

# Forces

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## Adrift in Silence

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## Fire in the Sky

Jayna Burch



## Adrift in Silence

Eric Ables

Kayla stared out the small round window, and into the diamond dotted void of space. Earth hung in the distance, bright and blue as her capsule floated away in a day's long journey to the moon. She knew in her head that she was traveling at incredible speeds but seeing the stars and Earth as they hung motionless in her window, it felt as if she were standing still.

She sighed as she wrapped a foil blanket over her suit to insulate it. There were only a few dim lights in the capsule, not for illumination, but only to mark important controls. Everything non-essential had been shut off ever since she had missed the rendezvous with the refueling station.

One little digit, that was all it had been to cause her to miss the dock and set her back days. She could have aborted her trip, returned to earth empty handed, instead she waited for her orbit to put her in a position to reach the moon on what fuel she had.

She took another look out the window, then tried to settle into sleep. She was not one to let discomfort get in the way of her ambitions.

She awoke with a start, taking several long, flailing moments to reorient herself. It was not her first time sleeping in weightlessness, but she could never get used to it. She scraped her arm on a button's protective cover, and clenched her teeth, her breath hissing through them. She became acutely aware of how every breath seemed to echo in the confines of her temporary home.

The vastness of the universe lay beyond the thick glass of the window, yet its voice was muted, no sound reached across the chasm of nothingness to reach her ears. Listening to the air slip in and out of her lungs made her long to turn something, anything on to provide a soothing background noise. Back on Earth, a riotous cacophony of noise was a near constant companion. Even in the quietest moments, there was always something. Even outside of civilization there was wind, nature, never a moment of true silence, and among the colonies, there was the ever-present hum of the generators, and the sounds of hundreds of colonists living their lives under a dome.

breathing had become louder as well. She could swear she could hear the air eddy and rasp as it passed through the various internal passages to and from her lungs. Soon another sound grew. A steady throbbing, pulsing sound that rushed in her ears. It took her a moment to realize it was the sound of her heart.

Three days, she only had to hole up in her capsule for three days. She thought maybe she might be able to sleep through them, but the sound of her breathing, the throbbing of her heart, the rush of blood through her veins, they blared in her ears, like a klaxon against the utter silence of the universe outside.

Sleep eluded her.

**The vastness of the universe lay beyond the thick glass of the window, yet its voice was muted, no sound reached across the chasm of nothingness to reach her ears.**

In her capsule however, there was nothing. The engine sat silent, not to fire until its precious reserves of fuel were absolutely needed. Even the gyroscopes were shut down to save energy until she was within reach of the moon. Her ears burned with a need for something, anything. She longed to turn on the sound generator, the heater, lights. Something to make a buzz, a click, beep.

Frustrated, she tapped at the glass with her fingernails, wallowing in the rhythmic assemblies she crafted in a desperate bid to stave off the silence. Too soon, her fingers tired, and the sound had become too loud anyway, the tapping pounding in her head like a hammer. Her

She checked her watch, the dull glow of its digits telling her only a dozen hours had passed. She wished she'd brought an analog watch. Perhaps the ticking would have helped her fight against the silence. The sound of her heart, her breath, the rustle of the foil blanket, the creak of her suit, everything grew louder and louder, drowning out her ability to even concentrate. She threw the foil blanket off, the sound of it deafening for a moment, but it was at least off her body, where it would no longer rustle with each breath, each twitch of her muscles. Louder, everything grew louder.

Staring out the small window, she put her hands to her ears to block everything out, to no avail. Just three days, three days ...

## **Upcycled Robot Head**

Kelly Park