Promises Through Time

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Summary

As Nepgear reaches to a decision, the arguing goddesses caused her to waver. While everyone was off cooling their heads, the Goddess Candidate of Planeptune approaches each of her friends and family, each making a promise to her before she makes her big decision... (Spoilers for SvS True Ending)

Notes

AN: So, I finished up SvS (like, last year-ish) and this little idea had been sitting in my head back then, so I figured I'd get this out of the way and repost it here since Ao3 is down (I mean, I also posted it on FFN but the more alternatives, the better right?). Enjoy, I guess!

Also, this is the first fic in this site for the Neptunia games...and it has spoilers to one of it's more recent spin-offs. Woo-hoo...

See the end of the work for more notes

GC 2015 – Planeptune – Hidden Lab

It was the best news I've heard in a long time…

Ever since the last battle against the Deity of Sin, we, the Goddesses and Goddess Candidates of Gamindustri have been leading reconstruction efforts all across the continent. We have been regaining our footing since then.

However…

Some of our residents still remain frozen, the PC Continent is still gone, it's people integrating themselves among our own as refugees…

And…

"Goodbye, Gearsy…"

…Maho, the Goddess Candidate of the PC Continent, has vanished, taking the Deity of Sin with her in a dimensional rift…

The years have gone by since that day, and although the world is returning to a sense of peace and normaly, something felt…incomplete, like something was missing…

And then, when I returned home and paid a visit to a certain hidden lab, the place where research involving a certain Infinite Share Crystal took place…

It was also the same place where we first met the Ashen Goddess, or rather…

"You will understand someday, Nepgear. For you are my…"

…another Maho, who came from the far future to defeat the Deity of Sin that ravaged her continent.

It was here where I was led to discover something incredible. Something that could forever change the outcome of everything…

"…and thus, we shall be able to perform one last time travel, back to when the IS Crystal was developed and have it be destroyed via the pair phenomenon…"

It was the best news I've heard in a long time.

If this is done, then we can stop the Deity of Sin's resurrection, halt ASIC's long-term plan from ever coming to fruition, and most importantly…

Save the entire PC Continent from ever being ravaged…

People like Alice and Higurashi would never have become refugees…

Anri can be with her parents again…

And Maho…She will still be alive…

It was the best news I've heard in a long time…

But…

"No way!" Ram shouted. "If that ever happens, what'll happen to us!? Do we just go 'Poof!' and that'll be that!?"

"But if we don't do this" Blanc tried to smooth over. "Our people will remain frozen away. I don't want our people to remain trapped forever…"

The excitable twin groaned. "I know that, but…"

"I…" Rom stammered. "I want to see Maho again…"

"Think about this for a moment…" Noire butted in. "There's a lot of risks when it comes to time travel. Grey Sister already pointed out as such"

"Like what!?" Blanc responded in anger.

"For one, there's the risk of opening more rifts into the new timeline" Noire stated. "And another, we don't know much of the new timeline will change from our old one. Will some of us be the same? Different? Will some people still be alive or dead by then?"

"And on top of that, we are not certain if certain individuals will still appear in the new timeline" Vert pointed. "Like my dear Aneeta…"

"Big Sis…" Aneeta called out.

"Hey now!" Neptune chirped in. "We haven't gotten this far by backing out now! I say, we take it! Besides, things may work for the best here! You know, like in that one retro-RTS game you all played!"

Noire sighed. "That's only a fictional story, Neptune. This is reality! And I'd rather not damage the entire space-time continuum if I can help it! We're already stretching it with those dimensional portals from before!"

"So, are you saying we should cut our losses and just deal with it?" Blanc said, her voice raising higher. "When there's even a slight chance we can make it all better!?"

And then the noises got louder…

The Goddesses and the other Candidates began to argue over if we should go through with this or not…

Poor Anri could only stand there, trying to calm everyone down, but no one was paying attention to her, continuing on with their arguments

Considering the source of the Trendi Phenomenon and space-time rifts, I couldn't really fault them for being cautious…

Still…

"Are we doing this or not!?"

"I'm saying we just need more time to make sure!"

"But I don't wanna disappear!"

"Me too…*sniffs*"

"But what about my poor Aneeta!?"

"Girls! Girls! We should just take a chill pill and…"

And then someone shouted…

"WOULD YOU ALL JUST SHUT UP!?"

It was Uni.

Strangely enough, while the others were arguing, she just kept quiet, kept to herself.

Normally, she'd agree with whatever Noire said or argued, but not here…

Instead, she shouted and everyone stopped to look at her.

"While we're all just wasting our time here" she started. "We're already forgetting one important fact!"

"And what's that!?" Ram shouted back.

She then turned to me, her fierce red eyes laden with tears…

"That it's Nepgear's call to make here" Uni answered. "She's the only one who can make this travel possible"

She then looked up. "Am I wrong, Ziri?"

"Your assessment is sound" Ziri responded. "All the preparations made here are designed specifically with only one person as a passenger."

"So, it could be anyone then?" Noire butted in.

"A strong possibility" Ziri admitted. "However, all the preparations done here over the past 12000 years were done with Nepgear's specifications in mind. She is optimally suited for travel"

"Nepgear"

Ziri then called out to me.

“With all this in mind, what shall be your answer? Do you wish to go or remain here?”

My throat gulped. This was a heavy decision.

There are many factors to decide here.

The risks…

The benefits…

Everything…

“Nepgear!” Ram shouted out. “Don’t do this!”

“Think of our people!” Blanc yelled. “We need to help them!”

“Nepgear” Noire called out. “I know you’re smart, so please think this through. We need more time”

“If Miss Nepgear goes…” Rom wondered. “Does that mean she has to fight Arfoire again… all alone?”

“Nepgear” Vert called out. “We can’t risk this. I do not want to lose Aneeta like this!”

“Woah! Woah! Woah!” Neptune butted in, standing in between Nepgear and the others. “Settle down! My little sis doesn’t need any more hammering suggestions here!”

“Stay out of this, Neptune!”

And then, everyone began to argue again…

What am I doing? I thought the answer was clear, obvious even…

But with all this weighing upon me, I felt as if the weight that has been hanging around my shoulders began to feel even heavier than before…

So much so that I could not take the first step…

What should I do?

What do I do?

“JUST SHUT UUUUUUUPPPPP!!!”

Ah. Uni shouted again.

“Nepgear can’t even decide with all this noise here!” she continued. “Could you all just shut up for three minutes so she can make up her mind!?”

And then, just like that, everyone stopped. I could see the guilt and shame on their faces.

Even Noire, her own sister, gave out a heavy sigh and backed off. I guess even she didn't expect to get reprimanded by her own sister like this.

"Sensing heightened brain activity" Ziri called out. "Stress levels far above expected parameters"

"Well, that's a given…" Anri commented. "This decision is very important, not just to Nepgear, but towards both our timeline and the one she's travelling to."

"Suggesting moment's reprieve" Ziri said. "A small walk or a breath of fresh air may reduce stress levels and create a more informed decision"

"I-Is that alright?" I asked.

"The preparations are made for this one moment" Ziri answered. "It shall remain as such for the rest of the day. However, this facility will shut down by the end of today, so a unanimous decision must be reached before the end of the day"

"So, we only have this much time then" Noire noted as she gave out another sigh. "Okay, then. Why don't we all cool our heads first and think this through? We'll meet back here in an hour?"

Blanc sighed. "I guess that's fine"

And just like that, everyone else left the room. Well, all except me and Anri…

"Why don't you go outside for a moment?" Anri requested. "I'd…like some time to myself here"

"Oh…Okay…"

And so I left the room without a word, my thoughts still swirling on what I have to do…

Do I take the plunge or not?

Do I risk destruction between two timelines just for a chance to create a much better future down the line? One where we're all alive?

I sighed. "I need to go see the others…"

I headed to the room on my right, the one where me and the other Candidates found the first switch. In there, Blanc stood near said switch, pacing back and forth, while the twins wandered around the far corner. Ram was also pacing around, while Rom stood still, her head lowered in thought.

"Hm?" Blanc looked up. "Ah, Nepgear"

“Are you alright, Blanc?” I asked the Goddess of Lowee. “You got pretty heated back there”

It was no secret that Blanc, who was known for her quiet demeanor and image of wisdom, has a very high temper. The fact that she gets upset pretty easily, whether through the twin’s pranks, getting insulted about her chest or hurting anyone she cares, doesn’t really help her.

She sighed again. “Yeah, but this isn’t really anything new from me. I’ll recover”

I giggled a bit. “Of course you will. You are pretty strong, Blanc”

And once more, she sighed. “I may be, but that doesn’t mean squat if I couldn’t protect my nation from being frozen over…”

She laughed a bit, bitter in tone. “My own people, born in the cold north, frozen over. I wish I could write such irony in my next work, but I can’t…”

When it comes to protecting those dear, I believe that Blanc has everyone beat.

She has moved through high and low to search for her two little sisters when the Goddess Shift Period occurred. Even when the odds were stacked against her, she still fought on to defend a nation that has forgotten about her and treated her like a stranger.

“It’s just…” Blanc started. “Seeing all those people…my people frozen over…made me think of what happened a few years ago…”

“What do you mean?”

“You remember, right?”

The Lowee Goddess asked me incredulously.

“Right here in this very facility, you, the twins and Uni all got trapped under here for a good while.”

Ah. Right…

It was the day we first saw the Ashen Goddess…

The day we saw Grey Sister…a Maho who came from a terrible future…

“When I came back from the PC Continent to ensure my nation’s safety, I began to wonder where the twins went” Blanc started, holding herself in her arms. “When Histoire told me where she saw them last, I began to worry. I thought to myself, ‘Those brats are taking too long. It wasn’t like them to dilly-dally.’ The days turned into week and before a month passed, I tried storming out of my own Basilicom to come looking for you all…”

I gasped. “You did what!?”

“You girls went away for too damn long!” Blanc suddenly shouted, her one red eye glowing with her ‘signature anger’, as Sis would put it. “Of course I’d begin to worry about you all!”

She then sighed, calming herself. “Anyway, ever since, I began to lead search parties across my nation whenever I can. Histoire did the same. That’s how she was able to find you all here at the time”

“And when Histy told you about it, you flew here as soon as you could”

Blanc nodded. “Yup. You could not imagine the relief I felt when I saw those two again. Those last two years without them felt…empty.”

She then faced me, her eyes filling with clarity.

“And I don’t want to wish upon that to anyone else” she declared. “I don’t want their families to feel that emptiness, that sense of loss, that feeling that your loved one is just right there, yet you cannot even reach them. It’s painful, no matter how you slice it”

“Blanc…”

The Goddess of Lowee sighed one more time. “I’ve said my piece. Whatever else happens, I’ll respect your decision on it. Just…promise me you won’t screw up your choice. Got it?”

I nodded. “Okay. I promise. Thank you, Blanc”

Once I left her be, I then approached the twins. As I closed on them, they then ran to me.

“Nepgear!”

Ram called out as she held onto me.

“C’mon, you don’t have to do this! We don’t want you to disappear like Maho did!”

“I…”

Rom cried as she held onto me tightly.

“I don’t want Miss Nepgear to go! I don’t want you to go fight Arfoire all alone!”

Despite the grim words they shared, I smiled at them.

It was hard to believe that so long ago, these twins didn’t want anything to do with me, Ram especially.

Nowadays, we, along with Uni, are as thick as thieves. You’d never find us apart whenever we get together.

“It’ll be alright” I reassured them. “If everything goes right, I won’t have to fight Arfoire at all. We could be friends with Maho again!”

Ram sniffed. “B-But! But!”

“What will happen to us?” Rom wondered, her eyes still teary. “Will we really disappear?”

I sighed. “I don’t know. If I’m successful, it will be as if this whole timeline never even happened…”

All the pain we have to go through will not even happened, but then, we’d lose what we gained here as well.

It was a precarious situation all around…

“But listen” I continued. “We were able to get through all the dangers because we have faith in each other. That faith is what helped us win against the Deity of Sin, against Rei, against Kurome.”

I then patted both their little heads. “Everything will be okay. We just have to believe and support each other, so that one day, we can all meet each other again. Sound good?”

Ram sniffed, wiping the snot from her nose. “O-okay. I’ll believe! We can save everyone with this, right!?”

I nodded.

“Then…” Rom said. “Let’s all believe in Miss Nepgear. We’ll all see each other again!”

I nodded again. “And when we do, it will be with Maho. I promise!”

Ram snickered. “You’d better!”

“You can do it!” Rom cheered.

Once the twins cheered up enough, they ran back to Blanc, likely to apologize for before.

I left them be to have their moment, as I headed for the other room, the one opposite where I was.

In there, I could see Noire sitting on the nearby broken table, looking up as she kicked her feet about.

And near the corner, I could see Vert, her eyes locked onto her phone, likely talking to Aneeta about what just happened.

Not wanting to bother them, I decided to approach Noire first.

“Hm?”

Noire hummed as she heard me approach.

“Nepgear…”

She then looked downcast, as if ashamed of something.

It’s not something one would normally described the proud, boastful Goddess of Lastation, but here we are…

She then sighed. “Listen, do you…mind if I vent for a moment?”

Vent? I guess she must have something on her mind.

“Okay…” I answered hesitantly. “What seems to be the matter?”

“It’s just…” Noire started. “I’ve been doing a lot of thinking, and I’ve come to realize something”

Oh? “What is it?”

“It’s mainly how I do things” she continued. “When I make a decision, I tend to think about all possible outcomes, the consequences and the like. I want to make sure that I do, it would be the best possible scenario all around”

She then turned to me, her gaze hard and fierce.

“Yet, when you and Neptune make a decision, you just look at the best possible case and ran through with it. And you know what? They all just…worked”

Huh? “What do you mean?”

“Think about it. You lead the charge against the Deity of Sin by uniting the Candidates and freeing us. After that, you and Neptune were able to get back from the other dimension with your Shares alone, even bringing help from there too. Then there’s you two and the other Neptune running back to save Uzume, and guess what? She’s back and better than ever! All this happened because you two rushed on ahead and did things long before we could ever catch up to you, and by the time we did, all we could do was provide you with our support”

The Goddess of Lastation then looked up again.

“I’ve heard from Histoire. You came up with the goal to take back Planeptune, and not only did you do that, we even got Neptune back from that good-for-nothing witch! Overall, everything seems to be fine when you two ran on and did stuff in times like these. I admit, I am quite jealous of you two for that”

“What makes you say that?” I asked.

“Remember when we first saw each other in a long time? Back at my office?”

Ah. I remember. I nodded, recalling the sight of the ever-busy Goddess of Lastation, her heavy, baggy eyes glued to her computer screen as she signed away paper after paper, barely glancing in our direction. She even treated Uni, her own sister, as an afterthought.

“I’ll admit, I wasn’t exactly in the best place since what happened in the PC Continent. Between coming up with countermeasures against the Trendi Phenomena and ensuring the

safety of my people, I was running myself ragged. My mind...wasn't exactly clear back then…"

I nodded in understand. "I understand. It's must have been tough for you…especially with what happened to Sis…"

Noire sighed. "Like you wouldn't believe it. Every time I try to close my eyes or fall asleep, I see her, back turned, facing away as she slowly walked forward. I tried catching up to her, but it seemed like I wasn't getting anywhere closer to her. Ever since then, I never even went to bed myself and just kept working. In a way, my duties were what kept me from falling apart completely."

Falling apart, huh? I've always suspected that Noire cared about my sister a lot, far more than anyone else that I know of, anyway. But, to hear her say something like this about her, it makes me think how much of a presence my sister is to her life.

On that, I can understand. A lot, really.

"I understand. I was the same. When I heard what happened to Sis, it felt like my whole world just got ripped apart from underneath me."

Noire gasped. "Nepgear…"

"I just cried myself to sleep every time. I refused to even come out of my room. At that point, nothing really mattered to me anymore. Nothing at all…"

I then took a deep breath, recalling a memory from way back when.

"Hey! Where are you going? You know there are monsters that way, right!? Hey!"

"But then, when I was out to get some air, that's when I first met Maho"

Noire hummed, urging me to go on.

I chuckled. "Well, more like, she stumbled upon me. The first moment, I was protecting her from a monster. The next, she was dragging me around to meet Anri. And that's how we became BFF's"

Noire hummed again, trying to absorb what she learned.

"So, that's how you did it, huh?"

Hm? "Did what?"

"You had someone who was able to prop you back up" Noire said, her tone softening. "Cheered you up and inspired you to keep on going. She was the reason why you were able to go about again."

I smiled. "Yes. She was"

Noire sighed. “I never had anyone like that for the years you, Uni and the twins were gone. The others were too busy to handle their own problems, and all I could do was just do what I always did. Watch over and protect my nation, regardless of my own feelings. And when someone close did come back to me, all I did was shoo her away”

“Noire, you didn’t mean that…”

“Did I?” Noire said bitterly. “I said I lied when I told Uni that her return wasn’t worth celebrating, and in some way, I wasn’t. Somewhere deep down, I knew she’s still out there. I refused to believe my own sister would be gone for good like Neptune”

She then sighed again.

“Or maybe, I just didn’t want to believe that. If Uni was indeed gone so soon after Neptune did…I…I don’t think I would know what to do…”

She then held herself close, as if she was a turtle hiding in it’s shell.

I could swear I heard her trying to hold back her tears.

“Noire…”

She sniffed. “Sorry you have to see that. I guess…I needed to let this all out. All the worries I had bottled up since that fateful day. All this…mess going around my head. I wouldn’t want this on anyone”

The Goddess of Lastation then looked to me with her tear-stained eyes, filled with fire.

“If you’re going to go through with this” she told me. “then you must promise me one thing.”

I nodded. “Name it”

“Promise me that you won’t let anyone go through what I did. If someone they cared for returned, they should be greeted and celebrated as such. Let them know how much you missed them. If they have heavy burdens, they should let people in and help them out. No man is an island. Don’t let them become one, Nepgear”

I nodded again. “Got it”

Noire giggled. “Good. Now, get going. I’ll go find Uni and apologize to her”

Once I left her to her business, I decided to approach Vert next, who is…

“Surely you cannot be serious about this!?” she asked incredulously.

“I am quite serious, Big Sister” a voice spoke out from her phone. “And I’m just as sure that my name is not Shirley”

…arguing with Aneeta Job, likely in regards to what happened earlier.

Vert groaned. “This is no time to jape around, Aneeta! This concerns you as well!”

“I know!” Aneeta replied. “That’s why Ziri and I decided that this was the best course of action!”

Aneeta Job was a famous VTuber who made waves since the Trendi Phenomenon broke out. Thanks to her advanced learning code, she was able to adopt her current persona in order to interact with people. While she was made to manufacture mechanical soldiers for Arfoire, she truly wished to speak to and understand people with no hint of malice or jealousy.

It was one of the times we’re thankful that Ziri was able to remove most of her programming. Now, she’s just a living AI program who interacts with people as a streaming VTuber, no ulterior directives whatsoever.

In fact, it was thanks to her advanced learning that Ziri was able to finish her preparations here. Guess good things can come in an unexpected pinch, huh?

“Ummm…”

Vert looked up, her lips forming a weak smile. Normally, she’d try to glomp me and claim me as her little sister, much to Neptune’s ire. But, not this time…

“Hello there, Nepgear” the Goddess of Leanbox greeted me.

“Happy, happy, happiness!” Aneeta shouted. “How are you doing?”

I chuckled. Even at a time like this, Aneeta cannot go without saying her catchphrase. “I’m doing fine. I’ve spoken with a few people here…”

“So, I noticed” Vert stated. “I noticed you approaching Noire in the corner of my eye.”

I forced out a laughed. “Nothing escapes you, huh Vert?”

Vert giggled. “Nothing must. I have honed my senses from all the games I’ve played to prepare myself for specific moments!”

I sighed. “I can take a guess what one of those ‘specific moments’ must be…”

It was no secret that Vert is the only Goddess without a Candidate of her own. Ever since the incident with the Goddess of Tari, she’s been making it her life mission to ‘acquire’ a little sister of her own, even if it was one of us Candidates.

Though, I find it strange she never pursued Maho. Then again, she never learned she was the Goddess Candidate until recently…

Now that I think about it, Vert and Maho would be a good fit, considering Maho likes gacha games and social media, and Vert’s dedication to both image and games are second to none in Gamindustri, so I could see that happening should the worst happened to the PC Continent’s Goddess…

The fact that she hasn't up to now is quite surprising. Whether the idea hasn't struck her or she never intended to do so out of respect of a fellow Goddess, one she never truly knew, I don't know, and something in my throat isn't allowing me to express the question…

"Nepgear" Aneeta called out to me. "Please, you must get Vert to listen. She's been in denial ever since the meeting…"

"Denial!?" Vert shouted accusingly. "If poor Nepgear goes through with this, not only is her existence at risk, but yours as well!"

"I know that!" Aneeta answered back loudly. "But even so, all the pain the people I've seen go through isn't worth this!"

"What are you…?"

"I've heard them from the comments and the chats. I've heard them say things like 'what is life anymore', 'this damn sucks lol'. At one time, a frequent viewer even pleaded to bring help to their family who was affected by the Trendi Phenomenon, but they were brushed off at best to made fun at worst, and by the next stream, I never saw that viewer again…"

Ah. So, it seems people are trying to reach out to others via the Internet for aid. But because people primarily used it as a means of escape, they ignored the cries of the desperate and the needy.

Vert gasped. "How insufferable! No one should mock those who suffered like that! How disgraceful!"

"And it doesn't stop there" Aneeta cried. "More and more people have become more apathetic as time went on. Even without the Deity of Sin to siphon those shares away, it doesn't change how much the people have suffered ever since the PC Continent was taken away. If there was a chance that such suffering never has to come to be, I would take it!"

"But Aneeta…" Vert began to cry. "But what about you…? If Nepgear does indeed go back in time to remove the IS Crystal from existence, you might never come to be. You may never be created…"

Tears began to flow from her eyes. "I'll…I'll never get to hear your voice…or see your beautiful smile again…!"

"Vert…"

She sniffed again. "My apologies. You already have so much to consider, Nepgear, and here I am, just being a selfish woman, crying for a little sister that I could never even reach from here..."

I shook my head. "There's nothing wrong with your tears, Vert. Losing a bond as precious as the one you have with Aneeta hurts. Believe me, I know…"

Even though Neptune managed to return to us, the feelings of loss and parting that came when I heard of her disappearance still lingered within me, like a scar etched onto my heart.

To say nothing of what happened to Maho…all three Maho's at that…

The one who became my friend…

The one who tried to save the world by defeating the Deity of Sin…

And the one who just wanted to save her own sister, no matter what…

"Big Sister…" Aneeta called out. "I must confess something to you…"

Vert sniffed. "What?"

"You know I was created specifically to learn about humanity's weakness in order to create war machines to destroy them, right?"

The Goddess of Leanbox nodded.

"Yet, out of all the places I was chosen to be able to go to in order to learn from them, why did I end up in your nation?" Aneeta continued. "That's because…I wanted to meet you"

Vert gasped.

"When I was scoping people out in the Internet, I took a look at about every place I could go" the self-learning AI explained. "NepTube, Neppit, Chirper, NepBook, even NepSpace. I've seen it all. Among all the posts I've combed through, I was fascinated by yours the most"

She then giggled. "The way you passionately declared your achievements in the games you cleared. The pride you showed in clearing those raids with your guild in Four Goddesses Online. The desire you expressed in wanting your own Goddess Candidate for a little sister. You were the most expressive and passionate person I've come to see. You could not imagine the joy I felt when I saw your first Superchat in one of my streams!"

The elation was so great it made Vert cry again. "Oh, dear Aneeta…"

"Ever since I've heard of you, I've long made it my entire purpose to make people smile, just like you did for me" Aneeta declared. "I don't know for sure if I'll be able to be created again in the new timeline, but if I was and we've met again, then that is how it should be…"

"So please, Sis…"

If Aneeta had a real body, I could see her comforting Vert through her tears, face close to hers as she hugged her.

"Please see Nepgear off and let her do this. Have faith that we will see each other, no matter what. I know I have cherished our times together, and I know I will cherish the times we will share then as well. So please…"

Vert wiped off the tears from her eyes. "Okay…We will play your game this time… Aneeta…"

Aneeta giggled. “There we go. That’s the gamer Vert I know!”

I giggled as well. “You can take the Vert out of the game, but you can’t the game out of Vert, right?”

The Goddess of Leanbox giggled. “You both know me so well”

She sighed. “Very well. I concede”

Vert turned her gaze to me, her eyes resolute.

“Do what you must, Nepgear. Know that whatever choice you make, you will always have my full support”

I nodded. “And I promise, I will find a way to make sure Aneeta is made again, and that both of you will see each other again. I will make it happened!”

Vert chuckled. “Then I will hold you to your word, Nepgear”

“Thank you so much!” Aneeta thanked. “Remember to head out there with a happy, happy smile!”

I chuckled. “I will. Thanks again for all the help, Aneeta. I won’t let you both down”

I then headed out of the room in search of three more people I’ve yet to speak to…

As I left the room, I began to wonder where my sis---

“Oof!”

“Owie!”

Goodness! Did I just bump into someone?

“I’m sorry!”

“No, I should apologize” a deep female voice spoke. “I wasn’t looking where I was going…”

It was Anri, who had left the capsule chamber.

“Anri…”

She is my other BFF, and a refugee of the PC Continent. Unlike Maho, who moved forth with such cheer and delight, she was more grounded and serious. Always worrying about Maho.

She’s a great friend. In fact, now that I think about, our little group dynamic is similar to Sis’ own with Compa and IF.

Sis and Maho are the happy-go-lucky ones.

IF and Anri are the serious ones keeping us grounded.

And…I guess that makes Compa and I the nice ones? Hmmmm, fitting…

“Hey, you doing alright?”

Anri asked me with worry.

I nodded. “I’ve been talking to some of my friends about the operation. What about you?”

“Oh, you know” Anri said. “Just thinking about a lot of things. You know who I am…”

I chuckled. “True…”

“Hey, listen…”

My other BFF started.

“I…never got the chance to say this, but…”

She suddenly bowed to me!

“I’m so sorry!”

Goodness! “W-What for?”

“What for!?” Anri replied incredulously. “For attacking you! For aiding Arfoire in causing the destruction of the world! For…for nearly killing Maho…”

“Anri…”

She was not only a refugee, but she was a gifted genius. Her skill in mathematics and science are incredible. It was thanks to her logic and theorems that the three of us were able to study the Trendi Phenomenon at all.

But not only that, she was skilled enough to create and pilot an armor known as F2P. As F2P, she worked alongside Arfoire to exact revenge for the death of her parents, which was caused by Grey Sister attempting to halt Arfoire’s revival.

We have crossed paths three times as F2P. Once in Lastation and then again in Planeptune’s underground arena. The third time was at the forest near Lowee, and by that point, we all knew who was truly under the armor.

She was quite tough in our last fight. Even after her armor ceased to function, she kept fighting with her gun and bazooka! I was honestly shocked that she was capable of this much!

“It’s alright” I reassured her. “You were still grieving for your parents. And in the end, you didn’t kill Maho yourself. You had every chance to pull the trigger, but you didn’t. So, there’s nothing else to apologize for”

Anri sighed. “I swear, you two are so kind…Too kind for someone like me…”

“Anri…”

The refugee stood straight, looking up at the ceiling. “Honestly, the fact that you two were dealing with such heavy burdens…It’s simply daunting…”

She then closed her eyes. “While you two were out there, fighting against the world’s destruction, I was here, fighting to avenge my parents. I was so short-sighted…”

Anri opened her eyes, looking onto her hands. “When I was fighting, I didn’t care what had to be done or how much blood I had to spill. As long as I can grant them peace, I can rest easy. But, then…”

“I may have lost my memory, but I can still see you’re hurting, Anri”

She then stood between her two BFF’s, arms raised and shield dropped.

“So, go ahead and shoot! If it means it can ease your pain, then kill me!”

“W-What are you—”

“Maho!”

“Then, Maho went and did that, offering her life on a silver platter to me” Anri then began to cry. “It was probably then and there that I realized that no matter what she did, I could never hate her or hurt her. She was precious to me.”

She then smiled through her tears. “She was…my only other reason to live…”

“Anri…”

Hearing this made me more conflicted. If I went through this operation, who’s to say that Maho and Anri can become friends again. The Maho of this time said that she was all alone in her Basilicom, without friends to call her own.

If I go through with this, could I ever get them to meet? Could the three of us still become BFF’s like now?

Anri wiped the tears from her eyes. “Nepgear, I have a request”

A request? “Sure. What is it?”

She then bowed again. “Please go through with the operation! Not just for my nation! Not just for my parents! But for her! For Maho!”

Her tears began to leak again, their drops being heard on the metallic floor.

“Please!” she begged.

I smiled. “If I go through with it, I will.”

“Nepgear…”

Anri looked up to me, her tear-stained eyes filled with hope.

“And when I do, I’ll find a way to let us be friends again! I can promise you that, Anri.”

Anri wiped the tears from her eyes again. “Then…I’ll hold you to it. Please, Nepgear…”

I nodded. “BFF’s must always stick together, right?”

Anri laughed. “That’s what she would say, right?”

I giggled. “Yeah. She sure would”

Anri sighed in relief as she stretched. “That’s a huge load off my back. Thank you again for agreeing to this”

“Nothing’s set in stone” I reminded her. “But…”

Anri chuckled. “I have a good feeling that you may have long made you mind already”

I chocked. “H-How did you know?”

Anri laughed. “It’s pretty obvious with you, Nepgear. Heck, even Maho can see it, and she’s not the smartest person the world, you know?”

I laughed at that. “She won’t like that, you know?”

After sharing a good few laughs, we both decided to head back up for some fresh air.

“HEYA, NEP JR!”

And then I was interrupted by a blur of white and purple barreling towards me!

“S-Sis!?”

Sure enough, it was my sister Neptune, tackling me down to the ground. Then again, I did the same moments before we left for the Gamindustri Graveyard, so I guess karma decided to pay me back, huh?

“Man, it’s been a whole game since I called you that, huh?” Neptune remarked. “It’s almost like the scriptwriters decided to be more faithful to the original script than to be ‘creative’, huh?”

As usual, her 4th-wall breaking remarks are out of this world. Then again, we participate in those a few times ourselves.

“Well” I stammered, motioning Anri to go on. “What is it, Sis? Is something bothering you?”

“That’s what I’d like to ask you, lil’ sis” Sis said in her usual cheer. “You looked like you got cold feet back there. You doin’ okay?”

I nodded. “I’ve been talking to the others a bit, and I think my head’s feeling clearer now”

“Soooooooo…” Neptune sounded. “Made up your mind…”

“I’m about to” I admitted. “But I need to hear from you and Uni first before I give my answer”

Neptune chuckled. “Always making sure, huh? That’s my dependable little sister for ya!”

I giggled. “I’m flattered. Thank you, Sis”

“Oooohhh, c’mon!” Sis complained. “We’re sisters! No need to be formal and stuff! Besides, I can see that there’s still something buggin’ ya right now”

I gulped again. Why is it that people can easily see through me?

“W-Well…” I stuttered, playing with my fingers. “I was wondering…what would you do about this whole situation?”

Neptune hummed in thought. “Well…”

“Y-Yes?”

“I’d go around and give those ASIC jerks a good smack in the faces, first and foremost!”

W-Well, Sis did prefer to go straight to violence when it comes to threats.

“And then, I’d give your new BFF a Histy-level scolding over dealing with obviously-shady characters!”

O-okay, Sis. Now, you’re starting to worry me…

“And after that, I think I will---”

“O-okay, Sis! You can stop!”

“Huh?” Neptune bemoaned. “But I was just getting to the good part!”

“I-I get it, Sis! Really! You will just nep things up as usual, right?”

Sis sighed. “Alright-y, but in all honesty, I think your solution would be the best one here”

“Y-You think so?”

Neptune nodded furiously. “I think…no, I know it because you came up with it, Nep Jr!”

“B-But, Sis. You’re just…so much better than me. A part of me still thinks you should be the one doing this”

Sis sighed again. “Listen, Nepgear. Just because my showing of a great protagonist is different from yours doesn’t necessarily mean you’re worse off, you know?”

“Huh?”

“Okay, let’s recap!” Neptune declared. “First, who was the one who travelled with Compa and Iffy to round up all the Candidates together?”

“Errr, me?”

“Correct! Next, who was the one who led the charge to free us from our ‘game of tag’ in the Gamindustri Graveyard?”

“Me?”

“Right! Now, who was it who defeated that Ar-someone so badly she decided to get revenge on you instead of me?”

“Me”

“Correcto-mundo! Who was it that stayed behind with Uzume when the transporter malfunctioned?”

“Me”

“Who was it that teamed up with the other me and B-Sha and her pals to free us from Kurome’s brainwashing?”

“Me!”

“Who was it that Uzume turned to make the final shot on that large Share Crystal?”

“Me!”

“Who was it that decided to bring back our Planeptune with everyone’s help!?”

“Me!”

“Who was it that managed to repair the bonds between her BFF’s!?”

“ME!”

“Who was it that inspired that Ashen Goddess lady to keep up the good fight no matter the time period!?”

“ME!”

“And who was it that eventually defeated that Ar-someone again and freed that other Maho!?”

“ME!”

“Last question! Who did all of the above!?”

“ME! IT WAS ALL ME!”

“GOOD ANSWER, JUNIOR!”

All that shouting has left me gasping for breath. I could swear that my eyes are getting watery.

Neptune sighed in relief. “See? No matter what angle you look at, YOU did all these things, and you know what? That’s a lot more than this version of me or any me could ever hope to match”

“But…” I stammered. “I could never have done it without the others, Sis. It was only because they were there with me that I could fight.”

“Right” Neptune nodded. “And that means, we’re just as much as your strength. Nothin’ wrong with having a bud or two at your side, y’know? That’s pretty much how you fight, along with others.”

She then raised herself to her toes and rubbed my head.

“And that makes you a great protagonist of your own, Nepgear” she told me in a sweet tone. “And I’ll always be proud of you for that”

My eyes couldn’t contain my tears anymore. Oh, Sis…

“T-Thank you…*hic*…so much…Sis…”

Neptune chuckled. “C’mon, dry up those tears, Nep Jr. You still got one more person to talk to now, right?”

I nodded as I wiped away the tears from my face.

“Now go on, Nepgear”

My sister encouraged me.

“Just…promise me you’ll never forget this little moment we have together. Remind yourself of this when you’re feelin’ down, alright?”

I nodded. “I promise”

I then headed out to the entrance to the hidden lab, climbing up to the cave where the lab is housed in. Out there, near the trapdoor entrance, there sat my first friend.

The first friend who was, in ways, like me. A fellow Candidate wanting to do her best for her sister.

“Uni?”

She looked to me, her knees brought together to her face.

“Oh, it’s just you…” Uni said in a low voice. “I was wondering when you’d show up…”

“Did something happen?” I asked.

Uni shook her head. “Not really. Sis came by to talk to me, though”

“Oh? What did she say?”

“Nothing much” Uni said dismissively. “She just apologized for causing that argument and stuff. I…also apologized for shouting out like that”

I shook my own head at that. “No need to apologize. If anything, we needed this moment to clear our heads a bit”

A bitter chuckled escaped her lips. “Is that right?”

She then turned her gaze up to the cave ceiling. “Hey, do you remember when we first fought Brave together?”

Brave? Ah, he was one of the Four Felons. The only one who had a sense of honor and dignity, that he fought for the welfare of the children. Something he and Uni connected with.

“Yeah. You went off by yourself and you looked pretty miserable before we fought him. What of it?”

Uni sighed. “I thought I told you to forget about that part?”

I giggled. “Sorry…”

She sighed again. “Whatever. Anyway, I recalled something you said there that day. In fact, I’d never forget it, even if I wanted to”

“Really? What was it?”

Uni gave me a confused look, arching her right eyebrow upward. “You serious? Do you just give out cheesy speeches so much that you just forget about them afterwards?”

I-what!? “D-do I!? What the goodness!?”

Uni laughed. “Wow, you’re such a natural at it that making them on the spot became second-nature to you, huh?”

“P-please don’t tease me, Uni” I pleaded.

“Well, you stood through my most embarrassing moment” she pointed out. “So, I’d figure I return the favor. Your welcome, by the way”

I sighed. Good to see that Uni is feeling better now.

“Anyway, what you said back there was ‘If we can’t fight through our battles alone, then we can do so together!’ or something like that” Uni continued. “You know what? That was one of the reasons I was able to keep going, because you all were fighting with me”

“Uni…”

“I’m weak, Nepgear” Uni said sadly. “There’s only so much I can do alone, but ever since I joined up with you and the twins, we’ve been able to overcome challenge after challenge, whether it was Arfoire, that Rei lady, or even Kurome. We always ended up doing it all together”

“Yeah” I agreed. “I’m quite weak myself, so even I don’t think I’d be able to do it all alone…”

“And that’s what gotten me worried…”

Worried? “About what?”

Uni breathed heavily. “When you go through with this, you’ll have to take your IS Crystal with the one being made in the past, right?”

I nodded. “If I bring them together, it will cause a pair phenomenon and they will vanish. If that happens, the Deity of Sin won’t be revived, and our timelines will change drastically.”

“But then…” Uni wondered. “Once you’re done there, what will happen to you?”

“Me?”

Uni growled. “No, my sister---YES, YOU! You will be an element out of time like Grey Sister! Once the IS Crystals are gone, where will you end up!?”

“I-I don’t know” I admitted. “Maybe I’ll stick around with Maho, or maybe I’ll end up going to where the new timeline me is…”

Uni sighed. “Okay, say the latter happens, do you think you can handle it?”

“Hm? What do you mean?”

“Like you said, we’re much stronger together” Uni pointed out. “But once you made the leap and destroyed both IS Crystals…you’ll be left in a whole new reality…a whole new life all by yourself…”

I gasped! I…honestly never considered that possibility. If I go through with this, then…

“None of us here will be there with you” Uni cried, her tears starting to leak out. “Not me. Not Neptune. Not Anri. Not Rom or Ram. No one! Not even Ziri will be there with you! Just thinking about that makes me…”

She began to cry some more, and then leapt onto my shoulder as she continued to cry.

I was quite surprised, to say the least (or at least, that was an undertstatement). I've seen Uni in many moods. When she's happy. When she's sad. When she's angry or mad.

But…I don't think I've ever seen her cry this much…

What makes this worse?

Those tears she shedding? They were for me…for the fate that awaits me should I go through with this…

I patted Uni on the back with my left hand as I held one of hers with my right. "Uni…I know this is hard…much more so for you and everyone else…"

I gulped, raising my own spirits. "But I have to do this. If…no, when I pull this off, I'd be able to save billions of lives, not just here but also in the PC Continent. But more than anything, I'll be able to save Maho from her despair and us from all the pain we've been through! That's why…"

"BUT WHAT ABOUT YOU!?" Uni shouted. "You'd save us from all the pain, but what about you!? All the pain, the suffering, the tears! You'd still have them with you! And no one will be there to ease them!"

I shook my head. "That's not true, Uni. You all will still be there"

Uni looked at her, face tear-streaken, and nose pouring out with snot.

"You will be there. Sis will be there. Maho and Anri too. Rom and Ram. Noire and Blanc and Vert. Compa and IF. All our friends will still be there. As long as we're all still there and still together, I can fight through any pain"

Uni wiped off the snot and tears from her face, stifling a laugh. "There you go again, with the cheesy speeches…"

I giggled. "I really am a natural at this, huh?"

Uni rolled her eyes, looking away. "That's not something to be pleased about…"

"Is it, though?"

She sighed. "You really going through with this, huh?"

"I've long made up my mind, Uni"

She sighed again. "Figures you would. Not like I could stop you, even if I wanted to…"

Uni then turned her head to me. I think I know where this is going…

"Then…"

“I promise!”

Uni’s eyes whited out at that! “But I haven’t even said anything yet!”

I giggled. “I…may have made promises to the others already.”

Uni sighed for the third time. “So, you did”

Her face turned serious again. “Okay then. Promise me this…”

I nodded.

“Promise me…that you---”

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“—epgear! Nepgear!”

I yelped. Was I out? How long!?

“Are you feeling okay?” Uni asked me, worry spread across her face. “You’ve been acting weird since you got here”

I gulped. “W-Well…”

“Hush!” Histy scolded us. “Our guests are arriving.”

The door in front of us opened, revealing two figures walking in…

“Come on, straighten up” a deep female voice spoke, one I knew well. “Remember, you’re representing the Goddess of our Continent on this meeting”

“I got it. I got it”

I gasped again! It’s her…

“I’ve been psyching myself up for this day! I won’t screw this up”

A sigh. “You’d better not”

It’s her…It’s really her…

With reddish-pink hair and red eyes, her white jacket over her Grey shirt, her right arm equipped with a mutil-buttoned frisbee, and a smile as big as her heart, she and her escort came to greet us.

“Greetings, everyone” the girl greeted with a curtsy, her escort following suit. “I am Maho. I am here to represent the Goddess of the PC Continent today”

“It is a pleasure to meet you. Now, about th----”

I couldn’t take it anymore! I ran up and gave my BFF the biggest hug I could give!

“Nepgear!?” Histoire called out.

“Whoa, hold the breaks!” Neptune shouted. “What just happened!?”

“N-Nepgear” Uni stuttered. “What are you---!?”

“Maho!” I cried out. “You really came back!”

“Geez” Maho complained, but she smiled nonetheless. “I know it’s seemed like an eternity since we last saw each other, but yeah…I’m here now, Gearsy.”

“M-Maho!”

I buried my face onto her arms. I’m just…so glad….so happy that she’s here!

Oh…Maho…

“Woah!” Ram exclaimed. “Nepgear just ran and hugged that new girl!”

Rom nodded. “Is she a friend we don’t know about?”

“A secret friend?” Vert wondered. “Goodness, Nepgear. It isn’t like you to keep secrets from us!”

“Yeah!” Neptune shouted. “If she has one, I’d be the first to know about it!”

Noire sighed. “Everyone has the right to their own privacy, you know? Even among family members”

Blanc hummed. “That certainly explains why she has been all anxious since we got here…”

“Ummm…” Anri whispered to Maho. “Is she…normally like this?”

Maho chuckled. “Don’t worry about her. She’s…gone through a lot. She looked like she needed a good cry.”

Anri hummed. “I see”

“Nepgear, please” Histoire pleaded. “Compose yourself. This is a diplomatic meeting, remember?”

I jolted, releasing myself from Maho’s hug as I dried my tears. “I’m…sorry. This is…just a lot to take in…”

“What do you mean?” Histoire wondered. “Is this related to what you were feeling before we left?”

I nodded. “Yes. If we all have time later, I will tell you all about it”

“Tell us?” Ram started.

“About what?” Rom continued.

“Yeah” Uni said, tapping her foot as she felt a little peeved “What’s this all about? How do you know her?”

I chuckled as I recalled all the promises I made.

To Blanc, it was to ensure I don’t mess up on what I have to do

To Rom and Ram, it was so we can all see each other, with Maho in tow.

To Noire, it was to make it so no one would have to suffer the pain and loss caused by separation, and should a reunion occur, it must be celebrated.

To Vert, it was to guarantee the birth of a certain AI who would later take the world by storm as a famous little-sister VTuber

To Anri, it was to save her continent, her parents, and most importantly, her best friend that she cherished so much.

To my sister Neptune, it was to remind myself that I have done so much and gotten so far, never forgetting that having my own source of strength is fine.

To Maho, it was so we could meet again, and become BFF’s for real.

And to Uni…

“I’ll tell you all everything. About the journey we all had…in another time…”

…it was to tell everyone what happened back there. Everything, down from the last minutia of detail there is…

“Where we saved Gamindustri from the return of an old and ancient enemy…with an ally from another time...”

…so that even in this new timeline, I will never be truly alone…

End Notes

AN: If you made it here, greetings, traveler! I made this fic for fun and if I ever get the motivation, I may come back to this and expand stuff a little, like how Maho and Anri met up in the new timeline, and Nepgear after telling everyone what happened (and maybe, a little reference in the new mainline title? Just need a good place to chime in on that front first, since I know little about that as of this upload). For those who knew me for my cross-over fic (and for those who don't, I wrote a cross-over fic series. Now you know!), don’t worry. I will re-upload them on this site as well (thankfully, I had some of them saved up and my drafts are still with me, so expect irregular updates on that!) . Anyway, see you all soon!

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!