

Armor Of Light

110

by Kyle Eggleston

120 Years Ago

Ben Solizar stepped over dead Shukan bodies. It had been years since the Dubor planted their flag on Shuka's soil. Years since those first settlements turned into barracks for soldiers such as himself. In all that time, Ben couldn't help but wonder what they were doing there in the first place. If all it was meant for was pointless slaughter, they were doing a fine job of it. He had been raised by good Dubor soldiers. Those who fought for what they believed in. Well here they were fighting for just that, what they believed to be true. That truth was slaughtering innocent cattle. Not for food, but just for slaughter. It didn't sit right with him, but who was he to argue against what was.

His gold armor glistened in the sunlight. Ben wore the Armor of Light, it was the highest order a military commander could achieve. Over the past fifty years he had led men into battle on countless occasions, he always managed to return them home in safety. At first he had understood his duty, kill Shukan scum where they stood. Without question. Ben obeyed the order without hesitation. It was a pleasure to serve at the High Command, the ruling body of the Dubor movement.

Ben was different, he lacked the facial features of the typical Dubor. Some doctors had noted that his insides didn't look Dubor, but alien. His name wasn't even Dubor. When he asked his parents, those who raised him, what all of it meant he was told to trust in the system. Well he trusted in the system a little too much these days, and look where it got him. The highest military command possible. To command troops into battle was something unique, it was quite an accomplishment in its own right. Ben was eager and happy to serve wherever that might take him. But he had uneasy feelings regarding slaughtering defenseless people, namely the Shuka people. Ben questioned if the orders were just. His upbringing told him they were, but something deep down inside told him it was wrong. Ben was constantly fighting a battle within himself. He did not like it one bit.

"Captain!" A lieutenant called out across the field of battle. "We have a survivor. Should I take them in for questioning?"

Ben thought about it for a moment. Their intelligence reports were shaky at best. He could use some new Intel, but that would take time. Time he didn't have.

"Negative." He said to the lieutenant. "Execute them."

The lieutenant carried out the order without question or hesitation. A short stab though the throat and the fallen Shuka citizen was dead. Cleaning his blade, the lieutenant cried out in victory. Another enemy slain.

Ben bowed his head in sorrow. Another Shukan citizen butchered by his hand. Sure it wasn't him who wielded the weapon, but that didn't matter. It was as if he had dealt the crushing blow himself. Ben would have to record his experiences in his flight recorder later when he was alone. To do so out in the open was blasphemy and heresy against doctrine. A crime punishable by death.

Yes he would mourn later. Now was not the time nor the place. In private would be much better suited for such activities. If his superiors heard about his actions, they would have his head. He would be put on display at the capitol, or rather his head would be put on display hanging from a rope. Ben could feel the maggots scrawling on his skin as he thought about it. It was an unpleasant feeling. He turned his thoughts to something else, anything else that would help him get his mind off of the slaughter.

That's when he noticed the suns in the sky. Ben never knew the Comeki Star System had two suns. It was quite a sight to behold. Snapping out of it, he reminded himself he was not there to stargaze. He could look at the suns and later the moons at a much later time. Now he was in the middle of a battle and had a job to do.

An older gentleman, a Shukan, stepped in Ben's path. "Why are you here smooth skin." He said. Smooth skin was a nickname given by the Dubor to Ben considering the lack of cranial ridges on his head. "This is not your battle. Why don't you go home where you belong!"

Ben grunted. Even the enemy had learned of his differences from the normal Dubor. He wasn't about to allow it to interfere with his mission or what he had set out to do. "Get out of my way, old man." He said.

"Don't you even know who I am?" The older gentleman asked. "Didn't they teach you anything at the war academy of who you might run into while you butchered our people?" He folded his arms and stood his ground. It was as though this man was ready for a fight.

Ben looked the man up and down, he could take him easily if he wanted to. Instead he felt like talking. What did this man know that none of the other cattle knew? What did he know specifically about Ben that he needed to find out? So many questions and possibilities to be made. Ben wasn't sure he was ready to hear the truth.

"Who are you old man?" Ben asked.

The man smiled and with a glint in his eye replied. "I am Nokev. Yes the same scientist who attracted you to our world so many years ago." He said. "You Strangers From The Sky are all alike, you take what you want. Never thinking about what could be happening to those you are taking things from." He sighed. "A shame really." Picking up a walking staff from the ground, Nokev readied himself. "Are we going to do this or not? I don't have all day."

Ben couldn't believe his ears. He was actually speaking with Nokev, the scientist. Without him, Dubor never would have shown interested in the Shuka home world. They probably would have left Shuka alone. But here they were eighty years later meeting face to face.

"It's your fault we became interested in your world, old man." Ben said. He tapped his sword against Nokev's walking staff. The staff didn't falter nor did Nokev's grip on the staff. He seemed to be pretty strong for being over one hundred years old. Quite an achievement in anyone's book really. Ben couldn't help but feel impressed by the older man. But he was the enemy after all, he had to be shown a lesson.

As the fight began, Ben dodged several blows to his head from Nokev's staff. Nokev in turn blocked blow for blow hits from Ben's sword. The two men wrestled like this for over a half hour. Evenly matched, one could not get a leg up on the other.

Ben looked to Nokev during the battle. "Need a breather old man?"

"Not if you don't." Nokev rebutted.

One lucky blow and Ben was on his back. His sword knocked out of his hand. Nokev's staff at his throat. "Surrender. It's over." Nokev said. "You have nowhere to run from here."

Ben scoffed at the thought. "I will not yield."

"Then you will die." Nokev said. "I do not wish to kill you. You aren't even Dubor, you are not my enemy. You only fight alongside them. For reasons unknown." He paused for a moment to allow Ben to think about the words being spoken to him. "Join my side of the fight." Nokev said.

The offer was enticing to say the least.

"You are a Stranger From The Sky. Not these skies mind you. Surely you must know you come from a different world than Dubor." Nokev said.

Ben nodded. "Yes, I know that. I was brought to Dubor as an infant. My parents brought me to Dubor from a far away place. I don't even know the name of my home world. That's how messed up I am. But I took part in this fight because that is what I was trained to do since the moment they brought me home."

"Either you or I will die today Shukan. Not both." Ben finished saying.

Nokev sighed. This is not what he wanted to hear. Raising his staff, he kicked Ben's sword some fifteen feet away in the opposite direction. "I will not kill you unknown species." He said. "You don't want to be here, I can see it in your eyes. It is a futile attempt for you to try and be something you are not."

Ben shook his head. Nokev was just trying to get under his skin. It was working. "What do you know of me?"

Nokev laughed. "Plenty, I know I am the same way. This is a useless war. No one will remember what happened here in a hundred years time. Mark my words, alien."

Alien. That was the best he could come up with? It was true, Ben was not from Dubor nor Shuka. He had come from a different planet altogether. Someday he hoped to return home, wherever that might be. He had a longing for home, to be with his own kind. Whoever they were, he hoped to be welcome with open arms.

"How about an alternative." Nokev said. "There is a mountain range roughly one hundred clicks from here. It's well beyond the city limits. My people won't go looking for you there. It will be safe for you." He paused. "You don't want to be here more than I do. I do not wish to kill you."

Ben thought about the offer for a moment longer. Possibly longer than he intended to. If he traveled to the mountain range, he would be admitting defeat. Ben would be fleeing the war effort, abandoning his people. *His people.* The thought lingered in his mind. They really weren't his people now, were they. The truth of the matter was he had been abducted. The people he now called family meant well, they looked after him. But he couldn't help but feel part of a science experiment. Every time he went to see a doctor they wanted to run more tests. It was always more tests, never less tests.

Standing up, Ben looked over at his sword. He was unarmed. Ben sighed. He had no other choice but to surrender. The Dubor way meant for him to fight to the death. Ben had no wish to do that. There was no need for unnecessary bloodshed. Especially his own. He held out a hand which Nokev shook.

"Name's Ben." He said.

Nokev smiled at the thought. He was definitely alien. "I will walk you to the mountain range. Do you have provisions to pack?"

Ben shook his head. All he had were the clothes and armor on his back, a flight recorder, and a sword. "I travel light. Wasn't expecting to live out my days hiding from my own government."

Nokev smiled at the thought. "You'll grow used to it." He said. "Come."

"There's one more thing I need to do before we go." Ben said. Tapping a small circular device underneath his left ear, he spoke. "All troops fall back to position Alpha." Ben said. "I repeat, all troops fall back and regroup."

Looking to Nokev, Ben explained. "That should cause some confusion." He smiled. "Before they know what's happening I will be long gone."

"Wise thinking." Nokev said. "Please, come with me." Using his staff for support he began walking. Ben couldn't help but wonder if he could have taken the old man even though they were evenly matched.

As they walked towards the mountain range, Ben asked the question that had been weighing heavily on his mind. "Nokev, why are you doing this? Surely there must be some motive for you to be helping me."

Nokev smiled at the thought. "I only want peace between our two peoples." He said. "If we cannot start trusting one another, peace cannot be truly obtained. I am willing to help you escape to achieve that goal. You are one of Dubor's most highly decorated command officers. Getting you out of the fight might actually do some good for a change. Time will tell." He continued walking.

"Tell me something." Ben said. "Do you have a family?"

Nokev stopped walking for a second. He paused at the thought. He thought of his family and shed a tear. It had been so long since he had seen them. Too long. Ever since the fighting broke out, Nokev hadn't seen his family. He figured they had been taken to a detention center, or possibly worse shipped off planet side to one of the many holding facilities orbiting Shuka. He wasn't sure which outcome was more likely.

"Yes, a wife and daughter." Nokev finally admitted. "They are the light of my life. The hope to my soul. My very survival depends on seeing them again." He continued walking. "This way."

Nokev lead Ben through a windy canyon before coming to the base of a tall and wide mountain range. "There are switchbacks that will take you to the summit. It will be a long journey, but worth it. You will be safe here. The Dubor haven't made any settlements this far out for some reason, and my people are forbidden to leave the city. There shouldn't be a problem with you living out your remaining days here."

Ben was older than your typical military commando. Perhaps that is why they gave him command of an infantry. He couldn't say for sure. What he did know is he was tired of the fighting. Tired of the war between the two peoples. He wanted them to find a peaceful solution to it all and live in harmony one with another. But maybe that was asking too much.

"I will leave you now." Nokev said. He turned to go.

Ben called out to him. "Nokev, wait." He said. Taking a small device out of his pocket he handed it to Nokev. Nokev took the device and examined it.

"What is it?" Nokev asked.

"It is a copy of my personal diary." Ben said. "Perhaps it can give you insight into my people, or at least into me." He smiled. "One way or another, if you have this maybe I will not be forgotten and my legacy will continue onward into the future."

Gripping the storage device, Nokev bowed slightly. "You will not be forgotten my friend." He said. "Good luck to you, may the twelve gods shine down upon you with joy." It was an old prayer that indicated safe travels to those who heard it. One of Nokev's favorites.

Nokev reached into his robes and pulled out some parchment scrolls. "Here are some scrolls, they are a history of our people." He said. "You might not see us as simple cattle after reading them. At least it will be something to pass the time."

Ben reached for and accepted the scrolls. "I do not know how to read your language." He admitted. "I never picked it up."

Reaching into his pocket, Nokev pulled out a device known as an interpreter. "This will help you decipher our language. It contains some of the older dialects known to our race. It should provide useful."

Ben bowed to Nokev. "Thank you for everything." He said. Then it dawned on him. "I won't ever see you again, will I?"

Nokev shook his head. "I am an old man. I doubt you will see me again, this is true."

Ben smiled at the help he was receiving. Finally he could rest from war. Finally he could be free from it all. He hated war, all the bloodshed and needless killing. If he had his own way, wars would be fought with words instead of swords. Language instead of weapons. That way both sides could learn from one another. But what did it matter? Wars would be fought no matter who was involved. There wasn't anything he could do about it to change the way things went. He was only one man.

Watching Nokev go, Ben hoped the old man would make it back to his home without problem. He felt like he was losing his only friend in this fight. Ben couldn't contact his superiors, he was on the run now. There was no place to go but up, so up he went far and deep into the mountain range. Safe and far away from the fighting.

Ben would call the mountain range home for years to come until he would eventually meet his demise at the wrong end of a sword. It was a good life, full of writing and learning all he could from the scrolls Nokev had given him. There wasn't anything particular secret on the scrolls, mostly genealogy and other teachings the Shuka people held sacred. It was truly a

wonderful learning experience to get into the mind of the cattle, of the people he had been slaughtering. Ben regretted everything he had done in the name of the gods. Over time, he saw the Shuka people for what they really were. An enlightened race full of culture and a rich history. His people had no right killing them and erasing that history. No right at all.

Activating the flight recorder, Ben decided to make an entry.

“Captain’s log. With the help of the Shukan man named Nokev, I have found myself in a far away mountain range. Obscure enough to keep me away from any patrol that might be searching for me. We were wrong about the Shuka people.” He said. “I wish I could go back to my people and make them see their mistakes, but that is impossible. I am an outcast, a drifter now. There is no going back for me. I will never see my home world again. End Log.”

The flight recorder beeped as it saved the log entry. Ben hoped to make an entry each and every day for the rest of his life. People had to know what had happened here. The real reason behind it all, not the propaganda the Dubor government wanted their people to believe and accept as the truth.

There were always two sides to the truth. The actual truth and the falsehoods that governments wanted to pass off as truth. Ben wanted to make a record of the real truth as he saw it. Maybe then it would cause an end to all of the violence and bloodshed his people were behind. Maybe then peace could be achieved. He doubted it would happen in his lifetime. But it was a worthy goal, one he could get behind and fight for.

Only time would tell.

2246

Ambassador Norev sat in her quarters going through a box recently discovered by one of her relatives on Shuka. The box had a seal on it, belonging to the house of Nokev and Norev. She had always found family history to be rather unique and interesting. You could say she had found a hobby in it. Norev always was eager to learn more about her family line from the very beginning up until the most recent times. It fascinated her.

The box contained technical journals, space ship designs, recipes that had both failed and succeeded. It just contained a lot of history. Norev felt the need to catalog everything she was coming across. That way if she wanted to look at something in the future, it would be easier to find and research. With the computers help, it made the workload quite light and manageable.

Coming across an odd shaped data recorder, Norev tried to activate it. It had been completely drained of any useful power. Setting it down on a charging station, she hoped for

the best. Norev hoped the station wouldn't overcharge the device shortening it out. She would have to be quite careful. She admired the design, it was alien for sure. She couldn't place her finger on it, but it looked somewhat familiar.

Norev's door chimed. She looked up from her belongings and sighed. Never a dull day for the ambassador, she thought. "Enter."

The door parted to show Grilka standing outside in the corridor. Norev was taken by surprise. She was not expecting to see Grilka today, or any other day. Given the nature of their races history. Norev supposed that could change, Grilka had indeed helped them escape from that Dubor prison station. She couldn't recall if she had ever properly thanked Grilka for helping them all. Perhaps it was too late for gratitude, it had happen over two months ago.

"Grilka." Norev said. "Please come in."

Grilka did as requested. "Ambassador." She began. "I have been named Delegate for my home world by Major O'Brien. He figured since I am the only one of my race on the station it would make sense. I suppose he is right, but I am feeling overwhelmed by the task."

Norev nodded connecting the dots. "And you have come to me for guidance on the matter."

Grilka nodded her head slowly. "Yes ma'am." She said. "If it is an inconvenience, I can leave and never speak of it again."

Norev scratched the back of her head. Grilka was a puzzle to her. The woman wanted to please and help out, but felt inadequate in anything that she did. Norev wondered why that was. Perhaps if she helped boost her confidence, she could get her past all of that and on the right track.

"No bother at all." Norev said.

Grilka looked at the table with all of the artifacts on it. She gestured to the table. "Going through history?" She asked.

Norev nodded. "Yes, these items were recently uncovered near my ancestors home in a sort of time capsule. I was hoping to learn more about my family." She pointed at a chair. "Please have a seat."

Grilka sat as invited. "Thank you." She said. "You will have to forgive me, I am trying to change my internal narrative about you and your people. So many years of backwards brainwashing has taken its toll on me." Grilka said.

The small device Norev had been charging switched on. A man's voice could be heard speaking from it. Norev was having a difficult time understanding the language being spoken and her translation orb couldn't lock onto the cadence adequately in order to translate it.

Grilka's ears burned. She recognized something about the language being spoken, but couldn't quite put her finger on it. "May I?" She asked.

Norev nodded. "Please do. It was drained of power before you came in. I had just put it on the charging station hoping for the best. I can't understand a word that is being said. It's not Shukan in nature."

Grilka picked up the recording device and smiled. "This is a personal diary." She explained. "The language is a very obscure, very old Dubor dialect. It isn't spoken much anymore. Only a handful of individuals even practice that dialect anymore. It was replaced with what we speak today." She pressed a button on the device, it rewound and started over again.

"Usually there is a holographic element to these." Grilka said. "I wonder if I can switch it on so we can see who is talking. She fiddled with the device more, pressing buttons here, toggling switches there. After a moment a holographic image of Ben appeared. Norev's translation orb locked onto the dialect and began broadcasting what was being said in her native tongue so she could understand.

"Hello, my name is Ben Solizar." The man began. He was wearing Dubor armor, the kind used to go into battle. Armor of Light, it had been known as. Grilka had seen such armor in museums on her home planet. It was ancient. She was puzzled, the man didn't look Dubor at all. He looked human, yet he spoke with a Dubor tongue and wore Dubor clothing. Very odd indeed.

"Where did you say you found this?" Grilka asked.

Norev was amazed at the image before her. "Oh, um near one of my ancestors house in a time capsule." She explained. "It was dug up yesterday and sent to me this morning."

They listened to the personal diary entries of this Ben person. They weren't your typical diary's of a man who had been in battle. He was alone and afraid of what was to come. Afraid of retaliation if someone came across his recordings. He would be considered a traitor by his own people for speaking out against doctrine.

"The major might want to take a look at this." Norev said. "Evidence of human life on Shuka over one hundred years ago? There's something going on with this." She continued to listen to the recording as it played back.

"May this recording serve as a warning to those who come across it. I hope to persuade you to avoid violence and war at all costs, they do nothing for those involved." Ben continued.

Grilka was beside herself. What was a human doing on Dubor or Shuka? Both races hadn't even known about humans until most recently, and even then it was considered classified knowledge.

Ben talked about how easily it had been for them to take over Shukan land one piece at a time. It was a surgical invasion of their home world. Expertly executed over the span of a number of years right under the nose of the Shuka Religious Council. The Shuka had been a push over as it were.

He spoke of Dubor culture. Their rich history in the arts, music, and literature. He spoke proudly of those things, proud to be a Dubor. Then things took a sharp change. Ben began speaking of the war effort. He openly criticized Dubor leadership at every turn possible. Things he spoke of would be considered heresy. They were more than his opinions, they were founded deep within his mind and soul.

As more of the messages played out, Norev could tell the frustration in Ben's voice grow. It got to a point where he began rehashing things he had already said. Never contradicting himself, but just repeating what had already been spoken of.

Picking up the device, Grilka skipped to the last diary entry.

"Met a man today, a Shukan warrior of sorts. His name is Obshi. Nokev spoke of him in the past saying there was something special about this man. But I didn't know what to make of it then. He couldn't be more than thirty cycles in age. Um cycles, that's what Shukan's call ocets, I believe the human term is years. Anyways, this man seems to believe he can lead an outright attack on the Dubor who have taken over Shuka. The funny thing? I think he can actually do it."

The recording ended.

Norev smiled at the mention of her great great grandfather's name. It could only be him, there were no other Nokev's in Shukan history. The Religious Council had forbidden the name to be used by anyone else. It wasn't out of respect but out of punishment for everything that had happened *because* of him. It was his space ship that caused the Strangers From The Sky to visit Shuka, to take over Shuka for a time.

Nokev was a dreamer, others saw him as a threat. Yet no one dared to oppose him or his way of thinking. Norev never understood why that was. That's just how things were back then.

"That was his final diary entry." Grilka said. "I'm guessing there is no other record of this human in Shuka history files?"

Norev nodded her head. "You would be correct. I didn't even know about him until today. There seems to have been a lot of our history rewritten or hidden from us over the years." She sighed. "If only there were more." She took the diary device back from Grilka and examined it further. There didn't appear to be any other secrets to be had from the device. It had done its part, it had told its story.

She looked over the other artifacts. Carbon dating might be able to tell her exactly when these things were last touched or handled. Norev had a rough estimate when this Ben person lived, but she wanted to know exactly when he lived. He was old enough to know her great great grandfather Nokev, but Nokev must have been an old man by that point.

"This brings about more questions than it answers." Norev finally admitted. Looking to Grilka, she smiled. "Thank you for your help." Then she remembered Grilka's original reason for coming to see her. "Oh yes, you wanted a mentor of sorts. I believe we can working something out."

Grilka grinned so big her pointed teeth showed on both the upper and lower parts of her mouth. She was definitely a carnivore. "Thank you so much ambassador." Grilka said in gratitude. "I won't let you down." She stood and exited Norev's quarters.

After Grilka left, Norev activated her communications device on her desk. "Norev to Major O'Brien, I have something I think you should take a look at."

On the other end of the comm unit, O'Brien looked up from a stack of paperwork. "Acknowledged." He replied. Jack was happy to get out of paperwork for once. Usually the affairs of the station were enough of a distraction from his day to day routine, now he needed something to distract him from his distraction.

Two hours later, and what seemed like a lifetime of listening to the same man speak over and over again, Jack's mouth hung wide open. He had heard of alien abduction stories before but most of those were hoaxes. Earth's history was filled with stories like that over the centuries. But this one hit closer to home somehow.

He tried to gather his thoughts. Somewhere along the line, a Dubor vessel visited Earth. Abducted, what, a small child and took him back to their home world? Then they raised him as their own and when it was time he entered the military? Jack couldn't wrap his head around any of it. It sounded absurd, yet there was Ben's record bright as day. He couldn't comprehend any of it. It would take some time to adjust to the thought.

"And this is genuine." Jack said. "No one's playing a trick on you?"

Norev nodded. "Carbon dating places these records to one hundred to one hundred thirty cycles ago. About the time of the great war on Shuka." She knew how this must sound especially to a race full of abduction stories that turned out to be false or made up.

O'Brien ran his fingers through his hair. "I'd like to have a look at that device for myself. If you don't mind." He said. "It's not that I don't trust you, I just want my people to take a look at it. If that person is human as he claims to be, the Dubor have some questions to answer."

Norev nodded. "Of course." She handed the device over to Jack. "Please be careful, that record is ancient."

Jack smiled. "I'll take care of it like it's my own child. I'll make a backup of the data crystal so I can play it back on the station's computer and have the computer do a full analysis. I'll have this device back to you within the hour."

"Agreed." Norev said. She bowed slightly. She watched as Jack walked out of her living area with a piece of Shukan history. Norev hoped Jack would keep his word and return the device intact without any harm done to it. It was fragile after all.

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"Yeah, and what do you want me to do with it?" Security Chief Jeff Killpack asked the major.

O'Brien smiled. "The archaeology department is off today. Their office is closed. I promised Norev I would have this device back to her within the hour. I know archaeology is a hobby of yours and thought you'd be interested in digging someone up for me." He said. "As a favor, not an order."

Jeff thought about it for a while. "A favor?" He asked. "What's in it for me?"

"A bottle of top shelf whiskey, Doctor Allen's finest." O'Brien replied. "I've been saving it for a special occasion. What better occasion than this?"

Doctor Allen was known for being persuasive with alcohol. Probably a bad combination considering the circumstances they all lived under. The stress was unbearable at times. The living conditions, while pleasant, were hectic. Living with aliens wasn't an easy task. Yet they all managed to do it somehow. Some just needed a little bit of liquid courage to get through the day was all.

Drinking on duty wasn't against regs, you just had to avoid the real hard stuff. Stuff that came out of the alien sections of the station. Human alcohol paled in comparison to it. It was like drinking water.

Jeff hadn't had a real drink in what seemed like months. He grudgingly accepted the assignment. Favor, he reminded himself, it was a favor. Of course it was, if it wasn't a favor, paperwork would have to be filed. Red tape would have to be cut through and drawn out. It was a long drawn out process to go through official channels especially if it turned out to be nothing. In a way he really hoped it turned out to be nothing. Those were the easiest kinds of things to debunk. Something told Jeff it wouldn't be that easy.

Taking the data crystal out of the device, Jeff placed it in the duplicator machine. This way he would have an exact copy of the data crystal to work from. He could more efficiently decipher what was going on with it this way as well, and transform and manipulate it any which way he wanted to in order to get to the bottom of whatever was in the data. Cracking his knuckles he settled in for a long night.

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O'Brien couldn't sleep. The mystery of the record keeping device kept him awake. He wanted answers and he wanted answers now. Jack wasn't normally an impatient person. But when it came to Earth history mixed in with an alien culture? You better believe he was feeling anxious about it.

He paced around his quarters trying to get his mind off of the issue at hand. Jack wanted to know why a human from Earth was fighting for the Dubor in a war that didn't even involve him.

Switching the vidset on, O'Brien tried to relax by watching some late night television. Unfortunately the only thing he could find was a documentary of his own life. How his approval ratings were after he took command of Crimson Gamma. What his love life was up to, or lack thereof. Jack chuckled at the thought. He wondered how much the documentary would get right and what they would make up to make it feel right. He got cozy and settled in, Jack was going to enjoy this brief look at his history. He was amazed to find that someone out there felt he was important enough to even make a documentary about him.

As he watched the television program, Jack's thoughts wandered. Who was this Ben Solizar? Why would he leave behind a recording from a long forgotten war? None of it made sense, and why did they find out about it now? Why not ten years from now? Or a hundred? Being a superstitious individual, Jack wondered if it had anything to do with the looming war to come on the Shukan home world. He hoped that wasn't the case, but it didn't stop him from wondering.

"Med Bay to Major O'Brien." Doctor Allen's voice came though the comm unit.

O'Brien sighed. *Now what?* He muted the vidset. "O'Brien here, go."

"Sir, Mister Killpack is here with me. He has an alien device in his possession and asked me to run a DNA analysis on it. We think you should get down here right away."

O'Brien stood up. He wondered if this was pajama worthy or if he needed to get into uniform. He figured it best to get into uniform. "I'll be right there. O'Brien out." Jack headed

to his closet to pick out a fresh uniform. This job, he thought, it's never ending. He was in part to blame, he did ask Killpack to do some investigation for him. He should be delighted at the thought of news regarding it. Something told him to dread what he was about to hear. Jack hated feelings like that.

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Med Bay was rather quiet at two in the morning, Earth Standard Time of course. Jeff Killpack and Matt Allen hovered over a station computer monitor. They were reviewing DNA sequences gathered from the alien device O'Brien had requested an analysis on.

As O'Brien entered Med Bay, the two men went to attention.

"At ease." Jack said waving his hand. It was too late for rank and protocol. It wasn't like this was any official business he had them working on. Jack reminded himself it was a favor, nothing more.

"Gentlemen." Jack began. "What news do you have that couldn't wait until morning?"

Matt looked at Jeff and nudged him. "Told you we should have waited until morning to bother the major."

Jeff snickered back. "I know, but I wanted to see him up and about."

"Gentlemen?" Jack said again. "I'm waiting."

"Right." Doctor Allen said. "I ran a DNA analysis on this device and the data crystal. There was DNA embedded into the crystal itself. When Jeff tried to copy that part of the data over, it wouldn't copy and the process failed." He explained. "When I decoded the DNA strand, I ran a cross check against our database to see if there was a match. One came up."

Jack was confused. Ben was related to someone on the station? "Who was the match?"

Matt hesitated for a moment, and then finally replied. "You sir. He is a relative of yours. Possibly a great grandfather if I'm understanding the timeline right."

Jack shook his head. "Impossible. I was born on Earth. I hadn't heard of Shuka until this assignment came to me. I can't be related to Ben Solizar. Impossible!"

Doctor Allen shook his head. "The DNA doesn't lie sir. On a hunch" he continued "I ran your blood work and DNA against known Dubor DNA we have, which is limited. There were one hundred and three genetic markers identical to Dubor DNA within your cell structure." Allen said. "You are part Dubor."

Jack took a step back. A half breed? He was part Dubor? That was absurd. He didn't even know about the Dubor until a little over a month ago. How could he have had the genetic make up of both a human and a Dubor his entire life and not know anything about it? Surely there had to be some mistake, some kind of misunderstanding. The samples must have been mixed up or...he was grasping at straws.

"How?" Jack asked. "How is that possible?"

"This is speculation of course." Matt started. "But, it would appear that Ben mated with a Duborian female and they, or he alone brought the child back to Earth to raise it as a human. You were born later as a result of that paring."

Now O'Brien's mouth really hung wide open. He sat down in a vacant seat as his legs were about to give way. "I don't even look like a Dubor!" Jack yelled.

Jeff chimed in. "It would appear that your human characteristics took dominance over the Dubor ones, sir." He said. "Like Doctor Allen said, the DNA doesn't lie. You are part Dubor."

Jack scoffed. Grilka had said he looked like a Dorf. He wondered if she saw something in him that he didn't see himself, or know himself until now. Talk about a wild way to jump start your morning. By the way, you're more alien than you think you are. Thank you very much.

He would have to report this to command. This little favor just turned into a big red roll of tape for Jack. He didn't like red tape. Didn't like it one bit. Obviously he would have to keep this under wraps for now. Who knows what would happen if word got out that he was part Dubor. The Shuka Religious Government would have a field day with this information. Jack had to play it safe. He needed to come up with a game plan.

"We're the only three that know about this." Jack said. "I need to keep it that way for a while until I can figure out what to do about this information."

Jeff and Matt both nodded their heads and responded. "Understood sir."

Jack planned to have a long talk with General O'Neil about this one. He had to, it was his duty to uphold the truth no matter where it led. Jack sighed. He was part alien.

The End