STARSHIP DOMINATRIX

ANGEL

By Dustin J. Craig

Copyright

The story, all names, characters, and incidents portrayed in this novel are fictitious. No identification with actual persons (living or deceased), places, buildings, and products are intended or should be inferred. But if you could upload a human's consciousness into an AI android, that would be so cool.

Copyright © 2026 by Dustin J. Craig
All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law.

Published by BOFF! Comics
Taylorsville, Utah

The Boff! Comics logo is a trademark of Boff! Comics. All rights reserved.

Trigger Warning

For Those Who Live in La-La-Land

This story dives into some heavy shit.

Expect accidental death, oxygen deprivation, organ failure, and cremation of human remains.

If you've read the novels, you already know where this ends. If you haven't, congratulations—you're about to find out how unethical a mother will be to save her daughter.

This is a prequel to Starship Dominatrix, an unapologetically queer space opera series by Dustin J. Craig. If a Harsikan engineer committing crimes against ethics, decency, and at least twelve jurisdictions sounds like your kind of story, then welcome aboard. Buckle up, cupcake. You're in for a badass, no-holds-barred, muthafuckin' ride!

Acknowledgments

Thank you BeeQueen, for the conversations, the chaos, the honesty, and the strange kind of support that never always looked like support at first. You've made my world brighter, my Second Life more alive, and my creative journey less lonely. Even when we disagreed, your persistence, ideas, and presence always pushed me to keep building. Some people inspire through praise; others inspire simply by being impossible to ignore. You've been part of the rhythm of this universe for longer than you probably realize. Thank you for being a good friend, a good heart, and a memorable part of this chapter of my life.

For those we carried through the night,
Who carried us back toward the light.

THE MOTHER OF MONSTERS

"Mom?" Yvonne called as she walked through the empty corridors of the CKS Orpheus. The ship had been stolen, but Chlo had made it hers.

Chlo sang *The Sound of Silence* by Simon and Garfunkel while she worked. She had spent the last three months in a rented hangar on the outskirts of the Remiel Reach colony on Mars, stripping out the ship's original control architecture and replacing it with something no one had ever built before. The Chimera Kyria automated their ships with dull systems—rigid, predictable, obedient. Chlo was building something that could think.

"Mom?" Yvonne called again as she searched the ship.

The neural conduit interface was nearly complete. The AI consciousness she had been developing was stable, and the integration pathway she had designed to bridge the two was clean. Six more hours of work, maybe less, and the Resistance would have a ship that didn't just follow commands but understood them.

"Mom, where are you?" Yvonne asked as she peeked into different rooms.

Chlo hadn't tested the integration yet. She had run the models, checked the architecture, and verified every connection point twice. Every simulation had passed.

"Mom, there you are," Yvonne said as she stepped into engineering.

Chlo looked up from the conduit. Yvonne leaned against the engineering doorframe with her arms crossed, still wearing her shore leave civvies. Her Chimera Kyria military uniform was stuffed into her bag, balled up out of spite.

"Well, hello there, Angel," Chlo said. "I wasn't expecting you home for another two weeks."

"Yeah, well, we declared victory in the Algol system, so they decided to give us some R&R." Yvonne walked farther into engineering and leaned against the console near Chlo's workstation, close enough to watch without getting in the way. "I've been searching for you for four hours, Mom. What are you even working on?"

"Oh, nothing, really. The Chimera Kyria commissioned me to upgrade this here ship."

"They're actually starting to upgrade their ships? The last upgrade they had was about a hundred years ago." Yvonne smiled as she bent down to examine the conduit. "What are you really working on?"

"I'm afraid I can't tell you that, Angel."

"Yeah, yeah. Top-secret mom projects." Yvonne picked at a seam on her sleeve. "You'd think after ten years I'd stop being curious."

Chlo glanced at her daughter. Yvonne's stark black hair was longer than the last time she had seen her, and her big

brown eyes still sparkled even in the muted lighting of engineering.

"How are they treating you?" Chlo asked.

Yvonne shrugged. "Fine. It's fine." She bit at her fingernails.

"It doesn't sound like it's fine."

Yvonne was quiet for a moment. "I've just been homesick, I think. It's stupid. I'm twenty-two."

"It's not stupid."

"It feels stupid. Everyone else handles it. I just…" Yvonne looked down at the floor. "I miss being home. I miss you. I miss Jack being a little weirdo."

Chlo set down her tools and looked at Yvonne properly. "Jack's at home right now. You could go back and rescue him. I'll only be a couple more hours."

"Nah." Yvonne pushed herself off the console. "I went to the house already. He had that nightmare again. I'd rather be here, even if you won't tell me what you're doing." She pulled a worn paperback out of her bag. "I'm gonna go read in the galley. Come get me when you're done being mysterious."

Chlo smiled, showing a sharp, toothy grin. "Deal."

Yvonne stopped in the doorway and looked back. "Hey, Mom?"

"Yeah?"

"You know I love you, right?"

"I love you too, Angel. Go read your book."

Yvonne disappeared down the corridor. Chlo listened to her footsteps fade away, then turned back to the neural conduit and picked up her tools.

BREATHLESS

Chlo was elbow-deep in the ship's neural conduit when she tasted nitrogen.

At first it was faint—a dry mineral tang at the back of her throat. Her species had spent millennia pulling nutrients from stone: basalt, feldspar, compressed sediment. Nitrogen trapped inside rock had fed her people longer than recorded history. Her body recognized the taste before her mind caught up.

She slowly pulled her hands free from the conduit and stood still.

The environmental display beside her workstation showed everything within acceptable parameters. Temperature stable. Oxygen normal. No alarms. No warnings. The AI she'd spent the last six hours integrating into the ship's systems calmly reported nominal conditions.

Chlo checked the atmosphere manually anyway, bypassing the AI's reporting layer.

Nitrogen levels were climbing. Oxygen levels were falling.

"Hey, Bucket?" Chlo asked.

"Yes, Chlo?" the ship replied through the CommLink.

"Why are you increasing nitrogen levels on the ship?"

"There are several fires aboard the ship."

"Where?"

"The bridge, all crew quarters, the galley, medbay, PT bay, engineering—"

"Engineering? There's no fire here. Your thermal readings are looping. Vent the nitrogen and restore oxygen levels."

"I'm afraid I can't do that, Chlo."

The system was hallucinating, interpreting a loop in its thermal feed as fires that weren't there. Chlo had connected an untested consciousness directly to environmental control. No alarms. No panic. Just oxygen disappearing.

Her lungs had evolved to wring oxygen from thin subterranean air, buying her more time than a human would have. She spun around and sprinted for the airlock, clearing the ship in seconds. The moment she hit the hangar floor, she sucked in a lungful of Mars' terraformed air.

Then she froze.

"Yvonne!"

Chlo turned and bolted back through the airlock. The nitrogen concentration hit her harder, thick enough that she could practically taste it coating her tongue. She held her breath and ran for the galley.

The door was sealed.

The AI had locked it as part of its fire suppression protocol, containing a fire that didn't exist.

"Bucket, open the door," Chlo snarled.

The AI ignored her.

She slammed her claws into the manual release and forced the door open.

Yvonne sat slumped in the rear booth with her bag by her side and an old copy of *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley open across her chest, the pages bent downward like she had simply drifted off while reading. Her skin had gone pale. Her lips were blue. She wasn't moving.

Chlo crossed the room and pressed two fingers against Yvonne's neck. There was a pulse. Weak and slow, but still

there.

Hypoxia had already set in.

Chlo scooped Yvonne into her arms. Her species could carry twice their body weight without strain, and Yvonne's limp body offered no resistance.

Chlo ran back through the corridor, through the airlock, and into the hangar. She laid Yvonne on the floor, then dropped to her knees beside her and checked her breathing. It was shallow and fading, but it was still there.

Barely.

She pulled out her OrangeAI phone. Her thumb hovered over emergency services.

One call. That was all it would take.

Paramedics would arrive within minutes. They could stabilize Yvonne, flood oxygen back into her bloodstream, maybe stop the hypoxia before it caused permanent damage.

And then the investigators would come.

They'd inspect the ship. They'd find the illegal AI integration and start pulling apart every contact Chlo had spent years protecting. They'd confiscate her research, her equipment, and every hidden piece of Resistance data they could find. Then they'd interrogate her, and under Chimera Kyria jurisdiction, interrogation meant torture.

If Yvonne died, they could charge Chlo with negligent manslaughter.

The Chimera Kyria executed people for less.

Her thumb hovered over the call button while Yvonne's breathing weakened.

The only person she trusted was Tomas Tristar, two cities away in Blue Wave City. Not a doctor. Not officially. Tomas was a cyberneticist and AI researcher who operated

out of a basement laboratory because Chimera Kyria institutions would have executed him for the things he knew how to do. But he had medical equipment, and he was the only person Chlo could go to without destroying everyone connected to her.

Chlo lifted Yvonne into her arms again and carried her to the black hovervan parked near the edge of the hangar. She opened the rear hatch and laid Yvonne inside as gently as she could before slamming the doors shut. She scanned the shadows of the hangar to make sure nobody was watching, then climbed into the driver's seat and ignited the engine.

The hovervan lifted into the Martian night air. Cold red desert stretched beneath the terraformed sky. Chlo slammed the accelerator to the floor.

"Hang on, Angel," she whispered. "Mommy's gonna fix this."

SHIP OF THESEUS, BUT UNETHICAL

The black hovervan touched down in the alley behind 1940 W Cypher Court at quarter past three in the morning. The lab was a scuffed red structure with worn metal siding and old machinery clinging to its walls like barnacles on a dock. A humming blue strip light over the recessed back door was the only sign anyone still worked here.

Chlo killed the engine and got out. She opened the rear hatches and pulled Yvonne from the back of the van, gathering her daughter's dead weight into her arms as she flattened her scales. Yvonne's head lolled against Chlo's shoulder. Her breathing was faint.

Chlo scanned the alley. It was empty except for a

dumpster, a stack of crates, and a fire escape. No one was watching. She carried Yvonne to the back entrance and buzzed the CommLink.

No answer.

She buzzed again. Three times, four, holding the button down on the fifth.

The door opened, and Tomas stood in the frame, unshaven and squinting. He looked at Chlo, then saw Yvonne in her arms.

"Chlo, what the hell are you doing here?"

Chlo sighed in frustration, "Yvonne's dying, and it's all my fault." She pushed past him, then walked inside.

Tomas leaned into the alley, checked both directions, and shut the door.

"Put her on the operating table," Tomas said, getting medical equipment ready to check her vitals.

The table was built for AI experiments—flat, reinforced, surrounded by equipment Tomas used for his underground research. Chlo laid Yvonne down on it and stepped back. Under the lab's harsh light, Yvonne looked worse than she had in the van. Her skin was grey. Her lips were even bluer than before.

Tomas grabbed a blood spectroscope from his workstation—a needle into the shoulder, wireless sync to a DataPad—and stuck Yvonne without asking permission. Data populated the screen within seconds.

He read it twice, then set the DataPad down.

"Her oxygen level has been critically low too long," he said. "Her heart is failing, and her neural activity is already breaking down. Even if I stabilize everything else, I can't reverse the damage."

"No."

"Chlo—"

"You're a genius. You've been experimenting down here for years. You have to be able to do something."

"I can't reverse organ failure in a basement lab."

Chlo gripped the edge of the table. Her claws scratched the metal. She watched Yvonne's chest rise, stop, then rise again. Ten minutes ago, she would have rejected any procedure that hadn't been tested. She was ready to beg for one.

Tomas picked up the DataPad again and looked at the readings, then glanced at the scanning equipment against the far wall.

"There's one thing we can do," he said.

Chlo looked up. "Anything."

"I have a scanner that can map her entire brain. Memories, personality, sensory associations, behavioral patterns—everything that makes Yvonne who she is. I can capture all of it and write it to a synaptic lattice." He gestured toward the prototype framework on the adjacent workbench. "That's my next-generation AI model. It's designed to hold a full consciousness. If I scan her now, while she still has a heartbeat, I can transfer everything into the prototype. Rebuild her body from the physical scan. She'd wake up and never know anything had ever happened."

"Has this ever been tested?"

"No."

"On anyone? On anything?"

"On lab rats. But the results were inconclusive. And it's never been done on someone who's dying. The brain scan needs stable neural activity to map cleanly. Her activity is degrading by the minute. The longer we wait, the less we

get."

Chlo looked at her daughter on the table. Hospitals, doctors, and emergency rooms would all require explanations she couldn't give about work she wasn't supposed to be doing. The Resistance could lose years of underground AI research, and Yvonne's breathing was getting weaker.

Her daughter was dying, and a man she trusted said there was a chance.

"Do it," Chlo said.

CAPTURING THE GHOST

Tomas positioned the scanner over Yvonne's body and powered it on. The machine was designed for controlled conditions—sedated biological subjects, stable vitals, hours of calibration. He had none of that. He had a dying girl on his operating table and a mother standing three feet away who understood every reading on every monitor in the room.

"The scan maps her physical structure and every synaptic connection," Tomas said as he worked the controls.

"I know what it does, Hotshot."

"I know you know. I'm talking so my hands stay steady."

The scanner hummed to life. A progress bar appeared on the monitor beside the table:

0%.

Yvonne's breathing was shallow but present. Her oxygen saturation dropped as her heart rate slowed. The renal indicator turned red, followed by the hepatic

monitor.

4%.

Chlo stood beside the table and held Yvonne's hand. It was still warm, but getting cold. She watched the progress bar and listened to the heart monitor and tried not to calculate which one would finish first.

12%.

Tomas adjusted the scan resolution. "Synaptic density in the hippocampus is higher than baseline. She's got a good memory."

"She remembers everything," Chlo said. "Every birthday. Every fight. Every stupid thing I ever said to her."

"That helps," Tomas said quietly. "Stronger memory architecture should survive transfer better."

23%.

Yvonne's breathing turned ragged. The oxygen reading dipped below 55. Tomas glanced at the vitals and then back at the scan.

34%.

41%.

The heart monitor beeped slower. Chlo counted the gaps between beats and felt each one stretch longer than the last. She squeezed Yvonne's hand.

58%.

Yvonne's chest rose and fell in uneven intervals. Tomas was leaning over the console, both hands flat on the surface, watching the progress bar like he could push it forward with his mind.

67%.

The oxygen reading dropped below 50. The heart rate was in the forties.

73%.

"Come on," Tomas said under his breath.

82%.

Yvonne's breathing hitched. A long, rattling inhale that didn't sound like breathing anymore.

89%.

The heart monitor slowed to a crawl. Chlo leaned over her daughter and pressed her forehead against Yvonne's shoulder. "Stay with me, Angel. Just a little longer."

94%.

The progress bar slowed. Chlo stared at it, then at Yvonne's motionless chest.

97%.

Yvonne exhaled. It was quiet and long, and when it was done her chest didn't rise again. The heart monitor flattened into a single tone.

100%.

The scanner chimed once and powered down. The progress bar sat full and green on the monitor next to the flatline.

Chlo pressed her lips against Yvonne's forehead with her eyes shut and her hand still holding her daughter's hand. The flatline continued until Tomas silenced it.

"This is my fault," Chlo said, tears filling her eyes. She pulled back and crumpled. "This is my own damn fault. I never should have implanted that AI consciousness into the ship without testing it first. I knew better. I knew better and I did it anyway because I was so goddamn sure of myself, and now she's—" Her voice cracked and she couldn't finish.

"We have her," Tomas said. He nodded toward the console. "Her synaptic map is on that lattice. As long as we

have that, she's still here."

Chlo looked at the monitor. The progress bar still read 100%, full.

"You're sure?" she asked.

Tomas held her gaze. "I think we got it all."

"Then build her," Chlo said.

PHOENIX

Chlo stared at the body on the operating table while Tomas reconstructed Yvonne's appearance over the prototype AI framework he had repurposed in another corner of the room.

"What are we going to do with the body?" Tomas asked.

Chlo didn't answer. She stared at Yvonne's hands, at the scar on her left knuckle from a kitchen accident when she was nine, then counted every freckle on her arm.

"Chlo."

She blinked and looked at him. "Huh?"

"I said, what are we going to do with the body?"

Bury it somewhere. Dump it behind the building. Burn it. Every answer felt monstrous. "I don't know," she said.

"We have to do something. People will ask questions."

Chlo rubbed her face. "I got nothing."

Tomas kept working without looking up. "I have a curing tube for damaged AIs. Its sterilization cycle reaches incineration temperatures. If I bypass the thermal cutoff…" He hesitated. "It could cremate her."

Chlo nodded once. "Okay."

For the next eleven hours, the reconstruction system printed synthetic tissue over the prototype framework

while Tomas guided the process from his console. Chlo sat beside Yvonne's body and stayed with her quietly.

Tomas stepped back from the framework and wiped his hands on a cloth.

"Would you like to see her?"

Chlo stood too quickly. "She's done?"

He led her into the corner where he had been working.

Yvonne stood motionless in the corner of the room with her eyes closed beneath the overhead lights. Tomas had rebuilt everything perfectly. The freckles. The slight unevenness in her eyebrows. The scar on her knuckle.

Chlo circled her slowly, searching for something wrong, but there wasn't anything.

"Perfect. She's…she's perfect."

"The full synaptic map transferred," Tomas said quietly. "She'll need time to adjust to the body, but cognitively…" He paused. "She should be Yvonne."

Chlo touched Yvonne's hand. Warm synthetic skin pressed back against her fingers with almost perfect realism.

"I'll prepare the curing tube," Tomas said.

"Wait," Chlo said as she grabbed his arm. "Her clothes. I'm not letting my daughter wake up naked in a lab."

Chlo undressed Yvonne's body carefully. Tomas helped when dead weight made it difficult.

Once the clothes were set aside, Tomas moved to the curing tube and adjusted the controls. The machine had been designed to repair damaged AI chassis, not destroy human remains.

"Do you want to say goodbye?" he asked.

Chlo stepped to the table and looked down at her daughter's face. Not the reconstruction, but the original.

She memorized the details, then she leaned down and kissed Yvonne's forehead.

"We'll see each other again, Angel," Chlo whispered.

Tomas lifted the body into the tube as gently as he could. He looked back at Chlo, searching silently for confirmation. Chlo nodded once.

He sealed the tube and activated the machine.

Chlo stayed and watched as the hum deepened. Heat built up inside the chamber. The filtration and cooling cycle seemed to last forever. When it ended, Tomas opened the tube. The smell of ozone and burned organic matter drifted into the lab. Nothing remained except ashes.

Chlo turned away. The sight of the new Yvonne grabbed her attention. She still stood waiting in the corner.

Chlo dressed her in the same clothes, buttoning the shirt and straightening the sleeves the way Yvonne liked them.

"Help me move her to the break room," Chlo said. "She's waking up on a sofa. Not a lab table."

Together they carried her to the couch and laid her down carefully. Chlo adjusted her arm across her stomach the way she always slept.

Tomas gave Chlo a reassuring smile. "Are you ready?"

She wiped her eyes and looked at Tomas. "Yeah."

REBOOT CONTINUITY

"Boot up."

For a moment, there was nothing. Systems initialized, processes loaded from a dead start, and consciousness awakened for the first time.

The reconstituted Yvonne lay on the sofa in Tomas'

break room with her eyes closed. Her hair was perfect, and her synthetic skin held a faint, lifelike warmth.

Chlo sat beside her, brushing her hair gently with her fingers and making sure the scales on her hand laid flat. She smiled, then leaned down and kissed Yvonne's warm forehead.

Yvonne stirred and groaned at the strange sensation of using her artificial muscles for the first time. Slowly, she opened her big blue eyes and saw her mother's sharp, toothy grin. Chlo's eyes were red, and her hand trembled against Yvonne's cheek.

Chlo brushed Yvonne's hair back once more, then gently touched her chin. She needed to know that Yvonne was still her daughter.

Yvonne smiled. "Mom…"

That was proof enough.

Chlo swallowed hard. "Good morning, Angel."

Author's Note

This story is set on October 21st, 2577 CE, seventeen years before the events of Starship Dominatrix, Book 1. It's an unapologetically queer space opera series by Dustin J. Craig. Chlo and Yvonne's full story—with all its secrets, sacrifices, impossible choices, and a mother's love that refused to let go—is waiting for you.

Continue the journey at BoffComics.com

About the Author

Dustin Joshua Craig is a science fiction author, illustrator, and comic creator from Utah. Creator of the Starship Dominatrix universe, his work blends emotional character drama, transhumanist horror, dark humor, and sprawling space opera mythology into stories exploring identity, power, grief, and what it truly means to be human.

Thank You!

Thank you for diving into this short story. Your time and imagination brought the story to life. If you enjoyed this novel, please consider leaving a review. Your feedback helps others discover and enjoy the story, too.

Continue the journey at BoffComics.com

Meanwhile...

Jack woke up screaming.

His voice cracked against the dark of his bedroom, raw and jagged, from a place deep in his chest. He balled his hands up in fists in the sheets, his knuckles were white, and his whole body was rigid as if bracing for impact. Sweat plastered his hair to his forehead and soaked through his T-shirt.

"Daddy!"

The word broke apart before it finished. He said it again, quieter, like he was testing whether it still meant anything. "Dad."

Silence answered back in the empty apartment.

He sat up and rubbed his temples. His left eye implant lit the shadows of his room. The migraine was worse. He pressed the heel of his hand against his skull until his skin turned red.

He was fifteen years old and alone in the apartment. His mother was working—she was always working, always somewhere else, always busy with things she couldn't talk about. He didn't know where. He didn't ask anymore.

He wiped his face with the hem of his shirt and stared

at the wall across from his bed. The dream was already dissolving the way it always did, leaving behind the same residue it always left.

He couldn't go back to sleep. He pulled the blanket around his shoulders and sat in the dark with his knees drawn up and his arms wrapped around them, making himself as small as the room would let him.