



# ***The Time Dilated Generations***

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***Chapter 14: One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.***



#### Chapter 14: One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind

"Endeavour Lander to Command Control, all systems are green. Ready for launch."

Donna Cruz spoke with a neutral and professional tone, masking the overwhelming excitement she and her crew felt. They had trained for this moment their entire lives—and now, they were minutes away from making history.

The reply from Command Control came swiftly, laced with anticipation.

"Command Control to Endeavour Lander. Releasing the locks in 3... 2... 1... Locks released. You are clear to engage."

"Roger, Command Control. Engaging thrusters to exit docking area," confirmed Albert, his voice steady as he initiated the first maneuver. As the lander drifted free from the space station, he allowed himself a moment of levity.

"Oh man, this is it. I'm gonna miss beating you guys in every sport. Tell Johnny that when I see him again, I'll still be able to kick his sorry ass."

A chuckle echoed over the comms.

"That's quite a challenge, Albert. We'd love to see that rematch."





With practiced precision, the Endeavour Lander executed its orbital maneuvers, aligning itself with the designated descent trajectory.

"Endeavour Lander to Command Control, we have reached target orbit," Theresa announced, her voice calm and controlled. "Landing protocol window opens in 90 seconds."

Albert, unable to contain his excitement, let out a breathless laugh. "I still can't believe it. We're about to walk on an actual planet. It's beyond my wildest dreams!"

Caleb, ever the cautious one, interjected. "I love your optimism, man. But considering how many things down there could kill us, I'd be lying if I said I wasn't scared to death."

Albert grinned. "We've prepared for this moment for centuries. I know we're ready."

Donna, ever the leader, brought them back to focus. "Alright, let's stay sharp, guys. We'll have plenty of time to explore once we land. Theresa, status?"

"Ten seconds to landing window," Theresa replied, all business.



"Roger that," Albert acknowledged, his demeanor shifting. He could joke around all he wanted, but when it was time to work, he was all focus and precision.

"Three... Two... One... Engage," Theresa counted down.

"Engaging," Albert confirmed.

The thrusters fired, pushing the Endeavour Lander out of orbit and toward the planet's atmosphere.

As the spacecraft descended, the atmosphere thickened, turning the sleek hull into a glowing inferno. Even though Rigel's world had a thinner atmosphere than Earth, the sheer speed of entry was enough to generate deadly levels of heat and pressure.

"Exterior temperature rising. 1300 degrees in ten seconds," Theresa reported.

"Roger. Correcting reentry angle," Albert responded, adjusting the ship's trajectory.

The Endeavour Lander shuddered violently, the g-forces pressing them deep into their seats.

"G-forces passing 4," Theresa called out, her voice still steady but now tinged with strain.





"Almost there... adjusting," Albert gritted through clenched teeth, sweat forming at his brow as he fought to maintain control.

"G-forces nearing 5," Theresa warned, her usual calm now showing signs of tension.

Then—"Angle correction complete!" Albert finally declared.

The ship stabilized, and the violent shaking eased. A collective exhale filled the cabin.

"Exterior temperature dropping below 1100 degrees. G-forces lowering to 4.5," Theresa confirmed, her voice regaining its composure.

With the reentry phase complete, they were now flying within the planet's atmosphere.

"Switching to atmospheric flight mode," Albert announced.

The Endeavour Lander transitioned from a controlled fall into a high-speed aircraft maneuver, shifting its propulsion systems to match the conditions of the alien air. Course correction protocols kicked in automatically, stabilizing the descent.



Just as Albert began to level out their trajectory, the ship lurched unexpectedly. The controls felt sluggish and unresponsive.

"Theresa, I need an engine adjustment. Something's off," Albert called out, tightening his grip.

"Already on it," Theresa replied, scanning her instruments. "Propulsion output recalibrating for atmospheric conditions."

Within moments, the ship responded, the engines smoothly adapting to the new gravitational and aerodynamic forces.

Albert let out a relieved breath. "Thanks, Theresa. You read my mind."

As the Endeavour Lander soared through the reddish sky of the twilight zone, the crew finally had a chance to take in the breathtaking view. Below them, the barren landscape stretched endlessly, a world untouched by life. The thin atmosphere, though sparse, still held wisps of low-lying clouds, drifting like shadows across the vast, arid expanse.

The eternal twilight cast elongated silhouettes of jagged mountain ridges, their peaks bathed in a crimson glow, while the shifting clouds reflected a kaleidoscope of deep reds, burnt oranges, and somber shadows. It was a sight unlike any they had ever witnessed—alien, harsh, yet indescribably beautiful.





For a moment, everything else faded. The mission, the protocols, the years of preparation—all forgotten as they marveled at the alien grandeur outside their viewport.

They weren't the only ones captivated by the sight. Across the vast, time-dilated network of generational ships, every surviving human was watching, their eyes glued to the live transmission. Some of them were seeing the possible future landscapes of their own worlds, others simply reveling in the enormity of the moment. For the first time since leaving Earth, humanity was returning to solid ground.

Then, Theresa's steady voice cut through the reverie, pulling them back into focus.

"Reaching landing target in less than one minute," she reported with her usual precision.

"Roger that. I see it now," Albert confirmed, eyes scanning the surface as he adjusted their descent.

The landing site was a flat, open plain, carefully selected from years of orbital surveys. Scattered across the landscape, visible even from this altitude, were several pre-deployed resource modules, strategically dropped over the past few years. These contained oxygen generators, water processors, food supplies, and construction materials—everything necessary to establish a functional base within two weeks.



Though their lander carried enough oxygen and food for two months, they wouldn't need it for long. The habitat modules were already designed for rapid assembly, meant to be operational in mere days.

Albert guided the Endeavour Lander into its final descent. Though the spacecraft had shock-absorbing landing legs to handle rough terrain, they wouldn't be necessary—the plain was as smooth and stable as they could have hoped for.

With careful precision, he deployed the landing gear and initiated the slow, methodical descent.

A minute later, the Endeavour Lander made contact.

For the first time, a human spacecraft had touched down on an alien planet, breaking a silence that had lasted for three centuries.

A wave of relief rippled through the crew, felt across light-years by every human still alive. Across the vast interstellar fleet, all generational ships erupted in celebration, but it was a silent victory, a moment where emotions ran too deep for words.

They weren't done yet. There was one final step left.





Inside the Endeavour Lander, the crew moved methodically. They each donned their helmets, sealing their pressurized spacesuits. Their life support systems would provide them up to four hours of oxygen—more than enough time for their first steps into the unknown.

It would take centuries before humans could breathe unassisted on this world, but this moment was the first step toward that distant future.

For several seconds, no one spoke. The weight of history pressed upon them.

Then, Donna broke the silence.

"So... who wants to do the honors?"

No one had discussed it. No plans had been made.

This would be one of the most defining moments in human history—the first human to set foot on another planet. Whoever took that step would be immortalized for eternity.

A moment of hesitation filled the cabin. Each of them glanced at one another, expecting someone else to volunteer.



Then, to everyone's surprise, the most unexpected person spoke up.

"I want to do it," Theresa said, her voice steady.

The others turned to her, momentarily stunned. Theresa, the brains of the expedition, the one who always played things safe, the one who had contingency plans for contingency plans—she was volunteering?

Donna's lips curled into a smile.

"Alright then," she said with approval. "Now's the time to make history. We'll follow your lead, Theresa."

Theresa stepped into the decontamination chamber, the thin partition between the familiar safety of the spacecraft and the vast, untamed wilderness outside. Though she had spent her entire life within artificial environments, everything beyond that door was something new—something limitless.

As the sterilization process ran its course, she steadied her breathing. The reality of the moment was settling in. Then, the exterior hatch released with a soft hiss, and for the first time, air from an alien world rushed inside.





The change was immediate.

Even through her spacesuit, she could feel a subtle warmth meet her skin—20 degrees Celsius, just as predicted. It felt eerily familiar, reminiscent of the last warm days of artificial spring aboard Rigel, a climate programmed to mimic Earth's seasons. But this warmth wasn't artificial. It belonged to this world.

She let the atmosphere settle, the air pressure equalizing in the chamber. Then, she took her first step into the unknown.

And suddenly—something happened.

A sensation she had never experienced before, yet one that had been etched into the very core of human existence.

Freedom.

A vast, unbounded openness stretched before her, so unfathomably immense that her mind struggled to process it. There were no walls, no ceilings, no steel corridors—only an endless horizon.

It was overwhelming.

Her breath hitched, her vision blurred for a moment as an unexpected dizziness washed over her. She felt lightheaded, her sense of balance momentarily thrown off. Instinctively, she gripped the frame of the door, steadying herself.



Her earpiece crackled with Donna's panicked voice.

"Theresa, what's happening?! Are you okay?!"

The alarm in Donna's voice snapped Theresa back. She took a shaky breath, forcing herself to regain control.

"Yes, sorry. This is beyond anything I ever imagined. I'm really okay. Don't worry."

Her hands loosened their grip. The initial shock was fading, replaced by a growing sense of exhilaration. The reality of what she was doing—what they were all doing—was settling in.

She was standing on the threshold of a new world.

From the top of the deployable staircase, she surveyed her surroundings.

Even though she had already felt the effects of increased gravity during their flight maneuvers, moving under it was entirely different. Every step down the stairs was heavier, slower, demanding more effort than her body was used to.

The world she had known for 28 years—the artificial 0.9 Earth gravity of Rigel spaceship—was gone. Here, gravity was 1.3 times stronger, turning what had once been simple movement into a calculated effort.





Her 40-kilogram body now felt closer to 60 kilograms, and with the weight of the spacesuit and equipment, she was carrying over 80 kilograms. Fortunately, the exoskeleton embedded in her suit helped redistribute the burden, and nanomachines in her bloodstream mitigated some of the strain, reducing the total weight by 20%. Even so, she still felt the pressure in every movement. She had trained for this. She was prepared. But this would take real adjustment.

And it was no wonder why they had been so selective. A larger individual—someone who normally weighed 80 kilograms—would now be weighting over 105 kilograms. The physical toll would have been immense.

She paused before taking the final step onto the surface.

Glancing over her shoulder, she saw Donna in the decontamination chamber, beginning her own exit procedure. Behind the reinforced glass, Caleb and Albert stood, watching intently, their expressions a mix of excitement and encouragement.

They were waiting for her to take the first step.

Theresa turned back to face the planet's surface.



And then—she stepped down.

The moment was monumental.

And yet, as Theresa stood there, her boots pressing into the solid ground of an alien world, she found herself speechless. She had prepared no grand statement, no words meant to echo through history.

Instead, she simply breathed, took another step, and let the first words spoken on an exoplanet come naturally.

"Cool..." she murmured, almost to herself.

It wasn't poetic. It wasn't rehearsed.

But it was genuine.

Because stepping onto a new world was, undeniably, cool.

Every camera—from the spaceship's external feeds to the helmet-mounted recorders—captured the historic moment in perfect clarity.

Theresa's single, unassuming word—"Cool."—echoed across every generational ship still drifting through the interstellar void.





For the people of Rigel, who had watched this mission unfold over the course of six years, it was the culmination of a dream generations in the making.

For those aboard the ships traveling at 99% the speed of light, where time dilation ran seven times slower, everything had happened in less than a year. They watched as if witnessing the dawn of a new world in fast-forward, a brief yet monumental instant compressed into their relativistic timelines.

And then—joy erupted.

The long-held tension shattered into celebration across the entire human fleet. On Rigel Station, cheers and cries of triumph filled the air. Across the networked ships of the exodus, the news spread like wildfire. Humanity had done it. They had returned to solid ground.

Donna was the next to step onto the alien soil, moving with cautious determination toward Theresa, her concern still evident.

"Are you really okay, Theresa?" she asked, scanning her for any lingering signs of distress.

Theresa exhaled slowly, her voice steady now.



"Yes, yes... I'm sorry for worrying you. It's just... this open space..." She hesitated, struggling to describe something so deeply unfamiliar. "It's like... something inside me that I never knew existed suddenly appeared. I can't fully explain it... This feeling is beyond me."

Donna nodded, understanding completely.

"Yeah... I know what you mean. I felt it too." She took a slow breath, glancing toward the vast, empty horizon. "If I hadn't been so focused on getting to you, it probably would've hit me the same way."

For all their preparation, training, and simulations, nothing could have truly prepared them for this moment. It was as if stepping onto solid ground had unlocked a part of their humanity that had been dormant for centuries.

The airlock hissed once more, and Albert made his way down the stairs, his usual boundless energy unshaken by the heavy gravity.

"Hell yeah, this is insane!" he shouted, taking in the landscape before them.

But Caleb remained inside. One person would always stay aboard the spacecraft, at least in these early days, in case an emergency lift-off was ever needed. He stood by the hatch, watching his crewmates venture into history.





Still, he wasn't jealous. He had his own mission.

"Enjoy the adventure," Caleb said with a warm smile. "I'll have my fair share soon enough. Besides, I'm going to use this time to write a song—the first song ever created on an exoplanet. Doesn't that have a good ring to it?"

Donna grinned. "The first song on an exoplanet? Sounds legendary."

Albert let out an enthusiastic laugh.

"That's amazing! You're gonna rock the universe, man! Bring it on!"

Caleb chuckled, watching as the others took their first tentative steps beyond the lander, their movements slow, deliberate, still adjusting to the unfamiliar pull of the stronger gravity.

The three of them wandered for a while, marveling at the landscape, acclimating their bodies to the heavier weight. But soon, Donna's voice called them back to reality.

They were not here just to explore.

They were here to build a future.



"Alright, team. It's time to get to work," she declared, her voice carrying the weight of history. "Let's get started."

At that moment, the colonization of the newly christened planet, Rigel One, officially began.