

# An Introduction...

*by* Eric Alan Solo

Deep below the settlement the chaos above was inaudible. Only the few explosions annihilating the complex above were perceivable from the geothermal plant's maintenance cavern by their shock waves. Tremors that in themselves caused little inconvenience for the maintenance team did however cause them alarming distress. There was no expansion blasting scheduled and it was inconceivable that any blasting would be done without warning the residents beforehand. No, these explosions implied something much more terrifying.

THUD!

Another one, this is not good, not good at all. What the crap is going on! An attack? A catastrophic fuel line failure? Asteroid's hitting the mountain? A rock slide...

"Aye! Ramirez!! Close the valve!!"

Crap cakes!! I'd completely forgotten what i was doing. Without waiting another heartbeat I began spinning the valve's control wheel closed. Only just in time as coolant rushed back into the chamber where i had just closed the emergency drainage valve.

The maintenance room was one of the only parts of the complex which had a raw and grimy appearance, there was some rusting on the rails and grease on the grates. Water dripped from some of the joints in the pipes which crept around the room like a disorientated robotic vine growing outwards from the pumping station. The hiss of pressure being released accompanying a jet of steam interrupted the constant dripping at the least expected moments. However all I could hear was the pounding of my heart, I could feel it pounding in my chest. Time seemed to have slowed down but everything was still happening too fast.

"Ramirez!! Aye man, snap out of it!"

I was being moved around violently, that was odd, I don't remember any of the tremors affecting only my torso and not my legs. Wait, I'm being shaken, what was I thinking?

"Take it easy man, I'm pretty sure I need my spine to remain intact!" I yelled.

"The way you were frozen I just thought it was already broken!" retorted Pedro cynically.

"Oh my gosh! We've probably just lost everybody we love and you two jackasses want to joke around! GREAT fricken idea geniuses!" Piped in Hannah

"Yeah, well I'm not the one who thinks it's national sarcasm day..." I mumbled to myself.

I was trying to put on a tough shell because what was going on in my head scared the crap out of me... I couldn't comprehend the possibility that something had happened to Araña.

"It's been a few minutes, let's go check it out guys. Don't make ANY noise." Pedro asserted taking a leadership position. Right now that was more than welcome, all I could think about was Araña. I had to get up and see if she was hurt but I didn't have the wits to think clearly. Grabbing my tools I followed Hannah and Pedro out of the maintenance room closing the hatch behind me and turning the valve.

Frak! Araña, don't be hurt, please.

"Hey Ramirez, you've got to stop spacing out man! Let's get going!" Pedro urged, but I heard nothing, just the beating of my heart, much faster than ever before.

"Look Ramirez," said Pedro, putting his hand on my shoulder, "I know you're worried about Araña but choking up isn't going to help her, let's get topside and see if there is anything we can do to help." I took it in, started trying to concentrate, we started climbing the ladder. But as we ascended the sinking feeling in my gut only got stronger, I didn't know what had happened to the complex but I knew it was horrific.

"I don't hear anything..." whispered Hannah. We had just reached the hatch at the top of the maintenance chute.

"Open it quietly, take a look around and if it's clear we climb out as silently as possible, OK go." Responded Pedro. His caution betraying his positive affirmations.

Hannah lifted the hatch up, dusty air rushed into the maintenance chute but no light. Why was there no light? The maintenance chute joined the surveillance room above to the maintenance room below, there were always lights on in the surveillance room. Wait, forget the light, why was there so much dirt in the air?

WHAT WAS GOING ON!

Cold hands gripped my heart and squeezed... Araña.

