

## Entire and Whole and Perfect

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## Entire and Whole and Perfect

by [B\\_Radley](#)

### Summary

Getting the hell out of Dodge. The Tal Shiar has a new member. A new wardrobe. The Executioner's Dance. Chili dogs and onions. A mother's pride. Leaving friends behind. Spies like us.

### The Boomer

Lieutenant (promotable) Willa Torbert watches as the stars stream past the bridge windows of her ship. She takes a deep breath as she shifts her view to the small navigational repeater on the folding console by her chair. She watches as the blue arrowhead, labeled USS *Crusader* (NCC-3743), Javelin 204, marches inexorably towards the golden-hued demarcation line.

"Approaching the Gold Line, Captain," the helm officer, an Ensign (Midshipman), who also served as the Ops department head, says. He looks over at the second position. The quartermaster's mate nods.

"We've reached the coordinates," says the XO, a j.g. like her, who is about six months behind her in seniority and hadn't passed the boards for a full two pips on the delta of his working rig.

"Very well, Number One. You have the bridge. I'm going to my ready room, opening the sealed orders."

She rises from her seat, allowing the Saurian, Yezri to take the seat.

Willa reaches down and opens the hatch to climb down the ladder to the CIC. She nods at the Bolian weapons officer, Felydra Taritor, before she goes into her ready room.

She sits at the tiny desk, and manipulates the various biometric locks before pulling out a small plastic envelope. She breaks it open, pulling out a dataplaque.

Her eyes narrow as she confirms what Rear Admiral Hunter had intimated was going to happen in a secure comm, that hadn't even gone to her squadron commander. He'd only received a terse comm detaching her from the squadron.

She ejects the plaque, then returns to the bridge. Yezri rises and says, "Captain on the bridge."

"As you were," she says. She hands the plaque to him. "Note that in the ship's log, encrypted to the three of you and our chain of command," she says.

"Comms, give me the 1-MC."

The pipe sounds 'Attention.'

"This is Torbert. We're about to cross the Gold Line. I have sealed orders that have been entered into the log. We're going to be sneaking in and looking for a Federation ship. If we find them and everything's copacetic, then we're getting the hell out of Dodge. If things aren't good, we're gonna make them good, then get the hell out of Dodge. If things have gone to shit and our assets already been canceled, then, you guessed it, we get the hell out of Dodge as quickly as possible."

She hears the XO and the two crewmembers on the bridge echoing the refrain in whispers. "Stay sharp and we'll soon be back at Merlin sitting on our asses on Ready-5 again. As soon as we're on course, we'll exercise Battle Stations, Torpedo. That is all."

Willa clicks off. She taps coordinates into her comm, sending them to the helm. "Mr. Benth, I've just sent you the coordinates. Get me a course and shift us to it. Maintain Warp 5."

“Aye, Captain,” Benthu replies. He looks at his console, consulting with the QM. “Course is 340 mark 26 minus.”

“Do it,” she says, remembering a turn of phrase that Chandra had once used to initiate whatever it was they were starting.

### **Next on the *Starlight*, Comes the Dancing**

Ava Fonseca shifts painfully on her knees. She can feel the blood still continuing to stream down her face from where her head had impacted with either her console or the bulkhead. She can't remember which. She looks over at her fellow crewmember, lying on the deck, rather than kneeling.

His chest rising and falling regularly, so she knows that the blow from the butt of a disruptor hadn't killed him.

Of D'Shaya, there is no sign.

She wonders if she has already been executed, her body dumped from an airlock. Save for her head. Which, if reports are true, would be preserved and mounted either on the bridge or at the entryport of the Tal Shiar ship.

Ava looks out the viewport at the remaining dart-ships, each with the Tal Shiar symbol on their hulls. She grins as she sees that there are only two left whole, with the other with half of its wing assembly missing. Her head snaps to the left as the Romulan nearest her apparently takes exception to her grin at the loss of the other three dart-ships. She spits blood at him. He starts for her again, but a senior guard stops him with the shake of a head.

She knows she only has a momentary respite. She doesn't expect to live much longer. Her hands, like Francis', are bound behind her back, not by handcuffs, but by a silken cloth. A sure sign, from what she has read of Romulan punishment processes, that she will soon be suspended by her neck via a cord hanging from the overhead. Along with Francis next to her.

The common punishment in the Romulan Star Empire for piracy. The Great Dance as it is known.

Traitors are strangled, beheaded, or subjected to the slowest, most painful means of execution, a type of creeping energy impalement. She shakes thoughts of her impending demise away as she hears a groan from the deck beside her.

“Nice of you to join us, Francis,” she says dryly. He groans, his eyes still closed. She turns on his side, then draws his knees up to his chest, before turning on them. Showing her that he has a passing familiarity with being pulled to his feet while his hands were cuffed.

“So. What's the situation?” he asks.

“Still shitty. I think we're going to be dancing soon. Your girlfriend is probably already floating in space, minus her head.”

“Well, I guess we're about to die,” he says. “You know, you could've experienced the awesome that is Oscar, if you'd just taken the time.”

“Probably would've been the best five seconds of my life,” she replies.

“Silence,” the Romulan leader says in heavily accented Basic.

Francis ignores him. “Ten,” he replies, his eyebrows wagging up and down. He winces painfully at the motion. She looks at the guards. “Since you're about to end us, how's about you telling us who betrayed us.”

The guards remain impassive, but she thinks that she sees a bit of shared smirks exchanged between them.

“That's not for them to say,” says a new voice. A Romulan male, with the characteristic heavy brow of a northerner steps out.

He wears the insignia of a major of the Tal Shiar. He stares at them with his arms crossed. “My name is Major Derion tr'Ddelasu of the Tal Shiar.”

“So you're the big deal?” Francis asks.

“I just thought you should know who is going to end your life,” the Major replies, his dark eyes blank with a complete lack of emotion.

Even when his lips turn up in a smile. He turns to the door he had just stepped out from.

Ava feels her anger build, as D'Shaya t'Rrallion steps out.

Very alive, and dressed in the uniform of a captain of the Tal Shiar.

Ava launches herself from the deck.

### **Family Time**

*Presidio Heights  
San Francisco, CA*

Decker quietly enters the house, taking her boots off near the door. She rubs her eyes, then moves to her bedroom, hoping to keep from waking anyone at seven-thirty in the morning. The ship had switched to a one-in-two watch system with rotation for shore leave; she had stood the 0000-0700 watch so that her officers could have some time off. The ship had moved to the Starfleet naval dockyards near the Academy; she could get a good morning's sleep and would be off the rest of the day until the ceremony in the morning to transfer their dead to move them to their final resting place.

Just before they depart, to head back to the FOB.

She moves into the bedroom, then strips off her uniform, falling into bed without bothering with her nightclothes.

Decker feels nothing until she hears some low voices. She also feels a great deal of warmth in her middle, but tries to ignore that. She slowly opens her eyes to the bright sunlight, a glance at her chronometer shows her that she had slept a full seven hours. She is tempted to let her eyes close again, but it is kind of decadent to get a full seven hours of sleep. She is thinking of keeping the 7s and 5s system while underway; it gives both watches more time for uninterrupted sleep, while still maintaining the ship and its readiness.

She lifts up from where she lays and stretches. As she does, she remembers that she hadn't bothered with any clothing. She swings her legs over the side and pads to the bathroom. After taking care of a couple of the necessities, she is soon standing with her eyes closed as a steaming hot shower pounds down over her head.

When she is out from under the stream, after luxuriating in the almost endless supply of hot water, unlike even when the ship is docked and hooked to a water supply (she shares the communal, mainly sonic, shower with the rest of the crew), she dries herself off in a large, 'floofy' towel, as Kim would've called it. She walks over to the dresser, where her leisure clothes lie.

Decker is about to lift her shorts and the T-shirt that bears the design of a stylized skull with a lightning bolt on the crest against a red and blue background that reads GRATEFUL DEAD 2288 REVIVAL TOUR - PALO ALTO, when her eyes fall on two pieces of dark green silk, with tiny threads of gold.

She knows that Kitana had placed the Deltan daywear on the dresser, along with a short cape for going out of doors, giving her the option of wearing what the two males and Kitana would be. Decker closes her eyes.

Wondering if she is ready to really embrace all Deltan customs.

Such as being supremely confident with her own body to put a great deal of it on display with this outfit, in front of this family.

Especially in front of a teenaged boy who had been stumbling all over himself when he'd met her, in her dress whites. Of course, his eyes had been on her rank insignia and then the medal ribbon and cluster dangling from her uniform.

Not on the parts that you would think.

She lifts the length of silk and stretches it out on the bed. She gazes at it, remembering as closely as she can how Kitana had draped it over the lower part of her body. She lifts the end and wraps it around her waist. After a couple of false starts, she has it knotted correctly in front and back. She knows how both Ren and his son have it fashioned into a kilt; she could, if she wanted to, even form it into a wrapped garment approximating a pair of shorts. She stares at herself in the mirror. She almost sees a stranger, with her hair around her shoulders and the two ends of the sash hanging in her front and back, just barely enough for modesty on the center, but down to her ankles in length.

She wonders if she could go out of this house dressed like this, even with the capelet up top. Decker sees herself smiling in the mirror.

The smile is matched on Kitana's face, as well as Ren. Gordet, the youngest of the two males, joins their smiles and nods.

There is no hint of the awkwardness from earlier, at the ceremony.

As she looks at the older man over the backgammon board, his eyes narrowed in concentration, she figures she has one more test for today.

She won't try for a second test, with her birth-mother.

Rear Admiral Mary Decker wasn't ready for that, in spite of her early exposure to the New Humans by her own mother.

### **Who's On First?**

Oscar Freetown—or at least that's what he knows himself in his own thoughts, having used that name for so many years—watches as his longtime partner and fellow chaos-bringer casually throws the Starfleet officer to the deck. He gets to his feet. A Romulan guard steps towards him, but the Tal Shiar asshole motions him back.

Another figure joins the two of them. A tall Romulan woman, the muscles prominent on her bare arms and bare legs, dressed in a brief top over one shoulder and a kilt. *Even her muscles have muscles*, comes unbidden to his mind. She wears a disruptor on her left hip and a large knife opposite. Next to the knife is a small length of cord with weights on each end.

Over her shoulder, where it can be grasped by either hand, is a long sword with a two-handed grip. Her amber eyes stare at him without expression in her strong, angular features.

Oscar knows instantly what she is.

A t'Lemaska. One who 'handles' problems for the Praetorate.

A state executioner.

She turns toward Major tr'Ddelasu. "You have work for me, Tal Shiar?" she asks. Oscar raises his eyebrow at the disrespect that he can hear in her voice, even not knowing her.

"You would do to show some respect to me. Or I'll have one of my agents cut your tongue out, Lemaska."

A brief smile comes over her lips. "You can try, Tal Shiar. But your head will fall to the deck before my tongue does."

He says nothing, merely staring at her. His gaze turns to Ava, who is on her feet now as well. He points to her. "That woman first. She is a Federation officer, I suspect."

"And your chosen method?"

"Strangulation, then beheading for our bridge."

"Now wait, just a damn minute," Oscar says. "I am the Scourge. Don't you want to kill me first?"

The Major's eyebrows raise. "The who?"

"I'm the Scourge. I'm a legend!"

A brief smile quirks tr'Ddelasu's lips. "Sorry. Never heard of you. You'll get your turn. You'll hang as a pirate. We got a gibbet-buoy all ready for the both of you, or at least part of your compatriot." His face turns even more sinister, if that is possible.

Oscar shuts his mouth. He wonders how he'd gotten so casual discussing the manner of his death. He turns to D'Shaya. "I hope you burn in hell for this. Whether it's yours or mine."

She smiles at him, then walks over to him. She reaches up and touches his cheek. His eyes widen as she reaches up and kisses him. He feels her tongue move into his mouth. "We don't generally have a hell," she says, breaking free of the kiss. "But having to sleep with you comes close."

"Get on with it," Ava says.

D'Shaya smiles, then moves over and repeats the gesture on her. When she breaks free, she smiles. "You were marginally less of a manifestation of hell, darling," she says.

Ava gives a one word response. Oscar isn't sure, but he thinks that it might rhyme with 'hitch.'

Her head reels back from D'Shaya's close-fisted blow. Ava once again proves that she can spit for distance. D'Shaya smiles and wipes the blood from her face.

"Get on with it," Ava repeats. "I'm bored."

The t'Lemaska walks over, as do two guards. She moves behind Ava. She whispers into Ava's ear, just before the two guards push her down to her knees.

The other guard touches the ear of his helmet. "Incoming vessel, Major," he says.

"That should be our mother ship," tr'Ddelasu replies.

The guard nods. Then his face changes, twisting in panic. "No. Not a Romulan signature! Two vessels, from different vectors. Both masking their signatures."

Oscar looks up and out of the viewports. He can't see the ships, but suddenly over a dozen red, sparkling and spinning lights appear from one direction.

The three Tal Shiar ships disappear, their shields overwhelmed by multiple photon torpedo strikes.

tr'Ddelasu's face twists in panic. Oscar sees it freeze on his face as D'Shaya thrusts a knife in the side of his neck, while drawing the disruptor from behind her back.

The two guards standing away from them both disappear as the disruptor lives up to its name.

Oscar turns towards Ava, trying to figure out what the hell to do to save her.

He needn't have bothered. He sees the two guards drop to the deck.

Their heads hit the deck before the rest of them.

The t'Lemaska calmly wipes her sword blade on one of the guards' uniforms. She sheathes it, then kneels behind Ava, helping her to her feet.

"You could've warned me," Ava says. She is covered in green blood.

"Where's the fun in that?" she asks, a smirk on her face. She cuts her bonds with a smaller, different blade than the one on her hip. "Besides. I'm sure that someone will volunteer to wash your back."

Ava rolls her eyes. "Great. Another one." Oscar notices that she doesn't immediately discount the possibility.

For any of them.

She turns and walks over to D'Shaya. Without warning, she hauls her right arm back, simultaneously forming it into a fist.

The sound of the blow could probably be heard back on Earth. D'Shaya narrows her eyes, but doesn't say anything. She lets the blood flow from her split lip.

They hear a gurgling sound behind them. tr'Ddelasu still stands, his hands at his throat. Trying to staunch the blood pouring from where D'Shaya had stabbed him.

"You traitor," he manages.

"Nope," D'Shaya replies. "I'm a spy. There's a difference."

tr'Ddelasu can't reply. He hits the deck.

There is silence for a moment.

Oscar looks at D'Shaya. "So how did you pull that one off?"

She smiles, her teeth showing green from Ava's blow. "I wasn't the asset being cultivated," is all she says.

"What do you mean?" Ava asks.

"I've never lived in the Romulan Empire. I was taken away before I was born. I'm a citizen of the Federation."

Oscar can tell that Ava wants to know more, but D'Shaya moves to the console. "There are two ships, like the guard said. One of them had to be an *Avenger*," she says.

An alarm sounds on the console. "Incoming target. Big," D'Shaya says.

The shape fills the viewport.

"That's a modified deuterium carrier," Oscar says.

"That's what attacked Merlin," Ava, the only witness here to the attack on the Forward Operating Base, says.

### **Lunch with a Spy**

Chandra sips from an old-fashioned Coke bottle as she waits for her lunch date. She is clad in her service dress-Delta uniform, with the short sleeves. As she waits on her date, she smiles as she sees the holo that had been texted to her comm. Decker Sinclair stands in the center of the holo, dressed in the green Deltan loungewear, sans cape.

She hadn't realized, even as a Deltan, that her officer could take any sentient being's breath away, not just those who are supposedly on the lookout for things like that.

Not that she should ever act on that beauty.

'Should' being the operative word. At least for now. She thinks back to the night before, with the night spent with McCall's yeoman at a Deltan restaurant. After dinner, they had enjoyed drinks and dancing in an adjoining Link-Club, as well as the bonding that might be present in a club full of empaths and pheromones.

And a number of non-Deltans thinking they were taking a trip on the 'wild side.'

Chandra looks up into the mirror above the bar. She smiles as she sees several 'fleet cadets shooting old-fashioned physical pool. She looks at the ancient sign above the bar, showing a cartoon human male smiling widely as he takes a bite of a hot dog. THE BEST DOGS BITTEN BY MAN, reads the banner. She looks back at a table in the corner, where about a half-dozen cadets sit there laughing. She feels a pang of memory at the sight, at that particular table.

She looks up. The woman she had met at the awards ceremony, walks in, looking at her surroundings with a bemused look on her face. She now wears a blue suit instead of the gray. Her dark eyes fix on Chandra's as she sits down at the bar next to her. In spite of the resting-bureaucrat-face, there is a hint of humor in the eyes, set in pale skin.

"So, I'm here," Chandra says. "McCall's yeoman gave me your less-than-subtle invitation to dinner."

"You've got a lot of room to be talking, dear, about subtlety. Next time I think Castellán might choose the restaurant and the entertainment venue."

"Whatever do you mean, Madame President? Or can I refer to you as 'C'?"

"You can call me Ellie," C, says. "And as far as what I mean, you chose a Deltan Brain-dance joint."

"Castellán gave every indication that she enjoyed herself," Chandra says dryly. "Still didn't get her real name, though."

Ellie's lips quirk slightly. The server comes over and takes C's drink order. They both decide to order.

They wait until the food comes to discuss business, discussing the weather, a soccer game, anything to pass the time.

Ellie shakes her head at the pair of chili dogs with onions sitting in front of Chandra. "I'm really glad I'm not riding with you."

"This chili doesn't have beans." She takes a bite, savoring it. "It's been awhile."

"How'd you find this place?"

“It’s been a hangout for cadets for centuries. Croft turned me on to it. Apparently an ancestor of his owned the originals.”

C smiles. She points at the chili dogs in the direction of the counterman. She raises one finger.

As she tucks into it, washing it down with a Diet Coke, she looks at Chandra. She puts her hot dog down and says, “You want to know what he’s doing, right?”

After a moment, Chandra nods.

They both inhale the chili dogs. They lean in to talk quietly.

“He had contacts with Ael’s crew, from when he was on the Enterprise A.”

Chandra raises her eyebrow. “That goes back a ways,” she says.

“Yeah. Six years. He was a junior weapons officer, but he made friends with one of Ael’s officers in one of Kirk’s infrequent contacts with his old friend.”

“Friends?” Chandra asks, putting a bit of drip into the word.

C shakes her head, smiling to herself. “I wouldn’t know.”

Chandra shrugs. “We know who we were and are,” she replies. “It was before we bonded with T’Varilyn.”

She sees ‘Ellie’s’ looks of surprise. Chandra smiles to herself, having hidden that apparently from the Institute.

Or else the Director-General is just a good actress.

And fucking with Chandra.

She takes a sip of her soda, her eyes distant for a moment. Chandra waits patiently.

“That crewmember,” C says.

“Probably Aidoann. An antecenturion, then Ael’s right hand.”

C nods. “Yeah. Well, her mother has taken a liking to your boyfriend.”

She doesn’t bother correcting C.

“Who’s Aidoann’s mother?”

“Megara t’Khnialmnae. Former Admiral-Superlative. Now the only remaining Praetor that the current ‘first among equals’ hasn’t killed off,” C says.

Chandra holds her breath, waiting for more.

“She’s introduced him to Llara t’Rrallion, that Praetor-Prime, trying to become the sole executive. She and her husband, Khav, of House Stalron have also taken a liking to him.”

Chandra closes her eyes for the space of ten seconds. When she opens them, C is looking at her expectantly.

“He always was charming.”

## **The Test**

Dr. Kimberly Sinclair sits at the airy outdoor café in the early evening, waiting on her daughter to join her for dinner. The one night that they would have before Decker shipped out.

At least until her transfer as the group’s doctor is approved and she can get out there. ‘Downrange’ as members of the Border Dogs call what Starfleet bureaucratese refers to as ‘duty beyond the stars.’

She lifts her wine to her lips, savoring the taste. She craves adventure; she has on many occasions gone out into wilderness on various worlds with only a pack and its contents to survive on. Both before and after Decker had left for Starfleet Academy. She had instilled a love for adventure in her daughter. She closes her eyes. Decker shares absolutely no genetic material with her, but she feels like she can take credit, at least in her own mind, for shaping the girl into the growing, amazing young woman that she is. She shoves down the bitterness and anger at her ex-wife, as well as the man who had provided the genetic material to Decker. Only Decker’s middle name, Jane, comes from that side, from his family name. Something that the sect of New Humans that he had been born into had eschewed.

Thoughts of this brings her, of course, to Mary Elizabeth Decker. Who she had once pledged her life to.

Not knowing what she was in for.

Kim sips her whisky. The thought of them tearing their clothes off and solving all of their problems with the physical, every time they have an argument, whether it is about Decker’s future, or whether the sky on the Earth is blue, making her rethink everything in her life.

She knows that they can’t keep doing that. She wonders if Mary knows it as well.

*Or maybe you can*, comes into her mind in Decker's voice.

She starts and looks up. She wonders if her jaw is now on the table.

A young woman stands there, tall and thin. Her familiar red hair is gathered loosely over her bare right shoulder.

Over a dark green capelet that is secured with a single fastening around the long neck and over her left shoulder. Kim breathes out, taking in her daughter in this new guise. She'd always thought that Decker was beautiful, as did Mary. It was one thing they could always agree on.

Decker hadn't agreed. She'd always found some flaw in herself—too pale, too many freckles, her eyebrows were too thick, or she was too tall and skinny. The latest had been years after she'd gone through puberty. *Her breasts were too small.*

All of these reasons that she'd found, as both parents had told her repeatedly, hadn't kept young women and young men of all species from coming around showing their interest.

Decker had either been oblivious to or had ignored their interest, immersed in her studies.

Mary had applauded this focus, especially when those studies were focused towards an engineering career.

She had stopped ignoring the interest once she had decided to pursue piloting and command. In fact, in another of what she thought was rebellion, she'd started returning the interest like there was no tomorrow, especially once she'd entered the Academy. There wasn't anything harmful in it or even meaningless to the relationships, which weren't just physical.

Kim shakes her head as she realizes that Decker is looking down at her. Kim stands and continues her gaze downward. There only seems to be a narrow skirt, both in front and in back showing off her hips and all of her long legs in front and on the sides. She is clad in half boots.

Kim suspects that all of her long legs are visible in back, all the way to her waist, as well.

Decker pulls Kim into her arms, holding her tightly against her. Kim kisses the small ear that her cheek rests against.

"Hey Mom," Decker says when they move apart. They keep silent, just taking each other in.

Finally Kim moves her hand over one bare, thinly muscled arm. "This is new," she says. She hopes that she doesn't spoil the fact that Decker seems lighter than she has since before the Academy, since she had been driven and focused on her studies.

With greater confidence as well.

Decker looks away for a moment, then back into Kim's similar eyes. "I'm staying with Chandra's family while they're visiting. Thought I'd try some Deltan customs."

"Any other customs you're trying?" Kim asks, keeping her expression even, except for one slightly raised eyebrow.

She is amazed when Decker smirks, instead of blushing furiously. "You might think that," she replies, "but I couldn't possibly comment." She nods. "I've been invited to a coming-of-age ritual for one of Chandra's stepsons. As the principal celebrant."

Once again, she wonders if her jaw is now on Decker's shoulder, her mouth agape. She looks at Decker for any hint of what that might entail.

Decker doesn't, of course, provide any enlightenment.

## **Departure**

The next morning, as the ceremony is dismissed, Decker looks for the dark-haired cadet she had noticed, but the honor guard has already departed for the Academy.

She salutes again as the transports with her fellow *Comstock* crewmembers rise for the trip to the transfer center.

She turns and sees the three figures of Chandra's own family of choice, at least the one from her birthworld and culture. All three of them are clad in modern dress clothing, generic to the Federation as a whole.

All three of them wear purple head-bands, with the knot hanging down in a precise manner on the left side of their mostly smooth skulls.

Chandra smiles. "They're Bands of Mourning," she says.

Decker matches the smile as Ren, Kitana, and Gordet walk up to them. She can hear the engines starting to cycle on the *Aerfen*.

Gordet, the youngest smiles shyly at her. She pulls him into a warm embrace, then gives him a quick kiss. His older sister smirks as he colors slightly, but says nothing, now that she is in uniform again.

Kitana is next. She holds onto her for a bit longer. "Na'prelanka-tere," she whispers against Decker's ear under her bound up hair. *My bond of the mind.* "I loved talking to you until all hours of the morning."

"Me, too, Kit," Decker replies. She looks down. "Do you think we might've moved up a level? To the bond of the heart?"

She feels the Threads jump. The fact that she feels it in her own heart, tells her the answer.

"I think so, Decker," Kit whispers. "I'll miss you. I think that you might be getting close to being family. My sister of choice."

Decker feels the Threads jump again, in a different place, with a devilish cant. “Maybe we can work on some exercises next time that move us closer to the prelanka-dere.”

*There it is*, Decker thinks. They both turn as the Threads intrude from another source. They watch as Ren and Chandra breathe for each other.

Chandra is quiet as the ship rises into the San Francisco morning. Decker wonders if she is thinking of her prospective family.

Or the losses of the crew under her command.

“You okay, Boss?” Decker asks.

“Yeah, Deck,” she replies.

She is seated in a chair rigged to the port and slightly aft of Decker’s command chair. Chandra had refused to take over the center seat. Both of them had changed into the dark blue, long-sleeved field pullovers with the combination delta and rank plaque pinned on the chests. Decker had found that they were more comfortable than the working blues or the newer and various versions of the service dress.

The Border Dogs were much more relaxed about uniforms, at least once they had gotten into space, as they would prove when they got to the Borders.

Of course, they weren’t in deep space yet. Technically they were still under the operational control of the Home Fleet and OPSTAR, where some bureaucrat could waylay them and pull a uniform inspection.

At which point, Decker wouldn’t put it past their Captain (L) to probably switch to the sleeveless vest with her delta pinned on. One that combined with a certain surreptitious application of her less overt gifts would probably distract said bureaucrat.

She was not above using her powers for chaos, for her crews.

“Captain Chandra, I have an incoming transmission from Starfleet. It’s Admiral Hunter. Priority One,” says the technician at the comm console.

Chandra nods. “I’ll take it in my quarters, comms,” she replies.

Decker watches as she leaves the bridge.

### **The Reveal**

Chandra moves into the quarters she shares with Decker for this trip. She touches the control to open the channel. “No-ve-kri, Afana.”

“No-ve-kra,” says a different, deeper voice.

The screen opens.

She exhales sharply. An entire panoply of emotions runs through her body, her heart, and her mind. Jamie Blackthorne—her and T’Varilyn’s Croft—gazes at her, his green eyes cutting through her, as they always had.

Chandra settles on one emotion as she sees Croft’s surrounding. He sits in the center seat of a starship. Nell Cavendish stands next to him, her hands behind her back. She, too, is clad in civilian clothes.

She grits her teeth as she realizes he is surrounded by Romulan officers. All of them apparently fine with him in the center seat.

A diminutive older woman, her dark hair tied back steps next to him. Her dark eyes appear to stare right through Chandra.

“Hello Captain,” she says in a voice that could be equal parts musical and equal parts commanding. “I’m Ael t’Rlailieu.” She smiles mischievously. “I suspect you’ve heard of me.”

Chandra looks back at Croft.

“You asshole,” she says.

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