

Transformations

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Kapitel 5: Investigations

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A repetitive knock at his door stirs him awake. He looks around, half asleep. The room is mostly dark, bits of light peeking through the blinds. He sits up, and notices the alarm blaring on the nightstand. He reaches over and cuts it off as he gets up and heads for the door, opening it slowly. "Yes?" He asks half awake.

Commander Eagle looks startled, realizing he woke him up, he sighs. "Can I come in, Saber?"

Saber comes to his senses quickly, realizing now who is at his door. "Yes, Sir...I'm...sorry. Come in, please." He steps aside so the Commander can enter, and follows him back into the sitting area.

The Commander takes a seat and studies Saber carefully. "How are you feeling, Saber. You don't exactly look..."

Saber smiles weakly and interrupts him before he can finish his thought. "I've been better, honestly. I suppose we were up a bit late last night, and when I managed to finally fall asleep, I slept rather soundly. Evidently even through my alarm." He chuckles. "Something I haven't done since I was a child." He mumbles under his breath. He looks at the Commander and sighs. "I'm going to go get changed. I'll be right out, Sir."

The Commander nods and Saber goes into his room to change. He looks around, noting how things appear normal. Nothing seems out of place. He looks towards Saber's room, pondering the discussions yesterday after his dismissal from the meeting. He begins to wonder if they made the right choice, after seeing him in such a state this morning. He sighs and shakes his head, no use judging solely on one appearance. A knock on the door brings him from his thoughts. He hears the shower running, so he gets up and answers the door. Standing before him are April, Fireball, and Colt.

"Good morning, Sir." Colt says cheerfully.

"Good morning." The Commander turns and goes back to the chair he had been in, allowing them to enter behind him, sitting down as they do.

"How's Saber?" April asks.

The Commander glances towards the bedroom door and shrugs. "Evidently, I woke him this morning." They all look slightly surprised. He nods. "He was not in day clothes when he came to the door half asleep. He said something about all of you being up a bit late?" The trio nods.

"We were up talking. I think it was close to 2 AM when we finally left here last night." April replies.

Commander Eagle nods. "Did he seem...satisfactory at that time?"

April nods. "Maybe a bit tired, but he seemed Okay."

"He seemed fine enough that when he insisted we go to our quarters for the night, we did." Fireball stated. "If I'd had any doubts, I would not have left him alone, Sir. Honestly. He seemed normal. Maybe a little down, and tired, but I expect that."

"He had seemed relieved when we agreed to leave, actually." Colt added. "I think after being around so many people yesterday, he wanted to be alone for a while."

The Commander nodded. "Perhaps I'll not be so quick to judge him. I just have to be sure that he is truly capable of handling the situation." The others nod their understanding.

April sighs. "I know you do. I honestly think he would admit it if he felt that he couldn't handle it. He knows that you basically have put your reputation on the line for him and I don't think he would purposely do something that would tarnish that." Her father nods. "Besides, he actually almost seemed eager to get started. Like just doing something normal would help him cope."

The Commander looks towards the bedroom door. "I hope so."

The bedroom door opens and Saber walks out, looking much better. "Oh, good morning." he states surprised, as he sees his living room full of people. "I didn't know all of you had arrived." He goes and sits on the couch beside Colt.

Commander Eagle watches him making sure to make eye contact. "You seem a bit more...alert now."

Saber smiles slightly and nods. "Yes, Sir. I apologize for earlier. I just was not fully awake." The Commander nods and Saber looks around to the others. "After not sleeping well a few nights, I suppose I just...crashed." Did everyone else get any sleep?" He smirks as a blush creeps onto the cheeks of his teammates. "Perhaps I got the most sleep of any of you."

Commander Eagle smiles at his teasing of his teammates and relaxes a bit before clearing his throat, causing everyone to look at him. "I want all of you to hear this, so I am glad that all of you are here, as it pertains to all of you." He looks to Saber, "After you left yesterday, there were several...discussions. Some people were starting to second guess their votes on allowing you to continue working at this point in time..." Saber nods, noting the pause. "However, with the arguments you put forth and the others..." he pauses, nodding towards his teammates, "...testimony on your behalf, we were able to convince those who were having doubts of your resolve. On a personal note, I will say that you held yourself together well yesterday. King Jarre was really testing you. He wanted to break you down."

Saber sighs, nodding. "I was prepared for it. I knew someone would. I would have been surprised if he hadn't tried, honestly. He is always trying to stir up something, and this was just another chance to do so."

Commander Eagle nods. "Well, I suppose I should get to the point of this..." He sighs. "The board wants you to undergo some sort of grief counseling. They have not said exactly how or when, but I thought you should know it will be coming." Saber nods. "I mentioned that you would most likely be traveling as you work this case, making it harder for you to seek help, so the suggestion was made that you keep a sort of journal of your thoughts and such as you travel. It may be that no one ever reads it, but sometimes just putting things into words is therapy itself."

Saber nods again. "I can do that." He says a bit relieved. "I'll have to pick an empty one

up." He says more to himself than to anyone in particular, then continues on normally, "I am not opposed to doing that. I do find it therapeutic to write my thoughts out. It sometimes gives me a different perspective on a situation."

Commander Eagle continues, "As for the recommendation of a leader of your crew..." He looks to each one before resting his eyes on Fireball. "After much discussion, and taking everyone's opinions and rationales into account it was decided that you, Mr. Hikari will take the helm for this mission."

Fireball nods, looking to each of his teammates, then to Commander Eagle. "Yes, Sir." Commander Eagle stands up and goes over to him, Fireball stands up and meets his gaze. "You have now been given the title of 'Captain' Hikari of the Bismarck team." The Commander smiles, "I also hear that you are now my Son-In-Law." Fireball nods slightly and blushes. "Just remember that all of us have put our reputations and faith in you. We will be here for support, so do not disappoint us." He nods towards April. "Or her. Or you will regret it, Captain."

Fireball straightens up and meets the Commander's gaze. "Yes, Sir! I will do my best." The Commander smiles. "Congratulations, on both your appointment and on your marriage, Shinji." He turns to April and smiles. "I suppose you are going to take his name, April?"

April looks up. "Actually, Father, I had not thought about it." She replies. She looks towards Fireball who shrugs. "I guess it's something we should discuss." Fireball nods. Commander Eagle looks around at the team and nods. You should figure out what your plan will be. I assume you will want to leave here with the Bismarck soon, to begin the investigation.

Fireball nods. "That would seem the most logical." He looks at the others. "I vote that we all leave and get something to eat, then regroup and figure out how we want to work this."

Saber nods approvingly. "It's never good to try and think on an empty stomach." He looks to commander Eagle. "Sir, would it be possible to send any files pertaining to the incident to our computers on the Bismarck?"

Commander Eagle nods. "I'll work on that while you go eat. That should give me time, seeing as we don't have much information."

"Could Robin and Josh come along?" Colt asks. "For breakfast, I mean."

Fireball smiles. "I didn't think you meant the mission, Colt." He laughs and nods. "Of course they can come."

"Thanks. I hate I'll be leaving them so soon." Colt says.

Fireball comes and places a hand on his shoulder. "Come on, Cowboy. The sooner we start, the sooner we can get back." He leans and whispers to Colt, "To the Honeymoon." He laughs as Colt blushes. "Is everyone ready to go?" He asks aloud. Everyone nods. "Then let's go." They head out to go and get food.

Commander Eagle returns to his office. Upon entering, he notices General Whitehawk waiting patiently. "Good morning, Sir."

The General stands up and shakes hands with him. "Good morning, Charles. How is Saber doing? I assume you have gone to talk with the team already."

Commander Eagle nods. "Yes, I just left his quarters. They were all going to eat something, and then prepare to leave on the Bismarck." He nods towards his office. Let's go inside, where we can talk more...casually." The General nods, following him inside where they sit in a couple of chairs in front of his desk. "To answer your question, I think he is doing remarkably well. I wasn't so sure when he opened the

door this morning though." He chuckles.

"Oh?" The General inquires, looking interested. "Why's that?"

"Well, evidently I woke him out of a dead sleep." He sighs. "He seemed a bit...disheveled, but after showering and dressing he looked more like his old self. He made a quip about sleeping through his alarm, and not having done that since he was a child." He chuckles. "He actually seemed a bit embarrassed. I am glad to know he was sleeping. I don't think he slept much the night before."

The General nods, processing the information. "What is your feeling of him?"

The Commander thinks for a bit before answering. "I think that it is going to be difficult. He may have some...setbacks. I don't think we will have to pull him from duty. He seems very determined to get past this. He took to the idea of counseling better than I anticipated. I also suggested a journal, since I feel that they won't be near a base much for some time." He pauses, collecting his thoughts. "He seemed to be fine with it. I think he has kept one before. They have asked that I send copies of what little we do have to the computers on the Bismarck."

General Whitehawk nods. "I would expect that." He pauses. "Do we really even have any information?"

Commander Eagle shrugs. "Not much. Just some radar images and I heard a tech this morning saying we may have come across some infrared satellite images. I was going to check my computer to see if they had sent me anything new." He gets up and walks around his desk and logs onto his terminal. Upon opening his email he clicks on some images. "Not much here, that I can see, but if anyone can get something from this, it would be April." He forwards the files to each team member. "They should have everything that I have here within an hour or so." He goes and sits back down across from the General. "Do you have any ideas on this, Sir?"

The General pauses to decide how to proceed and sighs. "Charles, I don't think we have dealt with this before. I think that perhaps it was a freak accident by something that did not intend to be where it was. At least that is my hope. I want to believe we can live in peace. God knows we could all use a break."

"But?" Commander Eagle presses.

General Whitehawk nods slightly. "But...I have a feeling that we are not going to like what we find." He sighs, looking out the window. "I think that we may be facing an entirely new enemy. Well, new to us, at least." The silence that followed was almost oppressive.

Commander Eagle goes and looks out the window, staring out over the Calvary Command base. "I think that perhaps it's time for us to realize we may never truly have peace." He sighs. "As much as I want to believe the Outrider War is over, I am beginning to think that perhaps it was just a prelude for things to come...I have heard rumors, General..." He turns and faces the other man, still seated in front of his desk. "...Rumors of other empires that are trying to expand their grip over humanity as a whole. I'd like to think I am wrong, but the more I stop and think about, the more likely that this is just a taste of what could be coming... Perhaps this next time it won't be Outriders we are fighting. It may be something far worse." He pauses to collect his thoughts. "I am more inclined to believe that this incident was not a politically motivated attack, like we first believed. Those that died, I think were just in the wrong place at the wrong time. Not that if that is indeed the case, will make it any better for those that lost loved ones, but it may change how things are handled." He goes and sits across from the General again. "I sincerely hope that I am wrong."

General Whitehawk nods grimly. "So do I." He looks closely at Commander Eagle for a

moment, choosing his words carefully, "Is this...feeling you have the reason why you have allowed a breach of protocol within the Bismarck Team?"

Commander Eagle looks at him surprised for a moment, and then nods. "Yes, Sir. It is." He pauses to think before continuing, "I feel that we could very well lose one or all of them. I am hopeful that we won't. But, whatever the outcome is, I would want to know they had a chance at being happy." The General nods, and the Commander continues, "I just wish Saber had been able to..."

"I know, Charles." General Whitehawk sighs. "War is never easy, and this has been rough on him, on all of them. We all just want a chance at happiness. We want our children to have that chance as well...sometimes even more than we want it for ourselves. I understand why you allowed them to get married. I'm not against it. I just hope that we are only planning for the worst, and not about to have to live it." After long pause, he continues, "We have to hold onto a hope that things will work out in the end. Perhaps Saber will find love again, though I doubt he will want to for a while." Commander Eagle nods. "They are stronger than we think. They have already seen so much, even though they are so young. All of them have shown a strong resolve to overcome obstacles. Saber is a good example of that. I'm not sure I would be as...stoic as he seems to be. I see pain in his face, but in his eyes, I see a resolve to become better...to get past the pain and move on." He sighs. "His father would be proud of him."

General Whitehawk nods in agreement. "I know he would be."

It was mid-afternoon and April and Fireball are sitting in their terminals going over the files sent to them by Commander Eagle. Saber comes in, carrying a bag, glances over to them. "Have you found anything of interest yet?"

April looks up and shakes her head. "Nothing yet. I'm about to try and clean up these infrared satellite images that Dad sent over. They seem a bit more promising."

Saber nods and continues on to his quarters, plopping his bag down onto his bed and sighs. Looking around everything seems to be just as he left it. He shakes his head to clear it from the memories trying to come to the surface of his mind. He takes a deep breath and sighs before returning to the area where he left April and Fireball. He enters the room to see Fireball glancing over April's shoulder. "Find something?" He walks over to peer over her other shoulder.

"Possibly." She replies. "I'm trying to blow it up a bit more." She starts pressing several buttons, before her screen suddenly gets fuzzy before clearing up and showing what looks to be a faded image of a space vessel. "There we go." A stunned silence hangs in the air as the trio stare at the screen before them. "It's...it's definitely a ship..." April manages to whisper.

"Not one like I've ever seen." Saber comments dryly. "At least we know that someone else was there."

"And, they aren't Outriders." Fireball adds.

April studies the ship for several minutes. "Perhaps I can clean these images up a bit more and we can pass them around to the rest of the alliance. Maybe someone else will recognize this ship."

Saber nods. "At least then we might know who or what we are dealing with."