

## [David Lance POV]

Within moments of leaving Granny Goodness, I reached the room where Dex-Starr was supposed to be resting. Inside, the room was small and sparsely furnished. A single bed sat in one corner, and a small table and chair were tucked into another.

Against one wall was a small dresser, its surface bare except for a single candle. Why on earth a cat would need a dresser was beyond me.

Taking a deep breath, I stepped forward, searching for Dex-Starr in the room. However, there seemed to be no signs of Dex-Starr anywhere around, and that was until my eyes caught sight of a box beside the bed.

It was a small, unassuming cardboard box, but a part of me knew what it contained.

It couldn't be, could it?

I mean, sure, Dex-Starr was a cat, but he wasn't a normal cat by any means, he was a cat given a higher level of sentience through his rage, and therefore such things had to be beneath him, right?

Taking a deep breath, I approached the cardboard box, half expecting it to be empty. But when I peered inside, I found the one I was looking for, curled up and fast asleep. It seemed no matter the level of sentience he had, Dex-Starr was a cat at his core.

I sighed, the little monster looked so peaceful inside that box that I couldn't help but smile, and without knowing, I found myself reaching inside to pet the cat-shaped murder machine gently. This, in turn, woke Dex-Starr up, who, in shock or perhaps surprise, simply stared at me as I petted him.

"What... doing?" Dex-Starr asked through his ring.

"Petting you," I replied as if that answered everything. "I guess at the time; it seemed like the right thing to do."

Dex-Starr stared at me for a moment, almost as if finding this interaction alien to him, unknown, strange beyond measure. After a few moments of awkward stares between us, Dex-Starr leaned forward, sniffing my hand a few times in trepidation before nuzzling against my palm.

And then, as if he had made up his mind, he closed his eyes and started to purr.

I smiled again, happily stroking his fur as he leaned into my hand. With each brush of my hand, I could feel Dex-Starr's soft fur and the steady rumble of its purr. I had to admit, it was a comforting sound, so much so that for a moment, I forgot about all my troubles.

Perhaps it had a lot to do with the fact Dex-Starr looked a lot like the cat that scared Trigon away or the fact that this has been one of the few positive things I had gone through in this accursed universe I found myself trapped in.

"Well, we have work to do, don't we?" I said, getting up and patting Dex-Starr on the head.

Dex Starr yowled in response as his body glowed red, remembering what our mission was. "I good kitty, I waited for you, I good kitty."

"Good kitty indeed," I replied with a small nod. "Now, let's get started."

I was glad Dex-Starr was okay, for a moment there, I had thought they had killed him, or worse. But he was okay, it

seemed that Granny Goodness was simply playing with me for the sake of her own amusement.

I would make her regret that later.

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With Dex-Starr at my side, I arrived back at the barracks, finding Granny Goodness right where I had left her. It took her a few brief moments to acknowledge our presence, but when she finally did, she smiled at us, her eyes filled with deception.

"Do my old eyes deceive me, or is that the companion you were looking for, sweetie?" Granny Goodness asked mockingly.

At this, Dex-Starr hissed at her, his fur standing on end as he tried to appear bigger than what he was. I had to admit, it was a bit amusing, and perhaps even adorable, if you didn't count the ring he wielded, but now wasn't the time for such things.

"Save your act for someone that cares to see it," I said coldly, my voice oozing with contempt. "I know what you are trying to do, and I won't stand for it. Not anymore, so get on with your explanation about my army and begone."

Granny Goodness simply stared at me as if she was assessing me before finally breaking into a wide smile. "Oh well, you can't blame an old woman for trying to have some fun, sweetheart. But I can see you're getting tired of dear old granny, so I won't waste your time senselessly. Granny knows what her babies need, so I shall explain the details of your army and their capabilities."

"Get to the point," I said impatiently.

Granny Goodness responded with a brief chuckle before waving her hand, making a holographic map appear in the center of the room.

"As you already know, sweetie. Your army is composed of four million genetically engineered soldiers: two million of them are considered brawlers, one million and five hundred thousand are air combat specialists, and the remaining five hundred thousand are terraformers," Granny Goodness then motioned for me to look around the room. Every wall of the barracks was filled with weapons; guns specifically designed for each individual soldier. "Each soldier is equipped with special weaponry that fits their individual style, making them capable of taking down even the most bothersome enemies."

I stared at the soldiers, the monsters Darkseid had offered me, and the weapons they wielded, using my ring to scan them to

see whether or not Darkseid had given me second-grade weapons, or not. Much to my surprise, however, it seemed the weapons were of top-notch quality.

Now my questions leaned toward the categories Granny Goodness was using. Brawlers, flyers, and terraformers.

"Are all of them able to fly? the descriptions you used for them didn't clarify much about that regard," I asked her, staring at her. "In fact, it explained nothing about them at all besides a very general point."

"Don't worry, sweetie, Granny will answer all of your questions," Granny Goodness said with a smirk, one that made me want to tear her head right off her shoulders. "To answer your question, yes, they all have flying capabilities, but each one shines in a different area. Brawlers are the ones that use brute force to get things done; and believe me, of brute force, they have plenty to spare. They can be best used for close-quarters combat, ambushes, and direct assaults."

That one, I could assume that much. The ones I wanted to know more about were the terraformers.

"Flyers are the ones that handle air combat and reconnaissance; they excel at... how do humans call it? dog... dogfight! they excel at dogfighting, scouting missions, and

things around those lines," Granny Goodness continued, as a dark smile formed on her face. "And finally, we have the terraformers, soldiers with long-range capabilities that specialize in the engineering feats of modifying the atmosphere, the temperature, the surface topography or ecology of a planet, moon, or other planetary body to a terra-preset installed in their little heads."

That sounded incredibly dangerous and powerful. They felt like a glass canon, so to speak.

"What presets do they have?" I asked in order to decide whether I would use them for their designed purpose or throw them as sacrificial meat in the upcoming fight.

"They can terraform any planet, given enough time to a few presets," Granny Goodness responded. "You can order them to make a planet's atmosphere suitable for human life, or in the opposite corner, sweetie, you could make a second Apokolips. There are a few other presets, but none are worth mentioning or feel worth mentioning. Well... then again, maybe one is worth mentioning now that I think about it. The Red Sun preset; with it, you could have the terraformers change the atmosphere on Earth to one similar to that of a planet under a red sun."

A red sun atmosphere...

That would depower Superman, putting his head on a silver platter.

"Wouldn't that affect the Kryptonian?" Granny Goodness asked with a malicious grin across her face.

At this, my thoughts came to a halt. Something about this seemed like Granny Goodness wanted me to use this 'preset', and for more than obvious reasons, that didn't settle well for me at all.

"It would," I replied coldly, turning away from Granny Goodness and towards the soldiers. I would find her true intentions sooner or later.

For now, I had much to plan.