

# Solar Stupid

## 1

*I'd prowled through some* pretty seedy dives before. I'd picked up men on Pluto and managed to drag down more than my fair share of able male bodies at Tycho City. I'd found solace in the dark recesses of Europa's Launchpub, suckin' down brews from the ocean that washed a hundred meters below the surface ice and then humpin' some man blind. But, shit, Mercury station was something else.

First, one look at the friggin' planet was enough to make a lady sling her rig down through the

gravity well and just move her load right on back upsistem. What idiot back in engineering decided that this half-frozen, half-baked planetoid needed a terraforming anyway?

And they had me land a hundred clicks from the one lousy base to set down my load. How's a girl supposed to get a decent drink and an overeager man, when it's a friggin' three-hour rolligon journey 'cross the hell these people call a terrain? So, after six weeks of dry space, I start unloading the gear without a goddamn break.

Now, mining-bots can be a great help, once you have them set up. That was two days right there, and then we, just the bots and lonely me, unloaded the mass drivers and started drilling the anchor holes.

Some whiz-bitch who'd clearly never been in space had cooked up this stupid idea. Set up a rack of mass drivers along the equator of this non-spinning world. Service them with a couple hundred mining-bots and fire them all off pointing in the same direction. Bots feed bits of Mercury, rocks and ice and shit, into the hoppers and then fire the mass drivers like hell for twenty years or so and the whole stupid thing starts to spin.

Then, instead of having a planetoid with one side the temperature of deep space and the other side way the crap above the iron melting point, you get a spinning boulder that no one cares about an' that's still too fuckin' hot to fry an egg. It would just hit the surface of Mercury, spinning or not, and flash into steam before it could cook.

But you try to point this shit out to engineering and they tell you to go fuck yourself. You're just a damned rocket jock and you don't know shit. They're all whacked on Earth.

Upsystem they aren't nearly as bizarre. By the time you haul your sorry ass across the asteroid belt, everything gets lots mellower and much less stupid.

Maybe stupidity compresses more and more as you get down toward the sun. Solar stupid could explain a lot of things. Like the idiot plan to break Venus' cloud layer and let the sun shine in by ionizing the atmosphere to turn it all into rain. First off, any moisture that would land on that surface would just flash back into steam right away. Second, nobody thought about that setting off the thirty nucs all at once might react funny with the atmosphere and irradiate the planet for the next couple

million half-lives of Thorium 232. Now instead of being a friggin' hot, dead planet under a bank of clouds, it's a friggin' hot, dead, radioactive planet under a bank of clouds. Solar stupid.

## 2

*So after three weeks* of me and the bots setting up the damn drivers in the cold and dark of the space-side, and me moving the ship three times to place the drivers, with no bloody help from the frickin' Mercury base, it was all good to go. Then I lifted a few hundred clicks up in case one of them blew. I didn't want to be marooned too far from the nearest beer if we got a planet quake or somethin'.

And screw 'em. No way was I gonna warn them if they weren't gonna come on out and help like they was supposed to.

I hit the fire button.