

Teleportation

104

by Kyle Eggleston

Early 2224

Lieutenant Jack O'Brien was amazed at what he witnessed. The ability to move an object between two great distances in the blink of an eye without the use of a ship was astounding.

"We call it teleportation." A scientist said. "It's the wave of the future." She watched as O'Brien reacted. "Before long we can install these on your ships." The woman smiled at her great achievement.

"So," O'Brien said "When can we try organic matter? Like say a person." Jack has his orders. The admiralty wanted the ability to transport troops down to a planet's surface in the blink of an eye. It would be a great tactical advantage.

The scientist hesitated. She knew such a request was possible, she just didn't want to address it. Early organic trials had some unexpected consequences all of which were recorded in her personal database.

"That's the next phase of development." She said. Development was further along than expected, she wasn't about to admit that.

O'Brien nodded. "Alright. That is your next top priority." He said.

The scientist watched him leave.

Another scientist entered the lab. "Does he suspect anything?"

The first scientist shook her head. "No."

2246

Crimson Gamma was full of activity. More activity than was normal for a weekend. There was a gratitude celebration going on. It was a Shukan festival. All alien races were invited to attend. No one was left out.

Ketish was standing in the middle of the Main Gallery. He was in awe at how friendly people were being to one another. The station truly was a place of peace.

As he walked, Ketish was greeted by a monk of some kind. The alien was dressed in brown robes. His hair was parted down the middle covering his head bones.

“Brother Ketish.” the monk said. “I was hoping to run into you.”

Ketish rubbed his head ridges. A sign he was in a state of confusion. His cheeks flushed green for a second. Further sign of his state of confusion. “Do I know you?” He finally asked.

The monk grinned. “No, but I know you.” Placing a hand on Ketish’s chest he continued. “I am Brother Lentosh of the Holy Order.”

Taking a step back, Ketish separated himself from the monk. “What is the Holy Order doing here”

Lentosh bowed ever so slightly. “I am here for you of course.” He said. “Our people need you to come home.”

Ketish shook his head. How can this be? He thought. This man could not be from Dubor. Dubor’s population has no hair on their heads and this monk clearly had hair. There were times they could simulate hair growth to blend in and hide among people. But Ketish didn’t see a reason for this. Especially not on a space station full of other alien life.

Lentosh looked around, a few people were starting to take notice of the exchange between the two men. “Perhaps this is not the place or time for such a conversation. Come by my quarters later tonight. All will be revealed in due time.” He turned and disappeared into the crowd.

Ketish wondered what would be revealed exactly. It was only a matter of time. He feared evening would come quickly. If it was the Holy Order that was after him, he had every right to be concerned.

* * *

Major O’Brien sat on his couch. In his hand was the latest news report. He liked to keep up on the current news across the galaxy and at home on planet Earth. Pressing a button on the device in his hand, the screen switched to another news story. The title read Shuka gratitude festival underway.

Skimming through the article, O’Brien learned the festival wasn’t a yearly occurrence. It took place every twenty years or so. He found that to be interesting. Every twenty years they celebrated everything that was important to them. Naturally everyone had something specific that meant something special to them.

O’Brien’s reading was interrupted as his door chime rang. Setting the news reader down, he switched his focus to the front door of his quarters. “Come in.” He said.

Norev stood in the doorway hesitant to enter. Ever since becoming ambassador she watched her actions more carefully. She was a member of Shuka's religious government now. Norev had to be careful.

O'Brien gestured to an adjacent chair. "Hello ambassador, please com in and sit down." He wasn't fond of the ambassador ever since he called her names. They didn't quite hit it off out of the gate. O'Brien wondered what Norev wanted of him this time.

Taking a step inside O'Brien's quarters, Norev took a seat as invited.

"What can I do for you?" O'Brien asked.

Norev shifted uncomfortably in her seat. To admit one's fault in something was considered a weakness in the eyes of her people. Yet she was about to do just that.

"It is a tradition among my people to harbor no ill feelings towards others during the gratitude festival. I've come to ask your forgiveness for going off on you like I did when I found my people were locked up in your brig." She looked deep into O'Brien's eyes. Searching his soul. Norev believed you could tell a person's true intentions by looking in their eyes. It was an old tradition not followed by those of the newer generation. She was from an older generation who still followed the old ways.

O'Brien leaned forward. He wasn't expecting any of this. If Norev could ask for forgiveness perhaps he could do the same. Part of him was still upset over the incident which had transpired over a month ago. But here she was putting her best foot forward.

He noticed her staring waiting for an answer. "I forgive you ambassador." O'Brien said finally. "If you can forgive me as well." There it was. The way he said it, it felt conditional. That was not his intention whatsoever.

"Please, call me Norev." She said bowing to the major. "I do not feel quite like the ambassador my people wish me to be. Not yet." Her people were strict on formalities. She didn't see fully eye to eye with the religious government, not yet. In time perhaps that would change but that time was not come yet.

Standing up, Norev had done what she set out to do. O'Brien followed her lead and walked her to the door. "Happy Gratitude Festival Norev." He said.

"Same to you major."

O'Brien watched as she walked away. A heavy burden had been lifted from his shoulders. He let go a sigh of relief. It felt good to clear the air, get rid of bad lasting feelings.

* * *

Lieutenant Killpack wandered up and down the docking ports. He was walking a standard patrol line. Security in that area was usually pretty lax. He didn't like that and wanted to implement change. If it were up to him, he would have security stationed at all access points to the station. Unfortunately he wasn't in charge and couldn't make station policy. Only the commanding officer could do that.

He was glad the Gratitude Festival had come to the station. Security issues dropped thirty percent in the past twenty-four hours. Yes, things were good.

"Burke to Killpack." A security officer came over the comm unit.

"Go ahead." Killpack said.

The man's voice was hushed like he was hiding from someone. "I need backup. I'm in back lot thirteen. Repeat requesting backup."

Maybe he spoke to soon. Killpack thought. He answered the call for help. "On my way, sit tight." Killpack ran down the corridor as far as he could before coming to a small opening in the wall. It was a service crawl way meant mostly for maintenance workers and repair bots. Time to time smugglers would find themselves in the crawl way. It was the only way to reach the back lot. Getting down on his knees, Killpack removed the protective gate and entered the crawl space. He would have to crawl the rest of the way.

Back lot thirteen was on the belly of the station near the long range communications array. John Burke hid behind an open maintenance hatch. He had his gun drawn ready to open fire at a moments notice.

Burke was breathing heavily. Sweat poured from his forehead. It was hot, a little too hot for his liking. The heat was due to the non shielded comm array. Whenever it was in use it put out a ton of energy. A lot of energy was needed for the comm array to contact Earth.

Taking a handkerchief out of his pocket Burke wiped his head with it. The handkerchief helped a little bit, but what would really help would be an ice cold shower. He planned to have a date with his shower after work. Burke could use the cold water. John pocketed the handkerchief and prayed Killpack would get there soon.

It took Killpack twenty minutes to reach back lot thirteen. As he exited the crawl space he felt a hand on his back. It pulled him behind the maintenance hatch.

Killpack reached for his gun and then released it when he saw Burke. Letting out a quick breath he whispered "Sit rep."

Burke nodded. "I tracked a strange alien signal down this way. Someone was trying to use the subspace comm array." He paused. "I haven't been able to identify the race yet." He pointed down a small corridor. "They're in there."

Killpack put a finger up indicating he heard something. Burke listened. Sure enough two aliens were talking in hushed voices. Killpack strained his ears to hear them talk.

Burke stroked his goatee. He had heard movement coming from an abandoned storage room but that was it. He hadn't heard anyone talking until now.

"They won't believe you!" A female alien said. "We've tried their own government and they lied to us."

"I know." Another alien said. This one was male. "But if we go to the station commander, make him listen. He has to believe in our findings. They must be stopped."

Burke and Killpack exchanged looks. Whatever it was, these two aliens were concerned about something.

The female scoffed. "You think the human called O'Brien will listen to us? He was part of the testing. He's probably hiding his knowledge in some sort of cover up!"

"Shhh keep your voice down. You don't know if there are maintenance workers nearby." The male squawked.

Killpack stood from behind the maintenance hatch. He had heard enough. Killpack motioned for Burke to follow him. "Come on, there's no place for them to escape."

Burke followed Killpack's lead.

"Alright you two. Exit the storage unit one by one, hands or similar appendages behind your head!" Killpack yelled down the small corridor.

The two aliens shuffled around a bit in a state of confusion. How did security know they were here? Eventually they exited the storage closet as ordered. Claws behind their heads.

"Draka." Burke said.

Killpack nodded. The Draka were a peaceful people. They refused to take sides in war calling themselves pacifists.

"What are you going to do with us?" The female asked.

Killpack grimaced. "Sounds like you went an audience with the major." He paused. "After I take you to security to determine you aren't a danger to anyone, you'll get your meeting."

The male Draka couldn't believe his hearing spots. Maybe these humans could be trusted even if their government couldn't.

The female Draka shook her head. She didn't believe a word the humans said. Something big would have to happen in order for her to believe otherwise.

They exited back lot thirteen through the open maintenance hatch. As they crawled, Burke grunted. "Should have taken the teleporter. Would have been quicker."

The female Draka gasped in frustration. "No no, this is fine. How do you humans put it? We could use the exercise."

Killpack could hear the distress in her voice. "Not to fret lady." He said. "We couldn't get a teleport lock down here if we wanted to. Too much shielding protecting the long range subspace communications array. Keep moving."

The female Draka gave a sigh of relief.

Burke had heard of people being afraid to use a teleporter before. But no one had gotten this excited about it. Teleportation was such a common occurrence these days. There was literally nothing to it.

As promised, Killpack took the couple to security for some routine questioning. Once he was satisfied they weren't a danger to anyone he arranged a meeting with the major.

Major O'Brien sat behind his desk. He watched as the two Draka citizens entered. They were followed by Killpack. Jack looked the Draka up and down. They seemed rather harmless to him. So why were they there now. Killpack didn't really give any information, only that they wanted to see the major.

"So" Major O'Brien said "To what do I owe this pleasure?"

The Draka exchanged glances with each other. The female spoke up. "Every time you use a teleportation device, you are killing people." She said it with such conviction like she knew it to be fact. Absolute fact that couldn't be challenged.

O'Brien folded his arms. He had heard the argument before. But no one had ever come forward with solid evidence that anyone died during teleportation.

"I assure you." O'Brien said. "No one has died from teleportation. Sure there have been *some* accidents over the years but those were years ago when we first started with organic test subjects. But those bugs were ironed out and progress was made." He concluded.

The female Draka shook her head. "I have heard that argument before from many different species." She said. "All you did was cover it up with subroutines and other code. When someone gets teleported they die. A copy is made in their place. That copy continues on none the wiser until they are teleported and the cycle begins again."

O'Brien shook his head. "No, the soul doesn't die or get sucked out of the body."

The male Draka interrupted him. “No major, not their soul. They are cloned. That clone keeps on living while the original dies. The clone maintains all of the memories and experiences of the original, they don’t know any better.”

Jack O’Brien wasn’t sure on what to say next. He had never heard of that angle before. It was something new that was for sure.

“If that’s the case.” O’Brien said. “And I’ve been teleported hundreds of times by now.” He waited a moment as the thoughts caught up to him.

The male Draka frowned. “Then you are so far removed from your original self by now there is no going back.” He looked to his companion with a pained expression. “You are simply a clone, a copy. I am sorry.”

O’Brien let it sink in for a moment. There was nothing he could do but think about all the implications they presented to him. “I’d say that I want proof of your claims.”

The male Draka kept eye contact with O’Brien. “Show him.” he said to his companion.

Taking a data chip from her pocket, the female Draka placed it on O’Brien’s desk. “Here is video evidence of our claims.”

Jack stared at the chip in front of him. It was the size of a poker chip but half as thin. He picked it up and fed it into a data port on his desk. The data port made a static noise as it read the data from the chip.

The monitors behind Jack came to life. He turned to face them. The two Draka appeared on the monitors. They were standing in an Earth Science Lab. On either side of them were two teleportation pods.

“Test number forty-seven.” The female Draka said. “I have commented out the code block sixty—seven gamma. I will teleport myself from Pad A to Pad B. “She stepped onto one of the teleportation pads. “Run the sequence.”

“Activating.” The male Draka said off screen.

The female Draka was engulfed in a bright green light. She vanished for a split second and then collapsed on Pad A. A moment later an exact duplicate of her appeared on Pad B. Alive and well, she rushed over to her original self. “She’s dead.” The female Draka said.

As the playback finished. O’Brien watched the monitors go black. He turned around in his chair to face the Draka. He was speechless.

“As you can see major” the female Draka said “You have created a death machine.” She rubbed tears from her eyes. It was always emotional for her to view the archive footage. Watching yourself die was never easy.

Killpack sat down on a couch that lined the wall. He felt like he was going to be sick. How could the government willfully know they were killing people and turn a blind eye to it all? He was dumbfounded.

“If it’s any consolation” The male Draka said “You are the fifth race we have brought this knowledge to. You are obviously not the only ones to master teleportation.”

“If you know this knowledge now.” O’Brien counted. “Is it safe to assume you do not use teleportation devices?”

The female Draka nodded her head. “What you just witnessed was my final trip through the death machine. I haven’t done it since. My mate has never been teleported.”

O’Brien looked to the male Draka. “Never?”

He shook his head no. “There were terrible stories I heard as a pouchling. I travel by shuttle.”

“May I keep this data chip?” O’Brien asked. “I plan on making a report to my government along with your findings.”

The female Draka nodded. “Yes but it will do you no good. We already contacted your government, that’s when Chief Killpack found us. They will dismiss you as quickly as they dismissed us. It is hopeless.”

O’Brien held the data chip in his hand. Tapping a control on his desk he contacted C&C.

“C&C, this is Lieutenant Commander Monson.” Kate’s voice came over the comm unit.

“Kate, take all teleportation devices off line until further notice. I’ll explain later.” O’Brien said.

“Aye sir.” Kate responded. “The Dock Master won’t be pleased.”

O’Brien placed the data chip down and nodded. “I know. Let me deal with him. They’ll just have to move cargo manually for now. O’Brien out.”

They all stared at each other in silence. Finally the female Draka spoke up.

“Thank you major.” She said.

O’Brien shook his head. There was no need to be thanked. There were still countless teleporters in use by Earth alone. He only controlled a tiny fraction of those on his station. It wasn’t much to go off of.

“We will be leaving your station in an hour onto our next race. Hopefully they will listen to us as you have.” The male Draka said. “If you’ll excuse us, we need to prepare for our departure.”

O’Brien smiled. It was an empty smile. After everything he had learned over the course of an afternoon he wasn’t sure how to feel. “Of course.” He simply said.

The Draka left the major's office.

O'Brien looked to Killpack. "Chief keep an eye on them. Make sure they leave the station in safety."

Killpack stood from the couch. "Yes sir." He too left the office leaving O'Brien all alone.

* * *

The monk that spoke with Ketish earlier in the day paced around his quarters waiting for Ketish to arrive. He kicked himself. The monk should have just told Ketish what he needed to know. But he couldn't have, there were too many aliens around. Anyone could have listened in on their conversation.

"Computer, open the door."

The door to the monk's quarters opened to reveal Ketish prepared to ring the bell.

The monk smiled at his guest. "Yes come in already." He said.

Ketish was confused. How did the monk possibly know he was standing there.

As if he read Ketish's thoughts, the monk spoke. "You're the watcher, didn't you see that coming?" He had quit pacing the floor by that point.

The door to the quarters closed.

"Now that you're here I no longer need this disguise." The monk removed his human face mask to show an older man of the Dubor race. The cranial ridges were a dead giveaway.

Ketish bowed at the older mans reveal. "Forgive me, I did not know."

The monk laughed. "Of course you didn't. If you had, my disguise would have been a waste."

Ketish remained in a bowed state. It was not often one of the elders paid a visit to the watchers.

"Chin up Ketish" the monk lifted Ketish's head up so they were eye level. "I know you spoke with the Shuka ambassador about the upcoming war. She won't believe you. We made sure to purge their race of any knowledge of us. No one knows we exist."

Ketish frowned at the news. He figured he was guilty of treason because of his actions and he would be right.

The monk smiled. "Many on the home world wish to see you dead. You need to come home with me. I will see to it that you are protected." He said. "Now hurry gather your wife and mistress. My ship is docked at docking port three."

Ketish nodded, he couldn't believe his luck. To have the promised protection of an elder guaranteed a place in heaven. It promised sainthood.

He quickly left the monk's quarters to gather his family and things.

The monk smiled. Ketish would get his day to be judged. But for now what was the harm in letting him believe he was safe. Besides, there were things he had to do. Important things.

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C&C was busy directing space traffic. Both incoming and departing ships filled the monitors.

O'Brien stood watch as Lieutenant Commander Monson guided the ships where they needed to go. It wasn't very glamourous but it was part of the job.

"The Draka transport is ready to leave major." She said.

"Permission granted." O'Brien said.

"Major, the Draka transport is signaling a mayday!" Monson gasped.

O'Brien stepped forward to man the main console. "Draka transport, what is the matter?"

The female Draka's face appeared on the forward monitor. "We've been sabotaged."

Monson confirmed the report. "Their core is about to blow." She looked at the computer helpless. "There's nothing we can do."

O'Brien frowned. "Draka transport prepare for teleportation." His hand hovered over a button that would bring the teleporters back online.

The female Draka scowled. "No! You will not use that death machine on us. Please major, you know the cost."

O'Brien stepped back from the controls.

The female Draka smiled. "Thank you for believing in us major, good bye."

The transport exploded with a blinding flash of light. The station rocked back and forth from the explosion.

Monson jumped into action. "Sending out rescue bots. Alerting Med Bay."

O'Brien shook his head. There would be no one to rescue. The explosion had engulfed the ship. He had seen such explosions during the war. There never were survivors. Jack left the command deck. There was nothing he could do.

The End