

ALONE IN SPACE

She was the lone survivor, there was no one on mars base station, when she heard a knock at the main door. Her head jerked back in a split second. Her fingers stopped moving across the keyboard. the pupils in her eyes moved restlessly, scanning every possible nook and corner of the room from the very spot she was sitting in. she stood up, walked across the room – she surely was alone.

And then another knock.

It was fainter than before but, where is it coming from? She couldn't figure out. It didn't come from the inside; she was certain of that. Neither did any metal hammer hit against the outside of the base station. "How in the world is that even possible?" she dismissed her thoughts as she peeked out of each window and even checked and rechecked the cameras. Everything seemed perfect. She took her usual spot right in front of the computer, in the heart of the station, and did what she knew should be done. Confirm it from the radio. Strange. The radio showed no signs of disturbances or any tiny fluctuations. She sat there staring at the line graph, contemplating her next action.

Until it hit.

"Maybe john was right! Space makes you see and hear things. Or was it computers? Too much blue light and its radiations? Grandma always said screens make kids go berserk. Is that what its supposed to mean? Am I really losing my mind? Hearing things out of nowhere?" She hit her head and shook it as if that would make all the thoughts just vanish away. She took a deep breath. Wiped the sweat trickling down her forehead.

And stood up abruptly.

Stood blanking for three minutes straight and walked over to the bathroom. Splashed cold water onto her face more than five times. Five has always been a number that calmed her down. Count to five and the nightmare would go away. Name five things around you and the anxiety would subside. List five things in the morning to have a productive day. Clench and unclench your fist five times to control the heartbeat. And that, is exactly what she found herself doing. Five deep breaths and a cold glass of water brought her back to reality. Her eyes scanned the room. It radiated the warmth at home. Reminded her of Amanda, Sarah, Mia, John, Ali and even the cranky team leader Joshua.

Her team.

They've been here inhabiting this station for as long as she could remember. She was the last of them to join but from that very day she has always been In company of any one or another. The bright smiles of sarah, hysterical laughs of Amanda that can make you double over in laughter itself, the studious Ali, superstitious john who ironically had tons of hilarious horror stories and punctual and savage Joshua who let us break rules every now and then. Thinking about them brought a smile on her face. She walked towards the center piece and picked up the half-eaten snacks and wrappers and dusted off the couch. As she threw them in the bin, she caught a glimpse of the sweet corn crackers. "Ah! Mia and her weird taste buds!" she

thought out loud. Mia was the youngest of the team and was an avid alien existence believer. Although all this time in space she has never ever come across a single alien, but then again, she was the computer geek. Always in her seat. Clicking the keys. And laughing along with them. Her smile disappeared as soon as it crossed her mind.

ALIENS!

She washed her hands in a spur of moment and was in her seat, swiftly typing on her computers. The clicking of the keyboard keys and the mouse. The zooming movement of the cameras and radio receivers was the only sound in the room. There was a hopeful glint in her eyes. By the time her teammates arrive maybe she might have something, to show them, instead of an unexplainable phenomenon. But before she could press ENTER. The lights flickered. Her computer screen blacked out. The radio graphs shot up.

There was aloud bang on the door.

Her heart dropped. Blood froze in her veins. Her face turned white. And she sat locked up in her place. She didn't move an inch. Staring at her reflection on the blank screen. There was another knock. Slighter this time. And another. The series of knocks grew louder and impatient. She pressed the space bar frantically. Jabbed onto all the protection buttons in the state of the panic. Until she heard the door being opened. Was she being invaded by them? Before she could even prove their existence?

There in the doorway stood a smiling john and an annoyed Joshua.

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