

the seskan occupation

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the seskan occupation

by [meriwethersays](#)

Summary

Seska has always known she would betray someone. The only question was who it would be.

Notes

See endnotes for CW.

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

Seska thinks sometimes that she was always going to be a traitor to someone—the only question was who. Her Bajoran mother has the misfortune to be beautiful, beautiful enough to be sent to Terok Nor for the pleasure of some freshly-promoted gul, who keeps her around until she makes the mistake of getting pregnant. He disposes of her by sending her back down to Bajor, where she survives just long enough to give birth to Seska. Not even long enough to give Seska a name.

Seska grows up in the garbage heaps of Bajor, her combination of eyebrow and nose ridges more dangerous than either would ever be alone. There are always more like her, half-wild and starving. They scrounge what they can, steal what they can't scrounge, teach each other to fight and kill when they have to.

There are only so many ways that her future can go, she knows. She won't live like this forever, always on the fringes, stealing from people with nothing worth stealing. The Bajoran Resistance has no place for people like her. No, the best she could hope for would be to find some petty administrator, whether Bajoran or Cardassian, and try to ingratiate herself until he decided she was worth feeding in exchange, and she doesn't think she could hold back her temper long enough to do that. Seska is rage and hate and maybe very deep down hurt, and for all that she's sly, she's never subdued. Besides, even if she could whore herself out, half-breed Bajorans aren't exactly in high demand.

Seska hasn't decided what to do with herself by the time she's sixteen except that she's gotten more and more reckless, breaking into buildings that she never would have risked before, sometimes to see what she can find inside and sometimes just to prove that she can do it. If she were in a real city, instead of this strip-mined mud pit, people would hire her to do things like that, but here there's no one who can afford to pay for things like that.

That is, until the day that she breaks into what she thinks is an ordinary administrative building, a rural office of the occupational government's commerce ministry (what a joke) and discovers a silent dark room with a single spotlight in the center. She should run, but there's something hypnotic about the quality of the light. "My dear." A Cardassian moves into the light. "What a pleasure it is to meet you." He's young and dark-eyed, his facial ridges less pronounced than those of the soldiers she sees.

"Who are you?" She has a knife at the small of her back, another strapped to her thigh and a third on her ankle, but she doesn't know how many other men are in the room too. "What do you want?"

"To meet you," he repeats. "Seska, isn't it? We've been watching you for some time." She shudders a little and hears the slightest rustling in the darkness and feels the presence of the two Cardassians flanking her. Her odds of escape are dropping.

"Who's been watching?"

He smiles. She hates that expression, whether it's on a Cardassian or a Bajoran face. It never means good things for her. "The Obsidian Order, of course."

Seska's breath freezes in her lungs. She's a practiced thief, a good con woman and an efficient killer when needed, but none of that means anything when matched against the Cardassian secret police. "I guess you know everything about me," she says. She's as good as dead at this point. No one leaves a meeting with the Obsidian Order alive. There are only the rumors, of people who disappear in the night, of people who die from perfectly ordinary accidents that shouldn't have happened.

"Actually," the Cardassian says, "there is one thing we've never been able to discover."

"I'll probably tell you if you'll let me go." The words sound bolder coming from her mouth than they feel inside of her.

He chuckles softly. "What is your given name, Seska?"

Any hope curdles inside her. "Why do you want to know?"

"Call it curiosity."

"It can't possibly be that important," she says. "The given name of some half-breed?"

His eyes are still smiling, but she can hear more rustling in the room. There must be at least five of them. "We don't like mysteries."

"Is this a test?" She can't imagine what they're testing her for, but if that mystery of her name is the only thing keeping her alive, she's not about to yield.

"If you hope to pass as anything but a *half-breed*, you will need one."

That strikes a discordant note in this entire encounter. "How would I ever pass as anything else?" She taps her skull ridges.

"What is your given name?" His eyes leave her transfixed, but she fights against it. When she doesn't answer, she feels the muzzle of a gun pressed low against her spine. "If he fires, you will be paralyzed at best," the Cardassian says. "What is your given name?"

The familiar anger is seething inside her. "What do I have to gain from telling you?" she asks. "You'll kill me either way."

The Cardassian breaks into a grin, and what a terrifying expression it is on his face. "In fact we won't," he says. "We have an offer for you."

* * * * *

They don't take her to Terok Nor. Dr. Parmak—a glinn, but he doesn't use the title—brings her to an Obsidian Order facility on one of the uninhabitable planets in the Cardassian system. There, Dr. Parmak and his assistants begin the slow process of converting her body, external and internal, into that of a Bajoran. They leave what they can of her Cardassian strength, of the balance of her body, so that she can still use it the way she knows how. But they give her gene suppressors to reduce the prominence of her face ridges, then shave down the bone, and she's in pain all the time, but it only stirs the anger inside her. The anger isn't even particularly directed at anyone, only at the world in general—well. Some of it is directed at her mother, who was foolish enough to get pregnant and even more foolish to go through with it and produce Seska.

There's psychological conditioning too, of course. The dark-eyed Cardassian patiently works her through it, gives her the pain medication when she answers right until she knows that the only way to stop the pain is to do what the Obsidian Order wants. There are five lights, she tells them, after an appropriate period of struggle. Seska shrinks herself down into a hard kernel, lets the conditioning wash through her and bleach away whatever else there was of Seska, but she keeps that kernel tucked away for herself.

It's unreal to look in the mirror and see her new Bajoran face. Seska has avoided mirrors all her life, but she knows what she used to look like and she can see it still in this Bajoran face. Her cheekbones are still sharp, but nothing out of the ordinary, and her hair is long. She would have preferred to be turned into a full Cardassian instead, but they explained that it would be harder—and anyway, what does the Obsidian Order need with one more Cardassian? No, a pretty young Bajoran is the best option for them.

They don't send her back down to Bajor. Instead, they send her to Starfleet, at the very heart of the Federation. There are periodic check-ins, of course, but for two years, Seska—or Seska Itan, as she has to put on her paperwork as a good little Bajoran—is immersed in what life is like for an ordinary Federation citizen, in the wealth of food and the comfortable beds and the discipline that involves nothing more than a demerit in a written file. It's all strange, too soft and gentle, and the Obsidian Order doesn't have to worry that she would defect to this pacifist kind of paradise. Seska's anger has no place here.

The Federation signs its treaty with the Cardassian Union at the end of her second year at Starfleet, and Seska knows even before the Order contacts her that her mission is at hand. There is resistance to the change of governance in the outer colonies—Maquis, they call themselves, and their ranks are swollen with Starfleet dropouts and escaped Federation prisoners, and every day they increase in size and resources. "You will serve as a conduit for Starfleet officers who wish to join the Maquis," her handler tells her. "And report on all recruitment and resources, of course."

"Of course." Seska doesn't like her handler much, but then, she's never heard of a spy who does. The Obsidian Order is not organized according to the personal preferences of its operatives.

It's an easy job to do. Easy to position herself as the person who welcomes in Starfleet personnel who are curious about the Maquis. She meets Sveta, who is careful to remain publicly on the correct side of the treaty, and pretends that she is teetering on the edge of joining the Maquis.

Then Sveta sends Chakotay to talk to Seska—to persuade her to join the fight, of all things. He's maybe ten years older than she is and she sees a kindred rage in him. Trebus, his village was called. She knows what the thermalite bombardment does to villages and she knows that he made his way behind the Cardassian lines to see it himself.

He comes to the ruins of the arena at twilight. She sees the way he takes it all in—he wanted to be an archaeologist a long time ago, she knows. The Obsidian Order has a file on him. They have files on everyone. The acoustics of the ruins are perfect and she sings a Bajoran song of mourning as though she doesn't know he's there, as though she's simply a woman grieving the loss of her planet. She learned the song several years ago and has used this ploy since the beginning. She watches the sunset and doesn't look back at him for a long moment after the song ends. Finally, she turns.

"You're Chakotay," she says.

"Seska." She looks him over, assesses what will bring him into the fold the most quickly, and that's when she sees that desperation for some kind of outlet—some kind of comfort that he can't ask for, wouldn't even know how to accept. She walks to him, there in the fading light, and kisses him.

Chakotay kisses her back like he wants to drown himself, takes her in his arms a little too roughly, and Seska knows that she has him. There's a twinge, somewhere in the kernel that is *Seska* rather than Seska Itan, Maquis, and she wonders for the briefest instant what it would be like to be exactly who she claims to be.

Her handler looks delighted when she reports it. She's careful not to suggest that she had any reaction to Chakotay beyond what she's had to any other person that she's used this particular trick with. Seska generally avoids using sex as part of her missions, but sometimes it's necessary, and this time she can admit to herself, and *only* to herself, that she wanted to. "Pursue assignment with him," her handler says. "This is the most highly-ranked Starfleet officer who has joined the Maquis yet. He will undoubtedly be put in a position of power."

It's easy, so easy. A few words and she's on his crew on the uncreatively-named *Liberty*. They argue with each other all the time as she tries to push him to be more aggressive on her superior's orders—argue in front of the rest of the crew, argue until one pushes the other against a bulkhead or into the tiny equipment room on the *Liberty* and they fuck hard and fast. Whenever they do, when they're finished, Seska kisses him very gently and he looks at her with some baffled combination of admiration and frustration. Her handler is pleased to hear that they've continued a sexual relationship, but she does have to undergo a day of interrogation to ensure that she isn't developing any kind of complicating attachment to him.

'Complicating attachment.' What a way to put it. Seska lies to them with everything in her and it should terrify her, the attachment that's developing. One night, she lies down in Chakotay's bunk when her shift ends, fully intending to leave before he returns, and wakes to find that he's curled close around her in the narrow bunk. Seska is very practiced in doublethink, in compartmentalization, and so she reports dutifully on his choices, on the *Liberty's* movements and missions. No one thinks anything of it if the Cardassians are waiting for them or are hard on their heels, because the Cardassians always are. Seska wonders how many others there are like her in the ranks of the Maquis. She can't be the only one.

The first, and only, time that she slips is when they're lying in bed together, drowsing in a brief moment of peace, and she murmurs, "I love you." She knows immediately that she's misstepped from the way that his entire body stiffens and his eyes widen.

"We need to stop doing this." He sits up and she's suddenly cold. For all that Dr. Parmak modified her physiology, there's some part of her that wants heat, always more heat, and space is very cold.

"What, because I said something emotional?" Seska sits up too, then swings her legs off the bunk and stands. It's too narrow to fight with someone there. "I thought you'd want to hear it." She bites out the words, each one sharp. "You seem like the type." That's too much, too close to admitting something about who she is, but fortunately Chakotay is too trusting to take it as anything more than something hurtful. It would never occur to him that she might be a spy.

It doesn't keep them from working effectively on the ship. It's only that their arguments don't end in bed anymore, and sometimes B'Elanna stares at her when she says something a little too vicious. But it's fine, they only think she's cruel, not that she's a spy.

"We need to pull you briefly," her handler tells her. "Gul Evek is going to capture the *Liberty* so that your cover isn't damaged. We'll need your precise route."

She provides the planned route, which takes them a little too close to the Badlands for the Cardassians to be happy, but that's not her problem.

* * * * *

As it turns out, it's very much her problem. "Where *are* we?" Chakotay asks. "Tuvok?"

"According to our instruments, we are in the Delta Quadrant." She hears the tremor even in his Vulcan voice.

Then comes *Voyager* and Captain Janeway to destroy their only way home, and Seska wants Chakotay to fight Janeway on this—to kill her, if necessary—but his Starfleet conditioning won't let him. He defers to her and the array is destroyed and Seska is trapped on a Federation starship. So many of them relax back into Starfleet rules—even B'Elanna, after her one moment of defiance. So many of them seem happy to yield their independence, to let Captain Janeway control their lives, to put blind faith in a woman who, as far as Seska can tell, has done nothing but make mistakes since they arrived here.

Of course, there's no real reason for Seska to *want* to return to the Alpha quadrant. For all she was sworn to the Cardassian Union, it's not as though she cared about them or their mission. Maybe she's half-Cardassian underneath it all, but she's not *Cardassian*. Fighting as a Maquis has been something to do, certainly, but she doesn't care much about any of it. Seska isn't really sure what she does care about, beyond this persistent fondness for Chakotay. And his eyes are only for Janeway, now—whatever they had, whatever he felt for Seska, has been eclipsed entirely.

Whether or not she wants to return to the Alpha quadrant, she doesn't want to stay on this ship, in this role she's been forced to play. She uses every skill, every attempt at persuasion, to try to change that. She knows she's desperate when she goes to the Kazon, and she regrets it almost

immediately, but it's too late. She sits on the infirmary bed while Chakotay looks at her with something like grief in his eyes.

"You're—Cardassian?" The word burns his tongue.

Seska laughs, tinged with bitterness. "Oh *no*, Chakotay, I'm *half*-Cardassian." As he stares, she drags one finger down the ridges of her nose. "It was easier for them to trigger my Bajoran genes when it came time to alter my appearance."

"You're *half-Bajoran*? How can you spy for the Cardassians, with everything that they do?"

She sneers. "What was I supposed to do, Chakotay? Live as an outcast even on the fringes of those filthy refugee camps? Whore myself out to whatever Bajoran or Cardassian minor official would be willing to feed a half-breed? I said yes to the Obsidian Order as soon as they found me."

"Was—any of it real?"

Somewhere inside, the kernel that is Seska hurts, but she refuses to show it. "Oh, sweet Chakotay," she croons. "Of course it was. Every time I touched you, every time I came to you—every time you said sweet things to me—that was all real. There was a time I thought I loved you too, before you ran back to Starfleet at the first chance. Don't you remember?" She knows that he does. "At least I *respected* you then, even if I was spying on you." Seska looks at Janeway with hate in her heart. "What are you here? Her loyal first officer, slave to Federation dogma even if it means this entire crew dies alone in the Delta quadrant?"

Chakotay is desperate for some way to make this all better, she can see it. "You could have—come to the Maquis as one of us. We would have welcomed you."

"*We*? I *made* you a Maquis." Seska shakes her head. What a lie he's telling himself. "Enough of this. Computer, execute command—"

"No!" Chakotay shouts, even as she shimmers and disappears.

* * * * *

The Kazon were the wrong choice. Maje Culluh is every lecherous bureaucrat she ever met wearing this face. They're rampantly misogynist, to the point that anything she does has to have been approved by Culluh (or at least she has to say that it was). She pays a doctor to concoct something that counteracts the Cardassian gene suppressors that she took, and gradually her facial ridges reappear and turn hard. It looks just as wrong in the mirror as her Bajoran face ever did.

She baits Voyager—Chakotay—to follow them, and then baits Chakotay even further, until he's being dragged into the hold, battered and a little bloody. She doesn't bother warning the Kazon guards who are dragging him, but she does give them both sharp looks to remind them that she'd said not to harm him.

He spits a little blood on the floor as she tells the guards to leave. "So the Nistrim take orders from you now? Is that what you wanted, Seska?"

Seska swallows back the bitterness in her mouth. "Culluh wanted to execute you immediately, you know. I convinced him that you'd be a valuable prisoner, and that I should be the one to interrogate you."

Chakotay glares at her from where he kneels on the floor. "Generous of you."

"You know, I thought all these months answering to Janeway would have made you soft, but all you needed was a little slap in the face to get that Maquis heart of yours beating again." She walks to him and grips his chin in her hand, forcing him to look up at her. "Don't you want to see my real face, Chakotay?"

She feels his jaw clench. "I'm not going to give you any information. You might as well kill me."

"Always the noble one," she says. "Happy to die for your shipmates." She presses her thumb to his bloody lip, then releases his chin. "Maybe I just missed you."

He laughs, and she sees the blood on his teeth. "You can't possibly believe—"

No. It was only ever the little kernel of Seska still inside her that thought that. "Don't flatter yourself," she snaps, and she hates that she sees some suspicion in his eyes. "I've always been less interested in you than in the information you could provide me with."

"Is that so?"

"Of course. Do you know how happy my handlers were, when I told them that I'd lured you into the Maquis? Such a high-ranking prize? That's why Gul Evek knew where we were," she says, to twist the knife. "I told him where we would be. The Obsidian Order was eager to meet you."

"The Obsidian Order." He turns the words over in his mouth. "I suppose you would've thought they were your only option, as a half-Cardassian on Bajor."

"Don't," she tells him, and she's proud of herself for not flinching. "I joined them of my own free will." Free will, with a gun to her back and a future in front of her. "I don't regret it. It's too late, anyway. There wouldn't be a place for me on Voyager."

That was a mistake. "I didn't say there was," Chakotay says slowly.

"I know." She has to get away before she slips further. "When Maje Culluh gets through with you, you'll wish you'd been more cooperative with me." She leaves before he can say anything more.

Seska returns when she knows Culluh will be starting to lose patience, before he can damage Chakotay too badly. “I’m losing patience, Federation,” Culluh grinds out predictably. His knuckles are bloody, and one of Chakotay’s eyes is fully swollen shut.

“Just tell him what he needs to know, Chakotay,” she says. “Just give him the command codes, and—”

“And what? I’ll be released?” He laughs. He knows how to take a punch, she knows. He told her about his boxing years. Chakotay looks to Culluh, and his voice turns mocking, “She’s quite a woman, isn’t she? Does she rub your shoulders and tell you you’re the most exciting man she’s ever known? That’s what she used to do for me.” Seska wasn’t expecting this new attack—she should have been—and it’s dangerous, what he’s saying to Culluh, even if all that Culluh does is bluster and demand the command codes again.

“He’ll kill you,” she tells Chakotay.

Chakotay ignores her and keeps talking to Culluh. “Flattery, devotion, sex. I always thought she had a lot to offer a man.”

Culluh hits him in the mouth and says, “I’m the one who’s using her.”

Chakotay looks past Culluh to Seska. “You did an even better job on him than you did on me,” he says, and spits out more blood.

It’s as though Culluh isn’t here. “All I did was choose the right side,” Seska says, and she’s good at lying to Culluh, but she hopes Chakotay can’t hear the lie in it.

Chakotay turns back to Culluh. “What’s she doing here? Watching you work? You know, she used to like to watch me work too.” He lets that sink in, then adds, “You know one thing I especially liked? The little mole on her stomach. I guess you must have seen it by now.”

Seska has heard things like this said a hundred times, so it makes no sense that her throat should tighten. She’s gotten sloppy, emotional, since losing contact with the Obsidian Order. She still has all her other skills, but she shouldn’t be able to be hurt by anyone’s words. “Culluh knows everything about you, Chakotay,” she says. “Every little point of weakness. Every secret corner of grief.” He doesn’t, in fact, but let Culluh think that he does.

Culluh punches Chakotay in the stomach and, while he’s doubled over, injects him with the particular solution that the Kazon have developed. “Give me the command codes,” he demands.

Chakotay laughs breathlessly. “I’ll give you some firsthand information instead.”

“Go on.” Culluh almost sounds as though he thinks Chakotay is about to break.

“When Seska’s through with you, she’s going to kill you.” Chakotay’s words are slurred.

“He’s delirious,” Seska snaps, and she sees the frustration building on Culluh’s face. Chakotay doesn’t have much longer. “Give him some time for the serum to work.”

“One hour,” Culluh says. “If he’s not more cooperative by then, you’re going to break his neck.” He leaves, and Seska discovers that she’s clenching her fists so hard that her nails have cut into her palms. Chakotay is half-unconscious on the floor now and she closes her eyes, imagines the feeling of breaking his neck. She can do it. But she very much doesn’t want to.

* * * * *

Culluh saves her from having to kill Chakotay through his own extreme incompetence. If she’d been the one running the meeting with the other Kazon factions, she would have all of them under her control by now. Instead, the Kazon Nistrim are fleeing without Chakotay or anything else. She sends out the message beacon boasting of a pregnancy anyway.

It’s not hard to continue falsifying her medical examinations on the Kazon ship. They have extremely limited medical knowledge of their own species, let alone Cardassian or Bajoran, and she can lie to Culluh easily about the progression of a Cardassian-Bajoran-Human pregnancy. The Kazon tradition dictates an end to any sexual intercourse during a pregnancy, which means that she has the mixed blessing of a pause in Culluh’s attentions. She was taught how to do this, in the Obsidian Order—how to induce the appearance of a pregnancy with certain combinations of chemicals that she brought with her from Voyager. Of course, there isn’t going to be a baby at the end of it, but she plans to have dealt with Culluh long before he can wonder why.

They lure in Voyager—again—by lying that she’s given birth and that Culluh is harming her. After they take Voyager, her plan to execute Culluh and run the ship herself is stymied by the EMH and Suder and, most of all, the sheer incompetence of the Kazon when it comes to running the ship. If Seska had twenty of herself, Voyager would be far from here already, the entirety of the Delta quadrant laid out before her. Instead, the Kazon don’t even notice the gradual sabotage and ignore her warnings, over and over again.

In the end, they all die. All but her, and she might as well have, because when the Voyager crew reclaims it, Geron shoots her.

She wakes up in the brig, without the artificial bulge that she’d created to mimic pregnancy. Chakotay stands outside the brig, hands clasped behind his back and shoulders stiff, watching her. “That brat,” she says as she sits up.

“You were never pregnant.”

“No.” At Chakotay’s wounded expression, she adds, “It’s hardly the first time I’ve lied to you, Chakotay.” She can’t stand the softness on his face.

“Did Culluh know?”

Seska snorts. “Kazon medicine might as well involve leeches. I could have told him that I lay eggs and he would have believed it.” She stands

and walks the length of her cell in the brig, which is only a few short paces. “What are you going to do with me?” The ceiling is high above her, at least, but the cell is only two meters wide. “Keep me in here for seventy years? You might as well kill me now.”

“Tuvok was rehabilitating Suder.” Chakotay sounds less than confident.

“Suder was an insane empath,” she reminds him. “I’m a spy.” He’s looking uncertain, so she adds, “I assume you’re still panting after Janeway and will do whatever she wants.”

“She’s the *captain*,” Chakotay snaps, and she wonders if that’s supposed to be a response to the first accusation or the second. “I—”

“Commander Chakotay.” Janeway walks into the brig.

“Speak of the devil,” Seska says. “Hello, Captain. We were just discussing you.”

“Chakotay, I’ll handle this,” Janeway tells him. Seska sees the slightest hesitation in his eyes, but he leaves without protesting. “Well?” Janeway asks. “Any suggestions?”

“If you’re going to leave me in a cell of two square meters until Voyager reaches a Federation outpost in seventy years, you might as well kill me now,” Seska tells her. “Treason is a capital offense on both Bajor and Cardassia, you know. Pick a jurisdiction.”

“Neither Bajor nor Cardassia is a member of the Federation.” Janeway is iron, but the Delta quadrant is already wearing on her, Seska can see it. If she’d waited until now to propose an exchange of technology with the Kazon—Seska thinks Janeway might have considered it. Too late now, of course. “It would be barbaric to keep you here like this.”

Yes, Seska has been to Federation prison camps to recruit for the Maquis. They’re large spaces, not comfortable by any stretch of the Federation imagination, but then, they’re for rehabilitation of offenders. “You could always drop me off at the next trade outpost.”

Janeway offers a wry smile. “I think we both know I won’t do that.”

No, not with what Seska did the last time she was off Voyager. “You know,” she says, “don’t take this the wrong way, but I might have come to like you, in different circumstances.”

“Don’t worry.” Janeway’s voice is very dry. “I won’t take that as an attempt to ingratiate yourself.”

“I’m not letting Tuvok into my mind to—de-program me,” Seska warns.

“He could do it by force.” Janeway says it as though it’s something she would actually order.

Fascinating. “Would he?”

There’s a shadow in Janeway’s face that Seska hadn’t seen before she left the ship. “I would order it if I felt it was necessary,” she says, “and Tuvok would comply.”

“*That* kind of violation certainly isn’t in the Federation penal structure.” Seska already hates the narrow confines of this cell. She’s not claustrophobic, but she thinks it might only take a few hours before she starts flinging herself at the wall. “What are you going to do, then?”

“I confined Suder to quarters,” Janeway says. “Strictly to quarters, no little adventures through the hallways or explorations of the air vents.”

“Do you think quarters will hold me?” It obviously gives Seska the greatest range of opportunities for escape, far more than life in this cell.

Janeway examines her for a long moment, and Seska is forcibly reminded of the moment in that room when the dark-eyed Cardassian fixed her with his gaze. “Yes,” Janeway says. “Until I have a better use for you.”

End Notes

Canon-typical non-graphic references to sexual assault of Bajoran women during the Occupation

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