

## Chapter 5 – On the Shuttle

“You humans are awfully stubborn, I’ll give you that.”

The mystery man, Milton, turned off the shields and pulled her in. The commander collapsed on the shuttle’s floor.

“Weapon systems have been locked.”

“Bloody hell.”

Milton hooked the Commander up on the medical chair and attached the breather. He then clambered into the pilot’s chair. The Capital city below had made a target lock, but not for long. He had a chance to learn the network system during his ‘interaction’ with it. It would be a simple command to disable it.

“Weapon systems deactivated.”

That was a relief, however, Milton now had a bigger problem, the Commander. He’d thought it would be a while before she’d wake up or realised her comm badge was a fake. He didn’t liken her to be an early morning riser or someone to be as reckless as to jump onto a shuttlecraft taking off. Perhaps after all this time, he didn’t know everything about humanity.

She was going to be a problem, but it would have to wait. He had to leave before he did irreparable damage to the region.

“This is Captain Myres of the Planetary Collective Forces Ship McGuffin to Shuttle 1. To whoever has taken control of this vessel, you are in violation of both PC and ITU law. Shut down your engines, this is your first and only warning.”

Milton knew this was an empty threat. No ship, except for authorised ITU security ships could open fire in ITU territory. All the security ships have had communications jammed before he left, thanks to his link to the satellite system, but only the security ships. He wasn’t about to cause a global wide blackout.

“McGuffin to Shuttle 1, I repeat, shut down your engines. You will not be harmed unless you force our hand.”

I considered if the McGuffin would open fire. No. The PC is a stickler for the rules, they couldn't break one if they tried. However, it was best to finish up with the transformation and fold out of here. Unfortunately, shuttlecrafts weren't designed to do that, strictly ship to planet vessel only. There would have to be some modifications. He got started.

"McGuffin to Commander Belle. Can you hear us?"

He felt a pain of guilt through his body as he looked briefly over at her. She had passed out from oxygen deprivation. The computer said she was fine but he hated the idea of using her and for putting her in this situation. He preferred zero casualties but someone always got hurt when something involved him. It was the universe's way of punishing him of being the abomination he was. If the PC and the ITU hadn't made it necessary to access their facilities without an authorised combadge, and had made those combadge each have a unique signature that would become inactive if two of the same code were linked to anyone system, he wouldn't have needed her.

He would have found another way if he had the time, but he needed to get of the planet before he put everybody at risk.

"Another vessel entering the system."

"Identify," he ordered.

"E.S Victory," the computer responded.

"Oh, shit!" He knew that the McGuffin wouldn't violate ITU law, but the Empire were a different story,

"Interception in five minutes."

This was the complication he didn't need. He had to get out of here fast. It was time for a merging. He placed his hands on the pilot's console in front of him. The skin started to become translucent and disappear within the console. He could feel the ships systems coursing through his veins, hear the alerts, smell its fear.

"It's all right. We can do this."

He began by remoulding and reconfiguring the engines, something dangerous to do mid-flight, even for him.

“What the hell are you doing?” came a concerned scream behind him.

The transformation process had taken all of his concentration, so he didn't see that Commander Belle had regained consciousness, again a lot sooner than he would have thought possible for a human.

“How are you doing that?”

There was an undertone of fear in her voice. Milton had heard it many times before when he demonstrated his talents. On the outside he was a normal looking human because he chose to look like that. On the inside, he looked pretty human as well, except the building blocks were all wrong. Most beings from Earth are made of elements like carbon, hydrogen and other organic elements. All that Milton knew was that he wasn't, though what it was he didn't know either. Neither did the friendly and not so friendly scientists when they experimented on him.

“I'll explain later. We need to get out of here,” he grunted.

“We aren't going anywhere buster.” Commander Belle commanded. She primed her weapon and pointed it at him.

He laughed nervously. “I'm connected directly into the ship, the engines specifically,” he began, “Do you think it's a wise idea to discharge an energy weapon at me.”

This made Belle pause.

“Look, it wasn't my intention to put you at risk. I'll drop you off at the next port and tell your ship where you are. I just need to leave here as soon as possible.”

“What do you need ...”

Milton felt a familiar pain rising up his body. This was not the time, not here. He cried in immense pain.

“What’s happening?” Belle cried out. “What’s wrong?”

His screams filled the cabin of the shuttlecraft and reverberated along the hull. The ship sounded like it was in as much pain as he was.

“That’s not possible. Is that you doing that?”

“I...cant...stop...it!”

“What’s causing it?”

“I don’t know!”

Milton was completely helpless, unable to control the forces within his own body. It felt like all the atoms in his body were being teared apart. Outside the maelstrom caused chaos for those around them.

“Whoop, Whoop.”

Commander Belle over to the comm panel. “Shuttle One to ES Victory, you need to leave immediately. You’re putting your ship in danger! Repeat leave immediately.” The message unfortunately never went through. On the monitors, they watched as they attempted to fire on the shuttlecraft, just as another tear opened underneath them.”

“Oh God.”

Milton screamed in agony but not at the physical pain. Once again he bared witness to deaths of so many at his hands. The ship outside twisted and turned as it appeared to ripped apart into the void of wherever the tears came from. And then with a flash it was gone along with the uncontrollable tears in space-time.

Commander Belle edge herself closer to Milton who was still melded into the shuttlecraft’s panel. Milton could feel the hesitation in her footsteps. He knew what she was thinking. It hadn’t always been like this. He had lived for centuries without this problem, others yes, but not a problem of this scale. He was a danger to everybody and everything.

“Are you okay?” she asked attentively.

Milton didn't answer. What could he say at this point that would do any help.

“McGuffin to Commander Belle! McGuffin to Shuttlecraft One. What is your status? What was that?” hailed Captain Myres.

“We need to get you to a PC facility, work out what's going on, get you some help.”

“No!”

Milton took in a deep breath, his atoms finally settled and finished the job he set to do. The flash of light outside was beginning to fade as the rest of the rips were being sealed.

“Another rip is opening!”

“That's not a rip.” Milton groaned. “It's a wormhole. See!.”

He put the wormhole on the display screen.

“Rips are usually grey and sucky. Wormholes are blue and swirly.”

He gave a brief smile as he piloted the ship into the wormhole.

“I've got to get back to my ship.”

“You will. I'll make sure of it.”

## Chapter 6

“Your Eminence, please forgive the intrusion but will you be requiring Lo’Va’s services tonight?” the attendant asked.

She rolled her glass of crimson brandy in her hand, staring through the translucent panel into the abyss of space. The question remained hanging as did the attendant. Protocol did not allow him to leave until he was formally dismissed, which had often led to some awkward moments, though not like this.

“Leave the room.”

There was no malice or frustration in her voice and for the first time there was no spirit. Her father ruled with an iron fist, her brother had a gentler hand when he was allowed. No one ever expected the burden of command to fall to Mistress Se-Cond, no matter her scheming, but now she had it. Was this how she would rule though? From the darkness of her suite, like her father, the Emperor at the end of his life?

“Very well, your Eminence.” The door closed behind him as he left the room.

The room fell into darkness, the only light from the stars. She took a sip. It tasted the same as always but it didn’t feel the same. She knew she should have been excited. After all, she had been working on her brother’s demise for some time, but nothing so final. He was meant to learn from his mistakes, not be killed by them. She was meant to show her father that she was the one born to rule, but now that wasn’t possible. The Empress was lost in her thoughts, caught between her desires and her reality.

On the screen, there was a message from Lee’dur asking what was going to happen now. She considered calling him back. A night of comfort was perhaps what she needed.

No.

That’s something she wasn’t allowed to have anymore. She needed to grieve. She needed to plot. She needed revenge. But first she needed to be alone because after tonight she would never be allowed to be alone again.