

Chapter 9

Billiam grimaced at everything he saw. The structure of the station, if you could call it one, was a mishmash of countless vessels, no doubt plundered from pirate raids. They were the plague of the galaxy. They were degenerates who took what they wanted, when they wanted. Scum of the universe in his opinion. He never thought he'd step in a pirate stronghold. When he became captain again, these people would be his first target; arrest the whole lot of them and let rot in a penal colony. They can fight amongst themselves.

"Ah human," a grotesque green mass of an alien called out. "It's not often we see a human from these parts. PC or Empire?"

Billiam rolled his eyes. The creature slithered around in front of him.

"Ah a freelance human, then? No matter. I'm willing to trade for Empire coin, PC credits or anything of value."

"I'm not interested." Billiam sidestep them and continued walking,

The creature slithered up to him and placed an appendage on Billiam's shoulder.

"But you know nothing of what I have. How could you know? What I have might surprise you."

"Get your greasy green tentacle off me."

"My my, don't we have a temper for a human. Must be an Empire. Escaping before your Mad Empress destroys this side of the galactic core?"

"I don't have time for whatever your selling. Now let me leave before you regret it." At that moment he pulled out a weapon and aimed it at the creature's appendage.

For a moment, the surrounding market place, filled with odd shops and odd shoppers paused and looked in there direction.

The creature laughed, followed by the surrounding crowd.

“You must be new here friend, otherwise you’d know how stupid you look right now.”

That was not the reaction he expected. At that moment everyone in the marketplace pulled out a weapon of some sort and aimed at Billiam’s direction.

“So, if you were smart, I’d put down that weapon, Peacey!” The creature was looking at Billiam’s weapon, a standard PCF lasergun.

Billiam slowly put his weapon down, while trying to keep an eye on everyone who had their eye and weapon on him. The crowd lowered theirs and went back to their business.

“So, you’re not in the market for something. It means that you’re looking for someone. Let me guess, another human?”

Billiam raised an eyebrow.

“You humans are all the same. You only think about yourselves.”

Billiam rolled his eyes and turned to his original path.

“Hey, that doesn’t mean I can’t help you human. I assume you’re looking for the ones who came on board earlier?”

This piqued his interest.

“Tell me everything you know.”

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He could see the Commander sitting at a table around what appeared to be a barbeque food stall. The smell of whatever was both inviting yet also a little repugnant. Whatever they were cooking it

wasn't fresh. She was alone having a drink, not someone in a hurry to get back to their responsibilities. Perhaps the Commander wasn't the star child of the planetary collective after all, especially if she feels comfortable in these surrounds.

"Commander Lilianna Belle!" he thought. "What a hypocrite."

She represented everything that he hated about the new PCF. She was a stickler for the rules, always had a stick up her ass about something. She was all business, no action, just talk. She was the kind of person that would judge him to be too rash, too gung-ho; a loose cannon. She never understood that the Universe doesn't play fair, and that sometimes, you need to bend your own rules for the greater good.

Commander Lillianna Belle represented the beginning of the end of Billiam's universe. Just about ten years now, he calculated. She was a yeoman at the time, when they still had yeoman on board starships. He had never met anyone more suitable for the job than her. She was organised, punctual on top of all the mindless paperwork, for a lack of a more modern term. Her personality fit the job description to a tee. Everything was running well, until that stupid boy showed up.

The Ultimatum had just picked up the survivor of a ship crash, who had been on the remote planet by himself since he was ten. Now then sixteen, the crew was the first people he had seen since then, the first time he had seen a woman since going through puberty. He had never been taught what to do and not do. So he made a few errors in judgement and Yeoman Belle was so attractive to a young teenage boy. When the young yeoman complained, he had a chat to him; man to man, about women.

Unfortunately, during the boy's time on the planet he was given special abilities that made him a very powerful being, with puberty. He had decided to not listen to the Captain's wisdom and force the issue with Yeoman Belle, who outright refused to humour him, even when the ship was in danger. If it weren't for the boy's alien guardians, the ship would have been destroyed, because Belle was stubborn and prideful. But, he let it go. The problem was solved and everybody was safe and sound.

However, it didn't end there. Two days later, he received a grievance from Headquarters explaining that he had thoroughly disrespected a member of his crew and didn't do anything to prevent the situation from escalating. She was the one who put the ship in danger, but apparently he was the problem. She had the gall to blame him because a teenage boy, who didn't know any better, found her attractive and didn't know how to handle it. And what made it worse was that she transferred before he could confront her about it.

But now, she was comfortable sitting in the den of the pirates. She was now even conversing with a pair. Miss Proper cavorting with scum of the universe. He was here because he had to be here, she was...

“Oh, shit.”

The pair of aliens, both muscular grey monoliths of beings, had grabbed hold of her and the Commander was not in a happy mood, Billiam knew he had misread the situation. But what was he to do now? He couldn't spring a weapon. He had already learned that lesson. There was no chance in this space-time continuum that he could take on one of those giants and besides he was not here for her anyway. He was here for the thing that brought her here, wherever it was. He was hoping she would lead him to it.

So he stood there watching the events unfold. She tried to tussle with the pair, kicking and screaming hoping to get some attention. Billiam was shocked that no one else was paying attention to the event, especially when his weapon got so much attention. He guessed that this sort of thing happened a lot of a pirate station, that the locals didn't even bother to watch, let alone do something about it.

One of the beasts managed to get his rocky hands around her mouth. She bit him. The beasts howled in pain and let her go. Whatever Billiam had thought about the Commander, she did seem scrappy in a fight. However, before she could get anywhere, the other had grabbed hold her, making sure he didn't get any appendage near her mouth. This guy told the first something, but Billiam was too far away to hear what it was saying. The other seemed to get the message though and got a medical injector and injected something that made her body go limp. Still no reaction from anybody in the throng of people going by their daily grind.

And it was over. They started to carry her away.

He considered his options. Should he follow them and see if his target tried to find her? Or should he stay here in case it was coming back to meet her? Though the assumption here was that it was still around, perhaps it had abandoned the Commander here instead. His sponsors didn't exactly give him a lot to go on. They had pointed to here and said to find the Commander, to find it. Chaos incarnate they had called the being. He was also unclear why they wanted him to...

“It is here!” he heard in his mind.

That was the other part he didn't like about his sponsors. They were inside his head and always called unexpectedly and loudly. This was both creepy and annoying.

Back at the table where the Commander had been only two minutes ago stood a very confused man. He was about early thirties by Billiam's guess, tall but bit on the lanky side. Not someone who knew how to fight for sure. Definitely, human.

"That's the man who ripped space apart with his bare hands?" he thought. "He looks like he couldn't win a fight with one of those tiny-ass Shrinktons, or whatever they actually call themselves.

"What you see is not the whole."

"And what exactly do you want me to do now?"

"Follow and friend! Win his favour!"

"You sound like one of those old social network things from history class."

There was no response. His head felt less cloudy, so it probably meant that they had left for now. He wondered though if whoever was speaking to him was here at the station themselves. Surely, they could telepathically transmit over such a large distance. The science behind telepathy was still relatively new, so it may be possible. Up until recently, most species didn't think it was even possible.

Time for the direct approach then.

"Hey, mate?" he called out towards the man. "Are you looking for your friend? The Commander?"

"Yes, what happened?" he said urgently. Billiam explained what he witnessed.

"Oh, shit," the man exclaimed. "I knew I shouldn't have left her alone. I was organising safe passage for her to return to the PC. I assume that's why you're here."

"Pardon?"

"Well, your former Captain Billiam Dirk, aren't you? Now working as a security agent on Isothorpe?"

Billiam felt a little pleased that the mysterious man knew who he was. He nodded.

“I assume the ITU sent you here to rescue the Commander from my clutches, right?”

“Something like that,”

“It’s good that they sent you along, instead of a team. A team would attract too much attention, you could blend in with the masses easily.

So much for being famous.

“Look, I have no ill intentions towards the Commander, and I’d be happy to have you take her back to her ship. Unfortunately, I think those who took her do. Humans, PC or otherwise are not seen favourably in these parts.”

“Yeah, I’m starting to see that. Well what are we standing around here for mate, we need to come up with a plan.”

“You’re right. We need to find out where they were going. I have a feeling these people aren’t going to talk to us.”

“What do you suggest then?”

“I have an idea. It’s kind of weird, but you have to trust me on it.”

“Ok, what’s the idea?”

“First I need to see what you saw, while it’s still fresh.” The man gripped his hands over Billiam’s head. “Now, what did the two thugs look like?”

In Billiam’s mind the image of the two grey colossal came up, however, it was soon interrupted by an enormous wave of pain shooting through his head.

“Aaaahhh, fuck,” he shouted. He pushed the man away.

“I’m sorry, it’s never been painful to anyone before.”

“Did you just read my mind?”

“Just the surface thought. I needed a better look at them. I promise I won’t do that again without your permission, however, needs must.” The man then stomped his foot into the deck plating and closed his eyes. He began to hum.

The first question that came to Billiam’s mind was what the hell was he doing, however the more important question was how the fuck did he just insert his foot inside solid metal?

“Their heading to the port side of the station, we need to hurry.”

Billiam didn’t argue, the day was already to weird for any more questions.