

Rainfall

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by Kyle Eggleston

Commander Kate Monson stared at the man on the monitor in her quarters. She was wearing her sleeping garment, it was the middle of the night. She had been woken up when the call came through, it was roughly three o'clock in the morning Earth Standard Time. Kate wasn't one to consider beauty sleep a thing, but tonight that's exactly what she wanted and needed.

On the other end of the call, General O'Neil sat with a not so amused look on his face. Not amused because of the time, not amused because of why he had to contact the commander. He was not in a pleasant mood at all.

"Excuse me sir?" Kate asked. "Can you repeat that?"

General O'Neil nodded. "I know how you feel about this Kate. It was a surprise to me as well."

Kate was beside herself. She couldn't believe what Mack was telling her. He had just informed her that her commanding officer was part alien. An alien! She didn't know how to accept that information. Kate had thought Jack O'Brien was as human as she was. But now with the light of this new information, well that changed things.

"Mack" Kate said "O'Brien is a line officer. He's just doing his best." She tried to put a good foot forward for her commanding officer. The general had to see something good in that, didn't he?

"He's an alien." General O'Neil replied. "You know my thoughts on aliens. They're outsiders. That station you work on is against everything I stand for. I thought you felt the same way. Maybe living there has softened you to some degree." His words cut to the heart.

Kate stammered a moment. "I thought your views had changed since the war." She said. Kate rested her hands on her hips in disgust. "Obviously I was wrong." All of this talk about how the war was behind them, how feelings had changed. It was all a ploy, possibly a ploy to start another war. She didn't know what it was all about.

"That's before I started getting reports about these Dubor." O'Neil said. "From what Jack says, they seem to be a formidable adversary who might attack us after they take care of the Shukan people." He continued. "If these Dubor attack us, I want to be prepared. Having

one of them in charge of one of my outposts doesn't sit well with me commander. I need you to keep an eye on O'Brien. If I need to, I will replace him, remove him from command." He said. "I need you to prepare yourself to take command if I call for it."

Kate nodded. "Of course sir." She said. Kate didn't like the thought of taking over for Major O'Brien. But then again, she didn't want some random officer coming in and taking charge of the place. She wanted someone she could trust, if that person was herself so be it. "I've been watching him since he arrived here sir, per your orders. Any idea when you're going to tell me what that was all about?"

General O'Neil shook his head. "No commander. You don't need to know the reason for that yet." Picking up a piece of paper, he reviewed its contents. "The Roosevelt is scheduled to arrive to the station tomorrow afternoon." O'Neil said. "I want to make sure their captain is taken care of. He's one of us, see that his needs are met."

By one of us, the general meant the commanding officer of the Roosevelt had fought on their side during the war. He liked to keep his people close together. There was no telling when another Civil War might break out, O'Neil needed people he could trust in key positions he could count on. He had wanted Commander Donaldson to command Crimson Gamma, but that didn't pan out as the president hand picked O'Brien for the job. How dare he. O'Neil didn't like another man in charge running things. He wanted things run his way, and his way only. If only things worked that way Mack would have the quadrant running just how he liked it.

Kate nodded in somewhat agreement, "I will sir." She said.

"Good." O'Neil smiled. "I know I can count on you. In the meantime, get some rest. Tomorrow will get here before you know it. You've got a busy day ahead of you now don't you. O'Neil out."

The channel closed.

Kate took her hands off her hips. Removing her robe, she got ready for bed yet again. Kate hoped her bed would be comfortable enough to sleep in that night. She considered contacting Major O'Brien and filling him in on the conversation that had just taken place. But she didn't quite know how to even lead into such a conversation. Kate couldn't tell O'Brien she had been keeping tabs on his actions over the past several months, or how she was now keeping a closer eye on him; all for the sake of Mack's plans on keeping the universe organized the way he wanted to. Yeah, that conversation wasn't going to be happening anytime soon.

Climbing into bed, Kate exhaled. Her pillow was soft and cold, just the way she preferred it. Kate felt like she was caught up in something bigger than she was. Something she had no control over. It was definitely something she would have to figure out, on her own it

would seem. She had no support on the station that much was abundantly clear by the general's remarks.

As Kate laid there, she couldn't get comfortable. The room temperature was set just how she liked it, it wasn't that. She wondered how long it would take for her to fall asleep. An hour passed without any progress. Kate sighed. Maybe if she turned on the vidset she could find something to watch that would make her rest easier. Or on the flip side, it could stimulate her brain and that's not what she wanted at all.

Kate's door chimed dinged. Of course it did. What else could happen at this time of night? Getting up, she put her robe back on and walked towards the door.

"Come in." Kate said. She glared at the door to her quarters when they didn't move. "Come in." She repeated the command. The door budged a little bit. She watched as two hands made their way between the door and the bulkhead. Kate walked forward and helped whoever it was open the door all the way.

"Kate." Jack O'Brien said. "I know about the transmission from General O'Neil." He said. "I traced the call figuring he would contact you about what had happened to me. Or what I've found out about myself rather. I'm not sure I'm fit for command after all of this. At least not now, I've been thinking of taking a leave of absence for a bit until I can wrap my head around it all." He looked to Kate waiting for a reaction.

Kate shook her head. She didn't want the burden of command again. That month she went through wasn't the easiest piece of cake. Kate was glad to not interfere with O'Brien being in command. He was where he belonged in her eyes. Sure he was an alien and that went against Mack's agenda, but who cared what Mack thought. Kate was starting to see what kind of man the general was. He really was still living the war, she found that to be odd very odd.

Kate touched Jack on his arm and held it there. "Major, I don't want your command." She said. "Nothing has changed. You're still the same man who fought and won the war for your side. You're still the same man who took command of this station six months ago. I know we've had our differences of opinion, we did fight on opposite sides of the war as it was. But I know that you have it within you to keep this station under control as needed." Kate continued. "I believe in you."

O'Brien smiled, it was nice to have a vote of confidence in his side of the ring. It was a constant fight he was in with the general. Like the war never ended between the two of them. Words could be said indicating otherwise, but that was not the truth of the matter. Jack knew it, the general knew it, he only wished Kate could see it as well.

"Alright." O'Brien agreed. "But if you see me faltering in anyway, I need you to step up and take command. Take over for me." He said.

“Agreed.” Kate smiled. “Until then, you have a job to do, as do I. The Roosevelt is docking tomorrow at oh nine hundred. I have that taken care of.”

“The Roosevelt,” Jack echoed. “Their commanding officer is a friend of the general. I wonder why they are coming here, possibly to check up on me.” He concluded.

Kate sighed. That wasn’t it, she thought. “No. That’s my job.”

“Your what now?” Jack asked. Was she saying what he thought she was saying? Was she a spy in the midst? He thought something was off about her, but never suspected this. It made sense now considering how concerned the general was about keeping Jack in command of the station. “I should have known.”

Kate frowned. “I’m sorry sir. I had my orders not to tell you.”

Jack nodded. “He’s a general, I’m a major. He outranks me and can order my people to do as he wishes. If you put this station in danger by any means, I will have your head on a platter.” He said. It wasn’t a threat, it was more of a promise.

Kate continued to frown. She knew what he meant. She didn’t like it, but she knew what he meant. Kate had misplaced his trust in her, simply by talking to the general and taking a simple order from him. Jack already didn’t trust her from the start, now it was going to take that much more effort to get him to trust her at all. Her eyes said she was sorry, but Kate didn’t think Jack would grasp the meaning. It was too late for her.

Jack headed towards the broken door. “You might want to have maintenance take a look at this door first thing in the morning.” He said as he squeezed through it and into the corridor.

Kate began to pace around. There would be no going to sleep now. Now her own commanding officer didn’t trust her. How could she take command of the station after that? She couldn’t. The major would have to be in pretty rough shape in order for her to actually assume command of anything around here. Maybe that was for the best. She didn’t know. Kate would have to speak with the doctor on what terms he could take the major out of command, that might be beneficial to her. She would check on it in the morning when she had time.

Getting undressed, Kate went back to bed. She was exhausted. If she couldn’t sleep now, she didn’t know when she would sleep. Possibly when she was dead. Well she was dead now, so why the heck not?

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Oh nine hundred came early. Kate stood at the Master Control Center in C&C and watched as the Roosevelt dropped from FTL on time. "Ensign, I'll be down at docking port sixty-two to greet the captain of the Roosevelt onboard. Please let them know where to expect me." Kate ordered as she walked out the door to meet the incoming ship's senior staff. She crossed paths with Major O'Brien on her way out, they made eye contact but didn't say a word to each other.

At the airlock, Kate was nervous. In a way she wondered if the captain of the Roosevelt was keeping an eye on her as well as the major. Who knew exactly what kind of information the captain would be relaying back to the major. She was literally shaking in her boots. Kate had never met the captain of the Roosevelt before, she hadn't even heard stories from the war about them. Talk about going in with cold feet.

A woman disembarked from the shuttle through the airlock. She walked towards Commander Monson and extended a hand. "Captain Shannon Simmons. U.S.S. Roosevelt."

Kate shook the captain's hand. "Nice to meet you ma'am. Commander Kate Monson." She said. "Welcome aboard. I am your assigned liaison while you're here. At the request of General O'Neil." Kate smiled as the name brought a form of familiarity between the two women. If name dropping the general would help her pull some strings, she wasn't above doing it. The major needed all the help he could get right now. Kate would see to it that he got that help.

"Cut the bullshit Kate." The captain replied. "We both know why the general asked you to escort me around and not the major. General O'Neil doesn't trust the major as far as he can throw him. To be honest, neither o I." She looked Kate in the eyes as she tried to determine something. "What side of the war were you on Kate?"

Kate frowned. It always came back to that damned Civil War. Why did people still want to fight that war? It was over. The losing side obviously couldn't deal with the fact that they had lost. What did it matter what side she fought on? Who cared anyways? "I was on the same side as you were." Kate said. "We lost." She reminded the captain of the sore fact that was weighing heavily on her shoulders.

The captain sighed. "Were you really fighting for the same goal as the rest of us Kate?" She looked around the station for a moment, at all of the aliens and other personnel working around the clock to make that dream become a reality. "Some of us were in the trenches fighting for our very lives while others were sitting in office complexes watching from afar. I know the men and women under my command are loyal to me, can you say the same about these...people here on this station?" She was fuming at this point. It was like a floodgate had given way and held up rainwater was finally allowed to rush free.

Kate couldn't take it any longer. She was about to snap. How dare an officer speak to her that way. She didn't care if that officer was a senior officer, she had no right to question Kate's loyalty in front of the other crew like this.

The dock workers had paused their work waiting for Kate's reply. The captain's voice had carried a bit.

"We fought on the same side, captain." Kate said sharply. "The truth of the matter is we lost. That's the end of the story. What matters now is where our current loyalties lie. Mine lay with the United Earth Force Alliance and Major Jack O'Brien who is in command of this station. Where do your loyalties lie, captain?" Her tone was firm and direct to the point.

Captain Simmons didn't flinch. She allowed her anger to subside a bit but she was still on edge over the matter. "I follow the United Earth Force Alliance commander." She finally said. "My loyalty lies with General Mack O'Neil. He put me in command of the Roosevelt and I owe him for that. You owe him too commander. Without him, you wouldn't be in this position you are now. Don't forget that." She walked past the commander. The topic was closed for debate.

Kate watched the captain go. She figured she better catch up with her, someone could get lost on the station quite easily without an escort their first time. She didn't want to have to explain that to the major or the general. If the day's events was any indication of how that conversation went, well it was going to be a very long day indeed.

Catching up to the captain, Kate got ready to listen to whatever the captain had in mind. She was here to do a job, and it was up to Kate to make sure that job was accomplished on time and in an orderly manner. Kate hoped the captain would cool it for a minute so she could at least show her the more interesting parts of the station without being hounded to death.

"I want to schedule a meeting with the major." Captain Simmons said. "I don't care when, just make sure it happens before I leave this...station of yours." She looked around. Her ship seemed cleaner than the station did. Shannon wondered what kind of crew they had cleaning this dump. It looked like it hadn't been dusted in well over a week let alone mopped.

Kate followed the captain's gaze. Was she actually staring at the floor? Good grief, the woman needed a hobby of some kind. Looking at the floor herself, she noticed it was a little bit more greasy than usual. She would have to put a call into maintenance later when she had the chance. Grease was a trip and fall hazard, one that couldn't afford to happen.

They stood in a large open area full of shops, restaurants, and pop up stands selling merchandise. Shannon looked around and took in the impressive sight. It was true she had never seen aliens and humans working together like they were. It was unusual to say the least.

She felt sick to her stomach at the thought of even working alongside one of them. Humans were her allies, not these...creatures.

“Where are we commander?” Shannon asked.

“We call this the Main Gallery.” Kate replied. “It’s where most of the commerce is conducted on the station, as well as some official business in the meeting rooms that line the outer sections.” She pointed to different places as she spoke about them. “The restaurants are the best this side of the quadrant.” She said. “At least that’s what they say.”

“They?” Shannon asked. “And who are these, they you speak of?”

“Oh” Kate said “The aliens of course. We haven’t had a complaint yet, and certainly haven’t poisoned anyone lately. I’d say business is going good and strong from my outlook. But one would have to take a closer look at the books to get the real rundown of the place.”

“I see.” Shannon said. “Carry on, what’s next.”

They continued walking down the Main Gallery to a section of corridor that would take them to the Observation Dome. From the dome, Captain Simmons could see her ship docked with the station. She never grew tired of looking at her ship from any angle. It was a beauty. Turning around to the other side of the dome, the captain saw the planet Shuka below. She was repulsed by the fact that an Earth space station orbited an alien planet of the like. From this altitude, Shuka looked like a barren wasteland. Where rivers should be, there was nothing but dirt. The mountains should have snow on them this time of year, but they too were barren. She wondered why Earth would be invested in such a filthy planet.

“So, that’s the planet.” Shannon said with disgust.

Kate nodded. “Shuka, yes ma’am.” She said. “Rumor has it a transport is headed down there today, if you would like to take a closer look around.” Kate hoped the captain would agree to a tour of the planet. It would get her out of the commander’s hair for at least a few hours.

“Unfortunately we do not have the time on this trip.” Captain Simmons said almost with regret. As much regret as she could fake. “Perhaps another time, if I come back this way.” She paused for a moment. She had heard so many things about the Shukan people. The captain wondered if any of them were true. Aliens were substandard by her thought process, yet there was something about the Shukan people that did entice her. She couldn’t put her finger on it, perhaps later it would come to her mind.

“The general wants to know how smoothly this station is running.” Shannon said. “I expect to give him a full report. Take me to the security office. I want to speak with Chief of Security Killpack.”

Kate nodded and gestured to a great set of doors. "This way captain."

Security wasn't too exciting for a Monday morning. Killpack was busy watching the holographic recordings from the Duborian diary device the major had him look over. He too kept a copy of the data crystal. History was a pet project of his, anytime to experience stories from another species was always an interest. This was no exception.

As the security office doors opened, Killpack stopped the playback of the recording and pretended to be looking at security footage. A large bank of monitors spanned the wall behind his desk. He watched the monitors with intent. They switched at random intervals to display different parts of the station. If anything fishy happened, he wanted to be in the know of it.

"Chief Killpack." Captain Simmons said as she approached the security desk. "I understand you keep a daily log entry of what happens on this station?"

Killpack turned to face the tall brunette. He was in love. If she wasn't a captain and he wasn't just a security chief, he was sure they could play doctor together. Jeff wasn't about to cross that line of course, but he'd love to find out. Pulling his mind out of the gutter, Killpack answered the captain's question. "Yes ma'am." He said. "We keep up to four or five logs a day of the ongoing operations here. It's mostly routine things, nothing big. We keep a pretty tight ship."

"I see." The captain uttered. She was not convinced on what the lieutenant was saying. "I expect you to transfer copies of your logs for the past six months to my vessel for review." She ordered. "Please do it at once." The captain turned to leave without further word.

Jeff looked to Kate who simply shrugged. She was as in the dark as he was on why the captain requested the records. He would turn them over as ordered of course, it would just be nice to know *why* she wanted to see them. Jeff had nothing to hide, he began working on the request right away.

After a brief lunch in one of the station's famous restaurants, Captain Simmons opened up to Kate a little bit. "I have been ordered to check on the major." She explained. "I'm to see if he's fit for command of this station. If he is, I leave and nothing happens. You go on about your lives. If he isn't, then I am to assume command immediately."

Kate frowned. "General O'Neil's orders huh?" She asked not surprised. It would seem he had already decided Kate wasn't up to the task of taking command of the station from her commanding officer. "So, that's the real reason you're here." She said. "I wondered as much. The general contacted me early this morning. He is concerned about the welfare of the major."

Shannon shook her head. "Not as much as he'd like you to believe." She said. "Look, I know we got off on the wrong foot earlier. For that I apologize. I had to put on a display, get people to hate me. Even you. How else was I supposed to get the information I needed without

you blocking my every move. If I put up a front, you would most likely back down easier than expected.” She frowned. “I apologize for being so harsh.”

Kate nodded. It was all coming together. The captain wasn’t after the nickel and dime tour of the station after all. She was after the major. Nothing more. Kate understood why the captain had been a bitch, but she could have at least explained herself earlier than making Kate hate every moment of being around her. She graciously accepted the apology.

“I can arrange that meeting with the major anytime you’d like.” Kate said. “He has a free afternoon. I made sure of it, just in case you wanted to meet with him. You’ll see he’s not that bad of a guy once you get to know him.”

“Was I that transparent?” Captain Simmons asked.

Kate shook her head. “No, I thought you to be a real bitch. Sir.” She said. “But now that I know you were just following the orders of a semi mad man, I understand. I get it.” She instantly regretted saying that last part. That mad man could take her job away from her if he chose to. Kate had to be careful about what she said to whom.

Shannon laughed. “Mad man eh?” She smiled. It was the first smile Kate had seen the woman give all day. “He is quite mad isn’t he. But you don’t get to the top by being sane I suppose. I would like to meet with the major now. Let’s get this over with.”

Kate stood from the table placing her napkin down. “This way captain.” She said.

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Major Jack O’Brien paced around his office. He had just been notified that the commanding officer of the Roosevelt wanted a meeting with him. He had agreed to the meeting on one condition, that his first officer be present during the said meeting. The captain agreed to the stipulation. As he waited, Jack looked up the captain’s official war record. She was highly decorated for her actions during the Civil War by the enemy president. Those actions had been kept humane for the most part, something he was glad of. There didn’t appear to be any serious mistakes made on her behalf. Maybe she wasn’t that bad of a person after all and his anxiety about meeting with her was misplaced. He hoped he was right.

Shannon and Kate entered the office via a transport tube. It was an emergency lift that the major could use in, well an emergency. He never used it. He was surprised when the two officers entered his office that way. Captain Simmons probably wanted to catch him off guard, she had accomplished that goal.

“Major Jack O’Brien, may I present Captain Shannon Simmons.” Kate said. “Of The United Earth Force Alliance.” Once the introductions were made, Kate sat down on a couch in the corner and listened as the two officers spoke to one another.

“Let me put this simply major.” Captain Simmons said. “I don’t like aliens. I don’t believe they have a place in my sky and I sure as hell don’t trust you for being an alien. I can understand that you just found out, but you should have stepped down from this post and made way for a pure human to take this position.”

Kate grimaced. This was not a good way to start out a conversation.

Major O’Brien sat down in his chair and faced the captain. “Please have a seat.” He said. The captain remained standing. “Captain, I understand your feelings on aliens. When I first learned that we weren’t alone in the universe, I too was quite skeptical. But I managed to get past that, then the war came and I had to make a choice all over again. I chose to fight what I knew to be wrong.” He explained. “I still think hating aliens is wrong, my current situation notwithstanding.” Jack watched for a reaction from the captain. She wasn’t giving him one, she was cold as ice. Not moving, she stood her ground on what she had said not allowing to give any kind of apology.

Leaning forward with her arms resting on the back of a chair for support, the captain continued. “I understand you’ve known about this condition of yours for well over a week now. You only recently decided to let the top brass know. Why?”

Jack leaned back in his chair and sighed. He had a feeling this might come up, he had been right. He hated when his gut was right. It didn’t make for a pleasant conversation. He stared at the ceiling for a moment watching the lights, counting them, as he decided how to answer the question presented before him. Finally he locked his gaze with the captain’s. “I wanted to see what I was up against. If I was simply part alien with no lasting side effects, then I could continue on my mission without problem. But if there was something I didn’t have control over, like a werewolf during a full moon, then I wanted to know about it. I couldn’t jeopardize the hundreds of thousands of lives on this station simply because I was no longer considered fully human.” Jack tried his best to explain his situation to the captain and hoped she would at least understand that part of it.

“The general won’t find that to be a satisfactory answer.” The captain said, her tone softened. “But it works for me.” She sat down in the chair and relaxed a bit. “So you do have Earth’s concerns at heart after all.”

Jack nodded his head. “Of course I do.” He said. “Just like I always have captain. Even during the war, I wanted what was best for Earth. I believe this station to be just that. The best thing for Earth at this time.”

“And why is that?” Captain Simmons asked.

Jack leaned forward. “We need to ally ourselves with alien species. They know what’s out there on the Rim, other places we haven’t been yet. They know the danger that is out there. Things we can only dream about until we experience it for ourselves.” He looked over to Kate who gave him a silent thumbs up. Looking back to the captain, he continued. “Until the recent Dubor incident, I thought we were doing pretty good. But now that we could be caught in the cross hairs of a battle between two neighboring worlds? That has me concerned a great deal.”

Captain Simmons nodded with agreement. “I understand your concern major.” She said. “I can only assume what orders the top brass have given you on the subject. Probably something along the lines of don’t interfere unless fired upon.”

Jack smirked. “Yeah, something like that. You can see my hands are tied when it comes to these two cultures.”

“You were imprisoned recently by the Dubor.” The captain said. “How did you escape?”

Jack’s smirk vanished. He didn’t know that was in his official report or file. The general must have been telling the captain somethings above her pay grade. “Well we had help.” He started to explain. “I befriended a Duborian citizen who helped us escape.”

Captain Simmons nodded. “Grilka” she said. “Yes I’ve read your report on the matter. Is it possible she allowed you to escape because she knew you were one of her own kind?”

That thought had crossed Jack’s mind before. Grilka had brought Obshi and Norev to him as food, and she did call him the Dubor equivalent of a half ling, or half breed. He couldn’t shake the thought that she had a deeper plot planned for him, something he wasn’t aware of yet. He wouldn’t put it past her, and that scared the hell out of him.

“That’s possible, yes.” Jack admitted. “It remains to be seen if that was the case though. I have talked with Grilka extensively about those events and why she chose to help me. To help us escape. I’ve heard nothing but innocent reasoning behind it all.”

“She’s taken with you.” The captain remarked.

Jack didn’t catch the remark. “Excuse me?”

Kate reacted with shock. She heard it loud and clear.

“Oh nothing.” Captain Simmons said. “Just a fleeting thought.” She smiled. “Relax major, I believe you. I believe that you think you’re not a danger to the station or the people aboard her. I believe that you believe you are capable of leading this rag tag group of misfits into the unknown beyond the Rim if necessary. I believe that you think you’re doing good here.” She paused and frowned. If only it were that simple. “My belief however isn’t good enough. We will need solid proof that progress is being made here. On behalf of Earth, on

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behalf of all the alien worlds represented here.” She said. “Until that time, expect to be watched over like a hawk. The scrutiny will continue. Just know that you have one more ally in your pocket than you had before I arrived.”

The captain stood from her chair. “Good day major.” She looked to Kate. “Commander, if you will see me back to my ship please?”

Kate stood as well. They left the major sitting there to think about what the captain had just said. If he did have an ally in General O’Neil’s inner circle, it might be enough to help him get through the coming days and months ahead. Time, of course, would tell.

The End