

Roop Needs Rescue

"Roop! Aliens on your six!" Captain Beepa yelled into her headset. On the radar in front of her, the green flashing dot that showed her best space pilot Roop's position, was being chased by two red dots and they were gaining on her fast.

"Repeat, aliens on your six! Incoming!"

"Got it, beginning evasive manoeuvres!" Roop's voice sounded breathless coming through the headset into Beepa's ears. She watched on the radar as the pilot changed direction suddenly, the data feeding through into the control room letting Beepa know that Roop was losing altitude as she ducked and dodged away from the alien ships.

This was meant to be an easy mission. Beepa's squad was tasked with picking up stray space junk to take back to their home planet, which was usually straightforward enough. Beepa would watch the radars from the control room, looking out for any unidentified objects floating around in the atmosphere. She would then send one of her pilots out to pick up the object and bring it back to be taken apart and repurposed. It was basically space recycling, with the added danger of being spotted by aliens who often wouldn't say no to a space pilot-flavoured snack.

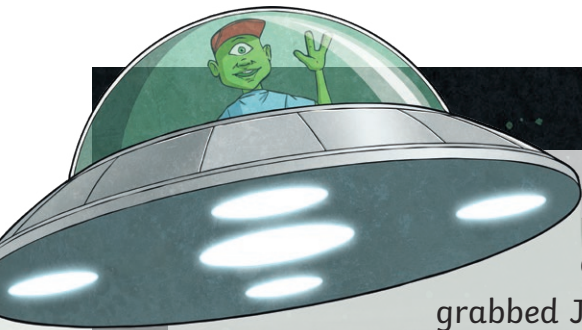
"They're hard to shake," Roop's shaky voice crackled through, "Something's not right, my ship is slowing down! I'm going to make an emergency landing!"

Beepa frowned and pushed her fingers through her hair, scanning the radars and maps spread out before her. "You've got a micro planet to your left. Make a landing there! I'll send back-up." She spun around, intending to ask her other pilot Joof to go out and support Roop, but he was slumped in his chair, a bucket on his knee, face even greener than usual for a spaceman.

"Really, Joof?" Beepa asked, throwing her hands in the air. "Sea sickness, again?"

"Technically, it's space sickness," Joof mumbled, his voice echoing in the bucket.





Beepa rolled her eyes. "You want something done, you gotta do it yourself," she muttered. She grabbed Joof's spacesuit from where it hung on the control room wall and stepped into it, zipping it up over her clothes. She picked up his helmet and strode through to the launchpad where Joof's crimson red spacecraft stood waiting. In one swift movement, Beepa had hopped into the cockpit, pulled on her helmet and started up the engine. She gritted her teeth as the spacecraft rumbled to life beneath her, flicked the necessary switches and gripped the steering wheel tightly. Within moments, she was up, up and away, zooming into the darkness to Roop's rescue.

There was no time to admire the view - a black canvas filled with glittering specks of light - as Beepa sped towards the micro planet she had directed Roop towards. She leaned forward in her seat as it came into view. Roop had landed her blue spacecraft on the rocky planet and was clambering out of the cockpit. Above her, the two alien ships circled like vultures. Beepa's only option was to try to distract them. She forced her vehicle into a dive, swooping and spinning between the two aliens, forcing them to break formation.

"Come and get me!" she yelled as if they could hear her, "Yoo hoo! Over here!"

To her surprise, the aliens didn't chase her. They fell back into position and continued to circle poor Roop, who was racing around her spacecraft in a panic, trying to figure out what was wrong with it. Then, the alien ships dropped down and landed, one on either side of Roop, who was now cowering behind her engines.

Beepa turned her ship around and flew down too, making a less than smooth landing on the soft pink-ish sand of the planet's surface. She hopped out of her spacecraft and joined Roop.

The doors of the first alien spacecraft opened with a hiss of steam. Through the haze stepped a human-like figure in a bright yellow uniform, his face covered by a yellow helmet. He dropped down to the ground and walked quickly towards them. Beepa could feel Roop shaking with fear next to her as the alien reached into his pocket and pulled out... A piece of paper.

"Ma'am, you're in violation of Code 276 of the Space Highway Code," the alien said. He took another step forward and handed the paper to Roop, "You've been flying with no brake lights on for around three light years now." Roop stared at the piece of paper, speechless.

"I don't want to give you a fine today," the space traffic patrolman said, "But it does need to be fixed ASAP. The address of the nearest space garage is on there - I would suggest you head there immediately."

Roop nodded as he turned to walk back to his ship. As they watched, the window of the second alien craft wound down and a second man in yellow poked his head out.

"I think you might need to refuel before you set off!" he yelled, laughter in his voice. And with that, the two space traffic patrol vehicles lifted off into the sky and zoomed away. Beepa turned to look at Roop, who was still staring at the paper in her hand.

"Roop," Beepa said, "Did you check your fuel gauge before you set off this morning?"

Roop turned brighter than a space tomato, "I may have forgotten."

Beepa fought the urge to roll her eyes. With one pilot who was space sick and one pilot who couldn't even remember to put fuel in her ship, it was going to be a long Monday at work.



Questions

1. What do you think Beepa means when she says 'on your six'?

2. What are Beepa and Roop's jobs?

3. What does 'repurposed' mean?

4. How do you think Joof will cope with being a space pilot?

5. Why do you think Beepa puts on a spacesuit before she goes to help Roop?

6. What kind of character is Roop?

7. Do you think Beepa is a good Captain? Why or why not?

8. How do you think Beepa feels about Roop and Joof?

9. Predict what will happen next.

10. Summarise the story in less than 25 words.

Answers

1. What do you think Beepa means when she says 'on your six'?
Behind you.
2. What are Beepa and Roop's jobs?
Beepa finds space junk on her radar and Roop goes out to collect it. They bring it back to get it repurposed.
3. What does 'repurposed' mean?
To reuse something for a different purpose.
4. How do you think Joof will cope with being a space pilot?
Any appropriate answer, eg. He won't be very good at it because he gets space sick.
5. Why do you think Beepa puts on a spacesuit before she goes to help Roop?
For protection.
6. What kind of character is Roop?
Roop is an anxious and panicky character who is a bit forgetful.
7. Do you think Beepa is a good Captain? Why or why not?
Any appropriate answer, eg. Yes she's a good Captain because she goes to rescue Roop, or no she's not a good Captain because she isn't very sympathetic to Joof.
8. How do you think Beepa feels about Roop and Joof?
Any appropriate answer, eg. She feels like she has to do everything because they aren't very good.
9. Predict what will happen next.
Any appropriate answer, eg. Beepa will help Roop go and get fuel and new brake lights.
10. Summarise the story in less than 25 words.
Any appropriate answer.