

***So Close***

**By: Leah E.**

They were so close.

The planet stretched out below her. It was beautiful. She reached her hand out to touch the atmosphere. It was too far. She knew it was too far. She just wanted to feel it, to know what this other world was like. Not just from the air, not just from stories or pictures - she wanted to know what it was *really* like. Were there really people down there? Were they free?

She spun around against her will. Darkness. The vast ocean of space surrounded her. She wished she could just look at the planet. It was so beautiful. If she had to die, she would prefer to die looking at the last hope she ever had.

A lonely piece of debris drifted by her. It was too far away to touch. Just like the planet.

She brought her hand to her helmet instead. It was beeping at her, telling her the oxygen was low. She wanted to turn it off. She knew she was going to die - why did it have to keep reminding her? She couldn't find the switch for the volume. She put her arm back to rest.

She could see the planet again. She wondered if anyone down there had seen the explosion. A tear escaped from her eye. "Stop that," she firmly scolded the tear. "There are worse places to be than here." There were always worse places. At least here, in this moment, she could see the beauty of the new world. There *must* be life down there. Sentient life. A whole new species.

They had been so close to finding out for sure.

They had been so close to refuge.

She was so close to the atmosphere.

Close wasn't close enough.

*So Close*

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"Hello and goodbye, Earth," she whispered, her voice drowned out by the incessant warnings of her suit. She was facing the abyss again. She felt lightheaded. "Perhaps the next group will make it farther than we did."

The Earth was almost in her peripheral, but her eyes drifted shut on the sea of stars. "We were so close."