

Who Wrote The Book Of Aliens?

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by Kyle Eggleston

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Captain Jack O'Brien stood on the bridge of the U.S.S. Aphrodite. He was conducting combat readiness drills on the crew. Their latest tactical scenario hadn't gone as expected. O'Brien had been caught with his britches down. He didn't like that thought. Ever since that fight, he had ordered battle readiness drills on his ship. Jack's crew didn't take to the drills kindly. They fought it tooth and nail, but that wasn't his concern. He wanted his people to be ready at all costs.

The war didn't bode well for the captain or his crew. News that the Moon had fallen under the enemy's control hit several of the crew hard. Those who had family members living on the Moon were hit the worst. Who knew what the opposing side's president had in store for those inhabiting the Moon. The man was a lunatic, he could order the destruction of the Moon at any time and his people would follow his voice. That wasn't right.

As the drill ended, O'Brien brought up the reaction times. He frowned at what he saw. Pressing a button on his command chair's control board, O'Brien addressed his ship. "This is the captain." He said. "Our reaction times were ten percent slower than last time. Let's try and get them above that. I'll order another drill in an hour. O'Brien out."

Addressing his bridge crew, O'Brien ordered them to stand down from Red Alert and to set Condition Green throughout the ship. O'Brien looked around the bridge, it was compact like most star ships of its kind. He liked the cramped close quarters. Jack could easily tell what was happening at a moments notice without having to ask.

"I'll be in my office." O'Brien said as he exited the bridge to an adjoining room.

O'Brien's office was simple. A desk in the corner, a sleeping area in the other corner so he could be out on the bridge at a moments notice. He rarely slept in his own quarters these days. Jack wanted to be there when the action hit, he didn't want to miss a second of it. A small bookshelf lined the far wall.

Picking a book off his shelf, Jack flipped to a random passage and read it aloud. "Twas not the playwright who said 'to be or not to be'? Such a trying time in which we live. I echo

those words with uncertainty as we come to this glorious event.” O’Brien chuckled to himself. If that man only knew what challenges they faced today, he might have worded that differently.

Lieutenant William Carter stood in the doorway of the captain’s office. O’Brien didn’t recall closing the door all the way, hence why the lieutenant was standing there. Clearing his throat, Carter smiled. “Excuse me sir.” He said.

O’Brien looked up from the book to see one of his best fighter pilots wanting an audience. “Will, come in.” Jack said. “Hope you haven’t been waiting there long.”

Carter shook his head. “No sir. Just arrived.” He said. “Some of the fighter jocks are wondering when it’ll be our turn to get in some training time. You’ve spent most of the drills focused on the ships main batteries and other armaments. We’re itching to get some flight time in.”

Jack nodded. Of course they wanted a piece of the action. They were Atlantic Squad Pilots, it was in their blood to be out among the stars, not wasting away down in the Ready Room listening to status reports of how badly the ship was doing during its own drills.

“Before this war is over, you’ll get as much flight time as you want.” Jack reassured his officer. “I get it though, I’ll schedule some training exercises for you and your men. We’ll go over them before they’re ready to go.”

Carter nodded. “Aye sir, thank you sir.” He said. Carter stood there a moment longer, like he wanted to say something else.

O’Brien noticed this and gestured for him to continue. “Yes lieutenant?”

Carter hesitated, it should be his concern about the captain’s shifts. But he felt the need to say something. Someone had to. “I’ve noticed you’ve been taking the night watch on a regular basis and then following it up by your regularly scheduled rotation. Sir. I don’t want to see you get burned out, especially if we come upon a hostile vessel.”

O’Brien closed the book and placed it back on the shelf along with the other books. “You would be correct in that assumption lieutenant. I have been riding myself harder than usual, wanting to be in on the action as it came out.” Jack frowned. Perhaps he needed some rack time away from the bridge in his own quarters. But then again, what if a hostile came upon them. He wouldn’t be there in a moments notice and would have to run to the bridge. It was a risk he would have to take in order to ease the lieutenant’s mind.

But O’Brien wasn’t there to hold hands of his junior officers. He had a job to do, there was a war on and he wanted to make sure the right side won the war at all costs. Even if that meant he was a little sleep deprived.

“I’ll take your concern under advisement.” O’Brien said. It was the best he could do given the circumstances. “Dismissed lieutenant.”

Carter got the hint that he was to leave the room. He exited quickly and headed back down to the Ready Room with the other fighter jocks. They would have their turn soon enough in the cockpit, they just had to wait it out.

O’Brien looked out his window on the port side of the ship. They were currently hiding in a nebula. He wondered how long the ship could survive in this soup before they would be forced to leave and enter normal space again. He had ordered the Aphrodite to enter the nebula after a run in with an unarmed scout ship on patrol. O’Brien didn’t want the ship to give away their position so he ordered its destruction. Ducking into the nebula seemed to have warded off any further advances by other scouts in the area. He was playing it safe, but he had to. There were over four hundred crew members on his ship. He was accountable for all of them to make it through this war alive.

Jack was tired of worrying about the lives of over 400 souls onboard his ship. This blasted Civil War didn’t help matters any. He wasn’t even sure what started the war to begin with. There had to be some disagreement somewhere along the line that broke out into a fight, but Jack just didn’t know what that was.

He was sure it would take time to figure out who started what. When the retaliation began and the war officially started. It was like the shot heard around the world during Earth’s very first Civil War, the war between the states. Jack had read his fair share of history from that era. It seemed like an unnecessary conflict that could have been avoided. He wondered if *this* Civil War could have easily been avoided as well. It was too late to tell that to anyone with the war in full swing.

Tapping his comm unit, O’Brien called down to Med Bay. “Doctor Ferguson, I need to see you in my office please.”

“On my way.” The doctor said.

O’Brien found it easier to talk to the ship’s doctor than to a counselor. To be blunt, Jack didn’t trust anyone on the psych team. He trusted them as people outside of work, but while they were on duty he didn’t care about them much. They were always trying to get into his head. He was glad telepathy wasn’t a thing. Who knew what kinds of things they would rip from his brain without authorization or permission from him. No thank you, he didn’t want any of that happening to him. Not while he had full control over his faculties. O’Brien liked his brain intact, thank you very much.

A moment later his office doorbell chimed. “Come in.” O’Brien said. Must be the doctor, he thought, right on time.

Doctor Ferguson entered Jack's office with a medical bag. He took out some instruments and began doing a full workup on the captain. "Take off your shirt." The doctor ordered. O'Brien complied with the order.

As Doctor Ferguson examined the captain, he tried his hand at small talk. "So we're in a nebula." He said. "How fitting, a top of the line combat unit hiding from whatever is out there. I thought we were explorers." He took more readings.

O'Brien nodded his head. Great, another valued observation from the peanut gallery. Sometimes he wished the doctors would stick to their prescribed duties and leave the talking to the ship counselors. Jack sighed, a ships counselor isn't what he needed, that's why the doctor was here.

"Say, you have anything for a headache?" O'Brien asked.

Ferguson looked up from his readings. "A headache? You have a headache?" he asked. "Too much stress in your line of work. You need to find a way to wind down and relax from time to time." Pulling out a syringe, he adjusted the settings for a typical headache. Pressing the device against O'Brien's neck he injected the medicine into his system. "That should take care of that." Ferguson said.

"Lay down please." Ferguson instructed. "I need to check out your abdomen."

Jack laid down on his back still shirtless from earlier. Ferguson began an abdominal examination. "Does this hurt?" He asked.

Jack shook his head. "No. My abdomen's fine doc."

"I'll be the judge of that." Ferguson countered. Pulling out another scanning device out of his bag, he performed an abdominal exam. When he found nothing out of the ordinary he shrugged. "Looks fine to me."

O'Brien smiled. He could have told the doctor that. If only he would have listened. "Look, I asked for a house call to talk. I didn't need a full medical workup."

"On the contrary." Ferguson said. "You missed your last two appointments due to ships business, whatever that means. I needed to come see you anyway." He paused, "So, what's on your mind exactly?"

Jack sighed. "I'm growing tired of being responsible for over four hundred lives under my command." He said. "This war is taking its toll on me. Am I really that bad of a captain that I can't seem to handle this?"

Ferguson sat down in a chair facing the captain. "If you're expecting stepping down will do anything, it won't. You'll never stop wondering if you made the right decision, and the way the war is going. It's a toss up of who will win at this point. Do you want these thoughts to

haunt your conscience year after year long after this war is over? Long after this conversation is over? Your people need you. I say you snap out of it, and get back to work.” He concluded. “But that’s just my two cents.” After a moment he closed his medical bag “Well I’m done here. If you need to talk further, you know where I am.”

Ferguson stood up and left O’Brien’s office leaving Jack alone with his thoughts.

Jack mulled over what the doctor had said to him as he got dressed. If he quit now, he would never know what might have been later on down the road. That much was true. Picking up a piece of paper, he examined it. It was his plan for getting the fighter pilots out into the soup for a bit of training. It was a good plan, a solid plan. His fighter jocks needed some time out there, heaven knows they earned it.

Touching the comm unit on his desk, O’Brien called down to the Ready Room. “Get ready fighter jocks, you’re up.” He could hear cheers coming from the room. Jack smiled at the response, he was happy when his troops were rallied together for a common goal. He needed to keep that in mind.

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Grilka sat in Jack’s office. She wondered why he had invited her there. The office was currently empty, well empty except for her. In the corner of the office was a fish bowl. Grilka walked over to the tank and tapped gently on the glass. The fish inside scattered afraid of her, annoyed at the noise. She made a mental note not to do that again. She found it interesting, for a species that claimed they didn’t tolerate detention of any kind, they kept inferior animals caged in. Humans were quite confusing creatures.

Jack entered his office moments after Grilka arrived. “Sorry I’m late Delegate Grilka.” He said. “Something came up, station business. You understand.”

In fact Grilka did not understand. Whatever this station business was, it must have been important to keep her waiting. That was okay though. She could be patient about such things. Grilka realized Jack was a busy man. He was the commander of a space station after all.

“It is okay Major Jack.” Grilka said. She did not understand the formality of placing your title in front of your first name, but she went along with it.

Jack chuckled as he noticed what he had done. “It’s just Jack, Grilka.” He said. “You know that.” He would have to remember to just call her Grilka in the future. The title of delegate was new to her, and she was just not used to it quite yet. She would get there, it would only take some time.

“The reason I asked to speak to you.” He began, “I have some news that I want you to hear from me before you hear it from anyone else.” Jack sighed. He was about to let the can of worms out and he wasn’t sure how she was going to accept it.

Here goes nothing. Jack thought. He hated conversations like this, they always made him feel uncomfortable, especially when it was *him* that was the center or focus of the conversation.

“There has been some information that has come to light recently.” Jack began. “I am part alien, part Dubor. I am considered a member of your species.” There, he said it. He took a deep breath wondering how Grilka would accept the news. If she accepted it without problem they could continue on with their lives. If, however, she didn’t accept it...working with her would be next to impossible in the future.

“Oh Dorf, I had a feeling.” She finally said. “I knew you looked like a Dorf.” Grilka continued. “You see, a Dorf is another term for what we call a halfling. You are a halfling. A mixture of both races. It is nothing to be ashamed of, it hasn’t happened in a long long time, but it is nothing to be ashamed of.”

Jack sighed a bit of relief. It was a known thing after all. Grilka wasn’t even surprised at the news. This was a first for his. Usually when he told a woman news of something, he had to duck from her throwing things at him. This was undiscovered territory for sure. Jack wondered if Grilka was always this easy going about possible uncertain things. He would have to find out.

“So you’re not upset, or mad, or...” Jack’s voice trailed off.

Grilka shook her head. “Of course not Jack. I am not upset.” In a way she was relieved at that is all he wanted to see her about. She was afraid Jack wanted to revoke her delegate status and send her away. She couldn’t have handled if he had wanted to do that. Grilka was so uncertain when it came to her position on the station still. She just didn’t know how things were going to go for her. It was frustrating at best.

“Have you told your government about this revelation?” Grilka asked.

Jack shook his head. “No I haven’t. It’s been a week I’ve known about this, but I haven’t had the courage to tell them yet.” He froze. How would his superiors act regarding this news? His own direct superior, General O’Neil, had sided with a xenophobe of a president during the Civil War. Would he still hold those values close to his heart? Jack didn’t know. Jack wasn’t sure he wanted to know.

“I see.” Grilka said. “Well if I can help in any way, I am here for you.” She couldn’t tell if Jack believed her. He didn’t respond only nodded. Clearly he had some thinking to do. She stood from her chair and headed to the office door that would take her to the corridor.

Jack watched her leave. He didn't stop her, she knew he had things to think over. Hell, he knew he had things to think over. It was going to be a long night, that much was certain. Jack didn't feel like sleeping anyway. He had a call to make, a difficult call at that. Checking Earth Standard Time, Jack sighed. It was only seven in the evening back on Earth. General O'Neil would still be awake, probably getting to retire for the evening with a nightcap.

"Computer," Jack said. "Open a channel to..." His voice stopped mid sentence. "Belay that order." He said. "Perform another analysis on the data crystal retrieved from the Shuka planet that came in last week. Did I review every piece of information on that crystal? Did I miss anything?"

The computer scanned the data crystal in question. "All three thousand twenty eight records have been viewed." The computer said, "and one hidden file."

Jack raised his head up from his desk. What's that? A hidden file? "What hidden file, computer?"

The computer beeped and bopped back and forth. "There is a hidden file on the crystal, contents unknown." The computer said in a flat cold tone. It could be quite annoying at times.

"Why wasn't I notified of this hidden, mysterious, file earlier when I was listening to the other records?" Jack asked impatiently. If there was a hidden file on the device, he wanted to know about it. The computer should have alerted him to the fact that there was indeed something he hadn't seen before.

"No inquiry was made." The computer replied.

Jack about threw his monitor across the room. The computer did have a tendency not to divulge information that wasn't requested for specifically. He hated that aspect of this particular computer system. Jack had similar issues on his old ship before he ordered an over-haul. He thought the change had been made fleet wide, but apparently that wasn't the case. He would have to make similar changes to the station's computer system to avoid such issues in the future.

"Can you access the file?" Jack asked. It was a simple question, one he hoped the computer wouldn't give him grief over. "Or do you need some kind of special algorithm or request to do that?"

"That data is available." The computer said. "Displaying file contents."

On Jack's computer monitor displayed the contents of the file. He began reading it and then remembered the hologram. "Is there a holographic version of this content?" He asked.

"Affirmative." The computer replied.

"Fine, display holographic message." Jack said.

A holographic image of Ben Selizar appeared. The human raised by Dubor parents and eventually went back to Earth to raise his half Dubor half human child, whether it be a boy or a girl Jack did not know. He supposed it didn't matter. Either way, he was a descendant of the half breed.

The hologram spoke.

“Whoever you are, you have accessed this hidden file on the device I was recording my life history on.” Ben said. “I have information for you to hear. It is not easy for me to admit this but the truth must be told. Most of the Dubor are xenophobic, I tried to fit in the best I could, but simply could not do it. I tried to gauge how my wife felt about it all, but she is difficult to read. Some days she feels the same way as I do, other days she is as xenophobic as the rest of them. I’m not sure what to do about her. I love her so much, she is carrying my child. The first ever paring between a Dubor and a human. I think. Who knows how many other humans they have abducted in the past.”

Jack listened with intent. Whatever this hologram had to say, he wanted to hear it all.

“I must flee this world with my child. If my mate will come with me, I will take her. If she won’t? Then I will be leaving by myself. I must return to Earth, I have no home here. Earth is where I belong.” Ben said. “I must fake my death. The teleportation device the Dubor have setup has a major flaw in it. It copies your body and then kills the original. Your new body and soul knowing nothing about your previous life. I must take this risk in order to escape.”

“So that’s how you escaped.” Jack said. He had figured escaping from the Dubor wasn’t an easy task. But if they thought you to be dead and had a body to back it up, there was no point in looking further into it. It was quite a clever idea to be honest.

“I plan on leaving for Earth in the morning. Either with my mate or alone with my child. That uncertainty alone is bothering me. This war on the Shukan planet has taken its toll on me. If Obshi is to be believed, the war will be over in a handful of years. He is a great leader, one Shuka needs. Once the war is over, I’m sure to be executed. That’s my main reason for fleeing this world. I can’t go back to Dubor, they would exile me as well, before executing me. It’s a no win situation all around.” Ben sighed. “To be raised by these people only to find out they don’t want me after all? It’s a difficult situation to say the least. So I must flee.”

Pausing the recording, Jack was curious. “Computer, how long does this entry go on for?”

“Eight hours.” The computer replied.

Jack wished he had the Readers Digest version of the log entry. But he didn’t, so he settled in and decided to listen to the rest of the recording. Looking at his calendar, he canceled

all of his appointments for the rest of the day and into the next day. Jack was going to need a lot of time to go over this material. It was that important to him. He continued the recording.

“Day three of my plan.” Ben said. “I have managed to find a ship. She’s an old derelict, but she’ll get me where I need to go. I’m told she once belonged to a man by the name of Nokev. He was a scientist of some sort. I wonder if it’s the same man who told me about Ob-shi. I don’t know how long Shukan people live for, but if this is the case I owe him one.” He paused as he thought. “I’m sure Earth has changed since I was there last. Unfortunately I don’t remember much of Earth, I only know that’s where I belong.”

Jack wondered why there was no record of Ben Selizar in Earth’s records. He had searched the name and came up short. One would think a man returning to Earth from a distant alien planet would make some kind of history at some point in time. Even family history records didn’t name this person, which was odd. Jack’s mind ran rampant. He wondered if it was some kind of government cover-up. Whatever it was, it wasn’t normal. Most people knew their family line, they understood where they came from. Jack did not. His parents never even mentioned anything about Ben or his abduction. If it was a family secret, it was very well kept.

The hours passed by slowly as Jack learned more about his ancestor. The man had principles, that much was for sure. He abhorred battle, death, and killing innocent lives. It would seem he had to lie a lot in order to pass himself off as believing in what the Dubor believed in. It must have been a difficult time to live in.

As Jack reached the end of the record, Ben said something that stuck out to him more than anything else he had said. It was a simple phrase. “Be true to yourself. Let the consequences follow.” At that point he knew he had to make the call to General O’Neil and fill him in on everything that had happened over the past week.

Deactivating the hologram, Jack activated a channel to Earth. Priority One clearance.

“Major Jack O’Brien to General O’Neil.” Jack said. “I have some information you need to know about.”

Jack waited for the call to go through.

The End