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The Adventures of Augment Gothic

Chapter 32

Office of General Gothic. Deep Space Nine.

Time seemed to drag on and on as I waited for my new ship to be built piece-by-piece. To keep an eye on things and to assuage my own desires to see this long held ambition come to fruition, a real-time video feed from the hanger bay to my omni-tool had been set up to watch the construction in progress.

It was *mesmerizing* to watch, a well-orchestrated symphony of movement, activity, and efficiency to achieve a single goal. All of my girls had 'tuned in' to also watch it come together and were as enthralled as I was, after I had given them access to the video feed from the Island. It was only fair considering all their hard work over the course of the two-week project I'd asked them to help me with. All their hard work had made it possible to even get started. Kira was still disappointed that she hadn't been able to come and help, but was very proud of what we'd managed to accomplish in so short a time.

Dax and Neela, in particular, as my more science and engineering-oriented girls, were practically obsessed with watching it and kept it displayed holographically from their omni-tool whenever they were off-duty in their quarters. It was just amazing how quickly the overall spaceframe of the ship had been built in those first few days on the Island and how *relentless* the Yard's six 'construction arms' were from the moment it all started.

Those arms were constantly in motion, 26 hours a day, every day, with never a moment of unnecessary inactivity or downtime, moving from deck-to-deck replicating whole sections, placing and precision installing recognizable pieces of the ship. It still looked like a slightly filled in skeleton of a ship at the moment, as without the external hull in place the interior of the ship could be worked on without any obstacles. Eventually, holo-emitters built into the interior side of the hull would allow holo-engineers to conduct repairs on the outside of the hull, so even that part of the construction was going to take some time and precision. I was still far, far ahead of where I would be if the ship was being built in a Federation shipyard, even on Utopia Planitia, the Federation's most advanced shipyard. This construction technology granted incredible speed and efficiency, and overall, a much higher and more consistent build quality than was normally possible using traditional methods.

Whole sections were being replicated as needed, while pieces and parts of the old *Flighty Temptress* were being transported in and used as much as possible and practical to preserve the 'notice me not/nothing to see here' effect that Q had placed on my old ship. What I hadn't anticipated, but probably should have, was the effect that this would have on me. Seeing my old ship taken apart at the start of this process, a ship which had served me so well, for so long, a ship that had saved my life on many an occasion, was near heartbreaking. I was man enough to admit that I had shed a few manly tears at seeing it being taken apart, bit-by-bit, to the point that it was unrecognizable to me.

She had served me well since leaving Earth, in fact it wouldn't be hyperbolic to say that she had opened up the very galaxy to me, but too much sentimentality would see me killed in the future battles to come. Being an Augment meant shit all if you were killed in ship-to-ship combat in space.

My circumstances were significantly improved since those early days and my new ship needed to reflect that. I was far richer than I had been when I first received her, with vastly greater capabilities and resources, and now in possession of advanced alien technologies that could only be used and integrated into a ship that had been designed for them from the start. No, I had too many enemies to deal with, now and in the future, enemies that would require much greater firepower to survive. It had undoubtedly been time for an upgrade, but it still affected me.

My girls had been extremely impressed with my final design and had made several interesting suggestions that I had implemented when I presented it to them, one of which was the installation of a large water Jacuzzi in the captain's master suite and a smaller version of my Island's conference table in the briefing room near the bridge, though both of those were just style suggestions and not something that required an actual design change. Thankfully, the Captain's quarters was practically a luxury penthouse apartment in size.

My lovely ladies had had a grand old time also thinking up what color choices and decorations to use throughout the ship, something which I had embarrassingly not even considered during the design process, having focused almost exclusively on the more practical concerns. I had happily taken their suggestions on what carpeting to lay in the corridors, what furniture to put in each of the staterooms, what artwork to put up on all the walls, etc. It was a pretty funny conversation to watch and listen to as I had seemingly been forgotten about during that rather *intense* discussion. Since I didn't really have many strong opinions on this topic, I was fine with them picking out most things. They even suggested that we should contact our favorite interior decorator, Commander Data, to come up with a plan too, since they'd been so impressed by his work on my Island home. He had responded incredibly quickly with detailed design ideas. Got to love that guy and how quickly he could turn out work product!

Dax, in particular, seemed a bit in awe of what I'd designed and had asked again 'whether there was anything I couldn't do?' in a rather lustful tone before she'd taken my cock out and given me a master-level blowjob. That had stroked my ego nicely and yet again I was wondering if she'd even give Worf the time of day when he arrived in a few years' time. Thankfully, that relationship never coming to fruition was a bit less problematic, with less obvious galactic consequences/implications, than Odo and Kira. At least I couldn't immediately see how it might result in the Federation alliance losing a quadrant spanning war with the Dominion and the death of billions. That said, introducing those butterflies into the timeline meant anything was possible. I had a feeling that the Prophets were pulling their ethereal hair out when it came to the changes I was making, both purposely and unintentionally, and how they ultimately affected the future.

After we'd finalized the ship design I had input the full design blueprints, with all the requisite design schematics and replicator patterns of its constituent technologies, into the computer, so that it could perform the millions of computations necessary to determine, over the course of

several hours hard processing, the most efficient construction plan for the ship when taking into account the six available construction arms of the Yard.

When the processing was complete, I had been given a list of non-replicable materials needed for the construction and exactly when they'd be needed, from the moment I hit the start button. As I didn't have near enough of these materials on hand, I made a run to Treasure Island, the last trip with the old *Temptress*, to secure all the needed raw materials. Using current galactic commodity prices for the materials, I determined its total value in latinum and gave Bajor its first cut of my pirate loot. Li Nalas had been very happy at receiving this unexpected windfall of cash, with the promise that more would be coming as I used or sold off the loot. The girls got their agreed upon percentage too.

Since we were going to be back on the station for most of the ship's construction, I gave my VI, Emma, or Hermione (depending on my mood given her current outfit), local control of the transporters in order to beam raw materials that couldn't be replicated into the hanger bay for the Yard to use, as needed.

The full construction plan had hundreds of thousands of detailed steps, each construction arm having its own set of unique instructions to follow per a master timeline that was specific to the microsecond. Without a strict schedule of construction, the arms could get in each other's way or interfere by working in the same area as another arm, or even do something as silly as finishing/enclosing an area that had not yet been completed by another arm. That would be akin to building an upper floor before the supports for the floor underneath it were fully complete. It could happen if you weren't careful. Shit like that had happened in the real world, after all.

With so much going on simultaneously, computer control of the construction process was not only preferable, it was a necessity. The Yard's advanced sensors continuously monitored the construction's progress against the master timeline which was constantly updated, both overall and of each construction arm, and the completion of each construction step in relation to the progress of the other arms.

Of course, this level of efficiency and precision came with caveats of its own. So much simultaneous work, interconnectedness, and interdependence meant a significant delay in one area or aspect of the construction, or some unexpected problem or resource deficiency, could hold up the entire endeavor. It would be like someone hitting the emergency stop on the factory floor and causing the entire assembly line to grind to a halt. I did not find that possibility likely, but even if it did occur, even in a premier Federation shipyard, traditional methods would have required 9 months to a year and hundreds of skilled workers to finish the build, especially for a ship like this which was the first of its kind, a prototype really. The Yard would complete the ship long, long before then, even if there were a few unavoidable delays or work stoppages.

So far, Hermione reported construction was slightly ahead of the master schedule overall and the few issues that had popped up had required only very brief delays measured in minutes. Still, I was very eager to get out into space again, being stuck in the same place for too long just didn't sit well with me anymore and actually made me feel rather anxious and restless. That was an

interesting self-realization because in my old life I'd never been one to travel despite often wanting to, well, apart from the travel required by my military service.

Of course, old me hadn't had a very cool and badass starship of his own, nor had I been rich enough to just do whatever I wanted, when I wanted. Maybe that was the problem, without my ship standing by and available to take out on a whim and travel the galaxy, I felt slightly trapped. Sure, I could ask Sisko to borrow a Runabout if I really wanted to and he'd more than likely say yes without issue if it was local and had some proper official purpose, but the need to even ask annoyed me greatly. I suppose I could take one of the squadron's fighters out for a spin, but that would attract unwanted attention of its own.

On the subject of my ship, while there was still weeks of construction left before it was complete, when it was done it would need a live crew, at least a few. One of my primary goals in this ship design was to automate as much of the ship's functionality to ensure that the ship could be operated with as little crew as possible. This wasn't even technology that I had to 'invent' or steal from some ancient alien civilization; current Federation technology allowed a great deal more automation than was currently used in their ship design. I had a suspicion that some disaster in their past or some rogue AI situation, something that hadn't appeared in the Star Trek shows that I had watched, was probably behind that decision, otherwise it made little sense to not design starships that required as few crew as possible to successfully operate.

Of course, it could also be something as mundane as 'this was how it was always done' or the fact that the Federation had not been at war with a peer opponent in so long that they didn't see the need to field as many ships as possible with as few personnel as possible. The Federation and Starfleet made some wonky ass decisions at even the best of times. When war broke out, it wouldn't be ship production that would be the true obstacle to strengthening the fleet or replacing battle losses, it'd be a lack of trained personnel to crew those ships that would be the true bottleneck. I guarantee you that. The Federation had an incredible amount of underutilized industrial capacity, if you knew what to look for. They just lacked the will, as well as the combined purpose and unity that came with fighting against a common enemy hellbent on your subjugation and/or destruction. When fighting that kind of war, even member planets that weren't currently pulling their full weight would chip in to save themselves.

As for my new ship and its future crew, my girls were busy with their own jobs most of the time and therefore wouldn't always be available to come with me on a whim. While I could operate the ship with the Husnock crew holograms, and the database indicated a long and successful history of use even when relied upon heavily, malfunctions were inevitable to some degree. Unless they got their own personalities over time from overuse, like Voyager's EMH did in the show, they wouldn't be good company on long trips or all that creative and adaptable to the situations I would likely encounter, which could prove disastrous in an emergency situation. This was the freaking Star Trek universe after all and unless you were suitably paranoid, holography always created some insane problem eventually.

While the ship did have a pilot hologram that I could use when sleeping, for example, the neural interface technology from my old ship was compatible with my new one and I had built that into

the new ship's design, though with some serious upgrades from the Husnock. The Husnock had used that technology as well, but not only or specifically for piloting the ship, though that was certainly possible. They had taken it *ten steps further* in a really intriguing way and had the user's brain, typically only the captain and first officer, though, for security reasons, implanted with a synaptic transceiver for a mobile, stable, and more robust connection to the ship's neural interface. Essentially they had a command link to their ship at all times, *anywhere in the fucking universe*, as they had built quantum entanglement communications technology into the synaptic transceiver in order to link up to the ship.

The Husnock hadn't created that technology, they'd essentially just stolen it from the remnants of a long gone, but more advanced civilization they'd stumbled upon. Unlike the Federation who hemmed and hawed at the very idea, terrified at upsetting the balance of power, etc., the Husnock just didn't give a fuck and their tech base had benefitted greatly from studying it.

This communications technology was a game changer for me and would be the solution to the 'Minos quandary' I had had for a long time now. That was a future project though and despite becoming an Augment with an enhanced intelligence, drive, and stamina, I needed to focus on bringing this new ship construction to completion before I took on another giant project.

With a quantum entangled connection to my ship, I could be standing on the Ocampan homeworld (the most distant world that I knew of, which was 70,000 lightyears away in the Delta quadrant), my ship in orbit of Bajor, and I could remotely command my ship to set course to my location and engage FTL, or pilot the ship in pitched battle, or to turn off life support, to 'see' with its sensors, basically anything a person could do if on the ship itself and more. The Voyager EMH, in an alternate future timeline, had invented a similar, but less sophisticated, synaptic transceiver that could be implanted into the human brain to control a vessel with one's mind. Janeway had used it in the Voyager finale to pilot her shuttle against the Borg, so I knew it was mostly safe for human physiology. I hadn't shared any of this information with my girls, but in the future, if we became something more permanent, I might give them the same level of control as a first officer had onboard a Husnock ship.

From the Husnock database's less technical writings, I had learned that Husnock captains had an almost...*intimate*...connection with their ships, due to the ever present and deep link they maintained with it for life. It transformed the relationship from captain and his ship, a cold and unfeeling machine, despite being so advanced, to man and perhaps his favorite hunting dog, who loved and killed for and supported the man in every way it could. Any human man who'd had a dog for a long time could tell you how deep that particular relationship could be. For a Husnock captain, his connection with his ship was almost a deep seated, symbiotic relationship. The Husnock, despite being despotic, genocidal conquerors, a race not prone to overt sentimentality, used almost poetic language when describing this relationship, calling it a bond. A Husnock captain bonded with his ship for life. Death of the captain or the destruction of the ship was the only way to separate the two.

For now, a bond like this with my ship would be my secret, at least in how deep it could be and how I could assume total control of the ship from anywhere in the universe. It was a risk, though,

for sure. Should I die without giving one of them that first officer connection, the bond to the ship would be severed and lifeless which could affect the ship's overall functionality. My ship wasn't based entirely on Husnock technology, though, so I had no idea if that would happen on mine as well, should I somehow die unexpectedly.

Of course, I studied the Husnock synaptic transceiver technology extensively before even contemplating going so far as to implant it into my brain. And, of course, I further made that design my own and integrated the synaptic technology Q had given me, from the original FT. After replicating the device, I had my Island's new Emergency Medical Holograms conduct compatibility studies on my physiology. They came back good, with no negative side effects from use, even prolonged. Well, this technology was safe for an Augment like myself, they'd found. The studies indicated that if I did select one of my girls to receive the same implant and bond with the new *Temptress* as first officer, I would have to radically scale back the throughput on the connection, otherwise it could lobotomize them from sheer data overload. A baseline human's brain, even that of a Vulcan's, was not meant for that kind of continuous connectivity with a starship and all its sensors and processing power. There were safeguards built into the technology, of course, but certain functions had minimum requirements. The Husnock got around those issues with bioaugmentation and genetic engineering of their own, I found out. Like the conquerors they were, they just didn't give a fuck.

Once my doctor gave its/their approval, for the very first time I actually used my state-of-the-art infirmary on the Island and one of my new EMH doctors performed the surgery to clandestinely implant the device into my brain while my girls were occupied elsewhere. Once my ship was completed, I'd initiate the interface and permanently imprint it to myself with my DNA, my brain, my brainwave patterns, and a slew of other unique identifiers. Once it was imprinted, it was hard coded and could never be used by another person, even if removed and implanted in someone else. In fact, the technology was designed to self-destruct if certain actions weren't taken within a set time period after removal. Even with the ship not complete, I knew this tech worked. I had already used it to connect to my computer core (and Emma/Hermione) on the island as well. Soon I'd have that intimate and continuous connection with both my Island and my ship.

The EMH had really come through for me in this case, otherwise this entire project would have been far more difficult and far more risky, as I would have had to find a trustworthy doctor/surgeon that I could trust with this or otherwise wouldn't report this procedure to the authorities, take advantage of my incapacity, blackmail me in the future, or try to steal this advanced technology for themselves. That was a very high bar for a paranoid and distrusting fuck like myself. Luckily, having seen 7 seasons of *Voyager*, I knew what the EMH was ultimately capable of, if you gave it a chance, even while everyone else still underestimated it. So why not have a few of them around if all it took was scaling up the underlying systems? Yes, it was costly, but you couldn't spend money if you were dead. There was a Ferengi Rule of Acquisition there, I think. In the end, it was an investment in my survival and that was *always* a good investment.

In practical terms, I essentially *owned* a few highly skilled doctors with the complete medical knowledge of a hundred plus worlds in the Federation. They were at my beck and call, doctors who would obey me above anyone else after I'd reprogrammed it and tweaked its ethical subroutines to be more flexible, which again, I'd learned was possible from an episode of Voyager. In fact, I'd trust an EMH I owned to take care of all my medical needs far more than a flesh and blood doctor at this point, especially since I'd learned from all those episodes of Voyager and had added many additional security subroutines to the program to prevent tampering by anyone else that in any way could result in harm to myself, any type of betrayal, or worked against my interests. I'd also included emergency shutdown/deletion safeguards if they should go rogue.

My current thought process was interrupted as my office's comm beeped, and I heard Ro's voice.

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"Gothic, you have an unscheduled walk in requesting a meeting. Do you have time to meet with them?" Ro asked.

Fuck. This was one of the downsides of having an 'open door' policy and actually following through on it. Unfortunately, it was something I felt was necessary to maintain my position, for several good reasons. For the Bajorans, as a human in a very high-level Bajoran military position, access to me was important to ensure that there were no festering issues that I was unaware of that could bite me in the ass unexpectedly. For Starfleet and its Federation citizens, as an Augment, with all the baggage that came with that descriptor, isolating myself in a high tower felt like it would be confirming all the worst fears the Federation had about me and I needed to act in opposition to those fears. Hence, I had an open-door policy, no matter how inconvenient it could be at times, though I felt the benefits outweighed the costs.

"This isn't a great time, Ro. I'm preparing for my 1pm meeting," I responded, knowing only Ro would hear my words. I needed to put my best foot forward if I wanted to get my Chief Engineer. "Can you have them come back with an appointment for another day?"

"I could, but I think you'll want to take it. It's Keiko O'Brien, Chief O'Brien's wife," Ro explained in a professional tone, before her voice turned sultry and flirty. "And may I say that she is looking delicious right now."

Keiko? Really. Now that was interesting...and unexpected.

"Send her in then," I said, feeling intrigued.

With that, the door to my office opened and a familiar sight from my time onboard the *Enterprise*, when I first arrived in this dimension, walked in.

"Keiko! It's lovely to see you again!" I greeted, not so discreetly eyeing her up and down, a wide smile on my face as I got up and came around my desk to shake her hand. "I've been wondering when we'd eventually run into each other. The station's big, but it's not *that* big."

“I know, I heard that you were on the station from Miles and saw you a few times from afar in Quark’s, though we never talked. I also heard that somehow you had become a General in the Bajoran Militia,” she replied, a bright smile on her face too. “How did *that* happen?”

“You and everyone else have asked that exact same question,” I answered with a laugh, her hand still in mine; for some reason, we hadn’t yet let each other go. “I’ll give you an answer that I don’t normally give in polite company, but one that’s just as true as the one I normally give. They made me a General because I *killed* a lot of Cardassians during the Occupation, killed them in the most bloody, violent, and gruesome ways, which played a significant role in driving them off the planet. And now here I am. Greatly rewarded for being the best killer, the best *warrior*. In a way, they made me their *warlord*, you could even say, their *Shogun*, in the terms of your ancestors.”

For Keiko, with her particular set of kinks, that was practically the magic word that got her motor running. My eyes were locked on hers, since I knew how it would affect her. Her response was just what I hoped for. Her whole body shivered, her cheeks flushed, her eyes dilated, her heartbeat quickened, and her nostrils flared taking in my scent. While she was having a moment, I checked out the delightful ensemble that she was wearing.

It was like a sexy version of a kimono, or the kimono a courtesan of ancient Japan would have worn in a movie about the period. It was pure white, low off the shoulder, so that the tops of her smallish, shapely breasts were only hinted at, decorated with white and blue chrysanthemums, with a wide, bright red obi, a belt across the waist. The sleeves were large and billowy, draping even, the kind you could practically hide a sword within. The kimono had a split practically up the side up to her waist. It was one of those splits where the woman could stand straight, or take smaller steps, and you’d never know what delights there were to see if she didn’t want you to. But when she did want you to, oh boy, she could flash an entire, long, naked leg up to the hip to entice any admirers. Her glossy, black hair was even tied back in a traditional Japanese style.

Letting her hand go, I sat back on the edge of my desk, facing Keiko, our eyes locked intensely as I replayed my memories of her. Keiko was one of the many women I’d slept with, fucked, whatever you want to call it, back on the *Enterprise*. She was an accomplished botanist assigned to the ship and hadn’t even been dating O’Brien yet. I’d first met in her 10 Forward and her intense interest in me was plainly visible. When I went over to introduce myself, I found that 24th century women were not all that dissimilar to the women of my time. The bad body reputation Augments had in the 24th century was just as good at enticing women into your bed as in the 20th/21st, no matter how evolved they supposedly were now.

Keiko was Japanese, from a very traditional family, and she had some distinct kinks along those lines. Over the course of our sexual relationship, I had discovered she had a submissive streak a mile wide and a very romanticized or sexualized fetish concerning Japan’s ancient days when the warlord, or the Shogun, was the military dictator of most of the country, where women would be given to him to earn his favor or to protect their families. In her heart’s fantasies, I was that warlord and she had no choice but to give herself to me to protect her family. I had zero issue playing up the dominating warlord if that did it for her.

I remained silent waiting for her to come back to the present, rather than whatever fantasy she was in. As our eyes met and she caught my intense gaze on her, a predator's gaze, it was immediately obvious, as her posture straightened, her hands clasped in front of her, her feet came together, and her eyes and chin lowered, like a peasant or servant before her Lord. She looked not happy, but content, like a part of herself was being let out to play that she desperately wanted to, but hadn't had an opportunity to revel in for far too long. It was a familiar sight to me and I wondered if she even realized that she had fallen back into these old patterns we once had together. It seemed I had my part to play now too and I was eager not to disappoint.

"Why are you here, Keiko-chan?" I asked in perfect Japanese, in fact, the rest of this conversation should be in Japanese to maintain that full fantasy immersion.

"I yearned to see you again, Lord Gothic," she quietly responded in Japanese.

"You have been in my territory and under my protection for quite some time now. Why seek me out now?" I asked, playing my part, before I growled. "Was it your intention to show such disrespect to me?!"

"No, my Lord! Never!" she immediately replied, her body folding into a deep bow of supplication. "My...I told my husband of our past relationship and he did not wish me to seek you out."

"Then why are you here, girl?" I demanded.

"I...I could not stay away any longer, knowing you were here," she admitted, sounding guilty. "I love my husband with all my heart, but he cannot give me what I sometimes need."

"And I can?"

"Yes, my Lord. Even with my husband, sometimes, I think of the time we spent on the *Enterprise* together. I know even then I was not enough for your power and appetite, which has only grown, but it was one of the most exciting times of my life and I wished to have that again, if you will grant your touch to this most unworthy one," she explained, breathily, still bowing.

"Will your husband understand this?"

"I hope so," she quietly answered.

I did not verbally respond, instead I stood up from the desk and slowly approached her, like a great cat stalking. Reaching out unhesitant, I raised her head from the bow she was in and cupped her cheek gently.

"Oh, my little Keiko-chan," I purred/growled.

She leaned into my touch. I could feel her body trembling, hear her excited breath, knowing that I had accepted her once again through my touch. I ran my fingers down her jawline before I took her neck in one hand and slightly squeezed, just enough to slightly restrict her breathing. She knew that I could snap her delicate neck with my enhanced strength and from the feel of her

racing pulse, it excited her that her very life was in my hands, that she was fully in my control. I tilted her chin up so that she could meet my eyes.

Leaning forward slowly, I brought my lips to within a hairsbreadth of her, our breaths intermingling, ratcheting up the anticipation of the moment. She did not try to move closer, but I knew instinctively that she wanted me to. Her wishes and desires were not the point of this fantasy, though. She wanted me to *take* what I wanted from her, to feel herself under my power and being helpless to stop it. Of course, this entire encounter was consensual and if she expressed any desire to stop, I certainly would, but that was not the fantasy she wanted to enact. It was also something her husband obviously struggled to provide her in their marital life.

Smiling at her, I pressed closer and kissed her firmly. Like I expected, she remained utterly compliant, accepting me and reciprocating my passion, but not directing our kiss. Her lips opened eagerly so that our tongues could meet and I pressed her small frame tightly against the hard planes of my body, her small breasts flattening against my chest as my hands roamed over the silky texture of her kimono, reaching down to grip her ass, digging my fingers into the muscular flesh.

I let the kiss go on for a long while, alternately forcing her head to the side so that I could nip and bite at her neck, to lick at her pulse point, delighting in the moans and squeaks of pleasure I elicited from here.

I briefly considered ripping her kimono off her body with my strength, but decided it was unnecessary given her choice in clothing, so I pulled back and looked down at her body as I unwrapped her long bright red obi until it fell to the ground at our feet. The bright white silk of her kimono was wrapped tightly around her, keeping the silk in place, before I unwrapped her like a gift. Eventually the white silk fell to the ground in a delicate pool, leaving her topless, and only covered by delicate, white silk panties.

She continued to look dutifully to the ground, refusing to meet my eyes, so my hands took her small, but extremely perky tits in my hand, squeezing them, playing with them, then taking her delicate pink, engorged nipples in my fingers and pinching them, sometimes gently and sometimes rough. Her moans told me just how much she was enjoying this.

Getting impatient, I slowly trailed my large hands down her hourglass figure. I allowed my fingers to slide under the straps of her panties at her sides and then I slowly slid my fingers under the fabric, bringing them together in the front over her hairless mound before I gripped them tightly and *ripped* them off her body. Her surprised moans were delicious to my ears, but she didn't move or do anything to stop me, her gaze down and submissive, offering everything to me and denying me nothing.

"Attend me," I commanded in archaic sounding language, gesturing to my utility belt that I had partially unlocked. Even totally naked, standing in the middle of my office, knowing anyone could walk in at any time, she continued playing the role of dutiful servant to her Lord. Her hands immediately went to my utility belt and after a moment's work she fully unlocked it,

removed it and placed it gently on my office desk. She similarly helped raise my armored shirt over my head.

She glanced at me for permission, which I gave with a nod, as she kneeled before me and unzipped my pants, slowly lowering them to the floor and helping me methodically step out of them. Her eyes were locked on my hard cock straining against my underwear, so I took a moment to subtly tap a few commands into my omni-tool sealing the room and instructing Ro to not disturb me or otherwise admit anyone else into my office unless there was a station-wide emergency.

“Take it out and suck it, *slut*,” I ordered, as she spent a bit too long gazing at my cock, concealed by my underwear. Her shiver at the name calling confirmed that she was still a fan of slight degradation/humiliation.

She dutifully took it out gently, lowered my underwear to the ground, and began lovingly licking from the root of my cock to the tip, her tongue lashing like a snake, eventually sucking gently on the head as her head began to bob up and down. Eventually I grew tired of this and thrust my cock past her lips and down her throat. Her choking and surprise didn’t conceal how the scent of her arousal practically doubled in the room. This was actually what she wanted, I deduced.

With both hands I gripped her silky black locks and thrust my cock into her mouth, going deeper and deeper with each thrust before I maxed out at 8 inches. I continued taking my pleasure from her mouth before, without warning her, I came down her throat with a torrent of my cum. She swallowed it all down greedily and from her shaking she was having an orgasm of her own.

“Thank you for your gift, my Lord,” she said, after I had finished cumming and she had cleaned me up. “I remember feeling so alive afterwards in the past.”

“You’re welcome, my little slut,” I magnanimously replied in welcome, hiding the internal cringe at even Keiko realizing that something was up with my semen. “Now, stand.”

She immediately stood. I reached down and grabbed her ass and lifted her up into my arms. She instinctively wrapped her arms and legs around me tightly as I carried her to the side of my office. Her wet folds cradled my hard shaft as it pointed up and rested on her stomach. I made sure to give her some extra wiggles against her clit.

“Computer, bed,” I called aloud and in the large empty space between the guest chairs and the door to my office, a well-appointed, queen-sized bed was holographically rendered in the open space. I spent a lot of time working in my office these days and there was only so much desk-sex, or office chair sex I was willing to tolerate when I wanted to get my dick wet in Ro or Neela or Nerys. As much as pornos claimed otherwise, a nice, soft bed, was still the best place to have sex.

I brought her to the foot of the bed, as it had no footboard, and laid her down on the soft mattress covered by a plush comforter. Standing at the food of the bed, I forcefully spread her soft thighs, lined myself up with her dripping, engorged pussy, and thrust my cock inside her to the hilt with one powerful thrust, my hands roughly gripping her thighs for leverage. Her sudden scream of

pleasure as I 'took her' without warning or asking for permission, like she was but a thing to slake my lusts upon, told me that I was doing the right thing.

Keiko's eyes practically rolled back into her head as her back arched and her tits were thrust into the air. A long, guttural moan escaped her lips as I forcefully fucked her, my cock burying itself inside her repeatedly with short, fast thrusts.

Her small tits bounced with each thrust, her gasps and moans punctuated each time I pierced her with my cock. Like a good lover, I reached down and roughly circled her clit with my thumb, sometimes squeezing it between my fingers to increase her pleasure. Sometimes I grabbed her breasts, squeezing them, slapping them, making the skin pink up nicely, sometimes leaning down to take each of those hard, pink nipples into my mouth.

As I could feel she was about to reach her peak and cum, I suddenly stopped. It took a few moments for her to come back to herself and moan piteously at denying her.

"You cum when I say you can cum, slut. Beg me now," I commanded. "Beg me to keep fucking you till you cum."

She remained silent, so I reached up and gripped her throat and squeezed, her eyes flying wide open, her gasp of surprise silenced by my lips. Her pussy went wild on my cock, even though I wasn't thrusting inside her, her hands trying to pry my vice-like fingers from around her delicate, porcelain throat. I released her soon after.

"You better start begging me, slut, or I'm sending you home to your disappointing husband. Is that what you want?" I warned, not entirely knowing if bringing her husband up now was a mistake or if the NTR aspects of that statement might be a turn off to her. Ah well, sometimes you had to take some risks and improvise a bit when dirty talking.

"No! No, my lord!" she yelled in desperation, her hands fearfully caressing the skin of my chest. "Please keep fucking this unworthy pussy of mine. Please help this deprived woman feel complete in your embrace, your big cock filling my emptiness. I beg of you, my Lord!"

"Good girl," I complimented with a smile, before I started thrusting hard into her once again and ground my pelvis against hers roughly, twisting my hips to reach every part of the inside of her pussy.

I continued pounding her for several minutes, before I picked her up, practically bending her in half, her arms wrapping around my neck and her head nuzzling into my chest.

"Cum for me," I commanded. And I let myself go. Her eyes shot open and her nails scratched down my back as her pussy started spasming around my cock, cumming so hard that she lost her breath, her eyes rolling back into her head, and her scream of pleasure was silenced. I held her sweaty body close to me as I unloaded deep into her womb, her entire body trembling, before she finally took a surprised and desperate deep breath to keep from passing out. She started to cry, feeling overwhelmed emotionally, which confirmed to me that she was very happy with our encounter so far.

“Good, Keiko-chan, you have pleased me,” I said, my words making her light up in shy happiness. “Now get on your hands and knees on the bed. I’m not through with you yet.”

As she scrambled to quickly get further up on the bed, I got on the bed and knee walked up to her trembling form. She was on her knees, legs spread wide, ass up in the air, with her head and shoulders fully on the bed.

Her pussy lips were glistening and open, ready and waiting for me.

Running the head of my cock up her slit, I sunk into her, angled just right to hit the g-spot I’d long ago located back on the *Enterprise*. My hands gripped her hips so tightly I’d likely leave bruises, but I couldn’t care less as I used her hips to thrust even harder into her. Of course, I still had to modulate my strength to prevent her pelvis from breaking. I had nothing against Chief O’Brien, honestly, but part of me kind of hoped he’d find his wife like this, dripping wet, her pussy leaking my cum, her hips bruised in the shape of my fingers.

Piercing her over and over again, each pump of my hips elicited a pleased filled moan from her lips worthy of a porno star, but better, since I could tell that her reactions were all real.

I watched my length saw in and out of her tight pussy. Her shaking ass presented a wonderful target for someone like Keiko, who probably didn’t actually like rough sex, per se, but more accurately liked their partner taking her roughly, doing whatever he wanted with her willing and helpless body. It was a fine distinction, but it was there.

So, I brought my right hand down on her shaking ass, causing it to shake. Keiko moaned and grunted from the spanking I was giving her, her pussy tightening around me each time I spanked her.

To truly send the message home that she was mine to do with as I pleased, the fingers of my left hand reached down and threaded in her glossy black locks, lifting her head roughly off the mattress, arching her neck, allowing me to better hear her cries of pleasure as I spanked each cheek in turn.

“Who do you belong to, Keiko-chan?” I growled.

“You, my Lord. All yours. I belong to you!” she screamed, fully in the headspace of her fantasy.

“What would you do for me, if I told you?”

“Anything!”

“Even if I asked you to fuck one of my girls? To get on your knees before them, put your head between their thighs and eat their pussies out till they came all over your pretty face?”

“Yes, my Lord!” she hissed in pleasure at the sheer thought of being used that way.

“Good. Seek me out when you next want to feel this way again,” I commanded, using my grip on her hair to turn her head to the side and roughly kissing her, dominating her mouth, then started to thrust into her as quickly as I could.

Feeling both of our orgasms coming, I buried myself as deeply as possible inside of her and let loose the iron control I had over my own orgasm. Keiko screamed when she felt me so deep inside her, cumming, and she came herself, soaking my cock with her juices.

Looking down, I watched how our combined juices slowly started to dribble out of her, so I rolled to the side, bringing her with me for a little bit of cuddling before I unceremoniously, and somewhat uncaringly, kicked her out of my bed, which she would definitely enjoy given her kinks. Normally, I would give any of the girls I slept with as long as they wanted to cuddle afterward or even have a third or fourth round as I or they pleased, but I both knew that she wouldn't want to be treated like that, like a girlfriend, and I had an appointment soon to prepare for anyways.

"Thank you, my Lord Gothic," Keiko whispered from her position lying across my chest. I simply rubbed her head like a much-loved cat and said nothing, but the smile on my face said it all.

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Now *that* was a pleasant diversion, I thought with a smile, as I leaned back in my chair, now alone once again in my office and the holographic bed returned to non-existence and all the air in my office had been recycled to remove the potent scent of sex in the air. The professional General was back in the driver's seat now.

Part of me was nervous at the potential consequences should Chief O'Brien find out that I'd banged his wife once again and he was angry about it, and another part of me just didn't give a fuck. It wasn't like I sought her out, though I was arguably the sexual aggressor given her particular kinks. Still, her consent to everything was abundantly clear too. I was willing to go along with most kinks to make my partners happy, like the Risians did, even a rape fantasy if that's what they wanted, but I always made sure we were on the same page and consent was fully given beforehand. The thought of asking Keiko how her husband would feel about our liaison during our encounter had briefly popped up, but then my cock was in her mouth, then my cock was in her tight, wet pussy, then it was pretty much too late to stop and I said fuck it. Ah well, I'd deal with the consequences if they came.

It was time to turn my mind fully back to preparing for my upcoming meeting. I'd decided to hire some live crew for my new ship, at least a few people. Unlike the old *Temptress*, even with all the automation I was utilizing, a ship of its size really shouldn't be flown solo or left unattended for long without a permanent live crew onboard. Of course, I could just assign members of the Militia to my ship. The most qualified and highly skilled people had mostly been seconded to Lupaza's squadron, but there were a few left that would almost certainly jump at the chance of being stationed aboard a large starship under my command, versus flying a fighter solo.

I hesitated to do that, however, and viewed it as a last resort should my other plans fail to realize. While I was a war hero of some renown and certainly commanded a great deal of respect and admiration, the Bajorans under my command would likely be loyal to Bajor first and could even be compelled, by someone higher in the political chain of command or someone higher ranked

than I, or if I was ever relieved, to divulge any secrets of mine that they'd learned while working for me. Sisko, as the Emissary of the Prophets, might even be able to get them to tell him whatever he wants to know if he was ever willing to play that particular card. As such, bringing in an outsider with no ties to Bajor or Starfleet, who worked for me directly and owed no one else their allegiance, seemed like the wiser decision.

I'd looked through the many databases that I had access to, both legal and not, in the hopes of finding people with the right skills who weren't already gainfully employed and didn't potentially owe their loyalty to someone else. So far, I'd found just a single person who had met those criteria and another maybe for a Chief of Security role, though getting ahold of her had been impossible so far. Everyone else who came close to meeting my requirements were either already in or worked on behalf of Starfleet or were doing meaningful work elsewhere and were highly unlikely to want to come and work for me.

It was B'Elanna Torres, of all people, who had met my requirements and was actually recently available. She was a Klingon-Human hybrid and possible future Maquis who would have served with distinction as Chief Engineer on the Federation starship *Voyager* under the command of Captain Kathryn Janeway after they were taken into the Delta quadrant against their will in a couple years' time. However, by inviting her to DS9 and offering her a job, I'd likely changed all that. Ah well. There was no point to living this life with all my future knowledge if I was constantly afraid of changing the future. There were some things even I was afraid of messing with, but this didn't feel like one of them.

According to her file, B'Elanna was born in 2349 on the Federation colony Kessik IV to John Torres, a Human father and Miral, a Klingon mother. That was interesting on its own. She certainly wasn't the only human/Klingon hybrid out there, but despite the long-held treaty between the Federation and the Empire, there really weren't that many examples around. I suppose that was due to a combination of the physiological difficulties in conceiving between the two races and the extreme cultural differences between the two polities.

In fact, there was only one other famous example of a human/Klingon hybrid in the modern day that had appeared on the shows, K'Ehleyr, who was the daughter of a human mother and a Klingon father. For whatever reason, whether it was a butterfly I had introduced or this being an alternate Star Trek universe, she was still alive, was still a Federation Ambassador and Special Emissary to the Klingon Empire, and had never had a child with Worf, though I had no idea if they had been lovers in the past. I strongly suspected the Collectors showing up and unexpectedly ending the Klingon Civil War was behind her still being alive. In TNG she had been killed by the Duras as a way to get back at Worf, more of an afterthought really. It was possible the Duras who had killed her in canon had met his end in some other circumstance or was somewhere else at the time.

Pulling up the official records, I spent a bit of time reviewing the official information prior to our meeting. B'Elanna spent much of her early life on Kessik IV, but because relations between the Klingon Empire and the Federation were rather strained at the time, she hadn't had an easy time

of it. Strained, in this context, meant that 'rogue' Klingon elements had raided poorly defended Federation colonies and had murdered a lot of people.

From what I remembered from the show, B'Elanna and her mother were the only Klingons on the planet at all. Although none of the other colonists voiced any negative opinions to B'Elanna, at least that's what she said in the show, she felt that she and her mother were perceived differently. That didn't surprise me given how conformist the Federation was, even on a colony world that tended to attract free thinkers.

Whatever happened on the planet had led to B'Elanna's alienation from the people of the colony and ultimately her father. Daddy issues were essentially at the root of many of her life-long insecurities. This was mentioned in her school records of all things, although the records hadn't used such colorful language. I'd not looked into the Federation educational system much, and now that I had, I could spot the differences. Apparently even from a young age, children within the UFP were psychoanalyzed and problem children were identified early, at least on the more developed worlds. Once identified, they were sent to mandatory counseling sessions and encouraged to get along with others by being encouraged to join team activities, with the consent of the parents. Seemed a little worrying to me, but perhaps I was overreacting due to my own issues with the Federation culture, especially as it related to threats to their existence. That said, the 24th century did breed people a bit more well-adjusted on average than in my time, so maybe there was something to it.

As it turned out B'Elanna was not so easy to get to conform to norms, possibly due to there being so few human/Klingon hybrids or the educational/counseling limitations on a colony world with limited resources. When she attended school she was tormented by a fellow classmate named Daniel Byrd who would point at her cranial ridges and tease her about being half-Klingon, calling her 'Miss Turtlehead.' So, perhaps I was overreacting a bit by thinking that the Federation brainwashed their children. Even in this vaunted future of peace and tolerance kids could still be cruel little shits and bullying could still be a problem.

This bullying had angered Torres so much that one day, during recess, she had attacked Byrd while he was on something called a gyro-swing. Torres, perhaps already showing a glimpse of her engineering genius, disengaged a device known as the centrifugal governor, which caused Byrd to spin so fast on the swing that the device almost flew apart. Torres then yanked Byrd off the swing and 'started pounding his little face in' until their teacher, Miss Malvin, separated them.

What was impressive to me was that after her father had left her and her mother, B'Elanna and her mother returned to live on Qo'noS, the Klingon homeworld, for some time. That meant that B'Elanna must have disabled the gyro-swing's centrifugal governor when she was still very young, which suggested that she had had an uncanny skill with engineering and technology from a very young age. The Federation were many things, but they built their technology with many safeguards that were near impossible to override at the best of times. Torres had not only successfully bypassed these safeguards, probably with only commonly available tools, but did it in such a way that the swing continued to operate, which shouldn't have been possible for

someone so young, someone with no formal training in engineering. That was quite an achievement.

B'Elanna later ended up joining Starfleet Academy, where she had a hard time fitting in. Her records told me that she had gotten into a lot of trouble with instructors and other members of the faculty. Within two years of starting the Academy she had already been suspended once and had had four disciplinary hearings concerning her behavior and conduct. Even though recognized as quite a brilliant student and a very promising engineer by her instructors, she eventually dropped out of the Academy altogether. That had happened only 4 years ago. If the course of her life stayed true to canon Star Trek: Voyager, she would join the Maquis next year, in 2370. That meant that there was a distinct opportunity right now to snap her up before that happened.

Since she had no job, no prospects, and was an utterly brilliant engineer who already had the benefit of a few years of Starfleet Academy training under her belt, I had invited her here to talk about a job opportunity, though I had already made up my mind to make the offer based on my foreknowledge. Whether she was looking for a new purpose, the chance to visit the Federation frontier, or the all expense paid trip to Bajor, she'd accepted my invitation. In fact, she was outside my office right now.

I wasn't surprised that she'd accepted my invitation; she had a human's curiosity and nowhere better to go. The chance to travel for free, at the height of luxury, to the mouth of the wormhole at the Federation's 'frontier' had probably also helped convince her to hear me out, especially if joining the Maquis was already percolating in her head at this point.

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My office's comm beeped once, before I heard Major Ro's voice.

"General, B'Elanna Torres, your 1pm meeting, is here. Should I send her in?" Ro asked.

"Send her right in," I replied aloud, the room's communications array picking up my voice.

Ro Laren, who worked in the office adjoining mine, let B'Elanna into my office once I had given her the ok and thus I got my first look at the woman in the flesh, rather than through a TV screen. The forehead ridges really didn't detract from her good looks, surprisingly, since I wasn't normally into Klingon women. If anything, the human DNA had softened her in wonderful ways and the ridges served to make her features appear more *exotic*, enhancing her beauty. Like so many canon characters I'd met in this life so far, the benefits of advanced medical technology were evident as she appeared younger and even better looking than the actress who had played her on tv.

Her body was hidden under several layers of rough and hardy clothing, rather than the stupid outfits that most civilians in the Federation wore, which again hinted at a desire or need for non-conformity from Federation ideals. In fact, if I didn't know better, I'd say that she looked like a Maquis already. That gave me hope that my very unusual offer would be enticing to her.

"Miss Torres," I greeted warmly, while standing up from behind my desk to shake her hand.

"Can I get you any refreshments before we begin?"

She shook her head to say no, so I gestured for her to take a seat, which she promptly did, and I returned to my seat.

"I got your message," the woman said, once she was seated. "I didn't think the Bajorans were so desperate for engineers that they'd look for Starfleet dropouts."

Her passive aggressive and slightly self-deprecating answer made me smile. That famous chip on her shoulder was there for all who had eyes to see. This fit what I knew of her from the show at this point in the timeline. Getting confirmation that my foreknowledge was accurate, at least with regard to her personality, was gratifying. Too many times this alternate universe had surprised me in ways both big and small, some good and some bad.

"While I can certainly arrange a position for you with the Bajoran Militia, if that's what interests you, they'd certainly be happy to have you," I answered, "I was actually hoping to hire you as Chief Engineer for my own ship, in a personal capacity, and not in my capacity as a General in the Bajoran militia. To be abundantly clear, you'd be working for *me*, directly, on my personal ship and on my personal payroll, and not for Bajor, not for Starfleet or the Federation, just me. I don't think I can state that any more clearly."

She looked confused. Obviously she had formed some incorrect preconceptions on the 6-week long journey to Bajor from Earth. Before she could inquire further, I decided a little shock and awe was called for, so I tapped a few commands into my omni-tool and it began to project a three-dimensional hologram of what the new *Flirty Temptress* would look like when fully complete. It was purposely transparent enough for her to see some of the ship's internal systems, including its FTL drives, which I knew she'd be interested in as an engineer.

"I have no idea what this device is or where you got it, but I want one," she said at first, looking me in the eyes, to which I gave her a smile and a nod, before she turned her eyes back to the ship. "This ship looks almost Federation in design on the outside, or at least like something Starfleet *might* build in the future; it certainly fits the design aesthetic. It doesn't correspond to any known design the Federation has ever used since its founding, though, and I know them all," she said quietly as she leaned forward to intently study the hologram of my ship which I set to rotating with a gesture, her eyes furtively taking in every detail, dissecting it with the critical and observant eye of an engineer. "The hull geometry is just *strange*, almost like it was designed with aerodynamics in mind, which is just ridiculous in the modern day. A stable warp field doesn't require geometry like this, nor would it grant an increase in top warp speed, but somehow I think it serves a purpose beyond looking nice."

She looked up at me, obviously hoping I'd give her an answer. I merely smiled largely at her.

"Go on," I gently encouraged, causing her eyes to return to my ship's hologram.

"The deflector dish is significantly oversized for a ship like this too. There is no need for a dish that large," she continued. "The weapon systems appear somewhat normal, some kind of directed energy beam and torpedoes, but there are a lot for a ship this size and other weapons too, but someone went to a lot of trouble to hide them, or to not make it easy to realize. And there are some strange things going on with its engines, there is a warp core, but it's much too small to be

providing the full power needs for a vessel this large, especially with this many weapons to power. Is there a second warp core? Or some kind of secondary power source? How would you balance the warp field with two warp cores? It makes no sense. A fusion reactor small enough to fit in this ship would not be able to provide the amount of power it obviously requires.”

She now looked confused and frustrated, before locking eyes with me again, like she was willing me to spill my secrets.

"Who designed whatever this tool is and who designed this ship? Where are you even building it?" she asked me, after a few moments pause. "From everything I've learned from my research about Bajor on the trip here, neither designing or building a ship like this is within its current technical capabilities. Even though I don't fully understand it, I can tell that this is a cutting-edge design. You'd need hundreds of engineers and a major shipyard to build something like this, especially a unique ship like this, the first of its class...a prototype, really."

I turned off the hologram, before I leaned back in my office chair and locked my eyes on her intently, my omni-tool confirming that the room was still secure.

"I'll answer your questions as a show of good faith. *I* invented this device. It's called an omni-tool, and it'll be going on sale soon quadrant-wide. I designed and am in the process of building this ship and in a few weeks it'll be complete. As a reward and payment for my service and many victories during the Occupation, Bajor gave me citizenship and land. I chose a large semi-tropical private island on which I built a very elaborate and luxurious home. My private island on Bajor contains advanced technology the Federation isn't even aware exists, which I am using to build this vessel that I personally designed," I admitted to her shock, intense interest, and grudging respect. "In a few short weeks it'll be complete, which is partly why I want to offer you this job. Quite simply, I need crew for my new ship, people I can trust, people who don't have divided loyalties. You're a brilliant and gifted engineer with no loyalty to any other government; someone who I believe can be trusted with my secrets and skilled enough to take care of my baby. And even if you did tell people about what I have access to, it's doubtful they'd even listen or believe you given your checkered history."

She scowled at that reminder.

If she did try to betray me, I was ready and willing to kill her, if necessary, but I didn't think it would come to that. If I was all wrong about her and she somehow managed it, the Federation likely wouldn't move against me, at least not openly. As a Bajoran citizen, even a human Augment, operating outside of Federation space like I was, I wasn't actually breaking the law. They wouldn't act unless there was a credible threat and I had made a move against them in some way. Section 31 might be proactive enough to remove me as a threat, even before I did something against Federation interests, but I worked for them.

"What I'm offering you is the position of Chief Engineer on my ship," I informed her. "You'll be the Chief Engineer on one of the most advanced starships in this quadrant and have access to technology you've never even heard of before. You'll be part of something special, Chief Engineer on a ship that I think may one day become as famous as the *Enterprise*. I know you've

had issues with Starfleet, with their bureaucracy and strict rules and regulations, but I happen to run a pretty informal command structure which I think you'll like. I'm not from around here, I didn't grow up in the Federation, so you'll find that I'm not a firm believer in many Federation principles, nor are my hands as tied as theirs are. I also don't care about uniforms. In fact, I'd prefer you to wear as little as possible," I joked, a lustful smile on my face, hoping to bring the overall seriousness of the conversation down a little.

B'Elanna blushed and frowned.

"I didn't come here blind, you know, I did a little research on you too," she challenged aggressively, obviously trying to regain some semblance of control over this meeting. "In addition to being a Khan-era Augment, for lack of a better term, from another dimension and time, a freedom fighter and hero of the Bajoran resistance, and a successful holo-novel author, you're well known to be a ladies' man that has several lovers, many of whom are still serving with you on this very station. So, if you're thinking of adding me to your *collection* of women, you can just forget about that right now. If I accept your job offer, that's not part of the package you get."

Oh, she was feisty. I liked that a lot.

"You forgot *inventor*, but it really doesn't matter," I reposted with a smirk. "How about I take you to my island home on Bajor so that I can show you the kind of tech and equipment you'll be working with and maintaining if you accept my job offer, and even watch the ship you just gawked at being built right now, *in real-time*, using a new method of shipbuilding that I designed myself. A method that will see my ship built faster and to a higher engineering tolerance than any method currently known to the Federation," I offered to which her eyes practically lit up.

I could tell that she was intrigued, but needed a just little bit of a push over the edge to overcome that anti-authority, non-conformist streak of hers. She might have agreed to leave Earth, in part, for a free trip and vacation to the frontier, or to get close to the Maquis' operating area, but she was equally interested in hearing what I had to say, a human Augment from another time and dimension who had rejected life on Earth only to choose to fight for another species' freedom on a backwater planet that few had ever heard of before the wormhole was discovered.

That's what really had grabbed her interest, that and the potential to be part of something special once again, to become a part of a family of sorts, working together towards a shared purpose and goal. In some ways, we were both rather similar. Part of, but separate from our people, marginalized, victims of prejudice perhaps, but wanting to live a life of adventure, a life well lived. Of course, as an accomplished engineer, she was also dying to learn more about all the technology she'd only seen tantalizing glimpses of and just how it was possible that I was building a ship this large and advanced essentially in my personal home.

"Once you see my operations you might change your mind about joining me. Sex with me is not a requirement of the job, by the way, it's merely a nice side benefit my girls and I enjoy together. I assure you, if you want in my bed, you'll have to *beg me* first," I leaned closer and whispered in a husky undertone, to which she remained silent, refusing to meet my eyes, yet visibly

shuddering, her nipples hardening and becoming visible through her layers of clothing. My enhanced sense of smell told me the same story of arousal. I wonder if that Klingon blood and those ancient predator instincts recognized an alpha in front of her, an apex predator, someone that would provide her with strong babies.

Getting up from my chair I directed her to the back corner of my office which was illuminated by a bright yellow beam of what looked like natural sunlight from Earth's sun. It certainly reduced the artificial feel of station living in my office and reminded me of home. This artificial beam of sunlight was shooting straight up into a beautiful cube made of the clearest glass, rotating on one of its points on a pyramid base of highly polished stainless steel. Inside the cube was another smaller cube filled with thousands of smaller shapes made of bright and vibrant colors. As it rotated it shot out pieces of colored sunlight onto the nearby walls.

"Do you like it?" I asked.

B'Elanna took it in for a few moments, her eyes following the slow rotation of the cube and taking in the vibrant colors.

"I do. It reminds me of my time on Earth. It's very beautiful," she answered, looking as captivated as I had once been. "I'm not sure I've seen anything like it before."

"Its name is 'Lion's Mane'," I explained. "It was made by a human artist, named Jon Kuhn, who lived on the Earth of my universe and time. He was a master and pioneer in cold worked glass, an artist who used advanced manufacturing technology to help create his art. The original piece took over 2 years for the artist to create."

"Did he live in this dimension too?" she asked, her eyes not leaving the rotating cube of light.

"He did, actually. I looked him up in Earth's historical database at one point," I answered. "He was born in 1949 in Chicago, on Earth, in this dimension too. Sadly, he was drafted during the Vietnam war and was killed in action in 1970, old Earth calendar, at the age of 21, before he began his art career. Just one of the many differences in the history of our two dimensions, I guess."

"I heard you were found with many of your belongings. Were you an art collector?"

My sudden laugh startled her and the spark of annoyance or anger in her eyes told me that she thought I was making fun of her.

"I'm sorry, I wasn't laughing at you," I assured her gently. "It's hard for Federation citizens to understand monetary concerns in this time, but I was a soldier in my dimension, a low-level officer. That means I couldn't afford to buy art like this on my salary; that was for people much richer than I. However, I had seen a few examples in person at various museums and really enjoyed his art, wishing I could own something so beautiful to display in my home if I ever became rich one day. I had to settle for a book and some high-resolution pictures and videos of his art, which also made the trip with me to this dimension, since it was in my apartment. When I built my island home I created replicator patterns from those reference materials and created my own copies of all his work. I had to extrapolate in a few places, but I think I made near perfect

copies to decorate my home and eventually my ship with. Even after all this time here, replicators are still amazing to me!”

She laughed at my enthusiasm, looking like my explanation had assuaged her hurt feelings.

“You went to a lot of trouble to recreate this art. What draws you to it?” she asked, surprising me a little. How someone interacted and viewed art could tell you a lot about that person. Was that why she was asking? Was she trying to better understand me as a person, to help make her decision? Maybe she worried that I was hiding the worst parts of myself, the stereotypical things associated with the augments of Earth’s dark history.

“That’s a great question, and I’m afraid my answer is going to get a little philosophical,” I replied with a smile. “I feel like Kuhn’s art is like a glimpse into infinity, it changes every moment. Its exterior may be stable and conform to the traditions of sculpture and objecthood, but the insides do not. The core takes in light and leads it on a journey, taking it in and letting it out, onto the walls and nearby environment and even into its viewers.”

Sensing a receptive audience, I continued.

“It’s a piece of art that moves at the speed of light, never knowing a static moment, never remaining truly at rest, which, I suppose, describes me rather well. As many scientists will tell you, light is life, and without it most of the sentient races of this galaxy wouldn’t exist. This artwork allows you to contemplate light’s potential, both physical and metaphysical. In more relevant terms, many modern citizens of the Federation struggle with understanding the Bajorans, who are a deeply spiritual people, like there is a fundamental contradiction between science/technology and spirituality, as if those two systems are not reconcilable. Kuhn’s work, in which technology strives for perfection, since so much of it was used in its creation, testifies that they are reconcilable with spirituality, and that they can become one.”

I felt almost embarrassed at my words now, but B’Elanna looked intrigued. Whether that was at my philosophy which acknowledged the value of spirituality, even in this advanced future, or that I was bucking whatever negative preconceptions she might have about violent and despotic augments...I didn’t know.

“Enough talk of such weighty concepts,” I said, “I have something else to show you. Something I think you’ll find just as interesting.”

With a few commands on my omni-tool, the hologram of Kuhn’s art fell away to reveal what was actually there, a single pad Husnock transporter I had recently installed. Since I had used particle synthesis-based holography, you could scan that area of my office with a tricorder till the cows came home and all it would tell you was that my beautiful piece of glass art was real. Part of the reason behind using a hologram of Kuhn’s work, besides me liking it a lot, was that even in this time people were very careful not to touch delicate and breakable art. That helped preserve the illusion. The hologram was good enough to appear real to the touch, but if they knocked it over and broke it, well, there could be issues.

Since the Husnock transporter had a much greater range, we could beam directly to the full transporter room on my island on Bajor. Luckily for me, the Federation couldn't keep track of everyone who beamed off and on the station and couldn't even detect my particular transporter anyway. Since I had the station's command codes and was officially in command of this station, at least on paper, it had been an easy task to ensure the station's sensors wouldn't take note of my com badge leaving its detection range. If anyone commed me, I could easily respond via my omni-tool and could beam back in minutes with no one the wiser that I'd ever been left the station in the first place. This transporter wasn't even on the station's power grid, since I had used a Collector power cell, so there would be no power expenditure to find in the logs either.

B'Elanna looked shocked at this unexpected turn.

"Don't worry, the real 'Lion's Mane' is in my private office on the Island," I reassured, pretending that that was the source of her shock. "Step on the transporter pad and I'll give you a grand tour of the Island."

"We can't beam to Bajor from here!" Torres protested vehemently, looking at me like I was insane. "No transporter can reach that far!"

That made me chuckle. With a wink and some encouragement, I gently pulled her onto the single transporter pad I kept hidden in my office and pulled her close by wrapping my arms around her.

"It's a single pad, so we're going to have to get a little cozy," I joked, pulling her into my chest, her large breasts pressed tightly against me. She gave the most delightful embarrassed squeak at this, but didn't actually pull away from me, her cheeks going red.

My office was sealed to anyone but myself and Ro Laren; even Chief O'Brien didn't know that this single pad transporter was here and wouldn't be able to get in even if he wanted to. Even Dax didn't know about this transporter. Since B'Elanna would be maintaining my ship's systems, which included this more advanced transporter technology, she had reason to know about it.

"Oh, I have so much to show you," I told B'Elanna. "Wait until I tell you about the quantum slipstream drive!"

Before she could ask what the fuck a quantum slipstream drive was we had already beamed away.

XXXXX

As I had expected, from practically the first look, B'Elanna had been enthralled at my ship being built. Watching the six autonomous construction arms constantly in motion, replicating whole wall panels or beaming in materials from elsewhere and precision installing them in place, had her practically hypnotized. I hadn't even had the chance to show her around the palace, or the Island, or even discuss her salary, or the fact that she would receive free room and board on my Island and upon my ship (when it was done), before, without even turning her eyes away from the sight of my ship being built, she calmly stated, "I accept."

There was something lovely about a plan coming together. How this would accept the Voyager storyline, well, I had no Godly idea. If there was some kind of serious consequence to the galaxy hopefully Q or the Prophets would clue me into that fact so that I could potentially step in and right the proverbial ship again.

Only a few days after B'Elanna agreed to become my new ship's Chief Engineer, I found myself in the office of Commander Sisko. As I walked in I found him intently studying a new addition to his office, an alien time-keeping device that he had built under the influence of that alien telepathic energy that the Klingons had brought back from a Gamma quadrant bio-survey which had caused them to reenact the ancient power struggle of a destroyed civilization of telepaths. Ro had filled me in on the salient details, which mostly matched what I remembered from the show.

Thankfully, I hadn't been here to get infected, having been on my island getting B'Elanna situated and filling her in on my current projects. Her top priority had been monitoring the ship build and she had already come up with a few good operational suggestions once it was complete. Unlike the situation with the Wadi, I was quite glad to have skipped out on the events of this episode. It was unlikely that my mind would have been breached given the defenses that Q gave me against higher level beings, but why risk it at all or draw attention to the fact that my mind was that protected. On the very small chance I might have been drawn into that power struggle, well, it was good for everyone else on the station because I'm pretty sure I would have won that little power struggle through sheer fucking ruthlessness. As my girls would tell you, I had zero issue turning off a ship's life support, airlocking my enemies, or just throwing a plasma grenade or three onto the bridge to get rid of pesky resistance.

"Good morning, Commander. You figure that thing out yet?" I asked.

It was a timepiece, that was somewhat clear, but unlike anything I'd ever seen in this time before. And Sisko seemed intent on figuring out not only how it worked, but also how the civilization that had used these devices measured or perceived time. It seemed like a waste of time to me, but whatever floats his boat.

"No, but I'm having fun trying," he replied with a half-smile in my direction.

I was about to mention why exactly I was here, it was a logistical coordination issue of minor importance, but it got me out of my office so I thought 'why not,' when a voice suddenly filled the air.

"Commander, there's an incoming freighter broadcasting an emergency signal," Kira reported.

"On my way," the commander answered.

I followed Sisko out of the office and the main viewscreen in Ops flashed into life to display a light orange skinned hairless alien wearing rather colorful yet functional attire. I didn't recognize her race, but it was always cool to see new aliens, even if some of them were quite ugly to human eyes.

"This is the Kobheerian freighter Rak-Miunis, requesting permission to dock."

"Docking port six is clear for approach," Kira said in answer to the docking request.

The Kobheerian Captain nodded.

"Thank you. We have a passenger onboard requiring urgent medical assistance."

"Can you tell us what's wrong with your passenger?" Sisko asked in concern.

"He says it's a condition called Kalla-Nohra. It's apparently chronic, but he doesn't have his medication."

"Beam him directly to our Infirmary. We'll have our doctor standing by," the commander advised.

"Thank you, Commander. Rak-Miunis out."

"Dax to Infirmary," Dax called.

"This is Bashir. Go ahead."

"A Kobheerian transport is about to beam a patient to you. He's suffering from something called Kalla-Nohra."

This was all starting to sound familiar now.

"I'm not aware of it. I'll check the computer."

I noticed that Kira was looking very thoughtful now. Something obviously had her attention.

"Commander, I'd like to go down to the Infirmary and meet that patient," she requested.

Sisko seemed surprised. My acute television show senses smelled large helpings of melodrama coming our way.

"Of course. Why though?" he asked.

"The only cases of Kalla-Nohra that I know of were the result of a mining accident at a Bajoran forced labor camp that the Gothic cell and I helped liberate during the Occupation," she answered, glancing my way. I gave her a subtle nod in support. "The survivors of Gallitep have always been a symbol to us of strength and courage."

She actually helped liberate it, along with my cell and many others working in concert. It had been a huge operation, but was one of the turning points in the Occupation as it had brought about a tremendous surge in support and recruitment.

And now I remembered the vague outline of this episode, and I had no fucking idea why it was happening *now*. As best I could recall, this episode had taken place near the very end of season 1. There were several more memorable episodes that had happened before this one was set to kick off, so why now? Had I introduced a butterfly that had thrown the schedule out of whack once again? Or did it have to do with the Collectors? The Cardassians had been restricting travel more

and more lately as the war with the Collectors continued to wage on. Had that hastened this guy's plans? It was the only explanation I could come up with that made any sense.

"By all means, Major. Take as much time as you want," Sisko said.

The Major walked into the turbolift and I was quick to follow. As the lift descended she turned to me.

"Tagging along?" she asked. "Or were you hoping to get me alone," she joked, but I could tell it was just to get her mind off things.

I didn't think we'd be doing *that* anytime soon. This whole situation had greatly affected her in canon and she deserved my support. All I could do now was be there for her when she needed someone. In my opinion, I still wasn't very good at this sort of thing, but I had had a few occasions to get better at it and the girls had always appreciated my honest efforts, at least. I certainly owed it to Kira to at least try. My girls were special to me and they more than deserved my best efforts.

"Just curious," I lied. Nerys was not someone who would take well to even the idea that she *needed* my help. "I would like to meet this survivor, though I do have other tasks that need my attention today."

This was all very poor timing. I really wasn't sure how long this would take and I had some shit to do, like covering up the fact that there was no record of Torres ever leaving the station, but clearly was no longer onboard. Thankfully, my command codes would allow me to alter the station's records and I had gotten very good at covering my tracks lately. Adding her to the records of an outgoing Bajoran transport would also be pretty easy with my rank and official access, but this shit took time and some finesse to keep Odo in the dark. It would have been infinitely easier if she had actually left the station the traditional way, like with my ship, but it was currently disassembled in a few thousand pieces and some shock and awe had been required to get her in the proper frame of mind to accept my job offer. It had also convinced her that I wasn't full of shit when I said that I had access to technology that was beyond Federation science.

Kira distractedly nodded as the lift opened onto the Promenade; she knew how busy I was most days, especially now, while my ship was under construction.

"I'll be free later if you want to have dinner together," I offered.

A few minutes later we stepped into the Infirmary.

"Ah, Major, I'll be right with you," Doctor Bashir said, before turning to me. "General, a pleasure, as always."

We both nodded at Bashir's greeting. He was reading a PADD, which no doubt contained information on the disease he needed to treat. To be fair, it was very rare one and he likely had had no opportunity to ever encounter it before today. It was unlikely that the Federation even had

a record of the disease or its treatment, although the Bajorans would have it in their records, which is probably what he was actually reviewing.

Nerys immediately saw that the patient on the examining bed was a Cardassian, and the Major practically slapped her com badge in anger.

"Kira to Odo."

"Go ahead, Major."

"I'm in the Infirmary," she said. "I need security here on the double."

Well, this had gone downhill rather fast. I briefly considered brandishing my sidearm in support of Kira, but decided it was a needlessly provocative gesture to deal with an old Cardassian who had made no move against anyone.

"I'm on my way, Major."

Doctor Bashir was astonished.

"What's the matter, Major?" he asked, glancing around the infirmary, trying to spot the reason for the urgent call to security.

"Your patient is a *criminal*," she practically spat.

The somewhat chubby Cardassian jumped off the bed at that and rushed for the infirmary's exit, only to encounter my arm, which pinned him to the wall with amazing speed and strength, lifting him a bit off the floor.

"Going somewhere?" I asked with a smile. His ineffectual struggling was amusing to me and brought back fond memories from the Occupation. There was nothing quite so satisfying as giving Cardassian monsters a taste of their own medicine and finding that they were true cowards at their heart, like so many bullies. And I certainly wasn't just calling all Cardassians monsters; the things I'd seen during the Occupation would turn your hair white.

Odo and two of his deputies marched in at this point, but I kept him pinned in place for the time being.

"Good afternoon. What seems to be the problem?" Odo asked, obviously trying to take in the strange situation he was confronted with.

The last time Kira's face had looked like this, it had been during some of the darkest days of the Occupation.

"Lock him up," she ordered.

The Cardassian was, unsurprisingly, not happy at that order, though for a moment I felt like Odo was looking at me. This guy really needed to get over his shit.

"This is outrageous! On what charge?!" he yelled.

"Will someone tell me what's going on? This man needs medical care," the doctor interrupted.

Bashir was not a happy man right now. The Infirmary was his kingdom and he didn't like anyone messing around in it unnecessarily, especially when it effected the health and wellbeing of his patients.

"Then give it to him in his cell," Kira told him.

"I haven't done anything!" the spoon-head protested.

Odo wasn't convinced by this protest, and who could blame him given that guilty people *always* said that.

"Then why did you run?" he asked archly.

"I'm trying to get away from this Bajoran fanatic," the alien answered. "Look at the hate in her eyes. She'd like to kill me."

"Oh? And why would that be?" Odo wondered.

"Well, it's obvious," he replied. "I'm a Cardassian."

Kira shook her head

"He's not just any Cardassian. He's a war criminal," she stated.

Yep, like I thought, great heapings of melodrama.

XXXXX

Brig. Deep Space Nine.

"You're saying that this man," Sisko started. "What's his name again?"

"Marritza. Aamin Marritza," Odo replied.

"You're saying that this Marritza is on the Bajorans' list of Cardassians wanted for war crimes?" the commander asked.

"He's not on any list I've seen," the changeling replied. "And I've got them all."

"I don't care if he's listed or not," Kira stated vehemently.

Sisko was obviously concerned at that.

"Hold on, Major. Marritza came here for a medical emergency, and yet we immediately threw him into a security cell. I, for one, hope he's listed."

His concern was justified. A person's rights were heavily defended by the Federation, especially from unjustified confinement.

"Commander, I know what I've done isn't exactly policy. It may not even be legal. But it's right," Kira insisted.

"All right, Major, what exactly do we charge him with then?" Sisko asked.

"We charge him for having contracted Kalla-Nohra," she replied.

The urge to facepalm was nearly impossible to resist, but somehow I did. I loved Nerys, but sometimes she could be so dense, especially when you got her back up. She worked day in and day out with Sisko, did she really think that that flimsy justification was going to fly with the man? You couldn't lock someone up for having an illness, well, not unless they were highly infectious, but even then, that was *quarantine*, and that simply wasn't the case here. If he was quarantined then the Cardassian would be confined to the infirmary and not a jail cell.

"Do you want to explain that to me?" Sisko requested calmly.

"The only way that he could have contracted this extremely rare condition was to have served at the Gallitep labor camp at the time of the mining accident," Kira explained to the human.

Sisko was still not convinced.

"So that makes him a war criminal, just by being there?"

"Commander, if you'd been there when we liberated that camp, if you'd seen the things I saw," Kira began. "All those Bajoran bodies starved, brutalized. Do you know what Cardassian policy was? Oh, I'm not even talking about the murder. Murder was just the end of the *fun* for them. First came the humiliation, mothers raped in front of their children, husbands beaten till their wives couldn't even recognize them, old people buried alive because they couldn't work anymore!"

The horrific images she'd painted gave the commander a small understanding of just why his Bajoran first officer was obviously upset and acting this way. The many horrors I'd seen during the Occupation would stay with me for as long as I lived. I had been born in the early 1980s in the United States, long after the concentration camps of WW2 were only a memory, but somehow I felt like I knew what they had looked like, what horrific things had happened there, because Bajor's version of those camps had been operating just last year.

On a few rare occasions one of the station's Starfleet personnel would work up the courage to directly ask me why I had done the things I'd done to the Cardassians during the Occupation, beheading them with swords, painting messages in their blood, incinerating whole groups with plasma grenades, removing all four of their limbs and yet not killing them so that they'd serve as a message of terror to their fellow soldiers, to demoralize and drain resources. This was why.

The Cardassians had needed to know that they weren't the only monsters around, that they too would be preyed upon without mercy, that their many evil sins would be revisited upon them in turn, just like they had done to the Bajorans. For too long, the Cardassians had acted with impunity, knowing that even the most horrific of evils perpetrated against the Bajorans would see no consequence. Too many Cardassian soldiers came to serve on Bajor and let their most horrible inner demons out to play, knowing that they could get away with it. To act on their every depraved urge and whimsy with no consequence for the first time in their lives.

I decided that I would be their consequence, the boogeyman in the night who would snatch their lives away from them in terrible ways for their many sins. Once news of my existence began to spread among the population, many a Bajoran about to be executed would curse their killers, saying that I would grant them their revenge. I hadn't always been successful in that regard, but I'd like to think that I had made a difference, and maybe made a few Cardassian soldiers think twice before doing something truly terrible.

"I think I'll have a talk with our guest," he decided.

"I'll come with you," Kira insisted.

"No, Major. I think it'd be better if I spoke to him alone," he replied.

Sisko's tone brooked no argument.

XXXXX

I watched the interrogation via visual surveillance from Odo's office. The first misdirection the Cardassian threw up was his insistence that he had Pottrick Syndrome and not Kalah-Nohra - which was quickly disproved by Bashir. Once that failed, he stated that he was just a filing clerk for the Gallitep labor camp, and not a guard. This was eventually disproved when an archival search revealed a photo of the camp's Cardassian staff. That photo showed us that Marritza was actually Gul Darhe'el, the commander of the camp itself, the head monster.

However, I knew that this was all wrong, and while I couldn't just tell everyone what I knew, I didn't really need to, the truth would come out in its own time. There was no profit or gain to be had in seeing this little drama wrapped up sooner. And, besides, I had an issue of my own to think about. The man in the cell, I *knew* I'd seen him during the Occupation, which made sense if he was the Gul of this camp or someone who had changed his face to look like the Gul, but I didn't think my sense of familiarity was actually due to the show. The liberation of Gallitep had been years before the first season of canon DS9 and the show had never shown that event, but somehow I was sure that I'd seen that face before, but even my genetically enhanced memory was having trouble putting that face in the right context. It must have been only a brief glimpse?

There were Vulcan techniques to aid in remembering past events that worked for humans. Later on, if I still couldn't fully recall, I'd try them out; I was hopeful that I would find answers that way.

On the monitors I watched as Nerys went back into the brig, she was going to question the Cardassian herself, it seems.

"Let me guess. You've come back to learn the secret of my filing system," Marritza enquired smugly.

Major Kira shook her head

"I know all your secrets now," she replied.

Marritza seemed unconcerned.

"Is that so?" he asked.

"What did you do? Did you kill the real Marritza so that you could take his place? Well, you'll pay for that death and all the others you are responsible for," Nerys said.

"I don't think I could pay for all of them, Major. There were so many, and you can only execute me once," the spoon head replied.

"That's my only regret. But I'll settle for knowing that Bajor will finally have the satisfaction of punishing The Butcher of Gallitep," Kira stated.

Marritza smirked.

"Tell me, Major, did you figure it all out by yourself, or did you have help from your Federation masters or maybe that *mutant* human monster that you call a lover?" he spat.

Ouch? Seems like my reputation preceded me. Kira had already turned her back on the alien.

"I'll let you wonder about that. It'll keep you occupied while we're waiting for the Bajoran government to prepare your war crimes tribunal."

"War crimes? How could there be war crimes when there has never been a war?" the Cardassian asked.

Kira then turned around.

"Oh, I can understand your wish that there had been a war. Your need to indulge some pathetic fantasy of brave Bajoran soldiers marching to honorable defeat in glorious battle. But in fact, Major, you and I know that there was no war, no glory to be had. Bajor didn't resist, it *surrendered*."

Clearly, Kira didn't like the belittlement of her people's struggles, many of which I had shared with her, and her voice was now raised in righteous anger. Despite making Bajor's struggle my own, I suppose I had just enough of an outsider's perspective to not immediately descend into rage.

"The Bajorans were a peaceful people before your kind came here. We offered no threat to you! We could never understand why you had to be so brutal."

"Well, we can't have that, Major, I want no more secrets between us. Anything you don't understand, I'll explain to you," the Cardassian offered helpfully, condescendingly.

"Thank you, but I think I've heard enough of your lies," Kira replied.

She turned around to leave but was stopped by Marritza's next words.

"What lies? You mean my failure to divulge my true identity?" he questioned. "Believe me, Major, I *yearned* to tell you, but I knew how much more satisfaction you would have if you found out for yourself. And that was my only deception. Marritza was a magnificent file clerk. And I, Gul Darhe'el, I hope you'll not think it immodest of me to say so, but I was a *magnificent*

leader. You never saw Gallitep at its height. For a labor camp, it was the very model of Cardassian order and efficiency, with unmatched productivity. And why? For that, you have to look to the top. *To me!* My word, my every glance, was *law*, and the verdict was always the same, *guilty!*"

Kira looked as if she was in shock at such blatant admissions of his crimes.

"You're insane!" she shouted.

Marritza laughed.

"Oh, no, no, no, Major. You can't dismiss me that easily," he said. "I did what had to be done. My men understood that, and that's why they *loved* me. I would order them to go out and kill Bajoran scum, and they'd do it. They'd murder them and they'd come back covered head to toe in blood and gore, but they felt *clean*. Now why did they feel that way, Major? *Because they were clean!*" he bellowed aloud, his voice echoing.

It was stuff like this that made me so angry that the Federation hadn't used its vastly superior technology and ships to dismantle the evil Cardassian government. Sure, they had their reasons not to, many of which I reluctantly acknowledged as valid, but I was sure that the USA during World War 2 had equally valid reasons not to fight the Nazis as well. Where would we be if they hadn't?

"So, you admit your atrocities!" Kira yelled.

"I admit everything! Why not? I was the best at what I did. My accomplishments speak for themselves. Can you say the same? You and the little Shakaar and Gothic resistance cells that that you belonged to. All you did was annoy the Cardassians, while I was out *exterminating* Bajorans."

We did more than annoy them. I'd terrorized them as well, but it was typical of a Cardassian to downplay the achievements of other races.

"Make sure you tell that to the war tribunal," Kira said in response. "Then they'll sentence you to death for sure."

Marritza was unconcerned.

"Let them. Don't you see? It doesn't change anything. Kill me, torture me, it doesn't matter. You've already lost, Major. You can never undo what I've accomplished. The dead will still be *dead*."

Nerys was now leaving so Odo turned off the monitor.

"Well, fuck me," I swore.

XXXXXX

Odo handed over a PADD to Kira for review.

"This certificate of death was in the file sent to me by Gul Dukat. Dukat says that he attended the funeral himself," the changeling explained to Kira, Sisko and myself. "According to the files, Gul Darhe'el was killed while leaving the Bajoran system during the final months of the Occupation when the ore freighter he was traveling to Cardassia on disappeared on route. The Cardassian government believes that the ship was taken by Ferengi pirates and the entire crew killed to the last man."

Kira threw the PADD away in contempt, now looking to Sisko.

"Couldn't they come up with a better narrative?!" she spat. "Commander, I guarantee you that this is a forged document. I think it's pretty clear what's going on here. The Cardassians are trying to trick us into letting him go," she said.

This was when it clicked and I started to laugh at the sheer irony of it all. I had wanted to let this little canon drama play out like it had in the show, but the truth was that I had long ago already inserted myself into this drama.

As soon as I saw the file and the mention of an ore freighter being taken I knew what had happened.

"Oh, the universe really enjoys its little ironies, doesn't it," I asked aloud to no one, once I picked the PADD back up and reviewed more of the details the Cardassians had sent. "He really is dead, Kira. *I* was the one who killed him," I admitted, not even looking up before dropping that bombshell.

Everyone looked at me in shock.

"I didn't recognize the name or his face until now, but I do recognize the ship. This is classified information, punishable by imprisonment if disclosed without authorization. Commander, that applies to you as well in your reports to Starfleet, per the classified information clause in the Federation/Bajoran agreement granting administration of the station to the Federation and Starfleet," I explained to everyone, waiting on their nods of confirmation, somewhat reluctant in Sisko's case, before turning back to face Nerys. "It was one of the ore freighters we hit towards the end of the Occupation. Darhe'el must have been recalled to Cardassia after Gallitep fell. I'm not sure why he was on an ore freighter, but perhaps he and his remaining men were part of an effort to defend the shipments, or maybe this was their version of punishment for losing the camp, or maybe there was just no other transport available, but, for whatever reason, he was on that ship, and I killed every Cardassian onboard, including a Gul passenger. I can remember him now. I shot him in the back several times as he fled like a coward while his men died for him, only seeing his face for a brief moment as he turned to see if he was being pursued. You were there too, Kira, but you and Ro were busy securing the dilithium in the cargo hold."

Some of that dilithium had been used in my new ship, actually. Everyone needed a moment to process that story.

"But the man in there confessed that *he is* Gul Darhe'el," Kira argued. "Maybe you just confused the Gul on that ship with Darhe'el. All the fucking Cardassians look alike."

To be fair, they mostly did, since they all had black hair and wore it in the same style, and all the Cardassian soldiers I'd killed had worn the exact same uniform. They were even more into conformity than the Federation.

"I'll task Hermione with searching the Island's archives for the relevant footage and sensor readings from my armor's sensors to confirm," I mused aloud. "I think Darhe'el still has a bounty on his head, nice. The First Minister will be pleased we can cross him off our list of wanted war criminals and I can make a nice little payday."

Kira just rolled her eyes at my musing on collecting the bounty for Gul Darhe'el's death. She was well used to my more mercenary side when it came to money.

"Major, the man in there does have Kalla-Nohra Syndrome," Odo reminded.

"Of course, he does," she stated in an obvious tone

She was clearly missing the point and obviously hadn't fully read the file Odo had acquired.

"According to the records I've been sent, Gul Darhe'el *never* contracted that condition."

Kira scoffed.

"More evidence from the most trustworthy of Cardassians, Gul Dukat."

Sisko looked intrigued.

"What have you got, Constable?" he asked, obviously sensing that there was more to what Odo had reported.

"Darhe'el's own progress reports from Gallitep show that when the mining accident occurred, he was on *Cardassia* being awarded the Proficient Service Medallion," he told us.

"If he wasn't at Gallitep on the day of the accident, then he couldn't have contracted Kalla-Nohra," Sisko realized.

"Correct. But the man we're holding *does* have it. Which means he was there at the time of the accident," Odo responded.

Kira started to pace, reminding me somewhat of an upset caged animal.

"I can't believe I'm listening to this," she said.

"I'm afraid there's more, Major," Odo announced sternly. "I inquired about our prisoner's last two weeks on Kora Two. He resigned his position at the military academy, put all his affairs in order, and even provided handsomely for his housekeeper, I understand. Then he specifically requested passage on a vessel that was scheduled to stop here, at a Bajoran space station. A rather unusual request for a Cardassian war criminal, don't you think, especially one who essentially put all his affairs in order before leaving?"

"He clearly *wanted* to be captured, Kira, and put all his affairs in order knowing it would happen," I told Kira. "The question is why?"

"Wait a minute. Let's be clear about one thing. This evidence may raise some interesting questions. Nevertheless, Darhe'el is going to be sent to Bajor to stand trial for the atrocities he committed," Kira stated.

"Major, that is still to be determined," Sisko argued.

"Then go talk to him. If you still have any doubts, just listen to what he has to say. He was there. He did it. He'll tell you all about it," she argued right back.

Kira's stubbornness was simultaneously her greatest strength and greatest weaknesses.

Dr. Bashir entered the room to give his own report.

"I've checked on Marritza's medical records, Major. He's been under treatment for Kalla-Nohra Syndrome, of course, and a few other minor ailments, most relating to his age. It's all pretty standard, actually, except for one thing. Recently he started taking massive doses of dermatiraelian plasticine, and according to Doctor Bashir, dermatiraelian plasticine is a dermal regenerative agent used to maintain skin resilience after significant cosmetic alteration."

"You're saying that he surgically altered his face to look like Gul Darhe'el?" Kira asked incredulously.

"It certainly appears that way," Dr. Bashir replied.

"Why would a former Gallitep file clerk try to impersonate his deceased superior and take the fall for his crimes?" Sisko wondered.

"Guilt, Commander," I answered with a deep sigh. "While it's hard to believe, not all Cardassians are unfeeling monsters. Even if he's not Darhe'el, he was definitely there, at Gallitep, maybe he can help Bajor learn more fully about what happened, to record his observations for all time. The horrors of Gallitep are things this world and this galaxy should never forget and the Cardassians destroyed so many of their records when they left. They've denied so much of what we know happened. It would go a long way to proving what happened if a former Cardassian military officer, who was stationed at Gallitep, gave his account of what he saw."

In my old world and time, the horrors of the Holocaust had been painstakingly documented, including exhaustive video interviews with people who were there, so that the world would never forget, even after those folks had passed on to their next great adventure.

XXXXX

Former Site of the Gallitep Labor Camp. Bajor.

I rarely saw Nerys in civilian clothing these days, well, besides sexy pajamas. Normally she wore her uniform during all her waking hours, although I preferred her in as little as possible. However right now, I wasn't thinking seriously about such things.

We were touring what remained of the Gallitep labor camp. I had been hoping that by coming here it might give the Bajoran woman some sort of closure on the issue of this place. The Cardassian who'd been dead set on playing the role of the evil Gul had emotionally confessed to

being nothing more than a file clerk for the camp, but one who still felt a profound sense of guilt for the evil that he had helped abet. He admitted how he had covered his ears every night, hiding under his bunk while weeping, a coward who couldn't bear to hear the horrible screams and desperate pleading for mercy of the Bajoran souls damned to be there, to see these horrors...yet do nothing to stop it.

I didn't see a coward now. When I watched this episode air on June 13, 1993, I hadn't yet turned 11 years old, not even a teenager yet, with little in the way of life experience or emotional maturity to understand that character and his actions, to understand that crushing sense of guilt, regret, and despair. When that young, that innocent, I had never felt those things before. But I was a different man now, who'd seen and done too many things, a man with many regrets and guilt of his own, so I easily recognized the courage Aamin had in trying to make amends for himself and for his people. That was why I had thrown a wrench into the canon events and instead of trying to send Aamin home, like Kira originally did, I had made a different case to the First Minister. With his blessing, I asked Aamin to stay on the station, to give his account of what had happened at Gallitep to Bajor's historians and officials. It would undoubtedly be a hard life, only the second Cardassian resident on a station predominantly filled with Bajorans, but it was what Bajor needed to heal, and I think Aamin was grateful for the chance to redeem himself, even just a little.

In order to nip the possibility of canon repeating itself, Kira and I had walked with him on the promenade and a drunk, angry, and vengeful Bajoran was not capable of getting past my reflexes, so when I saw him about to stab Aamin, a quick draw and a heavy stun shot put him down hard to the deck plates. Whether the Cardassians would send professional assassins of their own in the future, hoping to avoid the embarrassment of their always denied crimes being corroborated by a Cardassian insider, someone who might even have official records in his possession, was another question.

Beware the record keeper, I thought grimly, for he can *prove* your crimes.

"Nerys," I called out softly, but she didn't turn to face me.

Instead, she remained right where she was. We stood within piles of rubble and what remained of several burned-out buildings. The attack on this place, which I'd been a part of, had left little standing.

"Nerys," I gently repeated again.

She didn't say a word, and she didn't move a muscle. At least not for a while. She just took in the sight of it all, no doubt trapped within memories that I had not been directly a part of. Sometimes I wondered if putting her on the ground team had been a mistake, but my superior piloting skills had been necessary to draw out the camp's heavy armed shuttle or else the entire operation would have likely failed.

"Hard to believe this is the same place," she replied softly, before gesturing. "The barracks were there. Over here was the detention block. Behind there was the pit where they'd burn the bodies, but sometimes Bajorans were forced to dig their own graves - literally."

I frowned.

"Sounds like the Auschwitz concentration camp from Earth's history," I said.

Kira gave me a confused look.

"I told you about the Nazis, a group of humans who were exactly like the Cardassians, four hundred years ago. They had many camps just like this, the biggest and most infamous was Auschwitz. No one knows exactly how many people were sent to Auschwitz, or how many ultimately died there. But one account I read about said that the Nazis sent about 1.3 million people to Auschwitz. Of them 1.1 million died or were killed there."

"But you weren't alive back then," Kira argued quietly.

True, it had happened nearly half a century before I was born.

"You can't understand," Nerys said. "Not even all Bajorans really understand what it was like here."

I could tell that she needed comforting, so I rubbed her back gently.

"Marritza couldn't change what happened here, but he did the best he could by drawing attention to what happened here. He'll share everything he saw and everything he knows about this place with Bajor's historians and it'll be recorded for all time. You did the best you could when you liberated the camp. Think how many lives you saved by liberating them when you did. It might not be much comfort to you, but I bet it means a lot to them."

"It doesn't feel like it was enough. Not nearly enough," Kira whispered.

Nothing ever would, so I simply took her in my arms and hugged her close, her head resting against my heart.

"You might be interested to know that there recently was a large anonymous donation made to the Gallitep Survivors' Fund. From Kora II," I informed the Bajoran.

Her eyes widened.

"Marritza?" she asked.

I nodded.

"Well, that's our best guess, and he isn't saying," I said. "But the timing certainly fits."

She smiled faintly.

"Maybe I'll make a donation too," she mused.

I was thinking that I could make a much larger one. I always had ways of making more money after all. Perhaps another donation of building materials and funds to start a Gallitep Memorial Museum or something similar. With the upgraded Collector power core feeding my industrial replicator my maximum output had increased exponentially and the energy was essentially free

now. The thought that this place should be rebuilt was running through my mind, but I couldn't decide if that would be disrespectful to the victims and survivors. In the end, I was glad that it wasn't really my call, but if the Bajorans decided to, I'd support their efforts however I could. The Bajorans didn't prioritize spending their valuable limited resources on remembering or recording the events of the Occupation when they were still struggling to house and feed people in the aftermath of the Cardassians' withdrawal, so I'd help make that decision easy by paying for it myself.

The next time I met with the First Minister I'd suggest the creation of the museum and pledge my support. Bajor's recovery from the Occupation had to include remembering those lost during it, to acknowledge this scar on the Bajoran soul, to ensure it never happened again.

That was the only way the soul of its people would ever heal.