

Prophecy

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by Kyle Eggleston

Restless Night

Jack O'Brien sat in his office. He was having trouble sleeping. It was two in the morning and he still hadn't gone to bed yet. His usual bedtime was around twenty-two hundred hours. Jack had been contemplating the damned prophecy both Obshi and Ketish had been telling him about. He was currently reading and comparing both Dubor and Shuka lore on the prophecy. They both basically said the same thing. An off-worlder would bring about a peace neither world had known in centuries. They would combine the races to learn to live in harmony.

"Are you busy major?" Norev's voice could be heard from the doorway.

Jack looked up and shook his head. "No, not at all. Just catching up on some reading. What can I do for you ambassador?"

Norev entered Jack's office and sat down across from him. "There's something you need to know, about your DNA." She began. Not knowing exactly how to word it, Norev just said it. "You are part Shukan as well. You're not just Dubor and Human.",

Jack dropped his datapad. "What?!" He exclaimed. "What are you talking about?"

Norev nodded her head. "It's true. Nokev came to me in what you would consider a vision, he told me about it all. I also know you are a clone." She paused.

If Jack could drop his datapad a second time, he would. "What?!" He exclaimed again. Jack did not know what to say. "I wasn't aware anyone else knew about that! Nokev told you all of this?" He couldn't believe his ears.

Norev nodded. "Yes, he told me and Grilka when we were in that trance. I didn't know when would be a good time to tell you, or even how to tell you. So ... I'm here now telling you." She paused and lowered her head. "I'm sorry, I should have come sooner."

Jack frowned. He was saddened that one of the people he trusted didn't think she could come to him with this knowledge. Jack hoped Norev could come to him with anything, he

would be understanding of it. This news was partially new to him, but him being a clone was not new. That he knew.

“There’s more.” Norev said.

“Go on.” Jack replied. If there was more, he wanted to hear about it, all of it.

“Nokev told Grilka and me that you have to die.” Norev said. “He wasn’t clear if the real you, or the clone you has to die. To be honest, it’s all a little bit confusing.” She looked around Jack’s office. He hadn’t changed much since taking over the position of station commander. She preferred it that way.

Jack rubbed his temples. What the hell was Norev going on about?! “What do you mean I have to die?”

“I’m not sure.” Norev said. “Nokev wasn’t very clear on the details of it all. The trance ended quite early too, so I didn’t get to ask for specifics. I’m sorry, that’s all I know.” She folded her arms unsure of how to proceed further.

Jack stood from his desk and walked around his office trying to think. As he did so, Holo Ketish appeared. “Life’s a bitch isn’t it.” The hologram said.

Jack sighed. Now was not the time for him to be distracted by the likes of a hologram. Yet he waited to hear what it had to say to him. The hologram had a tendency to ramble on at times, Jack was sure this time would be no different.

“Ketish knows all that you need to hear.” Holo Ketish said. “All you have to do is go visit him.”

Jack looked at Holo Ketish and frowned. He was afraid the hologram was right. Jack hated the idea that a hologram was right. It just didn’t feel right to him. But what did he know? He was just a fracking clone after all. Hell, the real Jack O’Brien probably was the one to complete the prophecy, not him.

“We need to go to Dubor.” Jack finally said. “Ketish will have the answers we need.”

Norev nodded her head. “Yeah that makes sense. I’ll wake Grilka.” She stood to leave. “I mean the faster we get there the better, right?”

Jack agreed with her. “Right. We need to leave as soon as possible.” He watched as Norev exited his office. Jack wondered if they were going to accomplish anything, like anything good with this information. He would find out soon enough.

Journey To Dubor

Jack, Grilka, and Norev climbed aboard an Atlantic Fighter and headed away from the station towards Dubor space. Jack wondered deep inside if they should have taken the Fresno instead. But the Fresno was needed to guard the station not go off on some halfcocked mission that could get them all killed if Ketish was having an off day.

There wasn't much to talk about on the short trip to Dubor. Jack felt a little hurt over the fact that Grilka and Norev both didn't come forward until now. He looked at Grilka, she avoided eye contact with him. She knew what she had done, or in this case *hadn't* done.

Jack sighed. "Look, I'm upset. I get it. But I will get over it." He said. "Whatever experiments Ketish is doing to the *real* Jack O'Brien. They need to be stopped at all costs. If we find him in such a state that his quality of life would be diminished in anyway, I'm authorizing use of deadly force. We will need to kill him. It's what I would want done. Trust me we'd be doing him a favor."

Grilka and Norev both nodded. They were thinking the same thing, what had they done? Obviously the warning from Nokev was important and to be taken seriously. Jack obviously believed in Nokev's words, why else would they be on this mission.

"You're going to fail." Holo Ketish whispered in Jack's ear.

Jack groaned. He did not have time for this nonsense. He focused on the mission at hand and tried his best to ignore the hologram. What business did it even have swarming around in his head at that moment? To Jack's knowledge it had no business then, or ever.

"One misstep and you're all dead." Holo Ketish said. "Kaboom, consider your life over."

An hour later they were coming up on Dubor. Jack slowed the ship. "Nearing Dubor." He announced. "Opening a channel." He pressed a few buttons on the control panel in front of him. The comm relay responded accordingly. Jack cleared his throat.

"Attention Ketish. This is Major Jack O'Brien requesting an audience." Jack said out loud. He waited for a response, any response. Even if that response was weapon fire Jack hoped it wouldn't be weapon fire. They were under a status of truce with Dubor at the present moment in time. Jack hoped Ketish would uphold his side of the deal. "I repeat, this is Major Jack O'Brien requesting an audience with Supreme Leader Ketish." Jack repeated. He looked at Grilka hopefully.

"He'll respond." Grilka said. "You're like a pet project to him. He likes you."

The vidscreen crackled static and then came to life. The face of Ketish appeared on the screen. "Jack, you could have just called from your station. There was no need to come personally. But I suspect that just wouldn't do. What do you want?"

Jack smiled. “Nice to see you too Ketish.” He said. “We have some unfinished business Ketish. I request an audience and clearance to land on your home soil.” It was a simple request, a chance to talk, a chance to clear the air between them; and to find the real Jack O’Brien.

Ketish nodded. “I grant your request.” He said. “I’ll provide landing instructions and will meet with you in an hour. Until then enjoy what hospitality my world has to offer. The guards will take good care of you. Ketish out.”

Jack felt a lump form in his throat. It felt like they were walking into a trap, one Ketish had waiting for them. All it took was time for Jack and the others to actually come and find out what that trap was, and here they were. He turned to face Grilka and Norev. “I want you both to stay aboard the fighter. Keep a monitor on my life signs, at the first sight of trouble take off and head back to the station. I either come out of this alive or I don’t come out at all.”

Grilka began to object, but decided against it. Jack knew what he was getting himself into. She simply nodded. Whatever Jack wanted, she would follow. Norev also nodded her head. They were in agreement.

Jack received the landing instructions and proceeded to land the fighter down on Dubor soil. He felt anxious. Something inside him told him this was a trap. But he ignored that thought. This was something he had to do.

Jack was greeted by Ketish’s personal guards who escorted him to a waiting area.

The Meeting

An hour later a guard entered the waiting area. “Ketish will see you now.” He said to Jack. The guard was a typical Dubor, loyal to Ketish and would do anything to defend his master.

Jack nodded in response. “Good, take me to him.”

They exited the room.

They walked down a very long hallway. It was lined with various art pieces famous to Dubor history. Each art piece depicted a war of some sort. At the end of the hallway was a picture of Earth surrounded by Dubor spaceships. Jack found it an odd rendering. Ketish obviously thought they had won the confrontation between Dubor and Earth.

They continued walking.

At the end of the hallway was a large set of doors. The guard turned around and stood on one side of the doors. “Enter and you will meet with Ketish.” He said. He waited patiently for Jack to enter the room.

Entering the chamber, Jack looked around. It was a giant throne room. Ketish was seated on a large throne in the center of the room. On either side of him were two large torches with blue flames shooting out of them.

“Welcome to Dubor, Jack.” He said. “I hope your wait wasn’t too unpleasant.”

Jack smiled. “Ketish. No, it was alright. Just your typical waiting room. I’d like to get down to business.” He said. “I’ve come for my other self. The real me. I know he’s here. Heaven knows what you’ve been doing to him.”

Ketish grinned. “He’s been my very cooperative guest Jack.” He said. His teeth were sharp as ever. Jack winced at the thought of those chompers doing something to any living being. He hoped he would never find out first hand.

“Take me to him.” Jack demanded. “This isn’t open for debate. I want to see him.”

“First things first,” Ketish countered, “I see you came alone. Why did you leave Grilka and Norev in the shuttle? I’ve scanned your ship and detect two female life signs. One Dubor the other Shuka. It must be them.” He leaned forward on his throne.

Jack sighed. “To keep them safe from the likes of you.” He said.

“Let’s change that.” He snapped his fingers. Grilka and Norev were teleported into the main throne room. They were standing next to Jack. Grilka and Norev looked confused and disorientated for a moment. They gained their bearings quickly.

“It’s okay.” Jack assured them. “It’ll be okay. I’ll protect you.”

Ketish stood from his throne. “This way.” He led the three guests to another large set of doors that opened as he approached. Outside the doors were two guards standing watch. They stood at attention. Ketish led them down a long darkened hallway. Again more paintings lined the wall, more conquests of the Dubor home world.

Ketish spoke as they walked. “Yes, it is a safe space here for you all. I have no animosity towards any of you. Especially *you* Jack.” He said. “You play an important role in uniting our peoples together as one. The prophecy clearly states that a leader of an alien world would bring about peace between three civilizations. You are that person.”

At the end of the long hallway was another set of doors with two more guards posted at those doors. As they neared the set of doors, Ketish paused. “I want you to prepare yourself for what you’ll find on the other side of these doors. We’ve taken some ... let’s say liberties when it came to your other self.” He smiled. “I wanted to see what he was made of and he didn’t let me down. Open it up.”

The guards complied with the order. The doors opened to reveal another large room. A bed was in the middle of the room. A man was laying on the bed. Tubes were coming out of his

arms. Jack approached the bed. He saw himself laying there, but the man didn't look entirely human. He looked very much Dubor in nature. The life support machines were keeping him alive, if you could call that being alive. Jack winced at the sight. His other self looked him in the eyes, they pleaded for a release.

"Kill me." The original Jack said.

Jack frowned. "What have you done to him?!" He demanded.

Ketish swayed his hands back and forth. "Oh a little bit of this, a little bit of that. We've replaced all of his major organs with Dubor ones. His kidneys were the last to go, I'm afraid they didn't take well to the grafting." He paused. "Without these machines he would be dead. They are keeping him alive."

"I take it you've tortured him to get whatever information you wanted from him." Jack accused. "That goes against every law concerning treatment of prisoners of war."

Ketish raised a finger. "During wartime." He said. "We are not at war with each other. Those laws do not apply. They never applied here. Those are *human* laws, and well he isn't quite human now is he." Unsheathing a small ceremonial dagger, Ketish handed it to Jack. "Put him out of his misery."

Jack looked at the dagger in his hand. It was made of the finest steel. Gold trimming along the handle with a ruby at the end of it. It was a fine blade. Something he assumed to be used for ritual sacrifice. He raised the blade up ready to plunge it into the original Jack's chest.

Ketish stopped him. "The Dubor heart is where your liver is." He said positioning Jack's hand lower so his aim would be accurate. "Now finish him. Put him out of his misery. We have no further need of him."

Jack hesitated. He could take the man back to Crimson Gamma, have his doctor do something about it all. But he saw the pleading in the man's eyes. If it were him on that table, he would be doing the same thing. Wishing for death. Hoping for death. A quick death. "I'm sorry." He whispered.

"Don't be sorry, Jack." The man said. "I would do the same in your shoes."

Jack plunged the dagger into the original Jack's heart. The monitors went flat line within seconds. Pulling the dagger out, Jack sobbed. He didn't come here to kill anyone, let alone himself. It felt like he was playing directly into Ketish's plan, and he was.

Ketish grinned sharply at Jack. "It Is done." He said. "The prophecy is complete. Come, we will sign papers of peace at once!" He led them out of the room where the dead Jack O'Brien laid for the final time.

Jack looked to Grilka and Norev confused as hell. “Excuse me?” He said. “What do you mean the prophecy is complete?”

Ketish stopped walking and turned around to face Jack. “There is a passage in the prophecy that states a leader of one of the three civilizations, Dubor, Human, Shuka, would sacrifice himself and yet remain alive. That he would be both dead and alive at the same time. You have just fulfilled that part of the prophecy. That was the final peace of it all. Using the Butak dagger, you have sealed your fate. As have we all.” He looked to the three of them. “There is just one more thing we need to do and that is to sign a peace treaty. Our worlds will never be at war with each other ever again. It’s exciting don’t you agree?” He turned and kept walking.

They entered a large council chamber room. A hard stone table sat in the middle of the room with four chairs surrounding the table. They each took a seat. On the table were papers, a treaty of peace between their three worlds. Ketish signed the paper and passed it to Norev. Norev looked over the document, once she found it acceptable she signed it and handed it to Jack. Jack too read through the document, he picked up the pen and signed his name.

“Then it’s settled.” Ketish said. “Our three worlds are now at peace. Grilka you are acting as witness. Do you so declare?”

Grilka nodded her head. “Yes, I do declare. We are at peace. The century long turmoil between Shuka and Dubor has come to an end. The turmoil between Dubor and Earth has also come to its rightful end.”

Ketish nodded his approval. “Good, good. Please join me in a toast.”

A guard came in with a form of wine made from a fruit grown locally on Dubor. He brought four glasses with him. Filling each glass, he handed them to each of the members in the room.

Ketish raised his glass. “To our peace. The future.”

“To the future.” The others repeated. They each took a sip of the wine from their glass. It was a bit on the sweet side. Something Jack wasn’t expecting, he was expecting a bitter taste compared to how the rest of Dubor was. It was a nice surprise.

“Now what?” Jack asked.

Ketish shrugged. “You are free to go as you please.” He said. “There is nothing more to be done here. Go back to that station and back to your normal lives as it were. I have no further use of you.”

Jack knew that wouldn’t be the case. He still had that damned implant in his head and the Holo Ketish running around doing God knew what inside of his brain. He still didn’t trust

Ketish as far as he could throw him, but he didn't distrust him either. If peace truly was on the table and they were no longer enemies, someone had to start trusting the other. It might as well begin with him. Jack looked at the dagger on the table, his blood still on the blade.

Ketish noticed Jack admiring the dagger. "Take it with you. Think of it as a reminder of this wonderful occasion." He smiled. "You'll thank me later, I promise." He stood from the table and left the room. Speaking to the guards on the way out he said "See that their needs are met and their ship is ready for launch." The guard nodded.

One Week Later

Jack sat in Lieutenant Killpack's office. He was discussing his feelings about what had occurred on Dubor. How he felt about the peace treaty now in place. How Earth's government cautiously accepted the treaty, all of it. Jeff listened to the major talk and gave his input as he saw fit.

"Now I have this man's blood on my hands." Jack said. He looked to his hands, they were shaking. "I didn't go to Dubor to kill myself. Yet that's exactly what happened. I don't know about this damned prophecy, but if Ketish is right then this peace will last for hundreds if not thousands of years. It's a done deal." He paused. "The doc did an analysis of the dagger, the DNA matched perfectly for mine. It was indeed me." He paused. "Makes me wonder what happened to his soul when he died."

Jeff shrugged. "Some believe that the soul goes to either heaven or hell depending on your actions during this life." He offered. "I don't believe in such things, but some do. I believe in a soul, but I believe it is released to go on its own journey after this life. There is no heaven nor hell in my mind."

Jack frowned. He wouldn't find out until he would die himself someday. That was rather unfortunate. Standing up, Jack shook Jeff's hand. "Thank you for listening to me, I think it has helped."

Jeff smiled. "Anytime major. My door is always open for you."

Jack turned and exited the office. It was getting late, but he had one more stop to make before turning in for the night.

Moments later, Jack stood at Delegate Grilka's quarters. He pressed the door chime. *She should still be awake.* Jack thought. The door opened. Grilka stood there in a comfortable looking robe. "Jack." She said greeting him.

Jack kissed her and walked inside her quarters, he walked over to her couch and made himself comfortable. "Grilka." Jack began. "There isn't an official Dubor ambassador aboard the station. I offered it to Ketish, but he declined saying he would rather rule a world."

Grilka nodded. "Sounds like Ketish alright." She said. "Besides, I don't think the two of you could occupy the station at the same time and *not* get on each others nerves." She chuckled at the thought.

Jack nodded. "Yes, maybe I should be grateful for small favors." He agreed. "But what I'm getting at is this. I am offering you an official position as the ambassador to Dubor on this station. I've already spoken with Ketish, he agrees with the assignment if you'll have it."

Grilka smiled. "I accept." She said.

"You'll get new quarters in the ambassador section of the station." Jack assured her. "Included with all the perks of a full ambassador."

"Sounds good to me." Grilka said, she was still smiling.

"Okay, it's settled then." Jack said as he stood up. Leaving her quarters he felt good about life for once. Everything seemed to be coming together at last. It was a really good feeling to experience.

Walking down the corridor, Jack passed by a mirror. He stopped to look in it. He could see his alien feature more prominent than usual. This didn't bother him, it was his new normal. Being from three different distinct worlds was going to take some getting used to. But he was up to the challenge. He headed towards a transport tube that would take him to his own quarters.

Maybe it's time to invite Grilka to live with me. Jack thought. He would have to give it some serious consideration. They were in a committed relationship after all, maybe it was just time.

Entering his quarters, Jack called for the lights. They did not turn on. "Come on computer, turn on the fracking lights!" Jack exclaimed. Still nothing.

"Lights." A female voice said. The lights came on. "Major Jack O'Brien?" She asked.

The woman stood six foot four inches in height. She towered over Jack. Her blonde hair and blue eyes told him to trust her, but he had a bad feeling about it all. Everything in his body was telling him to run the opposite direction. Yet he froze.

"Yes." Jack said. "Who are you?"

"You are under arrest for murder and for being a clone." She said pulling out a set of irons. "Please turn around." Jack did as ordered. She clamped the cuffs on him and led him out of his quarters towards the docking ports where a shuttle was waiting to take him to Earth.

The End