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## Delusions of Grandeur

by Mari Syrad

I am a citizen. My name is 36-f-R. I live in the Reeva District on Planet Six. Planet Six is dying and I am not sure I can save it.

The telegram came first thing as always. Like an alarm clock, the first reading is often startling depending on that day's message. Today, the command made me leap from my skin, leaving me quivering an inch above my abandoned body. It took almost a minute to return to myself and back to the autopilot carved into each citizen by our compulsory military training.

The message read: "Planet Six has three hours left until final death. You know what to do."

Don't think, act as instructed. I quickly dressed and connected my comms to the central system, linking me to the rest of my crew. Exiting my sleep chamber, I joined them seamlessly, we strode, stiff-backed and in unison towards headquarters. As expected, the doors were locked and the unranked citizens inside had constructed a robust barricade to keep us out.

'It is for the best,' I thought in an attempt to convince myself. I pressed the button on my gauntlet, opening the comms channel to headquarters.

"It is futile," I said, with an authority not my own. "Open the door."

I glanced at citizen 15-q-R, my second in command. He nodded. We parted to allow the battering rams through. The heaving weight was thrust at the door and on the fourth try, was successful in breaching the blockade and pushing back some of the debris gaining us access.

We burst through, one by one, an army against our own people. We shouted and waved our weapons, aiming to limit the violence, the guns would only be used if the citizens did not comply. But the mission quickly got out of control and the gunfire and the screaming began.

It wasn't supposed to end like this. The instructions stated they were to be peacefully euthanised, a mass mercy. The slow, excruciating death that the planet's end would enforce was far worse than what we had just done.

After the bulk of the citizens were gone, 15-q-R and I turned and gave mercy to our own crew. By now, it had become hard to see from the poison beginning to leak through the air-vents, the death rattle of the planet's final breath. My last bullet was for my second in command, my friend. There was only one escape pod and he had not been chosen for entry to Planet Five.

They made me Captain when I arrived out of the wreckage, though they have to keep me in a small cell and say I am awaiting trial. I understand it is to prevent rebel forces knowing I survived and attacking the planet. The guards are rough with me, but I believe it is all part of the act.

It is three months later and they have transferred me to a psychiatric facility. I hear the nurses whispering about me, that I am insane, that I believe I am the captain of the greatest spaceship on Planet Five and that I murdered 72 people. But it's all part of the plan. I have them all exactly where I want them. And when the rebels forget about me and I can be released and I will have everything in life I've ever wanted.