

Bloodline 1611

Chapter 1611: Taking A Toll

"Following ghost trails across the galaxy. Just a typical day, right?" Ria chimed with a look of unseriousness.

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

Endric remained focused, guiding the ship as they pursued the faint thread.

The path led them far from the teal planet, through dense stretches of space where stars gleamed like distant beacons against the dark.

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In the vast reaches of interstellar space, Gustav's spacecraft was a solitary speck, a tiny vessel threading through the cosmos on its way to the next vestige of his Outworldly power.

This vestige was far more distant than the previous ones, requiring over a week of travel at top speed.

Gustav knew he could attempt to cover the distance faster using his void-piercing boots, but these boots were better suited for pinpoint travel, navigating known locations.

This was why it was easier for him to get Endric and the others back to Earth.

In unfamiliar regions, he risked overshooting his destination, ending up several galaxies off course.

For now, he was content to let the spacecraft guide him. After all, he couldn't complete the ritual until Endric and the others located the sword. Gathering the vestiges was only part of his journey; his full power remained locked until all the pieces came together.

With the spacecraft on autopilot, Gustav moved to a quiet spot along the corridor, away from the control deck's dim glow. He settled down on the cool metal floor, folding his legs into a meditative stance. He hadn't channeled his bloodline in a while, and as he began to focus, a familiar warmth stirred within him.

His thoughts drifted as he relaxed, memories surfacing. Oslov. His old friend, the last of an era, who'd watched him disappear into his journey with a promise that someday, he'd return.

"Rest in peace, old friend," Gustav murmured with a soft tone in the stillness of the ship. "Endric's your blood, and he'll definitely pass on the legacy."

With that, Gustav took a deep breath, channeling his bloodline.

His energy began to ripple through him, vibrant and fierce, a potent force that he hadn't fully explored since his return. He could feel that he was hovering at the peak of the fourth step of Beta rank, only a small push away from Alpha.

But he hesitated.

The first ascension to Alpha rank triggered a powerful phenomenon, a surge of energy so intense that it would overwhelm and likely destroy his surroundings.

While he wasn't sentimental about the spacecraft, he wasn't exactly keen on drifting in the void either. For now, it would be best to hold back.

As he sat there, lost in his thoughts, the system materialized before him. Dressed in a vibrant red gown, its girl-like appearance smirked at him and her eyes glinted with playful mischief.

"You're getting rusty, Gustav," she teased, swirling her gown as she moved in a circle around him. "Sitting on your power like a miser with his gold. What, afraid you'll blow the ship apart? Or just afraid?"

Gustav rolled his eyes. "And here I thought I might get a moment's peace. Guess I forgot I'm stuck with a talkative piece of code.,"

"Talkative? Me?" the system feigned offense, placing a hand on her chest in exaggerated surprise. "You wound me. After all, I'm the one guiding you on this grand journey!"

"Guiding?" Gustav chuckled, raising an eyebrow. "If I remember correctly, you've spent just as much time being absent as you have guiding me. Remind me again how long you've been gone or is that one of the many great mysteries?"

"Perhaps it is," The system chuckled lightly.

"Tell me... how is it that amongst everything dimension six revealed to me, your origin wasn't included. The revelation of my Outworldly identity and the existence of deities were all revealed and yet there was not a single hint as to how you... a computerised being capable of giving me the power to increase levels... came into existence," Gustav voiced with a look of curiosity.

The system's teasing expression softened slightly, her eyes shifting to a distant look. "Dimension Six hmm. That was... I spent thousands of years drifting through space, searching for the right host. I saw countless worlds, countless lives, until I finally found Earth... and you."

"Thousands of years, huh?" Gustav leaned back with a curious glint in his eyes. "And you never thought to give me a straightforward answer about where you came from? You know, most people just tell their story from the start, not in bits and riddles."

The system laughed, twirling again. "Well, where's the fun in that? And besides, it's not that simple. My origin isn't tied to deities or celestials, nor does it come from any cosmic entity. My existence is... unique, let's say. But don't worry—soon enough, you'll understand everything."

"Soon enough, huh?" Gustav's gaze narrowed. "Convenient answer. I've spent years unraveling mysteries, but yours still elude me. You show up when you want, disappear when you want, and have this uncanny ability to know things that people shouldn't. You're not exactly an open book."

The system shrugged, looking him directly in the eyes. "I'm as much of a mystery to you as you are to yourself, Gustav. You've learned about your past, yes, but there's still much you don't know about your own power. You think you understand the Outworldly... but there's more to it. I'm here to guide you through that understanding. And when the time is right, you'll know my full purpose too."

Gustav's expression hardened slightly. "So, what am I supposed to do until then? Just trust that everything will magically make sense?"

"Oh, no. Trust is a luxury, and you've never been one for it. But you're not here by chance, and neither am I. Just keep moving forward. Keep gathering the vestiges, find your sword, and you'll have all the answers you're looking for."

With that, she began to fade, her red gown becoming translucent as she vanished into the air, leaving Gustav alone once more.

He sighed, running a hand through his hair as he stared into the dim lighting of the corridor.

The next day, Gustav returned to the cockpit, his gaze fixed on the endless stretch of stars through the viewport. As he sat, memories continued to surface, weaving through his mind as he pondered the journey ahead. The space outside was dark, but the distant glow of stars painted the void with points of light.

"Approaching waypoint in five days," the ship's AI chimed, interrupting his thoughts.

"Acknowledged," Gustav replied, absentmindedly watching as the stars drifted past. He leaned back in his seat, allowing himself a rare moment of quiet as he felt the spacecraft buzz around him.

Hours passed as he journeyed deeper into the void, and his mind continued to dwell on his friends, wondering how Endric and the others were faring.

They were scouring distant worlds for the sword despite the obstacles they'd already faced. He hoped they were making progress; time wasn't on their side.

The cold silence of space stretched endlessly around their ship.

The darkness was broken only by the pinpricks of distant stars. Endric, Ria and Sersi had been following the faint, nearly invisible karmic temporal string for days, tracing its path relentlessly.

They hoped it would lead them to the sword Gustav needed, but the journey was starting to take its toll—especially on Endric.

His eyes were fixed on the glowing thread, visible only to him, that stretched out ahead like a faintly pulsating beacon.

Each beat took a little more of his energy, draining him with the effort required to maintain the tenuous link. For nearly a week, they had journeyed like this, trusting in the thread to guide them to a place that seemed infinitely far away.

"Are we there yet?" Ria asked while leaning back in his seat with a dramatic sigh.

Endric shook his head in frustration. "No, not yet. And asking every five minutes isn't going to get us there any faster, Ria."

Ria shrugged, unfazed. "Hey, I'm just saying. Following an invisible thread into nowhere? Not exactly the sightseeing tour I signed up for."

Sersi shot Ria a glare, placing a hand on Endric's shoulder in reassurance. "Don't listen to him, Uncle. You're doing amazing. Just keep your focus. We're right here with you."

Endric's face dropped even more from hearing this. Her consolation was doing more harm than good.

"That's Endric to you!" He bellowed.

His skin had paled from exhaustion, and his eyes held a flicker of weariness that he was trying hard to mask. They had been pushing through space without rest, and it was starting to show.

Another day of nonstop flying passed, and Endric's energy reserves were reaching their limit. His vision started to blur, and the faint thread was beginning to flicker, as if it were about to vanish entirely.

"Endric?" Sersi's voice was laced with concern as she noticed his hands trembling slightly.

Chapter 1612: Stranded

Endric gritted his teeth as he struggled to hold on. "I... I don't know if I can keep this up. The string—it's starting to disappear. I need to stay awake, but..."

Ria frowned, noticing Endric's condition worsening. "You're running on fumes, man. If you keep pushing like this, you're going to pass out. Maybe we should stop—"

Before he could finish, a green dot flashed on Endric's forehead as Husarius deep voice echoed in Endric's mind. "If you fall unconscious, the thread will dissipate entirely."

Endric nodded weakly, though his body was already betraying him. He fought to keep his eyes open, but his strength was fading fast. With a final shudder, he lost his grip on the string and his vision went dark as he slumped back in his seat, passing out from pure exhaustion.

"Endric!" Sersi gasped, rushing over to him as his body went limp.

"Damn it, he's out cold," Ria muttered, moving to help her lift Endric and lay him back against the seat. "Guess we're on pause until he wakes up."

They settled Endric as comfortably as they could, securing him in place. Sersi's face was drawn with worry as she glanced at Ria.

"He pushed himself too far," she whispered, brushing a stray hair from Endric's forehead. "He's been carrying this entire journey on his shoulders. I wish I could have done more to help."

Ria placed a reassuring hand on her shoulder. "Hey, don't beat yourself up. We all did what we could, and now we let him rest. He'll bounce back soon."

With Endric now asleep, they set about gathering some food and supplies, preparing for when he finally woke up. It was nearly a day before he stirred.

His eyes fluttered open to see the concerned faces of Sersi and Ria hovering over him.

"No!" he exclaimed, trying to sit up. He looked around wildly in search of the thread. But it was gone.

The faint glow he'd held onto for so long had vanished completely.

"Endric, calm down," Sersi said gently while placing a hand on his shoulder to steady him. "You're okay. You were exhausted. We had to let you rest."

Endric's face fell in frustration. "But the thread—it's gone. We're stranded here, in the middle of nowhere, and we've lost our only lead."

Ria gave him a crooked smile. "Hey, look on the bright side. At least you didn't completely collapse on top of the control panel and send us spinning into an asteroid field. Small mercies, right?"

Endric's scowl softened tightened in defeated. "I thought I could hold on just a little longer... Now we're stuck. And it's my fault."

"No. Don't even go there," Sersi said firmly, grabbing his hand and squeezing it reassuringly. "You got us this far, didn't you? We'll figure something out. But first, you need to eat. Your energy's still low, and starving yourself won't bring the thread back."

She handed him a piece of dried fruit, which he took reluctantly, biting into it without enthusiasm.

"It feels like all that effort was for nothing," he mumbled between bites. "We've been flying blind in space for days, and now we have no clue where to go next."

Ria leaned back, crossing his arms as he gave Endric a thoughtful look. "Maybe, maybe not. I mean, come on—these things don't just disappear completely, do they? There's gotta be a way to track it again. You created that link once; maybe there's some other way to pick up the trail."

Endric sighed as his gaze fell to the floor. "It's not that simple. The thread was fragile, a temporary connection. Once it's gone, it's gone. I don't know if I can recreate it without that initial spark signature from the previous location."

The dim glow of the spacecraft's control panels illuminated the worried expressions of Endric, Sersi, and Ria as they floated in the vast emptiness of deep space.

For days, they had followed the karmic temporal string, guided by Endric's abilities. But now, without that faint line stretching ahead, they were truly directionless. Endric sighed, leaning back in his seat with a look of uncertainty.

Sersi broke the silence after a while. "Maybe we should just head to the fourth location. It's the last place on our list... maybe that's where we'll find something."

Endric shook his head. "I don't think it'll help. We've checked three places already, and all we found were dead ends. If we go there and it's the same... it'll be a waste of time and energy."

Sersi's shoulders slumped, disappointment showing in her face. "So what, then? Just sit here in the middle of nowhere?"

Ria leaned back with his usual casual grin, though his eyes held a glimmer of sincerity. "Or... we could just keep going forward, right? Follow the path the string pointed in before it disappeared. Who knows? Maybe we're closer than we think."

Endric arched a brow, giving Ria a sideways look. "You're suggesting we fly into empty space with no destination in sight?"

Ria shrugged. "Why not? We're already in the middle of nowhere. We can either turn back, waste time, or just go with it and see what happens. Worst case, we're still lost. Best case, we find what we're looking for."

Endric rubbed his temples, thinking it over. "It's risky... but maybe you're right. We've got nothing to lose at this point."

Sersi nodded with a small spark of determination in her eyes. "If there's even a chance it'll lead us somewhere, I say we take it. We've come too far to turn back."

Endric exhaled, feeling a small sense of relief in their decision. "Alright. Ria, you take the controls. I'll need to conserve my energy in case we run into any trouble."

Ria grinned, sliding into the pilot's seat and cracking his knuckles dramatically. "Leave it to me. I'll steer us straight through the void without a hitch."

"That's what I'm afraid of," Endric muttered, but he allowed himself a faint smile. He directed Ria to steer toward the last point he'd seen the thread, then leaned back in his seat to rest.

The days that followed were monotonous and unyielding. The stars outside drifted past as the spacecraft cut through space at a steady pace, but every hour that passed without finding a trace of life or any sign that they were heading in the right direction chipped away at their patience.

Ria, despite his outward cheer, began to feel the uncertain, and even Sersi's optimism wavered.

"Endric, how are you holding up?" Sersi asked one day as they sat in the cockpit together.

Endric looked up with weary eyes. "I'm fine, just... frustrated. It's like we're floating in a void, hoping for something to appear out of nowhere. I know it wasn't my idea to follow the direction, but... it's starting to feel like a mistake."

"We made the best choice we could with the information we had," Sersi said reassuringly. "Besides, if we give up now, we'll never know how close we might have been."

Ria swung his chair around with a look of encouragement. "Let's not stop here. We don't know how close we are."

"Let's hope you're right..."

Meanwhile, in a distant part of the universe, Gustav was nearing his next vestige, navigating through a dense region of space filled with cosmic debris and small asteroid fields.

The faint, pulsing energy of the vestige drew him forward, and he could feel its power growing stronger with each passing hour. He knew he was close, but something in the surrounding space felt... different. Off.

As he closed in, a low groan echoed through his spacecraft, and a red warning light flashed on the dashboard.

Gustav raised a brow, leaning forward to study the message that appeared on the screen:

[RESTRICTED SPACE—LIVING MATTER WILL BE AFFECTED]

"Great, just what I needed," Gustav muttered, tapping the screen. "And I suppose 'living matter' includes me."

He brought the ship to a halt, staring out into the dark void ahead. The area beyond seemed calm, almost eerily still, as if held in place by some invisible force. But he could sense the vestige on the other side, faint but distinct, calling to him.

Just then, the system manifested before him in its familiar girl-like form, dressed in a crimson gown with a mischievous grin.

"Trouble?" she taunted, gliding closer.

"You could say that," Gustav replied dryly. "I need to get past this point to reach the vestige, but apparently, it's a zone where living tissue is affected... Any ideas?"

The system tilted her head thoughtfully. "Oh, surely a big, bad Outworldly like you can figure this out. Or maybe the answer is closer than you think."

Gustav's brow furrowed. "I don't have time for riddles, system. You either speak or keep shut do I can take care of it myself."

The system laughed, circling him like a specter. "What you need is a workaround. What is it about this restriction that's keeping you out? Is it your body, your energy, or... something else?"

Chapter 1613: The Strange World

Gustav's eyes narrowed as he considered her words. She always had a way of offering just enough information to guide him, without ever giving him the full answer. It was infuriating, but also helpful.

"If it's my living essence that's the problem... then I need to find a way to mask it." Gustav mused aloud. "Or... minimize it. Make it undetectable... or just get rid of it all together. "

The system nodded approvingly. "Now you're thinking. But can you pull it off? Can you temporarily 'shut down' your essence enough to pass undetected? After all, you've never exactly been the quiet type."

Gustav smirked as his mind began working through possibilities. "If it means getting that vestige, I'll find a way."

With this new task in hand, Gustav activated a few of his abilities to experiment.

Energy dampening was a common technique, something he had learned in his earlier days, but this situation called for something more advanced—something that would mask his very existence.

The silent expanse of space around Gustav was eerie as he initiated a technique that very few would dare attempt.

His goal was clear, but the path to it was hazardous.

The restriction demanded extreme measures if he wanted to reach the vestige within.

Standing alone in his spacecraft, Gustav focused his energy, channeling his Outworldly powers to perform a separation technique on himself.

A faint, translucent light surrounded him as he pushed his energy outward while his consciousness split in two.

His body shuddered as his form divided, creating two distinct entities. One of him remained as he was—alive, breathing, human.

The other form, however, took on a twisted, hollow appearance, with his skin taking on a faint greyish hue and his eyes dimmed to a dull glow. This was an undead version of himself, a being devoid of true living essence.

He looked at his undead form, inspecting it with a critical eye. "Alright, you're my ticket in," he murmured, watching as the undead Gustav mirrored his movements. "You will or rather I will bring that vestige back to me."

The undead version gave a slight nod. It was like Gustav's consciousness was split in two as well.

Gustav left his other self outside as his undead version approached the barrier using the spacecraft.

Unlike his living form, the undead body slipped past the boundary with ease, unaffected by the force that kept all living things at bay.

"Good," Gustav undead form whispered to himself forward from within the spacecraft as it continued to drift forward.

As they approached the deeper part of the restricted zone, the vessel's instruments began to fluctuate. The metallic frame shuddered under the strain of the intense energy field surrounding them.

"Hold together," Gustav muttered, gripping the controls. Despite its lack of life, the spacecraft was starting to feel the pressure. It wasn't as severe as it would have been for a living creature, but the sheer force of the restriction was wearing down the machinery, piece by piece.

Finally, after a long, grueling journey, the craft could go no further. Gustav gritted his teeth as he ordered his undead self to disembark, leaving the craft behind. As the undead version of himself drifted away from the vessel, he continued forward alone.

"Almost there," Gustav thought, watching through his connection with his undead self.

The journey was slow but he forced himself forward, inch by inch. After what felt like an eternity, the figure of the vestige finally came into view. Encased in a stone-like shell, it looked like a statue, pulsing faintly with the energy of his Outworldly essence.

But as the undead Gustav reached out, a realization hit him. "I can't absorb it," he muttered to himself. The undead form lacked the necessary connection to his living essence, making direct absorption impossible.

"Looks like I need to bring it back to me," Gustav voiced with a hint of frustration. With no other choice, he directed his undead self to lift the vestige statue.

Meanwhile, in another part of the galaxy, Endric, Ria, and Sersi had landed on an unknown, vibrant planet.

Thick green foliage covered the ground, and enormous trees stretched toward a violet sky, their leaves gleaming in various shades of purple and blue. Strange, iridescent creatures moved between the trees, their eyes glowing with an intelligence that was more instinctual than sentient.

"Well, we're definitely not on one of the dead planets we've seen before," Sersi murmured, glancing around at the vibrant surroundings.

"No kidding," Ria added, leaning against a tree and observing a creature with fur that shifted colors, moving in and out of the shadows. "It's like a jungle out here, except everything wants to eat you."

Endric sighed, crossing his arms. "Alright, we don't know if this is where we're supposed to be, but we're here now. Let's keep our eyes open for anything that might hint at the sword's location."

Sersi tilted her head, looking around warily. "Should we... try asking the locals?" She gestured to a massive, four-legged beast with dark scales and three eyes, watching them from a distance.

"I doubt they're the chatty type," Endric replied, raising an eyebrow. "These creatures look like they'd rather eat us than talk to us."

Ria smirked. "Still, can't hurt to try, can it? Maybe we could use Sersi as bait. You know, lure one over and see if it wants to have a friendly conversation."

Sersi shot him a glare. "You volunteer to be the bait, Ria. I'll happily watch from a safe distance."

Endric held up a hand to cut off their banter, his gaze sharp as he scanned the surroundings. "Focus, both of you. Let's spread out and see what we can find. Keep your comms open in case you spot anything unusual."

They moved cautiously through the dense jungle, stepping over roots as thick as tree trunks and pushing aside massive, shimmering leaves that released a fragrant, almost hypnotic scent. The ground was alive with small, scurrying creatures, their beady eyes following the trio as they passed.

Sersi knelt down to examine a patch of glowing blue moss, touching it carefully. "This place... it's almost like it's from another dimension. The flora and fauna don't match anything I've seen before."

Ria shrugged, keeping a wary eye on the trees above them. "Well, if there's some creepy dimension where weird robed figures and magical swords like to hang out, let's hope it's this."

Endric's gaze was steely. "Whoever those figures were, they seemed determined to keep the sword hidden. If they're connected to this place, we might find some sign of them here."

They continued their search, moving deeper into the jungle. Hours passed, but they found little more than strange plants and the ever-watchful eyes of the local wildlife. Frustration began to simmer as their efforts proved fruitless.

Sersi exhaled heavily, brushing a hand over her forehead. "Are we sure we're not just wandering aimlessly?"

Ria nodded, tossing a small stone at a nearby tree. "Yeah, we could spend a lifetime here and still find nothing."

They had hoped to find a clue here, but hours had passed, and their efforts were leading nowhere.

"Maybe we're on the wrong track," she murmured, looking around. "This place just doesn't feel right."

Endric, who had been deep in thought, shook his head slowly. "It's... strange, yes. But we can't just turn back now. There has to be a reason we're here. Those robed figures we saw—they must have been protecting something. Maybe they left a trace."

Ria flashed a grin. "Or maybe they just have a weird sense of direction. What if we're just wandering aimlessly while they're laughing somewhere, watching us on some cosmic monitor?"

Sersi chuckled lightly, but Endric remained focused. He knew they couldn't abandon their search without exhausting every lead.

"Let's spread out again. but stay within sight," Endric instructed. "If we cover more ground, we might be able to find some kind of clue. Anything unusual, call it in."

The trio began a careful sweep of the area.

Ria ventured toward a nearby clearing, examining the rocks and unusual markings etched into the trees.

"Endric, I don't think we're going to find anything here," Sersi called over the comm. "There's nothing even remotely close to the other world's energy signature. It's like they left no trail at all."

Endric frowned, a sinking feeling settling in his stomach. "Maybe they're hiding it with some kind of cloaking mechanism. These beings seemed powerful enough."

Suddenly, Ria's voice broke in, a mix of confusion and concern. "Uh, Endric? Sersi? You two might want to see this."

Endric and Sersi exchanged glances before hurrying over to Ria's location. When they reached him, they found him standing in front of a massive stone structure partially hidden by the foliage. Carvings covered its surface, symbols twisting and winding in patterns that seemed to move under their gaze.

"What is this?" Sersi whispered, stepping closer to inspect the symbols.

Endric reached out, running his fingers over the carvings. The stone was cold to the touch, but he felt a faint vibration beneath the surface, a kind of ancient energy that sent a chill down his spine.

Chapter 1614: Reconstructing The String

Endric, Sersi, and Ria stood before the massive stone carvings as the cold vibrations of ancient energy pulsed under Endric's fingertips.

He could feel it—a distinct, almost electric resonance that was eerily similar to the energy he'd tapped into when creating the karmic temporal string. It was as if the very stones held the memory of those dark-robed figures who had tried to mislead them.

"This is it," he murmured, eyes narrowing as he pressed his hand against the carvings. "They've been here before... I can feel it. This place... it's connected to them somehow. I can finally recreate the string."

Ria's eyes lit up with excitement. "So we're finally on track again? About time! Let's get this thing going!"

Sersi smiled in relief. "I was beginning to think we'd be wandering aimlessly forever. Let's do it, Unc."

Endric closed his eyes, focusing all his energy into his core.

His forehead emitted a greenish glow as he let his mind draw on the familiar patterns of the karmic string.

Time energy mixed with space to pull back a layer from the past and use it to create a link.

He felt the ancient energy align with his own. A faint shimmer appeared before him, like a silvery thread hanging in midair, slowly weaving into existence.

The others watched in awe as the string solidified, glowing faintly, stretching outward as if pointing the way to their next destination.

But before the string could fully manifest, a deep rumble shook the ground beneath them, and the sound of heavy, echoing footsteps filled the air.

"Uh, guys? We've got company," Ria said as the shadows around them shifted.

From between the trees and dense foliage, massive creatures emerged, their eyes glowing with a fierce intelligence.

Each creature stood at least twenty feet tall, with bodies covered in coarse, blackened fur and scales.

They had elongated limbs, tipped with razor-sharp claws that scraped against the stones as they moved. Their heads were a bizarre fusion of feline and reptilian features, with wide jaws full of serrated teeth and nostrils that flared with each heavy breath. Their tails lashed behind them like whips, creating gusts of wind that shook the trees and plants.

"What the hell are these things?" Sersi voice tinged with both fear and awe.

"I don't know, but they don't look friendly," Ria replied while taking a step forward. "Endric, you focus on creating that string. We'll handle these guys."

Endric nodded, closing his eyes and deepening his concentration. The creatures seemed to sense his power.

Their eyes narrowed as they fixated on him, drawn to the energy he was channeling. With a guttural roar, the creatures lunged forward, their footsteps shaking the ground.

Sersi stepped in front of Endric, her eyes narrowing as she raised her hand. A wave of frost shot from her palm, expanding into a thick sheet of ice that raced across the ground, intending to freeze the approaching beasts.

But as the frost neared them, it faded, barely reaching a fraction of its usual potency. Sersi gasped as her frost only managed to cover a small patch of ground.

"My frost... it's not working like it should!" she exclaimed while gritting her teeth. "These things are sapping my strength somehow."

Ria clenched his fists while his eyes narrowed in on them. "They have a presence that weakens everything around them. It's like they're pulling the life right out of the air."

With a determined yell, Ria raised his arms, focusing his power to reshape the rocky terrain around him. Normally, he could manipulate the earth with ease, forming rocks into weapons or completely disintegrating the ground ahead but now his ability felt sluggish, as if the very ground resisted his touch.

Gritting his teeth, he managed to form a handful of pointy stone spears and hurled them toward the creatures.

One of the beasts swatted the spears aside, roaring as it charged toward them, its eyes fixed on Endric.

Sersi stepped in its path, channeling every ounce of her frost power, creating a wall of ice that crackled as it rose. The beast collided with the wall, smashing through it with a thunderous crash, sending shards of ice scattering across the ground.

"Damn it! They're too strong!" Sersi shouted while dodging a swipe from the creature's claws.

Ria leaped in, swinging a massive stone hammer he'd just managed to form. "Let's see how you like this!" he yelled while slamming the hammer down onto one of the beast's heads with a resounding crash.

The creature staggered, shaking its head as if dazed, but quickly recovered, lunging at Ria with a furious roar.

While Sersi and Ria battled the beasts, Endric's focus remained unbroken.

The string was nearly complete. It's shimmering thread stretched out into the distance, pointing the way. He could feel the energy of the ancient carvings merging with his own, the connection between him and the string growing stronger.

"Almost there... just a bit more," he whispered as beads of sweat formed on his forehead.

But the beasts weren't letting up. One of them clawed through the ground, sending a shockwave that caused Sersi to stumble back.

She narrowly avoided a swipe from another creature's tail, retaliating with a shard of ice she managed to form in her hand, thrusting it into the creature's flank. The beast let out a pained screech but retaliated, its claws slashing toward her.

"Endric, hurry up!" she yelled before dodging another attack.

The string glowed brighter as Endric channeled his last reserves of energy into it. "Just... a few more seconds!" he called, feeling the string solidify with its direction now fully established.

With a final pulse of energy, the karmic temporal string was complete, stretching forward like a beacon in the darkness.

"Got it! The string is set! Let's move!" Endric shouted while opening his eyes.

Ria grinned, ducking under a claw swipe from one of the beasts. "About time! Let's get out of here!"

They immediately turned around and sprinted through the jungle, dodging the creatures as best they could.

The beasts pursued them, roaring in frustration, but the group managed to stay just ahead, doing their best to avoid another clash with these insane creatures.

Meanwhile, light-years away, Gustav was nearing the edge of the restricted zone.

The undead version of himself carried the vestige in statue form back to his location. But as the undead Gustav approached, the radar on his spacecraft pinged, and Gustav's eyes narrowed as a swarm of small, agile ships surrounded him.

"Space pirates," he muttered, watching as the ships closed in.

These were ragged vessels, mismatched metal plating and haphazardly modified engines giving them a rough, almost cobbled-together appearance.

The pirates themselves appeared on his monitor—a mix of various species with sneers and grins, each with a glint of greed in their eyes as they stared at the vestige.

A gruff voice crackled over the comms, distorted by static. "That's quite a pretty piece you've got there, friend. Why don't you hand it over, and maybe we won't blast you to bits?"

Gustav smirked, unphased. "I think you're biting off more than you can chew, friend."

Another pirate, a lizard-like being with scales that shimmered dark blue, hissed, "Big talk for someone surrounded. Surrender the statue, and we might consider letting you live."

Apparently these pirates had gotten wind of treasure hiding deep within that restricted zone for a long time but couldn't retrieve it. So they placed a beacon that would alert them if someone was to ever breach that part of space.

Gustav rolled his shoulders as a faint smile appeared on his face. "Well, since you put it that way..." He raised his hand, and in a burst of light, merged with his undead form, his power surging as the vestige statue returned to his grasp.

The pirates paused as their expressions changed from smug confidence to worry, watching Gustav's aura intensify.

One of the pirate leaders, a massive, horned brute with red skin, barked an order. "Take him down! We'll pry that treasure from his corpse if we have to!"

In unison, the pirate ships opened fire, beams of energy and projectiles filling the space around him.

Gustav moved with blinding speed, evading the attacks with ease.

His movements were almost casual as he dodged their assaults. With a flick of his wrist, he sent out a pulse of energy that rippled through space, pushing the ships back with sheer force.

One of the smaller ships spiraled out of control, crashing into a nearby vessel.

The explosion cast a fiery glow across the darkness. Gustav chuckled, watching the panic spread among the pirates.

"You were warned you. Do not blame me for what is about to happen..." Gustav voiced with a chilly and unyielding tone.

In the next instant, he extended his hand, forming a sphere of energy that glowed with intense heat. He hurled it toward the nearest cluster of pirate ships causing the sphere to explode on impact and sending shrapnel and fire across the battlefield.

Chapter 1615: The Gustavo Vessel

In the next instant, he extended his hand, forming a sphere of energy that glowed with intense heat. He hurled it toward the nearest cluster of pirate ships causing the sphere to explode on impact and sending shrapnel and fire across the battlefield.

Their formations broke as the pirates scattered while trying to escape the onslaught.

One of the pirates shouted over the comms, "Retreat! He's not worth it! This guy's a monster!"

But Gustav was relentless. He closed in on the retreating ships with a merciless glint in his eyes.

One by one, he dismantled the pirate fleet, leaving only a few survivors who fled into the depths of space with their tails between their legs.

Once the battlefield was silent, Gustav turned back to his spacecraft, satisfied.

With the vestige statue now secure, he could finally absorb it.

"Well, that was a nice warm-up," he muttered while glancing at the vestige with a glint in his eyes.

Floating before the statue, Gustav could feel its overwhelming presence. The vestige thrummed with a resonance that tugged at his very core, as though calling out to its rightful owner.

He placed his hand on the statue, and immediately, it began to dissolve into threads of golden and silver light, spiraling around him.

"Here we go again," Gustav muttered, closing his eyes and bracing himself.

As the light engulfed him, the familiar sensation of power coursed through his veins. The energy of the Outworldly merged with him once more, granting him yet another 1% of his original strength.

The wreckage of the space pirate fleet still glowed faintly in the distance as Gustav floated in silence, holding the newly absorbed vestige within his core.

The sensation of another 1% of his Outworldly strength merging with his essence was overwhelming, yet familiar. It coursed through him like molten power, sharpening his senses and stretching the boundaries of his understanding of existence.

Gustav's entire body emitted a radiant glow, and his vision momentarily blurred as the boundaries of the physical world seemed to stretch and fold around him.

He felt his mind expand, brushing against the edges of upper dimensions, their threads visible and tangible to him in ways that no mortal could comprehend.

"Fold dimensions... Weave reality..." he murmured to himself, as a flood of knowledge surged through him.

He saw pathways that could bridge galaxies, routes through space that defied time, and even ways to manipulate the very fabric of existence.

"4%. Just 4%, and already this much... What will it be like when I'm whole again?"

Gustav tested his newfound strength, raising a hand and folding a nearby pocket of space upon itself.

With space folded, several light years of nothingness had been turned into a small round space that Gustav could enter at will.

"So, this is what they meant by folding dimensions," Gustav murmured to himself.

The void rippled and shimmered as he manipulated it, bending it into an intricate shape before releasing it.

Just as he was about to step back into his spacecraft, faint whispers began to fill the silence of space. They were like a breeze in the void, soft and unintelligible at first.

"Outworldly... Outworldly..."

Gustav's head tilted slightly as his brow furrowed. He scanned the space around him but saw nothing. The whispers continued, growing louder with every passing second.

"We beseech thee... Outworldly..."

"Who's there? Show yourselves." His voice echoed into the emptiness, calm yet commanding.

The whispers didn't respond directly but continued their haunting chant.

Gustav's perception spread outward like a web, scanning for the source of the voices. The whispers, however, seemed to come from everywhere and nowhere at once, as if the very fabric of space was speaking to him.

"This better not be another trick of Nocturnis," Gustav muttered, but as soon as the words left his lips, the space around him shimmered.

The stars bent and warped, as though the cosmos itself were folding in on him. A sudden vortex of energy spiraled into existence... its pull was irresistible.

The vortex dragged him in, and he vanished from sight, leaving the debris field and his spacecraft behind.

Meanwhile, aboard a Gustavo Alliance Space Vessel...

The Gustavo Alliance space vessel was a floating fortress in the middle of an asteroid cluster.

Its metallic exteriors shimmered faintly, reinforced with alien alloys and pulsating with glowing conduits of energy that coursed along its hull.

Inside, the corridors were well constructed yet foreboding, with dim, ambient lighting and narrow passageways lined with pipes and panels humming with power.

Symbols of allegiance to the Gustavo Alliance were etched into the walls—angular, sharp designs that radiated menace.

In the shadows of one of these corridors, E.E. and Angy crept silently with synchronized movements.

E.E. demeanor was calm but his eyes sharp, glanced around before whispering, "The control room should be three levels up from here. How's your speed holding up?"

Angy smirked as her silver and pink hair glowed faintly in the dim light. "Please, I could do this all day. Just don't slow me down, E.E."

E.E. chuckled under his breath. "I'm the one keeping us hidden. Without me, you'd be zooming into the arms of those Gustavo lackeys."

Angy rolled her eyes playfully but nodded. "Fair enough. Let's move."

Angy grabbed E.E. by the waist and, in an instant.

Her body blurred instantly as they vanished from sight. The speed was so intense that the metallic walls became streaks of silver around them.

She dashed through multiple hallways in a matter of moments, coming to a halt at a darkened corner when they encountered a patrolling Gustavo alliance official.

He was a tall armored alien with emerald-green scales and four glowing eyes. Its claws clinked against the metallic floor as it scanned the area with a glowing device.

E.E. raised his hand, summoning a small vortex silently just behind the officer's head. The vortex expanded slightly, creating a momentary distraction. The officer turned toward the strange distortion, giving Angy just enough time to blur past with E.E. in tow.

They arrived at an intersection where the hallway split into three paths. E.E. pulled up a holographic map causing a faint blue glow to illuminate their faces.

"Straight ahead. The main control room is just beyond that central chamber," E.E. said, pointing to the route. "But there's bound to be more guards up ahead. We'll need to—"

Before he could finish, a low hum reverberated through the air, followed by heavy footsteps approaching from behind. Angy's sharp ears picked up the sound instantly.

"Company's coming," she whispered. "Fast. What's the plan?"

E.E. smirked as his fingers weaved through the air. "You go ahead and blitz through the guards. I'll deal with whoever's behind us. They won't know what hit them."

"Got it," Angy nodded.

She darted forward in a blur increasing her speed to the extent that the gust of wind she left behind extinguished the dim lights in the hallway.

The vast expanse of space stretched endlessly around the small spacecraft housing Aildris, Elevora, and Falco. L

The ship groaned softly as they cruised through a debris-laden asteroid belt, keeping their distance from a massive Gustavo Alliance vessel looming in the distance.

The Alliance ship was a fortress in space, bristling with weaponry and radiating an ominous presence.

Inside the small craft, Elevora adjusted the holographic communication panel as her third eye glowed faintly.

They had established a secure connection with E.E. and Angy, who were aboard the Alliance vessel.

"Are you in position yet?" Elevora questioned with a tone of urgency.

The holographic display flickered to life, showing E.E. crouched in a shadowy corridor aboard the Alliance ship.

Beside him, Angy's silver and pink hair shimmered while her keen eyes scanned their surroundings.

"We're almost there," E.E. whispered with a low voice to avoid detection. "Just one more level up and we'll reach the control room. How's it looking on your end?"

Aldris leaned forward in his seat as he surveyed the display. "We're staying just out of their radar range. Any sign they've picked up on you?"

"Not yet... it came close though," Angy replied. "But even if they do, they won't catch us. We're too fast for them."

Falco chuckled from his seat as his jet black hair cascaded over his shoulders. "Just don't get caught before you lock that engine down. We've got a lot riding on this."

"Trust me, Falco," Angy shot back, smirking. "We've got this. You just focus on your part."

Elevora's face remained serious. "Once you've locked the engines, notify us immediately. We need to ensure the ship stays within range for extraction if things go sideways."

"Will do," E.E. said while glancing at Angy. "Let's move. Stay on comms."

Chapter 1616: Not Very Subtle

E.E. pulled up a holographic map from his wrist device. "Two more turns and one more level up. Stay sharp. They might have motion sensors in this sector."

Angy nodded as she prepared to sprint. "Got it. I'll clear the path. Try to keep up."

Before E.E. could respond, she blurred into motion, with a speed that didn't even leave an afterimage. She darted down the corridor, disabling a surveillance camera with a flick of her hand before pausing at the next junction.

She had been so quick that she wasn't even caught in the camera, almost like she was invisible.

"Clear," she whispered into her comms.

E.E. followed, stepping through a small vortex that opened just in front of him, allowing him to traverse the distance in an instant. He appeared beside Angy, glancing down the corridor to ensure it was truly clear.

"Remind me to never race you," he muttered, earning a smirk from her.

"You'd lose, obviously. Now, let's go."

Back in their own vessel, Aildris, Elevora, and Falco monitored the operation closely.

The holographic map of the Alliance ship displayed the positions of E.E. and Angy as small glowing dots, moving steadily toward their target.

"They're making good progress," Aildris noted with a calm tone. "As long as they avoid detection, this should go smoothly."

"If it goes smoothly, it won't feel like us," Falco joked while leaning back in his seat. "Something always goes wrong. It's practically tradition."

Elevora shot him a look as her third eye narrowed slightly. "Not this time. This operation has to be perfect. If we fail, the Gustavo Alliance will know we're onto them, and they'll scatter. It'll take years to regroup."

Falco sighed, raising his hands in mock surrender. "Relax, Elevora. I'm just saying. But yeah, you're right. No room for screw-ups."

Aildris leaned closer to the console. "Angy and E.E. are capable. Let's trust them to do their part while we prepare for ours. Elevora, keep an eye on the radar. If the Alliance detects us, we'll need to move quickly. Falco, double-check the ship's cloaking field. We can't afford to be seen."

"On it," Falco voiced while moving to another console.

Elevora's expression softened slightly as she returned her focus to the radar.

E.E. and Angy reached the final corridor leading to the control room. The air here was different, charged with a faint static that made the hairs on their arms stand on end.

E.E. observed as his gaze scanned the walls. "There's a laser grid further ahead. We can't just walk through."

"No problem," Angy said confidently. "I'll go through it. You do your vortex thing."

E.E. raised an eyebrow. "You're just going to run past the laser grid? Those things are faster than—"

Angy cut him off with a smirk. "Faster than me? Please. Watch and learn."

Before E.E. could protest, Angy blurred forward.

Her body moved so quickly that the laser beams didn't have time to register her presence. She skidded to a halt on the other side, grinning as she turned back to him. "Told you. Now hurry up, slowpoke."

E.E. sighed while shaking his head. "Show-off." He raised his hand, opening a small vortex that allowed him to step past the grid effortlessly.

They regrouped on the other side, locking onto the massive doors ahead. "That's it," E.E. said, his tone serious. "Once we're in, we lock the engines and send word to the others."

Angy nodded with a straight look. "Let's do this."

Together, they approached the doors, their next move critical to the success of the operation.

Angy soon crouched beside E.E. in the shadows outside the control room with their eyes locked on the thick metallic doors.

"Are you sure this bypassing tech is going to work?" Angy whispered in impatience as she adjusted her gloves.

E.E. smirked, holding up a cylindrical device that pulsed faintly with blue light. "Trust me. It's top-notch. It'll get us through without a hitch."

Angy raised a brow as her silver-and-pink hair caught the faint glow of a nearby conduit. "You said that about the last one, and I had to run through those laser grids... imagine if I got fried."

E.E. let out a light embarrassed cough "It will work this time. Just stay sharp. Once we're in, it's lockdown time. No room for mistakes."

With a quick tap on the device, E.E. placed it against the door's control panel. A soft hum vibrated through the air as the mechanism began to override the locking system. Angy stood ready as she scanned the corridor for potential threats.

The moment the door clicked open, the entire vessel erupted into chaos.

A piercing alarm blared through the vessel, accompanied by flashing red lights that painted the metallic walls in ominous hues.

"So much for subtlety," Angy muttered as she darted into the control room, leaving afterimages behind.

Inside, the control room was a bustling hub of activity. Gustavo Alliance members of varying alien origins scrambled to respond to the alarm. The room was circular, with consoles lining the walls and a central holotable displaying a three-dimensional map of the vessel and surrounding space.

The pilots, seated at their stations, were of an insectoid species with exoskeletal armor and compound eyes that glinted under the red lights.

Several others—a mix of reptilian humanoids with scaled skin and a towering four-armed being covered in jet-black fur—turned toward the intruders.

"Intruders!" one of them hissed while raising a weapon.

Before they could react, Angy was already among them.

Her speed created a sonic boom that sent consoles crashing and chairs skidding across the floor.

Her first target was the nearest pilot, whose clawed hand reached for a message switch that would have sent out an alarm outside of the vessel.

With a quick strike to his thorax, she incapacitated him, sending him collapsing to the floor.

"Focus on the alarm!" E.E. yelled while opening a vortex in front of a reptilian humanoid aiming a plasma rifle at Angy.

The shot vanished into the vortex, reappearing behind the attacker and striking him in the back.

Angy zipped to the next target, delivering a flurry of blows to the towering, four-armed being. He roared in pain, swinging his massive arms at her, but her movements were too fast for him to track.

She dodged each swing with ease, delivering a powerful kick to his jaw that sent him crashing into a console.

"Nice hit!" E.E. voiced while sidestepping a blast of energy from another attacker.

He opened a portal beneath the attacker's feet, causing them to fall through and reappear upside down on the other side of the room.

The remaining pilots attempted to draw their weapons, but Angy's blinding speed disarmed them in seconds. She tossed their weapons into a pile, which E.E. quickly teleported into deep space through another vortex.

"Control room secure," Angy voiced with steady breaths despite the intensity of the fight.

E.E. moved to the main control panel, typing furiously as he worked to disable the alarm and lock down the engines.

The alarm ceased abruptly, leaving only the sound of the vessel's machinery and distant shouts as more Gustavo Alliance members approached.

"Engines locked. Doors sealed. We're good," E.E. voiced while turning to Angy with a grin.

"Not quite," Angy replied while turning toward the door as it slid shut.

Just before it closed completely, a Gustavo Alliance member slipped through, drawing both their attention.

The newcomer was humanoid but covered in glowing silver tattoos that pulsed with energy.

His eyes were an unnatural shade of orange, radiating malice, and his long, dark hair was tied back in a braid that swayed as he moved. He wore a black armor that seemed to buzz with an internal power source.

"You've made a grave mistake entering this vessel," his voice carried an unsettling resonance as he growled. "I am Zaul Renvar, and I will personally see to your demise."

"Yeah, you're going to have to get in line, Zaul," E.E. smirked as he summoned a vortex beside him.
"Angy, shall we?"

"Let's do it," Angy shot back, already blurring toward Zaul.

Zaul moved with incredible speed, meeting Angy's charge head-on. Their clash sent shockwaves through the room, cracking the walls and shattering nearby monitors.

Angy struck at his midsection with a flurry of punches, but Zaul's armor absorbed most of the impact. He retaliated with a burst of energy from his tattoos, forcing her to retreat.

E.E. took advantage of the distraction, opening a vortex beneath Zaul's feet. But Zaul anticipated the move, leaping into the air and releasing another burst of energy that disrupted the vortex.

"Clever, but not clever enough," Zaul sneered while lunging at E.E.

E.E. narrowly avoided the attack, opening a series of smaller vortexes to redirect Zaul's strikes. One of Zaul's energy blasts reappeared behind him, striking his armor and staggering him.

Chapter 1617: Was That Necessary?

Angy seized the opening, appearing behind Zaul and landing a powerful kick to the back of his head. He stumbled forward but quickly recovered, unleashing a wave of energy that sent her crashing into a console.

"Stay down, puny human," Zaul growled before turning back to E.E.

"Not likely," Angy groaned while darting forward again.

She moved so fast that she created afterimages, confusing Zaul as she struck him from multiple angles.

E.E. added to the chaos, creating vortexes around Zaul that redirected his own attacks back at him. Zaul roared in frustration as his energy blasts struck his armor, causing it to spark and flicker.

"You're outpowered, Zaul whatever your name was," E.E. smirked. "Just give up already."

"Never," Zaul snarled as his tattoos glowed brighter while he prepared a massive attack.

...

The interior of this Gustavo Alliance vessel was a labyrinth of dimly lit corridors, pulsating conduits, and looming steel walls.

A faint, metallic vibration reverberated through the air, punctuated by the occasional hiss of steam escaping from pipes. The place was vast, its design utilitarian but foreboding, an ideal fortress for the nefarious activities of the Alliance.

Aldris, Elevora, and Falco crept through the dim corridors with careful yet purposeful movements.

They had entered through a hatch on the far side of the vessel, opened remotely by E.E. from the control room. Their mission was to find and neutralize the commander overseeing this vessel, while E.E. and Angy maintained lockdown.

Aldris raised his hand, gesturing for silence. His glowing multicolored flickered faintly as he scanned the area. "They'll know we're here soon enough. Elevora, can you sense anything?"

Elevora third eye glowed faintly as she concentrated. "The life signatures are dense in this section. A lot of them are clustered a few corridors ahead. If we go that way, it's going to get messy."

Falco grinned upon hearing this. "Messy? That's my specialty. Let's introduce ourselves."

Aldris shot him a warning glance. "Stay sharp. This isn't a game."

The trio moved forward cautiously, but their stealth didn't last long. As they turned a corner, they found themselves face-to-face with a squad of Gustavo Alliance members—a mix of armored reptilian humanoids and insectoids with chitinous exoskeletons.

"Intruders!" one of the reptilian soldiers hissed while raising an energy weapon.

The corridor exploded into chaos as the Gustavo soldiers opened fire. Aildris raised his hand as he moved and an multicolored wave swept through the air, deflecting the incoming projectiles.

The soldiers staggered under the energy suppression field as their movements slowed as if they were wading through water.

"Elevora!" Aildris called.

Elevora stepped forward as her third eye flared brightly. A beam of purple energy shot from the glowing eye, striking the nearest soldier. The beam didn't just wound—it shrank the soldier's weapon to the size of a pebble, leaving him defenseless.

Falco on the other hand, lunged forward with his arm morphing into a dark blade.

He ducked under a swipe from one of the insectoid soldiers, spinning to deliver a precise strike that severed one of its clawed arms. "Messy enough for you?" he quipped.

"Focus, Falco!" Aildris barked, as he sent another wave of multicolored energy rippling through the corridor, sending several soldiers crashing into the walls.

Despite their initial success, more soldiers poured into the corridor.

In the control room, the battle between E.E., Angy, and Zaul raged on.

The room was a chaotic mess of shattered consoles, flickering holodisplays, and the hum of failing systems.

Zaul stood in the center of the room as his silver tattoos glowed with an eerie light while he unleashed bursts of energy. His movements were quick and relentless.

Angy blurred forward creating shockwaves with her speed as she darted around Zaul, aiming strikes at his midsection.

But Zaul anticipated her moves, his tattoos flaring as he conjured a barrier of shimmering energy that sent her flying backward.

E.E., standing near the control panel, opened a vortex in the path of Zaul's next attack. The energy blast disappeared into the vortex, reappearing behind Zaul but he swiftly sidestepped, evading it.

"Don't take me for a fool. I learn from my mistakes," Zaul growled while turning toward E.E.

"You're a pest, vortex boy. Let's see how well you fight up close." He lunged forward as his fists glowed with energy.

E.E. narrowly dodged the first punch, opening a vortex to teleport himself across the room. "Angy, a little help here!"

Angy was already moving. She appeared behind Zaul in an instant. She landed a powerful kick to the back of his knee, causing him to stagger. "I've got you, vortex boy. Try to keep up," she voiced sarcastically, causing E.E to shudder.

The two worked in tandem as Angy using her speed to keep Zaul off balance while E.E. redirected his attacks with his spatial manipulation.

Despite their efforts, Zaul's power was immense, and his resilience made him a formidable opponent.

Back in the corridors, Aildris, Elevora, and Falco were fighting desperately against the seemingly endless wave of Gustavo alliance soldiers.

The smell of burnt metal and the sound of energy blasts filled the vicinity.

Elevora created a barrier of purple energy, shielding the group from an incoming volley of projectiles. "We can't keep this up forever! We need a plan!"

Aildris eyes narrowed. "We push through. The commander has to be close. Falco, take point. Elevora, cover us. Let's move."

Falco charged forward slicing through the enemy ranks with his dark blade.

Figures were smoothly cleaved in two while Falco did his best to limit his power so as not to end up destroying the entire vessel from the inside out.

Fortunately, he had managed to carve a path through the enemy ranks. Aildris followed, sapping color from the surroundings and slowing their opponents, while Elevora fired purplish beams from her third eye to incapacitate the most dangerous threats.

"We'd better find him." Falco shouted as he slashed through a towering reptilian soldier.

"We will," Aildris replied with a calm voice despite the chaos. "Keep moving. We're almost there."

In the control room, Zaul was beginning to show signs of strain.

His movements were slower, his energy blasts less precise. E.E. and Angy seized the opportunity to press their advantage.

"You're not rebooting anything," E.E. voiced while opening a vortex beneath Zaul's feet. The vortex pulled at him, destabilizing his stance.

Angy appeared behind Zaul, delivering a rapid series of punches to his midsection. "Stay down, big guy."

Zaul roared as he gathered energy from every inch of his tattoos and unleashed a wave of energy that sent both E.E. and Angy flying.

He turned toward the control panel, his intent clear.

"Oh no, you don't!" E.E. shouted, opening a vortex in front of the control panel.

The vortex absorbed Zaul's hand as he reached for the controls, sending it through another vortex that dropped it harmlessly into empty space.

He tightened his fist and the vortex instantly closed around Zaul's hand, causing it to get severed immediately.

"Arrghhh!" Raul screamed in pain as blood gurgled out from where his hand was supposed to be located.

Angy darted forward and delivered a devastating kick to Zaul's chest.

He got sent flying towards the other end as his chest caved in and his glowing tattoos dimmed.

"It's over, Zaul," Angy voiced with a cold tone.

Zaul sank to his knees. "You... won't... win..." he growled while vomiting a mouthful of blood before collapsing.

The metallic corridor leading to the Commander's room echoed with the sound of footsteps and occasional grunts as Aildris, Elevora, and Falco swiftly dealt with the last of the guards.

The walls were lined with faintly glowing conduits, pulsating with the lifeblood of the ship's energy systems.

Six Gustavo Alliance guards blocked the massive reinforced door leading to the commander's quarters.

They were armored in black suits with glowing red visors, wielding energy lances that crackled with deadly power.

Falco stepped forward as his dark hair fell over one eye while he smirked. "Six of you? Too less..."

The guards snarled, readying their weapons, but before they could act, dark, writhing tentacles phased out of Falco's body.

The inky appendages moved with terrifying speed, snatching the guards off their feet and slamming them into the walls.

Heads bursted open but the tentacles weren't done. It ripped some in two halves and flung their remains to a far distance.

"Falco, was that necessary?" Aildris multicolored eyes shimmered as he surveyed the carnage.

Green and purple blood splattered the corridor, painting the walls in gruesome hues.

"Necessary? No. Fun? Definitely," Falco replied, his grin widening as the tentacles tore another one guard in half, spraying the floor with viscous green liquid.

Elevora sighed as her third eye glowed faintly. She slowly stepped past the carnage. "You could have at least let us interrogate one of them. Now we'll never know what's waiting inside."

Chapter 1618: Ominous Predicament

Doesn't matter. We kick the door down, we deal with whatever's there, Falco said, the tentacles retracting into his body as he approached the massive door.

The Commander's Room: A Scandalous Scene

With a powerful **kick**, the heavy door burst open, revealing a sprawling **luxurious room**. Unlike the rest of the ship, the commander's quarters were decadently adorned. Silken drapes in shades of crimson and gold hung from the walls, and the air was thick with the musky scent of burning incense. A massive circular bed sat in the center of the room, its silken sheets in disarray.

On the bed, the **Commander**, a towering reptilian humanoid with dark green scales and glowing yellow eyes, was entangled with **two females** of different species. One was a humanoid with soft, pink skin and pointed ears, while the other was an alien with shimmering, blue translucent skin and gills along her neck. Both were **naked**, their startled expressions frozen as they turned to face the intruders.

What in the—?! the commander roared, his voice a deep, guttural growl. He scrambled to grab a weapon from the bedside table, his movements clumsy in his panic.

Falco stepped into the room, his dark hair falling over his face as he smirked. ***Well, this is awkward. Didn't mean to interrupt your little... session.***

Who are you lots?! GUARDS!! the commander bellowed, his scales flaring as he reached for his communicator.

The Confrontation

Before the commander could call for reinforcements, **Elevora's third eye** flared brightly, emitting a beam of purple energy that struck the communicator, shrinking it to the size of a pebble. It fell uselessly from his hand.

No guards are coming,**" Elevora said coldly, stepping forward. ***They're all dead. Just like you'll be if you don't cooperate."

The two females scrambled off the bed, grabbing sheets to cover themselves as they huddled in the corner. The commander rose to his full height, towering over the intruders. His yellow eyes glowed with rage as he flexed his claws.

You think you can barge into my quarters and threaten me? Do you know who I am? I'm Commander Gralix of the Gustavo Alliance! I've destroyed entire civilizations!"

Aldris, standing calmly in the center of the room, raised his hand. **Swirls of color** began to manifest around him, shimmering hues that danced and shifted like liquid light.

***Gralix, was it? You're about to add 'loser to us' to your impressive list,**" Aildris said, his voice even and calm. ***Now sit down and answer our questions, or I'll paint this room with a new palette—one you won't enjoy.**"

The Fight

Gralix roared, lunging at Aildris with surprising speed. His claws slashed through the air, but just before they connected, Aildris's colors surged forward, forming a shimmering **barrier of light** that absorbed the impact.

***Too slow, big guy,**" Falco said, his dark tentacles shooting forward to wrap around Gralix's legs. He yanked hard, sending the commander crashing to the floor.

Gralix snarled, his claws glowing with a fiery red energy as he slashed at the tentacles. They recoiled briefly, but Falco grinned. ***Oh, you've got tricks. So do I.**" The tentacles surged back, wrapping around Gralix's arms and pinning him down.

Elevora stepped forward, her third eye glowing with intensity. ***This could have been simple, Gralix. Now you've just made it painful.**" She unleashed another beam of energy, this time striking Gralix's legs. They **shrank** to half their size, rendering him unable to stand.

***Release me! You have no idea what you're doing! The Gustavo Alliance will hunt you to the ends of the galaxy!**" Gralix roared, struggling against his restraints.

Aildris walked closer, his multicolored barrier shimmering around him. "***We're not interested in your threats, Commander. We want information. Where is your base of operations? Where are the two leaders hiding?***"

Gralix spat on the floor, his yellow eyes glaring defiantly. "***I'll tell you nothing! Kill me if you want, but I won't betray the Alliance!***"

Falco sighed dramatically, his tentacles tightening around Gralix's throat. "***You say that like you've got a choice. Let's see how long you can hold out.***"

Elevora turned to Aildris. "***He's too arrogant to talk willingly. Let me shrink something important. Maybe then he'll reconsider.***"

Gralix's defiance faltered, a flicker of fear crossing his face. "***You wouldn't dare—***"

"***Try me,***" Elevora interrupted, her third eye glowing ominously.

***The Interrogation**

After a few more moments of threats and pressure, Gralix finally relented. "***Fine! I'll tell you what you want to know! Just... call off your freaks!**"

Aldris leaned closer, his expression neutral but his multicolored eyes piercing. "***Start talking, Commander. And don't leave anything out.**"

Gralix growled, his voice bitter. "***The main base is in the **Nebulon Expanse**, hidden within an asteroid field. The two leaders you're looking for... I don't know their exact locations. They keep themselves hidden, even from us.**"

Falco tightened the tentacles slightly. "***You're holding back, Commander. I can feel it. What else?***"

Gralix hissed in frustration. "***There's... there's a relay beacon in this ship's databanks. It contains encrypted coordinates for one of the leaders. But you'll never crack it.**"

Elevora smirked. "***We'll see about that.**"

The Aftermath

As Gralix slumped in defeat, the team began accessing the ship's systems, using the commander's biometric data to unlock restricted files. With the location of the relay beacon in hand, their mission was far from over. But they had taken the first step in dismantling the Gustavo Alliance.

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As the alarms finally fell silent, Aildris, Elevora, and Falco reached a massive reinforced door deep within the vessel.

Aildris placed his hand on the door, feeling the faint energy signature behind it.

***The commander is in there,**" he said, his voice resolute.

***Then let's finish this,**" Falco said, his energy blade glowing brightly.

Elevora nodded, her third eye glowing as she prepared for the final confrontation. They knew the hardest part of their mission was yet to come.

**To be continued... **

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The Showdown with Commander Gralix

The spacious bedroom, once a place of indulgence and decadence, now crackled with destructive energy as **Aildris**, **Elevora**, and **Falco** faced off against **Gralix**, the towering reptilian commander of the Gustavo Alliance. The luxurious furnishings lay in shambles, shredded by beams of energy and the force of relentless attacks. Shattered glass and burning silken drapes added to the chaos, while the faint hum of the ship's energy systems remained a constant reminder of the looming danger.

Gralix stood in the center, his massive frame radiating raw power. His **glowing yellow eyes** locked onto his opponents, and faint **dark tendrils** flickered across his body, confirming Falco's suspicion: the commander had tapped into **Nocturnis's power**.

"**You dare to challenge me in my own quarters?*" Gralix roared, his voice deep and guttural, reverberating through the room. His claws crackled with fiery red energy, and his scaled body gleamed under the flickering light. "**You'll regret this. All of you.**"

Aildris and Elevora's Synchronized Assault

Aildris and Elevora exchanged a brief nod, their silent understanding leading to a perfectly synchronized attack.

Let's clip his claws, Elevora, Aildris said, his voice calm yet commanding. He raised his hands, and the air around him shimmered as he began to **draw colors from the environment**. The glowing palette of hues materialized before him, swirling like a living spectrum. It pulsed with power, creating a **suction force** that pulled at everything in the room matching its hues.

Gralix staggered as sections of his body glowed and flickered, drawn toward the swirling palette. The suction force gripped him, causing his **glowing tattoos** to flicker erratically.

What is this trickery?! Gralix bellowed, struggling against the pull.

Focus on that, why don't you? Elevora's voice rang out as her **third eye** flared. A concentrated **purple beam** shot forth, streaking toward the commander with devastating speed.

Gralix growled, raising his clawed hand to meet the attack. His claws slashed through the air, slapping the beam away with a burst of energy. But the deflected beam **doubled in size**, twisting and morphing into a volatile sphere of energy.

Incoming! Elevora yelled, diving for cover as the energy sphere **exploded** with a deafening roar.

The explosion **tore through the bedroom**, blowing out one of the walls. The vacuum of space briefly threatened to engulf them before emergency barriers activated, sealing the breach. A thick cloud of smoke and debris filled the room.

Falco Takes Center Stage

As the smoke cleared, **Falco** stood unscathed amidst the destruction. His dark hair hung over his forehead, and his piercing gaze locked onto Gralix, who stood panting, his scales charred in places but still exuding defiance.

Behind Falco, Aildris and Elevora lay sprawled on the floor, bruised and slightly bloodied. Elevora clutched her side, wincing, while Aildris pushed himself up with a grimace.

You two rest,**" Falco said coldly, not turning to look at them. ***He's mine."

***Falco—**" Aildris started, but Falco raised a hand to silence him.

No. I can feel it, Aildris,**" Falco growled, his voice trembling with suppressed rage. **Dark tendrils** began to phase out of his body, writhing ominously. ***That foul presence in him... it's my father's. He borrowed power from Nocturnis."

Elevora's third eye flickered weakly as she looked up at him. ***Falco, don't—***"

But Falco was already moving. His dark tendrils surged forward, slicing through the debris as he lunged at Gralix.

Falco's Rage Unleashed

Gralix barely had time to raise his claws before Falco's tendrils wrapped around his arms and legs, slamming him into the floor with a thunderous crash. The sheer force left cracks in the metallic surface.

"**You think you're powerful because of Nocturnis? You're nothing,**" Falco snarled, his tendrils tightening around the commander like constricting serpents.

Gralix roared, his tattoos glowing as he unleashed a pulse of red energy. The blast shattered Falco's tendrils, sending him skidding back. The commander rose to his feet, his scales glowing ominously as dark tendrils of his own began to emerge.

"**You underestimate me, boy. Nocturnis's power flows through me!**" Gralix charged, his claws slashing toward Falco with blinding speed.

Falco met the attack head-on, his **dark powers** manifesting as a shadowy shield that absorbed the brunt of the impact. The two clashed violently, their strikes creating shockwaves that shook the entire vessel.

Falco's rage fueled his strength. He drove his knee into Gralix's midsection, sending the reptilian commander stumbling back. With a roar, he unleashed a wave of dark energy that engulfed Gralix, slamming him into the far wall.

The Turning Point

Gralix staggered to his feet, his breathing labored. His tattoos flickered, their glow dimming as his connection to Nocturnis's power waned.

You can't win, Falco said, advancing slowly. His tendrils writhed around him, ready to strike. ***Your borrowed power is nothing compared to mine.***

Gralix snarled, lunging forward in a desperate attempt to turn the tide. But Falco was ready. He sidestepped the attack and drove his fist into Gralix's chest, sending the commander crashing into the floor.

Before Gralix could rise, Falco's tendrils pinned him down, wrapping around his arms, legs, and throat. The commander thrashed and roared, but he was no match for Falco's relentless assault.

Falco's dark eyes glinted with fury as he raised a tendril, poised to deliver the killing blow. ***You don't deserve to live,*** he growled.

Aldris Intervenes

"**Falco, stop!**" Aldris's voice rang out, firm and commanding.

Falco hesitated, his tendrils trembling as he turned to look at Aldris. "**Why? He's a servant of Nocturnis. He deserves to die.**"

"**We need him alive,**" Aldris said, stepping forward. His multicolored eyes glowed faintly as he spoke. "**He has information we need. Killing him now would be reckless.**"

Falco's grip tightened around Gralix, his jaw clenched in frustration. "**He's a monster, Aldris. You didn't feel it like I did—Nocturnis's presence. He's dangerous.**"

"**And that's exactly why we need him alive,**" Aldris replied calmly. "**If he's connected to Nocturnis, he might know more than we realize. Killing him won't solve anything.**"

Falco growled low in his throat, but after a tense moment, he released the tendrils, letting them retract back into his body. Gralix lay on the floor, battered and gasping for breath.

The Aftermath

Elevora limped forward, her third eye glowing faintly as she scanned Gralix. "***He's weak now. He won't be a problem.**"

Falco crossed his arms, glaring down at the commander. "***He'd better start talking. Otherwise, I'm finishing what I started.**"

Aldris crouched beside Gralix, his expression neutral. "***You're going to tell us everything, Commander. Where are the leaders of the Gustavo Alliance? What's their connection to Nocturnis? And what's their endgame?***"

Gralix coughed, his yellow eyes flickering with fear and defiance. "***You... think you've won? You have no idea... what's coming.**"

***Then enlighten us,**" Aldris said, his voice cold. ***Or I'll let my friend here finish what he started.**"

Gralix hesitated, his gaze shifting between Aldris and Falco. Finally, he sighed, defeated. "***Fine. I'll talk.**"

The team exchanged glances, knowing this was only the beginning of uncovering the Gustavo Alliance's secrets.

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Uncle Bila watched in amazement as Gustav interacted with the newly revived NID. The artefact, long dormant and silent within the depths of the Vertigon vaults, now pulsed with a vibrant, mystical energy.

"Mr Crimson, to use the—"

"Don't worry, I understand how it works," Gustav cut Uncle Bila off.

He placed his palm flat against the NID, and the device responded immediately, its surface shimmering with an ethereal glow.

The rhythmic pulsing seemed to sync with Gustav's energy, creating a resonance that filled the room with a palpable sense of anticipation.

Gustav's thoughts were singular, 'I need to find a way to get to the remnants of planet Humbad.'

He held onto this intention, willing the NID to provide a path forward.

After a few tense moments, the artefact responded. A projection of shimmering letters floated in the air before them:

"Planet AGON."

Gustav stepped back, his surprise evident.

"AGON? That's... that's the name Miss Aimee calls her planet."

The room fell silent as the NID powered down, its task seemingly complete. Uncle Bila, breaking the silence, confirmed what the machine had implied.

"It seems that whatever you need, Gustav is tied to Planet AGON. According to our ancestors, the NID has never been wrong."

Gustav, puzzled, murmured to himself, "But why there? What could be on Miss Aimee's planet that relates to Humbad or the Warp Demolator?"

Miss Aimee's planet was still very new so it didn't make any sense to him.

Stark chimed in, "Remember, Miss Aimee isn't just your former master. She's a creator of worlds, a manipulator of cosmic scales. There is every possibility that she has foresight of the current predicament."

The idea resonated with Gustav but he was still skeptical about it.

"You might be right. I guess the only way to find out is by heading there."

"I'll arrange for transport," Stark voiced in response.

"And I'll gather some supplies for your journey," Uncle Bila added.

"I need to find a way to send a message... An intergalactic message," Gustav requested.

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Days had passed since the Warp Demolator's appearance and subsequent disappearance, leaving Aildris, Endric, Falco, and Ria adrift in uncertainty.

They had been scouring the coordinates and searching for any trace of Gustav, their efforts fruitless and their morale dwindling.

As they prepared to set a course for a nearby planet in hopes of finding assistance, the console beeped loudly, signalling an incoming transmission that immediately drew their attention.

Falco who was closest to the console, quickly tapped to accept the transmission. The familiar face of Gustav appeared in full vibrancy.

"Hey, guys."

The group exchanged looks of relief mixed with confusion upon his appearance.

"Rival! We've searched everywhere, where did you vanish to?" Ria was the first to yell out.

"I'm on earth," Gustav revealed.

"You're on Earth?! How did you end up there?" Falco voiced in shock.

- "It's Stark's doing. It's a long story—I'll fill you in later. But I'm alright."

"We thought we lost you... How are you going to get back?" Aildris inquired.

"I'm not coming back just yet. I'm actually about to head to Miss Aimee's planet, AGON."

His revelation prompted a round of surprised murmurs among the group.

"Miss Aimee's planet? Why?" Endric voiced in bafflement.

"It's related to something called the NID—an artefact pointed me to AGON. I think it's crucial for what comes next. Since I missed the Warp demolator's appearance, this might be the only way I get to planet Humbad."

The group listened intently as Gustav briefly explained his encounter with the NID and its mysterious guidance.

"So, what do you need us to do now? Head to the Milky Way to join you?" Aildris inquired.

"No, that won't be necessary. You're over a month away, and I can't have you trailing behind that long. Instead, I need you to fix up my ship. I believe by the time you're heading back, I will have gotten what I need."

"Okay, we could help with other things while you do what needs to be done," Endric answered with a nod.

- "Thanks. I'll keep you posted on my progress and what I find out on AGON."

As the transmission faded, the crew sat back, processing the flurry of information. Gustav was safe, but he would have to tread alone on the journey ahead of him. They turned their attention to the task at hand—repairing Gustav's spacecraft and finding their way back without mishaps.

"We are gonna head for Earth afterwards right?" Ria asked.

"You bet we are."

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Gustav and Stark stood in the dimly lit hangar, their spacecraft prepped and ready for departure.

The air thrummed with the low rumble of the engines warming up, a subtle vibration underfoot that spoke of the power at their disposal. Beside them, two bodyguards in silver robes, their features obscured by the high collars and hoods, stood silent and alert.

Gustav, checking over his disguise—a similar silver robe that masked his identity—nodded towards Stark.

"It's time to go."

Although Gustav didn't shapeshift due to the numbers seeing Stark off, he knew he wouldn't shy away from it when the time came.

Stark adjusting his gear, looked at Gustav with a mix of excitement and apprehension.

"What should I expect out there, Gustav? It's not every day one travels to a planet crafted by a goddess."

"Honestly... it's hard to say what we'll find. Miss Aimee is... unpredictable. But if there's one thing I'm sure of, it's that she's continued creating life. She aims to craft a world far different from Earth's—full of diversity and harmony," Gustav responded with a reminiscent look.

As they boarded the spacecraft, the bodyguards took their positions at the controls, and Gustav settled next to Stark.

The bay doors slowly retracted. With a smooth surge of power, the spacecraft lifted off, leaving Earth's atmosphere in a streak of light.

As they ascended, Gustav's mind drifted to his past interactions with Miss Aimee. He remembered the lush landscapes she had shown him, teeming with life—creatures of her design, each species more fascinating than the last.

Miss Aimee stood before a sprawling vista, her hand sweeping over a field dotted with two-headed creatures grazing under a colourful sky.

"Here..." she had said, "I will create a sanctuary where all the life forms I create can coexist in balance. A model of what any world could be, free from strife and inequality."

Gustav felt a pang of nostalgia and a deep-seated curiosity about how much her world had evolved since his last visit.

He pulled himself back to the present as their ship broke free from Earth's gravitational pull and entered the open cosmos.

"Space travel still amazes me every time," Stark mumbled while peering forward. He started intently at every nook and cranny of the exterior of the spacecraft.

"How far until we reach AGON?" Gustav questioned.

"We're looking at just over a day's journey with the current hyperdrive settings since AGON is situated at the edge of the Milky Way," Stark answered informatively.

The journey through space was smooth, with the vast starlit void offering a display of serene beauty. Stark occasionally attempted to draw out more stories from Gustav, who remained somewhat reticent, lost in his thoughts.

"You respect her, don't you? Miss Aimee, I mean."

"More than respect, Stark. I owe her my life. I was hoping I wouldn't need her help anymore until all this was over but I guess, there is no other way," Gustav voiced with a look of admiration and perturbation.

As they neared AGON, the planet's image began to fill the viewport—a colossal world, its surface swirling with vibrant colours and cloud patterns that hinted at its dynamic atmosphere.

"There it is. AGON," Gustav announced.

"Wow, it truly is four times the size of Earth... Very breathtaking. To think one being could create all this... it's beyond what I thought possible," Stark couldn't imagine just how powerful Miss Aimee was.

Although he had very much witnessed her might at IYSOP, it was an entirely different scenario to physically be in the presence of an orbital body she created.

The spacecraft's approach was carefully calculated, as they prepared for descent.

As their spacecraft approached the vibrant, swirling atmosphere of AGON, Gustav and Stark were suddenly jolted by an unexpected resistance.

A shimmering barrier, invisible until now, materialized just as their ship was about to enter the planet's orbit.

Stark startled by the sudden halt, looked over at Gustav with concern. "What's happening? Why can't we move forward?"

Gustav brow furrowed in confusion and surprise as he responded, "This... this wasn't here before. Miss Aimee must have later put this in place to prevent external entry."

"But she should be aware of my presence by now. Why isn't she taking the barrier down?" Gustav wondered out loud.

It was impossible for anything to pass by Miss Aimee since she became a goddess so Gustav had expected her to have sensed their spacecraft long before it got to that point.

Trying to understand the situation, Gustav instructed the ship's AI to attempt a gentle push forward, but the barrier remained impassive, its surface repelling every advance with increasing force.

"Let's not force it. We might damage the ship—or worse, trigger a countermeasure we're not prepared for."

Chapter 1619 Worldwide Sorrow

Elyn looked troubled. "But how? The unrest is growing, and people are losing faith."

Frambultin took a deep breath. "I will address the people and call for a summit of all leaders and factions. We need to come together, now more than ever."

The playback showed scenes of unrest and division across Planet Humbad. Protests erupted in the streets, clashes broke out between opposing factions, and fear and uncertainty spread like wildfire.

It looked like history was repeating itself once again.

In one scene, Gustav watched as a group of dissenters gathered in a secluded space. Their faces were filled with anger and frustration, their voices hushed but intense.

"We cannot trust Frambultin the 88th," one of them said with a tone of conviction. "His methods are weak, and our survival is at risk. We need strong leadership to protect us."

"But what can we do?" another asked, her voice trembling. "The barrier is failing, and we are running out of time."

Kaldor spoke up; "We need to take decisive action. If Frambultin will not lead us well, then we must lead ourselves. We must find a way to restore true unity, one built on strength and resolve."

As the unrest grew, the barrier continued to weaken. The ashy sand-like matter pressed harder against it, the dark force swirling and writhing, seeking a way through. The cracks continuously spread.

Frambultin the 88th addressed the people from the Great Hall. "My fellow Slarkovs, we face an existential threat. The barrier that protects us is failing because of the divisions among us. Let us put aside our differences and work together to restore our unity and strengthen the barrier."

The summit of all leaders and factions began in the Great Hall. Representatives from all sides gathered around a large table. Frambultin the 88th opened the summit with a heartfelt plea for unity.

"We are all Slarkovs," he began, his voice steady but impassioned. "We all want the same thing: to protect our world and ensure our survival. The barrier keeps failing because we are divided. We must find a way to come together, to work as one."

Tarek, a community leader, spoke up. "We need to address the root causes of our division. People feel marginalized. Not everyone is satisfied with the Frambultin leadership. We must ensure that all voices are heard and that our society is built on cooperation."

Kaldor, the fierce dissenter, countered. "We need strong leadership, not appeasement. The barrier is failing because we are weak. We must take decisive action to protect our people."

The debate continued, with each side presenting their views and concerns.

As the summit progressed, Fraumbultin the 88th worked tirelessly to mediate and find common ground. He listened to each side, offering compromises and solutions.

Slowly, some progress was made, and a tentative sense of hope began to emerge.

In one scene, Gustav watched as Fraumbultin the 88th met with Tarek and Kaldor in a private chamber. The atmosphere was tense, but there was a glimmer of understanding.

"Tarek, Kaldor," Fraumbultin said, his voice sincere, "I know we have different views on how to protect our people. But we must find a way to work together. The barrier is failing, and our survival depends on our unity."

Tarek nodded. "I agree, Chief Fraumbultin. Unity is our objective."

Kaldor, though still defiant, softened slightly. "I understand the need for unity. But we must also be strong and decisive. We cannot afford to be weak."

Fraumbultin smiled, a sense of relief washing over him. "Then let us find a way to balance strength with compassion. Together, we can restore our unity and protect our world."

"The only way that works is if you step down as Chief," Kaldor words caused his smile to vanish instantly.

"But why?" Chief Frambultin the 88th questioned with a low tone.

"It is quite obvious that your methods have failed to fooster peace and unity whereas your father's worked. The Slarkovs need a decisive leader that will continue your father's legacy not some weak willed leader who is unwilling to get his hands dirty," Kaldor stated with a strong look of disgust.

"And if I were to step down who would take on the mantle of leadership?" Frambultin the 88th inquired.

"I shall," Tarek stated.

"Shut up Tarek! You're clearly too not eligible. I will take up the mantle," Kaldor voiced with a condescending look.

"And what is the first thing you will do when you step into power?" Frambultin the 88th questioned.

"I will get rid of every single Slarkov who disagree with the methods of our previous chief. The barrier will no longer weaken if everyone that is left remains under the same banner of agreement hehe," Kaldor pointed out.

"If that is the case then, no. I will not be stepping down. I have sworn to put an end to the ruthless tactic my father used during his reign and I will make sure it never happens again."

Immediately after saying this, Frambultin the 88th turned around to leave.

"Ptoi! You're a disgrace to your father's name!" Kaldor spat in his direction with a tone of disgust.

"Be that as it may... I will not let Humbad be ruled by tyranny," Frambultin stated before completely leaving the scene.

Soon, the situation on Planet Humbad reached a critical juncture.

Despite Fraumbultin the 88th's best efforts to heal the divisions within Slarkov society, the unrest continued to rise at an alarming rate.

The barrier, weakened by the lack of unity, began to falter more visibly. It's light flickered under the relentless pressure of the ashy sand-like matter.

Frambultin stood in the command center, his expression grave as he observed the holographic display of the barrier.

The cracks were spreading faster now, and the dark force outside seemed more determined than ever to consume their world. He knew that if they did not find a solution soon, the end of their species was inevitable.

He gathered his advisors for an emergency meeting in the Great Hall. The atmosphere was tense, the weight of their dire situation pressing heavily on everyone present.

"My friends," Frambultin began, his voice steady but filled with urgency, "we are facing an existential threat unlike any we have encountered before. The barrier is failing, and the unrest among our people is tearing us apart. We must find a way forward, or we will be consumed along with our planet."

Seran, the seasoned advisor, spoke up. "Chief Frambultin, we need to consider all options. If we cannot restore unity and strengthen the barrier, we may need to evacuate the planet."

Elyn, the young and passionate advisor, looked conflicted. "But where would we go? This has been our home for millennia. Leaving would be an admission of defeat."

Frambultin nodded, his expression resolute. "I understand your concerns, Elyn. But we must prioritize the survival of our species. I have made a difficult decision. We will prepare to evacuate the planet."

The advisors exchanged uneasy glances, but they knew that their leader was right. The unrest was too deep-rooted, the divisions too entrenched. Staying on Humbad would only lead to their extinction.

Fraumbultin addressed the people of Humbad in a broadcast from the Great Hall. His voice echoed through the city, reaching every corner of their world.

"My fellow Slarkovs, we face a grave threat. The barrier that protects us is failing, and our unity is crumbling. We have tried to heal our divisions, but the unrest continues to rise. For the survival of our species, we must make a difficult decision. We must prepare to leave our beloved planet."

The announcement sent shockwaves through Slarkov society. Families gathered around screens, their faces filled with fear. Gustav watched as the playback showed scenes of the reactions across Humbad.

In one scene, a group of Slarkovs gathered in a public square, their expressions a blend of anxiety and hope. "Leaving our home," one of them said, their voice trembling. "It feels like giving up."

Another Slarkov, an elder with wise eyes, placed a reassuring hand on their shoulder. "It is not giving up," they said gently. "It is choosing to survive. We carry the spirit of Humbad within us, wherever we go."

However, the decision to evacuate was not universally accepted.

The Slarkovs had divided into two factions: one faction, led by Chief Fraumbultin the 88th, agreed with the decision to leave the planet for their betterment.

The other faction, led by Kaldor and his followers, believed that they should stay behind and force Dimension Six open, hoping to employ its power once more.

In a heated debate in the Great Hall, representatives from both factions argued passionately.

"Leaving the planet is cowardice!" Kaldor shouted, his voice filled with conviction. "We must force Dimension Six open and use its power to protect ourselves. Abandoning our home is not the answer."

Fraumbultin the 88th remained calm but resolute. "Kaldor, we have tried to reason with Dimension Six. It has locked itself away. Our priority must be the survival of our species, and that means evacuating."

Chapter 1620 You Never Learn

"What are you saying?" Gustav's voice was low as his eyes glinted intensely. "Who are these enemies? Why don't they want me to regain my power?"

"They are beings like Ehyrian, Cosmic Superior beings who have glimpsed the memories of the deities," The monoliths' voices grew heavier, vibrating the air around Gustav. "When they reached their level of power, they saw the devastation and tyranny wrought by the deities, and they vowed that no being would ever reach that level of strength again."

Gustav's brows furrowed. "So they want to stop me because they're afraid I'll turn out like the deities? While knowing I put an end to them in the past? That's ridiculous. I'm nothing like them."

"They do not care for your intent," the monoliths replied. "They fear the power itself. And they have worked in secret to weaken you in this life, to strip you of even the fragments of your Outworldly strength."

The weight of their words hit Gustav like a hammer. "Are you saying my lack of power at birth wasn't a coincidence? That someone deliberately made me ordinary?"

"Yes," the monoliths confirmed. "When you were reborn, you should have retained a fraction of your Outworldly power, a tiny spark that would have guided you to your full potential. But it was taken from you. Suppressed by forces that do not wish to see you rise again."

Gustav eyed narrowed as he made a low hmph. "Who are these beings? Tell me their names. Tell me where to find them."

"We cannot," the monoliths said regretfully. "Their identities are hidden even from us. But know this: they are just as dangerous as Nocturnis. These beings seek to ensure that even he is destroyed. They will not tolerate the presence of beings being too powerful so they are currently pulling strings in the shadows."

Gustav took a deep breath. "And Ehyrian? Why is he no more?"

The central monolith's face softened slightly. "Ehyrian believed in you, Outworldly. He foresaw that you would be needed to protect the universe from the chaos that threatens it just as you have once done. He knew that only an Outworldly could defeat Nocturnis and the enemies beyond. And more importantly, he knew that his old friends would have no chance against Nocturnis if they got rid of you. That is why he entrusted his legacy to us, to guide you when the time came."

Gustav felt gratitude for a being he had never met. "Tell me what I need to do. How do I stop these enemies?"

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Gustav nodded in understanding. "So no powers..."

"Yes... Don't channel at all."

They began their descent, using the rough edges of the chasm to slowly make their way down.

The walls of the crater were uneven, with sharp protrusions and narrow ledges that offered precarious footing. They jumped from one protrusion to the next, each movement calculated and deliberate.

The descent was slow and treacherous. The deeper they went, the more intense the heat became, and the glow from the magma pits below grew brighter.

In as much as Miss Aimee had told Gustav not to channel his bloodline, he was still very much unaffected by this level of heat. A normal Mixedblood would have been toast by now but Gustav still had inbuilt durability.

"How deep do you think this goes?" Gustav asked while maintaining a steady gaze.

"It's hard to say," Miss Aimee replied, her voice calm and steady. "But it might take a while."

As they continued to descend, the walls of the chasm seemed to close in around them. The air grew thicker and more oppressive. The glow from the magma pits illuminated the rocky surfaces, casting a reddish hue that made the entire scene feel surreal.

Gustav glanced over at Miss Aimee, who moved with ease. "You seem to know your way around here," he remarked.

"I've had some time to explore," she said with a faint smile.

The ledges grew narrower the further they descended, forcing them to be even more cautious.

Gustav's entire body was at a very high temperature at this moment but he maintained an unfazed look.

After what felt like hours of careful maneuvering, the walls of the chasm were now almost vertical, forcing them to rely on handholds and footholds that were barely wide enough to support them.

The air remained thick with heat and the stench of sulfur.

Despite the challenges, they pressed on. The glow from the magma pits made the rocky surfaces appear almost molten.

"Watch your step," Miss Aimee cautioned as they approached a particularly narrow ledge. "One wrong move and we could fall and you'd have to use energy which could cause a split."

Gustav nodded as he carefully navigated the narrow path. His fingers clung to the rough rock as he maintained his balance. The ledge was barely wide enough to support them, and the heat from the magma pits below was becoming unbearable for his special made outfit.

The walls of the chasm seemed to pulse with a rhythmic energy.

Miss Aimee and Gustav continued their descent into the chasm. The journey had been ongoing for twelve hours at this point and they were still at it.

The terrain was a mix of narrow ledges, steep drops, and jagged rocks. Sometimes the edges were sloppy enough for them to walk down, but other times they had to jump from one protrusion to the next.

Each step brought them closer to the heart of the desolate planet, and the bubbling sound of magma below grew louder, accompanied by an increasing heat that would have been unbearable for anyone else.

Despite the oppressive environment, Gustav and Miss Aimee powerful bodies remained unaffected by the extreme conditions.

The glow from the magma pits made the entire descent feel like a journey into the underworld.

"It almost sounds like the planet is breathing..." Gustav voiced.

"The core of a planet is a place of immense energy. It's feels alive because we're getting closer," Miss Aimee responded without coming to a stop.

Gustav looked around as his face was illuminated with red glow. "I've been thinking about the Slarkovs. They must have had some way of predicting this catastrophe. But how did they know it would happen?"

Miss Aimee considered his question while they kept stepping forward. "The Slarkovs were masters of advanced technology and foresight. They likely had systems in place to monitor their solar system. When they detected the warp demolator, they would have known it was only a matter of time before their world was dragged through it."

"But why Earth?" Gustav asked while leaping to a lower ledge. "Of all the planets, why choose Earth as their refuge?"

Miss Aimee moved almost like she was floating while answering Gustav. "They must have seen some kind of potential on Earth. If there's more to it, I have a feeling you'll find out down there,"

Gustav nodded thoughtfully. "They sure had everyone fooled. There better be a good reason why they never mentioned the warp demolator..."

The path grew steeper, and they had to slow their pace to navigate the treacherous terrain.

"Will I truly find out everything in Dimension Six?" Gustav wondered out loud.

"I believe so," Miss Aimee replied with a confident tone. "Unless that time candidate person is wrong."

Gustav took a deep breath,

They continued their descent and the bubbling sound of magma growing louder with each step.

"I wonder what would have happened if the Slarkovs had stayed and found a way to save their planet? Mixedbloods most likely wouldn't exist and all the technology..." Gustav realised how choosing Earth really set many things motion.

Miss Aimee shook her head. "The Slarkovs made the best choice they could under the circumstances. Staying would have meant certain death. By fleeing to Earth, they ensured their survival and the continuation of their legacy... As much as I hate the existence of mixedbloods which was due to their decision, I am grateful for your existence. So I guess it's not all bad."

Gustav glanced at her briefly; "Pffft... It's the same for me Miss Aimee. Although I can't help but wonder if the world would have been kinder without bloodines..."

The glow from the magma pits grew brighter, casting an almost blinding light on the rocky surfaces. The heat was now beyond bearable for fabrics. Scorched holes were starting to appear on Gustav's clothes.

"How much further do you think we have to go?" Gustav was worried about being stripped completely naked before they arrived at their destination.

"We're getting close," Miss Aimee replied.

Gustav was sure he had heard that before but he decided to take Miss Aimee's word for it.

They continued to navigate the treacherous terrain, the path becoming increasingly unstable. Rocks crumbled beneath their feet, and the air was filled with the sound of distant rumbling.

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Back on Planet Agon, it had already been a couple of days.

Yet, the air still carried the scent of Gustav's bittersweet departure.

The group stood in a clearing surrounded by towering trees, their leaves rustling softly in the gentle breeze.

Endric stood at the center of the group, his expression resolute. "I need to find the other Time Candidate," he announced. "The fifth sacred item of the Outworldly is crucial, and it's taking too long."

"Understandable but not outerspace missions for me at the moment. I think I need to spend some time with my earthly father. I haven't properly caught up with him, and I owe him that much," Falco said to everyone.

Angy looked at Endric in concern. "I wanted to wait here on Planet Agon, but Aetherial informed me that when Gustav returns, he will appear in a different location."

E.E. stepped forward. "Angy, do you want to go back to the MBO in the meantime? It's better than waiting here without knowing where Gustav will show up."

Angy sighed, her shoulders relaxing a bit. "That's true. I'm still an MBO officer after all."

Aldris smiled with a calm look. "I need to return to my family. It's time I take my position as the leader. I can no longer ignore my father's legacy. Besides, those bastards don't deserve it."

A spark of excitement appeared in Ria's eyes as he spoke up. "Endric, I'm coming with you. I want to go on missions outside Earth."

Endric turned to him, his expression serious. "Ria, it's going to be dangerous. We're going after a Time Candidate. There's no telling what we might encounter."

Ria's resolve was unwavering. "I know. But I'm ready for it."

The group fell silent, the weight of their decisions hanging in the air. They had been through so much together, and now it was time for some to go their separate ways pending Gustav's return.

Endric suddenly cleared his throat, drawing everyone's attention. "Listen, everyone. We need to be prepared for Gustav's return. When he comes back, a battle line will be drawn. We have to be ready for whatever challenges lie ahead."

E.E furrowed his brows. "A battle line? What do you mean, Endric?"

Endric met his gaze with a serious expression. "Gustav's return will mark the beginning of a new conflict. I believe it will be at a time where he is ready to face them head on. We must be ready to stand with him. The fourth premonition is only a few months away."

Angy had a perturbed expression. "What if Gustav doesn't return in time? What do we do then?"

Endric took a deep breath. "If Gustav hasn't returned by then, it will be up to us to prevent the devastation. We must be prepared for anything."