

## Touch

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### Summary

Watching Weyoun greet an unusually handsy delegation of Cardassians, Damar realizes the annoying, fucked-up little war criminal has never been hugged.

The northern Cardassians were more gregarious than most. They hugged instead of nodding to strangers. They kissed knuckles and punched shoulders, a process they called “testing the armor.” Damar was used to it, but he saw the way Weyoun stiffened and flinched when Legate Ghall pulled him into an embrace.

“You act like you’ve never been hugged before,” Damar muttered when Weyoun stumbled out of Ghall’s grasp. Weyoun shot him a look, wide-eyed and accusatory, but in the next second it was gone and the usual diplomatic veneer took over. It was only later, when they stood alone by the companels, that Weyoun said,

“I haven’t, actually.”

Damar glanced sideways. His eyes caught on Weyoun’s hands, where he was anxiously stroking his fingers and massaging the base of his thumb.

“Haven’t...?”

“You asked,” Weyoun said, his voice clipped.

Then the apparent non-sequitur made sense. Damar tipped his head back with a quiet, “Ah.” Louder, he said, “What, your parents never—?”

The corner of Weyoun’s mouth lifted in a humorless smile. “The Vorta do not have parents,” he said. “We are formed in test tubes and cloning chambers by the Founders, fully-grown.”

Damar huffed out a breath. “I knew you were lab-grown, but I didn’t realize you were *that* lab-grown,” he muttered.

“It’s a most civilized process,” Weyoun said. “It eliminates the indignity and mess of most species’ early years.”

“And the experience,” Damar said.

“Oh, I think you’ll find that by simply programming their subjects with all necessary knowledge and experience, the Founders have engineered a more ... *efficient* system,” said Weyoun. His eyes flickered nervously to Damar. “During your childhood you must have encountered countless scenarios where you wished you had been programmed with the necessary information beforehand.”

Damar’s older brothers had grown up during the last years of the famine. His own early years had been marred by it, but by the time he was old enough to remember, their cupboards were full and the nurseries were dolling out snacks with every meal. He remembered once, at dinner, he’d thrown a piece of food at one of his brothers – just in jest – and been alarmed at the sudden flash of darkness on his brother’s face. Damar cleared his throat and muttered, “I suppose.”

Weyoun favored him with a sunny smile. “Well, there you have it, then!” he said, clasping his hands.

But Damar remembered his mother’s embraces, too. And his brothers wrestling with him, and his small hand holding onto the hem of his father’s coat as they crossed the street. He glanced sideways at Weyoun’s hands, his fingers twisting each other into knots, pinching at the

knuckles and picking at his nails. Damar couldn't stand to watch for very long; he kept expecting Weyoun to break the skin.

Whatever the Founders had done for Weyoun, it seemed they never programmed him with the memory of a kind touch.

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