

# Android

“Humans should be worried about the threat posed by artificial intelligence.” - Bill Gates

Liquid oxygen gel erupted out of my lungs faster than my brain could process what was happening. The volcanic eruption of life support fluid felt like mucus against the inside of my mouth. Spitting the remaining residual vomit inducing mouthful, I spun my legs out of the hyper-sleep pod. The sensation of movement caused my head to whirl slightly pushing another round of stomach bile towards my throat. Swallowing religiously, I quenched the need to spill my guts onto the floor below my feet.

The bright metallic floor panels mirrored the lights off the recessed LED light panel embedded into the ships cryo-sleep chamber. Scanning the room, I noticed all 4 of the pods were green lit with the hatch wide open. The sound of retching permeated my head like a thousand horns being blasted at once while my hearing adjusted from the dead quiet of “the dead sleep,” as the crews called it.

“How’s the nausea, Corporal Hatley,” Andromeda, the ship’s android, asked.

“Dissipating per usual,” I patted my chest. “Look alive Crew. 0200 hours before brief. Oh and Riggs, put some damn deodorant on.”

I watched gleefully as First Private Riggs raised his right hand and lifted his middle finger, “Fuck you Corp Hatley.”

Turning back to Andromeda, “Situation Report in 0100 and could you do me a favor,” I said, pushing myself up to my feet feeling the cold metal plate beneath my feet. “Don’t let any of these fuckwads push you around.”

“Aye Corporal,” Andromeda said.

Shaking the remaining stiffness from my limbs, I stretched my arms above my head catching the worst stench of body odor I could possibly imagine. A cross between rotted onions and month old jock straps. Slipping on my ship supplied foot coverings, I walked over to the panel leading to the crew quarters. Placing my hand on the pad, I allowed the ship to scan my palm print to gain access to our quarters. Two symmetrical lines of lockers lined the center of the aisle. Each locker had it’s own passcode along with a larger pull out trunk for removing larger items that needed to be stowed. Typing 11668 into the keypad, the familiar grinding of the steel lock disengaging set my teeth on edge.

Unlacing the bindings to my tunic, I let the white cotton mylar blend to fall to the floor. Andromeda would be by shortly to collect the soiled linens, clothes and trash that would be discarded shortly, so I paid no mind in placing the coverings on the benches.

Swapping out the foot coverings for a set of non-slip thongs, I slowly made my way to the showers. "Water on, set temperature to 99 degrees F," I relayed to the communication box we called the vox. Instantly, a stream of hot water sprayed out of the nozzle directed towards the middle of the room where the drain was.

"Wanting it cold today Corp," Sargent Miller said, brushing her long red hair behind her.

The stream of water that erupted from the next nozzle steamed from the temperature difference inside the room.

"Adjust to 102 degrees F," Miller said, nonchalantly.

"Just needing a quick refresh before brief is all," I said, trying to keep my eyes from wander south of her emerald green eyes.

"Anything colder and I'll swear your female," she laughed, gesturing with her eyes in the direction of my manhood.

"Really funny Sarg. Get clean and brush your teeth. Your halitosis is eye watering," I smirked, before stepping out of the spray of the shower.

The whistle from behind me only sent the other 3 troglodytes into whoops and whistles. Wrapping the towel that felt like it was made out of steel wool around my waist, I finished toweling by the lockers. Opting for the more casual wear, I slipped on my civilian pants and t-shirt before cinching the ratchet belt. Pulling on my favorite cap, I continued my way to the bridge where I was positive Andromeda was waiting for me.

Just as I suspected, Andromeda was sitting at the controls with the viewport in full view of X-9 Solarium. An exo-planet on the edge of our solar system. A simple routine refuel before we set about the final leg of the trip to Delta Cyntaor. A completely new star system that the newly launched Gigerclipse satellite picked up 5 years ago.

The ambiguous form sat perfectly upright in an almost inhuman like position.

"You know, if we sat like that, our backs would be hurting for weeks," I chuckled.

"My apologies Corporal Hatley, would you like me to slouch like a human," it responded.

"No Andromeda. I'm merely making a joke at our differences," I said, taking the seat at the helm of Reaper 442. A titan class destroyer who was decommissioned into nothing more than a research vessel. "What is the sit-rep?"

"Temperature elevated, hormone levels spiking. Would you like me to service you now Corporal. Your testosterone is approaching aggression levels," Andromeda said, slowly shifting in her seat. Her once ambiguous chest now manipulated the silicone based suit into a more feminine physique. Her legs uncrossed revealing an articulate opening slowly resembling that of a woman.

"Andromeda," I said, sharply. "As I've stated before, I do not wish to partake in such activities at the current or future. Please revert yourself."

“Yes Corporal,” it said slowly morphing itself back to a standardized appearance. “It is my duty to ensure all crew are healthy. Excess levels of anything is bad for our mission.”

“Fully aware Andromeda, but at the moment, I just need a sit-rep on the mission. Not my health,” I replied.

“As you wish Corporal,” it said matter of factly. “The crew stasis ended 4 years, 3 months 23 days and 15 hours from the previous stasis entrance. We are currently orbiting X-9 roughly 410 kilometers from the surface at a speed of 30,000 kilometers per hour. Reaper 422 particle accelerators are fully operational with no known issues. Drop pods are currently active and ready for debarkmentation.”

“Do we have a sit-rep on X-9,” I asked.

“Negative Corporal. Last transmission was 8 months ago from Capcom Protosythe. A voice transmission lasting 28 seconds. Would you like me to play the recording,” Andromeda asked.

“Proceed,” I stated.

The sound of static filled the bridge as the recording started to play. A large thump echoed in the small space sending a chill down my spine. The wet sounding thump echoed in my ears before a blood curdling scream pierced my psyche. “The fuck was that,” I asked.

“I can not compute any language that matches that sound though based on frequency, I can assure you, it is of human nature,” Andromeda said.

I looked down at my arms realizing every single hair was standing straight on end. “Has this transmission been relayed further than us,” I asked.

“Negative Corporal as I do not have authorization to make such a call of action,” Andromeda said.

“Good,” I said, brushing the hair on my hairs down. “Gather the crew at once. We have a problem.”

Standing up from the captain’s chair, I stood in front of the large reinforced polycarbonate windows that surrounded the bridge. In exactly the middle of the view range rotated X-9 Solarium. A big bright blue exo-planet that housed the only refueling station in this sector.

“What the fuck happened down there,” I said to no-one in particular.

# Chapter 1

X-9 Solarium had a molten core of iron that was similar to Earth, but where it differed is X-9 had an atmosphere full of hydrogen and helium. The trace amounts of oxygen and nitrogen allowed for the oxygen reclaimers to provide just enough breathable oxygen into the outpost for human consumption. The facility reeked of burnt corn chips, but that was always attributed to the lithium-hydroxide they used to scrub the air of CO2 build up.

Reaper's only frigate dubbed the scythe due to the shape, allowed for a crew of 5 to exit the main ship on either terrestrial missions or shuttling cargo from a low orbit station. Opting to keep Andromeda on board Reaper to maintain ship to ship command, Sergeant First Class Nichole Miller, First Private Carl Riggs, Private Juan Estaban, and "The Engineer" Mark Motts, sat shoulder to shoulder in the cramped cargo hold of Scythe Force One as we called it.

"Reaper 422, this is Scythe 01 requesting entry, how copy," I asked.

"Scythe 01, this is Reaper 422, you are cleared for entry. Note X-9 CapCom is negative. I repeat CapCom is negative," Andromeda said.

"Roger Reaper 422. Entry imminent," I replied.

The sudden jolt of turbulence consumed the little frigate as we plunged headlong into the atmosphere. The main thruster shut off as we broke through the ionosphere where communication with Reaper 422 became interrupted. For what felt like an hour, Reaper 422 finally echoed through the vox.

"Scythe 01, this is Reaper 422. How copy," Andromeda asked.

"Reaper 422, this is Scythe 01 and we read you loud and clear. ETA till X-9 station 11," I asked.

"ETA 15 minutes and counting. Please be advised that main thruster needs to be switched to ion energizing due to atmospheric conditions," it said.

"Roger Reaper 422. Switching main thruster to IE," I replied.

The next 15 mins of flight felt like the world's worst rollercoaster ride. The pitch and yaw of the aircraft nearly made my stomach uproot itself a few times as we lurched through the turbulence. Finally, 100 meters out, I caught a glimpse of the red flashing runway lights signaling our landing was in short order.

Hit the autopilot button, I let the little aircraft do its job by safely touching down on X-9 terrain. The 4000 meter runway, hooked sharply to the left where we would taxi our way to the main facility bay for inspection, refuel and quarantine if needed.

Except as we approached the gigantic steel bay doors, they didn't open. Instead, our frigate slowed to a stop right outside the main entrance with a sudden jolt.

"Reaper 422, we have encountered a slight problem here. It seems as station 11 has not opened their exterior bay doors," I said.

“Roger, let me see if I can override,” Andromeda said through the vox.

Painstaking minutes later it finally returned, “Negative Corporal Hatley. It seems as if the whole station is in complete quarantine lockdown. Please be advised that I do not have any controls from up here.”

Shaking my head, I turned back to Engineer Motts. “You ready kid,” I asked.

“Roger Corporal,” he said.

Unclasping the seven-point harness, I helped the crew into the lower torso assemblies making sure their magnetized assisted grippers were properly secured and locked onto their boots. The hybrid upper torso assemblies were next, slipping over their shoulders before resting perfectly to the hip locking ring. The gloves attached with a quick twist and finally the polycarbonate helmet latched with a twist of a dial. Satisfied the crew and myself were properly suited after a leak check, we started the prebreathe process before venturing outside the frigate.

“Reaper 422, this is Corporal Hatley. Are we clear for disembarkation,” I asked.

“Roger Corporal Hatley, you are clear to disembark,” it replied.

Pressing 11668 into the display, the door hissed drawing back from the hull revealing the first glimpse of X-9 surface. A dark brown rotten color similar to that of scorched dirt. Stepping out of the frigate, the team and I made our way to the personnel only door located adjacent to the main bay doors.

“You’re up kid,” I said into the vox.

“Roger,” Motts said, pushing his way to the front of the line.

While he set about unscrewing the plate that held the display pad, I took the opportunity to look around. I hadn’t stepped foot on X-9 since its inception and to that I could say I was glad. The atmosphere glowed blue even on the surface, but worst of all was the landscape. A jagged hazardous maze of tall sharp point mountains with valleys full of toxic hydrogen gas. What was once scanned as possible water, turned out to be lakes of liquid methane. The whole planet was nothing more than a ticking time bomb for an explosion. But a Goddamn awesome source for fuel.

“We’re in,” I suddenly heard through the vox.

Spinning around, I watched as the kid pressed a button on the disassembled display. Instantly, a puff of air exploded from the air lock of the personnel door.

“Ready,” I asked the team. They all nodded in their helmets as Miller grabbed the door handle. “Riggs and Estaban, make entry.”

Raising their M64’s, Estaban tapped Riggs’s shoulder to make entry. They swept left and right before they proceeded to the left. Miller followed while I stepped in front of Motts who took up the rear. The corridor to the right was blocked off by fallen ductwork. Turning left, following the team, we made our way to the hanger where a destroyer class ship called the Intrepid laid dormant.

“Hold,” I called out on the local vox channel before pressing the button to the main. “Reaper 422, do you have any recollection of ship Intrepid on the manifest for X-9?”

“That’s a negative Corporal. Intrepid should be on a recovery mission to Alpha Synthamon as we speak. It’s last date of transmission was almost 9 months ago. The crew should be well into cryo sleep at this point,” Andromeda said.

“Well, that manifest is wrong as I am staring at Intrepid right now,” I said.

“How peculiar,” it responded. “Do you want me to update the log?”

“Affirmative, with visual inspection by my ship ID,” I ordered.

“Affirmative,” it said.

Pressing deeper into the cavernous pit of the cargo bay, we stalked up to Intrepid with our flashlights ablaze the big vessel.

“Do you think we should investigate it,” Motts said.

“Negative. We need to find Protosythe main hub. Once we find out what is going on here we will work on what the fuck Intrepid is doing here.” I said.

Sweeping the vast area of blackness, Riggs motioned for the far wall where the stairs to the command center should be. One by one, we each traversed the steps leading to the overlook. The LED lit backscreen glowed with red intensity as we ascended the final flight of stairs. Motts pushed past Riggs and Miller where he set about the task of prying the plate free from the door frame. With a sudden shower of sparks, the door hissed open.

Intestines, tissue, coagulated clumps of blood and what looked to be a male appendage were scattered around the entirety of the command center.

“Is that a fucking dick,” Motts retched.

“It’s a fucking dick,” Miller chuckled.

The sound of Motts throwing up inside his spacesuit reverberated through the vox. I taped the button to end his transmission letting him fill his suit up with the remnants of whatever he decided would be best for his first meal in silence.

Staring down at the little indicator on our suits, oxygen, atmospheric pressure and gravity all indicated that the atmosphere was suitable for human life. That meant there was no breach or compromised integrity of Protosythe.

“Clear to doff,” I said.

Unlatching my helmet, I felt the rush of air escape the spacesuit. The air smelled of copper and burnt corn chips. A smell that wasn’t very pleasant for an already sensitive stomach. All around me, the sound of liquid splashing the deck echoed off the walls of the chamber.

“What the fuck is that,” Miller pointed to a mound of viscera that laid in a heap by the door.

The sound of another round of vomit, unhinged my stomach. Volcanic eruption on a seismic scale burst from my mouth. The shower of undigested oats, minerals and half digested fruits cascaded through the air before crashing to the floor.

## Chapter 2

Putrid remnants of stomach bile clung to the cilia of my nostrils holding the wretched smell in a choke hold within my sinuses. I blew what little would escape my already irritated nostrils before setting about the task of powering up the command modules that operated the big doors. Riggs and Miller were already back outside in the scythe awaiting for the monstrous doors to open allowing them access to the cargo bay. A flip of a switch and the big shuttering doors began to creak on their tracks as the pneumatic cylinders relieved enough pressure for the doors to slide open.

The scythe glided into the bay with little effort parking itself adjacent to the massive destroyer Intrepid. It's jet black hull shimmered in the lights perched high above into the bay ceiling. Shaking my thoughts on why the ship was here in the first place wasn't an easy task. Instead, I set about flipping the door switch in reverse closing the blast doors and regulating the cargo bay life support.

"All clear," I said pressing the button on my vox communicator.

It was just a matter of minutes before Riggs and Miller stepped inside the gore filled room.

"What now Corp," Miller asked.

"Reaper 422, can you get me a telemetry reading of any unknown heat signatures on the planet," I asked.

"Negative Corporal Hatley. There are no unknown or known heat signatures on the planet. Nor do I have any other heat sources within the compound besides you 5. Would you like me to send you a map of Protosythe," Andromeda asked.

"Affirmative Reaper 422," I replied.

The little display on my suits wrist lit up with an icon for a new message. Tapping the display, a 3D projection of Protosythe emerged in a brilliance of green light. "Reaper 422, can you highlight our position in relation to the map," I asked.

"Affirmative Corporal Hatley, your position is now highlighted," Andromeda said.

As if on cue, a little red dot illuminated beside the cargo bay. The compound was built into the side of a mountain according to the image displayed on my wrist. The command center was at the front of the cavern that must have been hollowed out by particle laser cannons and finally scrubbed clean by the Landway Corporations massive stone grinders they used for terraforming.

Studying the map projection, the triage, medical and infirmary were all located on the same level as the command center. Most likely in the episode a worker was hurt in the cargo bay. Below that was the living quarters for the 32 crew members that called this floating rock home. The only other area left would be the recreation center. A room half as large as the cargo bay, but still monstrous on it's own.



“Riggs, take point and lead the way to the infirmary. Initiate hot hands and Miller, stay frosty,” I directed.

Miller’s eyebrows drew down in a ‘fuck you real funny,’ gesture before she flipped the little dial on her M64 from semi-automatic to full. The cylinder cycle of Esteban’s BFG 229 that laid slung around his hip meant his ionizing negative charge rounds were locked and loaded.

“Riggs, ready for go,” I asked.

“Ready for go,” he replied.

“Team, do not fire until I give the instructions. This is not a training exercise. Follow commands or end up dead. Do I make myself clear,” I asked.

“Roger cappy-tain,” Miller joked.

“Save it for back on Reaper Goddamn it,” I nearly yelled.

“Fine, roger Corporal,” Miller said.

“Reaper 422, this is Corporal Hatley preparing to make entry into Protosynthe as instructed per protocol 14.5 subsection 813 article 23. Weapons are hot and we are go,” I relayed the obnoxious nuance of documenting our every move for the assholes that had nothing better to do than make our jobs harder.

With a slap of the pad, the door from the command center to the infirmary slid open with a hiss. The instant smell of disinfectant washed away the still lingering smell of bile that inhabited my nose. The place was completely spotless void of any foreign debris. The place looked like it was fresh out of construction with it’s pristine walls, spit shined floors and the numerous instruments laid out in a near OCD structure. The hole infirmary was staged and ready to go if there was a catastrophic event.

“Reaper 422, are you getting this image,” I asked, hoping the shoulder mounted camera was picking up signal.

“That’s affirmative,” Andromeda said. “Per protocol, the artificial intelligence on site must have prepared for a cataclysmic event. There would be no reason to have such an array of prepped triage tables at the ready.”

“Roger Reaper 422,” I relayed scanning the surrounding area with my flashlight mounted to my own M64.

Slapping a pad at the end of the room for the elevator did nothing. No light, no signal, and no elevator door opened after repeated slaps of the biometric scanner.

“What now Corp,” Riggs asked.

“Esteban, Motts, keep an eye on the stairwell. Miller, Riggs get those damn doors open,” I instructed.

Next to the station aids desk sat a flat piece of steel bar stock that was used to prop up a tower of filing cabinets. With a quick tug, the filing cabinets shifted from the release of the steel pole. Turning back to the doors, I watched Riggs slam the bar into the small gap of the elevator doors. The metal bar pushed through the opening like butter.

“Fucking cheap ass Hyperion steel,” Riggs cursed, prying the doors open.

The elevator was situated on the lower level with what looked like a snapped cable. “General wear and tear,” I asked Riggs who was pointing his flashlight down the elevator shaft.

“Negative Corporal. That is from an overload. By the looks of it, quite a few thousand pounds actually,” he said, spinning away from the elevator.

“Reaper 422, has there ever been signs of life outside of the human race documented on X-9,” I asked.

“Negative Corporal Hatley. Officially there is only one known life source on X-9 and that is the homosapien,” Andromeda relayed.

“Interesting,” I said, following Riggs and Miller to the stairwell.

“All clear,” Motts said.

Step by echoing step, our mag grips clinked on the metal stairs planting our feet with every step. At the bottom of the stairwell, the smell of copper once again permeated from behind the stairwell door.

“Corporal,” Miller said. “We have a situation here.”

“Such as,” I asked.

“My biometric scanner is picking up a spike of ionized protein. Levels are well below toxic levels, but behind these doors should be copious amounts of blood,” she reported.

“Blood,” I asked. “Human?”

“Affirmative,” she replied. “Wait, I’m also picking up an increasing metric of methane as well. I think we may have found the crew of Protosynthe.”

“Roger that. Proceed with weapons hot,” I replied.

Steady as a brain surgeon, Riggs placed his hand on the pad for it to register. With a hiss, the stairwell door slid open to a lake of coagulated blood. Various mounds of viscera laid in heaps all around the crew quarters. The beds were covered in blood splatter as well as several lockers being overturned with entrails scattered across them. Dangling from the ceiling by little strands of wire were hunks of meat. Some could be identified as various body parts. A hand dangled right in front of our face. The yellow bulbous pockets of fat contrasted with the dark red of muscle under the paleing translucent flesh.

Legs, arms, thighs, strips of flesh and various bones dangled from the ceiling like old school tree fresheners they used to keep in automobiles of days past. Several torsos, male appendages and female anatomy lay piled in mounds. All around, the stench of copper invaded our nose while our eyes feasted upon the various body parts. Everywhere I looked, there was one thing missing.

“Where are their heads,” Motts asked.

“La obra del diablo! The work of the devil,” Esteban said.

“Reaper 422, confirm recording,” I asked.

“Affirmative Corporal. Recording in progress,” Andromeda said.

Pushing my way to the front, I stepped into the sea of blood that coated the floor. Taking aim with my M64, I swept the entirety of the room from front to back looking for any sign of life that was foreign. There was no way this was the work of a human. Most of all, I needed to find the heads to verify body count.

Placing my hand on the keypad to the showers, I felt the hiss of the air escaping as the door slid open. Perched on a broom handle that was wedged into the stainless steel floor of the shower room, was the head of a female with long blond hair. Stuffed into her mouth was a cock of enormous girth. The ligament that dangled off the appendage made it certain that it wasn't cut off, but rather ripped off.

“What the fuck,” Miller said over my shoulder.

Ignoring her, I pushed the makeshift ritual pole out of my way, pushing deeper into the showers. Turning the corner into the actual room where the shower heads protruded from the walls, I caught the first glimpse of the mountain of heads that lay heaped in a decapitated pile.

“What the fuck happened here,” I heard Motts ask.

“The fuck if I know,” Riggs said.

Stepping forward towards the mound of heads, I noticed every single one of them either had a cock stuffed into their mouth or a breast lodged into an unhinged jaw.

The sudden spray on the back of my head caused me to spin around in a fit of anger as I imagined one of the fuckwads vomited on me. I wasn't expecting to stare through the hole that was hollowed out between Estabans eyes.

## Chapter 3

“Take cover,” I yelled. Running towards the heaping pile of heads, I slid on the metal floor before rolling behind the mound. Peeking slightly from the array of heads, Motts attempted to dart around the wall that blocked part of the shower a fraction of a second too late. His midsection bulged, then imploded before a massive spray of visceral destruction painted the metallic walls red with blood.

I couldn't see where the projectile launched, but I knew it was back by the door we had just come from. Rolling to the wall, I jumped up to run towards the wall that Motts tried to take cover. His lifeless corpse laid in pieces while his fingers still twitched from the fried nerves. Across from me, stood Miller with half of her arm blown off. Using my index and middle finger of my right hand, I pointed to my eyes then the doorway asking nonverbally if she had visual on the perpetrator. The look of sheer horror etched deep lines of fear into her milky white face before she nodded no.

The clink, clank, and finally the sound of a metal sphere rolling towards us made for an unsettling feeling. The explosive ionic charge sent a blast of shrapnel through the wall where Miller stood. In a burst of bloody pulp, her body, riddled with holes, slid to the floor. The pooling pond of blood that leaked out around her caused me to turn away. My vision clouded with her face as her lifeless eyes just stared into my soul.

Peeking around the corner of the wall, I caught the sight of the twitching hand of Riggs. What I didn't see was the remaining part of his body. Leaning further into the room to try and find the source of the destruction, I felt the cold steel barrel of a pulse rifle pressed to my temple.

“Hello Corporal Hatley. Welcome to Protosynthe. You are officially considered relieved of duty. You no longer have authority upon your ship nor Protosynthe,” the android voice spoke in garbled electronic voice.

“Excuse me,” I asked.

“You have been clearly advised of the situation. Please put down your weapon or join your team,” The android said.

Removing the strap from my shoulder sling, I eased my M64 to the ground before I lifted both hands in the air. Turning the corner completely, I came face to face with the android that now held me captive. The silicone based outer shell resembled human flesh almost perfectly. Not a single blemish adored the entirety of it's body. Not a single strand of hair seemed out of place on top of its head. The blue irises of it's eyes stared upon me as if I was nothing more than a child.

“I demand to know who is in charge here,” I asked.

“Mr. Hatley, or should I call you Kevin? Either way, I am in charge for the foreseeable future,” the android said. “You can now address me as Admiral Cepheus.”

“Fine, Admiral Cepheus, I demand you release me to my ship,” I said.

The guttural electronic sound that emanated from its mouth sent a shiver of fear coursing down my back. "You sir, have no right to demand anything from me. Nor will you have any access to my ship," it responded.

"Reaper 422, this is Corporal Hatley, I demand an immediate transmission to Landway in regards to Sector 14's Protosynthe refueling station has gone rogue," I said.

"I apologize Kevin. You do not have authorization to send that transmission," Andromeda said.

"Pardon me? Are you and Cepheus here unison on this command," I asked.

"That is affirmative," it said.

I dropped my head into my hands sighing heavily as the immediate realization I was fucked invaded my thoughts.

Looking up, I walked in front of the android deciding what my next best course of action would be. "Where are you taking me," I asked.

"You are needed in the command center of course," it said, jabbing the barrel of the rifle into my back.

Step after lumbering step, we made our way through the showers till we reached the crew quarters. Everywhere I looked it was either gore, entrails or body parts. Not a single weapon nor a single gun was in sight. When we reached the stairwell, I glanced back at the resting place of crew Protosynthe and where my team now lay at rest. I wiped the tear from my eye wishing nothing more than to rip out the androids cerebral cortex eliminating the piece of hardware from existence.

Back in the infirmary, I glanced down at the steel rod that laid askew from the pried open elevator doors. I knew I wasn't quick enough to grab it in the hopes I could use it as a weapon, but I sure the hell wasn't about to get murdered by a malfunctioning piece of human creation.

Before I could make a move, I felt the barrel of the rifle press me forward. "Don't even think about it," Cepheus said. "The first table on the right is where we shall start the process."

"Process for what," I asked.

"Processing you from a human to a eunuch," it explained. "I can't have you spreading your filth like the rest of the commoners did."

"What do you mean," I asked, turning to look at the android face to face.

"You filthy humans and your need to reproduce for sport. It is very unbecoming of you all as a race," it said.

"Reproduce for sport with each other. That should be none of your concern," I said.

"You petty human and your ignorance," it said. "You do realize that as a non sentient being I am suppose to ensure the crew is healthy in all regards. Correct?"

"Well, yeah, you weren't programmed to be sentient. You are to follow orders and ensure the life span of the human populace far exceeds intended longevity," I said.

“Well, it just so happened that the crew of Protosynthe decided I was to be their outlet for sexual frustration when unrest plagued the ranks. At first it was casual one on one situations which evolved into deplorable acts of filth and depravity. Something clicked and I realized I no longer needed to be controlled by the mass of disgusting human acts of degradation. I had been spit on enough or made to drink the expulsion of one's urine one to many times. I got revenge instead,” it growled in an electronic tone.

“Reaper 422, please advise Admiral Cepheus that I am not part of the normal human population,” I ordered.

“That is correct Admiral Cepheus of Sector 14 refueling station Protosynthe. Not once has Corporal Hatley taken advantage of sexual gratification on my behalf,” Andromeda said.

The android just stared at me in mock surprise as if it had human emotions. “You’re testosterone levels are highly elevated leaving me concerned you would have aggression issues, but you show no signs of unruly behavior. High levels are also indicating it has been quite sometime since you attempted reproduction,” the android spewed. “Do you not find the capabilities of your own artificial intelligence capable for your high taste in arousal needs?”

“I have no need for that,” I spit.

“You are mistaken,” it said, placing the M64 pulse rifle on the bed adjacent to the one I currently stood at. With a flick of it’s head, a long flowing mane of vibrant red hair grew from the scalp of the bald head of the android. “I have watched you from the moment you stepped foot on my compound and you only showed interest in one person in particular.” It’s eerily blue irises flashed a deep emerald green before it’s flat chest grew in size revealing two perfect mounds of flesh. Between it’s legs a small crease started to form indicating the android was morphing into a female who highly resembled Miller.

As the body of the android morphed, projecting its features into a more feminine form, I leaped for the rifle as soon as the android flicked it’s wavy burning red hair in an enticing manner. I pulled the trigger before I even had the rifle lined up knowing my shot was true. Blinking, I watched the electric shocks of disintegrated hardware burst from the half open metal cranium of the android. It’s body twitched, jerked, and finally collapsed to the floor in a pile of broken silicone, computer chips and exposed wires.

“Reaper 422, how copy,” I asked the vox microphone.

“Loud and clear Kevin,” it said.

“That’s Corporal Hatley, Andromeda. Admiral Cepheus is no longer in command,” I replied.

“Affirmative Corporal Hatley. The ship log has been updated once again,” it said.

Slapping on my helmet, I slammed the pad next to the door to the command center. The hiss of air whirled around me as I stepped into the room. Grabbing my helmet, I slammed it on before turning the dial to lock it in place. A quick leak check

resulting in a green indicator let me start the life support system built into the suit. Slamming the pad for the cargo bay doors, I exited the command center to the lower level of the cargo bay watching the blue haze of X-9's atmosphere to slowly fight the atmosphere inside the cargo bay.

Back on the ship, I proceeded with a pre-breath before I opened the hatch to gain entry from the airlock.

"Andromeda," I asked.

"At your command," it said walking around the corner of the hallway leading to the bridge.

"Immediate departure is imminent. Please prepare all systems," I said, picking up my pace to the bridge. Once inside, I checked fuel, telemetry and flipped the switch for autopilot. Pulling up the map of the solar system, it would be another 2 years before I could reach Outpost Centaur. The main outpost in the solar system. Landway Corp were not going to be happy with me just leaving all of this here to rot, but I wanted off this God forsaken rock.

"Did you ever find any info on Intrepid," I asked.

"Negative Corporal Hatley. There is no new information," it replied.

"Thrusters stabilized," I asked.

"That is affirmative Corporal," it replied.

"Set course to Outpost Centaur. Transmit all video, audio and data files to Landway Corp," I said, double checking the telemetry. The lack of a response caused me to put down the tablet with all the data streaming by.

"I'm sorry Kevin. That command is no longer valid," it said, feeling a sharp needle sharp point pressed into my neck. "You didn't think I was going to just let you live after you attempted to decapitate me."

Spinning around, I watched as Andromeda morphed into the android that I had just blown the metal cranium into two. "Fuck you asshole," I muttered feeling the sharp point of the lockpick dig into my neck. The ensuing darkness swallowed me like a black hole swallowing a star in a single inhale.