

The Heart

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by Kyle Eggleston

Captain Jack O'Brien watched as the stars whooshed by outside his window. Traveling at FTL speeds always amazed him. To think they could travel to Earth from Crimson Gamma in a week was astounding. He was glad they didn't have to travel by shuttle, that would have taken months to accomplish. The Fresno was two days into the week long journey back to Earth. O'Brien had just a few days to decide how he would order President Cain to step down from office.

Jack wondered what he would say exactly to the president to get him to leave Earth alone for good. Last time he had a warship to fight against, but managed to take out the president's guards with the help of one of his officers. That officer no longer served under O'Brien, he had requested a transfer to be posted to Crimson Gamma, but that never took place. O'Brien hadn't bothered to follow up on why Kate was assigned instead, but he supposed it really didn't matter. Posting assignments were always changing. You go where you're sent, and all of that. It's just how life in the military worked.

The door chime to Jack's quarters beeped twice. Jack looked to the door to his quarters and sighed. Being a captain meant never ending interruptions. "Yes, what is it? Come in. Come in." He beckoned to whoever was there to disturb him.

Kate entered Jack's quarters. "Sorry to bother you sir." She said.

"No bother at all." Jack lied. "Please, come in. Sit down."

Kate sat down on an empty chair that stood in the corner of the room. "I was just getting off my shift, and thought I'd drop by to see how you are doing sir." Kate said explaining her arrival at his quarters.

How he was doing, O'Brien smirked. It hadn't been that long since his scare with his heart. His Dubor heart at that. Jack hoped he would be able to simply feel better and continue on with his duty assignment. That was all he wanted.

"I'm fine Kate, honest." Jack said. "I appreciate the concern. My heart's felt better, stronger even since my heart attack. I'm good for this assignment, I swear."

Kate shook her head. "I'm not worried about the assignment sir." She said. "I'm worried about you." Her words sank deep into O'Brien's soul.

He knew Kate cared about his well being, but didn't know how deep that caring went. They had been enemies during the Civil War. He always thought there was another reason for her being assigned to Crimson Gamma, like she was keeping tabs on him or something. There was always something that just felt off with her. He couldn't put his finger on it and probably wouldn't ever figure it out. That was something he would have to live with.

"How's the delegate settling in?" O'Brien asked changing the subject.

Kate nodded, she got the message. "Grilka is doing fine sir. She's anxious about this mission, as are we all. But we'll get through it one way or another. We always manage to do so."

Jack looked back out the window. The stars looked like tiny rainbows coming from a water sprinkling system. "I won't lie, civilians shouldn't be with us on this mission. But she insisted that she come with us." He paused. Grilka really hadn't given him any choice in the matter. He wondered if it would change her status on the station any. But that didn't matter right now, right now he had to get Cain out of office. "If I've learned anything from her it's this, don't ever argue with your mate." He chuckled at the thought. Grilka and he got along just fine, but he could tell when she wasn't about to take no for an answer.

Kate swiveled in her chair for a moment. If the chair wasn't meant to be swiveled in, it shouldn't have had the ability to swivel. It made sense to her, she could tell it was getting on O'Brien's nerves even though he wasn't saying anything about it. Kate stopped moving and Jack relaxed a bit. She smiled at the thought. Jack had certain tells about him especially when he was being annoyed by something as simple as swiveling in a chair.

"Sorry." Kate said sheepishly.

O'Brien ignored the comment. He was just glad she had stopped moving in the damned chair. "How's the crew holding up with news of our assignment? I know some were loyal officers to President Cain during the Civil War." He said. "I expect it to be difficult to force the resignation of a man they once believed in."

Kate thought about it for a moment and then finally nodded her head. She too had been a supporter of President Cain when he was in office. Some people, like O'Brien, had thought he was on the losing side of the war. When Cain was forced out of office, he showed his true colors. That was all the confirmation Kate needed to know that she was on the losing side of the war. Something she wished never to repeat.

"Well," Kate said. "I would be lying if I said everything was going smoothly. Tensions are running high on the ship. Killpack had to break up a fight in the mess hall during lunch. Some hot headed lieutenant kept boasting about how President Cain was doing the best for the war effort and that he needed to be kept in office. There were some other officers that felt otherwise. The fight didn't last long, as Killpack was in there too eating lunch." She smiled.

There was usually a silver lining to things of that nature. You just had to look for it was all. Kate had found that out the hard way. But wasn't that how most life lessons went? You live and experience something just for it to make you fall flat on your face so you have to learn it all over again? Yeah, it was something along those lines.

O'Brien hadn't heard about the fight in the mess hall. It was probably in some report sent to him that he had neglected to look at yet. Jack had so many reports cross his desk over the past seventy-two hours that he didn't know what to do with all of them. Most of the reports could be filed in the round filing cabinet, also known as the trash. They just weren't that important to him to take a vested interest in. "I see." O'Brien said acknowledging Kate's findings.

Standing up from the couch he had been sitting on, Jack paced back and forth through the room. His quarters aboard the Fresno were a fraction of the size of the quarters on Crimson Gamma. Jack wanted to get this mission over with, then maybe he could talk to the admirals in charge and get his command of Crimson Gamma back. At least that's what he was hoping for. Jack hoped it wasn't a foolish thing to look forward to. He felt that might be the case though.

As though reading his mind, Kate spoke up. "You might not get your command back captain." She said. The truth hurt. Her words hurt as they cut to the core. "You have to be at least the rank of major to run a station like Crimson Gamma." She continued. "I don't see them making you a major again anytime soon. Not with you being part Dubor. In many of the admiral's eyes, you are the enemy." She folded her arms across her chest as she spoke. Kate wasn't trying to be rude, she was only stating facts.

O'Brien stopped pacing as he looked at his first officer. She was right, in many aspects he *was* the enemy in most people's eyes. Jack could have the most pristine clean record and people would still not trust him because he was Dubor; even if he was only *part* Dubor, that part was still considered the enemy. He couldn't help who his ancestor married and decided to have children with. In his eyes, who his ancestor was and what his blood contained shouldn't be a factor in where he served in the fleet. It just shouldn't matter. But there were those admirals who believed and thought otherwise.

"I understand what you're saying commander..." Jack began to say.

Without warning, the ship rocked and shook out from under them. Jack fell to the deck as Kate held onto the chair she was seated in.

"What the hell?!" Kate yelled.

Jack stood up as the ship was hit again by unknown weapons fire. Steadying himself against his desk, he called the bridge. "O'Brien to bridge, what the hell?"

The lieutenant at tactical responded. "Sir, the lieutenant commander's dead. I was able to raise our shields before that second blast. I'm detecting two Earth heavy cruisers bearing down on us."

O'Brien shook his head as he regained his senses. "I'm on my way." This day was not turning out the way he wanted it to. "Bring the main battery online, launch the Atlantic Fighters." O'Brien ordered.

Looking to Kate O'Brien nodded. "Let's go." They left his quarters in a hurry to get to the bridge.

On the way to the bridge, O'Brien and Monson had to take an indirect route as main transport tubes were down all over the ship. They had to take corridors that would take them close to the heart of the ship, the engine room. Then their route would zigzag to a different area of the ship. Five minutes of this and they finally reached the bridge as the Fresno took another hit.

"Keep firing." The tactical officer said, he stood from the captain's chair as O'Brien and Monson entered the bridge.

"Report!" O'Brien said.

"The Aphrodite and the Venus have their weapons trained on us. They're attacking us sir." The tactical officer said as he retook his post. "I've ordered the Atlantic Fighters to swarm the ships, but they seem to be having difficulty drawing fire from the ships. They keep firing at us."

O'Brien nodded. "Understood. Open a channel."

"You're on sir." Tactical said.

"This is Captain Jack O'Brien of the U.S.S. Fresno. State your reasons for firing upon us. If you refuse to answer I will be forced to return fire. I won't be as easy on you as you've been on us." It was true, the ships could have taken out the main bridge without warning. A continuous barrage of weapons fire would be enough to take down the shields of that section and destroy the bridge. They hadn't gone that far, yet.

A moment later the face of a man O'Brien knew quite well appeared on the screen. "This is Commander William Carter of the Aphrodite. I am ordering you to surrender your vessel. You're right, we've taken it easy on you captain. But we won't stay that way for long. Surrender your ship."

Carter. O'Brien thought. *What the hell are you fighting against me for?* "Will, what the hell? I thought we were on the same side. Why attack us?"

Carter frowned. "Captain, it would seem you and I don't agree politically anymore. Are you going to surrender your vessel or not?"

O'Brien stood his ground. "Let me speak to your commanding officer, *commander*." He said. "I want to speak to someone in charge."

"Our captain's dead." Carter explained. "When you returned fire, it hit a console he was standing next to. The console exploded. I am in command. You can deal with me."

O'Brien shook his head. Those blasted consoles were nothing but trouble. One would think they would come up with a console that *didn't* explode when all hell broke loose. Jack had lost track of how many officers he had lost due to exploding consoles. "I'm sorry to hear that, Captain Benson was a good man. But you gave us no choice, we had to defend ourselves."

Carter nodded. "I know captain. Are you going to surrender or not?"

"Sir, the Venus is leaving the fight and making the jump to FTL." The tactical officer said.

"Understood." O'Brien said. "Keep a target lock on the Aphrodite's weapons systems. Prepare to fire on my command."

"Aye sir."

The Aphrodite was roughly half a mile longer than the Fresno and had superior fire power. If Carter wanted to, he could have easily destroyed the Fresno. All they had to do was take out their main shield generator, the rest would be easy. But something was stopping Carter from making that call. Perhaps that was an opening O'Brien could use to his advantage. Carter still considered O'Brien a friend of sorts, he hoped.

"Commander, we can get through this without bloodshed and without me surrendering my ship. I have my orders and a mission to complete." O'Brien said. "From the looks of things, it's just the two of us head to head. The Venus bugged out."

Carter looked frustrated at the mention of the Venus leaving the fight. He would have words with their commanding officer at a later time. "Captain, I cannot allow you to reach Earth. I know you're set to remove President Cain from office. I can't allow that to happen." He said. "The president deserves more credit for what he's doing on the war front."

Another missile hit the Fresno knocking O'Brien out of his command chair. The missile was stronger than anything the Aphrodite had fired at her so far. "Damage report!"

An ensign flew her fingers across the console in front of her. "Shields down to sixty-three percent sir. We have hull breaches on decks six through twelve. Main docking bay is badly damaged as well."

O'Brien watched the main viewer as the Aphrodite was hit with weapons fire as well. Someone was attacking them both. *Maybe I can use this to my advantage.* O'Brien thought. "O'Brien to Carter, please come in commander. We seem to have a common foe."

The Aphrodite was too busy returning fire to respond to O'Brien's hail. O'Brien ordered a full spread of missiles and to fire the ship's main battery at the incoming enemy target. The Fresno unleashed its full arsenal of weaponry against the ship. The enemy ship just kept firing at both the Fresno and the Aphrodite making dents where possible.

O'Brien didn't recognize the enemy ship's configuration. But it did look similar to a Dubor warship. Similar to those who made attack runs at Earth a while back. He didn't like the looks of things. It was draining their shields, now down to forty-seven percent.

"Can we make a run for it?" O'Brien asked.

Kate looked at her monitor for a moment. "Possibly. Helm, set a course two five seven mark six and engage the FTL drive." She ordered.

"Two five seven mark six, aye." The helm officer replied in confirmation.

As the Fresno entered FTL, O'Brien only hoped the Aphrodite followed and entered FTL as well. The last thing he needed was a dead crew on his conscience. O'Brien had served with many of the Aphrodite's crew, he knew them well and hoped they would escape destruction.

"No sign of pursuit." The helm officer noted.

"Good." O'Brien said. "Casualty report." He was afraid to ask, but needed to know.

Kate checked her instruments as the casualty list came in. "Sixteen dead, five crewmen unaccounted for. Several micro fractures in the hull ranging decks six to twelve. Damage repair teams are on it." She paused as she reached the end of the report. "That's it. That's all there is sir. It could have been worse."

O'Brien nodded. Yeah, it could have been much worse. Sixteen dead though. He wondered how many were dead on the Aphrodite. He was certain he wouldn't be finding that out anytime soon. The Aphrodite had sided against them in battle. They were clearly in Cain's pocket. The Venus seemed to be a bit of a wild card though. She fought initially but then backed off and retreated.

"Continue on coarse for the Sol System." O'Brien ordered. "Drop us out of FTL behind Earth's Moon. We could use some time to finish repairs before heading into another battle." He was sure there would be more ships to face in orbit of Earth. The president wasn't stupid, he wouldn't make the same mistake twice.

Standing from his command chair, O'Brien looked to Kate. "You have the bridge." He exited the bridge entering a transport tube. "Main engineering." O'Brien ordered. The tube began to move towards its requested destination.

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Madison Park was busy piecing together life support. It had taken a hell of a beating since the attacks. The Fresno was running on emergency life support at the moment. She was lucky that's all that really needed fixing. The shields held covering the engine core from any major damage. The ship did well in battle, it was something to be proud of.

O'Brien entered engineering to see cables running every which way. Madison sat in the middle of them testing connections, reconfiguring them, and testing them a second time. She swore after each failed attempt.

"Ms. Park." O'Brien said as he approached her. "How are things down here? Do you need any help?"

Madison didn't look up from her work. "Dammit! Another failed connection." She paused as she looked up to see the captain hovering over her. "Oh captain, um no I don't need help. There isn't enough time to bring someone up to speed. I can manage. If I don't we won't have any breathable air." She made another connection, this one passed inspection. "See? Already halfway there, only twenty more relays to check and configure. If you'll excuse me." She stood and walked to the far end of the room to check another batch of cables.

Jack nodded "Alright, keep me posted." He said as he exited engineering.

"You bet sir." Madison called after him.

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"Med Log, Doctor Allen reporting." Matt Allen began his medical log for the day. "We have multiple casualties after our latest battle with a Dubor warship. Sixteen people are dead, several are severely wounded, and I have a minor mystery on my hands. End Log."

O'Brien entered Med Bay to see Allen hovering over an alien, a Dubor alien. The alien was hooked up to life support and several other machines that were keeping him alive. Matt looked up to see the captain checking in on him. He waved him into the surgical bay. "Captain, didn't expect to see you down here. It'll prevent me from calling you later."

O'Brien shook his head in disbelief. "Doctor, what's going on here? Who is this patient? Where did he come from?"

"All good questions." Allen said. "I wish I had answers for you. All I know is he transported himself here during the attack when the shields flickered for a moment, I would assume. I'm not sure how else he would have made it onboard." Allen frowned as he worked on his patient. "You might find this interesting captain, he has a human heart."

O'Brien froze. A human heart. The words lingered in his mind. "My heart? This is the man who has my heart?" He asked in disbelief.

Doctor Allen nodded his head. "It would appear so sir. I'm sure you have questions for him and would like to talk with him. All in due time sir. I'm still working to stabilize him. He's gone into shock, probably from the same bad plumbing you received at the hand of a Dubor doctor who didn't know what they were doing when they performed the surgery to exchange hearts between the two of you. I'll have to operate, he'll be unconscious for a better part of the day. If you'll excuse me, I don't have much time." Allen shewed O'Brien out of the surgical bay and into the empty corridor.

O'Brien was beside himself. What were the chances that a man carrying his heart was on the ship that had attacked them? O'Brien figured it wasn't a mistake, or a coincidence. Ketish must have sent that ship there to attack the Fresno and made it possible for this man to be aboard so he could be rescued by a human doctor. Doctor Allen.

Grilka entered Med Bay a short time later. She walked up to O'Brien and looked at him. Her facial expression was neither sad or happy. She was just there. "I understand the man with your heart is onboard."

O'Brien did a double take. "How the hell did you know that?" He asked. "I only barely found out myself."

"Small ship, news travels." She said. "I'm sure you would have heard about it on the bridge any moment, but you weren't there. You were down here in the Med Bay with the patient. How does it feel knowing your heart is in someone's body beating for them and not for you?"

"What kind of question is that?" O'Brien asked.

"A simple one if you take it at face value." Grilka said. "My people believe the heart is the singular most important organ in the body. It guides you on a path so you can achieve your destiny. Now I've heard that you hold a special place in history if you so choose to go along with it and be the hero both Dubor and Shuka need. But that destiny is up to you to fulfill. I cannot make that decision for you, nor can anyone else for that matter." She said. "So, tell me Jack. How does it feel?"

O'Brien looked at Grilka and then back to the surgical bay where the Dubor man was being operated on. How *did* it feel? He wondered. Part of him wanted his heart back, but knew that would be impossible. To perform the procedure would require a skill set even Doctor Allen didn't possess. It would likely kill both patients in the process. O'Brien wasn't about to take that chance, with a twenty percent survival rate, he would keep the Dubor heart firmly implanted in his chest.

"To be honest Grilka, it feels weird to have my own heart sitting on the other side of that window inside another body." Jack finally admitted. "Today has got to be the weirdest day out of them all. I can't even fathom how this came to be. What game is Ketish playing this time around?"

Grilka nodded. Yes, Ketish must be up to something she thought. Why else would he send a warship to attack the Fresno only to leave behind a survivor. None of it made any sense to her, but then again when did anything ever make sense? Exactly.

Holding Jack's hand, Grilka tried to comfort him. It wasn't much and she knew that, but she was at least trying something to help soothe the confusion within O'Brien's mind. "It might never make sense Dorf." She said reminding Jack of his half Dubor half Human heritage. "Sometimes nothing is meant to make sense, it just is." She let go of his hand turned around and exited the Med Bay leaving Jack alone to look through the surgical bay window at the procedure being performed on the unconscious Dubor officer.

O'Brien wanted to speak with him as soon as he woke up. *If* he woke up. Sitting down on a chair, Jack settled in for the long haul. It would take a few hours for the procedure to be complete and then another couple of hours for the patient to get out of recovery. If it was anything like Jack's procedure, it would likely take up to six hours to see results. Jack decided he wasn't about to go anywhere. He was needed there.

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Grilka entered her assigned quarters. She noticed an incoming transmission.
"Computer, trace this signal back to its origin. Where did it come from?"

The computer beeped as it worked "Unknown. Channel is scrambled, security lockout three."

"Odd." Grilka said. "Open communique." She ordered.

Ketish appeared on the screen. "Hello Grilka, long time no talk." He smiled big and wide. His razor sharp teeth glistened in the sunlight of his home world, Dubor.

Grilka took a step back stumbling into a chair, she sat down. "What do you want Ketish?" She asked. "We are over, there is nothing I have to say to you."

Ketish's grin grew. "You don't have to say a word my dear. Besides, I know it's over between us. It was over the moment you escaped that prison with your whore of a man. Two whores together, I find it quite fitting don't you?"

Grilka froze, what was it Ketish wanted from her?

"Remember when I told you to keep close to the human? Well you've been doing an excellent job at it. I'd prefer status reports now and then, but I imagine I can do without. I need you to do something for me." Ketish said. "Something very important."

"No Ketish." Grilka said. "I am no longer affiliated with your movement or the Dubor race. I am with the humans now. If you want something done, you'll have to do it yourself." She ended the communication link severing the connection.

Taking a deep breath, Grilka sobbed. Was she ever going to be rid of that mad man? A message appeared on the computer monitor for her. It was from Ketish, it read only one word.

Soon.

Soon what? She wondered. What would be happening soon? Grilka knew she would have to tell Jack about her conversation. He would want to know. Grilka knew if she was in his position, she would want to know about such a communication from the enemy. She just wanted to know what it was all about. Why did Ketish have such an interest in Jack? What was his end goal here? None of it made any sense to her.

Looking at the time, Grilka saw that it was four in the morning. She had stayed up more than half the night. It was time to get some needed rest. Changing into some sleepwear, she climbed into bed and closed her eyes. She hoped to have good dreams that night, but something told her otherwise.

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Six hours later, the heart procedure was complete and the patient was in recovery. Jack O'Brien was still seated outside the surgical bay waiting to speak with the patient. He paced back and forth wondering how best to open a dialogue between him and this man who held his heart in his chest.

Doctor Allen stepped out of the surgical bay and walked towards O'Brien. "He's stable for now." He said. "I'll have to run some further tests to make sure the surgery was a success and it holds, but yeah he's good for now. He's alert."

“Can I talk with him?” O’Brien asked.

Allen nodded. “I don’t see why not. Just don’t rush him on anything, he’s been in enough shock for one day.” He walked into his office to fill out some paperwork.

Jack walked into the surgical bay where the Dubor was laying down. The alien’s eyes were open, they were blue in color. His pupils were dilated. As Jack approached, the alien reacted. He recoiled and tried to scrunch up into a ball to avoid whatever Jack was about to do to him. Jack put his hands up.

“Hey, I’m not here to harm you.” Jack said. “I just want to talk. Can you talk?”

The alien nodded his head. “Yes.” He said in almost perfect english.

“Good” Jack said. Grabbing a stool, he sat down next to the medical bed. “I’m hoping you can answer a few questions for me. For instance, why the hell do you have my heart, and why am I carrying yours in my chest?”

The alien froze not knowing how to answer the questions. He was unaware of any modifications made to his body, what was this man talking about? He didn’t even know where he was at the given moment in time. There was so much confusion going on, there was just too much to take in. He fainted.

Jack sighed. This was going to be more difficult than he thought. “Doc, get in here!” Jack yelled. “He fainted!”

An hour later the alien regained consciousness. Jack again stood over him, his arms folded as he stood there. Jack wanted answers. He needed answers. With Doctor Allen’s permission, O’Brien was allowed to continue his questioning of the Dubor patient.

The Dubor alien looked at Jack with confusion. Not knowing what was going on was pressing on him mentally. The last thing he remembered was getting into an escape pod and ejecting himself from his ship. He crashed into the Fresno and somehow ended up in their Med Bay.

“Let’s try this again. No fainting on me this time, you hear?” Jack said. He looked at the alien their eyes locked. “Why do you have my heart?”

The man breathed in sharply. “Ketish ordered me to swap hearts with you.” He said. “I had no choice in the matter. You were laying on an operating table when I was brought in, they said you were dead, that you needed a Dubor heart in order to be revived again. I don’t know how many times you died, but I could tell it was more than five at least.” He explained.

O’Brien listened intently as the Dubor talked. How the procedure had been a success and yet a failure at the same time considering he was on an operating table again for some unknown heart condition. He was lucky the Fresno had a doctor aboard who could take care

of him. Lucky yet unlucky at the same time for now he was in the hands of the enemy. The Dubor sighed.

“What are you going to do with me?” He asked.

Jack shook his head. “I don’t know. I’m told we can’t exchange hearts back, it would kill us both. We’re suck with the equipment we’ve been given I guess.” He paused, it would be nice to know the name of the man who held his heart. “What’s your name?”

The man chuckled. “What use would a name be? I wasn’t born, I have no parents. I was bred for one purpose only. To hold a heart that was not mine. That is my purpose. I have fulfilled my destiny.”

“No name.” Jack said. “Interesting. Well we have to call you *something*.” He thought about it for a moment, “Let’s call you Geoff.”

“Geoff.” The Dubor said. “That is a human name. If that’s the best you can do, I will accept it. What will you do with me now?”

“Well,” Jack said. “We are on our way to Earth. Once we’ve completed our mission, I’m going to turn you over to our security force where you’ll likely be interrogated.”

“Imprisoned.” Geoff said.

Jack shook his head. “No, nothing like what you did to me, Geoff. Nothing like what you did to me.” Jack remembered his time in the Dubor prison. Being a prisoner of Ketish was not what it was cracked up to be. He wished he could go back in time and change it all for the better, but that was impossible.

Geoff smiled. “You got off easy from what I understand. Ketish has something in store for you human. I only wish I knew what it was so I could taunt you with it.” He turned away from Jack. “Leave me, I don’t want to talk to you anymore.”

O’Brien left the surgical bay and entered Doctor Allen’s office. He frowned. “If he says anything else, I want it. Record him with surveillance. I want to know anything he happens to say no matter how insignificant.”

“Understood.” Doctor Allen responded without looking up from what he was studying. He knew his assignment, it was clear. The captain wanted answers to questions only he knew. O’Brien did have a choice though, he *could* lock Geoff in a room, just the two of them and he could be more aggressive in his interrogation skills. But Jack wasn’t like that. That would be cruel and unusual punishment. He wasn’t about to torture a man who seemed innocent of his circumstances, just like how Jack was innocent of what had happened to him.

Jack stormed out of Med Bay. He wasn’t going to get any answers from Geoff, not yet at least. Walking towards his quarters he was fuming. The man knew *something*. He thought. He

knew something that Jack didn't. Knew what Ketish had in store for Jack, he was sure of it. Geoff knew what Ketish had in store for Jack, there could be no other explanation for it. Jack wanted to know what that reason was, why was Ketish so invested in Jack? What was the meaning behind it all? There had to be something he was missing. Something he could grab hold of and run with.

Reaching his quarters, Jack saw Grilka standing outside the door waiting for him. "Grilka, what are you doing here?" He asked.

Grilka smiled. "I heard the news." She said. "Word travels fast, you have a Dubor prisoner. Who is he?"

Jack shook his head. "He has no name, but he has my heart. You were there when Ketish was interrogating me. Do you know who this man is?"

Grilka shook her head. "No, I didn't spend much time in the operating room. Ketish didn't let me in on those secrets. A shame really, if I had known what he was planning I could tell you everything. But I do not know anything. I am sorry."

Jack held Grilka in his arms. "It's okay love. Come, enjoy a meal with me. It's been a while since I've eaten something."

Grilka smiled. "I'd like that." She said. "But let's avoid the shellfish this time? It upset my stomach."

Jack smiled. "Of course." Entering his quarters, Jack looked out at the stars streaking by. They were beautiful, almost as beautiful as his lovely Grilka. Now he would allow himself a moment to rest and relax, he would allow his mind to not think about what was in store waiting for them at Earth. There would be time to worry about that later, tonight he wouldn't allow it to get in the way of his relationship with Grilka. She deserved time away from it all.

The End