

The Battle of Vetune III was vast, deadly, and lucrative. To the untrained eye, the debris field could be mistaken for an asteroid belt, it hugged the devastated planet with a deep crack splintering its blue surface. The floating scrap varied in size and value, from screws all the way up to Army Carriers. The Army Carrier named *Final Wish* limply orbited the planet, a fatal wound tore its hull wide open, leaving it vulnerable to desperate scrappers like me.

I punched a few buttons on my console and navigated through the debris, shrapnel clinked off the window as I swerved towards my target. I still preferred my own vessel over all the hulking ships in this scrap field, *No Name* was a small thing, but it was *my* small thing. I salvaged her years ago and patched her up, all from recovered parts. This ship was more of a home than my birth planet was. I dreamed of just flying away in it, never returning to The Dump ever again. I could do it, if it wasn't for my father.

'Deedee,' Dad's voice burst over the speakers, his voice was grainy and distorted. 'How's it going, kiddo?'

'Good, approaching *Final Wish* now,' I responded. As I brought *No Name* closer, the *Final Wish* obstructed my entire view. It was the biggest ship I'd ever seen up close. It stretched further than I could comprehend, its grey surface pockmarked with holes, and scars from its last battle.

'Keep me updated,' he returned.

'Will do.' I tapped the comms receiver twice, sending two buzzing sounds down the line, our signal for "all good". He sent two back.

I maneuvered *No Name* to face the gash on the ship's starboard side. The tear stretched at least a thousand feet, exposing the floors and corridors within like a ribcage. Pipes, wires, and supporting beams poked out at sharp angles. I shot my anchor at *Final Wish*, and it sunk deep into the hull. After initiating autopilot, I jumped out of my chair and headed for my cramped bedroom. My suit was left in a heap near my laundry basket. I brushed my cropped, black hair backward and slipped on my skin suit. Then I hopped, stretched, and squeezed myself into my green space suit, twisting the glass helmet onto the neck seal and activating the support systems. Complete with air recycling and temperature control, it should have cost a small fortune. Thankfully I'd snagged it a few years ago from a ghostship a couple of systems away.

'Suit comms check,' I said into my helmet while reaching for a cloth to clean fingerprint smudges off the glass.

'Loud and clear,' Dad responded, followed by two clicks.

I sent two clicks back and headed for the airlock. Next to it was my tool harness, which I slipped on over my suit, immediately looking forward to some zero gravity to take the weight off.

As always, before leaving the safety of *No Name*, I closed my eyes, counted to ten, and repeated the words my mother used to tell me, 'Idiots die thinking they're smart.'

'And smart people die thinking they're better than idiots,' Dad said through my speaker.

I smiled and walked into my airlock. Moments later the door closed behind me and I heard the tell-tale hiss of gas venting. Then the outer door opened, revealing the dark, unwelcome void.