

Death Wish

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by Kyle Eggleston

Bert McDuff strolled through Crimson Gamma on his way towards Jack O'Brien's office. He had some important information to share with the major. Bert rehearsed what he was going to say to Jack over and over in his head. As he reached the office and entered, Bert noticed Jack wasn't there.

Reaching into his pocket, Bert pulled out his comm unit. "Computer, locate Major Jack O'Brien." He ordered.

"Major O'Brien is not on the station." The computer replied.

Bert sighed. "When did he leave?"

"Oh eight hundred hours." The computer said.

Bert checked the time, *that was over an hour ago*. He thought. "When is he scheduled back?" Bert asked.

The computer beeped an error beep. "Unknown."

Folding his arms, Bert grew frustrated. "Alright, alert me the moment he returns to the station." He walked out of Jack's office. Bert would have to wait until the major returned to the station in order to talk with him.

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Grilka sat in her quarters. She was sobbing. It had been an hour since Jack told her he was leaving for a bit and wouldn't tell her where he was going. He also told her she couldn't go with him. Grilka reflected on the fact they hadn't been able to spend that much time together since he had returned. It made her sad. She wanted nothing more than to be with her Dorf, they belonged together.

Looking out a window, Grilka watched her world turn. She was having nightmares of Shuka burning in flames. All brought on by some alien invasion force. Crimson Gamma didn't even survive the onslaught in her dreams. They were all destroyed.

Putting her head in her hands, Grilka sobbed even louder. She was interrupted by the sound of her door chime. Someone was at her door. Grilka didn't want to talk to anyone, she ignored the first bell, then the second bell, by the time the third bell rang she had enough.

"Enter!" Grilka yelled. She picked up a bowl and threw it towards the opening door.

Norev sidestepped the bowl missing it by inches. She stood there speechless for a moment. "Did the bowl do something wrong?"

Grilka waved her hand dismissively. She wasn't in the mood for jokes. "What do you want?" Grilka asked point blank. She wanted answers, not more sarcasm. Now was not the time for jokes or sarcasm. Grilka wanted Jack back.

Norev entered Grilka's quarters and sat down next to her. "Grilka, where's Jack?" She asked. The real purpose for Norev's visit had come out. Grilka could respect that. She did ask her purpose for being there after all.

Grilka shrugged her shoulders. "He wouldn't tell me where he was headed." She said. "I watched his fighter launch out that window." Grilka pointed to the window. "I'm not sure where it went from there."

Norev nodded her head. "I understand. He needs some time to think ... something ... over it would seem. I wish I knew what." She let go a big sigh. The major was in the habit of leaving on short notice without telling anyone where or why he was going. It was something Norev was planning on talking to him about. It needed to stop.

Grilka sighed. "Well his time to think needs to come to an end." She said. "if he wants to think, I'm here for him. I've always been here for him."

"I know." Norev responded. "I know." She paused. "Look, if we don't hear anything by the end of the day, I'll contact Shuka and put some feelers out. If it's like his other trips, he'll be back before sundown. Okay?"

Grilka nodded. "Alright. Till the end of the day." She said.

Standing up, Norev excused herself and exited Grilka's quarters.

Grilka shook her head, Norev's terms just wouldn't cut it. Grabbing a flight suit, she walked out of her quarters. If she had to find Jack herself, that's what she was going to do.

Down in the fighter bay, Grilka approached the officer on duty. "Where do I sign out one of these Atlantic Fighters?" She asked directly.

The lieutenant looked at Grilka and laughed. "You're joking, right ambassador?" He said. "I can't allow you to take out a fighter without authorization. Do you have authorization from the station commander to take out a fighter? I'd need to see paperwork stating that you do."

Grilka stammered for a moment. She reached into her pocket and pulled out a piece of paper. "Here are your orders." Grilka said handing the lieutenant the piece of paper. She bit her lip, the paper was forged, there was no way any command level officer would give her that authorization, so she had to take matters into her own hands.

The lieutenant looked over the document with skepticism. After a moment he shook his head. "This is forged. I'll have to call security."

Grilka watched as the lieutenant reached for a radio. She held up a hand. "Oh I don't think that's necessary." She said. "Can't you just forget this happened?" Grilka put on her best smile she could muster.

The lieutenant shook his head. "I'm sorry ma'am. I have my duty." Speaking into his comm unit, he signaled security. "Lieutenant Blund to Lieutenant Killpack, we have a situation in the fighter bay. Code forty-seven."

"On my way." Killpack's voice came over the comm unit.

The lieutenant looked back at Grilka. "If you'll wait here, security will be here shortly."

Grilka sighed. "Just great." She muttered under her breath.

Twenty minutes later, Grilka was in the brig staring down Lieutenant Killpack. He stared back at her trying to assess the situation. After a moment, Jeff finally spoke. "Care to tell me why you're trying to forge your way into an Atlantic Fighter?"

Grilka frowned. "I was just trying to track down Jack. He left without saying anything to me. I saw his ship leave the station and I wanted to follow his trail, that's all."

Jeff rubbed his chin. It was the first he'd heard about the major being away from the station. Usually he knew when a flight was scheduled to leave. He was the first to know most things that went on that concerned the station. "Where do you think he went?"

Shaking her head, Grilka sobbed slightly. "I do not know. It's unlike him to not tell me where he's headed. He usually tells me, something. But this time there was no warning. He just... what's that phrase you humans use? Up and left? We went to bed last night, when I woke up this morning he was gone. I asked the computer where he was, and it told me he was in the fighter bay preparing to launch. I watched him leave out the window."

"Hmmm." Jeff said. "I wonder where he went. I'll check the logs."

"Is it possible for you to send Commander Monson down here?" Grilka asked. "She might know something about his whereabouts."

Jeff smiled. He saw no harm in the request. "I'll see what I can do." Standing up, he exited the brig.

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Placing her hands in her lap, Grilka could only wait for the commander to show up, Maybe she would know where Jack ran off to. She was his second in command after all. If anyone knew anything it would be her.

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In C&C, Commander Kate Monson was hard at work navigating different ships to their destinations. When the call from security came in, she didn't want to take it. She was too busy, but figured it might be important.

"Monson here, what can I do for you Jeff?" Kate asked into the communications line.

"Well, I have Grilka down here in the brig." Jeff began.

Kate cut him off. "She has diplomatic immunity, you can't seriously be holding her."

"I know," Jeff said. "It's a temporary hold for now. She says she hasn't seen Major O'Brien since last night when they went to bed. I was wondering if you knew about his whereabouts?"

Kate froze. Of course the major was presumed missing. It wouldn't be a normal day on the station where the major wasn't missing. "I'll be right down to talk with her."

She could hear Jeff smile over the communications line. "Thank you commander, I owe you one."

"Yeah you do, navigating flight traffic isn't an easy job. Monson out." She closed the line. Looking to another officer, she gave orders. "Take over, keep an eye on Transport Gamma there. I don't like what they're trying. I'll be back." Kate exited C&C.

* * *

Major Jack O'Brien piloted his fighter in open space. It wasn't everyday he had the chance to take a fighter out and see what else was out there. Going on such a trip was risky. He didn't file a flight plan with anyone, not even the deck chief on duty. All he told them was he needed to test out a fighter to make sure she flew properly. Sometimes being in command had its advantages.

Closing in on a small moon, Jack prepared for landing. The moon orbited Shuka and was on the other side of the planet at the present moment, it was rarely visited by any Earth

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officer. In fact, Jack didn't have any records of any Earth officer visiting the base. Not since Earth placed the base there for the Shuka population to use as they saw fit.

Opening a channel, Jack contacted the base. "Shuka Base, this is Atlantic Fighter Calypso, Major Jack O'Brien in command. Requesting permission to land." He waited for a response to his hail.

A comm channel opened with static at first, then it was followed by a female voice. "Calypso, you are cleared for landing. We will have an ambassadorial delegation greet you." The communications line closed.

"Alright," Jack said "Looks like I'm going in." He piloted his fighter towards a landing bay where he could set down.

* * *

Commander Kate Monson walked into the brig and faced Grilka. Dropping the force field, she stepped into the cell. "Mind if I sit down?" Kate asked.

Grilka nodded. Sliding over on the bench, she made room for the commander. Kate sat down next to Grilka. Turning her head, she looked at the woman. "I'm sorry they arrested you, I've explained to them you have diplomatic immunity. Only your own people can discipline you. Do you understand?"

Grilka nodded her head. "Yes." She said. "Do you know where Jack went?"

Kate frowned. She didn't want to lie to Grilka. She decided against it. "He went to Shuka's third moon. Said he had some unfinished business to take care of. That's all I know." Turning her head away, she stared at the deck.

"I see." Grilka said. "Why didn't he tell me this?" She asked.

Kate shook her head and started tapping her foot. "I don't have a fraking clue." She said. "I'm sorry." Kate gritted her teeth. She hated being kept in the dark or only having half the story.

Grilka slapped her leg. "Then we're back at square one. Jack went to a moon orbiting Shuka for some unknown reason. Just wonderful." She sighed. "Alright, thank you for being honest with me. You're a good woman."

Kate chuckled at the thought. "Oh I wouldn't say that. I've done some not so good things in my life." She admitted. "Some things I'd like to forget, but some things are simply impossible to run away from. But I keep on fighting."

Grilka did not understand why Kate was chuckling. But that didn't matter. What mattered was Kate knew her past didn't define her. It only helped tone her to be the person she was today.

"Come on, let's get out of here." Kate said. She stood up and walked out of the cell.

Grilka followed Kate out the door, smiling at Lieutenant Killpack on her way out.

* * *

Bert McDuff walked into Med Bay. Looking around, he located Doctor Allen and approached him. "Hey doc, hope I'm not disturbing you."

Matt looked up from his desk, "No Bert, not at all. What can I do for you?" He set down a datapad and leaned back in his chair.

"I have an alien prisoner on my ship. She identifies herself as Elise. She has one hell of a story about if she isn't released by the end of the year, that her people will attack Earth." Bert said. "I uh, tried to go to Major O'Brien, but he's not on the station. Problem is, Elise needs some medical attention. My doctor on the Fresno hasn't seen anything like it, I was hoping maybe you could do something for her?"

Matt was confused. "You want me to help an alien that's hellbent on attacking Earth?"

Bert nodded his head. "Yeah that sums it up. Will you help her?"

Matt didn't know what to say. Sure he took an oath to do no harm, but he had to admit there were times he didn't want to help aliens. Especially when those aliens threatened to harm his home. He finally gave in to his own thoughts. "Yeah, I'll take a look. Teleport her aboard the station."

"Okay." Bert said. Taking out his comm unit, he contacted the Fresno. "McDuff to Fresno, teleport prisoner six one nine to the station's Med Bay. Heavy guard." He closed the comm channel.

A moment later, Elise and three of Fresno's security officers teleported into the Med Bay. The security officers had a woman with them, she looked human. But Matt knew better. They had a rope around her neck connected to a long bar which they used to move her about. Not that she could do anything about it, Elise was limping as it was.

Matt directed them to a surgical bay. "This way, I want to take a look at her leg." Looking to Bert he frowned. "What did you do to her?"

Bert raised his hands in the air. "Nothing, I swear."

“He’s lying.” Elise said. “He hit me when I wouldn’t cooperate.”

Bert shook his head. “Matt, you have to believe me. I didn’t do a damn thing to her.”

Matt began examining Elise’s leg injury with a scanner. “You have a spiral fracture, several bruises and what appears to be third degree burns.” He stared at Bert. “You’re telling me she caused this harm to herself?”

Bert shook his head again. “Self inflicted injuries. Not done by me or any of my men.”

“He lies.” Elise said breathing hard through the pain.

Picking up a morph pen, Matt injected it into Elise’s leg. “This should help with the pain.” He explained. “It’s a nerve blocker that deadens what you’re feeling. It’ll give me time to do surgery.” He looked to Bert. “Get out of here. Let me see to my patient.” He took the collar off of Elise and shewed Bert and his security team out of the Med Bay.

Looking back at Elise, Bert wondered what her true form really looked like. She was an alien after all. Having the disguise of human anatomy made his job easier though. So he wasn’t about to ask her to transform into whatever she really was.

“Let’s fix you up.” He said grabbing an oxygen mask.

* * *

Jack’s fighter landed in a large open area. It was obviously designed to house several ships at once. His was the only ship in the hanger. As he stepped out of the ship, Jack was greeted by three members of Shuka’s Religious Government.

“Major O’Brien.” One of the Shukan’s spoke. “Why have you come to see us?”

Jack shook his head. “I didn’t know I would be meeting with members of your government. I thought I was going to meet with an ambassador.”

“Our ambassadors are all busy at the moment.” She continued. “Why have you come?”

Jack looked to the woman and smiled. She reminded him of Norev. “I had what you might call a vision, perhaps it was a dream I’m not sure. In this experience I was told to come to this place, that it would all be explained to me when I arrived. So here I am.”

“Tell me chosen one, do you have a death wish?” The man in the middle spoke. The women on either side of him looked to Jack for a response.

“A death wish?” Jack asked. “No, not that I know of.”

“Shuka who visit this moon come here to die. It is their final wish to be granted. You have come here, so I assumed you have a death wish.” The man said. “But you do not wish to be among us. It is troubling at best to see where your path lies from here.”

“It is not your time.” The other woman spoke up. “You will know when your time has come. Leave us now, please. Go back from whence you came. Go home to your loved ones.” She turned around facing her back towards Jack. The others did the same.

Jack looked around the empty hanger. He had wasted a trip to the moon just to be told to go back. He figured that was the last time he would allow a dream to dictate his actions. Entering his fighter, he engaged his thrusters and took off. Leaving the hanger behind, Jack set a course back to Crimson Gamma.

“What a waste of two hours.” Jack said.

* * *

Chief Madison Park walked around the engineering deck. She was looking for something. A piece to Crimson Gamma’s water assembly. Without it, they would have no clean water until a new part could be located. They had the reserves at least, but those would only last for so long.

Opening crate after crate, she sighed. Madison wasn’t finding what she was looking for. So far she had found parts for the air filtration system, and the main reactor core. But no water purification system. She looked over the part manifest again, it should have been in crate six one eight four two. But that crate was empty, Madison wondered if someone had stolen the part.

“Shit.” Madison said.

“Problem chief?” A dock worker said as he walked into the room.

“Yeah there’s a fraking problem!” She yelled. “I can’t find a stupid part to the water purification system. I wonder if someone’s been in here and stole it. Greg, if someone stole it, so help me.”

Greg frowned at the thought. In all his time on Crimson Gamma no one had ever stolen a part from maintenance, well that he knew of. He felt sorry for the chief, *she must be hella frustrated* he thought. “Here, let me help look.”

So they spent the next hour looking and re-looking through storage containers. Every time coming up empty. Greg understood the chief’s frustration as time moved forward and they weren’t finding anything.

“It’s not here chief.” Greg said as he closed another crate.

“Shit.” Madison muttered. “I’ll fill out a request form asap. We can’t go without clean water. At this rate the reserves will be gone within a week, and it will take at least that long to get a part from Earth.” She stormed out of the room.

* * *

Jack O’Brien walked into his quarters, Grilka was there waiting for his return.

“Dorf!” Grilka exclaimed as she jumped up off the couch to meet him at the door. “You’re back.” She grinned from ear to ear.

Setting a duffel bag down, Jack hugged Grilka. “I’m back babydoll.” he said. “I’m back.”

Grilka and Jack walked back over to the couch and sat down. “Mind telling me where you went?” She asked him.

Jack hesitated. Did he want to tell her the truth of what he found on the moon? He didn’t want her to think he had a death wish, that he wanted to die. If anything, he wanted to live a long happy life *with* her. “Just following some intel. It proved to be worthless. A wasted trip as far as I’m concerned.”

“I see.” Grilka said. “Well I’m just glad you’re home and safe.”

Ding Ding. The door chime rang. Jack sighed, he really needed a do not disturb sign or something on his door. He also wanted to change the door chime, *ding ding*? Seriously?

“Enter.” Jack said.

The door slid open. Bert McDuff stood there. “Finally!” He exclaimed. “I’ve been needing to speak with you. It’s about the fate of Earth.”

Jack and Grilka exchanged glances. They weren’t good glances, they were worried glances. Earth was in danger.

“Please come in and tell us everything.” Jack said.

Bert obliged.

The End