

The Chains of Error

Posted originally on the [Ad Astra :: Star Trek Fanfiction Archive](http://www.adastrafanfic.com/works/952) at <http://www.adastrafanfic.com/works/952>.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warning:	Graphic Depictions Of Violence , Major Character Death
Category:	F/M
Fandom:	Star Trek: Full Speed Ahead , Star Trek: Gibraltar
Character:	Ensemble Cast - GIB , Ariel Elannis , Krystine Leone , Jesse Kincaid , Pava Lar'ragos
Additional Tags:	Action/Adventure , Adult Language , Adult Situations , Crew as Family , Diplomacy , Drama , Sexual Content
Language:	English
Series:	Part 1 of Star Trek: Full Speed Ahead - Post-Series Stories
Stats:	Published: 2023-09-19 Words: 1,691 Chapters: 1/13

The Chains of Error

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Summary

A crossover novel between *Star Trek: Gibraltar* and *Star Trek: Full Speed Ahead*!

Stardate 54310.98: A very attractive Commander arrives at Starbase 375 near the Cardassian border to assume custody of a very dangerous prisoner... all by herself. They depart together in the runabout *Sacramento*; sixteen hours into their trip, they come under attack by the Maquis.

Stardate 54311.8: The starship USS *Gibraltar*, while en route to a Federation convoy to the Ruyard Colonies, is diverted by the distress signal of the runabout *Sacramento*. Upon arrival, they find the runabout destroyed and an encrypted beacon points the way toward an escape pod. Now, Captain Sandhurst and his new executive officer, T'Ser, must deal with the formidable presence of Commander Ariel Elannis, and her prisoner, former Starfleet Captain Sabrina Diaz.

Notes

This story was originally published on the classic Ad Astra site on 23 March 2009.

Historian's Note: The events of this story take place five years after the series finale of Full Speed Ahead, and one and a half years after the end of the Dominion War as depicted in Star Trek: Deep Space Nine.

"Obstinacy in opinions holds the dogmatist in the chains of error, without hope of emancipation." -- John C. Granville

Prologue

Starfleet Marine Corporal Magdalene J. "Maggie" O'Connell sat at the reception desk, and presided over the night watch at Starbase Three-Seven-Five's impressive detention facility. Along with the shift's sergeant and officer of the watch, she appreciated the relative calm of the starbase's nighttime hours. The detainees tucked in their cells, under the watchful eye of the lance corporal and private first class manning the guard station, provided very little trouble for her. And that was just fine by her. With the credence of her lieutenant, she used the long, dull shift to study for her correspondence degree in law enforcement. Her goal being an eventual commission as a Marine Officer as a member of the infamous Shore Patrol.

Just like every other night, she checked in with the operations center to file the previous shift's report, and then settled in for a long night of nothing. No prisoner transfers to initiate, no scheduled inspections, no scheduled visits of any kind on the books or in the passdown log. Maggie looked forward to having hours of time to pour over her university texts in preparation for her mid-term examinations.

When the inner doors leading from the corridor opened to admit a female Starfleet commander wearing a gold undershirt, the surprise on her

face was completely understandable. As was the tradition, she got to her feet in order to greet this unscheduled guest. The problem was, she couldn't find her voice in order to speak.

The woman wore her jet black hair in a long French braid that almost certainly defied Starfleet's personal grooming regulations. Her lightly tanned skin contrasted against her dark eyebrows and ruby lips; her face appeared to have been sculpted to draw attention to her regardless of the room she entered. And not even the bulkiness of a Starfleet two-piece uniform could hide her devastating measurements. Her uniform jacket strained to hold in her almost unnatural assets.

"Good morning, Corporal," said the commander after her heterochromatic eyes glanced at Maggie's collar device. "I'm here about Prisoner Four-Seven-Eight-Eight-Gamma-Eight."

Maggie struggled to find her voice under the circumstances. "I-I'm sorry, Commander," she said with a visible shake of her head. She quickly tapped in a command into the LCARS display before her and called up the prisoner locator subroutine. It did not matter that it was well after visiting hours. Did it? Before she asked her to repeat the prisoner identification number, she took a deep breath. "Visiting hours will not resume until later today."

The commander reached into the front of her tunic, and Maggie's eyes followed that hand. Even though she did not find her own gender remotely appropriate for any kind of intimate relations, this woman gave her conviction serious pause. When the hand withdrew, it brought out a compact padd. "I didn't say I was here to visit a prisoner," she said, amusedly.

The padd's display lit up and a Starfleet Intelligence credential appeared. It held her full name, ELANNIS, Ariel Ivanda Etsuko Katayama, which was quite a mouthful. Her rank insignia of three full pips confirmed along with her considerable security clearance and authority. Direct from Rear Admiral Krystine Leone, the sitting vice-chief of Starfleet Intelligence, herself.

Maggie felt the weight of the entire organization on her shoulders all at once, and stood as close to attention as possible. "Shall I get my lieutenant, for you, sir?"

Commander Elannis held her gracious smile. "Would you, please? Thank you."

Unable to prevent a smile of her own, Maggie giggled. "It's no trouble at all, sir." Was she really flirting with her? She sent the silent signal to the inner office to summon the current officer of the watch, Ensign Miles Weatherby. Wait until he gets a load of this chick, she thought.

"May I he-help you, Commander?" stuttered Weatherby as he entered the reception area.

Elannis repeated what she told Maggie.

"May I ask how this particular prisoner is of interest to Starfleet Intelligence?"

"You may ask," replied Elannis softly. "But, I'm afraid the answer is classified. I've spoken with Vice Admiral Coburn, and he made arrangements for Four-Seven-Eight-Eight-Gamma-Eight to be transferred here by way of the starship *Fearless* from the penal colony on Jaros II."

Weatherby's eyes darted down to the display in front of him. His hands moved across the input pads until the proper information presented itself for his perusal. "Yes, sir. The prisoner was transferred a little over three days ago, but I don't have any orders from Admiral Coburn regarding a transfer into your custody."

"I apologize for not making myself clear, Ensign." Elannis tapped the same PADD displaying her credentials until the proper information appeared. "I'm transmitting a copy of these orders to you, now. Please take your time in running it through your authorization procedure."

In spite of the fact that he found it difficult to concentrate on anything other than staring at her, he mustered the last shred of his discipline to do just that. Above all else, he told himself, I am a Starfleet Officer and I have a duty to perform. He ran the orders through the system and found himself surprised at their validity. The admiral's notations were crystal clear, and required identification and clearance checks prior to transfer. "Would you mind, sir?" he said as he gestured to the computer.

"Not at all," replied Elannis. "Computer, recognize for X-Ray-two clearance."

The soft alto feminine voice replied, "Voiceprint authorization required for X-Ray-two clearance. Please input your authorization code, now."

Her gaze shifted up toward the disembodied voice. "Authorization: Elannis-X-Ray-Six-Zero-Five-Niner-Seven."

"Authorization confirmed. Commander Elannis is cleared for X-Ray-two access."

Elannis shifted her gaze between the commissioned and non-commissioned officers. "May I have my prisoner, now?"

Weatherby nodded. "Aye, sir. By your leave?"

"Of course," replied Elannis. "Thank you."

Left alone once more within the reception area, the seconds stretched into awkward minutes as Maggie continued to stare at Elannis without reservation. Every minute she spent within this woman's general vicinity made her thoughts run toward the erotic parts of her brain. Damn if Elannis was not looking right at her the entire time, wearing the same sexy smile since her arrival.

When the fifth minute ticked off since the ensign's departure, she ventured a question, "Commander, mind if I ask you a question?"

"Fire away."

Maggie licked her lips, causing the commander to widen her grin. "A-Are you, uh, passing this way again sometime soon?"

Elannis chuckled throatily. "Why do you ask?"

"I was wondering if maybe you'd like to have dinner sometime?" As soon as the words were out of her mouth, Maggie realized what a stupid thing it was to even ask. Officers and enlisted personnel do not fraternize.

Instead of chastising her, however, Elannis placed her forearms atop the reception desk's counter and leaned forward. Her chest draped over her arms like a dark wave collapsing upon them and the countertop. Without any warning, she placed a chaste peck on Maggie's left cheek and then returned to her standing position.

The contact of her lips against her skin reduced the corporal to her seat in a slump. She never heard the doors part and four people enter the lobby from the detention center. Maggie also never heard Ensign Weatherby talking to the commander regarding standard procedure in prisoner control.

"Sir, I would hope to transfer the prisoner to an armed unit. This is not just any prisoner," Weatherby expressed candidly. "You don't even have a sidearm, sir."

"I'm very aware of the prisoner's identity, Ensign. I'm also quite certain that the prisoner will not try to escape while in my custody. Without the need of a sidearm."

Weatherby's brow began to wrinkle, and his voice stammered. "A-And why is that, sir?"

Elannis strode up to him and allowed him to breathe in her scent. Her half-Orion physiology allowed her full pheromonal control over most humanoids she came in contact with. While serving aboard starships, however, she underwent weekly dosing of an inhibitor that allowed her to work without too much discomfort from the rest of her crew. Sometimes, the inhibitor could not keep up with her extreme attacks, but her mother taught her at an early age how to use her innate abilities as a weapon. Since her arrival at the starbase, her last inhibitor shot had already fallen out of effectiveness for nearly six hours.

She made absolutely sure of that.

Within seconds of her concentrated assault, Elannis smiled at the ensign's obvious struggle to maintain his composure. "For the same reason why you're fighting off the urge to jump my bones, Ensign. Trust me. She won't want to leave my side by the time I'm done with her. Understand?"

"Aye, sir." He snapped his fingers and forced himself to look away from her. Weatherby instead chose to focus on his Andorian staff sergeant. "Staff Sergeant, release the prisoner into the commander's custody."

The Andorian pushed the woman forward. "Commander, would you please enter in your authorization code to signal the transfer?"

Elannis grinned. "Of course, Staff Sergeant." She looked down at the PADD to make certain the prisoner's identity was correct. "I'm assuming custody of prisoner Four-Seven-Eight-Eight-Gamma-Eight," she announced in accordance with protocol.

The prisoner, a woman, looked up at her with rage in her eyes. "You better not try those whore tricks on me, bitch!"

Rather than applying force to the prisoner, Elannis merely took her by the hand. Immediately, her effects were visible on the prisoner's attitude. The intensity of her glare softened, and the taut skin of her face slackened as though she sank into a warm bath for the first time. "I'm sorry..." she whispered.

"That's better," Elannis noted with a smiling nod. "I'm sure we'll become very good friends. Wouldn't you like that, Sabrina?"

"Yes, I'd like that," the prisoner said eagerly.

Elannis reached up to tap her commbadge. "Elannis to *Sacramento*. Two to beam up."

The runabout's computer acknowledged the transmission, and within seconds, the transporter beam dissolved Commander Ariel Elannis and the former captain, Sabrina Diaz.

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