

Masu arc is about a guy named Masu and much later in this arc, his son will take over. Early stories of this arc are closely related to Cecil arc.

[Masu arc] [1] [Dandelion] [8618]

Rev 2.1

Dandelion, they are everywhere. You can generally spot them on side of streets, under trees, on the grasses, and even from barren environment. They may only be a plant. They may be tiny compared to other plants but their desire to survive is stronger than any other plants. They bury their thick root deep into the ground, no matter what happens to outside around them, even when their leaves are burnt, even when their flowers are chopped off, as long as they have their root buried into the ground, they will survive.

Masu was born in A.D. 8607 on Mars. Masu's family was one of those who served the Dietrich family directly, the clan who controlled the mining corporation and the mining guild.

The Dietrich family originally lived on Earth but they were pushed off by the Bau and eventually settled down on Mars.

Naturally, the Dietrich never got along with the Bau. What this also meant that the Dietrich never got along with United Sol well, either. However, revolting wasn't in their minds. At least, not in this era.

A.D. 8618, at this moment, Masu was eleven years old and it was his first time that he was told his destiny by his father.

"We are born to serve the Dietrich family. We will even die for them. We will do what we possibly can in order to thrive the family even if it means our destruction."

His father had been searching a way to send an informant to Earth. The Dietrich clan had been cut off with Earth for many decades. With no reliable way to spy on the Bau, they had been feeling blinded.

Masu's father came up with an idea of sending his own and only child to Earth as a student. Since Masu was an ESP, he had a valid reason to send him to a specialized ESP school on Earth since Mars did not have any specialized institutions for ESPs.

At the moment, eleven year-old Masu was mentally fully grown up. He knew what he was supposed to do and he knew the risks involved in it. What was more, he was willing to die for the cause.

And thus, Masu was sent to Earth.

His admission was already arranged and he was quickly assigned to a classroom.

The classroom looked state of art. There were only six desks with a large screen on front. He was told to take any random seat and he did. While there were two other students in the class, neither of them was doing anything but vacantly staring into air.

This place is more desolate than the desert of Mars.

There was no teacher for classrooms. What they needed to do would be displayed on the front screen and students did simply that. The tasks ranged from simple terminology explanations to complex maths; all of which Masu already knew.

While he had no official record of ESP education and training, the Dietrich had taught him what they felt was necessary for him but he did not mind repeating it over.

Several hours later, he was done for the day.

“Alright, so far so good,” He whispered to himself.

He was new to Earth and rightfully so he was curious everything about Earth. In fact, when he saw the greens for the first time, he couldn't take his eyes off it for a while. Having never seen any greens during his childhood, the environment of Earth looked so alien to him.

He gradually became used to Earth and adjusted his life style accordingly. He was a diligent boy. Therefore, naturally he did well at school.

One day, a female student approached him in the class.

“I heard that you are from Mars.”

At first, Masu was stunned because he did not know how to react.

“Hello?” She waved her hand in front of him. “Hello?”

Blinking his eyes, he cleared his throat and finally responded.

“Hello, what can I do for you?”

She appeared to be taken back a little by Marus' awkward reaction but nevertheless she continued.

“I heard you are from Mars.”

“Yes, I am. What can I do for you?”

She placed her hands on her wrist and asked, “What do you mean?”

“Pardon?”

“What do you mean by what you can do for me?”

Masu was lost and no longer knew what to say.

“What a bonehead!” She uttered and left.

Masu did not know what he had gone wrong. He honestly didn't. He tried to put the little event behind him but it kept bugging him on what went wrong.

Nevertheless, time went on. Masu was instructed not to attract attention. Therefore, he deliberately manipulated his grades to be slightly above average.

And a year passed.

As Masu entered his classroom, two female students waved at him.

“Hey, Masu,” They greeted him friendly.

“Hello, Heather, Affie.”

They were Heather Bau and Affie Bau. They were the first ones Masu happened to befriend. Heather and Affie were half siblings with different mothers. They were two years apart and got along well with Masu.

“You are eighth again, Masu,” Heather pointed Masu toward a corner of the front screen where it was displaying a list of students by grades. “It's amazing that you are almost always eighth.”

She added right after. “Not that it's a bad position or anything.”

“I guess that spot is where I belong,” He said casually as he took his seat. He could have done better but chose not to as per his instructions. His job was to blend in. Being top would attract unnecessary attentions.

“Masu,” Affie called out. “There is going to be a seminar at the facility of learning in New York. I heard Cecil Klisis is going to be there.”

“Oh, Cecil,” Heather cried out half jokingly. “The universe's most wanted man.”

Affie snickered, adding, "Wouldn't be too bad to have a class S ESP husband. And the Bau council would worship you for managing to marry the guy."

Not knowing who Cecil was, Masu asked genuinely. "Who is Cecil?"

And the two girls froze for a good moment.

"What do you mean you don't know who Cecil is?!" Affie exclaimed. "Cecil Klisis!"

Masu honestly did not know who he was and his facial expression reflected that.

"Oh, gawd!" Affie shouted. "Sis, tell him."

"Cecil is the heir to the Klisis clan, the pure ESP blood clan. The guy's known to be a class S ESP. He's an elusive guy and a lot of girls at the Bau want him," was Heather's one-sided explanation.

Even Masu knew the Klisis clan and started to understand why the girls were raving.

"I see. I'd certainly be attending. Am I even allowed to be there?"

"It will be fine," Affie said in response. "Everyone's allowed to access there."

Masu was a spy. At least, that was his task. However, even after a year, he hadn't obtained anything worthy of reporting. When he addressed his concern to his father, his father told him to just relax and live a life. He assured that his chances would come eventually in one way or another.

Under bright blue sky, Masu stood before the facility of learning in New York. Heather and Affie were with him.

Masu looked upon the blue sky.

"I could get used to this..." He whispered to himself, "I shouldn't though..."

Meanwhile, Heather and Affie were arguing about something behind him.

"No, I am going to stand next to him!" Heather was aggressively stopping Affie from attempting to grab Masu's arm.

“No, you’ve had plenty of boyfriends! It’s my turn!” Affie was trying to shake Heather off.

Looking back, Masu saw them wrestling each other.

“May I ask what you are doing?” He asked innocently. He really had no idea.

In the end, Heather and Affie stood next to Masu, both grabbing his arm.

Masu felt awkward but he had little intentions to questions the girls. His focus was to see Cecil in person.

The hall of learning was essentially a lecture hall. Hundreds of seats were arranged in back and all seats were filled when Masu got there. They were forced to stand in back instead. Masu noticed that majority of attendants were females.

When Cecil appeared on front by teleportation, the female crowd cheered loudly, including Heather and Affie.

“That’s him!” Affie shouted and repeated, “That’s him, Heather!”

“Yaoohooo!” Heather exclaimed in response.

Masu’s first impression was Cecil was awkwardness. To his eyes, Cecil did not look like a man but a woman minus the bumb on chest.

“Hello, everyone.” Cecil greeted the crowd casually. “My name is Cecil Klisis. And I’ve been invited here today for a lecture.”

Cecil’s lecture was simple in essence. He talked about the current conflict in Andromeda cluster which everyone was fairly familiar with, but his view on the conflict was very different. Instead of sugarcoating the conflict, Cecil was direct. His opinion was to leave them be.

“But they are suffering, ser, they need our help,” An attendant expressed his opinion after rasing his hand and was allowed to speak.

“Why do you think they need help?” Cecil responded indifferently.

“Because....., they look like they need our help?”

“That is what ENN wanted you to believe. Have you actually been there? Have you seen their actual situation?”

The attendant was silent but Cecil continued regardless.

“They are not begging for our help. All they want is independence due to how the government has been treating them.”

Another attendant asked a question. “How have they been treated?”

“They’ve been treated like lowlives. And tax has been rising every year. No health insurance for them just because they live out there. Pirates are rampant. The miners on Mars have been treated similarly but slightly better.”

Masu’s ears twitched.

Cecil continued, “Just because they don’t work with the Bau, they’ve been treated like they were nothing but slaves. I am sure most of you here are with the Bau and heed my warning. Keep this up and you will see United Sol divided in far future.”

The attendants were silent and amid the silence Masu raised his hand. Cecil gave him a nod.

“What do you think about Marians?”

“They work hard and they don’t play lottery,” Cecil responded, “Some may jokingly call them sand hoppers but Mars has its own charm, like the burning festival. And once you know how wonderful and beautiful sand storms are, life on Mars isn’t too bad.”

Masu had goosebumps all over his body. He bowed deeply and thanked Cecil.

“You are welcome, Mr. Dandelion.”

Dandelion?

Masu didn’t know what Cecil meant at this point.

“He was blunt,” Affie said.

“Very blunt,” Heather added.

They were walking toward a shuttle landing pad to get back to the school.

Masu felt that he was blunt because he had the powers. Being a class S ESP, he had the powers to terrorize a whole planet if he wanted.

Powers...

The Dietrich clan did not have powers and nor did he. Neither of them had necessary powers to enforce their opinions like Cecil.

He realized that he needed to have powers.

Time passed. In fact, 5 years passed. Masu's desire of powers made him stop manipulating grades. He did his best and he remained number one in his school for the past five years.

He also had become quite close to Affie Bau. She was in fact his girlfriend.

All ESPs graduated on their 18th birthday and Masu had less than a year left. He needed to take an ESP test to determine his final class before coming of age.

An ESP test consisted with five independent tests. The first test was how destructive one can be by destroying a cement cube. Speed and manner of destruction counted for its grade.

The second test was characteristic of one's ESP powers. ESPs often used cosmetic elements as their medium. In Masu's case, his element was that of soil AKA earth.

The third test involved stability of one's mind. Masu's mental stability was as stable as a rock.

The fourth test was testing miscellaneous abilities such as telepathy and telekinesis.

The fifth, final, test involving one's healing abilities. The fifth test was independent and wasn't counted for final score. For an example, Cecil's score in this test was F. Masu's score was A.

“Congratulations!” Affie said while serving him a cake in a café. “You are A+!”

Beaming a smile at her, Masu took a bite. “Thanks.”

“You look rather disappointed though.”

“I was hoping to become a class S, but I guess it’s good that I received A+.”

“A+ is very good. I am pretty sure a Bau agent will contact you.”

He knew it was a wishful thinking that he’d become a class S. And then it was summer break for them.

It was Affie who came up with an idea of visiting Moon. Masu had no reason to refuse besides he had never been there. When they arrived at Earth shuttleport in Washington, they were confronted by Bau agents. And Affie immediately identified one of them.

“Azazzel?!” She was surprised. “Why are you here?”

Azaazel was a very tall man with spike hair. He glanced at Affie and stared at Masu.

“You must be Masu.”

“Yes, I am. What can I do for you?” Masu was calm and collected. He did not believe his role as a spy was revealed because he hadn’t done any spying. He believed that they were there in attempt to scout him.

“We mean no harm,” Azazzel spoke to them. “We’d like to talk to you in the cafeteria.”

Affie looked at her watch. “We don’t have much time. We have only fifteen minutes or so before they cut off boarding.”

“We will compensate for the boarding tickets,” Azazzel replied right away.

Affie stepped between Masu and Azazzel. “No, this is our first trip together. It’s not about money. You are about to ruin our trip.” And then she pointed at Azazzel. “Azazzel O’reen, step aside. I am giving you an order as an insider.”

Azazzel sighed deeply. He was reluctant to speak but eventually spoke. "Miss, with all due respect, you do not have any authority over me, ma'am. I am on a mission given by the council."

Affie wasn't going to back off, either. However, Masu stopped her and told her, "We can take the next transport."

"But...!"

Masu called her name out in a quiet but grave tone. "Affie."

"... Fine." She reluctantly withdrew.

Azazzel let out of a whistle and patted Masu's shoulder. "Kid, you are a man."

And then they headed for the shuttleport cafeteria. One of Azazzel's agents asked Masu and Affie if they wanted any drinks. They both refused.

When they were seated, Azazzel began.

"Alright, I am sure you know why I am here."

Masu and Affie both nodded.

"Good, long story short, the Bau would like to employ you once you graduate." Having said that, he slowly placed a cash card from his pocket and placed it on middle of a table.

"You are the number one student. Thus, we are willing to give you a signup bonus if you accept. It is a cash card of half a million."

Affie's jaw almost dropped. "Half... a million!" She uttered. "I've never seen anyone get such a large signup bonus?!"

"We think you have potentials to reach class S. Granted, even so, you will be on low end of class S, but it is class S nevertheless. The Bau has currently no class S of anything," Azazzel explained.

Masu stared at the cash card for a moment before speaking to Azazzel. "That is because the Bau wants full control over them. People like Cecil and Aedy Freedom, they do not want to be controlled."

Azazzel smiled and nodded in agreement. "True, I am pretty sure there are few class S ESPs or hyperhumans somewhere within the vassal clans but I am also sure they would do anything to hide them. I am no Bau and am able to see what you are able to see."

Masu recalled that Affie called him "O'ren".

"Why do you work for the Bau? You are an O'ren. I thought the O'ren considered the Bau a fierce rival?"

"Yes, we do consider the Bau as our fierce rival but that doesn't mean the O'ren wants to cut ties with the Bau completely. Let's just say that I am an ambassador from the O'ren."

Masu felt that wasn't it but decided to ask Affie about him later.

"So?" Azazzel's index's finger was still on the cash card. "Are you taking this cash card or not?"

Masu was a spy. Although he hadn't done anything spy-worthy, he was still nevertheless a spy. He had been waiting for his chances and he believed this was the chance he was looking for. Being an agent of the Bau would open up for more opportunities.

"You do realize I came from Mars."

"Of course. We've done your background check."

"And yet you will want to employ me?"

"Your father is a mid-ranking officer in the Dietrich. In other words, he's a no one. To be hoenst, you don't deserve the Dietrich. You deserve a better place for your potential. The Bau is willing to offer you one despite of the fact that you are a Marian. Need I say more?"

Masu exhaled deeply. He believed he played enough hard-to-get.

"Very well, I will take the cash card."

Finally, Azazzel's index finger lifted from the cash card.

"Affie, take the card for me."

She carefully took the card and inspected it. "Oh, wow," She said in awe. "Half a million in my hand."

Azazel stood up and told him, "You will be contacted as soon as you graduate. Fare well."

Masu and Affie stayed at the table even if Azazel and his agents left.

"Half a million! I am not dreaming!" Affie was playing with the cash card. "I'd have to save my allowance for hundreds of years to reach this amount!"

"Hah, phew." Masu was relieved.

Affie approached Masu and just as she slid the cash card into his shirt chest pocket, they exchanged a kiss.

"Where to now? We were going to Moon only because we didn't have enough money to go elsewhere. Wanna go somewhere better?"

"Nah, I haven't been to Moon and I'd like to see there."

"Sure thing. We have time as well as money."

Masu's first impression of Moon was that it was dark and gloomy. There was no blue sky and there was only night. Streets lights were on all day.

He, however, noticed that the streets were much more vigorous. And there were much more people on streets unlike Earth where people on streets were few and far between.

"So? What do you think?"

"It's interesting." Masu was looking around while Affie was taking him forward.

"The whole place is dark yet very alive."

"Moon is called the darkside of Earth," Affie said, "Most of non-Bau members live on Moon."

Masu looked up and saw night sky with countless stars and on horizon, there was Earth.

“The view isn’t too bad. I mean Earth can be seen so beautifully from here,” He remarked.

Affie eventually stopped in front of a building. It was a five-star love hotel.

“Wanna go in? Expensive but the view is nice and it’s a 5-star.”

Masu was hesitant. He wasn’t sure whether he should get any closer to her. “We are not adults yet though...”

“So what? My sister Heather made out with lots of guys already!”

“But you have not?”

“I am a virgin.”

There was a short uneasy moment of silence between them. Masu eventually shrugged and decided not to think too much.

“If you say so. I am all yours.”

Just as Azazel said so, Masu was contacted by a Bau agent on the day of his graduation. They met up and Masu signed a contract, becoming a Bau agent on the same day.

The agent while looking over the contract papers spoke to him. “What is your relationship with Affie Bau? Gossips say you two are in a relationship.”

“That is correct.”

“Are you two serious enough?”

“May I ask why you are asking that?”

The agent continued to check the contrat papers for a bit without a reply. When he was done checking all papers, he put them in an envelope and sealed it. And then he spoke.

“The council wanted you to become a convert but, if you are going to marry Affie Bau, that won’t be necessary.

Masu hadn't thought about marriage. As a spy, he thought he shouldn't become attached to anyone. However, he felt it was already too late. His feelings toward Affie was romantic, he realized. And his sense of duty as a spy was weakening, he felt. He hadn't contacted his father for years and he wasn't sure his father cared whether he did anything spy-worthy, either. For all he knew, he might have been forgotten by the Dietrich clan. The whole project might have been ditched already for all he knew.

"I guess it is up to her," Masu responded casually.

"I see."

It was indeed up to her. If she wanted to go ahead with their marriage, he was fine with the prospect of setting down.

And they did. A year later, Masu and Affie married. And it was when his father made an attempt to contact him.

He wanted the blueprint of the Ark.

"He believes you've done well blending into the Bau's society," A messenger was speaking to him in person. Masu ran into him when he was taking a walk. Masu and Affie were on Moon at the moment.

He added, "Marrying a Bau insider was a brilliant tactic, he applauded."

The blueprint of the Ark would be top classified information. It wasn't something neither him nor Affie would be able to obtain without hacking.

"You do realize that I won't be able to stay here if I do this, don't you? My life as a spy would be over. There is no way I could do this without being noticed."

"We are fully aware, but we require the blueprint. You are to return to us as soon as you accomplish this mission."

Just for one mission.

Masu realized he was sent here for a mission. His childhood was wasted for a blueprint. He wasn't angry that he was used for that one mission, but he was angry that he was powerless and that he had no choices.

He was to return "alone".

However, he wasn't going to do that. The moment he was told of his first and only mission, he chose to run away but only after he was done with his task.

On that night, Masu told Affie everything; he was a spy and that he was given his first and only mission to steal the blueprint of the Ark. And that he was to return as soon as he was done. Finally, he told her that he wasn't going to return but flee to Freedom colony.

Affie was shocked at first and rightfully so. But she beamed a tranquil smile at him in the end.

"Thank you," She told him gently, "For telling me everything."

"I want you to come with me, but I understand if you want to leave me right now."

Affie hugged him and patted his back. "No, I won't leave you. In fact, I will help you to get the blueprint."

Why?

"Why?"

"What do you mean by why? Until death do us part, no?"

Affie was a Bau insider, meaning she had a level 3 security clearance. Masu had a level 2 clearance. The blueprint of the Ark was a top classified information and only those with level 10 clearance would have an access to it. Even those with level 10 security access would require an approval from the Ark senate to legally access the blueprint.

What that meant was it was not possible to obtain the blueprint normally. They had to hack the access and download it. Neither Masu nor Affie had the means to hack Earth archive. That left them only one method: brute force attack.

Masu would attack Earth archive with his ESP while Affie would search and download the data.

They were in a hotel room as they made their preparation.

“Ok,” Affie took her fingers off a holographic keyboard. “I booked two express tickets to Freedom colony. It’s due half an hour.”

“Ok...” Masu was meditating before he’d begin.

Affie added meanwhile, “I am going to turn our bank balance into cash cards. We will open a new account on Freedom colony. We will pick them up on our way to Moon shuttlesport.”

Masu nodded in response.

They weren’t even sure they’d be successful, but Masu had to do it even if he would fail.

Masu slowly opened his eyes. “I am ready.”

Upon hearing Masu, Affie took a deep breath and cracked her fingers. “I am ready,” She also replied.

“Here goes nothing.” Masu closed his eyes again as he started to brute-force all available ports on Earth archive.

Affie, meanwhile, was monitoring the situation.

“I am past the first firewall,” Masu spoke calmly although there were sweats forming on his forehead. “I am trying to locate an admin account.”

“They know we are trying to get through. They are backtracking us,” Affie warned, “We have a minute at best.”

Masu’s calm face started to crumble and sweats were starting to drop. “I am ... past the second firewall and I’ve located what seems to be an admin account...”

“Someone just pinged here. They know our location!” Affie exclaimed.

It was hopeless, Masu thought. There was no way that he’d be able to obtain the blueprint within a minute. The data had layers of protections that were different from others.

Opening his eyes at once, he panted for few seconds before he stood up.

“I’ve failed,” He declared, “Let’s get out of here.”

Nodding, Affie quickly grabbed two luggages and follow Masu. They acted fast and swiftly. Just as they took a cab nearby, they saw armed policemen rushing into the hotel they had just left.

They stopped by a bank to get all of their money in cash cards and headed over to Moon shuttleport only to find the port heavily surrounded by policemen.

“Damn, are we too late?” Affie uttered from a distance.

Masu, meanwhile, was looking over the scene, trying to perhaps find a way inside.

“They can’t know we are the ones yet, can they?” He asked.

“I don’t know. They could. Anything is possible.”

“Let’s just go inside. We are taking a trip to Freedom colony, nothing else.”

“Are you sure about this?”

“Either we go or we get stuck here. We will be hunted down. The less time we waste here, the better.”

Affie frowned but clined to agree.

Acting normally, they merrily walked toward Moon shuttleport entrance.

Numerous policemen glared at them but none of them attempted to stop them.

Once they were inside, there were more policemen at choke points. They were checking IDs of every passengers passing through.

“They are checking IDs. They must know it was us,” Affie whispered as they were merrily walking along.

“I don’t know. Let’s continue,” Masu replied.

It was a nerve wracking moment for both of them as they approached a ticket check point and the policemen looked up and down on them but they did not stop them and they passed.

“Phew,” Affie let out of a long sign. “This can’t be good for hearts.”

“Let’s get inside quickly.”

“Yeah.”

It was an express transport that would take them to Freedom colony in two weeks. They still could not let their guards down yet, but for the moment, they were safe.

Affie was taking a shower when Masu was staring at ceiling lying on a bed.

“I’ve failed,” He said to himself, “But a failure was within my expectation.”

Indeed, with so little preparation he had, he had little chances of success.

“I’ve become wanted, probably by both the Bau and the Dietrich.”

He slowly closed his eyes.

“What is going to happen to me now?”

When Affie came out of her shower, Masu had fallen asleep on the bed.

Their journey had been smooth until they were passing by Pluto. As the transport passed Pluto, the ship downloaded fresh news and other materials from the planet’s network relay, and it contained news regarding an attempt to hack into Earth archive.

“Look, it’s about us.” Affie pointed at a large screen holographic TV on ceiling.

The news spoke of “a weak attempt” on attacking Earth archive. No names were released but the news stated that they knew the culprits and were chasing them down.

“It was a weak attempt,” Masu admitted. He was also on the bed next to Affie.

“They are probably chasing this transport right now.”

“I wonder why they haven’t ordered this transport to halt then,” Affie said. Her voice wasn’t concerned however.

He shrugged and told her, “Your guess will be as good as mine on that one.”

They were outside of Sol system, basically in middle of nowhere, when the transport suddenly stopped and then an announcement was made.

“Greerings, I am the captain of the ship. I apologize for commotion, but we’ve been approached by a navy fleet. They’ve ordered us to stop while they conduct an investigation.”

Masn and Affie were watching a movie together in their room at that time.

“Crap,” Affie blurted.

The captain continued, “I do not know how much of delay we will have at the moment, but if you’d like to raise complaints, please refer to the company website for further information on how. Please do not complain to the stewards. Thank you.”

“What do we do?”

“Nothing. It could be unrelated.”

“They must be after us. We have to do something.” Her voice was shaking.

“We are in middle of nowhere. There is nothing we can do.”

“How can you be so calm like that right now?”

He did not know why, either. He was just calm.

“Calm down and let us see what is going to happen to us.”

It took a while as they inspected each room one by one, but eventually someone knocked their door.

“Excuse me,” A voice sounded behind the door. “Please unlock the door.”

“Get to the bed,” Masu said, pointing at the bed. “Pretend that you are sleeping.”

“O, okay.” Affie rushed toward the bed and covered herself with a bed cover.

Clearing his throat, Masu responded, “Yes, I am coming.”

When the door opened, a familiar face showed up.

“Azazzel...”

He didn't have anyone with him. He was alone.

“Hey, kid.” Looking over Masu's shoulder, he exclaimed. “I see you there, Affie. Come here.”

Affie startled on bed. Recognizing his voice, she slowly turned over and exclaimed, “Azazzel?!”

Sighing, Masu seemed to have given up. “Am I under arrest?” He asked.

“I am not sure yet.”

Masu twisted his head for confusion as Affie walked toward them.

“Is ... it over?” Affie asked cautiously.

Ignoring her, Azazzel asked Masu.

“Kid, why did you do it?”

“I had my reasons. I am sure you are aware of that.”

“I know you had reasons. Who was it?”

Shrugging, Masu shook his head. “Just arrest me and be done with it.”

Azazzel looked at Affie for an answer but she dodged his eyes.

“Kid, just tell me who ordered you. I know you are just a middle man. If you tell me, I will let you go today.”

Masu startled. He wasn't too far away from Freedom colony. It was only few days away. But he hesitated still.

Sighing Azazzel placed his hand on Masu whose eyes were downcast.

“Listen, I am no Bau, so I feel your pains. For many times, the O'ren wanted me to grab some important stuff from the Bau or whatnot. I've always refused for my own sake.”

Azazzel gave a short moment of silence. Masu's eyes were still downcast and showed no sign of speaking.

“There is no reason to protect them. They don’t care. They don’t know our pains. Even if you don’t say, we have a pretty good idea of who’s behind this. I mean it’s not rocket science we are talking about here. You are from Mars and your father works for the Dietrich clan. See where I am going?”

Masu slowly looked into Azazzel’s eyes.

“True, it’s not hard to figure out. True, it’s not rocket science. But a clan is strong because their members are tight-knit. I may not belong to the Dietrich clan by blood, but my parents and his parents, they all have worked for the Dietrich clan. For countless generations, my family devoted their lives to the clan. I may not be a Dietrich but my heart is.”

Masu slowly took Azazzel’s hand off his shoulder carefully and continued, “It’s not hard to figure out, true, but I am not about to give you evidence so that you can come up with a casus belli against the Dietrich. I am not that stupid.”

Azazzel glared at him momentarily but his glare soon faded.

“Only if more members of my clan were like you...,” He whispered. He turned around, facing away from them. “Kid, I hope to see you again one day.”

And he left.

“He... left?” Affie stuck out her head and look around the hallway. Azazzel was already gone. “He left for real?”

“... Yeah.”

And some days later, they arrived at Freedom colony.

“Finally...” Affie stretched out.

“Yeah, finally.”

They were confronted with a very lively docking bay. It was crowded and countless ships were docking in and out simultaneously.

“I’ve never been here before,” Masu said.

“Me, neither,” Affie replied, “It looks awesome from here.”

“Yeah, very lively.”

“Who’d believe that this is the heart of the lawless zone?”

When they approached a booth by an exit, they were asked to present their IDs. And when they did, the woman behind the booth looked troubled.

“You are wanted, sir,” She told Masu. “Your wife is clean however.”

“I expected as much.”

“It says you are a class B terrorist. Do you agree with this or...?”

Masu wasn’t sure why she was asking such a question, but he had no reason not to answer.

“I suppose I agree with that.”

“I see.” She gave back their IDs. “You may pass. Have a pleasant stay.”

“That was weird,” Affie remarked.

“Yeah, but she let us pass, so I guess everything’s alright.”

However, when they were waiting for an elevator, two strange men approached them.

“Masu and Affie?”

Pulling Affie behind him, Masu confronted them. “Yes, we are.”

They spoke at the same time, “We are Niak and Minghua.”

“I see, and?”

They, again spoke at the same time, “Lila would like to see you.”

“Who is Lila?”

“Lila is Lila,” They said, again, at the same time, “We mean you no harm.”

Where they were taken to was a rundown building where they went below for many stories via an elevator. They were taken to a waiting room where a woman in a business suit was waiting for them.

“Here they are,” Niak and Minghua said to the woman.

Nodding, she waved them away and off they went. Then she beamed a smile at them.

“Greetings, my name is Lila. I am sure you are sick and tired of being tossed around from here and there but you have little choices in that matter.”

Masu’s first impression of Lila was a fine secretary with nice rack. She also had an imposing aura. In other words, she was a leader material.

“Yes, we realize that. May we seat?” Masu replied calmly.

“Yes, you may.”

Lila had a file with her. She looked over the file as she spoke to them.

“I see what you did there. It’s nothing too serious,” She concluded.

“May I ask why we were taken here? As you said, we haven’t done anything that warrants this sort of special treatments,” Masu said.

“Yeah, you two weren’t taken here for what you’ve done. I am actually interested in hiring you two.”

“Pardon? How do you even know us?”

“A friend of mine sent a recommendation. You see, we’ve been looking for someone reliable and you seem to fit the bill.”

Affie who had been quiet so far asked, “Was it Azazzel?”

Lila made a short pause but eventually nodded, adding, “Don’t blame the guy. He’s sad, trying to act as a bridge between the Bau and the O’ren.”

“There is no hard feelings..., right?” Affie looked at Masu for an answer to which Masu nodded along, adding, “No, there is no hard feelings.”

“I assume you wish to settle down here?”

Masu and Affie both nodded.

“Perfect. Let me hire you two then.”

“I don’t see why not. We have some savings that will last us for a while but it’s always better to work,” Masu said.

“Just so you know, the two guys who took you here, they are both class S hyper humans. The name’s Niak and Minghua. I honestly forgot which name goes to who.” She added, “if you resisted, it could have been ugly.”

They were surprised that both of them were class S hyper humans.

“And I am a class S ESP myself,” Lila claimed.

It was shocking because class S of anything was rare. Yet, there were three of them right in Freedom colony.

A few weeks passed since then. Masu and Affie had gotten to know Lila and the others a bit better with time being.

It turned out that Niak and Minghua were homosexuals, in love with each other. They also had comm-link implants installed in their brains so that they could read each other's mind in real time. And somehow, the result became what they were; always speaking at the same time.

Two class S hanging out together, no one could beat them, Masu thought.

Few years went by and they had settled down. Masu proved to be a very useful diplomat, so his tasks involved mostly negotiations with occasional combat missions when Lila needed more hands.

Affie, meanwhile, worked as an office lady for an administrative department. Her primary task involved relaying information to mercenaries and the likes.

The current members of Freedom colony were just four people. The first was the founder, Aedy Freedom, who Masu had yet to meet or even see. Lila was second in command and was the virtual leader of the colony. And there were Niak and Minghua.

Unforuntately for Lila, Niak and Minghua proved to be poor agents and she used them mostly for inhouse guard duties. Therefore, the addition of Masu was a blessing for her. Within a season (3 months), Masu was carrying out mission critical tasks for Lila.

“I have an important mission for you. I have a fighter squadron from the Nebula pirate coming this way. ETA is about twelve hours. You are to meet them and send them my regards,” Lila explained, “Before you ask, yes, the colony and the Nebula pirates maintain a close relationship.”

Masu nodded. “I understand. Simply send them your regards?”

“Yes, this mission will require some improvisations. I used to do this always since I could count on neither Niak nor Minghua but you are here now. For once, I don’t want to face them. They make too much sex jokes when I meet them.”

Masu gave her a firm nod. “Understood.”

“I will link you to Affie.”

“Roger.”

As Masu left her office, he touched a spot below his left ear. “You got the mission info, Affie?”

Affie’s voice resounded in his left ear through a comm. implant. “Yes, I got it. I am not sure what kind of improvisations she was talking about, but we will see.”

“Yeah. I am going home. ETA is twelve hours anyway.”

“Okay, I might as well go home then since she linked you and me for the job.”

“Yeah, let’s go eat outside. It’s been a while.”

“Okie dokie.”

Their place was a small two-bedroom apartment. Neither of them hardly stayed at home, so they didn't need to have a spacious place to live.

"High five!" Affie greeted Masu at a lobby of their apartment building. After a high five, they exchanged a hug.

Masu and Affie were perhaps the perfect husband and wife. They were very faithful toward each other and they enjoyed being together more than anyone else. In some ways, they weren't a husband and a wife. They were just two very close friends who just happened to have opposite gender.

About ten hours later, Masu arrived at a docking bay where the fighter squadron was supposed to be arriving. He was alone and the docking bay was empty which was unusual for the colony.

"I guess she chose this docking bay for a reason," He said over comm.

"Doesn't surprise me. What's surprising that she gave this mission to you. I don't think a failure is an option for a task of this nature." Affie's voice sounded in his left ear.

"Well, it's good that she trusts me. I am going to walk around and inspect the area. I wouldn't want any surprises."

"Okie."

And the fighter squadron flew into the docking bay on time. A fighter was one-man craft designed for close-range dog fights. They weren't used normally for long voyages but the Nebula pirates used fighter crafts exclusively regardless how long their journeys were.

The crafts were painted in deep red and had a black skull mark on each of them. They skillfully flew around Masu and landed in a circle with Masu in middle.

A cockpit window opened violently from a fighter craft and a figure emerged from there.

“Where is our Lila!” He bellowed. “Who the fuck are you?!”

Following his dramatic appearance, other pilots opened their cockpits opened simultaneously and aimed their pistols at Masu.

“We don’t know who you are and have no business with you!” The leader continued to bellow. “We speak only to Lila!”

Shrugging, Masu sneered. “Gentlemen,” He softly called out. “I am on her behalf.”

“Fuck this!” The leader yelled and joined others by aiming his pistol at him. “We speak to only Lila!”

Masu’s smile remained on his face while what appeared to be soil-like substances emerged from metal platform and formed flexible thorns which aimed at each of their head.

“Gentlemen,” Masu again softly called out. “Let’s talk.”

“…Fuck,” The leader blurted with a frustrated voice.

“Hahahaha”

Lila was laughing her lungs out.

“Hahahahaha- Haha.... Hahaha” She almost passed out from the laugh.

Panting heavily, she wiped off her tears with her index finger.

“That was grand. That was beautiful!” She exclaimed with her arms spread out wide.

“I am glad my performance was satisfactory.”

“They always made sick jokes about my rack and whatnot for God know how many years and finally I pulled one back,” She said with a bright and satisfied smile on her face. Taking a deep breath, she finally calmed down. “Thanks, I owe you one.”

“They almost pulled the trigger, I could tell, so it was quite close.”

“Yes, I watching. I will send someone else next time. Meanwhile, I have another mission I want you to take on.”

“You are the boss, ma’am. You give me missions and I shall complete them.”

Lila smiled and continued, “Why don’t we have dinner together.”

That was unexpected. “Pardon?”

“Dinner. I know of a good place. Bring your wife also. I haven’t had dinner together with anyone for many years.”

“How about Niak and Minghua?”

“You can’t have any meaningful conversation with those two gays.”

She had a point.

They, Lila, Masu, and Affie, were in a restaurant that had an atmosphere of a log cabin.

“It’s all on me, so order anything you like,” Lila declared.

Masu ordered a T-bone steak. Affie ordered a shark steak. Lila’s jaw almost dropped.

“You guys really did order what you like...”

Red meat and fish were very expensive delicacies on Freedom colony.

“I figure you have lots of credits to burn,” Giggling, Affie replied.

“Well, true. Have fun with it.”

While they were having dinner and conversing, Lila asked them personal questions.

“So, what’s your guys’ story? What brings you here?”

“What did Azazzel tell you?” Affie asked.

“Nothing much. He said you two were trustworthy and that was it.”

Affie glanced at Masu who was quietly having his T-bone steak. He told her that he was sent as a spy at an age of eleven to Earth. He told her that he felt it was his duty to do his job as a spy only to realize later that he felt he was being used. He told her he wanted powers like Cecil did.

“Wishful thinking, I know,” He added.

“Yeah, wishful thinking. I mean the guy is on a totally different level,” Lila said, “You can’t reach his level but...”

“I know what you are trying to say. Each to their own. I will do what I can to reach a level I am comfortable with.”

Lila snickered and grinned. “Can’t believe I am hearing that from a guy as young as you.”

Affie asked, “If you don’t mind sharing, do you belong to a clan?”

Narrowing her eyes, Lila made a pause but answered, “Yes, I am from Natvil.”

Neither Masu nor Affie knew the clan, and Lila knew that.

“It’s a small clan based on Heaven of Order. Almost no one knows our existence. I don’t even proclaim my lastname for that reason.”

Affie changed the subject by asking where Aedy Freedom was.

“Is he even here?” Masu added.

“Yes,” Lila nodded, “He is here. He resides deep inside of the colony. Only I have access to that block.”

“He’s awfully secretive,” Affie said while finishing up her dish. There was nothing left on her dish, not even sauces.

“Well, I cannot tell you much unfortunately.”

Masu was also finishing up his dish. “Fair enough,” He said. “Thank you for the meal by the way.”

“Well, duh, you should be. You two cost me a thousand credit for those.”

Lila herself was having only a soup which she finished long before they did.

After seeing Lila off, Masu and Affie was taking a walk on a street. While there was concept of day or night in space, colonies used holographic sky to minick day during day hours and disabled the aritifical sky during night time.

It was currently night time when they were talking a walk.

“We have been here only for few seasons, but it feels like home,” Affie said, holding Masu’s hand as they walked.

“Do you miss your family? Especially Heather.” It was a question he had been meaning to ask for a while. “It happened so fast and I didn’t even give you any time to say good-bye to your family.”

Her eyes were downcast as she relied, “I don’t miss my parents. I do miss Heather though.”

“I am sorry.”

“Don’t be!” She raised her voice and held his hand harder. “Don’t be. I don’t really have regrets and neither should you.”

Masu looked up and the universe was there. It wasn’t true sky. The artificial sky mimicked the blue sky of Earth but having seen the real blue sky, he could immediately tell that it was fake when he arrived.

Years passed as if it was a dream. Everything in their life was good. Neither had any compaints. Money was good. Life was fun.

All was fine until Lila summoned Masu to her office urgently.

“A reliable source of mine has informed me that the Bau and the Dietrich attempt to get rid of you,” She informed while sitting on a corner of her desk. Masu stood firm with his hands on back.

“How reliable is it?”

“I would trust the source.”

“I don’t think I’ve done anything bad enough to warrant my death though.”

She let out of a casual snicker. “True, your crime is virtually nothing compared to others who come here, but you did run away with half a million credits and you did put dents on their pride for both the Bau and the Dietrich.”

She had a point, he felt.

“What do you suggest I do?”

“There isn’t much you or any one of us can do at the moment, but I am not going to give you any tasks that involve leaving the colony.”

“Fair enough.”

“Be on alert always and, if something feels amiss, seek a shelter immediately.”

“Got it.”

Masu informed Affie about the news. She wasn’t shocked and promised to be on alert.

But there were no immediate actions taken by neither the Bau nor the Dietrich. And years passed without any signs and then...

A male voice sounded from a comm. Device in Lila’s bedroom.

“Ma’am. Ma’am.”

Lila remained still on her bed. She was completely naked on her bed.

“Ma’am, are you there?” There was a pause and then the voice resounded again, “Ma’am!”

Moaning, she finally replied, “What.”

"Ma'am, you recall that you asked us to check on the incoming traffic?"

“Yeah...”

It had been years since.

"We just accepted two groups of incoming traffic. One was from the Bau family. They called themselves private investigators.

The other was from the Ra, ma'am. The Ra."

Lila's eyes opened immediately and she jumped off her bed at once and started to look for her underwear.

"How long ago was that?!" She exclaimed.

"They entered just a minute ago. I've attempted to inform Masu and Affie but neither answered!"

"Call Niak and Minghua. Tell them this is an emergency! Call them to my office!"

"Yes, ma'am."

The Ra was the dominating clan for the Nebula pirates. The Ra and The Dietrich maintained a close relationship. Furthermore, there were rumors that the Ra was attempting to get a daughter of theirs married to the heir of the Dietrich.

When Lila arrived to her office, Niak and Minghua were already there.

"Were you informed of the situation?"

They would normally answer at the same time, but only Minghua answered this time.

"Yes, ma'am. We are aware of the situation."

"This is weird. You two always answer at the same time."

Niak replied, "Considering urgency of the situation, we've disabled our link for now."

"Good call. Good job. I need you to find Masu and Affie ASAP." And then she clicked a comm. device on her desk. "This is Lila. Yellow alert. I repeat, yellow alert. I want all available enforcers armed and ready."

Niak and Minghua swiftly rushed out of her office.

Affie was in a park right outside of her home. Masu had been away for work past few days and he was expected to arrive in an hour or so. She was waiting for him. It was then three figured approached her and she immediately realized two of them.

“Vnil O’reu and Azazzel O’reu...”

Azazzel stopped Vnil and the other from rushing toward her. “Hello, girl. I am sorry that it has come to this.”

Being a mere class B ESP, Affie stood no chance. She quickly dashed toward the entrance of her apartment building.

“Sir? Vnil asked. Azazzel gave him a nod and he went after her.

“Varant,” Azazzel spoke to the other. “Watch Vnil. Do not interfere him unless he gets into a trouble.”

“Understood, sir.”

After watching him go after Vnil, Azazzel cast his eyes upwards and shrugged. “This is a dirty job, but someone has to do it. I’d rather do this with my own hands than let some random stranger do it...”

Vnil chased her into her apartment after blowing away the door.

“Affie Bau. Come out quietly. It won’t be painful,” Vnil spoke out loudly as he silently started to search the quiet apartment. “Come on out.”

A shadowy figure jumped in from balcony and dashed toward Vnil at a speed of sound. It was Niak.

“Woah!” Vnil blocked his attack with a barrier but he almost coughed blood from the impact. “He’s a class S...! Varant! I know you are here!”

Niak’s attack was blocked by Varant who dashed in to assist Vnil.

“Hold him off!” Vnil exclaimed while he took steps backwards. “Affie must be here somewhere!”

Varant was a veteran class A hyper human. Niak was a class S hyper human but lacked experience since he and Minghua never fought a lot. They normally stayed in Freedom colony and never took missions.

“Affie!” Vnil continued to shout as he desperately searched for her. “Affie! Come on out!”

Niak attempted to chase Vnil but was stopped by Varant.

“You are going nowhere.”

While Vnil was searching the apartment, he spotted a pregnancy test tool in a bathroom which showed a positive sign.

“Argh,” He uttered in frustration. “This is going to get complicated...”

Eventually Vnil found Affie on balcony where she was about to jump off. She was about to jump off but saw Azazzel on ground, looking up in her direction. She hesitated and that gave enough time for Vnil to catch her. He immediately knocked her out.

“Varant! I am done! See you later!” He shouted to which Varant replied.

“Understood!”

“Good job,” Azazzel clapped weakly as Vnil landed on ground with Affie in his arms.

“One of Lila’s dog is inside. Varant is holding him off,” Vnil informed him.

“Only one?”

“Yes, only one. Is there a problem?”

“There should have been two of them....”

“Sir! Watch out!” Vnil saw a group of men were approaching fast. Even before Azazzel had a chance to turn around, he was knocked out by a woman’s kick.

Laughing, she declared, “Kakari Ra here! Men, we need that woman!”

Kakari Ra was the elder daughter of Olne Ra. Olne Ra was one of the top figures in 3Ra syndicate that controlled the Nebula pirates.

She was wearing all black reinforced battle latex suit. The men with her were all wearing a black suit with sunglasses. They appeared to be highly trained and Vnil stood no chance as he was also knocked out by them.

“Do not kill them. They aren’t even Bau,” Kakari ordered.

“We have the woman, ladyship.”

“Halt!” Minghua bellowed as he ran toward them. “You don’t belong here!”

Sneering, Kakari took Minghua by herself.

“Get the fuck off!” She shouted as she dodged Minghua’s slash and gave him a good punch in his abdomen. However, instead of recoiling, he managed to hit her in the chest with his blade handle.

“Ugh!” Kakari recoiled, taking several steps back.

“Your ladyship! She has woken up!” The men informed her. They showed no intention to meddle in her affairs.

“We just need her head! Behead her!”

“Yes, your ladyship!”

“No, you will not do that!” Minghua dashed toward the men only to be intercepted by Kakari. “Oh, they will!” However, Kakari was suddenly blown away by a gust of string wind. “What the?!” She yelled.

“Affie!” It was Masu who was dashing toward to the scene.

“Your ladyship!”

“What the fuck is it now?!”

Varant and Niak decided to seize fighting for the moment and attacked the men in black. They were fighting back but to make the matter worse Azazzel woke up.

“Who are you!” Azazzel demanded.

“I am Kakari Ra!”

“The Ra?! What the hell?!” As far as Azazzel was aware, this would be the first time the Ra clan sent anyone to outside for a big job like this. Their appearance on the colony also meant that the floating rumors about an allowance with the Dietrich was likely true.

“Give her back!” Masu demanded.

Kakari took a deep breath and assessed the situation. There was no way she could take on Minghua and Masu both at the same time. However, she just needed to earn time while her men finish beheading her. She had ten men with them and they were a mix of class B and A hyper humans. They were all highly trained and she was confident that they would be able to hold off Varant, Azazzel, and Niak while they behead Affie.

She was confident and it showed on her face.

“Done beheading her yet?!”

“Your ladyship, she ...”

“What!” She looked back and found Affie bleeding from her nose, ears, and eyes. She was overexerting and was hardening her flesh. A blade was on her throat but wasn’t making its way through.

Masu screamed as he saw Affie overexerting. He dashed but was stopped by Kakari. Minghua rushed in to assist Masu but again was stopped by Kakari. She was being defensive and it was hard for Masu and Minghua to break through.

Unable to break through, Masu decided to reason with her instead. “What has she done to deserve this?!”

Kakari sneered off his question and told him, “Who the fuck cares? I’ve been given an order to do this and I am not about to fail my last mission for the Ra!”

“Don’t do this!” Vnil shouted out of desperation. “She’s pregnant!”

Masu’s eyes widened and uttered, “She’s ... what?”

“She’s pregnant! You can’t do this!” Vnil repeated.

“So?” Kakari looked genuinely uninterested. Shrugging, she turned her upper body to point at Affie whose bleeding was getting worse by moments. “Behead her!”

Masu got on his four and started to beg.

“Please! Behead me instead! Please!” He cried out, “Please!”

Kakari laughed pleasantly, having the whole situation under her complete control.

“No, sir, no. I wasn’t ordered to kill you. I was ordered to kill her.”

“Who gave you that order?!” Masu shouted back.

Affie was losing consciousness and her hardened flesh was coming softer. The blade was getting through.

“No! No! Someone... Somebody... Please help!”

Azazzel and Vnil gritted their teeth. Niak and Varant were attacking them but they couldn’t get to Affie. Minghua and Masu were a distance away due to Kakari’s intervention.

As things stood, Affie was going to be beheaded.

And then a voice, a voice sounded amid the strong tension.

"Who was the one asked for my help?"

Everyone turned their attention towards the direction where the voice sounded. Someone was walking toward to the scene.

Finally, the person was within the sights of the others. The gender of the person appears to be confusing. He or she had a short brownish bob hair style and was wearing a crimson robe.

“For once...,” Azazzel said while having a nervous laugh. “I am glad to see him.”

Vnil recognized him. “Cecil Klisis...”

Cecil walked casually toward Niak and Varant and Kakari's men who was attempting to behead Affie. Noticing him, Niak immediately jumped off to keep a distance, but Varant failed to recognize him and did not move aside.

"What the, who the fu-" was his last words as he was cut in half. Spewing and spattering blood, two pieces of what was once Varant slowly fell down.

"Holy shit..., Varant..." Vnil uttered.

Cecil aura soon dominated the scene and Kakari knew immediately that things had gone horribly wrong.

Smearing with tears, Masu vacantly stared at Cecil who simply sliced off few of Kakari's men. None of them had any chance but he casually killed them with his blade.

"Y, your ladyship!"

Gritting her teeth, Kakari bit her lips. "Abandon the woman! Withdraw!" And she jumped off to a roof of a nearby building and her men followed, leaving Affie bleeding on the ground. Azazel and Vnil attempted to reach her but they were stopped by Niak and Minghua while Masu dashed toward her.

"Affie!" He shouted out caressing her cheeks. "Affie!"

Her cut wound on her neck was only skin deep and wasn't serious.

Niak and Minghua stood by Masu and guarded them.

She opened her eyes slowly and saw Masu. "What ... happened?" Her voice was husky.

"It's all right, it's all right." Masu was relieved.

"Oh, God," Quickly recalling what happened, Affie started to sob as she raised her upper body. As they hugged, something hit Affie's back and something exploded inside of her chest.

It happened so fast that none of them knew what happened. It was only seconds later that Masu realized what happened.

Kakari's pleasant laughing echoed through the area. She was on a roof of a nearby building.

"I've injected her with lethal poison! She will not live..."

Her laughing stopped and she trembled with pain. Both of her hands were gone, apparently sliced by Cecil. Cecil was levitating in air and, without hesitation, he aimed for her neck but Kakari was taken away by her men and they fled the scene at once.

Masu knelt down beside Affie. She was shaking her body as if it was too cold for her. Her chest was open and he could even see her spine and lungs. Her blood was dark and her flesh around the large wound was dark purple.

Her wound was too deep.

Masu's throat was dry. His voice croaked as he spoke to her.

"It's ... all right. You will live..."

Tears started to flow down from his eyes to her face.

Affie beamed a placid smile at him and rose her arm to touch Masu's cheek.

"I am sorry..."

Masu blinked his eyes few times, trying to control his tears but his tears would not stop. He tried to speak but could only gulp. He resisted sobbing with all of his might.

Niak and Minghua turned away from the scene. Their fists were shaking.

Affie trembled from the pain. She slowly placed her hand on her abdomen and slowly closed her eyes.

"The new life ... within myself ... I am sorry that I am taking it with me..."

Masu embraced her and started to whimper. His whimper soon turned into crying. He cried out loudly. He wailed. His tears soon turned bloody.

When Lila arrived at the scene due to lack of updates from Niak and Minghua, she found Masu with Affie on his knees. He had his head dropped and was silent. Niak and Minghua were a distance away from them. They had their eyes closed and were as still as stones.

"The history ... just has been repeated once again....," Lia whispered to herself after seeing Masu and Affie's result.

Gritting her teeth, she silently approached Masu.

Niak entered Lila's office.

"... How is he?" She asked reluctantly.

"He hasn't said a word since. He hasn't eaten. He hasn't drunken anything."

"The sad thing is I can't blame him. I feel for him, for I was in the same situation in my youth."

Niak cast his eyes downward. "Which is why you left Natvil."

"Let him be. Leaving him alone is the best medicine. Give him time."

Sighing deeply, Niak replied, "Understood."

One day, someone visited Masu.

It was Heather. Originally, her request to see Masu was firmly denied by Lila. However, when she identified herself that she was Affie's elder sister, Lila granted her request to see him.

Masu was in a dark room. He chose to be here. He hadn't eaten anything over a season. His pure black hair turned all gray-white. He also grew a beard which also turned all gray-white.

Heather was shocked to see Masu in such a state.

“Hello, Masu.”

Recognizing the voice, he slowly turned his face to see her.

"Look at you. Affie would be sad if she saw you like this," Heather said jokingly with a smile on her face.

“... Do you think I care?”

It was a voice of a man who gave up on everything. His voice was weak and sorrow.

“When I heard of my sister’s death, I was devastated. I figured you’d be devastated as well. But it seems...” She made a pause before she continued on.

“Nevermind.”

She sighed deeply and got on her knees to get a better look at his face.

“You can return to Earth,” She said. “Your charges have been dropped.” She continued, "A lot happened after what happened on this colony.”

Apparently, Cecil went completely berserk on Earth few days later the event on Freedom colony. He assaulted a Bau division on Earth and killed more than six thousand before the Bau had to make a deal with him before he would wipe out every Bau.

“The deal was to drop all charges against you and that you’d be free to enter Earth if you wish,” She added with a grin. “The Bau council was mad, but at the same time, they felt the wrath of Cecil.”

Killing six thousand would have been no easy feat.

“They call him the Crimson wizard now,” Heather said, “The Bau couldn’t do anything. They sent their best agents and not one of them lasted few seconds against him. The laws meant nothing for him. He stands above the laws.”

Masu still did not show any kind of reaction.

He did not know Cecil. He met him only once in a seminar. He did not know why Cecil went so far to avenge him, and he felt he needed to talk to Cecil.

"I will return to Earth."

Heather raised her eyebrow. "Do you mean it?" Masu's answer was quite unexpected. Given his condition and state of his mind, she didn't think he'd return so quickly.

"Make no mistake. I am not returning because it was you who came here. I want to speak to Cecil. He was the only person who had gone so far for me. I'd like to know why."

For Heather, it did not matter why he decided to return. As long as he'd return, her mission was accomplished.

"That's fine. It does not matter," She said, "As long as you return and get back on your feet."

Masu stood up slowly. He staggered a bit as he had been in the dark room for months but slowly managed to walk. Heather attempted to support him but Masu strongly pushed her away.

"Leave me be," He said.

He informed his decision to leave to Lila in her office.

"I see. I have no right to stop you, for I've failed you. But know that you are welcome here at any time in the future."

Masu didn't respond and left.

Masu and Heather was on a transport to Moon. There was no transport directly to Earth for security reasons.

"What are you going to do on Earth? Everything won't be the same for you."

"First of all, I will talk to Cecil and decide from there on."

“Actually...”

Heather told Masu that they would first need to visit the headman of the Bau clan.

“What for?”

“After what Cecil did, the headman wants to see you in person. He may have other reasons, but this is all I know.”

Masu couldn't care less but decided to go with the flow. He also sensed Heather's glances from time to time but again he couldn't care less.

He just couldn't care less.

Fin