**Chapter 1**

**Krrchaaawww! Waking up to the sounds of platsteel groaning and alarms whirling is really not what I wanted to hear during the first night, of my first trip on \*matador\*. While she had certainly looked impressive with huge mining robots hanging off all four mounting points when I had entered, apparently something was wrong with the navigation or control. When you run into an object in space, it has to be navigation or control. Or maybe I am just the bad luck charm, “Corry Heelan: Human Bad Luck Talisman” - sounds about right. Within the span of four cycles my parents had been convicted for weapons smuggling, all of our assets had been seized, I had been forced to choose between staying on a deadbeat station or getting a job, and I had convinced my girlfriend to run away for said job as well. So all is going well, or so I thought in my sleep induced haze until I realized that groaning sound hadn’t stopped.**

**As the emergency lights in the bunk room of \*matador\* finally came up to power, and basked the room in a pale red glow the extent of whatever damage had occurred started to become apparent. Tablets and screens from workstations surrounding the bunks were spread about, person belongings and knick-knacks that had once been little mementos for those on the ship had been tossed around and even some crew were spread on the floor. As I finally stood up, battling the dizzy headache that threatened to consume every inch of my body, I saw Sylvie starting to rouse herself from the bunk next to mine. Toby McGarry, the ships engineer who normally ended up sleeping in the engineering bay anyway was stumbling his way towards the door to hit the actual lights. On the floor, Mikey Posen and Randy Tolven still seemed fast asleep, though with the noise, vibrations and alarms I couldn’t guess how.**

**Both Assistant Captain Perry and Captain Abel were firmly ensconced in their rooms in officer country, however there was no way to know of their status until they made their selves known. As my headache began to fade, and the noise of the alarms suddenly shut off - well someone had to be on the bridge - I heard Sylvie muttering to herself mostly incoherently.**

**“How in the fucking hells of shit do we run into something in the middle of a fucking jump?” Yeah, and I sometimes wonder why Sylvie is my girlfriend, it's because she has a fascinating vocabulary. Convincing her to run away with me to join the \*matador\* after my parents had, gone away, was just as easy as I had expected it to be. Her parents were frequently gone, participating in whatever activities, I never knew exactly what they did, leading to Sylvie had become quite the independent spirit. She was freakishly intelligent and dedicated to a fault, so my offer to get off \*Berk Station\* and go make something of our lives had been very well respected. Ironically even though it was my idea to try and sign on when the \*matador\* had shown up on \*Berk to offload their latest haul, due to her aptitude with computer systems(both straight and illicit on occasion) she had ended up getting a Class 4 job while I had been relegated to class 2. She had been offered a job working with Toby as a roboticist, making 4500 credits per cycle(a frankly ridiculous amount in my eyes, not that I was complaining). I had been given the title of “General Operations Assistant” under Assistant Captain Perry, which the crew described as a bit of a jack of all trades so that they could put me on the path to whatever I showed the most aptitude in.**

**By the time that Sylvie had stumbled over to me, I was halfway through the room and desperately lurching towards the door so that I could get to the bridge. If we could get to the monitors on the bridge then maybe we could discover what the hell we had hit in a jump, not that I had ever heard of anybody doing that before but what else could have happened? Sylvie’s assessment of the situation because she was throwing her arm over my shoulder and walking towards the door when we came upon Randy on the floor. Randy, the ship’s pilot would be essential to whatever would happen next so waking him up and getting him to the bridge was critical - something I knew even after spending less than two standard days on the ship. When Sylvie and I bent down to try and wake Randy from his apparent slumber, his whole body was cold, deathly cold. When it became apparent to both of us within seconds that Randy would never be waking from his slumber and our eyes made contact our plan of action became clear, we had to make sure that everybody was alive and uninjured.**

**Rushing over to Mikey Posen, to check on him only made the situation more somberwhen it became apparent that his condition was a mirror of that of the other. The danger of the situation had not yet been detected in it's entirety to that point, but it quickly made itself known. The terror of being stuck in a confined space, after suffering a collision with some other object in the vacuum of space in the middle of an asteorid field was not conducive to rational thinking so the fact that we made it to the bridge at all in an attempt to try and restore function to the ship was a small miracle. The sight of the bridge still intact was a small recompense for the loss of two crew members, but in a situation that dire I was more than happy to take what I could get. Both Assistant Captain Perry and Captain Abel were both manning their stations on the bridge, though the fact that they were visibily shaken was not surprising if not comforting. Toby Mcgarry had also somehow made it to the bridge after stumbling out of the bunkroom, what he was doing there instead of his habitat in engineering was still unknown to me but was a small matter in comparison.**

**Seeing through the front metglass windows upon entering the bridge did nothing to aleviate the stress that had fallen over me, despite seeing on the monitors that we were somehow holding atmosphere in our craft. In front of the windows was nothing but the electronics of some other vessel, not some random piece of debris or a rock that had somehow folded itself into the subspace region of our jump but was a large station of some kind, holding the attention of all the crew gathered in the bridge. \*Matador\* had somehow entangled itself with this station and had dragged it to the end of the jump as a symbiotic entity.**

**After trying, and failing, to fathom what the station was or how we could have merged with it I had no choice but to be the one to break the news about the fate of our crew.**

**"Captain?"**

**"I think we are past the formalities Corry, both you and Sylvie are in this for the long haul with us at this point."**

**"Well Nelson, I am said to report that we appear to have lost two crew members. Both Mikey and Randy were cold and lacking a pulse when we found them, I tihnk they were knocked out with the impact."**

**When the news of the loss of two veteran crew members broke over Captian Abel and Assistant Captain Perry like a wave, they both slamed their palms into the foreheads and looked down in completely sincorencity with each other.**

**"Well without those two Dan, this is going to get a lot more difficult."**

**Assistant Captain Perry looked up at Sylvie and I standing back, both staring at the ancient monstrosity that had been joined with our ship, seeing the innards of the massive station and the tendril like arms that connected the outer rim of it in a configuration that was unmistakably used for smelting. The outer rims were used as collection points for the raw materials that were found in space, the arms were used as conveyance for those materials for the central control and smelter. Though it looked like it hadn't been used in atleast a few hundred years, with parts and debris stuck on every side of it, it seemed small a small consolation that a smelter seemingly designed for asteroid processing had been our collision agent, it felt like nothing in comparison to the loss of two good men and potential friends.**

**Chapter 2**

**Within moments of the arrival of the rest of the crew on the bridge, consisting of just Captian Abel, Assistant Captain Perry, Toby Mcgarry, Sylvie, our sentient ship AI Tyro and me the full exhaustion that was inevitable after an event like that started to set in. We were all chugging caf as the first meeting of what we deemed the "Mid Space Collision Survival Society" commenced, the plan of action that Captain Abel laid out was almost annoyingly simple. Ensure none of us were wounded, take healing measures if we were, catalog what we had, and explore the smelter we had named \*Smelty the Smelter\* to see if it could be brought operational. The best news that was not directly related to our continued breathing was the apparent survival of the mining robots attached to \*Matador\*, \*Seneca\* and \*Algonquin\*. However the long range communication arrays, designed for communication with stations surrounding the \*Buxtion Asteroid Field\* had been flung off during the merging of \*Matador\* with \*Smelty the Smelter\*, which was not at all surprising considering they were mounted on the nose of the ship.**

**Assistant Captain Perry had insisted that we all start catologing our work stations while we waited for him to inspect us in the medbay, besides being Assistant Captain of \*Matador\* he was also the only certified medic on board. Captain Abel was the first to be inspected, while Sylvie and I headed torwards the office where we had both been working since our start on the ship only 2.5 standard days before. Any conversation between us was limited, as we were both trying to channel all of our strength into staying awake for long enough to catalog any and all possessions that could be useful for our continued survival and fall into bed. While writing down lists of Sylvie's extensive collection of wires and assorted control components, I felt almost bad to be thinking about how the loss of two senior crew members and the general hard time that we would be entering could mean a massive boost ot my career. If the smelter was at all functional, or actually a smelter at all, it would be necessary to run it in order to make parts in order to rebuild our systems enough to contact a station in order to facilitate our rescue.**

**Rescue.**

**I hadn't thought about it as a rescue situation up until this point, we would repair and then we would leave, but with our apparently permanent joining with \*Smelty the Smelter\* I had a sinking feeling that we were either going to have to build a new communications array or die trying.**

**\*\*\* BEFORE I COULD GO ANY FARTHER INTO EXTENSENTIAL THOUGHTS I WAS CALLED DOWN FOR CHECK ETC ETC\*\*\***