

The Broad Pendant

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The Broad Pendant

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Summary

At the end of the 23rd century, it is a time of great uncertainty in the Federation and beyond. The Khitomer Peace Accords have been signed between the Federation and the Klingon Empire. There is a very uneasy peace along the Neutral Zone, both the Klingon section and the Romulan.

Klingon Separatists, who don't recognize the Khitomer Accords, have begun to maraud on both sides, hoping to spark a galaxy-wide war.

In the previous year, an accident with a mysterious energy field has claimed the life of one of Starfleet's greatest heroes. An officer who was a witness to that tragedy, as well as at the center of the Enterprise-B's engagement with Klingon separatists, has come home to the border.

To lead one of the small units of small ships that are on the frontlines of a growing cold war.

Small ships filled with larger than life crewmembers, who are either born to this work, or would desperately rather be exploring the larger galaxy.

Or somewhere in between.

Notes

Author's Note: This is the product of a plot bunny that has been in my head for years. Some astute readers may recognize one character from Vonda N. McIntyre's novel, *The Entropy Effect*, as well as the hint of another character from that work.

All Deltan world building is my own, as well as some fleshing out from another seminal Start Trek novel, *Dwellers in the Crucible*, by the late Margaret Wander Bonanno.

Hope you enjoy. Please feel free to comment!

Thanks to SLWalker for the encouragement and Asp for the great discussions of ST novels.

green service uniform and green beret of the Rapid Deployment Force looks up at her. He manages to keep his expression even, with the usual resting-jarhead-face of those who wear the green beanie. She is sure that he isn't used to seeing a Deltan wearing the triple bars of a full captain on the strap of her service dress uniform.

At least not one at a Border Patrol Division FOB.

She gazes at the marine, wondering what he sees when he is eyeing her for concealed photon torpedoes or some such. She hopes that she is all squared away in the uniform that she doesn't usually wear much, not in the last year or so. And wouldn't much more, where she is going.

He would see a young woman with the ageless face of her people, with slightly darker skin than most, coupled with gray-blue eyes. His eyes grow less expressionless as his gaze falls on the long scar running the length of the right side of her smooth skull. Something like sympathy shows in the militarily correct stare. Something that she doesn't want.

Mandala Flynn, her godmother, and a product of the Fleet Security Force as well as the Border Patrol, wouldn't stand too much on ceremony. Particularly for someone who was the adopted daughter of a woman that she holds dear, as well as a someone just nominated for the Federation Medal of Honor.

And whose skull under that scar had to be basically grown back in place, after a strike from a Klingon bat'leth—an instant before she had jammed the other end of the weapon into the throat of its owner, a rogue warrior who hadn't been as accepting of the Khitomer Accords as some.

As she turns to nod at the jarhead, a dry voice comes into her head, the product of a long-ago Vulcan mindmeld, that had saved the essence of someone that she had loved.

You've got this, t'hy'la

She shoves T'varilyn's voice aside, not even bothering to think of the bearer of the other half of that essence. One that she had sworn that she would never think of again.

He felt the same way.

She walks through the door into an outer office. A yeoman stands there. She snaps to attention, but since they aren't wearing dress whites with the accompanying hat, she doesn't salute.

She gives Chandra a professional once over. Apparently she isn't found wanting, especially by one that wears a star inside the hollow square of her insignia, marking her as a Master Chief, the most senior non-warrant or non-fully commissioned rank of crewmember. She nods, apparently not moved by what Chandra, in her slight apprehension is projecting, and opens an intercom.

"Captain Chandra reporting as ordered, Commodore."

There is a muffled word over the speaker. The woman nods and gives her slight smile.

"Thanks, Master Chief," she says. She moves through the hatch.

Behind her, Annabeth Gisdon watches her enter. *Not what she wanted. Nor is it what her foster-mother or godmother wanted either.*

She breathes out, still trying to shake the overspill from the young woman's nervousness, if that's what it is.

There might be a certain engineering Master Chief on the divisional flagship Aerfen who might be benefitting from that 'nervousness' in the ship's night.

Mandala Flynn rises from behind her desk and walks over. She ignores the ever-present burble of the familiar pheromones, what was known as the Thread, among those who possessed them. She is used to them, even though these seem more powerful than usual. She sees Chandra's wary features finally ease into something approaching joy at the sight of her godmother.

On a face that was born to show joy.

Mandala eschews the outstretched hand and pulls the taller woman into her arms. She places her lips against Chandra's cheek. She feels Chandra's body relax.

Even more when she places her lips against the closest end of the evil, mostly-healed scar on the side of her head.

"It's good to see you, Brat," she says.

Chandra smirks. "That's Captain Brat, to you," she says, touching the delta with the four pips on it on her chest.

"I can still turn you over my knee," Mandala warns. She smirks and touches the single square-haloed pip on her own delta.

"Nope. Starfleet regs forbid it."

Mandala laughs and turns to the side-table. She pours a healthy slug of the crimson liquid from the traditional horn-shaped decanter into two glasses. "They also forbid an issue of spirits on naval vessels or installations, but here we are."

Chandra shares a laugh and holds the glass up in toast. "Up the 'fleet."

"And down the hatch," Mandala replies.

They both sit on the couch, looking out at the landing field for all classes of the Cohort-equipped cutters that are the backbone of the Border Patrol groups

In addition to an ancient gunboat. One that Chandra's foster mother had made her name in, so many decades ago.

"Before we do anything," Chandra says quietly in her slightly smoky alto voice. Mandala knows what is coming.

"My oath of celibacy is on record."

Mandala exhales. "I know you take that seriously Chan. But not even Starfleet takes it seriously. Especially in the Border Patrol. It's outdated."

Chandra says nothing. Mandala sighs and nods. "While you were recuperating, did you at least get to see Dayla and Ren? The kids?"

She shakes her head quickly. Her body language says that the subject is closed.

Mandala had never been one to follow body language, at least when it pertained to the ones she loves. "Goddammit, Chan, you need that connection. Your partners love you, as do your bond-children. You can't go on unconnected, especially after the injury you took."

Her reply is as dry as Vulcan's Forge, where she knows that Chandra had spent a great deal of time, with her late partner and the one that unmentioned one. "I'm fine."

The reply is as final as it is dry.

With an added question she'd been expecting.

"What the fuck am I doing here?"

Mandala closes her eyes and says nothing in reply for a moment. "You're one of the youngest full captains in the Fleet."

"Well, I was expecting to be one of the youngest starship captains in the Fleet. I thought what I had done as XO of the *Enterprise-B* was enough to get me that ship, when Harriman was relieved."

"Well, Fleet Ops had a different idea. We need competent captains out here on the frontier. The Klingon part of the border has calmed a bit, thanks to what you and *Enterprise* had done with that nest of the so-called Klingon Free Systems."

"So nearly getting my brains splattered on the sand in a KFS arena wasn't enough to get me that ship?"

Mandala continues to say nothing. She doesn't even consider telling her who the Admiralty had given the *Enterprise-B* to.

Or rather who they had given her back to.

"So what is my assignment?"

"They haven't told you? Your orders don't say?"

"Just that I'm assigned to the 1st Division of the Border Patrol." She stops at Mandala's look.

Chandra's face falls. "You're giving me the 17th, right? Or what's left of them." She curses. "The same goddamned group that I nearly got wiped out when I got this!" She angrily swipes at the lengthwise scar on her head.

"They need you, Chan. You've shown you can take hardcase ships or units and turn them around."

"And what about Kaylin? I recommended her as taking over the Group."

Mandala shakes her head. She takes a breath, then releases it before saying what needs to be said. "She wasn't ready," she says. "Patrol gave her the HQ squadron, the 23rd."

Chandra's eyes flash more brilliant blue than gray. "So she's going to be stuck on the command-and-control cutter with me? Just fucking perfect," she says through gritted teeth. "You take the woman who is the daughter of a woman that I respect more than few others, the woman who made sure that I was raised in a good home, even when my birth family felt like I was too much of a threat to their 'place', and I have to command her on the same goddamned ship? The one by rights she should have, along with the rest of the Group?"

Mandala looks at her even, but her words come out like darts. "Are you through, Captain?"

Chandra looks away, her face returning to its usual bronze color. She slumps, then braces at attention. "I'm sorry, Commodore. I know I should be grateful."

"No, you should salute and carry on. I know what you can do. You're going to probably be in an undeclared war with the Klingon Free Systems, as well as having to deal with whatever they're stirring up with the Romulans. And you're going to do it shorthanded. You're down a ship in your squadron, and you don't have the other two squadrons here yet."

Chandra says nothing, but remains braced. "But you're not the only one shorthanded. I've taken over the division. I should have nine groups, plus your special operations-capable group. Instead, I have six, including yours. And not a single one of them has the twelve cutters they should have in them. Everybody wants to 'explore strange new worlds' in an *Excelsior* or even a *Miranda*. In addition to commanding the 17th, I'm going to have to ask you to take over one of the wings. A commodore's billet, going to a newly minted post-captain."

She grins, then pulls Chandra up. Once again she finds herself holding the younger woman tightly.

“Go on to the Sunset Grille. You don’t officially report to your ship until in the morning. I’m sure that Agon and Theelia would give you some time.” She gives Chandra a devilish look. “And neither of them are Starfleet anymore, so that silly-ass oath doesn’t apply.”

As she comes awake in the low light of the morning, Chandra tries to remember where she is. She had just felt the bat’leth slice into her skull and skin when she had come awake to something else.

She hears a slight snoring sound. Her eyes move up the broad blue back of the Andorian male lying against her body, but flat on his stomach. Her eyes lock on Agon Zh’qithiq’s ass; she reaches over and runs her hand over the cooler skin.

She hears a snort from near the window. A woman of her own people stands there; her pheromones cut through Chandra, activating her own. She takes care to mask her own.

Theelia er Sotornal, gazes at her with laughing, dark amber eyes. She moves over to the empty side of the bed, kneeling on to it. She reaches down and pulls Chandra’s lips up to hers.

When they finally give up breathing for one another, Chandra takes a look at the chrono. “I hate to do this, Thee,” she says.

“But you have to go,” Thee answers for her.

“Yeah. Big day. Even bigger than I thought it would be.”

“Yeah. I know. Command of a wing instead of a group.”

Chandra’s eyes widen. She wonders how the hell a bar owner knows Starfleet personnel assignments.

She is about to reply and admonish that ‘loose lips do something, something,’ as she is distracted by Theelia’s, when she hears a loud whooshing sound.

One that she knows all too well.

She shoves Agon off the bed and tackles Theelia to the floor behind the bed.

The transparisteel of the bedroom’s picture window explodes. She feels lances of steel entering the back of her legs, as well as a place north of there.

She jumps up as she hears more explosions, ignoring the pain. She manages to grab her tunic while pulling up her underwear; she fumbles with the tunic, until she feels the communicator in an inside pocket. She pulls it out and opens it. She runs through the callsigns that she had glanced over on the way to the FOB and says, “Banshee Command, this is Banshee Actual.”

“This is Banshee One,” says a woman’s voice she recognizes, with a thick English accent. She smiles.

“This is Chandra. Authentication code Alpha-Omega-Gamma-301, Alpha-Bravo-Zulu-667.

The computer’s electronic voice cuts in. “Computer recognizes Chandra, Captain verification code 000. Welcome, Banshee Actual.”

“What’s the situation?” she asks as she manages to throw on the tunic, at least.

“We’re under attack. Unknown gunboats, but they’re hitting the unsheltered revetments first.”

“What of our group?”

“Only the HQ squadron is here. Shields are holding and the engines are spooling up.”

“Drop shields and get me aboard the flagship.”

“Aye, skipper,” the voice says.

As she feels the disorientation of the transporter beam, she sees Theelia toss her boots, trousers, and socks onto the pad.

She comes to herself, hearing a bosun’s pipe. “17th Border Patrol Group, and BPW-3 arriving,” says an unfamiliar voice, accompanied by the ship’s bell clanging in salute. She ignores the ceremony, a lot more brief than it ordinarily would be.

Chandra sees a young woman, maybe a year or so younger than her, standing before the console. She is wearing the new pullover and service dress trousers, with a commander’s three pips on the smaller delta.

“Hello, Captain,” she says.

“Hey, Kaylin. No time for a proper greeting. Who’s doing what?”

“Siobhan’s on the conn, Captain,” Kaylin says evenly. “I’m at your disposal.”

“Get to Combat. I’ll need you on the Cohort system.”

She heads through the hatch of the small transporter room. As she runs through the passageways, she sees the cutter’s small crew staring at

her. She files that for later.

Chandra passes into the Combat Information Center and skids to a stop at the ladder at the forward part of the compartment. She brings her foot to the rungs and realizes she is barefoot. She scales the ladder and brings herself up to the flight deck.

She sees the owner of the thick English accent about to drop into the pilot's seat. She grins from ear to ear, the freckles apparent on her light brown face. The mass of red curls are tied back out of her face.

Siobhan Lincolnton, the product of a Jamaican father and an Irish mother, who calls Staffordshire home, nods at her in recognition.

"Commodore's on the bridge," she intones.

"No, she's not," Chandra says. "I'm your pilot, Captain. This is your ship."

"All due respect, it says on the screen that we have your broad pendant hoisted as Commodore. I'm going to fly this bucket. You're going to command whatever we can get into the air and into the black." She points to the command seat behind the two control seats. Chandra is conscious of another young woman dropping into the second chair.

Chandra drops herself into the center seat, touching a button. "Comms, get me all available ships on the emergency freq. Signal for them to sortie, forming on me as tactical commander."

"Aye, sir," comes the acknowledgement.

She sees an odd smile on Siobhan's face.

"What?" she inquires, more sharply than she needed to.

"You might want to put some pants on. That and your hoodoo is kinda distracting, Skip."

Chandra closes her eyes; she feels the shudder as the ship lifts.

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