

Mass Effect: Eurydice

Von Bint-Lilith

Kapitel 4: The Battle of Humanity

Seeing Liara again felt great. She was a good and welcome friend. Especially after having Kaidan questioning Eurydice's every step. It was tiresome. Yet she had sent James back to the shuttle and not Kaidan. After all it was him she preferred to have by her side.

She had tried to get over him. Even attempted to distract herself by flirting with others, but she never managed to get intimate with someone else. In fact the last time she had slept or even kissed someone was with Kaidan the night before the SR-1 got shut down. That happened almost three years ago. Three years without intimacy. Well, it did not feel exactly like three years for Eurydice since being in stasis after her death, but still, it felt so long. She was almost yearning to be touched again. By him. But she could not think of that now. Not in the middle of a mission. She shook her head as if she could get rid of her thoughts by the gesture. Kaidan would not want her anyway.

They had made it to the labs, passing several scientists' bodies. It was a gruesome sight. Suffocated scientists, agony and shock across their dead faces, cramped hands at their throats. Did her body look like that when she had died? It was no wonder Kaidan was acting so frustrated surrounded by all this death. It upsetted her, as well. Cerberus had begun acting extremely brutal. To think she was working with them some months ago made her feel nauseated although she knew she was not to blame for any of the crimes Cerberus was committing now. Liara pressurized the room in order to make the labs that led to the tram station accessible.

"Hey," Kaidan said approaching the surveillance screens. "There's a recording of what happened here."

The footage showed the now dead guards mentioning an odd activity when the woman Liara had referred to as Dr. Eva Coré appeared in the background suddenly drawing a gun and assassinating the two. Liara drew the air in sharply at the realization.

"Guess we know how Cerberus got in", Eurydice stated soberly.

"I should've realized it when I met her", Liara leaned on a table. Her voice filled with self-reproach. "I was so focused on finding a way to stop the Reapers. I did not pay attention to her at all."

"Stopping the Reapers is the only thing we should be focused on, Liara. It's not your fault."

Liara started shaking. She clutched onto the desk as if not to faint. "What if we're wrong, Shepard? What if there's no way to stop them? If anything's futile? What if these are our last days and we waste them screwing around trying to solve a problem

we can't fix?"

This was weird. Liara seldom lost her temper. Eurydice did not like what Liara was saying. She felt a pain in her chest caused by Liara's statement. They were not fighting in vain. Every sacrifice they had made, every life they had lost. It could not have been all for nothing. She was thinking of the civilians she saw dying on earth. That little boy... What good was it bringing her back from the dead when everything was futile? They could have let her rest in peace. In truth she almost wished she would have stayed dead. But this was not the case. She was alive. And she had to fight. *They* had to fight.

"What are you saying, Liara?", she saw Liara pressing her lips together, a hint of resignation across her face. "You can't be serious. All we've accomplished so far... We can't give up. Not *now*!"

"I know. I'm sorry, Shepard. I should not think that way. I cannot give into despair, for it is no good", Liara sighed, burying the face in her hands. "I've just lost track. And... And I'm scared. But you. You are so determined. You give us strength. I don't know how you do it. You've always stayed focused, even in the worst situations. I admire you so much."

With a longing in her eyes Eurydice looked at Kaidan who was standing at the room's entrance with his back to them. "I think about what I'd lose if I fail", Kaidan turned his head and Shepard immediately looked back to Liara who was folding her arms. Eurydice could swear there was a subtle hint of jealousy in Liara's eyes. "Anyway. We've not lost yet. I try to imagine the future we could live in. And this idea keeps me determined. We will stop them", she smiled, resting a hand gently on Liara's shoulder. "Together."

"Yes, Shepard. As I said. I admire you. Let's head to the tram station now."

Upon entering the room that was leading to the tram station a turret hanging from the ceiling started shooting at them. Immediately Kaidan pressed forward to back them. They took cover from crate to crate in order to get to the other side of the room behind the turret. Kaidan was doing a remarkable job. The three of them were a good team. Just like old times. It delighted Eurydice and distracted her from the occurring thoughts caused by the earlier conversation with Liara. What was she fighting for? Did she have anything to fight for? She was doing it for the galaxy. For all the others. But what was *her* purpose in this battle?

They cleared the room but they were facing another problem. Cerberus had already made it to the Archives while Eurydice and her squad were locked out. Kaidan suggested to deceive the Cerberus troops through a communicator. While Eurydice was just praising the Major's performance together with Liara, he called her. Kaidan had found a dead trooper with a transmittor in his helmet. He opened the dead's visor and revealed his abnormal face.

"My god", he muttered stepping away. "He looks like a husk."

Shepard bent over to examine the trooper further. His flesh seemed decayed, emitting a sickening stench of death. "He is not a husk. But they've done something to him."

"And by 'they' you mean Cerberus?", she nodded. "They did this to their own guy?", Kaidan faltered before he continued. "Is this what they did to you?"

Eurydice opened her eyes wide in dismay. "What!?", she could not believe what he had

just asked her. A genuinely pain striking her. "How can you compare *me* to *him*?"

Was it this what she was looking like? She could feel the doubts returning of which she had thought she had already banished from her mind. What was she? An object created by humans? Hardly organic. A creation with no soul. She felt the doubts whisper to her as they had done all those months after she had woken up from her death. '*Who am I?*', she thought. '*What am I?*'.

"Shepard, I don't know what you are or who. Not since Cerberus rebuilt you", he answered as if he had read her thoughts. "You could be their puppet. Controlled by the Illusive Man himself."

She was at a loss for words. He was expressing what she was fearing all along. Her body started trembling, a coldness spreading to her limbs. "Kaidan...", was he right? Was she a puppet? "I am I...", she said to herself, whispering.

"Don't try to explain it. I don't think I'd understand it anyway. I just want to know... if it is you. Whether the person that I'm looking at right now, is the person I once knew? Is it the person that I followed to hell and back, the person that I loved. Are you still in there?"

She looked down to the ground. "I am myself. I am the vessel of my memories, my feelings, my thoughts. This object is me", then she looked up again. Facing him. "They didn't change who I am, Kaidan. They didn't change how I feel about you. I am myself. But my words won't convince you, will they?"

He looked evidently confused. "I don't know. I don't think it's enough."

She smiled and dared to nudge him. "Yes. You were always stubborn."

Then he laughed. The tension inside her eased a little. "Come on. Let's see what's Cerberus is up to. Maybe we'll both get some answers."

The Cerberus troops had bought Eurydice's deception and the tram filled with Cerberus arrived. They eliminated the hostile soldiers until their ride to the Archives was finally ready only to meet even more Cerberus troopers. They were awfully lot. Apparently Cerberus really did not want them there. Eventually they arrived at their destination. Liara started operating the control panel when the Illusive Man's holo appeared.

"Illusive Man!", Liara growled.

"Fascinating race, the Protheans, aren't they?", he merely stated.

"What do you want?", just seeing him infuriated Eurydice.

"What I've always wanted, Shepard. This artefact holds the key for solving the Reaper threat," he took a pull on his cigarette and looked at her with his cold, glowing blue eyes.

"I've seen your solution. You're turning them into monsters", Eurydice's voice was filled with disdain.

"Hardly. They're being improved. This is what separates us, Shepard. Whereas you see destruction as solution, I see a way to control. Imagine how strong humanity would be if we could control the Reaper's power."

"You're deluded!", Eurydice tried to appeal to his conscience. "Work with me. I will manage to destroy the Reapers."

"Shepard. The odds aren't in your favour. And I don't want the Reapers destroyed. We can dominate them."

Cerberus and thus The Illusive Man were a pro human organisation. At the beginning

they were acting as rogues. Then they spent four billion credits on bringing her back, managing the impossible. Working with them the short time they were allies was okay for Eurydice since they were together after the Collectors, whereas the Alliance did not seem to care. Although The Illusive Man had wished not to destroy the Collector base. But now he seemed he went mad. Controlling the Reapers? Just the thought of that disgusted Eurydice. She asked herself if he might have been indoctrinated already.

"The Reapers will kill us all if we don't stop fighting each other."

"Yes", he nodded in contempt. "I don't expect you to understand. And I don't look for your approval. You are merely a tool. An agent with a single purpose. You succeeded. But this is not your fight anymore. Don't interfere with my actions."

Eurydice grimaced. A tool he said.

"Shepard!", Liara exclaimed. "The data! It's not here. It's being erased", Liara was typing hectically.

"It's local. Someone's uploading the information."

They could hear The Illusive Man laughing confidently.

"Hey!", she could hear Kaidan shout from behind. "Step away from the console!" The energy of the monitors cut off. "She's got the data!"

Dr. Eva Coré sprinted out the room with an incredible velocity. Instantly Eurydice was chasing after her, but it was impossible to reach Coré. When Coré started jumping through walls she knew she could not be human. Still Eurydice ran although she was out of breath and her sides stitched. They reached outside when she saw a Cerberus shuttle approaching. "James, you read me?", she gasped into her comm.

"I read you", James replied through static.

"Cerberus has the data. Radio the Normandy. Get them down here. Now!"

Quickly she climbed a ladder to another top but it was too late. Coré had already jumped into the shuttle.

"Damn it. James!", Eurydice yelled. "Normandy! Anybody! Do something!"

Then she saw the shuttle James was riding approaching only to collide with the Cerberus shuttle leading to a crush on the roof just next to Shepard, Liara and Kaidan almost killing them all.

Angrily Eurydice stood up and gestured him to land.

"Normandy is en route. They'll be here soon", James said nonchalantly exiting the shuttle.

"James, are you out of your stupid mind!?"

He shrugged, seeming confused at her reproach. "What, Shepard? I took care of them, didn't I?"

Kaidan helped Liara back to her feet. She was limping. "We need the data!"

Inside the crashed Cerberus shuttle a dull sound clanged. The shuttle's entrance door was blown away and out of the flames Coré emerged. Her human appearance molten away by the fire leaving behind a silver female shaped android. She was a mech. Kaidan pushed Liara away and drew his gun shooting at the mech which came racing towards him. The bullets glanced off of the mech's body. It striked away Kaidan's gun, gripped him by his helmet and lifted the man with one hand.

"Kaidan!", Eurydice screamed terrified leveling her Shotgun at the mech. "Let him go!" The mech looked at her, still holding Kaidan in the air. Eurydice was scared. Losing his helmet would mean his death.

"Orders?", the mech spoke into its comm.

"No!", Eurydice could imagine the answer to the mech's question. The mech turned

around and smashed Kaidan's head against the burning shuttle's wall. "No!", Eurydice yelled again but the mech continued with the procedure. Around Eurydice everything went silent except the deafening ringing in her ear. She felt her knees weaken and panic spreading throughout her body.

After throwing away Kaidan's body the mech turned around now running towards Eurydice. Screaming Eurydice shot several times at the mech when it finally went down just in front of her.

"Grab that thing. Bring it with us", she ordered James to take the mech inside the ship running to a lifeless Kaidan. He was still breathing. "Don't die on me, Kaidan!", she begged heaving him to her shoulders.

"Shepard...", Liara said behind her. "There's Reaper activity..."

"Quick! We need to bring him to the medbay," Eurydice interrupted her not caring at all for any Reapers at that particular moment.

Eurydice entered the Normandy and hurried as fast as she could to the medbay. She laid Kaidan down on a stretcher taking off his helmet. "Please, don't die on me", carefully she stroked his cheek with the back of her hand. Tears rolling down her face. "Don't leave me."

Behind them James carried the mech inside. Puzzled he watched his Commander's outburst of emotion.

"Kaidan needs medical attention", Liara snapped at Eurydice bringing her back into reality. "We have to get him out of the Sol System. The Citadel is our best chance."

"Get us to the Citadel, Joker!", Eurydice called out to Joker. Only now she had realized that she had completely lost her self-control. She squared her shoulders trying to be Commander Shepard again.

"Roger that," Joker replied to the comm.

"Liara. See what you and EDI can learn from that thing", Eurydice gestured to the mech and left to the Comm Room to speak with Admiral Hackett.

Admiral Steven Hackett had requested to speak to Shepard about their mission on Mars. She updated him about the Archives and Cerberus' interfering. As she was telling him about the data they had managed to recover, Liara appeared to explain what EDI and her had learned.

"Commander", Liara approached Eurydice after the call had ended. "EDI is extracting data from the Cerberus machine."

"Okay", Eurydice replied indifferently not in the condition to talk business. But Liara continued anyway.

"By the time we will arrive at the Citadel we will have details that we can present to the council."

"And Kaidan?"

Liara shut her eyes and sighed. "I've done what I can for him. But we need to bring him to a medical facility soon."

Eurydice passed Liara without giving her another answer.

"The Admiral is right, isn't he? It's going to get worse."

"Unless we stop the Reapers, yes", Eurydice stated without turning around.

"I've looked at the data. This weapon could be the answer. Provided that we can build it."

As important as it was, Eurydice could not pay attention to Liara's words. Her mind

wandered off. When she saw Kaidan lying on the stretcher she had felt some kind of hopelessness. The only thing she wanted right now was being at his side and hoping he would pull through.

"You don't believe it, Shepard?"

"You didn't see what they did to earth. How is one weapon supposed to stop them?", Eurydice knew she was being cynical. It was unusual for her, also contraproductive for the entire mission. She could not stop thinking of Kaidan. Of the possibility of losing him. His body was lying downstairs in the medbay. Perhaps he was taking his last breaths right now and she was here wasting time.

"Shepard, we have no other options. This is no ordinary war and you know it."

Eurydice knew of the importance of what Liara was talking about. She understood how urgent it was to build this weapon. How they were running out of time. But could they not just allow her to be human once? Just once having a little time for herself. She had the feeling her body did not belong to herself but to everyone else. To the council, to the civilians, to the galaxy. Maybe she was a tool. She looked away from Liara with a painful expression. She was about to tear up again.

"Commander? Isn't it worth trying?"

"I'm gonna go check on Kaidan." Liara sighed at Eurydice's respond. "Make sure we're ready to present our findings to the council."

The asari nodded. "I'm sure the council will see the need to help."

"It will be a hell of a short war if they don't."

Eurydice sat next to the stretcher Kaidan was lying on, firmly holding his hand. She knew it was not right. The crew would probably talk. It could lessen her authority. But she did not really care at that moment.

"I guess you would not want me to hold your hand right now," she stroked the skin of his hand with her thumb. "Since you're thinking of me as of some kind of abomination, right? You know what? I don't give a fuck if you want it or not", she felt tears running down her cheeks again. "But please fight. You need to get through this. I don't think I could win this war without you. I don't even know if I would want to try."

She felt ashamed that she was losing her self-control again. She could not recognize herself. She felt it was very wrong of her to talk to Liara the way she had talked to her earlier in the war room. She should have paid more attention to the Doctor's informations and most importantly focus on their mission. It was wrong of her to have her mind occupied with Kaidan. And it was wrong of her to lose hope. Not when so much was at stake. Not when so many were depending on her. Still, when the mech had Kaidan in its powers back on Mars she had felt so weak. Weak and powerless. She took a deep breath. "I need to be Commander Shepard", she said to herself. Forcing a determined smile to her face. "I am in debt of those who died, I am in debt of those who are still fighting. And I am in debt of you."

They had finally arrived at the Citadel. To Eurydice it had felt like an eternity. They had informed medics of Kaidan's condition and as soon as they had entered the docking bay the medics were rushing him to Huerta Memorial leaving Eurydice, Liara and James behind. They needed to see the council first.

"Commander Shepard. We had word you were arriving", Eurydice heard a familiar voice saying.

"Captain Bailey. Good to see you again."

"Yeah, good to see you, too. Though it's *Commander* now", he rolled his eyes.

"Congratulations? I guess?"

He gave her a brief update of his new tasks and that the council was awaiting them but were busy at the moment. It meant she had time to visit Huerta Memorial first.

"You go on ahead", Liara said smiling. "I'll go to Udina's office."

When they all had departed she proceeded to the hospital.

"Shepard! There you are!", Karin Chakwas greeted her in the patient lounge. She was standing next to Dr. Michel. She remembered her first encounter with the red-haired doctor three years ago. Now she was the human medical in-charge of the hospital. Shepard was happy to see both women but anxious to get to Kaidan as soon as possible.

"Dr. Chakwas. You're here?"

"Yes, I'm working with the Alliance. I heard that one of your crew was injured. I came as quickly as I could," Back on the Normandy SR-1 Dr. Chakwas had been one of the first who got wind of what was going on between the Commander and Kaidan. On this account she was looking sympathetically at Eurydice. Not that her restlessness would not betray her anyway.

"Kaidan was hurt on Mars, yes. Cerberus interfered with our mission. How is he?"

Dr. Chakwas smiled softly. "He is alright, Shepard. Under the circumstances at least. Chloe did a great job. He is her patient by the way. I wish I could have joined you on Mars."

Eurydice felt so relieved she wanted to hug the doctor, but refrained to do so. Instead she reacted to the doctor's hint. They were missing a doctor on the Normandy and she could not think of someone better than Dr. Chakwas. A woman she not only trusted entirely but who has also grown on her heart after all this time. "You belong to the Normandy, Karin. I would be pleased to have you joining us again."

"Say the word and I am with you." There was a spark in Karin Chakwas' eyes which made Eurydice laugh.

"Get your things. Docking Bay D24."

"Thank you, Commander. Now go see him," she cocked her head at the door at the end of the patient lounge. "He's stationed on this floor. Just through this corridor."

"After you've visited him we can talk about his condition", Dr. Michel tossed in. "He is unconscious now but he will recover."

Grateful Eurydice shook the hand of both women before leaving for his room.

"Excuse me?", another doctor approached Eurydice in front of Kaidan's room. "You want to visit Major Alenko?"

"Yes. I am Commander Shepard. The Major was injured while we were on a mission together."

"Shepard?", the doctor raised her brows. "Pleased to meet you. I am Dr. Elizabeth Drake. Kaidan is an acquaintance of mine. I have to inform you, he is unconscious though."

Eurydice realized who the woman was. She immediately felt jealous again. She

wondered if the doctor knew of Kaidan's and her past. "I've been informed already. Nevertheless I feel obliged to visit the Major. It happened on my watch."

"I see. Of course you feel obliged if the soldiers you're responsible for are hurt or worse. I'd be, too. Well, have a good day, *Commander*."

'*What a bitch*', Eurydice thought. She had to admit the doctor was not ugly though. She was probably the opposite of Eurydice with her feminine posture, her clear skin and the narrow nose adorned with tiny freckles.

"I'm sorry. I thought Dr. Chloe Michel was in charge of the Major. How come you control his visitors?", Eurydice lifted her head, failing not to give her a smug look. In response the doctor cocked an eyebrow and smirked.

"As I said. He is an acquaintance of mine. It happens that I also am a doctor so I'm checking in on him."

Eurydice's lips twitched. She would gladly insult the woman. For a second time that day she could not recognize herself. "How nice of you. It happens that I have not much spare time so I should probably go inside now. Have a good day, *Doctor*."

Dr. Elizabeth Drake turned away and Eurydice finally entered.

Eurydice watched him lying on the bed topless. He was badly bruised. The sounds of the ECG reminding her that his heart was beating. She felt bad. That doctor had implied it was her fault Kaidan was here and it made her feel even worse. It felt as if an invisible power was squashing her heart.

"Hey Kaidan", she said faltering. "I don't know if you can hear me. I guess not. But you can't tell me to get the hell out either so I'll take my chances", she smiled faintly, softly caressing his arm with her fingertips. "Seeing you like this feels bad, you know? Seeing you get hurt like this... On my watch. It made me crazy. Just the thought of losing you...", her voice faltered and she pressed her hands against her face, inhaling slowly. "I would be lost without you. This war wouldn't be the same. Don't die. You've got to fight. Please return to me."

Another doctor holding a datapad got in. It was probably time to go.

"Oh, and the doctor you are dating – or were, I don't know – I can't stand her", she sighed. "Kaidan, you're a hell of a soldier. The Alliance could sure use you. / could use you. Come on Major. Fight. And that's an order."

She left. Ready to meet up with the council to discuss the potential annihilation of the galaxy.