

Don't Follow by Purrsia

Author's Notes: The time travel thing is actually canon – so don't look at me!

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I keep reminding myself that I'd had enough of the Council's madness. I keep trying to remember what it would have been like to return home after going up against that Alliance support fleet and losing. I keep insisting that it wasn't just my own burning humiliation I avoided that day, but also a future too bleak to face. One where mad men refused to listen and a helpless people were doomed. All that seemed to justify what I did. Of course, I have plenty of time to second-guess every move I ever made, including that last one.

It had crossed my mind to let the Garrison's ships rip mine to shreds and die with a shred of dignity, perhaps even as a martyr. But to whom would I become a martyr? To the Council that I had grown to loathe and disagree? The same Council I had seen back stab, betray and send better men to their deaths, only to have their sacrifice forgotten soon enough with credit instead going to our glorious leaders? That was one very final way out and one that would have spared me all my worries along with the anguish of wondering what the others thought of me and how I was remembered, true. And yet, a larger part of me wanted to live. Not for self-preservation or a love of life. I knew when I left you behind on Dreska, Hazar, after I'd gotten those despicable orders that my life as I knew it was over one way or another. I think you knew it, too. Indeed, in most ways I imagine my self-imposed exile, with the solitude and isolation that goes with it, has been far more painful than a fiery death during battle might have been. That would have been over quickly, but this misery drags itself on and on. But that was exactly the thing – I didn't want an easy out. Even if the Council holds up death in battle as some high honor, at the time it seemed even more a cowardly move than this was.

There is also little doubt in my mind that the Supreme Council wrote me off as a spineless coward that day for taking this experimental ship and running. Not that I ever expected them to understand the larger reason, but I digress. Back to my point, I left this way because I feel I deserve to wander space aimlessly in a different time and a different place, where there is nobody here with me but a robot crew. I have not run across another living soul in the years since, and it makes me almost wish to see somebody from the Garrison – anyone – other than the silent stars and unsettled planets in this desolate part of the universe. Death, it would have been too easy, but I wonder. Since I lacked the courage I saw in you to face the Council or continue

what always ended up being useless negotiations with the Alliance for they were forever corrupted and spoiled somehow, I simply walked away. It has been anything but easy but I'm unsure it's any better than death.

It's like I told you I'd had enough – I just couldn't keep going along with their orders and this seemed the only way left to go. I did think I owed you a farewell, and that is one of only a few regrets I don't have. I'm glad I took the time to radio you and let you know, even if you sounded disappointed in me. I know we were supposed to meet with some Alliance leaders the next day, but I couldn't even bear that. I've always wondered how that went. I'd met Hawkins before and he was a man of honor – reminded me a lot of you, actually. I hope you got through to somebody even if it meant swallowing our pride as a people and accepting Alliance intervention, but I guess I'll never know for sure.

Look at me, addressing you in this letter as if your eyes will ever glance over the words. But this is what I'm reduced to. A babbling, contact-starved pathetic being that has nothing much to do with his time but torture himself with internal dialogues and letters that will never be sent, going over the past as though dwelling on it will change anything. And yet, sometimes writing it out as I am now helps me cope. There is also the ego in me, I will admit, that hopes someday someone will find these writings, someone who heard the Drule legacy drifting on the solar winds, and that this will help them understand at least part of the struggle. Somebody who can read this and will know how a Drule captain tried and failed – a poignant footnote in history, perhaps?

Me, I'll never know how that struggle ended but I suppose it's just as well. I'd thought about trying to track down our solar system, as I'm fairly sure I'm in an entirely different system now, although whether I'm in the past or future I don't know. This was part of the risk of using such an experimental machine and the reason I'd brought only robot soldiers with me on the journey – if something catastrophic happened, at least I would be the only living being to pay the price for my running in such a fashion. Well, the technology worked even if its accuracy left something to be desired. I'm truly marooned in time and space now with no familiar places or faces to comfort me. And yet sometimes I feel a pull to go, to try to find out what happened. Did you convince them, Hazar? Did you save our world, our people? Or did it all crumble to dust and I am all that's left of our proud race – this half-crazed nomad?

Honestly, I'm too afraid of the outcome to pursue it. What I keep coming back to is this: if I'm in the future and I do find out what became of Drule and its people, will I like what I find?

I've always been a bit of a pessimist, and I think if I confirm that all was lost...I can barely allow myself to think that, there's no way I'd want to confirm it. I loved our Empire and the people in it – it was the Council I could no longer tolerate with their insane orders. There was no honor in the fight anymore. Even so, some days the need to know what became of it all gnaws at me until it's almost insufferable. But that possibility of the worst happening, it keeps me on course, - this lonely, pointless course. I think clinging to the notion that somehow the tide turned and we live on is easier to believe. It's a fantasy best left unshattered, I believe.

And if I've traveled into the past to see our world as it once was, in all its former glory, would only break my heart for I'll know what lies in its future, or at least part of it. I even once thought about going back and trying to avert the disaster generations before the fact, but then, that would be foolish. Messing with the space/time continuum, I've decided, is not for the likes of me. I'm no hero and likely, I would make matters worse interfering. I've since concluded that there's no comfort for me. I only hope that no matter what, dear friend, you found some peace. I often dream that you're out there somewhere, ruling our people with pride and no fear on a new world that is safe and clean. It's a good dream.

I sometimes wished I had had the courage to stand with you – maybe then I could be living that dream, too. But I only hope you understand it was too frustrating for me. Your thinking opened my eyes, and once I started to care about the same things you did, it hurt too much to see the greed and ignorance keep winning the day. It angered me to see good men and good ideas shot down or pushed aside. I couldn't bear to see you or our world meet their end that way, so yes, like a coward I ran to shield myself from that pain, trading it instead for this hollow existence I endure now. It somehow seemed the lesser of two hopeless evils.

Sometimes the homesickness is so crushing, I weep. Yes, you'd be surprised to know the hardened lion that led epic battles sheds tears for home. Funny, I sometimes miss the battles, too. The kind we fought in the old days, the true glory days, if you will, of the mighty Empire. Back when I believed in what I was fighting for and stood fiercely proud to be a Drule. It is sad indeed. What I wouldn't give to hear a real voice other than my own, one with actual warmth to its tone rather than the robotic drones of my ageless ensigns. Such simple things, I miss them fiercely.

As I have said, I don't really care what the Council thought of what I've done, but I always wondered what you thought, Hazar. I sincerely hope you understood. When I told you my heart wasn't in it anymore and my loyalties were really with you – I hope you understood as a

soldier why I carried out my orders and attacked that fleet anyway. But because my heart wasn't in it I was so easily defeated, even without Voltron, and my spirit was utterly broken. I had no pride left, no will to fight left, and only hopelessness, grief and humiliation waiting for me at home. You and I, just two men, what could we do? You were on your way to being railroaded by the Council – we both knew that, I think – and again, I couldn't bear to see that. But perhaps, I needed to have more faith in our beliefs and in you. Is that where I really failed? Were there others waiting in the wings to rise up and put things right? Could we have really beat those odds? Questions, always questions and I never have any answers.

I feel so old, drawn and useless I don't know why I continue on – other than to keep flogging myself for failures both imagined and real. It's so pointless, and yet, day after day I remain here on this ship obsessing over the past and enduring restless nights where sleep rarely visits. So yes, this is what I deserve. Far worse than anything the Council could have doled out, don't you think? You are the true hero, my friend, and I will forever respect you even without knowing how it turned out. I will always wonder about you, and I will always hope for the best. You were like family to me, and I do believe I miss you more than I do them at times.

I hope you continued to hold out where I could not, and that you didn't follow my poor example. Of course, I doubt that very much – you always were a leader rather than a follower. Faith in you, and that you succeeded, is all that sustains me most days. That is, I realize, a textbook case for too little too late. I guess I should stop feeling sorry for myself. What did I really expect when I did this? Even after all these years – at least I think years have gone by, I'm not really sure – I can't sum it up any better than I did in that farewell call to you. I was and I remain quite sorry. Sorry for you, sorry for myself – sorry for it all.

*Hey, I ain't never coming
Home
Hey, I'll just wander my
Own road
Hey, I can't meet you here tomorrow*

*Say goodbye don't follow
Misery so hollow*

*Hey you, you're livin'
Life full throttle
Hey you, pass me down that
Bottle, yeah
Hey you, you can't shake
Me round now
I get so lost and don't
Know how
And it hurts to care, I'm
Going down*

*Forgot my woman, lost my
Friends
Things I'd done and where
I've been
Sleep in sweat the mirrors
Cold
See my face it's growin'
Old
Scared to death no reason
Why
Do whatever to get me by
Think about the things I
Said
Read the page it's cold
And dead*

Take me home

Say goodbye, don't follow

--Don't Follow, Alice In Chains