

# The Century Voyage Ch2

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*Written and Edited by PgFalcon*

*“Shuttle-craft 005 begins boarding in one hour. Repeat, shuttle-craft 005 begins boarding in one hour.”*

I glance up as the roar of thermo-nuclear ion engines lifts shuttles 003 and 004 off into space. 005 is the last boarding shuttle for the soon-to-depart starship Century, and I'm scheduled to be on it. I don't hurry though, plenty of time to get to the gate. In fact, I have time to kill.

The Houston space-port is an enormous feat of engineering and craftsmanship. It's the central hub for all of America's large spacecraft, and has grown in size to accommodate the constant traffic of vehicles the size of the empire state building. Air-ports are almost non-existent nowadays, fixed wing transport taking a backseat to cheap and efficient rocket-power. Ever since the electric-driven ion engine became commercialized hardly anything compares. Even automobiles are slowly becoming outdated as more and more people take to the skies in personal rocket-propelled vehicles, or RPV's. Some of the economy models get the equivalent of 500 miles to the gallon, and still have the horsepower of a freight train. I personally own the newest model Sky-Screamer: a cross between a motorcycle and a cruise missile. One more thing I'm going to miss for the next twenty years. I actually considered sneaking it aboard in my luggage before giving up on the idea.

I'm amongst a sea of asses, one major downside of being only four and a half feet tall. I'm constantly jostled back and forth by the crowd of people as everyone seems to be in a hurry to get somewhere. Honestly, hardly anybody seems to have any manners nowadays.

My heat cycle started this morning, but so far it's not looking to be as troublesome as I thought it'd be. I'm just mildly horny, and I need to wear special pads in my underwear to neutralize the pheromones in my bodily secretions. So far nothing terribly new or surprising, and there's a certain relief to be found in knowing you are in complete control of yourself.

Judging by the females I've worked with before I thought that the heat cycle would be much more pervasive on my thoughts, but I guess being a dude I'm used to being horny 24/7. Go figure.

I'm wearing my regulation one-piece flight suit, with my tool belt hanging on my hips, and strapped across my back is my sea-bag with all the personal crap I'm also taking with me. The bag is so big that it could easily hold three of me, and is stuffed so full that it probably weighs over a hundred and fifty pounds. I shoulder it easily, this piece of biotech I'm in is rated to bear loads of nearly half a ton. Bones reinforced with industrial nano-tubes are no joke: a hundred or so pounds is nothing.

“Hey!” someone shouts in my direction. I groan as I recognize the voice. “Ms. Jones! Over here!”

“*Doctor Jones!*” I shout back, turning around and slamming my pack into an unfortunate fat-guy standing too close to me. He stumbles and falls over the railing onto the moving sidewalk, rolling and tripping people as he becomes wedged between the glass walls.

Without turning to look at him I wrap my tail around his chest and lift him back up to his feet by his armpits. I grimace with disgust as I realize he’s all sweaty. I make a mental note to wash my tail before take-off.

“Sorry,” I mumble back to the stranger, and walk straight through the crowd over to some benches where Colonel Anderson has stood up and is walking forward to greet me.

“I’m so glad I found you!” says Anderson. “I’ve been trying to contact you, but you haven’t been picking up. I’m supposed to escort you onto the shuttle and make sure you get on safely. This entire mission hinges on you.”

“No need to worry about me Colonel,” I say, dropping my sea-bag to the ground with a solid thud. “I can take care of myself.”

“Be that as it may, I still need to escort you. If only for appearances sake if nothing else.”

Anderson then reaches down and grips the straps of the sea-bag.

“Here, let me take this for you...” he says, then tries to lift it up. It hardly budge.

“Holy hell, what do you have in this thing, bricks?” he asks, now grabbing the bag with two hands. Staggering, he manages to lift it up onto the bench behind him, and squatting behind it slips his arms into the shoulder straps. When he tries to stand back up he nearly falls over backwards, but finally gets back up onto his feet, leaning heavily forward.

“Should we go check this bag in?” he asks, beginning to sweat. “The shuttle is leaving soon.”

“It’s a carry-on,” I reply, and turning begin the long walk to hangar 37C. Anderson huffs as he moves to catch up behind me, finally jogging up beside me before slowing back to a walk. Already he’s breathing hard.

“You’re kidding?” he says. “There’s no way they’ll let you take this monster as carry-on.”

“And there’s no way I’m letting some baggage handler toss my crap around like a sack of potatoes either,” I reply. “They’ll make an exception for me. As you said, I’m vital to this mission.”

“If you say so,” he replies with a chuckle.

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“All priority passengers may begin boarding,” says a tall woman with long legs. Her brunette hair is done up in tight bun.

“That’s us,” says Anderson, hauling the seabag back onto his shoulder.

“I can take that from here,” I say, taking the bag from him. The seams in the straps strain as I lift it up and sling it across my own back.

I’m immediately engaged by the long legged stewardess.

“Ma’am, you can’t take that on the shuttle.”

“Like hell I can’t,” I reply angrily. “And my name is Dr. Jones. I have an entire row to myself in first class. I’m sure you can make an exception.”

“I’m sorry ma’am,” my eyes narrow at the word. Why the hell does everyone insist on calling me ma’am all the time? I don’t even *look* like a ma’am. “But it’s against company policy. I can’t allow you to take that on board. I’ll be happy to have it taken to the baggage compartment, and you can retrieve it after the flight.”

I’m hardly listening to her, as I dig a card out of my belt. On it is a phone number.

“I want you to explain to this man why you are detaining me from boarding,” I say.

The stewardess hesitates, then pulls up the phone at her ticket booth and punches the numbers. On the other end of the line is the Major General, Captain of the starship Century, who is already aboard and stationed in the helm.

The stewardess’s blood drains from her face as she listens after explaining the situation, and I walk past her without waiting for permission to board.

Serves her right for calling me fucking ma’am.

The shuttle itself is very state-of-the-art, a brand-new mid-class airbus. Clean curves, an egg-white plastic shell, modest and artistically placed engines.... it is the epitome of wastefulness. I would have preferred to have made the trip in my own bike. This bus is lavishly build for show rather than any utilitarian need. A very lovely flying rock.

Personally, I believe real beauty comes in the form of function. I anticipate the engine on the starship Century to be very beautiful indeed, and it will be a wonder to finally see it in person.

For the past several years all I’ve been able to do, all I’ve been allowed to do, is help debug the kinks in this colossal feat of engineering, and man were there a lot of kinks. The people in charge of putting this thing together new almost nothing about what they were doing,

each one only holding a fragment of a piece to the puzzle as a whole. By the end of it, I had to help re-engineer over half the engine, and my hand in the birth of this new technology is no more apparent than the outrageous clash in appearance between the enormous twin engines mounted on the back of another ridiculous eggshell white capsule. I heard tell that they tried to cover up the “ugliness” of my design and make it more media friendly, adding more smooth white plastic panels after it was all built, but the panels were disintegrated when they first turned it all on. I could have told them that would happen, but nobody consulted me, the morons in the pr department don’t care about anything but the press, and just assumed any changes they made would be fine. They’re lucky nobody was killed. Fucking last minute changes....

The only other person who understood this engine like I do is dead, killed in a car accident, and now I’ve taken her place as chief engineer in charge of this whole project when all I wanted to do was retire into obscurity.... Anne Jones was even more brilliant than myself, and an incredible visionary. She should be the one inside this biotech...

I arrive at my seat and rest my bag in the window seat next to me, strapping it in with the belt. Anderson takes a seat in the chair across the aisle from me, and with a shaking hand immediately buckles himself in.

“What’s the matter Colonel? First time flying?” I ask jokingly. I recline back a little.

“No,” he answers. “Just my first time going into space.”

“You’re kidding,” I laugh, spinning in my seat. “I’ve been going into space ever since I was a toddler!”

“Yea, well... I’ve never really had a need to go into space.”

“But you’re a marine!” I exclaim. “You all get space training, right?”

“Yes, but we don’t all *actually* get sent into space. Sometimes to speed up training or cut costs they skip some things or shorten others.”

“So you’re telling me you’re scared of space then?”

“What? No! I never said that. I’m just a little nervous.”

“Well, nervous or not I wouldn’t worry overmuch. I doubt they’d send us up in a shaky ship, no matter how ludicrous the design.”

“What about the design?” Anderson asks a little too suddenly.

“Nothing,” I say reassuringly. “Just relax. It’ll be over before you know it.”

“I sure hope not,” he says, sitting rigid in his seat as if expecting to take off any moment.

“Just don’t barf on my luggage,” I say putting the matter to rest.

More people have been shuffling on board during all of this. This particular model shuttle can hold 500 people comfortably, but while the first four shuttles were packed to maximum capacity this shuttle is only taking a little over 300 passengers. The last of the crew and personnel. A twenty year voyage requires a crew that can perform the tasks of a large community. Babies will probably be born thousands of light-years away from earth on this trip, and before they turn one year old earth-time they'll already be in elementary and middle school. Home schooled of course.

It's all rather uniquely screwy.

We're halfway through boarding when I'm distracted by a smell, and am reminded again how I wanted to wash that man's grease from my tail, so I get up to go find the lavatory.

I'm immediately approached by a stewardess. She could have passed for the tall brunette's sister. Same bun and outfit too.

"I'm sorry ma'am, could you please find your seat? We're preparing for lift-off."

I don't even deign to answer her. I'm in bad enough mood already.

"Pardon me," I grunt, lifting her out of my way by her waist and setting her down behind me before continuing towards the bathroom.

"Ma'am! Please sit down!"

I fly her the bird, and now that I'm at the restroom I open the door and lock it behind me. The stewardess bangs on the door and continues to grow frantically distraught at my non-compliance. She knows the shuttle ain't leaving for another half hour at least, what's her problem?

I take off my flight suit and am contemplating the advantages and disadvantages of superior sensory organs such as the nose as I wash up in the sink when a faintly oily order catches my attention. I hadn't noticed it before due to all the other competing smells.

Now, ordinary people probably would never have recognized the smell. Even an accomplished engineer probably would have dismissed it.

However, I have a small weakness. A character flaw if you will.

Among many things, I love to play with high explosives. I'm a *connoisseur* of volatile liquids and solids, if you will.

And I could tell immediately that the oily smell was a unique mixture of putty explosive called "mixture No. 69" by it's inventor. It's characteristic trait is that it is self detonating. Approximately five hours after is it mixed it spontaneously combusts at a velocity of 14,000 meters per second. It was famously used once to send a block of depleted uranium into

outerspace via cannon, but is limited by its rather inconvenient detonating mechanism. Even worse, it cannot be defused through ordinary means. The most effective method of disarming the explosive is to toss it in a vat of acid.

Needless to say that really starts my heart racing. There's no telling when an explosive like that could go off, and when it does half of this shuttle will be sent into orbit in tiny pieces with the rest scattered across the continent. If there's half as much explosive as I think there is judging by smell alone we're in major trouble.

Well first things first: locate the bomb.

I yank the door to the restroom open and accidentally rip it off its hinges in my hurry. The stewardess is still banging her first but now in slow motion. I leap past her, springing onto the wall of the cabin, and use my momentum to run along it and up onto the ceiling, carefully sniffing the air to try and discover the source. As I fall off the ceiling I twist back right side up, grab hold of the headrests of two seats, and fling myself as hard as I can down the empty aisle to the far side of the ship.

The smell is weaker here, so I hit the rear wall with my feet and spring back the way I came.

Moving at such high velocities is like moving in low gravity while weighing several hundred pounds heavier than you actually are. It's a good thing I'm practiced at it. The only other time I've moved this fast though was when containment on my homemade coffeemaker almost failed. Coffee tastes so much better when it's heated to 300°C via nuclear energy then run through the reactors condenser. That wondrous smell wakes up the whole building let me tell you... but it turns out coffee makes a poor heat exchanger when you drink it all.

I'm approaching my front row seat and the smell is still getting stronger. Men and women are slowly turning their head to watch me in astonishment as I fly through the air like a bat outa hell.

I slam into the cockpits door and leave a dent in it a foot deep, but it's reinforced.

I reach for my toolbelt but I left it in the bathroom with my clothes... so I dig into my sea bag and pull out my ionizer. Basically a phase shifting particle disrupter that vaporizes holes in things and looks a bit like a battering ram. I press its business end against the door, dial the settings waaaaaay back, and discharge it. The door melts away in a blast of ionic particles, and the second the hole is big enough for me I drop the ionizer and bound through into the cockpit.

Inside I find both the pilots bound and gagged.... and between them both rests a large 40 gallon barrel. The explosive is definitely inside.... and there's more than enough to leave a crater in the earth the size of half the space-port.

I immediately lift the pilots out of their seats and throw them both through the still widening hole in the door. Already a secondary emergency lock is sliding down to close the hole.

I smash buttons rapidly and power up the engines. It happens waaaaay too slow. While the

engines heat up I lock all doors and seal all hatches. Before everything has had a chance to lock down I hit the “buckle your seats” sign and punch the throttle to 100%.

It turns out this ship actually has *some* guts, and accelerates up and out of earth’s atmosphere so fast that I’m the only one still conscious on board. A tiny red alert flashes on a monitor displaying our acceleration at 7 G’s and climbing.

I quickly punch in autopilot commands, activate the distress signal, open an escape pod and program it to launch in five seconds dash back to the door and punch in override codes, leap back to the console while it slowly opens and adjust the ship’s radiant energy shielding to focus solely on the rear of the ship, lift up the barrel, which has to weigh at least 500 pounds, leap through the still opening door. Fly like a missile down the aisle with 7 times earth gravity assisted acceleration added to my leg power. Slow down at the last minute as I return to the rear of the ship to the open, yet now closing, escape pod doors.

Chairs and armrests and head rests snap and break as I nearly rip my arms and legs and tail off trying to slow the ballistic missile me and the barrel have become, aim the barrel and help it slip back through the closing doors of the pod with just inches to spare, slam into the doors and catch myself, hurting my arms and legs and bruising my hands and feet in the process, enter more override codes as the door close and the second they lock hit the big red “launch” button through the breakable plastic box.

A magnetic launcher sends the pod away in a hurry. I leap back up the cabin, buckling in everybody and anybody who hasn’t managed to do so yet, and the second I reach my own seat and the buckle clicks all hell breaks loose.

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I awake in a daze. The lights are out. I’m dizzy.

Things are no longer moving in slow motion. I doubt I even have the energy anymore to produce adrenaline. A loud groaning sound waxes and wanes ominously.

I vaguely remember being thrown into a tornado of projectiles as the ship spun wildly after the detonation of the bomb. I think my ionizer hit me on the head. The rest of my sea bag is still safely secure in its restraints though. I unbuckle my seat-belt and stand up.

I let out a shrill whistle and listen carefully to the echos. It’s enough to locate everybody and everything, but my head hurts too much to try and make out any details. The spin comes slowly to a stop as the ship’s controls take over. I walk gingerly down the aisle back to the restroom where I find my clothes and tool-belt, put them on, and then take out a small gadget that happens to have a powerful flashlight built in..

“Is anybody hurt?” I ask, stepping back out into the aisle. I get groans and muttered obscenities in response.

I walk carefully back to the cockpit where I’m happy to find most of the controls still functioning. Emergency and warning lights are flashing like crazy though. One in particular

is most pressing.

*<Batteries damaged. Standby power only.>*

Well that won't do. I open up my flashlight, rip apart a panel on the wall, find the secondary fuse box for the cabin, and wire the flashlight's power cells into the circuitry with a knife. The lights in the cabin turn on, and airflow is restored. Stewardess's are walking shakily up and down the aisles comforting everyone. Somebody is laughing like a maniac while others are crying uncontrollably out of nervous fear.

Next up: fix the batteries.

I walk back out the cockpit through the hole in the primary doors, which are now stuck closed. Anderson is trying to release his buckle, and as I pass by him to pick up my duffel bag he manages to free himself.

"What in the hell just happened?" he whispers. His voice is hoarse. Probably from screaming.

"There was a very large bomb on the ship. I disposed of it."

*"A bomb? That's what that was?"*

About halfway back to the restrooms I find my ionizer laying in the aisle. I pick it up and stuff it back into my seabag.

"Yes," I reply, and keep walking.

I walk all the way to the rear of the ship. Although we're now in space (and therefore microgravity), I programmed the computer to enter a gentle roll to simulate about half a G of downward gravitational force.

My ears angle rapidly as I pick out the location of the ship's batteries. Those batteries power the ion engines. Without them we'll need to wait for rescue, which admittedly probably isn't too long in coming, but what with somebody trying to destroy this ship I'm not taking any chances. When you rely on the abilities of others you become a one legged stool. Best to just take care of it.

The batteries are actually about ten thousand super-cells lining the hull of the rear of the ship. They took the blunt force of the explosion. It's no wonder they're not functional anymore.

What's more: there isn't any access to the engines nor their wiring from inside the cabin... so I pull out my ionizer once more, dial in the appropriate settings, and vaporize a hole in the floor. I mutter a curse to whoever built a ship without easily accessible parts, but then again burning holes in this flying toaster does make me feel a little better.

"Hold this:" I say, and shove my duffel bag into Anderson's arms. In this light gravity he can

carry it easily.

I drop the ionizer to the floor and begin taking it apart. All I really need are its capacitors. They won't get us far, but they do pack a punch. The ionizer has three of them, each the size of an apple and packed full of enough juice to power a large city for about 10 seconds. I imagine we'll have about five minutes worth of useful thrust. We're already on a collision course with where the Century is supposed to be. That should be just enough for deceleration and docking.

Under the floor is a tight maze of wiring and piping. I'm barely small enough to squeeze through the gaps as I make my way to the main battery terminal.

I'm hoping that the wiring is still functional, and that it's the batteries themselves that are kaput. Otherwise this won't work.

I take my knife out of my belt and start stripping wiring, reconnecting everything rapidly before making the final connection that would complete the circuit.

Deep breath... connect.

Sparks fly as the sudden burst of energy leaps through the ship's systems. I tape all the connections together, then head back out the way I came.

The ship's engines are humming gently as they warm up yet again.

"What did you do down there?" asks Anderson.

"Fixing the ship," I reply, now walking back to the cockpit. One of the pilots is back in his seat. His buddy is nursing what appears to be a broken arm.

"Thank you miss for saving our lives," he says, tipping his hat.

"Call me miss again and I'll gut you," I reply flippantly, brandishing my knife, before taking a seat at the controls.

"Tell everyone, including the stewardesses, to take their seats again," I tell the pilot. "I'm stopping our roll, and we'll be experiencing micro gravity for the approach."

The pilot proceeds to get on a microphone and relay my message. He doesn't seem to mind that I've taken command.

All is well, until a warning comes up on the dash.

"What is it?" asks the pilot. "Is that a rescue vessel? It's about time."

"Nope," I say grimly. "Just a big missile. Looks like somebody really wants to stop us reaching the Century."

I walk casually back to my satchel and pull out four things.

One is my personal computer, which I open up.

The second is a high resolution gamma-ray dish.

The third is a point defense mini-laser useful for emergency fabrications (and self defense)...

The fourth is blasting putty... also useful for emergency fabs (and self defense).

Computer online. Dish online and located missile, scanned and reproduced in real time on my computer. Point defense laser online and powered up. Targeting microchip in missile warhead. Fire impulse to sever key parts of said microchip. Immediately use blasting putty to seal tiny holes created in hull.

"Fixed," I say once again, and head back to the helm. I adjust our course slightly and watch the missile blaze by. The readout on my computer made it clear that the warhead was nuclear. Didn't feel like risking another big explosion so close by.

Just to be safe, I quickly pilot the ship into dock.

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"Ah-ha! Doctor Jones! What in the blue blazes is going on!!"

Standing before me is Admiral Rodgers. He's old, fat, and a casual bodybuilder. His most prized possession is his thick, grey handlebar moustache.

I sigh as I stand before him, arms crossed behind my back carefully as I prepare to reiterate the events aboard the shuttle... Rodgers strides over to his desk and sits down as I explain everything down to the minutest details. As much as I like the Admiral I'd much rather be getting to work than get debriefed, even if it is by such a high ranking member of our military. He really is a sharp fellow though, despite his looks, and doesn't mind my speed nor ask me to repeat myself. I've officially grown bored by the end of it.

"... and so I disabled the warhead. It appeared to be hand-crafted, and rather low tech despite its size. I got recordings of the missile's design, but I doubt it will turn up anything. I wouldn't recommend attempting to retrieve it, it'd just be a waste of time and would pose a pointless risk to personnel."

I stare at the ceiling wishing that I didn't have such a feminine biotech. Standing at attention in front of the Admiral is making me feel rather self conscious.

"Hrrrm! Sounds like you're quite capable!! I'm glad to have such a reliable engineer aboard this leviathan! You helped design it's experimental engine did you not? You and some funny fellow, Tom Franks I believe. I can't imagine a better person to oversee this bag of cats...."

though I must admit I didn't dream you'd be so small..."

I flick my ears in annoyance out of reflex, and hope the Admiral doesn't catch up on my body language.

"This engine is built to very precise tolerances, and to access much of its key components either a robot or a very small biotech is required, sir."

He stands up and laughs.

"No need for that, no need. I'm very glad to have ya."

He envelops my hand in his mitt, and I surprise him by giving a commanding handshake despite my undersized digits.

"There's an old saying, you know," he continues as we shake hands. "When the ship is sinking, the mechanic outranks God himself. I do hope we never need such drastic measures, but know that I'll take any order of yours straight to heart. We're all trusting our lives to your expertise. You can go see to your subordinates and the ship now, I must get this recording sent back to base. We'll need to begin an investigation immediately... and of course I don't need to tell you that we're going to need to keep the incident very quiet. Believe it or not this isn't the first attack on The Century or its staff. Somebody doesn't want us to launch, and we can't let it go public that we don't have everything completely under control... so from this point forward it'd be best if you just pretend the flight was uneventful."

He says the last bit disdainful huff, as he himself believes I should do otherwise.

"Now off with you, we must be ready to get underway immediately, and I've got to meet the press."

"Sir," I say with a slight nod, and turning around I growl to myself while the heavy blast-resistant door shuts behind me silently, sealing the Admiral in his chamber.

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I'm not familiar with the layout of the ship, but I'm a very good educated guesser. Using the direction in which the electromagnetic fields are rotating in the wiring (my whiskers are not just for show), I follow the flow of current back to its source, learning along the way a good deal of useful information regarding the construction and design of the Starship Century. At least the infrastructure was competently designed, and a good infrastructure always makes me happy.

I'm taking my time following the pipes deeper into the bowels of the ship when farther down the corridor I spot another piece of biotech, almost identical to my own except for two things: it's fur is shorter and sky-blue, and it's male.

His back is to me, he appears to be working on his data pad, and he's only half dressed in his flight suit, the upper half flopping backwards behind him and the zipper mostly unzipped

to reveal a happy-trail of cowlicked fur. I walk up behind him.

As I get closer I notice a strange smell. A smell I know I've smelled somewhere before, but now it seems so much more... interesting. It's highly pleasant, and I stop to curiously examine it with more scrutiny. Where is it coming from? It's almost intoxicating, really. I'm getting lost in the lovely scent when the blue dude turns around.

He takes one look at me before a ridiculous grin becomes plastered across his face.

"Why hello miss perky-pants, how can I be of service?"

When I respond only with sternly raised eyebrow and a look that would kill a lesser man, he continues.

"Ding-ding!" he winks, pointing out his index fingers from his chest to further illustrate, his smile only growing wider. "Turkey's don-*\*WHAM\**"

I interrupt his sentence with a kick to the side of his head that lifts him off his feet and sends him sprawling into the metal storage lockers with a resounding boom.

Time has dilated once more, and I use the extra seconds to calm down a bit. I look down at my chest to find that my nipples are indeed, for whatever reason, making two tiny tents against the fabric of my flight suit through the thin, lacy bra I'm wearing. What in the world?

"Heeeeeeeeyyyyyy wwwwhhhhaaaaaatthttt gggggggiiiiiiiiivvvves?" shouts the blue guy in slow motion as he lies upside down against the lockers holding his jaw.

With calm focus I still my beating heart, and time resumes passing normally.

"I am chief engineer Jones. I am not a 'miss', my pants are not perky, and the next time you refer to turkey timers in my presence I *will* kill you. Understood?"

"Yes ma'am, I mean Ms. Jones...I mean sir... NO I MEAN YES DOCTOR JONES!"

He quails as I walk up to him, and shields his face as he curls up into the fetal position. I glance at the dent he left in the tough metal lockers and wince...

"Jones will be fine," I say, relaxing a little and holding out my hand. "Now just who the hell are you?"

He takes my hand and I pull him to his feet. Shaking slightly he pulls his iDent card out of his belt.

“Chief assistant engineer first class, Havock, reporting for duty!” he says, saluting me. He looks scared for his life. He swallows hard under my scrutiny.

“Ah, so you’ll be reporting directly to me then,” I sniff back. “Been here long?”

“I’ve been aboard for over a week now. Been going over everything ever since. I was just taking some readings to double check that our ship won’t implode from the stress of turning on the engine.”

“And?”

“I’d say there’s about a 5% chance that the ship will suffer catastrophic failure at launch. I don’t think the people who built the body talked much with the people who built the engine. It might not be up to handling the stress.”

“Hah! More like we never talked at all. All I’m interested in is engines. I suppose you’re referring to the molecular expansion that the engine induces when it releases containment on the twin singularities that generate the spatial distortions? I swear I warned her a thousand times to make sure they corrected for it with a properly flexing skeleton-”

“No, no, what I’m talking about is...”

And so me and Havock walk down the steel grating and talk shop... and after some explanation we work out a solution using the engine itself to counter its own destructive tendencies. It’ll reduce its usable power output a fair bit, but on the plus side nobodies going to get violently ill as reality inflates and deflates rapidly around them. Some people went temporarily insane during testing because they weren’t properly prepared for it... so really this is a better solution. It’ll take a couple hours to reprogram the master computer though. Personally (though perhaps I’m just weird) the relativistic effects of the engine ‘turning on’ aren’t much worse than being drunk... but not everyone can hold their liquor like the mighty Tom Franks!

Actually... it might be worth looking into opening up a bar in front of the engine and allowing some spacial disruption to occur. Talk about getting hammered. I might even be able to set it to music. Subwoofers have nothing on vibrating space-time.

“Here we are, engineering level A. This is where we all sleep. You probably have your own room in first class though.”

“I’ll be sleeping near the engine, thank you.”

And following my whiskers I find it.

The engine to the ship is roughly twice the size of the actual vessel, and sticks out of its ass like the goodyear blimp. We have reached its primary input console, which is isolated from any and all outside input. When we get underway we'll use secondary engines to get into position, but the once the engine activates all 'steering' is done from here. Right now all the seats are empty and the console is in standby.

It's exactly to the spec of my designs. I feel myself getting teared up. I run my fingers over the instrument panel, idly feeling the levelness and preciseness of every cut of metal, and giggle as I sit down in the seat. It fits me perfectly, just as I designed it to.

It's nice to know that the lesson was learned never to deviate from a design that you know nothing about... even if it seems a trivial change. In all reality the engine is calibrated to this exact command console layout, since the delicate electronics will be within close range of, and directly in line with, the engines primary containment fields.

My happy thoughts are disrupted by the faint sighs and moans that begin to emit from one of the maintenance chutes. The mental image is forced upon me as my mind pieces together the echos into a sharp picture of the internal maintenance tunnels inside the northern hemisphere of the engine, and inside of that hemisphere who biotech users are having carnal relations on top of the secondary heat exchanger. I am forced to witness in very minute detail the thrusting of the male into the female before I clap my ears shut and bite my lip. Oh fuck that caught me off guard... I think I need a cold shower.

I turn to catch Havock examining me with his own powerful sensory array, and with a blush only equaled by a warning growl and the baring of my canines he looks away.

I strip my flight suit off in seconds. I am not sullyng my first contact with the internal working of my engine with clothing, and like a shot from a bow shoot up and into the bowels of my masterpiece. In no time at all I locate the couple.

It's a black furred male and a purple female. They're too caught up in their groping and thrusting to notice me coming. I can appreciate that these biotech bodies can be very pleasurable due to their sensitive wiring and senses, but I interrupt their coupling with a shrill whistle that would hurt a deaf person.

"Agh!" shouts the purple one, her ears clapping protectively shut, while the black one bites his lip and orgasms, which causes the female's head to snap back sharply in shock and leap off the male's dick. There's a small popping sound as his knot is pulled free, and his sperm continues to spurt and dribbled down his shaft.

“Hey!! I said not inside me!!”

“Sorry...” he grunts. “She startled me.”

“My name is Jones, and as much as I appreciate you two taking care to lubricate my machine we have work to do, and I can’t think straight with you two making kittens up here. I’m in heat and we all need to focus if we don’t want this behemoth to kill us all when we start it up.”

“Kittens!?!” shouts the purple biotech angrily. “If you got me pregnant I’m cutting your balls off.”

“Relax,” says the black one. “You know as well as me that your hormones aren’t optimal for reproduction yet. By my math there’s at least a 1 to 4 chance of kittens. Less if you go wash yourself out right now.”

The purple immediately jumps up to take the guy’s advice and shower up, but I stop her.

“You ain’t going nowhere. We’re gonna find the rest of my crew and we’re going to start preparations. I need to readjust the calculations in the computer if we don’t want the ship to simultaneously explode and implode on take-off. Havok noticed some very shoddy engineering of the ships design. The totally underestimated the forces at work behind the driving mechanism of the engine, so we’ll be compensating for that. What are your names and ranks, by the way.”

“Lieutenant engineer first class James,” says the black male, reflexively pushing a pair of non-existent glasses up his nose and stopping himself halfway. His dick is still fully extended.

“Lieutenant engineer second class Mary,” says the purple female, nervously looking down. She, too, is still highly aroused. I can scent from her that she hasn’t orgasmed herself yet.

“James. Mary. Finish quickly if you must, but we’ll have plenty of time for this sort of thing when we’re at speed. Right now really isn’t the time.”

“Yes ma’am!” they chorus, setting my teeth on edge. They both are sitting with their hands on their knees, Mary’s breasts squeezed between her arms and James’ dick sticking out into the air.

“Call me ma’am again and I’ll duct tape you two together...” I threaten, turning around. “You have five minutes.”

They certainly don’t waste any time.

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Soon I meet with the rest of the crew. We're a ten person team, each with specialized backgrounds, although everyone here has diversified talents as well. We all have the same cat/mouse combo biotech. Small, agile, strong, and over engineered for a very dangerous engine.

There's Havock, a sky blue biotech with a cocky smile. He specializes in fabrication and design.

James, a black furred biotech with a shy but likable personality. He's a computer wizard, but is also very handy with heavy machinery.

Mary, a purple biotech. She's a bit nervous but otherwise outgoing. She's a fluid and thermo dynamics expert. She has taken very aggressive courses in quantum physics as well.

John, a green biotech, is a cocky motherfucker... but he is amazing at detail work.

Jerry, a brown furred biotech, is the funniest guy you'll ever meet. He's got the most diverse background, ranging from microchip design to inventing a toaster that toasts toast from the inside out. Crunchy on the inside, not the outside.

Sam, short for Samantha, is a daisy yellow biotech. She's quiet, but her words can be sharp. She's a skilled mechanic, and can if it exists she can fix it. She was part of the crew that assembled the engine.

Adam, a white furred biotech, is the only virgin on the ship. He closes his eyes and ears and hums showtunes when in the presence of lude acts. He's an atomic physicist, and his weakness is anything bigger than 100nm wide... though he can follow instructions to a T.

Debby, an airheaded red furred biotech, is surprisingly skilled with abstract theoretical physics. The things she comes up with seem silly right up until the point that they turn out to be correct.

Orthello, as we all call him, is an orange furred biotech who's eyes shine when he's cutting parts with his bare hands to within theoretically impossible tolerances. He has a gift. He can make changes to a part on the nanometer scale. His other nickname is mecho. He's the second part of my crew that helped put together this engine. He likes to etch his initials into parts he crafts that can't be seen without an electron microscope.

And then there's Alien 'D'. Or Dee. Dee has no specific gender, though Dee's biotech is female, so it's easiest to just call her a her, even if she's ordinarily an amoeba-like creature. She's one of

the few alien life forms that is on this ship, but her skill is unmatched in terms of multitasking and problem-solving. Though her engineering background is poor, her IQ is probably higher than the anyone on the planet, including myself.

I immediately have them running drills. No electronic equipment is can be used inside the engine, so we rely on our sensitive hearing and shouting to communicate and work together. We each individually go over the entire engine inch by inch. I run operational tests on all the working parts of the engine, though of course I leave the gate closed and locked down on the engines contained orbiting twin singularities. All systems are green, all the specs to within tolerances, and the reprogramming of the omnimagneto field regulator have been adjusted to counteract the stress that warped space will put on the ship. Ultimately this means that space will be pinched more than I like in certain points around the engine, but there should be no risk of damaging space-time. My engine isn't quite *that* powerful. Maybe generation 2 will have universe ending capabilities, but this one does in fact have a minimal safe distance. (200 light-years in fact, in a worst case scenario).

We're in the process of rapidly building power in the three annulation chambers and then shunting it in the form of arching electrical explosions out the rear of the ship (the Annie plants are backup power sources to contain the singularities in the event that contain should \*shudder\* fail. They would only be able to prevent the instant death of our crew for about 30 seconds. They run on antimatter, enough of which to, in fact, explode a large sun. This might tell you something when I say that they aren't nearly as dangerous as the engine. Should the Annie plants fail we can just feed them to the singularties... which would cause a gamma ray burst that, hopefully, our electromagnetic shielding will be able to direct out through the back of the ship... but ultimately won't destroy the ship. The burst will be brighter than the rest of the universe for about half a second, during which everyone on the ship will go blind unless they're standing behind about 5 feet of lead, and probably suffer a horrific sunburn... but they'd live.

I'd rather the Annie plants not fail all things said. It'd make taking care of the engine difficult.

We get the call as we vent heat buildup and taking measurements to make sure it's up to scratch as well (it totally is), and we all get into positions. Everyone but me is inside the engine with their toolbelts. I myself am at the console. I have totally forgotten my clothes, but remember them when the camera crews pay me a surprise visit. I chase them out with an ionic phase distrupter, vaporizing their equipment until they skedaddle.

“This is bridge to engineering. How are things down there?”

“Fine. Nothing to report. All lights are green to go.”

The camera crew has returned to peak through the doorway. I throw a knife into the lens of the closest one, but they're persistent, and I stop harassing them to focus on the job. I don't have time to put on clothes, and I'm too hot right now to wear them. My heat has made me rather irritable, and it's been escalating in intensity ever since I set foot on the ship.

"We're going live to television in sixty seconds Jones. Please, put some clothes on won't you?"

"If you don't like my chosen attire, then don't film me."

"Um... are you in heat?"

My fur is a mess, my seat is slick with bodily secretions over which I have no control, my breasts are swollen and slightly sore, and my nipples could cut glass they're so hard. I sneer sarcastically.

"Naaaaw... what the fuck gave you an idea like that?"

I have to pant a bit to keep cool as well.

"This won't affect your judgment or ability to perform your duty will it?"

"I'm not about to rub one out on national television if that's what your asking. If you absolutely need me on television just use censor bars."

I arch my back and stretch a bit to help compose myself, and quickly groom my fur. In seconds I look like a proper engineer again.

"Better?"

"No... but we'll make due. You're about to be famous. Please act the part. The world is watching."

"I'll just focus on making sure we don't all die. That sound good to you?"

He doesn't answer, because the opening theme to the world new network sounds out and suddenly the host is talking, and I just sit there quietly. Very wisely, nobody asks me a direct question, and I just sit there in my seat with cameras trained on me watching my every move, their red 'on air' lights glowing.

The ceremony ends up taking forever. Questions are asked and answered. Crew is interviewed. Red ribbons cut. Messages from our sponsors. While I wait I end up getting bored and keep running diagnostics to quadruple check everything. I tap our morse code to my crew, and we test fire our electromagnetic containment fields to the tune of old McDonald, and the ship hums along as the powerful vibrations in its frame echo back and forth. Someone in the bridge laughs out loud and then is smacked for interrupting a quick photo shoot with the Admiral, the President of the U.S., and queen Elizabeth. I explode the sensory array to bathe the earth in mega-low frequency radio waves, then sweep in through the spectrum. Nothing coming at us. Access a point-defense gravity tower (it crushes things to death if they come too close to the ship) and use it to grab hold of an nearby satellite and tighten its bolts and screws, dust off its processors and solar panels, then resume sitting patiently.

Then the moment comes. The order is given.

“-God bless this ship and its crew. We wish you all good luck.”

“Bridge to engineering, you have permission to start the engine. We are moving into position.”

“Rodger. Annie plants at peak power and ready for emergency containment. Systems are go. We will now be opening up containment. You all might want to take a deep breath. You good folk on earth too. I hope nobody’s eaten a big breakfast.”

And with a gentle touch I open up a hole in the shielding surrounding the twin anomalies no more than the width of a hydrogen atom... and through that hole pours more power than any man has ever before wielded. The entire solar system clenches together as the well of gravity works its way through the engine, and the galaxy hums to the tune of my architecture.

“We have power.” I say with a shudder. Reality itself is vibrating. Time is vibrating. Space is vibrating. This puppy is straining at the leash. “Output at point one percent. Ready to engage tractors. Standing by for orders.”

“Doctor Jones. Full steam ahead.”

Full steam? If you say so.

“Good bye earth. Now eat our space-dust.”

And those were the last words humanity heard before I engaged full gravitation power to the caterpillar traction drives, my engine sinking its teeth into the fabric of the universe and hurtling

itself forward down a thin unnatural fold in space-time and sliding along it like the universes largest luge with us aboard a sled with no top speed.

The ship stretches like a rubber band and snaps back as we rapidly break light speed. For the briefest of moments everything appears to explode and turn inside out, then it all reverses. We've jumped ahead in time about nine months relative to earth, but as we blow past double light speed, then triple, then quadruple as the engine continues to accelerate linearly, time on earth slows down to a crawl. Once we reach nearly 6,000 times the speed of light I slow the engine down to cruising speed. If we go too fast we'll all die before we can get back. This is the ideal speed. For the rest of the universe only three months will pass... but on board it'll be twenty years before we return.

"Anything to report?" I call.

"Nope!" they all answer one at a time.

And I finally relax. I look down at myself and realize that I creamed myself without realizing it. I look over to the film crew still taping me. One of them does a cat-call.

I get up and chase them out with the intention of severely hurting any of them that is slow to run away. They take the hint and don't come back. My crew of ten crawl their way out of the engine, smoothing over their fur and stretching, shaking hands and high fiving and hugging... hugging with boners and wet crotches. I can see where this celebration party is going... I guess I'll be making use of my 1<sup>st</sup> class room after all.

"Call me if there's any change in the engine. Otherwise I'm taking a nap."

"Yes ma'am," says John, his olive green fur fluffing out as his erection stiffens. He walks up behind Mary, who's kissing James, and presses his dick against her butt. He says something about hotdogs and buns. She giggles, and I leave.

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I walk up ten flights of stairs and down about half a mile of corridor to reach the first class rooms. Up here it's entirely human staff... all high ranking officers and important civilian personal. I stride in the nude down the carpeted hall, ignoring the stares of the lumbering humans.

I find the door with my name on it, and scan myself in.

The room is small but packed with luxuries. One of them is a king-sized canopy bed with gold gilding and trim. I shuffle over to it and fall over on it to sink half a foot deep into the comforter. I scoot over to the middle of the vast mattress and lay on my back for the longest time, finally resting. The engine worked. I allow myself to smile.

I can hear the distant hum of power circulating through the ship. I can feel the smooth power flowing around me. I giggle and rub my hand down my furred body.

I accidentally touch my mound. I'm still in heat, my body in a endless circle of arousal, and even now I'm dripping slippery fluids onto the bed sheets, wetting my fur and tail a bit. I reach down with my hand and delicately rub my labia like I might rub my balls. It's not the same, but it's close enough. I press the flat of my hand against my steamy mound and dig my fingers in a bit, and with a bit of shocked surprise my middle finger slips into me.

I look around. I'm alone. I'm an adult. I'm secure in my masculinity. Why shouldn't I have a go?

I slide my middle finger into my twat deeper and deeper, exploring and questing with the tip of my digit. It feels so curiously strange and good. I pull my finger slowly out, rubbing the ball of my palm up my slit and against my clit. My entire body feels electric and my skin pulls taught in goosebumps. I squeeze two fingers into my little hole, and that's more than enough to fill me, my tight wet puss hole stretched to its limit as I push my fingers in deeper and deeper, then drag them out... all while rubbing my slit and that little button of flesh. My other hand travels up to my breasts as I finger fuck myself, and I squeeze my tit and pinch my nipple.

I'm breathing hard now, and starting to lose myself, when the door bursts open.

Anderson blows into the room with his gun drawn to find me on the bed, frozen with my fingers inside of me and my tail curling and flexing as my other hand cups my breast. Our eyes lock. My face glows with the heat of a sun as embarrassment and shame suddenly flood over me. I'm speechless, and so is Anderson... but he tries to talk anyway.

"I-I-I-I... Oh God I'm so sorry! I thought... your door was open and I... Gah!"

He punches himself in the head, and spins on his heels to run out. His face is the shade of a ripe cherry.

With a gesture I shut the door before he can escape.

"Anderson," I pant, standing up and getting off the bed. I don't even bother trying to cover myself.

(will be continued shortly in part 3, picking up from here. As it is I think this is more than enough for a post, and I need to stop here and recuperate. I apologize for the cliff-hanger, but it will be remedied as soon as I get extra time. I'm going to be writing a lot today and tomorrow, ie: June 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> 2012. I have two other stories basically ready for upload, so those will go up next, then part 3 to this followed by more stuff. Comments and thoughts welcome. My email is [doctor@pgfalcon.com](mailto:doctor@pgfalcon.com), or you can contact me on DA or FA. Links on my front page. [pgfalcon.com])