

the placeholder

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by [meriwethersays](#)

Summary

Damar is falling apart here on this station, losing whatever edge he ever had. "Quark has kanar worth drinking from a glass," he tells Weyoun. "The replicator in my quarters doesn't." His entire body feels hot when he meets Weyoun's purple eyes, those pupils too big in the light of Quark's bar. Of course Weyoun has no visible marks. Damar was careful. Considerate, even.

This was supposed to be a simple "what if Weyoun saw Damar give someone a blowjob and wanted to try it himself" PWP fic. And then...this happened. Damar falls for Weyoun 5 during the Dominion occupation of Terok Nor and ends up starting a rebellion with Weyoun 6.

Notes

See endnotes for detailed CW and semi-dubcon explanation. Also includes a variety of minor sexual relationships.

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

Chapter 1

Damar is against the alliance with the Dominion from the start. Why should he and Dukat trade the freedom of their Klingon bird of prey for the yoke of the Dominion? Once the Dominion comes to Cardassia, with their specially-bred pet soldiers, there will be no getting rid of them.

Dukat can't see this. Dukat is obsessed with Bajor, always Bajor, and after the third time that Dukat refuses to accept Damar's counsel, he gives up, trusts the wisdom of his Gul and tells himself that yes, Dominion occupation (and that's what it is) will strengthen Cardassia again. Bajor will be theirs again, when all is said and done.

Life on Terok Nor under the control of the Dominion is surreal. That Bajoran woman, Kira, refuses to yield the Cardassians' rightful place. She's everywhere, in her bright red uniform and her judgmental sneer, unafraid of—well, anything, and Dukat is obsessed with her. He laughs indulgently at what she says when the words sound like death threats to Damar. He tries to play house with her and his daughter when Damar sees the vulnerability that kind of behavior creates.

And all the while the Dominion is there, watching, in the form of Weyoun. The Vorta sets Damar's teeth on edge, with his eerie purple eyes and pale skin and bizarre fascination with unimportant things. It's obvious that Weyoun hates that Damar defers to Dukat rather than to him and so Damar does it gratuitously, looks to Dukat for confirmation for the slightest instruction.

When Weyoun says, "Let me see that duty roster," Damar makes a show of waiting until Dukat says, "Yes, yes, Damar, give it to him."

When Weyoun says, "What time is it?" Damar doesn't answer until Dukat gives him the nod, at which point he slowly says, "Computer, what time is it?"

When Weyoun says, "Do you know how to make the replicator give me something called 'chunky peanut butter'?" Damar stares at Dukat blankly until he says, "Damar, work the damn replicator," and Damar hears the satisfaction in his voice under the annoyance.

Weyoun always looks peeved, just on the verge of snapping, and Damar takes great satisfaction in it. There's little enough else to take satisfaction in. His chief purpose here is to find a way to disarm the mines blocking the wormhole, and every day that he doesn't is a day more for the Federation to recover and rebuild. He divides his time between working and steadily drinking his way through Quark's top-shelf kanar, though sometimes the one bleeds into the other. He doesn't like Bajoran women, especially not like Dukat does. He runs through a few of the other dabo girls (and, more discreetly, one or two of the dabo boys), but finds it more of an obligation than anything else. And Weyoun always seems to be sitting in Quark's when he's there, eating an increasingly bizarre selection of alien foods that nauseate Damar and peering judgmentally at the glass of kanar in his hand.

Dukat is in his element. At least there's that. He doesn't walk anymore, only swaggers, and his laugh rings through the corridors. Weyoun's peevishness bounces off of him. He, at least, doesn't seem to mind how long it's taking to clear the minefield.

"Damar, come have a drink with me in my quarters," he says one night, and then pours spring wine for him, which Dukat prefers to kanar. It's sour to Damar's tastebuds, but lately everything is sour. They reminisce about the old days, hunting Klingons, until Dukat's door chimes. Dukat calls "Enter," and a redheaded Bajoran woman—not Kira, but undoubtedly close enough for Dukat's taste—walks in. "Liana," he says, and Damar hears the self-satisfaction in his voice, the oily undercurrent.

"Gul Dukat." She walks closer, and Dukat rises to take her hand. "I'm glad you had time for me."

"For you, my dear, always." Dukat cups her cheek and this, of all things, is what makes Damar's spine crawl. Dukat wants these people to admire him. He wants his women to be earnest, to love him.

"I'll leave you two alone." Damar drains his glass—sour or not, it still helps—and stands.

Dukat doesn't take his eyes off Liana. "If you wish," he says, and Damar is either too drunk or not drunk enough to do anything but leave.

He runs into Weyoun just outside Dukat's quarters. "Ah, Damar." Weyoun's nose wrinkles a little. "Don't let me keep you from your *work*." He looks past Damar to Dukat's door, already dismissing him.

"I wouldn't go in there," Damar says.

"Oh?" Weyoun snaps those unnatural eyes back to him. "Is something wrong?"

Damar smirks to cover the surge of frustration he feels whenever he talks to Weyoun. "He's busy."

"Busy doing what?" Weyoun cocks his head to one side, and in the dim light of the corridor, the soft skin of his neck almost glows. He sounds entirely sincere.

"He has a guest."

"I like to meet new people."

Damar can't tell whether Weyoun is being purposefully obtuse. He seems genuinely naïve about a lot of things, but this is a very basic thing that Damar is saying. "He's fucking a woman." That should be unambiguous enough. It's distasteful to say.

"Oh, I see." Weyoun doesn't look upset, only mildly interested. Damar has met his fair share of other races—more than he cares to—but Weyoun is the most *alien* by a long shot. "And we should not interrupt him."

"I wouldn't."

Weyoun's gaze sharpens. "So, if I tell you to do something, you won't go running to him for his approval before doing it?"

Damar feels himself smile a little, involuntarily. It's nice to know that he's managed to annoy Weyoun enough to reveal it. "It depends what you tell me to do."

"Does it," Weyoun says, and there's a certain fascination in his voice that makes Damar uneasy. "Well, we don't need to test the limits now. Run along back to Quark's, then."

If Dukat were here, Damar would look to him for permission—not because he needs it, but because it would annoy Weyoun all the more. Instead, Damar says, "At least you've managed to find an order I'm happy to obey." Weyoun's fascination intensifies, and Damar can almost feel his gaze as Damar walks away.

Dukat does it again, three more times. Then, the fifth time Liana visits while Damar is there, Dukat says, "No, stay." He doesn't bother to look at Damar as he says it.

Blood rushes hot through Damar. "I don't want to intrude—"

"If it were intruding, I would tell you to leave," Dukat says sharply. He undresses Liana there, in the main room, barely two meters away. He lavishes kisses on her as he does it—her mouth, her neck, her bare shoulders, then her breasts over and over, and her entire body flushes red. She's breathing hard, staring up at Dukat with her eyes shining, and no wonder Dukat likes this. No wonder he wants a witness to what he believes is this triumph of his. Damar doesn't even know if it's false. Perhaps Liana does want him. Perhaps she has fallen for the charm he projects. Damar doesn't know Bajorans well enough to tell.

Dukat strips naked himself, sits her down on the table positioned so that Damar will see his cock as he pushes inside her. She moans as he does it, and Dukat stops when he's fully inside and looks to Damar with a reckless grin. "You see," he says, one hand stroking her face. "You see, we can be happy here."

Damar is paralyzed, his entire body hot, a kind of roaring in his ears. Dukat looks away from him, gathers Liana up so that she's almost crushed against him and mouths at her ear as he begins to fuck her—she wraps her legs around his hips to pull him deeper, throws her head back and exposes her neck to Dukat. Damar sees the way the muscles in his arms tense, the way he grips her hips and pulls her even tighter against him, the increasingly rapid motion until Dukat groans and comes. He kisses Liana again, long and hard, and then pulls out.

"Damar," he says. Damar can only nod dumbly. "Come over here." Damar stands and walks over to them. He's aching hard, but he knows Dukat well enough to know that he wants something more. Once he's standing in front of Dukat, Dukat gestures at Liana and says, "She hasn't come yet."

So. That's what Dukat wants from him. They've never done this before, but somehow it doesn't surprise him. "All right," he says, and his voice isn't as steady as he wants it to be. He looks at Liana's face—he's not sure he could do this if she looked miserable—but she's at least playacting as much enthusiasm for him as she did for Dukat, and when he puts his hands lightly on her thighs, she lifts her hips a little to encourage him. Damar bends over, then finds himself kneeling between her legs. Bajoran anatomy is similar enough to Cardassian that he knows what to do, knows how to lick and suck until she's moaning and writhing on the table, clutching the edges. He slides two fingers inside her, pumps them in and out as he licks and he knows he's tasting Dukat too, knows Dukat must have wanted it. Liana comes, almost wailing—he feels her clench tight around his fingers, likes to think he knows well enough to know that it's real—and when she's finally still, he pulls his fingers out gently and lets his hand rest gently on the inside of her thigh.

His chin is wet and everything smells like sex. He stands up, wipes his mouth roughly on his hand and looks around for something to wipe his hand on, but Dukat is already pulling Liana close to him and draping a silky robe around her shoulders. "You can go," Dukat says, and his tone is cutting, dismissive.

Damar hesitates for an instant of disbelief—Dukat is sending him out into the corridor with a visible erection, smelling of the combination of Dukat and Liana?—and then nods once and walks out of the room. He only gets a few meters away before Weyoun seems to appear out of nowhere. "Damar!" he says, too enthusiastically for the situation. "Is Dukat busy again?"

His purple eyes are wide and innocent and Damar wonders if Weyoun does this on the nights that Damar isn't here too, if he wanders the corridors hoping to find someone to torment. "Yes," Damar says shortly.

Weyoun sniffs a little. "What's that smell?"

"If you don't know, I'm not going to explain it." Damar shifts, realizes too late what he's giving away as Weyoun's gaze travels down his body, slowly

"Fascinating," Weyoun says, and the heat traveling through Damar is something more than the shame he expected. "Let me touch you?"

It's so far beyond the norm of what anyone would say that Damar doesn't even register it until Weyoun is stroking his hand over Damar's cock. Even then his first response is to close his eyes and push into it—he realizes what he's doing and pulls back, even as his hips twitch back toward Weyoun. "That's not," he says. "You can't just—"

Weyoun is still very close. "Why not?" There's something a little petulant in his voice, something other than the puzzled note that usually accompanies questions about silly non-Vorta things like sex.

"People don't just—" It's hard to focus with Weyoun this close to him, with those eerie eyes fixed on his own, when Damar wants desperately to come and his treacherous body is telling him look, look, he wants you—but Weyoun doesn't want him and Damar doesn't want Weyoun and this is ridiculous. "Because I hate you." It doesn't sound true even as he says it.

And now Weyoun is the one to pull back, but his eyes are still holding Damar in place. "Strange," he says. "I find you rather entertaining

lately.”

Damar tears himself away before he can say something even stupider and gets back to his quarters as quickly as he can. The doors have barely closed behind him before he has his hand on his cock, and when he comes he’s not thinking about those alien eyes, about the softness of Weyoun’s skin—

Chapter 2

Dukat does it again. This time Liana looks almost eager and Damar wonders if at some point Dukat will cut her out of it and just put Damar on his knees and fuck his mouth while Liana watches, make him swallow all of Dukat's come instead of just what he happens to lick out of Liana incidentally. He's not sure if he would prefer that or not. And this time when Weyoun appears in the hallway, Damar turns and walks away, because he doesn't trust himself, not when his entire body is on fire and he can imagine vividly what it would be like to fist his hand in Weyoun's hair, expose his neck and bite until it bruised—

Dukat does it again, and again. Then, one of these times, when Damar had a great deal of kanar before coming over and has had a substantial amount of spring wine in Dukat's quarters—Weyoun walks into the room just as Dukat is undressing Liana. Damar, already paralyzed in his chair, sees the curiosity in Weyoun's eyes; sees the infinitesimal hesitation in Dukat's before he says, "Weyoun! I wasn't expecting you." He has also had a substantial amount of alcohol, and Damar wonders if he would be so unconcerned if he were sober. Weyoun, he can only imagine, is sober. He's never seen the man drunk.

"Oh, please don't let me interrupt," Weyoun says. Liana is staring at him, and Weyoun gives her a little wave. "Damar always tells me that you're busy when I want to visit. I was curious what all the fuss was about."

"Do the Vorta have locks on their doors?" Damar snaps. This is already excruciatingly uncomfortable when it's only the three of them.

"We don't have doors," Weyoun says, which Damar should have known would be the response. "Vorta have nothing to hide."

Dukat has been whispering quietly with Liana, who is nodding. "You're welcome to sit," he says, and Damar feels that like an electric shock. "Unless your gods would frown on it."

"Not at all, not at all," Weyoun says. Damar realizes, with another sudden shock, that Weyoun is *lying*. Dukat smirks and turns back to Liana. Weyoun drags a chair up next to Damar—too close—and sprawls in it. Damar sneaks a look at him, then looks away as soon as Weyoun catches him. "Is this a common Cardassian practice?" Weyoun asks. "My understanding was that Bajorans are quite private about such things."

Damar fixes his gaze back on Weyoun. Maybe looking at him will help prevent the inevitable erection that comes from watching Dukat's lean body and the way Liana reacts. "Not—not common." He clears his throat. "Not unheard-of."

"Obviously not unheard-of." Weyoun is tart. "As we are sitting here. It does provide quite an insight—"

Damar doesn't know what's worse, Weyoun talking or Weyoun *not* talking in this situation. Weyoun, it seems is content to prattle on, until Dukat's voice cuts through his noise. "Damar, come here."

Damar obeys, as he always does, but this time Dukat is still hard, and when he says "On your knees," Damar drops almost automatically and reaches for Dukat's cock.

"*Oh*," Weyoun says softly, as Damar slowly takes Dukat into his mouth. "*Oh*," again, as Damar sucks, working the length of Dukat's cock, and "*oh*" when Dukat gets impatient and grips the back of his head and fucks his mouth with long, methodical strokes, the head of his cock bumping the back of Damar's throat over and over. The knowledge that Weyoun is watching should embarrass him, but somehow it makes everything better, makes Damar grip Dukat's thighs and urge him deeper, as if Weyoun will somehow approve—

Dukat comes down his throat and Damar swallows and swallows until Dukat releases him. When Dukat kicks them both out, Weyoun stands in the hallway with Damar and says, "I want to try that."

Damar's entire body is throbbing with *want* and he doesn't answer in words, only allows Weyoun to follow him back to his quarters. He expects Weyoun to push him down onto his knees again there, but instead Weyoun says, "Is it necessary to be on the floor? The bed seems like it would be more comfortable."

"A—yes. More comfortable." He can barely think with how badly he wants Weyoun to touch him. Somehow Damar sheds his armor, his clothes, has only a faint impression of Weyoun doing the same before they're both on the bed. Weyoun kneels between his legs there, staring at his cock, and Damar feels like he's going to catch fire, his heartbeat pounding in his head. Weyoun squeezes the head of his cock experimentally and Damar makes a noise and hates himself for saying "Please—"

"I want to make sure I know what to do," Weyoun chides, and then he forms his hand into a loose circle and strokes it slowly up and down Damar's cock.

"Please—" he says again, and he barely recognizes his own voice.

Weyoun stops moving his hand. "Promise me you'll stop asking Dukat permission before you follow my instructions."

"This is—is that what this is all about?" His body doesn't care, even as he cringes at how easy he's made it for Weyoun. "Making me—obedient?"

Weyoun places an open-mouthed kiss on the underside of the head of his cock, tongue flicking out just a little. "Will it?"

"*No*," Damar says, because he refuses, he refuses to give up that tiny rebellion that is all that's left to him.

Weyoun shrugs, a strange shaping of his shoulders. "I didn't think so." Then he slides Damar's cock into his mouth slowly, pausing to suck thoughtfully as he takes each new inch as though it might taste different. His tongue flickers and curls and it drags noises out of Damar that he

never thought he would make, incoherent syllables, as he allows himself only the slightest touch to Weyoun's strange soft hair. He tries to stay still, tries not to thrust up into Weyoun's mouth because—because he wants Weyoun to enjoy it and he doesn't want to scare him away (*what is wrong with him?*)

Weyoun only takes half of his cock, doesn't even put a hand on him, but his tongue is so clever and his mouth is so hot that Damar comes quickly anyway—just barely manages to push Weyoun off before he does. The world goes white around him for a moment. When he can see again, Weyoun is dragging a finger through the mess on his stomach and tasting it, and Damar says something that could be “fuck” if he could shape his mouth enough to talk. Weyoun wrinkles his nose a little, tastes it again, and says, “Do all Cardassians taste like this?”

Damar's knowledge comes mostly from Dukat. “I don't know what I taste like,” he says, and Weyoun is wriggling up his body to offer Damar his finger expectantly. Damar lets Weyoun slide that finger into his mouth, and he's too distracted by Weyoun's expression, his eerie wide eyes, to notice more than the shape of Weyoun's finger on his tongue as he sucks on it. Cardassian children are warned not to wander off with stories of the fey, the wild ones, who will carry them away, and that's all Damar can see when he looks at Weyoun now.

Weyoun looks almost—unsettled?—when he pulls his finger out. “Well?”

It takes Damar a substantial period of time to remember what Weyoun has asked, and he hasn't really processed it. “More or less. I thought you couldn't taste things.”

Weyoun's tongue flicks out again. “Not the way you do.” He doesn't elaborate. Instead he runs his hands over the ridges that define Damar's chest. “I can certainly feel things.” His hands are hot, like every other part of him, and Damar shivers at the sensation of it, again when Weyoun drags his tongue along one of the ridges.

“Harder,” he says, and it's the first time he's given Weyoun an instruction. Weyoun lifts his head to stare at Damar—in surprise? why?—and then scrapes his teeth over one of the ridges instead. It's good, it's perfect, and this time Damar can't stop himself from fisting his hand in Weyoun's hair for a second. Weyoun bites him, almost hard enough to draw blood, and it goes straight to Damar's cock. He releases Weyoun's hair, lets his open hand rest on the back of Weyoun's neck and reminds himself that the Vorta are fragile, that he can't grasp Weyoun the same as he would a Cardassian. Weyoun bites him again, this time along his neck ridge, and Damar's entire body clenches. How horrifying, he could probably come from this, even with all the alcohol in his body, even having come once already. “Stop,” he manages to choke out, and Weyoun sits back. He's straddling Damar's stomach, rubbing against one of the ridges with an intoxicated dizziness in his eyes.

“Why?” He doesn't stop the little twitches of his hips. Damar reaches between his legs to find something that feels more like a woman's clit, and below it a slick entrance—but even as he does, Weyoun changes somehow until all he feels is the familiar shape of a hard cock. “You seem to enjoy it.”

“Yes.” Weyoun is rubbing his cock between Damar's hand and the mess on his stomach now, and he's honestly so drunk that he doesn't know if he imagined something different. “But.” But what. But Weyoun has so much power over him already. Every minute he's here only increases it. “But I need—to sleep.”

Weyoun hasn't stopped moving. “You don't seem to be sleepy.” His eyes are half-lidded now. He's beautiful like this, ethereal; his breath catches when Damar touches his side with a free hand, and his skin is so soft, so *fragile*. He's completely hairless but for his head, muscles defined under his skin, but without the nipples or navel Damar is used to seeing on other soft-skinned humanoids.

Damar is struggling with full sentences. “Will you—come from this?”

There's that unnatural head-tilt again. “Perhaps. It would be easier if I could resume what I was doing. Unless you need to sleep this minute?”

Fuck. “No. Go ahead. But—”

Weyoun has already leaned down again and his face is very close to Damar's. “But?”

“Let me see when you come,” and he's wrecked, he's lost.

Weyoun looks delighted at that. “Of course.” He goes back to work on Damar's neck ridges, his collarbones, and Damar is losing his mind with the agony of sensation, a kind of ecstatic energy building in every part of his body. At the edge of his awareness, he feels Weyoun's cock almost swelling between his hand and stomach as he thrusts, and then Weyoun sits back and replaces Damar's hand with his own as he cries out and comes on Damar's chest. He's the most beautiful thing Damar has ever seen, like this, and Damar comes again almost without realizing it, hips pumping up into empty space.

Damar is barely conscious at this point. Weyoun is wide-eyed, bright and almost joyful, and Damar dimly realizes that at some point he forgot any restraint and grabbed Weyoun's thighs with all the strength in his hands. “Sorry,” he mumbles, releasing Weyoun's thighs.

“Why?” Weyoun spreads his own hand and twists his wrist to try to match the bruises already starting to appear. Damar is unable to come up with an explanation. “It's—exciting?” He sounds like he isn't sure of the right word. Damar certainly isn't. Weyoun dips his finger into his own come and offers it to Damar. “Tell me if it tastes the same?”

It takes monumental effort to open his mouth and accept Weyoun's finger. “Yes,” he says. His brain isn't firing well enough to taste anything right now. He's truly not even sure he can move his limbs.

“You do look sleepy now,” Weyoun says. “I'll let you.” Before Damar can attempt to say something else, Weyoun has disappeared from his field of vision. A minute later, he hears the door close. He has just enough motor function left to grope for the half-empty bottle of kanar next to his bed and drain it. A lot of it ends up on his chin. He passes out before he thinks of wiping it up.

Chapter 3

There are words to describe how he feels when he wakes up the next morning, but Damar can't even summon them. He's in the sonic shower, braced against the wall to keep himself upright, before he remembers what happened and why his entire body feels wrung out. "Kantar," he grunts to the replicator. There's a nagging voice in his head saying that he should probably consume something else, that he can't live on kanar alone, and for once he obeys it. The fried regova eggs produced by the replicator are mediocre at best; he gulps down four and returns the rest to the replicator. At least the kanar is already smoothing out the edges of the morning.

When he looks in the mirror, though, he still feels horror in the pit of his stomach. His neck ridges are covered in the aftermarks of Weyoun's bites. It takes him a moment to remember that no one is going to know it was Weyoun who left them, not when there's a station full of other people who Damar could have taken home. The other soldiers elbow him and laugh and ask what her name is, when he finally shows up at his station; Dukat is the only one who stares, eyes narrowed. He's the only one who knows that Damar left his quarters with Weyoun, the only one who will suspect what happened. It makes Damar's throat tighten, to think of disappointing Dukat.

Dukat calls him into his office and Damar stands miserably in front of him—straight-backed, because he still has some dignity, but with the blood pounding in his ears. "Damar," Dukat says, in that crooning tone of his. "Damar, I'm surprised."

It's hard to breathe. "It was a—lapse. It won't happen again."

Dukat shakes his head. "You mistake me. If you want to distract the Vorta from the lack of progress neutralizing the mines, I'm happy for you to do it. I just never would have expected you to do it this way."

Yes. Damar can re-frame it in his mind that way. What happened last night was—an intentional act to distract Weyoun. "The opportunity presented itself."

"Of course, of course. And you took the initiative. I trust you can pursue it further on your own? I'm not inclined to let him into my quarters again."

"Yes." It's a little hard to hear Dukat's words. He mumbles something else meaningless and returns to his station, reading through mine schematics until his eyes can't focus anymore. At the end of the second shift change, he goes to Quark's for kanar and sits at the bar, staring miserably into his cup.

"Do you even bother with a glass when you're alone?"

He hadn't even spotted Weyoun when he walked in. Damar is falling apart here on this station, losing whatever edge he ever had. "Quark has kanar worth drinking from a glass. The replicator in my quarters doesn't." His entire body feels hot when he meets Weyoun's purple eyes, those pupils too big in the light of Quark's bar. Of course Weyoun has no marks, or nothing visible. Damar was careful. Considerate, even.

"I wonder that you can tell the difference anymore."

The worst thing—apart from Dukat's blessing to whore himself out—is that Weyoun seems completely unaffected by—whatever happened last night. Damar doesn't even know how to define it. "Hardly a surprise that you can't, with your tastebuds." And oh, his mind presents him with the vivid memory of Weyoun offering his finger to taste, and he pushes himself away from the bar angrily, throws back the rest of his glass before he leaves. No one will think it's strange. Damar's dislike of their Dominion friend is well-known, probably too well-known.

Weyoun, damn him, follows Damar into the habitat ring. He doesn't say anything, and eventually Damar turns and shoves him up against the corridor wall, pinning him there. "Stop it," Damar tells him.

"Stop what?" Those clever eyes are laughing at him.

"Stop—*following* me!" He locks one hand around Weyoun's throat, just enough to make him struggle for air a little, and marvels at how fragile that neck is, how easily it would snap. How easily he could crush that windpipe. Weyoun's pulse is steady. "You know I could kill you." He squeezes a little tighter, then releases his hand.

"You know I would only come back." Weyoun stares at him. "You seem distraught, Damar. Is something wrong?"

Is something wrong. Why would something be wrong? What could possibly be wrong with what's happened in the last twenty-six hours? "No."

Weyoun cocks his head to the side. Damar wants to mark his neck, wants to retaliate for however long it was last night that he spent desperate beneath Weyoun. "I see. I'm still familiarizing myself with the customs of humanoids. Have I done something—incorrectly?"

"No." He desperately wants to escape this conversation. "I'm busy."

"You are not." Weyoun's voice is sharp now, and when he shoves Damar in an uncharacteristic display of physicality, Damar finds himself stumbling back against the opposite wall. His steady diet of kanar has not improved his reflexes. "Look at you," Weyoun hisses. "Do you think it isn't obvious, your pathetic reliance on that disgusting beverage of yours? Do you think I can't see that you're simply not up to the task of disabling the mines? What use are you here?"

"Dukat—"

"Oh, yes, I'm well aware of the uses that Gul Dukat has found for you," and it's stunning how much that actually pains Damar to hear. "You're happy to oblige him there." Weyoun puts his thumb on one of his own bite marks and *presses*, hard, until Damar's knees almost

buckle from the shivery feeling it sends down his spine. Weakness, weakness. “But when are you going to prove yourself useful to the Dominion?”

“I hate you,” Damar says. “You and your Dominion,” and they’re dangerous words to say, too dangerous, but his mouth is thick with kanar and every time Weyoun pushes him he wants to push back and this is the only way he knows how. “But I’m going to find a way to disable the minefield.” He leans into Weyoun’s hand, hard, until Weyoun finally has to step back. “Or even better, why don’t you do it? You—the Vorta, the Jem’Hadar, you’re all easily replaced, aren’t you? Why don’t your ships just come through all at once—if enough of you came, it would overwhelm the minefield.” The scale of the casualties is—unimaginable.

“If the Founders, in their wisdom, instructed us to do so, we would,” Weyoun says, and there’s something sharp behind the obsequious tone he usually adopts when talking about his gods. “But they have not, because they apparently have more faith than I do that you are going to succeed.” He sneers. “Go back to your quarters, then. Drink yourself stupid and sit there in that ridiculous armor feeling sorry for yourself while your fellow Cardassians are dying—”

Damar has him up against the wall before he can finish the sentence, one arm across his throat, the other digging into his shoulder. He isn’t careful now, and he’s pressed so close to Weyoun that he can feel the man’s heartbeat—faster, now, and he likes that. “You don’t know what you’re talking about. You have no idea what it is to know—”

“To know what, Damar?” Weyoun’s eyes are coldly curious again, his voice needling, and Damar finally sees that that’s what he’s been doing this entire time, prodding Damar to reveal a soft spot so that Weyoun can slide a knife in.

Damar releases him, but he doesn’t step away. “I’ll clear the damn minefield,” he says.

“Oh, how inspiring. I’ve never heard you say *that* before.” Weyoun’s breath is hot on his face and Damar’s traitor body wants Weyoun’s hands on him again, his mouth, anything—

“When I do it,” he says, “you had better be grateful.”

“Grateful, that you’ve displayed some modicum of competence?”

Damar has never wanted to strangle Weyoun more. “I like you better when you’re not talking.”

“I like you better when you say *please*,” and there’s something about the way Weyoun’s lips pucker around the word please, the little change in his tone, that hits Damar too hard. He staggers back a few steps, staring at Weyoun because he can’t tear his eyes away, and then turns and half-stumbles down the corridor, back to his own quarters.

He doesn’t speak to Weyoun for a week, even as he feels Weyoun’s disapproving gaze as he downs glass after glass of kanar at Quark’s. Quark is always happy to listen to whatever drunken ramblings come out of his mouth. It’s obvious that the little troll is conspiring with Kira, Odo, and Sisko’s son in some kind of plan for a rebellion, or will be soon, but it’s hardly worth mentioning to anyone. Dukat is blind when it comes to Kira and Weyoun is blind when it comes to Odo and Damar is the only person who sees anything clearly anymore.

He can’t escape the next meeting of the station’s governing council, not as Dukat’s second-in-command and not as the engineer responsible for the continued lack of progress on the mines. “We’re still experimenting with solutions,” he tells them. Dukat is bored, Weyoun eager, Odo impassive. “Our attempt at concurrent bombardment did not produce desirable results.” In fact, it had caused the mines to increase in number rather than disabling their replication mechanisms. “We’re running a series of additional tests—”

“Maybe if you drank a little less, you’d come up with more solutions,” Weyoun says casually. “How many Cardassians died this week, for lack of that Jem’Hadar support?”

The running tally in his head is what won’t let him sleep without the aid of kanar. “I’m aware.” He struggles to say those two words and no more, to stand still and stare at Dukat instead of Weyoun, make clear that he’s reporting to Dukat and not to the Dominion’s representative here. “We continue to work on the problem.”

Chapter 4

In open defiance of Weyoun, he takes two bottles of kanar back to ops and distributes it, taking a generous measure himself. He's the one that everyone expects to find the solution eventually, after all. When he finally leaves ops and goes back to his quarters, he fumbles around in the dark for a few minutes before realizing that there's someone else in his quarters—another minute of focus tells him that the person is on the bed. He draws a knife—better than an energy weapon, in close quarters—and says “Lights” as he springs.

If he'd thought about it for more than a second, the identity of the person would have been obvious. Who else would have the authority to enter his quarters and the poor judgment to wait there in the dark?

Weyoun had been sitting cross-legged on his bed; Damar's lunge means that he's now pinning Weyoun to the bed. He's clumsy about his knife as he does it, and what wouldn't have hurt a Cardassian instead draws blood a scant centimeter from where Damar would have cut to kill him. Weyoun claps his hand to his neck and looks at the blood—a few drops, barely a scratch—in outrage. “You could have killed me!”

“If I'd meant to kill you, I would have.” He doesn't let Weyoun up. “What are you doing in here?”

“I thought you would appreciate it.” Weyoun's eyes are huge and innocent. “Your armor is very hard. It can't be comfortable to wear.”

He isn't actually going to kill Weyoun, so he stands back up and wipes his knife on his leg before re-sheathing it. “Armor is supposed to be hard. Don't be obtuse.”

Weyoun shrugs. “You seemed upset by what I said at the council meeting. Though motivated, so perhaps it was effective after all.”

“You know, I had just decided against killing you, and then you said that.”

He tilts his head. Damar hates it, the way that Weyoun looks at him like he's the strange one. “It would be inefficient to kill me. The Dominion would send another of me in a few days.”

“What do you want?” He begins the process of shucking his armor. Weyoun isn't wrong that it's uncomfortable. But this is hardly a safe place for them, and as long as Dukat wears armor, Damar will too.

“I—enjoyed what we did, the last time I was here. I understand there are many more things that can be done.” He mistakes Damar's shock for misunderstanding and says, “I want to have sex again. You seemed to enjoy yourself too.”

‘Enjoy’ hardly captures it. The marks have faded, but while they were still there, Damar would press his fingers hard against them while he stroked his cock furiously, would come remembering the feeling of being turned inside out. “I don't like you,” he says. It's a mantra these days.

Weyoun looks surprised. “Does that matter?” He stands up too and helps lift the armor off Damar's shoulders, then untucks Damar's shirt and slides his hot hands up inside it. The sudden shock of it makes Damar flinch, and Weyoun stops. “Does that matter?” he repeats.

What do they even do in the Dominion, when they're not out managing Jem'Hadar? Do the Vorta just sit and make snide comments to each other until they die and then clone themselves and do it all over again? Do they have feelings? Do they understand them? It doesn't matter.

“What do you want to do?”

“I want to fuck you,” and the crude word sounds bizarre coming out of that mouth.

Just like that, Damar's entire body is aflame again. “Before that,” he says, and pulls Weyoun tight against him. He slides his fingers into Weyoun's hair, tilts his head to the side a little so that Damar can lick the place where he cut Weyoun—he almost expects Vorta blood to taste different from his own, but it doesn't, so instead he leaves a sucking kiss, hard enough that Weyoun makes a little hurt noise, hard enough that he can already see the mark forming when he pulls back. Absurdly, ridiculously, then he moves to Weyoun's mouth and kisses him—softly at first, to see if Weyoun even knows what to do, and then Weyoun opens his mouth to Damar, tastes him the same way that he'd tasted Damar's cock last time. The kiss turns frantic, until Damar can't tell which of them wants it more, and they end up back on the bed.

Weyoun is holding a tube in one hand—“Did you search my quarters?” The words come out belligerent, like everything else he says these days.

“Of course,” Weyoun says. “Roll over.”

Damar's entire body tenses. Everything in him tells him not to turn his back on a Vorta, let alone Weyoun—not to make himself as vulnerable as Weyoun wants him to. “I don't—” he starts.

Weyoun cocks his head. “Do you not enjoy it?”

“I don't trust you not to knife me in the back,” Damar says, to avoid answering the question.

That prompts a laugh from Weyoun. “Damar, the state you're in, I could have done that when you walked in.” He slips two hot fingers into the waist of Damar's pants and tugs at it. “If you don't want to do this, you'll need to tell me that.”

Damar stares up into those eerie eyes. Weyoun's pupils look even larger than usual and he looks hungry. “No,” Damar says, hoarse. “No, I want to.”

“Roll over, then.”

Damar ends up on his knees, bracing himself on his forearms. He couldn't coherently explain Cardassian attitudes about men who fuck and get fucked to Weyoun right now, even if he felt like trying, even if his entire body weren't alight with anticipation. Weyoun's slick finger slides in as he asks, "When was the last time you did this?"

"Months," Damar manages to say. His entire focus has narrowed to the slow in-and-out drag of Weyoun's finger. "Before the war." As though there has ever been a definite time without war.

"With who?" When Damar doesn't answer, Weyoun adds another finger and it forces a breath out of him. "Dukat, I assume." The room is silent for a long moment, the only sounds Damar's harsh breaths and the slick noise of Weyoun's fingers moving slowly in and out. Damar is moving with them now and he wants to tell Weyoun to stop talking and fuck him already, but that would give Weyoun even more power than he already holds. "Is that a common arrangement in the Cardassian military structure?"

As Damar opens his mouth to answer, Weyoun puts a third finger in him and flexes his fingers experimentally, and it drags a long, unwilling noise out of Damar. He gasps in another breath and manages the best answer he can think of: "Not—uncommon in—Dukat's military structure." He shouldn't admit that, shouldn't be saying any of this—but then, he shouldn't be letting any of this happen and instead he's easing his legs a little further apart, blood pounding through his body. "That's—you can fuck me now."

"Thank you for the permission," Weyoun says, but he doesn't remove his fingers, only slows down his movements a little, and it's worse, it's so much worse, he's going to make Damar ask him—"You're quite an interesting race, Cardassians. And what a specimen you are." He drags the fingernails on his free hand down the ridge of Damar's spine, still slowly pushing his fingers in and out.

Damar is dizzy with it, the world tilting around him as he clenches around Weyoun's fingers. "If you're going to fuck me, do it already." He's hard, tries to support himself with one hand so he can get the other on his cock, and somehow it's both better and worse that way.

"Does this not count?" Weyoun sounds disappointed.

"Weyoun—just—"

"What were you hoping for?"

He can barely get the words out. "Your cock," he manages.

"How delightfully vulgar," Weyoun says, and then withdraws his fingers and thrusts his cock into Damar at almost the same time. It punches all the air out of Damar's lungs and Weyoun doesn't give him a moment to recover. The heat of his body against Damar's is searing, the shape of his hand on Damar's hip to hold him in place, the sharp points where his fingernails dig into the ridge of Damar's spine. The sensation is building through his entire body with the rhythm of Weyoun's thrusts, and just when it's about to crest, Weyoun pulls out and rolls Damar onto his back. Damar lies there flat on his back, chest heaving, and stares up at Weyoun. The violet of his eyes has almost disappeared, swallowed by the inky black of his pupils, and there's something viciously joyful in the corners of his mouth. He scans Damar for... something? and then grips his hips and pushes back inside. Damar tries to swallow a yell, but Weyoun hears it and speeds up. He can't look Weyoun in the eyes—it's too much—but closes his eyes and lets the pleasure wash through him. Then Weyoun says, "Open your eyes, Damar," and Damar does, just in time to see Weyoun's face as he comes inside Damar with a stunned kind of gasp. Damar can feel him pulsing inside and shudders, just barely on the edge of coming—

Weyoun pulls out and knocks him away from that edge, his entire body still drawn tight. He reaches for his cock, but Weyoun takes a firm hold of the base and says, "Wait."

"Wait for *what*." Damar struggles against his hand, almost frantic. He just sees Weyoun's face fall back into that curious, almost puzzled expression, looking at his own come trickling out of Damar, and then Weyoun is putting four fingers inside his ass without releasing his cock. If Damar had gods he would be yelling their names now as he tries to thrust up into Weyoun's firm hand, as he feels Weyoun begin that slow pace with his fingers that he'd used before. "You can't—"

"Can't what?" Weyoun looks honestly uncertain, but he doesn't stop.

"Please—" There's that word again.

Weyoun speeds up a little and his clever fingers are spreading Damar further, to match the way his face must be open now. "What do you want me to do?"

"Let me *come*," and the words are garbled but Weyoun understands. He loosens his hold on Damar's cock a little, enough that Damar can thrust up through the circle of his fingers. It only takes a few thrusts before Damar cries out and comes, clenching tight around Weyoun's fingers and then collapsing, almost insensate.

He's barely aware of Weyoun moving to sprawl next to him. "That was," Weyoun starts. "Unexpected." Damar is not capable of speech. "I suppose a shower would be the standard next step." When he moves to stand, Damar catches him with a clumsy hand and pulls him back into a semi-conscious kiss. Weyoun peers into his eyes. "Are you—" He looks mildly concerned. "All right?"

"All right," Damar repeats, because the soft warm lassitude swamping him is impossible to articulate.

Weyoun leaves the bed and then returns with a cup of water. He looks messy in the best way, slow instability in the line of his shoulders and his pattern of steps. Damar has left a dark purple bruise high on his neck, and the look of it against that pale skin makes Damar shiver a little. "I believe you should drink water."

Damar has at least enough energy to snort at that. "What, no kanar? Taking care of me, Weyoun?"

"It would be tedious if you drank yourself to death," Weyoun says. "I've grown accustomed to your particular type of irritation."

Against his better judgment, Damar accepts the water and props himself up enough to drink it. It's almost bitter after the sweetness of kanar. Then he drops the cup on the floor and collapses back onto the bed. "You're going to ruin me."

"Are you not already ruined?" Weyoun isn't wrong—Damar isn't blind, he knows what has been happening to him over these last months—but it still hurts as badly as if he'd stabbed Damar.

"Are you done here?" If they were in Weyoun's quarters, Damar would stagger out now.

Weyoun stares at him with that particular blank look he favors when he's acting as though Damar is the strange one. "Wouldn't it be appropriate for me to spend the night here?"

The thought is gutting. Whether he answers yes or no, it will tell Weyoun that he attaches some kind of—emotion to Weyoun's presence. "I don't care," he says, a refrain that's less convincing every time he says it. He thinks his legs might support him, and rolls off the bed to test them. He's unsteady, but at least he can stagger to the bathroom and the sonic shower. Weyoun will leave, of course.

The sonic shower drives the filth from his body. In the few minutes after a sonic shower, he always imagines that this must be what it feels like to have skin so unprotected, skin as delicate as Weyoun's. It also always seems to sober him a little, so he grabs a bottle as he leaves the bathroom.

To his surprise, Weyoun is still there, sprawled atop the covers across more than half of the bed. He smiles—always a bizarre expression on his face—and then frowns. "You're drinking more."

To spite Weyoun and his false concern, Damar takes a swig of kanar directly from the bottle and then holds it out. "Here, drink some. It's swill, but it's not as though *you* can tell the difference."

Weyoun grimaces. "Do you ever consume anything else? Your blood must be half kanar. Is that not harmful?"

"No." Damar doesn't feel like arguing. "It keeps me warm." Ever since the damn Federation occupation of the station, the heating controls don't seem to work as well. He takes another long swig and puts the bottle down. "Move over. Computer, lights."

Weyoun is almost comfortingly warm against his back. Then he places a hand on Damar's hip and Damar startles badly at the feeling. Weyoun waits until he's calmed and then slides his hand down to where Damar is tender and still slick. Damar hisses at the feeling. "Fascinating. Can you take me again?" he asks, in that disinterested tone. Two of his fingers play at the rim.

Damar doesn't answer in words, but he pushes his hips back toward Weyoun's fingers. What's one more time, when Weyoun has already cemented his hold over Damar? When Weyoun is sleeping here in his bed, something that Damar rarely allows anyway? He can feel the head of Weyoun's cock bumping against his hole, where Weyoun is holding him open, and then Weyoun is pushing inside him again, agonizingly slowly. Somehow this time it's more intoxicating than any kanar, the gradual drag in and out, the way Weyoun's entire body is pressed against his like a lover—the way that Weyoun kisses the skin over his shoulder ridge, and it should be too light but he's still sensitive from the sonic shower.

Time loses meaning. It could be five minutes, it could be an hour that Weyoun keeps him like this, wrapping one arm around him to put a searing hand over his pounding heart, sliding in and out with long, slow strokes. When Weyoun comes at last, he breathes out long and hot on Damar's neck and tightens his arm across Damar's chest. He stays inside Damar until he's completely soft and slips out gently, and then says, "Thank you," into Damar's ear. Somehow that's the worst thing of all, and yet Damar can't make himself try to escape Weyoun's arm.

Chapter 5

Weyoun is gone when he wakes up at 0600, thankfully. Who knows if the Vorta even really need sleep, or if Weyoun was only doing what he knew would weaken Damar further. He can only hope that no one saw Weyoun sneaking out of his quarters with that purple mark on his neck. Dukat may approve but he doesn't want anyone else to know.

This morning, after drinking his breakfast (some kind of nutrient beverage that the Federation left programmed into their replicators, vile but efficient, and some low-quality kanar), he goes directly down to engineering instead of working from ops and tries firing a sweep of broad-spectrum proton beams all along across the front line of the minefield. It produces a series of small explosions, detonating the entire front line, and for a moment he thinks that maybe he's finally done it. Maybe the Dominion reinforcements can come through and the Alpha quadrant will fall and Cardassia will forever be another faceless Dominion planet—

But when he scans the minefield again a minute later, they've already replicated and have now produced an additional row of mines. He swears for a long time and the other Cardassian scientists all edge away from him. It's a truly brilliant design, what the Federation has done here. He's beginning to think that the wormhole can never be accessed again—certainly, it can be opened, but nothing is going through it either way.

Damar isn't sure he can face returning to ops and explaining his latest failure—and its further consequences—to Dukat, let alone to Weyoun. Instead, he sends one of his subordinates up to Quark's for two zabo steaks, a bottle of good kanar, and a pitcher of *gelat*. He spends the next three days in engineering, sleeping only a few hours each night, armor discarded in a heap in one corner, working through new simulations. Nothing seems to work, and the other scientists are giving him a wide berth. He must look insane.

He expects Dukat, but it's Weyoun who comes down to engineering at last. He'd thought he was safe from Weyoun here, in the bowels of the station, but apparently nowhere is safe. Weyoun doesn't even wait for the other scientists to scatter before saying, "You look appalling."

Damar's vision has started to go a little blurry—he's had the computer reading calculations back to him instead—and he can only imagine what he must look like. Clothes stained, unhealthy yellow pallor blooming under his skin, empty cups and plates and bottles scattered or stacked haphazardly. "What would you know," Damar says. "All the way up at the top, doing nothing, sneering down at my work. I can do it."

"You know, I believe that you *can* do it," Weyoun snaps. "But I don't think that you will."

Tired as he is, it takes a minute for him to recognize the paralyzing panic sweeping through him. "I don't know what you mean."

"I don't think that you'll take down the minefield," Weyoun repeats, and Damar sees nothing of the man who broke him by holding him close in bed. It's worse, this way, than if Weyoun had never asked to touch him. Now everything he feels is—confused. Tangled.

"I *will*."

"No." The finality in Weyoun's voice makes him numb. "Because you don't want to."

And there it is, said aloud, the accusation of treason. "You're wrong." At least they're alone now, no one else to hear it. "You're wrong. I'll do it."

Weyoun's purple eyes are hard. "You hate the Dominion."

"I don't hate you," and it's the worst, the worst thing he could have said. This is what Weyoun has wanted, it must be—this admission, this realization.

"What would it take?" Weyoun mistakes his silence for lack of understanding and says, "What would I have to do, to persuade you to take down the minefield?"

"I don't want anything from you." The words nearly choke him as he says them. "I'll do it."

"Now, Damar, don't try to lie to me," Weyoun chides. "You want all kinds of things."

"So do you."

Weyoun considers it and looks almost surprised. "Strange. I do. You would let me do anything with—anything to you, Damar, wouldn't you? And then curl up in bed with me afterward. I liked that. I want to do that again."

Damar stares steadily past him. "I'll take down the minefield."

"I don't want anything to happen to you," Weyoun says, and looks confused as he does. "But I can't allow your willful failure to jeopardize the war effort. If you don't solve the problem within seven days, I'll be forced to consider—replacing you." He pauses. "I don't want to have to do that," and there's something sincere beneath his words, something that sounds like he regrets saying it. "But I will if I have to. The Founder will demand it."

"I'll do it," Damar says again.

Weyoun looks pained. He reaches out and puts a hand on Damar's shoulder, warm through his flimsy shirt. Engineering is one of the few places that's actually warm enough for comfort. "First you should sleep."

"It doesn't sound like I have time to sleep." Weyoun isn't wrong. He's only an hour or two from collapse, no matter how much *gelat* he drinks. But seven days is only 182 hours, and he has no illusions that, however Weyoun might claim to regret it, Weyoun will terminate him at the end

of that time if he hasn't succeeded.

"I'll add five hours to your deadline," Weyoun says, and that startles Damar more than anything. "Let me make you sleep. Not here." He moves his hand from Damar's shoulder to the side of his neck.

Damar brushes away his hand. "Fine." He follows Weyoun to the turbolift, and Weyoun is the one who remembers to bring his armor. Weyoun directs the turbolift to a different section of the habitat ring and Damar realizes too late that they're going to Weyoun's quarters. "This isn't the way to my quarters," he says stupidly.

"No. My quarters have less kanar in them." The doors hiss open and Damar follows Weyoun in. Weyoun removes his shirt and pants carefully, wrinkling his nose, and then pushes Damar gently onto the bed.

"I can't—" Damar mumbles.

"No, shh," Weyoun says, and climbs onto the bed with him. He arranges Damar on his side, facing Weyoun, and then presses his body along Damar's and leans in to kiss him. Damar is too tired to do more than mouth back against Weyoun's lips as Weyoun strokes the ridges around his eyes, his neck, his shoulder, slow and firm and warm. Damar touches Weyoun's ear and runs his fingers over the strange shape of it, the almost gill-like consistency, and Weyoun's entire body shudders as he makes a noise that Damar has never heard before. "No—I want you to—sleep," he tells Damar, and his voice is shaky. "You have to find a way to fix it. I don't want to kill you, Damar."

"Touching," Damar mumbles, and he's aware only of Weyoun's heat next to him as he falls into unconsciousness.

The problem is, he's starting to believe that Weyoun might be right. He doesn't want the Dominion to come through the wormhole. He's been paralyzed by that subconscious belief, but now that Weyoun has said it aloud, it's the only thing he can think about. He stares at his notes and all he can imagine is the Cardassian death toll, whether or not the Dominion wins the war. The Dominion doesn't care about their lives. The Dominion has occupied Cardassia and it won't leave unless someone—the Federation?—gets rid of them. But the longer the war lasts, the more Cardassians die.

At the next station council meeting, one day left before the deadline, Damar is forced to admit that, despite continued efforts, he's been unable to find a way to disable the minefield, and that his real-world experiments only make it expand. Odo is impassive, but Damar knows enough of his background to know that Odo does not consider himself a Founder and does not want those ships to come through the wormhole. Dukat is peeved. "Damar, you're supposed to be one of the best engineers among my soldiers." Left unsaid is the fact that there are civilian scientists, ousted from the current military government, who are undoubtedly better than Damar but are also unreachable. "Why can't you accomplish this one thing I've asked of you?"

Weyoun's face is impassive, but his eyes are—painful to meet. "The Founder has instructed me that, if the minefield is not deactivated within the next twenty-six hours, I am to remove him from the project." The method of that removal is left unsaid but obvious.

"Damar is under my command," Dukat snaps, and his smooth mask is faltering. "I'm the only one with the authority—"

"Cardassia is part of the Dominion. Damar, like you, is under the command of the Founders." Funny, how those words hurt more coming from Weyoun now that Damar has heard him speak kindly. "If the Founder orders his termination, he is to be terminated."

"I see," Dukat says, and his tone is one that Damar—and everyone else under Dukat's command—knows to fear. "I'm sure Damar is—adequately motivated." At the end of the meeting, when everyone but Damar has left the office, Dukat says, "Tell me, Damar, are you going to have the minefield deactivated in time?"

Damar considers his options. Weyoun is going to execute him in twenty-six hours—and he has no doubt that Weyoun will obey his god's order, however much he may regret it. "It's unlikely," he says finally.

"I see." Dukat leans back in his chair—Sisko's chair, which Dukat has kept in place. "Well, Damar, go back to engineering and keep working."

"Yes, sir." Damar recognizes that expression in Dukat's eyes. Dukat is going to prevent the execution, whether to spite Weyoun or because he has faith in Damar's ability to accomplish the goal immediately. The only question is how.

Chapter 6

Five hours later, Dukat calls him back into the office. “There’s been a transporter accident,” Dukat tells him, voice innocent. “I’m afraid this Weyoun was—too badly damaged to survive.”

“A transporter accident?” It sinks in slowly. Dukat has killed Weyoun. He’s heard this story before. “Do we know the—cause?” Dukat has killed Weyoun to protect Damar. There is something inside Damar, deep inside, that is screaming. He never said—what would he even have said to Weyoun, if he’d known Weyoun was about to die? Goodbye? Weyoun was prepared to execute him. Would he have sought a final few hours together? Would Weyoun have wanted that, if Damar had failed to meet the deadline?

“I thought we could use a few days without the constant annoyance,” Dukat says. “The pressure. A few more days may be just what you need.” And Damar may be drunk on kanar most of the time, but Dukat has just proven that he’s drunk on power, on his own success—on his belief in his own invulnerability. That’s far more dangerous than anything Damar might say when he’s had a little too much. Dukat has killed the only Dominion authority on this station. Until a new Vorta arrives, there will be no one to distribute the white to the Jem’Hadar, no one to keep them in their place. The Dominion may even decide that Dukat’s unpredictability is not worth his position as head of the Cardassian government and find a—replacement.

Whatever consequences actually do ensue, though, Damar doesn’t witness them. He spends the days (three? four?) between Weyoun’s death and the arrival of the new Weyoun in his deepest kanar binge yet. He has sex with two dabo girls and four dabo boys and a traveler of another gender, some at the same time; attempts three new solutions to the minefield, all of which fail spectacularly; and misses a particularly pointless ruling council meeting because the only people there are Dukat and Odo. Damar does his work from his quarters and spends far too much time trying to decipher his own notes. The most dangerous thing to do would be to consider *why* he’s doing this, why he’s chosen now to fully decompensate, and the only solution to that is to distract himself further. After his latest attempt at disabling a mine—sending a Jem’Hadar ship to tractor it away from the rest of the field—results in the destruction of the ship, there are probably unhappy rumblings among the Jem’Hadar, and he wonders how far he can go before one of them decides that it’s worth risking Dukat’s anger to just execute him.

He’s half-conscious in his bed, a naked dabo boy sprawled at his feet and another one feeding him fingerfuls of kanar, when he hears the familiar voice say, “Damar.”

“Ngh,” Damar says, because he’s heard that phantom voice before in the last few days and he doesn’t need to hear it again.

“Get out,” the voice says, and through his slitted eyes he dimly sees the dabo boys gathering what passes for their clothes and hurrying away. “Damar.”

“Next test’s at 1400, leave me alone until then.” The sweetness of kanar in his mouth is already turning sour. He has a vague memory of locking the doors when they came in, but it’s entirely possible that he didn’t. A lot of details are escaping him these days.

“Damar.” Someone cups his cheek with one hand, too gently, and Damar opens his eyes and scrambles away in almost the same motion. Only when he has the bed safely between them does he manage to focus his eyes on the person across from them.

“Took them long enough,” is the first thing he can think to say to the new Weyoun. “What are you now, Weyoun Six? Weyoun Seven? We go through you pretty quickly.”

“Sixth of my line,” Weyoun says, and there, there’s that familiar tilt of the head. There’s something unusual about his eyes—stranger than usual—something sad about the shape of his shoulders, and he doesn’t look quite like the Weyoun that Damar knew. “There were—complications in my cloning. It required several days to resolve.”

What world does Damar live in, that the reason for a commander’s absence was complications in his cloning? “Do you—” He starts to ask the question and then realizes he fervently doesn’t want to know the answer.

Weyoun tells him anyway. “I have all of my predecessor’s memories. Until the moment of his death.” His gaze travels down Damar’s body—it’s sticky with various substances, and Damar can’t remember if he’s showered since Weyoun Five died. “I’m sorry.”

“Sorry?” Damar wants to get away, but Weyoun is between him and the doors. There’s nowhere to retreat to, and it doesn’t matter, whatever Weyoun is about to say will be brutal wherever Damar is standing.

“My predecessor was—unkind to you.” Weyoun actually looks like he believes this, like the Weyoun model is capable of understanding kindness or affection or anything but disinterested curiosity. Damar’s first instinct is that this is only another trick, another way for Weyoun to lure him into vulnerability.

“You’re the same person.”

Weyoun approaches him very slowly. “Not exactly.” He’s only a meter away now.

“You’re cloned. With his memories.” Damar could get past him, even as unsteady as he is right now. He doesn’t have to listen to this, doesn’t have to put up with Weyoun’s pretense. “Stop,” he says, when Weyoun is very close.

“Why?”

“You see, you’re the same. Weyoun was always asking why.”

Weyoun is too near, his eyes bright and fixed on Damar. “Would you prefer that?”

He's having trouble breathing. He hates that Weyoun—whatever version—can have this effect on him. Any of the answers he could give will tell Weyoun too much. "Why are you here?"

"I missed you," Weyoun says, and oh, it's like being stabbed in the gut, his hungry eyes, his hand reaching to Damar's face. Then he kisses Damar and it's worse, this feeling that Damar has lost for the last few days—the shape of Weyoun's mouth, the curious movements of his tongue, the way that he lets Damar slide one hand into his soft hair, the encouraging noises he makes when Damar forgets himself and grips his fragile body too hard. Damar pushes him against the wall, holds Weyoun there with his hips and just strokes his hand over that hot skin. Weyoun shivers against him and there's—emotion?—in his eyes, so he turns Weyoun's head away and drags his teeth across that exposed neck. Weyoun jolts and moans and lets his legs fall open a little so that Damar can push closer between them.

"How could you be any different," Damar says, but he doesn't let Weyoun answer. He puts one finger to Weyoun's lips to keep him from talking and tries to shove the first layer of Weyoun's clothing off his shoulders. He wants to feel more bare skin, wants that heat draped against his entire body. He remembers the last time he touched Weyoun like this, that way that Weyoun reacted, and drags his thumb softly up Weyoun's left ear. It provokes the same response in this Weyoun, a full-body shudder and a long high-pitched noise. Damar follows his thumb with his tongue and Weyoun is shaking against him, eyes wide. "Let me," Damar whispers into his ear, releasing Weyoun just enough that he can work his pants down. "Can I?"

"You're drunk," Weyoun says, but his voice is high and breathy and he helps Damar, kicks off the last of his pants. He's messy and wet between his legs, shaped with a clit today, Damar's cock already catching against his entrance, and Weyoun asks, "Do you want me to alter—?"

"No," Damar says, even as he begins to slide inside. Weyoun is tight around him like this, so tight that Damar has to stop when he's partway in and ask, "Are you—"

"Yes." Weyoun thrusts his hips so that Damar's cock slides deeper inside until he's buried all the way and can barely breathe. Weyoun is shaking a little and Damar pulls out slightly, then licks the delicate shape of Weyoun's ear as he thrusts back in. Weyoun clutches at him, chest heaving, and then wraps his legs around Damar's hips as Damar fucks him. Damar keeps stroking his ears, slowly kisses his way up and down them, and Weyoun shudders and comes—Damar thinks. But as he keeps fucking Weyoun, keeps touching his ears, Weyoun doesn't stop shuddering, clenching around Damar's cock over and over again, like he's still coming.

Damar uses the last of his coherence to ask, "How does it feel?"

"Good," Weyoun gasps. "Don't stop." Damar is barely keeping himself from coming at the feeling of being inside Weyoun, but he tries to control it, keeps thrusting hard and leaving sucking kisses on his ears, and Weyoun's entire body is shaking hard now, so hard that Damar would worry if Weyoun weren't begging "*Don't stop*," until Damar has to give in, grabs Weyoun's hips and bites the edge of his ear very lightly and comes to the sound of Weyoun's howling moan.

Damar half-carries Weyoun to the bed and collapses next to him. He's entirely wrung out, drunk on kanar and Weyoun, but Weyoun pulls his head back to Weyoun's ear. Damar obliges, mouthing along it as Weyoun clutches at him, almost writhing, until he seems to reach some kind of completion and cries out again, every muscle going taut before releasing into softness. Damar pulls back just enough that he can speak without touching Weyoun's ear. "I missed you too." He can't help but admit it, with Weyoun here with him like this.

Weyoun turns his head to look at Damar. His eyes are wide, stunned, and he manages to lift one hand enough to brush his knuckles against Damar's eye ridge. "I would have been here sooner if I could."

Damar feels torn open. "You've broken me, you know," he says. "Whatever you want—"

Weyoun closes his eyes and shakes his head minutely. "I don't want to talk about—anything outside." His voice is tight.

"Are you here to terminate me?" He can't help asking it, despite Weyoun's request.

Weyoun grips his arm hard enough that it hurts even through Damar's tough skin. "*I will not*." He draws in a deep breath. "I was able to—negotiate a reprieve. Please, can we wait to talk about it? I've been waiting to see you again."

"You negotiated with—your gods?"

Weyoun's face is terrifyingly empty. "I have no gods." It's barely louder than a whisper

Damar doesn't believe in his gods and it's still frightening to hear Weyoun say. "What happened to the Founders?"

Weyoun touches his eyebrow ridge. "When I was activated, I learned that I was—deficient. That the Founders had not intended that. I questioned whether the Founders were gods. But we were all designed to believe in their divinity, so if I doubted it, that meant there was an error in my creation—and that meant they were not all-powerful. So they are not gods."

"Well, you've proven that you're not the same as—the previous Weyoun." Damar never imagined they could be this different.

"Enough," Weyoun says. "Let me have—five minutes. Without thinking about it."

"All right." Damar puts a sticky arm around Weyoun. "Computer, five minutes."

Chapter 7

When they emerge from Damar's quarters and enter the turbolift, Damar says, "Engineering."

"No, Quark's," Weyoun corrects. At Damar's expression, he adds, "Promenade."

"I thought you wanted me to drink less."

Weyoun presses his lips together for a moment and then says, "I do. But right now I want you to eat food and I want Quark to see in person that I'm back."

Quark has a glass of kanar ready for Damar when he walks in, but Weyoun snatches it before Damar can and drains it. Damar, Quark, and the rest of the bar stare at him. Weyoun Five tried food extensively, but he didn't drink alcohol. "This is not good," Weyoun announces.

"I would be happy to make something more to your taste if you'd like! Saurian brandy? Scotch whiskey? Root beer? Romulan ale?"

Weyoun tilts his head and inspects his empty glass, then holds it out. "Some of each."

Quark laughs nervously. "Let me get you fresh glasses for those." He turns to the liquor shelf.

"Why?"

"They each taste different," Damar tells him. This Weyoun is a little alarming. "If you have them mixed together, you won't be able to tell." He lowers his voice. "I thought you couldn't taste very well."

"It appears that is—not missing from my genetic composition. The taste of that kanar was much stronger than anything in my predecessor's memory."

Quark pours a small measure of each beverage into a glass and pushes all four toward Weyoun. He refills the glass of kanar that Weyoun consumed and passes it to Damar, and it's a mark of his distraction that he doesn't bother to give Damar a clean glass.

Weyoun picks up the first glass—brandy—and tilts it just enough that he can dart his tongue out and taste it, and then drinks the rest of it. He does exactly the same thing with the other three, spluttering at the root beer. Damar is so hypnotized by the sight of it that he forgets to drink his kanar until Weyoun has finished. "Well?" he asks, and damn the catch in his voice. He drinks the kanar to cover it.

"I like the whiskey," Weyoun declares. "It tastes like smoke."

Quark laughs nervously and pours a full glass of the whiskey. "On the house," he says, slanting his eyes at Damar, who realizes that he will be paying for it himself later.

"That's very thoughtful of you, Mr. Quark," Weyoun says. "Now, food." He rattles off a lengthy food order for himself and is about to order some for Damar when there's a scream on the promenade.

They run out onto the promenade just as the vedek steps off the second-level railing, noose around her neck. In an instant, she falls and her neck snaps. She hangs only a few feet in front of them, eyes empty. The force of the fall has flung her earring to the floor. Weyoun bends over, his movements jerky, to pick up the earring. He stares at it dumbly for a moment, then turns to offer it in his open palm to Kira, a foot away. As Kira takes it, he says, "I'm sorry." Kira gapes at him before accepting it.

Damar closes his hand around Weyoun's arm and pushes him away, out of the circle of people that have gathered around. Then he takes a deep breath and goes back to the dead woman. He draws his knife and gives it, handle first, to Kira; when she's taken it, Damar lifts the woman in his arms so that Kira can cut the rope easily. Her body is warm and the kanar in his stomach is burning its way back up his throat. Two Bajoran men lift the woman's body from him, and Damar takes two steps back almost reflexively. The crowd is silent.

"Damar." Kira's voice is sharp. He can't imagine that she's going to thank him, and she doesn't; she tosses his knife so that it clatters to the floor at his feet. "What, you've never seen a woman hanged before?" There's the slightest hitch in her voice.

Damar has witnessed formal executions, too many of them. Death is no stranger. But the taboo against suicide runs deep in Cardassian culture, reserved only for the direst of circumstances, and it's never happened in front of him. He crouches, slowly, to pick up the knife. "I'm," he says, and the kanar is in the back of his throat. "Sorry." He swallows against it and backs away until he finds Weyoun. "We need to get out of here," he hisses, and drags Weyoun back further.

Weyoun is staring at him with eerie wide eyes. "That's—the Weyoun line has seen a lot of death, but I never *felt* it like this."

"Well, you're defective," Damar says, and then realizes he's spoken to Weyoun like he's the previous Weyoun. "You have to—control the Jem'Hadar. There could be a riot. They'll kill anyone in their path unless you tell them not to."

"Yes," Weyoun says, and his voice sounds very distant. "Yes, I'll order them. Can you stop the Cardassian security?"

"You know I can't. Go." Damar feels strangely protective of this new naïve Weyoun, who feels things.

He does go to Dukat, even though he knows it won't do any good. "A vedek killed herself," he says. Dukat barely looks up from his padd. "Weyoun is dealing with the Jem'Hadar, but it might be a good idea to withdraw the Cardassian security patrols until the Bajorans have—worked their emotions out."

Dukat stares at him with cold eyes. “What’s this, Damar? I’ve never heard you worry about the Bajorans before.”

“I was simply—concerned—that Major Kira might be injured. I know she plays an important role in—maintaining control.”

Dukat waves a dismissive hand. “The major has a gift for survival. I’m sure she’ll be well out of the way of any disorder.” He sits forward in his chair. “How is the new Weyoun? He seems—different.”

Any interest from Dukat is dangerous. “Like the Weyoun before him, as far as I can tell. Though he was trying out different alcohols in Quark’s, so maybe he’ll be a little more fun.” He tries to adopt the right tone of casual unconcern even as he thinks of Weyoun dealing with Jem’Hadar. They’re programmed to obey him, but—

“I take it he’s still—amenable to your attention?”

He hates it when Dukat talks about this, but he tries to grin lasciviously. “He certainly was earlier. I hear I’m not scheduled for execution anymore. Thank you for that.”

“I can’t imagine what you’re talking about,” Dukat says. “The transporter accident was a tragic...accident. Merely a happy coincidence that it has also resulted in your being about to continue your work.” He lowers his voice to an almost conspiratorial level. “I’m saving a very good bottle of kanar to toast your success, Damar.” As though he’s a dumb pet who’ll be motivated by a treat. He must be a laughingstock on this station, lured here and there with kanar.

“I look forward to it.” Damar is impressed by how strong his voice is. “I should return to Engineering, in that case.” Dukat waves him away.

Damar ventures back out; the unrest is spreading, up to the second level of the promenade now. He sees a Cardassian security officer about to strike Liana and catches his arm. “You don’t want to hurt this one,” he says, voice low, and glances toward Dukat’s office. The officer understands and goes to find another victim.

“Thank you.” Liana’s voice is soft. He never heard her talk much.

“You should get out of sight,” Damar warns. “It’s only a matter of time.”

Liana straightens up. “What, until someone gets *hurt*?”

“I’m sorry.” He says that a lot lately to people who won’t care. “Just—be careful.” He can’t hold Liana’s gaze. He can see the Jem’Hadar bottled up behind the security office doors, restless. Weyoun looks very fragile in front of them and Damar wants to pull him out of there, but he’s the only thing keeping the unrest from turning deadly. Cardassian guards will inflict broken bones, concussions, bruises; Jem’Hadar will kill.

Down in Engineering, everyone is tense. It feels as though everyone is listening to see if they can hear the sounds of a riot, never mind that the sounds of the promenade never penetrated this far down. “Let’s get back to work,” he says. These engineers are nominally soldiers, but they’re not soldiers like he is, or like Dukat is. They’re just scientists who saw the way the wind was blowing and joined the military before the civilian government fell.

Chapter 8

He distracts himself with work until, to his horror, he stumbles onto the solution. An antigraviton beam would do it. He *knows* it, just as he knows, in a moment of pure clarity, that he cannot allow it to happen. There's no more uncertainty now. The Dominion cannot be allowed its reinforcements from the Gamma quadrant. Cardassia will survive only if the Dominion is defeated.

Damar doesn't know if Weyoun will agree. He wants him to agree, badly. But it's one thing to lose faith in a god, and another to go against everything bred into a Vorta. There are other scientists working on the problem of the minefield, and sooner or later, one of them will discover what he has. That means he needs to move quickly.

The first step—the obvious one—is easy. When the—unrest—has ended, Damar goes to Quark's. “Quark! Kanar!” he announces. “No, reach a little higher on your shelf!”

“You must be celebrating,” Quark says as he pours the glass.

“Let's just say that things are—about to improve for the Dominion.” The words feel slimy in his mouth. Quark plays his part, pressing more liquor onto Damar with sly encouragement, until Damar tells him, “I've discovered how to deactivate the mines.”

Quark laughs, even as Damar sees real fear in his eyes. “No offense, Damar, but you've been trying to do that for months.”

Damar grabs his wrist tight as Quark goes to refill his glass and squeezes hard, just to make sure Quark will remember, before releasing him. “Yes, but I've done it.” Quark feeds him two more glasses of kanar before he leans close and says, “Quark, you understand, this is just between a man and his bartender.”

Quark puts a hand over his heart. “Damar! You wound me. I would never repeat anything you say to me.”

Damar's neck prickles and he turns to see that Weyoun is sitting at a table, alternately staring at Damar and a glass of whiskey. It's too late to turn back now, though. “The key is an *antigraviton beam*,” he whispers. “It's so simple, I don't know why I didn't see it so much earlier. Do you know, that Vorta threatened to kill me if I didn't find the answer? Me!”

“I certainly hope he can't hear you,” Quark says. “I understand they have very good hearing.”

Damar makes a dismissive noise and reaches for his glass of kanar. It's only Quark's quick reflexes that keep him from knocking it off the bar. Damar takes it back and raises it in a toast. “You're a good man, Quark. A good businessman. One week, and the war will be over!”

“A good man,” Quark repeats. “Yes. Can I get you anything else?”

“Give me that bottle of kanar and—a bottle of whiskey! For my executioner!” Damar is only a little less drunk than he's playing, but he's delivered the message that he needs to and his heart is still pounding from his choice to betray the Dominion. Quark will take his message to the little knot of rebellion on this station. They must have contact with the Federation. They'll get the message to the Federation. And, with any luck, someone on this station will find a way to prevent the use of an antigraviton beam anyway, just in case the Federation takes too long to reach the station.

When Damar reaches his table with two bottles in hand, Weyoun says, “I see you're in your usual condition.” There's sorrow rather than bite in his words.

“I brought you more whiskey!” Damar pours too enthusiastically, slopping it over the edge of Weyoun's glass.

Weyoun wrinkles his nose. “How thoughtful of you. And more kanar for yourself.”

“Haven't you heard?” Damar fills his own glass, too full. “I've saved the Dominion. I've won the war.”

Weyoun's hand closes almost convulsively on his glass. “You've done what?”

“To the Dominion!” Damar raises his glass and toasts Weyoun aggressively. The Jem'Hadar in the bar stare briefly before turning away. “I figured out how to disable the minefield.”

“My predecessor was sure you would never do it.” Weyoun's voice is very quiet. “He was sure.”

“Apparently I'm just too smart for my conscience to stop me.” The kanar goes down easier with every glass. “Aren't you happy, Weyoun?”

“We can have this conversation somewhere else, later,” Weyoun hisses. “You're drunk.”

“Oh, yes,” Damar says. He drapes an arm over Weyoun's shoulder and leans in close. “I just need you to do one thing.” He's misjudged the distance and he's not even an inch from Weyoun's ear.

“What's that?” Weyoun's voice is thick.

“Your predecessor was blocking Jake Sisko's little journalism reports,” Damar says. His mouth brushes Weyoun's ear and he remembers the way that Weyoun shuddered against him earlier. Maybe this is obscene in Vorta society. “You need to let them through.”

“How do you expect me to do that?”

Damar laughs and he wants nothing so much as to lick along the edge of Weyoun's ear to see if he'll make those noises again. “You're the

mouthpiece of the gods, Weyoun. You can have anything you want.”

“Anything?”

Damar pulls away and pours himself another glass of kanar to avoid doing something that everyone in the bar would consider obscene. “That’s what I said.”

Weyoun looks almost appalled. “You know a woman died on the promenade right outside not twelve hours ago.”

“Your Dominion has allowed *seven million* Cardassians to die in its service,” Damar says. “What’s one Bajoran?” He’s at that beautiful point when everything sharp inside him is coated smooth in kanar, when his bones are turning warm and liquid. Where cruelty is easy. Soon he’ll need to leave, before he begins to say things even more dangerous than that. “You have soldiers bred to do nothing but kill, and instead you throw Cardassian parents and children into the blades of your war machine.” The last he heard, his son and his former wife are still alive, but nowhere is safe now.

“You’re drunk,” Weyoun tells him. “I think you should leave.” He grabs Damar’s arm and Damar yanks away from him.

“I can walk myself,” he says. He knocks his chair over when he stands up, but at least he’s standing on his own. He grabs the bottle of kanar as he goes, and it barely causes a stir. People here are used to seeing him like this. He would be the station’s drunken joke if not for the fact that he’s Dukat’s second.

“Of course you can.” Weyoun’s snide tone is familiar, at least. He manhandles Damar along out of Quark’s. Someone has already set up a shrine to the dead woman; her earring hangs from a post, encircled by flowers and trinkets. The kanar rises in Damar’s throat again and he swallows it back angrily. His fuzzy mind can’t track their progress; he only realizes where he is when Weyoun is peeling off his armor. Damar reaches for Weyoun’s shirt and Weyoun brushes his hand away. “No, not right now,” he says. He strips off the rest of Damar’s clothes and pushes him into the sonic shower. “Don’t fall.”

Damar doesn’t know if he’s left or not. A moment after the shower starts, he’s vomiting up the kanar, bracing himself against the shower wall to keep from collapsing to his knees. He keeps retching even after there’s nothing left in his stomach, convulsions racking his body. This has happened before, plenty of times, but this is the worst by far. Eventually he does allow himself to slide down the wall to sit in the shower and it’s miserable, almost painful. Clean, though. He gropes at the edge of the wall for the ever-present bottle and then realizes that he must be in Weyoun’s quarters instead. His own must stink of kanar and sweat and sex.

The shower turns off. Weyoun sits down next to him and leans his shoulder against Damar’s bare one, now over-sensitized from the sonic shower. “What happened?”

“I told you. I solved the problem. I know how to let the Jem’Hadar reinforcements through the wormhole.” His voice is hoarse; his throat aches. “We should all be happy.”

“You’re not.”

“Are you surprised? You always believed I could do it. You just thought I had some—subconscious resistance to figuring it out.”

Weyoun is unnaturally still. “I did. I don’t believe that you want this.”

Damar laughs. He can hear the edge of hysteria in his own voice. “How can I not want it? Aren’t we loyal servants of the Dominion?”

Weyoun is barely breathing. “Are we?”

Damar draws his knees up and props his face in his hands. The floor and the wall are chilly against his body. Weyoun’s shoulder is the only point of warmth. “I…allowed the specifics of my discovery to fall into Federation hands. I let them find out how soon the minefield will come down.” He’s started to shiver. Weakness. “So now I’m a traitor. To Dukat and to—you and the Dominion.”

“Damar.” Weyoun stands and helps him up. “Come out of there.” He walks Damar over to the bed, where Damar sits numbly. He’s replicated clean clothes for Damar and dresses him as best he can without Damar’s help. “So the Federation will come here.”

“To retake Terok Nor before the minefield comes down, yes. They’ll have to. And meanwhile the rebels in the station will begin work to destroy the antigraviton beam so that the Dominion can’t physically use it. All because I’ve betrayed—the Dominion.” He can’t say ‘you’ again.

“Why?” Weyoun’s expression is so much like his predecessor that it makes something deep in Damar ache.

“The Dominion would sacrifice every single Cardassian life to win this war.”

Weyoun doesn’t deny it. “The Founders would say that those are Dominion lives now, not Cardassian lives. My predecessor would say that. That they should be happy to sacrifice in service of the Dominion.”

Damar very nearly strikes him. “Dukat sold our lives to the Dominion. He never should have done that.”

“Many Cardassians will die without those Jem’Hadar reinforcements,” Weyoun says. “Hundreds of thousands. Maybe millions. More may die if Cardassia tries to leave the Dominion.”

“At least they’ll die for *Cardassia*, instead of being thrown away for nothing.” Weyoun touches his chin and turns Damar’s head to face him. “You don’t believe that the Founders are gods,” Damar says. Weyoun’s wide eyes are a little frightened, even though he said the same thing earlier. “If you were with me—”

Weyoun is frozen again. "If I were with you," he repeats, barely moving his mouth. "They are not gods, but they are my makers—"

"They made you deficient." Damar runs his finger along the place where Weyoun's ear meets his face, and Weyoun's eyes fall closed. "Did I betray you when I betrayed the Dominion?"

Weyoun Five would have laughed at that, because of course that would have been a betrayal of Weyoun Five. Weyoun Five didn't want to terminate him, but would have done it without hesitation. Weyoun Six says slowly, "I don't know."

"Are you going to tell Dukat?"

Any expression disappears from Weyoun's face. "I don't feel the need to tell Dukat anything," he says, and his fingers tighten on Damar's face. "*Anything*."

"He guessed after the first time. About us. He thought I was—letting you fuck me to *distract* you from my failures."

Weyoun releases his chin and seems to shrink back. "Were you?"

"I wish," Damar says. "That would have been much easier." It's hard to smile, the way he feels, so he just brushes a kiss to the tip of Weyoun's ear. Weyoun leans into it almost unwillingly and Damar finds himself admitting, "I love when you do that." There's a hard knot of fear forming in his chest. "I have to free Cardassia. The only way to do that is to break our treaty with the Dominion."

"What do you want me to do?" Weyoun's voice is rough. "If I—help?"

"You know Weyoun Five was refusing to allow Jake Sisko to transmit his little news reports," Damar says. "Like I told you, find a way to let Sisko transmit them. He'll be able to communicate what he needs to, to the Federation. What we need to communicate."

"To save Cardassia."

"To—save me," Damar says. It's wrong to play on whatever Weyoun feels for him. "I'm going to—pursue this, with or without your help. I'll be caught eventually if you don't help."

Weyoun's eyes are very dark. "My predecessor would have expected something in return. If he had even been willing to entertain the idea."

"I would have given him anything." Damar takes a deep breath. "What do you want?"

Weyoun shakes his head. "I want you to—live. I want you not to drink yourself to death because you're at fault for whatever happens."

"That's unrealistic." Damar fully expects to die before Cardassia is free. He plans to cope with that expectation with many bottles of kanar.

"That's my price."

Damar hesitates. "I can try."

"Promise me."

"You know I can't promise not to die. If you don't want me to die, you have to help." What a strange Weyoun he is, compared to Weyoun Five. "That's *my* price."

"All right," Weyoun says slowly, like each word is venomous. "I will help. Will you tell the—rebellion here?"

"Not yet. They'll think it's a trick. We'll have to stage that carefully."

Chapter 9

Major Kira patrols this section of the habitat ring at irregular intervals. The trick will be ensuring that she sees—and hears—they discussing Cardassia's rebellion and their support of the Federation without making it obvious that that's their goal. They tuck themselves into an alcove, where only someone searching for trouble will look, and Damar pushes Weyoun against the wall and kisses him, exploring his mouth and it always feels like the first time, with this Weyoun. Weyoun is listening for Kira's approach, and when she's out of earshot, he bites Damar's lip as the signal. "Promise you'll help me," Damar says, just loud enough for Kira to hear.

"Yes—"

"Free Cardassia—" Damar gasps when Weyoun bites his neck hard enough that a mark will show even on his hard skin. He lets one hand fall to Weyoun's cock and rubs gently through his clothing. "Stop the—Dominion—"

Weyoun fists his hand in Damar's hair and urges him down onto his knees, and this wasn't part of their plan but Damar wants it, wants it badly, so he pulls Weyoun's cock free and says again, "Promise me," before he sucks it into his mouth.

Weyoun cries out at the first touch of Damar's tongue and tightens his hand in Damar's hair. "Anything—I'll get rid of the Jem'Hadar—yield to the Federation—" As Damar takes him deeper, Weyoun says, "*Please*, and no wonder he likes it when Damar says it.

Damar pulls off and Weyoun almost whimpers—what a lovely sound—and presses his hand to the side of Damar's head, hips thrusting a little toward him. "I want them gone," he says.

"Don't stop—yes—" With another person, Damar might suspect that he was exaggerating, but Weyoun has never been one to fake his reactions. He holds Weyoun's hips against the wall so that he can't thrust and begins to suck him again, very slowly, tongue flexing. He takes Weyoun's cock all the way to the back of his throat and just holds it there, lets him feel the way that Damar's throat is trying to close around him. Weyoun is saying nonsense now, more noises than syllables, groping for something to hold onto, and Damar loves it. Weyoun tries to escape Damar's grip on his hips so that he can thrust into Damar's mouth, but Damar is far stronger. He's probably leaving bruises on Weyoun's skin and that of all things breaks his restraint. He speeds up, bobbing up and down on Weyoun's cock until Weyoun goes tense all over and digs his fingernails into Damar's neck ridges. Damar releases his hips and Weyoun fucks the final few strokes into his throat before coming with another strangled cry.

Damar swallows, sucks gently until Weyoun is shaking, and then slowly releases Weyoun's cock from between his lips. Weyoun is gazing down at him, one hand cupping his cheek. Then he says, "I think I love you," and he sounds baffled at the words coming out of his own mouth.

Damar can't bring himself to argue. He hears soft footfalls moving away and hopes dearly that it was Major Kira and not one of his soldiers.

* * * * *

The next day, Weyoun orders sixty Jem'Hadar to leave and sends them on a mission somewhere—Damar suspects it's somewhere that they're likely to die and finds that he doesn't really care, though he wonders if this version of Weyoun does. There are only forty left now, compared to two hundred Cardassians and over seven hundred Bajorans and other assorted alien races.

Kira must have heard at least some portion of the conversation, because he can feel her sneaking glances at him during the ruling council meeting. Weyoun forgets to be obsequiously deferential to Odo and it leaves Damar tense during the entire meeting, even though Dukat doesn't appear to notice it. He feels her staring at him in Quark's. He wonders if she's noticed the reduced presence of Jem'Hadar on the station.

He leaves Quark's after a zabo steak and only three glasses of kanar. He's keeping his promise to Weyoun—gradually. The good major accosts him in the hallway and says, "What are you doing, Damar?"

Damar looks at her for a long moment. He hadn't been planning to reveal things to her this early. He'd wanted to wait longer, until there were even fewer Jem'Hadar on the station, until he'd had the chance to feel out Dukat. But the confrontation is here and he can't risk lying, not when he'll need her support later. "I discovered how to disable the minefield," he says slowly. She doesn't look surprised. "And I don't want to do it."

She crosses her arms. "You don't want Cardassia to win the war?"

"I don't want the *Dominion* to win the war. I want Cardassia free of the Dominion."

Kira shakes her head. "Your desire to free Cardassia from an occupying force would be ironic if it weren't so pathetic. Dukat made your bed and you don't want to lie in it."

"I *never* wanted an alliance with the Dominion," Damar hisses. "Never. Dukat was—blind, to think it would help Cardassia."

"So you want out. And I'm supposed to trust you?"

"I don't expect you to trust me. You can see it for yourself. Terok Nor will be empty of Dominion soldiers by the time the Federation comes to retake it."

She sneers. "*All* Dominion soldiers, Damar?"

Damar abruptly regrets his phrasing. "Everyone loyal to the Dominion."

“Your pet Vorta?”

“Weyoun isn’t—” Damar wonders if Kira knows Cardassian physiology well enough to tell that he’s blushing. “He’s helping us.”

“And what about when his god shows up and orders him to stop?”

“He doesn’t believe that they’re gods,” Damar says.

Kira laughs aloud at that. “The Vorta were created to believe that the Founders are gods. I don’t care how good you are in bed, he’s not going to—blaspheme.”

If he were Dukat, he would leer at that. Instead, it makes him acutely uncomfortable and he has to glance away for a minute. “He said that he’s a defective clone. He told me out loud that they aren’t gods.” It feels like a violation to tell her this. He casts about for proof and looks at Kira again. “You saw what he was like with Odo at the meeting.”

“So he’s finally accepted that Odo isn’t a god. That doesn’t mean—”

“Do you want to hear him say it himself?”

“Have you considered that he might be manipulating you? That this is all some Dominion trick?” Kira looks a little disgusted with herself as she says, “That he’s playing on your—feelings?”

His entire body is cold. “Of course I have.” He hates the depth of emotion in his voice, and he clears his throat. Maybe Weyoun is right about the kanar.

“You really think he’ll do it because he *loves* you?” He can hear her contempt. “Dukat thinks he loves Liana, but he would never do something like this for her.”

“He’s not Dukat,” Damar insists. He can’t let himself think about that possibility. “What choice do we have but to trust him? Someone else would figure out how to disable the mines, and then I would have no control over the speed of deployment. I can only delay so long with simulations. If we can get the station—out of Dominion hands by the time the fleets arrive to fight over it, we could win that battle against the Dominion.”

“Unless the Vorta betrays us.” It’s the first time she’s acknowledged the possibility of an ‘us.’

Sudden fear lances through him. “Please don’t kill him,” he says. “Don’t kill him—the Dominion would only send another Weyoun, and that one might be...different.”

Kira snorts. “You’re just as delusional as Liana. But I suppose I have to rely on your word, don’t I.”

“I know you have no reason to trust me, or Weyoun,” Damar says. He wouldn’t trust her if their roles were reversed. “But if you believe nothing else, believe that I want Cardassia freed.”

“Yes,” Kira says. “That, at least, I believe.” She turns her back on him and walks away.

Chapter 10

Damar's time in Engineering now involves careful subterfuge. When one of the scientists asks, "Sir, isn't it time to attempt at real-world test?", he snaps back, "You know what happened with some of our past tests. Unless you'd like to explain the loss of yet another Jem'Hadar ship to Weyoun?"

"No, of course not, sir," the man says, and goes back to his tenth simulation of the antigraviton beam's effect. He's not wrong.

Damar has variations on that conversation with three different scientists and he's exhausted by the time he finishes his second shift in Engineering. He very nearly goes to Quark's as usual, but something makes him pause, and he tells the turbolift, "Habitat ring." He's never been very aware when Weyoun has dragged him to those cleaner quarters, but Damar is a trained soldier and he manages to find his way there with only a few wrong turns. It takes him a moment to ring the door chime.

"Damar!" Weyoun looks stunned when the doors open. "Do you need something?"

He doesn't have a good answer for that. He only knows that he wanted to come here, that he wanted to see Weyoun and reassure himself that yes, this—whatever they're doing together—exists as more than a manipulation. "Can I come in?"

"Of course!"

Damar walks in and finds himself standing at attention, the way he would in front of Dukat. "I only..." Weyoun fixes his fey eyes on Damar and doesn't help. "I wanted to...see you."

"Oh." Weyoun looks stunned. "You've never come here before on purpose."

Damar grits his teeth. "No." This is almost worse than Weyoun Five. "I can leave."

"Oh, no!" Weyoun bounds forward. "No, I was just shocked. I never thought you would." Damar can't stand to keep talking about his feelings. He shucks his armor and drops it by the door. Weyoun kisses him—light, no intent behind it—and it throws him, badly. He removes his boots and Weyoun says, "Are you—planning to stay?"

He freezes. "I don't have to."

"You keep assuming there is a hidden meaning behind my questions." Weyoun looks puzzled. "I just want to know the answer."

Damar forces himself to say, "Yes. I want to—stay." He doesn't even know what he's asking for. "Do you sleep?" he asks abruptly.

Weyoun cocks his head. His voice takes on that rote cadence. "The Vorta do not sleep." He hesitates. "I—have found that I sleep, at times."

Damar walks past him to sprawl back into one of the chairs. His head is killing him after a long day with no kanar to soothe it. "The Founders had strange ideas when they—made the Vorta, and the Jem'Hadar. You don't sleep, you can't taste, you're hatched or cloned." He closes his eyes. "You have sex, at least."

"We do, on occasion. We tend to enjoy it." He hears Weyoun settle into the chair next to him. "We don't reproduce sexually."

"Are there—male and female Vorta? I thought you were a man, but you seem to—"

"Change myself?" Damar opens his eyes to look at Weyoun. "It is the—little bit of divinity, supposedly, that the Founders gave us. Our genetic coding allows us to become—physically compatible with any sex of any race that the Founders have encountered."

Damar tries not to think about why the Founders saw fit to do that. "But you have preferences?"

Weyoun looks a little uncomfortable. "The two you have seen, yes. But that may be due to my continued—proximity to humanoids with roughly similar types of genitalia. We have no fixed gender, but I find it simplest if those humanoids perceive me as what they consider male."

"Ah." Damar's headache is only getting worse and he doesn't know how to respond to that. "Well. Do whatever you prefer when we—" He breaks off. "Do you have anything to drink here?"

"No. But I can—help with your head, if you wish." Weyoun stands. When Damar begins to follow, Weyoun pushes him back down and goes to stand behind Damar. "Close your eyes."

Damar obeys. Weyoun lays his forefingers very lightly on the ridges that begin at Damar's hairline and strokes softly along the ridges, down to those that frame his eyes. The heat of his fingers is soothing and Damar lets out a long breath. Weyoun repeats the motion over and over, until the headache retreats. He touches the tip of Damar's nose and runs his fingers slowly up the nasal ridge until he reaches the oval on his forehead. Weyoun leans down and presses his warm lips gently to the center. Damar groans. "You are—" he starts.

"Shh," Weyoun tells him. "Don't undo it."

Damar feels him move away. He doesn't mean to doze off, but his headache has finally abated and he's exhausted. He's not sure how much longer it is that he wakes up, only that he springs into wakefulness with his hand to the place where his knife should be. "Weyoun?"

"Lights to half," Weyoun says. "You can relax, Damar." He's sitting at a table with an array of food in front of him.

"I was asleep?"

Weyoun lifts an eyebrow. “Apparently.”

Damar rubs at his eyes. “Thank you. What are you doing?”

“This quadrant has a magnificent variety of sweet things. Here, have you tried this?” Weyoun offers him an *ikri* bun.

Damar accepts it and takes a bite. “It’s the one I know best. My mother used to make them.” He hasn’t had one in years. “She was a chemist.” He finishes the bun.

“You have jam on your chin,” Weyoun observes.

“Do I?” Damar pulls a chair too close to him and sits.

“You’re hardly sneaky, Damar,” Weyoun says. But he leans in anyway to lick the jam off and then kiss Damar with its flavor still sweet in his mouth.

“I don’t want to interrupt your meal, but—” Damar wants to touch Weyoun all the time, and it’s disastrous, this vulnerability. He might as well as have told Kira everything, when he asked her not to kill Weyoun.

“You certainly do,” Weyoun tells him. “But I don’t actually need to eat. I only like it.” He lets Damar pull him even closer, strip off the layers he always seems to wear. Damar sees movement from the corner of his eye and turns sharply, half-throwing himself in front of Weyoun—“It’s only a mirror,” Weyoun says, but there’s something queer in his voice. “Nothing to worry about.”

Damar tries to calm his heartbeat. “Of course,” he says. “Only a mirror.” Their faces are clear in the mirror, the contrast almost hypnotic. He takes Weyoun’s hand and pulls him to stand in front of the mirror. “Stay like this.” His pulse is pounding as he removes the last layers of Weyoun’s clothing, then roughly pulls off his own.

Weyoun is almost golden in the dim light. Damar presses against his back and slides one hand around his abdomen. The contrast between his own thick skin and Weyoun’s is mesmerizing. Weyoun seems just as hypnotized, his eerie eyes wide as he stares directly into the mirror. “You’re—unreal,” Damar breathes into Weyoun’s ear, and Weyoun shivers. He has a cock today and it’s rapidly hardening. Damar licks the edge of his right ear, dragging his hand firmly up Weyoun’s left ear, eyes fixed on him in the mirror. Weyoun is panting, shaking a little, and Damar holds him in place. “Is this standard?” he asks.

“I don’t know,” Weyoun gasps. “Keep doing it.” He whines when Damar continues stroking his ears, deliberately tracing fingers across each notch and mouthing at the outside. He arches his back, pushing his hips back against Damar’s cock even as his own stands untouched.

“Let me fuck you,” Damar breathes against his ear, and lowers his hand on Weyoun’s stomach to brush lightly against his cock. “Like this.” Weyoun nods, chest heaving. “Don’t move,” Damar tells him, and goes to the replicator for lubricant. He takes a moment, though, to watch Weyoun watching himself in the mirror, before he returns. “Spread your legs a little,” he says, and bites the edge of Weyoun’s ear. When Weyoun obeys, Damar slides his hand down between his cheeks to press one finger against his hole. Weyoun chokes on his breath and Damar switches to his other ear. He works his finger in slowly and Weyoun lets his head fall back against Damar’s shoulder. It means Damar can nip at the top of his neck as he begins to slide his finger in and out. Weyoun’s cock looks painfully hard, but he’s grasping at Damar with both hands.

Damar doesn’t know how long they stay like this before he adds a second finger and Weyoun’s eyes flutter closed. He works his hips back onto Damar’s fingers until they’re both deep inside him and Damar feels Weyoun clenching tight on his fingers. “You could—fuck me now,” Weyoun pants.

“Thank you for the permission,” Damar says, and Weyoun gasps out a laugh. Damar hasn’t stopped kissing his ear, and Weyoun shudders around him every time he makes contact. Damar has barely put a third finger at his rim before Weyoun is fucking back onto it. “Fine.” Damar pulls his fingers out, slicks his cock and then pushes slowly—agonizingly slowly—inside. He puts his hand on Weyoun’s cock now, and it’s not much of an angle for either of them, but he can’t look away. “You’re beautiful,” and what are these words coming out of his mouth as he watches Weyoun move frantically on his cock, thrusting back onto him and forward into his hand as Damar works on his ears.

“Don’t stop,” Weyoun tells him, as though Damar is capable of stopping.

He takes his hand off Weyoun’s cock so he can grip both hips. “Touch yourself,” he tells Weyoun, and Weyoun seems to remember that he has hands. He holds one up over his shoulder to Damar’s mouth, and Damar licks his hand, sucks his fingers until they’re wet and messy, before returning to Weyoun’s ear. He doesn’t know which of them is more overwhelmed by sensation now; whenever he looks his head to watch Weyoun in the mirror, they both look wrecked. “This is going to work,” he tells Weyoun.

“What?”

“The rebellion—” He can feel the way Weyoun’s breathing is changing, see the way his hand is speeding up on his cock, and so he sucks a messy bruise just where Weyoun’s strange ear meets his face. Weyoun comes, shaking apart, clenching tight on Damar’s cock, and Damar bends him over so that Damar can speed up his thrusts, lose himself entirely, until he comes. How is it that every time it feels like he’s being destroyed, peeled apart one piece of skin at a time? This catastrophic awareness of the danger in growing attached to Weyoun rears its head too rarely to be self-preservation.

“I should go,” he says, when they’ve separated and he’s caught his breath a little.

Weyoun stares at him, his irises almost invisible behind his pupils. “What do you mean? I thought you were staying.”

Panic is sweeping through him. “I—I can only stay for a few hours,” he amends. He can’t bring himself to leave when Weyoun looks at him this way, but Kira’s voice has suddenly intruded into his head. *You really think he’ll do it because he loves you? You’re just as delusional as*

Liana.

“You spent the night with—my predecessor,” Weyoun says. He sounds confused. “And he couldn’t even sleep.”

“I just—” If he invents a reason, Weyoun will tell him it’s not true, and he’ll be right. Damar can’t exactly ask whether Weyoun has been manipulating him all this time, can’t say that he’s—having an emotional reaction to his level of attachment to Weyoun. “A few hours. Then I need to get back to work.” Please, let him have this small lie. “I need to make sure no one decides to field-test the solution while I’m gone.”

Weyoun doesn’t argue, which does more to prove his distinctiveness than most of his other assurances. They lie in bed and Damar can’t help pulling Weyoun tightly against him, feeling his heartbeat beneath one hand. He doesn’t know if Weyoun falls asleep, but at least he doesn’t move a few hours later as Damar climbs out of bed and dresses himself again. He can’t bring himself to put his armor back on. Instead, he hurries into the corridor, almost directly into Kira.

“I was,” he starts. What’s the point of lying? “I have to go.”

“I see that.” She must see something in his face too, because she adds, “I’m not here to kill him.”

Damar doesn’t run, exactly, but he gets to the turbolift very quickly. “Promenade,” he tells it, and goes to Quark’s to drink his way through as much kanar as his stomach will hold.

Chapter 11

Quark is always happy to pour a drink—or many drinks—and listen to Damar talk. Has Kira told him, yet, that Damar and Weyoun are on their side, whatever that means? Or does he still think that Damar is a mark, to be liquored up and carefully handled for information?

“You know,” Damar tells him, and he’s not enunciating very well anymore, “Cardassia Prime is a beautiful place. The capital is—beautiful.”

“Eloquently put, as always.” Quark pours the next glass of kanar. “Remember, sip, don’t gulp.”

“What’s wrong with you? You’re supposed to sell me more, not less.” Damar would be suspicious if he could summon the energy.

“I just don’t want to be cleaning vomit off my bar,” Quark snaps. “Sounds like you miss it.”

“When the war is over.” It takes Damar a minute to remember his train of thought. “When the war is over, I’m going back. And we’ll—we’ll make it look like it did before the war.” He squints at Quark. “Do you have a home planet? What kind of place do you come from?”

Quark smiles with all his teeth. “Ferenginar. Very rainy. Not worth the Dominion’s attention.”

Damar shakes his head. “Be glad,” he says sadly. “I wish we hadn’t—”

Quark cuts him off by shoving another glass of kanar into his hand. “Don’t be an idiot.”

Someone sits down next to him. He winces at the light refracting off her sequined outfit. “Want some company? You should come try a round of dabo.”

Damar thinks this is one of the dabo girls from the time without Weyoun. “Quark’s—good company,” he mumbles. He hears her laughing as she leaves.

“My friend,” Quark says, “if you’re not interested in her still, you have problems. Someone else catch your eye?”

Damar inspects the bar top. There are fingerprints on it of at least half-dozen different races, some of them smudged together. It feels like a metaphor. Or something. “Rather not say,” he says. He examines his glass. It’s empty, and he thrusts it at Quark—a little too hard, because Quark has to catch it.

“Damar, let me give you some advice that the humans give each other: just apologize. That solves everything between them.”

“Ha,” Damar says. His glass is still empty. “You didn’t refill my glass.”

Quark heaves a sigh. “Oh, I did. Damar, I have to tell you, I have never in my life cut someone off. Don’t make me ruin that proud accomplishment.”

“Cut what off.” Damar shoves the glass at him. “It’s empty.”

Quark gives it back to him full of something that isn’t kanar. “Where’s your Vorta?”

He chokes a little on the drink. It had been making his head spin less. “Don’t have one.”

“Well, of course, I didn’t mean it in *that*...”

Damar tries to grab him by the front of his vest, but misses. “Don’t say it then.” He wonders, vaguely, who’s eventually going to come get him. Weyoun won’t. Dukat doesn’t come to Quark’s—never did. And no one really likes Damar, not anymore. “No one really likes me, Quark,” he says.

“Oh, I like you, Damar.”

“I spend—lots of money.” He’s leaning heavily on the bar now.

“Finish the drink,” Quark tells him.

Damar does, almost automatically. His mind is still wonderfully syrupy with kanar, but he can see a little better, hear what’s happening around him. Think about what’s happening. Betrayal of the Dominion. Mass death of Cardassian soldiers no matter what. Weyoun. Weyouns. “Cloning should be banned,” he says. “Genetic manipulation. Things.”

Quark looks increasingly uneasy. “It is, in the Federation,” he says, “but I would really advise you to—talk less.”

“I’d have less time to talk if you gave me another damn drink.” Damar is going to pass out here, he’s decided. Pass out and wake up and either things will be better somehow or he’ll be right in place to do this all over again.

“This is—” Quark looks pained. “This is—the third-to-last drink I’ll sell you.”

“You’re going to give me free drinks?”

Quark looks a little disgusted. Then his gaze flicks upward and he smiles. “Odo, my friend. What can I get you?”

Odo looms in Damar’s peripheral vision. “I—heard that Gul Damar might need some assistance walking back to his quarters.”

Damar imagines that Odo's hands must always feel a little gooey, not quite solid. Odo never smiles and his ears are strange.

"Thank you for that insightful commentary on my appearance," Odo says. "Shall we go?"

He doesn't want to go back to his quarters. He doesn't want to go anywhere. "I could sleep in a holding cell," he volunteers. Can't hurt anyone from there. Can't make any decisions there.

"You're—asking me to put you in a holding cell?"

Damar imagines himself smiling. "I could punch someone." He's not sure he actually *could* punch someone, the state he's in.

"Yes, and I suppose then I would have to explain to Gul Dukat why I had his second-in-command in one of my holding cells?"

What Damar wants, more than anything, is to be insensate. A coma, even. Separate from the world and everything he might do to it, for the next— "How long do we have?"

Odo's face is stony. "I can't imagine what you mean."

Five days. Unconscious away from the world for five days. It sounds like the only tolerable option. "Just—arrest me."

Odo crosses his arms. "I will not."

Damar looks around the bar unsteadily. He sees a lone Jem'Hadar staring at him—or in his vicinity, it's hard for him to tell exactly—and stumbles toward it. "What do you want, Cardassian?"

"What are you, Third? Fourth? Why're you in here when you never eat or drink? Here, have some kanar." Damar thrusts his glass at the Jem'Hadar, and a little splashes onto its boot.

"I am Second," the Jem'Hadar says. "I provide—security. Cardassians cannot be relied upon. As you are proving."

Damar snorts. The Jem'Hadar are usually easier to goad into a fight. If he starts a brawl, Odo will have to arrest him. "And we can rely on you, when you have to get your white to function? They would get rid of you if they ran out of white, you know. Your gods."

That's enough to get the Jem'Hadar to punch him, and it catches Damar on the side of the head. His ears ring and his vision is blurrier than it was before. He smashes his glass against its head and yanks out the tube of white, and the Jem'Hadar *roars*. It punches him in the mouth and Damar tastes his own blood. There are chunks of glass in his hand and he charges at the Jem'Hadar, lands his shoulder in the middle of its chest. His shoulder pops out of its joint, but the Jem'Hadar falls back a few steps before clubbing him down. If there were more of its kind here, they would tear Damar apart, but this is the only one. Damar can't hear what's happening, the floor is rushing toward his head, and he sees the Jem'Hadar's foot descending toward his neck—Odo grabs it by the shoulder and it kicks him in the head instead of breaking his neck.

Odo beckons another Cardassian over—Damar's vision isn't working properly to tell who it is—and they drag him up together. His shoulder is screaming in pain and his hand is a bloody mess and the entire world is very distant, but he tries to move his feet as they haul him away, enough to ease the pressure on his shoulder. He has a very vague impression of Major Kira watching him, but he's fading in and out of awareness and it could be another Bajoran who looks like her—could be poor delusional Liana, he and Liana pathetic together.

* * * * *

He's not sure where he is, only that it's too cold and too bright and he hurts everywhere. He seems to be propped against something, a bucket next to him, and he's vomiting into it before he realizes it. It burns in his sinuses and there's a stabbing pain in his shoulder when he tries to lean on it.

"I don't know what you think you're doing, but you'd better stop." Kira's voice cuts through his pounding headache, and he squints at her. "If you're serious—we need *you*. Not—whatever sloppy drunk you feel like being on any particular day."

Damar wipes his mouth. He's not wearing his armor, he remembers. "I'm," he starts. "Do you know—" He retches in the direction of the bucket. "Do you know how many Cardassians are going to die?"

Her voice is sharp. "Do you know how many Bajorans died in the Occupation?"

"What if you're right?" he asks. "What if I'm—blind? Pathetic?"

"You're pathetic, all right." Kira crosses her arms across her chest. "That's what this is? You're spiraling because that Vorta might not actually care about you, when the fate of the quadrant is at stake?"

"No," he says, and it sends another stab of pain through his entire body. "Because if I'm wrong—"

"If you're wrong, we're all dead," Kira says flatly. "It's a little late to worry about that." The room is spinning around him. "Get yourself together, Damar." She disappears from his field of vision, and he thinks he passes out again.

"Damar, Damar." That's Dukat's voice, and if anything could drag him back to wakefulness, it's him. Damar struggles to sit up. He's in the holding cell, he realizes. He feels—like a Jem'Hadar beat the shit out of him, though his shoulder is functional again and his hand isn't bleeding anymore. When he runs his tongue over his teeth, they're all solidly in place. But his throat burns and his mouth tastes like vomit and — "You know, Damar, if you'd been in armor, you'd have fared a lot better. Where was your armor?" Dukat can probably guess.

Damar blinks, his vision clearing, and sees Weyoun and Odo standing behind him. "Sir," he says, focusing his eyes on Dukat.

Dukat frowns. "I need you at your best, Damar. You found a solution to the minefield, but it requires extensive field-testing before we can assure our—friend—that the Jem'Hadar reinforcements can come through safely."

Will Dukat join them, in the end? Will Dukat renounce the Dominion too? Damar feels something choking him whenever he thinks about it, because he's beginning to suspect that Dukat won't. The Dominion gave Dukat his position back. They keep him there. "Just—celebrated too much, sir."

"Not much of a celebration, without a woman or two," Dukat scoffs. "My friend, you like your kanar a little too much."

Damar attempts a smile. He keeps his eyes fixed on Dukat so he won't have to meet Weyoun's eyes. "I'm getting that feeling."

"Get to sickbay and get yourself a hypo to sober up," Dukat tells him. "Then get back to work. There will be time to celebrate later." He nods at Odo and leaves. Odo's mouth tightens, but he lowers the forcefield.

Damar stands slowly. His balance is a little better now. His body has gotten better at processing kanar...efficiently. "Which way is sickbay?"

Odo points.

Chapter 12

Weyoun follows Damar to sickbay and stands watching as the medic gives him a hypo. Then he follows Damar to the armory, where Damar straps himself into fresh armor, and then into the turbolift. “Habitat ring,” Damar says, because he doesn’t want Weyoun to follow him to Engineering.

“What is *wrong* with you?” Weyoun looks sad and a little frightened, a terrifying expression on his face.

“If you—” Damar starts, and has to swallow hard. “You have to know—if you’re trying to manipulate me, telling me you feel—this way—you don’t have to try. I’m—it’s too late for me. I believe it whether or not it’s true.” It feels like there are razor blades in his throat.

Weyoun frowns at him. “Do you?” He steps closer and begins to reach out to touch Damar, but drops his hand before he reaches him. “Believe it?”

Damar closes his eyes. “Weyoun Five—he would have told me anything to get me to do what I was supposed to. You’re different, you told me.”

“He wouldn’t have, actually,” Weyoun says. “If it helps. He was—attached to you, but he didn’t lie to you.”

That tears a harsh laugh out of Damar’s ragged throat. “No, I suppose he didn’t. He told me he was going to kill me. You know it’ll kill me if you’re lying to me.”

“I’ll make sure you don’t die, however this goes,” Weyoun promises.

Damar laughs again. “That’s not what I mean.”

“Oh.” Weyoun lowers his voice. “Is that why you left?”

How to articulate why he left? “You’ve ruined me,” he says. How long has it been since he said that to Weyoun Five? He closes his eyes. “They’ll say I betrayed Cardassia.”

“Who?”

“Dukat,” he says, and he knows it’s true. “Dukat will say I’m a traitor.”

Weyoun’s hand settles very softly at the back of his neck. “Yes.” The finality in his voice hurts.

“I have to persuade the other Cardassians on the station. I’m the only one who can do it.”

“Yes.” Weyoun’s hand tightens a little, and Damar lets himself lean back into it.

“I need to get to Engineering.”

“Yes,” Weyoun says one more time. He looks very sad, and Damar won’t kiss him with the taste that’s in his mouth, but he brushes his fingers against Weyoun’s cheek before Weyoun leaves the turbolift.

“Engineering,” Damar says, and watches Weyoun until he’s out of sight.

It’s intimidating to begin the process of recruiting the other Cardassians back to Cardassia, especially with Dukat in charge. Dukat is charismatic, persuasive. Damar is—not. Damar is blunt, with even less credibility than he used to have. Still, as he stands in Engineering and looks at the diagrams of the antigraviton beam, he says aloud, “Nice to not have so many Jem’Hadar underfoot anymore.”

Glinn Rusot, his subordinate who’s nominally the chief engineer, darts a glance at him. “We heard about the—incident in Quark’s. Looks like you came out the winner.”

“Don’t flatter me, Rusot.” He smiles a little. “It’d be nice if they were gone entirely.”

Rusot laughs a little. “If only. Too bad we’re about to have millions more flooding into the quadrant.”

“It is too bad,” Damar says, and lets the words hang there.

Rusot freezes for an instant and then laughs again, a little more forced this time. “Well, we are allied with the Dominion. I suppose it’s inevitable.”

“We’re practically *occupied* by the Dominion.” He’s not being subtle, he knows. But with five—no, now four—days left, there isn’t time for subtlety. “Soon there will be no Cardassia left.”

“Sir,” Rusot says. “I’m not sure—”

Damar takes a deep breath and turns to face Rusot. “Or Cardassia could free herself.”

“I...don’t see how.” Rusot’s voice is light. He’s better at this than Damar.

“The Jem’Hadar presence on the station is—diminishing. It could continue to diminish. In fact, by the time we’re ready to disable the minefield, there could be none of them left here.”

Rusot passes him a coil spanner, which neither of them needs, and puts his head closer to Damar's. "I can't imagine the Vorta here would allow—" He sees Damar's face. "Oh. Are you—sure of him?" Rusot is aware of Damar's preferences.

"I am," Damar says.

"The minefield?"

"There's no guarantee that an antigraviton beam would succeed on this scale." Damar swallows hard. This is the part that will anger Rusot. "And it's possible that—someone on the station is already planning to—interfere with its operation."

Rusot recoils slightly. "The *Federation*?"

"War makes for strange bedfellows." Damar immediately regrets the phrasing. "We're massively outgunned, Rusot. You and me and Weyoun—that's not enough people to save Cardassia. For now, we need someone to put between us and the Dominion, and the Federation will be happy to accept whatever we will give them."

"And the—Bajorans?" Rusot curls his lip as he says it. Rusot has always hated the Bajorans.

Damar forces a smile. "If they want to die for a free Cardassia, who are we to stop them?" He takes a deep breath. "We've served together for many years, Rusot. You know this is what's right. I need to know if I can count on you."

Rusot stares hard at him. "I suppose you'd like me to go around spreading this message to the rest of the Cardassian presence on this station?"

"Discreetly." Damar meets his gaze. "It pains me to admit it, but you're the better—politician."

"Yes, and I have no trouble admitting that you're the better engineer." That's not quite an insult, but it's not a compliment. "All right, Damar." Rusot hesitates. "And—Gul Dukat?"

"I'm sure Dukat will be pleased when Cardassia is free," Damar says. He passes Rusot an unnecessary optronic coupler. "Until then, he has enough to trouble him." Rusot knows what this means, whatever else they want to call it: treason.

Rusot inhales tightly. "If it weren't for all our years—"

He and Rusot served together on the Federation border while Dukat was away lording it over Bajor. "I trust you," Damar says. Among Cardassians, such an open declaration means a great deal.

Rusot shakes his head, but Damar knows that he has Rusot on his side. And with Rusot will come much of the garrison here. The others will fall in line when they see what's happening—most of them, anyway. "In exchange, do me a favor, Damar," Rusot says.

"What do you want?"

Rusot claps him on the back. "Stop drinking so damn much. No one wants to follow a man who always smells like kanar and vomit."

Damar forces a laugh. He doesn't know how anyone can stand to walk around, knowing everything that's about to happen, without the aid of *something*, but everyone seems to expect him to. "Of course."

They spend hours in Engineering, carefully progressing on the project and undoing half their work at the same time. The danger, Damar knows, is that the Dominion might send another Vorta, or even a Founder, to oversee this work. If that happens, they have to be appeased so that nothing happens before the Federation gets here. Eventually, Rusot says, "You should go—see your Vorta. He can't be allowed to change his mind."

"Right." Damar shouldn't be nervous about this. But it frightens him, how he feels the pull to go to Weyoun's quarters, to touch him and try to make him smile and sleep in the bed the entire night this time. He will be destroyed if Weyoun betrays him.

Weyoun isn't in his quarters when Damar arrives, but the doors open for him. Damar hopes that's intentional, rather than a sign of Weyoun's lack of concern for his own safety. He takes his armor off again, takes the time to set it down neatly on a chair, and then consciously avoids going to the replicator for kanar. It would be better if Weyoun came home—returned to his quarters—soon, before Damar decides that a glass or two will smooth him out.

Instead, he goes to the sonic shower. Weyoun's is larger and fancier, with heating options. Damar cleans his teeth and mouth thoroughly—the taste of old kanar in the back of his cheeks is only making things worse—and then drops his clothes in a heap and steps into the shower.

He doesn't realize someone else is there until Weyoun says, "I'm glad you came home." Damar doesn't flinch or try to cover himself, but he has to fight the impulse to do both. He turns and sees Weyoun leaning against the doorframe, his head tilted the slightest bit as he watches Damar.

"I—wanted to come here," he says, and it hurts to admit even though his throat isn't raw anymore.

Weyoun shuts off the sonic shower and walks closer. "I'm glad," he repeats, and his violet eyes are fixed on Damar's face. He lays a hand on Damar's shoulder and Damar hisses in a breath. "Did that—hurt?"

"It was strange. The sonic shower always makes my skin sensitive," Damar says. He smiles a little. "I imagine it's what your skin feels like all the time."

Weyoun laughs. "I think you overestimate how fragile we are." He ghosts his hand across the ridge that frames Damar's collarbone. "How's that?"

Damar isn't cold, but he shivers all the same. "All right." He grips Weyoun's shoulder and pulls him closer, into a kiss. Weyoun's clothes are soft against his skin, and Weyoun leans into the kiss. Damar drags his fingers through Weyoun's hair, pulls just a little, then slides his thumb down the edge of Weyoun's ear very gently. Weyoun makes a kind of desperate noise against his mouth and presses his hand hard against Damar's skin. It's overwhelming. Damar remembers that first night with Weyoun, when he spent what felt like hours sucking and biting at the ridges of his skin—"Is this obscene, in Vorta society?" He strokes Weyoun's ear again, this time along the notches. "Would they be offended to see it? You respond to it very strongly."

The blush is very visible on Weyoun's skin even as he leans into Damar's hand. Damar never saw Weyoun Five blush like that. "There isn't—ah!—Vorta society," he says, and Damar plays his fingers along Weyoun's other ear too. He can see the tremors beginning as Weyoun's breathing speeds up. "We don't—spend a lot of—ah—time together. We're—not made for—ourselves."

Something about that is desperately sad to Damar. He can't imagine his youth without his siblings, his classmates, his adulthood without his comrades. "Cardassians are almost never alone," he says into Weyoun's ear, and presses his body against Weyoun to feel the shivers that result. "We like to be with others."

"I've—n-noticed." Weyoun is grasping almost frantically at the shape of Damar's ribcage, his fingernails skidding across Damar's skin. It's painful, but Damar would endure much worse to feel the way that Weyoun is falling apart from these little touches.

"You're—incredible." He can't stop himself from saying it, pushing Weyoun back against the doorframe with his body as he touches him. Weyoun's eyelids had been fluttering closed, but when Damar speaks, he inhales sharply and stares up at Damar. The violet irises of his eyes are very bright, catching the light, and his face is almost painfully open as Damar touches him.

"I'm—you have to believe me," Weyoun gasps, and his voice is heavy. "I'm here for—whatever you want. I don't have some—some secret plan—" He almost chokes on the words as Damar presses his hips against Weyoun's and licks from the base of his neck up to the tip of his ear. He follows the same path with little biting kisses and feels Weyoun tense, shudder, and then almost melt against him.

"I believe you," Damar says. He lo—there's something wonderful about Weyoun like this, when he's incapable of doing much beyond mouthing back when Damar kisses him. He steps back from Weyoun ruefully, and Weyoun stumbles a little before righting himself. "Glinn Rusot is with us."

"Glinn—?"

"Rusot," Damar repeats. He sprawls on Weyoun's couch and pulls Weyoun down against him, back resting on his chest. "My second, in Engineering. He's better at this kind of thing than I am. He'll recruit for us."

"If you say so." Weyoun's head lolls back a little on Damar's shoulder. At some point, Damar would like to either come or put clothes on (or both, as long as it's in that order), but for now there's something comfortable about the weight of Weyoun on his chest.

"When are you going to send the rest of the Jem'Hadar away?"

Weyoun hesitates. "It would be better if we had Jem'Hadar ships to use," he says. "Without Jem'Hadar."

Damar inhales slowly against Weyoun's warmth. "You want to kill them."

"That's—what my predecessor would have done," Weyoun says slowly. He doesn't continue.

"Millions of them are going to die in the fighting over this place."

"Yes," Weyoun says. "I'm not concerned with their lives, or the lives of the Jem'Hadar still on the station. But I care about your life. It seems—inconsistent."

Damar tightens his arm around Weyoun's chest. "What will you do?"

"The obvious option is to poison the white. It would be the fastest way." Weyoun sounds very distant. "Is it wrong not to care about killing them?"

How different he is from Weyoun Five, that he's concerned about this moral inconsistency. "We both know that either we kill them now by poisoning the white, or we shoot them in the fighting over control of Terok Nor. Does it make a difference to you?" He's genuinely curious.

"I don't think it does." Weyoun sounds concerned. "Is that bad?"

"You're asking the wrong person," Damar says. "If there's one thing that all the Cardassians on the station can agree on, it's that we hate the Jem'Hadar."

Weyoun is silent for a long time, his heart beating steadily. Damar can feel the tension in his body again. "The next distribution of the white is tomorrow. Noon."

"As good a time as any." Damar lifts his head a little to kiss the juncture of Weyoun's neck and shoulder. "Dukat will notice."

Weyoun shrugs. Damar wishes he could see Weyoun's face. "It'll be a tragedy, it happens sometimes. I'll assure him that I've called for more Jem'Hadar and remind him that he claims his Cardassian soldiers are adequate. The Bajorans?"

"Kira used to be a terrorist. She will know it was necessary. No one likes the Jem'Hadar," and isn't there something a little sad about that? No one will mourn their deaths. The Founders might find it an annoyance, the minor irritation of losing a few *kotra* pawns. No one else will even notice.

Weyoun shifts a little atop him. “You can’t be comfortable like this.”

“I can think of more comfortable things,” Damar says. Weyoun rolls his hips experimentally and Damar draws in a quick breath. “You’re easily distracted.”

“I suppose so.” Weyoun does it again, and Damar reaches down between his legs to discover that Weyoun is wet, rubbing up against Damar’s fingers. Desire shoots through Damar and he’s hardening against Weyoun. Weyoun rolls over so that he’s facing Damar, wriggling out of his pants and then straddling him. Weyoun is so wet that the head of Damar’s cock is already slipping into him, and Damar tries not to just thrust all the way inside of him. Weyoun sinks down on him slowly, and when Damar reaches for his hips, Weyoun grabs Damar’s wrists and pushes them up against the arm of the couch. Damar could break his grasp but he doesn’t want to, wants Weyoun to hold him there and ride his cock. He presses his wrists back against the arm even harder and tilts his head back to expose his neck. Weyoun puts one hand at the top of his throat, not even enough to cut off his airway, but it makes Damar gasp and buck up hard into Weyoun.

He’s on the verge of coming when he says, “Wait, wait.”

Weyoun halts abruptly, but his body still grips Damar tightly. “What’s wrong?”

“Can you,” Damar gasps, and he can’t believe he’s asking this. “Would you—change and fuck me?” Weyoun lifts up a little and then slides back down, and Damar almost comes just from that. “You don’t—only if you want. I’m happy to—come like this.”

“Intriguing,” Weyoun says. “I’ve never changed in the middle of intercourse. What an interesting experiment.” Those aren’t the words Damar would have chosen. Weyoun doesn’t lift away, but Damar can feel him changing around Damar, tightening further until his body forces Damar’s cock out and his own cock appears, slick and hard. Damar shivers all over, rolls over between Weyoun’s legs and rises up onto his hands and knees. “The replicator—lubricant—”

“Don’t,” Damar says, “just—” He looks behind him and sees Weyoun stroking his own cock a few times, getting his fingers wet, and then he’s pushing those two fingers into Damar. It’s—too fast, too much, but Damar can’t imagine waiting any longer. “Just—” he repeats.

“If you’re sure.” Weyoun sounds a little uncertain, but he withdraws his fingers and slides his cock into Damar’s ass very gradually. “Damar—I can barely—”

There are sparks behind Damar’s eyelids from the heat of Weyoun’s cock inside him with the almost-painful stretch of it. “You’re,” Damar says, and he can’t form words, can only fuck back against Weyoun’s cock as it opens him further. He was so close to coming before and somehow this is only heightening it. When Weyoun is fully inside, Damar starts moving, fucking himself on Weyoun’s cock. Weyoun digs his fingers into Damar’s hips and starts to move with him. Damar could die like this, happily—Weyoun inside him when he’s still a little too tight, working him open a little more with every thrust—and he doesn’t let himself touch his own cock even though he’s aching hard. “Come inside me,” he manages to say. He doesn’t hear whatever Weyoun says, only feels him speed up until he’s thrusting frantically. As Weyoun starts to lose coordination, Damar does grasp his own cock, and he doesn’t know which of them comes first because his mind empties, all thought reduced down to twin points of sensation.

Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

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

In an ideal world, the Jem'Hadar would all have died quietly, out of the way, so that their bodies could be stored in a cargo bay or otherwise dealt with efficiently without anyone noticing. Unfortunately, it isn't quite that quick, which means that six of them drop dead while looming in Quark's. Quark shouts, "You can't do that in here!" and "Someone tell Odo I didn't do this!"

At least the actual death is swift. Damar sees no sign of pain, or even the discomfort that they do occasionally display, on their faces. He can't quite tell if he feels some—emotion—but Weyoun is staring at them with obvious distress. "Oh dear," he says, and his voice is high. "Oh dear," he repeats.

"Must have been a bad batch of white," someone says—from Rusot's old unit—and when Damar meets his eyes, the man nods very slightly. "Too bad."

"Must have been," Weyoun says. He's too obvious—how did Weyoun Five manage to be so deceitful, when this Weyoun seems to be incapable of hiding his feelings? His hands are betraying the slightest tremor.

Odo is never far from Quark's. "What's all this?" he demands. "More fighting in your bar, Quark?"

"It's not my fault! They just—dropped dead!"

"Maybe you added a little something extra to their drinks."

"They don't drink! I hadn't served them anything!"

"Hmph." Odo glances up at the second level, ever so briefly, and Damar sees Kira there. What does she actually think about it? He was far from Bajor during most of the Occupation, but he knows the tactics that her terrorist cell used—the incidental civilian death toll deemed necessary to drive the Cardassians from Bajor. And these aren't civilians. "Well, I suppose we'd better get things cleaned up." He gestures at Damar and three of the other Cardassian soldiers. "You, and you, help me with these bodies."

They pile the bodies in a heap. Odo calls for an emergency transport, and does indeed transport them all—including Odo, Damar, and the others—into a cargo bay. He supposes Odo is the closest thing to one of their gods, here on the station. Maybe that's something they would care about. He doesn't have time to ponder it, though. The entirety of the Jem'Hadar presence on the station appears to have been reduced to these corpses laid out in the cargo bay. "Is this all of them?" Damar asks. He's having—more of an emotional reaction than he'd hoped. He would have fired on every single one of these Jem'Hadar, had they been pointing a disruptor at anyone on his side. He would have destroyed a ship full of them if he found it disabled. He's already in contact with Cardassian rebel forces off the station to arrange the bombing of two different Jem'Hadar hatcheries. This feels—he's glad Weyoun isn't here in this room.

"It would appear so," Odo says. "Accelerating the timeline, are we?"

None of the other Cardassians look surprised. "What should we do about the bodies?"

Damar looks to Odo, who stares blankly back at him. "Do they have some kind of—death tradition?"

"Why would you expect me to know?"

It's not as though the Jem'Hadar have told anyone about their cultural rituals, if they even have them. Cardassian funeral practices would be both inappropriate and impractical. "Incinerate them," he says. At least some cultures treat fire as a kind of funereal purification. "Tell Dukat that they're out scouting, if he asks."

He leaves the other soldiers to dispose of the bodies and leaves the cargo bay with Odo. "I suppose you disapprove."

Odo's face is impassive. "I'm certainly not surprised."

Damar tries not to think about it. "Of course." He takes a deep breath. "Things will be—precarious for the next few days."

"You mean that without the Jem'Hadar here, the Cardassians will remind themselves that they're superior to the Bajorans and run rampant on the station? Yes, I would think so."

"Weyoun—"

"You'd better hope that Weyoun is better at persuading Dukat to intervene than you are. Since you've successfully convinced most of the people on this station that they don't need to consider the Dominion anymore."

And there, there's that stab of fear again that someone will try to kill Weyoun. "I'll try to—remind everyone that Weyoun gives us the element of surprise." He swallows. "I would appreciate it if you could do the same."

"Hmph." Odo crosses his arms. "You're an odd one, Damar."

"As are you." Damar was banished from Terok Nor to the Federation border long before Odo arrived.

"Not one that I would have expected to betray your own commander."

Damar grabs Odo hard by the arm. "I'm not *betraying* him."

"I doubt he'll see it that way." Odo looks down at Damar's hand on his arm and doesn't bother to try to remove it.

"He—the Dominion tricked him." It sounds like a rationalization even as Damar says it. He knows the truth. Dukat sold Cardassia out to the Dominion to regain his old position. "Misled him. He'll be glad, when Cardassia is free."

"Oh? When the Detapa Council is re-established, I suppose? Is that what you're all fighting for? *Civilian government*?"

The soldier in Damar bristles at the idea. The engineer in him wonders what Cardassia under the Council might look like, if they're given the opportunity to govern. "We'll figure it out when we're free," he snaps.

"Hmph. Of course." Odo looks unconvinced, but then he always looks unconvinced. "If that's all?"

Damar releases him. Would his grip have left a bruise, if Odo were human? Can changelings bruise?

He spends much of the day trying to move subtly from group to group of Cardassian soldiers, trying to feel out their opinions. He has to distinguish between those who simply hate the Jem'Hadar—that is, all Cardassians—from those who are ready to leave the alliance with the Dominion. It's exhausting, and he does share a glass or two of kanar with several of them, but he keeps himself in check—mostly by thinking about his promise to Weyoun. As he's leaving, Quark says, "Damar, usually you're a better customer than this?"

He works on smiling, though his face is tired of trying to smile. "I've sampled just about everything you have to offer, Quark. I'm not sure your selection of kanar has anything new to offer me."

"I see." Quark's smile always shows so many teeth. "Root beer?"

"Root—beer?" Quark offered it to Weyoun, he remembers, but all Damar noticed was that Weyoun didn't like it.

"Medicinal," Quark assures him. "*Non-alcoholic*," he hisses.

What Damar really wants is to go h—to Weyoun's quarters. But he's walking a fine line between his old jovial drunken self and his new persona, and so he says, "I'm not paying for it, Quark."

"On the house," Quark says, and it looks like it's physically painful for him to speak the words. He lifts a glass bottle up from beneath the bar and pops the top. It's dark and thin and it fizzes as he pours it. He inhales the smell and almost looks—melancholy?

Damar accepts the glass and swirls the liquid in it a little. "Is this a traditional Ferengi beverage?"

Quark lowers his voice. "*Human*."

Damar has the glass halfway to his mouth and freezes. "You're trying to poison me."

"Your countrymen have drunk it without dying," Quark assures him. "Some of them even claim to enjoy it."

He doesn't think Quark would actually try to poison him, especially not now. Damar tosses back most of it and chokes on it, barely managing not to spit it out. "That's—*vile*."

"Yes," Quark says sadly. "But I've been thinning the cheapest kanar with it and no one has noticed." At Damar's expression, he adds, "Never yours! But I have hundreds of cases of the stuff. I have to get rid of it somehow."

Damar sips the tiniest bit of what's left in his glass. "I would notice this even in replicator-quality kanar," he says. "I'm confident."

"The chemical composition is pretty close, actually." Quark refills his glass before he can protest. "No bubbles in kanar, of course."

Even as his new responsible self, Damar isn't good at turning down a drink when it's put in front of him. He can only imagine how much he told Quark in the old days, when he was half-drunk at all times and desperate to tell *someone* something. The bubbles go up his nose and he sneezes. Further down the bar, a glinn he doesn't recognize laughs and then quickly stifles it. "Come, come." Damar beckons him. "It's Quark's latest poison, *root beer*. You have to be quite the man to drink it."

If Quark's face ever showed gratitude, he would look grateful now, as ten Cardassians suddenly crowd the bar, demanding glasses of root beer to chase their kanar. Damar takes a certain amount of pleasure in watching them, though he feels very old. It's a testament to the war that most of these men are younger than he was when he first came to Terok Nor. That was nearly thirty years ago, and he wonders what it would have been like, if he'd been here for more than two years of the Occupation. Do these gils and glinns look around and feel comfortable? Did they grow up hearing stories of the Occupation and expect deployment to Bajor? Would they trust their commanders, if not for the rebellion fomenting? Would they be ready to die?

Kanar used to blunt questions like that. He's tired of death. He doesn't want to think about the Jem'Hadar no longer taking up space in the cargo bay. He doesn't want to see these men throw themselves bodily into battle like *kotra* pawns. He doesn't want anyone more to die, and he knows there are millions, if not billions, of deaths yet to come.

"Thank you for the drink," he tells Quark, and slides the empty glass back to him. His tongue is coated in the flavor of root beer. It's growing on him.

"Thanks for the free advertising," Quark says.

Damar walks to the turbolift only to find Major Kira about to board it. There's a fraught moment and then he says, "Go ahead, I can wait." He

can see how tense her body is.

“No. There’s enough room for both of us.”

He walks onto the turbolift cautiously, making sure to leave space between them. They have an uneasy kind of *détente*, he and Kira. “You should be careful, especially now. Dukat is—obsessed with you,” he warns, out of some bizarre sense of obligation.

Kira’s face betrays her disgust. “I know.” She’s silent for a moment and then says, “Did you know he and my mother were—” She can’t say it. “He *told* me himself. Like it would make us—closer.”

He wants to say something, but what is there to say? That he disapproved? That not all of them did it? None of that matters. “I know.” The root beer has turned sour in his mouth. “Or—I knew.”

“What heroes you all were,” Kira spits.

Damar can still remember, distantly, the hatred he felt for the Bajorans after he lost Veja. It all feels very far away now. “Do you think we should have—kept the Jem’Hadar alive, somehow? Would you have?”

“What, do you need my approval for your decision to execute them?”

He wishes he’d drunk more kanar at Quark’s. A lot more. “Weyoun feels bad about it.”

Kira snorts. “I didn’t know Vorta could feel bad. I didn’t know *Cardassians* could feel bad.”

“Weyoun is different from the other Vorta,” Damar insists.

“You’ve said.” Kira looks up at him. “You’re very sure.”

What does it cost him, to admit it to her? “I’m—betting my life on it. All our lives. I don’t want anyone else to die.” He closes his eyes for a moment. “If he dies—”

Kira sighs. “Would you trade his life for Cardassian freedom? If it came down to that?”

The question is paralyzing. It should be easy. “Weyoun Five would have killed me, if Dukat hadn’t killed him first.” Hardly a secret.

“That’s not what I asked.” If she were anyone else—if he were anyone else—he thinks she’d put a hand on his shoulder. Offer some kind of—comfort?

“I can’t—” He clenches a fist. “I would trade *my* life.”

“That’s not what I asked,” she says again, and her voice is hard. “What if that’s all that the Dominion wanted? Their wayward Vorta back, in exchange for Cardassian freedom?”

“I would have to.” It sounds like someone else’s voice. “I would do it.”

“Good.”

“Don’t you think that’s—bad? The unfeeling Cardassian, when it comes down to it? Willing to trade away my lo—” He can’t finish it.

There’s some kind of compassion in Kira’s eyes, or as much as she can muster for someone like him. “Not to win a war,” she says. “When I was in the Resistance, we all knew it had to be that way. No one person could be more important than the cause. No matter how much you loved them.” She clears her throat. “Kai Opaka knew that,” she says, and she isn’t talking to him anymore.

“I—don’t know if he would say the same,” Damar says.

“I suppose you like that.”

“I have to tell him it can’t be that way.” It sounds almost like a question as he says it, and he finds himself looking to Kira for confirmation. “He’s not like—like *we* are.” She doesn’t hit him for saying ‘we.’ “The Vorta—all they have are their gods. They don’t spend time together. They don’t have relationships with each other.”

“He doesn’t care, you mean. About which side wins, beyond what happens to you.”

“Do you know, I regret every time I talk to you about him.” Damar does.

“What, because you think I’ll give a kill order if I decide he’s dangerous? You have a strange idea of who I am, Damar.”

Damar can admit, though certainly not to her, that he thinks Kira is one of the strongest people he’s ever met. Whether or not he likes her. “I heard you and Dukat talking. On our bird of prey. You know how to—fight.”

“You heard *Dukat* talking.” Kira shakes her head. “The Occupation is over. Some of us figured out a way to grow. Some people didn’t.”

“So you would have found another solution for the Jem’Hadar.”

He almost has to look away from the fierceness of her eyes. “I’m glad I didn’t have to decide.”

According to the books, Veja was Damar's fiancée about 30 years before the events of DS9. After being captured by a Bajoran, she was badly injured in a cave-in on Bajor. It left her unable to have children—meaning that, in accordance with Cardassian tradition, Damar broke the engagement. His unwillingness to leave her bedside resulted in Dukat sending him away from Terok Nor after only two years there, and he spent the rest of the Occupation either on the Federation border or on Cardassian freighters.

Chapter 14

He goes—home. Weyoun is scanning rapidly through a stack of padds, but when Damar walks in, he must see something in Damar's face that makes him stand up. "Well?" His voice is cautious.

"They're all dead." Damar can't manage the same softness. "All the Jem'Hadar. There's no going back now."

"Did you—want to go back?" Weyoun looks confused. "I thought we were—"

"No," Damar says. "It's just—something people say." His body feels very heavy, and he plucks ineffectively at the catch on his chest plate.

Weyoun approaches him and flicks the catch open, then helps Damar lift the armor over his head. "It'll be over soon," he says, as though that's reassuring.

"No." He laughs humorlessly. "No, soon it will be much worse." He puts his hand over Weyoun's. "I want you to stay out of the way, if there's fighting. I don't want someone killing you and you waking up in one of those cloning facilities. We don't even know if you'd be the same person."

Weyoun turns his hand palm-up so he can squeeze Damar's. "At least I'd be cloned," he says. "There's only one Damar." It's a little too reminiscent of what he said to Kira, and so instead Damar pulls him into a rough kiss. "You know," Weyoun says, pulling back a little, "if you want a hug, you can just ask." The words he chooses are so strange sometimes, and he's wrong about that. "Why do you taste like that?"

Damar does manage a real laugh at that. "Quark is trying to get everyone to drink root beer. I helped him sell some, but I had to drink a little to do it." He feels obliged to answer, "I did have some kanar too. With the men."

Weyoun doesn't comment on it, just kisses him again and frowns a little. "It's—not the worst taste. The root beer," he adds quickly. "I still don't like kanar."

"Quark has plenty of it, and it's not even alcoholic. Though I'm not sure the men realize that." In Damar's experience, once soldiers start drinking together, they can get drunk on almost anything, alcoholic or not. He should pull away from Weyoun, should do—something—but he finds it hard to imagine stepping away from Weyoun's warmth now. "Weyoun," he says, and his voice cuts off. "If it's a choice between me and Cardassia, you have to choose Cardassia."

Weyoun's purple eyes are very alien when he looks at Damar. "Why? Would you?"

Damar closes his eyes. "Freeing Cardassia is the most important thing. It has to be. For either of us."

He knows what Weyoun is going to say before he says it. "I know you would. But the only reason I care about Cardassia is because you do." Weyoun's voice is flat. "Why would I choose it over you?"

Damar can't look at him. It's both terrifying and intoxicating, the idea that he's the one thing that matters most in the galaxy to someone. "Because it *is* important to me. I couldn't live with it, if I survived and Cardassia fell."

He can feel Weyoun's cool regard, even with his eyes closed. "You would move past it, eventually," Weyoun says, but there's the slightest hesitation. "You would be angry with me, but I could take you somewhere safe and eventually you would be glad that I had saved you instead of sacrificing you."

That makes him open his eyes, and he grips Weyoun by both shoulders and holds him in place. "No," he says.

"There's only one Damar," Weyoun reminds him.

"I wouldn't forgive you." Of all the things that he has to worry about, now it's whether Weyoun is secretly planning to kidnap him to protect him. "Weyoun. I would not forgive you."

Weyoun squints at him. "...I suppose you wouldn't. No, you're too—honorable." One corner of his mouth tugs in a smile. "Weyoun Five liked that about you too. He didn't understand it, but he liked it. Except when he thought you would make him execute you instead of finding a way to escape. He didn't know exactly what was happening, when the transporter went wrong, but he knew Dukat was doing it to give you a few more days and he didn't mind."

It must be strange to have so many other lives in his head. "We're both going to survive," Damar says firmly. Weyoun is leading him toward the bedroom and Damar asks, "Were you just waiting for me to get home for this?"

Weyoun's eyes light up at Damar's slip. "Home? Yes. Unless you had something else in mind?"

He'd had vague ideas of...food? Reading more readiness reports on endless padds to figure out how to get more power out of the torpedoes? But no, this is—always what he wants. A constant thread in the back of his mind, the need to be touching Weyoun. "No," he mumbles, and his hands are already finding their way inside Weyoun's shirt to feel the heat of his skin. "What do you want to do?"

"I want—" Weyoun seems to have trouble deciding, his eyes darting up and down Damar's body. Damar has never been self-conscious but sometimes Weyoun's gaze feels like it's penetrating his skin. "I want you to suck my cock again," he says finally. "And don't stop until I tell you to."

"I can do that," Damar says, and kneels between Weyoun's spread legs on the bed. Weyoun is rapidly hardening, and he swells further when Damar begins to suck him into his mouth.

“Damar—” Weyoun’s voice is breathy. He’s already holding the back of Damar’s head, trying to pull him down further as Weyoun thrusts up into his mouth—no manners—and Damar pins his hips firmly to the bed and hums a kind of scolding noise. Then he rolls them over carefully, until Weyoun’s knees are planted on either side of Damar’s head on the bed, and Weyoun makes a frantic kind of noise. He’s still for a second and then thrusts into Damar’s mouth, as deep as he can get, and he’s all around Damar and inside him. It’s all Damar wants, the feeling of Weyoun falling apart above him, the thick weight of his cock in Damar’s mouth, the frantic noises he makes when his cock hits the back of Damar’s throat. Damar has his fingertip just tugging at Weyoun’s rim, pushing in minutely every time Weyoun thrusts into his mouth. Then Weyoun grabs his hair to tilt his head at just the right angle and fucks in deeper, enough that Damar’s throat starts to close a little around his cock as he comes. Damar sucks him through it, rolls them again and begins to pull off.

“Don’t stop yet,” Weyoun says, and his voice is choked. When Damar glances up, his entire body is flushed. Damar can see where his own fingerprints are starting to turn a little purple. Weyoun has only softened a little, and this time he threads his fingers very softly into Damar’s hair as Damar sucks him hard again. “Don’t—let me do that this time,” Weyoun says. “I have a plan.”

Damar laughs a little around his cock but hmms in agreement. Of course Weyoun has a plan. He does go slowly this time, sweeping his hands up and down the smooth skin of Weyoun’s legs and abdomen, feeling Weyoun’s muscles twitch and jump beneath his hands, the way that he arches into the pressure. Damar can tell when he’s close to coming, but Weyoun pushes him off, until Damar is lying on his back. “Well?”

Weyoun is fucking into his hand, eyes shining and cheeks red, and Damar realizes what he’s doing only seconds before Weyoun comes on his neck and chest with a long groan. Damar shivers at the sight and Weyoun drags his finger through the mess. “There,” Weyoun says, and he sounds very satisfied. He keeps doing it, until Damar realizes he’s rubbing it into Damar’s skin.

“That’s disgusting,” he says.

Weyoun stops and sits back. He looks surprised. “Is it? Should I stop?”

Damar doesn’t know how to answer that. He wipes his hands across his chest and then grips Weyoun’s thighs tightly. “No,” he says. “You can keep doing it.” He awkwardly adjusts them so that they’re both sitting up, Weyoun straddling him. His cock is rubbing between Weyoun’s cheeks and he can’t help shifting to trying to get better friction.

“Oh,” Weyoun says, and sits back just a little. He’s almost done with Damar’s skin. “I suppose you want to fuck me.” He sounds like he’s laughing

Damar closes his eyes and tries to calm himself. “I wouldn’t say no.” Weyoun laughs a little at that and starts to climb off Damar. “No,” Damar says. “Stay there.” He gropes for the lubricant that Weyoun has started keeping by his bedside and hands it to Weyoun. “I—want to see you do it.”

Weyoun cocks his head. “If you insist.”

Damar can hear the smile in his voice. Weyoun reaches back to work himself open, eyes fluttering closed. Damar can feel it whenever his slick fingers bump against Damar’s cock, the way his thighs tighten around Damar as he does it. They’re both breathing hard by the time Weyoun grasps Damar’s cock in his slick hand, strokes it a few times, and then gradually begins to slide down on it. Damar wants to close his eyes too at the sensation of it, but he forces himself to keep his eyes open so he can memorize Weyoun’s face. When Weyoun has taken him fully, Damar says, “Open your eyes,” and kisses Weyoun when he does. Weyoun is pressed almost flush against his sticky chest, sweating. “You’ll have to fuck yourself on my cock. I can’t really move,” he says against Weyoun’s mouth.

Weyoun draws in a quick breath almost from Damar’s lungs. He lifts himself up a little and then sinks back down, and Damar tightens his grip on Weyoun’s thighs until he’s holding on as hard as he can.

“Ouch,” Weyoun complains. He doesn’t stop moving, though, one hand on Damar’s shoulder and the other buried in his hair. It’s overwhelming, staring into his purple eyes—Damar’s entire body feels like it’s on fire, and he has to break their locked gazes. He releases one hand and uses it to turn Weyoun’s head and bring it a little closer, so that he can get his mouth on the edge of one of Weyoun’s ears. Weyoun shivers a little and Damar bites down harder than he usually would, holding with his teeth as he sucks at the skin, and Weyoun makes a hurt little noise and speeds up, lifting himself until only the head of Damar’s cock is held tight in his ass and then almost slamming down. Damar’s head knocks back against the wall for a second and then he surges forward, grips Weyoun’s hair and turns his head the other way. He sucks a ladder of bites from Weyoun’s bare shoulder all the way up his neck and then up along his ear and Weyoun is almost crying out now as he fucks himself on Damar’s cock. Their bodies are pressed tight, Weyoun’s sweat slick against his own sticky skin, and Damar almost doesn’t want to come, wants to stay like this forever. Weyoun is begging with his body instead of words, trying to get even closer, and he bites Damar’s neck ridge so hard that he almost draws blood and it’s perfect, it’s exactly what Damar wants.

“Do that again,” he says, and he doesn’t recognize his own voice. When Weyoun obeys, he holds Weyoun’s hips in place and thrusts up as best he can, grips Weyoun’s ear between two fingers and pinches, and he doesn’t know if it’s the noise Weyoun makes or the way that his ass suddenly clenches almost convulsively around Damar’s cock that makes him come. Weyoun draws it out, holding Damar inside as he keeps tightening and releasing, until it’s too much, until Damar can’t see straight and manages to croak out, “Weyoun.”

Weyoun lifts himself off Damar’s cock and then settles back into his lap. He carefully licks the painful places on Damar’s neck, tongue almost exploratory, and Damar lets go of his thigh. There are bruises already forming, livid against Weyoun’s skin, and Damar can’t bring himself to regret it. “We’re both going to live,” Weyoun says.

“We’re going to free Cardassia,” Damar tells him.

Chapter 15

Today's ruling council meeting is a farce. "The Dominion fleet will arrive shortly, in time to see the wormhole opened again," Weyoun says. "The Founders are eager to end this war."

"Damar?" Dukat looks at him expectantly, and for a minute, all Damar can think is how devastated—how angry—Dukat will be. "Will it be ready?"

"It had better be," Weyoun snaps, in a decent imitation of his predecessor. "All of these delays—don't think I don't know what happened to Weyoun Five—"

"A tragic accident," Dukat says, and his voice oozes insincerity. "Damar?"

"Yes. It'll be ready."

"The Founder will be here within twelve hours." Weyoun looks meaningfully from Damar to Odo to Kira. "This station must be prepared for her arrival. She expects everything to be operating perfectly."

"Yes, yes." Dukat is getting impatient. "You've said that many times, Weyoun. I notice you've sent the Jem'Hadar away?"

Weyoun exchanges a glance with Damar. They've rehearsed this. "I was...persuaded," Weyoun says, "that the Founder should have the opportunity to see that Cardassians can manage the station adequately." He gives Damar a slightly lascivious smile.

It's not lost on Dukat. He sits up a little straighter. "Terok Nor was always meant to be run by Cardassians," he says. "I'm glad you found the argument persuasive."

"I have noticed, however, a marked increase in conflict between the Cardassian and Bajoran security patrols since the Jem'Hadar departed." Weyoun frowns at Dukat. "I will remind you that the Dominion has a non-aggression pact with Bajor. The Founders expect all Bajorans on this station to be treated with respect."

Damar sneers at Kira. "As if they deserve it," he says.

Dukat responds exactly as expected. "Damar!" He smiles at Kira, who glares back. She doesn't have to play a role in this little farce, only be herself. "Of course, Weyoun," he says. "I'll have a—talk with the Cardassian security forces. I assume Major Kira will do the same with the Bajorans."

Odo puts a hand on Kira's arm before she can snap. "I'll see to it," he says.

Weyoun pastes on that old obsequious smile and bows a little. "The Founder is wise."

"Hmph." Odo doesn't bother with the usual argument about whether he's a Founder.

"Are we done here? I have work to do," Kira says. She barely waits for Dukat's nod to leave. Odo follows with a frown.

Weyoun leans close to Damar and whispers, "Come see me when you're finished," loud enough for Dukat to hear, and then smiles vacantly and wanders out of Dukat's office.

As soon as the doors have closed, Dukat slaps his desk. "Hah! Damar, if I'd known you had such talents—" He smiles. "Well, I suppose I *knew*, but you've put them to ideal use here." Dukat grips Damar's chin and turns his head to the side to inspect his neck.

Damar jerks out of his grasp. "He's—emotional," he warns. "Volatile. We don't want him getting jealous."

"Of course, of course." Dukat leans back in his chair. "Terok Nor for Cardassians again, as it should be." Any hope Damar feels about persuading Dukat to the cause of a free Cardassia dies when he says, "Truly, the Dominion is fulfilling all its promises to us. This treaty...I know you were against it at the beginning, Damar, but I hope you've come to see how it benefits us both."

"Yes," Damar says, and the word tastes like bile in his mouth. "I should go. I have work to do—"

Dukat waves his hand dismissively. "Yes, yes, go to your Vorta. Just don't forget to have everything ready to disarm the minefield when the fleet arrives. I understand that there is a Federation attack planned to try to stop us, so it all has to be ready."

"Of course." Damar waits a second more and then walks away. Every nerve in his body is tingling, the anticipation of battle sweeping through him. Roughly two-thirds of the Cardassians on the station have pledged themselves to the Cardassian Liberation Front, but he doesn't want a single Cardassian on the station to die because they haven't been persuaded to join by the time the attack begins. It would be so much easier if Dukat were with them, if it was clear that the man who had signed the treaty was repudiating it. But it's clearer than ever that Dukat is perfectly content with the state of things. Damar is still holding out hope that Dukat will be persuaded to go along with the liberation when it's already in progress, but he's not going to be the rallying force that Damar wishes he could be.

Entry into Engineering is tightly controlled. Everyone here is a supporter and has been quietly working to prepare the station for the attack. The initial strike, when they still have the element of surprise, is crucial. It needs to disable or destroy as many Dominion ships as possible. And it has to be carefully coordinated with the attacks on the Jem'Hadar hatcheries that Damar and Rusot have arranged. The timing has to be precise, the strike powerful, the shields ready for when the Dominion turns on them—they run through simulations, through plans, until Damar's head is swimming.

Five hours now, until the Dominion arrives.

Kira confirms that the Federation fleet will arrive at roughly the same time, and that the antigraviton beam has been reprogrammed to emit a bright light if triggered, but is now incapable of setting off the minefield. Damar verifies it himself—his greatest horror is that he would still be responsible for allowing the Dominion fleet through. If Cardassia rebels and the Dominion has the fleet that Weyoun claims—if it comes through the wormhole—he has no doubt that the Dominion will destroy Cardassia. And he, Damar, will be the Cardassian hero who brought about the end of his race.

“Calm down,” Kira tells him. “You’re making me tense.”

“I would call it a tense situation,” he says. “You’re not tense?”

Kira doesn’t quite smile at him. “You’re not used to playing this role in war. You’ll get used to it.” He stares at her. “Oh, never mind. You’ve confirmed that the beam won’t work, so please go somewhere else. Everything is ready.” She grimaces. “I don’t suppose you’ve convinced Dukat.”

“No.” It’s painful every time he says it.

“Well, I certainly won’t mind getting to deliver him as a prisoner of war,” Kira says, and he forces himself not to react to that. “I assume you’re going to try again.”

“Yes.” He clears his throat. “When everything is ready. He should understand, then—”

Kira shakes her head. “I don’t think so.”

“No.” For a moment, the only sound is the slight background hiss of space. “I never wanted to be in command,” he admits.

“Neither did I,” Kira says. “Want you to be in command.”

That surprises a laugh out of him. “As long as we’re agreed.”

“At least I believe you’ll be—honest.” She grimaces. “You’ll be an improvement over Dukat, if you can keep control over the Cardassian forces.” Yes. That’s the *if*. “Go somewhere else, Damar. I need to talk to the Bajoran security officers and your presence won’t be helpful.”

Four hours.

He wants to try to talk to Dukat now, but he can’t risk it, not until the fleets are here. If Dukat is angry—and he will be—they can’t risk him contacting the Dominion himself to warn them. The plan hinges on the Dominion keeping its attention facing outward, trying to protect the station as it supposedly begins the destruction of the minefield. He wants a glass of kanar—a bottle of kanar—something to calm the burning sensation in his chest. Instead, he goes to find Weyoun.

“I wondered when I would see you,” Weyoun says, and Damar can hear the anxiety in his voice.

“Are you—staying safe? I don’t want someone—”

Weyoun pulls him into an almost frantic kiss. “Am *I*—”

What must it be like, caring about someone for the first time? In the middle of wartime? At least Damar has always known what it means to care for someone, since he was a child. Weyoun is—however old he is, and as far as Damar can tell, has never felt more than mild interest in anything but the Founders until now. “We’re going to free Cardassia and we’re going to survive,” Damar says, and kisses him back, pushing him against the wall to feel the warm weight of his body.

“Before they try to kill us,” Weyoun says, tugging at Damar’s armor. “Once more, just—in case.” He takes Damar’s wrist and pulls his hand down, beneath his waist.

Damar has a countdown until fleet arrival running in his head, but he can’t stifle a hiss when he feels how wet Weyoun is. “Have you just been—walking around like this—” He half-drags them both into the nearest room, blessedly empty, and allows Weyoun to remove his chest plate one-handed. Weyoun holds Damar’s other hand between his legs, sliding two of Damar’s fingers inside himself. Damar swears hotly into his ear and braces him against the wall. He works Weyoun’s pants down enough to watch his fingers disappearing into Weyoun and adds a third finger just to hear Weyoun choke a little and clench even tighter around him. Weyoun fumbles at Damar’s pants until his cock is free and tries to get it inside himself—Damar withdraws his finger and his brain short-circuits a little at the brief moment when his fingertips and the head of his cock are both inside Weyoun. He’s so desperately tight again, so tight that Damar would go slower if Weyoun hadn’t grabbed his hips and pulled him all the way inside in a single thrust.

Damar gets a hand beneath Weyoun’s ass to lift him up a little, gets a clumsy thumb on his clit and sucks at the notched edge of his ear. It’s hard to focus on anything other than the feeling of Weyoun all around him, clutching him tight—the slick friction—the way they’re pressed so tightly together that he can feel it in his chest every time Weyoun inhales. It takes him a moment to realize that the noise he’s hearing is Weyoun saying “Damar, Damar,” over and over again against his neck. He remembers that first time with this Weyoun, the way he’d made Weyoun come on his cock and then kept him at that high the rest of the time, and he wants to feel that again.

“Hold onto me,” he tells Weyoun, and brings both of his hands to Weyoun’s head—one to stroke his ear, the other to slide two fingers slowly in and out of Weyoun’s mouth. Weyoun sucks at them, curls his clever tongue around them, and Damar has to pull his fingers out so that he can kiss Weyoun again, just for an instant. “You’re perfect,” he finds himself saying, as he ghosts his fingers over every ridge of Weyoun’s ear and thrusts in especially hard at the same time. Weyoun cries out and there, there it is, the start of it—clenching over and over again on Damar’s cock, gasping in breaths as he shudders. Damar doesn’t stop any of it, speeds up and presses his fingers more firmly along Weyoun’s

ears, and Weyoun is shaking harder now, eyes wide and fixed on Damar as Damar leans the sensitive part of his forehead against Weyoun's.

"*Damar.*" He clutches Damar harder.

"I lo—" Damar tries, and can't quite say it, but Weyoun groans anyway and Damar feels the rumble of it in his chest. He comes almost blindingly, losing all awareness for a moment. When his senses return, he releases Weyoun, but he doesn't lift his forehead from Weyoun's.

"I think I know," Weyoun says softly.

The outside world intrudes in the form of Damar's mental countdown. "That was—don't disappear. I have to go—"

"I know."

Three hours.

He goes to Quark's to eat something and make sure that the troops are maintaining the necessary discipline. The glinns who are old enough to understand the significance of what they're about to do are nervous, sitting with meals and untouched glasses of kanar in front of them. Rebellion—open overthrow—is a capital offense, punishable without a trial. The gils and younger glinns gather around the dabo tables and shoot dom-jot and drink root beer and kanar, because they're barely into their careers and they don't understand that the fate of Cardassia is at stake. Damar keeps his voice hearty and a broad smile on his face, drinks two cups of root beer and fails to choke down a single bite of food. Quark is his usual particular brand of cheerfully sleazy, but Damar sees the sharp awareness in his eyes. "At this rate, I'll be out of root beer by the time the Dominion arrives," he complains.

"I'm sure they'll be happy to supply you with more."

"Yes, it'll be right beneath Vorta and ketracel white on their priority list."

"If there's a man in the galaxy who can get something where it shouldn't go, it's you, Quark." He beckons Quark closer with one finger and then claps him on the shoulder. "To Quark!" he bellows.

The others echo, "To Quark!" They toast with their root beers and kanars, and the older glinns return their kanar glasses to their tables untouched.

Two hours.

Odo confirms that the Bajoran security forces are prepared if the worst happens and Jem'Hadar begin landing on the station. "If there are—internal difficulties with Cardassians, I expect that the Cardassian patrols will handle them?"

"Yes." Damar damn well hopes so. Any interaction between Bajorans and Cardassians that isn't pre-arranged will probably end in violence, and they can't afford that. He doesn't *want* that. "I'll—deal with anything that comes up." He dreads the idea of having to injure one of the Cardassians not pledged to the Liberation Front yet, let alone kill one, but he's also very well of the crisis will ensue if a Cardassian kills a Bajoran now.

One hour.

Another check-in with Engineering, a walk through Ops to make sure that every post is manned by one of *their* Cardassians. Verifying that all communications have been properly calibrated. Kira, to his surprise, doesn't even look annoyed at his continued re-checking anymore. "For want of a nail," she murmurs. At his expression, she says, "I learned it from one of the human engineers on Deep Space Nine. 'For want of a nail, the shoe was lost; for want of a shoe, the horse was lost; for want of a rider, the message was lost; for want of a message, the battle was lost.'"

"What's a horse?"

"Some kind of—riding beast, I assume," Kira says. "Used in battle." She sounds a little annoyed. "It means that the smallest detail can be crucial."

"Yes," Damar says shortly. "I think most engineers would agree." There are still many more stations to check.

Kira frowns. "On second thought, go away." She seems to say that to him a lot.

Zero hour.

The Dominion fleet arrives, looming. Kira reports that the Federation fleet is only a few minutes behind. Damar waits until Dukat has hailed the Founder and declared, "We're prepared to disable the minefield. It should be completely destroyed in—" He looks to Damar, who mouths *fifteen minutes*. "Fifteen minutes."

"We will hold the line until then," the Founder says. "When the Federation fleet arrives, continue to focus on the minefield and let us take care of them."

"Of course." Dukat ends the transmission. "Damar, begin—"

Damar swallows hard. "No."

"Don't tell me there's *another* delay."

"No. No delay." He takes a breath. Over the comms, the tactical officer reports that the Federation fleet is arriving. "Cardassia doesn't need the

Dominion,” he begins. “In fact—”

“Damar?” Dukat stares at him. “What are you saying?”

“You can repudiate the treaty. You can—free Cardassia.”

“Have you—betrayed me, Damar?” Dukat looks sincerely stunned. “You think we’re going to turn on the Dominion?”

“I haven’t betrayed you,” Damar says. He wishes that felt true. “The Dominion has conquered Cardassia. It’s time to liberate our people, and we need you to lead us.”

Dukat sneers. “I see. You’re presenting this opportunity to me, is that right?”

“I’m trying—”

“You’ve got quite the opinion of yourself now, don’t you? Strutting around as my second-in-command, reeking of kanar—and *him*, I suppose you won him over because you’re so good at sucking cock?” Some dispassionate part of Damar sees the way that Dukat is lashing out frantically as he sees that the situation is out of his control. It doesn’t make what he’s saying less painful, though. “You would have been *no one* without me, and even when I gave you every opportunity, you threw it away—”

“You sent me away!” Damar still remains the sting of it, nearly thirty years later. “I did everything you asked for *two years*, and the moment I needed—a few days—you got rid of me!” He remembers the frustrations of twelve years spent patrolling on the Federation border—the tedium of twelve more years on a *freighter*. The glorious moment when Dukat was made captain of the freighter and took them on their one-ship mission against the Klingons, and he thought that perhaps things would be right again.

“Cardassia will never accept you as a—as a Legate, no matter how many Cardassians you get killed in your pointless rebellion. The Dominion keeps us strong.”

Bone-deep sorrow is spreading through Damar. Dukat won’t join them. He’ll never admit he was wrong about the alliance with the Dominion, even implicitly. “Odo,” he says. He’s having trouble with his voice. “I think it would be best if you took Gul Dukat to the holding cell by transporter.”

“You don’t have the strength to do it yourself, Damar?” Dukat’s taunts still hurt, but he knows that he can’t be the one to step away from the fight now. He has to trust Odo and his Cardassian security forces to do it.

He walks outside of Dukat’s office, looking out over Ops. “Are we ready?” After all the final-final-final checks, there’s only one answer.

“Jem’Hadar attack ships are fully crewed. Station weapons fully charged. Broadcast ready when needed.”

Damar takes a deep breath and watches the battle approach. “Tell our smaller ships to focus on the small Jem’Hadar craft—I don’t want them taking down our shields. Focus primary station fire on the Dominion battle cruisers and secondary fire on the attack craft. Our own battle cruisers are to hold the line against the Dominion ships.” He looks to Rusot. “Gul Rusot, I leave the coordination to you.” Rusot nods. “Begin the attack!”

He goes to the comm unit. “It’ll broadcast on all frequencies,” the tech assures him. “Should even override the Dominion inter-ship comms. Go ahead.”

This is the moment.

“My fellow Cardassians. Two years ago, our government signed a treaty with the Dominion. In it, the Dominion promised to extend Cardassia’s influence throughout the Alpha Quadrant. In exchange, we pledged ourselves to join the war against the Federation and its allies.” The blood is pumping hard through his body, the adrenaline flowing faster. The torpedo fire outside the station is blinding.

“Cardassians have never been afraid of war, a fact we’ve proven time and again over these past two years. Millions of our brave soldiers have given their lives to fulfill our part of the agreement. What has the Dominion done in return? Nothing. We’ve gained no new territories. In fact, our influence throughout the quadrant has diminished. And to make matters worse we are no longer masters in our own home. Travel anywhere on Cardassia and what do you find? Jem’Hadar. Vorta.” He doesn’t let himself look at Weyoun for fear of revealing too much. “Instead of the invaders we have become the invaded. Our ‘allies’ have conquered us without firing a single shot. Well, no longer.”

A Dominion torpedo strikes their shields. “Shields holding,” comes the report.

The words come easily now. “Today, we retake Terok Nor from the Dominion. Today, we destroy Jem’Hadar hatcheries on four worlds. This assault marks the first step towards the liberation of our homeland from the true oppressors of the Alpha Quadrant. I call upon Cardassians everywhere: Resist. Resist today. Resist tomorrow. Resist until the last Dominion soldier has been driven from our soil!”

He’s breathing hard, as though he’s just emerged from battle. There are cheers from Ops, more flashes of weapons fire outside. When he focuses his eyes on the battle outside, he sees the carnage of Dominion and Jem’Hadar ships floating in space, the Klingons and Federation limping but intact. Weyoun is on the comm now, speaking softly, urgently, to the other Vorta—he begs them to realize that the Founders are not gods, only a stronger race, and that the Vorta need not serve them. Damar’s speech is re-broadcasting to the rest of the quadrant. The flares of the ships exploding outside leave bright afterimages in his eyes.

When the explosions quiet—when the only fires in space outside are the ones taking place—Ops is suddenly silent. “Hail the *Defiant*,” Damar says. It feels as though everyone in the room has stopped breathing. “Power down weapons.”

Captain Sisko appears on the screen. “Gul Damar. Thank you for your assistance.”

“On behalf of the Cardassian Liberation Front, I’m prepared to discuss—terms of a new alliance,” Damar says. “The *Defiant* may dock. We will lower our shields long enough to allow a single ship.”

“I appreciate that,” Sisko says. “We’ll be there shortly.”

Chapter 16

Damar meets Sisko at the docking bay with Kira, Rusot, and Weyoun. “Welcome to—Terok Nor,” he says. Kira doesn’t even flinch. She’s smiling at Sisko, who’s flanked by a Klingon, a Trill—Dax—and...Garak. He tries to stifle the reflexive lip curl at the sight of Garak, who gives him a serene smile.

“It’s good to be back,” Sisko says. “Will Gul Dukat be joining us?”

“No.” The one thing about this rebellion that Damar will probably regret forever. “He’s—in the security office.” He can’t bring himself to say “in a cell,” though he should probably start practicing. “We can use one of the conference rooms.”

They array themselves along different sides of the table. It hasn’t escaped Damar’s awareness that Kira belongs on the other side, with the Federation. He doesn’t know where Garak belongs anymore. “Thank you for the—assist,” Sisko begins.

“The *rescue*,” Garak says, and that’s interesting, to see Garak pulling toward their side. Damar has never liked or trusted him, largely based on Dukat’s opinion of him. But a member of the Obsidian Order—one of Dukat’s stories that he believes more and more—could be a very useful ally in the liberation of Cardassia. “Cardassian fleets across the quadrant have been rejecting our Dominion oppressors.” His eyes are thoughtful. “I have to admit, Damar, I never would have expected it of you. I’m impressed.”

“Well.” Damar isn’t made for this kind of thing, careful words across a negotiating table. “We assume that the Dominion will—retaliate.”

“They already have,” Garak says. “The entirety of the Second Order was executed.”

“But—that was *Dukat’s* former Order,” Damar says. There it is, the familiar taste of bile in the back of his throat.

“Apparently the Dominion believed that Gul Dukat was involved in the rebellion and chose to take particular revenge on him. The Eleventh Order is expected as the next target.”

Damar laughs in despair. “Of course.” The Dominion also apparently never would have expected him to betray Dukat. The Eleventh Order will be easily destroyed by the Dominion. Garak looks at him pityingly.

“Does the Cardassian Liberation Front represent the Cardassian Union?” Sisko isn’t interested in the particulars of Cardassian deaths.

“Not at the moment,” Damar admits. “When things are settled here, I intend to return to Cardassia Prime to—fix that.”

“What about you?” That’s Dax, fixing her eyes on Weyoun. “Aren’t you a Dominion representative? Do you have authority to negotiate?”

Weyoun shakes his head. “I am not. I do not.” His eyes flick to Damar. “I plan to go to Cardassia Prime with Damar to aid in gathering support for the Liberation Front.” Damar stiffens at that. They’ve never discussed it, and it’s a terrible plan.

“At the moment, we need to determine the—role of the Federation on Terok Nor. If any.” Gul Rusot’s words are precise and convey the depth of his dislike for the Federation in just the right amount. Maybe Damar should send him to Cardassia Prime instead of going himself.

“We recognize that the station is under Cardassian and Bajoran control,” Sisko says. “We also understand that—Terok Nor—is a crucial strategic outpost. The Federation would prefer to leave a small contingent of representatives to facilitate future cooperation.”

“*Facilitate*,” Rusot begins, and Damar is suddenly certain that Rusot will have to be the one to go to Cardassia Prime.

“This will require discussion, as I’m sure you understand,” Damar says. “You’re all welcome to go have a drink and something to eat at Quark’s while we talk.” He Dax smile broadly, and even Garak looks more than mildly happy at the idea.

It’s not an easy discussion. Rusot is happy to yell when out of earshot of the Federation representatives. He calms slightly when Damar says, “Gul Rusot, I’ve realized that you’re the best choice to lead the rebellion on Cardassia Prime. You have the—talent for rallying the people. I’ll stay here to manage the Federation.”

“*He* had better stay too,” Rusot says, nodding at Weyoun. “I have men that I trust to accompany me.”

“Of course. Old friend. Take as many from the station as you want. Contact me when you’ve arrived safely.”

Rusot nods shortly and leaves the room. Damar wishes that he could keep Rusot here too, but after seeing the beginning of negotiations, he understands the man well enough to know that keeping him here, with the Federation and with Bajorans, will only damage any alliance.

That leaves Damar with Kira and Weyoun. He looks wearily at Kira. “I suppose you think there should be a substantial Federation presence on the station.”

Her gaze is steady. “You weren’t here for the last years of the Occupation, Damar. Terok Nor can’t be that again, or anything like it. Bajorans have to be an equal presence here, and let’s be realistic, the Federation is the only entity interested in that.” She smiles just slightly. “And I’ve missed them.”

He doesn’t allow himself an emotional reaction. “Cardassians—Cardassians and Bajorans must be the majority on the station.” It’s not lost on him that he’s not even negotiating with the Federation at this point.

“What about Garak?” Kira’s mouth is twisted like she doesn’t like the taste of what she’s just said. “I don’t like him, but he’s—useful.”

“Yes.” A member of the Obsidian Order—never tell Damar that there’s such a thing as a *former* member of the Obsidian Order—may be what he needs to balance his own lack of subtlety.

“And what about Dukat?”

He’s aware that Weyoun is standing slightly to the side, watching them not-quite-argue. “He’s—” Damar can’t bring himself to tell Kira that Dukat isn’t a war criminal. Damar is confident that Dukat doesn’t meet the Federation’s legal definition of a war criminal, but to the Bajorans, Dukat will always be a monster. “You want to turn him over to the Federation. As a prisoner of war. For interrogation.”

Kira’s eyes are burning. “The Federation doesn’t execute people.” *Bajorans and Cardassians do* is unspoken. “Unless you’re planning for him to live in a holding cell until the war is over and gradually try to persuade him that you’re right.”

There’s a very small part of Damar that does indeed want that, but he’s not stupid enough to listen to it. “No. We’ll give him to Sisko.” Dukat won’t survive in a holding cell until the war ends—either some Bajoran will get a lucky shot in, or Dukat will lose his mind. “Is there anything else?”

Weyoun speaks for the first time. “What about me?”

“You’re not going to Cardassia,” Damar tells him.

“Yes, I assumed that after you sent Gul Rusot there. I wouldn’t have gone with *him*.”

Damar closes his eyes briefly and wishes that this Weyoun had a little more subtlety sometimes. “You’ll stay here.”

“Not a prisoner of war?”

“Absolutely not,” Damar says, and maybe his voice is too aggressive, because even Kira looks startled. “As an—advisor.”

“You know the Federation will want to debrief him,” Kira points out.

“And they can do that. In a well-lit conference room here on Terok Nor.” He thinks better of it and adds, “Not Garak.”

Kira rolls her eyes. “Enough already. Let’s find the *Federation* delegation at Quark’s and work out the details.”

The mood in Quark’s is strangely jubilant, even with four outsiders present. Rusot has taken many of the hard-liners to Cardassia Prime and now it’s mostly young gils and glinns left here, the ones who get drunk off Quark’s root-beer cocktails (“Half price!” Quark declares, and Damar is pretty sure either he or Sisko will be paying the other half of the price). Damar would be surprised if a single one of them ever set foot on Bajor during the Occupation—if a single one of them even met a Bajoran before coming here. They don’t flinch at the sight of Weyoun, because Weyoun sixth of his line is the only one who’s spent much time in Quark’s.

Sisko has a root beer in front of him and is grimacing at it—apparently not a favorite among all humans. Dax is flirting with a table of gils barely out of the Cardassian Military Academy, and Damar has to stifle a laugh at that, the way none of them are quite sure what to do with her. Garak is deep in conversation with the ever-present Morn, a small glass of Damar’s favorite vintage of kanar in front of him. The Klingon...looms in the background.

“We’re prepared to resume discussions,” Damar says to Garak.

Garak waves his hand. “I find that all discussions run more smoothly when lubricated with a few drinks,” he says. “Let’s find a table, Legate Damar, Weyoun.”

Damar has been aware of Weyoun’s warmth at his elbow ever since the Federation delegation first arrived, and he can’t bring himself to tell Weyoun to stay at the bar while he talks to Garak. Quark pushes a glass of whiskey into Weyoun’s hand, tells him “On the house!”—another patent falsehood—and they all make their way to an out-of-the-way table.

“A toast,” Garak says. He places a glass of kanar in front of Damar—Damar isn’t sure where it came from—and lifts his own. Weyoun follows suit, and Damar feels obligated to do the same. “To Legate Damar and the Cardassian Liberation Front.”

Weyoun drinks enthusiastically as Damar narrows his eyes at Garak and takes a single pointed sip. “I’m hardly a legate,” he says. Even the small amount of kanar sends warmth down his spine. Garak is dangerous.

“They will call you one.” Garak inspects Weyoun. “What a curious creature you must be, to have rejected your gods.”

“They were never gods,” Weyoun says.

“No, of course.” Garak fixes his gaze back on Damar. “You’ve taken on quite the task.”

“You know I’ll ask for your help.”

Garak nods once, decisively. “Which I will provide, of course. I have never wished to see Cardassians die.” Damar does believe that. He feels Weyoun’s leg pressed firmly against his own. “And what about you, Vorta? What role will you play in this—liberation?” Garak is so good at that, saying each word like he’s chosen it carefully.

“Whatever Damar wants me to do.” Weyoun says it guilelessly. Damar winces internally and sees a spark of satisfaction in Garak’s eyes.

“...I see.” Garak sips his kanar. Damar can’t help doing the same. He’s missed the taste, the syrupy texture of it. “Well, that sounds very—sweet.” Damar wonders if there’s a single vulnerable point anywhere on Garak—if a person could even pin him down long enough to test it.

He finishes the kanar and signals one of the beleaguered waitresses to bring him another.

“You know,” Weyoun says, “this whiskey is very nice. I’ll have another one too.”

The waitress looks at Garak, who hesitates momentarily before nodding. “Quite the array of people living on the station at the moment,” Garak says, after she’s out of earshot. “Not only Cardassians and Bajorans.”

“No.” Damar wishes Kira were here with him. It was a mistake to bring Weyoun—a liability—to speak with Garak. “It’s still a waystation, even with the wormhole blocked.”

Garak quiets as the waitress delivers their drinks, and then says, “I take it the wormhole’s status is—unlikely to change.”

“Not anytime soon.” One of the few things Damar can take unadulterated pride in.

“Good. In that case, to—Terok Nor,” Garak says, and they all toast again. Damar reminds himself to drink the kanar slowly, but it’s such a comfort after the past—he doesn’t even know how many hours of tension. “I suppose you should speak with Captain Sisko about the particulars.”

“Now that I’m thoroughly—” No, he refuses to describe himself as thoroughly lubricated. “I agree,” he says instead.

In the end, Garak’s carefully arranged toasts don’t make a difference to the negotiations. The Federation will be allowed to leave a complement of fifty personnel and use Terok Nor as a launching point for further attacks on the Dominion. They will provide material support to the Cardassian Liberation Front as requested, and will share intelligence on mutual targets. Damar is all too aware that, despite Cardassia’s control over this particular station, they’re in a substantially worse negotiating position than the Federation, and he does his best to reduce the number of concessions that they have to make. Garak will count as one of the Federation’s personnel, not as a Cardassian. He had hoped to count Kira toward the Federation personnel as well, but couldn’t really argue that she was in fact a member of the Federation.

“There will be no Federation authority over Cardassian personnel,” he emphasizes.

“Of course not.” Sisko is so smooth when he wants to be. “I understand that there was a—ruling station council, while the Dominion controlled the station? Perhaps we could re-institute that model.”

“What, you, me, and Kira? That’s not exactly an even distribution.”

“No, we can expand it.” The rest of the meeting devolves into negotiations about exactly how many people from each group will be on the ruling council, how many of them with votes and how many in an advisory capacity, and Damar’s headache isn’t because of the kanar.

When they agree to resume negotiations the next day, Garak tells him softly, “Your Vorta is waiting,” and Damar sees Weyoun watching with a slight smile.

“What?” He asks it as they walk home to Weyoun’s quarters, and he’s accepted that he probably isn’t going back to his assigned quarters anytime soon.

“You’re—good at this,” Weyoun says.

Damar laughs. “No, I’m very much not.” He allows himself to knock his shoulder gently against Weyoun’s. “But I’m glad you think so.”

“I do,” and Weyoun’s voice is so earnest that Damar doesn’t mind how easily he revealed the nature of their relationship to Garak. “You’re definitely not going to Cardassia Prime?”

“Not anytime soon. Habitat ring.” The turbolift begins its journey. “Not until I’m needed there.”

“Good.” Weyoun kisses him in the turbolift and it’s—sweet, unhurried. Damar is sure he’s blushing, which is not exactly the image he wants to present to the men who’ve turned traitor on their former gul. But he puts his hand on Weyoun’s cheek as he pulls away and touches his thumb to Weyoun’s bottom lip.

In his quarters, Weyoun replicates what he seems to believe is a celebratory feast, including some dishes whose patterns Damar seriously doubts are in the replicator. They pass dishes back and forth, warning each other off some and feeding each other bites of others. “You know,” Damar says, “this next part won’t be easy. The war against the Dominion.”

Weyoun tilts his head and says, “I have every confidence in you.”

“You do, don’t you.” What a strange thought. “I lo—” The words start to escape Damar’s mouth before he stops them, and Weyoun’s eyes are bright violet.

“I know,” he says, and leans across the table to kiss Damar.

End Notes

People have sex while intoxicated (and with intoxicated people) and have sex with people who are their subordinates/otherwise under their authority in some way in this fic. People do not use force.

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