

Pub Propositions

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Summary

A few years after Una's bold correction of Chris' re-entry technique, destiny orchestrates a surprise reunion at Starbase 12, sparking a life-long friendship.

Notes

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

2242 - Starbase 12

“Una Chin-Riley.”

Una glanced up from the PADD she was engrossed in, her attention caught by the familiar sound of her name. Standing before her was a man whom she recognized instantly, even without the familiar red uniform. The telltale silver threads woven through his substantial mop of hair marked him unmistakably as Lieutenant Pike. But that wasn't the only reason he stood out in her memory. Rather, she remembered him as the poor soul she had thrashed during a speech he'd delivered during one of her classes at the academy some years ago.

He had been annoyed, of course, but only at first. Rather than bristle, after acknowledging she was right, he had given her a warm grin – much like the one he wore now.

“Lieutenant Pike,” Una greeted, her attempt to stifle a smirk only partially successful.

“Actually, it's Commander now,” he corrected, his tone slightly teasing. “Mind if I join you?”

“Commander Pike, of course,” she corrected herself with a nod. “Please, have a seat.” A beat. “And if we're announcing promotions since the last time we saw one another, I'm a Lieutenant now.”

Pike grinned at that, then with an easy grace settled himself onto the stool beside her. “You're on the *Martin Luther King Jr.*?” he questioned.

Una arched an eyebrow. “Are you keeping tabs on me, sir?”

“Maybe I am,” Pike admitted. “It's not everyday someone nearly twenty years my junior calls me out, let alone while they're a cadet.”

“If the junior officers are not keeping you honest, why are they even in Starfleet?” Una asked with a shrug, though inwardly, she was quite pleased with herself for having left such a lasting impression on someone of Pike's reputation.

“Touche, Una,” Pike responded. He glanced at the PADD now resting at her elbow on the bar top. “It's not everyday you see someone buried in work at a bar,” he remarked, bemused, nodding at her PADD. “What's keeping you busy?”

She had not anticipated drawing the attention of senior officers, particularly from other ships. Her presence at the bar was simply an attempt at blending in; a quest to be seen as “normal” by her own peers. Bringing along some light reading was her way to staying connected to what she truly cared about, even though the bar wasn't really her scene.

“I'm reviewing my draft paper on warp field dynamics,” Una said after a beat. “I'm focused on refining subspace field modulation to optimize warp field stability.”

Pike lifted an eyebrow. “Any promising breakthroughs?” he asked while simultaneously lifting his hand up to catch the attention of the

bartender.

“If I’m right, and I probably am, Starfleet could reduce energy fluctuations during warp travel in a way that significantly enhances efficiency and safety on long-range voyages.”

Pike nodded. “How would that be implemented?”

Una met Pike’s genuine interest with a glimmer of enthusiasm, even as she tried to temper his expectations. “Hm, you’re getting ahead of yourself ... The next step would be an experimental phase to test modifications to field geometrics.”

“Ambitious work,” Pike said, and he sounded impressed. “But, don’t you ever take a break?”

Una considered her response carefully before settling on a dry retort, “Work tends to follow me everywhere.”

Pike laughed; it resonated warmly, infusing the air with hearty and inviting tones that wrapped around them. It was comforting in a strange way, almost reminiscent of moments with her father, but devoid of the bittersweet twinge that came with memories of home.

When the bartender came over, he ordered himself a whiskey. Turning to Una, he extended an offer, “Can I get you a drink?”

Una rarely drank; her modifications prevented the effects of alcohol, making it seem rather pointless. More significantly, she had developed a mantra of constant vigilance, always concerned with the potential of triggering her bright orange immune system with anything remotely foreign. But she *was* in a bar, and if she was seen engaging in conversation with Commander Pike, it might offer a break from the relentless scrutiny and teasing she faced from her peers about her work habits.

“Merlot, please,” she told the bartender, settling on something she knew to be safe.

“Aside from revolutionizing warp field dynamics, what else do you do in your spare time?”

Una had practiced this—and she let out her standard response: “I enjoy old Earth cinema and delving into historical texts.”

“Any particular era?”

Una didn’t know whether he was asking about film or history, so she decided to try answering for both. “The mid-20th century is captivating. There is a lot there reflecting societal changes and artistic experimentation, including post-war sentiments and evolving cultural shifts.”

“Oh?”

Again, Una had this response down to an exact science, having made it her job to become well-versed in discussing Earth literature of this time period. “For instance, ‘To Kill a Mockingbird’ is a literary piece that addresses racial injustices prevalent in the 1930s.”

Her response sounded *too canned*, she thought; she’d have to practice more in the mirror later.

But Pike just frowned. “Doesn’t that book end poorly?”

“It ends realistically,” she said with more conviction than she perhaps meant to convey.

“Hm, I prefer something with a happier ending; you know, that leaves you with a little bit of hope?”

Well, Una could understand why he might prefer that, but fortunately, the arrival of someone else saved her from having to respond, providing a welcome shift in conversation.

“There you are, Chris! Mind if I join the party?”

“Absolutely, please, join us,” Pike said, his grin broadening.

The newcomer wore gym attire, and a light sheen of sweat glistened on her brow. Despite the casual appearance, the woman exuded an air of authority that seemed to add several inches to her otherwise short stature. As the woman settled in, taking a stool on the opposite side of Una, Una found herself immediately captivated. The woman held herself with a commanding presence and her striking figure was accentuated by long, silky black hair that framed a face of sharp angles, while her dark eyes seemed to draw Una inescapably closer. Her aura held an indefinable charm, like an irresistible pull that seemed to effortlessly capture Una’s focus.

Una wasn’t sure if she had seen a more attractive woman in her life, but she only offered a faint nod of acknowledgement.

“Una Chin-Riley meet Philippa Georgiou. Phillipa, Una,” Pike said, smoothly introducing them to each other.

Georgiou smiled in a way that elicited a delightful little flutter in Una’s stomach. Before she could say anything at all, Georgiou’s laughter filled the air. Unlike Pike’s, there was nothing homey or comforting about it. It was pure mirth, tinged with a sly, knowing quality.

“Oh,” Georgiou drawled out the single word, elongating in a way that carried a hint of mischief, while she glanced at Pike with a glint of absolute glee in her eyes. “*That* Una Chin-Riley?”

“The one and only,” Pike confirmed with a chuckle.

Una felt a flush of curiosity mixed with uncertainty. Georgiou had turned to look at her now, and there was almost a calculating intensity in those eyes, as if she was assessing something Una couldn’t quite decipher. For some reason, held captive in her gaze like that made her both uncomfortable and intrigued.

Then Georgiou's lips curved into a smirk. "Interesting."

The cryptic response sent a shiver of anticipation down Una's spine, intensifying her sudden interest in this woman.

"I take it, Commander Pike has told you how I dressed him down?" Una ventured, fully aware how bold it was to characterize their prior interaction in that way.

"He did mention something along those lines," Georgiou said, a glint of amusement shimmering across her features.

Pike chuckled softly as he picked up his whiskey glass, twirled it, then took a drink before simultaneously ordering himself another one, and a beer for Georgiou.

"Though, I must say, he overlooked mentioning how stunning you are."

Una felt pleased by the compliment and found herself smirking. "I suppose he didn't want to overwhelm you," she said dryly.

Georgiou laughed again as she wrapped her hands around the mug placed in front of her. "You're funny, too."

"What have I done?" Pike groaned, his demeanor shifting slightly. "Una, it was nice seeing you again. We've got an open billet for a science officer on the *Antares*. If you've got any interest, let me know, will you?"

Una's mind whirled with the unexpected turn of events. She rarely was surprised but somehow, Pike's offer managed to catch her off guard. The idea of joining the *Antares* held an instant appeal. The *King Jr.*, though her home since she had graduated the Academy, had been a challenge. Not so much from the duties itself as the last few weeks of emotional exhaustion. Between rescuing a traumatized girl and navigating the relentless hostility of some of her peers, Una found herself longing for a change; a fresh environment where she could recalibrate and contribute in new ways.

But she tempered her eagerness. "Thank you, sir. I'll consider it," she said in a measured tone.

Pike nodded, his gaze lingering on Una for a moment longer. "I'll leave you two to it, then." He shot the rest of his whiskey.

Georgiou raised her glass in a causal salute. "Until next time, Chris."

Once they had watched him disappear into the throng of people behind them, Georgiou turned back to Una. "Charming, isn't he?"

"Very," Una admitted. Then, turning to Georgiou, she lifted an eyebrow, and said coolly, "But not quite my type."

Georgiou's eyes glinted with amusement as she regarded Una. "I understand completely."

"Care for another round?" Una asked, noticing Georgiou's glass had run dry.

"Wouldn't say no to that," Georgiou replied with a sly grin.

Una's own glass was still mostly untouched, but she still asked the barkeep to get them both seconds.

"Tell me about yourself," Georgiou said.

Una remained composed with her practiced mask, though she allowed a thin smile. This was yet another question she had had to carefully curate over the years. "I graduated from the Academy with a major in astrophysics. My career has been predominantly within the sciences, but I'm devoted to exploration, in every sense of the word. I've got a knack for annoying the pilots and the engineers."

"Hm, I take it by 'annoy' you mean, show-up?" Georgiou asked with a wry grin.

"I prefer to think of it as guiding them in the right direction," Una said. "Albeit, sometimes more persistently than they care for."

"You are a woman of many talents."

"Thank you." Una's fingers delicately wrapped around the stem of her wine glass, and she lifted it gracefully to her lips, allowing her to shed the smug look she knew had rippled across her lips.

Then Georgiou's features compressed. "Now, tell me something about *you*."

Una's muscles tensed imperceptibly at the request, her smirk fading slightly behind the wine glass. As she set it down, a fleeting hesitation crossed her features, just enough for Georgiou to notice. Georgiou turned on her stool and fixed Una with an intense, searching gaze.

Una felt caught. But she thought, if she didn't offer a glimpse of something genuine, this encounter might come to an end, and not in the way she found herself wanting it to.

"I like musicals," Una confessed, her voice softening a fraction as she revealed a fragment of personal interest.

"Do you sing?"

"I'm a maestro in the shower," Una quipped.

"I suppose the acoustics in there set the perfect stage for a secret performance," Georgiou replied with a hint of flirtatiousness.

"It is where all the best rehearsals happen."

“I’m partial to serenading the turbolifts, myself.”

Una leaned forward. “I’d love to hear you.”

Georgiou grinned, and her expression held a predatory edge that sent a thrilling jolt through every nerve in Una’s body. “I could use a shower, if you care to join?”

End Notes

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