Chapter 74 The Brotherhood

*Edmund was torn about what to do but went back to his training. The first thing he had to do was identify the problem. That meant finding the Diamond agent on the ship. He set his PerCom up to locate the signal echo. Shit. Deck 8…probably in the brig. The rumors among the crew were that a handful of passengers had tried to take over the ship. The hospitality staff were not informed of the extent of the incursion but were aware three crew members were dead and another two had been injured.*

*Edmund called in a steward bot to replace him at the bar to the disappointment of the woman. He was also disappointed because she was going to pay him a few credits to come to her cabin later tonight. He didn’t mind being a gigolo. Most of his training under his parents had focused on seduction and manipulation of a target.*

*Edmund made his way to his cabin trying to come up with a plan. He decided to call Loree on his comm. Her brother had been one of the crew members killed and he had developed her as a contact during his time on board. It had been more out of habit than actually planning anything. He had also cultivated Dora, Andie, and Tora during his time on board. The Wren catwoman scared him a bit though. She was having sex with half the crew and was quite an aggressive lover according to Andie who treated the men for deep scratches.*

*Soon he was in Loree’s quarters with a bottle of vodka and some fruit punch mixing up drinks. Loree was quite the mess. She had been so excited to have her brother back and that was short-lived. It didn’t take long to get her talking. Edmund was kind of the ship’s psychiatrist. He didn’t mind listening to anyone about anything. Being a good listener was one of his skills.*

*Loree said the one remaining woman from cabin 9 that was still alive was called Jane Doe. Edmund remembered the trio of sexy athletic women. They dined in the luxury restaurant every evening and had gotten on board early as well. So the leader of that group was still alive and was the Diamond agent for the brotherhood. Good information. Her implants and cybernetics had been removed and she was guarded 24 7 now by two wolf bots and at least one marine, usually two. Abby just didn’t trust her. Edmund slipped a knock drug in her next drink. Loree would think she just passed out.*

*He was certain the woman didn’t know that Edmund was an agent. Although he had thought he had deactivated all his PerCom protocols for the Brotherhood and she still managed to send it an SOS alert. He now wished that he had taken Abby up on the opportunity to join security on a part-time basis. He wasn’t going to give up his bartending position. It was too fun and lucrative. He decided to play it straight.*

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Francis and I were in my labs working on sorting the data discs from the vault. I was surprised when I received a comm request from Edmund. I had seen the charismatic man at crew functions but never talked with him before. He said he had information regarding Jane Doe being held in the brig. My and Francis met eyes and immediately made to meet with Edmund. I had the bots continue to sort and complete surface scans on everything we had logged so far.

Edmund met us in a private dining room on deck 7 and if I was a woman I would be smitten by his smile and looks. We sat down and Edmund started talking. The woman was a member of the Brotherhood, Well, not just any member. She was a Diamond agent. That was their way of ranking agents, Diamond, Ruby, and Osibian. Obsidian agents were their generic trained agents. Ruby was their talented agents and Diamond…Diamond agents did the really important tasks out in the universe.

Francis queried how Edmund knew all this and he admitted that he was an Obsidian agent. Or had been an Obsidian agent. He counted himself unaffiliated now. But if the Brotherhood knew he was alive they would kill him for revealing what he had so far. He was putting his trust in me.

The next two hours were a lesson I did not want. The Brotherhood was an organization that spanned all of human space and beyond and pulled a lot of the puppet strings. Maybe not directly controlling the human star nations but being able to manipulate them. Edmund’s knowledge was not too expansive since he was a minor agent out on the rim but he definitely got across his point that I was outclassed. When he finished I asked him what I should do with Jane Doe. He didn’t hesitate when he said to kill her.

Francis and Edmund waited for my reply and I just thought of my past actions. I had killed the other agent that was stuck in the foam during the hostilities. But at that point, I had let the anger at seeing Shinade dead and had a thought in the back of my mind that Celeste might have been dead as well. Not one of my better moments. I actually didn’t regret my action even after I learned it was Jane Doe who killed Shinade and not the woman I had shot.

I can not do it. For some reason, my inner self didn’t want to kill the woman. I thought maybe I could ask Abby or Edmund to do it because I felt they didn’t have the same empathetic block I had. No. I told them no we can not do it, it wasn’t right. Francis looked relieved and Edmund looked shocked. Edmund tried to convince me again but failed.

As the conversation ended Francis asked if Edmund had any keys to unlock the data storage devices they had taken from the shuttle. A large portion of the data was actually research on subspace. I didn’t understand why they had it on their shuttle but it looked very theoretical and interesting. I had the files moved to my lab storage to review when I had time…if I ever had free time again.

A lot of the encryption on the Brotherhood devices was well beyond Edmund but he did his best to help us get through them. We destroyed info on two devices before I just went and focused on the technology. The hacking devices were far beyond my understanding. Each one had its own micro AI to adapt during its hacking incursion attempts. They were also an array of trackers in the vault. Very advanced trackers. If I studied them I would have a very baseline for discovering attempts to track me in the future.

When we had finally gone through all the devices and cracked what data storage we could Francis put up his hands and said he needed food and sleep. Gabby was in the robotics lab and had asked me for help about an hour ago so I planned to go there.

I wasn’t sure what to make of Edmund yet. He had volunteered quite a bit of information and definitely gained a fair amount of trust from me. He was the first spy I had ever met. He was smart, charismatic, and seemed a decent enough sort. I still locked the lab down when we all left but thanked him for being candid and helpful. I now needed to go mentor Gabby for a bit before seeing to my own caloric and REM needs.

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*Edmund was shocked the captain couldn’t pull the trigger on eliminating Jane Doe. She was a clear and present threat to his person and the entire crew. He spent time with Francis and the captain unlocking what data storage devices he could. He also identified all the markers of the Brotherhood on the devices he could find. He noticed that Francis didn’t seem to trust him. The captain seemed to take his word and asked questions non-stop about the various devices.*

*Edmund wasn’t a skilled agent and although he had a cursory understanding of most of the devices from his education he had never used most of this advanced technology. They spent a good three hours before fatigue finally forced the session to an end. Francis was headed for a meal while the captain was going to the robotics lab to work with a young engineer named Gabby. The captain locked the door behind them, so he didn’t completely trust him but that was ok. Edmund had already decided on a course of action. Sometimes the knife in the dark needed to be wielded by someone else for your benefit. He liked the captain and the crew and this needed to be done.*

*Edmund spent three hours preparing and when he knew Loree was on duty and the only one guarding the prisoner he went to her. She let him bypass the security to bring her a drink and snack and talk. Well, he was going to ruin her trust tonight. The beverage knocked her out shortly after. He made quick progress to access the cell block and entered the brig.*

*The brig was four small rooms, each separated by a sound-dampening field. Jane Doe looked up first in hope and then in recognition. Edmund had the dead eyes of an assassin and he was working tonight. He used Loree’s sidearm to put three rounds in the chest and two rounds into the head of the woman who didn’t resist. Red lights flashed and he put down the gun and waited for judgment from the captain. He had done what needed doing and hopefully, the captain would realize it.*