

## Law v. Order

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### Summary

The direct examination of Admiral April was proving to be an arduous task. Pasalk had rejected each and every iteration of her outline. Marie was well aware that his expectations were unattainable; this wasn't about producing high-quality work product but about exerting power through punishment. A game of wills that Marie was all-too experienced with and not about to concede.

### Notes

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

The late hour of the night had no effect on Marie as she poured over the outline displayed on her monitor. Moments of silence where she was lost in deep concentration were punctuated by furious tapping as she worked out her revisions. The direct examination of Admiral April was proving to be an arduous task. Pasalk had rejected each and every iteration of her outline. Marie was well aware that his expectations were unattainable; this wasn't about producing high-quality work product but about exerting power through punishment. A game of wills that Marie was all-too experienced with and not about to concede.

Navigating the egos of self-important men was a timeless skill; one that Marie had spent years developing. Her mastery of it was the reason she had been promoted to Captain at a relatively young age. She was no pushover; especially when her career or reputation were on the line. While Pasalk held a rank advantage, Marie would ensure this experience was not a one-sided affair; she was prepared to make the process just as painful for him.

To that end, Marie had braced herself for the long night ahead. The thud of footfalls down the hallway was not uncommon even during late hours. Most attorneys spent part of their career burning the midnight oil. However, the sudden woosh of the door followed by a loud impact as it collided with the wall shattered her concentration. Startled, Marie's heart raced, panic momentarily taking hold.

The silhouette that burst into the room carried an intense energy that radiated in palpable waves. Marie's gaze flickered from the door to the figure, mind racing. Gradually, recognition replaced her initial shock. The short woman with tightly braided hair who stormed into her office was not a stranger. She was Chris's chief of security on the Enterprise. The realization displaced her fear, but Marie's shoulders straightened reflexively as her demeanor remained guarded.

Marie's lips curved into a polite smile as she addressed the intruder in a cordial tone, "Can I help you, Lieutenant?" She had a feeling this encounter was not going to be pleasant, and the tension in the room was undeniable. No one from the Enterprise was happy with her for arresting their First Officer; in fact, Marie wasn't happy either.

Noonien-Singh just stood there for a moment, her shoulders trembling as her chest heaved. Marie watched as a number of emotions seemed to flicker across her face. Marie surmised that the young Lieutenant might have stormed into her office without a clear plan of what to say. That suspicion was confirmed as Noonien-Singh's lips twitched and she fidgeted in place without saying anything. Marie was fine with the silence; she knew better than to needlessly fill the space.

"You took Una--Commander Chin-Riley," Noonien-Singh finally said, her voice cracking.

Marie met her gaze with a steady expression. She had already told Chris she was sorry for arresting Una--and she had genuinely meant that. When Marie had put-in for a position with the JAG corps all those years ago, she had done so with the expectation that her place in the legal system would be to champion the rights of all people--whether human or not, whether Federation or not. She knew now, all too late, that aspiration had been naive. For all the good the Federation did, some of the laws remained regressive. Marie took a particular dislike to being asked to prosecute someone for being other, but it was not her role to rewrite the laws.

"Commander Chin-Riley broke the law," Marie responded candidly. She might not have liked the law, but there was no denying Una had broken it.

“Will all due respect,” Noonien-Singh began in a steely tone devoid of the respect she spoke of, “enforcing that law is criminal.”

Marie’s own frustration simmered within her. While most of her cases were routine, with fair rules and defendants who broke them, this situation was different. Even in other cases when the defendant was sympathetic (and many of them were), Marie was perfectly capable of maintaining professional detachment. She prided herself on fairness and empathy; extending second chances where she could and minimizing sentences when confronted with sincere remorse. Marie had done that for Una, too--perhaps more so. Her zeal in pursuing the most lenient arrangement she could for Una was the very reason Pasalk was now bearing down on her.

But she couldn’t say any of that to the woman in front of her. “I understand your perspective,” Marie replied, her voice softening slightly to convey the emotional weight of the situation. “My duty, however, is to enforce the law. A duty security officers share.”

Predictably, her answer did not satisfy the security chief. If anything, Noonien-Singh looked insulted at Marie’s implication that law and order should be working hand-in-hand. “Duty is also about what’s right,” Noonien-Singh responded with an intense anger. “Una is a member of our crew. She has dedicated her whole life to Starfleet and its ideals. She is the best person I have ever known,” Noonien-Singh’s voice wavered as her anger ebbed into something else. “She is my home,” she added, voice quivering now.

A pang of sympathy at Noonien-Singh’s raw emotion washed over Marie, but she kept her face neutral. “I hope you understand that I am familiar with the tension between duty and morality,” Marie replied. “I don’t doubt her dedication or her character.” It was the closest she could come to expressing her true feelings.

Noonien-Singh’s shoulders slumped as the last of her anger dissipated, consumed by the raw vulnerability on her face. Marie thought she might cry, but she hoped not. As a Captain--and especially as a prosecutor--she was accustomed to such displays, but she preferred to avoid them. Several minutes of silence passed and Marie averted her eyes, attempting to give the Lieutenant a moment of privacy while she collected herself.

“What is the meaning of this?” came a cold voice, piecing the silence; one that pricked Marie’s neck in a bad way. Her immediate attention was drawn to Pasalk, who was now standing in the open doorway just behind her visitor.

“Admiral,” Marie greeted with a practiced patience. The tension in the room shifted with his presence, and Marie carefully watched Pasalk as he took in the Lieutenant’s presence.

“Lieutenant La’an Noonien-Singh,” Pasalk acknowledged with a measured tone. His Vulcan demeanor made it challenging to decipher his intentions, but Marie sensed an unmistakable predatory energy. “Are you here to offer evidence?”

Pasalk was motivated to incriminate Chris and tarnish his reputation. While Marie could not fully grasp the nature of Noonien-Singh’s relationship with Una, their exchange had revealed a profound attachment. And Marie knew that in Pasalk’s eyes, a vulnerable member of Chris’s crew might inadvertently provide just the opening he was looking for. It was true that Chris meant something to her (and she was still grappling with what exactly), but beyond that, she found Pasalk’s relentless pursuit of a respected Captain disconcerting.

Marie chose her words carefully, telling him with calculated ease, “I asked her for an interview.” She did not want Pasalk to find out about the impulsive nature of Noonien-Singh’s intrusion, especially because Marie was certain that the Lieutenant had broken protocol to gain access to the building. Marie was willing to overlook that transgression; Pasalk would not be. Fortunately, the Lieutenant seemed to sense the precariousness of the situation and said nothing to expose Marie’s lie. “She is adamant she did not know Commander Chin-Riley was an Illyrian.”

“Is that so.” Although Pasalk’s skepticism was phrased as a question, it was a statement, and it was aimed at Marie.

As Marie weighed her options, Noonien-Singh interjected with a measured tone, “It is. I have nothing further to add, except that Commander Chin-Riley has been nothing short of an outstanding officer. I aspire to emulate her.”

Pasalk weighed the statement. “I would hope not; especially as someone with your unique ... history.”

That was a deliberate blow, Marie thought. Of course, she knew Pasalk had scrutinized the Enterprise manifest and every crew record available to him. It would not be lost on the Vulcan that Noonien-Singh had her own connection to genetic engineering. To her credit, Noonien-Singh did not react to his cruelty or let him undermine her composure. She said only, “I can’t imagine a better First Officer.”

“Very well,” Pasalk said, evidently determining that it would be illogical to continue pushing. “Captain Batel, I expect to see your detailed outlines on my desk in two hours.” He left.

“If that will be all, Captain,” the Lieutenant said, evidently (and rightfully) concerned that Pasalk might still be lurking. Marie’s gaze met Noonien-Singh’s. An understanding passed between them, and Marie inclined her head slightly to acknowledge it.

“Yes, thank you.”

Noonien-Singh lingered just one second too long, giving Marie the sense that she had wanted to ask something else, but it was best for both of them that she thought better of it.

Marie watched her retreating back with relief and sank into the back of her chair. It was very tiring trying to protect everyone: her own career, Chris, Una, and now this young officer. When had she signed up for this? But she didn’t have time to dwell on that. Two hours was not much time.

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