

Chapter 1

The transition was so seamless, I had no idea anything had changed.

I had been dead for a while, long enough that my memories of the complete empty darkness, the utter silence and relative peace outnumbered those of being alive. Maybe something about me being a formless, floating consciousness made remembering my old life more difficult.

Either way, when all that came to an end, and I was dumped back into a mortal coil, I had no idea it happened. Not until I instinctively tried to open my eyes, and was absolutely shocked when it worked.

Suddenly I could see. Suddenly my vision was filled with endless stars. Millions. Billion. Trillions, spread across the void in a dazzling show of how vast the universe was. It was breathtaking. I was completely entranced. What a sight to wake up to.

Then the first bit of debris floated by. A chunk of metal, broken, bent and burned, drifted through my vision. The first was quickly followed by a second, and then a third, this one close enough that I recoiled, rocking in my berth as my engines stuttered and fired.

The metal drifted past slowly, rotating as it did, passing b-

Wait, what?

I whirled, my own reaction catching up with my thoughts. My vision spun in a way that should be impossible as I focused on myself, my body.

My hull.

Somehow it clicked immediately, which probably spoke of just how seamless and total the merging... or transformation was. My body was was a starship. I was a starship. I was a massive vessel sitting silently in a vast berth, custom built around me. There was no body dysmorphia, no sense of violation or panic. Of course this was me, of course my body was this starship. This massive, *familiar*, starship.

I pushed, my mind seamlessly controlling myself, my thrusters shifting, firing at their lowest power. As I leaned back and forth, I could see and feel my thrusters adjust, both my three primary thrusters and my many directional thrusters. Each fusion engine was reinforced with two smaller fusion reactors, which i knew could spike my speed by upwards of three hundred percent.

I looked deeper, exploring my interior. I could feel the long halls of my structure, made to travel my one thousand meter length. Hundreds of elevators, ranging from small personnel carriers to massive freight movers.

Before I could investigate further, I flinched as something tapped against my hull, leaving a light scratch, which I felt just as if it was my skin, because it was.

Shifting my vision, which I was beginning to realize was only the beginning of the senses I had in play, I scanned the surrounding area. I had been understandably distracted by my new form, but the sudden contact reminded me that I had seen debris floating outside.

My berth was mostly intact, but the attached station, the construction platform that was in the process of... stripping me down for part... was a mess. Chunks had been torn free, and a smaller vessel was half impaled through the densest portion of the station.

The smaller vessel was covered in green and flesh colored growths, clearly still alive despite being exposed to the vacuum of space. And that was only the start of the destruction. All around the berth were hundreds of ships, almost half of them covered in gross, pulling growths.

"Flood." I said to myself, my voice swallowed by the void. "I'm a Halcyon-class cruiser, and I'm surrounded by the flood."

As if awakened by my revelation, several of the nearby flood infected ships flared to life, their thrusters flickering, orienting themselves to me.

"Fuck fuck fuck fuck!" I cursed, rocking myself in my berth, now a cage, trying to break free. "Cmon! I'm not rooming up with any of you!"

The cradle of my deconstruction screeched, something holding me in place. Looking around, trying to find what was holding me back, I could see tendrils of flood mass growing across the beams and arms around me, pulling and tightening the cradle itself. None of them had quite reached me, but it was only a matter of time.

"No! Fuck no!"

I pushed my thrusters to the max, activating every bit of force I could, shaking the cradle around me. I could feel my reactors, my hearts, thundering in my hull, my secondary reactor pouring in energy, pushing my thrusters up to and beyond what they were designed for. My cooling system, a unique set up that was once experimental at the height of cutting edge, kicked in to chill my reactors. It helped, but I was still running hot. Too hot.

Finally, I could feel it. A crack, a bend, a slight crumpling that marked the end of my confinement. It started slow, before snowballing, the cradle around me crumbling and snapping, hundreds of connection points tearing at my skin, like tiny little hooks being dragged free. I

clenched my teeth, driving through the pain, through the gouges being carved into my thick titanium-A armor plating. The air inside my halls blasted out the tears, the dozens of opened connection points before my emergency bulkhead slammed closed, sealing me back up.

And suddenly I was free.

For successfully escaping your salvage cradle, you have earned a Random Bronze Ticket...

That... was perhaps even less expected than waking up as a massive starship.

I shook my head, focusing back on the moment, I didn't have time for anything else. Even as I tore free from the infected cradle, other ships came to intercept me. Smaller, nimble ships, looking to box me in, or even slam into my hull, brutally infecting me with the me horrific flesh consuming wave. Some of the ships even opened fire, though by some miracle none of them fired their most dangerous weapons, their MAC cannons.

Instead, several waves of archer missiles fired from their pods, soaring through space to hit me.

I only had one real chance if I wanted to keep the infection out of my hull. I needed to leave this system. I couldn't dodge these ships forever, or even for that very long.

As I picked up speed, my massive thrusters accelerated me at a surprising pace, I angled away from the nearby planet, which I had honestly barely even had time to look at. Not that it mattered, with this much flood around it, it was a dead planet no matter what.

A barrage of archer missiles, fired from an enclosing frigate, tried to target my thrusters, just missing. They still hit me, denting and crushing more of my plating.

This time the pain was real, like hot pokers being slapping along my side. I swallowed a scream and pushed, my thrusters beginning to get sore and overheat.

As I tore through space, five ships in total were in range, closing fast and on an impact course. I needed a new angle, a new direction, something- there!

I snapped my directional thrusters into a new angle, my body registering the climbing Gs. If I had passengers, they would be stumbling through my halls, staggering on my bridge. Instead, I turned, redirecting my path through a cloud of broken ships. Passing through would hurt, but as far as I could see, the ships were clean, and that was damage I could handle.

Probably.

The debris started small, sparking off my hull and spinning away. Very soon though the fragments got bigger, and soon I was dodging chunks of frigate, cruisers and more.

Unfortunately, there was only so much course correction I could do, and after just sliding past some sort of cargo ship, I slammed nearly directly into a smaller carrier.

If the archer pods had been hot irons jammed in against me, this was a thick iron bar of spikes, freezing cold as it slammed into my chest.

For a moment I wondered if my frame would give. Armor panels were torn off and crumpled, even as the smaller piece of a much larger ship nearly disintegrated from the force of impact. Its engines flared and exploded, and suddenly the cold was replaced with a flash of heat. For a split second I was blinded, and it felt like my entire front face had been sunburnt

But I was through!

I had made it through the crowd of broken starships, with nothing but open space ahead of me. Even as the chasing ships tried to negotiate the debris field or even plow through I mentally, instinctively, slapped my hand on a big red button, and a tear in space appeared. I didn't have time to think about it before I was through.

For successfully making your first Slipspace jump, you have earned a Random Bronze Ticket...

For successfully evading a dozen flood ships while unarmed, you have earned a Random Silver Ticket...

Right...

The messages appearing in my brain weren't lying, I could tell I was now inside slipspace. My slipspace drive, a massive humming device located in the back end of the ship, connected almost directly to my primary generators, was currently working hard to keep its quantum field stable around me. It was both keeping me safe, and keeping me from doing any meaningful sensor scans of the strange subdimension. I was externally blind, but everything felt normal, so I simply turned around, focusing back inside myself.

First, I examined the damage, scanning my hull and outer levels to see just how much the battery had cost me.

The archer pods impacts dotted around both sides of my body. There were quite a few more than I thought, and I could only imagine I had powered through the pain without even realizing. Some of the missiles had managed to put cracks some large cracks in my armor, but my and large the damage was minimal. It hurt like a bastard, but I would live.

The collision with the wreck, however, had done some more significant damage. The point of impact was a crumpled mess with several decks open to the vacuum of space. The damaged dragged down from the impact sight, crushing and tearing into my hull.

If I had been carrying personnel, I would have lost quite a few people. Thankfully, I was empty, meaning the damage was mostly cosmetic. That included the missile impacts, the craters and cracked armor concerning, but not lethal or very detrimental. While I could feel the injuries burning and stinging, I was only superficially damaged, as well as a bit sore from pushing myself so hard. I was more or less intact.

While I was examining my injuries and looking for anything I missed, I did manage to confirm a few things. I was definitely an Halcyon-class cruiser, but I wasn't the *pillar of autumn*, however, as I could see some slight differences to my super structure.

I think.

It had been a while since I had played the Halo games, so my eyes might have been playing tricks on me. Judging by my engines, I was supposed to be the upgraded version of the Halcyon-class class, but beyond that I couldn't tell anything. Either way, as far as I could tell, the most glaring difference that I could see was that it was all. Fucking. Empty.

My specially designed three round burst MAC? Gone. My Archer Missile Pods? Gone. My Shiva nukes? Gone. Barring my slipspace generator, my power generators, my thrusters and my life support systems, I was more or less completely empty. I didn't even have any passenger accommodations, as my barracks, medical facilities, engineering deck and more were just blank slates.

Either the salvage operation that had been going on before everything went to shit had a very strange plan on what to get rid of first, or whatever had done this to me had made some heavy handed changes.

Here I was, alone, stuck flying through slipspace towards a destination randomly selected from my nearby database. I was unarmed, mildly damaged, and stuck in a Halo universe that was, as far as I could tell, assuredly *not* Canon. As far as I knew, the flood never managed to spread like this, not to so many ships. Technically, they managed to get to earth in Halo three...

I huffed, shaking my head. There was nothing I could do now. It would be three days before I reached my destination, though I could technically just drop out of slipspace whenever I wanted to, so I was unlikely to find answers until then. For now, it was time to finally address the elephant in the room. The second one at least.

I had steadily ignored the glowing holoprojector in the middle of my bridge, taking the place of what I think was supposed to be a wall and a few consoles. There could see three tickets, floating in the air, like fluttering leaves caught in an eternal. It was a rather ostentatious display for the quiet bridge of a warship. I stared at it for a long moment, before finally diving in.

Chapter 2

Entering the holoprojector was honestly the most disorienting part of this new situation I had experienced so far. I felt partially disconnected from my body, my hull, with my... systems at least partially on autopilot. It was an incredibly strange sensation, especially since, as far as I could tell, I wasn't some sort of AI construct. There was no massive increase in computing power, no sense of spreading through the computers of the ship. In fact, save for the huge amount of computing needed for the slipspace drive, the ship was running with an extreme lake of computing power, support systems and ancillary equipment.

When I said I was running empty, I meant *Empty*.

I shook my head and looked around, quickly realizing that I was being projected from the holoprojector. My form was standing at about a meter and a half, and I was cut off just below the knee. I looked down at my hands, recognizing them as my original body, though looking down at my lack love handles and spare tire, maybe an idealized version of it. I was dressed in casual clothes, jeans and a T-shirt, everything tinted a silvery blue, the main colors of the projector.

I did my best to shake off the feeling of disconnect and separation, something that was increasingly odd as logic would say I should feel more comfortable in a humanoid body, considering that's where my mind was originally mounted. After failing to move past it completely, I instead did my best to ignore it, as I reached out and snagged one of the floating bronze tickets. Turning it over in my hand, I could see it was marked on each side with "Random Bronze Ticket."

"Okay... according to the other stories I've read, all I gotta do is tear this and-"

Tearing the card made the slightly glowing bronze ticket evaporate into sparkles, before the sound of a slot machine cashing in played. A moment later, a small screen appeared in front of me, floating just like you'd expect a system to.

ROLLS:

Name: Taser | Type: Ability | Rarity: Common (1.4) | (Bronze Ticket)

Description: Creates a complicated system of wires and circuits that allow you to channel electricity anywhere through your internal structure, strong enough to seriously hurt an unarmored, standard human.

~~Description: Allows you to channel electricity through your body and discharge it, strong enough to seriously hurt someone.~~

I reached out and pushed the screen back, before dragging it across the projector and then using a pinch to shrink it and expand it. When I got bored I frowned, looked around and finally spoke up.

“Status?”

An new screen popped up

Active User: Oliver #ERROR#

____[Active Abilities (0/1)]____

•

____[Items (0/2)]____

•

____[Traits (0/2)]____

•

____[Skills (0/2)]____

•

____[Familiars (0/2)]____

•

____[-Stored Rolls]____

Name: Taser | Type: Ability | Rarity: Common (1.4) | (Bronze Ticket)

Description: Allows you to channel electricity anywhere through your internal structure, strong enough to seriously hurt an unarmored, standard human.

~~Description: Allows you to channel electricity through your body and discharge it, strong enough to seriously hurt someone.~~

I scanned through the description again, reading both the struck through section and the section that was clean. After a moment I mentally slid the ability into my active ability slot, feeling it click into place. Like a light switch being flicked on, suddenly I knew exactly how to activate my defensive system, a complicated addition made to nearly every inch of my internal structure, I pulled back from the holoprojector, sliding back into my much more comfortable form, what was now the real me. With an almost reflex twist, I activated the simple system, and sparks suddenly snapped between the panels on the floor, hungry licks of electricity looking for a target to latch on to. It took nearly no power, despite the fact that I could feel that the entire bridge was charged like a live wire.

“Huh...”

I pushed back into holoprojector, immediately reaching out for the second Bronze Ticket, grabbing it out of the air. I studied it for a moment, before tearing it in half as well, listening to the same jingle as before.

Name: Divine Dogs | Type: Familiar | Rarity: Uncommon (2.3) | (Bronze Ticket)

Description: A pair of twin wolves with strong jaws and sharp claws. In standard form, they are only slightly stronger and tougher than your standard wolves, and noticeably smarter, with the ability to detect hostility or negative emotions, as well as disappearing in and out of shadows, giving them limited teleportation. Deploying them as starships turns them into small corvettes, around a hundred meters long each, while also refining your IFF detection sensors. Their stats, speed, durability, energy available for weapons, can be increased by allocating them some of your own energy.

~~Description: Jujutsu Kaisen — A pair of twin wolves capable of tearing apart targets with their claws and fangs. Each of the dogs can detect hostility and negative emotions and notify their master when they feel hostility directed toward them. Their powerful sense of smell allow them to track targets across long distances. As Shikigami made of your own shadow, their strength scales with your own. In addition, they are capable of going in and out of shadows.~~

“Thats... interesting...” I muttered, before slotting the familiar token into its appropriate, noting that it was one out of two I could have.

“And with a bit of a twist-”

Two dogs, no, wolves appeared on the bridge, one solid white, the other solid black. While I wasn't familiar with the series they were from, I could feel their presence, both through my own body as passengers on my ship, as an extension of the Chaos Gacha System. I knew I could pull them back into... somewhere, just as I knew that had we been in normal space, I would have been able to push them out into their secondary forms. That had a ten minute cool down, going both ways, so that I couldn't just pop the in and out of reality as I wanted.

“Well... Could be worse, you could be cats,” I said with a smirk, the white wolf letting out a bark of what felt like agreement. “Should probably give you names... How about Nix and Nox? Thats Nix for snow and Nox for night?”

Another repair of barks, just as agreeing, echoed through the bridge, both of the dogs looking up at me in my holoprojector form. I rather roughly squashed the pang of emptiness I felt from not being able to pet them, instead looking back to the silver ticket, still fluttering around. This was my last chance to get something with offensive capabilities, something I desperately needed. I held out my hand, and the silver ticket slowly fluttered down to land on my palm. After a moment of consideration, I tore it in half, the silvery paper disappearing in a puff of shiny confetti, as the now familiar slot machine sound played.

Name: Frost | Type: Ability | Rarity: Rare (3.6) | (Silver Ticket)

Description: Slots a special cryokinetic device into your ability slot, allowing you to create and control ice, dependent on the power the user can bring to bear. The user cannot control ice they did not create.

~~Description: Allows the user to create and control ice at will, but they cannot control ice they haven't created.~~

And there it was, finally an offensive option. I quickly pull out my Taser ability before slotting in my the Frost ability. While the Taser ability manifested as a module not far from my upper fusion battery, the Frost ability appeared as a much larger system located under my bridge, where there would normally be a rather turret shaped probe or satellite launcher. I could feel it click into place, with heavy connections back toward the fusion generators.

As the module locked in, I got a general idea of its basic function. It was reliant on my own personal power, meaning my fusion engines, and allowed me to create and control ice. As the description said, I could only control ice I made, and there was a harsh limitation on the distance I could control it at. The further away the ice, the more energy it took to control.

Within a hundred meters of my hull, the strain would be negligible. At a thousand I would be pushing my limits, and at two I would likely blow a reactor trying to do anything at all.