

Vorta Delicacies

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Summary

"I'm making quite a name for myself as a chef," Weyoun said.

"Weyoun—"

Odo cut himself off half a second after turning into the ship's kitchenette. He had cloned a new Weyoun months after the end of the war, hoping to gradually rehabilitate him, or at least teach him to think for himself. He hadn't made much progress in the years since then. Right now, the Vorta stood at the replicator, his head bowed over a disposable plate filled with food items.

"Founder," said Weyoun, turning wide, glistening eyes on Odo.

"Don't—" said Odo, but Weyoun was already going into submissive posture, his eyes lowered and his arms outspread. Odo stifled a sigh. "The Federation needs someone to decrypt a file they found on an abandoned Jem'Hadar ship. Do you still have your access codes?"

Weyoun looked up, his eyes wide. "I can certainly try," he said quickly. "Although there's no guarantee that my codes will work for any given Jem'Hadar ship—"

Odo waved this off. "Just try."

"Of course, Founder—" Weyoun started to march past Odo, back toward the cockpit and its computers. Odo stopped him with a hand on Weyoun's chest. "My apologies," said Weyoun at once, bowing his head again. "I meant to say, 'Of course, Odo.'"

No he didn't, the little shit. But that wasn't what Odo cared about. He pushed Weyoun back a step, gently, and nodded toward the abandoned plate on the counter.

"You were eating," he said in a growl that came out more surly than he wanted it to.

"Yes," said Weyoun. He clasped his hands together, nervously wringing them. "I will dispose of this first, then, if it pleases you."

"Don't dispose of it," said Odo. He approached the replicator and eyed the plate Weyoun had prepared for himself. "Were you done eating?" he asked.

Behind him, he could sense Weyoun struggling with the answer, trying to figure out what Odo *wanted* him to say. Finally, he stopped kneading his fingers and let his hands slap against his thighs. "In truth, I hadn't started," he said. He studied Odo, his eyes tight.

"Well, by all means," said Odo, gesturing to the plate. "Your mission is not so time-sensitive that you must skip meals." And he could sense that Weyoun was about to protest, so he brusquely moved on. "What is this?" he asked, pointing to a thick pool of purple gunk on the plate.

"Andorian hummus," said Weyoun a tad stiffly. "It's known for its sour flavor."

Odo recognized the bland sandwich meat that Weyoun had replicated – it was a slimy, rubbery staple of military diets on worlds where replicators weren't so easy to come by. He skipped over that and pointed questioningly to a pile of orange balls. "And these?"

"Regnar eggs," said Weyoun.

Odo hesitated. He pointed to a crispy pile of fried vegetable skins, each one so deeply cooked that it appeared brittle and hard. "And these?"

"Those are for the crunch," said Weyoun solemnly. He took a hesitant step forward and paused, silently asking for permission to approach his own plate. When Odo waved him forward, he assembled the most disgusting sandwich Odo had ever seen: purple hummus and slimy meat, orange eggs and crunchy chips. "You combine it with this marvelous Earth snack called 'garlic bulbs,'" said Weyoun. "Simply peel them and pop them into your mouth. It creates a most invigorating sting."

He tried to hand a garlic bulb to Odo, who declined it with a wave of his hand. Weyoun chewed on it thoughtfully and then took a bite of his monstrous sandwich.

"It's a Vorta delicacy," he said quietly. "The perfect combination of textures."

Odo got a whiff of the sandwich and backed away a little, resisting the urge to cover his nose. "I wasn't aware the Vorta had delicacies," he said.

A complex series of muscle twitches fought for control of Weyoun's face. He carefully boxed up whatever expression had tried to break free and offered Odo a sunny smile. "We didn't," he said, his eyes darting away. "Before." He set his plate down as if he'd lost his appetite. "I invented this recipe, you know," he said, staring at the far wall. "I am ... earning quite the reputation among the surviving Vorta. As a chef."

Odo took a slow, deep breath. He studied Weyoun 9, uncertain what to say. As someone who had gone from a 'party trick' to a security chief, and then to the sole 'good' representation of his species, he recognized the clouds in Weyoun's eyes. He had been the Founders' most trusted servant once; now he was an oddity, little more than the grotesque wet specimens Odo had seen on the shelves of Mora Pol's home. Defective, some said. Or bound to become defective in time, with a master like Odo. But in between 'servant' and 'oddy' there had been a Weyoun who did exactly this, arranged strange textures on his plate. A Weyoun who died in Odo's arms, with Odo's blessing.

Odo cleared his throat. He put a hand on Weyoun's shoulder, guiding him back toward the replicator, away from the cockpit door.

"The mission can wait," he said gruffly. "Finish your food."

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