Side Story Accord

In a large city, Concordia, capital of the Union, flags bearing the Red Stripes snapped harshly in the wind, their symbol marked by two crimson lines slashing through the center as if crossing something out. Armed troops patrolled every street, their presence constant and suffocating. No citizens dared to go outside anymore. Those who remained kept to the shadows, tense and watchful, as if the war itself had already seeped into their bones.

These were the Loyal Red Stripes, the faction that had remained faithful to the Council even after Natasha exposed their corruption and stripped them of power. In response, they had only grown more brutal. More rigid. More desperate. It hadn't started this way. Some citizens had even welcomed their occupation at first, convinced Natasha was a liar, a usurper staging a coup for her own gain. That belief had not aged well.

Now the Council didn't bother pretending. Optics no longer mattered. Control was enough.

A little girl ran across the street, barefoot and aimless. A soldier spotted her immediately. "What are you doing out here?" he barked, grabbing her by the head and lifting her effortlessly as she struggled and cried. "Are you with the traitors?" "No… I…" she stammered, her voice breaking. She didn't have

an answer. She didn't have a home either. It had been destroyed in the fighting. Her family was gone.

"She's just a little girl…" a woman said, stepping out from hiding despite the danger. The soldier turned toward her without hesitation, tossing the girl aside like she weighed nothing. "What difference does it make?" he snapped. "Any of you could be traitors. How do I know you're not one?" "That's enough."

The voice came from nowhere and everywhere at once. Before the soldier could react, a man moved, fast enough to blur, and struck him down in a single motion. The soldier hit the ground hard, stunned. The woman stared, confused but grateful. "Go," the man said, not even looking at her. "Take her somewhere safe. Things are about to get heated." She didn't question it. She grabbed the girl and ran.

On the outskirts of the city, the defenses told a different story. One guard sat asleep in a chair beside a makeshift barricade, while another leaned lazily against the wall, barely paying attention. Footsteps approached. The alert guard turned, startled, fumbling for his comm. "They're..." A shot rang out, clean and precise, destroying the device in his hand before he could finish the sentence.

Elsewhere, hooded figures moved silently through Concordia, slipping between patrol routes and avoiding detection with practiced ease. They spread out toward the center, each one waiting for the signal. Meanwhile, a larger force marched straight down the main road, armored vehicles rumbling behind them. They moved with confidence.. At their head walked a single figure. Natasha.

As they advanced, her eyes swept over the city. The damage was undeniable, but what unsettled her more was what hadn't been caused by battle. Buildings stood half-collapsed, streets left in disrepair, entire sections abandoned not because they had been destroyed, but because no one had bothered to maintain them. Neglect. It made her expression tighten.

They reached the central square, where a large concentration of Red Stripe forces had gathered.

The soldiers turned, their confusion quickly shifting into alarm. Natasha inhaled slowly, steadying herself. “All forces,” she said, her voice calm but carrying across the entire formation, “begin the operation.” She paused, just long enough to let the weight of it settle. “Let’s take back our city.” The response was immediate. From every direction, True Union soldiers surged forward, emerging from alleys, rooftops, and hidden positions. Gunfire erupted as they opened fire without hesitation, overwhelming the Red Stripes before they could organize a defense. Natasha moved with them, not behind, not above, alongside.

Across the city, the hooded figures cast aside their cloaks. They revealed themselves as True Union operatives. One group was led by Marcy. Another by Tyler. Tyler struck a pose, almost instinctively, and the soldiers behind him followed suit as their gear activated. Their armor shifted and locked into place, forming sleek, reinforced suits. Unison suits. They were not as flashy as the old Ultra suits, but they were far more practical. They enhanced mobility, increased durability, and amplified strength in a way that felt grounded and controlled rather than theatrical. Together, they charged forward, crashing into the unprepared Red Stripe forces from within the city itself. The occupation had never been as secure as it seemed, and now, it was collapsing all at once.

True Union ships tore into the sky in sudden flashes of light, emerging from warp already firing. Their opening volleys struck the orbital defenses before the Red Stripes could properly react, tearing through several ships and sending burning wreckage spiraling down toward the city below. The remaining vessels quickly returned fire, and within seconds the sky became a chaotic battlefield of crossing beams and exploding hulls. From the ground, defensive turrets roared to life, tracking the incoming ships and unleashing sustained barrages upward. The air filled with streaks of light and thunderous impacts as both sides fought for control of the space above Concordia.

On the streets below, the battle erupted just as violently. A resistance group burst out of an abandoned shopping mall, their sudden appearance catching a squad of Red Stripes completely off

guard. They were armed with outdated, improvised weaponry, rifles held together by scrap, blades worn from overuse, but their timing was perfect. They overwhelmed the better-equipped soldiers before they even had a chance to respond. That advantage didn't last. The Red Stripes adapted quickly. Shock gave way to fury as their forces regrouped and pushed back with disciplined aggression. Reinforcements poured into the streets, and what had started as a clean ambush turned into a full-scale clash.

Marcy's unit took the brunt of it. For a moment, they were driven backward under the pressure, forced to give ground as the Red Stripes advanced. Then Marcy stepped forward. Her form shifted, muscles expanding as she surged into a bulked-up state, a roar tearing out of her as she charged directly into the enemy line. The ground cracked beneath her weight. A tank rolled forward to meet her, its cannon already turning. She grabbed it. With raw force, she ripped the entire machine off the ground and hurled it into the advancing troops. The impact scattered them, sending soldiers diving in every direction as the vehicle crashed and exploded in their midst. The momentum shifted again.

Natasha didn't slow down. She moved through the battlefield like a force of nature, striking down anyone who stood in her way with precise, efficient blows. Her focus never wavered as she pushed forward, cutting a direct path toward the Council building at the heart of the city. Despite the danger, something unexpected began to happen. Doors opened. Citizens stepped out from hiding. At first, they only watched, uncertain. Then one voice rang out. "Go, Natasha! For the Union!" Others joined in. The fear that had kept them hidden began to crack, replaced by something stronger.

Some picked up whatever they could find, pipes, tools, broken weapons, and rushed into the fight. Others simply used their fists, throwing themselves against the Red Stripes with reckless determination. Union soldiers reacted quickly, handing out spare weapons where they could, reinforcing the civilians instead of pushing them back. In the Union, belief wasn't passive. People fought for it. Natasha allowed herself a small smile as she saw it unfold, even as concern lingered

beneath it. This was what she had fought for, but it came with a cost she could not ignore.

She raised a hand, signaling to several nearby units. “Keep them behind the second line,” she ordered firmly. “Minimize civilian exposure.” The soldiers nodded, moving immediately to redirect the volunteers toward safer positions without breaking the advance. Natasha turned back toward the Council building. They were close now, and this time… she wasn’t going to stop.

Most of the Red Stripe forces had clustered around the Council building, and it made their priorities painfully obvious. They weren’t defending the city. They weren’t protecting the people. They were protecting themselves. Natasha broke through anyway. Gunfire erupted the moment she entered their range. Bullets struck her head-on as she charged forward, each impact sharp and relentless. She no longer carried the full power of the Multiverse, and yet something of it still lingered within her. Her skin held, impossibly durable, resisting what should have torn her apart.

She didn’t slow down. The soldiers in her path fell like bowling pins, scattered by sheer force as she tore through their formation. Behind her, Union forces surged forward, locking into formation and securing the ground she cleared. They pushed hard against the remaining defenders, carving out a path straight to the entrance. A heavy impact shook the ground. Marcy crashed down beside her, landing with enough force to fracture the pavement. On her other side, Tyler flashed into position, removing his helmet as he fell into step with her.

His expression was sharper now, older, more tempered by everything they had been through. Their units merged seamlessly with the others, reinforcing the push as the final defensive line began to buckle. “This is it,” Tyler said, his voice steady. “Oh my god… what if there’s, like, a really scary guy in there?” Marcy added, shrinking slightly despite still being fully bulked up. Natasha didn’t even hesitate. “Nothing we can’t handle.” She moved forward and stepped inside.

Something felt wrong immediately. There were people inside the building, but far fewer than there should have been. The deeper they went, the quieter it became. Fewer guards. Fewer staff. Less

resistance. The tension didn't rise the way it should have. It hollowed out instead. By the time they reached the upper levels, the silence had become unmistakable. They stopped outside the Council chamber. Marcy and Tyler took position on either side of the door, ready for whatever waited beyond it. Natasha stepped forward and reached for the handle, pulling gently. Locked. She took a breath, steady and controlled, then drove her shoulder into the door. The impact splintered the frame, the lock giving way as the door burst inward. Inside… The Council seats stood in place. Untouched. Empty.

"What? But they… where could they have gone?" Tyler asked, confusion creeping into his voice. He got his answer immediately. Holographic displays flickered to life around the chamber, casting distorted light across the empty seats. One by one, the shadowed figures of the Council appeared, their forms unstable, their laughter echoing unnaturally through the room. "Natasha Starcrafter…" one of them began, voice dripping with mockery, "you truly are a fool. You committed so many of your forces to reclaim this location." Natasha's expression hardened, her gaze locking onto the projections.

"Why wouldn't I?" she replied, her voice cold and steady. "This city is the birthplace of the Union. Its heart. And you…" Her eyes narrowed. "How much suffering of our people do you intend to inflict?" For a moment, there was silence. Then another voice spoke. "You ruined everything, General Starcrafter. If it wasn't for you…" The figure leaned forward slightly, its form glitching at the edges. "The Union would still be whole. All of its citizens safe. Protected… by us." Natasha's composure snapped. "You were torturing girls," she shot back, her voice rising with fury. "Bleeding our people dry of wealth. Building weapons meant to destroy entire worlds. The only thing you were protecting was yourselves." She stepped forward, unflinching. "And you still are."

A brief pause followed. Then. "Yes," one of them said simply. "All for the good of our Union." The tone shifted. Cold. Final. "But now… we have won." A display changed behind them. "Goodbye, General." The holograms flickered, replaced by a live feed. An orbital cannon loomed above the city,

its massive frame already aligned. Energy gathered at its core, building toward a devastating discharge.

Natasha stared at it, disbelief cutting through her anger. “You would destroy everything?” she said, her voice tightening. “Your own people? Our foundation? Just to kill me?” “You’ve already done the hard work for us,” one of them replied, almost amused. “Most of your forces are committed to reclaiming the city. One strike eliminates you… and the majority of our opposition.” A low chuckle followed.

“And of course… we’ll blame it on you.” Something in Natasha’s expression shifted. Not surprise. Not fear. Disgust. “I didn’t want to believe it,” she said quietly, her voice steadier now. “But I suspected you would do something like this.” Her eyes burned as she looked up at them. “I just didn’t think you would sink this low.” She took a step forward. “You have no pride in your nation at all.” Her voice dropped, sharp and absolute. “You make me sick. You should already know that a Union is build with many not few it what you were founded to be.” She said pressing something on her comm. “Do it.”

A sudden rumble cut through the chamber. The holograms flickered violently, their forms distorting as the signal destabilized. Several of the Council projections staggered, their composure breaking for the first time. “What, how did you ?!” one of them shouted, panic bleeding into their voice. Another tried to regain control, forcing authority back into their tone. “You will pay for this, Starcrafter...” The feed cut out mid-sentence. For a brief moment, there was only silence. Then the display shifted again.

A new figure appeared, standing on the command deck of a warship. His posture was rigid, his expression stern, the chaos behind him barely contained. “The station has been destroyed,” he reported without hesitation. “We are deploying search teams for any survivors.” Natasha didn’t respond immediately. “…Thank you, General,” she said at last, her voice quieter now. “I wish I had been wrong. I didn’t want it to end like this.” She exhaled slowly. “They should have faced justice.” “They did,” the man replied, unwavering. “They attempted to destroy their own people. We stopped them

before they could succeed." His gaze held steady. "Take pride in that, General." The transmission ended without another word.

Natasha stood still for a moment, then turned and walked toward the large window overlooking the city. She pressed a control panel, and the glass shifted, clearing from darkened reinforcement into full transparency. Light poured in, revealing Concordia below. The battle was over. Union forces had secured the city. Fires were being put out, barricades torn down, and in the streets, people had already begun to celebrate. Laughter and cheers echoed faintly even from this height. The tyrants were gone.

They had their home back. They had no idea how close they had come to losing everything.

Natasha watched the celebration below in silence. "What now?" Tyler asked from behind her. She didn't turn. "This was only the first step," she said, her voice steady, though the weight behind it lingered beneath the surface. "The Red Stripes still control a significant portion of Union territory. We need to..." A hologram flickered to life mid-sentence. "Sorry to interrupt." The projection stabilized, revealing a man in unfamiliar armor. It carried the shape and structure of Union design, but something about it was… off. The red dominated almost entirely, far beyond the traditional stripe, while the green remained only in faint accents, like a remnant of something already being discarded.

Natasha narrowed her eyes. "Who are you?" The man laughed, low and amused. "What a shame. I was never stationed in a core world, but we were peers once." Natasha studied him more closely, searching her memory. Nothing. He tilted his head slightly, a faint smirk forming. "General Roman Virex," he said. "Of the Loyalists." A pause. "Though… that name may not be accurate for much longer." "And what is it that you want?" Natasha asked, her tone sharpening. "First?" he replied lightly. "To congratulate you on your victory." That only made her expression harden further. "Why would you be happy about that?"

Virex chuckled. "Straight to the point. Good. I was hoping you hadn't changed." He stepped forward slightly within the projection, hands behind his back like he was addressing an equal, not an

enemy. “I think we both know the Council had become dead weight. Endless politics. No progress. No vision. You removed them.” His smile widened faintly. “Now our forces can operate without that burden.” Natasha’s eyes narrowed. “So this is a power grab. You intend to take control of the Red Stripes.” A beat. “Is this a formal declaration of intent?”

“Yes… and no,” Virex said smoothly. “Control was inevitable. I simply chose to act before someone less competent did.” He paused. “But that’s not why I contacted you.” “Then what is?” she pressed. “I would like to discuss peace.” That caught even Tyler off guard. “Peace?” Natasha repeated, suspicion clear in her voice. “So what’s the play? You consolidate power, then fold your territory back into the Union?” She shook her head slightly. “I won’t complain if you make this easier for us, but...”

“Do not misunderstand me.” His tone shifted. Sharper. Colder. “I have no intention of rejoining the Union. None of us do.” For a brief moment, something like pity crossed his expression. “I respect you as a general,” he continued. “As a warrior. But as a ruler…” He exhaled faintly. “You lack the disposition.” Natasha didn’t react outwardly, but the tension in the room tightened. Ruling had never been her goal. That didn’t mean the words didn’t land. “So what, then?” she asked. Virex didn’t hesitate. “The Union cannot be made whole again. Not after this. Continuing this war will only bleed both sides dry.” He met her gaze directly. “So we stop.” A pause. “We separate.” The word hung in the air.

“We will reform as our own nation. You keep the territory you’ve secured. We keep what we hold.” His expression didn’t shift. “No more expansion. No more escalation.” Silence settled between them. Then, calmly. “We end it here.” Natasha frowned, her eyes drifting back to his armor, studying it more carefully now. “It looks like you’ve already made your decision… regardless of mine,” she said. “Would that be your new nation’s uniform?” Virex’s smirk returned, subtle but unmistakable. “Indeed.” He straightened slightly, as if the conversation had already concluded on his end.

“But I’ve taken enough of your time. I’m sure you have more pressing matters to attend to after

such a… great feat." A faint pause. "We'll discuss this again. More formally." The hologram cut out without another word. Natasha's fist clenched at her side. She didn't like it. Not the tone, not the implication, not the fact that he had already moved forward without waiting for her answer, but she understood it. She might not have a choice.

Time passed. Neither side made a move. Eventually, a date was set. They would meet on neutral ground, a Coalition world. Cyrus himself agreed to oversee the proceedings, ensuring neither side would attempt anything reckless. The talks were… tense. Debate stretched on for hours, arguments circling the same unresolved questions. Territory, sovereignty, responsibility, each point raised, challenged, and reshaped, only to collapse again under its own weight. Cyrus remained neutral throughout, stepping in only when either side pushed too far, his presence alone enough to keep things from spiraling.

In the end, no agreement was reached. There was no compromise. No reconciliation. Only a decision. They would separate. The Union Civil War was over. The Union itself… was not. It was gone. Roman Virex moved first, announcing the formation of a new state under his control. The First Sovereign Union. The name carried confidence. Finality. A declaration that he wasn't rebuilding something old, he was creating something new. They parted ways almost immediately after it was declared. Clean. Efficient. Permanent.

Natasha lingered. Her side had made their decision as well. They would not carry the old name forward. Not after everything it had become. She stood beneath the open sky, lost in thought. The war was over. People would no longer suffer through battles like this. That had been the goal, and yet… It felt incomplete. Like she had saved half of something… and abandoned the rest. Footsteps approached. Cyrus stopped beside her, arms loosely at his sides, his tone carrying that familiar mix of dry humor and quiet observation. "The Union Restoration Authority," he said. "Am I supposed to be impressed?" He tilted his head slightly. "Feels more like blatant copying to me."

She didn’t respond immediately. “Especially after you turned down my offer,” he continued. “You know, most people just call us the Coalition. But officially, we’re the Reformation Coalition.” A faint smirk crossed his face. “It has a nice ring to it.” Natasha let out a quiet breath. “I meant everything I said back at the Wishing Door,” she replied. “Call it whatever you want.” Cyrus studied her for a moment, the humor fading slightly. “You know my stance,” he said his gaze shifted toward the horizon. “I just hope this was the last time.” Natasha followed his gaze, silent. For now… it was over, but something told her, it wouldn’t stay that way.