

Hidden Gems

118

by Kyle Eggleston

Kate Monson woke up in the midst of ensigns and noncoms. As she stumbled off the bottom bunk, she regained her focus and her surroundings. Oh how she missed her quarters that were now being occupied by some thug, a friend of the new station commander. That bitch. Kate thought, taking over the major's job and her job. She was not pleased with how things were or weren't working out.

Looking at the top bunk, Kate didn't see anyone up there. *Where did the major go?* She wondered. "Computer, locate Major Jack O'Brien." Kate ordered. If anyone knew where the major was the computer would locate him by his comm unit. Every officer, noncom, and dock worker wore one. It was the easiest way to keep tabs on the members of the crew.

"There is no record of Major Jack O'Brien being on the station." The computer replied.

Hmmm, Kate thought. That doesn't sound right. The major wouldn't just abandon his post, would he? She shook her head, no that was absurd. The major would never do anything of the sort. He lived for commanding the station. It was his dream, even if it was a secret. He would never abandon his post like this. He had to be somewhere on the station, all she had to do was find him.

An ensign standing in the doorway looked at Kate and smiled. "You seem to be lost in no man's land commander." He said. "Don't worry your secret is safe with me...whatever that secret is."

Kate smiled at the ensign. She remembered being young and stupid once. Only she didn't recall being that naive about life. He was a kid, kids had a lot of learning to do before they were capable of command level training and duties. Someday he would get there, but today was not that day.

"Ensign, have you seen Lieutenant Travis Copperfield?" Kate asked.

The ensign shrugged. "That kid? He's probably sleeping in, you know in his own quarters. Man gets a promotion and forgets about the rest of us. I get it, but I don't have to like it."

Kate nodded. Right, of course the lieutenant would be in his quarters. Where else would he be. She pretended not to have asked the question. Looking towards the co-ed

showers, Kate frowned. It had been a long time since she had to shower with other people. It was probably like riding a bike, she hoped. Undressing she grabbed a towel and entered the shower room.

Men and Women ensigns were showering together. Kate felt like she was being watched as she entered the facility. It wasn't true of course, but for a command level officer to be showering with lower decks? It was just a bit odd. Setting the water temperature, Kate began washing her hair. The water pressure wasn't the best, but it would do. She could hear ensigns talking about what they had going on that day. It was nothing glamorous, mostly typical duty shifts. Some ensigns complained about their shifts, others were excited. Kate didn't care either way, she just wanted to get clean and get out.

"Hey, aren't you in the wrong place?" A male ensign asked Kate point blank.

Kate laughed. Oh what he didn't know. "It was the only place available." She said not wanting to continue the conversation with the ensign that recognized her.

The ensign got the clue and minded his own business after that. Kate was grateful for that.

As she washed her body, Kate was reminded of her academy days. The academy also liked to shove a ton of cadets into one place for showering. It was nothing new. Command level officers received special treatment, they got their own showers with hot running water. Kate missed her quarters.

A half hour later, Kate put on a clean uniform and headed out to find Lieutenant Copperfield. The station directory stated that his quarters were in Sector R. That wouldn't be too difficult to find.

The transport tube only took her so far, the rest of the way was on foot. There were just some places the transport tube couldn't take you. Kate was up to the task. Counting the bulkheads, she finally ended up at the lieutenant's door. Pressing the call button, she waited.

A few minutes passed and the door finally opened. Travis was half dressed and had a sleepy look on his face. One look at the commander, he snapped to attention. Any sleeplessness that he had in him left instantly. "Sir." Travis said. "What brings you down here ma'am?"

Kate ignored the lieutenant's state of dress for the moment. She just wanted answers. "I was wondering if you've seen Major O'Brien." She said. "You're his aide, I figured you would have at least spoken to him today. The computer can't locate him. I fear he's injured and unable to answer his comm unit."

Lieutenant Copperfield scratched his head. "No, I haven't seen him. Since the general took command, I was dismissed of my duties. I've been sitting in my quarters ever since

waiting to find out what I'm meant to do next. I keep checking the duty roster, but there's nothing for me to do."

Kate folded her arms. "Understood. Well keep an eye out for him, if you see or hear from him let me know as soon as possible."

"Yes ma'am." Travis said. He walked away as the door to his quarters closed.

Kate looked around R Section. It wasn't the best quarters of the station, but it was something. Better than sleeping on a bunk in a room crowded with ensigns. She decided to check with security next.

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Jeff Killpack sat in his security office watching the monitors on the wall. They never showed anything new to him. Always the same feeds, well almost the same. Ever since Earth entered the war with the Dubor there were a bunch less of an alien presence on the station. Most aliens had gone to their home worlds for protection. A handful seemed to stick around. He figured they had nowhere else to go. Some of their own home worlds had been destroyed by other means, plagues and the like. Some by wars even. It was a shame for people to lose their home, the only place they knew to be safe. So, where do you go when you don't feel safe anymore on your own home soil? You go to where there's a bunch of other aliens in the same boat. Crimson Gamma was that safe haven.

Kate entered the security office. Jeff stood at attention. She waved him down. "Have a seat lieutenant." She said. "You don't answer to me anymore. You're good."

Jeff shrugged. "You're still a command officer." He said. "You outrank me, there's no reason to stop just because some jerk took your position." Jeff frowned. He wanted things to return to normal, it just wasn't the same. He wasn't thinking about just the new security concerns and procedures, they were annoying yes but there was so much more to it.

"The reason I dropped by." Kate said. "Major O'Brien is missing. I need you to send out your security teams to search for him. He may be injured or his comm unit may be malfunctioning."

Jeff smiled. "No need commander. I know exactly where he is."

Kate had a look of relief on her face and confusion. "What? Where's the major?"

"This isn't easy to say." Killpack said. "He resigned his commission. There were station regulations that prevented him from leaving. So he resigned, became an ordinary citizen and left."

“Where did he go?” Kate asked.

“Down to the planet. He was accompanied by Obshi, Grilka, and Norev.” Jeff added. “They left late last night. I can’t tell you more than that, I’m sorry ma’am.”

Kate couldn’t believe the major just gave up his commission. He worked hard for that commission. To just throw it away based on a hunch that he could be the one to save two people’s was ridiculous, at least to Kate it was nuts.

Kate ran out of the security office. Jeff called out after her. “Where are you running off to?!”

“To find him!” Kate yelled back.

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Down on the planet’s surface, Coff and Toff were hard at work planting a garden in their settlement. If things kept up, they would be done by the end of the year. Just before the frost hit. Now frost on most worlds wasn’t good for gardens, but the Shuka environment made it a bit unique. They could plant year round and harvest year round as well. Their garden would be legendary among their people. It had to be or they wouldn’t see the light of day after that.

Coff looked up to the sky as a ship crossed the sound barrier. It made a sonic boom overhead. “Sky Divers,” She said “They’re coming.”

Toff stepped out of the settlement building and looked to the sky confirming Coff’s analysis. “Coff, what is it?” He asked.

“Sky Divers.” She pointed to the ship coming down from space. “They are going to land soon. I do not know where exactly, but they are coming.”

Toff continued to stare into the morning sky. It wasn’t a ship he recognized, but it was Dubor in origin. They weren’t expecting any of their people for a few years. It was too soon for ground troops to be landing, it was a mystery for sure. Toff smiled at the thought, he could use another friend down on the surface. Coff was great, but she just wasn’t one of the guys. Toff hoped someone with a little more excitement would be joining them.

He watched as the shuttle landed a few clicks from their settlement. He called out to Coff to let her know. “Coff! We have visitors! They’ve landed!” Toff shouted.

Coff raised her hand to acknowledge that she heard what Toff had communicated to her. She was busy cultivating some soil for more crops to plant. As she shifted the dirt around

with the enhanced nutrients, Coff wondered if it would really make a difference. She hoped it would but couldn't tell until she actually planted the first crop. Coff planned on planting a certain root called a Planketh Root. It was considered a delicacy among her people.

O'Brien was the first to step from the shuttle. He couldn't remember the last time he set foot on the Shuka surface. In fact he didn't think he had *ever* set foot on the planet's surface before today. For the most part whenever a dignitary wanted to speak of O'Brien they came up to visit the station, it was never the other way around.

The rest of the group exited the shuttle and took a look around. Grilka made a comment about how dry the atmosphere seemed to be. No wonder why her people wanted to conquer the planet, it fit perfectly in with their requirements. That and the Dubor felt they were entitled to every planet in the Comeki Star System. The Dubor claimed sovereign rights to every planet within the range of their home world.

Obshi and Norev breathed in the fresh air. It felt good to be back home. They figured they ought to pay a visit to the Religious Government to at least fill them in on what had been uncovered. But Norev was hesitant on doing that. The Religious Government didn't really hold the sacred scrolls that sacred anymore. They picked and chose what they wanted to believe in, not all of it as intended. Obshi couldn't understand how his people could become so confused in such a short amount of time.

"This way." Grilka said reading the output of a location scanner. "We will find their settlement this way." She began walking towards a tall set of mountains. The group followed her lead.

An hour later they reached what appeared to be a Dubor settlement. O'Brien walked towards the front door to an established dwelling. Knocking on the door, it made a loud clanking noise that echoed inside the dwelling.

As Toff opened the door and saw O'Brien standing there, he dropped a data pad that was in his hands. "Coff! Come quickly!" He said to his mate. Picking up his data pad, he placed it on a nearby table.

Coff joined them at the door, her mouth gaping open. "It's you." She said, confused. "But it can't be you...you're long dead and gone."

Jack was quite confused by her comments. As far as he knew, he was quite alive and well. "Excuse me?" He asked.

Coff took a step back. "You are Dorf." She said. "Please come in, I will try to explain what we know to the best of my ability."

Upon seeing Obshi and Norev, Coff spoke angrily. "You two should not be here." She said. "You do not belong here."

Toff put a hand on Coff's shoulder. "It is okay Coff." He said. "Now that the Dorf is here, everything will be explained and understood. They are here for a reason, perhaps friends of Dorf, perhaps enemies like they are to us. I do not know. It is alright. Let them enter."

Grilka looked at Toff and Coff and smiled. It was good to see people of her own kind once again. Ones who didn't have a gun pointed at her head, or the station she lived on. Yes, it was a good thing to be happening.

Toff repeated his greeting. "Please, come in and sit down. There is much to discuss."

The four travelers entered the small dwelling as invited and sat down on wooden chairs constructed from the trees in the mountains.

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Kate Monson stood at the entrance to docking port eleven. She had been fighting with the dock worker over the past twenty minutes over why she wasn't allowed to leave the station. She was surprised to see a dock worker telling her she couldn't go, usually it was up to security that performed that task.

General Tague approached the arguing officers. "Perhaps I can shed some light on the topic." Eve said.

Kate could feel her blood boil. Needless to say she was not a fan of the new commander of the station. Jack deserved his post, that was all there was to it. Turning to face the general, Kate attempted her best try at a genuine smile. It was rather difficult but she managed to pull it off.

"General." Kate said. "Didn't see you standing there."

Tague returned the smile briefly. "I have standing orders not to allow you to leave the station." She said. "Mister O'Brien already found a loophole, don't you dare try that same loophole, it won't work twice." She gripped her hands into fists. Eve wanted to punch a bulkhead and go to her office. But that wouldn't be quite possible, not yet at least.

Kate frowned. "I see, and you allowed a dock worker to prevent me from leaving, is that it?" She eyed the swagger stick General Tague was carrying. Oh, so she was one of *those* commanders. Kate rolled her eyes and then stopped herself.

Tague shook her head. "No, that was Miss Park's doing." She said. "Security was too busy to send anyone down to man the docking ports. I prefer security to do the job instead of dock workers as the dock workers are usually busy fixing things around the station." Tague explained. But she didn't need to explain it to Kate, Kate knew the job quite well.

Kate's eyes rolled back into her head. Madison. She was sure Madison didn't do it voluntarily, there had to be some push by the general to get her way. Kate hated manipulative control freaks, and Eve Tague seemed to be the cream of the crop.

"I figured when I was released from my post, I was free to do what I wanted with my free time." Kate said. It was true she hadn't been given new marching orders especially after being kicked out of her own quarters.

General Tague clicked her tongue. "That was your first mistake." She said. "You were simply reassigned. True you no longer hold the post you once did, you are no longer the first officer of this station, but your talents are needed elsewhere." She pulled out a small data pad and handed it to Kate. "Report to the Franklin tomorrow morning at oh eight hundred, you are to assist the dock workers in repairing her." Tague turned around and left the docking port. Being in command was something different she was finding out.

Kate looked at the docking port and the dock worker who refused her leave. She knew it wasn't the kid's fault. He was just following orders. Orders she didn't happen to agree with, but orders still. Turning around, she headed to the Main Gallery, something to eat sounded good. That and a stiff drink.

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Toff pulled out a holographic generator and held it before him. Pressing a button he activated it. The image of the human who had lived on Dubor appeared. This was the same human who was O'Brien's ancestor.

O'Brien stared at the moving image. The sound was turned off, but the man was speaking. O'Brien remembered the things the recordings Norev uncovered had said about how the Dubor couldn't be trusted, that war was a waste of time for both sides. Things of that nature.

"We extrapolated this image from the DNA of a soldier found nearby. He was protecting a stone box full of some interesting artifacts." Toff said. Holding up the sword, Toff gestured to it. "Things like this. There was a flight recorder, but it was damaged over time. Unfortunately we don't know what he sounds like."

O'Brien decided not to disclose what he knew about the human who had fought for the Dubor. His information might not be accepted very easily. He would have to be careful of what information he did choose to disclose. After all, these two scientists were the current enemy even if O'Brien was half Dubor himself.

“You are one of us.” Coff said finally. “We understand how you came to be. Your ancestor married one of ours and took her to Earth after she gave birth to a baby boy.” Coff said. “It was the only logical thing to do, and now you have come back to us. Just like the prophecy has said.” Walking over to a shelf, Coff pulled a book off of it and returned to the group. Flipping through the pages, she found the exact page she was looking for. “Here is the prophecy. You are our deliverer. We no longer have to take over this world.”

Toff cleared his throat. “Don’t be so hasty Coff. We haven’t been given different orders from the council. We still have a job here to do, and will do that job until we are told otherwise.”

O’Brien got the feeling that Toff was more by the book than Coff was. He would be a tougher book to sell than she would be, especially when it came to the war that loomed over head of them all.

“You accept he is special.” Grilka said. “That he has a purpose for our people. The prophecy must be fulfilled, there is no other way for any of this to work out.”

Toff nodded his head. “Of course I do.” He stood up from his stool and walked around the group in circles. “But I have my orders from the Holy Order itself. There can be no other acceptable course of action right now. Maybe in the future, we can present O’Brien to the ruling council, but not now. It is too soon.”

Coff looked to Toff with shock. “Toff!” She exclaimed. “You agreed the prophecy was to be followed. If we continue this war, the prophecy cannot come to pass. You know this to be true.”

Toff shook his head. “Tsk Tsk Coff.” He said. “Until the ruling council states otherwise, we will secure this world for the Dubor. I do not care about the prophecy at this time. These people shouldn’t even be here. It was a mistake for me to invite them in.” He looked to the rest of the group. “You must leave, now.”

Coff tried to counter the command, but found it difficult to do so. Toff was in command of the project, she was his aide. Work came before their relationship. It was the Dubor way.

As the others stood from their stools, O’Brien couldn’t help but be confused. Toff had been so welcoming at the start of it all. But things seemed to change after they had met. Something wasn’t right, and O’Brien couldn’t find a way to figure it out; to have it make sense in his head. It was like a switch went off in Toff’s head mid visit. O’Brien wanted to investigate further, but it was clear they were no longer welcome.

Heading back to their shuttle, they lifted off from the planet’s surface and headed back to Crimson Gamma. O’Brien wondered what their next course of action would be. He had resigned from his post, there was nothing left for him to do on the station at this juncture.

Jack frowned at that thought. What on earth was he going to do. He was sure General Tague would want to have a word with him in one form or another. In his eyes it could go one of two ways. Either she would welcome his resignation, or she would call him a coward and force him back into the service. Jack wasn't looking forward to speaking with her, but she was sure to track him down.

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Back on the station, O'Brien and his companions exited the docking port. Their mission a failure, they would have to find another way to make the prophecy come true. O'Brien was a firm believer that if you wanted something to come true, you had to make time for it. You had to actually make it work out for the best. It had worked for him so far and he wasn't about to let that thought process go.

As O'Brien walked towards the Main Gallery, he was met by Security Chief Jeff Killpack. Killpack looked like he was having a bad day. O'Brien had a sinking feeling he knew what the chief wanted.

"She wants to see me?" O'Brien asked.

Killpack nodded. "Yeah, she wants to see you."

O'Brien nodded. Right. "Is she in C&C or the office?" The office O'Brien mused. It had been his office just a mere twenty-four hours ago. Either way he was not looking forward to meeting with the new station commander.

Killpack frowned. "Your office. Uh, her office." He corrected himself.

O'Brien nodded. "Right." he said. Looking to his group, he smiled. "Sit tight, this shouldn't take very long."

Walking towards a transport tube, O'Brien found one that would take him to the station commander's office. The lift ride felt slower than usual. He had time to think about what he was going to say to the general. It felt like he was being sent to the principals office back in grade school. O'Brien took in a deep breath. He had to breathe, there was nothing else he could do.

Upon reaching the office, O'Brien walked in briskly. He was surprised to see Kate Monson sitting on a couch in the corner. She looked plastered which was so out of character for her. Kate was a by the book officer, if it wasn't in the book she didn't do anything with it. But to see her drunk? Oh this was a new level O'Brien had never seen before. He hoped it wouldn't be a lasting change in her attitude.

General Eve Tague sat behind Jack's desk. She had her legs on the desk resting comfortably. Her swagger stick was in her lap. Upon seeing O'Brien enter, she expected him to stand at attention which he did not. Eve frowned at the memory that he had resigned his commission earlier that day just to take a jaunt in a shuttle down to the world below.

"Jack." Eve said. "I understand you went down to the surface. How did that go for you?"

O'Brien placed his hands in his pockets. "Oh it was uneventful." He lied. "Couldn't find what we were looking for. A shame really." He walked around the office, she didn't have time to change anything. Everything was exactly as it should be. He smiled at the thought. If the plan he had cooking in his brain worked out, she wouldn't have time to change a thing in that office and it would be his again.

"I see." Tague responded. "I looked over your resignation and I decline your request. That's what it was after all, a request to resign. You can't just resign during wartime Jack." She said.

"If you want my opinion." Kate spoke up slurring her words. "I think you're both nuts. Look at you playing military when there's a fracking war going on. You need to find a way to make peace with these aliens before they kick our ass!" A moment later she passed out on the couch unable to answer any questions.

O'Brien frowned at his friend passed out. But there was nothing he could do about it. Taking his hands out of his pockets, he stood at attention. "Yes sir." he said referring back to their conversation about him not being able to resign his commission. "What is my assignment general?"

Taking her legs off the desk, the general stood from her chair. "What assignment indeed." She said. "I already assigned your friend to see over the repairs on the Franklin. I'm not sure she remembers those orders, so I'll have to remind her when she sobers up."

Kate began to snore loudly. Tague and O'Brien tried to ignore her as much as possible.

"As for your next assignment." She said. "I am giving you command of the Star Ship Fresno. You are to set a course for Crimson Delta and make sure things are okay there. We've lost contact with them recently. I want to make sure that outpost is okay in case we need to evacuate to it."

O'Brien thought about it for a moment. A ship. He could do worse. Then the general's other comment caught up with him. Evacuate Crimson Gamma? Was she mad? She must be mad if she thought they could ever evacuate Crimson Gamma. It was one of the furthest space stations out there on the edge of the frontier.

"And if we're attacked?" O'Brien asked.

“Rules of engagement are as follows.” General Tague said. “Do not fire unless fired upon. Then fight like hell and be sure you win that fight.” She smiled at the thought. “I envy you going into battle captain.”

O’Brien raised his eyebrows. “It’s major.” He corrected her.

Tague shook her head. “Oh that, yes one more thing. I’m demoting you back to captain. That little stunt you pulled earlier today shows you have no respect for the chain of command. My chain of command. Maybe being a captain will remind you of that.”

O’Brien nodded in acceptance. He might be a captain, but he was still in command of something. Sure it wasn’t a space station, but it was something. “Permission to report to my new post?” O’Brien asked.

Tague waved her hand. “Of course.” She pointed to Kate who was still passed out on the couch. “Take her with you, you’ll need a first officer. Good luck.” Tague turned her back on the captain as the conversation was over.

Captain O’Brien went over to Kate and picked her up. Swinging her over his shoulder, O’Brien walked out of the general’s office. He was going to have to make a stop at Med Bay, Doctor Allen would be able to fix Kate up in no time. Matt had a special recipe for hangovers that O’Brien preferred. It always worked like a charm. At least his first officer was still his first officer.

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Down in Med Bay, Matt Allen was still tagging bodies from the Franklin. It seemed like an endless process that was also thankless. But someone had to do it. Looking up from his task at hand, he saw an odd sight. O’Brien was carrying in Kate over his shoulder. Matt stood from his desk and greeted them.

“Major.” Matt said, then did a double take. “Captain?”

O’Brien nodded. “Captain is correct doctor. I’ve been demoted, thanks to the general sitting in my fracking office.” He gestured to Kate. “Can you do something for her? Seems she had a bad day.”

Allen nodded. “Yeah of course, I’ll give her some kick me up juice. Should take care of her hangover in no time, and sober her up.” He got to work on fixing the recipe that would help the commander out.

“Thanks” Captain O’Brien said. “She’ll owe you one. Hell, I’ll owe you one.”

“So,” Doctor Allen said. “If you don’t mind my asking. Why did she bust you down to captain?” He carefully poured one ingredient into another one and watched as the colors changed. Perfect, he was doing it right.

O’Brien shrugged. “She wasn’t happy with something I did. I think she just hates my guts and has a chip on her shoulder the size of the Pacific Ocean.” He grunted in disagreement. Jack had every right to go down to the planet, he did nothing wrong. “Say will you take care of her? Let me know when she recovers, there’s something I need to take care of.”

Doctor Allen gave a thumbs up. “You know I will.”

Walking out of Med Bay, Jack headed towards the ambassador quarters. He had to inform Grilka of what had transpired. She could tell the other ambassadors from there.

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Moments later, Jack stood in front of Grilka telling her the news. She was not taking it easily.

“But the prophecy!” Grilka exclaimed. “You cannot just leave for another assignment, no matter your new rank *captain*.” She was angry and had every right to be. “You are the key to ending this war, you cannot step away from that.”

Jack tried to explain that he had his orders. There was nothing he could do about it, he goes where he’s sent; all of that. Grilka was having none of it. “My people, our people, have attacked another base in orbit of the Moon. They destroyed it. Hundreds of humans are dead. Are you just going to walk away from that?”

O’Brien sighed. “No, of course I’m not going to just walk away from that carnage. But I have my marching orders Grilka. I will keep trying to find a way to make this prophecy come true, but for now I have to report to Crimson Delta onboard the Fresno.”

“Then I’m going with you.” Grilka folded her arms across her chest. “Someone needs to keep an eye on you, it best be me.”

Jack shook his head. “No, you can’t. You are needed here for negotiations between the Shuka and Dubor people. You need to prevent a war happening between your two peoples. Earth is spread thin at the moment, we can’t fight a foe on two fronts.”

“I thought your government forbade you from helping the Shuka people in the event of a Dubor attack.” Grilka countered.

O'Brien shook his head. "They've changed their mind. They understand that defending Shuka will go a long way in further establishing peace between our two peoples." It made sense on paper, but was it practical? Jack didn't have a clue.

"Anyways," Jack continued. "I just wanted to tell you I was leaving and I will miss you."

Grilka grabbed Jack by his uniform and kissed him. Jack felt weak in the knees. He had been wanting to kiss Grilka for a while now, and now that it was happening it was pure bliss. As their lips parted, Jack was speechless. Once he regained his composure, he simply said "Wow!"

Grilka smiled at his reaction. "If you thought that was something, wait till you experience more." She teased. "Of course you'll have to wait, you'll be on patrol over Crimson Delta after all. Good luck captain." Grilka took a step backwards. "Dorf." She added.

O'Brien grinned from ear to ear. He anticipated seeing her again after his duty assignment was over or he had leave coming, whichever came first. Jack turned to leave Grilka's quarters.

"Dorf." Grilka called after Jack. He turned around to see what she wanted. "I love you."

Jack smiled. "I know." He turned and walked out the door.

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Three hours later, Captain O'Brian stood on the bridge of his ship, the U.S.S. Fresno. The bridge was smaller than C&C and more compact, but he would get used to it. It wasn't his first time serving aboard a heavy cruiser. Sitting in his command chair, O'Brien took a moment to get used to it. It just didn't feel right. He was sure it would grow on him.

"Status report." O'Brien ordered.

Commander Kate Monson stood at his side. "All readings normal, sir. We are ready to go to sub light at your command. C&C has cleared us and detached the docking latches. The crew stands ready."

O'Brien nodded. He liked it when his ship was a well oiled machine. "Very well, helm clear all moorings. Clear us for departure."

The helm officer, a young ensign nodded at the order. "Aye sir." She said. "Moorings cleared, we are go for departure."

"Set course for Crimson Delta." O'Brien ordered, "And engage the sub lite engines."

The ensign nodded again. "Sub light engines engaged."

As the Fresno entered sub light, Jack couldn't help but feel like he had lost somehow. Sure he was in command of a star ship again, but it wasn't his best destiny. He was meant to be in command of a space station, particularly Crimson Gamma.

Kate watched her commanding officer. She knew the thoughts going through his head because they were the same thoughts she had going through her head. They didn't belong there. But they were members of the United Earth Force Alliance and had a duty to perform. No matter what that duty was, they would perform it without hesitation. There would be other commands up for grabs, Jack would get it all back, it would just take time.

Perhaps this was a hidden gem, she thought. A blessing in disguise, she wasn't sure which it was but it felt okay for the most part. That okay feeling would have to do. As Kate watched the stars move slowly on the main viewer, she wondered when the Dubor would attack next. It had been over a week since their last attack on Crimson Gamma. If Crimson Delta was anything like Gamma, they were for sure in for an attack. It was only a matter of time.

The End