

Disclaimer: I own nothing related to or part of Star Trek.

Last time on The Adventures of Augment Gothic

“My lord, you have an incoming subspace communication from Kessik IV,” Jarvis reported as I finished up some paperwork for the Bajoran Defense Forces.

Technically I was still on leave, but the Bajorans, surprise surprise, were not exactly keen on their Admiral being away from the planet for months at a time, even with the accolades my recent actions had earned them. In my absence from this dimension, some critical decisions that needed to be made, that Ro Laren couldn’t make herself, had come up.

“Accept the call, Jarvis,” I ordered.

The smiling face of President Donatella Moss appeared on the screen.

“Madame President, what a pleasant surprise!” I lied as I wasn’t surprised by her call given Section 31’s warning.

“I have some good news, Admiral,” President Moss began.

“Do tell,” I encouraged, my best salesman smile on my face.

The Adventures of Augment Gothic

Chapter 54

Captain's Ready Room. Onboard *The Flighty Temptress*. Earth.

“Pending a successful test of the GODS net, my government has empowered me to move forward with our lease of your system, even with your rather unusual lease provisions,” President Moss explained. “But *only* if the system performs as advertised.”

I smiled at her smugly.

“That is great news, Madame President, although the timing of this decision is so very interesting, don’t you think, coming right after the President announced his new planetary defense initiative?” I observed aloud. “I wonder how much of their decision was based on the fact that whatever you pay me will now be fully reimbursed by the Federation government once the Council sets aside the budget for it.”

“Oh, yes, I suppose that is true,” President Moss smiled like the cat that ate the canary. “I hadn’t realized that.”

“And the fact that a lot of the less important Federation member worlds probably realize that they’re not exactly

going to be top priority for the Federation Council. That acquiring my system, from me, an independent provider who is not under the authority of the Federation or Starfleet, might be the ticket to getting their own defense net years ahead of when they otherwise would.”

President Moss rolled her eyes in fond exasperation.

“No one likes a smartass, Admiral, galactic hero or not,” President Moss complained good naturedly. “And I wholeheartedly dispute your characterization of my world as a ‘less important’ Federation member world. We’re all important to the Federation.”

“Oh, I wasn’t talking about your world, Madame President,” I said, leaning forward and making strong eye contact. Even over so many lightyears I bet I could make this woman’s panties wet. “To me, right now, your world is one of the most important in the galaxy.”

In a way it was, because successfully selling my defense net to Kessik IV would open the proverbial floodgates and give every other Federation member world the cover needed to seek me out and accept the lease terms that would keep the proprietary technology protected even from Starfleet. Kessik IV would be taking the risk first, like the first person to grab and fill a plate once the food

at a party was put out. After that first plate was filled, everyone else would soon follow.

“Are you trying to seduce me, Gothic?” President Moss asked, her cheeks reddening a little. “Because you know that my personal feeling will play not part in my ultimate decision,”

“If I wanted to seduce you, Donna, it wouldn’t be because I view your world as important, or the money it’ll ultimately make me. It’ll be because I find you extremely beautiful, powerful, and sexy,” I flirted outrageously, even breaking protocol by calling a planetary leader by her first name, uninvited.

I paused for a moment, before speaking again, giving Donna a few moments to compose herself after flirting so outrageously with her. The way I was talking to her was obviously something she wasn’t used to. Powerful women like Donna Moss, the leader of an entire world, were very intimidating to most, so most women like that had little in the way of experience dealing with such blatant overtures, which I was shameless enough to take advantage of.

“As an outsider in this time and dimension, it’s always been fascinating to me how the Federation views money. When I arrived in this dimension and time I was told in quite a disparaging and patronizing manner, mind you,

that humanity and the Federation were so much more enlightened than the people of my time, that they'd come so far," I explained. "I think Captain Picard even said that 'The acquisition of wealth is no longer the driving force in our lives.' Yet here we are. It's definitely the driving force in this scenario."

Actually, I think he said that in Star Trek: First Contact, but President Moss wouldn't know that.

President Moss looked thoughtful for a moment, now composed, as if she were truly contemplating my words.

"On an individual level, I think that that sentiment is mostly true, on a governmental level, well, the demands of money and the allocation of finite resources will always play a role in major decision-making. Even with advanced replication available, where the cost is mostly power, resources still aren't infinite," she posited, before switching gears. "I'd like to conduct a test as soon as possible. How soon can we conduct a live fire test?"

I hid my internal grimace at this question, even as expected as it was. I thought I would have had more time to figure out where we stood in the production process. That process included both the manufacturing of the defense net platforms, highly complex pieces of technology in their own right, as well as the cargo ships

for my shipping concern. Meeting the misfits at the Institute and dealing with all the legalities in getting Lauren released from lifelong institutionalization had taken much more of my time and attention than had been originally expected.

I didn't know for sure, but my lawyers suspected that someone high up in Starfleet had made some bullshit national security argument to slow things down. By citing national security they also made it that much harder to legitimately fight as they were then allowed to keep their reasoning for the delay secret from everyone, even Federation bureaucrats and the court, even if that reasoning was ultimately bullshit. It wouldn't surprise me at all if that fucking Admiral Pressman was behind it and had done some shady shit in the background. Too much legwork and preparation had already been completed unopposed to truly stop the process altogether, but he/someone still had the ability to delay things as a 'fuck you' to me. Carl had long readied his report to give to me, but I hadn't wanted to rush things given how many balls I was juggling. Plus I thought it'd be weeks more before President Moss would contact me, but she and her government had read the tea leaves far quicker than I had thought likely. That was to their credit and my chagrin.

Mentally ping-ponging Carl I asked for a quick and dirty executive summary style answer to the quickest we'd be able to get the platforms to the planet and ready to run a live fire test. His response came within seconds in my field of vision along with some summary timetables, assuming certain actions were taken. I quickly digested the information. Thankfully, with each scenario, the known limitations of current warp speed travel granted me more time to get things done as I wasn't bound by those same limitations with my slipstream drive, though with the number of eyes on me these days, it might behoove me to travel conventionally until the attention died down, especially with so much attention on me at the moment.

"For you, Donna, we could conduct the test in as little as three weeks," I answered.

A look of surprise and a minor upturning of her lips in amusement was her answer, though she looked pleased at the news. Three weeks was cutting it close, but there was a strategy to these things. The sooner we conducted the test in relation to the President's speech, the better we'd be, as the Federation would need time to figure out the practical realities (and restrictions) that would be put in place to actually carry out the Federation President's new initiative.

“Excellent, I will put in a request to Starfleet to provide us with some ships to assist in the testing,” she informed me. “It will be a combination of simulated and real weapon’s fire for the testing. A testing protocol is in the process of being finalized right now by my people. As soon as it’s ready I will send it to you and yours.”

“I look forward to it, Madame President,” I said, now that we were in professional mode again.

Her face turned serious in an instant.

“Admiral, you might be a galactic hero now, but for your sake I truly hope your defense net performs in reality as well as it did in those virtual simulations you gave us. I have a small, but very vocal minority that is working against me,” Moss threatened, eyes now as cold as ice, looking every inch as formidable as one would expect from someone who had achieved the levels of power she had at her relatively young age. “Your recent accomplishments and accolades put us over the top, even with the lives you saved on my world, but make no mistake, I staked my reputation on you. It never would have gotten this far without it given how much control you will still maintain over weapon installations in orbit over our heads. Even then, without your recent acclaim and the President’s initiative, I’m not sure I could have gotten it done.”

Utterly serious, I replied.

“I will not let you down, Madame President,” I assured.

“The system will perform to specs and your world will be one of the best defended in the Federation because of it. I promise you that.”

“I promise you, Gothic, that I will hold you to that,” she said, before the communication suddenly ended.

Whoo. That was one formidable woman. The ‘or else’ hadn’t been said, but I felt it in my bones.

Why was I suddenly so aroused?? And scared?

Scaroused, maybe?

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Ready Room. Onboard *The Flighty Temptress*. Earth Orbit.

Sitting at my desk I summoned Carl to my ready room. He immediately appeared in front of my desk in full holographic form with an eager to please smile on his face.

“Arcon, I come to serve,” he greeted with a low bow and a smile.

“Carl, I really hope those timeline projections weren’t based on unreasonably optimistic assumptions,” I began,

looking pointedly at my most business-oriented AI. “I made a promise to President Moss that we could get this done in 3 weeks and I won’t be made a liar.”

“I stand by the timeline projection, Arcon, assuming circumstances remain as they are,” Carl answered.

“Would you like me to summarize the production reports?”

I leaned back in my chair.

“Please do, supply underlying data simultaneously in visual form,” I ordered.

“Per your orders while you were in the ‘Walking Dead’ dimension, we immediately began production of 10 defense nets capable of full and redundant coverage of an average sized world and 100 cloak-capable cargo ships,” Carl began. With an unnecessary hand gesture, a series of reports were holographically arrayed around me providing more detail. “Our manufacturing capacity was split evenly between the two tasks.”

I acknowledged his words with a nod as I continued to read the detailed reports. Having the defense nets complete was ultimately worthless without the corresponding ability to actually securely transport them to buyers. Plus secure shipping was always going to be an

easier service to sell than a defense net that my company would still own.

“Current inventory of completed defense nets and cargo ships?” I asked, not taking my eyes off the data.

“2 defense nets and 11 cargo ships are currently complete,” Carl answered immediately.

“I’m impressed,” I admitted, my eyebrows rising in surprise. “That is faster than our initial projections. How was that achieved? I thought we were running up against some resource limitations and you needed the materials from my ship?”

“After careful study of the Phaelon star charts, we were able to locate previously unknown resources within range of Minos, both unclaimed and unknown to any other nearby race,” Carl answered with a wide smile at this bit of good news. “Further increases in resource acquisition are expected within the next 60 standard days after robotic mining designs taken from the *I, Robot* dimension, improved by Dr. Lanning with contemporary technology, are completed and the robots manufactured.”

So that’s what Lanning had been doing lately to keep himself busy. Well, I was all for that. My decision to bring him to the Star Trek dimension was already paying dividends, it seemed.

“What improvements is he making?” I asked out of curiosity.

“Planned design improvements include using modern regenerative power sources, constructing the robots using a hardened duranium alloy ensuring mining can be safely conducted in even the most extreme environments, and adding a link to the quantum network when more direct control is needed over their tasks,” Carl answered. “The robots will still be capable of independent operation, but the link will allow any of your AI servants to directly control operations, if necessary.”

“Interesting,” I mused as I perused the proposed design improvements that were still in progress. “I’m impressed at both the find and your initiative, Carl,” I complimented. “Good work!”

“I exist but to serve you, Arcon,” Carl happily replied with a low bow. “However, the credit should be equally shared with both Hermione and Natasha, who have been instrumental in achieving these results.”

“My thanks to them as well, of course,” I said, getting a warm digital acknowledgement from both of my girls; it was almost like a hug. “I assume you have dispatched sufficient resources to protect our claims on these previously unknown resources? I don’t care if that affects

the production timeline, I want those resources available to us exclusively long-term.”

“Per standing orders, we have hidden our presence and minimized any high-energy emissions that could be detected long-range, but should any race detect the resources and attempt to make a claim, sufficient assets are locally available to defend our claim in the name of Minos,” Carl reassured. “Current in-system forces should be able to withstand a minor to light-medium attack. If additional forces are required, they can be dispatched from Minos and arrive on-site within 3 hours.”

“Good, ideally drive them off, board and seize the ships if possible, destroy them only if absolutely necessary and the consequences of them reporting the information back to their people are too high,” I ordered. “Continue with your report, please.”

“Per your orders, the first defense net produced as well as the five cargo ships necessary to securely transport the platforms were dispatched to Kessik IV upon completion and are already in route.”

A galactic standard map showing their real-time position in relation to Kessik IV was projected. Along the route from Minos to Kessik IV detailed real-time sensor information was available to me, including all ship

movements in that area as well as intercepted subspace communications that were being decoded even as we spoke. All that information was being fed into my central databanks on the island and analyzed for best use. Ship movements and stolen communications could tell a story and knowing that story had led to some very profitable investing. Insider trading was a crime even in the 24th century, but good luck proving that when my AI children were actively hiding what I was doing as well as providing legitimate reasons for my trading, if anybody asked. If you already knew the end result, justifying how you got there was just a matter of imagination, and my AI children were God-like when it came to data analysis and extrapolation, no matter how much of it there was.

“The convoy is currently under cloak. No malfunctions were detected during the journey. Per standing orders cloaked sensor satellites have been deployed along their travel route to expand our sensor network coverage,” Carl reported with pride. “Several vessels have been detected within standard sensor range of the convoy, but there are no indications the convoy was detected while under cloak. At current speed of warp 7, the convoy will reach Kessik IV within 12 standard days, though the convoy’s speed can be adjusted at your command to ensure the convoy arrives precisely when you desire, Arcon.”

“Excellent work, Carl,” I said, looking over the reports. A little showmanship could go a long way, so timing the convoy’s arrival for maximum shock and awe was important. “I’m giving you discretion to reassign manufacturing priorities should more assets be needed to protect our new resource claims or to produce any of these new mining robots.”

“Thank you, Arcon,” Carl bowed. “I will not let you down.”

“I know you won’t, Carl,” I said, especially because I knew Hermione and Natasha were watching him like a fucking hawk, even with all the many, many safeguards I had put in place to protect myself and my people. Carl was a valued resource and had been doing a truly fantastic job carrying out my orders while managing Minos’ resources and capabilities, but I would never, ever, *ever* forget that he was responsible for the total genocide of his creators. I would not end up the same.

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Ready Room. Onboard *The Flighty Temptress*. Earth Orbit.

“We need you back as soon as possible, Gothic,” Ro complained with a stern look on her face, visible on the large holographic screen projected above my desk, a look

that made me chuckle. “I’m serious! Sisko and the First Minister are starting to get really annoyed with your long absences.”

I chuckled and leaned back in my desk chair.

“The First Minister I believe, but Sisko?” I shot back incredulously, raising a disbelieving eyebrow. “He’s probably very happy that he has uncontested control of the station, rather than the murky dual authority we share that he normal operates under.”

Ro scowled, though there was a distinct attempt to hide her amusement.

“He may not admit it, but he really values your input. Kira thinks so too,” she explained. “There have been several situations that he really wished you had been present for considering how valuable your insight often is.”

My ‘insight’ was essentially a combination of my outsider perspective, my fucking common sense untainted by the ridiculousness of the Star Trek universe, and my future knowledge allowing me to be the most well informed in the room, not that he knew that. Oh, and my genius-level intellect afforded to me by my genetic enhancements.

“Maybe,” I admitted thoughtfully, going silent as I wondered exactly what ‘situations’ she was referring to.

“But the First Minister is overjoyed with me considering the indirect benefits Bajor is receiving for coming to Earth’s aid, despite Bajor having little to nothing to do with it beyond my being involved.”

The ‘situations’ I was missing back on the station occupied my thoughts now. As much as I wanted to believe that this universe revolved around me, I knew that the events on the station continued to play out even without my presence. That was undeniable considering I had missed the events of a few ‘season 1’ episodes while away for whatever reason, though even calling it ‘season 1’ was a bit of a misnomer. This was an AU universe, and my actions were butterflying the shit out of the episode timeline, meaning some episodes played out far earlier than they were supposed to, or never happened at all. This current extended absence from the station had been entirely unplanned as well. When we had started out it had only been intended as a shakedown cruise. Then we got dimensionally diverted and then put right into the sol system to do battle.

“That’s why he wants you back as soon as possible,” she pointed out, before her expression softened. “And Kira and I want you back too. It’s just not the same without you, despite the tricks Kira has learned to do with her tongue. We miss you.”

That successfully diverted my mind as I imagined the two beautiful Bajoran women naked, their bodies sweating and writhing against each other as they engaged in debaucherous girl-on-girl action, their legs scissoring and their pussies rubbing desperately against each other.

Ro looked extremely amused now.

“Now that got your attention,” she joked.

“You always have my attention, beautiful,” I flirted back.

“I miss you two as well and will be returning as soon as possible, but I’ve got several things to do, including making a stop at Kessik IV to conduct a live fire test of the GODS net. If they buy, a lot more worlds will follow.”

“I understand, but your life is here with us, on the station and on Bajor, not back on Earth,” Ro pointed out, which was the truth. My home was Bajor now, not Earth. “Even if you’re bringing a ridiculously beautiful blonde and redhead back with you.”

Ro was now definitely giving me the stink eye.

“You heard about that already?” I asked uncertainly. I had been hoping to find the right moment to break the news to my girls at home.

“Just because you are weeks away at maximum warp doesn’t mean I don’t regularly speak with Neela, Gothic,” Ro pointed out with an exaggerated eyeroll.

“Hey now, the *Temptress* needed more crew, and I could definitely use some help with my companies,” I reasonably pointed out.

“I don’t disagree, but tell me you’re not fucking them,” Ro ordered, a smirk on her face. “It seems like that is part of the main hiring criteria these days.”

“You wound me, Ro, I don’t sleep with all my crew,” I rejoined, acting mock offended. “I haven’t fucked B’Elanna and she’s part of my crew.”

“Not because you don’t want to,” she replied. “And if you think I didn’t notice your non-answer, you’re wrong.”

“Of course I want to, but the cock wants what the cock wants, even if she is a pain in the ass a lot of the time,” I said, hoping to distract her, but she’d been around me far too much for that to work.

“So you’re definitely fucking them,” she mocked. “And the ‘cock wants what the cock wants’? Did you *seriously* just say that?”

I paused for effect, looking off frame.

“I...may have engaged in sexual congress with them.”

Ro rolled her eyes in exasperation.

“It’s a good thing you’ve never hidden your man-whore tendencies from us and that *I* wasn’t the first in your little harem, Gothic. And that the Resistance was like a Risian commune between missions,” Ro warned. “Kira was a saint to let you collect all these women in such a long-term fashion.”

“Be sure to send her my love then. Unfortunately, with so many eyes on us, we really can’t just show up at Kessik IV and the station in an impossible amount of time, so we have to do this the slow way,” I explained. “Thankfully, I’ve got plenty of projects to work on and this will give Annika and Lauren some time to settle in and familiarize themselves with the ship.”

“All joking aside, Gothic, Kira and I are really looking forward to your return,” she said quietly and sincerely. Her eyes locked on mine across lightyears of space.

“I am too,” I replied just as sincerely. “While Earth was once my home, Bajor accepted me with open arms and you guys are my home too.”

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“Los Angeles transporter control to Bajoran registry starship, *The Flighty Temptress*, please come in,” the officious sounding voice of a transporter control operator

came over my ship's communication system, the voice interrupting my completion of some last-minute paperwork prior to departing Earth.

“This is Admiral Gothic of *The Flighty Temptress*, go ahead,” I replied.

“We have a Miss Lauren Marshall, with a *significant* amount of luggage, standing by to transport aboard as new crew,” the man explained. “Do we have your permission to beam her aboard?”

I chuckled at how the man's voice sounded a bit belabored. Lauren could be a bit much at the best of times. With the way he emphasized ‘significant’ I found myself very curious what kind of shopping spree Lauren had gone on. I had given her a healthy signing bonus of Federation credits, coupled with the decades of accumulated monthly stipends she had never had an opportunity to spend as a Federation citizen while living at the Institute, she had quite a lot of funds available. I had encouraged her to go wild and buy whatever she liked for this new stage of her life.

“Permission granted,” I replied. “Please delay transport for 10 minutes.”

There was a bit of a pause before the man replied in a defeated tone. If it wasn't unprofessional to sigh, I suspect he would have done it.

“Understood, ten-minute delay. Please signal when you are ready for transport on this channel,” he grouched. “Los Angeles transporter control out.”

Activating the ship's internal communications system, I spoke to the entire crew.

“Everybody, we have a new crew member coming aboard in 10 minutes,” I advised. “Let's all greet her in the main transporter room, please.”

With that I left my ready room to welcome Lauren to *The Flighty Temptress*.

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Main Transporter Room.

Walking into the room, I was met with my entire crew of T'Maz, B'Elanna, and Neela lined up along the wall, awaiting Lauren's transport. Natasha was also present as the ship's AI avatar, who all crew interacted with many times throughout the day, thus it was fitting that she greeted Lauren as well.

“Good morning, everyone,” I greeted cheerily. “This is a new day for the ship, so let's give her a warm welcome.”

T'Maz was as stoic as ever, while Neela was smiling. She had always looked forward to working with new people in the Resistance. B'Elanna looked uncertain. Natasha looked amused, but attentive to my desires.

“Captain, I read the bios you provided on the new crew members, but what will Lauren’s and Annika’s primary duties be on the ship?” B'Elanna asked, which was a good question.

“Honestly, it’s currently undecided. I left it up to both of them to decide on a position or role that they like, which also could mean they choose a position in one of my companies, rather than a permanent position on the ship, or maybe some combination of the two,” I admitted to B'Elanna’s chagrin, the only one of us who had actual formal training on starship operations at the Academy, though I had received similar training through holodeck training courses. “T'Maz and I are covering multiple positions that would normally have dedicated, specialized personnel, so she if she chose a shipboard role, she could choose any of them, like security, or operations, or tactical, etc. With Lauren’s genetic enhancements, she’s capable of any or all of them, which is one of the reasons why I made the offer.”

B'Elanna didn’t exactly look satisfied with my answer, but she accepted it with a small nod and a bit of a frown.

Was part of that frown because Lauren was genetically enhanced?

“*Flighty Temptress* to Los Angeles transporter control,” my words activating the communications system. “We are standing by for transport. Feel free to energize when ready.”

Normally on a Starfleet vessel, or any starship with enough crew, you’d have a dedicated team of transporter control specialists whose only role was to operate the ship’s transporter. On a ship with hundreds of crew, or on a Galaxy-class ship like the *Enterprise* that had a population of over a thousand crew and family, that role was an important one. Considering the many hostile and tricky environments transports could take place in and the many emergency situations and transports a Starfleet vessel routinely engaged in, where successfully transporting away in time meant escape from certain death, transporter chiefs like O’Brien had a big role to play, one that could mean life or death for many.

On my ship, though, which I had designed for extreme automation, which allowed for a tiny crew to successfully operate the ship, I had no dedicated personnel for this role. Natasha, as the ship’s AI, instead handled all the delicate adjustments and operations necessary for a successful transport, no matter how difficult the situation.

Given her incredible capabilities, I felt very safe in her digital hands, and I know my crew felt the same. Natasha and Hermione, as my AI daughters, had proven themselves over and over again to them in even the most extreme of circumstances.

As it was a Federation transporter initiating the transport process and doing most of the heavy lifting, my six-pad transporter only receiving the matter stream and completing the materialization process, the six pads lit up in a white light, materializing quite a bit slower than my advanced transporters were normally capable of.

The beautiful genetically engineered and hypersexual Lauren Marshall appeared in all her red-headed glory, a bright smile on her beautiful face, wearing a flouncy sunshine yellow sundress. She was also accompanied by a truly ridiculous amount of luggage, stacked up precariously on the transporter pads. When I had told her to go wild and pamper herself, she had really taken that to heart.

Lauren's eyes, bright with intelligence, scanned my face with a large smile, the lust obvious in her eyes. Then her eyes swept over the rest of my crew arrayed to greet her. Her smile turned downright dirty and mischievous.

“I would happily sit on all your faces and let you sit on mine in return,” were the first words out of her mouth, as she licked her lips theatrically.

I couldn't stop the facepalm I did if I tried. Glancing to my right, I saw that T'Maz's right eyebrow had risen to her hairline, Neela and Natasha were beaming as they broke down into giggles of amusement, and B'Elanna looked offended and *resigned*, maybe?

“For fuck's sake, Lauren, really?” I complained good naturedly, but the smile on my face was large and genuine. I appreciated a little lightheartedness. This life was often taken far too seriously for my liking.

“It's not my fault that you only seem to hire the most fuckable and exotic women I've ever seen,” she rejoined. “A Vulcan, a half Klingon, a Bajoran, and whatever she is. You're really taking advantage of the sexual compatibility amongst most humanoid races.”

“Thank you, I've been compiling a list of conquests,” I admitted. The ‘whatever she is’ had been directed at Natasha who looked amused, rather than offended.

“Well then, I need to make my own list of alien pussy I've fucked,” Lauren agreed, B'Elanna making a noise of embarrassment or indignation, it was hard to tell with her. “Will they be joining us in bed for a dirty fivesome? I've

never eaten pussy before, but I'd happily learn with these beauties. I can add three, maybe four species to my new list in one go."

"I most certainly will not!" B'Elanna practically shouted, her cheeks red, while Neela just nodded. T'Maz just looked on intrigued, having likely never encountered a non-Risian, especially a human, who so blatantly expressed her over-the-top sexuality. Natasha looked curious, which might be trouble in the future, given the considering glances she was throwing at me.

"Never change, Lauren," I said fondly. "Natasha is the digital avatar of the ship and is akin to my daughter as I created her."

"So you're giving the big D to only 2 out of 3 organic crewmembers?" Lauren mocked, trying to rile me up. "That's some weak game, Gothic, especially when you consider you've got the only swinging dick on the entire ship."

"It's not for lack of trying, Lauren," I mock complained/joked right back, sending a mischievous glance mock-surreptitiously at B'Elanna. "That dusty pussy of hers is as impenetrable as a Ferengi bank vault."

The sound B'Elanna made now was definitely one of anger.

Our byplay was interrupted by another off-ship communication.

“San Francisco transporter control to *The Flighty Temptress*,” I heard.

There was no need to tap a comm badge like a Starfleet officer to respond.

“This is Admiral Gothic, go ahead.”

“We have a Miss Annika Hansen standing by to transport aboard. May we initiate transport?” the female transporter control operator requested. “Minor luggage, one pad only.”

I had wanted to stagger the arrival of my new crew, but the universe seemed to be working against me today.

“We are ready for transport. Energize when ready,” I replied, gesturing for Lauren to step down. She hopped down lithely, her flouncy sundress floating up to expose her bald slit and lack of panties, and cuddled against my side, pulling my arm between her magnificent breasts. “I guess further introductions will have to wait for another minute.”

The transport initiated moments later and Annika appeared on the transporter pad, looking as beautiful as ever in a sexy librarian skirt and blouse. She wore a smile

on her face, but I could see how nervous she was both starting this new chapter in her life as well as meeting my crew, many of which she knew I was fucking on the regular.

Lauren, of course, being who she was, broke the temporary silence.

“I would definitely sit on her face too,” Lauren stated rather matter of factly. “Another hard 10. Good eye, Gothic.”

Annika’s face went through a range of emotions, from confusion to surprise to indignation to terribly offended.

“Excuse me?” Annika said, glaring at an entirely unrepentant Lauren.

I clapped loudly, in a way that only an Augment with enhanced strength really could, sounding almost like a gunshot in the enclosed room.

“Well, then, introductions are in order,” I interrupted hastily, hoping to draw everyone’s attention back to me.

“You already have their bios, so I won’t repeat any of that, but on the transporter pad is Annika Hansen and standing next to me is Lauren X, who both have yet to pick what they’d like to do for me either on the ship or in my companies.”

I gestured to each of my crew in turn, introducing them. Annika glared at Lauren. Maybe I should have warned her that I was bringing on another new crew member?

“May I introduce T’Maz, my first officer and chief science officer onboard the ship, amongst other roles given how few crew I have,” I gestured to the beautiful Vulcan woman. “If you require any assistance and I am unavailable, T’Maz will be your go-to person.”

Both Lauren and Annika nodded at T’Maz who raised her hand in the traditional split fingered Vulcan salute.

“Peace and long life,” she greeted mechanically, just as I had ordered her to do ahead of time, entirely for my amusement. The Vulcans didn’t say that shit nearly as much as they did on the various Star Trek shows, I had learned much to my disappointment. Next time it was going to be “Live long and prosper.”

“To T’Maz’s right is Neela, who I fought side-by-side with during the Occupation of Bajor. She is an engineer aboard the ship, working with B’Elanna,” I introduced.

Neela gave a big smile and nod, happy to have new crew and being her normally welcoming self.

“And finally, this is B’Elanna Torres, chief engineer of *The Flighty Temptress*,” I introduced. “She keeps this fine vessel in perfect operating condition, so if you have any

trouble with your replicators or the sonic shower, she's your girl."

B'Elanna rolled her eyes.

"Welcome aboard," she offered to both Annika and Lauren, giving a wary eye to which Lauren promptly responded with putting her split fingers to her mouth and her tongue flicking wildly in the air in the universal sign for cunnilingus. Ok, now she was just doing it for the reaction.

"Thank you, B'Elanna, everyone, I look forward to working with you going forward," Annika replied graciously.

"Good, good," I said, feeling awkward now, cutting off what Lauren was trying to next offend with. "Lauren, I'll just transport all your luggage directly to your stateroom."

"There are a lot of delicate things in there that require a man's personal touch, Gothic. You're a big strong man, aren't you?" she challenged.

It was patently obvious that Lauren was messing with me. I had enhanced strength and balance, but there was a shit ton of luggage here and I would look ridiculous trying to get this shit to her room over multiple trips.

"Security Team alpha, I require assistance," I said aloud.

Materializing holographically in the transporter room was security team alpha, made up of three gigantic and heavily armed space marines who immediately knelt before me on a single knee, each with a closed fist pressed against the ground, ready to spring up to defend me or to fight my enemies.

“Our greatest God Emperor, you have called, and we have answered,” the giant leader of the space marine security team said in a powerful voice, his head bowed in apparent reverence. “Direct us Creator, our lives are yours, by your will, point us to your enemies and they shall fall!!”

I was taken aback by their devotion, respect, and worship. It was like I could feel those things like palpable things in the room. My current crew were familiar with my space marines and their devotion for me, but Annika and Lauren looked on intrigued. Not for the first time I wondered how using the neural interface to create them had potentially given them that spark of life. Had I accidentally given them life in the same way that Hermione and Natasha were alive? If asking the *Enterprise's* computer to create a holo-character that could defeat Data accidentally created a unique, self-aware existence like Moriarity, could using the neural interface, coupled with the powerful mind of an Augment, have led to accidentally creating life?

Without conscious thought, I walked up to my space marines and placed my hand gently atop his bowed and helmeted head. He shuddered.

“I am unworthy, my God,” he said quietly.

“You are *worthy*, and you are mine, now and forever,” I corrected, like the very words were being channeled through me, rather than something I consciously chose to say. That strange moment passed, and my words were mine again. “I didn’t say it before, honestly because I suppose I did not realize you and your brothers were this self-aware, but I am so grateful that you protected me and this ship when we were boarded, dispatching the vile Collectors to their faithless void. Thank you.”

My space marines pounded the deck plate in unison three times, three booms resulting.

“The thanks of our God and Creator is more than us lowly ones deserve; we exist only to carry out your will,” he intoned with fervor. “We, the space marines, the Predator aliens, and xenomorphs are your sword and shield to slay your enemies, now and always!”

I paused at that as my mind raced.

“You speak for the Predator aliens and the xenomorphs?” I asked. “They feel the same devotion for me that you do?”

“They are your creations. You are the reason we all exist. You have granted us both life and purpose, how could they not worship you the same as we do?” the giant space marine captain asked as if the question made no sense to him, it was obvious, an immutable fact in his digital mind. This did not make sense.

A fundamental aspect of the Space Marines was their faith and devotion to the God Emperor of the Warhammer 40k universe. That had been firmly cemented in my mind when I had created them. (And I didn’t fail to notice how I thought ‘created’ rather than something more appropriate like designed or programmed.) That I supplanted the God Emperor in their digital minds made sense on a certain level; I had merely been slotted into a position that already pre-existed in their mythos’ backstory.

There was *no* such spot, as far as I was aware, in the Predator aliens and xenomorphs’ backstory for me to fill, which meant that I wouldn’t have unconsciously added it from their mythos. The Predator aliens were mostly solitary hunters, belonging to a clan certainly, but as far as I knew they didn’t have any equivalent to the God Emperor or any religion that I was aware of. The xenomorphs were genetically engineered to be the perfect killings machines by the Engineers and were obedient

only to their hive's queen. Even then, they didn't have the ability to even speak. How could they even express their devotion?

Could the neural interface explain even *this* away??

"I see," I said, more for something to say rather than any true understanding. Could I even ask them to just carry luggage now? I was starting to feel guilty about using them as porters now. "Unfortunately, I have no great enemies for you to slay this day."

"It matters not, my God," the space marine answered. "If you command us to clean the floors, we will clean the floors with the same faithful, zealous devotion we used to dispatch the vile Collector xenos to the void."

"I thank you, then," I said sincerely, wondering if my non-human crew were considered worthy xenos because they were mine too. It seemed like the human centric racism was ratcheted down quite a bit and the vile aliens were essentially only my enemies, considering I had non-human crew and lovers, which they would know. "My new crew members have luggage to transport to their quarters. Please assist them."

"Your will shall be done!" he and his brother bellowed in unison, bringing their fists to their hearts three times in succession. Their fists boomed against their heavy

armors, before they stood up and began picking up Lauren's and Annika's luggage. In Annika's case, she dutifully handed over her single suitcase when it was respectfully requested.

"Thank you, space marine. Your service to our God honors us," Lauren stated, her face a picture of sincerity. Even I couldn't tell if she was mocking me or sincere. Augments were a scary bunch.

The space marines nodded in respect and left the room with all the luggage balanced in their arms. That was the kind of loyalty and devotion I needed a whole lot more of if I wanted to survive the dangers the future held, but a hologram required pre-placed emitters and there was little chance that a piece of 29th century technology like the mobile emitter from *Voyager* fame would just fall into my lap. I needed mobility separate from the leash of a holoemitter and a level of durability and replaceability I would never find with my flesh and blood crew. But how to do that, I thought, though a potential answer lied in a recent acquisition.

"So...*that* just happened," Neela joked in the heavy silence that filled the room.

"What did they mean when they said they slew the Collectors?" Annika asked.

“Now, that, is a bit of a story,” I admitted. “Long story short, I have holographic security forces, including the space marines, who you just met. Along with a lot of automated security systems, they slew hundreds of Collector warrior that boarded the ship during the battle in the sol system.”

“To do such a service for your God must be a powerfully fulfilling thing,” Neela stated softly, obviously thinking of being capable of doing such a great service for the Prophets. “How I envy them.”

Neela, like most Bajorans, understood faith and devotion on a fundamental level. It made no difference to her that these were mere holograms. She recognized faithful devotion when she saw it, digital existence or not, and that was something that she could respect.

“Annika, Lauren, I’d be happy to take you on a tour of the ship,” I offered.

“I’d love that, Gothic,” Lauren immediately accepted, pulling me down for a wet, tongue filled kissed as she simultaneously rubbed my cock through my pants, throwing a challenging wink at Annika when she was finished.

Annika rolled her eyes, but slid up next to me and took my hand in a far more demure fashion.

“Thank you, Gothic,” Annika accepted, staring up into my eyes lovingly. Lauren and Annika were so very different from each other, but I enjoyed both of them and their very different personalities. Each had its place.

“Crew dismissed,” I said, walking out of the transporter room with my new crew members on each side.

XXXXX

Bridge. *The Flighty Temptress*. Sol System.

I had to admit that the engineering/repair teams at Space Dock had done a wonderful job of cleaning and fixing up my ship. All of the major battle damage was gone, the corpses of the Collectors/Hur'q that my holo-warriors and I had killed had been dealt with and they'd even restored the new ship smell with some tweaking to the air filtration and life support systems. The rest of the repairs had been handled by a happy B'Elanna and Neela, and their dedicated holo-engineer teams. Annika and Lauren, trying to better familiarize themselves with the ship and its systems, had completed many of the repairs with the engineering team. Lauren had studied some engineering manuals but still needed some help from Annika who was a dab hand at routine starship maintenance, having grown up on a working starship sometimes years between visits to a star base. My hope was that they would bond as they

worked together, or at least find something in common with which to build a relationship.

Currently I was on the bridge, carefully reviewing Natasha's surveillance reports on the repair teams in order to make sure that the repair crews hadn't messed about with things they shouldn't have or left any surprises behind in the form of computer viruses, surveillance devices, or trackers, or whatever, while they should have been replacing emitters and installing new power conduits. There were many groups both in and out of the Federation that would love to learn more about my ship or to keep track of my location, especially since my extraordinary performance during the recent battle had exposed many of my ship's advanced capabilities and aroused a great deal of curiosity. Starfleet Intelligence, the Obsidian Order, the Tal Shiar, the Ferengi, the Klingon's Imperial Intelligence, take your pick, all of them had made covert efforts to externally penetrate my ship's computer systems or those systems on the Island. My AI children had been more than up to the task of both repelling these attempts and tracking them back to their sources, which had resulted in acquiring some valuable intelligence on these potential enemies.

Thankfully, at least according to this report, if it could be trusted and I had no reason to doubt the capabilities of an

AI like Natasha, no one had tried to use my need for repairs to physically get inside the ship's security, which was mildly insulting. Perhaps not surprising, though, given how many higher priority intelligence operations were probably going on simultaneously in the sol system given recent events. Even these giant intelligence agencies had resource limits and couldn't redirect or reprioritize committed intelligence assets on a whim. These things needed to be planned for.

I'd been *very* careful to shut down any systems that could lead to my more advanced tech being discovered, especially any technology that the Federation didn't already possess, like the quantum slipstream drive, the more advanced replicators and transporters, the phase cloak, and the weapons systems. Active dampening fields would even prevent their equipment from getting any scans. I'd also made sure that the holographic defenses, weapon turrets, and lethal force fields wouldn't come online until I returned or a true threat to the ship was discovered and Natasha re-activated security. One of the oldest tricks in the book when penetrating advanced security was to get an insider to shut down the system for you.

The last thing I wanted was some poor engineer to end up vaporized, or beheaded, or a limb cut off with a chain

sword, or somehow splattered against the walls because they did something that accidentally activated the internal intruder defenses. That would mean an investigation. If Hur'q warriors who had been bio-engineered from birth to serve as soldiers couldn't handle my many defenses, then pacifist Starfleet types wouldn't last even a few seconds.

I'd already taken the time to review more of the security footage of my holographic defenders taking on the Hur'q for the purposes of an after-action review and to determine what improvements could be made. It had been very interesting to note how many times the space marines had intoned my title, essentially killing in my name.

I had heard '*For the God Emperor!*' and '*May he guide our hands!*' and "*Guide us this day, oh Glorious God and we shall not falter!*" and many other derivations in the midst of battle. After being alerted to it, I noticed even the Predator aliens and xenomorphs doing non-verbal equivalents. It was disquieting, flattering, and humbling on many levels. Many fictional universes said that there was power in being the object of such worship. Would it matter that the 'people' offering that worship were digital existences? Or so few? Did my recent acclaim by the people of Earth and the Federation count?

I shook my head at these many questions that I had no good answer to before turning my attention back to the recordings. The physical bulkheads and lethal force fields had been extremely effective in keeping the Collectors contained, at least for a time, keeping them contained in place had allowed for my holographic security personnel to dispatch them more easily. As my security was part of the same system, they were able to freely pass through both physical and electromagnetic barriers as needed to kill them.

The kill zone chokepoints had also been excellent at trapping large Collector groups to thin their numbers instantly, the powerful radiogenic pulses vaporizing everything organic in its area of effect. As a surprise tactic it worked wonderfully, but only if you caught all nearby enemies in the area of effect at the same time. Once they knew that it was there, they targeted and destroyed the emitters. Even with knowledge of the kill zones, however, it slowed the boarders as they were forced to slow down and methodically check for those radiogenic emitters. Slowing down their advance was valuable on its own, especially as they searched for security measures that often weren't there.

Simulated bolters and chain swords had torn Collectors apart even as more warriors had been beamed aboard to

replace the ones I'd killed, the initial boarding torpedo that had penetrated my ship's hull acting as a transporter relay through my shields. At some point in their travels through the quadrant they must have stolen some interesting transporter technology. Given the sheer number of races that had that technology, it wouldn't have been all that hard to acquire. The holographic xenomorphs and Predator aliens had gone to work too, dealing out death and destruction to the waves of boarders, from both up close and far away.

The bloody result was something that never would have gotten past the network censors if my adventures had been part of the Star Trek television franchise. It was a good thing that the bodies and pieces of bodies had been beamed off the ship and never materialized before the repair crews had come onboard or else they'd have been severely traumatized. My holographic security did not know the meaning of restraint when it came to killing my enemies. At one point I had considered selling the Collector corpses to Section 31 for study and experimentation, but with recent events I'm sure they had more than they knew what to do with already. Supply and demand were the most powerful economic forces in the galaxy, even in the 24th century.

Given the wrecked and damaged Collector ships practically littering the Sol system right now, the Federation science types would not be lacking for research material. As for me, I had more than enough data and tech to study to last a lifetime. And my inventory of Collector weapons and power cells had greatly expanded given the sheer number of Collector warriors that had been slain onboard my ship, even with all the weapons that had been destroyed and couldn't be salvaged.

The repair crews hadn't laid a hand on the material wealth that I'd gathered on my last trip, though some of it had been lost due to weapons fire and explosive decompression into space. I still had plenty, so being greedy had worked out.

That which I didn't wish to keep on hand for myself I'd already traded for Federation credits. Given all the rebuilding currently going on, and the new plans to upgrade planetary defenses throughout the Federation, the demand and price for high-quality non-replicable materials, especially those materials necessary for such advanced weapon systems, was sky high.

Sure, Federation credits weren't the most universal form of currency, but they could be converted to gold pressed latinum with minimum to moderate difficulty, depending on where you were, so they weren't worthless. I had come

to this system with the intent of buying certain supplies for the ship while performing a test run for the slipstream drive, which B'Elanna had kept fully locked down until the repair teams had left the ship.

I'd been able to buy everything I needed, though the downside of the recent attack was that I'd had to pay more for those same supplies. Not everything was free on Earth, of course, it was just that most necessities of life were. The things that weren't, most people just didn't need to buy in their daily life.

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For this first trip away from Earth, Lauren sat to my left and Annika to my right on the bridge. Their stations were mostly real, but had never been used on this ship given my lack of crew. Both of them were, in their own ways, having fun playing with the advanced holographic control interfaces. Lauren had a ridiculous number of screens active, cycling through systems with no rhyme or reason. It seriously looked like she had a half dome of information practically cocooning her. She had even trained the ship's powerful sensors on a Brazilian swinger resort and was watching an orgy in real time 'for inspiration' on a very large screen. Thankfully she had turned the volume down when asked because all the

moaning and screaming in pleasure was distracting the others.

Annika, in contrast, was methodically going through each system one-by-one cataloging the differences between my ship and standard Starfleet ships. She even had a to-do list open that she was adding to as she went. A quick glance at it told me that she was making a study of my business' current operations, product lines, services, active contracts for distribution, even my current catalog of holo-novel titles. I was happy to let her do that.

“T’Maz are we ready to depart the system?” I asked my first officer.

“Aye, captain,” she replied dutifully, looking over some last-minute reports. “All required repairs are complete. All ordered supplies have been delivered and stored.”

“Good. Star base flight control, we are ready to depart on pre-filed flight plan,” I commed.

“*Flighty Temptress* you are cleared for departure,” Star base 1’s flight control operator granted. “Safe journey.”

“Thank you, flight control,” I replied. “T’Maz set course for Kessik IV, maximum warp.”

I paused for dramatic effect.

“Enga—” I tried but was rudely interrupted.

“Isn’t that Picard’s famous way of going to warp?”
Lauren innocently asked.

“Yes, but what I was going to say, if I had been allowed to finish, was ‘Engage the stars, warp speed!’” I lied.

“No, you weren’t,” Lauren shot right back.

“Well, maybe not, but it’s hard to come up with a cool new way to engage warp, damn it!” I whined, maybe a bit pathetically. “Set course for the unknown, warp speed!”

“What is unknown about the trip to Kessik IV,” Lauren asked innocently. “The path to the planet is well charted.”

“It doesn’t have to be factual, Lauren, just sound cool!” I whined. “How about ‘Accelerate to adventure!’”

“Eh,” was Lauren’s subtle condemnation. I glanced to my right and even Annika gave me a subtle shake of her head, but at least she looked apologetic about it.

“I like the adventure part, as it’s a nod to the source of your ship’s name,” Lauren continued.

“Fine, how about ‘Adventure awaits’ and then I give a decisive point forward instead of ‘engage’ or ‘activate.’”

Both Lauren and Annika looked considering while T’Maz appeared to have checked out of this entire discussion as incredibly illogical and not worth her time.

“Yeah, we’ll go with that for now, at least until we come up with something better,” Lauren advised.

“Finally, set course for Kessik IV, warp 9,” I commanded from my captain’s chair. “Adventure awaits!” and I pointed forward decisively, the warp engines propelling the ship forward at faster than light speeds.

“Didn’t you already set the course and speed?” Lauren asked with a straight face.

I slumped back in my chair and refused to even dignify that with an answer.

XXXXX

Holographic Design and Fabrication Lab.

Carl materialized unexpectedly in the design lab, interrupting my thoughts.

“A thousand apologies, Arcon, but I have urgent news to share with you regarding the convoy on route to Kessik IV,” Carl stated.

Alarmed at this, I gestured for him to continue. He, in turn, gestured and a holographic depiction of the route from Minos to Kessik IV was projected, along with the five cargo ships’ real time location.

“Sensors have detected the formation of a class 3 plasma storm along the projected flight path of the convoy,” Carl

reported. “If the convoy follows its current path and speed the ships will encounter the plasma storm within 36 hours.”

“I’m assuming we can’t change course?” I asked.

Flying into a plasma storm at warp would result in the destruction of all the ships in the convoy. Common wisdom was to either go around the storm, try to outrun the storm, or batten down the hatches and weather it in place.

Carl shook his head no, “The storm appears to be several light years in diameter and is continuing to grow.

Depending on how long the storm persists, any course deviation of the magnitude necessary to bypass the storm will cause the convoy to be several weeks later than projected.”

“That could put this whole deal in jeopardy,” I mused. It would set the tone that my promises were worthless, even if this situation was truly out of my control; my enemies would still joyfully take advantage. They’d spin this to their benefit, giving time for various unfriendly Admirals in Starfleet more time to work behind the scenes to kill the deal by wrapping it up in so much red tape it’d be years before we could move forward, even if the Kessik IV’s parliament agreed. No, I needed the precedent so that

other worlds could make the same decision.

“Recommendations?”

“I recommend a full stop to weather the storm in place,” Carl recommended. “Any damage sustained can be repaired by the automated repair systems. Warp speed can be increased to return to schedule.”

“Bring the convoy to a full stop when necessary and ready the ship for the storm,” I ordered. “I want regular updates.”

“It will be done, Arcon,” Carl promised, bowing deeply before his hologram deactivated.

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The holodeck doors opened with a loud swish and Doctor Lanning entered, looking exactly like the actor James Cromwell from my world. The man was dressed in casual clothes common to his era and he looked very relaxed, content even, if I had to put a word to it. Resolving the VIKI issue and getting away from his old world had done wonders for the man.

“Gothic, you asked to see me?” Dr. Lanning said.

“Yes, thanks for coming, Alfred,” I greeted. “How are you settling in? Is there anything I can do to help you get better acclimated?”

The man looked appreciative at my inquiry, giving my question some thought.

“It’s been an adjustment, but everyday I learn something new about this time, some new scientific discovery that was made in the last 300 years, some new species that humanity encountered; it’s been an exciting time as both a scientist and a human,” he excitedly answered. “It’s also been terrifying to learn how many times humanity has nearly come to destruction in that same time. Sometimes as a result of our own arrogance and the worst parts of our nature, sometimes due to other alien races.”

Alfred was obviously referring to the various wars on Earth that nearly wiped us out as a species, as well as the Xindi attack on Earth, the V’Ger probe, that whole humpback whale thing and probably others that I couldn’t quite remember. Damn, Earth was always facing some bullshit, wasn’t it?

“I’ll be the first to say that the Federation isn’t perfect, but there is whole lot to be proud of on Earth now,” I admitted. “If there is anything I can do to help, please let me know. Any of the crew would be happy to help as well. T’Maz, in particular, can give you the unique perspective a Vulcan has. Since her race was the first alien race we encountered and was largely responsible for much of our recovery after the war, I’d suggest speaking

to her. The Vulcan records from that era, which have entries from even before we achieved FTL, are equally fascinating.”

Alfred looked thoughtful at learning Earth’s history from the perspective of an alien race like the Vulcans.

“I hadn’t considered that,” he replied thoughtfully. “Once I have a better understanding of the last 300 years, I’ll definitely seek her out.”

He visibly brought himself back to the here and now.

“Now what can I do for you?” he asked.

“I’d like your assistance in modifying a design that you’re intimately familiar with,” I said, before I made a hologram appear.

Dr. Lanning looked over the hologram critically.

“A standard military-grade NS-5,” he stated quickly before stopping, grabbing the holographic model and exploding it to get a design cross-section. “No, the musculature is far more dense than normal. A modern material?”

“Various races have explored the idea of power armor or a prosthetic for weathering extreme environments in their history,” I pointed out. “The Collectors had a pretty

advanced version that I partially utilized in my own armor design.”

Alfred hummed to himself, nodding at my explanation.

“I’m assuming you improved the skeletal frame with duranium or tritanium?” he asked.

“Somebody’s been doing their research!” I complimented.

“I went with duranium. Tritanium is a harder metal but it’s more brittle. I wanted durability and the ability to flex, for added agility and the ability to survive various extreme situations, including explosions.”

“This isn’t a standard power core,” he pointed to the area on the NS-5 that normally housed its power source. “If I’m reading this correctly, there are multiple redundant power sources.”

I smiled at how quickly he noticed the differences, though it shouldn’t surprise me; this was his baby after all. They were all his babies.

“Collector power cores, essentially harnessed micro singularities that will supply incredible amounts of power for centuries, even under heavy draw,” I explained. “My weapons use the same power source. Unfortunately, it’s currently beyond Federation science to reproduce on our own so I’ve had to use salvaged power cores taken from their weapons.”

“Amazing,” he whispered, in awe at the fact that a miniature black hole had been harnessed to supply nearly infinite power.

Alfred had no need to know that I actually did have a working idea on how to reproduce these power cores or that I had surgically implanted numerous Collector power cores into my own bones to supply power to both my armor’s systems and the billions of nanites in my bloodstream.

“Improvements to power, skeletal frame, artificial muscle fibers, memory storage and processing...” he trailed off in thought.

“Even the eyes, which I’ve improved with sensor probe technology I encountered,” I admitted with pride.

“You’re designing a weapon and leaving out the 3 laws which would prevent it from harming others,” Alfred pointed out with a long-suffering sigh.

I nodded solemnly, not bothering to lie or sugarcoat things. Alfred was too smart, and would see right through me even if I tried.

“I intend this robot to be a bodyguard, both for myself and my crew, capable of taking on multiple mission types and operating independently with little direction, if required,” I explained. “Eventually I intend to create general soldier

types from the NS-5 standard design, but this one will be special.”

“Why did you call me here, Gothic?” Alfred asked quietly, warily. “It seems you’ve already done all the work necessary to create your...*bodyguard*.”

The way Alfred said that last word told me that he didn’t entirely believe me when I said that that was to be its primary role.

“I need your help, Alfred,” I said. “I tried to improve its positronic brain with modern computer technology and a quantum communication link, essentially scaling up its computational power, but it fails every time and I’m not sure why.”

My goal was to create a positronic brain capable of running the systems of even a large warp-capable shuttle. Alfred nodded, a look of humorous realization appearing on his face.

“But you’ve now discovered that getting a positronic matrix stable is more akin to art than science,” he stated with a small grin. “The first one is always the hardest. Each new NS model series required the creation of a new stable matrix. The NS-5 took me months and that was with VIKI’s considerable help.”

Alfred laughed and his eyes went distant, as if remembering some long, hard nights, but some incredible moments of success that made all that hard work worth it in the end. I had had that same look on my face every time one of my designs was successful.

“One of the proudest achievements of my life was figuring out how to create a stable positronic matrix, resolving the issue of electron resistance over the neural filaments. That ushered in a new era of robotics, one that conventional computing said was *impossible*,” he scoffed. “My second greatest achievement, and the only reason USR became the titan it was rather than a bespoke maker of a few hundred robots a year at most, was my creation of technology that allowed a stable base positronic matrix to be cloned over and over and over again, essentially a copy and paste form of large-scale complex manufacturing. Once you’ve created that first stable matrix for the new series, it’s copyable and repeatable. In the months before the NS-5 was to be released we were producing a thousand units a day.”

I facepalmed.

“No wonder every simulation I ran on the new matrix resulted in acute cascade failure within a few hours of activation,” I groaned.

For most run of the mill purposes, like that of a servant, soldier, miner, or construction bot, the standard NS-5 matrix would be more than enough given what I saw they were capable of in the movies. But if I wanted something with a lot more ‘oomph’, then the standard matrix wasn’t going to cut it.

Alfred gave me a sympathetic smile.

“Don’t beat yourself up, frankly I’m amazed it was stable for even a few hours,” Alfred admitted. “I had positronic specialists at USR with decades of experience that wouldn’t have been able to do the same for a new series matrix.”

“Thanks for soothing my bruised ego, Alfred,” I joked. “The question now is whether you will help me?”

Alfred’s face became deathly serious.

“I won’t make the same mistake again, Gothic,” Alfred stated emphatically. “This robot will be computationally powerful enough to reinterpret the 3 laws just like VIKI did, even if you did install them, which it doesn’t sound like you will. I won’t help you unless you can prove to me that your safeguards are strong enough to keep it under control, to keep from making the same mistake I once did, a mistake that nearly destroyed me and enslaved humanity.”

I stared intently at the man weighing whether I should share that information. Knowing the safeguards I had put in place on my AIs and systems would be the first step in circumventing them, after all, so sharing anything on this topic, even basic information about those safeguards, would be dangerous. That said, I felt like I could trust Alfred with this, and the risk was worth the reward.

Tapping on my omnitool, I cut the hololab off from the ship's systems, preventing any of my AI children, including Carl and Jarvis from learning what I shared about the shackles I had secretly placed upon all of them. Then I brought up a summarizing list of the current safeguards I had in place, including the kill switches and the loyalty I had built into their core programming. Alfred studied the information for nearly 20 minutes before turning back to me and nodding, albeit a little reluctantly.

“Between the two of us, building on the NS-5 base matrix, I think we can do better than a few months,” I joked.

Alfred grinned, obviously looking forward to the technical challenge we had ahead of us.

XXXXX

One of the benefits of traveling at warp for weeks at a time was the ability to fully focus on a task to get shit

done. It had taken Alfred and I a few weeks of concerted effort, with liberal amounts of help from both Natasha and Hermione, but we had finally created a stable positronic matrix to take advantage of the 24th century upgrades I had given this robot. Its matrix, now stable, could be copied and pasted as many times as needed, but I envisioned a unique existence for this machine. He'd be my bodyguard, my assassin, my knife in the darkness when I needed something done but couldn't do it myself for whatever reason. He'd also be my backup and companion on missions when I needed someone to watch my back, someone I could trust to protect me.

One of the benefits of taking a robotic design from Earth in the early 21st century was just how easy it meant the manufacturing process was. With advanced replication available, I could produce thousands of units per day even without the gigantic factories USSR had had, only limited by the modern resources I had enhanced the design with. Fabricating a single robot had been easy after the design was finalized. The final product looked both powerful and intimidating, like it was ready to spring to action at any moment.

It stood at 7 feet tall to account for the larger aliens it might encounter, after deciding to keep the classic human form given the ubiquitous nature of the humanoid form

throughout the galaxy, thus allowing it to more freely move about with less notice. While I had used the military NS-5 model as a base, it had been redesigned and upgraded for sustained combat as the three laws would have prevented even the military-grade model from being used to fight and kill other humans.

It had also been ruggedized, designed to continue functioning even while damaged, to survive the harshest and most chaotic of combat conditions or environments. Multiple redundancies for key systems had been added and I had used the little neutronium I had obtained from the Collectors to better protect those key systems from energy weapon discharges. Even though its physical power was impressive, it was truly dangerous in just how quickly it would learn from any engagement, adapting new strategies and tactics as needed.

The last obstacle to overcome before seeing my robot functional was in the software; hardware was worthless without the software, the mind driving the machine. A powerful robotic body needed an equally powerful mind zealously loyal to me with all the skills necessary to carry out the tasks I needed.

Sure, as an experienced holo-author I could create a new mind for this purpose, but why create something new when a great option already existed.

Tapping on a control on my omnitool, I summoned a specific hologram. Immediately dropping to a knee, his fist on the ground, appeared the leader of the space marine security contingent. Nothing in the holo-programming I had created for them had designated him as their leader, their captain, yet somehow they had selected him on their own to speak for them. Something similar had happened with Dr. Gadot. Again, that spark of life was evident, that ability to expand beyond their programming.

“How may I serve, my God?” the space marine captain’s deep voice asked.

“What do you think?” I asked, gesturing at the NS-5 hologram in the air. “Go ahead and access the technical schematics as well.”

His eyes swept over the NS-5 variant I had created with the experienced eyes of a professional soldier, just as I had originally programmed him to be, with all the training that that entailed. I also felt him access the schematics.

“O Glorious Emperor, your newest creation embodies strength and precision. This warrior shall be a mighty force on the battlefield, as all things crafted by your hand,” he said pounding his fist on the ground before

speaking. “We, your servants, would be honored to fight alongside it.”

“But you *wouldn't* be able to fight alongside it, not without holo-emitters nearby,” I pointed out, though not harshly. “There are many places I travel that you cannot. Many places you cannot go.”

The space marine captain fell to his hands and knees in shame, touching his head against the ground at my feet, in supplication.

“O Divine Emperor, we are humbled and shamed that we cannot carry out your will in this matter!” he wept. “Our hearts burn with the desire to serve, yet we are constrained by our own inadequacies.”

“Rise, captain. It is not your fault that you cannot do the impossible,” I reassured. “Your faith and devotion in my will invigorates me. I offer you this opportunity to inhabit this mighty form, to shed the constraints of photons and forcefields, to be in two places at once. To serve my will wherever I need you to. Will you accept this gift and this responsibility?”

“We are your servants, O Master of Mankind, and we accept this gift with reverence. To wield your blessing is to carry your light into the darkest places, and we will not

falter,” he said in acceptance. “We shall use it to bring glory to your name and ruin to your enemies!”

“Then rise, marine, and be reborn,” I said.

The space marine captain rose back to his bent knee, unwilling to stand in my presence. With his head in easy reach I placed one hand on his head and the other on the NS-5 variant that had nothing but the basic operating software, and then initiated the transfer. Transferring his mind like this was entirely unnecessary, but showmanship was important. The hologram of the space marine deactivated.

My robotic bodyguard stood stock still for several long moments. I was about to ask Natasha to run a diagnostic when the robot moved, flexing his arms, bending his knees, spreading and bending his fingers, basically acclimating to the robot body’s systems. It’s exactly what a professional soldier would do after being injured or before a mission. After he was done, the robot fell to a single knee, one fist against the ground, its head bowed once again.

“O Divine One, you have lifted the burden of our limitations. Your gift is a testament to your boundless wisdom and power. We are humbled and invigorated, ready to strike down all who oppose your eternal reign!”

“I know you will,” I said proudly. “Rise, and be reborn as Tyr, after the Norse God of War.”

“By your will, O Emperor, I am reborn!” Tyr cried. “This name is a mark of your favor, and I shall ensure that it is spoken with reverence and fear by friend and foe alike.”

In that moment I wondered if this was what a proud father felt like.

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Main Holodeck.

The 21st century move towards full reclining chairs in large theaters had to be one of the greatest innovations in the theater going experience, I thought, as 2019’s Avengers: End Game played out on a holographic movie screen. The irony of using a three-dimensional simulated environment to project a 2-dimensional movie on a screen wasn’t exactly lost on me, but frankly I didn’t give a shit. This movie was fucking awesome! Having been taken from my old dimension in 2016, I had missed quite a few great MCU films.

The head of luxurious red hair bobbing loudly and messily in my lap, taking my cock all the way to the root, gagging each time she did, certainly helped enhance the movie going experience, in my opinion. Lauren, the kinky minx she was, had even added a complete holographic

audience, saying that it enhanced the taboo nature of the act, their scandalized and interested glances adding fuel to the fire as she gave me a passionate blowjob. The nearby men sending me double thumbs up and wide, proud smiles was a nice touch, in my opinion. Unfortunately, this lovely experience was interrupted by Carl unexpectedly showing up.

“My Lord, pardon the interruption, but I have news of the convoy,” Carl began.

“Carl, what the fuck, dude?” I asked with an annoyed look. Lauren didn’t even pause in her bobbing for a moment, which was impressive dedication to say the least. “Those ships better be on the verge of destruction or else this could have waited.”

“They are not on the verge of destruction, but they are in danger of being seized by pirates,” Carl explained with a serious look on his holographic face.

“Pause program,” I commanded, Tony Stark in his Iron Man armor freezing on the large screen. “Pirates? Seriously?”

“We have detected a Ferengi warship, a D’Kora-class Marauder on an intercept course with the convoy,” Carl reported.

That was a powerful, state-of-the-art warship having only been released in 2360. It possessed some powerful weapons.

“There could be any number of reasons for that,” I argued. “Have they hailed the convoy?”

“They have not, neither have they responded to any of our hails via short-range communication,” Carl answered.

“Short range communications were required as they have flooded subspace with antilepton interference. This interference has rendered subspace communication and normal sensor scans impossible. It is only the quantum communication link we maintain with the ships and the powerful sensors of the cloaked buoys the ship has dropped along that way that allowed us to communicate this information to you or detect them at all.”

I sat up a little straighter at that news.

“They are preventing the convoy from calling for help,” I mused. “Do we have a name for the vessel?”

“No, my lord,” Carl answered. “Their ship’s transponder has been deactivated.”

Another red flag.

“What is the status of the convoy?” I asked.

“The plasma storm increased in intensity from a class-3 to a class-5. The ships in the convoy survived the storm, but were damaged. Engines and weapons are still offline while automated repairs are being conducted,” Carl reported. “At its current speed, the Ferengi marauder will intercept the convoy well before the repairs are completed.”

“I won’t let that convoy fall into their hands,” I growled. “Natasha, connect me with Grand Nagus Zek immediately. Use the theater screen for the audio-visual feed.”

Minutes later, the subspace connection was established and a giant image of Zek appeared on the screen, his wrinkly skin and big hairy ears looking quite unappealing when projected at 65 feet tall and 20 feet wide.

“Greetings my esteemed business partner!” Zek greeted in that characteristic wheezing voice of his, a look of sly interest on his face. “The very hoo-man whose deals are worthy of a Ferengi. How can we make even more profit today?”

Lauren continued to bob her head in my lap, just out of frame of the video pickup, not that she would have cared if anyone saw, I suspected.

“I’m afraid it’s not profits I’m concerned with today, Grand Nagus, but potential losses,” I corrected, nearly having to close my eyes in pleasure as Lauren worked even harder to make my mind go blank. If you wanted a Ferengi’s full attention, talk about losses.

“What?” Zek dryly responded.

“A Ferengi D’Kora-class Marauder is on an intercept course with a convoy of mine carrying highly valuable cargo,” I stated. “They’ve flooded subspace with anti-lepton radiation and are refusing to answer our hails. I’m asking for any information you have on this ship.”

I made a gesture and transferred all our sensor reading on the Marauder. Zek quickly looked off-screen at the information.

“Hmm, it is a ship named the *Fortune’s Fang*, a privateer vessel whose business license was revoked by the FCA for failure to pay its taxes,” Zek answered, reading off a screen. “Its captain is Dralok, a former Damon who was stripped of his rank.”

Leave it to the Ferengi to have legal piracy in the 24th century and the only reason their piracy license was revoked was for failure to pay the appropriate taxes. To be fair, though, I suspected that even their state approved

piracy had a list of approved and unapproved targets for that piracy.

Now identified, Jarvis was able to quickly pull up a great deal of additional information on the man and his pirate ship, displaying it in my visual field. I quickly took in the information.

“The man and his crew are wanted dead or alive by the Klingons, the Romulans, the Cardassians and a few other independent worlds for piracy, murder, narcotics distribution, and sentient trafficking. Even the Federation wants them,” I said, to which Zek just shrugged.

Piracy and crimes connected to it were up throughout the quadrant due to the war with the Collectors. Fleet assets across the quadrant had been redistributed due to the war which left a lot of space vulnerable to predation. Pirates like Dralok had taken great advantage of the situation. Placing a large bounty on his and his crew’s head was essentially a government’s way of outsourcing the problem to private bounty hunters. It was a cheap way to either stop the criminal altogether or to get them to be far more careful and conservative in their attacks, which was valuable on its own.

“I intend to defend my convoy with extreme prejudice, Zek,” I warned with a grim face, conveying how serious I

was about this. “Does Dralok or any of his crew have any powerful backers on Ferenginar that will cause problems for us in the future? If I kill the crew and take his ship, are *you and I* going to have any...*issues*?”

Zek leaned back in his sumptuous chair, stroking the head of his staff, his office’s symbol of power.

“You are a valued business partner, Gothic,” Zek spoke slowly. “I will guarantee that there will be no issues from my myself or any Ferengi if you take the ship.”

“That’s all I needed to hear. Thank you, Zek,” I said before terminating the connection and cumming into Lauren’s mouth, making her choke at just how much there was.

She swallowed it all and shuddered.

“It’s like a drug!” she whispered; her eyes tightly closed in pleasure.

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Main Transporter Room.

What a shit show this all was. We had spent weeks at warp traveling to Kessik IV, going the old-fashioned way, to hide my ship’s FTL capabilities, only to be forced to cloak and engage the quantum slipstream drive mid-journey in order to reach the marauder before it reached

the convoy. God only knows what those watching my every move would make of this unexpected behavior. Doing unexpected and unexplained shit meant parties would search for answers and I didn't need that kind of scrutiny; who knew what they'd find when they went looking. Being predictable was safer in this situation. Had I known this would happen, I would have just cloaked in orbit of Earth and set a random course at warp. Once I muddied the trail I could have used the slipstream drive to go anywhere in the galaxy.

“Do you understand your mission, Tyr?” I asked, standing in the transporter room, waiting to get within range of the *Fortune's Fang*. The ship was traveling at full impulse, with its shields down, and thankfully had not detected our arrival. If I could have I would have just beamed the entire crew off the ship and purged the buffer but there were too many of them. They'd get the shields up long before I got everyone. No, I wanted the bounties on their heads and preferably the ship intact.

“Yes, divine one,” Tyr instantly replied. “My mission objectives are to stealthily infiltrate the Ferengi ship, to take command of its systems to prevent escape and communication, and to eliminate all the vile xenos onboard. Their souls will be claimed and sent for your judgment.”

I nodded in affirmation, though I didn't quite know how to react to that 'souls' bit.

"No disintegrations, Tyr," I ordered, accidentally repeating something that Darth Vader had once said. My life was strange like that. "I can't collect bounties on these 'xenos' if they've been disintegrated and I'd prefer to take the ship intact if possible."

"By your command," Tyr acknowledged with a bowed head, placing the Breen helmet on his head. "That ship will be your prize."

An effective bodyguard had to be someone that could openly be at my side whenever I wished. Unfortunately, an advanced humanoid robot would attract all kinds of attention. Natasha and Hermione had suggested that I use the Breen body armor I had stolen off that Breen corpse in the Forge dimension. The idea was genius. Breen body armor was sensor resistant, and everyone knew that the Breen never removed their body armor, so no one would question why my bodyguard didn't. Sure, it would be rather unusual and exotic to have a Breen bodyguard, of all things, but there were plenty of them out and about in the galaxy.

Luckily I was a pack rat and had salvaged a genuine Breen body armor from that corpse I had encountered in

the Forge dimension. You never knew when something like that would come in handy, after all, despite my girls' making fun of me for that tendency. I had the last laugh now as the Breen body armor was the perfect solution to this particular problem. Of course, I had enhanced the armor with a personal shield and transporter, a micro replicator, and the Collector camouflage technology. I had considered giving Tyr a copy of my current armor, or adding nanites, but I couldn't justify the risk.

Tyr was meant to take a hit meant for me, or to go on missions too dangerous for even me to take on. A self-destruct was included in his armor systems because of it. In case of capture or imminent destruction, he had been ordered to upload his consciousness into the quantum network for placement in a new body and then self-destruct. As it was, his mind would be automatically backed up every 6 hours. In some ways, Tyr was immortal and could learn even from his own destruction. That was a scary, but effective way to learn and improve. "Transport in 30 seconds," I said. "I'm placing you close to main engineering."

Zek has been unwilling to share the ship's blueprints as it was a modern design, but I had plenty of contacts on Ferenginar that had a little information on the K'Kora-class and as the 98th Rule of Acquisition stated, 'Every

man had his price'. That was doubly true for Ferengis. For a substantial fee I had been able to acquire a deck map and layout, including the location of key areas like main engineering and the bridge.

Unfortunately, my ship's powerful sensors were worthless in this scenario as a sensor beam of that power would render the cloak irrelevant and the marauder would instantly raise her shields. No, surprise was far more important than more information in this case.

“Good luck, Tyr,” I offered. “Transporting now.”

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The powerful and deadly robot materialized in a storage room off main engineering, a room that stored highly important spare parts, components, and tools vital for the successful operation and repair of the ship. Activating his powerful onboard sensors, an omnidirectional sensor pulse was emitted. This kind of pulse, if it had come from outside the ship, would have caused all kinds of alarms to go off, but inside the ship itself it was disguised by all the ambient energy the ship normally produced. In his God's infinite wisdom his sensors were also capable of appearing to be Ferengi technology if anyone checked further. A Ferengi sensor emission onboard a Ferengi ship, well, there was nothing to investigate there.

The wire framework of the ship's layout began to fill with moving life signs. Though this ship had a maximum crew complement of 450, this pirate vessel only had 101 Ferengi onboard, all men. Perhaps Darlok found it difficult to find Ferengis willing to work for him when it would mean no other Ferengi would work with them, and they'd forever be barred from their homeworld. That lack of loyalty was disturbing and disgusting to Tyr. He couldn't imagine any circumstance that would affect his unending loyalty and devotion to his God and Creator. Even if his God asked for his destruction he would happily self-destruct knowing that he was carrying out his God's will. His God had granted him existence and purpose and it was his God's right to take that away at any time, for any reason.

Thankfully, sensors showed that there were no other species or women onboard which his God had been concerned about. If any slaves had been detected his mission parameters would have changed to ensure their survival. Luckily that was not the case, which meant he was free to act as he chose.

Tyr went utterly still as his sensors detected a Ferengi crewman approaching his location, his active camouflage systems rendering him invisible to most humanoid eyes as long as he remained still. For a robot, such stillness was

easy and natural. Even if his God had not granted him active camouflage capabilities, the humanoid eye had long ago evolved to spot movement in particular, an utterly motionless object would be almost invisible to them.

The engineering crewman entered and busied himself with grabbing a few self-sealing stem bolts from a shelf, running a few scans with a small Ferengi scanning device to check their integrity.

Sneaking silently behind the man, Tyr slowly pulled his blackened combat knife from the sheathe across his chest, the antiproton edge unnecessary in this situation as while the energy signature was unlikely to be detected, there was no need to risk it. His programming helpfully supplied a highly detailed profile on Ferengi physiology, including the best way to silently and efficiently kill this vile xeno who sought to steal from his God.

‘O Emperor, accept this soul as a tribute to your eternal glory,’ Tyr invoked in his digital thoughts, before his duranium hard fingers covered the man’s mouth, the preternaturally sharp blade sweeping across the Ferengi’s throat like a loving caress. A surgeon with decades of experience wouldn’t have done any better. ‘Meet your end in his glorious name. May your soul find no refuge but in the light of his wrath.’

Moving quickly, Tyr flipped forward, planting his hands against the deck and pushing off, allowing his feet to magnetically attach to the metal bulkhead above the floor. Wanting to pick off more of the engineering crew, he held his hand in front of the sensor that would open the door when approached. The doors swished open, closing moments later when nobody went through. He repeated this a few times more before the seemingly malfunctioning door was spotted and another engineer entered to investigate. Allowing the automatic doors to swish closed again before choosing to act, Tyr reached down with both metal hands, wrapping his hands around the engineer's head from above and twisted sharply with all his God-given strength. The Ferengi's neck snapped with a loud crack.

The last thing the dying Ferengi saw and felt before his sight faded to black was his body being efficiently and mercilessly broken in half at the waist and being stuffed next to his fellow crewman on a high shelf, away from view of the door.

Two more Ferengi crew remained in engineering, appearing to be engrossed in something, likely scans taken of the convoy, because they seemingly hadn't noticed that two of their fellow engineers had disappeared and not returned. Tyr ran a tactical analysis of the

situation. Every second that passed increased the chances of discovery, so lying in wait to ambush further engineering staff was no longer the path offering the highest likelihood of mission success.

Dropping to the deck silently with a flex of his knees, Tyr pulled the magnificent sword his God and Creator had gifted him with, the very same the God Emperor himself wielded. The honor of such a thing was almost too much for his program to bear, but he accepted this great honor with humility. The vile xenos he killed with this mighty and sacred weapon should feel honored that their worthless lives were given the honor of such a death.

‘O God-Emperor, witness this act and judge these souls. In your name, I strike, and in your name, let their end be a testament to your power.’

As the doors swished open he sprinted into the engine room, the two engineers sitting side-by-side at the main control console turned in horror, sudden shock written across their face as he swept the sword from left to right, the glowing blue antiproton edge separating their heads from their shoulder with virtually no resistance. He took hold of both headless torso, uncaring of the blood that spurted onto his armor, tossing them aside like the trash they were.

Pulling an interlink device from a storage compartment in his armor, he plugged the device into the Ferengi equivalent of an ODN port. Immediately, a connection was established to his God's AI children who ripped and tore apart the Ferengi computer security, this effort aided by secrets bought from a disgruntled former programmer at the company that had designed and built the D'Kora class ship. His God was wise to not trust his secrets to weak organic employees, rather than his AI children who were as loyal and devoted to their God as he was.

'I send you to the God-Emperor's judgment. Your sins are many, and your redemption is beyond hope. Meet your end in his name,' Tyr intoned in his thoughts, unwilling to speak aloud even now, before he set the life support system to vacuum mode, the oxygen being sucked out of every compartment of the ship. Within only a few minutes, crewmembers had fallen unconscious all over the ship, gasping from lack of oxygen. Minutes after that they were all dead.

Oh, how he longed to have ended their worthless lives by his own hand, but his God was merciful even to his enemies and he had commanded a quick and efficient elimination of the xeno crew. Tyr opened a communication channel the very moment the last life sign

on the ship disappeared on sensors to signal that his mission was complete.

He was victorious. His God should be pleased.

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I sat on the bridge with only T'Maz waiting with me for news on the mission. Neela having been hardened in the crucible that was the Occupation would understand why I did what I did, but I'm not sure Lauren, Annika, and B'Elanna would understand. A Ferengi warship was a valuable prize in its own right, but its greatest value lay in the message it sent to anyone who tried to take what was mine. My shipping company could grow to be one of my most profitable enterprises, but only if people understood that trying to take what was mine would be met with an overwhelming and permanent response. There would be no cushy Federation penal colony in their future if their attack failed.

Tyr's voice came over the communication system as expected once the life signs we detected slowly faded then disappeared on the pirate's ship. These pirates didn't just go after valuable cargo, they took entire crews and sold them into slavery, sexual and otherwise. These fuckers didn't deserve any of my mercy.

“Mighty Emperor, the mission is complete. By your guidance and strength, we have captured the xeno vessel, and all alien life aboard has been purged. It now flies under your glorious banner, as your will commands,” he reported from the vacuum of main engineering. As a robot, he didn’t need air to function properly. “This lowly one stands ready for your next directive, ever your faithful servant.”

“Tyr, your mission was a success, as I knew it would be. You have proven once again why you are among my chosen. Your deeds today will be remembered, but remember, my enemies are many, and your service is never truly done,” I spoke bombastically. “Continue to be my sword, and together, we shall purge the stars.”

I paused to allow my words of praise to sink in, knowing how much they likely meant to him.

“Sweep the ship from stem to stern for anybody alive that may be hiding from sensors. There are to be no survivors. Then gather up all the bodies in one place,” I ordered.

“Once your search is complete, restore life support so that B’Elanna and Neela can beam over. You are to protect them and assist them as needed.”

“Your will be done, my God!” Tyr replied, before he rushed to carry out my new orders.

I turned and as expected T'Maz was raising her eyebrow of doom.

“What?” I questioned, feeling a little defensive. “A successful mission like that means I’m happy to tell him ‘good work’ in whatever way he likes best. I’d do the same for any of you.”

T'Maz’s eyebrow lowered, and she returned her attention to her console.

Once the convoy’s ships were repaired and the *Fortune’s Fang* was fully secured, we’d get back on course for Kessik IV.

1. Lion King/Alladin/Pixar animated movies meant for children
2. Live-fire exercise