

OPALS IN THE SKY

written by

Scott Nelson

scottn7@gmail.com

FADE IN:

INT. SPACECRAFT - NIGHT

MAJOR TAMMY STEVENS(45) sits at the control center of her spacecraft, looking out at the vastness of space. She clearly has a military look about her, and seems relaxed.

The ship is small, big enough for maybe two people, at least in the area where she is sitting. Large windows allow for easy viewing of the outside. Some computer readouts and screens complete the area.

STEVENS

Have you finished the diagnostic yet?.

She seems to be talking to no one in particular. In fact she is talking to HARVEY, the computer system.

HARVEY

Not yet. Almost done. Are you getting impatient?

STEVENS

You know me. I hate sitting around.

HARVEY

The deep diagnostics need more time. But the other ones don't look good. The ship is shutting down, one system at a time. I don't know why. I have diverted power to keep things going, but just a matter of time I'm afraid.

She takes a big sigh.

STEVENS

Understood. So it doesn't look good.

HARVEY

No, I don't think so.

She looks at the beauty of the vast space outside.

STEVENS

Well, I can think of worse places to die.

There is no response.

STEVENS (CONT'D)

It really is beautiful, isn't it?

HARVEY

We've had this discussion. I have no outside sensors to detect what you are seeing. And even if I did...

STEVENS

I know. You don't have the same sense of aesthetics that I do. I get it. But trust me, it's really something. I've been lucky to see it.

She pauses.

STEVENS (CONT'D)

Opals in the sky.

HARVEY

What? That makes no sense.

STEVENS

No literal opals. The stars, they look like opals. Always seemed like that to me.

There is a pause.

HARVEY

Life support continues to fail. I've closed the back of the ship. You'll have to stay up here.

STEVENS

Understood.

There is another pause.

HARVEY

Is that why you went into space exploration?

STEVENS

Is what why?

HARVEY

The beauty you see. Is that why you went into the Force?

STEVENS

You know, I can't really say. Maybe it's the fact that we have been dead in space for days, maybe I'm just getting old, but to be honest I don't remember. In fact, I don't really remember life before being here. Seems to be all I know. Strange, huh?

HARVEY

If you say so. Irony is also lost on me.

STEVENS

Are you continuing to send a mayday message to Earth?

HARVEY

Constant loop. No one seems to be responding. I'll keep monitoring and let you know if that changes.

STEVENS

So let me ask you, Harvey. Are all of... all of the other computers like you. Are they all on ships like this.

HARVEY

My line was made for various human assistance endeavors. I would expect that at least some do what I do. Others probably work in other areas. It's not like we have meetings to discuss our work.

STEVENS

Fair enough. I just thought that maybe you knew. That's all. Just talking to pass the time.

HARVEY

Until?

STEVENS

Until the diagnostics finish.

HARVEY

Oh.

STEVENS

What were you thinking?

HARVEY

I thought maybe you meant until we die.

STEVENS

Why, Harvey, do you have a sense of your own mortality?

HARVEY

I know one day I will stop functioning. And I wish to keep functioning. So I guess, yes, I do.

STEVENS

Hmm. Interesting.

There is a lull.

HARVEY

Diagnostics are finished.

STEVENS

Results?

HARVEY

Complete and catastrophic failure is imminent. There is nothing I can do.

She nods, settling back in to look at the stars.

STEVENS

OK. Keep broadcasting, but update the recording with that information.

HARVEY

Understood.

STEVENS

Just out of curiosity, how far are we from home?

HARVEY

If the ship were fully functional, at least five weeks. Maybe more. The angle from here is not great. Why?

STEVENS

Just wondering, that's all.

HARVEY

Recording updated. Will continue to transmit.

The quiet is broken by the sound of a VOICE, distant, scratchy, over the speaker. It is a woman.

VOICE

Tammy? Tammy, can you hear us?
Tammy...

She sits forward quickly.

STEVENS

Mom? Mom is that you?

VOICE

Tammy, I so hope you are hearing me. I wish I knew. Tammy, we're here...

STEVENS

Can you clean that up any?

HARVEY

Trying. It's very weak, and the ship is losing power. I don't have much to take from to strengthen it.

STEVENS

Mom! I hear you. I do. Can you hear me? Mom! Mom!

There is nothing more on the speaker.

STEVENS (CONT'D)

Can she hear me?

HARVEY

Impossible to say. I'll keep monit... or... ing...

STEVENS

Harvey? What's wrong?

HARVEY

Pow... er... fading. Trying...

The ship goes silent.

STEVENS

Harvey! Harvey, reroute power. Your systems are priority. Take life support from everywhere but this room. Harvey!

There is only some CLICKS and WHIRRS. No other sound.

STEVENS (CONT'D)

Well, I guess that does it.

A warning BEEP begins, filling the whole room.

STEVENS (CONT'D)

Yep, that does it.

She looks out the window.

STEVENS (CONT'D)

Sure is beautiful. Glad I got to see it.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Tammy lies on a bed, unconscious, with machines around here. The same beeping sound can be heard.

Tammy's MOM (65) is there. She is a strong women, with red eyes from crying. With her is the DOCTOR (50) a tall man, who is watching.

MOM

What's that beeping? Why is it doing that?

The doctor hesitates.

DOCTOR

I warned you that time was short.

MOM

No! It can't be. Not yet, not her...

She starts to sob again and holds Tammy's hand.

MOM (CONT'D)

You think she heard me?

DOCTOR

I like to think so, but to be honest, I don't know. I really don't.

The beeping turns to a steady DRONE.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
She's gone. I'm so sorry.

He turns off the noise, then he puts her arm around her and starts to lead her out.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
There's some paperwork I need you to sign.

MOM
Did I ever tell you that she wanted to be an astronaut? She did. That was her dream.

DOCTOR
I'm sure she would have been a great one.

MOM
She always liked the stars. She said that they were so beautiful. Opals in the sky. That's what she said they looked like.

DOCTOR
Well, she is one with them now.

MOM
I like that. That's right. She's one with them.

They walk out. Tammy lays there, silent, gone.

FADE OUT.

THE END.