

ORBIT

Written by

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DRAFT 2

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INT. SPACESHIP - BRIDGE - DAY

A pudgy spaceship soars across a backdrop of stars.

With a squeak, a set of border collie jaws clamp across its hull.

ORBIT drops back down to the bottom of an observation window, the spaceship chew toy clutched in his mouth. Though he pants with the thrill of the catch, he seems dissatisfied.

Something whirrs towards him: HAN-D, a sophisticated robot arm welded to a pair of caterpillar tracks. It pokes a digit down towards the floor, and Orbit obeys, dropping the spaceship. In return, he receives an algorithmic pat.

HAN-D traverses a few metres away, and prepares to toss the toy once more.

But Orbit gazes, mournful, at the woman hunched at the control console, engulfed by mountains of paperwork, oblivious to anyone or thing. This is SIMONE (35), the ship's only human occupant.

The chew toy sails over Orbit's head, strikes a wall, and flumps to the ground. HAN-D wags an electronic finger, not best pleased.

Orbit gnashes up the toy ship, and trots towards HAN-D, which holds out its palm.

Orbit struts right past it.

Simone scribbles an answer to a boring equation. Sucks the end of her pencil, and strikes it out.

Squeak squeak.

Her eyes flick to the right - behind the chair, Orbit. Chew toy in maw, eyes to full hypnotic puppy power.

Simone spins around and makes a face - *go away, I'm busy.* Then returns to her sums.

She jots down a few numbers, and dances a spidery hand across the computer terminal to type in some figures. There's a rustling behind her -

Orbit, perched on his hind legs. A hopeful bag of treats hangs from his jaw.

Simone studies him, then plucks the bag from his mouth. Orbit gallops behind her, tail wagging like a windscreen wiper, this is it, at last!!

Then he halts in his tracks: Simone has washed her hands of the treats, dumping them with HAN-D. She swiftly traipses back to her labour.

HAN-D rips the bag open. Biscuits spill into the bowl. Orbit trudges over to lower his snout inside, where he chews his snacks without any real joy.

Simone tries to ignore the sounds. She spins her pencil, thoughtful, then sets it to the page.

Munch munch. Her lips crease in a frown.

Crunch crunch. Her eyelid twitches.

Om nom. Her lead snaps on the page.

Simone whirls around, slams the pencil down and marches over to the biscuits. She snatches them from under Orbit's nose. With a flick of her wrist, they are discarded into a bin.

She yanks down a lever on the wall - *Whoosh*. The bin's empty. Orbit peers through the observation window, at the sight of his biscuits floating in space.

They freeze over, and crumble to nothing.

His ears and tail droop. Orbit plods away.

Ping. Simone glances up: the words 'ALERT: Incoming Asteroid Storm' appear on the console. She barely registers it - part and parcel, really. An uncaring finger stabs a button marked 'Shields'.

EXT. SPACESHIP - BRIDGE - CONT'D

As the tiny figure of Simone resumes her work, a shimmering purple barrier envelops the ship.

INT. SPACESHIP - SIMONE'S QUARTERS - DAY

Serene, sanitary, made all the more claustrophobic by the double bed and dog basket shoved in the corner. Orbit hops up onto the mattress and spins in a circle, hunting for the perfect spot. At last, he plops onto his front, chin resting on the duvet.

His eyes fall on a photo frame on the bedside table. Inside, a picture of himself and two women in a park. One is Simone, the other, CLAIRE (32). Parked in a wheelchair with a pair of tubes crawling up her nostrils, but it doesn't matter. She laughs as she dangles a tennis ball over Orbit's ecstatic face. His tongue lolls out of his dopey mouth.

Whatever this memory may be, Orbit's sadness deepens. He shuffles off the bed and snags the stripy, tasselled blanket from his basket.

INT. SPACESHIP - CORRIDOR - DAY

The blanket sags on the floor as Orbit drags it around. His paws pitter-patter along endless, lonely stretches of clinical white wall.

Finally, he finds a door, which seamlessly slides open for him.

INT. SPACESHIP - ENGINE ROOM - CONT'D

Orbit pads in.

Large stacks of equipment and computer banks glow with soft light, which reflects off bronze, steaming walls. A warm, relaxing rumble permeates the air, apparently emanating from a gargantuan unit, twisting up through the centre of the room like a grand old oak.

Orbit drops the blanket down by a grate, and settles himself in for a solitary snooze.

Which is when he spies --

A neon green, spherical power core. Suspended in mid-air in the central unit, safe behind a transparent gauze.

FLASH TO

The scene in the picture. It moves! Simone giggles as Claire teases Orbit with the tennis ball...

FLASH TO

...which looks remarkably like that sphere.

Orbit tramps over to the unit and gets up on his hind legs to scratch against the gauze. It's not coming down.

But his paw accidentally catches a button to the side of the shielding. The gauze retracts, exposing the core.

Orbit can't quite reach it. He parks himself on his bottom, braces, and springs-!

INT. SPACESHIP - BRIDGE - DAY

Simone polishes off a piece of paper. She sets it aside, the pile of completed work noticeably smaller than the towering mass left over.

The bridge doors whirr open. She turns, resigned to giving Orbit yet more attention.

Orbit proudly prances in, but Simone's eyes widen in horror as she sees, clasped in his mouth - the power core!!

Simone jumps for Orbit, who realises too late that he's been a bad dog.

However, just before Simone reach him, an alarm blares!!

Orbit's jaw falls open in shock, the core clunks to the ground, rolls away -

Simone whips about face. On the screen: 'ALERT: Shields Failing'.

EXT. SPACESHIP - BRIDGE - CONT'D

The purple shimmer flickers. Far away, but far too close, a shower of asteroids hurtles towards the ship...

INT. SPACESHIP - BRIDGE - CONT'D

A diagram appears on screen, insisting how the core should be returned to the engines as a matter of urgency.

Simone holds out her hand out to Orbit. Then balks - the collie, of course, no longer has it.

She flails, gesturing - *where?! Guilty*, Orbit nods his head to the side. Both he and Simone witness the core traverse a groove, like a marble, then drop into a grate!!

They stare at one another. Then back at the grate.

Simone lunges to yank the grate up. She can't, too heavy.

She clicks her fingers. HAN-D zips forward, effortlessly lifting the metal. Simone sticks her hand inside, scrabbling about --

But Orbit's nostrils flare, in and out. He plants his snoot on the floor and begins to follow the scent of the core.

INT. SPACESHIP - VARIOUS - CONT'D

The screen splits: top half, side-scrolling as Orbit follows the trail. Bottom half, side-scrolling as the core explores the ship's pipes. Orbit bounds out of the bridge, along a corridor, down some steps.

The split screen reconfigures - now a vertical split - as the pipe expands and moves upwards, becoming a ventilation duct. Orbit finds the vent for the duct, snares it with his teeth - the core's split-screen side crushes down Orbit's as he struggles with the vent --

Then it's open, and now the screen is no longer split because Orbit's following the core! Through the vent he crawls, towards its eerie emerald glow up ahead...

A sudden rush of air, and the core is sucked away! Orbit stops, tilts his head, confused --

In identical fashion, he's pulled forwards! He slides, cloaked by the darkness, then into --

INT. SPACESHIP - AIR VENT FAN - CONT'D

A central ventilation area with a giant fan! Orbit tumbles around like a drunken acrobat, spinning and cartwheeling in the air as his jaws gnash at the core --

The fan stops. Orbit and the core freeze in mid-air.

Together they plummet through a shaft, then a hatch --

INT. SPACESHIP - KITCHEN - CONT'D

Orbit crashes straight down from a ceiling hatch to a bin, his fall broken by decaying leftovers.

Drowsy, he places one shaking paw up onto the side, and then the other, to heave himself up. A banana skin slops off his head and onto the floor.

A pair of stern boots land in front of the bin - Simone's. She hauls him out, dumps him on the ground. Points - *stay*. Orbit cowers, ashamed.

Simone pinches her nose and stuffs her arm into the bin, brushing aside waste, until she finds the core, shining through a coating of ketchup. She grasps for it --

Woosh. An automatically-generated vacuum ejects all the garbage down a chute.

Simone dashes to the kitchen's porthole. Orbit leaps up on the counter. They gawp outside --

EXT. SPACESHIP - CONT'D

The power core pirouettes through the vacuum of space!

Through the porthole, in perfect sync, Simone and Orbit's faces harden.

INT. SPACESHIP - CORRIDOR - DAY

The pair streak forwards, side-by-side, on a mission.

INT. SPACESHIP - SPACEWALK READY ROOM - DAY

Simone climbs into a human-shaped cut-out in the wall.

Orbit climbs into a dog-shaped cut-out in the wall.

A spacesuit weaves itself around Simone. Trousers and boots roll up her legs. She raises her hands to receive the torso and arms. A helmet pops down on top of her hair.

A spacesuit weaves itself around Orbit. A bodysuit squeezes across his torso, little booties wrap pucker his paws, and a helmet drops onto his head. Attached just below is a little claw-like gadget. He barks, and the claw moves in time with his jaw - it's an external mouth!

He nabs a lead that's hanging up, and presents it to Simone, who clips it to his neck, and then snaps it to --

A hook on the wall, far away from the exterior door.

Simone ignores the betrayed Orbit. Her own tether in hand, she presses a button by the airlock. The door hisses open.

EXT. SPACE - CONT'D

The vast emptiness of space, and one woman lurking in a doorway.

Simone clips her tether to a rail outside the ship, and dives out!

INT. SPACESHIP - SPACEWALK READY ROOM - CONT'D

Orbit strains at his lead to watch, whining. His eyes flick to a notice posted by the exit:

"MINIMUM OF 2 ASTRONAUTS PER SPACEWALK"!!

EXT. SPACE - CONT'D

Simone taps a button on her sleeve. Jets of air shoot from her suit, pushing her towards the core. Not quite far enough.

She presses again, and she ends up close enough to reach out. But the tether's going to run out of slack soon.

She brushes the core with her fingertips and it spins nearer, graceful. Her hand goes to close over it -

An warning flashes up in her field of view - WARNING:
INCOMING ASTEROIDS

It's the asteroid storm! Small chunks of rock skim past her at petrifying speeds - on a collision course with the ship!

One smashes a bolt off the ship's hull. Simone's eyes widen, and she hammers the jet button. She swoops out of the path of a large, crenelated boulder -

The tether goes taut -

And then *breaks* off the bar by the airlock!!

Simone shrieks.

INT. SPACESHIP - SPACEWALK READY ROOM - CONT'D

Orbit jumps to his paws. He strains at his leash - no good. He tears at the rope with his mouth attachment.

EXT. SPACE - CONT'D

Simone panics, still dodging asteroids, swimming out of their path. She activates the air jets -

Her suit bleeps. No more air. Uh oh.

INT. SPACESHIP - SPACEWALK READY ROOM - CONT'D

Orbit's almost chewed through his leash. Sweat trickles down his furry face, and then --

Riiip! He falls flat on his face, free. Shakes himself off.

EXT. SPACE - CONT'D

Simone sees Orbit heading for the airlock. She grins, gesticulating frantically.

Orbit goes to attach his leash to the rail -

Oh.

Orbit peers at the end. Chewed off. No way of attaching it. He glances back inside...

INT. SPACESHIP - SPACEWALK READY ROOM - CONT'D

Of course, the clasp's still hanging from the ring on the wall, with a little tuft of leash stuck out.

EXT. SPACE - CONT'D

Orbit tries to lean out, can his mouth attachment grab the end of Simone's tether?

No. It misses by an inch.

The poor pup's face is the last thing Simone's going to see.

She gazes downwards. Sighs.

Closes her eyes, accepts her fate.

And then she's yanked forwards!

Her eyes flash open, wide as dinner plates. In front of her --

Orbit. Dangling out the door, HAN-D's caterpillar tracks in his mouth attachment. And HAN-D has a hold of Simone's tether!!

With effort, Orbit wrenches HAN-D and the tether.

INT. SPACESHIP - SPACEWALK READY ROOM - CONT'D

HAN-D back on solid ground, it and Orbit heave, and Simone is tugged back inside. The door slams shut behind her, and she tumbles onto the floor. She discards her helmet, and Orbit bounds over to licks her face, which she gratefully accepts.

A distant clang snaps them back to attention.

EXT. SPACE - CONT'D

Another asteroid collides into the ship.

INT. SPACESHIP - SPACEWALK READY ROOM - CONT'D

Orbit bores into Simone, pleading. She opens up her palm, revealing the core.

INT. SPACESHIP - CORRIDOR - DAY

Orbit, Simone and HAN-D pelt up the corridor as lights flash red and alarms blare -

INT. SPACESHIP - BRIDGE - CONT'D

On the screen, a diagram: a huge asteroid, heading straight for the ship.

INT. SPACESHIP - ENGINE ROOM - DAY

The trio skid in, HAN-D at the front. Across the room, there! The indent where the core should be.

The ship shakes, Simone makes as if to put the core back - HAN-D sticks his hand out in front, blocking her - a huge unit topples over in front of them, leaning at an angle!

HAN-D and Simone heave. No luck, it won't budge. However, Orbit spots a gap between the unit and the wall, and is able to squeeze through. He barks.

Just as Simone goes to give the core to him, there's another rumble, and a few pipes clatter down, sealing the gap.

Simone looks at the core in her hand, then to Orbit.

Orbit looks at the core, and then Simone.

She nods. Lifts her hand up high...

Orbit readies himself...

And Simone lobs the core!!

Orbit, woofing delightedly, blasts out of the gap like a missile shot from a submarine. The core sails through the air, and in slow-motion, he snatches it from its flight in his (real) jaws. Then canters over to the slot, leaps for the sky, and slips the core in.

Immediately, the machinery sparks to life...

EXT. SPACE - CONT'D

The asteroid streams for the nose of the ship --

But the purple shimmer reappears! The asteroid vaporises on impact.

INT. SPACESHIP - BRIDGE - CONT'D

The big scary diagrams all vanish from the screen.

INT. SPACESHIP - ENGINE ROOM - CONT'D

Tendrils of lightning splay from the sides of the room, magnetising the fallen debris, righting it back into place.

Orbit pads over to Simone and HAN-D. The droid lightly pats him on the bonce, Simone squidges him under the chin, and he grins. Then, he grabs the striped blanket in his mouth.

INT. SPACESHIP - BRIDGE - DAY

Orbit trails Simone as they enter the bridge, HAN-D in tow. Orbit drops the blanket in his basket.

Simone wanders back over to the control console. Makes some adjustments. Regards the leaning tower of paper with dread.

Behind her, Orbit. Parked on his butt, keen, eyes flaring with hope.

It's quickly snuffed out. Simone takes hold of the stack of papers and departs the bridge.

Orbit plods back to his basket and settles, solemnly chewing the blanket's tassles.

INT. SPACESHIP - SIMONE'S QUARTERS - DAY

Simone pushes papers onto a shelf, then runs her hand along, seeking a folder. She yanks it down, and rotates around to open it. Yet more dull, endless work.

Her eyes catch the picture on the bedside table. Such a happy, happy time.

A cardboard box appears from darkness - Simone is on her knees by the underside of her bed. She dusts it down, revealing the label: "CLAIRE'S STUFF".

She swallows, closes her eyes. Deep breath. Removes the lid.

Inside, a bunch of absolute junk. Movie ticket stubs, mini golf tallies, candy bar wrappers.

An engagement ring, diamond still sparkling. But also a framed photo, which Simone lifts, with a trembling hand.

It's Claire. No wheelchair, no tubes. Joyous. Healthy. Grinning so widely as she squeezes her new border collie puppy to her face: Orbit. He's won the lottery of life.

Simone traces the picture, her finger resting on Claire's chest. She wears... something that resembles Orbit's tasselled blanket...

A poncho.

Simone rummages further into the box and pulls out...

INT. SPACESHIP - BRIDGE - DAY

Orbit lifts his head up as Simone re-enters. No paperwork.

She marches over to the control console and sets a new destination.

EXT. SPACE - DAY

The ship arcs, changing course...

INT. SPACESHIP - BRIDGE - DAY

Orbit cocks his head. *What's the matter?*

And Simone unveils the tennis ball from her pocket.

Orbit leaps into the air! His tongue flops out, slobber whizzes everywhere - he bursts with unbridled, unrestricted, undiluted joy.

On the control console's screen, their destination: - a beautiful world, colourful fauna, sprawling hills.

EXT. PLANET - DAY

The same gorgeous world. The spaceship lands, and a ramp extends. Orbit slowly treads to the bottom, scarcely daring to believe it.

HAN-D pokes its hand out, as if exploring. But it's Simone this time who has the goods. She joins Orbit at the bottom of the ramp.

Orbit looks up.

She tosses the ball up and catches it in her hand. Teasing.

The ball reflects in Orbit's eyes as again, it goes up, and back down...

Then Simone sends it high, oh so high, into the beautiful pink sky.

Orbit runs. Unseen for dust.

END