

Chapter 111: The Marquis

"I simply want to be there along with my men when you meet my contact from Ferrumus Corp." The old QG dryly laid out his condition.

"...You're scared we'd hurt your contact?"

He nodded. "Life up here isn't that easy for common folks like us. I need assurance that no accidents happen. Otherwise, a lot of people, including me, will have to pay for it if anything goes wrong."

"Whatever your reason is, you can't just pull out a new condition all of a sudden!" Thorne yelled.

"I understand this is sudden. I'm willing to compensate you. Let's see, how about the schematics of Sanso Corp's 3D printers that they use internally? It isn't their latest model, but it is still better than most of what is available commercially." He sent me a file with the basic specifications of the printer in question.

"As someone who is known not to deal with corporations, you sure like to keep dangerous information on hand."

"Only those who know how to save for a rainy day get to grow old. Though I only acquired this recently." He chuckled to himself. "Do we have a deal?"

"...Fine. When can we meet with your contact? We're in a hurry here."

"No need to be impatient. I have already secured a reservation for you and your companions to the restaurant that a certain executive of the Ferrumus Corporation, Aegis branch, likes to frequent. Meet me later tonight at this space dock." I quickly received another ping with an address on it.

The old QG seemed to have finished his business with us as he turned the volume to his TV back up and began ignoring us.

Exchanging glances with my men, we quickly departed back to our vehicle.

"Andrew, have two of your guys scout out the venue that old geezer sent us," Thorne ordered as soon as we closed the door. "Are you really okay with that QG coming with us, Rollo?"

"He didn't seem like he would budge on it and we don't exactly have the time to prolong this. We need to speak with someone important from Ferrumus quickly." I said as I went over the information on the restaurant we would be attending tonight. "Let's go back and get dressed. The restaurant we're going to has a dress code."

We swiftly returned to our lodging and two of Andrew's team members immediately left ahead of time. The rest of us had plenty of time until time for our reservation at The Marquis, a sister restaurant of The Earl that we had once visited, located at the base of the space elevator.

We killed the time by training Brian how to use the power armor, as we couldn't show up with it in a fine-dining setting. The security there should be fine, as the place catered to the upper class. Besides, the restaurant was isolated from the rest of Aegis in a special compartment that orbited around it.

Several minutes before we were heading out, I received a video call from my ally, Joey.

"Rollo, sorry to interrupt, but I'll make this quick. How is your progress up there?"

"Ferrumus Corp hadn't taken us seriously and only sent me to some sales agent, but I should have a line that'll connect me to an executive soon."

The bald man narrowed his eyes and slowly nodded.

"Try to be as quick as you can."

"Is it getting that bad down there?"

"No...but that doesn't mean the status quo will stay. In fact, I'm calling to warn you because the High Gate people seem to have relented on their assault. They're satisfied with a slow and steady battle of attrition right now, which leads me to believe they are waiting for something. Be careful, they are either making new breakthroughs in their talk with Virtue Corp, confident that your negotiations with spacer corps will fail, or both."

"Got it. I have to go now. Let me know if you find any new developments."

He nodded and ended the call.

As we made our way toward the spaceport, I couldn't help but carefully survey our surroundings for any potential ambushes. There was no way the High Gate Group hadn't figured out I was up here by now, and with Joey's updates, an attack was surely imminent.

The question was just when and where. The laws against property damage in Aegis were only really strict near the life support systems and the outer walls of the space station. Still, there were a lot of big corporations in the city, and earning the ire of any one of them could easily spell the doom for the party responsible.

Where would I attack me if I were them?

As I mulled over the issue, we soon arrived at one end of Aegis, where the VIP ports were. This was where all the private spaceships were docked, segregated from the commercial ports that were responsible for the logistics, and the industrial one for miners.

We drove into the airport-like structure and made our way toward a lounge where we found Amos already there, along with half a dozen guards. They didn't have any matching uniform and gear or anything, but one look at them and we could tell they were experienced fighters.

"You are here. Let us be off, then." The old man immediately said as soon as we approached.

We followed him through the security gates, where a majority of our guards parted with us. Only Thorne accompanied me on my end, while Amos brought along three of his men. We boarded a small shuttlecraft that was shaped like a pyramid, tilted over to one side, with more rounded edges. It only took several minutes for us to arrive at The Marquis.

The restaurant had an arm attached to the rest of the space stations that allowed it to safely orbit around Aegis. As we got off, I immediately felt a sense of vertigo, as the corridor from the shuttle to the restaurant was made of transparent glass, even the floors.

At least the inside of the restaurant itself was slightly better, with partitions all around the place to allow the guests some privacy. While we were led to our seats, I noticed many other patrons enjoying their food while gazing down at Mother Earth.

I carefully examined the faces of all the guests, matching them with the images we had of the executives from Ferrumus, but to no avail.

"So, where is our contact?" I asked as soon as we sat down.

"Patience. The restaurant will have a live performance later, and you will be able to approach Bi Sun to discuss what you need. For now, we eat and wait." The old man said and gestured for us to take a look at the menu.

"Wait, does he even know we're coming?"

"I'm sure his security details always know, but the person himself shouldn't be aware."

"What? I thought he was your contact?"

"While I do have a connection with him, it doesn't mean I have his ears anytime I want. Fret not, he is usually willing to hear other the other guests while he is here."

Well, not having an introduction hurts, but it is good enough if we can have him hear us out.

More guests filed in as we talked and before long, we spotted a skinny middle-aged man wearing a very strange and distinctive hairstyle. He was almost bald and only had a few hairs left, but they were each very long, reaching all the way down to his waist.

He strode in with his wife, daughter, and two guards who were just as skinny as him, but I could tell they were heavily enhanced. I almost wanted to say there were cyborgs, but their thin builds made me hesitant to declare them as such.

I listened to old man Amos and reined in my urge to immediately approach the man. The last thing I wanted was to make a bad impression by interrupting his family time, so I patiently waited.

A lot was going on in my head the entire time we ate, trying to figure out the best way to approach him, and I barely registered what the food tasted like. I only broke out of my trance after dessert, when the lights to the place suddenly dimmed.

The place quieted down as everyone waited.

Then, lights began to bloom out, drawing all our attention below us, where outer space was. The lights were formed in various shapes, as if we were watching a fireworks show. Upon closer inspection, I realized the lights were various drones flying outside, working the spectacle.

“Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for joining us at The Marquis tonight! Tonight’s scheduled event will be taking place as planned. We will be bringing you footage of various spectacles taking place on our home planet right away. Please feel free to step forth in one of our neural cabins if you would like a more realistic way to view what our drones see.”

Right after the announcement, several large projections materialized in the center of the room, with various screens coming from about a dozen drones. They monitored a wide range of things, from an ongoing firefight to the vortex of a storm, and even a gigantic mutant whale.

The various guests stood up and surrounded the screens, so I quickly moved to join them, keeping an eye on where my target was the entire time. A server quickly came up to me with a tray full of drinks and I casually took one before moving toward the Ferrumus Corp executive.

The room became louder as the surrounding guests merrily chatted away about their preferred topics.

I quickly read over the bio I had of Bi Sun again as I waited for my chance to speak with him alone. He was the vice president of the Aegis branch of Ferrumus Corporation, which was born and raised at their company headquarters located on Mars.

Their Aegis branch wasn’t particularly large and was mainly a transport hub and distribution center for their products, such as vibro blades.

I noticed he wore a fancy sword on his hip, which made me search for my vibro dagger. On second thought, it would be embarrassing to compare my cheap junk when his sword had such an ornamental scabbard.

I glanced back at Thorne, who was a few steps behind me, and he cruelly gestured for me to get on with it.

When I looked back at Bi Sun, I saw his daughter and wife heading off toward the neural pods that were similar to the VR pods I had, leaving him alone with one of his guards.

I didn't squander the opportunity and instantly approached.

"Hi there, are you Mr. Sun, by any chance?"

He turned back to face me, giving me a good look at the man with a goatee. He seemed like an entirely organic human to me, which only made me more cautious.

"Yes, and I believe you are Mr. Halls. Was there something you're looking for from me?" He said as he gestured for me to stand beside me, looking over the main screen.

"I wanted to talk about a cooperative opportunity that may allow your company to undermine Virtue Corp's business."

He gave me a quick look before turning back to stare at the screen, but he remained silent. He was probably contacting someone to dig more information into what I was talking about, and that was exactly what I wanted.

He adjusted his standing posture as he took a sip from his glass. Several minutes passed, and he breathed in deeply as he watched the giant mutant whale surface, exposing much of its body.

I kept stealing glances at him, but he seemed unmoved. I started to have my doubts as I revisited what I had said to him in search of any mistakes.

Did I say something wrong?