

SpaceHighway

The Awakened

A21 ~ Cargo 66: Crushmont

«All's green, Phoenix. You've got an open vector through exit theta-five.»

“Thanks, Charlie.”

«Welcome, pal. Good haul.»

“See ya. Nice day.”

I begin to pull out of the Alpha.

«Hey! Wassup, Kira?»

“What's up, man?”

«Heh! Comin' back with some fuel. Need some? Hehe~»

“Thanks,” I laugh at Jim's happy offer. “But I'm full.”

«Where ya goin'?»

“Crushmont. With some stopovers. An easy roundtrip with mixed cargo. Two holds for a farmer planet, three filled with medical supplies for Raiga 5, and four for the IPS in Crushmont. Will get some more on route.”

«Hehehe~ Have fun.»

“Hah!” I laugh. “Thanks, Jim. I'll be back in three days. Set some beers aside for me for when I'm back.”

«Done, pal. Hehe~ Have a good trip.»

“Thanks, and take care of Enya,” I laugh. I keep teasing him to make some progress with her, even if I know quite well that it won't happen. I'm already in her paws...

«Bastar'...» he laughs. «Still brushin' ma aside...»

“Perhaps, you have to change strategies...”

«Heh! Some pointers?»

“Need some? Then with some drafts...” I laugh.

«C’mon, gimma a break! Ya haven’t gotten far with Aia either...»

“Ouch~ That’s a low one, Jim...” I laugh again.

«Hehehe~ Now we’re quits. Heh! Good haul!»

“See you...”

We both laugh and switch the comm off.

It’s an easy job. Half of the route is through Jumps. I’ll use my free time to read a new bestseller everyone recommends, that will keep my mind occupied. I bought the paperback edition yesterday. It is about a guy who loses two of his limbs in an accident and the overcoming of his disability. It’s said to be based on a true story...

Such a shitty book! No tension, not the slightest grace, no inspiration... nothing! Just a pile of depressing shit!

This guy isn’t even able to crawl out of his hole. Everything is lost. Nothing has the slightest meaning for him... Fuck you! You’re fucking alive! They even got him full bionic implants! He can still have a meaningful life! But no, he only tells over and over again how depressing it is. And the female character... such a loser... She falls in love through pity. Out of compassion, it says... Nope! She just mistakes pity with love, as simple as that.

Who wrote such a pile of depressing shit? And why the hell does everyone recommend it? As a punishment? To kill one’s joy of reading? Fuck it! Novels aren’t what they used to be...

Angrily, I free myself from the seatbelts and push myself back, to my *bedroom*.

I open the secured bookshelves and... they are empty...

Shit... I took my old books out to replace them with others I have left at Aia’s place... and I freakin’ forgot to bring new ones.

I sigh, fetch a coke from the fridge, and push myself back into the cabin.

Whatever... I'll just read about the full bionic limbs in the EG.

Interesting...

Just as Aia told about, the new full bionics are based on the Bioandroid's development.

But it gets further... As bionics were evolving, the new advancements were integrated back into the Bioandroid development.

I don't get all the medical terminologies and descriptions, but it's clear that the full bionic advancements let you have fully functional limbs. Other organs are under active development, and scientists were even able to create substitute organs for many natural ones. Even if most of them are still in testing phase, it's truly impressive.

As it states in the EG, to be called full bionic, the artificial organ does not only be able to perform the same actions as the natural one but must be able to receive the needed input from the nerve system. Also, no external power source can be required for at least a month.

As an example, a full bionic arm should be self-powered and only requires an external power source if it has to outperform the natural one. But in most cases, such external power is not needed as the arm powers itself through the artificial blood vessels connected to the natural ones, and the usual kinetic movements of the body. Even if being restricted to the natural power sources, a full bionic arm is still stronger than a natural one...

Wow...

Right now, the most impressive advancements in full bionics are that a limb may even have full sense of touch... Incredible... Although, integrating the complete nerve system into an external limb is still in experimental phase. Fuck me...

How on earth has the protagonist of the book fallen into despair after having received such impressive limbs? Fucking loser.

Reading the EG in the jumps, time goes by fast...

The AR alerts me that I am inside Primae Port's area.

"Falcon to Port Primae. Do you read?"

«Flawlessly. Welcome to the peaceful Primae. What can I do for you?»

"I have two holds of goods for you, and one is awaiting me," I tell port control while I send them my manifest.

«Perfect. Ah, yes. We were expecting your arrival... Oh... You are early. You've got landing strip zero-one available. Your assigned dock is alpha-eleven.»

"Thanks. I'm there in ten."

«Perfect. I'll notify the cargo port of your arrival.»

"Thanks again."

Let's see... this planet's gravity is 0.91Gg. Great. No problem.

I touch down easily and find my assigned cargo dock.

The cargo personnel is already in their positions. I love it when these guys are on time and efficient. That means I'll have a calm route in front.

"Perfect precision, I must say. Indeed..." says the ĩiha in charge with satisfaction. "It won't take long to uncouple the two holds. The replacement hold is almost ready..." We check the digital paperwork, and she nods again. "Just perfect. It will take us about twenty minutes."

"Great." I nod satisfied. "Do you have a diner or a café nearby? I'd like to have a bite."

"Sure we have. Just follow this corridor to the hall. There you'll find a café."

"Thanks."

Cozy...

The whole cargo port is really snug, just like a small airport of a small town. Simple and easy to navigate.

I near the café and sit down at the bar.

“Good morning, sir. What can I offer you?” asks a cute server.

“Good morning. A café americano, black. And...” I look over the menu, “a Special Primae Sandwich.”

“Very well, sir. One moment, please...”

It’s calm, and just a few people are around.

“Your breakfast, sir.”

“Thanks.”

I taste the huge sandwich.

“Yum~ Delicious.”

“Each and every ingredient is from Primae,” says the server proudly.

“Superb. I should stop over on my return route and buy some.”

“Ah~ If you’d like, there is a shop just outside the port.”

“Great.”

“But...” she hesitates, looks around, then whispers, “it’s a bit expensive... You know, tourist prices...”

“Ouch...” I sigh. It’s not that I don’t have the money. I just prefer to buy from locals and support the local farmers.

A young Knoreliaz interrupts my thoughts.

“Excuse me, sir. Are you a trucker?”

“Huh? Oh, yeah.” I turn to him. “I’m the Phoenix.”

He and the server gasp in surprise. It seems I'm known even here...

"Such an honor..." says the Knoreliaz. "Ah, yes... I wanted to invite you to visit my family's store. It's a bit away from the port, but at local prices."

"Oh, of course I'll accept," I tell him while the guy smiles broadly. "But it has to be on my return trip. My schedule is too tight to go there right now. Plus, I'll be on route for two days, I don't want the food to spoil."

"No problem, sir." He bows to me and hands me a business contact card. "Our store is open from daybreak to mid-afternoon."

"Thanks." I nod taking the card. "How do I get there?"

"Oh, right..." he laughs and turns to the server, "Christie, still got those maps?"

"Sure, Kaon, here..."

She hands him a city map clearly designed for tourists.

"Thanks. Let's see... This is the port. Our store is here..."

"Not too far away..." I say.

"Indeed." He nods. "But you have to traverse the old town. That might take some time..."

"Oh, okay. Then I'll take a cab next time."

"Perfect," the Knoreliaz exclaims and smiles brightly.

I keep chatting with Christie and Kaon while I smoke two fags.

"Oh! Gotta go!" Shit... I'm spending too much time with Jim. "I have to be punctual."

Both laugh and giggle.

"Sorry for holding you back..."

"Don't worry. If I'll get some great food for a good price, it was worth the time," I say with a smirk.

Both laugh again.

"Have good travels..." she says happily.

We bid our goodbyes, and I go back to my dock. All right, all's set.

By nightfall—okay... no nightfalls in space, it's just a figure of speech to say that a whole standard Gaian day is ending—I reach Raiga 5, a vast space city.

After the usual docking procedures and delivering of the cargo, I feel like having a stroll through the city of Raiga.

It's an interesting city. Built on the upper part of the station, it occupies the whole surface. A humongous see-through dome covering the entire city offers impressive views to the vast space.

My feet guide me to a beautiful park. The alien greenery makes it even more special, an alien park floating in space...

Seems the right place to think... I tried to occupy my mind with that novel during the haul but failed miserably, the story was simply too awful and amateurish.

I find a kind of amphitheater at the borders of the station. It is oriented towards the nearest star. That's odd... This kind of observation point is usually oriented towards a planet, satellite or far away star clusters and galaxies, but never towards a particular star.

I sit on one of the steps of the amphitheater and produce my tobacco and lighter.

With the first puff of the aromatic smoke, my mind drifts through what happened last week.

Kitty...

I sigh deeply while exhaling the smoke. I was too absorbed the last few days... I can't get over it... Enya couldn't help me. Not even Aia could, and she always was able to... Aia... Enya...

It's truly strange... Now I realize what I've lost due to the cryopreservation... Never have I stopped to really think about it since I've awakened. Only learning about Kathy's fate and about my son had awakened this uncertainty about my past.

What else did I lose?

“Beautiful...”

I jump from the sudden sighing voice. An elderly Felii sat down at my side without me noticing...

“Sorry, son,” he says smiling. “Not my intention it was, to interrupt your deep thoughts. To see the eruptions you came, right, son?”

“Eruption?” I ask him stupefied.

“Indeed...” He nods slowly and brushes his slightly drawn claws through his old, white beard. “A close look you should take, that star...” he points with his cane at the star in front of us, “an eruption will take place in a few minutes. Take, son...”

He hands me a special star observer’s binoculars while he brings another one to his eyes.

I peek through the solar-goggles...

“Wow!” I exclaim.

A huge flare shoots out of the star and falls back, forming a fiery arc.

Another one! And another one!

Hundreds of flares erupt from the star and form serpentine figures. This star is truly alive! Such a spectacle! I cannot avert my eyes.

“Ten years...” the old voice sighs. “Ten years must pass to see it again.”

“Really?” I ask in awe keeping my eyes on the spectacular solar display.

“Indeed...” He seems to nod. “But, not many inhabitants attention pay to it, not anymore... too used they are...”

“Such a shame... it’s incredible, simply amazing. Such a spectacular view...”

“True it is,” he giggles. “Never do I miss it. Every ten Raigan years here I come. Truly my treasure it is.”

“Treasure?” I ask still peeking through the goggles.

“Indeed,” he sighs emotionally. “Declare here I did my love to my soulmate Ahehrah, a hundred years ago. The love of my life she was...”

I almost let the binoculars fall and look at his calm and caring face.

“Not being here now, together, the flares be watching, do brings back the peace she gifted has me in life.” I swallow empty. I’m completely unable to say anything. “After lived you have that many years, only can you watch your past with a smile and do remember the good and beautiful things... Ahe not by my side she is anymore, but all her memories and spirit still are within me. A beautiful son she left with me before her parting and entering the annals of ancestry.

“Asked me to care for him and Ehanhhah, her best friend and mate, she did. Honored Ahe’s last wish we did, and a monogamous family we formed together. The three of us too near we were to let anyone else in, kept her in our family we always did, as our ancestral mother and matriarch.

“Eha and I, four beautiful daughters have. The five kittens formed their families, their litter already having further children.” I swallow hard again listening to his emotional life-story. “Every ten years, come here we do, together, to honor and remember my first soulmate. Today, for this special occasion, think she did I should go alone, that it is something intimate, special for us, just us two...”

“Wow...” I sigh deeply. “Such a life...”

He chuckles at my comment.

“Little it is compared to yours, I do believe...”

“Huh?” I blink thrice and look at him astonished. “Why do you think so?”

“My instincts tell me, son. You are, indeed, doubting your very own feelings. Doubting your past, present, and future you are.”

“How?”

“Many like you seen I have... unable to not meddle I am...” he giggles.

“Ah...”

“Never lament your past, son. Your present life and towards the future orient yourself. Dwelling in the past only does bring suffering... Tell me, son, what does weighting your heart?”

I sigh deeply and light another fag.

“You see... I’m an Awakened... I was cryopreserved for over a millennium. I’ve lost an important life-partner... A week ago, I discovered that I had a son with her. Seems that descendants might still be alive nowadays...”

“Hmmm...” He brushes through his beard again. “But that is not your only weight, son...”

“Yeah...” I sigh again. “Now, I’m in love...”

“I see...” he chuckles. “Where this leads, I do know. Doubting you are of breaking free from your past and create a future. Clearing your doubts, you must. Your lost partner does not want your future to be lost too. Sure I am, a happy life she wants for you, even not being at your side...”

“Yeah... she left a letter telling it to me...”

“Then? Why still doubting?”

“Not easy...” I sigh exhaling the smoke of my last puff. “It wasn’t till last week I’ve known how much she loved me, nor that we had a son...”

The old man clears his hoarse throat.

“You fear repeating it...”

“Huh?”

“Fearing to repeat, it you are. Fearing of being a no-good father... Don’t be stupid!”

Smack!

“Ouch!” It was years since if received a slap in the back of the neck.

“Stand up! Stand up, and your feet guide towards the future. Forget your past you cannot, but look back with a smile. By experience, I know. Take my advice, son. Too young to fuck up your future, you are! Open yourself up to the people who love you, and you love. Sure I am, you will find the light you seek.”

“Yeah... thanks...” I sigh.

“Not too convincing you sound, son.”

“Yeah... there are two girls...”

“Not able to decide you are?”

“Not exactly...” I sigh again. “One is awaiting how things work out between me and the other...”

“Why waiting?”

“I, we, do not know if this girl is able to open her heart to me...”

“How so?”

“We, the other girl, a Feli, and I, do know that this girl has feelings towards me. But... I’m waiting for her to be ready for a relationship for five months now...”

Smack!

“Ouch!”

“You are the one!”

“Huh?”

“You, the one fucking up you are, your future relationship with both of them, stupid!”

“Me?”

“Holding firm your past, you are. Too firm! How the fuck do you think any of them may share their future with you if you live in the past? Huh?”

What the hell is he talking about? I... I’ve never... did... Suddenly, it clicks in my head...

“Waaahh! Fuck!” I jump up and scream.

“Not even noticed it... Tsk, tsk...” He shakes his head. “Better change you do, or lose both of them you will...”

Noooo... Fuuuuck!

“But...” I sigh sitting down again, “I’ve never dwelled in the past...”

“That is what you think, son. Subconsciously, looking into your own past, you were. Your blockhead stubbornly told you, you are not. You never did notice? Always comparing yourself with your past, you were.”

“Fuck...” I hold my head.

“See, son? Finally you noticed. How do you think these girls must feel? They only know you how you are right now. They do not know your old self, just what nowadays they see.”

“Shit... You’re right...” I sigh deeply.

“Stop comparing yourself for once! Live! A citizen of the Gaian year thirty-twenty-five you are now, not a lost boy from the two-thousand. No sense it does living over a thousand years just to get lost. Fuck! You must at least be over a thousand-forty years old! And fucking nothing you have learned...”

“You’re right...” I sigh yet again. “I’m a thousand and forty-three years old... I’ve been such an idiot...” I slump onto the hard stone of the amphitheater.

“Indeed...” he tells me lying his hand on my shoulder. “On the right way you are. Only a smart one calls himself an idiot. Son, before any lover might accept you, you have to make peace with your feelings from your past,” he says standing up.

“Thanks!” I look up at him with refreshed hope. “Ah... what’s—”

“Uordah my name is, young Phoenix.”

“Huh?”

“Awaken and be reborn for once!”

Stunned, I observe him climbing the stairs nimbly and disappearing into the greenery at a true feline’s agility.

What was all this?

I am unsure what just happened, but he’s right. Kathy, you knew how I’d feel... You are right, Kathy, I have to accept and let go of my past. Thank you, Kathy... even so far away, you’re still helping me...

④

It was a while since I was able to sleep that well. Seems like the old Uordah lifted a heavy weight from me. He is right. I will meditate over it. I’ve got some time to spare while on route to Crushmont.

Half a day passes easily while I put order in my feelings of my past. The events from the past few weeks had me shaken up.

Finally, I know what to do. I've been such a fucking idiot. I should already have known when I noticed that I only felt myself at peace being together with Aia and Enya. I—No, no... I slap my face. Orient yourself towards the future, don't dwell in the past... that's right...

Enya knew already what I should have done all this time, and she always told me, subtly, how to gently advance on Aia. And I fucking messed it up.

Last night's dream was proof enough. I have to look forward, towards the future. This recurrent dream was even more vivid than usual. For our sake, I'll find the right way.

A sudden whooping sound and the red-flashing AR interrupts my thoughts.

“What the fuck?”

A vessel without the obligatory ID-emitter approaches in an intercepting vector.

I instruct the voice-assist to broadcast on the vessel-to-vessel emergency channel.

“Falcon to unidentified vessel, do you read?” No answer. “Do you read? You are on a collision course with this programmed route.”

I repeat the message several times. Still no answer. This can only mean one thing... Pirates.

Feeling an adrenaline rush, I disengage the autopilot and take full manual control, pushing the powerplants to their max.

While telling the virtual assistant to select the universal emergency channel, I keep a close eye on the strange vessel's vector. I also select a search mode that detects any possible cover in case I need to hide.

“Falcon to IPS, possible pirate attack. Anyone less than a lightyear from this position?” I ask knowing that my message includes my full coordinates.

«IPS patrol E3928 to Falcon. We copy you. Are you sure it is a pirate attack?»

“Negative...” I respond relieved. “I am not sure. But the vessel does not emit the obligatory ID-code. The vessel is on collision vector and does not answer my calls.”

«Understood. We are already on your way. Are you able to avoid the collision?»

“Affirmative. I doubt this vessel will outperform my truck.”

«Copy that. What is your destination?»

“Crushmont. I have some holds for the IPS stationed there.”

«Thank you for your notice about the suspicious behavior. We will arrive shortly.»

“Thanks.”

If my calculations are correct, I will be able to avoid the strange vessel by a slight margin. The powerplants are at their top output. I must be careful, this place has quite some asteroids floating around. Also, I cannot change my route too much without having the certainty of danger. If I do it without having a real emergency, I could be in deep shit...

After about ten tense minutes, I have a live feed from the outer cameras projected on my AR. The vessel seems derelict... Could it be an abandoned vessel?

Fuck! It isn't!

The freaking wreck is changing course!

All near-miss alarms are ringing and whooping. I silence them with a smash on one of the few hardware buttons in the cabin.

I take a deep breath and let my instinct control my Falcon.

The vessel shoots at a mere kilometer by. On Gaia, a kilometer may be much, but here in space, it's by a hair's breadth.

While I use Enya's DSD to control my Falcon and the cargo with fine-grained precision, I keep observing the strange vessel.

«IPS patrol E3928 to Falcon. We have you in visual range. Where you able to fully avoid the collision?»

“Yeah, by around nine-hundred meters. It must be manned. It changed course.”

I, too, have visual of their small vessel.

«Copy that. We will intercept the vessel and—Èh'táj'èh!»

«Shiiiiit!» another voice can be heard.

Startled, I look at the live-feed following the vessel...

“Holy fuck!”

The freaking vessel is exploding!

I slam the emergency button, which activates the emergency protocol one. It gives me full access and control over each end every booster of all the attached holds.

Pushing to whatever all boosters are able to produce, I flip my Falcon and the cargo away from the explosion in hope to outrun the fragments.

The IPS patrol is less than five-hundred meters parallel at my side.

A green splash on my AR!

“Found an asteroid!” I shout into the mic. “Follow me!”

I only hear a distressed «Thanks...» from the other side.

We reach the asteroid just in time. The fragments reach us the moment we spin around and hide behind the protective space-rock.

“Fuck me... on the last second... literally...” I sigh.

«Thank you, sir,» another voice says relieved. «Thanks to your calmness and precision. You’ve saved both our vessels.»

«Without mentioning our lives,» adds another one.

“You’re welcome, you’re welcome...” I sigh and reach for a fag. “What the hell was that?” I ask after lighting the tobacco.

«Now it’s clear... It’s a new kind of terrorism...» the voice sighs.

“Terrorism?” I ask baffled.

«I’m afraid so. There is an armed group seeking sectorial independence.»

“Fuck me...”

«This is the second time they are using this method... Yesterday we lost a trucker from the Galactics this way...»

“Shit... I didn’t know anything...”

«It’s also new for us. Until recently, they concentrated their acts of terror on the affected planets, but never on the sector-space.»

“That’s fucked up...”

«We’ll escort you to Crushmont when the fragment shower lets us.»

“Thanks...” I sigh.

Crushmont. The station isn’t much. I don’t mean its looks but its size. I hoped for something bigger as this is the IPS’ main base of this sector.

Finished my paperwork after the usual procedure, I visit the IPS office, accompanied by the two officers who assisted me.

Everyone from the office is agitated by our testimony while one superior takes notes of the incident. They ask me to uncouple my cargo and to move my Falcon to a secured zone where their specialist may analyze all the registered data. I have no reason to go against the IPS’ instructions as I know that any delay will be justified.

After having my trusty Falcon in the IPS’ specialists’ hands, I wander through Curshmont. I need a drink...

Without much fuss, I find the diner recommended by Buz, the Crush Mount. Okay... this must be an exact copy of his own bar, the MaryQueens.

“Good day, what might I serve you?” asks a huge Buz-clone. He is almost identical to Buz but for his implants...

“Good day, you must be Bax,” I greet back.

“The very same. Owner of this establishment,” he proudly confirms.

“Oh~ Greetings from Sue and Buz,” I laugh.

“Buz? My cousin? You know him and Sue?” he asks intrigued.

“Sure, he’s a good friend of mine.”

He laughs loudly.

“Welcome, then. Buz’s good friends are friends of mine too. Your name?”

“Ah, sorry... I’m the Phoenix.”

“Woow...” He jerks up. “The Phoenix! But of course! Buz told about you. Send him and Sue my greetings back.”

“Happy to do so, Bax. But first, a good blonde...”

“Of course...” He begins to fill a huge jug. “Here, our specialty.”

“Thanks, man.” I take a long chug of it. “I needed that...” I sigh. “I’ve just gotten away by a hair...”

“No fuck... the terrorists?”

“Yeah...”

“Oh, fuck these fucking bastards!” he shouts angrily.

“Bax...” a huge Wigmez says while sitting down at my side, “don’t get worked up...”

“Oh~ Hi, Xey. Sorry ’bout that. Ah, yeah. I introduce you two...” Bax says and points with his thumb at the Wigmez. “Xey is the security agent of this sector of Crushmont. Xey, my friend, I present you the Phoenix.”

The golden alien man inspects me carefully from tip to toe until a huge smile appears on his face, and he offers his hand.

“Excited to make your acquaintance, Phoenix,” he says really excited. “I thought you’re taller...”

“I’m told that often,” I laugh. At least, I’m told that from Wigmez... “Nice to meet you, Xey.”

“Listen, Xey...” Bax tells him putting a cup of coffee in front of him, “those assholes from the NewCrush tried to wipe him out.”

“Really?” the huge alien asks somberly.

“Yeah...” I nod after finishing my jug. “With a derelict vessel. They blew it up after I could evade their collision course.”

“No fuck...” he sighs. “Not again... I thought yesterday was a coincidence. Or simple luck—lack of luck...” he corrects himself. “We lost an important resupply cargo, without mentioning a good trucker...”

The few patrons of the Crush Mount stop talking and those wearing a hat, uncover themselves. The silence lasts for five minutes.

“Thanks, friends, for your considerations,” says Xey while looking at them. They only nod with heavy expressions.

He turns around, sips on his coffee, and sighs.

“It’s a huge problem...” he sighs again. “No trucker will be willing to do this route. The IPS is moving resources to this sector. They want to keep it under control, but won’t be easy...”

“I get that...” I sigh too. “More if they use this method of derelict vessels.”

“Yeah...” He nods slowly. “It’s still unclear how they program those vessels...”

“This one changed its course...” I sigh.

“What?” he jumps up screaming.

“Yeah...” I nod. “When I changed my vectors, the vessel did the same. It shot at mere nine-hundred meters by...”

“No fuck...”

“Yeah... Short time after missing me, it detonated.”

“No way... Was it manned?”

“No idea...” I shrug and sigh. “The vessel did not respond to my calls. It’s only thanks to an asteroid nearby that an IPS patrol and my truck was saved from the fragments.”

The bar lies in utter silence. Seems that all were listening in to our conversation.

“A remote control or suicide pilots?” ponders Bax aloud.

“A remote is more likely,” I asses. “It took its time to change course. The detonation also had some delay.”

“Fuck...” sighs Bax.

More sighs and profanities are heard from everyone.

I ask for a fresh beer. On my first sip, I choke from the sound of an alarm.

“What the fuck?” asks Xey while jolting up.

Everyone in the diner jumps up. Bax comes out from behind the bar. The huge video-wall shows the passenger port. Red lights flash all over the place.

«Attention! Attention! Explosives detected! Explosives detected! Civilians, evacuate! Civilians, evacuate! IPS personnel at its posts! IPS personnel at its posts!»

We all look at each other dumbfounded. The same moment we jolt... One of the passenger carriages explodes! A sharp shock vibrates through the whole station!

“Fuuuck!” “Evacuaate!” “Holly shiiit!” “Run!” “The capsules!” “Laaate!”

I stand frozen in place.

No... not now... finally I’ve decided...

Yet another vibration runs through the whole station... More explosions... The video-wall zaps and only emits noise...

“Phoenix!”

I’m taken by my belt, lifted, and thrown into the air... I fly towards the bar, Bax at my side. Just behind us, Xey follows.

“Wake up, dude!” Bax shouts at me behind the bar.

“Eh?” I’m lost...

“Fuck!”

Another explosion rips through the station, this time quite near to us.

“Duck!”

A huge flare shoots right over our heads...

Bax, Xey, and some others show sheer terror on their faces. Bax finally reacts.

“To the kitchen!” he shouts as the flames are doused by the sprinklers.

A shockwave reaches us and throws us towards the kitchen doors.

We gather ourselves and stand up moaning in pain. We're littered with bruises and some insignificant cuts.

"Shiiit!"

"Into the fridge!" shouts Bax. "It's quillium-reinforced!"

Instinctively, I jolt up and follow Bax and Xey. Some follow us, two of them clearly severely burnt.

"Fuuuck!" "Leak!" some shout.

I can't move forward! I'm being pulled back...

"Phoenix!" Xey shouts.

"Shiiit!" shouts Bax who tries to get hold of my extended hand, Xey holds him by his belt while holding onto a column.

"Aaaahh..." a heartbreaking scream rushes away from behind.

I turn my head and see terrified how a guy is violently pulled toward the diner's door. His screams are silenced by the air rushing out.

Trying to ignore the poor trucker's fate, I hold as strong as I can to a rail or the like. It seems it's about to give away any second from now...

Yet another vibration... stronger than ever...

A huge shockwave reaches us.

My body is thrown towards the kitchen again...

"Aaaarghh~ Fuuuuck!" I scream.

My hand got stuck between the rail and the wall. Anything loose is hitting me everywhere!

"Aaargh!" This pain!

A blunt object hits my head, and blood covers my right eye...

Finally, the rail gives away, and I'm thrown again towards the kitchen.

More pain... I lost the count of objects hitting me...

Bax, Xey, and a Reaf woman receive me like a football at the Super Bowl.

“Fuuck!”

“Hurry! Those still alive! Into the fridge!”

“This way!”

Yet another shockwave...

We fly towards what seems the door of the walk-in fridge.

“Woooooo...” “Fuuuuuuck...” “Shiiiiit...”

More impacts...

Fucking pain! Everything’s going dark red... I lift my hand to wipe the blood off my eyes...

“Fuuuuck!” I scream. “My arm! I don’t feel iiiit!”

Another shockwave makes someone fly overhead. I only hear his screams and his impact against the wall.

“Aaaargh!” Not again! Something massive impacts against me again. Fuck! This pain!

I’m unable to stand up. I can’t pull me up... my left arm does not respond...

“Fuuck!” I scream. “I can’t seeee!”

A sudden, sharp pain cuts through my right leg...

“Phoenix!” some scream.

“My leeeeg... I can’t moooove!” I scream in pain and fear.

I’m pulled somewhere by someone... but not for long... We’re shaken and thrown by yet another shockwave...

How long will this go on?

Again, someone carries me. It’s getting cold...

“Hurry! The ice!” “His leg!” “Shit!” “Hold on, Phoenix!” “Xey speaking. Do you read? Eleven survivors in the Crush Mount. Most injured. One serious... Here, Bax! Press here!”

“Fuuuck... what the—” I scream.

⋮

I... I must have passed out...

Aaaargh! Every inch of my body hurts!

I... I don't feel my left arm... nor my right leg... The pain is unbearable. I'm struggling to breathe... It's cold... I hear voices, far away...

Shadows move in front of my eyes. I try to open my left eye a bit more.

“Phoenix! Shit! Is the medic coming or not?”

“They're opening their way towards here!”

What's happening to me? My eyes feel heavy... Everything feels heavy...

“Don't fucking give up, Phoenix!”

I'm unable to open my eyes again...

“Hold on, dude! They're coming!”

It's cold... really cold...

I try to move... I grit my teeth from the pain. The pain is so intense I'm even unable to scream. Fuck... don't fuck me... I'm dying like this?

This can't fucking be!

Aia...

Enya...

No fuck!

I still have to tell them... I lo—

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SpaceHighway: The Awakened ~ A22 ~ Bionic Phoenix

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- Al

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- Ana del Hierro
- Siegi Simon Sr.

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TL;DR:

The author does not identify himself with any character.
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