

## Differences That Bind

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### Summary

Jory reflects on their kinship with the senior crew.

Jory had always been nervous about joining Starfleet and being assigned to a crew for a long haul voyage. While they didn't have to worry about being discriminated against for their queer identity—it wasn't the 21st century, after all—it was never easy being different from everyone else. But when they were assigned to the *Jemison*, they were pleasantly surprised by their colleagues and superiors.

Ijeoma Okoro, the commanding officer of the *Jemison*, was a Black lesbian. Having a queer captain automatically made Jory feel more at home, but it wasn't just her. The ship's chief engineer, Nors, was a trill. By the nature of bonded trill, they had effectively transitioned their gender at least five times. And the chief medical officer, Keytal, was a J'naii. Their species was known for being entirely androgynous and having no need for gender expression.

None of these people were the same as Jory. They were all queer, yes. But none of them were the same type of queer. As an asexual, Jory found it hard to relate their sexuality to Ijeoma's, or any of the other members of the crew for that matter. Nors had lived lifetimes as male or female, and now lived as female, while Jory had never been just one or the other. Jory was most similar to Keytal at first glance—neither of them were on the gender binary. But where Keytal was of *no* gender, Jory was multiple genders simultaneously. Under a microscope, they were actually polar opposites.

Jory was different from all of them. But there was a difference between the differences in this crew and Jory's Academy cohort. At the Academy, Jory's cohort had a sameness that Jory didn't share with the rest. Jory was different from them. An island off the coast of the mainland. But here—*everyone* was different. Different from each other, so that every one of them was their own island. And when everyone was an island, they could form an archipelago.

The differences between Jory and the rest of the senior staff felt welcoming instead of isolating. That was what Jory felt was important about diversity—it wasn't about finding people like you. It was about finding the right differences. The kind of differences that bind, not divide.

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