

# [Milky way arc] [2] [Voiceless scream] [9613]

Prerequisite stories/arc

1. Ashuta arc (up to 5)
2. Juron arc (up to 2)
3. The Hammers arc (up to 3)
4. Masu arc (up to 4)

Lord Arnkle and his fleet were about to enter Smuggler's Den. However, he was stopped by his old friend, General Wong.

General Wong's fleet was no match for Arnkle's fleet in size.

"Hello, old friend," Wong opened a channel and greeted Arnkle rather casually.

"Hello," Arnkle replied back with a cold voice however. "I am on an urgent mission. Step aside."

General Wong had no intention to stop him.

"I have no intention to stop you. I just want to give you an advice."

Arnkle scoffed. "I don't need your advices."

Wong narrowed his eyes and glared at him, giving him a silence treatment.

"Alright, alright." Realizing that he had gone a little too far, Arnkle made a quick apology. "What is it you want to tell me?"

Wong cleared his throat once and spoke to him earnestly.

"I know what you are trying to do here, but I strongly suggest you withdraw."

"Are you kidding me?"

"I kid you not. I am serious. What you are trying to do will do no good to you."

Arnkle smashed on an arm of his captain's chair. "Do not be ridiculous. I am here to serve the emperor!"

Wong talked back immediately "Murdering civilians is not the emperor's will."

"It may not be," Juron stepped forward and spoke. "However, they are certainly breaking the immigration laws. They've also thrown away civilian protection rights as they are leaving this nation without proper authorizations or passports."

Wong's eyes widened as he saw Juron came to show on screen.

"So..., it is you, Juron. It is you who is manipulating him."

"Do not be ridiculous, General Wong." Juron sneered.

Wong knew that fighting Juron with words wasn't going to work, and seeing no other way to convince Arnkle, he gave his last advice.

"Arnkle, I really hope you make the correct judgment," Wong said and closed the channel.

Silently observing Wong's fleet turning away, Arnkle asked Juron.

"I have a question for you."

"What is it, sir?"

"How does he know what is going on in Smuggler's Den? I believed only few knew, or have you lied to me?"

"Fear not, sir." Juron smiled. "Of course, he knows, sir, for he started this for his own personal agenda. Unfortunately for him, you were faster with the fleet mobilization."

Arnkle was skeptical. He had known for Wong for pretty much his entire adult life. Wong wasn't someone who'd scheme.

It was easy for Juron to read Arnkle's mind. "Sir, people change," He told Arnkle. "You haven't spoken for him for many years."

Arnkle was still skeptical but Juron's words bore truth. He had indeed not spoken for him for over many years.

Meanwhile, Ksa had arrived at Freedom colony by teleportation and was confronted by few security guards. She identified herself as Ksa and claimed to know Sae and Maeve. She was taken to an interrogation room for further questioning.

"Ksa, you say?"

A security guard submitted his report to Lila in person.

"Yes, she came here via teleportation which triggered the alarm."

There was no celestial bodies in the vicinity of the colony. By vicinity, it meant few tens of light years, which meant that Ksa teleported from afar.

"She also claims to know Sae and Merchant Maeve, ma'am."

Maeve had been spreading her name as a prominent merchant. She became well-known around Freedom colony for effective and efficient trading. She was also known to be quite fair, refusing to take dirty methods to maximize profit.

"Is that so?" Lila touched a spot under her left ear. "Sae, are you there?"

Sae's voice resounded faintly from her left ear. "Heya, I am here, for once." And her chuckle was heard from the channel.

"Get your ass over here. I need you to verify someone."

"Who's it? What's the name?"

"Someone named Ksa. I need you to verify her."

"Ksa? Release her. I don't even need to see her."

"What makes you certain? Someone else might be impersonating, you know."

"Beh! Who else would come up with a name like Ksa? Only Ksa does!"

Sighing and frustrated by Sae's carelessness, she told her bluntly, "Just get over here. This is an order."

"Hey, you can't order me around!"

"You keep calling me mommy, so I am ordering you as your mother."

There was a short moment of silence over the channel before Sae answered. "Yes, mommy."

While Lila was taking Sae to the interrogation room, she asked Sae, "Who is Ksa anyway?"

"A member of the Hammers, she's probably trusted more than Gair on Venus."

"Now who is Gair?"

"Cecil's stepson."

When they entered the interrogation room, Sae waved at Ksa.

"Heya, big sis," She greeted Ksa.

There was a lone chair in the room and Ksa was on it. She stood up as soon as she saw Sae and ran up to her. "It's been so many years."

“Yep, it has been.” Sae giggled but remained being her usual over-childish self.  
“How is he doing on Venus?”

“No idea,” Ksa said with a smile. “You know him. No one knows how he is doing. I don’t think he himself knows how he is doing.”

“That sounds just about right.” Having said so, Sae looked at Lila. “Verified, happy, mommy?”

Ksa was taken to Lila’s office and she showed the disk that contained Maeve’s message. After playing it, Sae confirmed that it was Maeve’s voice.

“Merchant Maeve is well known around here,” Lila responded. “And I believe she placed her cruiser on a year-long parking lot.” Having said so, she touched a spot below her left ear. “Ashuta, are you there?”

Ashuta’s voice sounded from her ear canal. “Yes, ma’am.”

“I need to know where Merchant Maeve’s ship is parked and under what term.”

“Right away, ma’am. Give me a sec... Here it is. It is parked in the private docking bay # 4121. The ship has been parked under a year contract with extra security.”

A private docking bay was just as its name indicated. It was a private parking area for a ship. A private docking bay was small and contained only one ship per bay. Extra security meant that the docking bay would be under guards’ watch.

Out of nowhere, Sae bluntly told Lila, “Lila, shouldn’t we tell her about the disk?”

The existence of the disk was supposed to be a secret. Lila told others to keep their mouth shut about the disk. Yet, there Sae was, speaking about it.

“Sae!” Lila exclaimed. “Watch your mouth!”

Sae would normally sulk after being scolded but this time she talked back fiercely. “Lila!” She shouted back. “You must distinguish an ally from an enemy! She is not our enemy!”

Tension between them skyrocketed when Reed entered the office.

“I am sorry I am late...” And he was amazed by the sight of Lila and Sae glaring at each other; it was something he had never seen before.

Sae wouldn't back off and Lila eventually gave in because she knew Sae was ultimately correct. It was just hard for her to admit that a member of the Hammers, formed by Cecil himself, would be an ally.

“Fine,” Lila said as she took her glare off Sae. “Allow me to explain the situation we have here.”

Taking a deep breath, she explained, “Sae obtained a classified disk from a local gang that was affiliated with the Nebula pirates. The disk was heavily encrypted and was meant to be one of two disks.”

“We gotta find the second disk to make full sense of it,” Sae added quickly.

Lila continued, “But still we were able to make some sense out of it and it is dire news.”

Although bits were missing here and there, they came to a conclusion that the Nebula pirates were planning to take control over Freedom colony.

“They were trying to entice local gangs to destabilize us while they approach, invade, and take over,” Reed chipped in.

Lila quickly added, “We would probably be able to repel whatever they were plotting but it would damage us greatly.”

Ksa quickly attempted to solve the puzzle and came to a conclusion. “So, I assume Maeve has the second disk,” She said.

“That is what I am thinking as well,” Lila agreed, adding, “It would appear so. I do not know how it came to her hands, but she does seem to have it according to the record you've brought.”

"We don't know where she is however," Reed added. "And we do need the second disk to fully decrypt the disk and its content."

Lila nodded and said, "Yes, without the second disk, the Nebula pirates can claim that it is hoax and dismiss it entirely."

Ksa crossed her arms. "I wonder why she left her vessel here. Maybe, that is where we should look for clues."

"That should probably be our next step," Lila said.

Arnkle's fleet had just arrived at Freebie and immediately scanned the planet.

"General, the planet has been scanned, and it is showing very low concentration of life on surface."

He twitched his eyebrow slightly. Disturbed, he demanded, "How low?"

"Less than ten thousand."

"On the whole planet?"

"Yes, general."

The planet was known to have over four hundred millions population. Ten thousand meant over 99% of its population had gone missing.

He turned to see Juron who was standing next to him by captain's chair.

"Juron, where to go now."

"Isn't it obvious. The border."

Arnkle hesitated momentarily. "If they are indeed trying to leave the nation..."

"Kill'em all," Juron finished the sentence for him.

Arnkle startled and hesitated and Juron saw clearly.

"Do not mind what General Wong told you," Juron told Arnkle. "He simply doesn't want you to get the glory. The emperor will be pleased, and you will be rewarded."

"Reward..., yes," Arnkle nodded at himself. "Yes, this is all for the emperor, my son-in-law!"

A faint smile emerged on Juron's face as he told him, "Indeed, sir, you have nothing to worry about."

"Helm, set our course to the border!"

"Aye, general."

Meanwhile, Wemer had borrowed a small fleet of mere one hundred practice vessels from a royal navy academy. Unlike Arnkle who had his own fleet of four thousand ships, the Knights had no authority to own their own fleet.

He loaned the small fleet to deliver the squad that the council had given him to Sevn and Juun.

Wemer and Iuny were onboard on bridge. They were at Heaven of Order.

"Thank you for letting us use the vessels, captain," Wemer spoke to a person by captain's chair. He was dressed differently from other crew on bridge.

"No problem, sir. It was the council's order after all." He then sat in the captain's chair. "Alright! Full speed to Smuggler's Den!"

Wemer returned to a guest quarter. Relaxing on a bed, he recalled his conversation with Sevn.

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Wemer and Sevn were at a bar.

"I have looked into his profile," Sevn initiated the conversation. "And it isn't pretty."

"Go on anyway," Wemer said while sipping his vodka.

"Juron is his real name. He has a record of being sued and subsequently countersuing his father."

"His father?"

"Yep, after his mother passed away, he was sued by his father for offenses. Juron won the lawsuit fairly easily and managed to take every asset away from his father with countersue."

"What happened to the father then?"

"He disappeared, that's what said on the records."

Wemer and Sevn had a strong hunch that the father was murdered by Ans.

"Anyway," Sevn continued. "After that incident, he joined the agency. After a year of missioning, he was spotted by General Wong and worked for him for a little over 3 years before he received the recommendation from the general. Well, with the recommendation, he joined the Knights."

For Wemer, Juron had saved his life before. At first, he didn't seem to be such a bad person. However, after joining the Knights, his attitude changed dramatically. He had never really worked for Wemer or the Knights. He had always been doing works on his own. He reported in perhaps only few times before disappearing completely. Wemer did send few notices to him to report in, but he never replied.

After Juron gave up on the Knights, he had seemingly disappeared. It was only recent that Wemer came across words that Juron was with Lord Arnkle.

“It’s obvious that he is scheming something and he wants a fast way to climb the chain of command,” Sevn said. "I don't know what he is trying to accomplish with Lord Arnkle. But it cannot be good."

By time Sevn was done, Wemer had almost finished his drink.

"That is certain," He replied as he put down his glass. "But it's sad that we cannot stand against him on a personal level. We may be able to restrict him on a political level though..."

After saying so, Wemer had just realized from his own words. "We can't stop him from a political level, either... He is with Lord Arnkle..."

Juron was simply too powerful for the Knights to stand against.

Sighing, Sevn said, "I am sure he could defeat every one of us except ..."

"Juun." Wemer finished Sevn's sentence.

"... It will be mandatory to bring Juun with us when we deal with Juron." Clearing his throat, Sevn had his drink.

Ksa, Lila, and others were at Maeve's vessel. To be exact, they were looking at a hatch.

Reed was inspecting its control panel.

"It is password protected as expected," He said while looking into a small control panel next to the hatch. "Lila, mind if I try just smashing the hatch?"

"Of course, not!" Lila responded fiercely.

"I don't see any other way though," Reed shrugged and looked at Ksa. "Unless you know the password?"

"I am afraid not, sorry," Ksa replied.

*We did not want this.*

The liberator, Acshell, did not want this nation to become this. He wanted to create a nation of equality.

*He did not want this.*

I saw people suffer, not from pains of mind but pains of mortality. Having no foods to continue their lives, having no places to sleep properly, ultimately having no wills to live, but they lived on simply because they were alive. It was as if they were born to face horrible death.

*They did not deserve this.*

I vowed to change them. I vowed to get them out of their misery, but I was powerless. I had neither financial nor political powers to alter their lives.

*- Therefore -*

I decided to lead them to the cold space where they will die. It will be a blissful end for them.

I created a cult and created a fake brief that was so convincing to them. I gave my words to them that their lives will get better if they follow my teachings. They donated their money to me out of their already small wallet. I took their money and flesh. I bought ships. I sent them to Earth.

They will die, and their death will be their ultimate heaven.

A man of a holy aura was standing alone in a hall. The hall was void of any presence. He was wearing a white robe and was holding a rod. He laid his eyes to the empty hall. He simply stood there.

At one point, armed men rushed into the hall. Among them, there were Ehka, Sevn, and Juun.

"There he is!" One of them shouted.

"Surrender! You are under arrest!" They aimed their guns at him and demanded. Ehka quickly approached him.

"Surrender!" Ehka shouted. "Surrender and you will be spared!"

The holy man slowly raised his eyes to see them and started to laugh weakly.

"You are too late," He said.

"Raise your hands, face a wall!" Ehka demanded. "What do you mean too late?! What are you trying to do?! Where are the people?!"

The holy man beamed a smile and spoke in low tone. "They've gone to Earth. They've already left. You'd know that, don't you, Agent Ehka."

Ehka startled. She suspiciously glanced back where Sevn and Juun were.

The holy man let go of his rod, and he slowly raised his hands. Where he used to hold a rod, there was a pistol.

One of men saw the pistol and shouted, "He's armed! Fire!"

"What the, stop!" Ehka immediately realized the purpose of the pistol. She tried to stop the men from firing but it was too late. "Stop, I said! STOP!"

Plasma shots pierced the holy man's figure, but he still remained standing. He silently groaned from excessive pain.

"You will not kill me," He said while aiming his pistol at his head with a labored breath. "I am in charge of my own life."

*And he triggered his pistol.*

"God damn, Nooo!" Ehka cried out and ran up to him, trying to grab him before he'd fall. But she was too late and his body fell over. The guards quickly ran up to the body to make sure that he was in fact dead.

"Crap," Sevn uttered. "Juun, contact Wemer. Deliver him the bad news."

“That man said something to the agent,” Juun said. “And she reacted. She may know something we don’t.”

“Yeah? Let’s call her up…”

It was when both realized Ehka was running out of the hall.

“Juun! After her!”

Juun vanished from the spot and showed up right in front of Ehka who couldn’t stop in time and seemed to have collided with Juun. But in reality, Ehka had a dagger in her hand and tried to attack him. However, Juun deflected her dagger and seized her by bending her arm.

To Juun’s surprise, that did not stop her and she pushed on, dislocating her arm in progress. She was attempting to flee the scene.

“Let go!” She exclaimed and then pleaded, “Please!”

“What are you up to, agent?”

“I must join them!”

“Join who?”

“The soon-to-be refugees!”

Wemer was informed that he had Juun on a secured line. He received the call from his quarter.

Juun’s face appeared on a hologram over a console. His face was serious.

“… Juun, what’s the bad news?”

Juun’s face was stiff and he spoke to him, “Wemer, we now know what is happening in Smuggler’s Den.”

“Finally, tell me.”

Juun told Wemer that six hundred million people left Smuggler's Den in 750 mammoth class freighters.

Wemer was confused at first because he did not know what a mammoth freighter was. In the era, freighters were all fairly small in size. Mere 750 of them would never be able to carry six hundred millions.

But after Juun explained what a mammoth class freighter was, he became pale, very pale.

Covering his face with his hands, he uttered, "This must be a very bad dream. I need to wake up."

"Wemer, this is not a dream," Juun said firmly. "This is the reality. Six hundred millions are going to cross the border soon."

"Six hundred millions!!!" Wemer screamed. "Do you have any idea how many is that?! I can't even clearly comprehend how many that is!" And then he repeated the number. "Six hundred millions!"

"I have more bad news."

"Hah." Wemer laughed, thinking that it couldn't get any worse. "Sure, what is it."

"Lord Arnkle's fleet was at Freebie. I can only assume that he is after the refugees."

Wemer froze. He froze for a good minute.

"Fuck," He cursed which was very rare for him. "Fucking hell. He's going after them. He's going to kill them!" His voice became progressively louder. "Lord Arnkle is going to kill the refugees!"

Juun frowned. He thought Wemer may be wrong. "Are you sure? Why would he do that?"

"Because Juron is with him!" He responded with a shout. "I see what Juron is trying to do!"

Lord Arnkle's fleet of four thousand vessels formed a wall formation right by national border.

Behind them, it was a neutral zone. Space was vast, and there was no guarantee that the freighters carrying civilians would pass this place. However, it was a common trade route, and it was also a choke point for majority of traffics. Furthermore, Juron said they'd pass this spot.

"Formation is set, general," A bridge crew informed him.

"There are a steady stream of traffic here. They are asking us what is going on. What should we tell them?"

Juron answered instead of Arnkle. "Inform them that we are expecting a group of smugglers."

The crew looked at Arnkle who nodded slowly at him. "...Yes, sir."

The fleet waited for days until the first freighter suspected carrying civilians was spotted.

"Lots of livestock on that freighter, hundreds of thousands at least, general."

Arnkle cleared his throat and glanced at Juron who nodded at him.

"Hail them. Tell them to turn around and go back," Arnkle commanded.

It was not the command Juron was expecting.

"General -" Juron was stopped by Arnkle as he lifted his hand up in air slightly.

Fortunately, for Arnkle, he still had some senses left.

A crew informed him, "General, they are not responding, and ..."

"And what?"

"More and more are showing up on our sensor."

"Open a public channel."

"It is open."

Arnkle cleared his throat. "You do not possess the right to cross the border. Once you pass the border, you will lose your civilian protection right. Kill-on-sight will be issued on you immediately."

"Still no response, general."

"This is your last warning. Turn around or we will fire."

A communication officer shook his head to Arnkle.

"General, they will not listen," Juron said.

"Prepare to fire once they cross the border," Arnkle commanded.

Bridge crews murmured and one of them spoke up. "But, general, their ships are unarmed and appear to have no defensive mechanism, not even shields!"

"What would your purpose then?" Juron answered him. "Let them go? Just like that?"

"But they are unarmed, and they are mere civilians!" The officer kept talking back.

"Yes, they are civilians," Juron sneered loud enough for everyone on the bridge could hear. "They are too poor to even pay taxes. What good are they? Might as well just get rid of them all."

Then, he glanced at Arnkle. "And I am sure that is the emperor's will..."

"That is absurd!" The officer shouted. "Don't be ridiculous! Why in the world would the emperor want them dead?! It is you who want them dead!"

"It looks like we have a spy here, Lord Arnkle?"

Arnkle sighed and ordered crew to get him out of the bridge.

By this time, one of the freighters had already crossed the border.

"Prepare to fire," Arnkle ordered.

Bridge crew were skeptical, but they still followed his command. None of them was able to foresee what was going to happen. As a laser was fired on a freighter that just had crossed the border, the freighter started to lose its balance immediately.

"General, the ship doesn't even have any armor!" An officer raised his voice.

And another shouted after him. "The ship is leaking fuel...? No, wait..., that's..."

"It's people... People are being sucked out to space..."

Crew on bridge murmured.

Main screen on bridge automatically zoomed the leak, and it showed people being sucked out to space.

"Turn the screen off!" Arnkle bellowed, and main screen was shut off shortly after. Heavy silence filled the bridge.

"Prepare to fire," Arnkle commanded, and this time, crew were hesitant. "Prepare to fire!" Arnkle's shout had little effect on crew's hesitance.

He stormed off his chair and shouted.

"This is an order! Prepare to fire!"

Crews looked at each other. They were troubled.

"Fire! Now!" He bellowed.

The royal navy fleet was not far from Arnkle's fleet. Wemer had picked up Sevn and Juun along the way.

"Captain, the sensor is detecting a disturbance. I think it's Lord Arnkle. I think he just fired at them!"

Wemer narrowed his eyes, and Sevn sighed deeply. Iuny was shaking his head, and Juun seemed content.

"We will be there soon. Just hold on ...," The captain said, gritting his teeth.

When the small fleet arrived, Lord Arnkle's fleet had shot down several freighters.

"Lord Arnkle!" Wemer spoke through a public channel. "This is Wemer of the Knights. I beg you to stop this!"

An immediate response was made.

"It's voice only," The captain informed Wemer.

"Who are you to tell me stop?" It was Arnkle's voice. "This is the emperor's will!"

Juun sneered silently.

"The emperor's will?!" Wemer responded. "That's absurd! Don't listen to Juron!"

"Watch your tongue!" Arnkle responded with a raging voice. "How dare you!"

"Captain, he keeps firing on the civilian freighters, and I am seeing ... a lot of debris..."

They knew well what "debris" meant. There were also tiny frozen matters in space on their screens. There were tens of thousands of them.

Sevn put his hand on Wemer's shoulder and told him, "This is not wor..."

Before he could finish, there was a painful shouting. However, it wasn't from their bridge. It was from the channel with Lord Arnkle.

"What are you doing...!" It was his voice. His voice sounded disturbed.

Groaning was heard from the channel, and stabbing could be heard. Every time there was a stabbing sound, there was a groaning. Eventually, the groaning stopped.

"What the hell is going on over there?" lunny demanded, but no one answered.

And then Lord Arnkle's fleet paused firing.

A communication screen appeared, and Juron was on it. Lord Arnkle lied dead behind him, stabbed by lots of energy daggers. Beside his body, there were other bodies scattered around.

"Lord Arnkle has been murdered by his own crew, and I've punished them." Juron's voice was determined and confident. "I am currently in command of this fleet at the moment. I shall bring this news to the council."

"What have you done, Juron?!" Wemer shouted. "This was your intention all along!"

"Do not accuse me," He responded firmly. "Else, I will presume that you also had something to do with this death."

"Now, he is being ridiculous," Sevn whispered to Wemer who was shaking his fists.

"Are you going to let him go like that?" luny said.

"Juron!" Wemer pointed at him on the screen. "You are under arrest for the murder of Lord Arnkle!"

Juron immediately started to laugh. He laughed harder and harder by a second, and eventually his laugh became hysterical.

"No!" He bellowed. "You are under arrest for stupidity! Your punishment is death!"

Having said so, he vanished from the screen and appeared on the bridge of Wemer and others.

"Take this!" Juron bellowed.

Before anyone realized, luny was hit by a sonic blast and was blown away. He was crushed into a wall violently.

"You...!" Sevn quickly faced Juron and was about to cast something, but he was slower than Juron and was also blown away by another sonic blast.

Juron laughed with satisfaction after demonstration of his powers. He, then, glared at Wemer who was trying to sneak behind Ans.

"Now, you all die here," Juron declared. He concentrated momentarily and created some sort of black hole. Its size was that of a head. However, regardless of its size, it was still deadly enough. It started to suck air as well as matters out of the bridge.

Juron laughed hysterically, but his hysterical laugh stopped as he defended himself from an unexpected attack. Confident smile from his face gradually faded away as he saw his barrier being broken by Juun's swirling blade. He had to take steps back to avoid Juun's blade.

"What is this?!" Juron demanded.

"Juun! Earn time while we neutralize this black hole!" Wemer shouted as he approached the black hole. Sevn also followed Wemer to assist him.

Bleeding badly from his back, lunny slowly stood up. Howling, he unleashed his energy blade and posed to attack Juron. But lunny wasn't Juron concern. His focus had shifted to an unexpected threat, Juun.

As he glared at Juun, he started to recall data he read about him. Juun was supposed to be a mere rank A hyper human with an average background. By "an average background", it meant one having graduated from hyper human institution. Then, he recalled how his barrier was broken. He did not use his full powers, but his barrier should have never been broken by a mere rank A hyper human.

"So, you've managed to hide your true rank until now," Juron spoke. He had reached his conclusion. "Wemer, I suppose I underestimated you."

Wemer was too busy to answer him. Along with Sevn, Wemer was attempting to neutralize the black hole by feeding it excessive ESP powers. The tiny blackhole was sucking air of the bridge but its suction was partially blocked by Wemer and Sevn's ESP.

It would take over an hour to suck all air out of the cruiser, but that wasn't Juron's intention. The purpose of the black hole was to whack havoc on others. And it worked in his favor as bride crews became too busy to hanging onto objects to assist Wemer and the others.

Juun slowly posed to attack. He didn't shout or bellow like lunny. He was more of a quiet fighter. He quietly fashioned his blade works over Juron. And Juron's second barrier was also broken fragilely as well, and this time, he did use his full powers, yet his barrier was broken as if a thin layer of glass shattered by gust. He had to

fight Juun differently, so he cast gravity on Juun to slow him down which didn't seem to effect Juun at all.

Gravity was one of the most common skills used by ESPs. When gravity is cast upon someone, a faint black aura would form around someone and he would feel his body heavier as if he is under more gravity. It was a common way for ESPs to slow down someone, especially hyper humans.

Juron narrowed his eyes with doubts.

This was no ordinary hyper human Juron was dealing with. He cast several other tricks on him but none seemed to have an effect on him. It was completely out of his expectations, but he was being cornered by a swordsman he had thought nothing of.

He was becoming irritated. This was not how this was supposed to turn. He was supposed to defeat Wemer and his minions and claim the victory over here. But that was apparently not happening.

"Grrr...," He growled as his third barrier was broken fragily by Juun. Juun was unlike any hyper human he had confronted. First of all, he was silent unlike majority of hyper humans preferred howling as a form of moral boost, and his blade play gave little time for Juron to react. None of his attacks were powerful but they came in numbers with precision. Eventually, when he was cornered completely, he decided to unleash his full powers.

He released a powerful shockwave. It was powerful enough to blow Juun away. However, that left a small gap in his defense, and Iuny did not lose that chance. Though wounded severely, he ran toward Juron fiercely with his blade pointed at his chest.

Noticing charging luny, Juron scoffed. "Annoying insects...!" He conjured a whip out of compressed air. It was almost invisible.

As he swirled the whip afloat, the whip, as if it had mind of its own, sliced clean luny's right arm.

luny moaned with extensive pain. Blood was pouring out of his severed and he simply stood still but glaring at Juron.

Juron's whip aimed for his head this time. luny was seemingly defenseless against the incoming whip, and his decapitation seemed inevitable.

It was when, however, Juun interfered. His blade quickly sliced incoming whip, and the sliced portion of the whip made a pop sound which was caused by rapid air decompression. Juun quickly inspected luny's condition. A large portion of his back skin was torn apart, bleeding severely. His right arm, below elbow was gone, pouring out blood, and his breathe was irregular. Lastly, his eyes were firmly fixed at Juron. Juun waved his hand in front of luny's eyes but there was no reason. He was unconscious standing still.

"Wemer! Done yet? luny needs a medical attention."

"We are almost done! Just a little more...!" Wemer and Sevn had almost closed the artificial black hole Juron created.

Juron encountered an unexpected opponent in Juun but still everything was going according to his plan. Perhaps, the only thing that didn't go according to his plan was how Wemer and Sevn were not lying dead on the floor. He was not pleased with that part and decided to execute it.

Dodging Juun, Juron teleported himself right by Wemer and Sevn who were about to close the black hole. Both Wemer and Sevn were too focused on their task to

respond in a timely manner, and Sevn was forcefully blown away, but he was caught by Juun.

"Are you alright?"

"I am fine!" Sevn exclaimed. "But Wemer...!"

Wemer screamed in pain as Juron shoved an energy blade deeply into his left shoulder, but he remained in his position still.

"Damn it!" Sevn ran toward Wemer and Juron blew him away with a shockwave.

"That won't work!" Juron exclaimed.

"God damn it!" Sevn growled. "There has got to be a way!"

"Can I kill him?" Juun asked indifferently.

The whole bridge became frozen momentarily. And Juron eyebrows were twitching.

"It's no time for a joke," Sevn stated quietly.

"I am not. Am I allowed to kill him? That is the only reason I am being easy on him."

Juun's words obviously smashed Juron's pride. He started to burn in absolute anger and hatred toward Juun. He was so angered that he even ignored Wemer who he could kill him instantly if he wished to. Juron wasn't a short tempered man, but Juun's words were too much for his pride.

Juron started to snicker hysterically, and Juun slowly posed to attack Juron after taking the silence as yes to his inquiry. It was that moment that Juron suddenly changed as if a completely different personality had taken over him. He stopped

snickering, and his face became sincere. He looked at Juun who drew out his blade and posed to attack.

"Good one," Juron said to Juun indifferently. "Very good one. Fine, we win this round. However, this will not change anything."

Wemer was bleeding badly from his left shoulder, but he managed to seal the black hole at last. Seeing that the black hole had been sealed, Juron realized it was his time to leave.

"You have done well, Wemer, with your hidden card," Juron said to Wemer who was trying to stop bleeding from his left shoulder. Sevn was assisting him. "I didn't think a class S hyper human was under your command. You hid it well."

Wemer tried to smile in response but it didn't come out well due to the pain he was experiencing. He told Juron regardless, "I did not come here without any sort of plan."

"I see that. I shall withdraw today. But we will meet again."

And Juron teleported away.

The bridge crew was glad that they survived, including the captain.

"Are you alright?" The captain asked Wemer whose bleeding had stopped.

"I will be fine...," Wemer answered while looking at Juun who was deactivating his energy blade. "Juun, did you mean that?"

"Yes," Juun replied. "I could have killed him until he suddenly changed."

"He may have dual personalities," Sevn added.

"Maybe, class S ESPs tend to have a backup plan," Wemer responded.

The captain who almost experienced death was panting. "God..., that was scary."

"I am sorry, captain," Wemer told him. "I didn't mean to get you involved in this."

"Captain, Lord Arnkle's fleet ..." A bridge crew reported. "Or whatever it is, they are withdrawing."

Lord Arnkle was dead. Apparently, Juron was controlling the fleet at the moment.

"We cannot do anything. Let them go," The captain said.

"Aye, captain."

The rest of freighters passed the border.

On main screen, hundreds of mammoth freighters were passing through.

"Are they trying to reach Earth?" It was Juun who asked the question.

"Likely so," Wemer replied as Sevn finished bandaging his shoulder.

"What for though?" Juun added, "Earth is not Heaven or anything."

"Who knows what they are thinking," Sevn replied while sighing deeply.

"We have done our part," Wemer said. "Let us depart."

When they arrived at Creg's, they received shocking news. Apparently, Juron was given Lord Arnkle's fleet. He literally inherited most of Arnkle's powers except for Arnkle's domain which his family inherited. The domain went to his family.

"I don't believe this," Sevn uttered.

Wemer, Sevn, and Juun were gathered at a park in front of a hospital where lunny was currently staying. He was undergoing regeneration.

"It was clearly planned by him, and he gets his fleet?" Sevn continued with an angered voice. "And he almost killed us."

Wemer was sitting on a wooden bench in the park. His left shoulder was bandaged, but it was nothing serious, especially compared to lunny's injuries. Sevn and Juun were standing. Sevn was conversing with Wemer and Juun was just wandering around in their vicinity as if he had no interest in the matter.

"It seems clear that the council wants to protect Juron," Wemer said. "I can see their point of view. He is a class S ESP after all, but he has gone too far."

Sevn sighed and changed the subject. "Any news on the runaway citizens?"

Wemer massaged his bandaged left shoulder. "They've crossed the border. The Smuggler's den region is nearly empty now, literally. Only few thousands are found throughout the whole region."

"They are heading to Earth?"

"Likely so. They are currently heading toward Freedom colony."

"What are we going to do?"

Wemer tried to shrug but he was stopped by a sharp pain in his left shoulder. Moaning weakly, he replied, "Nothing. It's not like there is anything we can do. They are not in our jurisdiction."

And then Juun casually told Wemer, "Mind if I go after them?"

Wemer quickly responded, "But they are not in our jurisdiction."

"I would not go as a Knight. I would go as just a mere man."

Sevn walked up to Juun who was leaning against a tree. "What are you going to do? Or what can you do? Besides, you could chase them only until they reach border of United Sol."

"I will manage. If you are not letting me go, I am going to ask for a vacation and go."

Wemer was going to have a break anyway. Therefore, he decided to let him go.

“With Iuny and me out, I was going to give everyone a break,” Wemer said. “So, fine, you may go.”

Turning around to face Wemer, Sevn was about to ask to go with Juun. However, Wemer told him before he could ask. “Sevn, I need you here. I am not giving you a vacation. I need someone to stay at the HQ and do paper works.”

“What? That’s unfair.”

“I will give you a longer vacation later.”

Sevn was resigned to his fate. “Fine.”

The truth was that Wemer wasn’t worried about Juun. Seeing he was able to battle Juron and would have emerged victorious if it wasn’t for the situation, he was confident that Juun would be fine. He was, however, skeptical about Sevn.

“But I want you to go as far as Freedom colony. I will not allow you to go further.”

“Understandable and reasonable,” Juun replied, nodding.

Meanwhile, Ksa, Lila, and Reed eventually entered Maeve's vessel. They had to destroy the hatch in the end since they were unable to get past its security.

When they reached the bridge, they found a recording.

"Should I play it?" Reed was inspecting the console. "It may be a trap."

“Go on. I am not worried,” Lila responded.

“Yes, ma’am.”

Maeve’s image appeared through main screen on the bridge.

"Ah-Ah-." She cleared her throat on the screen and continued. "Hello, if you are seeing this record, I suppose you've broken into my ship and I also suppose that you had a dire reason to have done so."

It was the first time for Reed to see Maeve. "Hey, she doesn't look so bad," He remarked.

She continued, "I suppose I know why you are here. You are here for the disk, are you not?" She made a short pause before she resumed. "I have the disk probably. I've made this recording to inform whoever you are how I came to possess the disk and what it is about actually."

She made another pause.

"The disk is one of two disks. The other disk is required to fully decrypt the message, but it wasn't too hard to make up what it meant. The Nebula pirates want Freedom colony. They feared Aedy Freedom at first but he hasn't appeared in public for hundreds of years and they presume he is dead. Without Aedy, they don't fear anyone on the colony."

Lila's eyes were downcast and Maeve's message continued.

"Whether he is alive or dead, that is not my concern. My concern is that I do not want the neutral zone to fall into their hands. I was able to obtain the disk via trading. One of local gangs on the colony was attempting to smuggle it out of the colony in a freight container. By total fluke, that freight box fell into my hands. As soon as they found out that the disk went missing, they tracked and hunted me down.

I gave a vacation to my crews and I fled."

The recording ended.

"I wonder why she didn't come to us for protection," Reed wondered. "We've have provided her the perfect protection."

Lila slowly came to herself and responded, "Perhaps, she wanted to get out of the colony and she probably thought there may have been spies in our ranks."

Ksa had a hunch where Maeve might be hiding, but she didn't trust Lila enough to inform her.

She turned around. "I'd like to leave. Thank you for everything so far," She said.

"Where are you going?" Lila asked.

"I've found out what happened to Maeve. I am going back to Venus to inform the others," Ksa responded.

"You seem awfully relaxed," Reed commented. "As if you know for certain that she is safe."

"I trust her and her ability. That is all," Ksa replied indifferently. Having said so, she faded gradually. "Farewell. Thank you for your help."

"And... she is gone," Reed remarked. "She was a pretty weird one. What's up with her hair anyway?"

Lila ignored Reed's comments. She looked around the bridge again to see if anything was unusual, but she was unable to spot any. In meantime, she realized Ashuta was contacting her. Touching a spot below her left ear, she spoke.

"Ashuta, what is it?"

He informed her of the incident at the border where Lord Arnkle was killed and that hundreds of mammoth freighters were on their way to Freedom colony.

"I see. We will be there right away." She turned to Reed. "We need to go. This matter is not as important what we are about to face."

Reed narrowed his eyes. "What is going on?"

"Hundreds of millions of Andromeda citizens are fleeing from their country. They crossed the border already, and they are heading here."

"Crap...," Reed muttered.

"Let's go. We need to hurry."

- *Fin*