

Chapter 13

Lilianna was getting a little sick and tired with being restrained. Correction, a lot tired. Don't get her wrong she didn't mind a little rope play in the bedroom, but this was no fun at all plus she wasn't the one in charge. This time though was worse than the first, at least on the 'Order' ship, which she inferred from her previous captor, was just a mistaken identity issue. Here, they knew exactly who she was, and she knew exactly what they would do.

The Empire were the sworn enemies of the Planetary Collective and were just about opposite in every philosophical and political way. The problem was, they blocked the PC's way into the Sagittarius arm of the galaxy. There was always the Perseus Arm to explore but that was more difficult to traverse as it was less dense, and star density was a factor in FTL travel. As for the Empire, well, they were an Empire. Empires like to grow. A united interplanetary society was something they never thought they would encounter; plus they thought that the PC being a society based on exploration and discovery wouldn't be able to defend themselves against the strength and strategic cunning of a ruthless blood thirsty Empire. Boy, were they wrong!

Then shit really hit the fan when both realised that the founders of each other's civilisation were human. It was like looking into a mirror and seeing the ugly side of yourself. The human soul was revealed to the rest of the galaxy, and both were embarrassed about the other.

So, Lilianna was not expecting a parade when she got to wherever she was heading to. In fact, she was surprised to live this long.

Her cell was dimly lit, but had the classic Empire motif; red and gold, albeit a little dimmer here than normal. There was a bathroom in the corner, with even a little bit of privacy, which was surprisingly considerate of them, and was self-cleaning to her shock.

She couldn't tell what time it was or how long she had been here for. The room was perfectly isolating and mostly empty. Belle was bored out of her fucking mind. But like a good little prisoner she waited and kept quiet. Her training had prepared her for this and not counting earlier, this wasn't her first imprisonment slash kidnapping. Unfortunately, this time the PC wouldn't be coming to rescue her. It's doubtful they knew where she was. Belle figured they'd be chasing Milton. As for Milton, that was anybody's guess.

It was hard for Belle to tell what her feeling for Milton were. He was of course responsible for her current predicament, though so was she. If she hadn't impulsively find her way onto the shuttle, everything would have been fine. From what she could tell the situation was just a series of unfortunate events. She genuinely believed that he didn't mean for all the bad things that had been

happening over the past few days. Despite everything, he seemed like an innocent soul. She couldn't put her finger on why.

It wasn't until much later, after the guards had fed her, that someone of importance came in. Besides from a couple of security personnel, who weren't the biggest of talkers, she hadn't met anyone until now.

She appeared to be a bridge officer, an admiral in fact. It was a rare thing to see a highly decorated officer on a scout ship; and a young highly decorated officer at that. She looked to be around the same age as Belle. In fact, they appeared to have a lot in common. Height in the 180s, athletically built with legs that looked like it could chase you down like a cheetah, and eyes as green as emeralds. The pair were a 23rd century parent trap remake waiting to happen. The only difference was the hair styles. Belle's was much shorter, her guests was long and regal.

Both stood on the opposite side of the EM barrier of the prison cell and studied each other. The officer eyes, as deeply green as they were, also looked dead. They was no sense of humanity in those eyes.

"I assume you're the one in charge here?" Belle asked trying to cut the tension.

She didn't reply, in fact she didn't move.

"Look, I've already given the whole prisoner of war spiel today and twice in the past few. I'd rather not repeat myself. I'm assuming you know who I am. I'm assuming you think I was responsible for the destruction of the Victory. And if I'm to hazard to guess Master Prime, your acting supreme leader was on board, so you think that I'm responsible for a PC lead assassination."

She had put the piece together. After all she had been working all the details with her Empire counterpart for the past few weeks. Unfortunately, they were never forthcoming with Master Prime's arrival.

Belle mustered up her sincerest sounding voice. "I, nor the Planetary Collective were responsible for the destruction of the Victory. It was simply in the wrong place at the wrong time."

Her opposite's eyes flickered for a moment, before going back to their death stare.

"Where is your companion?" Belle's opposite said coldly.

“My companion?” she asked knowing full well she was talking about Milton.

Her opposite raised her arm. Pain shot up and down Belle’s body as if she was a lightning rod. She kept her balance but was shaken to the core.

“Where’s your companion?” she asked again.

Lillianna wasn’t going to give up Milton’s identity so lightly. Even if she had thought he was to blame, it would just add another group on the hunt for him. And the Empire would do anything they could to somehow exploit his power and abilities. That would shift the balance of power in the Orion Spur. So she decided to decline an answer.

Her opposite raised her arm higher. Belle’s nerves felt like they were on fire. This time she couldn’t resist a short fall to the floor of her cell.

“Where’s your companion?” she asked a third time.

“I don’t know!” Belle shouted. “We got separated at the station when I was kidnapped by pirates. I assume you were the one that destroyed their ship.”

Her opposite stood still. While she gave no emotional response, it was clear that she was considering Belle’s answer. At the very least she hadn’t raised her arm.

“We need to discuss what’s going to happen now,” Belle continued. “I know what happened over Isothorpe has set back the trust between our respective civilisations. We need to salvage it before this rips us apart.”

“That was not a pirate ship.” Her opposite uttered.

Belle sighed. “No, it wasn’t, however, I don’t know who...”

“It was an Order vessel.”

There was that word again, Order. Were they a species she had never encountered before? There were many species the PC that the Empire had conquered and used as slaves or if they were lucky as entrenched trading partners. Unfortunately, no one from the PC had met any of them during any diplomatic missions. However, they knew about Milton and revered him.

“The Order stands for him still. He is not alone anymore.” She recalled to herself.

Was Milton a member of the Order?

“I don’t know who they are,” Belle added.

Her opposite raised her arm again.

“Ahhhhh,” she screamed. The pain was too much to keep it inside anymore. “I truly don’t know who they are.”

The pain stopped. Belle remained on the ground, her body twitching. She couldn’t take much more of this. It was doubtful that her opposite was going to relent any time soon.

“You truly don’t know,” she seemed surprised.

“No!” Lilianna tried to yell this, but it sounded more of a whimper.

Her opposite remained standing.

“Commander Lilianna Belle, you’ve been sentenced to death for the destruction of the Empire Flagship Victory, killing two thousand loyal officer and crew as well as the Emperor and the heir Master Prime; my father and brother. Unless, you give me the information I require about your companion you will be formerly tried and convicted tomorrow on T’Vis’shun.”

“Oh shit!” This wasn’t her response to her sentence, that was obvious. She was in the presence of the Empress, the ruthless daughter of the Emperor who had something to prove to the rest of the universe. And now she was the leader of the Empire.

The Empress knelt down to her level. "Commander, a few days ago I wanted your blood to paint the walls of my in my throne room."

Charming.

"But you and I both know what happen wasn't your fault. You seem like a smart and capable officer. Give me a name and a location and you and your PC will be left alone, for now."

That was not an offer she thought she'd here.

"You have a rotation to decide."

The Empress, in her clean cut military green Empire uniform left the room.

Lillianna wasn't pick herself off the floor yet. She was still having random spasms. She had another difficult decision to make.

Chapter 14

The downfall of Captain Billiam Dirk was as spectacular as his career in the Planetary Collective Defence Forces. He had been a revered Captain who lead saved the lives of countless innocents with his quick thinking, strategy and wit. Most people who met him considered to be a charming and inspiring hero, the shining star of the military.

Most of him who worked with him though saw him as a big talking dick with legs. They saw his downfall coming a mile away, but even they didn't think it would be this explosive.

By his early fifties, after being promoted to vice admiral, he decided to return to command. He couldn't stand sitting behind a desk all day, giving out orders, well the ones his superiors allowed, so he decided to return to captaining a ship. Again, for those who didn't know him, they considered this to be a heroic move. The valiant leader who needs to be in the thick of it, in the trenches with his peers and not cower behind a desk. It was a strong boomer move.

The admiralty attempted to prevent this, not because he was a valued member of command or that they needed his steady voice of reason. They did it because they had taken him out of active duty due to several harassment claims against him. Unfortunately, public opinion was on the side of the admiral, now captain. They should have stuck to their guns.

Despite the womanising, the Captain was a 'happily' married man with two children. He adored them all. But homelife after a lifetime riding around the galaxy was mind numbingly boring.



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