

was a tiny ship, about like the size of a water globus next to the nationships of the Mars-  
Luna-Terra trade route. The Scout's hold containing the ProbeLinks was at one end, the  
bridge was on the other, and 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 tight corridors  
between were crammed with sensor equipment, the quep drive, and the two Pods—  
sleeping spaces that doubled as sealed vessels in an emergency. The only other space  
allowed for the two occupants was their pods—individual chambers capable of self-  
sealing, that Kena and Mari slept in.

**Commented [EA1]:** Are you sure you want to use this term? "Droplet" might be more relatable to your readers. Or, possibly "dust mote."

**Commented [EA2]:** This could also be "dwarfed by."

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

**Commented [EA3]:** The story would benefit from added description of Mari's mode of navigation and her sensed experience of the inside of the ship.

**Commented [EA4]:** I can't visualize where this is. Maybe add some more description?

**Commented [EA5]:** I'm assuming this means that the diagnostics are not flagging anything? This might be confusing to your readers, and need a little more clarification.

**Commented [EA6]:** Adding some body language here would improve the reader's ability to understand Mari's mood. Is she confused? Relieved? Angry/frustrated?

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

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

**Commented [EA7]:** This does not give me a visual image of a tight space. You might consider further developing your imagery here.

"Kena, it's—"

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

**Commented [EA8]:** You could add words like "vibrated" and "burrowed" to this sentence: "vibrated into her skull, and burrowed deep underneath her teeth."

**Commented [EA8R2]:** Even as is, changing the prepositions...under, between, beneath.

*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 skipped together that last week before—

**Commented [EA9]:** While "jounce" is a technically correct choice here, it is not a commonly used word. You might wish to trade it for "stutter" or "jolt" or something similar.

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

*Diablo.*

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"Critical failure in the genera—"

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And suddenly everything was silent, too silent, and still, too still.

Mari lurched toward the ladder to the bridge, ~~She frantically~~ ~~tapped~~ ~~ng at~~ her helmet-comm, ~~trying to raise Kena.~~

"Kena? Kena!"

~~But it he comm~~ was silent, ~~and it was dead.~~ Dead.

Kena's feet came down the ladder toward Mari ~~out of the bridge~~, and there was a moment where their mirrored faceplates seemed transparent as the ScoutRunners shared a last, knowing look ~~look, a knowing look~~. Then ~~they~~ each woman lowered into their ~~her~~ pods, their ~~last hope~~, and sealed the heavy metal lids, the lids that ~~was~~ ere only meant to be closed when the pod was her last hope—~~or was about to~~ became her coffins, over themselves.

**Commented [EA11]:** This paragraph not only briefly switches out of the single third-person perspective into a collective "they," but also you lose the thread with Mari a little bit. Help your reader see it through Mari's eyes. Yes, it's important to maintain Mari's impression that Kena also sealed herself into an escape pod...push yourself to do that without just "explaining" it.

**Commented [EA12]:** This is redundant, but it feels stylistic. Perhaps consider whether this is the style you wish to have?

In those last few seconds, or long hours, or whatever they were, Mari felt the seal breaking ~~on herself opening that box, that~~ her internal Pod of memories, but she could not stop it from opening now. ~~inside herself that she kept the lid on, and she could not keep it closed any longer. OR maybe she was now inside it, with the memories she kept inside it.~~

"Mariana García Ricardo," Mamá had said, "Por qué? Why do you want to go?"

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

"Just give it time, Mari, ~~she had said, meaning well.~~" ~~She had meant 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."

**Commented [EA13]:** This is stylistic. Do you want Mamanita to use proper grammar?

Papá 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. “WAnd when she disappears and is never heard from again, I will get all the money!” He had ducked out of the room to narrowly missed avoid Mari’s swat., ducking out of the room.

Only Tía Veronica. The one auntie who didn’t fit, the one who sat quietly in the corner and; watcheding the gossips gabbleing while, wrapping her silence about herself like a solemn shawl.

Tia Veronica had, at the last moment Bbefore she had left the farewell fiesta, Tía Veronica had taken Mari’s hands in hers., lLooked up into her niece’s eyes, and spoken softly, so softly that Mari had had to bend down to hear.

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

**Commented [EA14]:** Possibly a Spanish term would improve this.

**Commented [EA15]:** For Spanish context, this could be a mantilla.

**Commented [EA16]:** You have good dialogue in this farewell fiesta scene, but there is very little visual or textural detail. For instance, how did Tia Veronica’s hands feel? Were they papery? Smooth? Work-worn? Arthritic and knobby? Weak? Strong?

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

**Commented [EA17]:** Reversing order because this is the order they appear in the story.

**Commented [EA18]:** Flaming? Burning?

Marianela García 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 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, Wand with a heave, Mari found herself in the middle of a barren wasteland.