

a new dawn, a new day, a new life

Posted originally on the [Ad Astra :: Star Trek Fanfiction Archive](http://www.adastrafanfic.com/works/1020) at <http://www.adastrafanfic.com/works/1020>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	Gen
Fandom:	Star Trek: The Next Generation
Relationship:	Soren & William Riker , Soren & Original Character(s)
Character:	William Riker , Original Character(s) , Soren
Additional Tags:	Trans Female Character , Trans Male Character , Nonbinary Character , Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence , Starfleet Academy , Implied/Referenced Transphobia , Implied/Referenced Conversion Therapy , TNG S05E17: The Outcast , Fix-It
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2021-11-24 Completed: 2021-11-30 Words: 9,263 Chapters: 7/7

a new dawn, a new day, a new life

by [QuailFence](#)

Summary

Fix-it/AU for The Outcast. After escaping from her home planet, Soren attends Starfleet Academy, makes some new friends, and learns more about gender. While there, she learns that other J'Naii like her want to come to the Federation to escape the hostile environment at home.
(Fic is complete and will update once a day until all chapters have been posted)

Notes

Notes: Originally posted 24-30 Nov 2021. Like with the original, one chapter a day will be posted until the fic is finished. Original A/N: This was written for the 2021 Trans Trek Big Bang. If you'd like to read more of the works from that event check out the collection [here](#). Many thanks to [Sasa_Q](#) for running the event, to [Herenya_writes](#) for helping me hash out the outline/plot, to [EternalLibrary](#) for beta-ing, and to @MrDinoArt on Tumblr for doing the art for this fic.

Note on the warnings: the J'naii's transphobia is discussed a few times in the fic, in some detail. There also are/will be several references to police in chapters 1, 5, and 6. The psycothetic therapy from the episode is mentioned once in the first chapter. If there are any other tags/warnings that you think need to be added, let me know in the comments and I'll add the tag and (if necessary) update this author's note.

Very belated edit on 2023-09-11: Some of the things about how Starfleet Academy works comes from [The Not-So-Lost-Years](#) by PrarieDawn

Now, onto the fic!

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Chapter 1

“So,” said Will as they sat down in his quarters, “how did you find the Enterprise?”

“It was very nice,” Soren replied. “I particularly enjoyed ten-forward. Guinan is an interesting conversational partner, isn’t she?”

“That she is,” Will agreed, and then they lapsed into silence. They both felt as though there was some topic that needed to be addressed, though neither one of them knew exactly what it was or how to approach it. Finally, Will ventured as to what needed to be discussed by saying, “Earlier, on the shuttle, you said that your being a woman, it’s considered to be abnormal in your society.”

“That’s all true. Additionally, we — that is, those of us who have feelings of gender — are considered to be ill in our society.” She glanced at him. “I suppose that such people don’t exist within the Federation, given that you have gender.”

“Actually, that’s not exactly the case. While we do have gender in our society, sometimes the gender that is given to a child when they’re born isn’t their actual gender. Someone who’s assigned a girl could actually be a boy, and vice versa. There are also people assigned either gender who are something other than male or female.”

Soren considered his words. “And how are such people treated within the federation?”

“It’s considered normal, and it’s accepted among us. The process to legally change your name and gender is very easy, and medical treatments for those who want them are safe and widely available.”

“Do you have a term for it?”

“Yes. We call it...actually, on second thought, it might not translate accurately. Computer, turn off the translator,” Will said.

The computer beeped and responded with something in an unfamiliar language, presumably a confirmation. At the same time, a sort of buzzing or humming noise that Soren hadn’t even noticed before disappeared. He nodded, then turned to Soren and said, “transgender”

She repeated what he said.

Will shook his head and repeated the word again. “Transgender”

They went like that for a minute or so, Soren trying to say the word and Will shaking his head and repeating the word. Eventually he shrugged and said some more unfamiliar words to the computer. There was a beep and then, “Universal translator reactivated.” The buzzing returned.

Will looked at Soren, waiting for her to say something. When she didn’t, he continued.

“You might be interested to know that I’m one of those people — the ones whose gender given to them didn’t match up to their actual gender.”

“Really?” a stunned Soren replied.

“Yes,” Will responded, smiling.

“How did you figure that out?”

Will exhaled. “I was actually very young — about four or five — so I don’t remember much, but according to my father I didn’t like being called a ‘girl’ or ‘young lady’ or things like that, and would say stuff like ‘I’m a boy!’. Not that long after I started doing that, he asked me if I wanted to use a different name and pronouns, and to change my gender on official documents. I did, so he did that. That was all there was to that, and I’ve presented myself as a man ever since.”

After a pause, Soren began to speak. “In school, when we learned about how there used to be gender, but that we had risen past that, something about that idea struck me as odd. At first I dismissed the thought, but as we learned more about that period of time, I began to question the idea more thoroughly, and began to suspect that I might have gender. Eventually, I confessed my thoughts to a friend from the nets. They were sympathetic to those who had gender, and directed me to a hidden netgroup for them. There, I met more people like me and was able to confirm that I was female. I also learned that their—our—term for those who have gender is gender people.”

“Soren, do you know what political asylum is?”

She was surprised by the sudden change in topics but replied, “Yes”

“Based on what you’ve told me here, it seems likely that you’ll be able to apply for and get asylum from the Federation. That is, if you’d like to do so.”

She hesitated. “I’m not sure...”

“That’s all right. You can think about it for a while, okay?”

“I will.” She rose to leave. “I should be getting back to my quarters. I need to get some rest before we leave on our mission tomorrow.”

“You’re right. I should probably be getting to sleep soon as well. And if you do decide to pursue asylum—just tell me, okay?”

Soren nodded and left Will’s room.

At the reception, Riker was having a fascinating conversation with a fellow music enthusiast (it seemed that the J’Naii genre of kraiin bore a striking resemblance to Earth jazz music) when Soren ran up to him and said, “I want to pursue asylum.”

Riker excused himself from the conversation and gestured for them to go over to the side of the plaza, by some bushes. Once they were there Will asked, “What made you change your mind?”

“One of my friends told me that the council had somehow found out about my gender,” she said, breathless. “They said that they would put me on trial, and it’s extremely rare for the council to find someone innocent in those cases.” Soren was trying to stay calm, but Riker could see the panic that lay just below the surface.

“Okay. Do you want to leave now, or do you want some time to get prepared?”

“I think it would be best if I left now. I don’t have any antiques or anything that I’d want to bring with me, and all my friends and family can be notified of my decision via the nets. If you have the technology to do that, of course,” she added as an afterthought.

“I believe we do,” Riker responded as he tapped his combadge. “Riker to Enterprise, two to beam up.”

They were deposited in a swirl of blue lines onto the Enterprise. Riker stepped off the transporter pad and tapped his combadge again.

“Riker to Picard, I need to meet with you in your the ready room”

“Alright. Meet me there in ten minutes” Picard responded. Riker turned to the ensign standing by the transporter controls. “This is Soren. I need to talk to her for a minute. When I’m done, take her up to guest quarters 5.”

The ensign nodded. Riker turned back to Soren and said, “I’m going to talk with our captain, see if he’s willing to give you asylum and take you into Federation proper. In the meantime, Ensign Porel will take you to your guest quarters and show you how to use the technology there. If you have any questions, just ask him.”

“Alright,” Soren replied as she and Riker stepped off the transporter pad. She walked over to the ensign as Riker told him to take Soren to her quarters. He watched as they departed for the guest quarters, then turned to leave for his meeting with Picard.

Soren was reading some of the entries in the Enterprise’s databases when Riker walked in. She immediately turned and asked him, “What does the Captain say?”

“He’s willing to grant you asylum, but he wants you to talk to him first. There’s a few complications the three of us need to sort first before he can officially offer you political asylum.”

“Okay.” She stood up from her chair and went to Will. Together, they walked to the turbolift and went up to Picard’s office. Will pressed a button on the door and Soren heard Picard say,

“Come.”

Picard was sitting behind a desk that had a PADD on it. He smiled at her and said, “Greetings. I presume that you’re Soren?”

“I am. Will told me that he has already given you all the information I’ve told him about myself and how people like me are treated, what more do you need?”

“What I need isn’t related to how you are treated, I’ve already decided that there’s enough information for me to grant you political asylum. Rather, it is related to what we are here for in the first place.”

“The null space?”

“Exactly. You see, the other members of your party and I have agreed that the Enterprise will stay here for some time in order to chart the null space, in the hopes that a map of it will prevent the loss of any more ships. And if I officially grant you asylum now, it is very likely that your colleagues will refuse to continue working with us.”

Soren frowned. “But I can’t return to the surface—I would almost certainly get detained not long after I touched down.”

Picard nodded. “Which is why we need to come up with a plausible excuse for why you cannot return while we are charting the null space, without arousing the suspicions of any of your people.”

“Perhaps I could say that I need to help you with the scans, or help analyze the data that Will and I collected.”

“That sounds good. Once we are done with the charting, I will officially grant you asylum. Until then, consider yourself to be unofficially under the protection of the United Federation of Planets. I’ll send someone to your quarters in order to help you officially register as a Federation resident, and show you how to access government services. You’ll have access to the common rooms and databases of this ship. Have you been given a tour?”

“I have, but the Enterprise is so large I feel I might become lost.”

“You can always ask any of the crew or the computer for directions. Do you have any other questions?”

“Not at the moment.”

“Good. If you have any, you can look up the answers in the database or ask one of the crew. Welcome aboard.”

“Thank you for your assistance,” said Soren.

“You’re very welcome,” replied Picard.

Soren and Will left for the quarters she had been assigned. Soren was nervous, but less so than she had been earlier that day, and for a different reason. She was no longer in danger of being subjected to psychotectic therapy, and had turned her thoughts to what she would do now that she was a resident of the Federation.



² [Image ID: Digital fullshot drawing of Soren from TNG. She is in a darkened ten forward, with her hand stretched out to the window and looking out towards J'naii. The planet occupies half the window and is colored with blue, pink and white]

The Earth

Several weeks after Soren had come to Earth, she'd established a routine: get up, go to Standard and English classes, go to lunch, go to classes on Federation culture and history, run errands or go to the park, go home, eat dinner, read or watch a vid, go to bed. She shared her apartment with a pair of Bolian freelance artists, Jor and Les. They were rather close, but Soren was never able to figure out whether they were close friends, siblings, or lovers. She'd also kept up a regular correspondence with Will, keeping each other updated on their lives.

She quickly learned that while she wasn't required to give her pronouns when introducing herself, nearly everyone ended up using they pronouns for her until she corrected them. Eventually she got used to giving her pronouns when she introduced herself. Apparently this was because while pronouns and gender didn't have an exact correlation in English, they were related and Federation people don't want to make assumptions about one's gender, so people resorted to using they until they could find out what pronouns someone used. Soren had also begun to experiment with how she presented herself—she allowed her hair to grow long and began applying a bit of makeup. Usually it was just some blush and lipstick, but some days she also put on eyeshadow.

She didn't need to have a job, given that the Federation made sure that all its citizens had their basic needs met, but what they provided wasn't much more than the bare necessities, and Soren rather wanted more than the bare necessities. But more importantly, she wanted something to do. She wasn't taking as many Standard classes as she had been now that her skills had improved, and she had found herself bored. Of course, she could become a freelancer like her roommates, but the irregular hours and income weren't appealing to her—and quite frankly, she didn't particularly like the sorts of jobs that freelancers did. The question was: what should she do? Be an engineer? A physicist? A clerk?

Perhaps she could become a pilot—that was what she'd done before coming to the Federation, after all. Their shuttles, or at least the one she'd operated with Will, were quite similar to the ones she'd operated back home. Even accounting for the fact that those ships likely had their own quirks and counterintuitive things, Soren was fairly certain that she'd be able to learn how to operate them quickly and get her certification or license or whatever she'd need to get in order to fly them. Of course, this raised two further questions: how would she get that certification, and who would she work for?

The first question was easily solved by some quick research in the nets: there were local agencies that let you take lessons and exams to become a certified shuttle pilot, and many of the places that hired shuttle pilots were willing to train their new employees.

The second question was trickier. There were many places that hired pilots, and Soren didn't know which one she wanted to work for: a cargo transport company? One that carried passengers? A charter company? Perhaps even Starfleet?

The more she thought about that last possibility, the more sense it made to her. She already had experience with flying their shuttles, even if it was only a few flights. She also had a rough idea of what their culture and things like that were like, thanks to the four days she had spent on the Enterprise and Will's letters.

Having made up her mind to try and become a pilot for Starfleet, Soren sat down and looked up the requirements to join Starfleet. Apparently, there would be a written application, which if accepted would be followed by an in-person exam. If the candidate passed that, then they would be able to enter into the academy. It also noted that if someone from outside of the Federation wanted to enroll, they had to be sponsored by a command officer and get a letter of recommendation from them. Soren stared at the computer for several long moments looking at that requirement. She knew a command officer, Will, and she was fairly sure that he would be willing to sponsor her. Still, she hesitated. She'd only known Will for a few months, and generally speaking someone wouldn't sponsor a person that they'd only known for a few months for a position. Still, he was the only person she knew that could recommend her, aside from Picard, but Soren knew him even less than Will.

Well, there was only one way to find out if he would help Soren. She sat down to compose a message to Will.

Dear Will,

I hope you are doing well. I'm doing great. Last night I went to see a new play...

The message continued on like that for a while, giving updates on her life, and asking Will about his. Eventually, she got to the reason she was writing:

Will, I've given a lot of thought about what I'd like to do here. I've decided to go to Starfleet Academy to become a pilot, but in order to do that, I need you to sponsor me and write a letter of recommendation for me. Could you please do this for me?

Love, Soren

Three days later, she got a reply. It started out in the usual way, with stories about what the ship had been up to, some of which she suspected were fabricated (a child's imaginary friend becoming real? Really?) Then she got to the end of the message, and the part she most wanted to see:

I've attached a letter of recommendation to this message. I hope you are able to get into the Academy. Good luck!

Love, Will

The next day, she submitted her application.

Soren stared down at the message on her PADD: *Dear Soren ja Nesk ed Oonet, we are pleased to let you know that your application has been accepted, and you are eligible to participate in the in-person entrance exams. Below you will find the dates and locations that these are being held at. Please respond to this message with your first, second, and third choices of exam session.* She stared at the message, rereading it several times. She hadn't exactly been expecting her application to be rejected, and of course she still had to do the in-person exams, but it was still quite a happy moment to find out that it had been accepted. She then broke into an enormous grin. If she was close with anyone on Earth she'd be calling them right now with the news.

Three weeks later, Soren had passed the in-person exams with flying colors, and was now off to the Academy.

Welcome to Starfleet Academy

Soren stared around the lawn. There were hundreds of people, of many different species, milling around there. Most of them looked to be rather younger than her, but she couldn't say by exactly how much, given the different rates at which species aged and the fact that every planet had a different year-length. She walked over to a table with the sign "Re-U" over it, and got in line behind a Caitian and a Trill who were arguing with each other. Soren couldn't understand a single thing about it, even though it was in standard, because she had no idea what the topic of their argument was.

Finally, she got to the front of the line, where a bored-looking person wearing a cadet uniform sat. "Name that you plan to be addressed by," they said.

Soren told them, and they shuffled through the Padds in front of them. "Are you Jessie Soren, or Soren ja Nesk ed Oonet?"

"Ja Nesk ed Oonet."

The cadet took out a Padd. "You submitted your intake form and medical report ahead of time?"

"Yes."

"To the best of your knowledge, has any of the information on either form changed since you submitted them?"

"No."

"Federation Law and Starfleet regulations require me to remind you that you may modify your accommodation requests at any time, and that your superiors and instructors are required to accommodate those to the fullest extent that they are able. You may find more information in the school databases. Do you understand?"

"Yes"

"Do you have any other questions?"

"No."

The person handed Soren a lockbox and a bag. "Inside this bag is a uniform. Go inside that building over there. There should be signs pointing you to the changing rooms. Go in there and get your uniform on, and put all your personal belongings in the box—including your old clothes—and mark it with your name. When you get out of the changing areas, you'll find a place to put your bag and box. Once there, you will exit through a different door to an assembly field. Wait there for instructions. Understood?"

"Yes."

"Good."

Soren followed the person's instructions, and soon found herself in the assembly field. Since she didn't have anything else to occupy her time with, she simply looked around the field. It was only half full, but it was very loud already, as many students were talking to each other as a way to pass the time. Several were playing some sort of game with their hands. Soren couldn't make much sense of the conversations, as most of them were in languages that she didn't understand, and the few that were in Federation Standard were about topics she didn't understand. Other people were running around or examining the plants on the field's edge. Finally, after an indeterminable amount of time, a person walked up to the podium at the far end and called out, "Attention, cadets!"

The hall quickly quieted down, though Soren could still hear a few stray conversations.

"Welcome to Starfleet. My name is Vice Admiral Moreia zh'Kresh Varem, and I am the overseeing head of Starfleet academy. We are very glad that you have decided to join us in helping achieve our mission of exploration, diplomacy, and defense. By the time you graduate in four years, you will have learned all the skills necessary to become a Starfleet officer and be representatives of the Federation and Starfleet to other worlds. As such..."

The speech continued on like that for a few more minutes, and then Varem said, "I would now like to introduce Commodore Parelum Brown, Student Dean, who will tell you what your first few days at the academy will be like."

There was a smattering of applause as Admiral Varem gave the podium to a short, bald person.

"Hello to all of you. As Varem said, I'm Commodore Brown, the student dean here at the academy. I'm responsible for day-to-day operations at the academy, and as such I'll be giving you information and instructions.

"You will be assigned squads that consist of eight cadets. Each squad will be led by an upperclassman in the command track, who will then appoint one of the command cadets to be your squad's executive officer. In addition, you will each be assigned a buddy, who will also be your roommate. You must stay with your buddy at all times for the first two weeks. After two months the squads will be rearranged based on your performances and you will be allowed to pick a new roommate if you so desire. I will now be reading off the squads. Once I am done, you will leave through this path and look for your squad's designated meeting area. Do not leave until I say you are dismissed.

"Squad 1, leader Cadet Sedik, consisting of Cadets Mary Caldwell, Baru Falris, Guret..."

Soren listened to Brown list off the squads, learning that she would be in squad 12. In all, there were nearly a hundred squads, and she found her mind wandering to other things. It was also very hot, and many of the cadets began to fan themselves. Finally, after what seemed like hours but was probably no more than twenty minutes, Brown shouted out "Dismissed" and the cadets went over to the path.

The area where squad 12 met turned out to be a grassy clearing with benches in it. Soren was the first to arrive, so she sat down on a bench and waited for the other members of the squad to arrive. The first to show up was a handsome person who was shorter than her, but not by much, and had dark brown skin with short, curly black hair. They were wearing a yellow uniform. Soren figured that they were human, due to the fact that they had a smooth forehead and no other features that were alien to her, but she wasn't entirely sure.

"God, it's hot!" complained the person. "It's got to be at least twenty five degrees out there."

Soren converted the number in her head then nodded. "I know. I really wish that they'd held this stuff inside."

"Yeah, I wouldn't be surprised if there were a couple cadets who've already gotten taken to the med center for heatstroke."

"I'm told that it's been unusually warm for San Francisco in the fall this week, so hopefully it'll cool down. Still, it's a lot hotter than what I was used to on Betazed."

Soren perked up. "So you aren't from Earth, either?"

"Yep. Where are you from, if you don't mind me asking?"

"I'm from J'na."

"Never heard of it."

"It's not in the Federation."

The other person was about to say something, but they got cut off by someone else arriving who was also complaining about the heat.

More members of their squad tricked in, including a person who was slightly taller than Soren, and had choppy brown hair that went to about their chin. They were wearing a blue uniform and had medium brown skin. They were looking around nervously when they arrived, and when one of the other cadets tried to talk to them they muttered something and scurried over to one of the benches.

At long last, the squad's leader arrived. Soren was fairly sure that they were a Tellarite, with a wrinkly forehead, pale skin, flat nose with wide nostrils, and a beard and hair that was long, light, and shaggy. They were dressed in a red uniform like all the other cadets that Soren had seen at that point, however, they had a gold oval on their collar instead of the silver one everyone else wore.

“Alright, welcome to squad 12. My name and pronouns, as you probably saw on your introductory packet, are Orviq Kreli and she/he, but don’t call me anything but Cadet Orviq unless I tell you to. Our first order of business is to have you cadets introduce yourselves, names, pronouns, and what track you’re on. Afterwards, I’ll start teaching you the rules of conduct. Understood?”

There were mutters of assent from the group.

“Let’s try that again. Say “yes, Cadet Orviq” if you understand, and “no, cadet Orviq” if you don’t. Do you understand?”

“Yes, Cadet Orviq,” rang out from the cadets.

“Good. Alright, let’s start the introductions with you,” Orviq said, pointing at a tall, bald person to her right that had blue skin and ridges on their forehead—a Bolian, Soren thought. They stepped forward and said: “I’m Vengal, she/ey, and I’m on the engineering track.”

They continued to go around in a circle. When it was Soren’s turn, she said, “I’m Soren, she/her, and I’m a pilot.”

“Don’t you mean you’re studying to become a pilot?” Asked someone who hadn’t introduced themselves yet.

“Cadet, you’re being rude,” grunted Orviq. “I don’t think Soren wants to explain what brought her here to you.”

“No, it’s fine,” replied Soren. “I already was a pilot on my home planet when I came here, and now I want to learn how to operate Starfleet craft and become a pilot for them,” she explained. There was an awkward pause, then the person next to her cleared their throat and began to speak.

“My name’s Taris Brel, and, uh, I don’t really care what pronouns you use for me…”

The introductions continued on—Soren learned that the Betazoid who had complained about the weather was named Eimes Huzex, used he/him pronouns, and was going to be an engineer. He looked mildly annoyed at everything. The nervous person was Ynes Vega González, used mixed they/xe pronouns, and was going to become a medic. They seemed relieved once xe was done speaking.

Once the introductions were over with, Orviq began teaching the group the rules of conduct and basic drills. The session was rather long and boring, and the heat made things worse. The group wound up taking many breaks just so that they wouldn’t end up getting overheated.

“I think that taking all these breaks is making this session take longer,” complained Brel during one of those breaks.

Another member of the squad, a Vulcan named Sovak, raised an eyebrow and said. “Illogical. There is an allotted time for how long these exercises will take, and we will end at the same time no matter how much we manage to get through.”

“Easy for you to say,” Brel grumbled back. “This heat is probably on the cool side for Vulcan.”

Eimes leaned back and sighed. “I don’t even want to be here.”

“What? Why?” Vengal asked

“My parents wanted me to join. My mom thought that being in Starfleet would ‘allow me to demonstrate my skills on a broad scale’, whatever that meant, and my dad agreed. So they pressured me to sign up. I’m planning on quitting as soon as I can.”

Vengal opened eir mouth to say something, but at that moment Orviq announced that their break was over. The group stood up and got back to their exercises.

Finally, after what seemed like hours, Orviq announced, “You guys are done for today. I’m going to give out your room assignments, and then you can go.” There were a few scattered cheers. Orviq cleared his throat and began to read off the assignments. “Everyone will be on the second floor of building one. Sovak and Park, room 212. Brel and Humex, 213. Soren and Vega Gonzalés, room 214. Vengal and Patterson, room 215. Dismissed.”

Well, Soren thought, as she jogged to the dorms with the rest of the squad, I’m pretty open, but Ynes seems pretty shy and jumpy. Maybe once we get a chance to talk one on one with each other, they’ll open up more. Or maybe xe won’t. Either way, this is going to be interesting.

New friendships, and other things at the Academy

Chapter Notes

Original A/N: Apologies for today's update being a bit late!

It was a few weeks later, and Soren and Ynes were in their room. Ynes was reading and Soren was writing a paper. When she finished, she turned to Ynes and asked her, "Could you explain Human gender to me?"

Ynes looked up from their book. "Why?"

"I'm just curious. I know a little bit, but I want to know more. You don't have to tell me if you don't want to, of course."

"No, uhm, I'm fine. So, how much do you know already?"

"You have male and female genders, as well as some others. Children are given a gender when they are born, but may identify as something else as they age."

"That's a good start. Uhm, the first thing to know is that historically and nowadays Earth has a lot of variety in cultures, and that each one tends to view gender somewhat differently, right? But the way gender typically works is that, uh, like you said, kids are given a gender when they're born. But there's also, ah, some parents who don't do that, and let their kids choose their own gender when they get older. Does that make sense?"

Soren nodded.

"Right. So, uh, like I said, Earth has a lot of cultures, and how gender works in each one is a bit different. But generally there's a male gender and a female gender, and one or more other genders, which vary between cultures. Er, in Western cultures, these genders are usually lumped under the term non-binary, and uh, like I said, there's a lot of them. Some people might, uh, feel like they're partially but not fully connected to a binary gender. Others might feel like they have a neutral gender, or no gender, or that they transcend gender. Uh, and there's some people that think of their gender in terms of, like, objects and feelings and concepts and such. Er, that's all I can think of right now. Is that good?"

"That's fine. Thank you for telling me all that."

"Yeah, 's fine." Ynes shifted in her seat and hesitated. "Uh, if you're okay with it, could you explain how gender on your planet works?" Ynes and Soren were both surprised that Ynes had said this, and they hastily added, "you, uhm, didn't have to do that or uh, you're not comfortable, or don't want to, or—"

"No, it's fine," Soren said, raising a hand. "I'm willing to explain. For the J'naii, we are taught that there used to be gender but it doesn't exist anymore. However, there are some people who find that they do in fact have a gender." Soren paused to see if Ynes was going to say anything. She didn't, so Soren continued. "Most are male or female, but there are a few who are both, or shift between genders—we call them changers. All of them live their lives in secret, as the vast majority of people consider them to be ill." Again, she paused to see if Ynes would comment. Again, they said nothing. "I am one of those people. I am female." This gained a reaction from Ynes, who stammered, "Oh—so that's why you want—, uhm that's why you're interested in Human gender?"

Soren nodded. "Gender people, as we call ourselves, are able to meet each other in groups on the nets, but we generally don't meet up physically due to fear of getting caught by police. In addition, we are taught very little at school about what gender was like before it was abolished. We are simply told that it used to exist, that people were male or female, and that it was abolished during the disaster that brought the current system of government into power. This means that I know very little about how gender works, and that I would like to learn more about it."

"Oh." Ynes leaned back. "Well, um, if you want to learn more, I can tell you where to look?"

"Thank you," Soren said with a smile, and she went back to her homework.

About a month later, Soren learned from Ynes that there was a group for transgender students at the Academy, and she decided to go to their next meeting, thinking that it would help her learn more about gender. The cadets were finally allowed to spend their free time how they could, and the squads had been rearranged as promised. Soren and Ynes were in the same squad and had decided to continue being roommates. The classroom they were all in was crowded, with people in every part of the room, but not packed—Soren was easily able to move between the clusters of talking students. The room had been rearranged slightly so that there were two semicircles of chairs at the front of the room, with desks and extra chairs pushed to the back. There was a table of snacks near the back that many of the students were crowded around. As Soren walked through the groups, she heard students talking about politics ("I mean, I know we've got that peace with the Cardassians, but we never fully settled those border issues, so I'm not sure how long it's going to last"), their classes ("Everyone said that Professor Barrow is nice, but they don't say that vir classes are *really* demanding"), and love lives ("I mean, Maxie is nice and all, but I don't think we have enough in common to justify continuing to go out together").

Suddenly, she noticed that Eimes was at the other end of the room. She jogged over to him, calling out "Humex!" He turned toward her and was about to say something when the person at the front of the room called out, "Alright, everyone, let's get this meeting started!" The group scrambled to find chairs. Soren wound up sitting between Ynes and a Trill. The person at the front began to speak, saying, "Okay everyone, looks like we've got a few new people, so why don't we all introduce ourselves and then we can get to business." *Guess I'll have to see if I can talk to Eimes after the meeting*, Soren thought as the person at the front introduced herself.

After the person (Wong Varis, he/they) was finished with the meeting, Soren got out of her seat to go to Eimes, and Ynes followed along.

"Soren! Ynes!" Eimes exclaimed when he saw the pair. "Glad to see you two here."

They muttered their thanks and got to talking. Well, it was more like Soren and Eimes talked and Ynes listened in. Soren had gotten to know her better, but they were still quite shy around others.

"So, what brings you here?" asked Eimes.

"Oh, I wanted to learn more about how gender works, and how people of other species view it," she explained. "I also think that it would be a good way to meet others like myself. How about you?"

"I also want to meet other trans students, maybe make a few friends. How about you, Ynes?"

"I've been here, uh, three times? Once near the start of the year, to see what it was like, once a few weeks later because they had a speaker I was interested in, and now because Soren wanted me to come along."

"Say, we're all in the same squad aren't we?" asked Soren

"Yeah. It's a bit of a happy coincidence, isn't it? At least, I doubt it was intentional. So, how are your classes going?"

"Fairly well, but I'm having some trouble with history."

"Really? I've found that to be pretty easy."

"Well, you *are* from a Federation world, after all."

"I suppose that's true. What else do you like to do?"

They continued chatting for a good while, with Ynes jumping in from time to time. Soren learned that Eimes liked to write poems, that he had two sisters, and that he enjoyed playing a Betazed sport called kekeaw. They also learned that Ynes was a good cook, but couldn't bake to save their life. The group talked for nearly an hour, and Soren found herself growing quite fond of Eimes. They only stopped when Eimes checked the time and realized that he needed to get to his dorm and work on homework. They exchanged good-byes, and Soren and Eimes exchanged room and comm numbers.

Hello from an old friend, and a chat with a new one

Chapter Notes

Warning: this chapter contains a brief discussion of death of a sibling. If you want to skip that part, skip the end of the chapter starting from “Ynes nodded, then frowned”

One day, not that long after the trans students group meeting, she returned to her room from her classes to see that someone was calling her. She accepted the call, and the screen filled with the face of someone that she hadn't seen in a long time.

“Joset? Is that you?”

Soren had met Joset at a secret gathering for gender-people, the first one she'd ever attended. He'd approached her, a young woman who was scared at the prospect of being able to meet those like her for the first time. He'd introduced himself and helped put her at ease, after many different people had stressed the need to keep the true purpose of the meeting secret. They chatted for a bit, and then Joset explained why he'd called

“Soren, I'd like to try and claim federation asylum, like you did”

“Why? Do you think that someone has found out about your gender and is going to turn you in?”

“No, but Soren, things are getting worse here. After you escaped, several more people left, and the government started cracking down more on us. They went looking through the nets, encouraging people to turn in tips, stuff like that. That only encouraged more people to leave, which caused the government to crack down more, and so on and so forth. It's getting to the point where the mainstream media is starting to comment on it, but it hasn't become a big deal yet. They haven't targeted me specifically yet, but I'm pretty sure it's only a matter of time.”

“Has anyone else in our friend group gotten captured?”

“The police came to Resel's house but he was on vacation, thank Aasem, so he was able to escape from them. She's in hiding now but is trying to get to Trill, where she's got connections — I don't know the details. Mores is trying to get asylum from the Klingons, Aasem knows why. Maris says she wants to go too but she just had a kid with Jorel and —”

“Wait, Maris and Jorel have a kid now?”

“Yeah, Jeska, they're very sweet, I've heard. Anyways, Jeska isn't old enough to travel yet, and she doesn't want to leave them behind, and Maris told me that Jorel has contacts at their job which means that they would be less likely to get found out.”

“You said that you wanted help getting asylum?” Soren asked, reminding Joset of why he'd called.

“Oh, yeah. Right. I was just wondering what the process was like for you, if you could put in a good word for me, that sort of thing.”

“Well, the process is going to be a bit different for you, since I was taken in by a starfleet vessel and you'll have to go out on your own.

She turned and yelled, “Hey, Ynes! Do you happen to know how to apply for asylum when you aren't on a starship?”

Ynes went over and said, “I'd, er, have to check to see what exactly you'd need to do, but, uh, first you'd need to get to an, uhm, federation starbase. Right, so, you won't be able to do that directly, of course, you'd have to go through, uh, Reqli or somewhere like that. Once there you'd need to, er, find a Starfleet officer, or something, and tell them you'd like to, uh, pursue asylum.”

Ynes continued to explain the process to Joset, occasionally pausing to let him write something down or ask a question. Once he was finished, Soren took over and explained what he'd have to do to get settled in the Federation.

“I can help you with all that, if you like—I had to do many of those things when I arrived here, and I still have some contacts.”

“Thanks for all your help—you can just send those contacts to me in a message and I'll just look at them when I have some time. Also,” here he paused and thought for a few seconds, “If I know of anyone else who's planning on going to the Federation, should I send your information to them? It'll probably be only about three or four people.”

“Oh, yes, that would be good—I'd love to help any other gender people who want to escape J'Na.”

“Great! Hopefully I'll see you soon. Goodbye!”

“Goodbye,” Soren said as the screen blinked out. *Well*, Soren thought, *That's that*. She figured that helping just a few more people wouldn't take up that much more of her time, and that she wouldn't have any more people asking for her help on that matter

How very wrong she turned out to be.

“So,” Eimes was saying, “It's a pretty simple matter of making sure that the submatrix diodes are aligned with the routing conduits before initializing a plasma vent. But if you don't do that, then your shuttle will explode. Does that help?”

“Yes,” Soren replied. She and Eimes were in the library, with Eimes helping her study for her class on spaceship design. It was a quiet night, and not that many people were around.

Eimes nodded and began working on his PADD, but then hesitated and stopped.

“Do you have something on your mind?” asked Soren.

“Not really,” he replied as bent down to start working again. After a few seconds of staring at the screen he looked back up and conceded, “Well, actually, yes. I've told you why I joined Starfleet in the first place, right? About my parents?”

Soren nodded. “You did. What about it?”

“I initially was planning on quitting the Academy program, but now I'm finding that I actually like my classes and the Academy in general. It's a weird feeling, and now I'm seriously considering staying in Starfleet and eventually joining the crew of a ship.”

“Oh!” Soren took a few moments to figure out how to respond. “Well, I hope that you make the choice that you think is right for you. And if you do end up deciding to stay in Starfleet.”

“Thanks,” Eimes nodded.

Eimes did eventually decide to stay, and Soren was surprised to realize that she felt relieved at his choosing to stay. *I'll have to think about this later*, she thought.

Several nights later Soren and Ynes were working on their homework together.

“So, what are you doing for your history assignment?” asked Soren.

“I'm, uh, studying how the Xindi attacks affected the Federation and its charter,” replied Ynes

“I'm not sure what to do for mine—I'm still a little confused by everything they talked about in today's lecture.”

“What do you mean?”

“It seems like they expected us to know more stuff about history than I knew. Like, they would just assume we knew who some guy was, and why they were famous, then go on to just talk about that person without checking to see if we already knew who they were.

“Oh. Uh, didn’t you take some history classes when you arrived on Earth, or something?”

Soren paused to collect her thoughts, then began to speak. “Yeah, and they accepted those courses as fulfilling the requirement for entry here, but those were pretty basic. They only covered the big stuff, the things that Federation people would know about and reference in their daily lives, but they didn’t really go into details. So when the teacher starts to assume I already know the details because I studied them a year or two ago in a school course, and just need a reminder of them, I get lost.”

Ynes nodded, then frowned “I don’t understand why they have the medics study history—I mean, I know ‘those who don’t study history are doomed to repeat it’, or however that goes, but I just don’t understand how or why that applies to medics an’ why we have to study history.” They sighed and flopped on the bed. “Honestly, if they didn’t require us to take history classes, then the sooner we can get to actual med classes, the sooner we can get certified and graduate.”

Soren smiled. “Anxious to get out there and help people, then?”

“Basically, yeah.” Ynes rolled around on the bed to get a better view of Soren. “Honestly, it’s a bit more personal than that. See, four years ago, my brother died.”

“Oh. I’m sorry.”

“Thanks.” Ynes smiled sadly. “He died of an injury. They said that the odds were pretty slim—but, I had this feeling that I couldn’t do anything about it, and that if I’d been able to help, then maybe he’d have lived.” Xe gave a hollow laugh. “Madre de dios, that sounds stupid, but that’s why I want to be a medic. So that other people wouldn’t die like Enrique did—that was his name, Enrique”

“Oh,” Soren said. “I’m sorry.”

“Thanks.” Ynes sat up and got off the bed. “Ehm, I suppose we should get back to our history assignment, yeah?”

“Sure. Do you have any ideas for what I could do?”

“Hm. Well, you could do something on the Klingon war...”

Calling for help

Dear Soren,

I want to ask for your assistance in securing asylum for myself and my partner. We are...

Dear Soren,

I'm a forty one year old male who realised that he was a gender person last year. Since then I have become increasingly worried that I'll be found out...

Dear Soren,

I'm desperate for your help. A few years ago I revealed my status to my friend, who initially took it well. Two weeks ago, however...

Dear Soren,

I know you've probably never met me before, but I need to get off J'na, and I was told that you could help. I'm a changer who...

Soren stared at the number of letters on her view screen. It had been mere months since she had escaped from J'Na, and an even shorter amount of time had passed since she had helped Joset get out as well. During that time several more J'Naii had wanted to leave and go to the Federation, and she'd helped them also. Those people had then sent messages with her contact information to others who wanted to leave, who had then contacted her. Soren was also fairly certain that her info had been posted to a messageboard on the nets at some point. Now there were dozens of people sending messages to her, and she could barely find the time to help with them all.

She was in the middle of composing a message to one of the people when Ynes got a call. Soren ignored it, and was finished with that message and had just started another when Ynes hung up, turned to her and said, "Hey, Jeval wants to know if we can come to -"

"I can't."

They frowned. "You haven't even heard what the thing is yet. Or when it is."

"I'm drowning in all these messages from other gender people who want help leaving and coming to the Federation. Add homework and studying for exams on top of that, and I barely have time for anything else."

Ynes stared at Soren for a few seconds then said, "I knew that there were lots of people who wanted your help, but I didn't realise that it was eating into your schedule so much. From what I remember when that other guy called, you only expected there to be a few people. Just how bad is it there?"

"People escaping, and police cracking down because of it, has happened before, but usually the cycle would be over by now. But this time—people are leaving in droves, and though I haven't been keeping up much because of school and helping others escape, I've heard that some of the remaining gender people are starting to talk about being more open and demanding rights."

"Just how many people are leaving? And—why is it this bad?"

"Today I've got about four messages from people wanting my help, but usually it's more like six, seven, or eight. It seems like every gender person on J'Na is either trying to leave, hide, or organise something. As to why it's this bad—I don't know. Maybe it's because the Federation is now getting involved, as far as I can tell they didn't know about the gender people before Will and I met." Soren sighed. "I want to ask someone to help me with this thing, but I'm not sure who to talk to, or how I want them to help."

Ynes chewed xir lip. "I think you, uh, might want to talk to Professor Rensgar."

"Who?"

"One of my teachers. We recently learned about some similar stuff in class, and I think she could help you."

"Do you know when her office hours are?"

"Honestly? For something like this, you, uh, might want to set up an appointment for sometime outside of classes. This might take a while."

Soren agreed, and the two managed to set up an appointment with the professor for that weekend.

The time for Soren and Ynes's appointment with Professor Rensgar arrived—ten o'clock on Saturday—and the two friends found themselves being invited into Rensgar's office.

"So, you two said that a lot of people from Soren's home planet were contacting her due to some sort of crisis. Can you tell me exactly what is going on?"

The duo explained to her what Soren had told Ynes. When they finished, Rensgar asked several questions about what Soren had already done to try and reduce her workload, then said "Soren, I hate the idea of putting more work on your plate, but I the best idea I can think of in this moment is to contact some of the other—what did you call them?"

"Gender people."

"Right, thank you. I think you should contact some other gender people, both ones that are still on J'na and ones that have left, and see if they have an estimate for how many people are leaving. I'll then see if I can get the ear of some higher-ups in Starfleet, we might be able to work something out."

"Can I have my friends help? And do you have any ideas about what I should do in the meantime?"

"Sure, having your friends help would be a good idea—it would help reduce the workload that you have. As for what to do in the meantime—do you think that any of your friends could help with that?"

"Maybe. I'll see what they can do."

The professor exhaled. "I know it's not a very good solution, but it's the best one I can think of at the moment." She glanced at the clock. "I have to leave in a couple minutes, so I'll just wrap things up right now. If our initial plan fails to produce any meaningful results, then we can get together again to try and think up more ideas. And if you can think of a better idea in the meantime, please let me know."

"That sounds doable. Thank you for your help."

"You're welcome. And Soren?"

"Yes?"

"I'll try and help you avoid this as much as possible, but you might end up having to ignore and delete some of the messages from people asking you for help."

Soren swallowed. "I understand. Goodbye."

She and Ynes left to contact their friends to get together with them and try to figure out how to implement the plan that Rensgar had come up with.

Epilogue

Four years later

Soren was milling about the reception for new graduates when she heard a familiar voice shout her name.

"Will!" she yelled as they walked toward each other. "I didn't expect to see you here."

"The Enterprise is in for repairs, so we've all got a few days of shore leave. I decided to spend one of them here. Congratulations, by the way. Where have you been posted?"

"I've been assigned to the Attenborough under Captain Wong—it's one of the new ships. Do you know her?"

"I knew Wong back at the Academy, she was a year ahead of me. She was a good student, but I'm afraid I haven't kept up with her since she graduated. What about your friends? Where are they going?"

"Ynes and Eimes have also been assigned to the Attenborough. Andy's been posted to Starbase Twelve, and Meg's going to the Penumbra."

"Well, it sounds like you've been doing good for yourself." He paused, then asked, "and how are things on J'Na?"

"Well, I'm told that things are starting to change. There are organized groups advocating for the gender people, and some people have started to live more openly. The police raids have slowed, and while there are still some refugees, their number has slowed too."

"That's very good!"

"Yes. I think that this is the start of a new era for the gender people—we're finally working to try and get our rights."

"And how are your friends doing?"

"Joset's just started working at a clinic in Moscow, and he really likes his work. Resel's work on Trill has continued to be good. Mores' poetry is doing very well on Qo'nos and apparently there's a lot of Klingon ladies who want to court him. Maris and Jorel and Jeska are doing well, and Maris and Jorel just had another kid. Their name's Opinsa."

"So, how are you feeling about graduation?"

Soren smiled. "I'm a bit sad that I won't be able to see some of my friends as much, but mostly I'm excited that I'll finally be able to be an actual pilot for Starfleet, and that I'll be able to meet other species."

Riker grinned. "Well, based on what I know about you, I think that the fleet will be very lucky to have you as a pilot."

"...thank you."

"You're very welcome."

Riker raised his glass. "To new adventures?"

"To new adventures."

They clinked their glasses together.

END

End Notes

Original ending A/N: [Here's a link to the art for this fic on Tumblr](#)

Let me know what you think! Comments, kudos, and constructive criticism are all greatly appreciated.

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!