

Valiant Hearts Are Oftimes Broken

Posted originally on the [Ad Astra :: Star Trek Fanfiction Archive](http://www.adastrafanfic.com/works/1527) at <http://www.adastrafanfic.com/works/1527>.

Rating: [Mature](#)
Archive Warning: [No Archive Warnings Apply](#)
Category: [Gen](#), [Multi](#)
Fandom: [Borderlines](#)
Character: [Ensemble Cast - BAN](#)
Additional Tags: [The Lost Era \(2293 - 2364\)](#), [Border Patrol](#)
Language: English
Series: Part 1 of [Borderlines: Book III - Visigoth](#)
Stats: Published: 2024-04-18 Words: 4,165 Chapters: 1/1

Valiant Hearts Are Oftimes Broken

by [B_Radley](#)

Summary

Romulan games. Francis doesn't get the last word. A new crewman looks to go back to academia. An old crewman ready for ejection.

Darkwing

The woman known as Darkwing sits in a bare room, awaiting her destiny. She had left Leelix III on an outbound freighter and had traveled to a world embedded deeper in the Federation. All due to a cryptic message from a disguised channel on her comm.

She calms herself by complete a series of combination breathing and mental exercises from an almost-forgotten martial art developed by residents of her particular region of a world just inside chRihan's sphere of influence.

She smiles under her mask as she thinks of her childhood on that world, in that region in particular. The smile fades as it always does when she thinks of her childhood home.

When her thoughts go back to the holovids she had seen of the remnants of her village and the entire region. From one of the Warbirds that had razed the region, making it uninhabitable for centuries.

All for intelligence that had placed a rebel faction there. A rebel faction that hadn't even existed, but the Tal Shiar and elements of the Fleet had insisted.

Cold comfort to the survivors of the attack and their family members on other worlds. Cold comfort to her mother, brother, and her.

Their daughter and sister lives on in their memories. Or at least in her mother's and hers. Her brother had later died on the Outmarches, his infant daughter his only legacy.

She opens her eyes as she remembers her commander, Ael—a woman who she, her brother, and her mother had respected enough to later name his daughter after her, coming to tell her, a young junior subcenturion in her crew, what had happened.

She had changed that day. Ael had already begun to quietly, then less quietly question the loss of something in the Empire.

A loss of honor. A loss that had begun to happen almost overnight, to where most of the old families had been corrupted.

Darkwing's mother had been one who had seen the rot with Ael. Instead of rebelling, Megara had attempted to work from within, receiving a post as a junior Praetor after decades of service in the fleet.

Putting a target on her back for assassination or even state-sanctioned execution for opposing the current Praetor-Prime's lust for power.

Even after the other ten Praetors, who made up the executive body of the Empire, in the name of the Vacant Chair, had died, either of old age, assassination, or execution.

None of them had been replaced.

Darkwing feels her anger rise at the thought of the Praetor-Prime. The same woman who had commanded the squadron of Warbirds who had bombarded her home region. The same woman who had sent Darkwing's brother—her own son-in-law—on a suicide mission.

The same woman who hadn't batted an eye in grief when her daughter had taken her own life in despair. Or when her newborn granddaughter had disappeared, presumed dead in some dynastic struggle.

She smiles under her mask as she thinks of their one victory. Two, really, when you think about it. The fact that her mother still survives and that there seems to be a type of understanding between the two remaining Praetors.

Darkwing stands as there is a knock at the door. She touches a button on the table next to her chair, then rises.

A human walks in, her face unmasked. She is clad in civilian clothes, but Darkwing knows that she usually wears a uniform.

She has worn two, actually, in her lifetime.

The woman stands straight, gazing at her. "Take off your mask," she says.

"No," Darkwing says succinctly.

The woman's eyebrow rises to her hairline, as if she is unaccustomed to not having her orders followed, to the letter and the punctuation mark. They stare at each other for a moment, then the woman sits without asking permission.

"I understand from my sources that you've been throwing my organization's name around a bit."

Darkwing again smiles behind her mask. When she had refused the woman's order to remove her mask, she'd detected a flush of anger.

The genetic alterations were good, but they couldn't totally mask her species. Not at the level of a cutaneous indicator of emotion.

"Well that tells me who I can trust," Darkwing replies. "It tells me who I might need to kill."

The woman shows no emotion in response to that. "What do you want with my organization?"

"A job."

The woman smiles slightly. "And why would we want to give you that?"

"Because I have a border ship at my disposal. One that can slip in and out very easily. But you might know that, if the ones I contacted have been running their mouths. Which means it might be harder to control said border ship, if I have to sanction them for that mouth-running."

"Perhaps not," the woman says.

Darkwing keeps the smile of triumph at that revelation. Her two imbeciles hadn't run their mouths, at least not directly to Section 31.

The suspects might be narrower, at least within the shitty bar that they ran.

The woman stands up, checking her chrono. She reaches into her pocket and pulls out an object.

Darkwing stares at it, recognizing the black Starfleet delta.

With a gray stripe diagonally through it.

"That should help you contact us," the woman says. She turns and walks out.

Darkwing stares at it. The door opens again and a shorter figure, recognizable as a female walks in. She reaches up and pulls her hood and mask down, as another female figure walks in.

She moves to the first young woman and embraces her tightly.

"Hello, shivaya," the young woman, says, using a word from their shared heritage. Father's sister.

"Hello, Ael'a," Darkwing replies. She looks at the other, slightly taller woman, who removes her hood. She is of the the Rihannsu, but with something else mixed in. Something with a more prominent green hue to her skin.

"We're ready," she says. "Our ship is shadowing the Starlight."

Darkwing nods. "Then take me to her."

The young woman smiles. "We may have to save their asses, though."

"Figures," Darkwing says. She hugs her niece tighter.

Aidoann t'Khnialmnae breathes in the scent of Ael'a's hair.

The Circus, Revisited

Ava Fonseca curses as the ship is hit once again. She steadies herself on the weapons console, as she attempts to target the pursuing one-time deuterium carrier.

"Where's our so-called 'angel' with the shitload of torpedoes?" Oscar asks as he jinks them in and out of the armed freighter's various firing solutions.

"Or the other one that showed up, too?" Ava asks.

"Well, they aren't here," D'Shaya says through gritted teeth as she tries to boost the gain on the long-range and short-range sensors.

“Well, we better find a spiritual angel, then,” Oscar says, “or all that fancy spy bullshit you pulled ain’t going to do us a bit of good.”

“Well, start praying then, Francis,” Ava says.

“On second thought, maybe not,” D’Shaya replies. “Anyone up there might be too surprised to help, with him praying.”

Ava concentrates on returning fire. When she sees that both of her compatriots are occupied, she reaches down inside her shirt and brings out her crucifix. She closes her eyes, then kisses it, before returning it inside her shirt.

She opens her eyes and sees both of them smirking at her.

“Assholes,” she mutters.

“That ain’t very Christian of you,” Francis says. She says nothing, but slams her finger down on the trigger, unleashing phaser fire at their tormentor.

She shouts in glee as there is an explosion on the strut of the deuterium carrier’s starboard nacelle.

“Now, Francis,” she and D’Shaya should simultaneously. “Jump!”

He shoves the warp engine’s throttles forward.

There is a sharp whining noise from that console. *Not unlike Francis*, Ava thinks. Her heart sinks as they continue to plod along at impulse power.

Suddenly, another shape comes in. It is another dart ship, maybe even a mother ship, that jumps into sight. One with a distinctive, non-Romulan insignia on its hull.

A burning Klingon skull.

As their eyes lock on the newcomer, once again a dozen or so sparkling red balls float almost lazily at their attacker.

They quickly intersect with the converted carrier, overwhelming their shields. The explosions finish the job as the nacelle that had been struck by their fire separates completely.

“Good, maybe we can get some intel on these assholes,” D’Shaya says.

“Probably not,” Ava says.

To punctuate her words, their eyes are overwhelmed by a bright white light and soundless explosion. When their vision readjusts, Ava stares at their guardian angle. “Lot of torpedoes for a dartship,” she observes.

Knowing what the answer is.

Another ship clears the dart-mother. Ava grins and exhales as she recognizes the shape. Another nacelled-spear shape, with blunt half-disk as the bow above it. This one with two shortwings folding back over the upper deck of the long secondary hull, each lowering a large box flush with a cover just forward of where they rest.

D’Shaya turns to look at Ava. “Were you going to tell us about an *Avenger* in Romulan space?”

“Nope.” Ava replies. *‘Specially since I didn’t know shit about her myself*, she thinks.

She stands up, about to tell D’Shaya to hail them, when her gut twists.

There is a large displacement of subspace, or at least she thinks it’s subspace. A huge, spread-winged capital ship, with the representation of a raptor on the ventral hull appears over all three ships.

“Shit,” she says.

She notices that D’Shaya is smiling.

A New Perspective

Siobhan Lincolnton sits at the small desk in her cabin, located on the opposite bulkhead from Chandra’s ready room off of the CIC. She rubs her eyes, tired from staring at fuel consumption reports. She looks over at her right shoulder, where George rests comfortably, apparently doing the nasty with her shoulder, from what Doctor Sinclair had told her. She shakes her head at those thoughts.

She wonders if thoughts of sex had always been prevalent in her mind, or those thoughts had started since Vostus when she had first been exposed to her Deltan CO’s personality. She closes her eyes, focusing on how Chandra had given them the strength to survive with the empathic/psychic parts of her species’ gifts.

How Chandra had held them together. Particularly, the two senior officers of the Group at that time.

Kaylin and Siobhan.

There is a knock at the hatch. She checks her chrono and nods. She reaches over and pulls the shawl-like Deltan garment over her head, draping it completely over her torso. *It wouldn’t do for a new crewmember to see their captain sitting at her desk topless, with some creature*

attached to her shoulder.

“Enter,” she says.

A woman steps in, dressed in the maroon jumpsuit over black pullover of the uniform of what would’ve once been called an enlisted person or ‘other ranks,’ in another time or place. That tradition had died out when someone had realized that the amount of training that goes into a starship or scout crewmember equaled those of earlier officers. Since that time, all members of their precursor and then Starfleet had passed through the Starfleet Academy system. For however long they needed to attain either their desired path, or their demonstration of their achieved skills had dictated, whether or not they had earned an academic degree and a commission to go along with their chosen level of technical skills.

She focuses on the human woman before her, who appears to be in her early-to-mid-thirties. Her brown eyes gaze at a spot on the far bulkhead. Her curly hair is haphazardly piled on her head. She remains at attention.

“At ease, Yeoman,” Siobhan says, standing up. When the woman relaxes, Siobhan holds out her hand. She sees the eyes widen, at that, but she extends her hand and grips Siobhan’s in a warm, dry grip.

She points to the chair, then sits herself, bringing up the PADD. The yeoman sits, but her back is straight. Siobhan had noticed that she was several inches shorter than she; Siobhan is of medium height.

Siobhan also notices that her right eyebrow is almost perpetually raised, giving her a questioning look. Siobhan looks at the PADD, with one eye on her new crewmember.

Leading Yeoman Sara Quigley (Command) continues to gaze back at her. Siobhan stifles a smile as she finishes reading her service record. Her eyes widen as she sees several things in the personnel jacket.

“You have a PhD. in Cultural Anthropology?” she asks, looking Quigley in the eye.

She looks away from Siobhan. “Yes, ma’am,” she says quietly. She opens her mouth as if to say something, then closes it.

“Go ahead, Yeoman,” Siobhan encourages.

“I didn’t join Starfleet to make a career out of it, Captain. I joined to get away from academia for a bit.”

Siobhan absorbs this. She looks down at the PADD again. “You only did basic training at the Academy. The first year.”

“Yes ma’am,” she replies. “I didn’t even want to strike for a specialty. I’m comfortable being a nonrated yeoman. An apprentice, ma’am.”

“‘Captain’ is fine. Or Cap, or Skipper,” Siobhan says. “You came to us from the Yorktown, before she was decommissioned?”

“Yes, Captain. I worked for the XO.” She hesitates. Siobhan nods at her. “I only have a year left on my hitch, Captain. I intend to go back to the University.”

Siobhan looks at her, hoping she doesn’t have a judgmental look on her face. She looks at the next thing she had noticed in her file.

“Your specialty in your academic field is the Romulan/Vulcan diaspora, as well as Deltan culture.” Siobhan smiles to herself at that combination.

“Yes ma—Captain,” she corrects.

“Well, you might’ve come to the right place, then.”

“What do you mean?” She shakes her head, adding, “Captain.”

“We don’t have an intelligence advisor, specialist, or officer. We’re engaged in a very tricky dance with the Rihannsu. Our group commander, Captain Chandra will need all of the help that she can get. I think you may play a larger role than as just my yeoman.”

She sees something like disappointment playing over Quigley’s features. Just as quickly it is gone.

Siobhan grits her teeth. “Quigley—Sara—like I said. We’re engaged in serious shit here. Lives may depend on what advice Captain Chandra or Commander Stone-Hunter or I get. We’ll need whatever skills we can use. In spite of what we may want.” She takes a breath, then softens her tone. “I didn’t receive an appointment to the Academy. I joined Starfleet, fully intending to learn a skill at the technician level and get out, so that I could make a living to pursue what I wanted to do. I barely made the academic requirements to graduate secondary school.” She stops, gathering herself, remembering her father’s face when she had told him.

Or the different anger on her mother’s when she had told her. Followed by a look of calculation, for what it might mean for her business.

“But something happened when I got there. A senior cadet took an interest in me, along with her academic advisor. I worked my ass off and they pushed and shoved me, but I graduated as an officer, with a degree in economics.” She looks away, hoping her face doesn’t show the pride that she feels. “With honors, and as a command trainee/pilot. Took me an extra year, but I did it.”

Quigley takes this in. After a moment, she nods. “Very well Captain. What do I need to do?”

Siobhan confirms something she’d read in the file. “I’m transferring you to Group staff. The CAG’ll want to meet you,” using another ancient term for the Captain (L). “I’m also rating you as a Senior Yeoman (Intelligence) 3rd class. You’ve got the technical competencies for it. I might even see about getting you a Warrant Officer rank—an Intelligence Specialist, if you won’t go for a commission, with your PhD.”

Quigley's face is open and shows what she thinks of that. She stands, coming to attention. Siobhan rises as well. They shake hands.

"What did you want to do?" Quigley asks.

Siobhan raises her own eyebrow, matching Quigley's permanently raised one. "What?"

"What was it you wanted to be, once you got out of Starfleet?"

Siobhan grins. "An actress. Or a classical guitarist. Had some skills at both."

For the first time, Quigley smiles, then nods. "I'd like to hear you play, Captain. Some day."

She turns and leaves. Siobhan sits back at her desk, wondering what Chandra would think of this.

She feels a soft jerk of her ship, accompanied by a clang and a hiss. The bosun's whistle sounds. Daronex intones in his bland voice, "Captain, the *Aerfen* has docked. Captain Chandra is aboard."

Siobhan feels her anger spike, but is calmed by the wave of Chandra's Link, approaching her. "You didn't think to tell me that the Captain (L)'s ship was on approach, until after she was aboard?"

"No, Captain. You were in a meeting."

Siobhan slumps, placing her head on the desk. After thirty seconds, she gets up, pulling the shawl off. She returns George to his habitat, before donning her work/field shirt, then as an afterthought, the white service dress pullover.

She composes her face and walks out into the CIC. She gives Daronex a withering stare. He seems oblivious. The newly promoted Senior Yeoman stands at the Cohort table.

A smirk accompanies the permanently raised eyebrow.

Command Schooling

No sooner than had Chandra had dumped her bag in her cabin, than she hears over the 1-MC, the voice of the duty comm tech. "CAG requested CIC, CAG requested CIC."

She moves out of her cabin, forward towards the compartment. Siobhan greets her; she sees the new XO standing there, a blank expression on his thin, orange-red face. She turns to Siobhan, who is at the comm console.

"I've got an encrypted message from Torbert on the *Crusader*," she says. "On special assignment."

Chandra nods, knowing that the message requires her to keep some distance from the rest of the crew. She moves over closer. "Read it," she says in a low voice.

"Have engaged modified deuterium carrier attacking our asset. Also engaged Gold Force unmarked darts attacking the ship. Assisted by pirate dartship. Signed, Torbert, Javelin 204."

There is silence in the room. Chandra nods. "So we've got evidence of the same kind of ship that attacked our base," she muses.

"Yes, Group," Siobhan replies. "Telemetry indicates same set up as the ones that we destroyed."

"Any idea of the outcome of this one?"

Siobhan shakes her head. "No. Nothing since then. No results."

Chandra nods, focusing on the display. The Cohort manager has displayed the coordinates from the encryption on her repeater. The coordinates are well on the other side of the Gold line, within the Neutral Zone.

Daronex walks over. "Captain, our ship is well inside the Neutral Zone. They are in violation of treaty. I am duty-bound to report this." He says this without lowering his voice.

Chandra starts to reply, just getting her mouth open when Siobhan shakes her head. Chandra gives a small nod in reply.

"No, you're not, Mr. Daronex," Siobhan says, her voice soft, but unmistakable in its authority. "We are a Special Operations Capable Group. That means we operate under sealed orders, sometimes. Ones that are classified and need to know."

He stares at Siobhan, then turns to Chandra. He is about to speak, when Siobhan says, in the same soft voice, where no one else in the CIC can hear.

"You can ask your questions of me, Lieutenant," she replies. "I'm next in your chain of command."

Daronex's small, bright eyes widen slightly. "How do I know you're telling the truth?"

Chandra breathes out. She hopes that she can keep her anger in check, that she doesn't broadcast it through the Threads or even the Link.

Siobhan's expression tells her that she has, at least through the Link they share, from Vostus.

"My quarters, Mr. Daronex," Siobhan says, her voice hard. Chandra can see the other members of the crew in earshot staring at Daronex.

The one member who had never been a part of a SpecOpsCap ship.

She moves to the ladder to the bridge and climbs up. An ensign, one of the replacements who had successfully passed the year mark to achieve full ensign rank, rises from the command chair. She motions to him and says, "No, Mr. Ngota," she says, glad that she can remember his name.

Chandra lifts her PADD, then sends coordinates to him and the helm crew.

She hears footsteps coming up the ladder. Siobhan pulls her head above the coaming.

"We good?" Chandra asks.

"We're good. Got Kaylin on the line in your ready room. Along with Decker, since she's here with us."

It doesn't take long. Decker is actually present, since they had been in transporter range. As they move to the ready room, Chandra motions to Daronex.

"I'm reading you all in as much as I can. We sent a torpedo boat in after the Starlight on secret orders, from Federation Command Authority. We've gotten some comms back that they've engaged a modified deuterium carrier, like the one we went up against in at Merlin. We haven't heard anything more, so I'm taking the *Comstock* in on my authority to respond to a threat to Federation interests, based on the telemetry we got on the carrier that they engaged."

"Is that enough?" Kaylin asks. "You're taking a big risk on yourself," she says.

"So are we," Daronex observes.

Siobhan turns to him. "Did what I just said to you not register? This isn't a democracy. We work for a democracy; but we're not one. That being said, what is it that you object to, Lieutenant?"

Daronex looks at her with no expression. "That I was not told that we had a ship making an incursion into the Neutral Zone."

Chandra can see that Siobhan is making the utmost effort not to explode. "Who is your commanding officer?"

"You are," he says.

Chandra thinks it is with something like reluctance. She sees Siobhan narrow her eyes at him.

"Captain," he adds, again with that reluctance.

"You've never even been a division officer, only a team leader, Mr. Daronex. You've never held responsibility for anyone, or for the security of the Federation in your hands before, correct?" Siobhan says.

"No, Captain. I have attended the trainings and completed simulations in command school."

Siobhan nods. "Someday, you might want to think about what you're saying when you're in a room full of officers like these." She points at Chandra. "See that scar along the CAG's skull?" she asks.

Daronex looks. His eyes do widen, as if seeing it for the first time. Chandra's eyes shoot daggers at Siobhan, which she ignores. "She took a bat'leth blade to the head. She suffered damage to segments of her brain that make her people unique, through her skull. She killed the Klingon with the other end of his own weapon. A large portion of the Group, the core, including Commander Stone-Hunter on the screen and me, owe her our lives and our sanity." She turns to Decker, who watches and listens without expression.

"This one here. She's barely out of the Academy and on the first goddamned day here, she fought this ship like she'd been doing it for decades. She's now in temporary command of one our boats."

"Now think about if all three of us are killed. You'll be left in command. Can you make those hard calls? When everyone's life depends on it? When the security of the Federation demands it?"

He says nothing, just stares at her; his face blank.

Chandra can see Siobhan's frustrations building at his lack of response.

She falls silent.

Chandra picks up the conversation. "I'm not logging your objections, Lieutenant, since you have no legal basis for them. 'That you weren't told about it' isn't enough, when you're not one of three commanders in this compartment."

He points at Decker. "I'm senior to her, by several years. By rights, I should've been the acting captain of the *Aerfen*."

"Well, I made a different call. I put you as XO, since you had absolutely no combat experience."

"I've been to command school," he repeats.

Chandra lifts her hand to her temple, but pulls it down. She looks at Siobhan, then at Kaylin, and finally Decker. "We good?"

"Aye, Captain," they reply in unison.

"Then we'll go over my orders before I write them." She looks pointedly at Daronex. The Edosian stares back at her. "Dismissed, Lieutenant.

This will be for captains only, as this is still technically classified, even though you just spilled it to the CIC crew.”

Daronex says nothing, but turns on his heel and leaves the compartment.

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!