

[Legends arc] [Andromeda rebellion] [9071]

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This is the story about Andromeda rebellion occurred on 9077 and their success, thus forming Andromeda republic.

This story commended to be read AFTER when you finish the six stories in Cecil arc. However, this is a standalone story and may be read without having read any of Two Clusters stories.

Additionally, this is a fairly long story.

Related stories

[Juron Arc] [2] [The Knights] [9608]: (This story mentions Red plate shipyard and Andromeda rebellion explains how they ended up there.)

[Cecil arc] [6] [Project Marat] [8961]: (The appearance of aliens)

Year 9071

All began in a small remote mining outpost near Planet Dawn. It was a desolate place where the only visible traffic was when freighters came in and out for ore. People went there only when they had absolutely no other choices. It was good money but it was also highly risky due to being close in proximity with Nebula pirates. However, even the pirates didn't bother roaming the area.

The mining outpost was on edge of nebula, surrounded by a few groups of asteroids. Its main purpose was mine from nebula gas and nearby asteroids and send back ore and compressed gas crates to a processing plant.

The outpost was self-sufficient. Roughly two hundred men & women were stationed there. The administrator of the outpost was Christina and the co-administrator was Acshell Knell.

Christina was a daughter of a director at the company and was installed as the station manager. She wasn't a favorite by workers due to her passive nature and they hardly worked with her.

Acshell Knell was from the Knell family which was a newly approved clan that was based on Heaven of Order. It was a small clan with no political powers.

Unlike in Sol system, where the Bau and the O'ren held the firm control over most other smaller clans, in Andromeda cluster, there was no big clan that ruled over others. All clans in Andromeda cluster was small and no clan was dominant over others.

Acshell was a far more popular figure among the workers because he was an easy and outgoing man who often worked alongside the miners. Therefore, he was literally the deputy station manager which Christina didn't seem to mind at all. She did work with Acshell to some degree but never worked with the miners.

“It is that time of the year again,” Acshell said jokingly as he and Christina Lee entered the communication room. The station policy was that all external communication had to be executed from this chamber in order to prevent unnecessary calls.

The policy was in place to protect the station and its crews. They didn't need to make it known to the pirates that they were there. It was likely that pirates knew

existence of the station but they didn't need to keep reminding them with unnecessary communication calls.

It was the time when their annual plan and funding were transmitted from the central command of Heaven of Order. Their last year's annual funding was basically half of what was expected which caused quite a bit of uproar from the workers. The company explained that they were going a rough time and needed to cut funding on all of their stations and promised that the situation would improve.

Not wanting to lose jobs, the workers reluctantly agreed to accept the vastly decreased funding. Decreased funding also meant that the workers had to pay from their own wallets to make their ends meet.

"It's coming in," Acshell felt cold sweats on his palm. Personally, he couldn't care less about the annual funding. He was concerned more about the possibility of workers going on a strike or even worse, revolt.

As his fingers remained restless, a message was displayed by the console. "What the fuck?!" Acshell exclaimed with anger. "This is the same as the last year!"

Christina scratched her chin and sighed deeply.

"This is ridiculous!" Acshell turned away from the console violently and walked out of the communication chamber to deliver the news.

The reaction to the news wasn't good. The workers felt provoked. They had literally been paying to work and they firmly refused to go on for another year like so. What was worse was that their HQ demanded the same amount of output.

“Calm down! Calm down!” Acshell shouted in an attempt to halt a raging crowd in front of him. They were the workers who were loudly discussing the idea of taking over the station by force.

“Shut the fuck up, guys!” A man, named Creg, did his part which calmed down those around him. Creg and Acshell were good friends who had worked together for a bunch of career opportunities. Creg was a man who looked like he went through a lot of rough stuff. His face was ragged and his hands were as hard as a rock whereas Acshell looked more like a white collar gentleman.

Indeed, despite of having a career in space mining, Acshell had mostly been an office worker. And it wasn't an exception in this station as well. He hardly partook in the mining operation itself. He was more of a supervisor along with Christina. However, he did get along with the miners. For an example, he actively participated in drinking together and play games while having casual chitchats regarding mining operations.

After the crowd calmed down a little, Acshell argued.

“I will contact the HQ tomorrow and see what the hell is really going on. I am on your side here and I want to work this out. Taking over the station will make us a target and we will be shot down. Do you really want that?”

Because it was Acshell, the miners listened to him. However, it still did not suppress their irritations. “What if they meant what they said?” One of the angry workers asked with a frustrated voice and other miners nodded along with him.

“They meant what they said,” One of the exclaimed bluntly in agreement.

“Yeah, there is no point in taking to'em!”

“So what, we are turning into pirates?!” Creg shouted back at them. “For frigging real? Or are you just dumb as shits?!” The workers quieted down as Creg vented over them. “I didn't come to Andromeda to be a frigging pirate!”

“Fuck this! I didn’t come here to pay to work, either!” A worker nearby Creg pushed him as he replied violently, and Creg pushed back which resulted a violent fight.

“Hey, hey, stop!” Aschell attempted to stop the fight but it was already too late because the workers started to fight each other because some agreed with Creg and Acshell.

“Arrrgghh, this hurts.”

Acshell muttered as he was treating his black eye in front of a bathroom mirror. The fight lasted half an hour before they dispersed.

“This is bullshit. I didn’t come here for this,” He talked to himself as he threw himself onto his bed. His bed sheet was worn. The outpost had not had sufficient fund to supply such miscellaneous goods. Even the laundry sector was only allowed to be used once per week. It was the result of deceased funding.

A beeping rang and Creg’s voice sounded.

“This is Creg. You there?”

Pressing a button on a panel by the mirror, Aschell responded, “Can we meet at the cafeteria?”

“Alright, see you there then.”

“Be there in 15 minutes.”

Acshell took a shower and eventually met up with Creg.

“You did take 15 minutes, jackass,” Creg muttered at him as he approached his table.

“Come on, give me a break. It was a big fight.”

“Fine, fine, sit down because we have something important to discuss.”

The cafeteria was empty besides the two which Acshell felt strange.

“Why only us two?”

“Because I made it to be like so.”

“Okay...” Acshell took a deep breath. He could feel Creg was about to tell him something big. “Shoot.”

“They want to take over the station,” Creg declared and quickly added, “They want to kill Christina and make you their leader. We don’t trust the bitch.”

Widening eyes, Acshell looked around nervously even though he knew there was no one around.

“Are you drunk or something?” He told Creg who was looking as stoic as possible.

“I thought you were on my side?!”

“I am not drunk and you heard me. And I am on your side.” Creg cleared his throat as he added, “But I am also with the miners on this one. They went too far.”

“I did say I am going to talk to them 12 hours later,” Acshell was whispering but Creg was certainly not.

“They are playing with us, you fool. Do you really believe that the company is going through a hard time?”

Acshell knew Creg had a good point and it was hard to argue against it. Still, it wasn’t a valid reason for him to turn into a criminal. After all, his life was practically guaranteed by his clan. He wasn’t about to ditch an easy life.

“Listen, I am not naïve enough to believe them but I am also not naïve enough to think that they are playing with us! They must have a reason for this and I intend to find out.”

Creg growled silently as he shook his head.

Acshell pressed on, "Listen, Creg, let me talk to them just one more time. Then we can discuss and trust me, I will be willing to discuss."

Creg reluctantly agreed on the 12-hour extension.

And Acshell headed straight to Christina's quarter afterwards and informed her of what had been occurring.

"I am not surprised," She told him stoically in her black night gown. She did seem unsurprised to his surprise.

"Do you know something I don't? Because your life is in danger apparently and you are acting so cool."

She beamed a cryptic grin at him. "Shall I panic then? Perhaps run down this hallway and scream 'save me!'"

Acshell shrugged. "Whatever," He muttered, "I am just trying to help you and this is how I get thanked."

"There is nothing much you can do. If they want me dead, I will end up dead."

"Do you have any idea why the company is treating like this? It's not like we are a bunch of criminals trying to pay back what we owe."

Christina walked around her quarter for a moment with fingers on her chin. "I am assuming this has something to do with the increased tax that got passed recently."

"What? Another tax increase? Didn't they just increase tax last year?"

President Mirren had been aggressively increasing tax on Andromeda colonies.

"From 27 percent to 31, I believe," She added.

"Holy crap...," Acshell uttered.

"I see you in front of console pretty often. Didn't you ever read news?"

Actually, he was playing games.

“What now then...,” He talked to himself, fearing that it would be useless to talk to the company.

“Listening to them might work.” She suggested, “You know, going rogue and take over the station.”

“Are you kidding me?” He frowned. “I am not turning into a criminal.”

“I don’t think you have much of a choice here. They don’t trust me but they trust you. If you really want, you are probably the only one who can save me.”

“How do you think I can save you?”

“Claim that I am your woman. That should be good enough to keep them from killing me.”

As shock as Acshell was at her suggestion, he actually thought it was a fair idea. However, soon, he shook his head repeatedly. “Whoa, wait, you are asking me to turn into a criminal.”

“Do you think you have a choice? They are going to kill you if you don’t lead them.”

Gritting his teeth, he uttered, “Crappy hell...” Placing his hands on his waist, he walked in a circle restlessly. “Crappy hell, crappy hell,” He repeated as he let his frustration got a better of him. Eventually, he told Christina, “I will deal with this somehow.” And he left her quarter.

As soon as it was the time, Acshell fired up the console and established a communication to his company HQ. He wasn’t going to tell his employer that his workers were going to revolt on him. Instead, he laid the groundwork by informing them that the workers were really upset and they may go on a strike.

Whoever it was on the screen eventually made a statement after listening to what Acshell had to pay for a good minute or two.

“Are you loyal to us? If you are, shoot them down. We don’t need employees who don’t want to work with us.”

‘How the fuck can you expect them to work with you when you aren’t paying them, for fuck’s sake!’ He yelled in his mind.

“Yes, I am loyal to you,” He lied to get the conversation going. “I’d like to know your reason or reasons behind this. Cutting the budget by half and still expecting the same ore output was never going to work.”

The man on screen appeared to be a rich executive who never had dirt on his hands. The way he talked to Acshell, he felt as if he was looking down on him as if he was a slave of his. He certainly did not like how he looked down on him. But it wasn’t time to get personal.

“You may shoot down half of them and make them get back to work. That way, you will receive the full wage, no?” His bored expression on his face indicated that he wasn’t just interested as long as he’d get the result he wanted.

Twitching his eyebrows, he responded as normal as he could, “I see. I will see what I can do.”

“I expect a good result. And I will personally promote you if you manage this well.”

When he left the communication chamber, he confronted Creg and workers who had seized Christina and had her down on her knees. A gun held by Creg was pointed at back of her head.

“What did they say?” Creg demanded as he glanced at Christina, indicating that he’d shoot her dead if news wasn’t positive.

Sighing and shaking his head, Acshell gently warned, "Guys..." *'Why does this happen to me'* "You don't want to do that."

"Acshell, you are a good pal, so answer the question for God's sake," Creg told him with a slow but threatening voice.

He saw no other choice and complied.

"They don't want to work with us." He raised his voice. "In fact, whoever was on the channel wanted me to shoot you all down. Happy now?"

The workers murmured and Creg shut his eyes while sighing deeply but it was the moment Acshell kicked the pistol out of Creg's hand.

"And let her go, you dumbass!" He exclaimed afterwards. "Why does she have to do any of this?!"

"Well, isn't she a daughter of one of the directors?!" A worker shouted and attempted to grab the pistol.

"So what, you dumbass!" Acshell bellowed. "If she really knew what the fuck was going on, she would have fled! Don't you have a brain?! Stop him!"

To his own surprise, it was Creg who made a body slamming tackle and brought him down before he could reach the pistol. Other workers were hesitant in acting.

"And untie her!" The workers were hesitant and Acshell shouted at them. "You want me to be your leader?! Then follow the fucking command!"

One of the workers reluctantly untied her and let her stand. Massaging her wrists, she thanked Acshell.

'There is no going back now.'

He inquired her gently, "Now, Christina, you must have some idea as to why this is occurring. Do you have any idea?"

With her eyes downcast, she weakly answered, "No..., not really."

He felt she was lying and he assumed it was because of the crowd. Having decided swiftly to question her later, he changed the subject.

“Okay, Creg, get that guy locked up.”

“Got it.” Creg was about to drag the guy away from the scene but he quickly exclaimed.

“W, wait! I surrender! Please.”

Creg fired a silent glance at Acshell who asked him, “Really, who are you anyway?”

“My name is Richard Bau. I realize I was acting too hastily but you can understand all of us were getting impatient.”

Being clearly skeptical, Creg uttered, “A Bau? What the hell is a Bau doing here?”

Richard quickly explained himself, “I am an exile. I may be a Bau but really I am not.”

“Well, fuck, don’t mention that name then!” Creg violently responded and gave him a kick at his back as he released him.

The Bau wasn’t quite popular within Andromeda cluster. The clan was seen as a big bully to outsiders and it didn’t certainly help that they attempted to establish a Bau division on Heaven of order.

“I am sorry!” Richard cowered as he took the kick.

Sighing over the scene, Acshell turned around to leave the scene while taking Christina with him.

“Hey, I will be there when you need me,” Creg said to which Acshell nodded as he left.

It turned out that Christina did not really know much else. She did confess that her father seemed to have been ostracized from the boards which she wasn’t fully

certain of. However, she hadn't been able to communicate with her father for two years which indirectly confirmed that something did happen to her father.

"There is a chance that they are doing this to you to get me killed," She added.

They were apparently in Acshell's quarter and he had secured the room in case of being eavesdropped.

"Bullshit, I am sorry but you are virtually nothing to their eyes," Acshell remarked. "I reckon there must be another reason."

Christina's shoulders sagged as she didn't have any other ideas. "Is it really true what you said back there?"

"What I said?"

"You claimed that they wanted you to shoot them down."

"Oh, yeah." He sneered. "That's true. Get half of them killed so that the wage evens out for the rest of survivors." After growling momentarily, he blurted, "What a load of fucking bullshit. He talked as if lives were nothing more than digits."

"What are you going to do now? It seems you are in charge now."

"That is actually a good question."

Acshell never had any intention of plotting a riot or anything remotely similar. The Knell family sent him to this remote mining station to learn a thing or two about the society and he was going back after ten years or so.

While he bore no deep affection to his clan, he had a reputation to keep for the clan's sake. Going the pirate route would sacrifice his reputation and perhaps his family's as well.

However, Acshell wasn't blind enough not to be able to see that, if he refused, he might not survive from this situation. He was left with no choice but to accept to be their leader for the time being. He figured he'd somehow get out of the whole mass somehow along the way.

This was how it all began. This small group of disgruntled miners started the Andromeda rebellion. It would start off with no intention of creating the rebellion but the general populace of Andromeda cluster was becoming really fed up with ever increasing taxes, not to mention clear discriminations toward the colonists in terms of social benefits, or rather lack of.

Before they truly turned rouge, however, Acshell had a meeting with the miners. He gathered everyone in a docking bay. Everyone was present.

The workers were gathered around Acshell who was standing on a crate. Mining frigates were neatly positioned out of the crowd. Christina was a distance away from the crowd as per Acshell's instruction.

"Ok, guys, I guess you are all here," He addressed the crowd as he looked around. "I called for this meeting because I wanted to make sure you are all up for this."

The crowd was tame and waited for him to continue.

"Are you really up for this? There is no going back once we turn rouge. We will be hunted down and become wanted."

It was basically Acshell's last chance to turn the situation around.

"What choice do we have?" A miner demanded. "Are you proposing that we pay to work for another year? And then what?"

The general crowd agreed with him.

"We can just walk away from the job," Acshell argued. "We can just leave."

"We are under a contract," Richard talked back. "Under the contract, it says we can't walk away unless we pay fine. They don't define how much fine though."

It was something Acshell wasn't aware of. Who'd read contract documents?

“You sure about that?” To which Richard Bau gave him a firm nod. “Crap,” He responded. Since the amount of fine wasn’t clearly defined, it could be anything.

Suddenly, Acshell lost his ground. He fired a desperate glance back at Christina to confirm what Richard claimed. She gave a quick nod which confirmed his fear. It meant that, if they walked out, they’d still be chased.

“Acshell, I know you are reluctant to go ahead with this,” Creg said, “But we are getting scammed.”

Still, for Acshell, it wouldn’t be much of a problem since he belonged to a clan. His clan would sort it out for him if needed. However, he wasn’t stupid enough to say that out loudly in front of two hundreds of people who were pretty much screwed at this point.

Once they decided to turn rouge, what they needed to do next was fairly clear. They could not simply stay at the station and duke it out, so to speak. They needed to leave the station. And in order to do so, they needed ships. They did have ships in mining frigates but they weren’t designed for long voyage.

It was Christina who came up with a plan. She claimed that they needed combat capable ships and she believed it was possible to catch a patrol fleet off-guard since nobody was aware of their intention to go rouge against their parent company.

The plan was to send a distress signal. A patrol fleet would come to the station to see what happened. Modified EMP mines would be placed around asteroid debris which would disable patrol ships once they enter its range.

It was a simple, yet effective plan, and the miners began to work on producing EMP mines.

It took six weeks, but a patrol fleet of six cruisers made an approach to the station.

"We've received a distress signal. Inform us what has gone wrong." It was a voice only.

"Here goes nothing," Acshell whispered to himself as he took a deep breath. "Our main reactor is out. We have no way of fixing it. I am hoping that you'd bring some spare parts for the reactor. We will be cold dead soon without spare parts."

"That's odd. You are out of spare parts? I thought mining outposts had a mandatory rule of carrying enough spare parts for few seasons at least."

"Our reactor has been going out constantly recently. We've been fixing it for some time, thus we've been using excessive amount of spare parts," Acshell replied with a calm voice.

"I see. We have some spare parts. We will bring them right over."

The channel was closed.

Acshell let out of a relieved sigh.

"They should be here in two hours," Creg said to others on the bridge. "Get ready, everyone."

Acshell spoke to everyone on the bridge, "Just to be clear, we are not going to kill anyone. Disable the ships and demand them to surrender, and we will leave them here while we get out with their ships."

Everyone was silent and he raised his voice. "Got it?!"

"Yeah, yeah, we hear you," Creg responded casually.

"No, you better pay attention." He pointed at Creg who was shrugging off his statement. "I am the boss, so you pay attention to what I say. We kill no one. Understand?!"

Creg along with other miners on the bridge nodded in silence and an uncomfortable silence dominated the area.

In two hours, the patrol fleet had arrived at the mining outpost. There were eight ships.

"Eight cruiser class ships." Richard was reading sensor readings. "They are fine ships. I cannot wait to get the hell out of here."

"What does their ship signatures say?" Acshell inquired.

"What?" Richard didn't expect such an inquiry and was baffled by it. "Why does it even matter?" At this point, Creg who was overseeing the command center, slapped his head from back as he dashed to him.

"Obey the boss," Creg warned Richard.

"Hey!" Richard turned around to face Creg but instead saw a gun barrel pointed at him.

"OBEY the boss." Creg spelled it out slowly in an intimidating manner.

With hands up, Richard uttered, "Okay, fine, you made the point. Okay, fine." And then slowly turned around and looked down on his console in front of him. "It begins with USF."

Creg turned around to face Acshell and told him, "They are United Sol navy vassals."

"Damn...," Acshell whispered. He wished that they were mercenary vassals instead.

"They are asking us to open docking bay," Richard informed to which Acshell gave the permission.

The fleet was slowly approaching docking bay and ...

Acshell started off slowly. "5... 4... 3..." And then shouted. "2... 1... Now!"

A rapidly expanding balls of blue light occurred from various spots. The light expanded and embraced everything, including the outpost, in a matter of seconds. The light vanished shortly afterwards. The outpost as well as the patrol ships were EMP-shielded. However, strength of the EMP mines were on a different level. It radiated much stronger waves which wiped out the patrol ships' anti-EMP coating but the outpost withstood the EMP waves due to its bigger mass and stronger shielding.

“The ships are disabled,” Richard reported. “They are dead in water.”

Nodding, Acshell gave a green light.

The miners had been waiting for actions for some time and the green light given by Acshell meant that they could finally do something as in taking actions. Many chronically bored miners turned violent as they attached their mining ships onto cruiser hulls. Their mining frigates were protected by the outpost from the EMP.

The patrol cruisers, however, were completely dead in water. They couldn't even use communications for S.O.S or simple signals.

“They are drilling now. Shouldn't take more than half an hour before they get through,” Creg informed Acshell who looked relaxed in his post.

However, as the miners boarded the cruisers, the navy members resisted by brawling which was expected. What wasn't expected that they were surprisingly good at repelling the miners which prompted Acshell, who was a class A hyper human, to act. Creg was also a class B hyper human who assisted him.

Acshell and Creg entered a cruiser through a guarded breached hole that the miners created. Some miners were fiercely guarding the area against navy members who were fighting back with batons because their guns were also disabled due to EMP.

As soon as Creg activated his energy blade, he was stopped by Acshell.

“Woah, wait. No one dies, I said.”

“Oh, right, sorry.” Creg quickly turned it off. “Old fashioned fist fights then.”

“Yep.”

Creg spoke with a snicker, “Man, I haven’t had a fist fight for a looong time.”

Both men wore miner’s gloves as they began fighting their way through the ship’s bridge. They were able to make it to the bridge in ten minutes and knock down the ship’s captain.

Rinse and repeat seven more times, the patrol ships were theirs.

Captured USF navy crews were being held in a docking bay where they were watched by tens of miners with modified mining guns which would be lethal to human beings.

"Good job!" Richard was joyfully patting others' backs in the docking bay. Acshell was also there along with Creg, Christina, and others.

“I don’t like Richard,” Creg whispered to Acshell. “I think he’s gonna rat us out at one point.”

Christina agreed with a nod and whispered, “He claimed he is a Bau exile. How can we know for sure?”

“What are you suggesting?” Acshell questioned them.

“I say we leave him with the navy crews,” Creg suggested while Christina remained silent.

It was true that even Acshell was skeptical of Richard’s allegiance but it was also true that he had been with the rest of miners since the start. He didn’t recall him causing any troubles. Considering his recent behaviors, however, it was strange that he didn’t cause any troubles unless...

“You guys are overrating the dude,” Acshell answered. “He is a loner and is hardly a harmful element.”

Creg wasn't obviously pleased with Acshell's intention to keep him around but spoke no more.

“What to do with the navy crews?” Christina asked.

There were over five hundred navy personnel in the docking bay.

“Divide them into as many groups as possible and shove them into quarters and then weld the doors shut. I think that's the safest way to keep them out,” Acshell suggested.

“They will need food and water,” Christina said.

“How long do you think it will take them to be rescued once we leave?”

Knowing what Acshell was thinking, she responded, “They will starve to death.”

Growling, Creg suggested with a shrug, “Can't we just toss them into the cafeteria and gas them out? By time they wake up, we will be long gone.”

Acshell and Christina looked at him, and Creg responded with narrowed eyes, “What?”

Although the ships required extensive repairs to be fully functional, the miners were able to get the ships running in a day. They had to savage their mining ships for circuit boards but they were able to restore all ships to minimum working condition.

And the captured navy members were forced to enter the cafeteria where they'd be gassed.

“Why are you doing this?” One of the navy captains demanded as miners were dragging him into the cafeteria.

Acshell chose to remain silent and so did the others.

“We can talk through this. Let us go and I swear I will not report this!” The navy captain shouted as he was dragged into the cafeteria. Since they weren’t informed they’d be simply gassed to be unconscious, they were fearing that the miners were trying to kill them.

Once all of them were in, they welded the doors and triggered gas release which was met with loud shouting and swearing as the navy members feared the worst.

“They will be out for eight hours,” Christina said to Acshell.

“Alright, let’s go.”

Eight ships, that’s what they started out. Once all aboard, Acshell commanded to fire on the docking bay of the mining station so that the navy members wouldn’t be able to get out even if they somehow repair mining frigates docked in the bay. He was just being extra cautious because eight hours was plenty of time to get away. In reality, they’d have weeks even if the navy crews somehow sent SOS signal.

“Where to now?” Creg casually asked with his feet on console.

“That’s a good question. Anyone has any idea?” Acshell looked around and asked for opinions.

“We should probably hide for some years,” Christina said, she was at a console as well.

“I know we need to hide, girl,” Creg talked back. “But where do we hide?”

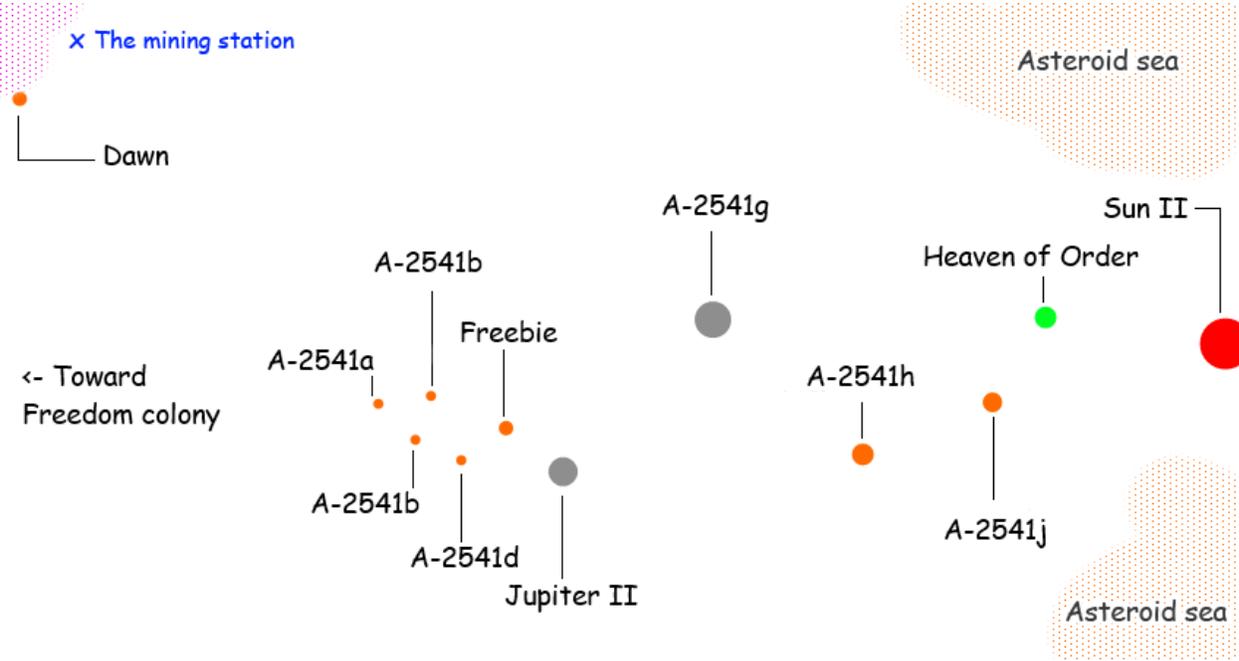
Christina loaded a holographic map of Andromeda system on main screen and everyone took their time to study the map. But it wasn’t hard to avoid a large sea of asteroids in outskirts of Inner Andromeda.

“That asteroid sea is charming,” Acshell weighted in his opinion.

“It’s probably the first place they will perform search though,” Christina said.

“Most likely but we won’t be alone there and their search will be hit or miss,” Acshell said with confidence.

There was a large area of asteroids in outer regions of Inner Andromeda. On space chart, the asteroid sea was located not too far from Heaven of Order. It was the main source of iron and copper supplies for the whole system. Therefore, there were numerous mining outposts scattered in the sea owned by private mining companies. The whole area was more or less a lawless zone and companies spent sizable amount of credits to hire mercenaries and enforce their own laws within their territories.



It was eventually decided that they'd head toward the asteroid sea and see before they decide to hide. Since it's take up to nine weeks just to reach the area, they'd have plenty of time to think over.

And therefore, the small fleet sailed toward the asteroid sea.

Acshell was watching a news show in his captain's quarter. He had been keeping close eyes on media signals in case news about their escape would appear on news. So far, however, there was no mention of their escape.

"It's been two weeks now..." He said to himself as he took his eyes off a holographic monitor. "I guess it's still too early."

When he exited his captain's quarter, he found not a single soul on the bridge. If he was a proper navy captain, he would have become furious, but he was not and understood why no one was present on the bridge. It was a boring job to man the bridge. Having little to do in front of a console for hours and hours was enough to bring sanity out of one's mind.

Acshell, after a casual loose shrug, approached a console and brought up sensor readings on main screen and watched it for a moment before turning it off and leaving the bridge.

Where he ended up was the cafeteria where he found most of his fellow miners along with Creg and Richard.

"What's up," Acshell threw a casual greeting toward a table where Creg and two other miners were having wine.

"Good timing, Aschell, we have a problem," Creg said as he stood up. He had his arm around Acshell's shoulder and led him away from others.

"What's the issue?" Acshell asked carefully.

“We have only wine.”

“Okay, what’s the issue?”

“Wine is the issue.”

Acshell frowned. “What?”

“Wine sucks. I, we, want beer or something other than wine.”

Acshell sighed and shook his head. He explained, “You do realize that we are on run, don’t you? We don’t have the luxury to be picky.”

Creg nodded along and dropped a bomb. “I want us to stop by Freebie.”

The planet Freebie, at this time, was a trade hub. It didn’t have an outpost in orbit yet however.

“Are you fucking crazy?!” Acshell involuntarily shouted.

“I..., no, we can’t hang on for extra six weeks or so with just wine!”

They quickly left the cafeteria at which point Acshell took Creg’s arm off his shoulders violently. He exclaimed right after, “Do you have any idea what you are asking?! That’s like four weeks just to get to the outpost during which, mind you, that our escape would be known to the authorities!”

Creg talked back fiercely, “So? No booze for life?!”

Honestly, Acshell had no idea. What he did know was that it wasn’t time to go after liquor at the moment. “I don’t know. We need to stay low for a bit. I can’t believe I am talking about booze here, Creg. We’ve got far more important things to take care of. You should know better of all people.”

Creg’s shoulders sagged and he dropped his head in mild disappointment.

“This is too boring. With booze, at least you can get high. This for six weeks or more? I am not sure if I could stay sane,” He muttered.

The miners were suffering from mild boredom syndrome. They always had their entertainment while working at the station and not having them around was

killing them slowly. They could have transferred their files but, in hinder sight, they left everything on station.

Acshell wasn't overly concerned about the issue although he wasn't going to strike it off as a non-issue. He knew something needed to be done but he also knew that it was no time for such luxuries. For the time being, he chose to do nothing.

It was some time during their fourth week in journey where they received an emergency distress call. And the distress call wasn't noticed by anyone for a long time until Acshell just happened to pass by the bridge to reach his captain's quarter. No one bothered coming to the bridge and it was really only him.

With his arms crossed, he was sitting in front of the console that had a flashing red light on top left which was an indication that a distress call was being received. Acshell wasn't sure whether he should answer. Eventually, he unfolded his arms with a long sigh and pressed a button to receive the signal.

“Hello?! Hello?!”

A desperate male voice sounded on the bridge.

“Hello??? Are you there?! Please, I need your help! Answer this please!”

Reluctantly, Acshell spoke, “Yes, I hear you. What is the problem?”

“Finally! A USF vassal! Thank, God!”

Acshell narrowed his eyes. He had completely forgotten that he was on a stolen navy ship.

“Please, come to my location. My freighter is being tackled by pirates!”

He wasn't sure whether he should respond and remained silent.

“Hello?? Officer?” Over the channel, it sounded as if he was tinkering with something. “Is this working? Hello? Is this signal lost?” He was desperately talking to himself in amid what appeared to be chaos.

Acshell started to tap his finger on his thigh, debating whether to answer him or simply ignore him.

“Oh, God-” The voice on the channel started to get teary. “I can’t believe this is how I am going to die.” The voice sounded as if he assumed the channel was dead. “Maybe, the navy patrol is coming here?”

Acshell placed the channel on hold so that his voice wouldn’t get through and opened a channel to the ships and crews.

He announced, “Guys, it looks like we have a freighter in a trouble by pirates. It’s not far from here.”

Soon enough, Creg and few miners rushed into the bridge.

“Say what?!” Creg exclaimed. “And we are going to help him?” And miners sat down at consoles.

“He thinks we are the navy and the guy does seem to be in need of help. He’s going to die if we don’t,” Acshell explained.

“But we are not the navy!”

“You think I don’t know that? We don’t have to say anything. Just repel the pirates and leave.”

“Do we even know how to use the ships effectively?”

One of miners at a console responded to Creg, “Should be a piece of cake. It isn’t too much different from handling mining lasers.”

In essence, both mining lasers and military grade lasers were both weapons. Mining lasers had far lower frequency to break down rocks whereas military grade lasers were extremely high frequency to inflict thermal damage.

Acshell opened a channel to the fleet and spoke, “This is Acshell. We are going to help out a merchant in need. Get to your stations and get ready for a small battle.”

Christina also entered the bridge but opted to keep a distance from everyone.

When the fleet arrived at the source of the distress signal, there was a freighter vassal that was tackled by a swarm of pirate fighters. There were also three frigates, all of which were reduced to mere wrecks.

“Fifty or so fighters,” A miner reported.

“Too much for just three frigates,” Creg added.

Acshell pulled up a sensor reading on the freighter. It was pretty much disabled with its engines burst.

“Uh, oh,” A miner exclaimed, “Those are coming after us.”

Acshell wasn't amused or panicked. “So? Fire!”

The fight lasted only briefly as the pirates didn't stay long and fled shortly the eight cruisers started to fire. Neither side suffered losses.

“The guy is hailing us, um...,” Creg was looking down on a console from a standing position. A miner was also seated behind the console. “It's a video channel.”

Acshell knew what Creg was concerned of. “Can't you change it to voice only?”

The miner and Creg started to fiddle around. Suddenly, main screen popped and the merchant showed up on the screen.

“Oh, hell, crap!” Creg uttered as he got down to avoid to be shown on screen.

“Hey, Cre-” Acshell was going to demand what was going on but quickly realized the channel was open. Clearing his throat, he calmly spoke to the merchant who had tears in his eyes.

“Hello, it's good that you made it,” He spoke as cool as possible.

“Thank you, sir! Thank you so much!” The merchant cried out. “I thought I was done for!”

Creg whispered, “Did he see me? Did he?”

“Don’t think so,” The miner nearby replied. “Keep down though.”

Acshell cleared his throat once more, indirectly telling them to shut up, and continued, “Glad to be your assistance. Now, we will go on our way...”

“Don’t close the channel yet. Please tell me your name. I am so going to file a recommendation for you when I get to Heaven of Order.”

“Uh...” Acshell smiled nervously. “That won’t be ... necessary. We simply did our job after all.”

“But, sir, you’ve saved my life! I ...” The merchant paused because he noticed that Acshell wasn’t wearing a navy uniform. His eyes filled with suspicions and he eventually continued, “I ... thank you.”

Acshell noticed the sudden change in the merchant and realized he must have noticed that something was amiss. Regardless, he put on a brave face and fared him well and closed the channel.

“He knows we are not the navy!” Creg exclaimed as he stood up at once.

“You are probably right on that,” Acshell responded indifferently. It didn’t matter, he felt. It wasn’t there anything he could do other than reporting.

“We need to shoot him down!” And then Creg turned to the console nearby and started to work with it.

“Whoa, hey!” Acshell got off his seat and grabbed Creg’s arm in an instant. “Even if he knows, so what? It’s not like he can do much!”

Creg attempted to shake his hand off which he failed. “He can inform the authorities and tell them what he knows!”

Acshell argued, “What does he know? He knows my face which doesn’t mean much by itself. He knows the ship signatures which, again, don’t mean much. He knows the coordinates we met which again don’t mean much!”

Creg couldn’t argue back and was merely fuming. Uneasy silence dominated the bridge until the freighter was shot and subsequently exploded into bits.

Eyes widely open, Acshell uttered, "What the fuck?!" On screen, the freighter bits were still exploding. "Who shot?!"

A miner took his hands off his console. "It wasn't me!" He uttered and added, "It wasn't this ship!"

Acshell dashed toward the captain's chair and pressed a button on a panel attached to its arm. "Who the fuck shot him?!"

An agitated voice answered him through a channel. "He was acting very suspicious at the end! I had to shoot him for our own safety!"

"I am the boss and I let him go! Who are you to deny that?!"

"Oh, fuck you!"

Acshell's attention switched to Creg. "Shoot that ship!" He aggressively told him and then he spoke through communication. "Shoot that fucking ship!"

Only six ships started to fire and two ships fought back, meaning effectively two ships revolted. The battle went on for fourteen minutes when the first of the two cruiser started to explode.

The last remaining cruiser attempted to surrender.

"You win! I yield!" Whoever was in command exclaimed desperately through a video channel.

"Too late for that!" Acshell responded aggressively.

"We are on the same side! Don't do this!" The miner became pale on screen as he desperately argued.

Acshell took a deep breath and gave out a short, but firm, reply. "You were." And then closed the channel. "Finish the damn ship."

With eyes closed, Christina shook her head.

When the conflict was over, remaining six ships continued on their journey toward their destination. It was this point when Christina asked a private meeting with Acshell.

“You want to leave?” Acshell was surprised to hear Christina. They were in the captain’s quarter and he was behind his desk and she was standing in front of the desk.

“Yes,” She said firmly, “If you allow me to leave, that is.”

He could sense sarcasm in her voice. “Does this have anything to do with what happened earlier?”

Reluctantly Christina answered, “You are losing the plot. I think you are going to get all of us killed.”

He wasn’t going to argue and didn’t certainly feel any need to keep her if she wanted to leave.

“How do you want to leave? Give you a shuttle and that’s it?”

She nodded without saying anything more. Acshell nodded repeated few times as if he was digesting the sudden event. “Okay,” He eventually said stoically. “In few days, we will be quite close to Heaven of Order. It should take only 2 weeks or so with a shuttle. You can leave then.”

“Thanks,” She also replied stoically.

Acshell stood up from his chair and offered a handshake. “I hope you will do well. And hopefully you will find out what happened to the company and your father.”

She accepted the handshake but spoke no further. And she did depart with a shuttle loaded with food supplies few days later.

Acshell was watching her shuttle progressively becoming smaller on main screen on the bridge. Creg was standing by him, also watching the screen.

“You sure we should let her go like that? She knows a lot, you know,” He said quietly.

In response, Acshell shrugged. "So what. They will find out about us sooner or later. We will be long gone by then."

"By 'long gone', do we mean we will be long dead or safe?"

Acshell chuckled. "Creg, not you, too."

"The air has been feeling awkward ever since you took down the rebels."

"Fear not, they will get their booze."

Creg chuckled as well.

When they entered outskirts of asteroid sea, Acshell was finally able to read news about "an apparent rebellion" at a remote mining station. The news claimed that a group of two hundred miners had raised a flag against the authorities and they were on loose. They also warned merchant fleets to be extremely careful of patrol fleets that may be rebels in disguise.

At first, Acshell was baffled how they were classified as "rebels". They weren't being paid and they walked away from their job in a violent way. He expected to be accused falsely but did not expect to be labelled as "rebels".

As he spent some time digesting the news, it became apparent to him that coming back to normal life was no longer an option. He initially planned to stay low in asteroid sea for few years before silently returning to civilization. He planned to ask his clan to help him in repelling convictions. But the whole event got out of control. Whether he wanted or not, it was him who was in charge when the merchant ship was blown to smithereens. He also ordered to kill his own fellow miners who revolted against him.

He shook his head silently in his quarter. He thought he had it all under his control. He was confident that he'd be able to sneak out at one point. But now it all seemed ... to have went wrong at some point.

"No going back now...," He said to himself as he continued to shake his head.

Year 9074, two and half years passed since.

Acshell, flanked by Creg and Richard, was standing in front of a crowd in a docking bay. There were three transports behind the crowd.

“Alright, gentleman and ladies!” Acshell shouted to reach out everyone.

“Welcome to the resistance!”

Two and half years ago, they managed to find an abandoned mining facility and settled down there. Life hadn’t been exactly easy but they managed to get by. Thanks to the media’s false accusation, the runaway miners were branded “rebels”. It made Acshell give up thinking of going back and chose to carry on the rebel tag, not only that he started to turn others into rebels.

Words spread and fed up colonists, due to massive and consistent tax hikes as well as poor treatments from the Ark, started to flock under his banner.

“I understand why you’ve chosen to join us!” He continued his speech. “And I assure you that we are all after the common goal.”

At first, Acshell cursed the media. It was because of them that his plan to turn himself in became impossible.

“The Ark no longer sees us as human beings. For them, we are just livestock to milk credit out of our wallets!” The crowds agreed with his speech by murmuring and nodding. “And I say it is about time that we stand against the bully!”

Eventually, Acshell accepted his fate and decided to go all the way. The media, for viewership increase, may have branded him a rebel but their little twist in truth ruined his life as well as the miners’ lives.

The crowds cheered as Acshell ended his speech. Things had been going well for him and his gang. The mining facility held over two thousand “freedom fighters” and they had dozens of cruisers, some of which had been stolen and hijacked from patrol fleets.

“It’s four hundred twenty this time,” Creg read off a report as he and Acshell were retreating from the docking bay. “They are increasing in numbers as well as frequency.”

“We are going to need another base as well as more ships,” Acshell said in response. “We will eventually have to fight off real United navy ships soon.”

“Agreed.”

“Sir,” Richard raised his hand although neither man could bother to turn back and see. “I have a contact from Red plate shipyard. They want to talk to us.”

Acshell and Creg immediately stopped walking and turned back to face Richard who still had his hand risen. “For real?” Acshell said out of amusement.

“Yesss, sir,” Richard replied with glee. “They wouldn’t tell me much but I think they want to strike a deal.”

Red plate shipyard was a third party frigate ship building company. They operated in Andromeda region only. They weren’t a prominent company at this moment and were struggling to find their own feet against steep competitions from other companies.

“Set a meeting with them ASAP then,” Acshell said. “But how come only you know of this?”

With a cheerful smile on his face, Richard scratched back of his head. “I’ve been reaching out. I know we need more ships, so you know, I did what I could.”

Creg gave him a slap on his back. “Good job, kid.”

The situation within inner Andromeda was such that majority of colonists were suffering from heavy taxes and struggled to make their ends meet. There were also no social benefits for colonists which meant that medical bill was not covered.

In other words, they paid taxes but received no benefit or whatsoever. The Ark representatives argued that the initial cost to colonize planets and building infrastructure cost them too much and they needed to recap the cost. Still, they had no answers for lack of social benefits as it was purely down to President Mirren who was very strongly against granting them even basic social benefits.

Strong discontent had been brewing for some decades and emergence of Acshell's media-claimed "rebellion" gave the perfect opportunity.

Some weeks later, two officials from Red plate shipyard sat down to talk a potential deal with Acshell. They were aboard a luxury cruiser provided by Red plate shipyard. The luxury cruiser came alone as a token of trust while Acshell brought ten cruisers. His cruisers surrounded the luxury cruiser as he entered the luxury cruiser.

One of finely dressed men with gelled hair beamed a grin at Acshell as he entered a conference room.

"You must be Acshell Knell."

"That I am." He swiftly sat down on a seat. The conference room resembled a five star hotel room with dark brown carpet floor with high quality aluminum table along with real wood chairs.

"So, Red plate shipyard, huh," Acshell crossed his fingers on table as he spoke. "I wonder what kind of deal you'd like to talk about."

"Straight to the topic, yes?"

"Of course because I am not a lying politician or a crooked diplomat."

The second official smiled although he spoke no words.

“True enough, let us get to the topic straight then.” The first official cleared his throat. “We, Red plate shipyard, have been struggling to establish a firm base of operation in Andromeda system. The competition has been fierce. Lightwave and Superstar are so much larger than us and we’ve been bullied. Right now, we have a single shipyard facility near A-2541g.”

Acshell nodded along and the official continued.

“You must realize that your influence is growing stronger every day. And your resistance right now has a very large sphere of influence in asteroid sea region. We ask your permission and cooperation so that we may establish few shipyards in the region.”

Nodding along, Acshell made a firm face. “That sounds reasonable enough. Makes perfect sense actually. Now, what will I get from this?”

“We may be a frigate shipyard company but we do have the capacity to produce cruisers. We will provide you with cruisers and you let us stay in the region. It is as simple as that.”

Again, Acshell nodded along. So far, they made perfect sense. Nothing seemed to be fishy.

“Are you not afraid of the authorities hammering down on you for this?” Acshell wondered. It was a genuine question.

“We are indeed afraid of that. And that is why the facilities will run under your organization on surface.”

Acshell saw no reason to refuse the deal. It was too good to turn down in fact. Ship supply had been the main problem.

“Very good. I accept,” He declared.

The official grinned as he responded, “You will understand that we will not sign anything.”

“Of course, better not leave useless evidence in case we get caught.”

This secret arrangement saw Acshell’s resistance grew rapidly over just few years. So far, his resistance was something the authorities were aware of but didn’t see as a threat. However, by year 9076, just two years after the secret deal, he had a fleet of 45 cruisers along with six thousand freedom fighters. At this point, the authorities could no longer just ignore.

And an event occurred which accelerated everything.

It was year 9076 season 1 14th day when two transports carrying disgruntled colonists were chased by a local patrol fleet near Heaven of Order. They were ordered to stand down which they refused and simply kept on going.

Long story short, the transports were shut down. That itself wasn’t a huge matter to deal with. The patrol fleet was within their right to enforce the laws. What shook general colonists was that the transports were carrying mainly women and children who found themselves too hard to support on their own and were fleeing to the resistance.

Perhaps, that itself was alright if it wasn’t a navy official on national TV show spoke of “lowly colonies” who “deserved the punishment”. It wasn’t the first time that the navy spoke lowly of colonies on official statement. However, when women and children ended up dying in freezing space and all the navy could say to refer them was “lowly colonists”, it irked a lot of people.

And the united voice from Andromeda colonists, who started to refer themselves as Andromedians, was clear; they needed to become independent.

“We need to become independent!” Acshell shouted in front of disgruntled members of the resistance, and the crowd acted to his shout by roaring positively.

“We do not deserve to be treated like slaves because we are not! Who the fuck do they think they are?!” He continued his speech in shout. “We are going to become independent!”

The members roared even louder.

They were in a docking bay and they were ready to leave. Their target was Heaven of Order. They intended to take the planet over. It may have sounded like a far-patched goal for a fleet of mere 45 cruisers, but it was certainly possible because Acshell believed the local populace on the planet would react to the takeover and assist them.

“We are going independent!” Acshell bellowed with his fist in air. Creg and Richard followed him and rose their fists in air.

Acshell brought his entire force into the operation. 45 cruisers along with 40 frigates as well as several transports departed from the resistant bases in asteroid sea.

“All ships reporting green, sir!” A pumped up crew on bridge reported firmly.

“Scouts are reporting in. Only few small patrol fleets are present at the planet,” Another crew reported.

Creg, who was standing by Acshell in the captain’s chair responded to the reports. “The time has arrived to take back what is rightfully ours!” And in response, all bridge crews roared a cheer.

Acshell gave a firm nod which was seen by those around him. In his mind though, there was a deep sigh. A rebel leader, he was. And his group was “the resistance”. After the group settled down in an abandoned mining facility, he had no idea how but refugees flocked in. The truth was that he did not do much other than trying to organize his group. Fast forward two years, the resistance grew big. Even if he knew his chances of returning was slim, he still had faint hope but as the resistance grew big, hope of possible return vanished completely.

Creg, on the other hand, was completely into the idea of the resistance.

“Creg,” Acshell called him out with a soft and low voice.

And he answered without turning his attention to him. “Yes?”

“Let’s have one huge party once we are done.”

Creg chuckled but didn’t respond.

The sudden emergence of Acshell’s fleet obviously alerted the local patrol fleets. However, they simply did not have enough ships to combat them effectively. And reinforcements would arrive weeks later.

Their solution to the immediate threat was fleeing. The administration officials were left behind and they desperately attempted to buy their ways out while Acshell’s fleet was still advancing toward the planet.

“Well, talk about being anticlimactic,” Acshell muttered as the view of Heaven of Order came on main screen. “Not a single patrol fleet showed up.”

“They fled,” Creg said.

“Tell me something I don’t know.”

Apparently, a group of armed civilians overtook a communication station and contacted them.

“The administration building is dead as dodo,” A civilian leader spoke on main screen with several people cheering in background. “They all fled once they heard news that the navy left.”

Acshell wasn’t pleased to hear the news because he knew that they’d back with far greater numbers soon. Placing the screen on hold so that they won’t hear the conversation, he asked Creg, “Creg, the planet has no outpost or shipyard, doesn’t it?”

“Not that I know of. As far as I know A-2541j has a mobile shipyard.”

Acshell crossed his arms and groaned.

“Something bothering you?”

“They will be back,” Acshell responded with a sigh. “We need a solid way to produce cruisers.”

“We have Red plate shipyard though, no?”

“For how long will they remain on our side, I wonder.”

“You think they will turn their back on us?”

“I don’t know.” Acshell shrugged. “They are a company. A company exists for profit. If they see a better deal than what they have with us, what is stopping them from turning their back on us?”

He had a point and Creg groaned while crossing his arms.

“Should we skip this planet and head directly for the shipyard by A-2541j then?”

“The populace here expects us to take over....” Then he seemed to have come up with an idea. “Send Richard down. Let him conquer the planet.”

“Richard? You sure? I don’t trust that guy.”

“He’s been with us since the beginning and did bring the Red plate shipyard deal. Give the guy some slack.”

Creg shrugged and said no more.

“Creg?” Acshell raised his voice.

“Fine, fine, I will send him down with some troops.”

Once Richard made it down with about five hundred troops along with few frigates for orbital support if needed, the rest of the fleet quickly departed Heaven of Order and set their course to A-2541j.

When they arrived within sensor range, twenty cruisers were detected by the mobile shipyard.

“So, they do intend to protect that asset of theirs,” Creg said while cracking his fingers.

“Get ready for a battle!” Acshell exclaimed.

While more than half fired back when Acshell’s fleet opened fire, some of the defending cruisers appeared clearly reluctant to fight back. They withdrew from the front line and stayed in back and the battle was clearly in the resistance’s favor just after an hour.

“They never stood a chance,” Creg remarked.

“Those in the back,” Acshell mentioned while pointing at a corner of main screen. “What’s their intention, I wonder.”

“Deserters, perhaps,” Creg responded carelessly. “Whoever they are, they ain’t a threat.”

After another hour went by, remaining two cruisers surrendered. This was when the group of seemingly deserter cruisers hailed them.

“We surrender,” A man on screen declared. He donned a United Sol navy coat.

“What was going on there? You didn’t even put up a fight,” Acshell asked.

“I, along with most of the crews aboard, am a native Andromedian. I guess I was one of the luckier ones to have come this far in the navy. I just could not attack you.”

He sounded sincere and genuine.

“Ok, Mr...”

“It’s Captain Morrik. I belong..., or used to belong, to United Sol-Andromeda patrol fleet division 662.”

“Alright, captain. I will accept your surrender if you can meet me in person down on that mobile shipyard, deal?” Having said so, Acshell stood up from his chair.

Morrik seemed rather confused why he had to make such a demand but nevertheless he accepted and the channel was off.

“What’s the point of meeting the guy?” Creg also wondered and asked.

“For no reason. I just want to take a tour on the shipyard and why not meet the new guy in process. I will leave the fleet to you while I am away.”

“You got it.”

The mobile shipyard was a fully featured shipyard. But it had to be anchored before being able to manufacture ships. It was one of the first mobile base technology which United Sol had been working on.

When Acshell’s shuttle landed on its docking bay, crews were on high alert. Many of them had their hands on weapons. While Morrik and remaining ships surrendered, the mobile shipyard itself hadn’t actually surrendered yet although they were forced to, given the situation. And when Acshell and two bodyguards exited from their shuttle, they were taking steps back with hands on weapons.

The tension was progressively mounting until Morrik’s shuttle touched down swiftly and he dashed out of his shuttle.

“Weapons down!” He shouted at nervous docking bay crews. “Weapons down!” And he stood in front of Acshell and his bodyguards, literally acting as a meat shield. “I said, weapons down!”

There were more shuttles entering which touched down in haste. They were Morrik’s men who quickly took over the docking bay.

“Thank you, captain,” Acshell said from behind.

Looking back, Morrik muttered, “Sir, I think I can see why you did what you did but did you really have to?”

Shrugging with a grin, Acshell responded, "I didn't have to. It's the same with this rebellion. We don't have to do this."

Morrik nodded repeated a few times. "Alright, I suppose you have a point. This shipyard will soon be under your control."

"Our control, I am not doing this alone, you know."

"Of course, sir."

Acshell made a quick tour of the shipyard once the situation calmed down and ordered the shipyard to relocate to Heaven of Order. With the planet, A-2541j, being completely defenseless after United Sol navy patrols were wiped out, the planet surrendered to the resistance as well.

When the fleet of fifty seven cruisers returned to Heaven of Order, Richard had the planet fully under the control already. The local populace was glad to see the resistance taking over and were in cheerful mood when the fleet was seen from the ground.

Richard returned to Acshell as soon as he could to deliver his reports. They were in the captain's quarter.

"I met no resistance when I went down. In fact, the local people joined and assisted me in breaking into government buildings which were already evacuated."

Acshell nodded as he heard Richard's report.

"I've also arranged an exclusive interview for you from the local media."

Acshell narrowed his eyes as he heard something completely unexpected. "Say what? What did you do that for?"

Richard giggled. "It will be good!" He exclaimed with excitement. "They should get to know who you are."

"Richard..." Sighing, Acshell shook his head.

“I’ve also attempted to find out what happened to Christina.”

“Oh? I didn’t know you cared about her.” In fact, her existence hadn’t crossed his time until Richard mentioned her.

“She was an old pal of ours. Of course, I do!” Richard punched his chest proudly, but his cheerful face soon died. “I have bad news though.”

According to Richard, Christina was charged with treason and was prosecuted as soon as she landed on the planet. She had to endure six trials before finally being given a prison sentence.

“What The Fuck,” Achsell uttered boldly. “Treason? What a load of bullcrap.”

“She was then sent to a maximum security prison that’s located in asteroid sea,” Richard concluded. He quickly added, “Should we rescue her? The prison is actually under our control now since you’ve taken this planet as well as A-2541j. We will have to fight some guards but you get the point.”

Taking a deep breath, Acshell made a pouting face. She left by her own accord. If she was caught while still belonging to the resistance, he would certainly attempt to get her out.

Noticing that Acshell was actually being reluctant, he told him, “You don’t have to save her of course. After all, she did leave on her own. It’s not like she was kicked out.”

“Exactly, Richard. Besides, she told me that I was getting everyone killed but here I am. How long is she locked up for?”

“Her full sentence is 200 years with no chance of parole for 50 years.”

“Bah, excessive. Bullshit justice system. I don’t even know how she got charged with treason in the first place.”

“Well, I suppose you could let her rot in there for few decades and grant her parole?”

Richard's suggestion actually sounded okay to his ears. "Yeah, let's do that. I will let her rot for some years." He bore no ill grudge against Christina. However, she did leave on her own after telling him that he was basically set out to kill everyone around him. While he did let her go unharmed at that stage, her departure certainly did not leave good taste in his mouth.

"Remind me about her one day," He told Richard half-jokingly.

"And I have some news about your clan."

Acshell immediately startled; it never crossed his mind so far about well-being of his clan.

"Oh, shit..." Sighing and shaking his head, he responded, "I didn't even think about... Crap. Okay, tell me."

Things had been pretty chaotic and he didn't have time to even think about his family although there wasn't any direct family he should have been concerned about.

"Well..., it's bad news."

But he took it fairly well. "How bad could it be? They weren't killed, were they?"

"NO, no." Richard shook his head repeatedly. "Not that bad."

Richard explained that the Knell family was kicked out of the planet after it was found that Acshell was leading "the resistance". They were sent to Dawn and that was as far as Richard could track.

"So, not a single member of my clan is here?"

Richard gave him a careful nod.

"Well..." Acshell took a deep breath and his shoulders sagged. "Getting kicked out to Dawn is perhaps as good as death... But at least they weren't killed."

"We can certainly prepare for a rescue operation."

“No.” His answer was firm. “I no longer belong to a clan. I told myself that I was no longer a member of the Knell family when this whole thing got blown out of proportion. They are gone. So be it.”

Acshell’s sentiment was something Richard could actually understand. He was kicked out of the Bau and he no longer had any attachment toward his former clan. He was never an important member of the Bau and it didn’t really matter whether he belonged to the clan or not. Acshell was also never an important member. Otherwise, he wouldn’t have been sent to a remote mining station. When Richard informed Acshell that his clan was gone, he didn’t feel anything other than “Oh, well”.

Taking a deep breath, Acshell inquired Richard, “So what do you suggest that I do from now on?”

Looking surprised, Richard pointed at himself. “Me? You are asking me?”

Acshell had noticed that Richard was fairly smart. He had somewhat jittery behaviors that overshadowed his intellect and he knew that Richard was good at getting things done.

“Yep, I am asking you. You and Creg are my most trusted comrades.”

Richard had thin layer of tears in his eyes as he heard what Acshell told him. “You have no idea what that means to me...,” He mumbled. Blinking few times to get rid of his tears, he cleared his throat and responded. “First of all, you should go ahead with the interview I set up for you. Whatever questions they throw at you, just answer them honestly. Let the people know that you have a humble beginning and that you are on a similar level as they are. The more they feel they can relate to you, the better it will be for your popularity.”

Acshell nodded. “And then?”

“And then you should declare a formal war against United Sol.”

“Even if we have only fifty-something ships?”

Richard grinned. "Listen, I am from Bau and I know how the Ark politics work. They could crush you with Earth defense fleet but they won't mobilize Earth defense fleet." He rolled his eyes and looked up as if he was thinking something quickly. "They won't mobilize that fleet until it's probably too late anyway." And then his attention moved back to Acshell. "Until then we will face shadows of the real thing. Fifty-something will be enough as long as we play defensive battles behind orbital batteries."

"Speaking of which, why were you exiled?"

Richard froze immediately upon hearing Acshell's, perhaps innocent, question.

"Of course, you don't have to tell me. I was just curious."

Richard made few fake coughs. "No, no, I suppose you should know. I ..." After an obvious moment of hesitation, he answered with a low voice. "Touched a girl I shouldn't have."

"Touched?" Acshell twisted his head, trying to understand the meaning. "You mean raped?"

Richard made an awkward smile. "I guess... that's another way to put it."

"Hah," Acshell laughed weakly. "I didn't know you'd have the guts to do that."

"It was a moment of madness," Richard defended himself while scratching back of his head. "Really, it was a moment of madness."

"I am not judging you here."

Richard was obviously ashamed of what he had done. "Well..., thanks. It was a moment of madness but I really liked the girl."

It was really none of his business and he decided not to pay too much attention to that. "So, I will attend the interview and I want you to prepare for a speech for me to use when we declare the independence."

Richard nodded repeatedly. "You've got it."

Acshell's interview was held on an empty stage where they were only him and a female journalist. The lightning was fairly dim but was focused enough to clearly show the two people.

"How did you end up becoming the leader of the resistance?" A female journalist inquired him with a clueless face; she really didn't know anything.

There was a wave of a cryptic smile on his face as he heard the journalist's question. He never wanted to be a part of the so-called rebellion. He never had any plan for that. Alas, his life was ruined by a journalist's desire for materials.

"I suppose I should thank the media or whoever the crook was," He said with a faint smile on his face.

Looking confused, the female journalist inquired him gently, "Pardon? Please elaborate."

Acshell explained that rebellion was never his idea. Rather he was forced to become a rebellion leader because a certain journalist cooked up bogus news.

He added with a chuckle, "When the media says you are a rebel leader, you are pretty much a rebel leader."

The female journalist looked astonished and speechless for a moment. Eventually, she managed to respond. "You can't be serious?"

"I am serious, ma'am. I, along with others, was a disgruntled miner who chose to run away from a scam contract set up by a mining company. How much do you know about us anyway?"

The female journalist's eye focus suddenly faded, meaning she was being fed information from her eye implant. Within seconds, her focus came back and responded, "From what I've read just now, it says you lured a group of patrol fleet

and stole their ships. And then announced to the universe that you formed the resistance.”

Achsell laughed out loudly. He was laughing so hard and so loudly that tears were coming out of his eyes. He eventually managed to get words out after a good 10-second laugh. “You should find and fire, or even kill, the journalist who was behind that bogus bullshit.” He continued to explain. “Our contact forbade us from backing out of our work without heavily being fined and we weren’t being paid, so we chose to walk out with a bang. We weren’t planning to do anything whether you believe or not. We were planning to stay low for some years and go back to our home.”

The female journalist seemed to have a hard time trusting Acshell’s story but she nodded along.

And shortly after the interview, Acshell flanked by Creg, Richard, and Morrik stood on a stage. A huge crowd was gathered in front of them.

It was year 9077 season 3 34th day. The resistance formally declared independence against United Sol. Since United Sol refused to grant independence, it was formally a war.

However, despite of being entangled in a war, for the populace, it did not feel like a war. Actual conflicts were few and far between because of logistics issues that United Sol fleets faced. Almost all food supplies were provided by Heaven of Order and losing the planet meant United Sol ships had no decent supply depot within Andromeda cluster. Therefore, they attempted to establish a supply depot which was the birth of Freebie outpost but the construction was taking many years.

Therefore, Acshell and Co had relatively peaceful days. Random skirmish warfare was the only actions they had been seeing.

Meanwhile, Richard drafted new laws and Acshell declared them official. New civil and tax codes were implemented and the new citizens of Andromeda republic was

happy to embrace new leadership. The taxes were high at 35% but they understood the need for high taxes and therefore were content in paying that much. They knew at least that their tax money would be used to create their new nation. Acshell did promise to lower taxes down to 10% once the war was over.

Almost all tax income was spent in the newly formed Andromeda navy. The mobile shipyard along with Red plate shipyard were always at full production and speed to push out as many cruisers as possible. Red plate shipyard company was founded during Andromeda colonization era and they had no presence in Sol system. Therefore, the company was willing to join Andromeda republic as the first private company. In contrast, all other companies had to withdraw their presence from the planet. However, since they left their factories as well as infrastructures intact, the republic took over the abandoned facilities and they became state-owned companies.

And when Freebie outpost was complete, it was year 9082 and Andromeda navy had grown to 110-large fleet. By no means was the fleet large enough to confront Earth defense fleet which was over 5,000 in numbers but Earth defense fleet was at Earth which was more than 20 weeks away from Heaven of Order. Furthermore, mobilizing Earth defense fleet required the Ark house to vote unless it was emergency, and Acshell was informed that no vote had been cast yet, meaning they weren't going to face the mighty fleet at the moment.

For additional several years, skirmish warfare remained to be the main dish for both United Sol and Andromeda republic. United Sol wasn't ready to commit vast resources and logistics required to mount a full-scale force and Andromeda republic, or the resistance United Sol insisted on referred them as, was simply not ready for a full-scale war.

Which ultimately meant it was adventurous for Acshell and Co since they were given time to build a sizable fleet.

And finally on year 9084, Andromeda republic mounted an actual invasion on A-2541h which was a neighboring planet of A-2541j.

A fleet of 130 cruisers were approaching the planet after formally announcing their intention of attack. No official response from United Sol was made.

“Detecting a small fleet of a hundred at the planet along with a small mobile outpost,” Richard at a console reported. “Number wise, we are on a superior position.”

Creg, who was standing by Acshell, spoke, “Your orders?”

“Send them a message. If they surrender, they can either choose to join us or leave unharmed. If they resist, surrender will not be taken lightly.”

Richard nodded and sent the message.

“No response, boss.”

Acshell snickered. “Probably not, but let’s hope that it will have some effect.”

United Sol’s Andromeda forces were mostly Andromedians, and they, Andromedians, did not like how United Sol treated them. Even after Acshell declared war on them, United Sol’s stance on blatant discrimination did not change for better. Instead, they enforced rules and regulations even harder. United Sol president Mirren insisted on such a method. He was a changed man after his daughter’s passing and became ruthless. Furthermore, lack of an influential adviser, Cecil, meant that no one was powerful enough to put senses into him.

“Fire at will,” Acshell ordered.

The battle commenced normally on surface. Both fleets fired at will and exchanged hundred rounds of laser beams. And it was soon noticeable that a certain number of ships weren’t really fighting. They were firing but they were intentionally missing all of their shots.

“Mark those ships,” Acshell pointed at Richard who was analyzing the battle from main screen. “They are one of us. Mark their ship signatures.”

“Got it, boss,” Richard replied promptly.

It became obvious shortly afterwards that the defending fleet stood no chance. So many shots from the defending fleet were missing that it was laughable. And, at one point, some of defending ships started to fire on their own which were incidentally missing the shots.

Acshell immediately stood up as soon as he spotted the incident. He quickly ordered, “Seize fire, withdraw few clicks. Let’s just watch.”

It soon became a battle between their own ships as defending fleet shot at each other.

“Sir,” Morrik opened a channel to Acshell’s ship. “I recognize some of the ships’ signatures. I used to work with them. They are one of ours, I am sure.”

“I can see they are one of us, Morrik,” Acshell responded calmly. But it wasn’t the answer Morrik was looking for.

“Sir, with all due respect, shouldn’t we help them?”

“Let them duke it out,” Acshell said firmly.

Obviously, Morrik wasn’t pleased with that statement. “But, sir.”

“Betrayal shouldn’t be easy anyway,” Richard joined the conversation.

Acshell nodded in agreement. “Let them earn it with their lives.”

The defending fleet was split into two smaller fleets as they continued to shoot at each other. After half an hour of shooting, one of the bigger fleet started to withdraw, leaving twenty-something fleet with the mobile outpost.

It was only then Acshell opened a channel to them.

“This is Acshell, the leader of Andromeda republic. Do you wish to join us?”

A captain answered with a lot of noises in background. "Sir, thi- -s Cap-ain Yyenitin, rep--sent-ing on behalf of our f--low An---median ----s."

"You are breaking off, Captain. Is everything alright there?"

The channel appeared to be dead for a second before it cleared up a little. He repeated," Sir, this -s Capta-n Yyenitin, r-presenting on beh--f of our fel--w Androme--an ships."

"Captain Yyenitin!" Morrik exclaimed over the channel.

"Mo-rik, you dog!" Yyenitin responded back vigorously. "So, th--e you are!"

Shrugging with a smile, Acshell declared, "Well, whatever. Welcome to the republic."

Yyenitin and other twenty two captains were all native Andromedian who had been discriminated worse ever since the resistance arose. However, Yyenitin and other captains chose to endure the harsh discriminations to wait for their chances to defect with their ships. They all knew ships were hard to come by for the republic and wanted to defect with the precious ships. And when the chance came, they wouldn't resist waiting any longer.

This victory marked a big turnaround for Andromeda republic because they fully secured Inner Andromeda, not to mention the additional ships gained, instead of lost, from this was huge for the republic.

With over 150 cruisers, Acshell decided to finally split the fleet and gave 30 cruisers to Creg and appointed him the general of A-2541j. Creg would rule the planet.

Meanwhile, soon after the loss, the Ark of United Sol finally decided to cast a vote to mobilize Earth defense fleet and wipe out the resistance. The vote was won

with 100% of YES. However, deciding its fleet command proved to be challenge. There were too many candidates and there were too many conflicting lobby activities to choose a strong contender.

When United Sol finally decided on its fleet commander for Earth defense fleet, the year was already 9085. And then it took an additional year to sort out logistics problems for such a large fleet. And then it took yet another year to sort out vacant captain seats within the fleet as well as repairing ships that hadn't seen maintenance for decades.

All in all, it was year 9087 when Earth defense fleet finally moved out of Earth.

Year 9087 season 2 87th day, Richard informed Acshell that Earth defense fleet finally moved out.

“For real this time?” Acshell joked with a shot of whisky in his hand. He was in his manor on Heaven of Order. It had been quiet for him and he had been enjoying life. “I have to ask because I've been told that more than five times.”

Richard gave him a firm nod. “This time, it is certain. They moved out for sure and is currently heading to Freebie outpost.”

Taking a deep breath, Acshell put down his cup of whisky and relaxed on an exquisite red sofa. There was no one around in the living room. He didn't enjoy company of women when drinking and preferred a lone life style.

“Okay, so I guess they are really coming. We do have over two hundred cruisers now, excluding Creg's fleet. That's a lot of ships but still no match for five thousand-something. What do you suggest that we do?”

Richard fired up a defiant smile. “We tackle Freebie outpost before Earth defense fleet arrives.”

“So, we skip A-2541g?”

“That's a gas planet. Who cares.”

Acshell digested his idea. "Do we take over or destroy?"

"We don't destroy or take it. We just damage it enough so that they won't give up on it. The outpost is where all food supply is. We damage the outpost, let it leak food and they will have logistics to sort out."

Acshell chuckled. "Sneaky."

"We can't take them on fairly. Gotta be sneaky."

Nodding in agreement, Acshell asked, "Who is the commander now? It took them a while to decide that, no?"

"Some random Bau dude named Alfron. He has no history of captaincy. He probably purchased the seat with buttloads of credit." He quickly added, "We should be glad that President Mirren didn't appoint the Crimson wizard. It wouldn't be funny if he was the commander."

"He doesn't have a history of captaincy, either, no?"

Richard nodded but argued, "True but the guy is a genius."

"To me, the guy is a nutcase."

"Which means he is a genius."

Acshell had a short laugh. He wasn't going to argue. "If you say so. Listen, I am a little tipsy. Give me a few hours to rest up. Assemble the fleet meanwhile."

Richard saluted casually. "You got it."

With Morrik and Yyenitin on front, Acshell commanded the center fleet. Richard was de facto advisor for him and usually commanded the rear fleet. The fleet of now two hundred cruisers was passing by A-2541j and was hailed by Creg.

"Yo, Acshell." Creg was on screen. He was wearing a holiday shirt with large sunglasses.

Acshell chuckled. "Dude, you look ridiculous in that. I guess life has been good?"

“Can’t complain. I had no idea I’d end up coming ruling a whole damn planet.”

“I had no frigging idea that I’d end up being a founding president of a republic, either, dude.”

“See you laterz.” Creg casually saluted and that was the end of the channel.

“Bah, I guess he is having a good time,” Acshell said to himself and Richard chipped in, “He does seem to be doing more than fine. The local populace like him a lot because he is down-to-earth kind of guy who try to solve issues instead of making blind promises and lies.”

“Well, duh, of course, he does that. He isn’t a politician. Rid of those imbecile politicians from this universe and the world will be far better off.”

“That’s right, boss,” A bridge crew agreed.

The republic had been doing exceptionally well even with the high tax rate. Everyone was fully aware of what was at stake and worked hard. Gambling and crime rates were extremely low and unemployment rate was 0.3% which was a record by itself. Only Cecil’s Venusian government in far future would achieve lower than that.

Acshell’s approval rating was obviously near a hundred percent as well due to him being “The liberator”. He was becoming known as Acshell the liberator. He chose not to adopt the nickname because the republic wasn’t fully independent but Andromedians called him so regardless.

“We see the outpost. It’s guarded by a small fleet of fifty,” Richard reported.

The outpost was obviously constructed to optimize storage. Its appearance was just few huge storage blocks connected together by a control tower along with few turrets installed.

“That outpost doesn’t look very threatening,” Acshell noted.

“Yeah, a scan shows it’s fairly fragile also. It doesn’t look like it has good armor, either,” Richard added.

“So, United Sol continue to do crappy job. How can they get away with this?”

Some of bridge crews chuckled but, for Acshell, it was indeed a sincere question. United Sol’s responses against the resistance had been so mediocre that he wondered whether United Sol was serious or not.

Even in this very case, he would have reinforced the outpost along with far more ships. The outpost was a vital supply depot. Anyone with half a brain could see this, he felt.

However, what Acshell failed to realize was the distance. Andromeda system was simply too far away from Earth and orders were often mellowed out by time it arrived in Andromeda system.

President Mirren did order full war-capable station along with all available ships at the station. That was his initial order. When his order was sent out and was received at Jupiter, the order was changed to “A station with a good defense fleet”. When the changed order arrived at Uranus outpost to be sent out a long distance, it was again changed to “A mobile storage station with a fleet”. When it finally arrived at the construction site, what the workers were told was “Hurry up and build this stupid outpost so that we can get paid and go home.”

The fifty-something defense fleet along with the fragile outpost stood no chance. They did withstand few days of sieging but in the end the outpost was near total destruction and the defense fleet was in tatters. Damaged and burst food crates were floating all over the vicinity as Acshell’s fleet withdrew. His fleet suffered only few losses.

This event prevented Earth defense fleet to cross Jupiter. The fleet halted at the planet while they could access more accurate damage reports. Jupiter was the last

major supply depot before they could head out. Therefore, it was important that supply depot in Andromeda system was secure.

Logistic was always an issue for large fleets. While a cruiser was capable of storing essential food supplies for years, fully loaded, war-ready, cruisers, especially when the number was in thousands, cost mind-boggling amount of credits. And additionally a large fleet generally meant inevitable large casualties, meaning a fully loaded ship loss was not desirable when it was expected to lose ships.

Therefore, ships in a large fleet, especially when going on offensive, were loaded bare minimum food and other supplies.

Earth defense fleet eventually moved past Jupiter and stayed on solar system border by Pluto for some time while they attempted to come up with a solution. In the end, to Richard's surprise, the fleet chose to fully load supplies and ventured out of Solar system.

An emergency meeting was called when the news hit the republic.

"So, they chose to fully load supplies," Richard briefed others on the situation. "They are on the way to us now."

They were at Acshell's manor, in the living room to be precise. Richard had a holographic displayer on a wooden glass table that displayed the map of solar system and Andromeda system along with flashing marks that displayed current known location of Earth defense fleet.

"ETA is 19 weeks," Richard said to Acshell, Morrik, and Yyenitin who all had grave looks on their faces.

"So, smashing the outpost didn't really help," Acshell said to which Richard argued, "It may not have a direct effect on the outcome but it should help in long term."

"If we can survive this, that is," Morrik added which Richard couldn't argue this time.

“We cannot obviously face them head to head,” Yyenitin stated.

Everyone became silent as none of them had a bright idea. The silence was unexpected broken by Acshell who had a determined look on his face.

“Obviously, we are not going to fight them head on,” He stated as he cracked his fingers. “We have 19 weeks, so we train.”

“Train for what exactly?” Richard demanded with a frown.

“Listen, it’s going to cost a lot but I think this is the only way.” He stood up, went back in and came back with a paper and a pen. He quickly drew up something which turned to be rough sketches of hit & run tactics.

“Missile hit & run?” Yyenitin said doubtfully.

Acshell’s tactics was basically guerrilla warfare but focused on speed and survival instead of damaging their enemy. The reason for utilizing missile was to divert as much energy as possible into shields, engine, and thrusters for evasive maneuvers. Additionally, missile warheads had far more alpha strike damage than lasers. Lasers provided stable damage over time but each shot was fairly weak. But lasers were seen as free weapon due to invention of A.C.M. and it was de facto weapon for ships. In contrast, missiles cost money to produce and circulate.

“We run into them, fire once, and just fly through at full speed,” Acshell explained. “Regroup and strike them again hours later.”

“That is going to cost a lot, just for missiles,” Richard uttered.

“I know that, damn it. What choice do we have?” Acshell argued.

None, and everyone knew it.

The training for this specific maneuver began immediately. They’d fly toward Earth defense fleet in a spearhead formation. Ships of twenty would be assigned to groups and each group would have a single target to destroy on each run. It was calculated that missiles from twenty ships would be enough to instantly destroy a cruiser if all of the missiles hit the exactly same spot. A fleet of two hundreds,

which was what Andromeda republic could summon, would be able to destroy ten enemy ships at once if all went according to the plan.

They also trained for extremely dangerous sailing which involved near collision driving. They planned to use enemy ships as their own meat shields while they make their ways through Earth defense fleet.

19 weeks flew by swiftly, and scouts informed that Earth defense fleet had finally arrived in outskirts of Andromeda system.

The republic fleet assembled in orbit of Heaven of Order. The fleet was exactly 200 ships consisted of ten groups. They had few more ships but there weren't enough to make a group and they were sent to A-2541j to aid Creg.

“Set a course to A-2541a!” Acshell shouted his order and explained, “We are going to bug them as long as we can. We cannot allow them to reach Heaven of Order!”

The bridge crews answered at once, “Yes, sir!”

Creg wanted to join but Acshell refused, explaining him that his fleet was the gate guards.

“Defend your planet, A-2541j, with your life,” He told Creg, “As long as your planet is safe, so will Heaven of Order.”

“Approaching our destination, sensor is picking up a giant signature,” Richard alerted. “It's them, the motherfuckers.”

Quickly, all crews on the bridge equipped what appeared to be seat belts, even including Acshell. They all knew what to do without any further orders.

“We pull this off and we will be fucking legends,” Acshell aggressively said out loudly. “You hear me?! We pull this and we will be legends!”

The crews on bridge roared.

Richard, who was tightly tied to his seat by seat belts, informed as their fleet flew at overclocked speed toward Earth defense fleet.

“They are hailing us, boss!”

“Who gives fuck?! We all know what to do!”

“Yesssss, sirrrr!” The crews shouted.

The republic ships flew at a dangerous speed with danger of popping their engines but it was necessary for them to keep high speed for their own survival. Besides, they had been training for this.

Initially, Earth defense fleet had no idea what the republic fleet was intending to do. Fleet commander Alfron originally was going to demand complete surrender. He certainly did not expect what was about to occur right before his eyes where mere two hundred ships flew directly at their faces, fired swarms of missiles, and then just flew past them. Because only ten ships were destroyed, which was hardly any damage to a fleet of five thousand ships, fleet commander Alfron was puzzled in what the republic fleet tried to do.

And by time, he slapped out of it, the republic fleet was clicks away and disappeared from visual range.

And in two hours, the republic fleet appeared from behind them and did exactly the same thing they did before; they flew toward them, fired swarms of missiles at once, and flew past them. Alfron may have been an inexperienced fleet commander but even he realized what was happening at this point. He ordered a tight sphere formation and reduced gaps between ships so that they would not be easily fly through them.

Alas, Acshell and Co expected such a response. On their third run, they loaded shockwave missiles and which pushed ships out of their positions, thus occurring

hundreds of collisions as the republic fleet merrily flew past them after firing their missiles.

Fourth run, fifth run, sixth, seventh, eighth....

When fleet commander Alfron was pulling his hairs out and barking orders angrily at his bridge crews, their number was down to thirty hundred. The fleet had yet to reach A-2541a. Most importantly, the republic fleet suffered not a single ship loss.

In panic as well as hinder sight, fleet commander Alfron ordered his fleet to withdraw from Andromeda system which meant that United Sol's campaign failed so miserably that it was laughable.

“The liberator!”

“The liberator!”

“The liberator!”

Crowds gathered randomly across streets. The republic fleet had just returned to Heaven of Order and were in orbit which was clearly visible to people. The crowds were chanting “The liberator!” non-stop at the sight of the fleet.

This victory had many implications. Most importantly, the victory cemented the republic's independence. While United Sol still refused to acknowledge, Andromeda republic was official more or less.

After heavily damaged Earth defense fleet returned to Solar system, skirmish warfare continued to occur in Outer Andromeda system but Inner Andromeda regained an era of peace and Acshell refused to take Freebie outpost as well as planets in surrounding the area. He claimed that he didn't want to take more than he could take.

Indeed, despite of the famous victory, the fact still remained that the republic was awfully short on fleet strength. Therefore, the republic chose not to expand and reinforce their position.

The war was still far from over, Acshell insisted.

A decade passed by rather peacefully. It was year 9097. United Sol still did not officially acknowledge “the resistance” although they no longer referred them as such. United Sol had a new term for the republic; it was Andromeda rebellion. It was perhaps an upgrade term which people couldn’t care less. No one cared what the Ark called them. What mattered was that Earth defense fleet was crushed and they were “Andromeda republic”.

Meanwhile, Earth defense fleet was restored to its former glory during the decade. It was often rumored that President Mirren attempted to persuade Cecil to take the charge of the fleet. However, it never materialized.

The republic now possessed a strong 1,500 ships with Creg having a sizable fleet of 200 ships on his own. Subsequently, Acshell lowered the taxes to 30% from 35%.

Morrik, Yyenitin, Richard, and Creg were appointed as “the four generals of the republic”. And each of them were given an ability as well as permission to amass their own fleets. It was an ability Creg already had for many years. Acshell sought to accelerate navy strength this way by giving the four generals their own domain.

Meanwhile, Acshell also started to implement election system progressively. After all, the government he formed was a republic. Due to the current ongoing war with United Sol, no one was calling for an election but Acshell never had any intention to cling onto his seat of political powers. Once it was over, he planned to retire and spend rest of his life peacefully.

Only Creg and Richard were aware of Acshell’s intention to retire. And, while Creg didn’t oppose to his idea, Richard did strongly. He claimed that Acshell needed to hold onto his seat even if it meant a rigged election. He insisted that the

Andromedians needed his presence and his figure of authority. He also suggested to change the republic to a monarchy government with Acshell being the founding king. But Acshell refused Richard's proposals and insisted on retiring once the republic was acknowledged by United Sol.

And it was year 9098 when scouts informed that Earth defense fleet left Earth. This time, this movement was done without the Ark declaring anything officially.

"They are serious this time," Richard said in a conference room where Acshell, Creg, Morrik, and Yyenitin were gathered. "Scouts confirmed 5,200 ships, fully loaded."

The republic was still outnumbered but this time it wasn't an impossible odd like the last time. Defensive war was an option. But Acshell suggested using the same tactic that was used in the last conflict.

"No," Richard denied Acshell's suggestion firmly. "They must have a plan for that now."

Still Acshell insisted on using the same tactics. He argued, "It worked the last time. It will work this time also." He was hell bent on using the tactics that Richard eventually agreed but only if he brought the same 200 fleet.

"Fine by me," Acshell said.

Richard placed himself and Morrik at A-2541g to confront Earth defense fleet. They were going to install orbital batteries around the planet. Creg was ordered to stay put on A-2541j and Yyenitin was given exactly a hundred ship to defend Heaven of Order.

And in 19 weeks, Earth defense fleet had arrived in outskirts of Andromeda system. And just as he did before, Acshell approached the fleet with overclocked speed.

“We’ve done this before! Let’s get this done!” Acshell shouted as his spearhead formation fleet accelerated toward Earth defense fleet.

When his fleet fired missiles, he noticed that they fired missiles as well. His fleet was literally running into an explosion. Instantly realizing that the whole plan was in jeopardy, he ordered his fleet to spread out immediately, but it was already too late to evade incoming missiles.

In just one volley, Acshell’s fleet was almost wiped out. Less than twenty ships made out alive.

When Richard was informed about Acshell’s defeat, he wasn’t surprised. In fact, he expected the defeat. He knew the Ark was serious this time. The lack of noises from the Ark was the proof. His fleet installed hundreds of orbital batteries around and waited for Earth defense fleet. He wasn’t positive that he’d be able to repel Earth defense fleet however. He simply did what he thought was the best course of action.

Acshell’s defeated fleet eventually arrived at Richard’s fleet and joined. He was disheartened by the defeat and didn’t say a word as they waited for Earth defense fleet to show up.

Since his fleet was chased by Earth defense fleet, they showed up relatively swiftly.

Richard stood up at once from his chair as soon as the fleet was seen on main screen; their number wasn’t adding up. There were only three thousand.

“They split the fleet! Diversion?!” Richard exclaimed as he contacted others. Acshell and Morrik came on screen. “Do you see what I see?!”

They both nodded and it was Acshell who responded, “It seems they want to keep us here.”

And then Morrik added, "They must aim to conquer the capital while keeping us here."

It was sensible tactics. Without a home to return to, the war would be lost when supplies ran out. Richard certainly thought of such a scenario but did not think that the Ark would actually execute such a plan. He immediately wondered who the fleet commander was. His scouts could never get to find it out.

Earth defense fleet hailed them, and who came on the screen shocked everyone. It was Mirren himself.

"P, President Mirren!" Richard involuntarily shouted.

"Stand down," He demanded with a firm and calm voice. "Stand down now and I will guarantee your safety. You will not be charged and you will be given a chance in careers."

"Hah!" Acshell laughed in an instant response. "Too late for that, Mr. President. We cannot go back."

Mirren had a thorough look at Acshell. "You are the leader?"

"Yes, I am. They call me the liberator."

"My other fleet is heading toward Heaven of Order. We will hold you here while they take Heaven of Order back from you. And once that is accomplished, your rebellion is no more."

Acshell beamed a confident grin at Mirren. "Sir, with all due fucking respect, we do have defense fleets."

"Only few hundreds," Mirren answered.

Acshell stood up from his chair and swaggered toward main screen. "They will die defending their home. I can bet my life on it." He looked completely confident. Then he slowly pointed at main screen and then bellowed, "FIRE!"

Creg's two hundred fifty ships were in orbit. Long range sensors warned of an incoming fleet.

"T, T, Twenty two hundreds, sir..." A scared bridge crew reported with a shaky voice.

"So what!" Creg responded with an aggressive shout. "The liberator faced far worse before!"

"B, but, sir..."

He stood up from chair and walked up to the shaking crew. He grabbed him by collar and shouted at him, "Man up, kid! A man has to do what he has to do! We have balls because of that!" He looked around. The crews were clearly scared. He walked toward his captain's chair and pressed a button, opening an internal channel to all ships under his command.

He raised his voice. "Ok, guys, it is time for us to man up. We will not let them pass!" He cleared his throat and continued, "No, we cannot let them pass. For fuck's sake, we cannot let them pass! If we win this, it will be over! This is the last round!"

The channel was silent and so was his own bridge. The sense of doom was looming large. Creg, too, was unsure of his own fate. Logically, there was no way he could stop the incoming fleet that outnumbered them by more than ten folds, but that didn't matter. He knew he had to stop them no matter what.

"Okay, guys, I admit. I admit that things are looking grim. But did you really expect a rebellion would be a walk in a park? Sacrifices are needed and we must sacrifice ourselves. When I signed up for this." Creg chuckled. The truth was that he never signed up for a rebellion. "When I signed up for this, I knew it wasn't going to be easy. And I knew, trust me, I knew that I would probably end up dying in progress." He never signed up for a rebellion. He never expected to die. But a leader had to do what he had to do.

The channel and the bridge were dead silent.

“But we all end in the end anyway and I’d rather end up in a history book than in a lonely grave. So, do your best and ...” He paused. He wasn’t sure what to say at this moment. After few seconds, he continued, “Do your best and ram their ship when your ship is going down. If you are going down anyway, then at least go down with them. Trust me, our sacrifices will be worth the trouble. Let them know that we, Andromedians, deserve a proper nation.”

This battle, later known as the battle of Creg’s, was indeed recorded in the history book as one of the proudest battles in Andromeda union’s history. Kids would be taught of this battle. Historians would discuss about this battle. It would be talked about countless times in the future.

Creg’s fleet took the second Earth defense fleet head on. It was a bloody battle and lasted seven hours. No ship under Creg survived. Every single ship was destroyed. In fact, none of them was actually destroyed by Earth defense fleet. Rather damaged ships rammed into opposing ships and caused massive debris damages. By time the last ship rammed into an enemy cruiser, the second Earth defense fleet was in state of shock.

Their twenty-two hundred strong fleet was reduced to mere five hundred and weren’t ready to face Yyenitin and his hundred defense fleet at Heaven of Order. They deeply feared that they’d lose. No, they knew they’d lose if they pressed on.

When President Mirren received news that his diversion fleet was stopped at A-2541j, he knew the war was over and he ordered everyone to retreat gracefully.

It would take the Ark a few decades to actually admit and acknowledge the existence of Andromeda republic on year 9124 but the major conflict was over at this point.

There was a tiny, nail-size memory chip on Yyenitin's hand. He gracefully walked toward Acshell who was seated in his chair on his bridge. He got down on one knee and presented the memory chip to him.

"Creg's last moment, sir," He said stoically.

Acshell took the chip and stared at it for a moment before inserting it to play. A video with lots of background noises started to play on main screen.

It was an aerial view of Creg's bridge. There were explosions occurring everywhere. A crew ran up to him and informed him with a shout because of the explosions.

"Sir, engineers report that the reactor is going out of control! And we have damages in all decks!"

"Have you found enemy commandship yet?!" Creg, at this point, was holding a fire extinguisher and putting out fire by a console.

"I think so, sir!"

"Alright, full speed toward enemy commandship! Ram that motherfucker!"

The crew startled but soon nodded with a salute. "Aye, aye, sir!"

Creg was seemingly busy with putting out fires. More explosions occurred and more crews died.

"We are at full speed! Ramming our target in 15, 14, 13--"

But the crew making the countdown was felled by an explosion. Creg quickly dragged him out of fire and sprayed Co2 over the console. When the fire was put out, He threw away the fire extinguisher and looked up right at the camera with a confident grin. As soon as he had a thumb up toward the camera, it went blank.

Tears rapidly filled in Acshell's eyes. With clearly close to tears, he mumbled with a teary voice.

“That motherfucker...”

Along with Yyentin, everyone else was present as well. Morrik and Richard also watched the feed. Morrik had his head dropped and Richard fell onto the floor with tears flowing out into the air.

“Sir, the people of A-2541j have a request to make,” Yyentin spoke, “They want their planet to be named after him.”

Acshell could only nod and not speak because he was already resisting very hard not to sob.

Skirmish warfare still went on even after the clash. However, the tide was no longer with United Sol and the republic went on offensive, taking rest of planets from United Sol by year 9124. Subsequently, United Sol announced acknowledgement of Andromeda republic.

On the same year, Acshell announced his retirement to his generals and told them to prepare for the first official election. Richard strongly urged him to run for the presidency, insisting that the republic would still need a heroic figure to remain strongly united.

However, Acshell was too tired to go on. He recommended his generals to run for the presidency if they wanted.

The first official election was to be held on year 9125 season 1 the first day which meant Acshell would remain in seat for two more seasons.

The general populace wanted Acshell to stay on. After all, he was the liberator and his approval rating was 99%. But they acknowledged the fact that he wanted retirement after such a chaotic period.

Before he'd retire for good, he decided to use his authority and free Christina. He reached the maximum security prison in asteroid sea and hailed them, but there was no response at all. His visit to the prison was unannounced and he brought only a single cruiser with bare minimum crew. Wondering perhaps the unannounced visit was the issue, he declared who he was and asked for docking bay lights and door to open.

Still, there was no response.

"Sir, I am detecting no life signatures over there," A crew reported.

"No life at all?"

"No, sir. Sensor is detecting nothing at all."

The prison was built inside of a large asteroid. The only indication of something man-made was present was the sole docking bay door on surface.

"Approach the docking door," He ordered, "Perform a deep scan. They might have a jammer of some sort."

However, even after a deep scan that took two hours, there was no life signature and no signs of any jammers. The scan did reveal that the facility had powers meanwhile.

"Shoot the door. Just do it."

Normally, the crews might have stood against his order but Acshell was a hero among Andromedians, thus they complied without complaints.

Once the docking door was blown out of its place, the cruiser carefully sailed into the docking bay. Lights were properly on but there was no trace of any people.

“Eerie...,” A crew mumbled.

“Land the ship.” And then he pointed randomly at three crews. “You, you, and you, get in spacesuit and come with me.”

Acshell and three crews made their way out of the ship and approached an exit door. After hacking the door, they were able to enter. One of the crews took out a hand scanner and performed a quick scan on air.

“Air is normal, sir. Nothing abnormal,” He reported.

“Alright, let’s get off the spacesuit,” Acshell said.

The immediate area was clean. There was no sign of conflicts. They proceeded to prison command center carefully and it was where they found decayed bodies. There were few dozens of badly decayed bodies piled on top of each other as if someone had arranged so.

A crew scanned one of the bodies. “It’s been dead for a long time, possibility for a year.” The corpses were in prison guard clothes and their cause of death wasn’t clear.

Acshell, holding his nose, had a close look on a body. “I can’t tell how they were killed, can you?”

“I can’t tell, either, sir.”

As Acshell crossed his arms and tried to understand what really happened, he felt something faint, perhaps a glare of some sort from his back. He swiftly turned around but there was nothing.

“Sir?” The crews were puzzled by his sudden action.

Acshell was getting goosebumps. He sensed immediate danger.

“Grab your weapons!” He exclaimed. “We need to get the hell out of here!”

As soon as the crews grabbed their pistols, something struck one of the crews in the head and blood splattered out of a tiny hole on his head. Acshell activated his

energy blade and dashed out of the command center. There were ... some ... things.

“The hell?!”

They had what appeared to be a glowing green crystal at center with numerous square silvery plates hovering around it. One of the plates morphed to become a long needle and threw itself at Acshell which he deflected just barely.

“Forget the dead! Move! Move!” He bellowed as the remaining two crews dashed out of the command center.

There were three of those things and they continued to throw needles at Acshell as he protected his crews. When they made a turn at a corner, they found themselves surrounded by a lot of the things.

“Crap...! What the hell are these?!” Acshell muttered as he and his crews leaned against each other’s back.

At once, tens of needles were thrown at them, piercing the three.

When Richard was informed that Acshell had been missing for weeks, he tracked him down to the prison facility where Christina was supposed to be held. However, when his ship arrived at the prison, he found Acshell and his two crews dead in a hallway. All three bodies had numerous fatal puncture wounds all over their bodies. Acshell in particular had six puncture wounds on his forehead.

“Sir?! Nooo!” Richard broke down in tears and felled on his knees in front of their bodies. He wailed for a minute or two before he suddenly seized his despair. Watched by tens of crews, Richard stood up at once, wiped out his tears and turned to them.

“Bring everyone aboard! Gather the bodies!”

When he said “everyone”, he meant everyone and all crews on his ship went into the facility to gather bodies and check on prison mainframe. Normally, engineers would remain on ship, but given severity of the incident, all crews left the ship.

As soon as the ship was completely empty, Richard went back to his ship and suddenly piloted his ship out of the docking bay. Even before his crews would find out, he fired everything at the asteroid and it was blown to smithereens.

Richard was genuinely saddened by Acshell’s untimely death. Therefore, he did break down for a moment. However, he quickly came to senses and realized it was an opportunity of life time.

When Acshell announced his retirement, his top concern was being able to hold onto his political powers. He knew that the only reason he climbed so high was because of him. If he was to be gone, there was a good chance that his sphere of influence would be reduced or even taken away. He feared his loss of powers and planned to run for the presidency which had no guarantee of a successful campaign because he was relatively unknown among Andromedians. Morrik and Yyenitin had far better chances.

Killing everyone was his way of getting rid of those who he considered knew too much. Upon returning to his domain, he called Morrik and Yyenitin and told them that Acshell was found dead in the prison he blew up. He lied that the prisoners had revolted and Acshell assisted the wardens but met an unfortunate end. To revenge his death, he blew the facility up.

Morrik and Yyenitin had no reason to doubt him. After all Richard had been the most loyal servant. He had stayed with Acshell ever since the beginning and stayed loyal to him all these years. What Richard told them next shocked them however.

He declared that he was cancelling the election and that he intended to seize the seat of the President Acshell once held. He also promised Morrik and Yyenitin more powers if they supported him. The two general shared a similar concern as Richard. They did not like the election which meant uncertainty for their future. When they heard Richard’s offer, they had little reason to refuse the offer.

At the same time, cancelling the election meant the government was no longer a republic. Indeed, Richard declared that he was calling himself an emperor and that a new dynasty, monarchy, was to be installed. Morrik and Yyenitin were given planets to govern for their support.

Subsequently, Andromeda republic became Andromeda union.

The public was never told the truth. They were simply told that Acshell went missing. While it was skeptical, his disappearance was in line with his publically declared desire of peaceful retirement. Therefore, it was understood that he simply chose to retire early without anyone being able to track him down.

And just like that Acshell the liberator faded into the history.

Soon after the Bau found out that Richard was an exile, they attempted to contact him, hoping to arrange a deal. However, Richard's stance against his former clan was firm; he simply refused to even communicate with them.

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