

Shell's home coming to Pluto at last. Ivan makes his debut here as well. He is the son of Admiral Gabrio from [Shattered union arc] [2] [Karin Bau] [9603].

Shell herself has some connections to Ashuta. Read [Ashuta arc] [1] [Ashuta's blade] [9599] to find out.

[Shell of Pluto] [2] [To Pluto] [9649]

Rev 3.0 (Creation date is unknown | Last modified on April 21, 2019)

Year 9649

A young petite woman was packing her stuff in her quarter. She was wearing a white round t-shirt with short sleeves and a faded blue jean. Her clothes were worn out and had holes here and there but she didn't seem to mind. Her shoulder length light brown hair was properly combed however.

The woman was Anesita or Shell. Shell was a nickname she picked up from her days on Pluto and it was the name she chose to stick with.

She was about to leave Mars. It's been a season since Masu's death. She had been planning to go back to Pluto and it was the time.

Her plan was to make Pluto prosper and hopefully make it independent entity. Ever since colonized, the planet had been more or less abandoned due to lack of profitable resources and the far distance to inner Sol.

While the planet was officially under the influence of United Sol, it was literally an outlawed planet with no government structure at all. Of course, rapidly waning powers of United Sol didn't help.

She rechecked her dagger on her belt and put on a small bag on her back. As she opened a door and left her room, there was Kan who was leaning his back against a passage wall.

"So, are you leaving?" He asked calmly.

"Yes, I have to."

Without giving Kan a look, Shell passed by him with no hesitation.

"I see. Good luck," Kan raised his hand and waved as a quick farewell gesture. He wanted Shell to stay and work for Mars due to the fact was that Mars lacked human resources. He needed a lot more officers. He felt Shell was capable and, therefore, wanted her to stay. Besides, she had been doing a good job so far.

With her gone, only Eran Gro and Roon were left as his core officers. Those two weren't enough. It wasn't that they weren't good enough; it was that Mars needed more than just mere two people to run the planet smoothly.

Regardless of the situation on Mars, Shell left Mars and headed to Venus for financial aid.

"Ah-," Shell stretched her body with raised hands. She was finally on Venus. She was at the shuttle port to be exact. The port was extremely spacious and well equipped very unlike Mars. Mars had the fund to operate a port like this, but due to sands, the equipment would go bad far before its life span. Therefore, little was spent on high tech consumable equipment.

She inhaled fresh air unlike dusty air back on Mars. Air on Mars had a distinctive taste of dirt unless one was in a heavily filtered room.

It wasn't hard to make an appointment to confront Cecil Klisis. As matter of fact, all it took was few minutes at the reception at Fallen Crater city hall. She found it pretty amusing that she was able to enter the place with ease. After all, she was a foreigner.

Shell was waiting in the main lobby and a man who looked like a servant came along. "This way please."

He led Shell to a barren room where nothing was there but two chairs and a small table between them. It looked like an investigation room.

"This room looks cruel," She said only to realize that she was already alone.

A moment later, there he was, radiating the chilliest aura Shell had ever felt. She gulped unintentionally. She felt as if her skin was being frozen.

"You are Mr. Klisis?"

He nodded. Cecil and Shell were about the same height, but Shell felt he was much bigger.

Regardless, she had a business with him.

Cecil slowly took out a card out of his long and wide sleeves and handed it over to Shell. It was a cash card with a deposit of six million credit.

"I know what you came here for. I wouldn't normally do this, but you are what is left of Masu. Consider it as my funeral gift to him."

Shell was staring at the cash card. She didn't know what to say. When she raised her head and wanted to thank him, he was gone already. She scratched her head.

"Ow..." And then thought,

'Six million is not enough...'

She was looking at a catalog of commercial combat-capable vessels. The cheapest vessel she could afford was at a cost of 600,000 credits per which was SSS Robin. And that was without most of options. Shell could purchase ten vessels total.

'Ten.., yeah right, I am going to fight hundreds and thousands of vessels with ten fighters? No way.'

Besides, those were “commercial” combat capable vessels. They were never going to be better than navy vessels at any rate.

However, she wasn't about to go back to Cecil and ask for more money. Her choice was obvious. She had to run a business and be successful at that. A sad fact was that Pluto barely had any resources to offer, let alone decent economy to run a business on.

"Six million..., why didn't he give me six billion...,” Shell mumbled to herself.

Masu was aware of Shell’s dream and, at his death bed, he told her to seek out Cecil to begin. It was why she paid him a visit in the first place.

Even with six billions, she wasn’t sure she could rebuild Pluto.

There was no commercial line to Pluto. Therefore, she had to buy a seat in a freighter that happened to go by Pluto, meaning the ticket she bought was cheap but the journey would be dangerous and boring. Alas, she had no choice.

When she took off Pluto transport, a barren environment was open to her eyes.

"Pluto..., I am back."

The capital was still in ruins; it had been about thirty years since. Nothing had changed apparently.

Even the shuttle port was in an extremely poor condition. She was surprised even the port operated in such a condition. No terminal was working properly. Few terminals were even sparking. To make it look even worse, there were no employees to be seen in the port at all. In fact, no one was in her sight. Everything was running automatically and with very poor efficiency. Anyone could have avoided paying tickets and get aboard any transports if they chose to do so.

She had a quick tour around the city. Well, it wasn't really a city by definition. It was a ruin, period.

'How am I supposed to raise anything in this condition...'

Shell wasn't wearing expensive clothes. All she was wearing was a worn out blue jean and a white T-shirt. But she was wearing a lot better clothes than all of people did in the city. Thus, she eventually attracted some attention. Besides, she wasn't a bad looking woman and she was in her prime.

Eventually, she was surrounded by six people. They were desperate for anything. They weren't a gang. They were a family consisted of a grown man, a grown woman, and four children. The man spoke to Shell with a labored breath.

"We are not asking much... If you have any food to spare..."

They didn't need money because there was no way for them to use credit. The city was a ruin and there was no functioning bank.

Shell was a class A ESP. Food wasn't a big deal. Therefore, she was carrying none in her bag. All she had was few pieces of clothing and few old-fashioned books.

"I don't have any..." She answered weakly.

"Your bag...", The man pointed at Shell's bag. "Food...."

The look on the children's eyes tore Shell's mind apart. She came here to save all these people. She swore to herself again.

She dropped her face and told them with sorrow. "I am sorry. I really don't have any..."

"I don't believe you!" The man shouted. He swung his arm in the air, pointing out the surrounding. "Look! Everyone here need food! Look at you. You came from outside. You do know you can't get food at all on Pluto, don't you?!"

She blamed herself because she could have spent some portion of the money and imported some food to this godforsaken planet. However, she also knew what she didn't. Importing some food for these deprived people would not last long and would not change anything without a solid plan ahead.

"I really don't have any food." Having said so, she dropped her bag to the ground at which point the men and his kids ran over to it, only to find clothes and old-fashioned books.

“No, you must have some!” The deprived man cried out. “You must have hidden it somewhere!” He became aggressive and was about to attack Shell but he collapsed suddenly. She used her ESP to put him down into sleep.

'Yes..., a fleet is not something I need to be concerned right now. I must start a business on Pluto to create economy. Six million..., it's enough for this small planet!'

She didn't know where to begin when she left Mars, but she felt clouds were cleared in her head at this point; she finally found the starting point.

She withdrew half a million of credit and imported frozen and compressed food to Pluto. It wasn't tasty food, but it was the cheapest she could find. Quality wasn't an issue but quantity was. The next thing she did was purchase of three small basic probes and launch over Pluto's orbit. It was to scan population of Pluto.

Few hours later, she was faced with a shocking fact. There were slightly over twenty thousand people left on Pluto. There used to be five million populations on Pluto on official record. It was either the invasions must have forced them out of Pluto or starvation had taken so many lives.

“Or both,” she added.

Her next step was scanning for resources on the planet. Pluto did have some resources as far as she could recall.

She ordered the probes to scan for mineral next. Result came in shortly after.

"Iron..., that's it?" She was reading down a record that the probes sent. "And some copper..."

Iron and copper were basic materials that could be found on almost any planet. There were more than plenty of them. The only exception was Earth but then Earth was an exception.

Shell sighed. *'I suppose I have to do with these then...'*

After she laid out a business plan, she waited for the ordered food to arrive. It was going to be an orbit drop since the merchant wasn't willing to land on Pluto. Therefore, she asked the drop to be in middle of the city. At this point, she was fully aware that she alone would not be able to distribute the food fairly. It didn't matter at this point. What was important was that it had to be known that she was the one who ordered the food.

She had few days until the orbit drop and she did her best to let those in the city know that there was going to be an orbit drop of food crates. Many did not believe her but people gathered around a spot she mentioned nevertheless, hoping for a faint miracle of some sort.

When food crates began to drop, the scene became pure chaos. Shell was a distance away from the scene and watched the chaos unfold. There could have been a better way to distribute food but it'd take time and more money to hire mercenaries. All she needed from this event was to let others know that she was the one who got them food which, in return, would make them listen to her.

Just a day after the food distribution event, someone paid a visit to her who was in middle of setting up her office in an abandoned building.

"Excuse me." It was a man in ragged clothes which would be a common sight on Pluto.

"Yes? What is it?" She was currently repairing a badly broken chair. She had a lot to do apparently with another badly broken desk next to her as long as few wiring to boot. Cleaning the charred walls and floor was the least of her concern at the moment.

"I was wondering if you needed a hand."

Judging from his voice, he sounded fairly young. She knew she would not be able to do this alone but that didn't mean she'd welcome anyone.

"Sure, I'd like some extra hands. But I don't know if you can handle the tasks I am going to do," Shell picked up a paper and handed it over the man. He looked over the paper. She told him, "I know it's probably a lot to ask but write down a resume for me? Just to get an idea of what you are capable of."

"No problem," He replied.

He returned the paper soon after. The document was properly handled. Shell had to raise her eyebrow as she read the resume.

His name was Masello and he was from Moon. After having his company gone bankrupt, he had to flee from private investigators. Long story short, he ended up

on Pluto 12 years ago. His story would be common on Pluto. What took Shell's attention was his degree in accounting. He was someone she needed right now.

Masello spoke, "I am extremely grateful for what you've done. I hear you are trying to get this planet running, so I would like to offer my service to you."

Beaming a grin at him, she told him, "Welcome aboard. Let's get this place set up first."

Masello grinned back. "Of course."

Once they set up an office, the next order of business was ordering a very old mobile mining rig. It had to be very old for a single reason. It couldn't be automatic because Shell planned to man it with real people. It was a way for her to create jobs as well as setting up a hierarchy.

Masello was quite surprised to hear this plan of hers in a positive way.

He remarked, "That'd work. People here have nothing to do. It'd be very labor intensive but at least this will create economy."

If there were labors, there would need to be a pub of some sort and the pub would need to be supplied. That meant businesses. It was a small step but a right step forward.

After acquiring a two thousand year-old mining rig that was sitting in a forgotten warehouse for a small fee, the rig was delivered to Pluto and was dropped from

orbit to a spot Shell requested. Masello was there to confirm its drop and Shell was in the city to announce a plan for jobs. She was asking for 20 people and 20 people signed up in an instant. She also hired 5 additional people as guards.

This was how it all began. Once the first rig was up and operating smoothly, she ordered additional rigs to be placed over the planet.

Fast forward, a season, she had five rigs up and running with 110 employees and 30 guards. So far, whatever they mined and refined were used to repair and rebuild the city on the planet.

However, Shell was fully aware that she need to earn money; she needed to sell iron and copper and more importantly at profit.

The trouble was, though, because the mining rigs were manned, it meant the end product was more expensive than what they were sold on the market.

However, Shell knew this from get-go and had a plan for it; she visited Saturn to meet Administrator Gaer.

Her proposal was simple in concept. Saturn would purchase Pluto's iron and copper and Pluto would become Saturn's ally.

Gaer folded his arms and groaned as he was told of Shell's proposal. It was a one-sided deal. Saturn would gain nothing initially. Even long-term benefit was questionable. However, Shell's proposal wasn't exactly empty, either. If she could revive Pluto, it would greatly benefit Saturn.

“United Sol won’t last long,” Shell added, “When you declare independence, so will Pluto and we will become your ally.”

To some, it may have sounded like an unrealistic offer, but for Gaer, it was a charming offer. It was a gamble as well. But, in this chaotic era, playing safe was hardly an option.

Shell attempted to persuade him by playing out a potential scenario. “You will have Uranus colony and Pluto. That essentially means Outer Sol. Emuel is too timid to act anyway.”

“Why should I trust you in this?” Gaer questioned. His concern was valid. Shell simply showed up out of nowhere. She had no record. She was a completely unknown figure.

In response, Shell pulled out the cash card given by Cecil. The card no longer had any credit on it but it still bore the emblem of Venus as well as the Klisis clan.

“They backed me in this, so should you,” She said.

Gaer had to raise his eyebrow. The cash card she showed was something remarkable. Neither Venus nor Cecil would back a fool, he believed.

Thus, the deal was done.

With a buyer in place for iron and copper, economy of Pluto took a sharp upturn. Stable income meant stable investment in restoring the city. Additionally, with more than a hundred people who were employed, there were demands for pubs

but Shell wasn't going to operate pubs. It had to be people. The growth needed to be organic. Otherwise, this adventure of hers wouldn't last long.

A year passed. In a room, Masello was putting in numbers to calculate the end of year report. Shell was silently watching the monitor from behind while Masello skillfully typed numbers in.

"270,500c," He said in a downbeat voice, "We lost 270,500c."

"Loss was expected," Shell remarked.

True, loss was expected for the first year. She had to improve upon it. Out of six millions given by Cecil, she had already spent two millions for mining rigs and initial investment to get things going.

"How much have we made from mining alone?"

"Well..., it looks like about 10,000c."

Shell folded her arms and went into her thoughts. Pluto needed another source of income. Mining alone wasn't going to be enough. There was a choice of increasing mining rigs in order to increase the income.

While Shell was amid swirling thoughts, Masello suggested, "Should we begin to tax?"

Tax would be a valid source of income. However, there was a fundamental issue with it: authority.

So far, Shell had been operating everything as a business and it was indeed a business. If she began to tax people on Pluto, it would make her company a governing entity and she wasn't sure how the Ark would react to such.

Granted, Pluto was a pretty much forgotten planet but it was forgotten partially because no one tried to do what Shell was planning to do.

"It's too early," She said, "We can't risk that."

"What should we do then? I don't know how much credit you have in your bank but 270,000c loss is pretty big."

Indeed, it was big. But it wasn't unexpected. Therefore, Shell chose not to do anything dramatic at this point. Instead, she asked Masello to optimize mining and refining process as well as letting go of few guards.

One day, a man visited the building Shell had renovated. Two guards outside informed her that a man named Ivan came to see her.

She had no idea what he was. Nevertheless, she chose to meet him. She met Masello this way, so she wasn't going to let chances slip.

Her first impression of Ivan was a refined young man. He was good-looking by her standards. He was tall and appeared to be trained.

"My name is Ivan, a son of Admiral Gabrio if you remember him."

She had heard of Admiral Gabrio from Masu. He told her that his death was "a pity". In other words, Masu considered Admiral Gabrio a good man.

Recalling what Masu taught her, she responded indifferently, "Which means you are from Venus? I was told that Karin Bau rescued two of his sons along with his wife and escorted them to Venus for safety."

Ivan seemed quite surprised that Shell knew the history. It wasn't common knowledge.

Beaming a smile, Ivan told her, "I've come here to join you for your cause. I am a class B hyper human and have been trained in close combat as well as captaincy. I am certain I can be useful."

"Why Pluto? If it is United Sol you want to fight against, can't you do that on Venus still?"

Ivan shook his head weakly. "Venus is too peaceful for me. My younger brother, Evan, has settled down and has a family here. So, he is not going to do anything risky anymore. But I am different. Peaceful time is too boring for me. I think I am born to fight. I want the thrill you get from life and death."

"... Pluto doesn't even have a fleet," Shell pointed out with a weak sigh. It was a sad truth she wanted to avoid telling anyone if possible.

"But you will manage, won't you?"

She had to and she wasn't about to turn away Ivan, either. She needed staffs but she wasn't going to randomly hire random people.

"Welcome aboard, Ivan." She struck her hand out for a handshake.

For the time being, Ivan became the chief guard.

Over next few years, Shell and Co worked hard to break even. From 270,000c loss at the first year to a small loss of 34,000c was achieved in four years. This was done by adding two more mining rigs and optimizing its process.

The past four years had been eventful for Pluto and its people as well. The first pub opened and it was a huge success which made few more pubs to open across the city. With pubs being success, other small businesses started to pop up. All of which ultimately meant small regular freight stop was being made at Pluto.

The regular freight stop was a huge deal for the people of Pluto who never had a decent way to import stuff they might order online.

The situation improved vastly to a point that women were safe to roam around alone without fear of getting assaulted. The populace was fully happy with her rule and was firmly behind her cause.

However, Shell knew well enough that their backing meant nothing when the hell broke loose, the hell being the declaration of independence. She knew she had a long way to go until that point. However, she also knew that time was not on her side.

If United Sol would fall before she was fully ready to declare independence, it'd be troublesome. If United Sol would last longer than she expected, it would also mean trouble. The timing had to be right and she had no powers to alter the timing.

- Fin