

This is the beginning of “The Saviors” mini arc within Alien arc. And this story is actually a very recent addition to this arc. There are three major players in this arc. Gallo of Gray mist is one. Captain Erika is another. And this story covers the third player.

## [Alien arc] [7] [The Saviors] [12330]

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The Saviors, they were a small group of a highly specialized fleet. They appeared amidst the chaos that unfolded before mankind:

### The alien invasion

There was a lack of a better term because no one bothered to come up with one. With mankind being battered left and right, there was simply no desire to come up with a better term.

In the end, it was simply referred as “the alien invasion”.

No one knew when the Saviors were founded but the first sight of the Saviors was shortly after the destruction of Freedom colony in 12329.

The space colony was fully aware of its impending doom and evacuated all citizens. The trouble though was destination.

Some chose to head to Sol system. Some chose to lead for Andromeda cluster. Few chose to search for the planet Cyan in order to proceed into the Nebula. And there were those who chose deep space.

The logic behind sailing into deep space was simple. Since no one knew a safe place, they simply decided that wandering in deep space would be the safest. With proper cargo bay modification and a big enough ship, it was entirely possible to live hundreds of years in space.

Some felt it was a very sensible choice. With a help of probes, they could still monitor the situation and come back when dust settled down.

The problem was that the aliens tracked them down, one by one.

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My name is Ciska. I was aboard one of three freighters that chose to venture into deep space. We felt it was the safest choice, and I agreed joining a group of 55 people across three ships.

We didn't just venture into deep space unarmed however. Two ships had anti-vessel turrets and the third one had anti-fighter turrets, and we formed a triangle formation before departing from Freedom colony. We were well aware that our offensive capabilities were no match for the aliens but that wasn't our motive for having turrets. We were mostly worried about pirates.

Five days after we departed the colony, we detected a large shockwave. We were shocked to our bones. It was really hard to believe that the gigantic fortress in space, home to more than 200 million people was destroyed like that.

Then the silence came.

“Nothing at all on the sensors, nothing. I mean not even a simple space radio signal. It’s all gone.”

I told David with a slightly shaking voice. I know space is vast and empty but this zone used to be full of junk signals from all over the directions. Now, there was nothing, absolutely nothing.

Even David seemed to be having a hard time trusting my owns and took at the sensor readings on his own.

“Fucking hell..., nothing at all...” He mumbled.

David and I were in charge of the bridge on one of the freighters. It was a simple bridge with a single console. He and I had been taking turns on watching sensors in case of an attack for the past few days.

The shockwave had scrambled their sensor for over a week and sensor was finally starting to work just few hours ago. This was when the fear factor started to kick in for us and I called the others to the cafeteria to discuss whether to deploy probes.

I made my feelings clear at the meeting.

“Guys, there is nothing out there. Not a single channel. I am afraid that laying down a probe network is going to attract unwanted attention. What we should do now is hide.”

David added to my point.

“Ciska is right, I think. It’s ... eerie out there. We should keep a low profile.”

The general consensus was in favor of hiding for the time being, and so we did. Parking our ships in virtually middle of nowhere, we shut down non-essential services and attempted to keep a low profile.

It worked for a while but carelessness kicked in.

It turned out that keeping a low profile was boring. With most of services turned off, there wasn't much to do other than just watching shows and playing games. Few weeks of such repeated activities meant they became bored and eventually too bored.

Wanting to do something else for a change, they wanted to fire the cafeteria up with loud speakers and other entertainment facilities. I attempted to stop them but they were adamant.

"Ciska, nothing has been happening for over 50 days now. I think we are safe for the time being. We are dying here," They argued.

I turned to David for help but boredom seemed to be getting to him as well. I would be lying if I wasn't bored, but it was a matter of survival.

In the end though, they did what they wanted. And, once they got a taste of full entertainment, they were going back to keeping a low profile.

While I was concerned, it certainly made me feel better that all of ship's services were online. I, too, took an advantage of it.

And one day...

I was nodding off at the bridge when the console started a low beep warning sound. Wiping off drooling on my face, I confronted the console and inspected what was going on.

"Oh, no..."

It was a group of unidentified signatures. The sensor picked up about five hundred of them. I immediately sounded red alert, and David rushed in soon after.

“Crap,” He uttered.

The two other freighters picked up the signals as well and went full red alert.

We were hoping they were pirates because we could at least communicate with them. With aliens, they were always shoot-in-sight according to numerous reports we saw back in the colony.

And... they weren't pirates. What looked like drones that were size of a fighter craft swarmed us and attacked us at once.

“Shields at 92.5%, 92.1%, 91.7%...” David was reading shield status monitor. “They are literally grinding down our shields. We won't last 10 minutes at this rate.”

Death was approaching us at a surreal speed. I wasn't quite grasping the gravity of the situation. So, perhaps too stoically, I said to David.

“So, this is the end, isn't it.”

Sighing, David nodded without a word.

When our shields were below 10%, one of our three freighter exploded. I really had nothing going on in my mind. I accepted my fate and was simply sulking. Death would be quick at least.

At one point, something appeared on the sensor. It was a ship. Actually, it was an UE cruiser. It just showed up on the sensor out of nowhere that I didn't take it seriously. Figured it was just an error or something.

Then the alien drones started to decrease in numbers rapidly.

“Hey, hey, HEY!” David was yelling and shouting. “Something, err, an UE cruiser is destroying the drones?!”

As much as it was hard to believe, it was indeed happening. When we put the unknown UE cruiser on screen, it was shooting beams left and right and was battering the alien drones. The drones looked as if they stood no chance at all.

And surely soon enough, the area was cleared of the aliens. Then a hail was received.

A man..., err, no, perhaps a woman..., his gender was hard to make out. He had a rather feminine and dignified face but something seemed off. There was slight bump on his chest I could see. I just couldn't make out the gender at that time.

“This is Captain Cecilia. Are you alright?”

That was how my journey with Captain Cecilia began. She claimed to be a former UE captain and confirmed that United Earth as well as Sol system were gone for good. She claimed that she assembled few crews she could and began her own journey, alone, and found us by accident.

There was no reason for us not to trust her. Hull of her ship was battered. Large scars were present all over the ship, some of which would require repairs soon. The ship was also manned just barely with crews of merely seven people. The ship signature was genuine and the public database confirmed her identity as an UE commander. Additionally, the exact ship was in fact assigned to her name.

So, everything checked out.

There was just one small aspect that seemed amiss however. She appeared to have no original crew and the seven people manning her cruiser were allegedly rescued from debris of Jupiter assault station.

How she managed to survive alone while all of her original crews died was a mystery to me, but I wasn't going to bring it up or argue. After all, she was our savior.

Captain Cecilia's cruiser, named UE Tudor, joined our remaining two freighters. She picked some of us to be aboard her cruiser and I was one of selected.

After few weeks of training, I was sent to the bridge as a communication officer.

By this time, we all accepted that we should tag along with the captain. She appeared to have far greater knowledge of what was going on outside. Of course, having a cruiser also meant we could also fend off pirates, should we run into any.

"Ciska reporting, Captain."

It was my first time seeing and entering a real cruiser's bridge. It was spacious and had four consoles, two on front and two on back. In middle, there was the captain's chair which was elevated by few feet.

The captain didn't acknowledge my presence but I was told she wouldn't and I proceeded to my console. One of original crews, Daniel, was at the helm console. Just as soon as I stood behind the console, the captain spoke.

"Wide active sensor at full strength, Ciska."

"Aye, Captain."

The captain made it clear to us that she was looking to rescue more people who chose to venture into deep space. She was adamant that the aliens were after

every single human out there. That was the reason for wide active sensor at full strength. It would expose her location though.

The scan resolution was about five light years and the result was two signatures.

“Mark on the larger signature and engage,” The captain commanded stoically.

Because the freighters were too slow to keep up, only UE Tudor engaged. The cruiser had what was probably a groundbreaking tech. The crews told me that they called it “subspace drive” and said it was the captain’s own invention. What the drive did was distort space and rip open a portal into subspace and make any space travel cut short. Any space travel would be cut short to just mere tens of seconds.

Of course, nothing was perfect and the drive had limitations. First, the drive drained so much power that its power draw exceeded maximum sustained output for the cruiser’s A.C.M. reactor, which meant that, once they pulled out of the subspace travel, we couldn’t activate shields or even power up weapons.

Secondly, the travel distance was relatively short in just three light years. The ship had to wait 30 minutes to recharge capacitors.

To counter the first major limitation, the ship implemented more batteries than usual and some of them were isolated from others, basically creating dual-layer of power grid. This allowed the ship to enter combat situations initially on battery power alone but would require half an hour to be fully effective in combat.

Installing a second A.C.M. would have been an option... except there weren’t enough crews to produce “fuel” for two A.C.M. reactors.

The ship also had an interesting weapon system. The turrets employed what was known as modulating lasers. The concept wasn’t new but the captain’s implementation was groundbreaking.

Normally, altering laser frequency would require new focus crystals, and mankind had little reasons to alter laser frequency. Therefore, while the concept was there, it was hardly researched.

The war with the aliens changed this however. Their shields instantly attempted to adapt to our laser frequency which decreased amount of damage our weapons would inflict. Modifications were made on software level and our lasers modulated automatically to counter their attempts. However, a single focus crystals could only modulate so much. In the end, our weapons did far less damage than it should have to the aliens.

The captain apparently invented new kind of focus crystals that had far wider frequency limitations which basically made the alien's adapting shields virtually useless. This was precisely why the alien drones were dispatched so swiftly.

All in all, the captain apparently had the weapons to combat the aliens, but she didn't seem too keen to share the tech with others.

Her answer to that was -

"Not ready," she said, and I wasn't going to argue with a great inventor and savior.

"Approaching our target," Daniel said. "ETA 15 seconds until subspace exit."

Captain Cecilia stoically commanded, "Activate shields upon exit. Power up weapons and fire at will."

"Aye, Captain."

She also told me, "Cicka, wide active sensor at half power as soon as we exit."

I had no idea why she wanted to do that. Nevertheless, I complied promptly.

“Aye, Captain.”

When we exited the subspace, I saw a familiar scene. There were two freighters with swarms of alien drones attacking them. Debris indicated that there might have been more freighters.

As ordered, I initiated wide sensor sweep and Daniel did his job. And the battle was over quickly. I was very impressed how it all went. The alien drones had no chance.

The saved freighters agreed to join us and the captain asked me whether the second signature was still there.

“...Negative, ma’am,” I informed the captain.

I felt genuinely sad that we couldn’t save the other group. However, there was no other options. We could save only one of them and the captain chose the larger group which was the logical choice.

“I see.” The captain stood up from her chair and said with a stoic voice.

“Downgrade to yellow alert. I will be in my quarter.” And then she walked straight into her quarter which was a part of the bridge.

“Phew.” I sagged my shoulders and let out of a long sigh. I was tensed up during the captain’s command. Once it was over, I felt very tired.

“You weren’t too bad for a first timer,” A bridge crew told me. “Some just freeze up.”

Another bridge crew laughed and said, “Especially when a captain is as cold as ours.”

Massaging my shoulder, I asked them, “What was the point of the sensor scan?”

They explained to me that the captain was attempting to save both groups by actively telling the aliens that she was there. It was literally “Come & get me” taunt.

“Obviously, it didn’t work but it was worth a try,” I was told.

Despite of how powerful the cruiser was, it was after all just a single vessel. And soon enough, I’d find out why she told me that the technologies that were aboard the cruiser weren’t ready.

Although I wasn’t involved in any of the repair calls due to me being a new crew aboard, I observed how the original crews battled bugs in both software and hardware. For an example, the ship’s power grid became so unstable afterwards that the cruiser was stuck on battery power for days with all non-essential features turned off to preserve battery.

During all the chaos, though, I didn’t see the captain getting herself involved in any physical labor. Most of the time, she was either in her quarter or in the cafeteria, drinking wine alone in a corner.

Regardless, the weapon and engine were still very much work-in-progress.

Once everything calmed down, we began our journey as a nomadic group of space dwellers. The captain never chose to sit still in one spot for more than few days. It was my understanding that she didn’t want the aliens to locate them and launch a preemptive attack.

We scavenged parts from debris and started modify one of our freighters into a mobile shipyard while reserve engineering the Captain’s cruiser, UE Tudor, in order to engineer a blueprint.

Now, I wasn't a skilled engineer but I was nevertheless an engineer. From my limited knowledge, reserve-engineering a highly sophisticated object like a cruiser would take years if not decades with a small group without proper equipment.

But our Captain and her inner circle managed to completely reserve-engineer the UE Tudor in less than two seasons and soon made improvements over the original design.

It was this point that I was allowed to join the engineering team. The hard work was already done. I was placed in team H which was responsible for building the super structure of the first cruiser we were going to build while on the move.

As we saved more and more people, rumors about us started to spread. And this was how "the saviors" began.

However, as our number grew bigger, an issue started to emerge. In short, our opinions were divided on a matter.

The captain showed no interests in other aspect of humanity. Her goal was to rescue what we began to call "space drifters". Now, not everyone was happy that she chose to rescue only a very specific target of people when she could certainly use her vast knowledge and experience to help mankind far better.

Or at least that was what some of people thought.

Some began to argue with the captain, insisting that they wanted her to aim higher but the captain was adamant that she wasn't going to change her ways. Perhaps, it was only natural but those disgruntled men chose to take the matters into their own hands by attempting to smuggle the technologies the captain invented.

One of the leading figures in the movement was David. And he and I being good friends, he attempted to persuade me over to join him.

"Mankind need these tech now rather than later."

David and I were in my quarter. He visited me at 22 hour.

He continued, "I do understand it needs to mature but mankind cannot wait."

He was attempting to persuade me to join him in hacking into U.E. Tudor's mainframe and download whatever it had regarding the subspace engine and modulating lasers. He was also planning to steal one of the focus crystals.

I disagreed with him.

"She was the one who invented those and I think she's the one who needs to continue working on it," I told David. "I've seen how complex the technologies were. Leaking them to the people now, I am not sure they will be of any actual use."

David agreed on a fact that the technologies were hard to understand but insisted that it needed to be tested in wilder applications to further develop it.

Overall, I agreed with David's points but stealing them was wrong. I was sure the captain had her reasons.

"I am not going to help you, David. But I won't inform the captain about this. Can you just leave me out of this?"

He looked clearly disappointed but quietly left.

Half an hour later, I was hanging on a wall with my magnetic boots off. I was trying to sleep but the debate between me and David kept lingering in my head.

I did feel he was right in his assessment that the technologies needed to have wider applications to accelerate its maturity. At the same time, I couldn't help but wonder that the captain must have had her reasons.

Eventually, I decided to visit the captain. It was 06 hour and, when I arrived at the bridge, I saw the captain alone in the captain's chair. A holographic screen was in front of her which was displaying endless lines of codes.

Without looking back, the captain spoke to me.

"What can I do for you?"

Her voice was cold, as usual.

Rooted on the spot, I told her carefully, "Um..., Captain, I'd like to speak to you in private."

Still without looking back, she told me, "Here we are. There are only two of us."

There was something about her that made me really nervous. The air between us felt chilly and heavy.

"I, I was wondering why you aren't spreading the technologies..." I stammered a bit.

I could faintly hear her sigh before answering me. "What if the aliens adapt to it? We need to mature it first and hit them hard at once. Attempting to spread the tech will only make it futile when we really need it."

She further explained that spreading it to a wrong group of people would make the current fragile balance in mankind shatter.

"They could attempt to sell this or even worse; ransom whole planets. I do plan to spread it but only when it's mature and when I am sure that I can spread it fairly."

After listening to her reasons, I had to confess to her that David and others were attempting to smuggle the technologies out of the group. I did feel David was right in his own ways, but the captain's reasoning was far more sensible in long term. David wanted a relief right now whereas the captain was looking at the bigger picture.

To my surprise, she seemed to be aware already.

“I am already aware. You aren’t the first one who informed me.”

The captain told me that they wouldn’t be able to download anything off the ship’s mainframe but did admit a possibility of focus crystals being stolen.

She said, “Though reverse-engineering the focus crystal will be as hard, if not harder, than re-inventing the whole thing.”

Finally, turning around her chair, she faced me with her legs crossed and arms rested at the chair arms.

“What do you think I should do to them, Ciska?”

“Y, you are asking me?”

“You and David are rather close, no? I am sure he attempted to persuade you to join him. However, you being here means you ultimately rejected him. You may have not realized but he was basically indirectly courting you. Should you have joined him, you two would have married eventually.”

My mind blanked. I didn’t think David had feelings for me. But upon hearing the captain’s words, it did strike me that it was him who hung around me. He was always present when I was on a bridge duty and it was true that we, two, were indeed fairly close. I didn’t feel it was romantic. He obviously thought otherwise.

“What do you think I should do to them, Ciska?” She repeated.

“I... don’t know.”

“Will you forgive me if I end up killing him?”

I felt she was joking. However, her face was stoic the whole time we were conversing and she wasn’t known to joke.

“You are not really going to kill him, are you?”

The captain let out of a deep sigh and crossed her arms slowly. "When it comes to the world view which is painfully similar to politics, it's near impossible to convince anyone. I'd rather talk to walls than attempt to switch their minds. Killing them off is the best way to maintain harmonized mind among us."

She was serious. She was dead serious.

"But some people won't be happy that you killed them."

"Truth is salt. They don't need to know the truth for everything. David and his gang attempted to flee but met an unfortunate end. Something like that will work."

"But I know the truth. Will you kill me like you kill them?"

"Do you want to die?"

The conversation was turning awkward. I felt that the captain was showing a weird, obsessive, side. I didn't like it and I didn't like how she was looking at me.

"I, I am leaving."

However, I felt like my body froze. I couldn't even move a finger but I could still speak, just barely. It hit me fast and hard that she was -

"Y...ou... ar...e... an... E...SP...."

"So are you."

My body was sternly frozen and I felt numb. "W...hat...?"

"It looks like you had no education as an ESP. The way you are resisting me, I'd say you are a class B ESP."

She did eventually let go of me when I was turning pale from invisible pressure from all sides. I felt as if huge weight was pressing down on my body and could handle it only for so long before about to pass out.

I fell to my knees and panted.

Looking down at me, the captain gave me an order.

“Ciska, I am putting you in charge of taking care of this. Whether you kill them or let them go, it will ultimately be your choice. However, know that I’d prefer a clean ending, meaning their death. But whatever choice you will make, I will accept, for ultimately it will be you who will end up cleaning up any potential mess.”

I had no idea what she really meant by her statement that it’d be me who’d end up cleaning any mess at this time. But, yes, she was right in the end. Alas, that’s for another story.

Having given the authority to deal with the situation, I was given a small group of marines to arrest David and his men.

“What a turn of events...” Scratching my head, I looked at the eight marines. I recognized one face among them.

“Hey.” I greeted him and he nodded back at me.

“Computer, locate crew 61.”

Due to lack of last names, there were often duplicated names. Therefore, it was common to refer people by their crew tag number.

A stoic, computerized, voice responded immediately. “Crew 61 is currently at the reactor room.”

“Alright, guys, let’s go.”

When we arrived at the reactor room, the scene unfolded before me was unexpected and that was a rather understatement.

David was down on knees in front of a console with his arms ... gone. I could see his red flesh and bones through what appeared to be a clean cut. He was with two other men who were too shocked to have noticed us. David himself was vacantly looking at the console from his position. He looked as if he was daydreaming.

“Oh, my God, David!” I screamed which appeared to have woken them up.

David screamed painfully soon after with the two men taking few steps backwards looking clearly afraid.

“C, call medic! Medic!” Looking back, I yelled at the marines.

The two men with David eventually told us what happened. David was attempting to log into UE Tudor’s mainframe. They believed they obtained correct login info and was going to go ahead with smuggling whatever they can.

When they logged in, however, the screen went blank. The next thing they saw was some sort of black lightning glowing in dark red. The lightning was responsible for vaporizing David’s arms in an instant.

Then I visited David when he was released from the sickbay. His arms were back which I believed to be regenerated arms.

“These arms are implants,” He told me with a weak voice. “They couldn’t regenerate my limbs.”

I was confused. Why not? “Why not?”

“They didn’t know. They said my DNA info was missing.” He covered his face with what were now artificial limbs and mumbled, “I swear... it was that black lightning...”

I never heard of anything that could erase DNA info on the spot. Is it even possible?

“What happened there exactly?”

“Well...”

According to David, they purchased what they believed to be chief engineer login info which would allow them to venture deep enough into the mainframe to get what they needed. They acted fast afterwards and logged in. As soon as they logged in though, the screen went black and some sort of black lightning just came out of the screen and hit David.

“Wait, wait, let me get this right. You are claiming that lightning came out of the screen?”

The two men who were with David said the same thing. Therefore, it wasn't easy to just dismiss it as lying.

“I know what I saw,” David exclaimed, “Although I can see how it is hard to believe for you...”

Regardless what happened, what he had done was clearly against what the captain wished. Therefore, I had to do what needed to be done. I either had to arrest him or let him go.

I informed David of my duty and my choices.

“I...” He sighed deeply. “I just don't care anymore. Let me go. Please just let me go. Haven't I lost enough?”

His arm implants were going to be as good as the real limbs. Most, if not all, issues he was going to face would be merely physiological.

Anyway, I had a decision to make.

“Exactly how many are there?” I asked him, softly. If he had really given up and didn't care, he'd tell me the truth.

“Forty... something, I don't know the exact number.”

“Can you write down a full list of their names?”

David sagged his shoulders. "Come on, Ciska. Just let me go."

I raised my voice. "David, we've been good friends and I am willing to let you go but, only if you give me a list of everyone involved."

"I can't believe you are pulling this, Ciska. I thought you were a nice, innocent, girl."

It was this point that I felt he was using our friendship as a mean to get away and conduct further espionage from afar. And, therefore, the most logical action to take was getting rid of him. However, he was one of few friends I had.

In the end, David and his two men were banished from the group. They were given a shuttle with enough food & water and were sent away. Identities of his "forty-something" men weren't revealed.

"You reap what you sow," The captain told me when she came by the docking bay to observe the banishment. I had no idea what she meant by that meanwhile.

"Captain." I saluted at her.

"I am going to be frank. This is the worst result. Regardless, I hope you learned something at least."

"Well..., I guess so, Captain. I did learn something unpleasant."

It was that people aren't what they seem on surface. I had always considered David to be an easy going and nice guy. It wasn't so in reality. He was manipulative and a crook.

And my formal training as an ESP soon began and it was announced that I'd captain the first cruiser we were building.

When asked to name the ship, I named it, "Hoop"

**- Fin**