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Fantasy & Science Fiction

Science Fiction Story

What Happens in Space, Stays in Space

In a time set in the future, on the far reaches of our galaxy, sat an old outpost left over from The Great Battle. For those who have forgotten, The Great Battle was the war that ended all wars and brought peace to a galaxy once drowned in chaos and turmoil. But that story shall be told another time. This story, however, must be told instead, of this particular outpost on the far reaches of our galaxy.

The outpost itself was very bare bones, with exposed metal bulkheads everywhere and long grid walkways to get to various places within the outpost. There was a crew that ran it, a small band of independent researchers and civilians that peacefully coexisted with each other. There was a little restaurant and pub that was frequented by the weary traveler just passing through. The spot was akin to a hole in the wall place that you would find on earth many, many decades ago before the earth's population took to the sky and stars to find more adventure. A mess of tables and chairs and booths lined the walls of the little pub with a long, full bar in the middle. A little window was the porthole between the pub and kitchen. Neon lights decorated the walls, some in Terran letterings and others in sharp symbols and zig zag lines to advertise the more exotic beverages that were sold. The low lights were the perfect setting to just relax or establish a secret rendezvous.

It was a typical shift for Kevin, the bartender. Kevin was tall with sandy colored hair and dark brown eyes and a very kind face. The pub was not quite ready to be opened yet and Kevin

busied himself with stocking the proper ales and alcohols to be consumed by the weary travelers that stopped at the outpost. It was an easy job really. One that Kevin stumbled upon several years ago when his tourist group stopped for a refuel and a stretch of the legs. They accidentally left him behind and since he didn't have any place else to go, he stayed on to work in the little hole in the wall establishment. Kevin considered himself a loner but being a bartender made him feel special, his patrons needed him, and it gave him great joy.

He finished stocking straws and napkins and moved on to the tray that held the fruits for the many different mixed drinks. Cherries were present, along with oranges but the lemons and limes were gone. He walked over to the little window that separated the pub and kitchen. Through the open window he could see Chef Fredo busy as he added a few spices to a boiling pot with one of his purple antennas. Chef Fredo came from the planet Parslay that was quite a few light years away from the outpost. The outpost lucked out when his ship skidded into the cargo bay almost twenty years ago for Parslayians are the best chefs in the galaxy despite their purple, slug like appearance.

"Uh, Chef Fredo?" asked Kevin.

"I am busy, my boy Kevin. If I not watch the pot, the soup will scorch," replied Chef Fredo. He wrapped his other antenna around a ladle and stirred the smoky pot.

"Are there any lemons and limes back there?"

"Come see for yourself for I am busy with the soup. When you find the fruit, you taste soup."

Kevin walked from behind the bar and entered the kitchen. "It smells good whatever it is." Chef Fredo grinned and nodded as Kevin walked past him to the big cooler where the produce was kept. He tugged on the big, silver door and stepped inside. On the shelf where the lemons and

limes were kept in a basket sat a box. There were no readily available lemons or limes otherwise. Kevin shrugged and opened the box. In it were three lemons and three limes. *Maybe Chef Fredo was too busy to unpackage them* he thought as he let himself out of the cooler with the box in his hands. Kevin made his way past Chef Fredo who cleared his throat.

"Oh, the soup," said Kevin and stopped to take a taste from the spoon that Chef Fredo offered him. Kevin sampled the red substance and his eyes watered and his breath came out in a little wispy cloud as he exhaled.

"Is good?" asked Chef Fredo.

"Yup," Kevin choked. "Perfect."

"Is tonight's special. Make sure to push soup." Kevin nodded as he left the kitchen.

As soon as Kevin returned to behind the bar, he scrambled to pour himself a glass of water and chugged it like his life depended on it. The cool water seemed to quench the fire that was in his mouth. Once he regained his composure, he started cutting the lemons and limes since there was only ten minutes left until the pub opened. As soon as he finished dropping the last lime into its container some patrons entered, a Terran husband and wife. They sat at the bar and ordered two rum and cokes with lime and Kevin made them right away. He set a lime wedge on the rim of both glasses and carried them over to the couple. While the couple busied themselves with talk of their next destination, a pair of tiny eyes appeared on the lime, unbeknownst to them. The pair of eyes then slid down from the lime and plunged deep into the rum and coke, stretched out its tentacles and swam around, making itself at home in the brown liquid.

"Geronimo!" exclaimed a tiny voice from the other drink as another tiny, tentacled creature slipped down into the other drink from its lime perch.

"Did you hear something?" asked the wife.

"You know how these old outposts creak, my dear," replied the husband. The wife shrugged and took a healthy swig from her glass. Her eyes grew wide as she swallowed hard. "Are you all right, my dear?"

The wife coughed. "Must've swallowed an ice cube."

More patrons started to fill up the pub and Kevin ran around to fill each beverage order. Music blared from the jukebox and the pub crowd seemed to be having a good time. Kevin sat back in his corner to survey the bar. In the corner, near the jukebox, a man stood with his arm around Sally, a young, green skinned woman with pink hair. Sally was a regular and she would always come in dressed for a night out and her outfits always left very little to the imagination. She stood there as the man chatted in her ear. The smile she held started to fade a little and one by one she started buttoning up the open buttons on her sheer, silver blouse. Kevin thought that was a little out of the ordinary from Sally because every time she entertained, the buttons on her blouse would unbutton, not button up. Then there was Bevlok, who always sat by himself and never spoke a word to anyone. Bevlok sat at a table with a few people around him as he regaled them with tales about The Great War. Kevin couldn't believe his ears as Bevlok's table and Bevlok erupted in laughter! A green eyed, brunette of average height and even more average looks entered and waded through the crowd to get to the bar. Denise smiled at Kevin. Kevin shyly returned the smile. Denise was an independent research scientist that also called the outpost home. She specialized in non-human species and every once and awhile she would come in just to observe the different walks of life that would stop at the pub. Kevin's heart would skip a beat every time she came in and her smile always brightened his evenings, but she could tell by the look on his face that something was amiss.

"Quite a crowd tonight," said Denise.

"Yeah, a weird one. Take a look at Sally over there." Kevin motioned toward the jukebox. Sally somehow acquired a long coat to hide her way above the knee skirt and the coat was buttoned all the way up to her green chin! Another peel of laughter filled the room and Denise looked toward the direction it came from.

"Bevlok laughs?"

"Bevlok talks too. Hasn't stopped for the past three hours."

Denise pulled out a small, thin tablet from her pocket. "Most peculiar." Her fingers flew over the screen and she made a quick nonchalant scan of the room with the device in her hand. "We're being invaded."

"What?" Kevin gulped. "By who?" Kevin poured himself a glass of water and added a lemon to it.

"The Merri." Denise looked around. "Oh, I wish I could see one. It would make such a wonderful addition to my research. I never knew that they would come this far into our galaxy." She marveled at the little screen in front of her. "I wonder how they got here."

Kevin watched Denise as she scrolled through the information on her little tablet, her brow creased a little in concentration. It was the cutest thing he'd ever seen.

"Denise?"

"Yes, Kevin?" Her attention was still glued to the little screen in her hand.

"You have a beautiful forehead."

"Thanks?"

"I mean it and it's not just your forehead, your face is beautiful too. What I'm really trying to say is that ever since I met you I, well, I just really like you."

"Well, I like you too, Kevin." She moved the handheld tablet over him.

"And I have no idea why I just said that."

"I think I may know why. Let me see your drink."

Kevin handed his drink to her and she used his straw to stir around the ice and water, faster and faster.

"I surrender! I surrender!" a tiny voice squeaked in protest. Denise stopped stirring and a little tentacled creature climbed to the rim of the glass. "I suppose we've been discovered by this ravishing creature."

"How many of you are there?" asked Denise.

"Well", the octopus-like creature slid down the glass and onto the bar, "there were seven of us. But that harpy over by the music machine squeezed poor Clem to death, I'm afraid. I am Merle." The creature took a bow.

"I'm Denise and this is Kevin."

"Hey," said Kevin.

"It's a pleasure to make your acquaintance. We Merri mean you no harm. We just take a more hands on approach to studying other species."

"By drugging them?"

"No, no. We merely help others express their inner most needs and desires. What better place to do that than in a pub such as this? I have to say; we've had a wonderful time. I do hope we can do this again."

"But how did you even get here?"

"We Merri are good at camouflage. We can blend into anything. Say, garnishes for drinks. Farewell, Lady Denise and Sir Kevin. It was a pleasure." Merle mixed in with the light wood top of the bar and disappeared.

"Wow," said Denise. "I have to get back to my lab and record all this." She grabbed Kevin's glass. "Can I take this for analysis?"

"Sure. But, uh, before you go, I'm sorry for what I said earlier. I hope I didn't make it weird or anything."

Denise smiled at Kevin, leaned into him and kissed him on the lips. "Come to my lab after you're done here." Denise left him with a smile of his own.