

## Time Trippin'

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## Time Trippin'

by [DavidFalkayn](#)

### Summary

We're back the STO universe here as the girls take a little trip through time.

### Notes

Those who have played the Drozana missions in STO will note that I have taken considerable liberties with the game's plot. I hope you don't object to that, but I do like to add my own twist to things--keeps it from getting boring. Hope you're enjoying the story and feel free to post a comment or two. Also, I switched things up where a certain legendary pair of characters do not appear in this story. Partly, I did it because it didn't make sense for both of them to be there at exactly the same time, and partly because I believe at this point they were either already assigned or they were about to be assigned to the Enterprise. The game did it as a fan service and it was a very nice and very well received gesture, but it didn't make sense for me to include them from a story perspective.

## A New Mission

### *Beppo System—STO Universe Falkayn I*

“Would you look at that.” Nelia chuckled as she gestured at the Starfleet ship on the viewscreen.

“Who called the museum for a takeout order?” Twesata giggled.

“The last time I saw one of those was when I toured the Utopia Planetia museum as a cadet.” Shelana reminisced with a fond smile.

“It’s a spaceship.” Ashley remarked, rolling her eyes, “What’s the big deal?”

“That’s a genuine *Constitution*-class cruiser.” Shelana exclaimed with more than a little awe in her voice. “Those ships are legendary. *Enterprise...Lexington...Yorktown...Hood...*I grew up hearing stories about those ships and their captains.”

“Kirk...Pike...Wesley...DeSoto...Decker...” Nelia recited, now in a respectful tone of voice. “They were a special breed. I heard they were bringing back some of the older designs, but this one doesn’t look like one of them.”

“Yeah.” Twesata interjected, “This one looks like the real thing.”

“There’s a practicality to many of those older ship classes.” Nelia, her engineering training resurfacing, pointed out. “The *Mirandas* are still going strong and the *Connies* were hanging around well into the 24<sup>th</sup> century before they were finally phased out.”

“I wouldn’t put a 23<sup>rd</sup> century unrenovated Connie in a full blown battle against a top line Klingon, Gorn, or Romulan ship today--much less the Elachi or Hirogen.” Shelana commented, “But they’re still useful for picket duty or watching over isolated outposts and colonies. And they free up other ships for frontline service.”

“This baby’s in perfect condition. Just like it came from refitting at a starbase.” Nelia added with a wicked grin.

“No holodecks or replicators though.” Shelana noted, “They used the old food synthesizers.”

“You mean the ones where you had to insert a disc to get your food?” Twesata queried.

“Yup.” Nelia chuckled. Her laughter fading away to be replaced by a more pensive expression, she pondered, “I wonder what it’s doing here...now.”

“We’re being hailed by the cruiser.” Rana called out from her station.

“Put them on screen.” Nelia replied, “I gotta admit, I’m curious.”

“Spoiled Princess *this is USS Valley Forge. Come in please.*”

“*Valley Forge?* This is the *Spoiled Princess.*” Nelia responded as Rana opened a channel between the two ships. “Nelia Terre owner and operator. I hope you don’t mind me asking, but...”

A human with short, neatly combed, seal brown hair, grey eyes, and wearing the mustard shirt with black trim and captain’s rank insignia on the sleeves of a 23<sup>rd</sup> century starship captain appeared on the viewscreen, answering with a slight accent marking him as being of Scandinavian origin. “*Why are we here? For now, let’s just say that we went through an interesting rabbit hole recently and have been asked to assist you. Captain Soren Magnussen, at your service.*”

“Captain.” Nelia responded with a smirk as she appraised the attractive man on her viewscreen. “Must have been a helluva rabbit hole you fell through.”

“*Indeed it was.*” The 23<sup>rd</sup> century starship captain answered back. “*The gentleman next to me can explain it a lot better.*” As he spoke, the captain motioned towards a non-descript looking man standing beside him. “*This is Agent Daniels. I’ll turn you over to him now.*”

“Agent Daniels?”

“*Ms. Terre.*” The man inclined his head in greeting, “*Thank you for coming. I know about your recent experience with the Devedians and I can tell you that you are right in your suspicions that they are not acting alone and that they and the ones controlling them could pose a serious threat.*”

The roguish Orion responded with a frown. “So how do you propose we deal with that problem?”

“*If you and your associates would beam over to the Valley Forge...*” Daniels requested, “*I can explain in greater detail.*”

After quickly checking to see that the rest of her group was in agreement, Nelia nodded in assent. “All right. We’ll be over in...fifteen minutes?”

Receiving a confirming nod from Captain Magnussen, Daniels answered back, “We’ll see you then. Daniels out.”

“Okay, girls...” Nelia took a deep breath and exhaled as she addressed her team, “Take a piss or whatever else you need to do and we’ll meet

in the transporter room in ten minutes.”

### *USS Valley Forge*

“Welcome aboard the *Valley Forge*.” Captain Magnussen exclaimed to the four attractive women standing on the transporter pad of his starship.

“Thank you, Captain.” Nelia grinned before quipping, “Now...what’s a 23<sup>rd</sup> century starship doing...”

“In the 25<sup>th</sup> century?” The Danish captain chuckled, “Come with me and all will be explained to you. Agent Daniels is waiting for us in Conference Room One.”

“Miniskirts?” Ashley shook her head in disbelief as she observed the female crewmembers going to and fro about their tasks walking down the corridor on her way to the briefing room.

“Standard uniform during the mid-23<sup>rd</sup> century.” Twesata grinned.

“You’ll never catch me in one.” Ashley responded, receiving in return a sly grin from the *Valley Forge*’s captain as he and the women reached their destination.

“Anything’s possible, Ms. Williams.” Magnussen bantered as the door swished open to admit them. “Agent Daniels is waiting inside.”

As they entered the room, they were met by a slender man with a receding hairline. “Thank you for coming. Please...” he urged, gesturing to the conference table, “have a seat. We have much to discuss.”

Once Nelia and the others on her team had taken their seats, the enigmatic Agent Daniels inclined his head. “Greetings. I am what you might call a temporal agent.”

“Temporal agent?” Rana interrupted, “Are you saying that you can travel through time?”

“Yes.” Daniels affirmed, “As you saw with the Devedians, time travel is possible—just very difficult. Just as it is possible to travel from one universe to another.” The time agent concluded with a slight grin.

“Point taken.” Rana responded with a slight smirk of her own. “So...I take it Captain Magnussen has also travelled through time?”

“Correct.” Daniels responded, as he glanced at the man standing next to him, “Captain? If you would please?”

“Thank you.” Nodding his head in acknowledgement, Magnussen cleared his throat. “My ship and crew were drawn into a vortex on stardate 1317.88...”

“That would put it sometime around September 2265.” Twesata noted for the benefit of her extra-universal companions.

“Right.” The captain affirmed. “The *Valley Forge* was answering a distress call in the Carnala System when we were ambushed by cloaked Klingon vessels.”

“The Klingons had developed an early form of cloaking by bending gravitational waves.” Nelia clarified, “But it didn’t take long until the Federation had learned how to pierce the cloak. A few years later, we found out that the Romulans had developed a much more effective means of cloaking—although it was still vulnerable to detection.”

“The *Enterprise* under the command of James Kirk fought an engagement against a Romulan warbird circa 2266.” Daniels clarified, mostly for the benefit of Ashley and Rana. “Subsequently, the Romulans improved on it to the point where now it is so good that you need a tachyon beam or grid to detect a cloaked ship with any degree of certainty.”

“The Klingons shouldn’t have possessed that sophisticated a cloaking system so early.” Shelana noted. “It should be another two—three years before their deal with the Romulans.”

“Again correct.” Agent Daniels affirmed. “The battle involving the *Valley Forge* was in an area rich in the presence of chroniton particles. The reaction of the chroniton particles with the energy caused by the fighting resulted in the opening of a time vortex that drew Captain Magnussen’s ship, along with the Klingons, into the 25<sup>th</sup> century. The *Valley Forge* was classified as missing in action, presumed lost on stardate 1318.46, but came out of the vortex this century...in fact, a few months ago current time.”

“What about the Klingons?” Nelia inquired, genuinely curious.

“After a brief engagement, they were destroyed.” Daniels reported ruefully, “They refused to listen or surrender.”

“In other words...” Nelia scowled, “They behaved like Klingons.”

“Must be difficult getting used to a different time.” Rana pondered as her human companion nodded her head in agreement.

“Yeah.” Ashley agreed, “We can kind of relate...”

The Danish starship captain smiled warmly at Ashley and Rana’s words, “It has been rough on some of my crew. They left loved ones... memories...you understand. Still...we are Starfleet officers and crew, no matter the time or universe. When duty calls...”

“We answer.” Ashley finished, feeling a kinship with the time displaced starship captain as she quoted one of her favorite poets. “To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.”

“I see you are a fan of Tennyson as well, Ms. Williams.” Captain Magnussen commented with a warm smile that was returned by the former gunnery chief as he quoted in response, “Tis not too late to seek a newer world.”

“Or a newer universe.” Ashley smiled back.

“Captain Magnussen and the *Valley Forge* have been of help to us both in their current time and now.” Daniels declared, once again taking control over the briefing. “While in the 23<sup>rd</sup> century, his ship and crew helped us in dealing with a crisis that was a spillover from the current Temporal War we’re in.”

“You mean we’re fighting in a time war?” Rana interjected, the astonishment visible on her face. “How? Why? Who’s involved?”

“I’m afraid much of what you’re asking about is need to know.” Daniels apologetically responded, “The less you know, the less possible damage you can do to the timeline.”

“That makes sense.” Twesata concurred, “If we were to discover that we could save the life of someone who died in the past, it could have serious ramifications on the present day.”

“Right.” The time agent nodded in agreement. “Time travel is a tricky business and waging a war through time...very perilous. The Devedians’ temporal intrusions must be stopped and we must discover who their sponsors are.”

“That’s where we come in.” Nelia interrupted with a grimace. “We’re your new time cops.”

“Succinctly, yet also correctly, put.” Daniels answered back with a slight smirk. “You’ll be going back to Drozana Station, only in the 23<sup>rd</sup> century. You’ll be temporarily assigned to the *Valley Forge* for this mission.”

“So, we’re going to use the *Valley Forge* to gain access to the station.” Shelana presumed.

“Correct.” Daniels nodded in response as he typed data on his padd. “Its disappearance still has not been recorded and when it did vanish, it was in this area of space.”

“Makes sense.” Nelia nodded her head, “Better than taking the risk of bringing in a modern ship or relying on holographic emitters to mask the *Princess*. Those emitters have a tendency to malfunction at the worst possible times.”

“True enough.” Daniels agreed as he continued his briefing. “One other detail: Twesata Glex...Shelana...Nelia Terre...effective immediately your Starfleet commissions have been reactivated. Records for your commissions have also been placed by our agents on file for all previous and future time periods.”

“Oh no!” The three former Starfleet officers exclaimed in unison with Nelia speaking for her cohorts, “We left all that bullshit behind us! We’re not going back and you can’t make us.”

“Your commissions will not show.” Daniels replied in a reassuring tone of voice, “Nor will you be expected to conform to Starfleet standards except when necessary.” Now taking on more of a lecturing posture, the time agent further elaborated, “With active Starfleet commissions, you will be able to access resources that would be difficult or impossible for you to attain otherwise such as intelligence reports and fleet assets.”

“He’s got a point.” Magnussen interjected, “If nothing else, think of the commissions as being a convenience.”

“Right.” Daniels asserted, promising, “You have both mine and Admiral Quinn’s word that you will not be bound by protocol or red tape.”

“Fine.” Nelia grudgingly conceded, scowling, “But what about Ashley and Rana? They’re not Starfleet nor have gone through the Academy.”

“Admiral Quinn has approved commissions for both Ms. Williams and Dr. Thanoptis as well as promoting you to Lieutenant Commander, Ms. Terre.”

“Congratulations, Lieutenant Commander...Lieutenants.” Captain Magnussen said, offering his congratulations.

“Gee, thanks, Dad.” Twesata scowled as Ashley tried in vain to repress a grin.

“Don’t sweat it, Twes.” The former Alliance marine joked, “Shelana and I will keep the REMFs off your ass. We’ll just punch them in the nose if they get out of line—right, Shels?”

“Not a problem, Ash.” The lovely Andorian responded with a laugh.

Daniels sighed before continuing the briefing, “Thanks to you, we know that the Devedians have been taking individuals from the 23<sup>rd</sup> century to our time where they can safely...”

“Suck the life out of them.” Ashley scowled, “We got that. Now...what are we going to do about it once we get to the 23<sup>rd</sup> century? I doubt tearing the station apart is an option.”

“Correct.” Daniels affirmed, “You’ll need to be discreet while you are conducting your investigation in the past. Care must be taken to avoid disrupting the timeline.” Taking what looked like a phaser one from behind his back, Daniels placed it on the conference table. “This weapon is a modified phaser that carries a proton charge that will affect the Devedians when they phase shift.” Inclining his head in the direction of the

green Orion, the time agent explained, “Your idea of adjusting your phasers was a stroke of genius. This weapon is a refinement on that principle. You’ll all be outfitted with these pistols. We will also supply you with rifles, but…”

“We’re not going to be able to run around a 23<sup>rd</sup> century station openly carrying rifles.” Shelana interrupted.

“Should you run into trouble, then heavier weapons can be beamed over to you.” Daniels replied, putting the two tactical experts, for now, at ease.

“All right.” Nelia sighed, “So when do we leave?”

“As soon as you get changed into proper uniform and are ready to depart.” Captain Magnussen replied as the briefing came to an end.

Gulping on hearing the starship captain’s words, Ashley winced as a yeoman wearing a short skirt entered the room, “You mean I really am going to have to wear a…”

“Miniskirt?” Nelia teased. “Afraid so…lieutenant.”

“Fuck.” Ashley scowled, “I finally get a promotion and this is my new uniform.”

“What’s your problem with short skirts?” Rana asked, genuinely puzzled. “I think they look very attractive.”

“The sky blue you’ll be wearing will match your darker blue skin perfectly.” Twesata flirted, brushing her hand briefly against her asari lover’s arm.

“They’re not so bad, Ash.” Shelana consoled, “I’ve worn them on a few holodeck programs.”

“I guess!” Ashley sighed, “And no…skirts don’t bother me. I can be a girly girl when I want to be. It’s just that…if Shepard and Alenko were to ever find out…I’d never hear the end of it from them. Garrus, Joker, and Wrex would be even worse. I’d never live it down.”

“You’ll get used to wearing one.” Nelia chuckled as she and the rest of her team made their way out of the conference room. Her laughter fading as they walked down the corridor to the transporter room, the roguish Orion declared, “We also need to get our armor and clue Belen in on what’s happening. I want to set up a Plan B…just in case.”

“Good idea.” Ashley nodded, sagely pointing out, “No plan survives contact with the enemy.”

“Or our allies.” Rana added with a smirk.

“Exactly.” The roguish Orion nodded her head in agreement. “While I trust Magnussen well enough, there’s something shifty about Daniels. He’s hiding something.”

“Well…he does come from the future.” Ashley commented as the team took their places on the transporter pad. “It’d make sense that he’d hide stuff from us.”

“True.” Nelia concurred, adding, “But that’s not what I mean. Something’s wrong, but I can’t put my finger on it and that has me worried. You don’t survive in this line of work as long as I have by not paying attention to your gut and my gut is telling me that there’s something odd about that man.” Glancing down at the transporter technician, the Orion rogue commanded, “Energize.”

### ***The Spoiled Princess***

“Okay, girls!” Nelia prompted as she and her teammates stepped off the *Princess*’s transporter pad. “Armor up, don’t forget to activate transparency mode, and replicate mid-23<sup>rd</sup> century uniforms—circa 2265. Red for myself, Ashley, and Shelana…”

“Blue for me.” Twesata interrupted, rolling her eyes, “I know. Used to play around in a 23<sup>rd</sup> century holodeck program. I think I still have it…”

“*Orgy Night on the Potemkin* doesn’t count, Twes.” Shelana laughed as she exited the transporter room.

“These uniforms are color coded?” Ashley exclaimed, shaking her head in disbelief.

“Yep.” Shelana responded. “Red for tactical and engineering, blue for medical and sciences, and yellow-gold for command. It got switched around in the 24<sup>th</sup> century because…”

“Red was the kiss of death.” Twesata quipped as Shelana let out a sigh.

Speaking primarily to the human newcomer, the Andorian tactical officer explained, “Tactical/Security get the dirty jobs and have the highest casualty rates because…”

“We’re in the trenches getting shit done.” Ashley interrupted, nodding her head in understanding. “Worked the same way in my old universe. Grunts do the work while the REMFs take the credit.”

“Some things never change no matter what universe you’re in.” Shelana chuckled as both Twesata and Nelia blew raspberries at her.

“Daniels is holding something back and I don’t think it’s because he’s afraid of us damaging the timeline.” Nelia declared to her Ferengi friend as she put on her armor and then, after activating its transparency mode, slipped on her miniskirt and boots.

“So...what do you think he’s holding back and why?” Belen inquired as he returned from the replicator with two drinks, handing the antarean sunrise to his friend while he kept the other for himself.

“Don’t know.” The green Orion woman admitted, “It could be nothing. But my gut’s telling me otherwise.”

“Not listening to your gut in this business is a good way to get yourself killed.” The Ferengi bartender soberly replied.

“Right So...this is what I have in mind...just in case.” Nelia nodded her head in agreement as she explained her contingency plan to her friend while quickly downing her drink, “So...any questions?”

“Nope.” The Ferengi bartender/engineer replied with a frown. “You know you can count on me and the *Princess*. We’ll be there when you need us.”

“Thanks, Bel.” Nelia smiled as she bent down and kissed her friend on his fore lobes. “Take care of yourself and my girl.” Activating her comm, the lovely Orion called out, “You girls ready?”

“We’re waiting on you, Nel.” Shelana’s voice came through the comm speaker. “Get your green ass in gear.”

“On my way.” Nelia laughed, “Next stop...the 23<sup>rd</sup> century.”

# Demons in the Past

## Chapter Summary

The girls aid as the station attempts to beat back the Devedian attack.

### *USS Valley Forge—23<sup>rd</sup> Century, Approaching Drozana Station*

Alone in the observation lounge of the *Constitution*-class starship, Ashley sat quietly, lost in her thoughts, observing the K-class station amidst an ocean of stars, not hearing the captain as he entered the room.

“Quite the view, wouldn’t you agree, Lieutenant?”

“Oh!” Ashley exclaimed, her cheeks turning red with embarrassment as she quickly rose to attention, “I’m sorry, Sir. I wasn’t paying attention.”

“As you were, Lieutenant.” Captain Magnussen smiled as he inclined his head at the seat the former gunnery chief had just vacated, “I’m sorry to interrupt your reverie. If you’ll pardon me for saying...” the handsome starship captain observed as he sat down next to Ashley, “you seem rather preoccupied.”

“I was just thinking, Sir...” Ashley replied in a soft voice, “Back where I come from, I was stationed as part of a colonial garrison on this lush paradise of a planet.”

“What was its name?”

“Eden Prime.” Ashley responded as she sat and watched the stars. “My unit...the 212...was assigned to watch over some archaeologists. Well...the geth...they’re sentient AI’s in my universe...they attacked the colony.” Shaking her head, the former marine repressed a sob, “I lost my entire unit. Including a good friend.”

“I’m sorry.” Magnussen replied apologetically. “I shouldn’t have pried.”

“No.” Ashley shook her head, “It’s all right. It’s just...Nirali...my friend...she liked starry nights like this. Told me that her husband, Samesh, proposed to her on a clear starry night.”

“That’s very romantic.”

“Yeah.” A sad smile briefly crossed the former gunnery chief’s face. “She was about to get her discharge. Her and Samesh were going to open a restaurant together. Her husband was an excellent cook and Nirali was great with both numbers and people. I was with Commander Shepard, my CO on the *Normandy*, the ship I served on after Eden Prime, when she had to tell Samesh that the Alliance was holding Nirali’s remains to run tests on the effects of geth weaponry. Shepard didn’t want to have to tell him that. More than anything she wanted Samesh to have his wife’s body back so that he could give her a proper funeral. But she understood that what the lab rats could learn from studying her remains...”

“Would save a lot more lives.” The starship captain finished. “It’s often a hard call to make...whether to listen to your head or your heart. All too often what seems to be the right choice is not always the best one and sometimes the best choice is not always the right one.”

“I know...Commander Shepard had to make another hard choice...the one that caused me and Rana to end up here.” Ashley reminisced.

“Do you want to talk about it?” Magnussen gently prompted.

“Yeah.” Ashley nodded her head, “I think I do. I think I need to. We were assigned to track this rogue former Council agent down...” The raven-haired beauty then recalled all her adventures that led up to Shepard making the fatal choice at Vir mire while the man with her listened quietly, only interrupting to ask a clarifying question. “The Commander assigned Lieutenant Alenko to arm the nuke while I went with the salarians to secure the anti-aircraft guns.”

“Sounds like your CO had a sound plan.” Magnussen noted as Ashley nodded in agreement. “So what went wrong?”

“The geth were overrunning our position at the same time that Saren was attacking Alenko.” Ashley explained. “She had to make a choice. Either rescue me and risk Saren getting to the nuke before the LT could set it off or...”

“Help your friend at the cost of losing you and your team. A hard call to make.” Captain Magnussen interjected with a sigh, filling in the blanks. “Unfortunately, those are the sort of decisions that come with the gold braid. Your CO found that out. Do you understand why she made the choice she made?”

“Yeah, I understand, Sir.” Ashley replied, “And I don’t blame her. It was the right call to make. That cloning facility had to be wiped out and I told her as much. I just wish...”

“You wish that you could tell her that you’re still alive.” Magnussen remarked as the woman seated next to him nodded her head.

“And my mother and sisters. I wish I could tell them too.” Ashley heaved a mournful sigh. “I miss them.”

“Service life is rough on families...it doesn't matter what universe you're in.” The captain declared in a somber tone.

“You have family, Sir?”

“Ex-wife and a child.” Magnussen responded. “The ex is...was...” he paused momentarily before continuing, “a good woman, but I guess it was one five-year tour too many for her. Subspace communications isn't the same as being there for your son's birthday or your anniversary.”

“I understand.” Ashley sighed, “My Mom and Dad managed to stay together, but that was mostly because he got shit postings on safe colonial garrisons so that he could bring us along and she was willing to give up her career to stay with him.”

“Why just garrison postings?” Magnussen inquired, “I'm sure he was capable.”

“Politics.” Ashley grumbled. “I don't want to get too much into it right now...but let's just say that where I'm from the Williams name counts for jack shit.”

“Understood.” The starship captain nodded his head, “Unfortunately, it happens here too. If you should ever want to talk about it...”

“I'll know who to come to.” Ashley smiled at the handsome Dane as the intercom interrupted their conversation.

*“Approaching Drozana Station. Captain to the bridge. Special team to transporter room one.”*

“Well.” Magnussen sighed as he and Ashley rose to their feet at the same time. “Time for us to go to work.”

“Yes, Sir.” Ashley responded with a grin as the pair exited the observation lounge. “And Captain...thank you.”

“Anytime, Lieutenant. Good hunting and don't forget the first duty of a security officer...take care of your people.”

Grinning broadly, the newly commissioned lieutenant grinned, “Aye, aye, Sir.”

### ***Drozana Station—23<sup>d</sup> Century***

“Lieutenant Commander Meyers. Chief of station security. You don't know how glad we are to see you!” A man wearing a red shirt accompanied by another man and woman, also wearing red shirts, greeted Nelia and her team after they had materialized on the transporter pad. However, before they could step off the pad, the security officer held up his hand as he nodded at the transporter technician who then pressed a button on her console. “Wait one. Decontamination procedure.” The lieutenant explained, “As you already know, the station's on medical quarantine. We've also been suffering some strange computer malfunctions. Doc's swamped with patients in sickbay, Commander G'aarv is shorthanded in engineering, and I could use a couple of extra hands in security.”

“Point us to where we need to go.” Nelia requested after the decontamination procedure was complete.

“Come with me, please.” Meyers indicated, gesturing with his hand to the door. “Ensign Pavlov will escort...”

“Lieutenant Thanoptis.” Rana interjected, “Medic.”

“Lieutenant?” The female security officer, Ensign Pavlov, smiled. “If you'll come with me, Doctor Jemil will be happy to see you.”

“Lieutenant?” Meyers requested, turning his attention to the raven-haired science officer standing next to the exotically beautiful blue skinned alien.

“Glex.” Twesata introduced herself, “Twesata Glex. Sciences specializing in computers and physics.”

“If you'll come with me and the Lieutenant Commander, I'll escort the two of you to Engineering.” Addressing the human and Andorian security officers standing next to the lovely green Orion engineer, the station security chief requested, “Lieutenants?”

“Williams, Sir.” Ashley promptly replied.

“Shelana.” The lovely Andorian acknowledged, adding, “My surname is too difficult to pronounce.

“Lieutenant Williams. Lieutenant Shelana.” Meyers nodded professionally, “Ensign Franks will give you a quick tour of the station if you'll go with him and then we'll put you to work. We're shorthanded in security as well.”

“Yes, Sir.” Both women acknowledged, as Ashley gave the dark haired young ensign assigned to them a smile, “Whenever you're ready, Ensign.”

### ***Drozana Station—Engineering***

“Commander G'aarv?” Lieutenant Commander Meyers called out to the station's Tellarite Chief Engineer who was currently chewing out a poor crewman. “Lieutenant Commander Terre and Lieutenant Glex from the *Valley Forge* are here to give you a hand.”

“You see what you did?” The engineer shouted in a coarse voice, momentarily ignoring the newcomers as he harangued the hapless young crewman seemingly wilting before him. “When you bypassed the duotronic relays, you failed to adjust for the increased current through the EPS circuitry. Now you're going have to go back and replace all those circuit boards you burnt out because you were in too much of a hurry



to do the job right the first time.” Quickly turning about, the Tellarite engineer scowled at the sight of the green Orion woman standing next to the station’s security chief. “What is she doing here?” The Tellarite bellowed, “I wanted an engineer not an Orion stripper from the bar dressed up to look like an engineer.”

“You wanted an engineer, you got one.” Nelia barked back at the Tellarite. “Helluva lot better engineer than you too.” Pausing, the green Orion gave the power relays a quick visual inspection. “I think I’ve spotted part of your problem. The containment fields are beginning to weaken. You’ll need to adjust the Heisenberg compensators to shore up structural integrity. It’s not too serious now, but if you don’t fix it soon…” Her lips turned up in an evil grin, “You and everyone else here will be swimming in vacuum.”

A sly smile appeared on the grumpy Tellarite’s face as he regarded the Orion woman standing before him. As the lighting in the engineering room flickered blue, the station chief engineer scowled as he turned his attention to the dark haired woman standing next to Nelia, “You. Go with Kiroki to the computer core. See if you can track down the lighting malfunction there.”

“On it.” Twesata replied as an Asian man wearing a blue shirt joined her. “Come on Kiroki, let’s get to work.”

“Okay…” Nelia frowned as she spoke to the crusty Tellarite engineer, “I’d suggest that the first order of business should be to fix the shielding before that radiation kills us all.”

“Agreed.” G’aarv nodded, “You handle matter-antimatter containment while me and my assistants take care of structural integrity.” Taking a deep breath, the old engineer admitted, “You were right about those compensators. Good catch.”

“Thank you.” Nelia responded with a grin, “Ready to get to work?”

### ***Drozana Station—Ashley and Shelana***

After being assigned their patrol routes, Ashley and Shelana went on shift. As the pair made their rounds, Shelana wryly jested, “I forgot how boring walking a tour was.”

“Tell me about it.” Ashley sighed in agreement. “Walk to post…check in…walk to next post…”

“Rinse…lather…repeat.” Shelana finished with a laugh. “At least you get some variety with shore postings. Shipboard is just up the corridor. Turn. Then down the corridor again.”

“I never served on a ship until the *Normandy*.” Ashley replied, “But it got boring planetside too.”

“*Patrol Three…disturbance in the lounge. Respond immediately.*”

“That’s us!” Ashley exclaimed, “Sounds like a barroom brawl.”

“Yup.” Shelana concurred as she flipped her communicator open and acknowledged the order. “Patrol Three enroute.”

“Ready to sit on some drunks, Ash?”

“Be careful what you wish for…right, Shels?” Ashley grinned as the pair rushed down the corridor and into a turbolift.

“Yep. Something like that.”

### ***Drozana Station—Sickbay***

“Time of death…1940 hours. Cause…neurogenic failure. Same cause as the last one.” A middle-aged man with caramel skin and dark-hair turning grey and wearing a blue shirt scowled as he spoke to a human female wearing a pale blue miniskirt. Noticing the newcomers, the doctor grunted as he spoke to Rana. “You that nurse from the *Valley Forge*?”

“I’m not formally a nurse, I’m a geneticist. However, I have had medical training.” Rana replied, taking out her tricorder.

“Good enough.” The doctor responded. “Whatever this disease is, it’s suppressing neural activity and crosses species lines.” He grunted as he examined first a human and then an Andorian. “It seems to suppress or remove the natural electrical energy that’s transmitted between neurons. It also seems to be tied into that blue lighting. It’s emitting some sort of strange radiation that our sensors can’t detect. That crusty Tellarite engineer managed to strengthen the shielding here and in a few other key areas, but much of the rest of the station is vulnerable.”

“If we scan the infected patients’ neural energies and compare them with a healthy control we should be able to synthesize an antidote.” Rana proposed, receiving in return a warm grin from the harried physician.

“You took the words right out of my mouth, Lieutenant. Get to it. Heavens know we have enough patients for you to take your samples.”

“On it, Doctor.” Rana acknowledged as she quickly went to work, going from patient to patient, calling out readings as a nurse dutifully recorded the results. After taking several samples, the asari scientist turned to the nurse, requesting as she held out her hand for the tricorder, “Let’s see what we have.”

“Here, Lieutenant.” The nurse responded, handing the tricorder to Rana who then quickly perused the results.

“Hmmm…lower than normal neuron resting point…elevated exterior potassium levels…sodium and potassium ions depleted. Sodium-

potassium gates damaged.” Nodding her head in satisfaction, the asari scientist called out, “Doctor? I think we have what we need for a cure.”

“Let me see.” As he carefully went over his recently deputized assistant’s findings, Dr. Jemil hummed to himself, “It’ll work.” Turning to his nurse, he commanded, “Fix a hypospray with this compound and bring it back here stat.” Speaking to Rana, he requested, “When she returns, inject Ensign S’vell over there. He’s our most serious case at the moment. If it works on him, it should work on the others.”

“Right, Doctor.” Rana replied as she administered the hypo to the patient, carefully monitoring the readings. “It’s working!” She excitedly called out, motioning for Dr. Jemal to come. “See...the sodium-potassium gates are repairing and his ion exchange is returning to a more normal level.”

“Good!” The doctor responded with an exhausted sigh as he called his nurse over, “Eileen! Make up more of this compound and inject it into the patients immediately. Thanks to our friend, Lieutenant Thanoptis over here...” Jemal smiled as he regarded the asari woman standing next to him, “we’ve found our cure.”

### ***Drozana Station—Lounge***

Meeting Lieutenant Commander Meyers, the station’s security chief, at the lounge entrance, Ashley ducked just in time as a chair flew over her head. “What the hell!”

“Orion freighter crew decided to get a little rowdy and began mixing it up with the crew from a Tellarite ore transport.” Meyers responded, raising his voice so that he could be heard over the din. “Then the crew from another merchant ship joined in...then station personnel...”

“And now we have a full scale riot!” Shelana quipped as she grabbed one of the brawlers, twisting his arm behind his back and shoving him against a wall.

“That’s about the size of it.” Meyers bantered back as he handed the two women, along with another security team, spare restraints. “Now we’ve got to wade in and break it up. Ready?”

“Hands off the girls!” Ashley barked as she threw a rather drunken Orion freighter crewman to the deck, binding him with one of the plastic restraints she was carrying.

“Break it up you two!” Shelana ordered, glaring at a human and an Andorian, both station personnel, who had been brawling with each other.

“He started it!” The human cried out, “He called me a pink skin! He’s a speciest!”

“Am not!” The Andorian shouted back, “You laughed at my bondmate’s picture!”

“No I didn’t! I was laughing because Chrissie had shot down that Orion trying to pick her up!”

“Really?”

“Yeah.” The human declared in a softer tone of voice, “Look, Drelin...I’d never make fun of you or your bondmates. You know that. I’m sorry if you thought I did.”

“No...I’m sorry.” The Andorian responded. “Too much ale.”

“We good?”

“Yeah.” Drelin grinned, “We’re good.”

“Gonna run us in, Officer?” The human asked Shelana.

Barely able to keep from laughing, the Andorian security specialist replied, “No. Just get the hell out of here.”

“Yes, Ma’am!” Both men acknowledged with broad smiles as they exited the bar, “Thank you!”

Just as it seemed that the security teams had brought the bar under control, the lights flickered as the lounge was bathed in blue light. Then the phantoms appeared. Gritting her teeth as the ghosts began to attack the now subdued brawlers, Ashley drew her phaser and shouted, “Shels! Commander! We’ve got problems!”

“What the hell are those things?” Meyers cried out as he drew his phaser.

“No time for explanations now!” Shelana yelled as she fired her phaser at one of the phantoms who had a dancing girl in a death grip. “We’ve got to take these ghosts out now before people get killed!”

“Right!” The security chief responded, firing his phaser at another phantom, commanding his team, “Take those things out! We’ll figure out what’s going on later.” In a softer voice, he whispered to Shelana and Ashley, “When all this is over, we’re going to talk.”

### ***Computer Core—Drozana Station***

It was everything Twesata could do to keep from giggling like a schoolgirl as she entered the station’s computer core and laid eyes on the antique computer system, now looking spanking new. The old duotronic circuits and relays, the sounds and humming of the systems, not to

mention the archaic consoles reminded the young Betazoid woman that she was indeed back in the past. But, as the lighting flickered and turned momentarily blue, the nostalgic feeling quickly went away to be replaced by a sense of urgency as she gazed on the frightened eyes of the man standing beside her.

“Ensign Kiroki?” Twesata called out in a soft voice, “You still with me?”

“Uhhh...Yes, Ma’am.” The youthful human male stammered, his training reasserting itself as he took out his tricorder and began to take scans while Twesata did the same. “I can’t make heads or tails out of these readings.” Ensign Kiroki glumly reported with a grimace. “Are you picking up anything?”

“Yeah.” Twesata replied with a frown, explaining with a half-truth. “We ran into a similar phenomenon on an earlier mission. I’ve since made a few adjustments to my tricorder. Triolic radiation.”

“What is that?”

“Like I said...it’s new.” The lovely Betazoid answered back as she scanned the area with her eyes. “Have you or anyone working with you seen what looks like...”

“Ghosts?” Kiroki stammered.

“Yeah.” Twesata affirmed, inquiring in a gentle tone, “You saw them...didn’t you?”

Nodding his head, Kiroki confirmed in almost a whimper. “Yesterday. I was with Ensigns Paulus and Rodriguez. We were sent down here to fix the computer malfunctions that have been occurring throughout the station. They were working over in ‘D’ section. I heard Rodriguez scream and when I went to investigate...”

“She wasn’t there?” Twesata interrupted, her empathic senses at once picking up on the young ensign’s distress.

“No. Both her and Paulus were gone. I saw one of those...ghosts...pass into what looked like a...”

“Portal?”

Nodding his head, Kiroki affirmed, “Yeah. After it passed through, everything went back to normal. Do you know what’s happening here?”

“Somewhat.” Twesata replied. “I know that we need to fix this computer core before something critical malfunctions...like that!” she exclaimed as alarm klaxons sounded.

“What’s happening?” Kiroki gasped, his eyes widening in near panic.

*“Self-destruct activated.”* The computer announced, but, instead of its normally feminine voice, it spoke in a harsh masculine tone. *“Three minute countdown initiated. 3:00...2:59...2:58...”*

“Hold it together, Kiroki!” Twesata exclaimed, “I can’t do this alone. I’ve gotta have your help!” Taking out her communicator and flipping it open, she called out, “Twesata to Nelia. We’ve got a problem here.”

### ***Drozana Station—Engineering and the Computer Core***

“The matter-antimatter flux has become unstable!” One of the engineering crewmen called out in alarm.

“Magnetic containment breaking down!” Another crewman shouted.

Hearing her communicator beeping, Nelia flipped it open.

“Nelia?”

“Got a problem here, Twes.” Nelia responded with a harsh edge to her voice.

“We’re going red!” Engineering crewman Sampson shouted in alarm

*“Yeah, well...I’ve got a feeling our problems are related.”* Twesata responded, her voice taking on a grim edge. *“The computer’s activated the station’s self-destruct.”*

“Shit.” Nelia swore under her breath. “We’re working on it from our end, but we’re gonna need your help.”

*“Working as fast as we can!”* Nelia overheard her teammate speak to someone else, *“Try the Sato algorithm, Kiroki. If that doesn’t work then feed the computer this string...”*

“Bring the matter-antimatter ratio down to .0004 Tuckers.” G’aarv called out to Nelia.

“On it!” The green Orion engineer responded.

*“Two minutes.”* Kiroki called out, his voice cracking. *“Trying Sato algorithm. It’s not working!”*

“Shore up that magnetic containment, Sampson!” G’aarv commanded, “Terre! I’m going to adjust the flux compensators. On my mark, bring the ratio back up to .003 Tuckers. Sampson! When she does that, bring the containment field down to standard level—but not before!”

“Ready when you are!” Nelia acknowledged as she did what the crusty old Tellarite instructed.

“Magnetic containment weakening!” Sampson called out in alarm.

“Don’t panic Sampson.” Nelia admonished, “Just reverse the positron flow by .058 percent. That should stabilize it.”

“*Sato algorithm not working.*” Kiroki’s voice resounded from the speaker, “*Feeding in the sequence...It’s slowing the countdown.*”

“*One minute until self-destruct.*”

“*Just what I thought.*” Twesata growled, “*It’s a goddamned virus. Kiroki...try this...*” The Betazoid downloaded a complex series of equations into the other computer technician’s tricorder. “*That should quarantine the virus.*” Speaking into her communicator, she exclaimed, “Virus neutralized. Aborting self-destruct sequence.”

“*Thirty seconds until self-destruct.*”

“Just about there.” Nelia announced as she made the final adjustments on her console. “Try it now, G’aarv!”

“Now, Sampson!” The Tellarite engineer barked as he pressed a button on his console. Nodding in satisfaction as the readings appeared on his screen, G’aarv again called out, “So far...so good. Bring up the matter-antimatter flow mix by three percent, Sampson. Terre...bring up magnetic containment three point two microjoules.”

“It’s working!” Engineer Sampson shouted out in glee, “Containment restored!”

“*Self-destruct aborted.*” The station computer announced, its normal female voice returning.

Heaving a sigh of relief, Twesata quipped to her teammate, “*I am going to get soooo high when we get back.*”

“Save some for me, Twes.” Nelia laughed as the engineering crew offered their congratulations to her and their supervisor. Looking up, she saw the gruff Tellarite approach her with an unaccustomed grin on his face.

“Not bad, Terre. Magnussen is lucky to have you on his ship.” The senior engineer stated in grumpy praise, “You can...” Before he could finish his words, however, the lighting in the engineering section flickered and turned blue as the Devedian phantoms suddenly appeared.

“Oh shit.” Nelia swore.

“What in Sulmar’s nine tits are those?” G’aarv cursed as one of the phantoms grabbed Sampson and began feeding off the hapless engineer, releasing its victim after it had drained the poor young man dry, the crewman’s body falling with a thud to the deck.

“Shoot now! Explain later!” Nelia barked as she fired her pistol at the phantom, disintegrating it, but unfortunately, too late for its hapless prey.

“Going to hold you to that.” The Tellarite responded as he drew his own phaser and fired at another ghostly figure, also disintegrating it. “Sampson was a good engineer, you son of a bitch!”

### **Sickbay**

“The patients are all showing signs of recovery, Doctor.” The nurse reported as Doctor Jemal and his temporary assistant, Rana, doublechecked the results of the inoculations.

“So I see.” The station doctor responded with a sigh of relief, “It looks like we’re through the worst of it.”

As the lights flickered, sickbay was bathed in a blue light as the Devedian phantoms made their appearance, moving relentlessly towards the recovering patients. “Oh no, you don’t!” The asari scientist yelled as she summoned all her strength, putting up a biotic barrier between the phantasms and their intended victims. “I can’t keep this up long!” She cried out, straining, “Get security in here—fast!”

### **Lounge**

“That’s the last of them.” Ashley sighed in relief as she and her Andorian teammate brought down the remaining phantoms in the lounge. Turning to the security chief, her lips turned up in a wry grin, “I guess it’s time for that talk now, huh?”

“Later.” Meyers replied with a grimace, “I just got a report that there are more of those things in Engineering, the computer core, and sickbay. You two get your asses to sickbay.”

“What about Engineering and the computer core?” Shelana inquired.

“Already got units converging on those locations.” Meyers responded, “Now get going!”

### **Sickbay**

“Can’t hold out much longer!” Rana groaned as her barrier began to weaken. “If we don’t get help soon...”

“Someone call for the cavalry?” Ashley called out as she, Shelana, and another security officer burst into sickbay, firing their phasers at the phantoms as they did so.

“Thank the goddess you finally got here.” Rana sighed as the last of the Devedians were dissolved by the combined phaser fire. “Don’t think I could have...” Staggering, the asari scientist fainted as her friends and Dr. Jemal rushed to her side.

Running a medical tricorder over her, the human physician declared, “I’m unfamiliar with her biology...but she has some interesting nodes... I’m guessing those are the source for that ability of hers.”

“Long story.” Ashley replied as she knelt down next to her asari teammate. “She’ll be better. She just needs time to recover.”

“Put her on one of the beds. She’s earned a little rest.” The doctor responded with a slight smile as Lieutenant Commander Meyers entered accompanied by Nelia and Twesata.

“You girls okay?” Ashley asked as she gazed at the haggard expressions on her friends’ faces.

“We’re fine.” Nelia replied as she glanced down at Rana, sleeping peacefully on one of the biobeds. “Is she all right?”

“Yeah.” Shelana responded with a nod of her head, “She’s just tired.”

“She threw up a barrier to protect everyone in here when the Devedians attacked and held it up until we arrived.” Ashley explained, not missing the momentary look of pride on her Betazoid friend’s face that Twesata quickly hid behind a knowing smirk.

“Told her she was stronger than she thought she was.” The raven-haired empath quipped.

“You called those things ‘Devedians’.” Meyers noticed, “What do you know about them?”

“Much of what we know is classified.” Nelia quickly replied, telling a half-truth, “We’re...”

“Starfleet Intelligence.” The security chief sighed, “I should have guessed. I’m not some rookie just out of the Academy. You and your people bailed us out of a bad situation, so I owe you one. But, I’m going to have to tell the Commodore something. He’s not a fool or an idiot, so it’s got to be something good.”

Her lips turning up in a sly grin, Nelia answered back, “Fair enough. Here’s what you tell him...”

Nodding his head as the green Orion outlined her scheme, the world-wise security chief reluctantly agreed, “That’ll work. There have been a couple of instances of something similar happening recently to the *Kongo* and *Atlanta*, I can sell the idea of a rogue comet spewing out dangerous radiation to him.”

“Great.” Nelia responded as Rana, refreshed from her brief nap, rose from her bed. Now, if you don’t mind...” She requested as she flipped open her communicator, “We need to get back to our ship.”

“Go ahead.” Meyers nodded in assent as Nelia requested beam out. “And again...thanks for the help.”

“Anytime.” Nelia grinned back as the transporter beamed her and her teammates back to the *Valley Forge*, just as the ship’s red alert klaxon sounded.

*“Red Alert. Red Alert. All hands to battle stations. This is not a drill”*

“Shit.” Ashley groaned as she and her teammates rushed out of the transporter room, “Out of the frying pan...”

“And into the fire.” Shelana interjected, “Welcome to Starfleet.”

# Welcome to Starfleet

## Chapter Summary

The Valley Forge fights a battle with a little help from a friend, then after Ashley and Soren spend a little quality time together.

### *USS Valley Forge*

“What is it?” Exiting the turbolift on to the bridge with her friends, Ashley pointed to the strange looking spaceship exiting what appeared to be a vortex or portal of some kind.

“Good question, Lieutenant.” Captain Magnussen responded as he turned his attention to his science officer, “What are you picking up Talana?”

“Databanks indicate that it is an Elachi cruiser, Captain.” The Andorian science officer responded, this time without her usual levity.

“Thank God they managed to put in all those retrofits in time.” Magnussen remarked in a low voice that only Ashley could hear.

“Shields at one-hundred percent, Sir.” The ship’s helmsman announced, “Phasers locked on.”

“Photon torpedoes armed and ready, Captain.” The navigator declared.

“Anything we can do to help, Captain?” Nelia inquired as the Elachi vessel turned its attention to the starship.

“Stand ready for now Lieutenant Commander in case I need you or your people to pitch in.” Magnussen replied as the helmsman shouted in alarm.

“They’re firing!”

“Brace for impact!”

As the ship shuddered under the impact of the alien’s fire, the navigator shouted, “Shields at eighty percent.”

“Fire all phasers.” Magnussen ordered as the helmsman pressed the firing button on his console.

“Elachi shields holding firm, Sir.” The science officer reported from his station.

“Concentrate fire on his aft shield and overload the torpedo yield.” Magnussen commanded as the alien ship fired again, the force of the Elachi ship’s beams and torpedoes weakening the old *Constitution*-class starship’s recently upgraded shields.

“Shields at sixty percent.” The navigator called out as the helmsman was stunned into unconsciousness.

Moving quickly to replace the injured crewman, Shelana called out, “Firing phasers.”

“Set course 270 mark 20.” Magnussen commanded as Ashley quickly filled another crewman’s slot and Nelia took over at the engineering station.

“We’re venting plasma on C and D decks.” The green Orion engineer reported, “Damage Control responding.”

“Inertial stabilizers holding.” Ashley reported. “Security prepared to repel boarders if necessary.”

“Sir?” Twesata called out, “I think I might have a way of at least distracting the Elachi ship...maybe causing a weakness.”

“Explain.”

“The virus they tried to download into the station’s computer.” The Betazoid flashed a wicked grin, “I think I can turn it against them...but I’ll need time to break through their system.”

“How much time.” Magnussen asked as his ship once again shuddered under the impact of the alien’s weapons fire.

“One...maybe two...minutes...” Twesata replied as she began work.

“You’ve got thirty seconds.” The captain exclaimed as the *Valley Forge* shook under the impact of the Elachi ship’s concentrated weapons fire.

“I think I know a way to buy us the time.” Nelia grinned as she tapped her comm badge. “Now, Belen.”

Decloaking the *Spoiled Princess* behind the attacking cruiser, Belen unleashed a full volley of phaser fire, following it up with two quantum torpedoes, his surprise attack forcing the Elachi to break off.

Opening a portal into subspace, the Elachi disappeared through the aperture, only to appear moments later behind the *Princess*.

Nimble avoiding the Elachi's weapons fire, the *Princess* cloaked as Magnussen ordered his ship back into the fray, "Fire phasers! Photon torpedoes—maximum spread. Glex...is that surprise of yours ready?"

"Got it!" The Betazoid science officer cried out triumphantly as she pressed a button. "And now they're getting it!"

"Doesn't feel like!" Shelana snarked as the ship shook again under the impact of the Elachi's weapons.

"Give it a moment or two." Twesata retorted as the enemy ship's weapons fire suddenly ceased.

"Power levels on the enemy ship are spiking!" Ashley called out.

"Move us away." Magnussen ordered as both the *Valley Forge* and the *Spoiled Princess* disengaged, withdrawing to a safe distance.

"Their systems are overloading." Nelia reported.

"And BOOM!" Twesata crowed victoriously as the Elachi ship exploded, "Can I cook or can I cook?"

"Good job, everyone." Captain Magnussen praised as the ship's damage control crews, accompanied by medics, entered the bridge, quickly and efficiently carrying out their tasks.

"So...the Elachi were pulling the Devedians' strings." Nelia concluded as a holographic image of Agent Daniels appeared on the starship bridge.

"Not really." Daniels replied with a ghost of a smile. "We think the Elachi are nothing more than middlemen for the true manipulators."

"Who are?" Rana interjected, rolling her eyes.

"Even we aren't completely sure." Daniels reluctantly admitted. "All we know is that their reach apparently extends not only through time, but also across galaxies and universes."

"Great..." Nelia scowled, "We're dealing with omnipotent god-like aliens."

"Just what I needed before breakfast." Ashley quipped, bringing a wry grin to the face of the 23<sup>rd</sup> century starship captain seated at the center chair.

"That's what makes this job so much fun, Lieutenant." Magnussen bantered, his smile fading away as he read the casualty reports, "No deaths, thankfully, but we do have a few wounded. Doctor Thanoptis? Can you give our medical people a hand?"

"Of course, Sir." The asari scientist replied as she exited the bridge, "I'll be in sickbay."

"I'll head to engineering, Captain. It sounds like your chief engineer can use a hand." Nelia declared, receiving an acknowledging head nod from the captain.

"And I'll help security with damage control, Sir." Ashley said as she also exited the bridge with the captain's permission.

A short time later, after repairs had been made and injured crewmen tended to, Agent Daniels, having returned to his own ship, appeared this time as a holographic image on the bridge as what appeared to be a gateway opened up near the ships. "I've created a time portal to return your ships back to the 25<sup>th</sup> century. Thank you again for your help and I'll be in touch. Farewell...for now."

"Thank you all for your help." Captain Magnussen, accompanied by his first officer, a handsome Andorian male named Zheren, complimented the four women now standing on the transporter pad. Before giving the order to energize, the starship captain gave one of the women, a certain dark-haired human, a playful wink. "If there's anything I or my ship can do for you, let us know."

Picking up on the suggestive wink that the starship captain had given her friend and Ashley's blushing response, Nelia smirked, "Glad to help, Captain. If you and your first officer would like, you could join us for dinner on the *Spoiled Princess* when we return. We've got an excellent cook and a fully stocked bar...and I know that there's a certain someone who would definitely be pleased for you to join us."

"Kill you slowly." Ashley whispered to the roguish Orion as her cheeks turned even redder.

"Thank you." The captain answered back with a chuckle of his own, "Just comm when you want us to beam over."

"Will do." Nelia chuckled as she tapped her comm badge. "Belen. We're ready to come home. Oh...and by the way...we'll be having guests for dinner tonight."

### ***The Spoiled Princess—25<sup>th</sup> Century***

"Where did you get this recipe for Stegt flaesk med persillesovs of kartoffler?" A very pleased Captain Magnussen exclaimed as he took a sip of his aquavit. "And the Rugbrod and Honselodssuppe! I haven't had food like this since I was last in Copenhagen!"

"Let's just say that I made a few subspace calls." Belen replied with a twinkle in his eyes as he refilled everyone's drinks.

"Well...it was very good." Magnussen praised as Nelia, giving Ashley and Shelana a coy wink, stood up and made a production of stretching.

"I think I'm going to turn in early tonight. I'm supposed to be shooting a new holo-novel, aren't I, Belen?"

“That’s right.” The Ferengi bartender smirked, “It’s the sequel to *Orion Love Slave*. I think the title’s *Triple Tangle on Trill*.”

“Yep.” Nelia grinned, “So...I’m gonna need all the rest I can get. Gotta get those pheromones all juiced up for the sex scenes, you know.” Sauntering out of the bar, the green Orion seductress waved her hand, “Good night! Don’t stay out too late!”

Giving her lover a flirtatious caress, Twesata yawned, “Me and Rana are going to turn in too. See you tomorrow. Sleep tight.”

Smiling as she saw her friend talking intently with the *Valley Forge’s* Andorian first officer at the other end of the bar, Ashley inclined her head towards the door, “Observation room’s open. Wanna go there and look at the stars?” Her lips turning up in a sly grin, Ashley joked, “It looks like Shels and your first officer want to be alone.”

Chuckling, Magnussen nodded his head in agreement, “Lead on, Lieutenant.”

“Ashley.” The former Alliance gunnery sergeant, now a Starfleet lieutenant, responded with a giggle, “Please call me Ashley. I’m not wearing a uniform now and...I’ve got a cover to keep up.”

“All right, Ashley.” Magnussen grinned, “But only if you call me Soren. I’m not wearing a uniform now either and since you’re no longer under my command and we’re both off duty. I don’t think Starfleet will mind...do you?”

“Not at all, Soren.” Ashley chuckled as she escorted her guest to the Observation room, the couple sitting down close to each other on the couch. “Beautiful view, isn’t it?”

Magnussen quoted in a low voice, “If the stars should appear one night in a thousand years, how would men believe and adore; and preserve for many generations the remembrance of the city of God which had been shown! But every night come out these envoys of beauty, and light the universe with their admonishing smile.”

“Emerson.” Ashley grinned as she took a sip of aquavit. “My father would have loved that quote.”

“Your father sounds like a good man.” Soren remarked as the woman next to him scooped closer with a sigh.

“He was.” Ashley murmured. “I remember he’d read from Tennyson or Frost for me every night before I went to bed. Did the same for my sisters too.”

“Were you born on Earth?”

“No.” Ashley replied as she leaned into the warm arms of the Danish starship captain, “I was born on Sirona, it’s a colony world in the 61 Ursa Majoris system in my universe. Does it exist in this universe too?”

“Yes.” Soren smiled, “It’s also called Sirona and, the last I checked, it was a thriving colony. So...your father liked poetry? Was he a soldier too?”

Ashley replied, her voice now taking a mournful quality. “Yeah. Dad loved poetry. Especially Tennyson. But he also liked Frost and Shelley. He served in the Alliance too—family tradition. Even though the Williams name was shit.”

“You mentioned something about that earlier, but that you weren’t ready to talk about it.” Soren gently probed, “Do you want to talk about it now?”

“Yeah.” Ashley’s lips turned up in a sad smile, “I think I do.” Taking a deep breath, she spoke as the man next to her quietly listened. “Dad spent a career being assigned to crap postings only to retire as a serviceman third class, but through all the shit and abuse he had to put up with, he wore the uniform with pride.”

“You can tell me to back off if I’m prying too deep...” Magnussen began only to be cut off by the woman leaning up against him, her gentle hand falling on his forearm.

“It’s okay. I know what you’re wanting to ask. I read that in this universe, first contact with aliens was peaceful.”

“Right.” Soren nodded his head, “It was during our 21<sup>st</sup> century—after the Eugenics Wars and the Third World War. The planet was a mess—the human race came very close to not making it. Then, Zephram Cochrane invented the first human warp drive. Fortunately, a Vulcan science ship picked up on the launch and traced it back to Earth. That peaceful contact pretty much set the tone for the future—not that everything always went smoothly or easily. There were plenty of obstacles and roadblocks, but I won’t bore you with those. I take it that first contact didn’t go so peacefully for you.”

“No.” Ashley shook her head. “It didn’t. We call it The First Contact War, but the turians call it the Relay 314 Incident. We opened a mass relay without even knowing that we weren’t supposed to and a turian commander got trigger happy and fired on our ships. We didn’t have a universal translator or anything like that and that turian was too impatient to wait to figure out what our people were trying to say. Because of that, a lot of people got killed and my grandfather...” she barely repressed a sob as Soren hugged her closer.

“You don’t have to talk about it if you don’t want to.” He said in a soft voice.

“No...I’m good.” Ashley replied, quickly rallying herself. “You see, my grandfather was a general. He was put in command of our troops on one of our colonies—Shanxi. When the turians attacked the colony, he made them fight for every inch of ground...every city block. Made it brutal for them. So...the turians changed tactics. Instead of taking cities block by block, they settled for leveling them to the ground...killing anything or anyone moving. Civilian casualties started mounting up so he...”

“Surrendered.” Magnussen finished as the woman next to him lowered her head. “He fought hard...fought well...and when it reached the



point where innocent lives were being lost for no good reason he did the only thing he could do.” The starship captain concluded before continuing in a grim tone, “Let me guess...his superiors needed someone to blame and they chose him.”

“Right.” Ashley nodded her head. “He was court-martialed and demoted. He retired and disappeared soon after. We still don't know what happened to him. Ever since then, the Williams name has been garbage. They even invented a term for when you're blacklisted. It's called being Williams-ed. I was surprised I made Chief.”

“Well...you're a lieutenant now.” Magnussen declared, “And a very good one.”

“Thanks.” Ashley grinned, resting comfortably in the handsome starship captain's arms. “Ummm...do you mind if we just sit here...like this? I mean...I'm interested in more...maybe...one day...but right now...you understand? Don't you?”

“There's no need for us to rush, Ashley.” Soren replied in a soft voice as he gave the woman seated next to him a tender smile, “I can wait until you're ready. And it is a beautiful view...isn't it?”

Gazing at the starry vista, Ashley huddled up closer to the captain as she whispered back, favoring him with a kiss on the cheek, “Yes...it is.”

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