

[Shattered union arc] [4] [Tournament] [9605]

Rev 3.5

Year 9605

Yakov knew Gvew was preparing to invade Venus. He had been carefully preparing a proposal to present in the Ark house. However, the plan was still quite a bit away from being executed and Yakov realized something he had never thought about before.

It was that he knew nothing about the Hammers. The only thing he knew was that the Hammers were an elite group under the Crimson wizard and that a member of the Hammers named "Karl" had assisted Doukar to flee from the Ark successfully.

He decided that it was time to get to know his enemies.

In the presidential office, Gvew was looking amused.

"A tournament..." He repeated, "A tournament, are you high?"

"No, sir," Yakov answered firmly. "We should know our enemies and I believe a tournament will serve well for the purpose."

Yakov suggested to host a tournament between a group he would assemble and the Hammers.

"I, I," Gvew stammered with amusement. "I don't even know where to begin. A tournament!" Sighing, he attempted calming himself. "Okay, fine. Let's say they accept this tournament. Where are we going to get seven people to battle theirs?"

"We could recruit some from the ESP prison facility on Earth, sir, and your daughter could lead the group."

Gvew felt ridiculous. Of all ideas, Yakov was going with a tournament.

For Yakov, he had always considered Cecil was the biggest obstacle United Sol was facing. Never in a million years had he thought "the hammers" would get in his way as they did with Doukar's escape. He had to adjust his priority and focus on the hammers first because, quite frankly, Cecil was out of his reach and out of his league.

"You want my daughter to lead a group of hardened criminals to fight against Cecil's hammers," Gvew spelled out Yakov's plan slowly, adding, "Apparently for no purpose other than trying to get to know them."

"Sir, it is true that we know little about the hammers. All we know is that there are eight of them and we know names of two members, Karl and Kisia. They seem to be acting on Cecil's direct orders."

"You are not getting me here," Gvew said. "I am not against your idea of getting to know our enemy. What I am against is your method. You are proposing a tournament. You could send spies and get the same result without much fuss."

"Sir," Yakov took a deep breath. "I've already sent spies. So far they've all failed. Their security appeared to be fairly loose on surface but it was very tight."

"Of course, it's tight," Gvew said. "He knows how to run a tight ship. He may have been only an advisor to President Mirren but he did a lot, probably more than what Mirren did. That was exactly why United Sol started to go downhill after Cecil kind of distanced himself from Mirren."

At the same time, Gvew recalled a past encounter with Cecil.

It was year 8959 and he was only 19 years old. His school invited a famous politician to a class that Gvew was attending at the time.

Cecil was standing in front of a class consisted of approximately forty students. Cecil was dressed in a dark robe, and it was clearly seen that he equipped an energy blade on his belt which was unusual because no weapon was permitted in the school.

"I will take three questions. That is it. So, be wise, kids," Cecil declared.

Cecil's provocative attitude surprised the students. All the guests they had met had been extremely polite to them. The guests were polite rightfully so because the school was known for having children from high profile Ark politicians. Gvew was a son of a rear admiral at that time and was rightfully allowed to attend the school.

Soon the first question was asked.

"What do you think of the situation over Andromeda?"

Rapid expansion in Andromeda cluster resumed under President Mirren's regime. The expansion spread too quickly for infrastructure to catch up and many were suffering from lack of food or power, sometimes both. Supplies were given out but the demand was far more than supply itself. ENN had recently filmed their living standards on some of the newly colonized planets and viewers became livid with what they saw.

"Do you really care?" Cecil talked back aggressively.

The student seemed to be confused. "What do you mean, sir?"

"Ach," Cecil walked over and sat on top of a professor's desk and crossed his legs. "Let me tell you what, don't address me sir. Just call me Mr. Klisis."

The students nodded.

"Now for your question, I suppose you should know this whether you really care or not," Cecil continued. "The government has a budget for every plans and projects. Those who are experiencing starvation, lack of medical support and electricity in Andromeda cluster should have seen coming. Of course, there is a planned budget to assist them, but the demand is far larger than the budget can afford."

The student who asked the question responded with a slightly raised voice. "Are you saying you are just going to watch them suffer and die?"

"Hah, look who is talking." Cecil scoffed. "You can't possibly assist all of those who suffer."

"But-, sir!"

Cecil stopped the student and stared at him.

"Mr. Klisis," The student sighed, and Cecil nodded with satisfaction. "But you are not making any sense! Are you saying you are going to just watch them suffer?!"

Cecil scoffed again. "Helping those who suffer won't get them out of their misery. Only they, themselves, can do such a thing. Just because they are focused by the media, you are feeling sorry for them? What were you feeling before you saw them from the media? What if the media didn't mention them at all?"

The students listened quietly.

"Most of your family are probably not paying taxes because they either belong to a big clan or to a powerful faction. In short, you contribute nothing to the country. Yet you speak of the righteous decisions."

The students were shocked. No one had ever talked to them like Cecil was doing. No one ever dared to do so.

"Tell me, folks. Have you ever actually seen them? Have you actually been there to see how they suffer, how they starve? Or are you simply falling for the media's words?"

Cold silence dominated the class room and Cecil's speech continued.

"They are not suffering. They are working their best to begin their new lives to make their new strange environment their home. They may look like suffering to the eyes of the rich and the fools though."

He spoke no more and his speech was concluded. After a moment of silence, another student, Gvew this time, raised his hand and Cecil nodded at him.

"Do you have a principle that you can tell us?"

Cecil answered instantly, "Know where you stand. It's important to know where you stand in your life. As long as you know where you stand, you can react properly."

Know where you stand...

Gvew took a deep breath and let it out all at once; it was a long sign.

"Fine," He said. "Host the tournament the way you want. I will leave the case entirely up to you. Don't try to get me involved though."

Yakov bowed. "Thank you, sir."

"Don't get yourself involved too much with him, if you do, next thing you know would be your head falling off your body. Many have died simply because they stood against him. They were warned but never heeded the warnings. I was warned and I took the warning. I will not deal with him on a personal level. I will only deal with him politically.

That is the only way to confront him and get out alive."

Regardless of Gvew's indirect warning, Yakov continued with his plan to host the tournament. His next step was recruit some members. His choice of the first member was, as he said he would, Devon.

He called Devon to his office and she showed up promptly in her usual outfit. Devon's provocative outfit and her glamorous features earned her an informal nickname of "Boob girl".

Her outfit consisted with a dark brown hard leather mini skirt with a light brown soft leather jacket with white sweater. She also wore high boots that reach well above her knee. Her style was properly provocative whereas Sae's outfit style was awkwardly provocative. Devon also wore skin-tight hot pants underneath her mini skirt since, due to nature of her job, she ran around a lot. Her mini skirt was simply a decoration instead of being a piece of cloth.

In other word, in a simpler term, Devon was quite a sexy woman and she had no problem showing them and she did it properly instead of going overboard.

"You called me?"

Yakov explained his plan to her briefly.

"I see," Devon acknowledged his plan indifferently and Yakov comprehended that Devon was uninterested in the idea.

"I am choosing you as the leader because I am giving you a chance to make up for the last failure," Yakov added. He was talking about Devon's failure to capture Karl of the Hammers few years ago.

Deovn responded, again indifferently, "That was years ago. The matter is done and settled as far as I am concerned."

"On surface, yes, but I haven't forgotten it."

Devon was silent for a moment before she answered, "Fine, I will do this."

Grinning, Yakov crossed his fingers on his table. "Now, I need more people. I am going to be searching the Earth ESP prison facility but, if you have any recommendations, I will gladly hear you."

The truth was that Devon didn't have any allies at the Ark just like her father. Everyone knew that Devon became the chief of the security because of her father and her position wasn't

helped by the manner her father took the presidency. Most of people she had to work with were mostly her enemies.

She felt that the reason she failed to locate Karl of the Hammers was because she had to work alone. It was back in 9601 and nobody wanted to work with her or even follow her orders. Years later, security staffs followed her orders but Devon didn't trust them just as they didn't trust her. In other words, she was bullied and it was the primary reason that she earned the nickname "Boob girl".

"I have no recommendation to make," Devon replied firmly.

Yakov let out of a frustrated sign. Nothing had ever been working out for him since Gvew's takeover.

"Father's regime is dysfunctional," Devon remarked. "Which I am sure you know since you were the one who pushed my father to take the presidency."

Yakov disagreed. "If it is indeed dysfunctional as you say, he would have been deposed years ago."

Devon wasn't an ark politician and knew little of what had been going in the house. Thus, she didn't know that the Bau was mysteriously keeping her father's presidency alive. Regardless, she couldn't talk back because Yakov was right in some degree. If Gvew's government was truly dysfunctional, he would have been deposed years ago. However, she still felt that his regime was dysfunctional. She couldn't clearly state why and how but regardless she felt it was dysfunctional. She wasn't going to argue with him however.

Yakov continued, "Now, I am going to head over the ESP prison. Just get yourself ready for the occasion."

Earth ESP prison was the same facility where Masu was imprisoned for over a hundred years. It was originally built to imprison ESP criminals but over centuries, hyper human criminals were also sent there. The prison was staffed by veteran ESPs and hyper humans and the facility was located in middle of a desert in Africa.

Yakov was well received at the facility. After all, he was the advisor to Gvew, the president. The prison warden greeted him on its only shuttle landing pad. Yakov carried an executive order from Gvew to release any prisoners Yakov would request.

"I am looking for seasoned ESPs and hyper humans. I need six of them at most," Yakov stated in the warden's office. "And disciplined ones."

The warden, looking amused, answered, "Sir, you do know where you are, don't you? Discipline is hard to be found here among the prisoners."

"I am fully aware, warden. But there are hundreds of prisoners here. There must be few who fit the requirements."

Warden opened up a holographic monitor and a list of prisoners was displayed. He applied few filters to narrow the list down.

"Cca Volant," The warden said.

"Cca Volant?" And Yakov repeated.

"Yes, some call him Volant Cca. It's his name actually, the two words."

"What's his story?"

"He killed few bugs and was arrested."

"Bugs?"

"The Gypsies call those who harass them 'bugs'. It's rare but they sometimes hire mercenaries to take care of such bugs. Cca Volant was hired and killed two people. Subsequently he was arrested and was sentenced for five hundred years."

"And you can recommend him?"

The warden crossed his arms and let out a long breath. "Of all prisoners, he is probably the most decent guy. He may have killed few but he had his reasons. Yes, I can vouch for him."

"I need more than just one, warden," Yakov said.

"Yes..., that's the problem. I can only recommend Cca Volant. Anyone else, I wouldn't trust them."

Yakov knew finding six more members might have been a stretch. Still, he did not think it'd be this hard.

“Warden, at least one more prisoner please,” Yakov insisted.

The warden sighed. “If you take out the discipline requirement, I can recommend a lot more. But then without discipline, it will be like letting out crazed mofos. I do have a psychopath I can recommend. He’s crazy but he is a good ESP. He probably has no idea what discipline means though.”

“The name? And what was his crime?”

“The name’s Mitica. He raped sixteen women and killed five before being arrested. He’s been given life and I will not release him. You will have to bring him back.”

Yakov groaned as he considered his options.

The warden added, “The guy can be quite tame if a beautiful woman is around him and orders him around. But he will eventually jump on such a woman, given enough time.”

“I will take him,” Yakov declared. Knowing Devon, AKA boob girl, was going to be leading the group, he felt confident that she should be able to control Mitica for a while.

“Sir, are you sure?”

Yakov nodded in response.

“Very well.” He tapped a spot below his right ear. “This is the warden. Bring #4334 and #3197 to my office.”

The warden also told Yakov that he was free to kill Mitica if he went over a line.

In a minute, two prisoners were brought into the warden’s office by four guards. They were blinded by black goggle devices on their eyes and their hands were tied by handcuffs.

“Untie them,” The warden ordered and the guards unequipped their goggles and handcuffs.

Both prisoners were delighted that they were freed.

“Cca Volant is the blond guy. The bald one is Mitica,” The warden stated.

Mitica was bald and very skinny man. His narrow but long arms made him look fairly weird. Cca Volant, on the other hands, looked like a gentleman. He was blond and had a firm face. He was also much taller than Mitica and was much more masculine as expected from a hyper human.

“Cca Volant, you are a free man, but to be fully granted of your freedom, you must follow this man here for a while,” The warden pointed at Yakov. “The same applies to Mitica.”

The warden was lying to Mitica which Yakov was well aware. Otherwise, there was no chance that Mitica would follow Yakov.

Mitica started to chuckle hysterically. "Freedom at least!" He exclaimed. "Pussies await!"

Meanwhile, Cca Volant looked at Yakov and bowed. "Sir, your name?"

"My name is Yakov. I am the President Gvew's advisor."

Cca Volant was pleasantly surprised. "The president's advisor..." He thought he was finally given a chance to start anew on a high note.

Cca Volant and Mitica were quickly taken to the Ark and were introduced to Devon.

"A hot girl!" Mitica roared as soon as he saw Devon. "Drop your skirt and spread your le-" He was unable to finish his sentence because Devon threw a high kick to his face. He was knocked down right away.

"Good job, Yakov, good job!" Devon exclaimed sarcastically. "This is what you brought from the prison?!" She then glared at Cca Volant.

"Ma'am, I am not like him..." He attempted to defend himself. "I am glad to have been given a chance."

Sighing and looking at knocked off Mitica, he responded, "Cca Volant here is alright. That guy is a nutcase."

"Then why the hell did you bring him here?" Devon demanded.

"Because I didn't have a choice. We now have three on a positive side."

Sighing, Devon ordered Cca Volant to seize Mitica for the time being. And then she told Yakov, "I think I may have found two more. I sent a message to the security personnel and two volunteered. I don't know them really, so I can't recommend them, but they volunteered, so you might as well include them."

Cca Volant had no idea what was going on and decided finally to ask, "May I know what is going on?"

The two volunteers were Piroska, a female class A ESP, and Vilmos, a male class A Hyper human. Yakov scrambled five members somehow and he decided to go with just five, seeing there weren't much other way to recruit anymore on a short notice.

In order to make the Hammers hard to refuse, Yakov sent a message through ENN, releasing it to the public at the same time, and Devon was highly skeptical that the team would stand a chance against the Hammers.

First of all, the members of the Hammers were handpicked by Cecil and she knew, from the history, that Cecil would not randomly pick anyone whereas Yakov was picking up people randomly. The history regarded Cecil was a highly cunning and calculating figure. He wasn't someone who'd do things without a plan.

Secondly, Devon feared team coherence. None of the members on her side knew each other and, therefore, there was no team coherence.

Nevertheless, she never told Yakov her concerns because she knew he would not listen.

Few days later, Venus government sent an acceptance to the request and formally asked the tournament to be held in a stadium found right outside of Fallen Crater on Venus, and Yakov agreed happily since it'd give him a chance to plant spies from within.

The whole arrangement occurred swiftly and within a week, Yakov and his team were aboard a shuttle and descending down to the arena outside of the crater.

"Alright, team," Yakov stood before Devon and the others. "If you win this, you will be either paid a big bonus or pardoned of your crime."

"What the," Mitica blurted and aggressively talked back. "That wasn't the deal! You said I was free!"

"You will be free," Yakov spoke firmly. "If you win this tournament."

Shrugging, Cca Volant signed and whispered to himself, "Figured as much..."

Devon, Piroska, and Vilmos couldn't care less. It was their job and they just had to carry on doing their job. For Devon, she just had to do it. And for Piroska and Vilmos, they wanted something unusual and outstanding on their future resume. A bonus was just that, a bonus.

Mitica started to stomp and mumbled.

"Be quiet, you fool!" Devon scolded at him.

"I swear I am gonna fuck you," Mitica talked back.

Devon laughed off his threat.

What welcomed them on Venus wasn't what they expected. A gigantic arena stadium with a capacity of 260.000 crowd was waiting for them. People were already starting to populate the seats progressively.

"What is this?!" Yakov uttered as he saw many civilians around.

Devon replied, "Looks like they advertised this tournament like a game."

Yakov complained, "I don't believe this!"

Several security guards approached them as they exited their shuttle on a landing pad.

"Who's in charge?" One of them asked.

"I am in charge," Yakov declared. "And I demand to meet the Crimson wizard."

The guards looked at each other as if they had no idea what he was talking about.

"Sir, we will take you to President Gair," One of them said.

Yakov raised his voice. "Gair? Who is Gair?"

"He is the imperial master's son."

Narrowing eyes, Yakov demanded, "Now who is this imperial master?!"

“Cecil claims that title,” Devon answered. She had done her own research although there weren’t much.

“Imperial master?!” Yakov uttered in anger and amusement. “He has no right to call himself that!”

The guards glared at Yakov and Devon had to step in before it could get worse.

“Calm down, Mr. Advisor,” Devon said to Yakov. “Do not forget what we are here for.” And then she told the guards. “Give us a moment please.”

The guards reluctantly withdrew and waited from a distance.

“Calm yourself down!” Devon dragged Yakov into the shuttle and exclaimed. “This is Doukar incident all over again!”

But Yakov didn’t back off. “That murderer is calling himself an imperial master!” He talked back fiercely.

“So what?! Are you going to fight him here? In his own domain?!”

“Venus belongs to United Sol rightfully!”

Taking a step back from Yakov, Devon sighed and shook her head. “You are hopeless. I understand you made father the president but you are really hopeless. Don’t you know where you stand? We are not in a position to fight them now.”

Silence filled the interior of the shuttle and Yakov calmed down a little after a minute.

“Fine, let’s see this Gair guy,” Yakov said while fixing his shirt which Devon grabbed.

Where the guards took Yakov and Devon were a private box in the stadium where Gair was standing by a series of windows. He was with a woman who had disheveled hair style.

Gair and the woman turned back to face Yakov and Devon.

“Welcome, Mr. Advisor,” Gair greeted him formally. “My name is Gair and the current president of Venus.”

Gritting teeth in silence, Yakov approached him and offered a handshake. “Nice to meet you, sir.”

Meanwhile, Devon glanced at the woman with disheveled hair. It looked as if she never bothered to look after her hair after waking up. Regardless, she approached her and offered her a handshake.

“My name is Devon, the chief security officer at the Ark.”

The woman beamed a grin and shook her hand. “My name is Kisia, a part time diplomat and I am in charge of Venus cosmetic division.”

Devon had no idea what her position meant. She also had no idea what “Venus cosmetic division” was. She nodded along however.

“Let us make this simple,” Gair suggested. “I see you have 5 participants and Devon is the leader, yes?”

Devon nodded and replied, “Yes, I am the group leader.”

“Then you shall fight the last. Who will you send first?” Gair asked while pointing at seats. “Have a seat please meanwhile.”

Yakov took a seat quickly while Devon considered who to send first.

“A male ESP named Mitica will go first,” She declared. She wanted to send Mitica first and get him out of the way. She couldn’t care less whether he’d survive. She just wanted him to be gone and done for.

Nodding, Kisia answered, “I shall fight him. I am a class A ESP.”

Class A? Devon wondered because it was recorded that she was a class B ESP with a brain tumor. “Aren’t you a crippled class B ESP?” She boldly asked.

“I was,” Kisia answered indifferently. “I am no longer.”

The stadium ground was covered with grasses which was rare on Venus due to presence of vie moss. Neither Yakov nor Devon had any idea what the stadium was used for. Nevertheless, it wasn’t their business.

The stadium was full at this point and it was lively. There weren’t chants or songs however.

Mitica lazily walked onto the grass ground. He didn’t like the bright flood lights and he reluctantly entered a holographic white circle where he was told to stand and wait.

Kisia entered the ground about the same time and walked straight to the circle.

They were about 100 feet from each other and Mitica was drooling and growling. He looked as if he was drugged. Without saying anything, Kisia quietly stood, staring at him.

The crowd was silent. They didn't know what to expect because they hardly saw two ESPs fight in their lives.

After a little while of tension between them, Mitica suddenly started to choke and collapsed like a dead log. The audiences were quiet as they didn't know what happened, and neither did Yakov and Devon.

Kisia teleported to Mitica's holographic ring and raised a hand, signaling for medics to enter.

A group of paramedics rushed into the ground and carried Mitica away who was bubbling in his mouth. Devon came down from the private box and asked the medics what happened. She was told that his heart flipped, apparently by Kisia.

Kisia's specialization was teleportation which included teleporting objects from afar. But flipping a living heart wasn't an easy feat. It was certainly a lot easier to be said than done. Teleportation by nature required precise control over distance and location of target. In other words, if she misjudged her distance and location of Mitica's heart by even one bit, his heart would have ruptured instead of being flipped.

The medics didn't have time to have an operation to save his life. He was likely to die in middle of an operation. Therefore, they chose to place Mitica in a cryo capsule to halt his metabolism.

However, Devon ordered, "No, let him die."

The medics were totally baffled by Devon's order and were clearly reluctant to do what they were told.

"Listen to her. If she wants him to die, then so be it," Kisia added.

Meanwhile, Yakov was clearly angry that Mitica didn't even stand a chance, but due to Gair's presence in the private box, he remained calm on surface.

Cca Volant entered the ground and, from another end, Vakha entered.

At the same time, a man entered the private box and said in a sarcastic tone, "Looks like one of you is already down."

Looking back, Yakov immediately recognized his face. It was Doukar.

"I am not here to provoke you. Don't misunderstand me. I am here on my free will," Shrugging, Doukar said while taking a seat next to Yakov. Gair, meanwhile, was silently watching the ground below.

"Alright, what brings you here?" Yakov calmly asked. If there wasn't Gair, he might have jumped on him.

Doukar cleared his throat and answered, "You did read their data, right?"

Yakov did his homework but there weren't much info on them. "I did read their data," He replied earnestly in Gair's presence. "Though there wasn't much and I knew names of only few."

"There are eight members," Doukar explained. "Gair here is one. You saw Kisia. Vakha is down there. And I am sure you know Karl. Dante is the mayor of Fallen Crater. Tuhina is also a member and Maeve the merchant, and Kasper."

Yakov was rather amused that Doukar was exposing the Hammers right in front of Gair who didn't seem to mind.

"Why are you telling me this?" Yakov asked out of amusement.

"It's no secret. That's why."

But it was a secret to Yakov because he did everything in his powers to know more about the Hammers and he came up empty-handed.

Meanwhile, Vakha dashed toward Cca Volant on the ground. Howling, Vakha slashed at Cca Volant who attempted to deflect Vakha's energy blade and counter attack, but when he

attempted to deflect, he found Vakha's slash very heavy and ended up taking a blow in his chest by Vakha's kick while attempting to resist Vakha's energy blade.

Cca Volant was an experienced mercenary but his abilities took a sharp decline during over fifty years of imprisonment. If given enough time, he would have recovered. Alas, he simply did not have enough time for full recovery.

Devon was fully aware of this and sympathized with Cca Volant's situation.

Cca Volant's body rolled backwards for few feet before he managed to stop. However, by time he regained his balance and stood up, Vakha's fist was already right at his face and he was punched in the face. His nose bone was immediately broken by the punch and two of his frontal teeth were knocked off.

Blood was pouring out of his nose and mouth. Still it did not deter him and he managed to bounce back and punched back at Vakha. At this point, Vakha had thrown away his blade and Cca Volant dropped his. They were basically having a fist fight and the crowd responded well to the fight since it had way more actions than Mitica and Kisia's fight. It was clear, however, that Cca Volant was getting hit way more than Vakha did.

Gritting his teeth, Yakov narrowed his eyes down to the ground where Cca Volant was apparently losing. Sighing in silence, he inquired Gair.

"How much money are you making from this?"

"Nothing," Doukar answered instead. "This was a free event."

Yakov was going to tell him that he didn't ask him but he let it slid.

"What is this stadium used for? I haven't seen a stadium like this in my whole life. I've seen this in history only," Yakov asked.

Indeed, a stadium had no purpose in this era.

"The imperial master," This time Gair answered, "has chosen to revive an ancient sport. This stadium was built to host the sport."

Yakov asked, "What is the sport?"

"European football."

Football (Known as soccer to Americans) was a long forgotten sport. Its downfall was due to the space age where many people lived under different gravity. Football was a ball sport requiring gravity for ball manipulations. Different gravity meant games would be played vastly differently under different gravity, creating unfair and surreal situations to players who weren't used to different gravity.

Venus had 0.9 gravity which was basically identical to Earth's 1.0 gravity. It meant that European football was possible to be recreated under this gravity. Currently, only one club existed in Fallen Crater Football club, AKA FCFC. Venus government was in progress of studying the art of European football and reviving ancient techniques.

Meanwhile, Cca Volant was getting badly beat up and his face was swollen and smeared with blood. Devon eventually threw a white towel. She couldn't care less for Mitica but she felt Cca Volant to be decent. In fact, she planned to hire him to work with him at the Ark.

Vakha and Cca Volant froze on spot as they saw the white towel in the air. As soon as they let go of each other, Cca Volant staggered and tumbled.

Panting, Vakha offered his hand. "Not bad. You got a spine," He said out loud. "Thanks for the workout."

Cca Volant's face was a mess. It was swollen and blood was all over his face. With his broken nose and knocked out teeth, his face looked more like a mangled meatball. Still, he laughed while heavily panting and took Vakha's hand to stand up.

The crowd cheered as Cca Volant and Vakha shook hands.

"Time for my turn." Gair stood up at once having said so.

Yakov was confused for a moment. "Pardon?" And then realized what he meant. "For real?"

"Why not? He is a class A ESP himself and is a member of the Hammers," Doukar said.

Vilmos entered the ground while Cca Volant was carried away by two medics. And from the other end, Gair appeared. Vakha asked for a high five and Gair complied. After then, Vakha went down to a tunnel.

The fight began as soon as both Gair and Vilmos entered the rings. Not wanting 3rd straight defeat, Vilmos rushed toward Gair as soon as the fight began. Gair responded with seven floating flaming swords that blocked Vilmos' dash.

Having never seen anything like so, Vilmos wasn't quite sure how to react. Gair's floating flaming swords were protecting him from any physical attacks. As soon as Vilmos backed off, the flaming swords attacked him. He felt like he was dealing with seven different entities because each blade acted as if it had a mind of its own.

Gair's technique was called spiritual blade and it was a skill that was symbolic to the Klisis clan. The clan was always small in numbers and being outnumbered was common for the clan. And spiritual blade was their answer to being outnumbered. At this time, only three people knew how to use this skill.

The first one was Cecil. The second was Sae. The third was Gair.

"What the hell is going on down there?!" Yakov exclaimed. Since Gair wasn't present, he spoke freely. Of course, there was Doukar present, but he couldn't care less about his presence.

"The Klisis clan's signature skill, the spiritual blade. I assume he has a right to use that skill considering he is Cecil's stepson," Doukar said while looking down at the ground with amusement. He added, "I didn't think I'd see it again with the fall of the Klisis."

"I cannot believe this...!" Yakov crawled as he saw Vilmos was running around like a headless chicken.

Vilmos couldn't even approach Gair and had to run around just to escape from the flaming blades. He was looking for a chance to attack but, when he realized he was cornered by the blades, and Gair casting gravity on him to slow down, he had to surrender.

With his head dropped and his eyes downcast, he walked out of the ground. The crowd jeered him as he disappeared into a tunnel.

The score was already Earth team 0 Venus team 3.

Piroska entered the ground following Vilmos's shameful defeat and she didn't fare much better against Tuhina. They were both class A ESPs but Tuhina had clearly upper hands in experience and skills. Piroska passed out after being strangled by Tuhina's whip made out of grass from the ground.

Devon's turn arrived and she had a strong feeling who her opponent might be. Walking toward her ring, she saw a familiar face walking toward his ring.

It was Karl. The distance was too far to converse. Therefore, Devon simply readied her oversized pistols and Karl posed to dash. Her pistols were powerful but her ammo was severely limited. Therefore, she wasn't going to waste her ammo unless she needed to.

Their match began when Karl dashed toward Devon. She fired a shot which Karl easily dodged by slight change of direction while running. And it was Devon's turn to defend as Karl's blade struck down on her.

"How is that shoulder doing for you?" Devon asked while holding off Karl's blade pushing down on her with her pistols.

"It did hurt," Karl replied with a grin and then jumped back to start running in circle around her to make harder for Devon and aim and fire. However, Devon quickly figured out a rhythm in his running and fired which went straight through Karl's thigh. Losing balance, he tumbled or at least Devon thought so only to realize that it was an act to hide a throwing blade coming right at her left leg. It was too late to evade and the throwing knife was struck in her leg. With both of them having wounded their legs, their mobility became limited which wasn't a much of an issue for Devon because she was a gun user. She aimed both of her pistols and was about to fire at Karl. However, she realized it was a friendly tournament and she shouldn't kill him.

"I've won!" Devon shouted with her pistols aimed at him. "Give up!"

Closing eyes, Karl smiled while letting his energy blade drop. Devon had clearly an upper hand due to mobility not being a big factor for her unlike Karl. Still, if Karl desired, he could have gone on. Devon was fully aware of this but she also had a vague feeling that her match was meant to be won by her.

And thus the tournament was concluded.

Yakov was royally livid and left alone, leaving Devon and three others to seek their own shuttle since they came in one shuttle. However, Yakov had also apparently took his fleet away from Venus orbit, leaving Devon and the others completely stranded on Venus.

However, Devon didn't mind Yakov's behavior because she couldn't care less about him. For the moment, her concern was well being of her members and treating Cca Volant was her top priority. While he was being treated at a local hospital in Fallen crater, Devon and the others were given complete freedom, they were even free to roam around the city.

Fallen Crater was a city known for its technological advancements to house over a billion of population. Thus, Devon expected a tight and messy city but it wasn't so.

The ground level was remarkably beautiful and well designed. The roads were well maintained and the traffic was low. People were seen idling at parks and cafes. Looking above, she saw skyscrapers being connected to each other and also saw countless civilian grade shuttles in air traffic lines. It seemed as if traffic on ground level was heavily restricted.

She was currently in a front park of a hospital and she sat on a bench and crossed her legs. It was quiet and the gentle breeze felt nice. Feeling strange, she looked around. Every corner of the park was extremely well maintained.

For some odd reasons she couldn't figure out, she felt perfectly home.

"Man, I could get used to this," She spoke to herself.

Then a voice sounded behind her. "You can settle down here if you want."

Devon startled hard and looked behind while taking a deep breath. "Holy moly, you startled me."

It was a woman with a disheveled hair style which meant ...

"Kisia, yes?"

Kisia nodded. "Sorry to have startled you. How is Cca Volant?" Kisia walked around and took a seat next to her.

"The guy's tough. He will be fine," Devon answered while letting out a short laugh. "I have a favor to ask you."

"A shuttle to borrow?" Kisia guessed.

“Yes, pretty much, seeing my boss left us stranded here.”

“Like I said, you can settle down here if you want.”

The first time Kisia said it, Devon thought she was joking but realized she wasn't joking when she said it the second time.

“You do know who my father is, don't you?”

Kisia smiled. “Of course, and your brother works for who?”

Her elder brother was Reed who worked for Freedom colony under Lila.

Devon was speechless for a second and laughed shortly afterward. “You have a point there, miss. Still, my father needs me and I have to be there.”

After a moment of silence, Kisia told her, “Your father's regime cannot last long.”

Devon's face darkened. “I know,” She replied. She feared for her father's future but there was nothing she could do other than being around him.

Sighing, Kisia stood up and told her, “I shall get a shuttle ready for you. Fare well.”

“Thanks but, before you go, mind answering me a question for me?”

“Go ahead.”

“The last match of the tournament, was I meant to win?”

Devon felt that they were manipulated by the Hammers or Cecil himself because the last match was supposed to be a leader fight and she was quite positive that Gair was supposed to be the leader of the Hammers. Yet, she faced Karl.

Furthermore, it didn't appear that Karl did his best or even put an effort in the fight. He gave up too easily.

“Yes, you were supposed to win the last match. While Yakov had his own agenda, so did we,” Kisia answered indifferently.

Devon had a vague feeling what Kisia was talking about but decided not to think too much into it.

“Thanks for the honest answer.”

Meanwhile, Yakov was getting scolded by Gvew.

“You left my daughter in hands of enemy!” Gvew was boldly pointing at Yakov whose eyes were downcast. “Furthermore, you lost the tournament! 1-4?! That is a joke of a score and you know it!”

Yakov had excuses to use but, considering he had left Devon on Venus, he felt any excuses would anger him more.

“My apologies, sir. I was too angry and I must have lost it.”

“Oh, I am not doubting you lost it. I mean you lost the plot big time!” Gvew exclaimed. “Leaving Devon on Venus! What the hell were you thinking?!”

“Sir, she will be back. They won’t harm her...”

“That is NOT THE POINT!” Gvew shouted. “Are you truly sorry for what you’ve done?! You do NOT abandon your men like that!”

All Yakov do was just shut up and stay silent at this point.

Devon and the other members eventually returned to Earth with a borrowed shuttle from Venus government. Yakov had to apologize to her in person in front of Gvew.

Meanwhile, Devon hired Cca Volant and pardoned him of his sentence by using her father’s executive order. She knew the value of having allies because she never had any at the Ark and felt that Cca Volant was someone she could work with.

Fin