

Section 14 - Themoonyouidiot

It didn't take Samson Two long to work out what had happened. The buttons had been pressed in the wrong order. The *Dandelion*'s protective cover had blown off and its silvery sails had popped out. But it had not separated from the command module.

The solar sails had opened unexpectedly—that was the metallic screeching noise—and immediately picked up a gust of solar wind. The sails were designed to push the *Dandelion* gently forward. But our command module was still stuck to the top of the *Dandelion*. Instead of gliding off nicely toward the moon's orbit, the *Dandelion* had gone spinning over on its side and pulled us off course. The sails weren't acting like sails on a ship; they were more like the sails on a windmill, spinning us round and round. And it was taking us with it.

We couldn't see the Earth out of the window. But we did see a thing that looked like a satellite dish go by, and something like an aerial. Our satellite dish. And our aerial. Which was when I realized I couldn't hear DraxControl in my earpiece anymore. All our communications equipment had snapped off.

They all started yelling and blaming each other and pushing and shoving. Pushing and shoving under weightless conditions is more long-winded than it is on Earth. You push someone and it takes them a few minutes to get back to you with a shove.

I was going to join in when I noticed a message window flashing on the monitor. A message. Maybe we'd be all right after all.

The message was "Permanent Fatal Errors."

I could still hear them fighting and shouting behind me. I was going to yell too—something like, "We are now completely doomed and it's totally all your fault!" But when I turned to face them they were all looking at me. Like I would know something.

Like I would know what to do.

Like I was their dad.

Like the end would never come as long as I was there.

"Is there a message?" said Samson Two.

"Yes."

"What does it say?"

I could've told him, "The message is 'Permanent Fatal Errors'. So we're dead. And by the way, I'm not a dad. I'm a kid. So stop looking at me like that."

These children—Hasan, Samson Two, Max—their dads weren't looking out for them at all. Their dads made them do all this stuff to make them cleverer or richer or more successful. And then they'd been packed off to Doom in Space. But still they thought someone, somewhere would be looking out for them.

In the circumstances, it felt like that should be me.

I thought, okay, you lot are my mission. I am Engaged. I turned off the monitor and said, "Everything's going to be okay. We just need to find Earth and then we'll go back home."

Florida hadn't noticed till then. Now she screamed, "Ohmygod, the Earth has gone! What have you done with the Earthyouidiot!?"

"It hasn't gone. It's just not very visible at the moment. Don't worry, it'll turn up."

"How do you know?" said Samson Two. "What if it doesn't?"

"Because all my...all Florida's stuff is there: the Playmobil Viking ship, the slightly leaky Super Soaker, the 'It's Your Solar System' glow-in-the-dark

L) How did the author describe the way the sails were actually working when the mission had gone wrong?

I) Why do you think Liam lied to the children about the message? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

V) What does it mean if there is a 'pressure differential'?

E) Would you have lied about the message? Why/why not?

GD) What would you do if you were Liam and you were the only one that knew that the mission had *Permanent fatal errors*?

I don't know what made me start listing stuff. But it worked. It reminded them about the Earth. How real and big it was. It made them see it in their heads and they started adding things to the list until they calmed down and finally went to sleep.

And just now the cabin suddenly filled with light. It came flooding in like water. Sunlight.

The Earth—I still can't see it, but now I know it's there.

There's a hatch in the floor just in front of the multifunctional displays, the hatch that leads to the *Dandelion* module. I thought I'd go down there and look through the *Dandelion*'s windows. I might even be able to see the Earth from there.

Luckily that didn't happen.

Inside the *Dandelion* it was surprisingly unrockety. Three rows of seats, two massive windows. It really was like being inside an unusually spacious ice-cream van. The good news was there was a lot—cupboards full—of food and drinks.

The bad news was that—even with those massive windows—you still couldn't see the Earth.

There was a massive thing between us and the sun, but it wasn't the Earth. Something moved behind me.

Florida. She had come down into the ice-cream van. Then “Oh. My. God,” she said, pointing out of the window. “Do you know what that is?”

I nodded and said, "I think I may have seen it before."
"That," said Florida, "is the moon you idiot."

ANSWERS:

L) The author described the sails as moving like the sails on a windmill, spinning round and round.

I) I think Liam lied to the children because he did not want to worry them as they were looking at him like he was their dad.

V) There is a different amount of air pressure on the outside of the ship than on the inside