

Fraser tries to push his own agenda for once.

[Shattered union arc] [10] [Cheap pride] [9648]

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The embargo that was placed on Moon -

There had been some who were beginning to feel that the embargo was the bad omen that started the downfall of United Sol. Uncontrollable budget deficit, losing more than 5 trillions a season, and national unrest had been pushing many Ark house members to very edge on a cliff

For Fraser, and to an extent Len, his sole reason that he sought to become the next President of United Sol was the embargo. His ultimate goal was to repeal it and then cut the tie between the Ark and the Bau council. He firmly believed that it was the first required step in order to heal deeply wounded economy of United Sol.

Repealing the embargo was certainly easier to be said than done. To understand why it was so hard for the Bau to simply repeal the embargo, one had to understand the history between Cecil and the Bau.

The Bau, despite being the most powerful clan in clusters, never could quite score anything against Cecil the Crimson wizard. Instead, whatever Cecil planned, the Bau had to literally watch him to do as he pleased.

It irked them deeply; it had irked them over a thousand years. Therefore, when a chance finally, at last, arrived to score one back against Cecil when he declared Venus independent, the Bau did not hesitate a second to place the embargo on

Venus.

In that perspective, one could see why the Bau was adamant not to repeal the embargo.

However, the reality was that the embargo hurt United Sol far more than it hurt Venus. Cecil foresaw the embargo and built Venus economy around it. On the other hand, the Bau had no answer to the turmoil that Moon had to experience due to the embargo.

On a positive side perhaps, the turmoil produced Admiral Kain. A counter argument would be that, if the Bau kept a positive relationship with Venus, Cecil would have assisted in repealing Juron.

Regardless -

Ever since Kain began Project Mothership, the tide had slightly shifted toward Fraser. Kain's growing powers, in addition to his recent marriage to Magenta Bau, gave Fraser some powers in the house.

There was only one person who was fully aware of Fraser's true agenda and that was Len who was also heavily against the embargo for different reasons. Ever since the announcement of Project Mothership, Fraser had ordered Len to silently gather supporters at the Ark in order to finally challenge and defeat the embargo.

Mathematically, in order to repeal the embargo, they needed 56% of YES from 2,700 member congress. The magic number they were after was 1512.

Out of 2,700 seats, 1,002 seats belonged to the Bau clan. 498 seats belonged to Moon. Almost all seats belonging to Moon were pro-Bau. Jupiter administration maintained 721 seats while planet Saturn was given remaining 479 seats.

Due to the Bau's dominance, it was unofficially understood that the Bau could push

near 2,500 votes if required.

The key word was "required". It'd require heavy bribing and whatnot that the Bau could normally be happy with just 1512 votes.

"Do you think it's possible?" Fraser said skeptically after doing a quick math on a blank paper. Len was standing in front of his desk.

"It's not going to be easy, sir. I think that's obvious from the start," Len stated.

"Is it possible though?"

"Anything is possible, sir."

"Len, stop being cryptic and give me an answer."

Sighing, Len took a moment to answer.

"Sir, you may be able to earn majority of votes from Saturn since you have Admiral Kain on your side. You will also gain some votes here and there from Earth and Moon. In short, the maximum amount of support you could obtain is probably in the region of 1,000 votes, give or take 20%."

That wasn't enough obviously.

Fraser argued, "People must know by now that the embargo is not working. There has to be a way to convince more house members."

The reality was that majority of house members lived comfortable lives. Basically, they were so rich that the problems of the poor was nothing but a distant whimper. Even Fraser was a billionaire whose wealth was inherited from his father.

"They are likely aware that the embargo isn't working for us," Len responded, "But I don't think they feel the heat to repeal it especially when the Bau council stands firm on this issue."

Growling and shaking head, Fraser sighed.

"I must try," He said with determination. "This is exactly why I wanted to become the President."

His ultimate goal was separating the Ark from the Bau council's grasp and he firmly believed that the first step to his goal was repealing the embargo.

"Sir, we must time this right," Len said, "We probably have only one chance to execute the plan."

"We cannot wait forever, Len. I realize that the timing is crucial which is why I want to push this now. With the Admiral, I have some powers."

Seeing that Fraser's mind was set, Len chose not to stop him.

"Very well, sir. What do you wish me to do?"

"I suppose lobbying is the first and easy step. Go out there, scout for possible votes and buy the votes. Let me know how it goes. While you are at it, I am going to talk to Gaer."

Giving him a firm nod, Len left the office.

Fraser determined that the matter was too important to be talked on a channel.

Therefore, he arranged for a private meeting with Gaer on a cruiser mid way from Earth and Saturn.

When they met and Fraser explained his agenda in person, Gaer seemed mildly shocked.

"I didn't see that coming," He remarked with half a grin. "If they knew that this was what you had in your mind, they would have never selected you to become the president."

"Indeed," Fraser agreed and explained, "But money talks. Buying the votes was as easy as handing candies to babies."

Gaer chuckled and said, "Repealing the embargo will certainly send a positive

message. To be honest though, I don't see it happening. But I will do what I can do."

"How many votes could I expect from Saturn?"

"If you could guarantee a victory, 100%. However, since I see you can't make the guarantee, some will hesitate, sir. Siding with you will mean standing against the Bau concil."

Fraser was unable to press for a more concrete answer.

While Len was busy lobbying for votes, Fraser set himself up for a brief speech during a house session. It was one of budget debate sessions where tensions used to run high. However, as decades went on without a clear solution to a balanced budget, house members started to simply not care.

In this specific session, there was no house members from Earth which was exactly why Fraser chose this session to begin his call to repeal the embargo.

"Greetings, everyone, I've come forth today to talk to you about the budget," said Fraser who started off brightly.

After initial speech pieces were laid out, he went on to the point.

"Let us be honest," He rased his voice at this point. "These budget debate sessions are pointless. In our minds, we all know the first step to solve our budget issues. I am absolutely positive that we all know the first step. Yet we are afraid of talking about it."

The members whispered to each other.

"We. Need. To. Repeal. It," Fraser declared boldly. "We cannot fix a problem without fixing its root of the problem."

He paused while members in the chamber were busy whispering to each other.

When murmur calmed down, he continued.

"I will be presenting a formal request to repeal it and I expect most of you here to agree with me. This isn't about a party's agenda. This is about the bigger picture, to save our nation from collapsing. We need to do this. This is long overdue."

Not long after he returned to his office, Abell showed up, looking clearly agitated.

"Mr. President, you know you cannot do this," He warned Fraser.

"I cannot do what, Mr. House speaker?"

Abell pointed at him. "You know what I am talking about. You are well aware of the council's stance on the matter."

Glaring, Fraser argued, "Abell, the council is a council. This is the Ark. The council is for the people of the Bau. The Ark is for the people of United Sol."

Unable to contain his temper any longer, Abell raised his voice. "You know damn well how it works around here! You are about to cross the line here, Mr. President. I've come here to tell you that the council is NOT pleased."

Then Abell rushed out at once.

Crossing his fingers and leaning his chin on them, Fraser closed his eyes slowly. Not a day went by without him thinking about repealing the embargo. He genuinely believed repealing the embargo was the first step to heal United Sol. And, once the embargo was repealed, the next step would be reducing or even cutting the council's grasp on the Ark by using momentum.

He felt that, once the Ark stood on its own feet, it would finally be able to govern properly.

He knew that it was going to be hard and frustrating. He knew.

However, the whole situation was beyond that. He found the whole affair... simply embarrassingly childish. The solution was right in front of their eyes. All they had to do is knock it down. Yet, they were trying to go around it.

"Even a 10 year-old child would govern better than these...," He grumbled in silence.

Pride... It was cheap pride they had. Fraser was absolutely confident that Cecil was never affected by the embargo, nor would he have cared.

Despite Abell's stern warning, Fraser pushed on with his agenda, formally requesting a vote to repeal the embargo. He firmly believed that majority of house members would come to reason. Furthermore, without giving a real go at the issue, he did not have a reliable way of accessing his future endeavors. In other words, whether he'd fail the vote or not, he had to do it at one point of his presidency.

And Len made his report.

"Not sure? What do you mean 'not sure'?"

Len reported that he wasn't certain of outcome, meaning he was unable to make any accurate prediction of votes.

"Those who did accept bribes gave me mixed signals, sir. Whether they were trying to deflect Bau's watchful eyes, I wasn't certain. Either way, they couldn't give me any sort of firm answers."

Growling, Fraser scratched his chin slowly. "So, you are saying that 56% of YES is unlikely."

"I am afraid so, sir."

"Is it possible to even tie?"

Under United Sol laws, a tie would mean 45% to 55%. A tied notion wasn't entirely dead since it'd move up to the senate. In fact, Fraser himself could vote in the senate. Therefore, he'd have an edge because, if it was still tied in the senate, Fraser's vote would become a tie breaker.

However, a tie wasn't his first choice because it'd take time for the notion to move

up to the senate. The longer it dragged, the more likely chance of interferences and sabotages. Basically, the best scenario was to win 56% of YES outright and get it over with in one full sweep.

"A tie is within reach, sir," Len claimed, "I would say we have about 60% of making it a tie."

1215 votes were needed to make it at least 45% which would be the bare minimum for a tie. It was absolutely achievable. However, a tie would mean sailing into uncharted waters. Neither Fraser nor Len could guess how the Bau council would react.

Regardless, they had to go for it. Before bringing it formally to the house chamber however, Fraser had to tackle votes from Jupiter. Len advised that gaining votes from Jupiter was the only way to guarantee a tie.

Ever since the second invasion by Andromeda union, Jupiter administrator Emuel had not visited the Ark. He had basically isolated himself to Jupiter station and kept a low profile.

Jupiter congress members, 721 of them, from Jupiter administration were still present as usual but they also kept low profiles and did not openly discuss anything. He summoned one of the representatives and asked him to deliver a message to Emuel which was a set of promises regarding his position as Jupiter administrator as well as his willingness to welcome him back to the Ark.

In truth, the promises were hollow since Fraser didn't exactly have the authority to uphold them. Every house members was aware of that fact. But it was also a fact that he was the president who was struggling for power. Although his message did not specify, his promises would be based on a condition that he won the war he had going on with the Bau council.

Emuel did get the message and discussed his options with Aroa and Aroan.

"Fraser will lose," Aroa spoke, "A tie will ultimately mean his loss."

Aroan agreed. "The best he can do is a tie. The Bau council will not sit by once it reaches the senate."

Crossing arms, Emuel groaned. After a moment of consideration, he told the twin, "So, you two agree that he will lose in the end. Should I give him the votes though?"

At this point, Aroa's opinion and Aroan's opinion differed.

"Doing nothing will yield you nothing," Aroa explained, "On the other hand, giving Fraser the votes will make him owe you a favor as well as the promises even if it cannot be kept ultimately."

Aroan disagreed. "I agree that doing nothing will yield you nothing and that's what you should do. You are fine where you are right now. You don't need to anger the Bau council over this."

Emuel grit his teeth slowly in sideways as he considered his options. For a while, he had been troubled by Kain's emergence. And, at this point, he was completely isolated. He expected Kain to fail securing Outer Sol and eventually ask him for an assistance, but that had never occurred, leaving him in limbo. However, as Aroan argued, his current position was fine as is. Despite of being isolated, he was certainly under no danger. At the same time, being stuck wasn't Emuel's way. He was nicknamed "the snake" for a reason.

"To Hell with the Bau," Emuel declared, "Kindly inform our President that he will have the votes."

Aroan didn't argue and simply obeyed the decision.

With the positive news, Len informed Fraser that it was going to be a tie most likely.

And, with everything set, Fraser decided to formally introduce the notion to an official house session.

As expected, Bau and Bau associated members gave him very cold glares.

Additionally, Abel was clearly fuming over the matter. Ignoring glares for over a thousand people, Fraser gave a short speech on the notion.

"I've believed, since the beginning, that repealing the embargo is the first step to heal our broken economy. Moon has been in downfall for 50 years and unemployment rate is over 35% according to the latest data. Populace has been smuggling themselves out and more than 30% of its total population is officially missing. If we do not fix Moon first, there is no way that we can fix our economy as whole."

Taking a short pause, he addressed the crowd in the chamber. It was silent with some members whispering to each other.

"Therefore, I bring forth this notion to you and I hope you will do the right thing. The embargo needs to be repealed."

As he stepped down from the stage, the chamber remained dead silent.

The house speaker, Abel, stepped onto the stage. Without saying much, he declared to start voting on the notion which Fraser had brought forth.

And, without further ado, the voting started which was as simple as clicking YES or NAY on a screen on their desk. The voting ended in less than a minute amid uneasy silence.

The result on "Repeal United Sol-Venus embargo" was ...

Earth, 1002 seats = 1002 NAY

Moon, 498 seats = 221 YES / 277 NAY

Jupiter, 721 seats = 698 YES / 23 NAY

Saturn, 479 seats = 299 YES / 180 NAY

With 1218 YES, the repeal was tied. It had 3 more votes from the absolute minimum required for a tie which was 1215.

And, although a tie wasn't Fraser's first choice, it was nevertheless a victory for him at this point.

However, there was no congratulation from Len when they met up in his office.

"The senate will be almost impossible to crack, sir," Len noted while he went through a list of senate members on a datapad.

The 500-member senate was consisted of 469 Bau members. The senate itself was more of a retirement home for aging Bau bureaucrats where they'd still get paychecks for doing absolutely nothing.

The last time the senate had any job to do was during the 2nd invasion by Andromeda union and all they did was a vote to assemble and mobilize Earth defense fleet.

"They should be susceptible to bribes though, shouldn't they? Normally, they don't get bribed at all," Fraser pointed out.

Len agreed but also argued, "True, sir, but they are generally loyal Bau members, sir. They are more like to listen to the council than to us, especially matters concerned their pride."

"Cheap pride, you mean...," Fraser whispered to himself and then told him, "Open the wallet regardless. Let's see how many votes we can get."

Len did not see that Fraser would get a tie in the senate and Fraser also understood his chances.

The Bau council remained silent over Fraser's push to repeal the embargo, and a formal voting session was held to repeal the embargo in the senate in a matter of days. Ordinarily, it'd take longer but Fraser pushed it hard to happen faster.

Everything was rather uneventful until an hour before the voting when Len heard of an announcement from the Bau council that anyone who'd side with the vote would be expelled from the clan.

Just as Fraser planned to give as little time as possible for the Bau council to act, the council did the same, giving merely an hour for Fraser to counteract.

And when the voting was held, its result was crystal clear.

21 Yes to 469 NAY

And so, Fraser's little adventure came to an end. However, Fraser would soon find out that his efforts weren't entirely in vain...

When Fraser's shuttle landed on a landing pad, it was getting dark. The landing pad was about a minute of walk from his manor. It was designed so that he'd get some bits of exercise.

His manor was surrounded by a forest and was void of any civilization in its vicinity. In fact, there wasn't even a road leading to outside of the manor. It was completely isolated.

With Len, Fraser took a casual walk toward his manor and, at one point, a group of four people appeared in front of them at which point, Len took out his energy blade and went on full alert.

"We mean you no harm, Mr. President," One of them claimed. They were in formal business attires and did not appear to be thugs. Their faces were shadowed.

"What is your business here?" Fraser calmly inquired.

"We are here to inform you that your efforts weren't in vain."

"My efforts?"

"Your efforts to stand against the poison."

Fraser caught on and demanded, "Who are you with?"

Ignoring Fraser's inquiry, the man continued on, "Only a fool would claim that the Ark is functional at this point. You did well against the odds."

"I ask again; who are you with?"

"We are someone like you who actually see the bigger picture. We are someone like you who are not deluded. Until now, we've had little presence at the Ark. You've done well in spite of your given situation and the subject you had to fight against.

We are here to inform you that you will have our votes in the future."

Lightly bowing, the four men walked into the forest and soon vanished.

Crossing arms and tapping his right foot, Fraser grumbled, "How many votes are they talking about?"

Lowering his guard, Len responded, "Four maybe?"

"Right... As if that's going to make any difference."

As for the Bau council, while they did contemplate impeachment for Fraser, they decided to stick with him for the time being. The reason to keep him was simple in concept. Admiral Kain and Saturn administrator Gaer were on his side. Even Jupiter administrator Emuel appeared to have a favorable stance on him. Therefore, it was in their best interest to keep Fraser in place for the sake of stability.

Fin