

Bloodline 1461

Chapter 1461 An Imposter?

"A Triton guard?" Gustav's tone shifted from confrontational to curious, his grip loosening just enough to allow the guard to breathe more easily.

The guard catching his breath, quickly tried to leverage the moment.

"Yes, yes! I'm—I'm not here to cause trouble. I recognized you, Gustav Crimson, and curiosity got the better of me. I meant no harm!"

Gustav set him down but didn't release him completely, his hand firmly on Sael's shoulder.

"Curiosity? Or were you planning on outing my location?" Gustav's suspicion was evident.

The guard, realizing that honesty was his best chance at walking away unscathed, nodded hurriedly.

"It's true, I thought about it—but I swear, I haven't told anyone! Please, I have no interest in crossing someone like you."

Gustav studied him for a moment longer, then finally released him, stepping back.

"What is a Triton guard doing here anyway? Don't you guys specialize in transporting criminals?"

The guard still catching his breath from the encounter, responded with a mixture of relief and apprehension.

"I—I was assigned to patrol this area, not by choice but by orders. My superiors... they sent me to keep an eye out for Vlain Zenith."

The mention of Vlain Zenith caused Gustav to narrow his eyes in surprise and suspicion.

"Zenith? Why?"

Realizing that evasion might only provoke another confrontation from which he might not walk away, he hurriedly complied.

"We were tasked to recover a stolen item—Rion—and to recapture an escaped prisoner, Karis..."

"You're here for Karis and the Rion?" Gustav knew Triton would try to make a move but he hadn't expected it to be so quick.

Sael nodded, eager to cooperate, perhaps to curry favor or simply to avoid further physical persuasion.

"After the incident with one of our transport vessels and theft, our intelligence traced Karis's path to the Nereus Sector. We believe Karis and Zenith might be collaborating, which makes him a person of interest in multiple violations."

Gustav processed the information, "And I'm guessing a team has been formed to process retrieval?"

"That's right," Sael continued, shifting uncomfortably under Gustav's intense gaze.

"Engagement without backup is deemed too risky. Zenith has resources and allies that far outweigh what I could handle alone. My role was reconnaissance only—observe and report back."

Gustav mulled over the details, "Since you guys are here now, there's no need for me to meddle anymore."

"Are you saying you're here for the same reason as us?" Sael asked, his voice laced with disbelief.

"To retrieve the Rion and apprehend Karis?"

Gustav, his expression somber, nodded. "Partially. I was at the scene of the wreckage. That's where we found Eyhrum. He pleaded for help, claiming the Rion's danger was too great to ignore. We saved him and did in fact come here to help, but now I think we should leave the rest to your team."

Sael's confusion deepened, his eyebrows knitting together as he processed Gustav's words.

"But... Gustav Crimson, the fugitive? You're not the monster stories across the universe make you out to be."

Gustav gave a wry half-smile, the kind worn by those who'd long accepted the weight of the world's misjudgments.

"Stories often find a life of their own. Eyhrum is with us, I'll tell him to join you guys."

Sael's surprise turned to shock.

"Officer Eyhrum? He's one of the leaders of our retrieval operation. He was the sole survivor who called for backup immediately after the wreck. You're saying he's with you?"

Gustav's confusion mirrored Sael's.

"Eyhrum is with us, yes. He has been aiding in our efforts to locate Karis and the Rion. Are you sure we're talking about the same person?"

Sael shook his head, disbelief etched across his features.

"There must be some mistake. After the wreck, Eyhrum coordinated with our command to organize this mission. He couldn't have been with you."

The implication hung between them like a charged cloud ready to burst. Gustav's mind raced. An imposter? The pieces didn't fit.

"This is what happened according to your command after the wreck?" Gustav prompted, needing to hear the full story.

"Yes," Sael started, his voice steady with the cadence of recited facts.

"Eyhrum transmitted a distress signal shortly after the wreck. He reported that Karis had orchestrated an escape, leveraging the chaos to steal the Rion. Command mobilized a response team based on his coordinates and intel. He's supposed to be embedded with the recovery team, overseeing the operation from a command post not far from here."

Gustav's thoughts churned. The man they'd rescued had seemed genuine enough at the time. Could they have been deceived so easily? "If he's with the command team, then who have we been harboring?" Gustav mused aloud, more to himself than to Sael.

Sael looked equally troubled, the security implications of an imposter deep within their operations dawning on him.

"We need to verify this, immediately. If there's an imposter, it could compromise the entire operation. And if he's after the Rion..."

"Then we may have inadvertently been aiding an enemy," Gustav concluded, the gravity of the situation settling over him.

"You said you found him in the wreckage?" Sael tried to confirm.

"Nearly dead at that. There is no doubt that he was there when the incident occurred but must have chosen a fake identity... Because he isn't on the right side of this," Gustav immediately pieced everything together.

"Do you mean...?" Sael seemed to understand what Gustav meant.

"Where is that command team of yours located?"

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Gustav and the guard, Sael, walked briskly through the dimly lit corridors of the Nereus Sector, making their way to a concealed command post established by the Triton guards.

The sector's usual cacophony faded into a muffled echo behind thick, reinforced doors that led to a series of storage facilities, cleverly repurposed into a strategic base of operations.

The command post was starkly utilitarian, with exposed pipes running across low ceilings and harsh LED lights casting stark shadows.

Screens and digital maps flickered with the constant stream of data, and a palpable tension filled the air, compounded by the urgent murmurs of Triton operatives moving briskly about their duties.

Upon entering, Gustav was greeted by a humanoid male with a rigid military posture, wearing the distinct crisp uniform of a Triton officer. His hair was peppered gray, and his glowing eyes, sharp and assessing, quickly took in Gustav's measure.

"Officer Eyhrum, I presume?" Gustav mumbled.

"That's correct. And you must be the infamous Gustav Crimson. My subordinate briefed me on the comms," Eyhrum's voice was even, but his eyes were wary.

Gustav nodded, getting straight to the point.

"As much as I do not wish to further involve myself, the imposter pretending to be you might prove to be a problem."

Eyhrum's brow furrowed, and he signaled for the others to gather around.

A small group of operatives joined them, forming a semi-circle around a central holo-table.

"Can you describe him?" Eyhrum inquired.

"SJ," Gustav called out.

Zing~

The sacred jewel appeared in place and flashed a bright light from its circular visage.

The light formed the features of the fake Eyhrum.

The group immediately took note of the physical features of the fake Eyhrum and began working to identify him.

Images flickered into view, and after several moments, the real identity of the imposter was revealed—

Eyhrum's expression hardened.

"Thalos. I should've known..."

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-The Next Day-

In the shadowy underbelly of the Nereus Sector, within the confines of a heavily fortified warehouse at the eastern docks, a clandestine meeting was taking place.

The warehouse was a sprawling maze of crates and cargoes, dimly lit by flickering lights that cast long, ominous shadows across the cold, concrete floor.

At the center of the secretive assembly stood a large, sturdy table littered with digital displays and holographic projectors, illuminating the area with soft, pulsing light.

Standing at the head of the table was Vlain Zenith, a figure of imposing stature and commanding presence.

Zenith was a striking blend of humanoid and alien features: his skin bore a metallic sheen, reflecting the light in iridescent waves, while sharp, angular ridges ran along his jawline and forehead, giving him an intimidating appearance.

His eyes were a piercing silver, devoid of any visible iris, exuding a cold, calculating intelligence.

Around him were gathered his lieutenants, each wearing tech masks that obscured their faces but enhanced their sense, and connected to the various data streams flowing in from their operations around the sector.

They were not ordinary criminals; they were specialists in espionage, smuggling, and high-stakes theft, handpicked by Zenith for their skills and loyalty.

"Boss, the latest shipments have cleared the outer checkpoints. We've moved the contraband through the Tesseract Rift without any Imperial entanglements. The profits are exceeding projections," reported a lieutenant, his voice modulated through the mask.

Zenith nodded, his expression unreadable.

"Good. The markets are hungry, and our supply lines are holding. What's the status of the Rion acquisition? Has there been contact yet?"

Another lieutenant, a female with sleek cybernetic enhancements visible at the nape of her neck, chimed in, "Still in play. There has been no contact yet, but we are chasing certain leads. However, boss... There have been sightings of powerful forces present in the sector."

Chapter 1462 Karis Appearance

"However, boss... There have been sightings of powerful forces present in the sector."

Zenith's interest peaked almost immediately.

"That could be trouble. Keep a close watch; I don't want any surprises. I'll be leaving soon to broker the deal with the Calrissian delegates. It's delicate and needs my personal touch."

As he concluded his directives, instructing one of his underlings to assemble a team with specific capabilities for an upcoming secretive operation, the tranquility of the meeting was shattered by a sudden, resounding crash.

Bang!

The metal doors at the far end of the warehouse burst inward, revealing a group of five.

They appeared to be humanoid in physique. All except for one in a Triton guard uniform.

"Secure the exits!" Zenith barked, as his well-trained crew scrambled into defensive positions, pulling tech weapons from concealed holsters and activating defensive shields.

But before the skirmish could escalate, Gustav himself appeared from a side entrance, moving with such unexpected swiftness that he seemed to materialize out of thin air. He bypassed the chaotic melee and headed straight for Zenith who was trying to flee.

"Going somewhere?" Gustav's voice boomed through the warehouse as he grabbed the crime lord, his grip iron-tight.

Zenith struggled, his strength considerable, but incomparable to that of Gustav's.

"Let me go! You don't know what you're meddling with!"

Gustav tightened his grip, pulling Zenith closer. "I know exactly what I'm messing with."

As Zenith's lieutenants watched their boss being subdued, a brief hesitation fell among them; their leader, the linchpin of their operations, was compromised.

"Restraints! Don't let any get away!" Endric stated.

Aldris opened his eyes and colorful, glowing strings wrapped around every single one of them, Zenith included.

The warehouse had become a scene of total control by Gustav. Ria moved efficiently, disarming the lieutenants while Falco kept an eye on the perimeter, ensuring no reinforcements could surprise them.

Zenith, now caught and restrained, glared at Gustav.

"What do you think you're doing? Do you know who I am?" he barked at Gustav, trying to regain some semblance of control over the situation. His voice carried a mix of arrogance and a thinly veiled anxiety.

Gustav, unfazed by the bravado, replied coolly, "I know exactly who you are, Zenith. And I know what you're capable of. But right now, you're the one in restraints, not me."

Zenith scoffed, his worry creeping deeper as he recognized the calm confidence in Gustav's posture—a clear indicator that he was no ordinary foe.

"I have an army at my disposal. You think you can just walk in here, restrain me, and there won't be consequences?"

Gustav leaned in, his voice steady.

"I only want two things, Zenith. Karis and the Rion."

Zenith let out a hollow laugh, his earlier confidence waning as he processed the implications.

"Karis? That makes two of us then," he said, his tone laced with sarcasm.

His words were proof that he was aware of Karis's possession of the Rion.

Gustav's brow furrowed in confusion.

"You're supposed to be working with her. If that's the case, hand them both over."

Zenith shook his head, a genuine chuckle escaping him despite his predicament. "I don't have them. You're barking up the wrong tree."

"Explain," Gustav demanded, his patience thinning. "You're supposed to be in cahoots with her. How do you not have what I'm looking for?"

Zenith sighed, realizing that there was no point in withholding the truth any longer since he had been captured.

"Karis and I... we were partners, yes, but that was years ago. Our last heist together didn't end well—for her. I thought she'd come to me with the Rion, looking to cash in so we could split the profits. Seems she learned from the past, too."

Gustav crossed his arms, intrigued despite himself.

"What happened in the past?"

Zenith's eyes drifted to a spot on the dusty floor, his mind replaying the events. "I betrayed her. During our last big score, I let the authorities have her. Thought I could wipe out the competition. She was arrested and spent years being transferred from one maximum security vessel to another. Triton vessels, mostly."

Gustav listened, his understanding of the situation deepening. Zenith's revelation had added a layer of complexity to Karis's motives and slightly explained her current movements.

"If she's avoiding you, then she's likely working alone or with someone else. Someone who isn't you," Gustav mused aloud, piecing together the scattered information into a clearer picture.

Zenith nodded, a bitter smile twisting his features.

"Exactly. And knowing Karis, she won't stop until she's played her hand. If she hasn't come to me with the Rion, she's planning to use it for something... bigger."

Gustav turned back to his group, signaling them to keep searching the area for any more clues.

"We need to find her before she strikes. Any idea where she might head?"

Zenith laughed weakly, the irony of the situation not lost on him.

"If I knew that, I'd be chasing her myself. But Karis is a ghost—she doesn't want to be found, especially not by me."

Gustav nodded, processing the information.

"But you're her best bet at selling the Rion, and if she had gone to another person, you'd be aware because you have eyes everywhere, right?" Gustav's tone was pointed, cutting through the stagnant air with its sharpness.

Zenith nodded reluctantly, a trace of unease flickering across his features.

The mention jolted Zenith, his eyes widening as he processed the implications. After a moment of intense reflection, he conceded, "You might be right. It never crossed my mind, but considering our past... it's possible."

At that moment, Gustav's demeanor changed as he activated an ability.

"Yes, that's correct. My network is extensive."

Gustav, sensing a shift in the undercurrents of the conversation, leaned in closer. "Did you ever consider the fact that Karis might be after your life?"

The mention jolted Zenith, his eyes widening as he processed the implications. After a moment of intense reflection, he conceded, "You might be right. It never crossed my mind, but considering our past... it's possible."

At that moment, Gustav's demeanor changed as he activated an ability.

[God Eyes Have Been Activated]

His irises swirled into a mesmerizing blend of gold, crimson, and green glows, casting an eerie light in the dimly lit room.

The room fell silent as Gustav's eyes began their scan. The operatives watched in awe and confusion as his gaze swept across the warehouse. With the power of God Eyes, nothing could escape Gustav's sight.

His gaze moved methodically, sweeping through the cluttered spaces of the warehouse, past the superficial layers, and into the core of its structure.

As his supernatural vision pierced through a seemingly innocuous corner of the premises, he caught a glimpse of a feminine figure cleverly camouflaged within the shadows.

The figure seemed to be using an ability that was hidden from perception, which was why none of them had been aware of her presence the entire time.

The figure, sensing detection, made a swift move to flee, her movements a blur to the ordinary eye but clear as day to Gustav.

Gustav vanished from his position, reappearing almost instantaneously beside the fleeing figure.

With a swift motion, he grasped her arm, halting her escape, and dragged her into the light, to the center of the warehouse. The sudden appearance of the two caused a collective gasp among the group.

Gustav's grip was firm as he addressed the captive, "Karis, I presume?"

The woman, now unable to hide her identity, met Gustav's gaze defiantly. Her appearance was striking.

Her skin was a pale, iridescent color that caught the light with a subtle shimmer, reminiscent of a pearl.

Her eyes were the most captivating aspect of her visage. Larger than human eyes, they gleamed with a vibrant teal color, speckled with tiny flecks of gold that sparkled under direct light. The pupils were

vertically slit, hinting at her alien lineage, and they dilated or contracted with a precision that seemed almost mechanical, adapting instantaneously to changes in light.

Karis's hair flowed down her back in a cascade of soft waves, the color a deep blue that at times appeared almost black. The tips of her hair occasionally emitted a faint glow, particularly when she was agitated or excited.

She had an angular facial structure with high cheekbones and a slender jawline that gave her a regal and authoritative appearance. Her ears were slightly pointed, more pronounced than a human's, and from the tips hung delicate, bioluminescent earrings that complemented her natural glow.

Her hands were slender, with elongated fingers tipped with nails that resembled smooth, polished opal.

"Yes, I'm Karis. Seems my luck has finally run out," she said, her voice steady despite the precarious situation.

Zenith, witnessing the unfolding scene, felt a mix of shock and betrayal.

"Karis... here to kill me, after all these years?"

The air in the dimly lit warehouse was heavy with tension and unspoken grievances as Karis faced V্লাid Zenith, her expression a mixture of scorn and profound hurt.

"You realize what you did by betraying me, Vlaid?" Karis's voice was low, almost a whisper, but it carried through the space with chilling clarity.

Zenith, still reeling from the shock of her sudden appearance and capture, looked at her, confusion and realization dawning in his eyes.

"Karis, I— You should have seen it coming. I taught you the ways of this world is full of blood and treachery so—"

"Did you even know?" Karis cut him off, stepping closer, her presence imposing despite her physical restraints. "When you turned me in, did you know I was carrying your child?"

Chapter 1463 Revealing Thalos

"When you turned me in, did you know I was carrying your child?"

Zenith staggered as if struck, his face paling. "Our child? I didn't know, Karis. I swear I didn't know."

Tears shimmered in Karis's large, teal eyes, not of sorrow but of rage. "I lost our baby, Vlaid, in a maximum-security transport. Do you understand what that means? The conditions... they were merciless. No medical care, no compassion. Our child didn't stand a chance."

Zenith looked as if he might collapse, his hands clenching into fists. "Karis, I..."

"A life for a life, Vlaid," Karis hissed, her voice rising. "You will pay dearly."

Before the situation could escalate further, Gustav stepped between them, his demeanor authoritative yet calm.

"No one is paying anything until we sort out the situation with the Rion. Where is it, Karis?"

Karis turned her gaze to Gustav, her expression shifting to one of mocking amusement. She laughed, a sound that echoed eerily against the metal walls. "The Rion? Oh, it's not with me."

Gustav frowned, his patience thinning. "What do you mean by 'it's not with you'?"

Her laughter grew louder, more unhinged, as she looked around at the bewildered faces. Then, abruptly, she stopped, her expression settling into a crazed calm.

"That's all you get from me."

Gustav studied her, a sense of unease growing within him. Her laughter had been too raw, too deranged. It was clear that whatever had happened to the Rion, was a piece of the puzzle that was deeply troubling.

"Karis, this isn't a game," Gustav said firmly.

"We need to know about the Rion to prevent it from falling into the wrong hands. It's dangerous."

Karis's lips twisted into a sardonic smile. "Dangerous doesn't begin to cover it, pretty boy. But you'll find out soon enough on your own."

The standoff in the warehouse seemed to freeze time as everyone processed the implications of Karis's words. The stakes were clearly higher than any of them had anticipated, and with Karis unwilling to reveal more, they were left with more questions than answers.

Gustav turned back to his group, nodding for them to continue securing the area and to keep both Zenith and Karis under close watch.

"We need to figure out where the Rion could be. Who she has been in contact with since she is definitely not alone in this."

In the tense atmosphere of the warehouse, where revelations and confrontations had just unraveled the complex web of their mission, the man they knew as Eyhrum, still in the periphery of the unfolding drama, stepped forward.

His movement was casual, but his intentions hinted otherwise.

"I want to try something," he said, his voice calm yet carrying an undercurrent of urgency.

Karis's reaction was immediate and visceral.

Her eyes widened in recognition, and as she opened her mouth to speak, possibly to call out his name or issue a warning, the man moved swiftly, covering her mouth with his hand and silencing her before any name could escape her lips.

"You traitor... You will show me where the Rion is," Eyhrum whispered in her ears.

The suddenness of his action caught everyone off-guard. Gustav, Aildris, and Endric turned to watch, their suspicion instantly flaring up, but before they could react, the person they knew as Eyhrum acted.

He pulled from his pocket a small, reflective object that looked like a mirror. With a deft flick of his wrist, he tossed it onto the hard floor.

The object shattered with a sharp clang, and from the broken fragments, a blinding flash of light erupted, enveloping him and Karis.

In an instant, both figures vanished, leaving behind only the twinkling shards of the broken mirror and a room full of stunned allies.

"What just happened?!" Aildris exclaimed, his voice echoing off the walls of the now-quiet warehouse.

"Where did they go?" Endric added, moving towards the spot where the two had stood, as if he might find some clue in the fragments that remained.

Before anyone could process the situation fully, the sound of heavy boots filled the air, and a squad of armored Triton guards stormed into the warehouse, their weapons drawn and faces set in grim determination.

The leader of the squad, an alien with a humanoid physique and glowing eyes, wearing the insignia of a high-ranking officer, stepped forward.

"I'm Officer Eyhrum," he announced, scanning the room and taking stock of the situation.

The declaration caused a ripple of confusion among Gustav's group. Endric turned to Gustav, his expression a mix of disbelief and frustration.

"What? That's Officer Eyhrum? Then who the hell was—"

Gustav slightly raised a hand to silence him, his face betraying none of the surprise that the others felt.

"Our 'Eyhrum' was an imposter," he said simply.

"You knew about the fake Eyhrum?" Aildris inquired.

Gustav nodded, his gaze steady as he looked at each of them.

"Yes, I had my suspicions. Yesterday, I met with a guard named Sael who brought me to the real Officer Eyhrum. It was then we devised a plan to see what this imposter was really up to." He voiced while his mind reeled back to the previous day's events.

"We need to act quickly," Eyhrum stated. "He could compromise our retrieval operation. What do you propose, Gustav?"

Gustav leaned over the table, his mind clear.

"While this is no longer officially any business of mine, I don't like people thinking they've successfully played me for a fool."

A smirk appeared on his face as he spoke coldly.

"Let's set a trap. He believes he's successfully fooled my team, and he'll likely make a move tomorrow. Meanwhile, we'll pretend not to see it coming. Or rather I will..."

Eyhrum nodded, appreciating the strategy.

"And we'll be ready to intercept him when he makes his move."

"No. He has to believe that his move worked. When he does make his move, we'll let him leave with a false sense of success," Gustav stated.

"I have a feeling we'll meet Karis tomorrow. If this plays out as planned, everything will be revealed and the Rion as well as your prisoner will be retrieved with a bonus," Gustav added.

"But what if he gets away?" Officer Eyhrum was a bit skeptical about the whole thing.

"He won't," Gustav stated confidently.

The plan was swiftly put into motion, with details hashed out and roles assigned. Triton operatives wouldn't be showing up until afterward but they would lurk around the vicinity.

The plan would ensure that Thalos would still make his move without being spooked.

Falco, leaning against a nearby crate, crossed his arms.

"So, this was like a sting operation? You expected him to make a move?"

"Exactly," Gustav confirmed. "We needed to know his endgame without alerting him that we were onto him."

Ria, who had been quietly processing the events, chimed in, "And all this time, we were just waiting to see when he'd reveal his hand. Clever. But how did you ensure he wouldn't just disappear with Karis without a trace?"

Gustav's lips curled into a slight smile at Ria's astute question.

"Tracking him conventionally wouldn't work."

Aldris raised an eyebrow. "Did you put some kind of tracker on him?"

Shaking his head, Gustav explained, "No, a traditional tracker would have been useless given his abilities. Thalos moves between a certain type of dimension that blocks such attempts. Instead, I used a more personal method. His life sign is imprinted into my God Eyes."

"Life Signs?" Endric echoed with a surprised expression.

"You can see life Signs?"

Falco and Ria were clueless about what it meant but Endric and Aildris seemed to be well aware.

It was an ability that Gustav had acquired years back but they had no idea. Aildris and Endric felt it made sense since Gustav was able to link them and pinpoint their locations back in Planet Ozious. He never did tell them the details but they had now come to a realization.

"You mean you can sense where he is now?" Aildris inquired.

"Yes," Gustav replied. "Once I activate Life Signs tracking, I will be able to tell wherever he is... feel his presence and even see through him."

Falco whistled softly, impressed. "That's intense. So, you can actually feel him? Like, physically?"

"It's more like a persistent echo of his life force," Gustav elaborated.

"I can tell you exactly what he's doing and see his environment through him. I can also feel the direction and distance enough to track him down again."

The group digested the information, the weight of Gustav's words sinking in. It reminded them once more of just how powerful Gustav was but also made them internally question why he didn't use it when Falco and Angy got captured.

"So, what's the next step?" Aildris asked, looking around at the rest of the group.

"Thalos, the person we've been calling 'Eyhrum,' wasn't just impersonating an officer; he was one of the fake guards that infiltrated the transport vessel to help Karis escape."

Endric leaned forward, his interest piqued.

"So he was working with her from the inside? What's their endgame?"

"He was..." Gustav confirmed, his eyes scanning his group, ensuring he had their full attention.

Chapter 1464 You Left Us To Die!

"He was..." Gustav confirmed, his eyes scanning his group, ensuring he had their full attention.

"From what I've pieced together, Karis made a deal with a criminal group to secure her escape and retrieve the Rion. But their plan seems to have had some kind of mishap with Thalos being left for dead."

Falco frowned at the complexity of the situation.

"So since he survived, what's his move now?"

"That's where it gets interesting," Gustav continued. "I suspect Thalos is desperate to regain the Rion. He will likely convince Karis to take him to its location. If we can keep track of him, they'll lead us right to it."

Aildris looked up. "So we use Thalos as our unwitting guide. When Karis takes him to the Rion, that's our window to strike. We'll need to be ready to move on a moment's notice."

Gustav nodded immediately while responding.

"Exactly. We'll need to maintain constant surveillance on Thalos but since that can't be done, Life Signs Track will help me keep tabs on him without needing to get close."

Endric chimed in with a steady voice. "What about the criminal group Karis made the deal with? Wouldn't they try to save Karis or something?"

"That's a valid concern," Gustav acknowledged.

"We need to be prepared for interference but at the same time..." he paused while his eyebrows furrowed.

"...I have a feeling they're no longer in play."

"You mean..." Ria's eyes widened slightly.

"Yeah. They may all be dead already. Thalos may be the last survivor. He did call her a traitor before vanishing with her," Gustav analyzed.

Everyone felt it made sense. Although they didn't know the full story, if Karis had sabotaged the group and escaped with their spacecraft after taking the Rion, anyone would have been very pissed.

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In an ethereal dimension where reality seemed suspended, Karis and Thalos floated amidst a shimmering expanse that reflected fractured images of their past.

The surreal space, bound by the fabric of memory and time, pulsed with translucent, glowing lines that ensnared Karis, holding her captive. The lines wrapped tightly around her, their luminescence casting eerie shadows across her anguished face.

Around them, echoes of past events played out like ghostly scenes from a film—flickering images of their heist, the escape, and the catastrophic explosion that had changed everything.

Thalos, his figure free from the bindings that held Karis, paced before her, his voice filled with bitterness and betrayal.

"You left us to die, Karis! You betrayed our trust, and you ran with the Rion, alone!"

Karis, struggling against her glowing restraints, replied with a mix of desperation and sincerity in her voice.

"Thalos, I thought you were all dead! The vessel was coming apart; there was no time. I had to escape, or I would have perished with the ship."

"You're a liar!" Thalos shouted, his voice echoing in the dimension, distorting as it rebounded off the memory images.

"You caused that explosion on purpose to rid yourself of us and take the Rion for yourself!"

Karis's eyes, wide and filled with pain, met Thalos's accusing gaze. "No, that's not true! I never intended the explosion to be so powerful. I didn't know any of you had survived. I wouldn't have left if I'd known."

Thalos paused, his anger momentarily giving way to grief as images of their former comrades—friends, and allies in their clandestine activities—flickered around them.

"They trusted you, Karis. We all did. And they died because of it. I'm the last one, the only survivor of your betrayal. And for what? For a cursed artifact that has brought nothing but misery."

Karis's voice broke as she pleaded, her words tinged with a profound sadness.

"Please, Thalos, you have to believe me. I know how betrayal feels; I wouldn't inflict that pain on anyone. I'm so sorry."

Thalos, unmoved by her pleas, his features hard as stone, continued relentlessly.

"Where is the Rion, Karis? If you truly regret your actions, prove it. Where did you hide it?"

Karis shook her head slowly, her voice a whisper lost amidst the swirling memories.

"I can't... I can't tell you."

Thalos scoffed, his disbelief evident.

"Convenient, Karis. Always thinking of yourself, even now. You say you feel remorseful but the truth is you don't."

The dimension around them seemed to pulse with increased intensity, the images speeding up, replaying their last moments together on the vessel, the escape, the explosion, and the aftermath that had led each of them to this point. The air was thick with the weight of unsaid words and unresolved grief.

"It's not like that, Thalos. The Rion... it's dangerous, more dangerous than we ever imagined. I will save everyone the trouble with what I've done. You have to leave the Nereus Sector."

Thalos turned away from her, his figure silhouetted against a particularly vivid replay of the explosion. "I wish I could believe you had good intentions, Karis. But in the end, we're all just crooks. You will tell me where the Rion is... Willingly or unwillingly."

As he spoke, the dimension began to dim, the images flickering out one by one, leaving them in a growing darkness. The glowing lines that bound Karis started to fade, her figure becoming less distinct.

"Thalos, please," she called out to him, her voice echoing in the now nearly empty space. "Don't leave me here alone..."

The space around them vibrated with the echoes of loss, past misdeeds, lives, and how she lost her baby, each memory replaying like a tormenting specter.

"Thalos, please, don't leave me here alone with these memories," Karis's voice trembled with despair as images swirled around them relentlessly.

Thalos, his expression torn between resentment and a lingering sense of former camaraderie, paused at the threshold of the dimension's exit.

His voice, when he spoke, carried a cold finality, "I will return when you are ready to tell me the location of the Rion. Until then, you have your memories for company."

Without waiting for her response, his figure dissolved into the ether, leaving Karis alone in the echoing void.

He watched, with a mix of strategic calculation and empathetic concern, as Thalos departed the dimension, his location now a beacon on Gustav's mental map.

As Karis was engulfed by the relentless playback of her past, in another realm of existence, Gustav observed the unfolding events through Thalos' eyes.

He watched, with a mix of strategic calculation and empathetic concern, as Thalos departed the dimension, his location now a beacon on Gustav's mental map.

Gustav stood before a large digital map, his eyes fixed on a particular location that he believed was Thalos's current physical location. Around him, his team and several Triton guards coordinated efforts, their faces etched with concentration and urgency.

"That's Thalos's location," Gustav informed them, pointing at the map.

"But hold on about moving in. He is yet to receive the Rion's location from Karis."

Falco, leaning over the console next to Gustav, frowned. "How long do we wait? Every moment is dangerous based on what Karis said."

Gustav's gaze remained fixed on the screen, his mind racing through scenarios.

"We wait until he meets Karis again. It's our best shot at getting the Rion and stopping whatever they plan to use it for."

("This would have been much easier if you had just used Memories Siphon to get the location of the Rion the moment you got her,") The system voiced in his head.

'You're back... And no. If I had done that and we headed off to the location together then, Thalos wouldn't have played his hand.

If he had managed to lay hands on the Rion and used that mirror thingy to vanish, things would have gotten way more complicated. But at least now we can't be taken by surprise since we already know of his abilities,' Gustav responded.

("You could have tried to salvage the situation.")

'You just got back and you're already arguing with me... Typical,' Gustav felt the urge to pull her ears.

("Hmph! When we leave the Nereus Sector, I have something to tell you,") The system voiced in response.

'Oh? Alright then.'

...

In the streets and shadows of the Nereus Sector, Triton guards patrolled relentlessly, their scanners humming softly as they searched for any trace of the Rion's distinctive energy signature.

Despite their technology and training, the elusive artifact remained hidden, as if shielded by unseen forces.

"Any luck with the energy signatures?" Gustav called out to a guard stationed at a monitoring station.

The guard shook his head, frustration evident in his terse reply.

"Nothing, sir. It's like chasing a ghost."

As another day bled into night, Gustav remained vigilant, occasionally watching Thalos through Life Signs Tracking.

Ria approached Gustav, "You think Karis will actually tell him?"

Gustav sighed, "People under pressure make surprising choices, Ria. Karis might hold out, or she might crack. No one is truly absolute when it comes down to a play of emotions."

...

...

...

In the strange and ethereal dimension of memories, Thalos re-entered to find Karis looking more desolate than ever before.

The space, charged with the echoes of her past, seemed even darker, the air thicker with the weight of her sorrow. Karis floated amidst the glowing lines that held her, her face etched with deep lines of misery.

Thalos approached her, his expression hardening as he prepared to confront her once again.

"Karis, tell me where the Rion is," he demanded, his voice echoing slightly in the memory-filled void.

Chapter 1465 Locating Rion

"Karis, tell me where the Rion is," he demanded, his voice echoing slightly in the memory-filled void.

Karis lifted her weary eyes to meet his, a spark of defiance still burning within.

"I can't tell you, Thalos. I won't let you destroy what I've planned."

Thalos's frustration was palpable, but he masked it quickly and tried a different angle.

"Why deny me of my share? This was never the plan so stop being selfish."

Karis shook her head slowly, her voice soft but firm.

"The Nereus Sector cursed me. It made me a criminal. I blame this place for the loss of my child. I won't let anyone else suffer as I have. What I'm doing with the Rion... will make sure nothing like this is repeated. Just leave the Nereus Sector for your own sake."

Thalos scoffed as his patience wore thin.

"Tell me where the Rion is, Karis. This is not a game."

Her resolve hardened as she repeated her refusal.

"No, Thalos. I must finish what I started."

At that moment, Thalos burst into laughter, a sound that seemed jarringly out of place in the somber atmosphere. Karis stared at him, confusion and surprise written across her face.

Thalos, catching his breath, waved his hand dismissively.

"I don't need you to tell me, Karis. Look around you."

As he spoke, the memories swirling around them began to shift. The images of past tragedies and struggles faded, replaced by more recent memories.

Karis watched, horror-struck, as scenes of her arrival in the Nereus Sector with the Rion played out around them. The memories showed where she had headed, whom she had contacted, and even where she had hidden the Rion—all displayed vividly in the shimmering dimension.

Karis's eyes widened with realization and dread.

"How...?"

Thalos's smile was thin and cold.

"You see, Karis, the mind, no matter how strong, starts to crack under constant reliving of grief. It opens doors and makes it easy to navigate to the memories I want to see. Your plan, your contacts, the Rion's location—I know it all now."

Karis felt a chill run down her spine as the implications of Thalos's words sank in. Her last defense had been breached, her secrets laid bare not by torture or threats, but by her memories.

Thalos continued, his voice now a whisper that seemed to fill the space.

"You thought you could outsmart everyone, didn't you? Use the Rion to your satisfaction? But you're just a pawn, Karis. And now, I own the board."

Karis, now realizing the extent of her vulnerability, felt a mixture of anger and desperation.

"You think you've won, Thalos?"

Thalos nodded slowly, his expression serious.

"Yes, I have. And I will. The Rion will be mine, and with it, I will choose to do whatever I please."

As the revelation hung heavy between them, Karis's mind raced for solutions, ways to salvage her plan. But with every option seeming to slip through her fingers, her situation felt increasingly hopeless.

Thalos, satisfied with the shock and defeat on Karis's face, began to fade from the dimension, his parting words echoing around her, "Goodbye Karis."

...

Through the intricate and exclusive capabilities of the Life Signs Tracking, Gustav had a unique vantage point. Only he could see Thalos's actions within the dimension of memories, witnessing the revelation of the Rion's location.

Without hesitation, Gustav called everyone together for the revelation.

"I have the location of the Rion," Gustav announced, his voice carrying a grave urgency. "Thalos just extracted the information from Karis's memories. We need to move—now. He'll be heading there, and if he retrieves the Rion before us, we're looking at a potential catastrophe."

The Triton operatives mobilized instantly, equipment and weapons holstered as coordinative commands echoed through the room.

The location, an industrial complex on the edge of the Nereus Sector, was now their target. The complex was a labyrinth of abandoned machinery and towering storage tanks, casting long shadows in the twilight that blanketed the area.

As the team approached the site, the surrounding environment grew increasingly hostile. The complex was guarded by figures cloaked in the shadows, their faces obscured by hoods and masks. They were allies of Karis, part of the network she had relied on to keep the Rion hidden.

The Triton guards took point, engaging the shadowy figures with precision. Laser blasts illuminated the dim surroundings in stark bursts of light as the guards advanced, using their supernatural ability dampener to handle the foes.

"Secure the perimeter!" shouted one of the lead guards, a burly man with a scar running down his cheek.

The team worked systematically, cornering the defenders who were quickly overwhelmed by the sudden and well-orchestrated assault.

Meanwhile, Gustav and a small contingent pushed deeper into the complex. The heart of the industrial maze was a massive, cavernous room where the Rion was said to be located. As they entered, the sight that greeted them was otherworldly.

The Rion itself was not a discrete object but appeared as a complex assembly of crystalline structures, fused into the infrastructure of the building. It pulsed with a glowing energy, the light it emitted growing steadily intense.

"It's charging up," Gustav observed, his expression tense as he surveyed the setup.

"We can't just pull it out. It's integrated into the sector's power grid by the looks of it. Removing it might be impossible without the energy signature of the person who activated it."

The operatives fanned out, securing the room as they contacted their base for technical support.

"We need options here," they reported through commlinks, while their gazes were fixed on the pulsating Rion.

Before further strategies could be discussed, a commotion at the entrance signaled a new development. Thalos burst into the vicinity, his face a mask of shock and fury as he beheld the scene before him. His plan to retrieve the Rion unchallenged had clearly unraveled.

He spun on his heel to retreat, but Gustav appeared seemingly out of nowhere.

"Going somewhere?" Gustav's voice was cool, calm, and ominously quiet.

Thalos reached into his jacket, his hand closing around another reflective, mirror-like device, but before he could use it, Gustav was upon him.

With a swift move, he disarmed Thalos and pinned him against a wall.

"You're not escaping this time, Thalos. Not with the Rion, not with anything," Gustav stated firmly, the grip on his adversary unyielding.

Thalos, caught and deflated, his eyes darted around the room, taking in the array of Triton operatives that had already surrounded him.

"How did you...?"

He couldn't believe his eyes. They really got to the Rion before him but he could sense that something was wrong.

Gustav's eyes narrowed as he turned to the Triton guards.

"Keep him secured. I'm going to figure out how to neutralize the Rion without causing damage to the sector."

A few minutes later, Gustav stood before the Rion, his brow furrowed in concentration. The crystalline structure pulsed with an ominous glow. Gustav, with determined precision, attempted various methods

to dislodge the Rion, but each attempt was met with failure—the mineral remained unyieldingly fused to its surroundings.

Realizing the gravity of the situation, officer Eyhrum called upon Vlain Zenith for his assistance. Zenith, whose past actions had indirectly contributed to the current crisis, approached the Rion with a mix of curiosity and trepidation.

As they inspected the setup together, Zenith's knowledge proved invaluable.

"It looks like it's user-locked... A mineral with binding sentience," Zenith observed, examining the interfaces that linked the Rion to the infrastructure.

"Only the person who activated it can deactivate it. This thing is bonded to Karis."

Gustav processed the information, "So, we need Karis to shut it down."

Zenith nodded grimly. "Yes. If that energy is released, it'll obliterate everything. The entire Nereus Sector—gone. There's too much power being accumulated; no one would survive, and while my men and I can escape, it is impossible to evacuate millions in time."

Regret washed over Zenith's features as he considered the implications of his past betrayals. "This is all my fault. If I hadn't turned on Karis, none of this would be happening. I wish there was something I could do now."

"There might be something you can do, Zenith. Help convince Karis to deactivate the Rion." Gustav voiced before turning away.

Leaving Zenith to ponder his role in the unfolding disaster, Gustav strode with purpose toward the area where Thalos was being held. Thalos looked up as Gustav approached, his expression defiant yet curious about the intentions of his captor.

"Thalos, we need Karis to deactivate the Rion. It's linked to her, and she's the only one who can shut it down safely," Gustav explained, his tone commanding yet edged with a plea for cooperation.

Thalos scoffed, his skepticism clear.

"And why would I do that? What's in it for me?"

Gustav met his gaze steadily, "Thalos, if that mineral goes off, you'll die along with everyone else. This isn't about deals or leverage anymore—it's about survival."

"Hmph! Perhaps dying isn't such a bad option so long as that treacherous bitch gets to join in," Thalos spat out, his disdain for Karis was evident in his sneer.

Chapter 1466 The Planet Destroyer

Hmph! Perhaps dying isn't such a bad option so long as that treacherous bitch gets to join in," Thalos spat out, his disdain for Karis evident in his sneer.

Gustav's response was measured, his tone icy as he leaned in closer. "Don't test my patience, Thalos. Release Karis, so she can deactivate the Rion. I've been awfully understanding and nice these days. You don't want to see the other side."

Thalos, clenching his fists, shot back, "And why would I do that? If I'm going down, I want the Rion in the end. Without that, there's no deal."

Gustav's expression darkened. "Listen carefully. With the little time we have left, I can make your life a living hell. I can save you from the destruction only to dedicate the rest of your days to torturing you until you beg for death as a relief—and I will not grant it."

The threat hung heavy in the air, Gustav's words echoing with a chilling promise. Thalos, looking into Gustav's relentless eyes, felt a shiver run down his spine. There was no bluff in Gustav's gaze, only the cold certainty of his intentions.

Was he powerful enough to handle it? Recalling all he had witnessed these last couple of days, he doubted it. Initially he thought Gustav and the others were just ordinary people that had saved him but he knew very well now that they were far from being ordinary, especially after finding out about Gustav's identity.

After a tense moment, Thalos swallowed hard, his earlier bravado crumbling under the weight of Gustav's resolve. "Alright... alright, I'll do it. Just... just... Spare me."

Gustav nodded curtly, signaling to an operative who handed Thalos a small, reflective surface—a portal device. With a resigned sigh, Thalos took the device, his hands slightly trembling as he summoned Karis from the dimensional void she was trapped in.

The air shimmered as Karis was pulled through the reflective portal, her form solidifying in the real world. She looked around, disoriented for a moment before her gaze hardened upon seeing Thalos and Gustav.

The urgency of the situation brought them to the site where the Rion was embedded, its glow pulsating ominously. The operatives, along with Vlais Zenith, stood back as Gustav led Karis to the crystalline structure.

"Karis, you're the only one who can deactivate this," Gustav stated.

Karis, her expression unreadable, surveyed the Rion. The burden of her decision weighed visibly on her shoulders. After a moment's hesitation, she shook her head. "No."

The single word fell like a hammer. Gustav's brow furrowed, his patience fraying. "Why won't you deactivate the Rion? You really want innocent folks... children to lose their lives just like how your baby lost it's?"

Karis's eyes met Gustav's as a flurry of emotions flickered through. "That is not it. I am trying to save them and the potential many others that may fall into such a disastrous situation. When the Nereus Sector is no more, so will their suffering. This will only bring salvation."

Thalos interjected, anger lacing his tone, "You'd risk everything for your ideals? You're as mad as they say!"

Karis turned to face Thalos, her gaze steely. "And you'd sell us all out for a chance at power. We're different, Thalos. I'm trying to save lives as opposed to your selfish ass."

Gustav stepped between them; "No, you're trying to take them. There can be other better ways of saving them. Do you really believe this is the only path?"

Karis sighed, the weight of the world seeming to press down upon her. "There is no other way. The Nereus Sector is full of rotten criminals. Their death will make the universe a better place. Other innocents won't fall into their hand once the charge goes off."

Zenith, who had been silent, now spoke up; "If I had known of our baby... I would have done better. As much rotten as I am, I don't believe those kids should suffer the same fate as the ones you wish to punish. You are not giving them the chance to be saved or live a potential life different from how you did."

"What if... There is hope for them and you end up snuffing it out with this?"

The question hung in the air, unanswered as Karis pondered the gravity of her next actions.

Gustav knew that persuading her would take more than threats or pleas; it would require understanding and perhaps aligning with her deeper motivations.

"You want the kingpins and crimelords gone, right?" Gustav broke the silence, his voice steady, eyes locked on Karis's conflicted gaze.

Karis, taken aback by the simplicity of the question, responded with a hint of frustration, "Of course, that's why we're here. This—" she gestured to the glowing Rion, "—is the only way to cleanse the sector once and for all."

Gustav shook his head slightly, a thoughtful look crossing his features. "It's not the only way. There are other paths, ones that don't involve taking innocent lives."

Karis's eyes narrowed, skepticism written across her face. "And what would you know of it?"

"I can help you achieve that. I have the power," Gustav stated.

"Pfft... You? What can you do? Where does such unruly confidence come from?" Karis nearly bursted out in laughter as deeds of the powerful crime lords appeared in her mind.

"It's because I am Gustav Crimson—the 'Planet Destroyer,' as the Alliance calls me," Gustav revealed, his title hanging heavy in the air. He didn't elaborate on his past deeds, but the weight of his reputation was evident.

Karis stepped back, her shock apparent. "You? You're him?" she murmured, piecing together rumors and stories she'd heard of the infamous fugitive.

"Yes," Gustav affirmed, "You have no doubt heard of some of my feats. Does any of your crime lords compare?"

Karis didn't need to answer because the look on her face already did.

"You're just as bad or even worse... Why would I deactivate the Rion after your revelation?" Karis inquired with a frightened look.

Karis, still processing the revelation, looked from Gustav to the Rion and back. "You're a planet destroyer, yet you speak of saving lives?"

Gustav's expression softened. "I've been called many things, Karis. Not all are true, and not all are unfounded."

Eyhrum wanted to step in and speak on behalf of Gustav based on all he had seen so far but Gustav stopped him.

He leaned closer to Karis before responding; "Sometimes, you need a monster to get rid of other monsters."

Karis mouth hung open as she couldn't find the words to refute. For some reason Gustav statement made a lot of sense even though she was supposed to be terrified of such a presence.

"But I need you to trust me, deactivate the Rion, and let us handle this without catastrophe."

Finally, she nodded, her decision made. "I don't know why I'm trusting a planet destroyer, but I'll do it."

Turning to the Rion, Karis approached the crystalline structure. She placed her hands on its surface, her fingers tracing the complex patterns that emitted a soft, blue light.

Whispering words of deactivation, she began the process. The glow of the Rion slowly dimmed, the pulsating energy ebbing away as Karis's chant continued.

Around them, the atmosphere shifted, the imminent threat receding with each passing second. As the light of the Rion faded to a mere flicker and then extinguished, a collective sigh of relief swept through the room.

The Triton guards, led by Officer Eyhrum, stepped forward. With professionalism and precision, they secured the now inert Rion, placing it within a specialized containment unit designed to safeguard such powerful mineral.

"Thank you, Gustav, for your intervention," Officer Eyhrum said, offering a nod of respect to Gustav. "We'll take it from here. The Rion will be kept under maximum security."

As they prepared to escort Karis and Thalos away, Karis gave Gustav a long, searching look. "I hope you keep to your word Gustav," she said quietly, a mix of hope and uncertainty in her voice.

Gustav nodded in acknowledgment, "I will but too bad you won't be around to see it."

In the aftermath of the crisis with the Rion, Ria approached Gustav with an inquisitive gaze.

"So, what's next?" he asked.

Gustav turned to him with a smirk, his eyes glinting with a fierce resolve that had become all too familiar. "It's time for heads to roll," he declared, his tone suggesting a looming storm about to be unleashed.

As Eyhrum and the Triton guards organized their exit from the Nereus Sector, Gustav quickly laid out his plans.

He assigned tasks to each of them focusing on strategic strikes against the criminal underbelly of the sector in a bid to keep his word to Karis.

"Aildris and Falco" he said, "I need you two to coordinate the extraction of trafficked alien kids. Get them to safety, set up a secure channel for medical and psychological support. No loose ends."

"Endric, Ria..." he instructed, "Start dismantling the slave markets. Free those held against their will, and ensure they have a passage to safe havens. I don't have to say, 'Use force if necessary' because it will be but keep casualties to a minimum."

Chapter 1467 The Cleanup

"I don't have to say, 'Use force if necessary' because it will be... but keep casualties to a minimum."

And with that, Gustav set out on his own darker path—hunting down the crime lords and kingpins who had plagued the Nereus Sector for too long.

His reputation as a formidable force grew with each step he took into the shadowy corners of the sector, where the criminal elite hid in their fortified dens.

Karnex, known as 'The Untouchable,' was a notorious crime lord whose operations spanned across smuggling and illegal weapons trade. His lair was a fortified compound deep in the industrial quadrant, guarded by a cadre of heavily tech-armed mercenaries.

Gustav approached the compound under the cover of night. As he neared, the guards became alert to a presence, their nerves on edge. Without hesitation, Gustav surged forward, not bothering to evade shots from blasters as they bounced off his body.

Within moments, he had dealt decisive strikes to the body of the guards, taking them down one after the other.

He breached the compound with explosive force, the doorways, and walls crumbling under his power.

Inside, he encountered Karnex, a hulking figure clad in armor designed to withstand heavy assaults. It would seem that he had already been alerted of the threat.

The crime lord roared in defiance and charged augmented fists aiming to crush Gustav.

[Atomic Manipulation Has Been Activated]

The battle was brutal and swift. Gustav dodged a crushing blow, then countered with a thrust of his palm surrounded by milky-colored waves that sent Karnex flying into a wall, the impact leaving a spider web of cracks in its wake.

The armor fell off his body like tissue as Gustav manipulated its atomic structure.

Before Karnex could recover, Gustav was already upon him, delivering a final strike that silenced the crime lord permanently.

Bang!

His hand ripped right through Karnex's chest.

Gustav didn't stop, he moved on to the next person on his list...

Vela, known as the Siren of the Slums, controlled the illegal narcotics and trafficking rings. Her stronghold was less a fortress and more a maze of underground tunnels beneath the slum districts, her domain veiled in shadows and deception.

Gustav navigated the underground passageways with his perception spread out. He was well aware of the traps and ambushes that lay in wait.

Vela who had snakes for ears, appeared almost out of thin air, her appearance beguiling and her intentions lethal. She attacked with a mix of seductive illusions and deadly strikes, hoping to disorient and then dispatch Gustav.

Unfortunately for her, due to Gustav's high perception and mental fortitude, her ability was useless. Gustav could see right through the dance of shadows and light pinpointing precise locations of hidden foes.

Without restraints, he pierced through illusion after illusion, dealing blows to her henchmen.

Bang!

A henchman thrust a glowing dagger from his blindspot which he spun around to slap away while swinging his other hand forward.

Bang!

A single punch was destructive enough to deal with foe after foe.

When he finally cornered Vela, the confrontation was quick. Gustav's hand shot out, seizing Vela by the throat, and lifting her from the ground.

"H-how?" She grasped for straws of breath with a look of disbelief.

"Because your abilities are merely cheap parlor tricks before me. Goodbye,"

With a quiet word of finality, he extinguished her life force, her body going limp in his unyielding grasp.

In the wake of the seismic shift in the Nereus Sector's criminal underworld—triggered by the swift and brutal takedown of its most notorious kingpins—a palpable wave of fear spread among the remaining criminal elites.

Stories of Gustav's merciless approach spread like wildfire, igniting a desperate sense of survival in the other crime lords. They knew they had to unite or fall individually to the formidable adversary.

In a clandestine meeting held in the depths of a derelict space station orbiting a remote asteroid, the remaining kingpins convened. The atmosphere was thick with tension, each leader acutely aware of the dire necessity of their alliance.

Zorath, the Alien Hybrid, known for his strategic mind and ruthless methods, addressed the gathering first.

"This Gustav, he's not just a man. He's a force we've not seen before. Alone, we've seen our peers fall. Together, we may stand a chance."

Marnix of the Void Clan, a being of shadow and deception, nodded in agreement, his form flickering in the dim light.

"Our combined might, our resources, and our henchmen with abilities that rival his, it's our only shot."

With a pact forged in desperation, the crime lords mobilized their forces. Supernatural abilities pooled from across the sector—telekinetics, pyrokinetics, beings with the power to manipulate the fabric of reality—all rallied under a single cause: the downfall of Gustav Crimson.

As Gustav received intelligence about the new alliance, he prepared for the inevitable confrontation. Standing alone in the heart of the Nereus Sector, where the echoes of his recent battles still whispered through the abandoned streets, he awaited the coming storm.

The crime lords approached with their forces in a macabre parade of power and malevolence, converging on Gustav's position. The air crackled with the energy of impending battle, charged with the collective might of dozens of supernatural beings.

Zorath was the first to speak as they approached.

"You've disrupted the balance, Gustav Crimson. Did you think we would not come for you?"

Gustav's response was a smirk, his confidence unshaken.

"I was counting on it."

With no further words needed, the battle erupted. Marnix unleashed the first strike, shadows coiling like serpents toward Gustav, seeking to bind and crush.

Gustav's response was swift, his body glowing with radiant crimson energy as he discharged a wave of force that tore through the shadows, dispersing them into harmless wisps.

Fwwhiisshh~

He surged forward with incredible speed.

"He's fast..." Marnix barely managed to mutter as a large palm covered his face.

With unparalleled force, Gustav grabbed Marnix's face and rammed him into the ground causing a blast of air to sweep across the surroundings.

'We underestimated him!' Similar thoughts raged in the minds of everyone else gathered here after witnessing how quickly Marnix was taken down.

They all charged forward, activating their supernatural abilities in a bid to take advantage of their higher numbers.

Bang! Bang!

Clashes akin to the rumbles of thunderbolts rang out.

As the fight intensified, Gustav showcased the breadth of his abilities.

[Atomic Manipulation Has Been Activated]

Atomic Manipulation allowed him to alter the density and composition of his surroundings, creating barriers and weapons from thin air.

A swing of his hand turned a gust into a blade, slicing through approaching foes with precision.

One of the henchmen who possessed a rare cloning ability had Gustav surrounded by over a hundred foes who leaped onto his frame, overwhelming him with numbers.

[Energy Discharge Has Been Activated]

Crimson Energy Discharge burst from him in waves, each pulse a devastating explosion of raw power that knocked back waves of attackers, searing through their defenses as though they were mere paper.

The crime lords adapted as their tactics evolved with the battle.

Nerissa of the Deep, a water manipulator, conjured a tidal wave in an attempt to overwhelm Gustav.

But with a stomp, Gustav's Genetic Manipulation Bloodline activated Partial Transformation, turning his legs into pillars of unbreakable alloy that anchored him against the tide while he used his enhanced strength to send a shockwave that vaporized the water before it could touch him.

The battle raged as the Nereus Sector shook under the collective might of the conflict. Buildings crumbled, streets cracked, and the air was filled with the sound of battle cries and the clash of power.

Gustav, however, was relentless. His raw power combined with strategic acumen, allowed him to isolate and dispatch his foes one by one.

Zorath, realizing the tide was turning, attempted a final gambit, channeling all his energy into a massive beam aimed directly at Gustav.

Calmly, Gustav raised his hand as crimson energy peaked from his form. With a silent push, he unleashed his counterblast. The two forces collided with a thunderous roar, a spectacle of light and power that illuminated the sector.

Boom!

Energy swept across the surroundings wreaking havoc on the weaker ones around.

When the light and mist faded, Gustav stood victorious while Zorath and the others lay defeated. Their alliance broken. The ground-scorched surroundings, proof of the ferocity of the battle.

Gustav surveyed the destruction around him.

Marnix, barely conscious, coughed as he tried to speak.

"What are you?"

Gustav's reply was simple and resolute.

"A stronger darkness."

With a stomp, Gustav's foot created a dent in Marnix's skull, causing brain matter to splatter across the ground.

....

Gustav stood on the viewing deck of a colossal spacecraft as he watched as the last of the freed alien and former slaves boarded.

The craft, a massive structure designed for heavy cargo and extensive passenger transport, buzzed with the activity of those eager to leave their nightmares behind.

It wasn't the only spacecraft in the surroundings. There were two others, each of which was about to be piloted by Endric and Aildris.

As Gustav turned to join the others inside a spacecraft, Falco approached him.

"Gustav, are we really going to pull this off? There are tens of thousands of them."

Chapter 1468 Commander Estela

Gustav nodded, his gaze fixed on the horizon of the Nereus Sector, which had become a crumbling shadow of its former self.

"Shouldn't be much of a big deal. We'll drop them off on a universally, commercial, multi-species planet. The alliance forces there will help coordinate their return to their respective planets. We'll be out of there before anyone notices and back on track."

All the spacecraft besides Gustav's used to belong to the crimelords and kingpins. Now that they were gone, Gustav could use them to help the oppressed.

The group finalized their preparations by securing every hatch and checking every system.

As the engines began to hum with power, ready to break free from the gravitational pull of the sector, a sudden flash of intense light enveloped the spacecraft.

"Hmm?" Gustav moved to the main control room where a large screen flickered to life, displaying the emblem of the universe alliance. A stern voice crackled through the communication system, heavy with authority.

"Gustav Crimson! You have been surrounded by the alliance fleets. Step out of your spacecraft and surrender!"

Gustav and Falco looked at each other in surprise as the atmosphere turned tense.

His perception spread and just as the voice said, there were over thirty alliance spacecraft hovering above them, armed with space cannons and energy pulses ready to fire.

Not to mention that within the fleets were hundreds of alliance corps members. A mixture of planetary species from across the galaxies with a variety of skill sets and supernatural abilities.

He knew dealing with them wouldn't be as easy as how he dealt with the crimelords. Especially with the current circumstances of the encounter.

In the other spacecraft, Aildris reached for the communication panel.

"Gustav, what do we do?"

Gustav stepped forward while answering, "Time to put the alliance to the test. Let's find out which is more important to them... Capturing me or saving lives."

With that, he opened a communication channel with the fleets.

Once the line was open, he spoke with a resonant and unwavering tone.

"This is Gustav Crimson. We have onboard tens of thousands of innocent lives that we've just rescued from enslavement and trafficking.

We request safe passage as I wish to transport them to a universally, commercial, multi-species planet where your forces can help sort and return them to their respective planets. This is one of the duties of the alliance, is it not?"

The reply was quick and curt.

"Your violent actions in the Nereus Sector have reached us, Planet Destroyer. You are to surrender immediately, or we will take action."

'Someone ratted me out eh...'

Recalling how he had dealt with every single crime lord except for Vlaid who had chosen to be taken with Karis. Gustav knew it couldn't have come from anyone on his end.

'One of the Triton operatives huh?' Gustav shook his head slightly.

He wasn't surprised. Even after helping, people always managed to show him that he was better off being the monster that they all wanted him to be.

The little Aquarii girl they saved on their first day there tugged at Gustav's jacket, pulling him out of his brief reverie.

"Thank you. I will get to see Gaba and Fara again," She showcased a bright smile that caused her eyes to light up.

Her face temporarily reminded him of Angy's causing him to pat her head twice.

"Go strap in," he said to her.

She heartily strutted towards the sitting area and strapped in along with the many others there.

"Prepare for evasive maneuvers," Gustav informed Aildris and Endric through their private channel.

"Understood," They responded in unison while firing up the engines.

Gustav returned to the open channel, his tone now edged with a cold firmness.

"You do realize that any aggressive action from your side will endanger tens of thousands of innocent lives. Knowing this, will you allow us to pass?"

There was a brief pause, the tension palpable in the silence that followed.

Finally, a voice from the alliance responded.

"You have a one-hour headstart. After that, we will take necessary actions to bring you into custody, with or without your cooperation."

Gustav was surprised by the unexpected response. The feminine voice was different from the one that spoke earlier which left him wondering. It wasn't something he had expected from the alliance at all but he had decided to make use of the window.

The channel closed with a click and in the next instant, they began lifting off the surface.

In the boundless expanse of space, a moment of eerie tranquillity settled over Gustav's spacecraft as it ascended from the Nereus Sector.

Inside the command center, Gustav stood before the panoramic view of the cosmos, his gaze intently fixed on the central vessel of the encircling alliance fleets. Time seemed to dilate around him, the stars and distant galaxies blurring into streaks of light as his focus narrowed.

Amid the fleet, the command ship loomed prominently. Gustav's perception, allowed him to sense the presence of the person who gave him a headstart, distinctly. He did not linger on the sensation, however, as the urgency of their escape pressed upon him and the others.

As the spacecraft maneuvered through space, time seemed to slow down.

Simultaneously, aboard her command ship, Commander Estela stood by the forward viewing panel, her eyes unwittingly meeting the direction of Gustav's craft.

A strange sense of recognition passed through her, a lingering effect of their previous encounter marked by deceit and illusions.

-Minutes Earlier on Commander Estela's Ship-

Commander Estela was in the midst of a briefing with her senior officers. The room was filled with the low vibrations of the ship's engines and the soft beeps of operational consoles.

"Commander, the latest reports from the Nereus Sector are in," announced Lieutenant Harrow, handing her a digital tablet.

The screen displayed detailed accounts of Gustav's recent actions—his ruthless purging of the sector's crimelords, his rescue of thousands of enslaved individuals, and his unilateral efforts to restore order.

Estela scanned the report, her brow furrowing in confusion and skepticism.

"This... this doesn't look like the actions of a destroyer," she murmured, her voice tinged with disbelief.

Harrow nodded, sharing in the confusion.

"Yes, Commander. It appears his motives might not be as clear-cut as we were led to believe. There's a complexity here we didn't expect."

Estela paced slowly, her thoughts racing. The image of Gustav, painted by the alliance corps briefings as a ruthless planet destroyer, clashed dramatically with the man who had just orchestrated such an action.

Not to mention that her last encounter with him had struck a chord within her that made her desperation grow.

However, it felt like she was currently dealing with an entirely different person. The recent turn of events instantly put a stump on her decisions.

Lieutenant Mora, a robust and imposing figure with a rugged, granite-like complexion and eyes that glowed faintly red, broke the silence first.

"Commander, what should be our next move? Shall we force him to surrender?"

Before Estela could respond, another Lieutenant, Kael, a lanky being with scaly skin that shimmered blue and green under the ship's lights, activated the communication channel.

"Gustav Crimson! You have been surrounded by the alliance fleets. Step out of your spacecraft and surrender!"

"This is Gustav Crimson. We have onboard tens of thousands of innocent lives that we've just rescued from enslavement and trafficking.

We request safe passage as I wish to transport them to a universally commercial multi-species planet where your forces can help sort and return them to their respective planets. This is one of the duties of the alliance, is it not?"

They heard Gustav's voice boom forth from the control room speakers.

"This joker," Lieutenant Kael scoffed before tapping on the response console.

"Your violent actions in the Nereus Sector have reached us, Planet Destroyer. You are to surrender immediately, or we will take action." He stated while the other alliance corp members aimed the weapons at the three spacecraft below.

"Hold on..." Commander Estela commanded.

"Commander, are we not attacking him for resisting arrest?" Lieutenant Kael questioned cautiously.

"Scan their spacecraft. I want to be sure he is telling the truth," Commander Estela instructed.

The alliance corp members in the control room immediately did as commanded and in a few seconds, holographic data was displayed.

What seemed to look like a 3D sketch of thousands of different species could be seen strapped in within the three spacecraft below. It proved that the reports and the words of Gustav were true.

'He saved so many... And yet, how many has he taken in act of planetary destruction? What is the truth of this man?' The questions haunted her, swirling through Commander Estela's mind as she considered her next steps.

"What would happen if we opened fire?" Commander Estela asked.

"The spacecraft is at most level three issue standards. Their shields might be able to tank two or three blasts but anything more would result in their destruction as well as that of everyone onboard. Except for Gustav Crimson of course.

With his level of strength, he would survive but not the children and ordinary slave adults on board," Lieutenant Harrow gave Commander Estela a detailed explanation.

Chapter 1469 Reengage Engines Now!

Estela stepped forward and shoved the other Lieutenant aside before tapping on the communication console.

"You have a one-hour headstart. After that, we will take necessary actions to bring you into custody, with or without your cooperation," She voiced with conviction.

Her decision sparked an immediate backlash among her officers. Lieutenant Kael, visibly agitated, voiced his concern loudly.

"Commander, this is a mistake! He is manipulating the situation. He's a fugitive, a destroyer of worlds!"

Lieutenant Mora joined in, his voice a deep rumble.

"I must agree with Kael, Commander. Giving him a headstart could compromise our mission. Gustav is the villain here, not a hero. He needs to be detained now."

Estela turned to face her crew, her stature commanding and resolute.

"I have made my decision. We will give him the hour. It is not just his fate at stake but the lives of thousands. We must consider the broader implications of our actions." She paused briefly before taking a glance at every single one of them.

"We are pursuers of justice, not blind enforcers. We must see beyond the surface. Gustav Crimson's capture is important, but so are the lives of the oppressed on those spacecraft."

-Back in the Present-

As Gustav's spacecraft surged forward, breaking away from the gravitational pull of the Nereus Sector, Estela's ship remained a silent sentinel among the fleet.

Her eyes stayed fixed on the receding spacecraft.

'Gustav Crimson, who are you really? An architect of war or a harbinger of peace?' Estela thought to herself as she prepared to bridge the vast distance between them, not just in space but in understanding.

As the room buzzed with reluctant compliance and whispered discontent, two lieutenants, Kael and a lesser-known officer named Serin—a sleek, silver-skinned humanoid with delicate features and piercing yellow eyes—exchanged glances.

Their discontent with Estela's decision was clear and a silent agreement passed between them.

"We cannot let him get away," Serin whispered, her voice a sibilant hiss. "We should follow him discreetly."

Kael nodded in agreement, "Yes, we'll organize a stealth tail. Commander Estela won't know, and we'll be ready to act if he tries anything."

Undisclosed to Estela, Kael, and Serin quietly directed one of the smaller, faster alliance spacecraft to follow Gustav's ship at a safe distance. The vessel, equipped with cloaking technology, slipped away from the main fleet, its presence masked by the vastness of space.

Aboard their stealth ship, the crew worked silently, the tension palpable. The pilot, a nimble, dark-veined Thulian named Jax, maneuvered the ship with expert precision.

"Cloak engaged. We're invisible to their sensors," he murmured, his four eyes scanning multiple screens.

From within the craft, Kael and Serin monitored Gustav's path, their resolve firm but fraught with the risk of their rogue operation.

As Gustav's ship moved steadily towards its destination, the alliance stealth ship trailed behind. Kael and Serin watched cautiously, their plans a precarious gambit that could sway the balance of this high-stakes confrontation.

While Gustav stood at the helm, gazing out at the cosmos, the stars streaking past as they approached their destination.

"Command, we are approximately three hours from Planet Solquix," the spacecraft's AI announced, its voice a calm, neutral tone that contrasted sharply with the tension aboard.

Gustav nodded, tapping the console lightly as he pulled up the coordinates for Planet Solquix. The display showed a vibrant blue and green orb, a commercial hub planet known for its strict governance and strong alliance presence, making it a haven for those in need.

"Why did the alliance give us a one-hour headstart?" Gustav mused aloud, his brow furrowed in suspicion.

"It's unlike them to show leniency."

Ria, who had been coordinating the care of the rescued individuals, joined him at the console.

"Maybe they're starting to see reason."

Gustav shook his head, unconvinced.

"Or maybe it's a calculated move to get what they want without a fight. We need to be careful."

As they spoke, unknown to them, the rogue fleet led by Lieutenants Kael and Serin was closing in. Despite Commander Estela's orders for no approach till after an hour mark, they were driven by their convictions that Gustav must be stopped at all costs.

On the stealth ship, Lieutenant Kael stood beside the pilot, his eyes fixed on the sensor array.

"Increase speed. We need to catch up as soon as possible."

"Arming disruptors. We won't let him slip through."

Back on Gustav's ship, as they neared Planet Solquix, the atmosphere around the rescued individuals was a mix of anxiety and hopeful relief. The planet itself was a hub for intergalactic trade and safety, its cities sprawling with diverse cultures and its markets a bustling testament to its economic vitality.

"Preparing for a descent into Planet Solquix. Please secure all cargo and personnel," the AI instructed, its voice an urgent prompt amidst the growing uncertainty.

The planet stood before them in space as Gustav turned and spoke to Ria firmly, "Get everyone ready."

Just then, a warning blared through the spacecraft.

"Incoming projectile detected!" the AI alerted.

Gustav's eyes widened as he rushed to the defense controls.

"Brace for impact!"

The ship shuddered violently as a disruptor blast from the stealth ship hit, temporarily disabling the engines and sending them drifting. The cabin lights flickered, panic rising among the passengers.

"Report!" Gustav barked, gripping the console to steady himself.

"We've been hit by an energy disruptor, systems are down but slowly recovering. It's an ambush," the AI responded.

On the stealth ship, Kael smirked, his plan unfolding. "Keep firing. This ends now."

Gustav, assessing their dire situation, activated the ship's emergency defense protocols.

"Deploying countermeasures," the AI complied, releasing a burst of dense smoke and electromagnetic pulses, designed to disorient and delay the attackers.

Gustav's ship, enveloped in clouds of smoke and electromagnetic waves, became a ghost amid the cosmos. The stealth ship commanded by Lieutenant Kael struggled to regain its bearings, its sensors blaring with false alarms and distorted readings.

"Can't get a lock on them!" shouted the pilot, frustration evident in his voice as he toggled switches, trying to pierce through the deceptive fog Gustav had deployed.

Kael, standing rigid with determination, peered through the haze on their monitors.

"Keep at it! They can't have gone far. Boost the sensor gain, filter out the ECM noise."

Meanwhile, inside Gustav's ship, the situation was growing desperate. The engines had been knocked offline by the disruptor blast, and the AI's calm voice belied the urgency of their plight.

"Engine reboot in T minus twenty seconds."

Gustav, his hands firmly on the manual override controls, felt the weight of every second as they ticked by.

"Hold on, everyone. Just a bit more time," he muttered as he coaxed the ship's systems to respond.

The passengers, sensing the tension, clung to whatever they could as the spacecraft jostled and shook.

Ria, assisting by securing some frightened children, called out, "Gustav, how long?"

"Almost there, Ria. Keep everyone safe just in case," Gustav responded, his focus unyielding.

With only five seconds remaining for the engines to come back online, the stealth ship's sensors finally cut through the interference.

"Target reacquired!" the sensor operator exclaimed, relief laced with triumph in his voice.

Kael didn't hesitate.

"Fire all forward batteries! Take them down now!"

Kael didn't care that there were innocents on board. All he knew was that he couldn't relent in a chase against the infamous Gustav or it would mean his end.

Now that the universe had given him an opportunity where Gustav was vulnerable because of his current actions, he would use it to the best of his ability.

The commands were executed with chilling efficiency.

Gustav, sensing the impending attack, reacted instinctively. He leaped upwards, his body morphing as he activated his Iro Silk ability. From his skin, diamond-like icicles spread rapidly, encasing the spacecraft in a shimmering, protective shell.

The stealth ship's weapons discharged a barrage of energy pulses, each one designed to overwhelm and destroy. As the pulses struck, Gustav's ship began to spiral uncontrollably, the force of the impacts magnified by their disabled state.

The interior of Gustav's ship trembled violently, the sounds of creaking metal and the roar of energy impacts filling the air. Passengers screamed, their voices mingled with the ship's alarms.

Gustav, his form shimmering with the icy sheen of Iro Silk, struggled to keep up with constantly reactivating the ability to cover up dents in the barrier.

"Hold on!" he shouted over the din, his voice a beacon of hope in the chaos as he navigated the spacecraft physically from within.

Each hit strained his ability to regenerate the protective ice, the Iro Silk shattering and reforming under the relentless assault.

Kael, observing the resilience of their target, gritted his teeth.

"Increase power output! Break through that defense!"

Back on Gustav's ship, the AI announced, "Engine reboot complete. Manual control required."

With no time to spare, Gustav dashed back to the helm, his hands flying over the controls to stabilize their harrowing descent.

"Re-engaging engines, now!"

Chapter 1470 One Shot!

The spacecraft's thrusters roared back to life, the sudden burst of power allowing Gustav to pull them sideways. He navigated the ship with sheer will, dodging subsequent energy pulses as they desperately headed for the safety of Planet Solquix.

As they cleared the worst of the assault, Gustav kept the Iro Silk active, its icy barrier glinting like a star amidst the darkness of space.

The passengers, now murmuring prayers and words of thanks, looked at Gustav with awe and gratitude.

'Not out of the woods yet. I still need to find a way to land them safely.'

As the planet's atmosphere came into view, a beautiful view of blues and greens beneath them, Gustav's ship, scarred yet sovereign, slowly lost altitude while still gliding forward at incredible speed due to the pursuit behind.

The situation escalated with Gustav's ship careening through a hail of disruptor fire, its hull scarred by energy blasts. The cockpit was a blur of motion and urgent alerts, the screens flickering with the chaos outside.

"Gustav, we can't see who's attacking you. There's nothing on our sensors." Aildris voiced from the communication channel.

"It's like they're invisible. Are you sure it's just one ship?" Endric's voice came in as well.

Gustav's voice boomed through the intercom, "It's stealth tech—has to be an alliance. Top grade, beyond what we've seen before. They're only targeting me."

As Gustav maneuvered his ship, evading another barrage of fire, Aildris and Endric, in their respective ships carrying bulks of the rescued individuals, scanned with their radars. Once more, their scan revealed that there were no threats which deepened their concern for Gustav.

"There has to be something we can do," Aildris chipped in.

"We can't attack haphazardly... It will endanger lives on the surface," Endric pointed out.

Gustav, hearing their concern, interjected with a tone of command that brooked no argument. "Focus on getting everyone to safety on Solquix. I'll handle this."

"Understood, but we're not leaving you to deal with this alone. Once they're safe, we're coming back for you." Aildris stated.

A slight smile touched Gustav's lips, a brief moment of warmth in the coldness of space.

"Appreciate it, but by then, it'll probably be over. Just keep those ships moving."

As Aildris and Endric reluctantly redirected their focus to their primary mission, Gustav steeled himself for the ongoing battle. His hands flew over the controls, adjusting the thrusters and shields to dodge the relentless assault.

Planet Solquix loomed ahead, its atmosphere beginning to envelop his ship as he descended. The pressure of entry added another layer of difficulty to his evasive maneuvers.

'If I can just make it through the upper atmosphere, their weapons might be less effective...'

Attempting to return fire, Gustav toggled his ship's offensive systems, targeting the coordinates from where the blasts seemed to originate. Yet, each time he fired, the results were the same.

The shots phased through thin air.

As much as Gustav wanted to leave the control room and hunt for the craft responsible for his predicament, he couldn't leave all the people he had with him on the ship.

They would remain a target and dealing with the invisible opposition while having to protect them at the same time would be practically impossible.

'If only I could spot their position, even for a second... I can end this.'

His ship's AI responded with frustrating news. "Unable to acquire the target."

Gustav eyes knitted as a disruptor beam grazed the edge of his shield, sending ripples of energy cascading across the hull. The ship shuddered, alarms blaring a warning of shield integrity dropping.

"Divert all available power to aft shields. Keep us in the game a little longer."

As he spoke, Gustav's ship broke through into the lower atmosphere of Solquix, the skies a swirl of cloudy blues and grays. The chase didn't let up; if anything, the proximity to the planet's surface added new risks and challenges.

'Just a little further... Use the cloud cover, blend in with the storm systems.' Gustav was already formulating a plan in his mind.

Utilizing the planet's turbulent weather as cover, Gustav dipped the ship into a thick bank of clouds, the moisture and electrically charged environment providing a temporary screen.

His pursuers, however, were relentless, their technology evidently equipped to handle such conditions.

A narrow miss by another energy pulse forced Gustav to ascend sharply, spiraling upwards as he jettisoned countermeasures. Bright electro flares erupted behind him, hoping to confuse any locking mechanisms the enemy might employ.

The spacecraft vibrated with the strain of the maneuvers, every bolt and panel protesting as Gustav pushed the ship to its limits. He was a lone figure against a hidden enemy, a dance of death above a world that promised sanctuary to others but none to him.

As he looped back, trying to shake his pursuer, Gustav realized his situation was growing increasingly untenable. He needed to end the chase, and soon.

'One shot... I just need one shot...' Gustav's eyes emitted a glow as he prepared to activate God Eyes.

As Gustav's spacecraft hurtled towards Planet Solquix, the atmosphere crackled with the electricity of impending conflict. Knowing that mere evasion was no longer sufficient, Gustav steeled himself for a daring and potentially devastating maneuver.

Positioning his ship just above the swirling cloud decks, Gustav initiated a steep, spiraling descent to throw off his pursuers. He glanced at the control panel, ensuring everything was set, then took a deep breath and turned around while God Eyes was activated.

[God Eyes Has Been Activated]

The cockpit darkened momentarily as his vision shifted, the mundane world falling away.

In its place came a brilliant cascade of colors beyond the normal spectrum, each hue and shade representing different forms of energy and matter hidden from the naked eye.

Time seemed to dilate around him as Gustav's heartbeat echoed in his ears like a slow drum, his focus narrowing to the pulsing signal of the cloaked Alliance craft.

There it was—a spectral outline illuminated against the dark void, betrayed by the faint heat signature of its engines and the ripple of its cloaking field.

As another disruptor blast charged towards their spacecraft, Gustav's instincts screamed. It was the moment he had been waiting for.

With the universe in slow motion, he released the controls and turned fully around, his body coiled like a spring.

The disruptor beam approached, a deadly lance of energy meant to wreak another havoc that the ship would definitely not be able to handle.

Gustav channeled all his power, his muscles tensed for the split-second needed to meet the attack.

Then, with the precision of a predator, he launched himself forward.

Fwwhoossh~

His body, surrounded by a nimbus of crackling energy, phased through the rear of the spacecraft as he instantly appeared out in the open.

He met the disruptor beam head-on. The collision was less a contest of force and more a display of Gustav's sheer will, as he literally tunneled through the energy, his skin glowing with an otherworldly light.

The impact was deafening, a symphony of energy that resonated across the world.

Gustav's fist, driven by the momentum of his charge and his supernatural strength, struck the invisible craft with the ferocity of a force a hundred times more powerful than a meteor.

The alloy of the spacecraft's hull, designed to withstand the rigors of space warfare, crumpled like foil under his assault.

As his fist pierced the ship, alarms blared from within. The cloak flickered and died, revealing the mangled form of the once-stealthy vessel.

Gustav, his body halfway through the ship, pulled back his arm and pushed off, propelling himself clear as the ship began to disintegrate around him.

The crew inside scrambled, caught off-guard by the sudden breach. Shouts and cries filled their comm channels as they struggled to maintain control. However, the damage was catastrophic.

With critical systems failing, the craft's descent towards Solquix became an uncontrolled plummet, flames licking its sides, painting a stark picture against the planet's blue horizon.

Gustav, now back in his ship, watched as the enemy vessel fell. He didn't know if there would be survivors from such a crash but at the moment he didn't care.

Since they had come after him, they should have braced themselves for the consequences.

He quickly regained control of his craft, steering it away from the debris field spreading in the wake of the downed ship.

"Gustav, what happened?" Ria who was unable to follow all that had just happened in a span of milliseconds, questioned in confusion.

"I've taken care of the threat," Gustav replied, his voice firm yet a little fatigued.

"How is everyone back there?"

"All passengers are secure," Ria responded, relief evident in his words.

As Gustav guided his ship towards Solquix, the reality of what he had just done settled in.

He had single-handedly taken down an Alliance stealth ship. Since he began this journey of fleeing from them while achieving his objectives, he had managed to avoid engaging or causing harm to any of them.

Unfortunately, it was unavoidable this time.

The repercussions he guessed would be more of the alliance's claims of his evilness.

The descent into Solquix's atmosphere was uneventful, a stark contrast to the violence that had just transpired above. As the planet's vast oceans and sprawling continents came into view, Gustav prepared for landing.