

# [Kain and Suu arc] [4] [Rise] [9614]

Rev 1.5 (Last modified on May 19, 2021)

## **Prerequisite stories**

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

## **Related stories**

[Shattered union] [2] [Karin Bau] [9603]

## **Stories in parallel**

[Juron arc] [3] [The Grand Agenda] [9614]

[Shell of Pluto] [1] [Shell] [9614]

Fraser had a brief ceremony right before he officially become the new president of United Sol. He had a brief speech at the Ark house and promised to bring glory to the federation again.

His presidency, however, rang alarm bells for many, especially administrators. One of primary reasons that Gvew's presidency lasted as long as it did was his reluctance of replacing cabinet members. He largely kept the same stuff as former

President Mirren did. His only new appointment was Emuel simply because Jupiter Administrator Rommel disappeared. Gvew knew he had no popularity, and thus he refused to shake things up.

Fraser was a different case however. He had the full backing of the Bau, and the Bau had the powers to make any notions a tie at the house level in which case Fraser could throw a tie break at the senate level.

In other words, he could shake things up if he wanted and he intended to shake things up. He planned to replace pretty much all administrators at Moon, Saturn, Uranus outpost, as well as Jupiter.

He started with Moon administrators. Quirino and Tibor were immediately dismissed. Those two administrators had been in their position for hundreds of years since Mirren's regime. They were believed to have shown little discontent. Or rather they had little right to complain. Their replacement was yet to be chosen as the Bau council was making decisions behind Fraser.

Their prompt dismissal confirmed what many were afraid of but it wasn't unexpected. When an administrator was dismissed, so did his staffs. Replacing Moon administrators didn't just mean two people. It involved thousands of people being replaced.

But there was one administrator who could actually refuse his dismissal and even get away with it.

It was Emuel, Administrator of Jupiter assault station.

Unlike other administrators, he had the fleet to refuse and revolt. He was fully supported within Jupiter, and thus it was certainly a possibility.

And, if Emuel did revolt, there was a strong likable possibility that Gaer of Saturn could form an alliance with him and revolt as well which would result total meltdown of United Sol. If Jupiter and Saturn would revolt, United Sol would no longer be "United" Sol.

After dismissal of Quirino and Tibor, Fraser aimed to dismiss Gaer. Gaer was Gabrio's successor and was also popular within Saturn. He was originally a powerful merchant before turning to politics. Fraser needed to be careful with dismissing him. The Bau was becoming increasingly unpopular within United Sol, and Gaer was a true Saturnian. He was born and raised on Saturn. Installing a Bau related administrator on Saturn could prove to be very risky.

Therefore, Fraser took a very careful approach by visiting Saturn and Gaer personally.

"I welcome you, Mr. President."

Gaer accompanied by few men welcomed Fraser and his security guards on a private shuttle pad in Mist, the capital of Saturn.

Fraser was immediately taken to a private luxury suite within Gaer's manor. Gaer owned more than half of Mist and was a naturally powerful figure. His wife was also a Maeka insider, making him even more powerful on Saturn.

The Maeka clan was originally believed to have been spelled Maeda. When Saturn colonization began thousands years ago, the original Maeda clan on Earth was split between those who wanted to explore the new frontier and those who wanted to stay put.

Those who wanted to reach Saturn had to leave their clan and formed a new one on Saturn, and they altered their last name to Maeka as a result.

The clan was fairly small, only thousands-large, but the clan was one of few clans on Saturn and they were true natives, having immigrated to Saturn as soon as Saturn colonization began. In other words, even if Gaer was dismissed, he would still represent Saturn.

After being served a marvelous meal, Fraser was having a private chat with Gaer.

"I believe you know what I am here for," Fraser carefully told him.

"I do," Gaer answered promptly. "And I don't have good news for you."

Narrowing his eyes, Fraser sighed but said no further.

“As the president, I swear my alliance to you but I will not step down,” Gaer declared. “Admiral Gabiro personally asked me to look after this planet and I intend to do so.” He emphasized with a grave voice, “I can tell you one thing; I will not side with Emuel if it makes you feel any better.”

Fraser sighed again. In his head, he was quickly considering his options. The Bau wanted Gaer to be replaced. Fraser himself didn’t care either way. Gaer was never a problematic member and he didn’t mind Gaer to remain in his post. He did listen to the Bau and dismissed Quirino and Tibor. He felt perhaps he could push his opinion and keep Gaer in his post since he let the Bau have their way once.

“Very well,” He finally responded. “Unlike you-know-who, I can actually trust your words. But you should know that it is not me who want you to be replaced.”

“I am aware,” Gaer responded. “The Bau want their dogs everywhere.”

He did feel that Gaer could be trusted. His reputation was good and he was loved by Saturnians. He did rule the planet fairly and the Maeka thrived under his rule. He did feel that there was no need to unsettle the planet unnecessarily despite what the Bau thought.

The Bau had a small division on Saturn but, under Gaer’s rule, the Bau Saturn division did not do too well because Gaer fully supported the Maeka. The Bau on Earth aimed to change the flow, but for Fraser, while he was with the Bau, he needed to keep the nation as stable as possible. He wasn’t a puppet contrary to general belief. He was supported by the Bau but he had his own agenda.

“Very well, you shall keep your post. The Bau will not be pleased but I have my reasons and I think they will understand.”

Gaer let out of a sigh of relief. “Thank you, Mr. President.”

“Keep up the good work.”

His decision not to replace Gaer would prove to be a good piece of business in the future.

Meanwhile, the Bau wasn't pleased to hear that Fraser had decided to keep Gaer, but he did push his case and insisted that Saturn was united under Gaer and there was no need to unsettle the planet further. He did, however, promise that he'd sack Uranus outpost administrator which he duly did so.

That left only Emuel to deal with. Since Gaer did give his words to Fraser that he would not side with Emuel, he had one less thing to worry about, the possibility that Gaer might join Emuel if he did revolt.

Just as Fraser was trying to come up with a plan to sack Emuel, an urgent message from Uranus outpost arrived.

“Andromeda fleet?! 12,000 ships?!” Fraser was shell-shocked to hear the news.

“War?!”

Yes, it was a war and, even before they knew, they were at their door step. Sacking of Uranus outpost administrator meant that all patrol fleets returned and national border security did not exist. No one took national border security seriously and no one thought anything like this would occur, after all SOL system had never been invaded by anyone or anything.

He had absolutely no way to assemble a sizable fleet on such a short notice. But he did try. Because it was a national emergency, the Ark senate became active and overrode the Ark house for the moment. He inquired the senate to pass a bill to assemble Earth defense fleet and gather ships from Sol system which passed with 100% of YES.

However, it'd take at least two weeks to gather thousands and they simply did not have the time. Fraser was left with no choice but to ask Emuel to combat incoming Andromeda fleet.

For Emuel, it was a strange situation for him. It could be called a chance or it could be something worse. He was expecting the sack and was debating whether to fight it or attempt to negotiate. He knew he had the choice of revolting but having no clear allies around him, his revolt would be too risky and unpredictable.

Regardless, he felt he needed to keep his fleet as large as possible in any case. If he did his best and his fleet was reduced too much, there was a chance that Fraser would simply push him out of his position by force.

Still, disobeying Fraser's direct order to fight back Andromeda fleet was foolish as well. Somehow, somehow, he needed to show that he fought and was defeated

while keeping his fleet as large as possible. The only reason he desired a defeat was to keep his fleet as large and fresh as possible. He did feel he could repel the incoming enemy fleet but the victory wasn't worth his position, he believed.

After discussing with Aroa and Aroan, he came up with a plan; it was to sacrifice approximately two thousand ships.

He planned to put a fleet of two thousand in front of his own fleet in a formation, and when a battle with Andromeda fleet began, he planned to retreat, leaving the sacrificial fleet to soak up the damage while his main fleet withdrew.

Obviously, no one was going to volunteer to be killed for no reason. Therefore, he randomly picked captains from weak factions which included Kain and Suu since neither of them belonged to a faction.

After gathering two thousand of what Emuel referred as "losers" in private, they were assembled into a sub fleet and was integrated into his main fleet.

Their task, on surface at least, was to fight alongside the main fleet.

"Suspicious," Kain remarked. His cruiser had joined the sub-fleet and was preparing to take off as per Emuel's order.

"Sir? Is something bothering you?" Samuel inquired.

"I don't understand the purpose of this fleet."

Emuel had told those who were called up for this fleet that the purpose of the fleet was to protect the main fleet but Kain felt the purpose was an excuse instead.

“He doesn’t need any further ‘protection’.” He claimed. “Even if he did, he certainly did not need to create a new fleet for that.”

“Then what do you think he is up to?” Samuel wondered.

Emuel the snake, his methods were often questionable. But he was fully supported by Jupitians because he had thus far been successful in prospering Jupiter economy. His interests were strictly for Jupiter and cared nothing else outside of that even if it meant his decisions would have overall negative impacts for United Sol as whole.

Kain had a bad feeling. He thought Emuel would be replaced when the new president was elected. On his second thought however, he thought of possibility of Emuel revolting. He certainly had the fleet, the most powerful tool, under his disposal. More importantly, Jupiter economy was geared to support the fleet, meaning Emuel had the fleet and means to support the fleet whereas United Sol fleet had to be financed via other venues.

A spaceship required support to remain operational. Support meant credits and other materials.

Credits would be used for crew wages, frozen food, and occasionally crew training. Materials were needed for ship parts as well as supply of missiles. It took a lot to keep a cruiser running and a fleet of 10,000 cruisers demanded a lot of resources to keep the ships operational.

All those resources needed to come somewhere, and most of the resources came from taxes. However, Jupiter operated differently. Jupiter economy was built to support its fleet. There was no tax imposed on Jovians. Instead, they were asked to contribute a certain amount of hours into productions and activities related to spaceships. They also had a choice of volunteering to be ship crews with a low wage. All such unique features meant that Jupiter was able to maintain its fleet far cheaper than how United Sol would maintain fleets.

All of those little facts gave Emuel a good ground to revolt, should he desire. He would be able to hold his ground. With Venus and Mars all gone independent, he would certainly be able to hold his ground and there was a likely chance of Mars supporting Jupiter as well in its revolt due to its relative close distance.

“He could revolt, you know,” Kain claimed after a moment of thought.

Samuel gave it a thought and agreed, “Possible considering how United Sol is looking like right now.”

Another crew on the bridge joined the conversation. “If Emuel does revolt, I bet Gaer would revolt as well, and if those two would revolt, that’d be the end of United Sol.”

“Either way, the purpose of this fleet remains unknown,” Kain said. “I just don’t have a good feeling for it.”

Emuel’s fleet proceeded to Uranus outpost as soon as possible and sensors confirmed an Andromeda fleet of slightly over 10,000. Emuel had a fleet of 11,000 cruisers. The overall battle situation was in Emuel’s favor since he’d fight in home territory, not to mention support from Uranus outpost itself.

Emuel’s voice sounded in Kain’s bridge.

“This is the fleet commander. We will be engaging the enemy fleet at will.” And then a private order was delivered to all ships in the small sub-fleet Kain belonged. The sub-fleet was to be on frontline.

Kain didn’t think too much in the specific order and carried on. The battle commenced and it proved to a pretty much standard warfare. Fires were exchanged and ships went down. In small fleet battles, it was important to focus-fire but in large scale battles, focus-fire was futile due to a fact that it was too much of a waste if every ship had only one target. Therefore, engaging targets of opportunity was the standard procedure.

When half an hour passed, Samuel urgently informed Kain.

“Captain, the main fleet appears to be retreating!”

“What the? You are kidding!”

“I wish I was! See for yourself!”

Samuel wasn't kidding. The main fleet was indeed retreating.

“Fine, let's retreat!” Kain exclaimed and it was the very moment Emuel's voice sounded in the bridge.

“Fleet commander to the fleet. You are not allowed to retreat until told otherwise. This is a direct order and disobeying this order will classify you as a deserter, and I will shoot you down.”

“What the fuck?!” Kain uttered. “Is he asking us to die here?!”

The crews on the bridge murmured and the sub-fleet fell into total chaos. Few ships attempted to flee but was immediately shot down by Emuel's main fleet that was slowly, but surely, withdrawing.

For Emuel's defeat to look legitimate, he needed to suffer some losses and the sub-fleet was the losses.

“Captain, your orders?!” Samuel desperately asked Kain for a way out. At the moment, retreating wasn't an option, and the fleet was being slaughtered.

Kain had no authority to create a fleet channel and operate it. He certainly did not have the authorized passcode to do so. Therefore, he opened a public channel on a weak frequency so that its range was short.

“This is Captain Kain! I want you to listen to me. I need you to form a sphere formation around me!”

A captain immediately responded to Kain's plea aggressively. "Who do you think you are?!"

"Do you want to die here then?! I am trying to survive here and, for us to survive, we need to reform our ranks!" Kain exclaimed back. "Those who want to survive, form a sphere formation around me!"

At first, only few ships approached Kain's cruiser and formed a formation. However, as more ships were shot down, progressively more ships started to form a formation around Kain.

"Maintain the formation! If your ship is too damaged to operate, fall back! Fall back into the sphere so that others can shield you!" He exclaimed as he gave out various orders. "Our primary objective is to survive long enough. We need that fucking Emuel away from here before we can withdraw!"

Ship losses were significantly reduced as damaged ships fell back into the sphere formation for immediate protection. And, while Kain's initial plan was to withdraw when Emuel's fleet was far away enough, increasing number of damaged ships meant that the fleet could no longer withdraw without abandoning damaged ships.

"Captain, Emuel's fleet is far away enough... Shouldn't we withdraw?" Samuel inquired.

He was aware but damaged ships would not be able to keep up and would be exposed.

“Captain!” Samuel demanded an answer.

“I know, damn it!” Gritting his teeth, he shouted. Calming his voice a little, he spoke through the public channel.

“Guys, Emuel is far enough to pose any threat and we need to withdraw. However, I can see that a lot of ships are in no shape of speedy withdrawal. You need to evacuate.”

Evacuating in middle of an intense battle was literally suicide as well. Escape pods weren't protected at all and a single shot or even violent enough shockwave was enough to destroy such pods.

Regardless, they had little choices and damaged ships started to evacuate their ships which took considerable time by itself.

When the battle reached about 2 hours-mark, the evacuation was still going on and it was getting worse as more ships fell back, thus needing to evacuate. At the current rate, they were going to be wiped out.

Kain had to make a decision to leave the damaged ships and swiftly withdraw. When he was about to make the decision, the Andromeda fleet started to withdraw.

“Please tell me I am not dreaming,” said he with faint tears in his eyes.

“You are not dreaming, captain. They are, in fact, withdrawing,” Samuel replied, also with tears in his eyes.

Everyone thought they were goner and sudden turn of the event brought everyone into tears. Even on Kain's own bridge, crews hugged each other and cried.

When everyone calmed down, Suu asked Kain a daunting question.

"What now?"

The fleet belonged to Emuel originally but none of the captains was willing to go back to his command.

"I guess we will go to Earth," Kain said. "I don't see any other place. Once we go back to Earth, we will be redistributed."

"Actually, I have another idea," Suu suggested. "Why don't you take us under your command?"

"What do you mean?" Kain had no idea what she was implying.

"There are over a thousand of us who survived. And we certainly are not going back to the snake who abandoned us like this," She said. "And you saved us. I don't think anyone here will reject you being our new faction leader."

"Yes, I'd love you to be our new leader," A feminine voice agreed. It was actually Margaret.

"Margaret? You were here?" Kain blurted.

"Yeah, I was here and I thought I was dead for certain."

“Tell me, captains. Why don’t we form a new faction under someone who actually cared enough and saved us?” Suu attempted to persuade other captains who were already leaning toward to joining Kain.

Nobody could doubt that it was Kain who saved them. And how Emuel abandoned them left strong hatred toward their old boss. They could simply go back to Earth but none of them felt it was the right thing to do.

“Yes, I am willing to work under your leadership,” A captain declared.

“I am not going back to Jupiter and I am certainly not going to Earth,” Another captain voice his opinion. “I am not going to work for the fucking Bau.”

Yet another captain shared his opinion, “I’ve always felt that the snake would betray us like this. I’ve never liked him. I am going to join you, sir.”

This event suddenly made Kain the most powerful faction leader. No faction had over a thousand vessels. The biggest known faction had slightly over a hundred ships. Kain’s sudden, completely unexpected, emergence alerted Fraser.

As for Emuel, his supposed retreat went according to his plan, and he was going to report his defeat, but with the Andromeda fleet suddenly withdrawn, he reported instead that the battle ended in deadlock.

Fraser knew what exactly happened, but with Emuel being powerful and still having 9,000 ships, he chose to remain silent. Emuel’s actions spoke volumes that he was not going to be replaced. While Fraser did plan to somehow replace him, his plan changed with Kain’s sudden emergence.

And a shocking promotion was to be made.

“Captain, the President is on the line?” Samuel wasn’t sure he was reading it right.

Kain, too, wasn’t sure Samuel was sober.

“You okay? I know you had a lot of drink last night.”

“I am fine, Captain. I do think this is from the President.”

Standing up from his captain’s chair, he walked toward to his captain’s quarter. “To the captain’s quarter,” He said hastily.

“Yes, sir.”

Fraser appeared on a screen above a desk as Kain sat in his chair.

“Mr. President?” Kain was skeptical as he had never seen Fraser in person yet.

“Yes, I am Fraser Bau, the current President of United Sol.”

“Mr. President!” He saluted at once.

“At ease, Captain.”

Fraser wanted to hear from him what really happened on the battlefield, and Kain reported as truthfully as possible.

“I see. Thank you for your honesty, Captain.”

What Kain reported was in line with reports he received from Uranus outpost.

“Captain,” Fraser said with a grave voice. “You realize that you’ve somehow become a leader of the most powerful faction?”

Kain laughed weakly. “For now, yes. I personally don’t see the point in this faction.”

“What do you intend to do with the faction?”

“They really like me, for now, sir, so I will be hanging out with him for a while. When the flame of love cools off, I am going to send them their ways.”

Fraser beamed a smile. “I like your attitude, Captain. The reason I’ve contacted you today is regarding your promotion.”

“Promotion..., sir?” He didn’t expect a promotion. Rather, he expected reassignment to somewhere else. That was because he was still a young captain with no accomplishments under his belt.

Fraser cleared his throat and declared out loud, “Captain Kain, as of this moment, I hereby promote you to the rank of Commodore. I also appoint you as Deputy Administrator of Uranus outpost.”

Kain opened his eyes widely and became speechless. His jaw also dropped. After a moment, his eyes blinked a few times and he finally responded.

“Eh..., I beg your pardon?”

Fraser smiled brightly at him. “You heard me, Commodore.”

He intended to use Kain to watch Emuel. With Gaer and Kain watching Emuel, he assumed that Emuel would be isolated and would not be able to scheme much. And with no official administrator of Uranus outpost appointed, it also meant that Kain was going to be ruling the outpost. He certainly had the fleet to protect and, if necessary, strike pirates from the outpost.

In other words, Uranus outpost was going to be his base of operations and that was what Fraser wanted. The Bau also agreed that it was the best solution for the moment.

Kain's sudden and unexpected promotion created positive ripples across Sol system. It was primarily because he was a man whose background was common. He wasn't from a powerful clan. He wasn't a rich man. He had no powerful parents. Everything about him was as common as it could have been, and his appointment as deputy administrator of Uranus outpost meant that everyone could have a chance and climb the ladder.

Of course, the truth wasn't so. He was just incredibly lucky. If Andromeda fleet did not withdraw, he may have not even survived and, if Emuel did decide to stand on his ground and fight, he'd never have received the promotion.

Regardless, the lady luck smiled upon him.

“So this is what a station bridge looks like,” Kain remarked as he, Samuel, and his other crews entered the bridge of Uranus outpost.

The station bridge looked somewhat identical to a bridge of a cruiser but the estate was much bigger by scale of at least two times. And there were far more stations for crews to sit down and work. The bridge also had physical screens instead of holographic screens used by spaceships. Most importantly, there was no captain’s chair in middle. In fact, a station manager didn’t hang around on the bridge too much. It was considered a desk job and they had offices instead.

The outpost had been evacuated and it was run by minimum crews. There were only two crews when Kain and the others entered the bridge and they promptly stood up and saluted.

When everything calmed down a little, Kain was finally able to tell how many ships he actually had. He had 1135 ships under his command and two third of ships required immediate repairs and whatnot.

Meanwhile, Kain summoned Suu to his office. She promptly appeared in his office and saluted.

“You called me?”

“Yes, I am giving you a cruiser. I think it’s long past due.”

The outpost had a small shipyard for purpose of repairing ships, but it was capable of building ships, just not in massive scale like Jupiter shipyard could.

Suu was pleased and agreed that it was past due.

“The President wants me to stay here most of time,” Kain said. “So, I am going to place you in charge of a patrol fleet if you don’t mind.”

Suu was pleased to have been given a role but questioned him why especially when their relationship wasn’t ideal.

“Like or not, you are my original staff. Samuel will be given a new role as well,” He explained. “Basically, those who worked directly under me will all be promoted one way or the other.”

His explanation was acceptable, Suu felt and she accepted the role and her new cruiser.

Ritsuki Maeka also became the chief station engineer as well.

Not long after Kain became deputy station manager, he received an invitation from Gaer, Saturn administrator. It was a meal invitation. He had no reason to refuse and brought Rituski along since she was a Maeka.

Gaer and his wife welcomed Kain and Rituski on a shuttle pad. Gaer and Kain had a handshake while Gaer’s wife and Rituski exchanged a hug.

“Welcome to Saturn, Commodore,” Gaer greeted him brightly.

“To be honest with you, sir, I prefer Captain more than Commodore. Commodore sounds just weird,” Kain said with a grin.

Laughing in response, Gaer introduced his wife, “This is my wife, Natsuko Maeka.”

Natsuko was a refined woman in a black kimono with flower patterns. If a noblewoman existed in the era, she'd be one, Kain thought.

He shook her hand and introduced Rituski, "I am sure you know who she is."

"Of course," Natsuko responded with a gentle smile.

Rituski wanted to be excused to meet her family, and Kain allowed her to leave.

After being served a high class meal with Gaer and his wife, they were having light drinks at Gaer's personal bar. Natsuko was serving the drinks.

"Captain, do you know why I've invited you here?" Gently swirling his glass, Gaer asked him.

"Can I be honest?"

Gaer nodded.

"Was it the president's order?"

Smiling, Gaer responded, "I see that it wasn't entirely just luck that got you promoted. It's good that you have some perception. Yes, the president did ask me to welcome you but I had my own reasons."

Natsuko served Kain a shot of whisky with lots of ice cubes.

Taking the glass, Gaer continued, "I noticed that you are still single. I can arrange a fine lass if you'd like."

Kain almost spit his drink. "Woah, this whisky is strong." He coughed few times.

“Trust me, Captain, a man of your status needs a woman,” He claimed.

Kain never thought about marriage and he certainly did not think Gaer would suggest something like so. He wasn't entirely against the idea. It was just that it was sudden.

“I am just surprised, sir,” He responded finally. “I did not think you'd suggest a marriage.”

Smiling faintly, Natsuko started to break a large ice block.

“I like you, Captain. I like your character, so I am going to be really honest. I am suggesting you a marriage to a Maeka lass to increase our influence,” Gaer said earnestly.

It made sense, Kain thought. Influence of Maeka clan was faint outside of Saturn. Having a deputy administrator of Uranus outpost in the Maeka clan would certainly help increasing the clan's influence.

“If you'd like, Ritsuki is also a choice,” Natsuko quietly added.

“Ew,” Kain blurted and quickly apologized, “My apologies, I didn't mean...”

“That is fine. I know how Ritsuki is. One can hardly see her as a woman,” Natsuko replied with a gentle smile and Gaer smiled as well.

“Would you like a list?” Gaer carefully asked Kain.

He figured why not and accepted a list of Maeka women from Gaer.

“I do have a question if you don't mind,” Kain asked as he looked over the list of available Maeka women for marriage.

“Go on.”

“I am a guy who never went out with girls because I didn’t care much. I don’t really know what a wife should be. What is a wife to you?”

“A wife’s role is depended on a man’s social status,” Gaer answered earnestly. “I will give you my example. I married my wife here as a part of a deal.”

Natsuko smiled peacefully in response.

“The Maeka wanted to solidify their influence on Saturn and I was to become the new Saturn administrator. They offered me an arranged marriage in exchange of their support on this planet,” Gaer explained and looked at Natsuko with a warm smile. “And I chose her. I’ve had no regrets.”

Gaer handed an empty glass over to Natsuko who refilled the glass.

“For me,” Gaer continued. “A wife is my counterpart who will work for me in shadows. For an example, if I am to bribe someone, I will make a scene for it and my wife will bribe the man in shadows.”

Kain stared into his half empty whisky glass. He saw a distorted reflection of himself. He was a man whose account had only two-digit worth of credits once. He was a man who couldn’t find a job. He was a man who chose to enlist for the navy to feed himself.

And suddenly here he was, being offered an arranged marriage to one of the finest women from a respected clan.

“I read your background,” Gaer told him. “And I can see why you had to ask me such a question.”

“I was no one, sir. I was a loser. I was just lucky.”

“Lady Luck is the most sought after,” Gaer replied firmly. “If a man is lucky enough, he can rule the whole clusters. You cannot underestimate the luck.”

“Captain,” Natsuko gently called Kain out with a soft voice. “You have the quality. I can feel that. I believe your common background prevented you from capitalizing on your quality. Lady Luck has allowed you to come this far. However, lady Luck can take you only so far. It is now time for you to take a step further and capitalize on your recent success.”

Her voice was soft but was amazingly powerful. With eyes widened, Kain stared at her for a short moment. She had the quality just like Gaer.

To be honest, Kain did not believe such thing existed. “Quality” in people sounded like treating human as some sort of live stocks or whatnot.

He may have not gone out with women but he had worked and had some female friends on Moon. All women he had worked with or had platonic relationships with were all interested in typical things, like shopping, clothes, fashion, gossips, and so on.

He certainly did feel Natsuko was different. She knew when to speak and knew when to keep silence. She was being the perfect counterpart for Gaer, letting him do the job while providing him with support fire when needed. The precise timing meant quality. Knowing when to step in and when to step back meant quality. Knowing where one stood meant quality.

Kain looked at the list once again, this time with determination. For a moment, he felt jealous that Gaer had such a good wife. He wouldn't have minded such a smooth relationship with his significant other, either. And while looking over the list, he noticed two faces that looked similar to Gaer and Natsuko.

"Sir, do you mind if I ask a question?"

"Go on," Gaer replied.

"Do you have your own daughters on this list?"

Natsuko beamed a smile and Gaer laughed pleasantly.

"So, you can tell, huh?"

Apparently, there were two of his daughters on the list.

"They are Maeka insiders after all. One's 13 and the other is 12 but they are mature enough and the marriage can always take its place few years later," Gaer explained.

Gaer had five children with Natsuko; 2 sons and 3 daughters.

After being told that to take it slow, Kain was returning back to Uranus outpost on his cruiser. He was casually looking over the list again in his captain's chair where Ritsuki suddenly popped up her face in front of his.

"WOAH!!!" Screaming his lungs, he almost jumped off his chair.

Giggling, she stood some steps back and waved at him. "Hello, Commodore, having fun?"

"Holy Macro, you scared the bejesus out of me!"

"That's because you were drooling over all those fine girls."

"I was not drooling-" He was about to talk back but realized she was just fooling around. "Nevermind."

"So, we are going to be related soon, huh?" Placing her hands on her waist, she claimed.

"Maybe."

"Oh, you are not even denying."

"I am telling you the truth. Maybe is the best answer I can give you."

"Do you mind if I take a look at the list?"

The list was a datapad, and it was a notebook-size display device that displayed its internal data.

"Why not, take a look." He handed the datapad over to her.

She whistled as she looked over. "Man, they really did give you the A+ list," She remarked merrily. "You sure you can handle these girls?"

"What do you mean?"

"They gave you the list of their finest girls. I can even see Administrator Gaer's own daughters as well. They are bound to be cocky. You will need to dominate or be dominated."

He understood her point and it made sense.

“I was told that you were also a choice if I wanted,” He said.

Her face became mangled and there was a big “Ewww” on her face.

“Commodore, can you honestly see me as your wife?”

And there was a big “Ewww” emerged from his face as well. And they both laughed.

“I am just gonna marry a fellow engineer or something in few years,” She claimed.

“And give birth to one or two kids to satisfy my clan and parents, and then I will be good to go.”

“Can you recommend anyone from the list?”

She handed the datapad over to Kain while answering, “They really did give you the best list, so every one of them is going to have high expectations from you, and by high expectations, I mean your promotions. Whoever you marry, she will want you to become the official Administrator instead of Deputy or even the rank of Admiral.”

He sighed while slightly pouting. “Nothing is ever easy.”

She continued, “It is also what they are expecting from you which is why they gave you A+ list to begin with.”

“Maybe I will just refuse this whole deal.”

“You need to be careful with that, too. They gave you the list, so refusing the whole thing might worsen your relationship with Gaer and the clan itself.”

Which meant perhaps he should have never accepted the invitation to begin with.

“You know, you are not on this list,” He said out of blue.

“Ah?” She was confused by sudden change of subject.

“I was told you were a choice but you aren’t on the list.” Having said so, he realized. “Wait a sec, didn’t you tell me you were an outsider?”

She dodged eye contacts and scratched her head.

“You lied,” He guessed. “Come on, spill now.”

“Fine, I am an insider. I am not on that list because, like I said, it’s A+. I am on a B list, probably.”

Kain turned off the datapad and took it away. He had seen enough. In fact, he looked over the list more than a hundred times so far. “What determines the grade anyway?” He asked.

“Age and family background come first, probably,” Ritsuki replied. “I think age 10 to 35 are considered prime, probably.”

“How old are you?”

“I am 27.”

“So, does that mean you come from bad parents?”

“My parents ain’t bad!” She exclaimed. “They are just not powerful within the clan.”

“You know what, say...,” He gestured her to come closer. “How about this?”

He bluntly suggested marrying her.

“Whoa? What?!” She almost screamed.

“Calm down. Follow me to the captain’s quarter. Listen to me for a sec.”

As soon as they entered the captain’s quarter, he told her.

“We both gain from this,” He claimed. “You get to be free from the nagging and I get to be free of headaches.”

He had a feeling that Ritsuki was being persuaded to marry by the clan which was why she said she was going to marry an engineer in few years and give birth to two children to get it over with.

“If any man is going to be fine with you, why not me?” He suggested. “And I don’t want headaches that come with marrying a high profile girl. Still I don’t want to throw this opportunity away.”

Having a clan in his back would certainly help, he did feel. It wasn’t a rocket science.

Ritsuki actually seemed to be considering the idea. Marrying Kain would certainly get his parents off her back. They’d be very happy indeed.

“You want two kids?” She asked indifferently.

“I couldn’t care less. If you want two, so be it. If you want none, so be it. You will have no obligation to sleep with me whatsoever.”

She crossed her arms and actually considered the idea. Eventually, she looked Kain into eyes and asked sincerely. “You sure about this?”

“I should ask you the same question,” He talked back. “Are you sure about this if you want to go ahead?”

They both would stare at each other silently. At one point, Ritsuku started to undress swiftly.

“The hell?! What are you doing?!” Kain exclaimed while covering his eyes.

“Don’t you cover your eyes! If we are going to get married, we gotta have sex right here right now!”

“What?! That’s nonsense! No way!”

“Way!”

Fully naked Ritsuku aggressively chased Kain who was trying to get away and jumped on him on a couch.

“And just so you know!” She shouted who at this point was in her undies. It was good thing that the quarter was sound proof. “You are allowed to have two mistresses!”

He shouted back, “That’s more nonsense coming from you!”

In the end, both of them lost virginity on that day.

Ritsuki turned out to be surprisingly conservative when it came to marriage. When the marriage was being finalized, she did stress that two mistresses were allowed. When asked by Kain why she'd even allow such, she answered.

“Because a powerful man needs more than one bitch.”

The marriage was as simple as acknowledgement from both parties and it was tied up in just few days.

Nothing much changed on surface, and Ritsuki continued to hold her post as the chief engineer of Uranus outpost. However, as part of the marriage deal, over a hundred Maeka members became employed by the outpost, thus increasing and expanding Maeka influence.

The marriage also meant that Kain became officially allied with Gaer. And their alliance isolated Emuel completely.

Emuel was on an exquisite sofa with Aroa and Aroan. They were in an observation deck and they had the beautiful view of universe around and above them. There was also a small round table in front of them which had few bottles of liquor and small glass cups.

The three were quiet and Emuel had his arms around the women's waist. He had every reason to feel down. Things hadn't been exactly working out for him. Still, he managed to keep his position as Jupiter administrator for the time being.

**-Fin**