

MASS EFFECT

Bring Down the Tides 02: Khalisah Bint Sinan al'Jilani's New Story

“Commander Sheperd! Commander, the people of the Alliance have questions!”

That's what Khalisah had said. She'd seen the first human Spectre, arguably one of the most dangerous people in the galaxy, and she'd immediately demanded answers. Khalisah had met the Commander twice before. The first time the Commander had been furious and sucker punched her. The second time, the Commander had bullrushed her and made her look like a fool on her own show. The last time they had both been on the Citadel while the Reapers did everything they could to wipe out humanity. Sheperd had run from them and Khalisah had been the only person brave enough to hold the Spectre to account.

“Commander Sheperd,” she had said, approaching the fiery redhead. “Khalisah Bint Sinan al'Jilani. Isn't it true you were on Earth when the Reapers attacked? How do you justify running away while millions of people on Earth die? Is that the best we can expect from the Alliance?”

There was a moment where she held her head in one hand, hiding her expression, that Khalisah almost believed that Sheperd cared about anyone other than herself. But then she picked her head up and said

“I came to get help for Earth. For everyone.”

and the moment passed.

“What about all the people suffering while you play politics with the Council? What about them? How can you stand here while our families die? What are you going to do?”

She shuddered, then. Her whole body.

For a moment Khalisah thought Sheperd was going to hit her again. She was preparing to fight back when Sheperd gently, slowly, touched her arm and said

“Khalisah. We're doing everything we can.”

They talked for a bit. Sheperd had another reported onboard and sent her reports, letting her know what had been found. The reports were few and far between, Sheperd trying to keep her plans secret from the Reapers and from Cerebus. She went around the galaxy and put together the biggest army that would ever exist.

Khalisah knew it wasn't enough.

She'd heard secret reports that the Batarian Hegemony had a secret plan. When the Batarians on the Citadel began to run, taking anyone they could grab, she willingly went with them.



The Batarians who fled with her asked who she was. She explained it to them and they nodded and made notations on an omni pad. They pulled her to one side, snapped an omnitool on her wrist, one she wasn't familiar with.

“What is this?” she asked.

One of the Batarians tapped his omnitool and hers responded – she found she couldn't speak.

“I can take your movement away, too, or just hurt you, so shut up and don't move,” the batarian growled. He switched from speaking galactic standard to batarian, but she'd spent enough times in the Terminus Systems to know the language, not that they needed to know that. “Who is this one?”

“An alliance reporter, the one that kept harrasing the human spectre,” her savior answered.

“Do you have money?” the batarian that had slapped the omnitool on her asked in galactic standard.

“Yes,” she said, in batarian, watching as all four of the alien's eyes went up. Her savior seemed pleased.

“Your accent is terrible,” the batarian with the omnitool muttered. “My name is Kracor Gorboba. This one is Kem Pofgess. How are you called?”

“My name is Khalisah Bint Sinan al'Jilani,” Khalisah said.

“Do you have your money held independently on your omnitool?” Kracor asked. She nodded. “Good. I need access to it. You need to buy a ticket.”

“How about you give me a price and I'll pay it,” she answered. The two batarians looked at one another. Kem, her savior, shrugged. Kracor tilted his head to the right and looked down at her. Her omnitool pinged and she looked at it, at six different prices for tickets.

Khalisah was relatively and independently wealthy. She sold vitamin suppliments on the side through her news and disonformation services, in addition to subscriptions for further information, insight, and details. She had a sizeable following, enough that she could afford the third ticket price from the bottom.

“Surprising,” Kracor said, tilting his head to the left.

Her omnitool pinged again, identifying her as Khalisah Bint Sinan al'Jilani Usveth'huin von Usen Brendorah.

“What does this mean?” she asked.

“Someone will explain it to you later,” Kracor said, shoving her and Kem along. “There's no time now. Kem, get her to cryo. You'll be expected to take her to Usen when we arrive where we're going. Now, get.”

There was a line of very nervous people were coming.

Khalisah remembered how many dead there were on Earth.

“Sorted me?” Khalisah asked, as Kem roughly dragged her along a corridor. “What does that mean?”

“You'll be working for Usen Brendorah when we arrive at our destination.”

“Where's that?”

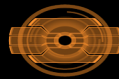
“I believe your people call it the Triangulum Galaxy.”

Khalisah frowned, thinking. Astronomy had never been her strong suit, but she'd heard the name bandied about as an alternative to the Andromeda Galaxy if things she turn and everyone needed to run from the Reapers.

“Isn't that, like, three million light years away?”

“If fortune smiles upon us, that will be enough distance that the Reapers will leave us be.”

She shuddered, let herself be pulled along. Whatever awaited her had to be better than extinction.



The batarian looked up as Khalisah entered the massive structure on the main deck of the new Batarian Hegemony capital. The space inside was mostly open, a clean structure that contained a small forest of metal poles that jutted out of lit circles on the floor. He was well-dressed, clean, professional – Khalisah had spent her life covering powerful people, and she knew the look of inherited power done right when she saw it.

“Hello,” she said, bowing politely, “I'm Khalisah Bint Sinan al'Jilani... Usveth'huin von Usen Brendorah Nasghuv.” She had to double-check the last part. She'd been told where to go and what to say when she'd woken up, given clothing to wear. She looked like an asari dancer and, though she fit the suit nicely, was still uncomfortable being this revealed this publicly.

She'd seen very few humans on her way here, fewer the closer she got to the main deck. There'd been a handful of other species – volus, turians, salarians – but they grew fewer and fewer in number the higher she rose and the closer she got to her destination. Some of them had been dressed like she was. Some of them had been dressed in less.

“do you understand what it is you just said?” the batarian said. His voice was crisp, clipped. Upper crust for batarian society. She knew the hegemony was defined by a brutal caste system and she knew enough to know that only those near the top spoke like he did.

“Sort of,” she admitted. “It's my name, my caste, and who I work for?”

“Close,” the batarian said, tilting his head to the right. “I am Usen Brendorah. You work for me.”

“A pleasure to meet you,” she said, and he ignored this.

“I am told that you are a propagandist,” he said. He was tall for a batarian, towering over her as he got closer to her. “This is good. You also have personal experience with some of our product, and I think will prove motivated in selling that product. Currently, you are of the Usveth caste, but you will need to pay a few to maintain that space for yourself.”

“How much will I need to pay?” she asked. He quoted a number and she felt herself shudder, a reaction he noted with a grim smile.

“We have the capacity to become quite wealthy given the product we have in hand,” he told her. “I am a slaver, dealing primarily in unique or exotic individuals that cater to the interests of the very wealthy. The product I have at present is one of a kind and of great interest to a number of individuals. Would you like to see?”

“A slaver?”

“Yes.”

Khalisah wasn't sure how she felt about that. Her response sounded strangled to her own ears but Usen ignored that, or maybe he didn't know how to read humans responses and expressions. Either way, she decided, she would rather be a free person than a slave.

When he motioned for her to follow she did, walking beside him. He wanted her to walk on his right and it occurred to her that she didn't know enough about batarians, their caste system, or the society that she found herself in. That was going to have to change.

They left the main hall and entered a long hallway and then a small bisected room. On one side were a small number of chairs, and on the other a closed capsule.

There's a person in there, Khalisah thought. *There's a person in there that couldn't afford to be anything other than a slave.* That could have been her. She felt a shiver up her spine, a tension in her shoulders.

“Sit,” Usen said, and she did. He pressed some buttons on his omnitool, studying it for a moment. There was a hissing sound and the capsule began to open, revealing Commander Jane Sheperd. Commander Jane Sheperd.

Commander Jane Sheperd.

Khalisah sucked in a breath. One of her hands touched her lip. The Commander's armor had been shredded but the flesh underneath was healthy, whole. She was unconscious, eyes closed, lips parted, suspended in some kind of goo.

“Omnigel,” Usen said. “Her injuries were severe.”

Commander Jane Sheperd. The most important and famous human in Citadel space and the Terminus systems. Everyone knew who she was. Khalisah remembered being attacked, being made a fool of, being taken aside and made to feel like there was hope in a hopeless situation. She stared at the red-headed human.

“She was salvaged from the wreckage of her ship, along with most of her crew,” Usen said. Khalisah took a moment to let that sink in. “We have them here and will be putting them up for sale in the next few weeks, as society settles and re-establishes itself. Normally I would let my product speak for itself, but in this case I think it might be interesting to drive up prices as high as possible.”

Khalisah nodded, mind racing furiously.

Commander Jane Sheperd.

Machines were taking her armor off, carefully cutting the form fitting fabric she was wearing underneath.

“Save the armor and underarmor,” Khalisah said. “If you have the means to reconstitute them, do so. Buyers will pay more if they can get other collectibles along with the main product.”

Usen smiled.

“How many of them did you get?” Khalisah asked, and Usen gave her a list. Machines moved the Commander, shifting her weight, spinning her around, measuring her completely, invasively. Usen gave her access to the information being collected, things like susceptibility to pleasure and pain, which places on her body were most sensitive, biotic potential and control, cybernetics, everything.

She has a lovely ass, Khalisah thought.

“What's this?” Khalisah asked, pointing to a small device that had been implanted at the base of Sheperd's skull.

“A control ball,” Usen said. “It's standard procedure to install them in slaves. Normally we'd do it without anesthetic, but the humans collected from the ruins of the ship were in such bad shape that it was decided to implant them during the repair process, which happened on our way here. They can trigger neurological and nervous responses, and lock use of biotics.”

Khalisah nodded, thinking.

“We were going to sell them as a lot, but no one is going to be able to afford that,” Usen said. “Given their value, the lowest among the N7 crew will be purchasable only by the upper ranks of the Xusseik caste or above.”

Khalisah stopped nodding, staring. She knew there were a handful of castes and they were ranked on a curve, with available space within a caste being a matter of percentile based on the population. It made batarian society cutthroat and vicious, with social climbing made prone to an inborn scarcity. The highest ranked people she'd ever heard of in Citadel Space were among the Xusseik caste.

“you're Usen Brendorah Nasghuv,” Khalisah said, slowly, and Usen seemed pleased. “Forgive my ignorance, but is the Nasghuv caste higher or lower than Xusseik?”

“Higher,” Usen said. “Second from the top.”

“So there's very few people that can afford any your product, and many will be eager to do so,” Khalisah said. Usen tilted his head left, looking down on her. “Start selling the low end first to test the market, drive prices up by building to midline members of the crew. Keep the higher quality product in stasis until you're ready to sell them as individuals, with Sheperd there being the last to be sold.”

“I had similar thoughts,” Usen said. “what can you bring to my process?”

“Information and narrative,” Khalisah said. She looked up at him and smiled. “I am going to make you wealthy enough to enter the highest caste, if you promise to take me to where you are now.”

Usen smiled, tilting his head further left as he listened to what she had to say.



Khalisah watched as Jane's head lifted and her pretty green eyes flickered open.

She snapped awake quickly, trying to pull free of the omnibonds that bound her to the chair she was sitting on. Her muscles strained as she tried to speak but couldn't do that either. Her legs twitched as she tried to use her biotics to do something and that didn't work either. Her eyes went wide and she bucked, hips rocking, head twisting one way and then the other as she felt the two protrusions impaling her.

Khalisah saw the exact moment Sheperd say herself in the mirror: naked, legs spread, arms on arms rests, neck held steady and back kept straight, her chair suspended off the ground. She bucked again, trying to pull herself off the dominant powers in her cunt and ass, but all she managed to do was push herself up and down, her cheeks becoming flush and her eyes watering, spittle dribbling from her both and down onto her soft breasts.

She was breathing hard, eyes wandering this way and that as she twisted her shoulders, trying to break free without exciting herself any further, and Khalisah decided that was enough.

"Hello, Sheperd," Khalisah smiled, walking from behind the one-way mirror she'd been standing behind. Sheperd jumped, the invaders slipping into visibility and sliding back inside Jane as she settled.

Jane's eyes slipped in and out of focus and Khalisah smiled, reaching out. Sheperd pulled back but there was nowhere for her to go as Khalisah held and pinched a nipple, walking around behind her and enjoying the way Jane tensed as she grabbed the full breast and groped. Jane tried to free herself and there was nothing, nothing she could do.

"Settle down, Jane," Khalisah said, continuing to molest her captive. "This is going to happen and there's nothing you can do about it." Sheperd was turning, straining to look at her, eyes wide and mouth open, trying to scream or threaten or beg. Khalisah didn't care which. She hugged the captive Commander, moving her other hand between Jane's legs, feeling the belly and thighs of the product tremble.

"You failed, Jane," Khalisah whispered in her ear. "The Reapers won. The Batarian Hegemony knew you would fail, though, and they prepared an escape. We're on it, in another galaxy. No one is coming for you. The only power here is the Hegemony."

She licked Sheperd's ear, nibbled on her neck, felt the captive human shake and shiver as Khalisah's fingers worked over her clit, driving her hips up and down on the thick impalements. She would have moaned if Khalisah would let her, but the former reporter saw no reason to give Sheperd that sort of relief, to give her any sort of relief, not until the moment was perfect.

"I want you to know it's been years since we all woke up, everyone but you," Khalisah continued, watching as Jane shook, as she closed her eyes and bowed her head. "We've sold everyone everyone left alive that you've ever loved into slavery."

It felt like cheating, adjusting Sheperd's sensitivity, making her want this on a visceral level, making her respond to these simple touches, to being raped, but Khalisah didn't care. She was experienced now, and rich, and Sheperd was only Tmuwa-huen.

“And very soon,” Khalisah continued, feeling how sopping wet her fingers were, “we're going to sell your tight little ass to whomever can afford it. Doesn't that sound nice? You can cum if you agree.”

Sheperd shook her head, whether in denial or pleasure Khalisah wasn't sure.

But, smiling, Khalisah was sure that this moment was perfect.