

THE
ADVENTURE
BEGINS...



It took Alla three long weeks to reach the Pulsar nebula where she was sent to repair one of Deep Space Industry's communications satellites. The satellite was orbiting a small, barren planet named Eriac. These satellites were incredibly complicated and Alla was the only engineer skilled enough to repair them.

Ever since Alla was a little girl, she'd always dreamed of becoming a space engineer. She loved to create new things and she was fascinated by science. She also loved adventure. Space engineers had the chance to meet other life forms and explore far-off places.

Alla's only companion on the mission was R.E.N., a helper bot Alla built to help with the repair. The bot ran an artificial intelligence system Alla coded herself. It was one of the best, but like all AI systems of the time, it just wasn't very...well...intelligent.



What was missing? Alla spent years searching for the solution. In fact, she pondered this very question as she and R.E.N. prepared to exit their ship and repair the broken satellite.



We made it! Our navigation systems parked us in orbit around Eriac right next to the broken satellite.



Well, R.E.N. I made a few adjustments to your AI code. Hopefully things go better this time.



Either way, I sure am glad to have your company! Ready to fix that satellite?



AFFIRMATIVE!

Allia secured her suit, took a deep breath and entered the airlock with R.E.N.



Tethered to her ship, Alia leaped out of the airlock, floated through nothingness, and landed gracefully on the surface of the satellite. That was always her favorite part. R.E.N. followed.



OK,
R.E.N. let's
knock this one
out quickly and
get home.

ACKNOWLEDGED!

Unfortunately, the helper bot's flawed AI took her literally. It fired its aft thrusters at full throttle and slammed into the side of the satellite. Alia dodged as twisted pieces of metal flew past her. She'd have to fix the satellite manually - without R.E.N.'s help.

5 HOURS LATER



Let's get
back to the ship and
then go home, R.E.N.

Alia was relieved that the satellite was repaired, but she couldn't shake her disappointment in the AI she built for R.E.N. She'd have to start from scratch, but this time she'd--

WARNING: SHIP'S
HULL IS
OVERHEATING

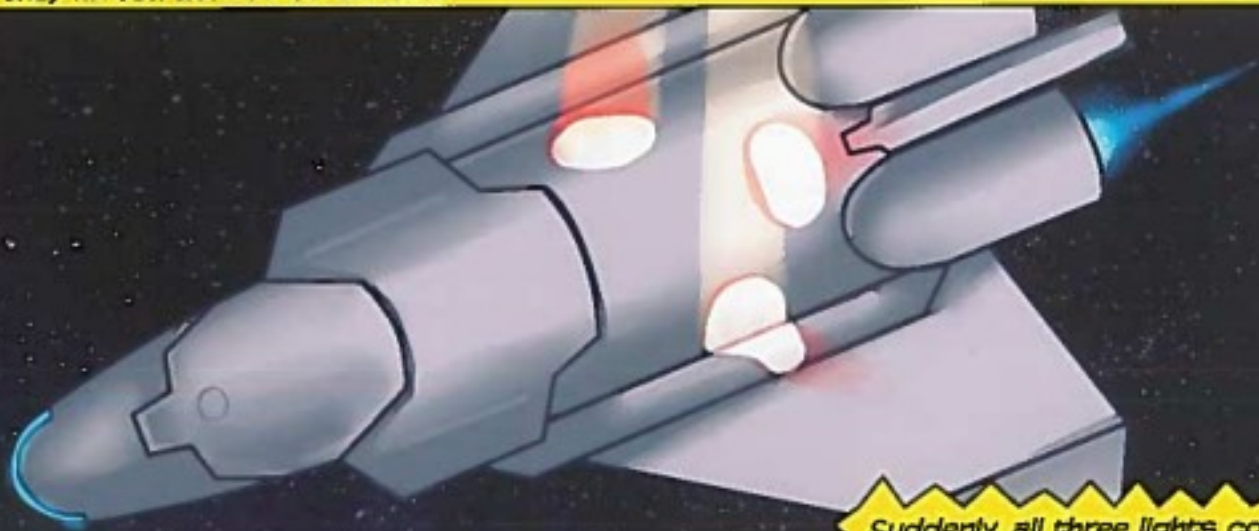


Huh? Are
you su--



Loud warning beeps from R.E.N. startled Alia out of her thoughts.

Still on the surface of the satellite, Alia turned to look at her ship, which was engulfed in white light. Alia squinted to see three beams of blindingly bright light focused on her ship, leaving red hot trails behind them as they moved across its surface.



Suddenly, all three lights converged directly over the ship's computers!



Come on, R.E.N!
We need to get
back to the
ship, FAST!

The emergency return which strained as it yanked Alla back to the ship at top speed.



She threw herself into the ship's airlock, not sure what damage she would find inside her ship.



The beam of light melted a hole through the ship's hull and disappeared as quickly as it came.



It was too late. The ship was off course and beginning to lose speed in the planet's thick methane atmosphere. It was falling out of orbit. Fast. Too fast.





We're Falling out of orbit!

Put the shields up, R.E.N!

WARNING OVERSPEED

ACKNOWLEDGED!

With alarms blaring, Alia attempted to override the navigational computers as the ship dove towards the planet's surface.



Alia struggled to manually land the crippled ship on the cold, rocky surface of planet Eniac.



OPEN



I made it in one piece, but the ship wasn't as lucky.

Ok. Think Alia, think! I need to assess the damage and repair the ship. It'll take weeks for anyone to reach me out here.

Alla turned her attention to her ship. The ship's computers were down, which meant no navigation and no communication. Life support was also down and...no oxygen!

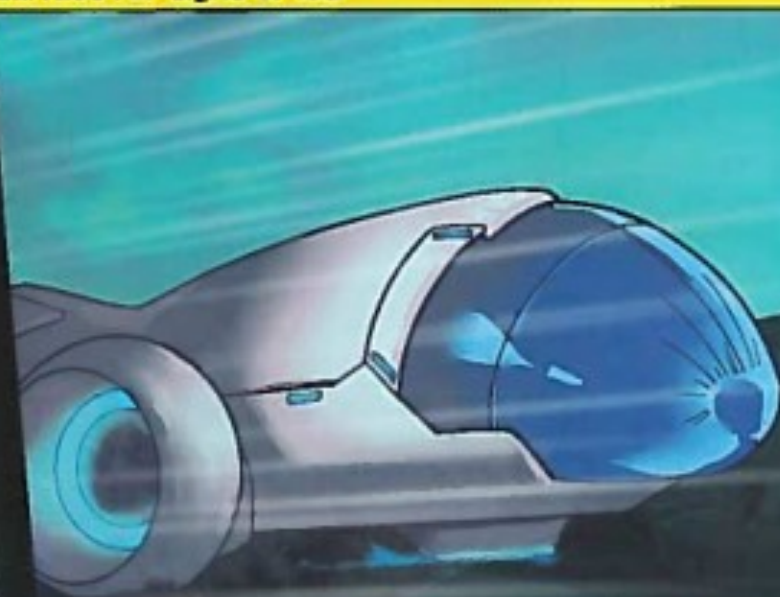


Alla knew she would need to find ice on the frozen planet. Then she could use the ship's electrolysis module to resupply her oxygen. Only 8 hours of oxygen left. She'd have to move fast.



Alla jumped in her hover speeder and scanned the planet's surface for signs of ice.

Stay here, RENJ! I need to find some ice.



Alla searched and searched. One hour went by, but she found nothing but a rocky, barren surface. Another two hours passed. Still nothing. Alla began searching further and further away from her ship. Four more hours passed...



Only 1 hour of oxygen left.

...and still no sign of ice.



There's nothing on this blasted planet but rock!




Wait... scanners are picking up atmospheric vibrations up ahead?


Computer—put the vibrations through so I can hear them!



It sounds like... rushing water!!




But that's
not possible! It's -76°
outside! The water should be
frozen!




What is
THAT?!?

The sound emanated from a massive, black
building. The tallest building Alla had ever seen.



Where
did it come
from? This planet
is supposed to be
uninhabited.



It's
magnificent!



The sound is coming from inside. I need to find a way in.



Allia reached out and touched the wall. As she did, a massive section of the wall slid open.

touch



RUMBLE



Inside, Allia saw that the walls were lined with millions upon millions of panels—stretching up as high as she could see and down deeper than she could make out in the darkness.

PSHHHHHHHHHH

PSHHHHHH

PSHHHHHH



On closer look, Alla saw a complex cascade of small, metal balls rolling across the surface of the panels. Flipping a myriad of switches as gravity pulled the balls downward.



Alla stood in awe amid the roar of billions of click-clacking balls.



Incredible...
but...

Balls that reached the bottom were pushed to the top by a geothermal pump at the planet's core. Alla picked one up. The ball was still warm to the touch.

Hopelessness washed over Alla...



...there is
no water here!

At this point,
even if I found
water, there
wouldn't be
enough time to
return to the
ship...

Alla summoned her courage.

Well,
sigh, no point
in feeling sorry
for myself...

I have
27 minutes
of oxygen
left.

That's 27
minutes to
explore humankind's
greatest discovery!
Not a bad way to
go.



This all looks like some sort of massive computing machine.



But what was its purpose?

Alia wandered a maze of hallways lined with panels from top to bottom. She drew shallow breaths to extend her oxygen.

Huh?

She tried to decode what she was seeing. Intelligent life. A massive, mechanical computer system.



Alia stumbled across the remains of an alien being. It was a type of alien Alia had never seen before.

I suppose in this intense radiation, silicon-based computers couldn't function. All of this must have been their solution.

Was it trying to fix these panels?

Near the alien, balls and parts were strewn about the floor. It looked as though they came from the panels above them.

Alia guessed that the missing parts were meant to slow the balls down. Without them, the balls were falling down too quickly, causing them to sometimes bounce out of the panels and onto the floor.

It looks like these panels aren't working properly. I bet the alien was trying to repair the machine. I wonder if I can fix it.