

[Milky way arc] [4] [An end to many] [9613]

Rev 2.3 (Last modified on Jan 12, 2021)

Required stories to read prior reading this one (A long list)

1. All previous stories in Milky way arc.
2. Until 5th story of Shattered union arc.
3. The Hammers arc 3rd and 5th stories.
4. Until 3rd story of Kain and Suu arc.

Captain Willste's patrol fleet was roaming near border of Sol system. The fleet was consisted of six frigates and one cruiser. It had been on duty for about three seasons and they were about to head back to Uranus outpost for resupply.

"Captain, long range sensor is detecting massive amount of freighter-class ships."

Capt. Willste twisted his head in confusion. "Freighter-class?" It didn't mean much sense at first because freighter vessels never traveled in a massive amount. "Just how massive?" He asked.

"About seven hundred fifty. We are unsure of its exact class. They are still too far away, but they are heading this way."

Willste scratched his chin carefully and came up with a decision. "Let us proceed to them."

"Captain, we will be crossing the border."

"No one has to know," Willste replied. "Let's make it quick."

"Aye, captain."

It took the fleet roughly thirty minutes at their maximum speed to reach the freighters in a visual range, and the crew, including Capt. Willste, lost their words for a good minute.

Eventually, a crew blurted. "These are mammoth class freighters...."

"What the hell is going on?" Another crew said out loud. "We weren't informed this."

"Let us go back. Contact the outpost as soon as we get in the range," Capt. Willste commanded.

Yakov rushed into Gvew's office without knocking. "Sir!" He exclaimed urgently and found Devon confronting her father. Yakov was stunned by the air in the office.

"Are you serious, father?"

"I don't have any other choice," Gvew said gravely. "It is for our people."

"They are people as well!"

Yakov had a hunch that they were discussing about the same news he had brought.

Gvew noticed Yakov and let out of a cough to notify angered Devon. Sighing, she turned away from her father and left the office.

"Sir, I guess you know what I am here for," Yakov said.

"Likely so."

Apparently, Gvew received a report from Freedom colony while Yakov received a report from Capt. Willste. In other words, Gvew was ahead of Yakov. The truth was that Gvew was actually informed by the Bau informant within Freedom colony. Ever since becoming Bau's puppet, Gvew gained some access to their information network. He never had told Yakov that the Bau approached him however.

"They are approaching the border," Yakov said. "What is your command?"

Gvew rubbed his eyes. He sounded tired. "What do you think I should do?"

Yakov instantly realized where Gvew was going. "You have two choices, sir. And neither choice seems good for you."

There was no way any nation would be able to accept hundreds of millions of refugees. A nation's backbone would simple be broken if done so and the nation would suffer economic problems for generations, not to mention unrest among its own people. The current economic condition of United Sol certainly made the decision easier however. With broken economy, United Sol was in no shape to accept any kind of refugees. Cold logic dictated the refugees must be repelled.

"I will have to risk it," Gvew said. "The economy will collapse if we shelter them."

Yakov sighed deeply as he left his office. He felt his regime was done. He felt there was no way of Gvew escaping from this situation. He, too, believed repelling them was the right choice but there were bound to be Ark politicians who'd use this occasion to depose him once for all.

Meanwhile, Capt. Willste's fleet had been hovering over the freighters for few days. They were to cross the border in few hours. The patrol fleet had been trying to contact the freighters. However, so far, none had returned a hailing call.

"Captain, I've just received news from Uranus outpost that an admiral fleet has been dispatched."

Willste was by a comm. console with a bridge crew. "What's his name?"

"Not yet verified, sir."

"I am thinking that their communication systems may be down," Willste said to the crew next to him.

"Their system can't be all down simultaneously." A crew remarked.

"We can shoot them, can't we?" Willste said. The bridge became silent after his statement. The silence was broken when a crew entered the bridge.

"Captain, we have a written report for the deep scan."

They performed a deep scan on one of the mammoth freighters. As Willste read through the report, he found few shocking facts. First of all, the freighters did not have any sort of armor, let alone any sort of defense systems. It was also running on a single plasma reactor which was being utilized past its recommended output. The deep scan also revealed that any sort of physical impact on the reactor will have a higher chance of the reactor being blown up.

Furthermore, the scan showed that a freighter was carrying roughly eight hundred thousand civilians, which meant that there were six hundred million people in the freighters.

"You've got to be kidding me ...," Willste remarked with twitching eyebrows.

The scan revealed that the plating of the cargo compartment, which was where the civilians were being held, was very thin. It was below standard thickness.

Willste handed the report over to a crew nearby. "This is ridiculous," He said. "Where are they from even?"

The freighters had not declared themselves to be refugees. Therefore, United Sol could repel them by any means necessary. At least, that was an option that was legally allowed at this point.

What that meant that Capt. Willste was right that he could shoot them. However, just as with everyone in the situation, moral was holding him back. A shot at its cargo compartment could result in a catastrophic disaster.

Meanwhile, Admiral Emuel had been dispatched by Gvew's executive order in order to deal with the freighters. He wasn't an admiral in a strict sense, but he was temporarily given the title for the cause. Emuel was originally an administrator of Jupiter assault station. Gvew chose him for a reason. It was that Emuel had his own fleets. The economy of United Sol was falling apart, and Gvew hoped to save every credit possible. By assigning Emuel, it would be him who'd pay for his fleet expenses.

It wasn't a win-win situation for Gvew however. Emuel was becoming popular among Ark house politicians, and he was starting to emerge as a new possible candidate for the next president along with Fraser. Giving him a big task such as this would earn him more popularity and recognition, should he succeed.

Emuel's lone commandship was hovering over Jupiter assault station. His commandship was a heavily modified cruiser with thicker plates and stronger shields. With crew capacity of five hundred and capacity of two hundred fighter

crafts, it was essentially a small mothership. Despite of a bill that would retire fighters, Emuel was against the bill and he openly supported usage of fighters. It was an indication that United Sol was heavily decentralized. The Ark no longer had the powers to enforce its bills and laws and administrators of planets and admirals of fleets had freedom to do what they saw fit as long as they had the credits.

Aroa, one of Emuel's mistresses, approached Emuel who was in his decorated captain's throne. The captain's throne wasn't just an ordinary chair. It was more of a three-seat couch. He was literally lying there.

"Sir," Aroa's smoothing voice sounded on the bridge. "You've just been approved as an admiral for this task." Aroa was wearing a formal military uniform. However, her uniform was unique in a sense that it was a tight suit to emphasize her body line.

Emuel lazily yawned and told her, "Good, gather ships."

"How many, sir?"

"Four thousand-ish," He said. "That should be enough."

Bowing lightly, Aroa left the bridge, and at the same time, Aroan entered. Unlike Aroa, Aroan was wearing a casual suit, consisted of a shorts and a loose white shirt. She approached Emuel's couch. Aroa and Aroan were a twin. Both of them used to be a low ranking officers until Emuel took a liking in them.

"May I sit?"

Emuel opened one of his eyes and slowly raised his upper body. As Aroan sat, Emuel pillowed on her thigh.

"It's over," He said silently. He was speaking about Gvew and Aroan was well aware what he was talking about as well.

“Even the Bau will be unable to support him now, so yes,” Aroan answered him softly. “The notion to depose him is ready. Give me your word and I can gather enough support to make it a tie at the house level and pass it at the senate.”

Normally, Gvew would be able to throw a tie break vote but, since it would be regarding his own dismissal, he wouldn't be able to vote. What Aroan planned to make happen was massive bribing. Since the senate had considerably less members, it'd cost far less to bribe what was needed to make 56% of YES.

Emuel let out of a groan, indirectly sounding against the idea. "We wait until he makes the decision on the refugees. It will be a lot easier then."

Aroan nodded. “Agreed, sir.”

But it wasn't completely smooth for Emuel. There was Fraser who was rumored to have been supported by the Bau, which meant that the Bau was also ready to depose Gvew.

“What of Fraser, sir?” Aroan asked softly.

Emuel continued groaning and refused to answer.

Aroan continued, "Meanwhile, there is a disturbing rumor."

He stopped groaning and asked her, "Which is?"

"Gvew's assassination," Aroan said firmly.

Despite of backing from the Bau, Gvew wasn't truly supported by the Bau. The Bau saw him as a puppet, thus a tool, and Gvew himself viewed the Bau as a necessary evil to keep his seat. The Bau now had Fraser as their official candidate.

Other Ark house members were mildly aware of Fraser's existence and, therefore, they also knew Gvew's time was almost over. But they did not want the Bau to end his regime. They wanted to depose Gvew on their own and possibly bring him to a trial for his actions.

Few Ark house members spoke of assassination instead which wasn't a far-fetched idea, given Gvew's unbearable standings with the whole Ark.

In other words, Gvew was against everyone at the Ark. His regime was effectively already over. It was a simple matter of how he was deposed.

Scratching his chin slowly, Emuel lazily asked Aroan, "Where was the rumor originated from?"

"It came from a reliable source of mine. And I am certain that Gvew is aware of the rumor as well."

Emuel and Aroan both did not mention, but if Gvew was assassinated for real, Emuel would be the first one to be suspected due to his sneaky methods. Logically, Fraser was the one who would benefit the most from the assassination since he'd become the sole candidate for the presidency.

"I see. Someone's playing a dirty game, eh?"

"Perhaps, darling. What will be your move?"

"For now, we do something about those piece of shits that crossed our border."

Meanwhile, Kain and Suu had been literally idling for past few years since 9611. Ever since Kain became stuck with Suu, his small fleet wasn't given any other tasks than patrols. And Kain could not get away from Suu, either, since both of them weren't in any factions, meaning Jupiter administration saw the two of them the right fit for each other for the time being.

Suu had mostly ignored Kain at the early stage of the ever-boring patrolling career, but she gradually opened up a little as they worked together for over a year. At the same time, Kain eventually grew resistance over her.

They were currently docked at Uranus outpost after having returned recently from their 4th patrol session.

Suu entered a cafeteria where Kain was having a drink of alcohol.

"Kain," She called out quietly after approaching him from behind.

"Yeah?"

"We need to go. Something is going on."

Kain groaned because he just started to dip his drink. "Can I get some break? We've just returned, you know."

"Kain." It was a quiet resounding call as if a mother was talking to her child to stop having a candy.

"Mister, you've better go," A bartender remarked with a grin on his face.

"Yeah, yeah..."

Kain and Suu were returning to Parashe II.

"So, what's going on?" Kain asked Suu while they were walking to a docking bay.

Suu explained that her crew reported an emergency broadcast from Jupiter administration and that the message was encrypted. While Kain and Suu belonged to United Sol navy, their actual direct supreme officer was Emuel himself. Thus, their ships were tuned to receive messages from Jupiter administration. Since Kain was the current leader of the fleet, he was the only one with the authority to decrypt the message.

In the captain's quarter, Kain entered his passcode to decrypt the message.

"This is Admiral Emuel speaking. I've been granted a temporary title of Admiral for the occasional although I personally wouldn't mind the title."

It was Emuel's voice.

"It has been reported that an unknown number of illegal refugees have crossed the border. While their exact number is unknown, it is over hundreds of millions."

"Holy shit," Kain uttered.

"I've assembled a small fleet and am headed to the border to take care of the matter. Meanwhile, I order those who are still out there stop what you are doing and dock at the nearest friendly outpost or shipyard. Wait for further instructions from me."

And that was the end of the message. It was hard to believe what was really happening.

"Hundred millions of refugees?" Kain mumbled in doubts. "Why did Andromeda union let this happen?"

"We must do something," Suu insisted.

"What do you mean by that?" Kain raised his voice. He had to. As he got to know her better, he realized what was wrong with her; it was her strong sense of justice that often blinded her. He figured her tendency to go off had something to do with her upbringing. He raised his voice because he knew she could simply blow her lid off and chase after the refugees.

"Keep your cool, girl," Kain told her. "You have only a single frigate. You won't be able to do a thing."

Narrowing eyes, Suu glared at him.

Refugee laws were fairly civil and well-constructed for United Sol. Being accepted as a refugee was fairly simple. There were two ways. One was by simply crossing the border and surrendering while declaring that one was a refugee. The other way, much less expensive way, was smuggling oneself into Sol system and turn oneself in while declaring one was a refugee. Once becoming a refugee, a

background check would be done and, once clear, he would become a United Sol citizen.

However, the laws were not meant to take in hundred millions of refugees at once. If United Sol was to accept them while fully keeping in line with their laws, it'd break the nation's backbone.

Emuel was fully aware of this, and there was only one solution to the matter as far as he was concerned. It was to shoot them down. But whether he was going to get his hands dirty was another issue.

"He is going to drive them out with seer forces," Suu said after a moment. What she meant was he was going to shoot them down.

"Can you blame him? Our economy isn't exactly stable. If we do take them in, we will be flat-broke."

Suu talked back fiercely, "But we can't just kill them!"

It seemed to be a rough choice for anyone. Both choices were bad and nobody could really afford to take either choice. There were simply too much at stake for everyone.

"What do you suggest then? Have any better idea than placing everyone in jeopardy?" Kain demanded.

"I...I don't know."

Kain shrugged and said, "Woman, don't speak up if you don't have a solution. You are dragging us into a big trouble."

Suu couldn't talk back to him because she felt that he was correct on the account. There was nothing she could possibly do especially as captains.

However, Kain chose to depart the outpost shortly later and Suu questioned him through a channel.

"What do you mean we are leaving? To where?"

"To where the refugees are."

"Pardon? I thought you weren't going? Besides, the admiral told us not to."

Samuel joined in the conversation. "Captain, are you sure disobeying the admiral's order is a good idea?"

Kain answered with a chuckle, "I doubt he will care or even notice a tiny fleet like ours. Let's just go there and take a peek."

He had a point. Their "fleet" was made of a single cruiser and a single frigate. It wasn't exactly a fleet. However, due to lack of a better term, it was considered a fleet.

"I thought you didn't care," Suu said with sarcasm.

"Your sarcasm is well noted."

Meanwhile,

Capt. Willste had been sort of escorting the massive freighter fleet. He wasn't exactly escorting but was instead keeping his eyes on them. Nevertheless, on surface, it appeared that he was escorting them.

"Captain, we have an order from Admiral Emuel. Apparently, he has been put in charge to deal with this situation."

"What's the order?"

"It's been encoded. We need your passcode, sir."

As soon as Willste entered his passcode, the order was played. It was a voice-only message.

"This is Admiral Emuel. I've been personally asked by the president to look after this issue. I am ordering all available vessels in the vicinity to head to the coordinates I am providing with this message. As soon as you are there, you should spot some abnormalities on your sensors. Track it down, find the source, and fire at will."

"Woah, woah, woah," Willste paused the message. "Did he just say 'fire at will'?"

His question was answered by silence.

"I am not firing at them!" Willste uttered. "This is madness!"

But that would mean disobeying a direct order.

"Damn it," Willste muttered. "Any luck in contacting them?"

They had been attempting to establish a contact with the freighters without much luck.

"Nothing, sir. I am beginning to think that they may not even have communication capabilities."

"Nonsense, I am sure they can communicate. I just don't know why they won't talk."

It was when Capt. Willste was grumbling about lack of solutions when a crew reported urgently.

"Sir, I am detecting several fleets. They are one of ours. They are coming here."

Several wandering fleets had received Emuel's call and was coming to the location. Willste foresaw havoc.

"Great, I am sure some of them want to obey the order," He muttered loudly.

Willste's fear was well founded. After listening to rest of Emuel's message, he had apparently placed large bonuses to those who followed the order along with a possible promotion.

In an hour, fourteen patrol fleets had arrived at Willste's location.

"This is Captain Willste, #311st patrol fleet. I've been keeping an eye on them," Willste declared to all available ships in the area.

The freighter fleet was currently were approaching Pluto. It'd take days before they'd get into the planet's vicinity.

A captain asked him boldly, "Captain, did you not receive the admiral's order?"

"I certainly have, but scanning indicates that there are hundreds millions of people inside."

"And so?"

Willste frowned. "I beg your pardon?"

"Just shoot them down. They are not our people."

"They are - people - regardless their nationality. Just because they do not have Sol citizenships, that does not make them some domesticated animals," Willste raised his voice.

Apparently, some captains agreed with Willste's statement and some did not. Soon, they started to argue.

"I am not firing at those - defenseless - people," Another captain added. "Our scanning shows that they don't even have shields and have fairly weak plating. If we shoot them, they will be damaged severely by just few hits."

"Who cares?! They entered our nation illegally without prior arrangements. This is against the laws and we all know this," Yet another captain argued.

"Yes, but consider how many people are out there. Are you really willing to just kill them all? It's not just one or two, or a hundred or two. It's millions!" Other captain remarked.

"Are you implying that we should disobey the admiral's direct order?"

"Speaking of the admiral, why isn't he here? Is he letting us do the dirty work?"

The debate went on and on, and as time ticked, more and more patrol fleets arrived. The debate soon included name-calling, cursing, and swearing. The opinions were divided into two obvious choices. One was to let them pass. The other was to shoot them down.

Roughly half of captains were with Willste. The other half was against the option one and decided that they had enough and started to fire at the freighters.

"God! They are firing at them!" Willste shouted. "I can't believe this! Shoot them!"

"Sir? Shoot who?"

"The ones that are shooting the freighters!"

"But, sir, they are ours!"

"Not anymore!"

Willste's fleet started to attack those who were firing at freighters. It sparked a battle.

"Fire! Destroy them!" Willste commended fiercely. "I will not allow such murders!"

"Go to hell, traitor!" An opposing captain responded to Willste.

The whole situation was starting to get out of control.

Kain's fleet was approaching the area.

"Samuel, are you seeing what I am seeing? I am reading weapon firing. I think there is a battle going on at the destination we are heading," Kain laughed weakly. "I can picture what happened."

"This is not time for laugh. It is hard to believe by just reading the sensors," Suu commented on a dedicated channel.

"I reckon they started to argue whether to fire or not, you can guess the rest."

"You mean ... they are fighting each other?"

Kain shrugged. "Isn't that obvious? I suppose that's better than seeing the freighters shot down."

"But we are all on the same side."

Kain laughed casually. "Not at the moment."

Not a single vessel cared when Kain's fleet arrived. Everyone was busy shooting at each other and the freighters were idly passing by as if they weren't aware of what was going on in their immediate vicinity.

"At least they aren't foolish enough to have gone too far," Kain remarked as he saw the scene.

"Your orders?" Samuel inquired.

"I ain't taking a side. Keep a distance and let's run if they act hostile toward us."

Samuel felt that it was the best choice for their own sake. "Aye, sir," He responded accordingly.

No vessel was destroyed in the end. A few were badly damaged but no life and ship was lost. Capt. Willste's side had apparently won.

The freighter fleet was idly passing by the battle scene as if nothing happened. Suu ran a quick scan on a freighter.

"They have no shields and no visible armor plating. A well-aimed shot can be critical," She concluded.

Kain was running his own scan as well. He grinned as he read through the result.

"Whoever built those is a genius," He remarked with a smirk. "He made it so fragile that we can't even attack it."

Meanwhile, Maeve had returned to Venus at last. She was unharmed.

Kisia welcomed her with open arms. "Welcome back. Glad to see that you are safe and sound."

They exchanged a hug in Venus international shuttleport.

"I am sorry that it got a little messy," Maeve responded with a smile.

"Don't apologize. The master is waiting for you."

"Alright, let me go see him."

Kisia took Maeve to where Cecil Klisis was residing. It resembled that of a large library building. Maeve had been away from Venus for many years. In fact, she

was ordered to leave as soon as Venus was taken over by Cecil. Thus, all the changes Venus went through, she missed all of it.

Taking a good look at the library-like structure, she whistled. "This is new. I guess he's in there, huh?"

Kisia gave her a nod.

"And knowing him, I should go there alone."

Kisia nodded again.

Inside of the library was dark, too dark for ordinary eyes. ESPs would have no problem however since they had 6th sense. The interior was exquisitely decorated and the material was wood, it wasn't typical synthetic wood; it was the real thing. There were also countless wooden shelves full of physical books. The area was lit with few candles here and there, creating dark but soothing atmosphere overall.

Maeve eventually found Cecil mediating in a corner of a room.

Beaming a smile, Maeve greeted him. "Hello, sir. It's been a long time."

"Indeed," Cecil answered without neither opening his eyes nor moving.

"This is what you do nowadays?"

"I have nothing to do apparently."

Maeve giggled. "I guess you are letting them do all the works?"

"That has been my intent, just as I sent you away to do your own thing."

Maeve explained to Cecil everything that had been going on, and Cecil remarked a statement.

"Milky way to our home," He said quietly and gravely.

"What's that?"

"I recall an enthusiastic young man who wanted to change Smuggler's Den. I referred him to Sae for further guidance. I suspect that this is his deed. 'Milky way to our home' was what he wanted to accomplish."

"What does that mean?"

"He was a clever young man. If he foresaw the outcome of this event correctly, the meaning of 'Milky way to our home' will be realized soon."

"So you won't tell me."

"I don't need to. It will be explained eventually with time being."

"Can we stop them?"

"I am afraid not. It is too late. They should have been stopped at their national border."

"Anything we can do, anything at all?" Maeve knew little about the whole event, but as a merchant who covered a large area, she had seen glimpse of the hardships that people of Smuggler's den were going through. And the current treatment they were receiving wasn't deserved at all, she felt.

Cecil responded after a short pause, "I've ordered Kisia to do something although what I've ordered to do has nothing to do with the refugees themselves."

Maeve sighed deeply. "You never make things easy, sir."

"For me, life is boring as it is. I try to make things ... more interesting for my own sanity."

On Earth, in front of the Ark, the political heart for United Sol, had been a subject of massive protests as of late. Tens of thousands of people were protesting against Gvew's decision to shoot the incoming refugees down.

They demanded Gvew to reconsider his initial decision and accept the refugees.

"Who leaked the words..."

Gvew was looking at the crowds from his office.

"I thought I said the decision was to be confidential..."

Yakov was in the office as well.

"I apologize, sir, but we are losing the control."

Gvew had grown many white hairs ever since he became the president. Before he became the president, he didn't have a single white hair but now one third of his hair was white.

"How is Emuel doing?"

"He has sent an encrypted message to all available ships to attack the freighter fleet."

Gvew groaned, making no further statement other than silently staring down at the lively protesters outside of the Ark.

Yakov took a moment to speak carefully. "Sir, there is a disturbing rumor going around."

Gvew sighed deeply. "What is it now?"

"It is from a reliable source. It is about your assassination."

Gvew snickered. "For real? Well, that took long enough."

"Sir, it is from a reliable source."

"I am no fool. I've dragged my presidency for too long," Gvew remarked.

“Sir, you mean...”

Gvew nodded. “Yes, I have no intention of dragging this anymore. I will resign once this is over.”

Later that day, he declared that he’d be resigning once the current situation was over. The announcement earned him some popularity among politicians because what Gvew basically meant was that he was going down with the huge responsibility alone.

Everyone knew that there were only two choices in the current situation. One was to shoot the refugees down, and the other was to accept them. And neither was a good choice. What his resignation meant was that he was going down with the responsibility nobody wanted to take. In simpler terms, he was making himself a scapegoat and spare all other Ark members from the heavy burden.

There were still protestors outside however. Gvew gazed at them as he sighed deeply in his office alone.

He mumbled, “What are they protesting for? What they are doing is pointless. I think ... I am finally starting to understand the Crimson wizard a little bit more now.”

He had always criticized Cecil’ methods for being too inhumane; He had openly criticized. But looking at the protests, he had to wonder...

What they were protesting for, he wondered. Whether they protested or not, the decision wasn’t going to change. He made a choice and he decided to go down with it. He believed the decision he made was best for his nation.

Regardless, the protestors had a huge sign that said: They are people, too! Some smaller signs said Gvew was a murderer and so on.

“God...,” Gvew chuckled while looking down at them vaguely. “Cecil must have felt good when he took down protestors...”

Captain Willste led a small fleet who agreed with his view on the situation along the refugee fleet and protected them. They were currently in vicinity of Uranus. His actions had already been reported to Admiral Emuel.

A messenger frigate approached Willste’s fleet quickly. It opened a private channel to Willste’s ship as soon as he entered its range which Willste turned the conversation public so that his crews as well as his fellow captains could listen.

“I bring words from Admiral Emuel. Captain Willste, you are asked to step down. I suggest you comply.”

It was expected. Therefore, Willste wasn’t shocked or anything.

“I will step down when I need to. But not right now,” he firmly replied.

The messenger raised his voice. “Captain, you are being court-martialed. You do not have a choice. Step down.”

“I do not think so!” Willste talked back fiercely. “I joined the navy to serve and protect people. I did not join just to murder millions of innocent people!”

The messenger looked troubled. He knew exactly what was going through Willste’s head. However, that didn’t change the fact that he disobeyed a direct order and even went against it.

“Captain,” The messenger’s voice softened. “I understand you. However, I suggest you to look at where you stand now. You’ve disobeyed a direct order and went further to insure that the direct order could not be carried out. You shou-”

Willste raised his hand to stop the messenger from talking.

“I do know where I stand. And I do also know possible circumstances of my actions,” He said out loud.

“Then please, stand down.”

“Because I do know the circumstances, I cannot stand down. Once I stand down, I won’t be able to help them.”

The messenger realized that Willste had absolutely no intention to stand down. He quietly stared at him for a moment before he closed the channel and left the scene.

Willste made an announcement to his own crewmen and to his fellow captains.

“You’ve heard that. Those who do not want to get into troubles, you should leave now. Otherwise, your military career will be over. I won’t stop you even if you leave because I understand your concern completely.”

Few vessels left the fleet. And few escape pods had been launched from Willste’s ship as well.

Among ships that left, there was Kain’s fleet.

“This is as far as we can go, Suu,” He said through a channel.

Suu didn’t say a word, silently admitting that he was correct.

Kain added, “If there is anyone who can help Captain Willste and the refugees, I reckon the Crimson wizard could.” He shrugged as soon as he said so. “But I don’t think he will meddle in.”

“... How can you be so sure?”

“Just a gut feeling.”

Suu felt utterly powerless. She joined the navy to make a name for herself and eventually become an admiral. This was an occasion she had to take for renown. Yet, the reality dictated that she had to flee.

On the other hand, Kain joined the navy to feed himself. He had been out of job for years and had been barely managing to make a living off occasional freelancer works. For Kain, as long as he could feed himself and not worry about credits, he was fine. Still, he wasn't a man without sense of moral which was the reason he joined up with Capt. Willste for a short while.

Unfortunately for Emuel, Capt. Willste's behavior placed him in a trouble.

At first, he considered this opportunity as his chance to gain presidency of United Sol. However, the whole issue was becoming more troublesome than what it initially let on. With arrival of news that the refugee fleet had just passed Uranus and that they were heading directly to Jupiter which was Emuel's territory, he was given very little choices and time. He was being pressured by various organizations to make a choice. Some wanted him to let them pass. Some wanted him to shoot them down.

And Captain Willste's revolt made some question Emuel's leadership.

"Grrrrr."

Emuel growled on his bridge as he was looking down on a tactical screen where it was broadcasting current location of the refugee fleet.

Aroan entered, bearing bad news that his messenger came back empty-handed.

He had only few days before the refugees would enter vicinity of Saturn, and then a week before they would enter vicinity of Jupiter.

“If I shoot them down, I will lose so much popularity that the next presidency will be out of question!” He exclaimed. Despite of having assembled a sizable fleet, he was never going to be involved in shooting down the refugees. He was hoping to manipulate others to do the dirty work which unfortunately did not work.

Aroan sighed and replied, “If you let them pass, they will question your leadership.”

In other words, it was lose-lose situation. Still, he had to make a choice regardless.

“The fleet will be passing right by the station,” Aroan added, remarking right after, “Whoever planned the course knew what he was doing.”

Emuel shut his eyes and remained silent, silently growling meanwhile.

Yakov had just reported to Gvew that the refugees had just passed Uranus and was on course to Saturn.

“Are they passing by Saturn or are they just passing through the zone?”

“According to computer projection, the fleet will be passing right by. Not only that, it has been revealed that they will pass right through Jupiter also.”

Gvew laughed pleasantly. It had been a while since he had a good laugh and said, “It will be lose-lose situation for Emuel. He deserves it.”

“Indeed, sir, but I have a concern.”

“Which is?”

“If he lets them pass, the burden will fall on you.”

Emuel was known as the snake. His nickname was an outcome of his sneaky methods. Gvew had little doubts that Emuell would shoot them down. There were just too much at the stake for Emuel. Gvew figured that it was probably

better for Emuel to let them go. That way, at least, he wouldn't be called the murderer of the century.

Captain Willste had been constantly trying to communicate with the refugees, but his efforts were fruitless. He wanted to make them change their course. It became apparent that the fleet was sailing directly toward Jupiter assault station. He had approximately ten days before they'd enter Jupiter.

"Captain," His comm. officer reported. "Still nothing, sir. It's safe to assume that they either don't have any communication systems or have no intention to talk to us."

Groaning, Willste replied. "Or maybe, no one's on their bridges."

He was right. The Mammoth freighters had empty bridges. Everything was automated.

"Let's board a freighter and see how it is down there," Willste suggested, only to find his solution to be a lot harder than he expected soon after.

"What do you mean the hatches are unstable?"

When the refugee fleet was passing by Freedom colony, they had been assisted by the colony for medical and repairs on ventilation systems. During that time, the hatches became worn out. The hatches were never built strong to begin with and, after just few usages, it had apparently become unstable and were on verge of being collapsed.

"How could a ship dock on it without a hatch?"

Willste's question went unanswered. Then an idea hit him hard.

“Don’t tell me that the ship was designed so intentionally?!”

If there was no hatch, it was still possible to create a hole on hull. However, the Mammoth freighters were proved to be very fragile. A hull breach on a wrong spot could be catastrophic, resulting uncontrolled decompression and eventually destroying hull integrity. And if a freighter went down, so would life of eight hundred thousand civilians.

The risk was simply too great to even attempt a hull breach.

“God damn it...”

After another moment, he came up with another idea.

“Can we hack it?”

He wanted to hack into freighter’s system and alter their course. It was a sensible idea, thus his crewmen started to work on it, only to find out that their systems were on a read-only memory without any kind of random access memory.

“That’s ridiculous!” Willste uttered. “No ship can run on a ROM!”

He was correct. A ship’s computer would need to make thousands of data alterations per minute in order to work correctly. There could be only one exception where a ROM based vessel would work. It would be a ship with a completely pre-calculated course. Even that would be dangerous since universe was always changing. Even escape pods did not use ROM. A loose asteroid might be in path. Random debris might be in path. It was simply too risky to set a completely pre-defined course.

But they were there. Willste and others could think of only one reason for their impractical system.

It was meant to be.

Willste was on a crossroad. Realizing the inevitable outcome, he became scared. Furthermore, there was very little chance to save them if not at all. His own life was at risk at the moment as well. He never intended to risk his life for the cause. He did risk his career, but he wasn't willing to die for it.

He wondered if it was too late to go back. He wondered if he could still surrender and get it over with.

Meanwhile, Emual had finally come up with a plan. He decided to take out Willste. He placed a large bounty on him and ordered all captains to take him out no matter what the cost may be. "The cost" was the refugee freighters. Emuel wanted a fight to break out between Willste and others and hoped that the freighters would get involved in battles.

The bounty was seventy million credits; it was an unbelievable amount. The bounty was huge enough to make enough captains blinded morally. And it was the largest bounty ever to exist in the history.

Just as the freighters passed by Saturn, Willste's fleet encountered a group of rouge vessels. Their ship signatures were erased illegally.

"Captain Willste! Prepare to die!" They announced as they approached. They were captains of United Sol. However, they were not legally allowed to take on any kind of bounty missions. Therefore, they resulted to becoming rouge captains.

At this time, Willste had no idea that he had a bounty on his head.

"What's this about?" Willste demanded. "Rogue captains in the heart of Sol?!"

"We are not rouges!"

"What the hell are you then?!"

They stopped responding and initiated fire. They didn't specifically target at Willste's fleet. They just fired in frontal arc as if they wanted to make a point. Few shots were hit at a freighter.

"What do you think you are doing?!" Willste shouted. "There are hundreds millions of people in there!"

The shot freighter started to decompress rapidly and violently. Its outer hull started to crumble in pressure. The gigantic Mammoth freighter started to deform violently and countless something started to pour out of crushed hull.

"That's... people!" Willste's worst fear had come true. The freighters were indeed too fragile. "Fucking imbeciles!"

The rouge ships seemed to have paused as well after realizing circumstances of their actions. However, soon they resumed firing.

"Fire back! Kill them!" Willste raged.

The battle ended in Willste's favor and the rouge vessels were completely wiped out. However, a freighter was destroyed in progress. Eight hundred thousand lives were lost.

Frozen corpses were floating around the completely decompressed and destroyed freighter. Ship's scanner was registering frozen corpses as ice debris and the corpses shined brightly upon sunshine.

"My, God... What have they done..."

Emuel was being criticized for lack of leadership in the case. Indeed, his fleet never saw any sort of actions nor did they even approach the refugees. All he had been doing was keep a distance and send out empty orders.

ENN (Earth News Network), VNN (Venus News Network), and even the Ark started to criticize him. Focus of attention was quickly swaying from Gvew and onto Emuel instead. It was the least turn of event he wanted.

“Do make sure that no one will find out that the bounty was placed by me,” Emuel spoke to Aroa who was sitting by his side on a couch in the captain’s quarter.

“It is easy to erase traces, but we won’t be able to stop suspicions,” She responded.

“That’s fine as long as there is no proof.”

“What shall we do about the refugees?”

If there was no one watching, he would have shot them down without hesitation, but apparently billions of eyes were on this event. He could still care less normally. However, he wanted the next presidency of United Sol, which meant that he had a reputation to look after.

“I am going to be honest here. I haven’t got a damn idea.”

“Your order was to shoot them down,” She reminded him.

“Which would mean I will lose my next presidency.”

“But if you don’t shoot them down, they will question your leadership and loyalty.”

He gritted his teeth and cursed Gvew. “He got me good there..., that bastard,” He added.

“How about abandoning the mission? Let’s declare that you care for them too much to shoot them down and have to step down from this mission.”

“I want a better excuse than that.”

“But, honey, I don’t see any other way. Abandoning the mission will give you the least damage.”

Are there really no other way?

Are there really no other ways to save them?

Captain Willste and his small fleet had been battling rouge ships constantly while they made their way across Saturn. Number of rouge ships decreased considerably as they approached Jupiter. Few more freighters were lost in addition.

Willste signed in his captain’s chair. “Great, we are approaching Jupiter. I suppose I can’t pass there alive.” He had already assumed that it was Emuel who placed the bounty on him. It wasn’t rocket science to figure out.

“Still no communication from the refugees?”

Comm. Officer responded. “No, sir.”

At this point, Willste was positive that the freighters were completely automated. He was also positive that whoever was behind the scene foresaw how this would turn out.

He gazed vacantly at a corner of main screen where it was displaying the freighter fleet.

“Are there ... really no way to save those folks?”

“More rouge ships approaching, captain.”

Willste's fleet had nineteen vessels under his command. They all disobeyed Emuel's direct order and therefore they could not go back to their original post. In other words, they were stuck with Willste until the end. But none of them had regrets for their twisted fate, for they all chose to remain. None of the ships had gone down due to rouge vessels, but few vessels were heavily damaged and were unable to function as warships. Internal repairs could only go so far. Those ships needed a repair station, which wasn't an option at the moment.

Rouge ships had come in small numbers always.

"I also detect two civilian vessels, captain. Its signature says it's from ENN." The officer soon added, "The other is from VNN."

The media was on the case which was adventurous for Willste. Rogue ships no longer opened channels in presence of the media but still did attack him.

Neither ENN nor VNN had proper authorities to make a direct contact with Willste who was to be court-martialed. However, VNN contacted Willste anyway after the battle was over.

"Captain, the VNN vessel is trying to make a contact. Should I put it through? Voice only."

He was pleasantly surprised. He figured the media would not contact him directly, at least not this soon. He nodded in response.

"Hello, Captain Willste. This is Edith from Venus News Network."

Edith's popularity was on rise on Venus. She wasn't quite there yet, but she was getting there. After her hit documentary show, "Averno & Edith's adventure", she became renowned for taking risky tasks. She originally partook in the first Earthian-Venusian war. Therefore, it was no surprise that she was again selected for this task.

Willste cleared his throat and said, "You do realize that it is illegal for you to make a contact with me?"

Edith responded. "I don't care. There is no boundary for journalism, at least not to me and VNN."

"You could get killed for this."

"I died once. If I die once more, so be it."

Willste felt determination from Edith's voice and decided to trust her. He told her what had happened so far on a public channel. Everyone could hear it. He also told her about the freighters in full detail, even sending scanned data to her shuttle.

"So, according to you, so far seven freighters had been shot down," Edith concluded. "That's ... a lot of people."

Willste added, "Someone placed a large bounty on me, but it wasn't to get rid of me. It was to get rid of the refugees. I don't have any proof as to who is behind this, but you can guess. In fact, anyone with a brain should be able to make a fairly accurate guess."

Emuel, it was although no one said it out loud. Willste continued.

"We will soon enter vicinity of Jupiter. If we can pass Jupiter, we will soon approach Mars."

"You should be able to pass Jupiter. In fact, I can bet you that it will be safer to pass through the lion's nest," Edith said. And what she said clearly hinted that Emuel was behind the scene. "I cannot help you with your battles, but I will make sure that your deeds will not go unnoticed."

Willste snickered and said, "ENN, you guys should be ashamed."

VNN quickly created two-hour documentary-style news for Capt. Willste and the refugees. It included all information provided by Willste. Furthermore, Juun of the Knights from Andromeda union provided VNN with more information, and Sae from Freedom colony chipped in for even more information.

Citizens of United Sol now knew that the refugees were from Smuggler's Den of Andromeda union, and that almost all population from that zone had arrived in Sol system. 600 millions of people were out there and that a small portion had already perished. This educational program was continued to be aired on Venus meanwhile it was blocked by United Sol within an hour of airing. However, an hour was enough for people to realize something was going on and contact Venus for full program.

Emuel was being criticized beyond control. Even without any proof that he was behind placing a large bounty on Willste, people didn't care for proof because it sounded logically correct that he'd place the bounty.

Emuel was amused both positively and negatively. He no longer had any luxury of sitting back. Furthermore, Willste and the refugees had already entered Jupiter.

He grinned and put his arm around Aroan's shoulder.

"I admit that I lost. I am abandoning this mission. And I am letting them pass Jupiter."

"How about the bounty?"

"Leave it be. If I take that away now, that will just prove that I was behind it."

"Are you willing to pay the bounty?"

"Well, fuck, it looks like I have to."

Aroan announced that Emule abandoned the mission given by Gvew on his behalf. It didn't come as shock to anyone, but it did leave a big question mark on what Gvew will do next.

Gvew was giggling at this desk. He had just heard the announcement that Emuel had given up.

"Good news in such a long time," He said out loud pleasantly. "Don't you agree?"

Yakov, however, was feeling down rather. His day as the top advisor at the Ark was numbered.

"Yes, sir. What will you do now then? The responsibility falls on you now."

"I've made my decision at the moment they entered Sol. We have to shoot them down."

Yakov originally had the same idea, but even for him, shooting down six hundred millions was too much.

"Are you sure about that, sir?"

Gvew noticed Yakov's change of heart. And it wasn't like he didn't experience moral dilemma, either.

"We have to do this, or our people will suffer."

"Father!" Devon entered the office violently. "You can't do this, father! You cannot kill those people!"

"Mind your manners, girl. Knock first," Gvew replied with a change of subject.

"Father!"

"Understand me, girl. Be on my side. If we do take them in, our economy will collapse and will remain so for a good ten years at least. Famine will kill more than six hundred millions."

“Why are you so determined that our economy will collapse? We can make it work!”

Devon continued to argue fiercely. Leaving them behind, Yakov left the office. When he was alone, a voice whispered from shadow.

“Do it before it is too late.”

He startled and looked around for any possible witness. Of course, there was none. Letting out of a relieved sigh, he responded, “Give me more time.”

“Very well, you’ve better do it. Else you will not be granted of the safe passageway.”

He gritted his teeth. “Fine.”

Yakov had a dream. It was to have a great empire on his palm. Although he realized he could never have that as he became an adult and realized the reality, he still found a way to come closer. He earned Gvew’s trust and became his advisor. He had done whatever he could to insure that Gvew’s presidency would last as long as possible so that he could have his golden time as long as possible.

All started to crumble down gradually. No matter what he did, nothing seemed to be working in Gvew’s favor. His rating within the Ark went down so rapidly that he proposed an idea of mass bribing just to keep his rating slightly above danger level. Economy of Sol was also in crisis. No matter what he did, nothing seemed to be working.

And this.

This event pulled the last straw. When he saw the report that six hundred millions were heading to Earth, he first thought that it was a horribly mistaken report. But it was soon confirmed that there were indeed six hundred millions coming toward Earth.

Why?

He wondered. No, he did not wonder why the refugees were making their ways toward Earth. He asked why such an event had to occur at this time, at this worst time. Gvew's regime was never going to end pretty, he knew. But still he was confident that his regime could last much longer if few things clicked and went his way. Alas, nothing ever clicked and nothing really went for Gvew or his favor.

He had made a lot of enemies during his days of being Gvew's top advisor, and he was absolutely certain that he would never survive a month when Gvew would step down. In fact, he had a plan to escape to Andromeda union when Gvew would step down, but that wasn't for any time soon in his grand scheme of things. For all he knew, he foresaw Gvew's presidency to last at least a hundred years more.

He had to hurry. He had to secure his escape path. That was when someone approached him and proposed him a secure escape route if he would assassinate Gvew.

He did hesitate at first. After all, he had been serving Gvew for more than a hundred years. He wasn't a type of person who would die for his master, but he had a certain degree of loyalty for his master. But then he had to also look for himself, and there wasn't enough time to properly secure an escape route in such a short period of time.

He had no choice, thus he accepted the deal.

The offer came from Kisia, a high ranking officer of Venus dictatorship. Normally, he would never even bother to listen such a risky deal, but time was short and the situation was desperate. Still, he hesitated. After all, Venus was nemesis of Gvew's regime.

When he asked why he was asked to assassinate him to insure a secure escape route, he was answered by Kisia: "His regime has gone long enough. It needs to be replaced. I am giving you the chance to end it since you were one of those who started it. Think of it as taking responsibility for what you've started"

He accepted the deal and was informed that Kisia would spread rumors of the assassination. He just had to wait for the right moment. For him to successfully escape unnoticed, the best moment would be when there is another event that'd draw everyone's attention. He was waiting for one.

Willste had unusually peaceful time while his fleet and the refugees were passing through Jupiter. His peaceful time ended as soon as they left vicinity of Jupiter and headed for Mars. The battles became more fierce and frequent, and Willste started to lose ships in his fleet. However, existing captains of United Sol who had the same view of Willste started to join. However, at the same time, number of rouge ships grew in numbers as well.

By the Willste's fleet and the refugees arrived at vicinity of Mars, already over ten freighters had perished. They were casualties of battles; they were never directly attacked. Lose beams and missiles unfortunately stroke them down.

Millions of frozen corpses started to become noticeable with sun's rays. It started to shine like a path where Willste's fleet had battled through. Meanwhile, his fleet had grown to fifty six.

The refugees and Willste's fleet were welcomed by Mars' defense fleet led by Eran Gro.

Eran Gro's fleet of twenty five hundred vessels welcomed them at the border.

"I guarantee a safe passage while you are here," Eran declared. "You will be protected. Should you have any requests, Captain Willste, don't hesitate ask."

And Willste did not hesitate to ask for repairs and resupplies. Eran Gro duly complied.

Thanks to the presence of Eran Gro's fleet, Willste's fleet and the refugees were completely safe while they were passing Mars.

"You are almost at Earth, Capt. Willste."

Eran Gro and Willste were on a private line in their quarters.

"Yes, it took a long time."

"Can I be honest with you though, Captain?"

Narrowing his eyes, Willste gave him a nod.

"You are not going to get a warm welcome at Earth."

Willste figured as much. It was brutally and painfully obvious.

Eran took Willste's silence as yes and continued, "Well, you look like you are still going."

"I would stop if the refugees would, but they are not stopping."

Silence filled their quarters until it was broken by Willste.

"I have a request to make, Admiral Gro."

"Yes, go ahead. I am not an admiral though"

"I have a family. I am sending their location now. I want you to send them my will."

Yes, there wasn't going to be a warm welcome at Earth. Ever since Emuel had quit his mission, no further orders were sent by Sol central command. It was as if peace before storm.

When Willste's fleet and the refugees left vicinity of Mars, his fleet had increased to ninety six vessels. With that many in numbers, no further rouge ships attempted to attack the fleet.

Meanwhile, Gvew used his exclusive order to gather ships. It was an emergency situation and he did not have to ask the house to pass a bill to gather ships. The Ark house politicians could have stopped Gvew but, with his impending resignation, they were no longer willing to get in his way; he was free to do whatever he wanted.

He had gathered over one thousand vessels from Earth defense fleet which was the only fleet that he could mobilize with an executive order. They were given an order to shoot any incoming vessels down. Some of captains had a problem with his order and left. Still, the fleet number exceeded one thousand.

Willste's fleet of ninety six vessels and remaining refugee freighters of seven hundred forty-something were approaching Moon. Willste could see Earth clearly from this distance. He could also clearly see a large fleet.

"They are sending warnings, sir. They are telling us not to approach."

He did not respond. The decision to stop wasn't up to him.

"The freighters?" He asked.

"The same as usual, maintaining their course and speed, captain."

He closed his eyes and recalled his family for the last time. He did not expect to come this far, but he was here. And he was certain that he would perish soon.

"Open a channel to my crewmen as well as to my fleet."

"Open, sir."

“This is Captain Willste. We are almost at Earth, and I am sure all of you see the fleet ahead. They outnumber us by ten times. We stand no chance. However, I will still go. Meantime, for those who are having a second thought, please leave now. This is the last chance. If you tag along, you will die.”

A person from Willste’s bridge stood up and saluted at him.

“I am sorry, Captain, but this is as far as I think I can do, sir...”

He beamed a gentle smile at him. “It’s no problem. There is no need you to feel sorry or anything. Go now.”

“I... I am sorry, sir!” He ran out.

Another person stood up and ran out after saluting. Another ran out after another...

There were only two people left at Willste’s bridge.

“Thank you, you two, for committing your life for this.”

His fleet of ninety six had become reduced down to twenty one after his announcement.

And they passed Moon.

“Captain, they are sending their last warning,” One of two remaining officers on Willste’s bridge informed him. “They are contacting us as well.”

He shrugged. “I don’t think I have much to say or even listen, but sure, why not.”

A desperate voice sounded from the channel.

“This is your last warning. Withdraw. I repeat this is your last warning withdraw. If you enter vicinity of Earth, we will fire you. Captain Willste, withdraw and you will be forgiven.”

“Sure, I can withdraw, but the refugees will not.”

“Don’t be ridiculous. I was informed that you were leading the refugees.”

Sighing, Willste uttered, “Fucking bureaucrats....” Then he closed the channel. “No point in talking to them. They are horribly misinformed. They think I am doing this.”

In presence of VNN shuttles led by Edith, Earth defense fleet opened fire upon Captain Willste’s fleet and the refugee fleet as they approached Earth orbit.

“Captain, we won’t hold even for a minute!”

Willste stood up from his captain’s chair. “Evacuate!” He commanded and ran out of his bridge to enter a fighter craft. Despite of fighters being phased out, he still kept a single fighter craft as a memento. He certainly did not expect to use the fighter craft like this however.

His ship was almost pretty much empty at this point. He had only eight crewmen total in his vessel. He rushed into a fighter craft and launched into space while others made into their escape pods. Just as he made a safe distance from his vessel, his cruiser exploded.

Then He saw the bright blue planet Earth, the ultimate home of all human beings.

“But it stinks now,” Willste said to himself in cockpit. “It stinks of dead.”

He saw the overview of the battle. It wasn’t ... even a battle. Earth defense fleet was simply slaughtering defenseless civilians.

“This event should forever be remembered...”

He saw a freighter that was ahead of others and was approaching Earth at rapid speed. It was being fired heavily but somehow it was going on. He could see its hull plates being shattered into pieces and numerous explosions occurring all over as well as frozen bodies being pouring out. It seemed the freighter was tougher than others and still kept heading forward while falling literally apart.

He chose to attach the fighter to the freighter. While attempting to approach the freighter, his fighter craft was shot numerous times, but still he managed to land on the freighter and securely attached his craft onto the freighter.

It was when he noticed a public channel was being transmitted.

“Captain Willste! Where are you! Turn on your beacon so that we can locate you!”

He recognized the voice. It was Edith from VNN.

He responded to the public channel.

“Hello, Miss or Mrs. I am still here, alive but not kicking.”

He beamed a smile at himself as he said so.

“Captain, you are alive! Where are you?” Edith’s voice was desperate.

“That doesn’t matter now, does it?”

The freighter he had attached himself onto was being shot as if rain of light was being hit on them. It was amazing that the freighter was holding on still.

Edith exclaimed desperately, “Captain, save yourself! I can take you to Venus!”

Willste had to grin. He was grateful that someone was caring about him in his last moment amid the chaos.

“Thanks for the offer, but I have to decline. I am going down with these people.” He realized he was on a public channel where it could be heard by anyone and added, “I want people to realize that I was not leading the refugees. They came here on their own will to reach their spiritual home, Earth. I don’t know what

those cursed bureaucrats told you, but there are some hundred million people right here right now being slaughtered to oblivion.”

The freighter was going down. It lost its balance and started to explode, but Willste had his craft attached to the freighter still.

His cockpit window was already shattered into pieces. He was in a space suit and was safe for the moment.

“I see Earth now...” He vacantly stated.

Edith cried out, “Captain! Please! I beg you! Please turn on your beacon! Please!”

“For some reason, it’s not blue... It’s so... dar-“

The refugee fleet came as close as just two clicks of Earth’s orbit before the last Mammoth freighter was shot down. Over fifty five hundred millions of frozen bodies were scattered across in vicinity of Earth. The frozen bodies could be also seen from Earth surface as well. It looked like countless stars on the sky at night.

Not many Sol citizens were able to comprehend the gravity of the situation as well as amount of deaths. Few who could comprehend screamed murder but they were mostly ignored.

Gvew was signing last sheets of papers before he would resign today. Yakov entered quietly after knocking the door once which was already open.

“Oh, it’s you.” He didn’t even look who was there. He just knew for some reason.

“I am doing the last papers. I will be with you shortly.”

Yakov pulled out a laser pistol from his pocket and fired at Gvew’s head at once. Gvew lingered on for over a decade with his fragile regime but the end was short

and uneventful as he silently collapsed on his desk with blood pouring out from top of his head.

A figure just appeared in the office. It was Kisia. She checked to make sure that Gvew was dead.

“Well done,” She said. “Come with me. I will get you out of Sol system.”

Yakov was on a list of trusted officers. Therefore, there were no security measures to stop him. It was hours later that Gvew was found dead by Devon, his daughter.

“Father!” Devon cried out as she approached Gvew’s cold body. There was a clear shot wound on top of his head. “Father...”

He had been dead for some time. There was no way to revive him. Devon didn’t have time to think about suspects because she had to look for her life. Her father had lots of enemies. As soon as he was found dead, the Ark fell into chaos, and there were obvious movements to get rid of Devon as well.

She found herself powerless to do anything without her father. She was unable to leave Earth or even the Ark. This was when she was confronted by Kisia.

“Who are you?” Rightfully so, Devon was very defensive. She had already encountered two assassination attempts so far. She was expecting more attempts. Cca Volant was with her and he quickly stood in front of her to guard her. Ironically for Devon, he was the only one she could trust at the moment.

“I am Kisia. You may have heard of me.”

Indeed, she had. In fact, she recalled her face from the tournament few years ago.

“I offer you a safe passage out of here,” Kisia suggested.

It was quite a charming offer which was completely unexpected.

“What’s the catch? There has to be for something like this,” Devon asked.

“Can we even trust her?” Cca Volant wondered.

Kisia beamed a grin at them. “There is no catch.”

“I don’t buy it. Why would you help me? If anything, you should be trying to kill me right now.”

“Why should I? Because your father clashed with my master few times?”

“My father hated the Crimson wizard.”

“That has little to do with what I am offering you. You can refuse my offer and get eventually assassinated if that is what you wish.”

“I don’t want to leave here until I find out and catch whoever murdered my father!”

“The assassin has already left Earth.”

Devon narrowed her eyes because Kisia sounded as if she knew who it was. And when she was about to ask, Kisia went ahead.

“It’s Yakov, your father’s top advisor,” She claimed.

Devon was shocked. She could not believe what she had just heard.

“What?! No way! You are lying!”

“Where is he then? Have you seen him?”

Devon couldn’t answer right away because she had indeed not seen him for a while. She was actually expecting to work with him to fight their way out of the Ark but he never showed up.

“Don’t you wonder why there wasn’t any alarm or anything?” Kisia continued on logically. “Whoever assassinated your father had a high enough security clearance; it was an insider job.”

Devon didn't want to trust her words but it seemed she had little choices and time.

"H, how do you even know this?!" Devon demanded an answer but she soon realized. "Again, how do you know this?!" Then she pointed at her. "Were you behind this?!"

Kisia, without showing any kind of emotion on her face, replied promptly. "I was ordered to finish what your father started."

"Don't you play with words!" Devon exclaimed. "Just yes or no!"

Kisia, again, replied promptly. "Yes." But she quickly added, "You have very little choices. The longer you stay here, the lesser chance of your survival."

She gritted her teeth in rage. She found herself pitiful for having to rely on her nemesis to survive. But indeed she had little choices. In fact, she had none.

"Lower your weapon, Cca Volant," Devon told him after a long sigh. Although Kisia openly admitted that she was behind her father's assassination, she was level-headed enough at the moment to realize that her father may have been killed by someone else regardless. For the moment, it wasn't time for revenge. It was time to retreat and survive the day. Thus, she chose to survive for the moment.

Gvew's assassination was viewed rather positively by ENN, and people of Sol voiced that he went down with the heavy responsibility of saving United Sol. No one could argue that, if they accepted the refugees, economy of Sol would experience a great crisis for decades and inevitable famine for years which might have resulted death of more than six hundred million.

In that sense, Gvew was considered to be a hero. On the other hand, some argued that he chose an easy way out which indicated that he was not assassinated but committed suicide. Either way, his presidency was over, and they never found out who assassinated him. And his assassination kept a record

unbroken; it was that no United Sol president had ever resigned. Gvew was going to be the first but he never got to resign. He was assassinated.

With Gvew's regime over, there had to be a new president. There were two candidates but Emuel had to dismiss himself over the suspicions that he was the one who ordered the assassination which left Fraser being the sole candidate, and with the Bau's backup, he became the new president of United Sol with ease. And with Fraser installed as the next president, the Bau controlled the Ark once again.

The tragedy at Earth was later called "Milky way to our home". Hundreds of millions of frozen bodies eventually spread out from vicinity of Earth and formed what looked like a path. Whenever sun's ray would be upon them, the frozen bodies would shine and would look like a path to Earth. The bodies were eventually collected for burial. It was a slow progress that took a decade to collect all the bodies.

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