

Space Expedition

It is the year 2063, and NASA scientists are about to send two astronauts to Europa, one of Jupiter's 79 moons. Out of all 79, Europa is the only one able to sustain human life. Oliver sat down in the pilot's seat and began preparations to blast off. "Venus, come!" Katie called to her dog. The Alaskan malamute complied, bounding onto the spacecraft and jumping up onto a smaller seat in between Oliver and Katie. "Good girl." Katie said, petting her head. The dog's fur was a bright reddish-orange, resembling the fiery surface of her namesake planet. The spacecraft, *Borzoï 6*, took off into the atmosphere. There was lots to do once the craft hit the Exosphere. Katie monitored the O₂ levels, Oliver refilled the fuel tanks, and Venus played with her toy in zero gravity. A day went by and nothing went wrong, but that night, the crew was woken up by an asteroid hitting the ship. Oliver ran to the main controls. "The autopilot turned off!" Katie had an idea. "I'll go outside in my space suit and look at the wiring. Maybe something got unplugged." She attached a cable to her suit and went outside the craft. She floated over to the control panel and opened it up. Nothing was out of place at first glance, but when she looked further, she noticed that there was a half-chewed dog treat floating around. It must have hit the switch that controls the autopilot on the main computer system. Katie's mind whirled trying to figure out how that tiny little thing had traveled so far, and created such a disaster. Then she noticed a vent. The same vent that Oliver had opened attempting to retrieve a screw. What a chain reaction that caused. Katie drew her eyebrows together in an effort to appear annoyed, even though nobody was watching. She turned on her walkie talkie. "There's a dog treat floating around the main computer. I can see it but I can't reach it." Oliver thought for a moment. He was taller than Katie, so there would be no way he could fit. "What if we sent Venus?" The rust-colored canine perked her head up and stared at him with sapphire-blue eyes. "Are you crazy?" Katie cried out. "She could get hurt!" Oliver calmly stated his reasoning. "She'll just eat the treat. Then maybe if we tell her how to flip the switch with her paw, she'll listen." Katie could see hundreds of flaws in his so-called plan. But what else could they do? The *Borzoï 6* had a limited supply of...well, supplies! "Alright, I'll go with your crazy idea. But if anything happens to Venus, you are completely responsible." A few minutes later, Venus was in her miniature space suit with a camera strapped to her head. The airlock opened, and Venus went off into space. She floated her way over to the square-shaped hole and climbed inside. "Do you see the cookie Venus?" Oliver said. Her ears perked. She ran up and ate the dog treat. "Good girl Venus!" said Katie. "Do you see the gray switch?" The Alaskan malamute looked around. When she spotted it, she raised her right paw. The two astronauts could see everything Venus was doing through the camera, and they couldn't believe their eyes. The plan was actually working! Katie continued. "Good Venus, good! Now hit that switch!" Venus flicked her paw forward and slapped the plastic, but nothing happened. "Ok, that was good, hit a little harder this time." she repeated the same motion, and a green light came on above her head. Katie turned to Oliver. "Does the green light mean it's working?" Oliver replied, "I'm not sure. I'll go check." when he pressed the button that activates the autopilot, the *Borzoï 6* started moving. "Yep, she fixed it." He called back to Katie. Oliver quickly turned it back off and opened the airlock so Venus could get back inside. As soon as her space suit and camera was off, Katie rewarded her with a belly rub. "You did it Venus! You're such a smart dog!" Oliver glanced out the window. "Katie look!" He said. "We made it to Europa."