

[Masu arc] [7] [Wrong legacy] [9599]

Rev 3.8 – Revised on June 3 2018

Prerequisite stories

[Shattered union arc] [1] [Revolts] [9599]

And (obviously) all previous stories of Masu arc

Related stories

[Cecil arc] [6] [Project Marat] [8961]

The Bau had a casus belli on the Dietrich. Ironically, it all began when the Dietrich retainers called in the Bau for support in deposing Kakari Ra.

Long story short, the Bau gained full control of Mars for over a decade before the Dietrich overthrew them out of the planet for good.

That was a long time ago. It was in fact near four hundred years ago. The Bau at that time was restricted by the O'ren mostly and the Ark was not in their favor. Mirren's regime was simply too strong for the Bau to force their way.

The political balance changed since then.

After Andromeda rebellion and its success, Mirren's regime was weakened greatly. The O'ren also lost their claim as the most powerful clan in Sol system.

Furthermore, four hundred years meant that the Bau council had seen a significant portion of its members changed, meaning less council members experienced Masu's achievements first-hand which translated to less members fearing or being grateful about him.

Therefore, there was little discontent when the Bau council wanted to attack Mars and they were confident that they would be able to force Mirren to approve their actions.

When the news reached Mars, the Dietrich was ready for a battle. Masu had reshaped the clan into a power house at this point. They had armies as well as a fleet of a thousand warships in Mars orbit. The Dietrich had no intention to stop the Bau and the Bau was eager to set the record straight.

At that time, a conflict seemed inevitable.

However, a war never erupted. And there was a surprising result; Masu was imprisoned in an ESP prison facility on Earth after Cecil meddled in and proposed a secret deal. No one knew what the deal was but Masu willingly turned himself in, leaving Kan Dietrich fully in charge of the clan while he'd be gone.

Long story short, the Dietrich revolted on 9599 and was successful. As a part of hostage exchange deal, Kan let go of all Mars government workers and Cecil released Masu.

Year 9599, December 1st

At Mars shuttle port.

The port was seemingly deserted, partially because of the recent revolt and subsequent independence. It was operating but no civilian was at the port.

Public security was in question and no one was willing to go out for their own sake. The Dietrich never declared any form of martial law because they didn't need to. Anyone with common sense wasn't going out. The clan ruled the planet for thousands of years and it was universally understood that the clan had the authority to do anything on Mars.

The dark brown sky and fierce sandy wind from the usual Mars storm symbolized that this place was indeed Mars. The appearance of Mars was, simply put, a red desert. There was no Earth-like environment on Mars. Even the capital, Kamtaka, was a desert city on surface and had no greens underground. Necessary oxygen was created chemically.

The planet was hardly favored by a lot, but for miners, for those who were born and grew up on the planet, it was all they had. For miners, the planet was as good as it could get. It was certainly better than being miners in space in middle of nowhere. And most importantly, ACM was abundant on Mars.

A.C.M. would be the most demanding material in the era. It was used for space vessel construction, for energy blades, for cars and many other products. The demand was high and supply was limited. Mars was the main source for Sol system and ACM was found only in small quantities in asteroid fields around Andromeda cluster. Therefore, even when Mars declared independent, United Sol could not place embargo on Mars because it was them who needed ACM more than anyone else.

A heavily armored transport was landing on the port and there were plenty of soldiers around the landing pad while the port itself remained empty.

As soon as the transport landed properly and lowered its rear door, a lone figure was revealed. There appeared to be no one else. The soldiers immediately identified who it was and saluted at him at once.

Masu returned.

The men cheered as he walked down and stood in front of them. Kan Dietrich wasn't among them but there was a woman instead.

"My name is Roon Dietrich," said the woman whose light brown pony tail reached her waist. Kan Dietrich was the only surviving member of the clan when Masu was imprisoned. Additionally, there was something else. She resembled someone he once knew. She resembled Marat O'ren.

"Has Kan married?" Masu asked regardless.

Beaming a smile, she replied, "I am his clone sir."

A clone with a different gender? Who also resembled Marat? "Who created you?"

"Dr. Anna, the family doctor of the Dietrich."

Anna was a name he had also never heard of. Roon understood Masu's stoic expression and told him, "Sir, you've been away for a long time."

His stoic expression soon faded and a faint grin emerged on his face in response.

"Indeed, lass. Let us go."

Nodding, Roon guided him. Riding comfortably in a luxury shuttle, Masu gazed through a window which was showing nothing other than deep brown storm. He closed his eyes slowly.

When Masu was imprisoned, it wasn't his intention. He intended to fight the Bau. Therefore, it came to a surprise to both parties when Cecil meddled in with a strange offer.

Cecil proposed Masu to be imprisoned and the Bau would give up their casus belli in exchange. As strange as it sounded, the Bau saw benefit in Cecil's proposal. Taking Masu away from the Dietrich would mean hampering the Dietrich's growth. The Bau did not fear the Dietrich but they did fear Masu to a degree. If his removal from the Dietrich was possible without bloodshed, they were willing to strike the deal.

Masu understood where Cecil came from but he didn't agree to be imprisoned at first because he felt that the Dietrich had a chance. However, eventually, Masu agreed to be imprisoned. Of course, Kan Dietrich was adamantly against the whole idea at that time.

Someone tapped his shoulder and Masu slowly opened his eyes.

"We are here, sir." It was Roon who told him.

The Kamtaka castle didn't change, at least on surface. Kan was waiting outside on the landing pad who ran to him as soon as he saw Masu walking out of the luxury shuttle.

"Long time no see," Masu spoke to Kan with a grin.

"Sir, it's good to have you back."

There was no visible damage or signs of conflicts on the Kamtaka castle.

Masu guessed, "Did Cezary assist you?" To which Kan nodded at him, adding, "Yes, it was pretty much what you did before. We took over the government facility over a night after hacking its external comm. system."

"They did not resist," Roon added to Kan's explanation.

“Mars is ours now, completely,” Kan said proudly while softly hammering his chest once.

“Let us go inside first,” Roon suggested. The Kamtaka castle was floating above the sand storm but regardless the wind was strong.

Kan explained further once they were inside that Venus was also going independent and was going to form an official alliance with Mars. But Masu knew this already, for Cecil told him of his plans when he was convincing Masu to turn himself in.

When he was told of Cecil’s agenda for the first time, he was highly skeptical, not of his chance of success but the degree of Cecil’s sanity. He saw absolutely no reason to break down United Sol. Granted, everyone hated the Bau, but Bau’s influence was largely restricted within Earth.

Regardless, it happened. With Mars and Venus going independent, United Sol was bound to go downhill fast. The two planets were two highly profitable planets and the planets were the main source of income for United Sol. Mars provided the valuable A.C.M. and Venus provided with good injections of cash.

However, what surprised him the most was Mirren’s assassination because it wasn’t a part of the plan Cecil told him. He did wonder whether it was Cecil who assassinated Mirren. His heart told him no way, but his brain wasn’t sure. Cecil was never someone who was predictable. He could have a change of heart or his assassination could have been a byproduct of an event.

“Do you have any info on Mirren’s assassination?”

Looking uninterested, Kan responded, “No, sir.” He couldn’t care less about Mirren. And Masu couldn’t blame him. He was raised with expectations to restore the Dietrich and he had done fine so far. His interests did not sway from the goal

and Mirren's assassination shouldn't have been something he should have been interested in indeed.

One of points Cecil made when persuading Masu to turn himself in was Kan Dietrich's growth. Cecil argued that Kan needed to stand alone for some time for his own growth and maturity. It was something Masu couldn't argue with and it was true that his own presence would overshadow Kan's presence as well as his future influence within the clan.

And there was something else; Cecil asked him to prolong his life by hibernating during his prison sentence.

Masu was introduced to Dr. Anna not long after Kan introduced him his quarters. Dr. Anna was a stocky woman whose hair was turning gray. It was an unusual appearance for someone to show such clear aging. Even at four hundred years old, humans retained middle-age appearance.

"How old are you?" Masu asked her boldly.

Her stoic expression showed she wasn't pleased to be faced with such a question but she answered nevertheless, "I am 417 years old." Adding a moment later with a tone of displeasure. "Sir."

Kan explained that she had been looking after Roon's health mostly because she was a rare clone with a different gender.

"Speaking of which," Masu said, "Being rare would be understatement. I've never heard of such a case where cloning was successful with an opposite gender."

In fact, if true, Roon would be the first case. What Masu was suspicious was whether Anna was truly behind the cloning. To add fuel to his suspicion, Anna didn't really give a firm answer but did state that she was a part of the experiment.

For the time being, Masu decided not to dig too far into the matter. Besides, he didn't really need Anna to tell him who was really behind the experiment. He had

a good hunch already. Roon resembling Marat was literally the answer. There was only one person who would have done and would have been capable of such a thing.

Cezary, it was. Masu was perhaps the only one who noticed Cezary's secret crush. While he wasn't a shy man, he was very passive toward his desire for Marat, and quite understandably so. After all, she was married to Cecil.

In Masu's memory, Cezary showed his true feelings toward Marat only once and it was when the third phase of Project Marat experiment failed. When Marat was hit with Cecil's concentrated orb of powers, Cezary literally fell onto his knees and wailed. No one, except Masu, saw him cry due to the chaotic situation.

Once Masu spent two days getting to know what had changed, he wanted to get back to work which Kan disagreed strongly. He wanted Masu to have some holidays since he had been imprisoned for so long.

In reality however, his imprisonment was more like hibernation which he tried to explain to Kan but he refused to listen. In the end, Masu had a lot of spare time unexpectedly and decided to visit his old friend, Cezary.

Cezary's villa stood on the same spot as before although the villa had worn down considerably given its four-hundred year-old age.

Mars had entirely different building codes to combat the ever-blowing sand storms. Even then structures needed inspections annually to make sure that protective coating was not damaged.

Masu could see that the villa had not seen any repairs for a while. Its protective coating on corners had worn off, revealing mildly damaged structure. The

environment had sanded away sharp edges and had created tiny holes. Given enough corrosion, such structure might collapse.

There was nothing at all in the vicinity. The villa was the only thing that was standing. As he approached the entrance doors, he couldn't shake off the feeling that the villa had been abandoned even though it was not. The entire structure was giving out this eerie sensation that no one was living here.

Knocking and waiting patiently for a good five minutes, one of the doors slowly opened with creaking sound. The door was open only slightly and a woman could be seen through the crack.

"Who are you?" She asked stoically.

"My name is Masu. I am an old friend of Cezary. Is he here?"

Upon hearing his name, her stoic expression on her face loosened up slightly and she showed some respect.

"He is here, sir. I am ... uncertain he'd like to see you though."

Cezary was well over four hundred years old. The average lifespan of humans in the era was four hundred years old. However, in some cases, an average man lived up to seven hundred years. As men lived longer, death came in very different variety. Mental death was the most common where consciousness would simply cease to function. And, although rare, there was death of flesh, where cells no longer repaired itself.

He knew how old Cezary was and was aware of a possibility that he might be dying.

"I'd like to see him," He pressed passively. "Please."

Without putting up a fight, the woman opened the door more, allowing Masu to pass through. Once he was in, she shut the door and locked it tight.

The interior was unusually dim with only few light sources turned on. It looked like it had been taken care of however as it was clean.

“Are you the only assistant here?” Masu asked her who was sweeping sands by the entrance with an old-fashioned broom.

“There used to be three, but yes, I am the only one for the time being.”

Once she was done sweeping away the sand that managed to sneak through the door, she led Masu to underground and he couldn't help but notice that the eerie feeling of abandonment was still present. All the doors were shut firmly, light was dim and the air was stagnant.

And when he saw Cezazy, his concern became reality.

He was apparently in a life support on a bed in a room full of medical equipment. He had a long tube stuck into his throat which was secured by tapes. He seemed to be conscious however and his eyes weakly gazed at Masu as the assistant took him inside.

“What has happened to him?”

According to Kosoku, which was the name of the assistant, Cezary suffered several organ failures in a quick succession which triggered mass cell die-offs. Normally, a body would heal but his body did not. He had been progressively dying and he was on his last stand at the moment.

Masu carefully walked by his bed and looked into his eyes which were looking right back at him. He could tell that Cezary's consciousness was sound and strong and that death wasn't something he was willing to accept.

Moaning, Cezary attempted to take the tube off with his badly shaking hands. Kosoku dashed toward him and forced his hands off the tube.

“He wants to speak, let him,” Masu said.

“He will die without the tube. He needs high concentration of oxygen mixed with antibacterial gas. The gas will kill people in seconds normally.”

Narrowing his eyebrows, he took a good look at Cezary. His skin had turned dark brown and there were wrinkles all over his skin. There was also a somewhat unpleasant odor coming from him.

“I’d like to speak to him,” Masu demanded. “It seems he wants to speak as well.”

Kosoku was redundant because she believed there was no way for him to speak unless he risked death. Masu came up with an idea.

“Fill the room with oxygen. I am an ESP, so I will manage.”

She agreed to the idea and left the room. Since she was neither an ESP nor a hyper human, she wouldn’t survive in such an environment.

A moment later, oxygen & gas started to feel the room. Masu felt strange but he managed. After assisting Cezary to take his breathing tube off, he coughed a few times but stabilized himself a while later.

“As you can see.” His voice was dry and husky. “I am dying.”

To which Masu did not respond. Instead, he laid an indifferent gaze upon him. They once worked together for Project Marat but their friendship was an indifferent one. Neither would cry for either.

Cezary continued, “I am near six hundred years old, just shy of reaching seven. I’ve lived long enough, I admit.”

“What is happening to you exactly?”

“It’s the body, the cells, they’ve stopped repairing themselves. In other words, my body is currently rotting and I have only few weeks left.” He added, “At the very best.”

Masu was genuinely saddened but he wasn’t feeling overly sorrow. He was sad to see an old friend passing but his feelings went no further than that. And his rather indifference expression on his face revealed it. However, Cezary was not offended,

for he was rational enough to know that Masu wasn't a close friend to moan for him. Besides, that wasn't even his concern.

"Let me get to the topic," Cezary labored to speak. "Your timing is impeccable in fact."

First of all, he claimed that his lone assistant, Kosoku, was pregnant with his child and asked Masu to get her away from the villa on his way out.

"Very well. Consider it done," Masu answered indifferently. However, he did ask, "You sound urgent though. What is the reason?"

Cezary let out a hollow laugh. "Secondly, I am going to need a special permission to launch something into space."

Narrowing his eyes, Masu questioned, "What do you intent to do?"

"I ... would rather not explain. But I assure you that I don't mean anything harmful to the planet or the Dietrich. I simply want to launch something into space."

"I will grant your request, but do please tell me what you are launching into space."

After a moment of hesitation, Cezary replied, "It is a cruiser. I am launching a cruiser into space."

According to Cezary, he had designed and constructed a special cruiser that was controlled fully by A.I. (Artificial intelligence). He assured that it would cause no troubles and it would swiftly disappear into deep space.

Meanwhile, Masu could feel that Cezary was up to something. Actually, he felt that his whole purpose of settling down on Mars had something to do with his agenda.

"What would have occurred if I hadn't come here?"

"The cruiser would have launched anyway and would have fought its way through if stopped."

It was a bold answer because he was talking as if the lone cruiser would have been capable of breaking through. The cruiser would have to battle through layers of orbital batteries as well as a fleet in orbit. In other words, it would be impossible for a lone cruiser to break through.

Seeing Masu was hesitant, he added, "I do mean no harm to the planet or the clan. Please, just grant few dying man's wishes."

Sighing, Masu eventually gave him a nod and told him, "Very well. I will let the fleet know that a cruiser would be coming and let it pass. When though?"

"It is out of my hands. The cruiser will decide when to lift off. It's waiting for the sand storm to subside."

"I see," Masu replied with a weak sigh. "So be it."

A bright smile surfaced on a dark brown face of his. He relaxed on the bed and casually spoke, "Very good. Finally, I can rest in peace."

"Not yet," Masu said. "I've come here today to inquire you about the clone."

The smile on Cezary's face slowly faded away. "I see," He answered stoically.

"She resembles Marat. It can't be a coincidence," Masu said gravely.

Gazing at ceiling vacantly, Cezary told him bluntly, "You are a smart guy. I am sure you've figured it out already. Why bother asking me?"

Gulping as if fearing what answer he might receive, Masu asked carefully. "Do you have another clone?"

Cezary's eyes remained fixed at ceiling and he refused to answer. And, instead of forcing him to answer, Masu also remained silent. And an uneasy silence filled the room.

"Have you seen Cecil recently?" Cezary changed the subject as he broke the silence.

Masu accepted his silence as yes. But it wasn't as if it was his business in fact. Therefore, he didn't pursue any further. "I met him recently," He replied. The last time he met Cecil was when he came over to release him.

"He visited me a few days ago." Cezary beamed a faint grin. "He looked the same as before. Does he even age at all?"

ESPs had a control on their appearance and aging and, if desired, they were able to retain their youthful appearance at will until the very end.

"He is an ESP, a powerful one at that," Masu told him indifferently, not giving much of a thought at his statement.

"Do you think he really is an ESP?" Cezary wondered. His defiant gaze at the ceiling indicated that he wasn't pleased for some reason. Perhaps, it was his impending death, or perhaps it was something else.

In truth, Cezary lamented the fact that he wasn't born as either an ESP or a hyper human. He felt utterly unfair that a talent like him was given a normal body to begin with. He felt he had so much to do and, in his lifespan, he had accomplished a lot. Even so, he felt it wasn't enough. What he truly wanted from deep down was immortality and he felt Cecil had it.

Meanwhile, for Masu, he had suspicions that Cecil wasn't just an ESP. No ESP was as powerful as him. The way Cecil massacred the O'ren city on Venus when the Klisis fell, he had read various reports of the incident. The truth was that no ESP would have been able to do what Cecil had done on that day. However, Masu felt that there was no point in digging any further and he believed that digging further would cost him his life.

"Cecil is no ESP. He is something else," Cezary claimed boldly with a strong assurance in his tone.

Shaking his head weakly, Masu turned away from the bed. "It seems you are done. I shall be on my way."

"Do take her with you." Cezary was referring to his assistant.

“I shall send someone to take her.”

“No,” Cezary raised his voice. “You must take her with you or she won’t be there.”

Masu turned back to face Cezary again. “You are not telling me something,” He said.

Cezary chuckled weakly, followed by hard coughs. “I did tell you that Cecil visited me a few days ago. Why would he visit me?”

Masu narrowed his eyes. He had a hunch and he did not like it.

“Cecil is punishing you for the clone?”

Cezary beamed a big grin at him.

Masu was certain that Cecil would not take the clone lightly. Using Marat’s DNA as a base for the clone would have meant a big offense to Cecil. Truthfully, Cezary hadn’t done anything illegal but morally he had crossed Cecil by using his diseased wife’s DNA as a base of a clone.

“Roon Dietrich is 99.9% Marat, cellular wise,” Cezary exclaimed joyfully. “The 0.1% was used to mimic Kan Dietrich’s appearance somewhat!” He added even with a louder voice. “A clone? Yes! Kan Dietrich’s? No! She is Marat!”

“Have you gone mad...,” Masu whispered to himself and Cezary laughed loudly but his laughter didn’t last long as he started to cough blood. His blood was dark.

Panting and bleeding from his mouth, Cezary labored to speak. “Take ... her away ... No time ... to waste ...”

Sighing, Masu dashed out of the room and quickly activated his sixth sense to locate Kosoku. As soon as he activated his ESP, he found her. However, at the same time, he quickly realized that the villa was currently sealed by a force he felt familiar; it was Cecil’s.

And before he made out to the first floor, he could feel that villa was engulfed by hell fire. This was the moment that he realized what the eerie aura really meant.

Cecil was here all along and was just waiting to finish Cezary. It was very likely that Cezary made his last wish so that his pregnant assistant could get away.

“Miss! Miss!” Masu shouted as he reached the door to outside and the assistant, Kosoku, looked out from the second floor.

“Yes?” She answered casually. “Are you done talking with the doctor?”

“We need to leave now!”

“Pardon?” Confused, she frowned. “What are you saying? Did something happen to Dr. Cezary?”

Masu gestured her to come down and exclaimed, “There is no time for an explanation right now! If you have important things, pack them right now! This villa is going down!”

“What do you mea-” Kosoku paused as she saw ceiling of the building being distorted and fading away. “What’s happening?!”

“Just get back down here!”

Finally realizing that something was going horribly wrong, she ran back to her room and made loud rumbling. When she dashed out, she had a luggage bag with her. By time she made to downstairs, the ceiling was gone completely. What was once ceiling was nothing more than black goo that was consuming everything as it slowly made downwards.

Masu was about to open the doors but Kosoku stopped him.

“What about Dr. Cezary?!” She exclaimed with a horrified face.

Instead of attempting to reason with her, Masu told her the truth. “Miss, he is to die here today.”

“What?! That’s ridiculous!”

“Do you not see that black goo above? That is actually the most powerful ability used by ESPs specialized in fire element. It is called hell fire which returns matters into nothingness.”

Kosoku looked above, the second floor had already been completely consumed.

“I will explain everything later, but now we need to leave here!” Having said so, Masu grabbed her hand and pulled her as he opened the door. And what awaited them outside was pitch black environment. The sky was pitch black and the ground was pitch black. Normally, stepping outside would have been suicide but Masu had a feeling that his safety as well as hers were guaranteed. Thus, he stepped outside without hesitation.

As soon as his foot made contact with the dark matter, memories surged into his head. The first memory was how Affie’s last words rang in his head.

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

Masu gritted his teeth as such memories flew into his head. He was vividly seeing himself embracing Affie’s dead body. He could even hear his own whimpering and subsequently cry shortly later. It was all fragments of memories he had tried his best to bury.

Darkness was invading his mind. But he kept on running forward while pulling Kosoku with him.

“What is this?!” She screamed as if she was going through a similar experience as him. “What?! Nooo!”

He was in no condition to encourage her or anything. Instead, he continued to run forward.

..... Regrets

The longer one lived, the more regrets one had. And when one had lived an eventful life like Masu did, there were a lot of regrets. Some were minor and he could easily get over with. Some were fairly significant and he had tried hard to bury. And there were a few which he could never forget and would haunt him every single night.

He faintly recalled how Cezary was complaining about wanting to live longer. Gritting, he shouted defiantly, "What's the point of living longer when you have mounting regrets?!"

If there was a reset button, he would have taken it in a heartbeat, and he would have never let Affie die. His life had become twisted ever since her passing and he could never be satisfied with his life – that was the truth for him.

And because he had given up, he was able to handle ordeals thrown at him more efficiently because he couldn't care less quite frankly. That was another piece of truth.

Suddenly, his face started to tingle at which point he realized that he exited the God forsaken place of doom. He looked back and Kosoku was still there although unconscious.

Panting heavily, Masu sat down on the sand and relaxed a little. There was a large black sphere on where the villa was and it was progressively shrinking. The sphere eventually shrank enough that it had become a small pitch black fragment. The whole scene looked as if nothing happened. The villa was completely gone and there was absolutely no trace at all that any structure stood there once. Despite of the villa having a basement, there was no trace at all.

After placing a barrier on top of Kosoku to shield her from the fierce sand storm, Masu walked to the black fragment and picked it up. He could sense strong powers chilling through his arm.

"Are you happy now, Cecil..."

He expected no answer.

And there was no answer.

Kosoku woke up a few hours later and found herself in a room. Masu apparently teleported her and himself to Kamtaka. She found Masu noticing her move not far from the bed she was in.

“You regained consciousness, I see,” Masu said to her with a grin.

“What ... was that?”

“I did tell you, didn’t I? Hellfire although I think it was enhanced hellfire.” Masu approached her and placed his palm on her forehead. “You are fine,” He declared.

“Dr. Cezary... is dead, isn’t he.”

“Yes, he had to pay a price for his deed.”

After a moment of silence, Kosoku spoke, “I assume it is about the clone experiment he conducted.”

Faintly, Masu narrowed his eyes. “You were a part of the experiment?”

Sighing deeply, she nodded.

“He told me that you were pregnant with his child. Is that true?”

She nodded again. They both sighed and silence filled the room until it was broken by Kosoku.

“In his sleeps, he’d moan a name, Marat. I am assuming the clone was based on her DNA template.”

“Yes,” Masu replied stoically. He had nothing more to add truthfully.

“I did some search on her. And the only woman went by the name of Marat was the Crimson wizard’s wife, and the former President Mirren’s daughter. Is that the woman?”

Masu gave her a simple yes once more.

After a moment of silence, she said, “I can see how cloning her has gotten the Crimson wizard mad. It was morally wrong.”

Masu changed the subject. “Was the pregnancy by your own choice? Or was it forced?”

“It was a bit of both. When he found out that he had little time left, he decided to leave his legacy behind him. I reluctantly agreed.”

“How is that a bit of both?”

“I agreed because the child would be receiving the royalty money he would otherwise get.”

Masu’s eyes were downcast as soon as he heard her answer. “I see,” He replied with a deep voice. “Well, at least you were honest with me.”

“I am not going to lie in front of the sage,” She claimed. “Especially after he saved my sorry life.”

Masu found her a fairly good person with a good sense of justice. Therefore, he decided to employ her at the Kamtaka castle. For the time being, she was given a maternity leave.

It was a dull night. The nights at Kamtaka castle usually involved hearing whirring sound from fierce wind from outside. The castle was naturally a quiet place and, at times, being inside would feel like a horror experience.

On this particular night, the wind was still, thus silent. The whole castle felt like a grave yard. In an empty corridor with dim light, there was Masu who was casually walking forward.

Cezary claimed that Roon Dietrich was basically cloned Marat. If what he claimed was true, he had to check a few things with her.

“Knock, knock.”

Instead of actually knocking, Masu said it out loud to inform Roon who was working in her quarter with the door open. There were files of documents to be inspected and approved on her desk.

Startling, she turned around with haste with a surprised face. “You startled me,” She said while letting out a long breath.

“Haven’t had your ESP activated?”

For ESPs, they had an ability to turn their sixth sense off which made them an ordinary human being. Turning the sixth sense off would enable them to relax and sleep soundly. The sixth sense often gave them too much information consistently which was why some ESPs turned it off when able.

“I wanted to concentrate,” She said with a tired smile.

Masu could sense that she had been working all day long. There was even a possibility that she had been working for days.

“Don’t you have someone to take a load off you?”

Roon beamed a bitter smile. “We’ve tried,” She said while turning back to face her workload. She skimmed through a piece of a document and sighed on bottom. “Majority of population on Mars have spent their entire life mining. As it turns out, as you might have expected, they made poor office workers.”

Masu could imagine. And, for some miners, being confined in a cubic in a quiet place would have been a death sentence. Being a miner on Mars would involve

staying by a loud mining laser all day long for countless years. Suddenly being forced to work in a quiet environment ..., only few would have been able to take it. Even if those select few would have been able to take it, their efficiency wouldn't have been ideal.

She added as she took a few more documents off a file. "We did find a few from over ten thousand applications. Fifty? A little over that."

A government with fifty white collar workers wasn't obviously enough.

"I see. You should still take proper breaks. I can tell that you are exhausted."

Her shoulders sagged. "These need to be signed and get passed by tomorrow morning," She said.

He would stare at her for a moment before bidding her good night.

On his bed, Masu pillowed his arms and was in deep thoughts. 99.9% Marat, she may be but Roon wasn't Marat. For a person to be that someone, the person needed to have the memories. She may have Marat's DNA but she did not have the memories to be Marat.

Which was quite frankly obvious in the first place.

"Wrong ways to leave legacy..." He told himself. He was referring to Cezary, how he impregnated his assistant, how he produced a clone with Marat's DNA, and the mysterious cruiser he wanted to launch. He couldn't help but feel that his last endeavors were failures.

But then it wasn't exactly he could have done better in his shoes, he felt.

He recalled what Cecil told him when he was attempting to convince him to turn himself in to the Bau so that the Bau-Dietrich conflict would be avoided.

“The most important aspect in a man’s life is how he ends it,” Cecil said indifferently in a room where he and Masu were casually facing each other divided by a lone table. There were two untouched glasses of water on the table.

Cecil continued, “You can be a sage but, if you mess it up in the end, your whole reputation will be ruined. It works both ways as well. A villain can turn into a hero if his last deed is overwhelmingly positive.”

Looking unconvinced, Masu was tipping his index and middle fingers on the table slowly. He simply did not like the idea of hibernating for hundreds of years, especially when he could use the time to fortify the clan and battle the Bau.

“Cecil, you must understand that the Dietrich stands a chance. And the clan has been itching to set the record straight,” Masu argued his point.

“That precisely is the problem. The problem is that the Dietrich stands a chance. It will be a bloody conflict that will damage both clans. The Bau will be able to recover. I am unsure about the Dietrich however.”

Masu narrowed his eyes as he heard Cecil’s verdict.

“Besides,” Cecil added, “The Dietrich is not your clan, Masu. It is Kan Dietrich’s.”

“My will to fight is in line with Kan Dietrich’s.”

“Indeed,” Cecil agreed. He, however, added, “But your will is also his right now. He looks up to you and he is not obviously going to stand in your way.”

It was something Masu couldn’t argue. It was true that young Kan Dietrich would obey whatever he’d tell him.

“Let him mature.” Cecil emphasized, “On his own. Meanwhile, take some time off. Prolong your life.”

“Cecil, you do know that I have little intention to prolong my life.”

In response, Cecil remained silent for a moment. Eventually, he told Masu, “Do you know what it feels like to live for eternity?”

Masu didn't answer but Cecil continued.

"The most painful aspect about it is having to befriend new generations who hail from different mindsets and cultures."

Sighing, Masu told Cecil, "Cecil, what are you trying to say?"

He could feel Cecil's warm gaze on him. "You are one of few people who, at least, try to understand me. You are one of few who are capable of understanding me. You are one of few friends I have." Cecil continued after a moment of uneasy silence. "You could well be the last friend for me. And I want you to live as long as possible."

And then Cezary's words rang in his head.

"He visited me a few days ago. He looked the same as before. Does he even age at all?"

"Cecil is no ESP. He is something else."

If he was something else, then what would he be?

Masu smiled at the thought. He knew he wouldn't get an answer to the question. And he wasn't interested.

Deciding to stop think any further about it, he rolled sideways and leaned his body against a wall. He favored sleeping leaning against a wall and, thus, his bed was next to a wall.

Meanwhile, a rude awakening was in order and Masu had no idea, absolutely no idea.

With his jaw dropped, he was looking at Heather who was courteously being escorted out of a shuttle by castle guards on a landing pad.

Stammering, he exclaimed, “H, Heather?!” He never expected her to be on Mars. In fact, he believed she should have and would have moved on. After all, he hadn’t gone back to her for hundreds of years. It was completely unexpected that she’d be on Mars. He did not believe Lila would let her leave the colony in the first place. Then he recalled Cecil mentioning “a surprise”.

“Oh, hi, hon.” Heather beamed a cheerful smile at him although, to Masu, her smile looked like a hawk eyeing her pray.

“Why are you here? How are you here?” He demanded an answer as he dashed toward the shuttle. Heather apparently had several luggage with her which the guards unloaded.

“What, you thought I wouldn’t be able to leave the colony?” Heather replied innocently with a grin.

“Yes,” Masu answered bluntly.

It was true that Lila was adamantly against her leaving the colony for her own safety.

“Yeah, well, you got that, right. I did ask Cecil,” She responded.

“Bah...” Masu was loss at words. He had no idea Cecil would grant her request, let alone listen to her even.

“You are stuck with me, whether you like or not,” She declared.

When sand storm quieted down on a random day, a spot on a desert cracked open and a platform with a cruiser on it emerged from what appeared to be an underground hanger. On surface, it looked like an ordinary USF cruiser.

As soon as the platform reached its maximum height which was the ground level, it activated its thrusters and its main engines to lift off at once. A space cruiser wasn't designed to be able to lift off under gravity normally which meant that this specific cruiser had been specially designed to be able to lift off. Once the cruiser reached a certain height, it fired on the hanger which became engulfed in flames and fumes.

Once done, it ascended sharply toward the space.

Fin