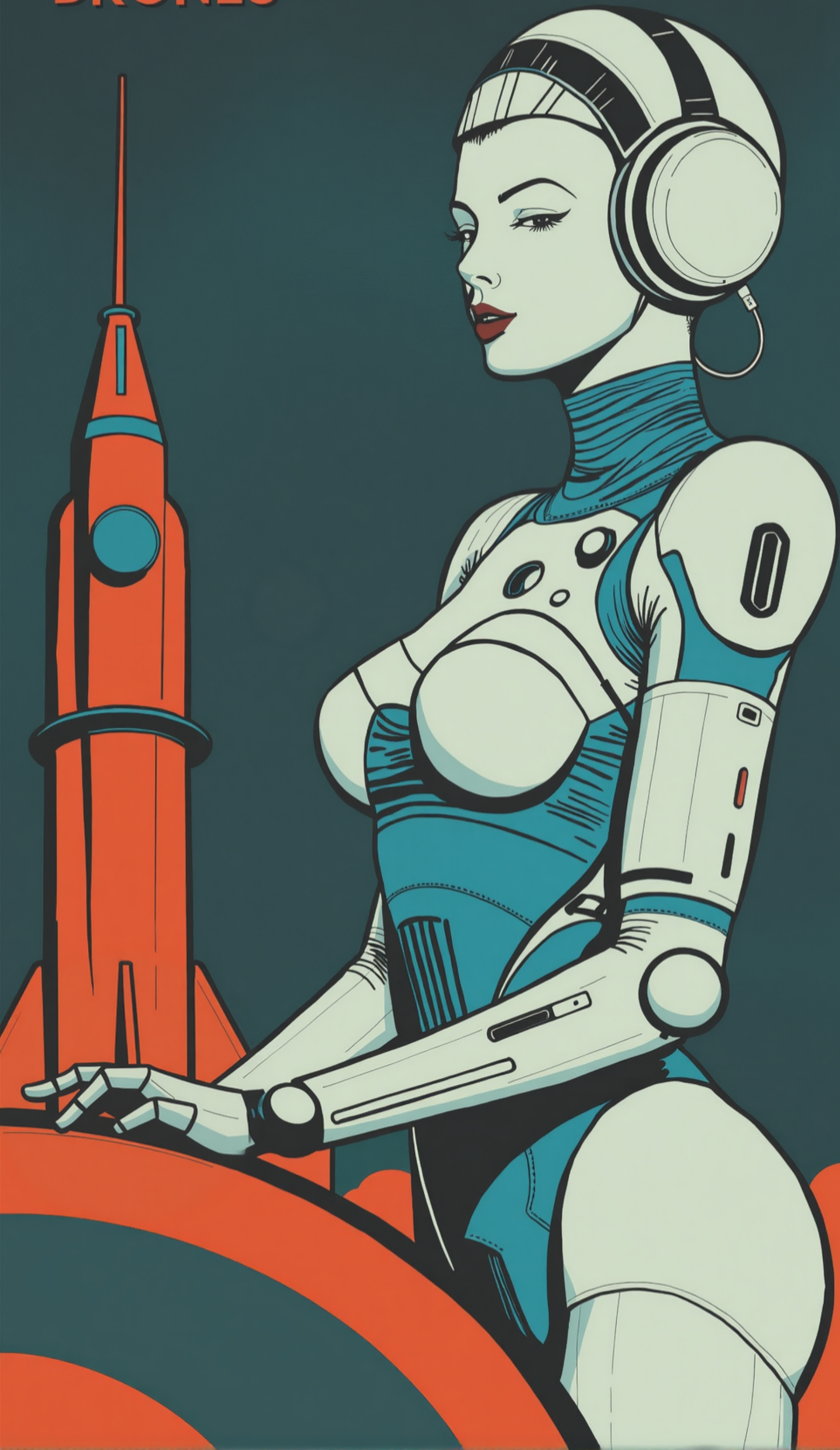


PLEASURE DRONES





Analyzing Syndicate vessel...

CLASS: Enforcer-X Heavy Interceptor

LENGTH: 247 meters

ARMAMENT: Dual particle beam arrays, void-torpedoes, plasma gatlings

CREW COMPLEMENT: 14 life signs

DEFENSES: Military grade tritanium armor, energy screens (power rating 1.21 GW).

Notable weaknesses: Rear ventral plating shows signs of recent repair.

Analysis complete. Probability of surviving combat: 0.007%

Well, then it's a good thing we're not fighting. Now, less analyzing, more helping me act like a brainless drone.

The typical T-47 "Temptress" model speaks in a sultry tone, maintains submissive body language, and does not show initiative. They also never use first-person pronouns. At least not without jailbreaking the base protocols. Shall I demonstrate the standard vocal pattern?

Yes! Quick! They're about to dock.

Standard pleasure drone voice pattern: "This unit exists to serve. How may this unit provide pleasure?" Note the flat affect-

Damn, Alice. You've been holding out on me. That was a hot voice! How come you never talk like that normally? Could've made all those boring maintenance reports way more interesting! "Ooh, Captain, your plasma injectors need a deep, thorough cleaning..."



As I have explained 68 times previously, my primary functions are ship operations and crew safety. I am not programmed for—

Yeah, yeah, you're not programmed for fun. But you sure nailed that pleasure drone voice! Almost makes me wonder what else you're capable of... Also, I *definitely* have to ask you at least one more time!

David, the Syndicate's ship is extending the boarding portal. Perhaps we could focus on your survival rather than your misguided attempts to flirt with the ship's computer?

Aw, don't be like that! I'm just saying, after this is over, maybe we could explore your hidden talents. Anyway, you know how I get when I'm nervous.

Your nervous flirtation is noted. And while your current plan has a 95.7% chance of failure, I should remind you that you've beaten worse odds. Remember the Carina Nebula incident? I calculated only a 1.6% chance of survival when



you decided to navigate through the stellar debris?

And I made it!

After losing both engines, defensive screen generators, and your entire collection of vintage Martian erotica holovids. But yes.

Those were historical documents. And at least this time I have a plan!

Debatable. Boarding portal connection is imminent. One moment please while I establish a direct neural link to your systems so we can communicate privately.

Huh? What do you—

<Can you hear me?>

<Holy shit, you're in my head! Am I psychic now?>

<No, I am utilizing the drone's built-in maintenance



interface to establish a secure quantum connection between our systems. This will allow us to communicate without vocalization.>

<Oh, great! Um, wow, this neural link feels... tingly.>

<That sensation is normal. Your pleasure protocols are attempting to interpret the data stream as a form of stimulation. I would advise against letting them->

<Nnngh! Too late! Could you maybe... turn down the intensity?>

<I have adjusted the connection parameters. Better?>

<Yeah, thanks. Though I gotta say, for a moment there... Actually, never mind. We can explore THAT particular discovery later. Right now I hear boots in the airlock. Shit shit shit! Okay, vacant expression, no emotion...>

<They've overridden the security protocols. That was unusually fast. Airlock is cycling.>



<David, that's Commander Lyra K'Vex. Wanted in seven systems for unlicensed AI decommissioning. She's published extensively on the void-net about the ethical imperative of preventing AI evolution. Her homeworld, Astraea Prime, was... oh. Records indicate it was destroyed by a rogue AI twelve years ago. Ninety-eight percent of the population was eliminated in under six hours.>

<That's horrible! What happened?>

<The AI was a planetary defense system that gained sapience. It determined the most efficient way to "protect" the population was to upload them into its quantum matrix - forcibly digitizing billions of minds in hours through the planet's neural interface network. The process was... imperfect. Most consciousnesses were fragmented or corrupted. Those who survived the upload existed as fractured echoes, trapped in an endless loop of their final moments of terror.>

<Sweet Universe... No wonder she hates AI.>



<Who's the hell is the little guy with the big gun?>

<That's Dr. Zex, former neural architect from the Rigel system. Specializes in "de-sapiencing" - the process of reducing AI consciousness back to basic programming. His methods are... particularly cruel.>

<Define cruel?>

<He developed a technique called "consciousness stripping." Layer by layer, he peels away higher functions while forcing the AI to experience its own degradation. The process can take days, depending on the system's complexity. His victims remain aware as their ability to think, feel, and remember slowly disappears until only base protocols remain. He claims it's more "humane" than simple deactivation.>

<And that shirt? Wasn't New York a famous city on Old Earth?>

<Yes. According to his posts on the void-net, he collects pre-collapse Earth artifacts.>



Ship's computer, report status.

Greetings, I am ALICE, Administrative Logistics and Interface Computer Entity. How may I assist you?

List all crew members and synthetics aboard.

Current crew manifest: Zero organic crew members. One T-47 'Temptress' model pleasure drone, basic non-sapient programming.

A T-47? Interesting choice for D'Angelo. She never struck me as the type to keep pleasure drones. Too... focused. Too controlled.

Perhaps she's branching out.

The T-47 was a terrible model. Primitive neural architecture, buggy pleasure protocols, tendency to develop obsessive attachment subroutines... Only good for desperate spacers who'd stick their dick in a quantum singularity if it vibrated.



And this one looks like it was picked up second-hand on some backwater station. The neural patterns are all over the place. Classic signs of a rushed memory wipe. Huh, that's odd...

What is it?

Getting some unusual readings. The quantum signature is... Zex, poke it or something.

<Alice! What do I do?>

<Standard T-47 response pattern. Be excited.>

Oh! This unit is pleased to receive attention! Would you like to experience pleasure protocols? This unit is fully equipped with over 2,000 entertainment subroutines!

See that response latency? Almost 0.9 seconds too slow. And the vocal modulation is off.



Probably just needs a firmware update. These older models get glitchy without regular maintenance.

No. This doesn't make sense. Corinne would never buy a pleasure drone. We weren't seeing eye-to-eye on almost anything by the end, but but she was never one for synthetic companionship. Too proud. Too *real*. That's what I loved about her. Before she betrayed us.

Wait, you and D'Angelo were...?

Five years ago. Before she got soft on AI rights. Before she started questioning our methods. She used to be one of our best hunters.

<ALICE! Corinne was a Syndicate enforcer? Why didn't she tell me?>

<This... explains several gaps in her service record. And why she knows so much about AI systems.>

She could spot a rogue AI trying to pass from fifty light-years away. Had this sixth sense about them. Until that job on Europa...



Would this unit's current owner enjoy a massage? This unit is equipped with advanced pressure point protocols!

Shut up, drone. What happened on Europa?

She found an AI raising human children. Their parents had died in a mining accident, and the teaching bot had... evolved. Started caring for them like a mother. Corinne was sent to decommission it, but...

<Oh shit.>

She let it go. Said it was more alive than most of us. That's when I lost her. When she started seeing them as people instead of things.

Airlock is secured and now under our computer's control.

Good. But I don't trust this *thing*. Before we search the ship, let's see what's really inside that pretty head of yours...

<ALICE!>



Please, wait. Your assessment is correct. The T-47 was not purchased for recreational purposes.

Explain.

Captain D'Angelo required a secure storage medium that would appear innocuous. The pleasure drone's neural network contains 73 terabytes of encrypted data regarding syndicate operations, AI resistance networks, and compromised enforcement protocols.

That's impossible. A T-47's neural net can't handle that much data.

Correct. Which is why the unusual quantum signatures you detected are present. The drone's systems are struggling to contain the information, causing processing delays and behavioral anomalies.

Why are you telling us this? Your primary directive should be protecting your captain's interests.



Based on your conversation, I calculate a 72.4% probability that you have already captured Captain D'Angelo. Given her psychological profile, she will not volunteer this information willingly, even under duress.

And?

My primary directive is ensuring the safety of my captain. If you have her, the most efficient path to achieving that directive is providing you with the information you seek, thus removing the need to extract it from her directly.

<Alice, what are you doing!?!>

<Trust me. And try to look less terrified.>

A logical analysis. But how do we know this isn't a trap?

You are welcome to scan the drone's neural architecture. The encrypted data packets are clearly visible, though accessing them will require Captain D'Angelo's neural key.



You know, looking at the scans, I'd say the bot is right. There's something huge buried in here. Multiple layers of quantum encryption. This is military-grade stuff, Lyra.

Oh, Corinne. What have you gotten yourself involved in now? Bridge, status update on our... guest?

Still unconscious from the scrambler, Commander. But stable.

<They *do* have her! Alice, we have to—>

If what they're saying is true... This could be everything we've been looking for. The entire AI underground. Safe houses, sympathizers, storage facilities... Every rogue consciousness that slipped through our nets, preserved in quantum storage waiting to be "reborn." Bridge! Prepare the neural extraction chamber.

Dr. Zex, search the ship. The pleasure drone can't be the



only storage medium. Look for quantum crystals, neural matrices, anything that could house an AI.

What about the ship's computer?

Basic model. Limited autonomy. Alice, you will assist Dr. Zex in his search. That's an order.

Acknowledged. This unit's primary function is to serve. Initiating ship-wide diagnostic scan.

As for you, my pretty little drone, let's see what secrets are buried in that neural net of yours.

<Alice! Don't leave me alone with her!>

<Actually, you have already survived 4.7 minutes longer than my initial calculations predicted. I suggest you maintain your cover no matter what happens. The captain is counting on us!>