

The Price of Peace

Von chelle76

Kapitel 30: Truths and Consequences

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Chapter 29: Truths and Consequences

"Sir?" a soldier says as he steps into Commander Eagle's office.

Commander Eagle looks up from his screen, "Yes, soldier?"

"Dr. Izumi sent me to find you. Ms. Kawamura is waking up," the soldier replies.

Commander Eagle nods and hits a few more keys before standing up. "Thank you. I will be there in a moment. You are dismissed," he says. The soldier salutes him and he returns the gesture and they both go their own ways. He heads for the hospital ward of Calvary Command, swiping his card to gain entry to the critical care section. After passing a nurses station, he enters the room where Dr. Izumi is examining Erika.

Dr. Izumi looks up when he enters, "Ah Commander, thank you for coming so quickly. I'm not sure how long she will be awake."

Commander Eagle comes up to the side of the bed and nods to Erika. "Well Ms. Kawamura, how are you feeling?" he asks.

She looks at him quietly for a moment before replying, "I don't feel much of anything, sir."

"What do you mean?" he asks confused by the statement.

"I am unable to feel my legs, nor can I move them."

"The abdominal shot went through and hit her spinal column. I believe she has suffered some paralysis because of it," Dr. Izumi explains. "Her liver functions are close to normal once more, and her other blood work is coming back within normal limits, so other than the paralysis, she seems to be in pretty good shape medically

speaking."

"So why has she been asleep for nearly three months, if everything is doing so well?"

"Her organs were damaged sir, the coma allowed her body to rest so that it could repair itself to put it simply."

He nods, accepting the explanation and returns his focus to Erika, "Do you know what has happened?"

"I screwed up sir. I had a lapse in judgement and it has killed several people needlessly," she replies fighting back tears.

"You haven't killed nearly the number of people that you believe you have, Ms. Kawamura."

She looks up at him in confusion, "But I'm responsible for killing the Bismarck crew, and Gabby. I swear sir, I didn't know the Outriders were going to just blow up the ship they were on." She breaks down crying.

Commander Eagle waits for her to calm down again before speaking, "Ms. Kawamura, the crew of the Bismarck is very much alive. The ship was a decoy. We lost nothing but a shell. The crew was piloting the ship remotely."

Erika looks up at him in disbelief, "But they were responding as if they were there! How...how could they do that?"

"We had sensors that sent signals to another location, so that they could reply in kind as if they were under attack. We knew that someone had passed on information, we had to figure out who and why. We know you are the who, but I want to hear your reasons for doing so."

Erika is silent for several minutes, pondering her explanation. She finally takes a breath and starts trying to explain herself, "A few months ago, shortly after we were selected to be the Tirpitz crew, I had a chance meeting with this man in a bar. We were talking about the Outriders and the war and how it seems to be a never-ending battle. How just when you think it's over, they reappear with some new weapon or tactic. I asked aloud just why they wouldn't give up, even though we continually beat them. He said it was because what they want is a way to exist away from us, but that they need some sort of power source. Something that they could use away from us, something outdated for us even." She pauses her face hardened in thought, "I immediately got suspicious and tried to back away from the man. I realized that he was either a sympathizer or an Outrider in disguise. He grabbed my arm and forcefully pulled me back into the chair I had just vacated. He gave me a threatening look and indicated he had a gun, so I didn't fight back. There were too many civilians nearby, I didn't want to risk someone getting shot. He told me that he had heard rumors of some old nuclear power sources that were being sent to a disposal site. He said that if I could help him find out when it was going out, he could make sure they got it to use as an experimental power, and that it could end the war. That if it worked like they

hoped, the Outriders could go live some place away from the humans and we could all go back to normal lives. All I had to do was give the time and location of the one convoy." She stops and fights back tears and takes several breaths.

"Take your time, Ms. Kawamura. I need every detail, your life may very well depend on what you tell me."

"Obviously, that isn't what happened. After the one convoy was attacked and they stripped it and killed the crew, I knew that I had been lied to. It was a day or so later that the same man found me again and told me they needed one more convoy and then I'd be done. I told him I would have to think about realized something was bothering me and he pressed to explain what was bothering me. So I told him just what I told you. He thought long and were still debating what to do when we were told that the Bismarck crew would be taking a convoy of weapons in a freighter and that we were to escort them in the Tirpitz. Yuri told me to tell them of the convoy, and tell them that we were told it was the final shipment. I did, and we carried on as if nothing were amiss. The morning we were to leave, Yuri met me at my apartment and told me that if we were attacked to shoot any of us I had to. He swapped weapons with me. He gave me his blaster and told me it was set to the highest stun level. It would appear that I killed whoever I shot, so to only fire once. Perhaps then we could figure out what the Outriders were planning to use the nukes for. It sounded like a good plan, so I went with it. I didn't know it would technically cost the Bismarck crew their lives." She stops and takes a few breaths as she fights back tears again before continuing, "After the ship was destroyed, the Outriders boarded us. I actually didn't think they would. I thought they were just going to flank us and steer us to wherever they were taking us, but they got violent. Yuri gave me a signal and I told him and Gabby to try and cut them off at the ramp. Alex did as he should have and took the data drive and got away through an escape hatch. He wiped the security systems and such so that if the ship was taken, the Outriders wouldn't get too much info from the computers. I was glad of that. At least one of us was going to make it out. It was then that Gabby and Yuri were led back into the control room by the Outriders. He started yelling, so I did as we agreed and shot him. I honestly thought I had killed him. They just left him there. Then Gabby made a break for it and I told them to go after her. Most of them did, but one thought better of leaving me unattended and held me at gunpoint. They had me drive the ship to their base. Shortly after landing, I noticed that Yuri was nowhere to be found. I hoped that meant that he got away. They took me to their leader of the base. By then I saw that they were making weapons and I tried to rush the ship and get away. They captured me and beat me until I blacked out. The next thing I remember is Alex coming into my cell wearing some Outrider outfit and telling me to follow him if I wanted to get away. There was some other Outrider with him, so I guess he had someone helping him get in. Then we separated and were going to meet at the ships on the landing dock. He was about to be discovered, so I came up and hit the officer from behind and we took off. The Outrider who was helping him went to pilot the ship and I saw them about to shoot Alex and screamed for him to close the ramp. He hesitated, so I shoved him in and hit the button and got shot two or three times. That's the last thing I remember until Mrs. Rider telling me to stop fighting her and relax. She said something about a tube and I blacked out and woke up here."

The commander nods, "Well, that seems to match up with what the others have said. Ms. Weber is alive. Her ship was shot down and she crashed onto an asteroid. When she didn't eject the ship, they assumed her dead. She was actually unconscious. A few hours after that, Mr. Hido, who had escaped through an escape ship spotted her com-link signal and found her unconscious in the ship. After assessing her condition and the condition of the fighter, he got in and took off for the outpost. He crashed the ship and in the process caused himself and Ms. Weber more harm. They are currently doing well, but it has taken a good bit of time for them to heal."

"So the only people that died were the four crew members of the first convoy?" Erika asks quietly. The commander nods and Erika sighs relieved. "I know that I'm still in a heap of trouble for that, but at least I haven't killed as many as I thought."

"We are discussing what actions to take against you, I will not deny that. But you have done some good even if you went about it in the wrong way. That will be enough to keep you from death. There is talk of a court martial, but then allowing you to live as a civilian. This is a viable option given your medical situation. The doctors do not feel that you will ever walk again."

Erika nods, accepting the statement. "I will do whatever you deem necessary for my punishment, sir. I know that even though my intentions were noble, I should have come to you when the man contacted me. I suppose I was not thinking clearly."

"Well, what is done cannot be changed, Ms. Kawamura. When you are deemed well enough to be released, you will be confined to your quarters until the matter of your punishment is resolved," the commander states.

"Yes sir," she replies quietly.

The commander nods then turns and heads out of the room towards his office. Plopping down into his chair he clicks on his computer and begins catching up on his communications.

A couple of weeks later, the commander is in his office when he hears a knock at his door. "Come in," he replies, not bothering to look up from his work.

The door opens and April walks in, "Hello, father," she says brightly.

He finishes reading then looks up to her in greeting. "To what do I owe this visit, April?" he asks giving her a tired smile.

"I came to ask how Erika is doing. I heard that she is awake now," April replies.

The commander nods slightly and sighs, "She has been awake for a couple of weeks now and I have discussed her version of the events."

"And?" she asks.

"The stories seem to match. At least close enough that I believe they are all being

truthful."

"What's going to happen to her?"

"The current discussion is that they will court martial her and then allow her to live as a civilian. She would have to agree to some sort of monitoring, and live under certain guidelines, but given her physical limitations, I feel that is probably the heaviest penalty they can force upon her, given the statements of the others involved," he replies.

"What was said?" April asks genuinely curious.

"I cannot give you all of the details, April. I can tell you that the others have all made points about how once she realized that she had been used that she went to great effort to stop the plans the Outriders had made. Even nearly losing her life to save Mr. Mackenzie and your husband. If she had not intervened, I don't think things would have turned out as well as they have for any of us. I have made that case to the council, so they will take that into their consideration when they decide on her punishment."

April nods, "Fireball won't even tell me what all happened on that base. He said that perhaps after all of this is over he may tell me, but until then, he can't."

"That is correct. I'm sure you are familiar enough with the regulations to know that he speaks the truth?"

April nods, "Yeah. I know." An uneasy silence falls between them and April walks over to the window and looks out over the vast complex known as Calvary Command. "I think Alex is coming along well with his training. He seems to be picking things up more quickly now."

"It sounds like you are surprised," the commander says.

"Perhaps a little. I don't think anyone could replace Saber. Except for maybe Amanda," April states quietly.

Her father resists the urge to laugh out right and nods slightly, "I had no idea that she would prove to be so useful when I hired her, I guess it's been over three years ago now."

"It seems like she's always been around us, doesn't it?"

"At times, I am inclined to agree with you. Other times it seems like yesterday when Saber contacted me that you were in dire need of medical attention. I still remember how hard he tried to hide the severity of his injuries. I really had no idea he was injured until I arrived on the control deck, and even then he had me convinced it was minor."

"We all were pretty bad off, weren't we?"

The commander nods, "And yet, in spite of how things were all of you have continued to fight."

"We're a rather stubborn group, aren't we?" April asks with a laugh.

The commander laughs, "To put it lightly, yes." He falls silent a moment before getting up and standing beside April, "The day that you first responded to us while in the coma, I was elated. A relief washed over me that nearly made me drop to the floor," he admits quietly. "And then, when you got so angry at Saber for not waking up, I realized just how much all of you look to each other for support. I saw the hurt and the fear in all of your faces when you realized that he was blind and could not remember anyone. And yet, none of you would abandon him. All of you became rather protective. I don't think anyone can fill such a void in your group dynamics."

"We will do what is necessary. Saber feels that Alex can learn, and I am inclined to agree with him. He has proven himself able under pressure when he got off that ship to bring us the information, most cadets could not be that clear-headed under such circumstances. Saber is a good teacher. Perhaps a bit unorthodox in his methods with Alex, but look at how Amanda turned out, and she had no formal training. He was rather tough on her too from what I've heard."

"I had also heard that. Of course she wanted him to be, perhaps that was her point."

"What do you mean?" April asks, turning to look at him.

"Well, at the time he began teaching her self defense and sword fighting, he was not feeling like he could handle doing much, right?" April nods and he continues, "Well, I heard her say that sometimes, you have to allow the person to prove to them self that they are still capable. In his case, she got him to teach her skills that he has used for his entire life. An almost natural ability, if you will. It brought up his confidence, I noticed a change in him after a couple of weeks. And then after Sean attacked Amanda, he became more determined to teach her to fight. After they had the argument or whatever it was, they both seemed to have some sort of unspoken understanding of each other. Perhaps it was that she treated him as an equal, and not like he was some poor person thrown into a disability that made him respect her. I suppose I could ask him, but I'm not sure he could honestly answer me."

"I figured it was because she would stand up to him. I think he admired that in her. We were always hesitant to argue with him, because we knew that most of the time, he would end up winning an argument. But Amanda seem to take that as a challenge. It almost seemed like he welcomed the intellectual sparring she gave him. She was not afraid to tell him off, that much is for sure," April states.

"I'm sure that even now they have some rather heated discussions. Or rather passionate discussions. But, as you stated, they seem to thrive under such debate. I think it makes them closer in a way."

April laughs, "There were a few times I would have loved to have been within earshot

of them." Her father gives her a curious look and she grins before continuing, "Well, that day they disappeared after we found them in that outer building sparring, for instance. He was angry with her when he left that morning, but something happened when she found him. I would have loved to have been privy to that conversation, because whatever was said, that was the beginning of how their relationship developed." The commander nods and April looks back out the window before speaking again, "Have you heard from either of them in the past couple of weeks?" she finally asks.

"About a week ago I talked with Amanda. Saber was resting, his headache was back again. She had called Dr. Izumi and they talked, and then he transferred the call to me. We talked a bit. She's worried about him, but he has tried to not show her how bad he's feeling. It worries me. Dr. Izumi was going over there this morning to do a check up on both of them. As far as I know, he has not come back yet."

"I see. Perhaps it's good news then," April says trying to sound positive.

"I hope so. All of you have gone through enough for two lifetimes," the commander replies.

Amanda is sitting downstairs when Dr. Izumi comes down from the bedroom. He comes and sits beside her, "Well, I think the medication will help his headaches. I should have the results of his scans in a couple of hours. From what I could tell, I don't see anything major. He most likely has another mild concussion. If he can manage to not get knocked around for a few months, he should be back to where he was before you went out this last time."

Amanda nods, looking relieved. "I will do anything I have to to prevent him from going back out. Although I don't think he will put up much of a fight."

Dr. Izumi smiles and then looks her over carefully, "How are you feeling?"

"Tired, sore, hungry all the time. I suppose all of that is normal. I figure that I'm almost seven months along now. I do hate that my balance is so thrown off, it makes the stairs harder to navigate."

Dr. Izumi laughs, "All expectant mothers tend to feel the same way about stairs. I will say that you look well, especially after everything that has happened. I do need to be getting back, please do not hesitate to call me if you or Captain Rider begin to feel bad. I will call you once I have the results of the scans." Amanda nods. "I'm sure that Commander Eagle is waiting for a report. I think he wishes to speak to you, but wanted to make sure you were both up to it before coming here."

"I think it would be fine. I figure I'd leave Saber to rest for a while and just stay down here. He is welcome to come any time he wishes," Amanda says as Dr. Izumi stands up. She stands up and they walk into the kitchen where Thomas and Elaine are talking.

They look up when the two enter and Thomas stands up. "Are you ready to leave, doctor?" Thomas asks, getting a nod in reply. Thomas grabs the keys and they head

out the door.

Amanda comes and sits down at the table and sighs as she plops into the chair.

"Are you feeling alright?" Elaine asks eyeing her with concern.

"I'm fine, just tired. Dr. Izumi said he'll call and let us know how the scans come out within the next couple of hours."

A knock at the door causes April and her father to turn towards the door, "Come in," the commander says. The door opens and Dr. Izumi enters. "Ah, we were just discussing whether you had come back yet."

"I've been back about half an hour, sir. I've got the test results for Captain Rider and Ms. Kawamura," Dr. Izumi says as he comes and places three folders down on the desk. April hangs back, but the commander walks over to look. Dr. Izumi look over to April with a questioning look.

"If it's all the same to you, it's fine with me if she stays," the commander replies.

Dr. Izumi nods and April comes over to the desk to look at the contents of the folders. "Well, I'm sure you want to know about Captain Rider first," he begins. The two nod slightly and he continues, "I see evidence of some trauma to his temporal lobe, that could be causing the vision disturbances and headaches. However, I compared it to the scan a few months ago, and the size of affected area has actually decreased. So hopefully, if he can manage to not get in a situation where he hits his head for a while, he should return to how he was before he went out the last time. He will most likely still have some light sensitivity, but he should have good enough vision to do more focal things like read, at least with the glasses I've had made for him. He should be checked every six months for the next few years, on the off chance that a hidden issue comes up." He pauses and then after being sure that neither person had any questions, he continues. "As for Mrs. Rider, she is doing rather well. The usual aches and pains of pregnancy, but overall, I am pleased with her progress. From the ultrasound images everything appears fine with both children. Although I do not think she will make it to the forty week mark. I give her maybe five more weeks." April smiles broadly and the doctor chuckles. "Of course I didn't tell her that, as she is too worried about her husband," he adds, hinting not to say anything.

"I won't say a word, doctor," April replies.

"And now for Ms. Kawamura," the doctor states with a sigh. "Her spinal cord was nearly severed. The likely hood of her ever walking again is extremely low. After her release, I assume the proceedings for her court martial will convene?" Commander Eagle nods. "Well, I would like to go on record as saying that I recommend that she be dishonorably discharged and then allowed to live in a nearby colony with electronic monitoring for the duration of her life. She may still need health care on occasion, and since she was injured while trying to save fellow officers, I recommend that she be allowed annual check ups with me. I am aware of her situation and it would be better to be able to keep a close eye on her."

"That seems to be the general consensus of the council from the members that I have spoken with. If you think she is as physically able as she can be to come to the hearing, she should. A few of the others wish to speak on her behalf, and the council has allowed time for them to do so."

"When are they wanting to have the hearing?" Dr. Izumi asks.

"Friday morning at eight."

The doctor nods, "She should be able to attend without much difficulty. She is doing better on managing to get around in the wheelchair I have provided for her."

Friday morning arrives and the council chamber is packed with people. The council is seated and everyone falls silent. General Whitehawk comes up to the podium and begins speaking, "Ladies and gentlemen, we have come this morning to decide on the fate of cadet Ms. Erika Kawamura. She has been charged with treason." Several murmurs are heard and he holds up his hands to silence the crowd. "That being said, I want all of the circumstance that led to the events to be brought here before the council. I feel that given the unique circumstances this case is not entirely as cut and dry as most cases of this nature tend to be. So I will be asking those that have previously told me they wish to speak, to come forward at this time." Fireball, Alex, Yuri, and Gabby all get up and approach the general. "Mr. Hido, Why don't you give your statement first."

"Yes sir," Yuri replies and steps up to the podium...

It is mid-afternoon and everyone has just come back from deliberations and they bring Erika to the front to face the council. General Whitehawk steps up to the podium and takes a breath before speaking, "After much deliberation and some rather heated debates, we have decided to allow a medical discharge for Ms. Kawamura." He looks to Erika, who looks surprised for a moment, then nods accepting the decision and he continues, "As for her punishment, it has been taken into account that she took steps that has most likely saved millions, so she will not be given a dishonorable discharge." Several people gasp in surprise, but he presses on, "Obviously given her medical state, she is unable to serve as a cadet. Since we are giving her a medical discharge, we will not give her prison time. She will be release as a civilian, but has agreed to electronic monitoring indefinitely. We feel this is a reasonable punishment given what the circumstances are. Ms. Kawamura, we have found you an apartment that is wheelchair accessible. It will be ready for you on Monday. Until then you are confined to your quarters. You may have visitors. You will report in an hour to Dr. Izumi to receive your monitoring device. You may travel freely within the civilian colony you are placed, but will have to apply for permission if you wish to leave the colony. Do you have any questions, Ms. Kawamura?"

"No sir," she replies.

"Very well, we are adjourned," the general states and the crowds begin to disperse.

Hope you like this so far :-) Let me know.