Chapter 59

*Aston was surprised to still be alive. The space elf city ship had taken considerable damage so he wasn’t surprised that all pirates were rounded up and placed in a large holding cell together. To his crews credit they defended him from the other pirates anger at being suckered in to raid the planetoid. Those with any intellect knew it was the foolhardy pirates that attacked the elves that caused their predicament.*

*The mock trials of each the pirates was broadcast in succession with their summary execution. Now just four of them remained, the trials seemingly over with the Sylvan blood lust finally satiated. Two were captains from other ships and the third was his ship’s engineer, Bradock. Three days later a Sylvan woman introduced herself as Sha’Lua. She told them she had great news for them. They would be sparred but would have to serve the First Citizen for the remainder of their lives.*

*One of the captains spit at the woman and Aston mentally shook his head at his stupidity. It only took two breaths before the man found a hole burned in his skull. Aston sighed and kneeled before Sha’Lua. The elf smirked and said no need to kneel. Aston rose and looked the elf in the eye. She had a tired look in her eyes like she had faced her own tribulations recently. Bradock and the other pirate stood as Sha’Lua told them they would be implanted with biosynth and released to spy on the human kingdoms. Their first mission was to find the whereabouts of the ship Void Phoenix.*

*All three of them perked up at this. A chance to get some vengeance against the Void Phoenix and its engineer. The name Void Phoenix was growing on Aston and he had thoughts of slipping his elven leash and taking that ship for his own.*

*The three of them were led to what appeared to be an elven medical facility. His engineer Bradock was the first to go. He was placed on a bed and completely restrained face down. Two Sylvan scientists brought out a jar with what looked like a spool of thread in it…then the spool unwound and moved around the container in the blue liquid. The other scientist placed a collar around Bradock’s neck and he voiced his objections but they didn’t listen.*

*The collar had an attachment at the base of the neck the jar with the blue liquid clicked into the collar and Bradock screamed as the liquid slowly drained. What the fuck? When the liquid was gone so was the spool of moving thread. Aston resisted a little just to show he wasn’t happy about this. When the fluid drained Aston could see why Bradock had screamed. It was like his skull was being inflated with no room to expand.*

*Soon the pain receded and Aston could think again. He felt a burning in his spine and at the base of his skull. Sha’Lua entered as the three of them adapted to the feeling. Sha’Lua explained the biosynth they had just been joined with could kill them at any time. It was the insurance policy that they remained loyal. But the biosynth could also identify others that had been implanted. While they were spying for the First Citizen they could call on anyone who they found also had a biosyth. Bradock asked the question that Aston had. Could they ever be removed?*

*Sa’Lua looked at the three of them and told them bluntly ‘no’. The biosynth resided in their spinal cord and brain, removing it would kill them. They could however earn their freedom. She had known a few spyd that were released from duty to live out their lives by performing exceptional acts. Aston laughed in his head. That was probably an elf lie to give hope to the enslaved humans.*

*Six days later the three of them were given an old human courier to travel to the Gunther system. That was the best guess as to where the Void Phoenix had fled. During the trip the other pirate captain had an unfortunate accident with the help of Bradock and Aston. No point in having any unknowns during their attempt to find the Void Phoenix.*

*It took three days to find out the Void Phoenix had left a day before they had arrived but they knew the destination of the ship, the Arana system. Aston laughed at the irony. He was born in the Arana system. He would be going home. Unfortunately it took nearly a week to find another human in the Gunther system with a biosynth implant. The elves for all their power hadn’t given their spies any local currency. They told them to just find other spies and they would be provided with whatever they needed.*

*Bradock and Aston had searched the station first before heading to the planet and finally found a professor at a college. The professor was very helpful. He knew of three others on the planet with biosynths and told them after a few months with the implanted creature they would be able to sense others at much greater range, up to 200 meters. He also told them it wasn’t all bad. The biosynths extended human life significantly. How much was a guess but he met a man before who was 200 years old and just looked to be in his fifties.*

*After they got funds it was going to take a week for repairs to their little courier ship. There were no passenger liners headed to the Arana system in that time so it was their best course of action. Acton hired three crew members, a pilot, an FTL engineer and a first officer. They had no idea he was working for the elves but he wanted to start rebuilding his crew. His next step would be getting a bigger ship. Bradock had used the transmitter on the ship to keep the elves updated on their progress.*

*The trip to Arana had few problems. He gradually asserted his dominion over his new crew. He had a certain charisma that people liked, a cocky arrogance. When they finally emerged from sub space Aston sent out inquiries to his contacts. It took five hours before he got his first reply. The Void Phoenix was here and not scheduled to depart for another six days. He told Bradock to send out the news to the elves. Now what was Aston going to do?*