

Chance Encounter

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Summary

On a diplomatic mission, Odan crosses paths with a man she's never met before--
--a man she knows very well.

Notes

Written for a discord challenge -- the host put a cast of TNG characters into a randomizer wheel, and I had to write the two that popped out! I had the option to swap either Odan or Pressman for a character of my choice, but they fit well together.

Odan still wasn't used to using transporters. She let the beam arrest her molecules, a sub-dermal shiver that always left her host unaffected, while she – the symbiont – curled into a ball. It wasn't *really* uncomfortable, she knew; there was plenty of soothing scientific literature out there to assure her that transport beams were painless. But years of avoiding them – decades of carefully preserving the Trill secret from transporter scans – had wormed into Odan's psyche in a way no physical evidence could ever counter.

The beam resolved. She flexed her fingers, subtly testing her body's range of motion, while a Starfleet admiral approached her with a smile. Clear-eyed, balding, trim, he shook her hand–

–and she recognized him at once.

“Odan,” she said with effort, because she'd never met this man before, but she knew the callused rasp of his palm against her skin.

He'd called her names and teased her on the bridge. He'd tested her on shipboard research to see if she'd get flustered, if she'd protest and say it wasn't her department – or if she'd bow her head, flushed red, and let him humiliate her in front of the crew. He'd pulled her into his office a dozen times. He'd accused her of having no sense of humor; he'd urged her to lighten up. He'd praised her, privately, the way she always wished her father would, and he always did it right when she was on the verge of losing her temper, when her resolve had strengthened and she was this close to finding the first officer, to reporting him for–

She'd stood by this man in the middle of a mutiny. She'd protected him with a phaser. She'd shot his first officer – her only real friend on the Pegasus – dead. He'd forced her into the escape pod's pilot seat and he'd slapped her on the head with the blunt side of his phaser when she started to cry, and even then he'd alternated between harsh reprimands and the sweetest praise. To keep her silent. To keep her obedient. To keep his secrets safe.

“Admiral Erik Pressman,” he said with a smile.

“I know,” said Odan, and she faked a smile back – for Will Riker's sake. “We've met.”

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