

Chapter 169: Trip to Ganymede Station

Thorne - Halls Corporation

“What? They had those installed in here? Did you trace where they’re sending the feed to?”

Thorne glanced frantically around their room aboard on the starship, searching for any signs of monitoring devices. He employed his Argus to scan in every direction.

“Calm down. The cams and bugs I found were all directed to their main security hub on the ship. My Argus indicated it’s in the other rooms as well, not just ours. It’s just their additional measure against any detrimental actions taking place on their ship. We’re not being targeted,” Lana reassured.

“Still, we can’t be sure.”

Thorne then proceeded to use several hand signs to converse with his co-workers.

“Thorne, it’s fine. This place is now clear. We can talk.”

Instead of verbally replying, he continued to use signs. He warned his companions to be more cautious as they were up against A-Class corporations and above.

Seeing how there was no convincing the cyborg, the others soon followed suit and conversed through a mixture of hand signs and directed messages through their SAID.

As they did that, the starship undocked from Aegis Spaceport and began its journey.

Thousands of other corpos were on board, and many flooded the various amenities on the ship. As a Cruiser-class starship, the Megalodon was comparable to the top cruise ships back on Earth. It had entire shopping areas, pools, casino, and various eateries on it.

Several hours after Thorne and his crew had settled in, they finally decided to rotate a portion of their group out of the room to explore the new vessel.

“Come on, Thorne. Keep up, and put away that long face,” Lana lectured.

“...Do we really need to go get food ourselves? I’m sure they have room service.”

“Seriously, Thorne? You want us all to stay cooped up in a room? Doesn’t that draw more attention to us than anything else? Come on now; we went through this already. Stop throwing a tantrum.”

Thorne could only relent, as he had already been thoroughly defeated during their earlier discussion.

They cut their way through the shopping area to reach the part of the ship where the dining area was.

They passed various different types of people, ranging from entire families to other corporate entourages.

“So about that woman from Airo Tech who tried to hire you guys. Do you expect to find trouble around here?” Lana asked as she observed a group of corpos who seemed to be celebrating something.

“Where there are corpos, there is profit. Where there is profit, there’s conflict. Keep your eyes peeled.”

That was exactly what Thorne did all the way up until they sat down at Lana’s chosen restaurant. They had a quick meal before venturing back out into the greater part of the ship.

“This detour...Is it really necessary?”

“Well, if you think something is going to happen abroad on this ship, we better investigate thoroughly.” Lana shook her head as she guided her companion toward the casino. “Places where people drink or gamble do pretty well in loosening people’s lips.”

“...”

Like Thorne had done many times with Rollo, they soon found themselves at a table in the corner of a bar located in the heart of the casino. From there, they could hear the bustling sound of the slot machines and people loudly shouting as they gambled.

“If intel gathering was your goal, shouldn’t you look for a chance to breach into their system?” Thorne whispered.

“...We’re on a spaceship, for goodness’ sake. If they detect someone breaching their system, we won’t have anywhere to run. It’s not worth it unless it’s an emergency.”

“...”

The two fell silent as they focused their ears to listen in on the nearby conversations.

“Are you gentlemen planning to go anywhere on Ganymede Station?”

“I’ll be listening to company MO and staying put within our compound.”

“Hmm, that sounds boring. Perhaps I may go sample the unique venues they have down there.”

“Glad to know we are like-minded. However, we’ll need to assemble an adequate escort if we’re to head out.”

There wasn't a whole lot of useful information to glean from the chattering of the nearby patrons. Many of them were sharing old stories and were all having a pleasant time.

After half an hour at the bar, Thorne and Lana finally decided to head back.

Their journey was smooth all the way until they arrived in the hallway to where their room was. They were both alerted that their fellow co-worker was before them, but with active camouflage engaged.

They were standing outside one of the rooms belonging to the other guests, but there was no one else in sight. Seeing the strange scene, both Lana and Thorne decided to send a quick text to their allies.

Andrew, what is going on?

I'm not sure. We're investigating some loud noises we heard in one of these rooms. When we scanned with the Argus, we found everything around here entirely blank. They have a jammer of some sort set up.

Thorne and Lana exchanged looks before both quickly turning on their active camouflage. As she wasn't equipped with power armor, Lana made her way back into their room while Thorne joined Andrew.

The two of them simply stood outside the room in question, trying to listen in for any clues about what was inside. They didn't stand there for long as Andrew's Nyes returned.

Despite the room being jammed, the Nyes were programmed to record everything in their surroundings before returning if the connection was lost. This meant they could still be relied upon to scout the peripherals of a jammed area.

Thorne soon played the recording in the corner of his eyes. He watched the video taken from the perspective of a Nye, which was low to the ground, entering a dark room. Inside it recorded several bodies laying motionless in there. The furniture in the room was also in disarray, as if a wild animal had been let loose in there.

You said you guys heard a loud noise. What kind of loud noise? Thorne texted.

I'm not certain. Maybe something heavy slamming into the metal deck? Either way, this doesn't seem like something we want to get involved in.

This happened like three rooms over from ours. We need to be certain it has nothing to do with us. Looks like people in the other rooms heard the commotion as well.

Right after Thorne's message, he pinged Andrew to look up at the main hallway. Several armed guards were taking long strides their way.

The two Halls Corporation operatives came to a quick decision about what to do and simply stepped out of the way. They hovered just a small distance from the starship's security and watched them work.

As staff members of the ship, the two new guards easily unlocked the room in question.

From there, they followed the guards into the room and observed the crime scene firsthand.

"Pat, contact central command, now! We've got an incident."

The entire response time from the starship's security crew was immediate. Dozens of people flooded the room within a minute as they investigated the crime scene.

Thorne and Andrew watched as they discovered a small circular device that was the source of the jamming. After taking note of the bodies for any identifying hints, the two returned to their own room.

"Is this the kind of trouble you were expecting?" Lana asked as soon as she spotted Thorne.

"Not exactly...But it's still in line with what I expected. It's not too out of the norm for those who hang around Rollo..."

"..."

During the brief moment of silence, the big guy in the back noticed the return of his comrades, albeit with some delay.

"Andrew, welcome back! Peng is hungry. Is it our turn to go eat yet?"

"..."

For the next day, the group hunkered down as they prepared to face the unexpected, but it never came. They peacefully passed the time and even resumed taking turns to go out and eat.

Like that, a week quickly passed, and they arrived at Ganymede Station.

"Well, that trip ended uneventfully after the first day," Lana muttered as they disembarked.

"That's a good thing. Now, is the main challenge. We have to find a place to stay first, then somehow talk to the owner of Aerodynamic," Thorne replied.

"This place...it looks pretty worn down," Andrew noted as he took in the surroundings.

They were still inside the spaceport, but even there, the plating and furnishing looked aged. If the metal walls were rusted as well, then it would make one think they had entered into a scrapyard.

It didn't take them long to pass through the spaceport and laid their eyes on Ganymede Station proper. It was just like Aegis, with high ceilings and buildings like a proper city. However, the skies were a dreary gunmetal grey, and smog was constantly churned out from some factories. Thankfully, the smog didn't pollute the city too much as heavy ventilation shafts ran their way down from the high ceilings of the city.

The group flagged down two taxis.

"Bring us to a decent hotel," Thorne instructed the two drivers.

The group had been in a rush to Ganymede Station and couldn't find any information on potential lodging. That was why they had to wing it.

The taxi driver awkwardly glanced back at Thorne and rubbed his chin.

"Umm, there aren't any hotels that would be up to corpo standards around here."

"What?" Lana yelled. "I thought you couldn't book any rooms around here because it was disconnected from the network. Are you telling me Ganymede straight up doesn't have any hotels?"

Before she got a reply, gunshots rang out in the distance. There were numerous buildings that were only inches from each other, even on the outskirts of where the spaceport was. It was within these dense clusters of buildings that the sound of gunshots originated.

"I knew from Amos' intel that Ganymede wasn't tourist-friendly, but I didn't expect it to be this bad..." Thorne muttered.

"Umm, sir." One of the taxi drivers spoke up. "There are hostels we can take you to, but they are for the average worker like us. In fact, most of the places here are operated by and for regular folks."

"Understood. Let us head out to the best one you know of."

As their group got moving, Thorne couldn't help but read over Amo's report once more.

It had indicated Ganymede station was a place that hosted the premier foundries in the entire area. It processed the large amount of ore mined from the asteroid belt between Jupiter and Mars. The corporations that operated this station treated it only as a foundry and invested the minimum in other facilities.

They didn't care, as all they wanted were usable alloys that they would ship elsewhere. The quality of life or security of the regular workers wasn't even in their consideration. Only profit was in their calculations.

For that goal, they shipped hundreds of thousands of people to Ganymede every year to replace their stock of workers lost to the hazardous conditions and the rampant crime in the city.

For the people in charge, it was more cost-efficient to replace the once-empty cargo ships, coming in to pick up alloys, with new workers than to improve the conditions of the station.

That was why on their entire trip to their lodging, Thorne and his crew witnessed numerous rundown buildings, and the pedestrians did not seem well off at all.

However, there would be the occasional areas that appeared affluent. They were the compounds for various corporations and their core employees that operated their assets on the station. Their entire area was protected by high walls with ample security patrolling the area. These compounds created a stark contrast from the rest of the city.

It was when their two taxis came across one of the most luxurious-looking compounds that Thorne spoke up.

“Make them stop around here for a bit.” He waited until both cars came to a stop before continuing. “That’s where our target should be. Inside the headquarters of AeroDynamic.”

They glanced over just in time to see a dozen VTOLs taking off from the rooftop of one of the buildings and flying through the skies in formation.

The group watched on in silence until the big man beside Andrew spoke up.

“Peng doesn’t think it will be easy to get in there.”

“ ... ”

No one could say anything to refute that claim.