

Something to note. When this story was written back in 90s, I, for some reason, believed that planet Saturn was a barren planet. When I eventually found out that Saturn was actually a gas planet, it was years later and it was already too late. Numerous stories and lore were created for the planet to just erase the whole thing.

Therefore, Saturn in Two Clusters universe is a barren planet.

## [Shattered union] [2] [Karin Bau] [9603]

Rev 1.1

"Karin...", A female's voice resounded in darkness. Her voice was soft and yet grave. And then an image suddenly replaced the darkness. It was a scene where Karin was at front door of a house. He had a rather small travelling shoulder bag with him. It looked as if he was leaving for a journey or some sort.

Karin Bau said something, but it couldn't be heard.

The female who was at the door was covered by shadow, but her voice could be heard. Her mouth moved.

"I wish you good luck," She said with a sense of sorrow and regret.

Karin nodded and said something again and left the house at once.

"Karin...."

"Karin...."

Karin was having a nap on his desk in some kind of garage. Its door was wide open. A lot of unfinished machine parts were lying around. A female was trying to wake him up.

Karin let out of a groan and opened his eyes tiredly.

"The hell, who is it?" His sleepy voice indicated that he was obviously disturbed.

The female gathered her hands and jumped up and down weakly as if she was in joy.

"I've been looking for you."

"What....?" He raised his upper body from his desk and looked at the female. It was noon and the only light source in the place was sunshine from the wide front door. She was shadowed by the only light coming into the place.

"Who are you? And what do you want?" His voice was cranky. His sleep was disturbed and the female was talking weirdly. It was enough to get on his nerve. He stood up. Few machine parts that were on his lap fell, making sharp sounds upon impact on the ground. He glanced back to make sure his project was there.

"Ah....," The female sensed that Karin wasn't in good mood. "I- I am sorry if I disturbed you." she rushed to leave. Karin let out of a short sigh and grabbed her arm but let her go right away because he realized he was wearing a pair of dirty mechanic's gloves. It was already too late though. Her white shirt sleeve had black oil stains. He didn't say sorry. He wasn't just in mood. The female looked back at him for a second and rushed out.

Karin was vacantly standing there for a while to figure out what was going on.

"Good morning," Karin threw his greeting as he entered his department. He was apparently assigned to an engineering department on Venus. Some people should have been in the room, but none was there except two people. One was Kisia and the other was a woman who Karin had no idea of.

"Hello, Mr. Karin," said Kisia.

"Hello," Karin walked to his desk and placed his bag under his desk. "Where is everyone?"

"I told them to leave for a while."

"What for?"

Kisia quietly pointed at the other woman.

Karin twisted his head a bit. He had no idea who she was. "I don't know her. Do you know me?"

"She said she came to your shipyard early this morning."

"Ah...! So, you were the ..."

"She says she came to see you. And you don't know her?"

Karin twisted his head again. "Nope."

"My name is Baibre... We've met before...on Saturn," Her voice was weak.

"Saturn...?" The only time Karin was involved with Saturn was due to having to let Gabrio's family escape. "The only time I was on Saturn was to let..."

His eyes were opened widely as if he remembered something. He unintentionally pointed at Baibre. "You...!"

Kisia smiled. "You remember her now?"

"Not clearly," He said. "I did run into a female student back there though."

Baibre nodded. "Yes, that was me."

Karin exhaled. "So, what are you doing here? And why were you looking for me?"

Kisia chuckled weakly. "I will let you two have private time. See you around, Mr. Bau."

Before Karin could say anything, Kisia left by teleportation.

Karin wasn't a kind of man who was afraid of women. In fact, he was quite popular when he was still in the Bau clan. It wasn't that he was experienced in women though as he had never had a girlfriend before. It's just that his cool character made others assume many ... things.

"So, why did you come? It must have been hard for you to come here. You are a normal citizen, aren't you?"

Baibre nodded.

Being "a normal citizen" meant that she'd have security clearance of level 1 which was basically nothing. A person with level 1 security clearance would not be able to take a transport to another planet without a special permit. A person from the Bau clan normally had security clearance level 2. And level 3 for insiders. Karin Bau was an insider.

"Oh, and how did you know I was here?" He groaned weakly and answered himself right after. "I suppose anyone can find out..."

He kept on talking and Baibre kept on nodding. At one point, Baibre took her chance and shouted, "Would you go out on a date with me?!"

"... Huh?" Karin became speechless once again.

Karin was like, "What the hell..."

But seeing a girl acting like her reminded him something, something old...

Year 9591,

Karin was lying on a hill. He was staring at deep blue sky. He heard footsteps approaching. Soon, he heard a female voice.

"Karin, they are looking for you again." The female looked down on Karin. Her face could not be seen due to being shadowed by Sun.

"I don't care. Leave me alone," Karin twisted his body to a side to avoid her.

"I heard you submitted a blank paper again," The female chuckled. "The teacher is extremely mad."

Karin pouted. "Like I care."

The female sat next to Karin. "Nice weather today," She raised her hand to feel wind. "Gentle wind as well."

Karin said nothing.

"Why did you submit a blank paper?"

Karin sighed deeply as he began to stare at sky again. "Even if I do submit properly answered papers, I get scolded either way anyway."

"That's because you only write answers. The teacher wants you to write progress to the answers as well."

"I don't know progress to answers. I only know answers," Karin muttered.

The female stared at Karin for a while. "You... only know answers?"

Karin answered in a muttering tone. "Yeah."

"He said you were cheating as well."

"I don't cheat." Karin's answer was firm.

Generally, no one would believe him, but she did because they were childhood friends.

Karin was a genius, a typical type of genius so to speak. His IQ was far above ordinary. Since the Bau teaches all of their youngsters engineering and math, Karin was taught of those as well. The problem was that Karin's educator wasn't a kind of teacher who'd accept the concept of genius. He was an old fashioned teacher who always wanted things in a conventional way. He, of course, did not like Karin since he never wrote progress to answers. Whenever Karin was in engineering class, he never followed instructions from text books. He had his own ways and he apparently insisted that he was able to listen voice of machines.

Karin's grades were extremely poor because his teacher wouldn't give him above E or F.

Despite of his capability, he was underestimated by most of peers in the class. Simply put, he was not understood.

At one point, Karin refused to go to school. He was seventeen years old at the moment.

Karin was soon summoned by a Bau officer.

He was forced to enter a sealed room where there was a desk. There was a man sitting, waiting for Karin apparently. He was handcuffed and forced to sit down on the chair.

"Karin Bau," the man gravely called his name. But Karin did not answer.

"You've been a big trouble maker. Low grades and known to be cheating, it gets worse and worse."

Karin did not say a word. He, however, was directly glaring at the man's eyes. Any passionate person would have been able to see that his eyes were not of a trouble maker. But apparently, the Bau officer was just another ordinary man. He was offended by Karin's glaring.

"Karin Bau, if you do not get your acts up together soon enough, I will have no choice but expel you. Is that what you really want?"

The man's statement made Karin think that perhaps leaving the place would be a better choice. He had been hesitating to leave since it was his home and all. But it had been too much for him. It was time to act, he felt.

He nodded. "Fine, you can expect much proper behavior soon," Karin emphasized the word, proper.

The man was quite offended by Karin's rudeness. But he tried to smile. "Good, you do understand that I have to check on you regularly from now on, don't you?"

"Yes."

As soon as he was released, he rushed to his room and began to pack his belongings. It didn't take long to pack everything he needed. All he needed was his bank account card which had several months of his allowance saved and a toolset for an engineer. He grabbed his toolset and placed it on his belt and his wallet on back of his pants. He then headed to find Riell, his childhood friend.

He knew where she lived, so he went to her house directly. When he stood before her house, the door was open and two people appeared. One was Riell and the other was a much older man. The man kissed Riell rather passionately and passed Karin.

"Who... is he?" He asked although he had concluded his answer already. He wasn't a fool. He knew very well that a woman in the Bau clan had few choices if her social rank was low. The easiest way to insure her position and wealth was by sleeping with a powerful insider of the clan and that was what Riell did, he assumed.

She sighed and said, "I chose the easy way."

Karin smiled bitterly. "I thought you were better than this," He said.

"There is nothing wrong with selling my body," She talked back fiercely. "If you want me, I am willing to..."

"Enough. I am disappointed at you," He sighed deeply. "Anyway, I've come to say fare you well."

Riell narrowed her eyes.

"An officer visited me this morning. He demanded a better behavior from me. I am not understood here. Therefore, I've decided to leave."

"Is that so ..."

She couldn't stop Karin. She had no reason to. The man needed to swim in sea rather than a pond. But still her feelings toward Karin were more than just a friendship.

"Do you really have to go?"

Karin smiled bitterly again. "You could come with me."

His words struck her heart hard. She could feel that her heart was racing fast. However, she shut her eyes and grinned vacantly.

"Each to their own, Karin," She concluded. "This is my way."

"Is that so..."

Karin turned around. "I hope to see you again."

They both felt bitter. But like she said, it was each to their own.

Karin Bau easily managed to reach Moon. He wanted to go further. He needed to be away from the Bau. Influence of Bau was gigantic. It was only a matter of time before he'd be captured as long as he stayed in Sol cluster. He quickly found a transit to Saturn. His original intention was to reach the Freedom colony.

"Here is your ticket."

He was at the port of Moon.

"The ship will depart in two hours. Please be on thirty minutes prior to the time."

Karin nodded. "Thank you."

He let out of a sigh of relief for now. Having no intention to leave the port, since he believed that it was the safest place to be at the moment, he found himself picking up few salads in the port cafeteria. The whole port was pretty much crowded with people. There was a Jazz music playing also.

He placed his food plate on a lone table which took him sometime to locate.

"Ha ~," He exhaled. He felt exhausted for running away, and it hasn't truly begun yet.

His destination after Saturn was Pluto. He hoped to get away further from there. Pluto was literally a lawless planet where he could hide completely for a while.

When Karin was heading to his transport, he spotted Bau guards. It had been few hours since he left his home. It was a little early for the Bau to find out and act. However, Karin was skeptical. He eventually decided to take his chances. He walked casually by the Bau guards.

"Hello, sir." Karin acted casually and passed by the Bau guards.

"Halt," One of the Bau guards said.

Karin gulped and slowly turned around to face them. "Yes?" He tried to sound as calm as possible.

"Your bag's open."

"Ah...!" Karin tried to look behind and realized his backpack was not open. "Shit," He whispered to himself realizing that he was tricked.

The Bau guards moved in quickly and grabbed Karin's shoulders. They forced him to be on his knees. Karin was not without a solution however. He clicked something on his belt, and the guards' hands were repelled away forcefully.

"What the?" One of the Bau guards panicked. "What was that?!"

Karin didn't waste his chance and rushed into the transport. On his second thought, it was too dangerous to go on with his original plan to reach Pluto. He quickly ran out of the transport and ran off elsewhere. He hid himself in a toilet for the moment.

"Are you alright?"

There was no one, but Karin was talking as if someone, or something, was present within reach of his faint voice. It was a shielding device which was his first invention based on Cezary's shielding technology. It was equipped on his belt apparently, and this was the first time for this device to work outside of a lab environment.

"Phew," Karin let out of a relieved breath. It was a prototype device after all. When he left the washroom, he spotted more Bau guards. It was hard to believe that they were there simply because a minor member of the Bau was fleeing. He believed that there was some other reason, and he was getting caught in middle. The Bau guards were inspecting on every passenger they came across, and they were blocking every entry for inspection.

There was no way for Karin to purchase a new ticket, let alone get aboard a transport without getting caught. In the end, Karin was forced to leave the port and find a shelter on Moon for a while.

Moon had no cities. Instead, the whole civilization was under one giant dome system. The dome was divided into sectors where an administrator was put in charge for public security and such.

Inhabitants on Moon were relatively poor. Of course, they being poor were a very relative term as inhabitants on Pluto was much, -much more-, poorer than Moon inhabitants.

Average wage of a Moon inhabitant was 11.000 credits per season. Now, average wage of Pluto was, if a Pluto inhabitant had a job, roughly 3.000 credits per season.

Karin waited out until whatever was going on died off, and that lasted two days. He was finally able to get on a transport to Saturn after then.

It was the most inexpensive transport ticket he could get, so understandably it was crowded. After two weeks of excruciating journey, he arrived at Saturn shuttle port. Saturn's capitol was a dome city named Mist. It was named so due to Saturn's foggy atmosphere. The planet had no other established civilizations other than the capitol.

After arriving at Saturn, he immediately sought out for a ticket to Pluto. It turned out that there was no ticket to Pluto.

"Tickets for Pluto haven't been available for a while now," A ticket seller informed him. "The last ticket I sold was back in 97s."

Karin crossed his arms as he was troubled.

"Got any ticket for Freedom colony then?"

"Actually, I do, but we need you to submit a permit."

Karin figured as much. He knew that a division of the Bau was operating on Saturn. In other words, the Bau's influence was present on the planet. He had to find a way to stay out of the Bau's influence, and the only way he could think was joining Saturn navy. At the time, Saturn navy was commanded by Admiral Gabrio who was known for not cooperating with the Bau.

Every military applicant would go through a simple background check. Therefore, there was a chance that Karin would get caught before he could even get an interview, but he was willing to take his chances and submitted his application to Saturn navy.

In few days, he was contacted and was given a date for an interview. Preparing for the worst case scenario, Karin equipped his repulse shield and a pistol hidden in his outfit.

When he arrived at a military facility for his interview, he immediately knew something was wrong. There was a small army waiting him.

Karin wondered why the Bau was using so much resource to capture him. After all, he was a small fish. Nonetheless, he knew that he had to surrender at this point.

He was taken to Admiral Gabrio soon after.

"Karin Bau, yes?"

Karin Bau was in a room with three men. The only object that was between him and them was a metal table. The man in middle appeared to be Admiral Gabrio. He was bald and had a moustache. He was in a good shape also.

"Yes, I am. Happily captured for your pleasure."

"Your sarcasm is well noted."

“I didn’t know that Admiral Gabrio would be cooperating with the Bau.”

Admiral Gabrio dismissed his two officers.

“The Bau division on Saturn did ask me to capture you, and I did comply. I will admit that much.”

Karin was confused by his reply. “You did comply then what? You captured me. Send me back to the Bau.”

Gabrio shrugged lightly. “That depends. Why do they want you?”

“Why bother asking. You are going to send me to them anyway.”

“Because you don’t see a member of the Bau running away every day. “

Karin sneered. “I am not going to tell you just to fulfill your curiosity.”

Taking a deep breath, Gabrio’s tone became grave. “Listen, kid. Depending on how you answer me, I can get you out of the Bau’s web. I am an admiral. I have that much influence.”

Narrowing his eyes, Karin considered his options. It didn’t take even two seconds to reach a conclusion that he didn’t have much of a choice.

“Fine, I will tell you,” He replied and told Gabrio his story; he told him everything from the start to the present, though his story was short and simple.

“So, you are claiming that you are a genius.”

“No, I am claiming that I am not understood in my own clan.”

“That sounds like being a genius to me.”

Karin sighed. “Fine, if that helps you to understand, so be it.”

“So, you are an engineer. Very well, I might have a job for you to prove your skills.”

Gabrio called back his two officers and whispered to them. One of the officers left and came back with a document. It was Karin’s application. Gabrio stamped it with an approved mark.

“For now, you will be safe. Go get your belongings and see you tomorrow at the interview facility. Someone will be waiting for you.”

It was a weird turn of events, but at least Karin was not being taken to the Bau. The job Gabrio was talking about turned out to be tweaking a vessel. He was escorted to a training vessel where trainees would receive their basic marine combat training. Karin was told to tweak its ship’s engine and reactor. He had never tinkered with ships previously. He had ever touched a ship’s engine and reactor, either obviously.

As soon as he entered the vessel with an escort, the ship’s memory flew through his brain.

“Woah,” Karin uttered. “This ship is old.”

“What did you say?”

“This ship is very old, officer. At least three hundred years old. Normally you don’t see a cruiser last that long.”

The officer twisted his head. “How did you know how old the ship is?”

“It told me.”

More confused, he asked, “What told you?”

“The ship, what else?”

The officer was very much doubtful that Karin could actually listen to the ship. He figured Karin was missing a bolt or two in his head and simply escorted him to its engine room without saying further words.

“This is the deck you will work in,” The officer said. “Someone will check the result in six hours. Is that enough for you?”

“Yes, that’s plenty.”

“Very well then, I will leave you alone. Good luck.”

Karin was in pool of the ship’s memories. It was over three hundred years old. The ship told Karin that it was proud to have scars on its hulls. It also told him that it was happy to have survived so long without being destroyed, though it wished that it could perish in a battle rather than being used as a training vessel. Nevertheless, the ship was satisfied.

“Is that so?” Karin said, and there was no one. “How are you feeling?” He kept on talking when there was absolutely no one. He approached a patched panel. He unscrewed the panel and found a circuit. It looked fine on surface.

“Oh, I see, so you don’t feel too well here. Let me look at that...”

The circuit board was in a fine order, but it was a wrong model.

“I don’t think they have the model you need,” Karin said, “I should be able to make some modifications to the circuit to make you feel better.”

At this moment, the reactor in the engine room made a low humming sound momentarily.

“I hear ya,” Karin snickered.

Six hours later, a group of crew arrived on the ship to check on the result. Admiral Gabrio was among them. They arrived on the bridge and started to run diagnostics.

“What the hell?” A crew uttered as he was checking the system.

“What is it, officer?” Gabrio asked.

“Uh...”

“What is it?”

Another officer blurted out also. “What the?!”

The training ship was previously having a serious power leakage problem. Being an old model, they no longer had spare parts, so eventually the navy was forced to retire the ship and use it as a marine training ground.

“Admiral, the reactor output is at 98%.”

Gabrio did not believe what he heard.

“Not possible. I’ve personally spent many hours with top engineers to bring this ship to life. We could not get the reactor output to even 30%.”

“But, sir, the system is reporting everything all green. Uh, this is really hard to believe.”

“Bring the Bau here right now.”

“Aye, sir.”

As soon as Karin entered the bridge, Gabrio demanded.

“What did you do?”

“I fixed the ship. I thought that was my job.”

“You were not given any spare parts nor did you make any calls for parts.”

“No, I did not, admiral. The ship told me where it was hurting.”

Gabrio narrowed his eyes. He recalled the officer who escorted Karin saying that Karin was insane and he thought he was talking to the ship. He also did not believe that Karin was able to talk to the ship.

“What did the ship tell you?”

Karin inhaled and took a moment before he spoke. “It told me that it was at least three hundred years old. It could no longer remember how old it exactly was. It told me that it was proud to have seen so many battles and survive although it wished that it could have perished in a battle rather than being used as a training ground. It told me that it was happy to have scars on its hull. It told me that you, Admiral Gabrio, has tried to restore it but failed. It wants to thank you.”

Gabrio was utterly confused. Karin knew unofficial records of a forgotten ship. There were absolutely no records of this vessel, but yet Karin knew its history and secrets.

“So, it was ... hurting?”

“Not in a bad way, Admiral. It is old and old age brings pains to parts.”

“How ... did you restore this ship exactly?”

“There were many circuit boards that weren’t meant to be used in this ship. It told me where and I made modifications to circuits to fit its needs.”

The crews on bridge looked at each other with amused eyes.

Gabrio was having goose skin. It was hard to believe but it seemed that Karin was indeed able to hear voices of something that should not have a consciousness to begin with.

He asked a question to Karin, "Does it recognize me?"

Karin answered right away, "It does not know your name, but it does know that you are shiny. I think it recognizes your baldness reflecting light from light sources."

A crew couldn't resist snickering.

"It's alright, you can laugh if you want," Gabrio said to the crew, and they smiled brightly. He took a deep breath before he talked to Karin.

"Alright, Karin Bau. I have no choice but to admit that you are a gifted person. Apparently, machines talk to you and you can hear them. This vessel was originally the flagship of the previous Saturn admiral. It is a proud ship. I am sure you realize that."

Karin nodded.

"I suppose I know why you are not understood. You are a passive ESP, I believe, and many people do not believe such people. I, for one, had a hard time believing your story, but all evidences point that you can indeed listen to machines."

Karin nodded weakly.

"I will not let the Bau have you. You will work for me, Karin Bau," Gabrio declared.

And thus, Karin Bau started working for Admiral Gabrio. At the beginning, he started out as a mere maintenance engineer. The admiral tried to give Karin solo tasks when possible since Karin was not understood by others.

However, eventually, people found out that Karin talked to machines. Many considered him sort of insane, but resulted he produced gave indisputable evidence that he was talented in a weird way. Any issues that engineers could not solve in a reasonable timeframe Karin solved them in a matter of hours.

After 8 years, by year 9599, Karin had become Admiral Gabrio's chief engineering adviser. It was not an official position. This unofficial position was created so that Gabrio could have Karin nearby. Karin had been acting as Gabrio's direct personal advisor for some time. The admiral found Karin's high perception quite useful.

And then it happened; an event that would change Karin's life forever.

Gabrio look shocked to his bones as he read an urgent message that came through a secured channel. Karin was also in his quarter.

"The president is dead. He's been assassinated," The admiral uttered.

Shocking news indeed, but his assassination was what people were concerned about. They were concerned about who was going to be the next intern president. By laws, it was going to be Cecil Klisis, and no one would be able to raise objections due to facts that the greatest president of United Sol was his grandfather and that Cecil had been acting as the president's chief adviser since beginning of the term.

However, the event took an unexpected when Mars declared independence. In response to a hostage demand made by Kan Dietrich, Cecil used his exclusive powers to release Masu. Angered by Cecil's decision not to fight Mars, Admiral Jack caused uproar and acted on his own only to be crushed by Cecil's wits. Following the event, Cecil resigned and left for Venus.

Earth was left without its leader and its political system was in chaos; it meant one thing for those who had motives: Whoever gained the most supports from the Ark on Earth was going to be the next president of United Sol.

There wasn't going to be a traditional solar-system wide election. It was an emergency election to be decided solely by political factions.

Gabrio, being one of more potent admirals, was contacted by a politician named Nalen who asked him to support him to be the next president.

"Who is this Nalen?" Karin asked. He was reading Nalen's secured message in front of Gabrio.

"An old friend of mine, not a close friend, but we've known each other for a long time."

"Do you intent to support him? Committing to support him is a dire decision, I must add."

Gabrio nodded firmly and said, "Indeed, should he fail, so will I."

Admirals in United Sol were considered as a cabinet member because they were in charge of a planet, and a planet with an exception of Earth was considered as an executive branch.

In other words, whenever there was a power shift, admirals were almost always replaced. The only way to avoid being replaced was by supporting a future president who would make sure of their position.

The most potent admirals in United Sol were Jupiter admiral and Saturn admiral due to economical wealth that Jupiter and Saturn could produce which would translate to being able to sustain more ships at once. This also meant that Jupiter admiral and Saturn admiral would always be targets to be replaced whenever there was a power shift.

Gabrio was trying to avoid being replaced. Karin knew that much, though he wasn't sure Nalen could be powerful enough to be the next president.

"Nalen has some followers at the Ark," Gabrio said, adding, "If he's given some support, he could well be the next president of United Sol."

"But, Admiral, the conflict has just begun. You shouldn't confirm your support just yet. You need to watch the situation for a while longer," Karin insisted.

"If I refuse to give him my support now and he becomes the next president with support of another admiral, I will be done for. I know that this is extremely risky, but I am taking my chances."

Gabrio wasn't completely wrong, and Karin didn't have anything too much against his decision.

"I understand, Admiral."

"He has asked me to show proof of my support by heading to Earth."

Karin saluted at him. "Understood, I will prepare the fleet." And left the quarter.

The fleet relocation to Earth caused great uproar. The Ark feared that Admiral Gabrio might send down his troops to seize the parliament with Nalen. Element of fear worked for Nalen as he gathered more support. It wasn't all positive however. Admiral Gabrio's action caused Admiral Rommel to act. Rommel confirmed his support for a politician named Uzma.

Soon enough, Karin received reports that Jupiter Admiral Rommel had mobilized. He informed Gabrio right away.

"I am going to have to fight him," Gabrio concluded after some thoughts. "I cannot bow down now."

"Sir, if I may add my thoughts, I feel that you are pushing too hard," Karin said.

"Is that so? What do you suggest that I do at this point?"

"You may have declared your support for Nalen, but you can still withdraw."

Gabrio frowned. "Yes, I could, but I won't. It's a matter of honor to keep my words."

"True, sir, but is it worth your life?"

Saturn fleet was powerful, but it was still no match for a Jupiter fleet in terms of firepower.

Karin continued, "You can fight a losing battle if you like, but you will be killing a lot of people under your command as a result. I do not approve that."

"No, Karin. As an admiral, my command is their wish. I know it is not so in reality, but that is how it is on surface. All I can do is doing my best not to put their lives in vain."

"Captain, long range sensor is detecting a large fleet. It's out of range for identification, but it's closing in at moderate speed."

"Red alert, prepare to depend ourselves," Gabrio commanded indifferently.

Few tens of minutes later, the crew reported,

"Captain, It's Admiral Rommel's fleet."

No one was surprised.

Both fleets were in visual range, but there was no firing from either side.

"It's weird; they are not hailing us," Karin said.

Rommel's fleet arrived relatively soon at Earth, and military confrontation seemed inevitable between Gabrio and Rommel. However, Rommel was surprisingly passive.

Rommel's fleet was much larger than Gabrio's, but Rommel's fleet remained non-hostile for days before finally they hailed Gabrio.

"Put it though. On the screen."

Rommel appeared on main screen.

"Nice to see you, Admiral Rommel. What brought you here? You sure brought a large fleet for a picnic."

"Hello, Admiral Gabrio. Since we both are busy, let's get to the topic right away."

"Agreed."

"I want you to leave this area immediately."

Gabrio frowned.

"I cannot do that."

Rommel and Gabrio both stared at each other, saying no further words. It was uncomfortable silence for both side, but it ended soon as both admirals bellowed at the same moment.

"Fire!"

Karin rushed back to the reactor room of Gabrio's commandship. Gabrio was a type of an admiral who'd fight on front line. Therefore, it was important for Karin to regulate energy.

Engineering crews were observing Karin to do what would normally be impossible. Karin was maintaining shields of the ship well above 50% consistently by rotating shield modules. It would be extremely complex to accomplish even by

a group of highly skilled engineers, but Karin was doing it alone. He had to do it alone because his method was so alien.

"I know, boy. I know it's hard, but try it! I will treat you later!" Karin shouted as he manipulated his console in front of him. "Yeah, I know. I hear you."

The crews in the deck did not bother Karin, for they knew that whatever Karin was doing would work.

Meanwhile, on the bridge.

"Sir, it doesn't look good."

Gabrio growled as he observed his front being crushed.

"Admiral, it isn't good idea to stay here any longer."

Admiral Gabrio had just received shocking news that Nalen was assaulted by someone named Gvew and that Nalen's party was brutally being swept by Gvew's forces. He had to get Nalen out before he'd leave Earth. Otherwise, Nalen would be trapped on Earth and would eventually be captured.

"Dispatch three armed shuttles. Get them down to the Ark. Secure Nalen."

"Sir? We can't hold much longer."

"We will retreat as soon as the shuttles return."

As Gabrio watched his front being shattered, he felt as if his achievements were being shattered as well. His political life was literally over as Nalen lost his position at the Ark. It was only a matter of time that Gabrio would be dismissed as an admiral. His life after that would become only worse.

Still, he had to do what needed to be done. He had to secure Nalen's safety and then retreat to Saturn. His family lived there.

"Status on the shuttle yet?" Gabrio was nervous at this point. His ship was pretty much alone on front and was forced to retreat to join his remaining ships.

"Admiral, the shuttles have been destroyed. It appears the orbital batteries are active."

"That cannot be! Who would have the authority?"

Earth planetary defense could only be activated by either the president or his personal advisor.

The only conclusion was that Gvew had gotten total control of the Ark. If so, then the cause was lost. Gabrio had lost.

In the meantime, Nalen and few other survivors had made to roof of the Ark. There was only handful of people made through Gvew's assault. They were informed that Admiral Gabrio was sending down shuttles which apparently were not present.

"What the hell? I don't believe this!" Chaths busted in anger. "God Damn!"

Nalen attempted to contact Admiral Gabrio by using his private communicator, but his communicator gave him an error, stating that his target was out of range.

"It seems Admiral Gabrio's fleet is out of range," Nalen concluded.

Chaths was cursing and other survivors feared the worst. It was only a matter of time before Gvew would reach roof.

"We are staying here. Admiral Gabrio is our only ticket out of here," Nalen declared.

Eder had just teleported herself on roof.

"Where is Ashuta?" Nalen asked.

She shook her head. "He died. His wounds were too great."

Nalen sighed deeply. "A good soul is lost."

Eder also noticed that the promised shuttles were not present.

"Gambling for our lives here, eh?" Eder said jokingly.

Admiral Gabrio's fleet was being hammered by Admiral Rommel's fleet. Gabrio's fleet was no longer in a condition to put up a fight.

"Admiral to all ships, retreat. Retreat to Moon. We will regroup at Moon."

He clicked a button on his left. "Karin, I need you here ASAP."

"Yes, sir?" Karin arrived in 2 minutes.

"How is this ship doing?"

"Not doing well, but she is holding on."

"Can it go down to Earth?"

A cruiser, especially USF Courage model, wasn't capable of entering Earth's atmosphere. However, with some tweaking to its bottom thrusters, a momentary entry was possible.

"I assume the shuttles didn't make it, Admiral?"

Karin's question was answered by silence.

"Yes, he can go down to the Ark, but her shields won't be able to hold it. I think we can make it out with some damages to the ship's hull."

"Do It. They need to be secured," Gabrio said.

"I see. I will need to make quick preparations."

"I am giving you the full control over the ship. Drive it down and save them," Gabrio declared, handing over his pass code card.

Taking the pass code card, Karin gave him a firm nod. "You can count on me."

As soon as Karin left the bridge, Gabrio commanded, "Bring up the map of Sol."

A holographic map of Sol system was displayed in front of him.

"Admiral, Admiral Rommel wants to talk to you."

"Hmph," Gabrio sneered. "Fine. Audio only though."

Rommel's voice resounded on the bridge.

"Admiral, you've done well. Perhaps it is time to surrender."

"You've done well also, Rommel, but your cause is also lost. Gvew has taken over the Ark."

"Yes, I do know, but that is not my concern."

Gabrio was confused. "Pardon?"

"I don't care who takes over the Ark. That is not what I've come here for," Rommel stated.

"What have you come here for then? Just to fight me?"

"I was ordered to come here to battle whoever might threaten the safety of Earth."

There was a short silence before Gabrio responded.

"Who gave you that order?"

There was no one who could give a direct order to admirals at the moment. President Mirren was assassinated, and his advisor resigned. There was no one unless Rommel supported Gvew secretly and took orders from him.

"The Crimson wizard gave me that order."

Cecil bore a nick name of "Crimson wizard" due to his bloody deeds.

Gabrio narrowed his eyes as he tried to make sense.

“I suppose you took an order from him before he resigned?”

“It is a long story, admiral. The bottom line is that he got me. He got Admiral Jack. And finally he got you.”

Gabrio laughed bitterly. “I should have known that the bastard wouldn’t leave easily.”

“I ask you to yield, Admiral Gabrio. Yield now and you will be treated as a POW. If you fight and get captured, you will be treated as a traitor.”

Gabrio closed his eyes. He could feel that his ship was descending.

“Admiral, what do you think you are doing? You are descending down to Earth.”

“That is my answer, Admiral Rommel. Fare well.”

As soon as the channel was closed, Gabrio commanded, “Open a channel to the fleet. Audio only.”

“Channel’s open, sir.”

“This is Admiral Gabrio of Saturn. I’ve lost. This war is lost. If asked to surrender, comply. Don’t risk your lives for a failure like me. Gabrio out.”

Gabrio’s commandship had successfully secured Nalen and his few followers. As soon as Gabrio had them aboard, he immediately left Earth where he found less than a hundred ships left under his command. Most of his fleet had deserted after his announcement.

“Admiral!” Nalen was escorted to the bridge by few guards. “I thank you for your rescue.”

“No problem, Nalen,” Gabrio replied weakly. “We are in the same boat now.”

“I apologize.”

“Too late for that.”

An uncomfortable silence filled the bridge. Some of the bridge crews had intention to kill Nalen.

Knowing his crews’ intention, Gabrio silently spoke, “Don’t, boys. He’s as good as dead now.”

Nalen smiled bitterly.

Karin was summoned to the bridge soon after.

“You called me, sir?”

Gabrio took him to the captain’s quarter for privacy.

“I need you to do me a favor,” Gabrio said, “I need you to secure my family.”

Karin knew that Gabrio had lost the war and that he was to be hunted down soon.

“I’d suggest Freedom colony, sir. You still have this ship. You can still make it,” Karin said.

“I don’t have the slightest intention to live my life as a traitor.”

Karin frowned. “Admiral, you plan to die.”

“I plan to die like how a man would.”

It took Karin a moment to respond. “I will respect your decision, sir.”

“Thank you. You’ve served me well and I don’t plan to waste a young talent like yourself. That is why I am sending you to secure my family and flee.”

It wouldn’t exactly be an easy task. First of all, Karin didn’t know where to flee. He thought of Freedom colony, but the distance was too far.

“I suggest fleeing to Venus,” Gabrio said, reading Karin’s mind.

“Venus, sir?”

“The Crimson wizard has gone there apparently. I cannot figure out why he went there after resigning, but he has an agenda. Freedom colony is too far to make it there without running into a patrol.”

“You sound like the crimson wizard is going to revolt.”

They did not know that Venus had already declared independence. The Ark was too unstable to inform any info to anyone.

“Now would be the perfect time, wouldn’t it? Get Venus for himself and form an alliance with Kan Dietrich.”

“But there is Illy O’ren on Venus, sir.”

Gabrio scoffed. “You are too young to know, but Illy O’ren is on Cecil’ side. She has always been. If he asks her to rebel against United Sol, she will. I have no doubt about that,”

“You seem to be taking this awfully easy, sir.”

Gabrio laughed pleasantly. “Yes, indeed. I feel much ... lighter now. I feel as if heavy burden has been lifted from my shoulders.” Shrugging, he continued, “I guess I was never meant to be one of those political types.” His bright face soon died off. “Karin, I am giving you a cruiser with no crew. You can do this, can’t you?”

Karin saluted at him. “Thank you for everything so far, Admiral Gabrio.”

Gabrio struck out his hand for a handshake. “I am no longer an admiral.”

“You will always be in my mind, sir.”

They beamed smiled at each other. This moment was Karin saw Admiral Gabrio for the last time. Before Karin’d leave, Gabrio uploaded his home location into the ship’s computer.

Karin was given a cruiser with no crew. That was fine. He would need the ship for not too long. He set a course to Saturn where he'd secure Gabrio's family. He was determined to complete this mission.

He overclocked everything to maximum and reached Saturn in a record speed.

"Good job, girl," Karin said to no one on the bridge. He landed on Saturn's only city, Mist, by a shuttle. Mist was a metropolis with one hundred fourteen million populations. Where Karin reached was a small detached home. When he rang a doorbell, a middle-age woman answered.

"Can I help you?"

Karin explained the whole situation to her as briefly as possible. The woman sighed deeply as if what she feared had become reality.

"Where is he now?" She asked him.

"I don't know, ma'am. But he won't be able to leave vicinity of Earth easily. He's surrounded."

The woman identified as Gabrio's wife. She told him that her two sons, a twin, were at high school.

"Bring them home," She told Karin. "Don't tell them anything. Just bring them home."

As Karin arrived at the high school where Ivan and Evan, the twin sons of Gabrio, were studying, there was a school festival going on. The place was chaotic which worked for Karin's favor. He was able to sneak into the school without any suspicion. However, Karin was unable to locate the twin sons. Eventually, he had to ask someone.

“Hello, miss.”

He got a hold of a school girl nearby. She looked very shocked when she looked at Karin and was speechless.

“Hello? Are you alright?”

Staring at Karin, she remained utterly speechless.

“I don’t have time for this,” Karin whispered to himself as he moved on. He eventually asked another student and found out that Ivan and Evan were in their classroom.

The boys were very suspicious of Karin and were reluctant to join Karin, but he eventually managed to take them home where his mother told them what happened.

“What’s going to happen to us, mom?” One of the boys asked.

“Apparently, your father wants us to join that man over there.”

Karin spoke up, “I am to take you to Venus for safety.”

“What’s going to happen to father?” The other boy asked and he was not answered by anyone.

Admiral Gabrio’s fleet, which consisted less than a hundred vessels, was heading toward the national border towards the Nebula. It was Nalen’s idea to flee into the Nebula. He had apparently arranged an escape route with 3Ra Syndicate.

Admiral Rommel did not chase Gabrio’s fleet and retreated to Jupiter meanwhile.

Gvew gave out immediate orders to have Gabrio and Rommel arrested, but his orders weren’t followed as he was yet to be declared as a president.

Gabrio still had the status of being an admiral, so he wasn't questioned nor stopped while he was making his way toward the Nebula.

"I've gone long enough," Gabrio said.

Surprised, Nalen said, "Pardon?"

"Nalen, I will give you a ship. You go alone from here."

"Admiral, why would you want to go back?" Nalen insisted, "You must come with the rest of us."

"Your fellow, what was her name, Eder, wasn't it? She took off at Pluto. Why do you think that is?"

Nalen didn't answer.

"I am going back for the same reason. Nalen, I've known you for many years, and I thought you knew. If you flee like this, you will only be remembered as a traitor. You must make the last stand when you must. I feel that I must stand and not flee at a time like this."

"I understand what you are trying to say, Admiral, but one must live to accomplish anything."

Gabrio sighed. "Nalen, you won't be able to accomplish anything anymore once you enter the Nebula."

Silence filled the bridge momentarily. Gabrio continued on.

"Do you really think you can go back there and throw Gvew out? That won't happen. The history will record you as a loser who fled. I will also be recorded as a loser, but I will be recorded as a loser who stood on my ground until the end. There is a big difference between those two, Nalen"

Karin's lone cruiser was sailing fast toward Venus. Karin didn't intent to run into any ships at all, so he was taking a longer route around Earth and Moon.

"Are you sure?"

Karin was talking to no one, but he was talking nevertheless. There were also Gabrio's wife and the twin sons on the bridge. They were looking at Karin with suspicious eyes.

"Ok, let's avoid that path. You sure that you sensed ion, right?"

Karin waited a moment and then nodded.

"Yes, that's how ion smells like. Yep, that means a ship passed by recently. How smelly is it?"

After another moment of silence, Karin nodded again.

"Alright, that sounds like a patrol fleet. We got to take a different path."

And then yet another moment of silence later.

"I see. Head to wherever you smell ion the least."

Karin nodded repeatedly.

"Good, yep."

He wasn't controlling any helm, yet the ship was acting on its own. The confused passengers on the bridge had to assume that Karin was apparently talking to the ship.

While Karin's lone cruiser was making its way toward Venus, he found out that Venus declared independence while leeching on ENN signals. There was nothing apparently Gvew could do at the moment. He had just earned himself to be the sole candidate but he was yet to be declared the president.

Meanwhile,

Admiral Gabrio's fleet was approaching Saturn. He was still formally an admiral, but his title was effectively revoked by Gvew.

As his fleet approached Saturn ring, a warning went off. Gabrio shrugged as he heard the beeping warning.

"So, it's over," He said.

"We are being hailed by Saturn administration, captain."

Gabrio was no longer referred as admiral anymore by his crews.

"Put it on. Let's see who is going to replace me."

A fine looking man appeared on screen. He didn't look like a military personal. He looked more like a businessman.

"Greetings, Admiral Gabrio. I am sorry that it has come to this."

"I don't recognize your face. What is your name?"

"My name is Gaer."

Gaer, he was a potent figure on Saturn. He had little to do with military however.

"I know that name," Gabrio said, "How you managed to become an administrator, I won't ask. But I will ask you to look after Saturn."

"You can count on me, sir. Meanwhile, I have to inform you that you are under arrest."

Gabrio grinned. "You will have to fight me."

Gaer showed much discontent on his face. Eventually, he accepted Gabrio's decision. "If you say so, Admiral." He saluted at Gabrio and the channel was off.

“Captain, a large fleet is undocking from Saturn outpost.”

Gabrio closed his eyes gradually as he made his last command. “Prepare for a battle.”

Karin’s cruiser stopped all of a sudden.

“What is it?” Karin asked.

Sorrow filled Karin’s face soon. “I see...,” He repeated, “I see.”

Gabrio’s wife noticed Karin’s sorrow. “Did the ship tell you that my husband is dead?”

“Yes if you can believe me.”

“I have no choice but to believe you. You’ve been controlling this ship even without activating voice command.”

Karin snickered.

“I suppose it is your talent?”

“I suppose so. I can talk to machines apparently.”

“What is your name?”

“My name is Karin Bau. May I ask yours?”

“Jane.”

“I am sorry about the Admiral.”

“Don’t be. He went too far. I bet that he was glad to die.”

“Yeah? You seem to be taking this awfully easy.”

Jane smiled bitterly. "I am or was an admiral's wife. I've always expected to lose him."

Ivan and Evan were sleeping in a corner of the bridge. Jane glanced at them. "I fear for their future though. Will Venus really be safe?"

"The Admiral told me to take you three to Venus. He feared that I would not reach Freedom colony unharmed."

"How would Venus be safe?"

Karin shrugged. He didn't know, either. "We just have to trust your husband's words."

Karin's lone cruiser arrived at Venus outpost successfully without ever being detected by any ship's sensors.

"Identify yourself. Our sensor shows that your ship belongs to former Admiral Gabrio's fleet."

"My name is Karin Bau. I am here to invoke the right of refugee. In addition, I am also carrying Admiral Gabrio's family."

Karin, Jane, Ivan, and Evan were quickly escorted down to Venus. They were treated fairly with high security.

A woman with disheveled hair greeted them as they were escorted to city hall.

"Welcome to Venus, and I am sorry about Admiral Gabrio."

Karin was nervous to be honest. Venus was under the crimson wizard's control. No one knew how he'd treat him and Gabrio's family. For all he knew, there was a chance that the crimson wizard might sell them out to Gvew.

“I guarantee your safety except for Mr. Bau here.”

The woman identified herself as Kisia. She stated that she was acting on the crimson wizard’s behalf. She assured that Gabrio’s family would settle down fine on Venus. It wasn’t all that easy for Karin however.

“You are a Bau, Karin,” Kisia told him, “And being a Bau brings in headache for us.”

By this time, Karin was already separated from Jane and her twin sons.

“That’s fine,” Karin responded with a little bit of spite. “I will leave. My task is done.”

“I cannot let you do that, either. Mr. Ba-.”

Karin stopped Kisia. “I’d rather be called by my first name. I’ve never been very fond of my last name.”

Kisia beamed a grin at him. Nodding at him, she continued, “Very well, Mr. Karin, I sense that you are a passive ESP.”

Karin narrowed his eyes.

“I sense that you may be able to talk to non-organic beings, especially ships.”

Karin was very doubtful of Kisia’s credibility. No ESP had been able to tell Karin’s talent easily like that.

“Who are you really?” Karin demanded.

She replied innocently. “My name is Kisia, I told you.”

“I guess all ESPs I’ve met were lousy, eh.”

“We cannot let you leave because, by doing so, you will be captured. We don’t want that.”

“Why not? It’s not like I know any secrets.”

“We offer you a home to stay, a job to work with.”

Karin was slightly confused. “Are you trying to scout me?”

“If that is how you want to think this is, yes.”

Having little to lose by staying on Venus, Karin accepted the offer. Besides, he wanted to keep his eyes on Gabrio’s family for a while longer just to make sure.

He had no education degree nor any certificates. The only record he could put on his resume was his employment as a chief engineer under Admiral Gabrio.

Kisia offered him a position as a freelancer Engineer. His pay was 19.000c a season. The job was basically an onsite repairman. He’d go where he was needed to make quick fixes. The job was easy and the pay was good. Furthermore, Karin had plenty of spare time with the job which he could use to enjoy his hobby which was tinkering with ship parts. He hoped to build his own ship one day.

A few years passed. Jane and her twin sons settled down perfectly. Jane was given interest-free mortgage with no time limit to start her own business. As for Karin, he was satisfied with his quiet life with steady income. On his spare time, he’d usually in his private workshop where he was constructing a vessel, well a part of a vessel. His workshop was nowhere big enough to house a whole ship.

It was his usual day. After spending a pretty much whole night in his shop, he was taking a lap on his desk, which was when a voice started to call his name.

“Karin.”

“Karin.”

Karin was tired and didn't want his nap to be disturbed, thus naturally, he was annoyed.

"Hell, who is it?"

He opened his eyes lazily. Come to think of it, he also had no idea how this person entered his private workshop.

"I've been looking for you."

"What?"

It was a feminine voice. As his blurred vision came back, a young woman came into his view. He didn't pay attention to her face.

"Who are you? And what do you want?"

Karin's initial hostile voice seemed to have frightened her. Startled, she took a step back. "Ah..., I, I am sorry to have disturbed you." She turned around and started to run.

He held her arm, only to realize that he still had his dirty oily gloves on. It was too late; her white shirt was already ruined by black oil stains. He let her go and she disappeared from his sight soon.

Twisting his head and crossing his arms, he tried to recall whether he had any appointment this morning.

"Good morning."

Karin greeted casually as he entered his department. As a freelancer engineer, he was required to check in at least once a day. Since his nap was disturbed, he figured he'd check in. It was unusual to see no one in the office. There was Kisia

who'd occasionally visit the office from time to time. She was with another woman whom Karin didn't know.

"Hello, Mr. Karin," Kisia greeted him.

Karin walked to his desk. "Hello, where is everyone?"

"I told them to leave for a while."

"What for?"

Kisia glanced at the woman next to her. He had a look at her. Nope, he could not recognize her.

"I don't know her. Do you know me?"

Kisia grinned and said, "She said she came to your shipyard early this morning."

Now, that rang loud enough for him.

"Ah...!" He unintentionally pointed at her. "So, you were the..."

"She says she came to see you. And you don't know her?"

Karin twisted his head again. "Nope."

The young woman seemed to have gained courage this time.

"My name is Baibre... We've met before...on Saturn," Her voice was weak however.

"Saturn...?" The only time Karin was involved with Saturn was due to having to let Gabrio's family escape. "The only time I was on Saturn was to let..."

His eyes were opened widely as if he remembered something. He unintentionally pointed at her again. "You...!"

Kisia smiled. "You remember her now?"

"Just barely. And I don't even know her."

Baibre nodded. "Yes, that was me."

Karin talked to a female student to know Ivan and Evan's whereabouts back on Saturn. Now that he finally knew who she was, he had to ask, "So, what are you doing here? And why were you looking for me?"

Kisia chuckled weakly. "I will leave you two in private. See you around, Mr. Karin."

Before Karin could say anything, Kisia left by teleportation. He wished that Kisia'd stay because he was feeling uncomfortable being with this woman. Nevertheless, he was left alone with the woman.

"So, why did you come? It must been hard for you to come here. You are a normal citizen, aren't you?"

Baibre nodded.

Being "a normal citizen" meant that she'd have security clearance of level 1 which was basically nothing. A person with level 1 security clearance would not be able to take a transport to another planet without a special permit. A person from the Bau clan normally had security clearance level 2. And level 3 for insiders. Karin Bau was a Bau insider.

"Oh, and how did you know I was here?" He groaned weakly and answered himself. "I suppose anyone can find out..."

Karin kept on talking and Baibre kept on nodding. At one point, Baibre took her chance and shouted, "Would you go out on a date with me?!"

"... Huh?" Karin became speechless once again.

Karin was like, "What the hell..."

But seeing a girl acting like her reminded him something, something old...

"I have a request."

Karin was seeing Cecil Klisis, AKA the Crimson wizard.

Cecil was reading a book in his library which would be later known as the imperial headquarter.

"... This is new," Cecil said quietly. "It must be desperate, I assume, Bau."

Karin nodded. He had no reason to hide. "Yes, I need your help to find someone."

"State location of this 'someone'."

"I don't know. The last time I saw her, she was living the Bau local residence # 78."

"How many years ago would that be?"

"It's been about ten years."

Cecil closed the book he was reading and put it back to where it belonged carefully and slowly.

"Bau, you must have come here to see me for a reason especially when other ESPs could help you."

Cecil faced Karin.

"Yes, I've come to ask for your help since you are feared by the Bau."

Cecil crossed his arms. "You expect resistance then?"

“I don’t know. I am not sure. It’s been too long. For all I know, I am not wanted there. My presence alone could call for a big army and I don’t want to be captured.”

“Kisia is well capable of doing what you are asking.”

“But I want you to be there with me.”

“Time to tell me what is really in your mind then, Bau.”

Karin inhaled a deep breath.

“Her name is Riell, she is my childhood friend. The last time I saw her, she had apparently chosen a lowly path of living. Your fame is well noted, Mr. Klisis. People may call you a reckless murderer or else, but I reckon that you must have gone through a lot. I fear that my childhood friend may be beyond my reach. I want you to get her back on her feet and convince her to come with me to Venus here.”

“And if she cannot be ‘convinced’?”

Karin answered gravely. “I want you to kill her.”

“Each to their own, Bau. You can force your view on others, but if they are unwilling to listen, you might as well talk to a wall, and that doesn’t mean they need to be killed.”

“It’s very, way too, ironic to hear such a statement from you,” Karin said.

“Indeed. I can help you until the convince part. I will take no part in your personal affairs, Bau. You will have to convince her on your own and kill her on your own also if you feel that it must be done. All I can guarantee is your safety and a safe trip back here.”

“Well, I guess that is good enough. I will go get read-“

Before Karin could finish his sentence, he was teleported. The destination was awfully familiar. Yes, it was his home in front of him.

“I will keep a distance from you,” A voice echoed in his mind which startled him.

His previous home was occupied by someone else naturally, and Karin had absolutely no intention to bother whoever was living in the ex-home of his. He went straight for Riell’s house. It was a dedicated residential area; there weren’t many people roaming around.

Nothing seemed to have changed at all ever since he left. Not wanting to feel nostalgic, he loosened up his focus and continued his way toward Riell’s home.

When he reached Riell’s house, he had a strong hunch that she was still living there because there were some men lined up at front door of the house. Karin had a hunch that her chosen path went horribly wrong.

One of the men in the line noticed Karin approaching.

“Buddy, get in the line. We’ve got a long line here.” Then he laughed perversely.

He decided to play along for now.

“This is actually my first time here,” Karin responded indifferently, “I’ve heard about her. Is she any good?”

He laughed perversely again. “This girl has got a history.”

“A long history,” Another man in the line said.

“A quickie for 250c. 700c for a long one. 2000c for a full night upon appointment,” Other man said.

“What history?” Karin asked.

“You see, this girl used to be favored by a counselor.”

“Then the counselor got canned,” Another man said, laughing.

“The girl was about to be kicked out of this area after her ‘sponsor’ was gone, so she slept with another counselor.”

“Which worked for a while but backfired when she got pregnant.”

Apparently, it was a really long history. After Riell had to get an abortion, she lost her “sponsor” once again which left her to be penniless soon. She apparently attempted to get another “sponsor” but her reputation was tarnished at the point. She had no choice but start selling her body for credit to anyone.

Karin was angered greatly. He was pissed at himself as well as Riell. He blamed himself for not being forceful enough to have taken Riell with him and he blamed her for such an outcome.

*‘Should you want these dead, I can guarantee you that wish,’* Cecil’ voice resounded in his head.

Karin ignored the voice and continued to wait for his ... turn.

Two hours he waited. He entered her place; it was dark and mucky. Riell was apparently using a very strong incent as well.

He stood before Riell who was wearing a see-through lingerie. She didn’t seem to care whoever was there. She was smoking something out of her mouth and was gazing at the ceiling.

“You’ve got 15 minutes, dear,” She said stoically.

Feeling bitter inside and out, Karin could barely speak to Riell.

“Long time no see, Riell.”

“What? Who are you...”

There was no need to look at who it was because she recognized the voice. She covered her face with both of her hands and rolled off the bed, hiding herself in a corner.

“What did you come here for?!” She yelled viciously.

“Am I not allowed to see an old friend of mine?”

Riell started to sob. “I didn’t want to end up like this!” She continued to yell with a sobbing voice. “This is not what I planned my life to be!”

Leaning in the corner, she slowly started to collapse. Her sobbing soon turned into wailing. Having his eyes closed, Karin stood still. He offered her no comfort nor did he say any words.

*‘It is your choice, Bau,’* Cecil’ voice resounded in his head.

Karin Bau bore no love for his clan. In fact, he hated the Bau for not understanding him. When he left the Bau, there was one lingering attachment left for him. It was Riell. He planned to come back and take her with him eventually. That was his plan and that was also one of reasons he chose to settle down on Venus.

However, as he saw Riell like this, he regretted not having taken her when he left the clan. It was too late. The once charming and elegant Riell was completely gone.

Now, he had two choices. Let her live on with her life or end her right here. Either choice didn’t seem right.

Cecil's voice echoed in his head once more. *'You have another choice, Bau. It is to take her with you. Just because she is not how you want to be, it does not mean that she is not the girl you once thought she'd be.'*

Karin thought he had time. That's why he waited until he was wealthy enough to take Riell back to Venus and get married. He thought he was being a little passive, but he believed that he had the time ...

When he saw Baibre who risked her life just to meet a man who she came across just once, he realized how passive he had been. He had the means to reach out to Riell if he really wanted to. He simply didn't.

Now, it seemed he was too late. He opened his eyes and looked around the room. There was nothing but a bed in this room. He had been to Riell's room before. He saw teddy bears back then.

Leaving sobbing Riell behind as well as leaving a cash card of 250c, he left the house. As soon as he left Riell's room, he was immediately teleported back to Fallen Crater, Venus.

Kisia was in front of him when he was teleported back.

"Are you happy with this revelation?"

"I can't say I am happy, but this will do."

"I welcome you again to Venus," Kisia said.

Beaming a smile, Karin nodded, "Yep, it looks like I will be here for a while longer."

Karin wedded Baibre two years later.

- Fin

