

# Chapter 168: Smuggling Aboard

## Thorne - Halls Corporation

“We have connections up here?”

Thorne smiled wryly at Lana’s question as he nodded.

“That’s right...Rollo picked up a new hire from here not long ago. A computer guy called Pino. His sister tagged along and was assigned to Lucy. She’s already here to pave things out for us.”

“Then where is she?”

“I messaged her already. We should hear back soon.”

“...Then what do we do in the meantime?”

“Rest. Only those who know how to take care of themselves can stay in tip-top shape for the battlefield.”

“..”

The four of them lazed around in their room while they each did their own thing.

Thorne and Andrew were both on their optics, and Peng was spacing out as he looked at the scenery out the window. While Lana was typing away on the mechanical keyboard, she brought along.

Like that, they waited a whole three hours before their contact responded. The saving grace was that their contact didn’t simply send a message, but showed up in their room shortly after.

“Nice to see you again, Tally. Thank you for coming,” Thorne greeted as he opened the door.

The woman hesitantly nodded as she entered.

“It’s been a while...”

“No need to be so stiff.”

“That’s easy for you to say. I never expected to be working with you, or under you, nevertheless.”

Thorne smirked.

“You didn’t have to join us if you didn’t want to.”

“No way in hell am I leaving my brother alone with you corpos.”

“Now, now. You’re one of us now. Can we talk business? There are others here, after all.”

Tally took a moment to glance around the room where the others were staring their way. She sighed as she relented.

“Fine. We don’t have that much time, anyway. I’ve looked for several ways you guys could use to reach Ganymede Station. Since you’re there as diplomats and not as a hit team, you’d prefer legitimate channels, correct?”

Before Thorne could answer, Lana paused her typing and glanced over at the newcomer.

“Yes, and we need intel on Ganymede Station itself. Maps, factions, special rules, whatever we would need to not make a fool of ourselves. We can’t afford to mess up when we’re going somewhere so far away without any additional support.”

“No problem, I got the old man on it. The issue you should be worrying about is your ride.” Tally glanced at for a moment and found her audience befuddled. “You’re all pretty heavily equipped with two power armor in your group. The commercial flights will force you to stuff it into storage, but they’re not known to be the most secure. There’s a good chance someone will examine it without our permission or outright steal it, which isn’t something our company wants, right?”

Everyone else in the room nodded in unison.

“Then the best way to retain your equipment and control is to rent a ship like you guys had done the last time you were here. The main drawback of doing it this way is finding the right ship. The trip to Ganymede isn’t exactly short, so you’ll need an adequately large ship geared for long-distance voyages.”

“I take it these large vessels aren’t readily available?” Thorne grimaced.

“They are...but only the older models. They’re much slower and would take an entire month to get there, at the very least. In comparison, if you take a newer model like the ones they use for commercial routes, you’d get there in a week.”

“...That’s too long.”

Everyone’s gaze was drawn to the only cyborg in the room. None of them were as clear as him regarding what their mission was even for.

“We have to get there as quickly as we can. A month is out of the question...”

“...I can start the search of an adequate ship, but don’t expect too much on such short notice.”

“Whatever you’re thinking, it better not be hijacking a spaceship.” Lana quickly added as she saw the thoughtful look on Thorne’s face.

“...I know, that’ll just complicate everything.”

“I’m not sure if it’s my place to speak, but...” Andrew interjected from the corner of the room.

“Go ahead. Speak your mind.”

“Then I will. If the only issue with taking a commercial ship to Ganymede was to keep our power armors secure, then couldn’t we just not bring them?”

“...That is possible.” Thorne hesitantly answered. “But it’ll lower our leverage by a bit. Not even considering the dangers that an unfamiliar territory could present, we’d just become a group of regular corpos. The other corporations may not take us seriously at all. Power armors aren’t just combat assets, but a symbol as well.”

“In that case, we could just smuggle them.”

Everyone instantly turned to Andrew at his alarming idea.

“We shouldn’t risk earning any corporation’s ire,” Lana quipped.

“I mean, it’s not that big of a deal if they don’t find out, right? The new power armor is optimized for stealth, so it shouldn’t be an issue.” Andrew gazed over at Thorne for confirmation.

“He is...right. That is possible. Plus, if anything goes wrong, it’d just be an issue between us and the company operating the ship. Not any of those based on Ganymede.”

The group then discussed in further detail regarding how they would carry out such a plan until they found it satisfactory. They didn’t have a lot of time as the next scheduled voyage departed in the evening of the next day, and the next one wouldn’t set out until a week later.

After a night of rest, the group went off to make their preparations during the day, and then all assembled near the docks just before evening.

“Did Amos find anything?” Thorne asked as soon as he saw Tally’s arrival.

Instead of responding, she simply held up a data chip to Thorne’s face as she proceeded to the boarding gate.

“I’ll board ahead with her. See you guys soon,” Lana said before jogging to catch up to her companion.

This left the three guys by themselves. They waited around for an entire thirty minutes before taking action.

With both Thorne and Andrew in a power armor, they changed the projection camouflage they had to active camouflage, allowing them to meld in with their surroundings. With their invisibility, they began making their way to the boarding area.

They followed closely with the other passengers until they reached the airlock of the large cruiser. The entire ship was so huge that it wouldn't surprise anyone if they were told it could hold tens of thousands of people.

There were a few security guards around, but their main focus was the inspection of items being brought onto the ship. It was perfectly understandable, as such a long voyage meant they wouldn't have anyone nearby to save them if anything happened. If someone smuggled explosives onto the ship and set it off, they would have to deal with it themselves until they reached their destination.

That was why all guests had to go through a long line of security checks where their belongings were thoroughly scanned.

Thorne and Andrew took a moment to inspect the security measures around them before they continued. They found multiple active scans were employed every few seconds, but their power armor held up against it. With the long lines of people blocking their path, Thorne decided to reuse the strategy he had once employed with Rollo when they infiltrated Sensorial Corp.

They jumped high into the air with the help of the thrusters from their modified ionic pack. It pulsed several more times to adjust their course and prolong their air time until they reached the other side of the security area.

They swiftly joined the rest of the guests in boarding the ship and made no detours on their way to their assigned rooms. As hundreds of people were constantly boarding, every staff member was all too busy with their own tasks to have noticed anything amiss.

Thorne and Andrew were able to safely navigate their way into one of their rooms. Right as they opened the door, they spotted the pair of girls who had gone on ahead.

"Seems like everything went well," Lana commented as the men began to exit out of the power armor.

"Yeah, we should be back soon, but are you sure you know how to operate these things if someone comes?" Thorne asked in a skeptical tone.

"Yeah, yeah. Neural interfaces are made to be stupid-proof, don't worry about it. I've done my fair share of VR to know how to just move it."

"...Okay. It should only take us like half an hour to get past that line."

Closing the door behind them, the two men had to rely on their Shade instead to make their way out. It didn't take them long to find Peng standing around in the same spot as they had left him, but he wasn't alone.

“As I said, if you’re coming to Ganymede anyway, you should just agree to the gig! It’s practically free money for you,” a woman wearing a red suit said in an exasperated voice to Peng.

Seeing the scene, Thorne and Andrew decided to disable their Shade around the corner before coming in to assist their companion.

“Madam, is there something you need from my brother here?” Andrew intervened.

The woman sharply turned their way before silently scrutinizing them for a moment.

“Yes, yes...not bad. I was looking to hire people like you for my trip. I heard from Peng here that you guys were going to Ganymede, correct? I’d like you guys to accompany me as I deliver something there.”

“...Isn’t that something you should ask of your company’s security force instead of an unknown corporation?”

“Oh please. It would be much safer with neutral parties like you guys. You just have to be a deterrent for me and it’s extra money while you’re on the job..”

“...Lady, no means no. We don’t have time for time.” Thorne stepped in with an imposing aura. “Come on, guys. Let’s go.”

He ushered his subordinates away with him to board the ship while he glanced back to snap a good shot of the woman to search for any indication of which corporation she was from. Having saved the photo, the trio wasted no time in getting started with the tedious process of going through security.

This was doubly so for Thorne. As a cyborg, he was scrutinized much more than others.

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## **Lana - Halls Corporation**

“I won’t be in contact for some time. Make sure you remember to eat and sleep.” Lana called out to the person on the other end of her call.

“Yeah, yeah. I’m not a child,” Leo complained. “You should be more worried about yourself. I heard spacers corps are even more vicious, and regularly target each other’s assets whenever they can. Don’t get caught in anything you shouldn’t...or at least make sure Thorne doesn’t get caught up in anything.”

Lana chuckled at his words.

“Of course I will! I’ll also be sure to get everyone souvenirs. Anyway, we’re departing soon. Say hi to Claire for me.”

“Have a safe trip.”

Their call ended, and Thorne’s party soon returned. They had gotten a family suite to be able to stay together and take turns keeping watch over their room.

“Was everything okay while we were gone?” Thorne asked.

“Yeah, feel free to rest up. We’ve already cleared all the bugs and monitoring devices as soon as we boarded.”

Thorne was instantly alarmed at her words.

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