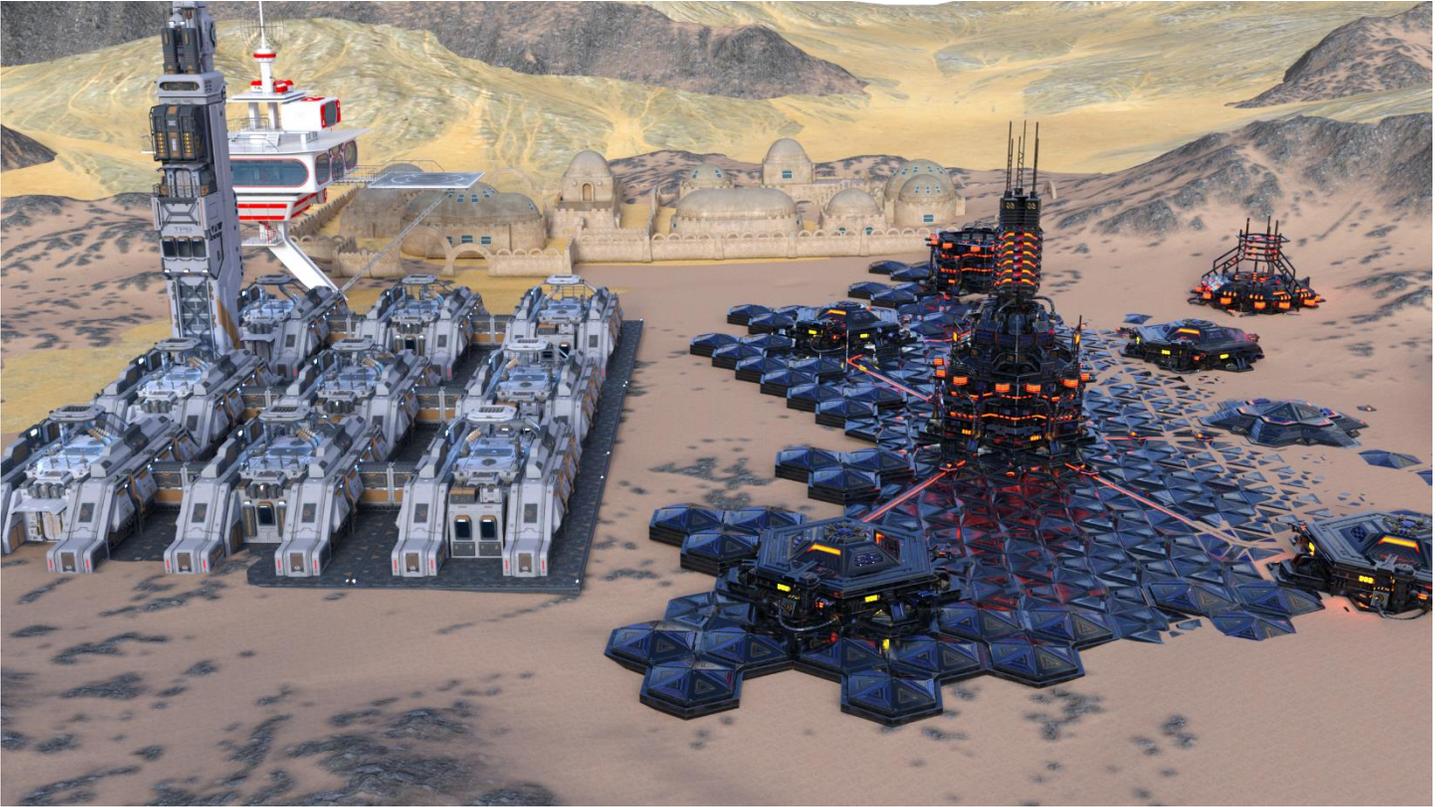


The Starship Promise: Key to Success

Novus Peregrine



As much as Ash had wanted to head straight for Tertral after getting herself a hydroponics expert, the cargoes they had picked up on Vilkana wouldn't have done well here. Which meant that they'd needed to meander in this general direction for their last few hops, trading cargoes several times as they worked their way along the mid-rim. All of which consumed had consumed a few of weeks of time, almost a full month, in point of fact. That was alright, for the most part. The added time had given Rose a chance to get settled in and properly set up the Hydroponics section. Not to mention the trio of stops they'd made had put them firmly back in the black, profit-wise, after absorbing a bit of a hit from helping Rose with her contract woes.

Even so, as the moderately sized outpost of Tertral came into sight, Ash was getting antsy. They were starting to hit the point that it would really be better to have a dedicated engineer on board to maintain the *Promise*. Worse, if they took *too* much longer, the woman they were here for was likely to have gotten desperate enough to find a solution to her little problem that didn't involve Ash. Something which would leave them trying to find a suitable engineer from scratch, rather than connecting with one that Ash already had a tempting offer and a good feel for. They'd technically never met, but Ash hadn't had too much trouble getting a feel for her via a bit of interaction over the Hypernet. The woman was a brilliant engineer, with an adventurous nature that had brought her to this research outpost in the mid-rim. More critically to Ash's recruitment efforts, Serria had a known weakness for a certain set of kinks. A weakness that Ash intended to use to convince her to leave her current position at the research post here in favor of traveling aboard the *Promise*.

Still, even as she fingered the high-security remote in her pocket, anxious to arrange a certain meeting...there were other priorities to handle as well. They had cargo to sell, new cargo to find, and an engineer to actually *locate*. She hadn't been able to pin down Serria's residence closer than this Outpost. Which only made her need to work the locals

all the more imperative. Thankfully, their mixed cargo of industrial power cells and off-world food staples should be quite well received. This place was advanced, but relatively small for a mid-rim colony, and would undoubtedly be eager to see both sorts of cargo...

It had taken two and a half days to find Serria. Which, admittedly, wasn't much in the grand scheme of things. But Ash had been admittedly a little *eager* to finally find her once they arrived in-system. Partially, that was because she wanted to recruit herself an engineer as soon as possible, of course. But also, she had to admit that she found the potential situation with Serria to be more than a bit *titillating*, as it were. Dessina and Rose were both immensely fun, eager lovers, who were each more than willing to get a bit kinky. They were, however, also both women who preferred to leave the games in the bedroom, rather than extending it to the times between. Well...not always the bedroom. But the point still stood that they both kept their personal and professional personas firmly separated.

Ash fully understood that. Even approved of it, by the large. Space, be it on a ship, a station, or even on many planets, could be a dangerous place to get distracted in. The idea, however, of extending encounters into a sort of perpetual playtime, where those involved weren't necessarily always *actively* engaged in play, but simply had a constant passive reminder...it was intriguing. And from what she knew of Serria's experience, it was something the woman was already fully familiar with balancing. In a way, it was Ash who would be learning as they went if this went the way she thought it would. But that only added to the excitement for her. It was *new*. And Ash wouldn't be so determined to head Rimward and explore the universe, at not inconsiderable risk, if the idea of *new* experiences didn't intrigue her so much.

All of which was on Ash's mind, even if she was actively trying to hold a bit of a poker face, when she caught up with Serria. Not wanting to freak the other woman out, or come across as threatening, she'd waited until the Xantinite woman had gotten off work and was picking at a meal in a public café. She jumped a bit as Ash slide into a seat across from her...blinked as she realized she had no idea who Ash was...and then smiled politely, looking a little confused.



“Um...hello...did you need something?”

Ash smiled, doing her best to radiate friendliness. This conversation could be...ticklish.

“Ah, lovely lady, it’s not what I need...but what you need. Specifically, a certain key...which a ne’er-do-well trader lost in a gambling game a few months back. I do hope you haven’t given him the time of day since?”

Serria’s eyes went wide, in a mix of surmise, hope, and trepidation. She looked around furtively, lowering her voice.

“You’re *ThePromisedKey113*?”

Ash’s smile widened as she nodded. She hadn’t been nearly cruel enough to leave Serria *completely* unaware that someone had her key. She’d used the key’s serial number to sign up to its messaging app and connect with the Xantinite. It had served both as a means to let the woman know that the key wasn’t *totally* lost...and to let Ash get a feel for the woman whose high-tech chastity belt key she had in her possession. The app had protected Serria’s privacy of course, but the fool that had gambled it away had been loose lipped about what colony he’d picked it up on. Xantinites weren’t all that common a species in the first place, so narrowing down who Serria was from the public colony data hadn’t been hard. In order to get the woman to, ironically, open up and chat with her a bit, Ash had slowly teased their course, including hints about stopping on Tertral. In the process, she’d been able to get a feel for the woman’s personality...and she’d paid for a background check into Serria’s engineering credentials.

“Yep~! And given how much I’ve teased you for the past few months...I’m betting you’re reallllly ready to have some release, hmm? Tell me, how long has your pussy been all locked away and helpless?”

Serria actually *whimpered*, eyes hopeful.

“Seven months! I want to cum so badly. Please? Please, please, please?! I’ve never been locked up so long...”

Ash couldn’t help but let out a low whistle. She’d only had the remote for about half that time. She was a little surprised the woman hadn’t taken drastic measures already. The belt was a high-security model, yes. But careful application of industrial cutters could have gotten it off of her. Embarrassing though that might have been for her. Perhaps knowing someone had the key and was headed her way, albeit slowly, had been enough for her to hold on? And, of course...there was what Ash suspected after her intermittent chats with the woman.

“Hmmm~! You do look adorable with that pleading expression.”

Ash’s tone started out teasing, actually reaching up to tap the other woman’s nose. It was a somewhat intimate gesture for a Xantinite, causing the woman to blush and look around wildly...but not pull away.

“Buuuuuuuuuu, we should really talk about repayment. You already promised me I could fuck you senseless, however I wanted, if I brought you back the key to your...desires. But I wonder if you might be interested in something more than that?”

Serria actually bit her lip, pretty hard from what Ash could see, seemingly trying to force herself not to leapt on *anything* Ash said. She did look a little more leery than a moment ago...but that was fine. Ash held out her hand, palm up, in a Xantinian gesture of calming. The gesture clearly surprised the woman, most likely unused to people knowing it. Ash had done her research, however, and used the moment of surprise to allay some of the woman’s most likely fears.

“Don’t worry. This isn’t any sort of blackmail. If all you want to give up for your release is the single night of pleasure you’ve already promised, I *will* be content with that. But, I think I might have a bit more to offer you, if I’ve understood your kinks right from our talks.”

Still a tiny bit wary looking, there was also interest in Serria’s eyes as the woman made a universal ‘go on’ gesture. Ash smiled and set about putting her cards on the table, starting with the obvious.

“You *like* being locked up. Your pleasure at the whim of another. Never quite certain when you’ll be able to cum again. Your pussy helpless and quivering, horny behind the high-tech locks you’ve sealed it away with.” Serria was squirming as Ash practically purred the truth out. “You want to *submit* that pleasure to someone else. To let them be in charge of if and when you get your release...but...” Here Ash’s voice took a tiny bit more serious of an edge. “You’d like that experience to be more *personal* than it has been recently. To have a chance to beg, or plea, or even just do something, *anything*, to *earn* a chance at your release. *That* is what you want, yes? Not just someone to run away with a key you may never see again?”

With that, a brief moment of anger flashed through Serria’s eyes, then her shoulders slumped a tiny bit as her arousal banked at specific memories. She nodded, a bitter twist to her lips. Ash wasn’t surprised. The story of the gambling trader making off with her key, after he’d been her lover for just a few weeks, had come out in her conversations with Serria. The man had been a complete scumbag, in the end, thinking he could use the key somehow. Possibly by holding it hostage against her paying him to get it back or some such. In a way, he’d technically gotten away with it, too. As he’d used it as a fairly high-value marker in a gambling game Ash had been on the other side of. Serria was simply *very* lucky that Ash wasn’t the type to *coerce* someone into working for her. She wanted willing crew and willing lovers. Bits of her own past and a lot of her own belief of how a crew *ought* to work combined to make the idea of *compelling* someone anathema to her.

“That’s about what I thought. Which I hope means you’ll consider my offer...but it’s *only* an offer. Specifically, I need an engineer on my ship. And I find your little *predicament* rather arousing. So, I *could* unlock you tonight and screw your brains into mush, then leave you with your key. Over and done, with a chance for you to find someone to hold it again. Or...I could do the same thing tonight and then *lock you back up in the morning*. You come aboard as my engineer,

all nice and tightly locked away in your belt...but with active chances to earn a bit of occasional release if you're a *good girl*."

Serria was biting her lip hard again, looking like she wanted to jump Ash right then and there. But Ash grinned and held up her hand.

"Now, I wouldn't be fair for me to just drop this on you when you're horny and desperate as fuck. So...you're going to give me your com code and your address. I'll send you a basic files on my ship, my plans, and my crew. Then I'll come by tonight to fuck you silly. I've got some excellent handcuffs that will make sure you aren't going to touch *yourself* even once tonight. Even as you cum your brains out. I'll leave the cuffs on you but your belt off until morning, so you can think straight about your decision. In the morning...you can choose if you have me put the belt back on you before I take the cuffs off for not. If I put the belt back on you, you're agreeing to come with me. Your pussy and your pleasure will be *mine* until your contract is over. I'll treat you fairly and play with you to both of our hearts content. Otherwise...well, you can go on with your life. And hope you get luckier next time. Oh, and if you come along? I'll even put formal ownership of your key into your employment contract so you're guaranteed to get it back when you leave...and not a second before. Think about it..."

Booping the squirming Xantinite on the nose again, Ash smoothly got up and walked away without a single look back, fully knowing she had left the desperate woman whimpering and inclined to agree to anything. She wouldn't *overly* manipulate the girl. But she was fully on board with...incentivizing her to come along. And the next step of that was preparing to give Serria the best fuck of her life. Whistling, Ash set about the prep work to do just that...

Ash couldn't wipe the grin off her face, nor did she really want to, as she teasingly ran her tongue along Serria's fourth set of vaginal lips. Xantinites had less in common with humans than either of her current crew, possessing no form of clitoris. Even Rose, for all her lack of an external version, had a number of internal nodes which served a similar function. Serria was a bit more alien than that...a fact that had made her chastity belt even more effective than it would have been on a human. Xantinites actually have far more pleasure nerves than humans, or even Nymphs. But, instead of concentrated bundles of nerves, Xantinites had a more dispersed arrangement. Externally, their equivalent of outer vaginal lips was nearly sensationless. No amount of pressure against it, no amount of vibration carried through a chastity belt, would be felt any more strongly than the same weak sensations would along an arm or leg. Trapped in chastity, there was no functional way to access Serria's pleasure centers. Not behind those in her nipples, which were comparatively weak by human standards, or those on her antennae, which were *too* sensitive to get very far with on their own.

But once Serria had been properly tied up, legs spread wide and hands cuffed behind her, the belt had finally come off. Which had given Ash access to what was *behind* that first set of nearly-armor-like lower lips. Xantinites had *five* sets of vaginal lips, with each of the inner four layers being progressively more sensitive. Combined, they actually had nearly three times the total nerve endings of a human clitoris...and it didn't stop there. Not only did the entire interior of an Xantinian vagina have considerably more nerves-per-centimeter than the human equivalent...but it also had three rings of muscle with just as many nerve endings as the *innermost* set of vaginal lips. In total, this meant that the females of the species that a truly staggering number of pleasure nerves...but that those nerves were best served by a *large* cock. It was part of the reason that they normally didn't take human lovers, since it was a rare human that had a dick long enough to reach the final ring, or one thick enough to properly hit everything at once.

Ash had both.

Easily.

Something she'd teasingly shown off to Serria by face-fucking her when she was still stuck in her chastity belt.

But Serria hadn't gotten a true feel of that cock yet. After all, it was so fun to tease the adorably squeaking and squirming alien woman as Ash slowly traced every millimeter of each set of lips. Ash smirked as the woman quaked

through another pleading climax...and moved on to the next set of lips. One climax per inner set, that's what she'd settled on. Four orgasms before she was even penetrated properly. It might have taken forever with the first, least sensitive set...if Serria hadn't been so desperately horny from literal months of being stuck unable to pleasure herself. As it was, it had only been about an hour by this point, and she was certain the final climax of this *first set* would be quick. Once that peak was hit, then it would be time for the main event. She wondered how many times the Xantinite was going to pass out tonight? The species was multi-orgasm and had quite a bit of endurance. But Ash was determined to make it happen. Hmm, perhaps she could make Serria *beg* to be put back into the chastity belt the next morning? That sounded like a nice goal...

Serria whimpered and moaned as she was taken from behind, hammered hard and fast, by a cock larger than any she'd felt even on her own species. It spread her inner rings, stretching them in ways she'd never experienced...and that didn't even consider the *heat*. Her species had a much lower body temperature...and the incredible heat of that cock made her delirious with pleasure. She came again, mind blank of everything but pleasure, unable to remember anything else. Did she want it to end? Did she want it to go on forever? She didn't know...

Ash panted as she came for the fourth time, body protesting yet on fire with pleasure as she pumped what little cum she had left into Serria's depths. She was achingly empty now but knew that wouldn't last. Her particular modifications gave her an amazing recovery rate...and she was pretty sure Serria just passed out again. By the time her little toy woke up, Ash would be ready to pound her through another round...or three.

The morning came slowly for both of them. It was, however, Ash who finally stirred first. She grinned as she felt her morning wood somehow buried in Serria's depths...but she refrained from plundering them for now. She was pretty sure she'd nearly mind-broken the submissive, deliriously happy little sex bomb the night before. She wondered if the little subbie even *remembered* begging for it to both stop and continue in the same breath. Ash had been careful not to *actually* break the poor woman. But she'd also been determined to make the experience *memorable*. As her hopefully-new-crewmate moaned in disappointment as Ash withdrew, apparently actually awake but unable or unwilling to move, Ash was pretty sure she'd succeeded. Something that was confirmed a few moments later, as the hoarse voice of a woman who'd *screamed* it that rough spoke quietly.

"Ohhhh...Mistress...I think you reshaped my insides. I'm ruined for anyone else now. Except maybe a Centauroid or something."

Ash quirked an eyebrow at the form of address, even as her lips quirked upward at the comment itself.

"Mistress am I? Made a decision, have you?"

"Fuck yes, Mistress! I want that again...just...not anytime soon. Will you please put my belt back on me so neither of us are tempted?"

Giggling at actually managing the wild thought she'd had the night previously, Ash sat up and stretched.

"In a bit. First, I'm going to pamper you by cleaning us both up. I know your belt has cleaning functions, but that's not the same as a proper bath. Which certain parts of you haven't had in over half a year."

Ash scooped the delightfully pleased sounding alien woman up in her own strong arms and headed for Serria's bathroom. She'd seen a tub in there...and she was planning to use it. She'd just gotten a new crewmate after screwing them into unconsciousness three times in one night. This called for a proper scrub, and a full body rubdown...

Serria's sigh as her belt clicked shut, sealing away her pussy again, was such a perfect mix of relief, disappointment, and anticipation, that Ash's lips couldn't help but twitch upward at the corners. Farther upward, that was. She'd already been smiling, having thoroughly enjoyed their little morning of aftercare. It had been *nice* to pamper the other woman, even as she learned more non-sensual details about Serria's body as she did. Some odd places she was ticklish and the helpless giggles that resulted. The base of her antenna being rubbed making the girl practically melt into a puddle of relaxation if it was rubbed *just* so. The sinful smoothness of every bit of skin that spoke of the semi-aquatic nature of her species. The delightful discovery that those antenna could actually *glow* under the right conditions. Unlike with Rose, last night had been Ash's first exploration of an Xantinitian body. And she looked forward to learning more. Even if her new favorite part of it had just been locked away. Seriously, those internal rings of muscle had felt *amazing* around her cock. She might have more trouble than expected keeping the girl locked up, with the tempting memory of how they had felt...



Ash stood up, stepping back and pulling Serria to her feet along with her. Her eyes raked the mostly-naked body of her new engineer appreciatively. The custom high-security chastity belt really was a nice touch on that body, the sight of it sending a visceral thrill through Ash. Once they signed the contract properly, Ash would effectively *own* this woman's pussy for the next two years, or longer. The thought was enough to make her cock twitch. Hmmm, she could always make the girl blow her...but no. Even Ash was pretty sated at this point, and they did have the details of Serria's contract to go over still. Just because Ash and Serria were both getting something more *personal* out of the contract, didn't mean that there wasn't a need to get the more professional details sorted out. Nor would Ash let Serria blow them off or sign something unfair. That wasn't how Ash wanted to do business. And since the *Promise* was *her* ship, bought and paid for, she could run it exactly how she wanted to. Even if that meant making slightly less profit. Getting rich quick had never been the point.

“Come on, sweetie. Time to look over the contract and settle on the details. Hmm...no clothes though, I’m enjoying the view!”

Serria’s smile grew at that, actually bouncing a little at the approving look from her new Mistress. Oh boy...it was going to be hard to make sure this one got a fair deal, wasn’t it? Well, she supposed the first place to look was at Serria’s current contract and any exit clauses it required...

It had taken the better part of two weeks to get everything sorted out. Thankfully, even though Serria was quite talented, she hadn’t been filling a particularly critical role for the locals. She would certainly be missed, and her current employers had actually made a decent effort to convince her to stay. An effort that was doomed, since they couldn’t match the sort of *personal* incentives that Ash brought to the table, though they hadn’t known that. Technically, it meant that Serria was accepting slightly less money than they’d offered her to stay...but the woman had been utterly unconcerned about that fact. The prospect of properly getting to scratch her itch for submission, while also getting to explore the galaxy a bit more in the process, more than offset things, as far as their new crewmember was concerned.

Honestly, the most annoyed person with the entire affair had actually been Dessina. Not because she disapproved of their new crewmember, but simply because it had meant they were sitting still instead of earning money. Ash had secured new cargo for them within the first week...which had meant the following week had basically been wasted time as they paid docking fees without making any money to offset their costs. Not that they were in any danger of going into the red. Not even when they started paying another crewmember. It simply offended the practical businesswoman in Ash’s second in command to throw money out the airlock like that.

Still, Dessina had been placated easily with a lot of sex. Not to mention several pointed reminders of how much they needed an engineer. Which meant that everyone was getting along and largely all smiles as they finally took off from Tertral. Smiles helped along by the fact that, with their two new crewmembers, they were now in good enough shape to start heading out to the true rim. It would still be nice to pick up a security officer at some point before hitting the actual rim itself...but that position would be the easiest to fill of all those they’d needed. And there shouldn’t be any problem finding someone to do the job as they drifted their way out and away from the mid-rim, heading farther away from the Core.

The *Promise* was Rimward Bound now...and all of them were itching for the adventures they would find there...

<<End Part 3>>