

Planet Rion
by Sabrina Alongi

We're the chosen ones.

They say I should be happy, but what I'm feeling is far from that. As the countdown starts, I brace myself, only now am I facing reality. In a matter of what feels like seconds, the ship begins its journey into space. All I can think of is him, *I can always feel a lover's cry even from outer space.*

I open my eyes for the first time on this journey, and an explosion of light blurs my vision as I hear alarm systems go off one by one. Disoriented calls from the radio speaker claim that we're headed towards Merth's sister planet Rion. In this moment everything goes black.

My eyes slowly start to open, and I find myself in a very uncomfortable position. The landing was rough, but as I get up, a much worse reality slowly occurs to me- *I am alone.* I release myself from the constraints and decide to explore the grounds. Gathering myself, I feel a tear on the left side of my safety suit. *The air pressure here should have killed me, why hasn't it?* I start to feel dizzy, disoriented, and just as things start to get foggy, I see the brightest light appear in every direction. I feel many hands travel around me, pulling me one way and another. A field of mirrors surrounds me, with reflections of myself showing me holding a glass bottle with a letter in it.

It's a maze.

This brings me back to the memory of myself as a kid at the fair. That maze, the mirrors, and the sheer fright in my eyes. Then I woke up, and I was in my bed safe and sound. That's when Dr. Ronnie came along, and with her came those little orange sleeping pills. Eventually these instances stopped happening as frequently, and I was told I could slowly stop using the pills.

I become aware of my surroundings again, and I see a large opaque white figure with red eyes tower over me. It speaks to me in a way in which words are not used. I somehow end up with the bottle from the reflections in my hands. It feels cold, and without a finger to the cork, it pops off and the script inside disappears. The being appears in my mind reading the script out to me, but also as me. "I understand you may be confused Lily, but I need to ask, "Where did you hide it?" What does that mean? My whole-body shivers as I see who it is signed by: "Lily Carhen"

My name.

Suddenly, everything disappears. I'm left alone, and everything goes black again as I topple to the floor.

I awake again, but I'm back in the ship, constrained. I'm shocked to see a co-astronaut is constrained beside me; however, they look to be zoned out staring into the distance. I come to my senses and scream as I shake them and say,

"We've crashed, where were you? Where is everyone else? We need to get away from here!" As I continue to try to get the controls working, my co-astronaut starts talking in a monotone voice, continuing to stare straight. "You need to listen; I can't help you because I'm not here." I stop dead in my tracks. "Have you been taking your pills?" he says as he grins slightly and turns my way. *How would he know that?*

When I look to him, he turns his head to the right, and the other half is consumed by blood and bones. My jaw drops as he continues to speak,

"We lost control of the ship, you blacked out, and the rest of us died in the crash. We never made it, you know this, you need to face reality!"

I realize once again that I am truly alone, and that he isn't there with me. As he disappears, I think about how I never woke up. I never left the ship. I was dreaming again. Everything goes black as I faint out of shock.

I wake up in another ship with many people in white suits probing at me. Mumbling words. I jerk up, confused, as they tell me they received calls for help at the crash. I was found alone with tears in my suit. They explain how this is impossible, I should be dead

by the air pressure, but as I seem fine, they leave me alone to get dressed. They tell me that we're headed back home. Relieved, I start to remove my hospital like gown, and reach for my clothes they left folded nicely.

I feel something in the pocket of my pants, and my heart drops as I pull out that same letter from the bottle that disappeared. I open it up and there is is... "Where did you hide it?" My eyes widen as I realize: it's in my pocket – that's where I hid it. The script has been with me the whole time. It's not on Rion. I grab a nearby lighter to see if it would burn, as this would mean the script is real and I am not imagining it. However, I watch in despair as it burns to nothingness. *What is reality, what is truth?*

I need to face reality.