The Station is a story-based game set in space. A space station was sent by your species to a hostile alien planet in hopes of investigating the reason the other alien species is so violent and always in conflict with members of its own species. This space station then goes radio-silent and you are now tasked with going onboard that space station and finding its 3 crew members.

The game itself is visually pleasing, albeit overall a little dark, with an art team who clearly knew what they were doing. The darkness serves a very specific purpose: the game wants you to treat it as a horror game. It tries to achieve this objective through its visuals and well-placed auditory jumpscares to create a horror atmosphere, such as with doors abruptly opening and lights turning on only as the player enters the room, or some actual scares as the lights turn off and a menacing sound is heard from the hallway. However, there are no actual threat to the playable character, and the player can easily fall into a comfortable rhythm playing the game, only occasionally jumping at the odd jumpscare (which, while unpredictable, are never given any kind of explanation). It is clear the developers never wanted the player to replay a portion of the game by having an actual threat in the game, but some kind of risk-reward is inherent and required for a game trying to pass as a horror game, without which the player just feels like they are moving through a pre-programmed story (which, in this case, they are).

The puzzles themselves serve a gameplay purpose, but never go above and beyond. The player is left to wander through room after room, while occasionally challenged by puzzles with wildly fluctuating levels of difficulty. The locker/pattern puzzles are too complicated relative to the other puzzles to the point of requiring some kind of external guide for the average player. The other puzzles feel more like a programmed number of steps which need to be done rather than an actual puzzle requiring reasoning to be solved.

Where the game really shines is in its story, with intricate lore, details of messages and emails between crew members, side stories and a big reveal becoming clearer and clearer towards the end. With a well-crafted and paced story, the game doesn’t overextend itself, giving the necessary details to the story and ending the game perfectly once the player understands the story. However, at a meager playtime of around 60 to 90 mins (120 when struggling on puzzles or trying to get every single secret), the game still feels deceptively short. At the end, the player is left with the feeling that some very good story writers were tempted to create a game without carefully considering the best gameplay ingredients.

The Station clearly had a good art and writing team and this is visible throughout the game. For people who simply want an atmospheric game with excellent writing and visuals to support it, this game will provide a wonderful experience. But without adequate gameplay, it feels like it would probably have been more successful through a different medium. The game just feels “short” in most senses of the word, from lacking gameplay, to strange unexplainable jumpscares, to simply being a short game, not surpassing Steam’s two-hour refund limit. With an asking price of €15, The Station is offered at a steep price when compared with other indie games which can offer a more meaningful experience at the same or a lesser cost.