

This is a side story to Gallo of Gray Mist.

Equa Maria is a food restaurant brand found on Cyan. In later years, all over the Nebula once the war is over.

[Alien arc] [14] [Equa Maria] [12336]

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This story takes its place between “Allies” and “Selfish sacrifice”. Even though Krait said he'd stay on Creg's, some residents thought otherwise. They sought refugee and started to make their ways into Cyan.

The planet Cyan was the home to Gray Mist clan, and its sub(vassal) clans were the Osprey and the Mystic. Living standards of the planet was overall poor, but the planet had something all other places outside lacked at that time: peace or rather peace of mind.

Peace of mind, they wanted. Peace of mind, they had been lacking for so many years. Living every single day with fear of invasion was too much for some, if not all.

Therefore, refugees flew into Cyan, not just from Creg's, but from other planets as well as soon as they received words that such a planet like Cyan existed. Some came from planets that no one from Gray mist heard of. They welcomed all refugees regardless.

Among countless refugees, an old transport vessel had reached Cyan. The ship's signature identified the ship as "Equa Maria". It was her name apparently.

Normally, refugees would come into specially shielded shuttles. It was the first time for a transport to reach Cyan. It meant that the transport was properly modified to enter the nebula.

"Equa Maria?" said Gallo as he was informed during his training with Arnon. Arnon was becoming pretty good at swordsmanship himself. He had been learning swordsmanship from Gallo and the book he gave to him. He was learning swordsmanship to become a swordsmith. Although he wasn't producing massive amounts of energy blades, he was in fact providing handful of energy blades to Gray mist. His energy blades were currently used by Cyan city guards.

"Yes, a transport named Equa Maria is requesting to dock with the outpost," Ormvor said. "Although it's not that big in size, this is the first time the outpost has a chance to dock with a ship that wasn't built inside of the Nebula. I fear that our docking mechanism may not compatible with theirs."

"What are you telling me that for? Ask Naliss." Gallo turned his back on him and was about to resume his training with Arnon.

"Well, she told me to tell you and bring you."

Arnon lowered his energy blade, sweeping his sweats on his forehead. "Sir, it looks like you are on duty now. Let us do this later."

He was wielding his newest blade. It was a much higher quality blade than his other crafts. He was apparently calling it his master piece although that would change in the future.

Gallo, meanwhile, sagged his shoulders a bit and walked away.

He took a quick shower and arrived at Naliss' castle with Ormvor. The transport could be seen from ground. It was floating by the outpost, waiting to dock apparently.

"About time you got here," Naliss scolded Gallo. "What took you so long?"

"Why do you even need me for this?" Gallo talked back rather fiercely. They had not been getting along well in recent times. But then they had never gotten along good, either. Nevertheless, they worked together professionally and that was it.

"Go face them. They are sending down a shuttle. There are two bio-signatures in it," Naliss replied with a faint grin on her face. Something was up.

Regardless, he complied without giving her a reply and left her office.

"Chefs?"

Everyone looked utterly clueless. In this era, people were used to eating frozen powdered food. Such food was ideal for long voyages and provided all necessary nutrition for humans to function properly. Expensive version would come in shapes of various cookies, but they all tasted the same.

These frozen foods had no taste at all. It tasted neither salty nor sweet. It simply had no taste at all. However, since everyone in Gray Mist had eaten such food ever since their birth, they did not know better food. They didn't have the concept of chefs and cooking. They did not even know the words.

And, therefore, rightfully so, everyone was clueless when Equa and Maria told them that they were chefs.

"You don't know what a chef means?" Equa shrugged as she told them. "Uh, we are cooks. How about that? You know what that means right?"

However, there was only silence.

"You are kidding me, right?"

Their continued silence proved otherwise.

"Listen," Gallo spoke, slightly annoyed by the weird turn of the event. "We don't know what your profession is and we don't care. You came here to seek a refugee and we welcome you here."

Equa and Maria seemed frustrated. "No, no, we did not come here for refuge. We don't seek refuge," Equa declared. "We are here to run a business."

"What business?"

"We'd like to open a restaurant."

Gallo twisted his head again. "What is a restaurant?"

Silence filled the scene, and Naliss had to be called, and she understood Equa and Maria quickly.

What Naliss did was to teach Gallo and others around the area what they meant by chefs and cooks. She had to teach them series of new vocabularies.

However, the concept of cooking was entirely alien to Gallo and the others, and rightfully so they were extremely confused. Having sensed such, Naliss asked Equa and Maria if they could demonstrate cooking.

"Sure," Equa said, "But we will need to bring down equipment and ingredients." She told them to take their time.

Equa and Maria claimed to be siblings but they looked nothing alike. They even had different hair color and physique. Equa appeared to be in charge while Maria seemed to be a chef. Equa was a tall and slender woman with blond long hair whereas Maria was a rather short, chubby at best, woman with short black curly hair. They had crew of ten which were rather few considering the size of their transport.

On next day, they were prepared and would demonstrate cooking. They had a long dining table with a mobile stove. Their crew had a few baskets full of ingredients, none of which Gallo could recognize or had seen even.

"What's that?" Gallo pointed at a white ball-like object on a dining table innocently.

"It's called a chicken egg. Haven't you seen one?" One of their crewmen responded.

"What's an egg?" He asked, again innocently. He wasn't playing around. He genuinely didn't know what an egg was nor had he seen one in his entire life.

A little shocked by Gallo's response, the crewman tried to explain in detail. "Do you know chicken? Egg is a product of reproduction process for chickens or all birds. Each egg contains a new offspring."

"Birds...? Offspring? What?" He was utterly clueless.

Silence struck the area. Eventually, Gallo decided to shut up and just watch what would happen. There were hundreds of people in the area as well, ranging from Gray mist members to ordinary civilians. It was an event which rarely happened on Cyan. Lack of proper entertainment caused more people to flock in.

Equa and Maria were making egg pies which were the easiest and fastest they could do with limited supplies of organic matters. They were done in an hour and Gallo was the first one to take a bite.

He was speechless as he chewed on the pie. The taste was ... nothing like he had tasted before ever.

"Sir, how does it taste like? It smells amazing." A person nearby him asked while drooling.

It was hard, perhaps even impossible, for him to explain how it tasted like because it was unlike anything he had eaten before. He didn't even know vocabularies to describe what he tasted.

"It's ... good," was all he could say vacantly. "Try it out, everyone," He added.

Then suddenly he frowned deeply, turning away from the pie and rushed out of the scene. Gharyn noticed and followed him.

"What is wrong?" He called out Gallo.

"N, nothing.," He replied while heavily fainting.

Gharyn inquired him but he refused to say what was really wrong.

"Did eating that piece of pie remind you of your comrades?" A female's voice sounded out of nowhere.

It was Eгна who was approaching them casually. She had fully recovered from the shock she had to go through and was in charge of restoring the dome system on Cyan with her engineer crewmen. She never showed much interests in Gallo or Gray mist's affairs.

He glanced at Eгна who was approaching. "Don't come closer," He exhaled deeply. "You are right though."

She shrugged with a smile. "I went through the same thing."

Gharyn was more surprised that she initiated a conversation first. As far as he knew, she was so passive that she wouldn't talk to anyone except for her own engineer crewmen.

As he claimed down, he spoke with a vacant stare.

"I can't... I just can't especially when most of my comrades are floating dead in cold nebula space..."

He couldn't enjoy the pie due to the invisible weight that had been pressuring his shoulders: it was the responsibility as the ruler of Cyan and it was also the weight of his lost friends. He no longer had close friends. He no longer could share liquor with anyone else anymore. His life was turning into dull and gloomy despite of his successes.

Why can't I fucking enjoy drinking with my friends... was his thought.

Gharyn understood what Gallo was going through. However, his understanding of Gallo's issue was mathematical. It was as if how a doctor would understand his patient's illness but fail to understand his emotional crisis.

However, Eгна's understanding was different. She had experienced a similar, perhaps the same, experience as Gallo and, therefore, she was able to council him.

"Sometimes death sounds more charming than living," Eгна muttered although she was smiling.

Gallo grinned and said, "That sounds about right." He agreed with her, again, with a grin on his face.

Over a distance, the crowds at the cooking scene were murmuring in awe after having tasted the pies.

He turned around toward the crowds. "Well, let them open the re... resta... whatever."

"Understood," Gharyn replied. "How are you feeling now?"

"I've always been feeling like crap. Don't bother asking."

Eгна snickered.

Soon after Gallo left the scene, and there were Gharyn and Eгна left. Gharyn stopped Eгна who was also leaving.

"Yes?"

"Do you believe that Gallo will be able to pull through?"

She sighed and let out of a short disgusted laugh. "Do you think he could?" She raised her voice a bit. "He has no one on his side. He's all alone. I'd say it's amazing that he has come this far without breaking down."

What Eгна didn't know was that he had broken down, twice. The first time was reported by Ormvor: Gallo was found sobbing, moaning for death of his friends. The second time was the bar fight with Waran. It was supposed to be confidential

but he decided to tell Eгна about it after determining that perhaps the woman could help Gallo in a positive way.

Therefore, he informed her of Gallo's history and his breakdowns.

"I honestly don't know what to tell you," Eгна said, "I am not a shrink. Though I can tell that he is hurting, hurting real bad, and no one is on his side. Everyone is just looking up to him. I don't know what's motivating him to go on and even stay alive, but I bet his shoulders have been long broken."

She chuckled and added, "Maybe, he needs to get laid," she added jokingly.

Gharyn asked Eгна an unexpected question. "Do you think I am on his side?"

"Absolutely not." She was firm in her answer.

"What makes you so certain?"

"Because, if you really cared for him, you'd have taken him off duty."

After thinking briefly, he answered slowly. "You have ... a point, but Gray mist needs him now. They need a leader."

"That is precisely why you are not on his side."

Equa and Maria eventually opened a small food restaurant on Cyan. It became a huge success and perhaps it was the beginning of economy on Cyan. They named the food restaurant "**Equamaria**".

In the future, it'd become the food restaurant of the Nebula.

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