**Pyrostasis Resurrection**

**Part XXIV.V – The Perfect Duel / Agonis/Antagonis/Isometric Muscles**

Cpl. William Hworang and Cpl. Penelope Vega had each other at the cross-hairs of their respective M82 A2 Barrett Bull-pup revision. They took the shot. Each hit their mark, a special shoulder blade bulls-eye, the size of a human head that shattered with three circles of destruction. They were approximately 1024.76 metres from each other when they took the shot.

Both squinted at each broken shoulder blade plate, and then cast it off, and unhooked the gun's sling belt aside. They left their sniper rifles on their open bi-pods, on the ground of their respective OPs. They picked up their respective B-56 and HK416 for the mid-range phase. Both of them managed to hit around 50% of their rounds on each other's energy shield, that had depleted by the time they were closing in at each other to a range smaller than 100 metres.

At this point Penelope cried to William “Hworang, I'm out of ammo, what about you?”

Still breathing hard he answered: “I'm out too. Let's finish it, Vega, like true soldiers. Face me!!!” By the tone of his voice she knew he meant business. She unhooked her quadrature eye drillers optical cables from her HK416 sights. He did the same. By the time he caught her Mohashi mid-kick and repelled her by an open palm thrust to her lower torso region, all their scars had healed. He took a Kibadachi stance, twice as wide as his shoulder blades were.

Penelope got up to her feet from the fake red dust of the AR arena. She tried to throw a punch to William's face, which he deflected to his left, but then she quickly gave him a low kick to his right which he was able to guard against, but an upper kick to his head managed to catch him by surprise. He tried to Mi-Gerry his way forward with his boot, but Penelope managed to deflect the kick, and was able to counter kick it behind his right knee. She could have aimed higher, taking advantage of his deflected state, not to mention his Kibadachi stance.

William remained there a second or two, still flexing out his Isometric muscle tension, then he did a ninja roll backwards, replacing his Kibadachi stance with a less strenuous stance. Penelope's flailing hands were constantly shifting her punches from the antagonis position of full impact but zero kinetic potential to the agonis position, of full kinetic potential with zero impact.

William did the same and though his punches were powerful, they hadn't had the reach of his kicks. Penelope strafed his kicks and answered with her own, that is until...

“Very well, Cpl. Hworang and Cpl. Vega, cease combat.” That was Lt. Commander Jaxx.

“That was a fine display of both shooting capabilities and close quarters combat skills. There is still room for improvement on all fronts, but overall I'd say you did a fabulous job out here today. Both of you will receive a 25 Duck$ bonus by the end of this week. I wish other soldiers would show this kind of composure and dedication where they should.” He looked at me accusingly. I looked at Mustapha and Jacques but the message seemed to have been lost on them as well, maybe Alpha or Charlie squads know what he wants. Those Delta and Foxtrot fucks always cast bad light on the rest of us mortals.

“Excuse me, Lt. Commander Jaxx...” I tried to understand.

“Not now, Ophelia. The following Corporals are to report to Sniper duty training session, print their respective weapons and munitions: Gomez, Ricardo M82 Barrett A3; Summer, Ophelia Dragunov; Frinz, Aran M24; Marshall, Seal Cheytac Intervention; and last Suliman, Jacob M14 EBR.”

Then the Commodore came out of nowhere. I'd assumed he wasn't even at the outpost at the time. “The rest of you go to AR2 for advanced CQC training with Mr. Dante Romano - after he finishes with Cpl. Summer tri-dot syringe 12:00 shots, that is.” As if he needed to address me personally, the rest of them knows the drill as well as me. I unhooked the C60 quadruple Kevlar suit latch to free up my left arm, and started to find the isometric muscle tension which makes it somewhat less painful. Not that I mind the physical pain. But why did he have to mention it in front of all the others like that, it is not as if that they don't know about my condition, that is. Dante was there all along, I suppose. I didn't notice him come in before.

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When my biological brain regained consciousness as the Uber den Geist subsided, everybody was looking at me strangely. “Sgt. Kristie, take Cpl. Nox to the infirmary...” her nose was bleeding and I can almost swear I heard her whimper. What did she ever do to my A.I. to deserve that? It felt as she was greeted by my knee to her face. Subconsciously I guess I always wanted to do that, to see what will happen to the princess of Golf squad.

Mustapha shot me with a disappointed stare, while Jacques facial expression seemed indifferent. “Tell Dr. Oswald we just ran into another outburst of the foreign spirit, he'll understand. As you were, people, this is under control, move it like you mean it.” The commodore at least has high spirits, not that he dared to even look in my direction, preferring to check how virtual the red dust of the planet can fly when it is being kicked in the AR room.

Maybe he should take some of the stuff he injects into me instead, it might calm his nerves. The holographic sands do not seem to comply with what he is trying to accomplish there, which I guess the others are at a loss, same as me in regards to what he is doing now. The virtual stigmata of the cracks and nooks do not always play along with what someone has in mind in relation to the desired effect one can assume would logically follow. That is to say, the room's virtual elements depend somewhat on physical elements which are not always there if at all.

I wonder what my Uber den Geist did to Gabriel, and most important, I guess, is why? The Uber den Geist is designed to be in perfect equilibrium with our own biological brain, but there are some aberrations from time to time. Some people said it can go out of sync when they need it the most. The fade out and fade in delays can be measured in nano seconds for most individuals. Mine take considerably longer time to re-adjust after a transition. At least in the fade-in phase, when I regain control. I thought this is why I get those tri dot syringe shots, to lower my sync back time and re-adjust more quickly to my surroundings. Nox is not such a bad person when you get to know her. But now I wonder if I am.

This round is me versus Jacques. I hit my mark at the 1024 metres range, he missed. Got down from the OP, after casting off the un-broken shoulder plate, leaving the Dragunov with an open Bi-pod, I think Jacques threw his DSR-1 off the OP. Attaching quadrature eye drillers tubings to my right eye socket, from the B-56 for the mid-range fight. He did the same with his FN SCAR-H, modified version.

He's coming for me, the AR arena formed towers of rubble to hide in. I ran from one tower to the next. He gutted them to apple-seeds of their former selves. His clips replacement is very slow and he uses 20 round magazines. My twin 35 rounds magazines are far more effective. His shield had depleted 45 seconds before mine. I had enough ammo to finish him off, but I wanted to get close and personal.

“Jacques, I'm spent, what about you?” I asked behind one of those pillars. I unhooked the quadrature eye drillers. He probably did the same.

“I'm all out, Ophel, come and get me if you think you can.” I took another peek behind the corner, he was standing there, empty handed, unloading his SCAR-H from its empty clip, and disengaged the modified optic nerves extenders. Scars will heal by the time we'll get to point blank. I decided to make a run for it. I try to kick him head-on while flying only to be deflected mid-air to a nearby pillar. The amount of adrenaline in me muted the pain. Not to mention the high of Serotonin.

He took a relatively defensive stance, and marked with his left palm, I should make the next move. I pretended to come hastily once more, but responded well this time around. He tried to throw a few sickle based punches, which I deflected and returned with my own. Making any agonis potential hit the mark when his punches reached the antagonis state of full impact (if they had hit their mark) with zero potential of kinetic energy to strike back at me, as much as he wants.

He then manage to surprise me with a low kick which I barely deflected in time, and then two Mi-Gerry that were enough to push me backwards onto another pillar. He tried to have a 3rd roundhouse kick, that I managed to avoid by using the pillar wall behind me as a jumping surface as a point of contrast, and then got back at him with a low kick and considering the close proximity to him I had elbowed his rib cage twice, then hooked him for a knee deep massage of sorts, when Mustapha had to butt in.

“Cpl. Summer, cease combat immediately and follow me.”

“What about me, Sarge?”

“Keep practicing, your performance is not at the level I expect from you.”

“Where are you taking me, Sgt. Abdul?”

“Dr. orders, he wants to try something else.”

“Did I fight well, Sarge?”

“Your techniques were superb, this was never your problem.”

“Then what is?”

“Your attitude. You are disrespectful to the system. You always been a selfish brat who thinks she knows better than everyone else.” I wanted to say something, but maybe he has a point. I guess I owe some people a certain apology of sorts. I have to redeem myself even if she might deserved this. My Uber den Geist has no authority to distribute justice as it sees fit. Mr. Romano waited outside AR-2.

He accompanied us to the infirmary. His quiet could have been more maddening than that of the Sarge.

When we got there he did say something. “It was a fine display, Cpl. Summer, a fine display indeed.” I had a feeling he was observing me the whole time, much as he was scanning me telepathically as we walked in the hexagonal corridor. I wonder if he did managed to see something through his scans. Come to think about it, I don't think he has ever spoken to me.

Even when at first I tried to object to his behaviour, when he gave me my tri-dot syringe shots at the showers. His persuasion techniques were never verbal. It was just the empty stare that was enough to convince me that 'it will be over before you know it'. Not that he had to say it. But he was a Psyion priest, which also meant he was a Generien, devoid of bizarre constructs like feelings or love/hate dichotomies. They never succumb to such trivialities.

Just a second before they had left me there to see the old Dr. Oswald, I could swear I could discern a retracting optical cable entering Mr. Dante Romano's cloth. Could he poked inside my Uber den Geist, an image of 256 exabytes would not take less than 10 minutes to be copied over an optical cable, and it doesn't need to wake it to do so either. That sneaky bastard, he went in the direction of the rez chambers when he had left.

No, it doesn't makes much sense. Mustapha would have noticed something was wrong, unless he was in on that as well. The watchdogs of the Uber den Geist must have been recording my battle data as I sparred. That's probably what they're after. They wouldn't want to waste such a great resource.