

Entry Two - Peter

by

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No Such Thing Productions

INT. Bridge, Starship Adamantine - DAY

Static.

Peter and Chel sit side by side, staring down at NCC1701-Delta from orbit. Chel has on headphones, but the music is so loud, it pulses faintly through the cabin.

Peter clicks something on his data pad, which emits a soft beep as it begins to record.

PETER

Day two-eighty-eight aboard the Adamantine. It is 0832 hours. Official calendar date is-... is...

(breaking off, distracted) Chel, will you turn that down? Chel! ... Chel! ... she can't hear me. Of course she can't. Sitting right next to me, and she's a whole world away. Figures. Story of my life.

Where-... (he pauses, then sighs) Despite the obvious temptation this opportunity affords me, I don't feel particularly comfortable saying "Captain's Log." I could. I... may have on personal logs. But I'm only nominally a captain, with a crew of one other person. I'm not making any terribly difficult decisions, and thus far, this has been no different than my position back home. It's just that now, instead of four comfortable walls and reliable gravity, I'm supervising Chel in the middle of an endless, weightless, deadly void. Because she wasn't getting into enough trouble when she couldn't fly. I'm not a captain. I'm still just a supervisor. Though I don't imagine it matters very much what I call myself. Especially given these notes are for my reference, and mine alone. No one will ever need to access these logs. I doubt anyone will ever hear any of this. But you never really keep logs for other people. It's

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PETER (cont'd)

for the details. The little things that slip through the cracks when time and emotion start to cloud... everything. Or I imagine that's how it is for everyone else. I have a near perfect memory, and I've never had much experience with any sort of emotional overcast. Details though... Devil's in the details. You never know how these things all fit together, until it's over.

We're in orbit above the planet now. From this height, NCC1701-Delta is a heavily cratered, rocky mass, swathed in streaky bands of multi-hued clouds of periwinkle and violet. It stands at about a third the size of Earth, and while it has no moon to speak of, a thick double layer of ice and debris forms a choking pair of concentric rings around the planet's circumference. Light from the binary stars, which Chel has inexplicably nicknamed Sirius and Remus, are casting a pale lilac light over its surface, and across the Adamantine. Against the ink black background of the sky, the whole scene takes on a forlorn, melancholic look. As though this part of the universe were in mourning. That's how Chel put it this morning, as we were coming over the horizon, watching Sirius and Remus rising in the sky. But I have to disagree with her. With the dust of the rings choking the atmosphere and the haze of the two stars battling for attention, the planet doesn't look forlorn so much as abandoned. A craggy, dusty relic in spiderwebbed veils of blue and grey. No trees, few large bodies of water, and craters gape like empty eye sockets and fangless mouths in a battered, broken skull. It's beautiful. But eerie. And she is... utterly under its spell.

He looks at her, but it's like she isn't there.

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PETER (cont'd)

Chel?

No response.

How the hell can she listen to music that loud? I've told her a thousand times- I mean, it was worse when she wouldn't wear headphones. But she's going to hurt herself. She's doing that thing with her hands again. I can't tell if she's conducting the music or shaping it. She never sits still. Always playing with her hands, or her afro, or her glasses, or her lab coat. No one should have that much excess energy. Though, now that I think about it, this is the stillest she's been in weeks. Not to mention the quietest. I thought there'd be screaming. Crying. But she's just... enraptured. She did hug me. Came up from behind and wrapped her arms around my neck while I was making orbital adjustments, and rested her chin on top of my head. Which... caught me off guard. It wasn't the usual tackle, no unbearably loud shrieking. Just... soft. Quiet. She smelled like brown sugar and caramel. I'm not a terribly physical person, but for once it didn't feel invasive. Maybe because I knew she wasn't looking at me.

I can't stop going over the numbers. It's like ticker tape running through my head. 150 gallons of fresh, immediately available water. 400 pounds of dehydrated food, and 30 emergency nutrition packs. We have 4 basic first aid kits, more supplies in the lab for more serious injury. 5 pounds of oxygen per square inch of the Adamantine. 52 hours to complete our survey, before our departure window closes and leaves us stranded. Everything is numbers. The same numbers, over and over again, running through my head. Every possible scenario. Every

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PETER (cont'd)

potential injury, malfunction, disaster, reduced to a series of ones and zeros, basic calculations, and theoretical simulations in my head. Ticker tape, day in and day out. I have seen this mission every day, for the past nine months, from every possible angle. I have accounted for everything. Absolutely everything. There's a comfort, a solidity in having these numbers. They don't change. They don't waiver. They're reliable. Infallible. And for some reason, it doesn't feel like it's anywhere near enough.

I don't think even the ghost of the idea that we could both die out here has even crossed Chel's mind. I don't know if it ever even occurred to her. Not once. She's already down there. On the surface. And she's left me up here, on my own. Whatever it is she's looking for, she's already wrapped her fingers around it in her mind's eye. Holding it to her chest. She sees everything. Paints a picture of it so clearly it might as well be a photograph. I admire that. Envy it, to be honest. She lives in colored brush strokes. I've never managed much more than a complex of digits in black and white.

We are, at this moment, 231.844 light years from Earth. It took 287 days to get here, and we had to avoid about 700 hypothetical disasters a day to make it here in one piece. By all accounts, we should not be here. Against all odds, we are. I'll be the first to admit it, I didn't want to come. I didn't see the point in trusting my continued existence to a thin metal tube, a manufactured atmosphere, and the untraceable patterns of chaos, or the cruel indifferent whims of gods I've never had much faith in or use for. But being here

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PETER (cont'd)  
now... with her. ...seeing her  
face-...

He watches her in silence for a moment, thinking that maybe this might just have been worth it. After a few seconds, Chel notices him staring.

CHEL  
Peter?

She takes off her headphones. We hear her music a little louder as she lets them dangle around her neck.

CHEL  
Sorry. Were you saying something?

PETER  
I-... No. I just-... It's nothing.

CHEL  
It's beautiful, isn't it? Your  
planet.

PETER  
Yeah.

CHEL  
You okay?

PETER  
I don't know.

CHEL  
Nervous?

PETER  
Actually... no. I don't know. But I  
think... I'm ready.

CHEL  
Yeah?

PETER  
Yeah. I just.. got the sense... I  
think... we're going to be okay.

She smiles at him, and reaches out, giving his hand a light squeeze. He lets it linger there for a moment, then pulls away, reaching out and clicks off the data pad.

FADE OUT.

END OF SERIES.