

The Medicine

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by Kyle Eggleston

Ketish moved through his ship like a tiger on the prowl. He was in search of something. Something he couldn't find anywhere else. It was something he needed and needed quickly. He had been away from his home world for a while now and that wasn't sitting good with him. Ketish didn't trust anyone else to take over his current task of occupying Ashlea Prime. *He* had to be the one to take charge of the situation. Put simply he felt like he was the *only one* who could adequately keep things running smoothly. It was a delusion of godhood at best, but that's how Ketish lived his life.

Coming upon a set of quarters, Ketish pressed a button that would open the door. As he entered he noticed a Dubor woman laying on a bed. She was sprawled out taking up the entire bed. Next to her was a container full of a green powder like substance. Ketish picked up the container and opened it. The aroma punctured his senses forcing his nose open to them. He couldn't help himself. Taking his index finger, Ketish put some of the powder on it and snorted it. He staggered over to a chair and sat down, relaxing as the drug entered his system.

The drug would last for a few hours. In the meantime Ketish would be unresponsive and unable to process anything that needed his attention. He was completely useless during these trips. Ketish didn't care, all he wanted to do was feel good and this drug made him feel good. It helped him forget about whatever he was worrying about. It helped him relax.

The female woke up from her trip and wandered over to where Ketish had left the bowl of drugs. Dipping her finger in, she snorted the dust and took another trip herself. Draping herself over Ketish she too rested from her worries. She was at peace.

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Jack O'Brien sat in his office. He looked over paperwork that he had been neglecting. There was all kinds of paperwork that needed his attention. It was a for his eyes only kind of job. Jack hated the paperwork but there was nothing he could do about it so he dove right in until it was finished. Most of the paperwork was for the dock workers to get a pay increase. He had to find a way in the budget to make that happen or they would go on strike.

That was the last thing Jack wanted. His workers had gone on strike before, it wasn't a pretty sight. When the dock workers were on strike, nothing got done. Since no one else knew how to do their job, they had all the power in the world at their fingertips.

Jack set the paperwork aside and looked at the incoming hail. "Incoming transmission." The computer announced.

Jack frowned. Who would be calling him this early in the morning? It was two in the morning Earth Standard Time. "Who is it?" He asked the computer.

"Contact unknown." The computer replied.

"Begin recording and answer the hail." Jack said.

His monitor switched to the face of Ketish. He was grinning as the monitor came to life. "Greeting major." He said. "I hope I didn't wake you, I know it's early your time."

That damn grin. Jack thought. *He always had that damn evil grin.* He sighed. "Ketish, what do you want? Plan on taking over any other planets I should know about?"

Ketish laughed. "You humans are all alike. The same humor. I find it amusing really." He paused. "Excuse me, your human side that is. You should show your Dubor side more, it would do something amazing for you." He grinned again.

That damn grin.

"What was it you wanted?" Jack asked. "I don't believe you've stated your purpose for contacting me ... yet."

"To the point, I can appreciate that. I have a medicine that Grilka needs." Ketish said. "I know she's back with you on that station of yours. She left without saying a word, and she left without her medicine." He held up a small vial filled with green dust.

"She's never spoken of this medicine before." Jack said. "Isn't it a bit odd that *you* want to give her some kind of drug? What if it causes some ill effect on her? What if it kills her? You said she left without telling you, couldn't this be some kind of revenge?"

Ketish shook his head. "I care about Grilka, Jack. You should give me more credit. I don't want any harm to come to her. But if she doesn't get this medicine, she will face some terrible side effects. I do not want to see her go through that." He paused. "I can come to your station if you'd like. That way you don't have to go anywhere, and you can be present when I give her the medicine. You can even have your doctor test it if that will make you feel better."

His assurance didn't make Jack feel any better, his concerns were still present. But if Ketish came to the station, Jack could have security follow him around.

"Let me talk to Grilka." Jack said. "I will get back to you." He closed the channel.

Standing from his desk, Jack rushed to the exit. He needed to find Grilka. If Ketish *was* telling the truth, Grilka could be going through withdrawals right at that moment.

Moments later, Jack was standing at the door to Grilka's quarters. He rang the bell and waited for Grilka to answer the door.

There was no answer.

Jack paused for a moment. Why wouldn't she answer her door? Jack ran the bell again.

Still no answer.

"Computer override the lock on Delegate Grilka's quarters." Jack ordered. "Security override authorization O'Brien Omega Six Two."

The door opened.

Jack rushed into Grilka's quarters and looked for her. He checked her bedroom, there was no one there. Her kitchen and living room were also empty. Her quarters were empty. Jack panicked. "Computer, locate Delegate Grilka." He said.

"Delegate Grilka is located in the Main Gallery." The computer responded.

Jack nodded and headed out the door.

The Main Gallery was mostly empty, there were a few shops open offering last minute drinks to interested parties. Grilka was standing at a tall table drinking a Vodka Martini with two olives. As she drank it, she noted that it had a unique taste to it. Grilka was unsure about the drink when the bartender suggested it to her but she gave it a try anyway.

"Grilka!" Jack shouted from across the room. He rushed up to her. Jack was out of breath. "Grilka, are you okay?" He asked.

Grilka looked up from her drink and locked eyes with Jack. They were bloodshot. "Jack, what are you doing here?" She asked as she took another sip of her drink.

"I had to check on you." Jack said. "Ketish contacted me, said you forgot to take your medicine with you when you left? What's that all about?" Jack asked. "What medicine are you not taking?"

Grilka locked eyes with Jack again. She hesitated for a second. The medicine Jack spoke of, it wasn't something the Dubor people spoke of to outsiders. But Jack really wasn't an outsider was he? He was one of them to some degree. Maybe it would be okay to talk with him about it, maybe it wouldn't. She had to take a chance.

"Okay Jack. I'll tell you about the medicine." She said. "But not here." Finishing her martini, she led Jack back to her quarters.

Inside Grilka's quarters, she walked over to a drawer and pulled out a small vial. It was almost empty of some sort of green powder. She held it up so Jack could see it. "This is the medicine that Ketish is speaking of. It's more of a drug really." She said. Grilka handed the vial over to Jack.

Accepting the vial, Jack looked at it. He opened it and took a whiff of the power inside. It smelled like old gym socks. He coughed as he tried to breathe.

"Not too much." Grilka said. "You don't want it in your system. You'll become addicted to it like I am." She was ashamed of being addicted to a drug, it was how her whole race lived though. "Everyone on Dubor uses this drug." She explained. "It was first introduced into our society over two hundred years ago. We've been addicted to the substance ever since."

Jack couldn't believe what he was hearing. An entire civilization addicted to a drug? Surely not. Yet here Grilka was telling him that's exactly what had happened. He looked at the vial again and frowned.

"The thing is." Grilka continued. "I'm running out and need more. You said Ketish contacted you?"

Jack nodded. "Yes, he's willing to bring you a fresh supply of the ... drug." He said. "Of course I want Matt to do a full workup on what he brings, and possibly this." Jack gestured to the vial in his hand. "I want to see if there's a way to get you off of this drug."

Grilka shook her head. "I need the medicine." She said. "If I don't get it I will die. Do you want me to die Jack?"

Jack shook his head. "No, of course not." He said. "But, I don't want to see you addicted to a drug that you can't live without. There has to be *something* the doctor can do to help you."

She shook her head. "No Jack, our doctors have tried. Nothing they have attempted has been able to wean us from the drug. So we kept taking it, and taking it." She sighed. It was no use trying to teach the Dorf what was going on, she felt hopeless.

Taking his comm unit out of his pocket, Jack tapped the button on it. "O'Brien to Doctor Allen."

The groggy voice of Doctor Matt Allen answered. "Yes, go for Allen."

"Sorry to wake you doc, can you meet me in Med Bay, roughly twenty minutes from now?" Jack asked.

"On it. Allen out." Matt said closing the channel.

Jack looked to Grilka. "Come on, we're going to Med Bay."

Grilka sighed again. "It won't do any good. But fine." She drank the last of her martini.

Twenty minutes later, Jack, Grilka, and Doctor Allen stood in Med Bay. Matt was looking at the vial of green powder. Taking a sample from the container, he placed it under his microscope and began an analysis.

After a moment, Matt looked at Grilka. "Grilka, tell me. What exactly does this um power do to you? What are its effects?"

Grilka shrugged. "When I snort it, it takes me to a magical world. It's kind of difficult to explain really. I guess you could say I have visions." She hoped her experiences with the drug made sense but wasn't certain.

Matt coughed. "You *snort* this powder?" He asked. "Like cocaine?" Matt gasped at the thought. There were still drugs out there that people snorted, he didn't expect to find one on an alien planet. "Does it keep you up for days?"

Grilka shook her head no. "No, it makes me fall asleep. That's how I have the visions."

"I see." Matt said. He looked to Jack with concern. "This drug is not only addictive, it is not good for the cardiovascular system. I'm surprised the Dubor have been taking it for so long and haven't had any problems. If a human tried this powder? They'd drop dead in a day."

Jack nodded. Unfortunately they couldn't compare aliens to humans. There really wasn't a comparison to be had. But that's what the doctor had to work with. "So it's a bad thing." He said. "I figured something was up with it." Looking to Grilka he frowned. "Grilka, what happens if you *don't* take the powder?"

Grilka shuddered. "I get the shakes really bad." She said. "Then the headaches come."

Matt took notes. "Withdrawal symptoms for sure." He paused as more readouts came though his analysis machine. "Unfortunately we have to get her more of the drug right away. She's almost out, we can't have her going through a withdrawal right now. I hate to say it, but the drug is needed until we can find a way to wean her off of it."

Grilka spoke up. "But what if I don't want to be weaned off of it? It's all I've known since I was ten." She said. "You can't take the visions away from me. They are a part of me and my people. It's who I am."

Jack and Matt exchanged glances with each other. It was an uncomfortable silence. They were thinking the same thing. Drugs were bad news. But to be hooked on them since you were ten? Oh boy that was even worse. Weaning Grilka off the drug wouldn't be an easy task, especially if she was refusing to do so.

"I'll contact Ketish." Jack said. He looked to Grilka. "How much powder do you need exactly?"

Grilka walked over to the doctor's desk and picked up the vial. "Two hundred bricks."

"Ay ay ay." Jack said. "Got it, like I said I'll get a hold of Ketish and um ... put in your order." He sighed. "Does this drug cost money?" Jack asked.

Grilka shook her head. "No, it grows naturally all over Dubor. You can get it literally from anywhere on the planet." Taking some powder out of the vial she snorted it. "If you'll excuse me, I need to go take a nap before I pass out." She exited Med Bay.

Jack stood there in shock. "Did she just ..."

"Get high in my Med Bay?" Matt said. "Yeah you saw that right."

"Oy." Jack said.

"She's your girlfriend." Matt said. Then paused. "You two *are* seeing each other again right?"

Jack nodded. "Yeah we are." He said. "Don't remind me. I'll bring you a sample of the drug when Ketish brings it. I want to make sure he didn't lace it with anything that might harm Grilka."

"Right." Matt said. "I appreciate that." Pointing to his office he added. "You want to make the call from my office?"

Jack nodded. "Yeah, the faster we get the drug here the better. Thanks Matt." He stepped into Matt's office.

Matt exited Med Bay to return to his sleep.

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Two days later, Ketish's shuttle docked with Crimson Gamma. As Ketish entered the Docking Port, he looked around. Security was waiting for him, of course. He sighed. Jack didn't trust him. Ketish felt hurt at the thought.

Behind Ketish was another Dubor who pushed a large cart of 200 bricks of the drug.

"Just wait here." A security guard instructed Ketish. "Major O'Brien will be here momentarily."

Ketish nodded. "Of course." He said.

So they waited. Sure enough, Jack came walking down to the Docking Port. He whistled as he saw the 200 bricks of drugs just sitting there out in the open. If it were any other drug, security would have had it bundled up as evidence and the supplier in the brig. But this was a different situation entirely.

"Ketish." Jack said as he approached the group. "Sorry to keep you waiting. I came as quickly as I could."

Ketish held out his hand. "Of course major." He waited for Jack to shake his hand. "I heard this is a human custom of greeting."

Jack shook Ketish's hand and nodded. "Yes it is." Jack said as he let go of Ketish's hand. "Thank you for coming with the medicine. Grilka really appreciates it." He paused. "Sorry she couldn't be here to thank you in person. I advised against it. I don't trust you and I think you are trying to harm her."

Ketish put a hand to his chest. "What? Me? Never!" Ketish said. "We do not hurt our own people. This medicine is sorely needed for her. I understand that." He paused. "It hurts me that you do not trust me Jack. I know we have had our differences ..."

Jack cut him off. "Differences? You *tortured* me!" He said. "And *killed* me! On more than one occasion. I will *not* forget that anytime soon. You're damn right I don't trust you. You're a monster."

Ketish frowned. "I thought we had moved past that Jack. I guess I was wrong. It is okay, I will be patient and wait as long as it takes for you to trust me." He paused and grinned. "I'm a very patient man. Now, can we deliver this medicine to Grilka?"

Jack shook his head. "Not until I've had my chief medical officer take a look at it."

Ketish nodded. "Of course." He gestured to the drugs. "Please take as many samples as you wish."

Jack activated his comm unit. "Teleport the entire case of 200 bricks to Doctor Allen."

"Aye sir." The waiting tech said.

Jack watched as the drugs vanished in a teleportation beam. He smiled at Ketish. "Feel free to enjoy our station while you wait for the testing to be complete." He said. "Once we verify they don't pose a danger to Grilka, you will be free to go. Understood?"

Ketish returned the toothy grin. "I will do just that major. Thank you." He turned to his subordinate. "Go back to the ship and wait. I am safe here. They won't harm me." The officer nodded his head, turned around and boarded the shuttle they had arrived on.

Jack left the Docking Port and headed to Med Bay to meet with Doctor Allen and see about the test results that were already underway.

Ketish walked towards the Main Gallery with two security officers in tow. He chuckled as he watched them follow him. It was ridiculous how no one on the station trusted him. But he would deal with it. Ketish wished he could pay Grilka a visit, but he doubted the major would allow such a meeting to take place. He would deal without.

Down in Med Bay, Matt Allen was hard at work testing all of the bricks that had been teleported to his lab. He was surprised to see exactly how much 200 bricks was. Matt wasn't expecting *that* many for testing, but he would do the work that was assigned him.

Jack entered the Med Bay. "Matt, what do we have?"

Matt chuckled. "Jumping the gun aren't we major?" He said. "I just go the bricks and fired up the machine. I should have an answer for you in three hours." He watched his monitor as results began pouring in. "If you'll excuse me, I'll be busy monitoring. You're free to stay, but three hours minimum is what we're facing."

Jack nodded. "Aright. Keep me posted." He exited Med Bay.

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Grilka sat in her quarters shaking. Ketish had arrived a day too late. She was going through some major withdrawals and she *hated* it. The sweating was increasing as she sat there wrapped up in a blanket. Jack had come to check on her an hour ago, it hadn't been bad at that point and she managed to hide the fact that she was going through it all. But now? She wasn't sure she could prevent anyone from seeing it. She needed her medicine.

"O'Brien to Grilka." Jack's voice came through the communications line.

Grilka shook as she reached for a button on the wall. "Jack?" She asked, her voice squeaked. "I'm sorry Jack, I'm not strong enough." Grilka began crying.

Jack's voice became rushed as he picked up his pace. "I'll be there soon sweets. Hang in there."

When Jack reached Grilka's quarters, he found her laying on the floor unconscious. Next to her was the remains of some kind of powder. Jack analyzed it with a scanner. She had tired to synthesize the drug and failed.

"Dammit!" Jack yelled. "Hang in there Grilka." He began performing CPR on her. "O'Brien to Med Bay, send a medic to Grilka's quarters, STAT!" He yelled. "Oh I wish the teleporters weren't murder machines! GRRR!"

Moments later, a medic entered Grilka's quarters and took over CPR. As Grilka came to, she coughed. Grilka opened her eyes, the first person she saw was Jack hovering over her.

"Jack?" Grilka asked.

Jack held her hand. "I'm here Grilka. I'm here."

The medic checked her vitals. "She's alive." He stated the obvious. "The doc gave me this before I left. It's clean, pure." He handed Jack a vial of the drug. "Give it to her, should clear up her symptoms."

Jack opened the vial and poured some onto his finger. He put his finger in front of Grilka who snorted the powder. She rolled over onto her back and gave a huge sigh of relief before passing out in bliss. She had her medicine, she would be okay.

"Transport her to the Med Bay, the doc can keep an eye on her there." Jack ordered the medic. The medic got a stretcher and put Grilka on it, he wheeled it out the door heading towards Med Bay.

Jack tapped his comm unit. "O'Brien to Allen, tell me you have some good news. Grilka tried to synthesize her own version of the drug and it didn't go well. Luckily the drug you sent down with the medic worked."

Matt's voice was that of concern. "Good, I'm glad he made it. That was just a small sample of what I've been able to analyze so far. She should be out for a few hours." He paused. "I know, I know, I'll keep you informed. Allen out." The communications channel closed.

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Three hours passed. Matt was on the horn talking to Jack. "The results came clean." He said. "You can teleport all of the bricks to her quarters at your earliest convenience." Jack could hear a frown over the communications channel. "I just wish she didn't have to take this drug. It's not medicine, major, it's a drug." He whistled. "What a way to live being dependent on a drug to survive."

Jack nodded his head. "Yeah I get it. How's Grilka doing?"

"She's fine." Matt said. "The drug took its effect like it should, she's been talking in her sleep about some sort of prophecy. Most of it's gibberish, but she mentioned a Dorf. I don't get it."

Jack considered what Matt said. "Huh." He said. "I'll have to see what she says when she wakes up. That is unusual. I'll be down in an hour to say hello. I need to have a chat with Ketish first. O'Brien out."

Jack walked into the Main Gallery, he spotted Ketish and the two security guards without problem. He approached them quickly. Ketish was drinking what looked like an Appletini. It was a green drink at best. It could have been something else, but he wasn't sure. He didn't really care. What he *did* care about was Ketish was keeping out of trouble.

"Enjoying yourself." Jack said to Ketish as he walked up from behind.

Ketish gestured to a chair at the table he was seated at. "Please join me major."

Jack hesitated for a moment. He didn't really want to join Ketish for a drink, but when in Rome. He sat down in the chair next to Ketish. A waitress came by and asked Jack what he wanted to drink. "Jack straight up." He said. The waitress walked away to get his drink.

"The drugs checked out." Jack said. "Thank you."

The waitress brought Jack his drink. Jack grabbed it and took a sip.

Ketish raised his glass to Jack. "You're welcome." He too took a drink from his drink. "Your alcohol pales in comparison to what you can find on Dubor. You must come visit our home world sometime, take in the sights and join me for a real drink."

Jack laughed. "Not while you have a planet under your control." He said. "No way in hell."

Ketish grinned. "We shall see what happens." He said.

Jack took another sip of his drink. Drinking with the enemy was new for him. But the enemy had just helped him help his girlfriend out. So what else could he do? "I do have to ask, why?" Jack said. "Why did you help Grilka?"

Ketish set his drink down. "I told you Jack, I care about her. I care about her well being. She matters to me. Before she was with you, she was with me. That's all. No Dubor has ever harmed another, if I didn't help her I would have harmed her. There was no choice in my mind."

"Interesting you say no Dubor has harmed another, when that's exactly what you did to me." Jack said reminding of the torture Ketish did to Jack.

Ketish shrugged. "You are a Dorf, so technically a Dubor still has not harmed another full blooded Dubor." He said. Ketish watched as Jack took the information. Jack downed the rest of his whiskey.

"I see." Jack said. "You jackass! I want you off my station, now! You delivered the goods, the drugs. Now I want you to go back from where you came."

Ketish stood from his chair. "I understand major. It will take time for you to come around and see things my way. But mark my words, it will happen." He walked away from the table back towards the Docking Port.

Jack sat there in disbelief. How could the man attack him like that? He was mad, angry, upset and a bunch of other emotions filled him. Jack was not pleased with Ketish. If he could, he would have knocked Ketish on his ass. But that wouldn't have been the right course of

action. Not after Ketish helped out his girlfriend, getting her the necessary drugs to keep her alive and well. Keep the addiction alive. He sighed. Addiction. It was difficult to accept, but he had to. His girlfriend was addicted to a drug and there was nothing he could do about it.

Jack stood from his chair and took a look around. It was probably a bad idea of drinking the whiskey while he was still on duty, but it was something he had to do to keep a peaceful face. But then again he had just called the leader of another world a jackass. So there was that.

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Jack entered Med Bay and walked towards the bed Grilka was assigned to. She was alert and sitting up. She grinned as Jack approached.

“Dorf!” Grilka said.

Jack kissed Grilka and held her hand. “Yes my dear. How are you feeling?”

Grilka rubbed her head with her hand. “Aside from a pounding headache, I’m fine. Now that I have my medicine, thanks to you.”

Jack sighed. Yeah thanks to him. He tried to smile, but found it difficult to do. “It was really Ketish.” He said. “It was all Ketish. I just had to make sure he didn’t lace it with anything that would make you more sick.”

“Well then thanks to you *and* Ketish.” She corrected herself. “I wouldn’t be here without the two of you working together.”

Jack cringed at the thought. He *had* worked with Ketish to get Grilka what she needed. If Ketish hadn’t offered the drug freely, Jack didn’t know what he would have done about the situation. He wondered what other surprises Ketish had in store for him. Jack would rather not think about that now though, he had other things to worry about.

“I just came to check on you. I’ll let you get your rest.” Jack said. He kissed Grilka again. “I’ll see you in the morning.”

Jack exited the Med Bay. As he walked he thought about what had transpired over the past twenty-four hours. He frowned at the thought that he had allowed a dictator to board his station. It was meant to be a station where people could feel safe, be free from tyranny and the like. Yet Ketish has been permitted to board simply because Jack’s girlfriend was in danger. What did that say about *him* as a leader? What did that say about his command? Jack would have to think that one over.

For now, he was pleased beyond words that Grilka was safe. That she had gotten the drug that she needed. Even though Jack was supporting her addiction to the drug, which he wished he didn't have to do, he was helping her stay alive. It was a weird thought to be sure, Jack was certain of that. He only hoped there would be a way in the future to wean Grilka off of the dependency of the drug.

Jack could only hope such was possible.

The End