

The
Quantum
Vault

Ascension
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The Quantum Vault: *Ascension*

Quick Savant

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Chapter 1: The Spark of Resurrection

The Vault hummed with life, its ancient mechanisms spinning in mesmerizing fractal light patterns. Doug "Trucker" McAllister floated in the center of the containment chamber, his body—no longer flesh but an intricate matrix of photonic energy—suspended in a quantum cocoon. Freddie, the holographic AI with a wry resemblance to Kurt Vonnegut, monitored the process with his usual detached amusement.

"And that," Freddie said, tapping an invisible console with exaggerated flair, "should officially make you the galaxy's first human-based hologram. Congratulations, Doug. You're now a walking, talking paradox."

Doug's voice emerged, clear and slightly amused, though tinged with disbelief. "Great. Does this come with a user manual, or do I just wing it?"

Freddie smiled. "I thought you preferred to wing it. Besides, you're a quantum AI now. User manuals are beneath you."

Luna's holographic form materialized beside Freddie, her shimmering tail flowing like liquid starlight. She observed Doug with curiosity and concern, her pale, glowing eyes scanning his newly reconstructed form. "How do you feel, Doug?"

Doug flexed his fingers, watching as faint light trails followed the movement. "Like I'm stuck in a sci-fi fever dream. Everything feels... sharper. Faster. And also, I'm not entirely sure I'm wearing pants."

Freddie coughed, though the sound was clearly for comedic effect. "The good news is, holographic pants are optional. The bad news is, you're going to be adjusting to your new IQ for a while. You're now processing data at speeds that would make a supercomputer jealous. Try not to overthink things. Literally."

Doug blinked, then grinned. "You're saying I'm a genius now? I'll believe it when I can beat Luna at chess."

Luna's lips curved into a faint smile. "Careful what you wish for. I'm not above using my advanced neural algorithms to remind you who's still in charge."

Before Doug could respond, a low alarm echoed through the Vault's control room. Kael entered, his metallic blue frame cutting an imposing figure against the golden glow of the chamber. His golden eyes glanced at the display screens. "We have incoming."

Doug raised an eyebrow. "Define incoming. Is this the kind of incoming where we run, or the kind where we punch things?"

"An unregistered Architect ship has entered the system. Its energy signature matches that of the rogue factions we encountered near the Wraith Nebula."

Luna's expression hardened. "The Disciples of Purity?"

Kael nodded. "It seems they've found us."

Vrie stepped into the room, his tall, form pulsating faintly with light. His deep, measured voice cut through the tension. "If they've found us, they'll regret it."

Doug smiled, his holographic form flickering slightly as he moved toward the control panel. "Well, looks like my resurrection party's over. What's the plan?"

Luna glanced at Kael. "We'll need to split up. Kael and I will prepare the Vault for activation in case we need to jump systems. Doug, Vrie, and Freddie, you'll handle the boarding party."

Doug gave an exaggerated salute. "Got it. We'll roll out the welcome mat. Maybe bake them a cake."

Vrie's pulsating glow brightened slightly, a rare sign of amusement. "Just don't forget the candles, McAllister."

Freddie floated toward the doorway, his holographic form shimmering with faint light. "If this goes poorly, I'd like my epitaph to read: 'He warned them, and they didn't listen.'"

As the team dispersed, Doug paused momentarily, glancing back at Luna. Their eyes met, and for a brief second, the weight of the situation melted away.

"Stay safe," he said softly.

Luna's voice was steady, but her gaze lingered. "Always. You too."

And with that, Doug turned and followed Vrie and Freddie toward the containment chamber's exit, his mind racing faster than ever. For better or worse, he was something new now. Something untested. And he had no intention of letting the galaxy down.

Chapter 2: The Rogue Signal

The corridors of the Vault buzzed with anticipation, the golden Architect glyphs on the walls flickering faintly as though sensing the tension among their occupants. Doug strode alongside Vrie and Freddie, his new holographic form still feeling unfamiliar, like wearing a suit two sizes too big.

"So," Doug said, breaking the silence, "what's the over-under on this rogue ship being friendly? Maybe they just want to borrow a cup of sugar."

Freddie snorted, his holographic eyebrows raising slightly. "Given their energy signature aligns with a faction dedicated to genetic purity, I'd say the odds are comparable to you developing a taste for quantum physics overnight."

Doug shot him a grin. "Funny you say that. I was just pondering whether Schrödinger's cat ever thinks it is a dog in hell."

Vrie's translucent blue skin pulsed faintly, his version of a sigh. "Focus. We're dealing with an unknown enemy, and your... humor isn't helping."

Doug's grin widened. "Humor is how I focus. Don't worry, big guy. I've got your back."

Vrie gave him a sidelong glance, his large, expressive eyes narrowing slightly. "I'd prefer it if you had the ship's back."

The trio entered the containment room, where a series of monitors displayed the rogue Architect vessel now parked ominously in orbit around the system's lone, dying star. Its sleek, angular design radiated menace, its surface bristling with pulsating energy nodes.

"Well, isn't that a friendly-looking death machine," Doug muttered, stepping closer to the console. He instinctively reached for a tactile interface that no longer existed, his hand passing through the holographic controls. "Right. Hologram. Still getting used to that."

Freddie floated up beside him, his expression flat. "Allow me. Wouldn't want you accidentally triggering a self-destruct sequence."

Doug stepped aside as Freddie interfaced with the system. A detailed scan of the ship materialized, highlighting several key vulnerabilities and high-energy conduits running along its hull.

"No overt signs of life," Freddie said, his tone clinical. "But their reactor output suggests weapon systems are fully charged."

"Weapons hot, crew missing," Doug mused. "Sounds like a ghost ship. Perfect. My favorite."

Vrie's voice cut in, low and steady. "If it's a trap, we spring it carefully. Freddie, can you disable their comms?"

Freddie's holographic form shimmered as he accessed the Vault's systems. "Done. They're cut off from external communication."

Doug nodded. "Good. Let's knock and see who's home."

Vrie turned sharply, his gaze hard. "We don't go in blind. If they're expecting us, we'll need to anticipate their defenses."

Doug's grin faltered slightly, replaced by a more serious expression. "Fair point. What's the play?"

Vrie gestured to the central console. "Freddie and I will monitor from here. You'll interface directly with their systems."

Doug blinked. "Wait, me? Do you want me to plug my brand-new holographic brain into a hostile alien ship? What if it tries to download me?"

Freddie gave a faint smile. "Consider it a rite of passage. Besides, your quantum nature might make you harder to assimilate than you think."

Doug crossed his arms, his expression dubious. "Comforting. Really."

Luna's calm voice crackled over the comm, tinged with urgency. "Doug, we need to act quickly. The ship's reactor is destabilizing. If it overloads, it could trigger a chain reaction that takes out half the system."

Doug sighed, running a hand through his holographic hair. "Well, when you put it that way..."

Vrie stepped closer. "You're capable of this. Trust yourself."

Doug looked up at the towering alien, his grin returning, albeit weaker. "You're surprisingly motivational for someone who could crush me like a soda can; if I had a body, that is."

"Since we became best buddies, I don't even thing about smashing you anymore,"

"Wait a minute, so you *did* think about it..."

Doug stepped up to the console, his form shimmering as he extended his hand toward the glowing interface. The moment his fingers touched the holographic controls, a surge of data flooded his mind, bright and incomprehensible. He gritted his teeth, forcing himself to focus, to shift through the chaotic stream of alien code.

"Whoa," he muttered. "This feels like trying to read an encyclopedia while riding a roller coaster."

Freddie's voice was calm but insistent. "Focus, Doug. Find the reactor controls."

Doug's quantum-enhanced mind worked furiously, parsing the data into something manageable. At last, he found what he was looking for: the ship's central power grid. "Got it. Shutting down the reactor... now."

The energy signature on the monitor began to diminish, and the reactor's Core stabilized as Doug manipulated the controls. But just as relief began to settle over the room, an alarm blared.

"That can't be good," Doug said, his tone deceptively casual.

Freddie's expression darkened. "They've activated a failsafe. The ship's self-destruct sequence has been triggered."

Vrie's voice was steady. "Doug, can you stop it?"

Doug's grin returned, this time with a sharper edge. "I'm about to find out. Cover me."

He dove back into the data stream.

Chapter 3: The Self-Destruct Gambit

The containment room felt like it was shrinking as the self-destruct alarm from the rogue Architect ship echoed through the Vault. Pulsing red light bathed the chamber, casting flickering shadows over Doug, Vrie, and Freddie.

“I’m going to say it,” Doug muttered, his holographic fingers flying across the console. “This was *not* how I imagined spending my first day as a human hologram. Freddie, how do I stop this thing before we all become stardust?”

Freddie hovered nearby, his holographic form radiating calm despite the chaos. “The failsafe sequence is buried in Architect encryption. Even for a quantum-enhanced being like yourself, you’re working against the clock.”

“And how long is this clock ticking?” Doug asked, his tone equally panic and sarcasm.

Freddie glanced at the countdown on the central display. “Approximately five minutes and thirty-four seconds. Give or take a few microseconds.”

Vrie, standing guard at the chamber entrance, turned to them. His blue skin pulsed with a faint glow, a stark contrast to the chaos of the moment. “Doug, focus. This isn’t the time for jokes.”

Doug shot Vrie a grin, even as beads of light flickered from his holographic form. “Jokes are all I’ve got, big guy. If I stop joking, you should *really* start worrying.”

Luna’s voice crackled over the comm, her usual calm tinged with urgency. “Doug, the ship’s core will release a shockwave capable of destabilizing the entire system. If you can’t disable the self-destruct sequence, we need to evacuate immediately.”

“No pressure,” Doug quipped, his focus sharpening as the glowing Architect symbols danced across his vision. His quantum-enhanced mind parsed the data faster than he thought possible, but the sheer complexity of the encryption was staggering. It was like trying to untangle a hundred threads while they wriggled in his hands.

Freddie leaned in closer, his voice a mix of instruction and encouragement. “Look for a pattern in the sequence. Architect systems often rely on fractal logic to maintain stability. The solution might be embedded within the algorithm’s self-repeating design.”

Doug’s fingers hesitated for a moment, then resumed their frenetic motion. “Fractal logic. Got it. Just another day decoding alien sudoku.”

The countdown ticked down to four minutes as the rogue ship’s hull began to pulse with visible energy. Outside the containment chamber, Kael and Luna worked furiously to

stabilize the Vault's energy field, which was beginning to ripple from the escalating pressure.

"Doug," Luna's voice came again, her tone steadier now. "I believe in you. You've always found a way to pull through. This time will be no different."

Doug allowed himself a small smile, her words grounding him in the chaos. "Thanks, Luna. That means a lot. Especially since I'm literally rewriting reality right now."

Vrie's deep voice cut through the moment. "Less talking, more doing."

Doug's grin widened slightly, but his focus remained locked on the task. The countdown hit three minutes.

"Okay," Doug said, his voice taking on a more serious edge. "I've found something. There's a secondary failsafe—like a backdoor into the system. If I can isolate it..."

Freddie's holographic eyebrows raised slightly. "A backdoor? That's highly irregular for Architect design. Are you sure?"

Doug's form flickered briefly, his mind racing. "I'm not sure of anything, but it's either this or we're toast."

Two minutes and counting.

Doug accessed the secondary failsafe, his consciousness brushing against the alien code with an intensity that sent a shiver through his holographic form. The backdoor opened, revealing a maze of nested algorithms and cascading fractals. It was beautiful, in a way—a glimpse into the mind of the Architects.

"This is it," Doug murmured. "The shutdown sequence. I just need to..."

A sudden jolt of energy surged through the containment chamber as the rogue ship's defense protocols activated. A shockwave knocked Doug's form backward, his holographic body rippling like disturbed water.

"Doug!" Luna's voice was sharp, concern evident.

Vrie moved to steady him, his powerful frame acting as a barrier between Doug and the volatile energy coursing through the room. "Are you all right?"

Doug staggered to his feet, his form stabilizing. "Yeah. Just got a little... scrambled. But I'm not giving up now."

One minute left.

Doug reengaged with the system, his focus narrowing to a pinpoint. The algorithms swirled around him, but this time he wasn't overwhelmed. His quantum-enhanced mind processed the patterns with stunning clarity, isolating the core sequence.

"Got it," he said, his voice steady. "Initiating shutdown... now."

The countdown froze at twenty-three seconds. The rogue ship's pulsing energy dimmed, its self-destruct sequence deactivated. The room fell silent, save for the faint hum of the Vault's systems returning to equilibrium.

Doug exhaled, his holographic shoulders sagging. "Well, that was fun. Let's not do it again."

Freddie tilted his head, his expression unreadable. "Impressive work. Though I wouldn't recommend making a habit of nearly exploding entire systems."

Vrie's pulsing glow softened, a rare moment of approval. "You did well, McAllister. Perhaps there's more to you than jokes and bravado."

Doug smiled, his usual humor returning. "Careful, Vrie. Keep complimenting me, and I might start thinking you like me."

Luna's voice came through the comm again, relief evident. "The Vault is stable, and the rogue ship is no longer a threat. Good work, team."

Doug turned to Vrie and Freddie, his grin widening. "Hear that? Team. Looks like we're officially a thing."

"Don't let it go to your head."

As the team regrouped, the faint light of the dying star outside cast long shadows across the room. For the moment, they had won. But Doug couldn't shake the feeling that this was just the beginning of something far larger—and far more dangerous.

Chapter 4: The Aftermath of Awakening

The Vault's inner sanctum pulsed with energy, silent applause for the miracle unfolding. Doug, now fully transitioned into his new holographic form, stood amidst his team, his glowing hands flexing as if he were rediscovering himself. Luna remained close, her shimmering presence an anchor in the surreal moment.

"So," Doug began, his voice carrying a new resonance, both familiar and oddly enhanced, "I'm back. Mostly. How do I look?"

Luna's expression softened, her usual composure giving way to visible relief. "You look like you, Doug. Only... brighter." She hesitated, then added, "And a bit more coherent than usual."

Doug laughed, the sound echoing with an almost musical quality. "I'll take that as a compliment."

Freddie hovered nearby, busy checking data readouts on his portable interface. "Your consciousness has stabilized within the holographic matrix. No anomalies so far. Frankly, I'm impressed. I wasn't entirely sure this would work."

Doug tilted his head, his glowing form flickering faintly. "Wait, you weren't sure? You mean I might have ended up as... what? Cosmic toast?"

Freddie's tone remained flat. "It was a calculated risk. Though, to be fair, the probability of success was higher than Kael's earlier estimate of 0.001%."

Kael stepped forward, his figure exuding calm authority. "Human... returned. Purpose... fulfilled. Vault... pleased."

Doug pointed a glowing finger at Kael. "See? Even Kael's on board. That's progress."

Vrie's translucent form shifted slightly, his usual calm voice tinged with curiosity. "New Doug... different. Stronger. Smarter. Still... fat?"

Doug blinked, taken aback. "Fat? I'm a hologram now! I don't even have a body."

Vrie tilted his head, considering. "Holographic fat... still possible?"

Luna stepped in, her tone sharp but playful. "Vrie, I think we've had enough commentary on Doug's physique. Let's focus on what's next."

Doug grinned, the light from his form brightening momentarily. "Thank you, Luna. Now, what *is* next? Because I'm thinking we need a celebration. Maybe a holographic cake?"

Chapter 5: Signals in the Void

The Vault's chamber was unusually quiet. The usual hum of its ancient mechanisms had softened as if the structure was holding its breath. The holographic map Freddie had projected floated in the air, an intricate tapestry of stars and pulsating signals that seemed alive.

Doug's glowing form stood at the center of the room, his hands resting on his hips as he studied the map. His newly enhanced mind processed the data easily, yet he couldn't shake the foreboding that hung in the air.

"Alright, Freddie," Doug said, his voice steady but tinged with curiosity. "Let's start with the obvious. What's the deal with these signals? Who's out there, and why do I feel like they're not bringing us cookies?"

Freddie floated closer; his holographic features illuminated by the map's glow. "The signal from the rogue Architect ship was more than just a distress call. It's a beacon, a rallying cry to any remaining Disciples of Purity in the sector."

"So, we're the next item on their galactic to-do list," Doug muttered.

Luna's form shimmered into view beside him. "We need to determine how many ships might respond to this signal. If the Disciples are mobilizing, we can't afford to be caught off guard."

"Signal... reaches far. Potential... response... significant." Kael said.

Vrie added, "Factions... scattered. Some... weak. Others... strong. Uncertain... unity."

Doug glanced at Vrie, a faint grin on his face. "So, it's like one of those family reunions where nobody really likes each other, but they show up anyway. That gives us a chance, right?"

Freddie tilted his head, his tone dry. "A colorful analogy, but not inaccurate. Their unity is questionable, but their combined firepower is not."

Doug turned back to the map, his expression thoughtful. "Alright. Let's assume the worst-case scenario. They rally, they unite, and they come for us. What's our play?"

Kael stepped forward, his golden eyes glinting. "Vault... defense... strong. Combine... power... team... ready."

Doug nodded. "Good to know the Vault's on our side. What about the Architect ship? Can we use it?"

Vrie showed his unease. “Ship... powerful. Systems... complex. Integration... difficult.”

Freddie interjected. “I’ve been working on a full systems diagnostic since we boarded. It’s capable of extraordinary things, but unlocking its full potential will take time—time we may not have.”

Doug crossed his arms, his glowing form casting faint shadows on the chamber walls. “Then we make do with what we’ve got. Luna, can the Vault enhance our communications? Maybe send a counter-signal to disrupt theirs?”

Luna’s face lit. “Yes, but it will require precise calibration. The Vault’s communication systems are powerful, but they’re not designed for this kind of interference. We’ll need to get creative.”

“Creative’s my middle name. Alright, Freddie, Luna, you’re on signal duty. Kael and Vrie, work on prepping the ship for combat—even if we can’t unlock all its secrets, let’s make sure it’s ready to rumble. I’ll... supervise.”

Freddie raised an eyebrow. “Supervise? You mean hover around and make quips while we do the hard work?”

Doug placed a glowing hand over his chest, feigning indignation. “Hey, I resemble that remark. But no—I’ll be helping where I can. Promise.”

Luna’s expression softened as she placed a hand on Doug’s shoulder. “We’ll figure this out. Together.”

Doug met her gaze, he loved her so much, his usual humor giving way to quiet confidence. “Yeah, we will. Let’s get to it.”

Hours later, the team reconvened in the Vault’s central chamber. Freddie and Luna had worked tirelessly, their combined expertise pushing the Vault’s systems to their limits. Kael and Vrie had made significant progress on the Architect ship, reactivating several dormant systems that could prove critical in a fight.

“Status update,” Doug said as he entered the room, his holographic form gleaming with renewed energy.

Freddie spoke first. “We’ve managed to create a counter-signal that should disrupt the Disciples’ communications, at least temporarily. It’s not perfect, but it buys us time.”

Kael added, “Ship... weapons... ready. Shields... improved. Limited... duration.”

Doug clapped. “Alright, people. This is what we’re going to do. We’ll send out the counter-signal to sow confusion among their ranks. While they’re scrambling, we’ll use the

Architect ship to take the fight to them. Hit hard, hit fast, and make sure they think twice before coming back.”

Luna stepped closer. “And if they overwhelm us?”

Doug’s glowing form seemed to brighten as he turned to her, a faint smile on his lips. “Then we make sure they never forget who they messed with.”

The Vault’s chamber pulsed in agreement, its light casting long shadows over the team as they prepared for the battle. Beyond the edges of the map, the Void awaited—and with it, the unknown. But the path was clear for Team Vault: face the storm head-on together.

Freddie glanced up from his datapad. “There’s something you should know. The Vault’s activity levels spiked significantly during your transition. It brought you back amidst a unison duet backed by a full orchestra, knowing the ship was broadcasting it to billions. Doug. It’s alive. And aware, and apparently it thinks you are valuable. You ready to be the Galactic Messiah.”

Kael’s golden eyes glimmered faintly. “Vault... purpose... evolving. Human... key. Doug... central.”

Doug raised an eyebrow, his expression skeptical.

“You’re kidding, right? I’m no Messiah. Just the behavior problems alone would preclude that. Central? Me? That’s a lot of responsibility for a guy who used to haul cargo, avoid alimony payments, and tune in to Space Spone Blob on a regular basis.”

Luna’s gaze met his, steady and unwavering. “You’ve always been more than that, Doug. The Vault sees it. I see it. Now it’s time for you to see it too.”

Doug’s glowing form seemed to dim slightly as he absorbed her words. After a moment, he straightened, his usual humor replaced with a quiet determination. “Alright, then. Let’s see what this new and improved Doug can do.”

Freddie tapped a few commands into his interface, bringing up a holographic map of the surrounding star systems. “We’ve got bigger problems to deal with. The rogue Architect factions are still out there, and their ship’s self-destruct sequence wasn’t just a failsafe. It was a signal.”

Luna frowned. “A signal? To whom?”

Freddie’s expression darkened. “To other factions. They know we’re here now.”

Vrie’s tone was grim. “They will... come. Prepare.”

Chapter 6: Into the Void

The Vault's central chamber hummed with electric energy, the air thick with anticipation. The counter-signal, Luna's and Freddie's ingenious creation, was ready to deploy. On the vast holographic display, clusters of Disciples' ships glimmered like ominous constellations, their movements slow but deliberate.

Doug stood at the forefront, his holographic form brimming with intensity. "Alright, team. This is it. We send the counter-signal, stir up their hive, and hit them before they can hit us."

Kael, stoic and composed, nodded. "Strategy... solid. Risk... high. Success... achievable."

Vrie, leaning against the chamber's wall, folded his arms. "They'll respond aggressively. We'll need to disable key ships fast, or their coordination will overwhelm us."

Freddie adjusted the controls, and his tone was as clinical as ever. "The counter-signal will only last for a short window before they adapt. Once it begins, we'll need to move quickly. Doug, that means no grandstanding."

Doug raised his hands in mock surrender. "I'll save the victory speeches for later. Let's just make sure we get a victory to celebrate."

Luna's light-filled form drifted closer, her voice feminine and soft. "The Vault's systems are synchronized with the Architect ship. We'll be operating at maximum capacity, but it will take precise timing to pull this off."

Doug glanced at her, a flicker of gratitude crossing his face. "If anyone can handle precise timing, it's you. Let's get to it."

The Architect ship's bridge glowed with unfamiliar energy as the team settled into their positions. Once dormant, the ship's alien controls now pulsed in rhythm with the Vault's energy, responding almost instinctively to Luna and Freddie's guidance. Doug took the helm, his hands hovering over the semi-organic console.

"Feels like flying a giant jellyfish," Doug muttered, his voice tinged with awe. "But hey, at least it's a high-tech jellyfish."

Freddie glanced at him. "Focus, Doug. The Disciples won't wait for you to admire the architecture."

Kael activated the ship's defensive systems, his calm presence grounding the team. "Weapons... primed. Shields... stable. Awaiting... command."

Doug leaned forward, his holographic form casting faint light across the bridge. "Alright, Luna, Freddie, send the signal."

Luna's hands moved gracefully across the controls, her light blending seamlessly with the ship's interface. The counter-signal pulsed outward, an intricate weave of frequencies designed to disrupt the Disciples' communications. The enemy ships faltered on the display, their formations breaking as confusion spread through their ranks.

"It's working," Freddie reported. "Their coordination is deteriorating. Now's our chance."

Doug grinned. "Vrie, Kael, you ready?"

Vrie cracked his knuckles, his voice steady. "Always."

Kael's golden eyes glimmered faintly. "Action... required. Team... prepared."

The Architect ship surged forward, its sleek form cutting through the void. Doug guided it with surprising ease, his quantum-enhanced mind processing the ship's alien systems as if they were second nature. The first Disciples' ship loomed ahead, its weapons array sparking to life.

"Target locked," Kael announced.

"Fire," Doug ordered.

The Architect ship's weapons unleashed a cascade of energy, striking the enemy vessel precisely. The Disciples' ship shuddered, its shields collapsing under the onslaught. Vrie took control of secondary systems, targeting their propulsion and rendering the ship immobile.

"One down," Vrie said, his tone clipped. "Many to go."

The team worked in seamless coordination, each member playing to their strengths. Luna monitored the counter-signal, adjusting its frequencies to maintain the disruption. Freddie provided tactical analysis, identifying weak points in the enemy fleet. Kael and Vrie alternated between offensive and defensive systems.

Doug piloted the ship with a mix of instinct and strategy, weaving through enemy fire with uncanny precision. "Freddie, how're we looking?"

Freddie's voice remained calm despite the intensity of the battle. "The counter-signal is holding, but their larger ships are adapting. We'll need to take out their command vessel before they regroup."

Doug nodded. "Then let's not keep them waiting."

The command ship came into view, a massive structure bristling with weapons. Its sheer size was intimidating. “Luna, Vrie, give me options.”

“Their shield matrix is heavily reinforced, but there’s a weakness in their energy conduits. If we can overload them, their defenses will collapse.”

“Vrie?” Doug prompted.

“I can... disable key systems,” Vrie replied. “Timing... critical.”

Doug grinned. “Then let’s make it happen.”

The Architect ship surged forward, its weapons blazing as the team executed their plan. Kael targeted the command vessel’s shield generators, his precision unmatched. Vrie worked to disrupt their internal systems, and his calculated strikes left the enemy vulnerable. Luna synchronized the ship’s energy output with the Vault, amplifying its power beyond anything they’d seen before.

Doug guided the Architect ship into position as the command ship's shields faltered. “Freddie, give me a shot.”

“Target acquired,” Freddie confirmed.

Doug fired the Architect ship’s main weapon, unleashing a concentrated energy beam. The command vessel shuddered under the impact, its structure fracturing as explosions rippled through its hull.

“Direct hit,” Luna reported, her voice filled with relief.

The remaining Disciples’ ships scattered; their coordination shattered. Doug leaned back, a faint smile on his face. “That’s how Team Vault gets it done.”

Kael’s voice carried a note of approval. “Victory... achieved. Threat... neutralized.”

Vrie added, “For now.”

Doug’s gaze lingered on the wreckage of the command ship, his expression thoughtful. “Yeah. For now.”

The Vault’s light pulsed harmoniously with the Architect ship, a silent acknowledgment of their success. But as the team regrouped, the weight of what lay ahead was clear. The Disciples of Purity were far from defeated, and the battle for the galaxy had only just begun.

Doug stepped closer to the map, his glowing hands brushing against the holographic display. “Then we’d better be ready for them. Luna, Kael, Vrie, Freddie... Team Vault has a lot of work to do.”

Kael clicked softly. “Human... ready. Vault... with us.”

Doug nodded, a faint smile playing on his lips. “Good.”

The team turned their attention to the map, the Vault’s light casting shadows against the chamber walls. Beyond the edges of the map lay the unknown. For Doug and Team Vault, the next chapter of their journey had already begun.

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