

What Do You Know?

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by Kyle Eggleston

Shuka Planet, Dubor Settlement

Toff and Coff were working in their dwelling on Shuka. Toff was busy with a mechanical rice picker, and Coff was working on a water transportation system for the garden they had planted. She was tired of hand watering everything. As she worked on the water system, she thought of creating a water purification system as well. The water had a flavor that she was not used to. Toff hadn't complained about the water that she knew of, at least not yet.

As they worked on their respective projects, the sound of a ship overhead could be heard. Toff looked to Coff, they thought the same thing. Sky Divers were coming. A term they used to indicate strangers that came in ships. Toff hoped it wasn't the Dorf that came and visited them last year, that encounter did not go over well.

Toff walked outside to investigate. "I'll be back." He said. "If it's something exciting, I'll let you know."

"Sounds good." Coff said not looking up from her work. She was interested in the ship, but if it turned out to be nothing, why bother? Coff began humming a tune her mother taught her when she was a child, it always soothed her. La dee dee, la dee da, la la la, dee da da... and so on.

Walking outside Toff looked up and stared at a shuttle hovering over the dwelling. Hovering over him. A spotlight shined down on him. "Attention Dubor citizen." A female voice said. "This is Religious Government Leader Meleth. Stay where you are."

Toff froze. What the hell did the government leader want with him?

A second later Meleth teleported down to the surface. She was standing next to Toff. "Toff." She said. "That is your name right?"

Toff nodded. He looked at Meleth and frowned. She stood about a foot taller than him. "Yeah that's right." He confirmed. "We haven't done anything wrong." He gestured around him pointing out the garden they had planted. "You could say we've been improving the area."

Meleth shook her head. "You don't belong here." She said. "The war is over. Your attempted takeover of this planet, is over." Meleth put a hand on Toff's shoulder. "I expect you to leave Shuka in twenty-four hours."

Toff did a double take. The war was over? He had his suspicions but now it was confirmed, by the enemy no less. But in this era of peace between their two peoples, if peace was even the right word, the prophecy could come true.

"You're kidding right? Making a joke? I've heard about the Shuka sense of humor. But I must admit, I am not grasping it." Toff said smiling.

Meleth shook her head. "I'm telling you the truth. There's no joke here. If you don't leave, I will have a security contingent down here in no time." She said. "Don't tempt me. It will happen."

"Twenty-four hours." Toff repeated. "We'll see about that." He walked back into the dwelling slamming the door behind him.

Meleth sighed. Radioing her shuttle, she teleported back to it. The shuttle left the area bound to return in twenty-four hours if Toff and Coff didn't vacate the premises. She would come back with full force if she needed to. Meleth wasn't afraid to do that.

As Toff entered the dwelling, Coff looked at him. "She can't be serious." Coff folded her arms across her chest. "She can't make us leave."

"Well, she seemed pretty serious to me." Toff admitted. "Even threatened to bring security with her in twenty-four hours if we don't leave." He sighed. "I don't know if we have a way out of this. Might as well pack up and just get out of here."

Coff shook her head. "You saw the latest message from Ketish. He *wants* us to stay and continue what we started." She handed Toff a datapad to remind him of what the message said.

Toff read over the message again. He nodded. "Yeah, I know Ketish wants to keep his options open." If Ketish's current plan didn't work out, he wanted to be able to have a planet to conquer. Shuka was that planet. Shuka was his backup plan. "He won't be happy if we leave, will he."

Coff shook her head. "No, he won't. We need to keep this post. No matter what happens, we can't let that woman take this post from us. It's that important."

Toff scoffed. "I thought you didn't care about this post. What changed?"

Coff pointed to her designs. "I've never been able to work on whatever I wanted to before. This is the first time in my life that I've been able to just do whatever it is I want, and I don't want to lose that!" She exclaimed. "Besides, what if we're meant to help usher in the

prophecy? We're already here ... what more do we need besides the Dorf? And I'm pretty sure we have a way of getting him here whenever we need to. Have you thought about that option? Like at all?"

Toff rubbed his chin. Walking over to his desk, he opened a drawer and picked up a device. Pressing a button on it, he activated the device. Toff smiled. "There, that should give us some protection."

Coff was confused. She looked at the device and frowned. "What ... what did that just do?" She asked. "I don't think I've seen that device." She walked over to Toff and looked at the device in his hands. Nope, it didn't ring a bell for her.

"Cloaking device." Toff said. "We're hidden from eyes and sensors."

Coff nodded her approval. They had a fighting chance. "Now contact Ketish and let him know what's taken place."

"Right." Toff said. "Scrambler code sixty-four."

Crimson Gamma

Jack O'Brien and Jeff Killpack sat in the Over The Sea Restaurant in the Main Gallery. Jack had a seafood plate in front of him that he was devouring, Jeff was eating a steak. As they ate, Jack thought about all of the things that he had going on. Too many meetings, that much was for sure. Jeff was worried about station security as usual. The two just couldn't have a relaxing lunch, both men were worried.

Picking up a piece of shrimp, Jack dipped it in cocktail sauce and ate it. "Performance reviews are coming up next month." He said. "I hear good things from you and your department. Since we've been back, security concerns have dropped by thirty percent all over the station. Even in the back lots don't seem to be *that* much of a problem these days. You're running a tight ship."

Jeff smiled. "I learned from the best." He gestured to Jack. "And I believe it's *you* who is running the tight ship, not me." He ate a piece of his steak. "Now if only I could eat like this *all* the time. That would be terrific."

Jack laughed at the comment. He knew how it was being on a lower pay grade. The pay was lousy for the chief of security. It was something he had planned on addressing with the performance reviews. Killpack was in for a nice surprise. Jack wished he could tell the chief that, but it was too soon. The reviews were still a month away. Giving away such information now would be jumping the gun, no, Jack would have to be patient.

"Security to Lieutenant Killpack." A security guard's voice came over the wire.

Killpack sighed. "Speak of the devil." He pressed a button on his comm unit. "Killpack here. What's up Gabriel?"

"Sir." The ensign began. "Seems we have a lurker problem down in back lot thirty-six. About six of them are hold up in there. They refuse to leave. Thought you should know."

Jeff nodded. "Got it, I'm on my way." He stood up from the table. "Sorry major, duty calls."

Jack stood up as well. "Mind if I tag along?"

Jeff shook his head. "Nope, don't mind it at all. You hae a weapon?" he reached for an extra gun and presented it to Jack. Jack reached for his own weapon.

"I'm packing." He said. "Ever since I've been back, haven't been able to keep mine at home. I feel safer this way for some reason. Never know when Ketish will arrive unannounced or otherwise. Best to be safe."

"Right." Jeff said. "Shall we?" They left the restaurant for back lot thirty-six.

Back Lot Thirty-Six

Jack and Jeff entered back lot thirty-six from the access tunnel. The access tunnels connected all of the back lots together, yet it was still easy to get lost. Jack pulled out his gun and got ready for anything that could come their way.

"Who's there?" Jack yelled out, his voice echoed down a loon hallway. The acoustics were amazing for being that part of the station. There was no response. "Hey, I know you're down here. I got the report. So show yourselves."

There was a loud noise from a pipe falling down. "Dammit." A voice said louder than intended.

"Dude, you're getting us in trouble." Another voice said.

O'Brien sighed. "We can hear you..." He said.

"Aw hell man." A third voice said. "Now they know we're here."

"Idiot, they *knew* we were here the whole time." The first voice said. "Alright, we're coming out!" It was the voice of a woman.

As the group of six exited from their hiding place, the woman who was clearly their leader spoke. She stood six foot tall easily, without high heels. No one wore high heels especially down in the back lots. She had green eyes and red hair. "Major O'Brien." She said. "We weren't doing anything illegal down here. I promise you that."

Jack nodded. “Just being here is illegal enough miss. This is a maintenance access point, meant *only* for station personnel. I haven’t seen you in any of the station rosters. Who are you? Who are these people? He gestured to the group.

The woman held out her hand. “Sam.” She said then pointed to her group. “Buster, John, Elise, Alice and Noodles.” She said introducing her group.

Jack held back a smile. *Noodles*? He thought. Who on earth would go by the name Noodles?

“His mother used to call him that, it stuck.” Sam said, reading Jack’s mind.

Jack took a step back. She could read his thoughts. “Don’t tell me, telepathic.”

Sam nodded her head. “Yes. We managed to ... escape extermination that was the telepathic war. Been on the run ever since.”

Jack sighed. The telepathic war. When Earth went on an all out offensive against anyone who could read minds. It was a horrible thing that took place. No one wanted it to happen, but it just did. It was a dark part of Earth’s history one that no one could reverse. Jack was ashamed of that part of Earth’s history.

“You ... people ... and your kind did us dirty *major*.” Sam accused. “The *military* is always at fault. Mark my words, someday your organization will be taken down. There will be nothing you can do about it, and I will sit back and laugh.”

Jack chuckled. “Yet *you* decided to come to *my* station, run by the *military*. Interesting.” He paused. “I’m not sure why you are here. I get it you’re on the run. It would be well within my duty to turn you in you know.”

Sam shook her head. “Typical bureaucrat. You’re a puppet major. The government, the military, they *both* have you on a string. The problem is you don’t see it. You can turn us in, but trust me it won’t get you anywhere. We’ll find a way to break out of whatever jail you toss us into.” She paused and smiled. “There hasn’t been a jail I’ve been in that I haven’t escaped from.”

Jack nodded. “Tell you what, find some suitable accommodations on the station and maybe we can overlook this infraction.” He said hoping Sam would understand and accept his terms. If she didn’t then he would have to throw her in the brig. Jack didn’t want to do that. “You’re right, the military did you wrong.” He admitted.

Sam frowned. “We don’t have any money.” She said. “We stowed away on a transport that left the Moon to get here.” She looked around. “We thought we could just hide out here for a bit, but that obviously won’t do.”

Jack frowned too. “Well without suitable accommodations, I’ll have to put you in the brig.” He looked to Killpack. “Unless Jeff here and I just happen to turn our heads. I hear there’s some rooms in Section twenty-three, they’re not much to look at, but they’re free.”

Sam couldn’t believe what she was hearing. “Seriously. Just like that.”

“Just like that.” Jack said. He pointed to his head. “You can read my mind, am I lying?”

O’Brien and Killpack turned their backs on the group of runaways. “Nice weather we’re having today.” Jack said.

Jeff laughed. “It’s environmentally controlled sir. It’s just station standard.”

“Oh I know Jeff, just making smalltalk.” He turned around to see Sam and the others had gone. “And *that’s* how you let runaways keep on the run.” He patted Killpacks back. “Come on, I’m sure there are other more important things to look into. Let’s go.”

They exited Back Lot Thirty-Six.

Command & Control

Kate Monson stood at her post in C&C. She looked at the computer monitor in front of her. It was the usual. Ships asking permission to dock. Ships asking permission to leave dock. Just the run of the mill happenings for a Tuesday.

Then something caught her eye. A ship was attempting to leave dock without permission. The docking clamps were still engaged, the docking tentacles were still attached to their ship.

Kate opened a channel. “C&C to the Star Ship Astria Queen. Do not attempt to leave the station without proper authorization. I repeat do not attempt to leave. There are proper channels you need to clear through to be able to undock your ship. Please respond.” She waited for a response. There was none.

Kate groaned. Why did they have to be stubborn? She opened a channel down to the docking port. “Docking Port Sixty-One, release that ship before it takes part of the station with it! Now!” She yelled into the channel.

“Trying to commander.” The dock master said. “The controls are frozen. That ship is in danger of going critical.” He said. “They’re putting too much strain on the docking clamps. I’m detonating them.”

Outside, at Docking Port Sixty-One, the docking clamps exploded in a brilliant flash of light. The alien vessel ripped away from the energy tentacles that were hooked to it. As it moved away from the station, the ship attempted to go to FTL. It exploded immediately.

Kate stood there with her mouth open. “Scramble the search units.” She ordered. “I want any survivors found as soon as possible.” She walked over to the security console and keyed up a schematic of the docking ports that ran along the sides of the station. There had to be a reason for the docking clamps not to release. She hoped it wasn’t sabotage, but anything was possible these days.

Reading through the logs, she noticed something odd. The ship’s docking clamps had been fortified with extra shielding. It wasn’t proper procedure, in fact it was quite outside the box and not recommended in order to prevent this exact situation from happening. Someone had authorized it, and it wasn’t her. Kate slammed her fist on the console.

“Report!” She yelled.

“Search and rescue pods are away.” An ensign answered. “Should find out if there are any survivors soon commander.” She turned back to her station.

Kate nodded. “Good.” She said.

“O’Brien to C&C, Kate what the hell is going on up there? Did a ship just explode?!”

“Yes sir.” Kate responded. “The Astria Queen attempted to leave without disengaging the docking clamps or energy tentacles. I have a search and rescue team out right now.”

“Good.” O’Brien said. “I’m on my way.”

Kate sighed. Today was not going the way she wanted it to. Life rarely went the way she wanted it to. That was just one of the perks of the job. Was it a perk though? She wondered. It was possibly a curse. Yes, a curse made more sense than a perk. Kate chuckled to herself. She was silly.

“Park to C&C.” Madison’s voice came through the comm channel. “We have several fractures along the hull where the ship exploded. Our shields didn’t protect us. I have a crew working on it. I’ll keep you posted as things progress. Park out.”

Kate smiled. She liked it when her officers were doing their jobs efficiently. She knew Madison would contact her as soon as the hull fractures were taken care of. Knowing the Dock Workers, it would be in no time.

Twenty minutes later, O’Brien stepped into C&C, things were hectic as usual. “Report.” He said to Kate.

Kate handed him a datapad. “We’ve recovered twenty-three escape pods so far major.” She said. “The fractures along the hull are being repaired, should be done within the hour. The alien ship, Astria Queen has been destroyed. We’ll have to put the survivors up someplace until a replacement ship can come for them.”

O'Brien nodded. "Seems like you have everything under control." He said. Jack headed for the door. "I guess I could have just gotten all of that over the comms, but I wanted to take a look at the damage. I don't envy the Dock Workers, they'll be busy for hours. If you need me, I'll be on contact range. I need to go talk to someone." He exited C&C.

Kate shook her head. Everything could have been done in a report. Oh well, she thought, at least O'Brien knew the information she had.

Section Twenty-Three

O'Brien walked around Section Twenty-Three. He came upon the main housing office. Walking inside, he found a woman sitting behind a desk. "State your request." The woman said without looking up.

"I am looking for some grifers who might have come though here recently, like within the last hour?" O'Brien said.

The woman looked up. "Oh, Major O'Brien." She said. "I wasn't expecting you to come down to this section of the station. I would have come to you."

O'Brien waved his hand. "Nonsense, I know you're busy down here. I just need to know if these people made it here safely."

"The telepaths you mean?" The woman tapped her pen on the desk in front of her. "Yeah, they came down here. They said *you* sent them. Guess they thought that would have given them some special treatment or something. Well it didn't. They did find a place to stay though. Guest Quarters Sixteen Alpha. You can check in on them if you want your mind probed."

Jack nodded. "That's great, thank you." He said. Turning around, he exited the office.

Walking down the corridor, Jack frowned. It was in a state of disarray. Crates were everywhere, some were blocking doors even. Jack wondered how any part of the station could get in such a state. He *thought* he had run a tighter ship than this. But there were bound to be places that just weren't up to code he guessed. Something to address at a later time.

Coming to the guest quarters, Jack rung the bell and waited. A moment passed and Sam answered the door. She looked him up and down and frowned. "Don't tell me you're here to arrest us, *now*." She said.

Jack shook his head. "No ma'am." He said. "I simply wanted to check on your people."

Sam scoffed. "My people." She said. "Don't you realize before the eradication of my people, there were thousands of us? Do you understand what your organization did to us?!"

She was angry. "I live on the run because of you and your military. It's ... tiresome and ... frustrating." Sam sighed.

Jack nodded. "I understand." He said. "I know this probably isn't the right time for a request."

Sam smiled. "You want me to read your mind. Maybe pull up a repressed memory?"

Jack looked shocked. How did she know?

"Telepath, remember?" Sam laughed. "Yeah, come in. I can do that for you. I owe you *something* for allowing us to stay here. Even if it is for a little while."

Jack entered the guest quarters and looked around.

They were average quarters. Nothing fancy. If the occupants wanted fancy, they could visit the Main Gallery and buy some things from the shops on the station.

"Please have a seat, major." Sam said.

Jack sat down on a couch. He waited further instruction.

Sam hovered over Jack. Taking her hands, she hovered them over his head. "Clear your thoughts. How far back do you want me to dig?"

Jack thought about it for a moment. "Hmmm." He said. "I'm not sure. Do you have the ability to I don't know, search my thoughts for something I can't actively remember or recall? Something I can't bring up to the surface, like it's buried or something?"

Sam placed her hands on Jack's head. "Yeah, I can do that." She said. "This might feel a little ... weird." She smiled.

Jack sighed. Weird was always somewhere in the works. "Okay, go for it." He said.

"Ooommmm." Sam hummed. "I'm seeing you sitting in a room, you are being tortured." She said. "Ketish is the Dubor torturing you. You are one of them."

Jack frowned. "Yeah, that I know. I said something I *didn't* know."

"Right, let me concentrate." Sam said with a scolding tone. After a moment, she gasped.

"What do you see?" Jack asked. "What do you know?"

Sam forced herself to close the mind connection. "No," She said "It's too dark. I can't go any further." She fell to the floor sobbing.

Jack rested a hand on her shoulder. "I'm sorry."

Sam scooted away from him. "Please, don't touch me. It only tries to relink the psychic bond." She said. "Please leave."

Jack stood and exited the quarters. It felt like thousands of eyes were watching him. Talk about a creepy vibe. As he walked down the corridor he kept looking behind him. *What did she see? What does she know?* He asked himself.

Back in her quarters, Sam collapsed to the deck unconscious. Noodles approached her carefully, kneeling down, he checked her pulse. She was alive, barely. Walking over to a communications device, he contacted Med Bay. "I need a doctor." He said. "Section twenty-three, Guest Quarters Sixteen Alpha."

"On our way." A medic said on the other end of the line.

Ten minutes passed, Doctor Allen showed up at the guest quarters. Walking inside, he looked around. *These quarters are just terrible.* He thought. Why anyone would want to live there was beyond him.

Approaching Sam, he knelt down and checked her vitals. Her breathing was labored, but she was breathing. Her heart rate wasn't normal. Pulling out a device from his medical bag, Matt placed it on her chest. He activated the device, after a moment her heart rate returned to normal.

Looking to Noodles, Matt frowned. "I want to take her to Med Bay where I can keep an eye on her for a few days. I don't like some of these readings."

Noodles hesitated. "Is that ... absolutely ... um ..."

"Necessary?" Matt finished the man's sentence. "Yes, I'm afraid it is." Looking to Sam, he wished he had brought someone with him, and with the teleporters offline there wasn't an easy way to get her to the Med Bay. "Care to help me?" He asked.

Noodles nodded. "Yes." He said.

They picked Sam up and placed her in a wheelchair. Matt smiled at the young man. "Thank you. I'll take her to Med Bay for observation. You're welcome to come with me, if you'd like."

Noodles shook his head. "I better stay here, my people will be concerned about her."

"Alright." Matt said. He wheeled Sam out of the quarters and down the corridor.

Med Bay

A day later, Matt was concerned about Sam. She hadn't regained consciousness. Every scan he ran on her came back as normal. But if that were the case, she would be awake and walking around. But she wasn't, Sam was in some kind of coma that Doctor Allen couldn't even begin to explain.

“Chief Medical Officers Log, May 6, 2247. Recorded under security lockdown Zed Seven. I have a patient that I cannot seem to understand. Her name is Sam, surname unknown. She’s in a coma at the present moment. From what I can tell, she’s a telepath. Telepaths were eradicated over thirty years ago according to the archives. How she managed to survive is beyond me. I am under a strict doctor patient confidentiality clause not to disclose this to anyone. Hence the security lockdown. As far as anyone is concerned she is just a patient. End Log.”

Matt walked into the quarantined area where Sam was laying and took some readings. No change that he could detect. He sighed. Matt wished he could figure out what the hell was going on with Sam. He hated seeing people in such a condition, granted it was all he saw most days; but it was heart wrenching for him to experience.

As Matt stood over her, he began to experience ... something.

His mind opened up, he was standing in an empty field. The sky was overcast. It was kinda dark from what he could see. Squinting, Matt couldn’t see much beyond the horizon. Where was he? What was he doing there? More importantly, how did he get there?

“Where am I?” Matt asked out loud.

“In your mind.” A female voice said from behind.

Matt turned around, Sam was standing there with her arms folded. “My mind sensed your presence and reached out to you. I apologize if it was a bit unsettling. I didn’t mean to shock or surprise you like this, I wanted to make you feel comfortable.”

“Why?” Matt asked.

“So we could talk.” Sam said. An oak bench appeared. “Come sit down, we need to talk.” She said sitting down on the oak bench.

Matt shrugged, what could it hurt? He thought. Sitting down on the bench, he looked at Sam. She was a beautiful woman. Which was creepy to think about because they were in his mind. Was he imagining he was attracted to her, or was he actually attracted to her? Matt couldn’t tell.

“What did you want to talk about?” Matt asked, he rested his arm across the back of the bench.

Sam smiled. “What are you going to do with my people?” She asked. “I know you know we’re telepaths. I mean, you’ve scanned me and could tell that from your scans. My higher brain functions are different than ... *normal* humans. I can’t change who I am, I am me.”

Matt smiled. “Yes you are, you.” He agreed. “I, like many other humans, do not agree with the eradication order that took place in 2217. Many of us did not know what was

happening. We knew telepaths existed, but thought they posed no threat to the rest of us. The government felt ... otherwise.”

Sam scoffed. “You can’t apologize for the entire human race. You’re only one man.” She said.

Matt agreed with the statement. He *was* only one man. A man who did not have the authority to even attempt to make an apology for the eradication of an entire race. Telepaths deserved a right to live and survive in the present political climate. They always had a right to live and survive, but well they had been destroyed. Or so he thought.

“What were you doing before you collapsed?” Matt asked. “You’re in a coma and I do not know how to bring you out of it.”

Sam turned away. She did not want to answer the question. She did not want to remember what she had felt in the major’s mind. It was too dark to relive. But Matt was facing her down, she had to say *something*. “I was performing a scan of the major, Major O’Brien.” She said. “I found some ... dark, deep dark thoughts I was not expecting. It affected my ability to keep control and I believe I just passed out from the experience.”

Matt nodded. “I see.” He replied. “What was it you saw?”

Sam shook her head. “Oh no.” She said. “I don’t think I should tell you that information. It’s rather personal.” She shrugged. “If the major wants you to know, he’ll tell you.”

Matt laughed. “I doubt you even told him.”

Sam realized he was right. She hadn’t told the major a thing she had seen, she simply had asked him to leave her alone before passing out. That was something she must rectify, the major deserved to know what she saw. The dark dark thing she saw.

“I can pull myself out of the coma.” She said. “If I do so, will you give me a meeting with the major? I have to ... apologize to him and make up for it.” She couldn’t believe the words that were coming out of her mouth. Growing up, she was trained to *not* trust any non telepath. They were considered *normals* and normals were not to be trusted no matter what they said to you. But the major was different somehow. She could feel it. She knew it from reading his mind.

Matt stared at Sam. Could he trust her? Nothing she had done said he couldn’t trust her, so there was that. He smiled. “Alright, you have a deal. Come out of your coma, and I will arrange a meeting between you and Major O’Brien.”

Sam smiled. “Agreed.”

Matt came to, he was still standing over Sam’s body. “What a head rush.” He said.

“Indeed.” Sam said waking up. She sat up and smiled. “We have deal, don’t forget it.”

Matt nodded. “Right.” Taking his communications unit out of his pocket, he hailed the major. “Doctor Allen to Major O’Brien.”

The voice of Major O’Brien came over the comm unit. “O’Brien here. Go.”

“I have a telepath that wishes to speak with you sir. Her name is Sam?”

O’Brien froze for a moment. The telepath wanted to speak with *him*? The doctor must have misheard the request. There was no way in hell Sam would want to speak with him, not after what happened. Whatever she saw scared the hell out of her. That was enough for him to run the other way.

“Major?” Matt continued. “Can you hear me?”

O’Brien spoke, his voice was shaky. “Yeah, I can hear you doctor. Um, have her escorted to my office. I’ll speak with her there. Are you sure she’s okay?”

Matt nodded. “Yes sir. She was in a coma, but she’s doing much better now. I’ll send her to your office at once. Allen out.”

Sam looked to the doctor. “Thank you.” She said.

Matt smiled as he helped her stand up from the medical bed. “Alright, you have your meeting. Don’t screw it up.” He teased. “Do me a favor.” Matt said.

“Anything.” Sam said.

“Come back in for a follow-up in ten days. There’s some strange readings coming from your hippocampus, I’d like to checkup on it later.” Matt said. “I don’t want anything happening to you. You’re a dying breed, might as well keep you alive as long as possible with your memories intact.”

Major O’Brien’s Office

Jack was pacing in his office, the lights were off. Sometimes Jack felt he thought better in the dark. He wondered what Sam was going to tell him. It could be anything really, she had seen Ketish torture Jack in that cell on Dubor. What else did she know about his past? What could she possibly know that he did not know about his life?

Sam entered Jack’s office. “Major?” She said. “I can barely see.”

Jack frowned, time to face the music. “Computer, lights. Full illumination.” The office lights came up. Jack sat down on a couch in the corner of his office. “Sam.” He said. “When

Doctor Allen told me what he had made you promise, I about lost it. I won't lie. I'm scared shitless of what you happen to know about me that I don't."

Sam walked over to the couch and sat down next to Jack. As she locked eyes with Jack, memories of what she saw flashed before her eyes. She shook her head to snap out of it. "No reason to be scared major." She said. "We've all been there before, I get it. I understand." She paused. "I'm the first telepath you've ever met, aren't I."

Jack slowly nodded his head. "Yeah, there are others who have relationships with telepaths from thirty years ago, I am not one of them. You are my first telepath, and it scares me of what you might know." He looked Sam in the eyes. "What do you know?"

Sam fought past the fear and spoke plainly. "I know you went through hell on the Dubor planet. Ketish wanted to know so much information from you."

Jack nodded. "Yeah, I don't remember much from those interrogation sessions. Doc says I probably blocked them out because of all the death. They killed me, placed another heart in my chest; badly I might add. Then they brought me back to life. Many times."

Sam nodded. "I know." She hesitated. Would the major want to know more? She was obviously there for a reason. So why the hell not? "They put something in your brain Jack." She said. Then quickly corrected herself, "Major."

"Jack is fine." O'Brien said. "What do you mean they put something in my brain?!" Jack asked. "The doc went over my brain with a fine tooth comb. He said there isn't anything in there that shouldn't be there!" He stood up mad as hell.

Sam leaned back. *Okay maybe the truth was a bad idea.* She thought. "I am so sorry major." She said. "I don't know what's *in* the implant? But it's there. It's meant to fool scanners from what I can tell. You might want to make sure you're not broadcasting any kind of signal." She shrugged. "Like I said, I don't know what the device does. But it's active and it's doing *something*."

Jack's anger grew. "You were afraid to tell me this? You said it was something dark!"

Sam shuddered at the memory. "Yes that." She said. "You might want to sit back down for this."

Jack shook his head. "Oh hell no missy. I'm not sitting down. Tell me. I can take it." He stood his ground, firm and unmoving. "Don't make me beg."

Sam grabbed a glass of water off of the table in front of her and drank from the glass. She prepared herself. "You are not the you, that you thought you are." She said rather cryptically.

Jack stared Sam in the eyes and folded his arms. “What? What on Earth does *that* mean?!”

Sam sighed. *I can do this.* She thought. “Don’t shoot the messenger.” Sam said. “I’m just telling you what I know.”

Jack nodded his head. “Yes, and? Go on!” He said anxiously.

“You’re a clone Jack.” Sam said. “You’re not the real McCoy. You’re a fake, a fraud, not the genuine article.” She frowned. “I am so sorry you had to find out this way.”

Jack couldn’t believe his ears. He sat down on the couch with his head in his hands. *A clone?! He thought. A clone?! How could I be a clone? There is no way in hell I am a clone,* he thought.

“Believe it and buckle up buttercup.” Sam said., then regretted saying it the way she did. “Sorry about that. But the real you is still on Dubor. You never left. Somewhere you, the real you, is suffering at the hands of Ketish.”

“How can this be?” Jack asked. “I have memories of growing up on Earth. Joining the military academy. All of it.” He gasped for air. “How can I be a clone?! Cloning procedures don’t clone memories, those can’t be copied.”

Sam shook her head. “Not on Earth they can’t.” She said. “But on Dubor, it would seem they have overcome that ... limitation. I’m sorry Jack.” She said. “Come to think of it, the implant in your brain might have something to do with the cloning process. A way of keeping you alive maybe? Perhaps a way of making sure your DNA doesn’t break down? I don’t know. I’m no doctor, all of this is just a guess. Possibly a terrible guess at that, but still a guess.” She rubbed her hands together like she was cold. “I um, should let you go. There are things you need to think over.” She stood to leave.

Jack stood from the couch. He stormed out of his office without any further word. He was mad, and rightfully so. To find out you were a clone of someone else? Talk about a slap in the face. He made his way towards the Med Bay.

Med Bay

Doctor Allen was sitting in his office when Major O’Brien came through the door. Jack walked into Matt’s office and slammed his fist against his desk. “I’m a fracking clone!” He yelled. “A clone!”

Matt looked at Jack with his mouth agape. “What?!” He grabbed a scanner and began running it up and down Jack’s body. “That’s what Sam had to tell you?!” Matt read over the scans, nothing jumped out at him at first.

Jack waited patiently for the doctor to complete his scans. “On top of that? I have some kind of brain implant. There’s a chip or something in my head! What’s up with that?!”

As expected Matt’s scans didn’t show the brain implant. “I’m not detecting an...”

Jack cut him off. “No of course you aren’t. It’s designed to be undetectable. That bastard Ketish designed it that way! No wonder why he’s so interested in me. I’m his fracking clone!” He stormed into an exam room. Matt followed Jack. Jack removed his uniform top. “I want a full body scan run. Do your magic doc. I want to know if what the witch said is true!”

Matt nodded. He smirked at the major calling the telepath a witch, but that was to be expected. What was different to Jack would easily be classified as mystical or witchcraft.

Three hours later, Matt was finished with his scans. As he waited for the major to get dressed, he wondered how he was going to give the news to Jack. He had the right to know the truth, to know the findings that Matt had come up with.

“Tell it to me straight doc. Is she right?” Jack asked.

Matt looked up from his microscope and nodded. “Yeah, she’s right. You’re a clone. I don’t know how I didn’t see it before.” He paused. “Well no, I do know why. I wasn’t looking for markers typical in cloning processes. When I *did* look for those markers, they’re there plain as day. I’m sorry Jack.” He said.

Jack was trembling. “And ... and ... the implant?” He asked.

“That I can’t confirm. If it is programmed to camouflage, it is hiding very well from my scans.” Matt paused as he thought over his findings. “Ketish hid that sucker well. Its light years beyond any tech I’ve ever seen. There hasn’t been a device I haven’t been able to pick up, *until now*.”

“Alright.” Jack said. “Thank you doctor.” He accepted the truth, it was hard but he accepted it.

Dubor Home World

Jack O’Brien sat in a cold, dark, damp prison cell. He didn’t know whether it was day or night. The time had escaped him. Once he used to know how many days he had been cooped up in this damn cell, but now he wasn’t so sure. There was no skylight or window to the outside world. There was no way of telling what time of day it even was. Just no way.

The door to his cell opened. A guard entered. “Dorf. It is time.”

Jack stood, his shackles preventing him from standing fully upright. He gestured to them. “Hey ugly, why don’t you take these off and let me show you what time it is.” Jack said

in a mad tone. He was pissed, beyond pissed. The aliens had kept him for who knows how long and he was getting tired of it.

The guard entered the cell, took out a key and released Jack. "You will come with me." He escorted Jack out of the cell and down a long dark corridor. The guard prodded Jack with a weapon every so often to keep him walking.

Jack tried to keep track of how many doors they passed, but failed to do so after twenty. So many doors. So many cells.

As they came to the end of the hallway, they entered a large chamber. There was a chair in the center of the room. A bright spotlight shone down on the chair. It was brighter than the noon day sun. Jack blinked at the light as he tried to get used to it.

The guard forced Jack to sit down in the chair. Once he was seated, the chair's restraints were activated confining him. Jack was unable to move. A belt around each of his limbs, a chin strap preventing him to turn his head. He was confined good.

"He will be with you, shortly." The guard said before exiting the interrogation room.

Jack sighed. He had seen the inside of the interrogation chamber before, countless number of times. Each time, he was executed and then brought back to life. Jack didn't want to go through any of that again, he was growing tired of it. But something told him he wouldn't be allowed to get off so easily this time around.

Ketish entered the room. "I trust you are alive and well from our last interrogation session, Jack." He said.

Jack spat. "Go to hell!" He yelled.

Ketish laughed. "Oh human. You are amusing. So amusing in fact that each version of you I come across, there's always this certain charm about you. I've yet been able to determine where it comes from. But no worries, I *will* eventually find out the source of it all. You are going to show me where it all comes from human. Jack. You will show me in time."

Jack tried to shake his head but was reminded that he couldn't due to the jaw strap around his chin. "I'd tell you to go to hell again, Ketish. But I doubt you would listen to me!" Jack yelled at his jailer. "Why don't you just let me go? I'm sure my people are worried about me."

Ketish laughed. "Oh I wouldn't say that Jack." He said. "I'd be surprised if your people are worried at all. Everything is as it seems."

Jack sighed. *When will this madness end?* He wondered.

"Shall we begin ... again?" Ketish asked, he smiled his big toothy grin.

AskEarly dot NET

Here we go! Jack thought. Time to die!

The End