Chapter 70

Abby was hard to understand over comms. She had initiated a comms blackout. The security software she had installed were supposed to allow us to communicate while preventing any boarders from communicating. It was working...sort of. Abby said there were intruders in engineering and on the command deck. At least two crew members were down. The bridge was secured but engineering was compromised. They were going to breach engineering and flood it with the wolf bots before following them in.

I moved to a terminal to see what the damage occurred we dropped out of subspace. Nothing...I couldn’t get the engineering reports on my terminal. I felt the shudder from the breaching charge and waited for Abby to give me an update before deciding on where I should go. I started remotely prepping the yacht. I tried to get Julie but my efforts were ineffectually. Finally, Abby said engineering had been retaken. The wolf bots had restrained a woman in combat armor. Half of the bots had been disabled or destroyed during the breach but they succeeded in grappling her with their jaws and the marines eliminated her with head shots as she refused to surrender.

Abby had bad news. Two other hostiles on the command deck had killed Henry, Shinade and Titus. One was currently barricaded in Shinade’s quarters. My heart was pounding. I had always been able to remain focused in situations like this but suddenly I was sweating and panicking. No not panicking, worried. My daughter was in Shinade’s quarters. I forgot my senses and rushed up to deck 8 and the armory and suited up. I went to deck 9 to find a foam block in from of the bridge and a destroyed spider bot. Abby and three other marines were outside Shinade’s quarters.

My eyes focused on Shinade, her lifeless eyes staring at the ceiling. I turned to the foam encased intruder. It was a woman…I recognized her as one of the guests at the captain’s dinner. Anger flooded me, uncontrolled anger. I unholstered my pistol and walked up to the encased woman and fired at her helmet. The first shot deflected into the foam and the woman winced. I fired six more times and the clear plate finally shattered and entered the woman’s suit, killing her. I swung to see my marines looking at me. It was out of character for me. I was always in control and clear thinking. Maybe I could have leveraged the woman for Celeste. Too late.

Abby put her hand on my chest and told me to calm down and think. It was five minutes before I was able to say I was ready to communicate with Jan Doe. I needed to respond carefully and put Celeste’s safety first. Amos was in there as well. If Eve hadn’t been undergoing upgrades…or if I hadn’t dragged my feet, she could have prevented this. Fuck! I yelled in my suit before opening the comm to the room.

Jane Doe was ridiculously calm as she asked about her two teammates. I breathed and said her team was currently winning. I had three dead while she had just two. The delivery had the appropriate response as Jane was very slow to respond and I told Abby to send her the images of her dead compatriots.

It was a few minutes before Jane responded with a question. She wanted to know what condition the ship was in. Abby privately said engineering was completely secure and they never reached the bridge. I told Jane we would be reentering subspace after a quick check of the engines. We waited for a response. Jane said she would surrender peacefully and I could turn her over to authorities in the Ragnhild system. I paused as this was too easy, too simple. I looked at Abby but she her face said a lot. She was blaming herself for this failure.

I told Jane she was to strip naked and walk out and she wouldn’t be fired upon. It took another few minutes before she said she would comply. When the door opened, she only had underwear on. She was a well-muscled woman and walked with a lithe grace. Her face betrayed nothing and she looked down the corridor where her comrade was still stuck in the foam with her helmet destroyed with heavy pistol rounds. That site made her pause as it was an obvious execution.

Abby and Francis moved in their power armor to add restraints to Jane and she didn’t resist. I quickly walked inside and my heartbeat faster as there were no babies crying. Thankfully both babies were alive and well and just sleeping. I had somehow sidestepped a tragedy. Jane looked unremorseful…more contemplative with her situation. I wanted to strike her but resisted.

I walked to Abby and told her we would review her security failures late. Right now she needed to find someone to take care of the babes, we also needed to clean up, secure Jane and get the ship back into subspace. I went to engineering and worked with Damian to go over the power core, drives, emitter’s and sub space systems. Together we found repairs that would take the bots about twelve hours to complete. During this time Suruchi found me in engineering and questioned me as to what had happened. I gave the rundown as best I could. She was in total shock and was formulating a response to the remaining passengers as to what had happened.

When the ship finally transitioned back to sub space I went to my quarters and found Dora there with Celeste and Amos. I thanked her and told her to get two steward bots up here to care for the children. She just nodded and left without saying anything. I would upgrade my personal steward bot with a childcare suit but right now I was just too exhausted. I had never felt this drained before.

Celeste would never forgive me for this…would she even realize it was my fault? I sat on the bed in a daze and the bots entered the cabin and began to fed and then change the babes. I held both in a large plush chair in front of a wall vid screen and fell asleep.

*Jane couldn’t believe they had failed. They were the elite of the core worlds. Their armor could have functioned after taking dozens of hits…well the agent in engineering had the damaged armor but still she should have been a force! It was that stupid foam…if they had known about it they could have moved the solvent capsules from their belts to one of their wrist mechanisms. Water under the bridge.*

*Two agents killed she would have to answer for. Agents were expensive for the brotherhood, training, implants and cybernetics cost hundreds of thousands of Sol credits. Well at least she had read Captain Wellspring correctly. She was alive and in custody. Once they made port she could activate the Brotherhood beacon in her molar.*

*The next morning the security chief came in and escorted Jane to medical. She was only slightly worried, they shouldn’t be able to discover the transmitter in her molar. She was placed in the scanner under the watchful eye of four marines. Guess they saw her as a threat! The scan was unpleasant as the doctor used some harmonic settings and started listing of Jane’s enhancements. She didn’t find the tooth but they did remove lock over her PerCom and proceeded to completely remove it. It was not a pleasant experience as it was fused to the bone.*

*The doctor in concert with her med bot team proceeded to deactivate or cripple all her implants. Jane remained stoic and just stared at the security chief the entire time. Some of the modules had been pain modulators so she had an unpleasant walk back to the holding cell. She decided to keep quiet. Once they reached the Ragnhild system and her distress beacon activated the local Brotherhood agents would respond.*