

## [The Hammers arc] [6] [Asylum] [9613]

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### **Prerequisite stories**

[Milky way arc] [4] [An end to many] [9613]

### **Related stories**

[The Hammers] [4] [Kasper] [9604]

[Shattered union arc] [4] [Tournament] [9605]

[The Hammers arc] [5] [Edith] [9607]

Where Devon and Cca Volant were taken was Venus outpost. They were teleported to there by Kisia. Therefore, it took only seconds for them to find themselves on the outpost. Kisia didn't accompany them, claiming that she still had some unfinished businesses at the Ark.

They were promptly greeted by Elemist as soon as they arrived.

"Greetings," Elemist hailed them gracefully. "I've been expecting you two."

Cca Volant looked obviously glad to be out of the situation whereas Devon looked downbeat. For her, she had to quickly make a decision or it was her life. However, after she felt safe, waves of regrets came hard on her. She left her father's body at the Ark and there was nothing she could do. What was worse was that she would not be able to attend his funeral if there was going to be one, let alone being able to visit his grave if any...

“Please follow me,” Elemist told them kindly. “I will handle your express immigration forms and get your Venusian citizenship by end of today.”

Cca Volant and Devon did just that and followed him silently to a secured room where few officers were waiting with documents to fill.

“Sir, just so that I am aware, we will be protected from United Sol, yes?”

It was Cca Volant who asked. He was genuinely concerned with his safety.

“You are probably going to go through what I had to go through,” Elemist explained. “Stay low for some years and get employed, thus starting over.”

He explained further that he was once a terrorist who sneaked into Venus. He was caught and was subsequently jailed for a short period. He was ordered to stay low for few years and was employed by Venus government. His direct superior officer was Kisia, meaning he was working at Venus cosmetic division.

Cca Volant was nodding along, looking interested while Devon looked dejected. Elemist noticed Devon’s condition and carefully asked her what was bothering her.

“Do you even have to ask?” Devon raised her voice.

Elemist knew what she meant and responded firmly, “But you made this choice. Live with it.”

Devon looked like talking back, except she didn’t. Instead, she let out of a long sigh. He was right after all.

Yes, she made a choice. She had to make the choice or it was her life. However, she felt she was forced into making the choice of fleeing. The whole thing felt like the worst nightmare. The unbelievable amount of refugees flowing in, the decision her father made, and his assassin turning out to be his right hand man.

Everything felt like a giant train wreck.

Regardless of her emotional crisis, the hours went on. Cca Volant and Devon had their photo, finger prints, and DNA samples taken and they filled out a short forms to complete their express immigration.

Express immigration was a truly expedited way of immigration. It was often used by political refugees to escape from one nation to another. Freedom colony used express immigration very often as a way to provide shelters for a fee.

An ordinary immigration required communication from both nations. One nation would release a citizen's info and the other nation would take it and adopt it. However, express immigration was different. It was more of a forceful immigration. The receiving nation would simply create a duplicate ID of a citizen from his home nation. And the citizen will declare his previous identity from his home nation forfeit which basically forces his home nation to accept removal of the citizen from their national database.

Because there was no communication required from both nations, the immigration process was swift. For Cca Volant and Devon, all it took was just few hours and they were Venusian citizens.

"So, this is it?" Taking his brand new ID card, Cca Volant was in awe. It was fast.

"You are legally still a United Sol citizen," Elemist explained. "Let's say you have a dual citizenship for now. United Sol will remove you from their database with time being."

Devon wasn't sure United Sol would forfeit her identity as well. After all, she was Gvew's daughter. But she decided not to bring that up; she wasn't just in mood for any chit chats.

Having left the office, Elemist asked them what they wanted to do next.

"Your future, I am asking," He quickly added with a faint grin on his face.

“Do we have a choice?” Cca Volant asked. It was actually a genuine question. He didn’t think he’d have a choice.

“Well, you don’t have lots of choices,” Elemist replied with a shrug. “But then who doesn’t?”

And then Devon spoke. “Do you mind if I ask for a favor?”

There was a momentary silence as Elemist stared at her. “Sure?” He eventually replied her. “What favor?”

“Is it possible for me to speak to the Crims...., no, Cecil?”

Because her father always used to refer Cecil as the Crimson wizard, she was used to call Cecil the Crimson wizard. However, the current situation was different. Her father no longer lived and she was apparently settling down on Cecil’s planet. Therefore, she had to pay a certain amount of respect.

“What you are asking is out of my league,” Elemist answered her earnestly. “But I will tell someone who has more authority about your request.”

“Sooner the better,” Devon insisted.

Cca Volant was quick to choose his option however. He decided to work as a security guard at a company. It was one of available choices Elemist offered.

“Stay low for few years,” Elemist suggested.

“I am amazingly good at staying low,” Answered Cca Volant half-jokingly. He was in fact exceptional at staying low in truth. It was not his nature to cause commotions which was exactly why he was hired by Devon. She felt he was the perfect sidekick to have around.

As for Devon, she had several choices but decided to postpone making her decision and opted to stay on Venus outpost for the remainder of the day which Elemist accepted.

“I will get you a room,” He told her while taking a cash card out of his pocket.  
“And this is yours.”

It was a cash card of 10,000 credits which wasn't a big amount but Devon was penniless at the moment as her bank account on Earth was frozen.

“Cca Volant will be given the same just in case you are wondering,” He added.

In fact, Elemist himself was given the same amount when he was starting anew as well.

“What is this for?” Devon inquired while reluctantly taking the cash card.

“It's the policy. Everyone who settles down here via express immigration is given one of these. Even I was given it.”

A bank account was tied to an individual's ID. Thus, Devon already established a new bank account on Venus by being given a new Venusian ID.

“I didn't say I wasn't going to take it,” She said while slipping the cash card into a gap on her belt. While her outfit offered no pockets, there were a lot of gaps where she could shove things into. She also slid her ID into her bra.

“Charming,” Elemist remarked. “Good luck, lady. I or someone else will come to see you early tomorrow morning.”

Devon was on a bed. She was in her undies and was watching News 9. A holographic panel was being projected onto ceiling and she was watching the news while lying on bed. She pillowed her arms as she vacantly watched the news.

As it had been only one day since her father's assassination, News 9 was all about the assassination and Milky way to our home tragedy.

A fine looking female news anchor was speaking vigorously.

“This is a follow up from the last news. It has been confirmed that United Sol President Gvew has indeed been assassinated. We are unable to determine at this

point who the assassin is. We also do not know what is currently going on at the Ark.”

Devon had her eyes closed at this point and was only listening to the news.

“Meanwhile, I do have a fresh report from our reporter Edith about the Milky way incident. She is on the line. Edith?”

A smaller window popped in top left corner of the screen, showing Edith’s face in what appeared to be a shuttle. Of course, Devon had her eyes closed still and wasn’t seeing it.

“Hello, this is VNN reporter Edith. Current vicinity of Earth is, pardon my language, whacked. There are debris everywhere and Earth Defense fleet is stuck. Shuttles are being deployed to collect debris right now.”

The whole screen was displaying the chaos and Devon slowly opened her eyes to see the debris filled space where Earth Defense fleet was completely stuck. The space was so dense with debris that sailing through the area was no longer an option for the moment.

“Are you stuck as well? The news anchor inquired Edith.

“No, I am fine. Our shuttle is a distance away. Meanwhile, I believe the Ark has declared comet emergency to both Earth and Moon.”

Debris were going to fall onto the two planets due to the gravity and some debris was big enough to survive Earth’s atmosphere entry. For Moon, even a small debris impact was potentially very dangerous.

“It isn’t a big issue for Earth. Most of debris are going to get evaporated, but it is posing to be very dangerous for Moon where debris can freefall all the way to surface,” Edith stated.

The screen returned to normal view.

“Thank you, Edith. You’ve been wonderful so far,” The news anchor told her. “This is all we have so far. Thus, we are moving onto next news. Gair, the vice President, has had a public speech regarding the recent developments. He has expressed a desire to assist United Sol in clearing out the debris.”

There was no mention of Cecil at all throughout the news and Devon found it strange. The planet was supposed to be ruled by the Crimson wizard. However, from the news alone, it was like Gair was running the planet.

Sighing deeply, Devon turned the channel off and closed her eyes.

A familiar face came to give her morning greeting when she woke up. She recognized the face but couldn't recall his name. As if he knew what was going through her mind, he promptly told her with a grin.

"The name's Karl. Did you sleep well?"

"I don't know," She answered while looking uninterested.

Regardless, Karl went on to tell her that he was taking her down to Venus surface. Devon had no reason to refuse. Thus she complied by remaining silent.

There was one aspect of Fallen Crater that Devon liked very much. It was the city's atmosphere. Fallen Crater was the largest city and the most populated city known to mankind. The city's population was nearly 2 billion and the size of the city was half width of Moon. In a sense, Fallen Crater was a nation by itself.

Yet, the city atmosphere was calm and quiet on surface. The reason for this was because majority of population lived underground. Another reason was more of a secret. Cecil had instructed Illy O'ren on how to renovate the city while she was the President of Venus. The city had gone under reconstruction for 800 years and the end product was a city that was unlike any other from a design point of view.

Devon noticed that the shuttle Karl was piloting wasn't landing on Venus international shuttle port.

“Where are we going?” She inquired calmly. She felt she could be assassinated. But she wasn’t going to fight against if it was so. She was depressed enough that being assassinated didn’t bother her at the moment.

“I thought you wanted to meet Cecil,” Karl answered. “So, we are going there directly.”

Vicinity of Venus international shuttle port was clear of skyscrapers due to safety. When Karl diverted to another route, he flew the shuttle through few seemingly dangerous routes where the shuttle had to fly through narrow gaps in skyscrapers. Such maneuvers may have freaked out ordinary citizens but it didn’t deter Devon who calmly and uninterestingly was looking through a window.

The shuttle eventually entered another area void of skyscrapers where there was a single building which resembled a Greek style library. There was a private shuttle landing pad not far from the building and Karl promptly landed his shuttle there.

Opening the door, Karl told Devon, “You must go alone from here.”

“Is he in there?”

“Yes, it’s just a library. He is in there alone. Good luck finding him. He is aware that you are coming though.”

There was no one in the area, not even guards. Standing before two grandeur wooden doors, she gently pushed the doors.

The first impression when Devon opened two large wooden doors was a strange scent. It was actually the scent of old books but having never seen paper-bound books in her entire life, it was an alien smell for her.

She had never seen book shelves, either. Thus, the whole interior was alien to her, not to mention visible lack of light. The library was lighted by few candles mounted on walls. Being a hyper human, however, her rod cells in eyes swiftly adjusted in seconds.

As she took careful steps into the dark library, she was embraced by surreally uncomfortable silence. Anyone who traveled a lot in space was used to complete silence but this was a different kind of silence. She had goosebumps all over her body as her hands searched for her guns only to realize that her guns were confiscated when she was getting her new Venusian ID.

Alas, she slowly ventured into the dark library.

The library was a two-story building with its interior made of mostly wooden materials. Wood was rare on Venus which meant that the building interior would have been exquisite if there was adequate light.

“Is... anyone here?”

She wasn’t expecting an answer and there was none. The interior was basically a big hall. The only dividing element was the book shelves. Thus, locating Cecil wasn’t practically hard; it was just time consuming.

When Devon spotted Cecil, he was leaning against a wall while reading a book.

“Welcome,” Cecil said and closed the book he was holding. “You must be Gvew’s daughter.”

Devon meant to say something nice. After all, she was in his domain, but what came out of her tongue wasn’t something she planned.

“My father hated you,” She said, only to cover her mouth right after.

“I take no offense in what you said although you are wrong. Your father did not hate me. He admired me.”

She felt ridiculed and replied, “And I am to believe you?”

Cecil crossed his arms while still leaning against a wall. “No, it is up to you whether you believe me or not. What have you come here for?”

Devon took a breath and organized her thoughts quickly.

“I wanted to ask whether my father’s decision was correct on the refugees.”

“That hardly matters now, doesn’t it? He made the decision and went down with it.”

“He was shot in the head,” She raised her voice slightly. “No one deserves to die like that. And, for a president of a nation to die like that, he didn’t deserve that certainly.”

“The same can be said for the refugees. They did not deserve to die like livestock,” Cecil said indifferently.

Devon couldn’t talk back. She wanted to say she didn’t care about the refugees but realized that, if she said so, the point she was trying to make would be moot.

“It’s good that you have the perception to be able to have a wider view,” Cecil stated. “I believe you don’t care about the refugees. Why should you? But, if you are to press the idea that your father didn’t deserve such an end, you must preserve others’ right as well.”

Devon let out of a deep sigh and shrugged.

Cecil continued regardless, “Your father’s regime was going down. If your father survived, he would have eventually been assassinated either way. If not, prosecuted. Either way, it would have been ugly for him. The way he went down, at least he will be seen as a hero, sort of.”

“... So, you agree that he made the right decision?”

“Either choice would have resulted in his death. I can assure you that.”

Devon narrowed her eyes and demanded, “How can you be so sure?”

*“Because I was the one who ordered his assassination,”* Cecil declared.

For a brief moment, Devon felt ... nothing. And then she felt her blood was surging upwards. And when she came to her senses, she found herself stuck deeply into a wall; she had apparently charged at Cecil but was blown away.

A series of sharp pain started to be felt across her back. A distance away from her, Cecil stood firm. Devon was about to shout at him but coughed blood instead.

Book shelves were down in the path. Few shelves were intact but rest were broken horridly and book pages were coming down as if feathers were coming down.

There was a moment of a silence between them until Karl violently opened the main doors.

“What happened?!” He exclaimed. He quickly realized what happened.

“Sir!” Karl ran up to Cecil and got down on one knee. “Sir!” He repeated with a louder voice.

“I am aware, Karl,” Cecil responded quietly.

“May I?”

Cecil nodded at him.

Standing up, Karl approached Devon who was about to lose her consciousness. He dragged her out of the wall and carried her out of the library.

“It’s too late for would-have and should-have,” Cecil said while Karl, carrying Devon in his arms, passed by.

And then she passed out soon after.

Devon had regrets which she came to realize only after the mess. It kept bothering her that her father died alone. She lamented the fact that even she, his own daughter, was standing against him in his last days. It irked her that, when her father needed her support the most, she turned her back at him.

And recalling him lay cold dead on his desk with a plasma shot on his forehead...

She felt she should have sided with him. She felt she should have been on his side.

She should have...

*Would have...*

Yes, it was too late. But it wasn't a simple matter of turning one's back on the past and walk away. Her regrets were going to stay with her until the end.

When she opened her eyes, she saw a ceiling fan spinning slowly. Looking around, she realized she was in someone's room.

With no one around, she let out of a deep sigh. Recalling what happened earlier, she was still feeling some pain from her back. Moaning, she managed to get herself up from a bed. It was when someone entered the room.

"You are up."

She recalled the face. It was Kisia.

"Is this your place?"

"Yes, Karl took you here, without my permission, might I add."

Rubbing her eyes, Devon told Kisia, "Not sure what you are expecting from me... Do you want an apology or something?"

"Nope, well, take a shower if you need. You were sweating a lot."

Devon did feel like crap and decided to take up on the offer.

Kisia's place was a simple one-room apartment located in one of skyscrapers. A traditional setup of Fallen Crater apartment was that an outside wall of a living room was transparent, glass, setup which Devon didn't notice at first because the wall was darkened initially.

When she came out of her bath in a bath robe, she found the wall completely transparent with Kisia sitting by a table with a cup of tea.

“I threw your underwear into my laundering machine. Your outfit was mostly made of leather though, so I didn’t touch those and left it in the room,” Kisia said while beaming a grin at her.

“Uh..., thanks.”

“It’s a reflective wall, so no one can see from outside. You can come here and have a drink. Tea or coffee?”

“Black coffee would be great.”

Kisia prepared black coffee just as ordered and they were sitting by a small round table by the now-transparent wall. Glancing sideways, Devon noticed that it was at least over a hundred stories tall. She couldn’t even see the bottom.

“We are on 177<sup>th</sup> floor,” Kisia said, adding, “In case you are wondering.”

“How tall of this building?”

“600 stories tall.”

Devon was in awe. Never had she ever seen a building that was 600 stories. She could also see other skyscrapers not far.

“There are tunnels that connect to other buildings, so it’s quite convenient to move around. You don’t have to go all the way down,” Kisia explained.

The tunnels also provided additional support for stability.

They would quietly have their drinks until the laundering machine signaled that it completed its cycle.

“Come with me,” Kisia said while placing her cup on the table and Devon followed after also placing her cup on the table as well.

A moment later, Devon was back in her original outfit.

“What am I supposed to do now?” Devon asked. She really had no idea. She had a one-sided fight with Cecil and she figured she might as well be expelled.

“Well?” Kisia shrugged as her response. “You are a Venusian citizen. You have some credits. You can look for a job or weren’t you given some options?”

“But I had a fight with Cecil... Isn’t he the ruler?”

“Yes, he is the ruler although he has been more like a shadow ruler. Whatever happened between you two, it is personal. Cecil is actually very strict about personal and business affairs and doesn’t let personal affairs distract the bigger picture.”

Having forgotten what “options” she was given back at Venus outpost because she couldn’t care less at that time, she had to ask for options once more. But Kisia gave her only one option; it was to work with Karl under Venus Tax division.

“I thought I had options, you know, plural?” Devon remarked.

Kisia responded with a grin, “Well, you blew your options. How about that for an excuse?”

“Bah, fine.”

**Fin**