

*Korstá*

I couldn't believe my eyes. My screen displayed words I hoped never to read. The most important of them, *korstá*, the Yorgippian word for attack. A threat of *korstá* warranted an official report, but I held off for several long seconds, savoring existence as it was. When the humans arrived on Luna, it wasn't a question of if, but a question of when... when extinction would come. Here was the beginning of the end. The onus fell on me, First Interpreter Suryara, to set our demise in motion.

When I was young, Mother would whisper stories to me in our bunk after the lights zapped off for the night. They were stories of her grandparents, their traditions and beliefs; how they worshipped a baby born in a stable- a structure for animals- who grew to be a man who died by being nailed to a cross. He came back to life to save humanity, but despite the prayers of his followers, his magic couldn't save the Dead Planet. A distant memory of him certainly wouldn't save Luna now.

"First Interpreter!" Commander Perto marched toward my station. He saluted, as was customary, then relaxed and leaned in close to my face, closer than I expected. I was sure he smelled the terror in my sweat.

"When does your shift end today?" He spoke too casually to have detected anything wrong.

"In three rotations," I responded. Not long now. If only this textbyte had been intercepted four rotations from now. It would have been out of my hands.

"I was thinking, after your shift... maybe you and I could consume our rations together..."

"Commander-"

"Suryara," his tone was soft, "I understand that this is against protocol, but I feel..." He trailed off as his eyes followed mine and both pairs rested on my screen.

"What is this?" he asked, but he knew. "*Yórgi irutia Luna korstá... my god!*" His final words were a cry for help, a remnant of the Dead Planet, their meaning lost years ago.