

With her unexpected arrival and request having been acceded to, Betsy now sat in the midst of a rounded chamber hall, watching as representatives from all three of the Underground Districts of Mars gathered.

This had taken some time, with the Leaders understandably confused and perturbed by the lack of formalities. As she pondered how she would go about this, a hush fell over the milling crowd, and those who were seated rose from their chairs. Needing no further prompting, Betsy does the same and follows the reverent gazes of the crowd towards the large, ornate double doors that had just been opened by a pair of guards on either side. A herald from the left of the chambers spoke out in a booming voice.

"Representing the Techno-Canopy District, Lady Remia Than, Prime Minister."

First to enter is the impressive, statuesque figure of Remia Than, Prime Minister of the district that combines agriculture, industry, and technology. Tall and regal, her skin glowed an opalescent white, her wide, swirling orange eyes perfectly circular, boring into Betsy as green-and-gold royal regalia swept elegantly behind her as she glided to her chair.

"Representing the Anvil District, Vogolas Krinck, The General."

Equally impressive as the Prime Minister, the General is tall, with lizard-like olive-green skin and quietly intelligent black eyes, which found hers quickly. He had thrown on his formal uniform for this occasion, and the two shared a respectful nod, having fought side-by-side before. Betsy knew full well that his military was among the very best the Milky Way had to offer.

"Representing the Aethelgard District, Her Royal Highness of Mars, the Crowned Princess Tyr'ahnee Thoris."

Tyr'ahnee entered grandly, looking so splendid that she put the other two to shame. With hair that glowed like a river of starlight, shimmering purple skin, and catlike yellow eyes, the Princess glided gracefully to her chair, her chin swept regally upward, her eyes carefully avoiding the crowd's gaze. Her gown seemed to glow with ethereal light; it made no sound as it brushed against the ground with each step.

Everyone fell to a knee as she stood before her chair, which brought the ghost of a smile to her crimson lips. With an imperial gesture of her hand, she sank into her ornately decorated chair, inviting the room to do the same. Everyone save for Betsy dropped to their chair; the Traveler remained on her feet, folding her arms behind her back and clasping her hands together. After the three District Leaders studied her for several silent moments, Remia rose to her feet and cleared her throat loudly.

"Your arrival brings mixed reactions, Traveler. Speaking on behalf of myself and the General, we are pleased to see you, albeit surprised at the fact that you have come back here."

The General nods his agreement, his rigid posture never changing as he did. Tyr'ahnee sits between them, looking bored; the Princess had never been a fan of the Impossible Traveler and has never made it a secret. Fighting the urge to roll her eyes, Betsy allows herself to focus on the pair sitting between the Princess.

"I was not expecting the urgency of this trip to arise, but..."

Her words caught in her throat as the absurdity of what she was about to tell them hit again. Closing her eyes, she pinches the bridge of her nose and sighs heavily.

"As you are all well aware by now, Earth is pretty much in the grip of the richest men on the planet. And as it happens... That particular group of chodes opened their pockets to the wrestling federation I work for. Which means they now have the funding to travel far and wide for their events..."

All three Leaders snapped to attention now as Betsy's words registered.

"... And Leap of Faith has always been their... Out of this world event. And this year, they want to host it-"

"Stop."

Betsy's mouth snaps shut as the Princess rises from her chair, her entire body aglow with her indignation. Her voice is like ice down the spine.

"We have long tolerated the intrusion of your kind with all the rubbish you like to throw at us." She begins, her words calm and calculated. "Curiosity and education we can allow, but what you are suggesting now-"

The General clears his throat loudly, cutting off what he knew was about to become a tirade. The Princess gasps but clamps her mouth shut; it was well known that the General was the only one with the power to silence or disagree with the royal family. Few knew *why*, though the General himself had long ago indulged Betsy with the secret that he was the adopted brother of the Old King.

Long story.

Tyr'ahnee slumps down into her seat, looking absolutely livid now. The General remains seated, but his voice booms with authority.

“Allow me to be concise. You’ve come here to warn us... Not to *ask*, but to *tell* us... that you will be joining a band of slum-level entertainers to *our* world, uninvited, to partake in obscene frivolities for sport?”

“Well, when you put it like that...” She tries for playful, but the deadpan stares of the three kill that approach. With another sigh, she decides to just toss the dice. “I can’t stop them, and you’ve been watching Musk for a while... I guess he figured his shit out enough to make this happen. For the sake of everyone involved, I will personally act as Earth’s Ambassador for this event. If anything goes awry, or any one of my people puts a toe out of line, I will handle them myself.”

“I must voice my own concerns that reflect my esteemed fellows... As well as you feeling the need to come here to warn us of this particular band of traveling entertainers.” Remia’s eyes narrow as she studies Betsy again. “We trusted you had better judgment when it came to picking your company.”

“I’m not friends with everyone I work with, let’s be extremely clear about that,” Betsy says, letting her own frustrations be heard in her tone. “As a matter of fact, there are more than a few of them that I would happily allow to wander into the wastes, never to be seen again. But...” Betsy shudders as the next words leave her lips. “Whether I am friends or foes with them, they are all my people. I would be doing them a disservice if I didn’t attempt to protect all of them, to a point. However,” Reaching into her pocket, Betsy pulls out a small piece of paper with a short list of names scribbled upon it. “The names on that list are directly under my protection; if anything happens with or to them, I will handle myself.”

This she says with firm resolve, handing the list to Remia and locking eyes with each of them. Each of the Leaders takes a glance at the names before passing off. The General tucks the list into the breast pocket of his uniform and nods minutely towards her.

“If you think we’re just going to allow this vulgar farce to take place, you are even craz-”

“Before you finish, Your Grace, I’d like you to consider what I have to propose.”

Tyr’ahnee looked as though she were ready to loudly object, but stern glances from The General and Remia rendered her mute once more. With a nod, Betsy continued.

“The intrusion of my company is unwelcome, I know this... But our Princess here called what I do a circus, and she’s not entirely wrong. We’re a bunch of traveling weirdos with a plethora of issues that we try to forget by beating the holy shit out of each other. Yes, it can be seen as vulgar... But the good tribes of Mars could enjoy a good, bloody show just as much as the savages on Earth. Think about it; they toil day after day with little to nothing to break up the monotony of the day-by-day routine. Think of us as the random traveling freak show; one show, one night only, for anyone who is able to show up to witness the spectacle.”

Tyr’ahnee looks disgusted by the idea, but Betsy could see the wheels turning in the heads of Remia and the General.

“It wouldn’t be the worst idea. We have been discussing how to integrate the Earth Children here should the need ever come.”

“This is a risky idea, my friend. The Traveler’s mission here is filled with good intentions, but it doesn’t negate the fact that her fellow man is imposing on our world for their cheap thrills.”

“We have time to figure out how to present this to our people; there will always be those that are passionately against the idea of interlopers holding their event here... But I have a feeling the majority are going to be curious enough to turn up.”

“I think you’re both fools for even entertaining the idea of this.” The Princess interjects, her temper finally exploding. “You’re inviting a world of colonizers onto our planet, on the promise of one woman with a reputation for bringing trouble with her wherever she goes.”

“With all due respect, Your Grace, that same woman has saved all of our asses, and those of our people, more than once.” Remia shot back. “The least we can do is consider her request.”

“Your reservations are valid, M’lady, and are shared between Remia and me; but we ask you to see how this could be good for the morale of our people.”

“Would it sweeten the deal if I said that Musk, Bezos, and Zuckerberg are under no protection from me?” Betsy says, her tone completely serious. “If any of the Trillionaires puts so much as a hair out of line, or makes ANY conversation about possibly colonizing while the event is being held, they are all yours. In fact... Please feel free to make them disappear, whether they misbehave or not.”

This earns a chuckle from Remia and the General, but Tyr’ahnee still isn’t having it. Standing abruptly, she lifts her voice so that it echoes throughout the walls of the meeting chamber.

“I like this not, and I’m not afraid to tell you as much, Traveler. But it seems that my fellow Leaders and I have some decisions to make about this...”

Tyr’ahnee stomps away and pushes her way through the double doors. She is followed by Remia and the General, who are already plotting between themselves...

For now, all Betsy could do was wait.





"I feel like the XWF is collectively asking the same question about now:

Why is Betsy bothering with the Leap of Faith match this year?"

The Impossible Traveler grins as she challenges old-school superstitions by standing beneath a large ladder set up in the middle of a ring. Clutching it with both hands, she glances upward as she begins to speak in earnest.

“The climb up the ladder this year is stacked, no doubt about it. And in all fairness, I’ve lost to a fair number of the people involved, some more recently than others. And some... haven’t had the chance to try yet.

Korvayne, I do believe you are the only among us with whom I’ve yet to have the pleasure of facing. At the risk of being accused of being one of your simps, I’ve liked what I’ve seen. You’ve got spunk, a bit of a spitfire underneath the snobby girl exterior. It should be interesting to see if your bite is as big as your bark. Game Girl, our introductions have been brief and tend to involve groups of peeps... And we find ourselves meeting in the midst of multi-man chaos once again. But it’s always a pleasure to share a ring nonetheless.

For as well-documented as my thoughts and attitudes are towards the majority of the participants, I have some things I’d like to... Get off my chest, I suppose.”

Moving her position, she swings with one hand around the ladder, stopping before it, one foot propped up on the bottom rung. She holds that pose, smiling into the camera.

“For as much as I like to make fun of Charlie for having MAGA-coded views on history and reality, I’ve spewed a few altered facts of my own in the last few months. For instance... Dickie, I’d like to offer my sincerest apologies to you and Amelia for mixing her up with *She Who Will Not Be Named*. 'Tis a mistake I won’t allow myself to live down, because like... Who does that?”

Betsy makes a silly face to acknowledge the flub before moving along. She climbs up another rung now.

“In all honesty, I came at you with a disrespect I don’t actually have towards you. I won’t excuse the behavior, but I will apologize for shitty behavior and sounding like an idiot. I meant no genuine ill will. I reckon you’ll rightfully take that with a grain of salt for now, but I’ll put my money where my mouth is in the ring when we step up to one another again. I’m not here to suck your dick, but I’ll back up my words by giving you the performance you deserve out of me.

Charlie, you fuck-faced, delusional son of a bitch... Do you even hear the shit you excrete from that puckered asshole you call a mouth? As much as I’d love to put you out to pasture, pests like you tend not to die so easily. I could rant about you all day, but it would be an absolute waste of my breath and everyone’s time... All you’re actually good for anymore is being Jordan Penn’s part-time bodyguard and full-time fluffer. After you failed to stumble your way into the Universal Title match, you find yourself here, filled with a ring of people ready to rip you to shreds. Have fun with that... Maybe Leap of Faith is the night the rabid old cunt gets Old Yeller’d for good.”

This puts a smile on her face as she pauses to sit on the rung for a moment and ponder it before moving on.

“Heeeeeey, Zaya... Fancy getting to face you so soon after being adopted in the Exiles. I don’t know if you remember War Games, or the lead-up to it, but I certainly do. Fun fact for you, I was actually hoping to recruit you to my team... Then you had to go and get announced as another captain, and completely ruined my master plan. I hated that stupid bathtub match all the team leaders had to do to determine the draft order... Honestly, how XWF hasn’t killed anyone or been sued by anyone with some of this novelty nonsense astounds me. I did better that night than I actually did at War Games when our teams faced off... Getting eliminated as early as I did left a bad taste in my mouth. I can still taste it there, on the back of my tongue, lingering like something bitter that refuses to be washed away. I’m not one to hold a grudge, but I would like to take that loss back at Leap of Faith... It’s on my to-do list for the night.

T-Six, our situation is similar, yet so very different. Our track record is much clearer, as is evidenced by the fact that I carry the Revolution Title over my shoulder. We work well together as a team, even if our record is a bit spotty. Against one another, though... Well, that’s a drastically different story, now, isn’t it? Mind you, we’ve only had the single one-on-one together for the Revolution Title, but you allowed me the momentum to even be a name considered for the match we find ourselves in now. I thank you most sincerely for that contribution... and the one you’ll follow up with at Leap of Faith. We have no beef, no quarrel, but if you think you’ve figured out the key to defeating me... I promise you, friend, you haven’t. Just like Zaya, I’m afraid you’ll be treated as collateral damage, much like the others I respect in this match...

Which is everyone but Charlie, as it happens.”

Her lips quirk up into a smirk.

“Moving on...

Rowan and I find ourselves facing off everywhere we end up. One would almost think we were friends, but I don’t think we’re there yet. Matter of fact, I don’t believe we’ve had an actual conversation yet. It’s nothing personal, it just hasn’t happened yet. Which is interesting, considering our dynamic leading up to this. Our history, brief as it is so far, is among the most interesting as we go into Leap of Faith. He’s beaten me for a title in EWO, which promptly closed (though rumor has it, they are getting ready to re-open), and in turn, I toppled his monster run in the Summit Gauntlet on Divide’s opening night. Hell, we even share a tied victory... But I can’t help but feel that title win of his ups the score in his favor, just a hair. We haven’t clashed in XWF yet, so Leap of Faith feels like the perfect night to fire that little rivalry of ours back up. Numbers say that you’ve got good odds of walking away with the briefcase... But Lady Luck is riding with me.

As for the ladies, Game Girl and Korvayne... Let's put a hurtin' on those guys."

Betsy grins devilishly over her shoulder as she takes two more steps up the ladder.

"No offense to any of them...

Except Charlie, of course, he *always* gets *full* offense because I find his mere existence *offensive*...

But it would be nice to see one of the girls standing tall with the briefcase at the end of the night. Ideally, I'll be the one making the climb for the briefcase.

As talented as the other two ladies are, I'm the face that people come to see. It's not a knock on the gals, it's just what the numbers say.

Game Girl has been on a bit of a tear since her own return, something that isn't lost on me going into this. House of Hardcore might have fallen to the Exiles recently, but one would be an idiot to think it had to do with a lack of skill on Game Girl's behalf. In all honesty, that entire match was a clusterfuck from the word go, and anyone who wasn't a member of BoB was just trying to keep Charlie Nickels as far away from the Leap of Faith main event as possible. As I've already stated, my experience with her is limited, perhaps even just that triple tag match itself, but I know she's a force to be reckoned with when she's got the eye of the tiger. Honestly, it's hard to say a mean, even a stern thing to or about the girl; she's such a ray of sunshine and entertaining as hell to watch in the ring. I'll be the first to admit that I don't understand her world as well as I'd like; I'm not much of a gamer, and I've definitely never been in the world of one. One of these days, you and I will have to sit down and plan a trip between worlds; something tells me you'd be an amazing companion to take around the universe... And one day, I'd love to see the world through your eyes. Until then, however... Forgive me if I happen to be the one who sends you flying off a ladder.

As for Korvayne, let's face it: chick has a bit of a chip on her shoulder right now. Listen, babes, I've been on that end of Bourbon's Bullshit, and I'm gonna tell you right now: If you want to get one over on that Bastard, you'll have to sink to lower depths than you thought you could get to. He and his equally horrible partner have a talent for bringing out the absolute worst in people, and I tell you this from experience. We find ourselves in a match against someone just as disgusting, not that I need to tell you. I know it seemed like a clever move, picking Charlie to face the Exiles... But you seem like a woman who learns from her fuck-ups fairly quickly. We have that in common; once upon a time, I thought I could befriend Charlie Nickles. Naively thought if I dug a little deep, I could find that last shred of humanity left in him. I learned the hard way that there's only one way to handle a feral beast who was that far gone. I'm looking forward to seeing what you're made of when you have a chance to

scratch his face off properly... I just hope you're willing to get those perfectly manicured nails of yours dirty."

Her lips twist into a smirk as she climbs quickly now, unbothered by the violent wobbling this causes. She stops just before the top and swings her body to the opposite side she'd climbed; now the ladder sways dangerously from side to side. Cussing under her breath, Betsy uses her own body weight as momentum to keep from toppling over, ass over heels, ladder and all.

"I knew I was going to defend the Revolution Title on the same night... Which is why people are asking why I would choose to chase the briefcase as well.

Fair question, so here's an honest answer for that:

Because I *need* this... all of it.

Any chance I've had to make something of myself since I've been back has gone up in flames because of my own self-made impediments. And when I let go of my self-doubt, I took the Universal Champion to the very limits of his own specialty match. I may not have walked out with the strap, but I re-engaged the conversation around Betsy Granger.

That night, I reminded everyone in the XWF-verse, from fans in the seats to the top corporate in suits, who the fuck I am.

I had no intention of greedily taking up two spots on the card, but the powers that be decided that was to be my fate. Could it be someone at the top is pushing me to greatness, hoping to unleash what I continue to hold back?

Or perhaps they think it a punishment for my open distaste of our Trillionaire benefactors, insane booking, and amount of dangerous novelty. Maybe they hope this will be the night that drives Betsy Granger away from the XWF for good.

Joke's on you; I'll keep my title *and* take home the briefcase.

That is the challenge, and I accept.

The Leap of Faith I need to take is in myself.

Because I've got this... And I believe that."

As she says this, she climbs to the tippy-top of the ladder, which is now doomed to go crashing down. As her words echo from the room and walls, Betsy throws herself forward, reaching upward, and hurls herself from the top of the ladder...

As the screen fades to black, a familiar mechanical *whooshing* fills the room...



As the Leaders deliberate over her requests, Betsy can feel the crowd's stares, their hands raised to shield their whispers. Her eyes remain towards the double doors, waiting for them to march back through and make their decree. After what felt like an eternity, the guards swung open the doors, and the three returned to their chairs. From the surly look on the Princess's face, Betsy knew the decision had gone in her favor.

"We, the Three Leaders of the Three Districts of Mars.... Agree to allow the company known as XWF to hold their event on our world without interference. However, we ask that you, on behalf of those who will be involved, to accept these terms..."

Her heart leaps with relief as Remia begins to dictate the terms to be agreed upon...