

## **In The Beginning**

### **By David Silver**

He stands on an escarpment looking out upon an alien landscape. One that belongs to him. It is all his. There is nobody else - no human, no animal, no microbe. Far from the Sun, there is a perpetual creepy twilight with the magnificence of Saturn looming in the sky.

He thinks back to the difficult journey ending with the horror of finding that he was the only one of a crew of five who had awoken from bio-suspension. It wasn't just the loss of his companions but the realisation that without a minimum of two crew members to operate the return journey he would never make it back to Earth.

He had grim choices. He could die quickly by taking the standard-issue exit pill. He could stay in place orbiting Titan whilst expiring gradually as food, oxygen supply and the general living habitat deteriorated. He could wait for rescue from Earth but that was now highly unlikely. Mission Control had kept him fully apprised of the global pandemic that had rapidly depleted the population and made any further space missions unlikely for the imaginable future. In fact, if civilisation was being knocked back to the Stone Age as seemed likely, there would never be any space missions ever again. In any case, even if they miraculously launched tomorrow it would take them years to reach him. He found it difficult contemplating such remote isolation, so alone, for so long.

He had pondered the idealistic reason he had elected to do this mission, sacrificing five years of his life, albeit the suspension phase would have reduced his physical ageing – but it wouldn't have reduced the ageing of his loved ones back home. His beloved mother, father, sister and brother. Would that loveable puppy Hooch, now grown into an adult, remember him? Oh yes, he had felt he was doing his bit to ensure the continuity of human life in the solar system by seeking an alternate world for colonisation.

He knew what he had to do and so he had deployed the Titan lander and officially completed the first phase of the mission by delivering a human being to stand on the surface of Saturn's largest moon, the one world in the solar system deemed to be most favourable for the possibility of life.

The auto-lab had completed an array of tests and reported negative for any signs of existing life despite the rich atmosphere and organic liquids flowing abundantly on the surface. It seemed there just had not been the necessary spark, the catalyst, which would create a genesis on this world.

And now, now he stands on the escarpment looking out upon the alien landscape. He doesn't need the auto-lab to tell him that inside his pressure suit is an enormous reservoir of life, some of which might well survive in this environment and grow and prosper and ultimately produce more life either as we know it or perhaps as we don't. Cells, bacteria, viruses, enzymes, DNA and more.

He closes the switch to detonate the device attached to his suit, a device he's fashioned from the auto-lab's store of compressed gases. The last words he utters seconds before the flash and blast are ...

Let There Be Life

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