

Anatomy of a Secret

Posted originally on the [Ad Astra :: Star Trek Fanfiction Archive](http://www.adastrafanfic.com/works/78) at <http://www.adastrafanfic.com/works/78>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	Gen
Fandom:	Alternate Universes (General) , Star Trek: Deep Space Nine
Relationship:	Jadzia Dax & Benjamin Sisko
Character:	Jadzia Dax , Benjamin Sisko , Julian Bashir
Additional Tags:	Worldbuilding , DS9 S02E03: The Siege
Language:	English
Series:	Part 2 of Trill in the Reboot Universe
Stats:	Published: 2020-03-19 Words: 10,944 Chapters: 1/1

Anatomy of a Secret

by [Beatrice Otter](#)

Summary

Old memories are stirred up when a group Trill scientists come the station, led by one Jadzia Dax. Though she claims to be the daughter of Benjamin's old friend, Curzon Dax, she is more than what she seems, and some secrets can't be kept forever.

Notes

Written for shopfront in Worldbuilding Exchange 2020

Thank you so much to TexasDreamer01 for brainstorming help and betaing, this fic could not have been written without them.

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

"You seem a bit more interested in this batch of scientists than you normally are," Nerys observed as she and Commander Sisko walked to the airlock where the Trill team's ship would be docking.

"Why do you say that?" he asked.

"Usually, you send me and Lieutenant Thothih to greet them. Or just Thothih, if it's a busy day."

"As science officer, Thothih *is* usually the best to get them settled, but he's on leave right now," Sisko pointed out.

"Which still doesn't mean *you* have to help with it, unless the research group is a bit more prestigious than you've told me."

Sisko sighed. "No. I'm just ... curious. Curzon Dax was a very good friend of mine, and I miss him a great deal. He never mentioned a Jadzia Dax, and for all I know there's no relation. But, if there is, if she knew him ... perhaps we can get together and reminisce about the old man."

"Was this Curzon a Starfleet officer?" she asked, as they turned the corner and arrived at the airlock the Trill team would be using.

"No, he was a diplomat," Sisko replied. "Not that he was necessarily very diplomatic, all the time. He was brash, loud, impulsive ... and very charming. He was one of the Federation's main ambassadors to the Klingons, they always loved him, if that gives you a picture of him. Curzon taught me about science, about diplomacy, about how people think. He also taught me how to drink, how to handle myself in a bar fight—and how to keep things from turning *into* a bar fight—and how to talk to a woman I was interested in."

"Sounds like an interesting man," Nerys noted.

"That he was, Major," Sisko said.

Before they could say anything else, the airlock opened with a hiss. Three Trill stepped through, and Nerys was surprised at the order they did it in. A young woman, who was about 30 if Trill aging worked the same as Bajoran and Human, was in the lead. Behind her a middle-aged man and woman carried a crate of equipment. Obviously age did not bring seniority, for Trills, because the young woman had only a bag slung over her shoulder and a case in one hand.

"Commander Sisko!" she said brightly, stopping in front of him. "It's so good to finally meet you." She held out her hand, and Sisko shook it.

"You must be Doctor Dax," he said. "I take it you *are* related to Curzon, then?"

Her smile dimmed a little. "Call me Jadzia, please," Dax said. "And yes, Curzon was my father."

Sisko cocked his head in surprise. "He never mentioned he had a child. In fact, he told me once that he *didn't* have children."

"I know," Jadzia said. She turned to the other Trill. "These are my colleagues, Doctor Prohn and Lusin." She gestured at the man and the woman in turn.

"Hello," Nerys said. "I'm Major Kira, the station's first officer. I'll be your liaison until our science officer gets back from leave. Please let me know if you need anything—for example, if you'd like, we can beam any heavy equipment directly to the lab you'll be using."

"Thank you," said Doctor Prohn, "but this is the worst of it, and we can manage. We're not that far from the lab, if I read the station schematic correctly?"

"No, not far," Nerys said, by this time used to scientists who were more interested in seeing their lab than their quarters.

"I'd love to catch up, but we should get settled in, first," Jadzia said. "Maybe this evening?"

"Of course," Sisko said courteously. "I can make my famous jambalaya, and we can talk about your father."

"Great! Then I can meet Jake, too," Jadzia said.

"I guess Curzon told you a lot about me and my family," Sisko said, slightly taken aback.

"You could say that," Jadzia replied. She paused, then reached out and patted him on the arm. "I was so sorry to hear about Jennifer," she said. "I know Curzon would have wished he could be there for you."

"That's ... kind of you to say," Sisko said awkwardly.

Nerys noted that Lusin bristled at the exchange. Nerys didn't know what *her* problem was, but *Nerys* was wondering who the hell this Jadzia was, anyway, and why she felt the need to stir up old wounds in someone she'd never even met before.

"It's the truth," Jadzia said.

"I hate to interrupt, but we should be getting settled in," Lusin said. "Major, if you could direct us to our lab?"

"Yes, of course," Nerys said, gesturing for them to follow her.

"See you tonight, Benjamin!" Jadzia said.

The second the door closed behind the Bajoran officer, Lusin spun to face Jadzia. "Dax, what were you *thinking*," she hissed. "You are straying *perilously* close to revealing us!"

"I did nothing that any other joined Trill in my position would not have done," Jadzia said. "And to an alien who doesn't know about symbionts, 'this person's father told her a lot about his friends' is *far* more believable than 'this Federation member species has been keeping a major secret from the rest of the Federation, and part of my dead friend lives on inside a new body.' Benjamin's smart, but he's not prone to wild flights of fancy or conspiracy theories ... which is what Trills being symbionts would sound like to him." She helped Prohn open the case and begin taking out the equipment within it.

"You're not taking this *seriously* enough," Lusin said. "If the Federation finds out about symbionts—"

"What a tragedy *that* would be," Jadzia said flatly, not bothering to look up at her. "Despite what the Symbiosis Commission believes, the majority of aliens would *not* be interested in having symbionts of their own. There's no danger in telling the truth, and we've known that for a *long* time. Benjamin is one of my closest friends, and I'm not going to pretend he's any more of a stranger than I *absolutely* have to."

"You're not saying you'll reveal yourself to him!"

"No, of course not," Jadzia said.

Prohn was being conspicuously quiet, trying to blend in to the background. He was a good scientist, medically ineligible for joining, neither jealous of nor overly deferential to the Joined, and studiously apolitical. She liked him. Lusin, on the other hand, was barely qualified, and only there because the Symbiosis Commission had insisted on a watchdog if she was going to go so close to an alien who'd been a close friend in a previous life.

"Are you going to help, or are you just going to stand there watching us work?" Jadzia asked. She didn't particularly want to have anyone hovering over her, and the sooner they were done here the sooner she could go have dinner with Benjamin and Jake.

Lusin sat down at one of the computer terminals and began installing the software needed for their experiments.

Once the lab had been set up they found their quarters, and thank everything holy Jadzia didn't have to share with either of them. The close quarters on the ship here had been bad enough. By the time she was unpacked, it was time to head over to Benjamin's. She opened the door of her quarters to find Lusin standing in the corridor waiting for her.

"No," Jadzia said firmly. "You are not invited. Good *night*, Lusin." She marched off towards the turbolift, ignoring the protests behind her.

"Curzon had a *kid*," Jake marveled, not for the first time as he stirred the vegetables in the pot.

"Hardly a kid any longer—she's an accomplished scientist here to study the wormhole," Benjamin said, taking a small taste of the sauce and considering what it needed.

Jake swiped a finger through it and brought it to his mouth, dodging the swat his father gave him in return. "Needs more oregano," he said, "and maybe some red pepper?"

"You're getting good at this," Benjamin said, doing as his son suggested, "but use a spoon instead of your finger, especially when we're cooking for strangers—I don't want to think what your grandfather would say if you'd done that in the restaurant."

"I know, I know," Jake grumbled. "What's she like?"

"I only met her for a few minutes," Benjamin said, "so—"

The door chime cut him off.

"I'll get it!" Jake said.

Benjamin turned away from the stove and watched as the door slid open. She didn't look any more like Curzon now than she did at the docking ring, he noted. Besides the obvious differences in gender and age and hair, she didn't share the same body type or bone structure.

"You must be Curzon's daughter Jadzia," Jake said.

"I guess I must be," Jadzia replied. "You must be Benjamin's son Jake. It's a pleasure to meet you. I was sorry to hear about your mother—I know Curzon would have wanted to be there for you, if he could."

"Thanks," Jake said, drawing in on himself a little. "I know he would've been there if he could—it's not like he got to choose when to die, either."

"No," Jadzia said. She gave a weird, sad smile, and an awkward silence fell.

"Are you going to leave her standing in the hall?" Benjamin asked.

"Oh! No, sorry, come in," Jake said. "Dinner will be ready in a few minutes. How are you liking the station so far?"

"I've only really seen the lab and my quarters," Jadzia said. "The lab's fine, and I'm *really* glad to be out of the cramped quarters on the ship we took to get here. I'm fine *working* with my colleagues, but being crammed in together into one shared living space was a bit much." She took a seat on the couch, and Jake sat on the chair opposite her.

"Why not take a ship that had room for you all?" Jake asked, leaning forward.

Jadzia made a face. "I got ordered to bring Lusin along at the last minute. Politics. If I'd stayed to fight it, I might have gotten rid of her ... but I also might have lost my funding. And the next ship coming directly to the station from our sector wasn't leaving for another month. It was easiest just to shoehorn her in and pray she didn't annoy me to death."

"What's so annoying about her?" Jake asked.

"Intra-Trill politics," Jadzia said. "Did Curzon ever complain to you about the stuck-in-the-mud paranoiacs who run things on the Trill Homeworld?"

"Yeah, but I didn't listen," Jake said.

"Well, the short version is, both the Homeworld and Aljagra—"

"That's the colony, right?" Jake asked. "Established during the post-Nero colonization period, when lots of planets were scared of being destroyed like the original Vulcan homeworld was?"

"Exactly," Jadzia said. She sank back into the couch and curled her legs up under her. "Leadership on Trill has always been a bit paranoid about non-Trill, partly because so few of them actually meet any. And then after Aljagra was established, that got worse because the people who were most adventurous were the ones who agreed to join the settlement of the new colony. So while leadership on both planets is very conservative, there's also a sort of a rift between them because most of the Aljagra Commission understands the difference between 'reasonable caution' and 'paranoia,' and that can't always be said of the Commission on Trill."

Benjamin had been listening while he stirred the pot. It was nothing he hadn't picked up from various comments Curzon had made over the years, but the old man had never put it all together like that. "You know, I looked up the Commission once, in the databanks," he said. "I didn't find much of anything."

"You wouldn't," Jadzia said, glancing over at him. "Anyway. The Commission on Trill doesn't like that I don't like *them*, and they don't like that my research happened to take me to a place where one of Curzon's old friends lives, because they didn't much like Curzon either. So they stuck me with Lusin as a sort of political commissar. And then we had to share quarters on the transport out here. I'm hoping she'll settle down once we actually get to work. That, or she proves so incompetent I can send her back in disgrace."

"Let's hope," Benjamin said. Curzon had often complained about intra-Trill politics. But Curzon had been an old friend, and this was only the second time Benjamin and Jadzia had even met. It was strange, that someone with a 'political commissar' watching them would be so open with a stranger, even one who was an old family friend. "But tell us about yourself, Jadzia. Curzon told you about us, but we had no idea you existed."

"There's not much to tell, actually," Jadzia said. "I grew up on the Trill homeworld, did *very* good in school, especially the sciences, and went off to Starfleet. Then Curzon died, and ... I had familial responsibilities back on Trill that were not compatible with Starfleet service. But Trill has some *very* good science institutes, so I've been able to do some interesting research."

"Did you like being a Starfleet science officer more than a civilian scientist?" Jake asked.

Jadzia hesitated. "It's hard to say—they're very different. Starfleet science officers usually have to be generalists. You never know what sort of thing your ship is going to encounter, so you have to be good at everything. Civilians specialize. Instead of knowing a little bit about a lot of things, we know a lot about a few things. Are you considering a career in Starfleet, like your Dad?"

Jake shrugged. "Sure, I guess."

Now, *that* caught Benjamin's attention. He turned a little away from the cooktop to get a good look at his son. Jake was usually more enthusiastic than that about Starfleet.

"I loved being in Starfleet," Jadzia said with a shrug. She leaned forward and caught Jake's eye. "But I also love my job now. You've got lots of time to figure out what you want." She smiled at him, and then at Benjamin when she saw him watching them.

"And on that note," Benjamin said, "I think this is ready. Jake, help me get it over to the table." Since everything else was already there, it took little time before it was ready to go. They sat down together and he dished food onto everyone's plate.

Jadzia took her first bite. "This is so good," she said with a moan. "Curzon was right about how good it is."

"He told you about my cooking?" Benjamin asked, surprised. Of all the things Curzon might have told his secret daughter about Benjamin, he picked food? On the other hand, Curzon had always been a connoisseur, and Benjamin would rather she'd heard stories about his cooking than some of the scrapes he'd gotten into as a young officer.

"Mm-hmm," Jadzia said, through another mouthful. "We don't always share the same tastes, but this is really good. Thank you for inviting me for dinner."

"You're welcome," Benjamin said.

"Are there any good restaurants on the station?" Jadzia asked.

"None where they cook the food," Benjamin said. "There are only two restaurants, and both the Replimat and Quark's Bar use replicators."

"Not surprising, given that it *is* a space station," Jadzia said. "Ah, well. Maybe I can go down to Bajor for a weekend or something, once we get our experiments up and running, do some sightseeing."

"I'd be happy to give you some recommendations," Benjamin said.

"I'd like that, thank you," Jadzia said. "But you've been here on Deep Space Nine for almost a year now. Between the political situation on Bajor, the proximity to the Cardassians, and the wormhole, I'd bet you have some interesting stories."

"Interesting's *one* way of putting it," Jake said, through a mouthful of food.

Benjamin shot his son a reproving glance for the bad manners. "There's certainly been a great variety of things happening, more than I expected when I received the assignment," he said, running through events in his mind and discarding any that were too classified or too personal to share. "Is there anything in particular you'd like to know more about?"

Jadzia shook her head. "Whatever you'd like to share is fine by me." She gave him a warm smile.

The rest of the evening passed in a pleasant exchange of stories. Benjamin and Jake's time on Deep Space Nine, Jadzia's time in Starfleet, and, eventually, memories of Curzon.

"So, you going to see her again?" Jake asked as they scrubbed the pots from dinner.

"I would expect so," Benjamin said, scraping at a particularly tenacious bit of stuck-on gunk. "It's a small station, and she'll be working with Lieutenant Thothih."

"No, I mean, are you going to *see her again*," Jake said, nudging him with an elbow. "She seemed pretty into you, she was really into some of your stories."

"I didn't see anything like that," Benjamin said, blinking. Had he missed something? She'd been warm and attentive, but he didn't *think* she'd been flirting with him. And she'd been just as warm with Jake. It was probably just how she was. "She was probably just missing the excitement of Starfleet."

"No, really, if you *wanted* something with her, I think she'd be up for it," Jake said.

"Oh, really," Benjamin said, amused. "You get that from your great store of romantic experience?"

"*Dad*," Jake said, rolling his eyes. "I'm just saying. She's great, and she seems interested in *you*."

"I think she's a little too young for me," Benjamin said. "And besides, she's Curzon's daughter."

"She looks a lot prettier than he did, though," Jake said.

That was undeniable. "You know, these pots aren't going to scrub themselves," he pointed out, flicking a little bit of water at Jake.

"Hey!" Jack said, flicking some back at him.

Nerys walked into Quark's scanning it for signs of trouble or interest as she always did. Between Quark's own business deals and the fact that almost everyone who visited the station showed up in his bar sooner or later, it was always the best place to catch the pulse of the station.

It was a quiet day. The only thing even mildly interesting was Doctor Bashir having a drink with that new Trill scientist, Doctor Jadzia Dax. She'd have thought the woman had better taste than that. No, that was unfair, Bashir had grown up a bit since he arrived on the station.

Nerys ordered a drink and sat at the bar, three stools down from Morn. She was early for her slot in the holosuite, but it wasn't like she had anything better to do. She liked all her colleagues here on the station—even Bashir, which was surprising given how bad a first impression he'd given when he first arrived—but it wasn't like any of them were particularly close.

The other two Trill were over at the dabo tables, and Lusin kept frowning over at Jadzia. It was the most interesting thing happening—she'd heard the story Morn was telling before—and Nerys idly wondered what was going on there.

Bashir and Jadzia got up, and Bashir left. Lusin cashed out at the dabo table and intercepted Jadzia. The two exchanged tense words, and Lusin continued out while Jadzia made her way to the bar.

"What can I get for you, Doctor?" Quark asked with an unctuous smile.

"I'll have a Black Hole," Jadzia said with a smile.

"One Black Hole, coming right up," Quark said, turning away to mix her drink.

"How's the research going?" Nerys asked.

"It's going," Jadzia said. "We're at the stage where there's a lot of data, but it's not making sense, and there are more dead ends than answers. And it's not a *bad* thing—negative results are still results—but it is a bit frustrating."

"Is that what your assistant was glowering at you about?" Nerys asked. "Ignore the question if it's too nosy."

Jadzia snorted. "No. She doesn't like me spending time with Julian. Thinks he's too young for me."

"What business is that of hers?" Nerys asked. It was true that Julian came off as especially puppyish next to Jadzia, but if that was what Jadzia liked, it was her own choice.

"Exactly!" Jadzia said.

"Is she jealous?" Nerys asked. "Does she wish you'd pick her, instead?"

Jadzia laughed. "No, worse. It's political. And I have had *enough* of politics lately."

"Me, too," Nerys said. Things on Bajor had been heating up lately, with lots of anti-alien sentiment, and being the Deep Space Nine liaison officer, she bore the brunt of a lot of it. She checked the chronometer. Ten minutes until her holosuite time started. "You know, I've got a holosuite slot starting soon, you're welcome to join me in it, if you want to get away from the station for a bit."

"I'd love to," Jadzia said. "What program are you running?"

"Honestly? Haven't decided," Nerys said. "I know a holosuite can take you anywhere, but I'm usually too busy to even think about what the options are, so I end up doing boring things like watching a sunrise over Mount Kola."

"Hey, spending time in nature can be very refreshing," Jadzia said. "But if you'd like some ideas of other things to try, I can make some recommendations. Don't let my baby face fool you—I've been around, and seen a *lot* of different things."

By the time Quark told her their holosuite was open, Nerys had half a dozen different things she wanted to try. By the time their time slot was over, Nerys had invited Jadzia to join her next week, as well. It had been a long time since she'd had that much fun.

"It seems a waste, starting tests we may not get to finish," Prohn said as he tested the code they would be using for the next phase of their experiment.

"Would you rather sit here doing nothing while we wait to know if we have to leave?" Lusin said. She was preparing the latest data packet for their partners on Bajor, Trill, and Vulcan. "Besides, even if they throw the rest of the Federation out, they may allow us to stay—we are partially sponsored by the University of Navot, and they may have enough clout to get us visas so that we can continue research."

"I wouldn't count on that," Jadzia cautioned. "They're not exactly Bajor's foremost institution, and if the nationalists win, sponsoring foreigners becomes an embarrassment. Still, we have two choices: we can stop work and wait to see, in which case we'll have to start this whole sequence over again if Bajor decides to let us stay. Or we can continue on as scheduled, and if we *do* get kicked out we'll have as much data as we can possibly get out of it."

"Or, we could catch a ride on the next ship heading towards the Federation, and come back if things cool down," Prohn said. "I don't like the

reports of violence on Bajor."

"That's on the planet's surface," Lusin scoffed, "and however incompetent the Bajoran security forces may be, *this* station is run by Starfleet. I'm sure things will be orderly and safe here."

That was a bit naïve, as Jadzia knew from the long experiences of several of her previous hosts. Benjamin was good, but unstable situations like this could get very messy, especially when you had a population used to violence. "You're not the only one to have that thought, Prohn. There are more people wanting back into Federation space than there are ships headed that direction." She shrugged. "But we probably don't have much to worry about; if Benjamin thought the station was in danger, he'd have ordered an evacuation. I can ask him if he thinks we should get out, if you'd like." She would have asked Nerys's opinion, given that Nerys was a local and would have a better feel for the situation, but Nerys had gone on some sort of religious retreat after her position was given to someone else, and Jadzia had no idea how to contact her.

"Would you?" Prohn asked in evident relief.

Jadzia pinged Benjamin, but his commbadge was set to only accept calls from station personnel. Curzon would have been on his list of people who could interrupt even when he was set to 'do not disturb,' but Jadzia wasn't. "He's busy," Jadzia said. "I'm sure he'll get back to me when he has time. In the meantime, we might as well work."

The station intercom came to life. "This is Commander Sisko. There has been a coup on Bajor, and the Circle has sent out ships to capture the station. They will be here in approximately seven hours. To protect the civilian population, I am ordering an evacuation. There will be enough places for every civilian, and Doctor Bashir will have a schedule with what ship you are assigned to published shortly. If you do not wish to evacuate, please let him know. Space will be tight, so there will be a minimal baggage allowance. Hopefully everything will be resolved soon, and you will be able to return. Please keep calm so that we can get everyone off the station orderly and safely."

"... well, so much for *that*," Prohn said in disgust.

Jadzia checked her messages. "Schedule's already out," she said. "Fast work, Julian. Looks like we're scheduled for the hold of a Bandi freighter that departs in five hours."

"Five hours!" Lusin said, appalled. "That's only two hours before the invaders arrive! That's not enough margin to ensure your safety, Dax!"

Dax shrugged. "I've been in tighter situations. It will probably be fine." Which was true, but in situations like these there were a *lot* of room for things to go catastrophically wrong. On the other hand, Lusin working herself up or trying to 'fix' things was likely to screw everything up. And it wasn't as if there was much they could do, as civilians scientists, other than follow instructions in an orderly fashion and pray everyone else being evacuated did, too.

"You two should probably go get packed," Jadzia said. "Only a small bag, a few changes of clothing, leave anything that isn't absolutely vital."

"What about you?" Prohn asked.

"I've got a bag ready to go," Jadzia said. "Old habit, from when I was a diplomat in some pretty unstable places. We've got some time—if we get to the docking bays more than an hour before our transport is supposed to leave, we'll only slow them down getting the earlier ships away, and delay our own departure. I thought I'd take a half-hour or so and get the next batch of tests started."

"What do the *tests* matter?" Lusin asked. "Our lives are at stake! *Your* lives are at stake!"

Jadzia shrugged. "Sitting around and fretting won't make our assigned freighter depart any quicker. I'd rather keep busy. Besides, the next set of tests is crucial, and maybe the University of Navot will send us the results, when it's finished. If something comes up and it takes too long, I won't bother with it, but another half hour here isn't going to change anything."

Prohn shrugged. "See you on the transport, if nothing else, I guess," he said, and left.

Lusin turned back to her console and started tapping furiously away at it. Jadzia ignored her and got to work.

That was a mistake, because not ten minutes later, Lusin interrupted her. "Quark is selling tickets on earlier ships. I'm going to buy one for you."

Jadzia spun around to face her. "No, you absolutely will not! It's a scam, and a threat to the orderly evacuation of this station. Quark has *no* authority to make such deals—"

"He's just acting as a broker for people willing to take a later transport—"

"He *still* doesn't have the authority to make that deal," Jadzia said, "and he is undoubtedly selling more seats than he actually has people willing to stay later for. What do you think is going to happen when all those people show up at the docking ring expecting an early ticket out of here, only to find Quark lied? It'll be nasty; desperate people do desperate things. Even if nobody gets hurt, it *will* delay things."

"You don't know he's overbooking—"

"Yes, I do, because I know Ferengi business ethics, which in this case amount to 'if they won't be around to sue you, cheat them for all they're worth.'"

"—and in any case, surely it won't be that bad," Lusin continued on, doggedly. "You are a *symbiont*, Dax, you carry seven lives with you, we can't risk your death. It's worth paying a little to get you out of here safely, and at worst all it will take is a little extra work for the officer coordinating things."

Jadzia folded her arms. "I will be leaving this station in four and a half hours on the Bandi freighter to which I was assigned. Whether or not you try to make a deal with Quark is irrelevant, because I will not be accepting any earlier seat he claims to have found for me."

"*Dax!*" Lusin cried in anguished frustration.

"I've been through evacuations before, Lusin. You are letting your fear get in the way of your sense."

Jadzia turned back to her console and typed out a message to Julian, high priority, using the personal code he'd given her.

"What are you doing?"

"Letting Julian know what Quark is doing so he can put a stop to it," Jadzia said, ignoring the noise of protest the other woman made. "You should go pack a bag."

"No, I'm staying with you," Lusin said.

"Fine," Jadzia said. She went back to setting up the last of the parameters for the next test, and set the computer to run it.

As she logged out, Julian's voice rang out from the intercom. "This is Doctor Bashir, and I am the officer coordinating the evacuation. Quark is not authorized to sell seats on outgoing vessels, nor are any captains of the ships themselves. No transport arrangements may be made through anyone except me or the Starfleet and Bajoran Militia personnel assisting me. Any arrangements Quark has made are fraudulent; you will be leaving on your originally scheduled transport. Please remain calm, bring minimal baggage, and arrive at the docking ring no more than one hour in advance of your scheduled transport. The more people try to argue, the slower the evacuation will go, and the more delays there will be. All evacuees *will* be off the station before the invading force arrives."

"Told you so," Jadzia said.

Julian was afraid. Not of the invading force; Sisko's plan would work, and they only needed a very little bit of luck to pull it off. They weren't planning any grand battles; quite the contrary, the goal was to minimize casualties. Honestly, he was a bit excited to have the opportunity to be an insurgent for a few days.

No, what scared him was the mood at the docks. Everyone was afraid. Every Bajoran had first-hand knowledge of everything that could possibly go wrong during a military occupation, and all had severe trauma about it. The non-Bajorans were less likely to have experienced an invasion or occupation, but that meant they had more room for flights of fancy. There was a lot of fear floating around, and all it would take was a match to make it flare up into violence. Sisko and Li Nalas had both come by several times to reassure the Bajorans—those who weren't comforted by the Emissary's presence were heartened by the reassurance of a legendary war hero—but the Bajorans weren't the only ones who were afraid.

Julian had studied the effects of fear and trauma on individuals and societies. He had been trained in treatment techniques and best practices for crowd management.

And if things went wrong, none of it would matter.

They were almost done with this—two thirds of the station's civilian population had already left—but all that meant was that those who remained had had more time to stew in their panic.

His combadge chimed. "Doctor, this is Deputy Yndar, we've got a situation at Upper Pylon 1 that needs your personal attention."

"I'm on my way," Julian said. He'd finished handling the last problem here at Lower Pylon 2, so he could head right over. He was tempted to run—God only knew what would happen by the time he got there—but he couldn't afford to spook people any more than they already were.

He settled for walking very briskly.

Jadzia and her colleagues arrived at their assigned docking port to hear raised voices. She handed her bag to Prohn and made her way through the crowd to where a Ziballian was shouting at the Bajoran deputy in charge.

"No, I will *not* stand aside!" she bellowed. "I am a *Courier* for the Terellian Tetrarchy! I have a *contract* to ensure the *safe delivery* of my cargo—" she gestured to the freight pallet next to her, positioned so that nobody could step around it and get into the docking bay—"and I am *not* leaving it here, I am taking it with me!" She didn't seem to notice the crowd's hostility to her.

"We don't have *room* for it," the deputy said. "I don't care how valuable it is, it's not worth more than somebody's life. You can put it in storage and have the new Bajoran government ship it to you, or you can stay here with it and hole up in your quarters, but it's not going with you."

"You Bajorans won't kill your own kind, so surely it wouldn't matter if one or two were left behind—"

"Excuse me," Jadzia said. "I'm a trained and experienced diplomat; perhaps I can help?" If the crowd had been less packed, she would have stood further away, out of arm's reach, but there just wasn't room. As it was, the only place she could see both the deputy and the Ziballian was to stand almost between the courier and her cargo.

The Ziballian didn't even glance at her. "Screw you, kid, I don't need a diplomat, I need someone in charge who can tell this moron to let me and my cargo on my ship."

"It's not your ship, alien," someone shouted from the crowd. "If someone's going to be left behind, it should be *you*."

"There's enough room for everyone," Jadzia said. "We'll all fit, as long as everyone is calm and reasonable."

"I am perfectly calm and reasonable!" the Ziballian shouted, not seeming to notice the irony. "It's everyone else who's gone mad. It's not *my* fault you Bajorans are too—"

"Finish that sentence and you'll regret it," the deputy said coolly. "You're holding things up. I am *very* close to transferring you to the last transport leaving. And you still won't be able to take your cargo. Doctor Bashir will back me up."

"Then I demand to see Commander Sisko!"

"He's busy. If I have to stun you to get you out of the way, I will."

"You wouldn't dare!"

"I assume Doctor Bashir is on his way?" Jadzia asked. "Why don't you step aside with your cargo and wait for him to settle things?"

"No!" the Ziballian said. "I will not—" she noticed one of the deputies had taken the pallet's handle and was tugging it out of the way. "*Hey!*" She drew a knife and took a step forward.

Jadzia grabbed her wrist and tried to use a mok'bara move to disarm her, but she hadn't practiced enough since she became Jadzia, and Curzon's body was so different—

Julian arrived at Upper Pylon 1 to find a bleeding Trill and a stunned Ziballian.

"The unconscious alien was making trouble," Yndar said, "that's who I called you here to deal with. The one with the knife wound tried to calm her down, got stabbed for it."

Julian listened with half an ear as he scanned Jadzia with his medical tricorder. "She needs surgery, immediately," he said. "Can you handle things from here?"

"Well, the angry one isn't shouting anymore," Yndar said. "Don't want to put her on this ship, because a lot of people are angry at her already."

"Use your best judgment," Julian said. "If you have the time, write up a brief statement of what happened so that no matter what happens, she can be prosecuted for assault."

"Will do," Yndar said.

Julian tapped his combadge. "Julian to Ops. One to beam directly to the Infirmary."

When he heard about the incident, Benjamin called Doctor Bashir. "Will she be stable enough to put on a transport?" he asked.

"No," Bashir replied, "she needs immediate surgery. And none of the remaining ships have good enough medical facilities to keep her alive until they reach their destination. I'm going to have to operate now and keep her here."

"How long will the surgery take?" Benjamin asked.

"Tough to say," Bashir said. "I've never operated on a Trill before, and her anatomy and neurochemistry doesn't match what we have on file for that species. But I guarantee you she won't be up to hiding before they get here—I doubt I'll be done operating by then."

"Are you alright with being captured?" Benjamin asked.

"I'll have to be," Bashir replied. "None of my nurses have enough experience with species other than Bajoran, Cardassian, and Human to treat her."

"All right, good luck," Benjamin said.

"To you as well, sir," Bashir said. "Bashir out."

Benjamin hoped that Curzon's daughter wasn't about to die on his watch. But there was nothing he could do about it, and there was too much else going on to spend any time worrying about it.

Bashir was in the middle of suturing a ... something, it was clearly a tube carrying neurotransmitters, but it wasn't marked on the Trill anatomy diagram ... when the door to the operating theater chimed.

"I'll get it," said Nurse Hortak.

Stripping off her gloves, exited the theater. It was well insulated, so Bashir couldn't hear what she was saying. He concentrated on his work.

A short time later, the door opened and Hortak re-entered, accompanied by a soldier. "He's been decontaminated, and should be fine as long as he doesn't touch anything," she said. "I couldn't get him to wait outside. Colonel Day wants to see you as soon as we're done with the surgery."

"Of course," Julian said.

Prohn sat on the floor of the cargo bay, bag in his lap, squeezed tightly on every side by other passengers, and watched the display projected on the wall. It had a clock, a stellar map with a dot showing their position, and a countdown to arrival. He focused on it in the vain hope that watching the countdown tick down would somehow drown out Lusin's voice.

He had long since given up on trying to get her to stop fidgeting. There was no room to pace—everyone was packed into the cargo hold like fish-in-a-can—but Lusin was giving it her best shot. By now, *everyone* was annoyed with her, but she didn't seem to even have noticed.

"I should have *made* them let me stay with her," she said, for what had to be the thousandth time *at least*.

Never mind that the station personnel had had phasers, and been *quite* willing to stun anyone who made trouble by that point. Too bad they hadn't been so trigger happy with the alien who'd stabbed Dax. He supposed Lusin could have stabbed herself and gotten to stay on the station that way, but he didn't see that it would have improved Dax's care at all.

Only another hour until they reached their destination, and he could get off this blasted ship and away from Lusin. He was worried about Dax, too, but since there wasn't anything he could do about it, the next best thing would be getting away from Lusin.

"Her wound couldn't have been *that* bad," Lusin continued. "I should have made them put her here, on the transport. We could have taken her to Trill for treatment. She would have had better care, and we wouldn't have had to worry about *aliens* poking around *Dax*."

Prohn had seen the wound. It had definitely looked bad enough to require immediate surgery to him; maybe if Jadzia had been unjoined, but with a symbiont? There weren't any Trill doctors in the sector, that he knew of. There was no way she'd have lasted long enough to get to a Trill doctor without *some* kind of treatment, and any competent doctor would immediately notice that Jadzia Dax's insides were not on the standard Trill model. Or was Lusin willing to sacrifice Jadzia, by denying her medical care from aliens, in the hope that Dax would survive and the secret would be intact?

He didn't say anything. He wasn't joined, he was never *going* to be joined, he didn't have anybody in his family with the genetic profile to even *apply* to be joined, he didn't care about larger politics as long as his research got funded, and this was the first time in his life he'd ever had to deal with the Symbiosis Commission or any of its representatives. If the Commission itself was *half* as controlling as Lusin was, it was no *wonder* a growing number of people—especially Aljagrans and the Joined—were starting to talk openly about the need for reform.

"—what that *alien* might be doing to her, what *damage* he might do without even *knowing*—" Her voice rose, drawing his attention back to her tirade.

If Doctor Bashir did any damage out of ignorance, well, it was the Symbiosis Commission's fault he was ignorant, wasn't it? And also, couldn't she see the irony in her xenophobia showing up when they were in this whole situation because of Bajoran xenophobia? They were the Federation! They were supposed to be better than this!

Prohn held his tongue and focused on the ETA countdown. Still almost an hour to go.

By the time he had her stabilized, Julian was exhausted. Trill torsos were *complicated* even in the best of circumstances, and he'd never operated on one before nor spent much time studying them; at least he'd looked over what material they had on the Trill when he'd learned there would be a team staying on the station for some time.

Not that it helped much, Jadzia Dax's anatomy, neurology, and neurochemistry being significantly different from the Trill norms in the files, or, indeed, from the medical records dating from her Starfleet service.

"Are you done?" the Bajoran soldier asked, interrupting Julian's reverie.

"Yes," Julian replied. "Assuming she doesn't take a turn for the worse."

"General Krim wants to see you immediately, then," the soldier said, reaching up to tap his combadge.

"Can I help Nurse Hortak get her settled in a regular bed?" Julian asked.

The soldier hesitated. "Fine," he said.

It would have been easier with more help, but fortunately he'd finally gotten the Starfleet-issue gurneys and biobeds installed, which were designed to be as easy-to-use as possible in a variety of configurations and with a variety of personnel. The Cardassian version relied mostly on the brute-force of the people using it. Hortak could have moved the patient on her own, if she'd needed to, but this gave Julian a chance to make sure the monitors were set correctly for his best guess at what her metabolism and neurotransmitter rate should be.

He wanted nothing more than to fall into bed—even just a nap on a cot in his office—but General Krim awaited.

For a man overthrowing his own government in xenophobic terror, General Krim was a reasonable man. He listened to the message Sisko wanted Julian to give him—that the Circle's weapons were being supplied by the Cardassians in an attempt to destabilize Bajor—and, despite his assistant Colonel Day's derision, promised to look into it. He promised that Julian wouldn't be bothered as long as he agreed to treat any of Krim's troops who needed medical care, which Julian would have done anyway.

However, he wouldn't let Julian contact Trill for more information on Trill biology, no matter how Julian asked.

"Do you think I'm stupid?" Krim asked. He didn't seem angry, just amused. "I'm not letting you contact *anyone*. We'll let your Federation know you're here, and they can come pick you up with the rest of your fellow officers once the station is secure."

"Jadzia Dax is still in critical condition," Julian said. "I have reference materials for Trill biology and recommended treatments for various ills

and injuries, but her anatomy and neurochemistry have significant differences from the reference materials and it already caused problems in surgery. If there are complications—"

"Her anatomy isn't Trill?" Colonel Day demanded. "What *is* she then? Has she been altered to *look* Trill?"

"No," Julian said, puzzled, "she's definitely a Trill, and definitely Jadzia Dax. She used to be a Starfleet officer, and I have her records from that time. There's no question that she is the same person. But between then and now, she's had significant internal changes. I don't know why, I don't know if there will be further complications because of it, and I don't want to be flying blind if there are."

"Too bad, Doctor," General Krim said. "I'm afraid we can't take the risk."

"Well?" Nurse Hortak asked when he returned to the infirmary.

"We get to stay here under guard, and we can't call up Trill and ask them for help with Jadzia," Julian said bitterly.

"Not surprising," Hortak said.

"What do they expect us to *do*?" Julian asked. "We've both been in the infirmary since before Krim's troops arrived, and we'll be here under guard the whole time. We have no tactical or strategic information that couldn't have been sent perfectly free and clear *before* Krim's people arrived, and no way of *getting* any. The only information we have is the state of our patient's health, and *that* has no tactical or strategic value!"

Hortak made a face. It was the face she made when he said something stupid—especially something having to do with the Occupation and the Bajoran Resistance—but she didn't want to contradict a superior directly.

"You can think of a way we could use it," Julian realized.

"Well, yeah, several," Hortak said. "But most of them would only work if we'd had time to set things up beforehand and our patient wasn't really sick, or if we didn't care whether we had to sacrifice treatment in order to take advantage of opportunities."

"Really?" Julian asked. He was *intensely* curious, but ... that could wait. He yawned. "Given the evacuation and the emergency surgery and everything *else* that's happened, we've both been up for over twenty-six hours. We need sleep, but we can't leave Jadzia unattended ..."

"If she does take a turn for the worse, you'll be the one needing to figure out how to handle her biology, so you need to be freshest," Hortak pointed out. "I'll take first watch."

Once Krim had handed over control and was safely off the station with his troops, Benjamin left Li and Odo in Ops to handle calling everyone back and getting the station up and running again and headed to the Infirmary to see how Doctor Bashir and his patient had fared.

"Oh, no, we were fine," Bashir told him. "Under guard, of course, but he didn't interfere. It was touch and go with Jadzia, there, for a while, and Krim wouldn't let me call Trill to get more information on her anatomy and biochemistry, but she seems to be recovering now, and should be awake soon."

"What information would you need?" Benjamin asked. "The Trill are Federation members. The information in the databanks should be fairly complete."

Bashir and Nurse Hortak exchanged glances. "There are, at the very least, *significant* omissions," Bashir said. "Almost certainly deliberate."

"That's quite an accusation, Doctor," Benjamin said. Scientific exploration and development was one of the few principles shared more-or-less across the entire Federation; it was the unifying ideal most often leaned on. Withholding information was heavily frowned upon. But given what Curzon and, now, Jadzia, had to say about Trill paranoia ...

"I know," Bashir said. "Let me show you." He led Benjamin over to a display and pulled up a diagram of Trill anatomy. "Do you see this empty space in the abdomen?"

"It's fairly large," Sisko said.

"Yes," Bashir said. "And according to the information in the databanks, it's a vestigial pouch left over from when an ancestor species of the Trill were marsupials and carried their young in it."

"But that's not the case?"

"This is Jadzia's abdomen," Bashir said, pulling up a scan.

"There's something in the pouch," Benjamin said. "It doesn't look like a baby."

"It isn't," Bashir said. "It's a slug. It's also not a temporary thing; that slug is connected to every single system Jadzia has: neurotransmitters and nerves, digestive system, circulatory system ... I don't think it could survive outside of an environment such as Jadzia's pouch. Moreover, it's *extremely* dense in neurons. It is, basically, a secondary brain. There is quite a complex connection between it and Jadzia's own brain, and *that* is what caused all the trouble. She was stabbed just through some of the largest connections, and, given that this is *entirely* absent from the databanks, I was flying blind in surgery and the early stages of recovery."

"Did she have this slug when she was in Starfleet?" Benjamin asked.

"No," Bashir said, pulling up her medical records.

The internal scans from her last Starfleet physical looked, to Benjamin's untutored eye, fairly close to the diagram from the databanks.

"So she got it after she left Starfleet," Benjamin said.

"Any medical exam she had as an officer would have revealed it," Bashir said. "She hasn't been awake and coherent enough to ask about it, yet."

"Is it a parasite?" Benjamin asked.

Bashir shrugged. "Do you mean, is it harmful? Hard to say, without long-term study. I doubt it, though; She's had it for several years, at this point, given the level of conjoinment in her torso, and she doesn't seem to have any major physical problems. Neurologically, things are harder to judge; but if it were causing neurological problems, surely it would have interfered in her research by now."

"Doctor, she's waking up!" Nurse Hortak called.

Jadzia Dax woke quickly, this time around. She vaguely remembered something dreamlike and panic-filled—she had been only Jadzia, not Dax, or only Dax, not Jadzia—but she felt like herself again. Albeit, herself with a painful wound in her abdomen. Sitting up was not an option, just yet.

Julian came in and ran his tests, and Jadzia answered his questions about how she was feeling, but she could see Benjamin hovering outside the door. "I take it the station is back under Federation control?" she asked.

"Yes," Julian said. "The coup didn't last long, I'm happy to say, and the station was only under the Circle's forces for about a day and a half."

"Good," Jadzia said. "Maybe we won't have lost too much data." Julian gave her a strange look. Either the lab had been damaged, or ... Julian *had* to have noticed, in surgery. "I'm sure you found our secret. You may as well call Benjamin in, I'm sure he's curious." Julian stepped back to call Benjamin in, which gave her a few seconds to gather her thoughts.

If Lusin or any other representative of the Symbiosis Commission were here, they'd still probably be trying to hide this—some justification to swear Julian to secrecy or wipe the records or something. But Dax knew that there was no way Benjamin would agree to knowingly letting false databank records stand.

Besides, Dax had been half-hoping for some joined Trill to have an accident requiring emergency medical care from a non-Trill doctor for the last two decades. She just hadn't wanted to be the one whose life depended on a doctor with no knowledge of her anatomy or neurochemistry.

"We don't have to do this now," Benjamin said. "You're still healing."

"Curzon taught you better than *that* Benjamin," Dax said. "When you're trying to get information out of someone, if you can get them off their game, take full advantage of it."

"He did," Benjamin said with a closed expression on his face. "And how do you know that?"

"Because I *am* Curzon," Dax said, "or at least, I used to be. I'm sure Julian has filled you in on how my anatomy differs from that of a standard Trill?"

"You have a parasitic slug in your abdomen," Benjamin said.

"Parasites drain their host for no return," Dax said. "It's a symbiont. They're native to Trill, too." She'd dreamed this conversation a thousand times, when she was Curzon, every time the secret had chafed. "Only about one Trill in a thousand is capable of hosting them, and it's a great honor to be chosen to do so. Symbionts live very long lives, much longer than Trill do. When a host dies, the symbiont is given to a new host, carrying all the memories and skills of their predecessor. I'm Jadzia ... but I'm also Curzon, and Torias, and Audred, and Emony, and Tobin, and Lela. And when Jadzia dies, I'll be someone else, someone new, but Jadzia will still be a part of me just like all of Dax's past hosts."

"You're Curzon?" Benjamin said. "Now, *that* I find hard to believe."

"I used to be Curzon, and Curzon is a part of me," she replied. "I'm not him *now*, but I used to be. If you don't believe me ..." she paused, considering her options. "Do you remember that time on Turkasia II? I can tell you the story if you like, though you may want to send Julian out."

"Curzon *swore* he'd never tell anyone that story," Benjamin said.

"He didn't," she replied. "Or maybe *you'd* like to quiz me, instead."

He believed her, she could tell, but he'd always been thorough, and asked her a number of questions about things they'd been through together, details she could only have known by being there.

"So why the secrecy?" he asked at last. "Why lie to the Federation?"

"Being joined is the highest honor any Trill can aspire to," Jadzia said. "The competition is cutthroat, and at times in the planet's history, that has been literal. Just a few years ago, a rejected candidate named Verad abducted a joined Trill named Birzam Degin, removed the symbiont, and had it implanted in himself. By the time Trill agents caught up with them it was too late. Birzam was dead. They removed Degin from Verad, put it in a new host, and tried to hush the whole thing up with only partial success."

"What did they do to Verad?" Julian asked.

"Once past the ninety-three hour mark, neither host nor symbiont can survive without being joined," Jadzia said. "It had been two weeks."

"So, by removing the symbiont, they effectively killed him," Julian said, judgmentally. "Capital punishment is illegal in the Federation."

"Degin was, effectively, a hostage," said Jadzia. "Once Verad had them joined, the only way to save Verad's life was to keep Degin neurologically joined to the person who had kidnapped him, assaulted him, and murdered his last host. Was saving Verad's life worth a lifetime of *that* for Degin? Bad enough that Degin will have to carry memories of Verad for the rest of his life." She shivered. If it had been *her* ... she couldn't tell if the roiling in her abdomen was pain from the surgery or Dax moving in distress.

"A very sad story," Benjamin said. "What does this have to do with lying to the Federation?"

Jadzia sighed. "The Trill Symbiosis Commission is *highly* provincial. Most have never been off Trill, not even to Aljagra, and few of them have even *met* an alien, and they're *proud* of their insularity. As far as they believe, any person who *doesn't* want to be joined is mentally unstable in some way, irrational. The basic truth of their worldview is that *everyone* wants desperately to be joined. So if aliens knew ..."

"They think *we'd* be pressing for symbionts of our own," Benjamin said.

"Exactly," Jadzia said. "They're terrified of it. And deeply aware that if the Federation demanded symbionts and sent Starfleet to take them, Trill would not be able to stop them.

"But that's such an irrational fear," Julian said. "They're projecting their own desires on other species."

"I know." Jadzia sighed. "So does every Trill who's had much contact with other races. Most non-Trill wouldn't *want* symbionts."

"Some races would be disgusted by the idea of having a slug in their body," Benjamin said, his even tone giving no hint to what *he* thought of it. "Others would think being fundamentally altered and sharing your consciousness for another being for the rest of your life wouldn't be enough of a tradeoff for the fact that you would live on in some way after you die. And most people of all species in the Federation are, at heart, fundamentally comfortable with how they live."

Jadzia sighed again, and winced as her gut twinged. "But the Trill Symbiosis Commission can't comprehend that. Too few of them have even *met* an alien. Much less gotten to know one."

"Fears can be far more powerful than reality," Julian said, pulling out his tricorder to scan her.

"There's also the matter of political control," Jadzia said. "It used to be that the Symbiosis Commission controlled everything. Then Vulcan was destroyed, and we settled Aljagra specifically so that the symbionts would be preserved even if Trill met a similar fate, and there were *two* Symbiosis Commissions, one per planet."

"So their power base has been divided," Benjamin said.

"Yes. And the caves where unjoined symbionts live on Aljagra are much larger than the ones on Trill; they hold far more symbionts, which means the population has increased and there have been more symbionts to be joined, which means the Commission's power is diluted even more. Plus, since they couldn't explain what their purpose was or how they were chosen without disclosing the existence of symbionts, they had to hand over most of their legal and overt political control when Trill and Aljagra joined the Federation. They have less power, so they cling to what they have. Which hasn't made them very popular in the last several decades."

"Will you get in trouble over telling us this?" Julian asked.

Jadzia made a face. "Once you're joined, if you don't have any political aspirations, there's a limit to how much the Symbiosis Commission can do to you," she said. "Especially now that we're Federation members. They could get my funding cut, but I'm sure there are many other institutions willing and able to fund wormhole research, so it's hardly a major threat."

"If nothing else," Benjamin said, "you could re-join Starfleet. Since I'm assuming you left in order to keep the secret of the symbionts."

"I hadn't thought of that," Jadzia said. Would she want to? She'd loved being a Starfleet officer, but she liked her life now, too. She shook her head. "Aside from minor inconveniences, the only thing they can *really* do to me is expel me from Trill and refuse to allow Dax to pass to a new host when I die. But that's such an extreme response—especially considering that I didn't voluntarily spill the secret—that I can't imagine they'd do it." The longer she talked, the more her body was reminding her that she'd just had major surgery. She tried to ignore it; this was important. "And if they did, well, the Aljagra Symbiosis Commission is more reasonable, and while they've never defied the Trill Symbiosis Commission before, this might be enough. I'm not worried about it."

"I think that's enough for the initial report, Commander," Julian said. "And if it's not, it will have to be. She's recovering from major surgery, after all."

"Benjamin," Jadzia said, "we left some simulations running, and the next phase will need to be initiated soon. Can you have Lieutenant Thothih take care of it? He knows everything he needs to."

"I'm afraid Lieutenant Thothih was killed by the Circle, while trying to help Major Kira get information to the government about the Cardassian backing of the coup," Benjamin said. "But I'll see what I can do."

"Oh," Jadzia said. "Oh. I'm sorry to hear that. I liked them." She closed her eyes and winced at a stab of pain.

"I'm afraid we can't use neural blockers to take away the pain without also disconnecting the Dax symbiont," Julian said, "and you've had a bad reaction to some of the medications we tried. It wasn't in your file."

"Nexflozine should be safe," Jadzia said.

"All right," Julian said. "By the way, who should I contact on Trill for more information about how to treat you?"

"The Symbiosis Commission," Jadzia said. "But the Aljagra Commission will be much easier to reason with."

"Thank you," Julian said. He replicated the medication and brought over a hypospray. "This should make you woozy. If you fall asleep, that's good; your body needs rest more than anything."

As always, nexfrozine took a while to fully kick in, but once it did, it was very effective.

This time, when Prohn and Lusin arrived on the station, they were accompanied by a whole cargo ship full of former refugees, and there was nobody to greet them. They checked the infirmary first, and found Dax sitting on a biobed, reading a PADD.

"Glad to see you're back safely," she said with a smile.

"And we're very glad to see you're up and looking so well," Prohn said.

"Yes," said Lusin, "we were so worried! I hope they've taken very good care of you." She lowered her voice. "I don't suppose you were able to conceal—?"

Dax stared at her. "I was stabbed *right next to my pouch*. I was lucky that Dax wasn't directly hit. And Julian is a *very* good doctor. Of course he noticed. And of course he was able to put together what Dax is. After that, there wasn't any *point* in concealing anything. The Symbiosis Commission knows all about it, you can check with them."

"Now that we know you're safe, I think I'm going to go check on our experiments," Prohn said, looking for an excuse to get out of there.

"Yes, please do," Dax said. "Benjamin's had officers handling the most time-critical things, but I'm sure a great deal of work and data have been piling up, and I'm not going to be allowed out of here until tomorrow at least."

"And when you are released," said Doctor Bashir, sticking his head in, "you are going nowhere but to your quarters to rest in comfort. You can access your readings over the computer, but *light* work only for another week at least."

"I'll take it easy, Julian," Dax said with some amusement. "I *promise* you, if there is one thing I know, it's how to relax."

"I will go to my quarters and call the Symbiosis Commission, then," Lusin said with a sour expression on her face. "I *am* glad you're healing well, Dax."

"I still can't believe that *Curzon* is now *young*," Jake said as he set the table. "A young *woman*, at that. He's supposed to be *old*. How alike *are* Curzon and Jadzia, anyway?"

"I don't know," Benjamin said, "I haven't spent much more time with Jadzia than you have."

The door chime rang. "I'll get it," Jake said.

"Jake!" Jadzia said, stepping through. "I hope I'm not too early, but I was so looking forward to actually being able to be honest that I couldn't help it. Benjamin, that smells *delicious*."

"So, you're really Curzon?" Jake said, looking her up and down. "Man, if you said to me 'Curzon will come back in a new body,' this would *not* be the body I would have imagined."

"Well, part of the idea is to give the symbionts as many different experiences as possible," Jadzia said, "and also to make sure the new host isn't just subsumed into the memories of the old hosts. So it's customary to switch genders with each new host."

"It's not that you're a woman," Jake said. "It's that you're young. And attractive," he blurted out, shoulders hunching a little with embarrassment.

Jadzia laughed. "And Curzon was old and ugly, you mean? He was young in his day, and no matter *how* old he was or *how* he looked, he always managed to attract company for the night when he wanted it. Or for the morning, noon, and evening, too." She winked at him.

"Daaaaaaaax," Jake whined, scrunching up his face. "Gross."

"You were the one who was wondering how much Jadzia was like Curzon," Benjamin reminded him. "Don't complain when you get the answer you're looking for."

"In all seriousness, though," Jadzia said, "some things about me are different and some are the same. As for which is which," she shrugged, "guess you'll just have to get to know me and find out."

End Notes

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