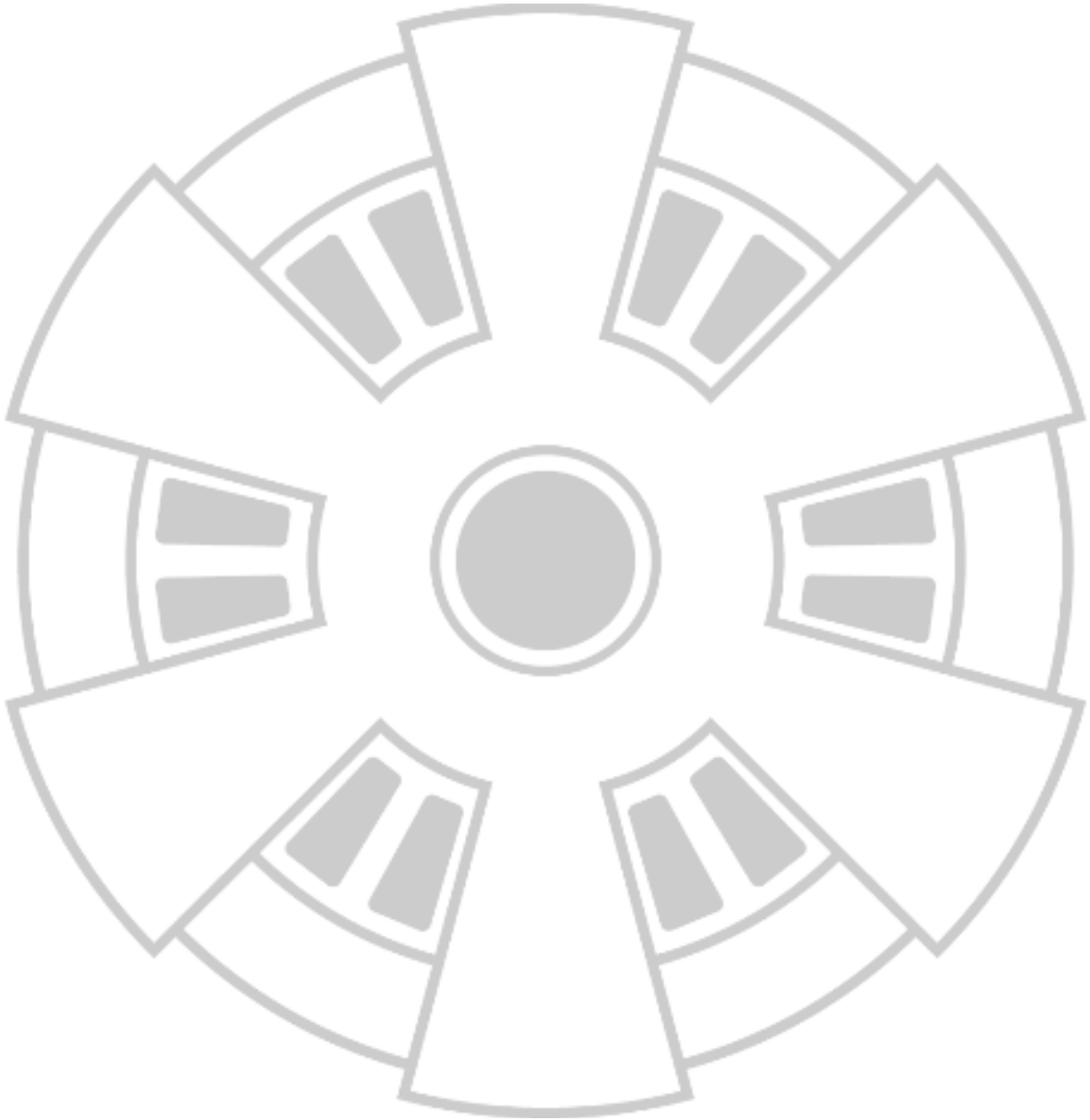


Speed Date



By Aylin Sajark (Zehsaa)

The room was already starting to fill with people when she walked in. She felt nervous in her new clothes, all nicely dressed up so she would make a good first impression. Her dress was simple, off shoulder bands, nicely fitting around her body and a dark bordeaux in colour, complementing her dark green skin tone and reached down to over her knees. It flowed smoothly around her legs as she walked over to one of the few empty seats, and sat down.

Glancing around the room she saw a few nervous people joining others at the tables, most of the people seemed confident about themselves though.

A man walks up to the mic and clears his throat, "Hello and welcome to the First Annual Cross Clan Speed Dating Event. This is part of a temporary ceasefire agreed to by the heads of each clan." He nervously shifted in his position, the cameras and lights on him with the many more eyes as well. "Thank you for once again agreeing to not bringing your weapons in here, as we are here to make friends, relationships and... peace." He swallowed the lump in his throat, "S-so why don't we go over the rules?"

"Firstly, don't harm or kill your partner, we like to keep this peaceful"

A few chuckles rose from the room and he glanced around.

"Okay," He gulped, "You have until the bell rings, once it rings those with a red ticket get up and move to the next seat."

"Lastly, but no less important, be kind and courteous." With that a bell rang and the first round of the speed date night started.

Aylin stared at the empty chair in front of her and frowned slightly. *They probably have an odd number of contenders... nothing to worry about.* She sat back in her chair and took a sip of the drink that was offered to her. Glancing around the room she saw various people enjoying themselves, some were laughing, others seemed to be in heated discussions.

The first round ended with the ding of the bell, everything seemed to have gone well. No one injured and everything was still in one piece. She sat up and smiled, hoping someone would join her table this time. The bell rang again, indicating that the second round had started. Still no one had joined her at the table and frowned.

She got up and walked to one of the organizers and asked what was going on. He checked his papers.

"Seems we are one contender to short. It sometimes happens and people on the speed date than start to think you didn't join in."

"Is there nothing you can do about it?" Aylin asked.

He shook his head slowly, "I'm afraid not, you can only hope someone would join your table. It should be clear enough for them that your table is also part of the speed date group."

Aylin sighed softly and returned to her table, hoping that he was right.

The night went by. With each ring of the bell she tried to look her best again, but as the night grew older she was getting more and more annoyed with the fact that no one of the other contenders would even try to have a speed date with her.

Didn't she look nice enough? Was it because she was Nautolan? Did they think she was too young?

Aylin sighed deeply and rested her head on her arms on the table, no longer wanted to look as the last round was starting.

"I should have stayed home..."