



Adventures Across the Starways - Chapter 18

By Kari

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"Ye'll meet the rope's end for this me Bucko!" as he ran out of the room holding his ass.

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The door to the mess hall opened and in walked three of Murdock's crew, they had had enough of searching and now were feeling hungry. While two took a table and sat down, one walked up to the counter wondering what was today's grub, "Grim, Smiley be any of ye thar?" Sive blinked a couple of times not answering, would they recognize her voice? "We be searching the cargo bay for them prisoners Murdock lost. Now we be taking a well deserved break but need to ask, have ye seen anyone?" Sive stood there frozen for a moment. She had heard Fido's voice, the nanites were working on her vocal cords. She coughed to clear her throat before she shouted, "Smiley be sick it's me...Fido, I be taken his shift for today ya swabs. So no you don't have to bother searching the kitchen, ye and anyone who does will regret it. No one's been to the mess hall until you three

stumbled in." She held her breath hoping they would accept that. She turned towards the counter where the chef had been cutting up some poor beast, which was beside three large pots of bubbling stew. Sive grabbed the meat cleaver hoping to sound busy she started hacking at the bloody hunk of whatever it was, adding the chunks to the pots. The pirate laughed, "Blimey...thanks for the warning matey, I reckon I be eatin in the pit later." The trio left making jokes about Fido's cooking. One looked back thinking, "I swear he said he would never cook again." Sive was left alone for now, breathing a sigh of relief as the last crewman left the mess hall. She put the meat cleaver down blood leaking over the cutting board. "Yewww...gods but I hate touching raw meat! What is it with men and meat?" She mumbled low as she wiped her sweaty hands on her pants thinking about her next move. She looked at the three large bubbling stew pots remembering the pepper incident on the Angel. She smiled to herself, an idea forming in her mind. Searching around she walked over to what looked like a medicine cabinet. She opened it up to find quite a selection of different kinds of medications. Reaching in she picked up and read some of the labels. There was a large bottle of laxatives, another of a nexus honey, (a super sweet liquid which makes people vomit.) While keeping her ear tuned to anyone coming into the mess hall she continued to read the labels on the rest of the bottles. Some for digestion, others for indigestion another one was for pain. She kept on reading, "Ha...now this is funny! Will grow hair in less than one day....I guess this one is for the big bald guy...Grim?" She pocketed any of the bottles that had some affect on the digestion. Sive finished chopping the meat, and threw the last of it into the pots, then with a grim smile she added the laxatives, the honey and anything else she had found that might be upsetting to a tender pirate's stomach. She was thankful that no one came in while the stew bubbled away and became darker. She touched the dark brown liquid and carefully tasted it, "Not half bad," she whispered as she grinned smugly to herself. Not long afterwards she heard the doors open and voices coming from the mess hall. Lowering her voice she announced, "Come on me hearties, it's stew today, how many of you scallywags want a bowl?" The stew was going down a treat, a few of the men wondered how Fido had suddenly learned how to cook. Bowl after the bowl was eaten, and everyone was happy licking their chops until the first pirate groaned grabbed his stomach and suddenly ran out of the room. Followed by a second, then a third and then more followed. It seemed that the men were developing a severe case of "The Trots". Sive was still hoping the captain would join them when unfortunately Fido walked in the mess hall. Sive charged back into the kitchen hoping he hadn't seen her. Some of the pirates looked at him eyes blinking stupidly, others didn't care as they suddenly needed to use the toilet. One of the men shouted at him, "Ye'll meet the rope's end for this, me Bucko!!!" as he ran out of the room holding his ass. Fido had looked at the counter and saw the rear end of someone as they rushed back into the kitchen. He watched two more pirates run out of the room looking very green, he drew his gun. "I don't cook!" he shouted as he stomped towards the kitchen. There was no way to bar kitchen door. Sive looked desperately for somewhere to hide but apart from the freezer there was nowhere. She grabbed the meat cleaver while backing up to the corner. She had never killed anyone nor did she want to. She bit her lower lip, if she did have to well Fido would be a good start. Holding the cleaver in front of her, she waited for the door to swing open. Her breathing had increased, adrenalin rushing through her

body. She was ready to kill Fido if she had to. She watched the door open and saw Fido walk in, Sive's eyes widened, her mouth became dry, he had a gun! She hadn't expected him to be armed. He stopped frozen in shock looking at himself holding a meat cleaver. If he hadn't seen it with his own eyes he wouldn't have believed it. His black eyes narrowed as he slowly raised his gun, an evil grin began to form when suddenly something hit him across the back of the head. Sive turned hiding her face as a huge pirate, known as Tubs grabbed the falling Fido and dragged him by the ankles out of the kitchen. He lifted him up high to see if he was conscious before he dropped Fido none too gently onto the floor and sat on his chest effectively pinning him so he couldn't get away. Sive swiftly picked up Fido's gun pocketing it in her pants and moved over to peek over the doorway only to see the furious Tubs sitting on a struggling Fido. "YOUR RIGHT YOU CAN'T COOK!" the Tubs scornfully shouted as his big belly gurgled in discomfort. He grabbed a bowl of the hot stew from a nearby table and forced it into Fido's mouth before he could protest. More pirates joined in pouring their leftovers onto the wailing Fido, as Tubs belched loudly sweat running down his thick neck and back. Fido couldn't break free and was forced to swallow mouth fulls of hot stew, "Unhand me you fools!" he tried to shout but it came out all garbled as he got another load of stew in his face causing him to bellow as he fought. Murdock was heading for the mess hall. Something wasn't right. His men were rushing about and queuing for the loo. The door opened, his eyes widened as he took in what was going on. "What is the meaning of this!" he shouted. Tubs quickly stood up and saluted before turning and throwing up all over Fido. The other men laughed causing Fido to scream in frustration and annoyance. He started to shout when suddenly he realized he had shat himself. He grabbed his ass cursing as he ran out of the room, much to the delight of the other pirates. Murdock somehow managed to keep a straight face he held his hand up, "All right! All right simmer down men.... I demand to know just what is going on here?" he ordered. "He poisoned us captain," one of the pirates cried grimacing, (he really did have a greenish tinge to his skin.) "That stew he cooked made us all sick," another added. Murdock's eyes narrowed thinking, (Fido was on bridge duty earlier today. Chef and Smiley were supposed to be restocking the kitchen from the supplies we got from the planet.) He glanced over at the kitchen starting to mutter out loud as he strode towards it. "Fido would not take kitchen duty over the bridge...not after that last fiasco. I told him he was permanently excused from kitchen duty. Something isn't right here." Murdock moved towards the kitchen pausing briefly before entering the room. Swinging the door open to his surprise he found it empty. Meanwhile, Jason had finished his checks on the shuttle and opened the external door. He had flown something similar before and was now ready to leave the ship. The problem was once the shuttle left the ship Murdock would know where he was. He could lock on a tractor beam or worse blow him out of the quadrant. He would have to be quick and lucky. He watched the lift doors open at the same time several armed pirates entered the shuttle bay. He was out of time. He hit the launch button the little shuttle shot forward passing through the force field that kept the air in the ship. He had already programmed the course back to Sargo. As soon as he was outside, the ship engaged its engines and blasted at full speed out of the "Vulture's Claw" range. An alarm sounded on the bridge. Darlla rushed over to the display monitor, "This is why there should be two people on the bridge at all times," she angrily

mumbled. One of the shuttles was leaving the ship. Darlla powered up the weapons and the tractor emitters, but before she could grab the shuttle it shot into hyperspace. "Damn it!" she shouted angrily. She activated a tracking program before trying to contact the Captain, but he didn't answer. "Damn it!" she repeated banging her fist on the console. "Computer show me where the Captain is located." The computer replied, "Captain Murdock is in the Mess Hall. "What a time to be eating!" Darlla commented. She needed orders. Should she pursue or continue on course? Darlla activated bridge lock down. Only an officer would be able to unlock the controls. She needed to talk to Murdock. She knew he wasn't going to be pleased. Once again Sive had changed her looks. She becomes a blond man she had seen running for the toilet earlier. She was breathing heavily, her body feeling the strain of so many changes in a short space of time. All in all she couldn't help but laugh whispering, "Fido deserved all he got, that murdering bastard!" At the last second she had remembered to grab her outfit from the storage room before exiting the kitchen. Carefully making her way around the men she slipped out of the mess hall pretending to need to use the toilet. Seconds later Fido had rushed past her with a nasty stain on his pants. She had to stop and catch her breath. She knew she had been lucky and that her luck wasn't going to last forever. She had to find Jason and get off this damn ship. Once she was back in the corridor Sive swiftly ran until she came to an elevator. As she drew near, the door started to open, she quickly ducked into a air vent. Through the grill work Sive watched as a hard dark woman exited in a hurry. Once the coast was clear she dived into the lift and looked around. She didn't have a clue where it led nor could she work out the controls but finally decided to push a button. The door slid shut, when it opened she found herself in another corridor with a door at the far end. With a shrug to her shoulders she decided to head for that door. Coming up close the automatic door slid open, she entered the room. Sive grinned widely. She was on the bridge. Once inside she turned around as the door slid shut. She took out Fido's gun and fired it at the mechanism that controlled the door laughing, "Ha....let them try and get me now!" She headed to the central control area kicking off the massive shoes as she reached inside her pocket, finding only the small skirt. "Damn it I lost my top! The pirates will know I've changed my clothes, plus now I'm stuck with this stinking outfit!" she angrily muttered to herself. Walking to the Captain's chair she put her foot on the armrest and rolled up the pants of one leg to her knee, then did the same to the other. Last of all she pulled the large T-shirt out of her pants tying it to the side of her waist knotting it tightly. She flopped down into the captain's chair mumbling out loud, "What I need now is to get this tub on course to take me back to Sargo! But first things first!" Sive glanced around until she found the main control button. With a grin she activated the console and stated, "Total computer control is from the bridge until further notice." "Access denied controls on lock down. Voice recognition needed," the computer replied. Sive concentrated hearing Fido's voice in her head, "Cancel lock down, total computer control only accepted from the bridge until further notice." She said sounding exactly like Fido. The console beeped "Voice recognition accepted." "Wow, the nanites can be impressive, complete with voice approximation and disguise capability. Can I designed them or can I design them?" She couldn't help but pat herself on the back. Feeling herself relax she programmed a long override code so the captain couldn't take back control without coming to the bridge. Lastly, she set a course for Sargo.

The ship slowed and turned before re-entering hyperspace. That's when she noticed an unauthorized launch of a shuttle, she thoughtfully whispered, "Jason must have escaped. He didn't know I was here! He'll head back to Sargo. I'll have to get there quickly if I'm to find him." Now that things were under control Sive breathed heavily, noting her body felt strange almost alien. She never liked being a man, their urges and feelings were very different compared to females and they were so easily distracted. She chuckled. She knew she was relatively safe for now so decided to change back to Sive. Although not her original form it was the one she had spent the most time in over the past year. She liked the Sive look. It felt comfortable even natural after all this time. Sive allowed the change to happen slowly. It felt like a tense muscle slowly relaxing. She rolled her shoulders in a circle feeling the tight muscles in her neck loosen up. Sighing contentedly she sat back in the captain's chair, much of the stress behind her now. Sive hung one long slender leg over the arm of the seat while looking more closely at the controls. To her surprise she realized she could read them all. The nanites had translated the controls for her. (Amazing little machines with enough time I could probably run this entire ship!) With a huge grin, she sat up in the chair and laughed out loud. "Computer gives me access to the command codes," Sive shouted in delight still using Fido's voice. Mischief was on her mind. Meanwhile Murdock stormed his way towards the bridge, Darlla had explained what had happened with the shuttle and hadn't wanted to follow it without his orders. He angrily had ordered her to the cargo bay to find out what had happened while he went back to the bridge. His anger built as he passed several crew members laying outside of their quarters looking very ill. They had been unable to get into their quarters due to the intruder alert. He had contacted Dr Zark for a status report. Zark was treating the crew and had taken samples of the stew. He proceeded to tell Murdock the stew had been laced with laxatives, nexus honey, and other medications. "A deliberate attempt to poison my crew," Murdock mumbled, seething in fury. "Someone is going to pay for this!" Suddenly he froze on the floor in front of the lift to the bridge deck was what looked like a woman's ripped top. He picked it up. "She's still here!" he whispered to himself, "If she is responsible for this, I'm going to make her clean every inch of my ship before I sell her!" He passed a window and froze again. They were moving in the wrong direction. "Fido!" he shouted. Darlla had told him she had locked the bridge. Only an officer could override the lockout and only Fido and Darlla weren't at there stations. He sprinted to a computer panel. "Engineering this is Captain Murdock..... stop all engines." There was a pause before a voice replied: "Cap'n all command procedures have been reassigned to the bridge I canna override it." "By who's command?" Murdock asked in rising surprise and anger. There was another pause before the voice replied "Officer Fido sir." Murdock cursed, was Fido making a play for his ship? "Override it!" "Aye sir!" After what felt like ages the engineer came back on, "We canna Captain. Fido has sealed it with a long voice command code. It's going to take some time to hack. He has frozen all your control codes out as well." Murdock cursed again, "The bastard has locked me out! He's smarter than I gave him credit for," he whispered with irritation. "Override, control code officer one, Captain Murdock." He commanded into the panel. "I'm sorry sir the command code canna work from here. Ye need to get to the bridge and manually shut the engine down from there and restore ye command codes." "You fucking bastard Fido!!! Engineering give me a visual of the

bridge and activate com. I want to talk to that son of a bitch!" Seconds later a monitor by the panel flashed into life, what came into view was a small attractive young woman with curly brown hair and olive skin. She was sitting in his chair with her leg over the armrest and it looked like she was humming some kind of tune to herself. Murdock stood there for a full minute trying to fathom where this woman had come from. Somehow she looked familiar, after searching his memory it finally came to him. This was the woman the Emperor was looking for. He pulled out his communicator and uploaded the image. Yes it was the same woman! He had found her. Now he needed to catch her. He smiled slightly as he pressed the com. "You....in the captain's chair, whoever you are I command you to stop this ship now. Do it now and I will go easy on you otherwise there will be hell to pay!" he ordered, his voice echoing over the bridge com. Sive gradually glanced up at the camera quirking an eyebrow before replying, "Tisk tisk now Captain ...mmm what is your name? Oh yeah...Murdock. There is no need to get yourself hot under the collar. I'm positive you and I can come to some kind of understanding. You so called pirates are always making deals. Maybe you and I can do the same....maybe." Sive was loving this and decided to get the most out of provoking the man. She would show him she wasn't to be messed with. She smiled as she watched his eyes bug out in fury. She glanced down at her nails for a few seconds before looking up at Murdock again. Sighing loudly she continued, "Look, Captain, as you can see I am in charge of this tub of yours so here's the deal. You sit back and enjoy the ride. Maybe get a little lunch I hear it's rather tasty." She paused smiling at her wit, "I'm taking this ship back to Sargo where you kidnapped me. If your very very lucky you will escape the Sargo authorities and continue with your career of robbing and killing innocent people! But mark my words...we are going back to Sargo!" She couldn't help but be pleased at her remarks as she watched how his face changed colours from pasty white to beet red and back again. Sive couldn't remember ever enjoying antagonizing someone as much as she was now. The man really couldn't control his emotions which lead her to continue to poke the bear. Taking her slim leg off the arm of the chair she sat up sweetly continuing, "Now Captain Murdock, let this be a lesson to you and your scurvy men. That leading an honest life doing good deeds you will be rewarded with a kind of satisfaction, but as you can now see leading a lawless, contemptible, vile, obnoxious life. Well, I'm sure you get a general idea, will only lead you to a very bad end!" Sive was just warming up her lecture on the evils of a pirate career when she noticed that Murdock had vanished from her monitor. She lifted her leg back onto the arm of the chair and sighed as she mumbled out loud, "Pirates, they're all the same, they just never learn to take good advise." She checked the coordinates to make sure they were still on course before closing her eyes for a well earned nap. Murdock was furious, "That little bitch!!! Just wait til I get my hands on her!" he stormed into the elevator and went up to the bridge door, it wouldn't open. "Oh, she thinks she is so smart! She may be clever but I still have a few tricks up my sleeve!" He went to the panel by the door and opened it. He turned a knob and pulled out two wires. Then he went to the com. "Engineering remove the emergency O cylinders." "Captain?" a voice asked, unsure what his captain wanted him to do. "Do it, and shut down main lighting and power as well." A few moments later the voice came back, "I can't shut it down, Captain. The computer is only accepting orders from the bridge." Murdock shook his head. "Emergency shut down,

take the computer off line, then detach the engine power cables. Lights should go off as soon as the computer is down." "Aye sir." the engineer replied. He followed the captain's orders, seconds later the lights went out, being replaced with red emergency lighting shortly the engines fell silent, and the ship started to drift. Murdock went back on the com to the bridge "Listen up, who ever you are...I've just shut down the engines and the life support on the bridge including the backup. You have five minutes of air left. I suggest you open the door as it'll take me ten minutes to get the cutting equipment up here. Either way, I'm taking my bridge back!"