

The Trance

220

by Kyle Eggleston

Norev sat in her quarters alone. She didn't know what the message from Nokev meant. What did he mean she had to *kill* Jack O'Brien? Jack was a colleague, a friend. She would never cause any harm to come to him. Not intentionally anyway. No, there must be more to the message than she had seen. She had come out of the trance so abruptly, probably due to shock, that she didn't hear everything that Nokev wanted to tell her.

Drawing a bath, she soaked in the hot water hoping it would relax her body. Relax it enough to a point where she could rest and have another vision. *That's what it was right?* She thought. *A vision of sorts?* She wasn't sure. The bath did nothing but make her more agitated that she wasn't able to get to that place she needed to be.

Next, she tried some tea. It was a variation of a tea that was found on her home planet. It always seemed to soothe even the most difficult of situations. The tea didn't help either. She was becoming frustrated. What caused her to enter the trance to begin with? She typically had control over visions when she entered them. But this one was different. This experience was unique.

Up next, she tried her hand at meditation. Sitting cross legged on the floor, Norev crossed her hands over her chest holding her shoulders. She hummed ever so lightly to herself. The humming calmed and relaxed her. But she still didn't enter into a trance. Something was still off. She couldn't put her hand on it, whatever it was.

Laying down on the floor on her stomach, she stretched her limbs out as far as they would go. Norev began crying. She was desperate to learn the meaning of the message she had seen. What did it mean?! She wondered. Why would Nokev, a man of high stature in her culture, wish for Jack to be dead? None of it made sense to her.

Ding Ding. Her door chime rang. Norev looked at the door. She really didn't want to answer it. She didn't care who was on the other side of the door either. Norev had a serious mission to complete. She had to find out why Nokev wanted Jack dead.

Ding Ding. The door chimed again.

Standing up, Norev crossed the room and answered the door. There was no one there. It was possible that some kids had just been fooling around. The humans had a term for it,

doorbell ditching, she believed it was. It had happened on a number of other occasions. Norev didn't think it did any harm, just was an annoyance at best. She turned to go back in her quarters when she noticed a small package on the deck.

Norev stared at the package. It was black in color and an oblong shape. What was it? She wondered. Picking it up, she brought it inside and set it down on her coffee table. Norev stared at the package for a moment before deciding to open it.

Inside the orb was a note. It was from Grilka.

"This might help you in your quest." The note said.

Norev shook her head. How did Grilka of all people know about her vision? Let alone that she needed help to get back to it?! It made no sense. She would have to seek out Grilka immediately to find out what she knew. Looking inside the package, Norev saw the green powder drug that the Dubor were addicted to. Was Grilka expecting Norev to snort this substance just to get back into her trance? Madness.

Norev picked up the orb and walked out of her quarters. She and Grilka needed to have a talk.

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Jack O'Brien took a stroll in the Main Gallery. He was walking among the different vendors looking for a gift. He wanted to surprise Grilka for their one year anniversary. Jack was looking for something specific. He knew it was highly unlikely any of the shops would have anything from her home planet. She was the only Dubor citizen aboard Crimson Gamma.

Stopping at a small trinket shop, Jack smiled at the shopkeeper.

The shopkeeper tried to sell Jack various of his items that weren't selling. No one had a need for a quadrupedal stretcher or a smooshmat, whatever *that* was. He was about to leave the vendor's cart when something caught his eye. A locket. Jack picked it up and admired it.

The locket was made out of gold with sterling silver interlaced in a heart shape. Jack smiled at the locket. It was perfect. "How much?" He asked.

The vendor looked at the merchandise and smiled. "Five gold pieces or five credits. Your choice." He said. It was a fair price, Jack thought.

Pulling a credit chip out of his pocket, Jack handed it to the vendor. "Take ten. Keep five of it as a tip." He said smiling. Jack knew the vendors needed all the help they could get these days.

The vendor grinned in response. "Thank you major." He said. "That is *very* generous of you to offer that." He paused. "I'll throw in a Duborian flower just because." He picked up what looked like a rose crossed with a poppy and handed it to Jack. "Never know when a pretty girl with a locket will need a flower."

Jack was surprised. "Where did you get a Dubor flower?" He asked. "There are no trade runs coming in or out of Dubor."

The vendor chuckled. "I have my ways." He explained. "I spent a year on vacation on Dubor. It was tricky, no one liked me there. I had to dodge the law a few times. But it was worth it." He nodded. "Have a pleasant day." The vendor turned to another customer in need of his services.

Jack placed the locket in his pocket and carried the flower in his hand as he walked. Today was turning out to be a beautiful day. Pulling out his comm unit, he contacted Grilka. "O'Brien to Grilka."

Grilka's voice came over the unit. "Yes Jack, what is it?" She asked. Grilka didn't have the way with words that most aliens had. She was rather, harsh. She wanted to know what the caller wanted, there was no ulterior motive behind her question.

Jack chuckled. "What are your plans for this evening? I was wondering if you'd like to join me for dinner. The Fresh Market Cafe around twenty-one hundred hours?"

Grilka smiled. "I would love that Jack. I'll see you then."

"Perfect. O'Brien out." Jack grinned. He had a date.

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Down in engineering, Madison was swearing up a storm like a sailor. Nothing was going her way today. She stormed across the deck with a wrench. Hitting a valve with the wrench she swore at it. "Take *that* you son of a bitch!" She yelled. "You mother fucking piece of shit!" Madison slammed the wrench down on the valve until it loosened and turned for her.

"Finally!" She yelled as she turned the valve the rest of the way to the final on position. Her fellow dock workers didn't pay attention, it was just one of those days for Madison. Pulling a comm unit out of her pocket, Madison activated it. "Park to C&C."

Kate Monson's voice came through the other end of the communication line. "Monson here, what do you have Madison? Hopefully some good news."

Madison smiled. "Yeah, try the externals now. They should be up and running."

"One sec." Kate said and then reported in. "Yep the aft quarter shield grid is back online. Good work Madison. C&C out." The channel closed.

Madison nodded. *Good, she thought. Now onto the other hundred things I have going on.* She groaned just thinking about what she still had to do before lunch time. Walking back across the maintenance room, she glared at one of her workers. "Hey!" She yelled. "Get away from that!" Madison ran over to where a dock worker was fiddling with something he shouldn't be touching.

As Madison approached, her anger grew. "I just fixed that you idiot!" She yelled.

The man stuttered his response. "Sorry ma'am." He finally said. "I saw...saw something off and wanted to help correct the problem." He was sweating from being anxious. Madison hadn't yelled at him like that before.

"Jeff, if there's a problem you come and get me. Don't go trying to fix it yourself." Madison said. She was exhausted after working a twenty-four hour shift. She took in a long breath. "Now, what's going on? What did you find out of place?"

Jeff pointed to a datapad in his hand. On it was an engine schematic. "There's a minor discrepancy in the antimatter chamber. It seems like a small thing, but it could lead to major problems down the road."

Madison sighed. She knew it had been a mistake to convert the station's main power source from nuclear fusion to a matter antimatter mix. It was new tech that was untested. The nuclear reactor wouldn't have ever had this problem. "Alright, let's see what you've got." She said taking the datapad from Jeff.

"Holy shit." She said. "That's no *minor* discrepancy, Jeff." Madison said. "Lock it down right now, the core could go unstable at any moment."

Jeff went back to work on the mix chamber. He wished he could hit it with a wrench like his boss, but something told him he needed to be a bit more cautious in his approach. "We might have to take the mains offline." He said. "Until this is fixed."

Madison weighed the pros and cons of taking the main power source to the station offline. Kate wouldn't be pleased with it. She opened a comm channel to C&C again. "Madison to Kate... We have a problem."

As Jeff deactivated the main power, he sighed as the computer announced the power outage.

"Warning. Main power offline. Main reactor core offline. Secondary backups enabled. Emergency life support online. Backup power online." It listed all of the secondary systems.

Madison sighed. Kate was indeed upset over losing main power, but she was understanding of the situation.

"Let me know as soon as the mains are back online." Kate said. "We can't afford not having shields if something goes wrong." She paused. "I'll inform the major."

Madison nodded "Understood. Park out." The channel closed. She immediately began assisting Jeff with repairs. The day was just going to get longer and she *still* hadn't been to bed in over twenty-four hours. Reaching into her pocket, she pulled out a stim pill and popped it in her mouth. Swallowing the pill she shook her head. *I swore I'd never use these, but well I need them right now.* She promised herself not to use another one for at least two days. If she could get some sleep that is.

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Norev walked down the hallway where the delegates stayed. They were separate from where the official ambassadors lived. She didn't know why that was, just that was how the station's living quarters were separated from one another. Just like how the officers and crew of the station lived in a different part than everyone else.

Coming to Grilka's quarters, Norev pressed the door chime and waited patiently.

Grilka opened the door. She was wearing a silky purple robe. She looked rather relaxed for the time of day. Looking at Norev, she noticed the orb in her hand. "Oh I see you got my gift." She smiled at Norev.

Norev nodded. "Were you expecting someone?" She asked.

"Just you." Grilka said. "Wondering how to use the medicine?" She asked referring to the drug.

Norev outstretched her hand with the orb in it trying to give it back to Grilka. "Yeah, about that. I don't think I need this." She said.

Grilka didn't budge. "Come in."

Norev walked into Grilka's quarters. She watched as Grilka sat down on a couch. Norev joined her. "It's not that I don't appreciate the gift ... but I don't know how it will help me."

"Brace yourself." Grilka said. "Nokev came to me in a vision. We talked for a while. Yes I used the medicine to get into that state. But he came to speak with me, he told me to seek you out and help you with your vision."

Norev was speechless. "What?" She said. "When was this?"

"The other night." Grilka said. "He didn't say what your vision was about, but it sounded pretty urgent. We didn't talk much about anything but *you*." She concluded. Grilka rubbed her legs. Her robe moved with her movements.

Norev was beside herself. "How did Nokev know that I wouldn't be able to get back into a trance?" She asked. "I've tried every method I know of, and I haven't been able to do anything about it."

Grilka gestured to the orb in Norev's hands. "Use that my dear." She said. "Just a little bit for your first trip. Don't overdo it." Grilka instructed. "You are free to use my quarters for your journey, if you wish." She paused. "Or, I can come with you if you'd like on your journey." Grilka held out a hand to Norev.

Norev took Grilka's hand. "I'd like that." She said.

Taking the orb from Norev, Grilka opened it. Inside was the green powder. Taking out a small amount she placed it on her small finger. She placed it up to Norev's nose. "You must snort the powder to gain its full effect." She instructed. "It won't hurt, I promise."

Norev took hold of Grilka's hand and guided her finger to her nose. She snorted the drug. Grilka then took some more of the drug, a larger serving and snorted it as well. The two passed out on the couch in a trance.

Blackness engulfed the two. It was pitch dark blackness. They were standing on a floating platform high above ... who knew what.

"Grilka?" Norev asked.

"Yeah." Grilka responded.

"Where the frack are we?" Norev asked.

Grilka shrugged. "Either in my mind or yours, I do not know which." She looked around. "Maybe we're in Nokev's mind. If that's the case, he has a serious need to redecorate. It's so gloomy in here."

"I'm glad you approve." Nokev's voice came from behind.

Grilka and Norev turned around to see Nokev standing there. "How long have you been standing there?" Norev asked.

Nokev shrugged. "Long enough." He looked to Grilka. "Thank you for bringing her, although I didn't expect you to join her on this trip. It's okay though, no worry from me." He then looked to Norev. "I take it you need some kind of explanation for my instructions to you."

Norev nodded her head. "The humans have a word for situations like this. Duh." She smirked. "Yes Nokev, I'm in need of more information than what you said. You can't just tell

me to kill Jack and be done with it.” She paused as she looked at Grilka who was freaking out. “I need some kind of reason why.”

“He what?!” Grilka yelled. “What do you mean *kill* Jack?” She stared at Nokev waiting for him to answer. Dark clouds came overhead. They were feeding off her emotions of the situation. It began to rain.

Nokev looked up to the dark sky. He was not a fan of rain. But he had no control over it. He was a guest in ... one of their minds, either Grilka or Norev he did not know which. He put his hands up. “It’s not my fault.” He said. “I’ve been roaming the world for a spell ... you could say a *long* spell. When I learned that Jack is a clone of the *real* Jack, I knew one of them had to be destroyed. So balance can be restored to the universe.”

Norev’s mouth dropped open. “Major O’Brien is a clone?” She asked.

Grilka nodded. “Oh yeah, about that. Um, so yes he is. The *real* Jack is on the Dubor home world being tortured and surgically altered by Ketish’s nurses. We should probably find that one and kill him. Put him out of his misery.”

Norev was in tears. “What?!” She screamed. “Just because you fell in love with the clone doesn’t make it easy to simply do away with a life, Grilka!” *The nerve of her.* Norev thought.

Nokev sighed. How was he going to explain to Norev that Grilka’s plan is exactly what he was going to suggest. No man should be put to such torture and expected to live through it. It would be a mercy killing at best. “I agree with Grilka.” Nokev finally said. “The Jack you know is not the same man as he was when he left Crimson Gamma last year. Just like how his clone is not the same man. Each have lived two different lives when they split.”

Norev couldn’t believe her ears. “Jack is part Shuka.” She said. “We cannot kill him!”

Nokev and Grilka shared a look. “Did you know about this?” He asked.

Grilka shook her head no. “Not at all. It makes sense though, the prophecy states that a hybrid will bring peace to our worlds. What if the hybrid isn’t human and Dubor only, but human, Dubor, *and* Shuka?” She mused. “It could totally make sense.” She paused. “Does Jack know?”

Norev shook her head. “No, he doesn’t.” She paused. “Wait a second, Nokev. How are you even here? You disappeared. Where have you been?”

“My being here is of no bearing on what must be done.” Nokev said. He could tell Norev wasn’t going to just take that as an answer to her question. He sighed. “Fine. I was sent back in time to my *own* timeline. I have lived on from that time to what you consider the present.” He explained. “I can’t seem to ... die.”

They were getting off topic. “Listen. We need to travel to Dubor, find Jack and kill him. He will thank us for it.” Nokev said.

Grilka and Norev looked at each other. They had a decision to make.

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Major O’Brien sat in the Fresh Market Cafe. He was waiting for Grilka to show up. It was twenty-one hundred hours on the dot. The exact time they agreed to meet. Jack tapped his foot on the floor as he waited for his date to show up. Five minutes passed. No Grilka. Ten minutes passed, still no Grilka.

“Computer, locate Delegate Grilka.” Jack said.

“Delegate Grilka is in her quarters.” The computer responded.

Jack stood from the table and left the cafe.

Moments later he was standing in front of Grilka’s quarters. He rang the door chime. There was no answer. Jack began to panic. The last time this happened, Grilka had been passed out on the floor due to a drug imbalance in her system. He was worried the same thing was happening again.

Jack overrode the door controls to her quarters. As the door opened, he stepped inside to find Grilka and Norev passed out on the floor. He checked their breathing and pulses. They were still alive, thank goodness. Picking up the orb shaped box, Jack looked inside. It was the green powder that Grilka had been using. *Did they both go on a trip?* He wondered. He was about to call the doctor when Grilka moaned. She was waking up.

“Jack.” Grilka said. “What’s going on? Why are you here?”

Jack looked at Grilka, he helped her stand up and hugged her. She was okay. “I was so worried about you.” He said. “We had a date, twenty-one hundred hours, remember?”

Grilka gasped. “Oh my, has it really been that long?”

Jack nodded. “What were you two up to?” He asked.

Norev moaned as she came too as well. “Woah, that was some vision.” She said. Noticing Jack in the room she grew uncomfortable. There was no way in hell that she was going to tell him about it, or at least the important part. That information had to be worked in easy, not just spoken the first chance she got. She looked at Grilka for help.

“Yes, we were on a vision quest.” Grilka said. “Isn’t that what humans call them?”

Jack nodded. "Yes, a vision quest." He responded. Looking at both Grilka and Norev, he paused. "Is that what you two were doing? Going on a vision quest?"

Grilka nodded. "Yes, that's exactly what we were doing Jack." She smiled. "I'm sorry I missed our date. I did not mean for the ... vision quest ... to go that long. It was so early when we began."

"I understand." Jack said. "I'm just glad to see that the two of you are okay. We can go on a date another time." Scratching his head, he asked the only question on his mind. "What did you learn on your vision quest?" Jack asked.

Grilka and Norev exchanged awkward glances. They really didn't want to tell Jack about the plot to kill him, the real him. The one still on Dubor. But eventually he would find out. Jack just wouldn't find out from them if they could help it.

"That's personal." Norev said, thinking fast. "We have to talk it over a bit before letting anyone in on what happened. It's just too personal." She said.

Jack nodded his head. "I understand."

"They're hiding something from you Jack." Holo Ketish said. "They're lying."

Jack tried to get the thought out of his head. Grilka wouldn't lie to him. Norev wouldn't lie to him. He was the only one who would lie to him. It had been proven in the past and would surely be proven in the future. "Go away." He whispered.

"What was that?" Grilka asked.

"Nothing." Jack said. "Nothing at all. Just talking to myself." He glared at Holo Ketish. "Well it's getting late, I'll let you two go. Grilka, let's meet up tomorrow for lunch or something."

"I'd like that." Grilka said.

Jack exited the quarters with Holo Ketish not too far behind.

Norev let go a deep breath she had been holding. "That was close." She said.

"Indeed." Grilka said.

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Down on Shuka, Nokev sat in a far off mountain dwelling. Putting a silver orb away, he smiled. The news had been delivered to the necessary parties. That's all he could do. Nokev wished he could help out more, but that just wasn't possible.

Ever since he had returned to Shuka, in the past, Nokev promised himself that he would not interfere with other people's lives. He had done that enough. Now he was far away in the Kerta Mountain Range. It only felt right that he settle down there in the place named after his second wife and child. Oh how he missed them.

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Jack entered C&C, he was looking for a status report on the station's power systems. Walking up to Kate, who was still on duty, he smiled. "Status report commander." He said.

Kate handed Jack a datapad. "Systems came up to full power within the last hour sir." She said. "It's all there on that datapad. Madison assures me this was a one time fluke and we shouldn't experience anything like it again."

Jack nodded. "Good." He reviewed the datapad, nothing seemed out of the ordinary.

"What are you looking for Jack?" Holo Ketish asked. "You won't find it you know."

Jack tried his best to ignore Holo Ketish, but found it difficult to do so. He tried singing songs in his head, reciting poetry, famous quotes etc. Nothing ever seemed to work. It would seem he would have to just get used to it all.

"Alright, I'm turning in for the night." Jack said. "Keep me informed if anything else goes crazy around here." He left C&C.

Kate sighed. Looking at the clock, she still had another three hours before her shift was over. She so wanted to call it a day. Kate imagined what she wanted to do when she got back to her quarters. A long bath followed by a long sleep. It sounded like bliss to her.

Crimson Gamma spun in the dark of night that was space. Everything was right for once. Sure there were challenges ahead, but for the most part everything was right. Everything was good again.

The End