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The Crimson Wastes keep their dead vertically — iron ribs ancestrally half-swallowed, hull by hull.

A Spatia Revenant's mark folds the metal inward. Space here does not behave.

Void-Moss stitches old wounds. The desert renders its own imperfect revival.

One gloved hand rises. Iron filings trace the birthright buried beneath — and the sand-ship retreats before the night claims what the day could not.



The Crimson Wastes keep their symmetry. Kira does not.

Her reflection ages ahead of her — the Tether's customary toll for borrowed sight.

Somewhere in the Scrap-Dunes, patient as quartzite, something watches back.

The petroleum pool trembles. Her Spectre's cold jolt at the temples says: still there.

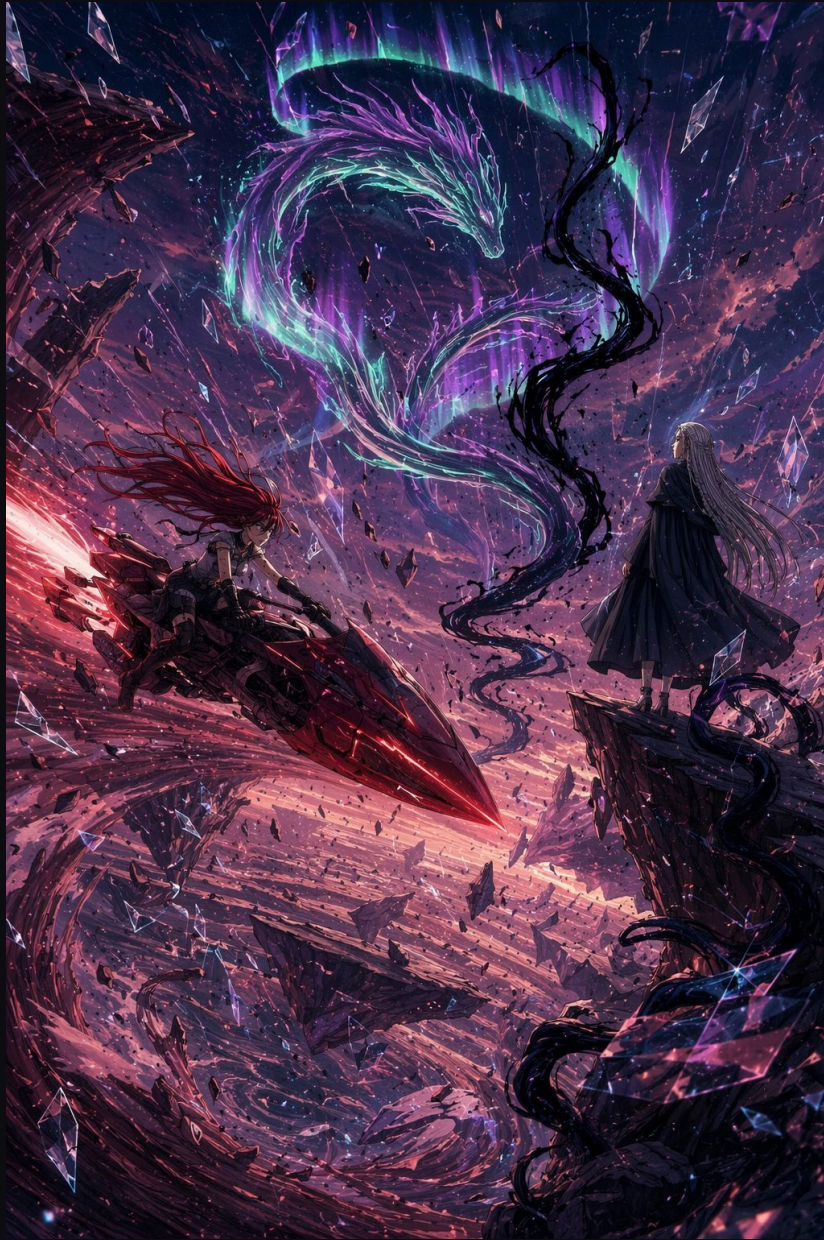


The Scrap-Dunes hold their breath.

Somewhere between dust and decision — a shape flickers, half-real, unresolved.

Rin's shadow touches sand. The numbers begin.

Probability waits. So do they.



The Crimson Wastes have forgotten which way is down.

Mira rides the fracture. Rin becomes the stillness inside it.

Above them, cosmic light and living shadow distil their treaty — sand turns to glass, the horizon folds, and the storm's shriek crystallises into something unspeakably close to a name.

The Dragon Guide and Shadownip inscribe their bond across a sky that cannot hold it.



The Artisan Quarters offer no shadow — only a choice.

Whisper of the Drift: errant boy, clandestine cargo, jaw clenched at the threshold.

Between them, the Crystal Gardens hang sere and colorless — brilliance locked behind administrative glass.

Rin's gloved hand rests near her waist. It is mightier than a javelin. It has not moved.



The Drift does not surrender its secrets — it negotiates them.
Two trajectories. One reckoning.
Zev reads the air like a dare. Whisper reads it like a dire warning.
The fastest path and the wisest one have never been the same road.



Purgatory's Reckoning — Between Witnesses

Ash hangs suspended. The desert holds its breath. Four incompatible truths occupy the same frozen dawn.

Gearbit catalogues what no one will admit: scale is authority, radiance is defiance, and the witness that records the moment owns it.

Somewhere between mentor and chaos enabler, a decade of unshaken philosophorum meets a single spark too stubborn to fall.



The Drift does not yield — it waits.

Seven figures. One crescent. The wreckage already spoken for.

Amber Cohesiva tears the horizon open. The earth does not ask permission.

Oblivion's smirk deepens. He bewailed nothing. The real game has begun.



Two outlanders. One graveyard of stars swallowed by dunes.

The salvager plants her boot where entropy stops — Resonantia threading the desert atom by atom, colossal and animalistic in her refusal.

Beside her, the synthetic broadcasts its challenge darkly through the Tether — a bass tremor, undecipherable and operatic, shaking iron to its marrow.

The Momentum sails flare crimson. The wasteland holds its breath. Neither yields.



Fifteen hulls stitched from dead starships — each scar a patchwork eulogy,
each rivet a borrowed future.

The Gravita tether bends the Crimson Wastes downward. A fleet does not
sail this desert. It negotiates.

On the horizon: Probabilis and Lumina embroiled — branching futures
igniting ghost-ships between existence and void.

No order is shouted. Survival flows through bone, through breath, through a
thousand nomads tilting as one.



Somewhere in the Crimson Wastes, a salvager's claim becomes a verdict.
The Cohesiva Spectre tightens its bolts. The argument tightens everything
else.

Heredity. Trespass. The unspoken arithmetic of territory rights.
The hauler shudders — as if the chassis itself forbids what comes next.



Thirty souls. One prow. Crimson Wastes at terminal measure.

The Momentum Spectre stretched the world into smeared afterimage — she alone refused to drag.

Blood at the temple. Rapture in the chest. The Tether always collects its tithe.

Ten kilometres to Scrap-Haven. Unshakeable as the beacon. Magnificently, impossibly still.



THE CRIMSON WASTES — THE DRIFT

346 kilometres northeast. Salvage window: closing.

Two figures. One bone-white sky. The wreckage won't wait for the stasis-sink to decide.

Eve gestures. The desert dwarfs them both. The ship surges — and the foreground swallows them whole.



A quarter-million souls, forsaking no one — assembled into a single breathing mandala above the Crimson Wastes.

Sand-ships crescent the eastern horizon, sails heavy with Momentum. Makeshift avenues sprawl westward, rife with barter and the unsaid weight of shared scarcity.

At the center: the Weldheart — thirty meters of prayer-fused scrap, Vitalis veins deepening through Void-Moss, its Gravita anchor holding the throng from drifting into dissolution.

Not a city. Not a border. A covenant drawn in flesh and steel — ephemeral, impregnable, and theirs alone.



Weldheart's monthly congregation — and the city does not slow for the living.

She flattens. One heel against fuselage. Amber warmth cupped in a fist.

The Spatia-bonded stranger folds the horizon into angles that shouldn't exist — no one stops, no one can.

The Tether tightens like wire in her ribs. One pivot. The throng delivers her forward, debris in a rip current she did not choose.



The Celestia Spire at dawn — where solar sails elect their vessel.
Kai. Spatia-bound. The last warm thing at the edge of everything.
She does not move. Stillness is the price. Stillness is the proof.
Two worlds share a border here. She is the only one honest enough to stand
on it.



The Scrap Haven market canyon roars. Five faction leaders. Five irreconcilable positions. Beneath their feet: the Weldheart, its amber lattices flickering with vulnerability.

KORG: "We burrow or we perish. The dunes do not negotiate." JINX: "Stasis is blasphemy. Settlement is euthanasia."

Between them: Elara. Blind. Utterly present. Reading their breathing patterns. ELARA: "We do not choose anchor or motion. We choose which death we dignify."

The Weldheart's light dims. Not failure. Authenticity, at last, displacing notoriety.

The canyon breathes. All five faction leads breathing in unison. Shared mortality acknowledged. The silence is its own form of journalism.



Twenty-two years of fused steel and deep-water knowledge — surrendered across a table of driftwood.

The key lands warm in Osa's hand. The debt it carries is older than either of them.

The Tidalcross Community watches without applause. They have seen this wound before, in longer wars.

Korg walks east into the steam. Slag settles. Obligation takes the shape of what remains.



THE BLAST-HEART FOUNDRY — THRESHOLD OF THE BROKEN FURNACE

Forge and cold. Two planes. One membrane between godhood and ruin.

Whisper reads the corrosion through his fingertips — Tidalcross, creeping inland. The contamination does not announce itself.

Kael's Therma strains. The barrier shudders. For one dire, incandescent instant — neither man nor boy can name which side they stand on.



The grandfather-wreck exhales — not in malice, but in the fervour of the almost-finished.

Three figures. No words. Only the agility of bodies already in motion.

Kaito's Tether burns. Chen's armor reads the storm. Rake descends, cold-eyed, bearing silent warnings toward the dock.

Salvage-life congregates in the ribcage of an empire. They pass through it like a clearing remembers fire.