Chapter 12

Samantha stormed into the room after her shuttle landed. The berating by Samantha was long and filled with vulgarities. I took the assault because I knew I had been careless, maybe intentionally. I didn’t like the fact she did it in front of the prisoners and crew. Vanessa briefly tried to stand up for me but got stared down by Samantha.

When I was finally left alone with the remaining prisoners I started quietly working. From her cell Vanessa said it wasn’t my fault and then she got the bright idea of taking Shinade to the drop shuttle. There was an emergency medical alcove there with two beds. It should have enough functionality to treat her. The other prisoners’ injuries were not life threatening. Currently Shinade was on pain killers and stable. After a brief thought I told Eve to review the needed operations manuals.

Eve went to work at a terminal and I continued my own work. The cleaning bots had finally removed the bodies and cleaned up the blood. It took Eve just over an hour to incorporate a medical program and operations program into her knowledge base. I checked her available memory, she was utilizing 86%. I might have to upgrade her memory again.

I had been working on sending assignments to all the bots. Without the large contingent of bots on the ship I would have had no chance of maintaining the freighter. I didn’t think Samantha knew just exactly how much I was currently doing. My current project was refitting the cargo containers. I had welded makeshift canisters to our frame and my army of bots had broken those welds and was making makeshift containers that fit normally. This would allow us to jettison them if needed in the future.

Eve got my attention and we went to Shinade’s cell with another bot functioning as a gurney. Vanessa asked to help but I declined. She had been a good prisoner and didn’t participate in the recent prisoner break. I still didn’t feel the need to jeopardize Samantha’s wrath again. On the walk to the shuttle bay I was noting the work that needed to be done in some of the corridors. Conduit lines were exposed, air filtration ducts showed orange, indicating they were due to be cleaned, and the corridors needed a heavy cleaning and new hard coat. I had salvaged some bots that could extrude epoxy coatings so if I got around to it I could make the interior of the ship look like new.

Entering the shuttle bay I was impressed. Three large shuttles occupied the bay. The small maintenance bots swarmed over the recently arrived shuttle doing standard cleaning, refueling and maintenance. All the work was supposed to be checked by a human but I doubted Vanessa would be allowed out again by Samantha. I sighed and looked into the cargo hold of the shuttle.

They had a large haul. I could see the three alien bots they had mentioned and lots of other salvage. This was their third trip but the first time they had brought back anything substantial size wise. They had just been filling up small one meter square crates. I moaned in despair as I could see lots of rough cuts and burn marks. The crew had obviously acted more like scavengers than archeologists in acquiring their haul. Although I was eager to dig into the alien artifacts I continued on to the marine drop shuttle.

The shuttle was crammed with supplies. I began to think about abandoning ship. The drop shuttle had a half light year range for a single jump. I didn’t have a lot of the specialized fuel though or the skills for programming the nav computer. I also wouldn’t abandon the crew. Dropping the thought, I went to the special medical alcove and started cleaning it out. It had cases of officer meals and alcohol. The alcohol was a surprise and I had to query Eve on where it came from. She said it was from the salvage officers' mess on the cruiser. Eve had control of half the bots during the salvage of the cruiser and I hadn't checked her work.

After some more in depth questions I learned Eve had directed the harvest as from her research she found the bottles had high value financially and as a stress outlet for crew. She said the 219 bottles were worth around 109,000 credits! The bottles were in hard glass bottles and packed in foam and special crates to resist the coldness of space as well. The containers had a battery life of sixty days and I wanted to look more into the tech when I had the chance. I pulled out a bottle of brandy and cracked the seal and took a deep pull. I capped it and put it back letting the warmth spread.

With Eve we cleared the small room that just had two beds and a small desk. The cabinets were full of medical supplies. Eve got Shinade inside and I got her shackled to the bed while Eve started preparing. I watched Eve work in fascination. The ceiling coffin lowered to encase Shinade and a light sterile field appeared over her body. She was unconscious and still and on pain killers. Eve then began surgery with the help of some mechanical arms that came out of the wall.

It was remarkable how Eve had learned so much in such a short time. She opened Shinade up and started repairing the damaged areas and cutting out flesh too far gone. She had a small supply of universal synthetic implants from the alcove. Eve talked while she worked. Some intestinal and stomach damage, kidney damage and a lower lobe of the lung needed to be removed. After three hours Eve was done and said Shinade should stay mostly immobile for four days. I informed the bridge she was shackled in the shuttle and should make it. They never replied back. I checked the video of the bridge and no one was there. I panicked for a second before checking all other cameras…they all went to sleep in their quarters! And yes there were two pairs, so the captain was definitely intimate with my life support engineer. I knew they must have been exhausted but still they should have at least manned the bridge per regulation with at least one person…. Well I had been the only one on board during their missions… I was fuming a little and began to rethink about the possibility of abandoning them.

I calmed down and after leaving Eve to watch over Shinade I went to drag out the alien artifacts and inventory the pile. I reassigned six bots to help. I went to engineering to get my data pad that had my translation program on it. I even had an interface device that should work on the crystalline computers.

I decided to sort the artifacts into three piles. The first was junk, the second was functional alien artifacts and the third would be items that I couldn’t figure out. I got the three bots out first. After a short time I found two were cleaning bots and the third was maintenance bot. The general maintenance bot had seven hundred programs on it! It was a gold mine for the alien technology. I had my bots bring that bot to engineering. The cleaning bots had nothing monumental on them so I tagged them to be stored in a cargo container. The rest of the pile was frustrating as important parts were missing. The first one I figured out was a clothing fabricator. It scanned a person and then created the outfit selected. Unfortunately the material feeds were not part of the salvage.

Hours passed as I sorted the rest of the materials. Most of it was junk or useless but I found three things that got me very excited. The first was a shield emitter, it’s matrix was four times as efficient as the deflectors on our starships! This alone could be worth billions to humanity. I had jury rigged the power supply but it worked. It was used to seal a door in an emergency situation I think. The second was a micro generator, I didn’t have the fuel source for it but it was at least twice as efficient for its size if my estimates were correct but I didn't have the fuel profile. The third was a stasis repository for seeds. I went and got Eve to scan the seeds.

She got three scanners and worked on scanning through the housing. After twenty minutes she thought the seeds were viable, 29 different species. The seeds were exciting but the fact the stasis device had worked for so long? That was heavenly.

Everything else was trash as far as I was concerned. I sent my report to the bridge which was still empty and got the shuttle bay cleaned and ready for their next launch window. I asked them obtain more of the shield emitters for study, the bigger the better. I was also curious about the power sources for the devices. I doubted the civilization had any left…hell that was probably how they died out…no power. Maybe they could find a power station and get the computers…maybe I should go out on the next mission? I was getting tired and needed to crash. I went to my quarters and put on my SLUMBER unit, loaded a romance adventure program, set it for five hours of REM sleep and went under.