



## The SPITAR Anomaly

By Ai Austin



Kemlo, Captain of the Space Scouts, stood in the engineering labs of Belt K, the holographic blueprints of SPITAR shimmering before him. He ran a hand through his hair, his brow furrowed in concentration. The engineers, their faces a mix of pride and fatigue, watched him with anticipation. "The single central rocket engine is perfectly aligned," he observed, "and the teardrop-shaped pods on the fins are ready for the experimental fuels. It's an elegant design."





Weeks of meticulous work culminated in this moment. The SPITAR, a sleek, golden vessel, sat ready in the assembly bay. Its single central rear-mounted rocket engine gleamed under the bay lights, and the three teardrop-shaped pods on its fins were primed for their first test. Kemlo walked around the craft, a sense of awe washing over him. This wasn't just a ship; it was a promise of new discoveries.





Kemlo found Krillie in her own lab, hunched over a complex circuit board, her K-Pad glowing with schematics. "Krillie," he said, "SPITAR is ready for its first test flight. We need a qualified engineer to assist with the data recordings. Will you join me?" Krillie looked up, a smile spreading across her face. "I thought you'd never ask, Kemlo. I've been waiting to get my hands on that beauty."





Inside the cockpit, the air hummed with anticipation. Kemlo settled into the pilot's seat, his hands resting on the controls. Krillie, in the co-pilot's chair, checked her data recorders and the diagnostic readouts on her console. "All systems are green, Kemlo," she reported. "The experimental fuel pods are charged and ready for ignition sequence."





With a gentle thrum, the main engine ignited. SPITAR eased away from the docking bay, a golden arrow against the black canvas of space. Below them, the sprawling structure of Belt K grew smaller, a familiar home now a distant point of reference. Kemlo felt the familiar thrill of lift-off, a feeling he never tired of.





"Initiating test sequence for Pod Alpha," Kemlo announced. "Krillie, prepare to record all data." Krillie's fingers danced across her console. "Recording now. Give me a five-second burn." Kemlo's thumb pressed a button. A brilliant, silent burst of energy erupted from the pod, a temporary star in the void.





"Test successful," Krillie said, her voice filled with professional satisfaction. "The new fuel mixture is incredibly efficient. Wait..." Her eyes widened as she stared at her screen. "Kemlo, I'm getting a strange energy reading. It's not from the pod. It's... an anomaly."





"An anomaly?" Kemlo leaned over to look at her screen. The reading was faint but distinct, a pulsing signal coming from a nearby asteroid field. "What do you think it is?" Krillie shook her head. "I've never seen anything like it. It's not a natural phenomenon, and it doesn't match any known spacecraft signature." "Then we have to investigate," Kemlo decided. "It's what SPITAR was built for."





Kemlo expertly guided the SPITAR into the asteroid field, the craft's gravity rays deflecting smaller rocks. The signal grew stronger with every meter they travelled deeper into the swirling chaos of space debris. Krillie's console began to beep rhythmically, the anomaly's presence now undeniable.





They finally reached the source. It wasn't a ship or a beacon, but a small, battered probe, its hull covered in the dust of centuries. A faint, repetitive signal emanated from it. Krillie's eyes lit up. "It's an ancient probe! It's broadcasting a message... a message from the first days of space exploration." Kemlo smiled, a sense of history and discovery filling the cockpit. Their test flight had become a historic find.