

Mass Effect: Eridium Dreams

Novus Peregrine

Chapter 4: 2375 – Wrong Place, Right Time

Shepard skidded behind the burning hulk of a skycar, cursing in several languages as she felt the impacts of mass accelerator fire hammering into her cover. A flick of her eyes to the visual indicator of her shield showed them recharging...but not as fast as they would have if she'd been wearing her hardsuit. Damn it. Why couldn't she ever go on vacation *without* being shot at?! This time it hadn't even been a set up by AIS! Also...

"Mira, where the fuck is the navy?!"

"Busy, boss! The Defense Fleet and Orbital Defense Platforms are being engaged by nearly two hundred ships, including twenty-two cruisers. The Fleet is winning, but a lot of assault craft are slipping through the net while the Fleet and Platforms are busy. Most of the AA guns are already slag, and someone seems to have sabotaged the theater shield."

Shepard grimaced.

"Ground forces?"

"Multiple kinetic strikes hit the primary army base the moment the shields dropped. Best guess is that 80%+ of the local garrison was wiped out. There's enough jamming that I'm having trouble getting through, but there do seem to be pockets of resistance firming up against the push. Local police and off duty colonial militia, most likely."

Shepard grunted and sprang upward. Her half-strength shields took a few rounds as she landed on the roof of the downed card. But an instant later...

"Phase Walk."

She only needed to cover 20 meters this time. And there were only five pirates. Not bothering with a Nova, she came out of phase-space right behind them, quickly blowing the head off one pirate even as she put her charged fist through another one's heart, punching through his armor like it was tissue paper. Two more shots and a Distortion blast finished the other three, only one of them even getting a shot off, leaving her with a solid 30% of her shields.

"Give me the location of the largest resistance pocket you can. We're going to need more guns if we hope to hold these people until the Navy is done upstairs."

Silently, a mostly-transparent map overlay showing her position, the position of the largest resistance group Mira could find, and possible routes between the two appeared layered over Sae's HUD. God bless the fact that Siren Cybernetics could replicate much of a hardsuit's systems. Picking a route that looked like it would take her right through another group of slaver scum, she lightly augmented her body and began running, gun coming up to swivel and fire at anything non-human as she sprinted right down the open portion of a street.

By the time she broke past the group of pirates, using a Phase Walk with exit Nova this time to shatter their cohesion, her shields were once again near critical. Thankfully, whoever was manning the makeshift barrier at the intersection ahead had realized what they were seeing and she took no more fire as she pumped more power into her physical augmentations and leapt over the barrier, using its top to shift her momentum. She used a tiny pulse of Phase Walk to take in the situation as she did and angled herself toward a marine and police Captain that looked like they were leading this group. Managing a three-point landing less than three feet from them, she tried not to grin at their expressions. Sure, this was a cluster-fuck of epic proportions...but at least she'd gotten to make an Epic Entrance!

"Lt. Commander Sae Shepard, N7. What can you tell me?"

Surpassingly, it was the police Captain that got his wits about him first, rather than the marine.

"Captain Tiin. And nothing good. They've completely overrun the Spaceport. I've got twenty men here, holding them from advancing towards the Delta-2 Shelter. Ten locals, five off duty marines and the other five are remnants of the 242nd that were forced away from the port. Two other groups were holding choke points for the Alpha and Epsilon shelters, but we've only got intermittent contact with them on band 144.5. There's some potent jammers on a few of the ships that landed."

Sae looked at the other man, even as she stepped toward the police-marked Paladin that the men had been standing next to. The heavy Javelin was configured in anti-air mode, though a light mounted gun was still available and slicing out every few seconds. Its presence likely explained how they'd managed to hold their intersection...as well as a few of the nav points that Mira had marked as likely shuttle crash sites. Raising a hand toward the Paladin, Sae fell halfway into Phase Shift, a trick she'd learned from an R&D Siren. Its pilot quickly recognized Mira's handshake protocol and let her in, the AI flowing into the friendly systems. She felt Mira connecting to the coms, trying to break the jamming with the more powerful unit aboard the Paladin, even as she herself paid attention to the marine addressing her.

"Ensign Kaidan Alenko, Ma'am! I'm an N5 Biotic from the SSV Agincourt!"

That got Shepard's full attention. Biotics were *rare* for humanity. Humanity's infrequent use of Mass Effect ships meant that the accidental exposure required for Biotics to develop was so unlikely that there were very nearly as many Sirens as there were Biotics in the service. Which, given the *extreme* costs it still took to produce even a single Siren, was saying a lot. It also meant that the alliance did *not* screw around with its rare biotics though. They'd spared no expense to bring in Asari and Turians both to teach that biotic course...and brought in a Siren R&D expert to modify a top-of-the-line Asari amp for human-use, too. Shepard herself had spent nearly a year helping build a doctrine for the biotic trooper program, drawing on her Siren experience, talks with multiple Asari, and combat experience against pirate biotics, to help build the core elements of the program. That, combined with the man's N5 ranking, meant that Shepard knew *exactly* how good he probably was. Which could be best summoned up by, 'yes.' When Mira flashed her a message three seconds later, she knew exactly what to do with him, too.

"Perfect. You have a shield unit?"

Alenko nodded, turning just a touch so she could see the profile of the shield projector under his BDUs.

“Yes, ma’am. The Captain gave me one of their SWAT unit’s spares.”

“Good. You’re with me then.”

She turned to the Captain and jabbed a finger at him.

“The first thing we need to do is get the coms back. My AI isolated the shuttle broadcasting the majority of the jamming. I’m taking Alenko with me. We’ll get to that shuttle and disable it by any means necessary. Once the coms are back, find out what the situation is with the other two choke points. Alenko and I will head to whichever one is having the most trouble, picking up any strays we can as we move to reinforce. Understood?”

Captain Tiin was gaping at the plan, likely wondering how she was planning to even *reach* the shuttle in the current situation. But such was the reputation of Sirens in general that, as soon as he gathered his wits, he simply...accepted the declaration of the impossible.

“Yes ma’am! We’ll give them hell until then, ma’am!”

“Good man!”

Sae clapped the Captain on the shoulder, then grabbed hold of Ensign Alenko, eyeing a roof three buildings toward the port.

“Hope you’re not scared of heights, Ensign. I suggest you hold your breath. Phase-space is unpleasant for non-Sirens.”

Before the poor kid could do much more than blink, Sae activated her Phase Walk again. It was *possible* for an experienced Siren to drag someone with them through phase-space. But it cut their range drastically. The building she’d targeted was barely three stories tall and only 30 meters from the intersection...but she came out of Phase Space with a groan of strain. Which was still better than the poor bastard she’d just half-kidnapped. Kaidan fell forward onto the roof and heaved, barely managing to keep his lunch from coming up as she gulped air.

“Shake it off, kid. We move in twenty seconds. We’ll keep to the rooftops and cover the firezone immediately around the port with another Phase Walk. From there, we should be able to fight our way to the shuttle and disable it.”

Kadain looked at her like she was certifiably bonkers, but he staggered to his feet a moment later all the same. She gave him her best confident smirk, watched him perk up slightly, then nodded and moved out...

Despite how easy she’d made it sound, it had taken them twenty minutes to make it into the Port without being spotted. Kaidan had just barely managed to recover from his second ever Phase Walk when their luck getting inside ended. The first slaver around the corner was so surprised to see them that Shepard blew his head off before he had time to even scream a warning, but the other three had annoyingly good reflexes. She nailed a second one before they managed to return fire and actually *grinned* when one of them was stupid enough to pitch a grenade. Her tattoos glowed and an ethereal construct looking suspiciously like a tennis racquet batted the grenade out of midair, back at the

surprised pirates. A moment later, they were so much paste on the walls...but there were also sounds of running feet coming from multiple directions. Sae cursed and started sprinting, Kaidan managing to keep up just behind her. Grenade explosions were *not* subtle.

They hit an intersection and both turned away from each other to face small groups of running pirates lifting weapons in their direction. In a near-synchronized move, Kaidan launched his group with a Biotic Shockwave while Shepard hit hers with a Distortion Blast. Neither of them bothered to check if anyone was still alive as they recentered on the remaining path, heading deeper into the port. More pirates rounded the corner in front, but the charging pair both had their pistols up, catching two of the four instantly, plasma rounds bypassing kinetic barriers to flash fry the pirates. The other two fell to a Biotic Warp from Kaidan and a narrow Distortion Blast from Shepard, and then they were abruptly through into the landing area. A landing area *filled* with pirates.

Not deterred, Shepard Phase Locked a barrel of fuel to bring it into the air...then used one of her rarely-chosen abilities to *light it on fire* and throw it straight at the largest concentration of enemies. It exploded in mid-air as she dropped the Phase Lock, flaming fuel splattering all over the screaming pirates, even as Kaidan took inspiration from the move and shockwaved another barrel right into the shuttle standing behind the group. It burst on contact with the hull and more fuel splattered the group from the rear, dousing anyone that had gotten lucky enough not to already be *on fire*.

With that group *thoroughly* distracted, both of them charged other groups. Kaidan apparently couldn't manage a Nova at the end of his charges yet...but he *could* Lift the entire group he landed in and Push them a high speed right into a third set of pirates. None of them were seriously hurt, but the tangle of limbs had both groups out of action long enough for Kaidan to hit them with a singularity...and then detonate that singularity with a warp.

Shepard, meanwhile, *could* use a Nova and utterly shredded the group she landed in. One unlucky man had been out of range...and got an augmented kick to the crotch followed by a shot to the head. The pirate had possessed a grenade pouch, and Shepard swiped it from him on his way down. Even as she finally started to take hits to her shields from the rest of the pirates, she dove for cover and activated one of the grenades before pitching the entire pouch at her target shuttle. She growled, seeing it was going to fall short...only for a biotic push from Kaidan to catch them and spike them right *into* the open shuttle. Cheering as she slid behind the cover of a stack of crates, she cheered again as the grenades went off and the majority of the jamming went down with its destruction.

Now they just had to somehow escape a landing field with, most likely, upwards of seventy remaining pirates in it. All of whom were coming back on balance after being blitzed by a pair of insane people.

Well. She'd...probably been in worse situations before! Like that one time when she'd been caught banging an Admiral's daughter and found herself on punishment duty as a *cook*. The things one saw in a Marine Mess *had* to violate some sort of war crimes convention, doubly so after *she'd* attempted to cook something in there. She...wasn't the best with domestic skills...

Alliance News Network:

“Reports coming out of the Verge about the assault on Elysium are grim. While Alliance Fleet reinforcements help soundly defeat the slaver armada in space...nearly 1,500 Civilians were captured and another 5,000 were killed. The Alliance Navy has sworn to pursue the retreating fleet until those responsible are caught. In a single bright spot, the ground raid was largely stopped cold despite the huge numbers of pirates that landed. A Special Forces Siren on vacation managed to rally local forces and marines on shore leave to repel the invaders from the Shelters until the enemy forces had to retreat. Those captured were almost exclusively from outlying settlements, with few pirates managing to escape from the city Elysium Fields. The Siren in question, Lt. Commander Sae Shepard, helped fight off a similar raid on Mindoir in 2070...and rumors have it that her repeat of that feat has seen her nominated for the Star of Terra. I know I speak for all of Humanity when I say I am thankful she was present to stop the raid from being much worse than it was.”

Chapter 5: 2381CE – A Disobedient Guard Dog

Sae sighed as she watched the body Jack Harper, former mercenary turned Alliance Black ops, slump to the floor. Given she'd just blow his head off, he wouldn't be getting up again. And good riddance to bad rubbish. The idea of the Cerberus program had been understandable, even if she personally thought it had been foolish with so many eyes on humanity. The fact that the Black Ops group had gone rogue right after being ordered to return from their clandestine war in the Terminus only proved her right. Admittedly, the idea of using them to *deal* with the Batarian state-sponsored pirate groups that had hit Elysium hadn't been a terrible plan. But letting them expand to the point they had, while technically effective, had ultimately been moronic.

Oh sure, the group had developed a few new pieces of useful tech, which the Alliance would quietly shuffle through other R&D groups before making them known, but the psychopaths had done so by a lot of insanely unethical research. And, before she and a half dozen other Sirens had been assigned to hunt them down, they'd managed to do some unfortunate damage to humanity's image. Sae wasn't going to cry over the butchery their operatives had committed on Torfan, not considering *who* they'd been butchering. But the fact that their field team, under that total nutjob Kei Lang, had livestreamed the slaughter to the extranet had tipped the scales for a lot of people who already viewed humanity as a troublemaker on the galactic scene.

Thankfully, the hundreds of thousands of non-Batarian slaves that had been freed during various operations had offset that enough that the situation was merely polarized, rather than grim. Less thankfully, the trio of races that help real power in Citadel Space would certainly have been aware that Cerberus was state-funded. Which meant that the polarization extended to the Council as well. The Asari had already not been particularly happy with them for the way Eridium tech was cutting into their economy by making eezo less important. Now, the Matriarchs Conclave was fanning the flames in the background against them and the only thing keeping them from doing more was the fact that their Maiden population were rather *enthusiastic* about humanity. The Turians honestly didn't care much and had been quietly placated with more help for their new Eridium-based military tech programs. The Salarrians...had actually outright approved. Which was fucking disturbing and Shepard didn't want to think about it.

Stepping up to the mainframe in the room, she fell fully into Phase Shift to help Mira crack the security on the system. Even as she did, however, she wondered to herself if it wasn't maybe time to get out. She was 99 years old and had been in service to the Alliance since her teens. Sirens didn't really *retire*. But she could certainly shift to R&D if she wanted to. Well, maybe she'd talk to Anderson about it. He was always good for bouncing ideas off of. He also tended to have an ear to the ground about the latest projects. He might have some ideas...