

# STRONG ENOUGH

*This can't be happening*, Maggie thought as she felt the torn metal skin of the science module, her mind spinning. In the clumsy spacesuit gloves, everything felt blunt and indistinct. Her hands were already numb with cold. She cursed David for his sloppiness. How could he have gone to sleep without first purging the reactors? Stupid! So stupid!

The blowout had woken her—the sudden loss of pressure, the screaming alarm as the air howled out of the jagged tear like an out-of-control freight train hurtling down the tracks. David was nowhere to be seen. All alone ... all alone. *I told you, David! I told you!* she thought as she forced her head into the emergency hood, gulping oxygenated air from the tank like a person on the edge of drowning.

She struggled into the baggy evacuation suit and frantically zipped it up. Shivering with the intense cold, she checked the pressure gauge on her air tank. She noticed that the access tube to the escape module had been crimped by the explosion that had blown the escape module loose. That module—her only lifeline—was now tethered to the science module by a ragged strip of torn aluminium sheeting a dozen metres long.

*You said we didn't need to practise evacs*, she thought angrily. *You said there would be no problems! Is this what you meant, David? That you'd create the problem and just leave me all alone to solve it? My problem, not yours? Thanks a lot!*

She looked across to the tiny escape module. Earth hung behind it like a huge blue marble. The module looked intact. Intact and light years away. She cradled the globe of her face mask in her bulky gloves and sobbed. *I've never been strong enough to do this*, she thought again and again as she cried. *I've never been strong enough, never been, never ever.*

She checked the air gauge again. She'd been breathing like a marathon runner, and the needle quivered on the edge of the red. *Alright universe*, she thought, her mind clearing from the panic and her breath slowing as she bit her lip. *Maybe I'm not strong enough, but maybe 'not strong enough' isn't a choice I have anymore.*

With that thought, she pushed herself through the jagged hole and into the unforgiving vacuum of space. Carefully, she began to haul herself in zero gravity along the ribbon of metal towards the escape module.

14. Which word is a **SYNONYM** for 'purging'?
- (A) cleansing
  - (B) checking
  - (C) activating
  - (D) accessing
15. *'I told you, David! I told you!'*  
What did Maggie tell David?
- (A) to ensure that she was woken if an emergency occurred
  - (B) to secure the escape module before going to sleep
  - (C) to make sure the crew practised evacuation procedures
  - (D) to test the pressure gauges on the evacuation suits
16. How did Maggie feel when she saw what had happened to the escape module?
- (A) puzzled about how she would escape
  - (B) doubtful about the space mission
  - (C) discouraged about the damage she had to repair
  - (D) outraged that her safety had been compromised
17. What does the phrase 'light years away' in the fifth paragraph highlight?
- (A) Maggie's state of mind
  - (B) the condition of the module
  - (C) Maggie's scientific knowledge
  - (D) the distance to the module
18. Maggie experiences a range of emotions before she accepts her situation and resolves to act. Which option correctly describes the sequence of Maggie's emotions?
- (A) despair to anger to disbelief
  - (B) disbelief to despair to anger
  - (C) disbelief to anger to despair
  - (D) anger to disbelief to despair
19. Which of the following is **NOT** a theme of the text?
- (A) human vulnerability in an alien environment
  - (B) individual courage in the face of adversity
  - (C) the importance of being responsible
  - (D) the thrill of exploring outer space