

Divine Path System - Chapter 18 - Good Days Orphanage

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Varian's hover bike dashed through the skyways. It passed through the floating complexes, patrolling airships, and reached a quiet district.

It had no floating buildings and only a few skyscrapers. The hover bike descended and Varian stopped before the familiar building.

The old-fashioned LED nameplate of the orphanage greeted him as he entered the orphanage.

The front yard was a playground with with a park.

"Hey! Catch the bluebird!"

"Catch the green one!"

"Dodge the bullet. Duck! Duck!"

Children of different ages were playing the AR games. Though all such games were eliminated from mainstream, and were now outdated, these kids found joy in them.

The maid robots taking care of them were also outdated, but the kids didn't complain. They revelled in the present, without worrying about the future.

Varian was glad that at least the security measures were in place. The camera systems and the security robots were in place.

"Yay! I got gold!"

"Hehe! Yue got gold!"

"Sree has platinum!"

'I guess I will never have happiness like them.' Varian shook his head wryly and walked down the cobblestone path.

He stopped in his track as a group of benches under the trees caught his eye. The scene from his dream where Amanda sat on the bench and spoke to him flashed in his mind.

'You have to remember this, Varian. You don't have to take every responsibility alone. There will be people who share your burdens, and in turn, you will share theirs. Got it?'

'I have no one.' Varian clenched his fist... then remembering Kyle and Maya who were worried about him, and Mr. Gareth, who helped him out without seeking anything in return, his fist loosened.

'I am glad I have them. Maybe you are right, mom.' He turned his head and continued to walk before stopping in tracks. But despite everything, he felt lonely. Some things he could never share.

'Some burdens, I have to bear them alone.'

He reached the door, and the home keeper Al informed him to wait. Varian sat on a bench outside and waited for the orphanage owner.

'Would it matter?' He asked himself. 'Why am I doing this? For Sia? For Mom? For myself?'

Heavy Footsteps sounded, and an aged voice greeted him, "What can I do for you, young man?"

Varian turned to see an old man with a bright smile plastered on his wrinkled face. Unlike elderly of this day who use skin treatments, he seemed to enjoy the natural oldness.

Varian gave a small greeting and stated, "I need a favor. Can you check if I ever visited this orphanage 7 years ago and met a girl named Sia here?"

The temperature rose in the air, and Varian was on his feet the next moment. Flames were swirling around the old man and threatened to jump at Varian.

'At least Level 2 peak, Fire Awakener.' Varian estimated and raised his guard further.

'He must have thought my first question was a feint and my actual purpose was an ulterior motive against an orphan. Welp! I need to clarify.'

He looked straight into the old man's eyes and said "Look, I don't need any personal details about her if that's what you're thinking. Just at least tell me if a girl with that name existed or not."

The Old Man stared back into Varian's eyes and finally sighed "Show me your criminal records."

Varian shrugged and tapped on his comm. A holograph popped up with a tab of 'Self Criminal Record'. Varian clicked on it and swiped the new holograph file to the old man.

The old man observed Varian's criminal record, or the lack of it. From breaking traffic rules to attempted murder, everything wrong doing of a citizen was recorded into it.

Varian's criminal record was blank. Truly an ideal citizen of the Federation. Breaking the bones and injuring his competitors was considered a part of the game, so he came out clean.

The Old man's eyes scanned Varian for a moment and he said, "My old eyes tell me you're seeking someone not for ill, but for well."

He took out a holo mobile, an old-fashioned device, and searched for the records.

'You're half right. I'm seeking Sia but I want to confirm if she really existed. Maybe the System was lying.' Varian thought.

"Ah! Your ID matches the entry records 7 years ago. So you visited this orphanage and your mom was with you." The Old Man tapped on his holo mobile and swiped the file towards him.

Varian looked at the holograph file displaying the records of 33th Septe, 513.

{Entry: Varian + Amanda

Time Spent: 1 Hour}

"Um, is ther—" Varian's question was cut off

"Boy, there are no video recordings. It's against our policy." The Old Man waves his hands.

"That's understandable." Varian inwardly sighed. There were several policies against hyper surveillance.

"About the person, uh, Sia." the old man looked up from his holo mobile with a distressed face.

Varian's face turned serious, and he awaited the answer.

"There are no records of her. I was working here for 6 years and as far as I know, there was never a girl named Sia." He said the truth, and feared it would disappoint Varian too much.

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"Great!" Varian flashed a bright smile, contrary to his expectations.

'Is this kid alright?' He looked perturbed. 'He's happy that the important person he's looking for didn't live here. Wait, is he crazy or what?'

"That's all I know. Now leave." The old man's speculation was strengthened looking at Varian's genuine smile and he urged Varian to leave.

Varian thanked the Old Man despite his weird gaze and left the orphanage with a bright smile.

'All cadets have their information on the meta net deleted. This also includes any information from the public domain.

I came here 7 years ago in that dream and in the records. We planned to adopt Sia.

If it was just a dream, I'd have never come here in real life and with the records as evidence, it proves this must be a memory.

But I grew up alone after all.

So something must have happened that led us to not adopt her. Since I was too young, I forgot what happened. But mom had some connection with Sia. I don't know why she never told me.

Then Sia joined Imperial Academy. So her records on meta net and in the orphanage are deleted.'

Varian confirmed his conjecture, but he still had questions he couldn't answer.

But one thing was clear. Even though he didn't have any memory of her — Sia was real. And whatever predicament she was in, he needed to save her.

The Sun was setting, marking the end of 39th, Septe.

Varian returned home and spent the next 5 days visiting the murloc islands. He spent all fighting the level 1s and mastered his Awakner powers.

But to his utter dismay, his progress bar never moved. It stayed stubborn at:

[Body Path Level 1: 50/100]

On 45th, Septa, Varian woke up earlier than usual.

'Today is the day. I must make it!' He looked at himself in the mirror. 'I only got one shot to find Sia. Next year, I'll be 19 and I can't take the test.'

'I can do it!' Varian cheered himself. How successful it was, he didn't know.

He reached the Starfish Spaceport. It was crowded with hover bikes and hover cars. Swarms of youngsters entered through the six entrances of the vast spaceport.

Starfish was one of the finest spaceports of Earth. Spaceports were similar to airports of Old Earth but with space shuttles.

Starfish was an 8 pointed spaceport with 8 terminals dedicated to a planet each, including Pluto.

After Pluto war, the Pluto terminal was disbanded and now used for other purposes.

Varian reached the terminal. It was a huge building made of crystal walls with star treasures as defenses and enlivened by holographs boasting about humanity's achievements.

The entrance was divided into two sections. One for the Officers and the other for soldiers. Each had different academies. Due to their different requirements, they also had different entrance tests.

Soldiers or troopers were trained in Imperial Trooper Academies.

Officers were trained in Defense Academies. Naturally, there were only Five Defense Academies on Earth and the Imperial Defense Academy was the best.

'So I'm aiming for the highest of high.' Varian sighed and entered the officers' section.

To be admitted to a Defense Academy, one was required to reach at least level 2 and at most 18 years old. That was only a prerequisite. Then they had to make the cut in the entrance test, something which even geniuses didn't always succeed at.

Passing through the tunnel entrance, Varian finally reached a vast hall. There was a stage in front and all candidates stood in preassigned positions in uniform distance.

Varian reached his position and stood in the standard military posture. But the sight outside the glass window caught his eye.

The Space shuttles on the runway were not just difficult but impossible to ignore. They were pitch black, and at least 200 meters long and at least 60 meters wide. To put it into perspective, it was double the length of a football field and just as wide.

'So these are the fabled Type 1 Space ships, huh.' Varian sighed in amazement at this marvelous creation.

A Type 1 Space Ship was said to travel at an insane 1% of light speed.

To put that into perspective, any location on earth can be reached with in 4 seconds. Moon can be reached in about 2 minutes and mars in around 5 hours.

Varian was transfixed by the marvelous ship and didn't notice a female military officer stepping onto the stage.

"Szz"

Those who weren't concentrating on the stage got a slight shock under their feet, and that included Varian.

Feeling the numbing pain from his feet, he looked at the officer along with others and she said harshly, "Getting distracted will kill you. Always focus on mission. Now sign the forms or back off while you still can."

A form popped up in front of every candidate. It stated that the candidate understood risks and if they died; it was their own doing.

"I... I don't want to go."

"Me too. The death rates are 30% for fuck's sake."

Whispers filled the room and a section of the candidates couldn't bring themselves to face the final choice.

Varian signed the form and, along with thousands more, entered the Spaceship.

The Entrance test began!

Their destination? The Abyss!