

Then with a shudder the window flew open and I tripped, clumsily, and fell on my hands and face, I saw the future. The planet below us was surrounded with sharp, sapphire waters that washed over the coasts of neighbouring countries: although, to the west of the levitating iron disc, twilight skies overshadowed the uninhabited sleeping, silent cities, this could be ours... My eyes, clouded with disbelief, were praying that this destination was real. Doubt and worry filled the air around me and my companion, he told me the planet was close, maybe a mere 800 miles – we could hope. The planet had molten silver coloured continents, merging into one deep azure globe. Light, misty clouds floated lazily below the ozone, possibly the only source of life for miles, aside from a glimmer of sunlight appearing from further in space. A comforting darkness grasped the sphere of life like a protective blanket, keeping it from the harsh, sharp rays of the close ball of flame.

The largest stretch of sea smirked with triumph as the silver dome-ship approached. Cavor's expression was in wonder and awe – much alike my own as the atmosphere drew nearer.

We were so close now...

How can I describe the thing I saw?

It was poisonous. Or venomous. Or both, it looked so extreme. The ghostly buds stared at me with cold, calculating eyes, the menacing thorn like petals writhed around while releasing an aroma of fear. Or terror. Or both. I could see wisps of the unseen, shy, bone – coloured roots. Poison green coloured stems moved gracefully yet they were far from beautiful. Like a cobra's cousin, they revealed themselves painfully slow. The alien plant grasped at air, like a flytrap, in action.

"It's a seed," said Cavor. And then I heard him whisper, very softly, "Life!"

Life! it automatically grew on me that our long, vast voyage was not made in vain; we had arrived at no lump of rock nor wasteland of pointless minerals, but, a growing thriving globe of life. We watched sharply, senses alert. I recall moving my hand swiftly to remove any evidence of condensation. This was real. The image was clear and bright, only to my eyes. The dead planet awoke, adjusting to the new challenging day. It was like it could sense our arrival. One after another, the minute plantlets arose, the umber – coloured bodies peering cautiously with unseeing eyes. They opened keen mouths that absorbed the rays of gentle sunlight. It was beautiful.

Every second, another coat split, as though copying others in unison and as they did, more and more buds appeared. The swelling shoots gaped and gasped as they grew, reaching forever skyward. They looked like persevering pioneers, accepting the challenge of painfully graceful growth. Suddenly, the groups of ghostly saplings grew and strained and opened with a shudder, tossing out a chorus of crimson claws, spreading spirals of pointy chestnut leaves that grew swiftly to their full taunting length, so long to the length of an eagle's feather.

How can I explain it to you – the way the plants grew and thrived? The daggers upon the leaves increased in size, so that they moved outward, further away from the centre of the system, when we blinked... they had changed. The deep – brown seed cases shrivelled and shrunk and became smaller, the reducing became rapid. Within minutes as it appeared, they were the height of a small adult and then began to release a second whorl of leaves.

Izzy Thompson

Age 11