

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

Rev 1.3 (Last modified on 2021 Feb 20)

Prerequisite stories

+General understanding of Cecil arc

Year 8921 marked the year that Yuiriel II's regime started to crack. The Bau insiders had grown too discontent with Yuiriel II's ruthless methods and started to seek to re-establish the Bau council once again.

They wanted a spearhead figure and they felt Masu Bau was the perfect man for the job. Many insiders believed that he was forced his way out by Yuiriel II, and therefore, they had little reason to believe that he would reject their plea.

Besides, Masu was still officially the head councilor of the Bau council. If anyone was capable of establishing the Bau council without Yuiriel II's cooperation, it was him.

They knew where he was and swiftly a messenger was sent to Freedom colony.

Lila called Masu to her office. Her grim face told Masu that the time had come.

“I see. So, the storm has finally arrived,” Masu remarked as soon as he saw Lila’s grim face.

“A messenger from the Bau arrived. He wanted to speak to you in private but I told him to leave a message. He reluctantly did that,” Sighing, she told him. “Yes, the storm has arrived.”

Both Lila and Masu knew Yuiriel II would not get too far with his methods. They both felt that it was only a matter of time before Bau insiders would seek to re-establish their council and, considering that Masu was never stripped away from his title of head councilor, he was going to be involved when such a time would arrive.

And such a time arrived.

“We both knew this day would come,” Masu told her calmly. “I need to go to Earth.”

Lila knew he’d go. She knew she couldn’t stop him. Nevertheless, she felt a strong urge to try to stop him. “You don’t have to go, you know,” She argued. “No one can really blame you for not going. I mean, what are you going there for? What for? What do you gain from getting involved?”

“I will gain a closure,” Masu replied firmly. “When the storm is over and, if I still stand alive, I will be finally done with the Bau once for all.”

Lila sighed deeply. She was frustrated for not being able to stop him. All she wanted was let Maus and Heather live happily in peace. That somehow became her goal of life. Sending him to turmoil never felt right. Alas, she simply did not have a choice.

“The Bau messenger is waiting for you with a luxury transport. It’s in docking bay #82.”

“I see. I will leave before the day is over.”

“And Heather? What of her?”

Lila did not like Mau’s silence and told him, “Talk to her at least. I know you are not very comfortable with being serious with her, but for God’s sake, whether you like or not, you two are married on paper.”

She wasn’t about to tell him to get over Affie but she did feel entitled to persuade him to be more open to Heather. While she did understand Masu’s position, she also understood Heather’s position as a woman.

Masu sighed weakly and gave her a nod.

He informed Heather back at the apartment that he was going to leave after telling her about the growing conflicts back on Earth.

Heather let out a long sigh and placed both hands on her waist. “I knew this day would come,” She said weakly and repeated. “I knew this day would come.”

“I am sorry,” was all Masu could say. He wasn’t going to argue with her. In fact, there was nothing to argue. He was going and that was it.

Heather also knew there was nothing to argue, either. She knew he was going and she knew she could not stop him no matter what.

“Promise me one thing and I will let you go without a fuss.”

He answered with silence and Heather continued.

“Promise me that you will return when it is over.”

Masu had very little attachments to his life. The only reason he was living was because he was alive and his belief that suicide was for cowards. Heather knew this after having lived with him for over a hundred of years.

She also knew something else. It was that Masu would not try very hard to keep himself alive. If a chance to die would come, he may not willing take it but he’d let such a chance take him instead. And this conflict reeked of many lives.

He beamed a smile of tranquility at her and told her, “I will try.”

She raised her voice in an instant. “No, promise; swear to me. Swear to me that you will come back.”

Both of them would stare at each other for a while.

Masu was in the Bau luxury transport headed to Earth. He was the only passenger and there was only a pilot, leaving the entire estate to Masu himself. There were various recreational equipment, none of which Masu bothered. Until he reached Earth, Masu took only minimal actions.

Where the transport landed was Sydney. And it was Shaun who welcomed him with open arms. Shaun was one of the first people to support Yuiriel II and was a mere administrator for the city of Sydney. After Yuiriel II overtook the Bau council, he was given the entire continent of Australia continent. Gabriel Bau who used to be the administrator of Australia continent was subsequently given Europe which was a promotion.

Masu honestly did not expect Shaun to welcome him. He should have been one of the most loyal people around Yuiriel II. Shaun took Masu to his manor where he was treated like a royal guest by his servants. After a while, Shaun eventually visited him in a guest room.

“Masu the sage, long time no see.”

Masu beamed a bitter smile at him. “I wasn’t expecting you.”

Shaun sighed and looked clearly troubled. “I know what you are saying. But the headman..., he has gone far enough. I believe he has gone insane.”

“Tell me why you are standing against him. There must be a valid reason for you to stand against him. After all, you were rewarded handsomely.”

Shaun told Masu that Yuiriel II started to purge those against him soon after he disappeared from Earth. But many understood his anger at that time, and he did manage to control his temper well enough to make his purging minimal and sensible.

“His purging got gradually worse. More and more were purged and we did not see an end to his purging,” Shaun added.

“You are not telling me everything,” Masu pointed out. “No matter how many were purged, it shouldn’t have concerned you much as long as your own people weren’t purged.”

Shaun shrugged with a smile. “Yes, you are right. Sage indeed. No point in going around, I guess. My own brother was purged about a year ago. I begged in front of Yuiriel II to spare him. I told him that he could exile him from Earth as long as his life was spared.” His voice started to raise with anger. “What he did was scoffing at me and killing my brother right in front of my damned eyes.”

“And who approached you? Someone must have approached you,” Masu, again, pointed out. He had a reason to believe that Shaun was being manipulated because he was given a lot by Yuiriel II. Being given an entire continent was no small reward; it was a reward of life. His loyalty shouldn’t have been shaken unless someone skillfully manipulated him.

“That is not important,” Shaun insisted. “I am sure you know that I am not the only one who want ... a change.”

He wondered why his title wasn't stripped away by Yuiriel II. He could easily have stripped his title away and prevent this from occurring. He did not want to get into yet another conflict for the Bau.

"So, how many are we talking about here?" He asked although he had assumed that it was already past the boiling point. Otherwise, he wouldn't have been called back to Earth.

"There are enough to make ripples," Shaun said vaguely. "We just need a head start."

"What do you expect from me exactly?" He knew the answer but he asked anyway.

"You are still the head councilor of the Bau. We want you to reinitiate the Bau council and stand against Yuiriel II."

Which was exactly what he expected when he became involved.

"Will you?" Shaun asked cautiously.

He took a deep long breath and let it out. He took his time for an answer.

"I don't have a choice, do I? You or the likes of you will keep bothering me."

Truthfully, Masu had the choice to ditching his title of the Bau head councilor. However, even if he abandoned the title, he was regardless the head councilor

unless Yuiriel II dismissed him. Even if he would refuse Shaun's request, someone else was going to come after him sooner or later. And, if he kept on refusing, some might choose to take a more violent approach, like threatening Heather.

There was another reason; it was that Yuiriel II needed to be stopped one way or another. He had no attachment to the Bau but he wasn't about to let a raging tyrant bring the clan into the ground. While he believed that Yuiriel II would go down regardless his involvement. So many lives would be lost in progress if a civil war would occur once more.

"Thank you, sage," Shaun seemed very glad to hear Masu's positive answer.

The first action Masu took was releasing an announcement that he had returned. His announcement alone caused ripples throughout the clan. His intention of the announcement was that he wanted Yuiriel II to contact him first and perhaps strike a deal. Alas, Yuiriel II remained silent over the announcement.

A week later, Masu officially declared that he was bringing the Bau council online, and Shaun became the first councilor to take a seat. At this point, Shaun introduced two people to Masu. The first one was a man named Gracia and second was another man named Xavier. Both of them were moderately powerful members of the Bau and both of them hailed from European continent, which meant that they were supposedly under Gabriel Bau's control.

With the three initial members, Masu held the first meeting in a secured environment.

“It is good to see that the council is finally active,” Xavier remarked as he took his seat.

For the moment, the council meeting was being held in a secured room inside of Shaun’s manor. There was a round table and four chairs, and that was it. The meeting did not need anything else.

A clan was basically an organization which its members were made up with family relationships. In other words, a clan was a family.

For smaller clans, it was much easier for them to maintain its leadership and unity. However, for a gigantic clan like the Bau which had more than a billion members on Earth alone, maintaining unity was problematic at best.

Masu took a deep breath and crossed his fingers on table. Having waited the others to sit down, he calmly spoke with a firm voice of authority.

“The council is now in session. I declare this a closed session,” He declared.

“Meaning you will not speak unless I give you permission to. You shall not raise your voice. You shall not verbally argue. Those are rules of the council. Those who disagree, I ask you to leave now.”

Such rules were often ignored in time of weak leadership, but it was different this time.

Shaun, Gracia, and Xavier gulped in silence. The authentic, cold, voice was unlike his usual warm and soothing voice. They had the chills in their backs; they were dealing with real Masu the sage.

His chilling stare came upon them and he quietly spoke.

“We must discuss Yuiriel II’s future here. Do you have opinions? Raise your hand if so.”

Shaun rose his hand and Masu nodded at him, granting him the permission to speak.

“If he steps aside, that would be the best outcome. However, I do not see that happening.”

Gracia and Xavier both nodded in agreement.

“Which means we will need to take him down by force,” Shaun suggested.

Masu’s attention moved to Gracia and Xavier. “I believe you two are under Gabriel,” He spoke. “What is his stance on the matter?”

Gracia and Xavier looked at each other momentarily before Gracia raised his arm at which point Masu nodded at him, giving him the permission to speak.

“Gabriel Bau is corrupted beyond recovery, sir,” He said earnestly. “He has more than a hundred mistresses and cares nothing about the well-being of the continent he rules.”

Corruption. Yes, corruption. Humans were too prone to corruptions. Masu recalled Gabriel's once blooming eyes. He was eager to work for the Bau and he was eager to put things straight.

"In order to displace Yuiriel II, we are going to need far more support than what we've assembled today," Masu explained. "However, I see this only as a repeat of the past history. The council, should it emerge victorious, will become corrupted given enough time."

Shaun raised his hand and Masu nodded at him.

"What do you suggest?"

"The Bau is too large to be controlled by a single entity or a single council," Masu claimed. "Therefore, I want the Bau to be controlled by its headman and its council in equal share."

Shaun, Gracia, and Xavier all realized that it'd be tricky to achieve his suggestion. The Bau had always been a power hungry clan. What he suggested occurred before in the history of the clan but always internal conflicts occurred and either side eventually dominated the other.

Masu was also aware of the Bau's history of long internal conflicts and knew the risk. However, he felt there was no other way. What he was seeking was not a permanent solution to the Bau's internal conflicts. Rather, he wanted a solution that would last longer than just a mere hundred years. Yuiriel II's rule was

crumbling down already at a hundred-year mark and such constant internal conflicts would eventually tear the whole clan down.

“Who is the successor to Yuiriel II?” Masu asked.

Shaun raised his hand again and Masu nodded at him.

“Yuiriel II has three children, 3 sons, but we do not want his bloodline to take over the next seat of the clan headman.”

Masu actually agreed with Shaun. His child wouldn't certainly be pleased with reduced powers since his farther enjoyed absolute powers, not to mention the fact that he was likely to hold grudges against the council since his father was taken down.

“Who do you suggest then?”

“Bowin,” Shaun suggested. “He is a distant relative to Yuiriel's family. He is a Bau insider but has virtually no status. He is not in line of succession but he certainly has the lineage that fits the bill.”

Masu felt Shaun was too quick to suggest him, meaning Shaun may have had him in his mind for a while.

“What has he promised you?” Masu asked calmly and Shaun narrowed his eyes.

After a moment of uneasy silence, Shaun eventually replied, “Nothing gets by you, huh. He has promised the Europe and in addition to what I have.”

Gracia and Xavier seemed shocked to hear Shaun's statement.

Masu closed his eyes slowly. He wanted a proper genuine leader. He wanted proper loyal vassals. The Bau had too little of it. The clan was too big and too powerful. Even if this Bowin was installed as the next headman, Masu could see the history repeating yet again.

Still, he didn't have much of a choice except...

"What do you say if the Bau gets rid of their headman once for all?"

Shaun, Gracia, and Xavier weren't sure what Masu was implying and their silence spoke so.

"What I am suggesting is to let the clan run by the council only," Masu cleared up. "I realize I suggested two entities controlling the clan just a moment ago but my mind has changed."

A headman was a single person, and he felt that there were simply too much powers for a single person to take. He did suggest initially a system of a headman and his council working together, but if that wasn't going to work, then he felt he'd rather have the council running the clan. After all, a council was made up with numerous members.

Shaun, Gracia, and Xavier were quite shocked to understand what Masu was suggesting although they did agree that it was perhaps better to run the clan without a headman. What it ultimately would mean getting rid of immediate royal bloodlines. In other words, more bloodshed.

It would also put Bowin's position in a limbo but that was not an immediate concern at the moment.

In the end, the council had just four members and whatever they decided wasn't going to be official. The council was dismissed until there were more members. But the fact that the council had an official meeting had its meaning among Bau members who were already too discontent with Yuiriel II.

Slowly but surely, the council started to gain support. The council grew in size as well and there were 10 members at this point. The council before it was dissolved by Yuiriel II had over three hundred of members. Thus, there was still a long way to go.

At this point, without letting anyone know, Masu silently visited Yuiriel II who was residing in a palace he built some decades ago. He was ruling Asia continent and his palace was located in the ancient city of Beijing.

The palace guards were aware of Masu's appearance and did not stop him from entering Yuiriel II's personal chamber where he was found with three fully naked women on a large luxurious bed.

"About time you show up," He responded to him while smoking through a pipe. The three naked women showed no intention to hide their skin.

Corruption...

“What are you doing here...,” Masu demanded silently. “Is this how you intended to run your clan?”

“Hah!” Yuiriel II laughed loudly. “Clan?” He then raised his voice. “You call this fucking mess a clan?!”

“It may not be an ideal clan, but it is a clan nevertheless,” Masu responded calmly. “If you didn’t like something, you have the powers to change it.”

“Powers to change?” Yuiriel II got himself off the bed. The three naked women made a way for him promptly. “Powers?!” He shouted. “Powers?!” He screamed and then pointed at Masu. “Every god damn motherfucker who claimed to obey me has ambitions to strike me down. Every motherfucker out there wants the council to return!” He panted violently for a short moment before he continued, “If these are ‘powers’ you claim, you can fucking have it because, quite frankly, I am getting fucking tired of this never-ending bullshit!”

Walking angrily around Masu who remained silent and appeared calm, he continued to vent his anger at him.

“You know what?!” He exclaimed. “I am very jealous of Cecil. People may badmouth him, people may title him as the Crimson wizard, but no one can give him a fucking damn. No one can punish him and no one can take him down! He killed fucking over two million for God’s sake!”

Masu was well aware of the fall of the Klisis. At first, he could not believe that the clan fell although he started to understand how it happened as he thought over.

“That is the kind of powers I want,” Yuiriel II claimed, again pointing at Masu.

“Cecil is out of your league, Yuiriel,” Masu finally answered. “He has the powers and has the decency to handle the powers.”

“Decency?! Killing fucking over two million people is what you call decency?!”

“He had the powers to annihilate the O’ren. Yet, he did not. Whatever truly happened, he determined that it was worth that much lives. And that is the difference. He does not go over limits but you do.”

“I,” Yuiriel II pointed at himself as he spoke with an astonished voice. “Went over limits?” He then repeated with a louder voice which was clearly filled with even more anger. “I went over limits?!”

“A proper leader has to keep his vassals pleased,” Masu explained calmly. “Being a leader isn’t about doing what you want. Being a leader is about maintaining peace, even if it’s fragile. Are you maintaining peace? Are you keeping your vassals pleased? My presence alone here says no.”

Yuiriel II took a step back. He was clearly angry and was gritting his teeth but he seemed to have calmed down a little. It took him a moment to speak.

“What do you suggest that I do?” He sounded calmer and seemed to have come to some senses.

“Before I suggest you do anything, I must ask. Why are you purging people?”

“To prove my absolute position, to exact revenge on those who looked down on me when I was powerless.”

Sighing, Masu replied, "Iron fist has its places and I understand your desire to exact revenge, but it has been a hundred years. Those who looked down on you are long dead or gone. Furthermore, it is now only a distant past. It is time for you to grow up."

Yuiriel II seemed to have taken a great offense in Masu's reply and pointed at him again and exclaimed with anger. "They are not dead! Every single day, there are new ones who stand against me!"

"When you keep purging people, of course you are going to have people who want to stand against you. It has to stop somewhere, and as a leader, you should be the one who takes the first step."

"I am not going to stop!"

Masu closed his eyes slowly and Yuiriel II continued to shout. "I am not going to stop until the last of them lies dead!"

Too late.

Masu felt it was already too late for Yuiriel II. Whatever consumed him, he was beyond recovery.

After leaving the palace, he inquired Shaun to arrange a meeting with Bowin. Shaun was glad to arrange a meeting. After all, he had a lot to gain.

It didn't take long for Masu to realize that Bowin and Yuiriel II had a lot in common. Bowin was an ambitious man like Yuiriel II and was just as angry as him by a fact that he was discarded. In other words, Bowin had a strong likely chance to become the next Yuiriel II.

Masu was getting sick of the whole clan. It may have been a clan but it was literally a group of angry people. No one was willing to work with each other and everyone was out for themselves. He needed a reliable second opinion from someone who had little, or nothing, to do with the Bau.

"So, you came to see me."

Cecil's usual emotionless face welcomed Masu at the main lobby of the Ark. Even though the Klisis clan fell, Cecil continued to work with President Mirren.

Masu beamed a smile at him regardless. "How are you doing?"

But Cecil didn't respond. Instead, he pointed inward and Masu followed him. Where Cecil took him was the cafeteria.

"You don't need to explain anything. Your presence alone is enough of an explanation."

Masu beamed a grin as he heard Cecil's statement.

Cecil claimed that the Bau's main problem was its longevity.

“Longer an organization lives on, more corrupted it will be,” Cecil added. “In this case, the Bau is even older than United Sol. Their traditions are long lost. Their pride is also gone. They simply don’t have desire for unity. When a clan has nothing at stake, people will seek their personal fortunes.”

Masu nodded in agreement. What Cecil stated made sense. Yuiriel II wanted powers and powers only. Bowin wanted similar things. Shaun was being swayed by personal fortunes. Those who wanted the Bau council to take over was those who were against Yuiriel II and those who wanted a direction change in their fortunes.

He told Cecil possible solutions to the Bau’s current crisis which were two. One was having two authorities in the headman and the council. They’d share equal share of powers. Second was not having a headman at all and let the council have full control over the clan, hoping that the councilors will run the clan fairly.

“Neither solution is going to work for the Bau,” Cecil answered. “They can only have short periods of false peace. The only way for the Bau to become unified is to have a tyrant who knows what he is doing to take over and rule with iron fists. Yuiriel II is a tyrant but not good enough.”

“So, are you implying that there is no other way?”

“The Bau will fall one day and the time is ticking now. As I said, they will have moments of false unification until then. Whatever you do won’t change their fate but, if you want to ensure that their false peace will last a little bit longer before yet another breakdown, you will want to please broader amount of people during this conflict.”

Which was a lot easier to be said than done, but Masu wasn't about to point that out. He also wanted to ask about the fall of the Klisis but decided that it wouldn't be a good idea to reopen a wound.

What Cecil told him wasn't something Masu wasn't aware of. However, Cecil's opinions confirmed his own thoughts that, no matter what he would do, nothing would change for the Bau ultimately in long term.

Masu informed Shaun that he planned to install Bowin as the next headman, and needless to say, Shaun was more than happy to hear such news.

The council also backed Bowin and he emerged as a contender to Yuiriel II's throne. Soon enough, the council grew in size further and its size increased to over a hundred.

The Australia continent was completely under the council's control. Parts of Europe and America were also under the council's control. But Asia continent remained unified under Yuiriel II's rule still and showed no sign of budging.

The council was in session.

"It is time for a war," Shaun declared.

The progress had been slow and the regions under Yuiriel II's direct control weren't budging to persuasions. People were becoming impatient and they wanted faster resolutions. The whole situation at this point was a tie. Yuiriel II had roughly half Earth and the council had the other half of Earth. If a war broke out, there were going to be a lot of casualties and chaos.

Masu originally wanted to avoid unnecessary conflicts and casualties. However, he had a change of heart after consulting with Cecil. If the Bau was going to get themselves into endless conflicts so consistently, then perhaps it was better for a large scale conflict.

Peace is built on blood.

Bearing that in mind, Masu spoke.

"War does seem inevitable," He said in agreement to Shaun's proposal. "But this is going to be a long and bloody war. I want to vote for it."

Many council members knew it was going to be bloody if a war indeed broke out, and thus, they fully agreed with him.

Bowin was observing the council session from a guest box. As a contender, he wasn't allowed to speak and represent himself in the council but he had agreed in principle with the council to split the clan authority to equal half if their rebellion was successful. For him, he needed the council to gain his throne which he felt

was rightfully his. For the council however, his presence didn't mean much and there were some voices in shadow that suggested getting rid of him.

For Masu, he personally couldn't care less about Bowin. According to Cecil, whether the clan authority went to the council only or it was divided, it wouldn't matter. Thus, his goal altered. He desired to create the bloodiest conflict ever in the Bau's history so that perhaps Bau members might cherish peace when they finally gain it.

The vote was in favor of the war. Almost all council members had a lot to gain from the conflict, provided that they win it. Loss of lives wasn't something they cared and even paid attention to at the moment.

And the Bau council declared war on Yuiriel II on that day.

It was year 8921 September 15.

From the immediate beginning, the war was bloody. A lot of people had grudges against Yuiriel II's purging and their angers showed on battlefields across the globe.

And in less than a month, Europe was in tatters. Europe had been the main point of conflicts and most of early conflicts started from there. Gabriel fled as soon as

the war began and the whole continent became chaotic. Major cities were in ruins and there were still battles going on across the continent.

Masu was receiving a private report on the situation in his quarter.

“Most of major cities have been destroyed.”

A man was reading through a datapad.

“Most of cities are under consistent battles and civilians are fleeing. Yuiriel II has refused to accept refugees and have been shooting them down even.”

“How many casualties?” Masu asked from his desk.

“We are not sure, sir. The whole conflict has been chaotic and not many scouts made out.”

He gave him a firm nod. “Good work regardless,” He told him. “Dismissed.”

Saluting, the man swiftly left the quarter.

During Yuiriel II’s war against the old council, Masu did his best to give instructions to armies to reduce damage and casualties. However, in this conflict, instead of giving out instructions to be careful, he simply told the others to go all out, and they duly did go all out. His scout being unable to determine damage was a sign that things were horrible out there.

Ever since Europe became the main point of conflicts, both the council and Yuiriel II started to use Europe as the main battleground since the continent could not get any worse. But there was one person who was increasingly displeased by this turn of event and it was Shaun who was promised Europe as a reward from Bowin.

In a council session, he asked others to tone down in Europe.

“The continent is tatters!” Shaun exclaimed. “All major cities are gone and other cities have been severely damaged. The damage is so massive that it will take some decades to restore!”

However, very few actually agreed with Shaun.

“We knew there would be damages and casualties,” A council member responded to Shaun’s plea. “As long as the damage is confined within Europe, I say we push on harder.”

Many council members nodded in agreement.

“You can’t be serious!” Shaun responded back fiercely. “My scouts were unable to determine full extension of damage and casualties! This is ridiculous!”

Another council member talked back. “You are only angry because Europe is going to be your land. May I remind you that you were one of the first backers of this war?”

An argument began and their voices were loud. Masu could have kicked them out but he had no intention to. The more they were disorganized, the better for his goal.

When the year turned 8923, what was once called Europe was nothing more than a wasteland. No cities stood and infrastructures were completely shattered. Roads were gone and so did networks.

This was also when Shaun had an argument with Bowin. He no longer wanted Europe and demanded Bowin to give him something else for his backing which he refused.

As the last resort, Shaun visited Masu in private for a solution.

“There is no solution,” Masu answered Shaun’s inquiry. “Besides, it is already too late, don’t you think?”

Shaun was speechless and Masu slipped in his suggestion.

“You have sizable armies. After all, you rule a continent. If you feel truly resentful, you could create a new war front.”

Shaun’s ears twitched. “What do you mean?”

“Target America and go after Yuiriel II controlled territories. There are aplenty.”

A sneaky smile emerged from Shaun’s face.

By year 8924 March, Shaun advanced his armies into South America and started to wage wars on pro-Yuiriel territories. However, instead of conquering territories, he withdrew after a short period of battles. Gracia and Xavier, who ruled cities in Europe, quickly joined him. The two no longer had their own cities as they were razed from the war. And they were just as angry as Shaun.

War quickly engulfed South America and the whole situation started to resemble what happened to Europe and there were changes of tones in a council session.

“We need to work together and attack Asia. Yuiriel II has been fortifying and defending his territories fiercely,” A council member stated. “Some of us have tried to break through but all failed.”

Shaun at this point chose to remain completely silent. He had nothing more to gain from this conflict. His goal was to destroy more so that others would feel the same pain he had to go through.

Another council member disagreed, “We need to root out Yuiriel’s influence in other continents first. We do not want to be assaulted from rear.”

Yet another council member made his point, “My city has been destroyed recently. I don’t know what to do anymore this point. I have a small army that has no home to return to.”

However, they generally agreed that some losses were expected although no one bothered to mention total destruction of Europe.

For Masu, everything was going according to his plan.

By year 8926, South America was fully engulfed in wars. It had become the new war front and more and more battles were breaking out.

And by 8928, South America was in a similar condition as Europe.

In a council session, a member was crying out for a change in direction.

“Europe is gone. And it looks like South America is on course to the same fate. We cannot simply keep doing this.”

Roughly half of council members agreed. Those whose lands were still fine in other places disagreed however.

He pressed on, “We need to tackle Asia. It is the only place we haven’t been able to advance into!”

It was primarily because there had been no concentrated efforts on Yuiriel II’s direct territories. Everyone was doing their own things according to their own private agenda.

However, gradually the council members started to agree that concentrated efforts on Asia were required. But they came to such a conclusion on year 8929 at which point, South America was resembling very much Europe.

According to Masu’s own private scouts, more than seven hundred million lost their homes, thus displaced. Death count was estimated to be well over five

million. It was, thus far, the most damaging conflict in the history of the Bau as well as the mankind.

While it pained him that so many people were going through hardships, Masu had to go further for their own future. For prolonged peace, more blood and chaos were necessary.

By year 8930 June, the council started to concentrate on Asia where Yuiriel II had been holding firm. Pro-Yuiriel II forces were steadfast in defending their own territories.

A council session was called to discuss war strategies. Masu declared it a free session which meant everyone was free to speak. And what Masu saw was a group of angry people arguing with each other on who was to go first because whoever would be on front line would suffer the most casualties.

It was laughable, Masu felt. He was actually amused that his plan to create a bloody war was going according to the plan and he was further amused by a fact that he didn't even do much. He simply let them be and manipulated Shaun a little.

In contrast, Yuiriel II seemed to know what he was doing as far as defending his own territories was concerned. However, as much as his fortification was strong, his people were not. He continued his purging within his territories and outskirt

regions of his main domain were starting to fall progressively either by the forces of the Bau council or on their own by revolts.

It proved to be a slow progress still and it was year 8934 when the Bau council forces finally advanced into Beijing. The city was quickly seized and the Bau council forces surrounded Yuiriel II's palace which resembled that of a medieval castle.

"He always favored medieval settings..." Masu remarked, recalling the first moment he met him. It was also inside of a medieval keep.

Masu and other council members were present at the scene because everyone believed his palace would fall before midnight. Beyond castle walls, there was a stone keep that was five stories tall. Yuiriel II himself was seen from a window of the fifth floor.

His palace would quickly fall if Masu gave out an order for the final assault, but he didn't. He simply waited. Many believed that Masu was waiting for Yuiriel II's surrender but he wasn't actually expecting that. Rather, he was giving Yuiriel II time to think over and decide his fate on his own. He expected Yuiriel II to commit suicide.

And by midnight, violent flame suddenly engulfed the keep which Yuiriel II was staying. The flames were so violent and strong that castle walls, which were made of stones, were starting to melt.

"Oh, God!" A council member uttered. "He's committing suicide!"

The soldiers had to quickly retreat due to the immense flame. It was simply too hot to stay. While everyone was retreating to stay clear of the palace, Masu teleported into the room Yuiriel II was seen.

When Masu teleported into his chamber, he found Yuiriel II in his bathrobe and he was sitting calmly on his luxury bed. Despite of the intense flame outside, the temperature inside was still bearable.

“I was expecting you to show up,” Yuiriel II said.

Masu didn’t respond. Instead, he simply stared at him.

Shrugging, Yuiriel II stood up and attempted to approach the window, only to step back due to rapidly rising temperature.

“I would be a damn fool if I didn’t foresee this,” He said. “But it took a lot longer than I expected. The last time I fought against the council, it lasted only six months.”

“I did not lead the armies this time. I let them be,” Masu replied.

“Hah,” Yuiriel II let out of a short laughter and spoke, “I see. So, you wanted to drag this conflict. What for?”

“In order to,” He replied reluctantly, “Prolong peace.”

Yuiriel II seemed to have understood his point immediately.

“You are just as tyrannical as I am,” He remarked with a smirk.

The temperature in the room was reaching unbearable level. Both Yuiriel II and Masu were sweating a lot.

“What are you waiting for, get the hell out of here,” Yuiriel II told him.

“I actually came here to take your last words.”

“My last words?” Yuiriel II looked up. “Hah. I don’t have any. But, if you are willing, I do have a favor to ask you.”

“Go on. I am listening.”

“Kill all of my children. They are spoiled kids and will do no good for the clan.”

Yuiriel II claimed that he wanted them to die in the keep but they somehow escaped before the keep was set ablaze.

“Cowards,” He muttered. “Even my own children are cowards.”

“It shall be done,” Masu answered. He went this far to ensure prolonged peace. He wasn’t about to let potential threats looming.

“Good. Now, get the fuck out of here. I am going to take a nap here.”

Masu’s calm stare was fixed at Yuiriel II who was getting himself onto the bed. He paid a respect to him by giving him a bow and teleported out.

By morning, the only thing that was left where Yuiriel II’s keep was used to be was ashes and molten stones. And, on that day, the Bau council led by Masu declared victorious.

Within days, Bowin was quickly declared the new headman of the clan and the council acknowledged his position officially.

And Yuiriel II's three sons were soon caught attempting to flee from the planet. The three young men were taken in front of the council members.

The young men pleaded for life. They insisted they'd stay low for their entire life. They swore that they'd be harmless. They were also willing to give up on claims to the throne.

"It's always easy to make promises when your life is at stake," Masu commented while looking over Yuiriel II's three sons who were seized on floor by guards. The guards already had guns at them and were ready to pull trigger on his order.

They swore they'd do anything as long as their lives were spared. However, he was never going to let them live and ordered swift executions.

And the conflict was finally over.

Many people were glad to see the conflict finally end. Over a billion lost their homes. Casualty count was off the chart and it was estimated to take a hundred years to completely recover from the damages.

Masu planned to leave Earth and return to Freedom colony once the situation settled down. However, two seasons after the conflict, Bowin was found dead in

his bed chamber. And at the same time, Shaun, along with Gracia and Xavier, declared a revolt against the council.

The timing of their revolt, which was only a day after Bowin was found dead, indicated that Shaun was behind the assassination.

Shaun claimed that Bowin was unfit as the clan leader and he aimed to become the next headman. Being an insider, he was certainly entitled to. However, he wasn't going to have any sort of support from the council. Therefore, he decided to take the matter into his own hands.

Because over half of Earth was devastated, Shaun had an actual chance to battle the council. His Australia continent was never damaged from the conflict and he retained most of his forces.

The council panicked because their forces were scattered around and supply lines were disturbed due to damaged or destroyed infrastructures. The council relied mostly upon Shaun's Australia continent for supplies during the conflict with Yuiriel II. Now with him turning into an enemy, supplies became an immediate problem.

As if fully aware of the council's issues, Shaun made a public proposal that, if the council were to concede defeat, he was willing to let the council exist albeit reduced in size, therefore reduced in power.

The council members were actually in favor of conceding defeat because they would not last a week if the fight actually occurred. However, Masu had another plan. He turned to a very unlikely ally.

The Ark which was currently ruled by the O'ren.

To be more precise, he turned to Cecil for supplies. As President Mirren's top adviser, Cecil had the authority to approve such an act and he did.

Mirren mobilized Earth defense fleet and dropped off massive amount of supplies at the Bau council HQ. Mirren also had the backing of the O'ren who saw it as a rare opportunity to let Bau owe them a favor.

And with supply issue taken care of, the situation started to look very different. The Bau council started an immediate and swift invasion of Australia continent per Masu's direct order. The continent was tackled from all fronts and Shaun became quickly isolated in the city of Sydney in a matter of a month.

In desperation, Shaun quickly came up with a peace deal which was duly rejected by Masu. He ordered an all-out assault on Sydney and Shaun eventually committed suicide. Gracia and Xavier were subsequently captured but Masu ordered their executions.

Shaun's revolt made many Bau council members to realize that the right leader had been with them all along. Masu's response to Shaun's revolt was swift and

precise. His orders were organized and proper, not to mention damage to the continent was minimal.

His composure as a leader, his calm aura of authority; his qualities meant that the Bau could be stable as long as he was in his seat.

Yes, he was only an outsider and wasn't related to the Bau by blood, but many felt that it was a non-issue. Masu had been involved in Bau's affairs for pretty much his entire life, and only fools would consider him as a non-Bau.

And the council urged him to stay on when he expressed his desire to leave when things were finally settling down for good.

"We need you, sir. If you leave now, the Bau will soon fall into conflicts again," A council member was attempting to persuade Masu in a council session.

Another council member agreed. "We are not asking you to stay with us forever. We understand that you are not a true Bau but you might as well be considering what you've done for the clan."

It was also suggested to bring Heather Bau back to Earth.

To which Masu expressed a firm denial. "No, she will stay on the colony."

If Heather was to come back, there was a very likely chance that Masu would be forced to convert into a Bau insider and even take the position of headman because it was apparent that that was what the council members desired.

They desired peace. After over a decade of harsh conflicts, the last thing they wanted was yet another conflict and Masu's presence meant peace literally. No one was going to stand against him after what he has done with Yuiriel II and Shaun. He had literally conquered the clan.

Meanwhile, Masu wasn't going to stay. The last thing he wanted was prolonged stay on Earth. The longer he'd stay on Earth, the harder it was going to be for him to leave later. However, the council members were firm on their refusal to let him leave.

This was when Cecil meddled in. Cecil proposed a deal that'd please both Masu and the council. He proposed Masu to stay on as an elder to oversee things and be called upon only when needed. He would be given freedom and the council would operate without him.

Both sides reluctantly agreed with Cecil's idea since neither of them was willing to budge. This was also when Cecil invited him to work with him at the Ark.

They were at Masu's temporary villa which was given by the Bau council. It was a two-story grand manor built on a prime location in North America. The manor was surrounded by dense forests and it had a private shuttle landing pad in its spacious backyard which was more like a park by size alone. The council was

willing to do anything to please him although Masu wasn't kind of a man who was swayed by such.

"Are you serious?" Masu was amazed at the proposal.

They were taking a casual walk in the backyard.

"You have lots of spare time now, do you not?"

"Is this why you made such a proposal?"

"You do not belong here," Cecil stated firmly.

Masu knew where he truly belonged. Alas, he wouldn't be allowed on the planet he desired to go.

As if reading his mind, Cecil told him, "You can go there." And started to explain him in detail regarding the current status of the Dietrich clan.

The Dietrich clan had long been suffering from lack of leadership. Retainers of the clan attempted to take control over the clan from Marcus Bau. They were on course to strip the clan leadership away from him until he married Kakari Ra. Kakari proved to be highly cunning and Marcus was able to win back the clan control in the end. However, with Marcus' rapid decline in health, things weren't certain at the Dietrich.

Masu paused walking on the instant he heard a familiar name: Kakari Ra, the assassin who killed Affie Bau. To him, she was the cause of his every misfortune. If

she did not kill his wife, he wouldn't have been involved in any further Bau affairs. He would have kids. He would have had a happy life at...

"Stop."

Cecil's voice disturbed Masu's abstract swirling thought.

"The past is past. Your job is not to remember and recall your past. Your job is to look forward," Cecil said.

Masu blinked his eyes few times, attempting to distance himself away from his inner, dark, thoughts.

"It's hard, Cecil," He told him. "It's hard not to think about what ifs."

They resumed walking.

"Everyone has their own darkness, and there are those who need to embrace their darkness and there are those who need to distance away from it. You are the latter," Cecil claimed.

"Who determines that?" Masu asked, jokingly.

And Cecil answered with a voice of authority, "I determine that."

Masu beamed a grin. It was an illogical answer. Yet, he couldn't argue.

Cecil continued, "The red sand planet is where you truly belong."

"But I am banned from entering the planet," Masu replied. Yes, Mars had always been in his mind, for it was truly the planet he wanted to settle down. He was born there; he was raised there. He had a passion for the red sand and the qualities of Mars. He missed the sand storms that would blow people out of their

feet. He missed the engineers who were hard workers. He missed the mining operations where a group of people worked hard to get their money's worth.

"Masu," Cecil softly called out his name. "You underestimate yourself too much. You are no longer just a young lad who eloped with a Bau woman. You are now a powerful man. You certainly have the political powers to lift the ban."

Masu paused walking again. What Cecil told, or proposed, his words opened up new layers of possibilities. Until this moment, his goal was his eventual return to Freedom colony. It wasn't because of Heather. Rather, it was because he felt he was bound there. However, if, if, he could return to Mars, if he could just do that, if...

"Much better than recalling the past, isn't it," Cecil told him which brought him out of his swirling thought again.

Masu didn't answer but he couldn't deny. When he was asking himself numerous what ifs for his past, all he was feeling was regrets. When he was asking himself the new possibilities, he was feeling newfound hope.

A moment later, Masu asked a different question instead, "Why do you want me to work at the Ark then?"

"Because now is not the time to return to the Dietrich. You might as well do something while you wait."

"When is the right time then?"

Cecil told him to wait until Marcus Dietrich would pass away. The clan would be divided upon his death and he said that was the time to return.

And for the time being, Masu was to work as one of Mirren's staffs.

And for the first time, Masu was introduced to Mirren's core staffs.

Avicenna, Cecil, Illy O'ren, Marat O'ren, and Dr. Cezary were directly working under President Mirren although Avicenna and Illy O'ren were almost always absent from Mirren's office due to facts that Avicenna was mostly working in the Ark house and Illy O'ren was acting as the president of Venus.

Therefore, when Cecil introduced Masu to the others, it was only Marat and Dr. Cezary.

Cezary was a young scientist who earned his fame via his inventions that proved to be crucial for mankind. His two major inventions were ACM reactor and ACM shield technology. Both of them had huge impacts on everyone's daily lives. ACM reactor literally changed how city planned to distribute its power and maintain their grid. And ACM shield technology warranted fundamental changes in space ship constructions.

The two inventions proved to be so vital that Cezary became billionaire in a matter of few years, not to mention earning the recognition as the best scientist ever lived. He had other inventions that were worthy of notes also.

Mirren invited him to be his staff as a result.

As for Marat O'ren, Masu was pleasantly shocked to encounter her. The moment he entered her vicinity, he felt his mind being cleansed. It was as if cool spring breeze was blowing in his mind. It made him feel at ease and feel energized.

She was a fairly petite woman with medium brown hair and blue eyes. With her relatively short height of 165cm (5 ft 5 in) and cute appearance, she was certainly pleasing to look at and even Masu wasn't an exception to that line of thought.

However, what was even more shocking to him was her relationship with Cecil. As far as he remembered, Cecil had never shown any humane emotions. His face had always been lifeless and emotionless as far as he was concerned and seeing him interact with Marat like a human being was a sight to behold. Cecil would exchange casual jokes with Marat and would even grin at times.

Giggling, Marat asked Masu.

"Masu the sage, how did you gain that title? Not many are given such a grand title, you know?"

Her voice was soothing and bright, and Cecil answered before Masu could.

"People gave him that title because he has done so many stupid things," He said half-jokingly. There were some truth in his answer however.

Smiling, Masu answered, "The previous headman of the Bau, Yuiriel II, has given me the title in his PR speech. Somehow, the title got stuck with me."

“It wouldn’t have stuck on you if you didn’t deserve it,” Marat remarked and struck out her hand. “May I shake your hand? I’ve never shaken a hand with a real sage.”

“I am not sure whether I am a real sage,” Masu responded with a grin. Nevertheless, he struck out his hand for a handshake.

“You are a real one. I can tell,” Marat claimed confidently.

Marat proved to be a very interesting woman. Despite of being a class S ESP, her raw ESP powers weren’t that strong. However, her aura was very, extremely, extraordinarily, powerful. What she said and claimed felt like the answer. When she persuaded someone, her persuasion was almost always successful.

In a way, she was a gifted diplomat and she played a crucial part in Mirren’s attempts at maintaining positive relationships within the Ark. The house members were mostly pleased with Mirren’s regime thanks to Marat’s diplomatic actions.

And with Cecil and Masu by his side, Mirren maintained almost absolute powers within United Sol. Mirren proved to be the only president in the history of United Sol who maintained positive relationships with both the Bau and the O’ren at the same time.

What that meant that Mirren had powers to pass any bills at the house level with ease.

On year 8932, Mirren was discussing another tax increase for Andromeda colonies. The previous tax increase was soon after he was elected which was over a hundred years ago. Mirren wanted a further 3% increase and make the universal tax in the colonies 9% total from 6%.

Cecil was against the idea.

“Not only is this too soon for another tax increase, the allure of colonies was the low taxes. At 9%, it is the same as the tax level in Sol system.”

Mirren’s reasoning for yet another tax increase was to stop tax evasions. More companies were using virtual offices on Heaven of Order to reduce tax. He noted further that he planned to increase the tax in increments until it would reach 20%.

“A lot of them managed to save their wealth for hundreds of years. They should be paying back some of it,” Mirren claimed.

Mirren’s desire to tax the colonies heavily stemmed from a series of financial issues. Andromeda cluster was bigger than Sol system and the need to cover the vast area cost credits. When the colonies were relatively young, it cost the Ark literally nothing to keep the colonies running and it didn’t take much to maintain security in outer space.

However, as the colonies matured, thus turning into established and developed planets, it started to cost vast amount of credits for civil services as well as fleet costs to keep the systems secured from pirates. The amount of the colonists were

paying in taxes was nowhere enough to keep everything running at an optimal level.

Cecil was fully aware of the financial issues. However, instead of increasing taxes, his idea to counter the mounting debt was dipping into black market. Cecil was never someone who was afraid of controversial methods and he claimed that the ideal form of government was when it ran like a company. He also proposed demolition of various social benefits which he claimed to be “useless”.

However, Mirren’s view of ideal government and Cecil’s view of ideal government differed too much. Cecil was willing to cut down on non-essential benefit payments while Mirren wanted to create more.

In the end, Cecil made a compromise and suggested something entirely new.

“Create more lotteries. Tax the fools,” Cecil suggested.

There was only one official lottery game in Andromeda cluster and Masu actually agreed with Cecil.

“It’s not such a bad idea,” Masu agreed. “Create, let’s say, three additional lottery games per week and you will get hundreds of billions in revenue.”

“They will never complain about more lotteries,” Cecil added to his point. “It’s two birds with one stone.”

Furthermore, Cecil also proposed some modification to current free medical treatments. He proposed medical exemption for those who were found guilty of smoking tobacco and usage of drugs.

Medical treatments had been completely free for all citizens ever since formation of United Sol with an option of private hospitals if one wanted to pay for faster and better quality treatments.

“Let them opt out if they want to,” Cecil suggested. “Treating them costs far more than what they pay anyway. Even if they opt in, no medical treatments for them if they are found guilty of such.”

Mirren was actually shell-shocked that Cecil made such suggestions. He simply could not believe that Cecil would make such suggestions.

“Why don’t you apply medical exemption to those who drink then?” Mirren responded angrily and sarcastically.

“Because drinking is a socially accepted method of recreation,” Cecil responded. “Smoking and drug usage are not.”

Cecil’s suggestions never saw the light of the day because Mirren rejected all, but he would later implement his ideas on his own government in far future.

In the end, the universal tax for Andromeda colonies was increased to 9% from 6%. It passed the Ark house with over 70% of YES which showed the strong support Mirren had from the Ark. However, his support within Andromeda colonies were dwindling although that didn’t matter much as they had no voting powers. Mirren knew this and Andromeda colonies knew it as well.

Additionally, in just few years, Mirren also implemented other various sneaky measures of additional hidden taxes on the colonists. A prime example was printing a renewal date on Andromeda citizen IDs and requiring a fee to renew.

By year 8950, Mirren increased tax on Andromeda colonies further by additional 3%, making the universal tax 12% along with other various small taxes. Andromeda colonists were becoming swiftly displeased with Mirren.

At the same time, the Bau council which had been running fine for few decades without Masu grew in confidence that they could run the clan on their own and they were finally willing to let Masu go which he duly accepted.

On 8950 May 1st, Masu officially resigned as the elder of the Bau and became fully employed by Mirren.

And Cecil, Marat, and Masu went to Illy O'ren's villa on Venus for a short vacation. Illy O'ren was actually an administrator of Venus, but due to the planet's population size and importance, she was referred as "The President" or more often as "Madam President". The O'ren was currently at the peak of their powers and even surpassed the Bau for the moment.

Illy's villa was located on edge of Fallen Crater where a grand manor was built around the crater wall. The villa boundary reached 100 acres. It was her personal property and she'd keep it whether he was the President or not.

She ran up to Cecil and gave him a warm hug when the group exited from a shuttle landing pad in its backyard. At this point, Masu was skeptical of Illy's feelings. It wasn't kind of hug he expected to see from Mirren's wife. Her hug carried deep affections. And seeing Marat's eyes sway off in light frustrations from the hug indicated that something unpleasant was going on between the three.

For Masu, however, it was really none of his business and he wasn't going to make any mention of his suspicions.

Cecil and Masu were having tea time by a table in the backyard. Observing the light gray sky of Venus which was usually clouded, Masu dipped into his tea.

"Well, this is quiet," Masu remarked to which Cecil didn't respond at all. He felt that, if Marat was present, Cecil might have made a joke or two.

In the end, Cecil spoke not a word and Masu had to finish his tea in an uneasy silence. He felt that the storm was over when the matters at the Bau were settled, but it seemed he was being dragged into yet another storm.

Fin