

[Ashuta arc] [6] [MMD Incident] [9614]

Rev 1.1

Recommended lore file to read: Imagination Entertainment (Under General lore)

Ashuta had a day off and was slacking at home. He was in his undies and was eating clips while watching MMD channel.

“Hello! Hello!” Two hosts, one male and one female, jumped into the scene. At the same time, a classy music played in background.

MMD stood for Make My Day. MMD was a dedicated broadcast channel to make jokes out of political matters. The channel had only MMD show and the show aired once every week. It had no regular schedule and aired randomly.

Since Ashuta lived on Freedom colony where MMD studio was located, he would get live shows. Those who lived outside of Freedom colony weren't legally allowed to play the signal. However, there were ways to obtain the shows.

The show was obviously a niche channel and wasn't overly popular. It did, however, have a small and loyal fan base. But Ashuta wasn't one of them. He was just watching the channel because it happened to air on time.

“Welcome to Today's MMD!” The female host exclaimed joyfully while the male host was wearing a classic wardrobe with a gentleman's hat. He took the hat off and bowed.

“This is our 9999th show!” The female host continued to speak joyfully. “Wow, we've been going on for so long!”

“As usual, we have very lively topics to discuss today,” The male host spoke.

Although “discussion”, it was more of one-sided jokes aimed at political failures and events.

Ashua yawned loudly and started to scratch his body as he paid little attention to the hosts’ introductory greetings and jokes.

“So! Have you heard?! Moon’s economy is doing so bad that they are having over 25% of unemployment rate!” The female host gestured a silent wow with her lips after she made her statement. “And you know what’s worse? The Ark saw it coming!”

The male host nodded in agreement. “They saw it coming, alright. I mean, if they hadn’t seen it coming, they’d be frigging idiots.”

The show had an audience in back but their faces were shadowed out. They were sitting on stools and they booed and made a thumb-down gesture.

“Who in the world places embargo when they were benefiting more than those they were placing embargo upon?” The male host questioned further. “I can safely say we have idiots running the Ark.”

“Or losers with huge ego!” The female host joined in, adding, “I bet they have tiny penis. Men with big ego always have tiny penises.”

The audience behind them jeered.

“The Ark has been doing so bad that an admiral called it quits,” The male host announced. “Have you heard of Admiral Rommel?”

The female host responded, "He is the Jupiter assault station admin, or an ex admin now."

The male host nodded and continued, "He partook in the short-lived revolt against the Crimson wizard when the former President Mirren was assassinated. Admiral Jack was killed in action and Admiral Rommel was captured."

The female host swung her index finger in air. "It was rumored that he had to swear an allegiance to the Crimson wizard when he was spared. But Cecil never became the president, so his position became awkward."

"Still," The male host nodded firmly and spoke, "The president Gvew never replaced Rommel which begs the question: Did Rommel really swear his allegiance to the Crimson wizard?"

"Well, we will never know now!" The female host shrugged lively. "Because he is gone!"

The audience made a surprised sound.

"Yep, he is gone!" The female host continued after the audience quieted down. "He simply vanished one day!"

The male host quickly added, "He left no traces. She is correct that he simply vanished. But he wasn't the only one who vanished. His wife Uzma and his first officer Vard were gone as well."

"Mysteries, mysteries~," The female host hummed. "Where art thou ~"

"I can't say for sure and this is only an assumption, but there was an expedition fleet that took off by the time his disappearance was realized," The male host spoke. "It could be that he and the others were on that fleet. Now as to why he'd do such, I have no idea."

"Only if we could ask the Crimson wizard," The female host remarked with a pout.

The male host responded with a nod, "Indeed, I am sure he knows the answers."

“Speaking of the Crimson wizard! Do you know how he earned that nickname? We all know he is seen always wearing a crimson robe.” The female host turned back and asked the audience and the audience returned her question with a silence. The audience wasn’t actually allowed to speak.

She turned back and asked the viewers. “Do you know? I bet you don’t!”

“Yeah, I don’t know, either,” Ashuta answered.

“He earned the nickname in 8630s,” The male host answered on her behalf. “He massacred a city on a random day for seemingly no apparent reason. Now there were speculations on why he had done such but nothing was confirmed.”

The audience jeered and, after their jeering, the male host continued.

“Survivors recalled his bloody robe and they murmured ‘crimson’. Subsequently, none of survivors made recovery mentally. Since then, Cecil klisis was nicknamed the Crimson wizard.”

The female host questioned jokingly and joyfully, “Wouldn’t a blood drenched robe stink?”

“It would stink surely,” The male host answered earnestly. “I don’t think you could launder such a cloth and get the blood stain out, either.”

“Stinky wizard!” The female host called and Ashuta sneered.

“That’s a bad joke,” Ashuta said to himself.

The male host and the audience laughed. In truth, Cecil’s crimson robe wasn’t actually a blood stained robe. Meave tailored a robe on her own made of titanium

threads. It just happened to be in crimson in color because Meave felt that the color went well with Cecil's light brown hair which appeared to be red under direct sun light.

"It would stink for sure," The male host responded pleasantly. "I am surprised we haven't seen the robe mold yet."

"Like how Venus surface is moldy!" The female host exclaimed. "It's all purple!"

Venus surface was full of purple mosses called "Vie". They were responsible for photosynthesis and were a very important part of Venusian eco system. Fallen Crater and its surrounding areas had green grasses but elsewhere had vie. And the planet itself was seen deep purple if seen from space.

"Stinky planet, stinky leader, stinky people!" The female host continued to make fun out of Venus. The male host smiled and nodded along but didn't add his comments.

And at that very moment, a figure appeared out of thin air about 10 feet behind the hosts.

"What the?!" Ashuta uttered as he startled by the sudden appearance. He quickly recognized who it was because he was wearing a crimson robe. "The Crimson wizard!" He uttered.

It was a live show and the show was being watched by hundreds of thousands on Freedom colony at the moment Cecil teleported himself into the stage. The audience realized who it was and started to rush out of their stools while screaming.

The hosts, realizing something was happening, looked back only to find Cecil walking toward them swiftly. He had a blade in his hand.

“What in the world?!” The male host uttered and the female host screamed. Just before the live show was cut off, Cecil was seen jerking his arm and blood was spouting out from the female host’s neck.

Ashuta was vacantly staring at his TV where there was nothing but gray color. The screen blinked few times and a message in red appeared. It said: “The show is temporarily suspended. We apologize for the inconvenience.”

He knew what he saw. It was a live show and MMD wasn’t known for pulling pranks like such. He had a bad feeling and grabbed his clothes to dress. Just as he finished dressing up, he received an incoming transmission.

“Yes?” He answered, knowing who it was from.

“Ashuta, I need you at my office. Actually, head over to a location. I am sending you its coordinates right now,” Lila told him urgently. “You would not believe what happened right now.”

“I know what happened,” He replied.

“How do you know?”

“Because I was watching the show.”

“Then you know what happened. Head over to the location ASAP. I am sending Reed to there also.”

“Roger that.”

When Ashuta arrived at the location he was told to go to, it was a small studio. On surface, it looked as if nothing happened, but he knew what happened in there. He saw at least one host was killed. More could have been killed. Taking a deep breath, he fortified himself as he went inside.

The studio was empty. Staffs and others must have been evacuated. Upon arrival at the stage that he was watching from his apartment, he saw Reed who had kneeled down and was inspecting a headless female body. Her head was found not far from her body.

Reed looked back since he felt a presence. "Oh, hey, you are here," He said casually. His voice carried no sense of urgency. "Are you shocked?"

"No, not really. I was watching the show when it happened," Ashuta, too, answered casually. He had killed numerous people before. As a mercenary, he often had no choice but to kill others.

"Damned Crimson wizard..." Reed grumbled. "You'd think an ESP uses ESP to kill people. But he certainly enjoys beheading people with a blade."

Ashuta approached the body. The cut was as clean as it could have gotten. She was beheaded so skillfully that there was no blood on her body at all and blood was still pouring out albeit weakly.

"So what now?" Ashuta asked Reed although he probably knew the answer.

"What can we do?" Reed answered with a frustrated voice. "Let's just make the report and see Lila. I am sure she has something to say."

Nodding alone, he took pictures and collected the loose head. Her widely opened eyes showed that she hardly saw it coming.

"Can I close her eyes at least? It's freaking me out."

"Sure."

It turned out that the female host was the only casualty. Reed and Ashuta went to see Lila with a detailed report of the event.

As usual, Lila leaned against an edge of her semi-transparent desk and read through the holographic report.

“So, she was mocking Cecil, Venus and everything about him before it happened,” Lila concluded. “MMD must have went a little too far this time. Ashuta, you said you were watching the show when it happened. Do you agree with Cecil’s action?”

Without a thought, he gave his answer to her. “Of course not. Just because one mocks the other, it doesn’t entitle murder.”

Reed shrugged in response to Ashuta’s answer. “But then what can we do? Is the guy still here on the colony?”

“No, he left already,” Lila answered with slightly growling. “You know I’ve placed a barrier around the colony to prevent illegal movements in or out of the colony. He broke the barrier as if it didn’t even exist.”

One of major reasons Lila stayed at the colony always was due to her barrier. It covered the colony and prevented ESPs from teleporting in and out. She was using all of her powers to maintain the barrier that she became pretty much an ordinary person while the barrier was active. If she was forced to use her ESP, the barrier had to be weakened.

Freedom colony also developed a whole new line of security systems to work in conjunction of Lila’s barrier. All Lila had to do was maintain her barrier and there was a security team who monitored status of her barrier. They had also been developing an entirely new system in case of Lila’s retirement where a group of specifically trained ESPs maintaining the barrier.

“So, what now?” Reed asked although he already knew the answer. Lila knew also. Even Ashuta knew.

“Legally nothing. We can inquire him through someone,” She answered. “If you want to push, we can ask him why he did what he did.” She shrugged. “Although I can hardly see a point in that. What is done is done. A woman was murdered and that is it.”

Legally challenging Cecil was pointless because of few factors.

First of all, Cecil couldn't care less. He stood above the laws and trying to tackle him with laws meant as useless as throwing ice cubes into the Sun.

Secondly, bringing a legal case against him meant challenging the Klisis clan. Yes, the clan was defunct but the clan still existed legally and Cecil was still alive. By suing Cecil, it meant suing the Klisis clan, and Cecil would countersue and he wouldn't countersue normally. He'd just demand a compensation for doing harm to the reputation of the Klisis clan.

As ridiculous as it sounded, Cecil had won numerous countersues previously and had successfully been paid compensations he demanded. They had to pay or it were their heads.

Silence filled the office until Lila received a transmission.

"What? Please tell me that they are joking." She sighed. "I thought they knew better." She raised her voice. "Of course, not. Fine, I will send someone over."

"What is going on?" Reed asked.

Lila, out of frustration, stomped her foot and crossed her arms. "The MMD studio plans to seek a legal solution for the death of the female host." She looked at Ashuta and said, "You go."

Pointing at himself, Ashuta looked clueless. "Pardon?"

"You go. Talk to them."

"You want me to see them? What am I supposed to tell them?"

"They will be killed if they don't drop their stupid lawsuit talk. Talk them out of it."

Ashuta frowned with a confused face. "But I don't know what to do?"

Sighing deeply, Lila explained, "Look, I have some problems with them. I personally don't want to face them."

He was still puzzled. Reed would have been a better choice obviously, he felt, since he was a much senior member of the staffs. Reading his mind, Lila added another explanation.

“Listen, MMD is a sub division of IMG Ent. They’ve been trying to ...” Lila stopped to worsen Ashuta’s confusion.

“Ma’am?” He called out to which Reed answered instead.

“They’ve been trying to get me and Sae for their shows,” He explained. “Sae for lesbian movies and me for some gay movies. Part time stuff, not full time, of course.”

Ashuta’s jaw literally dropped. After a moment of shock, he blurted, “I would totally watch a movie featuring Sae.”

Reed grinned in silence and Lila glared at Ashuta.

“No, ma’am,” He quickly defended himself. “What I am saying is ...”

“Enough, I know what you meant.”

But Ashuta insisted, “Ma’am, I didn’t mean what I said.”

Sighing briefly, Lila told him, “Boys will always be boys. I understand where you are coming from. Anyway, you go on my behalf.”

Ashuta felt like he had no other choice. However, still a concern lingered in his mind.

“Ma’am, I will go but I really don’t know what to tell them. I don’t think I will be able to persuade them.”

“At least you’ve met him before in person, so actually you have a chance,” Lila explained.

Ashuta became even more confused. “I do? Him? Who?”

“The Fatman.”

“The Fa...” Ashuta raised his eyebrows and exclaimed, “The Fatman of Seaside retreat?!”

Lila nodded at him.

Ashuta was shocked at first although he soon realized it made sense. Actually, it made the perfect sense. Members only section of Seaside retreat fitted IMG's slogan, Sex sells, perfectly.

"You've met him personally before, so you go," Lila said.

Ashuta went to Seaside retreat as a diplomat and saw the Fatman who hadn't changed one bit since he met him the last time. And there was the same bunny girl next to him as well.

"Long time no see!" He exclaimed while some stuff was coming out of his mouth which the bunny girl promptly cleaned off his bare chest.

"Hello, sir. It's been a while," Ashuta greeted him.

The bunny girl pointed at a seat in front of her and told him with a charming tone, "Have a seat, stud."

Having sat, Ashuta went to the topic straightforwardly. "Mr. Fatman, I've come here on behalf of Lila."

"Yes, I am aware. You've climbed up a little."

Carefully, he told him, "She believes it is unwise to initiate a lawsuit against the Crimson wizard."

"Aye, probably."

That wasn't the kind of response Ashuta was expecting. Still, he went on with the plan.

"So, I assume you will be dropped the lawsuit idea?"

The Fatman changed the subject. "Do you know why she hasn't come here by herself?"

"No...," Ashuta reluctantly answered.

“Tell her to grant one of our requests and we shall drop the lawsuit.”

Ashuta narrowed his eyes. It didn't make sense. If the lawsuit wasn't dropped, it was their lives. He couldn't understand why the Fatman was using the lawsuit as a bargaining chip.

“Sir, you do realize it's your neck on the line, not hers?”

The Fatman and the bunny girl both smiled at the same time as soon as they heard Ashuta.

“Mr. Darling, do you know which company he owns?” The bunny girl asked him to which Ashuta answered instantly. “IMG Ent.”

The bunny girl nodded and told him, “Imagination Entertainment is a huge company. He may get killed from this but the company will live on.”

Ashuta wasn't sure what she was trying to say.

“I am the founder of IMG Ent,” The Fatman declared. “And I am willing to do anything to make my company prosper even if it means my untimely death.”

He wasn't still sure what they were trying to say.

The bunny girl explained further, “If the Fatman pushes on with the lawsuit and, if he is somehow killed, because he is going to refuse paying for countersue, Freedom colony will have to pay IMG Ent a huge insurance payout.”

The Fatman added quickly after the bunny girl, “It is a win-win situation for the company.”

What the Fatman was trying to do was rather simple although it sounded crazy. He wanted either Sae or Reed to join IMG Ent as an employee and drop the lawsuit or he would go ahead with the lawsuit if Lila refused. The Fatman was likely killed by Cecil and Freedom colony would need to pay IMG Ent “a huge insurance payout”.

“You are risking your life like that?!” Ashuta uttered with amusement and the Fatman laughed pleasantly and told him, “Either result is beneficial to the company. I may be a founder but I’ve shaken my hands off the company operation for few decades now. They seem to be doing fine without me. I am no longer needed. Thus, I have no regrets.”

Having no other way to persuade him out of the lawsuit, Ashuta quickly went back to Lila and explained what happened.

“Ugh,” Lila grumbled while frowning. “I knew that old geezer would come up with a plan like that.”

“How much are we talking about here, ma’am?”

Lila explained that, since IMG Ent was a rather sensitive business, Freedom colony offered them cyber protection as well as physical protection for a price. It was the “insurance” that they were talking about. A death of a mere employee from MMD show was not deemed serious enough for a huge insurance payout, but death of their CEO would warrant a serious breach in the protection, and thus a huge insurance payout would be needed.

“We are talking about half a billion,” Lila added.

“Can I be honest with you?” Ashuta inquired her carefully to which she gave him a nod.

“Sae is probably willing to work for them. Why don’t you let her?”

He had seen Sae’s behavior for several years now and he considered her crazy. As much as she was powerful and resourceful, she was simply crazy at times and Lila often had to scramble solutions for whatever troubles she sometimes created with clients.

“I know what you are trying to say,” Lila responded. “But she is a class S and we need a class S.”

Niak and Minghua had recently retired and Freedom colony was lacking in class S department. Lila herself was a class S ESP but her powers were used elsewhere. As much as Sae was inconsistent and were sometimes a liability, she was nevertheless a class S hybrid and Lila firmly believed that Freedom colony needed her.

“Ma’am, what happened to Aedy Freedom? He is also a class S ESP, isn’t he?”

Lila answered with silence but Ashuta felt that he deserved to know.

“Ma’am, I’ve been working with you for over a decade now. I think I deserve to know. Or do you not trust me even now?”

She reluctantly told him, “I do trust you. Otherwise, you wouldn’t still be working here.” She was reluctantly to continue but, after letting out of a long sigh, she continued. “Fine, you deserve to know. I am not going to be here forever and somebody has to know what happened to him.”

The core of Freedom colony was a restricted zone. Only Lila had an access to the core. The core of the colony was nothing fancy. When Freedom colony was just starting out, the colony had a single inhabitant module with a docking add-on. As the colony grew, more modules were attached to the core and eventually the core was deeply buried by other modules.

Eventually, the core became a place where no one used and the core also became the deepest & safest part of the colony.

Where Lila took Ashuta was a place which he had never been to. After passing through a complex maze of dark tunnels, there was an elevator with a very dim light. She entered a passcode and the door slid open. Once inside, she had to enter another passcode to get the doors closed. And then she had to enter yet another passcode just to get the elevator moving downwards.

“What you are about to see must remain with you,” She told him with a grave voice. “You mustn’t tell anyone.”

Ashuta remained silent. He had no idea what happened to him but it was apparent that he was in a serious condition.

It was a dark chamber. With a single dim light source on ceiling, it was hard to make out the surroundings. But there was bright light coming out of a single capsule in middle where it was connected to other machines via tubes.

Lila approached the capsule and Ashuta followed. There was a man inside, a man who was best described as a skeleton with just skin on.

Ashuta was filled with doubts. “You can’t mean that this is Aedy Freedom?” But Lila’s silence answered otherwise.

Aedy Freedom, while short-lived, was known to be the most powerful ESP of the era. Before his sudden disappearance, he was being acknowledged as the rightful ruler of the lawless zone. Many welcomed his appearance because it would mean there was perhaps someone who could rival Cecil, the Crimson wizard. Those two never clashed, at least not on surface.

With her eyes downcast and fixed at hopeless Aedy Freedom in the capsule, Lila crossed her arms while letting out a long sigh. Her stare emitted regret and resentment.

“About six hundred years ago, by President Mirren’s order, Cecil visited the colony,” She explained. “Cecil’s objective was, I believe, to establish a positive talk with Freedom colony at that time.”

Unrest was progressively growing in colonies of Andromeda and the existence of Freedom colony did not help the situation. Therefore, President Mirren decided to establish a diplomatic talk with Freedom colony and perhaps annex the colony for a price.

“When Aedy saw Cecil for the first time, he instantly assaulted him,” Lila said. “And few seconds later, Aedy was lying on the ground. I was there but I wasn’t sure what exactly happened. I saw a flash of light and that was all there was.”

She caressed the surface of the capsule.

“I don’t know why he attacked him, either. All I know is that their fight ended in mere seconds and Cecil vanished on spot right after.”

The skinny figure inside of capsule opened his eyes slowly and stared at Ashuta for a moment before his focus moved onto Lila.

“He opened his eyes. Maybe, he is getting better?” Ashuta guessed.

“He is conscious and he can open his eyes and send messages through telepathy, but that is all he is able to do unfortunately.”

She explained that his immune system failed. Therefore, he had to be inside of the capsule for survival.

Ashuta was shocked to know the truth behind Aedy Freedom. However, he wasn’t terribly shocked. The colony had been doing fine without him as far as he was concerned.

They were back in Lila’s office shortly later.

“Does Reed also know about Aedy Freedom?”

Lila nodded and replied, “Yes, he does. I had to let him know since he will be replacing me when my time comes. I let him know not long ago actually. It was soon after the tragedy. He wanted to know and I let him know.”

She was talking about Milky way tragedy.

“You speak as if you know your future exactly.”

She beamed a bitter smile. “I know enough. I have about 150 years or so before I am done and I will retire before that time comes.”

150 years was still a lot of time. Perhaps not for Lila however.

Now with the secret out of the way, they had to get back on the matter at their hands.

“Aedy gave me an idea actually,” Lila claimed. “It’s a little daring but worth a shot.”

She explained her plan and Ashuta went back to see the Fatman once again.

“Welcome back, lad,” The Fatman welcomed him with open arms in his usual red luxury couch. The bunny girl wasn’t present at this time. And the Fatman was dressed up for real this time as well.

Clearing throat, Ashuta told him after taking a seat, “I’ve come here to inform you of Lila’s decision.”

Smiling, the Fatman said to him, “Hopefully good news?”

“She says she couldn’t care less what you plan to do and she is firm on her decision not to let any of her subordinates work for IMG, not even part-time.”

The Fatman’s face darkened upon hearing Ashuta’s statement.

“She says she will pay IMG Ent the insurance payout. However, once done so, she wants IMG to relocate out of Freedom colony.”

As Ashuta continued Lila’s verdict, the Fatman’s face darkened further and he started to glare at him. Regardless, Ashuta continued.

“IMG will have a season to move out of the colony and she recommends Dawn.”

His last statement was more of throwing an insult at the Fatman. Establishing IMG Ent’s new HQ on Dawn was literally telling them to go to the Hell. Dawn simply did not have the infrastructure to maintain and support IMG’s live channel. The planet didn’t even have the security and protection as it was an abandoned planet with no authority in place.

“She says IMG can establish its own government on Dawn,” Ashuta added. “And bully its local inhabitants of Dawn as they please.”

An uneasy silence struck between the Fatman and Ashuta. The Fatman was silently glaring at him and Ashuta was looking at back him. He went through enough to know the value of not stepping back in the eye battle.

Ashuta had no idea how long it had been but eventually the Fatman eased up his face when the bunny girl entered the scene. He let out of a long, pleasant, laugh and said to Ashuta, “Very well! She wins this time. I shall not push the lawsuit idea.”

As soon as the bunny girl sat next to the Fatman, she leaned against the Fatman. “Did I miss a lot?” She softly told the Fatman.

“Nah, girl. We were discussing a possibility of him joining our firm.”

Ashuta widened his eyes and quickly dismissed him. “That is not true!”

Laughing, the Fatman told him as Ashuta stood up to leave.

“Lad, the best porn is from amateurs. That is why we aggressively recruit new faces. Pro and experienced move up to hardcore stuff while newbies do the other soft goodies.”

Ashuta told him firmly, “I am not interested in how you run your business, Mr. Fatman. Please leave me out of it.”

The Fatman said no more but put on a smile and a sort shrug.

When Ashuta returned to Lila’s office to report, he found Sae and Lila arguing.

“You should have waited and consulted me!”

Sae’s high-pitched voice rang through Ashuta’s ears as he entered the office.

“You have no choice in the matter!” Lila exclaimed at her. “You are not working for them and that is final!”

Ashuta could easily guess what they were arguing about.

“You had no right to make any kind of decision on my behalf!” Sae yelled back. “It would have been god damn fun to feature in some porn movies!” She added quickly aggressively, “You are not my mom!”

Lila also responded aggressively at Sae. “I AM your mom and I am telling you that you are not going to work for them!” And then she pointed sideways. “Now, you are grounded!”

Obviously, Lila wasn't Sae's mother. But she knew well how to manipulate her. Sae pouted and tears were dropped through her cheeks. Without saying further, she ran out of the office, passing by Ashuta.

“What a crazed bitch!” Lila uttered. “She actually wanted to work for them!”

Ashuta blurted out although he quickly stopped. “Woah, I would totally...”

Upon receiving a fierce glare from Lila, Ashuta cleared his throat and left the office.

Fin