

[The Hammers arc] [3] [Kisia] [9600]

Rev 2.4 (Last modified on Jan 20, 2020)

Kisia entered a chilly changing room. There was a lone woman who was dressed up in a casual suit who was closing her locker.

She seemed to be aware that who entered without turning around to see. "It's been really a long time, you know," She simply said.

"Yes, I know." Kisia replied firmly.

The changing room had numerous lockers attached on walls and there was a big square table in middle. Kisia placed a yellow envelope on the table quietly. The woman turned around slowly to stare at the envelope.

"Before you go, I would like to discuss something with you, Miss Edith."

Edith turned around to face Kisia. She looked somewhat frail but nevertheless looked healthy enough.

"I figured this day would come. How much did it cost to save me?"

"The cost is not a concern of mine. However, if you would like to know...."

"Yes, please." Edith was desperate to know the truth. She didn't really understand why she was saved in the first place. She was nobody.

Kisia sighed weakly. "Your health insurance card was invalid on Venus. Twenty millions of credit has been spent to replace your entire skin, and half a million was used for high-tech hospital room fee... And there were few other factors. In sum, approximately forty millions were spent on you. That was just beginning through

since your healing progress went through a lot of complication. Overall, well over a hundred millions in the end."

Edith looked a bit confused and told her, "And the cost is not your concern."

"No," Kisia answered authentically. "The cost was never our concern."

"Am I missing something here?"

Kisia pointed at the yellow envelope. "Please open it and read the documents in there."

The envelope had several documents. Edith looked over and was surprised.

"These are immigration forms. What's the meaning of this, may I ask?"

"The credits that was spent on you was from an individual's wallet, so it is none of our business. However, the individual that practically saved you left a request."

"Is it a he or she?" She was still looking through the documents.

"A he"

"He wants me to immigrate to Venus?"

"Yes,"

"Why?"

"I don't know."

After barraged by Kisia's straightforward answers, she was forced to be silent for a moment. Eventually, she giggled to loosen up the tension. "This is certainly awkward..., isn't it? I mean it's cold here, and I've had enough of this place already. Can we go somewhere else for a talk?"

Kisia agreed.

Since Edith was completely new to the city, Kisia led her to an outdoor cafe.

"Nice view here," Edith pointed at a table and took a seat, and Kisia sat after her.

The café was consisted of two compartments. It had a wooden cottage-like building accompanied by a fenced area with glass tables and wooden chairs.

"This sure is a nice city, much liver than my hometown on Moon." Edith recalled the city she used to reside. There were no pleasant memories: always busy with her life with little to no rewards in the end, always late on her rents and other payments. It was a typical life of an average person. She eventually came to accept that such was her life.

"The tax rate on Venus is five percent. I believe the president Gvew has increased the tax rate to twenty seven percent."

For being an ESP, or for being herself, Kisia came up with a logical reason for being a nicer and liver city.

She grinned after what Kisia said. "I think it's more than just tax rate."

"Of course, the city development is more active than any other cities, I believe. Also, the economy has been stable and has seen some steady growth admirably."

"Hmm," She released a weak groan. "I think it's more spiritual."

Kisia said no more.

She opened the envelope again and cited over the documents.

"According to these, the Venus government is scouting me for four million. This means I am free to immigrate unless the Earth government counters the fee."

Kisia explained, "The four million is the cost of your restoration on paper."

Edith read the documents again throughout and eventually spoke, "Looks like there is no cheating or anything. I guess the four million scouting thing makes sense, at least to me and you."

"The Earth government would not pay a dime," Kisia said with assurance.

More or less, she was right and Edith knew. She was in a great debt that was not asked to be repaid. Besides, she didn't have any family on Moon. It was easy for her to make the decision. Still -

Seeing Edith was still hesitating, Kisia gave her the final blow.

"Your death certificate has been released from Moon administration. It happened after 30 days of your disappearance. If you explain your situation, your death certificate will most likely be revoked and issues will be taken care of."

The point she was trying to make was simple: It was that they gave up on Edith so easily and quickly. To be a little fair though, any government might have done the same, given the violent outcome of the incident.

Everything became quite clear to Edith.

"Yes, I will accept this immigration," She declared.

"Good, I will also arrange a new job for you. Since you were working for a media company, I will try to get a job related to that area."

"VNN," Edith mumbled.

"VNN, Venus News Network? Is that where you wish to work?"

Edith gave her a weak nod, fearing that her request might be refused.

"I will try that for you, but you will have to start from the bottom, and to be honest, I don't know what kind of job you will start as."

"Thanks," Edith beamed a smile at Kisia. She had nothing to lose.

Kisia's eyes were itching from tiredness, and her neck was stiff. She decided to go home which she hadn't visited for months. Her home was a tiny one-room apartment. She had the money for a much better place, but she had no reason to waste money on a home which she barely returned.

She had an unbelievable busy schedule to cope with because she was literally Cecil's right hand person at the moment. She also worked with Gair as well as being in charge of Venus cosmetic division. In short, she had three full time jobs, at once.

After entering a security code, a metal door slid in a sleek manner. What welcomed her was dust.

There was not much furniture. There was a brand-new wooden desk with some stuff on it, and there was a bookshelf right next to it. She cleaned off a dusted chair with her hand roughly, and sat on it. She forwarded her upper body and laid her chest on the desk. Resting her head on her arms, her consciousness began to fade out.

It was year 9354.

Sunshine rested its warmth upon a garden. As pleasant cool breeze blew, flowers danced in rhythm. There was a small tea table with two antique chairs amongst the flowers.

Kisia and Cecil were sitting on the chairs.

Cecil spoke, "Mistakes happen. And whenever it happens, people will ask you to learn from it and never make the mistake again," Cecil sipped his tea and continued. "But I want you to think differently. I want you to have more perception than others do."

Kisia was leaning her chest on the table, tapping her fingers as if she was bored to death.

"More perception..., I was never born with it," She muttered weakly.

"Perhaps, but you had your head blown up once. You might have gained something from it." It was hard to tell whether it was a joke or not.

Nevertheless, she said nothing but kept on tapping her fingers in a rhythm.

"Whether you want or not, you and the Hammers will eventually be involved in wars and indecent politics, and learning to abuse your mistakes will be a great asset for your survival."

"How am I supposed to understand what you are saying?"

"Once you become predictable to others, you will lose."

She glanced at Cecil.

"You ever laugh or smile? Because I've never seen you do that. It's almost as if you have no emotions flowing in your heart."

Cecil gazed into air as if he was recalling memories.

"I may have had my sweet moment. I can't ... recall clearly however."

"Liar," Kisia replied jokingly. "I was born in a normal family, grown up like everybody else. I was never the best in grades," She could not suppress a giggle. "Old memories."

"I wasn't meant to stand above people." She continued. "But you did save me for a reason, didn't you?"

"I saved you. What you do with your destiny will be completely yours to handle," Cecil proclaimed quietly.

"Then why did you bring me to Venus and telling me all this?"

She wanted an explanation. Everything in her life changed at the point Cecil saved her from a brain disease. Cecil brought her to Venus and they had been staying in Illy O'ren's villa. They were apparently in the backyard of the villa.

"Who knows. I may have had some thoughts when I was saving you though."

"Am I supposed to have a goal in my life?"

Cecil sipped his tea and replied, "A woman's goal was supposed to be to obtain the finest genes she could find."

"That's like thousands years ago." Kisia chuckled.

"It's not," answered Cecil firmly. "It is still going on within clans themselves, such as the Bau and the O'ren families."

"Does it really make a difference?"

"That's how they keep quality of their insiders."

She frowned slightly. "I don't know. I think it's too ...savage."

"Inefficient, I suppose, but a natural way."

She scratched her head and sighed. "This conversation has gone way off topic."

"It has not," said Cecil.

Being an ordinary person, she had nothing better. She was one of those you could never recognize if she was in a crowd. Graduated from a general purpose ESP school and having a brain tumor which decreased usage of ESP power, she was pretty much a normal person.

It wasn't that she resented her situation. She was pretty content with it. She had no problems with the way her life was unfolding before her eyes. She was normal. Her life was normal. She had nothing to complain.

She was employed by a small private software company, but her job was serving people with drinks and emptying trash cans. Her brain tumor was not a threat as long as she did not use any form of ESP powers. Her doctor repeatedly warned her that her tumor was likely to explode upon usage of heavy ESP powers, and even using the power slightly gave her intense headache. Because of her medical condition, she lived pretty much as an ordinary girl.

It was a usual day for her. She cleaned out trash cans and gathered garbage into two large black bags and left the company building to throw away the trash. She opened a rusty metal door. It was a backdoor, and she threw away the garbage bag with a heavy grunt. If she was a normal ESP, she would have simply used her powers to lift the bags instead of physically lifting them.

She was in a dark alley. No one was around, or that was what she thought. She heard someone ramming the door to close. That was when she noticed several men were around her. She had no idea why she couldn't notice them before. They were ... just there when she realized. From look of their eyes, it was quite obvious to her what they wanted. She sensed hunger from them, and it gave her chills.

Without saying a word, they began to approach her. She had two large bags on each of her hand. She threw away one at them which did nothing, so she had one left. In desperate attempt, she ripped the plastic bag and threw garbage at them just to make a chance to run.

However, they used a stun baton on her. She was knocked out and was leaning hopelessly on a wall. She felt powerless and desperately considered using her ESP powers. She tried to calm down and tried to use ESP powers.

Upon establishing her sixth sense, she was stuck with a heavy headache, but she didn't care for the moment; she was about to be raped. She desperately placed a barrier on herself and hoped it was enough to make them give up. But they took out something an ESP would never want to see. It was an anti-ESP pistol. They changed its energy cell. She assumed they were changing their type of energy cell to an anti-ESP drain cell. What it did was drain ESP's barrier and such by releasing a repulsive wave of energy. She knew one thing clearly at this point; she had to power up the barrier. Her headache was becoming worse and worse. The pain turned her body numb.

At one point, she felt that her head suddenly became lighter and saw some fragments of what it appeared to be flesh coming down from above. At the same time, she found the men who were draining my barrier in astonishment. They looked afraid rather. They took few steps backwards and suddenly ran away, screaming.

She knew something happened to her head. She tried to reach her head but found her body paralyzed. Soon after, a rather large piece of flesh was slowly coming down through her forehead. When it was going down through cheek, she realized it wasn't just flesh.

It was her brain or a rather large part of it. Her brain exploded due to the usage of ESP powers. When she realized what was happening, she hopelessly fell down on the ground facing down. She couldn't move. She couldn't use any of ESP's abilities at all. Her sixth sense was shut down.

Death was approaching fast.

It felt like a sick joke.

It was year 9602.

"I have a small job for you."

Kisia was summoned by Cecil one day.

It was to meet Core T. Core T was the CEO of Core software corporation. Venus had been experiencing a license agreement breach with Core operating systems on military vessels when Venus declared independent. Core Corp had been contacting Venus to renew the licenses, but Venus had been keeping silent.

"Core Corp, sir?"

Cecil nodded while dipping his tea.

"What do you want me to do with Core?"

"Do what is necessary for Venus."

It was a very vague answer, but he had a habit of giving out vague instructions and answers.

"Understood," She relied regardless, knowing that she will find out soon enough. She immediately contacted Core T and set up a meeting at Venus outpost, and she herself prepared to leave for the outpost.

Core. T had been trying to deal with Venus government for renewal of licenses on their vessel operating system software.

When Venus declared independence, their vessel operating system software licenses were also revoked as well. Normally, a government would have contacted his company to issue new licenses. However, that did not happen in this case. Instead, what appeared to be happened was that Venus government cracked into the license keys and had been using it illegally.

He was looking up files in front of his desk. His desk was half transparent and was glimmering in weak blue hue. His surroundings were glimmering in weak blue as well as if glowing blue was a theme in his office. There was nothing at all on the walls, not even a window. The floor was made of a pure black stone, again with slight glowing in blue.

A word, Knock, was displayed cutely on an edge of the monitor.

"Come in," said Core.

A man in a formal suit came in quietly as the door was slide.

"We've got a response from Venus,"

While looking at the monitor, he spoke motionlessly. "What did they say?"

"They want us to rendezvous at Venus outpost.

Core finally unbound his eyes off the monitor.

"Why in the world do they want us to meet at the outpost?"

The man shrugged slightly. "Your guess is as good as mine," He said.

Core paused for a moment.

"Do you know by any chance that there is a good cracker on Venus?"

The man shrugged again. "No, sir."

"Ok....," Core scratched his head and stood up. "Get an armored transport ready, we are going."

The man pointed at himself. "Me as well?"

"Y E S," Core said firmly.

Core, his accountant, and his few bodyguards met with an unexpected view when they arrived at the outpost. The outpost was crowded. It was unexpected because the outpost was supposed to be a military installation. Yet, they were seeing loads and loads of civilians as if the outpost was some sort of a tourist attraction site.

Core whispered to his group. "Since when did this place get a life?"

His accountant shook his head. "I've never been to Venus before."

"What are the citizens doing in a military outpost?" Core wondered.

He looked behind where the external dock was located. There was hardened thick glass wall between the external dock and internal dock connected by an automated gate with a pressure system. The dock was busy with incoming and outgoing small shuttles. He noticed that the shuttles were civilian-grade crafts.

He soon noticed something unusual about the vessels that were docked to the external dock as well. There were numerous one manned shuttles docked. Some of those vessels were looking as if they were surfing in the space.

'*Surfing?*' Core wondered and then exclaimed. "Don't tell me they are surfing with solar wind?!"

A female voice sounded before them. "That is one of new entertainment sports on Venus. We call it, sunwave surfing."

Core turned to face where he heard the feminine voice. There was a woman who had a black short hair. Even though her hair was disheveled, he felt her hair style

was charmingly lustrous. She was wearing casual clothing. Therefore, he initially thought she was a citizen.

"Thanks, ma'am. You read my mind." He beamed a smile at the woman.

The woman looked around slowly, asking, "Are you waiting for someone?"

"Ahhh, yes,"

Although Core's objective was not top-secret, it was still a military-related issue. He did not want to expose his reason for being in the place.

"I come here occasionally," He lied. He felt it was a poor lie.

The woman grinned weakly and told him, "I see you know what you are doing,"

"Excuse me?"

"Welcome to Venus outpost, I've come here as a diplomat. I am called Kisia."

"Oh," He bowed to her in a great haste. "Nice to meet you, I am Core. T and...."
Core introduced his accountant to Kisia.

"Do you want me to give you a tour?"

"I'd like to get back to the subject as quickly as possible..." While saying so, he noticed another woman approaching Kisia from behind. She had a long straight brown hair and was wearing one piece mini dress made of what appeared to be latex. The woman tapped her finger on Kisia's shoulder from behind.

"Mm?" She looked behind. "Oh!"

Kisia and the woman hugged softly.

"I see you made it this year," She said with mild excitement.

"Yep, I ain't gonna miss this year's party."

Kisia quickly excused and postponed the meeting date by one day. Core didn't like the fact that he had to wait another day in the outpost. But there was nothing that could be done. He had no one else to contact on Venus.

The woman who greeted Kisia was Maeve. Maeve came back to Venus for the New year celebration. Having skipped last year's party, she was determined to join this year's. The members of the Hammers held a party on every new year eve ever since they settled down on Venus. Maeve was often absent in the party due to nature of her mission that took her far away from Venus.

Kisia and Maeve soon found themselves in a quiet café with a nice view of outer space. Kisia was having tea and Maeve was having coffee.

Holding the warm tea mug with both of her hands, Kisia said while beaming a smile at Maeve. "It looks like all the members are going to be here this year."

Maeve covered the mug with her hands and felt its warmth as well. "Is Karl back, too?"

"Yes, he got into a little trouble back at the Ark but managed to get out alive."

"It looks like it's going well here," Maeve looked around. The cafe was quiet but it was full of people. She could also see a bunch of shuttles that seemed to be floating idly in space.

"What the hell are they doing outside?"

Kisia chuckled and answered her. "Sunwave, it's a new sports that has gained popularity fast."

"Hah," Maeve laughed off. "When he told me to be a merchant, I wondered why he gave me that order. I think I know the reason now."

"Yeah?"

"People in United Sol aren't doing well. Ever increasing taxes and economic recession coupled with the general instability of the Ark wasn't helping them," Maeve explained and said, "I see. And Venus is thriving."

"Preciously."

"Meanwhile...," Maeve took a deep breath and looked at Kisia intensively. "Any romance going on?" She was dead serious.

Kisia was drinking her tea and almost spilled it. Choking few times, she wiped tea off her mouth and talked back, "Excuse me?!"

"Why not?"

She cleaned her lips with a tissue. "Nothing wrong with it, it's just that it'd be not like us if there is any romance between us."

"Come on, we are grown up. We are all singles," Maeve shrugged while frowning pleasantly. "When young men and women get together, there can only be one thing. It's romance."

"Well, I think Gair and Admiral Nikki Sweetheart are getting along a bit, other than that, nothing that I know of."

Maeve clapped her hands once. "Oh! How unexpected." She was giggling like a little girl.

Kisia didn't find it entertaining but was nevertheless pleased that Maeve enjoyed. She saw Maeve off down to Venus and she went to her temporary quarter at the outpost to prepare for the meeting.

Venus outpost had permanent population of twenty thousand residents. It had its own downtown and districts. In a sense, the outpost was a small planet of its own. Ever since Venus declared its independence, Cecil invested heavily into

further expansion of the colony and the outpost was becoming a tourist attraction on surface.

Yes, on surface.

A fragment of past that is as clear as the present...

She couldn't move and she was down.

As her body was becoming cold in the dark and wet alley, She recalled her meeting with her doctor.

"I cannot guarantee as the brain structure of an ESP is still a myth."

Kisia and her doctor were discussing routes for her treatment.

"What's going to happen to me, doc?"

"Either you completely lose your power, meaning you will be a normal human or your power may be decreased significantly. However, I believe that there is a good chance of your power being decreased rather than vanishing completely, so don't worry too much. There is also a chance for your brain to adapt and create a new circle. My point is that I don't know what outcome will be."

She was vacantly gazing and the doctor told her, "I am sorry that I can't be of much help."

She sought a way to heal her brain tumor which was harmless to treat if she was a normal human. But because she was an ESP, it created complications. Her doctor came up with a treatment and it was to install an implant by her tumor which would allow her to utilize ESP. However, it carried dangers of its own.

In the end, she chose not to accept the treatment and decided to just let it be. The tumor wasn't growing, so there was a choice of letting it be there and she chose that route which was the safest according to her doctor. In return, she was instructed not to use her ESP at all.

Living as a normal human ..., she thought it was easy. She was wrong. Not being able to do what one used to be able to do give her a great amount of stress mentally. But she didn't surface her problems. She went on as if she overcame her problems and lived as a normal human. She was forcefully retired from work where being ESP was required and obtained a new job as a low-end employer in a random software company.

Several years passed, it was a normal day for Kisia. At least, it was supposed to be. She was as usual taking out garbage.

All changed from that point. Was it for the better or for the worse?

Well?

Well....

After that fragment of memories, she felt empty. Nothing was going on in her mind and she was simply waiting for the grim reaper to come along. At one point though, she heard footsteps echoing from wet ground of the alley.

'Must be ... one of the gangsters ...'

At the moment, she gave up on everything. Whether the gangster would rape what was left of her or not, she didn't care. She was already facing death anyway.

"Stand up."

She didn't answer. Well, she couldn't answer. She was completely paralyzed.

"Stand up," Whoever the person was said again.

'Stop bugging me...'

And then...

Year 9355

Don't do your best...

Kisia, Maeve, and Cecil Klisis were in the backyard of Illy O'ren's villa.

Kisia and Maeve were sitting around a white round table, and Cecil Klisis was staring at the sky while talking a walk around the garden.

"Do what you can but not best," Cecil lectured casually as he walked around.

"May I ask why, sir? I've been told to do my best always." Kisia, at the same time, stared at Maeve who was knitting something.

"The best, the perfection simply do not exist. If you try to be perfect, then you will make obvious flaws," Cecil explained.

"But sir, that's why we are told to do the best to be even a little bit closer to perfection."

"And that is a big flaw and easy to crack. Anyone with half a brain will be able to foresee what you'd do if you always try to do the best you can." Taking his eyes off the gray sky of Venus, Cecil crossed his arms and faced Kisia. "Everyone knows they are going to do their best or at least they always try so. What is your definition of best?"

Kisia didn't answer. In the meantime, Maeve who was still knitting answered.
"What you think best is the best."

"There is no answer for it. The only answer is within yourself and the answer will vary from a person to another." Cecil pointed his index finger high at the deep gray sky. "When your opponent is ..."

Cecil noticed a maid bowing to him from a distance. Illy O'ren must have called him.

"Excuse me. You are all dismissed for today." Having said so, he left the backyard.

Cecil had been giving them a five minutes length lecture every day. After the lecture, it was all free time.

Kisia stared at Maeve again and eventually asked after a moment.

"What are you knitting?"

"A robe," Maeve replied immediately.

"A robe? For him?" It was an easy guess because there was no one who'd wear a robe other than Cecil.

Maeve nodded.

"If I may, can I ask you why?"

She looked innocent and asked back, "Why not?"

She couldn't answer back. She was right. There was no reason not to.

"His robe wears off very quickly probably because he wears it all the time, twenty four hours a day, seven days a week. Three hundred sixty four days a year."

"He doesn't sleep?"

"Nope."

"Really?"

"Yeah."

Maeve didn't show any sign of stopping, so Kisia went out, she had no destination. She just went out.

It had been a few months since Kisia was taken to Fallen Crater on Venus. Still she found it amazing that a billion of population were occupying in a large crater. The city had a very sophisticated structure throughout underground and above ground to support the living area. What one would see above ground was less than half of it.

She was wandering the downtown. The downtown area was as large as a size of a few cities combined. If the downtown of Moon was reflecting the dark side, the downtown of Fallen Crater was reflecting the light side. The street was clean as a mirror. Not even a single piece of garbage was spotted. The streets were blossoming with life and businesses were prospering.

At one point, unexpectedly, someone knocked her back. It was Azazzel O'ren.

"Mr. O'ren? I didn't expect to see you here." It was indeed a pleasant surprise.

Azazzel O'ren was one of few pro-Bau O'ren member who wanted to mend their broken relationship with the Bau. He was a quite famed ESP as well. He was often on Earth and worked with the Bau but, for the time being, he was on Venus this time.

She had met Azazzel O'ren few times previously due to a fact that she was staying at Ill O'ren's villa. Many insiders of the O'ren welcomed the presence of Cecil Klisis at the villa. The O'ren wanted blood of the Klisis for many generations. The floating gossips of an affair between Illy and Cecil was a welcoming one for them.

Kisia, however, knew the gossips weren't true at all.

"I was hanging around here to kill time," Azazzel replied casually.

Kisia looked over at Azazzel. Depute of his advancing age, he was still handsome. He had brown hair with brown eyes. He was wearing casual day-to-day clothes. No one would think him as one of the most important people on Venus.

"Hey, you wanna" Azazzel looked around and searched for something. Soon, he pointed at something cross the street. It was a bakery store. "Eat something?"

Kisia felt awkward for him to buy a meal for her. The thing was that she never really knew Azazzel. She was only told of who he was and saw him a few times from the villa. They ran into each other few times and gave each other occasional greetings; that was it. In fact, she was actually surprised that he knew her name.

But then, she didn't really have any reasons to refuse, either. "Sure, sir..."

She followed him across the road and entered the bakery. As she entered, a tasty smell of various breads allured her nose. There were a few people sitting on the tables next to a glass wall.

Azazzel approached to a chef and said.

"The usual please."

It appeared that it was not his first visit.

"What do you want to eat? Pick one," He showed her the menu which was attached to the ceiling above the counter. The menu was made of hologram and was updating quantity of breads in real time.

Kisia was not very interested in food. It had been more than a month since she ate her last meal. It was a part of a training Cecil made her do so but he never forbade her from eating. He simply told her eat as little as possible. ESPs did not have to consume food as much as ordinary people did. They had other means of obtaining nutrition.

"I'd like to pick what you picked, sir."

Azazzel nodded and sent a hand gesture to the chef.

"Hey, call me Azazzel. I don't like to be called 'sir'," He said meanwhile.

Kisia frowned slightly. "But..."

She had a feeling that he was hitting onto her and apparently she didn't like his sudden approach. Regardless, it appeared that she didn't have many choices at the moment.

"If you insist..., Azazzel."

Year 9602

Kisia and Core met again the next day. Although Kisia had been given no clear order as what to do, she had come up with an idea.

"We are not going to renew the licenses," She declared, and it came as a quite shock to Core. He was speechless for few seconds, probably more than that.

"E, excuse me?" That was all Core could say after the initial shock had subsided.

"Venus government is not going to pay anything in order to renew the licenses, I said."

"Huh?" He finally snapped out of his confusion. "That is ridiculous! Why did you even call us to set up a meeting then?"

"To inform you of our intention," She said firmly.

"Ridiculous!" He could not resist smashing the table between them. "Absolutely ridiculous!"

She grinned. "True," She agreed, "But there is nothing you can do about it."

That was true. Venus was no longer bound to any laws of United Sol. In other words, Core could not even sue. He turned around in his chair and glared at his accountant who was also speechless. Upon realizing his glare, the accountant shook his head repeatedly.

"Argh!" Growling, he wanted to just leave the scene which was an official conference room provided by the outpost. However, he did not because, he knew that, if he simply rushed to leave, any potential deal would not be possible. It was indeed ridiculous, but that was not the point at the moment. It had taken him few minutes to cool down a bit.

"Alright, Miss," Core said finally after calming himself down. "Let us negotiate."

However, Kisia shook her head. "There is nothing to be negotiated. We are not going to pay for the licenses. We will simply crack the software and develop them by ourselves."

He felt as if blood was flowing upwards into his head all at once. His accountant whispered to him hastily. He took a deep breath and spoke again. "We will give you a discount."

She shook her head firmly.

"Fifty percentage of discount," Core continued on though, and she shook her head again.

"Sixty!"

The same response from Kisia.

"Seventy!"

The same.

"Eighty!"

The same.

"GOD DAMN IT!" Core's voice burst in utter anger. He tried to jump on Kisia to attack but was stopped by his accountant. "Let go of me! I want to hit that bitch!"

"If assaulting me would make you feel better about us stealing your software, so be it," She said with firm determination on her face and in her eyes.

Core stopped his rampage all of a sudden. "Let go of me," He told his accountant who was reluctant to let him go. "Let go of me!" His accountant finally let him go. After he fixed his suit, he looked right at Kisia.

"Fine, I get it. You don't want to negotiate. What did you call me up here for then? Did you just want to inform me of your decision?"

"Yes."

He almost swore at her, but his accountant stopped him by covering his mouth with his hand.

Year 9354

Cecil and Kisia were in the garden of the O'ren villa again. And the weather was the same as before, clouded and breezy. Nothing disturbed them other than pleasant breeze and joyful dances from flowers.

"The difference between elites and geniuses?" Kisia repeated after him.

"Yes."

She let out of a groan. She never thought about the differences. In fact, she felt the two words were the same. "I don't know?" was her answer.

Cecil replied shortly after, "Elites are those who complete their given tasks as efficiently as possible. Good examples is shown in school classes. Those who obtain top grades constantly are elites."

"Hm, and geniuses are...?"

He continued, "Geniuses are those who complete his tasks by their own ways. They don't necessarily complete tasks as fast as elites. They may not even complete or even care. They live their lives on their own terms and don't give a damn about some mundane tasks and rules they were given."

She chuckled. "I am not sure whether you are right, but according to you, all losers at school classes are geniuses."

"Might well be. Winners in life are determined at the end of their lifespan. Will they smile at the end? That's all that matters."

"But, sir, elites make better money since they are better educated and have better degrees. They work less and earn more money. And money translates to happiness," She argued.

"True, for ordinary lives. Money is essential for ordinary lives. Money doesn't mean anything for people like me, Illy O'ren, Masu, and such."

"I don't know, sir..."

“You don’t have to understand for now. Just keep what I’ve told you in your mind. One day, you may realize, and when you do, expect a good boost to your ESP capabilities.”

Year 9358

It came as a big surprise when Kisia realized she was having a relationship with Azazzel O’ren. She didn’t realize at first, but apparently she was spending more and more time with him on regular basis.

She never had a relationship before; she was always preoccupied with her brain tumor. And when she was finally free of it, she was taken in by Cecil Klisis.

“Something’s bothering you?”

They were in the garden as usual. Kisia seemed to be very confused and wasn’t listening to what Cecil was saying.

“I..., uh...” Although she took her time, she eventually told him about her new relationship.

As expected, Cecil didn’t seem surprised or anything.

“It’s your life. Enjoy it while it lasts.”

She certainly felt that Cecil might be hiding something she wasn’t aware of. Regardless, she had no way to find out.

When she asked Azazzel if they were having a relationship, he casually answered her.

“Why not? I am a male. And you are a female. It’s heterosexual. I don’t think there is any problem with that.”

“But you are Azazzel O’reen.”

“And?”

“And...,” It took a moment for Kisia to continue. “I am nobody.”

He had a pleasant laugh. “Thanks for pointing that out. Yes, everybody knows me. Every woman I’ve met knew who I was. You didn’t know though.”

She was confused by his statement because she knew who he was. “I knew who you were.”

“True, but you didn’t care anything else other than my identity.”

“Pardon?”

They were in an outdoor cafe on Venus, having their usual drinks; tea for Kisia and black coffee for Azazzel.

“Every opposite sex I’ve met, they always wanted something from me, a position as my girlfriend or even wife for fame and money. Maybe, it has been just my bad luck, but all women I’ve met have been power hungry bitches.”

Even then, Kisia was pretty much content about what he said and was casually dipping her into her tea which Azazzel beamed a big grin about and he told her, “You see, you don’t really care about all that crap. You are just who you are.”

“I don’t know. I don’t really care to be honest. I know you are famous and all, but I don’t care.”

“Perhaps, that’s the way it should be. I don’t know. I’ve been set up with so many bad women, AKA gold diggers.”

If anything was amiss from her newfound relationship, it was assassination attempts which she didn't tell him about but informed Cecil about it.

"Normal," He responded indifferently. "The O'ren would not want Azazzel to marry a civilian like you, so they would rather have you dead."

Then she told him about what Azazzel told her about being set up with "bad women".

"I can see where he is coming from," He responded, again, indifferently. "The O'ren clan has been trying to set him up with a suitable woman for a long time."

"What kind of woman would be 'suitable'?"

"Power hungry, politics-aware women. He will likely be the next clan headman. They don't want a subtle woman."

Assassination attempts had been so far rather passive; it had been mostly poisons which seemed to have no effect on her to which Cecil responded, "You have a drop of my blood in you, and my blood is the most potent poison in the universe. No poison can harm you."

The relationship went on for few years. As if the O'ren was starting to accept the situation between Azazzel and Kisia, assassination attempts had died down as well. Eventually Azazzel informed his clan council his intent of marriage which was met with, expectedly, a strong refusal. However, he showed no sign of backing down and an internal conflict loomed over the situation where some members were supportive of him. They argued that he had every right to choose his own wife where the council argued back that a man of his position had to follow the clan's needs.

The internal conflict spread rather fiercely throughout the clan. Realizing that what he had wanted was beyond his reach, he committed a suicide with a note of will.

The content of his will was never released by the O'ren council.

Kisia was informed of this sudden event by Cecil himself in the garden. She looked shocked but seemed quite content.

"I am not too shocked. I mean I am shocked but I am not devastated," She said rather indifferently. "As I got to know him, I realized he was hurting inside."

With Azzazel's death, Illy O'ren became a strong candidate to be the next headman. This was partially due to her marriage to President Mirren.

"The O'ren missed out their chance to have possibly one of the most capable leaders. I am quite certain that the O'ren council is ruing this outcome," Cecil remarked indifferently.

"Well, they deserve whatever outcome," Kisia said.

"Indeed."

Year 9602

They were having a new-year party. The Hammers held an anniversary party every year. Two of them were missing last year, but everyone was here this year. There were even more people invited, Karin Bau and Edith who had recently been cured.

With additional people to the party, it had put Nikki Sweetheart in an awkward situation. Her house was meant to be for only a few people. Her house was barely able to take seven people including her last year. There was no way everyone would fit into the house.

Therefore, they were forced to rent a restaurant, and they planned to rent a whole restaurant. However, Kisia and few others did not like the idea of spending quite large sum of credits for the party and they ended up having the party inside and outside of Nikki's house by utilizing a little backyard she had.

Kisia and Maeve were inspecting a little backyard that Nikki's house had to offer to see what could fit in that area.

Kisia looked around and uttered, "It looks like it would barely fit anything!"

There was a road not far from the backyard. But cars in the era weren't noise makers. Thus, it was quiet. The view wasn't great however. The backyard had nothing but grass, dying grass to be more precise due to the lack of care from Nikki.

Maeve glanced at the surroundings. "... She must be pretty rich to have a house with a backyard." Pretty much everyone was living in an apartment. The crater was a small place for the amount of people it held in. Therefore, maximizing living space was a top priority. But there were indeed houses here and there for the richer people.

"Eh...", Kisia looked as if she just realized. "She has inherited some of Mrs. O'ren's assets."

"I heard she passed away," said Maeve.

"That is what we've been told. But Cecil said her body wasn't found, so who knows."

"Well..., when Cecil is skeptical, there is a good chance that something weird is happening," Maeve remarked.

"Hah, you've got that, right. Anyway, let's get on with cleaning the area."

"Right."

At one point, Maeve threw a random question in the wild.

"Kisia, who do you know why he calls us 'The Hammers'?"

"Oh?"

"We are called hammers in hope to break the common sense."

"Really."

"We have none or little education degrees. For an instance, I've never been to a school or an institute or a college or even a university. What education degree do you have?" Maeve asked with a bit of taunting tone.

"... I graduated a local ESP academy... And I had been working for a company until I had a brain disease."

"What kind of work did you do?"

It took some time for her to answer. "Some miscellaneous works... getting coffee, cleaning office... although I was hired for paper works."

In other words, Kisia basically never had a decent career.

"See?" Maeve seemed to be proud for making the point. "Gair doesn't have any education, either. I know that for sure. And I know Vakha quit his hyper-human training institute. I bet the rest of the Hammers don't have great education records."

"I have never thought of that... But, yes, you do have a point."

"Our existence breaks the common sense. No government would hire people like us to work for them. Even worse, we are running a government here on Venus."

Kisia felt Maeve did really have a point.

Maeve continued, "We are supposed to be human garbage, Kisia. None of us would have had an important role in the society if Cecil did not accept and took care of us."

Kisia mumbled, "I am supposed to be dead without him"

"Maybe, we know this from our hearts. And that is why none of us stands against his orders which are often ridiculous."

A very weak, almost unnoticeable, grin surfaced on her face.

- Fin