

Fay clicked his tongue as he stared at the images on the viewport. They were hovering above the main spaceport on Kleet but it didn't look like a good time for them to land. Pirates were in the process of withdrawing from the area and dead bodies, many of them police, littered the spaceport floor. Fay noticed the freighter that Charles was flying docked below, but there were several pirates near it.

"Take us to the police station so I can get to the bottom of what happened here," Fay commanded.

The Dark Bounty Hunter piloting the ship tilted the Justicebringer slightly and then pushed the thrusters up a notch, moving them away from the spaceport. Fay sat in the captain's chair, wondering if it had been Charles who had killed all of the police down there.

"Initiating spaceport landing," the pilot announced a few minutes later.

"I told you to take us to the police station," Fay said.

"This is the nearest spaceport to the station, sir."

Fay stood up.

"I didn't say take us to the nearest spaceport, I said take us to the police station."

The Dark Bounty Hunter exchanged a glance with one of the other bounty hunters on the bridge, then shrugged.

"You're the boss."

They were flying over the outer edge of the city now and Fay tapped his foot impatiently as they approached the police station.

"Enhance it," he said, pointing to the station on the viewport.

With the punch of a few buttons one of the men had zoomed all the way in on the top of the police station.

"What are you waiting for?" Fay asked. "That looks like a perfectly fine place for a landing to me."

The pilot turned around and looked at him.

"You can't be serious."

Fay fixed him with an intense stare.

"Do I strike you as a man who jokes?" Fay asked.

Another man on the bridge stepped forward. He wore heavy black armor and a helmet that covered the top half of his face, leaving his mouth and chin exposed.

His name was Brewster and he seemed to have the respect of the other Dark Bounty Hunters.

“We don’t even know if that station can support the weight of the ship, Mr. Fay,” Brewster said.

“I don’t care,” Fay shouted. “Charles Bryant is not slipping through our fingers. He’s already had time on this planet and we need to know what the police know so we can track him down.”

“But if the roof...” Brewster began.

“The roof isn’t our problem,” Fay snapped. “Charles Bryant is, and with every minute we waste he gets harder to find.”

Brewster shrugged at the pilot, who turned back towards his console.

“Initiating landing,” the pilot said.

Fay watched as the top of the police station grew larger on the viewport. From higher up it had looked as if the Justicebringer was going to fit easily but now that they were closer Fay had his doubts. He moved quickly to the captain’s chair and strapped his safety belts on. The ship shuddered violently as it touched down. Everyone held their breath until finally the pilot turned towards them and spoke.

“All clear.”

After undoing his straps, Fay stood up and left the bridge.

“Lower ramp, authorization code Fay alpha,” he said as he approached the back of the ship.

The ramp lowered swiftly and he strode out onto it, feeling confident in his fancy equipment. When he realized that none of the Dark Bounty Hunters were following him he turned back around. All eight of them stood at the top of the ramp.

“What are you waiting for?” Fay asked. “We need to get moving.”

Brewster stood in front of the other seven men, his arms crossed. None of them budged.

“You work for me!” Fay shouted.

“You hired us to hunt down a man, not talk to the police,” Brewster said. “You can understand that men like us make a habit of never talking to police, can’t you?”

Fay sighed heavily, making a mental note to find some law abiding bounty hunters to be his crew as soon as he could. Deep down he knew that men like Brewster were needed for this particular mission, but once it was done he wanted the Justicebringer to be home only to men who carried themselves on the right side of the law.

“Fine, stay here while I figure out what’s going on,” Fay said at last.

He turned to approach the roof access door but it flung open. An older gentlemen with an angry disposition rushed forward, shaking his finger.

“You can’t land here!” the man shouted.

“And who would you be to make such a decision?” Fay asked.

The officer looked stunned over the question.

“Why, I’m Chief Collins, as in the top ranking police officer on the planet!”

“Ah, perfect, you’re just the man I need to speak to,” Fay said with a smile.

“Son, who in the hell are you?” Collins asked.

“Professor Gordon Fay, head of the Sociology department of Covan Unified University on Academia 7 and newly ordained Bounty Hunter,” Fay answered proudly.

“Well Mr. Fay, you either get your damn ship off my station or I’m going to have you arrested.”

“If you arrest me then how will my men and I take Professor Charles Bryant off of your hands?” Fay asked.

The Chief sized him up for a moment before answering.

“That’s who you’re after?”

“That’s right. Bryant’s been on your planet for less than a day and already a war has erupted in your main spaceport. If you help me track him down I’ll have him out of here by sunrise and the University will make a generous donation to the cleanup efforts of your spaceport.”

“The sun doesn’t rise on Kleet, Mr. Fay, but I like what you’re saying so I’ll tell you what I know. We got a tip that Bryant and his crew might be touching down so we set up in the spaceport to wait for him.”

“Who tipped you?” Fay asked.

“A business man, does a lot of deals here on Kleet. Just as he said, Bryant shows up. We got him surrounded but just then a whole fleet of pirates swoop in and start a damn war right there in the spaceport. My men had to pull back.”

This wasn't what Fay had been hoping to hear.

“So you're telling me you don't know where Bryant went?” he asked.

“I know exactly where he went. That man and his friends left a trail of bodies leading right to the doorstep. They went straight to the offices of the businessman, the one who tipped us off earlier. My agents just reported in that there was a big battle going on in there until just a few minutes ago.”

“Well then what are you waiting for?” Fay asked. “Head over there and arrest him!”

Chief Collins laughed.

“Head into the city? That's not going to happen, Mr. Fay.”

“But you just said that you went to the spaceport, that's located right in the middle of town!”

“That was a special arrangement made by the business man. He had to pull a lot of strings to allow us safe passage that deep into the city,” the Chief answered. “Normally we just patrol the outer edges here, keep law where we can and keep out of where we can't.”

“This is unacceptable!” Fay shouted. “You're a man of the law, it's your duty to...”

“Yelling about it ain't gonna change a thing,” Collins interrupted. “I've got a couple of cars below that you can use and I'll guide you by communicator straight to the building but that's all the help I can give.”

Fay was fuming but could tell he wasn't going to get anything else out of the man.

“Fine,” he said. “But I assure you that I'll be logging a complaint with the Galactic Council about your lax policing here on Kleet.”

“You go right on ahead and do that, Mr. Fay.”

Knowing that time was against them, Fay turned away and rushed back onto the Justicebringer. The eight Dark Bounty Hunters were inside, having retreated just far enough into the ship so as not to be seen by any cops. Fay quickly relayed to them everything he had learned.

The Bond Episode Eight

“Sounds like Isaac Falkinburg,” Brewster offered.

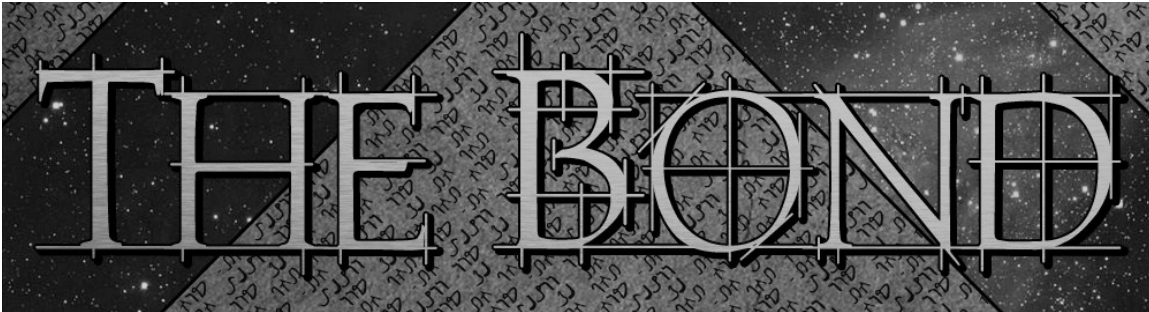
“What?” Fay asked. “Falkinburg’s a criminal. He jumped a bond recently. The Chief said it was a businessman that tipped them off, not some lowlife like Falkinburg.”

Brewster laughed.

“With all due respect Mr. Fay, you have no idea what you’re walking into here,” Brewster said. “Kleet’s the black market capital of the galaxy and on a planet like this, men like Isaac Falkinburg are kings.”

Fay didn’t like the sound of that and felt his resolve wavering for a moment. He shook his head and gritted his teeth, then spoke.

“I won’t allow Charles Bryant and his criminal friends to slink away into the blackness of a world like this and disappear. He thinks he’s safe here, among his element. That means he’ll never see us coming.”



CREATED BY PHILLIP HALL

WRITTEN BY A.C. HALL & PHILLIP HALL

EPISODE EIGHT – “HOW DARK THE GALAXY CAN BE”

“This is all your fault!” Penelope yelled, sticking her finger in Charles’ face.

He stared back at her stoically, giving zero reaction to her outburst. He had discreetly covered up the goriest of corpses in the room as they all recovered from their brutal fight with the harbinger. Then he had watched as each of them coped with what had just happened in their own way. For Penelope, this meant getting angry.

“You released the harbinger and look at all the death he caused! That you caused!” Penelope shouted.

Charles’ head was pounding and he was finding it harder and harder to bite his tongue.

“I made a strategic decision to...”

“No you didn’t, don’t try to justify it like that,” Sean interrupted.

The young man was leaning on the wall near Penelope, his mood darkening more by the minute.

“Excuse me?” Charles asked.

“No, you’re not excused Professor Bryant, not for all of this,” Sean said, sweeping his hand across the bloody room. “Penelope’s right, what you did makes you just as responsible for all of these deaths as the harbinger.”

Sean turned to face the harbinger who was sitting on the stairs.

“And Charles may be too nice to say it, but I’m not. You’re a sick, twisted, murdering, beast. No man would kill like you do. You’re an animal, and someone should put you down,” Sean said.

Harbinger stood up slowly, his face an unreadable mask.

“If I hadn’t been fighting back with all of my will against Isaac’s control then I would’ve killed you the first second I laid hands on you,” Harbinger said. “I could’ve snapped your bones like twigs, it would’ve been over in an instant.”

Sean pulled his pistol and aimed it at the harbinger. Charles rushed forward and knocked it out of his hand.

“Enough!” Charles yelled.

Everyone fell silent. The harbinger turned away and climbed the stairs, disappearing onto the second floor of the building. Charles faced Sean and Penelope who were staring at him hard.

“You two may disagree with my decision to let Harbinger run free but that was the only choice we had,” Charles said loudly, barely keeping his emotions from spilling over. “We would’ve been ambushed repeatedly on the way here and if we had breached this building we wouldn’t have had a chance.”

“What chance did these people have?” Penelope yelled.

His last ounce of self control disappeared and Charles rushed her, stopping right in her face.

“WHAT CHANCE DID MY WIFE HAVE?! HUH?” he screamed. “She was murdered in cold blood by thugs like these, all of them acting under the direct orders of your husband!”

Penelope covered her mouth and stepped away from him. Sean put his arm around her as he too stared at Charles in shock. Jerry approached from across the room quickly. He put his hand on Charles’ back gently and tried to lead him away from Penelope. Charles realized what he had just done and allowed himself to be led. Jerry took him up the stairs and long after they disappeared from view Sean and Penelope remained silent.

“Charles Bryant knows better than most how dark the galaxy can be,” Sam said.

He had remained quiet since the fight with the harbinger but approached now, a sad smile on his bearded face.

“Sometimes a man has to go to great lengths to survive against the evils he faces.”

Sam sat on the stairs.

“I didn’t know about his wife,” Penelope said quietly.

“Most people don’t,” Sam responded. “The first time I met Charles it was a few years after his wife was killed. He was tracking a bounty on Kinder 4, a real nasty world. I was there on some business of my own and ran myself into a bad situation. Charles was passing through town and he saved my life. I caught up to him in the hills outside of town so I could thank him. I’ll never forget what I saw in his eyes when he turned towards me.”

Sam paused for a long moment, reliving the memory in vivid detail in his mind.

“There was a fire in him that burned his insides every second of every day. He had already found most of the men responsible for his wife’s death, but not all of them. And that fire, that need for revenge, it consumed everything that he was,” Sam continued. “We became friends, and over the years Charles has changed a lot. In ways he’s recovered, regained the goodness that made him who he was, but make no mistake about it, that fire still burns in him, every second of every day. He’s better at controlling it now, but it will be there until the day that Isaac Falkinburg is dead.”

His words were weighty and they all fell silent for many minutes as they reflected on them.

“Charles walks a fine line in this galaxy and believe me when I tell you that it is razor thin. On one side is goodness, lawfulness, happiness, control. But on the other is hatred, revenge, anger, and violence.”

After another long stretch of silence, Sean spoke.

“I didn’t realize that it was that bad. I don’t want to sound insensitive, because I care deeply for the Professor, but maybe he’s not the best person to be leading us right now.”

Sam stood up quickly, a stern look on his face.

“I’d follow Charles Bryant into hell itself, because I know one more thing about him, his most annoying trait,” Sam said, pausing to smile. “In the end, he always does the right thing.”

Movement caught their attention and they looked up to see Charles rushing down the stairs, his pistol in hand.

“We’ve got company,” Charles said quietly. “Eight or nine heavily armed men, approaching fast.”

He paused at the base of the stairs and turned in a slow circle.

“Where’s the harbinger?”



As soon as Harbinger was out of sight of the others he slumped against the wall and let out a shuddering breath. He saw a jacket draped over the back of a nearby chair and grabbed it, then continued up the stairs. He moved slowly, his head pounding, and it wasn’t until he emerged out onto the roof that he was able to take a deep breath.

Harbinger used the jacket to wipe at his face. The others had probably thought the blood on his face wasn’t his own, but the sharp pain in his head told him otherwise. Blood ran from each of his eyes, his nose, and his ears, the excruciating side effect of trying to resist the mind control of Isaac Falkinburg.

Over the years Harbinger had made a few attempts to defy the Conqueror but always gave up soon after the pain started. This time he fought against it with

everything he had. During the fight he could feel the electronics in his brain feeding back against him, punishing him for resisting his master's commands to kill everyone in the room. For a man whose life had been nothing but pain, it had been the worst pain Harbinger had ever felt.

He crouched down in the middle of the roof, taking another deep breath to calm himself. The looks on the faces of the people below flashed into his mind. He didn't blame them for their distrust, that's how people had looked at him his entire life. It was just another side effect of being a monster with circuitry in your brain that could force you to attack anyone at a moment's notice.

Harbinger ran his hand down the back of his bald head, wondering what would happen if he ripped the electronics out. Four Horsemen doctors had assured him that doing so would kill him instantly, but their opinion was obviously skewed.

He recalled the words that Charles had spoken to him, saying that if he'd help them bring down Isaac then he'd release him. Harbinger still wasn't sure how he felt about taking a man at his word, but so far Charles hadn't activated the bracelets and forced him to do anything. It helped that Harbinger sensed a kindred spirit within Charles, a rage bubbling just below the surface, always threatening to break through.

Thinking deeply wasn't among Harbinger's favorite things to do and he tossed the blood soaked coat down and then stood. He walked to the edge of the building and stretched, feeling better now that Isaac was long gone from the area. Harbinger closed his eyes and took a long, deep breath.

His eyes shot open, a scent on the air putting him straight into combat mode. He scanned the dark streets below and saw them. Eight well armed, coordinated men, approaching the building fast. There was a ninth man among them, scrawny and clumsy, obviously a civilian.

The harbinger was instantly back into combat mode, all other thoughts gone from his mind as he studied the men below. As they prepared to breach the building Harbinger pulled out his knife and smiled.



“Get upstairs, Penelope,” Charles said.

She was more than a little insulted over being treated like a helpless woman that had to run and hide at any sign of trouble but figured now wasn't the best time to argue. She moved up the stairs quickly as Charles, Sean, Sam and Jerry started taking up defensive positions. Charles flipped up the remnants of the table in the middle of the room and hid behind it. Sean and Jerry used a small desk as cover while Sam had a grim stack of corpses shielding him from view where he crouched in the back corner of the room, Lenore aimed straight at the entrance.

They stayed still and silent for several minutes before the door swung open. A Dark Bounty Hunter with a large rifle stepped into the doorway. He wore a half helmet and swept his gun across the room slowly. After a moment he stepped back outside and another figure appeared. The room wasn't very well lit, but Charles could tell that this person was of a very slight build and looked uneasy wearing combat gear. The person took two steps into the room, then came to an immediate halt when they saw the blood and gore spread about.

"Oh good lord," the person exclaimed as they recoiled, backing right into a Dark Bounty Hunter.

Charles recognized the voice. He stood from behind the broken table.

"Gordon?" Charles asked. "What are you doing here?"

Fay straightened himself and came back into the building, doing his best to walk tall and proud and not look at the death and gore all around.

"I'm here to bring you to justice for your crimes, Charles," Fay said.

Charles just stared at him for a long moment, not believing what he was hearing.

"You're what?" Charles asked.

The Dark Bounty Hunters with Fay began pouring into the room, taking up positions along the far wall. Two of them broke off and moved as a team towards the middle of the room, flanking Charles. Fay smiled, feeling much more confident now.

"Charles Bryant, for harboring the fugitive Penelope Falkinburg and aiding her in her escape from the law and for the murder of Robert Kent, you are hereby commanded to return to Academia 7 with me to face the consequences of your actions," Fay said loudly.

Charles quickly studied each of the Dark Bounty Hunters in the room. He immediately recognized that these were more than capable men, they were probably the most dangerous Dark Bounty Hunters in this quadrant of the galaxy. He knew that Sean, Sam and Jerry were coming to the same conclusions and could feel them growing anxious. The last thing they wanted was for this to turn into a firefight.

“Listen to me Gordon, you’ve got your facts all wrong,” Charles said.

Fay scoffed.

“Do I?”

“Penelope Falkinburg is helping me track down her husband. And I assure you, I didn’t kill Robert Kent.”

Sean poked his head up from behind the desk.

“It’s true Professor Fay,” Sean said. “I was in that house when Robert died, and Professor Bryant had nothing to do with it. He wasn’t even in the house yet.”

“Yes well, yours isn’t exactly an unbiased opinion, is it Mr. Varis?” Fay snapped.

Jerry slowly stood up, drawing the aim of many of the Dark Bounty Hunters. He raised his hands, showing that he was unarmed, and stepped forward.

“My name is Jerry Rapada and I can back up what you’re being told. What happened to Robert Kent was tragic and I wish badly that it hadn’t happened, but it wasn’t Charles who killed that young man.”

Fay watched him suspiciously as Jerry took another step forward. Jerry was just a few feet away from Charles now and their eyes met. Charles immediately grew nervous, realizing that his old friend was planning something.

“I’m afraid your account can’t be trusted either, Mr. Rapada,” Fay said. “You’re a known friend and associate of Charles Bryant, so of course you’d want to keep him out of prison.”

Jerry took another step forward.

“My connection to Charles has nothing to do with it,” he said. “This is about one thing and one thing only, and that’s the truth. You are interested in the truth, aren’t you Mr. Fay?”

Fay looked at Charles and then back to Jerry quickly, growing anxious.

“Stop moving,” Fay commanded.

Jerry was right beside Charles now and he spoke quietly out of the side of his mouth.

“I’ll draw their attention. Get Penelope and the rest of you get out of here,” he said, barely above a whisper.

“No, Jerry...” Charles whispered back.

Jerry didn’t let Charles finish and took another step forward, now just five feet from Fay.

“I said stop moving!” Fay yelled.

“This doesn’t have to be an uncivilized situation, Mr. Fay,” Jerry said. “Why don’t we all lower our weapons and just talk about this.”

Jerry stepped forward again. Fay’s hand was shaking as he pulled his pistol out of its holster. The gun shook as he raised it and aimed it at Jerry.

“I’m telling you to stay still!” Fay yelled.

“No one here wants to hurt you, Mr. Fay,” Jerry said soothingly.

The room shook suddenly as a portion of the ceiling came collapsing down. In a matter of seconds concrete and lights came slamming down right on top of the two Dark Bounty Hunters who had been flanking Charles. Among the falling rubble was the massive shape of the harbinger.

“Ahhhh!” Fay screamed.

A single gunshot rang out. Jerry’s eyes went wide and his hand went to his chest. He pulled it away and looked to see that it was covered in blood.

Fay dropped the gun to the floor, tears welling up in his eyes.

“I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to,” he mumbled.

Jerry fell to his knees.

“Jerry!” Charles yelled.

Charles rushed forward.

“They’re attacking!” one of the Dark Bounty Hunters yelled.

Fay’s Dark Bounty Hunters opened fire.

“No!” Fay yelled, his voice drowned out by the roar of gunfire.

Charles grabbed Jerry and pulled him backwards, flinging both of them to the floor behind the table. Harbinger rushed forward, his knife drawn. Sean was returning fire on the Dark Bounty Hunters and several of them were shooting at him, unaware of the harbinger moving among them. Within seconds he had

already slit the throat of one of the men. The second saw him a moment too late and Harbinger plunged his knife through the man's combat armor, deep into his chest.

The man known as Brewster rushed forward. Harbinger swung his knife horizontally, going for a decapitating blow. Brewster rolled at the last second, the blade bouncing off the top of his helmet. He came up into a sprint and never turned back, rushing straight out the door and into the blackness beyond.

Sensing the wisdom in Brewster's move the other three Dark Bounty Hunters still alive moved for the door. Two of them made it but the harbinger caught the last one from behind. He dropped the knife and put one of his massive hands on each side of the man's helmet. Harbinger screamed as he squeezed as hard as he could. With a sickening crunch the helmet crushed inwards. The Dark Bounty Hunter crumpled to the floor, dead.

In one swift movement the harbinger stooped down and grabbed his knife then rushed towards Fay, who was frozen in place.

"Don't," Charles said.

His voice was quiet but Harbinger had heard it clearly. He paused, the knife just inches from Fay's face.

"Don't?" Harbinger asked.

Charles was crouched beside Jerry, staring down at his friend. When he didn't respond Harbinger lowered the knife and pointed out the door.

"What about those three?"

"Just let them go," Charles answered without looking up.

Harbinger frowned. He could still smell them and had been looking forward to chasing them down.

"You're the boss," he said finally, putting his knife away.

Sam rushed forward.

"Is he going to...?" he asked, his voice trailing off as he got a good look at Jerry.

Charles shook his head slowly.

"He's gone," Charles said quietly.

Sean moved from behind the desk and put his gun away, his eyes glued to Jerry's lifeless body. Charles was kneeling in the pooling blood, holding Jerry's

now dead hand. Sam was shaking as he stared down at his old friend. His face was red and he looked like he was going to explode.

“I...” Fay muttered

It had barely been a sound, but it was all Sam needed to hear. He came forward fast and Fay didn't have time to run. Sam grabbed Fay's armored chestplate and pulled him forward until he was just inches from his face.

“It was an accident!” Fay cried. “I've never fired a gun in my life!”

Sam said nothing but he continued to shake. His eyes were wide and devoid of all reason. He was breathing heavily, his nostrils flaring with each exhale.

“I didn't mean to hurt your friend. I didn't want to hurt anyone,” Fay continued.

Sam roared and flung Fay to the ground as hard as he could. The air was knocked from Fay's lungs and he slid to a stop on the floor. Sam stalked over to him and raised Lenore high into the air. He stood like that, shaking violently before bringing down what would surely be a killing blow.

“Sam!” Sean yelled. “He's not worth it.”

Penelope emerged at the top of the stairs and saw what was happening.

“Don't do it, Sam,” she pleaded. “Too many people have died here today.”

Sean and Penelope both turned to Charles, expecting him to also tell Sam not to follow through with it. But Charles just stared, motionless, his eyes fixed upon Lenore.

“RAHHH!” Sam bellowed as he brought Lenore downward.

The sledgehammer crushed into the floor less than an inch from Fay's head. After taking a moment to realize that Sam had purposely missed and that he was still alive, Fay broke into sobs. Sam had to wrench upwards hard to dislodge Lenore from the floor, then he slowly walked away.

“The neighborhood is restless,” Harbinger said, standing at the door and sniffing. “We should get moving.”

Charles took one last look at his dead friend and then stood.

“We need something that could tell us where Isaac is going next,” he said.

“There are some computers up here,” Penelope said, pointing back up the stairs. “And I think I saw a briefcase too.”

“Show Harbinger and Sean where it's at,” Charles said.

Penelope nodded and headed back upstairs, soon followed by Sean and the harbinger. Charles walked slowly over to Fay and looked down at him. After staring at him for a long moment Charles held out his hand. Fay tentatively took it and Charles pulled him to his feet. The two men stared at one another as they stood face to face. Charles hadn't yet released Fay's hand.

"I'm so sorry Charles," Fay said. "You have to believe that I didn't mean for this to happen."

Charles let his words sink in for a moment before responding.

"Once you're outside the confines of the classroom, life can be unpredictable. The galaxy is a big, dangerous place, and sometimes bad things happen around us that aren't completely our fault."

"That's right," Fay said. "That's exactly what happened. I'm glad you understand."

Charles pulled him in closer.

"I'm glad YOU understand," he said. "I'm a teacher, yes, but I also live out here, in this, all the time. Laws and rules matter, they separate us from the beasts, but sometimes the difference between life and death, between escape and capture, between your friend living or being slain in front of your eyes, is razor thin, split second fast. In the heat of the moment rules and laws don't mean as much as surviving, as doing whatever you can to save lives."

Fay's eyes were wide with fear.

"My... my hand, Charles. You're crushing my hand," Fay said.

Charles released him and Fay stumbled backwards. Penelope, Sean and Harbinger came back down the stairs, carrying multiple computers and documents.

"What were the Gray Buccaneers orders at the spaceport, Sam?" Charles asked.

"Most should be withdrawn by now."

Charles nodded, then turned towards Harbinger.

"How much more presence do the Four Horsemen have on Kleet?"

"More than we want to deal with in our current condition," Harbinger answered. "They're certainly onto the freighter by now."

A moment later Charles led them out of the building and towards the nearby vehicles that Fay had arrived in.

"Looks like we're taking Fay's ship then," Charles said.

“About that, Charles,” Fay said. “I didn’t exactly leave it in a normal landing spot.”



“Are you sure you don’t just want me to kill all of them?” Harbinger asked.

“We’ve spilled enough blood on this world,” Charles answered. “Just stick to the plan.”

Harbinger nodded and hung back as the others entered the police station.

“What’s the meaning of this?” Chief Collins bellowed.

He watched as a motley crew came marching into the station. Fay approached, leading Charles Bryant. Charles was in handcuffs.

“I’ve captured him,” Fay said. “The threat to your world is over.”

Collins looked at Charles for a long moment, then motioned towards Sam, Penelope, and Sean who were hauling computers and documents towards the stairs.

“Who are they?”

“This really is no longer your issue,” Fay said. “I’ll be bidding you farewell and taking Bryant back to Academia 7 now.”

“Hold on just one damn minute,” Collins said. “This man was part of a group that killed several of my officers. He’s going to answer for that crime right here on Kleet!”

A shadow settled over Chief Collins and he slowly looked up to see a mountain of a man approaching.

“I believe Mr. Fay said we were leaving,” Harbinger said menacingly.

Collins involuntarily gulped as he looked at the bloody monster before him. He briefly considered going for his gun but was quite sure that this manbeast could rip him limb from limb before he could fire it. Collins’ eyes darted around the station, taking stock of how many able bodied officers were within shouting range. The number ended at five, a number he believed to be far too low to contend with the man standing before him.

Finally Collins nodded.

“Of course,” he said. “I’m sorry to have delayed you.”

Fay turned away, leading Charles up the stairs. Once they were out of sight Harbinger backed towards the steps. He smiled wickedly before turning and bounding up the steps.

No one bothered them as they made their way to the roof and boarded Fay's ship. After spending their last trip on the battered freighter, the site of such a technologically advanced ship was welcome. Sean moved quickly into the bridge and settled into the pilot's seat, looking over the state of the art console. Normally complex startup routines were initiated with just the touch of a few buttons and he smiled.

"Nice," he said.

Everyone made their way to the bridge and once Sean was certain they were all there he kicked on the engines. Due to the odd place the ship had landed it was necessary to take off in a straight upwards motion. For a normal ship that was a difficult maneuver, but Sean found it easy in the Justicebringer. Soon he had them exiting Kleet's atmosphere.

The mood on the bridge was somber and everyone had taken to their own separate areas. They drifted aimlessly for a few minutes before Sean finally swiveled in his chair to face everyone.

"Where am I going?"

"The Gray Buccaneers are waiting for us behind Kleet's third moon," Sam said.

Sean began heading in that direction.

"Great, pirates," Fay muttered to himself as he sat with his back against the wall.

"I always wanted to be a pirate," Harbinger mused.

Charles didn't hear anything that was being said. He was wiping vigorously at the blood on his hand and arm, wanting badly to clean it off. He'd been in some dark situations before and this wasn't the first time he'd had blood on him but for some reason this blood was proving difficult to clean off.

End of episode 8

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