Chapter 68 Captain’s Dinner

I was working on prepping Eve’s new body leading up to departure. Gabby joined me whenever she had free time. She was eager to skin her first male steward bot. Even with her dog bots completed I was making her do a lot of preparation work. She wanted to upgrade the bots programming but when I saw her specs for the enhancements I denied it. She wanted the bot to be able to control the size and firmness of his penis. I told her it was no necessary but if she ever built her own bot she could add such flexibility. This seemed to be giving her approval of designing her bot and she started to multi task, prepping the reskin and designing a male steward bot from the ground up. I created a monster.

Gwen usually sat in the robotics lab while I worked and we talked. I remembered that about Gwen…she loved to talk. She had that quality that Abby had…being able to talk about anything and somehow made it interesting. Surprisingly I was able to multi task…following and participating in the conversation and still getting my work done.

I was doing more prep work than was needed. Eve was right, I was dragging my feet. The test bot skeleton me and Eve had made when we had first gotten the alien hull fabricators operational was laying on the central table in the robotics. It was a copy of Eve’s original frame and I had decided to do a test run on it.

I was going to make myself my own personal steward bot. During transit the steward bots were kept occupied by the passengers so Eve had to get my meals and do my laundry. This bot wouldn’t have an evolving AI like Eve and Julie would not be able puppet it. The new bot was going to reside in my quarters. It was going to get the full slate of upgrades though. I had no plans to use it to satisfy my carnal desires on the bot. It was just a test run of concept I told myself.

Gwen kept asking me what I planned to name my new steward bot. I told her none of the other steward bots had names so my bot didn’t need one. To keep Gwen’s nagging contained I let her design the bot’s cosmetics. The height was fixed due to the frame, 1.8m (5’10”). She thought to make it male but I told her the pelvis was designed to imitate a female woman…yeah that is what I told her even though it wouldn’t take much to alter the frame and programming.

She selected a thick musculature, giving the bot an athletic look and more masculine gymnast build. The breasts were larger than I was expecting. Gwen said that she wanted to make sure I could get a handful with each of my hands. I once again professed that I had no plans to use this as a sex bot. She just gave me a grin through her scarred face and said, sure. I was glad her mood was improving.

Gwen’s eyes looked good and her vision was perfect with her cybernetic eye and was quickly healing on the other eye. She had chosen some thermal and infrared settings for the cybernetic eye that were controlled by her PerCom. Her new skin was being grown and it really livened up her demeanor. I realized I didn’t even see the scars. Well I saw them but they didn’t bother me at all.

The face Gwen choose was youthful for the bot. Shoulder length black hair, pale blue eyes, with strong Asian features and a light brown skin tone. With her faux muscles she looked like an Amazonian Warrior. Abby would approve.

On the day of departure I started to assemble my new bot. The internals were extremely quick as everything was prepped. I was just starting on the musculature when Eve stopped in and asked if I was making her another sister. I stumbled a bit before saying no. This was just going to be a simple-minded steward bot. Gwen was giggling at my embarrassment. Gwen still thought I was making myself a personal sex bot. Eve then shocked me again by asking Gwen to join us in our sword and sorcery game.

My hesitation was mostly due to how the three women treated me in the VR game. In the game Julie was overly aggressive in courting me, Luna dressed provocatively and sometimes touched me inappropriately and Eve…well Eve was Eve and she had backed off but encouraged the other two. Before I had time to argue or come up with an excuse Gwen had accepted the invite and they were in a discussion on what type of character Gwen would play. I sent a message to Francis begging him to play with us. I needed some male support.

I took a quick break to head to the bridge. The *Void Phoenix* was leaving the dock and heading out to its subspace transition point. I sat in the captain’s chair and felt…powerful. The bridge crew was arrayed before me in their uniforms. I made a mental note that next time I was on the bridge I should wear my own uniform…I felt slightly out of place. Abby was at the security station and working on doing hull scans with the exterior bots as we entered our flight path. Zoe and Elias worked in unison and communicated with the rest of the bridge officers. I felt a little superfluous but still felt the need to be here. My only knowledge base for being a captain was from the pirate vid…I didn’t think taking on that persona here would be beneficial.

Julie’s hologram was present as well. Her white uniform had been altered to match the rest of the crew. Once again it made me feel out of place. I used my terminal to communicate with Julie, she looked at me and her eyebrow raised in question. She replied back through my terminal, answering my question. Julie did not have any military based programs. She did have some training certs for merchant marine captain’s. I said to send them to my PerCom so I could review them. If I was going to be an actual captain I should at least know my duties and some command.

I left the bridge to return to my lab. We had a few hours before the actual transition to subspace. I told the bridge crew to just comm me when we were going to transition. I would go to engineering and work with Damian for the transition. I got sidetracked in the robotics lab helping Gabby. She was focused on the design phase of her new steward bot. Suruchi had sent Gabby a 12 hour window to reskin a male steward bot…that window was in five days and Gabby was frustrated. I decided not to play hero and intervene. Suruchi was in charge of the steward bots.

The time for the transition arrived and I went to main engineering. It felt empty compared to the bridge. Damian and Saabir were the only two people here. I just hovered and watched Damian as the bridge and him communicated and went to sub space. As soon as we were in sub space I was on the terminal monitoring the engines. Everything looked good…I asked Damian how he had normalized the fuel flow to the power core? He said it was a common problem on the large Union ships and you just had to add reduce the nozzle size and increase the pressure. He said you needed to monitor the nozzle and replace it regularly but it increased engine efficiency by 1.6%. Yeah, that was huge in terms of the fuel expense reduction. I studied the nozzle for a bit before heading to engineering. I could make the nozzle with my alien hull fabricator. I spent the schematics off to Yannis to get it done. He was probably getting sick of fabricating hull plates. I returned to engineering.

In engineering I was about to start on the skin for the bot when Eve said it was time for the captain’s diner. I had 40 minutes to get ready. On a thought I asked Gwen to join me, not a date, just as friends. She said she didn’t have anything fancy to wear so was going to decline. I said she could get something from the luxury shops on deck 7. She looked indecisive so I said ‘please’. She nodded and went to get ready.

I returned to my cabin with Eve. Eve said she had been asked by Suruchi to make sure I wasn’t late. Of course! I reminded Eve that I was in command. Eve rolled her eyes. No she actually rolled her eyes. Eve then lectured me! She said everyone had my best interests in mind. Until I showed myself as a competent captain they would ‘guide’ me. Instead of being shocked I was more worried. Eve was only suppose to do things in my best interests…was Suruchi manipulating that programming to her own ends?

Eve didn’t let me dwell and pushed me tow the dinner. Gwen met me in a sleek deep red dress. She smiled at me and looked happy. We walked together to the dining room and found it filled with people. Suruchi and Dora was there and a little shocked I had brough a guest. There was a slight scramble as another setting was added.

There were seven guests. Suruchi introduced them, Jane Doe and her companion Alicia. These two women were stunning and wore skin tight dresses showing off their assets. It was easy to see Jane was in charge and she was appraising me with her eyes. The next pair was introduced as Andrei Curran and his steward bot. The man seemed to be sweating and giving worried looks at Jane Doe. This was the man who bought my statues. The next pair were a husband and wife and very connected financially and politically in the Sapphire Empire…see Suruchi I read your notes! The final guest was introduced as being from the lower passenger decks. His name was Gerault Homage. The only note on him was that he had paid 100 Sol credits to get to this dinner. So he was extremely rich.

Dinner started with basic conversation and Gwen was running the show. After she explained how she got her scars she had everyone talking. Andrei did turn the conversation to the statues. I pretended to be shocked he knew I was the seller and that they were on board. I told him the prefabricated story that we helped a ship in distress and the statues were transferred to us as payment. Andrei looked disappointed. Gerault asked what the ships name was. I said *Stellar Cowboy* without hesitation. This was one of the pirate ships that I was sure had been destroyed when the planetoid exploded. So if they searched for the ship they would find it existed but had disappeared. Gerault choked a little on a bit of food and I smiled because it was obvious he was familiar with the ship. Thankfully he was quiet the rest of the evening.

It was Jane who took over the conversation after that. She asked me question after question on how I came into position of the *Void Phoenix* and about the ship’s configuration. She had a lot of charisma and her questions seemed innocent but she was obviously digging. I was a little shocked as the evening was coming to a close Jane Doe asked if I and Gwen would join her and her companion in their quarters. I declined.

I went to my quarters alone and planned to start working on certs as a merchant marine captain. Francis commed me and said he would join me the next time we went to the sword and sorcery game. Yes! Maybe it would have Luna behave better. It had been a full day and I was extremely tired and quickly fell into VR sleep.

*Andrei locked his cabin door. He was in no mood for anything. The excellent food at the captain’s dinner did not make up for the presence of Jane Doe. He had hoped in revealing that he had purchased the statues the captain would send him some goodwill but he didn’t seem to care at all! Jane had also gave him a predatory stare when he said that. If he could get off this ship immediately he would!*

*Aston had paid quite the price to get to the captain’s dinner. He wanted to size up the engineer and indirectly gloat. This ship would be his soon! Then when it was mentioned that some mysterious statues being talked about were from the Stellar Cowboy…that was one of his converted merchant ships! Then the engineer chuckled in his direction…he knew! The fucking engineer knew that his guise as Gerault Homage was a farce. The engineer was taunting him. He was beginning to reconsider his plans.*

*Jane Doe felt pretty good after the captain’s dinner. Nothing from the meeting had turned her off from her plans to take over the ship. The ship’s captain was crafty. He brought a young woman with some heavy burns unexpectedly. No that was a masterful move on his part, not only did the table need to be reset but the burns drew everyone’s attention away from him. And the young woman had an innate charisma that orchestrated a steady conversation at the table.*

*The captain easily deflected her questions about the ship’s origins and the changes he had made. He buried his responses in technical jargon and faux excitement on the alterations he had made. He was a master manipulator…this Deven Wellspring. But he was not a threat. Her own technology was far beyond any countermeasures he could dream up. Two more days…then she would make her move.*