Untold energy surged through innumerable conduits, all softly glowing, the lifeblood of the massive ship. A man, small compared to the cyclopean structure of the engine walked slowly through the superstructure. All the sights were familiar to him. Every crack and every cable had a place. The sounds his labored footsteps made against cold pulsing metal. The steady hum of the antimatter engine, it massive cylindrical bulk towering above him several stories.

As a force of habit he stopped at a small screen and wiped the dust from it, frowning slightly. How many years had it been since he was last here? It seemed so recent. Had it been so long? The years were running from him. And an additional sadness stretched in front of him, the interminable march of eons.

He put the thought out of his head for a moment and looked at the screen. All the readouts were stable. There was enough fuel for centuries. Centruries. Millenia. The ship was ready for immortality, as it always had been. He had built it of himself. It was his scion. Perhaps that was why it was so familiar.

He was out of the engine room. He wasn't sure when he had left the room. It was unimportant. His subconscious processes were thoroughly debugged. He could probably lie dormant for those centuries, wait so he could oversee the refueling. It was a rare event. But interesting? Probably not.

He yearned for the new and the unique but instead he was entombed in the known. If he could lie silent as the universe passed around him, what was the point his consciousness at all? Could he just dream away? He had heard, at some point in his life he had become aware of the fact that some like him did just that. Barely alive really. Hulks of Scions, merely husks, floating alone in the cosmos, never to awaken, for to do so would subject the owners with that pure existential dread that only living brought. You never had to truly think if all you did was dream.

But he had his own dreams. Or at least he thought he did. Processes so deep that they were no longer enumerated. Had they worked their way into the very living fabric of his brain? Were they that important? Were his dreams so pervasive? They were. He could feel it now, the urge. Sleep would not do.

The world slammed into being around him. He was truly conscious now. Every second a second. Every minute a minute. He cursed himself for wasting such time. There were things to do. They were not going to get done without him. Automation could only stretch so far, and he had never...trusted? He had never…understood? A minor memory malfunction. He had never been one to give his responsibilities to another. To see his dreams fulfilled by another? Even of his own making? The definition of hell. Everything would drop through, the dread would return.

He must be active, it was his own dreaming. It was how he filled the years. No purpose only than its own. His purpose was the comforting ouroboros of science, of learning. Perhaps it was because of all the things, all the pursuits that could exist, it was as infinite as himself, as the years that he had and would have. No end. The universe stretched around him. Its emptiness called and he answered.

He got to work.

It was all new. It was all sublime. The experiments had unknowable results. All unique. No one was doing what he was doing, he was pretty sure. His scion was and had collected thousands of samples from the nebula around itself. And now he pondered its makeup in the most intimate room on the ship, his lab.

The smallest room, it consisted of inert metal walls, simple and unadorned. It didn't even run the length of the ship. Had it been its own ship? Was this his childhood? It didn't matter. Instruments surged around him, every one in its place. A grid stretching as far as his unaugmented eyes could see, each one connected to the Scion's computational fabric.

The results were… good? Surprising certainly. Levels were altogether unexpected. A smile played across his face, and some part of him realized how significant that was: that he could still smile.

The results were analyzed methodically, minute precision, no gaseous stone left unturned. Then millions of hypothesis were created instantly. Why? What a beautiful question. His mind surged. He was in his element.