

The Jump

An excerpt from **Far Flung** by TCC Edwards

Blackness spread over the MedBay door. Dena's boots were magnetized and held fast to the floor, but her fingers ached as they clenched the rungs of the ladder. The door vanished, and Lee gasped as most of MedBay was simply gone. The hatch above her sealed shut automatically, blocking off the route to the service shaft in the center of the ship. The door behind her in the hallway, which led to crew and colonist quarters, had also shut, leaving only a small amount of air to get blown out this bizarre new hull breach.

Movement caught her eye. Across the rounded edge of the gash that had mysteriously opened in the hull, Doctor Denise Reynolds clung to a chair in what had been her office. Half of her desk was lost to whatever had *erased* the MedBay, and Reynolds was sprawled over the remains of the desk, her hands locked around the arms of the chair.

Dena gasped as another human form fell across her field of vision. *It's Aren, the android*, she realized. The android could be recovered later. Doctor Reynolds had no helmet – she wouldn't survive long. Dena focused on Reynolds, determined to cross the gash in the hull and save her. *Air. She needs air, quickly!*

Dena stepped along the remains of the hallway, past where the ladder came down from the narrow passageway through the spokes of the habitat rings. Where the wall ended, just before the place where the door to MedBay should have been, there was another emergency cabinet. *At least that hadn't vanished*. Dena opened it and retrieved a helmet and the pack attached. It was awkward work slinging the second pack onto

her back with the first, but she managed it quickly, letting the helmet attached hang behind her. This cabinet also had two fire extinguishers, each small enough to fit in one hand.

Dena grabbed an extinguisher and looked across the gap. Only a few stars were visible in the blackness beyond the opening. The rush of air pushing at her was slowing down, and it seemed for a second that Reynolds wouldn't suffer a similar fate as Dennis Park. Just before the wind died completely, the chair that Reynolds clung to came loose. Reynolds fell soundlessly through the hole, the chair following her with the last of the air from MedBay. *Dammit!*

Dena counted seconds, remembering her own time without air, clambering around Engineering. Reynolds had less than that, as the coldness or lack of pressure would take her before suffocation did. Dena crouched at the edge, a perfect cut, as if the hull had been carved apart by a laser. She reached around to the outer hull on the other side of the edge, and after indeterminable seconds worked herself into a crouch on the outside of the hull with the extra oxygen tank under one arm. Starless void surrounded her. Reynolds floated away from the *Tereshkova*, and had seconds left before any rescue would be futile.

Dena turned off the magnets in her boots and grasped the fire extinguisher. She looked one last time, gaging the direction as best she could. Summoning all her strength, she jumped into the void.