

Mandatory Mission

I breathe in and out, in and out, my breaths slowly getting faster and faster. I'm not ready for this, I shouldn't be going, and I shouldn't be here. I am not okay with this. I'm panting, I'm breathing so fast barely any air is coming in to my system.

We're moving faster and faster, my ears are blocked. "This is it, we're about to enter that atmosphere!" Williams shouts over the deafening rumble of the engines. I close my eyes and try to calm myself, the sound of the engines rattling my bones. It feels like an hour goes past I'm so scared, even though it's only been a few minutes. I hear a dull thud and the whole ship jumps.

Everyone frees themselves from their safety belts and gets ready to leave. I'm glued to my seat, breathing in and out, my heart beat going through the roof. "Fray!" Williams shouts "Get moving!" I close my eyes and shake my head. Williams comes forward, forces me to stand, and shoves my helmet on my head. Once everybody is ready, the door opens and the ramp slowly lowers to the ground. We've been training for this for months, we know what to do, and it still doesn't make it any easier. I can barely breathe, my mind is telling me no but my body isn't corresponding, it's moving me forwards.

When I walk through those doors I am surrounded by a red, barren desert. Even walking on this planet feels different. This is insane, this isn't right, everything feels wrong. "Head for the dome to your left!" Williams instructs us. I turn to my left and look into the distance, what looks like miles away is a small dome.

We walk and walk and walk, and I can't help but feel sick, my breathing is unsteady and I can feel my heart beating in my throat. As we get closer the dome gets bigger and bigger, though I still can't clearly see what's inside. Oh god, I don't want to be here this place feels wrong, I can feel the cold through my thick suit. I've just gotten here and I already want to go home.

My breathing is picking up pace again, I feel dizzy. I'm so scared my body is trembling. We have to live together, close and compact. We can't leave. I begin to feel very, very light headed. My vision starts to spot and I start to stumble, everything goes sideways and it goes black.

I open my eyes to see a grey, curved ceiling. I turn to my side and jump. There is a man sitting right there next to me. "Hazel Fray, Welcome to Mars." He says with a slight smile on his face. I struggle to sit up, my whole body feels like lead. I'm in a small room, in a bed with weird metallic looking thermal blanket over my legs.

The man is still sitting there patiently, waiting for me to say something I assume. "Where am I?" I ask, looking directly into the man's face. "You're in the medical centre, you can leave when you're ready and begin work." He replies. "What if I don't want to work, what if I just want to go home?" I ask him, "You've only just gotten here, and you came for a reason, and you haven't even seen what life is like here." He says, looking with a scolding look.

I push the blanket off my legs and stand "Where do I go?" I ask him again. "Home of operations, you can easily find it, it's the biggest building here." He replies, "There are clothes for you on the chair, I will be leaving, good luck." He says, reaching out his hand for me to shake, I don't take it. He stands and leaves.

I get up and put on the clothes I have been given, a black shirt and tight black pants. I get dressed and put on my shoes. I step out of the room into a large space with a dome shaped ceiling. On the surrounding walls are doors that lead to rooms like mine. On one wall there is a large semi-circle shaped door. I walk over to it and it opens automatically, I step outside.

The ground is still red, though I am surrounded by many buildings that all look the same except for small differences, Made of what looks like grey concrete and all shaped like a dome. I look up and see a thick glass covering, so thick that I can barely see the sky. The dome. I walk directly down the path and the dome ends directly at the end of it, I run around the edge of the dome. The dome is so big, there is so much space but I still feel claustrophobic. My

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breaths start to become shallow. It feels like something is pulling in and pressing down on me. I already hate this place. I need to get out of here. I start to run around, trying to find the exit.

This place is like a maze, every time I turn a corner it looks exactly like where I came from. It feels oppressive, I feel trapped. I almost collapse when I finally see it, a building that goes halfway in and out of the dome. That has to be the way out.

I sprint towards the building, I'm so determined to get out I barely even notice that I'm hardly breathing. I reach the doors and they open again automatically, I slip through, trying to keep hidden. The door opened into a chamber so full of people that they don't even notice me. All along one wall are space suits with helmets and oxygen tanks. I just need to get out, they will never let me go home, and I just need this to end. I walk over to the door at the edge of the dome, there is a pad at the door, I need a security card or something. I see one hanging from a man's waist. I slip over to him. I snatch the ID and he turns, but I'm already at the door.

I scan the card and everyone starts shouting. The door opens and I run out, it closes behind me. I'm holding my breath, I turn and look behind me. They're opening the door. I turn back around and sprint as fast as I can, I don't want to stay here, and I may as well end it. My vision turns black at the edges, my vision is spotting. I open my mouth to breathe but there's no air, I'm suffocating. I gasp and fall to the ground clutching my throat and everything stops.