Chapter 78

I worked with Damian after we were secured and docked inside the moon. It was partly my fault for moving the transition point further in system and creating the extra maintenance work.

While I was working in engineering I received multiple reports from Suruchi and Abby. The passengers disembarked without issue and consigned cargo had been picked up. Unlike my normal routine of being wholeheartedly focused on the ship and its engineering problems, I stopped frequently and communicated with the bridge crew. It took everyone about 16 hours to get the ship secured, locked down, and resupply materials flowing to it.

I released non-essential staff for 72 hours of leave and the essential staff would have to split their leave at the station. For my own part, I was ordering upgrades to my fabrication units and adding new small-scale fabricators for my next project. I was going to design and build my own suits of stealth combat armor for my marines. I was planning to base my suit on the Brotherhood model Jan Doe had been wearing. I had a few improvements I think I could add as well.

The hardest part was getting a design suit from the station. There was nothing available commercially for military-grade power armor design suites, go figure. So I would have to rely on a basic suit design suite and use Julie to mod it for my needs. Julie was excited to be working with me on a project.

I kept checking the passenger manifests to see how well Suruchi was doing. She was already at 24% of the cabins booked just 16 hours after we had docked. I looked at the available raw materials on the station and began to reserve cargo space on the *Void Phoenix*. I had been disappointed that we only had 8% of the outer hull completed. Part of the reason was we kept finding internal areas of the ship where we wanted to add more radiation shielding. Usually, these fabricated wall panels were very thin but quadrupled our radiation protections.

I held quite a bit of cargo in reserve for raw materials and guessed Yannis and Saabir could maybe get 40% more of the hull completed with what I planned to purchase this round. There would also be enough excess to fabricate 36 power armored suits. A lot of this round of hull plating fabrication was going to include the thicker hull plating areas that protected the ship skeleton so it was the most important step in our process. Yannis had already programmed every single hull plate design we needed complete the Void Phoenix into the translation device. We just needed the time and material to fabricate everything. Mot of the labor was actually removing the old hull plates. They were banged up and sometimes welded improperly.

On the second day in port Eve approached me and said I needed to relax myself. I had given the crew time off and I needed to take time off as well. She said she had programmed the Claire bot with a massage and relaxation program. She would take Celeste and Amos to get their checkup in medical which she said would take two hours according to Doc.

I told her tomorrow as I wanted to supervise the receiving of my new fabricators and install the design suite in Julie’s mainframe. Everything went relatively smoothly as I paid with the hard currency we took from the Brotherhood’s shuttle. Edmund and Francis had been monitoring comm traffic on the station from the Brotherhood. They only found regional reports, mission updates, and queries from other agents. Granted Edmund only had access to the Obsidian rank messages, the lowest rank. But after a while of working together, Francis seemed to trust Edmund’s judgment. A fairly quick change considering just a few days ago Francis had wanted Edmund turned over to the authorities for murder. I think Francis was maybe developing a healthy fear of the Brotherhood. At least that was my surface observation.

Eve reminded me twice that I had a relaxation massage in my cabin and not to miss it. I was sure she had programmed Claire to administer to my sexual needs as well. That would match what I expected from Eve.

I passed by the restaurant actually thinking of asking Cori for a date but found she was on the station buying ingredients from the orbiting farms. I commed Suruchi and reminded her to get items in as few shipments as possible and made my way to my cabin.

Claire had the lighting turned low and asked me to strip and lay on the massage table face down. The next hour was a serious deep muscle release and pliability session. Then the bot asked me to turn over. The bot started with the same muscle release but then began a massage of my scrotum. Now I was will say it took a few minutes before I got comfortable. I built this bot and I knew this bot had enough strength to crush or rip off my testicles with minimal effort.

When the bot started using her mouth on my erection I thought the same thing, she could easily remove my penis with her jaw strength. Finally, my body relaxed and rogue bot scenarios faded from my mind and I began to enjoy Claire’s administration. The bot was good, better than a human partner in that she read my body language on what I enjoyed and kept returning to that technique. I had released once and was building to a second when the bot paused.

The bot asked if I wanted her to mount me and ride my erection. I nodded and the bot stripped. Gwen had definitely chosen a very provocative and sexy appearance…guess she was right about my using the bot for sex too. The bot lowered herself after getting on the massage table and her synthetic vagina was amazing! I fondled her breasts from instinct and the bot smiled as she rode me to another orgasm. I admit knowing this bot hadn’t been used by anyone else, essentially a virgin bot, was probably the only reason why I was doing this. I tested out my bots advanced skin and functionality for a good thirty minutes in a handful of positions. The Claire bots program learned quickly what I liked and I shamefully admitted to myself I was probably going to do this again.

The massage session lasted a little over three hours and after I finished and showered Eve returned immediately with the babes. Julie must have let her know I was done. I should have disconnected Julie’s cameras in the room…no it was slightly erotic to know the ship was watching.

The last few days in the station allowed me to get my new fabricators and design suite set up. I had talked with Abby, Francis, and Edmund about the future stealth-powered armor suits. They reviewed the profile and loadout of the suits we had inherited from our Brotherhood guests and the best suggestion they made was to make two versions. One would be a similar suit with the plating upgrades I planned and the second suit would be a heavy, non-stealth, more shock trooper set of powered armor. It would be heavier, stronger and have more powerful weapons, and be more effective in ship-to-ship actions in space.

I liked the idea and planned to make 12 stealth suits and 24 heavy assault suits. Now did that mean I planned to have 36 marines on board? Probably. It hadn’t taken Abby, Buckie, and Francis much to convince me after I nearly lost the ship. Since I was planning to swing back toward old Union space Abby was sure between the three of them they could find highly qualified marines to fill out the roster. About 30% of the navy and 20% of the marines of the Union were in the prison camps in the Sapphire Empire. That left thousands to choose from back in the old Union. I was hoping to find my brother and possibly Nila as well.

Abby planned to have four squads of 6 in the heavy armor and three squads of 4 in the stealth armor. So 36 marines in suits. That actually didn’t include Abby, Buckie, or Francis…so I guess 39, a full diverse platoon.

We also had a few conversations about adding weapons to the ship. My concerns were based on the fact most nations had limitations on what weapons a civilian ship could have onboard. Francis put forth the argument about the new hull plating blunting scanners. I conceded his point but still had reservations about the available space and engineering staff to maintain armaments. Buckie said we could just Frankenstein the ship a little more as hadn’t I already done that to add the cradle for the courier? Once again I conceded the point but powering and maintaining an arsenal? Abby said I would figure something out. So I guess we would be adding some type of defensive and offensive capacity for the *Void Phoenix* in the future. How much and how powerful were yet to be decided. I needed to finish the hull refit and crew power armor design first.

The five days passed quickly. Francis and Edmund found thirteen different attempts to add trackers to the *Void Phoneix*! Edmund wasn’t too concerned as he said that based on the poor attempts and the technology level it was probably from local competitors or terrible pirates. It was common practice. The trackers you couldn’t find – those were the problem. I just looked at Edmund like really?

Suruchi had filled the luxury cabins to 60% and regular cabins were at 80%. Cargo was very limited going to Ederne system and I had reserved most of the available cargo for material feedstock for the hull fabrication units. We were going to be operating at a small loss for this trip and I was perfectly fine with it.

Gabby had finished reskining all the male steward bots and was working on her personal bot. Her father, Nero, had asked Gabby to reskin his own steward bot that I had purchased for him. That must have been an awkward conversation. But Gabby agreed to do it.

Gwen was making good progress in the tank from the Docs reports. I tried to visit her in VR once a day since she kept unconscious. We usually just played the sword and sorcery game together since everyone else was enjoying station life. Well, Julie and Eve didn’t ask to join us either. Doc said maybe 12 more days before she could be awakened. Any earlier and the pain might be too intense.

The day before we were scheduled to depart Eve approached me again about creating a link so Julie could puppet the Claire bot. I had given it a lot of consideration and said no. But I would make Julie her own body…I was actually thinking about using Julie for the ‘aging’ bot I planned for Celeste and Amos’ playmate. Eve looked upset and asked why. This caught me off guard. Eve shouldn’t be questioning me. Especially since she seemed to be expressing some emotion akin to anger.

I told her I didn’t want it to get weird with Julie. I had been using the Claire bot to satisfy my sexual needs and the idea of having sex with my ship was just too awkward. Eve said ‘too late’ and left me with my jaw hanging open as she went to care for the children. Julie’s hologram appeared and looked guiltily at me and said that she only did it because Eve said it would be alright.

My mind was spinning. Julie had been in Claire? For how long? How did Eve make the upgrades? I mean I tracked everything…she would have had to make adjustments to inventory, log hours on the fabricators…I was going to have to talk with my two willful AIs.