

Winter Wonderland Celebrations (II)

Posted originally on the [Ad Astra :: Star Trek Fanfiction Archive](http://www.adastrafanfic.com/works/553) at <http://www.adastrafanfic.com/works/553>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	Gen
Fandom:	Star Trek: Phoenix-X
Character:	Michael McCary , Yuffie Samya
Additional Tags:	Holidays
Language:	English
Series:	Part 26 of STO Phoenix Compendium
Stats:	Published: 2015-12-26 Words: 1,528 Chapters: 1/1

Winter Wonderland Celebrations (II)

by [Hawku](#)

Summary

"You could say it was bound to happen, considering the commercially avaricious nature of the holiday season." - Unofficial Literary Challenge 18: In the early 25th century, while visiting Earth Spacedock and Q's Winter Wonderland, Captains McCary and Samya discover Gingerbread men infected with the Calibus VII virus.

Notes

Author's notes: This was written in December 2015, as part of the Star Trek Online Forums Unofficial Literary Challenge #18, which was a holiday repost of Literary Challenge #69, both based on the in-game event of the same name. This revisits the concept of the Winter Wonderland last visited by Captains Seifer, Menchez and Aeris in ULC 69, and carries on from events in LC 68: STO Halloween, Parts I, II & III and Seifer's most recent Captain's log.

Unofficial Literary Challenge #18: Prompt #1: The ancient tradition of Terran Winter Celebrations is such a festive and playful time in STO! Q is back and he brings us more Winter fun this year, with new snowmen, new weapons, new ships and more. This month's challenge is to write your own crews story centered around the event and festivities of the Terran winter season. But don't stop at Earth! You can tell us stories about any cultural celebrations from across the Star Trek universe. Perhaps the Andorians have tales of mysterious Vulcans who sneak into their homes at night and replace their toys with logic puzzles. Perhaps the Bajorans have a winter tradition that they hold dear involving incense and an Orb of Jolly. Maybe the Borg Queen is all alone on New Years and just longs for the day some dashing Android will meet her under the mistletoe and help her kill all humans. Or maybe your crew discovers a planet of elves who are ruled by a fanatical toy maker with a thirst for egg nog. Let your imaginations fly this month, and add your own twists of Trek Holiday Lore to the universe!

Unofficial Literary Challenge #18

"Winter Wonderland Celebrations (II)"

The *Steamrunner*-class U.S.S. *Tsunami* bobbed and weaved its way through a smorgasbord of festive-colored ships parked near Earth Spacedock. McCary beamed onto the transporter pad aboard Deck 47.

"Joy of the season, Captain!" an Adult Jackal Mastiff approached him and said. "Oh, I'm Captain Terry of the U.S.S. *Kitana*. You see, I challenged Q-Junior's claim on his power— a claim that's obviously disputable considering he was once trapped on the U.S.S. *Voyager*— and then he transformed me into this beautifully grotesque thing. Isn't it wonderful??"

McCary squinted, unconvinced. "What? Aren't you on duty?"

"Hehehe!" Terry ran off, excitedly.

The main concourse was full of creatures, strange and mystical. Stepping passed two Large Talarian Hook Spiders, a War Targ and an Enslaved Hordling, McCary was stopped before a green Gingerbread Andorian eating into a struggling Gingerbread Klingon's side.

"Ugh! Andorians aren't cannibals??" McCary recoiled.

When the misty-eyed Gingerbread Andorian took notice of McCary's witness, he ran off in an animalistic gruff. The Gingerbread Klingon

huffed and heaved for a few seconds before passing out all together.

"He must've been a left-over Winter Wonderland pet from when that bunch of Klingons were able to beam onto Spacedock," Captain Samya observed, approaching from the left.

McCary took notice of her. "Oh, Captain Samya? I didn't think you'd still have your Starfleet commission after that space-transport incident."

"Those children deserved to burn to death in plasma!" And then, realizing, "Did I mention they were Undine? Perhaps I should mention that more often."

McCary took out his tricoder. "I was okay with the first part. Anyway, why would an Andorian-version cookie, normally peaceful, turn on its own baked-kind?"

"If my Science officer, Mika, were here, she'd say they were delicious and unavoidable by every holiday measure. Thankfully, Bridge officers aren't allowed on Spacedock."

The quarter-Klingon Captain read off his device. "I'm still reading the Gingerbread Andorian. He's emitting some kind of energy wave distortion."

"Can you be more specific?"

McCary showed her the tricorder. "No, it actually says 'some kind of' on this thing."

"*WRAGH!*" In the next second, in the distance, Captain Terry, now morphed into a maddening and drooling Warrigul, pounced and hungrily decimated the off-base walking cookie before realizing what he did. "Oh no! I can't be full for my Fastest Game on Ice grind??"

Samya turned to McCary as the Starfleet Warrigul ran off in fear. "Those pets originate from that incessant Wonderland. Perhaps we'll find more information there?"

"Very well." McCary nodded while pulling out his phaser. "If you see any epohh 'friends', shoot them on site. Don't even hesitate."

Flashing into the joyous Q's Winter Wonderland, onto the blue, semi-transparent gazebo, McCary and Samya were suddenly hit with the pungent aroma of candy canes and lollipops.

"Ugh! This place is utterly repulsive," McCary partially blocked his eyes as they adjusted to the light.

Samya nodded, in-process assimilating herself. "I wish I was dead."

"You've been here five seconds and you're already bringing down the place," came Captain Terry's comment of disapproval as he approached in Devidian Visitor form.

McCary jumped back in mild shock. "Whoa! Maybe warn us before you do that?"

"I'm embracing the season, which would do you two obvious-trauma-hordes good if you even tried," he replied, floating passed them toward the Breen Race Coordinator.

Samya turned to McCary. "Should we?"

"Hell no," he replied, studying his tricorder. "Hold on. I'm getting some kind of echo-based residual wave reading."

She crossed her arms, annoyed. "Would you please stop with the 'some kind ofs'? I once executed my Operations officer for that." And then, "Oh, he turned out to be a Changeling."

Making their way into a forgotten forested area, next to a stone mountain, McCary was suddenly attacked by two wild-eyed generic Gingerbread men.

"YYaarrghh!" Like rabid animals, they leapt onto his shoulder and arm and attempted biting into him, hungrily.

McCary threw one off him and Samya crushed the head off the other. "Sickening," McCary commented as the cookie head debris of the remaining breadman crumbled off his arm. "What happened to their holiday cheer?"

"Spent on that." Samya pointed to a field of half-eaten, partially aware, moaning Gingerbread men and women.

They were all groggily reaching out for each other in cannibalistic hunger. "Candddyyyy brainnsss..."

"Chocolate innardddd..." another moaned, hungrily.

Captain McCary put his tricorder away. "By the ripped-out shirts of high-strung-Kirk! It's like they tore through their nasally-pitched, annoying ice-coated necks out of pure greed?"

"You could say it was bound to happen, considering the commercially avaricious nature of the holiday season, proliferating indulgent tendencies, funded by the Ferengi Commerce Authority."

McCary shook his head. "No one will ever admit to that. It must be something else." He pointed at a glowing point-of-light-portal, perched at the end of the partially alive cookie massacred field.

"I'm reading another pocket universe," Samya reported as she scanned it with her tricorder while the two of them carefully stepped around each halved, grasping Gingerbread man. "It's similar to this one."

McCary kicked a reaching Gingerbread man to pieces as both he and Samya approached a small, hovering, blue spark. "There was a report from the U.S.S. *Phoenix-X* about an imitation Winter Wonderland from a similar Q-like being. There were Borg-puns, Neelix-jabs and everything."

"Yes, that one was made by Qu. He spells his name differently, but it sounds the same. I met him when he turned my crew into singing references. I ended it with Blue Skies," Samya added. "There weren't that many other songs to choose from."

Captain McCary furrowed his brow. "We should put an end to this manufactured fakery right away. The some-kind-of energy wave distorted, echo-residual base readings are more condensed here."

"Alright, you're on a time-out for explaining things."

After McCary reprogrammed his tricorder into sending a feedback pulse at the point of light, the portal opened up and engulfed the two Starfleet officers.

Appearing on the other side, McCary and Samya found themselves surrounded by jungle vines, in a hot and muggy palm tree-filled environment: Qu's Winter Wonderland.

In a dark recess of foliage, before them, was a vine-bound figure, draped in shadow, on his knees, decaying nearly beyond recognition. His uniform was torn.

"Starfleet??" McCary began scanning, in shock. "A Trill?"

Samya pushed a giant, nearby leaf aside, lessening the shadow over the man's face. "Captain Seifer??"

"Uuhh," the decrepit supposedly-young officer groaned in pain. "The light hurts my eyes."

McCary kneeled to his level. "But it's dark? And where have you been this whole time? A bunch of us Captains have been picking up your slack."

"Sorry, I'm having Slamek flashbacks," Seifer admitted. "Indeed," he continued, struggling to speak, "It would seem the Calibus VII virus that got my crew, previously, has been reactivated. I've been living off Gingerbread men for weeks."

Samya checked his flakey forehead temperature. "It's not as bad as you described in past reports?"

"Someone, I don't know who, must've partially reactivated the virus in us, so it's not as effective. My crew and I are in perfect health some days, where we can complete missions, but back to decaying on others." He tried to get up, unsuccessfully. "I booked passage here through a Traveler named Wayfar because I meant to ask Qu for help— Instead, I get maddening games and living jungles."

McCary tilted his head. "Living?" And then, suddenly the foliage all around them began moving, growing and tightening around Captain Seifer.

"Forget about me! I can get out of this. But any help you can provide on who's working that virus would be great—"

The two of them stepped away as the jungle engulfed him and a thick, curling vine accidentally knocked McCary and Samya back toward a point of light.

Both Captain's then found themselves back in the normal Q's Winter Wonderland. The portal that was there previously was now gone.

"Looks like I pushed the energy distortions on this end to the other end," McCary reported from his tricorder. "So, it's a one-way wormhole now."

Samya picked herself up. "You see what uncontrolled effects we get when we work off generalizations? Also, it seems the problem is worse than expected."

"GGrrgghh," came the drooling sounds of infected Gingerbread men, stumbling out of Qu's pocket dimension. More and more Gingerbread zombies began flooding out of thin air, piling on top of each other in partial crumble from jungle moisture.

McCary and Samya ran to a safe distance. "We should probably change Wonderland instances," McCary said. "This one's experiencing some kind of a cohesion loss."

"Well," Samya shrugged. "At least the air isn't full of cotton candy anymore. Missions aside, perhaps we can appreciate this waste of a universe after all, considering what we just experienced."

McCary put his phaser away. "Fast and the Flurrious then? With the prize tags, we may be able to gain access to the epohhs."

"Agreed." Samya nodded as they both left the piling Gingerbread mess. "Perhaps we may pay a visit to that overbearing Talaxian as well. I must learn more about his weaponized leola root stuffing."

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