

was a tiny ship, about like a water globus next to the ~~nationships~~ of the Mars–Luna–Terra trade route. It was crammed full of sensor equipment and the quep drive, the hold for the ProbeLinks at ~~the~~ one end and the bridge at the other. The only other space allowed for the two occupants was their ~~Ppods~~—individual chambers, capable of self-sealing ~~in an emergency,~~ that Kena and Mari slept in.

Commented [EA1]: Since you are inventing this term, you can choose whether to hyphenate or not. You might choose to hyphenate.

Commented [EA2]: Capitalized inconsistently. Consider whether it should be lowercase or capitalized.

Mari navigated through the tight passageways down to the magnetic resonance sensor, ~~then tapping~~ several keys on ~~the sensor's its internal~~ screen to begin running diagnostics. ~~She peered ing~~ through the tiny viewport to see the sensor arm. ~~as the rocky~~ "It's all greens down here," she commed to Kena.

"Check the quep ~~drive~~," Kena tersely responded. "I'm getting some strange feedback from it."

Mari turned, ~~and~~ pulled her body two paces down the hallway, and dialed into the drive's computer.

"Kena, it's—"

~~Inside the quep chamber, a~~ screeching whine rose ~~inside the quep chamber and, one that~~ threaded between Mari's joints, ~~and~~ into her skull, and deep into her teeth.

No puedo ser bueno, as Mamanita would say.

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"Critical failure in the Quantum-Electro-Physics Drive Compartment," belatedly informed the ship.

A rattling joined the whine, and the ship began to jounce and jump, like the rocks Nico and she ~~had~~ skipped together that last week before—

"Critical failure in the thrusters compartment," informed the computer calmly.

Diablo.

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"Critical failure in the genera—"

~~And s~~Suddenly everything was silent, too silent, and still, too still.

Mari lurched toward the ladder to the bridge. ~~She tapping~~ at her helmet-comm ~~and,~~ ~~triyed~~ing to raise Kena. But ~~the commit~~ was silent, ~~and it was dead and unresponsive.~~

Kena's feet came ~~down~~ out of the bridge, and ~~as they passed each other~~ there was a moment where their mirrored faceplates seemed transparent as they shared a last, ~~knowing look, a knowing~~ look. Then they ~~both~~ lowered into their ~~Ppodss~~, their last hope,

and sealed the heavy metal lids—, the lids that were only meant to be closed when the Ppods ~~became~~ ~~were about to become~~ coffins—, over themselves.

In those last few seconds, or long hours, or whatever they were, Mari felt herself opening that box, that Pod inside herself ~~that she kept the lid on~~ ~~on which she kept the lid tightly sealed~~, and she could not keep it closed any longer. Or ~~R~~ maybe she ~~was had now sealed herself~~ inside it, ~~with alongside~~ the memories she kept ~~inside it~~ ~~locked away~~.

“Marianela ~~García García~~ Ricardo,” Mamáa had said, “¿~~p~~Por ~~que~~ ~~qué~~? Why do you want to go?”

Mari had said nothing, just stood there and looked at Mamanita. Her own dear ~~Mama~~ ~~Mamá~~, no matter how much she loved her ~~daughter~~, would never understand. ~~Her Mamanita's~~ life was too perfect, too happy.

“Just give it time, Mari,” she had said, meaning well. “Give it time, and that young man will fade, and another young man will ~~come in~~, ~~and~~ steal your heart, and ~~will~~ make you happy.”

Papáa had shrugged. “If she wants to take care of us in our aging years, with all the promised familial benefits, then let her.” And that was all he ~~had~~ said.

Abuela had patted her cheek sorrowfully. “Child,” she had said, “there are easier ways to get rich.”

Manolo had grinned—the wretch!—and turned to Abuela. “And when she disappears and is never heard from again, I will get all the money!” He had ~~ducked~~, ~~narrowly missed~~ Mari’s swat ~~narrowly missing him~~, ~~ducking out of the room~~.

Only Tía Verónica. The one who didn’t fit, the one who ~~sat~~ quietly in the corner. ~~Tía Verónica~~, ~~had~~ ~~watchiedng~~ the gossips gabbling ~~while wrapping~~, ~~wrapping~~ her silence about herself like a solemn ~~shawl~~.

~~At the last minute before leaving Mari’s farewell fiesta~~, Tía Verónica had ~~, at the last moment before she left the farewell fiesta,~~ taken Mari’s hands in her ~~own~~. ~~s~~. ~~She had~~ ~~+~~ looked into ~~her niece’s~~ ~~her~~ eyes; and spoken softly, so softly that Mari had had to bend down to hear.

“Marianela”—she had said, and just the way ~~she her auntie had~~ looked at ~~Mari her had~~ brought the hated tears pricking to ~~her Mari’s~~ eyes—“Marianela, the reason for the emptiness you feel—”

~~And Mari’s felt her world~~ ~~existence~~ erupted into heat and flame. ~~Eand~~ even the Pod and the pressure suit she’d wrapped around herself couldn’t entirely keep ~~it~~ ~~at~~ ~~her~~ ~~world~~ from ~~coming~~ to pieces.

Commented [EA4]: Especially given the later scene of finding Kena has died, this should probably be rewritten from Mari’s perspective instead of from “they.”

Commented [EA5]: In Spanish, questions begin with an inverted question mark. Also, some authors italicize foreign words, and some don’t. Consider how you wish to merge the two languages, and possibly seek a fluent Spanish speaker’s opinion.

Commented [EA6]: This is a stylistic choice. Do you want Mamanita to speak “properly”?

Commented [EA7]: Is this a state of constant being for Tía V., or a state specific to this event? Adding “always” or “had” before “sat” will change the meaning of this sentence.

Commented [EA8]: Mantilla?

Commented [EA9]: Flaming? Burning?

Marianela Garcia Ricardo awoke, groggy ~~and~~; screaming, from a dream of being buried alive. Her pressure suit sighed and she gulped, swallowing her screams down in the close dark of the ~~Pod~~. She palmed the ~~Pod's~~ interior release, panic threatening ~~in her with~~ images of being buried under twenty feet of lava ~~—~~; or worse, solid rock. At least ~~with the lava she would die~~ ~~lava would kill her quicker~~ ~~more quickly~~.

But by some miracle, the ~~Pod's~~ release functioned correctly. ~~W~~, ~~and~~ ~~w~~ with a heave, Mari found herself in the middle of a barren wasteland.

