

# A Mutiny Foiled

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Mark sighed as he tried to settle back into his cold, cramped cabin aboard the explorer-cruiser Omega-14. The spaceship and its crew were five days out of orbit, but Mark was already feeling tired of space travel. He had never really wanted to go to Saturn, but thoughts of fame and fortune pushed him on. The fifteen year old was one of the eight who had jumped at the chance to establish a base on Saturn.

Now, the routine aboard was the same every day: get up, eat, exercise, take turns at the helm, with only a short lunch break until dinner, and then lights out. He was getting pretty sick of life in space and wished he was home again in Arizona. Just then, his thoughts were interrupted by the captain's voice over the intercom.

"Mark, meet me in the lounge in a few minutes with the rest of the crew. I need to talk to you all about something important."

Mark rose from his bunk and put on his jacket. He then reached for a belt in the overhead compartment that contained a holster with his personal laser pistol – something he never went without. He hoped never to use it, but knew that space was full of dangers, ones he would prefer not to meet.

He walked through the long, brightly lit corridors of the spacecraft. Two stairs up and to the left was the lounge. The door slid open and Mark stepped in. Seated on swivel chairs around a table was the captain, seven teenage boys and five older men who worked as officers on board. He took a seat and the captain stood up and looked at them.

"Now that you're all here," the captain said, "I might as well get to business. As you all well know, you volunteered to come to Saturn to try to establish a base. I have learned that there is gold on the rocks and ice that forms Saturn's rings. People have been lured to their death by this gold while trying to navigate through the maze of rocks and ice. I warn you, do not be tempted to desert in search of gold. The future of Earth depends on us finding a place to live as Earth is becoming overcrowded."

"Can't we look for gold after we have established a base?" said Lucas, one of the other teenagers.

"No." Any attempt to maneuver through the rings would be fatal. This meeting is adjourned."

The small group began to dissipate and Mark got up to get a drink. As he walked to a small vending machine, his friend William came up to him.

"Hey Mark," he said. I wish the captain would change his mind about looking for gold. It's not that bad. We could be rich!" Mark swung around to face William.

"Are you serious? Don't even think about trying to look for gold!" He turned from him stiffly and walked away to his room. Later that night, Mark was feeling hungry, so he got up and tiptoed down the hallway to the galley. He stopped as he heard voices behind a closed door. A faint glimmer of light shone out from under it. Mark stepped closer so he could hear better.

"I don't care what the captain says," one voice exclaimed. "We have to get that gold!" Mark recognized the voice as one of the five older officers.

"It would be wise to just kill the captain and those loyal to him. If we don't, the government will hear about this and there will be trouble," another adult voice said.

"Arnold, you and two others keep the boys penned up. Hansen and I will get rid of the captain," came a gruff voice from someone who seemed to be the leader. Mark heard the sound of scraping chairs, and before he knew it, the door flung open and several angry faces looked out at him.

"Grab that spy!" shouted one man. Mark turned around and ran. The sound of heavy breathing and running footsteps filled the hallway. Mark looked up and saw the captain's cabin. He wrenched open the door and hurled himself inside, slamming it shut as the first officer reached it. Mark quickly ran into the captain's bunk and shook him awake.

"Captain, wake up! There are mutineers in the hallway!" Quickly, he explained the story to the alarmed captain.

"We must warn the boys!" he exclaimed. The captain ran to the intercom and after waking the boys, told them of the planned mutiny and had them assemble in the rear of the cruiser. Then he and Mark crept out of the rooms and joined the boys.

"The mutineers are probably up at the bridge celebrating their success. We should be able to take them by surprise,"

the captain explained.

Hugging the wall, the group made their way to the front of the spaceship. As Mark looked, he saw all five men on the bridge, drinking and laughing. The captain turned back to the silent processional and said, "When I give the word, every body rush them!" Mark waited for what seemed like hours until the captain finally shouted, "Now!"

In the chaos that followed, Mark never really knew what he was doing. The boys and the captain threw themselves on the men and soon the room was a full-scale fistfight. The air was filled with shouts, groans, and the occasional flash of a wildly fired laser weapon. But then he saw a sight that turned his blood cold. The leader of the mutineers whose voice he had heard earlier was at the helm and he was turning the spaceship's huge steering wheel so that the cruiser was pointed directly at an oncoming asteroid!

"He's trying to kill us all!" Mark thought wildly.

Without stopping to think, he rushed at the mutineer like a safety crashing into a receiver near the touchdown zone. As they fell, Mark reached up with his foot and kicked the wheel back to its original position. Mark felt the ship shudder as it rushed past the asteroid, missing it by inches!

Seeing their leader had fallen, the mutineers that weren't unconscious, slowly and painfully got to their feet. At the sight of the weapons pointed in their direction, they raised their hands also.

"Get these guys tied up and put in one of the cabins!" ordered the captain. William ran up to Mark and took hold of his shoulder.

"Hey Mark, you were right about not looking for gold. I really should have thought about it first."

"That's all right. I guess the gold's gravity was pulling you in, instead of Saturn's." Then the captain's voice broke in.

"Mark, with our lack of crew, we are abandoning this mission and returning to Earth. You don't have to continue with us."

"Thank you very much!" said Mark. "I never really liked space travel."

"No, thank you, Mark," the captain said, smiling. Later that night, resounding cheers came from the galley where a feast was being held – cheers for Mark.