

Final Moments

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by Kyle Eggleston

President Cain sat in his office listening to the communications channel. Captain Jack O'Brien had just ordered his surrender. The nerve of the captain to try and take him from office a second time. Cain had been prepared for this moment though, the two days had passed without incident, and here he was ready for action.

"I repeat, this is Captain Jack O'Brien. President Cain I order you to stand down and surrender. If you do not, you will be killed." The message repeated. O'Brien was serious in his threat. He planned on killing Cain himself if need be.

"I wouldn't try his patience Mister President." Ketish said backing O'Brien up.

President Cain laughed at the two of them. "Look at you. Humans and aliens working together. This isn't the way life is meant to play out." Cain sighed. "I have tried to tell everyone this news, tried to get them to understand and yet not everyone gets it. Now we are at war." He slammed his fist on the desk in front of him. "I do not like war, but it is necessary from where I sit captain."

On the bridge of the Fresno, O'Brien sighed. Cain wasn't about to give up without a fight, it was clear as day. O'Brien watched his console as two of the Earth warships broke off their patrol and set a course for the moon. *Great*, Jack thought. That's all he needed, warships to fight.

"Patch me through to Ketish." O'Brien ordered.

"You're on." An ensign said.

"Ketish, do you see those vessels coming for us?" O'Brien asked.

Ketish nodded. "Yes. Are they hostile?"

O'Brien shrugged. "I don't know, but if they're under President Cain's command. Yeah they're damn hostile. They must be stopped. Hold your fire until they fire first. Once they fire, fire at will." He said. "Target engines and weapons. Leave their life support alone. They are humans, I don't want their blood on my hands."

Ketish scoffed. "You don't get war do you captain." He said. "There are no civilized rules in war. If they are loyal to this President Cain, they will target our life support."

O'Brien countered. "We are not like them though. We are different." He said. "Their values do not align with ours. That is why we are at war Ketish. We don't agree on anything, and their president is a coward, and he hates aliens such as yourself."

"You mean such as us." Ketish corrected O'Brien reminding him of his Dubor heritage. "Either way, we must disable those warships incoming. Close transmission."

The channel closed. O'Brien was cut off from Ketish and the president. The threeway communications relay had been severed.

"Alright," O'Brien said. "Launch the Atlantic Fighters, have them target the shield generators on those ships. Weapons, target the enemy weapons. Wait for them to fire, once they do open fire and attack like hell." O'Brien ordered his crew. "I only hope Ketish keeps his end of the bargain and fires on them instead of us." Oh how he prayed and hoped Ketish was honorable with his word.

Outside the ship, Atlantic Fighters were launched, they scrambled and began attacking the enemy ships after being fired upon. Now, by themselves Atlantic Fighters were no match for a warship. But with the help of the Fresno, they could stand a chance. As soon as the Fresno was in range, they began firing at the enemy vessels. Ketish's warship joined in the fight as well attacking the enemy vessel's weapons and engines.

As Ketish's ship overpowered one of the enemy ships and disabled it, the other enemy vessel bugged out. O'Brien gathered the second ship just wanted to live and survive another day. Why bother getting killed when you can run from your enemy. So that's what they did.

"O'Brien to Ketish." Jack said opening a channel. "Think that's it." He said.

Ketish responded. "No, I don't believe so. They gave up too easily. There must be something else to be aware of." He said cautiously. "I don't believe we are done here."

As he spoke those words, a heavily armed Earth warship exited what looked like some kind of docking bay. O'Brien looked to Kate. "Tactical analysis!"

Kate looked at her tactical console and reported. "Three main batteries, twenty missile ports. Heavy shielding across all decks. She's meant for war Jack, she's meant for war." Kate gasped at what she read, it made her sick to her stomach. In all of her years in the United Earth Force Alliance, she had never seen a warship of this magnitude. Earth didn't make such vessels.

Jack sighed. He was not liking these odds. "Contact the Atlantic Fighters, tell them to fire on that new target. Don't wait, just fire. Contact Ketish give him the same orders." O'Brien ordered.

"Aye sir." An ensign said as she carried out the order.

Jack watched as the Atlantic Fighters swarmed the enemy vessel, firing everything they had at it. The warship fired back at the fighters picking them off one by one. After all of the fighters were destroyed, the warship turned its attention to the Fresno. She aimed her main batteries at the Fresno and fired.

The Fresno's bridge lit up like a Christmas Tree. Sparks flew everywhere, crew members went flying across the bridge as their console exploded. Jack held onto his command chair and braced for more incoming fire. He ordered a return assault. Their assault barely scratched the surface of the enemy vessel's weapons.

Ketish ordered his attack after the Fresno did theirs. They managed to damage the enemy ship a little bit, but not much. The enemy ship attacked Ketish's warship with the same firepower that they attacked the Fresno with. Ketish fell to the deck injured. "Keep firing!" He ordered. His officers carried out his orders.

On the Fresno, medics carried the injured and dead off of the bridge. Doctor Allen would have his hands full, that was for sure.

"Punch a hole through their shields." Jack ordered. "We have got to make our way through!"

"Aye sir!" A lieutenant at tactical said. She was scared as hell, this was possibly her first fight she had ever been in. It most certainly wouldn't be her last. "Sir, Ketish's ship is taking heavy fire."

"Maneuver us between Ketish's vessel and the enemy ship." O'Brien ordered. "Shields to full. Let's nuke the bastards!"

"Warning, command codes needed to verify use of nuclear weapons." The computer warned. "Warning, command codes needed to verify use of nuclear weapons."

O'Brien sighed. He swore he never would use a nuclear weapon against another human, but here he was ordering such an attack. Keying in a sequence into his console, he spoke. "Confirmation order for nuclear strike. O'Brien Omega Burke Delta. Execute."

"Command codes verified." The computer said. "Nuclear weapons are now authorized. You may fire when ready."

O'Brien grimaced. "Fire at will."

Outside, nuclear weapons fired from the Fresno towards the Earth warship that was attacking them. It took three nukes to take down her shields. Another two nukes knocked out their main batteries.

"May God forgive me for what I've done." O'Brien whispered. "Continue firing conventional weapons." He ordered. "Our nukes have done enough."

“O'Brien, what are you doing?” Ketish asked over an open communications channel. “Your weapons were disabling that ship nicely. Why switch to conventional weaponry?”

O'Brien pointed a finger at Ketish. “We aren't like you Ketish. I used deadly force when necessary. Now that their shields are down, we can go back to conventional weaponry. That's all there is to it. Are you going to follow suit?”

Ketish shook his head. “You humans are weak.” He said. “When this is over, we become enemies again. I will show you how *we* conduct business.” Ketish turned to his tactical officer. “Conventional weapons, fire at will.”

Both the Fresno and Ketish's warship fired on the enemy Earth warship. Once she was burning and in flames, they stopped their attack. On the bridge of the Fresno, O'Brien ordered an open channel.

“Enemy Earth warship.” O'Brien said. “You are outgunned. We can destroy you in a few more shots from our main batteries. Surrender and prepare to be boarded.” He waited for an answer.

The Fresno's main viewer came to life. On the screen appeared a woman. “Captain O'Brien.” She said. Her hair was a mess, her uniform was torn in shreds. “President Cain is the only one who can give me orders to stand down. The order will have to come from him. Until that time, we will continue to fight.”

The Earth warship fired a missile at the Fresno. It exploded ten feet from her main sensor array effectively disabling it.

“Your weapon sensors are disabled.” The woman said. “You are unable to fire on us, we are unable to fire on you. It would seem we are at a standstill. But it doesn't change the fact that I take orders from President Cain alone, not you.”

O'Brien stood his ground. “Listen captain.” He said. “By now the radiation from my weapons have made their way into your atmosphere. It's contaminated. Which means you're contaminated. I would highly suggest you surrender to us, I can have a medical crew over to your vessel within an hour to help prevent any sickness that might come among your crew.”

The woman folded her arms across her chest. “The president would never allow such a deal.” She said. “As we speak, I have an armed contingent onboard your ship. They beamed over while your shields flickered during one of our attacks. If you will simply comply with my demands, your crew won't get hurt.”

O'Brien froze the channel. “Kate, confirm her threat.”

Kate checked her console. Not finding the answer she sought, she walked over to tactical and checked that console. After a moment she reported in. “Confirmed, we have

intruders on deck six, seven, eight, and one. They are just outside that door.” She pointed to the entrance to the main bridge. Drawing a weapon, she readied herself. “Let them come.” Kate said. “I’m ready.”

O'Brien sighed. Deck eight. Engineering. Deck six was Med Bay. He didn't know why they went to deck seven. There was nothing of importance on that deck. The bridge made sense, cut off the head and the beast dies.

Standing from his command chair, O'Brien readied his weapon. “Arm yourselves.” He ordered his crew. They did as ordered. Pointing to the bridge door, he looked to Kate. “Open that door on my mark.”

She nodded.

“Mark.”

The bridge door opened. Two enemy officers entered the bridge. Their weapons drawn. They began firing at the non commissioned officers first. Then the ensigns. O'Brien ducked behind a console and began firing back at them, Kate did as well.

Kate took one of the guards out, Jack took the other one out. They both fell to the deck dead. Kate quickly ran to the wounded crew members and checked their pulses. Some were dead, others were merely injured in need of medical care and treatment.

Walking up to the fallen guards, O'Brien checked them. One was dead, the other was still alive. “Take this one down to the brig.” He ordered. “Tell Doc Allen to get down there to treat him. I want some answers.”

“Aye sir.” The lieutenant at tactical said. She picked up the body and took him down to the Med Bay where Doctor Allen could patch him up and get him ready for questioning.

“Now.” O'Brien said as he sat back down in his command chair. “Open a channel to that fracking ship!”

“Channel open.” Kate reported.

The female captain appeared once again on the screen. “Captain, I do hope my men didn't cause you too much harm.” She smiled an evil smile at O'Brien.

Jack frowned. “You sure do know how to kill a party.” He said. “I order you to surrender your ship. You will hand yourselves over to the Dubor warship. They know how to take care of people like you.”

The captain shook her head and laughed. “What about no don't you understand captain? I am in command of this situation. You are not. You will comply with *my* orders or I will have your vessel destroyed. My men have already set bombs in your engineering compartment, I have the control mechanism to destroy your ship with the press of a button.”

She held up a small device. On it was a red button. A crude but simple method of deploying the necessary explosive compound into the engine core. One hit of that switch and the Fresno would burst into flames.

O'Brien raised his hands. "I give up." He said. "Order Ketish to stand down for now. Fill him in on what's going on."

Kate turned to her communications panel and contacted Ketish. He wasn't pleased with how things were progressing, but followed O'Brien's lead. Whatever O'Brien had up his sleeve, Ketish wanted to know what it was. He would have to remain in the dark until things would be sorted out. He hoped it wasn't too late for that.

The female captain smiled. "You and Ketish will transfer yourselves over to my vessel at once. We have much to discuss." She said. "I will meet you in one standard Earth hour." The channel closed.

O'Brien opened a channel to Ketish. "You get all that?" He asked as Ketish's face appeared on the viewer.

Ketish nodded his head. "Yes Jack, I did. What do you plan on doing over there on her ship?" He asked.

Jack shrugged. He stood from his command chair. "Well Ketish, I'm not entirely sure. I do know it hopefully buy us some time. If she's anything like my old boss, she's way loyal to Cain and will be difficult to bargain with. But I'm willing to give it a shot."

Ketish couldn't believe his ears. "A shot?" He asked. "What kind of strategy is that?! You have got to be mad! If she has us, she'll have two bargaining chips to work with while our crews will have nothing. You better know what you're doing."

O'Brien smiled back at Ketish. "Oh I know what I'm doing alright." He said. "Get ready, we don't want to keep the lady waiting. O'Brien out." The channel closed.

Kate looked to O'Brien. "Do you really have a plan captain?" She asked. Kate hoped O'Brien would say that he did have a plan, that his plan would help them get out of their current situation. But she couldn't be certain about anything right now. They were so far off script that things just weren't adding up.

O'Brien nodded. "Oh I have an idea for sure. Let's just hope it works out for the best." He paused for a moment. "Before we can..."

O'Brien's statement was cut short as he was whisked away in a teleportation beam. He disappeared from the bridge of the Fresno. A second later, he appeared on the bridge of the enemy Earth warship and was standing next to Ketish.

"What the bloody hell do you think you're doing?!" He looked at Ketish.

Ketish shook his head. "Not my doing captain. It would appear that the enemy captain has transferred us over to her bridge from the looks of things." He looked around the enemy ship. It was a compact bridge. Nothing too big, but not too small either. It was just the right size to get the job done.

"Good, you're both here." The female captain said. "Allow me to introduce myself."

Jack looked at the captain. "Danielle?" He asked.

Ketish looked at Jack in shock. "You know this female?"

Jack nodded. "Yeah, we met in a bar years ago during a truce, it was Christmas time. She was a major back then. It's the president's daughter." Looking to Captain Cain, Jack questioned her. "Why the demotion?"

Captain Cain sighed. "Daddy thought having a major in the family was too powerful. So he reduced me in rank back down to captain. It's okay though. I accepted my punishment without any remorse." She paused. Why was she telling this to them? It didn't make sense, but O'Brien had that affect on her for some reason.

"Interesting." Ketish said. "But that doesn't help our current situation now does it." He was getting upset. "You teleported us over here without our permission."

Danielle nodded. "Yes well it was the quickest way to get you over here."

Jack thought about what that meant. How it had killed him just to make a copy and animate that copy onto the bridge of the enemy vessel. He sighed. Jack had managed to avoid being teleported for so many months now, and now that he had been moved through space again, he didn't feel quite like himself. He supposed that didn't matter now. They were at the mercy of Captain Cain. Whatever she decided to do with them, they would have to live with it.

"How did you teleport us? Our shields are up?" Ketish asked.

"I wanted you to see the damage you caused us." Danielle said. "Your nuclear warheads all but destroyed us. We still have main power, but that's it. We're outgunned, our power levels are trying to fall, and so here we sit dead in space thanks to you. Your shields are no match for our teleporters. We've had an...upgrade."

Jack held his hands up. "I was doing my job." He countered. "There's nothing more to it than that."

Danielle stabbed an anti radiation pen into her arm to avoid radiation poisoning. "You tried to kill us." She said. "All because you want my father out of office? What has he done to you to make you hate him so much?" She threw the pen to the deck.

Jack frowned. "What has he done? Your father is anti alien. He hates anything that isn't human. Isn't that damage enough?" He asked. "Being anti alien is against everything the United Earth Force Alliance stands for captain. Don't you see the harm in that?"

Danielle shook her head. "No, no I don't. I was brought up that way. It is normal."

Jack raised his hands to his head in confusion. Normal? What part about that was normal? It didn't make any sense to him. Nothing she was saying made sense, none of it was normal in his eyes. To hate other species because they simply don't look or talk like you? That was some terrible shit right there. He needed her to see things his way for once. How he would be able to do that was beyond him though.

Ketish stepped forward. "You hate aliens." He said. "You hate me because I exist."

Captain Cain folded her arms. "You are unnatural." She said. "Anything not human is not natural and should be destroyed. Ignored at best. So we choose to ignore you and hate you."

Ketish kept his cool. He was upset by her words obviously, but he remained calm. Jack was amazed at how Ketish behaved. He was happy Ketish wasn't freaking out, that might endanger their lives if he did so.

"Alright, so you hate us." Jack said. "We've confirmed that. Hence the Civil War we had to endure years ago. Thing is? You lost." He folded his arms. "So we dealt you some heavy damage. Your ship, your radiation levels, all of it. Are you going to tell your father to leave office? Or do we have to do that too."

Danielle smiled. "He will not yield. He will not surrender." She paused. Standing from her captain's chair, she walked towards Jack. "It must be so terrible for you not knowing your full family history." She said. "Part alien, part human. Yet you're pathetic. You don't deserve to live let alone command a star ship."

Jack rolled his eyes. "Oh good grief." He said. "You and your father are a danger to the society we have built. Aliens are part of that society you see. You can't change that. Your father can pass all the laws he wants, but if it isn't approved by both the Military Council and the Civilian Council they won't get anywhere. Make sense?"

An alert sounded. The tactical officer reported in. "The Fresno is arming their weapons again captain. They plan on firing on us. We are being hailed."

"On viewer." Danielle said.

Kate appeared on the forward viewer. "Attention enemy vessel. You have my captain aboard your ship. I demand you release him and the Dubor as well. Let them go or I will blow you out of the sky. You have ten minutes to deliver your answer."

Danielle shook her head. She didn't even need one minute to deliver her answer. It was already firmly planted in her mind. "I will not release them. My father wishes to question them. It is you who will stand down. If you don't, I will activate my ships self destruct and we will all die right here, right now."

Jack looked to Kate. "Looks like Plan B is our option now commander." He said.

Danielle looked to Jack. "Plan B? What's that?" She wanted to know what the captain had in store or in mind. Was it to attack Earth? No, he wouldn't attack his home. That's the last thing he would want.

Jack smiled. "You'll never find out what Plan B is captain."

"Sir! The Fresno is leaving orbit of the Moon and heading towards Earth." The tactical officer said.

Danielle looked up from her console. "Jack, what is your ship doing? What have you ordered your vessel to do?" She asked. What would make the Fresno leave her captain behind and head towards Earth? Her father was on Earth, was he their target? Were they planning on destroying the White House in order to stop him? What was their plan?

Jack shook his head. "Not telling." He said. "Kate has her orders. Even I can't stop her from carrying them out now. I've been compromised." He looked to Ketish. "Sorry pal, I know this wasn't part of the plan."

Ketish grunted. "I knew I shouldn't have trusted you." He said. "You are being a fool Dorf! I cannot trust you anymore."

Jack shook his head. "Ketish, if you knew the full plan you wouldn't have trusted me to begin with." He said. "But, there is something you *can* trust me on. That Captain Cain is our enemy. We have her to blame for all of this. It is her who we should act against."

Ketish nodded. "Agreed."

They looked back to Captain Cain with disgust. She simply stared back at them. "Fine, you won't tell me your plan then you don't belong up here. Security, take them to the brig!"

A security officer pulled their gun on Ketish and Jack. "If you'll come with me." He said. The security officer escorted them off the bridge and towards a transport tube that would take them to security where they would be held until further notice.

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Onboard the Fresno, Kate tightened her grip on the captain's command chair. It was now her turn to tell President Cain that his time in office was over. Plan B was for her to take over the mission, that was all there was to it.

"Earth orbit confirmed." The helmsmen said. "Ready when you are commander."

Kate sighed, *here goes nothing* she thought. "President Cain, this is Commander Kate Monson onboard the U.S.S. Fresno. I order you to surrender. Your time in office is over mister president. I will send down a shuttle to retrieve you. Please respond."

The forward viewer lit up. President Tom Cain appeared on the viewer. "Command Monson." Cain said. "Are you the same Monson who won the skirmish in the border war back in the day?"

Kate nodded. "The very same."

"Hmmm" President Cain mused. "I believe you were on my side in the war then. But now, you've changed your stance. Such a shame." He paused. "I have no intention of surrendering to you commander. Nor do I plan on surrendering to your Dubor bastard of a son Captain O'Brien." He held his ground. "I am president of Earth, and I will remain president until this damn war is over." The communications channel closed.

Kate sighed. Why did he have to be so difficult? Why couldn't the man just surrender like he was being ordered to. It would make things much easier for all of them if he did as she commanded. She wished Cain would make it easy for her, wished he would just give up the fight and give in.

"I'm going down there." Kate said standing from the command chair. Entering the transport tube, she commanded the computer to take her down to the fighter bay. As the transport car moved through the tube, she breathed in heavily. Kate wondered if she was going to make a difference. She was sure to meet resistance down on the planet's surface.

A moment later, the transport tube deposited Kate at the Atlantic Fighter Bay. There was one fighter in the bay, a backup. Since all of the other fighters had been destroyed attacking the enemy vessel, she only had one shot at launching the remaining fighter.

Climbing into the fighter's cockpit, Kate activated its propulsion systems. "Precheck is a go." She said into the comm unit. "Leaving the bay now." The Atlantic Fighter flew out of the Fresno's fighter bay at full speed. Kate headed down towards the planet's surface.

Landing on the White House lawn, Kate smiled. So far so good. She crossed the lawn of the White House and found the Oval Office's main entrance. Pulling her gun out, she prepared for the worst. Kate entered the Oval Office without confrontation. She found it odd that there wasn't a welcoming committee waiting for her. There were no guards, no one was around. The hallway was empty.

Coming across the actual office door, Kate slowly opened it. Sitting at his desk was President Cain. He was writing words down on a piece of paper. He looked up at her as she entered.

“Commander Monson.” Cain said. “Come in, please. I insist.” He continued writing. “I am just finishing up a speech I want to deliver to the people of Earth. Nothing big, just a message.”

Kate raised her weapon and trained it on Cain. “President Cain, I order you to surrender your office. Under the authority of the articles, section twenty-three, sub section eight. I order you to stand down.”

Cain didn’t look up from his work. “Almost finished my dear.” He said. A moment later he finished writing. “Done.” He looked up from his desk. “Now, what is it you wanted again?”

Kate scoffed. The man couldn’t be serious, could he? She had given him clear instructions to surrender his office. She wanted him to give up. There was nothing he could do or say to her that would change her mind of what needed to happen.

“I want you out of office, *mister president*.” Kate said. “If you were to stay in office, it would only prolong this war out. We want this war to come to an end. We are certain that if you are dismissed as president, we can put an end to this war much quicker.”

Cain looked at Kate. “You plan on making peace with the Dubor?” He scoffed at her. “Don’t you understand commander, you cannot trust them. They are worse than I am when it comes to aliens. We are alien to them and they hate aliens.”

Kate continued to train her gun on the president. “Not all Dubor think that way. I have met some that would have you rethink your position on the matter.” She was referring to Grilka naturally. Was she a traitor according to the Dubor? Maybe. Was she considered a hero? Probably not. But she was a pioneer of sorts. To go against her own people and make friends with humans among other alien races, was a dangerous thing to do, yet she did it.

“Yes I know all about the captain’s lover.” Cain spat. “I will not leave office, you will have to kill me commander. Are you prepared to take a life? Have you ever taken a life before? Once you take a life, there’s no going back. You will be haunted with that memory forever.” He breathed in. “I am guilty of taking several lives in my time. There’s nothing I can do about it now though. I can only move forward.”

Kate released the safety on her gun. “You have a death wish president?” She said. “So be it.” Raising her weapon, she aimed it at Cain’s head. “You will relinquish the presidency by sending out a message to the people of Earth.” Kate handed Cain a piece of paper. “Here are the words you will speak aloud and will transmit the message through all vidscreens on Earth and through space to Earth star ships.”

Cain accepted the piece of paper and read over it. "I will not read this to the people of Earth or any other people." He finally said. "Now, if you'll excuse me I have a press conference to prepare for." Cain pressed a button on his desk.

Kate teleported away from the White House back onto the Fresno's bridge. She gasped as she realized what had taken place. "That bastard." She spoke aloud.

"Ma'am?" The tactical officer said. "We are receiving a general hail. It appears to be being sent out to all United Earth Force Alliance postings, as well as the population of Earth. It's President Cain."

Kate sighed. "Put it on the viewer."

Cain appeared on the forward viewer on the bridge. "Greetings Earth citizens." He began. "I am contacting you from the White House. Earlier today a rogue Earth star ship, the U.S.S. Fresno, attacked one of my personal warships. I regret to inform you that the captain of that vessel, Captain Jack O'Brien has been killed in the attack." He paused. "This is a message to anyone who wishes to go against my presidency, you too will be destroyed. This promise I make to you, on the life of my family."

The transmission ended.

Kate shook her head. This was not a good turn of events.

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In the warship's brig, Ketish sat in a corner. O'Brien stood and stared at the force field that kept them captive. They were under heavy armed guard as well, the guard was there just in case the force field failed for some reason or another.

O'Brien looked at the guard. They had just watched the president's address to the people about O'Brien's death. Jack shook his head. "Excuse me, don't you see what's happening here? The president lied to the people. I am not dead. I'm still alive."

The guard didn't care. "Yeah? So?" The guard said. "Before this day is up, you'll be dead and the president won't have lied." He smiled at Jack.

Jack frowned. "Frack." He said. "That's the last thing I need to hear right now."

"Jack." Ketish spoke up. "Don't you see? They have you where they want you. In a cell without the means of escape. You will die in here, we are likely both to die in here. Not because we refuse to accept what they offer, but because we are alien to them. Yes, you and I are aliens and they do not like our kind."

Jack nodded his head. "I know Ketish. I also know that you are the one who started this damned war to begin with. You attacked Earth. Why did you attack Earth? I thought Shuka was your enemy, why attack a peaceful race like Earth?"

Ketish smiled. "It is our way captain." He said. "Spend some time with your own kind and you will realize what we are capable of Jack. Trust me." Ketish continued to sit on the floor, he had clearly given up on trying to escape. This was his life now, this was his existence.

"Mind if I ask you a question?" Jack asked.

Ketish nodded. "Of course."

"Why the interest in me?" Jack asked. "I mean I know about the so called prophecy and all of that. But to say I have a destiny? That doesn't seem to be the right reason to be so interested in me. So, why? What do you get out of it?"

Ketish chuckled to himself. *Oh the Dorf wants to know why I'm interested in his well being is that it?* He thought. "Well it is true, you do have a mission to complete among our people, and the Shuka people as well. It is in your blood. You were not born by choice but out of purpose to both of our worlds. That is really all I know of the matter. The sacred texts can fill you in on the rest. If we survive this, I will see to it that you get a copy of the sacred texts so you can read them for yourself."

O'Brien smiled. *How nice of him to do that.* He thought. *Whatever.* If Ketish didn't want to tell Jack the truth of why he was interested in him, then he would never know. It didn't matter to him, after all he was just a Dorf. It was possible Ketish didn't actually *know* the truth and was just going along with what he did know, which wasn't much.

"I see." O'Brien said. "So you believe in it because the sacred texts tell you to. I get it, I do. But we can't keep fighting each other like this. Either we fight on the same side and are all in, or we go our separate ways." He continued. "If we go our separate ways? You will lose. Mark my words. So, what is it? Do you want to see this prophecy through or not?"

Ketish stood up from the deck. He thought about the offer before him. Ketish had a choice to make. Either he could continue on the path he set out for his race, to keep attacking other worlds or he could stop the attacks. He could work with the humans, he could work with O'Brien and make peace come sooner than the prophecy hinted at. That was the problem though, the prophecy didn't say when Shuka and Dubor would finally get along and become allies. Instead of fighting, they would become one in purpose. It was a dangerous proposition that laid before him.

"Alright Jack." Ketish said. "When we get out of here, I will contact my home world and declare peace between our two peoples. Of course a truce won't do anything for us while we

are locked up in this, this prison, and I am not sure how your President Cain will take the news.” He paused. “That is if we don’t remove her from office in time.”

O’Brien nodded his head. He shook Ketish’s hand. “You have a deal, and trust me we will get that bitch out of office. We’ll get her out if it’s the last thing I do.”

“Oh dear.” Ketish said. He looked at Jack like a deer in headlights. “Oh my.”

Jack raised his shoulders. “What? What is it?” He asked. “What are you so concerned about?”

“Your General Tague, the commanding officer of Crimson Gamma, sent the U.S.S. Franklin on a mission to Dubor.” Ketish said. “The last status report I received before coming after you was that the Franklin was still fighting our fleet in orbit of our world. If we don’t get word out of the truce soon, they could be destroyed.” He paused as he thought of the repercussions. “The war is still going on. The sooner we get out of here, the quicker we can put an end to it and hopefully save the crew of that ship.”

Jack nodded. “Right.” He said.

“I truly am sorry.” Ketish said. “Had I known we would be reaching this agreement, I would have stopped the battle. But I cannot go back and change the past.”

“I get it.” Jack said. “If they’ve survived this long, I’m sure they will survive the battle. Maybe they can retreat, I’m not sure.” He paced around the cell. “We have got to find a way to escape. But I doubt that guard over there is going to just let us go.”

“You’re right, I’m not.” The guard said with a smile. He turned his back to the force field and walked out of the brig leaving Ketish and Jack alone.

Ketish sighed. “Finally he left.” He said. Pulling a device out of his jacket pocket, he placed it against the force field. It dropped. “We need to find weapons.”

Jack stood there in disbelief. “You’ve had the ability to drop that field this whole time? We could have taken the guard out easily.” he couldn’t believe what he was seeing.

Ketish stepped out of the cell and began searching the brig for a gun. Jack followed his lead. Finding a weapons locker, Jack opened it and retrieved two guns. He handed one to Ketish.

“Let’s go.” Jack said.

They walked towards the main entrance. As the door opened, they caught the guard and surprised him. He was not expecting them at all. Ketish fired his weapon killing the guard instantly. They walked out of the brig and ran down the corridor to a transport tube.

“Docking bay.” Jack said. “Step on it!”

The transport tube moved towards its ordered destination at a quick paced speed. Soon they were in the docking bay. Since the ship was on high alert, the docking bay was empty. Jack hurried over to an Atlantic Fighter, punching in his command codes, he opened the cockpit. Sitting in the pilots seat, he watched as Ketish sat in the seat behind him.

“Firing engines.” Jack said. “Let’s get out of here. Opening bay doors.”

Outside, the warship’s docking bay doors opened. The fighter left the bay and fired her engines.

“I’ve found the Fresno, she’s in Earth orbit.” Ketish said. “I thought she would have retreated by now, what is she still doing here?”

Jack smiled. “Carrying out my orders.” He said. “Changing course, we’re going to head for the Fresno. We have business to finish with President Cain. But first we need reinforcements.”

A moment later they landed in the fighter bay aboard the Fresno. Kate was there to greet them. Kate stood at attention as her commanding officer exited the fighter.

“Captain O’Brien.” Kate said. “Welcome back.” She watched as Ketish exited the fighter as well. “What the hell is he doing here?” Kate demanded. “He and his people let us down. They broke orbit and left as soon as he was captured.”

Ketish laughed. “They were merely following *my* orders commander.” He said. “I couldn’t allow them to be captured by that monster Cain. Is it really that difficult to understand? I hope not.”

Kate rested her hands on her hips. “Alright, I can respect that.” She said. “Look, when I went down to take President Cain captive, he simply teleported me back up to the Fresno. Unless you have some kind of anti-teleportation machine, he’ll just do it again. Or worse, kill us.”

Jack sighed. “I see.” He said. “Well, we’ll just have to make sure he doesn’t do that. Come on, let’s go.”

The three of them boarded the fighter and launched from the Fresno’s fighter bay. As they descended down into the Earth’s atmosphere, they circled over the White House.

“Open fire.” O’Brien said. “Target the house’s shield generators. Take them down.”

Kate nodded. “Aye.”

The Atlantic Fighter fired its weapons at the White House’s shield generator. Coming around for a second pass, they took out any weapon systems they saw, which weren’t many. No one expected a fighter to come and attack the White House, not on peaceful Earth.

President Cain dropped to his knees and hid under his desk. What the hell was going on? He wondered. Someone was attacking him? Him?! Cain couldn't believe it. Pressing a button, he opened a comm channel. "This is President Cain to security. Get in here quick!"

Moments later, four security guards burst into the Oval Office. The lead guard walked up to the president's desk. Looking under the desk, he smiled. "We're here sir. Don't worry, no one is going to get through that door." He pointed at the Oval Office door.

Cain nodded. "Good, good Cartwright. I need that assurance." He looked to his other security guards. "In case they do overtake us, it's been a privilege having you serve me." He really meant that, it was hard to find people who aligned with your thoughts about aliens these days.

Jack looked to Kate and Ketish. They were standing outside the Oval Office. Jack prepared his gun. "Alright, the president's got to have some security guards in there with him. We need to take them out first. The president isn't confident when it comes to conflict. I know that for a fact. We take the guards out, he'll surrender."

Kate nodded. "Understood." She too readied her weapon.

Ketish pulled a sword out, he too was ready for anything.

Jack looked at Ketish. "Where the hell were you hiding *that*?" He asked in amazement.

Ketish chuckled. "Yes, your officers aren't that great at searches it would seem. Do not worry I wasn't planning on using it on you captain." He admired the sword, it had been with him in his possession for a long time now. It hadn't let him down yet.

Jack held out a gun and offered it to Ketish. "Wouldn't you rather have one of these? Their guards will likely be armed with guns not swords. I'm not sure how effective your sword will be in this fight."

Ketish smiled. "No, that is alright captain. I am fine with my sword." He assured Jack. "It is how they fought in the days of old. A time honored fighting skill I promise you. Now, let's get this over with."

With one kick to the door, Ketish knocked the door off its hinges, it fell into the Oval Office. He ran in avoiding the gunfire as best he could. There was a lot of shouting in the room and a lot of confusion.

Jack and Kate ran into the room as well. They fired their weapons, taking out three of the four guards. The fourth guard hid behind the president's desk coming up to fire occasionally at the intruders.

"Surrender Cain!" Jack yelled. "You can't win this." He ducked behind a couch.

Cain swore under his breath. "Like hell!" He screamed. "You'll have to kill me."

Ketish too hid behind another couch. "That can be arranged!" He stood up from behind the couch and rushed the president's desk. The remaining guard fired his weapon at Ketish hitting him in the right shoulder. Ketish pressed forward, swinging his sword he decapitated the guard. His head rolled to the side of the desk while his body plopped to the floor.

Jack walked up to President Cain, who was still hiding under the desk. "It's over Cain." He said. "Come out with your hands up. You'll receive a fair and just trial, I promise you." Jack actually hoped that was the case. He wanted the president to be brought to justice.

Earth needed someone who would accept aliens into their fold. Cain wouldn't do that in a million years. He was in the old school of thought where aliens weren't looked upon with kindness. They were looked at like they were diseased monsters who only wanted to take control of what Earth had to offer. They weren't given a chance at anything.

"Like hell!" Cain said. He pressed a button under his desk.

A computer sounded an alarm. "Detonation in five minutes. There will be no further audio warnings."

Jack froze. Detonation? Something was going to explode? A bomb of some sort was going to go off. He didn't want to be around when it did. "Come on, let's move!" He shouted to Kate and Ketish.

"What about the president?" Ketish asked.

Jack shook his head. "I don't think he's willing to go. We have to get out of here." Pulling Kate's hand, he ran towards the door. Ketish followed not far behind.

A few minutes later they were on the White House lawn. Kate boarded her fighter while Jack and Ketish entered the other one. They took off immediately. As they went into the atmosphere, the White House exploded in a brilliant flash of light with Cain still inside. Anyone else still in the house were killed as well.

Jack frowned at the thought. The president didn't have to kill himself and other innocent people. It was an unnecessary killing and suicide. Talk about a disaster. As the fighters reached Earth orbit, they set a course for the Fresno. With Ketish's warship having bugged out earlier, he had nowhere else to go.

The two fighters docked with the Fresno. Jack stepped from the fighter and walked towards a transport tube. Kate and Ketish followed right behind him. "Bridge" he ordered the computer. Moments later, they stepped onto the bridge of the Fresno.

Jack and Kate took their seats. Ketish stood behind them.

On the forward viewer was the Earth warship they had fought earlier. Jack read his console for a status report on the ship. They were still heavily damaged from his nukes. They shouldn't prove to be a threat.

"Sir, the warship is hailing us." The helm officer said.

Jack clenched a fist. "Put Captain Cain on the forward viewer." Jack ordered. "Let's see what she has to say."

The viewer lit up with the confused look of Captain Cain. "Captain O'Brien." She said. "I should have known you were behind this. You killed my father."

Jack shook his head. "No captain, he killed himself. It was his own bomb he set off to destroy the White House. I had no part in that. He wouldn't come willingly and decided to take his own life. For that I am sorry."

Captain Cain shed a tear. "Well without a commander in chief to lead us, it would appear I'm in your brig." She said. "Do with us as you will." She stood up straight waiting for whatever punishment to come.

Jack sighed. Handing out punishments wasn't his thing. He again shook his head. "No, it's not my place to punish you or your crew. The term just following orders comes to mind, but that seems a bit out of place here now doesn't it." He paused as he thought. "What are your damages?" He asked. "We can send over crews to help you sort things out." The offer was genuine, Jack didn't want them to be enemies; not anymore.

Captain Cain sat down in her command chair. "No, that won't be necessary captain." She said. "I can't believe how foolish I was." She cursed. "I really thought he was onto something this time around. Just goes to show that he really didn't have everything put together tied up neatly in a bow." She paused. "Guess I was wrong. I will submit myself to Earth authorities and resign my commission. Good fighting captain." She coughed as blood dripped from her mouth. "If I survive your nuclear attack on us, that is. Cain out." The channel closed.

Jack frowned at the thought. He had caused harm to every officer on that warship. It didn't have to be that way, but Cain had given him no choice. Either Cain. They both wanted him dead, and he had to survive because Ketish willed it.

"It would appear our work here is done." Jack said. "What's our damage situation?"

Kate looked at her console. "Engines are working. Shields are at fifty percent of normal, weapons are damaged beyond repair. We'll need at least a month in space dock to undergo repairs to our systems." She reported.

Jack nodded. "Good thing we didn't have to fight another warship. We'd be toast. Contact the dock master. Get a repair crew over here asap." He ordered. Kate nodded in acknowledgment. Jack stood from his command chair, "If you'll excuse me, I need to see Grilka to let her know I'm still alive."

"I'll join you." Ketish said. "I have something to say to her as well."

Jack smiled. "Of course you do. Kate, you have the bridge."

The two of them exited the bridge into the transport tube. The ride in the transport car was in silence. Jack wondered what Ketish wanted to speak with Grilka about. His wonder wouldn't last long for they were almost at their destination. As the car came to a stop, they exited the transport tube.

Jack stepped up to Grilka's door and pressed the chime button letting her know he was there. The door opened, Grilka rushed out of her quarters and hugged Jack kissing him. "Dorf! I knew you would survive!" She exclaimed.

Jack returned the kiss and hugged her back. "Yes my darling, I have returned."

Ketish cleared his throat. Grilka stopped kissing Jack and took a step back.

"What's he doing here?" She asked.

"Ketish has offered a cease fire." Jack explained. "We are now under a truce. He wanted to make sure I survived to see the prophecy come to light. He was very helpful in taking Cain down." Grilka gasped. "I know, I'm as surprised as you are." Jack said.

Ketish stepped forward. "It's true Grilka." He said. "I release you from any obligation you owe me. You are free to do as you wish."

Jack lost his voice for a moment. He could feel his vocal cords tightening. After a moment he was able to speak again. "Excuse me?" He asked. "What obligation is he talking about?"

Ketish responded. "Oh captain, do you honestly think she was really in love with you? You're a Dorf, a half breed. I had her watching you, keeping an eye on you to make sure you were safe. To make sure the prophecy came true."

Grilka lowered her head in shame.

Jack stared at Grilka. "Grilka? Is this true? You've been working for Ketish?"

She didn't respond, only stared at the deck.

"I'll take that as a confirmation." Jack said. "How long has this been going on? Since the prison I was held in? The one in orbit of Dubor?" He scoffed. "Of course, you were planted there to help us escape. No wonder why the Dubor ships didn't do a full on attack on your

shuttle. They probably had orders too, make it look convincing enough but allow us to escape. Is that it?" He turned his back on Grilka. Jack didn't want to look at her. He was furious.

Ketish smiled. "She performed admirably." He said. "Quite convincing if you ask me."

"Shute up Ketish." Jack said pointing a finger at him. "When I want to hear from you, I'll let you know." Turning back around, he looked back to Grilka. "Well? I'm waiting on an answer."

Grilka hesitated. How would she make Jack understand. "My love." She began. "Dorf."

Jack cut her off. "Do not call me by that name!" He said. "My name is Jack O'Brien, captain in the United Earth Force Alliance. I haven't come all this way just to be cut down by the likes of you!" He was fuming.

Grilka nodded. Trust had been breached. A delicate trust that had taken months to foster, and now? That trust was shattered. All because Ketish opened his big mouth.

Jack looked to Ketish. "I will provide you with a ship, you can track down your warship. I'm sure they would like you back. When you get back to your home world, please keep your end of the deal and release the Franklin. Offer aid to them if needed." He paused. Looking at Grilka, he continued. "Take *her* with you. I want you both off my ship within the hour." Jack left Grilka's quarters. He had no further business with her.

Grilka looked at Ketish. "Why did you have to do that?" She asked.

Ketish shrugged his shoulders. "He deserved to know the truth. I figured this was the best opportunity to do so." He paused. "You were working for me after all. I see nothing wrong with what I did."

Grilka growled at Ketish. "I told you I was done working for you." She said. "What part of that do you not understand? Our agreement ended the moment I escaped that prison with the others." She scoffed. "Now he won't have anything to do with me!" Tears flowed from her eyes.

Ketish walked over and placed a hand on Grilka's shoulder. "Do not cry my pet." He said. "There is still much for the captain to accomplish. He just doesn't know the full extent of it yet. But he will, he will and the two of you might even end up back together." He smiled, all of his sharp teeth showed. "Trust me pet, it's not that bad." Turning around, he too left Grilka's quarters. As he stood in the doorway, he paused. "I'll meet you in the fighter bay, our warship couldn't have gotten that far away. She was pretty damaged last I saw her."

Grilka nodded. "I'll be there."

Outside, the Fresno docked with space dock where she would undergo repairs. A month full of repairs. It seemed like a long time, but it would go by in a flash. Soon the Fresno would

be back out among the stars doing what she did best, exploring and protecting Crimson Gamma.

Ketish walked down a corridor towards a comm relay station. Accessing the system, he keyed in a sequence that would send a message to the Dubor home world. He waited for the channel to open.

A woman appeared on the small vidscreen. "Ketish." She said. "I am surprised but relieved that you are still alive."

Ketish nodded. "It's going to take a lot more than an Earth warship to take me down." He said. "Ambassador, there is an Earth star ship in orbit of our planet. Our fleet has been engaging her in battle for some time now. I want that to stop. We have aligned ourselves with the humans. There is a truce in place... for now." Ketish said. The thought made his stomach turn. "Please allow that ship to leave our space, offer support if needed but see to it that they know they are free to go. Let no more of our vessels attack that ship. Do I make myself clear?"

The woman nodded. "Yes Ketish, quite. But."

"But what?" Ketish asked.

"The Franklin, that is the ship you are talking about? It's been destroyed. All hands lost."

Ketish slammed his fist against the bulkhead. How was he going to explain this to the captain? He had promised the captain he would let the Franklin go as soon as he was able to. He wasn't able to keep his promise.

"I see." He simply said. "Well make it well known that *any* Earth Force ships are off limits. We are now allies." Ketish shuddered at the thought of so much death happening. First with President Cain and now this. Could this day get any worse?

"Understood Ketish." The woman said. The channel closed.

Ketish turned from the vidscreen. How was he going to explain this to Jack? He was not pleased with the news, no he was in fact so mad he could punch a bulkhead and keep punching it until it caused a containment failure. He wouldn't do that of course, but that's what he felt like doing. He was not looking forward to the talk he would have with Jack. Maybe he would wait until he was back aboard his warship, then he could deliver the message.

Walking down the corridor, Ketish found a transport tube that would take him to the fighter bay. There he would wait for Grilka and the two of them would seek out the warship and go home.

The End