

# Shadows

By Kyle Eggleston

John looked out the window of his office. He was on space station Epsilon orbiting Earth. The year was 2245, the twenty-third century. It had been a long handful of days for the commander.

The stars shined brightly. He could see different constellations out his window. It reminded him of many things in life. Mostly the fact that life was fragile. Nothing was really set in stone. Life could end at any moment, John was highly aware of this.

The door chimed, interrupting John's thoughts. "Come in." He said.

John's aide entered the room. "Commander." She said. "I thought you should know, the results you were waiting for? They came in." Handing John a piece of paper with the findings, she waited his response.

John looked at the paper for a moment. He frowned at what he saw. Sitting down in his chair, John sighed. "You're certain this is accurate Susan?"

Susan nodded. Her blonde hair seemed to shimmer off of the lights in the office. Her blue eyes locking with his to confirm her statement was true. "Yes sir, there's no doubt about it. Sabotage."

Looking around the room, John sighed. Sabotage wasn't the word he was expecting to hear today. Leaning back in his chair, he looked at Susan. She was not pleased with the news either, he could tell. There was a look on her face that was plain as day.

"Does the president know?" John asked.

"Yes sir." Susan responded. "I sent him the report as soon as it came in."

"Good." John smiled. "He said he wanted to be in the know."

Susan nodded. The president was a pain in the butt, but he was there to stay. She wasn't a fan of the president and there weren't that many who were. But it wasn't her job to say if he could stay in power. It was her job simply to obey whatever orders were given.

"I'm guessing he'll want to see me soon enough." John sighed. He too wasn't a fan of the president. But orders were orders.

Susan nodded. "You know it boss."

"Thank you Susan, you're excused." John smiled. He watched as she exited the office.

An hour later, John stood in the president's office. It was a typical office for a president. Nothing a king would desire, but enough of space to allow for normal discourse. The president was an older man shy of sixty. He looked tired and worn down. Years in office could do that to a man.

"Sabotage." The president said. "I figured as much. Earth's defense systems were down for an hour. What if an attack had happened during that time?"

John nodded. "Mr. President, I assure you the ships in orbit of Earth can and will protect Earth at all costs." He waited for a reaction.

The president shook his head. "After the war, I'm not sure which of Earth's ships I can trust these days. Sure they all say they're loyal to Earth and the government, but it was a civil war after all." He paused. "Never mind. It doesn't matter. I trust you and your assurance. I did hire you in the first place, if I can't trust you who can I trust." Another pause. "Which side were you on during the war exactly?"

John laughed. "If you don't know by now Mr. President, you'll never know." He remembered the day the president called him as commander of the Earth Station. It was true he was on an opposite side during the war. John didn't trust the president as far as he could throw him. In his eyes, the wrong side won the war and the president was proof of that.

The president shook his head. "Listen, I know you don't like me." He said. "I had to make difficult choices during the war. One side had to win, it was inevitable."

Looking back to the paper, he continued. "I'm going to choose the next patrol to cover Earth for the next year. I need people I can trust."

John stood from his chair. "I see, anything else I can do for you Mr. President?"

The president shook his head. "No, that will be all." In the coming days his true card would be played. In the coming days something bigger than he would be unleashed upon the Earth. As long as there weren't any more threats to Earth security, everything would go smoothly. Pouring himself a drink, the president thought about those days to come. The future to turn his world up side down. Then and only then would he know who truly supported him and who did not. As of now it was only shadows of what was to come.

Back on Earth Station Epsilon, John walked through C and C and headed towards his office. He needed a drink. As the door opened he walked to his desk and poured himself a glass of whiskey. John unbuttoned his top button. It had been a long day.

"C and C to the commander." A voice rang out over the intercom. "You have a message coming through."

John set his glass down and pressed a button on his desk. “Understood, route it through here.”

“Yes sir.”

A monitor to his side began to flash the words Incoming Transmission. John pressed another button. “Computer encrypt incoming transmission. Authorization John Alpha Zed Two.”

The monitor scrambled for a moment and then became clear again. A man’s face appeared. “Report.” The man said.

John took another sip of whiskey. “Everything is going according to plan Mr. Vice President. The attack on Earth’s defenses was most successful.”

The vice president had a big grin on his face. “Good, good to hear John. I want to be thinking of our next attack as soon as possible. We know Earth’s defenses are weak, this is excellent news.”

“Indeed Mr. Vice President.” John replied. “You do realize this is treason.”

The vice president shook his head. “John, you work for me. When I give an order it isn’t treason. We are taking steps to ensure Earth will be ready for whatever comes next. Is that understood.”

John nodded his head. “Yes sir, I apologize.”

The vice president scoffed. “Oh don’t apologize to me John. I understand where you’re coming from. You’ve served Earth for a long time. I know I can count on you. Soon we will take action and I will take the president’s place. You’ll be my vice, if you’ll have it.”

John was shocked. He wasn’t expecting this at all. “I thank you Mr. Vice President.” He said. “I will not let you down.”

The vice president laughed. “We have to get there first John. One step at a time.” He paused as he mulled a thought over in his head. “Your first officer, how much can you trust her?”

John shrugged. “I can trust her with my life. Why?”

“Trust her enough to let her in on our plans?”

Scratching his chin, John thought it over.

“The fact that you hesitate tells me all I need to know. She will be kept in the dark on this John. Susan must never know what we are doing.”

“Yes sir.” John said.

The vice president frowned. He had hoped to bring Susan in on this venture. But if her own commanding officer can't trust her, why should he. Plans were coming to fruition, he needed all of the people he could trust on his side. Taking over a presidency was no small potatoes.

"I'll have orders for you shortly." The vice president said. "I'll be in touch."

The communications line went dead.

"John to Susan." John said opening a comlink to his first officer.

"Go ahead." Susan's voice came through.

"I want a more detailed analysis on the attack on Earth's defenses. Can that be arranged?" John asked.

"Yes sir." Susan said. "Right away sir."

John nodded. If he was going to help take over a presidency he needed to know everything there was to know about the trouble he was going to get into.

The end