The Time Dilated Generations

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Version 0.1

Chapter 12: Two Time Dilated Peaceful Centuries

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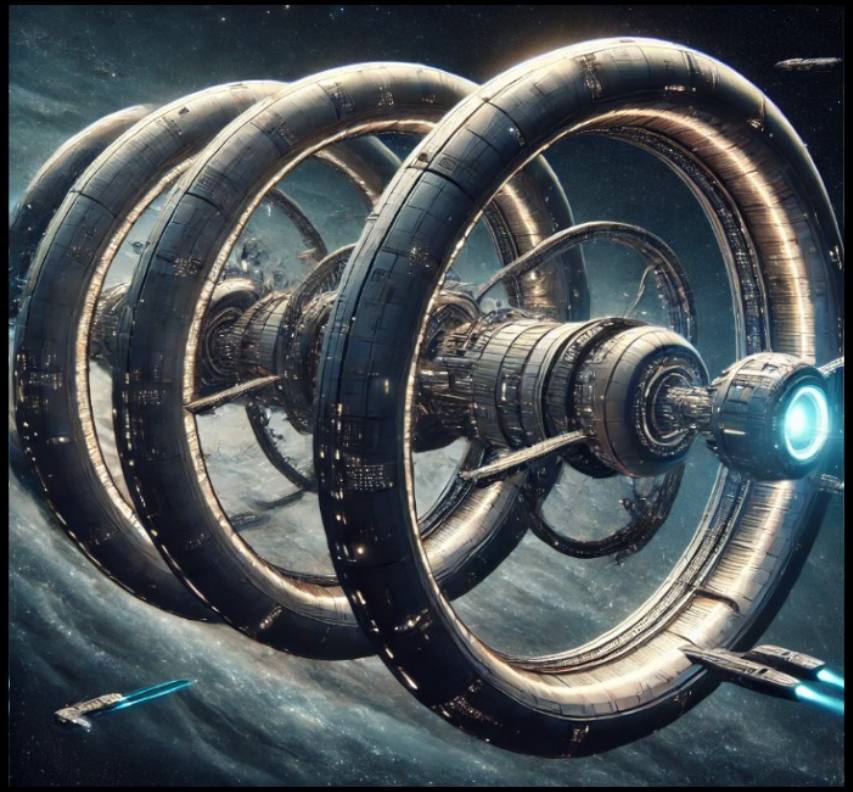
The first generational ship to depart was Rigel, bound for the star of the same name in the Orion constellation, a mere 860 light-years away. Thanks to Ellie Anderson's groundbreaking work in propulsion, the journey would take approximately 215 years—an inconceivable span of time for a single human, but a necessary sacrifice for the survival of the species.

The launch order of the generational ships was determined by proximity to their destination stars. The shorter the journey, the less time humans would have to endure the confined, artificial environment of their spacecraft, reducing the likelihood of societal collapse. This approach also allowed engineers to refine and enhance each subsequent ship, improving the quality of life for those who would spend their lives traversing the void.

Despite variations in size and advancements in technology, all generational ships shared a fundamental design—an intricate, multi-ringed structure built to sustain human civilization for centuries. At the core lay the propulsion system: an improved offloading quantum mass drive, paired with a Helium-3 nuclear reactor. This powerful engine, encased within the ship's innermost ring, served as the beating heart of each vessel.

The surrounding rings were meticulously designed, each serving a critical function in sustaining life and ensuring long-term viability:



- First Ring – Fuel Reserves: Wrapped around the engines, this ring stored the fuel required for the entire journey, carefully rationed to last across the centuries.

- Second Ring – Resources and Terraforming Equipment: A repository of all necessary materials, from structural repair components to the tools and machinery essential for planetary colonization.

- Third Ring – Engineering and Maintenance: The first ring to offer artificial gravity—albeit a mere 10% of Earth's—it housed the critical infrastructure that kept the ship operational. While most systems were automated, occasional human oversight was required to ensure long-term stability.

- Fourth Ring – Life Support and Agriculture: Home to vast hydroponic farms, this ring provided a continuous supply of fresh food and oxygen. Since it was constantly inhabited, engineers optimized its artificial gravity, achieving a stable 50% of Earth's gravity—enough to support long-term human habitation without excessive physical degradation.

- Fifth Ring – Human Habitats: The outermost and most vital ring, where families would live out their entire lives. Designed to replicate the conditions of Earth as closely as possible, this section reached an artificial gravity of 90%, reducing the physiological toll of interstellar travel.

Rigel was the first of the ten planned generational spaceships to set sail for the stars. Over the course of eight decades, successive generational ships were constructed, culminating with Rho Cassiopeiae, the final and most advanced of them all.

Despite the 80-year gap in technological progress between Rigel and Rho Cassiopeiae, most internal systems remained unchanged—proof of the robustness of the original designs. The propulsion systems saw only minor refinements, as the dangers of exceeding 99% light-speed were well understood. No one was willing to risk another catastrophe like the Endeavour. Instead, engineers focused on improving reaction times during emergency course corrections, compensating for the relentless effects of time dilation. Incremental advancements in nuclear energy production allowed for marginally faster power delivery to provide more control, reducing the physical strain on travelers when rapid adjustments became necessary.

The most significant technological breakthrough during those 80 years wasn't in the generational ships themselves but in their long-range sensor technology. The pioneers of humanity's interstellar expansion were not only the massive generational vessels, but also the autonomous scout ships that traveled far ahead, charting the unknown and detecting dangers before they could threaten the fleets behind them.

The dangers of interstellar space were far from trivial. While the void between the stars seemed empty, it was anything but. Rogue planets, drifting unbound from any solar system, lurked in the dark. Primordial black holes, relics from the birth of the universe, were nearly impossible to detect using conventional methods. A collision with either would mean instant annihilation.

To solve this, engineers developed a revolutionary gravitational echo detection system—a breakthrough in deep-space navigation. Instead of relying solely on traditional electromagnetic scans, this system functioned by emitting controlled gravitational pulses into the void. When these pulses interacted with objects, whether as massive as rogue planets or black holes or as tiny as a marble-sized meteorite, they generated an echo—an invisible ripple in spacetime. The scout ships, equipped with highly sensitive quantum sensors, could detect these echoes long before the objects themselves became visible.

This technology wasn't available for the first two generational ships, Rigel and Sadr, whose destinations—860 and 1800 light-years away, respectively—had been meticulously mapped in advance. Years of observational data confirmed that their planned routes contained no known large-scale hazards. However, caution dictated a conservative approach. To mitigate the risks of unseen threats, mission planners decided to cap their velocity at 97% of light-speed rather than pushing the limits at 99%. This seemingly minor reduction drastically altered the journey's timeline:

Rigel, originally expected to reach its destination in 123 years at 99% light-speed, would now take 215 years at 97%. And Sadr, which would have taken 257 years at maximum speed, now required 450 years. The cost of safety was time—entire generations would be born, live, and die before their ships arrived at their destinations.

By the time humanity constructed its third generational ship, NGC 7789, bound for a distant cluster in the Cassiopeia constellation 2500 light-years away, the new gravitational detection system had been perfected. Unlike its predecessors, NGC 7789 was cleared to travel at 99% light-speed, making it paradoxically the second of the generational ships to reach its destination, completing its journey in just 357 years—nearly a time dilated century ahead of Sadr, despite being 1000 light-years far away.

For the first time, humanity wasn't just moving through the darkness; it was mastering it. With each new ship, the path to the stars became clearer. The vast, uncharted cosmos was no longer a death trap—it was a road, one that, step by step, humanity was learning to navigate.

Another significant technological advancement of the last 80 years was the development of the habitats where humans would live out their centuries-long journeys.

One of the most crucial breakthroughs came in energy efficiency. By the time the fourth generational spaceship was under construction, engineers had cut energy consumption for life-support systems by 50%—a critical improvement, considering the finite resources available. But even with these gains, one persistent challenge remained: cosmic radiation.

Interstellar space was an unforgiving expanse, bombarding ships with far more intense cosmic radiation than what humanity had ever experienced within the protective magnetic field of the solar system. The phenomenon was first confirmed decades earlier by Voyager 1 and Voyager 2, two 20th-century probes that spent nearly 40 years crossing the solar system before finally breaching the interstellar boundary. Their data had hinted at what future explorers would face: a relentless, high-frequency onslaught of radiation that no natural planetary shielding could counteract in the long term.

At first, engineers focused solely on strengthening the radiation shielding—thicker plating, improved electromagnetic fields, and optimized defensive barriers. But then, a radical idea emerged: what if, instead of merely blocking the radiation, they could harness it?

Building on principles similar to solar panel technology, scientists developed cosmic ray energy converters, which could absorb high-energy particles and convert them into usable power. The breakthrough had a double impact: it not only provided a continuous energy source but also reinforced the ship's shielding, reducing the need for heavy radiation-blocking materials.

With more power, fewer shielding resources required, and advancements in material durability, a new opportunity arose—the expansion of human habitat modules.

The first-generation habitats were cramped, utilitarian structures—barely enough space to accommodate families without inducing claustrophobia. The initial design was equivalent to the space occupied by two large truck trailers placed side by side.

By the time the last generational spaceship was constructed, those dimensions had doubled, vastly improving living conditions for the 500 people aboard each ship. Though the population per vessel remained fixed—ensuring genetic diversity across generations—this additional space was not left empty.

Understanding that psychological well-being was as crucial as survival itself, engineers transformed the extra room into recreational areas designed to alleviate the psychological strain of prolonged enclosure. Artificial gardens, various types of playgrounds with basketball courts, a small soccer pitch, an arena for football, cricket fields, and even mini-golf courses were created. The competitive nature of humans needed to be nurtured to maintain their mental well-being.

The idea of leveraging sports to mitigate the psychological strain of prolonged confinement was a theme that Emma Anderson explored in her final literary work. Recognizing the potential impact of her mother's insights, Ellie made the strategic decision to release additional excerpts from Emma's story shortly before her own passing at the age of 80, a full 40 years before the scheduled launch of the Rigel. This particular segment of the narrative was deliberately chosen for its uplifting tone, avoiding the darker elements to ensure it would bolster the spirits of those embarking on the interstellar journey.

For the more somber and cautionary sections of her mother's story, Ellie implemented a contingency plan. These passages, which delved into the darkest potential scenarios, were programmed for release only if specific, predefined events transpired during the spaceships' centuries-long voyage. This foresight ensured that the crew would be prepared for the most challenging aspects of their mission, while initially focusing on the more inspiring and motivational aspects of Emma's narrative.

Emma Anderson didn't just only advocate for traditional sports—she envisioned something entirely new. A game that could only exist in zero gravity. A sport that was as physically demanding as it was strategically intricate. Easy to learn, but nearly impossible to master. A competition that, thanks to instant quantum communication, could be played in real-time between generational ships traveling at 99% light-speed—each bound for different stars yet moving through time at the same pace.

Emma imagined that by the time the generational ships were launched, humans would be able to control humanoid robotic bodies on distant vessels as if they were their own. No longer would interstellar societies be limited to digital interactions—video calls and text messages. Instead, they could physically engage with one another, despite being separated by thousands of light-years.

By the time Rigel launched, 100 humanoid robots were included aboard, fully operational. Though the first-generation models fell into the uncanny valley—visually unsettling in their near-human appearance—their core functionality was flawless. Every action executed by a person on one ship was instantly mirrored by a robotic body on another. More remarkably, the technology allowed sensory feedback—enabling the sensation of touch to be transmitted across the abyss of space.

Emma had stressed in her writings how vital the sense of touch was for humanity's survival. Whether a gentle caress or a well-placed punch, physical interaction had always been an essential part of human connection. Without it, she feared that generations born aboard the ships—living their entire lives within the confines of steel corridors—would suffer a slow, psychological suffocation. Physicality was not just a comfort; it was a necessity.

As each new ship was constructed, the humanoid robots evolved, becoming more energy-efficient, visually refined, and responsive. Advances were shared with previously launched ships, allowing them to upgrade their own units when resources permitted.

The playing field for Emma's sport was not some enclosed room, but the vast central void of the generational ships, a massive space extending up to the fourth ring. It was a dynamic arena, capable of being reconfigured with modular panels to create different layouts for different seasons of play. However, due to energy constraints, these layouts had to be manually deployed—a small price to pay for the versatility they provided.

Yet, Emma had not imagined a single rigid game but rather a flexible competitive framework—a PvP team-based competition, inspired by the strategic depth of chess and the fast-paced action of early 21st-century e-sports. It was a game designed to evolve, with each ship potentially introducing its own variations.

However, there was one universal rule across all variations: energy was the ultimate resource.

Every match operated under a strict energy budget, emphasizing efficiency, precision, and strategic aggression. Each player was given a fixed energy reserve, stored in a personal battery. The only way to replenish energy was by executing a takedown—landing a precise touch on one of an opponent's vital zones.

This single rule changed everything.

Players could not afford to be passive. They had to chase, outmaneuver, and engage their opponents, ensuring the game remained a spectacle not just for the participants, but for the entire interstellar audience. Across the fleet, humans—separated by unfathomable distances—would watch, cheer, and experience the game together.

And when a player was taken down, they wouldn't just see it. They would feel it—the pressure of another human's touch, even if it came through the synthetic skin of a robotic body light-years away.

For Emma, this was more than a game.

It was a lifeline—a way to ensure that, no matter how many centuries passed, no matter how far apart the ships drifted in the void, humanity would always have a reason to reach out and touch one another.

Emma's original vision for the game was both physically demanding and strategically intricate. It was designed for two teams of ten players, each vying for victory through precise coordination, calculated aggression, and strict energy management. A match could end in three ways:

1. The team leader of one side was taken down, resulting in an instant loss.

2. A team ran out of energy, leaving them unable to continue.

3. Time expired, with the team that had conserved the most energy emerging victorious.

Each team was composed of specialized roles, requiring a balance of speed, offense, defense, and deception:

3 Runners – The fastest members of the team, equipped with specialized propulsion systems that allowed for rapid acceleration. Their agility made them ideal for flanking manoeuvrers and disrupting enemy formations.

2 Shooters – Mid-range specialists who could fire a concentrated laser pulse, consuming a portion of their energy. If a shot landed, the target would be temporarily frozen for three seconds, creating openings for teammates.

2 Shields – Defensive players who could generate an energy barrier to block incoming laser fire. The larger the barrier, the more energy it consumed, forcing careful strategic deployment.

1 Sniper – A long-range specialist capable of delivering high-energy shots. Their attacks required significant energy investment but, upon impact, could freeze an opponent for ten seconds—a potential game-changer.

1 Chameleon – A deception-based player who could alter their appearance once per match for up to ten seconds, creating opportunities for ambushes or misdirection.

1 Team Leader – The brain of the team, unable to attack or defend directly. Instead, they used their energy to access an advanced tactical map, tracking teammates' positions and orchestrating strategies in real-time.

The game was more than just a contest of reflexes and endurance—it was a battle of minds, a test of strategy where victory depended on efficient energy management and teamwork. Every match was meticulously pre-planned by the spaceships' energy committees, ensuring that only a predetermined amount of accumulated energy could be allocated to the games. This allowed ships to schedule matches way ahead, ensuring sustainability while maintaining the integrity of the sport.

While the interstellar major league was the pinnacle of competition, local variations of the game emerged aboard each generational ship. These local leagues had slightly modified rules, designed to use way less energy and adapt to resource limitations.

- Smaller Arenas – Games were played in reduced playing fields, requiring more close-quarters combat and tactical manoeuvring.

- Shorter Matches – The duration of matches was significantly reduced, ensuring that energy consumption remained within sustainable levels.

- Adjusted Roles – Some specialized roles were simplified or omitted to accommodate local constraints.

Over time, as had happened with sports on Earth, the best teams from the local leagues rose to the interstellar stage, earning the chance to compete in the major league against teams from ships travelling across different sectors of the galaxy.

Beyond competition, the game became something more—a lifeline for those born into the cold, unchanging corridors of their metal worlds. It offered excitement, purpose, and a shared connection across thousands of light-years.

The strategies were deep enough that teams could continuously surprise one another, keeping both players and audiences engaged. To maintain balance and innovation, rule changes and new mechanics were introduced through democratic consensus, ensuring that the game remained fresh across generations.

It was more than just a sport.

It was a legacy—one that turned the endless void of space into an arena where humanity could still feel alive.

Within the closed ecosystems of the generational ships, energy emerged as the most valuable resource—the lifeblood of civilization, determining not only survival but also prosperity. Consequently, energy became the cornerstone of the economic system aboard every vessel. However, this economy extended far beyond any single ship; it was interconnected across the entire fleet, despite the fact that energy itself could not be physically transferred between vessels.

From the moment each ship launched, its total energy supply was fixed—a finite quantity meticulously calculated to sustain the journey for centuries. Every reactor, every system, every light that flickered in the corridors drew from this predetermined reservoir. There were no second chances, no external refuelling stations waiting in the abyss of space. Yet, despite this restriction, a thriving interstellar economy emerged—one based on access rather than transfer.

The key to this system lay in the humanoid robots, designed originally for sports and labour but soon repurposed for something far more profound. Thanks to their sensory fidelity—designed to replicate the human experience—made them ideal for something else entirely: tourism.

Over time, people began to rent access to humanoid robots on distant ships, allowing travellers to experience life in another vessel's world—not as a distant spectator, but as a fully embodied visitor. The concept was revolutionary. For the first time in human history, people could physically explore foreign cultures without ever leaving their own ship.

The economic model was simple: people aboard one ship could pay others on a different ship with energy in exchange for temporary access to a humanoid body in their spaceships. The wealthier a person was—meaning the more energy they had—the more often they could travel to other ships and experience their unique environments.

Once it became clear that cultural tourism would be a driving force of the interstellar economy, each generational ship was given guidelines to develop its own local identity.

Artists, architects, and storytellers were encouraged to create something uniquely beautiful, something that would make their ship a destination worth visiting. The goal was simple: to appeal to the innate human desire to explore, to see new worlds, to step into another's shoes—even if only for a fleeting moment.

Much like on Earth in the 20th and 21st centuries, people saved their earnings for the chance to travel, eager to experience the wonders of other worlds—even if those worlds were simply different ships, each moving through the void on its own lonely course.

And so, a new era of tourism was born—not across planets, but across the stars.

Aboard these vast, self-sustaining arks, humanity found a way to turn the cold isolation of interstellar travel into something beautiful, connected, and endlessly enriching. Even as they drifted toward different destinations, separated by light-years, they remained bound together by the shared pursuit of discovery.

As the centuries passed, culture did not remain confined within individual ships—it flourished across the entire fleet. While each generational spaceship developed its own local customs, traditions, and artistic movements, a shared global culture also took root, strengthened by the instant interconnectivity of the time dilated network.

Creativity became a universal currency, and people were incentivized to create things that could be enjoyed across all ships. The reward for contributing to global culture? Energy credits that granted access to humanoid robots on other vessels, allowing artists and entertainers to visit, perform, and interact physically in foreign worlds. The more successful a cultural production—a movie, book, song, or game—the more time its creator earned to explore and experience life aboard other ships.

This catalyzed an explosion of interstellar entertainment, a vibrant tapestry of creativity that transcended the boundaries of individual ships and united humanity across the cosmos.

Films and series chronicled epic sagas that spanned the generations of travelers, capturing the essence of their journeys and the indomitable spirit of exploration. Music, too, evolved uniquely aboard each vessel, yet found a universal audience. Cross-ship collaborations gave birth to unprecedented genres, harmonies that had never before resonated through the void.

Literature and storytelling flourished, transcending isolated communities to weave narratives that echoed across all of humanity. These tales, both poignant and triumphant, became the shared mythology of a species adrift among the stars.

Video games emerged as a dominant form of entertainment, with intricate virtual worlds constructed to bridge the vast expanse of space. These digital realms offered solace, adventure, and a sense of unity, binding people together despite the endless gulf that separated them.

Even the influencers, a concept that had long shaped digital culture, found renewed relevance in this interconnected, interstellar society. They became the voices of an era, chronicling the experiences and aspirations of a humanity that drifted between the stars, their words and images a beacon of shared identity in the cosmic night.

Yet, as culture flourished, so too did social stratification.

Over time, the distinctions between social classes became more pronounced. At the top, successful artists, writers, musicians, athletes, and influencers held positions of wealth and influence, joined by the business class, who had found ways to capitalize on essential industries without violating the strict sustainability guidelines.

One such group—the landowners—had been deliberately built into the system from the beginning, introducing a controlled economic inequality.

These 'landowners' did not own physical land—instead, they owned shares of the hydroponic farming units, the lifeline of every ship. While ownership provided them with a steady energy income, they had no control over farming operations themselves. Food production was tightly regulated by the global government to ensure optimal efficiency and sustainability.

Instead, the only power landowners had was in how food was processed and distributed. Some invested in pre-cooked meals, others focused on flavoured cereals, high-quality oils, or specialized dietary options. Some even relied purely on branding and marketing, making their products more desirable.

However, stringent safeguards were in place to ensure the integrity and sustainability of this vital industry:

If an owner mismanaged their enterprise to the point of waste or inefficiency, their stewardship was promptly revoked. The global government maintained vigilant oversight of production, intervening only when incompetence or negligence posed a threat to sustainability. The stark reality was understood by all: humanity teetered on the brink of extinction, and there was no margin for error when it came to food security.

This meticulously structured approach not only guaranteed sustenance but also cultivated employment opportunities, elevating the hydroponic industry into a cornerstone of both survival and economic stability.

Cooks and food processors crafted diverse and appealing meals, ensuring that culinary variety remained a staple of daily life. Delivery workers traversed the expansive ships, transporting these meals with efficiency and care. Marketing teams promoted an array of food options, fostering a competitive environment that drove innovation and quality. Software developers, meanwhile, created custom applications for ordering and managing distribution, streamlining the process and enhancing accessibility.

The outcome was a robust economic foundation that mitigated the risk of resource hoarding while fostering an entrepreneurial spirit. This balance allowed individuals to prosper in ways that enriched the collective well-being of society, ensuring that the pursuit of profit aligned with the greater good.

While software development thrived across various sectors, the creation of video games emerged as one of the most esteemed industries. However, stringent ethical guidelines were imposed to safeguard the new economy from the corrosive influence of exploitative business models.

All forms of gambling were strictly prohibited, including loot boxes, micro-transactions, and any mechanics designed to manipulate compulsive behaviour. The sanctity of human life was paramount, and entertainment was mandated to respect the well-being of players, ensuring that no individual was reduced to a mere consumer product.

Games were encouraged to be exhilarating and engaging, but never at the expense of ethical integrity. This commitment to responsible entertainment fostered an industry that prioritized the enjoyment and welfare of its audience above all else.

The only recurring revenue model permitted was subscription-based multiplayer worlds, ensuring the sustainability of persistent virtual environments while maintaining fair business practices. Developers were encouraged to create experiences that appealed to all of humanity, and periodically, certain games achieved legendary status, captivating audiences across multiple ships for decades.

Even with these strict ethical boundaries, some controversies arose.

On rare occasions, the global administration intervened, banning or modifying games that unintentionally introduced psychologically harmful mechanics. However, for the most part, game developers respected the guidelines, focusing on crafting genuinely thrilling and immersive experiences rather than manipulating their audiences for profit.

As humanity fought for survival on Earth, religion played little role in decision-making. The people selected to retreat into the underground base—those who would become the architects of humanity's escape—were almost entirely from scientific and technical backgrounds. The immediate threat of extinction left little room for theological contemplation; every thought, every effort was dedicated to the singular goal of ensuring the species' survival.

For nearly 200 years, as they laboured beneath the surface and later in the orbital stations, religions persisted, but they held no influence over governance or survival strategies. Faith was a private matter, overshadowed by the sheer urgency of scientific progress.

But once humanity found itself aboard the generational ships, things began to change.

The constant struggle for survival that had defined life for centuries eased—if only slightly. Though the ships remained fragile ecosystems drifting through an indifferent void, their societies stabilized. Humanity was no longer running; it was travelling. And with this transition came something inevitable. A renewed search for spiritual meaning.

The leaders of this interstellar society understood history's lessons well. They knew that suppressing religious expression could lead to dangerous unrest, as had happened in past civilizations. The human spirit—the need for purpose, for something greater than oneself—was just as essential as food, air, and water. To deny it was to invite rebellion.

But unrestricted religious freedom also carried danger. Left unchecked, radical ideologies could spread, destabilizing the delicate balance of their confined societies.

A compromise was needed—a system where faith could flourish, but never become a threat to order and survival.

Thus, stringent regulations were imposed upon religious leadership to ensure that faith served as a pillar of strength and unity, rather than a source of division or peril. Those who aspired to guide others in matters of faith were held to extraordinary standards.

Firstly, they were required to be deeply educated in the realities of survival aboard the ships. Every religious leader had to comprehend the scientific and logistical frameworks that sustained their people. This included an in-depth understanding of ship systems, energy rationing, ecosystem balance, and the inherent limitations of their civilization. They were trained to respect the delicate nature of their existence, ensuring that faith complemented and enhanced survival efforts.

Secondly, they had to embody qualities of empathy, intelligence, and open-mindedness. The selection process was rigorous, ensuring that only rational, level-headed individuals were chosen—those who valued dialogue, cooperation, and reason over fanaticism and division. Extremists were barred from positions of influence, safeguarding the community from divisive ideologies.

Finally, upon successfully completing their training, religious leaders could even gain access to the fleet's most classified knowledge which was otherwise restricted to the five main administrators of each generational spaceship. This included the secret societal management protocols. These protocols involved cyclical social challenges—preplanned periods of controlled upheaval designed to prevent stagnation and complacency within their confined societies. Working closely with the global administration, these leaders guided their people through these cycles, fostering motivation, adaptation, and long-term social stability.

In this manner, religion was not merely tolerated; it was seamlessly integrated into the very fabric of the system, ensuring that it served humanity's survival and prosperity rather than threatening it.

Because all ten generational ships were connected through instant quantum communication, no religion was confined to a single vessel. Faith was no longer limited by physical boundaries—for the first time in history, religious communities could exist as a singular, interconnected whole, stretching across light-years.

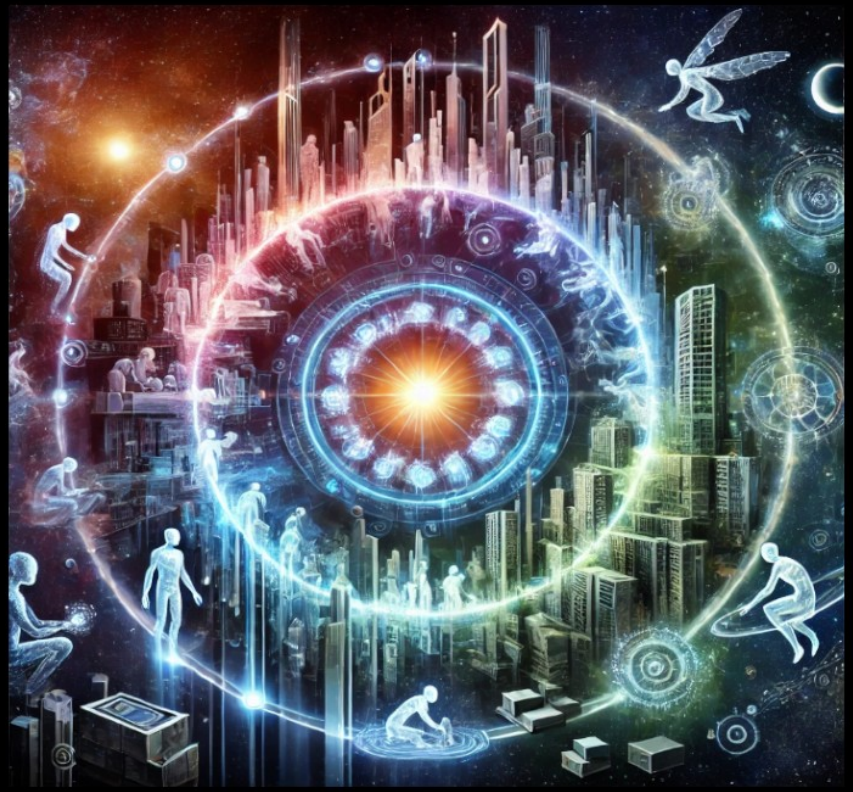
Even with humanity reduced to just 5,000 souls, spread across the void in isolated pockets, several distinct religions took root, flourishing in the shared digital and social space that bound their ships together.

These providers of spiritual sustenance filled a deep-seated human need. Just as hydroponic farms nourished the body, these religious leaders nourished the soul, helping those who searched for meaning find peace amid the endless night of interstellar travel.

For nearly three centuries, the system functioned as intended. Even the controlled revolutions unfolded within the parameters meticulously designed from the outset.

Revolutions erupted across almost all the spaceships, orchestrated by the global administration to manage societal dynamics. Greed was allowed to flourish naturally, with certain businessmen amassing influence in local governments, exacerbating living conditions for the general populace. The global administration ensured that basic necessities such as food and shelter were always met, but deliberately permitted the income gap to widen, fostering social tension between classes.

As the disparity reached a breaking point, the common people's diet was reduced to a basic protein soup, nutritionally adequate but unpalatable. Access to remote humanoid robots was restricted, shrinking their world and eliminating the possibility of visiting other spaceships. Some even lost their homes and were relegated to communal residences provided by the global administration for the destitute. While the administration ensured that people were fed and rested, it intentionally cultivated discontent.



Revolutions inevitably brought new political factions to power, shifting the capitalist system to a socialist one. Businessmen retaliated with mass media propaganda, sparking conflicts between the populace and police forces during rallies advocating for a fairer system. Although weapons were strictly forbidden and most altercations were unarmed, incidents of violence, including stabbings, occurred. In one such rally, a member of the police force lost his life. The global administration understood the risks of this perilous game but deemed them preferable to the collective depression that could afflict society over such an extended period of time.

This cycle of periodic revolutions appeared to function effectively. Following each upheaval, a period of peace ensued, during which income distribution was equitably restored, narrowing the income gap to a minimum. However, over time, businessmen would again exert influence over local governments to advance their personal agendas, reigniting the cycle of social tension until it reached another breaking point.

The system, however, was not without flaws. Inevitably, some individuals succumbed to depression and even committed suicide. The global administration acknowledged this grim reality and, despite the distressing nature of planning for suicides, recognized it as a necessary consideration for humanity's survival. Every aspect, no matter how dark or awful, had to be contemplated.

Thus, everything seemed to proceed according to plan. Sports, religion, local and global cultural promotion, tourism, and the cycles of social revolutions—even the suicide rate—all fell within expected parameters. The system exhibited the stability that had been so meticulously planned.

Everything began to change when the first spaceship reached its destination, barely two centuries after its launch. Over the subsequent 100 time-dilated years, the interconnected society of the remaining nine spaceships observed with initial hope, and later with horror, the 700-year trajectory of a colonizing population that ascended from prosperity to utter extinction.