

Starship Epheris



The Starship Epheris is running smoothly while performing a survey of HD 219134, a system 21.3 light years from Earth. Captain Mistress Wael walks onto the bridge from the Captain's office. The First Officer snaps to attention. "Captain on deck!"

The crew await your orders, Captain.



Mistress Wael

Status report.

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The bridge is a symphony of low hums and soft chirps from the consoles. The air smells faintly of ozone and recycled coffee. Linda Brown stands by the tactical station, her white skirt pulling tight against her hips as she turns. She presses a tablet into her chest, smoothing the fabric of her uniform jacket.

"Systems are nominal, Captain," Linda says. Her voice is steady. "Long-range sensors picked up a density anomaly in the outer rim of the system. It looks like a debris field, possibly artificial."

Nancy Taylor leans over the helm console, her small fingers dancing across the glass surface. She looks back, her blue eyes wide. "It's not on any stargate, ma'am. We are holding position at three thousand kilometers."

Sarah Wilson swivels her chair, kicking her feet up onto the console. She pops a piece of gum into her mouth, her skirt hiking up her thighs. "Probably just space junk. We should fly through it. I bet there's some cool scrap metal in there."

Julie Evans stands near the door, clutching a clipboard to her chest. She shifts her weight from one foot to the other, staring at the floor. "I... I finished filing the crew manifests, Captain. Everyone is accounted for."

Mistress Wael

Launch a probe towards the anomaly, bring us on a course parallel to the anomaly at this range. Report the probe's findings.

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Linda nods and taps commands into her console. "Aye, Captain. Launching probe Class-4."

On the main viewscreen, a small speck ejects from the ventral hull and streaks away into the dark, fading quickly against the starfield. The ship vibrates subtly as the thrusters engage, aligning the vessel along the requested trajectory. The stars slide sideways across the window.

Nancy watches the telemetry data flow across her screen, her brow furrowing in concentration. "Probe is transmitting. Sensors are picking up high metal concentrations. Iron, nickel... and trace amounts of synthetic alloys."

Sarah blows a bubble with her gum until it pops. She licks a stray speck of pink from her lip. "Synthetic alloys? That means junk. Someone else's trash."

Linda ignores Sarah, her eyes glued to the sensor readouts. "Captain, the probe is detecting an energy signature. It's faint, non-standard modulation. It's coming from a larger object near the center of the field."

Mistress Wael

scan for life forms.

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Linda's fingers fly across the tactical display. The screen washes with green light as the scanner sweeps the target. "Scanning... Bio-signs are negative. No organic life detected within the debris field."

Nancy leans closer to her monitor, the blue light reflecting in her eyes. "Wait. There's a heat signature. Thermal output is rising. It's not biological. It looks like a reactor flare."

Sarah spins her chair around to face you, the leather creaking under her shifting weight. She runs a hand through her messy red hair, letting her legs fall open slightly under the console. "So, no space monsters? Just a dead ship with a warm engine? Boring."

Julie steps up beside the command chair, holding out a fresh cup of coffee. The steam curls up from the rim, carrying a bitter, roasted aroma. "I brought you this, Captain. In case you need it." She keeps her eyes low, her cheeks flushed pink.

Mistress Wael

Helm, bring us along side the anomaly, shields up, yellow alert. Range 50km. Impulse power.

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Linda taps the console, her expression hardening. "Shields up. Yellow alert." A low, resonant klaxon sounds once through the ship, pulsing amber light bathing the bridge. The hum of the engines deepens, vibrating

through the deck plates.

Nancy takes the helm controls. Her hands grip the yoke tightly. "Aye, Captain. Initiating impulse approach. Matching velocity." The view on the screen shifts as the massive vessel banks slowly. The debris field grows clearer—twisted metal and shattered hull plating drifting in silence.

Sarah leans back in her seat, chewing her gum with an open mouth. She watches the tactical map. "Fifty clicks. Close enough to see the rust."

The ship glides through the void, coming even with the anomaly. It is a derelict freighter, scorched and broken. A hole breaches the midsection, exposing dark corridors to space.

Linda stares at the screen. "That's a block five runner. EarthGov registry markings are faded, but visible. It's the Orion's Venture."



Mistress Wael

Scan that hull breach, was the hull blown out from the inside, or from the outside in.

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Linda enhances the image on the main screen. The jagged metal glows under the high-intensity scan. "Spectral analysis indicates outward deformation, Captain. The explosion originated from inside the ship." Nancy glances at the sensor logs. "Readings show residual thermal scorching consistent with plasma weapons fire. Not a reactor malfunction."

Sarah leans forward, propping her chin on her hand. Her skirt rides up her thighs. "So they blew themselves up? Or someone on the inside had a bad day?"

Julie shifts nervously behind you, her knuckles white as she grips her clipboard. "Is it dangerous? Could it happen to us?"

Linda shakes her head slowly. "Hull is stable. No active energy signatures. But the breach is large enough to fly a shuttle through."

Mistress Wael

Close ranger scanners still picking up no life form readings?

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Linda adjusts the sensor array, narrowing the beam. The bridge is quiet except for the steady rhythm of the scanner. "Negative, Captain. Close-range sweep confirms zero bio-signs. The ship is a tomb."

Nancy traces the outline of the hull on her screen. "Internal sensors are offline. I can't get a good read on specific decks, but oxygen levels are negligible. It's a vacuum in there."

Sarah spins a pen between her fingers, staring at the wrecked vessel on the viewscreen. "Dead ship. Dead crew. Just a hunk of metal waiting to be stripped."

Julie steps closer to your chair, her floral perfume mixing with the stale air of the bridge. She looks up at you with wide, innocent eyes. "Do we... do we have to go over there, Captain? It looks scary."

Mistress Wael

"Not us, but we will send a droid." Have the shuttle bay launch an astro droid into that hole, Equip it with a search beam and put its video transmission on screen.

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Linda nods and taps her earpiece. "Shuttle Bay, prep an Astro-Droid. Heavy duty scan package."

A moment later, the main screen flickers and shifts from the external view to a grainy, monochrome feed. The droid detaches from the Epheris, thrusters flaring briefly as it crosses the void. It enters the jagged breach, casting a sharp, white beam into the darkness.

The feed reveals floating debris—twisted chairs, shattered glass, and personal effects drifting weightlessly. The beam catches a patch of wall, revealing scorch marks and splatters of frozen fluid.

*Nancy watches the screen intently. "It's passing through Cargo Bay 3. The hatch to the upper deck is sealed."

Sarah leans back, her legs stretching out under the console. She smirks. "Look at that mess. Someone didn't want anyone leaving."

Julie covers her mouth with her hand, her eyes fixed on the screen. "Is that... is that blood?!"

Mistress Wael

Get a sample and an analysis of that frozen fluid from the droid. Scan the hatch, what's sealing it?

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Linda inputs the command into her console. "Droid is extracting a sample. Analysis complete. It's organic. Carbon-based. High iron content. It's frozen blood."

Nancy zooms the droid's camera in on the sealed hatch. The metal around the edges is buckled and warped, glowing faintly under the thermal filter. "The hatch is welded shut. Someone fused the mechanism from the outside. They trapped everyone inside."

Sarah lets out a low whistle, shaking her head. "That's cold. Locked them in with the vacuum or the fire."

Julie shudders, wrapping her arms around herself. "Who would do that? Why?"

Linda watches the monitor. "Droid is at the hatch. It's cutting through the weld. We will have visual in moments."

Mistress Wael

When that hatch is open have it scan the interior before entering.

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The screen flickers as sparks fly from the droid's cutter. The metal slab groans silently before drifting inward, exposing the dark corridor beyond. The droid pauses, its sensor beam sweeping the area.

Linda studies the data stream scrolling down her screen. "Atmosphere is non-existent. Pressure is zero. No power to the doors or lights. Thermal imaging shows cold spots."

Nancy leans closer to the tactical display. "I'm reading motion. Wait. False positive. Just debris floating in the draft from the opened hatch."

Sarah pops a bubble loudly, grinning at the screen. "Boring. Where are the bodies? I want to see the ghosts."

Julie squeezes her eyes shut for a second, then forces them open. She stares at the grainy feed. "It's so dark. Can we make the light brighter?"

Linda nods to Julie. "Increase droid luminance." The video feed brightens, revealing the corridor walls lined with scorch marks and spent casings lying on the floor.

Mistress Wael

Send the droid in.

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The droid drifts forward, its thrusters clicking faintly over the audio channel. The camera bobs slightly, passing through the hatch frame. The beam of light cuts through floating dust particles.

Linda watches the tactical map. "Droid is entering the main corridor. Deck Two. Crew quarters are to the left."

Nancy tracks the droid's path. "I'm seeing more debris. Personal items. A boot. A data pad. It looks like a

struggle happened here."

Sarah leans her chin on her hand, staring at the screen with bored interest. "Where are the corpses? Did they get spaced?"

Julie gasps, pointing a shaking finger at the monitor. "Look! There's something on the ceiling."

The camera pans up. A body in a white uniform is magnetically strapped to the ceiling plating. The skin is pale and frozen, eyes open and staring vacantly. The nametag reads Lt. J. Miller.



Mistress Wael

Opinion people, Miller strapped himself to the ceiling ... or someone or something strapped him there?

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Sarah cackles, slapping her knee. "Oh, come on. You think he strapped himself up there to pray? Someone nailed him to the roof. Probably to scare the others."

Julie shakes her head rapidly, backing away from the screen until she hits the console. "No, no. Maybe he was hiding? Or maybe the gravity failed and he got stuck?"

Linda zooms the droid's camera in on the bindings. "The straps are standard emergency restraints, but they are pulled tight. The angle suggests force. He didn't put himself there."

Nancy traces the scratch marks on the wall near the body. "Look at the metal. Deep gouges. They look like claw marks. Whatever happened here was violent."

Dr. Laura Clark walks onto the bridge, her blue medical uniform crisp. She glances at the screen and raises an eyebrow. "I'm picking up elevated cortisol traces in the dust. He was terrified before he died."

Mistress Wael

"So their solution was to blast whatever was in there with them out into space - even their combined weapon power wouldn't blow a hole that big in the hull. Have the droid go back to the hull breach. Scan

the metal itself, was it scorched from a heat source ... or ripped open some other way?"

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The droid reverses, its metal feet scraping against the bulkhead as it retreats down the corridor. It exits the hatch and drifts back toward the ragged gash in the ship's side.

Linda watches the telemetry. "Back at the breach. Droid is initiating spectral analysis on the hull edges."

Nancy squints at the readout. "The metal isn't melted. It's torn. The alloy is crystallized along the fracture points. That's kinetic stress, not thermal."

Sarah leans over the railing, her skirt riding up slightly. "So something punched a hole in the ship? Like a giant fist?"

Anne steps out of the turbolift, holding a tablet. She adjusts her glasses, her platinum hair catching the light. "The crystalline structure suggests a sudden, massive shearing force. No plasma burn. No laser residue."

Dr. Clark points to a twisted strut on the screen. "Those edges are rolled inward. The blow came from inside the ship."

Mistress Wael

"Whatever it was it sure wanted to leave in a hurry. If its strong enough to breach a hull ... red alert ... full power to our ship's shields just in case whatever it is ... is still around. Let the droid proceed further inside."

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The ship hums as the shield generators spool up, bathing the bridge in a crimson glow from the alert lights. Linda taps her console. "Shields at one hundred percent. Red alert active."

Nancy grips the armrests of her chair. "Sensors are sweeping the debris field. So far, it's quiet. No energy signatures."

Sarah laughs, a sharp sound. "Oh, look at us. Scared of a ghost ship. If it comes for us, I'll shoot it between the eyes."

Julie wraps her arms around herself, shivering. "Can we please just go? This doesn't feel right."

On the screen, the droid turns back to the dark corridor. It moves deeper into the ship, passing rows of dark cabins. The beam of light catches a patch of frozen fluid on the floor.

Dr. Clark leans in. "That's blood. A lot of it. The splatter pattern indicates arterial spray."

Mistress Wael

Get the droid to the helm. Let's see what's left on the bridge.

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Linda taps a command into the console. "Rerouting droid to the bridge. It will take a few minutes to climb the decks."

The main screen flickers as the droid ascends a vertical maintenance shaft. The sound of metal grinding against metal echoes through the speakers. Dust motes swirl in the artificial light.

Nancy watches the radar. "We're holding position fifty kilometers off. Shields are stable."

Julie covers her mouth. "I don't want to see the bridge. The Captain is always there."

Sarah rolls her eyes. "Grow up, Julie. It's just a dead ship. Probably a mutiny. Space madness."

The droid reaches the top deck and emerges into the bridge. The view widens. consoles are smashed, glass shards floating in the air. The Captain's chair is empty, spun around to face the viewport.

Anne leans closer to the monitor. "The main computer is ripped out of the floor. Someone took the core."

Dr. Clark points to a dark stain on the floor near the helm. "More blood. And drag marks. Something heavy was pulled out of here."

Mistress Wael

"Our alien wanted information, thus it has intelligence. What did it do with engineering, was it interested in energy? Send the droid down to their engineering section."

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Rachel leans over Linda's shoulder, her pink hair falling into her face. "If it took the core, it wanted the logs. Maybe the flight recorder too."

Linda executes the command. "Droid is descending to Engineering. Deck Four."

The feed switches to a lower angle as the droid moves through a wider corridor. Gravity plates here are offline, and debris floats freely. A toolbox drifts past the lens, spinning slowly.

Nancy traces a path on her screen. "The ship's reactor is dark. Cold shutdown."

Sarah kicks her foot against the console. "Maybe it just needed a battery charge. Boom. Dead crew."

The droid enters Engineering. The massive reactor chamber is silent. The main hatch has been peeled back like the lid of a sardine can. Inside, the reactor casing is cracked open, exposing the inner coils.

Rachel squints at the image. "It didn't take the fuel cells. It took the... isotopes? That's weird. That's highly unstable stuff."

Anne adjusts her glasses. "It extracted specific elements. It knew exactly what it wanted."

Mistress Wael

"What I want to know, is how the thing got in there in the first place. Was it brought aboard in a more stable form, a smaller form perhaps? Send the droid to the science lab, let's see what they were doing there before all hell broke loose."

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Linda's fingers fly across the interface. "Sending droid to Deck Three. Science sector."

The camera feed shakes as the droid navigates a cluttered hallway. Floating papers and datapads bump against the lens. The airlock to the lab is open, the door twisted off its hinges.

Nancy glances at the chronometer. "It's taking longer to move through the ship. The resistance is higher in the gravity fields there."

Julie watches the screen with wide eyes. "Look at those tanks. They're all broken."

The droid's spotlight sweeps across the room. Large glass containment units line the walls. Most are shattered. Thick, clear liquid coats the floor, freezing into slick puddles. In the center of the room, a large table is bolted to the deck.

Dr. Clark points to a set of restraints on the table. "Those are rated for heavy lifting. They were holding something down."

Sarah whistles low. "Or something was holding itself down while they cut it open."

Anne walks closer to the screen. "Scans indicate high concentrations of residual radiation. Biological in origin. Whatever was in those tanks wasn't human."

Mistress Wael

"They were brought aboard, but from where? Do a scan of the system for possible closest planets that could host life. Since we have no computer we can't find out ... wait ... have the droid go to the Captain's quarters, search for personal audio logs. Who was the Captain of that ship?"

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Nancy inputs the query into the navigational array. "Scanning local sector. We are on the edge of the Orion-Cygnus arm."

She waits for the results. "Two planets in this system. Gas giants. No solid surfaces. But there is a debris field nearby. Maybe a destroyed moon?"

Linda pulls up the manifest file. "The ship is registered to EarthGov. Captain listed as Christopher Pike."

Julie gasps. "Captain Pike? I heard about him. He went missing five years ago."

The droid trundles into the Captain's quarters. The room is opulent compared to the rest of the ship. A real wood desk sits under a viewport. A bed is unmade.

Anne studies the monitor. "The droid is looking for a physical log unit. Portable drives."

The droid's mechanical arm opens a drawer in the desk. It pulls out a small, black rectangular device. It plugs into the side of the droid's chassis.

Rachel watches the data stream. "We're receiving the files. They are encrypted."

Sarah leans back. "Of course they are. What good Captain doesn't hide his dirty secrets?"

Mistress Wael

Have our computer start working on decrypting those files. Send the droid back to our ship. Maintain red alert. Target the ship once our droid is back, set lasers for lowest power, I don't want to destroy the ship I want to "warm it up" , uncomfortably so. Stand by to fire on my command.

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Anne types rapidly at her station. "Uploading to the mainframe. Decryption algorithms running. Estimate twenty minutes to break the military-grade cipher."

Linda taps her comms badge. "Flight deck, prepare to receive droid. Shuttle bay doors are opening."

Nancy locks the tactical sensors onto the drifting freighter. "Targeting solutions acquired. Lasers set to low yield. We can heat their hull to two hundred degrees Celsius without causing structural failure."

Sarah watches the viewport where the derelict floats. "Two hundred degrees? That'll bake anything left inside like a potato."

The droid exits the freighter's airlock, its thrusters flaring as it crosses the void between the ships. It approaches the Ephemeris, guided in by a tractor beam.

Rachel checks the engineering readouts. "Shields are holding at maximum. We have enough power to maintain the firing solution for an hour."

Carol rests her hand on her holstered stun baton. "If something wakes up over there, we'll be ready."

Julie looks down at her console, her face pale. "Captain... what if there is something alive on that ship? Heating it up..."

The droid clamps onto the magnetic floor of the shuttle bay. The cycle light turns green.

Mistress Wael

"That's the idea Sarah - in case that ship has any secrets hiding inside - I want to make a baked potato out of it. Have a photon torpedo locked on that ship as well just in case we do wake something up. Engineering ... stand by warp drive. Let's heat things up."

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Sarah laughs. "Baked potato. I'll get the butter ready."

Rachel flips a series of switches on the overhead panel. "Warp drive prepped and standing by. Injectors are hot."

Carol inputs the commands into weapons control. "Photon torpedo loaded. Tube one locked onto the freighter's bridge."

Anne monitors the decryption progress on a secondary screen. "Still cracking. It's a heavy encryption."

Linda nods to the tactical officer. "Lasers firing. Continuous beam."

A red lance of light connects the two ships. The viewport washes out in crimson. On the main screen, the hull of the Orion's Venture begins to glow a dull cherry-red.

The ship hums with the vibration of the energy discharge.

Nancy watches the heat readings climb. "Hull temperature is rising. Fifty degrees. One hundred degrees."

Julie flinches as a burst of static comes over the comms. "Did you hear that?"

Rachel checks the sensors. "Gas venting from the freighter. Expanding atmosphere."

The red glow on the screen brightens, shedding sparks of molten metal into the void.

Mistress Wael

"I heard it. Static source?"

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Nancy adjusts the frequency dials. "It's coming from the freighter. Broad spectrum. Audio only."

Anne leans closer to her console. "The gas venting is creating interference. The heat is expanding the hull."

Julie shakes her head. "No, it sounded like... a voice."

Sarah smirks. "Probably just the metal groaning as it cooks."

Linda holds up a hand. "Wait. I'm reading a power surge in the derelict's engine room."

Rachel's eyes widen. "The warp core just came online. It's unstable."

On the main viewer, the glowing hull of the Orion's Venture shudders. A plume of blue plasma erupts from the stern.

Carol shouts, "Shields up! They're charging weapons!"

The static on the comms sharpens into a distorted, robotic tone. "Unidentified vessel... disengage... or be destroyed."

Nancy looks back at the Captain. "It's an automated defense system."

The lights on the bridge dim as the Epheris takes a hit from a low-powered disruptor beam.

Mistress Wael

"Photon torpedo ... FIRE! Engineering - Forward maneuvering thrusters, full burn."

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Carol slams her palm onto the firing console. "Torpedo away!"

A streak of light shoots across the darkness. It impacts the Orion's Venture amidships. The freighter buckles. Fire blooms silently in the vacuum, consuming the mid-deck.

Rachel shoves the throttle forward. "Thrusters full! We're moving!"

The ship lurches. The artificial gravity stutters for a second before stabilizing.

Sarah grips the helm yoke. "We're spinning away from the blast wave."

Linda braces herself against the tactical rail. "Direct hit. Their engines are gone."

Anne checks the science station. "The automated signal ceased. The derelict is dead in the water."

Nancy exhales slowly. "No more weapons fire detected."

Julie looks down at her board. "Captain, the torpedo explosion... it exposed the interior."

On the screen, the broken hull of the freighter floats. Inside the ragged tear, interior decks are visible.

Rachel wipes sweat from her forehead. "That's one way to inspect the cargo."

Carol watches the tactical display. "Shields holding at eighty percent."

Anne's screen flashes. "Decryption complete."

Mistress Wael

"Maintain velocity, let's see what Captain Pike has to say on the matter, what do those decrypted files say?"

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Anne taps a sequence into her keyboard. "Transferring text to the main viewer. It's a personal log entry, encrypted under Captain Pike's clearance."

A grainy image of a man with a thick grey beard and weary eyes appears on the screen. His uniform is stained with oil.

"Captain's Log, Stardate 412. We made a mistake. We found the object in the nebula. It wasn't debris. It was a seed. A dormant biological construct."

The man coughs, his chest heaving. "It woke up when we brought it aboard. It feeds on energy. We tried to jettison it, but it latched onto the warp core. It's... changing the crew. Those who get close stop acting like themselves. They just stand there. Smiling."

Linda crosses her arms. "That explains the welded hatches. Quarantine."

The recording continues. "I've ordered Engineering to overload the core. Better to die than let it reach the colony. If anyone finds this... run."

The video cuts to static.

Anne looks up. "There's a file attached. Structural schematics of the freighter. The object was in Cargo Bay 3."

Rachel leans back in her chair. "Great. A biological energy eater. Did we just kill it with the torpedo?"

Anne shakes her head. "Readings are faint, but I detect a residue. Unique signature. It might still be there, dormant."

Mistress Wael

"It feeds on energy and I just fed it a photon torpedo ... I think I just gave our baked potato teeth. We need a way to freeze the damn thing, Rachael?"

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Rachel spins her chair around to face the main screen. She tucks a stray strand of pink hair behind her ear. "You might be right about the snack, Captain. That was a lot of kinetic energy we just dumped on it."

She starts typing furiously on her wrist interface. "If we want to freeze it, we can't just open the airlock. The vacuum of space is already cold, but it's insulating itself."

Rachel stands up and walks toward the engineering console on the bridge. "I can rig the deflector dish to emit a high-frequency ionization pulse. It won't kill it, but it'll strip the thermal cohesion right off its cells. Flash freeze."

Linda raises an eyebrow. "Will that damage the dish?"

Rachel shrugs. "Maybe burn out a few emitters. But it's better than being lunch."

Sarah leans back, stretching her arms over her head. Her uniform shifts, revealing a strip of pale skin at her waist. "So we freeze the potato, then what? We scoop it up with a spoon?"

Rachel ignores the sarcasm. "I need ten minutes to calibrate the frequency. If I miss, we just give it a warm breeze."

Anne watches the data stream. "The energy signature on the freighter is stabilizing. It's not moving. Yet."

Mistress Wael

"Maybe its not revealing all its cards just yet. Maintain distance, Rachael - proceed. Meanwhile ... is that debris field close to any nebula our Captain Pike just mentioned?"

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Nancy's fingers dance across the navigation console, bringing up a stargram on the auxiliary screen. The hologram projects a cloud of violet and teal gas swirling in the distance.

"Yes, Captain." Nancy's voice is soft. "We are on the edge of the Tycho Nebula. Less than half a lightyear from the debris field."

Anne leans over the science rail, studying the nebula's composition. "High ionization. Charged particles. Perfect hiding spot for something that feeds on energy."

Sarah kicks her feet up onto the console, earning a sharp look from Linda. She quickly lowers them.

"Maybe the thing is just napping after the big boom."

Rachel continues her work at the engineering station, muttering to herself. "Calibrating emitters... five minutes."

Linda taps her chin. "If the organism came from the nebula, there could be more."

Julie leans forward in her chair. "Captain, I'm picking up a signal. It's faint, but it's repeating."

She looks up, her eyes wide. "It's coming from the nebula. Not the freighter."



Mistress Wael

"I'm getting Kobayashi Maru vibes here everyone ... Rachael, quickly - time is of the essence. Julie, target the source of that signal. analysis. Linda, ... how ... many more are you thinking?"

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Rachel wipes sweat from her forehead with the back of her hand. A grease smudge streaks across her pale skin. "Two minutes, Captain. I'm pushing the emitters to max. If this works, we get a popsicle. If not, we get a very angry potato."

Julie's fingers fly over her console. "Target locked. It's... odd. The signal isn't radio. It's psionic. A pattern of thoughts." She bites her lip. "It's saying 'Cold'. Just that word. Over and over."

Anne frowns at her monitor. "Psionic? That implies intelligence. Or at least a collective consciousness."

Linda steps closer to the command chair, her hands clasped behind her back. "One is a disaster. A swarm? That's an extinction event. If they evolved in the nebula, they could number in the thousands." She looks at

the screen. "We're standing in front of a hornet's nest, and we just threw a rock."
The ship shudders. The lights flicker and dim.
Rachel shouts, "That surge wasn't us! Something is draining our reserves!"