Chapter 27

The Void Phoenix slid out of the hanger. Henry was immediately activating exterior sensors to tie in the new nav computer. I moved to the closest engineering station. I was instantly jealous of Henry’s new station. His shiny puffy chair looked comfortable and his displays were ergonomically set up. His chair even swiveled! I took a second to make a note on my PerCom to replace and update all stations and terminals in engineering.

As the ship moved I started going through the yellow and orange warnings and assigning bots to handle them. Most of the warnings were maneuvering thrusters…thrust was at 47% of optimal. It was supposed to be 61%. I found the issue. A fuel line was clogged and the secondary line didn’t kick in. This affected an array of three thrusters. I tried a reverse feed purge from the bridge which caused a red indicator. The line had either burst or blew a seal. I assigned a bot to take care of it. Thankfully that was the only major issue so far.

Henry said station flight control was assigning us a flight path away from the station and confirmed that I wanted to follow it. Since I didn’t plan to be on the bridge much guess I needed a captain for the ship too. I was reluctant to put my ship and my safety in the hands of someone else though.

My comm kept buzzing so I checked it. Sha’lua had made five attempts in 20 minutes to contact me. Hesitantly I answered. She wanted to know if I was leaving as she had a diplomatic request that I wait for the arrival of a Sylvan city ship that was en route. It was the guy who had purchased my cache of jewelry.

I didn’t want to be rude as the station had been relatively good to me. At least they hadn’t tried to screw me over more than expected. I told her I was out testing my refurbished ship and planned to test the FTL drive. She immediately said she would love to be on board to see the ships improvements. I told her I wouldn’t be gone long, just a few short jumps. Her response was that was fine with her and she was already in a shuttle and could land in 7 minutes. What the hell woman? I was losing this verbal sparring match. Before I could make my next reason why she couldn’t dock Henry said the station had approved her flight path and her ETA was 5 minutes and 20 seconds. Well fuck.

I moved over to our flight controls. I had six shuttle bays and no cameras were working on any of them. I tapped a reminder in my PerCom to fix that. I could just keep all the shuttle bays closed…I swore as I keyed shuttle bay 2 to open and then dashed off the bridge to meet the shuttle in the bay and Eve decided to follow.

I arrived before the shuttle had landed and was stunned. The shuttle bay was immaculate. The floor was a dark glossy gray and the walls were an off white glossy finish. The ceiling was also refinished. I was tapping on my PerCom to figure out why when the shuttle landed on the other side of the observation glass. The doors closed and atmosphere was being added back in and I suddenly panicked. What if this was a boarding attempt to take over my ship?

I used the shuttle bay scanners and read only two life signs, no bots and no weapons on the craft. Well at least the scanners worked. I could see the camera modules in the shuttle bay and they all looked new…probably not powered or hard lines to the bridge were not installed. A ships AI could have routed them to the bridge wirelessly so maybe I should work on tying in the university AI to serve as the ship’s AI.

While I was waiting I found out why the shuttle bay looked brand new. Eve had assigned the refurbishing bots to work from top down on the ship in areas that engineering had finished with. The entire top deck was done and I peeked into the adjacent bay. It had six crates the size of caskets in it but otherwise also looked brand new. Those crates must be the steward bots.

The indicators turned green and the shuttle door opened and Sha’Lua walked confidently down the ramp. Damn elves shouldn’t smile, the light blue teeth made them look creepy. I entered the shuttle bay to greet her and to try to turn her away.

The Sylvan woman immediately launched into conversation saying how wonderful the ship looked and that I was a miracle worker to get the FTL drive up so quick. I took the praise before asking her why she was here. She said she just wanted to see the ship.

Frustrated I bluntly told her I didn’t believe her, she had practically forced her way aboard. She apologized and said she would be appreciative if I could wait for the Sylvan city ship to arrive. The First Citizen wanted to meet with me. Apparently the leader of the city ships was called the First Citizen and the position was revered in Sylvan society. Well Silverstream station was controlled by humans correct? Yes she said reluctantly. And I was a human and not a Sylvan so I didn’t have to revere a First Citizen? Sha’Lua had a sour look on her face when I added the last.

She then tried to bribe me. 500,000 station credits to wait and meet with the First Citizen. I was tempted for a brief moment but then I remembered I had quite a bit of rare metals left in the alien city. She tried other avenues, Sylvan technology, star maps outside human space, access to Sylvan information networks and even herself.

I turned each one down. The Sylvan to my knowledge were not a malicious race so avoiding the First Citizen shouldn’t be too bad, right? If I stayed and he detained me then I might not be able to reach Vanessa and Shinade before they activated the backup rescue plan. Also my greedy side didn’t want to reveal the planetoid and it’s riches before I had a chance to take what I could. I was really interested in the technology as well. It had all looked extremely intriguing. Damn I should have gotten a material science lab setup. Well I was definitely not going back to the station now.

I asked Sha’Lua to leave four times before she finally consented. I hoped I was not making a mistake. After the shuttle departed and I ran a scan of the bay in case they left anything behind. I returned to the bridge. I had a small exterior hull bot sweep the hull to quell my paranoia. With that done and nothing found I gave Henry some nav coordinates. We would be leaving on a vector that I had approached the station and then making two more jumps to rendezvous with the planetoid. The FTL legs would be in deep space so I hoped we couldn’t be followed.

From the bridge I spun up the FTL drive and found Nero, Gabby and Tora had joined us. This was the moment. I had to move from the engineering station to the pilot station to engage the drive so repositioning myself was a bit anticlimactic. Henry, although he was not my sensor operator, noted we were being closely tracked by 23 ships. Guess I made an impression in my time here. I activated the drive and the Void Phoenix made a smooth transition. Much smoother than any other ship I had been on before…well all two of them.