Chapter 56 Con Air

I was sitting on the table under Docs care. Abby had run me two hours ragged with conditioning and strength training. Then we spared and I commented during the hand to hand engagement that she was getting old to spur her on to make a mistake. Instead, she quickly got me in an arm bar and dislocated my shoulder. Doc was giving me anti inflammation shot and a drug cocktail to expediate the healing. Doc asked if this was going to be a regular thing. I sighed and said yes.

Doc volunteered that there were treatments to expedite muscle growth and cardiovascular conditioning. I sighed again. Abby had a strict policy, if you didn’t earn it, you didn’t deserve it. So I would have to get into shape on my own. I also knew when Abby’s friends arrived I was probably in line for compounded training. However, I was looking forward to the same camaraderie I experienced with Abby, Buckie and Adam. Truthfully, I wasn’t as motivated as I was back at the academy. Back then I was dealing with the threat of Asher and now I was rich, had dozens of interesting engineering problems and I was supervising an entire crew. No…I was a captain of my own ship.

I brought up the current crew roster with positions on my PerCom. Abby and Suruchi had worked together with input from me to make a ‘complete’ crew roster for operations on the *Void Phoenix*.

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| **BRIDGE OFFICERS** | **Name** | **Sol Credits** |
| Owner Captain | Devon Wellspring | NA |
| First Officer, Personal Director | Suruchi Lozano | 1111 |
| Pilot |  | 200 |
| Co-Pilot |  | 150 |
| Chief Engineering Officer |  | 200 |
| Bridge Sensor Officer | Haily | 150 |
| Comms Officer |  | 120 |
| Medical Officer | Andie Niaz | 222 |
| Science Officer |  | 150 |
| Logistics Officer | Vicky Charity | 95 |
| Navigation Officer | Henry | 167 |
| **FLIGHT DECK** |  |  |
| Lead Fighter Pilot | Shinade | 150 |
| Wingman Fighter Pilot |  | 120 |
| Shuttle Pilot | Finn Martis | 85 |
| Shuttle Engineer | Stavros Martis | 90 |
| Shuttle Engineer | Evira Martis | 90 |
| **ENGINEERING** |  |  |
| Life Support Engineer | Nero | 150 |
| Ship's Mechanic | Saabir | 100 |
| FTL Engineer | Damian Loredo | 200 |
| Assistant Life Support Engineer | Gabby | 50 |
| Computer Engineer/Robotics Engineer | Emon Alkhaiwani | 100 |
| Propulsion Engineer | Tora | 150 |
| Navigation Engineer |  | 150 |
| Shield and Defensive Engineer |  | 150 |
| Hull and Structure Engineer |  | 150 |
| **SECURITY** |  |  |
| Chief Security Officer | Abby | 200 |
| Security | Hanno Sabet | 100 |
| Security | Mitchel Breece | 100 |
| Security | Loree Kinkade | 100 |
| Security | Maria Sahagun | 100 |
| Security |  | 100 |
| Security |  | 100 |
| Security |  | 100 |
| **HOSPITALITY** |  |  |
| Chief Steward | Dora Kiernan | 80 |
| Assistant Steward | Razan Ramirez | 70 |
| Assistant Steward |  | 70 |
| Agricultural Steward |  | 70 |
| Master Chef | Cori Deane | 240 |
| Bartender | Edmund Asir | 90 |

This list had 39 crew members with thirteen open positions currently. I really wanted, no, needed a pilot. We had…49 crew cabins. I was sure the rest of the cabins would get filled out. I looked over the list. I was hoping to promote Nero to Chief Engineering Officer but he wasn’t well rounded enough. I edited the list to add another life support engineer. The pay scale seemed awfully high for the crew in general but only two people stuck me as ‘overpaid’. Henry and Cori. Well, we were still under the ceiling for the crew budget even if we filled out the entire crew as listed.

With my shoulder feeling better I left Doc and headed to my cabin and set up my SLUMBER unit. I didn’t want to enter VR under Julie’s oversight right now. I put on another detective mystery from old London. I hadn’t like being bested by the villain last time. Rather than replay the same scenario I selected a different one.

Damn it! I woke angry. Again! I needed more familiarity with the era that the scenario took place. I called for Julie and she appeared in my cabin. She was dressed in business casual clothes, not the white dress navy uniform she had on the bridge in the VR sim. I just did a double take before asking for her help to set up some educational programs for me in VR to learn more about ancient London. Next time this Moriarty character would lose the game of minds…or maybe I should turn down the difficulty…no it wouldn’t be satisfying to win on any level besides nightmare mode.

I checked my PerCom and our new crew members were inbound from Bastille. Four hours ETA. I went to the bridge and found Nero there working. He was alone and we talked for a while about his value to the crew. I told him I wanted to make him the chief engineer but he would need to expand his engineering utility and become familiar with most of the systems on the *Void Phoenix*. He seemed hesitant for just a moment before agreeing…as long as I didn’t make any more major changes to the ship’s layout.

Julie appeared on the bridge in her white navy dress uniform and announced an incoming shuttle. It was not the transfer from Bastille, just supplies that we had ordered. Checking and the unloading was already handled. I checked the ship assignments and found Abby and Suruchi had assigned all the new crew members cabins. I tabbed through many other documents and it looked like things were getting handled without me.

I went and found Gabby in the robotics lab. We talked about how she was doing and her recent adventures on the Sapphire station. Zed was here as well as Luna was currently on station with her parents. Zed was growing fast and he was trying to play with Gabby’s first three iterations of fur cloaked wolf bots. Gabby had completed some basic programming in the bots to respond to Zed’s enthusiasm but she had a long way to go to make them look natural.

Her most recent attempt looked pretty good on cursory inspection. Good musculature, the fur felt great, it walked like a natural wolf…I told her she needed to work on the eyes and mouth. We spent two hours on the wolf eyes when I got interrupted with a comm. The Bastille shuttle was ten minutes out. Suruchi said we would have to go the shuttle bay on the station to receive the crew members in a transfer. The dock was not far from our ship’s umbilical.

Our procession included myself, Abby, Suruchi and Dora. I wasn’t sure why Dora was with us but that was answered when I heard her talking to Suruchi about Edmund. I guess he would fall under her supervision as the ship’s bartender. When we got to the shuttle bay I noticed there were other groups waiting to collect transfers from Bastille along with eleven Sapphire marines posted here as guards. Three separate groups waited here. All were dressed in formal business suits so I guessed either lawyers of corporate execs.

Twenty people left the shuttle after two marines. I almost had a fit as the second one to leave looked like Asher. Well, he looked very similar to Asher, but most likely a brother or relative. Not my concern…once all the prisoners were released and standing in a rough line I didn’t see Asher which was a minor relief. I easily picked out our marine grunts from the lineup. They were already joking and waving to Abby who whispered to me they were not as buffonic as they were currently demonstrating. Haily was there standing next to the old man Damian. The look on Haily’s face was one of assessment…she was sizing me up like a piece of meat.

Too late Haily. I had matured enough to not fall under her persuasions. I looked over the rest. Saabir towered over the crowd but had relaxed muscular shoulders and looked pensive. I would make sure he felt welcomed aboard. Before I could assess any more the group was being divided up and my group was headed towards me. I asked Suruchi in passing to look into the group where Asher’s relative was headed with two others from the transfer shuttle. Abby was hugging a number of people and our group swung out of the bay and my personal mob headed back to our ship’s umbilical.

On board Abby took her grunts to a tour. Suruchi and Dora took Edmund and Vicky on a separate tour. That left me with Saabir, Damian and Haily. Haily was a sensor engineer but she would be serving on the bridge to alleviate Henry’s duties. Saabir would be doing a lot of general maintenance and I hoped he could work toward some engineering certs. His skinsuit looked really old so I got his measurements as we walked and ordered him two new ones. Damian was very talkative in our group as we headed to engineering. He was very complimentary of the ship and its condition and we spent three hours in aft engineering talking while Saabir and Haily got bored. My comm beeped. There was a welcome party for all crew members on deck 7. I checked and almost everyone had returned from the station.

The steward bots had set up a big spread and I was surprised to find everyone had changed out of their Bastille garb and into civilian clothes. Guess I forgot to give my group time in their assigned cabins. Suruchi or Dora had ordered some simple clothes for all the new crew members. My mind wandered briefly to the alien clothing fabricator from the planetoid but this was not the time for it. The marine grunts were the life of the party and I saw Dora take Haily away and she came back in a new set of clothes with slightly wet hair tied back. I tried to avoid the alcohol but Suruchi eventually got a drink in my hands. Edmund had prepared something called a screwdriver for me…because I was an engineer I guess. It was orange and had a sweet acidic taste. The coldness of the beverage made it very easy to drink.

I was a little upset that Eve couldn’t attend and mentioned it Abby who was quite buzzed herself. She assured me that her new marines would take over from Eve in a few days. Abby had been working with Julie on security protocols and was confident Eve would be unchained soon. Then she told me to loosen up a bit. This wasn’t a military ship. So I did my best to enjoy the rest of the party.