

## Ornament

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## Ornament

by [Beatrice Otter](#)

### Summary

Kira Nerys, in the camps and in the resistance

### Notes

"The hair is the richest ornament of women."—Martin Luther

Bajoran women wear their hair long.

So do Cardassian women. It's one of very few cultural similarities. No one ever talks about it.

Nerys remembers her mother, a little. Not much. Her mother used to brush her hair until it was gleaming, the only pretty thing in the Singha refugee camp. And she'd tie it back, and then she'd do the same for Nerys's hair. Nerys was a lucky little girl, because many of her friends had no mothers to brush their hair and take care of them, and fathers never quite did it right. (Some of her friends still had mothers, too. Most of *them* didn't have fathers. Nerys was a very lucky little girl.)

No luck lasts forever. One day the Cardassians came and took Nerys' mother away, along with several other girls' mothers. Even then, Nerys saw that they were the prettiest ones, the ones with the shiniest hair.

After that, her father tried to brush her hair. But he never quite learned how to do it without pulling painfully on tangles, or to tie it back so that it wouldn't get loose. So Nerys learned to brush her own hair, and how to take care of it. One pretty thing.

In the Resistance, Nerys spent a lot of time cleaning weapons and running errands. She always brushed her hair out freely for errands. Cardassian soldiers never paid much attention to a girl child with flowing hair, except sometimes to pat her head and give her a treat. It was only when you got old enough to tie your hair back that they watched you.

Once she was allowed out on raids, Nerys learned to tie her hair up under dark scarves on night raids, so that it wouldn't catch in the moonlight and betray her presence. When she was fourteen, a Cardassian guard grabbed her hair on a raid, yanked her back. He would have killed her if Shakaar hadn't shot him first. When they got back to their camp, Kira was still shaking. She took her knife and went to sit out in the bushes, alone. Fingers working quickly, she undid the braid and ran her fingers down her hair one last time. Then she took the knife and raised it.

"Don't."

Kira turned around, to see Lupaza standing behind her. She swallowed—she hadn't heard the other woman approach. That kind of carelessness could get people killed, herself included. "Why not?" she said harshly, to hide her fear. But she lowered the knife from where she held it against her hair. "It almost got me killed today."

Lupaza smiled. There was no humor in it, no teasing. "Cardassians like long hair."

"All the more reason to cut it," Kira said, shuddering. "Why would I want to look pretty for a *Cardassian*? I'd rather kill one than flirt with him!" And the thought of doing something more—she gagged, lightly.

Lupaza shrugged. "Do what you want," she said.

Kira looked at her, at the tension in her frame. She thought about the way sometimes Lupaza went out on missions alone, and everyone was

jumper than normal till she got back, and the way she always had a little tidbit of information or food or parts or *something*. And no campfire tales of how she got it. Kira thought about the way she was sometimes sent out in a pretty dress with a gun under her skirt while the rest of the cell sneaked in the back, so they could hit a target from both sides. About the way her curves are starting to show, about the way everyone says she's prettier than Lupaza.

Kira put down the knife and picked up the hair tie. "All right," she said, turning back around. She stared off into the night while her fingers redid her hair by touch and memory.

Years later, when the Cardassians leave, the first thing Kira does is kiss every (surviving) member of the cell. Then she takes a knife, and goes out behind a bush, and undoes her hair. She runs her fingers through it one last time. Then she cuts it off, all of it.

She will never wear long hair again.

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