

# **MASTER DEFENDERS 3**

## **SHIELDS OF HOPE**

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I will like to thank my family, friends, mentors, and all other supporters of *MB Realms Entertainment* books and merchandise.

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MASTER DEFENDERS 3: (Recommended for ages 12 and up)

FICTION

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MATT BHANKS

**MASTER  
DEFENDERS**  
SHIELDS OF HOPE





# THE BIRTH OF A NEW WORLD

## AN ASSEMBLY OF GALAXIES

*Up above, there is an everlasting state of stars and a constant realm of prospects. Space, the dense field of a multitude of planets, provides an opportunity for life-forms to experience new domains. These worlds tend to be within their galaxy, but the best travelers—the greatest nomads—yearn to scout the entire cosmos. A universe of endless possibilities would take eons upon lifetimes to fully travel through once. And based on this knowledge, a group of intellectual mystical creatures known as the Sychophemians or simply ‘Sychophemia’ decided to search the cosmos the most they could.*

*Many generations ago, the Sychophemians used their gifts to create a means of transportation through a hand-held automated key. By voice command, this item opened doorways to new galaxies. And as the creatures traveled numerous realms, collecting a mass of followers that abided by their ideals, they decided to voyage to a very specific galaxy, one that had a drifting rock-strewn moon. The Sychophemians found this galaxy, and when they embarked on this moon owned by a race of creatures known as Avinoriacs, they made sure to do so by opening all the doorways of their new union. Many creatures from a multitude of galaxies coasted to this star and settled upon the land, training their followers to stand by an immoral organization, one filled by shadows.*

*The Avinoriacs detested this order and collected their own factions to challenge the Sychophemians. Their battles spanned for decades, eras of abhorrence. And over time, the Avinoriacs prevailed and branded themselves as royalty. But as for the plaguing order of the Sychophemians, it lived on with the years. Although nations now trusted the Avinoriacs, some secretly pledged to the organization. Disasters sought revenge on the rock-strewn moon. Nations were slaughtered, but the Avinoriacs and their followers succeeded against each adversity. From these triumphs, they developed beliefs that were strong as rocks and gave themselves a name. Rock of Avinoriacs—also known as Pixalians.*

“You can’t expect me to believe that’s how it happened,” said an adolescent lavender coloured Pixalian in his language. He walked with his companion down a desolate path. The land was covered in dirt and was regarded as a zone for delinquents. The Pixalian didn’t think the story was real, having been told other versions except everything was considered a myth. The other Pixalian, who was an Avinoriac of the same age and carried a gold shield, said, “That’s surely how it happened.”

“How can you be so sure?”

“Because...I heard it from the order itself.” The lavender coloured creature stopped in his saunter. He scratched his head and asked, “What do you know about the order?” The Avinoriac chuckled and then explained, “I’m a part of it.”

“What?! What were you thinking?!”

“Shush, quiet down would you?”

“There’s nobody here to begin with.”

“Well yeah,” replied the creature with a menacing smile. “It’s just that you’re being too loud. And why does it matter anyway? If only you knew the wonders it does for you.”

“Wonders? You gave your life to something forbidden in the Kingdom. I’m going to tell—”

“You will not tell the King.”

“He’s your father and he must know! This is absolutely absurd and probably your worst idea ever! Don’t you want to take on the throne one day? Give me one good reason why I shouldn’t tell him.”

“Because,” the Avinoriac stopped pacing as his grin grew wider. “If you do that, we’re done being friends. I don’t care about the throne. I care about the order, mainly because it gives me hope. Look, I’ve read all of their chronicles. Nobody knows it, but I’m already a scholar of their ideals. I know things the coalition heads don’t even know.” The Avinoriac took out a glowing sphere.

“What’s that?”

“I have a small hunch of what it could be. I sort of *borrowed* it from the order.”

“You’re not the same anymore. You’ve changed.”

“Only for the better.” The Avinoriac spun it around and spoke phrases that were foreign to his friend. In English, the phrases read, “*Flourish this realm with our faction. Purify the world like the Sychophemian cohorts, so that we all may receive the gift of healing.*”

“What are you doing?” he asked the Avinoriac. The Avinoriac stepped back when he finished his phrases. By curiosity, the other creature did the same. Before them, a gigantic door, the biggest seen by the lavender creature, magically materialized. He was stunned as he watched his friend clap.

“Yes, so it does work!”

“What...works? W-what are you—”

“Don’t be so scared. Come on, just trust me. This is the answer to all of our problems. Let’s build a better world.” He rejoiced more and his friend’s inquisitiveness rose. The lavender creature wondered, “What are you trying to imply?” The Avinoriac slowly loomed to his companion, almost like a prowling menace. He had a devious face, placing both arms on his frightened friend’s shoulders.

“Answer this question,” the Avinoriac said with pride. “When do you expect to die?”

## EARTH THE DISTANT FUTURE TRINADEL CITY

Many black jets soared over a hospital in a dystopia called Trinadel City. Within a room on a medical bed, there was an old man in his early 70s who had just short minutes left to live. He looked through a window at the city and then moved his aged face to a comrade who was also in critical condition, but his acquaintance died in short seconds with his red eyes still open. He knew his friend a long time. There were moments when they didn’t see eye to eye. Nevertheless, nothing could change the fact that they were a team. A tear raced down the aged man’s face. The doorknob of the room twisted after bombs shook the walls.

Another man in a suit and in his late 50s stepped inside. The aged man on the medical bed coughed blood, looking at the electrocardiograph, barely seeing pulses. He smiled upon sighting the younger ally, who slowly paced to his bed side and shook his head in apprehension.

“It’s...all right,” the aged man said and then choked out more blood. The younger man found a napkin and gave it to the older man so he could wipe the mess. He said, “Thank you.”

The man cherished his presence and trembled in the bed. The suited ally observed the next bed over to see the deceased companion with his red eyes open. From his death, all the younger man could say was, "I'm sorry."

"Don't worry," the aged man replied. "Do not worry about us. You need to depart before they come."

"I'm not going anywhere."

"You must," the aged man cautioned. "You...can't be here. They'll come for you—they and their sovereign. They'll hunt you down or..."

His heart had trouble beating and the aged man stopped his sentence. He froze, like being covered in a cold sheath except his temperature was hotter than normal. Then, he coughed again. His organs were fading miserably. The suited man explained, "I'm not siding with them." He knelt down to the dying man. "We've lost many of our own. Some swore their allegiance while others perished by fire. But as for myself, I can't leave you. We're going to get through this."

"No. I...am at peace with my condition. I've made mistakes in my life, ones I truly wish I could take back. But I'm so glad that I met you, all those years ago. Thank you for caring for us."

"Don't thank me," the suited ally modestly stated. "The alliance would've never happened without your vision. But I need you to stay alive, okay? You can surely make it through this."

"I can't. I just can't do it. I'm too old. I'm dying and I'm content with it. But I want you to promise me something."

"Yes, anything," responded the suited friend as he noticed the minimal results on the electrocardiograph.

"Promise me that you'll go back to them." The suited man slowly stood up and was slightly troubled by that request. He knew he eventually would have to do it. However, the unfortunate circumstances outside always resulted in failures. He replied, "I...don't know if—"

"Please," the aged man coughed again. "They need you. They need you more than anything. Go to them. They're trying everything they can, but with you they can—"

"That's not my life anymore. They have to do this without me. I went into hiding for a reason. If I show myself...then it's over for us."

"If you don't...then the enemy has already won."

“Truth is, I heard they said they had a plan. It involves someone with special insight that can fix all of this. He’s agreed to go to where this all started. And in time, this will all change.”

“We might not have that amount of time. I know I don’t. That’s just the reality. As for you, please return. It can be your life again if you let it. Never give up hope.” He grabbed the younger man’s hand and said, “The world needs the ‘New Masters’. It needs all of them...including you.” He stared at him long, constantly repeating the words, “Promise me.”

The man didn’t know what to say. Being in his late 50s, he was well informed about what it meant to have hope. He has learned it from many people and Pixalians, but in the dystopia where the chances of a long life were slim, *hope* became very vague. The man didn’t respond, and his dying friend said the words again.

“Promise me,” he gulped and shivered. “Go back to them. Return to the team.” He yearned to hear the words, but the man couldn’t make the promise. He believed it was over, but trusted that his ally could defeat his illness.

“Promise me,” the old man said again. He squeezed the hand harder to hold on for life. “Promise me, please.” Tears arrived in the old man’s eyes. His companion standing over him said, “I..”

As he wanted to give his response, the window shattered and glass shards scattered into the room, making him fall over as armed soldiers stormed inside. The suited man was in shock, and then panicked upon seeing his aged friend get shot down with countless arrays of bullets.

“Cyfreid!” screamed the man and then departed when the armed horde aimed their weapons at him. He quickly left before bullets were fired. He ran down a hall and hid behind a wall, where his chasers continued to sprint without spotting him. The man breathed deeply, petrified by what he just saw. His ally perished in such a way that was too unbearable, and there were many others that lost their lives to a powerful sovereign.

The man thought about his friend’s last words, a plea of holding on to confidence and returning to where he belonged. Despite the words, the world was in a crisis, meant to last for eternity. He couldn’t keep the promise of going back to his old life, a life of heroism that required a specific power, one that symbolized the strength of a shield.



## **IMPORTANT NOTE**

No matter what you're going through, no matter what hardship you are facing, always remember that you can survive it. The journey is tough, and it gets harder with every step. But as long as you keep defending, I promise that you can tackle your adversity.

“I still believe in you...even if you don't.”

The story continues...

*-Matt Bhanks*



MATT BHANKS

# MASTER DEFENDERS

SHIELDS OF HOPE





*For my friends, family, and all other supporters.*



**PART 1**  
**PARTITION**





## I

## CENTENNIAL BASE

THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD SEE THE truth from above. As humans gaze up to the sky that shifts from light to darkness every morning and night, one planet is known for the history of the Pixalians. It was a diverse kingdom, a star with creatures that believed in an accumulation of eighty cultures. All eighty nations shared one goal. Equality.

Each ethnic background acquired this goal, but when new motives arrived in favour, they were crushed by newcomers. Humans embarked on the world of the creatures, and yet the Pixalians viewed them as the aliens. Just over a decade ago, a man named Richard Rageous traveled to this world and stole five rocks called Pixaliemain. Ever since, Pixalians have followed humans back to Earth and their motives rested on slaughterings. They were savages to the people. The thought never came that a few could become something better not just for Earth, but for Star-Pix.

As years passed, there were uprisings of killers, but there was also the presence of heroes with remarkable abilities. All of their gifts derived from Pixalian sources. And after the most dreaded threats like Xaliemer and Sychophemia, the prime defending alliance currently faced a new enemy.

Rogeeta Konvictis, highly intelligent, age unknown, and very lethal in plotting hits on his opponents. The galactic mobster led a clan in his family's name called Konvictis loyalists or simply, *The Konvictis*.

It has been just over two years since the 'Denver raid' that brought an end to the central sector of the Alien Investigative Agency. The sector's much aggravated leader,

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Hank Lasher, was now a corpse that was buried beside his parents' graves in Los Angeles. From that time, the east department was rebuilt and had new members applying from all areas of the world. Alteration didn't stop there. AIA East had a new commander, and she vowed to lead the department the best she could.

Tina Truman—the stunning jade-eyed field agent—was no longer the second-in-command. Now, she was the leader of AIA East. Her mentor and good friend, Cyfreid, resigned from office and joined the AIA council.

As always, the council members held their meetings in an underground facility in Denver, Colorado. And there have been recent talks about new inventions posed by General Thaddeus Mingyu, the leader of sector zero that was previously the central department. Thaddeus was a true visionary, far better than Hank, and his ideas were approved by most of the council members. One of his notions was a deterrence bomb, much like the one used on Denver to denounce the Sychophemia plague, but this time fully controlled by the militia and constructed at a covert location.

He wanted to ensure the world's safety, and if a mass nation of creatures ever came back, he would be prepared. His other idea was one with enhanced creativity. It was an AIA force field that was planned to be built around Earth. This was a holographic barrier where all life-forms, whether being human or Pixalian, needed permission in order to enter or leave the planet. Resistance to comply would result in full termination of that spacecraft. Matters were harsh, but in the eyes of the militia general and most of the other council members, the world needed to be stricter for protection. This innovation still needed time to be put in full effect, and Cyfreid had to admit that it was probably the best route, especially when it came down to the twisted aims of Rogeeta's mafia.

From what was revealed two years ago, there were one hundred terrorist stations that trusted the ARPANOID code. Every month, four or five bases were demolished and members of the Konvictis were brought to trial in front of the AIA Militia. The east sector operatives demonstrated the core

attributes of a valiant force. Citizens looked up to them, but most importantly, they looked up to its astonishing extension.

It was a belligerent blizzard in Moscow, Russia where Rogeeta's hundredth base was in the center of snow hills. The final station was shaped like an elegant palace, termed as *The Centennial Base*. Snow scattered across the helmets of stalking soldiers. Their sight was none other than members of the opposition. They were high above them, hidden from the blizzard and crouched down behind snow hills. Across from the east agents, there were heroes from their extension wearing thick white coats. An eastern operative signaled them to look down below. One of the heroes took out binoculars to analyze the troops. Then, a dark portal appeared behind him and four people walked out. They all knelt down and waited.

"You know that's never going to scare me," said Sherman Bawnder holding the binoculars. The others glimpsed at Axel and then back at the Konvictis workers. Axel shrugged his shoulders saying, "Hey, always got to try right?"

"Not really, Shade. Are you ready for this?"

"I'm ready for anything."

"I was actually talking to them." Quickly, Axel turned to the three others, reminding them that this was their final mission. The Konvictis could not last another day. It was the promise by the gallant force, the vow of the Master Defenders.

Since Denver, the Master Defenders inspired other specialized civilians to act as heroes in their cities. Among hundreds of possibilities, only a few were recruited to the force as 'class 10' fighters. The new members knelt with Sherman and Axel.

Among the new recruits, there was Eduardo Costa, going by the codename Zip Zap. His powers, being intact with three elemental forms, which were called *Solar Flare*, *Lunar Wind*, and *Azure Light*. The other was a woman whose persona mediated between serenity and fury. Her name was Destiny Mays and she wielded sai, with the weapons' prongs made from titanium. She credited herself as the female Titanium Titan. Lastly, there was Noromadel, a man who possessed

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telepathy and trained with the Master Defenders to control his powers.

Sherman waited for the response of the recruits. They only went through a handful of simulations, not best for the task of confronting the extremist base. Noromadel respired and lowered his head. His muscles bunched, building the fury that he thought was needed. The others ogled at him. Noromadel was a rather skinny man.

“Relax, Noromadel,” said Axel beside Sherman. “Don’t stress.”

“I’m not, I’m just preparing myself,” said the telepath. Sherman shook his head and leaned back with the binoculars still placed.

“Noromadel,” said Sherman. “It’s not so much physical strength that you need. It’s more mental. You’re a telepath, so trust your instincts and use that to benefit you.”

“I understand,” he said back.

“It’s easy for you to say,” said Zip Zap to Sherman. “I mean, you can’t die.”

“I’ve heard that too many times. And I hope that one day, I’ll be able to help others with their sicknesses. But do you think my deathless life changes anything? It’s the will from the fight that counts. You, Destiny, and Noromadel all need to use it. The time is now. We’re shutting this base down and stopping Rugeeta Konvictis.” Axel nodded in appreciation, although thought about Sherman’s tone. His expression could be seen from the way Sherman moved his eyes to him. It said, “*They’re not ready, Axel.*”

“Yes they are,” Axel confirmed.

“I didn’t say anything,” replied Sherman.

“You were thinking it.”

“Yeah,” Noromadel added with his arms crossed while still knelt. “I heard what you said in your mind, loud and clear.”

The others grinned from Noromadel’s power. Sherman put down the binoculars, giving a fair smile to Noromadel and the other recruits. Noromadel’s telepathy was superb and Axel chuckled to himself. Sherman eyed each recruit and said,

“Okay, now you got me believing in your capabilities.” They were soundless and awaited his next words. He said, “The three of you are true fighters, true masters. Right now is our time. The field leader was very wise in choosing you three to be a part of this squadron. Our responsibility is to restore hope to this world. We defend those in need and we fight for the ones we’ve lost.”

While the heroes and eastern agents kept eye contact with the Konvictis troops below their separate snow hills, they spotted an armoured vehicle that slowly arrived. Its tires gushed snow in different directions. Pulling over to the side, the back doors opened to reveal yelling troops.

“This way! Bring him inside!” screamed one of the soldiers. Sherman and Axel crouched lower when a guard turned to them. The white camflouflage aided the heroes and the eastern agents uphill. After the guard’s command, the Konvictis workers brought out an armoured man in hand cuffs, having voltages around the wrists as locks.

“Static cuffs,” Sherman stated. Zip Zap took the binoculars to check for himself, making Sherman roll his eyes.

“Dang, how bad are those?”

“Trust me,” said Sherman grabbing the binoculars back. “You don’t want to find out.” Snow scattered everywhere and dotted their faces. Their sights became vague from the storm. Sherman pressed a button on the side of the binoculars, making the view zoom closer. He moved his vision with the guards as they brought the man to the front gate, where more Konvictis loyalists stood.

“Lord Konvictis wants this man to be fed to the scoundrels,” said a worker squeezing the shoulder of the prisoner.

“You may proceed,” the other man replied. On the hilltop, Destiny said, “Now is our chance. We should go down there and at least free that man.”

“Patience Destiny,” Axel told her. “There’s no need to rush.” In no way did Axel or Sherman consider the task as being a rescue mission. It certainly wasn’t one that involved saving a stranger. Still, they had a code to follow.

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“Did someone say ‘rush’?” said Lynx who zoomed to their location with static volts. “Sorry I’m late. But then again, I’m not really sorry because being sorry would mean that I own up for my mistakes. Truthfully, I’m always never on time, which is an oxymoron because I’m the quickest there is out of all of us. Did you know that an average man can only run a total of—”

“Lynx,” demanded Sherman filled with annoyance. “I swear on my immortal life that if you don’t shut up right now—”

“Calm down ‘Bawn-Bawn’. I just electrocuted two stalkers who sighted you a mile back. You’re welcome.”

The static fighter was always contented with the thrill of battles. He became persistent in his unrelative talks about his speed. Axel and Sherman ignored him until he said, “It’s too bad that we’re out here while the others are already inside.”

“*What?*” they gasped.

“Yeah, it’s pretty shocking, right? Get it? Shocking? That was a static joke.” Axel groaned, fists clamping. He questioned, “I thought they were executing a sky attack once we’ve cornered the Konvictis workers?”

“Change of plans,” Lynx answered smiling. “Field leader’s orders.”

The outer appearance of the centennial palace did not match the traits of the inside. The interior represented a high-tech facility with marching troops, much like AIA Militia operatives except they relied heavily on mass destruction. Konvictis loyalists filled the hallways and all communed about the same manner—all of their bases were forever gone and they were the last of a dying breed. Only one section of the base was quiet and clear of soldiers.

A man hopped off a railing from above and landed in the quiet area, wearing a uniform that matched the loyalists. It was yellow attire with black diagonal stripes. He scouted around, thinning his sight and sniffing for aroma. Nothing filled his nostrils.

“I already hate this plan,” he grumbled into his earset. “I look like a freaking bumble bee.”

“Sharp, you have to blend in,” replied Jamal Vertison who also wore a yellow and black uniform. His necklace never showed on the outside of his torso, although it would’nt attract too much attention if it did. Jamal watched Curtis from above while other soldiers passed by in hordes mumbling the same word in all of their sentences. *“The nomad.”*

“Sharp,” Jamal started. “Walk further down and then take a left. There’s a man that Rogeeta is expecting in a navy blue suit and gold tie. He’s carrying a key card that accesses Rogeeta’s office. Need I say more?”

“Understood,” Sharp responded. In his slyish stance, Sharp crept low, his smell elevating for every step. He turned left and then observed the target. The man sat down and fixed his tie. Sharp’s squatting stance ended. As of the moment, he appeared as a member of the Konvictis force. He corrected his posture and walked for the man, politely stretching his arm.

“Welcome to Lord Konvictis’s palace,” said Sharp to the man. “Can I assist you with anything?” The man stared at his arm and then looked back at Sharp’s face. He shook his hands with a firm grasp.

“I’m here to meet with the Father,” the man reacted.

“You will need a key card to access Rogeeta’s office.”

“Yes, I—I had it here somewhere.” The man dug through his pockets. “Ah, here it is.”

“Excellent, and are you familiar with the room number?”

“Room 632, just as Rogeeta said in his audio transmission from yesterday.” The man rose from his seat and checked the time. “I’m also running slightly late.”

“No worries, Rogeeta is quite flexible when a time is set. So please proceed, Mister...” Sharp waited to see if the man felt comfortable. He kept his jaw open and slurred his last word until the man finally replied saying, “My name is Gynippus Kalen. And you are?”

Sharp curved a smile, half baleful yet demanding. His pupils faded as if his soul escaped him. With pure white eyes

and a weighty snarl that rolled out of his mouth, Sharp said, “Curtis.” He grew his finger claws, having no elastic gloves to shield the grisly texture of his hands. “Curtis Kareem.”

He had an evident name in Rogeeta’s archives, much like most of the other members of the team. Gynippus paced backwards with gulps racing down his throat. He handed the key card to Sharp, who slashed on his arm, draining blood. Gynippus came close to yelling until Sharp stated, “If you scream, it’s the whole arm.” He dropped to his knees and knew the truth; the masters occupied the last base.

The loyalists still swamped the hallways and Sharp returned back to the upper level to blend in. A different hallway led straight to an elevator. Sharp held the key card to his side, pacing forward and then crossing paths with Jamal coming from the left and heading for the elevator. He handed over the key card while still walking, keeping a low profile. Jamal entered the elevator with other workers. The doors closed.

They opened on the sixth floor, still full of loyalists. Jamal whispered into his earset to ask, “Tommy, do you see me?”

Tommy Finkle, more preferably noted as Desplode, stood in a corner and checked around. Upon noticing, Tommy answered, “Got you right now.” They crossed paths and Jamal slipped over the key card. Tommy listened through his earset for Jamal from behind who paced the other direction.

“Sharp just confirmed that the room number is 632. You’re definitely close, but you’ll know once you see Rogeeta’s expected guest.” Tommy reached fairly close.

“Hold on,” he questioned. “From when you elaborated on this new scheme, I figured that I was the intended candidate for Rogeeta’s guest. If it’s not me, then who—”

Tommy froze in place, leaning his head back, marginally hissing. The candidate to pose as Rogeeta’s guest was the one who devised the new plan. *The field leader.*

His look resembled Gynippus Kalen with the same suit and yellow tie. The difference was his black skin, although he was wise enough to know Rogeeta never met Gynippus Kalen

in person, providing the critical advantage. Tommy handed the key card with a trembling arm. He faltered in his movements only from the desire to be in the office. Nothing pleased him more than seeing the face of Rogeeta, and returning the pain he deserved from tainting societies with fire. The field leader returned a short nod and said, "Get outside and regroup with Tina."

"What about you?" asked Tommy. "Are you sure that you can handle him alone?"

"I'm never alone. Now go. She'll explain everything." He waited for Tommy to leave the area. At last, the time has come. What was beyond the door was a mystery to finally be solved. Rogeeta scarred the past two years with memories of deaths. However, his executions were cut short because of his extremist territories being conquered by the field leader's squad and AIA East. Still, there were many questions and Rogeeta was thought to have the answers. After the key card was scanned, the door opened.

The field leader stepped in to see a room of bones piled in the corners. There were also paintings on the walls, quite exceptional works of art. Creativity stood as the last quality that a galactic mob boss would ever have. The paintings all had something in common, seemingly a type of portal that appeared in the corners or the center. "*Perhaps the visions of a realm-bender?*" the field leader thought as he slowly paced forward with Rogeeta sitting and facing his large scale window. It was awkward, the quietness of the room. Rogeeta clearly knew he had a visitor. To kill the silence that plainly disturbed the field leader, the mobster spoke with a slender accent.

"Sit down, Gynippus." The field leader sat down acting as Rogeeta's trusted guest. Rogeeta turned around in his seat. The field leader tried his best not to shift his expression. It was the first time seeing Rogeeta in person. The creature appeared more menacing than in photos people shared.

Rogeeta had a purple Pixalian face with greasy eye bags that sagged to his cheek bones. His eyes were maroon much like most predators from Star-Pix. He also had the ears of an elf and teeth that struck fright in most of his associates.

Rogeeta smoked a chubby cigar filled with Pixalian herbs. He offered his guest to blow a puff until the field leader said, “I’m not here to kill time. I’m here for answers.”

The mobster blew smoke curls right in the field leader’s face. He flippantly chuckled with brown drool running down the corner of his mouth. Rogeeta placed the lit cigar down on the table and folded his hands, moving his formidable face closer.

“Rogeeta always has all the answers,” he said. “What is it you’re confused about? As mentioned in our transmission, I can offer you immortality provided you join my dominant family.” The thought of immortality made the field leader ponder the full identity of Gynippus Kalen. A human seeking immortality was parallel to the days of Hank Lasher. The truth was revealed by Adalyth, who served in the universal plague order.

“How legitimate is the immortality that you promise to offer once I join the Konvictis?”

“As legitimate as me facing you in this room right now. Imagine a death-free life, Gynippus. Through me, you can achieve the gift of healing. I am the Father. I have the power.”

“Many people,” the field leader began while fronting Rogeeta’s face, “have claimed to access the gift of immortality—most of which came from the directors’ High Power. Are you familiar with the identity of him?” Rogeeta laughed while his saliva dripped down.

“Let me ask you a question. Who informed you of this High Power of the directors?”

“Adalyth. It was before his expiration. But what really intrigued me was the late Hank Lasher.” The field leader stood up and placed his hands in his pants pockets. He wandered around the room while gazing at Rogeeta’s paintings. “Hank Lasher exposed humans to a poison that derived from Sychophemia. He claimed himself to be indestructible until it was understood that he too was a parasite.”

“And this confuses you, lad?”

“Everyone was trapped inside of a silky cocoon within the body of a Sychophemia predator. This sheath could not be

broken or revealed until those irritating Master Defenders developed a cure. What confuses me Rogeeta, is why Hank Lasher wasn't trapped in a sheath. He had more control than anyone did." The field leader who pretended to be Gynippus Kalen stopped and looked at a painting. The portal seemed quite larger in the picture.

"Hank Lasher came to me for help to expand ARPANOID," said Rogeeta. "The Konvictis continued his ways for the good of this planet. But from the day I met Hank, he gave himself the alias of *Red Parasite*. This codename was no mistake. Hank Lasher wasn't trapped in a predator's body because the High Power gave him that privilege among other gifts. This explains why Red Parasite was able to teleport and telekinetically move objects. His dose of the serum was forever delayed."

"I find the amalgamation procedures to be rather uncalled for. But for humans to actually become Pixalians, that is uncanny."

"The bond of humans and Pixalians must be commenced scientifically mainly because of the inability for them to get along with each other."

The field leader understood Rogeeta's phrase as a valid one. Only a portion of the human race accepted Pixalians, no matter how wrathful or moral.

"Look at my family," the mobster continued. "We are a combination of Pixalians and humans. This is exactly what I want for the world. Two species united together, bringing order to Earth and the universe—my universe. But in order for my dream to prevail, I've decided to remove the source of segregation."

"Which is..." wondered the field leader marveling over a painting.

"Cyclohoma City." The field leader paused with widened eyes, like there was a consuming shade of apprehension.

"What did you say?" he turned back to Rogeeta hoping he misheard.

“Cyclohoma City. Think about it with me, Gynippus. The only kingdom on this rock with the largest Pixalian population is Cyclohoma. The more Pixalians means the more undesirable human misfits who know nothing about multiculturalism. If this metropolis is destroyed, then there is no more segregation. Just simply, a kingdom ruled by me, the true Father. I have a missile targeted at this doleful kingdom. In one hour, Cyclohoma will be a wasteland. And I will reconstruct that city and ensure all creatures are accepted. This is magnificent news for the Konvictis.”

“I see,” said the field leader, shifting back to the paintings and pretending to be stunned by Rogeeta’s passion for drawing portals. “Tell me something, Rogeeta. Why portals in your paintings?” Rogeeta rose from his seat and picked up the lit cigar.

“Why so inquisitive, Mister Kalen?” There was silence again. The field leader grinned and replied, “It’s just a question. Nothing serious.”

“I’ll tell you what,” Rogeeta said, pointing the cigar right at him. “The portals have the same meaning. But there is one portal in particular that I value. If you join my family, I’ll tell you everything about this portal and its wonders.” His words were slightly tempting.

“How do I know you can really offer me immortality?”

“Do you mock my abilities?!” Rogeeta bellowed with rising anger. “I am the Father! You must know it!”

“I want assurance, Rogeeta. That’s all I ask.”

“How’s about I assure that you join my family!” he shouted and pulled out a pistol from his holster. “Since you decide to come into my office, better yet my palace and mock me. You will join the Konvictis, Gynippus Kalen. Or maybe I should just blow your brains out right now! I should spill your guts on this floor and feed on your internal organs! I’ll send the scraps to my scoundrels and then—then Mister Kalen we’ll see who lacks power!”

The gun pointed at the field leader, but he kept steady. Rogeeta came close to pulling the trigger.

“Put the gun down, Rogeeta. I mean it.”

“Aren’t you the tough lad, eh? And I was beginning to think that we were friends! But now you are outnumbered.” He dropped the cigar and snapped his fingers, initiating a full response from his guards who filled the room. “Brothers and sisters, we have unwanted company. He will make a succulent meal for us all once we rip through his flesh don’t you think?”

“Yes, Father Konvictis,” the guards all said at once.

“But there is nothing like a meal with some sprinkled bullets on top. Let’s shoot this filth.” They revealed their guns and aimed at the field leader.

“Seriously?” he said after a quick yawn of annoyance. “Rogeeta, this is crazy.”

“And now he calls us crazy?! Brothers and sisters, on my signal please! I’m starving! One!”

“Rogeeta...”

“Two!”

“This is really embarrassing,” he said shaking his head.

“Three! Go to hell, Gynippus!”

“You first.”

Rogeeta roared and gave the signal. Upon firing the bullets, cerulean light flashed the eyes of Rogeeta and his workers. They kept firing and screamed, until all of their guns clicked empty. As the light faded, they were stunned in place.

The bullets floated in the air for eight seconds and then dropped. Who they thought to be Gynippus Kalen appeared to be someone entirely different. His black, blue, and gold armour illuminated with his cerulean energy signature. Rogeeta, trapped in a state of awe, walked backwards until he too floated. Having no control of his body, he yelled at his guards for assistance, who could only watch when they noticed their feet unmovable, planted like deep roots.

Rogeeta reached the field leader, who was a proud Pixalian warrior that fought for both species. Up close, the mask marked an alarming sight for the mobster. He saw him before, the news, the mass media, and the many people that screamed his name, pleading for hope.

## 18 MATT BHANKS

“You’re...” Rogeeta stopped in fright. The warrior grimaced under his mechanical mask and spoke with a demanding voice.

“I’m Canavin.”

The galactic mobster rolled his eyes back as if his spirit fled his ghastly body. All of his bases were demolished by a group of heroes—a protecting shield. And now, his centennial base was occupied by them. The Master Defenders had the Konvictis legion surrounded. Canavin knew that after so much agony, the will of a true defender restored him once more.





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