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“Mars ain’t the kind of place to raise your kids.” ELTON JOHN.

“In fact, it is.” LARS CHRISTENSEN

In 2172 Earth sent its first spaceship to colonize Mars. It was a long trip for 6 people, 3 females, 3 males, 7 months to a new world. Their mission was to explore the region, live in the first module and start procreating.

The long weightless flight, motion sickness and isolation, all adjusting to the new experience. The gravity reinforcement of Mars was hard to get use to but they managed.

One hundred years later, Mars had more colonies than they were expecting. Travel time was cut in half, weightlessness was remedied with bigger gravity producing spaceships and they were pretty much ready to go once they landed.

As time progressed, more and more companies started sending more employees to Mars to work in offworld capacity. Mars was becoming what people envisioned decades earlier, a new home.

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In April 2320, Lars and Erika Christensen came from Bergen, Norway to make their fortune on Mars Colony 6. Leaving earth for the three point five month trek to their new world was surprisingly exciting to them, so exciting, Erika got pregnant the second day out of orbit.

Pregnant and living in space for a few months was actually pretty easy, space and pregnancy really was painless.

Second month through the nearly four month flight was nothing but pleasant. Lars and Erika found that it was a wonderful experience both physically and emotionally.

The entire crew aboard the ship were very supportive of their newly created family. Each member of the ship was looking forward to her day of birth. Which was still a few months away, even after their space flight was nearing its end of three point four months nearly as scheduled flight.

Landing on Mars was routine, nothing was abnormal in striking their landing spot, no mishaps, no problems, it was as normal as landing a ship on the moon.

The Geo-dome was set up for their arrival, and Lars and Erika headed to their new home on Mars. The baby was only a couple of months away from birth.

Each new day on the new planet went typically well, Lars set up his lab, as did Erika. Mars Colony 6 was set up in a week or two upon arrival.

Soon the birth day was just around the corner, the bedroom for the new child, which was a boy, was ready for occupancy. They already had a name picked for the newly arriving Martian, Tag, Erika's grandfather's name from Oslo.

Tag would be baby 1955 born on Mars, maybe not the first, but they weren't here to make pioneering firsts, just here to make a living and escape the decline of Earth.

Lars was playing music from his homeland during the last month of Tag's womb experience, black metal from the homeland. Erika thought it was a bit too much for her child, the music is disturbing for those not accustomed to it, but Lars was really into it, all the way back to its origins of the band Mayhem. He wanted to pass his heritage on through music along with his DNA; who was she to deny her husband of his influence on their child, anyway, Lars wasn't abnormal due to his fondness of black metal. The neighbors on the other hand had a different opinion. Black Metal wasn't the new music of the day or the planet.

Erika's lab had imports from Earth, a section of farm food, grains and barley, hops and other exotic plants like marijuana were being grown for the Martian population.

Soon the whole Colony 6 were smoking newly strained weed. Erika's knowledge of cross breeding strains was producing some really good strains.

Between his mother smoking weed and listening to black metal daily when Tag was finally born, he was already prepared for his destiny.

Mars Colony 6 wasn't like the other settlements on Mars, it was purely intellectually set up for pioneering life on a new planet with the influences of old Earth. Not only were everyone educated in post university but they were also an off book research project to see what life on Mars would be with Earth like environmental psychology.

The residents of MC6 weren't fully aware of this side project of research, but it was a harmless research project, nothing to influence or stretch their findings, it was just a purely "what if we left them to their own devices" info seek.

CHAPTER 1: Pre-Flight Protocols

Lars stopped Erika after entering the prelaunch pad entrance. Feeling his shirt pocket, and finding nothing.

"Fuck!" Lars screamed at Erika, "I left my E-drive research tab at home."

"You mean, we're leaving for Mars and you don't have your research?" Erika rolled her eyes, "How are you suppose to get your work done?"

"We have to go back." Lars answered feverishly feeling his shirt and pants pockets. "We have to go back home and get it."

"That's a hundred miles away." she said a bit flustered.

"I'm sorry, but we can't leave without it." Lars said picking up his bag from the floor, "or I can go back, you can wait for me, it'll only take an hour roundtrip."

"Well, it's a good thing we're early." Erika said finding a chair to sit on in Launch Pad 1A waiting room.

"Just wait right here, I'll be back shortly." Lars said dashing out the pad front doors to a waiting transport.

Erika sat back on the chair and stared out the window at the launch pad. The GAT3 ship to Ecospace was steaming in preparation for departure in less than six hours.

Shaking her head in amazement, unbelievable.

How can a educated man be so stupid, oh right, man, answers it. Plus, he takes his bag with him, he could have left it with her, he'll probably forget that on the return trip, she thought. She smiled to herself while taking out her phone to call her mother in Norway.

"Hi Mom." Erika smiled at her mother.

"Hi honey, did you get there safe?" Erika's mom asked.

"Yeah, but Lars forgot his E-drive tab." She smiled, "such a dunce."

"Honey, don't be so mean, he has a lot to think about." Erika's mom said to her while handing the phone over to Erika's father.

"Hi honey, you get there safe?" her father asked.

"Yes daddy, we're safe, just waiting for Lars and we have plenty of time."

"Good, well, call us when you're about ready to leave." He said handing the phone back to her mom.

"It's still another six hours before we board, so I'll call you way before that." Erika said smiling at her mother. They ended their call. Erika leaned back on the chair and gazed out the window.

Erika's silent passing was interrupted by a man next to her.

"Hi my name is Julio." He said with his hand out.

Erika opened her eyes wider from her trance and recognized him.

"Oh, hi." she said.

"We're on the same team." he said. "Where's your husband?"

"He went home looking for his E-drive, he thinks he forgot it." she said dryly.

He laughed a little, "That happens a lot with extremely intelligent people."

Erika smiles, "so what is your position on the Mars landing?"

"I'm logistics, nothing special, but I do get things done. My wife and I are expecting our first child on Mars, hopefully, God willing."

"Well nice to meet you, I'm sorry we didn't know each other from the training." Erika said placing her phone on her chair next to her.

"Well, different segments of training I guess." he said.

"My wife is looking forward to this adventure."

"Well, it's probably a one way trip, she okay with that?" Erika asked.

"Oh yeah, we know that this is probably a one way trip, and we're cool with it. The parents, not so much."

Erika smiled, "Yeah, my parents don't like it either, but who knows, maybe it's not as bad as they think, maybe we can come home sometime in the future."

Lars came bellowing into the conversation. "I'm back!"

Erika wide eyed at his approach said, "Yeah, I can see that."

"I had the tab all along with me. I just couldn't feel it in my pocket. I got halfway home and realized it."

"Why do we need an E-drive?" Julio interrupted.

Lars looked at Erika like, who's this?

"Hi, I'm Julio, Logistics, why do you need a E-drive, everything had be preloaded to The Albedo from the cloud days ago."

Lars looked at Julio, then Erika realizing that Julio was right, why did he need a tab, and why didn't Erika stop him from leaving to go home and get it.

"And why didn't you stop me from being an idiot?" Lars asked Erika.

Erika softly laughed, "Because you're so adorable when you're anxious, I just couldn't help myself to see if you realized it yourself, and you didn't."

Lars looked at Julio, "See what I have to put up with the rest of my life."

They all laughed, "Well, I'll see you guys on the shuttle to orbit." Julio said joining up with his family in the waiting area.

"Only three more hours until lift off." Erika said to Lars who sat next to her handing her phone to her.

"Mom and dad called." She said.

"Oh, okay, cool." Lars said relaxing looking out the window at the shuttle sitting on the pad.

"We still have two weeks in quarantine to adjust to our new life." Erika assured Lars.

"I know, I just want to be ready for it all, living in the Ecosphere will be an adjustment, I know I've trained for months, but this is for real this time."

Erika patted Lars back of his hand. "You'll be alright dear, you'll always have me to rely on."

As the two sat waiting the next few hours to board the GAT3, other members of the crew introduced themselves.

Todd Woodley, Air Quality Engineer, and his wife Jennifer, Healthcare Specialist. Bryan Faythe, Media Tech., his wife, Melissa, Comptroller, Magnusen Jefferies, Biotech Analysis for Immersion Symmetry, his wife Margarita, Head Astro-Nano Specialist, also at IS. Just to name a few on the flight on their Module Team.

Two hours before departing to the GAT3 to Ecospace, Erika reached for her phone and called her parents.

Mom answered and had tears on her face.

“What’s wrong, mom?” Erika asked.

“I just realized that this might be the last time I see you on Earth.” Her mother said with tears streaming down her face.

Erika’s father got on the phone also with tears streaming down his face.

“Your mom and I have been talking for the last few hours, thinking this was the last time we actually will see our baby on Earth forever.”

“But, mom, dad, we’re just a few million miles away, we can come back anytime we’re needed.” Erika assured her parents.

“Life is different now than the old days, we’re only a few months away, and we can visit at least every year if need be.” Erika said trying to console her aging parents.

“Besides medical technology is supreme these days, you and dad should live to be at least 200 years old, you’re still young. You’re just in your sixties, you have a long time to live, you may even be able to come visit us on Mars in a few years, tech is getting really good.” Erika continued to assure that the trip to Mars was not that big of a deal. Just like going to Australia to live, same amount of time, if you’re taking a slow ship from China to Norway.

“We have to go soon, we have preflight preps we have to get ready for, and all the press and stuff we have to deal with, at least, we’ll see you on TV in about an hour.” She said continuing to assure her parents that this was just like going to camp for a week, nothing to worry about. It’s just everyday life.

Erika’s parents were sad not only having their only child leave Earth, but having to continue to live on Earth which was still in decay, but trying to make a swing around to getting more habitable. Things were about to change for the better with the New Organic Deal that all nations on Earth signed into. Taking care of the Earth instead of just taking everything it had to offer without giving back. Finally, people on Earth realized that they had to stop taking and start replenishing what was extracted. And the new generation of kids were in full swing to make their Earth the way they wanted, and with the New Organic Deal, it was happening quicker and the Earth was responding and there was a bright future to Earth after all. The bleak vision of Earth was starting to turn around into revitalization of the planet, and moving off-world was just a choice, not a need.

Twenty minutes until lift off, The Module Team all gathered in the media room and answered questions from the press and made their appearance on global networks before entering isolation and moving on from Earth.

Erika and Lars both said hi to Erika's parents, since Lars family were deceased, he had no one to say goodbye to, except a cousin or two and a few lifelong friends. The family made one last connection before departing for their two week quarantine to Ecospace. They still had connection via wifi to family members and that kept them in touch until the next phase of transporting themselves to The Albedo, when all individual connection would be lost for the next few months, only connection was with NASA/SpaceX and Virgin would be able with communication directors and lease-zones. Communication would be sent if an emergency happened on both ends of the space flight. If something on Earth was bad enough for an abort or visa-versa.

Getting on board the GAT3 was routine, all in the team were sim'ed to what to expect. They all had space time on their records, each had been to the Moon one time or another and space travelling was just like going on a world tour, and all were experienced in what to expect and protocols were in place and all were intelligent enough to recognize hazards when it might happen. But space travel to Mars was as routine as going to the Moon, just like going to your grocery store every week. This was just as normal as that. Nothing to worry about, but, just in case, if things happen, things were being taken care of and

mishaps were routinely diagnosed and examined and examined again.

CHAPTER 2: Flight to Mars

Lars was a little jumpy when they were about to be escorted to The Albedo. He'd been pacing back and forth in their quarters for most of the morning.

"Lars, will you settle down, I know you have pre-flight jitters but you're making me nervous." Erika said while packing the rest of her suitcase.

"I know, I know, I'm sorry, I'm just anticipating all that could go wrong." He said sitting on their bed. "I'll be all right maybe I should take a pill."

"Maybe." She replied.

The ship was going to be their home for a few months. The two weeks in isolation to make sure they were healthy to the prolonged togetherness of twenty people in a long space flight to another planet was a slight fear of Lars.

Erika whispered in Lars ear. "You'll be alright dear. You'll always have me to rely on."

Lars was always calmed down by Erika's words and tender touch. He really relied on her, since his mind was constantly in outer space. She was a grounded person dealing with earthly matters and he was in outer space

dealing with hypotheticals and theories. But she was always there to ground him when his fears suddenly appeared out of nowhere. Mostly his fears were from the time his immediate family died in a tragic accident that he survived. His entire family died in a transport accident involving an animal in the wilderness. He was the only one to come out unharmed, literally, unharmed, not even a scratch, but his mom, dad, brother and sister all died instantly with a bison on a vacation in America at Yellowstone when he was just ten.

The PTSD was always with him, no matter how close Erika loved him, he always somehow ended up having nightmares and sudden bouts of depression and survivors guilt, but nothing a few meds like Xanax couldn't level out.

Even with all that in his psychological profile, he was still able to leave Earth with his new wife and hopefully start a new family on Mars like other young people on Earth looking for a new direction and following their occupational paths of Astro-tech.

Having the isolation protocols finished and The Albedo was ready for their trip, all the couples were given quarters and were also part of the crew for flight routines on their voyage to Mars, all happy in their new life sequence, they all retired to their quarters every night, tired, from work but energetic with their new concepts of living, love making was pretty much looked upon required especially, since

most of Mars was to be populated to continue creating new offspring to continue the Mars Project.

Lars and Erika were happy to be obliged and were quickly surprised she was pregnant and expecting at least two months after arriving on Mars.

CHAPTER 3: Home Sweet Home

Erika and Lars arrived with their new born baby, their module was preset because of their situation, and Mars Inc. was happy to make the arrangements. The formative years of life on Mars went normal. They both had their child in the Mars C 6 with very much fanfare and media coverage both on Mars and Earth.

Erika and her parents loved the time spent on line, showing Tag and Lars and their family having the time of their lives on Mars.

Each year went well, they both developed their occupations to the best of their abilities and both were being successful on Mars and Earth.

Earth was returning to the vital ecosystem it started as The New Organic Deal was producing a more sustainable planet, and Erika's parents were living a more productive and healthful life. They even were submitted to visiting Mars in two years to visit their Martian family, and seeing their grandson finally in person.

Erika kissed Lars on his lips. "Home sweet home, dear, don't forget to dump the trash compactor." Which Lars immediately did at the nearest receptacle. Even though he just got home from a long hard day at exploring the southern quadrant of the Splinter Galaxy, his latest in search for extraterrestrial life outside the Milky Way Galaxy in computer VR 3D models.

While Lars was doing his chores, Erika smelled something familiar and sniffed her way to Tag's room.

Tag and his two buddies, Julio's sons were smoking a joint that he found in Erika's drawer earlier that day and called his best buddies over to have a party, when Erika walked in on them.

"What the fuck Mom?!" Tag screamed, "Where's my privacy?"

"Sorry dear, "Erika said, "didn't mean to impede on your space, just smelled something and wanted to investigate, no worries."

Tag and his two friends all about the age of thirteen were sitting naked in a circle and smoking the half spent joint and exploring their sexuality. All sporting hairless hard erections standing straight up like young boys get. Some of the penises glistened in the light, like someone was exploring more with their mouths than hands. And Erika, just stroked it up to young boys doing what young boys do.

Each of the boys were embarrassed having been found playing with each other and smoking dope, which is frowned upon by adults in the colony. Erika quickly shut the door without reprimand. She didn't want to cause psychic harm to any of them.

Tag and his friends continued to smoke the weed and continued to explore each other. The thrill was too great to not continue, even if mom found them, these dicks were too hard and needed to explode any way possible. And no one was complaining, not even Hector, Julio's youngest, who was the mouth being used for their sexual release. Tag suggested Roberto and he both put their hard dicks in Hector's mouth. Which all accepted as normal and, Erika's weed was major potent, they were in another world to themselves; including Hector who was vigorously beating off while sucking his brother and friend, Hector might have found his true sexuality, as gay...all were happy in the long run.

Lars returned from his chore and Erika, gave him a glass of whiskey.

"We have to talk." She said.

"What is it, what did I do wrong now." Lars asked.

"Honey, it's not you...this time. It's Tag." She said with a concerned face Lars wasn't familiar with.

“What’s up with Tag?” he asked taking a sip of his drink.

“Well, it seems, Tag likes smoking weed, and on top of that, he’s starting to get Hard-On’s and explore, with other boys.” She said taking a sip of her own whiskey.

“So, should we call a doctor?” Lars asked.

“No, it’s not that much of a problem, I just stumbled upon them just now, smoking and being naked, I needed to let you know, our son is sexually exploring and wanted to keep you up to speed.”

“Well, I remember when I was young, kids explore. We just discover what we like, who we like. Girls are hard to approach, and your friends are your friends and it’s just normal to explore with each other, even if it’s frowned upon, but that was Earth, this is Mars.

Tag was going to school and learning new processes to learn how to be a productive person on Mars and beyond. His middle school studies including Geo-logistics and showed an interest in geological formations and technologies of understanding components that make up Astro-terrestrial land formations. Something, that both Erika was happy with, following her pursuits of natural and Lars was happy with his Astro interests. Tag was following both his parents in a occupation that would produce a lifelong sustainable economic probability and perhaps make his own family, when finding the right woman. Tag

was more interested in partying even as a young man pursuing his education. Hector and Roberto both followed their fathers profession in Logistics, after the age of fourteen each drifted apart from themselves, including Hector from his brother and family. The family couldn't get behind Hector being gay, even in this day. And especially on Mars, gay was looked upon as not productive. Mars was for procreation, not self fulfillment. You had to be productive and sustaining of the Martian culture and keeping the population growing to be the same as Earth, if possible.

CHAPTER 4: Containment = Null

Erika sat at her station looking in her microscope at the new strain of Pineapple Express she was using CRISPR with an old strain of golden pineapple, both showing promise.

When alarms were blaring in her ears, she thought that there was a malfunction in the lab and had to quickly gather up her specimens and lock them in a bio-container for safekeeping from whatever bio hazard was happening. She quickly put on her hazmat suit and headed for the nearest shelter for isolation.

Her supervisor assured her, their section was okay, but she needed to get back to her module in case something

was amiss and they need to quarantine and isolate for a long period.

Erika placed her specimens in their vault and headed home.

The whole module was busy with activity, all essential and nonessential personnel were scurrying to protocol decontaminate systems. All were working feverishly quickly to get to safety.

This was the first of hazardous health alarms that MC6 had been involved with, she heard of a couple a few years ago in other MC's but none ever in 6. She was scared, and she knew her husband and child were scared too, they were less capable of high stress situations than she was. She headed directly to their mod and went into mother-mode.

Tag and Lars were both in their pod and scrambling to search on vid what was happening.

"Where were you!" Lars screamed as Erika entered their pod.

"I was at work and I rushed here as soon as possible." She said, trying to calm the two of them down.

"Why didn't you answer my call?" Lars asked wide eyed and shivering in panic.

“I didn’t have my cell, things were a bit wonky and I didn’t really have time to do anything, except, get my shit together and get home as soon as possible to take care of you two.” She said in a hostile voice.

Lars was shaken by her voice and realized his childish behavior and started to settle down. Tag, on the other hand, was still under eighteen and not a full adult, still was freaked out and not handling the situation well.

“What are we going to do and what’s going on?” Tag asked.

“Well, Tag, it’s a warning, and yeah, it’s a new warning, one we’ve never had, and we’ll see what happens.” Erika tried to comfort her son and husband who was still looking at her like a deer in headlights.

“It’ll be okay, there’s protocols.” She said, they know what to do, we’re 6, this happened years ago, they have their shit together, pardon my French.” She said looking at Tag.

Tag smiled, she said shit he thought, he’s still a kid.

Erika patted Lars on his back. "It'll be fine dear, don't worry."

VIRAL ALERT...VIRAL ALERT...VIRAL ALERT

This appeared on their home monitor, safety protocols were issued. A Nano-Viral mishap had spread from Nano-

matrix and was not contained and replicating in MC5, Scientific Research labs which in turn spread into MC6 vents of Immersion Symmetry Nano research 6 Division. All subjects were issued quarantine immediately. Safe zone protocols.

LOCK DOWN IMMEDIATE_LOCK DOWN IMMEDIATE

This meant, get to the Safe zone as soon as possible, and the meant a matter of minutes, five minutes precisely, anyone outside safe zone would be lost. And lost meant, vaporized. Time was important, no dilly dally.

None was taken, all residents had safe zoned in time.

Vaporization commenced.

CHAPTER 5: Rapid Viral Deployment

Safe in the safe zone. The Christensen's were safe from bio.

Alarms were blaring, doors were shutting quickly around MC6, Lars and his family were in proximity of their quarantine room so getting back to their home safe zone was easier than most people in MC6.

Erika looked at Lars and said, "I don't think we're going to survive this." Lars could see the fear in her eyes.

Lars, Erika and Tag were huddled in their safe zone. The virus was spreading rapidly in the base. Tag was crying and Lars was trying to comfort him as they soon found themselves isolated from the rest of the colony. Alarms were sounding and video monitors were automatically updating each module with news of the virus spread.

Vaporization of all areas was set and functioned, all was vaporized, but lockdown was still in place for another two hours.

Two hours in isolation, and here Erika was with her child and child husband trying to maintain control over the situation and their immediate freak out. Lars was still trying to control his fear as was Tag.

“It’s fine, it’s all fine, we’re safe, don’t worry.” Erika soothed them both.

TO BE CONTINUED....WORK IN PROGRESS