

[Alien arc] [6] [Sae the witch] [12329]

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You sometimes look back the path you've walked on and recall few mistakes you've made that changed your path forever.

"You expect me to believe you?" A fat man with a rather high pitched voice raised his voice. He was Karma the third.

Gallo shrugged and replied, "It is up to you. I will go find another employer if you refuse my offer. It is as simple as that."

Karma the third scratched his chin. He was obviously suspicious for good reasons. He had faced many scammers in his life and Gallo's situation sounded a little suspicious. At the same time, he was a class A hyper human which was rare in the era. He was too good to just let go even if he had an ulterior motive.

Grinning, Karma cross his fingers on his desk. "Fine, I will believe you that you left the Gray mist. But you do understand that I do not completely trust you."

Gallo nodded. "Yeah, whatever. I am just a mercenary. As long as you pay me, it does not matter whether you trust me or not."

"Good enough. That's what I'd like to hear," Karma opened his desk drawer and picked up a cash card. "Here is ten thousand credit for the contract. Note that, once I can trust you, it will be a lot more."

Karma threw the card high toward Gallo and he grabbed it in air.

"Thanks." Gallo whistled of joy.

"Now get out of my sight."

"Sure thing, boss," Gallo turned around and left Karma's office at once.

After he left, Karma looked left at folded curtain by a window.

"What do you think?" He said.

"I am not sure. I was able to read his mind. But nothing was there," A voice sounded from the direction.

"What do you mean nothing was there? I hired you for this very purpose."

"His mind wasn't shielded. It was easy to enter his mind. But nothing was there. That's all I can tell you."

Karma crossed his fingers and put his chin above them.

"Stupid ESPs," He whispered to himself.

"How did it go, boss?" Fionn and the others were slacking at a pub.

"Got the job. So far so good, eh?" Showing off the cash card, Gallo sat on a stool in front of bartender's counter.

Zafir approached Gallo. "There was a message from the old man," He whispered.

"What does he want now?" Gallo whispered back.

The bartender glanced at them. Noticing him, Gallo and Zafir left the pub.

"Pikkal ran away," said Zafir.

"What?" Gallo couldn't believe at first.

"He ran off. He left the gray mist. We don't know where he went although CoR would be the last place he'd go to."

"Crap." Gallo sighed and looked around. The whole city was pretty much a trash town. Homeless people were seen everywhere but no one even bothered to beg.

"And this shitty street makes me feel worse," Gallo muttered.

"No kidding, boss, this is even worse than I imagined." Zafir nodded in agreement.

"Should we go back? The Gray mist is pretty in a bad shape right now."

"No." Gallo shook his head. "If we don't succeed this mission, we will definitely go down." After observing the powerless homeless for a moment, he called out Zafir.

"Take this card and try to find out where the money came from."

"What for?"

Gallo crossed his arms and looked around the street again. Homeless people had worn out rags over their body just to stay warm. Most of them were aimlessly gazing into air.

"Let's find out what the hell Karma the third is doing. Rumors say he is sponsored by the Blackbirds. He must be doing something valuable to be sponsored, no?"

Zafir scratched his chin. "Or, maybe, Cyan is already a part of the Blackbirds.

Unofficially, you know."

"Well, either way, do the stuff, will you."

"If you say so." Zafir nodded.

Gallo just recalled something to do. "I have a place to visit. Stay low."

There were two orphanages in the city. He randomly picked one and went there. Luck was on his side. He saw Eurne outside of her orphanage. She was playing with children. Gallo had no intention to meet her. He just wanted to see how bad it was. He quickly hid around a corner of a building nearby.

The children looked obviously starved. And some of them appeared to be suffering some illness. Eurne herself didn't look healthy, either. Then, pretty much everyone on this planet looked unhealthy in a way or another.

Gallo sighed. He didn't mean to sigh. It just came out.

"It could become personal," He grumbled.

The old man was teaching his only student, Sabars. He patted Sabars's brown hair softly as he spoke to him.

"Sabars, my child. We, ESPs, can train an ability to read others' mind," He said.

Sabars nodded without a clue.

"But there are a kind of people we can never read their mind from. And there is another kind of people who are capable of shielding their mind."

Sabars nodded again.

"Sabars, my child. It is not always good to read others' mind. Do not use the ability unless you must."

After a moment of confusion, Sabars inquired, "Why not, sir?"

"If you want to remain humane..., use the ability cautiously," The old man patted Sabars's head gently again.

"Sir, I have a question," Sabars raised his face to look up at the old man.

"Yes, what is it."

"Who is a kind of people we can never read their mind?"

"Ah," The old man's focus became loosened. "Simple men with simple mind, they are... Their mind can never be read because they do not have doubts in their consciousness."

"Simple men with simple mind, sir...? That sounds a little illogical," Sabars twisted his head due to confusion. "Their mind should be the easiest to read."

The old man laughed weakly. "That's what the most ESPs would say." He began to laugh gradually louder. "If you have a chance, try to scan Gallo's mind. You will see what I mean," He said.

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"I have your first mission," Karma said.

Without a word, Gallo nodded briefly.

His mission was simple enough. He was ordered to bring Erune to Karma. He told Gallo that she had been quite of a menace. Karma believed that she was involved with resistant forces.

"I see," Gallo nodded. "I shall be back with her."

"Use force if she resists."

Gallo nodded again. He knew where she was.

Erune was rather shocked to see Gallo when he paid a visit.

"Why are you here?" She led children into the orphanage in rush and stood in front of the door as if fearing that Gallo was here to take them away.

"I've been ordered to take you to Karma's office," He declared firmly.

She turned pale as soon as she heard. Taking few steps back, she raised her voice.

"What does that mean? You are on his side?"

"I've left the Gray mist and is now employed by Karma the third."

She seemed mildly shocked and demanded, "What about the children you took? They can't be left alone surely?"

"They should be safe. But I wouldn't know the newest information about them."

She gulped in fear. She did not feel any lies in his words. She thought of running.

But then she recalled how he murdered the men on Cyan surface; she would stand no chance and she was certain Gallo would simply cut her down just as he showed the three men no mercy on the other day.

Resigned to fate and sagging her shoulders, she responded, "F, fine, I guess ... I can't run."

"If you have nothing to hide, nothing bad is going to happen to you, no?"

Her face darkened. "You will see..."

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"Well, that was easy," Karma sat back into his black leather chair. "I didn't know you'd come this easily."

Erune glared at Karma without a word.

He snickered perversely. "It doesn't matter what you do now. You are here," While saying so, he opened his desk drawer and took out a cash card. Throwing it at Gallo, he said, "There is your pay. Good work."

"Am I dismissed now?" Gallo asked.

"You are free to watch."

Gallo narrowed his eyes. He had a bad feeling. He said, "Watch what?"

He made a clicking sound with his thumb and middle finger. Two men came into his office and noticed Erune.

"So, she is here," One of them said and laughed perversely.

"Yep, enjoy her. Take her to the basement," Karma stood up from his chair and approached Erune. Smoothly touching her chin, He snickered and said, "I hope you will enjoy being raped."

Gallo frowned and was about to say a word, but Karma was faster.

"Ah, ah, you are free to watch," He reminded Gallo. "But you are not to interfere them. Do you understand?"

"Am I allowed not to watch?"

Scratching his chin, Karma groaned and said, "I hope you'd watch and have fun though. If you don't want to watch, I have another mission for you."

"Shoot," Gallo replied right away.

"Kill all the children at her orphanage," He said without hesitation.

"You bastard!" Erune resisted the two men who were holding both of her arms.

Then, she looked at Gallo. "You can't do this! They are innocent and they are just children! Send them to the other orphanage at least!"

Karma laughed sarcastically. "You should be worrying about yourself rather than the children," He said. Then, he went back to his desk and reached underneath of the desk top. Upon pressing a button, one of his book shelves opened and a stair to downstairs appeared.

"Take her away."

Nodding and giggling, the two men dragged her to the dark passageway.

"I swear you will pay for this!" Erune shouted.

"Make sure you drug her as well," Karma said, laughing.

He turned back to Gallo.

"So, are you going to take this mission or not?" He asked quietly and slowly. He did not mean to actually murder all those children. Rather he wanted to play with Gallo.

However, It took Gallo only a second to give Karma a reply.

"I will do it," He said.

"Eh, what?" Karma was struck by his unexpected answer.

"But only for ten million ci," As if convincing himself, Gallo nodded at himself. "No more, no less."

Karma narrowed his eyes and said, "Ten million, are you absolutely sure about that price?"

"Yes, if you are willing to waste ten million for this simple task, why not. I will be the bad guy," Looking into Karma's eyes, Gallo replied firmly.

A moment of silence passed between them.

"I do not have..." Karma rolled his eyes as he began to think. "Ten million in hand right now."

"Then the deal's off," Gallo turned around and walked toward the exit.

"I will have it ready pretty soon though."

After Gallo left Karma's office, he scratched his head and sighed deeply.

Karma never prepared the money for the job. At least, he did not inform Gallo. Perhaps, it was his way of trying to forget the deal. Nonetheless, Gallo was actually glad he did not really offer ten million for the job. Murdering approximately five hundred children would have been too much for him.

Over 100 days passed rather peacefully. The situation Cyan was pretty much the same as before. Though it was bound to get even worse soon.

Reason being was that the aliens initiated attacking Freedom colony and succeeded in destroying the space colony which was known to be a space fortress.

Refugee transports from the colony were sent in every direction. And some of them managed to reach Cyan.

The port was especially busy on a day. Gallo was called to the port for so-called policing. Gallo, Embrek, Karesinda, Zafir, and the others were at the port.

"Other transports are waiting at the orbit! Move! Move!" Karma was busy ordering his men, and that included Gallo's men, to carry refugees' luggages. Of course, most of them were going to be his.

"I can't believe the colony's destroyed," Embrek remarked while carrying six bags at once. "I mean it's been there for God's knows how long. Everyone thought it was indestructible."

Zafir sighed and said in disgust, "I am more shocked that we are doing this."

"Stop bitching. We are here for the mission. Until the right time comes, we stay low," said Gallo.

"But why don't you just kill that damned fat guy?" Karesinda muttered.

"He has got an ESP hiding in his room. I won't have enough time before his whole army comes in," While saying, he looked around. "I can sense his presence here as well. He must be nearby, guarding that fat bastard."

Karesinda looked around, trying to sense a hidden presence but nothing came up. Instead, she complained more. "This really is a crappy planet. What are we going to make use of this planet?"

Zafir had several luggage boxes in both of his hand. They seemed relatively heavy. But the gravity on Cyan was zero point six.

This was the main reason why no machine was doing the job. It was cheaper for Karma to use men power instead of expensive machines.

Meanwhile, Gallo wondered what happened to Erune. Ever since the day she was taken into the basement, he hadn't heard anything about her. He feared the worst. It seemed Karma had something going on in his basement. And he wanted to find out.

It wasn't hard at all to sneak into Karma's base. His office resided in a massive building that looked rather similar to a castle. The place was guarded tightly. But, for a class A hyper human like Gallo, it was easy to avoid being seen or even felt. His only concern was the ESP but he simply went ahead anyway.

It didn't take long for him to reach Karma's room. No light was on. The only light source in the room was two windows behind Karma's desk. Colorful lights from nebula were coming through the two tall and narrow windows. As he approached the desk to find a button to open an entrance to the basement, A man's voice sounded in the room.

"Stay where you are."

But Gallo didn't obey. Instead, he quickly turned to the direction where he heard the voice and tried to grab the someone in near-complete darkness.

As soon as he felt contact, he threw a punch forward. He felt a nice contact and there was a moan afterwards.

"Who are you?" Gallo demand.

Coughing few times, the someone eventually answered, "Who do you think I am?"

"You are the ESP guarding Karma?"

"And yet you threw a punch at me? I can tell him of this incident and get you fired." He indirectly confirmed Gallo's suspicion.

"Well, duh, if someone spoke to me all of a sudden in darkness, I would have done the same to anybody."

It was a strange stand-off. After a short moment of silence, Gallo declared.

"I will just have to kill you then."

"You don't need to worry about that. I am not going to tell Karma about this and why you came here tonight."

Gallo twisted his head slightly and asked, "How come."

Still massaging his chest, he struck out his hand. "Help me stand up," He said and Gallo did so.

"I don't like Karma. That's why," He dusted off his clothes. "But that does not mean I will help you."

"I am not leaving until I find out what is going on in his basement." Gallo's voice was determined.

"Yes," The ESP nodded in agreement. "I will help you with that at least..." Then, he approached Karma's desk and pressed the button underneath the desk top. A series of mechanical gears made its sounds and one of the book shelves in the room turned ninety degree, making a path to the basement.

"Follow me and I will show you what is going on in there," He passed the shelf and walked down.

There was completely no light source in the stairs and a strange smell was hurting Gallo's nose.

"What's this smell?" Gallo asked while being extremely careful with his steps.

"You will find out soon enough." The ESP sighed deeply.

When they reached a flat ground, there were torch-like light sources on walls. It was providing just enough light source to see objects in the basement. The basement was constructed with solid stone bricks and the air was chilly. A narrow passageway was ahead of them with metal doors on its sides. It reminded Gallo of a prison.

The strange smell became much more potent as they walked further into the narrow passageway. When they approached the nearest metal door which had a small rectangle hole, Gallo took a peep.

He was shocked by what he saw in there. Two naked women were in the small rocky room. It was dark, wet, and gloomy. One woman was hung on a wall by chains. And the other was on floor. Both seemed to be unconscious. Their urine and feces were all over the floor as well. Those were the source of the disgusting smell.

"What the hell is this?!" Gallo raised his voice slightly, though it still remained to be a whisper.

"Karma is into bondage. He kidnaps women and enjoys watching them being raped and tortured," The ESP said.

He felt like having massive headache. He thought of what would have happened to Erune.

"Hah, well," He cleared his throat. "I've had enough of this. I am getting out of this basement."

"I thought you came here to save the woman who was recent taken down here."

Gallo shook his head. "Nope," Then, he answered firmly.

"Then why did you come here?"

"To fulfill my curiosity."

Because the ESP hadn't been able to read Gallo's mind at all, he was skeptical of his true intentions.

"You are a strange man," The ESP said with a curious tone.

"How come?" He began to walk toward the stairs.

Following Gallo toward the stairs to exit, the ESP explained, "You were going to take on the job to kill all the children over the orphanage if he really did offer you ten millions, weren't you."

"Yes." Gallo's answer was simple and clear.

"You may be worse than Karma."

"Who cares," Gallo laughed weakly. "I am here for something else. If anyone or anything gets in the way, I will have to get rid of it."

"That's it?"

"That's it."

"Even if it means killing hundreds of innocent children?"

Gallo would pause his step and look back at him.

"I am not going to try to be a hero and try to protect those I don't even know while I am trying to protect those I do know," He replied firmly. "If those I don't know get in the way, I will get rid of them for those I do know. It's just a matter of priorities."

The ESP mumbled, "Priorities, huh...."

"So, will you help me?" Gallo asked.

"Help you with what?"

"To get rid of Karma."

He was frozen by Gallo's words but answered soon enough. "No, I am not going to help you. As much as I hate Karma, I'd also hate to betray."

Grinning, Gallo chuckled and said, "Yes, betrayal is the worst of all, isn't it."

Few days later, Karma called Gallo to his office.

"Things are heating up," Karma said at his desk. "I thought that Admiral Nottingham had given up. But I guess not..."

"So, what's the mission?" Gallo pressed, not wanting to listen to the fat man any longer than he needed to. He also felt a hidden presence in the room. He figured it was the ESP.

"Some important guests from the Blackbirds will be here momentarily. At the same time, my men reported that an officer from United Earth has arrived on this planet."

"You've better explain why an UE officer would come here."

"Hmmpf," Karma snorted. "The only reason they'd come here is because of the specimen I am holding."

"The specimen?"

"I cannot tell you much about it. What I can tell you is that it is a very important piece for my study. A lot of money went into it. I cannot risk ruining this project."

Gallo narrowed his eyes. He thought that this project of his might have been source of his fund. From what he had been observing, he wasn't making any money off the planet's economy. The tax rate was above eighty percentage, but no one was buying anything officially. Therefore, taxing was pointless.

"So, my mission would be ...?"

"Ach," Karma snorted again. "You and your men will guard outside of my research station. It's located outside of the city dome. Just guard outside and do not let anyone enter. Is that understood?"

"Sure thing, boss," Gallo nodded in agreement.

If you stand in my way, I will kill you.

Gallo loved that quote. To him, that sentence clearly showed one's true intention without trying to go around. He read it many times from e-books. It was a famous quote from the crimson wizard.

He was known for his cruelty and was criticized many times for that. But he was never punished for his methods. Though, in his time, he was criticized, he was praised in Gallo's time.

He was in a cheap inn room. The pub owner was also running a small inn along together. Gallo and his men were pretty much his only customers. He woke up from a weakly constructed bed that creaked loudly as he got off the bed. Taking a shower, he continued his thoughts on the crimson wizard.

He was so powerful in his time that he was unmatched. And he used a blade even though he was an ESP. And it was also said that his swordsmanship was also unmatched.

Gallo simply loved those unbelievable tails. He believed that it was tales because it was hard for him to believe such stories.

Even so, he simply loved pretty much everything about the character because everything about him seemed just so surreal.

Reading his tales was why he had gotten himself a red trench coat as well.

Once out of the shower, he looked around the small room of his. Cracked walls and ceiling. There was a cracked mirror on a wall as well as his misbehaving bed. Everything in the inn was in the worst condition. But, for some reason, Gallo found the whole environment friendlier and better than what he had on the station of the Gray mist. Everything Gallo saw on the station was, well, simply metal constructions.

Once he walked down stairs into the pub, he saw everyone already gathered. Beaming a grin at them, he told them, "We've got a new mission, guys. We go guard the fat man's research facility. What we will do is mess up whatever he will be doing on the day that his important guests come."

"About time, boss. We are finally doing this," Embrek bellowed in joy.

Karesinda joined Embrek. "Yeah, right!"

"Well, That's all. Stay low and strike the base when I say so. Just mess around and I believe it will be all over."

Gallo's men chanted briefly in excitement. In the meantime, Gallo called Zafir to his room.

"What' up, boss?"

Leaning on a wall, Gallo said, "Well, you know the Gray mist's situation."

"Which situation?"

"Reduction of leaders," said Gallo promptly.

"And?" Zafir narrowed his eyes.

"After this mission, I am thinking maybe I should nominate you to be a new leader. I am pretty sure the old man will agree. You are a leader material. Maybe, better than me."

Zafir's face filled with excitement. "Are you sure, boss?"

"Have you seen me lying?"

Zafir shook his head.

"There you go then," Gallo beamed a grin at Zafir.

"Thank you, thank you!" Zafir, for the first time, bowed at Gallo, twice even.

Karma set up few small camps just outside of his research station, so that Gallo and his men could stay there.

Everyone was wearing an air mask due to far thinner atmosphere outside of the dome on the planet.

"It sucks. It's not like we are slaves," Embrek muttered. "We should be treated better than this."

"It's not so bad." Gallo pointed above. "Look above. It's pretty nice sight to watch."

Cyan had little atmosphere. The usable air was so thin that there was no sky and everything outside could be seen directly from the surface. The nebula provided sets of beautiful colors. It was as if watching aura on Earth, only far clearer and vibrant.

After a while, Zafir arrived at the camp. He approached Gallo and whispered to him.

"Are you sure?"

Zafir nodded. He just informed Gallo that the fatman, Karma's, specimen was a legendary being called Sae the little witch.

Gallo had read some about Sae the little witch from his e-books. She was a pupil of the Crimson wizard. He did not find much credibility of the crimson wizard's tales. But, if Sae the little witch did exist, then the crimson wizard could well have as well. Still, it was more of a distant interest than anything substantial to pursue.

Few hours later, Zafir rushed to report Gallo.

"Boss, an intruder's here. He has gotten into the station through a backdoor."

The research station was built underground and a ruin of a small city was above the facility. It was said that the previous Karma lived here.

"Boss!" Embrek called Gallo from afar. "The fat boss wants a word with you in person."

Karma was rubbing his hands nervously on a screen.

"I thought you had everything under control," A man on the screen said to Karma. He appeared to be of a high rank military personal, wearing a study black uniform. He clearly had more authority than Karma the third.

"Yes, of course, everything is under control." Karma was sweating.

"It does not appear so though. I must say I am disappointed in you and your ability." His voice was low and slow. It was as if he was trying to scare Karma.

"Recently, you asked us ten million. Where did that money go to?"

Karma did not reply but was simply had his head slightly down.

"I am not asking you a question. I am demanding an explanation," His voice raised and Karma turned pale.

"My men shall be there in few days. I strongly suggest you clean up your acts by then." He glared at Karma. "If you do not, you will no longer have my support."

"Yes, of course!" He lowered himself to the man repeatedly. "You will not be disappointed."

"I am already disappointed in you." The man said, and the communication went off.

"You called me?" Gallo entered Karma's office. As soon as he entered, Karma literally threw away a cash card on the floor. Gallo having near lightning reflex, he kicked it with his foot and caught it in air.

It was a cash card worth ten million.

"There, you have it," He grumbled for some reason. "The money for the job."

Gallo narrowed his eyes while staring at the cash card. "Right now?"

Karma shook his head. "No, after the current task." He seemed to be bothered by something else. Apparently, he was receiving a transmission through his chip implanted in his ear. He nodded once and then another.

"Someone is trying to enter the facility through its backdoor. Send your men and get rid him now!"

Gallo gave him a firm nod and left his office at once.

He was standing on roof of an abandoned building in the ruin above Karma's research facility. He was looking down at the said intruder who was being chased by Karma's mercenaries. He had no intention of following Karma's order anymore. His plan was already close to the end.

The intruder was running at nearly one hundred kilometer per hour. He was fast, but not fast enough for energy bullets. While he was running, he was shot many times in his back. But none seemed to be critical except one shot that went right through his abdomen.

"Ouch, that has to hurt," Gallo whispered to himself.

Even with such a wound that seemed to be critical enough for one to actually fall unconscious right away, he kept on running. He seemed to be more than just desperate. Gallo gazed at him vacantly and wondered what was making him go on. He also wondered what was making himself go on as well. What was he fueled of. What was he standing for. More directly, what was he fighting for.

He startled as he saw the intruder tumbled over. No mercenary was nearby. Therefore, he was safe for the time being, but he could see him bleeding badly.

"...Stand up," Gallo mumbled.

The intruder was there fallen still.

"I said, stand up," Gallo murmured.

As if answering Gallo, the intruder managed to stand up and started running again.

Gallo raised his right wrist toward his mouth.

"Zafir, do you copy?" He spoke to a bracelet.

"I copy. What is it, boss?" Zafir's distinct voice sounded from a hidden speaker inside of the bracelet.

"A small change of the plan. We attack the base today."

"Huh? That is not a small change, boss. That's huge," Zafir's voice indicated that he was obviously surprised. "Anyway! We can't attack right now. We have to be prepared."

"Well, I am not asking to launch the attack right now. How many hours do you need?"

"Three hours at least, boss," Zafir replied after a moment.

"Fine, I will sneak into the facility. So, don't call me. I don't want the channel to be detected. Whenever you are ready, just launch the attack and I will join you."

"Okay, boss, see you then." Then the channel was closed.

While he was conversing with Zafir, his eyes were on the intruder. By the time he was finished with the communication, the intruder was above a manhole. He took

out some kind of device but his device was shot and it exploded as it hit ground.

The intruder, then, opened the manhole and rushed into there.

“Good luck, dude...” Gallo threw a casual salute before walking away.

It was easy for Gallo to sneak into the facility because attention was being drawn at the intruder. He found himself a nice shadowed corner and hid himself there.

He, then, took out a communication hacking device and began to interfere signals within the place.

He picked up many conversations. But none of them seemed to be related to the intruder. Grumbling, he made sure no one was around again and closed his eyes to take a short nap.

A group of men was passing down and were having a conversation.

"The intruder appears to be heading to the storage area," A voice said.

"We are going to perform rehearsal of important tests. You must keep the intruder out of the core area. Do what you must," Another voice replied to the previous voice.

"I will do what I can. But let me be one to tell you that it isn't easy to chase him in this facility. Too many restrictions are there."

"Just do the job. Where do you think he is doing anyway? Any clue?"

“The deepest floor 15B is my guess. He’s clearly descending.”

Bingo

Once they were gone, Gallo made his way to 15B which was a piece of cake given the chaos created by the intruder.

He silently waited at the entrance of 15B for the intruder to show up. While there was no guarantee that he'd make it this far, he was feeling confident.

And indeed eventually a crippled man showed up. Gallo knew immediately that it was the intruder.

"Damn, it's cold here," The intruder muttered while groaning in pain.

"Hi." Gallo casually walked toward him and greeted him.

The intruder clearly startled. Regardless, he greeted back.

"Hi."

"Sorry, nothing personal." Having said so, Gallo draw out an energy blade and activated it. "You cannot go further." Normally, he'd use guns but figured he'd go for melee this round. He barely knew swordsmanship. Therefore, using a sword against trained opponents was suicide. Against a heavily crippled opponent though? It was worth a shot.

The intruder drew out his blade as well. "And I must go further."

After momentarily glaring at each other, they dashed toward each other. Upon just first clash, however, the intruder coughed hard and started to bleed from his mouth. Additionally, he struggled to keep his pose afterwards.

“Dude, just turn back. You ain’t gonna make it,” Gallo warned him. “Killing a crippled man makes me feel inadequate.”

The intruder was going to be no match for him despite of little swordsmanship Gallo knew. He was just too crippled to begin with.

Wiping out blood from his mouth, the intruder responded, “I don’t have any place to return to. The world is going to Hell and I am on a critical mission.”

“Dude, you talk as if you are here to save mankind.”

It was a joke. However, the intruder seemed struck back as if he hit the jackpot.

“... For real?”

The intruder was clearly reluctant to open up but he eventually did after a short moment of consideration.

“I don’t know to be honest. The answer lies with someone on this floor, I believe.”

“Who are you talking about?”

“I cannot tell you. Can you just let me go?”

Gallo wasn’t certainly going to kill him. An enemy of an enemy would be a friend.

However, in this case, it went further than that. Having observed him, he felt whatever the intruder’s goal was, it was for the good.

It was this moment that he noticed that the intruder’s blade was blinking faintly; he was malfunctioning.

All that credit spent for god damn nothing.

Then he threw the blade to the intruder.

Catching it, he uttered, "What?"

"You didn't notice? Your blade lens is shattered. It's malfunctioning. Take mine. I am just not good with a blade."

Then turning around at once, he walked away and left the zone.

He no longer had any intention to stay any longer. While he was heading out of the place, his device picked up few disorganized voices.

"We are under attack! They appeared out of nowhere."

Gallo snickered as he heard them.

"Hold them off," It was Karma's voice. He sounded desperate. "I cannot be bothered right now! This is what you are being paid for!"

Karma was in the heart of his facility. He was looking at a capsule in the middle which was confining his specimen.

There were several men in white coat whose fingers were busy handling their jobs in front of consoles. The specimen ... appeared to be a small girl. She was floating in light green liquid. The capsule was standing vertically in middle of the room, supported by metal bends on bottom. Karma was not far from the capsule and was staring at the specimen.

"Sir, all is green. Should I pressurize the capsule?" One of the men in white coat asked.

Karma nodded.

"Increasing pressure. Recording the readings now," He replied.

Soon enough, the specimen's bones began to make cracking sound. It was loud enough for everyone in the room to hear. Then, the specimen's figure began to be crushed and withered. It didn't take long for the specimen's figure to look no longer a human. Her arms were in pieces and her legs were bent in a way that would not be possible under normal circumstances. The only piece of the specimen that remained intact was her head.

"Detecting no bleeding. In fact, there appears to be no blood at all. No heart beat. But I am still detecting weak brain waves. It is still alive," He reported.

"I've told you... It is an invincible being...," Karma whispered to himself. No one heard his voice.

A small mechanical arm expanded itself from top of the capsule.

"Taking a flesh sample now..." A man was controlling the mechanical arm with two joysticks. "Took a sample from her shoulder."

"How long will it take to get it analyzed fully?" Karma asked, turning around to leave the room.

"First, we will need to lower the temperature of this facility to near zero as its flesh seems to ... vapor away in average temperature," He said so while stilling controlling the mechanical arm.

"Then perhaps a full day to get it analyzed. Though we've never been successful at it."

"I don't care how. Just get it done somehow."

"Easy for you to say...", He mumbled.

Karma the first established a small settlement on Cyan around year of 98xx. No one knew why she settled down an abandoned planet and established a settlement there.

All Cyan had copper, which was more than common material. It didn't sell at all. But Cyan was located between edge of the Nebula and normal space. Therefore, she did her best to establish trade routes. It did work, but not too greatly. When Karma the first died of age, Cyan was running fairly stable.

Karma the second followed her mother's ideal. She was a clone of Karma the first. But Karma the first addressed her as her daughter. She married a merchant on Cyan and that was how Karma the third was born.

When Karma the third took over Cyan, he was already sick of the planet. Population was few. Vigor seen from big communities was not found on Cyan. In other words, it was a boring planet for him. But Cyan was officially Karma's property. Thus, he couldn't dare abandoning the planet.

Then..., it happened. He located something strange not too deep underneath surface. It was a humanoid creature, a small-figured girl to be more precise. He later found out that she was once called Sae the little witch. He also happened to find information about an interesting project called 'Immortality'.

It was initiated by General Wong of Andromeda union. After his death, it was, then, lost ever since. The study was there in Karma's database. He didn't know how it had gotten there. All he knew was that he finally found something interesting in his life.

However, it cost him money. Cyan's income was barely green. After building a research facility around his specimen and then hiring a bunch of scientists and mercenaries to protect his little project, Cyan's income became plain red. He had to raise tax. Even then, he needed more money. And that was when the Blackbirds approached him. They promised him money in return of information on his project. It sounded all good at first. But the more they gave him money, the more demands they began to make. At one point, the Blackbirds showed intention of taking over Karma's entire project. He was losing choices. His only chance was achieving something useful. He thought he was getting closer. Then Gallo offered his service to him.

An urgent report came through a speaker.

"We can't hold! The barracks have already been overrun by those intruders!"

Karma twitched his eyebrows. He thought he was almost there. At least, he thought so.

"They are heading over toward generators!" Then the channel suddenly died. One by one, the scientists in the room slowly backed off and ran out of the room.

"Hey, stop!" Karma bellowed. But that didn't stop anyone. In the end, even the head scientist ran away. At the same time, light went out and was replaced by red emergency light. While grinding his teeth, he noticed that the master disk for his study was gone. One of the scientist must have taken it.

"Arrrrrrggggggh !!" He bellowed with anger.

Karma began to have a weird feeling from that moment. He had a gut feeling that he'd be killed soon. But, even so, he had to do what he had to do. He immediately left the facility and came back with remaining mercenaries who were stationed at the city. When he became back to the experiment room, he saw an intruder with an energy blade. He was about to strike the blade on the capsule.

Karma quickly pointed at him and shouted, "Kill him!"

His mercenaries mercilessly fired at the intruder. He was hit so many times that no one knew how many times he was hit. But he still managed to swing his blade upon the capsule before he fell and dropped his blade. His blade deactivated itself as it hit the ground.

Perhaps, it was because of the shooting, the capsule began to crack gradually. Its light green liquid began to leak from here and there. Most importantly, Karma saw the specimen twitch a little. It was moving.

"Shoot the specimen! Kill it!" Karma ordered his mercenaries again. The capsule was completely broken and shattered after another round of shooting, but the specimen remained unharmed.

"What the fuck..." The mercenaries took few steps backwards. "A monster..."

The specimen was floating peacefully in air, and then it opened its eyes at once and slowly raised its head toward Karma and his men.

Though the specimen had a small figure of a girl, her eyes beamed merciless hostility. Her body slowly landed on ground. Then all they saw was her jerking one of her arms. And then mercenaries on front fell, bleeding from their chests. Before the other mercenaries could react, another batch fell and then another. Karma turned around and ran away and so did the others.

They waited... for hours. Gallo's operation was pretty much over. All he had to do was kill Karma. Whatever happened in the facility, he didn't know. But what he did know was that most of Karma's mercenaries went into the facility were gone since their bio-signatures vanished. They didn't know what happened. What they did know was that it was their chance.

A small figure emerged from the facility's main entrance. Gallo somehow instinctually knew it was Sae the witch. It wasn't just a hunch, either. He was feeling a very strange aura off the figure. He had never felt such an aura before from anyone, not even from the weirdest person he thought he knew, the old man. He took few steps forward and noticed the small figure was a girl and was completely naked. Though she was wearing what appeared to be a man's jacket. The jacket was actually too large for her and wasn't covering anything.

"Greetings..., would you mind wearing pants?" Gallo carefully spoke to her once in range.

She looked down on herself and looked back at Gallo.

"I don't have any spare pants. Give me a pair," She responded casually.

He certainly wasn't going to take his pants off. Instead, he took off his coat and handed it over.

"This should be big enough for you to cover everything."

Length of the coat was much taller than her. Thus, it did over her entire body although she looked ridiculous at this point. Regardless, she didn't seem to care much. "Indeed. Now, who are you?"

"We are the Gray mist. We've been watching over Karma the third's research base."

"No, I asked who you are."

Despite of her small physique, her voice was commanding and her aura was imposing. In short, she was a scary figure.

"My name is Gallo, ma'am," He answered earnestly.

Sae realized he was being very polite to her. "Do you know who I am?"

"One of the legendary class S people, Sae, aren't you?"

She snickered and folded her arms. "So, you know who I am. Now what do you want?"

"We, the Gray mist, ask for your assistance," Gallo had no idea why he was saying so. The Gray mist didn't need her help or whatsoever. But some unknown force seemed to be driving him.

"Before that, I want to know what is happening. Apparently, someone asked me to save the mankind."

Gallo gulped; he had a strong hunch on who it was. "Is he alive?"

"No, he's dead," Sae replied promptly.

"I see....," He lowered his tone and repeated again. "I see...."

Gallo suggested Sae to come with him. However, Sae refused Gallo's offer.

"We really need your help," He insisted.

It wasn't a part of the old man's plan. But, Gallo's thinking was that, since Sae the witch was what he had read from ebooks, she was one of the most strongest ESPes in the history. If she could provide help, he believed that the matters that CoR and the Gray mist were facing could be solved much easier.

However, Sae's age wasn't just something to show off. She had literally boundless experience under her belt. She knew well that she would be used as a solution for

their political matters. After some thinking though, she seemed to have convinced herself.

"Fine, I will listen to what you have to say."

"I will take you to our clan leader. He will be able to explain far better than I can."

Sae snorted and said, "Whatever."

Gallo, Sae, and his men reached Cyan's only port. It was literally empty. No guards was there even.

Zafir returned after scouting the port.

"Boss, there are few fighters, but they require passwords. The only ships we can launch right now are transports."

Gallo made a troubled face. "I suppose the transports will be much slower than fighters?"

"Twenty one days to reach CoR with fighters. Two full month to reach the same destination with a transport," Zafir replied.

"What should we do, Boss?" Embrek asked.

"We will be defenseless if we use a transport. But have a transport ready to launch anyway just in case. I will go to Karma's hideout and finish him. That should get me the password required for fighters," Gallo said.

"You speak as if you are going alone," Embrek said and Gallo nodded.

"You can't be serious? Who knows how many guards he may have left?"

"You guys just make sure the port is still ours when I return," Waving his hand to his men, Gallo turned around and left the port.

Karma had over seven hundred mercenaries. However, most of them were either lost or killed in the research facility. Only very few were left in his hideout. Still as usual, two were standing guard on main entrance. Gallo walked straight to them.

"You are no longer welcome here!" They bellowed as they raised their firearms and Gallo talked back.

"Oh, yeah?" Answering them, he rose his pistol and simply shot them. Two clear shots were fired and they were killed. Sneering at the dead bodies, Gallo entered Karma's hideout.

Karma's hideout was located in eastern side of the city. His hideout resembled of a simplified castle with walls around and a tower in it. Few smaller buildings were around the tower. Karma's office was located on top of the tower. The whole place seemed rather empty and dead. Not a soul was seen until Gallo entered the tower. A receptionist was there behind a counter. Gallo aimed his pistol at the woman without hesitation and shot her in the head at once.

He wasn't someone who'd go easy on women just because of their gender. To him, all enemy was equal even if they were children.

The Gray mist, in general, shared the same mentality.

Gallo was standing in front of an antique dark brown wooden door. He inhaled silently and had his pistol ready in his hand. He felt two presences in his office. But it was a little different feeling compared to previous times because he felt two

clear presences. He always felt one hidden presence plus Karma's presence. This time, there was no hidden presence.

Kicking the door violently, he stuck out his arm with his pistol and did not hesitate to shoot a figure behind Karma's desk. It happened so fast that Gallo wasn't even sure that it was Karma himself. He simply believed in his instinct.

An energy discharge occurred in the room, followed by an impact sound soon after.

Blood was pouring out of Karma's chest. His wound was near his heart. Gallo frowned. He missed. He meant to shoot his heart. Karma groaned painfully in his chair. His guardian, the ESP Gallo met from the other night, was standing next to him. It appeared that he did not try to protect Karma.

"God ..., damn", Karma talked in a labored breath. "So..., this is ... it ..."

Gallo still had his pistol aimed at Karma. Without hesitation, he shot another blast at Karma. This time, an energy blast went through his left shoulder and exploded as it hit the black leather chair.

Karma coughed blood and continued to groan painfully.

"So..., this was what you came for in the first place?" Despite of his physical condition and situation, his voice remained calm.

However, Gallo did not answer. He was simply looking at Karma with his pistol aimed at him.

"Answer... me...!" He coughed blood as he spoke. Meanwhile, he was looking for something desperately with his remaining arm on the desk. But his right hand soon exploded with an energy blast. It was Gallo. Pellets of blood and flesh splattered across the desk.

"That is enough." The ESP looked away to avoid the gore scene. "You've done enough, Gallo."

Karma laughed indifferently. "It doesn't matter now. I've lost everything. The specimen is lost. The blackbird will want to get back their investment."

He, then, glared at Gallo. "That means, even if you kill me today, you won't have Cyan. It's all about legality," He claimed.

"That means," Gallo snorted. "Your existence won't matter either way."

Ultimately, Gallo was correct.

Breathing heavily in labor, Karma asked, "Do you have a dream?"

Gallo didn't answer and Karma asked again, "Do you have a dream?"

The ESP was standing still and had his eyes closed as if he had given up on everything.

"No, and I don't care," Gallo replied firmly.

"I had a vision," Karma's eyes seemed to be losing sign of life slowly. "And I will let you carry on my dream."

Gallo snorted as a reply. "Like I would accept your dream."

"You may as well," Karma glanced at the ESP. He nodded and picked up a disk from floor. It was flown away when Karma's hand exploded.

Gallo's aim moved to the ESP.

"I mean no harm," said the ESP. "Let the dying man do what he wants."

And then, finally, Gallo lowered his pistol. "Fine," He said.

The ESP exhaled after finally receiving Gallo's approval. He inserted the small cartridge disk into a display. The display seemed to have been a holographic player. It began to morph surroundings and turned the whole office into a rain forest.

Animals that Gallo had never seen was running around. Dark and sturdy trees surrounded him with high density air and sunshine. Though, due to nature of holographic, there was no smell.

"What is this?" Looking around, Gallo asked.

"It is called a rain forest," said Karma. "And this is my dream."

"Huh?" Confusion struck Gallo.

"My dream was to turn Cyan into a terran planet." Then he laughed and said, "No, it has been Karma the first's dream. My mother wanted to continue and so did I."

Whatever he was saying seemed indeed interesting. "Go on," Gallo said.

Karma's explanation was rather simple.

When Karma the first settled down on Cyan, her goal was to turn Cyan into a terran planet. It was known to be impossible with technology of her time. But she settled down on Cyan anyway. Since then, Karma the first had been investing

every penny of her income into developing technologies needed to turn Cyan into a terran planet. Apparently, she wasn't successfully within her life time. Then her clone carried on her dream.

"I think my mother's mistake was marrying my father. She should have just cloned herself," Grinning sarcastically, Karma said, "I guess, when the blood was mixed, quality of gene must have gotten a lot worse."

"Do you have this technology?" Gallo asked curiously.

In a heavy labor, Karma nodded. Sweats dropped from his forehead as he lowered his head.

"It is almost completed. I've never invested a penny into it though. But my grandmother and mother completed most of core technologies."

Karma covered his mouth and started to cough violently. Blood dripped out of his mouth afterwards and he was panting hard.

The ESP continued on his behalf.

"Although most of needed technologies are complete, it is only a beginning. Cost of initiating this development... will cost more than a fortune," He said.

"I am...," Karma narrowed his eyes and looked at Gallo. "Not good enough... You will carry on..."

Gallo sneered disrespectfully. But Karma kept on looking at him. Eventually, their eyes met and moments of dense silence lasted few seconds. The silence last until he noticed that there was no more sign of life in Karma's eyes. He approached Karma desk to check on him. He was dead.

"What are you going to do now?" Gallo turned his attention to the ESP.

"Though I've disliked him until very recent, it seems I've mistaken him a bit. Or perhaps, Karma's gene was awakened during his last moments." Then he shook his head in disgust.

"Whether he was a good man or not, there is still a need for his body." Saying so, Gallo grabbed Karma's body by his collar and began to drag him out of his office.

"What are you doing?" The ESP raised his voice.

Without answering, Gallo kept on dragging Karma's body. He dragged his body all the way to the first floor and until he reached the main gate. A crowd was gathered at up the gate. They must have noticed something was going on. They noticed Gallo and Karma. It didn't take long to realize that Karma was dead.

Gallo stopped right at the gate.

"Karma's dead," He declared aloud. Then, he lifted the body and threw the body into the crowd. Screaming, some of them desperately tried to dodge the bloody body coming right at them.

"He's really dead...," One of them said. Following by his statement, the crowd began to murmur.

"He's really dead!" They shouted and began to hit Karma's dead body. Their violence went out of control. Karma's dead body was being beaten up so violently that his face was beyond recognition and his arms fell off his shoulders.

The ESP stood next to Gallo who was still at the gate, watching them have a go at Karma's body.

"So, this is the price he has to pay," he said and Gallo nodded.

"So be it," He sighed "Where do you think consciousness goes after death?"

"Who knows," Gallo shrugged. "As far as I know, consciousness simply ends when you die."

The ESP began to touch his neck softly. His fingers paused at his larynx area where his fingers seemed to have grabbed something underneath his skin. Without hesitation, his fingers simply pulled something out of his neck. Gallo didn't notice what was going on until he sensed a scent of blood nearby.

"What in the world are you doing?!" Gallo quickly grabbed his wrist. Something was in his hand. It was covered with blood. But he was able to make out that it was a small device.

"Ah, this feels much better," He.. waved his short hair. His ... voice was too high for a male.

"Huh?" Twisting his head, Gallo asked, "What happened to your voice?"

The ESP faced Gallo. Her wound on neck was healing already. Grabbed what appeared to be a prosthetic face off his..., err, her face, she struck out her bloody hand for a handshake.

"Naliss at your service."

It turned out that the ESP was a young woman named Naliss. She hid her gender and appearance for safety reasons.

She was willing to join Gallo. But she wasn't willing to join the Gray mist.

Therefore, Gallo refused her. However she offered something that Gallo could not refuse.

"Karma the third gave me the master password to his vault and database. I believe I have what you need," She said, spotting a crooked grin on her face.

Gallo was left with no other choice. He had to change his plans. He called up his men at the port to Karma's castle. Embrek, Karesinda and Zafir gathered up in the office which was once Karma's not so long ago.

The desk was drenched with blood. But Gallo didn't seem to mind. He carelessly sat on edge of the desk. Clapping his hands to gather attention, he cleared his throat.

"We have a situation. With Karma dead, the Blackbirds will want to claim this planet," He said rather joyfully. "Fortunately, we have someone who is willing to assist us."

Naliss was standing right next to the desk.

"I've been accessing Karma's database. It's in excellent condition. It has records even from late universal time," Naliss claimed.

Late universal time meant years before ten thousand. (~ A.D. 9999)

"Hey...," Gallo sighed. "Get to the topic, bitch."

Glaring at Gallo for a short moment, she pouted.

According to Naliss, the Blackbirds wanted two things. Their prime object was to transfer Cyan legally to them. The other was obtaining information about the crimson wizard. To be more precise, nature of the Crimson wizard who was believed to be immortal. Naliss, according to Karma's database, believed that the Blackbirds may have obtained the latter.

"So, what are we going to now?" Embrek, looking bored, inquired.

"We must build defenses on Cyan," Naliss replied firmly.

"That's easy to be said than done," Zafir scoffed at Naliss. "The whole Gray mist is barely above two hundred now. And how many do we have here? We are not even forty. Now we are talking about defending a whole freaking planet."

"But you did manage to get rid of Karma who had more than one thousand mercenaries," Naliss argued.

"That's because of the little witch," Gallo claimed. "She did it."

"Then you must use her," Naliss said.

"You can't use her," Gallo laughed weakly. "She is no fool, I bet. Where is she now?"

"She is sleeping in a transport, boss," Embrek replied.

"Her mentor was the crimson wizard...," Gallo mumbled. But everyone in the office could hear him clearly.

"You sound afraid, boss," Karesinda said sarcastically.

"Yes, I am."

His answer was so straight that Karesinda couldn't reply back.

"Naliss," Gallo called her softly. "You said the database goes way back to late universal time."

Naliss nodded.

"Then do you also have access to information about the crimson wizard and the little witch?"

Naliss nodded again but slower this time.

Gallo paused for a moment, gazing into air. He, then, asked Naliss.

"Is Karma's database unique?"

"As far as I can see, his database was built by Karma the first. So, the database is independent. It should be unique compared to what we have now."

Gallo had a mysterious grin on his face. "Then, perhaps, you know what I am talking about," He said.

Naliss cleared her throat. "Anyway," She changed subject. "If your clan or whatever needs this planet, actions must be taken."

"We must return to CoR," Gallo said firmly. "We have no other choice. But I will leave you in charge while I am gone."

Naliss pointed at herself. "Me?"

Gallo gave her a nod. "Well, and I will leave Zafir in charge as well. Take fifteen men off my team. I know this is going to be hard. But just try to keep public security intact."

"Boss," Zafir sighed. "It is impossible to do that with only fifteen men. I mean we are talking about a whole city here."

"Karma is dead and everyone will know the news soon. Outside influence will soon reach here," Naliss added.

"We have no other choice, like I said," Gallo said. "I said it is going to be hard."

Zafir and Naliss were left with no other choice, it seemed.

"But don't worry. We will make it through," Gallo's voice was assuring somehow, giving them a sense of confidence.

Zafir laughed weakly as if he had given up.

"Fine, boss," He shrugged. "We will manage somehow."

Naliss put her hand on her waist. "I guess there is no other choice then," She said, sighing.

"Give me passwords for fighters. We must take off," He said to Naliss. "But before that..."

Naliss seemed to have understood Gallo.

Clapping his hand twice, Gallo stood up from his desk. "Okay, guys, I need help here."

"Huh?" Everyone in the office seemed to be confused except Naliss.

"I will need towels. Big towels, big enough to cover an entire body," He said. "How many will I need?"

"Sixteen," Naliss replied.

"What's going on?" It was Zafir who said it.

"Just bring them now and you will see," Gallo's hand reached underneath of the desk and pressed a button. With mechanical gearing sound, a shelf on a wall began to turn around.

"What's this? A secret passageway?" Karesinda approached the dark gloomy stairs.

"You will know soon enough. Be prepared to be either shocked or joyful." Tapping Karesinda's shoulder, Gallo passed her.

"Follow me in," He said to the others behind him.

It was long stairway. When they were half way through, Karesinda and Fionn sensed the disgusting smell. Zafir was away for getting towels.

"What's this smell?" Karesinda complained.

"Just follow me, woman," Gallo grumbled in response.

Once they reached the basement, it didn't take long for Karesinda and Embrek to realize what was going on.

"That fatman was a pervert. What a pervert," Karesinda muttered.

"So, he was into bondage. This is hardcore stuff," Embrek was looking into one of the cells.

Zafir soon arrived with a bunch of towels on both of his arms.

"What the hell?" was his words.

Cell doors were locked and Naliss didn't seem to have a password for its locks.

Because the locks were old-fashioned, it required keys rather. Gallo simply had to

break each door by kicking. Since he was a class A hyper human, he was able to deliver few tons of raw force with high speed kicking. Embrek and Karesinda whistled as they watched Gallo's more-than-powerful kicks.

When Gallo dented the first door enough for a person to pass, Naliss squeezed into the first cell.

"I see two women here. I do not sense any kind of brain wave from both of them. They are dead." After saying so, she came out of the cell.

"Zafir, cover their bodies with towels and get them out of here now," Gallo ordered him.

Nodding quietly, Zafir took two towels and passed the rest of towels to Embrek and Karesinda. Then, he squeezed into the cell.

While Zafir was at it, Gallo moved to next door. It was also shut. Gallo repeated what he did to the first door and dented just enough for Naliss to pass through.

"There are also two here. One's dead. The other's alive but barely."

Responding to Naliss, Embrek entered the cell, leaving all but taking two towels with him.

By the time, Karesinda had to enter a cell, Zafir had already returned.

"I've put them down in the lobby for now," He reported.

They repeated the process until the last door.

"Erune should be behind this door," Naliss whispered to Gallo.

Gallo gave Naliss a nod.

He stood right in front of the metal door. He stared at it momentarily before he took a deep inhale and held his breath in.

His kick, this time, was even faster and more deadly. In fact, he kicked the door so fast and so hard that no one else could see his foot until it set itself on ground again.

This time, the door was dented beyond recognition unlike previous attempts so that the cell was revealed to everyone.

As expected, Erune was there, lying on floor naked. Another naked woman was hung on a wall by chains.

Naliss approached them and scanned their bodies with her ESP.

"Both are alive," She said. "Erune was the latest one to be dragged into this place. So, I suppose she has the highest chance for full recovery."

Nodding once at Naliss, Gallo turned around.

"Get them to the lobby," He said and then he began to walk out of the place.

All sixteen women were laid in the lobby. Each one of them was covered with white towels to cover their nudity. Four were brain dead. Nine had their brain severely damaged from overdose. Only three, including Erune, were expected for full recovery due to shorter periods of overdose.

"I will do my best to try to heal them," Naliss said. "But with such low class medical equipment available on Cyan, don't expect excellent results."

"Don't do your best," Gallo's words were unexpected. "Do what you can."

Naliss didn't really understand what Gallo meant. But she gave him a nod anyway.

Zafir and Naliss were watching Gallo and his men took off the port of Cyan.

"Do you have any plans?" While watching the fighters in the sky, Zafir asked.

"The tax must be lowered. I am going to lower it to eight percentage," she replied.

"And then?"

Naliss didn't reply.

Originally, Gallo planned to take a transport with him. But, with time being short

on him, he only took fighters. Sae stayed in Gallo's fighter until he reached CoR.

She had slept through the whole journey.

They successfully docked at CoR's orbit ring.

Gallo and his men gathered at a spot. Sae was among them, rubbing her sleepy eyes. Her actions resembled that of a kid rather than the legendary witch she was more known for.

"So, we are here," Gallo said. He pointed at three men. "You, you and you, go back to the Gray mist station and inform the old man now."

The three men nodded and quickly left the group.

"Now, let's go find a warden."

Gallo hoped to meet Dacre. He was a warden. Gallo believed that he could trust him. But he was nowhere to be found. Not only that he learned that Dacre left Claw of the Ra. He was actually shocked to hear this.

In the end, Gallo took Sae to a warden who was available. He was ordered to stay on guard while the warden would talk to her.

It had taken roughly an hour before Sae would leave the room. Gallo was standing by the door.

"How did it go?" He wouldn't care for results. He only brought the witch to CoR to avoid possible troubles that she might cause.

"No answer yet. By the way, do you have a pen and a paper?"

"What are those?" Gallo asked.

"Huh?" Sae raised her voice. "You don't know what a pen and a paper are?"

Gallo shook his head innocently.

Sae sighed. "Do you at least have something I can write on? I don't have brain implants like you dorks."

Gallo shook his head again.

Sae sagged her shoulders. "Whatever. I need to get me some materials. I will say what material and I hope you can remember all those."

Gallo nodded. "I am ready."

Sae told Gallo about fourteen kind of materials. Gallo nodded repeatedly as she went on.

Some materials she was asking were common minerals. On the other hand, some materials she was asking, Gallo didn't have any idea of.

"I will see what I can do. What are those materials for anyway?"

"To repair an energy blade I found back at the facility," Sae replied him firmly.

"Could I see it?"

Sae took out Alucasa's blade from his battle jacket that she was carrying.

Gallo was staring at it. It was his. He gave it to the intruder. But he didn't show any change in tone and asked, "I see. Can you repair it?"

Sae chuckled, "Not just repair, I will make this blade one of its kind. I already have a name for it."

"What is it?"

"Alucasa." She declared.

"That's a strange name. What is it from?"

"I think it's actually the name of the holder."

"I see..."

Gallo immediately returned to the Gray mist station after he let Sae leave. She claimed that she needed to go somewhere to gather further materials and he was never going to stop her. It'd be suicidal to attempt to stop Sae the little witch anyway if her past reputation was anything to go by.

The first one to have noticed Gallo's return was Yudai. She was at the docking bay when Gallo and his men's fighters landed.

"You are back," She said indifferently.

Pretty much ignoring her, Gallo gave her a brief nod while passing her.

"Wait."

Yudai called up Gallo indifferently and Gallo paused and slowly turned around to face her.

"What is it?"

Yudai didn't answer. Instead, her arm jerked. Something was thrown. It was a small handbook when Gallo caught it. The book appeared to be worn out greatly. Pages had turned yellow.

"What is this?"

"Read it. Understand it. Make it yours. I will give you a test soon enough," she said. Then she turned away from Gallo and resumed what she was doing.

"Hmph," Sneering, Gallo, too, ignored her and continued his way to meet the old man.

"Gallo, my child," The old man greeted him the usual way except his voice sounded less cheerful.

"I've returned, sir."

"Have you brought good news?"

Gallo told the old man what had happened on Cyan in detail without hiding anything. He even informed him of Naliss and Erune and that currently Naliss and Zafir were in charge of looking after the planet. And that he brought Sae the witch to a warden. He also requested the old man to promote Zafir to the 7th leader.

"Are you sure you want to promote Zafir?"

The old man's words were unexpected for Gallo. He didn't expect that he'd bring up Zafir's issue rather than what seemed to be more important at the moment.

"I do not believe he has the quality." The old man continued. "But if you say so."

"We need more men at Cyan as soon as possible, sir."

The old man wandered around his chamber in a slow tempo.

"Is something wrong, sir?" Gallo asked.

"If we relocate now, CoR will make their move. They are very sensitive right now after an incident," He said.

"An incident?"

It turned out that a warden class general had recently betrayed CoR. His name was Dacre, the old man said.

"I know him a little, sir."

"Is that so?"

"Yudai seems to know him much better though." Gallo sighed. "It's simply getting worse, isn't it, sir."

"If the Nomads and the Blackbirds declare war on CoR, it will be a good chance for us to relocate."

"Was I wise to have brought the witch to CoR?"

The old man beamed a big grin on him but didn't reply with a statement. Then, Gallo was dismissed for the moment. While wandering around the station, he

noticed that his coat smelled. Realizing how long it had been since the last time he had it dry-cleaned, he left it at a cleaner and went to his quarter.

There was a thin layer of dust on his desk in his quarter. Even heavily air-filtered environment in space contained considerable dust. Regardless, he was home.

“Home, sweet home.”

Yawning, he jumped onto the bed and took out the worn out book given by Yudai. He glanced over the book. It did not have a title on its covers. He opened what appeared to be front cover. He was bombard with a long list of words. It was table of content.

"What the...." Gallo grumbled. "Chapter one..., how to breath... Chapter two..., how to walk?"

He closed the book immediately. "Give me a break," He laughed weakly. Then, after throwing the book away, he shut his eyes for a nap.

The old tales of the crimson wizard as well as other class S people were hard to believe. Other notable people were Juun the white knight and Eran Gro the black knight. People claimed the two knights could run at the speed of light and could lift hundreds of tons in one hand. The tales note that the three had a fight once. It was Cecil versus the two knights. It was said that a whole city was vaporized in the end.

Tales regarding Sae weren't pretty, either. She was apparently regarded as a mad bitch who'd kill people for pure entertainment.

But there was one thing in common for all those unbelievable tales. It was that they were all so ... powerful. Their capabilities were beyond simple comprehension which made Gallo skeptical of the whole stories.

When he woke up from his nap, few hours had passed. With some rest he got, it was time to do the favor for Sae. He rushed to the quartermaster of the Gray mist station after taking a shower.

His name was Ghahin. He had been the quartermaster of the Gray Mist for pretty much his entire life. Gallo told him the list that Sae told him.

It took an hour but Ghahin prepared materials in a reinforced backpack. "There you go," He tried to slide the backpack. But it wouldn't move. "This thing is too heavy for me."

Gallo lifted the backpack. It was weighting more than a ton, which was the reason that he put materials in a reinforced bag.

"Thanks. I owe you one." Gallo turned around and left cargo bay.

Gallo immediately headed to the dock of CoR orbit ring. Sae was waiting there.

"Sorry for keeping you wait."

Sae giggled like a child and said, "No problem. I've been wandering around a little bit. A lot have changed, I see."

Gallo handed the backpack over to her and she grabbed it with ease.

"Thanks."

That's all she said before she disappeared into a transport. Gallo didn't bother to stop her. He simply didn't want to get involved into her affairs. When he turned around to leave the dock, he was confronted with a group of guards.

"You are Gallo, correct?" One of them asked. His uniform had the marking of Wardens.

Gallo's tone was already hostile. "What if I am?"

"I believe you had connections with Dacre?"

"I had known him briefly. That was all," He replied.

The guards surrounded Gallo and the Warden pulled out a stun baton.

"I advise you to come with us," He demanded.

Laughing out loud at once, Gallo gave a strong punch into the Warden's face and he was knocked down.

"Don't joke, stupid," Gallo sneered at the warden who was down and bleeding from his nose.

"Get him!" The warden shouted.

They seemed to have wanted to capture Gallo. They pulled out stun batons and approached him fast. Without hesitation, he drew out his pistol and shot one by one in head. People screamed as they heard gun shooting and much bleeding.

"Are you insane?!" The warden shouted while being pale. "We had no intention to harm you!"

"Fuck you," Gallo sneered. He then shot the warden in the head as well.

A bunch of guards were coming from all directions. Gallo rushed to enter his fighter, but his path was soon blocked by countless guards with guns pointed at him.

"Fine, arrest me," Gallo rose his arms to surrender.

It had been few days since Gallo was arrested. He had been interrogated by another warden. They didn't seem to care for the death of the other warden. Instead, they were rather desperate in trying to get some information regarding Dacre's whereabouts.

Of course, Gallo did not have info they wanted.

Few more days passed, Gallo was locked in a sealed room where even no light was allowed. Suddenly, door to outside was opened.

"We will get you out if you assist us," The guard said.

"Whatever."

"Is that yes or no?"

It seemed Sae the witch had been to the Blackbirds and she had just returned. It seemed that CoR wanted Gallo's assistance in getting rid of her. Gallo had no

intention to harm Sae. In fact, he wasn't even sure that he could be a match to her. But it was a good opportunity to get out. Thus, he accepted. He was ordered to follow a warden and his large group of guards.

They headed to docking bay. Sae was there.

"I see that you are back," The warden didn't sound to be pleasant. His voice contained hostility.

She looked around while she was being surrounded.

"You came back from Blackbirds. What business did you have?" He demanded.

Sae shrugged, "I was not allowed to go there?"

"Enemy's friend is our foe," He drew out his pistol.

"What makes you think I am your enemy's friend?"

"Because you went there."

Sae laughed hysterically and said, "What a fucking fool."

As her figure blurred momentarily. Warden's gun was in Sae's hand. She aimed the gun at Warden himself, "You do not deserve whatever rank you have." And shot him in the head. Warden was killed instantly.

Gallo could not see her movement. He couldn't even see her mirage. Sae's speed was beyond his capability. Daring to fight her would a foolish act. He quietly watched Sae massacre the warden's guards.

When every single guard became nothing more than flesh pieces, Sae confronted Gallo who was a short distance away.

"Why did you not attack me?" She asked with a cold grin on her face.

"Because I value my life."

Sae giggled brightly and remarked. "Smart boys always live longer." She turned around and walked toward the port, "Well, at least your instinct is functional. Do not forget that feeling. Adios muchacho."

"Adio... what?" Gallo had absolutely no idea what she just said. Regardless, he had to ask, "Where are you going? You could come with me."

She turned around to face Gallo.

"I could help but I must not. I am no longer a part of this world. I will, however, lend you a hand."

She reached out her backpack and threw something to Gallo. He tried to catch it, but it just slid right out of his hand, making huge crashing sound as it embedded itself into metal platform.

She snickered. "It weights few tons."

Gallo managed to pick it up on his next attempt. It felt very heavy in his hand but felt very solid at the same time. It was as if the blade was trying to attach itself to his skin.

"You know what it is. I repaired and rebuilt it. You now take it," She said firmly.

"You take it and use it. That will be my assistance."

It was the blade he bought at the auction and then gave it to the intruder, Alucasa.

"Is it ... the blade?" Though slowly, Gallo swung it around, trying to turn it on.

"Yes, the blade's name is *Alucasa*. You can't turn it on yet. Speak its name."

"... *Alucasa*," He hesitated momentarily before speaking the word. The blade vibrated gently and weakly. "It shook."

"It's sort of alive. Now it is bound to you. Only you will be able to use it. It will always be with you. Even if you do not have it near you, as soon as you imagine it in your head and call it, it will be there for you."

Gallo asked one last time, "Where will you go?"

"Ahah," She peacefully smiled at Gallo. "Nowhere."

Then off she went into crowds, humming.

Gallo returned and reported what happened to the old man.

"You've gone a little too extreme this time," His voice was concerning.

"I realize that, sir."

"Two wardens dead in a row... I hope that the Blackbirds and the Nomads won't be taking this chance."

"Sir! Sir!"

It was Yudai's voice. She was trying to knock the door to the old man's chamber as quiet as possible. But the truth was that it was loud enough to be called slamming.

As the old man glanced at the door, it unlocked itself and Yudai dashed in. Her breath was at her neck.

"I am very sorry to interfere, but this is urgent."

"Go on," said the old man.

"The Blackbirds... and the Nomads ... have officially declared war on the claw of the Ra!"

The old man grinned at Gallo.

"The time has come," He said. "Gallo, I have three missions for you."

Fin