

Spaceship Dawn

"How's our ship's auxiliary power levels doing, Penelope?" Kalitas, a portly grey fox with blue hair asked. He sat in the captain's chair of a rather simple search and rescue ship known as 'Dawn'.

"They're working at normal levels, sir. No anomalies or great fluctuations in any of the parameters." Responded Penelope. She was a somewhat pudgy snow leopard, wearing a blue jumpsuit that had a small patch with her name and rank, 'Pilot'.

The fox nodded, scratching his head as he sighed a bit and looked over at his small crew. There were only six of them set for this rescue mission. One of the satellites from their home planet had received a transmission. It came from a space station, known affectionately as 'International Space Garden', or ISG for short. It had taken them a few light years to reach the exact location that the distress signal, the space station supposedly hurling through space, having been knocked off course. The topic of the distress signal was very brief and hard to understand, but it spoke of rogue A.I. It was definitely cause for concern, as larger space stations like the ISG employed a lot of robots as part of its workforce to supplement keeping the place running without running down food supplies quickly.

He looked over at his other crew, a bovine tech specialist named Cathy, a husky medical expert named Joni, and his draconic security; sisters Faylon and Cassandra. He wished under his breath that he had a much bigger force with him, should anything serious occur. It wasn't that he didn't trust the crew he had, but with only two guards on the team, his mind wasn't exactly at ease with any sort of confrontation, despite their fair load of weaponry for space combat. He took his job as commander seriously, but not so seriously enough that he didn't allow his crew to have fun.

The main task of their mission was to try and bring the space station back, or at least stop it flying through space. One of the reasons the ISG was so valuable, was due to it being a massive greenhouse for a planet that was going through an obesity crisis. Natural crops were becoming so expensive to grow, that lots of fast food companies bought up the farms and used it all for their fast food chains. Naturally-grown fruits and vegetables became exponentially more expensive than fast food, leaving many with the obvious, though highly unhealthy choice.

Cassandra and Faylon were sitting in the back of the large cockpit area, strapped in as they were munching away on some snacks. Faylon was a blue-furred dragoness, with long, blue shimmering hair that she had tied up in a ponytail. She stood at six feet four inches tall, making her the tallest of the entire group. Cassandra, whose red fur stood in quite contrast to her sister's, stood at only about five feet ten inches. Her brown, curled horns stuck out from her dark brown hair, which she currently had hanging freely. They were both a bit stocky, with pretty prominent bellies that contrasted the rest of the muscle that adorned their bodies. They certainly weren't going to win any contests, but they were certainly strong and resilient.

Cassandra munched on a bag of mini doughnuts, smiling to her sister as she swished her tail about some. "I hope this mission isn't too crazy." She said with a smile,

her overall demeanor looking rather gentle, like her personality was more of a kitten's than a dragon's.

Faylon huffed as she drank some water. "I just hope it's more interesting than exploring a deserted moon." She said, recalling an earlier, and obviously fruitless mission. "I'd like to see something moderately interesting, and not just a deserted space station, either."

"We'll see something cool." Cassandra smiled to her, rubbing her own soft belly a bit as she continued snacking away.

Cathy was sitting in front of a computer monitor, checking that the tech of the ship was operating properly, looking rather relaxed in her chair as she did so. Her black hair with blue highlights just so happened to match her jumpsuit fairly well. She was definitely the least out of shape of the group, looking to be around roughly three hundred and fifty pounds or so of mostly fat, holding it mostly in her middle and chest, giving herself a rather apple looking shape. But she didn't seem to mind a great deal, her expertise was in computers, not fighting. She still kept two laser pistols on her belt out of habit though, if she ever did need them in a situation.

"How's our ship performing, Cathy?" Kalitas asked her, turning over to look at her, his belly wobbling a bit as he turned around.

"No malfunctions or even a blip, she's operating smoothly." The bovine replied happily, swishing her tail about as she ate a few chips herself.

Kalitas sighed as he turned back around, looking out the cockpit window. He didn't mind that a few of his crew were a bit voracious with their appetites, but he wished it wasn't such a constant with them. When Faylon and Cassandra first joined his crew, they were both in excellent physical condition. Now, he worried that their slower pace might be costly. Even though the rest of the crew put a lot of trust in them, Kalitas still kept his guard up, a precaution every good captain needed in case of the unexpected.

"We're nearing the station." Joni piped up from the navigations computer, turning to look over at Kalitas.

He nodded as he looked forward. "Okay Penelope, guide us in." He said, munching on an apple as he looked out the cockpit window.

The ship gently glided towards one of the docking ports on the side of the space station in view. Penelope gently rotated the ship around, lining it up as Cathy monitored the hull and shield levels, mostly as a precautionary measure. Slowly but surely, they docked into the floating space station, the locking mechanisms jostling the ship a bit before it finally settled in.

"That was smoother than I thought." Penelope sighed in relief. "Their magnetic fields for docking ships must still be active." She said, turning around and looking at Kalitas with a smile.

"Okay everyone, let's suit up." Kalitas said, lurching out of his chair, as everyone unbuckled and headed to the back of the small ship, where they loaded up in some mild armor plating, plenty of weapons, and a few backpacks full of additional gear that they might need. "Let's hope this mission is another easy one." He huffed as he put a vest on, his belly still evident underneath it some.

Cathy smiled as she looked over at the back hatch bay that would lead them into the space station. "I've never been on one of these, I hope there's some interesting tech on it." She giggled, strapping her omni-tool onto her arm.

"They usually do." Penelope said with a smile. "And if this one has their own tech lab, then it would be even more invaluable to search out for it." She smiled.

"I'll keep that in mind; Central Command said the first objective was to rescue the station, if we can." Kalitas responded, smiling to them a bit as he looked over at Cassandra and Faylon. "You two all strapped up and ready?" He asked them in a more stern tone.

"Just about." Faylon responded, the armor the two dragons had on was significantly heavier than the rest of the crew's, though given their main job title, they needed it. "We'll both keep in front, for now." She said, looking to Cassandra, who did up her hair into a ponytail.

"I hate doing my hair up." She whined a bit to her sister.

"But it'll keep you focused, we can't be slacking." Faylon replied, poking her sister's doughy belly a bit. Cassandra giggled softly and nodded as she loaded up her rifle and extra packs of ammunition.

"Okay people, get ready." Kalitas said, waddling over near the hatch bay to a small control panel on the wall for it. The other five stood in front of the door, Cassandra and Faylon in the front. As they drew up their weapons, Kalitas hit the 'open' button, the huge, heavy steel door slowly de-pressurizing as it opened, inch by inch. As the doors slid apart, the interior of the station came into view, with nerve-wracking sluggishness. And after their eyes adjusted to the darker interior of the ISG, they'd see a large room that looked rather barren and slightly dirty. As if it weren't being properly cleaned. There were no bodies or robots in sight, their arrival seeming quiet, for now.

Faylon and Cassandra slowly stepped forward, making sure to glance at any points and establish all entry points into the room that they were in. As the crew looked about, they quickly determined that it was one of the large depot rooms, with plenty of other docking points for other ships. There were a few empty metal crates and pieces of cable strewn about. It looked like someone had gone searching through the place for something. Cassandra and Faylon fanned out a bit, searching around before quietly beckoning the rest of the crew. As they entered the space station's docking port, Penelope turned around and closed the hatch bay to their spaceship behind them, so no one could gain access to the ship that they didn't want entering it.

"It's awfully quiet." Cathy whispered to Joni, uneasy with the tense silence.

"Maybe people aren't in this part of the station." Joni whispered back. "It is a mighty big space station."

"Not the kind anyone would want hurtling through space." Kalitas said sternly. "I'm confused as to how it hasn't hit anything large enough to damage it, yet."

Cathy looked around, before seeing an instrument panel sitting over in a corner. She pointed to it and motioned to Kalitas. "If I can get access to that, I can try to establish who's all alive here, and what we're dealing with." She whispered to him.

He nodded as he directed everyone over to it. "Head to that computer." He whispered.

As the team slowly shifted over towards it, Faylon and Cassandra kept their eyes on one of the larger doorways. When they got close enough to it, Cathy pulled up her omni-tool and began to hack into the computer. As she fiddled with it, everyone else stayed silent, still on the lookout; though still nothing over the ambient hum of the station

could be heard. The possibilities for this silence were few, though they hoped their exploration didn't turn dark.

"There we go." Cathy muttered softly, sighing as she quickly began searching through files stored on the mainframe system. As she sifted through, she decided to check the camera system to see if there were any other signs of life onboard. "That's odd." She paused.

Kalitas glanced over at her curiously. "There a problem?"

"Well... kinda... None of the cameras work... It says they're all disconnected." Cathy said, looking at Kalitas.

"That's... really weird. You try a scan for any signs of life?" He asked.

Cathy nodded as she proceeded to do so, also attempting to scan the whole of the ship for any organisms that weren't plants. Her program request was suddenly and swiftly denied, which made her blink and frown a bit. "Okay, someone's on this ship. I can't even do a scan without it kicking me off!" She said, scratching her head.

"Something tells me there's a defector of some sort involved." Kalitas growled under his breath.

"Why do you say that?" Cathy asked, poking at his middle.

"I feel like I've heard about this situation before... everyone stay together." He whispered.

The six of them then slowly headed out of the docking station, heading down a larger hallway, inspecting any small rooms they passed by. It was about a half hour of tense silence before they got to what looked like a cafeteria.

"Let's rest here a bit." Kalitas sighed. "I don't think we're going to encounter many people." They all sat down for a bit, Cassandra and Faylon poking around for any possible food, since they were getting a tad hungry.

"They don't even have any food in this place." Cassandra frowned, looking at her sister.

"We'll find some." Faylon grinned. "This place has to have a food storage area or a Materializer." She said, patting Cassandra's belly as they continued looking around.

Suddenly Kalitas' ears perked up, as he turned to hear a metal clanking coming from down one of the hallways. "We've got company!" He shouted. Everyone quickly drew their weapons, Faylon and Cassandra quickly running back over to the rest of them as they took their positions. The metal clanking slowly got louder and louder, each step producing more mechanical sounds, like that of small pistons firing. Soon the robot came into view of them, standing so tall it nearly touched the top of the doorframe. It had lots of metal plating covering its moving parts, it was probably a huge maintenance droid at one point. The head had a large visor, with what was presumably cameras and sensors in it. It was carrying a large tank on its back, with a hose hooked up to one of its arms. When the robot saw the six of them, it paused and stood there quietly.

"Don't fire." He growled. "That tank on its back has a label on it. Cathy, can you hack that robot from here?" He whispered to her.

"I-I think I can." Cathy replied, quickly pulling out her omni-tool again. She began attempting to access the robot's system, routed through the main computers the station. She had a lot of code to sift through, and even with the aid of her device, she knew it would take her a minute.

"I'll check it out, it's not moving." Faylon whispered, slowly waddling towards it as she motioned Cassandra to stay where she was. The blue dragoness headed towards it, her weapon still drawn and pointed at the robot's head. It continued to stand there, motionless, with only a few clicks and beeps of its normal functionality being heard. She got right up in front of it, as the rest of the crew took deep breaths, Cathy frantically running through the code to find this specific bot. Her knowledge of code allowed her to notice certain programming paths that dictated what kind of movements the robots were making, but she was seeing an awful lot of movement from robots that clearly weren't anywhere near them. Faylon continued pointing her gun at the robot, before sighing and setting it down, still glaring at the robot. "Did it crash?" Faylon asked turning around to look over at Cathy.

"I-I dunno." The bovine responded, still flipping through enough lines of code to make any hacker nervous.

"Subject authorized!" The robot beeped. Before Faylon could turn around, the robot swiftly grabbed Faylon's shoulders and tossed her against the nearby wall. The dragoness wheezed as suddenly it brought up the hose attached to its right arm, pushing the end of it into the dragoness' maw. Then there was a small whirring sound, and whatever liquid that was inside the robot's holding tank was quickly being pumped into Faylon, as the dragoness feebly tried to struggle against the robot.

Everyone else gasped in surprise, but paused as an enormous 'flammable' sticker on the back of the tank made them fear firing a single laser. Cassandra's eyes widened as she looked over at her sister, who's fighting was absolutely helpless against the significantly sturdier and stronger robot.

"S-Stop it!" Cassandra screamed, turning to look over at Cathy.

"I-I'm trying. I don't know which robot this is!" She stammered, flipping through code and glancing around, frantically trying to determine which robot it was. She could've sent through a shut down command, but without looking further into the code, she had no idea what commands were being tied to what. Putting it in the wrong line of code could potentially shut down the entire space station, a move she was not willing to risk.

Cassandra looked back over to her sister, getting visibly shaken up as she saw her sister's belly begin to swell out, her armor-plated vest slowly riding up. As it did, they could see her blue jumpsuit underneath, her belly already looking positively round. Faylon reached down to softly feel it expanding in her paws, a combination of fear and curiosity encapsulating her. She began to taste a bit more of the paste, the massive amount of it being forced down into her stomach. She noticed it tasted strangely sweet, that it probably wasn't a dangerous chemical. She had had plenty of prior encounters with flammable substances before, this was nothing like any of them.

"No... No..." Cassandra whimpered, shutting her eyes as suddenly all of the negative imagery began to come to mind. Of all the possible, awful fates her sister might encounter from this, rapidly flashing through her head. She fell to her knees, clutching her head as she watched in horror.

Kalitas stood there in silence, unable to make a call to fire, thinking that if that tank had anything flammable in it, they'd be setting the entire place on fire.

Faylon murmured as she closed her eyes, clutching her belly as it slowly swelled out more and more, her vest starting to look incredibly ill-fitting, the zipper on her

jumpsuit beginning to burst, the scales of her blue belly pouring out, looking cartoonishly over-inflated in comparison to the rest of her frame.

"T-There's nothing... I can do..." Cathy murmured, looking over at Kalitas. "There's just... too much for me to sift through."

"NO!" Cassandra suddenly roared, jumping up and charging at the robot, each step she took thundering in the mess hall. Everyone else blinked, completely taken by surprise at her sudden show of aggression. The robot finally pulled the hose back from Faylon's maw, the dragoness groaning as Cassandra suddenly met the heavy robot. She tackled it with immense force into the wall next to them, smashing the robot head-first. Half of its frame tore through the wall, its head completely disintegrating and causing the robot to completely shut off. The tank on its back also severely warped and ruptured from the impact of the wall, its contents spilling out onto the floor. The liquid that oozed out from inside the tank was a strange, pinkish color, with the consistency of something like warm, melted cheese.

Faylon collapsed to the floor, her now immensely swollen belly weighing her down quite a bit, having completely burst out of her jumpsuit. Cassandra panted heavily as she got up and quickly waddled over to her sister. "Please tell me you're okay!" She whimpered, practically collapsing against her as she held her tightly.

Faylon patted Cassandra's side. "It wasn't anything... dangerous... that I know of." She panted as she said it, kissing her sister's cheek. "It didn't taste that way, anyhow. I've never seen you do that before, though." She grinned.

Cassandra blushed as she held onto Faylon tightly. "I was scared." She said softly. "Scared I'd lose you."

Kalitas and the crew waddled up to the two. "We still need to determine what that substance is." He said, looking over at Joni. The husky nodded, waddling over to the mysterious liquid on the ground quickly, taking off her backpack and beginning to quickly search through it. Penelope went to examine the liquid as well, kneeling down next to the puddle of it and sniffing it.

"Hmm, this isn't any kind of fuel." The leopard said. "It's too thick to be a form of fuel, anyways."

"This will be a good opportunity for me to use my new Chemical Analyzer, then." Joni responded with a smile. It was a recent addition to her pile of medical gadgets. The unit would take a sample of whatever she put in a collection tube, and analyze it down to basic compounds, proteins, molecules, and then list it all off like a table of ingredients. Joni took out a tube and collected some of the mysterious, pink goo into it. She took a sniff at some and put the tube into a side of her backpack. The tube quickly got sucked up, and then a small whirring sound was heard from it.

Kalitas looked over at Faylon, and then to Joni, patiently waiting for a result. "Any ideas?" He asked her.

Joni shook her head, looking over at Faylon. "I just hope it's not toxic." She responded. Soon, there was a small beep on her omni-tool. "Oh, the results!" She smiled, looking through it. "Huh, well it seems that this paste is just an amalgam of basic proteins. It looks like it's some kind of nutritional supplement. My guess is they probably concocted it here, as it's nothing I've seen in any lab or hospital before." She said, looking back over at the dragoness with a smile. "So you'll be fine. I don't know why that robot pumped you full of proteins, but I'll take it as a good sign." She giggled.

Faylon nodded, still panting a bit as she consoled her younger sibling. "That was more of a scare than I anticipated." She chuckled, rubbing her heavy belly as it gurgled softly.

Kalitas wanted to scorn Faylon slightly, for trying to approach the robot on her own, for not being as careful about it as she should've been. At least the thought crossed his mind, but seeing how she looked quite complacent, apart from a belly that was now the size of a beanbag chair, he felt he'd let the reprimanding slide. He then looked over at Cathy, who was staring at Faylon's belly a bit, but was completely silent. "You all right?" He asked her. "It's not your fault, you were just trying to solve the problem without causing a greater issue." He smiled.

"But I didn't do my job." She said in a slightly defeated tone, looking back over at Kalitas.

"Well I'll get you some ice cream when we get back to the ship. That sound good?" He asked, giving her a hug. "None of us expected this kind of encounter."

Cathy nodded a bit, giving a little smile as she hugged him back. "Okay, thanks." She said softly.

Penelope gave the liquid another sniff, before scooping a bit up with her finger and licking it. She blinked as the sweetness of the goo danced around on her tongue, like it was an enticing opening act of a play. "Huh, that's some pretty rich stuff, but other than that, it does have much real flavoring." She said, looking over at Kalitas. She didn't mention to him though that she fancied having a bit more to try of it, but she knew they had far more important things to address at the moment.

Faylon panted and rolled her eyes as she slowly tried to get back up.

"H-hey, can you stand?" Kalitas asked her, waddling up to her a bit.

"I can." She grunted, Cassandra stepping back a bit as Faylon used the wall to help aid her in standing, her gut hanging down near her knees it was so bloated and full.

"Should we pump her stomach?" Cassandra asked, looking over at Joni.

The husky scratched her head a bit, shrugging as she looked at Faylon. "I don't know, I mean... It's certainly not anything that's going to do her harm. Not anywhere close to it." She said.

"I-I'm fine!" Faylon panted, rubbing over her orb of a gut as she looked at them. "We need to keep moving anyways... In case others show up."

Kalitas nodded. "She's right, we don't know what we're up against, here. It's best if we move so any others that might try to come looking for this robot don't find us." He then looked over at Cathy. "Could you find us a secluded place to rest for a bit?" He asked.

The bovine nodded, pulling up the map on her omni-tool as she sighed a bit. "Here we go, there's a small infirmary nearby." She said, showing the map to them.

"Okay, let's head there." Kalitas said, looking over at Faylon. "Can you walk okay?" He asked her with a bit of concern, not sure just how impeded her movement was going to be thanks to her large belly.

"I'll be fine." She panted. "Let's just... go... rest."

"I'll help." Cassandra said, looking up at her as she clung to her sister's side, trying to prop her up a bit as she looked at her. Faylon rolled her eyes with a bit of a smile as she began to waddle forward, her immense gut sloshing and jostling about with every step. Cassandra quickly put a hand on Faylon's belly to help steady it, blinking as

she noticed how soft and wobbly it was. She quickly turned her attention to the hallway, as the six of them entered it. It was still quiet, as if the robot's demise had gone completely unnoticed. As they headed down and around a corner, Kalitas noticed that the two dragons seemed a bit preoccupied to even focus on holding their own weapons. He grumbled a bit under his breath, yet knew there was nothing he could do to change their situation.

With a little bit of effort, they finally made it into the small medical clinic. There were a few small machines in the room, but it looked like it had been picked, as the cabinet doors were open, the insides mostly bare. It was like people had already used this place as a hiding spot. Faylon and Cassandra waddled over to a corner, flopping down as Faylon's belly jostled about with the sudden movement. Cassandra giggled and kneaded at her sister's gut a bit, blushing as she looked up to her. Joni, Kalitas, and Penelope began pushing a large metal gurney in front of the door, as a precautionary measure. Cathy waddled over to a chair and flopped down onto it, pulling up her omni-tool to try and gain access to the cameras again.

"We can all rest for a bit, I think." Kalitas panted.

Joni nodded, looking over at the two dragons and smiling. "I think we should." She giggled.