

[Masu arc] [6] [The Dietrich] [9012]

Rev 3.5 (Last updated on April 25, 2020)

Prerequisite stories

All previous stories in the same arc.

Especially **[Masu arc] [3] [3Ra Syndicate] [8625]** is absolutely crucial

Marcus Dietrich initially dismissed Masu's return. When Masu eloped with a Bau woman, the whole clan was raged and the opinions were unanimous in banning him from entering Mars.

Hundreds of years passed. And Marcus had a change of heart.

Mage the sage, people started to call him. The Bau literally worshipped the man after he single-handedly took care of Yuiriel II, twice.

When Masu was banned from entering Mars hundreds years ago, the retainers sneered at him. They talked about how useless he was. They swore Masu would never be able to return to Mars.

And, indeed, he never attempted to go back to Mars. There was never even any diplomatic talks in attempting to lift his ban.

But Masu the sage; he was a talent. His accomplishments started to cause ripples across the Dietrich. The clan had long been lacking in strong leadership, thus unity, and someone strong needed to be present.

Someone..., someone, like Masu the sage for an example.

Originally, Marcus Dietrich did not understand Masu's decision to elope. He simply could not. Why would anyone ruin one's own future just because of a specific woman? It wasn't like there was only one woman in the universe. There were options, or at least that was his line of thoughts initially.

After he married Kakari Ra, he had a change of heart. When he became a man from a boy, he started to understand Masu and started to sympathize with his actions.

Marcus and Masu were, in fact, childhood friends. There were expectations on Masu's shoulders to grow up as a fine retainer and serve Marcus. Alas, that never happened and Masu was banned from entering Mars.

Him being referred as "The Sage" certainly had its part. The Dietrich needed a solution to their leadership crisis. For retainers, it was a simple matter of taking the clan away from the Dietrich. For Marcus, it was a matter of holding onto his

position and try to gain support. But it wasn't rocket science to figure out that he wasn't going to get any. And with his rapidly declining health, he feared the worst.

His wife, Kakari, wasn't going to be able to stand alone against the retainers. If he died, the retainers would simply revolt and Kakari would be hunted down.

The reason for such an extreme outcome was simple. They were childless. The only child they had was poisoned by his own retainer. A childless wife of a dead headman was as good as nothing.

He was content on unable to have any children. He felt it was the fate. However, he wanted to ensure his wife's life, and the only way he saw was Masu's return. He firmly believed that Masu would stand on his side and protect his wife. There was a chance that he'd side with the retainers but he gambled. Masu was "a sage" after all.

It was a gamble of life so to speak and it was probably the biggest gamble anyone had to undertake. For Marcus, it would be his first gamble and the last as well.

The retainers approved Marcus' desire to pardon, and thus lift, Masu's ban unanimously because they believed that Masu would be on their side. Even without that thought, they were willing to approve it on an account of granting a dying man's wish.

Year 9012,

Masu was getting onto a transport to reach Mars. He promised Heather that he'd return after the Bau affair was done, but quite frankly for him, that was his last option. If there was something better, he was always going for it rather than returning to Freedom colony.

He received a word that the ban had lifted a decade ago, but he didn't leave right away due to a fact that he still had some work to do. After Cecil left the Ark, and subsequently the Earth, he had to fill Cecil's shoes and did most of paper works that needed to be done for Mirren. Cecil and Marat used to do most of paper works and with both of them gone, his hands became full.

Although Mirren never publicly showed his sorrow over his daughter's "disappearance", his body language showed clearly that he was suffering. He became more reckless and careless in politics especially matters involving Andromeda colonies. In addition, his decision to silently cast off Cecil was met with criticisms from the O'ren Ark members as well.

In Cecil's defense, Masu felt that Cecil was unexpectedly a fair statesman. Despite of his odd nature and questionable temper, which could result death of millions as the history had shown, he had near total unbiased view on employments.

In other words, Cecil employed personnel based on purely their skills and adaptability to jobs instead of glancing at their backgrounds. While most politicians claimed of fairness, few acted upon their words. Background was

important. If one was neither from the Bau or the O'ren, it was hard to get high-end positions within inner Sol. That was the harsh truth which not many were willing to discuss. Thus, Cecil's departure meant that some positions at the Ark were quickly replaced with O'ren members.

Masu did his best to cover the cracks created by Cecil's vacancy but realized eventually that Mirren's regime was heading toward a downfall. Mirren himself was a changed man and started to hog himself with silver-tongued bureaucrats. Cezary also felt the same and chose to depart Earth some years ago.

When Masu was leaving, he was seen off by no one; he left alone and rode in a regular civilian grade ferry from Washington international shuttle port. For a man who was called the sage, it was a rather undeserving farewell. However, he couldn't care less. He wasn't a man who sought out glories and attention.

He did get a business class seat which he deemed to be good enough.

A business class seat meant his own private quarter. Making himself home in the quarter that was just big enough for him to move around, he dimmed the light and casually leaned his shoulder against a wall and relaxed.

"Neutral background music, windy one," He called out. "Volume low."

Soon a soothing windy space resounded in the quarter faintly. His eyes were slowly closing as he relaxed.

The seventh sense...

During the last phase for Project Marat, Masu was drawn into something called “the seventh sense plane”. It looked and felt like he was on a grass field under deep blue sky with a gentle breeze blowing. He was told by a figure that looked identical to Cecil but in a female frame that he was indeed on the seventh sense plane.

He was also told that the access to the seventh sense was “a privilege” while the sixth sense which ESPs possessed was a right by birth.

At that moment, Masu was losing his consciousness due to overexertion. He made sure that Cezary would survive and was going to pass out. And the next thing he realized, he was on the seventh sense plane.

“I am just nobody,” She or he, whatever it was, told him with a gentle smile to which Masu responded with a crooked grin.

“If you are nobody, then I am bloody dirt,” He told her sarcastically.

They had a rather cryptic conversation that didn’t last long and when he woke up, the aftereffects of his overreaction was gone. While he was puzzled what it was all about, he chose not to pursue the matter any further. *Some things are better to be left alone as they are,* he felt instinctively.

Slowly opening eyes, his gaze was vacant; his wave of thoughts moved onto the next subject.

Martians, especially those who belonged to the miner's guild which was controlled by the Dietrich, had a moral rule that passed down for generations.

It was: **You shall never play lottery.**

As interesting as it sounded, there was indeed no lottery on Mars because ticket sales was near zero. The Dietrich clan strictly forbade anyone from playing lottery. Their founders never believed in relying on random luck for prospecting for minerals and they firmly believed in rewards blossomed from hard and consistent efforts.

All of which meant that they did not like to see people relying on random luck of draws which was inheritably what lottery was all about. Lack of lottery on the planet ultimately resulted in moderately higher planetary tax which the miners had no problem with.

He never really had a chance to grow up in such an environment but his spirit was that of a Martian. He missed the sand storms that would blow people away. The sand storms on Mars were so fierce that one couldn't see 5 foot ahead of them. Still, as a child, he had a lot of fun with the storms. As an ESP being blown away by the sand wasn't life threatening and it was certainly entertaining for a child to be lifted by wind and fly around effortlessly.

There was also this unique scent of the red sand of Mars. He couldn't explain it clearly and his memories had faded greatly but he knew he missed the scent.

And there was also the burning festival. Clear sky was a rare sight to see on Mars, and, whenever there was clear sky, there was the burning festival.

Being a desert planet, Mars surface absorbed sun's heat during the day and released the heat in evening, making evening hotter than day. Clear sky would mean a lot more sun's energy being absorbed by the sand and subsequently literally burning evening on the same day. Martians celebrated such days.

At one point, an announcement was being made.

"Mars is in visual range. We will orbit the planet for an hour in case you want to take pictures and have a view. And then we will touch down on Mars shuttle port."

It was a ferry after all.

An hour and half later, Masu was standing on Mars. And nothing appeared to have changed as a fierce sand storm was blowing on his face.

Although he was unable to see afar, he could feel presence of a group of people ahead of him, whose attention was firmly fixed at him.

"I am Masu. Were you waiting for me?"

Whoever it was, he tried to speak but his voice was blocked by the fierce wind storm carried by the sand storm. Coughing few times, probably because sand got into his throat, he attempted to speak again.

“We’ve been waiting for you.”

As much as he wanted to enjoy the planet, he had no such luxury.

Masu was introduced to Kakari as soon as he arrived on Mars.

"Greetings," Masu said as he kneeled down on one knee formally to her.

It was the clan hall where retainers stood on sides and the headman would sit in his throne at the end on an elevated spot. There was an extra seat for the spouse which would belong to Kakari.

His eyes gazed downwards at the red carpet and he was completely silent and remained still until Kakari finally spoke to him.

"Welcome back to Mars, retainer Masu," She said indifferently.

The hall was quickly dominated by uneasy silence. The retainers were unaware of the history between them while Masu himself was also fully aware. However, it was a mere past that they had to silently bury and move on. Hundreds of years passed since then.

Eventually, after a good minute and half, she finally opened her mouth to give out a command.

“Arise,” She said; she was being completely stoic.

And so was Masu. As he stood up with a silent groan, he had to ask.

"Where is Marcus?"

He was taken to Marcus' grave. He was astonished to hear that Marcus had passed away over a decade ago. He stood in front of Marcus' grave for a moment. He was saddened to have missed out the reunion although truthfully his memories with Marcus as a childhood friend was only distant memories for him.

Regardless, It also didn't take him long to realize that he had far more pressing matters at hand. The Dietrich clan was a mess. The retainers were crying for Kakari's head and she had no intention to turn herself in, obviously.

The clan was also worn down and heavily divided due to the prolonged internal conflicts.

Masu was initially welcomed by some retainers but his first speech at a meeting among retainers placed him in a negative spotlight because he sided with Kakari.

“What do you hope to gain from this?” Masu swung his finger at a group of retainers in a conference room. Each retainers were all leaders of prominent mining teams. As expected from miners, every one of them had rugged appearances. And they looked exhausted. Some of them were simply tired of the endless conflicts that had been dragging for hundreds of years. Regardless, they remained stoic toward him.

“What do you hope to gain from this?” He repeated, this time with a more demanding voice which prompted one of the retainers to talk back.

The retainer raised his voice as he told him, “What the hell would you know?”

Nodding firmly, another retainer responded after an angered groan in attempted silence, “You’ve been away for too long that you don’t get the picture.”

“I may have been away,” Masu spoke to them passionately. “Thus, I am able to see what is clearly wrong with the clan.”

No one could argue that Masu didn’t go through enough. But for the retainers, he wasn’t one of them and hadn’t gone through the crisis. Thus, most of them believed that he had no right to nudge in his opinion on the matter. They believed he should have sided with them and get it over with.

However, Masu did not back down. In the end, the meeting ended prematurely when some angered retainers left.

He wasn’t discouraged by the outcome; he expected such reactions. However, timing of his arrival was too late to make any impacts on the outcome. The retainers’ minds were already set on deposing Kakari and they went on to do so shortly after the meeting.

He wasn’t surprised by the uprising. What he was surprised of was that they called for reinforcements from the Bau. Such an act was simply unthinkable as a member of the Dietrich clan. It was no secret that the Dietrich was originally an Earth-bound clan. They were forced out of Earth by the Bau and settled down on

Mars. Over four thousand years passed since then. Still, the fierce hatred toward the Bau passed down for generations.

Majority of population on Mars had either direct or indirect connection to the Dietrich. Many were once outsiders of the clan whose bloodline became too weak to be considered one as generations passed. Even so, even without having the last name, Dietrich, majority of population on Mars considered themselves to be a part of the clan. While their memories of the clan was hazed, the hatred was not.

When the populace heard the news that Bau soldiers were coming to Mars, they were outraged. It was simply an unthinkable act. And when they found out that it was retainers who called for Bau's assistance to depose the late wife of their last headman, they were even more outraged. While they did not see Kakari as a fit wife for the late headman, there was no denying the fact that she had been with Marcus Dietrich for more than four hundred years. She may have not been able to secure the Dietrich bloodline but there was no denying that she did what she could; it was a well-known knowledge that Marcus was a physically weak man.

And the rebellious retainers were quickly isolated by the locals. Some of them were brutally beaten to death by them.

As for Masu, the retainers were no longer his concern. Marcus Dietrich was the last insider of the clan. With him gone, so was the clan. But, for the moment, he needed to get Kakari out of the danger. As a retainer of the clan, that was what needed to be done before anything.

And for the first time, Masu called to meet Kakari and her maid, Iss in order to discuss the matter at hand. Unlike everyone else on the planet, he had good first-hand knowledge over the Bau and their council. He was absolutely certain that the rebellious retainers had been in contact with the Bau in secret for many years.

"It is too late now," Masu said with a calm voice and face. He didn't look like someone who was in deep troubles. "The Bau has the means of wiping out this clan."

"I cannot believe this. I would never ask the fucking Bau to assist, and they did it just like that," Kakari remarked while growling.

Her forces were consisted of militia and the number did not exceed one thousand while it was rumored that the Bau was bringing in tens of thousands. It was already a lost war seemingly.

Iss, who was known as Kakari's maid on surface but an assassin in heart, had her eyes downcast and seemed to be in deep thoughts. Her narrowed eyebrows indicated that whatever was going on in her mind wasn't good thoughts.

She eventually stated her inner thoughts. "M'lady, may I suggest that you escape from this planet?"

Kakari glared at her at once. "Iss, I bloody hope you do not mean that sincerely."

"I do mean so. You've done enough. Four hundred years, you've done enough, lady. Let us go back to where we long, to the Nebula."

She froze immediately when Iss mentioned “the Nebula”. Her annoyed face soon soothed itself and she gazed vacantly as if she was recalling good memories.

Seeing how she was reacting, Iss pressed, “In fact, I’ve arranged escorts for your return, lady. Your father awaits you, ma’am.”

Masu did some background search on Kakari as well as Iss before coming back to Mars. It wasn’t something he was keen to do but he needed to do it.

Kakari was Olne’s daughter who was his eldest child. It was said that she was a proud woman who was very skilled in the art of shadow, a fancy term for an assassin. Her arranged marriage to Marcus Dietrich paved a way for the Ra clan to establish a connection to outside and secure a good mineral import source.

For four hundred years she had stayed on Mars. Four hundred years was literally over half of a hyper human’s lifespan. To have such a determination, whether she was his wife’s assassin, he felt she was commendable. Rationally thinking, he believed that Kakari did what she was told. It was an order; nothing more and nothing less.

She did what she was told to do just as he did what he was told to do so. The difference was that she chose to go all the way while he fled midway. Whether it was her intention or not, she had been fiercely fighting for the Dietrich. If she had given up early, he wouldn’t have the clan to return to even if he somehow came back to Mars. She may have been the one who assassinated his wife but she managed to preserve his home planet. The score was one to one in his mind.

As his mind met a conclusion, a small but searing something inside of his chest slowly dispersed.

“Lady Ra, if you stay here, you will be captured. I agree with Iss. You must leave,” Masu attempted to convince her to leave. He’d be lying if he didn’t think about avenging Affie. He’d be lying...

Iss’ stoic gaze struck at Masu and she said to him, “Retainer Masu,” Iss said, “I would like you to come with us.”

Kakari startled to hear that. “What are you saying, Iss?!”

“My place is here.” He beamed a tranquil grin. “If the clan goes down, I will go down with it.”

It took him hundreds of years to finally be able to set his feet on Mars. He wasn’t about to leave only days after he came back.

They had to act fast; there was no time to waste. The Bau transports were on their way and ETA of their arrival was a single digit in days.

Thankfully, Iss had everything prepared in advance. Kakari and Iss reached an escape shuttle with Masu also accompanying them.

"Take the shuttle and leave here," Masu said while Iss entered a passcode for the shuttle. "Then you will be out of here for good."

Kakari and Iss exchanged a silent nod at each other and it was Iss who spoke up.

"Why are you helping us?" Iss demanded. "Especially when the lady has murdered your late wife?"

Masu froze momentarily as he looked up at Kakari who was behind Iss and was at the shuttle entrance. He recalled how much hatred, how much regrets, and how much pains he had experienced. It was painful for himself and those around him. For a time, Masu aimed to exact revenge.

But it was all over. Just as Cecil advised him, he chose to look forward instead of lamenting the past. In response, beaming a tranquil smile at Kakari and told her, "It's all in the past. One has to get over it at one point."

Kakari laid her gaze upon him who was looking right back at her with a firm focus. She recalled how powerless he was when his wife was at the death's doorstep. Her memories involving her loss of hands were painfully clear for her. For many years, she suffered from nightmares involving such memories. She lamented loss of her hands which effectively put an end to her life as a hyper human because no battle bionic hands were adequate enough to mimic neutral hands, especially for hyper humans.

The hatred, the darkness, what-ifs, should-haves, would-haves...

"Iss," She called out with a very firm voice. "Give him the capsule."

Iss showed no objection and pulled out a thumb-size capsule. She approached Masu and handed it over without any sort of hesitation.

"What is this?" Masu wondered.

“It is a fertilized embryo, the lady’s egg and the late headman’s sperm. It is currently inactive,” Iss explained indifferently.

“His name is Kan, Kan Dietrich,” Kakari added. “Take a good care of my son, Retainer Masu.”

“The bloodline is not over...?”

“It is not. I planned to take him with me to the Nebula, but I realize that I should not,” She replied then turned around and was about to enter the shuttle.

“M’lady,” Iss called out. “Please heed my plea.”

Kakari turned back again. “Go on.”

“I’d like to remain here on Mars.”

She narrowed her eyes. “Why?”

“Your son will need protectors. While I feel that we could trust retainer Masu here, he will stand alone against many. Besides, your son will need a trainer who can teach him about us, the Ra.”

Kakari closed her eyes for a moment. She thought she should also stay on Mars and finish what had been begun. Reading her thought, Masu told her, “You should leave, Lady Ra. Your presence can only stir up more resistances.”

After a moment of silence, she opened her eyes and looked at Iss vigilantly.

“Iss!” She called out.

“Yes, m’lady.” She kneeled down on one knee.

“I hereby declare that you’ve been released from the oath you’ve sworn. You did not break your oath, rather you’ve fulfilled your duty admirably and I am releasing you from your duties. I am retiring you, Iss.”

She bowed toward Kakari sincerely. “Thank you.”

“Retainer Masu, take damn good care of my son.”

“I will do what I can to insure that the bloodline is not lost.”

Shortly after Kakari’s departure, Masu and Iss rushed back to the clan headquarters. The small militia army she had gathered was waiting there. He quickly addressed them with a commanding voice.

“Men, we are moving out! We are abandoning the headquarters!”

Iss inquired, “What do you plan to do?”

“This is no an ideal place to defend,” He explained in rush as he instructed the militia. “If my memories serve me correctly, there are better places.”

The HQ of the Dietrich was located on edge of Kamtaka, the capital of Mars. The HQ was nothing more than a small group of buildings with low walls around them. Ever since having to relocate to Mars, the clan was never attacked. Thus, the defense was non-existence.

“Defending this place is suicidal,” He continued his explanation as he quickly went around to gather some things. He collected disks that contained sensitive data

while erasing and destroying what could prove beneficial to the Bau when they occupy the HQ. Once he was done sabotaging the place, he found the militia army that was waiting outside.

Standing in front of them imposingly, he spoke to them.

“Men, are you all aware of the situation we are going to be under?”

The men nodded silently.

He told them regardless, “The Bau is going to be coming here to wipe the Dietrich out. And I am not going to let that happen. But defending the HQ is out of the question.”

He had four hundred militia under his command who weren't even properly armed. Their rifles were a heavily modified mining gun which was a basically a high-powered but unfocused laser gun, which meant that it was very inaccurate at distance while being powerful at a short distance.

He had a plan. However, first of all, a new HQ needed to be established for base of operation, and he chose a remote abandoned mine. It was located in middle of nowhere and visually it was impossible to spot due to constant sand storms blowing over the mine. Even sensors would have a hard time picking anything up due to mineral deposits. Furthermore, there were over ten thousands of similar mines present on Mars. Therefore, even if the Bau force decided to sweep-search, it wasn't feasible to do so.

The mine structure was straight-forward. It had a large chamber in the deepest part and there were smaller chambers along the way to its exit. The large chamber was big enough to act as food storage.

Masu was swift on his orders and the militia relocated food crates to the new base along with other equipment that were movable. By time they were done setting up the base, scouts reported that the Bau force had landed on Kamtaka. Their number exceeded twenty thousand. The Bau wasn't welcome in the city but the inhabitants had no power to resist them. Mars government, which had been nothing more than a puppet under the Dietrich's shadow, welcomed them.

The Bau force aggressively searched for remnants of the Dietrich as soon as they established their own base of operation in the abandoned Dietrich HQ but they didn't have much luck as their search in endless deserts turned in only casualties. They sought to gain some info from the local inhabitants but they knew nothing. And years went on.

Year 9031

A decade passed, and the Bau force established its own stronghold in Kamtaka, eventually overthrowing Mars government. On surface, the Bau conquered Mars. The reality, however, was different.

It was a darkening evening. A group of six Bau combatants were leaving a pub. Their faces were all red from the drinks they had and they were chitchatting as they stepped outside. All of them had quality plasma rifles on their backs.

To their complete surprise, two shadowy figures ran up to them from sides and knocked two of them immediately.

“Ambush!” A Bau combatant shouted desperately but his cry for help fell into deaf ears and he soon fell choking with a dagger shoved in his neck.

“Fucking Dietrich!” The rest three pulled out their rifles from their back and opened fire immediately but the ambushers were long gone already.

“Again?”

A tall, slender, man who was donned simple but elegant clothes muttered with a deep frown. His name was Noviti who was in charge of the Bau force. He was given a temporary title of the administrator of Mars by the Bau council.

He was just reported that a patrol team was ambushed by the Dietrich. Three were killed and their weapons were taken as a result.

“I cannot believe this,” Noviti was visually angry. But he wasn’t angry because of the casualty. He was angry because the ambush cases had been on sharp increase and he did not want to report it to the Bau council.

“Increase patrol!” He barked at his secretary who acknowledged his order by a simple nod. “And keep this off the report. I will handle it.”

Noviti had high expectations and determination when he arrived on Mars. He was fully determined to make Mars Bau’s. However, his high spirit eventually wore off as years passed on without having any success in locating the illusive Dietrich base. It was literally trying to find a needle in haystack. In fact, it had been worse than trying to find a needle in haystack because the needle was biting back.

Initially, the Bau council was very kind in his failure to locate the Dietrich base. Even his casualty report for his first year, which was fifteen hundred MIA (Missing in Action), was kindly overlooked. However, as years went on, the tone altered. The casualty report became bigger and bigger and the tone from the Bau council was progressively becoming more uninterested. And he recently came across a rumor that the Bau council was considering his successor. He had to find a way. He needed to show them fruits of his efforts.

Meanwhile, Masu was in his quarter which was a small chamber underground. The ceiling was rocks and dirt. The walls were rocks and dirt. But the floor was cement. There was a small bed along with a small desk and an electronic lamp on it. There was a map of Mars surface on his desk and he was carefully looking at the map.

Over the years, Mars inhabitants started to call the remnant of the Dietrich the resistance. Noviti attempted to win their favor by claiming that the Dietrich bloodline was over which was countered by Masu's public statement that there was a fertilized embryo left by Kakari.

Noviti called it hoax but Masu responded no more.

"Masu." Iss called him out as he entered his quarter. There was no door to knock. Without looking at her, he focused on the map where he was carefully making red marks around Kamtaka. "Yes?"

"We have more recruits."

The resistance had been recruiting civilians from Kamtaka. The city inhabitants were growing increasingly dissatisfied with the Bau's discriminative treatments. When the Bau force occupied Kamtaka, some thousands of Bau members immigrated to the city and received far better treatment than local inhabitants.

"This base is full as far as I know," Masu responded. "Time to establish the 4th base, I believe."

Iss replied promptly, "You got it."

The resistance had more than three thousand members but they were poorly equipped, and Masu never opted to fight the Bau force head-on. He claimed the time wasn't right, yet. As for Iss, she had been the main drill instructor who

established a small elite squad of her own called “Diggers” who were mainly responsible for ambushes within Kamtaka. They were called diggers because they hid underground by swiftly digging holes. They’d wait for windows of opportunities and ambushed Bau patrols. The diggers were the main source of Noviti’s headaches and a good source of weapons for the resistance.

The resistance had been growing steadily. When Masu decided to go into hiding, initially Iss objected and questioned why he’d go so far to hide as much as he had done. In response, he claimed that the longer this conflict went on, it’d be more advantageous for the Dietrich.

Indeed, as years passed on, Mars local residents grew discontent with how the Bau handled things. Because they never favored the Bau to begin with, even slightest mistakes they made caused them to be angrier with them. And Noviti made lots of changes that were clearly favoring Bau immigrants.

However, it still did not change the fact that the Bau division on Mars had nearly unlimited support from Earth which was the primary reason Masu refused to fight them on a fair ground. He felt there was no point in fighting them unless the resistance was able to wipe them out in one attempt and install their own government to halt Bau reinforcements. Furthermore, he insisted that any direct contact with the Bau force meant giving recognition to Noviti.

Meanwhile, Noviti was in his office, skimming through various office documents and sighing them on bottom. He couldn't care less what the documents were regarding.

After he was done with the documents which was a big file, he relaxed in his leather chair and lighted a pipe smoke. Ever since arriving in Kamtaka, his job had been fairly easy and straightforward. He arrived on Mars on year 9022, roughly a year after the Bau troops occupied the city. It was an opportunity he could hardly pass and he was determined to ...

"Sir?"

It was an opportunity he could hardly pass and he was determined to make it count.

"Sir!"

Startling, Noviti jumped up and down lightly in his chair. "What!" He exclaimed with an annoyed face. "Couldn't you knock?!"

It was his secretary. "I did, sir, but you didn't respond...," She said shyly.

"Ok, fine." He placed down his pipe with a knock. Clearing his throat, he spoke, "What is it?"

The secretary showed a moment of hesitation before telling him, "A woman named Mora called. She said she got pregnant and wanted to inform you..."

His eyes widened and soon narrowed as he came to understand what was going on. "What the fuck? She said she was infertile and I could cum inside..." As he blurted, he frowned; he said too much. Sighing and looking away from his

secretary who was mildly frowning at him, he bit a tip of his index fingernail. A scandal wasn't something he wanted to be reported of.

A quick thinking enabled him to face his secretary again. He told her firmly, "I am not going to see her. I see why she called. Give her some credits, half a million would shut her up. Oh, and I am not going to report this, so keep your mouth shut, understand?"

His secretary nodded along and left the office.

"Fuck, nothing has been working right ever since I came here...," He muttered as he picked his pipe up and inhaled the smoke.

The diggers were causing enough problems already for him, but he knew the diggers weren't his primary problem. They were more of a distraction. He needed to rout the resistance, and for him to do so, he needed to locate the hidden bases. The issue with it was the vast and harsh desert. Sensors weren't working properly and were giving out false-positives.

He made a clicking sound from his throat and, after blowing smoke out of his mouth, he split into a garbage can next to him.

Tapping his index finger on the desk, he continued his deep thoughts.

In his first few years as the administrator of Mars, he did his best to search for the hidden bases. But the Bau soldiers weren't trained to withstand the harsh treatments from the red desert and casualties mounted. After searching less than

1% of Mars desert, the casualty number exceeded five hundreds which forced him to halt the search.

Since then, the affairs had been pretty much dull. The resistance never showed themselves and the diggers appeared in Kamtaka. The Martian knew the resistance existed and favored them as expected. Thus, he never attempted to win their favor; they were from the Dietrich after all. He accepted the fact that he and the Bau immigrants would never be accepted by them. Therefore, whether he was favored by the local Martians or not did not matter. His objective had been always the same; defeat the resistance.

He knew well who he was dealing with. It was Masu the sage. Some from inner circles of the Bau elite meetings were shocked to hear that he chose to return to Mars. The Dietrich was never kind to him after all. But the reality was that he did return and led the resistance. Many council members were clearly aware of his ability to lead armies. Thus, Noviti's failure to rout the resistance had been looked upon kindly which was the main reason he wasn't replaced. But, after a decade, there was a change of tone from the council and Noviti felt his position threatened genuinely.

He paused tapping his index finger on the desk and his sharp gaze went forward. He had just realized something; Cezary was residing on Mars. He could perhaps develop a modified sensor that would work on the planet. The big question was whether he'd do so. It was believed that Cezary and Masu were friends after all.

A day later, Noviti formally invited Cezary to his manor. Cezary had moved to Mars even before Masu came back. He had purchased an abandoned mine an hour away from Kamtaka and built his own villa in middle of the desert above the mine. It was rumored that he came to Mars to focus on invention in seclusion. However, Cezary never responded to Noviti's invitation and, eventually, Noviti himself chose to visit his villa in person.

Six shuttles landed around Cezary's two-story villa in middle of the desert. Noviti had to bring considerable number of guards due to the diggers and a faint chance that Cezary might be working with the resistance. The shuttles were armed and were ready to raze the villa if necessary.

Accompanied by five heavily armed and armored personnel, Noviti knocked on the doors of the villa which initially met with nothing but complete silence. After knocking the second time, finally a woman, presumably a maid, opened the doors. She opened the doors just enough for her face to show.

"Yes?"

"My name is Noviti, the administrator of Mars," He declared. "I've come to see Dr. Cezary."

"He does not wish to meet anyone right now." Having said so, she was about to close the door but one of Noviti's guards inserted a baton to prevent the doors from being closed.

Glaring at the baton, the maid demanded, "What is the meaning of this?"

Clearing throat, Noviti declared again. "Let me make clear. I am Noviti, the administrator of Mars. I've come to see Dr. Cezary."

The maid attempted to handle the baton when the guard who had the baton warned, "Don't, Miss." He quickly added, "For your own sake."

Eventually sighing, the maid opened the doors widely at which point wind brought sand into the villa violently.

"Come on in, you leave me no choice. But whether the master will see you is not up to me," She said.

Although branded as a villa on surface, it looked more like a research lab. There were numerous doors along the walls. Noviti and his guards were taken to a large lobby and were told to wait. However, for a lobby, there were no seats and they were forced to stand while waiting for over an hour.

When the same maid was walking past them after an hour, Noviti violently grabbed her arm to get a hold of her.

"I've been waiting for more than an hour," He told her aggressively. "I am the administrator of Mars. I deserve more respect." The guards around him nodded in agreement.

Looking visually annoyed, the maid opened her mouth but no words came out of her tongue for a moment as if she was restraining herself. Eventually, she told

him calmly, "I did inform you that he may not see you. You still chose to barge in anyway."

"Perhaps, we should teach her and the doctor a lesson," Said one of the guards while cracking his fingers.

"She doesn't look too bad. Might be interesting to see more of her skin actually," Another guard chipped in his honest opinion and other guards laughed.

Undeterred by their perverted conversation, the maid talked back, "You call yourself guards? I guess the administrator was on the same level as you thugs, huh."

Gritting, Noviti threw her down to the floor. "Watch your mouth, bitch," He warned. "Unless you want them to have their way."

Glaring fiercely, she blurted, "The Dietrich will get you. This planet does not deserve a loser like you as its leader."

Twitching his eyebrows but smiling, he kicked her in belly hard. "I said." He exclaimed, "Watch your fucking mouth!" And the guards surrounded her, looking down at her with lust in their eyes.

"You guys have fun, I am going to look around," He said. He was determined to meet Cezary one way or the other which involved opening lots of doors. He eventually walked down into basement where he found Cezary and his experiments in a dim chamber. There were several human-size capsules on walls which were empty along with various instruments he had no idea of. Cezary was found by a small round table where he was looking intensely at several datapads.

“Doctor,” Noviti called out casually but he didn’t respond. “Doctor?” Only when he tapped his shoulder, he responded by violently turning around.

“What?!” Cezary exclaimed. It was apparent that he hadn’t shaved for a long time. His hair was also disheveled.

“Doctor, I am Noviti, the adminis...”

Discarding Noviti, Cezary demanded instead even before he could finish. “Why are you here? Who are you? You aren’t supposed to be here. Get out.”

Noviti was about to talk back but Cezary’s eyes were bloodshot and he didn’t seem normal.

“Perhaps...,” Taking few steps back from him who was glaring at him with bloodshot eyes, Noviti told him nervously. “I will come back some other time.”

“Shoo! Away you go!” Cezary exclaimed while gesturing him away.

Cezary’s image, at least from the media, was always a refined high class scientist who was adapt at a lot of areas. Seeing he also worked under Mirren for a period, it was clear that he was more than just a mere scientist.

Puzzled but convinced that something was going on, he decided to question the maid who was about to be raped when he reached her out in the lobby.

“Stop, I need to question her,” Noviti gave out his command promptly as soon as he saw the fully naked maid on the floor restrained by two of his guards. Glancing at her bare body and beaming a smirk at the pleasing sight, he approached her.

“Spread her legs,” He said and the guards duly forced her legs open.

He got down on one knee and took a careful look at her private part at which point he scratched his chin while smiling.

“You a scientist also?” He questioned but the maid had her eyes shut and looked as if she had given up.

Laughing mockingly, he caressed her private hairs for a short moment before grabbed some of them and pulled them out swiftly which made her groan with slight pain.

“You answer me and I can let you go. Or do you enjoy being raped?”

She sighed and opened her eyes. Glaring fiercely at him, she reluctantly answered.

“I have a PhD, if that is what you are asking.”

“So, you are a scientist then. Why are you working as a maid?”

“Dr. Cezary is like a big figure to us. And new and young scientists can’t exactly get any funding to do what we want. Therefore, it makes sense to work for him while we do my own experiments and whatnot.”

She made sense, Noviti felt. “Do you sleep with him as well? You know, as a part of service. That’s what maids are for anyway,” He said with a tone that reeked mocking.

She refused to answer and he grabbed most of her private hair and pulled upwards. “Answer me,” He demanded while the guards were giggling.

Wincing weakly, she answered as demanded. “No, but some of us do.”

“Some?” He sneered. “How many of you work here?”

“Three.”

He let her private hair go and ordered his guards to give her underwear back which they promptly followed. “Free her so that she may dress although I don’t see why women wear clothes. What a waste.”

The guards chuckled in agreement.

She wore her panties and bra panicky but still tried to cover her body with her arms.

“Now answer me some more questions earnestly and I will give your clothes back. Understand?”

Fully aware of the fact that Noviti was capable of what he was saying, she carefully nodded in response.

“I met the doctor and he didn’t seem alright. What is wrong with him?”

“That’s normal for him. When he is into something, he doesn’t eat or drink or even sleep.”

“I see...,” He silently responded and repeated. “I see...” He stood up and asked again, “I sent him an invitation but I did not receive any response. Did he even see the invitation?”

She shook her head. “No, I was the one who received the invitation but did not relay it to him because he’s been like that for a while now.”

“Understandable,” He said while nodding along. “Now I do ask you to let him know that I am interested in a meeting with him when he regains himself. Clear?”

She nodded once.

“Men, give her rest of her clothes and let’s leave this place.”

The guards looked disappointed mildly but followed his order promptly.

It was after a month since his visit when he received a response. Cezary was coming. And when he did arrive at Mars Bau Administrative center, he was received like a super star. Noviti did his best to make him comfortable, arranging big parties and hosting luxurious meals. Cezary went along with the flow until Noviti finally hammered him with his desire.

“A modified sensor that would detect life signatures through the Martian desert?”

After repeating Noviti’s request, Cezary considered. They were currently in middle of a wild night party where majority, in fact except for Cezary and Noviti, were in their undies and were dancing around half-highly.

“I suppose you really want to destroy the resistance?” To which Noviti gave him a firm nod and dipped his drink.

“You do realize Masu is my friend.”

“The Bau would never hurt the sage,” Noviti claimed earnestly. “If we capture him, we are sending him back to Earth and will treat him like a God.”

Cezary smiled loosely. He knew exactly what Noviti was up to. Although on surface he was seen focusing on his own experiments, he had been keeping eyes on the political situation on the planet, and the truth was that he was with the resistance due to his friendship with Masu.

Meanwhile, Noviti wasn't a fool enough to overlook a fact that Cezary may already have a connection with the resistance. However, he firmly believed that the connection was weak. And despite of being "friends", he believed that their relationship was hardly cordial. As far as he knew, Masu and Cezary were simply mutual friends only because they worked together under President Mirren.

"I have an offer," Noviti suggested. His offer was to give him virtually unlimited funding in whatever Cezary wanted to do.

He added, "I know you are rich but I also know that experiments of your scale cost a lot. I can guarantee you as much funding as you desire." However, in truth, he had no idea what kind of researches Cezary was into. Regardless, it seemed he hit a jackpot as Cezary was seen considering deeply.

It was indeed true that Cezary was rich. He was in fact a multimillionaire. Due to widespread adaption of ACM reactors as well as shield technologies, the royalty payment he received per a season was in millions. He would be a billionaire if it wasn't for his massive spending for his experiments. And, while he wasn't a greedy man mostly because money was plenty to come his way, he did want a funding source.

"50 mil," He declared. "And 10 mil every season."

Noviti's jaw almost dropped. It was an insane amount he was asking for a sensor. Noticing his reaction, Cezary added, "It will probably take some years for it to be done but, once done, you will have a chance to get rid of the resistance."

Gulping at Cezary's statement that he could destroy the resistance, thus cementing his position as the administrator of Mars, he was thrilled. However, at the same time, 50 million credits upfront and 10 million per season was a breathtaking amount. He did have an access to Martian taxes but he desired a discreet method if he could. He'd need to spend 90 million in the first year and it wasn't an amount he'd be able to tuck away.

Although...

Noviti made a clicking sound from his throat as if he made up his mind.

"Fine, deal. But you must realize that I can't back you for forever. Give me a deadline," He said.

Cezary rolled his eyes once and looked upwards. Eventually he replied, "3 years probably. I could do it in less than two seasons if I devote all my time but I am not going to, so 3 years and you will have the sensor."

Noviti's face quivered. He could complete in two seasons which could mean 70 million credits but he'd rather prolong the development so he'd get 160 million. However, the money wasn't coming out of his pocket, not that he had that much wealth to begin with. He was going to use Martian tax money; it was essentially embezzlement.

“Fine,” He said with a sigh but he looked pleased nonetheless as it became only a matter of time before he could defeat the resistance. “So be it,” He said with assurance.

“Hey.”

Cezary was standing in a seemingly abandoned underground chamber in a mine where he stood with a dim light above. The area seemed to be completely void of any entity but Cezary was standing there with two of his assistants, or maids so often they were referred as.

A moment of awkward silence passed when a rocky wall slid smoothly, making no noise whatsoever. And Masu appeared flanked by Iss and her “diggers”.

He greeted Cezary with a weak grin and told him, “I’ve heard you settled down on this planet and made contacts to Iss.”

Cezary sagged his shoulders with a mild disappointment. “Is this how you greet your friend?”

“Were we ever friends?” Masu responded half-jokingly. Though he was correct that they weren’t actually friends per se. They worked together under Mirren and for Project Marat. That was as far as their relationship went.

“Fine,” Cezary said with a visible pout. “May I come in though?”

Masu stepped aside and so did Iss and her men.

Cezary was taken to a quarantine zone at which he duly remarked.

“A quarantine zone? Come on, you should treat us better than this,” He complained.

“We have no guest quarters. We can talk here.”

A proper mine on Mars had at least one quarantine zone. It was due to possible exposure to harmful elements during mining. Mars used to have a lot of unidentified materials during its colonial area and many died from unknown poisoning during mining. Since then, every mine built a quarantine zone in case someone fell ill during operation.

Thousand years later, building a quarantine zone inside of a mine became a tradition. The quarantine zone was barren. It had hardly anything other than few beds and few medical instruments along with a mobile shower cube. Iss’ men placed a table with two stools on opposite end and Masu sat promptly. There was a faint layer of fine dust on the table which he ignored and placed his hands on it.

Looking obviously displeased, Cezary blew dust off his stool and sat. His two assistants stood closely behind him.

“So, let me get to the topic straightforward,” He said to which Masu gave him a nod. “I know you are looking for funding.”

Masu narrowed his eyes and looked behind to give Iss a stare. In her defense, she replied with a fake cough, “Dr. Cezary is the only one we could trust who has the credits.”

“She speaks true and I can secure you at least 50 million credits right away.”

Masu crossed his fingers on the table. The layer of fine dust that was on the table was on his hand. “I know you are capable of forking out such an amount but you aren’t someone to do so unless...” He narrowed his eyes. “Unless it is someone else’s credits.”

“Bravo.” Cezary clapped his hands. “It’s not my credits. I’d wager that it’s Martian’s tax money.”

“Explain,” Masu demanded.

He told Masu everything that had happened so far. Starting with Noviti’s rube break-in and ending with his proposal of the funding in exchange of the modified sensor.

“3 years, you have,” Cezary told Masu. “3 years to equip your armies and take Kamtaka over.”

In truth, Cezary never had any intention to develop the sensor. While he wasn’t taking a side on surface, he preferred the Dietrich over the Bau especially on Mars. He simply felt the Dietrich deserved the planet more than the Bau.

In Masu’s head, complex calculation was occurring. With a possible funding of potential 150 million credits, it was only a matter of time that the resistance would be fully equipped and ready to take on Noviti’s Bau forces. But military might wasn’t the key to liberation of the planet. It was absolutely crucial that

Kamtaka, the capital of Mars, was taken over a night without sending a distress signal, which meant hacking was required.

If Noviti sent a distress signal, Bau reinforcements would arrive soon and the resistance wouldn't have the time to prepare to defend the planet. If the Bau became unaware of Mars being fallen to the resistance, they'd have time to restructure the planet's defense systems, including orbital batteries, and effectively prevent Bau military transports from deploying any further reinforcements.

While the Bau did have a fleet, they weren't allowed to be used for internal conflicts. President Mirren strongly forbade such actions and since the Ark wasn't in the Bau's favor, as long as Bau transports were barred from deploying reinforcements, Mars would be safe and given enough time to recover, the planet would be fully Dietrich's once again.

"Thank you," Masu said to Cezary who wasn't expecting his gratitude so boldly. Beaming a crude smile, Cezary responded, "No need to thank me. The planet is better off with the Dietrich. That's simply what I feel."

"Your part in this not over yet."

Cezary shrugged. "I figured so. Let me guess. Want me to hack Kamtaka communication systems?" He was thinking exactly the same thing as Masu.

To which Masu nodded at him firmly. "Given the chance, we will storm Kamtaka and take the city over in a night."

Meanwhile, when Noviti took a big chunk of 50 million credits out of tax coffer, he was immediately asked to answer for his actions by the Bau council back on Earth. It wasn't unexpected, therefore, he remained calm. He came up with an excuse that he was close to exterminating the resistance and that he needed the credits to hire independent mercenary groups. Fortunately, the council became overly excited by his claim that they didn't bother too much looking into validity of his claim.

Once he had the backing of the council, it proved to be too easy for him to take money out of Martian tax coffer and it didn't take him long to start abusing his access to the tax coffer. He started to throw massive luxurious night parties every day and he was hardly sober for countless days.

Naturally, effects of his bold embezzlement started to show. He bought girls homes. He purchased luxury shuttles, which cost upwards few millions, for fun and gave away.

Cezary promised 3 years for the development of the modified sensor but in a year the money Noviti had spent shot past 300 million. City treasury was dried up and non-essential city services were forced to shut down. Even so, he couldn't care less and continued to host parties.

“Drink! Drink!” He bellowed toward a bunch of crowds ahead of him. He had two half-naked women in his arms who were serving him with drinks which he duly poured it through his throat as soon as they were done filling glasses.

“This planet will be mine soon!” He exclaimed and his loud laughter soon followed. His face was deep red and he was already too drunk to be sensible.

He was snoring loudly on a table alone when a man in black swiftly approached him. The hall he was throwing the party was already empty and no one was around. Scent of liquors as well as traces of food droppings were all over the place; it was a mess.

“Sir.” The man shook Noviti’s shoulders lightly and repeated, “Sir.” But he wasn’t responsive. He was force to inject him with a refresher which was a sobering injection and finally Noviti opened his eyes with a deep frown.

He growled, “God, my head hurts...” And then he exclaimed looking annoyed. “What the fuck is it?!”

Regardless, the man told him calmly, “Sir, we are being attacked.”

However, Noviti failed to grasp the situation initially. Burying his head with arms, he complained, “So what. Just leave me fucking alone. I need to sleep.”

Without further ado, the man in black silently stared at him who had his head buried in his arms and was trying to sleep. However, a few seconds later, he stood up from his seat at once.

“We are being attacked?!” He shouted and rushed out of the party hall and the man followed right behind him. “By whom?!”

“The resistance.”

“Inform the Bau council now. How are we holding?”

“Sir, our communication system appears to be down. In fact, I believe our system is being hacked.”

“Can’t be...” He sped up his walking.

The resistance was flowing into Kamtaka through various entrances. Because they were blending in with city inhabitants, it was very hard for the Bau soldiers to track them down. To make the matter further complicated, Iss’ diggers were rampant, taking down lone or small group of Bau soldiers at every opportunity. And with comm. system down, Noviti was unable to contact the Bau council. However, it was only external comm. system that was down. Noviti quickly attempted to gather soldiers and defend his own base.

“Casualties are being reported all over the city, and I believe the resistance has entered B4.”

On a command bridge, Noviti was massaging his aching head with both of his hands in his chair in middle. Numerous bridge crews were making reports.

“Diggers spotted on B6. They came through an air vent.”

“The resistance has seized the surface city, sir.”

“The comm. system is still down. We are attempting to block the hacker.”

Growling, he spit out few cursing words and then exclaimed in anger, “Why are the soldiers spread out so thin?! They had their orders!”

They indeed had their orders. Their orders were stay close to the main base during the party but none of them cared just as Noviti himself never cared. And, because they were spread out so thin, they were being picked up by diggers and were easier to deal with by the resistance.

“Tell them to fall back!” He shouted. “Fuckers! Tell them to get their asses here!”

The truth was that many of “patrolling” soldiers were having their own fun.

Discipline wasn’t something that was common along Noviti’s troops.

And as hours went on, the situation was becoming worse, far worse.

“The resistance has breached into B14,” A crew reported urgently.

“A small group of diggers are found in the base, sir!” Another exclaimed urgently.

“Crap,” Blurting, he stood up from his commander’s chair. “Get the fucking comm. system up, you fools! We have a direct access while the hacker has only a remote access, imbeciles!”

He was becoming more nervous as minutes passed and, when a bridge crew reported that the resistance was on the same floor as the bridge, he decided to flee. Silently, without saying any words, he walked out of the bridge while the

crews were busy making vocal reports with their eyes fixed at their consoles, meaning nobody noticed him walking out.

Masu and Iss flanked by a small army of fighters were standing in front of a city underground entrance. A group of fighters were bringing out two seized Bau soldiers who had only their underwear on.

“What did you take their clothes off for?” Iss asked them with an amused face.

“Boss, we found them like this. Well, they were on top of women,” One of them replied to her while chuckling.

“Never have I seen such undisciplined professional soldiers. How the Bau manage to dominate Sol system, I will never know,” She remarked.

“The Bau had their own era of brilliance,” Masu answered her. “Nowadays, they are living off their ancestors’ achievements.”

A pair of fighters who were clearly distinguishable from regular soldiers dashed toward Iss. They had their entire body covered with what appeared to be a battle suit covered loosely with pieces of desert colored clothes. The two approached Iss and started to type on a holographic keyboard generated from their wrist device attached on left arm. She nodded along and gave them an order.

“What is it?” Masu asked.

“It seems their commander, Noviti, wants to flee.” Having said so, Iss let out of a short laughter. “I am glad you’ve decided to take these crowns down after only a year.”

“Well, the guy was sucking juice out of the planet way too quickly,” Masu said while crossing arms. “If we waited 3 full years, by then the planet’s coffer would be beyond recovery.”

“Right.” Iss nodded at him. “We can’t let him get away, can we.”

“Of course not. They made a seasonal report to their Bau council yesterday which means we will have a full season to prepare if no word gets out of today’s coup.”

However, capturing Noviti proved to be easier to be said than done. When Kamtaka came under complete control of the resistance, he was nowhere to be found. Still, Masu did not panic and his choice was to wait, outside.

Sure enough, few days later, a shuttle was seen out of nowhere in the sky.

Despite raging sand storms, a shuttle was generally powerful and durable enough to withstand the storm.

“Well, well,” Masu said to himself as he looked up. The shuttle was disappearing fast into deep red sand storm. There was also Iss who was looking up.

“What now?” She asked rather indifferently as if she couldn’t care less because she was confident that Masu thought it through.

“There is a reason I am an ESP,” Said Masu with a confident grin. Pointing at blurred image of the shuttle in the sky, he opened his hand and gestured as if he was grabbing the shuttle in the air. Just as he did so, the storm changed its shape and surrounded the shuttle. It looked as if a large ball of turbulent wind was ripping the shuttle apart, and surely soon enough the shuttle was falling apart and

shattered in air. Even remnant pieces were shattered further, leaving nothing but black dust that dispersed into the storm.

“Done then.” Having said so, Iss casually walked away from the scene whereas Masu continued to stare at the sand storm that had returned to its normality.

Things had been chaotic ever since his return to his home planet, but finally he was at peace to appreciate how much he loved Mars and everything about it: the red desert that was too hot to walk across during the day, the dark gray sky, the unique scent of red sand, and many more.

The transition was smooth. Although it had been more than a decade since the Bau overthrew the Dietrich, the Martians always wanted the Dietrich back partially due to the bad management by Noviti. The resistance, now restored as the Dietrich, was welcomed in Kamtaka. However, the takeover was far from over. Officially, the Bau still controlled Mars and the Dietrich was the rebellion force. Furthermore, the Dietrich had no access to the mainframe on Mars due to lack of its master password. Hacking their way into the mainframe would take some time to accomplish which wasn't much of an issue for the Dietrich. They had a whole season to prepare.

While hacking was in progress, Masu turned to Cecil and Mirren for backing. It wasn't exceptionally hard to receive backing from the Klisis and the O'ren as the Dietrich was the rightful ruler of Mars which ultimately meant that, if the Bau were to act upon to take Mars back from the Dietrich, they'd conflict with both

clans. Although the whole progress was simple and quick, Iss knew it was simple and quick because of Masu. He had the necessary reputation as well as connections to make the whole progress as painless as possible.

Indeed, if a complete stranger was asking for such backing, there was no way it was going to work.

Once the Dietrich gained an access to the mainframe, all orbital batteries were turned back on and was set to fire upon all ships and the real transition begun.

There were over ten thousand of Bau immigrants and they were all asked to leave. Masu personally guaranteed their safe departures.

And, while Kamtaka city tax coffer was empty all thanks to Noviti's reckless spending, Mars was inherently a rich planet. The main export was refined/unrefined ACM and making money was as easy as simply shipping them out. Still, it took another decade for the planet's treasury to become healthy again.

Year 9035

The Dietrich announced an epic plan to construct a floating isle above Kamtaka. The floating isle, to be named as [The Kamtaka castle] upon completion, was designed by Dr. Cezary. The isle was actually a cruiser in disguise. However, a

cruiser wasn't capable of flying in atmosphere for too long. Therefore, Cezary developed one of kind specialized cruiser which its only ability was levitate in gravity. Using the cruiser as its core, an isle was going to be built around the ship and then a castle on top of it. It would be the home for the Dietrich and yet-to-be-born Kan Dietrich.

It was a seven-year project which would cost 700 million credit.

Masu was having a public speech regarding the announcement.

"The Kamtaka castle is to be the symbol of our unification as well as the symbol of the Dietrich."

It was public knowledge that there was no living member of the Dietrich insiders except for Kan Dietrich who was yet to be born. However, the breakdown between the clan and its former retainers meant that the clan had become unified despite of shrinking down in its size. And, while there was only one single insider left in the clan, majority of Martians were of the Dietrich bloodline.

"Make no mistake. This is an enormous project that costs credit we currently do not have and will not have for many years but this is something we must do."

In other words, Martians did not really care whether there was a living Dietrich insider or not, for they themselves were Dietrich. As long as the Dietrich clan stood in a way or another, they were fine. Even if Masu took the clan for himself, they were fine with it, for he was also a Dietrich in heart and in blood albeit faintly.

He raised his voice imposingly. “Arise, Dietrich!” He then repeated with a louder voice. “Arise!”

The crowd that gathered in the underground hall roared loudly at once.

Although it was announced that there would be an extra 5% more tax during the project duration, there was no ill feedback. They were building a landmark of the century and it was something no other clan had yet done. For the Dietrich who had always been looked down upon due to their less powerful presence, it was welcoming news.

Years passed and the Bau reluctantly accepted that Mars had escaped their grasp for the time being at least. Because Masu had support from the O’ren and the Klisis, it wasn’t easy for the Bau to bully their way through.

Upon completion of the Kamtaka castle, the frozen embryo was finally activated and Kan Dietrich was born on 9044 May 6.

Iss did her best to raise him as a suitable leader. She taught him everything she knew about the Ra as well as the Dietrich. However, for Kan, his mother was Iss and his father was Masu despite being repeatedly told that his parents were Marcus Dietrich and Kakari Ra.

Kan eventually came to terms that his parents were Marcus and Kakari but, in his heart, Iss and Masu were always his parents no matter what others told him.

And, on 9053, Iss was on a death bed.

There was no such a thing as natural death due to physical immortality that mankind achieved. Death came sudden for the most; their consciousness would simply shut down on one day and that was as natural as it became. For those who feared such an end committed suicide when they no longer could bear such an unexpected demise.

For Iss, she knew her death was at her doorstep and promptly notified Masu. She had noticed recently that her consciousness was blinking out occasionally which was when she realized her end was nigh.

She was laying on a bed and Masu was sitting next to her.

“I feel very sleepy right now,” She said while looking at ceiling. “I know that I will never wake up once I fall asleep.” She then closed her eyes while sighing. “I have so much to do though.”

Masu was genuinely saddened that Iss was passing away. Her loyalty was unshakable and she was one of few who he could trust completely. More importantly, to him, Iss was like his mother he had never had.

“You’ve done enough,” He told her kindly. “You could have walked away but you didn’t. No one can claim that you haven’t done enough.”

Slowly opening her eyes again, her attention moved to him who looked genuinely sad.

She said, "I had a choice to go back with Lady Ra but I chose not to, for she was an angry beast waiting to explode. I bet 3Ra Syndicate is having troubles now."

Ever since Kakari Ra left Mars, there had never been any further contacts from the Ra. Thus, neither of them could know what was really happening at 3Ra Syndicate.

Masu gently inquired her, "Thank you for everything you've done so far. If you wish for your body to be sent to the Nebula..."

"No," Iss firmly answered. "Bury me here on the floating isle. I don't want a gravestone or anything but do bury me on the isle."

He replied firmly, "As you wish."

Taking a deep breath, she closed her eyes and sang weakly in a rhythm. "Masu the sage, Masu the sage..." She beamed a smile. Then she spoke no more and that was it.

Young Kan Dietrich cried his eyes out over her death. For Masu, it was just a beginning of yet another long journey. It was time to rebuild the Dietrich around Kan.

Fin