

# The Memorial Service

A UFO Challenge Story for the SHADO  
Writer's Guild

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Based on the Characters and series created by  
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**Historians Note:** This story takes place about a week before the episode *The Long Sleep*, written by David Tomblin.

*I do miss the springtime*, she thought as she walked towards the entrance to Harlington Straker studios carrying her dress uniform in its garment bag. *But I don't miss lugging my uniform in every day.* Instead of heading for the hidden personnel elevator, she made for Straker's upstairs office. Having been reassigned to Moonbase, she needed to stop in and visit a friend.

The young woman made her way through the busy hallways of the studio until she came to the relatively quiet executive wing that housed Straker's office. She tapped on the door and walked in.

"Ayshea!" said Miss Ealand, as she looked up from her typewriter.

"Hello Janice," she said, closing the door behind her. "It's good to see you."

Janice Ealand stood and rounded her desk to embrace her friend in greeting. "How is life on Moonbase?"

“It’s a great posting,” said Ayshea. “I should have put in for this a year ago. The view is just spectacular!”

“I can only imagine. You know had I majored in physics instead of business administration I might have had a chance of being assigned there.”

“It’s never too late to go back to school Janice.”

“And leave Commander Straker saddled with all of this? No I’m well past that, besides, most people don’t know it but Ed Straker takes very good care of me, let’s just say I fare much better than the average executive secretary.”

“Well, he’d better treat you right if he wants to keep you.”

“Are you here for the service?” asked Ealand in a more subdued tone.

“Yeah, I was lucky to have furlough this week. I’ve never missed one of these...” she paused suddenly lost for words as the reality of her loss

forced itself to the surface. She suddenly became misty and her tears began to flow.

“Ayshea, are you okay?”

She nodded as she wiped her eyes, “I’m sorry Janice, Mike Finch was a very close friend, and Beaver, well, everyone loved Beaver...”

“I know. He was such a gentleman. He would always hold the door for the ladies when we should have been holding it for him. You know, I almost asked Margaret Holland to cover for me so I could attend, but Colonel Blake has her running in circles with this new project. Not to mention all the work that is piling up here.”

Ayshea nodded, her composure now somewhat restored, “Well I should let you get back to work. I still have to change and I don’t want to be late.”

“All right, but stop in and tell me about the service before you leave, okay?”

“I will.”

Janice Ealand reached down and opened the door to Ed's inner office.

Memorial services at SHADO were held at random and all too often they were preempted by operational needs or alien incursions. This one had been postponed from last week due to a mass attack that was bound for HQ. The attack consisted of nine UFOs and Moonbase had managed to stop six of them. The combat skills of Captain Carlin and Captain Waterman had dispatched the remaining three.

Now wearing her dress uniform, Ayshea walked into the conference room and mingled with the rest of the staff. The emotion in the room was wildly varied as those gathered shared both pleasant and painful memories about their departed comrades.

While military decorum was maintained during the service itself, operatives were expected and encouraged to allow their grief to surface and it

was not uncommon to see senior and junior officers and staff comforting each other, either by handshakes or hugs.

That decree had been issued by Commander Straker himself even though he remained stoic during and after the proceedings. Very rarely did his façade show any signs of cracking, but Ayshea had caught a rare glimpse during the service for Craig Collins last year; it was the closest she had ever seen the Commander come to breaking down. *And some say he has no heart*, she thought. *If only they knew.*

In one corner of the room, she noticed Paul Foster and Virginia Lake, engaged in deep conversation. Ginny had been crying and Paul seemed to be struggling with his own emotions. She knew Paul was the one who was forced to kill Captain James in order to save Virginia's life. *They both must be going through hell.*

“Ayshea.”

She turned to find Keith standing next to her and she reached to embrace him.

“Hello Keith, I missed you. How are your wife and family?”

“Very well, thanks for asking. So, how is duty on Moonbase? To your liking I hope?”

Ayshea smiled broadly, “It is incredible Keith. Being away from home takes some getting used to, but to have the privilege of working on the moon, is just like being among the Apollo Astronauts. I’m sure I made the right decision.”

“I’m glad for you, truly, although you are missed here,” he said.

The room suddenly became very quiet as the Commander silently walked into the room and made his way to the front and sat in the chair behind the dais. In a very ordered fashion, everyone took their seats and somberly waited for Ed Straker to begin the proceedings.

Ayshea watched the Commander carefully as he was not looking out but down almost as if he was in deep prayer. Stillness had descended on the room as everyone seemed to hang on his next action. A moment later he looked up, slowly panning the room with his eyes as if he were making eye contact with each and every person. Although his face was expressionless, Ayshea could see the storm of emotion in his eyes. Finally he stood and took his place behind podium.

“Ladies and Gentlemen; by now you are all aware of the appalling incident that occurred five weeks ago that claimed the lives of six of our comrades. This loss is a great tragedy, both for SHADO, and for their friends and loved ones. It is regrettable that my words offer little, if any comfort to those who are grieving.”

*If only he knew, Ayshea thought.*

“While I cannot tell you the reason for their deaths, I can and will tell you that their sacrifice

was not in vain. These six men gave their lives for a purpose; a cause that they all knew could one day cost them their lives, their hopes, and their dreams. But like every single person in this room, as well as those watching at their posts, they gladly and willingly took an oath to protect and defend this planet, the planet we call our home, from the hostile invaders that threaten our very existence. The dreams of our fallen comrades will live on in the thoughts and minds of those left to carry on the fight, so let us speak well and often of them and never forget their memory.”

Ayshea was sure that there was not a dry eye in the room as the Commander had such an eloquent gift with the spoken word. She didn't know if he memorized the eulogy or simply spoke from the heart; it didn't matter as the overall effect was the same.

“Attention to orders.”

The entire assembly stood and came to rigid attention.

“For actions in combat, the following personnel have been posthumously awarded the SHADO Bronze Star for bravery in the face of the enemy.”

Straker paused seemingly preparing himself to read the list.

“Moonbase Technician First Class Jeffery Campbell, Security Sergeant Kevin O’Connell, Security Second Lieutenant Michael Finch.”

Ayshea choked back a sob as her friend’s name was read.

“The following personnel have been posthumously awarded the SHADO Silver Star for gallantry in the face of the enemy.”

“Astronaut First Lieutenant Richard Dale, Astronaut First Lieutenant Andrew Conroy.”

“And finally, for extreme gallantry in combat in actions over the course of his career including

the event that took his life, it is both my honor and privilege to posthumously award the SHADO Medal of Honor to Captain Theodore Francis *Beaver* James. The actions taken by these men were in keeping with the highest military traditions, and reflect highly on themselves and all who served with them.”

While the Commander paused, Ayshea noticed tears in the eyes of several of her comrades. *At least I'm not alone*, she thought.

“I now call for a moment of silence, so we may ponder our loss in accordance with our many beliefs.”

Although she tried to offer a silent prayer Ayshea found her thoughts drifting to her close friend Mike. Although they never were romantically involved she felt a special connection with him that went well beyond the bounds of friendship. He had joked with her about taking the first transfer available to Moonbase just so they could be together. She

didn't believe him at first until Keith told her that he was serious. She had just found out that he had in fact put in for a transfer to Moonbase security. *Now I'll never know...*

"...remember our fallen comrades as they were. There will be a reception in the mess hall in thirty minutes. Dismissed."

"The Commander always has a way of getting to the heart of the matter doesn't he?" asked Keith.

"Yeah, he does, but I wouldn't change a thing about him. I don't know how he got through it without shedding a tear. Look at everyone else, there isn't a dry eye in the place, even Lake and Foster."

"Colonel Lake took Beaver's death very hard, even though it didn't show right away. I don't think it hit her until a few days later. I walked into her office to deliver the tracking report and when the doors opened I could tell that she had been crying."

“Are you sure it was about Beaver?” she asked.

“I’m quite sure. The report that she had been working on was about his death. She had me take it over to Straker’s office.”

The Commander and Colonel Lake were involved in a private conversation behind the podium. *Virginia is still crying.*

Keith followed her gaze, “Far be it from me to add to the fire, but you heard the rumor about the two of them?”

“Yeah I heard, even up on Moonbase. Nina put a stop to it almost immediately. To be honest I didn’t give it any thought as it’s really none of my business. There’s probably nothing to it, and if there is, well good for them.”

Behind her, Ayshea could hear Paul Foster talking with someone, “...you don’t understand. I killed him for nothing. His gun was empty.”

“You didn’t have any choice Paul,” Major Graham was saying. “Had that gun been loaded

he could have killed Colonel Lake. It's a terrible thing, but you did what was necessary."

"Paul is taking it pretty hard as well," she said quietly to Keith.

"I know. He had flown with Beaver a few times before the incident that crippled him. I talked with him later in the mess hall and he was quite distraught over the matter. I certainly would have been."

They continued to converse as they followed the group to the mess hall.

"Ayshea, I'm very sorry about Mike."

"Thanks Keith, I think the hardest thing of all, is not knowing what might have been. It's times like this that you realize just how precious the moments are. Once they are gone you can never get them back."

"I know," said Keith. "Carol and I live each day like it may be our last. I can only imagine how hard it is for the pilots. Hell, I have nightmares

about my family being destroyed, like Paul Roper or Jim Regen.”

“When it hits that close to home you can’t help but worry. I don’t know if I could be involved with someone on the outside.”

Keith and Ayshea availed themselves to the spread of food that had been laid out for the reception. The mess hall was almost full to capacity as all of the off duty personnel were in attendance. Keith quickly ate and excused himself so he could relieve Lt. Anderson in control. *Keith is more like the Commander than he realizes*, she thought.

Virginia Lake had taken time to sit with her and ask about her new position, as well as entrust her with a personal letter for Nina. Ayshea felt complimented by that as Colonel Lake did not trust people blindly.

A few days later Ayshea was working the late shift with Lt. Colonel Barry.

“So how was the memorial service?” asked Nina.

“It was very emotional. I still don’t know the Commander does it. I’d be a blubbering mess.”

“That makes two of us Ayshea. You know, I really wish I could have made this one. I had worked with both Andy Conroy and Rich Dale for a long time and I’m going to miss them.”

“I know what you mean Nina,” Ayshea said dropping formality. “I feel the same way about Mike Finch. We don’t talk about them enough, those who are gone, Jim Regen, Craig Collins, Paul Roper, and now Mike, Kevin, Andy, Rich, Jeff, Beaver. Maybe we should. Commander Straker said that their dreams don’t die as long as we keep their memories alive. It hurts, but we owe them that much. To never let them be forgotten.”

“You’re right, we should. Why don’t we start now? Tell me all about Mike...”

END