

”Frozen”

A short story by Andreas Ingo



It hang among the stars like a metal skeleton on a deep journey into the heart of the universe. The space-ship had left Vinter months ago. A gigantic space-station rotating slowly in phase with a cold destiny. Inside were the two bodies of Jeffrey and Samantha, hibernating in dreamless sleep. In wait for a descent into paradise. The hull of the space-ship was grey, a dark grey with the emblem of the future space agency. Years had come to pass, the youngsters had grown older, being best friends since childhood but age had made them break apart. And then they were lying there in the space-ship as pale ghosts.

An alarm went off on a high pitched frequency. In time Jeffrey arose. Watching the high-tech equipment connecting him to a drug-store. The drugs having fed the teenager with chemicals for his own hibernation. But no fluid came along the transparent tubes. The alarm continued to his deep dissatisfaction. Being from the stars and looking at flashing displays.

”Why am I awake?” Jeffrey asked himself. ”It is still three months left.”

And he walked around the hibernation chamber on unsteady legs. He watched the hibernation capsule of Samantha. The teenager girl sleeping tight, dreaming nothing, eyes closed as planned before. Jeffrey thought about the journey. The journey towards paradise. A lush planet in orbit around a gas giant.

”What to do about it?” Jeffrey thought in a rush of panic.

He looked at a display to reinform himself of the situation. The drugs were out and Samantha was coming to life. No other personnel was found on the space-ship. A mission to arrive at paradise for no cost at all. Traveling in a stolen space-ship.

”Why did I wake up?” Samantha asked, ”I can ’t see any planet.”

”The drugs in the drug-store went out.”

The teenagers were looking at each other as twin souls. The drug-store was the ticket to paradise. Not enough oxygen was available for the two teenagers traveling awake. Only for the slowed down breathing in dreamless sleep.

"I think we're in danger." Jeffrey said.

And the two of them walked around the dim interiors of the space-ship. The space was finite, so different from the endless carpet of stars shining through the circular windows. There was no captain on the ship. Driven by a ship-computer, to land on "Untouched", a planetary system with lush forests of purple, enchanted oceans and arid deserts. It was paradise. An empty area never intended for man. Full av animals, carbon dioxide and sulfur. The dream was the dream of many: To merge with nature and to be one with all. Samantha and Jeffrey walked into each other only to retreat. The two of them had almost fallen in love on Vinter, destroying the friendship they always had had. And so they drifted apart.

"I have an idea." Jeffrey said.

"An idea?"

"To land on a comet nearby." Jeffrey said, "I have heard about the failed mission. There could be oxygen supply in the stranded space-ship."

"You're crazy."

"Perhaps. But I can see no other way."

Samantha looked at the teenager with anguish. She felt for him in a twisted way. Childhood years giving way for sexual arousal later. But the magic they felt in childhood digging beautiful forms in melting snow was abstract, loving and sincere. Jeffrey was not quite the same. Childhood play was their thing in the past. But Jeffrey had begun to change his mind later. Thinking about sleeping with the beautiful girl that had interests different from his own. That was the dream of the greatest art. Samantha painting her way beyond the physical world into the abstract. A huge contrast to Jeffrey that loved the physical universe. The physical journey of life, passing adulthood and finding old age, settling down in paradise to build a space-colony.

The days that passed was a horrible nightmare, the two of them waiting for disaster, thinking about the crazy idea to descend towards the giant comet lacking training. As the oxygen supply was running out.

"I will go." Jeffrey said.

"I can't follow." Samantha said with anguish.

"That's what I have been thinking."

"Why?"

"Because the lander is only made for one."

Three days later the teenager descended towards the huge comet leaking ice and cold gases. It lacked gravity. The dark journey had the stars twinkle and die due to the light reflected from the huge comet. He dreamed about a last rescue, descended towards the surface and landed beside a white outcropping. He went out and watched the bleak surroundings and was not a little bit surprised. The ice crystals came to life in different colours due to the light from the remote star in the distance. The main star of the paradise system.

He used his thrusters and floated around the crystal landscape. Blue neon reflections were seen and the colours of red and green. Making a cold imprint in the young mind of Jeffrey. He floated around the surroundings as a remote intruder. The ice was intersected with strange blocks of stone. Like coming from an asteroid or passing blocks around a star. The teenager watched these stones sometimes glimmering in a golden light. It was beautiful.

Hours later he found the lost space-ship. Jeffrey investigated the interiors and found three bodies inside. He watched the air-supply and the main auxiliary support unit. No oxygen was found. He was taken aback, he was afraid but no solution was to be found. Could he go back to the space-ship without solution? Could he search for drugs from the failed mission? He could see no future as those astronauts were traveling awake. It was better to remain in silence. But silence grew the word failure in Jeffrey's mind. He gave up. He sat down and wept. Wept for the impossibility of the mission. Also for the impossibility to have Samantha of his own. But it was empty tears.

He came to his senses and dragged himself around watching the dead displays and the equipment of the lost astronauts. As he dragged himself out he floated around the dead comet. Watching fragments of dust and minerals on the blank surfaces. He thought he heard the shrieking of panicked astronauts. The haunting of dead souls. And as he floated around, using the main thruster to his advantage he started to think about childhood and his teenager years.

He played with Samantha as a child and he later tried to awake her romantic interest. But he remembered he sat in the dining hall of Vinter, watching the red lips of the teenager and stumbled as he talked. Samantha answered him in a remote fashion and Jeffrey just didn't understand it. He learned dispassion on the way. Hinting at love but abandoning it, a mechanical drive of his teenager brain. Sometimes it worked but Samantha gave up in the end. The dining hall became empty, the loving play of the childhood years were gone. And so the teenager gave up and became a flight officer. Samantha studied art.

He floated around the comet like a hollow ghost. Devoid of hope. Devoid of love, hope and understanding. And he started to see the comet in another light. A light of his own undoing. The realization that Samantha was his life and his life would amount to nothing. He found a strange cave, a bit similar to the caves the children had made by artificial snow. It was decorated with strange carvings. Carvings from the dead astronauts, telling about a future of space-ships, a hot sun and the paradise of unknown planets. But among all this he found nature. Natural signs from the interstellar evolution of the comet. A strange trajectory around the remote sun.

He started to think about the paradise on "Untouched". What life would amount to in close proximity to Samantha. A dying ember of love, abandoning her plans of great art, to live with him in a physical universe. They would travel the barren landscape, breathing real air. Seeing strange aliens, with their heads held up high towards the brightest sun. A blue giant above, signaling alien ways of life, unfit for them.

He thought about it. He called Samantha and told her about the situation.

"You must return home by yourself." he said, "You must think of great art. Because the life you haven chosen was my dream, not yours. And there was no oxygen in the stranded space-ship. The oxygen will last only for you."

"You are crazy!" Samantha said, Full of tears, panic and anguish.

"I have found a place." Jeffrey said, "A place for great reflection. And when it comes to you, you have to make the journey alone."

Samantha shouted over the radio as Jeffrey ended the communication with the push of a button.

Jeffrey sat for himself in the icy cave. He watched the surroundings with despair. Took up a green flare from his backpack and placed it in the center of the cave. The walls of the cave came alive with the light from the flare. Heating Jeffrey up as he thought about "Untouched" once again. The journey had happened according to his will. But will was will, love was love.

The greenish walls of the icy cave flickered as the flare shone and gave up according to the principle of low energy. Jeffrey shuddered, his body was getting cold. And as he drowned himself in a bottomless abyss of beautiful thoughts he began to breathe. Breathe for himself and his last decision.

His body were getting colder, he thought about suicide. And that was the ultimate point of the journey to "Untouched" he thought. To confront his demons. He always loved the heat but Samantha loved the cold. The cold as an abstract thing in art. One thing he never understood but came to think about in fleeting moments. And now as he leaned back on the colden walls, the night were entering the cave. Coldness came and heat were generated from the inner core of his body.

He closed his eyes and had a long last prayer. To give up his life for the girl of his dreams. That was Samantha.

THE END