Chapter 41

*Rae’Ver looked at the holotank on the bridge as the city ship emerged from sub space. He quickly focused in on the sleek ship fleeing the scene. The Void Phoenix was here. He looked for one of his aides to gloat a little but they were all busy with the battle and securing the city.*

*He looked on as his admirals directed ships out of internal docks. Soon the scan data came back on the large asteroid. Immediately he became interested in the object which had large mine shafts throughout. No not mine shafts…deep scans were showing immense caverns and structures beneath the surface. No power signs though…wait there was a small power reading deep within the planetoid that was networking between the shafts. He called over two scientists who specialized in energy.*

*As they began an in-depth review of the power readings the battle raged on and a quick glance told him they would easily prevail. Rae’Ver was in a good mood. The pirate ships could be sent to the furnaces on the city ship and the surviving humans could be transferred to a human nation that gave rewards for pirates. With all the resources spent on this hunt he might actually recover the vast majority. Hopefully the knowledge Devon Wellspring had with him would be great as well.*

*One of the scientists suggested the city ship move away from the planetoid. The readings suggested a harmonic power resonance building…either a weapon or some type of countdown he theorized. The other scientist just seemed to think it was a power network for the structures in the shafts and was nothing to worry about.*

*A few minutes later and the first scientist screamed in alarm. Rae’Ver quickly focused on the planetoid and saw why the scientist was alarmed…in the holotank the planetoid had shattered. An officer from across the room yelled impact in 2 minutes. A flurry of activity was done to move, deflect or destroy the chunks of rocks speeding toward the city ship. Then a wave hit. The wave was something he had never felt before…it wiped away his mental energies and he tried with his all his will to stay awake but without his power the fatigue was too much and he passed out as the city ship shook from fragments hitting it.*

*Acton was taken slightly off guard by his first encounter with the engineer. He looked to be in his late teens, maybe even twenty. The young man was extremely tall compared to his crew in the background. Acton introduced himself and the engineer had a look of amusement in his eyes. Acton was about to make a threat when the engineer said a line he was going to retreat and fight another day. The way he phrased it…the engineer was a fan of his childhood vid.*

*He couldn’t be as bad as Samantha had said. That show was his favorite, was produced in the core worlds and it had ended about 12 years ago. He wondered if the engineer had similar thoughts about the shows terrible ending. All the pirates getting captured so easily after evading authorities for 22 seasons!*

*The engineer’s ship was fleeing as his sensor operator confirmed he was lifting off from the planetoid. Well, he wouldn’t get far. He started communicating with the other captains to spend some of their sub space disrupters. After the first ignited he knew the ship was his. It looked extremely slow so it was probably loaded down with plunder from the planetoid.*

*Some of his fleet broke off to head to the planetoid. So much for a coordinated effort in capturing the fleeing ship. He kept his own fleet on task guessing the engineer had already looted the choicest bits from the planetoid. He noticed Samantha was gone from behind him. Well, it had been a few hours and he couldn’t expect her to remain there indefinitely. He thought she might like to see the fall of her nemesis so he would call her back just before the moment. He also knew Samantha was with child, his son. After the birth he would place her safely on an agricultural world or small developmental planet.*

*The engineer was on comms again and Acton took the connection. The engineer was brazen enough to try a ridiculous bluff. He was threatening to blow up the planetoid. It was a similar bluff used frequently in the pirate comedy vid but Acton did not find any hidden meaning in the engineer’s threat. At best he thought the engineer might be able to destroy one of the cities.*

*His sensor operator said another ship had been pulled out of subspace in front of the fleeing engineer. Acton focused on the data and when the IFF came back as a Sylvan scout he swore and cut comms. Fucking space elves! He tried to restrain the pirate fleet but it only took minutes before an array of ships had fired on the scout. Fucking idiots! Space elves were like cockroaches…you kill one and twenty take its place. Another scout appeared before the missile salvo reached the first.*

*Acton ordered his fleet to retreat. There was probably a city ship in the vicinity and his allies had kicked the proverbial hornets’ nest. The elves started to appear in force and cast their own sub space disrupters. It was over. His command fractured before him, ignoring his orders. Some fled, some fought and some sought refuge in the planetoid.*

*The engineer must have set this up. The odds were far too long to have the elves appear out of nowhere. He was a devious bastard like Samantha had said. His sensor operator said the planetoid was giving off weird energy signatures. He ordered his ship moved away at best possible speed as the pit of his stomach sank…he wasn’t bluffing about blowing up the fucking planetoid up! Then he got more bad news. Samantha had taken his recently acquired ultra fast courier ship and was trying to rendezvous with the engineer’s ship. What a fucking fine day! The planetoid shattered and soon his ship was dark and squeezed by an unseen pressure that made his nose, eyes and ears bleed.*

*His crew worked feverishly to get everything back online…at least those of his crew that could still work. A quarter were dead, and half were in a sorry state. As systems started coming on line he thought nothing other than ending the engineer’s life.*

*As sensors came on he found the engineer already fleeing…he must have had a defense for the explosion to be operational so soon, it was definitely a planned trap then. Then the bastard commed him to gloat. He used another line from the vid which didn’t help Acton’s mood. When the engineer indicated to his crew to go to FTL and nothing happened Acton was about to laugh but then the ship did in fact go to FTL a few seconds later. Shortly after the Void Phoenix disappeared a disrupter went off. He was trapped. He ordered his crew to surrender to the space elves. He just hoped he would get another chance at the engineer.*

*Samantha had done what she needed to do to survive. She had hoped with gaining more freedom on the ship she might have an opportunity to escape. The things she had seen in the last few months were horrific. At least she was under the protection of Acton. She was carrying his child, a boy, which was another shield for her.*

*She hated and admired the pirate lord at the same time. When the engineer had ended his comms by saying he was happy to see her alive she nearly broke. He seemed genuine in his statement. He probably had a plan to get out of here safely. She made a rash decision. She would take Acton’s prize courier ship and try to rendezvous with the engineer. She stopped in the missile disrupter storage to plant a bomb. She had made this bomb in hopes of disabling the ship and getting rescued in the future but this was as good a chance as any.*

*When she got to the courier it was unguarded and she had all the passcodes. The ship was stuffed with luxury goods from dozens of merchant captures. Enough small goods wealth to live comfortably for decades. Unfortunately the ship didn’t have FTL. But it was very fast.*

*When the Sylvan started to arrive she admired the engineer. This must be his back up plan…some type of alliance with the space elves. All the other pursuers broke off and it was just her now. Then the planetoid exploded and a wave washed over her ship, knocking all her power out.*

*She worked hard to get comms back up and when she did the engineer said a shuttle was coming for her! She felt it connect and then bring her to the engineer’s ship. He left her to stew while he went to FTL. Eventually he got an umbilical to attach and she was allowed on his ship. She was greeted by the engineer, Eve, the two female prisoners he sent to the planetoid with him and two dog bots. The red head prisoner looked pregnant, further along than herself. She was wearing baggy clothing and hoped to hide her own pregnancy. Before she could say anything Eve blurted, “She’s pregnant.”*