

Kill a Slave

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<http://kalinbooks.com/rock-eve-novel/kill-slave/>

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Against a Rock Deleted Scene: sometime after Floreina's father dies

Takes place shortly after Floreina's father is killed. I deleted this because I felt it made Floreina out to be too violent and cruel, and I felt that it wasn't realistic in the sense that Captain Allihence was ordering something that the crew and the average Amarrian just wouldn't be accepting of. I felt it brought the injustice on the ship too out in the open. Instead, I wanted Allihence to pretend to the crew that she's not that cruel. Also there was the problem that it wasn't a real scene, and was more of an event, because Floreina didn't have any clear goals.

Captain Allihence's personal command center was much darker, less active, and strangely, not much larger than Floreina's own turret command room. She looked around, seeing controls much different than she was used to, but recognized everything from her various training sessions. From here one could access and control input and output from the pod that contained their captain. All communications with the captain came through the systems in this room.

Adjacent to this center was the captains pod itself. A room behind a heavily sealed hatchway hidden along the far wall of the command center contained the machinery and controls for maintaining Allihence's life, forever encased in her command pod, her brain permanently linked to the computer systems, able to control any detail on the ship, to constantly touch and be one with the minds of thousands of crew members, and to communicate with anyone, anywhere in the universe with little more than a thought.

It was a solitary life in a physical sense, yet a life that allowed for deeper understanding and closer human contact than normal people could comprehend.

Floreina stared at the hatchway to the pod for a short time before continuing to look around the command center.

Only a single slave sat at a console, looking bored as he scanned a readout for fluctuations in Allihence's nervous system. During battle this center would be bustling with Amarrian commanders keeping track of systems and maintaining the flow of communication, but now it seemed all but deserted.

Floreina read the Scriptures quote, etched into a giant plaque built into the wall of the ship, as was so common across Amarrian vessels:

"Go up, my warriors, against the land of Caldari and against the people of Gallente. Yes, march against Minmatar, the land of rebels, a land that I will judge! Pursue, kill, and completely destroy them, as I have commanded you," says the Lord. "Let the battle cry be heard in the land, a shout of great destruction".

For a battleship command center it was an excellent quote that communications commanders would see out of the corner of their eye in the midst of battle to remind everyone just why we are doing this.

Floreina heard the captain's voice interrupting her thoughts through her mental implant.

Hello, Commander, said the Captain. Why don't you take a seat and plug yourself in so that we can communicate more intimately.

Floreina paused for a second. The direct link would reveal much more of her emotional state than the primarily verbal communications that could be conveyed through her standard remote implant. Floreina was still angry... but not just angry... She also had a flood of other emotions surrounding the events of the last week; emotions she did not quite understand and did not

want the captain to misinterpret.

But she could not refuse her request.

Yes, Ma'am, replied the commander, sitting down in a command seat to plug a system connection into the socket at the top of her neck.

This one was faster than many of the others she had tried. The sensations were crisp and bright; the emotions of the captain and other commanders currently plugged into the system were clear and unadulterated. The connections in her regular turret command center were only necessary for controlling mostly physical things like tracking, bandwidth, beam density, and things of that nature, while this center was responsible for much more subtle things such as the morale of the crew, the captain's personal relationships, and the other various emotional issues of the crew, as well as all of the normal physical things needed to run a battle starship.

You are understandably angry about what happened, the captain comforted. *I would be concerned about you if you weren't.*

They touched minds for a time, the captain attempting to make Floreina understand her decisions a little better, by presenting her emotional connection with the vessel as a whole and her desire to know every nuance of the ship's systems and exactly what they are capable of. The arguments were no different than before, but now were attached to much heavier feelings that could not be communicated with words or pictures or even through the mind links available in Floreina's normal command seat.

That sense that you have become the ship; capsuleers do not feel as though they are the captain of a ship, they feel as though they are the ship, that they were born, not as human beings but as giant, intricate, metallic machines. A body infinitely more complex than a human body, at least in terms of everything the mind could control.

But there was more than just the oneness of the ship, and her desire to understand it. Also, was Allihence's desire for that same adrenaline, the same rush of excitement that is felt by any human being, whether they are permanently linked with a starship, their true human form being closed off from all eyes inside an armored shell of finely tuned electronics and nutrient solution, or if they're a normal person whose never had a brain implant living on some planet's surface.

Floreina sensed that desire for excitement behind all of the intricate emotions surrounding her connection to her ship.

Yes, The captain communicated, *That is the other aspect of this.*

We went through all of those dangerous overclocking procedures just because you wanted a little bit of excitement?

Not 'just' because I wanted some excitement. You must remember that all of you are here to serve me; my feelings encompass this ship. I apologize for your father—that was not part of the plan, I assure you; I understand that it would be difficult for you in that situation, and I apologize for ordering your termination. I should have realized that it was merely the situation that caused you to overreact, and since then I have come to realize that you are more of an asset to this crew than I had previously thought, judging by the reactions from your team, and the fact that you somehow escaped termination with a broken leg and a nasty blow to the head.

Thank you, captain, Floreina replied.

You must remember, however, that everyone on this ship, besides myself, is expendable. You included. This is a violent profession, Floreina. You understood that when you signed up, and if you have a problem with that you can sign off at any time and we'll find a replacement. I just ask that you give a proper two weeks notice...

No, no, Floreina replied quickly.

But your job here is to kill people, continued the captain, *and your job is to follow my orders. You kill far more people on other ships than I do on this one. I've touched your mind before when you're calculating the spot on an enemy ship with the highest concentration of people so you can take out as many lives as possible with each shot. I know you enjoy it as much as I do.*

Floreina had no choice but to give her mental concession to that. She did love her job.

Will you do me a favor? Asked the captain.

What would you like?

That slave over there: I would like you to take out your sidearm and end his life.

Hmm... replied Floreina. *Is there a reason for this?*

Does there need to be a reason for everything?

Has he done something wrong?

Nope. Why is everyone always looking for an excuse to do these things?

The slaves on this ship respect me and if I do something like this—

They will never know. I have seen to that. The captain paused, and Floreina felt her scanning the commander's emotions. *I want to determine if you really understand what we are doing here, that you are capable of doing the same at close range that you enjoy doing at the turret's optimal range when you can't hear them scream.*

*It just doesn't seem practical—*Floreina started.

If you wanted practical, you'd go make a peace treaty.

Taking another life is a spiritual experience and not to be taken lightly.

I agree; and I'm not asking you to take it lightly, I'm just asking you to do it.

And Floreina nodded internally, realizing this was not something the captain was going to let up on, and put her hands carefully on the plug on the back of her head to remove it, rising slightly from her chair.

Oh, no, The captain stopped her. *Stay connected. I want to feel what you feel; to share the experience with you.*

Floreina reluctantly removed her hand from the connection and relaxed back into the seat. But after reaching for her pistol and removing it from its holster, her hesitation was over. In one rapid motion she brought the weapon up, aimed and carefully fired a single shot to blow a clean chunk off the top of the slave's head.

The Minmatar did not make a sound or a movement for several long moments and for a second, Floreina thought he might actually turn around and protest to the mistreatment.

He finally slumped to the floor, his limbs beginning to spasm and move in a post mortem release of energy. She stared for a time, feeling strangely blank.

But the captain felt empowered, and Floreina allowed herself to float into those feelings, and to become one with her captain. To feel that superiority over those... people... this is something that the Amarrians can do... our gift from God... to have this power.

And together they focused on the body, lying, shaking on the floor, and felt its life force escaping into the unknown. They imagined his friends and possible family on board, what they would think when he did not return from his duties. Allihence and Floreina had made the decision, and right or wrong, practical or counterproductive, it was their decision to make. And for a long moment they sat, without literal verbal communication, and simply explored their emotions together, as two and as one.

And that is why we do this. You and I—we all feed on tragedy, The captain finally communicated. *That's all I needed from*

you. I think I can say we're on the same page about this, and I think I can trust that you can handle the deeper emotional implications of the things that occur in our line of work.

Floreina sat, still directly connected to her captain and to the network as a whole, able to comprehend the mental state of Allihence much more clearly than before, and for a long moment, explored the new pathways, feeling the myriad connections and controls throughout the ship and what it must feel like to have power over each and every one of them, to have that overwhelming complexity, yet a constant and seemingly magical understanding of everything.

She hung for another moment, bringing her mind back to the body on the floor, feeling a sudden sadness. Only the second time she had ever killed a slave, and regrettably, also the second time she had done it for no discernible reason.

The drones will take care of the body, Floreina,

Have a good day, Captain, Floreina mentally saluted. *It's been a pleasure.* She pulled the plug from her head, feeling a rush of energy as her soul pulled itself back into the chamber of her body from the spiritual and emotional expanses of the ship's computer systems and the variety of people connected to it.

She sat up and as she walked away from the scene and exited the captain's central command chamber, she felt a sense of pointlessness. Why am I here? What am I doing? Do I have an ultimate goal in all of this, or am I just wandering around this life, experiencing one strange and interesting situation after another?

But other thoughts came to the surface as well. The plans she had begun developing... to begin the next leg of her career. Now that she was not directly connected to the captain, she could think of them more freely, and the feelings of pointlessness only made her want to give her plans a shot, and the captain's expressions about violence could only serve to justify them.

There had to be a point to this. Floreina could not accept the idea of killing simply for the enjoyment of the adrenaline and the power over others lives. The taking of another's life had a time and a place and a holy and practical purpose. Killing was meant as a tool to help establish the Amarrian people as God's children throughout the universe, to bring peace and order to the lesser races through the rule of Holy law. Abuse of such power was shameful.

Floreina nodded to herself. *Yes,* she thought privately and smiled. *We are all expendable on this ship, captain, and so are you.*