

## Reverse Metallurgy

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## Reverse Metallurgy

by [Hawku](#)

### Summary

"This pitiful space-crane looks like a head-only Enterprise-D." - Trek BBS 2, October/November 2020 Challenge: In the late 24th century, the crew of the U.S.S. Phoenix-Y debate on what to sacrifice to get their old ship back.

### Notes

Author's notes: This was written in November 2020 as part of the Trek BBS October/November 2020 Challenge. This takes place in the late 24th century. The new ship class is from Star Trek: Lower Decks.

October/November 2020 Challenge: Many stories have been told of deals made with the literal or figurative devil. Agreements arranged to satisfy a heart's desire, to undo a mistake, or to save a loved one. Trades made willingly or under duress, perhaps in desperation, or with the best of intentions... and we all know what's said of good intentions :devil:

Inspired by the celebration at this time of year, your challenge, should you choose to accept it, is to craft such a tale. Regale us with the story of how and why the deal was made, and how those involved dealt with the consequences. Was it worth it? Did they pay the piper, or maybe they tricked the "devil" and got away with it (for now...)? Maybe someone else paid for their arrangement? Original characters only this time, please, and preferably new stories written for the challenge. PM with any questions, otherwise have at it!

### October/November 2020 Challenge

*Paging Dr. Faust: Reverse Metallurgy*

The *California*-class U.S.S. *Phoenix-Y* chugged through transwarp as Commander Seifer, a Trill and the Commanding officer, entered the Bridge trying to suppress his antipathy.

"Ugh. The holodecks on this ship are so dated. Vic Fontaine's is a Café des Artistes where your love interest organizes a revolution against Nazi's. Also, a sentient commbadge tries to eat you?"

Armond, a Human and Tacitcal officer, tapped at his console. "Yeah, and there are a surprising number of Ensigns running around having their own adventures. Why'd we destroy the *Phoenix-X* for this?"

"It was that annoying Kruge/Soran hybrid Kruran who tried to run the transwarp drive through quantum slipstream," Kugo, a Vulcan and the Chief Engineer, recanted. "We ended up crash-landing on an ice world and realizing we all needed seatbelts."

The Commander nodded. "It's unfortunate they were outlawed in the early 2300s after the Gravity Plating Lawsuits. Anyway, I have the exact solution to all this. Remember that Traveler we met who converted several near-destroyed Starfleet ships into completely new classes? Well, he hasn't died from exhaustion yet!"

The crew observed as the ship dropped back into normal space over the large Nausicaan space station Hekacos Social. Wayfar appeared on screen, in the corner of a busy dive-bar, near-completely out of it.

"Oh, another ship wants an upgrade?" Wayfar connected his bloodwine to the table. "For once, how about a stroll through the mystery beaches of Orion? Or, a Vegas casino heist where we all walk really slow in a line?"

Seifer held up a datarod. "Normally, I'd be into all that, but right now I have the complete solid-state scan of our last ship, the *Phoenix-X*, down to the leola root wrappers on every deck. You simply must re-engineer this lower deck stacked saucer-on-sticks back into a *Prometheus*-class for continuity and before we all go insane from the constant Chu-Chu."

"As a band-sifting, space-wielding Traveler with an on-and-off Starfleet commission, you know I can do that. But first, I would ask you to agree to my terms," Wayfar established. "Now hear this! You and your crew will have to give up something significant for this gift. A sacrifice so transformative that it would In the Pale Moonlight you for the rest of your lives."

The Commander watched as Wayfar began to band-shift himself out of there until he was gone. Seconds later, Wayfar band-shifted himself back to grab the wine.

"I'm not in crisis. I just don't like to waste things."

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Later, with Wayfar onboard and the hackey old-style ship in transit, Commander Seifer met with his senior staff in the Conference room.

"All we need to do is sacrifice one huge thing," he began. "So, hands up if that visiting Evora delegation is good to go."

He made a mental note as no one put their hands up, per moral standards of not-ejecting people into space. Kugo changed the target. "Or, we have an excess of T88's in Engineering. They're pretty much blocking access to the warp core, and access to Engineering. Phasering them seems to replicate more."

"Ensign Dan!" Kayl, a Human and the Operations officer, threw out. "He broke all the replicators on Deck 3 building his own personal android child named LOL."

Ensign Dan, a Bajoran and Science officer, turned to her. "Yeah, but she was 47% successful and did everyone's reports for the last mission. Granted, they were filled with early 21st century Direct Message acronyms and vegetable emojis."

"Alright, wait," Seifer held up his hand. "I think we're all going at this way too hard. Just because we're on a ridiculous ship-letter doesn't mean we can't proceed with mindful calibration and non-Romulan-attacky poise."

Lox, an older Human and the Doctor, queried, "Is it really necessary to change us back? Surely moving forward is healthier. Not to mention, a ship is a ship is a ship is a ship."

"This pitiful space-crane looks like a head-only *Enterprise-D*!" Red, a Klingon and the helmsmen, slammed his fists into the table. "Also, is the gagh claw kiosk not working for anyone else?"

Seifer spread his palms across the table. "Look. We all agree this is the only course of action, sans an auto-filled vessel requisition form to Utopia Planitia where no one wants to see Mars still on fire and be reminded of that whole dark-old-Picard thing. It's been 12 years. Is anyone ever going to put that planet out? Anyway, I suggest we all go around the table and give up one personal thing as a collective offering of selflessness to a greater cause: Abandoning privilege for better privilege."

"Fine," Kayl agreed, trading her eyes in accord with each of the other staff. "I'll go first. I'm willing to part with my Tholian silk pillow that was excreted from the High Magistrates themselves. I warn you, it came from their butts."

Armond expressed a moment of hesitation, but proceeded anyway. "There's a secret temporal access code I have from my days with the Starfleet Corps of Engineers. I can see into everyone's future personal logs. Red, you eat one of us several years from now."

"What!?" Red and everyone else was taken aback seconds before the Klingon brushed it off. "Never mind. I will look forward to it. In the meantime, I will contribute my Ferengi tooth sharpener that I definitely did not steal from Worf during that Klingons Serving on Starfleet Vessels Symposium."

Kugo indicated her head to Lox. "The Doctor and I will forego our annual giant tardigrade experimentations to yet another theorized layer of subspace which probably doesn't exist. Probably."

"Uh, I'll give away all the Ready Room desks I stole from Captains throughout the fleet, without any intention of returning them like a bunch of Deep Space 9 kids would," Ensign Dan admitted.

Seifer stood up. "You're relieved! What is going on here? Are you all seriously this terrible? Sure, I have an unhealthy obsession with throwing delegations out of airlocks, but you guys? Butt pillows, time travel logs, cannibalism? You're supposed to be better than me to balance things out?"

"We're flawed too, Commander," Kayl began. "We break replicators, annihilate trans-dimensional holograms and initiate wars between Species 8472 and whoever the recurring alien villains are for us this year."

The Commander paced and then stopped. "I guess I never realized the extent of our collective follies. Maybe it's the *Phoenix-X* that balanced us out? We were atrocious but the ship allowed coexistence because it was so OP. Now our ship is just as dreadful as we are."

"It's not *that* bad. The U.S.S. *Cerritos* was this class and look at how they revolutionized Cardassian dance rituals," Kugo noted. "Also, they

were so snappy with their dialogue. Like, a five-jokes-per-minute thing."

Seifer clenched his fist. "Right. They made it work, so why not us? This is what we were given, and in order to be better than what got us here, we have to move forward like Lox said. It's time for us to act like the real science/military mashups we were supposed to be."

"Well done, Commander," came the slow clap from Wayfar, leaning against the wall nearby. "Your true sacrifice was sacrificing sacrifice itself, the most terrifying self-calibration any man can take! Not pushing the envelope is your pushing-the-envelope."

The Trill recoiled in shock. "Ahh! You were standing there the whole time? That's really creepy, dude."

"Why not? Mirror Georgiou did it every meeting on the *Discovery*," Wayfar countered. "Probably because she didn't have a job. Also, I will now grant you the seemingly impossible type of class refit only a Traveler could concede."

Armond shook his head. "But our thing was to not do that?"

"Well, it's too late! Once you put an idea into a Traveler's head, he never is able to rid it. Why do you think I was drinking earlier? Why do you think that other Traveler wouldn't leave Wesley alone?"

Kugo interjected. "Well, how long is this going to take?"

"Oh, I'm already done," Wayfar admitted.

The crew found themselves suddenly surrounded by *Prometheus*-class interiors aboard their starship re-engineered back as the U.S.S. *Phoenix-X*. Seifer checked the registry on a nearby console. "Holy balding-Organian! The ship is exactly the old one!"

"It's three weeks later," Wayfar explained. "I froze you guys in time as we were talking purely for shock value. Your ship is now reconfigured and reverse-named back to X, like a weird 90s letter fetish. I forged Admiral Cloud's approval and everything. Hope this satisfies your continuity."

Lox crossed his arms. "There's just something remiss about all this. Sure, we're going to try to be better officers, despite the now recaptured temptation of our old ship, but there's no residual sour taste to our sacrifices?"

"Yes, about that. I forgot to mention we're also docked at Utopia Planitia Fleet Yards."

Seifer then activated the wall-screen. "We're what? No!"

"That's right! Behold its absurdity! Muahahaha!" the Traveler began. "MUAHAHAHAHA!!!"

The Commander fell to his knees at his and his crew's shared horrifying witness of Mars still in flames. "Nooo! It makes no sense! How is it still on fire?? Nooooooooooooo!"

And, with that, Wayfar banded himself out of there in laughter to leave Seifer and his crew wallowing in the complete madness of whatever Mars was now.

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