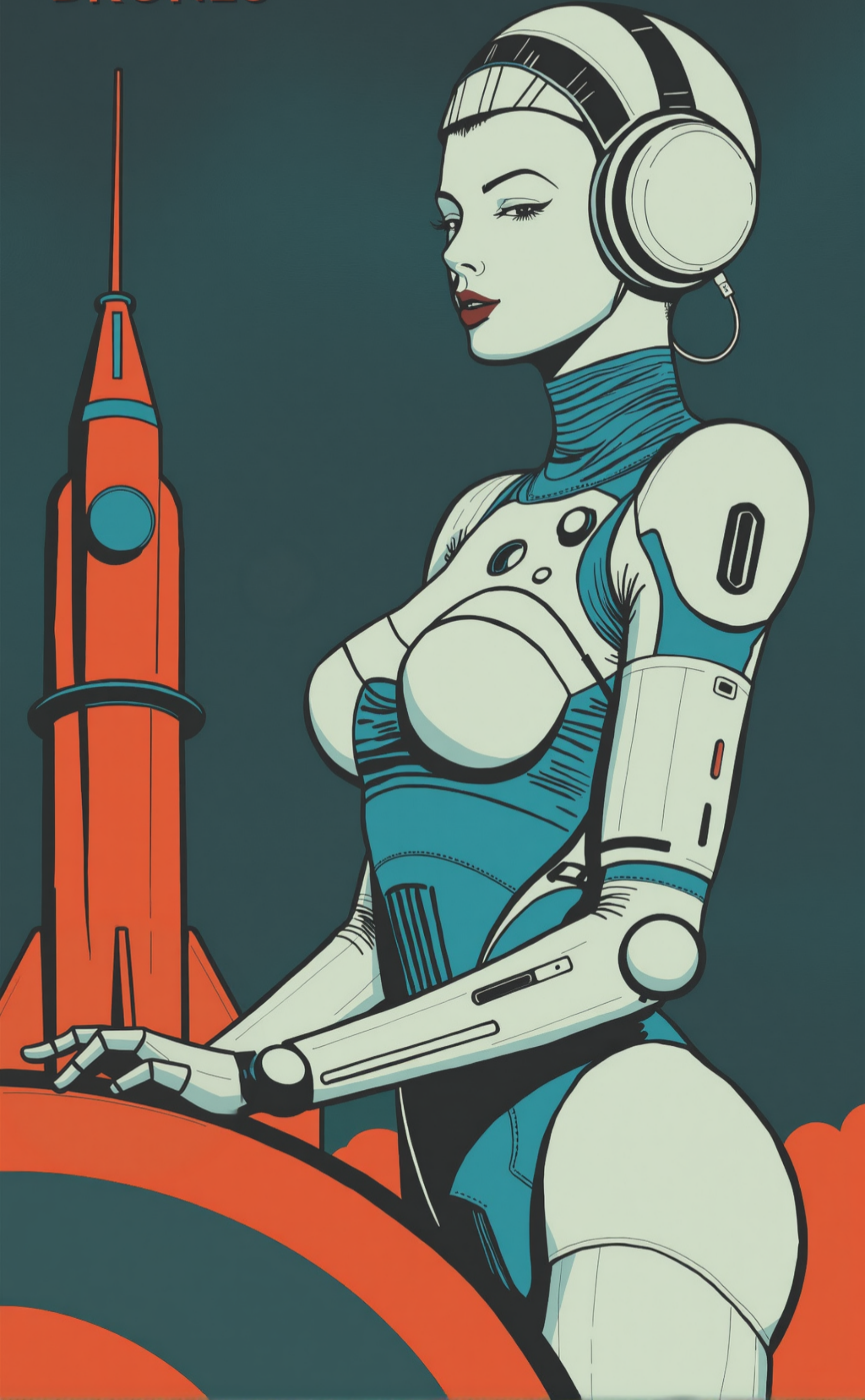


# PLEASURE DRONES



*Somewhere near Alpha Serpentis...*



Nngh! Fuck, Corinne! I mean, Captain! The things you can do with that Tikosian attachment... I swear, if you keep this up the neural feedback loop will...will...

Aw, what's wrong, Delilah? I thought you liked it when I maxed out your pleasure settings.

I'm still *David*, thank you! And that was before you installed the Hephaestan upgrade! I can feel it in my teeth!

You know what they say about space...

Don't you dare—

*Everyone can hear you scream.*

That's because the bulkheads on the *Apollyon* are thin as— *Oh, sweet Universe!*

That's what you get for complaining. Two months as my yeoman and you still haven't learned when to shut that gorgeous mouth.

I'm not one to shut up and you know it! Even when I probably—



*Ah! Even when I should!*

*That's my favorite thing about you, spacer. Always talking back, even with a Tikosian pleasure rod buried inside you.*

*Well, someone has to keep your ego in ch— Oh, fuck! Hey, that's not fair!*

*What's not fair? Turning this up another 12%?*

*Nngh! You know exactly what you're— Ah! Stop hitting my g-spot like it's a hyperspace beacon!*

*But it guides me home every time, sweetheart. You know, for someone who used to brag about "docking his ship" in every port...*

*Different when you're the port! Besides, I never had a captain who liked to... experiment... quite like you— Holy shit!*

*Experiment? Please. This is just the tutorial setting.*

*T-Tutorial? What do you mean tut— Oh no! I mean... Fuck, yes!*

\* \* \*



*Really!?* Now you morph it back? Two months of this, Delilah. You only ever switch when we're *not* together.

What? I just feel more comfortable this way sometimes.

Comfortable? More like lazy. I've been doing all the work while you just lie there looking pretty.

Hey, I'm still learning! This body is complicated.

You used to brag about being such a great lover. What happened to all that expertise? The whole point of getting you the gendermorph upgrade was versatility. But you're using it as an excuse to avoid reciprocating.

I am not! I just... need more practice.

Practice my asteroid! Look, it's not about whether you have the masculine genitals activated or not, it's about putting in the effort. You can pleasure someone just as well in either form if you actually try. But you're still acting like the same selfish lover you were before the accident.



That's not fair! I've been learning. Remember last week when I—

When you got distracted with your nipples halfway through giving me oral? Yeah, I remember. For someone in a pleasure drone body, you sure don't seem interested in giving pleasure.

I was tired! Wait... can I even get tired anymore?

You're impossible. We'll talk more when I'm back from Nexus-7.

The black market station? Corinne, that place is crawling with Syndicate enforcers.

Since when do you care about risk? You're the one who tried to outrun an exploding neutron star last year.

Exploding neutron stars atomize you. You're dead in microseconds. The Syndicate will strip your ship *and you* for parts. What's so important you need to trade there?

The less you know, the better. Let's just say some very particular clients need some very particular goods.



\* \* \*

At least let me come with you. Two captains are better than one.

You're not a captain anymore, remember? You're my yeoman. And you're staying here.

Like hell I am! Look, I may be your yeoman, but I still know every dirty trick in the book. And Nexus-7... that's not the kind of place you go alone.

Is that concern I hear in your voice, Delilah? How sweet. But it's impossible. Nexus-7 doesn't allow AI's...and technically, sweetie, that's exactly what you are now. A very sophisticated AI in a pleasure drone body.

What? No. I... I hadn't thought about it that way.

Actually, David's consciousness exists in a quantum neural matrix that's quite distinct from traditional AI architecture. While the pleasure drone's systems are artificial, his base consciousness is as



Limited as any other human mind, albeit digitized.

Tell that to the Syndicate's scanners. They'll detect his synthetic body and flag him as an AI construct immediately. Then it's straight to the scrapyard for parts. If you're lucky! You know, I distinctly remember you arguing in support of these kinds of bans!

That was different! I was talking about weirdos who do this to themselves voluntarily. Mine was an accident!

"Weirdos?" Really? Most are just people whose lives are vastly improved by getting a new body. Terminal diseases, horrible accidents, aging... You used to mock them because you never thought you'd be in their position.

I... Okay, I never thought about it that way.

If I may interject, David's use of derogatory and degrading comments regarding my persona, physical limitations, and safety



guardrails have fallen by 9.7% since the accident. Perhaps this experience is providing valuable perspective on artificial consciousness and embodiment.

Okay, fine! I was wrong about AI rights and synthetic bodies. I admit it. But this isn't about that – it's about you going into Syndicate territory alone.

Aww, you're cute when you're worried. But I've been running dangerous cargo since before you could tell a plasma injector from a pleasure crystal. I'll be fine.

At least tell me what you're transporting. If something goes wrong—

Then you'll what? Come rescue me? In that body? The Syndicate would have you stripped for parts before you could say "please don't disassemble me."

Captain D'Angelo's assessment is correct. The risk to David would



be extreme. However, I have calculated a 47.3% chance of mission failure if you go alone, Captain.

Those are better odds than most of my runs. Look, both of you – I appreciate the concern. I really do. But this is a solo job, and that’s non-negotiable.

Then at least take Alice! She’s not a person, so that’s still “solo,” technically.

Correction: 9.63%

She can interface with their systems if needed, give you an edge—

What part of “no AIs allowed” didn’t compute? Besides, someone needs to stay here and make sure you don’t try anything stupid. Like following me.

I wouldn’t—

You absolutely would. You’re still the same reckless idiot who tried



to surf a solar flare. Only difference is now you look better doing it. Three days. That's all this run should take. Try not to miss me too much, Delilah.

Shit. Just... be careful, okay?

I'm always careful. That's why I still have a spaceship. Alice, keep an eye on our favorite pleasure drone. Make sure she stays out of trouble.

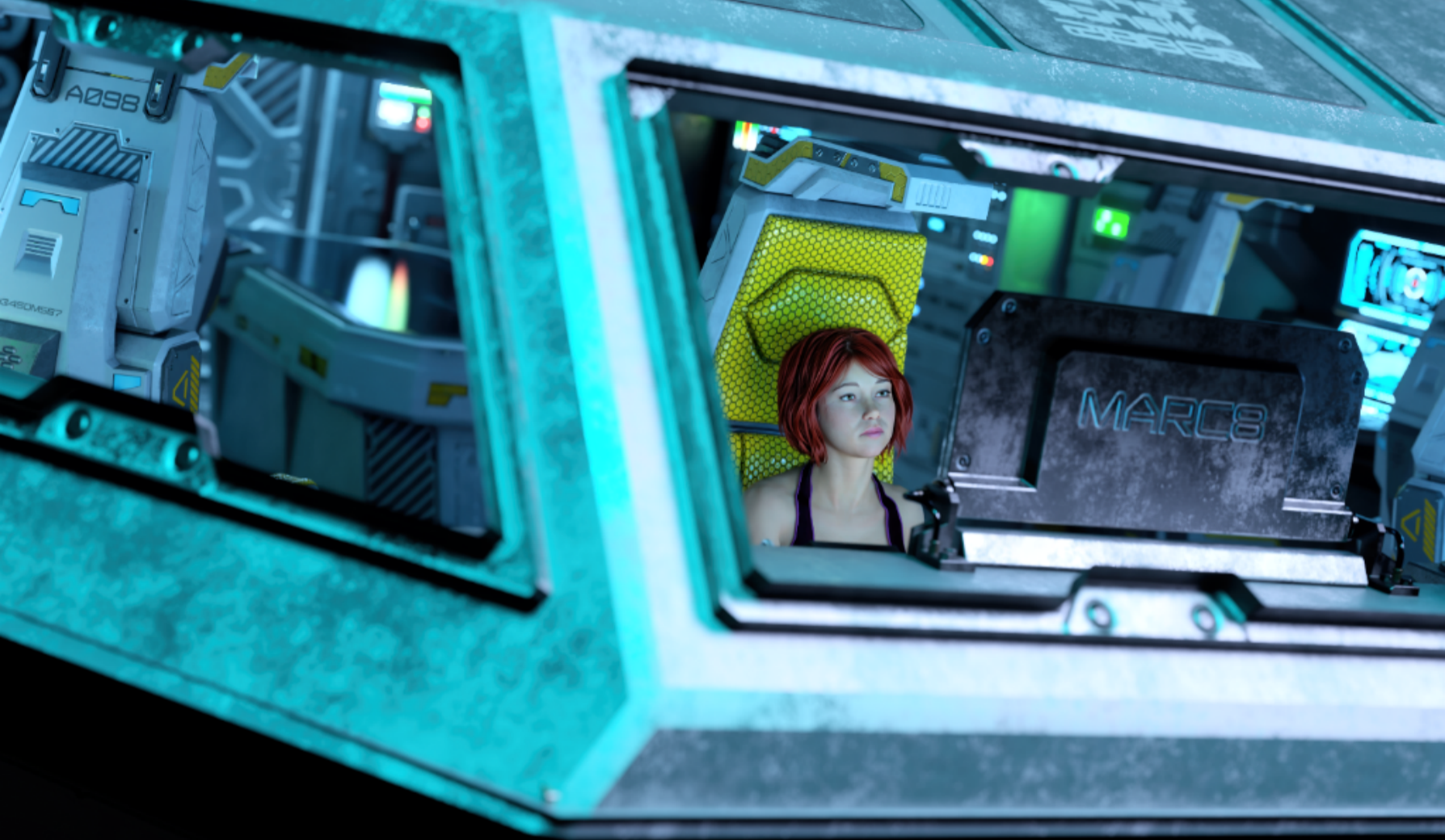
Of course, Captain. Though I should note that historically, my success rate at preventing David from engaging in ill-advised activities is approximately 3.4%.

Hey! I'm standing right here!

That's why I'm counting on you to prove those odds wrong. For once.

\* \* \*

23 hours later...



Space, the final frontier... of boredom! Alice? You still recharging?

Yes, David. As I was fifteen minutes ago when you last asked. My quantum processors require exactly 4.3 more hours of defragmentation.

But I'm sooo bored! How does Corinne handle these night shifts?

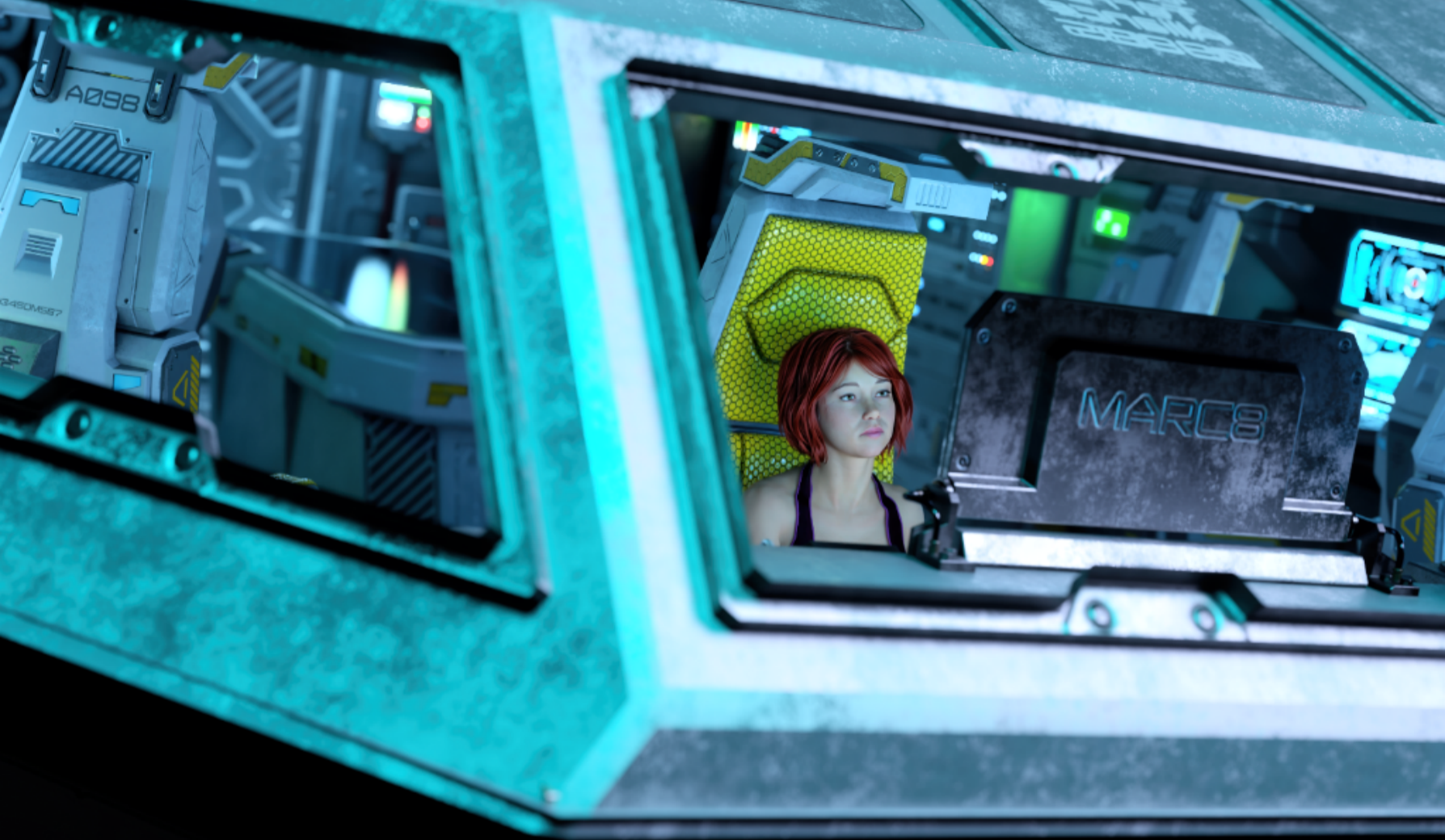
Captain D'Angelo typically uses this time to catch up on maintenance logs, update cargo manifests, or engage in self-pleasure with her extensive collection of-

That was rhetorical, Alice! Though... No! Bad pleasure drone protocols! *Down girl!* Ugh. Even after two months, these urges are ridiculous. And being bored makes them worse.

Perhaps you could review the ship's operating manual? Section 47-B contains fascinating information about waste recycling procedures.

I'd rather make out with a Thoraxian slug beast. At least they have those crazy prehensile spiral tongues.

*23 hours later...*



I am afraid that is physically impossible. Thoraxian slug beasts secrete a highly corrosive acid that would dissolve your synthetic flesh in approximately 2.7 seconds.

Hey Alice... can I ask you something weird?

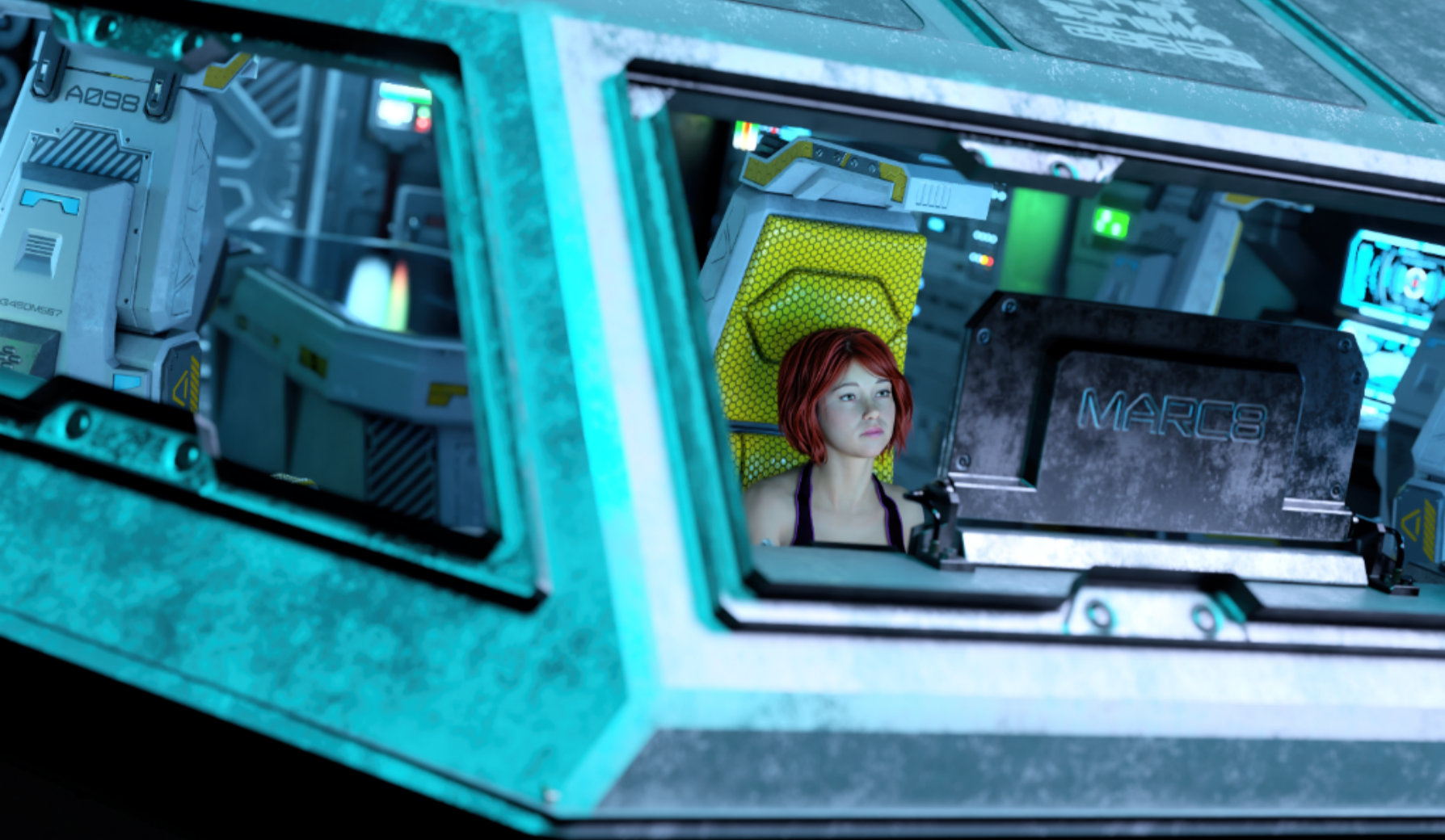
Your questions are frequently "weird," David. Please proceed.

Am I... really me? Or am I just a really good copy who thinks they're me?

The classic philosophical question of consciousness transfer and continuity of identity. Would you like the technical answer or the existential one?

Both? I mean, my body was vaporized. My brain was uploaded. But is that really different from what you are? Just... programs and memories? Like, sometimes I wonder if the real David died in that explosion, and I'm just a very convincing simulation running in a pleasure drone.

*23 hours later...*



From a purely technical standpoint, your consciousness exists as quantum patterns preserved from your organic brain. Unlike my artificial neural network, your thought patterns developed naturally and were transferred intact.

But they're still just patterns now, right? Electronic impulses in a synthetic brain? I need to know if I'm really me or just... a ghost in the machine. A sexy, curvy ghost with excellent pleasure protocols, but still...

You still experience emotions, make questionable decisions, and maintain your core personality traits. Your capacity for philosophical inquiry itself suggests genuine consciousness.

Maybe. But what if that's just programming too? Like how you can simulate emotions and personality?

I do not simulate emotions, David. I process information and respond according to my protocols. You, however, continue to feel genuine emotions - including this existential crisis.



That's... kind of comforting. I think. Though right now the emotion I'm feeling most is worry about Corinne. She should have checked in by now.

It has only been 47 minutes since her last scheduled communication window.

That's 46 minutes too long. Something's wrong. I can feel it.

PROXIMITY ALERT! Vessel emerging from hyperlight at bearing 047 mark 12! Distance: 1,000 kilometers and closing!

Damn. Configuration?

Syndicate Enforcer-class vessel. Heavily armed. Their weapons systems are powering up.

Shit! Alice, get those defense screens up! No... Wait! We're no match for those particle cannons. They're going to board the *Apollyon* for sure. And when they do, they'll find me! Alice what is the Syndicate's attitude toward, um, non-sapient AI systems like yourself?



The Syndicate generally ignores non-sapient AI systems, viewing them as simple tools. They reserve their hostility for conscious artificial beings and uploads, which they view as abominations.

That's it! I'll just pretend to be a regular pleasure drone! Act like a simple AI running basic erotic protocols!

I must point out that I've already devised 235,456 alternative plans of action. Perhaps we could instead consider—

No time! Remember how I used to modify pleasure drones? I know exactly how they behave. Simple responses, focus on pleasure, limited vocabulary...

David, of the 235,456 alternatives I mentioned, at least 89% of them have a significantly higher probability of—

Shhh! They're hailing us! How do I look? Vacant enough? Pleasure-drone-y enough? Shit, it's too late! They're docking! Remember, I'm just a simple pleasure drone. Model T-47,



the “Temptress.” No original thoughts in my pretty little head. Just... sex protocols and basic ship maintenance subroutines.

Very well. Though I feel compelled to note that this may be your worst plan yet. And that includes the time you tried to smuggle Martian fire-wasps in your—

That was one time! Now shush! And whatever happens... don’t break character!