

Change In Command

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by Kyle Eggleston

“Change in command verified.” The computer said coldly. “Crimson Gamma is now under the command of General Eve Tague.” The computer didn’t care who was in command of the station as long as the correct command codes were supplied, which in this case they were.

“O’Brien stood in disbelief. Usually there was some kind of ceremony when a new commander was taking charge of the station. There were protocols to be followed. None of those things had taken place here. This woman simply had come in and taken control of his station out from under him.

Eve looked around the room at the faces of shocked officers and crew members. Frankly she didn’t care about them only their loyalty to her and her staff. She walked up to Jack O’Brien and smiled slightly. “I believe you’re standing at my control console major.”

O’Brien stepped aside. “Yes ma’am.” He said. Stepping aside he looked to Kate Monson who did the same when one of Eve’s aides walked towards her station. Her eyes pleaded with him, this must be a dream she thought. Just a bad terrible nightmare.

“Your presence is no longer required in C&C major, commander.” Tague said to the two officers.

O’Brien and Monson were escorted from C&C by the second aide. Once in the corridor, Kate lost her mind. “What the frack is going on here Jack?!” She exclaimed.

O’Brien just shook his head. “I don’t know commander. I don’t know. But I intend to find out.” They walked down the corridor in disbelief. There was a war going on and they had been replaced just like that without a moment’s notice. Something strange was going on, something strange and Jack didn’t like it one bit. He needed to talk to someone on Earth, someone in charge, someone who knew what was going on. Standing in a corridor was doing nothing for them.

“Come with me commander, let’s get some answers.” O’Brien said. They headed for the nearest transport tube. They traveled to O’Brien’s quarters, luckily the change in command didn’t affect his access to his own quarters. Passing the retinal scan, they walked in. O’Brien walked directly over to a computer terminal and started keying in a sequence that would bring the subspace communications relay online.

“Priority One Channel open.” The computer said.

O’Brien smiled. Good it worked. “This is Major Jack O’Brien trying to contact anyone within the president’s advisory council. Please respond.” He said. He preferred to speak with General O’Neil, but that wasn’t possible. O’Neil was dead.

A lieutenant appeared on the screen. He looked nervous as hell. “Hello sir.” He said. “Unfortunately none of the advisory council is available to take your call. May I route it somewhere else? Or is there someone else that can assist you?”

O’Brien frowned. “No lieutenant, no one else can take my call. What do you mean they’re all busy? Busy doing what?!”

The lieutenant stammered. “I’m sorry sir, don’t you watch the news? Change in presidencies of course. President Cain was sworn into office a few hours ago.”

Cain. O’Brien gasped. That rat bastard had taken control over the government. It wasn’t an election year, how the hell did that happen? He and Kate exchanged confused glances with each other.

“That son of a bitch.” O’Brien said. “He always wanted to be president again after we caught him. I should have known he would have found a way.”

Kate wasn’t as upset as O’Brien was. She had backed Cain during the Civil War, a decision she would probably rethink if it were to happen again; which seemed likely. She couldn’t imagine two wars being fought at the same time though. Fighting the Dubor and Earth didn’t seem like a pleasant situation.

“I see.” O’Brien said. “Thank you for this information lieutenant. Can you take a message for me, are you able to do that?”

The lieutenant smiled a cheesy grin. Take a message, of course he could do that. “Yes sir.”

“Tell the president, or whoever is in charge, that I want my station back, ASAP. I won’t stand for this mutiny.” O’Brien said. Sure it wasn’t technically a mutiny, but it sure as hell felt like one. Who did this general think she was to just waltz in and take command of *his* station? It was more than rude, it was downright disrespectful.

The lieutenant made a note and nodded. “Yes sir, and you are?”

O’Brien chuckled. “Who am I?” He asked. “Who am I?” His temper rose. “I am the rightful commanding officer of Crimson Gamma. Put that in your report too!” Jack slammed his fist down on the computer console effectively closing the channel.

Kate tried not to smirk, but felt it difficult to do. “Well, you sure told him.”

“Oh hush you.” Jack said. He laughed after a moment. He couldn’t be mad at Kate, she was in the same boat as he was. Both officers had lost their jobs in less than an hour. How were they supposed to feel about it? Jack was angry, Kate was angry as well. They would get their commands back if it was the last thing they did; and with the war on it might very well be the last thing they did.

Kate’s smirk dropped. “Orders major?” She asked.

Jack let go a sigh. He wasn’t sure what course of action to take exactly. It had only been an hour since the change in command, there hadn’t been time to fully process what had actually happened. Sitting down on his couch, he invited Kate to join him.

“I bet you’re pleased Cain is back in office.” Jack said.

Kate hesitated. “No, not really sir.” She admitted. “After serving with you, and learning from you,” she added “I’m pretty sure I was on the losing side of the war from the beginning.” She paused. Kate hadn’t admitted that to anyone before. She looked O’Brien in the eyes, they seemed a little bit alien to her now that she got a real good look at them. Kate hadn’t noticed before. “General O’Neil, on the other hand, he would have been delighted about the change in government.” She stared deeper into the major’s eyes until it became too uncomfortable and she cut eye contact.

“What?” O’Brien asked.

Kate shook her head. “Nothing sir.” She said. “But it is obvious why they wanted you out of the command chair, sir. You’re alien, you’re not fully human. Cain doesn’t trust you.” She refused to use the presidential title when referring to the new Commander in Chief. “That explains why they replaced you, but not why they got rid of me.” Kate frowned.

Jack nodded. “I know why.” He said. “You’re loyal to me. I’m sure we won’t be the only ones replaced, in short time they’ll replace all of us.” He thought of the good people who served under him, they didn’t deserve this treatment from the new commanding officer. Each of his officers deserved to be at their posts doing their current work, however that work was meant to be done.

“Cain should have put up more of a fight when I arrested him five years ago.” Jack admitted. “He deserves to be dead.” There was another reason Cain didn’t trust the major, he was the one who had arrested the so called president that many years ago. O’Brien wondered how today could get any worse than it already was.

There was a knock at his door. Not the typical door chime, but an actual knock. Kate readied her weapon, O’Brien walked towards the door and waved it open with his hand to see who was on the other side.

Obshi stood with what appeared to be one of his people’s sacred scrolls in his hands.

“May I come in.” Obshi asked. “I didn’t dare use the comm system, I didn’t know who was listening in.”

O’Brien nodded and gestured for Kate to lower her gun, which she did. “Obshi,” O’Brien said. “Yes please come in. Have a seat. We have some news for you.”

Obshi waved his hand as a gesture that he knew what O’Brien was going to say. “I know, you and the commander have been taken out of commission as it were.” He said. “It’s a shame really, but I have come on an urgent matter, one that needs your direct attention.” As he entered Jack’s quarters, Obshi found a place to sit down and got comfortable. “Computer, water. Something cold.” Obshi ordered. The computer got to work on a cold glass of water. Once it had materialized the glass and water with ice, Kate brought it over to Obshi who was grateful. He took a drink of water, it felt refreshing.

“Now for the reason I have come.” Obshi said. He unwrapped the scrolls in his hands and spread them out on the coffee table before him. “I had thought these history scrolls had predetermined my returning to Shukan space. After one hundred years of being away.” Obshi said. “But after closer observation, it is clear the scrolls do not speak of me.” He frowned. “They speak of another.”

Kneeling next to the coffee table, O’Brien hesitated. He had much bigger things to worry about right now than some ancient text from an obscure dialect of a religious people. But he decided to humor Obshi and his claim, whatever it was he had found out.

“You see here.” Obshi said. “I thought this translated to Obshi would return after one hundred years.” He said. “I had the translation wrong. The ancient Shukan dialect can be very finicky at times I’m afraid.” He pointed to another character, a pictogram actually and explained. “Actually, this states that a man named Obshi would return after one hundred years and usher in an alien military commander from a nearby world, a half breed who would usher in a new era of peace between the Shuka and the Dubor.” His voice trailed off as he let the major think it over for a moment to see if he was picking up what Obshi was saying.

“A fallen military commander.” Obshi continued. He stared at Major O’Brien and smiled. “It is clearly speaking of you major. There can be no doubt about it.”

Jack stood from the floor and stood there flabbergasted. Surely this prophecy couldn’t be talking about him. It had been written over two hundred years ago. Who in their right mind could foresee that far into the future to claim that Jack of all people was some sort of redemption the Shuka and Dubor people needed. He scoffed at the thought.

“Fallen military commander.” Jack said. “I am very much alive.”

Obshi nodded. "True, but you have fallen from your post major. That has got to count for something. I am sure this is the correct translation of the sacred scrolls. I will confer with Norev, but I believe she will agree that this is the way it is meant to be."

"What?" Jack asked. "According to your own people, I am the enemy. I am of Dubor origin. There is no Shuka DNA within me. How could I be a religious icon for *your* people?" He began to pace around the room. First he lost his command, now this had found its way into his hands. Jack wasn't sure what to make of it.

There was another knock at the door.

"Oh for crying out loud!" Jack yelled. "Doesn't anyone know how to use the chime?" He said. "For the love of all that's good and holy, come on in. There's more than enough room!"

Norev entered the major's quarters, she was accompanied by Grilka. The two women looked in as they entered to see who all was there. As Norev approached the coffee table she saw the history scrolls rolled out across the surface of the table. She looked where Obshi was pointing and read through it. Norev took one look at Jack and smiled. "It is you." She said.

Obshi grinned. "I told you so major!"

Grilka was confused. "What is going on?" She asked. "What do you want with Dorf?" She too looked at the scrolls and noticed a Duborian word in the mess of Shukan words. The majority of the Shukan words, she did not understand. But the Duborian word, she knew clearly. "See?" She pointed at the scroll. "Dorf. Why does your scroll referenced the major?"

Norev and Obshi exchanged looks of confusion and excitement.

"You tell me, my dear, that you recognize this word?" Obshi asked. He was excited at the revelation.

Grilka nodded her head and continued to point. "Yes, Dorf. It means half breed or half ling in my language. To my knowledge, there has only been one half ling, and that is Major Jack O'Brien." She looked to O'Brien who had just sat back down on the couch. How was he going to deal with this new information? He had a station to recapture.

"One moment." Grilka said as she rushed out the door. She came back a moment later with a book of her own. "Our sacred texts declare a day will happen when the Shuka and Dubor people will be at peace after two wars; all thanks to a Dorf, or half ling." She said. "It is no coincidence that the major was sent here. But now that he has been replaced, I do not see how these prophecies can come to pass. It feels impossible."

Jack knew how Grilka felt about the situation. It did feel impossible for him to be the savior of two worlds in conflict over each other. Especially when the second conflict hadn't even begun yet. Dubor wasn't at war with Shuka, they were at war with Earth at the moment.

Obshi shook his head. "The prophecy cannot be wrong." He said. "It is there clear as day for anyone to see." He pointed at the scrolls on the coffee table. Pounding the table with his finger, he pressed the issue. "You are our deliverer, Major Jack O'Brien. If we hurry, you can stop this war, both wars, before they get out of hand." He looked into O'Brien's eyes. The man was a born leader. He could tell just by looking at him.

"I never thought I would be agreeing with a Dubor." Obshi said. "But here I am. Two prophecies pointing their finger at you major. It's more than a coincidence. There is something here." He looked over at Grilka who was smiling back at him. She knew it as well.

Kate stood in the background gathering it all in as she was processing everything that was being said. She felt like the only sane person in the room. There was a war going on out there and these diplomats were comparing notes over some long forgotten prophecy? She had had enough of listening to all of it.

"Stop!" Kat yelled. "Enough already!" She said. "I don't know about you, but my main concern is getting our jobs back. The major and mine. I don't care about this so called prophecy. There isn't anything there, you're all reading into something that isn't there." She tried to reason with the group but was finding her words were falling on deaf ears.

Major O'Brien was even caught up in the thick of it. If he could somehow stop the war, he would get his station back. It seemed rather cut and dry to him. Jack liked simple. He enjoyed with a plan came together and he was feeling that a plan was starting to come together. He didn't simply dismiss the commander's comments. She had some valid concerns, but they just weren't as important as putting an end to the war before it got so out of hand they could do nothing about it.

Grilka looked up from her book of prophecy and change. She had an idea, it was a risky idea, but it was an idea. "There are two Dubor scientists down on the Shuka surface. They have a settlement just outside Shuka City Limits in an obscure mountain range." Grilka explained. "I believe they can help us reach our goal. Their current mission is to prepare Shuka for conquer. I believe we can change their minds."

O'Brien gave it some thought. It was better than any plan they currently had on the table, which was nothing. If these two scientists could make a change to the future of the war effort, he wanted to learn more about it.

Kate threw her hands up in the air. "I'm out." She said exiting the major's quarters. It was getting late as is, she just wanted a good nights sleep. Was that too much to ask for? Kate wasn't sure, but she did know that if she got a good rest she would be better able to deal with whatever was going on in the morning.

O'Brien watched her go. There was nothing he could say to stop her, he wasn't her commanding officer anymore. She was a free spirit. Free to go and do as she pleased.

Turning his attention back to the group, O'Brien wondered if the scientists would really help a half human half Dubor hybrid. If Grilka's words were to be believed, and he was sure they were, then these two scientists should be able to help him get a jump start on stopping the war before it got out of hand. They seemed to be rather important as it was. The initial expedition down to the planet's surface. The Dubor government didn't just hand that assignment out to anyone.

"We must speak with these two scientists." O'Brien decided. "They might have the key to helping us end everything." He paused. They might help end the war between Dubor and Earth, but it wouldn't help getting Cain to give up the presidency. That would take another bit of doing. O'Brien would have to think that operation over more carefully, it was his home world after all.

"I think we should call it a night." O'Brien said. "It's getting late. We need to be on our A Game if we're going to pull this off. We'll meet at the docking port, say sixty-four at oh eight hundred tomorrow morning." He gestured to the door.

Obshi, Norev, and Grilka nodded as they stood from the couch. Obshi collected his scrolls as Grilka picked up her book. They would meet in the morning and head down to the planet's surface to see if they could convince these two Dubor scientists to work with them. O'Brien hoped it would go smoothly, he loved when a plan went smooth.

Watching the group leave his quarters, Jack felt good about what they were planning. Tonight he would sleep well. A little bit on the anxious side for sure, but he would sleep well. The doc had prescribed some sleep medication to help cure his insomnia. Tonight called for it.

Changing into his pajamas, O'Brien climbed into bed and proceeded to fall asleep. Tonight he would dream of getting his command back and ending a war. Nothing big. Just the typical dreams of an oppressed officer wanting to be useful.

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Jack's door chime dinged loudly. It wasn't the normal door chime, it was something much more hideous and annoying. The chime was ten times as loud as normal. It was used to rouse those officers who couldn't wake up on time and needed a kick in the ass to get a move on.

Jack bolted upright in bed. Wiping the sleep from his eyes, he looked at a bedside clock. It read 3:25 AM, Earth Standard Time of course. Station time, that calculated to roughly twenty-seven hundred hours. Basically midnight.

“What the frack!” Jack yelled. “Yes, what is it? This better be damn good!” He put on a robe and walked out into his living room. As he entered the living area, the lights came on full brightness. O’Brien about stumbled over a chair in the process. “Computer, dim the lights. Forty percent of normal.” The lights dimmed.

The door opened to reveal General Eve Tague standing there. She was still in uniform despite the time it was. Apparently she didn’t believe in getting into something comfortable for the evening. Unless that *was* her idea of letting her hair down.

Jack wondered about the general’s hair. Did she ever let it down? Did she ever allow herself not to be so serious all of the time? He wasn’t sure he wanted to find out. He was about to invite her in, but decided against it. As soon as you invite someone into your quarters they expect to be invited in every time after that. Rule number one of living on the station, don’t allow someone to feel comfortable in your quarters unless you know them well. Jack did not know General Tague well at all. No, she would stay outside.

The woman’s green eyes pierced Jack’s soul. That was not an easy task to do. Her exterior was cold, dark, mysterious. Jack bet she had ice cold blood running through her veins as well. Something told him she was cold blooded all the way through.

“General.” Jack finally said. “To what do I owe this annoyance?”

Eve Tague was carrying a small suitcase, she packed light. Or maybe there were more things to come. Jack didn’t know, he didn’t care at the moment. He wanted to know why she was at his quarters at this ungodly hour.

“These are the station commander’s quarters.” Eve said. “I am the station commander, thus these are now my quarters.” Her logic seemed right on the money. “My aide is looking to get Commander Monson’s quarters as we speak.”

“Monson to O’Brien!” Kate’s voice came over the intercom. “You won’t believe what this weasel is trying to do!”

Jack answered the call. “Oh I have an idea commander. I have a very clear idea. The general is trying to take over my space as well. I guess we’ll have to comply. There are ambassador quarters in Section G, forty-two Gamma. I’ll meet you there. O’Brien out.”

General Tague smiled at the compliance. “Thank you major.” She said. “For making this transition as smooth as possible. Now if you’ll excuse me, I would like to get ready for bed.” She set her bag down on the floor just inside the doorway.

Jack grabbed a fresh uniform for the morning and his toothbrush. He could do without the rest of his belongings for the night. In the morning he would send for a maintenance crew to gather the rest of his things and move them to his new quarters.

As Jack turned to leave his quarters, Eve called out to him. “Don’t get too used to those ambassador quarters major.” She said. “First off they’re for ambassador delegations, and second I have visitors coming in the morning. We will need the space. Have a good night.” She closed the door behind him. “I’ll have to remind myself to change those locks.” She said to herself.

Eve walked into the master bedroom and proceeded to change the sheets. She wasn’t about to sleep in the same sheets as another officer, especially one of Dubor genetics. They were filthy creatures, it was a wonder the fleet kept O’Brien in as long as they did and continued to allow him to serve as a major in the fleet. If she had her way, she would change that ASAP.

Changing into a silky nightgown, Eve jumped into bed and got comfortable. She quickly noticed the room was too warm for her liking. “Computer, lower temperature.” She said. The computer complied and the temperature lowered to a more agreeable degree. Finding the cold side of her pillow, she fell asleep within minutes.

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Across the station, Jack met Kate in front of the ambassador quarters. They had only managed to open one set of doors. The others were locked having been reserved for some ambassadorial delegation in the morning. The quarters were amazing, much larger than Jack and Kate’s quarters combined. No wonder they kept them for ambassadors, they wanted to impress anyone who came through the station and stayed in them. Jack smiled. They certainly did a good job of it.

Kate looked to the bedroom and then the couch. Being the low man on the totem pole, she knew where she should expect to sleep. Setting her things on the couch, she went into the bathroom to get changed for bed. Upon exiting the bathroom in her pajamas, Kate noticed Jack had taken the couch for himself. He neatly placed her belongings on the bed in the bedroom. Kate smiled at the gesture, it would not be forgotten.

“Goodnight major.” Kate whispered from the bedroom. She got comfortable and began to fall asleep.

“Madison to Commander Monson.” The dock worker’s voice came over the comm unit. “Sir, you can’t be serious of what’s going on.” She said. “Sir, if you’re there, please respond. We need to talk.”

News had traveled fast over the station. Kate figured they had at least a day before anyone noticed a change in command staff, but she had been wrong. Oh so wrong. Picking up

a pillow, Kate put it over her face and screamed. The pillow muffled the sound, but Jack could hear it coming from the next room. He sighed. Bad news traveled fast especially on a space station out in the middle of nowhere. Removing the pillow, Kate answered her comm unit.

“Madison.” Kate said. “I was going to tell you tomorrow. Yes both the major and I have been reassigned. Reassigned to what? We’re not quite sure yet. No, it’s looking pretty permanent right now. Come by and visit? Oh, um no I don’t think that’s a good idea. I’m not in my quarters. It’s a long story.”

Jack could only hear one half of the conversation. The other half sounded muffled, possibly the distance between the couch and the bedroom. He didn’t mind, he got the gist of it all rather quickly.

As the conversation died down and the comm channel closed between the two women, Jack got comfortable on the couch, well as comfortable as he could get considering the circumstances.

An hour later, security kicked Kate and Jack out of the ambassador suite. They cited station regulations indicating that no flag officer was allowed to use the ambassador suites for their sleeping quarters, not even for a night. Killpack felt bad about kicking the major and commander from their makeshift quarters, but he had his orders. He could only apologize so many times to them.

Jack was sure it was the general’s doing. Who else could it be? She really was a coldblooded human being. He was not liking her at all. He would have to request two new sets of quarters for them in the morning. That is, if morning ever were to come.

An hour after that, Major O’Brien had found another place to sleep. It wasn’t anything cozy or big, but it would do in a pinch. They found a bunk bed located in lower decks world. It had been many years since O’Brien had slept in a bunk bed. He opted for the top bunk while Kate took the bottom bunk. They were crammed in a large room full of other crewmen and ensigns. Those who didn’t have the seniority to pull off getting their own quarters.

Jack and Kate had managed to sneak into the sleeping quarters without being detected. The last thing they wanted to do was have a bunch of noncoms and ensigns worried they might say the wrong thing, or sleep the wrong way. Jack and Kate were just down on their luck, any sleeping arrangement would work for now.

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The next morning, Jack woke up early. Sneaking out of the shared communal sleeping area, Jack made his way to the docking port where he agreed to meet up with the others. He figured Kate could take care of herself for a little while. After all, she didn't seem too thrilled to join them on their mission.

Obshi, Norev, and Grilka waited for Jack at the docking port.

Grilka greeted Jack with a warm smile. "Your hair is messed up. I believe you call it bedhead." She smirked at the phrase. Such an odd phrase, she thought. Bedhead. It didn't make any sense to her, but it made sense to the humans and that is all which mattered.

Jack tried his best to comb his hair.

Security Chief Killpack approached the group. "Travel papers please?" He asked. "New regulation. It's a bummer I know, but well it's the rules. So please may I see your travel papers."

Having heard of the new regulation just put in place, the foursome produced the necessary documentation to leave the station and head down to the planet. Killpack went through them one by one, the ambassadors and delegates cleared without any problems. Then he reached Major O'Brien's travel orders. His scanner beeped at him in an angry tone. Killpack tried it again, and again the same error popped up.

"I'm sorry sir." Killpack said. "You're not authorized leave at this time. General's orders."

Jack folded his arms and chuckled. The bitch really was going to make his life a living hell. "I have the leave saved up lieutenant." He said. "This is her doing, I know it is." He was frustrated over what was happening.

Lieutenant Killpack frowned at the situation. He wasn't pleased with how the major was being treated. Even he felt the general was out of line, but he had his orders. There was nothing he could do. Jeff's hands were tied.

Jack paced back and forth for a moment. Stopping mid stride, he looked to the lieutenant. "What if I were a civilian." He said. "That would get me by all the red tape."

Lieutenant Killpack thought it over for a moment. "Yeah, sure it would sir. But how are you going to do that?"

"I resign my commission." Jack said. "As of this moment I am no longer a major in the United Earth Force Alliance. I quit." He froze. Did he really just quit on the spot just to be able to leave the station? Why yes, yes he did.

Lieutenant Killpack stammered. "I...sir...you what?"

Jack smiled. “You heard me mister. Now either accept my resignation or don’t. It’s your call. Either way, I am boarding that transport.” Placing his thumb on a fingerprint scanner, jack made it official. He was now a citizen free to move about as he pleased. If he wanted to go down and visit the Shuka planet, he could. If he wanted to open a new restaurant in the Main Gallery he could do that as well. He would need permits, but he could do it.

Jeff was flabbergasted. “Alright citizen.” He said. “You are free to disembark the station. May your journey be uneventful, yet pleasing.” He said handing Jack’s travel papers back to him.

As Jeff watched the foursome board Grilka’s shuttle, he scratched his head in confusion. He would have to call it in for sure. Jeff wasn’t sure how the general would accept the news. But he had to call it in.

“Lieutenant Killpack to General Tague, Major O’Brien just resigned.”

As Grilka’s shuttle launched from the space station at high speed, she went into synchronous orbit over Shuka. Grilka scanned the planet below looking for the Dubor settlement in the mountain range near the Shuka City. Upon finding the settlement, she plotted a course and watched as the planet grew bigger in the window.

The End