

# Space for Interpretation

by Diana Kussainova



"Untitled 143" by V Hole?ek

Ever since she was a kid, Saule Sagaidat liked to be first. The first to run up to an apple tree in the park. The first in class, with the highest mark for every math test. And the first alumni of her school to become a *?ary?naut* and fly into space.

Saule’s dreams were bigger than that, though. They were as big as her unlikely inspiration — Barack Obama. To be the first African American President of the US — what an honor. And what a way to write your name into history.

Saule couldn’t become the first mother in space, or the first lesbian in space, or even the first Kazakh woman in space. Far from it! The most attainable “first” she could get was being the first Kazakh *?ary?naut* to reach the newly-formed moon of Uranus — Ceres.

And if there was no other opportunity, surely that wasn’t the worst “first” to be.

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The mission was simple — investigate the previously undiscovered moon and send the data back to Earth. Just a research task, a field trip, together with two Chinese taikonauts and an American and Canadian astronaut.

When it came time for an EVA, Saule volunteered to exit the ship and take the photographs and measurements. She grabbed the tools and headed out.

The excitement of an EVA had worn off after her first three or four, so Saule was focused on the job. The faster she got things done, the better.

— Saule, do you copy?

— Yes, Sally, I’m approaching the object. About two more minutes until I reach the required height.

Up close, the surface of the moon looked peculiar. Saule noticed how smooth it was. She clicked the camera. How it reflected light like no soil could. Click. Perhaps this moon was made...out of metal?

The air inside the helmet started vibrating slightly. She felt uneasy. A low ringing in her ears — getting louder. The vibration resonated deep in her skull.

Saule tried to calm down by repeating a childhood mantra out loud:

— What would Barack Obama do? What would Barack Obama do? What would Barack Obama do?

— ? ???? ? ???? ?

— ? ???? ? ???? ? ? “ka-boom” ? ???? ? ???? ?

— ? ? ?

The vibrations stopped.

For a while, even after finishing her EVA, Saule felt a little dizzy. As though she had just passed a medical examination. A probe of sorts.

The extraterrestrials never left the ship. Saule wasn't attacked, nor did she report the strange vibrations she felt close to Ceres.

When she returned home, her wife Arina made her favorite ?r?m??k syrniki.

And Saule never knew she had become the first person in space to be heard — and interpreted — by aliens.