

When I thought things couldn't get worse, life always have a way to defy common sense and fuck things up. What actually happened? Aliens invading earth? An intergalactic war? Someone stole my donuts? Well, let me tell you this story but before we get to it, let's back up on the timeline a little.

It happened on the ship of Saint Peters. I wasn't much of a special guy onboard, just an tech guy. Maybe I might be a bit special, able to charm the chicks with my ripped body and awesome looks. I mean, what's not to give for the dark hair and blue eyes? Chicks dig them.

Where was I? Ah that fateful day where everything turned to hell. June 21st 3071. It was six in the evening for the EST, that's Earth Standard Time for the guys stuck on the ground. I was just done with my shift of being a caretaker of the ship. No, I'm not a nanny nor am I a mechanic! I'm not way too low for that!

Right, I was walking out with duty done, jacket in hand when I heard. "James!" I turned around to see the ship's Chief Engineer. His name is Davidov. Russian guy, bulky tough one. Not worth getting in trouble with him. Catching me at the worst time ever.

I replied to him as I leaned against the wall. "Yes Cheng?"

"Have you heard about the bombing?" He still has the Russian accent. Thought he would lose it by the six months I've been aboard.

My reply was simple. "I wasn't updated on the news. What happened?"

Davidov explained with a tight fist. "Apparently some svolochis decided to rig a bomb on our sister ship, Saint Maria. She survived but not in condition for her trip to Atlantis." A bomb? On the ship that is to be part of humanity's savior? That's rather fucked up.

"Swell, that's some shitty news to hear, who're the wisecracks that did it?" Oh damn it, you shouldn't be opening a can of worms.

"Nothing conclusive yet but rumours point to the Salvators." Oh great, those nutcracks who always preached about salvation of Earth. Not that they're doing any good shit at the moment. Davidov gave a glint in the eye, a very bad one to me. "Anyway I have something in mind. Heard you had some military background and wanted your help."

Knew it. Oh this is going to suck. "Yea, I was in the military. Just a navy tech, nothing special."

Davidov approved of his findings. Shit. "Better than nothing. I've planned to run a few inspections on the ship. Tighten security around."

Great, more useless work to do. I argued against it. "We haven't had anything for the three months on this trip. There's no reason for anyone to risk their lives in bombing this ship. I mean we're light years away from any civilization and bringing them to a brand new world for goodness sakes." I added further, trying to pull Davidov to my side. "It won't be paradise but it would hell be a lot better than Earth right now."

Earth, oh earth. To sum everything about our home world is a cesspool. Every single problem that you don't want to have is in the blender. Lethal pollutions, check. Food shortage, check. Environmental instability, check. Political tensions on cloud nine? Check. You name it and you have it. "One more thing, why are you the one doing it instead of our actual security team?"

"Remy's indisposed as of now. Thought its better for us to take the initiative. Better safe than sorry Da." When he meant indisposed, he meant totally wasted from alcohol. Damn Remy, Damn Davidov, Damn it all. Well, at least I tried. "I'll treat you to some vodka if you could spend a few minutes of your time." Ah....catch 22. Choosing between having dinner with the hot chick down at logistics and a chat with the Russian badass who could probably throw you out of the ship with one hand.

The long run option is definitely better. "Alright, let's talk it out at the cafeteria. No reason to starve while thinking this out."

"Good, I'll get my drink. I'll meet you there." Davidov turned and left Engineering. Now I've got my chance to bail...nah better not. Then again it didn't mean I couldn't take a detour down to logistics. The journey was quick but it was enough to give me time to think about the bad news and the ship. The news with those Salvators are overrated. Maybe someone aboard Maria fucked up and tried to cover it up to avoid losing face. Heads will roll alright but not that I care anyway to begin with.

Saint Peters, one of the colony ships entrusted in the Avalon program. Older than Maria by six months. Eight kilometres long, she could fit six thousand people and send them off in a comfortable trip for a few years. More like a cruise ship than a standard exploration. This ship is all about fancy, I mean you have a swimming pool for goodness sakes. There's no way on Earth you would find a ship that have facilities like these. For us ship crews though, we don't get to use good stuff but it's definitely a hell lot better than the old days.

Saint Peter's Logistics Cargo Bay Facility can be summed into one word, Chaos. The largest space at the rear of the ship was being scrambled about with dozens of forklifts and mobile ladders. My target was the administration office towards the right near the entrance of the cargo bay. It was small and cozy place, enough for a dozen. I made my way over towards the back. Not many was around, especially that geezer. Good good. I made my appearance by leaning against the door of the manager's office. "Helloooooo Monica."

Young, petite, brown hair and green eyes with those cute cheeks. Just my kind of woman. She looked up from her desk and smiled. "Hey, what brings you around? That regulator having a fault again?"

I shrugged as I stepped in. "Nope, I just wanted to see you. That's all." Her office had always been utilitarian. Simple desk, workstation and a big window to see things going down outside.

Monica shook her head as she turned back to her monitor. "I'm flattered but I'm busy. Maybe we can chat another time."

"It's cool." I mean she can't really vanish off anywhere right. I looked out the window. "You're right, it's hell a lot of busy here."

Monica commented as she went back to work. "We've been conducting inspections on our cargo hold since we got the news about the Maria."

I raised an eyebrow by reflex. "You'd think that they would try something here?"

"It was Davidov's idea." Damn the Russian.

"I'm supposed to talk with him about it as well. Some plans to make up." I noticed a few of the restructurizers amidst the forklifts with all their blue glow. "Think all this effort worth it? I mean the MSATC eats a good chunk of juice doesn't it?" I caught eye on the rectangular container being restored to its original heavier an bulkier drilling machine.

Her reply was conservative. "I hope so. Better to be careful than reckless isn't it?" Aw, you had to break my heart babe. At least before Davidov breaks it for real.

Time running short, I decided to take my leave. "Sure, maybe we can catch dinner later after all this settles down."

Monica raised her head with a smile. "That' be great James." Perfect.....

I waved as I turned for the door. "Good. I'll give a ring when I'm done." As pleasant as the chat with Monica was, I was not eager for a session with Davidov. The cafeteria would be on the other side of the ship, a long pain in the ass trek. I hope the Chief didn't mind. Much.

I decided to take the public routes instead of the staff pathways. Faster and easier. That did leave me to be moving through groups of passengers, all nonchalant and enjoying their trip. If only they knew.

The public address system made an announcement. "To our dear passengers, this is your captain Anthony Revans speaking. Firstly, I hope that you have enjoyed the trip thus far since our departure from Earth. Secondly if you would look to the glass displays on the right, I would like to welcome all of you to planet Meinland." My eyes turned to follow his announcement.

The planet looked pretty close like Earth. More land and a touch of red in the clouds though. Damn, after being away for months, a planet looks like a beauty. Once we land, we can finally get off this ship and get things going for real! Worst case scenario, we go home to the hell hole I like to call Earth.

That was when I felt it. A minor but noticeable shudder along my feet. From my experiences aboard a ship, I knew that it wasn't natural. My instincts rose to my throat. I suspected a fuck up. I turned for engineering. Mid strides, I reached for the intercom in my breast pocket and listened in.

Davidov called out on the engineering channel. "What's going on?"

The painful background noise made it hard to discern who replied on the line. "A fuel cell detonated. Fuel cells are on fire!" Oh shit. It can't be those guys...Nevertheless, the situation is still FUBAR. I entered one of the staff only hallways and found the nearest system terminal. .

Davidov questioned. "Can you contain it? I'm on my way!"

"No good! Fire suppression's are down. Our handhelds aren't cutting it. The fire's spreading and fast!" I accessed the engineering systems with my access ID. What came next was all red displays and errors. Okay, its FUBAR time.

"Do your best until I get there!" Davidov huffed as he disconnected. I opened up the cameras related to engineering. What I found was bright red. Flames everywhere and eating into anything it could grab its hands. I could see a few crews running fire extinguishers but against such an inferno, it's not even a close fight. The fire being so close to the engines, it would be minutes before things turn into the worst.

Fuck it. There's no saving this ship. I turned for one of the crew dedicated escape pods. I yelled as I ran past several techs. "Get to the escape pods!" The floor rumbled again, this time much larger. Thank god the ship's engines are divided into two with separate zones. Otherwise, we'd blow up like a overripe fruit.

The PA came online. "All passengers, please report to the escape pods. This is an emergency. Do not take your belongings and follow the orders of the crew in a calm manner."

I couldn't care less. I found one of the escape pods embedded on the port side walls of the ship. I clicked open the hatch as a few other crew, particularly kitchen crew came around. I climbed in and strapped myself onto the seat. A third rumble, even stronger. Damn, time is tight.

Our escape pod for sixteen was full in moments. I hit the switch to seal the pod. Confusion was everywhere over the radio. There's not enough escape pods for everyone. Saint Peter's designed only for four thousand at max, not six. Without further ado, I hit the release button. The "To all aboard, this is Captain Anthony Revans. We will begin emergency landing procedures on the planet. Those who cannot get entry to the escape pods, please return to your rooms and brace for impact."

"Look at this!" An unrecognizable crew yelled. People moved to see through the round glass windows around the port side of the pod. My seat had a good view.

We finally cleared enough from the ship that we could see. The ship's tail had caught a massive fire, arcing along its back. It leaned towards its right flank before starting on a dive towards the planet. Another explosion burst from one of the engines.

Reaching the atmosphere, I felt my body slam against the seat. These escape pods weren't built in mind to consider g-forces. I felt the rush of blood into my head, filling my vision with red. Seconds later, things went black.