

Bloodline 1601

Chapter 1601 The Last Stance

"Come on," Gustav taunted while leaning forward slightly. "You want a chance, don't you? A host with real power. Isn't that what you're looking for? Or are you just going to dissolve into nothing?"

The darkness seemed to tremble, drawn toward him despite itself. Then, with a sudden, desperate lunge, it surged forward, reaching out toward him in a reckless attempt. Gustav didn't flinch. Instead, he opened himself up, allowing the shadowy tendrils to slip through his defenses, to infiltrate his being.

The corruption flooded into him with a cold, suffocating sensation spreading through his veins as it tried to take hold. For a moment, his vision darkened, his senses dulled as the darkness sought to gain control. But Gustav's mind remained a fortress. His will was an unyielding force that refused to be swayed.

"Is that all you've got?" Gustav's voice echoed within his own mind, taunting the corruption now struggling to establish dominance within him.

The darkness thrashed, clawing at his consciousness. Its tendrils writhed as it tried to overpower him. But Gustav's presence was too powerful.

Every attempt to consume him was met with resistance. Every tendril was blocked and cast aside as he began to assimilate the corruption instead.

"You thought you'd use me as a host? Foolish. I'm the one using you," Gustav's voice reverberated within the confines of his own mind as he tightened his grip on the shadowy force, drawing it deeper, trapping it within his psyche.

The corruption shuddered, realizing too late that it had fallen into a trap. It struggled, flailing wildly, but Gustav's will was unbreakable.

Slowly, he began to absorb the darkness, breaking it down, examining every fragment of its essence.

As he delved deeper into its core, flashes of memories began to surface—moments from its existence, echoes of the malevolent intent that had driven it. The darkness had come from Nocturnis, a fragment of his power sent to wreak havoc. But beneath the layers of malice, there was something else... a memory of an object. A sense of purpose. A place.

The sword.

Gustav allowed his eyes to close, focusing on the fragments of memories he had taken from the dark corruption. Somewhere within those faint glimpses was the answer he needed, and he could almost feel the sword's presence, like an echo calling out to him from across the vast expanse of the universe.

In his mind's eye, a hazy vision began to sharpen: the sword, embedded deep in the ground of a distant, desolate world.

The environment was half-erased, the remnants of a cracked planet, its other half fractured into a floating ring of jagged rock and frozen debris. This world was bathed in an unnatural, eerie glow, almost as if it were a void in itself. Just as Gustav reached for more clarity, the echo in his mind suddenly sharpened.

"It's... there," he murmured, locking onto a faint sensation of cold, malevolent energy.

But before Gustav could fully register the location, a booming, cold voice echoed through his mind, ripping through his concentration.

"The darkness is mine to command, Outworldly," Nocturnis snarled with contempt and hatred. "You may have glimpsed it, but you will never find it."

Gustav's grip on the darkness shattered, the remnants of the corrupted energy forcibly pulled from his mind, leaving him momentarily disoriented.

The vision of the fractured planet dissolved, fading to black as Nocturnis severed any connection Gustav had to the darkness.

"Nocturnis..." Gustav voiced with a tone of low frustration.

He lifted his hand, dissolving the crystalline cage surrounding the city as he descended back to the streets. A moment later, Endric appeared beside him, having blinked down from the sky.

"What happened?" Endric questioned with an expression concern.

Gustav exhaled before filling Endric in on everything that had gone down and how he just lost the corruption he assimilated.

"I caught a glimpse of the sword but just for a moment. The sword is embedded somewhere out there still in half of that torn desolate world. But before I could see where it was exactly, Nocturnis broke in and took the corruption back. I lost the location."

Endric's shoulders slumped as his face contorted with frustration. "So we're back to square one?"

Gustav shook his head. "Not quite. I saw two distinct features: a hazy teal planet in the background and an unnatural light, almost void-like, surrounding it. If we can find a world with those features, we'll find the sword."

Endric's gaze hardened. "Alright. That's something to go on, but we'll need to be thorough. A hazy teal planet and an eerie glow—there can't be many places like that."

Gustav nodded in agreement. "It'll be a difficult task, but it's our best lead."

Endric looked determined. "Then let's get started. We'll go through every record of worlds that have been impacted by this corruption. I'm not letting Nocturnis keep us from stopping him."

Meanwhile, across the galaxy, E.E and Elevora were locked in a relentless chase.

Their once-sturdy spacecraft was now battered and torn. Its shielding had long cracked. Sparks were flying from its engines as it struggled to hold together.

For days, the Gustavo Alliance member who had been hunting them had trailed them without rest. It was like a dark shadow that tore through space and time to follow them wherever they tried to hide.

E.E's hands moved rapidly across the console. His eyes focused as he glanced back at Elevora, who was seated beside him, looking exhausted but resolute.

"We're losing the shields," her voice was tight with concern. "If he gets through again, we won't last another attack."

E.E gritted his teeth while opening another vortex with a snap of his fingers. "We're not giving up just yet," he replied while forcing their ship through the swirling portal and into a different section of space.

As they emerged, a tense silence filled the ship. For a moment, it seemed as if they had managed to evade their pursuer. But then, the silence shattered as another rip in space appeared before them. The same dark figure stepped out.

His eyes gleamed with a twisted amusement as he closed the distance between them once again.

"Damn it, he's persistent," E.E muttered in clear frustration.

Elevora looked at him as a calmness settled over her face despite the situation. "E.E, I think it's time we stop running. We need to face him."

E.E glanced at her in surprise. "Are you sure? You were against it before."

Elevora smiled with a determined glint in her eye. "That was before. I didn't have you then, but now I do. Let's do this together."

Their eyes met, and there was a moment of unspoken understanding between them. E.E leaned forward, pressing his forehead to hers, his expression softening as he whispered, "Then let's give him a fight he'll never forget... or will forget because he definitely will die."

"Haha, shut up," Elevora chuckled lightly.

Without another word, he leaned in and they shared a brief, fierce kiss.

As they pulled away, they were both ready to face the figure.

Almost on cue, the dark figure's voice echoed through the void of space, a sinister edge to his words.

"So, you two lovebirds have finally decided to stop running, have you?" He sneered while crossing his arms. "I must admit, this has been one of the longest chases I've ever had to embark on. Normally, I kill my prey instantly, but I suppose this was worth the exercise. You two have chosen a fine place for your burial ground."

He gestured around them, where only empty outer space stretched for hundreds of millions of miles, nothing but the faint glimmer of stars in the distance.

E.E and Elevora both stepped out of their ruined spacecraft as their bodies floated in the vast expanse, facing down the relentless Gustavo Alliance member with a calm, deadly focus.

"You've chased us long enough like a junkie that can't seem to get enough of the high," E.E stated with a cold tone. "It ends here."

The man smirked, tilting his head with a mocking expression. "Bold words. But words are meaningless without power to back them up. I'll enjoy ripping the both of you apart."

Elevora's gaze hardened as the purple energy in her third eye beginning to pulse with power. "You talk too much. Let's see if you can fight half as well as you threaten."

The figure's face twisted in rage, and with a roar, he launched himself at them. His fists crackled with dark energy as he closed the gap. E.E and Elevora moved as one in synergy honed by years of combat experience and the trust they shared.

E.E snapped his fingers, opening a vortex just as the man's fist was about to connect.

The man's punch hit empty space as he was pulled into the portal, only to reappear on the opposite side of E.E, who was already prepared. With a quick move, E.E swung his arm in an arc, releasing a concentrated blast of violet energy that slammed into the man, sending him careening backward.

Chapter 1602 Look At The Skies

Elevora didn't waste a second. She raised her hand, her third eye glowing intensely as she unleashed a beam of concentrated energy straight toward their pursuer.

The man barely managed to twist out of the way. The edge of the beam grazed his shoulder and leaving a trail of smoldering, burnt flesh.

"You..." he growled while clutching his shoulder, his eyes blazing with fury. "Unfortunately, that isn't enough to stop me

You're nothing but insects compared to me!"

"Then we'll just have to prove you wrong," Elevora shot back, her voice steady and unwavering.

They clashed once again, a flurry of attacks exchanged in the endless void of space. The Gustavo Alliance member struck out with a savage intensity, his fists creating shockwaves that rippled through the stars. But E.E and Elevora moved in perfect harmony, evading his attacks, countering with precision and speed.

E.E opened portals to redirect the man's attacks, turning his own strength against him, while Elevora unleashed a barrage of energy blasts, her power growing with each strike. They wore him down slowly, chipping away at his defenses, frustrating him with every missed blow.

Enough!" the man roared, summoning a massive surge of energy as he prepared to unleash a devastating attack.

But E.E saw it coming, his eyes narrowing as he whispered to Elevora, ***Now.***"

Together, they moved in sync, closing in on him from both sides. As the man released his attack, E.E opened a portal, redirecting the blast back at him, while Elevora struck from the opposite side with a focused beam that

pierced through his defenses.

Caught in his own attack and Elevora's energy, the man let out a howl of agony, his form disintegrating under the combined assault.

As his body faded into nothingness, E.E and Elevora floated there in silence, the empty stretch of space around them a stark reminder of the battle they had just survived. They turned to each other, exhaustion etched on their faces, but there was also a deep sense of satisfaction in their eyes.

We did it," Elevora murmured, her voice soft, a hint of disbelief in her tone.

E.E gave her a small, triumphant smile. "***Together, we're unstoppable.**"

They drifted closer, sharing a moment of silent victory, the vastness of space stretching out before them as they prepared to return home, knowing they had faced the darkness—and won.

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Empress Dahria, with her authoritative bearing, still managed to engage in light-hearted banter, showing a more relaxed side of herself that was rarely seen.

Nearby, E.E., Falco, Aildris, Endric, and Ria were having the time of their lives at the shore.

E.E.'s melanin skin glistened in the sunlight, his wet, bushy afro hair bouncing as he moved. His infectious laughter filled the air as he cracked jokes and splashed water at his friends.

"E.E., you look like a sea monster with that hair!" Falco teased while ducking to avoid another splash.

"Oh yeah?" E.E. retorted with a grin. "At least I don't look like a rat that got drowned in milk, Falco!"

Aildris had built an impressive sandcastle, much to the admiration of the others. "Check this out," he said proudly, gesturing to his creation. "A castle fit for a king."

Aildris rarely ever showed this childish side of him so it as quite heartwarming to see him playing around like this.

Endric dashed around with youthful energy whole making small crabs float from the middle of the ocean. "Got one!" he exclaimed while holding up a tiny crab for everyone to see before gently releasing it back into the water.

Rialaughed at Endric's antics and joined in the fun.

Meanwhile, Gustav sat a little distance away, looking effortlessly handsome in his summer outfit.

His presence commanded attention, and many of the ladies on the beach couldn't help but steal glances at him. However, Gustav paid them no mind. His focus was elsewhere, his eyes fixated on the holographic system notification panel that only he could see.

The panel displayed two messages that had been occupying his thoughts for days:

\[Five Year Quest Completed (1/2): Become The World's Strongest Mixedblood ✓ \]

\[Issuing Rewards... \]

Gustav furrowed his brow, trying to make sense of the messages. He had completed one of the quests, but the reward had yet to manifest. What was taking so long?

As he pondered this, Angy approached him, her eyes sparkling with happiness. "Hey, Gus," she said, sitting beside him and nudging him playfully. "You're missing out on all the fun."

Gustav smiled, his eyes softening as he looked at her. "I know, Angy. Just got carried a way for a bit."

Angy tilted her head as her gaze flickered with concern. "You know we came here to relax, right?"

Gustav sighed while running a hand through his hair. "Yeah you're right. I should probably put everything away in the meantime."

Angy placed a reassuring hand on his arm. "Come on, a lot has happened. Why don't we enjoy the vacation? You've earned it."

Gustav nodded, appreciating her words. "Thanks, Angy."

She smiled, her eyes filled with warmth. "Now come on, let's join the others."

As they walked toward the shore, the rest of the group noticed them and cheered. "Finally decided to join us, huh?" Falco called out, grinning.

Gustav chuckled. "Couldn't let you have all the fun."

E.E. splashed water at him playfully. "Watch out, ladies and gentlemen, the world's strongest Mixedblood is here!"

Gustav laughed, shaking the water from his hair. "Yeah, yeah. Let's just enjoy the day."

They spent the next few hours swimming, playing beach volleyball, and lounging in the sun.

Playing games like this had to be done with caution because if they weren't careful, they could make it inconvenient for everyone else around them.

For instance if Gustav hit a volleyball with as little as a tiny fraction of his strength, it could burrow straight through a person.

Fortunately, they managed to have fun.

Gustav found himself relaxing and temporarily forgetting about recent events. The sound of his friends' laughter, the warmth of the sun, and the coolness of the water all combined to create a perfect day.

As the sun began to set, painting the sky in hues of orange and pink, the group gathered around a bonfire they had built on the beach. The flames crackled and danced, casting a warm glow over their faces.

Empress Dahria, always dignified, even in a swimsuit, raised a toast. "To friendship, to courage, and to the future," she said, her voice resonant with pride.

"To the future!" everyone echoed, raising their glasses.

As they sat around the fire, sharing stories and reminiscing, Gustav felt a sense of peace he hadn't experienced in a long time. The quest notification still lingered in the back of his mind, but for now, he was content to be surrounded by those he cared about.

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Later around midnight, the luxurious resort was quiet. The sounds of the ocean waves was a gentle background melody. The group had enjoyed their time on the beach, and now they retired to their rooms, each one designed to provide the utmost relaxation.

Gustav's room was no exception. It was a spacious suite with high ceilings, adorned with elegant furnishings.

Draped in fine linens, the king sized bed sat against a wall adorned with tasteful artwork.

Soft florescent lighting created a serene atmosphere, while a large window offered a breathtaking view of the moonlit ocean.

A small seating area with plush chairs and a coffee table invited relaxation, and the bathroom, visible through an open door, boasted a deep soaking tub and a rainfall shower.

Gustav sat in one of the chairs, his eyes fixated on the holographic system notification that hovered in front of him:

\[Five Year Quest Completed (1/2): Become The World's Strongest Mixedblood ✓ \]

\[Issuing Rewards... \]

He had been staring at it for days, the mystery of the delayed reward gnawing at him.

His thoughts were interrupted by a soft knock at the door. He before getting up and crossing the room. As expected, he opened the door to find Angy standing there.

"Hey," she greeted softly, stepping inside when he motioned for her to enter.

"Hey, Angy," Gustav replied, closing the door behind her. "What's up?"

"I couldn't sleep," she admitted, her eyes searching his. "I wanted to talk to you."

Gustav nodded, leading her to the seating area. They sat down, the soft cushions sinking under their weight. "What's on your mind?"

Angy took a deep breath. "I've been thinking about what happened during the trial. How did you manage to dominate the darkness and regain consciousness? You're really Gustav, right?"

Gustav's expression grew serious. "It's not something I managed to do easily," he began. "I've been fighting that darkness since the day I saved you. That was the reason I choose to be unconscious in the first place. It provided me a better chance."

Angy listened intently, her eyes never leaving his. "But you managed to control it. How?"

"I didn't really dominate it. I just isolated it using the three-in-one golden body. It allowed me to compartmentalize the darkness, keep it confined to one area."

He lifted his shirt, revealing the left side of his abdomen where a dark, swirling pattern was etched into his skin. The sight of it was both mesmerizing and unsettling.

"This is where I've isolated the darkness," he explained. "It could increase my strength to unprecedented heights, but it would also make me lose my mind. That's why I've decided to keep it isolated forever."

Angy's eyes widened in surprise and curiosity. She reached out, her fingers lightly tracing the dark pattern. "It's... incredible," she whispered as her touch sending a jolt of electricity through Gustav's body.

"I mean... You're incredible..." She added.

Gustav shivered at her touch, feeling the electricity of her fingers on his bare skin. He gently grabbed her hand to stop it from continuously tracing the pattern as their eyes locked in an intense gaze.

"Angy," he murmured, his voice barely above a whisper.

Their faces drew closer, the air between them charged with an electric, romantic tension. The world seemed to shrink until it was just the two of them.

Their breaths mingled briefly as their lips met in a passionate kiss.

The kiss soon deepened and their hands began to explore each other. Gustav's fingers trailed down her back, feeling the smooth fabric of her dress, while Angy's hands moved to his chest, tugging at his shirt. They pulled back for a moment, their eyes filled with desire and need.

"Gustav," Angy breathed, her voice husky with emotion.

"Angy," he replied, his voice equally filled with longing.

They moved with a sense of urgency, their clothes discarded piece by piece. Gustav's shirt fell to the floor, followed by Angy's dress. They stood there for a moment, taking in each other's forms, their hearts racing.

The room seemed to glow with a soft, golden light as they came together again, their bodies pressing close. Gustav lifted Angy, carrying her to the bed where they continued to kiss, their passion intensifying with each passing second.

As they lay down, the softness of the bed enveloping them, Gustav and Angy let their desires take over. Their movements were a dance of love and need, their touches gentle and urgent all at once. They whispered each other's names, their voices filled with emotion, as they became lost in the moment.

Gustav left a trail of kisses down Angy's soft skin causing her to shiver each time in excitement. She could feel something hard and thick poking her belly region... She instinctively reached out to grab it.

Chapter 1603 The Higher The Risk

The realization that this powerful tool came at the ultimate price left a bitter taste in their mouths. The previously enthusiastic dignitary with shimmering scales was the first to break the silence.

"Grand Commander, this news is... devastating. How can we ask our warriors to make such a sacrifice?"

Shion nodded, his face reflecting the inner turmoil he felt. "I understand your concerns. This is not a decision to be taken lightly. But we are faced with an existential threat. The beings of the dark plane will not show mercy, and our universe is at stake. We must weigh the cost of using this tool against the potential destruction of all we hold dear."

An ethereal figure from the Mystic Enclave spoke up. "We must ensure that those who choose to use this tool are fully aware of the consequences and are willing to make the ultimate sacrifice. It is a heavy burden, but one that may be necessary to save countless lives."

Another delegate, with metallic skin and a deep, rumbling voice, addressed the room. "Indeed we may have brave warriors but we cannot simply send them to their deaths without exploring every possible alternative. Are there no other options, Grand Commander?"

Shion took a deep breath. "We are continuing our research, and we are exploring every possible avenue. But as of now, this amplification tool is our best chance to confront the dark plane on equal footing. We must prevent the final premonition, as these efforts are crucial to our survival."

The room erupted in a mix of voices. Some agreed while others disagreed. Grand Commander Shion allowed the discussions to continue for a moment before raising his hand again.

"Please, everyone. I understand how difficult it is to digest what I've told you. However, we must move forward with caution and unity. We need volunteers from every planet under the alliance who understand the stakes and are willing to make this sacrifice. We must also continue to work together to find other solutions. Our universe's survival depends on our combined efforts."

The delegates nodded in agreement, their faces reflecting resolve.

As the meeting continued, the delegates worked together to develop a plan. They discussed how to use the amplification tool strategically. Each step was carefully considered, with the understanding that the stakes had never been higher.

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Gustav had been in Dimension Six for what felt like an eternity. The passage of time seemed distorted in this place.

The realm itself was like an empty city, maintaining its mechanical and incredibly futuristic constructs despite the desolation that had befallen Humbad.

Gustav found himself in awe of the towering structures and the smooth lines of the buildings that defied gravity.

The buzzing of machines seemed to operate on their own, defying the decay of time. Yet, there was a haunting emptiness, a sense of loss that permeated every corner. The silence was deafening, broken only by the occasional whirr and click of the constructs.

Gustav had spent most of his time in a particular construct, an enormous chamber filled with holographic displays and intricate machinery.

This construct was a one of origins. Gustav had been moving around since and found this one which was currently showing him Planet Humbad's origin.

The place reconstructed it's planet history in vivid detail like he was witnessing the occurrences as though he lived in such times.

The chamber flickered and shifted, creating a panoramic view of Humbad in its prime.

The advanced technology brought the past to life, allowing him to walk through the city as it had once been, filled with vibrant energy and life.

"So this is how it used to look?" Gustav whispered to himself.

He felt a deep sense of connection to the place, as if he were witnessing a part of his own heritage.

The playback showed bustling streets filled with the inhabitants of Humbad with fluid and graceful movements. Their clothes, movement machinery and everything was just out of this world.

It was inconceivable.

"These people," Gustav thought, "they were so advanced, so full of life. What happened to them?"

As he walked through the city, he felt a pang of sadness. He hadn't even had the time to properly think about what had happened to Miss Aimee or grieve her loss.

The current objective had consumed him, driving him forward with relentless determination. In as much as he wanted to grieve, Miss Aimee sacrificed for him to be here so he knew he had to keep the ball rolling.

"Miss Aimee," he murmured, "I won't let your sacrifice be in vain."

The construct shifted, showing the once-thriving city beginning to fall into disarray. The vibrant lights dimmed, the streets grew emptier, and the inhabitants seemed to fade away. Gustav watched as the planet's decline played out before him, the advanced technology unable to prevent the inevitable decay.

He reached out to touch one of the holographic figures, a young child with wide, curious eyes. His hand passed through the image, and the child dissolved into a cascade of light.

"It's moving too fast" Gustav voiced aloud.

The playback continued, showing scenes of chaos and destruction. The once-proud buildings crumbled, and the ground split open, revealing the molten core beneath. The inhabitants of Humbad fought desperately to save their world, but their efforts were in vain. The planet was dragged into the Stagnant Siterus Void, its fate sealed by forces beyond their control.

"Slow down..." Gustav stated.

Everything immediately paused at this moment.

"Take it back... And reduce the speed, I want to properly digest it all,"

It was like the construct had a mind of its own. It began to rescind at a rapid pace.

The whole playback restarted, giving Gustav a detailed showdown of Planet Humbad's past.

As the constructive surroundings shifted and reformed around him, Gustav was transported back in time, witnessing the truth about how everything began.

"Humans have always believed that we were amongst the first intelligent species," Gustav thought, watching the scenes unfold. "But the Slarkovs were here long before us... their civilization was thriving while Earth was still in its infancy."

The city came to life, filled with beings that bore a striking resemblance to humans but with distinct animalistic features.

Some had horns curling elegantly from their heads, others had elongated ears, and many had scaly or iridescent skin that shimmered.

The playback showed the bustling streets of Humbad, filled with the daily activities of its inhabitants. Advanced vehicles zipped through the air, and towering buildings gleamed with the reflection of the twin suns in their sky.

The architecture being far beyond anything Gustav had ever seen. There were energy towers everywhere and devices that didn't need physical charge.

As the solar system was displayed, Gustav recognized some things and was shocked.

"Earth was a neighboring planet in their solar system," Gustav voiced as the construct shifted to show the cosmic relationship between Humbad and Earth. "It was so close, that the distance between them was shorter than the distance from Earth to Mercury."

The scene changed, showing Earth as a barren, lifeless world. The planet's surface was a desolate landscape, devoid of the flora and fauna that would one day flourish there.

"But it looks like Earth didn't even have humans back then... Just how far back is this?" Gustav was still utterly surprised.

In stark contrast, Humbad was a vibrant, thriving world, teeming with life and advanced civilizations.

"Humbad had already borne intelligent species for millennia," Gustav mused. "The Slarkovs were the most intelligent and their technology still surpasses that of Earth even till today."

The playback shifted again, showing the development of the Slarkovs' technology.

Gustav watched as they harnessed the power of their planet's natural resources, creating energy sources that were clean and inexhaustible.

They built towering structures that reached into the sky and some that lived in the sky with elegant and efficient designs. The Slarkovs had achieved a level of technological sophistication that seemed almost magical.

"They were so far ahead," Gustav thought, awe. "Their understanding of science and technology was unparalleled. Earth only got the short end of the stick."

The scenes shifted to show the Slarkovs' daily lives. Gustav saw families gathered together, sharing meals and stories.

He saw scholars and scientists working diligently in their laboratories, pushing the boundaries of knowledge and discovery. He saw artists creating breathtaking works of beauty.

The Slarkovs truly bore many similarities to earth.

"They were so much like humans," Gustav realized. "But much more united from the looks of things."

The past continued to unfold before Gustav, revealing more layers of the Slarkovs' history and the challenges they faced.

The playback showed a time when Humbad existed in an era dominated by powerful beings who were essentially deities.

These beings possessed unimaginable power, and their very presence could alter the fabric of reality.

Gustav watched in awe as the surroundings shifted to show these deities, titanic figures of immense strength and majesty that existed deep in the solar system.

Their origins were unknown. The only known fact was that they ruled the cosmos and had existed since the beginning of time.

Chapter 1604 Fan The Flames

Gustav watched in surprise as the playback depicted the colossal battle in space. The deities clashed with unimaginable force, their energies creating shockwaves that rippled through the cosmos. The very fabric of reality seemed to tremble under the weight of their conflict.

"Not again," Gustav thought.

The battle reached a catastrophic climax when one of the deities was struck down.

Usually, deities were immortal but the only threat to a Deity's immortality was another deity.

The defeated deity's corpse which was massive beyond comprehension, began to drift through space. The playback highlighted the sheer scale of the body, which was as massive as the combination of more than thirty planets.

It was incredibly colossal.

As the deity's corpse floated toward Humbad's solar system, the sun was blotted out, casting the planet into darkness.

The holographic images showed the Slarkovs looking up at the sky in terror and disbelief, their world plunged into an eerie twilight.

Fraumbultin the 45th addressed his people in the aftermath of the catastrophe. He stood on a platform within Dimension Six. "My fellow Slarkovs," he said, his voice steady but filled with sorrow, "we face a challenge unlike any we have encountered before. A shadow has been cast over our world, and we must come together to find a way through this darkness."

"Chief Fraumbultin, what can we do? Our crops are failing, and our energy reserves are depleting without the sun. How will we survive?" A Slarkov asked.

Fraumbultin the 45th responded with a tone of understanding; "We will use the power of Dimension Six to sustain ourselves," he replied. "We have faced great challenges before, and we have always found a way to overcome them. We must remain united and work together to find solutions."

While it is well known that Dimension Six could solve any problem, the problem had to be within the vicinity of the planet and not in outerspace.

This meant they couldn't ask Dimension six to get rid of the Deity's corpse and even if they could, it wouldn't work due to it being the corpse of an actual deity.

So, they had to consider a different approach.

Gustav watched as the construct showed the Slarkovs mobilizing to address the crisis. They Dimension Six to create artificial light sources, attempting to replicate the sun's rays to keep their crops alive. Engineers and scientists worked tirelessly to develop new technologies that could sustain them in the prolonged darkness.

In one scene, Gustav saw a group of scientists gathered around a large device that emitted a powerful, golden light. "This should help keep the crops growing," one of the scientists said, adjusting the settings. "It's not a perfect solution, but it will buy us some time."

Frambultin the 45th visited the laboratories, offering his support and encouragement. "Your work is vital to our survival," he told the scientists. "We must use every resource at our disposal to ensure that our people have what they need to endure this crisis."

Despite their efforts, the prolonged darkness began to take its toll. The playback showed scenes of hardship and struggle, with the Slarkovs facing food shortages and energy crises. The once-thriving society was now grappling with the harsh reality of their situation.

They did their best to keep working to find solutions and survive.

The playback continued, depicting the grim reality the Slarkovs faced after the death of the deity and the resultant eclipse of their sun.

The initial challenge of surviving in darkness was compounded by a new and insidious threat: an ashy sand-like pollution that emitted from the deity's corpse.

This pollution began to spread through space, turning into a malevolent force that swallowed up orbital bodies, including moons and satellites.

Gustav watched as the construct showed the spread of this pollution. It moved with a sinister, creeping inevitability, engulfing everything in its path.

The Slarkovs, already struggling with the loss of sunlight, now faced an even greater existential threat.

"We must protect ourselves," Fraumbultin the 45th declared, his voice resolute as he addressed the council. "This pollution is unlike anything we've encountered before. We need to act quickly to safeguard our planet."

The council members and scientists came together in agreement to work quickly on a solution.

One of the scientists spoke up; "We have developed barriers using the energy from Dimension Six," she said. "These barriers should be able to hold off the pollution and give us time to find a more permanent solution."

Frambultin the 45th looked at the council members, determination in his eyes. "Let's implement these barriers immediately. Every second counts."

The playback shifted to show the Slarkovs working tirelessly to erect the multilayered barriers. The barriers shimmered with an ethereal light, forming a protective shield around Humbad.

As the barriers were activated, the ashy sand-like pollution met with resistance.

The barriers held strong, repelling the malevolent force and preventing it from reaching the planet's surface. The Slarkovs breathed a collective sigh of relief after seeing their efforts pay off.

Fraumbultin the 45th addressed the people of Humbad with reassurance. "The barriers are holding, and we are safe for now. We continue to seek a permanent solution to this threat."

The playback showed the Slarkovs returning to their daily lives, their spirits lifted by the temporary reprieve. However, the shadow of the pollution still loomed large.

Months turned into years, and the barriers continued to hold. The Slarkovs used this time to develop new technologies and strategies to combat the pollution. Scientists and engineers worked around the clock, searching for a way to neutralize the threat permanently.

In one scene, Gustav watched as a group of scientists gathered in a high-tech laboratory, their faces etched with determination. "We've made some progress," one of them said, pointing to a holographic display. "We've developed a prototype device that might be able to disperse the pollution."

Fraumbultin the 45th, who was present in the lab, listened intently. "Excellent work," he said. "How soon can we test it?"

The scientist hesitated. "We're still in the early stages of testing. We need more time to ensure it's safe and effective."

Fraumbultin the 45th nodded. "Understood. Keep me updated on your progress. The safety of our people depends on it."

The scientists did try to test this device but unfortunately it wasn't as effective as they would have liked it to be.

No matter how much of the sandy ash like substance they dispersed, it always found a way to replicate.

It was like they were just wasting their time.

Despite their best efforts, the situation took a turn for the worse. The playback showed the barriers beginning to falter, the relentless pressure of the pollution wearing them down. Cracks appeared in the shimmering shield and things were starting to get very dire.

The playback showed the relentless assault of the as

hy sand-like pollution against the barriers. The Slarkovs watched in despair as their protective shield continued to weaken and crack. Despite their best efforts, it seemed that all hope was lost.

Fraumbultin the 45th stood in the command center, his face etched with worry. "We've done everything we can," he said to his advisors. "The barriers won't hold much longer. We need a miracle."

Just as the situation seemed dire, a bright light appeared in the sky, cutting through the darkness.

The playback showed a figure descending from the heavens, his form glowing with an otherworldly radiance. As he landed on the surface of Humbad, the light around him dimmed to reveal a deity who had taken on a human form.

How could one tell that he was a deity? For starters, he got through the barrier with ease and past the sandy ash like substance without any trouble.

Not to mention his two silver eyes that glowed like lightbulbs and the majestic presence he carried.

The Slarkovs watched in awe as the deity walked among them.

He raised his hand, and the ashy sand-like pollution that had been attacking the barrier began to gather into a swirling mass above his head.

"Who are you?" Fraumbultin the 45th asked, his voice filled with a mixture of hope and disbelief.

He knew it was a deity but subconsciously still spat this question out.

The deity looked at him with kind, ancient eyes. "I am a guardian of balance who came to rectify the harm caused by the battles of my kin," he said. "I apologize for the destruction and chaos that has befallen your world."

Gustav watched in amazement as the deity continued to gather the pollution, forming it into a compact, pulsating ball of dark energy.

The malevolent force that had been swallowing up orbital bodies was now contained, its threat neutralized.

And it had been done with so much ease that no one would doubt the authenticity of the person before them.

The deity then raised his other hand, and the skies began to clear. The remains of the fallen deity and the pollution that had darkened their world dissipated, revealing the sun once more.

Light flooded the planet, and the Slarkovs cheered in relief and joy.

"Thank you," Frambultin the 45th said, bowing deeply. "You have saved my people..."

Chapter 1605 Severe Consequences

****Gustav's journey**** to the vestige continued, the gravitational density now almost overwhelming. He took a deep breath, channeling his energy to stabilize himself as he closed the distance, his senses sharpening as he felt the vestige's power calling to him.

At last, he arrived at his destination, a small, barren planet surrounded by swirling dust clouds and asteroid fragments. It was desolate, isolated, and untouched by time—a fitting resting place for something as powerful as a piece of the Outworldly.

As he descended toward the planet's surface, he could feel the vestige's energy thrumming beneath the ground, pulsing with a life of its own. He landed, stepping out onto the cold, cracked terrain, his gaze fixed on the horizon where the energy was strongest.

He walked forward, feeling the power intensify with each step, the air growing heavy around him as if the very atmosphere was charged with cosmic energy. Finally, he reached a towering, jagged rock formation, its surface etched with ancient markings that glowed faintly in the dim light.

*****This is it,***** Gustav whispered, his hand reaching out to touch the stone. The moment his fingers brushed against it, the entire structure pulsed with energy, a wave of raw power surging into him, flooding his senses with memories, visions, fragments of a life he had once known.

He gasped as the energy coursed through him, his body absorbing the vestige, his mind filling with the knowledge and strength it contained. For a brief moment, he felt whole, as if he had regained a part of himself that had been missing for centuries.

As the power settled

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He turned his attention to Raw Assimilation. His Genetic Transformation Bloodline already granted him an assimilation ability, but this one was fundamentally different.

With Genetic Transformation, he could assimilate with living tissue—people, aliens, or organisms. However, Raw Assimilation opened up a realm of new possibilities. He could merge with non-living matter, potentially even something as vast as a moon or as powerful as a star.

The idea was exhilarating, the potential applications endless.

As Gustav considered these new bloodlines, his thoughts shifted to the two skill evolution cards he had also received as part of his rewards.

He pondered which skills to evolve next, knowing that his choices could significantly impact his future capabilities. Before he could make a decision, he recalled the dinner he had agreed to have with Angy's family.

Realizing the time, Gustav decided it was best to get ready. He headed to his bedroom which was a minimal yet compact and cozy set up.

He stepped into the en-suite bathroom to freshen up. The shower, with its multiple jets and rainfall feature, was a welcome respite. As the warm water cascaded over him, he allowed himself a moment to relax and clear his mind.

Once freshened up, Gustav chose a casual yet stylish outfit—dark jeans, a crisp white shirt, and a tailored red jacket. He checked his reflection in the mirror, ensuring he looked presentable for dinner. Satisfied, he made his way to the living room, where he grabbed his keys and phone.

Before leaving, he sent a quick message to Angy: "Heading out now. See you soon."

A few moments later, his phone beeped with Angy's reply: "Can't wait. Muah."

Gustav smiled and pocketed the device as he stepped towards the balcony area. It would seem that his location had been revealed so the press was cooped up at the entry point of the skyscraper.

The world before him came to a pause as Gustav moved leapt into the air and vanished.

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Gustav stood outside Angy's apartment building with some flowers in his grasp and a slight smile playing on his lips.

As he walked up to the apartment door, it swung open to reveal Mr. and Mrs. Vilandrobadia.

Mrs. Vilandrobadia displayed a welcoming smile.

"Good evening, Gustav," Mrs. Vilandrobadia greeted warmly. "We're so glad you could join us tonight."

Mr. Vilandrobadia extended his hand. "It's good to see you again, Gustav. Come in, make yourself at home."

Gustav shook his hand and stepped inside. "Thank you for having me."

The apartment was cozy and inviting, with family holographic photos adorning a side of the wall and the scent of a delicious meal wafting through the air. The dining table was set with elegant dishware, and a variety of mouth-watering dishes were spread out, indicating the effort the family had put into the evening.

As they moved into the living room, Gustav noticed Phil, Angy's little brother. Phil was no longer the small boy Gustav remembered. Despite being 15, he was almost fully grown, with a build that hinted at his future strength.

"Hey, Phil," Gustav greeted with a nod, genuinely surprised by his growth. "You've grown a lot since I last saw you."

Phil smiled shyly, his voice deeper than before. "Hey, Gustav. Yeah, it's been a while."

Angy appeared, a radiant smile on her face as she walked over to Gustav and linked her arm through his. "Come on, everyone. Let's sit down for dinner."

They all gathered around the table as the atmosphere was filled with warmth. The meal was a delightful affair, with an array of flavors that showcased Mrs. Vilandrobadia's culinary skills.

Gustav tried not to compare her cooking to that of Boss Danzo's since he made an habit of doing that for every meal he had.

As they ate, they chatted and reminisced about the past, sharing stories and laughter that bridged the time and experiences they had missed.

They remembered how things used to be much simpler back in their previous neighborhood before Gustav and Angy joined the MBO.

Mr. Vilandrobadia recounted an amusing tale from Angy's childhood, causing everyone to laugh. "Remember the time Angy tried to build a rocket in the backyard? She was so determined to reach the stars."

Angy groaned, her cheeks flushing with embarrassment. "Dad, not that story again!"

Gustav chuckled, his heart warming at the familial banter. "I'd love to hear more about Angy's childhood adventures."

Mrs. Vilandrobadia smiled. "She was always so fearless, much like she is now."

After the meal, as they moved to the living room for dessert, Mr. and Mrs. Vilandrobadia grew more serious. Mr. Vilandrobadia cleared his throat and looked at Gustav with sincerity.

"Gustav, there's something we need to say," he began. "When Angy disappeared, we were devastated. We were angry and scared, and we took a lot of that out on you. We were wrong."

Mrs. Vilandrobadia nodded with a remorseful look. "We're so sorry for how we treated you, Gustav. Thank you for saving our daughter."

"You don't need to apologize. I made a promise to protect Angy, and I failed. I can't blame any of you but I'll make sure to keep that promise in the future."

Mr. Vilandrobadia's voice was filled with emotions. "Thank you, Gustav. You've done more for our family than we can ever repay."

Phil, who had been silent, spoke up. "Gustav, can I talk to you outside for a moment?"

Gustav nodded, standing up. "Of course."

They stepped out into the cool evening air, the city lights twinkling in the distance. Phil looked at Gustav with a serious look.

"I need to apologize too," Phil began, his voice trembling slightly. "For the longest time, I hated you. When Angy was missing, I hated myself for looking up to you. I blamed you for everything."

Gustav remained silent, giving Phil the space to express his feelings.

Phil continued, his eyes filled with regret. "When Angy returned and told us what happened, how you sacrificed yourself to save her, I realized how stupid I'd been. You must love her just like we do. Maybe even more. When she was lost, you must have been hurt too, right?"

Gustav placed a reassuring hand on Phil's shoulder. "I was, Phil. But what matters is that Angy is safe now. And that's all I care about."

Tears welled up in Phil's eyes as he looked at Gustav. "I'm so sorry for how I treated you. Thank you for saving my sister."

Gustav smiled gently, patting Phil's back. "Don't worry about it. We all went through a lot. What's important is how it turned out."

Phil wiped his eyes, his voice breaking. "Thank you, Big brother Gustav. Really."

They stood there for a moment in silence, staring into the distance with smiles on their faces. After a while, Angy appeared at the door, a soft smile on her face.

"Everything okay out here?" she asked.

Phil nodded with red eyes but a lighter expression. "Yeah. Thanks, big brother Gustav."

It was obvious that he'd been carrying a weight of guilt all this time and now that he had gotten it off his chest, he felt better.

He headed back inside, leaving Gustav and Angy alone. She walked up to him, her eyes filled with love and gratitude.

"Thank you for talking to him," she said softly. "Phil led a campaign when you were still unconscious and in custody before your trial. He rallied so many people, trying to get justice for you."

Gustav raised an eyebrow, impressed. "Really? Phil did that?"

Angy nodded. "He looks up to you, Gustav. Even when he was angry, he still admired you. And when he realized how much you cared for me and put yourself on the line to save me, it made him want to fight for you."

"He's a good kid. You've got a great family, Angy," Gustav had a brief recollection of everything that happened when Angy was missing.

Angy wrapped her arms around him while resting her head on his chest. "As do you because you're our family too. We're so lucky to have you, Gus."

Gustav held her close, feeling the warmth of her embrace. "Perhaps, I'm the lucky one."

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About a day later, Gustav sat in the living area of his luxurious penthouse. The evening was calm, but inside his mind, a storm of decisions brewed.

He leaned back into the plush leather sofa, his thoughts fixated on the two skill evolution cards. These cards were potent, capable of transforming his abilities into something far more powerful and versatile.

He brought up his system skills and abilities collection causing a holographic panel to materialize before him.

The list was long, over two hundred skills and abilities which he had acquired over the years. However, only the skills that were maxed out could be evolved, and that narrowed his choices down to a handful of his most critical abilities.

\[Skills and Abilities \]

\[»Lightning Blitz (Level 7) \]

\[»Sprint (Level max) \]

\[»Chop (Level max) \]

\[»Slash (Level max) \]

\[»God Eyes (Level max) \]

\[»Flight (Level 8) \]

\[»Combination (Level max) \]

\[»Super Jump (Level max) \]

\[»Strength Boost (Level 9) \]

\[»Bloodline Acquisition (Level max) \]

\[»Bloodline Hold (Level 8) \]

\[»Bloodline Transfer (Level max) \]

\[»Palm Strike (Level max) \]

\[»Silent Advancement (Level max) \]

\[»Energy Discharge (Level max) \]

\[»Miniature Blackhole (Level 5) \]

\[»Recreation (Level max) \]

\[»Toxin Immunity (Level max) \]

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Chapter 1606 On The Search

In the heart of a chaotic and gravity-warped region of space, Gustav hovered just above the rocky surface of a barren world. It bore no inhabitants.

He had finally reached his destination, and beneath him, buried deep within the fractured ground, lay the second vestige of his original power.

He could feel it humming like a heartbeat, resonating with the fragments he had already absorbed. This energy was familiar yet ancient, a part of himself he had long forgotten.

Taking a deep breath, Gustav reached out and placed his hand against the surface. As soon as his skin made contact, the vestige reacted, sending a surge of power through him.

The ground trembled beneath him, cracks snaking across the terrain as the energy rose up like a pulse, fusing into his very being.

He closed his eyes, feeling the humanoid shaped energy wrap around him, absorbing into his core.

Every cell in his body seemed to awaken, and the sensation was almost overwhelming.

His muscles tensed as a newfound strength coursed through him.

It was only a mere extra 1% of his original strength—a fraction of his former glory—but even that small amount felt monumental.

The Outworldly, in his full power, was beyond what any ordinary being could comprehend, and now, he could feel a sliver of that unimaginable force returning to him.

Opening his eyes, Gustav felt the familiar rush of knowledge as another ability from his Outworldly repertoire unlocked. He flexed his fingers, the power settling into his veins like a second skin.

"Let's see what you've given me this time,**" he murmured to himself as he took a few steps back from the now-dormant vestige.

With a single thought, he extended his arm, and the air around him seemed to ripple. A faint, almost invisible sphere of energy enveloped him, flickering with a gentle, silver glow.

Gustav clenched his fist, and the sphere expanded, stretching out over the entire landscape. Trees, rocks, and even the distant peaks began to bend under the force of his energy.

With a flick of his wrist, he pulled it all back, compressing the sphere around him in a rush that sent a shockwave outward, creating a crater beneath him.

"Not bad," he voiced with a satisfied tone.

After a few more tests, Gustav leaped into the air, flying back toward his waiting spacecraft.

The gravitational density continued to press against him but it was barely noticeable. He reached the spacecraft and climbed aboard, setting his sights on the next vestige.

"One more step closer," he murmured as he fired up the engines.

Meanwhile, somewhere else in the universe, a small but robust spacecraft cut through the vast emptiness of space.

Inside, Endric, Ria, and Sersi were discussing the next steps in their journey. Sersi had insisted on joining them, and after much debate, Endric had finally agreed, unable to resist her determined gaze.

"Alright, team, here's where we're at," Endric said, leaning over the ship's navigation console. "The database came through and cross-referenced the two distinct features that Gustav glimpsed— a hazy teal planet and an unnatural void-like light. Unfortunately, it returned not one, but four locations."

Ria, seated across from him with a frown, crossed his arms. "Four locations? That means three of them are not correct?"

"Yes," Endric confirmed.

"Great. We're going to need to hop across the galaxies to check each one,"

"Bingo," Endric replied, bringing up a holographic map. "But that's our best shot. We'll need to visit each location and confirm which one actually holds the sword."

Sersi leaned in with a determined expression determined. "Then let's not waste time. We go in, check, and if it's not the one, we move on. Simple."

Endric glanced at her. "You make it sound easy, Sersi. You realize these locations aren't exactly next door to each other, right?"

Sersi shrugged while displaying a smile. "Doesn't matter. We're doing this for father. I'd fly to the edge of the universe if that's what it takes."

Ria chuckled, nodding approvingly. "You're relentless. I can see why you insisted on coming. But let's just hope these locations aren't crawling with the Alliance's goons, or worse."

Endric pulled up the first destination, pointing to a distant star system marked on the map. "The first one's here, on the outskirts of the Ilvorn Galaxy. We'll check it out and go from there. Everyone ready?"

"Ready," Sersi and Ria replied in unison.

The ship buzzed as Endric punched in the coordinates, and in an instant, they leaped into hyperspace. The stars outside immediately blurred into streaks of light.

After what felt like numerous hours, the ship slowed, emerging from hyperspace on the edge of a star system where the first of the four potential locations awaited.

Outside the ship, a massive teal-hued planet loomed before them, surrounded by swirling clouds and faint, greenish light that gave the atmosphere an ethereal quality.

"Well, that's... something," Ria murmured, staring at the planet. "Almost looks like we're in a dream."

Sersi eyes narrowed as she peered out the window. "I don't like it. Something feels... off."

Endric nodded in agreement, adjusting the ship's scanners. "Let's keep our guard up. This might be the place, but it could also be a trap. Stay sharp, both of you."

They descended through the atmosphere, landing in a remote area of the planet's surface where massive, sharp rocks jutted out of the ground like teeth.

The surroundings were eerily quiet, with a pale mist clinging to the ground, casting strange shadows across the barren landscape.

"I'll check the scanners for any signs of Outworldly energy," Endric said, adjusting the controls.

As he worked, Sersi and Ria stepped out of the ship, keeping a close eye on the surrounding terrain. They moved cautiously, their senses on high alert as they scanned the area for any threats.

"It's dead silent," Sersi whispered, prepared to activate her bloodline at anytime. "Too quiet."

Ria nodded. "Yeah, I don't like it either. Shouldn't we have bumped into extraterrestrials by now? Endric, anything on the scanners?"

Endric's voice crackled over their communicators. "No Outworldly energy detected yet, but there's a faint residual energy—something that could be connected. It's faint, though. If the sword was here, it's either well-hidden or long gone. Let's sweep the area."

They spread out, moving through the mist as they searched for any signs of the sword or clues pointing to its whereabouts.

Nearly an hour went by with no luck. Endric could scour the entirety of the planet within seconds but the mist really made it difficult to cast one's senses like a net across this mysterious world.

After some time, Endric called them back to the ship. "Nothing here. Just a residual energy field—might be a remnant of some old relic, but not the sword. We're moving to the next location."

"Well, at least we're one down," Ria muttered while climbing back aboard. "Three more to go."

Sersi sighed, settling into her seat. "Uncle needs to be better with his choices."

"Don't call me that..." Endric snapped back.

"Sorry uncle..."

"You're older than me."

"I don't think so, uncle..."

"Shut up!"

"Sorry uncle..."

"You little...."

It almost seemed like Sersi was trying to get Endric mad on purpose and yet her eyes remained clueless.

"You know what... forget it. Maybe we could crash into a sun and die so I can finally be rid of that godforsaken title," Endric grumbled as he programmed the coordinates for the next location.

"You know... you two really suit each other," Ria chipped in from behind.

"Go fuck yourself, Ria," Endric yelled from the pilot seat.

"No really, think about it."

"Shut up!"

"I could become a godfather."

"No!"

"Gustav could become an uncle."

"You're insane!"

Ria kept jabbering away nonstop and Endric felt like death would be a very good relief at this moment.

"Why did I pick these two?" He questioned his choices while shaking his head.

"I hope we don't have to visit all four."

They jumped to hyperspace once more, speeding toward the next destination.

As the stars streaked by outside the window, Endric couldn't help but think about their mission. He knew that finding the sword was crucial, not just for Gustav, but for the fate of the universe itself.

The second location took them to a desolate system on the edge of a black hole. The gravitational pull was intense, warping space around them as they approached.

"Whoever thought hiding a sword next to a black hole was a good idea deserves a punch," Ria grumbled.

Endric carefully navigated the ship around the black hole's edge. "Stay focused. We've dealt with blackholes before and this won't be any different. Sersi, keep an eye on the scanners. If there's anything here, we'll need to be quick."

They circled the black hole, scanning the surrounding debris fields for any signs of the sword.

The environment was dangerous, with massive chunks of rock and ice orbiting perilously close to the event horizon. But despite their careful search, they found nothing.

"Another dead end," Endric voiced with a frustrated sigh.

Chapter 1607 Identical Locations

"Another dead end," Endric voiced with a frustrated sigh as they finally broke away from the black hole.

As Endric skillfully piloted the ship around the gaping maw of the black hole, his attention was caught by a faint flickering in the distance.

Just beyond the swirling gravitational chaos, he spotted a teal-hued planet.

It wasn't static, nor was it consistent—it flickered in and out of existence like a mirage at the edge of his vision.

"Hold up," Endric squinted through the viewport. He tapped a few buttons, magnifying the image, then called out, "Hey, you two, look at this. Do you see that?"

Both Ria and Sersi leaned over his shoulders, staring intently into the viewport.

At first, the dark void of space revealed nothing unusual. But then, as if on cue, the teal planet shimmered back into view, hanging in space for a few moments before fading away again.

"Did you see it?" Endric asked, glancing between them with a spark of excitement and concern.

Ria's eyes narrowed. "Yeah, I caught it."

"That's no ordinary flicker. Planets don't just... phase like that," Sersi chipped in.

Sersi's expression was a mix of fascination and unease. "It looks like the first planet we checked out, doesn't it? The color, the haziness... everything."

Endric nodded, gripping the controls. "It's weird, but I'm bringing us in closer. Hang tight."

He eased the ship forward, carefully navigating past the intense gravitational forces.

The black hole seemed to reach out, tugging at their vessel with an unrelenting grip, but Endric maintained a steady course, pushing back with his telekinetic energy as they headed towards the flickering teal world.

With every second, the planet became more real, until finally, they crossed some unseen threshold and emerged in the planet's atmosphere. The shimmering faded, and the planet solidified, no longer vanishing in and out of existence.

The ship touched down with a soft thud. Its engines powered down as Endric, Ria, and Sersi prepared to disembark.

"Alright, keep your guard up," Endric warned, his voice low and tense. "This place... it looks exactly like the first planet, and that's not a good sign."

They exited the ship, stepping onto the surface.

The surroundings were almost haunting in their familiarity. Pointed rocks rose from the ground, casting long shadows under the teal sky.

A pale mist clung to the ground, curling around their legs and filling the air with an unsettling chill.

Sersi glanced around with a wary gaze. "This place... it's identical to the first planet. Same rock formations, same mist... even the light feels the same. It's almost like we're back there."

Ria nodded while scanning the horizon. "I don't like this. It feels like a trick. But we're here now, so let's see what we can find."

They split up, moving cautiously through the mist-covered terrain.

Every detail seemed eerily familiar, down to the smallest crack in the rocks. They checked each crevice, examined every shadow, searching for any sign of the massive chunk of planet or the sword that Gustav needed.

But no matter how thoroughly they searched, they found nothing. It was as if the planet were a hollow shell, an illusion designed to mislead them.

Endric kicked a rock and watched it skid across the ground. "This isn't right. We're going in circles, and there's nothing here."

Sersi's voice came through their communicators. "Uncle, Ria, I just checked the northern ridge. It's clear. No signs of anything out of the ordinary."

"Same here," Ria replied, glancing around with a frown. "It's like we're on a ghost planet. This has to be some kind of trap, right?"

Endric sighed while rubbing his temples. "I don't know. There's got to be something we're missing here. Let's give it one more sweep, and if we still don't find anything, we'll regroup and head back to the ship."

With heavy hearts and wary eyes, they resumed their search, but the result was the same.

No matter how meticulously they combed the landscape, the planet remained barren, devoid of anything that could lead them to Gustav's sword. After another hour of fruitless searching, they returned to the ship, feeling a mixture of frustration and unease.

Meanwhile, across the galaxy, Gustav was piloting his own vessel, making his way to the next vestige.

The gravitational field around him was thick, and the space itself seemed to shimmer, warping in strange patterns as he approached his destination. Just as he was preparing to enter a new galaxy, a flashing light on his control panel signaled an incoming alert.

Ahead of him, a series of ships formed a perimeter in space. These were no ordinary vessels; they bore the emblem of the Universal Alliance, an interplanetary coalition led by some of the most powerful worlds—including Earth.

This was the same alliance Gustav had a scuffle with in the past.

As he approached, one of the ships hailed him, the signal crackling to life on his console. Gustav clicked the communicator, and a gruff voice filled the cockpit.

"This is Universal Alliance Checkpoint Bravo-17. Halt your approach and prepare for inspection."

Gustav rolled his eyes while muttering, "Such unnecessary delay."

Nevertheless, he complied, slowing the ship to a stop as two Alliance vessels moved alongside him. A screen blinked on, displaying a tall, burly alliance corp officer with a bald scaly head and a scar running down his cheek.

His expression was one of forced professionalism, but there was a glint in his eyes that suggested he knew exactly who he was addressing.

"Gustav Crimson," the officer voiced with a clipped tone. "We'll be conducting a routine inspection of your vessel. Stand by."

"No problem. Anything to keep the galaxy safe, right*"

 Gustav replied with dry amusement.

The officer's lips tightened, but he said nothing, gesturing to a subordinate to begin the scan. Gustav watched as a bright light washed over his ship, scanning every inch of the vessel's exterior.

After a few moments, the officer's face reappeared on the screen. "You're clear, but I'd advise against flying through restricted regions without checking in at designated checkpoints. You may be a well-known figure, but that doesn't exempt you from Alliance regulations."

Gustav smirked while crossing his arms. "Noted. So, what's got the Alliance so riled up? Seems like you're running a pretty tight operation out here."

The officer's eyes narrowed slightly. "We're on the lookout for a fugitive. A high-priority target. That's all you need to know."

"A high-priority target, huh? Must be serious if it's got you all out here patrolling the middle of nowhere."

The officer's face hardened. "Your cooperation is appreciated, Mr. Crimson. We don't need your commentary."

Gustav raised his hands in mock surrender. "You never know what could help. I've got places to be anyway. You're good to let me through now, right?"

Gustav was being humble even though he knew none of them could stop him if he wanted to leave.

The officer hesitated, then nodded reluctantly. "Fine. You're clear. Just remember to be on your best behavior Mr. Crimson. You might be powerful, but we're still the protectors of the cosmos."

As the screen blinked off, Gustav smirked.

He fired up the engines, pulling away from the checkpoint with accelerating speed. The gravitational forces resumed pressing down on the spacecraft as it drew closer and closer to the next vestige, but his thoughts lingered on the interaction with the Alliance.

The fugitive they mentioned had seemed unimportant in the moment, but the description he had overheard was automatically stored in his mind.

It was impossible for him to forget anything after all.

Back in their own ship, Endric, Ria, and Sersi regrouped, silently processing the strange experience on the flickering planet.

"This has to be some sort of trick," Ria voiced in confusion. "The fact that we found two planets with identical environments can't be a coincidence."

It was one thing to both have teal looks but it was something else entirely to have a completely identical ecosystem and environment.

Endric leaned back in his seat, rubbing his chin thoughtfully. "Could Nocturnis be behind this? I find it difficult to understand since his powers doesn't have enough potency to create a whole world in this plane."

Sersi looked between them. "Maybe it's a delay tactic from someone else. If someone knows we're looking for the sword, keeping us here could buy them time to move it."

Endric's expression darkened as he considered her words. "You might be right. If this is a fluke, we need to rescan."

Ria nodded. "Agreed. If this place is a decoy, let's not stick around any longer than we have to."

As they prepared the ship for departure, a sense of urgency settled over them.

They couldn't afford to waste any more time. If someone was playing tricks here, they needed to isolate the fake from the real as soon as they could and figure out exactly what was going on.

Chapter 1608 Alliance Fugitive

Gustav hovered in deep space as the vast emptiness stretched out endlessly around him, broken only by the faint glimmer of stars.

He had reached the next vestige of his power, nestled delicately between two large, icy moons orbiting a distant planet.

The vestige pulsed faintly casting a mythical glow that illuminated the dark surroundings, calling to him with the same sense of familiarity as the others.

Without hesitation, he extended his hand, letting the energy of the vestige flow toward him.

The force was overwhelming, flooding his being as it merged with him. This particular vestige brought yet another sliver of his original strength—a mere 2% but it was significant enough to make him feel a surge of power unlike anything he'd experienced since reclaiming his fragments.

His body pulsed with newfound strength, and he felt yet another of his Outworldly abilities unlock within him.

After testing the effects of the boost briefly, Gustav turned and flew back to his spacecraft.

He still had five more he needed to retrieve. He entered the ship, settling back into the cockpit as he set a course back on his path through space.

But just as he turned the ship around, his senses caught onto something attaching itself to the ship.

The ship sensors didn't go off but his senses were too astute for anything to occur without his notice.

"What the... something's attached to the ship?" he muttered, glancing over the control panel as he searched for the source.

But before he could investigate further, the flashing lights on his communicator signaled an incoming transmission. His screen lit up with the familiar insignia of the Universal Alliance, and in the next instant, the ship's speakers filled with a sharp, gruff voice.

"This is Checkpoint Bravo-17 of the Universal Alliance. Halt your ship immediately and prepare for inspection."

Gustav let out an irritated sigh. "...Again?"

Nevertheless, he slowed his ship and waited for the Alliance officers to close in. As before, two of their imposing vessels flanked his spacecraft.

The same officer from earlier, the tall, scarred man with a stern expression and a hint of something personal in his gaze, appeared on the screen.

"Mr. Crimson, we're conducting another search," the officer announced with a curt tone.

Gustav raised an eyebrow, feigning surprise. "Another search? What a coincidence, I was just thinking of you, officer."

The officer's eyes narrowed, clearly unimpressed by Gustav's sarcasm. "We'll be quick about this, Mr Crimson."

Gustav gave a mock sigh, glancing at the scanner display before him. "You know, you might want to start your search at the southern part of the ship's hull. I've got a feeling you'll find something interesting there."

The officer frowned, giving Gustav a skeptical look before signaling his subordinates.

A few moments later, one of the Alliance officers hovered close to the southern edge of the ship, carefully scanning the surface. Suddenly, a figure cloaked in a shimmering, camouflaged layer began to materialize, clinging to the hull.

"There!" one of the officers shouted as the figure's camouflage faded, revealing a thin, wiry man with sharp features and a wild look in his eyes.

Before anyone could react, the fugitive sprang forward, shoving one of the officers back with a powerful kick and darting into the open void of space.

"Stop him!" the officer in command shouted, lunging forward as he aimed a glowing weapon.

But the fugitive moved with astonishing speed, warping space around him as he vanished from sight, leaving only a faint ripple in his wake.

The officer turned back toward Gustav in anguish. "Mr. Crimson, you're coming with us for harboring a fugitive."

Gustav let out a dry laugh, shaking his head. "Harboring? You're not serious, are you? That guy was clinging to the outside of my ship! If I were harboring him, don't you think he'd be, you know, inside?"

The officer's face darkened as he spoke with irritation. "Your smart remarks won't save you, Crimson. You're coming with us for questioning, one way or another."

Gustav crossed his arms, giving the officer an unimpressed look. "I'd rather not waste my time with that. Stay out of my way if you know what's good for you."

Without waiting for a response, Gustav's form shimmered, and in an instant, he vanished from the cockpit, reappearing millions of feet away from his ship.

He darted through space at unfathomable speed, closing in on the fleeing fugitive.

Ahead of him, he could see the fugitive's silhouette, nothing more than a tiny, distant shape moving at incredible speed. Gustav narrowed his eyes, extending his arm as he channeled his energy, focusing his vision on the figure racing through the stars.

"You're not getting away that easily," he murmured while clenching his fist.

In the blink of an eye, he accelerated. Closing his fist made space fold around him, making him cross vast distances in a heartbeat.

The fugitive was moving fast, but Gustav was faster, and within seconds, he closed the gap, appearing directly behind the man.

The fugitive barely had time to react before Gustav's hand shot out, grabbing him by the neck in a vice-like grip.

The fugitive gasped, struggling in Gustav's hold, his limbs flailing as he tried to break free. Gustav held him effortlessly with a cold gaze as he tightened his grip just enough to subdue him.

"Going somewhere?" Gustav questioned with a smirk.

The fugitive's eyes widened in fear, his voice coming out in a strangled gasp. "Let... me... go! You have no idea who you're dealing with!"

Gustav raised an eyebrow as his smirk widened. "Oh, I think I have a pretty good idea. But I'm curious... why hitch a ride on my ship? Seems like a dangerous game for someone so desperate to stay hidden."

The fugitive's eyes flickered with panic, but he said nothing.

His body tensed as he continued to struggle. Gustav gave him a slight shake, bringing him face-to-face.

"Come on, now. Don't make me work for it. Why were you hiding on my ship?"

The fugitive swallowed hard as his face contorted in fear and defiance. "They'll kill me if I go back. I had no choice. I thought... I thought you could help."

"Help? Now that's funny. I don't make it a habit of helping stowaways, especially ones with bounty hunters on their tails," Gustav replied coolly, his grip unyielding. "But since you're here, maybe you can answer a few questions. Like, what exactly did you do to get the entire Alliance out here looking for you?"

The fugitive's expression hardened, and for a moment, Gustav thought he might get an answer. But before the man could speak, a familiar, harsh voice cut through the void.

"Mr. Crimson, release the fugitive immediately. This is your last warning."

Gustav rolled his eyes as he spotted the alliance spacecraft closing in on their location. "I've got him under control, officer. But if you want him so badly, come and get him."

The Alliance ships closed in rapidly and made a stop not too distant from their position.

"Mr. Crimson, you're in violation of Alliance protocol. Release the fugitive and stand down, or we'll use force."

Gustav glanced back at the approaching ships with an unamused expression. "You really don't know when to quit, do you? Fine, have it your way."

With a flick of his wrist, he loosened his grip on the fugitive just enough to give the man a brief moment of freedom. The fugitive hesitated, glancing between Gustav and the Alliance ships with a desperate expression.

Gustav looked at him briefly before speaking with an icy tone. "Run all you want but if you keep making trouble for me next time, I won't be as generous."

Without waiting for a response, Gustav released the fugitive, watching as he shot off into the distance, vanishing into the void once more.

He turned to face the Alliance ships with his arms crossed as he waited for their next move.

The officer's face displayed a look of annoyance as he leapt out of the spacecraft. "You let him go?!"

"'Release the fugitive and stand down'... weren't those your words?" Gustav questioned while raising a brow.

"How could y... Now he's gone!" The officer was speechless.

"You sound like you don't know what you want," Gustav remained unbothered by the current situation.

The officer growled in response; "Mr. Crimson. I suggest you return to your ship and prepare for questioning. You have aided and abetted a fugitive today."

Gustav raised an eyebrow and replied with a calm voice edged with irritation. "If you think I'm going to waste my time answering your questions, you're sorely mistaken. I have more important things to do than babysit your fugitive. So unless you have something useful to say, I'd suggest you move along."

The officer's face turned red with anger, but before he could respond, Gustav's form shimmered, and in an instant, he vanished, reappearing in his ship's cockpit as he activated the engines.

"I dare you to stop me..."

Chapter 1609 Same Occurrence

With a final, dismissive glance at the Alliance ships, he set his course for his next destination, leaving the frustrated officers and their elusive fugitive far behind.

"I dare you to stop me," Gustav's voice echoed from the ship, transmitting it to the Alliance comms as he sped off.

Gustav's ship cut through the darkness, leaving the Alliance checkpoint and their chaos behind. He had more important matters to attend to, and he wasn't about to let a minor distraction derail his mission.

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The expanse of space lay quiet as Endric, Ria, and Sersi drifted through the stars.

Their ship seemed like a lone traveler in the vast, cosmic sea. The interior of the vessel groaned softly. The interior dimmed lights further allowed the illumination of the constant glow of data screens to surround them.

A week had passed since they'd departed from the flickering teal planet.

Their destination now was the third possible location that matched the features Gustav had seen in his brief vision.

Endric leaned over the control panel, scanning the incoming data with a focused gaze. He had been tense since the second planet, its eerie similarity to the first unnerving him.

A creeping suspicion had started to take root in his mind, one he couldn't shake, despite Ria's and Sersi's attempts to lighten the mood.

"I don't know, Endric," Sersi said, reclining in her seat with an amused smile as she twirled a strand of her silvery hair between her fingers. "Maybe it's just a coincidence. It's a big universe, after all. Planets looking alike? Happens all the time, right?"

Ria chuckled from the other side, tilting his head to look at Endric with a casual, mischievous grin. "Exactly. Who's to say we haven't just stumbled on some intergalactic copy-paste system? I mean, it would save on decoration costs."

But Endric barely glanced at them, his expression tense. "Two identical planets in the same quadrant with no real differences? No, that's not a coincidence. Something's... off. I don't like it."

Sersi still tried to maintain her light-hearted tone. "Come on, uncle. You can't take everything so seriously. We're on a wild hunt for a sword across a galaxy—can't we at least laugh a bit on the way?"

Endric gave her a sidelong look, unable to fully hide a smirk. "I'll laugh when we've got the sword in our hands and Gustav has what he needs to regain his power. Until then, stay sharp."

Ria stretched, placing his hands behind his head with a casual sigh. "Two days out from the next mystery planet. Until then, I'll just be here, kicking back and waiting for the next round of déjà vu."

With a weary shake of his head, Endric turned back to the panel, checking their progress.

They were indeed two days from their destination, and he intended to use every moment wisely. For now, he was focused on keeping track of the energy signature he'd scanned from the second planet. He wanted to see if it repeated on the third planet or if there was any deviation.

Meanwhile, Sersi decided to make her way to one of the quieter rooms of the ship.

She knew that of the three, she was the least experienced. Her abilities lagged behind Ria's and Endric's. She sat cross-legged on the floor, closing her eyes as she began to channel her frost-related bloodline.

Cold energy seeped from her palms, gathering in a faint mist around her, forming small, delicate snowflakes that drifted down.

"I need to be stronger..." she whispered to herself, focusing intently as she continued to train. She didn't want to be a liability in this mission; she wanted to be useful.

Two days later, the ship emerged from hyperspace as the coordinates of the third location lit up on their map. Outside, the vastness of the new system stretched out before them, and as they approached the designated planet, Endric's heart sank.

It was identical to the first two planets.

The teal-hued atmosphere gave the world a surreal glow, and the pointy rock formations that rose from the surface looked all too familiar.

The pale mist that clung to the ground gave the landscape an eerie stillness, and Endric couldn't shake the creeping sense of dread that had haunted him since the beginning.

"Well, here we go again," Ria muttered in resignation. "Same place, same strange feeling. Want to place any bets on finding nothing here too?"

Endric ignored him, pulling up his scanner as he began to analyze the energy signature of this third planet. He compared it to the reading he'd taken on the second planet, and though it was similar, there was a subtle variance—a faint difference that added another layer of mystery.

"There's a slight shift in the energy signature here," he voiced while frowning. "It's not much, but it's there. We're not dealing with identical planets... just similar ones."

Sersi, standing by the viewport, looked out at the landscape with a frown. "Maybe we're on the right track, then. If there's a difference, it could mean we're getting closer to something real."

Endric nodded, though he didn't let himself feel hopeful just yet. "Let's search the area, same as before. Be thorough. We're looking for any signs of the sword or anything out of place."

They disembarked, stepping into the unsettlingly familiar landscape.

The air was thick with an unnatural chill, and the rocks and jagged formations cast long shadows across the ground.

They spread out, each scanning their assigned area cautiously.

Hours passed, and once again, they found nothing. But just as they were preparing to regroup, Sersi's voice crackled over the comms.

"Endric, Ria—there's... there's someone here!" Her tone was laced with strain, as if she were struggling.

In the background, a loud explosion rang out, echoing across the empty landscape.

"Sersi, what's your location?" Ria asked.

"Southern ridge—just hurry!" Her voice broke off as another boom echoed over the comms.

Without hesitation, Endric blinked, disappearing from his spot and reappearing at the southern ridge in an instant.

He arrived just in time to see Sersi's body hurtling through the air. Her figure was illuminated by the faint teal light as she flew back, disoriented.

Endric rushed forward, catching her mid-flight before she hit the ground. "I've got you," he voiced while lowering her gently.

Sersi coughed, clutching her ribs as she struggled to speak. "Two... two figures. Dark robes. They came out of nowhere."

Endric looked up, his gaze narrowing as he spotted two shadowed figures in dark robes, their faces obscured.

The figures turned, glancing briefly at him before they started to flee, vanishing into the mist as they moved with inhuman speed.

"You're not going anywhere," Endric growled while handing Sersi off to Ria, who had just arrived.

Ria took Sersi's arm as his casual expression got replaced with a steely look. "I'll look after Sersi."

Endric nodded as he locked onto the fleeing figures.

He vanished from his spot in a blink, reappearing directly in the path of the two robed figures as they hurtled through the mist.

He raised a hand, and a telekinetic barrier of pure energy sprang up before them, blocking their path.

The two figures halted abruptly, and for the first time, Endric could make out their faces—or rather, the lack thereof.

Their features were hidden in shadows, as if they were wrapped in a dark veil, and their eyes glowed faintly with a sinister, otherworldly light.

"What are you doing here?" Endric demanded with a low and unyielding voice.

The figures exchanged a glance, then one of them laughed—their voice emitted a chilling hollow sound that sent a shiver down his spine.

"We are here to protect what you seek, Time Candidate," one of them voiced carried on like a whisper in the wind.

Endric's eyes narrowed. "Protect? So you know about the sword. Where is it?"

The second figure tilted his head. "It is beyond your reach, child of time. Turn back, lest you meet the fate of those who came before you."

Endric felt his patience snap. "I'm afraid I can't do that. You will tell me where the sword is," He raised his hand while silvery blue energy glowed in his eyes.

"I'll take the information by force if I have to."

The two figures merely smirked as their forms started to flicker like phantoms. "Try if you dare, but know that your meddling here is but a pebble cast into an ocean. The ripples will drown you, Time Candidate."

Without waiting, Endric surged forward, reaching for the nearest figure with a swift motion.

But as his hand connected, the figure's form dissolved into mist, dispersing into the air with a haunting laugh. The second figure did the same, vanishing into thin air before he could react.

Left standing alone in the mist, Endric clenched his fists.

'How the hell did they get away?' Endric thought he had them cornered but he could no longer sense their presence.

Whoever they were, these figures had knowledge of the sword—and the power to evade him with ease. But their words lingered in his mind.

It was obvious they knew something.

"Endric," Ria's voice came over the comms.

"Sersi's alright. She's a bit banged up, but nothing serious. Did you get them?"

Chapter 1610: Karmic Temporal String

Endric let out a sigh while shaking his head. "No. They slipped away. But they knew about the sword. They're protecting it—or at least, keeping it from us."

Ria cursed softly. "So we're not just dealing with decoy planets. They're playing a bigger game here."

"Yeah, and we're missing the rules," Endric muttered. "Let's regroup. If they're watching us, we need to be smarter about how we move."

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In the dimly lit interior of their spacecraft, Sersi sat quietly in one of the rear seats with a dark and pensive expression.

She replayed the encounter in her mind—the two robed figures, the explosion, the way she'd been effortlessly thrown across the air, completely outmatched.

Despite her training, she couldn't shake the feeling of helplessness. If she'd been stronger, maybe she could've stopped them. Maybe she wouldn't be the weak link.

"You okay, Sersi?" Endric broke the silence with a question as he glanced at her from the pilot's seat.

Sersi forced a smile, but it didn't reach her eyes. "Yeah, just... frustrated. I feel like I messed things up back there. Those robed figures got away, and we're no closer to finding the sword. Maybe if I'd been faster or stronger, we could have—"

Endric cut her off with a gentle but firm tone. "Sersi, listen to me. This isn't on you. Those two were something else entirely. If anything, I'm amazed you stood your ground as well as you did. Even if all three of us had been there, they'd have slipped away still. They weren't ordinary enemies."

Sersi looked down as her fingers fidgeted. "But I don't want to be the one holding you guys back. I don't want to be the reason we fail."

Ria, leaning back in his seat with his usual casual grin, jumped in with a tone of playfulness and encouragement. "Look, Sersi, you're not a weak link. You're the only one who's been smart enough to keep her head on straight this whole mission. You're doing fine."

He leaned over and tapped her shoulder playfully. "Come on, I know you don't want to miss out on seeing the weird wonders of the universe with us. Stick around—you might end up being the one who saves our lives, you know?"

Sersi managed a laugh, rolling her eyes. "Fine, fine. But I still feel like I need to get stronger. I'll keep pushing myself, and I'm not going to stop until I'm on your level."

Endric smiled and gave her an encouraging nod. "Good. But right now you need to stay focus, not locked up in your head. We're all in this together, and no one's carrying more weight than they can handle."

Turning his gaze back to the monitor, Endric studied the data from the previous scans with a look of curiosity.

The two robed figures haunted his thoughts, and he couldn't shake the feeling that there was more to their appearance than just guarding the sword.

They had seemed purposeful, almost protective, but there was no evidence they worked for Nocturnis. Who were they? And why did they seem so intent on keeping the sword away from them?

Ria, on the other hand, leaned back as his fingers tapped idly on his thigh. "You know, maybe we're thinking too hard about this. This place feels off, sure, but we haven't given it a proper sweep yet. I say we go back out there, give it one more look, and see if there's anything we missed."

Endric nodded, appreciating the suggestion. "You're right. We'll need to cover the area thoroughly this time. Every rock, every shadow, we search it all. Sersi, you stay here and keep an eye on things in case anything happens. Ria and I will take a closer look."

"Got it," Sersi replied, watching them as they prepared to head out once more.

She wasn't thrilled to be left behind, but she understood the need to be cautious. With a resolute expression, she gave them a nod. "Stay safe out there. And if you find anything... well, let's hope it's a clue and not more trouble."

Endric and Ria stepped out of the spacecraft, descending once again onto the strange teal-colored landscape.

The mist was thick, swirling around their feet like a living thing, and the jagged rocks cast long shadows, creating a surreal and haunting atmosphere.

The entire world seemed to hold its breath, silent and watchful, as if it were aware of their presence.

"Alright, let's split up,**" Endric said, scanning the landscape with narrowed eyes. "I'll take the east and you take the west. Keep your comms open, and if you see anything—anything at all—call me."

"Copy that," Ria replied with a grin, giving him a mock salute.

He turned and began making his way toward the western part of the ridge.

As they scoured the terrain, their search seemed as fruitless as before.

Endric blinked across the area, moving swiftly and scanning every nook and cranny, but there was nothing out of the ordinary. The ground was bare, the rocks undisturbed, and there was no sign of the two robed figures who had attacked Sersi.

Minutes stretched into hours, and still, they found nothing.

"Nothing here, either," Ria's voice crackled over the comm. "This place is like a bad dream, just one empty patch after another."

Endric let out a frustrated sigh, but then an idea sparked in his mind. The figures had vanished without leaving any trace of spatial energy behind—something that should have been impossible.

Even a spatial expert like E.E. would leave a signature, however faint. But what if he could bridge the gap between their temporal and spatial presence to trace them?

Endric sat on the ground in a crossed legged format and closed his eyes to focus.

He felt his Time Candidatepower within him and channeled it.

At that moment, a faint green dot glowed on his forehead, an indication that Husarius, the ancient being residing within him, was ready to assist.

"Husarius, are you there? I have an idea, but I'm going to need your guidance."

The deep, rumbling voice of Husarius echoed in his mind. "I am here, Zedrick. Speak your plan, and let us see if it is worthy of pursuit."

Endric took a deep breath, explaining, "I want to use a form of temporal rewind, but not on myself. I want to trace their last presence on this world and bind it with my Ambience of Space and Will. I think if I combine these powers, I could create a tether to their past location."

Husarius considered the idea and spoke with a calm yet contemplative tone. "A risky endeavor, but one that could bear fruit. Focus on their essence—the faint trace of their existence that still lingers in this space. Let your powers intertwine, and reach back through the threads of time."

Endric closed his eyes as his brows furrowed in concentration.

He extended his time candidate power, letting it merge with the ambience of space around him, feeling the energy coil and pulse through the surroundings.

His Time Candidate abilities began to reach back, combing through the invisible layers of temporal echoes, seeking a trace of the robed figures.

The process was slow and delicate. He held his breath as the combined powers danced, weaving together in a fragile balance. And then, finally, something shifted—a faint glow materialized before him, forming a thin, shimmering string that stretched from the ground where the robed figures had last stood, reaching up into the sky, extending deep into the vast reaches of space.

Opening his eyes, Endric saw the ethereal string, a thin line visible only to him, extending far beyond the planet.

"There it is," he murmured with a sense of awe. "A link... a thread of their presence. We can follow it."

"Ayou seeing this, Ria?" Endric questioned.

"Seeing what?" Ria asked back with a look of confusion.

Endric could already tell that it was invisible to everyone else based on Ria's reaction but he still answered; "The thread... I guess you can't see it."

Ria appeared by Endric's side gazing in the direction of the shimmering string but he still couldn't see anything. "I'll take your word for it, Endric, but to me, you're just standing there pointing at thin air."

Endric rolled his eyes, gesturing toward the ship. "It's a trace of their past presence. Get to the ship—we're following this thread. If we're lucky, it'll lead us right to wherever they went."

Back inside the ship, Sersi met them at the controls with a look of excitement. "Did you really manage to create a link to them? That's incredible, Unc!"

"That's Endric to you and yes It'll lead us somewhere, though I can't say for certain where. But if those figures left this trace, they can't be far from whatever they're protecting. Let's hope it's the sword," Endric responded with a look of slight reassurance.

As he set the course to follow the shimmering thread into the stars, the spacecraft buzzed smoothly.

A quiet resolve settled over each of them as they prepared to chase down the mysterious figures once and for all.

"Here we go," Ria voiced while bracing himself in his seat as the ship surged forward. "Following ghost trails across the galaxy. Just a typical day, right?"

"Exactly," Sersi said with a laugh while her eyes were glued to the screen.