

Better Angels of Our Nature

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Better Angels of Our Nature

by [Hawku](#)

Summary

"I'm actually glad you're present to explain all this, rather than us finding out through story or technical deduction." - Unofficial Literary Challenge 11.3: In the early 25th century, Captain Reynolds of the U.S.S. Hijinx teams up with Captain Iviok of the U.S.S. Jenova to catch the renegade Captain Menrow of the U.S.S. Crucial.

Notes

Author's notes: This was written in May 2015, as part of the Star Trek Online Forums Unofficial Literary Challenge #11, and mashes up three of my latest alt Captains, Menrow, Iviok and Reynolds.

Unofficial Literary Challenge #11: Prompt #3: The unthinkable has happened. Word has reached your captain that a fellow commander in Starfleet/the KDF/the Republic Navy has gone rogue and committed a horrible crime. Perhaps this captain has subjugated an underdeveloped planet and set him/herself up as a god. Perhaps this captain has committed an atrocity against unarmed civilians, or lashed out and destroyed the ships of a former enemy. Regardless, your captain has been ordered to go after this rogue and bring him/her to justice...or failing that, to terminate this renegade's command with extreme prejudice. Write about your captain's hunt for the renegade and what he/she finds.

Unofficial Literary Challenge #11

Better Angels of Our Nature

The *Akira*-class U.S.S. *Hijinx* sat out in deep space, unable to move. Down in Engineering, several crewmembers stared blankly at the drive.

"Damn. Did we learn nothing of warp bubbles from the Wesley Crusher years?" Captain Reynolds gripped the edge of the main console.

Science officer Jolene breathed a sigh of distress. "We learned not to have any more Wesleys, hence the Jake Siskos, and, to a lesser extent, the Echebs."

"Not to mention, the Dividiians are creating these bubbles as neural energy labor camps," Security officer Lane stated. "If we hadn't stumbled upon this one, those poor Kazon murderers would've gotten hurt— or worse, their just desserts."

Suddenly, a voice came through, from the Bridge. "*Bo-Lin to Captain Reynolds.*"

"Here." The Captain tapped her commbadge. "Wait. Your name is Bo-Lin? I thought it was just Bo?"

There was a quick answer: "*When the first Starfleet database patch was released in 2409, I had to re-register my name because there was a three character minimum. Not to mention, this was always my full first name. Not to mention, why don't you know your own crew's names?*"

Reynolds waved it off. "We Betazoids are far too busy reading minds to pick up details on people somehow. Anyway, nice to meet you."

"*I just wanted to let you know the U.S.S. Jenova has arrived and is offering to beam over their experts,*" Bo reported.

Captain Reynolds nodded. "Beam them in."

In a matter of seconds, Captain Iviok and his Chief engineer, Caveat, were transported into the vicinity.

"Madame Reynolds," Iviok opened. "Or, is it just Madame? Or, Mademoiselle?"

Reynolds looked at him. "It's neither? I don't get why people don't know what to call female Captains."

"Well, whatever your title is, my Chief engineer will have this fixed in no time. Not to put your Chief Engineer out of business or anything."

Chief engineer Scion turned from his console. "Are you insinuating a lack of enlightenedness on my part? Them's fight'n words, Mac."

"Don't worry about him," Reynolds turned to Iviok. "He's just going through the most embarrassing relationship break up. As for us, after we bridged the warp bubble, using Wesley's Kosinski Warp calculations, and saved the people inside, our own warp drive stopped working."

Caveat approached the main console. "Ugh. Last time we were caught in one of these, I was applying analgesic cream for weeks. Also, your ship's positioning is offset from the Dividiian warp field by a few trillion microns. Just realign your field's positioning until it lines up, by pressing this button, here, repeatedly." He begins tapping one of the buttons, to start, and Scion approaches to take over. "It may take a few hours, so you'll want someone to make krill-beast sandwiches."

"*Starfleet Command to Captain Reynolds,*" a screen nearby suddenly clicked on, interrupting. The speaker appeared to be Admiral Herthel.

Both Captain's walked over. Reynolds addressed him, first. "Admiral? Aren't you supposed to be at Starfleet Academy??"

"Quinn and I are going out to lunch. I'm at his desk while he's dealing with some time travel loiter outside his office, before we go. In the meantime, there has been a devastating report of the U.S.S. Crucial attacking and destroying several Starfleet science ships in the Vandor system. Since you're the closest vessel, I'm proxy-ordering you to track down Menrow so he can pay for his inexplicable crimes."

Reynolds raised an eyebrow. "After all the trickery you've put me through? I refuse to take your orders! Last week, you had me tracking Fek'lhri, who are clearly just figments of Klingons' imaginations."

"Also," Iviok's Andorian antennae twitched, "Reynolds is indisposed with her ship at the moment. That being said, and hence forth, and other extra words, shall I take over?"

Herthel looked at him in realization. *"Agh. Your ship is a Tier 1, isn't it? Well. You can try, I guess. You'll probably die, infinity. Seriously, how are you alive? Fine. Might as well get what we can get since the Enterprise is out, right now, grinding for experience points. —Damn! I have to get going. It looks like Quinn and Crey are getting into an awkward slap fight. —Reynolds, I still expect you to catch me a Fek'lhri. Ferra wants to breed them for DOFF assignments."*

Later, Captain Iviok entered the Bridge of the *Centaur*-class, U.S.S. *Jenova*. He took a seat just as the ship sped through warp for the Vandor system.

"Ah, yes. Back out into open space. It's the cry of the space fairies that each of us Captains must answer, with glee," Iviok narrated.

Reynolds stepped into his field of vision. "You mean the Calamarain? They're more like space fireflies, who can lift a man if they wanted."

"Yeah, them. —Wait. What are you doing here??"

She then took a position, standing next to him. "You may have seen me in a state of refusal earlier, but that was just in taking orders from Herthel. This was still supposed to be my mission. Ever since the *Phoenix-X* was taken out by that Calibus VII virus and the cancellation of LC's— that's what I call the Life-support Canisters in their environmental systems— we've been getting lucky with mission queues, and I refuse to waste this one on my ship being inert."

"Captain Seifer's still alive, though, right?" Iviok asked, confused. "I mean, it's not like he's actually dead now?"

Reynolds just shrugged.

Before they could continue, the *Jenova* was knocked out of warp, just as they approached Vandor IV. The Orion corvette, *Hakkett*, dropped out in to normal space, with them, and opened fire.

"Federation starship. The Orion Syndicate has taken full control of this system, as your kind was quick to abandon it," a large, Orion male, named Ginyo, blinked on screen.

Iviok stood up. "It's only been inhabited by Federation citizens for, like, 59 years, is all."

"Yes, but the last 10 of those years were under a shared Syndicate operation, in much the same way your precious Deep Space 9 was awkwardly intermixed with the skin-toned, pajama-uniformed Bajoran Militia. Only, the advantage with our joined service was the money we could offer for illegal materials. That, and the slave girls."

Reynolds snapped her fingers. "Of course! This was the site where Doctor Paul Manheim caused a rip in dimensional space-time— thus

stunningly causing a turbolift, carrying Picard, Riker and Data, on the *Enterprise-D*, to appear right next to itself."

"And he would have gotten away with it too, if it weren't for that meddling Android! I think. I really didn't know any of them. The people running his project just got desperate. Let's just say Manheim's son was leading it. Right? That makes it more dramatic? Ah, I should've been a fan fiction writer. That was my calling."

Captain Iviok pointed at the view screen. "How dare his legendary legacy be sullied in this dark and trendy way? You'll pay for what you've explained!"

"Don't you mean you want to negotiate a cease fire, so you can investigate what the U.S.S. *Crucial* did to your own people, and where it went?"

The Andorian dropped his pointing finger. "Huh? Oh, yeah. That."

"Well, said gesture is not in our nature. Clearly! Plus, some other things. Now, defend yourself!"

The screen clicked off and the *Hakkett* re-opened fire, blasting photon torpedoes on to the *Jenova's* forward shields. The *Jenova* responded by veering off into a rotating attack pattern, returning with quantum torpedoes and phasers. After several minutes of exchange fire, Reynolds stepped away from her position.

"What is this? Are we back at the beginning of the game? Never mind. I'm taking a team down to Manheim's lab to see what I can find out," Reynolds said.

Iviok turned to her. "Why don't you just wait until we're done here?"

"Are you kidding me?? This ship is like a Pakled in Future Guy's shadowy drug chamber! I'm being specist, but, the point I'm trying to make here is, basically, you're never going to be done."

At that, she left the Bridge and Iviok turned his attention to his Klingon first officer, Melyot, as three Orion interceptors approached.

The *Jenova* was then taken down, closer to the rocky, barren and uneven planet while *Caveat* expertly beamed two transporter rooms of Starfleet officers out through shield cycles.

Reynolds and her team rematerialized into a hallway, next to the lab, where several muscle bound Orion operators were surveying open consoles and lifting large crates around.

"So, my mother is about ready to retire from the Orion slave business. Ah, the career she's had. I am truly proud," one of them said while carrying a case.

His co-worker nodded. "She really was the best. I've actually seen her work in action. Several times and up close, in fact. She certainly did thrust herself in to her profession. Yes, she was a very good office manager." At that, the group suddenly took notice of Starfleet's presence.

A hell storm of weapons fire erupted from both sides, both taking positions behind dead crates, as Reynolds noticed Iviok was right next to her with his own team.

"You abandoned your ship in mid-fight??" Reynolds exclaimed in shock, while continuing firing her phaser in rhythm with the enemy. "This, I'd expect from emotion-chip-Data, maybe even alternate-reality-Kirk; but you, the Andorian everyman who is also a Captain?"

As men from both sides were taken out, Iviok phasered the open console, blowing the rest of the Orions away in a messy, debris-spattering explosion. "I trust my crew, Captain; I don't trust you." The two stood up. "This mind reading ability you have gives you too much power. It's made you over-confident, and who knows what else? What other kinds shenanigans are you really into? 22nd century Vulcan fury? Delta Quadrant magic MacGuffins? British Kahns?"

"All of those things, if I wanted to kill our franchise universe!" she confronted, emoting on a completely separate issue, just moments before realizing they were the only two left. "Damn. That's ominous and post-apocalyptic."

The two entered the lab, and began examining the equipment. Display screens listed data on wormhole activity, rather than dimensional doorways, and just below a console, blended with the room debris, was an injured Damar Kahn, chained to the wall.

"Uggh. You guys made it. As you can see, the team, here, has been focusing on something completely different." The Trill coughed out dust and his shoulder was pierced with a duranium rod: debris from the explosion across the lab doorway.

Iviok and Reynolds ran over, immediately. "We have to get you to the *Jenova!* Your Trill symbiont is in danger!"

"I'll be fine. I'm buffering the EMH as we speak. He sure does have an alternate Spock vibe to him. He was knocked temporarily offline when you blew that console. Not to mention, I made out with Jadzia Dax once, so, pretty much anything that happens to me pales in importance."

Iviok nodded. "Well, he's right about that."

"So, you survived the *Crucial's* attacks and the Orions kept you to finish the work here?" Reynolds surmised by mind reading.

Damar Kahn sighed in self-contained frustration. "Ah, a telepath. That makes things easier, and by easier, I mean, annoying. Yes, I was touring several research facilities when this one was hit. The team, here, was grandfathering Manheim's dimensional equipment to, in a sense, catch wormholes; more specifically, the Barzan wormhole."

"I'm actually glad you're present to explain all this, rather than us finding out through story or technical deduction," Iviok admitted.

The Trill shook his head. "Yes, yes, I'm clearly a mechanism. Now, back to the research: You see, after catching one of its ends, we gained control of the Barzan wormhole— insane, over-the-top control— so much so, that we've enabled use of the dimensional portal as an entry point."

"So, what went wrong?" Reynolds asked. "I mean, tell Iviok. I already know."

Damar Kahn breathed. "Menrow, from the *Crucial*, forced us all to open the wormhole in space, right here, so that he could take his ship through. I don't know why, or what his motivations were, but his actions freed up the area for Orion raiders. Wherever they went, you'll find them by going through this space-time rift." He reached over to a wired remote control and turned a knob, activating the in-room portal: a reflective, crystalline mesh of flat rectangular surfaces, shifting into each other. "Manheim's portal turns Barzan into a person-sized-wormhole."

"You'd expect it'd be voice command, as everything is in this century," Iviok observed.

Reynolds turned. "You're thinking of the last century, the one with the computer search engine that processes like it's from 1987."

"What? Are you two doing a thing? Never mind. You'd better go through, now, as the person-sized-wormhole can only hold for a few minutes at a time, and before more Orion's get here. And don't bother trying to contact your ship. The Syndicate installs Ferengi thought makers everywhere they occupy. They prevent intruders from wanting to call for help."

Iviok stood up in realization. "Hey. He's right?? Well, I suppose we have no choice."

"Right. It's time to put Menrow down. That sultry, sexy-looking man who sleeps around with any alien he comes across," Reynolds stood up as well, and the two of them stepped through the portal.

Moments later, the two emerged out a similar-looking portal on the sunny side of a planet, somewhere in the Delta Quadrant.

"Seriously," Reynolds continued. "We may have to infiltrate his operation and I might have to get close to the enemy— for the good of the mission."

Iviok looked at her. "I guess? Also, it's nice that the wormhole transferred atmosphere and that we didn't just walk out into cold space, for, you see, Captain Menrow is going to have to pay for what he's done. Killing others is inexcusable."

"What about all the thousands of ships and crews we destroy, daily, on system patrols and seasonal story missions?"

The Andorian nodded. "I figured you were going to mention those, and I've prepared a thoroughly thought-out, perfectly articulate, message board-esque answer which more than justifies those actions, and, in fact, calls for even more murderings. And that answer is— **BY THE RIP-TORN SHIRTS OF KIRK???** Look at that!"

He pointed, interrupting himself, at a giant industrial building, feeding smoke into the atmosphere, sitting at the head of a stone-built, ancient-looking city center. Entering the city and busy town square, the two were approached by a raggedly dressed, colourful-robed man.

"Hello, Great Advocates. What an honor it is to run in to you. My name is Mard and I'd like to submit a Takar business opportunity passage, if that would be okay with you?"

The man put his hands together, with glee, and prepared to recite his rhythmic legal epic:

"As you may know, our sorrows grow;
We share them high, we share them low.
But what say you, is how we deal?
Why, a drinker's bar: to help us heal!

"An establishment of class, and one of glee;
For upper state commoners, like you, like me.
Stories shared, stories bared, stories might, be all night;
Like when I slept with my cousin, and it felt, just all right.

"Money made, money earned, money gained, you'll see;
We'll start a thing called tipping; 30%; all three!
For shares are our goals; a cut of the pricing;
Together we'll gouge and have all the icing!"

Reynolds looked to the side, in sudden distraction. Her senses all ready; all ready for action. "A planet with a town, a village called Takar? This scenario, the chances, they aren't really that far."

"Wait. What? Are you rhyming? Please don't set a precedent. Please?" Iviok begged.

The Betazoid shook her head out of it. "Sorry. I mean: this is the Takarian home world. They were a Bronze Age civilization, last encountered in 2373, by that ship-that-shall-not-be-mentioned, operating under rhythmic, religious overtones."

"Oh. Actually, this seems like a great opportunity to comment on religion as a base structure for developing societies, and ask questions like, is it necessary? Would a non-religious-based society even get off the ground?" Iviok queried, just seconds before Reynolds slapped him across the face.

The Betazoid snapped. "There's no time for that! It's clear, by the Starfleet guards throughout the entire town, that Menrow has enslaved this civilization in the name of these Great Advocates."

"Owe," Iviok rubbed his cheek. "You do know blue skin is sensitive to warm hands?"

But it was too late. Both Iviok and Reynolds found themselves surrounded by Starfleet crewmembers from the *Crucial*, aiming phasers at the two trespassers. Mard was sadly escorted away.

"You pit-i-ful Humans! You think you can just waltz on in and disrupt an operation that was ours to begin with?" Menrow said, walking down a large stone entrance-staircase for the industrial plant.

Iviok looked at him. "Clearly, neither of us are Human. And, just because you are accustomed to 'conquering' females, does not mean you should amplify that to entire cultures. Yes, it's a natural progression, but we have to fight those obvious urges."

"Just the culture ones, though," Reynolds clarified. "The other ones are okay. Menrow? Shall you and I meet in private to 'discuss' things?"

Menrow shook his head. "This is more than taking over the Takarians. This is taking over the Takarians for profit! If you add Rule of Acquisition #10, greed is eternal, to Rule of Acquisition #52, never ask when you can take— You get Rule of Acquisition #62, the riskier the road, the greater the profit."

"Wait. Rules of stuff? You're not Menrow and his crew?? You're all Ferengi?? That, or Androids," Reynolds accused and stated all at once.

Menrow approached them. "The name's DiaMon Cide. My crew and I found ourselves in the most gracious of luck, one day, when our minds were somehow switched with Menrow's crew. We were no longer on my *D'Kora*-class ship, the *Jade Fox*, but, rather, some *Intrepid*-class U.S.S. *Crucial*. Searching its database for opportunity, we discovered the Vandor IV labs."

"Oh, good. You're explaining everything too. Really appreciate that, by the way," Iviok nodded to him, honestly.

Reynolds' eyes widened at Menrow/Cide's revelations. "Then you must have a deal with the Orions where they maintain the Barzan wormhole from Manheim's lab?"

"Exactly! The resources we strip from this world will go to Ferengi and Orion operations all throughout the Alpha Quadrant, thanks to the Syndicate. You see, I purchased the rights to this planet from Arridor and Kol, the first Sages in Takarian prophecy. As we did more opportunity data mining— the spoken kind, in this case— More epics of their history became clear to us: Specifically, the Song of the Advocates, who were prophesied to establish a Takarian economy!"

Reynolds cursed at his selfish, society-improving treachery. "You bastard!"

"Seriously, we just invented electricity for them, like, two days ago."

Iviok turned to his partner. "Why'd we go from an *Enterprise-D* thing to a *Voyager* thing? That seems backwards to me."

"By the southern twang of mind-altered Leonard McCoy! We have to stop this rehash of a shoddy series of events before we become just as cheap and sub-par, ourselves," Reynolds realized.

Menrow laughed. "Good luck! There is, in fact, a counter prophecy, but we've installed thought maker devices all over town to prevent telepaths from reading our now-vulnerable minds!" He then realized: "An odd and random precaution, I admit. Even odder that I would concede to the counter prophecy."

"Of course!" Iviok realized, taking out his tricorder. "Ferengi thought makers are mere imitations from some race we haven't met yet, or Iconians, and, as copies, are therefore cheap and faulty. They're even preventing Menrow's crew from shooting us."

Trying to fire his weapon, Menrow/Cide was hit with a clench of physical constipation. Iviok quickly hacked into the devices and allowed Reynolds the will to read Menrow's mind.

"Amazing! I never thought I could read a Ferengi mind. Profit and greed are a way of life for you, isn't it?" Reynolds perceived in a very EMH Mark I way.

Iviok turned to her. "What? We already knew that."

"Oh," she snapped out of it. "I mean, there is hear-tell of a future group of Holy ones called the Holy Dissidents. Songs, ever so lengthy, go on about their role to slow economical growth before it destroys all of Takarian kind."

As her words rang true, Takarian men and women from the square began to pick up on it.

"We could be these Holy Dissidents, here to temper progress, and stop possible threats like carbon emissions from expediting global warming effects! And we could stop the Internet from becoming over-saturated with horrible comments sections!" Reynolds called out so that all could hear.

Menrow furrowed his brow. "Again. We literally just invented indoor plumbing yesterday."

"Holy Dissidents! Stop our progress!" But it was too late. The accumulated crowd had finally found the courage and strength of the next part of the one of their many, many prophecies. *"Holy Dissidents! Stop our progress!"*

Captain Menrow/Cide dropped his weapon out of realized defeat. "Damn it. Once you get them going, you literally can't stop them. And this was supposed to be my salvation after losing my job at Slug-o-Cola!"

Iviok celebrated. "Hah! We stopped those shoddy series of events— kind of. Either that, or we played in to them."

"Captain Iviok, I misjudged you as some kind of Starfleet-abandoning-invalid. But the truth is, your piece of junk starship has made you an innovative, courageous engineer," Reynolds confessed.

The Andorian sighed in relief. "And your mind reading over-confidence was instrumental in mental data mining, which, I'm sure, a less confident telepath would have messed up from emotional panic."

"Yeah. Definitely," Reynolds agreed. "But what about the crew of the U.S.S. *Crucial*? Where'd their minds go??"

Suddenly, another man faded in, next to them, in a striping band-like effect. "I'll field that field-worthy question," he said. "You see, my name is Wayfar, and I'm a Traveler. My powers include altering space and time, and I have a history with mind switching Captain Menrow and his crew. I once sent them to the 28th century, don't cha know."

"Ahh! He's grey like a giant bug!" Iviok over-reacted. "I mean— go on."

Wayfar continued. "My job was to transport the real Sages and Advocate aliens of the Takarian home world into corporeal form, but, due to the fact I'm horrible at my job, I accidentally sent the non-corporeal Sages into a crew of corporeal Ferengi. And, due to my past mind-transfers with Menrow, I mix-displaced that Ferengi crew into the occupants of the U.S.S. *Crucial*."

"So, what happened to the crew of the *Crucial*? Are they non-corporeal now??" Reynolds asked.

The Traveler was caught off guard. "What? Oh, sorry. My mind wanders. The answer to your question is yes." He then rolled up his sleeves. "But I can fix things now, for I was otherwise preoccupied with Traveler paper work. You have no idea the forms we're expected to fill. Like, actual paper and pen forms."

At that, he concentrated, hard, and caused himself and the Starfleet officers from the *Crucial*, all over the city, to fade in and out in sliding bands. Moments later, the crew of the *Crucial* was returned to their bodies.

"What... what happened? We were floating energies??" Menrow reacted in pure shock. He then double-checked his body parts, top and below. "Oh, thank the Vice Admirals, everything is back!"

Reynolds' eyebrows went up.

"My fault, Captain." Wayfar turned to Menrow. "I shouldn't have tried to switch minds during that *Intrepid*-class celebration in your Messhall. I didn't think you'd serve real green drink??"

Menrow nodded. "Yeah, that's the non-synthetic stuff. Since we're expected to have as many pointless parties as *Voyager* had, we go for the hard stuff. Also, since I was in a non-corporeal form, I already knew what you did. But that doesn't make me any less disappointed in you-- As is the nature of our working relationship with each other."

"So the Sages are real, huh? Are they okay? Their plans never went through?" Iviok commented.

Wayfar held up his hands. "Whoa! To redo any of that will take days and days of Traveler administration. So, I'll try again next week."

"On the plus side, we've finally tamed the Barzan wormhole," Reynolds observed. "The downside being the Orion Syndicate owns it and will use it to go all over the place."

Iviok nodded. "At least we saved this world from Ferengi conquest, despite that being something that happens to them a lot. Not to mention, Cide seems to have gotten away with mass murder."

"Forget all those trivialities! All that matters is that we're okay now, thanks to you two," Menrow offered in the direction of Iviok and

Reynolds. "The lesson, here, being, there's nothing Starfleet Captain's can't accomplish when working as a team."

It was at that moment the group noticed that the townspeople had been building wooden logs all around them the whole time. In the next moment, it was lit on fire.

"Holy Dissidents! Stop our progress! Stop our progress!"

Reynolds looked around. "What the hell? Sending us to the sky on 'wings of fire' isn't even part of this specific prophecy??"

"No, that's... That's just a thing they do," Wayfar reassured. "Well, it seems your ship's transporters are being blocked, so, good luck with everything." And he disappeared in the same *Enterprise-D* era banding energies he rode in on, leaving the three Captains to their demise.

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