

Futureproof

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/37579054) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/37579054>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	Graphic Depictions Of Violence
Category:	Gen
Fandom:	Hermitcraft SMP
Relationship:	EthosLab & Ryan GoodTimesWithScar , John Booko & EthosLab , John Booko & Steffen Mössner
Character:	EthosLab (Video Blogging RPF) , Ryan GoodTimesWithScar , John Booko BdoubleO100 , Steffen Mössner Docm77
Additional Tags:	Alternate Universe - Science Fiction , Alternate Universe - Space Opera , Blood and Violence , Character Death , not our main boy Etho tho ;) , Hopeful Ending , Ambiguous/Open Ending , Bar Room Brawl
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2022-03-07 Words: 5,827 Chapters: 1/1

Futureproof

by [AstronautBeans](#)

Summary

Etho knew running away from the Red Empire wouldn't be easy. He thought staying hidden at his old friend Scar's outpost to hide for a little while would be a good start. He should've known better. If there was anything Etho learned from the years he'd known him, it was that Scar loved drama and Scar loved money even more.

Notes

Had an idea for a space opera AU just rotting away in my brain and I really just needed to write this scene so here you go, enjoy :)

Title inspired by Futureproof by Nothing But Thieves

Trigger warnings: blood, violence, (unimportant) character death

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

The ship groaned as it pulled out of hyperspace. The leather seatbelt pressed into Etho's chest as he leaned forward with the sudden decrease of speed. He fell back with a huff and combed his fingers through the mess that was his hair.

“Almost there, just hold on for a little while longer,” he muttered as he gently patted the control panel of his ship. He’d never dared to neglect taking care of it, but he’d be lying if he said the ship wasn’t getting old and wasn’t starting to break down. Especially after his *spectacular* escape. It wasn’t every day he’d have the entirety of the Red Empire’s main fleet after him inside his tiny ship. He wouldn’t be surprised if it was beyond repair now.

He spared a small moment to sit back and let the adrenaline wear off. Back at Red Station, the headquarters of the Empire, he’d jumped into hyperspace as soon as he was out of the way of most ships. To get to his destination, he had to make quick and messy calculations while going faster than the speed of light. Even inexperienced pilots knew it was high risk with barely any reward.

But he’d rather fly blind into an asteroid field than face the Red fleet like that again.

Outside the ship was completely void of anything but a singular planet. A rogue planet, with no star it followed. Even from afar Etho could see the bright blue storm that raged on there. It was a never-ending thunderstorm. The perfect material for an outpost like this one.

Pushing a handle away from him he turned his ear to listen to the regular engines to turn back on. They roared to life without a hitch. He smiled to himself. His ship still had some life in it after all.

He pushed on towards Honii. Before long, he heard the crackling of static and a voice coming through to ask the same thing they’d always ask; “*who are you and what is your business here?*”

“It’s Etho. Ship code is N80 dash 522. I’m here to see Scar.”

There was a pause and he didn’t doubt the person behind the comms had to process the information for a while. He had that effect on people.

“Alright, Sir. Please go to hangar three. The main pad is free.”

By the time he voiced his confirmation, he’d already reached the planet. Waiting for an opening in the storm was pointless. You could wait for days for it to stop and it would only seem to get worse. He’d learned how to face the lightning and harsh winds by now.

Instead of carefully positioning his ship, he dropped the controls. Almost instantly the gravity of the planet pulled at the ship and dragged it into a nosedive. Etho wouldn’t call himself a thrill-

seeker and he definitely wouldn't be doing this if he hadn't done so a hundred times before, but the adrenaline pumping in his veins and his stomach fluttering at the freefall were fun unlike anything else.

He watched the clouds rush by and listened to the metal groan as the wind pulled at his vessel. Thick beads of crystal hail beat against the ship. As soon as his scanner let out a ping and a 3D scan of the planet's surface popped up in front of him, he took back the controls. The clouds thinned out and Etho popped out the bottom of the storm mostly unscathed. No doubt there would be scratches and dents in the exterior.

As always, the surface was grey and almost lifeless. The stubborn tree stood here and there surrounded by patches of muddy grass. Many mountains decorated the area in grey to match the storm. An occasional tower was set in the stone to catch the lightning and store its power in storages below the surface.

He steered the ship to a large, perfectly circular hole in the ground, spanning about a hundred metres in width. A protective barrier covered the entrance, glowing a bright purple. Steam rose from the shield as any hail that came in contact with it vaporised instantly.

Etho let his ship hover over the barrier. It took barely two seconds before it shimmered once, twice, then disappeared. He lowered into the pit, sparing just a second to look at the barrier generators. What would happen if the locks malfunctioned and he got stuck in the middle as the barrier went back up? If the shield didn't slice him in half he'd cook alive, he supposed.

A raised pad waited for him. It was larger than the others and would be more than enough for his ship to park. He landed gracefully and took a second to raise his cloth mask over his mouth and nose before gathering his things and leaving the ship. There were only a few bits of hail lying on the ground. A constant hiss filled his ears as the continuous onslaught of hail melted in the barrier twenty-something metres above him.

A man waited for him by the stairs of the landing pad. An old school but metal umbrella was held open in his hand. The man twirled it between his fingers, the canopy going in hypnotising circles behind his back. He was dressed in a three piece, maroon-coloured suit.

"Etho! What a wonderful surprise! Come in, come in! It's quite chilly out tonight, isn't it?" the man called, a friendly smile ever-present on his face. As Etho stepped beside him, he turned and walked down the stairs. A thin, white wing pressed against his back to lead him inside.

"Hey Scar," he greeted simply. "Do you know why I'm here?"

A door opened in front of them. It closed with a rusty creak after they walked through. Scar left the umbrella against the wall and grabbed the wood cane that waited beside it.

“Do I know why you’re here? Who do you think I am? I’m not as unknowing as the Revolutionists or as blind as the Red Empire. You should know that by now. There’s a reason people call me the King of Gossip.”

Etho rolled his eyes. No one, but then again *no one*, called Scar such a thing. ‘Father of Deception’ or ‘King of the Lies’ were titles he’d heard whispered in conversations though. He kept that fact to himself.

“Then you know what I’m going-”

“- going to ask? I know you want a place to stay, away from Red eyes and bounty hunters. You know we go way, way back and you know that I’d be willing to offer you a place to lay low. And you know my answer will be, *of course*, Etho.” Scar patted his shoulder with a wide grin, flashing his sharp teeth.

“That’s good. I’ll be earning my stay, of course.” He knew thanking Scar was like making a deal with the Devil, and this wasn’t his first rodeo in Hell. The grin froze slightly, only if you watched with careful eyes, but he happily continued walking.

Etho found it remarkable and funny that Scar held so much power in his little outpost on this lonely planet. The people were scared of him, scared of what he could do with a simple word. But he barely reached Etho’s chest. He had a suit, a top hat that matched his whole aesthetic, wore a constant smile and had wings that seemed to be able to tear with a single touch of a finger. And yet everyone knew that even looking at Scar the wrong way could lead to your demise. No one dared to comment on his size.

Except Etho, who would tease about it whatever chance he had. Scar would laugh and call him a giant. There was little to no hostility between them.

They walked through the metal halls in silence. They passed through the underground square, a central area that split off to the different areas. Homes were deeper into the earth. Above those were most of the working areas. On top of everything, the level they were now, was Scar’s greatest joy and pride.

Doors were pushed open dramatically to an enormous space, decorated with lanterns and wood furniture to contrast the cold halls of the rest of the outpost. There were at least three separate bars in there. Music blasted through speakers with way too much bass. People were dancing and drinking neon drinks from strangely shaped glasses. There was a second floor, completely made of see-through crystal panels. Metal held the pieces together and beams of light wood held the floor up.

But it wasn't the beautiful details or strange drinks that would catch someone's eyes. It was the fight pit in the middle.

A ring, encased in metal bars, currently holding two fighters. People shouted. Money was thrown. Blood was spilt. It was truly Scar's masterpiece, but it was mainly his greatest income.

"Let's talk upstairs," Scar said while taking two glasses from a Blazeborn waitress. He downed one and after Etho declined, the other quickly followed. He led him up a set of thick wooden stairs. He whispered something to a passing waiter before taking Etho to a bar table above the pit. Anyone close by left to sit or stand elsewhere.

"So, what happened? Finally stepped on the Red Emperor's toes? Failed mission?"

Etho sighed as he adjusted his mask. He forgot how warm the Outpost always was on the inside. "Something like that."

He lied. Maybe Scar noticed, maybe he didn't. He hadn't failed a mission, or stepped on anyone's toes. He'd done his job perfectly just like he always did. It was a shame it had been a set-up, a suicide mission, in the end.

The waiter came back with two more drinks. One was set in front of him. It was one of the thin ones that were tall and balanced on a tip so small it had to defy the laws of nature. A bright red liquid filled the glass. He knew he could take a sip and it would be left empty already.

"That's a shame. Such a high rank and a mission threw it all away. You're lucky you have me-" he paused to open his arms wide and grin even wider than before, "- to help you out. You'll be out of trouble in no time, trust me."

Etho pulled the mask forward just slightly to throw the drink back. Like he thought, the amount

was gone in a single swallow.

Scar watched him for a moment before taking a step around the table. Both hands were on his cane as he gave Etho a serious look. He let the silence brew.

“I’m glad you’ve decided to trust me, Etho. I know it must be hard in a time like this.”

Etho nodded simply. He’d show his gratitude over time, paying his friend back with jobs and maybe missions similar to what he was used to. Scar wouldn’t waste his great skill set, he knew.

“But really, you should’ve known better.”

He didn’t get the chance to even consider the implications. The cane raised a foot above the crystal panel he stood on. Scar brought it down with force. Instantly, the panel gave away and disappeared from underneath him. His hands barely missed the edge to grab onto it. The glass flipped upside down, closing back up like nothing happened and leaving Etho to fall.

Straight into the pit.

The fall lasted barely three seconds. He managed to land on his feet but staggered forward until he fell to his knees. People shouted in excitement right in his face and he scrambled away from the noise.

“Ladies, gentlemen and everything in between! *Welcome!*” Scar announced through a microphone. The sound bounced around the room. “Welcome to the event of the day! Oh, who am I kidding? This is the fight of the week, the spectacle of the year! People will be talking about this for decades to come!”

Scar licked his lips. He stared at Etho like he was his prey. The glare he sent to the Vex was met with an unhinged grin, far from apologetic.

“I’m sure you all know and love the new fighter in the ring. Etho! The one and only!” He cackled into the mic, hearing the people cheer. “Yes yes, very well known for his accomplishments. Now, *why* is he in my beloved ring? Let me tell you.”

He circled around him like a hawk metres above him. Etho slowly rose to his feet, tearing his eyes away to watch the crowd quickly grow in size. Of course the bastard set him up like this. He couldn't believe he'd be foolish enough to trust Scar of all people.

“We all know our dear friend the Red Emperor, Mumbo K. Jumbo, right?” Most of the crowd booed. “Don't be like that. He's given every single one of us a great, great, great opportunity. You see, he's put a lovely little bounty on Etho's head. Just the head, the Emperor doesn't need the rest.”

People began murmuring, they didn't seem convinced. Etho's head for the Red Emperor? No one would risk their life for such a bounty. Etho counted on it.

“Six million credits.”

The crowd fell silent. Eyes went from Scar to Etho with newfound hunger and greed. He cursed silently.

Cheers filled the room, shouting filled his ears and threatened to turn him deaf. He watched hands reach for him past the metal bars. Others banged on the wood or stomped on the floor. Scar's crazed laughter sounded above it all.

“Come on then! Fetch me my prize! Bring me his head! Six million credits are waiting! The no-knife rule is out the airlock, go wild!”

A creature instantly hopped through the entrance, which locked back up behind it. Its figure was hunched over and broad, the body covered in thick blue spikes. It had four claws on each hand and it held two spear-point blades with ribbed edges. Four individually blinking eyes glared at him on a long scarred snout. Teeth were bared as it laughed at him darkly.

Why hadn't he brought any weapons inside? How stupid could he be?

Etho balled his fists, letting his eyes scan over the alien. It had much experience with the knives seeing the way it held them. It didn't put much pressure on its left leg. The spikes covered the whole back. The chest and belly were only covered in leather clothes. He could work with this.

Deciding to go for the surprise attack, he thrust his fist forward to ram into its nose. A knife lunged

to stab him in the side. Etho dropped to the floor, rolled onto his side and kicked at the left leg. Like predicted, it fell to his knee and wailed in pain.

“You bastard! You’ll never get out of here alive, just give up!” it said, the voice sounding like it spoke from two separate mouths. Instead of recoiling further it shoved Etho away with incredible strength.

He slammed into the bars. Hands reached to grab at his clothes. Nails sunk into his leg and he nearly screamed out. A well-timed kick followed by a sickening crack later and he managed to get the hands off. He scrambled away from the sides once again.

His opponent had already recovered. It twirled a knife and snarled a curse in a language he didn’t speak. He had to come up with something fast.

Fixing his mask, he moved to get up. A plank groaned under his weight and sparked an idea in the back of his brain. Slipping thin fingers through the cracks, he wrapped them around the wood and yanked. It gave fairly easily and Etho pulled it up just in time to block an incoming blade.

Shifting it until he held the end, he reared back to wack the alien in the face. It worked, if only to piss it off more. Another attack, another block. The blade rammed through the wood, the tip stopping inches away from his face. A fist followed it and the wood splintered as it bent.

He dodged the other knife and twisted the wood to slam into its face again. It creaked loudly as it broke into two pieces. One half fell between them. The knife joined it.

It reached for the weapon at the same time that Scar frantically screeched through the mic. Etho hadn’t been listening to the rambles and nonsense in favour of dodging knives, but he could easily guess he hadn’t missed much. He wound his foot back and kicked the other half of the plank into the alien’s knee. It toppled over. Etho ducked underneath, holding his half of the broken plank up as it fell.

It sank deep into the soft flesh of its belly after tearing right through the clothes. It howled and scrambled to get off. Claws caught his side and he hissed but jammed the plank further. He couldn’t care less that his clothes were painted a vibrant blue from the blood.

He reached over to the knife. After grabbing it, he finished the job with a powerful stab and pushed the body off. It rolled off, the crowd falling silent enough to hear Etho’s huff as he moved to get

up.

Scar's mouth hung open. In disbelief yes, but mostly in annoyance and anger. Etho levelled him with a smug grin, the expression invisible to anyone who didn't know him beneath the mask. The mouth clamped shut and he forced a cheerful smile. The old microphone twirled between skilled fingers before Scar brought it back to his mouth.

“Now, that's quite unfortunate, hmm? Bring in the next lucky fighter, there's a price waiting!”

In everyone's hesitation he scanned for an escape. The doors certainly weren't an escape. As the only logical escape route, a broad guard stood by it. Maybe he could bend the bars of the cage, if he put enough strength in it. But the viewers would stop him if the next opponent wouldn't literally stab him in the back yet. The hole he created when ripping out the wood didn't seem like an option either. Underneath was some space just not enough for a person to squeeze through. And up were the panels that apparently could flip to the other side. He would have to climb and figure out a way to get them open. He'd count it as an option if things got desperate enough.

The next fighter to come in didn't give him a chance to plan any escape. A human like him, covered in tattoos and sporting a mechanical arm twice the size of her other. Etho squared up. He fought her just as hard as the alien before, using the other half of the plank as well as one of the knives — the second one had disappeared under the weight of the alien.

He knocked her out with her own mechanical prosthetic. Guns were trained on Etho as some waiters pulled the bodies away from him. He couldn't do anything to get out, couldn't do anything to escape this Hell. A new monster entered the stage.

“Are you enjoying the game, traitor of the Red Empire? It's a losing battle. It's only a matter of time until you crumble to the floor because you can't take it anymore.” Scar giggled like it was the funniest joke in the universe. “Perhaps one of the viewers will take pity on you and give you a drink. What do we think of that, people?”

Laughter and cheers threatened to deafen him once again. Drinks were thrown into the ring. Glass shattered around his feet. Liquid stained his clothes. The fight began when the alien, a scaly creature with four arms, lunged at him. He beat it fairly easily.

Another took its place. He broke the plank to knock them unconscious. He ripped his long sleeves off to wrap them around his knuckles during the time it took the waiters to get rid of the body, his arms shining from a mixture of blood, sweat and sweet drinks.

An alien entered the ring. After that, another. And another. And they kept coming and Etho kept fighting.

Someone managed to rip off his mask and tear it to pieces. He retaliated by punching so hard it broke their nose. He fell to his knee by the creature's body. Breaths came out heavy and ragged.

The door creaked, the body was pulled away.

How was he ever supposed to win? How was he ever supposed to survive *this*?

He dragged a hand through his hair to comb it back and out of his face, not quite sure whether to be glad the strands stayed back or not. Oh, how disgusting it would be to clean his hair when he came out of this. *If* he came out of this.

“Etho. Look at me.” It came as a surprise to hear Scar so close. He snapped his head to the side. People had cleared the space for him to stand, just outside the cage. A serious look had replaced the entertained laugh. “I don't like watching you suffer. Give up now and the pain won't have to continue-”

Blood tainted his fancy shoes, courtesy of Etho spitting at him mid-sentence. Like Hell he'd give up and die now. Scar's sigh almost sounded disappointed.

Something rattled against the bars and he let his head roll back towards the gate. A new figure had entered. A tall and fairly thin creature with a tail that ended in a fifth claw, coloured a midnight blue underneath layers of armour. As Etho struggled back onto his feet, it climbed up onto the metal bars. An amused smile tainted its mouth.

He gripped the bloodied knife until his knuckles whitened and his hands shook from the effort. The alien hung from the bars, taunting him as it climbed around. Then it turned to face him and-

BOOM!

He was thrown to the ground by the explosion. His vision swam, colours and shapes dancing in front of his eyes. Shaking his head didn't help. In fact, it made it worse. So he closed his eyes and rolled onto hands and knees. With a cough he pushed himself back up. Panicked shouting filled his ears as soon as a previously unnoticed beep died down. Smoke filled his lungs, he coughed again.

A hand grabbed his shoulder.

Instantly, he brought his knife up to stab the assailant. They let go and he dropped back onto all fours with a cough.

“Hey!” they hissed. “I’m trying to save you! Hold on!” His arm was raised and brought around the person’s shoulder. He slumped against them, all the remaining energy leaving his body. They sighed and instead threw Etho over their shoulder.

“Hold this, we’re getting out of here.” A weapon was thrust into his hands before the person broke out into a run. It could only be the weapon that blew the hole in the pit. Wait, there was a hole? Blinking to clear his vision, he could indeed see the shape of a hole through the smoke.

They burst through a door and suddenly the air he breathed was clean again. Shouting that sounded suspiciously like Scar’s came from the room they left. The person just kept running.

“You’re lucky I saved your ass back there. That lady would’ve torn you to pieces.” Oh, it had been a woman then. He could never really tell with all those aliens and creatures, he’d stopped assigning them genders a long, long time ago.

“Who are you?” he croaked out. He pulled the enormous weapon closer to his chest when it almost slipped from his grip. “Why’d you save me?” To get the bounty all for himself? He stifled a scoff.

“Bdubs. I’m taking you to my ship, away from people who are trying to kill you and now me too. We’ll talk there!”

They turned a corner just when Etho heard the doors slam open a second time. Judging from the shouting and the way he couldn’t hear the doors close, people had given chase. Of course they did.

“They’re coming. I’m hoping you have a better plan than ‘run and get to the ship’?” The weapon was unfamiliar to him. He pointed it down the hallway but found it didn’t have any kind of pointing indication. It was large in his hands, and beneath his exhaustion he itched to pry it apart to take a look at how it worked.

“Gun! Gun is my plan!” Bdubs shouted between pants.

“How does it work?” He moved it around in his hands to study for any additional guides to show how it’d fire. There were a few buttons but the marks weren’t in a language he knew.

“Left side is the type of ammunition. I’d say you use electrify- uh, the second option. Then you hold the trigger to charge- WOAH!” Almost slamming into a wall, he paused to contemplate which direction to go.

“Go left, *your* left!”

“Oh, thank you!” They continued on their way. “Hold the trigger to charge up the shot and release whenever ready. Shorter charges mean weaker blasts.”

Footsteps came closer fast. Etho didn’t spare a look as he clicked a button on the side. Something whirred on the inside. Holding down the trigger, he waited for someone to show up around the corner.

Something whipped into the hallway at the same time Bdubs stubbed his foot against a loose floor plate and staggered. Etho released the trigger, sending a flaming orb in the alien’s direction. It hit the roof and sent a ship-load of debris down directly onto the enemy with a loud roar.

It wasn’t the option he’d said but Bdubs whooped regardless. “That works too!”

They slowed down and Bdubs let him back onto the ground to lean against the wall. He pulled out a tool to mess with the door’s systems they were stuck behind. Etho sneaked a sideways look to see what he was dealing with, for when it came down to another fight.

Etho could tell Bdubs was a strong person. He’d carried him the whole time while running through all these tunnels. Bdubs was short, not as short as Scar but close. He wore a green hoodie — made of actual plants upon closer inspection. He could tell a pair of alien wings hid underneath the clothing, but were kept away to protect them. A good decision, he supposed. You never knew whether someone looked to sell wings or other parts. So you either hid them like Bdubs, or didn’t care like Scar.

“If you’re done staring, let’s get to my ship.” Bdubs didn’t even give him a look. The door slid

open and icy air washed inside.

He huffed a reply, leaning against Bdubs as they walked outside. If he could muster up the last bits of energy, he could shove him away and run to his own ship. He could get out of here and run far, far away, where no one knew who he was and he had no ties to anything. Sure, Bdubs seemed like a nice enough person. But he'd seen time and time again that a nice personality didn't mean they wouldn't betray you in the end. This man would hand him over to the Red Empire eventually. It was a matter of when, not if.

All the fight got sucked from his body when the haze of orange caught his eyes. They were far enough away so they didn't feel the warmth of the fire but their whole bodies were painted in different shades of red and orange.

His ship, as broken as it was, his whole life had been on that ship. All his belongings as well as countless memories with people who'd either betrayed him or passed away. Words from Bdubs passed by but he couldn't find the energy to listen to them. His ship was a flaming mess, possibly been alight for the past hour already.

He let Bdubs carry him to a different ship, undoubtedly his own. Maybe later he could appreciate the sleek design and brand new engines if he weren't failing to keep himself up. Stepping onto the ladder to climb up was difficult and tiring. Numerous cuts and bruises made themselves known again with flaring pain.

“Doc! Doc, help me out!”

His fingers wrapped around the cool steel of the ladder, but his strength had left him. He couldn't pull himself up anymore. Instead, two strong arms helped him up and over the edge. A green blur brought him to a soft surface to lie on before leaving with Bdubs to another room.

“We're getting out of here,” Bdubs spoke to the other — Doc, right? “Did you manage to hack into their systems? Otherwise we might not get out in one piece. Or at all actually.” As soon as he finished, alarms went off in the outpost. A spoken message Etho couldn't make out echoed over the landing area.

“Just how much of a mess did you make? Who is that guy?” Doc said, a heavy accent in his voice. The engines roared to life. The ship barely creaked as it lifted off the ground. A short, high-pitched hum filled the air and Etho could hear the barrier disappear for a few seconds, before it shot back on below him. There were a few explosions before a clap of thunder overtook those.

“Yeah uh, funny story. That’s Etho. I’m sure you know him. Apparently very much wanted by the Red Empire. Thought I’d save him, because why not? Y’know ...”

In the silence that followed, Etho forced his eyes to focus on the ceiling above him. Heavy hail scratched the outside but he ignored it in favour of holding onto the nearest thing. He could feel as the wind tried to get ahold of the ship but if anything the engines only roared louder to get them into the sky and off the planet.

After what seemed like hours, the thunder, hail and rattling of the ship eased. They’d made it out.

“How much do the Reds want for him?”

Etho froze. He expected this, but now he only wished he had the power to defend himself.

“Not telling,” Bdubs said. There were clicks as Bdubs prepared for hyperspace. Wait- he wasn’t going to tell the other one? Why wouldn’t he?

“Bdubs. There is a Red *criminal* on our ship. Even if we wouldn’t turn him in, what do you think the Revolutionists will do with him? What do you think *I* would do?”

They were with the Revolution. Great. He got out of the hands of the Red Empire and went straight to their — and his’ too, in extension — mortal enemy. He should’ve accepted Scar’s offer on a merciful death.

“Doc, please. The Red Empire betrayed him. He knows a lot about them. Just think about what he could tell us! No- don’t give me that face! If we help him, he might help us in return. At least think about it, alright?”

Etho couldn’t stay with them. He wasn’t safe with them. Rolling over, he let himself slide off the couch onto the floor. At the same time, the ship jerked as it jumped into hyperspace. The sudden movement threw him against the wall. With a grunt, all the air was forced out of him. He hit the floor a second later.

Two sets of footsteps approached. He tried to push himself up, but his arms shook with the effort.

He couldn't move up a single inch.

"He's in bad shape. Please help him?" Bdubs asked. Someone kneeled by his side. Which of the two it was he couldn't tell.

A large and quite warm — but surprisingly gentle — hand covered his forehead for just a few seconds before it moved on to feel his arm. He groaned at the touch.

"He *is* in bad shape. Bdubs—" there was a pause, and a sigh, "- what makes you think he'd help the Revolution? He's born into the Empire, he's been loyal to it his whole life. And *even if* he'd help us, he's still got the whole Red army after him. We should do the smart thing and leave this conflict with them."

He crumbled where he'd still tried to get up. He let his head hit the floor. All this effort to get out, get free, and these Revolutionists would just destroy all his progress and hopes of ever having a life again. And Etho didn't have the strength to do anything about it.

"Doc, we can't do that. He's been betrayed by the Empire! We can give him a new home. You know exactly how many of the Revolution had first been ... *slaves* of Mumbo! You know *I* was! The Revolution was made to help people, save them, and fight for a better future for everyone. Help him, please."

He waited through the tense silence. For a moment, he thought Doc would disagree again. He caught himself hoping that Doc wouldn't. But he crushed that hope, ripped it from his mind. Hope never worked for him, it wasn't reliable-

"Alright. Fine, I'll take care of him. But *you* get to explain it to the others."

He pried his eyes open, coming face to face with Bdubs and Doc — a creeper cyborg. Instantly, the latter scanned his face and then his body.

"Go back to the controls before we crash into something. I'll shout if I need you."

"*When* you need me."

“If. Definitely if.”

Bdubs scoffed before stretching and walking back. He did look over his shoulder once but Doc blocked the view as he picked him up. Only a few seconds later he was set back down on the soft couch. A silence settled over them. Doc fished some supplies from somewhere and got to work.

Conflict raged in his mind. He didn't want to trust these aliens, even if they were convinced they'd help him. Maybe he'd attack and leave as soon as he'd have the chance. On the other hand, what if they actually wanted to help him? It was a dangerous thought. He couldn't possibly be hoping they'd want to be his friend. All his old friends had betrayed him, why would these strangers be any different?

He still hoped. He hoped that this time it would be different, he hoped that this time he could have something good. The Red Empire had betrayed him and he would never go back to it. Maybe the Revolution wasn't as bad as he thought.

He would have to see and judge for himself. If the Revolution disappointed, he could just disappear from the war and never return.

As his eyes slipped closed from exhaustion and his head fell back, he made this decision. He'd survive somehow, he always did.

End Notes

I might someday make the whole fic, I've got some pretty sick ideas for it :D

Let me know what you thought in a comment, I'd greatly appreciate it!

Love you guys, enjoy season 9!

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!