

# **empty.**

The adventurer wakes up to the soft sound of the engine. He gets out of his tiny excuse of a bed and stretches in the zero gravity of the living quarters. He pulls on his suit with ease. He is hungry for something, so he calls for his crew mates to toss him something to eat. He gets no response. He thinks of how quiet it is. It shouldn't be this quiet. Where are his crew mates? Why is nobody yelling over his intercom? Odd. He floats out of his room.

His crew mates aren't in the living space. They also aren't in the kitchen, control room, or bathroom. The engine has gone silent. He can't find them and he is beginning to get a weird feeling. Where are they? They should be here. There is only one more place to check, and he isn't sure he is prepared to go there yet. He has never told anybody but the room he has yet to check makes him uneasy. He decides he will just have to wait on them to show up. This also means that he will have to do everything else. He starts on his way to the control room.

He immediately realizes what is wrong once he arrives. Everything is dead. The tool used to control fuel says that they are empty. The tool used to set the spacecraft's course is dead, and the emergency light is blinking. The oxygen levels are high, at least.

This is bad. If the crew had been there, everything would be fine, but he doesn't understand this machinery. He decides he has to check the last place he hasn't checked yet. He isn't ready, but he will force himself to do it. It's time.

He steps into the dusty storage room. It smells of mildew, and something else he can't quite put his finger on. He realizes what the smell was as soon as he slowly passes by the last aisle of boxes. The smell was death. He finds his crew mates with a bullet through each of their foreheads leaned up against the last row of boxes. Blood is splattered on the crates of supplies behind them. He doesn't know what to do. He forces himself to look at it and take it in so he can come to terms with what he has discovered. As he is not the pilot, he has no way of guiding the ship or figuring out what happened to all the gas. There is another thing that the explorer is starting to realize.

He is alone.

### Fear

He thinks back to his family. He misses his son, his wife, his dog. He even misses his dad, who he strayed from before he left. His dad had never *liked* the boy's decisions, but he always supported him. He always loved him. The drifter missed these people more than everything. He also missed his crew. A man named Li Jiang from China, a woman named Anna

Müller from Germany, and a younger man named Pepe Garcia from Mexico. He thinks of them and their mission and nearly breaks down right there. He looks down at the American Flag on his suit. These had been his only companions for the past 3 years he had been up here. They had become a part of his family. He tried his intercom again; Nothing. Static. Useless. He threw it off of his head in pure frustration. He has no connection back to Earth. They are a million miles away. There is so much to say, but nobody to say it to.

The explorer decides that it would help to get rid of the bodies. He needs to get them out of here before he suffers the same fate as them. He grabs Jiang and quickly starts on his way to the hatch. It will be unbearable to look at them this way any longer. The drifter lays Jiang at the door of the hatch, and goes back for the others. He soon has all of his friends at the hatch. He slowly and sadly leaves the room and closes the door behind him. The adventurer looks at the switch to open the hatch. It is covered in dust. He flips it and looks out the window. He watches as his only friends drift into the endless void of space. A tear forms on his cheek and he watches as that slowly floats away too.

It seems as if everything floats away in the end, doesn't it?

### Subsistance

The adventurer had enough food left for a week since the greenhouse had shut down. The supplies had been used up long before whatever happened on that fateful day when he lost everything and everyone. He felt a slight ache in the pit of his stomach and it rumbled deeply. He was going to go hungry before long. He was also starting to starve from something other than

hunger. The explorer needed human contact. To be utterly and completely alone is the worst fate a human being may suffer. The explorer was *starving* for contact.

When you are deprived of something you need, you find a way to get it. When you are without human contact, the brain must create it. In the wanderer's case, his new companion was not human, but something far more sinister. A dark figment of his imagination that could lead to his own demise if it was not controlled. His mind was taking the fast lane to the same fate that the explorer's crew mates had suffered. His brain knew what was to come to the adventurer, but refused to accept it. It was a battle of death and determination. There is no way to put it other than, it was a one-sided fight. Death was inevitable and could only be held back for so long. The adventurer had his mind set on holding it off as long as possible.

At first, Death only appeared in the drifter's dreams. As the day went by, he started to appear everywhere. The explorer's only way of holding him off was to think of other things. If he thought of his new opponent for too long, he knew what would happen. He would not let that happen. Instead, he thought of his family. He thought of how much he loved and missed them, and he thought of what he would do if he could have just one more day. Just one more, and he would be happy. That is what he told himself to keep Death away. He truly wished he could be with them forever. He drifted off to sleep once more. Just a few more days.

### Acceptance

He wakes up and finally realizes something. He may never see his family again, but he can let everything go with the thought of one last day with them. A day where he is with them,

his true loves, one last time. He begins to think of his dog, who would always be waiting for him at the door when he got home. He thinks of his son's first steps, and how he was lucky enough to watch him grow. He thinks of his beautiful wife, who he had always known would be the one for him. He thinks of how lucky he was to have had the experience, and he thinks of one last thing to do. So he does it. He does it well and he takes his time because in the end, he knows it will find its way back home. He knows it. The explorer goes back to the dusty storage room, and grabs one of the defense weapons from the ground. He slowly raises it to his head and smiles. Our explorer closes his eyes and, one last time, thinks about everything that he has had in life. He thinks of his wife, his dog, and his only son. He pictures them all together as a happy family. That is, after all, what they had been; a happy family. He smiles, and with the slightest movement of his finger, his story has reached its end.

On a sunny Saturday morning, a boy is taking his dog on their daily walk through the woods. The boy nearly trips when the dog starts yanking on the leash. She quickly leads him to a spot in the brush where he spots something tangled in the bushes. It looks like a note. He picks it up and when he reads it, he turns around. He and his dog run home as fast as they can. When the boy shows his mother what he found, she breaks down in tears of disbelief, but she knows it must be true. His love has found them. Everything may float away in the end, but those things never fail to get to where they need to go. Love always finds a way.

A Poem From Dad

*I know this note will find the way,  
Though it may take a million days,  
Although you know I've passed away,  
I'm always in your heart.*

*Your Daddy loves you, my dear son,  
I miss you more than anyone,  
Just don't let your heart come undone,  
You're always in my heart.*

*I love and miss you,*

*Dad*