

[Alien arc] [9] [Seven days of fire] [12330]

Rev 2.0 (Last modified on Oct 29 2018)

This is where Gallo becomes a leader instead of a mere fighter pilot. There may be what seems like plot holes in the story but they are intended.

Among the nebula pirates, declaring war on others was the same as asking for a duel. When a faction declared war on another faction, it meant the offender was willing to take on the defender head on. Such an action was considered to be honorable. And whoever won such a battle would face much less resistance in taking over the other faction.

“Gallo, I have three missions for you,” The old man said.

Your first mission is to take the children to Cyan. You will have our only freighter.

Jessamy will lead the children. Sarbas will remain here with me.

Gallo was assisting Jessamy to pack. He was currently abandoning his bar. War was about to begin and the whole situation did not look good for neither CoR nor

the Gray Mist. The old man had ordered everyone to pack up their belongings in case they needed to evacuate the station.

"The liquor vault is way too heavy for me to lift," He said while wiping out sweats off his forehead, "Gallo, you carry it for me."

"Hey...," A big drop of sweat dropped off Gallo's head. "This thing is as tall as me and made of thick metal," He muttered. "I can't carry this especially when..."

Gallo currently had the blade, Alucasa, wired up to his left arm in his coat sleeve. He tried to put it on his belt. However, due to its immense weight, his leather belt just couldn't bear the weight. In other words, Gallo was unable to use his left arm for anything other than daily usage currently.

"Jessamy, I will be back soon. Keep packing," Gallo said while leaving the bar.

He visited Ghahin, the quartermaster, at the cargo bay. The cargo bay was busy as well. Many members of the Gray mist was transferring cargo to the freighter.

"Gallo, what can I help you with?" Noticing Gallo's presence, Ghahin asked.

He explained his situation to him.

"I see. I believe I have just the right item for you." He smiled and called one of people who was working. A small box was brought to Ghahin. The box looked rather delicate and exquisite. It had a strange marking on its surface as well. Gallo didn't recognize the marking at all. It had a green leaf within a green circle.

Ghahin lowered himself and opened the box slowly. It had some kind of belt in it.

"This is a part of a battle suit. You don't see these around nowadays," Ghahin added, "This is actually Yudai's."

Gallo startled. "Wait, wait, I am not going to wear a girl's belt!"

"This is no girl's belt. And this is the only belt that can withstand few tons of concentrated weight."

The belt looked reinforced with some kind of threads and it was far thicker than a normal belt as well. There were also few devices attached to it with some loose wiring coming out of them as if the belt was meant to be connected to something else.

"This thing's a beauty actually," Ghahin added, "It's made of titanium threads underneath. The green surface is pure cotton layer and the white lines are silver threads. It is truly an exquisite item."

"That doesn't matter, look at me!" Gallo pointed at himself who was donning dark red coat along with gray-ish suit underneath. Ghahin hopelessly stared at Gallo for few seconds and then looked at the belt. He then looked back at Gallo with an uncomfortable smile.

"Still, better than nothing, eh?"

Sighing, Gallo took the belt out of the box at once and shoved it into one of his pockets.

Children are a source of noise.

Gallo reminded himself such a fact. Jessamy was leading the children into the freighter at the moment. But the children was disoriented and, not to mention, quite noisy. Meanwhile, Gallo ... had equipped the battle belt. He closed up his trench coat to avoid any embarrassment.

At one point, his comm. bracelet vibrated.

"Gallo here," He responded to the bracelet.

"Command bridge here. We have a situation," That was another disoriented voice that he didn't want to hear.

"Be there soon."

Apparently, CoR had sent a messenger to the Gray Mist station to ask for reinforcement.

"...We ask the Gray mist to supply us with reinforcement. I repeat...."

Gallo was on the command bridge along with others. Yudai was there also.

"This is nuts. They expect us to send them a reinforcement seriously?" said Yudai, obviously pissed.

"I will go," Calvin volunteered as he entered the bridge. Everyone's attention was directed at him.

Yudai shook her head firmly. "Oh, no, you are not going."

"Give me fifty. I will try to survive," He apparently was ignoring her.

"I said, you are not going!" She raised her voice.

"If you don't send them any reinforcement, they will get us first," Gallo added, supporting Calvin in progress.

"Then why don't you go?" Yudai glared at Gallo.

Gallo shrugged. "I have a mission," He said.

Yudai shook her head, realizing it was going nowhere.

Then the old man's voice sounded from a nearby speaker. "You may go, Calvin."

Once he had the permission, he quickly turned around and left the bridge. Yudai wasn't pleased but she had no further ground to fight on.

After a moment of awkward silence, Gallo's bracelet vibrated and he answered. It was Jessamy. He said that everything was ready to go. When he arrived at the bay, he spotted Calvin and his fifty men. He was apparently giving them instructions.

"Everything's ready, Gallo," Jessamy told him once he approached him close enough.

"I will be right back in few minutes. Get in the ship and fire up the engine."

Jessamy nodded and proceeded and Gallo approached Calvin.

"Hey, Calvin, can I talk to you for a moment?"

"Sure, what is it?"

Gallo whispered into his ear, "If you do survive, I want you to head directly to Cyan rather than returning to this location."

Calvin looked puzzled. "Are there any reasons for that?"

"The station is to be relocated. And the new location won't be available until we are actually there. You and your men won't obviously have the new location," Gallo explained, "How much food are you taking with you?"

"A month of supply. That's all we can put in."

"I will drop few frozen food crates on my way to Cyan. I will send you a coordinate in few hours."

Calvin moaned in consideration. "That might be a good idea actually," He beamed a smile at Gallo. "Thanks, dude."

Patting Calvin's back, he replied, "If you really want to thank me, survive and we will have liquor together."

Then both Gallo and Calvin departed soon after.

Gallo was drinking liquor. Jessamy set up a small bar inside the freighter again. They had been on their way to Cyan for a few days now.

Although it was only a freight class vessel, the ship was originally used as a base for the Gray Mist in its early days. Therefore, it had every necessary components to be a compact base.

And it had something else; Every modern ship didn't have a window since it was not needed. However, the freighter, being built hundreds years ago outside of

nebula, still had windows. Gallo had moved a stool over to a window and was drinking while gazing through it.

"Hey..," Gallo wondered while having his liquor casually. "Why are we living in the Nebula?"

"Ha ...?" Jessamy was confused by his vague question. "What do you mean?"

"It's hard to live here, is it not?"

"But we do manage to live here fine."

"Well...." Gallo shut up and gazed into the nebula. All kind of color was there. Such a beauty, some say. Such a beast, some would say though. He saw spots of swirling rainbow of lights in space. Those were actually chemical reactions and those were precisely why shield technology was useless in the Nebula. They were beautiful to look at but that was about the only advantage. Those reactions degraded ship hulls over time.

"Say...," Gallo swirled his glass in a slow motion. "Would you like to leave this place and live in the greens?"

"The greens?" Jessamy twisted his head. Soon, he smiled and resumed cleaning glasses of his bar. "Gallo, we live where we live. Don't fix it unless it's broken."

Gallo laughed weakly. "I guess you are right. We live fine here regardless what outsiders think." He finished up his liquor. "Thanks, I am gonna take a nap."

While he was leaving the bar, Embrek rushed in.

"Boss, something's on our sensor! It's big!" His breath was at his neck.

"Embrek, get out there and scout. Give us a status report," Gallo was in his fighter. Embrek, Karesinda and the others were in their fighter craft as well. He had a total of thirty seven men.

"Roger that. Be back soon."

They weren't launching their fighters yet. There was no need to act in aggressive manner, yet.

About 15 minutes later, Embrek reported back.

"I can't get a clear reading. Whatever it is, it's coming right at us fast," He reported.

"Alright, we launch and form a defensive formation. Don't attack unless they do first. Is that clear?"

"Right."

They formed a defensive formation around the freighter swiftly.

Karesinda shouted, "It's the Nomads! They are massive! Few hundred at least!"

Gallo smiled in the cockpit however.

"Fine, we will get them all," He said. "No need to be defensive We get rid of them at all cost."

"I will get the children to man the turrets," Jessamy said. He was on the bridge of the freighter. "They are pretty good. Well, that's what they've been being trained of anyway."

"Alright, we will not move too far away. Just make sure you shoot them down when they get too close to you."

"Yep," Jessamy replied.

"Okay, guys. You know what to do. Embrek, you take eight and my right wing. Karesinda, you take another eight and take my left wing. Rest of you on my six," Gallo instructed.

His squadron fired on the Nomads as soon as they were spotted. Several fighters of the Nomads went down immediately. Gallo's fighter cut through their squadrons skillfully. The others were covering for him well as well. His right and left wings were also distracting attentions on him. Overall, their teamwork was solid.

They thought they were on a winning side and they indeed were. However, at one point, one of their pilots screamed. "My head...! I am getting... a headache...." That was his last transmission. Then he lost control of his fighter and was shot down.

"What the hell just happened?" Gallo demanded an explanation. But no one was able to give him a straight answer. Soon after, another pilot was killed after screaming that he was getting a headache.

"Emberk and Karesinda, withdraw your wings to the freighter. They are using some kind of trick. I repeat withdraw."

"Roger, I am on my way back," Karesinda responded. However, there was no reply from Embrek.

"Embrek? Do you hear me?" Gallo repeated. "Embrek? Do you copy?"

"Boss, he was shot down!" Someone on the channel informed him.

For a moment, Gallo felt numb as if somebody had hit him in the head with a hammer. Once he snapped out, he thought he heard it wrong. This was Embrek who he had been with ever since he could remember. He was a solid fighter and a pilot.

"Wh, what did you say?"

"He was shot down! He's dead!"

"Karesinda, do you copy?"

"I am here, boss, and I heard the news."

"Get back to the freighter alive now," Gallo commanded with a calm voice. The truth was, though, that he was too shocked to accept the reality.

Feeling something was amiss about Gallo's behavior, Karesinda inquired, "What are you doing to do? I have a bad feeling -"

It was this point that there was an intense burning sensation in his guts as well as chest.

"That's enough. Just do as I say. I will have my revenge," Then he cut off the channel and began to control his fighter very fiercely toward the Nomads fighters. He knew he could die just like the others. But he simply didn't care. When he shot down few of the enemy fighters, he sensed that something or someone was trying to get into his head. He figured it was his end. But nothing seemed to have happened. He didn't feel a headache or anything. Thus, he continued to blast

enemy fighters. When he began to lose track of how many he had shot down, he didn't have anyone else in his wing.

‘Did Karesinda survive at least?’ He wondered. But there was no time to think. He was surrounded by Nomads fighters and he had to continue battling them. In spite of being alone, however, he was doing fine. In fact, being all alone meant he no longer had to care for others and was able to focus on simply battling them. By time somebody finally made a contact to him, he was covered in sweats as well as tears.

"Boss? Boss? Are you still there? Are you alive? Radars are not working?"

It was Karesinda and her wing. They must have come back to save or even perhaps revenge Gallo. They obviously did not expect to see Gallo's fighter along with few scant left-over of the Nomads fighters.

“Yes, I am here... Glad you are still here, Karesinda.”

Once Karesinda’s squadron cleaned up what was left of it, they all retreated to the freighter and Gallo passed out as soon as his fighter landed.

When Gallo was younger, when he was just a child, he often read e-books of famous ESPs and Hyper humans to kill time as well as due to his mild interest in the past.

Those e-books were written after their era: the ever-powerful Crimson wizard, Cecil, a gentleman knight Juun, a dark night Eran Gro, and finally the ever confusing Sae the little witch.

Boundless tales were written after them, many of which were simply fabrications. However, such fabrications existed for a reason: They were powerful enough to warrant such fantasy stories about them.

And among those figures, Cecil stood out the most. How he never gave a damn about pretty much everything, how the mighty Bau cowered when he came at them, how pretty much no one was able to stand in his ways....

Everything about him sounded too surreal to believe that those tales were real. However, historical evident suggested that the tales he read off the e-books had merits.

Then he looked at his own era. There was no one of such personalities.

Gallo slowly opened his eyes to reality.

Karesinda was there and she panicked as she saw him become conscious.

"Are you awake. Thank you, God. I thought something went wrong," She said.

He looked around. He was on a bed. His coat was taken off and was wearing different suit. At this point, he recalled something potentially important.

"Did you drop the food crates?"

Gallo had mentioned to his men to drop few food crates and send an encoded coordinate to public channel.

"Yes, boss," Karesinda nodded. "We dropped few along the debris."

"Good," He let of a sigh of relief. "You take over the escorting job. I am going to head back."

She narrowed her eyes. "What do you mean head back?"

"To the Gray Mist station."

"Are you nuts? Alone?"

"The freighter has to make to Cyan."

"It can defend itself. It's literally a moving fortress."

"A fortress without defenders is a moving chunk of dead meat," Gallo beamed a firm look at her. "Your wing will bring the ship to Cyan."

"Fine," She shrugged. "Let's say you go back. What are you going to do? The station could have been relocated and we sure don't know the new location. Why do you think the old man has set us on this mission? Maybe, he wanted you to be apart from the whole mess."

"That's why I am going, to face this fucking mess."

She was speechless for a moment then replied, "We are six days into the journey. We will reach Cyan in roughly eight days. Zafir's there with rest of your men. If you are going to put up a fight, you need a squadron."

Gallo laughed. "You sound a lot more intelligent than you do in general. I had no idea that You had such a side."

He insisted to go and Karesinda no longer tried to stop him. Cockpit of his fighter was cleaned already. All they needed to do was add supplies to his fighter.

"It's full, one month of supply," They said.

"Good, thanks. We will see again at Cyan," Gallo assured.

Once outside, he was staring at radar in the cockpit. He was looking at the signal of the freighter. It was getting weaker. There was a reason that the nebula pirates acted in groups. Sometimes, silence of space would get into people's mind and make them go insane. Imagine being in complete darkness with complete silence for weeks. Acting in groups helped them to get over boredom. Social interaction was important for mental health as well.

Regardless, setting autopilot to the Gray mist station, he set himself deeply back and closed his eyes for a nap.

When Gallo was awoken by a repeated beeping, there was nothing on radar.

"What the hell?"

He slammed the radar few times. But the radar was reporting nothing still.

"So, the station relocated already?"

He had no other choice but to activate active sensor. Though it'd have a far greater range. It was also a double-edged sword. Others in the area would also locate him as well.

Even with an active scan though, he was unable to locate anything. There was absolutely nothing in the region, not even debris. Thus, he decided to head to CoR. He set autopilot again and sat back. Closing his eyes, he fell into darkness again.

Your second mission is to come back with the freighter. I believe it will be near impossible to relocate the station at a time like this. It is too bulky and slow. It is perhaps wiser to move what we have to Cyan instead of trying to relocate the station.

Alas, the station was gone. Something must have happened. What, Gallo had no idea.

When he was hearing beeping sound again, he opened his eyes and looked at the radar. Thousands of signals were being picked up. They apparently surrounded the orbit ring of Claw of the Ra.

"Fuck my life," He muttered.

It didn't take long before he was contacted.

"Whoever you are, turn back if you want to live. This is the only warning we shall give you."

"I am Gallo of the Gray Mist. I request a passageway through."

It was a so-called honorable war. Thus, as long as a request was made formally and before battles, they could be granted.

"Permission granted. You shall pass through. We shall not harm you."

After Gallo docked at the orbit ring, he was confronted by guards of CoR.

"Identify yourself," They demanded.

"I am Gallo of the Gray Mist. I've come here to seek presence of my people."

CoR knew Gallo for killing two wardens. Though he had only killed one warden in reality. They didn't know that and probably didn't care.

Who appeared to be another warden stepped forward from rest of guards.

"Emold, the warden, greets you," He smiled as he bowed lightly toward Gallo,

"We do not know the location of the station. They have, simply put, vanished completely."

Gallo sighed. "Thanks. Can I at least meet Calvin here?"

"Of course, feel free to stay."

It was the first time Gallo and Emold met. He was certainly a lot more tolerant of the Gray mist compared to other wardens Gallo had encountered.

"Gallo?!" Calvin bellowed when he saw him approaching. "What the hell are you doing here?"

They exchanged a brief hug.

"Glad to see you alive still," Gallo said jokingly.

"The battle has not even started yet. What brings you here? I thought you were on a mission."

"Ach," He uttered. "I quit the mission. Karesinda's on it. I am carrying few bad news though."

He told Calvin that Embrek was killed and that the Gray mist station was nowhere to be found. Calvin had been with the Gray Mist far longer than Gallo had been. If anyone knew anything, that was him.

He was scratching his chin however. "So, the station was not found in the Gray Mist region. We were beginning to be called and remembered as the Gray mist because we hide so well in its early days," He said, "If the station is indeed not present in the region, then there is another location you might try."

"Which is...?"

"The Bliss region," He answered firmly.

"The Bliss? Are you serious? Besides, isn't the region already occupied by the Nomads?"

"The region is very vast. Besides..., I believe the old man used to belong to the Nomads."

Gallo was shocked to hear that.

"He could still have some connections with the Nomadss," Calvin continued,"
Though I very much doubt that."

Entering the Bliss region alone was suicide. Even Gallo who was pretty suicidal at times wasn't willing to risk entering there, alone.

"I am not going to the region," Gallo crossed his arms and sighed. "I suppose I will stay here."

While they were chatting, Gallo sensed eyes on him. The whole place was quite crowded. It took him a bit to locate source of an attention. A man was glancing at him repeatedly. He made a swift move and approached the man. He startled as he saw Gallo right in front of him.

"Hello," He smiled like a child. "Do you want something for me?"

"Uh....," He blushed and couldn't speak right away.

Sometime later, he identified himself as Arnon. He noticed that Gallo was carrying an energy blade, he told him.

"So what?" Gallo said.

"May I have a look at it? I've ... been taught a little bit of bladesmithing."

Looking at his eyes, Gallo did not believe that he was lying. He was quite a shocking news to him also. He believed that anything about energy blade was extinct.

He gladly wanted to show his blade to him... except that he was wearing the girly green battle belt under his coat.

"Ah..., perhaps later."

A thought came to his mind right after.

"We could use a smith. Do you want to join the Gray mist perhaps?"

It was a ridiculous deal, he thought. His life at CoR would be better without a doubt. To his surprise though, the guy accepted without hesitation.

"Fine, It's not like I am wanted by Claw of the Ra anyway. I might as well find someone who needs me."

"Can you pilot a fighter?"

Arnon shook his head, shrugging and said, "I've been a mere low-end worker here. I don't know anything related to combat."

"How did you get to know bladesmithing then?"

"I know you are not going to believe me but ..." Arnon measured his hand around his belly and said to Gallo. "A small girl whose height is about this ... kind of taught me."

'Sae the witch...'

Gallo was originally skeptical of Arnon. However, upon hearing that he was apparently Sae's apprentice, his doubts were cleared.

"Hah, I guess the blade isn't the only thing she left behind," Gallo uttered.

"Excuse me?"

"Nothing," He struck out his hand for a handshake. "Welcome to the Gray mist."

The Blackbirds and the Nomads publicly announced through a public channel that they'd commence attacking in four hours.

Meanwhile, Gallo, Calvin, and the others left the orbit ring in preparation for the upcoming battle. The truth was that they left because it was uncomfortable for them. It was just better to be out there in space.

"I am taking a nap. Wake me up later," Said Gallo to the others as he shut his eyes.

The greens... *Those who were born outside of Earth, which meant 99.9% of people, had some sort of longing and fascination for the greens. Grass, trees, and other plants, those were something they'd never get to see in real life, especially in large volume.*

Gallo in particular desired it, not because he needed them, but because he read them so many times in e-books. He wondered what it was like to have been surrounded by them under the deep blue sky of Earth.

Of course, he was completely unaware of a fact that Earth had been destroyed.

Gallo was awoken by calling of his name. He opened his eyes abruptly.

"Yeah?"

"We are preparing for the battle. Wake up and get ready now."

Everyone was in rush for final checkups. Gallo, Calvin, and their men were forming a defensive formation.

Gallo inquired, "I haven't had time to look it up, but how is CoR holding up?"

Calvin replied promptly, "Claw of the Ra has roughly four thousand fighters right now led by Emold and Quy. And our opponent outnumber us by about twice. But then, we are in a defensive position. We have an advantage."

Gallo told him about the Nomads's tricks he had encountered.

"So..., they use ESP's mind tricks to take down fighters...", Calvin groaned. "That's a pretty powerful trick."

"ESP's mind tricks?" Gallo had no idea.

"Well, ESPs are pretty rare nowadays but then the Nomads are a pretty powerful faction. I thought they'd cherish them and not use them in dogfights like that but, oh well."

Gallo wanted to ask more about ESPs but the time was up.

Calvin declared, "It's almost time. Get ready. Gallo, take ten men and form a squadron."

"I can solo."

Gallo didn't want to lead men at the moment after Embrek's incident. He was still in shock. For Calvin, he was unaware of Gallo's feelings. However, dividing his men to Gallo was a risk move on his part. Therefore, he was actually glad that Gallo wanted to solo.

"Are you sure?" Calvin asked just to be certain.

"Yes, I am."

"Alright, survive, Gallo."

"The same to you, Calvin. Let's survive this shit."

As the battle began, both side received a bunch of casualties immediately. Those on front line were killed almost instantly. It was a large scale battle where a group of fifty fighters didn't matter in the flow of fight.

Cavlin's squadron was located in the rear and wasn't seeing much of actions until his squadron was contacted by Emold at one point.

"This is Emold, the warden. I want you to take down a group of fighters that I believe they are a group of ESPs sent by the Nomads. I am sending you their coordinates," He said.

Basically, he wanted the Gray Mist to take care of dirty work.

"I refuse," Calvin replied firmly, "You are asking us to die."

"You've come here under my command. Thus, you obey my command," Emold's replied stoically.

Calvin still refused. "We are under your command only as long as we decide so."

"If you leave my command, I will have to declare you as enemy."

They were not backing off each other and their argument eventually became fierce. It was Gallo who put a stop on their conversation.

"I have the coordinates. I will go," Gallo said.

Calvin uttered, "No, Gallo."

"Don't worry. I have a plan."

"But you are alone, right now. It's suicidal."

Gallo chuckled. "Don't worry. I am not that easy to shot down," He said.

"But we are talking about the Nomads here. They are using tricks."

Ignoring Calvin, Gallo spoke to Emold.

"Mr. Warden, as long as we do something about them, our alliance is valid, yes?"

"... Yes," He answered slowly.

"Watch me do my thing then. Gallo out."

Gallo simply drove his fighter and approached to the first coordinate. A group of fighter was there, which appeared to be doing nothing but flying in an endless circle. As he approached them, he sensed that someone was trying to get into his head. However, nothing happened to him. He initiated a communication with them.

"This is Gallo of the Gray mist. Are you willing to talk?"

As expected, there was no reply from them. Scratching his head, he tried to find a way to make them willing to talk. He maneuvered his fighter and shot down one fighter in the group which immediately disturbed their formation. They didn't seem to be skilled pilots. Their task appeared to be just fly in a circle and take others down with ESP tricks.

"This is Gallo of the Gray mist. Are you willing to talk?" He repeated again.

There was no reply, so he shot down another.

As if their death was not expected, few squadrons rushed to the scene and attempted to take down Gallo. But he was an ace pilot. Although he wasn't aware of such a concept of 'ace', his piloting skill was nearly unmatched. He took down an entire squadron before he was contacted by his enemy.

"We copy. What is it you want?" His voice was stoic. There was no sense of fear or being forced in the voice.

Regardless, whoever they were, they were willing to talk.

"What tricks are you using to take down your enemy?"

There wasn't a reply for a while.

"We are the Mystic."

The Mystic was a minor clan who supported the Nomads. Just like how Gray Mist supported CoR. While their number was incredibly small, most of them were ESP. And they (in)bred themselves in order to protect their bloodline. They were one of few factions in the Nebula that were truly a clan. Given who they were, it was easy to guess how they took down their enemy.

"The Mystic? Why are you guys here?"

"The same reason you are here. To keep our words on the alliance."

"What would you say if I want you to withdraw?"

"We cannot do that. If we withdraw, the Nomads will come after us."

He was right. But that was none of Gallo's concern.

"If you don't withdraw, I will shoot down all of you," Gallo warned.

"Better us dying than the whole clan go up in flames."

Gallo narrowed his eyes. He understood their position truly. He personally really did not want to kill them. They were just like the Gray mist. They were dragged into this war. However, Gallo's interest was to save his own people. He had no spare space in his mind for the others.

In the end, he eliminated their fighters mercilessly. He moved onto other coordinates and did the same. Gallo's action was beginning to be noticed by the Blackbirds and the Nomads. They sent a very, very large number of fighters after him. There was no way even for Gallo to handle them all. It was time to flee.

"Good job, I must say," It was Emold. "I honestly didn't expect you to take down most of them single-handedly."

"We've kept our side of bargain," Gallo needed to be assured.

"Yes, yes, indeed," His voice sounded pleasing. Then the channel became private suddenly.

"What do you say... Would you like to join CoR?"

Emold was trying to recruit Gallo into his clan.

"I am not interested," Gallo refused at once.

"If you say so. But I will give you some time to think over."

He wasn't obviously letting go of Gallo easily. Either way, Gallo didn't reply to him anymore.

CoR's defense was holding well against the Blackbirds and the Nomads. Seeing no advancement in their plans, the Blackbirds and the Nomads concentrated on CoR's flank and finally managed to create a hole in CoR's defense.

Emold was announcing the situation in a secure channel.

"The Blackbirds and the Nomads broke our flank and rushing to raid the orbit ring. Immediate assistance is required."

CoR needed to keep their defense strong. Even though flank of their defense was broken, it was vital to keep rest of defense up.

An order was given to the Gray Mist to help repelling raid forces which Calvin complied without a fuss. It was one of easier jobs for them.

His squadron and Gallo docked at the orbit ring and rushed in at once. The docking bay was chaos. Groups of men were killing people on sight.

"Get'em!" Cavlin bellowed and charged forward.

It was easy to distinguish the Blackbirds and the Nomads. The Blackbirds were wearing black suits and the Nomads was wearing dark brown suits.

Gallo was actually waiting for such an opportunity to use his blade. He took out his energy blade off his belt and activated it.

Through the blade's lenses, beautiful red plasma particles was pouring out in a swirling manner. It soon formed a shape of a sword in bright red.

"Ohoh....!" Gallo was thrilled. He felt a surge of strange feelings throughout his body, AKA excitement.

Howling, Gallo ran forward along Calvin and the others.

When he first started using the blade, it wasn't obviously good at it. However, as he had used for roughly an hour, he had adopted to it almost fully. He felt that using a blade had certain advantages over guns. Of course, he was a hyper human to begin with. Thus, his reaction was just so much faster than any average humans.

At one point, he noticed a group of four people in brown suits. They must have been the Nomads except for a fact that the four people were rather isolated from other Nomads. They didn't appear to be fighting. Instead, they made fists occasionally in air. Whenever they made a fist in air, somebody nearby fell.

"The Mystic...." Gallo had a hunch.

He approached them. Noticing Gallo, one of them made a fist toward him. But, of course, nothing happened. He had gotten used to the weird feeling of someone trying to get into his head at this point.

"You are him," One of them said, "The one who's immune to the force."

The others looked at Gallo at once.

"I've come to talk," Gallo said while lowering his blade.

"We have nothing to talk."

"Come with me. You were dragged into this war. I do not want to kill you."

"Better us dying than the whole clan to be destroyed."

"I will save your clan."

They scoffed. "None sense," They said at once. It was as if their mind was synchronized.

"Look into my eyes. Do you think I am lying?"

As Gallo asked them to, they looked into Gallo's eyes. At this very moment, they were able to read Gallo's mind. No, they weren't reading. They were looking at images in Gallo's head. They were seeing the rainforest that Karma the third had shown him. They were also seeing the images that Gallo had seen off disks, including the snowy mountain. They were also seeing green fields.

Suddenly, they shook their heads to shake off what they had just seen. In fact, they were confused as to what Gallo's intention was. They couldn't even tell whether he was lying or not.

"Who are you?" One of them spoke to him independently. Their synchronization must have been broken.

"I am Gallo, Gallo of the Gray mist."

"What do you want from us?"

"I want you to join me."

"If we refuse?"

"I will have to kill you all," He replied firmly with determination. He was certainly capable of killing them easily since their powers were not working on him and he certainly had done so previously.

"You are threatening us with death. That won't work. We have our people to protect. For them, we are willing to die!"

Gallo dashed toward him and punched him right in his face. He was knocked off violently with a broken nose.

"If you care so much about your people, survive! You are one of your people!"

Gallo shouted at him. The one who was knocked down was just staring at Gallo vacantly as if nothing was going on in his head. He snapped out soon and returned to the reality.

"You are quite right. However, we do not have a choice. We will not surrender," said another.

"I am not asking you to surrender. I am asking you to join me."

"We cannot join you."

"Yes, you can and you will," He said, "You saw my visions."

"Your visions told us nothing," The one with a broken nose answered while standing up. "We saw greens. What does that even mean?"

"I have a dream and my visions are my dream."

"Everyone can have visions. You have nothing backing up your visions."

"Perhaps," Gallo chuckled. "But I must inform you that the Gray mist has Cyan."

"Cyan...?!" They looked shocked. "That cannot be."

"I am not lying and you know it."

They glared at each other for a while.

"What about our clan....," They murmured, "What about our children...."

"I will save them," Gallo said it again with determination.

They believed that it was impossible. If they surrender, it wouldn't take long for the Nomads to find out and, when they do, their clan would receive punishment instead of themselves. After much whispering between the group, one of them approached Gallo. He was the one who had been talking to him.

He grabbed Gallo by collar.

"You...!" He accented each words he spoke, "You. Will. Keep. Your. Words!"

Gallo was looking at him but didn't answer him.

"You will lead us to your visions!"

Gallo beamed a weak grin at him and replied to him, "Welcome to the Gray mist."

For many people, going back to the way it was became progressively more important. Raising children in barren metal blocks wasn't pleasing. However, going back to the way it was also became progressively impossible.

On one hand, Gallo's visions were clearly a path to go back to the way humans originally meant to live. Granted the blue sky of Earth may no longer be possible, but living under solid soil with greens was certainly possible – if – they did in fact had Cyan.

Meanwhile, the battle in space was still on going. The tide of battle was leaning toward CoR and they were within their grasp to secure a victory at the moment, partially thanks to the Gray mist's efforts to nullify the raid on CoR orbit ring. The enemy's raid force was almost cleared. And Emold in space was pushing the enemies out.

Quy who was sent down to stop the raid was also finishing up his work. Finally, he stood in front of Gallo who was shielding four Mystic ESPs from being taken by CoR soldiers.

"Hand them over," Quy demanded.

Gallo aimed his energy blade at Quy.

"They've joined me. They are not your enemy," He replied.

"That does not matter. They are enemies to me," Quy slowly moved into an attacking position with his plasma blade. "Step aside or else."

Gallo smiled and made an offensive pose as well. "Fine, come," He replied.

They stared at each other momentarily before dashing toward each other at a speed where ordinary eyes could barely see. Quy's plasma blade made howling sound as his blade cut through air. Both of their blades swept across. Upon impact of their blades, they were both pushed back.

"Hmm," Quy appeared to be surprised a little bit. However, he continued to act. He moved toward Gallo rapidly, slashed his blade from bottom to top.

Gallo barely managed to deflect Quy's blade.

He beamed a big grin at Quy and exclaimed, "This is good. This is fun!"

For the first time in his life, Gallo was fighting against a warrior. He was never taught of swordsmanship. He was reacting with only instinct and little experience he gained over time. Quy grinned in return as well. He stood firmly while wielding his blade backwards. Gallo struck out his chest and held his blade firmly.

"Blade, roar!" Gallo didn't know why and even how. He just thought so. It just came to his mind.

As if his blade was obeying his command, energy particles of Alucasa began to expand in size and frequency. It was as if the blade was overloading.

Quy was looking at the blade curiously. "That's enough," He said eventually.

"Ah?" Gallo was all eagering to go but Quy apparently poured water down on him.

"You may go."

"....Why?"

Quy made a mysterious facial expression. "You were not formally trained of swordsmanship. It was easy to see. I could have defeated you easily if it wasn't your blade. Thank your blade. It saved your arse."

"Fucking hell, how anticlimactic," Gallo whispered.

"Go," Quy said strongly. "Before Emold comes back. I am letting you go personally."

Gallo gave him a nod and looked at Calvin who was a distance away. He understood Gallo's signal. They were to get the hell out of there ASAP.

"Not sure what the fuck happened," Calvin complained over the event.

Gallo replied, "I saved some dudes of the Nomads. That's the short version."

"Yeah, I noticed that. Those four in the rear, right?"

"Right. While at it, we are going to rescue the Mystic," Gallo said firmly.

Calvin sighed over the channel. "I wish you were joking, but given what happened, I suppose we just have to follow you around."

"Thanks, Calvin. That makes my life easier." Clearing his throat, Gallo asked the names of the four ESPs." He quickly added, "Only one respond at a time."

"I am Ormvor."

"I am Eolde."

"I am Nerid."

"I am Essdar."

They were in their own fighters as well. Their fighters looked quite different from fighters of the Gray mist also. Their fighters had only one kinetic gun whereas fighters of the Gray Mist had four blaze-class plasma guns. Kinetic gun was an old-fashioned gun that wasn't useful at tearing hull apart in the nebula. In other words, the guns were there for cosmetic reasons.

The Gray Mist's 'blaze-class' plasma gun was a standard gun among the Nebula pirates. The Gray Mist had implemented a number of modification to the gun to make it further effective in the nebula.

"I didn't believe that you were truly going to keep your word on rescuing our clan," Ormvor responded.

"How come?" Gallo replied. "Why did you surrender then?"

"We were willing to sacrifice our own clan and start over," They responded simultaneously again except this time they weren't synchronized.

According to Ormvor, who seemed to be a leader of them. the Mystic station was located roughly ten hours from the planet of the Nomads. Their proximity were indeed quite close each other.

Ormvor added that they used to be located much further away. However, recently, the Nomads had demanded and finally made them relocate to the new location and that the Nomads's treatment toward them had been becoming worse over years.

"We were never meant to partake in space battles," He explained, "But the Nomads forced it upon us."

"Calvin, do you have the encoded transmission we sent?" Gallo asked. Their food supply was not going to be enough if they were to reach the Mystic station.

"Yes, but I haven't had time to decode it. It will take few hours to decode," He replied.

"Well, set a course to Cyan. It's somewhere on the way. When you decode, we will fix our course and head back to their station."

"Agreed."

Once it was decoded, they headed there to find the crates as well as Karesinda's wing.

"Gallo?!" Her high pitched voice rang.

"What are you doing here?" Gallo, too, was surprised.

"After we escorted the freighter to Cyan, we headed back. But we didn't know where you were. I figured you might come back to here for food supply," She explained, "I see that Calvin is here with you as well and four Nomads signatures?"

Gallo explained what happened.

"Interesting and weird," She said, "What a coincidence, I say," She continued, "The Osprey has come to Cyan and joined us."

"The Osprey? Are you sure?"

"Am I sure? Of course! They even brought their station to Cyan."

It seemed that the Osprey somehow had gotten a hold of news that the Gray mist had acquired Cyan. And they were apparently looking for a shelter.

"Zafir is on his way to here with a fresh squadron from the Osprey. Well, Osprey's kids are in the squadron but they've been trained."

"How big of a wing is it?"

"Exactly fifty two fighters, excluding Zafir's fighter, boss."

Combined with Gallo, Calvin and the others, their number would exceed one hundred. It was a big enough of a gang to make an impact in the war if they wanted.

Karesinda suggested an idea.

"Boss, I suggest you head back to Cyan. We don't know where our station is and the three clans are in war. Not to mention that the outside is so messed up."

"What do you mean?"

The outside meant outside of the nebula. It literally meant Andromeda union and sometimes also United Sol. According to Karesinda, the Aliens had overridden United Sol and they were proceeding to attack planet, Freebie.

"I cannot believe that we are fighting each other at a time like this." Gallo was livid. It was time to cooperate, not to fight and kill each other. "I guess we really are just pirates after all," He said sarcastically to which nobody answered.

Few hours passed, Gallo and the others were just floating around the food crates. Gallo himself was eating frozen food. He took a bite. There was no taste at all. But he didn't mind. He was used to such food. Taste and moisture were removed to keep food longer. Result was hardened white powder in a form of cookies. He had been eating such food for his entire life that he simply did not know there was anything better. For all he knew, tasteless food was the food.

"Boss..., what are we going to do?" Karesinda finally had the courage to speak up.
"We wait," He replied. "Until Zafir arrives here."

It took three days for Zafir and his wing to arrive.

The first thing he did when Zafir arrived was inform him that he was promoted to be the 8th leader of the Gray mist. Zafir was more than glad to hear his promotion. However, there was no squadron to give to him.

In the meantime, he had also brought fifty two fighters. Along them, there was the former leader of the Osprey, Vaelmnal.

"After death of most adults in our clan, I had closed door to outside and been training the children," Vaelmnal said, "I've taught everything I know to them. All they need is experience."

"Is that so? I see no problem with that, Gallo?" Calvin asked him since he was also a leader of the Gray Mist. But he did not ask Zafir.

Gallo didn't feel good to use children in a war but, given current situation, he had little choics. "Well, if you insist..."

Vaelmnal assured.

"Then why not."

Then Vaelmnal's squadron was temporarily given to Zafir until the Gray mist would gather a meeting and formally give him a squadron.

After then, they began to discuss their future plan.

Gallo insisted to go through the Bliss region and help the Mystics According to Ormvor, he knew a short cut to their station through the Bliss region. While Calvin wasn't willing, he saw little choices. Thus, he reluctantly agreed.

Ormvor shared his knowledge of the region. "The Bliss region is too vast to just fly across. Sensor literally doesn't work in the region. Therefore, the sense of direction is completely null in the area.

The Nomadss have recently drawn a map of the Bliss region. Of course, the region is too vast for them to map out the entire region. But they did manage to map out a passageway through the region. The map should be loaded in one of the Nomads stations. And there are eight of them protected by a probe net."

"Wooah, stop there," Zafir stopped Ormvor before he could speak further. "You mean to tell us that we are going to capture one of the stations?"

"That's correct." Ormvor's answer was firm.

"Do you realize capturing a station which is even behind a probe net is asking for suicide?" Zafir raised his voice.

Gallo found it odd that Zafir was acting up. He had always thought that he was a cool-headed one, which was exactly why he recommended him to be a new leader.

"I suppose Ormvor has a plan. Let's hear what he has to say," Gallo added.

"I do have plan," Ormvor said with determination. "But it is going to be tough."

Ormvor's plan was like this.

They attack one probe in their network in the Bliss region. He claimed that the probe would send a distress signal to two other closest probes in its network. Since the probe network the Nomads had set up was a liner network, each probe was vital to maintain the network. A squadron would soon be dispatched to check out the probe.

Ormvor made it clear that they must damage the probe and not destroy it. So that the squadron would attempt to repair the probe rather than replacing it. It would take time to repair it on sight and it would be their chance to strike them and capture them.

Once that is done, they would have their fighters, volunteers would use the fighters and go back to where they belong, which would be one of their stations. He stressed that one of the Mystic must tag along. So, one seat was reserved for them. How many would they have in a squadron remained unknown, he added.

"Pretty neat plan," Calvin laughed nervously. "Though I must agree that it is going to be tough to capture them and all."

"Where would we hide once we reach the probe?" Zafir asked.

"We wouldn't need to hide. All we need to do is keep a certain distance. We won't even need to stay far, either. The Bliss region degrades effectiveness of sensors by ninety nine percentage. They would never know that we were there, especially with no windows on their fighters."

"Neat plan, indeed," Gallo laughed also. "ESPs are smart." "I see no problem with his plan."

Calvin agreed, but Zafir was against the whole plan. "It's simply too risky," He claimed.

"What we've been doing has always been risky. What's the matter with you?" Gallo finally decided to say what was in his mind. "You suddenly changed your attitude after I notified you of the promotion."

"That's the point. I am one of the leaders now."

Gallo was, at this moment, certain that the old man was probably correct in his assessment that he was not suited to be a leader.

However, he did not regret his decision to promote him. Rather, he was disappointed in Zafir. Nonetheless, it was not possible for him to withdraw his rank nor could Calvin.

Gallo pushed on. "If you think it's too risky, then go back to Cyan. We are going to do this with or without you."

They went on. That was without Zafir's presence. He insisted not going and went back to Cyan. When he asked Vaelmnal if he was going with him, he refused to go to Cyan and chose to follow Gallo instead. Therefore, Zafir went back alone. The whole affair left bitter tastes.

"What are we going to do about him?" Calvin asked with an obviously concerned voice.

"Nothing," Gallo said, "Only the old man can remove him at this point. Let's get the job in our hands done first."

And they went on, leaving the food crates behind. Even after they supplied their food, the crates still had leftovers.

"Perhaps, we should relocate the crates."

It was Calvin's idea. He feared that Zafir might turn against them and he knew the location of the food crates. A fighter could only carry a month of supply. The nebula, being immense in size, often required weeks of traveling to a destination. One month of food supply was often not enough. It was vital that they would secure a supply point and, with the war broke out between the three major clans, there was no other place for food supply.

It basically meant this: If they lost the food crates, their only choice would be to head back to Cyan.

The others agreed. After relocating the food crates to a random spot, they headed to the Bliss region. It took them roughly four days to reach edge of the region.

They could tell that they were there by looking at their sensor readings.

Their sensor readings few clicks ahead was static.

"We are here," Ormvor informed everyone. "We are able to scan better once we enter the region."

'We' meant the Mystic, or to be more blunt, ESP.

"Is that the 6th sense you guys will be using?" Gallo asked.

Though he asked, he already knew the answer. He just brought up the question to ask another question.

"Yes, it is," Ormvor replied.

"Do you know anything about the 7th sense?"

He was actually quite surprised that Gallo brought up such a topic.

"Where did you hear about it? It's not a common term that anyone would know."

Gallo pretended that he forgot where he heard about it from. In truth, the seventh sense was often mentioned in the tales he read. The books mentioned it but never explained it.

Ornvor explained, "We, ESP, possess a 6th sense. It's identical to active sensors. But machines cannot detect it. Only other ESP may detect. But I believe obscenely sensitive people may feel it as well. Though not as clearly as we would do."

His explanation went on and on. This and that, he was basically telling the others how great ESP were. And finally after much talking, he came to a point where Gallo found interesting.

"It is known that only class S ESP or hyper human possess the 7th sense," He said, "No one knows what it exactly is since class S people were very ... bizarre. They never bothered explaining it to anyone."

"Maybe, they didn't bother explaining because it couldn't be explained," Gallo said.

"Maybe."

"I think that's it. It's just like what you said a moment ago. Only ESP could feel the 6th sense with few exceptions. You really didn't explain anything about the 6th sense other than it's hard to explain to those who has never felt it," Gallo added, "They probably didn't bother explaining to others about the 7th sense because

there was no point in attempting to explain something that would not be understood."

"I guess you are right," Ormvor answered after a moment of silence.

Calvin changed the topic. "... How are we going to capture them anyway?"

"I was hoping you guys'd know," Ormvor said. His answer was unexpected to everyone. They thought he knew how.

"Can't you use your mind trick to just kill them?"

"I wish I could. But all kind of ESP abilities are kind of blocked in the Bliss region."

"What do you mean by blocked?"

"We can use ESP powers. But there is no result. It's as if our powers are neutralized immediately by some kind of unknown force."

Everyone became quiet after. Apparently, Ormvor had left out the most important detail.

Calvin suggested, "Then we will have to disable their fighters."

His idea faced a major problem immediately. Fighter was a small craft. It was not designed to take any kind of damage. One shot was enough to completely destroy a fighter.

"Our weapons are too powerful. Even if we use only one gun, it will do enough damage to completely whack hull of a fighter. Don't those ESP guys have some kind of sucky kinetic gun?"

It was Kresinda who pointed it out. The Mystic's weapon on their fighters was a mere kinetic gun which barely would do any kind of damage in the nebula. But, even such a weak weapon, would do enough damage to a fighter's engine if shot directly. Gallo and the others didn't know how much exactly it would damage however.

Still they decided to try as it seemed to be the only visible solution. Gallo put on a spare suit in the cockpit of his fighter and cleaned the cockpit a little bit. Then, he closed a small hatch behind his pilot chair. Then, he pressed a red button on a console in front of him. With two high-pitched beeping sound, the cockpit was open as air was sucked out at once.

"Oh, shoot...!"

Gallo narrowed his eyes as he was struck by view of the nebula. It was so bright. He quickly adjusted brightness of his helmet's visor. As he darkened it a bit, he was beginning to see how beautiful the view was. There was no other way to put it but to say beautiful. It was filled with various colors and no part of the view was still. The colors continued to envelope onto each other, creating new colors every seconds. He felt he was being sucked into the colors. He was eventually snapped out by a voice suddenly.

"Boss, are you ready?"

It was Karesinda's voice. He exhaled after he heard her voice. He was about to completely lost in the view.

"I am ready. I am hovering over the Eolde's fighter."

He closed his eyes while hovering. It was too dangerous to keep looking at the nebula. When his suit bumped into something soft, he opened his eyes.

Eolde was outside without a suit. ESP was known to be able to survive in space with bare body for a short period.

Once he entered the cockpit and secured himself, he began manually adjusting the gun's aim. After he believed that he was done, they proceeded to the region. With sensors being blinded, Ormvor and the others were their only eyes.

"We are approaching a probe," Ormvor informed the others. "Rest of you stay here. Gallo, turn off your system completely."

"How am I going to lock on it though?"

"You don't. You will manually fire."

By manually, it meant opening up the cockpit and manually aim the gun and then manually release a hardware rigger. Gallo put on his space suit again and opened the cockpit.

"This is so fucking hardcore," Gallo pleasantly said to himself. He was enjoying it.

"We will control the thrusters by hands. Just wait for us to arrive. It will take few moments."

When he was outside, he saw a glimpse of a figure passing by.

"Who was that?"

"It's Nerid," Nerid told him via telepathy.

It was his first time hearing her voice. She, too, wasn't wearing a spacesuit.

"How do you feel like being out there without a spacesuit?"

"We use a skill called stonesskin. It prevents our skin and flesh to freeze in space."

"Yeah? I wonder how it feels like to be out there without a damned suit."

"You will feel nothing as you will be dead instantly."

As he was conversing with Nerid, he noticed that the fighter was moving slowly forward. Ormvor and the others were manually controlling thrusters and was moving it forward.

"Do you see the probe?" Nerid inquired.

There was nothing to look in front of Gallo. All he was seeing was enveloping colors and that alone was dangerous enough for his mental health.

"Nothing. We need to get closer."

"Roger."

It took them nearly an hour before Gallo started to see something.

"Hold. I am seeing something," Gallo said.

Ormvor started giving Gallo final instructions.

"You need to shoot its outer shell. We need it functional. We must have it repairable."

"Wait, wait, hold. Say what? Are you kidding me? I can barely see the thing.

Besides, I have to shoot it manually without sensor readings. You are asking the impossible."

"We should not get closer. You can shoot it numerous times and aim it closer. Since the gun uses an ammunition, the probe won't send alarms. It will probably register the ammunition as just pieces of space dust."

Gallo groaned and then chuckled.

"What are you laughing?" Ormvor asked.

"I am liking this. This is so hardcore."

"... Whatever. We will adjust your ship according to your orders. Just try to aim for its shell."

"Roger."

The gun was located directly under the cockpit. Once he got himself into a good position, he informed the others.

"I am ready to fire. Are you guys ready?"

"Yes, press the manual hardware lock. The gun mustn't be powered by the system or the probe will pick up something. It is powered by ESP right now."

"Right...," He narrowed his eyes and tried to focus. But it wasn't helpful. So, he decided to simply fire. As he pressed the hardware lock, the fighter shook violently as a shoot was fired. Thrusters were activated soon after to stabilize the ship. But, since it was not done automatically, it took some time to be stabilized before Gallo could focus again.

"Well, that sucked. I think I missed by a lot."

"Yes," Ormvor replied. "It wasn't even close."

"Move the fighter to right a little bit."

"Roger."

Gallo had to fire sixteen times before he was able to aim for the probe's shell.

Everything was set in the end.

"So, now what," Gallo asked Ormvor.

"After you shoot the probe, a small squadron should arrive here."

"And?"

"We need to capture them. Pilots don't need to be captured alive. But the ships must be in working order when captured."

Gallo wanted to scratch his head. But, being in a bulky space suit, it wasn't possible.

"How?"

They became silent. And they remained so for few minutes, just aimlessly floating around.

"Okay..., here is a thought...."

And then Gallo came up with a wacky idea. He came up with an old idea called tugging. It required great skills in piloting and he believed that the Gray mist pilots had what it took to make it happen.

Ormvor, since he decided to believe in Gallo's abilities and foresight agreed to follow despite doubts in his mind. Besides, there wasn't another option. Ormvor sent Nerid to inform Calvin and the others of the tugging idea.

"Okay, in ten seconds, I will make the shoot," Gallo declared.

Counting down ten seconds, Gallo inhaled deeply and finally fired the gun. There was no sound in space. But he felt as if he was hearing high pitched sound as the lone ammunition traveled swiftly across the distance. It successfully hit the probe and the probe's outer surface was shattered slightly.

"Okay..., now we wait," Gallo mumbled.

Gallo had no idea how long it had been nor did he bother checking time. But when he was bored and was about to fall asleep, he began to see few shadowy objects approaching the probe.

"There are three." It was Ormvor's voice. "You make the first move. When you do, we will follow, Gallo of the Gray mist."

Gallo didn't respond. He simply watched the shadowy objects approach the probe. Like Ormvor mentioned, there were three shadowy objects. For a while, the shadowy objects remained around the probe. Gallo had simply no idea how much time had passed and had left. When he felt it was the right moment, he turned on the system and informed the others.

"Attack!"

They were swift. Karesinda was the first one who reached the enemy fighters. Before they could even react, the others also reached them and tugging began. They bumped into the enemy fighters in all directions and physically restrained the enemy fighters. The enemy fighters attempted to get away. But no matter what they did, it was futile. They were completely surrounded by fighters.

"Tug them away from the probe before they could pass through a distress signal!"

They quickly tugged the three fighters away from the probe. Ormvor and the others were still in space. They were the ones who approached the enemy fighters and opened cockpit manually, sucking the enemy pilots out to space. Ormvor, then, entered an enemy fighter and quickly ran a system check.

"I do not believe a distress signal was sent."

"Well, that's one good news."

"The fighter's in perfect condition also."

"Another good news."

Now they needed to decide who was going to infiltrate with the captured fighters. Ormvor added that he must go and another ESP, he chose Nerid for the task. The third spot was taken by Gallo.

"Each Nomadss station in the Bliss region should have at least one Mystic ESP."

Ormvor began his briefing.

"It was a part of our agreement with the Nomads. I didn't think it'd come handy like this though. Anyway, we will now head to the fighters' home station and infiltrate. We will send you when and where to go in hopefully twenty four hours through the probe network. The rest of guys stay here."

Gallo, Ormvor and Nerid headed to their destination. All they had to do was activate auto pilot. As they approached a station, they were contacted.

"Status report."

Ormvor responded immediately.

"The probe was hit by just a small floating object. Everything's green."

"Roger. Bay 7 is open. Proceed."

He then contact Gallo through a private channel.

"As soon as we dock, I want you to kill everyone in the bay."

"Isn't that too early to act?"

"They won't recognize our faces. So, we don't have a choice."

"Alright."

The bay crew were guiding the fighters in. Since there was no window on fighters, they had no idea that Gallo and the others were in the fighters.

Gallo activated his energy blade and initiated unlocking of the cockpit. When the cockpit was open wide, there was a crewman right above Gallo's head. Without hesitation, He pierced his blade right into the crewman's chest. The crewman screamed as his chest was punctured. The other crews in the bay didn't quite

realize what was going on. Then he pulled the wounded crewman into his cockpit and broke his neck by hand. Once the first one was taken care of, he jumped out of the cockpit and initiated running toward another at a rapid speed. He slashed another crewman into half.

Then the crew in the bay realized something was wrong.

One of them started running toward a nearest alarm. But he was shot and killed by Ormvor's gun. Nerid also started firing.

Nine crew were killed in less than 30 seconds. When the last crewman fell, the whole bay became silent. Gallo was breathing hard and wasn't doing anything while Ormvor and Nerid were walking around and checking to make sure that everyone in the bay was dead.

"So far so good," Ormvor said, "I will try contacting our friend now."

Ormvor closed his eyes and remained so for few seconds.

"Okay, he is on his way."

Staring at the dead bodies, Gallo felt nothing. He had become too used to killing. Besides, it was a war. It was killed or to be killed.

Fighting for what he believed in was all Gallo could do at the moment and he hoped that what he was trying to accomplish was worth the killing although he wasn't exactly sure what he was trying to accomplish.

What would happen if he successfully reached the Mystic's station? How would he lead them out of the Nomads's control? And where was the Gray mist station?

Questions filled his head that reached out for its own answers. He felt as if he was beginning to have headache and decided not to think further.

"He is here."

Ormvor and Nerid were standing by the exit to outside. They were holding their guns by their head in case someone unwanted would enter, just in case.

A man entered the bay. He was wearing the same dark blue uniform like the bay crew's. He looked no different from the bay crew.

He seemed to have recognize Ormvor and Nerid instantly.

"I cannot believe that you've done this," He said, looking shocked.

"Yes, we've done this and it is too late to regret now. Did you bring what I asked?"

Gallo noticed something just now. It was that Nerid had a nice figure, sizable breasts and narrow waist. She was an ideal woman.

He sighed and frowned.

"I do have it with me," He said, "But I am not quite sure that I should give it to you."

"Didn't we agree that it was too late to go back?"

"Perhaps, not too late if"

He turned his attention away from Ormvor and looked at Gallo who was standing a distance away from him.

Gallo realized his attention and drew out his blade.

"You will be dead before you even try."

He seemed to have scoffed and glared at Gallo briefly and then his face filled with doubts. Then, he looked back at Ormvor. He nodded back at him.

"It won't work on him," He said.

Sagging his shoulders, he finally accepted the fate. "It seems we have no other choice."

Saying so, he approached Gallo and struck out his hand for a handshake.

"The name's Waren."

Then he pulled out a security card from his chest pocket.

"This security access card should allow you to access every doors except for the ones to the bridge and reactor room."

Taking the card, Gallo asked.

"How would you access the bridge and reactor room?"

"The only way I can think of is with firepower."

"It shouldn't be no problem then," Gallo laughed weakly. "We have a whole squadron waiting outside."

Waren sighed and turned around.

"I must go back now. They've been keeping eyes on me lately. I see why now."

However, Ormvor was standing at the exit. Moreover, Gallo moved and stood in front of Ormvor.

"You are not going back," Gallo proclaimed, blocking his way rather fiercely.

"If I don't go back, they will get suspicious."

"You don't need to go back. We will assault them now.,

Waren was clearly not pleased with how it went down.

"I do not know how you managed to convince or perhaps even plant delusions on the others but I won't fall for your plans."

"I am not trying to fool anyone."

Waren scoffed. He wasn't listening or being convinced.

"Ormvor, I think we need to seize him for now."

"Are you sure?" To which Gallo gave him a firm nod.

Then Ormvor nodded at Nerid who, in return, aimed her pistol at Waren.

Waren, however, did not resist and, instead, rose his hands as if he was surrendering.

Gallo dashed toward him and dragged him down to the floor. Then he knocked him out for the time being.

"Seize him, Nerid. And Ormvor, send the message to the others. We must act now."

Ormvor nodded. He entered his fighter and transmitted a message.

"It is done and the station should be aware that an unauthorized message was sent."

Gallo looked around. The bay they were in was simply too small for the entire squadron to land.

"We need to capture more bays."

Ormvor, too, realized what Gallo was taking about.

"Indeed, we need to guard this bay as well though. If we lose here, we will lose everything."

"Alright, I will go alone. You and Nerid guard this bay with your life," Having said so, Gallo pointed at knocked down Waren. "Keep an eye on him as well." Ormvor gave him a firm nod.

As soon as Gallo left the bay, alarm began to roar.

"So, they now know," Gallo mumbled to himself while rushing to a nearby bay. Finding his way was fairly easy. There were signs indicating which way was to another bay.

When he reached another Bay, there was no crew in there. All he could see was six fighters lined up for taking off. He accessed a nearby terminal in the bay to open its gates. Waren's access card indeed worked.

He proceeded to three more bays before finally he confronted a group of armed and armored guards.

They began to fire at him as soon as Gallo was spotted. They appeared to be highly trained as Gallo found himself troubled. He couldn't dodge incoming shots well because they were aiming for his center mass, which was the hardest to maneuver.

All Gallo could do, at this point, was roll around to avoid being fatally shot. He had spent some time rolling and avoiding them at all cost. Eventually, he lost track of his location.

He thought that the environment was somewhat familiar but he couldn't quite put a finger on why. Hearing incoming fires again, he rolled and passed through a doorway. He quickly regained his balance and swiftly leaned his back by the doorway. He was so focused on attempting to fight them back that he failed to notice a presence right next to him.

Then, he sensed a figure passing him somewhat slowly.

Then it happened.

He felt some pellets of liquid on his cheek. He wiped it off. It was sticky and it was red. He turned his head to right. Nerid was there and her center of mass was shot. She was staggering backwards, bleeding from her mouth.

He really didn't know that he had come back to the bay and that Nerid was innocently looking outside to find out what was going on.

"Ah....," She looked down onto her chest. She was bleeding from three points, two from her right and left chest and the third was from her belly.

As she finally lost her balance and fell, Gallo grabbed her.

"Are you alright?"

But Gallo already knew the answer. She was shaking her body and bleeding fast. She seemed she wanted to say something. However, only her lips were moving.

"Ah - "

Images were flowing through into Gallo's head. It was overloading his brain. The images were Nerid's desires or dreams. Cooking peacefully in a kitchen. Having

meal with a family. Being in an amusement park with countless people. Playing with her children.

Everything was blurred in her pictures except her own figure.

Gallo bit his lips so hard that he was bleeding from his lips.

The pictures were her imaginations, her dreams and her goal. It was like Gallo's images, green field, snowy mountain, view of dawn and sea.

He kept on nodding at her as tears filled up his eyes.

"I understand," Gallo repeated with an even graver voice. "I understand."

Nerid nodded firmly several times and then she held Gallo's hand strongly before her body became loose. Her eyes glared at Gallo momentarily before closed.

Ormvor screamed out Nerid's name. Apparently, Nerid was watching the doorway and Ormvor was waiting on the other side of the bay waiting for the others to land. It just so happened that she reached out briefly to see what was going on. Perhaps, they decided to take their chances after shooting Nerid, they threw some smoke grenades and rushed their way into the bay.

At the very same time, few fighters were on their way to land into the bay.

Gallo was still holding Nerid in his arms. She was dead already, but he didn't feel like fighting back anymore. There had been many people who died in course of his

actions. They were in a war. No one would blame him for responsibilities. Again, it was a war. At least, that was the excuse.

As more and more people were killed by his hands or killed by actions he chose, Gallo felt more and more unseen weights on his shoulders. Right at the moment, he was feeling heavy weights on his shoulders that he could barely support his own shadow.

The station's infantry force rushed in and immediately found Gallo. They fired at him instantly. Gallo's right arm below his elbow was blasted away. Their attack also took his right eye as well.

"Boss!"

A familiar voice echoed in the bay. Karesinda and few others had successfully landed and were rushing toward the station infantries.

Meanwhile, Gallo felt numb and lost his consciousness.

We all fight for our visions no matter how small they are... It is our last stand.

"Do you hear me?"

"W...."

As Gallo attempted to speak, he had to vomit awkward tasting green liquid for a while. Actually, he was submerged in some sort of water bed.

Panting, he spoke at last.

"Who are you."

"Have you forgotten me already."

Gallo narrowed his eyes. His blurry vision became clearer. It was Waren.

"It is you."

Waren told Gallo what happened.

He was injured severely from the battle at the bay, losing a right arm and a right eye. Fortunately, the station had regeneration facilities. So, Gallo was able to receive proper medical care.

Gallo realized that he was naked.

"Do you have my clothes?"

Waren pointed at a metal box behind him.

"They are in there. Though I think you need a new suit. Your clothes are mess."

He slowly walked to the box. Upon opening it, he found bloody clothes, including his red trench coat which was missing its right sleeve.

"I thought you were against this."

Waren crossed his arms.

"I still am. However, I realize it is no time for an internal conflict. And I hate to admit this, but it is too late now. We've already taken one of their stations."

Gallo soon realized his blade was nowhere to be found in the box.

"Where is my blade?"

"It's where you got hurt. We couldn't move you here with that heavy thing on your waist. None of us could lift it. We just left it there along with the green belt."

"I see."

"It took six hours to regenerate your eye and arm. We must leave here quickly before the Nomads come here to investigate what happened."

Gallo's right arm was completely numb and his right vision was completely blank.

It was uncomfortable, but he didn't really care. As if reading his mind though, Waran explained, "Your nerve will reconnect soon. It should take few hours to days before your newly regenerated flash becomes completely under control."

"Alright, just give me something to wear and I will pick up my blade."

Waran reached out a sealed folded suit on a desk and handed it over to Gallo.

"It's the uniform of the Nomads. It's all we've got right now."

"I see."

It was a dark brown uniform, consisted of a turtle neck shirt and a pair of pants. The turtle neck shirt had two light blue lines from left shoulder to all the way down.

"Alright, gather everyone at the bay. I will be there soon."

Waran sneered as a response.

"I have no reason to take your orders."

Gallo didn't feel like picking a fight with anyone at the moment. "Then this is good-bye. I hope you will escape successfully from the Nomads."

Waran tapped his right foot few times.

"But my destination is the same as yours, I suppose."

He decided to ignore him and left the medical room at once. He headed directly to the bridge of the station. He had something to check.

"Boss," Karesinda greeted Gallo indifferently. There were few others around her and they seemed to be content to see Gallo.

"I need to check something. Are there sensor logs in the mainframe?"

"Should be. We haven't checked, though."

The bridge was a small triangle room with just a standalone console ahead. There were two holographic monitors facing each other by the console. Gallo approached the console and Karesinda stepped aside for Gallo. He wasn't exactly sure what he was looking for. He just had to take a look at boundless sensor logs recorded by the station. After a while, he came across something interesting.

The sensor entry was not very old, either. According to the record, there was a large object detected and it vanished from sensor pretty much instantly.

"Boss, what are you looking for?"

Gallo groaned and explained.

"Calvin told me that the Gray mist station might be hiding in the Bliss region. This sensor entry is a little suspicious."

Karesinda was standing right next to Gallo. She began to type busily on the console.

"It even has a coordinate," She added.

"We should check it out."

She opened her mouth to speak but she didn't. Instead, she sighed. Gallo quickly downloaded the log into his memory implant and turned around.

"Inform everyone that we are departing."

Karesinda nodded firmly.

Gallo and the others abandoned the station. They were supposed to follow the map and leave Bliss region as soon as possible. But Gallo was leading them into even deeper.

"Where are we going? This is not the way."

Ormvor was the first one to bring it up.

"We need to check something out."

"You mean you need to check something out." It was Waran. Gallo didn't answer him. On his book, he was not with his group.

"I need an explanation. I will not object your decision however," Ormvor said.

Gallo explained the situation that the station of the Gray mist might be hiding in the area and he had come across a log that indicated a good clue on its trace. He also noted that there was a high chance that whatever it could be relocated by the time they get there.

"Fair enough. I guess the Mystic isn't the only one you need to save."

It had taken them two days to reach the coordinate and something was there, something big.

"All I am getting is static. But something's definitely out there," Karesinda reported.

They were getting some vague signals. It wasn't clear enough to determine what it was out there. Gallo put on his spacesuit and opened his fighter's cockpit for a visual confirmation. An enormous object was shadowed by the nebula. It was quite possible to figure out its shape. It had a shape of a station.

"I believe it is a station. I am going to approach it and locate its docking bay," Gallo said to the others, "You guys stay still and wait."

"No, it is too dangerous. If they are not one of ours, you'd be space dust for certain," Karesinda quickly tried to stop Gallo by blocking him with her fighter. It was that moment that everyone heard a voice.

"Do not approach."

Not everyone recognized that it was the old man's voice but Gallo did.

"Old man, is that you?" He uttered.

"Yes, it is I. Do not approach. This station must stay clear of any contact in order to stay undetected. Even this conversation may very well pose a risk of being detected."

Gallo had a lot of questions in his mind but realized it was no time for such luxury.

"Then, I will make this as short as possible. I just need to know that everyone is alright."

"Everyone is alright. You must leave this area at once."

"How will you escape?"

"There is no time to explain anything. Leave now. You will know what to do soon enough."

Gallo had no other choice.

While they were on their way out of the region, Ormvor began talking.

"That voice sounded a lot like Sarbas."

"What name did you just say?"

"Ah? Oh, Sarbas."

Gallo narrowed his eyes.

"Care to tell me more?"

"Sarbas disappeared from the Mystic few hundreds years ago. He was a trainer.

He left a weird echoing message to all of us when he left though."

"Weird echoing message?"

"Well, I wasn't even born at that time. I was only told so. Elders at our station will be able to tell you if you really want to know."

"How did you recognize his voice then? You just said that you weren't born while he was with the Mystic."

"We have some training video that was made by him. We watched them when we were young."

"So, you know his face?"

"Yes, I suppose."

"Can you tell me?"

There was a short silence before Ormvor replied.

"Why are you showing so much interest?"

"Whoever our leader really is, we've been calling him 'the old man'. He has recently been training an apprentice. He renamed him to Sarbas."

Ormvor's slight groaning could be heard over the channel.

"Interesting, Sarbas means 'old man' in some ancient language."

Many thoughts were going through Gallo's head. If the old man was indeed Sarbas that Ormvor was talking about....

And then a scary thought chilled his whole body. In the end, he decided not to think further until he was sure. He thought that he was foolish to think that Sarbas could be the legendary crimson wizard.

Gallo laughed over the channel.

"Why are you laughing?"

"Nothing, just ... had to laugh." Then he whispered to himself. "I read too much of those e-books, bah."

They followed the recently acquired map of the region. It had taken them two weeks just to be able to cross the region. When they were finally out of Bliss region, they let out of a big relieved sign. The whole journey was a nightmare.

"Finally, sensors readings are much more clearer!" Karesinda screamed out of joy. But then another problem rose.

"We are running out of food supply," Ormvor reported. "We will run out of food days before we could reach the station."

Gallo raised his voice. "What? Didn't we refill the food at the Nomads station?"

"We sure did. But who knew it'd take this long to cross the region. Besides, we spent few days more to check out the coordinate."

"How soon will we be out of food??"

"If we consume the food pack normally, seven days. If we consume only two packs, about ten days."

Vaelmna spoke up. "The children consume less food. They consume two food packs a day. We could share the food."

Sighing, Gallo responded, "That's a good idea. We might just make barely in time. I just hope that we won't get intercepted on our way. We can't waste any more time with food on low,"

Gallo and the others had come a long way. Many of them were itching to stand up and get some workout. After all, they had been sitting in a tight cockpit for literally months.

A nebula fighter had a very narrow room behind a cockpit. It allowed them to store few personal stuff and a small bedroll where they could sleep or even lay down if needed. This small place was also where it was connected with food storage. It was also connected to a tiny bathroom. But there was nowhere to get a shower.

"God, I so want to take a shower," Karesinda began to whine over a channel.

"You are free to whine," Gallo snickered. "But when you whine, I can smell your breath over the channel. May I add that it smells really foul also?"

Some laughed.

Their travel to the Mystic station was flawless. When they entered vicinity of the station, sensor readings became crystal clear.

"The sensor readings are so clear," Karesinda was the one to bring it up. "It is as if we are not in the nebula at all."

"The Mystic is an ESP clan. We all are ESPs. We use our powers to create gravitational waves to clear enough clean space around the station, so that we wouldn't have to repair degrading hulls," Ormvor explained.

"Neat idea, really," Calvin said.

They were cleared to land. Everyone jumped out of their cockpit and stretched their body. Some were jogging on spot, trying to get some workout.

The docking bay of the Mystic station was very much different from the Gray mist's station. The bay was very clean and quiet. No one was there until Gallo approached an exit.

Three people greeted Gallo and recognized Ormvor, Eolde, Essdar, and Waran. Ormvor was quick to explain what had happened and Nerid's death as well.

Their reaction was unlike Waran's. They nodded quietly and responded, "I see." Then, Gallo and Ormvor were taken to the leader, elder Gharyn.

"I've been told what happened," was his first words when they just entered his quarter. It was a rather tranquil room with heavy incense and dim light. In a way, the room very much resembled the old man's chamber.

Gharyn continued, "It is too late to discuss whether it was right or wrong. It is time to act."

He was determined and straightforward. Gallo liked that. No pointless debates like Warren would, he felt. Gharyn looked more like a monk in a brown robe. He was bald with light gray stubble.

Without further ado, he made an announcement all over the station and gathered everyone at "the bay of the ancient".

"What's the bay of the ancient?" Gallo asked Ormvor.

"You will know soon enough," was his answer.

Everyone was at the entrance to the bay of the ancient. The Mystic members bowed to Gharyn. Then they proceeded to the bay.

There was nothing but a single unit. It was a warship. It was the first time for Gallo and many others to see a warship.

"Corvette class warship, this is the smallest warship available," Gharyn explained proudly. "Our ancestors entered the nebula in this ship. We've managed to preserve its condition and mainframe."

Gallo and the others were inspecting the ship curiously.

"Her name is Mystic," Said Gharyn.

"This is my first time seeing her, sir," Ormvor was in awe.

"Gallo, isn't it?"

Gallo turned around to face the elder.

"I see that you are not ordinary, especially the blade on your waist. It is a very dark being."

"Is having a dark being bad?"

Gharyn beamed a weak grin at him and shook his head slightly.

"No, its darkness is so pure that it's even cleaner than light."

Gallo didn't understand Gharyn's statement. He just nodded along.

Peacefully smiling, Gharyn told Gallo, "You are the one who united people and brought them this far. You will lead them back to the world you are hoping to create."

Gallo narrowed his eyes. He sensed something from Gharyn's words.

"Why are you sounding as if you are not coming?"

"Because I am not."

The Mystic members murmured as they heard Gharyn.

"Sir! What are you saying!" They talked to him at once.

"Elders will stay here. When you arrived here, we detected large squadrons on long range sensors. They will be here in two hours. They will be here to destroy us. Elders will try to hold them back as long as possible for you to escape further."

"Sir, you are not staying here. You will come with us. You are our leader!"

Gharyn bellowed, "Listen to me!"

As he bellowed, the murmuring Mystic members became quiet.

"They are in fighters. A corvette class warship is much slower than fighters. We will need every second we could earn."

"But, sir...!"

"The era is changing. Sacrifices are needed. The old must rid themselves for new blood."

Gharyn pointed at Gallo.

"You will follow him."

Gallo's face was motionless. He was staring at Gharyn. He was feeling even heavier weight on his shoulders.

This is so ... suffocating

'But you will go on, Gallo of the Gray mist.'

It was Gharyn's voice in his head.

Their surroundings became slow motion and blurred. It was as if their world had become consisted of only two of them.

Though strange, Gallo didn't give a damn.

'Tell me everything you know about Sarbas,' He asked firmly. He figured he'd get as much as info he wanted as possible while at it.

'Sarbas ..., it's been a long time since the last time I heard that name.'

Gharyn's focus became loose and appeared to be accessing old memories. When he came back to focus, he told Gallo,

'Tell me what you know about him and I will transfer my knowledge to you in return.'

Gallo told him that who he thought Sarbas was created the Gray mist clan and that he had managed to bring their station to Bliss region.

'Interesting indeed. If this Sarbas you mention is the Sarbas I know, then it becomes much more interesting indeed.'

He paused for a bit and arranged his memories before conversing Gallo.

'A long time ago,'

He began.

'When the Mystic arrived in the nebula, all we had was the warship. As you know, the nature of the Nebula constantly damages ship's hull over time. What they did was create waves that are just powerful enough to clear nebula gas around their vicinity. We settled down like that. And that was two thousand seven hundred seventy two years ago.'

'Are you implying you are that much old?'

Gharyn shook his head. 'No, I am only six hundred two years old.'

Gallo had to sneer at Gharyn for saying 'only'.

'Sarbas was the only original settler who remained alive when I was born. If you think about it, we should have been curious about him even then. However, for some odd reason, we did not question his vitality. He trained us. He taught us technologies. We sought out for him and his knowledge. And, one day, he simply disappeared.'

Gallo was listening quietly.

'ESP tends to vanish from the society when they feel their demise is close. They seal themselves from others and find a place to die in peace. We believed that it was the case for Sarbas. When he vanished though, he left a strange message to everyone.'

He paused and gulped before speaking further.

'If you stand in my path, you shall taste my wraith.'

Gallo received haunting sensation all over his body when he heard Gharyn's statement because it was the very exact statement from tales he had read, the tales of Crimsin wizard.

'I do not know why he decided to leave and even create a new clan in the nebula. But, if the Sarbas you know is the one I know, the Mystic and the Gray mist are related.'

Gharyn beamed a gentle smile at him.

'And that gives you the right to lead the Mystic.'

'I am not a leader or even a leader material. I am just a simple man with a simple mind.'

Gharyn did not reply Gallo but grinned instead. Then, surroundings came back to life.

"We must hurry!" Gharyn proclaimed, acting as if nothing happened. "Transfer food and equipment to the warship!"

They were left with no other choices. They loaded food and other necessary goods into the warship and rushed to activate the ship.

Being thousands years old, the ship showed signs of old age here and there. Especially, its mainframe had data integration issues.

Gallo stood on its bridge. It was his first time actually to see a warship's bridge. The bridge was basically a dome with lots of standalone consoles on its platform. And then there was the captain's chair in middle on a slightly elevated platform.

Few murmured by one of console on front.

"What's going on?" Gallo asked.

One of them turned his head toward Gallo.

"The system is not booting up. It's giving no data error."

"I thought you guys preserved the whole thing?"

"Only elders had access to bay of the ancient. We don't know what they had been doing."

"I will look into that," said Gharyn as he entered the bridge. He passed Gallo and went to the console.

He discussed few things with the others and mechanical whirring sound could be heard from everywhere.

"It's coming on!" One of them bellowed out of excitement.

Three holographic screens appeared around Gallo, where the captain's chair was. Then, six additional large holographic screens appeared on front, displaying different information on each channel. Some kind of programming language were being displayed at rapid speed on screens.

Soon enough, the screens blanked and then showed the bay.

"It is active. Refer to its help channel for operations. Be quick and learn all necessary commands," Gharyn said.

Turning around, he walked toward exit.

Gallo had a quick backward glance at him. Both exchanged no words however.

One hundred twenty three people were onboard the Mystic. Ormvor was in charge of the ship. Gallo led fighters to escort. They left the station few hours ago. Everyone was quiet. They all knew what would be happening by this moment.

It was Gallo who broke the silence with shock.

"We are going back."

He said it. He said the words that many of people had in their mind.

Ormvor smiled nervously and said, "This is no time for a joke -"

"Shut up!"

He was startled by Gallo's shout.

"No one deserves to die like that!" Gallo's voice was becoming fiercer. "No one deserves just to be left behind to die!"

"But it is for the greater cause."

"I am a simple man with a simple mind! I don't fucking care about the future! I don't care about politics and I don't care about the greater cause! What I care is people around me and some of them are about to be left just to die!"

Ormvor attempted to sway his mind. "But Gallo, listen to me! If we go back, we all will be killed and accomplish nothing!"

"It is up to you. If you don't want to go back, fine, keep going to Cyan."

Gallo's deep inhale could be heard over the channel.

"Will you follow me or not?"

Having said so, Gallo turned his fighter around. Calvin, Karesinda, and anyone who originally belonged to the Gray mist followed him immediately. However, Ormvor and others who were the Mystic were skeptical still.

It was unexpectedly Waren who gave the final blow.

"Why are you hesitating to save our people?" He said. The warship soon turned around.

"It is still not too late. We are willing to accept your surrender still."

The Mystic station was already in flames. Ghary and eleven other elders did their best to shield their station from the Nomads. But they were simply way too outgunned.

Gharyn sneered at whoever was speaking on a screen on bridge of the station.

"It is too late."

"I wonder though," The one on screen scratched his chin. "What made you to betray?"

"It was going to happen sooner or later. It doesn't matter."

The man on screen laughed sarcastically.

"Perhaps," He was still laughing with assurance of victory on his part. "You will not be killed though. I'd like to capture you rather."

An elder quickly approached Gharyn and whispered to him.

"They've barged into the docking bay. It is only a matter of time."

"Initiate self destruction." Gharyn replied firmly.

The man on screen must have heard him.

"That won't work. We are going to the reactor room first to disable self destruction protocol."

Gharyn bit his lips.

"Seal the door. We are standing our gr...."

It was that very moment. A voice echoed in their mind.

'Standing on my path, fools. Time to die.'

"Sarbas?!" Gharyn startled as he uttered with shock.

The man on screen must have heard the voice as well. He remained calm though.

"What kind of trick are you playing now, Gharyn?"

The screen blinked momentarily.

The man on screen barely kept his balance. "What is going on?! Report!"

"Sir, we are being attacked!"

"None sense!"

Then, the screen went dead.

"Gharyn, they are back."

"What?"

"Gallo and the others are back."

Needless to say, Gharyn was flabbergasted.

"Attack! Follow my lead!" Gallo roared on a channel. "Ormvor, cover our back!

Attack, attack, ATTACK!!!"

Driven by Gallo's fierceness, the Gray mist fighters hit the Nomads hard and that was an understatement.

Gharyn and the others on bridge of the station were gathered at a sensor console.

"They seem to be back. How can this be? Why didn't the sensor give us a notification?"

No elder had an answer for him.

An elder said, "They came out of nowhere. It was as if they were cloaked."

"Then the voice?" Gharyn questioned.

Elders gave Gharyn a firm look, agreeing that it was indeed Sarbas' voice.

Gallo's wings were attacking very, very aggressively. With veterans pilots from the Gray mist, He was able to break through the front line of the Nomads.

"They are so easy," Karesinda said. "Their formation is so easy to predict. It's on the first chapter of the book."

"Indeed," Calvin agreed. "Whoever their trainer was, he should be fired. We can even predict where their command fighter might be."

"They are tearing them apart. The Nomads are in havoc," An elder reported. Gharyn didn't answer. He wasn't listening even. He was trying to solve a puzzle in his head.

"Gharyn! Gharyn!"

An elder shook Gharyn's body. But he was unresponsive. Then, they heard forceful slamming from locked bridge gate.

"They are here already?!"

The locked gate were cut into pieces soon enough and an unexpected figure was seen through smoke. It was Gallo.

"Don't just stay here! Come with me now! We are getting you out of here!" He shouted.

When Gharyn was finally himself, he was aboard the warship, Mystic. To be more precise, he was on its bridge along with others.

"Where am I?"

"You are onboard the warship, sir," Ormvor replied.

"The station?"

"It's in flames. I fear the worst."

Gharyn looked around. A quick back glance revealed Gallo.

"Why did you come back, Gallo?"

"To save you and the others," He answered firmly.

"It was unnecessary. You could have killed everyone."

"But I didn't. Eolde, casualties report," Gallo spoke to Eolde who was at one of helm stations.

Eolde quickly looked back at Gallo and returned to his console.

"Four fighters lost," He reported.

"Four fighters?" Gharyn raised his eyebrow. "Only four fighters lost?"

"It's not only. Four is too much already." Gallo's voice was grave. It carried much weight. But no one other than Gharyn could feel the weight.

Gharyn narrowed his eyes. Dark aura was radiating from his blade. He closed his eyes briefly and beamed a grin at himself, comforting himself.

"So, you've saved us. I suppose I must thank you."

Gallo didn't reply.

The Nomads had to retreat from Gallo's aggressive attack and it was the perfect time for Gallo and the others to make a run for it.

"We are going to the coordinate of the station, yes?" Ormvor asked just to make sure. He had been with Gallo for some time and was beginning to understand his character and pattern.

Gallo gave him a nod.

When they reached the coordinate, they confronted the Nomads attacking the station.

"The station is in a very, very critical shape. It's not going to last long. It's going to explode!"

Gallo ran out of the bridge.

Meanwhile, Gharyn's was in the captain's quarter. It was a small square room connected directly from the bridge. He slowly closed his eyes and activated every senses he had. He was trying to read something from outside, something dark...

"Boss, the station's going down and a lot of life's being detected in it!" Karesinda contacted Gallo as soon as he was out of the Mystic's fighter bay.

Gallo attempted to establish a channel to the station. But communication was not being established at all. It could have been that the bridge was already busted. In the end, he opened a public channel.

"This is Gallo of the Gray mist. Old man, answer me."

Another public channel was opened by the station.

"This is the leader of the gray mist. I send this message to the Nomads as well as the others currently in this area."

There was a short pause before the voice resumed.

"This station is going to explode at any moment. I advise you to keep a safe distance from the station."

"Old man! Respond!" Gallo shouted. It was on a public channel, so everyone could listen to him.

The old man continued his speech on the channel, ignoring Gallo.

"To the Gray mist and its friends, survivors are currently preparing to release a small freight vessel. It will soon undock from an old bay. You will see it on your radar soon enough. Protect it at all cost."

Right after that, an unstable channel was opened. It was full of static.

"This i... Ghah... W....re... Assi... ut."

"It's Ghahin's voice, boss!!" Karesindia exclaimed.

"Yes, it is his voice. I am seeing something that just popped out from the station. That must be it, Gallo." Calvin added.

"Escort the ship to Mystic," Gallo ground his teeth. "What the hell is going on ..."

"That is Sarbas's voice." It was Gharyn. "I can confirm that it is indeed his voice. Our roots are the same."

The old man continued on a public channel, "Gallo, my child, I have the third mission for you."

Gallo's ear twitched.

"Unite the Nebula pirates under one ruler. Then, the path shall be open for you to advance."

"Old man," Gallo tried to sound calm. "Are you Sarbas? Or rather ... the Crimson wizard of old tales?"

There was no answer. In fact, the channel was terminated.

Ormvor alerted everyone. "The station is going down. We must leave this place unless we want to be toasted by its shockwave!"

"Damn it!" Gallo smashed whatever was in his reach. "Old man, you are not going to die with the station!"

"If he is indeed who you think he is, then he will not die anyway." Gharyn's calm, yet, grave voice reached out everyone in the area via telepathy.

"This is no time for truth, Gallo. It is time for decisions," He added while Gallo was being frustrated.

Listening to Gharyn, Gallo inhaled deeply and closed his eyes briefly before he began giving out commands.

"Karesindia," He spoke. "Take a wing and secure the vessel. Calvin, go ahead and make path for us to escape. Ormvor, follow his wing."

It was a large battle regardless. When Karesindia's wing secured the vessel, they were able to establish a navlink with the vessel and secure a clear channel.

"We've been battling for days," Ghahin said. "We thought we were all going to die."

"Is everyone ok?"

Ghahin was silent for a moment before he spoke.

"Many died protecting the station. That includes Yudai as well. She fought intruders until she was outnumbered..."

Gallo never got along with her, but he did not hate her personally. It was sad news that she died. He had the book given by her sometime ago in back of his fighter. He decided that he'd read the book to respect her.

Karesindia joined the channel. "Boss, the Nomads is withdrawing. They must be trying to make a safe distance as well."

"They've better unless they want to commit suicide," Ormvor replied.

Shockwave in nebula was more than just deadly. It caused chain reactions and explosions ultimately, destroying pretty much anything in its vicinity. In normal space, shields were strong enough to prevent shockwave though.

News spread fast that CoR managed to hold together through the siege by the Nomads and the Blackbirds. However, although they managed to stay intact, strength of CoW was weakened greatly, great enough for them to completely shut their doors until they regain some of strength.

Gallo and the others arrived at Cyan months later. It was a very long and tiresome journey. So, everyone was glad to set their feet on a solid ground.

"You've... changed quite a bit," Gallo laughed nervously.

Naliss was proudly wearing off-shoulder black ruffle trim dress with matching lace top stockings. She had also grown a little bit of her hair as well.

In other words, she looked much like a hooker.

"Welcome back finally." Ignoring his comment, she welcomed him.

Gharyn stepped forward.

"You must be the one that Gallo has told us," He stuck out his hand for a handshake.

"No thanks, your hand is all oily."

It turned out that Naliss refused Zafir's landing request. Her reasoning was quite simple, yet straight.

"I felt utter anger from his voice and he was alone. Something was fishy. So, there." was her answer.

Everything settled down pretty fast. Gallo was appointed to be the new leader of the Gray mist. He tried to refuse the appointment. But everyone agreed on the decision.

Ones from the Mystic chose to build their own stronghold on Cyan. They had their own fund to construct an underground fortress.

As for the Osprey, they had their station in Cyan's orbit, so they chose to stay in their station.

The warship, Mystic, was transferred to the Gray mist under Gallo's command. It was decided that the ship would receive complete overhaul and be ready for full actions.

Gallo still questioned who the old man really was but he had his answer already in his mind. It was just that he did not want to remind himself of events he went through. Too many died for his cause. No one would blame him. But that wasn't enough. If the old man was who he thought he was, that was certainly not the end of him. That much was certain.

It had been a while since he felt a bed. Gallo slowly opened his eyes. It was a very quiet morning. An old room with old furniture, he was in the inn room that he

used last time he was on Cyan. He changed his clothes and washed his face. Donning his newly tailored red coat, he left the inn.

The city of Cyan was no different than before. However, it was to change. He headed over to the castle where Karma the third used to reside.

They were waiting for him at the entrance. Gharyn, Karesindia, Calvin, Ormvor, everyone was there.

Naliss casually saluted at Gallo and said, "Shall we go in?"

Gallo gave them a firm nod.

-Fin