for them.

The jury consented to the following final resolutions:

1. The jury recommends that Judy and Penny receive a 0.0 on the take-home portion of their final exam. However, the jury further recommends that Judy and Penny receive all earned credit for the self-scheduled portion of the exam. (9 jurors consented, 0 stood outside)

2. With the goal of restoring trust between the two parties, the jury recommends that Penny and Professor Robinson discuss the violation and its implications. We the jury recommend that this discussion occur in person during the Fall [year omitted] semester. (9 jurors consented, 0 stood outside)

3. Judy and Penny will be separated from Haverford College for the Fall [year omitted] semester. However, in order to rejoin the Haverford academic community, Judy and Penny must:
   a. Read the Haverford Honor Code
   b. Complete Haverford’s academic integrity tutorial
   c. Attend at least two abstract discussions. (9 jurors consented, 0 stood outside)

4. At the conclusion of their separation from the Haverford academic community, Judy and Penny will each write a letter reflecting on the incident and their subsequent experience with the restoration process. In their letters, we the jury ask that Judy reflect on the impact that stress can have on one’s academic integrity, and that Penny reflect on the difference between appropriate collaboration and academic dishonesty. These letters will be released with the abstract, and the jury recommends that they also be released to the Bryn Mawr community. (9 jurors consented, 0 stood outside)

5. The jury recommends that Honor Council consider ways to educate the Bryn Mawr College community about the Haverford Honor Code. (9 jurors consented, 0 stood outside)
6. The jury recommends that this incident not be reported to institutions of higher learning. (9 jurors consented, 0 stood outside)

**Resolutions as a whole: 9 jurors consented, 0 stood outside**

**Post-Trial:**
The resolutions were not appealed. All resolutions have been completed.

**Penny’s Letter to the Community:**

I have broken the Honor Code by improperly collaborating with my friend on my final exam. After reading the Code and attending two abstract discussions, I reflected more on the studying collaboration and my relationship with the community and professor. I want to express my deep regret and sorrow for the community and my thanks for Honor Council and Professor [Robinson].

During the semester, I have worked with my friend and learned a lot from our discussions. Collaboration was really a beneficial process that it inspired me to question my thought and think more critically. I have learned different thinking process and thinking methodology with the help of my friend. We not only talked about the class notes, but also solve lots of related problems we found. However, the collaboration became no longer beneficial and justified when we still did it during the exam period. I was too careless when I started to talk about the exam material with my friend. Though I never meant to break the Honor Code, I didn’t take it seriously enough to remind myself all the time. From now on, it is so important for me to evaluate the appropriation of collaboration every time and prevent further mistakes.

I reflected more after attending two abstract discussions. The first one was about the changes of final grades by “Prospero”. I realized that the break of honor code is very irresponsible and unfair for my classmates. As a member of Haverford and Bryn Mawr College, I respect and enjoy the spirit of our community. It allows us to live and study in a safe environment that everyone is trustworthy. Thanks to the integrity sharing by all the community members, I can leave my laptop in the library, schedule the exams myself and most importantly, I can truly live without many worries because of trust. However, by breaking the honor code, I disrespected and broke the trust sharing with the community. I felt disappointed and mad to Prospero when he changed the final grades and imposed unfairness to others. Similarly, if I were my classmate, I would feel so hurt and unfair. Thus, my mistake was not only irresponsible for myself, but also hurtful for my classmates. I really feel sorry for them and thankfully, Honor Council and Professor [Robinson] have prevented me from imposing unfairness to my classmates. As a member in such a friendly and trusty community, I have enjoyed a lot of benefits because of my honest classmates and supportive professors. I feel awfully sorry for breaking the trust and I should become more responsible in protecting the merit of the community that I love.

I am more regretful and sorry after attending the honor code discussion session with professors. Many professors have talked about their support for the collaboration between
students and worries of over-collaboration. Their understanding made me feel guiltier. Since the collaboration is beneficial for our study, the professors choose to support it with trust. No one could deny that there’s no need for the professor to be such considerate for our convenience. Professor [Robinson] is so supportive to her students but I truly let her down. After the professors talked about their experiences with the break of honor code, I realized that my professor would doubt her years of teaching and examining mode because of my mistake. By discussing the exam with my friend, I broke the trust with my professor. Also, my mistake might question the benignant relationship between the professor and her students. She might rethink about the feasibility of the take-home exam and usual collaboration between students because of my mistake. I am sincerely sorry for disappointing the professor I respect and love. I wish my mistake would not affect the trust between the professor and her students as a whole.

I have learned and reflected more during the whole process and realized that my mistake was truly serious because it has affected the whole community. Though I have never thought about being dishonest and breaking the honor code, I truly did so because of my carelessness. I should have taken the code more seriously and understand the meaningfulness of it. The honor code has connected the community together and gave me such an amazing college environment. I will definitely beware of my responsibility as a community member in the future. Professor [Robinson] and Honor Council have been so helpful to us that I really feel the support. I feel so grateful for community that it is still tolerant when I hurt it. I have gained the precious lessons from my awful mistake and I have learned a lot from the reflecting process.

I am awfully sorry for Professor [Robinson], my classmates and the community. But I have more thanks in heart. Thanks to Honor Council for helping me go though the process patiently and inspiring me to think and reflect deeply. Thanks to Professor [Robinson] for preventing me from making mistakes and giving me the chance of correction. I really appreciate the chance the college gave me and I will never let the community down again in the future. With full thanks, I want to say sorry again for my community.

Judy’s Letter to the Community:

Deep inside, I knew it was wrong to discuss the exam paper with others, but I have been under great pressure starting shortly before final period, so I was afraid that I would do badly on this final. I was so worried because recently my family has some serious business trouble. My parents even talked to me and asked me to consider transferring to a public school because tuition is much less expensive. But I really love here. I love every professor and peer here. I don’t want to go. I wanted to use good score to convince my parents that I deserve this school.

What’s worse, my uncle passed away suddenly. This happened too fast and too sudden. None of our family members were ready for this. But before his sudden left, he was suffering in couple surgeries during my final period in May. All of stuff’s stuck in my mind. I was extremely stressful and my emotion was melting down. So then I shamefully allowed me to follow the ideas Penny and I discussed and do my take home part under apparent influence of Penny’s ideas and steps.

After my family met such a big business fiasco and my uncle passed away, my whole world turns upside down. I never had such big pressure before. I used to FaceTime with my mom everyday but now usually when I FaceTime her, she says that she is busy having meeting,
dealing with business. And I have to cancel my summer school plan because of the tuition problem. Even though my parents tell me not to allow their problems to influence my study and life, I simply can’t. My life has changed and I felt I was really lost. Also, about my uncle, I once felt so lucky to have him because he really treated me like his own daughter. He was the most important person other than my parents. And now, he passed away, left us. I felt so desperate.

However, after I got my professor's email, I realized that it is so wrong. It violates more than Honor Code; it violates my integrity that I used to be proud of. I am truly sorry. I should have been stronger to resist the temptations in life. I am clearly aware that the challenge in my life cannot be used as an excuse to cheat. Also, I feel more shameful after I confessed to my parents. They asked me to do exactly what I think I should do, telling the truth.

After I told my parents that I wasn't honest during the test, they chose to forgive me and they even comforted me when I was so worried and barely ate; they said that any mistake can be corrected as long as I have my life. I need to take care of myself and stay strong because nothing is more important than being alive. I think that is so true. That's the main reason I got my courage back and confess to Honor Code Council, wanting to correct my mistake.

My aunt is a housewife with two little boys, the bigger one is just ten. I wish that I were a boy so that I can play basketball with them, move heavy boxes for them, have man-to-man talk, and teach them how to shave. My own family was able to support them financially but not anymore now. Therefore, from now on, I need work hard, and when I actually am financially independent, I can and I will support my aunt and my two cousins for paying the tuition for them to colleges. But above all, the first step is to be an honest person again, and set a good example for my boys.

Thank you here for giving me a chance to correct my mistake.

Discussion Questions:

1. Was the Jury right to exclude the fifth tentative resolution (about reporting to graduate schools) from the final resolutions? How should Honor Council approach reporting to institutions of higher learning in future cases, as it is a decision which has a long-term impact on the confronted parties but is also a responsibility of Haverford as a member of an academic community?

2. How and perhaps why should a jury determine when/if separation is punitive? Was the jury right in drafting a separation resolution in the tentative portion, even though not all of them were totally comfortable with it?