

Readers aged 6-10

All Frills

Eric Huang

Frills gasped—her HydraShell was leaking!

As an axolotl, Frills wore a humidity-controlled spacesuit when exploring a waterless world. If she didn't, her body would dry out. The other crew members both land animals didn't need spacesuits on this planet. They moved across the terrain as if on Earth.

'Captain, my suit is leaking,' Frills sighed. 'It's not bad, though. I can still make the repairs to Outpost Omega.'

The captain, a reddish-brown capybara, examined the HydraShell. He shook his head. 'It looks pretty bad to me. You should return to the ship.'

Frills wanted to complete the mission. 'But I'm Chief Engineer!'

A black-and-white cat named Cosmo, the Science Officer, meowed, 'It's just a simple solar panel adjustment. A kitten could fix it!'

Disappointed, Frills returned to the ship and swam into her quarters.

Maybe her academy buddies were right: she should've stayed on Earth. Space travel is risky—but even more so for aquatic astronauts. Most missions aren't built with them in mind.

'Computer, please load field-cams,' she said.

Footage from the Captain and Officer Cosmo's clip-on cameras filled the screen. Frills sighed. 'Terrestrial animals have all the fun.'

As Frills' crewmates approached Outpost Omega, warning lights blinked atop the research facility. The meteorite damage was far worse than they had anticipated. One solar panel was cracked. The other had been hurled into space!

'Without solar panels, life support systems are shutting down,' Cosmo meowed.

'Copy that,' Frills answered. Everyone understood that this was not something a kitten could fix. Only Frills could! 'I'll suit up in the spare HydraShell. Be there in fifteen.'

'We don't have fifteen,' the captain interrupted.

Frills slumped into her seat. 'I'm no help, then.'



Readers aged 6-10

All Frills

Eric Huang

‘You’re the only one who can help!’ the captain countered. ‘The damage is way beyond our skills. You’re still leading this mission—just from the ship.’

‘I am?’ Frills mumbled. ‘I AM! Cosmo, focus your field-cam on the power module. I can’t show you how to repair the solar panel, Captain—it’s too complex. But if you follow my instructions, we can slow the battery drain and buy some time.’

‘Ready when you are!’ the captain replied.

‘Engage the thermoelectric recovery loop,’ Frills directed. ‘It’s a blue tube. That’s the one! Divert the heat from life support into the emergency battery buffer.’

Frills knew that if she had been on site, the cracked solar panel would’ve been fixed in a matter of minutes. But she couldn’t be there, so she used Cosmo’s field-cam like a surgical scope and guided the captain step by step to boost the power, instead.

The readings steadied as the emergency buffer filled. The warning lights switched off. Frills’ quick thinking stretched the station’s survival just long enough for the emergency repair crew to arrive.

Frills watched the repair crew secure brand-new solar panels from the comfort of her quarters. She smiled. Needing a HydraShell didn’t make her any less capable. She was an excellent Chief Engineer.

Outpost Omega was safe again.

