

THE COSMOS: THE SYMBOL SITUATION

BY

J. SMYTHE

This is a work of fiction. Any resemblance to actual characters, descriptions, names, places, and events is purely coincidental.

All rights reserved. No part of this literary work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storing and retrieval system, without the written permission of the author, and/or the publisher of record, except where permitted by law.

Thanks to all my family and friends for their patience and understanding.

j.s.

ISBN:

Published by
The Educational Publisher Inc.
Biblio Publishing
BiblioPublishing.com

CONTENTS

Chapter One	1
Chapter Two	5
Chapter Three	17
Chapter Four	27
Chapter Five	35
Chapter Six	43
Chapter Seven	55
Chapter Eight	67
Chapter Nine	75
Chapter Ten	85
Chapter Eleven	93
Chapter Twelve	99
Chapter Thirteen	105
Chapter Fourteen	115
Chapter Fifteen	121
Chapter Sixteen	129
Chapter Seventeen	137
Chapter Eighteen	143
Chapter Nineteen	147
Chapter Twenty	151
Chapter Twenty One	155
Chapter Twenty Two	163
Chapter Twenty Three	167
Chapter Twenty Four	171

J. SMYTHE

Chapter Twenty Five	175
Chapter Twenty Six	181
Chapter Twenty Seven	191
Chapter Twenty Eight	201
Chapter Twenty Nine	207
Chapter Thirty	211
Chapter Thirty One	221
Chapter Thirty Two	225
Epilogue	233

CHAPTER ONE

In a very well protected secret compound somewhere in China, Yo Ching Tao was sitting in a certain Yoga position. He was in deep concentration concerning his one and only passion – the Universe. The stars had to be in their proper alignment. The Universe is the prime controller. It was the ultimate Creator, the life and souls of all the Beings. It must not be tampered with or altered in any way. Certain stars control our very Being; Disorder among the stars disrupts the harmony among the constellations. That can bring disasters, typhoons, devastating tsunamis, even diseases and wars between peaceful nations. To have peace, harmony and success the stars must be in perfect alignment at all times. It was a necessity for the Earth's peoples.

Yo Ching Tao had assumed vast holdings of land to enable him to achieve that peace, harmony, and success. He owned, or had an overbearing interest in, several Chinese electronic manufacturing plants, some with Government contracts. He owned many tea plantations in India and China. He had acquired several thousand acres of hillside property in Afghanistan where the Poppy plant was the only product. These properties provided the much-needed income to supply him with his peace, harmony and success.

Yo Ching Tao's well-protected compound in China had several underground chambers and camouflaged bunkers. It had a large glass-domed observatory that housed several

large, long-range telescopes for viewing the stars. Two other telescopes, controlled electronically, constantly monitored and tracked two orbiting satellites. One was for communications. The other one sensed any changes in a particular zone of the universe. It was a very long way out in deep Space and stationary. One satellite was dying or already dead. The Russians had launched it over 30 years ago.

Yo Ching Tao lived by the careful and distinct rules created by Astrology and governed by the laws of the Constellations. The stars must always align. This was critical. They should not be disturbed.

In one of Yo Ching Tao's camouflaged buildings, in the sub basement 25 feet below ground, a specially designed, almost nuclear bombproof chamber, held all of his electronic equipment. He had many, many 'private contractors' at his disposal every minute of the day, anywhere in the world. These people were necessary to maintain his peace, harmony, and success.

Yo Ching Tao was not happy. The United States had launched a large research type of vessel into Outer Space several years ago. Yo Ching Tao had monitored all of the communications to and from this vessel. He followed this floating laboratory with his powerful telescopes. This vessel was only known as the Mother Ship. Although the Mother Ship occasionally altered its orbit deep in Outer Space, Yo Ching Tao followed its every move. He knew when it moved or breathed. He knew when it was re-supplied. He knew its entire manifest. Yo Ching Tao had access to its remote relaying satellite. He had built the electronics for the satellite. He had a finger in every nook and cranny of this Mother

Ship. He had some employees in that Mother Ship!

The United States and its allies began to send other air ships into Outer Space to construct an even larger facility. This project took several more years to complete. Yo Ching Tao had listened and watched that progress, too. This Space facility was 100 times larger than the Mother Ship. Yo Ching Tao shuttered every time he had heard the name of this vessel – the Father Ship!

The Father Ship presented a few problems that Yo Ching Tao could not overcome. All of his attempts at receiving any communications to and from the Father Ship were blocked. Some type of cosmic shield blocked his high-powered telescopes. The United States Military had complete control of the Father Ship. The Father Ship remained a mystery to him. He did, however, have a 'spy in the sky.' Although it had crash-landed evidently on a dead star, its rotating beacon could be seen from one side.

Yo Ching Tao concentrated his energies toward the Mother Ship further out in Space. This was the one that continued to interfere with the natural order of the Universe. This was the one that occasionally changed its orbit completely upsetting the precise organization of the stars. It was altering the balance of Nature. The stars were the controller, not that Mother Ship!

Yo Ching Tao spent many hours devoted to the crew of that Mother ship. He formulated a strategy. The Navigational aspects of that Mother Ship *Must* be altered. Perhaps he would begin with the Captain and the Navigational Officers.

The satellite he had placed in deep Outer Space many years ago had mostly died. It had been an experiment to

J. SMYTHE

study the stars. It had been in a particular orbit but it was slowly dying. The harsh environment of deep Space had been taking its toll. The satellite was barely alive and now there was no way to fix it.

Yo Ching Tao had contemplated a way of recovering it but there was no way to do it now without raising suspicions. When the satellite had been launched there was neither the Mother nor Father Ship in deep Outer Space. The Father ship was approximately a three or four day trip away from it.

Unfortunately for Yo Ching Tao, the explosive device could not be detonated either. He would have to let it die a peaceful and quiet death. His only alternative is to let it go. His priority now is to find a way to either move, or destroy that Mother Ship. It is upsetting the balance of Nature and of the Universe, the creator of our very Being.

CHAPTER TWO

Ellen heard the airlock clang shut behind her. She grabbed the handhold bar to stop her from falling into the cavity of the Escape Pod. Only a few seconds had expired when she heard the airlock seals engaging completely. She had made it to safety. The emergency lights came on and the life support system quietly purred to life. The computer-generated voice said, “welcome to pod number three..all systems are operating correctly.” Ellen wondered whom that voice belonged to. It was a male voice, calm, staccato, yet not overbearing. She actually didn’t know how long she could stand listening to it. She shook off those feelings quickly.

She squirmed into the console stool and brought the console to life. This was an emergency. Those alarms, in this environment of space, meant business. We didn’t have any drills up here. Her console monitor showed something happening in the aft area of the Mother Ship. The monitor flashed out the word of another warning, too. “Warning! Complete Space Suits Required Immediately! Warning! Complete Space Suits Required Immediately!” She turned a few degrees to her right and saw the lockers where the suits and helmets were stored. There were six lockers. Six? There was hardly room for three people in here, let alone six!

Ellen grabbed the handhold bar and counted three steps over to the lockers. She had to ask the computer to unlock locker door number one. “This was stupid,” she said out

loud. "Why are the lockers locked, anyway? This is an emergency situation. If we had to get to those space suits in a hurry like this...well, never mind. It was just another example of those things that those jerk designers did because they didn't have the slightest idea what the *Real* people have to do up here. Besides, it was probably the lowest bidder!"

Ellen somehow managed to get into the space suit. "You would have thought that somewhere on the outside of these things there would be a tag listing whether it was a man's or woman's and what size it is!" she mumbled. "I'll have to remember to notify the Space Technologies Department!" The life support system of the suit would not energize until she sealed her helmet. The bulkiness of the suit was unreal. She could hardly maneuver enough to get back to the console. She found the right keys on the console to override the locker door locks and activated it so the lockers would remain unlocked. She didn't have the slightest idea how long she would be in here. She knew that each spacesuit's life support systems was good for up to five days, or maybe longer. This escape pod could go 30 days on its own system.

Ellen felt the pod shutter a bit. She knew what it was but hoped it wasn't true. If the pod separates from the Mother Ship she would be floating in the vacuum of space. That shutter meant that the first stage separation had begun. She didn't hear that automated male voice say anything. So far so good.

She looked back at those lockers. There were six lockers. There was one of her. The airlock had been sealed, no one in or out now. She was alone. She would remain alone. She could survive at least 30 or more days. There were rations,

too. Hanging on the side near the end of the lockers was a net suspended by two hooks. This was the sleeping area. The net kept the occupant from crashing into anything while they slept. After all, if it weren't for her magnetic boots she would be floating all over this pod now, albeit a very small area.

Ellen weighed the odds in her mind as her fingers flew over the console seeking any answers of what had happened. It had been a long time since her Space Survival Training. She had remembered what to do. Those remaining extra space suits meant more survival time for her...assuming the pod held together! That was another problem but she wasn't ready to deal with it right now.

Ellen activated the outside video cameras. Only one of them was working. It only showed her the open vacuum of space. It showed where she was headed, not where she had been. At least nothing was floating by. The automated voice came back on. "Commander..your pulse and blood pressure are both high." Just what she needed, someone to tell her things she already knew! "Commander..the intercom network is now operating." "Wow," she thought. That's some good news! She knew Big Brother and Big Sister were somewhere around. They always were. This was a close family and everyone looked out for each other, even the computer systems belonged to the family, it seemed.

Ellen energized the microphone in her helmet. "Jim? Jim? This is Ellen. I made it to Escape Pod three. Can you hear me? Can anyone hear me? Over." Ellen heard the response click and breathed a sigh of relief. "Ellen? Ellen? This is Jim. Can you hear me? Over." The intercom systems was crackling and becoming very garbled. She didn't think it

was going to last very much longer. Ellen needed to know what had happened to the Mother Ship as fast as possible. “Jim. What happened and where is everybody else? Where are you, Jim? Over.” “Ellen. I heard something about a ruptured cooling hose in the aft plasma generator about the same time the door sealed up. I’m in Escape Pod six. My console is not working. The lockers won’t open. I can’t get at the Space suits. The pod’s life support system gauges read five. They should be at 10....” Jim faded away. Ellen called Jim several more times but there was no response.

Ellen searched the meager stores for something to drink. She wanted, and needed, something a bit stronger than the filtered-six-times water. She found what she was looking for stashed under the console. It was a stainless steel flask, taped to the underside of the console. She ripped it off of the desk in one solid motion and flipped the lid back, not caring what might be in it. One quick gulp and she felt immediately better. Her throat burned a bit but she didn’t have to talk or breathe on anyone anyhow!

The calm, male, automated voice told her to stand by. Escape Pod number three was deploying. “*What??*” Ellen almost had a heart attack! “*Deploying? Why?*” Ellen didn’t understand! The console and all the systems involved didn’t indicate any serious problems necessitating deployment of a pod. “*You can’t be serious? This can’t be happening! No way!*”

Ellen remembered what happens when an Escape Pod has to deploy. First, anyone inside of it must be in complete space suit attire including gloves and helmets. The control console would have several flashing areas in plain view. All of the life support systems must have been activated when the

helmets are secure. All occupants must be securely tethered to certain bars and rods. The rods, or handholds, were painted a bright reflective red color. The emergency beacons would be activated as well as the outside flashing locator beacon lights. All communication and intercom systems must be checked and confirmed before the retro rockets could push the Escape Pod many nautical miles away from the Mother Ship. This is for explosion protection. All these things were redundant and built into the computer. If any occupant misses one step, the pod will not release. Each step was very important.

Ellen's fingers flew over the console tabs and keys. The returning information indicated that the cooling coil rupture had been repaired but not fully tested or operational yet. The Mother Ship central computer was running the internal diagnostics. Some other 'minor' difficulties were being repaired also. Ellen didn't see any 'red flags' pop up on her monitor. There was a little square popping into view in one corner she didn't like, though. It was flashing a bright orange color. That meant it must be dealt with as soon as possible. She didn't know exactly how to deal with it. It was telling her that one of the batteries was depleting faster than it should be. "What battery? And, where was it?" Ellen asked out loud. "Computer, which battery is low and where is it located?" That calm, male voice answered. "there is a battery located in the service bay compartment number 12..it is located under floor panel number six..it cannot be replaced..i will check the electrical capa..." The voice stopped in mid sentence. "*Now what!??* Ellen was stunned! "Now I've lost the computer voice, too?"

Ellen saw a flash through the little window above the control console her. It was an Escape Pod. She couldn't see the number. The small retro rocket was firing to maneuver it away from the Mother Ship. In just a few more seconds it will send out a large blast and move the pod away many nautical miles. Ellen didn't have time to focus on that pod. A new voice spoke up from somewhere. It was another male, but a different voice than before. "Commander..this is gabriel..i am one of the back-up computer generated voices..please be aware that this escape pod, pod number three, will begin deployment in five minutes exactly..thank you.

Ellen quit using her fingers in mid stride. *Five minutes?!! No, this can't be happening!! What is going on?*" She moved her eyes to the ceiling in horror!

"Computer. Double check all deployment protocol for Escape Pod number three, please." She tried to remain calm. She made sure her helmet and gloves were within her reach. Five minutes is a long time...if you are waiting for someone, or a train to arrive. When you are preparing for what may be your doom, it seems like seconds!

Ellen recorded things into a log. She locked down anything that might float around inside

this tiny place. She located two tiny flashlights. She checked the operation of the lights on the top sides of her helmet. She did anything to keep her mind off of the clock. She was sure this new voice, Gabriel, would count down for her anyway. Perhaps Gabriel could be her Savior??? "Commander..two minutes to separation..prepare tethers and space suit, gloves.. helmet..at one minute mark..several clicking noises..these are release mechanisms one through

six..at 30 second mark..hissing sound..retro rockets activation.. shudder.. escape pod number three released... in 8.5 seconds..second bank of retro rockets..thrust firing..exactly 3.6 seconds..escape pod number three..achieves minimum distance..14.97 nautical miles from..mother ship..required for survival..thank you.” “That is the way it is supposed to be.” Ellen said out loud. Ellen knew the scenario. She said a little prayer to herself just as Gabriel piped up again. “Commander.. separation aborted..repeat..separation aborted..beginning reconnection protocol.. thank you.”

Ellen could hardly believe her ears. She had never heard of an Escape Pod being this close to deployment having an aborted launch. Not that she was complaining, of course but...She just took several deep breaths, removed her helmet and gloves and hit those console tabs and keys like lightning.

Ellen wiped away the tears of joy and hit the microphone button for the intercom. “Commander Norcom here. Does anyone copy? Over.” Ellen couldn’t make out any of the words over the jubilant party noises from somewhere.

“Ellen? Ellen, is that you? Get out of that pod and join us in the Bridge. See you soon! Out!”

Ellen didn’t realize her mouth was wide open until Gabriel spoke again. “Commander..your pulse and blood pressure rates are much too high. Commander..gabriel has checked. life support systems..all systems are..go.. mother ship dying quickly.. false readings everywhere..most oxygen..proton engagers..malfunctioning..bridge command center.. inaccessible..advise you remain in escape pod number three until further notice..thank you. Ellen thought

this all had to be a dream. First, I was ordered into this escape Pod, and then the alarms sounded. Did I climb in? Jump? Fall? Leap into this Escape Pod? The airlock slammed shut and sealed. I am alone. I have a life support system built into the pod and plenty of stores. I have the advantage of five additional space suits and their built-in life support systems. I could possibly survive floating in the abyss of space for 40 or so days. I have no communications to the Mother Ship. My first venture for deployment in the Escape Pod was aborted at the very last second or two. Then, I had a telecom from the Bridge saying all was fine. By the time I had stored my space suit and shut down the console, that second automated, computer-generated back-up male voice named Gabriel told me everything was false. The Mother Ship was dying and I had better remain in the Escape Pod until further notice. I think that sums it all up. I am back into the Space suit.

Ellen finished entering all of this information into the log and took a large swallow from that stainless steel flask she had found under the desk. She sat in the quiet darkness, only hearing the clicks and hisses of normal operations, waiting for that unseen, mysterious voice to tell her that her blood pressure and heart rate were both too high. "I wonder why that might be," she thought, chuckling to herself.

"Commander..begin preparations for separation..separation count-down from 10 minutes has begun..thank you."

The psychological aspect itself was frightening. Ellen didn't fear what was about to happen. She was ready for it the first time. It was the stuff that was in between that scared her.

How did those voices from the Mother Ship's Bridge get from there to her if these were somehow false, or fake? Ellen really hated it when she had to rely on an invisible thing or voice to tell what to do. She was...is...a Commissioned Officer employed by the Naval Division of the Space Program. She is a Commander with many years of experience -maybe too many? She is an engineer and a graduate of the Astronaut program. She knows what to do. It is only the metaphysical, that great divide between what is real and what isn't; what you know about and what lies hidden, that bothers her.

Ellen shook herself back to reality as Gabriel came back to life. "Commander..t minus two minutes and counting..thank you." Maybe it was that voice. It was all business, no emotion, and no feelings for the person receiving the message. Yes, it was mechanical and that's it. That is the way it worked. It wasn't Space Physics!

"Commander..t.minus.one.minute..and.counting..gloves ..helmet.required...checklife.support..system..connect.tethers..check.communications..network..initializing.release...mechanisms..thank you."

Ellen was ready. She secured her helmet and slid on the bulky gloves.

The life support system purred in her ear. Ellen took one last look around to make sure everything was secured. The stainless steel flask was on the table next to her tiny flashlights, and both within her reach. She wondered which one she would need first as the Escape Pod shuttered one last time, gracefully falling into the empty, quiet abyss of space.

Only a few seconds had elapsed and the small retro

rockets fired to move her away from the Mother Ship. Another minute of smooth gliding and the other retro rockets fired, thrusting Ellen to the back of her seat. It was a short burst of only a few seconds or so but the Escape Pod travelled nearly 15 nautical miles.

Ellen sat at the control console and directed the Escape Pod Port side to view the Mother Ship out of her little window over her control console. It was bigger than she had remembered. She was over 15 miles away and that orbiting Mother Ship still appeared very daunting. Ellen felt very small, like a mere grain of salt, floating and drifting aimlessly.

Gabriel broke the weird silence. "Commander..all systems operating as per protocol..please notice left stern area of mother ship..adjusting oxygen levels..your pulse and blood pressure rates are within proper limits..thank you."

Ellen found it hard to concentrate on Gabriel's wording and voice. It was too stark. She almost missed the part about viewing the stern area. Ellen used the telephoto setting on the video cam and zeroed in on the stern of the Mother Ship. It was spewing what looked like smoke. There were no lights working on that section either. She did spot four or five small objects floating outside of the Mother Ship near the smoke. A closer look revealed heavily equipped astronauts. She changed the magnification factor to eight. The astronauts were tethered to each other. Three of them were being towed back to a side airlock. They didn't make it. A small explosion blew out a portion of a sidewall and the astronauts disappeared. Lights began flashing. Small round spheres, maybe ten of them were beginning to encircle the area. Ellen knew that these were robotic examiners and were being

controlled from inside the Mother Ship.

Ellen became glued to her telephoto cameras. Terrible things were happening all over the Mother Ship now. She saw some Escape Pods drop down from the sides of the Mother Ship. Only a very few of them had activated their retro rockets to maintain the proper distance from that Mother Ship. Were they occupied? Could she contact them? Those escape pods needed to fire their retro rockets very soon. They were much too close to the Mother ship. She counted only six of them. Maybe Gabriel would know.

“Gabriel, how many Escape Pods are on the Mother Ship and where were they located?” “Commander..there are six escape pods for each deck..there are six escape pods for each occupied main structure on the inner boundaries..there are a total of 52 escape pods..thank you.”

Fifty-Two? I didn't have any idea there were so many. I suppose it makes sense. Each Escape Pod could hold a maximum of six people...assuming they could reach the proper designated one in time. The more she thought about it, the more assumptions she had to make. The Mother Ship had a manifest of 200 and just like the ships that sailed the oceans, they probably had enough life rafts so all could abandon ship if need be.

Ellen released her tether and stumbled over to the other small window. The

vacuum of space was dark. She couldn't see any lights or beacons from this side at all. On the way back she stopped at her control console. All systems were operating correctly. She wished she could have the last swig from that stainless steel flask but pushed herself off toward the lockers. She felt

J. SMYTHE

slightly sick and was exhausted. Those astronauts being towed was really the *last* thing she had wanted to see.

“Gabriel. Keep an eye on things while I catch a few winks. Thanks.”

Ellen threw the netting over her space suit, clicked off the magnetic system for her boots and secured the belt. As soon as she felt her feet float slightly off of the floor, she was asleep.

CHAPTER THREE

Ellen fell into a deep sleep and dreamed that she was eight years old. She was sleeping in the old hammock at her parent's cottage at the lake. Her little brother was helping their mother bake some cookies. Ellen could smell those freshly baked cookies all the way outside. She kept her eyes closed as her tummy grumbled her awake. She swung the hammock very slowly trying desperately to hear the birds singing. The sun darted in and out of the trees and the shadows swayed side to side with Ellen. It was very peaceful and serene. She almost went completely asleep again when her father called her in for lunch. She really didn't want to get out of the hammock but shook herself awake and went into the cabin.

When Ellen was ten years old she was lying on a blanket in the front yard of her house with two of her friends. It was late summer and prime time for watching the meteor showers. Ellen's friend, Janey, slowly lifted her arm straight up and pointed to an airplane flying high in the sky. "See those blinking lights on that airplane," she said to no one in particular. "I wonder what it would be like if you were sitting on a star, or inside a satellite?" The other girl just giggled at their friend's imagination. Ellen stared at her friend for a few seconds and took her literally and seriously. She thought, at that time, that maybe she would become a pilot, or even an Astronaut. She said that word slowly and deliberately and

used a capital 'A' in her mind! Then she wondered aloud, "I wonder what the Earth would look like from deep outer space?"

Ellen remembered that her dad did not like to fly in airplanes. He always said that he never felt safe in anything that was off of the ground, especially airplanes. "If there was ever any sort of a problem up there, there was no place to go but down. If the fall didn't hurt you, the sudden stop surely would! You couldn't just step out onto a cloud until the repairs were done and bop right back in and go again! No thanks!"

Ellen remembered her father not liking to ride on any rides at the Fairs or those tall Ferris Wheels, either. He had never really said so but Ellen thought he was afraid of heights. It was several years later when she was studying a very hard Aeronautical Engineering course in college that the truth finally came out.

Ellen had received a special invitation from the Space Program Development Administration to tour a special satellite prior to launching. It was located on top of the newest class of D-6 rockets. It was on the launch pad. The satellite-housing compartment was nearly 1000 feet off of the ground. Ellen could ride up on the same elevator that the astronauts used if they were being prepared to launch. The Space Program was recruiting Ellen for a special training mission aboard a rather large research vessel called the Mother Ship presently orbiting over 1700 miles above the Earth.

Ellen and her mother went on the tour. Her father stayed on the ground. The older he got, the more he didn't

even want to look up at tall buildings, let alone the 1000 foot high rocket on the launch pad!

Ellen dreamed about some of her old boyfriends and of certain relationships that she let slip away. She knew she was cause of those failures in her love life. They failed because of her. She had the undying pursuit of becoming an astronaut. It took precedence over everything else. It was her personal lover in a sense. Nobody could fully understand how powerful her desire was. She had shunned the social scenes to donate every waking minute to her dream. She had deep beliefs – both religious and personal. Nothing got in her way. She had, and still has, a powerful personality. She is all business on the outside yet seems scorned somehow on the inside.

Ellen shrugged off that dream. It was way too personal. It didn't belong here. There was some of her past relationships that should remain buried forever. There were some that she wished she could find again. There were some she didn't want to ever let go of. Why and how did these dreams pop up now anyway?

Ellen opened one eye. It took all of three seconds for her to realize where she was. Then, there was that noise like someone talking right into her left ear. She lifted her head slowly and remembered she was still wearing her full space suit and had the sleeping net belted around her.

The voice belonged to Gabriel, the computer-generated, automaton, robot like, super-duper communications and facts expert who always said thank you to every command and request.

“Commander..escape pod number three has balanced

the atmosphere..barometric pressures acceptable..established concentrated artificial gravity.. your pulse and blood pressure are at acceptable levels..thank you.”

Ellen loved to hear those words about the condition of her Escape Pod but adding all of those ‘Thank you’ words was becoming quite annoying.

She unbuckled her restraint tether and slowly eased out of the special sleep netting. She removed her gloves and dispensed with the helmet. She took several deep breaths and coughed. This pod atmosphere was not the same as that life support system inside that space suit. She made a mental note to try using a different space suit if and when the next crisis arises. She knew, of course, that might very well be any time!

Ellen slipped out of the back of the space suit and started to laugh as she was pulling her legs out. She began laughing and crying at the same time. She was still wearing the standard issue uniform, which included those heavy-duty warm socks. The colors didn’t match! Not only was it funny but sad too as she realized it was the only clothes she had! After all, when she entered the escape pod she was in a bit of a hurry. She hadn’t had time to go back to her room and pack. When those alarms sounded...alarms sounded? She didn’t even remember any alarms sounding before the airlock had sealed. She was sure that they must have. She let that memory go. Now that she thought about her clothes, or rather the clothes she didn’t have, she didn’t have any shoes, either. She had been wearing the standard issue of boots. She looked around at her new quarters. “Well, at least, this place has a shower and toilet facilities! I think it’s time to clean