

This is a story I wrote in 2008 but releasing on 2019. In order for this story to be released, I had to complete Kain & Suu arc which was completed in 2019.

To understand the stories in this arc, Shattered union arc must be read prior.

The main character of this story, Karveel, has been more or less a minor character. He showed up mostly Hermit arc.

[Warring era arc] [1] [Crossroads] [9670]

Rev 3.2 (Creation date 2008 Feb 3rd | Last modified on 2019 April 18)

Prerequisite story: [Shattered union arc] [12] [Shattered union] [9670]

Year 9670 3rd day.

A day earlier, Cecil from Venus had defeated United Sol and wiped out the Bau in the progress by bombarding Earth. After losing 90% of its population, Cecil sent ultimatum to those who survived the bombing: Revoke their lastname, Bau or die. Long story short, the Bau was dissolved on that day.

It was only a day after the Bau clan was wiped from Earth. After the clan was wiped out, everyone expected that Venus would acquire Earth. It seemed only logical to do so.

However, the Crimson wizard, Cecil Klisis, ordered his fleets to withdraw.

"Sir," A bridge officer called out. "Moon administrator would like to have a conversation with you, in private he insists."

Cecil was on the central bridge of his command ship. The bridge was unusually larger than any traditional bridges. It was also manned by more men than usual. Ksa and Vakha were also present on the bridge.

He was in the captain's chair, crossing his legs in a crimson robe. He also had his chin supported by his hand on a chair arm.

"Put it on main screen."

The bridge officer hesitated. "Sir, he would like to talk to you in private."

"No matter, put it on main screen."

"Aye, sir."

A middle-aged man appeared on main screen. He was about to greet Cecil but he noticed others around him, realizing that it was not a private channel. He cleared his throat and said carefully, "Greetings."

"Greetings, what would you like to talk about?"

Cecil's voice was dull and cold.

The administrator cleared his throat again. "I've heard that you are withdrawing your fleets. Is it true?"

"Yes."

He was silent for a while. Moon was under United Sol's control. To be more precise, Moon was under the Bau's control. Both United Sol and the Bau were gone at the moment however.

"What do you want me to do?" He asked finally. It was why he wanted to have the conversation in the first place.

Of course, Cecil was fully aware of his concern.

"You are a grown man. You can make your own decisions, can you not?"

"You do not mind if I take over Earth?"

"I do not," Cecil added, "However, if you choose to do so, be prepared to take on a snake and perhaps a miner."

By no means was it a cynical statement, he immediately understood who "a snake" and "a miner" were.

"A snake" was Emuel of Jupiter assault station. "A miner" was Kan Dietrich of Mars. Moon surrendered as soon as Earth defense fleet was defeated and they still had a fleet. In fact, the Moon administrator, whose name was Karveel, had three small fleets consisted of a few hundred cruisers and frigates. He was perfectly capable of putting up a fight, except that he didn't and surrendered since there was no chance of him winning.

"The miner will not likely come here," Cecil stated. "However, the snake will. It is up to you whether you side with him or resist him."

Karveel groaned and scratched his chin.

Meanwhile, Emuel, AKA the snake, had assembled an emergency meeting.

Though it was a formal meeting, only Aroa and Aroan were called. Those two

women were the only peers who Emuel trusted fully and they were his mistresses as well.

"So, is it true that the Crimson wizard is withdrawing?" Emuel asked.

"He has not yet, but our source says he will shortly," Aroa stated. "What will you do?"

"Acquire Earth of course," He answered firmly. After a short moment of silence, he continued. "I do wonder why the wizard is abandoning Earth, though."

"Perhaps, he loaded Earth with bombs," Aroan joked, "Who knows, he is the Crimson wizard after all."

It sounded unrealistic. However, the Crimson wizard had a proven record of executing unexpected.

He shook his head. "No, he wouldn't do that, I am positive." He shut his mouth momentarily in thoughts. "How is Gaer doing? Has he declared independence yet?"

"He has not declared independence officially as of now. I believe it is imminent, though," Aroa reported, "His actions are clearly indicating it. He has denied our offer firmly and he is supporting Shell of Pluto financially."

He narrowed his eyes. "Shell of Pluto?" He had no idea who that was.

"Yes," Aroa nodded. "Have you heard of her?"

"I've heard that someone new was dominating that little planet...," He scratched his chin. "That little planet is a key strategic point."

Emuel, at the moment, was the most powerful faction in Sol system. He had more warships than Venus did. However, as a result of his supreme power, he had no allies, and his nickname, the snake, didn't help his situation any better.

"Aroa, prepare one third of the fleet. We are going to Earth," He eventually declared.

He needed an inhabited planet desperately. It was the only requirement he was missing to form a sovereign. Ideally, he wanted Saturn. However, Gaer had been proving himself a capable general. Mars was out of his reach due to their alliance with Venus. Earth was ironically the only planet that was within his reach and could be acquired with relative ease.

He continued. "Aroan, I will leave the station to you. Defend it well while we are away. We must reach Earth Before the Dietrich takes it!"

While Emuel had made his decision to advance, Mars was having an emergency meeting as well. Kan Dietrich summoned all of his officers to the meeting.

Kan, Roon, and Eran Gro had gathered in his quarter. On a table in middle of his rather small quarter, there was a holographic device displaying a space chart of Sol system. It was focusing on Earth.

Roon and Eran Gro entered the room together.

"Hello, Kan," Roon greeted him casually whereas Eran Gro greeted him formally with a salute.

Kan looked up to them from the table. "The time has come. Though our ally is withdrawing from Earth."

"Withdraw?" Roon twisted her head. "How come?"

"I do not know," Kan replied, "But this is our golden chance to acquire Earth. That has been the Dietrich's dream for generations."

The Dietrich was originally Earth-bound clan. They were drawn out of the planet by the Bau thousands years ago.

"But, Kan, there has to be a reason why our ally is abandoning Earth," Roon debated, "Besides, I don't think we have the men power to occupy two planets at once."

"In fact," Eran added. "We have barely enough men to defend Mars."

The shortage became much worse after Masu passed away.

"We must still do this. In the worst case, we will request backup from our ally." Roon sighed. She was against Kan's idea because she believed that there had to be a reason why Cecil Klisis had chosen to abandon Earth.

"I see that your mind has been made up. I guess we will have to do this," Roon said nevertheless. She was fully aware of the Dietrich's dream.

Eran Gro turned around and said, "I shall prepare the fleets then." And left the room.

The Venus fleets were on its way to home. It was half way there. Ksa entered the bridge urgently and approached Cecil at once.

"Master," She said quietly. "I have a report stating that Emuel and Kan are on move."

Cecil, at the moment, had his eyes closed as if he was taking a nap. He slowly opened his eyes and responded, "Kan Dietrich is moving?"

She nodded and responded, "Yes, he is bringing over half of his entire fleets over to Earth. It's obvious that he means to acquire the planet."

"... And Emuel?"

"He's bringing a fleet of six thousands." Ksa was reading down the report in her hand. "The Dietrich will arrive at Earth few day before Emuel will."

"So, if we do not stop the Dietrich, a military clash is inevitable," Cecil concluded.

Ksa suggested, "This might be a good way to weaken Emuel. If we aid the Dietrich, he may stand a chance."

"No," Cecil replied firmly. "We are heading back to Earth not to aid him but to make him turn back."

She wasn't going to argue against Cecil. "Understood," She replied.

"Tell Vakha to take the half of the fleet and continue heading home."

Ksa wasn't going to ask why this time, either, but Cecil answered regardless. "If we bring enough firepower, Kan Dietrich might become too stubborn to be convinced."

"I see."

He gazed into air and stated, "Earth is the grand goal for many. However, I hope that they can see through its thick veil..."

The Venus fleets were the first to arrive, and they were hailed by Karveel.

"Greetings, what brings you back here?"

However, the Venus fleets were unresponsive to him.

After six hours passed, Kan Dietrich's fleets were in visual range.

"The Dietrich is greeting us," Ksa informed.

"Put it on main screen."

Kan Dietrich's image appeared on main screen. He had a big bright smile on his face. It was a sign of satisfaction that he was about to acquire Earth.

"Greetings, ally," Kan said out loud, "I assume you are here to assist me?"

Cecil crossed his legs slowly and declared. "That would be resounding no."

Kan narrowed his eyes and his smile was slowly being swept away from his face.

"Pardon?"

"Withdraw. This is an advice."

"Is this a joke?" Kan exclaimed, "Earth is right before my eyes and you expect me to withdraw?"

"I think you are the one joking here. Do you realize what you are doing?"

Kan had lost his words for a moment. He was shocked to hear such a statement.

Cecil explained, "Your forces do not even have proper manpower to have two planets operational. Even if you do acquire Earth, what will you do when the snake bites you?"

"You are our ally," Kan demanded, "You must help us defending Earth."

Cecil shook his head in a disappointment. "We are allies but our term is that we watch each other's back. Assisting you to defend Earth is not within the term."

"Don't be ridiculous!" Kan exclaimed, "This is what an ally is for!"

"Snap out of this, Dietrich!" Cecil raised his voice as well. "What would you gain from acquiring Earth? Pride? Give that to a dog. Pride means nothing when you cannot defend it."

Veins were starting to pop up on Kan's forehead.

Meanwhile, Roon narrowed eyes. She seemed to have understood Cecil's point.

"Kan," She called out softly. "We must withdraw."

"Sir," Eran Gro also agreed with Roon. "I agree that we should withdraw."

The communication was terminated for a moment while Kan argued with Roon and Eran.

"Earth is a resourceless planet. We gain nothing from acquiring it," Roon explained.

"We cannot defend it despite us having the money for it. We lack manpower," Eran added.

The argument went on for a while. Even though Kan was a hot-headed and a direct leader, he had an important quality as a leader; he had the ability to listen to his advisors. This was something Masu desperately attempted to teach him while he was alive.

In the end, while Kan was clearly angry, he was reasoned.

When the communication was back on with Cecil and he was informed of Kan's decision to give up on Earth, he clapped weakly. This wasn't meant to be sarcastic.

"Masu taught you well. You listened to your loyal advisors. That doesn't happen often," He said.

But Kan didn't take the compliment nicely and the communication was off soon enough.

"I hope this won't put a dent on our relationship," Ksa commented.

Cecil scoffed. "It will not matter. If he is foolish enough not to see through our good will, he does not deserve to be our ally."

The conversation was on a public channel, and therefore, Karveel was able to listen to it freely as well. He had never favored Emuel for him being cruel and his fondness of betraying others.

"Sir," Ksa said, "Karveel is contacting us."

"Ignore him," Cecil replied.

At the same time, another crew informed him, "Sir, Admiral Eran Go is online to speak to you?"

It was unexpected for the most but Cecil appeared to be aware of what it was about.

"Put him on screen," He responded.

Eran Gro wasted no time to speak his mind as soon as he appeared on screen.

“Greetings, I’ve come to ask whether it is alright for me to take my clan off Earth. They’ve informed that they are miraculously safe although air condition is worsening rapidly.”

Due to the global bombardment, the atmosphere of Earth had become too dusty to breath properly for humans. It’d last decades before the air would clear. Until then, for those on Earth, they’d have to wear a dust filter mask when venturing outside.

“It’s no coincidence. I made sure that they’d miss the small isle the Gro was residing. They bear no fault in this saga. You are free to take them off Earth. You didn’t need to ask. I don’t own Earth.”

There was a tint of satisfaction on his face. It was barely noticeable.

“Thank you.”

When the fleets turned away and leaving vicinity of Earth, Ksa informed him again.

"It seems he is desperate. He keeps on contacting us."

"... So be it then. Put it through. However, audio only."

It was Karveel's voice. "I thank you for granting this privilege. Since it seems that you are busy, I'd like to -" He was cut off by Cecil who told him bluntly.

"I am not busy. I just do not want to deal with you anymore."

Karveel was silent for a while, and it was for a good reason. He cleared his throat as he gathered courage to go on. "I, uh, overheard the conversation with the

Dietrich. I would hate to work under the snake. I would like to join you if you allow me. I will even bring my officers and fleets if you ask of me."

It was an audio-only communication, so there was an inevitably uncomfortable atmosphere between silent pauses between each chat phrases.

"I do not need you," Cecil declared after a brief moment.

"Fine, then at least help me out. Take me with you. You can strip my rank. I am willing to become an ordinary citizen. I wish to be out of here. The snake will assassinate me eventually. I do not want to die like that."

Emuel was well known for assassinations of his comrades based on little facts but assumptions. The only reason he became such a powerful figure was that he had good foresight and intelligence backed up by Aroa and Aroan.

He was also lucky enough to have been promoted to become the administrator of Jupiter assault station after Administrator Rommel's sudden disappearance.

The audio-only communication was on hold.

"Ksa, what is your opinion?"

She was surprised that he asked for an opinion. Cecil, in her knowledge, had seldom asked for second opinions.

"I feel that he bears no ill intention. He is a high-ranking military man who has lost his nation and is facing a crossroad in his life. Perhaps, it might be better to help him out. After all, it seems he is in need of help," She answered earnestly.

"Everyone is on their own crossroads," Cecil replied loosely. "But I see your point. Can you fetch his record? Let me see how well he has performed."

"I will get it done right away," A bridge crew answered and went back to his console in front of him.

Karveel was a native on Moon. He was born on Moon and was raised on Moon. He graduated from a Moon navy institution and climbed his way to the administrator position on Moon. He bore no ill records. It took him two hundred seventy four years to reach his current rank.

"A constant worker," Ksa commented after reading his records. "Not a hard worker by any means."

Cecil scoffed casually. "Hard workers die too fast, and they are too often blinded by their own passions," He said. "Very well, I suppose I should help him out."

The channel was resumed and Cecil declared, "Very well, you may come with us. You may also bring your fleets. However, only if they agree with your decision. I give you my word that I will treat you no differently even if only you come. Meanwhile, I cannot make you an administrator. You will be given a choice of available positions."

Karveel's voice was shaking slightly in joy. "Thank you..., thank you. I will get back to you in a few minutes."

It was quite unexpected that Karveel and his entire fleets came along with him. Perhaps, it was Karveel's charisma.

"Looks like we earned a fleet of a thousand vessels for free," Ksa commented on the situation.

"And a thousand less for the snake," Cecil replied.

"What will happen to Moon, I wonder...," Ksa said to which Cecil replied.

"Earth and Moon produce no resources. Emuel will have to tax them hard just to maintain its status quo. He will have to invest his own credit if he wants to repair Earth."

At the moment, he was basically dusting off his robe, which hadn't been laundered for God knows how many years. He was still wearing the same robe gifted by Meave. The robe was made of titanium, silver and gold threads. Even so, the robe was showing signs of age and wear & tear after more than six hundreds years of usage.

Looking at the robe, Ksa remarked, "Perhaps, it's time for a new robe."

Cecil changed the subject. "Time to meet this guy in person."

Meanwhile, Karveel left his cruiser by a shuttle and entered VN Cecilia. He arrived without any guards. He was completely alone and unarmed. It was his intention to show that he was surrendering unconditionally. He was ordered to wait at the docking bay.

After a moment, Cecil arrived flanked by Ksa and two armed marines. He certainly had strong swagger in his steps, and it was the first time for him to meet the legendary "Crimson wizard" in person.

He saluted sincerely and exclaimed. "Karveel reporting!"

Cecil looked up and down on him, inspecting his appearance for the time being.

"Ksa, give him the list."

"The list" was a piece of paper with "available positions" which he mentioned over the audio-only communication.

"You may choose one of the available positions written on the list," Cecil added.

The list had various positions, some were very low ranks, some were fairly high ranks. None of the positions was as high as a Moon administrator.

"The positions are basically divided into two categories," Ksa explained while he was reading through. "Planetary positions and space positions."

After looking through he spoke up, "I'd like to take a position as a field-officer at Venus outpost."

It was a much lower rank compared to a planet administrator. There were much better positions on the list as well.

"Why did you choose to be a field-officer?" Ksa asked. "You don't have to answer of course."

"It was the only available one for space. That's the only reason I took it."

"You'd rather live in space?"

"I prefer space."

Humans were, by nature, social animals. That had been an excuse to "help" solitary people. The trend had changed in this era however. Solitary people overwhelmed social people vastly. Ironically, outgoing people had a hard time

adapting to new life styles in space. It was solitary people who adapted exceptionally well in long space voyages.

Inhabiting in space constructions wasn't as easy as it sounded. One had to deal with an extraordinary level of quietness and solitude. Life in a space station was a little better however since space stations had recreation centers.

Still, social people were strongly discouraged from jobs related to being in space.

"Good luck to you then," was Ksa's short and stoic response. At this point, Cecil and his armed marines had left the docking bay already. Karveel was literally looked down upon and overlooked.

When Emuel's fleet entered Earth's vicinity, nothing was there literally. He did not expect Venusian fleet to be present but he did expect Martian fleet. However, neither was there.

"This is strange," Then Aroa commented. "Moon is not hailing us."

In fact, it was way too quiet that Emuel thought there was an ambush initially. He withdrew his fleet for time being and sent out scouts. Earth was bombarded, and it was understandable that all planetary communications were shut down.

However, Moon was supposed to be fully operational according to informants.

It took them hours before they found that no navy was left on Moon.

"One of our informants has successfully hacked one of navy consoles on Moon," Aroa informed Emuel who was in the captain's quarter. "Moon is completely void of navy personnel. They've all left. That explains why there was no hailing of any sort."

"Were they killed?"

"Our informant says that they joined Venus."

Emuel scoffed. "In other words, they chose not to follow me. Who was in charge of Moon?"

"A man named Karveel."

"I have not heard of him. He must be a peon. Nevermind him."

Emuel's fleet proceeded into Earth's vicinity once again. Infantries were sent to Moon first in order to gather logs from computer consoles. They analyzed the logs.

"So, the Dietrich did come here," Emuel was reading reports. "And the crimson wizard convinced him to leave."

"Too bad," Aroa said, "If the Dietrich was here, we would have defeated him and take over Mars as well."

In two days, Emuel had successfully acquired Earth and Moon. He was waiting for planet status reports to make necessary changes to their administration.

The reports came in eventually by Aroa, and it wasn't pretty. Earth had lost majority of infrastructures. It would require hundreds of trillions credits in order to restore them.

"Not gonna happen," Emuel concluded after reading reports for Earth. "I am not going to spend a dime on the planet. It's a resourceless planet. There is no point in investing."

True, Earth did not have any resources. However, it was Earth where mankind originated. It was "the spiritual home for all mankind". Of course, such sentimental values meant little to none to him.

He continued reading reports for Moon next. Infrastructures on Moon were fully intact. However, its economy was bound to fail since it was strongly tied to Earth's economy. Additionally, it was already in deep economic recession. It would take a lot of efforts to repair Moon as well.

"This is going to be a major pain in the back to fund these two planets," Emuel concluded and then added, "No wonder the Crimson wizard didn't take these."

"What are your orders?"

He was silent for a moment. He was considering his options. "It's going to be expensive to maintain and reconstruct Earth," He added. "Impose high tax on both Earth and Moon."

"How high?"

"50% on Moon, and 35% on Earth. Impose that on all taxable cases."

"Including medical?"

"Of course."

He was well aware that economical situation for the two planets weren't going to get any better. It was bound to drive deeper into recession, and he wasn't going to spend much credits to help them get back up. He could care less. He needed Earth not for its people. He merely needed its symbolic power.

In addition, in order to prevent possible civil wars, he declared martial law on both planets. Inhabitants were literally at his mercy. Then he left for his home base after leaving Aroa in charge of security. She was given fifteen hundred ships to protect both planets from possible pirate raids.

This news spread quickly within Sol system. What this event meant that now Emuel emerged to be the most powerful faction in Sol system. However, none of other factions showed any signs of submission. There were Venus, Mars, Saturn, and Pluto.

Venus and Mars were allied and untouchable by Emuel at the moment. Saturn and Uranus colony were run by a former administrator of the planet, Gaer. Finally, Pluto was a rouge planet without a government.

By navy powers alone, Saturn was the weakest with a fleet of twelve hundred ships. If Emuel would fight Gaer head on, Gaer was likely to lose.

However, the situation wasn't favoring Emuel as if he were to concentrate on conquering Saturn, his backside would be tackled by Venus and Mars. As he acquired Earth, he now had a buffer zone, it was a fragile buffer zone however.

His ultimate goal was unite Sol system under his rule but that wasn't going to be easy.

Meanwhile, Venusian fleet had arrived at Venus outpost. Karveel was waiting for his new assignment as well as a new life on Venus.

He was ordered to wait in a dock at the outpost for the time being. As he entered the outpost for the first time, he observed something he would have never thought. The outpost was apparently being used as a resort destination. The main lobby was full of civilians waiting for their turn to ride "solar wind" which was a form of a sport on Venus.

He had never observed such a scene before in his entire life. He found himself lost in thoughts as he observed the outgoing life in space until he was disturbed by a female voice.

"Karveel."

His focus came back to him and turned toward where the voice originated. It was Ksa who he met back in space. He never had a chance to ask her name.

"Oh, it's you. Ehm..."

"My name is Ksa, a member of the Hammers."

"Excuse me, ma'am, but what are civilians doing here? Isn't this a navy outpost?"

"Yes, it is. People are having fun here as you can see."

He didn't know what to say.

"Is it hard to accept this?" Ksa asked.

"Not hard..., it's just... new, something I've never seen before."

Under United Sol, navy facilities were strictly off limits for civilians. There were no exceptions. Therefore, for Karveel, it was something new to see a navy facility allowing civilians to have sports.

Ksa beamed a smile at Karveel. "Well, welcome to Venus. Follow me. It's time to set your life up."

Where Ksa led him was a docking bay with a shuttle ready to depart.

"If you don't mind me asking, where are we doing?"

"We are going down to Venus. You are going to need a citizenship card."

As they descended from the outpost, the view of Venus surface was starting to emerge. Karveel's jaw dropped literally in awe as the shuttle quickly navigated through densely packed skyscrapers. Those buildings were over six hundred stories, and the city was full of them. He had seen nothing like so in his entire life on Moon which always struggled for fund.

The skyscrapers were interconnected each other which helped the buildings for balance. The shuttle landed on a private pad in an open field in middle of the city. The city appeared to be packed from above, but it was surprisingly open on ground level.

"Greens...," Karveel mumbled as he exited the shuttle. Moon had little of those. As a former administrator of Moon, he had always wanted more greens on the planet, but the Bau charged an arm and a leg for the privilege of importing more greens.

And the city was full of them, trees, grass, flowers, and such. In short, he loved the scenery.

"This ... This was not so what I was told..." Karveel recalled reading about status of Venus, how poor they were and how poorly their cities were constructed. He even recalled laughing at Venus' situation.

"People can easily fall for false information," Ksa said as if she read his mind.

"You mean to tell me that ENN had been lying all along?"

"That is up to you. What you see is what you get here. What do you see here?"

He looked around. He thought it was a navy top secret shuttle pad, but it was not. Civilians were freely roaming around the shuttle pad and none of them looked his way as if it was a normal sight.

"Though," Ksa stated. "A lot of bloodshed was required to achieve this."

He had little idea of what Ksa meant, and therefore, paid little attention to her comment.

A car had just arrived at the pad. A man from a driver's seat took off from the car.

"Ma'am, I am here. Is this the guy?"

Ksa gave him a nod. "Yes, Elemist." She, then, turned to Karveel. "Shall we go?"

He was taken to Venus cosmetic division headquarter. He was given an express immigration form to sign, then he had to take a picture for his new ID.

"Congratulations," Ksa struck out her hand for a handshake. "You are now a Venusian."

The whole process took half an hour. He had a handshake with her and said, "Thanks."

"Now, let us talk about your rank, shall we?"

He applied for a field-officer which was a fairly low-rank. It wasn't the lowest, but still for someone who was an administrator of a planet, it was a very low rank.

"Master and I both agreed that making you a field-officer. For now, you will go through simple training sessions here on Venus for two weeks, then you will be assigned to Venus outpost."

He beamed a bitter smile. "Thank you, ma'am." He didn't really have any complaint over having to start over. But it certainly did not feel great.

Ksa handed him a cash card. It had half a million credits in it. "This is for you. You earned it since you've given us a thousand vessels."

He accepted it gladly. "Thank you. If you don't mind me asking, what will happen to my men?"

"They will go through the same steps as you do. They will be asked what they want to do, and go from there."

"If they refuse to serve the navy?"

"Then, they will be allowed to settle down."

He imagined that a country run by dictatorship would be much more rigid and inflexible. However, he was feeling the opposite as he talked to Ksa. The system was very flexible and easy-going. Most importantly, they gave him choices which was far cry from how the Ark did things.

"Well, my job is done. I will have a guide ready for you if you'd like."

"No, I will wander on my own."

"So be it." Before leaving, Ksa handed him a city guide book. "The least I can do," She added.

He wanted unbiased opinions about the city and the planet, thus he wanted to be alone. Indeed, what he was seeing was the complete opposite of what he was being informed of. He wanted to see things by himself with his own eyes. With his new ID card and the cash card in his jacket, he left the headquarter.

Layout of the city was very refined. Every corner of the city was properly taken care of. He spotted no garbage at all. There was no dirt. The city was literally shining. He felt it was too refined in a sense.

Looking up, he saw densely hazed light gray sky. He also saw many skyscrapers progressively vanishing into the sky.

Eventually, he decided to grab a cab. After all, he had absolutely no idea where to even go.

"Good day, mister, where do you want to go?"

Karveel startled because he did not expect a human in the cab. He assumed it was an automated cab just like the ones on Moon.

"A human?" He blurted out.

"Pardon?" The cab driver responded casually while looking down on his shirt. "Do I look that bad?"

"No, no..., I didn't... expect a human driver."

"You must be new to Venus then."

Indeed, he was.

"I don't know anything about this city, let alone where to go. Do you have any recommendations?"

The cab driver pulled out a pamphlet and handed it over to Karveel.

"Check out Avert's adventure. I can take you there right now if you like."

Having no other clear alternative solutions, Karveel decided to go with the cap driver's recommendation.

"To Avert's adventure then."

Avert's adventure was a private tourism company. The company differed itself by introducing tourism to the wildness of Venus rather than working exclusively in cities.

The pamphlet he was given was an ad for the company. It featured a short description of his company and what it did as well as explaining eco-system of Venus with pictures.

Venus was covered with a bio-engineered artificial life form called Vie. Vie was responsible for photosynthesis.

As the cab drove away at high speed. Actually, Karveel felt like the cab was going a little too fast.

"Hey, are you alright with this speed? You are going awfully fast."

"Don't you worry, sir, I have a speeding license."

"Speeding what?"

Venus was full of things he had never heard of.

Averto's adventure was located on edge of the city. The company had a small four story building built into a crater wall. The company building had a cozy feeling as it was built into a rocky environment.

"Woah," Karveel whistled out loudly. "A nice view."

The cab driver proceeded his fee and his receipt. "Here you go, sir."

"Ah, thanks. Sorry, I am not used to getting receipts."

As he approached the building, he realized that the building roof was being used as a small private shuttle port. Apparently, there were two shuttles present on roof and he could hear a conversation from the roof.

"Welcome to Averto's adventure, do you have an appointment?"

He was, for a second, at loss for words, because an actual human woman greeted him in the lobby. Such a thing wasn't very common on Moon. Sure, he had plenty

of people to talk to, but when it came to mundane tasks, A.I. computers took care of them.

"Uh..., I don't."

The receptionist beamed a bright smile at him. "I see. Are you here for a trip?"

"Uh..., I think so."

"I believe Mr. Averno hasn't left yet. If you rush, you might make it." Then she pointed gently at an elevator on side way.

Scratching his head in confusion because he had no idea what was going on because a payment was yet to be made, he gave her a nod nevertheless and rushed to the elevator.

It was very chatty on the roof, not to mention windy. There were a few dozens of people waiting outside of two shuttles. Karveel had been in United Sol navy for pretty much his entire life and he did not recognize shuttle models he was seeing on the roof, though he could tell that the shuttles were heavily customized.

"Is everyone ready?!" A man shouted in front of everyone. It was obvious that he was an employee from the way he was dressed up. "Get in, ladies and gentlemen!"

As the crowd rushed into the shuttled, the man spotted Kavreel in a distance.

Pointing at him, he shouted, "You there! Hurry up!"

"Y, yes, sir!" And he dashed toward one of the shuttles.

It was just a reflex from his navy training days.

-Fin