

Glory In Honor

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It was 3 years after the conclusion of the Great Wars, the wars that had landed a hair's breadth on our side of the line, on the human's side. Things had changed - the vasudans were desimated, the vasudan war was over, our knowledge had been complimented. So too, things remained as always - the hammer of light continued its troublemaking, species-racism still abided in many minds, and men stood stark in their ignorance chiming their descent with the predicament of the world.

Things had adapted, as they always had, and as they surely would. And adapting among all things, the GTI stood in a new light among the stars. They were the keepers of peace, not the bringers of war. And as it had ever been, cadets came, and were trained, and were sent to watch and wait, and protect the peace that the Great War had finally yielded.

So in full decorations, estatic with the elusive possibilities of her future, Jessica D'Leary stood with her squad before an onlooking crowd of proud and loving onlookers to be recieved into the GTI. Jessica had finished at the top of her class. She was the fastest, brightest, best suited among all of her peers to fly for the GTI as her evaluators saw her. And as such, she had been asked to speak at her squad's graduation. To inspire, to congratulate, and to remind her classmates and her country of what it was she, and all of them, stood for.

Jessica was nervous. She was never one to make speeches. She was afraid she might make a mistake. But she new already what she was going to say. As her squad instructor finished up to a round of applause, he motioned her to the podium. She took a deep breath, and stepped forward to face the crowd.

She glanced around. It was time. She nervously cleared her throat as she began, "I am Jessica D'Leary, and I was asked to make a speech today to put into perspective the duty which we gathered here are promising to fulfill." God, she was nervous. "I think the best way I could do this, is to tell you a story that you can understand easily, and respect. A story that symbolizes our ideals in their purest light. I hope you all enjoy it."

Clearing her throat one final time, Jessica began.

"In the opening days of the Great War, the war with the shivans, we did not even know of their existence. They were elusive, and we were not even able to identify them until we had already taken somewhat of a beating from them.

"How do I know this story, you ask? Where did I get my facts? Who am I to tell this story? I must ask then, who are you to listen? Why do the facts matter? Is it relevent how the story came to me? Listen with open ears.

"In the Betelguice system, Meg Grey was a new cadet who had just joined the GTI, and she was stationed on a ship called the Warrior, an Orion class ship. Meg was excited to be in the GTI, and she was feeling overwhelmed by her good fortune to be stationed on the Warrior. The Warrior was slated to join with another smaller convoy in the area and jump closer to the front lines where Meg would surely get a chance to prove herself against the Vasudans.

"Also, at 19, Meg was at an age where she was looking for someone to be with, and during her cadet training she had become somewhat infatuated with another member of her squad. His name was Scott Reeve, and he had also been stationed on the Warrior. They had plans to pursue a

relationship together, and things were looking good for the two of them. Meg was happy. Her life seemed to be treating her very well.

"The Warrior was waiting to meet with the smaller convoy before they jumped to a hotter area. The convoy had engine troubles on the way there, though, and the whole operation was set back by a few days. During this time, Meg was called onto her first active duty.

"It was a simple job they put to her. She and another newly arrived cadet were put to a sentry duty behind an enormous asteroid in the area that was in Dark Territory to the Warrior's scanners. It was her first field job. She was put up in an Apollo class ship, which was widely regarded as the superior fighter during the Vasudan War. She and one other formed a wing that was sent to scan behind the asteroid in 5 hour increments and then relieved by the next wing.

"Meg was excited to finally get out. Even if her duty was what most would call a test of tedium. She went the night before and talked to Scott about what would be her first assignment. As it turned out, he was part of the wing that would be relieving her from watch. 'You'll have to wake me up when you get there,' she said to him jokingly, and they laughed and went out to the cafeteria to get something to eat.

"The next day, Meg was ready to go a full hour before her duty. She was getting impatient. Anyone who has successfully passed training feels this way, I'm told. It's only natural to want to go and prove your abilities. As she awaited the call for her to report to her wing, she sat there holding a picture of Scott. It was a present he had given her after her first kill in the simulator, along with a lovely dinner. She loved to just look at the picture sometimes, and think about him. She sighed and set it down.

"She was going to tell Scott that she loved him that night. After they got back from their watches, they would surely wind up having a bite together, and then she would tell him. Not to say that he didn't already know. They both knew. But it needed to be said, and she felt ready to say it. It was going to be a memorable day for Meg Grey. She could just feel it.

"Assigned pilots to wing Nova, report to ready room for debriefing and be prepared for departure,' Came the call over the intercomm. In a rush, Meg jumped from where she had been sitting on her bed and headed out for the ready room, a spring in her step.

"As she arrived in the ready room, her wingman was just sitting down. A lieutenant stood at the briefing console. 'Welcome,' he intoned. 'I'm lieutenant Winthrop. Today is both of your first assignment. This is the standard drill for receiving a briefing and departure, as you well know from your training. Your goal today is simple. Our sensors do not have the ability to scan around an asteroid situated 3 kilometers from the Warrior. It's creating a gap in all of our sensor readouts about 4 degrees across. One of you will sit on the other side of the asteroid and send back sensor readings for our boys down in the comm unit to look over. However, the asteroid will also block your communications if you're on the other side of it, so one of you will site off to the right and piggy-back the message back to the Warrior. You will be relieved approximately 5 hours after you take up positions. Go and make the GTI proud, rookies. Dismissed!'

"At that, Meg saluted and headed for the docking bay for departure. As she boarded her ship, she thought about Scott. He probably hadn't even gotten up yet. At that, when she was strapped in, she took off for her destination.

"Meg sat diligently during her first mission. She stayed attentive to the information and checked her sensors often. Of course, nothing happened. She hadn't expected anything to.

"As her watch was wrapping up, Wing Nova2 came to relieve her. And, as Scott had said, he was there. 'A lot of action up here today, Scott,' she said sarcastically. 'Try not to get shot down on your first day.'

"'Anything you say, honey.' He said in a reassuring way. 'You better not go to sleep before I get back. We've got a date tonight.'

"'Wouldn't miss it,' she replied, and began her return to the Warrior. She didn't know what was about to happen, no one could. On her way back, both she and her wingman detected an odd energy reading on their sensors. As Meg looked over her shoulder, she saw a slight burst of light behind a smaller asteroid in the vicinity. She noticed that it too was large enough to partially wipe out her scans, she didn't know what was behind it.

"'What do you think that was?' her wingman asked.

"'I don't know what to make of it. Doesn't seem to be causing any problems, though.'

"'Think we should ignore it?' came the response.

"'It's probably just a packet of gas that got ignited by some burnoff from one of our engines. I'll go check it out. Don't wanna miss anything on our first watch.'

"'Alright, I'm heading back.'

"Meg Grey diverted from her return to check the disturbance behind the unnamed asteroid. She should have been more cautious. She should have taken the idea of an ambush more seriously. But she didn't, and in the end, it didn't matter.

"As Meg approached the opposite side of the asteroid, a jet black fighter appeared from the darkness as at least 20 more fighters followed suit from other asteroids. Meg couldn't help but think that the people down in the Warrior's comm unit were obviously not as well informed as they let on.

"All but one of the fighters broke from the belt and took attack vectors on the Warrior. One remained to deal with Meg in her much weaker Apollo spacecraft. The unknown craft gave a quick flyby of her ship and pelted her with a quick volley of laserfire. Her hull buckled in one place and her subspace drive was literally destroyed.

"Over her comm system she heard a stifled yell cut off by static, and she knew with a horror that Scott was not going to make their date. As tears stung her eyes, she swung her Apollo around and opened fire with her forward laserbanks. Much to her frustration, she could not get a lock on her target to end its bitter existence. As the unknown ship came around for another pass she was also forced to admit that her lasers were having no visible affect, and she was in a bad way already.

"As the Shivan vessel came by, pelting her again with its deadly powerful lasers, her missile cache was destroyed and all of her warheads were lost. Frantically, screaming into space, she swung her spacecraft around to follow her enemy and again fired on its hull to no avail.

"As the Shivan vessel sensed its kill, it slowed to a stop and turned to face Meg's vessel. Meg's face was a wash of tears and blood from where she had hit her head against the glass of her cockpit. She was a swarm of angry emotions. Anger for these unknown attackers, sorrow for Scott, longing for

her home, fear for her life.

"And as these things flashed through her, she thought of her training. Of her training for the GTI. She thought of her responsibility. She thought of how she had wanted so much to prove herself in battle, and realized it was nothing. She thought of the oaths she had taken when she joined the GTI, and they were nothing. She thought of how she wanted to command a ship someday, and it didn't seem so important. And she thought of Scott and of her parents back home and of the people on the Warrior, and that seemed important.

"She realized that the purpose of the GTI is not to make heroes, and not to get rich, and not to take out her hate. It's to fulfill a responsibility to our homes, to the people we love, to the strangers who can't take the responsibility themselves. It's to protect our freedoms and our ways of life, and to do so without regard for ourselves.

"Meg Grey died that day, along with the entire crew of the Warrior. As the Shivan vessel sat looking her in the face, with a heart free of its evils, Meg fired her afterburner at full thrust straight into her opponents ship. Her engine containment had been compromised in the previous attacks, and her ship exploded on impact.

"To her credit, Meg was the first pilot to destroy a shivan ship. She did so noble, and selflessly. She did it for those she had sworn too, she did not do it for the glory.

"Nor did she receive any. Nor did many heroes who died in the Great War. Meg Grey was simply a casualty of war. History will not remember her. Time has already forgotten her face. Even her lineage will not be remembered, for she was the end of her line, as were so many others. But you can remember her. You can remember her in each of us, and in yourselves, because Meg Grey is in everyone. She is a symbol of sacrifice, of desire, of love. She is every soldier who goes unremembered for his sacrifice. She is the first hero of the Great War, and she is the leader of a new age."

Jessica stepped back from the podium. She wasn't nervous a bit.