

BLACK SPACE

By

James Austin McCormick

Copyright (WGA) 2164052

jimbostories@hotmail.com

FADE IN

EXT. SPACE - DARKNESS

A black void.

INT. CONTROL DECK - LIT

We're looking at the void through a view screen.

CAPTAIN KARL STEIN (30) stares out, narrow-eyed at the emptiness. He's a bull of a man, heavy set with a thick neck and military crew cut.

STEIN
Shouldn't we be seeing something?
Where's the nebula?

A small, mousy navigator, DANIELS (early 40's) studies the readouts at his station.

DANIELS
There's no reading.

Stein looks at SEERS (50), stoical, not easily shaken.

STEIN
(barking his name)
Seers.

SEERS
Nothing.

Stein's short fuse is getting shorter.

STEIN
This is bullshit.

He runs a meaty hand over the back of his neck. He glances at the woman stood next to him.

STEIN (CONT'D)
Dr Anderson. This is your nebula.
Want to explain?

DR KATE ANDERSON (32), quick witted, alert, glances up at him. Stein's towering over her, but she's not impressed.

KATE
I'm not a Nav, Captain. I'm simply
here to study new star formation.

(CONTINUED)

Stein's barrel chest swells but he looks more bluster than anything else. He looks around the deck.

STEIN
Where's Krevik?

DANIELS
He's resting.

The Captain's heavy features contort in anger.

STEIN
Not any more.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - LIT

JOSEPH KREVIK (early 70's), frail yet with a fearsome intelligence dancing in his eyes, stifles a cough with a handkerchief pressed to his lips.

Stein sits at the head of a long, black marble table. Daniels and Seers are either side of him.

In the middle of the table is a bottle of champagne resting in a bucket of ice. Upturned glasses wait patiently around it. Yet there will be no celebrating today.

All eyes are on the old man. He takes a sip of something from a silver flask.

KREVIK
The void we find ourselves in is not entirely empty. There are gravitational waves, suggesting points of super density.

KATE
Black holes?

KREVIK
Indeed, but that seems to be all.

Stein sends a fist crashing down on the table.

STEIN
So, what does that mean?

Daniels raises a nervous finger.

DANIELS
Maybe...

Everyone looks at him.

(CONTINUED)

DANIELS (CONT'D)

Maybe, we jumped dimensions. Think about it. This mission was partly a test of the ship's new warp core. Perhaps instead of jumping locations, we jumped dimensions. One where stars never formed. All the matter just got caught up in gravity wells.

STEIN

You're blaming the ship?

Daniels looks to Seers for support.

SEERS

The core was a prototype.

STEIN

Meaning what?

SEERS

Meaning maybe profit was put before safety. Stein Industries has a lot riding on this mission. You know, investors, important stuff like that.

The sarcasm is all too clear.

Stein stands up, leaning forward until he's almost nose to nose with Seers.

STEIN

Don't push it, little guy. I'll make you real sorry.

KATE

Captain.

Stein turns, glaring at her.

KATE (CONT'D)

We need a leader right now, not a frat bully.

The big man looks about to explode.

Then he turns and marches out the door.

It's a moment before anyone speaks.

(CONTINUED)

KREVIK

It might be better not to provoke him.

SEERS

He shouldn't be here. Stein failed in the military, so instead his father makes him a Captain in his own corporation's forces.

KREVIK

He insecure, that makes him dangerous.

Daniels nods.

DANIELS

The guy's wound real tight. Scares the shit out of me.

KATE

Whatever he is, Stein's not going to be any help. How do we get out of this (looking at Daniels) dimension?

KREVIK

One moment. We can't be certain it is a different dimension.

KATE

You're the astrophysicist. What do you think, Professor Krevik?

KREVIK

Let me run some numbers.

SEERS

We can put them through the computer.

KREVIK

Not quite yet, if you don't mind. It helps the intuitive process when I do them myself.

He starts coughing again. The attack is a bad one.

KATE

Let's get you to your quarters first.

INT. STEIN'S QUARTERS - LIT

Stein stands at his basin, throwing water over his face.

He pops open a bottle of pills and hurls a handful down his throat.

STEIN
Get it together.

He glares at his own reflection in the mirror.

STEIN (CONT'D)
Don't look at me like that.

He slams a fist into the glass, shattering it. His hand's bleeding but he doesn't notice.

INT. KREVIK'S QUARTERS - LIT

Kate stands at the doorway.

KREVIK
Come in, my dear.

The chamber is filled with plants and flowers, an attempt to surround himself with natural beauty.

KATE
I love your quarters.

KREVIK
It helps the thought process.

Kate sees a table full of mathematical scribblings.

She picks a sheet up.

KATE
I thought I was good at math, but this...

KREVIK
It gives me a headache too, believe me.

He indicates a chair.

KREVIK
Please.

Kate sits down. Krevik taps a porcelain pot.

(CONTINUED)

KREVIK (CONT'D)

Tea?

His guest nods.

He pours a drink into an mug.

KREVIK

You haven't been sleeping have you?

KATE

Not much.

She takes a sip of her drink, her thoughts dancing behind her eyes.

KATE (CONT'D)

I keep thinking what if we can't get back. I can't even send my family a message.

KREVIK (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry for you, my dear, for all of you.

KATE

(Surprised)

But not for yourself?

KREVIK

No.

Kate watches her host closely.

KATE

You're sick, aren't you? I mean much worse than anyone knows?

He takes a sip from his silver flask.

KREVIK

Morphine, for the pain. That's all that can be done for me now.

KATE

How long?

KREVIK

A couple of weeks, maybe less. I wanted to see space one more time. At least there will be no-one to miss me when I'm gone.

(CONTINUED)

KATE
That's not true.

The old man smiles.

KREVIK (CONT'D)
You're here to see if I've gained
any insight into our situation?

KATE
(Gently)
Have you?

Krevik's expression darkens.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - LIT

Krevik's addressing the others.

Kate sits beside him, head down, hands folded in her lap.
She's already heard what the old man has to say.

KREVIK
We did jump.

DANIELS
I knew it.

KREVIK
But not dimensions.

DANIELS
What?

KREVIK
We jumped in time.

Seers leans forward.

SEERS
(Slightly skeptical)
How?

KREVIK
Instead of the core engine folding
space as intended, it folded time.

STEIN
(slurred voice)
What does that mean?

Kate looks up.

(CONTINUED)

KATE

It means we're at the end of the universe, Captain.

Stein stares, only half comprehending.

KREVIK

Essentially. Every star has long burnt out and gone cold. The poet Robert Frost wrote, "some say the universe will end in fire, some say in ice." I believe we have our answer.

DANIELS

Can't we just jump again?

KREVIK

I don't think so. It would only send us further forwards, not backwards.

SEERS

We haven't run your numbers through the computer yet.

KREVIK

No, we haven't. I sincerely hope you can prove me wrong.

Stein seems to come out of his daze a little.

STEIN

We're stuck out here?

KATE

Haven't you been listening?

STEIN

No way.

The big man looks at each of them in turn.

STEIN (CONT'D)

My father put me in command of this. This was my chance to prove myself.

He's beginning to lose it.

STEIN (CONT'D)

I failed.

(CONTINUED)

KATE

No, you didn't. He used us all as test rats. He wanted to prove his core worked so he could sell it to the military.

The big man isn't listening. Paranoia's taking over.

STEIN

You're laughing at me.

KREVIK

Captain, please.

STEIN

Just like him.

He pulls out an energy weapon.

SEERS

Holy shit. Where did he get that?

KATE

Put it down, Captain.

Daniels gives a nervous giggle.

Stein turns on him.

STEIN

You're laughing.

He fires. A single blast to the man's chest, killing him instantly.

Seers jumps up. Stein fires again. The bolt hits Seers across the chest and shoulder but it doesn't stop him. He grabs Stein's arm. It's like trying to restrain a bear.

Kate snatches up the champagne bottle and sprints over. She hits it across the back of Stein's head.

He goes down.

Kate kneels on his back, grabbing an arm and twisting it up his back.

She turns to Seers.

KATE

Get a tranq from sick bay, quick.

INT. STEIN'S QUARTERS - LIT

Stein lays on his bunk in a fitful sleep.

Bottles of pills and meds lay sprawled across his table.

SEERS

Guy's been juicing. That meat
head's fried his brains.

His chest and shoulder are badly burnt from the laser blast
and it's clear he's in terrible pain.

KATE

He stays locked up in here from now
on.

INT. STEIN'S QUARTERS - LIT

Stein's eyes open.

He rolls over, throwing his legs over the side of his bunk.

A voice plays over in his head.

FATHER (O.S)

Even you shouldn't mess this one
up, boy. Don't let me down.

He balls his fists in the sides of his head, trying to grind
away the voice.

INT. KREVIC'S QUARTERS - LIT

Krevik is sat up in bed. He doesn't look as if he'll last
much longer.

KREVIK

I'm sorry I can't stay with you.

His eyelids are growing heavy.

The flask drops from his hand.

Kate catches it.

She pulls the blankets up around his frail shoulders.

Seers watches. Pale, sweating, with black veins threading
from his shoulder and up along one side of his neck, he
looks sick himself.

(CONTINUED)

SEERS

Is he..?

Kate nods.

SEERS (CON'T)

I'm heading back to my room and dosing up on pills. My shoulder's on fire.

KATE

We should treat the wound Seers, before the infection gets any worse.

He manages a soft, bitter laugh.

SEERS

What does it matter now, Kate?

INT. STEIN'S QUARTERS - LIT

Stein holds a piece of the broken mirror to his throat. He draws the shard across the flesh. Blood pours from the wound.

INT. CONTROL DECK - LIT

Kate sits in the Captain's chair, the now open champagne bottle next to her. She looks as if she's had a few already.

She holds up a glass to the view screen, toasting the blackness outside.

KATE

To Robert Frost.

She sighs.

KATE (CONT'D)

To the biggest discovery in human history.

She takes a long gulp of her champagne.

KATE (CONT'D)

And there's no-one here to see it.

FADE OUT