

For as long as he could remember, the man in the astronaut suit had wanted to see the stars. Not from afar, through some backyard camping trip or middle school telescope, but up close, so he could really see them.

Now, he was alone. The island wasn't really an island; rather, it was a patch of sand carved in the water, small enough that he could lie down with his head dipped in water on one side and feet dipped on the other.

The man in the astronaut suit wasn't sure, exactly, where he was. The sky was always some odd shade of pink; not sunset pink, with streaks and hues across a canvas, but a solid, taffy color that left the patch of an island with an eerily rosy glow. Not to be confused with a happy, lovely pink — no hint of sunset kisses at all — rather, an empty, soulless pink with the distinct absence of a sun.

The man in the astronaut suit had not felt the air in months. After all, this could be any planet, any lost galaxy or forgotten system millions of miles from home. Instead, he slept, sat, and slept in his heavy luggage.

Once in a while, the man in the astronaut suit would go for a swim. A dip. With two hands clinging to the island, he would throw his body over the side and float, for a little while. The water, like the sky, was thick and dark, with no sign of what was underneath — he never let go in fear of slipping away. When he floated, he felt like he did in space: empty, because he never really got to see the stars like he wanted to. Yes, they were closer when he was in space, but the man in the astronaut suit wanted to reach out and just hold the stars, as silly as it seemed. He wanted to kiss the stars and hug the stars and just eat the stars all up.

He would stare, sometimes, into the water, and examine the glossy black circle that would reflect back. The man in the astronaut suit had not seen himself for a while.

So, he would look longingly into the water, into that black reflection, slowly forgetting what he looked like. The man, in the astronaut suit, wondered how his hair looked like. He wondered, too, whether he could scratch his growing beard. Indeed, it was growing scruffy. The beard was very itchy. Extremely, frustratingly itchy. At first, he tried to move his head around the suit to scratch it. That only increased the frustration. The beard was very itchy — he needed to scratch it. He tossed around, the man in the astronaut suit, trying to move his head to settle the itch. It remained. For hours, he rubbed his helmet against the ground, hoping to escape from his misery. Finally, he realized he couldn't handle the itch any longer — it was too much. So, he had an idea.

The astronaut took off his helmet.

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