

Everyone said running on the moon was a stupid idea. She couldn't disagree with them more. Equipped with a weighted suit, she half bounded through the powdered regolith of that satellite.

There was something universally calming to being alone, and simply running. In her training she had opted to forgo the usual groups and instead had made it a point to be alone, regardless of the distance. Loving the feeling, she signed up for mundane missions far from the base, even if they had nothing to do with her role as a programmer, this one to collect samples from some ancient ingenious extrusion.

Now that feeling was multiplied a hundredfold as the stark and bleak lunar landscape raced by her. The superb and absolute darkness of space stretched above, like some inky black shape threatening to descend upon her, punctuated only by the tiny pinpricks of light of distant stars. Somewhere, almost a thousand miles through the lunar rock, and then almost a quarter of a million more, lay the earth, a distant worry.

In some sense, at this moment in time, Rebecca realized that she was most likely the most remote human in existence. And she had no problems with that.

Eternally admiring the stark and surreal contrast that the sunlight caused when it hit the moon's atmosphere-less body, she was startled and somewhat annoyed by her communicator chirping to life.

"Rebecca, you there?" Communication protocol strictness had diminished somewhat now that there were almost a thousand people on the moon, from a variety of countries and companies.

"I copy Beta, whats going on?" She asked, slowing her pace and trying to mask the annoyance in her voice.

The voice on the other end, probably Professor Mathews thankfully wasted no time.

"Listen, there's been some sort of event. We're still confirming with the sensors to make sure it wasn't an anomaly or some misreading, but we think we just observed a collision between Asclepius and some other unknown object."

"What?" She said, a bit too loudly. "Did you say a collision? Are you sure?"

There was a moment of hesitation on the other side of the line.

"Well, no. I mean, I was tracking the thing almost because I had nothing better to do but we remembered that you were doing something with the object recognition system. We weren't sure whether what we saw was a false positive or not."

"Huh. Thats actually pretty exciting. Do you have even recorded somehow? This is a one in a billion event. Scratch that, its basically impossible! Do you know what the other object was?" Rebecca asked, her annoyance turning into excitement. There was almost certainly a paper if not three or four in such an event.

"Actually, Professor Petrov was actually pretty agitated about the whole thing. He has some of the other people doing up revised trajectories. The thing was supposed to get quite close; there's a reason its on a list after all."

“Ok, well, it'll take me a bit to get back. I should be back in airlock in about thirty minutes.”

She heard the soft click of the communicator and she was left once again in isolation. However, now the emptiness was invaded with an almost palpable excitement. Her nominal assignment was to increase the resolution of the sensors by installing a new software package, but like all things, there were complications. She had gotten to extend her stay on the remote Beta Base for almost two extra weeks. Which brought her to now.

As she half ran, half bounded over the lunar landscape she lapsed again into a more automatic rhythm. This was in no small part due to the amplification of her breathing in the suit. Even with her exercise and the samples in the compartment in her back, the gauge didn't even read half empty.

It was exhilarating, and she half wondered how she was going to re-acclimate to being on earth again and how much better it would be if NASA had facilities in Montana or some other properly isolated area.

About five minutes out her communicator came to life again, but instead of a message there just came a steady stream of static.

“Dammit.” She cursed, stopping to fiddle with the settings on the thing. This was certainly not the first time someone had accidentally contacted her, and it seemed like it would not be the last. To their defense, it was somewhat easy to select the wrong person, and whole system lacked clear feedback to the user. With a sigh she continued forward.

As she got close, she thought about the place that had been her home now for almost three months

Beta base was situated in the crook of a massive crater whose name she probably should remember. Several hundred feet across, the crater and its walls provided good protection from solar wind and micro impacts, lessening the need for ugly solutions like the massive concrete and rock shielding of Alpha Base. Instead the hab had been a study in the utility and economy of inflatable structures.

However, because money was once again short, the 'temporary' unit had stayed its prototypical self since its inception nearly three years ago.

The center held its massive telescope, the size and the shape of the crater perfectly aligning with the device as if the impact had been specifically designed for the equipment rather than the other way around.

The sun was now coming in at an angle, and if it hadn't been for the lunar experience she had, the effect would definitely have been disorienting. When the fresh researchers came up, even with warning and simulation, they were always stuck by the stark and at times vertigo enhancing contrast of the lunar landscape. Ever rock was outlined, casting a perfectly definable shadow, as if they're time on earth had been an insufferable low definition rendering of real life. Of course, earth also had color. You couldn't always win.

As Rebecca approached the rise that lead to the base, she, for once, initiated communication with it and wondered which airlock she should use.

The communicator hummed in her ear, but no response came.

Ironically given its massive array, Beta had a massive unsolved communications problem. Uniquely situated in the 'dark' side of the moon, signals with earth were at times spotty, since geostationary (or perhaps lunarstationary?) orbits were impossible. Although several theoretical frozen orbits had been planned, further studies had revealed that even they too decayed given a short time. Since now half of space infrastructure was privatized, the increased expenditure of running a boost or two so frequently was financially daunting. There had been a strategy for setting up a constellation further out but, surprise, it had never really solidified. The team at Beta had to rely on several spotty satellites and ground communication.

Because of this, she merely let out a sigh and trudged forwards, tired from her excursion. It would be quite ironic but she might bring up the lack of communication with the signals with Mathews if they had time after she looked over the object recognition system.

As she came to the top of the rise though, her heart clenched in her chest.

At the center of the crater lay the inordinately expensive telescope, but several massive rents marred its surface. Twisted pieces of metal littered the center of the crater and in one look she knew it could never be fixed. She managed a shocked choking sound. The device was the center of her work and she had worked on its software for almost half a year. How was this possible?

For a moment she stood in shock, unable to move or process what had happened. Her mind jumped from sadness to anger and numbness. Had someone done this? Although it had never happened to her knowledge, the vast sums involved with space work made industrial sabotage a possibility. Not all of the work was government sponsored. In Tiny Beta base alone there were six different companies doing various work.

But no, it didn't look like explosives had gone off, there was no charring and the fragments visible from the lip of the crater didn't look melted. But she had no idea if they would be given the lack of air.

"B-Beta Base" She said hesitantly. "Beta Base, what the hell is going on?" she managed.

Only static met her response.

At this point a new emotion, fear whelmed its way up and gripped her body. But a morbid curiosity overcame her and she scrambled down the cut that traversed the crater lip.

As she approached, she could make out more of the destruction. Several sensor nodes and smaller subsystems on the array itself had also been destroyed. If she had a feeling before, she was sure of it now: the array would never be used again. She began to despair. It had taken her several years to get this position, and she had to twist several arms, have week long conversations with others and even had to eventually bribe one particularly nasty son of a bitch who had stood in her way for no reason other than spite.

She was on the edge of the array now. In any ordinary situation she would have immediately gotten a shocked communication telling her to get off the sensitive instrument. Even given its size, its careful calibration meant that actually walking on it was never allowed.

She could see amid the holes in the array that there were what looked like several boulders that hadn't

been there before.

It took moving closer and a half second of confused pondering before she realized what had happened. It was an impact. And not a micro-impact. It wasn't something that they had to replace a panel for. It wasn't some minor inconvenience. This was an honest to goodness impact.

She looked into space, half expecting to see more material coming towards her. But of course there wasn't. No wonder her communication hadn't gone through! Everyone must be frantically trying to get a hold of earth, or at least Alpha Base. She could just imagine Petrov yelling at the others. He had warned of impacts for some time, although the ones that concerned him were quite a bit smaller. No one had anticipated this.

She finished mourning the lost array, and got to her feet. It was clear that not only the array and her research, but also all of Beta Base would be decommissioned because of this. She clenched her hands. It was a god damn freak event! You couldn't predict something like this!

She imagined the lawyers and the risk assessors of the private sponsors shaking their heads. "I'm sorry, we can't provide funding this cycle. Our shareholders have spoken. In light of recent events, its too dangerous." This would set back funding for years.

But it was such a freak event! She stared up out of the crater and thought about the kind of trajectory that would be required to hit the array. It was ridiculous! The thing had been built in the crater for precisely this reason. The higher the side of the formation, the less likely it would be for micro impacts to scarr the surface. They should be worrying about dust and software problems, not this!

Whatever it was, it would have had to come in at an angle almost straight down on the facility she figured.

She clenched her teeth against the stupidity of it all and braced herself for the chaos that was bound to be happening inside the base.

She approached the Base, its bulky geodesic design hidden in the shadow of the crater as the sunlight inexorably ran away from her. She approached the closest airlock and fumbled with the manual controls on the outside. Obviously everyone would be too focused on the crisis to notice her approaching.

But her hands were trembling with shock and anger, and it took her nearly five minutes to open the door getting steadily more and more mad as she fiddled with the system.

"God damn it!" She yelled at the door. "Fuck this piece of shit!" Maybe these kind of live or die systems shouldn't be awarded to the lowest goddam bidder, she fumed. After several more minutes, sweat now running down her face, she finally managed to get the cumbersome system to cooperate, and the door indicated that it was ready.

She went to open it and nearly dislocated her arm. She had intended to slide the damn thing open in one sweep in her anger, but instead the door barely budged! She cursed at the thing and threw her weight against it, forgetting that that was usually the worst reaction to malfunctioning equipment. She could be excused in this situation she thought.

The door protested, but finally slid open, revealing the dark innards of the airlock.

“Someone want to give me a god damn hand with this?” She said into her communicator on all local channels. There was, of course, no response. Oh how she would grill the technicians for this...

She knew the workings of the airlock, or at least thought she did. The beginning trainings had been boring as sin and relentless in the first couple of days. It was a surprise she even remembered that there was a manual on the airlock. Now what was the next part?

Well of course she had to close the door. Easier said than done, she could have sworn the damn thing had gotten heavier somehow. But with protest, it clicked into place and indicated that the airlock was armed. Now there were controls to vent air into the lock...

She scanned the tiny transitional room, finding them in a corner. The screen was distressingly dull, probably because it had been exposed to radiation or dropped on installation or something stupid like that. Thankfully it wasn't a touch screen she thought, fumbling with her heavy gloved hands as she located the manual controls below the screen and tried to make out the order of which ones to activate first.

Blue then red? There were instructions but in their lovely international cooperation ideals, the designers had made them only pictorial. She squinted at the asinine little person in the drawings trying to establish from the point of view whether they were moving the red lever towards or away from themselves.

Picking a direction she engaged the system and was satisfied to hear a hissing sound. It was in fact the first sound beside her own and the communicator that she had heard in several hours. She waited for the airlock to pressurize, growing bored as the overly engineered system chugged along.

She sat on the ground at first, swearing that the system was usually faster than this. Finally, her already reduced patience had diminished far enough. She got her feet and went to the door on the opposite end. Thankfully it had an actual window instead of some video system or other bullshit. She shoved her helmeted face up to it and knocked on the door.

“Hey, whats going on? Can you open this damn thing” She asked, although she knew that the airlock technician who was posted around the corner probably couldn't hear her anyways.

She sighed, but was not surprised when no one answered.

She was about to turn away when her eyes caught something out of place about the base. Firstly, the lights were out in the airlock bay. Secondly, there seemed to be a fair amount of tools on the ground.

This was far from typical. Lax communication or not, if they were doing maintenance on such an important system, they should have told her days before she went out. But as she stared at the room, an irrational fear came over her. She hadn't heard from the base since she was coming in. Surely they would have tried to tell her about the impact... bad communications or no, they knew she was out here...

Could something even worse have happened? The base was right up against the crater wall she reassured herself. This is simply what came of combined organizations responding to a crisis.

Inevitably every side was trying to get in contact with some higher up, but it would be hard with the array down.

If it happened recently, which was likely, it would take a bit for the Captain, the nominal leader of the small base to reestablish order. That was after all, the purpose of the military in this situation.

So this damn airlock is broken. Strange that they wouldn't just deactivate it. Maybe the crisis happened in mid maintenance...

She tried to stop the repressurization and was pleasantly surprised when the system actually did what she had asked it to do. Now to open the door again...

Since the airlock obviously wouldn't let her open it without the room being depressurized, she was surprised to say the least when it opened freely.

What the fuck? She had just pressed the door open button. It was supposed to wait until the room was fully depressurized before opening...

The remaining air escaped with a forceful rush, which unlike the portrayal in fiction, didn't suck her into the openness of space. However, what the fiction didn't communicate is that such rapid depressurizations were very dangerous to the structure they belonged to. There had been accidents where whole section had been ripped apart before due to such problems, but mostly in test, or so she had been told.

Fear surged pointlessly. This time concerned she had further damaged the airlock. But, running her hands along the heavy metal door, she defensively realized that she had followed the instructions, or at least she thought she had.

At least now she was free of that damn room.

She emerged from the hab and a further fear ran through her as she noticed the sun running low against the crater. Her suit was rated for nighttime operations, but there was the whole human response to such environments. She switched on her lights.

She immediately wished she hadn't. Her lights elucidated what had been hidden by the shadow of the crater. Above her, the massive geodesic dome of Beta base was crushed on one side. Various smaller holes riddled the exterior. She backed away unconsciously in horror. She was stunned again. Speechless.

That the array had been hit; that was a disaster. That the base had been hit...there were no words for that. Thanks to the relative weakness of the lunar gravity, climbing up to the nearest hole was possible even in her bulky suit. She was subconsciously aware of the exposed rebar, poking this was and that from the wrecked roof. One tear in her suit...

Finding a hole that was unfortunately big enough for her to fit in with some effort, she slipped into the inside of the dome, and sweating profusely now, lowered herself to a dangling position from the dome roof.

There were several floors to the facility and below her she could see the top of them. Monitors and expensive signals equipment lay shattered on the ground. On one spot beneath her she could see

straight through to the floor beneath her.

Suppressing the logical implications of what she was seeing, she hesitated, wondering what the drop would do to her suit, assuming that she missed the further hole in the floor. She didn't have to think for long; although her fear was rising inside her like some foreign dark ocean, she finally realized that she simply didn't have the strength to hang where she was for much longer. She let go.

Even with the lunar gravity, and perhaps because she was in a suit, the fall was jarring. Her feet slammed into the remains of a desk, and threatened to twist under her. Her body impacted secondly with the rigid parts of her suit and she was surprised nothing ripped. However something impacted with her lower leg and arm, which caused her to sit in shock for a moment.

She looked beside her, expecting to see rebar sticking out of her arm, but she had merely impacted with one of the monitors. Although she had bruised her arm, perhaps even to the bone, it didn't feel like a break.

Shifting herself from amid the tangled pile of ruined equipment and desk chairs, she got to her feet. The landing had certainly winded her, but she forced herself to move. She had to make sure... what, that there were others? She looked dubiously at the hole she had dropped through. This was a full depressurization event. Forget the lack of air, the impact itself would have caused havoc as it tore through the tiny base. Despite this, she took tentative steps down to the second floor.

The place was a twisted horror filled mirror of the base she had left not a handful of hours earlier. Smashed reinforcing and equipment lay everywhere. Lights flickered, indicating that at least one of the backup generators had managed to come online. But worse of course were the bodies.

She had been trying to prepare herself, but she couldn't help but to cry out when she found the first one. The man, a technician whose name she didn't recall, lay on the ground. Blood welled from the body, but it looked strange against the ground, until she realized that it had of course evaporated, leaving just a sickly residue. The man's face was an inhuman gray. She tried to not look at his expression.

And of course that was just the beginning. There were close to seventy people in Beta Base. She walked numbly through the corridors. It was clear that no one had much time before the decompression had hit. Alarms would have undoubtedly triggered from the initial impact as the pressure sensors had tripped, but the size and brutality of the hole meant that reaction was impossible. If they hadn't died from whatever pressure wave the impact had caused, they surely would have seconds later when the air was ripped from the base.

About halfway down the floor she found Mathews. He was still sitting at the communication station. She had a vivid image of her voice echoing through the dead station, asking to be let in. Mathews was right here. And there was the rest of her team...

Despite her best efforts she couldn't take it anymore. She collapsed to the floor, crumpling in a strange angle because of the joint of the suit buckling under her. Tears ran from her eyes, heedless of the fact that cleaning off her helmet would be almost impossible. She let out a wretched scream of horror, slamming her gloved hand into the floor over and over again, only stopping when she was too discomfited by the sound of her own voice.

Gods it was just her. She had just spoken to Mathews over the radio. She had just seen the rest of her

team. They had been waiting for her to return to go over the software again. Literally just hours ago. Literally just hours ago! She fell to the ground and looked at the ruined ceiling. It was just her...

She lay there a long, long time beside the remains of her team.

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When she at last rose, it was only from the protest of her suit. It had been several hours since she had exited the once safe Beta Base. She was running out of oxygen. It was the first of many notifications she comforted herself. If there was a way out of this nightmare, she would have to somehow take things one thing at a time.

Still sniffing, and every second threatening to absurdly break back into meaningless tears, she rose back to her feet. The bruises ached from her landing, but she tried to ignore them. After all, they were nothing compared to the injuries her team had received.

She drifted from room to room as if in a daze. More smashed equipment, even down to the first level. More bodies. She had not found anyone alive. But the tantalizing possibility of someone, anyone alive drove her, even if it would have been impossible. They would have had no warning, and second of time before they died in horrible ways not worth thinking about.

She had forgotten where the canisters were and she was having trouble thinking clearly about what she needed to be doing, so she wandered from room to room, each one unveiling a picture of destruction. She opened the room to one of the labs and stopped. Professor Petrov lay on the floor, obviously dead. She drove a hand into the table and screamed in frustration and fear.

Gods, you too? Of course him as well. Why would he have somehow escaped? But still

She let out another wretched yell.

The grumpy old Russian had been a frustrating but essential part of base life, and one of the reasons she was up her in the first place.

She shook her head, as the anger and sadness roiled uncontrollably.

“Damn! Damn! Damn!” She yelled, sweeping the contents of the nearby table to the ground. The last item, a copy of Petrov's seminal work lay unmolested. *The effect of microimpacts on distributed multiphase arrays*. Rebecca let out a horrible laugh and threw it too to the ground and slammed the door, leaving her adviser's lab for the last time.

Well, there was really only one possibility then. One of the labs had been built before the main dome was constructed and still had its own pressure system for doing experiments, even though none of the current facility needed anything like that. It was possible, through coincidence that someone had been in the lab when the impact happened. She recalled that the system probably would bring down pressurized bulkheads. That meant it was literally the last place on the base where she had a chance at finding anyone.

She navigated through the ground floor and stopped at the rec room. Ignoring the bodies draped along



the ground and the smashed entertainment devices, she focused on the center of the room.

Sitting there almost three feet through reinforced concrete was the cause of the impact. The dull looking rock languished innocently at the bottom of its depression. At any other point in time finding something like this would have been interesting, if not exactly her specialty. The others certainly would have gone crazy.

“Fuck you piece of shit!” She screamed at the rock rocking it with her boot. The rock did not move. She glared at it, noting its location. One part of her registered that it must have been going quite slowly for it to have just stopped there. They were, after all, in the aftermath of a much larger and more destructive impact.

When she had finished fuming at the deadly, yet completely immobile piece of rock, she continued her journey to the lab. But when she arrived, her hopes were once again smashed. The door was open. The bulkhead door had not been able to close. Even still she stuck her head in. There were two people lying on the floor. Wondering if the frame had twisted, she found an item wedged in the door. It was a piece of an old pipe. Unlike the rest of the debris it looked like it had been put there.

A moment later she realized that they probably had been annoyed at the lab door. It required a second input to open and took a long time, ratcheting the heavy door out of the way. They jammed the device to make it easier for them...

She sighed deeply and came back up to Mathew's floor.

She carefully moved his body to another chair that was still intact and tried the communications system he had been using. That particular computer was destroyed it seemed.

Her mind suddenly jumped to the message she had gotten from Mathews before this all had happened. He had told her something about detecting some sort of collision. She rooted through the rooms, looking for an intact computer on this level. She had no idea whether the LAN was still intact, but if it were, perhaps she could save some of the information about the event. At least people could know what had happened.

She finally found two laptops and one desktop that looked intact. Located closest to the crater wall, this side of the dome seemed to have taken the least amount of damage. She looked over at Mathews. She had to hold back tears again. Such stupid loss. Such impossible odds.

She didn't have to futz with the laptops, whose passwords would have proved difficult. Excited for once, the desktop came to life and immediately blue screened. “Fuck!” She yelled, realizing that the computer would not function in cold vacuum. She was surprised it even got to blue screen.

She wracked her brain for how she was supposed to start up a computer before realizing an even worse problem: the emergency generator. Dutifully, she noted looking up at the ceiling, at least one of the devices had stayed on somehow through the impact. But that actually made things worse. She was no hardware expert, but she the base was not all that large. She had heard the technicians grumbling about the hardships of electronics in space.

She examined the desktop she had accidentally destroyed. In space, a hard drive cannot function, she remembered, it requires a cushion of air between the needle and the stack in order to read properly. In a

vacuum it would just... rip the hell out of the stack. Damn. So she had just destroyed it. And any computer that had been on when the impact happened would also have been destroyed.

She slammed a hand to her head. Was she not even going to get anything out of this? Did all these people die for nothing?

She thought for a moment. Solid state drives like the one in the laptop might function in space, provided that they didn't arc, but every single transistor would light up like a motherfucker if she tried to turn it on. She realized that even if the desktop hadn't died, it would have melted itself in minutes. Or possibly faster, she didn't know the heat flow required.

That meant she needed a room with air. She lit up. For once something useful was possible! The lab vac system downstairs might still work. But she needed the data as well...

She hauled the electronics she had found to the lab and then headed to the center of the dome. In a small circular room she knew the servers lay, most likely dead. Trying the door, she realized it needed password. The lock was a mechanical spin dial. She did not remember the entry code if it had ever been told to her.

After almost a minute of solid cursing, she eventually realized that there was a possibility that she could simply knock the door down. Such a wanton action would have been inconceivable just hours earlier, but at this point she was ready to try anything.

After almost an hour of tearing out rebar and smashing against the door, during which she replaced both her oxygen and the battery in her suit, she finally got a piece through the edge of the door. Like a massive can opener, she pried the contraption open. It was likely that only the exterior walls were metal, she had no idea what the inner ones were made out of, and at this point, didn't care.

The servers lay dead as any person before her. Since it was almost assured that they had been on when the impact happened, she ignored them completely and instead went to the backup frames. She had heard the technicians talking about their jury rigged backup system that they had made using the motherboards of several laptops, and now their unorthodox system might prove to win the day.

She grabbed as many of the delicate frames as she could carry, noting that indeed, the back up systems were in fact the bottom half of unused laptops. For once since the accident, she smiled through her tear stained visor.

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She held her breath even in her suit as she closed the lab door. Along the way she had tracked down every piece of food, every container of water and every oxygen bottle she could find. Would the system work? The place was small and she hadn't noticed any holes in the room. Cautiously she turned the mechanism on. It somehow hummed to life. Or perhaps it would have if she could hear it. Slowly and steadily the sensors indicated that the room was filling with oxygen. She didn't try to think about what was powering the vac system or how much longer it would last; she just needed the data.

Finally the process was complete and she rigged together the laptops turning them all at once in case time was limited. She had connected each one to a backup. Two of them failed to boot and she assumed she didn't have enough time to figure out why. Purposely not taking off her gloves, even if the room had theoretically pressurized, she carefully navigated via keyboard shortcuts. The last two booted but

neither could see their respective backup. It was possible the backup had been running when the impact happened.

Holding her breath again, she switched the backups. Out of the four, only one laptop backup pair managed to work. She let out the breath she had been holding for what seemed like minutes.

She brought up the latest files. There was only one major file, a strange and massive compressed folder. Confused, she looked through its contents. Most of them were spreadsheets and scripts of one or another. She presumed that they were sensor data from the array. Her body felt weightless.

She hurriedly copied the information to the other computers and turned them off. She had no idea the effect of radiation on solid state drives, but it was the best she could do at this point.

After almost a half an hour of trying to make sense of the data, she got worried about the airvac system and decided to check how it was actually working. Looking inside what she had presumed to be a closet, she instead found a massive backup tank connected to what she could only assume, from the many ducts traveling to it, was the air system. She blessed the designers of the place for not connecting the two air vac systems.

A further check found that the thing she had thought was a battery backup was actually connected to solar panels outside, at least if the note left inside the casing was to be believed. Perhaps she wasn't going to freeze to death without oxygen in hard vacuum after all.

Well... food, water and oxygen...

She looked around the now crowded room. It was barely thirty feet cubed, and most of that was now taken up by containers of some sort or another.

She had not until this point considered how she was going to get out of here herself, especially since the journey from Alpha Base to Beta Base took several days and had only been attempted once as a hypothetical venture to see if it was logistically possible. The crew involved had refused to do it again, and had in fact stayed here at Beta Base as technicians.

The communication system was undoubtedly smashed and neither her pathetic comms system in her suit nor any amount of work with the laptops would do anything if the array was destroyed. But surely someone would notice! Having an entire base go dark was unheard of. Although she wasn't sure how they would do it, they would have to look and see what happened right?

None of the bases were self sufficient, not even the monstrous Alpha base. When the next resupply came from earth at the very least she could get a signal out, even if the resupply ship was a drone...

Her immediate needs satisfied, she suddenly collapsed against the wall, the adrenaline leaving her.

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She awoke to the sound of her suit's second oxygen warning, she having evidently slept through the first one. She cursed herself for wasting the tank and, checking the airvac finally decided that the system was stable enough to trust.

Having nothing better to do she turned on the laptop again and continued to go through the backup. A specific file caught her eye. An audio file?

Less than three minutes later she let out a laugh and slumped against the wall, her face contorted with uncontrollable laughter. It continued until her sides hurt, but she continued. That was the only thing you could do in the face of such madness right? You just had to laugh. And so she did, over and over as the message repeated itself.

“Huston. We have just detected a collision! I repeat, a collision of Asclepius and some unknown object. We... um... well, lets just say this is impossible. Whatever the asteroid hit, it was massive. Our sensors have it as almost...” Mathews choked, “... almost a hundred times as large. So um... yeah. We can't really say why we didn't see this coming sooner but I...” There were frenzied sounds of someone close to Mathews.

“Huston, we just chugged the numbers, we don't know the trajectory certainly but our systems have whats left of Asclepius impacting with the moon... somewhere... in a minute or two... But the unknown object is I suppose more of a problem, it going to impact with earth in about an hour or so. Our sensors have it going quite fast. I've attached the data so there's a chance to shoot it down. I've taken the liberty of sending this to as many receivers as possible. Again you have about an hour... Good luck Huston, and may god be with us all.”

Impossible. The cosmic improbability of such an event... It truly was impossible. But that didn't relaly help did it? Saying something was impossible didn't make it any less... real! Because it had happen, right? Didn't that by definition make it quite possible??

Her vision swayed before her, and another bout of hysterical laughter burst from her lips. But no sooner had it done so, then quickly she reversed course and collapsed into tears.

Earth... Gods... Earth... Somewhere thousands upon thousands of miles below her, through rock and stone and the vacuum of space there were billions of people...

Or were there? It had been an hour... Had they been able to shoot it down? The debris alone of something that size...

And she would never know. All the communications systems had been destroyed. Alpha base might last some time, but even if it escaped the shrapnel of the impact, it had nearly ten times as many people. Gamma base was just at its resupply week, the poor bastards... She would probably last the longest. A manic grin came to her face at the proposition.

She looked around the room and did a quick tally of the food, wiping her nose and the tears from her face. The base had been stocked for seventy people. Each one had about a fourth a year's worth of food. She been able to find and get about a tenth of that, she figured looking at the massive stacks of boxes she had hauled in.

So she was covered for food. She supposed water would be the main problem. She looked at the tank she had hauled in and the smaller containers but realized she had no idea how much a person needed per day, or if it could be recycled in any appreciable manner. Perhaps half as much as the food? She guessed.

And air was good as long as the solar panels stayed alive. And nothing broke. Two very dubious propositions. That left her in a thirty by thirty foot room, for about... A year.

She put down the laptop.

Rescued or the only one left. Those were the options. And it would take a long, long time in any case. A laugh erupted from her mouth once again...

She had been so wrong. She thought she had wanted isolation. It seemed like there could be too much of a good thing.

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And almost a half a year in the future, when the airvac system finally failed, what was left of her was glad. She put on her suit as the indicator showed oxygen levels dropping.

The door opened with a hiss and she stepped out. She walked calmly out into the ruined base. Not a thing had changed.

She climbed out of the crater and stared up at the stars. And with a cry of madness and exhilaration heard only to her, went for one last run on the moon.