

So Be It

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by Kyle Eggleston

Ketish stood on his bridge once again. His ship was heavily damaged from the battle in orbit of Earth's Moon. Grilka stood by his side. She didn't like what Ketish did to her, but like any loyal Dubor officer she would come to accept it. Her love with Jack was real to her, but Grilka knew it was now over. Ketish had played her dirty, tricked her into falling in love with the human/Dubor hybrid. She had fallen for it hook, line, and sinker and Ketish knew it.

Grilka cleared her throat. She hadn't said a word to Ketish since they landed back on the warship. She felt no need to speak with him until now. "Ketish, what do we do now? Earth is no longer our enemy and you promised Captain O'Brien you wouldn't attack Shuka. What is our purpose?"

Ketish clapped his hands. "She speaks!" He exclaimed. "How dare you use my name in public, you will address me as sir." Ketish rebuked Grilka. In private she could call him whatever she wanted to, but in public especially on the bridge of his own warship, she would respect him.

Grilka nodded and bowed. "Of course sir." She said. Grilka didn't see the need for such formality. But she would go along with it. He was her superior officer as it were. "But what of my question, sir?"

Ketish thought about it for a moment. It was a shame about the Shuka people and his agreement. If he was to uphold his part of the bargain, he wouldn't attack their people. It was agreed upon. "I do not know." He finally said. "There is a fourth planet in the Comeki Star System I've had my eyes on, maybe we could visit them." He smiled. "I've heard interesting things about their world and technology. Might be worth a look."

"Of course." Grilka said in a mocking tone. "More conquests for you to enjoy. A world to pillage and plunder, for what? Resources? Technology? Our latest reports state that the fourth planet hasn't developed any new technology in the last one hundred years!" She exclaimed.

Ketish's smile dropped. "Yes well, we have to get back up and running before we can even pay them a visit now don't we. Where do we stand on repairs?"

Grilka checked over a data console. "We are three days away from having FTL restored. The other systems might take another week or so. We appear to be right on target."

"Good." Ketish said. "Those nukes the captain fired at the Earth warship managed to hit us as well. I'm sure there is radiation poisoning going around. We need to counter that first before we accomplish anything further to the ship. Can't run a ship with a dead crew." He ordered.

Grilka nodded in agreement. "At once sir." She exited the bridge.

Looking out the window, Ketish saw they were passing a planet with rings. If he wasn't mistaken, the Earthlings called it Saturn. It was a wonderful sight to behold. A most beautiful planet. He couldn't imagine a star system with planets that held no lifeforms. No life at all, they were simply dead rocks in space, but they were marvelous and beautiful at the same time.

"Open a channel to the Fresno. I wish to speak with their commanding officer." Ketish ordered. It was time to rip the band aid off. He needed to let the captain know about the fate of the Franklin and hope their truce wouldn't come to an abrupt end. He needed O'Brien and O'Brien needed him, even if he didn't see that yet.

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Captain Jack O'Brien closed the communications channel. He was smiling. Earth had a new president and vice president lined up, all they had to do was be sworn in. It had been a busy week since he took down President Cain. Earth was getting a new president, the Fresno was being looked after, what more could he want? Yet there was something missing in his life.

"Grilka." Jack whispered. Jack hadn't uttered her name since the incident. The incident of course was her betrayal of him. Everything Jack thought he knew about Grilka had vanished the moment she didn't speak up for herself. She could have told him Ketish was making it all up, but she didn't. She simply kept silent on the matter. It was terrible.

Jack's comm unit chirped. "Go for O'Brien." He said into it.

"Captain, are you seriously going to let space dock have their way with the Fresno?" Madison's voice came through the comm unit. "You *know* my people can do a better job and faster than they can!"

She had a point. Her people were the best and the brightest of the bunch. But when it came to heavy damage like the Fresno had taken, he wanted a second set of eyes on it. Like the people who actually had built the ship in the first place. That meant space dock would get their slimy grubby hands all over her. Madison *hated* the idea of that, and Jack knew it.

“Madison.” Jack said. “I know it’s hard for you to have someone else work this ship. She’s become personal to you, I get it. But if we want to leave the Sol System and head back to Crimson Gamma, we are going to need help.” He knew his words didn’t bring any comfort to the situation, but those were the facts.

Madison hesitated at his words. She knew he spoke the truth but didn’t want to come to terms with it. Doing so would admit defeat in her eyes, that was something Madison didn’t want to do. She wasn’t one that took defeat lightly. Madison was in it for the long haul, if she wanted something bad enough to win it she planned on getting it.

“Alright, let them do their job I guess. But, tell them to stay out of my way. I’ve got work to do and I don’t want any of those idiots in my path. They’ll only slow me down.” Madison said. “I’d better get back to my plasma manifold, it’s been acting up ever since we got in that damn fire fight. I’ll keep you posted. Madison out.” She hissed as the comm channel closed.

Jack sighed. He didn’t like it when his officers weren’t happy. He was concerned with the welfare of his officers. Opening another channel he called down to the Med Bay. “O’Brien to Doctor Allen, Matt I need some good news about now.”

Matt’s voice came over the comm unit. He was out of breath. “I’m up to my neck in wounded captain. That’s how things are going. Is there someone in particular you need a status on? I’m kinda busy.”

O’Brien nodded. He understood. “I won’t keep you doctor. Just keep me posted.”

“Right.” Matt responded. “I’ll publish a report every hour on my progress. Allen out.”

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Down in Med Bay, Matt had his hands deep in a woman’s chest. He was trying to massage her heart back to life. “Come on damn it. Don’t you dare leave me!” He yelled. Matt continued to massage her heart.

The woman gasped as she came back to life.

“Thank goodness.” Matt sighed. He injected her with a drug. “Now, you stay alive.” He walked out of the surgical bay towards a nurse. “Keep an eye on her. If anything changes, come get me. I’ll be in with patient 240 Beta.”

The nurse nodded in confirmation. “Understood.” She entered the surgical bay and took over for the doctor.

As Matt entered another surgical bay, he began taking vitals. It was too late for the poor soul on the table. They were dead. What a damn shame, he sighed. If only he had gotten to the man sooner maybe something could have been done for him, Matt wasn't sure though. Pulling a sheet over the deceased's body, he walked out of the surgical bay.

"Someone take care of him, please take him to the morgue." Matt said. Rubbing his eyes, he frowned. He hadn't slept in what seemed like days, it had been a week and people were still coming in complaining of being injured. He had been able to send some to the space dock, but even they had a capacity limit that had to be respected.

There were some parts of the ship that weren't safe to be around, some of the officers kept entering those parts of the ship either on purpose or accident, Matt didn't know, and thus ended up in Med Bay. When half of the crew compliment was injured or ill, it made for very difficult times.

Matt needed rest, but he wasn't about to get any; not when there were sick and injured to be taken care of. "What's next?" He asked a passing nurse.

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General Eve Tague sat in her quarters on Crimson Gamma. She was still waiting for someone to come collect her. Eve hadn't heard a thing since Jack left for Earth to take down the president. Maybe they had forgotten about her? She couldn't tell. When she asked Jack to place her under arrest, Eve expected to be taken to a penal colony, or some other prison until a hearing could be held. But here she was sitting in her quarters waiting for the inevitable to happen.

Beep Beep. The door chime sounded. Eve stared at the door, she wasn't expecting visitors, it wasn't lunch time or dinner time. It was only eight in the morning. Beep Beep. It sounded again.

"Come in already!" Eve yelled. "Why even bother to signal? You know I can't open the fracking door!"

The door opened. Eve looked out the door and saw a guard standing watch. She had expected as much. A little guarantee just in case she had found a way to access the door controls and overpower them, thus opening the door and making a way for her to escape. It was typical procedure, one oh one type of stuff.

Obshi entered Eve's quarters. "Are you accepting visitors human?"

Eve smiled. "Name's Eve." She said. "Obshi, isn't it? Come on in. What can I do for you?"

Obshi sat down on a couch across from Eve. He looked around her quarters. They were rather fancy. Everything screamed wealth. He didn't know generals were paid that much. But if her quarters were decorated so beautifully, well she must be highly paid.

"Why did you do it?" Obshi asked. "Why the hatred of my people? You were in command of a major tactical outpost and you hate those people down on the planet you swore to protect." He said. "Why?"

Eve thought about it for a moment. Would Obshi even understand anything she had to say? More important would he believe her? Eh, what did she care of he believed her or not? She was a dead woman as far as the law was concerned. Eve was about to be put away for a very long time, perhaps it just didn't matter.

"I was raised to hate aliens." Eve tried to explain. "My father taught me everything there is to know about alien races. Don't trust them, don't believe them, don't allow them to control you. That's what aliens want, control." She sighed. "Call me a bigot if you must, but I've since changed my mind about you and your kind." Eve said. "I was on the wrong side of everything. I was on the wrong side during the Earth Civil War, I backed the wrong guy. I get that now. President Cain wasn't all he was cracked up to be. He wanted Earth only for humans. Such an arrogant piece of shit."

Eve slapped her knees with her hands.

"I know I can't take back what I've done. There's no going back." She said. "But I can promise you that going forward, I don't act like that ever again."

Obshi nodded. He understood what she was trying to say, but there was a problem. Like she said it was too late to do anything about it. Her past was damming to everything he believed in. No matter what she did, Eve could never erase the sins of her actions. Her *mistakes* were there for good, there was no turning back now.

"Well, I forgive you." Obshi said. "We can all lose our way from time to time, but eventually we come back to our senses, or a portion of them." He smiled at Eve hoping to put her to ease of some sort. Obshi was sure she didn't have many friends. Now he wasn't there to actually make her his friend, but if it happened; well worse things could happen.

"I just wanted to check in on you." Obshi said.

Eve shook her head. "Why?" She wondered asking aloud. In her experience, anyone who just wanted to check in on you had an ulterior motive. She wondered what Obshi's motive was. What did he really want? She couldn't quite understand what it was Obshi wanted. If he really did just want to check on her, that would be a first.

“Let’s just say I believe in giving everyone a second chance.” Obshi said. He stood to leave. “You looked like you could use a friend.” Walking towards the door he turned around to look at Eve. “If there’s anything I can do for you, if I can be of service to you. Let me know. I don’t have much going on these days.” He exited her quarters.

Eve sat there in disbelief. Obshi really just wanted to check in on her. How could she have been so foolish that he had another motive than friendship. The brainwashing ran deep within her. She needed to get back into check asap. If she was going to survive, she needed to make a major change in her life and that needed to start now.

Looking at her computer console, she stood and walked over to it. “Computer, begin dictation.” Eve said.

The computer beeped in response. “Ready. Recording active.”

“To whom it may concern, when you find my body you will wonder why I did what I did. Well the answer is easy. I hate myself. I hate what I’ve become. When I came to Crimson Gamma, my intentions were wrong. I hated aliens, hated them with a passion. I followed President Cain in the false belief that humans were superior to all alien life.” Eve began the recording. What she was planning on doing wasn’t in the plan, not her life plan she had decided on so many years ago. But that plan was dead.

Eve talked for an hour into the recording device. She talked about her early life growing up on Earth. Her time during the Earth Civil War. Her learning of her father’s death. Life was short and precious, it was too short not to make it count. She talked about how she wished she had known better. How she could have learned things from the Shuka people had she given them the chance.

When she was done speaking, Eve instructed the computer to deliver her statement to the Fresno in care of Jack O’Brien. Reaching into her desk drawer, Eve pulled out a gun. She chuckled at the thought that her own security officers hadn’t checked her quarters for a weapon of any kind. Lucky for her she thought.

Pointing the gun at her head, she pulled the trigger. Eve dropped to the deck dead.

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Jack tried to get some rest. He was in his quarters. It was a difficult task to accomplish though, he had just heard from Ketish that the Franklin was destroyed with all hands. He was pissed. An Earth star ship full of loyal officers, destroyed. Over three hundred souls lost. Jack wanted to fight Ketish, he wanted to take revenge on what had happened. But knew anything

he did wouldn't bring them back. No matter how hard he tried he couldn't shake the thought that those people deserved to still be alive. If only Ketish could have contacted his people sooner, maybe he would have changed the outcome of the war. Perhaps the Franklin would still be alive and well. But there was no way of telling that now. No, now it was too late to do a damn about any of it.

His door chimed.

"Come in." Jack said sitting up in bed.

Jeff Killpack entered Jack's quarters. He was there in his unofficial capacity as ships counselor. Jeff had a knack for that sort of thing. It just came to him and was in a way thrust upon him in a time of need. Today was no different, Jack was in need and Jeff was there to help him.

"Hey captain." Jeff said as he walked in and sat down. "Thought I'd check on you. No one's heard from you in over two hours. That's unheard of, even when we're in space dock." He said. "What's got you in such a downer of a mood?"

Jack sighed. "Over three hundred souls lost, man." Jack said. "Three hundred souls, and there's nothing I can do to bring them back." He placed a pillow over his head.

Jeff nodded. "I see." He said. "I'm sorry to hear that captain, I know it won't help but those officers knew what they were signing up for when they joined the military." He paused. *Yeah that really wasn't the right thing to say*, he thought. "What I mean is we all know the risks when we put on these uniforms."

Jack thought about what Jeff said for a moment. It was true, he signed on knowing full well he might die in his uniform some day. It was a given fact. He of course didn't want to die anytime soon, but should it come he didn't even know if he would be ready for it. Jack feared the unknown, yet he signed on for exploration of it. It was a contradiction in terms, he knew that and he didn't care.

"I heard about General Tague." Jeff said. "I know she was slowly coming around to thinking the way we do about aliens. I'm sorry that she couldn't see it through."

Jack sighed. He tapped his fist on the bed. Sitting up, he looked into the living area where Jeff was seated. Whatever he said about General Tague wouldn't bring her back. Even if she was having a change of heart, nothing he did could bring her back from death. "Yeah, she sent me like an hour long message. I just finished watching it when you arrived."

"Oh," Jeff said, "What did she have to say?"

Jack frowned. "It was full of regrets. Regrets of her past, regrets of things she wouldn't see happen in her lifetime. Things of that nature. Just one regret after another." It was a

shame for a person to have so many regrets. But sometimes that's just what life dealt you. A regret here, a regret there. Some regrets you had control over, others you did not. Eve didn't seem like the person to not have control over her life, Jack liked to think she was in a good amount of control over her life. But he could be wrong.

He didn't really know her that well. Just the front she put on in front of her officers. It was mostly for their benefit, no one wanted a commanding officer who didn't have it all together. They needed a level head on their shoulders in order to guide their people into battle. Eve portrayed that exactly as expected. Which is why it was a shock that she would kill herself.

Standing from the bed, Jack walked into the living area to join Jeff. He grabbed a bottle of whiskey on his way in and two glasses. Pouring the whiskey into the glasses, Jack handed one over to Jeff who accepted it.

"To the Franklin and General Tague, two women we'll never see again." Jack said toasting the fallen comrades. They drank from their glasses.

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Grilka stared out at the stars passing by. She was slowly realizing that she wouldn't be returning to Crimson Gamma anytime soon. She would no longer be a delegate to Earth from Dubor. Her relationship with Jack was over and she had Ketish to thank for that. She wondered why she hadn't spoken up when she had the chance. Was her love real? Was it faked? She didn't know. Grilka didn't know if anything was real anymore. It all could have been conjured up by one of Ketish's doctors for all she knew.

She began to wonder if she even loved Jack at all. Grilka doubted she even knew what love was to begin with. That she was just going along with the emotions she felt. She did find Jack attractive even if he was a Dorf. But if that was it, if that was all there was to it then she didn't love him and it was all fabricated. Fabricated and made up just so Ketish could get close to Jack in the end for *his* end goal. Whatever that purpose was.

Laying down, she would try to get some sleep that night. Grilka wasn't sure if she would get any sleep, but she had to try. What Grilka didn't know is she would dream of Jack and their time together. When she woke, she would miss him that much more.

The End