Chapter 28

An engineer’s work is never done. While the rest of my crew were on the bridge marveling at the FTL exterior star scape view. Subspace was just a gray field to the human eye but once you applied filters it did look remarkedly colorful. I was reviewing the ships internal feedback and alert systems. I really needed a ship AI and a few more human crew to handle this. The bridge had 11 stations. So maybe I should get up to 11 bridge crew? The original full crew complement was 158 according to records and the ship could have upwards of 300 passengers. Supposedly it had transported about 3,000 Wren to Silverstream but I had no idea how they stretched life support that far.

I was happy to see the FTL drive was operating at 109%. That wasn’t too unusual. A new drive or rebuilt drive usually exceeded the limits. After two or three trips it usually leveled out between 92% and 98%. I was busy sending bots all over the ship as yellow and orange indicators hit my screen. It was actually kind of fun. The Destiny’s Children didn’t require this much work but it was a fifth as large if you discounted the cargo containers. I figured after a few months I could get my ship running smoothly.

Nero asked what he should work on next. Distractedly I said Deck 3, the other main life support deck. But he should wear a skin suit and keep a bot nearby in case of an emergency. Deck 3 was unpressurized right now so fixing that was his first priority then he could get to working on life support. At least the cleaning bots had swept through the deck while we had been in station dock. He had Gabby follow him out as I continued my work.

Tora asked where we were going. I brought up my Nav jumps on my PerCom. We had a 30 hour jump, a 12 hour layover to check systems out, a 22 hour jump, an 8 hour planned layover and the a 33 hour jump to our final destination. It was a circuitous route. If I had jumped directly to the planetoid we could be there in around 28 hours with this FTL drive. Hopefully my course would keep anyone from trailing us. The layovers were for that particular reason.

I told Tora she could select quarters on deck 8 with everyone else and take a break. Henry helpfully offered that all rooms on that deck should be furnished by the stevedore bots by now. He also had new chairs for the bridge queued to be installed. He also had crates of furnishings for officers quarters on deck 9 in one of the small cargo holds. He started to tell me about his red and black color scheme and as he talked I thought I had selected the wrong person to furnish my ship.

Henry was a bit too talkative so I left to do my work in engineering. On my way there Eve directed me to get an 8 hour SLUMBER nap in. I didn't argue and I complied and selected a detective story in the city of London, year 1892. I had done a similar role play before and I thought it was fun to see how they lived back then and follow the clues. When I woke I was a little disappointed that I had been bested by the villain. But I did feel refreshed and went to a terminal to see how things were on the ship.

Eve had been handling everything, assigning bots as needed. Henry had slept on the bridge instead of his quarters. That chair of his did look comfortable enough to sleep in. Nero had gotten decks 3, 4 and 5 pressurized. No breathable atmosphere yet and he was sleeping currently. Everything seemed handled so I told Eve I was going to do a quick tour of the ship. I started on the flight deck, deck 10.

It looked like a new ship up here. The first room I checked was the EVA room. It had alcoves for 10 EVA suits and lockers for engineering equipment. Everything was currently empty so I noted on my PerCom what was needed for stocking this room. The next was the shuttle maintenance and fueling bay. It had full fuel tanks, reactor fuel rods and enclosed shelving for spare parts. It was about 30% of capacity. The marine drop shuttle had some spare parts on the shelves here. We didn’t have any tools up here for working on the shuttles or a shuttle engineer or technician to use them anyway. I added the tools to my purchase list. There was a secondary parts storage room as well that was empty.

Shuttle bay 1 and 2 were pristine newly painted and each had an alcove for the new charging station for a stevedore bot. The bots were missing, probably working elsewhere. The two bays shared a cargo lift that went all the way down as far as deck 1. Shuttle bay 1 had my shuttle in it. It was fully functional now and the extra fuel tanks had been removed allowing for up to 24 marines in combat armor. I had spent 22 days living on this shuttle in my trip getting to the station so it had a special place in my heart. Shuttle bay 2 had my new luxury shuttle in it. It was just 2 months old but it was a sleek looking vehicle. The interior still had the new shuttle smell. The passenger cabin had 12 large comfortable seats and a small kitchen. The cockpit was impressive as well, two seats and a sleek set up. It hadn’t been fueled or gone over by a technician yet but I was happy to have it. Bay 5 and 6 were empty but also pristine and shared a cargo lift. Bay 4 had been refurbished and converted to hold 3 of the large exterior hull bots and three of the smaller exterior bots. All the exterior bots were accounted for. Bay 3 had the six crates the size of coffins and a larger crate...oh yeah my hover cycle.

I unpacked the hover cycle and it was 6m long and 2m wide. It had a load capacity of 800 lbs for one passenger and cargo. Its hover range was up to 4m and its max speed was supposedly 800 kph. The cockpit was enclosed and I wasn't liking the safety features in the manual I was looking at on my PerCom. I would have to work on improving them and I needed to get some time in a simulator before driving the beast.

The steward bots. Well I figured I should get them activated. They were supposedly versatile bots so they could help with installing the furnishings. I opened the first crate and was a little speechless. It was a naked, anatomically correct male but I recognized him. He was one of the crew from the space pirate comedy vid me and Eve used to watch together. Opening all the crates and yes all 6 were modeled closely after the pirate crew members, even the elves. At least our steward elves had white teeth and silver blond hair. They looked closer to human than Sylvan copy their vid clone.

I wasn’t sure what Eve was thinking and she probably broke some copyright laws. The steward bots came with a smaller box inside. I opened this to find the command chip, six bottles, a cabled sphere for wireless recharging, a diagnostic wand and a data slate that had a catalog for upgrades. The six bottles were refills for the bots sexual anatomy. I used the command chip on a terminal and transferred the data to my PerCom for all the bots one by one. I scrolled through the menus. There were six primary settings preprogrammed, nanny, butler, chauffeur, paramour, dominatrix, and caretaker. The nanny setting was for taking care of children and educating them. Butler was a servant mode. Chauffeur could drive wheeled and hover vehicles. Paramour was the sex bot setting. Dominatrix was a sexual fetish setting. And caretaker was for assisting the elderly and feeble. I turned all the bots to butler setting and activated them. It was creepy seeing them all get up and be naked in a row in front of me.

Then I did an inspection. They looked human and I was curious about their synthetic skin. I touched it and felt it on the bot that was on the end. It was hairless and like soft pliable rubber. Eve’s flesh was far superior. These bots could cycle heat to their skin and that was about it. Maybe I could upgrade them eventually. I checked their genitalia out of curiosity. I was disappointed, it was accurate and looked good but lacked…ultimate realism. Maybe when it was being used…there were bottles of fluids in the boxes. I had no urge to test the bots right now…actually they were kind of creepy when I compared them to Eve who had a wide range of musculature woven into her skin. When she moved it looked like she had muscles under her skin…these bots were more like a mannequin.

I had sets of clothing that I had gotten for myself, Vanessa and Shinade so I would dress them in that. All the bots were attractive by human standards…well the actors in the show had been movie stars.

I started questioning them to find out their functionality and utility. Their programming was fairly adaptive but it annoyed me they kept mentioning upgrade options. Something like I am programmed with one hundred and two meal preparations. There is a gourmet chef upgrade that has 12,129 additional meal preparations. I just wanted to know if I could get them to help move and install the furnishings in the officer quarters on the command deck.

I got the group all dressed and brought them to one of the quarters in question. The resurfacing and repainting bots were working of this deck. I got all the steward bots into one of the finished rooms and had a stevedore bot bring the furniture. Each room here had a small lounge, modest bathroom and modest bedroom. The bathroom had been cleaned and looked almost new. I knew some of quarters needed new fixtures in the bathrooms but this unit looked good. The furniture included an oval couch that was black with red cushions, a large vid screen, a set of glossy black dressers and pair of red closets, a bed with red blankets and black sheets, two black end tables, two red storage chests, and a black desk with a red chair. The color scheme didn’t work too well with the soft white walls. Whatever. I walked the stewards through the procedure for securing everything to the floor and walls with the tools and bolts. I then watched them do the next room as a team. I only needed to correct two minor things…placement of the couch and one of the closets. Good enough I let them continue unsupervised.

We were just two hours from dropping out of FTL so I went to main engineering. I would have 12 hours to service the FTL drive. I told Henry to stay on the sensors while we waited for the next jump. Nero and Gabby had gotten atmosphere on deck 3 and would need two weeks to clean and replace equipment on deck 3. I assigned them 14 engineering bots to assist. The deck was in much worse shape than deck 8. Tora was working in engineering tying in the backup nav station. It wasn’t as elaborate as the bridge station but still much nicer than anything else down here. I talked with her briefly and we decided she should work on her engineering certs for sensors. I had checked and my university computer could issue galactic standard certifications for most engineering areas with the exception of weapons and other military focuses. I planned to work on my own certs when I got the opportunity.

We dropped to normal space and it was back to work. An engineers work is never done.