



ALONE IN SPACE

By Adriel Nee

The steak was rubbery, he could not feel the ground and he risked being blasted into bits. Yet, Jason was not about to give up anytime soon.

1 Jason floundered about like a dog paddling furiously to stay afloat in a swimming pool as it made the ¹dicey journey from one end of the pool to the other. The door at the end of the room perpetually seemed to be just within reach but every 5 inch forward through the air never brought him any closer. Back on Earth, gravity was lambasted as one of Man's greatest enemies ²culpable for the countless times people were yanked down to their knees and palms. However, the daily struggle of moving from room to room revealed the epiphany of how much Jason ³pined for gravity's company.

With the last shred of energy left in his 2 body, Jason propelled himself forward and lunched at the door handle like a rock climber reaching out to the final ledge of his ascent. The sound of his laboured breaths pounded against his eardrums as he conjured the strength out of nowhere to crank open the 15 door. With his vision thrown into a temporary disarray as beads of light lit up the room, Jason fumbled his way to the front of the cockpit, strapped himself into the pilot's chair and tucked himself into its comforting embrace. 20 The momentary ⁴respite from floating around like a helium balloon was interrupted by a 25 loud growl from his belly.



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3 In his eagerness to ⁵quell his hunger, Jason barbarically ripped open a packet of food without a second thought. Globules of food gushed out and rose into the air like wax in a lava lamp. Jason craned his neck and snapped at the blotches of food. 35 The remnants of mush that he desperately salvaged, glazed over his tongue and left nothing but a gooey trail.

4 “Tastes just like the real thing!” He mimicked the misleading slogan at the back ⁴⁰ of the packaging as he tried to reconcile the word ‘steak’ starkly printed on the packaging with the unfamiliar blandness that lingered on his taste buds. No matter how hard he stared at the picture of his family ⁴⁵ plastered on the control panel, he could not manifest his thoughts about his dad’s homemade steak into actual taste.

5 Jason gazed out at the blue sphere that seemed frozen in place in the middle of a sea of darkness. The awe of space that had been promised ever since the first day of astronaut training was eclipsed by the menacing darkness that threatened to swallow Earth whole like a Tic Tac. The windows that lined the cockpit were like mirrors reflecting a void that stared into his soul. 55 Loneliness had transformed his heart into an empty, desolate place. Jason yearned for another person’s voice that was not distorted radio waves or the warmth of another person’s presence that could thaw the ⁶frigid interior of the spaceship. 60

6 Without warning, a shrill siren shattered the dreary silence that had been drowning him. The flashing lights painted the cockpit in a menacing shade of red.

“Collision alert. Collision alert.” A robotic ⁶⁵ voice, ironically ⁷composed for a life-threatening situation, echoed throughout the room.

Word Bank:

- 1 dicey:**
unpredictable and potentially dangerous
- 2 culpable:**
deserving blame
- 3 pined:**
longed for
- 4 respite:**
a short period of rest or relief from something difficult or unpleasant
- 5 quell:**
suppress
- 6 frigid:**
very cold
- 7 composed:**
having one's feelings and expression under control; calm
- 8 ramshackle:**
in a state of severe disrepair

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7 Asteroids the size of a spaceship were hurtling straight towards him. For a split second, Jason sat frozen in fear. The pages of the indispensable training manual for all astronauts-in-training flipped furiously through his mind but nothing in there could save him from his impending doom. A booming thud rattled the spaceship as if it were 75 a ⁸ramshackle bird cage. However, this was nothing like the simulations he had experienced – one wrong move and the spaceship would be obliterated into pieces. A part of him told him that his tragic fate was inevitable but another part of him gave him hope that he could wrestle away from 80 its clutches.

8 A look at the picture of his family was all Jason needed to reignite his survival instincts so that he could return to them on Earth. With no time left to completely veer the spaceship away 85



from the asteroid field, Jason had no choice but to traverse through it like weaving a string through the eye of a needle.

What was supposed to be a few minutes 9 of a relentless barrage turned into a dread- 90 ful eternity. Pieces of the asteroids pelted the windows like bullets and large boulders crashed into the hull of the spaceship like wrecking balls. While his heart stopped with every collision that could prove to be a fatal 95 one, he was determined to manoeuvre out of this perilous situation.

All of a sudden, the air in the spaceship 10 was so still that one could hear a pin drop. It was as though Lady Luck was smiling down 100 at him, even in space. Though not unscathed, Jason had made it out of the asteroid field. He heaved a sigh of relief, thanking his lucky stars for surviving another day in space. He was going to soldier on, looking forward to 105 the day when he would finally put his two feet on the ground he called Earth.

Five Foods and Drinks Astronauts Should Avoid in Space



Salt and Pepper

Salt, pepper and other spices and seasonings, in their granular forms, tend to make a huge mess in space, given that they would be haphazardly floating all around in microgravity. These could also get trapped in sensitive equipment. Moreover, it would be quite a challenge to get the seasonings to land on the food! For better-seasoned food, astronauts can opt for liquid alternatives instead.



Bread

Bread often lacks the structure and shelf life needed to be in space. Biting into that sandwich could also create a good number of crumbs.

These crumbs float around and get trapped in sensitive equipment, causing unnecessary complications. Tortillas are a good replacement, though.



Alcoholic Drinks

No bottoms-up parties, especially for NASA astronauts. This could be because they don't need to experience yet another 'high'! Russian astronauts, however, do not have this in their not-to-drink list.



Fizzy Drinks

Fizzy or carbonated drinks are not allowed in space as the carbon dioxide in these drinks acts differently in space than on Earth. In space, the carbon dioxide bubbles do not get released as a gas for an effervescent pop but instead remain in the liquid drink. As a result, astronauts can experience unnecessary digestive discomforts. So, no Coca-Cola or Pepsi if you intend to be in outer space!



Ice Cream

In some science museum gift shops, you may find the Astronaut Ice Cream, which is essentially dehydrated ice cream. Despite the efforts made to provide astronauts with a popular dessert, the ice cream they receive in space tends to be dry and brittle, a far cry from what it tastes on Earth. What's more, this dry ice cream tends to break up and contribute to a polluted environment, even possibly interfering with sensitive equipment. For astronauts with a sweet tooth, they can try a honey cake or a berry medley instead.