

# Chapter 178: Cavalry

## Thorne - Halls Corporation

“Claire, can you hear me?” Thorne shouted out to the comms unit before him.

The screen depicting his friend was laggy and only after a few seconds did she respond.

“...Yes! It’s freezing up a lot, though!”

“Never mind that. I just wanted to contact you to let you know I’ll be a little while longer. There are shows here I wanted to check out.”

“...Oh...Okay, then. See you soon.”

The call soon ended after that. To any onlookers, it was just a harmless conversation, but Thorne had managed to convey the situation using previously agreed-on keywords.

He turned his attention back to the bridge he was on. He was currently on a spaceship that was traversing the void.

After having met with Titus, they originally planned to wait and see how Rollo’s mysterious protector reacted. However, with the update that Rollo was taking action in a few days, Titus had sent a priority message.

Surprisingly, the man answered. And from there, Thorne somehow ended up a destroyer. The ship had no markings that gave away its affiliation, and the crew were all reticent.

They wordlessly allowed Thorne and his companions on. Only the captain of the ship bothered to converse with them.

“Thank you for letting me use your comms, Captain Diaz.” Thorne nodded amiably to the middle-aged woman.

“No problem. If there’s nothing else, you can sit in the corner there or return to your quarters.”

“Understood. We’ll stay out of your hair.”

Thorne decided to pick the former option and strapped his power armor onto the seat off to the side of the captain. He observed how the bridge crew of a dozen managed to coordinate a ship that was large enough to hold hundreds of people.

He was warned it was going to be boring as it would take some time for their ship to get to their destination, but Thorne didn’t think so. He believed that his company would obtain similar assets in the near future. He would value this opportunity to learn about spaceships.

*We only have this one ship...If only Titus participated with his forces as well.*

Thorne still remembered when he confronted the AeroDynamic owner about participating. All he got in return was a brief lecture about how things were different in the upper echelon of corporations.

He made excuses about how the enemy accounted for all of their rivals, and that his making a move would be meaningless. He justified it with speculation of their enemies dispatching an equal force to keep him in check. That was because it was almost impossible to hide the movements of something as noticeable as warships.

However, Rollo's protector had somehow retained some hidden trump cards for special circumstances. Thorne was glad he was willing to utilize it for them.

While Thorne was able to observe the surface level of the inner workings of the destroyer, a more knowledgeable person wouldn't have had the same worries. As a trump card belonging to someone who was estimated to be near the pinnacle of the corporate world, similar to SocialCorp, it wasn't surprising that it was a state-of-the-art warship.

While it had taken more than a day for the ship to prepare, its speed was much faster than anything commercially available. Within the same day, they would already be arriving in the vicinity of Ceres Station.

"We will be arriving shortly, and I won't have time to talk to you anymore," the captain suddenly said. "Do you still insist on joining the boarding party?"

"Yes. Both my companion and I will be tagging along. We'll be most useful with the search party heading to Rollo. We have power armors, so we shouldn't be a burden to your men."

"...Understood. Then you'll want to head down to the main hangar."

After the captain reminded Thorne several times to listen to the platoon leaders, Thorne escaped into the interior of the ship. He didn't forget to send a message to his companions, alerting Andrew to come join him.

He passed by numerous people who were in a rush. The atmosphere made it so that even the cold metal walls of the ship gave off an aura of urgency.

It didn't take long to follow the line drawn by his optics to reach the hangar bay.

It wasn't large, but it could still fit half a dozen fighter jets, and another half a dozen other small spacecraft. It was precisely one of these spacecraft that Thorne was being guided to.

Before Thorne could greet the people standing in front of the shuttle, the one who seemed to be in charge spoke out first.

"And here's our guest. Be sure to check your fire when we get there."

“Awww man. Do we really have to be on babysitting duty? Why is it only our team?”

“Stop complaining, soldier! There will also be one more guest, who will be wearing identical power armor. You’ve got your orders. Carry them out.”

“Sir, yes, sir,” the team lazily shouted out.

Every person in the squad was completely covered in armor. They varied in loadout, with some wearing power armor while others wore a much lighter tactical suit.

Just as the squad leader finished speaking to his squad, Andrew arrived, wearing the same Halls Corporation power armor. The squad leader then sent his men ahead onto the shuttle while he glanced over at the two new arrivals.

“Names Loo, you’ll be under my command today. That means you’ll have to listen to me if you want to tag along. Have I made myself clear?”

Both Thorne and Andrew nodded, and the leader gestured for them to board the ship.

“I’ll go over some things you’ll need to know so you can at least tell allies from enemies while we’re en route. Get strapped in first. We could be leaving any moment now.”

The two did as instructed and got into the vehicle. Thankfully, the wait wasn’t as suspenseful as they thought. There were monitors on the ship, linked to the sensor and optical feeds outside.

There was nothing but empty space and asteroids around, but everyone tensely stared at the screen and the radar readings.

The men sat there as squad leader Loo explained their doctrine for the upcoming battle.

Their downtime was long and suspenseful, but they soon received a warning. The communication officer opened up a channel for all relevant personnel and broadcasted the latest news.

“Ships detected up ahead. Making contact in one minute and thirty seconds. Heat signatures were detected in the area that are consistent with missiles. Prepare for combat. Raising to maximum readiness.”

Thorne and Andrew exchanged a glance and remained in their seats and watched on, powerless to do anything else.

They both thought they were experiencing the longest minute of their lives. Soon, their monitor showed a visual feed of the ships in question.

There were five of them in total. A commercial shuttle, and four spacecraft that appeared no smaller than their own. The four guns were surrounding the shuttle, and it was clear they were preparing to board.

Seeing the chaos, Thorne tried to contact Rollo, but to no avail.

Instead, he could only listen to Loo update them on their latest commands.

“Teams one through eight will be taking care of those frigates. We are on standby until further notice.”

“Their facility is right there. Weren’t we going to be sent in?” Thorne asked.

The squad leader looked over at him with a reprimanding gaze, but shook his head when he saw Thorne’s expression.

“Our plan didn’t account for four hostile warships right in front of us. We have to deal with those if we want to be doing anything.”

Thorne was speechless, as he wasn’t well-versed in space combat, but he didn’t have time to worry about it. That was because he received a new priority call. It was from the captain.

“Thorne, are you sure you can’t contact our target right now? It’d be useful to know his position before we go into this mess.”

“...I’ll try, but I think he should be at their facility still. He said he was only going to help others escape and stay back himself.”

“...I see, then we won’t be holding back. We’ll put a quick end to the enemy fleet.”

Somehow, Thorne instantly knew their battle plan did not account for the civilians escaping on the ship. He wanted to say something to get them to help, but he couldn’t come up with a proper reason. It was at times like this that he missed Rollo even more. He wished he was like him, being able to press his will onto others with confidence.

As Thorne fumbled his thoughts, the captain ended the call as she was busy with her duties.

It was only after their destroyer had gotten close enough and prepared to launch an attack that the enemy fleet noticed their presence.

The four ships were spread out, surrounding the civilian ship, so they were completely unprepared to receive the newcomer. This allowed the technological superiority of Thorne’s allies to stand in the spotlight. With the enemy not being able to utilize their numbers, Captain Diaz ordered her ship to focus fire on the closest enemy.

Eight ship-grade railguns fired a few milliseconds apart, and a bright yellow beam sailed through the darkness of space. The targeted ship tried to steer out of the way but was too slow.

All eight projectiles landed on target. However, it didn’t do any physical damage. That was because a blue shimmering bubble surrounded the ship. It dimmed significantly after taking the

hits, but it didn't change the fact that they were still unharmed. That was only until the next salvo came.

With speed and precision, another eight rounds landed on the enemy ship again. Sensing their imminent defeat, the enemy ship desperately fired back as it tried to move into the cover of its allies.

Missiles and railgun rounds sailed through incredible distances. Numerous turrets on the exterior of the ship fired nonstop to intercept enemy missiles. By the time Captain Diaz fired a fifth salvo, the enemy energy shield had been broken.

It wasn't all good news, though. The three other ships managed to maneuver around to face their new foe.

Captain Diaz read the predictable move and had already ordered her ship to kite around in a circle. Making sure her enemies wouldn't be able to utilize their numbers to concentrate fire on her lone ship.

The ships began to tangle, going around in a semi-circle.

Unbeknownst to Captain Diaz's foes, several stealth shuttles were floating around in between ships. With the three operable frigates chasing down the ship Thorne was aboard, they inevitably came closer to these shuttles.

As soon as they entered the range, these vehicles powered up and charged straight at the enemy. At the same time, the captain finally ordered missiles to be launched. This made the enemy focus fire on them instead of their boarding spacecraft.

Soon, Thorne was able to witness the carnage from the body cameras. The commandos quickly filed into the enemy spaceship. They ran with purpose, staying neatly in their formations. They only met resistance when they arrived at the more vital areas of a ship, like their reactors.

This was when Thorne was able to see the minions of high-level corporations in action again.

They moved at dizzying speeds that Thorne could barely keep up. They had so many technological gadgets to disrupt and counter enemies that it often descended into a melee or stalled gunfights.

It truly reminded Thorne of the cyborgs for Ferrumus Corp and more.

However, it didn't discourage Thorne or make him fearful. Instead, he was excited to join the fray. He believed he could still hold his own. But more than that, he was excited about his future self, who could reach a higher level along with his entire company.

The fighting was intense but short. The ships soon lost to the technologically superior party.

Naturally, it meant it was soon Thorne's turn.

Squad leader Loo abruptly shot up from his seat and glanced at his men.

“It’s go time, boys. We’re moving in on the enemy facility. Stay sharp!” He directed those last words at the two Halls Corporation employees.