

This is the last story of Cecil arc. Cecil will still feature in the stories however. It's just that this arc ends here.

After reading this one, one may jump into Shattered union arc. You'd be ready.

This story is also the basis of "alien invasion" that would occur thousands years later.

[Cecil arc] [6] [Project Marat] [8961]

Rev 2.4 (Last modified on May 27, 2019)

Required story before reading this

[Masu arc] [5] [Storm] [8921]

Cecil loved rain. He absolutely loved rainy days. He would go out on rainy days without an umbrella and soak himself in rain. The heavier rain was, the better.

It was probably one of few reasons he opted to stay on Earth in spite of his relationship with Mirren being steadily cracked. Their views were too different. Especially when it came to dealing with Andromeda colonies, their views were on opposite end.

Neither side was too wrong but Mirren's way to handling Andromeda colonies was a little too forceful, not to mention shady. Tax hikes and hidden fees; but Mirren

wasn't entirely wrong about his actions. Money had to come from somewhere and it was true that Andromeda colonists had paid little tax for hundreds of years. However, human nature was such that the colonists was increasingly becoming resentful with his actions. And their inability to have any sort of political presence at the Ark was another aspect they were increasing dissatisfied with.

Another reason for their cracked relationship came from alleged gossips of Mirren's wife, Illy O'ren, having an affair with Cecil. Mirren never confronted Cecil regarding the gossips because, after all, gossips were merely gossips. Furthermore, Mirren didn't have feelings for Illy. Their marriage was a loveless one, for it was an arranged marriage. Mirren was slightly annoyed by the floating gossips. He knew Cecil well enough that he wasn't someone who'd cheat on someone else's wife but the public saw it differently.

The O'ren also cared. They had to.

The clan did not desire a breakdown in Mirren and Cecil's working relationship. For the clan to maintain their power blob, they needed both of them working together; the public needed to know that they were working together.

With the gossips of Illy's alleged affair came afloat, some clan members voiced a possible deal with Cecil in order to nullify the gossips.

It was an arrange marriage between Cecil and Marat O'ren. It was a pretty much perfect deal for the O'ren. In fact, they had been planning this arranged marriage

ever since Marat was born. The marriage would ensure that Cecil would be working with them or for them. It would also make Mirren Cecil's father-in-law, thus tightening their relationship. And lastly, the O'ren expected powerful offspring from the class S ESP couple.

Marat O'ren, despite classified as being a class S ESP, wasn't quite there in raw powers and the O'ren concluded that she was never going to be as powerful as Cecil. Her true powers came in form of an aura around her which later was classified as passive ESP. Her aura boosted mood and powers of those around her immediate vicinity. The clan performed a detailed analysis on her aura and determined that her aura is about to boost one's ESP by approximately 25%. However, due to one's mood being also energized, the effective boost was considered well over 50% which was huge. It meant that a high-end class A ESP could momentarily become a low-end class S ESP without overexertion.

When the deal was presented to Cecil by an O'ren messenger in secret, he didn't seem surprised to hear the proposal. He expected it rather.

For him, there was no romantic feelings toward Marat. He wasn't simply capable of romantically loving anyone, not to mention he was also infertile. However, he did like her as a person. He knew it was mostly because of her aura which made him feel at ease and most importantly her aura granted him an ability to sleep.

An ability to sleep was a very important factor for Cecil. Sleep meant periodic death for him. And periodic death meant rest. Being perpetually conscious was a torture by itself and being conscious for thousands of years was taking a toll on him, to be more precise his sanity.

In other words, he was going insane. Normally, he would have done what the precedents would have done, creating a new persona and letting itself die in progress. However, Cecilia chose not to do so and pushed on, eventually borrowing Cecil's body to make an impact to the world.

The goal was to reshape the world as he saw fit which proved to be a lot more complicated. When the Klisis clan fell, he felt it was over. The clan had to be there. It had to exist as the foundation of a nation he was going to build. With it gone, all seemed to have been lost. What kept him going was Konrad Klisis' will. Originally, Cecil was going to wipe the O'ren out and withdraw from the society. He wanted to destroy the O'ren but was unable to do so with his own hands. He needed to build a foundation and a new plan which would take him hundreds of years just to start.

Cecil was walking aimless on a barren field. It was actually the former clan house of the Klisis. Nothing was there anymore. Debris had been removed and what was left was nothing at all. The O'ren proposed a monument stone to be placed but Cecil rejected firmly and wanted nothing to be present at the site.

The land now belonged to Cecil.

Suddenly at one point, rain started to pour down the area. It was a heavy rain followed with loud thundering above. As an ESP, Cecil had the powers to create a barrier and escape the rain, but it wasn't something he was going to do so.

He loved rain; He loved the sound rain created; He loved the atmosphere rain created.

Year 5194

Cecilia was attending a thesis conference. The scientist responsible for the thesis was known to be slightly off, meaning insane. He was a good inventor in his early years but turned out to be pretty a dud in his later years. His declining recognition was reflected by few people who attended the conference.

His current thesis was titled "Time and Space where everything is within". As ambiguous as the title sounded, so was the content. The thesis contained no facts; it had only hypothesis. Those few who did bother to attend eventually left their seats after half an hour. By time the conference ended, there was only Cecilia.

The scientist looked obviously downbeat and left the conference room with his head dropped.

His thesis was regarding a way to open a gate to subspace. His hypothesis was that the space we live and breathe in was surrounded by invisible & undetectable space tiles and that we should be able to manipulate the space tiles. What he

could not clearly state was how, which was the most important part. He pressed that, if such space tiles could be manipulated as in broken, it could open a gate to subspace, and thus, pave a way for subspace travel.

Cecilia understood why everyone opted to leave in the end. It wasn't much of a thesis. It sounded like just a grumbling from an old man.

The explanation of subspace altered as centuries went on. However, the core definition was never altered. Subspace was basically space underneath current layer all mankind was living on.

What is beyond our current universe? What is underneath our current universe?

Something must be there to fill the void and that "something" was subspace. For few who loosely grasped the concept saw endless possibilities if subspace travel was possible. The most obvious benefit was near instant travel between two places that were light years apart.

However, there was simply no way to prove that subspace existed. If anything, it remained to be just high fantasy of space scientists.

Year 8960

Cecil opened his eyes slowly. He was on a bed and was in a pajama.

Yes, a pajama. Next to him, there was Marat who was sleeping like a baby on sideways. He had a sleep and he had a dream. And the dream was about the subspace thesis.

He hadn't had a dream for a long time and "a long time" was a major understatement. He hadn't had a dream ever since turning into an immortal or whatever it was.

Vacantly staring at his palm on bed, he progressively clinched his hand. There was something he realized ever since obtaining Cecil's body.

It was that how he teleported and how an ESP teleported were fundamentally different.

When an ESP initiated teleportation, his heart, brain, and spine were the first components to teleport and flesh followed microseconds afterwards. The way matters teleported, it was a simple faster-than-light-speed travel. If light speed was 1, the speed of ESP's teleportation was about 100, meaning ESP's teleportation wasn't exactly instant. But no ESP was powerful enough to teleport far enough to make the delay noticeable.

Cecilia's teleportation was fundamentally different. When Cecilia initiated teleportation, she opened a gate and she simply entered the gate, exiting on the other side although it wasn't exactly she entered a gate. A gate embraced her body and she was taken away.

Cecil wasn't sure why it hadn't occurred to him so far that the gate he opened was a gate to subspace and that the teleportation method he had been using was actually subspace travel. Still, there was another issue. Cecil's unique teleportation method worked only for him. He was unable to use his teleportation method onto others and had to use ESP's teleportation if he were to take others with him.

Breakable space tiles

He recalled. The scientist from thousands years ago lamented the fact that there was no feasible way to test his theory.

Even Cecil didn't have a sure-way. After realizing that the teleportation he was using might have been subspace travel, he did attempt to experiment. The result was destruction of a remote planet. There was simply no reliable way to use his abilities in full powers without destroying his surroundings, meaning he was never able to confirm results of his experiments.

Glancing at Marat who was sleeping soundly still, Cecil focused and went deep into his mind. In deeper part of his mind, there were his personas that were once active. Their personalities had dried up and what were left was their memories and experiences which Cecil could use if he desired. Cecil himself was an archive in that sense.

One of the personas was a master fencer in a medieval era and the persona knew everything about precision controls.

Cecil's irises started to glow in red; it was a sign that he was drawing Cecilia's powers and memories. His irises didn't simply glow at once. It was as if fluorescence red fluid was filling his irises.

Pointing in air with his index finger, Cecil focused on tip of the finger. With Marat's aura, he was able to fine-tune his powers even further than what he was originally capable of and he was able to release a tiny orb of powers out of the finger that had necessary destructive powers to vaporize an entire solar system.

And it happened. It was faint but the orb's surrounding started to become distorted and few second later the tiny orb of powers looked as if it sank into a layer, leaving a tiny dark purple void which soon closed itself.

"Thesis #5674-2905?" Dr. Cezary repeated after Cecil told him to look up the database.

Every thesis that was ever released had been recorded at Earth archive. The archive had over 7,000 years of records, some of which were too old to be properly decrypted.

Cezary's fingers became busy as he started to look into Earth archive.

"It's a thesis from ... year 5194?" Cezary said. "Very old thesis...." As he read over the thesis quickly, he concluded. "Not sure how this is a thesis."

“What would you say if I think this thesis is correct?” Cecil said.

Shrugging, Cezary responded, “I’d be more surprised how you came to know this thesis.”

“That is not important though, is it?”

“In the grand scheme of things, no, it’s not,” He said but added, “But if you say this thesis is correct, then we are about to have a major breakthrough in subspace theory. They will ask you about the thesis and how you came to know.”

Regardless, Cecil insisted that it was trivial and wanted to test the thesis.

“Will you give me some time to chew on this so-called thesis? I’ve done few things about subspace myself as well. While I’d say this this thesis is fantasy, it does have few interesting points,” Cezary explained.

Cezary was neither an ESP nor a hyper human. Regardless, he was a bright young man with a sharp brain. It took him only an evening to realize what was needed to test the thesis.

He explained in front of Cecil, Marat, and Masu in Mirren’s office.

“The point with the thesis you provided to me yesterday is simple in concept. In order to destabilize a space tile or tiles, we are going to need high concentration of powers in a small space. Seeing even blackhole is incapable of breaking space tiles, we are looking at something extraordinary to make this happen.”

Cecil felt Cezary was spot on. That was the issue with the thesis.

He continued, "Seeing Cecil wants to test this thesis, I am sure you've done your share of testing and feel confident that it can work, correct?"

Cecil gave him a nod but added, "Marat is required for me to focus powers into a smaller orb which should effectively destabilize space tiles."

Marat nodded in response.

When Cecil tested it out, he was able to open a tiny, few centimeters at best, space. For further studying and to actually prove, the gate needed to be bigger. And he felt it wasn't something he should do alone. As powerful as he was, he needed more brains as well as reliable people.

And he felt Masu and Cezary were reliable enough to work with.

Masu had a look at the thesis as well and he had some comments to make after Cezary was done explaining.

"You do realize that, if anything goes amiss while an experiment is in progress, it would be total evaporation of the Solar system, do you not?"

Cezary quickly responded, "No, it's worse than that. Milky way galaxy might be gone."

Masu looked shocked and eventually spoke after a moment of chilly silence. "Do we have to do this? What do we gain from testing this?"

Actually, Cecil had no answer to Masu's question. A breakthrough in subspace technology would be nice to have but it was entirely a luxury. Mankind currently did not need subspace travel yet. They had been doing fine without it.

Regardless, Cecil pushed on, "Yes, a breakthrough wouldn't mean much at this point but subspace travel and further knowledge of subspace have been century-long dreams of many scientists. Imagine new possibilities if subspace travel would be realized."

Indeed, it was hard to argue with new possibilities that would come with subspace travel. It took mankind thousands of years to explore Andromeda cluster which was just a small part of Andromeda galaxy. With subspace travel, mankind would be able to venture further into the universe. It would simply be a matter of time before mankind would reach edge of the universe with a proper subspace drive technology.

The endless questions of what lied beyond the universe could be answered also. Finding more terran planets would be much easier as well.

The new possibilities were literally endless.

Soon enough, Cecil presented "Project Marat" to Mirren for his approval. The aim of the project was to confirm the existence of subspace scientifically and obtain a sample of subspace.

Mirren scratched his head as he read through the project synopsis. It was written by Cezary and it was clear about its goals, process, as well as dangers.

“It says this experiment can wipe out an entire galaxy. Surely, this is an exaggeration?”

However, Cecil’s silence said otherwise. Actually, it was understatement. Cecil never attempted to use his powers in full capacity, but his powers were virtually limitless. If it was his desire, the entire universe was as good as gone. He had such powers. It was the primary reason personas were used to replace aging spirits: To keep oneself from becoming insane. Thus, preventing the universe from being destroyed.

Cecil did wonder what he was. He wasn’t a creature; he wasn’t even an organism, but he did have consciousness. It was an age old question that lingered from the moment his persona, as Cecilia, was forced to take over her previous persona.

Seven thousand years passed. No persona lasted for this long. No persona remained sane enough for such a long period. But Cecil was still here.

“Mankind will enter a new era if this experiment proves to be successful,” Cecil said firmly. “And the history will remember you as the President who started it all.”

It was an indirect charming offer Cecil was proposing. In the history of United Sol, the best President was Gawain Klisis. No one came close to this legacy, but Mirren could top his legacy if this experiment was successful.

It wasn’t a far-fetched idea to begin with. While Gawain was known as the best President of the nation’s history, even he did not have official support from both

the Bau and the O'ren. He did command respect from both clans but he never had their officially declared support.

But Mirren had official support from both clans. If he were to somehow bring mankind to a new era, yes, he could and would top Gawain's legacy.

A faint smile emerged from Mirren's face eventually.

"Make it work," He said before approving the project.

Project Marat had to be done in secret, and Cecil decided that the most secretive place was right under people's nose, the Ark itself. An underground section of the Ark west wing had been sealed off and was designated to be used for the project.

The Ark was an enormous U-shaped building that was 20 stories above ground and 10 stories under the ground. Large portions of underground floors were unused which was the perfect place for the project to commence.

Cezary created three phase test plan. The first phase was more of a test where Cecil would try to recreate what he attempted before, creating a tiny orb of concentrated powers and confirm the thesis.

The second phase was the similar as the first phase except Cecil would attempt to create a bigger orb. The final phase was the real test where they would attempt to create a human sized, if not bigger, orb in order to create a gate that was big enough for testing instruments to enter.

The first phase went without a hitch. Marat stayed few feet away from Cecil who focused to create a tiny orb of concentrated powers. Cezary was behind a console to record and analyze sensor readings. Masu was a distance away from them as a guard.

Cezary whistled as he scanned the tiny orb of powers which Cecil had just released.

“Indeed enough to vaporize an entire solar system,” He said with mild excitement in his voice. “To think that such powers are confined in such a tiny space... It’s remarkable.”

Masu didn’t need a scanner to confirm Cezary’s findings. He was getting goosebumps by looking at the orb which was size of half an egg. To think that Cecil had the powers to destroy an entire solar system..., he was just glad that such powers did not befall to a mad man.

He had to smile at himself as he thought so. He never really considered Cecil as truly sane, for what he had done was beyond what a sane person would have done. However, he did feel Cecil was sane enough. After all, Cecil never destroyed an inhabited planet so far even when he was clearly capable of doing so.

Just as Masu was done with his thoughts, a phenomenon started to occur where the immediate vicinity of the orb was starting to become distorted.

Cezary was seeing it but frowned. “Nothing on the sensors,” He claimed. He was reading the orb but the distortion wasn’t showing up on the sensors.

Eventually, the orb sank into nothingness where it leaked faint dark purple fumes which vanished as soon as it was seen.

“It is done,” Cecil declared.

“I can see that,” Cezary responded with a sigh. “The orb is gone and nothing at all on the sensors. It simply disappeared.”

“I saw purple fumes,” Marat said.

“So did I,” Masu added.

“I saw it also but nothing on the sensors. We can’t prove anything if we can’t record it,” Cezary said.

Few days later, the second phase test commenced. Cezary also recalibration sensors and tweaked further.

And this time, Cecil created a basketball sized orb.

“The power reading from the orb is beyond the capacity of the sensors,” Cezary declared. “Meaning, should that explode, more than one solar system will be gone.”

This time, the distortion was far clearer. The affected area was larger as well.

“Still nothing on the sensors though,” Cezary said with frustration. “I think we may have to bring an instrument into there.”

It also appeared that Marat was being exhausted which wasn’t expected. It was Cecil who had to draw huge amount of powers. He came up with a hypnosis.

“Perhaps, her aura which is a continuous radiation of her powers is being sucked into the gap created by the orb,” Cecil implied.

Cezary scratched his chin in consideration. “Sensors cannot detect ESP’s passive aura, either. There must be some way to detect both.”

Examination of ESPs were done by other ESPs. It was also the reason ESP grade exams were practiced in physical tests. There was currently no mechanical sensor that were able to detect ESP.

The second phase was nevertheless a success, but Cezary wasn’t satisfied on how it went. He wanted to be able to read sensor readings. Without it, there was no way to scientifically prove the existence of subspace. He decided to put the third, final, phase test on hold while he was working on a new sensor array.

Eventually, the third phase commenced. It was two weeks after the second test. Cezary came up with an entirely new sensor array. Instead of sophisticated sensors which was basically radars, he chose a simple and the most basic sonar. The major difference between radar and sonar was the type of wave they created. Radar used electromagnetic waves. Sonar used sound waves. Since radar wasn’t working, he chose to use sonar instead. He wasn’t sure whether it’d work or not however.

This time, Cecil created an orb that was 20 inches in diameter and it carried even more powers which was proven by a fact that a sensor array went burst as it tried

to scan it. Everyone in the secured room could feel the surreal aura the orb was emitting.

It gave an unpleasant feeling of extreme danger and there was a faint but uneasy breeze swirling around the room as well.

Soon enough, the surrounding area of the orb started to become distorted.

As a large distorted field started to become even more mangled, it looked as if a reflective tissue was being mangled and eventually ripped apart. What was behind the scene was hard to describe. What lied behind space tiles were glowing in unpleasant dark purple.

Cezary ran scans as soon as he spotted the space being ripped apart. The initial scan was negative.

“I am detecting nothing still!” He exclaimed. “The scan shows that it’s scanning an empty space!”

Marat, who was standing very close to the phenomenon, curiously leaned toward the area. She sensed no scent. She sensed no heat or anything.

“Don’t touch it!” Masu shouted from afar.

Unlike previous two tests where the orbs sank into nothingness minutes after it was summoned, the third test went on further, letting the space tiles be ripped

even more. The giant orb of power stayed on far longer as well and the mangled and ripped space tiles were visually clear and vivid.

Meanwhile, Cezary growled as none of his sensors were picking up anything. Having given up on sensors, he decided to perform experiments to the scene itself and approached the orb.

At this time, the orb was slowly sinking into the dark purple substances that was visible from ripped space tiles. He inserted a wired probe into the dark purple space but the probe vanished, leaving just the wire. Cezary was puzzled as to how to conduct tests.

Going back to his sensor station to grab a drone, he noticed a sudden collapse of space tiles around the orb. In fact, everyone noticed it. The phenomenon was different from their last two tests where the visible purple space simply closed up itself. This time, the cracks were becoming wider.

“Woah, woah!” Masu bellowed from a distance. “Watch out!”

Cecil noticed the possible danger as well, but he had to control the orb. A simple mistake could result total evaporation of the Solar system.

Marat screamed, “It’s ... opening!”

The rip was becoming larger and larger by seconds and it was already twice bigger than the orb itself. Not only the unpleasant purple space was clearly visible, it was expanding.

Narrowing eyes, Cecil suggested, "I am killing the orb right now. Give me a sec. Marat, take slow steps backwards. Get away from here."

"But..."

Cecil demanded, "Now."

Without her aura, the orb wouldn't stay perfectly formed and an out-of-control orb was the last thing they needed. Still, she followed the order and took gradual steps backwards.

Despite shrinking orb, the size of rips remained the same however.

Scratching his chin carefully, Cezary suggested, "Perhaps, some kind of threshold has been broken?" It was this moment his sensors started to produce beeping sound. "What the?" Looking down, his eyes moved left to right repeatedly and swiftly.

"Watch out!" He bellowed. "Something is coming from there!"

"Something is what?" Looking back as well as walking backwards, Marat questioned with a puzzled and troubled face.

Cezary's eyes widened as he did not like what he was reading off the sensors.

"Masu, get her out of there now!"

As Masu dashed toward Marat, a silvery needle shot out from the ripped space and pierced through her chest. Being a class S ESP, it wasn't a fatal wound. However, the silvery needle started to wrap around her and started to drag her inwards.

“Marat!” Cezary shouted as he dashed toward her as well to grab her only to be stopped by Masu who pulled him away.

“Too dangerous!” Masu claimed and passed him. “Let me do it.”

At this point, Cecil had shrank the orb to an egg size. Even so, it was too dangerous to let it go and assist Marat who was shrugging to resist being dragged inwards.

“Masu!” Cecil exclaimed at him. “Secure Cezary!”

“What are you trying to do?!” Masu demanded while grasping Marat and tried to pull her away which wasn’t exactly working as she was still dragged inwards.

“Make sure Cezary lives!”

Groaning gravely, Masu nodded at Cecil and placed a barrier around Cezary while letting go of Marat.

“What are you trying to do, Cecil?!” Cezary demanded.

Cecil created a large barrier that covered the entire lab. Meanwhile, the orb that was shrinking between his palms were thrown into the ripped space. He hoped to destroy whatever was dragging Marat.

The orb was still capable of destroying an entire solar system and what occurred as soon as it struck the ripped space was a violent explosion. Extreme heat waves were pulsing out one after another and then air was sucked into the center momentarily only to be released back in pulse with freezing element.

Amid all the chaos, Cezary was fine and wasn’t feeling a thing inside of a barrier Masu had placed on him. Masu himself was hanging in there with a barrier of his

own but he was overexerting as he was bleeding from ears, noses, eyes, and mouth. He had to overexert because he was no longer feeling Marat's aura. It was too much to protect an additional person without her aura.

Neither of them could see what was going on at the center where Cecil's orb was thrown at. All they could see was a violent storm that was pulsing harmful waves in and out.

"Uh, oh," Masu blurted as the ceiling started to come down on them.

"Uh, oh," Cezary repeated after him and added, "Crap, this can't be good."

The whole place was shaking badly and it was hard to remain standing up. Cezary fell to the ground but Masu levitated himself to keep focused. With his overexertion, he wasn't going to stay conscious for too long.

And then a bright pulse wave was emitted from the center with a sharp sound that bashed ear drums as the ceiling came down upon them.

Cecil was standing on a waving grass field. With deep blue sky above and gentle cool breeze, it wasn't too bad. He was alone in the field for a moment before a figure appeared in front of him which looked just like him but with feminine physical features.

“Welcome home, master,” The figure said while emitting a gentle but somewhat sorrow smile. With hands gathered on front, she bowed to him formally.

“Please tell me that I died,” Cecil said emotionlessly but his eyes were blossoming with a faint expectation of death.

She beamed a peaceful grin and told him, “You know we cannot die. Death is not something that is allowed for us.”

The vigor in his eyes soon vanished and his shoulders sagged. The woman noticed Cecil’s obvious disappointment. She told her with yet another peaceful grin.

“We don’t interfere with you,” She said but emphasize right after. “Normally.”

Cecil narrowed his eyes and glared at the woman. Responding to the glare, she gestured her hands defensively. “Do not misunderstand. We know we have no right to meddle in your affairs but we do have a right to give you advices.”

“You’ve chosen to run away,” Cecil told her bluntly. “You’ve given up on yourself and let another persona take over you. But I’ve chosen to stay no matter how excruciating it has been.”

He continued with a louder voice. “For over seven thousand years, I’ve held on. Not one of you lasted few hundreds of years. The scale of damnation isn’t even comparable.”

The woman could speak no longer and she no longer smiled as well. She’d simply stare at Cecil for a moment before bowing formally to him and slowly vanished on spot.

As Cecil opened his eyes, he saw what appeared to be a bunch of debris on him. If he was an average Joe, he would have been squashed to oblivion.

Sighing deeply, he remained still under the debris and soon closed his eyes. He knew what happened. Marat was gone. He did not see her die but nobody could have survived in subspace. He may have survived because he wasn't a living being but that was a different story all together.

But if it was only her death, it would have been better, but something else ... was there and it got out. He saw exactly five of it.

The five which didn't look anything like organisms. They had what appeared to be a glowing green crystal at center with numerous square silvery plates hovering around it. The orb which Cecil threw at them managed to destroy one of them, but he was unable to stop the other four which got away.

Those weren't from this world as far as he was concerned. Those weren't supposed to be here but yet they were here now. What those would do in this world was anyone's guess.

Cecil sighed again. This time, he thought about Marat. Poor lass, he thought about her. She didn't deserve an end like so. She deserved a proper husband and a proper family and most importantly a proper period mark on her life.

.....

Come to think of it, there was absolutely nothing Cecil would have gained from this project. But why did he go for it? Why? Why did he have to start the project? Subspace travel wasn't going to benefit mankind greatly at this point.

..... It all began with a dream.

Debris around Cecil started to float and moved away from him. Covered in dirt and scoots, he slowly got himself up.

The blue sky...

Cecil was looking at deep blue sky of Earth. The whole build had collapsed. One third of the Ark, to be more precise, the west wing, had completely collapsed. The Ark was built to withstand orbital bombardments and yet it could not withstand the explosion.

A little further away, another person stood up; it was Cezary. He looked dejected as he desperately looked around. As soon as he spotted Cecil, he shouted.

“Cecil! Get rid of the debris! We need to find survivors!”

However, Cecil shook his head. There were very little survivors in the vicinity after quickly scanning the area. He reluctantly walked toward a small mound of debris and found two burnt bodies. There was a boy who seemed to be soundly sleeping underneath. Frowning perhaps due to the sunlight, the boy lazily opened his eyes and found Cecil looking down on him.

“Where are mom and dad?” He innocently asked.

Cecil was about to answer him earnestly. He was going to tell him that the two burnt bodies were his parents. When he was about to tell him -

“Cecil!”

It was Masu who was quickly descending from the sky. He was the only one who managed to avoid the collapse. In spite of his previous overexertion, he seemed fine.

“Is everyone alright?” Masu asked as he softly landed on debris-filled ground.

Everyone Masu was referring to was Marat and Cezary. Cezary was fine but Marat was not.

Subspace wasn't an environment any organisms could survive. Marat was a class S ESP but even so there was a limit how long she could survive in such a hostile environment. And opening another gate that was big enough for a human to pass through was no longer possible without her.

In other words, Marat was as good as dead. She would face a painful and slow death if she did not die instantly, Cecil assumed.

Masu also knew Marat was gone. When he had to overexert, it was because her aura was gone. An ESP's passive aura could not be disabled unless the host ESP was dead or went out of range. Logic dictated that whatever happened to Marat wasn't ideal.

Mirren was holding a six-page report that Cezary had written up. However, after reading first few sentences, Mirren dropped the report on his desk and skimmed over the report.

“My daughter is gone. That is what you are trying to tell me,” Mirren spoke with a voice that was devoid of any emotions.

“Yes.” And Cecil relied promptly.

Mirren took a deep breath and remained silent. He clenched his fists and remained still for a moment. At one point, he started to rub his left thumb finger against his index and middle fingers. And, as if he was running out of patience, he repeated silently. “My daughter is gone. That is what you are saying.”

To which Cecil did not respond this time.

Mirren didn't get angry or anything on surface and he dismissed Cecil short after.

However, Cecil was never called back by Mirren since then. He used to attend all conferences Mirren held but he was no longer called to attend such conferences. Mirren had effectively cast Cecil away from his plans.

Cecil took the outcome well and decided to finally go back to Venus.

“It wasn't your fault, you know,” Masu told him while seeing him away at a shuttle port on Earth.

“Does it matter?” Cecil responded calmly. “I feel my role and time are done here. I shall leave.”

He did his best in the situation. However, the reason Cecil was willing to leave without objections was that he had a choice. He was able to save either Masu and Cezary or Marat. At the moment, he scaled value of their lives and chose to sacrifice Marat. He wasn't proud of the decision but felt that lives of Masu and Cezary out-weighted Marat's.

He could have saved her but chose not to. And, therefore, he was fine when Mirren decided to cast him aside.

“What should we do about the data we gathered from the project?” Masu inquired carefully.

“Didn't the President say something about it?”

“No, he hasn't mentioned anything related to the project. Cezary wants to keep the data though.”

“What do you think personally?”

Masu's shoulders sagged. “I don't know. The data itself would be useless and the test cannot be replicated without you and Marat, so I don't think it matters.”

“Whatever happens to the data, so be it,” Cecil stated. “As you say, it's virtually useless.” And patted head of a boy who was with him. It was the boy he rescued at the rubles. His name was Gair. He decided to adopt the boy.

“I see,” Masu nodded repeatedly few times as he answered Cecil. “So be it indeed.”

“Farewell, Masu. You will know when to go back to Mars.”

And just like that, Cecil left Mirren and Earth.

Illy O’ren welcomed Cecil warmly on Venus. She certainly did not behave like a mother who had lost her daughter recently. She was cheerful and energized. She was a woman who was jealous of her own daughter and Marat’s apparent disappearance as the O’ren claimed was more of a blessing than a curse. At least for her, that was.

The O’ren, meanwhile, dreaded the news that Marat was lost. The loss meant they no longer had an official class S ESP in their ranks and the tie with Cecil had been severed. And with Cecil leaving Mirren, the O’ren’s height of powers was in question although nevertheless the clan was still above the Bau for the time being. Some saw it as a beginning of their downfall.

Additionally, Mirren started to take really harsh stance on Andromeda colonists by imposing further taxes. He no longer attempted to sneak in additional taxes. He boldly declared that the colonists had to pay more for the services they received. While Sol residents agreed, the colonists obviously did not, and the tension between the Ark and Andromeda colonists were progressively growing. There were even unverified reports of rebellion blossoming in dark.

However, as for Cecil, he was having a rather peaceful time on Venus. He stayed away from politics and stayed on Illy's villa. He also entrusted Gair's education to her which she accepted with glee.

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