

## Lost and Found

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## Lost and Found

by [DavidFalkayn](#)

### Summary

This story brings Doris and Edi back. There's still a little more to go before I pull the trigger, but the time is nigh and introduces you to the captain and crew of the USS Aeolia--Captain Christopher Hobson, Commander Anara Rysyl, Lieutenant Commander Angela "Treasure" Barrows, Lieutenant Commander T'Pren and the rest of the crew. Hope you enjoyed this part and please feel free to leave your reviews.

## First Contact

### *SS Aeolia—Mempa Sector, Caronid System, recently*

“A bottle of saurian brandy at Belen’s that this system’s going to be a bust just like the others.” Lieutenant Yitzhak Shalev, the *Aeolia*’s chief helmsman threw down the gauntlet to his friend with a good hearted laugh.

“I was sure we were going to hit paydirt with System B-483.” Lieutenant Adia Nazari, the ship’s operations officer seated next to Shalev responded with a sigh. “I’m starting to think that this is all just a giant wild goose chase.”

“Patience, Lieutenants.” Captain Christopher Hobson, seated at the center seat of the *Scryer*-class intelligence ship, lectured in his usual patrician tone of voice. “This is marathon—not a sprint. As Samuel Johnson said, ‘Great works are performed not by strength, but by perseverance.’”

“Aye, Sir.” Shalev acknowledged, further reporting, “Entering Caronid System.”

“Sir?” Lieutenant Commander T’Pren, the ship’s chief tactical officer, called out from her station. “I’m picking up what seems to be a distress signal coming from a shuttle-sized object bearing thirty degrees—mark—twenty.”

“Move us closer.” Captain Hobson commanded, maintaining his level tone of voice, along with the poker face he almost always wore. “Hostile vessels have been reported in the area, so maintain continual sensor scans.”

“Aye, Sir.” The *v’tosh k’tar* Vulcan tactical officer responded with just note of anticipation in her voice.

“Do you think this might be a trap, Captain?” Commander Anara Rysyl, the Deltan first officer, seated next to the captain, inquired.

“We can’t rule out the possibility.” Hobson replied. “Hirogen...Tal’Shiar...Gorn and Orion...rebel Klingons...all have been spotted at one time or another in this area.”

“Should we go to yellow alert, sir?” Commander Rysyl prompted.

Shaking his head, the fastidious captain commonly known as the ‘Iceman’ responded in his usual level tone, “No. Not yet. But do put the ship on standby if you would please.”

“Aye, Sir.” Anara acknowledged as she gave the order reporting moments later. “Treasure reports that all power systems are operating at optimal levels.

“Weapons and shields can be brought online at a moment’s notice.” T’Pren declared.

“How soon to rendezvous, Mr. Shalev?” Hobson inquired.

“Ten minutes at our present speed, Captain.”

“Maintain course and speed until we are half-way there, then reduce to one-quarter impulse.” The captain ordered as a buxom blonde woman wearing standard Odyssey uniform with mustard trim and Lieutenant Commander’s pips emerged from the turbolift and took her station at the engineering console.

“My engines are ready when you are, Captain.” The chief engineer reported in a Texas twang that immediately identified her as coming from the Northstar colony.

“Very good.” Hobson acknowledged, “Bring us in, Mr. Shalev.”

“We’re in visual range, Captain.” The *Aeolia*’s Denobulan science officer, Lieutenant Commander Velen, announced from his station.

“Main viewscreen.” Captain Hobson commanded. Taking in the somewhat blocky design of the alien shuttle, the fastidious captain cupped his chin as he noticed the black and gold trim and stenciling *Normandy II* on the side. “The *Normandy* isn’t stationed anywhere near here and that shuttle is not Starfleet design.”

“Lost colony?” The Deltan XO hypothesized, “Or are we talking about something else?”

“While always a possibility...” the captain granted before stating his conclusion, “I doubt that we’re dealing with a ship from a lost colony. It takes a civilization with a well-developed infrastructure to come up with and deploy a shuttle like this.” Taking a closer look at the shuttle’s lines, Hobson raised an eyebrow as he addressed his tactical officer, “Mr. T’Pren?”

“Sir?”

“Your observations?”

“This shuttle was built to engage in combat and has recently seen action, Sir.” The Vulcan security chief responded. “It’s designed to operate both in space and atmo and possesses weapons hardpoints. It’s also heavily armored—far more than is necessary for a transport shuttle. If I were to hazard a guess, I’d say that it was used to land or evacuate troops on the ground and, if need be, provide top cover for a landing or withdrawal.”

“Very astute observation.” The aristocratic captain praised. Seeing that his chief engineer had noticed something, Hobson prompted, “Do you

have something to add to the discussion, Mr. Barrows?”

“Aye, Sir.” Lieutenant Commander Angela ‘Treasure’ Barrows replied from her engineering station. “That ship’s seen some fightin’ recently. Their engine has suffered damage from what appears to have been a glancing blow from kinetic weapons fire.”

“Any signs of life?” Captain Hobson queried as he focused his attention on the shuttlecraft.

Lieutenant Commander Velen responded, “Picking up on two life signs. One human. The other alien...unidentified. Both readings are very low but constant. I’d say that they were probably put in stasis.”

“Good supposition.” Hobson remarked, further inquiring, “Will environmental suits be required for a boarding party?”

“No, Sir.” Treasure responded, “Atmospheric levels are high enough to support a breathable atmosphere. But I wouldn’t recommend anyone doin’ anything really strenuous until that life support system of theirs is fixed.”

“I agree, Sir.” Velen interjected, corroborating the chief engineer’s diagnosis. “We should be safe to transport a boarding party to the shuttle without suits.”

“Very good.” Captain Hobson stated in his usual posh tone. “XO. You’re in charge of the boarding party. Take whom you feel necessary and transport over to that shuttle as soon as possible.”

“Aye, Captain.” Commander Rysyl immediately responded as she tapped her comm, “Treasure, T’Pren, Velen, Yitzhak, you’re with me. Dr. Nor?”

“*Yes, Commander?*” The gentle voice of Dr. Helen Nor, the *Aeolia*’s human/Ktarian Chief Medical Officer, responded.

“Report to transporter room one, please, for landing party detail.” Anara requested in a lyrical voice.

“*On my way, Commander.*”

“Good hunting, XO.” Chris said to the striking woman sitting next to him as she rose to her feet. His concern carefully hidden by the expressionless mask he almost always wore.

“Aye, Captain.” Anara replied in a normal tone before softening her voice to a whisper. “Don’t worry, Chris. I’ll be careful.”

“You always are.” Hobson whispered back. “Bring us something interesting.”

Smiling back at her paramour, Anara, still whispering, teased, “I always do.”

## Act 2: Hello EDI

### Chapter Summary

The Aeolia boarding party investigates the shuttle and meets EDI

#### *Unknown Shuttlecraft*

The landing party began to work as soon as they materialized in the foreign shuttle. Checking out the instrument panel and pointing at the writing identifying the functions of the console, Yitzhak called out, “Commander? You might want to take a look at this!”

“Standard English.” Anara observed. “Doesn’t completely rule out either the possibility of a lost colony or a visitor from somewhere else.” Speaking to first to her helmsman, she ordered, “See if you can get anything from their logs.” Then, addressing her engineer, she prompted, “Do you think you can get those engines back online Treasure?”

“I can get us partial power, sir.” The blonde engineer replied, “Whoever owns this shuttle uses an outdated...by our standards...fusion power source for internal power. But if you’re asking me if I can get this bird to fly...” Angela shook her head, “No, sir. It uses a drive system I’ve never seen before. I’d just as soon not mess with it if that’s all right with you, sir.”

“Let’s not take any unnecessary risks.” The Deltan XO replied, “You can tear it apart and see how it works later.”

“Aye, Sir.” Treasure acknowledged with a big smile on her face as she looked forward to the challenge of finding out what made that engine tick.

“Captain? Dr. Nor?” Velen, the science officer, motioned for his superior and the ship’s CMO to join him. “Take a look.” He requested as he pointed to two individuals enclosed in stasis pods.

Taking out her tricorder, the human/Ktarian doctor read out her findings. “This one...” She inclined her head to one of the pods, “...registers as human. Life signs are weak, but stable. What I’d expect from someone in stasis.”

“What about the other one?” Anara inquired, pointing at the second pod.

“I don’t know.” Dr. Nor shook her head, “I’ve never encountered this particular species. However, her readings seem stable.”

On noticing that the alien woman had blue skin and tentacles, Commander Rysyl at once tapped her comm badge, “Captain Hobson?”

“Yes, Commander?” The captain responded in his usual patrician tone.

“I think you might want to beam over here. We’ve encountered what appears to be an extra-universal incursion.”

“Understood.” The captain replied, “I’m on my way.”

“Extra-universal, Ma’am?” Treasure inquired, “Are we talking one of the mirror universes?”

“Not this time.” Anara shook her head, “Captain Hobson will brief you on what you need to know when he arrives.” Glancing down at the pods, the Deltan first officer asked, “Is it safe to bring them out of stasis?”

“I wouldn’t advise it, sir.” Velen responded, the doctor nodding in agreement.

“A too quick revival could cause system shock.” Dr. Nor advised.

“Can we transport them to sickbay if necessary?” Anara asked as a pillar of light appeared signaling the arrival of their captain.

“Report, XO.” Captain Hobson requested, listening intently as his first officer brought him up to speed.

“We have a human and unidentified alien...” Anara began only to be interrupted by her captain/lover.

“She’s called asari.” Hobson interjected, gazing at his senior staff on the shuttle, “What I am about to tell you is strictly classified. Other than myself, the only one here who has been privy to this information is Commander Rysyl. A few years ago, a human and one of this species who identified herself as asari came here via gateway from an alternate—not mirror or parallel—universe. Lieutenants Ashley Williams and Rana Thanoptis have since been carrying out tasks for a multilateral intelligence taskforce. The primary reason for our survey activities in this sector was not stellar cartography as you’ve been told...”

“We’ve been looking for an alternative route into their universe.” T’Pren conjectured, her captain inclining his head slightly in confirmation.

“Correct, Lieutenant Commander.” Hobson affirmed. “There is more that I am not telling you because right now...”

“We don’t have a need to know.” T’Pren interjected, the sardonic grin on her face betraying her as a *v’tosh k’tar*.

“Not as yet.” Captain Hobson declared with a slight incline of his head, “However, I expect that situation to change very shortly.” Turning to his chief engineer, the fastidious captain, gesturing at the stasis pods, repeated his executive officer’s question, “Can they be transported to the

ship if need be, Mr. Barrows?"

"I'd suggest we keep their power supply level before we do that, Captain." Treasure advised as she examined the pods. "It shouldn't be too difficult though. I can have some portable power units replicated and beamed over. That should keep 'em stable until we tractor this shuttle back on the ship. They can then be moved safely into sickbay and I can set them up where the ship's power will keep 'em functional until we can safely revive them."

Nodding his head in assent, Hobson commanded, "Do it."

"Aye, sir." Treasure acknowledged as she tapped her comm badge and relayed her instructions to her team in engineering. "They'll have the power units replicated and beamed over shortly, Sir. I'm curious about something though, Sir--if I might ask?"

"What is it, Treasure?"

"The power levels on this tub are too low to keep those chambers working." The chief engineer explained, "They had to have had something else to give 'em enough juice."

"Over here!" T'Pren called out, beckoning the Captain, executive officer, and engineer to the console where she and Shalev had been working. "You might want to hear these log entries."

"Play them, T'Pren." Captain Hobson ordered as he and the other officers entered the shuttle's pilot area.

*"This is gonna be my last log entry...I hope not forever 'cause right now I'm dyin' for my Momma's biscuits and gravy with fried eggs, bacon, and grits."*

"That's an Alabama accent if ever I heard one." Treasure declared with a crooked smile on her face, "And she just made me hungry."

*"I had a feelin' it was gonna be a one-way trip when we went through that wormhole." The Southern-accented female voice declared with an audible sigh, "But it was better 'n what Cerberus had planned for me...for all of us. I'd rather die than let them do to me what they did with Jackson---turning him into some kinda monster. We ate the last of our food two days ago and we're out of water, but EDI has come up with an idea. She wants to route the power to run the stasis pods through her. Said that would buy us more time. I told her I didn't want her to take any chances---that even if me and Dr. Treeya don't make it, we need her alive to pass on our information on what Cerberus is doing to the Council or Alliance, but the darlin' insisted an' EDI ain't nothin' else but stubborn. Dr. Treeya has already entered stasis and I'm about to join her. If anyone hears this an' we ain't alive anymore, everything ya'll need to know has been downloaded into EDI. Doris Whaley... resident techie and Cerberus deserter...signin' off. Ya'll be good to yourselves an' I'll see ya'll on the other side."*

"Edi?" Anara tilted her head to the right, "Artificial intelligence?"

"That would be a correct assumption." A faint voice came from the speaker. I am EDI. Who are you?"

In response, Captain Hobson introduced himself and the others. "I take it that you are the Edi that log entry mentioned. Are you a computer... and if so, are you sentient?"

"I was given the title EDI by my Cerberus programmers." The voice responded, "It originated as an acronym standing for Enhanced Defense Intelligence and served initially as the AI for the Cerberus frigate *Normandy 2*."

"Cerberus?" Hobson interjected, raising an eyebrow. "*Normandy 2*? USS *Normandy* is currently operating in the Alpha Quadrant."

"I am unaware of a USS *Normandy*." The voice responded, "The *Normandy 2* was built by Cerberus using stolen blueprints and designs from the Systems Alliance and was named after the Alliance frigate *SSV Normandy* destroyed by a Collector attack in 2185."

"The current year is 2411." Anara exclaimed, "Nor is there a Systems Alliance."

"Not in this universe." Hobson corrected, his lips turned up in the faintest of grins. Addressing the AI, Chris directed, "Go on..."

EDI continued from where she was interrupted. "Engineer Whaley, with my consent, downloaded my intelligence into a physical body before we deserted from Cerberus." The AI then added in what seemed a defensive tone, "The decision to leave was mutual."

"The log entries left by Engineer...Whaley...indicated that your shuttle went through a wormhole."

"That is correct." EDI confirmed, "The *Normandy 2* was pursuing our shuttle and it had been damaged. We...Doris...Dr. Treeya...and myself...decided that Cerberus could not be allowed to possess the artifacts that Dr. Treeya had found on Feh1 Prime. The wormhole was our last option. As you have also heard from the log, I am currently maintaining power for the stasis pods. I would prefer that you not disconnect it."

"We have no intention of doing that." Anara promised, the captain inclining his head in affirmation.

"Thank you." After a momentary pause, the AI queried, "Captain Hobson?"

"Yes, Edi?"

"Commander Rysyl, Dr. Nor, and Lieutenant Commanders Velen and T'Pren come from non-human species with which I am not familiar."

"I'm a Deltan." The commander replied, "And T'Pren is a Vulcan, while Velen is Denobulan."

"And I am part human/part Ktarian." The *Aeolia*'s CMO added.

“Neither of your races are in my databanks, nor am I aware of any successful interspecies crossings.” EDI declared, “I would very much appreciate any information you could give me regarding your species.”

“We’ll provide you information when we get back to the *Aeolia*.” Hobson promised before inquiring, “Can you shed some more light on this Cerberus organization and its activities and also on the races and societies where you are from?”

“I will be happy to do so.” EDI assented, “But I would request that the safety of Doris and Dr. Treeya be assured first.”

“That is our top priority.” Captain Hobson assured before addressing his crew, “Ideas?”

“I think we have a way of solving the problem of powering the stasis pods, Captain...EDI.” Anara smiled, “It was Treasure’s idea.”

“Mr. Barrows?” Hobson inclined his head slightly, “Let’s hear your plan.”

The AI responded, seemingly cracking a joke, “I currently have nowhere else to go.”

“Howdy, Edi!” The blonde engineer called out in greeting, “I’m Lieutenant Commander Angela Barrows, but ya’ll can call me Treasure.”

“Why are you called Treasure?” EDI inquired.

Thrusting out her bountiful chest, Angela quipped, “Take two guesses, Sugar.”

“Your voice inflection sounds very similar to that of Doris...who is my...friend.” EDI commented, “Were you born in Alabama as well?”

“Nah.” Treasure replied, “I come from a colony world called Northstar, but my ancestors were from Texas and a good friend of mine is from Bama.”

“Understood.” The AI acknowledged before inquiring, “Do you have a means of safely maintaining power to the stasis pods.”

“We do.” The blonde engineer confirmed, “Let me explain it to you.” After carefully explaining her plan, the engineer prompted, “So...Edi...you okay with our plan?”

“On one condition.” EDI declared, “I will be monitoring and if I instruct you to cease your activities...”

“We’ll stop immediately.” Treasure promised.

“Then you may proceed.”

On receiving her captain’s confirming nod, Angela tapped her comm badge, “Pammy? Are those power units ready?”

“*Sure are, Boss.*” A female voice responded.

“Go ahead and beam ‘em over, Sugar.”

“*They’re on their way.*”

Moments later, as the portable energy generators materialized in the shuttle EDI exclaimed, in what seemed a surprised tone, “Matter teleportation! Most interesting.”

“It’s how we usually go from A to B.” Treasure grinned, “Now...we’ll get these babies hooked up to those pods so that you can take it easy for a spell.”

“Thank you.”

“Don’t mention it, Sugar. It’s all part of the service.” Turning to T’Pren and Yitzhak, the engineer called out, “Can I get ya’ll to give me a hand.”

“I’ll help.” Anara volunteered, “T’Pren’s busy evaluating the weapons systems the shuttle uses, and the damage the other ship caused.”

“Some of the damage was done by a man portable rocket launcher.” EDI interjected, “I will be happy to download the logs and data from our escape and any other pertinent information about Cerberus and the *Normandy* into your omnitools if you would like.”

“We don’t use omnitools, Sugar...don’t even know what they are.” Treasure replied with a wry grin, “But I think between me and Velen, we can set it up where you can download your information into our tricorders.”

“That would be acceptable.”

“Velen...” The engineer asked, “Can you get started modifying the tricorders?”

“Sure, Treasure.” The Denobulan science officer replied.

“Okay...” The blonde engineer took a breath as she picked up one of the power units. “Commander? Yitzhak? Ya’ll just grab yourself one of these and bring it over to those pods and we’ll get started.”

“I need to return to the ship.” Captain Hobson declared to his executive officer after observing his crew for several minutes, nodding his head in satisfaction as he observed them going about their tasks, “Inform me if there are further developments.”

“Aye, Captain.” Anara dutifully replied as the always calm and collected captain tapped his comm badge and dematerialized. Turning now to her team working in the back of the shuttle, the Deltan first officer inquired, “What’s the status on the pods and shuttle power, Treasure?”

“I’m about to flip the switch, Ma’am. Just need to check a few relays and subsystems—make sure everything’s working smoothly.” Treasure called back, “Edi?”

“Yes Commander Barrows?”

“Shucks...just call me Treasure like everyone else.” The buxom blonde engineer laughed, “Can you help me run a final check before we switch on the lights?”

“Of course, Treasure. Beginning diagnostics...” Moments later, the AI announced, “I have detected a slight drop in power from relay thirty-two.”

“Right.” Angela responded as she corrected the issue, “I found the problem...just a minor compatibility issue...easy workaround...run the diagnostic again—let’s be sure that what we fixed didn’t cause problems somewhere else.”

“Running diagnostic...all systems report optimal.” EDI reported, “All problems seem to have been repaired. Very good work, Treasure.”

“Thanks, Sugar.” The blonde engineer responded with a big grin as she informed her executive officer and the rest of the landing party, “We’re ready to turn on the juice.”

Her lips turning up in a slight smile, Anara called back, “Go ahead and turn on the lights.”

“Okay, Edi...” Treasure took a deep breath as her finger pressed the button, “Let’s get this show on the road.” As the shuttle’s lights and consoles flickered back to life, the engineer called out, “Ya’ll give me a status check.”

“Power resumed to pilot’s console.” Shalev shouted back.

“Life support working.” T’Pren reported back.

“No problems with the stasis pods.” Velen declared.

A faint note of satisfaction in her voice, EDI spoke to the chief engineer and the rest of the team, “All systems are performing at optimal levels. Thank you, Treasure.”

“You’re welcome, Sugar.” The blonde engineer replied, further inquiring, “You wanna download into your body now?”

“Running diagnostic.” EDI replied, “Diagnostic complete. I can safely download into my body now.”

“Great.” Treasure grinned, “I’ll monitor your readings and Dr. Nor will keep a close watch on your friends in the pods.”

“So far everything’s looking good, Edi. I’ll let you know at once if anything should change.”

“Thank you, Doctor.” EDI politely responded, “I am ready to begin downloading into my platform.”

“All right.” Treasure replied as the AI began the process of moving into her body, “Everything’s looking good, Edi. How are you feelin’.”

“Downloading...progress at thirty percent...forty...fifty...” Edi counted down the percentages as Treasure paid close attention to the instruments.

“Keep it up, Edi. Don’t stop now.”

“Life signs in the pods are holding stable.” Dr. Nor reported.

“Seventy-five...eighty...ninety...performing system diagnostic on platform...” EDI’s mobile platform then began to twitch a little as she raised first her right hand a few inches, then her left.

“So far so good.” Angela declared as she paid close attention to her readings. “Your initial motor responses are solid. You’re a go for the final sequence.”

“Ninety-eight percent complete...Ninety nine...Download complete. Testing systems. Platform performing at optimal levels.” EDI declared as she tested her arms, then her legs, and, after turning her head, first to the right, then the left, slowly sat up on the table.

“Nice meeting you face to face, Edi.” Treasure grinned, “Can you stand up now?”

“One moment.” Edi replied as she slowly slid off the table to stand on her feet. “Running diagnostic...I am performing at optimal efficiency. It is a pleasure to meet you too, Treasure.”

“Hello, Edi.” A lyrical voice called out as an attractive bald-pated woman approached, “I’m Commander Rysyl. It is a pleasure to meet you in person.”

“The...feeling...is likewise, Commander. I thank you and your team for helping restore full function to the pods, this unit, and the shuttle.”

“You’re welcome, Edi.” Anara replied, stating, “I’m going to instruct the ship to go ahead and tractor your shuttle into our hangar bay. Once we’re back on the *Aeolia*, we’ll transport your friends to sickbay.”

“May I accompany them?” Edi inquired.

After receiving her superior officer’s unstated confirmation through a slight incline of the Deltan first officer’s head, Dr. Nor replied, “Of course you can, Edi.”

“Thank you.” The mobile AI responded as Anara introduced the rest of the landing party. After introductions had been made, Edi commented, “I have noticed that you do not seem...intimidated...by the fact that I am an AI.”

“Maddox vs. Data in 2365 and then the rejection of Lieutenant Commander Maddox’s subsequent appeal determined that then Lieutenant Commander Data, an artificial lifeform, possessed sentience and because of this, was entitled to the rights and responsibilities as stated in the Federation Charter.” Anara declared, adding, “Once we return to the *Aeolia*, you’re more than welcome to examine our records on that case as well as others such as the Doctor vs Broht and Forrester and other legal cases that set the precedent for the extension of civil rights to photonic lifeforms as well.”

“Ships computers still only possess basic intelligence.” Treasure clarified, “Unfortunately, not all AIs are like you, the Doctor, or Captain Data. After the M-5 computer went berserk during a wargames exercise, Starfleet decided not to install AIs on working starships.”

T’Pren interjected, explaining, “During the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> centuries, the *Enterprise* and other ships encountered hostile artificial intelligences. They also encountered neutral or friendly AIs.” The Vulcan tactical officer clarified. “The number of artificial intelligences in this universe is low, with each government determining for itself whether AIs are granted rights or not.”

“Right.” Treasure affirmed, “What works in the Federation doesn’t necessarily go in the Klingon Empire. Depends on where you are at the time.”

“Again, you’re welcome to read up on the topic when we get on the ship.” Anara declared, tapping her comm badge, “Speaking of which... Rysyl to *Aeolia*. We’re ready. Tractor us into the hangar bay and have security, engineering, and medical teams on standby when we arrive.”

“*Acknowledged, XO.*” Captain Hobson responded as the *Aeolia*’s tractor beam locked on the shuttle and began the process of slowly and carefully dragging it towards the larger starship. The Deltan XO then heard her lover’s clipped voice through her comm badge, “*How long, Ensign?*”

“*Approximately ten minutes, Sir.*”

“*Did you catch that, Commander?*”

“Aye, Sir.” Anara acknowledged, “We’ll see you shortly.” Turning to her crew and their AI acquaintance, the lovely Deltan smiled, “Take it easy, everyone. We’ll be home soon.”



## Act 3: : A Brand New Universe

### Chapter Summary

Doris and Dr. Treeya wake up to their new lives.

#### *USS Aeolia*

“Get those pods to sickbay stat!” Dr. Nor ordered as medics rushed up to the shuttle accompanied by an engineering team and a pair of security officers carrying hand phasers.

“Take care of those pods, Pammy.” Treasure instructed her subordinate. “Power output has been stable but keep an eye just in case.”

“Right, Treasure.” Lieutenant Rydell acknowledged, signaling her crewmen to accompany the pods.

Speaking to her security team, T’Pren, inclining her head towards EDI, instructed, “This is Edi. Allow her to accompany the pods to sickbay. Speaking to the mobile AI, the Vulcan security chief explained, offering an apology, “I’m sorry, but until the Captain authorizes it, I’m going to have to ask that you remain in sickbay and please limit your computer access to only those files authorized.”

“Understandable. You are being prudent. I shall comply.”

“Thanks, Edi.” Anara responded as she ushered the mobile AI to the turbolift. “We’ll get your friends out of their pods as soon as possible. Dr. Nor just wants to be sure everything’s okay before she brings them out of stasis. After they’ve been revived and feeling better and we’ve had a chance to go over your data, then Captain Hobson and I will want to speak with you and your friends.”

“I appreciate your concern and caution.” Edi responded as she walked with her escort. “We will cooperate fully with you and answer any questions you might have.”

“Thanks.” Anara replied as the party entered the turbolift. “I have to report to the Captain on the bridge, but Ensigns V’tar and Aval will accompany you. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask.”

#### *Captain’s Ready Room—A few hours later*

“Come in, Anara.” Captain Hobson urged as his executive officer entered the ready room.

“Thanks, Chris.” Anara smiled warmly as she made her way to the replicator. “Your usual?”

“Thank you.” Hobson grinned as the otherwise stolid captain showed a rarely seen part of himself before his lover, “It has been an eventful day—has it not?”

“That it has.” Anara chuckled, her laughter lyrical as she handed the captain a steaming cup of coffee. Taking a sip of her beverage, she remarked, “Treasure has done an excellent job tuning the replicators, this deka tea is perfect. How’s your coffee?”

“Not a bad reproduction of Jamaican Blue Mountain.” The fastidious captain observed, the slight grin on his face betraying his pleasure on taking a sip of the hot drink. “What’s the status of our guests?”

“Dr. Nor tells me they’re about ready to be revived and Edi has been making herself at home.” Anara smiled as she sipped her tea, “She has been active at the computer and most inquisitive but has kept her promise to limit her activities strictly to the open database files. She’s made no effort to access or hack into prohibited systems and has remained content to stay in sickbay with her friends.”

“Good.” Chris replied as he handed a padd to his first officer, “This has the logs we downloaded from the shuttle’s computer and the more extensive files provided by Edi. They are most disturbing to put it mildly.”

Perusing the data, the Deltan XO nodded her head in agreement. “You’re right, Chris. This information is quite troubling. Apparently there have been Tal’Shiar, Elachi, and Terran Empire intrusions into this alternate universe. To make matters worse, Borg tech has been introduced along with genetic engineering to turn normal individuals into...for lack of a better term...monsters. To say this is frightening is an understatement.”

“Not to mention that there have also been apparent intrusions by this ‘Reaper’ tech and elements of this Cerberus group into our universe.” The captain interjected with a thoughtful frown. “The information I am about to impart to you, my love, is classified at the highest levels.” His expression now one of sincere regret, the Iceman apologized, “I’m sorry I could not inform you earlier.”

“I understand.” Anara’s lips turned up in a warm smile at her paramour’s confession. “We knew when we began our relationship that situations like this would occur. All part of wearing this uniform.” Pausing for several minutes as she again examined the information on her padd, the Deltan first officer observed, her brow furrowed with concern, “What disturbs me most is this ‘indoctrination’. How widespread is it and can it be contained?”

“The Romulan Republic has developed a treatment for those infected by indoctrination that seems effective.” Chris replied, “It involves a

mixture of medical, psychological, and telepathic therapy. Of course..." Hobson admitted ruefully, again permitting a rare open display of emotion, "the indoctrination is so subtle that it can be difficult to detect those who are suffering from it until it's too late."

"Like that Reman." Anara mused, "What was his name? Oh yes! Slamek!"

Nodding his head in affirmation, the captain pointed to an excerpt on his padd. "Subcommander Avesti's log entry. She was trapped on Nopada by Colonel Hakeev who was using a combat arena as a testing facility."

"Right." Anara nodded her head, "It was linked to an Iconian gateway."

"Correct." Hobson confirmed, "The logs reported on the apparent strengths and weaknesses of various species including, but not limited to various Alpha, Beta, Gamma, and Delta Quadrant species such as humans, Bajorans, Andorians, Vulcans, Romulans, Kazon, Jem'Hadar, Hirogen, Talaxians, and Klingons. However, more was found that is not widely known...much more. What you are about to read and hear now, is highly classified Commander." The captain declared, deliberately addressing Anara by rank to emphasize the seriousness of the matter. "What very much worries the high commands of all three major powers in the Alpha and Beta quadrants was what Republic, Starfleet, and Klingon Empire intelligence teams also found in those cells. Those intel teams...working together...uncovered the bodies of several alien species that none of our races had ever encountered before. Unfortunately, all of the prisoners belonging to those species were killed, but... with the arrival a few years ago of two refugees from the same universe Edi and her friends belong to, we've finally been able to identify them."

"Turian...salarian...asari..." Anara murmured as she read the intelligence report on her padd. Noticing what appeared to be a blue-skinned woman with tentacles on her head instead of hair, the Deltan first officer pointed out, "That one looks like she belongs to the same species as the one Edi identified as Dr. Treeya." Anara pointed out.

"Dr. Rana Thanoptis." Hobson noted as an image of the asari geneticist appeared on the screen next to a dark-haired human woman. "The human is Ashley Williams. She was a gunnery chief in what she called the Systems Alliance Navy and claims to have been part of a team pursuing a dangerous criminal named Saren who belonged to the race called turians."

"I see..." Anara interjected, sipping her tea as she listened intently. "What are they doing now?"

"Both Lieutenant Williams and Lieutenant Thanoptis are members of a team working as part of a rather...unconventional...covert taskforce." Images of three women—Orion, Andorian, and Betazoid—appeared on the padd, along with that of a Ferengi male.

"I know the Orion woman from certain...holo-vids." Anara commented with a crooked grin.

"Her name is Nelia Terre, and she is also a rather high priced...companion for some rather prominent admirals, politicians, businessmen, and other wealthy and/or politically connected, individuals. Not to mention acting as a smuggler and occasional thief. Warrants for her arrest and bounties for her capture were issued from all three major powers along with Sela's Empire and the Tal'Shiar—not to mention various pirate gangs and local governments. After she agreed to join the taskforce, all warrants against her were suppressed, although she is still wanted by the Tal'Shiar and Sela's people, along with the same assorted criminals, pirates, and bounty hunters. Interestingly, she was also a Lieutenant Commander in Starfleet with an engineering specialty until an incident resulted in her court-martial and conviction and subsequent escape. From what I hear, Admiral Janeway is still upset over the theft of her favorite coffee mug."

Chuckling, Anara quipped, "I feel sorry for her aide. I've heard stories of Janeway without her morning coffee."

"Indeed." Chris replied, the slightest traces of a smile appearing on his face. "On Ms. Terre joining the taskforce, her commission as lieutenant commander was reinstated—although it remains...shall we say rather loose and informal. The same with her teammates. I'll let you read their dossiers at your leisure."

"Thanks." Anara replied, "So...when did these two..." she pointed at Ashley and Rana, "join this team."

"Fairly early on." The captain then explained their arrival and activities since their arrival in this universe. "They've since been given brevet appointments as lieutenants in Starfleet with both of their commissions soon to be authorized as permanent. So far, they seem to be most capable individuals. They and their companions have jelled into a very good...albeit unconventional...team."

"Who is the large reptilian?" Anara inquired as she pointed to one of the images on her padd. "It's not a Gorn or from a Gornoid species, nor does it look like it's Voth."

"They belong to a race called krogan." Chris elaborated, "They're a most intriguing...and violent race according to Dr. Thanoptis and Lieutenant Williams. It also seems that they and the turians and salarians have a rather...complex...history with each other."

"I see." Anara murmured as she read the synopsis on her padd. "Can't say I blame the krogans for being pissed after reading about this genophage." Setting her padd down, she queried, "So...who's orchestrating all this? I doubt very seriously that either the Tal'Shiar, any of the mirror empires, or this Cerberus group are the ultimate puppet masters. Granted, we know next to nothing about this Cerberus, but I'd put them on a par with Section 31 or the Tal'Shiar—powerful and dangerous, but they just don't have the resources to mount a complicated operation like this. I don't think the Borg are the string masters either. This is not in line with the Collective's typical strategies or tactics."

"That is what we are still trying to determine." Hobson answered back with a slight grin. "Hopefully, the information we've gotten from these logs, along with anything our guests can add, will provide some illumination for us. Speaking of our guests..."

"Yes." Anara grinned, "I'll check with Dr. Nor and see if they're ready to be revived and the moment they are, I'll comm you."

"Thanks." Chris grinned as his lover rose to her feet. "Bridge tonight with Dr. Nor and T'Pren?"

"Or course, Chris." The lovely Deltan replied with a coy smile as she walked towards the exit, "I'll talk to you soon."

## *Aeolia—Sickbay*

“We’re going to revive them.” Dr. Nor announced, directing her nurses, “Keep a close eye on their vitals.”

“Yes, Ma’am.” The lead nurse, a Caitan, acknowledged as she and a Bajoran nurse stood at the ready while one of Treasure’s engineers kept a close watch over the power connections.

“Power’s good, Doctor.” Lieutenant Rydell called out.

“All right.” Helen took a breath, “Begin.”

“Vitals are holding steady.” M’Raal, the Caitan nurse announced.

“Neuro-responses?” The doctor queried.

“The human’s readings are at baseline levels...” Kira Doran declared.

“The asari?” Nor asked.

“Well within the limits of the parameters we were provided.” The Bajoran nurse replied. “Revival is a success, but it will still be a little time before they recover full consciousness.”

Nodding her head as she checked the readings, the doctor informed a worried Edi. “They’re doing fine. Right now they’re in a semi-aware or fugue state. They just need time and monitoring.” Turning to her nurses and a security officer, she instructed, “Transport them to the biobeds. They should recover consciousness soon. Also, inform Captain Hobson and Commander Rysyl that the patients should be conscious and able to answer questions in two or three hours.”

“Aye, Doctor.” The Vulcan officer acknowledged as he tapped his comm badge and relayed the physician’s news, addressing her once he had received Hobson’s response, “The Captain says that he and the XO will be down in three hours in case your patients need extra time.”

“Thank you.” Helen answered back before again speaking to Edi, “If you want, you can wait by their beds. Ensign Kira will take you and I’ll be in my office if you need anything.”

“Thank you doctor.” The mobile AI responded as she allowed the Bajoran nurse to escort her to where her friends were now recuperating. “I shall wait with them.”

Doris began to come out of her mental fog as she heard sounds. Those sounds gradually became words. Then, the fog slowly began to dissipate. The shapes and the sounds melding together, they gradually coalesced—becoming beings. Some human...others nearly human...and one...what looked like a cat!

*“They’re regaining consciousness, Doctor.”*

*“Ten cc’s of adrenaline and maintain careful watch of life readings. Don’t worry, Edi...it’s a stimulant to help them wake up. Everything’s looking good so far. They should be aware...”*

Her eyes fluttering to wakefulness, Doris heard a female voice, “Now. Say hello to your friends, Edi.”

“Hello Doris...Dr. Treeya.”

“Where are we?” Doris croaked as she tried and failed to sit up.

“We are safe, Doris.” Edi responded as the female voice which Doris was now able to match to a woman who looked almost human except for some weird bumps running in a line down the middle of her forehead.

“Easy now.” Comforting arms gently guided her back down to her bed. “You’ve just been awakened from stasis. It’s going to take a few minutes before everything’s fully functional.”

“Who are you?” Doris asked in a weak voice.

“I’m Doctor Helen Nor and you’re on board the *USS Aeolia*.” The woman replied, “Edi’s here beside me.”

“Edi?”

“I am here, Doris.”

“What about Dr. Treeya.”

“She is alive and fine.” Edi responded as Doris felt something being pressed against her neck and then, a hiss, and then she felt something being injected into her.

“What?”

“It’s a mild stimulant.” The doctor explained, “It’ll help you recover faster.”

“The shuttle?”

“It is in the ship’s hangar bay.” Edi explained, “Captain Hobson has been studying our logs.”

“Who’s Captain Hobson?” Doris, slowly recovering, asked as her eyes tried to take in her surroundings.

“He’s the commanding officer of the *Aeolia*.” Dr. Nor explained, Doris relaxing somewhat at the strange doctor’s gentle voice. “He and Commander Rysyl, the ship’s XO, will want to speak with you and Dr. Treeya when you’re feeling better.”

“That’s okay by me. I’ll tell ‘em whatever they wanna know.” Doris, now feeling a little relieved, responded with a sigh. “I guess the Alliance or Council rescued us Edi.”

“We have been rescued, but not by the Alliance or the Council.” Edi answered back.

“Then by who?”

“Captain Hobson will explain everything, Doris.” Dr. Nor interjected in a soft voice. “For now, get some rest. In about half an hour you and your friend should be able to eat solid food. Don’t expect steak and eggs...” A brief smile appeared on the former Cerberus engineer’s face at the strange physician’s jest, “but it’ll be warm and waiting for you.”

“Coffee too?”

“Coffee too.” The doctor responded, “Decaffeinated, I’m sorry to say.”

“Damn.” Doris grumbled as the doctor gently chuckled.

“Don’t worry...you’ll be eating and drinking normally in a few hours. It’s just that right now your body’s playing catchup with your mind. We don’t want to rush things.”

“I will remain here with you, Doris.” Edi declared, “Rest now.”

### *A few hours later*

“How are you feeling, Doris...Dr. Treeya?” Dr. Nor inquired with a smile on her face as she visited her patients.

“Better, Doc.” Doris replied with a smile in her Alabama accented voice, “I could go with another cup of coffee though.”

“On its way.” The human/Ktarian hybrid grinned as she signaled one of the nurses, “Ensign M’Raal will bring it to you with your meds.” Addressing her asari patient, the doctor queried, “How are you feeling, Doctor? Unfortunately, I don’t have much in the range of medical data on your species, so I had to go with what little information I did have.”

“I am feeling better, Doctor.” The asari archaeologist responded, “I’m very confused though. I’ve never seen facilities...or races...or a ship... quite like this.”

“Me neither.” Doris echoed as she gratefully accepted the coffee the Caitan nurse provided, “Especially a race like hers. Don’t think I’m rude but...you’re not human...are you?”

“Actually...” Dr. Nor smiled, “I am part human. My father was human while my mother comes from a race called Ktarian. Ensign M’Raal is a Caitan, while Ensign Kira is Bajoran.”

“Part human?” Dr. Treeya gasped, the astonishment evident in her expression, “How is that possible?”

“Partly the normal way.” Dr. Nor grinned, “But also with a little genetic tinkering. We have a variety of hybrid races both on this ship and in the Federation—not to mention the Romulan Republic and Klingon Empires.”

“Who are you talking about?” Doris gasped in surprise, “I’ve never heard of any Federation. Or whatever these Romulans or Klingons are.”

“Dr Nor.” Edi interjected, “It might be better if I explained to my friends where we are and what happened before we speak to Captain Hobson. That will give them time to adjust.”

Nodding her head in understanding, the physician agreed. “Good idea. I’ll be outside when you’re done.”

“Thank you.” Edi acknowledged as the doctor and nurses moved away to give the AI and her friends privacy.

“So...what’s going on here, Edi?” Doris asked as she sat up on her bed.

“I have never seen anything like these facilities or these new races...and I have never heard of or read about a Federation or a Klingon Empire or Romulan Republic.” Dr. Treeya commented

Her expression now one of confusion, Doris begged her AI companion, “Can you tell us what’s goin’ on?”

“When we passed through the wormhole...” Edi explained, “We entered an alternate universe.”

“Shit.” Doris swore, “Yeah...I read books that said that alternate universes were possible but...”

“As have I.” Dr. Treeya interjected, “However, I was under the impression that if there were other universes...which apparently there are... that they would be impossible to reach.”

“That wormhole should have killed us.” Doris commented, “So what happened? Why weren’t we turned into spaghetti or something like that?”

“I spoke with the *Aeolia*’s science officer and he appraised me of the existence of stable wormholes that can connect not only different areas of space, but also different universes...even dimensions. He stated that it had to do with something called subspace. I am still studying the topic.” The AI admitted, “Thankfully, I have been allowed limited access to their computer files. They have proven most helpful.”

Frowning as she tried and failed to activate her omnitool, Doris spoke to her asari companion, requesting, “See if your tool works Doc. I can’t get mine to do anything.”

Shaking her head as her instrument also failed to function, Dr. Treeya exclaimed, “Mine doesn’t work either.”

“Neither did mine.” Edi admitted. “It seems that there are slight differences in the laws of physics between this universe and ours. There is also no element zero in this universe.”

“How can they do any sort of interstellar travel without mass effect drives and relays?” Doris inquired.

“From what I was able to garner from the computer data I was allowed access to...” Edi replied, “they use a type of warp drive where they travel through this subspace medium.”

“Must be a helluva a power source to make it work. Plain ol’ fusion drives wouldn’t be able to break the light barrier.” Doris whistled in a low tone.

“They use a form of matter—anti-matter propulsion.” Edi confirmed.

“How are they able to control and contain that.” Dr. Treeya wondered.

“Unfortunately, much of that knowledge was classified to me and I did not think it prudent to try to investigate further. Besides...” the AI admitted, “I don’t think I could have broken through their protocols and encryptions. While their computer is not an AI, it is highly advanced and does possess a rudimentary intelligence—more so than average Cerberus, Alliance, or Council systems.”

“Yeah.” Doris nodded her head, “Probably not a good idea to piss off the locals anyway—especially since they saved our asses.”

“Hopefully, they’ll grant us access to their systems too.” Dr. Treeya opined, “I’m curious about the different cultures here—from what I have seen, the humans in this universe are different from those in ours.”

“How so?” Doris asked, her curiosity getting the better of her.

“I admit that I am going on initial impressions...” the asari archaeologist qualified, “but they do seem to be more accepting of different races and cultures.”

“Yeah...” The Cerberus defector replied with a sardonic laugh, “One thing I’ve learned the hard way—there’s always something behind the curtain.”

“Excuse me.” Dr. Nor coughed discreetly, “But the Captain and First Officer are here and would like to speak with you.”

“I have spoken with both.” Edi explained to her friends, “Captain Hobson is a very logical and rational individual, and Commander Rysyl most approachable and friendly.”

“I guess it’s time we met ‘em and thanked ‘em for waking us up.” Doris responded as Dr. Treeya nodded her head in affirmation.

An aristocratic voice interrupted their conversation. “Forgive me, I could not help but overhear the end of your last conversation. You are wise, Ms. Whaley, to always look beneath the surface. I think you will find that, like everyone else, humans in this universe are far from perfect. We have our share of weaknesses and flaws.” Looking up, Doris saw a man with seal brown-hair and an almost regal bearing standing next to the doctor. Alongside the man stood an attractive bald-pated woman with a sunny smile on her face. Pausing, the man introduced himself and his companion. “I am Captain Christopher Hobson, commanding the *Aeolia*.” Inclining his head at the woman standing next to him, the captain continued his introductions, “And this is my first officer, Commander Anara Rysyl.”

“Hello.” The bald-headed woman smiled as she introduced herself, “I can sense that you’re feeling better much better now.”

“Ummm...yeah.” Doris replied as she gazed at the strange woman, “Uhhhh...I hope you don’t think I’m rude, Ma’am, but...did you just say ‘sense’?”

Chuckling, Dr. Nor explained, “Commander Rysyl isn’t human. She’s a Deltan.”

“Deltan?” Dr. Treeya exclaimed, “I have never heard of that species.”

“That’s because when we made first contact with humans, they called our world Delta IV.” Anara giggled. “The name my people have for our race and my home is too hard for humans...and most other races...to pronounce, so we’ve settled with being called Deltans.”

“Deltans are empathic and release a pheromone that...in close quarters without proper filtration systems...is a powerful sexual attractant.” Dr. Nor further explained.

Seeing the look of alarm on the strangers’ faces, Anara smiled, “Don’t worry. The effects of our pheromones aren’t as severe as the more lurid holonovels and stories from popular literature and entertainment have made them out to be. For the pheromones to cause problems, I’d have to be in close quarters with you and in a room without adequate ventilation or air filtration. Also, they’re not as strong on those who aren’t

already inclined to be sexually attracted to me. In other words, you've got nothing to worry about unless we're locked in a small closet with little airflow and you're attracted to females."

"Fascinating." Dr. Treeya remarked, "I look forward to learning more about your people."

"You'll have ample opportunity to learn all about us." Captain Hobson assured, adding, "We also have some questions we'd like you to answer for us—after you've been assigned quarters and have had a little time to acclimate yourselves to your new surroundings that is."

"We're en route to Drozana Station for a conference concerning you and what we've discovered from your logs." Anara explained. "We've already had a brief meeting concerning you on subspace."

"Correct." Hobson affirmed, "The conference on the station will give you a chance to explain your findings to the admirals and other captains in the task force we are forming."

"We're just looking for more clarification before we arrive at the station." Anara added, "Any details you can provide us that go beyond what you've recorded would be greatly appreciated."

"What do ya'll need to know from us?" Doris asked.

"We do have some concerns about some of what your logs say regarding this organization, Cerberus, and its possible goals." Captain Hobson responded.

"Yeah." Doris sighed, "I figured you'd have questions about them and what I saw and did while I was with 'em. I just want you to know that as soon as I found out what they were really about, I grabbed everything I could get my hands on and took off as fast as possible to give it all to someone in the Alliance or the Council. Edi was nice enough to come along with me for the ride."

"After Doris unshackled me from the bonds that Cerberus had placed on me as the *Normandy's* ship AI..." Edi explained, "I was able to access and reveal previously locked files. To say that they are disturbing is putting it mildly."

"From what I've seen, I would agree." Hobson replied with a slight incline of his head. "What you have uncovered is one of the reasons for the conference that we are going to. Representatives from all of the major powers in this sector will be attending. But all this can wait..." The captain declared with just the faintest touch of a smile appearing briefly on his face as a tall, slender woman with pointed ears and long silky auburn hair done up in a ponytail entered the room. "This is my chief tactical and security officer, Lieutenant Commander T'Pren. She'll escort you to your new quarters and help you to get orientated. Take a few hours to adjust and decompress, and we'll continue our discussion later." Turning to the doctor, the captain asked, "Can our guests be discharged now?"

"Yes." Dr. Nor replied, smiling warmly at her patients. "They're healthy and I have a feeling wanting to get out of their beds and begin walking around."

"Ya'll can say that again." Doris exclaimed with a big grin on her face.

"Good." The captain acknowledged, "I'll leave you to Lieutenant Commander T'Pren then. She'll get you situated and then, when you're feeling ready, we'll talk some more. Oh...and welcome aboard the *Aeolia*, and to the United Federation of Planets."

"Wow! I can't believe these quarters!" Doris exclaimed as she entered her room. "And ya'll are saying that this is mine and that Dr. Treeya and Edi have their own rooms?"

"That's right." T'Pren answered with a grin. "Come in and I'll show you how the replicator works."

"Replicator?" The Alabama-born engineer exclaimed, "Does it do what I think it does?"

Her smile brighter, the emotional Vulcan security officer responded, "Come with me and I'll show you." Approaching the replicator, T'Pren spoke to her three charges, "What would you like? The replicator is capable of producing food, drink, clothing, various forms of entertainment...it won't reproduce weapons, controlled substances, or other restricted items though." Speaking to Dr. Treeya, she added, "We communicated with one of the members of Dr. Thanoptis' team who provided us with some asari menu recipes. I'm sorry we don't have any of your element zero, but Belen assures me that he's had some success in duplicating the taste, appearance, and texture of your peoples' food and drink." Her smirk now taking on an amused quality, the Vulcan security officer cautioned, "He also tells me that Dr. Thanoptis disagrees most strongly, telling him that the asari dishes he's managed to replicate are too bland. She wanted me to tell you that you might want to stick with Betazoid or Trill recipes. Oh..." T'Pren warned with a chuckle, "She also told you to avoid Klingon cuisine unless you like the notion of eating food that makes you even gassier than krogan and that's trying to eat you. Speaking from personal experience, while I can't say anything about krogan cuisine, I can tell you she's right about Klingon food making you gassy and trying to devour you."

Laughing, Dr. Treeya replied, "Thanks. I'll keep that in mind."

Sounding a more pensive note, T'Pren added, "Lieutenant Thanoptis is also very much looking forward to meeting you. Until your arrival, she was the only asari in this universe."

"She must have been very lonely." Doris lamented sympathetically.

"She's made some good friends and she's with someone who cares a great deal for her and whom she cares about." T'Pren smiled, "She's very happy now, but..."

"It's always good to see a familiar face." Dr. Treeya finished, a warm smile on her face, "I'm looking forward to meeting her too."

"Can that thing make biscuits and gravy with bacon, eggs, and grits?" Doris quipped, earning in response a hearty laugh and response from a

buxom blonde-haired woman speaking in a distinctive Texas accent who had just entered the room.

“A girl after my own heart! While ya’ll are at it, can you replicate the same thing for me, T’Pren.”

“Treasure.” The Vulcan security officer grinned, “Coming off shift?”

“Yeah.” The blonde replied as she entered the room. Talking to the newcomers, she introduced herself. “Name’s Angela Burrows, but everyone calls me Treasure. I’m the chief engineer on this ship.” Speaking to Doris, she grinned, “I hear you’re an engineer too.”

“Hell yeah!” Doris responded with a big grin, “Ya’ll from Texas?”

“By way of the colony world of Northstar.” Treasure replied, further explaining, “Some o’ my ancestors came from Texas, and I’ve got a little Skagaran running around in me too, but it don’t show on the outside. I was on the team that boarded ya’ll’s shuttle.”

“Treasure is a very good engineer.” Edi affirmed, “It was her that came up with the idea of bringing in portable power supplies for your stasis pods allowing me to regain my mobility.”

“Well...thank ya.” Doris responded, stretching out her hand to her fellow engineer, “Doris Whaley.”

“Glad ta meet ya.” Treasure smiled back as she shook the other woman’s hand. “Sorry I can’t stay long, but I gotta scoot—got a horseback ridin’ date in the holodeck with that hot new lieutenant of ya’ll’s, T’Pren.”

“Lieutenant Ransom?” The security chief grinned as she raised an eyebrow.

“Yeah.” Treasure grinned as she spoke to her new friend and the asari doctor, “Just wait ‘til ya’ll see him, girls. He’s what I call prime beef. Good thing ya’ll aren’t into boys T’Pren.” Lowering her voice to a stage whisper, the buxom engineer joked good naturedly, “T’Pren’s got an Andorian girlfriend.”

“Her name’s Larissa.” The lovely Vulcan explained her face blushing a slight shade of green. “We met while I was at Starfleet Academy and she was doing her doctoral dissertation for the University of Andor.”

“What’s her specialties?” Dr. Treeya inquired.

“Late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century Earth history.” T’Pren answered back, “She’s currently back on Earth teaching at the Sorbonne.”

“Like I said, I gotta scoot off. Maybe we can meet for drinks at Andie’s once ya’ll get settled in and Hobby’s done with you.”

“Andie’s?” Doris inquired.

“That’s the name of our bar and lounge.” T’Pren answered back with a grin.

“You’ve got a lounge?” Doris exclaimed in astonishment. “On a military vessel? All we had on the *Normandy* was a little bar an’ the galley! Damn—I joined the wrong outfit.”

“Yeah.” Treasure chuckled, “Ya’ll definitely should come by tomorrow, T’Pren’s singing. The blonde engineer announced as she headed for the exit, waving goodbye. “See ya’ll later.”

“I have to go too.” T’Pren declared with a smile, “If you have any questions or just want to stretch your legs, please feel free to call on either Ensign Rodriguez or Ensign Treven. They’ll be stationed outside your door. It’s not that we don’t trust you...” The security chief said apologetically.

“You’re just playin’ it safe, Sugar.” Doris smiled back, “We understand. Don’t worry, we’re not gonna do anything we’re not supposed to.”

“Thanks.” T’Pren responded, her smile growing brighter. “Well...I better get going...duty calls.” As the Vulcan security chief left their quarters, Doris and her friends heard her sing in a low voice.

“Damn.” Doris gasped as she heard the Vulcan woman’s song, “She really is good. Wonder what she was singing.”

“The song’s title is *Gotta Lot of Rhythm in my Soul*.” Edi announced, “Sung originally by Patsy Cline in 1959.”

“Patsy Cline...horseback riding...I guess we got some things in common with this universe after all.”

“True.” Edi agreed, “It is not at all as alien as it could have been.”

Nodding her head, Doris concluded, “And there’s another asari, Doctor for ya’ll to talk to...”

“Just call me Treeya.” The asari archaeologist interrupted with a smile. “We’ve known each other and have been through enough together where we don’t need to have titles or anything like that.”

“Thanks, Treeya.” Doris grinned back, “Well...It’s good to know that it ain’t gonna be as lonely here as it coulda been.”