

Lewis

Lewis believed that truth brings light; it's the lies that live in darkness. He felt like he had been in the darkness for too long and was on the rough end of an anaesthetic that had gone wrong. Hyper sleep always had a telling effect on those who underwent its procedure and the truth of his awakening into the light was a painful one.

He found himself out of his tank and the thick solution that had covered his body was now being cleaned off as he towelled himself down. He sat on one of the examination tables with a brunette woman taking a sample of his blood. She had blue eyes and freckles and reminded him of his little sister, Lewis knew when he introduced himself that he liked this woman and quickly made the decision that he had made a new friend. His voice was still croaky and he was quickly realising how vague his new friend was being, as he fished for answers about the revival of all the duty crew members sitting around the room.

"So you're helping out the medical officer?" Asked Lewis with an unmistakably educated dialect structure. He couldn't hide his privileged background anymore than he could hide his blond hair and grey eyes, which had always been a hit with the ladies.

"Adrian Voss, yes," Elliot replied and Lewis could see she was nervous around him. "He is the ship's medic. He would have taken care of you, but you can see we are a little busy today," a smile crept onto one side of her mouth.

"I'm not complaining, you're doing a great job looking after me. So which one's Adrian?" Lewis asked with a smile of his own.

"Over there," Elliot points. "He likes to be called Voss."

"He looks like he needs a break."

"He's looked that way since I met him, I don't think he gets much sleep. Always worrying about us I guess, even in hyper sleep," Elliot said defending Voss.

As Elliot moved back over to the holo-pad to view Lewis's blood, he looked around the room at the different crew members allowing himself a first impression of each of them. No one in particular caught his attention until he saw a man on the far side of the medical bay slipping his arm through his bio-suit and scanning the group exactly as Lewis was. Lewis watched as the man flicked his eyes from one crew member to the next, the florescent lights shining off his shaved head and his light blue eyes. He looked like an animal with crooked teeth observing his pack or his prey until he reached Lewis. Their eyes met and Lewis decided to hold his gaze, not with the

intention of pulling the bald man into a competition, but with the intention to show that he was also interested in the crew and their reactions to each other. The bald man broke the gaze by lifting up his hand and waving slowly and playfully, which seemed out of place to Lewis. He couldn't quite put his finger on it, but something about this man screamed '*stay away.*'

"Ok ladies and gentlemen," said a huge man standing in the doorway of the medical bay. Lewis knew straight away that he was the Captain, as he had read up on one or two of the crew's files that had been made available to him. *If I'm not mistaken, the only six foot four black juggernaut we have on board is Captain Marcus.* He thought to himself. *I have a feeling I'm going to want to be friends with him as well.* Captain Marcus continued to speak to his crew. "I've spoken with our medical officer Dr. Voss and he says that you're all good to go. Meaning that you can all report to your stations after briefing. So if you could put your bio-suits on, finish up here and make your way down to the mess within the next five minutes I won't have to shout at anyone on our first day together. When we're in the mess I can tell you what's happening and why you've been woken from your well paid slumber," he clapped his hands together as he finished little speech and was most likely on his way to the crew's kitchen, or mess as he called it, to see who the late crewmembers were to his summons. Lewis jumped off the table and started pulling on his bio-suit making the decision quite quickly he did not want to be late to the Captain's meeting.

Sitting in the mess with the other crewmembers Lewis made sure he wasn't left sitting next to the bald man, instead he was sitting with Elliot and Voss who both looked exhausted, Voss unbelievable so. They sat quietly as all of the other crewmembers took a seat or perched on a table or counter with low level conversations fluttering around the room, no doubt guessing as to why they had been woken up. Already Lewis noted that one or two friendship groups were forming, but these things mattered little to Lewis who always prided himself on his ability to get on with almost anyone he wanted to. The Captain waited with his hands on his hips as he looked at his crew mingling. His silhouette showed just how big Captain Marcus really was. Not only did he have a big frame, but also his muscle culture was impressive to the point of intimidating. Lewis only noted this as all crew members had to be within certain physical parameters to be accepted for the mission, not that any of them truly understood the mission's true purpose.

Back in training and the selection process all Lewis had been told was that the mission would be of a ground breaking nature, consisting of multi-strands of science and historical exploration. The real reason for taking the position within the company was that he had been head hunted and the length of the mission was enough to tell him that the level of potential exploration in his field of geology was high, meaning that he would be involved in the

examination of planetary substances from an alien planet, at his best guess. The secrecy of the mission was so high and privately financed that the company could afford to keep all those it needed to in the dark, including him. No one knew the company name, and that rang a few scientific alarm bells. It meant illegal and ethically questionable science was on the cards.

"Everyone here?" Captain Marcus loudly voiced over the minor chatter of the mess.

A man with red blotchy skin and beads of sweat being wiped from his cheekbones and forehead was last to walk into the mess. He wore an engineering rig *inside* the ship which Lewis thought wasn't quite right, although he noticed that most of the other crewmembers shared his thought from the variety of puzzled looks that were given to the man leaning up against the mess's door frame as he continued to sweat. Elliot saw that Lewis had given the man an odd look and leaned in to Lewis to tell him that it was the ship's engineer, Neil Duerdon, who was sweating profusely whilst keeping his distance, as Captain Marcus waited for an answer.

"I'm the last." Said Neil with a wavering nervousness in his voice as he addressed the Captain and then looked around the mess to see who was still staring at him past the point of rudeness. No one kept eye contact for long, it was as if they were worried they might catch his blotchy skin and continuous sweating that they thought might be a hyper sleep sickness just by being near him for too long.

"Well ok then, firstly I will introduce myself. I am your Captain and my name is Marcus, you can call me Captain, Cap or Captain Marcus. Secondly we're going to find out why we're all awake and having this meeting rather than sleeping the dreamless sleep of our hypersleep induced state. There are only a few reasons for all of us being revived so suddenly. One, the ship is in trouble and needs evacuation. Two, we've had contact from the company with a change of orders. Three, we're in a position to carry out our orders," Captain Marcus allowed a moment for the rest of the crew to take in what he was saying and come to their own conclusion before continuing. "Who was on rotation when 'Duty Orientation' was initiated?"

"It was me," said Voss holding his hand up with a flick of a wave.

"Yeah, the Doctor and . . ." Captain Marcus reached for someone to fill in the blank.

"Neil, ship's engineer and we had just revived Elliot here as well," Voss continued.

"So what happened?"

"Why don't you ask the computer, she records everything."

"She? If I want to ask the machine's opinion I will, but for now I'm asking you," Captain Marcus fired back still waiting for his answers.

"I revived Elliot and was following orientation procedure by showing her around the non-restricted areas of the ship and as we got to the crew quarters the computer announced that she was initiating 'Duty Orientation.' We then made our way straight to the medical bay and hyper sleep chamber to make sure everyone had a complication free revival, which is a long and tiring job for one person let alone eight all being revived at the same time. So I'd appreciate a little more respect and a little less condescension when we next talk, if it's all the same to you," Voss finished his account looking like he only then realising what he had said and kept his eyes to himself as not to try and look like he was looking for a fight from the other crewmembers.

Lewis watched this interaction and thought that even though Captain Marcus was a reasonably scary man, he had responded to Voss's frustration and reason with a keen and fair ear. Lewis made a judgement on Captain Marcus, he decided that the Captain wanted to make the most informed decision for his ship and crew, but he had the sense to listen not just to what his crew were saying, but what they meant as well.

"Ok Doctor," Captain Marcus continued with a less aggressive nature. "Was there anything else that happened that could shed some light on our situation before I pass on our orders?"

"The computer said that the Galileo has sourced a potential target and needs the crew members to assess, evaluate and analyse," Voss made sure everyone heard him.

Silence filled the mess as the crewmembers thought on what he had just said. Lewis noticed that Captain Marcus didn't carry on with his orders; he waited for the crew to once again come to terms with their new revelation. Lewis took the opportunity to look around the mess and see how his colleagues were reacting to the small piece of the puzzle that they had been given and what they would do with it. There was an oriental woman who Lewis could see was wearing holo band around her wrist along with another man who reminded him of himself a little when he was younger, but with brown hair. He too had a holo band, which led him to believe that they were the pilots, as they could control key ship piloting functions from these devices. The Captain had one, which could act as an overriding control should he ever need to personally change a ship command. Next to the pilots, but keeping herself to herself was a pale woman, a bit older than the rest. Judging from her looks, Lewis would have gauged her to be in her late forties, with a few strands of grey creeping into her hair from her temples giving her a sense of seniority. It was then that the older woman spoke, breaking the silence with a question aimed and no one in particular. "Have we found a new home?" Her voice was controlled, yet hopeful.

"Potentially," Lewis said beginning to take on board what had been said

and thinking his thoughts aloud. "If the computer has woken us up, then Galileo has potentially found a non-hostile scenario."

"Sorry, what was your name?" Asked the greying woman.

"Lewis, and yours?"

"Catlin."

"Before we go any further and hypotheses become our false targets and goals, I need you to listen up," commanded the Captain with his no-nonsense attitude Lewis was becoming used to. "We have orders, orders that will be followed. Before going into hyper sleep, the company ensured that I had access to the mission's priority purpose, which would be made apparent during the course of the operation," the Captain tapped his wrist opening up the projected screen to his holo pad, which he then prodded and swiped until finding the document he wanted to access. Upon finding it, he spoke up at the ceiling as they all started doing when talking to the ship's computer.

"Computer, read out the document entitled 'Mission Statement.'"

"The ship Galileo will commence significant environmental studies of any planetary system that resembles our own. Data should be recorded using drones and relayed back to the ship Galileo as it continues its other studies and protocols. If at any time the ship Galileo should detect a planetary system with viable planets, then the crew of the ship Galileo will take action to obtain a closer analysis and evaluation; this will all be undertaken at the Captain's discretion."

"I have a question," said the bald man who Lewis made an effort to sit away from. Even before the man spoke, Lewis thought *here we go* to himself, *let's see what this guy has got to say for himself*. Everyone in the room turned to the bald man and then the Captain gestured to him with his hand to ask away.

"Computer, what does the company define as a viable planet?"

"A viable planet constitutes evolutionary terraforming and has a sustainable organic ecosystem that can be studied and developed into a colony."

"A human colony?" Asked Catlin, following up the bald man's question that now had all of the crew members' wide-eyed attention. No one had attempted another human colony after the Columbus disaster, and Lewis knew that this would have always been a topic of much controversy if they had been back on their own planet.

"Is this why we're getting our orders out here, so far from anything resembling a governing body?" Asked Lewis.

"What do you think?" Asked the oriental woman with an obvious sarcastic tone, Lewis thought to be a pilot. "Of course, this is why we're just getting our orders. The ship doesn't stop and engage in key protocols to wake up significant crew members unless it has been programmed to do so," she

looked around the group to see their reactions, when she realised they were all following her deductions she continued. “There’s something out there and the reason we’re getting orders when we’re on the doorstep of ‘a viable planet’ is that the company knows that not a single one of us would say no to ‘taking action to analyse and evaluate,’ or am I wrong?” Lewis knew the crew all sat in silence thinking about the question they had just been asked and the worrying thing was, they would all have the same answer.