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Last time on The Adventures of Augment Gothic

Now that we'd gone through the rift we began the work of trying to figure out exactly where we were. We should be close to Earth, but we didn't exactly know much about these dimensional rifts, despite having taken all the information on them that we could from the Forge. We also got a ton of data on their dampening field technology, remembering the Breen weapon used during the Dominion war. The Temptress was not going to be destroyed that easily motherfuckers!

"Sensors confirm that we are in Federation space, Captain," T'Maz reported, to my delight and cheers from my girls in engineering who had opened a comm link with the bridge. "Syncing with Federation time beacons."

A moment later I heard several insistent beeps. After several years in the Star Trek dimension, I could tell when the beeps were bad.

Sigh...

"Federation time beacon shows a significant temporal inconsistency from internal ship chronometer," T'Maz reported just as stoically as she did everything else, besides sex with me.

"Why am I not surprised?" I said, after a long-drawn-out sigh. "What year is it? And are we even in the right dimension?" I asked tiredly, but only after closing my eyes, putting my feet up in the recliner, and sinking deep into my captain's chair and activating its massage function at maximum. I don't care how un-captainly my quiet groans of pleasure sounded.

Didn't the Gods of the Star Trek multiverse understand anything about narrative pacing? Going from one action packed adventure to another was just bad writing. You don't narrowly escape from the alien super villain only to find your triumphant return spoiled by unexpected time travel in real life. No, that was the stupid melodrama of an episodic television show.

The Adventures of Augment Gothic

Chapter 41

The Flighty Temptress. Alternate Universe.

At this point it was pretty clear to all of us that we were not back *where* we were supposed to be, much less *when* we should be. It was also pretty clear to me that we really didn't understand the intricacies of the dimensional rift or transit technology that we'd made use of and acquired from the Forge. Of course, I'd expected that there would be problems, especially since T'Maz and B'Elanna had had precious little time to study such an advanced piece of alien technology before actually using it, something that was so far beyond Federation science that it wasn't even funny.

Unfortunately, sticking around for too long in that place to patiently study and test things wasn't really an option either and was just begging for shit to go wrong. That station had been filled with millions, maybe even billions, of enemy soldiers in stasis, and who knew if killing that supervillain had activated some kind of delayed dead man contingency that would either see us killed or the galaxy overrun, or both. The possibility that it had sent a hidden signal to whatever race or contemporaries the alien supervillain I had defeated may have had, which is exactly what I would have done in their place, had forced me to move faster than I was otherwise comfortable with.

We knew the risks. The possibility that the dimensional rifts/portals the Forge could create could send us to alternate universes had been likely; hadn't I seen a Terran Empire vessel within the Forge's dampening field? Without more information I'd just assumed that it had been there for decades as part of that floating junk heap and/or that that had been the universe the Vorsoth had originally come from, I'd not considered that maybe the Forge was taking ships across both time and space and dimension. Canon DS9 didn't have dimensional travel technology, after all, yet the inhabitants of both the regular and mirror universe had crossed over into each other's dimension multiple times. Sue me.

Not that any of that mattered right now; recriminations, self or otherwise, were irrelevant and ultimately counterproductive. What did matter was getting back to our home universe in one piece as I had a pretty sweet life to return to back there. Having access to other universes was very cool, the potential for adventure and profit *extreme*, to put it mildly, but without the means to deftly navigate the infinite multiverse, and return home when we wanted to, the dangers associated with using that technology were equally extreme. Every use of the thing increased our chances of something going horribly wrong and us being killed, or maybe something even worse than death, like our souls being trapped in a hell dimension to be tortured by demons or some fucking crazy thing, like an eldritch horror.

And that was ignoring, of course, the potential for misuse and/or the consequences of anyone back home realizing we had the knowledge or capability. If anyone back home knew we had this capability, they'd hunt us to the ends of the fucking galaxy. In fact, this was exactly the kind of technology that I felt was too dangerous for even Section 31 to have possession of and lo and behold this tech fell right into my fucking lap, all while I had a Section 31 operative on my bridge who now *had* to learn everything she could about how this tech worked in order for us to get home! The universe was really out to ass fuck me this time, and there was no lube to be had.

I could only hope and pray that T'Maz would realize that sharing this information with Sloan would be a huge mistake. If she didn't, I'm not sure I had the heart to kill her, though the possibility of memory wiping her was tempting.

Fuck my life sometimes...and this is after I was trying to be more positive about all this craziness. This was exactly the kind of thing I was hoping to avoid and yet look where I ended up. Maybe my patron or Q was fucking with me and they wanted me to go to other universes to up their entertainment value. If so, I wish they'd just tell me.

"T'Maz, we need to figure out how to use the rifts to get home," I offered rather obviously to my fellow Section 31 agent. "Any ideas how to do that yet?"

The Vulcan spent several minutes going over all the information she had available. I patiently waited as I knew that there was quite a lot of technical data on the rifts we'd been able to download from the Forge's database once the leader of that strange space station had been killed. Once again, my 'overkill' style of design meant that I had put in a truly ridiculous amount of memory storage for just this kind of situation, meaning stumbling across some advanced alien technical database. It was a big part of my success so far, after all. The Vidiian harvester weapon we'd taken had helped a great deal in that respect as the thing had advanced memory and data compression technology built directly into the device; it was the only way they a precision transporter could be put into the thing.

I'd zinked that knowledge and had Natasha implement it as quickly as she could in all my equipment. She'd passed the same technical data to Hermione, but while the quantum entangled connection was still there with my assets in my home universe, the data throughput was even more restricted than before, which suggested that we were actually 'further' from our home dimension, in quantum terms, if such a thing even had any meaning in this context, than we'd been in the pocket dimension the Forge had occupied.

"None at this time, captain," she finally admitted, a hint of embarrassed frustration in her voice that only those who knew her well could probably detect. "There is a great deal of data to analyze before I can determine what...*error*...I may have made in my calculations. Every simulation conducted prior to our transit indicated that we should have been returned to the exact space/time location where we initially encountered the probe sent by the Forge."

Well, we weren't *there*, or even *then* for that matter.

"Why? Something wrong with your math?" B'Elanna asked, a touch too aggressively for a situation we needed to work together to overcome.

My head whipped around to silently glare the hybrid woman into submission. She ducked her head down in deference and apology, her gaze fixed on the conference table that we were sitting at. This situation was not exactly something she was used to and the thought of never being able to return home was obviously stressing her out a great deal. T'Maz looked entirely unaffected, of course.

"I apologize, T'Maz, that was uncalled for," B'Elanna offered quietly, not looking at the woman. I nodded and lowered the intensity of my gaze on her.

While her snarky tone of voice wasn't going to help matters or the crew's morale, I was secretly rather impressed with how well the hybrid woman was holding herself together, with only her formal Academy training to fall back on. We'd been through some strange, strange shit over the last few days and unlike the other women in my life, she wasn't used to the level of weird that was routine around me, having reminded myself once again that I had hired her before she had joined the maquis and most definitely before she had come into her own onboard *Voyager*.

"Not as such," T'Maz answered, with not a single iota of irritation in her voice. "My mistake was in the application of the technology, not in understanding the underlying mathematical theory. I believe that I can correct this flaw, but it will take a great deal of modification to the main deflector array. I cannot give an estimate at this time, Captain."

To be fair, she was dealing with a totally alien technology which utilized science well beyond that of the Federation's. Even with all the data we'd gathered from the Forge it wasn't that surprising that she'd gotten it wrong the first time. It was probably a miracle that we were alive at all. Experimenting with new technology almost always involved quite significant danger and even more failure.

"Take as much time as you need to do this safely, T'Maz. Unlike before, we're not in a highly volatile and unpredictable situation that we need to immediately remove ourselves from. The time travel aspect here might actually turn out to be a boon considering our ship will be much more advanced than the baseline political powers of this era," I told the spy. "While you work, we'll take a look around, to see what is going on around here."

It was quite possible that we'd be stuck here for a while. Getting a lay of the land was a necessity in a situation like this. Plus, this could be an opportunity for profit.

"Unless you need my assistance, T'Maz, I'll be down in engineering," B'Elanna said, looking at the chief science officer of the ship. "I still have some priority repair work to complete."

"B'Elanna, Neela, focus on only those repairs that require your direct oversight or involvement. Direct the holo-engineers to complete the simpler, more time-consuming repairs," I ordered.

"After that's done, start replicating any spare parts and/or any emergency supplies that we used or were stolen recently to bring us back up to normal levels. I don't want to be caught with our ready emergency supplies depleted if we need them again and the replicators are non-functional," I ordered.

"Understood, Captain. We'll ensure the ship is back to fighting form soon," Neela answered, before she and B'Elanna returned to engineering.

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"Captain, the Klingon ship we detected earlier is in range," T'Maz reported, from her position on the bridge. Neela, too, was currently on the bridge assisting her while we dealt with the Klingon ship, while B'Elanna listened from engineering.

I'd not forgotten about the cloaked Klingon vessel that we'd so easily detected. Once we got back to our universe and time, I'd have to see if these advanced Husnock designed sensors could penetrate the modern Klingon cloaking device. The chances were pretty good that they would be able to.

Looking over the sensor output from my captain's chair, the holographic screens floating in midair and locked to my eyeline, I saw that this Klingon ship was significantly larger than even a modern Vor'cha-class and was covered with thousands of hollow, ornamental metallic pods that were tightly interlocked to form a rather silly form of armor, which more than likely had some

kind of basis in Klingon religion or mysticism. These caskets contained the organic remains of Klingon warriors, dating back as far as thousands of years, if scans were to be trusted. The genetic diversity of the remains was actually rather interesting, from a historical sociological perspective.

While we couldn't get all the details due to the cloaking device interfering somewhat, our scans showed that this spacecraft was armed with directed energy weapons and primitive torpedoes, and possessed enough firepower to threaten even my ship, at least in our currently weakened state.

"This form of armor is rather perplexing," T'Maz reported, looking over the sensor readings on the thousands of coffins adorning the hull of the ship.

One of the few cultural things that was widely known about the race was that they were very practical when it came to how they treated the remains of their people, with very little funeral or burial rites to observe after death. The Klingon death ritual for warriors, for instance, which I'd seen performed several times in canon Star Trek episodes, only involved opening and staring into the eyes of the dying or dead individual, then bellowing loudly at the 'sky.' The bellowing supposedly warning the dead in sto-vo-kor that a Klingon warrior was about to arrive. It only took seconds to complete. That was in stark contrast to many other races' practices. The Bajoran death chant, for instance, was a traditional funeral ritual practiced among some conservative Bajorans and was over two hours long. I had participated in several during my time with the Resistance, at least when we had the time to do so after a mission and we were in relative safety.

No, after a brief ritual, a Klingon corpse was a shell, worthless, and no more deserving of respect, as the spirit had already moved on to the afterlife. The method of disposing of the body at that point was simply whatever was most practical and efficient at the time, which could mean dumping the body into the waste reclamation system to recycle for components, putting it out an airlock, or even just vaporizing the body with an energy weapon. For a warrior race that was constantly in conflict and where death was routine and frequent, it made great practical sense.

Yet these Klingons seemed to be treating their dead as if the bodies could somehow offer them mystical protection of some sort, which meant that the crew of this strange ship was like no other Klingons we'd dealt with before. Sensor readings indicated that the ship was extremely old, ancient even, so perhaps the Klingons had once cared more about the bodies of their honored dead. Either the Klingon historical and cultural database of our time and dimension was hiding some things, or perhaps this was a true alternate universe Star Trek dimension that might have had some significant difference in its history.

Or maybe it was as simple as these were some oddball fucking Klingons. I'd long since learned during my time in the Star Trek universe, that unlike in the television show, you don't get entire races unerringly following one set of ironclad principles, laws, or cultural precepts. There are always oddballs, outliers and such who go against the norm. No race was truly monolithic outside of a television show or movie.

Then again, we *were* in another universe, so perhaps the race was simply different here. Anything and everything was possible when you started joy riding across the multiverse. Bottom line, I needed to know more, before I made any sort of judgments or assumptions. While we were stuck here in this dimension and our ship was still in need of repairs, our safety depended on an accurate threat assessment of the locals.

"Any idea where they are going?" I asked my crew, my question being transmitted to engineering as well considering how little crew I had to assist me. I really needed to add some additional people.

Neela, one of my Bajoran babes, checked the sensors, and as she did my eyes roamed her form. Despite being overworked and in near constant danger recently, she was still very easy on my eyes. The Bajoran phaser on her hip added to her appeal, for some reason. Likely feeling my eyes on her ass, she turned around and gave me a wink, to which I smiled.

I would never regret derailing the path that her life was supposed to take when I had prevented her from falling into Winn's hands as a disposable pawn, eventually ending up in prison and discarded by the treacherous Vedek when she was no longer of use to her. If we were able to return to our universe safely my plan was to give my crew at least a week on my island to relax, be pampered, and decompress before getting back to work once again. They'd all also be getting a big bonus from whatever profit I made on this mission, which should make them feel good too.

"According to star charts and extrapolating for stellar drift and some other anomalies, I believe that this is the Pahvo system," Neela reported. "According to the database, it contains an M-class planet discovered by the Vulcans in the 21st century. It has two moons, but there is little additional information."

Hardly surprising given that the galaxy had about a 100 billion stars, and many of those stars had planets that surrounded them. The lack of information on a system that had been discovered nearly 3 hundred years ago was suspicious, though. The Vulcans and the Federation loved to chart space to an exhausting level of detail.

"Let's follow these Klingons at a safe distance and see what they are up to," I decided, before turning to T'Maz. "We should look over your data in my ready room. Neela you can return to engineering to assist B'Elanna."

This would leave the bridge unmanned, at least by living crew, but I knew that the ship and Natasha would let me know if anything important happened. And as interesting as this new universe was, I knew that I should first focus on getting us home safely. Hopefully I wouldn't get distracted.

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Onboard *The Flighty Temptress*. Alternate Star Trek Universe?

As T'Maz checked and rechecked the mind bogglingly complex mathematical equations at the heart of the dimensional rift technology they'd acquired from the Forge's database, much of which had yet to have even been conceived of by Federation mathematical theoreticians, she

found herself distracted. The errant thought that this new dimensional math might be the key that they had been looking for to more efficiently make the slipstream phase variance calculations was all but washed away by a wave of pleasure that coursed through her body. The cause of this distraction was her captain who stood behind her, grinding his unusually large manhood into her posterior, while his left hand massaged her uncovered left breast and his right hand had been inside her jumpsuit, plying her clit and wet pussy (as he called it) with his strong and deft fingers.

Her captain had found her working on the problem of returning home and yet had silently, gently, and unceremoniously, opened then pulled down her silver jumpsuit---the style her ancestor T'Pol once wore---leaving her naked from head to waist, then began to molest her. She had, of course, not resisted, even helped him as he disrobed her; he was her captain, and as she had often told him, was always available to satisfy his sexual needs to improve his operational performance, though she wished he would stop sucking the tips of her ears like that or running his tongue gently up and down her earlobe. The ears of a Vulcan were a powerful and distracting erogenous zone.

Unfortunately, T'Maz not been able to meditate in some time, and while she could normally control the intense emotions that all Vulcans needed to suppress throughout their lives, she was currently failing to do so around her new captain, the human Augment known as Gothic. His presence, his very life, had a gravitational pull akin to that of a great star, changing and twisting probability and reality around him with his very presence, bringing planets to heel, bringing order to disorder, and disorder to order.

That description felt poetic, perhaps hyperbolic when applied to an individual rather than stellar phenomena, and thus illogical in the extreme, but how else could she explain the improbable, if not impossible events and circumstances that regularly occurred and surrounded the man. Agent Sloan had once called Gothic a 'nexus individual,' saying that such people could summon the future itself by their presence and actions. At the time, she did not understand what that meant, relegating it to the illogic that plagued most humans she'd encountered in her life and career, even such a ruthlessly pragmatic and logical human like Agent Sloan. Now, though, she was beginning to understand a little as to what Agent Sloan had meant all that time ago. How could she not when she was caught in his orbit and had witnessed it firsthand.

Her captain had ways of testing her self-control that defied logic itself. He also had ways of getting into extremely improbable, if not near impossible, situations, that defied any semblance of logic or the existence of an orderly universe governed by rules. How could one man get into so much trouble so often, or be in the wrong place at the wrong time so frequently, as the human saying went? Or, arguably, be in just the *right* place to prevent terrible happenings from occurring. It would not be hyperbolic to say that Gothic, and his crew to a lesser extent, of which she was a part, had prevented an extra dimensional invasion of their universe that would have almost certainly succeeded. An invasion that they would have had no warning of or defense against. And not only had Gothic prevented the aforementioned extradimensional invasion, emerging relatively unscathed and victorious, but he had come out of the situation with advanced

alien technologies and scientific knowledge in his possession that would surely strengthen his position when they returned to their home reality.

While B'Elanna and Neela worked to repair the ship and return it to its full operational capabilities, she and Gothic had been working together to resolve whatever issues they were having with the dimensional transport technology, and thus their ability to return to their correct dimension and time. Unfortunately, this has been temporarily set aside due to their mutual attraction and physical needs. While T'Maz never minded helping Gothic with his biological need to mate and thus her exploration of human sexuality, in her logical opinion there were far more important things to focus on right now.

Unfortunately and admittedly, to her illogical shame and embarrassment, the desire was not fully one sided or entirely unwelcome. She, also, hadn't truly been able to remain fully focused on the priority task that was in front of her, intrinsically recognizing, just like the ship itself, that she was not at her full operational capability, despite her best efforts. A purging of her emotions through intense coitus might be exactly what she needed.

The sheer improbability of their circumstances they found themselves in had frayed her emotional self-control to the breaking point and she felt only the cathartic release of sexual intercourse with Gothic, a feeling she often had when around her fellow Section 31 agent, could help her regain her equilibrium and put her in the best place to solve their current dilemma. His augmented abilities, physical and mental, his resourcefulness and creativity, his utter ruthlessness in dispatching his enemies and protecting his crew and the people he cared for, and to a lesser extent his looks, made T'Maz feel enormously attracted to him.

"Would you like to me to suck your cock, captain?" T'Maz asked quietly

"Fuck yes!" Gothic whispered in her ear, before beginning the process of pulling off his advanced armor system, carelessly throwing his heavy weapons to the floor.

T'Maz gracefully dropped to her knees before her captain, still nude from the waist up, and greedily took hold of the long, hard shaft bobbing in her face with one of her soft hands, before opening her mouth wide and engulfing over half of it in a single determined movement. She was well practiced with this act having performed it a number of times and knew exactly what her captain liked best.

"It's been too long!" the human said, the pleasure clear in his voice as his hands came to rest gently on each side of her head, not yet directing the movement.

"Feel free to use me for your pleasure, my captain."

Gothic was clearly enjoying the sensation of having the Vulcan spy suck his cock again. T'Maz didn't respond; she was far too occupied with bobbing her head up and down, easily deep-throating him with each thrust. Eventually, as was Gothic's want, he firmly took hold of her head and 'fucked her face' with long, deep thrusts into her mouth, as her tongue lashed the underside of his cock like a snake. Saliva dripped from her mouth freely as her face was roughly fucked,

which she knew her captain enjoyed seeing. He had once told her a 'sloppy blowjob' was his favorite.

After only a few minutes of having his cock sucked, the Captain of the *Flighty Temptress* had obviously decided that it was time to move on to actual vaginal sex, though they often engaged in anal sex as well.

"Go bend over the console, slut," Gothic ordered gruffly.

T'Maz, as always, complied without hesitation, tacitly accepting her new name, first locking down the control interface in order to prevent her work from being corrupted, before bending fully at the waist, her hands bracing themselves on the console. She stuck her ass out as far as possible, wagging it from side to side to further entice her captain. Her hot Vulcan cunt was already copiously lubricated, 'dripping' as he liked to say, ready for the augmented human to do anything he wanted to her.

Gothic grabbed her hips firmly, then spread her butt cheeks open wide, gaping her pussy open under her jumpsuit, before sliding his hand down to her pussy and rubbing it over the slick fabric. While her outfit was still bunched up around her waist, it was extremely tight fitting, and the material wasn't thick, so it did little to desensitize her to the stimulation Gothic was providing with his deft fingers.

Rather than pull it down, the General rather brutishly took hold of her outfit and ripped it apart, easily destroying the outfit, which was actually quite sturdy despite its thinness, yet it was no match for the sheer strength a horny superhuman Augment could bring to bear when intent on thrusting his cock into her hot Vulcan cunt. While she would never admit it freely, for some reason that thought excited her greatly.

Soon Gothic was guiding his cock towards T'Maz's eagerly awaiting pussy.

"Ahhhhh!" T'Maz moaned/grunted/yelled in both pleasure and pain.

The Augment had slammed his cock into her as hard as he could, letting her pussy envelop nearly the whole thing with the first thrust, a thrust hard enough that it would likely have broken a human woman's pelvis. It didn't take the 21st century man long before he was thrusting his manhood into T'Maz's *very* accepting cunt, causing her to moan even louder.

T'Maz used every iota of her remaining self-control, which she was rapidly losing, to stop herself from cumming right away, as Gothic continued to pummel her tight pussy, varying his speed and angle of penetration, rolling his hips, rubbing her clit with his fingers, slapping her ass every few seconds to further stimulate her even further and assert his dominance over her. The man was an extremely adept lover and was making it very hard for her to stay in control of her emotions and reactions. She desired to orgasm as her lover did, not before.

"Please, captain, hurry up and cum; I wish to cum with you!" she requested in a yell, turning around a bit to look at him fiercely.

Rather than do as she wished Gothic gave a mocking grin and then slapped her ass hard one more time, causing her to again cry out in pleasure, before flipping her over so that her back was resting on the angled control console. She knew that her big, firm, and perfectly shaped breasts were on display, flopping and jiggling around with each hard thrust of his cock inside her more than accepting body.

Gothic gripped her hips tightly, almost bruisingly, as he resumed his torrid pace, fucking the beautiful Vulcan as hard as he could, her breasts bouncing vigorously, the wet sounds her pussy made loud in the room. The strain on T'Maz's physical control was epic; she did not want to orgasm before she wished to.

However, she didn't need to worry it seems, as Gothic had begun to slam his hips into T'Maz's with increasing rapidity. According to her observations and past sexual experience with the man, this was a sure sign that his climax was approaching.

"Cum inside me, Gothic! Fill my slutty Vulcan pussy full of your hot Augment seed!" yelled T'Maz in pleasure. "Reshape it so that none may bring me pleasure but you!"

"I'm going to fill you up, slut!" Gothic practically roared.

She was urging the human male to cum as soon as possible, so she could let go and cum as well. She'd noticed that 'dirty talk,' as humans called it, could speed things along and enhance the sexual experience if used correctly and was surprisingly pleasing to her as well when Gothic was in the mood to speak dirty to her too. It was effective this time as well as she felt him swell inside her.

Unlike all the other times they had had sexual encounters, however, she heard the distinctive whine of a transporter rematerialization sequence. Turning around, she saw Gothic's bliss baton device in his hand. Her eyes widened in stunned realization as he brought the glowing neon blue metal ball down and pressed it right against where his cock and her clit met as he penetrated her.

Her vision went white as she came, their bodies in a pleasure locked rictus, a ringing filled her ears as she gradually came back to herself, Gothic's cocked pressed as deeply into her as it could go. While they came together, the ridiculous, but pleasurable device, that Gothic had designed had fallen from his hands to the floor. He was breathing hard, his head thrown back and eyes closed tight, shaking slightly. She sat up and gently locked her heels on his behind and pulled him into her body, gently resting her head over his rapidly beating heart as he came back to himself.

"Yeah, I think we both really needed that," the Augment who had turned her life upside down softly said, after wrapping his arms tightly around her in a gentle embrace, his still hard cock remaining inside her.

As he gently pulled his cock from her pussy's tight grip on it, the tight seal they had made broke and his semen poured out of her. As she had discovered during her research of human sexuality, Gothic's average volume of semen was much larger than was normal for baseline human males. As she had nothing to clean the fluid up with and the semen had rejuvenating and health effects

both physically and mentally, which would aid her work, she cupped her hands and caught as much as she could. Bringing it up to her lips, she drank deeply from it, even licking her fingers as the effects took hold of her and she shivered in pleasure. Gothic watched with a proud smile on his face. Once she was done and had stood up, Gothic gave her a swift, loud slap on the ass and told her to get on with her work.

This might seem rather cold, but her work was important and neither of them should have allowed their sexual desires to interfere with the completion of this important task. On the other hand, relieving her Captain's stress was also vitally important to the survival of the ship and crew. The fact that it allowed her to both express and fully purge the building emotions her lack of meditation had allowed was merely a fortuitous side benefit.

Fortunately, T'Maz had no problem with walking the corridors of the ship with a new spring in her step, still completely naked, dried cum visible on her thighs, cunt, and stomach for all to see, a slight Vulcan smile on her lips. The carpet was plush and felt quite agreeable on her bare feet, after all.

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Having decided that T'Maz needed the catharsis of a good, hard fuck in order to give her all to deciphering/understanding previously theoretical or completely unknown math and science, I returned to my ready room on the bridge and began gathering information on this universe while my fellow Section 31 agent worked on getting us home.

That study would be somewhat delayed by my actions, as she needed to get her feelings back under control, and possibly need to sleep, but in the end I think she'd come at this problem fresh, relieved of stress, and centered once again in the morning, even better than before. Thankfully, this dimensional transit or rift technology allowed movement through both time and into other dimensions, therefore we could theoretically arrive right back at the same time that we had originally left. Of course, that would *not* be a good idea on several levels. While my connection to Hermione and the island was being affected by the dimensional displacement, it was still there.

If we returned to the exact moment we left, then all her interactions with us and the assistance she had provided us so far would be essentially wiped out. Without her help, who is to say we would have succeeded in actually returning home, which could create all manner of temporal paradoxes that could affect the universe and bring down the wrath of the Federation time cops. Of course, if we arrived months or years past the time we left, who knew what we might return to. We could return to a Star Trek universe in which the Collectors had already won and everything that I had built had come to ruin.

I would need to suppress all knowledge of these capabilities and hope T'Maz agreed with me and didn't report back to Section 31 with this information, but that was a problem for a different day.

With no need to rush, I'd decided we would need to wait for the repairs to be completely finished before risking the use of another dimensional shift/jump. We'd taken some minor damage the last

time traveling that way, so we might as well take the time to finish repairs as well as take a proper look around to see if the locals had anything worth taking back with us.

I'd also given new orders to B'Elanna and Neela to completely insulate our power distribution system with isodesium and to take her time to precision replicate all the needed casings and conduits, ripping out and replacing anything that we'd hastily and haphazardly replicated and installed while working under the dampening effect of the Forge. According to the simulations she and T'Maz had cooked up, this would both protect us from the Vorsoth dampening field technology, if we should ever encounter it again, but also make the ship either immune, or, at the very least, more resistant, to other varieties of dampening field technology in the future. Now, *that*, was a capability well worth any delay.

"So the Federation and the Klingons are currently at war in this reality," I offered to Natasha, who was 'working' on a padd while sitting on my office's couch, but was mostly thinking aloud. Of course, her working on a padd was utter bullshit and unnecessary, even her holographic appearance here was ultimately unnecessary, but she wanted to spend time with me, which I couldn't help but to appreciate. She was my creation, my daughter in a way, and I enjoyed spending time with her and bouncing ideas. "Ever since something called the Battle at the Binary Stars? That's very interesting."

Natasha gave a humm of acknowledgement. The Klingon ship's data security was no match for my ship's electronic warfare capabilities.

"There are several notable differences in our two histories," Natasha responded, without looking up.

We'd been able to access quite a bit of information on the local conditions in this universe. Since there was a war going on, most of the subspace communications we could pick up, from both sides, were heavily encrypted, however my ship's VI was having little trouble with decrypting them as we had much more advanced computers in terms of both hardware and software. It also didn't help that those encryption schemes, used by both the Federation and the Klingons in the past, were over a century old by our time, fairly well known, and had long ago been breached.

"My lord, I've found what seems to be an abandoned Starfleet ship only a few light years from our current location," Natasha reported. "We could check it out and still make it to the Pahvo system long before the Klingons do."

I really loved my new ship (even if it kept getting damaged by circumstances well outside my control or ability to predict), since we didn't even need to actually use the slipstream drive in order to beat the native vessels of this reality there, especially not at these relatively 'short' distances. Thankfully, I was a big fan of redundancy and overkill, so my ship had a second FTL propulsion system in the form of a conventional warp drive, something that I had reused and upgraded from my old ship given to me by Q.

The new *Temptress*' upgraded warp drive had a top cruising speed of warp 9.95, so we'd be much faster than anything this time period otherwise had available, which was good because the slipstream drive was currently out of order. Well, not out of order, per se, but with all the repairs

we'd had to do on the fly and the lack of time to closely study our quick slipstream jaunt before this current adventure, it just wasn't a great idea, even if the chances were good that everything would be ok. That was ignoring, though, the distinct possibility that there could be something unique, different, or unknown about this universe's physical parameters that could kill us if we used the slipstream drive. It just wasn't worth the risk. Even using our warp drive was a risk, but a much lesser one since the ships we'd detected had warp drives similar to our own, albeit more primitive.

"Set a course to that abandoned Starfleet ship then, maximum warp," I ordered. "I want to see the local tech up close. Maybe grab a copy of their database."

"Aye, captain. Course set, maximum warp ready," Natasha dutifully responded to my order.

"Engage!" I said with a smile, channeling my inner nerd as my command came out like Captain Picard would have.

I really need to come up with my own command phrase.

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Starfleet Ship. Alternate Universe.

The small Starfleet vessel was of a class that I'd never seen before, but that wasn't surprising to me; the Federation had been around for a long time and by the time of TNG/DS9/Voyager there must have been many designs that had come and gone over the many years.

Nor was I shocked to find the corpses of Starfleet officers who had apparently valiantly died trying to defend their ship, after I beamed over by myself with my armor fully deployed, including the head covering. The crew complement was mostly human or at least human-looking, but had far more aliens than I'd been expecting considering that you didn't see all that many on Kirk's ship in TOS. That, of course, might have had more to do with the budget limitations of a television show than anything else. Since I'd come to this universe, there had been many instances, I'd realized, where the demands of a network television show, either because of monetary considerations or content limits, glossed over certain things or completely left them out. Reality was a much different animal.

I had beamed onto a lower deck to get a lay of the land, as it were, planning to make my way slowly and cautiously to the bridge of the ship. T'Maz questioned why I didn't just beam onto the bridge in the first place, since the ship was empty according to our advanced sensors. It was that lack of caution, even from a hardcore and experienced Section 31 agent in this case, admittedly one that was not a full-time field operative, that confirmed that even T'Maz was infected with Federation/Starfleet stupidity, though much less seriously than most. That kind of thinking, the lack of appropriate caution, was exactly what got so many Starfleet away teams in trouble on the show, seeing one or more of the red shirts on the team killed per mission. I was trying to live my life with all that in mind as serious bullshit best to avoid. Those repeated mistakes and acts of stupidity, in my opinion, weren't going to be my mistakes too.

Riding up in the still functional turbolift to the bridge, my caution, and the many hard and bloody lessons I'd learned during the Occupation when we'd routinely taken on a technologically superior and better equipped Cardassian military, was paying off once again as my armor's head's up display (HUD) lit up in red with numerous high priority alerts. My armor's sensors had detected several life signs on the supposedly empty bridge. Some might say that I wasn't being cautious enough as I'd taken a turbolift, instead of the Jefferies tubes, to reach the bridge, which had alerted the people hidden on the bridge. In this case, that was a calculated risk, and was part of the reverse ambush I was executing. In the privacy of my thoughts, I admitted that I had also probably taken the turbolift because I had had just about enough of that during my last covert mission.

As I'd lamented many times before in this new life, there were a fuck ton of different ways to hide your life signs from sensors at a distance. Thankfully, most likely because of the close proximity, my armor's onboard sensors had pierced through whatever stealth or obscuring field they were using to hide their presence.

My HUD was a work of programming genius, adaptable and designed to provide me with useful real-time data and information. At the moment, it was rather helpfully providing me with a countdown to the turbolift I was riding reaching the bridge level and its doors opening, along with an updating schematic of the bridge and the life signs' exact locations being highlighted.

Stepping quickly to the side and thus out of view of the doors, my sidearm already in hand and up, I waited for the turbolift to reach its destination and for the doors to swish open. In mere seconds, the turbolift slowed and the doors opened. Just as I had expected, dozens of neon green disrupter bolts flew into the space my body had been only moments before, impacting the back wall of the lift, devoting large holes and melting the duranium plating with the intense heat.

After experiencing so much combat, my eyes were closed as I waited, my face the picture of a still lake, practically serene, my heartbeat slow and steady

With the cacophony of weapons' fire going on, I mentally commanded my armor to beam three flashbangs out of my inventory. These flash bangs were fundamentally the same in function as the ones from my time, but they had been improved with 24th century science. In fact, the early design had been made with Data's help back in my first month in this universe onboard the *Enterprise* and I had since used them to great effect many times during the Occupation, especially in those instances where I wanted to preserve nearby technology for looting.

These flashbangs were smaller, each a ruggedized cylinder tube that fit well in the palm of my hand for easy throwing, about an inch and a half in diameter. It had been a strategic decision to keep them chemical and mechanical in nature, just like in my old time. This meant that that they were much less energy intensive to replicate as well as much harder to detect by modern sensors and thus often overlooked. With the more advanced chemistry and material science involved in each device, however, they would produce a far louder sound and flash of light than was possible in my time.

At the first sign of the weapons fire slowing, I activated all three flashbangs in my left hand, waited an additional 1.5 seconds to burn some of the time on the fuse, and then quickly spun in a tight circle from cover on one side of the turbolift to the other, throwing all three devices in an arc to cover the entire bridge, my brain and HUD automatically recording the positions of the ten Klingons on the bridge likely waiting to ambush any Starfleet officers they hadn't killed the first time around, or those attempting to salvage the vessel or render aid to the ship, just like the so called honorable warriors they claimed to be.

I waited with my antiproton pistol in hand a heartbeat for the deafening explosion of sound and blinding light, tactical rolling onto the bridge and then up to my feet, my HUD auto dampening the sound and light to keep it from affecting me. An Augment's hand eye coordination and ability to do two complex tasks by splitting focus is a fearsome thing, with my HUD providing me information, it was almost too easy for the pistol in my right hand to sweep the right side of the room, barking bright bolts of blue antiprotons into stunned and disoriented Klingon heads, while the disrupter blaster on my left wrist spit dozens of deadly green disrupter bolts into bodies on the left side of the bridge, practically tearing them apart given the short range and sheer number of bolts that hit each body.

When my right wrist and left wrist met in the middle, aiming at the center of the bridge, all ten Klingons were dead or dying according to my sensors. Never one to take a risk with such a thing, I quickly shot each body in the chest and head once more to make entirely sure that the job was done.

Looking over my bloody work not 30 seconds after exiting the turbolift, I detected no life signs besides my own. These were Klingons, but they were just wrong, not looking at all like what I had expected. They were larger and more alien-looking than the ones I was used to, and they should be looking more like humans in this period of history, as their cranial ridges should be missing.

In the year 2154, the Klingons gained access to the genetic material of Khan-era human augments who had easily killed the crew of a Klingon bird of prey and captured the ship. Intrigued by the physical prowess of these human augments, they had tried to adapt the enhanced DNA to improve their own genome, however it had gone terribly wrong, as was so often the case. The volunteer test subjects gained increased strength and intelligence for a time, but soon their neural pathways started to degrade and they died in agony. Messing with your DNA to that extent was an extremely risky business, especially when you tried to essentially copy and paste desirable DNA from another species altogether. How the Klingons thought that would work was beyond me. Even minor improvements in the 24th century carried the risk for serious unintended consequences.

One of the subjects suffered from the Levodian flu, which was modified by the augment DNA to become a fatal, airborne, mutagenic plague that spread rampantly through the Empire, from world to world.

In the first stage of this plague Klingons lost the cranial ridges on their foreheads and began to look more human. With the help of a Klingon scientist named Antaak and Dr. Phlox of the Earth

starship *Enterprise*, these two were able to use the DNA of Captain Archer to develop a cure that halted the genetic effects of the virus in the first stage.

This meant the changes in appearance were permanent for infected individuals, along with some minor neural re-ordering. The neural ordering caused changes in the emotions of the Klingons. For example, the infected started to feel fear, which the crinkle heads didn't normally have to worry about.

Even though the infected did not develop any stage-two characteristics - such as enhanced strength, speed, or endurance - they did not die from it. This left millions upon millions of Klingons physically changed. These alterations were even passed on to their children.

By the TNG era the Klingons had regressed to their earlier appearance, or had determined the minor genetic modification necessary to regain their ridges and old neural patterns, and had returned to their warrior ways. Actually, it must have happened before that since the Klingons had had the head ridges in the TOS era movies, but that could be retconning at work. What the true answer was, I didn't even know; they were actually quite hush hush about the whole thing.

As for these strange Klingons, that wasn't the only thing that was different about these so-called warriors. Their armor was more garish and as for their weapons, well, they were using bat'leths, but these versions of the iconic blade looked even less practical than the ones I was used to.

Still, I took one of the weapons anyway so that I could compare them to the Klingon bat'leths back home. The ones here might be made using a different forging process or from different metals. I'd like to know.

"How are things over there?" B'Elanna asked me through the comm unit built into my helmet.

I didn't reply right away. Instead I activated a subspace link between my armor/omnitool's VI, Mila, and the one on the ship, Scarlett, so that information could be freely shared between them. This would allow them to see what I was seeing via my armor's sensors. This was not something I kept on as a matter of course as the risk of detection wasn't zero with an active link, but the risks here were minimal. No doubt T'Maz would have found this all interesting to look at, but she would either still be resting or working on the dimensional rift/transit technology.

"See for yourself," I said, gesturing at the charnel house that was the bridge of Starfleet ship.

I heard Ro gasp and swear, and I couldn't blame her for the emotional outburst. There were corpses all over the bridge, of the Starfleet bridge crew of this ship and lots of dead Klingons, including the ten fresh corpses of the Klingons I'd just killed. Just by looking at the scene and the way the bodies had fallen, I was able to get a good idea of what had happened here.

As best as I could tell, the security officers had done their very best to defend the ship, however they had been overwhelmed, and the Klingons had killed anything moving. The duty uniforms of this Starfleet were unfamiliar to me, unsure what the colors meant in terms of department, but it wasn't hard to guess which of these Starfleet officers had been unarmed science types and which had been capable of fighting back.

Clearly, the Klingons hadn't given a shit which they were; they simply cut everyone down, sometimes stabbing people in the back as they obviously tried to escape. How anyone could consider the Klingons to be an honorable warrior race was still a mystery to me, in this dimension or my home one. An honorable warrior race would differentiate between warriors and unarmed non-combatants.

Sure, I'd killed plenty of people myself, mostly during the Occupation, and I'd not exactly been honorable back then in the way I fought or in the amount of collateral damage there sometimes was, but I'd *never* pretended to be an honorable warrior. To be fair, though, I *had* considered myself to be a freedom fighter, rather than a terrorist, which was a very, very fine distinction and mostly based on which side you were on and who ultimately won the conflict in the end.

Pushing those thoughts aside, I placed my smiley face sticker transporter tags on several Klingon and Starfleet energy weapons so that I could also compare them to the weapons technology back home, beaming them into my armor's buffer inventory. It was unlikely that the study of them would advance my technology even a little bit, but even a small innovation or design ingenuity would be worthwhile. Besides, they weren't exactly huge and I had plenty of room on my island home or on my ship for souvenirs from my many travels. They could also make interesting display and conversation pieces. My girls had called me a pack rat at times, which was a spurious accusation that had no basis in reality. I was an avid *collector* of curiosities and nick knacks at best.

So far none of the local tech I'd seen lying around, other than some weapons and a few tricorders, had caught my eye as being worthy of looting. All of it seemed obsolete by the standards of the time I was used to, but there could be some innovations that only a close scan would reveal so I was crossing my proverbial fingers there.

As for why I was here on the bridge at all, rather than doing this from the comfort of my ship, while my computer technology was centuries more advanced than what was here, my VI couldn't simply hack into Starfleet computers and download everything remotely. A direct link would be required between my omni-tool and the target ship's computer.

Of course, even my enhanced omnitool, with the brilliant data compression schemes the Vidians had developed, could not hold all the data a starship like this would have, but it could serve as a relay to transfer all the information back to the *Flighty Temptress*. This would take a few minutes at most. Opening up an ODN access port on one of the command consoles, I linked my omnitool to the ship's systems with a hard line from my omnitool to the port, purposely replicated to fit the computers of this time.

"Mila, initiate linkup and begin transfer. Download the entire database and transmit concurrently to the *Temptress*. Scarlett, prepare to receive data and begin decryption immediately, data security segregation protocols are in effect," I ordered my personal VI and the VI in control of my ship.

With those orders the database download began. Of course, there were a *ridiculous* number of computer safeguards to prevent someone from doing exactly what I was doing, but nothing my far more advanced tech couldn't override or bypass.

"We'll need to get moving soon if we want to beat the Klingons to that planet that's putting out the strange signal," Ro reminded me over the comm.

Yes, my time in this strange reality would be limited, hopefully, but it was important to gather what information, technology, and valuable material I could before moving on. That was kind of my bread and butter these days.

While the download was ongoing I looked around some more. By the looks of things these Starfleet officers had died at their posts, some of them clearly working to the very last moment to make repairs or resist the boarding in progress, while others thought to either buy time or just to resist something that they couldn't truly prevent. I wondered if that was brave or foolish in the end. Maybe it was a bit of both, but that courage, that conviction in their duty, even if futile, was something to be respected and admired. There were a lot of shit ways to die, dying at your post while defending your ship and crew to your very last breath seemed liked a distinctly good way to go.

The Captain, who was a Bolian judging by the crease down his face and his blue skin, had died in his chair. I didn't think that he put up a fight, but he hadn't run either; he'd died at his post. There was some honor in that.

I next moved over to the tactical station to see what the sensor logs could tell me about this battle. According to the logs, the ship's weapons had still been firing when the intruder alarms had gone off, meaning that the Klingons had begun a boarding operation in the middle of battle, probably taking advantage of a convenient shield grid failure. That was bold of them, as it could have turned out to be a suicide mission if their ship lost. Of course, the Klingons glorified death in battle so they wouldn't have cared. They'd have smiled at the idea.

"Local download is complete. Transfer of all data to the *Temptress* will be complete in 30 seconds," Mila reported.

"Good work, Mila," I complimented.

I threw one last long glance at the bridge and all the dead here. While I certainly wanted to poke around some more, I knew that it was time to get going. There was a lot of this strange galaxy left to see before we left it, and maybe even some opportunities for profit. Those Federation hippies might call me a Ferengi for thinking like that, but most of them didn't have a harem of beautiful women, or own their own private, good sized, semi-tropical island with a luxurious palace fortress on it, or owned their own warship giving them the freedom to safely roam and explore the galaxy at will, in probably the most advanced known warship in the alpha quadrant. Soon enough I may even be able to traverse time or the freakin' multiverse if I felt like it.

So they just suck it.

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Onboard *The Flighty Temptress*. Alternate Reality.

After Natasha and Mila had conducted a thorough comparative analysis of our two ship's historical databases, we determined that this reality was quite similar to the one I now called home, with only a few small differences at key points in time. To start with, there were a few minor, but notable historical differences, mostly involving or connected to the Klingons. There had been some terror attacks, for instance, made by the Klingons, that hadn't happened in my universe's timeline.

Those attacks were bad enough to thrust the Federation, and the fractured and factionalized Klingons, into a state of long-term cold war, but the outbreak of the war was marked by the Battle of the Binary Stars on stardate 1207.3. This battle was provoked by T'Kuvma, a Klingon from the House of T'Kuvma, who wished to rally the Empire to unite against a common threat, to this end he portrayed the Federation as an existential threat, whose ever growing space had encroached unacceptably and uncomfortably close to that of the Klingons.

There was no mention of this T'Kuvma in the history of our universe's timeline, yet in this reality he was considered to almost be Kahless Reborn and had died a martyr to his cause, his followers now fighting in his name.

In the first six months of the war, the Federation had lost 8,186 highly trained officers. While bad, it really wasn't as bad it could have been given that the crinkle headed fuckers had no problems wiping out the populations of entire planets and even killing those who couldn't truly fight back.

After hacking into the classified files of the ship I'd just boarded, ones meant for the eyes of the command officers only regarding the state of the war, I discovered that a Captain Gabriel Lorca of the USS *Discovery* had been given the freedom to do whatever it took to win the war, even if it meant breaking the rules of Starfleet and the laws of the Federation. That spoke of some desperation, that they did not think they could win a conventional war with the Klingons. That was interesting.

According to the Federation historical database, there had been a Captain Gabriel Lorca in our timeline, only he had commanded a different ship altogether and according to the records had died when that ship had been destroyed in an ion storm.

As part of this effort to win the war at any cost, even if it required them to do things that went against their core beliefs and morality, Starfleet co-opted some theoretical research that was being led by Paul Stamets into an experimental 'spore drive.' An experimental device which would somehow allow them to access the 'Mycelial Network' for travel, a subspace organic web that permeates the universe, maybe even all universes. There was no mention of this in my ship's historical database, not even a disproved or crazy theory suggesting it as a possibility. It was possible that the existential threat the Klingons represented in this universe had led to the idea being given some credence, or a grasping at straws that resulted in something actually viable, that otherwise hadn't happened in my dimension. Or the key players behind it might have died or

never been born in our native Star Trek dimension. Who knows? The Federation's historical database had a lot of data, but it didn't have everything. That just wasn't possible.

So, apparently, they had some kind of FTL method that was powered by mushrooms. That had to be one of the stupidest sounding things that I had ever heard, though given how often crazy turned out to be true in Star Trek, I also wouldn't be surprised in the slightest if it worked beyond anyone's wildest expectations. Maybe it was unique to this universe only?? Some local circumstance that made it viable? I was starting to wonder if this universe existed because of some idiot who'd written some bad fanfiction. Not that I would know anything about that.

The Klingons themselves were a significant divergence between the two universes. For some reason the whole damn species had changed; it wasn't just a group or a small faction. Gone were their signature long manes, dramatic eyebrows, and sinister goatees; they actually had no body hair at all, and their leather uniforms and sashes had been replaced by elaborate tunics of some sort that were adorned with spiky bits of metal.

Six months into the war, I had learned, the *Discovery* managed to successfully test the drive and went on to achieve a string of key victories over the Klingons using its unique capabilities. This was made possible by capturing an alien, one that they had named a Tardigrade, that was uniquely suited to interacting with the mycelial network.

My databanks told me that Tardigrades were a phylum of water-dwelling, eight-legged, segmented micro-animals on Earth. They were first described by the German zoologist Johann August Ephraim Goeze in 1773, who gave them the name of "little water bears." The name Tardigrada was given three years later by the Italian biologist Lazzaro Spallanzani.

So, I was meant to believe that the Starfleet of this timeline, had a highly advanced and experimental engine, on a *single* ship, that was powered by magic mushrooms and navigated by microscopic creatures that lived in water. Could this be disinformation of some kind?

Reading some more of this craziness I discovered that in November of 2256, a Klingon force managed to slip past the blockade defending Corvan II, a major resource hub, whose mines produced forty percent of the dilithium supplies in the Federation.

Corvan II was an inhabited planetoid in the Corvan system, near the Aneto system. Rainforests on the planetoid were home to the Corvan gilvo, which were threatened by industrial pollutants during the 24th century. Normally, the Federation was much more careful about pollution and such so I'd not realized that it was a Federation world. Upon further research, I discovered that while it supplied some dilithium to Starfleet back in my new home dimension, it was not actually a Federation Planet.

In this reality, it actually was a full Federation world, probably because of how important the strategic resources it produced were to the continued functioning of the Federation of this dimension. Without the planetoid's vital resources, a sizeable part of Starfleet here would be grounded or wouldn't exist. By the time the colony managed to get a distress call out, the planetary defense shields had only another six hours before it would fall under the continued Klingon bombardment. With the closest ship too far away to render assistance before the defense

shields fell, the *Discovery* quickly responded, outmaneuvered, and destroyed the attacking Klingon vessels using its experimental spore drive.

Wow, this read like a network television show on its own!

After their first success with the spore drive, *Discovery* quickly became the most important weapon in the Federation arsenal, causing the tide to turn and allowing the Federation to start winning the war. In the three weeks following the relief of Corvan II, *Discovery* further used its drive to break the Klingon supply line at Benzar and rout an attack through the Ophiucus system. Starfleet then started building spore drive units in a secret facility on Earth, while directing every ship, colony, and starbase to search for more tardigrades.

This made no sense to me, why didn't they bring this super ship of theirs back to Earth so that it could be protected at all costs? No, instead they let it go on missions where this one-of-a-kind vessel could be destroyed, or worse, captured by the enemy. If this one super ship was so vital to the war effort that it couldn't be temporarily pulled away to be better studied and reproduced, then maybe the Federation of this dimension deserved to lose to the Klingons because they were weak as fuck.

The chances that this was some kind of trick they were playing on the Klingons to get them to expend resources chasing bullshit felt very high to me. Only those Klingon morons would be dumb enough to think that there was a super ship flying around that was powered by mushrooms and microscopic organisms. But again, maybe this universe was so damn different in makeup that this was somehow all possible.

On the subject of the Klingons, according to some recent intelligence reports, a man called General Kol had established a new ruling council. Starfleet believed that he had ousted the House of D'Ghor and the House of Mo'Kai, who secretly approached Vulcan to discuss a potential alliance. However, this was in fact a ruse by Kol to capture a high-ranking Vulcan.

The plan had worked better than expected when, due to unforeseen circumstances, Admiral Katrina Cornwell arrived in the place of Sarek. After Cornwell's capture, Kol welcomed Dennas' and Ujilli's Houses into his empire and promised them cloaking technology.

As more houses joined this new faction led by General Kol, the number of ships utilizing cloaking technology increased, and Klingon activity had become more aggressive and far more dangerous to the Federation. In our dimension, the Klingons actually got their cloaking tech from the Romulans, they didn't invent it themselves, yet that seemed to be the case in this reality.

"This timeline is nuts, but it makes for some fun reading," I said to the bridge crew. "Mushroom powered starships and a war that never happened."

By now T'Maz had recovered from our recent liaison and her work had substantially improved after our fuck session, no matter how much she likely thought that it hadn't been needed. Even the Vulcans weren't above self-delusions, I had realized. I know I certainly felt better and more centered. Our mission to take down the Forge had been more high pressure and stressful than I'd realized and we still hadn't returned home. The possibility that we may never be able to return

home was one that I refused to acknowledge. If we got back to Earth, no, *when* we got back to Earth, I was going to insist on my entire crew taking some much-needed vacation time on my island.

On a whim, I did a search for Section 31 and to my surprise I found classified documents on the organization. They weren't exactly public, but they also weren't a secret known only to a handful of people either. In this dimension, the spy group's existence and purview seemed to be known to many, many people in Starfleet, which was super strange.

Next I checked out the status of the *Enterprise*, because frankly that was always a good idea. In my universe Captain April had commanded the *Enterprise* at this point in time, only here Captain Pike was in charge, for some reason.

"We're entering the Pahvo system," T'Maz reported.

"Very good, raise cloak," I ordered.

"We are picking up a signal," T'Maz reported to me. "Some kind of music, which is being broadcast into space by a massive crystal transmitter.

Well, that sounded cool, maybe I should make a recording for my future listening pleasure.

"This is not a known feature of this planet in our universe," the Vulcan reported. "I can also detect a signal coming from this world on a subspace band that we don't normally monitor."

That must be what had lured the Klingons here, and a Starfleet ship as well, one that looked somewhat like a pizza cutter of all things.

"Please make sure that you record that music," I ordered T'Maz. "I'm sure the Klingons, being the enemies of all things good and fun will do something to bring it to a swift end."

The Klingon ship was now decloaking, so I figured that the shooting was about to begin.

"Back us off to avoid any stray weapon's fire," I ordered, even though we were under cloak. A stray shot being stopped because it had impacted our hull would give the game away. "If there's going to be a battle here we don't want to get involved, even accidentally."

While the vessels of this time would normally be no match for mine, my ship still wasn't in full working order, and I really didn't want to undo all of B'Elanna and Neela's recent hard work by getting shot at. They'd only blame me.

"What the hell?" I whispered in shock.

I couldn't believe what I was seeing. The Starfleet ship was appearing and disappearing, all over the place.

"This has got to be part of the disinformation campaign that Starfleet is using on the Klingons," I said to the bridge crew. "No ship can move like that."

T'Maz was frantically working her controls at this point; no doubt she was running many different kinds of scans at the exact same time.

"I have no explanation," she offered quietly, looking perplexed. "It is not a hologram, Captain, or a sensor trick. That really is a starship, phasing in and out of normal spacetime."

"Is it entering subspace?" I asked.

"Negative," T'Maz shortly replied, looking more and more frazzled.

Well, either this universe's underlying laws of reality were so crazy that you actually could move a starship with magic mushrooms or the Starfleet vessel was using some technobabble mind trick to fool people. The latter was far more likely.

"Continue scanning this phenomenon," I ordered.

This reality was seriously weird. The pizza cutter ship was still leaping around with no end in sight. I could see no reason for these bizarre movements and just watching it was making me a little dizzy.

"I would like to request the assistance of the engineering crew to run additional scans," T'Maz requested. "Some of these scans are quite energy intensive and could be picked up the ships in the area. The probability of detection, however, is less than 10%."

Well, given how rough I'd been when fucking her earlier I figured that I owed her a small favor, though taking away B'Elanna and Neela from their repair duties would slow us down some and leave us a bit more vulnerable.

"Go ahead. Use whatever resources you need," I said, after a moment's consideration. Given how much more advanced my ship was compared to the ships of this time, the risk was minimal, even if we were detected.

Hopefully all this jumping around would be over soon. While it was definitely interesting, and a mystery to solve, it would likely offer us little help solving the main problem facing us, returning to our home reality. I really wanted to get to the Earth of my home Star Trek reality. The multiverse was likely as wonderful as it was terrible and I had no desire to end up in a hell reality if we made a rounding error.

So far, our little dimensional side trip had been interesting and not all that dangerous. With the possibility of returning home looking more and more likely as T'Maz studied the dimensional technology and got more comfortable with it. When we first arrived here, the possibility that we may never get to return home, that we might need to make a new life in this dimension, was a scary one and something that I hadn't really wanted to consider or think about.

Now that things were looking up, I found myself asking what did I have to show for this side trip? A few old Starfleet and Klingon weapons? Some non-technical data on an experimental form of FTL that I still wasn't sure was bullshit or not, and even if real, would take decades to understand, assuming it didn't rely on local dimensional circumstances to even use. We'd have to track down *Discovery* and most likely take that ship by force to get the technical data we

needed, or raid Earth itself. Doing either one was just begging for some of the time cops to show up and fuck us up, or some of the local God-like beings to take notice of us and do something nasty to us.

As interesting as this little side trip had been, 'interesting' didn't pay the bills or improve my life or increase my chances for survival with war with both the Collectors and the Dominion on the horizon.

'How could I take advantage of this opportunity to better my position?'

I closed my eyes and let my powerful mind free to work to answer that very question, a dozen disparate datapoints coming together in interesting ways as I replayed every memory I'd made since coming to this universe, accidentally or not. A few things that hadn't quite made sense to me before, suddenly took on a new and more important meaning. Like a Ferengi, I sensed the potential for profit in the air.

According to the data I'd stolen, Corvan II was a full Federation member and produced 40% of Federation's dilithium supply in this reality. That had *not* made sense. No one planet supplied that much of the Federation's annual needs in my reality. It would be a huge strategic vulnerability. Cripple the supply of strategic materials coming from Corvan II and you could cripple the Federation and its ability to defend itself. No wonder the Federation took it over and made it a full Federation member world. You don't leave the keys to the castle in the hands of anyone else.

40% was a huge amount and simply did not track with what I knew about the Federation's history from my home reality. I knew from my historical studies that the Federation in my home reality had several resource rich planets at this point in the timeline, including a particularly rich planet that had been the premise for a great TOS episode. The Federation had fortified that particular planet to the gills during their own conflict with the Klingons and was still supplying the Federation valuable materials to this day, a century plus later, with no end in sight.

A quick check of our historical database gave me the information I needed. Janus 6 was a planet discovered in the early 23rd century and had been claimed by the Federation of my home due it possessing huge amounts of highly valuable substances, substances that an advanced space faring civilization needed in abundance to grow, like pergium, platinum, cerium, uranium, and dilithium. At one point it had even been a major source of gold for the Federation, but with advances in replication, gold was no longer a valuable strategic resource any longer. Many theoreticians predicted future advances in replicator technology might render even those valuable substances worthless in time.

If the Federation in this reality was relying so heavily on Corvan II, then I had a sneaking suspicion that, for whatever reason, the Federation here had *never* discovered Janus 6.

Hoping to confirm this hypothesis, I pulled up a holographic star chart from our home universe showing the part of the galaxy containing the Alpha Janus system, a system firmly within the boundaries of Federation claimed space. Floating in my eye line was a highly detailed star chart of that region of space. Given its strategic importance, the Federation of our home had spent over

a century further exploring and mapping the nearby and adjacent systems, colonizing many of the worlds in the area to further strengthen its claim on that sector of space.

Pulling up the star chart we'd stolen from the Starfleet ship of *this* dimension, I found a sparse level of detail, mostly taken from long-range scanning probes sent in this direction. The charts showed the star and the system of planets, but virtually *nothing* else. In fact, the system only had an alphanumeric designation for a name and there no indication whatsoever that this area of space had been claimed by any other power or polity.

There had been some historical differences between the two dimensions, but the big stuff remained the same. I strongly suspected that Janus VI was just as resource rich here as it was in our home reality, yet it was unclaimed and untapped, with all those resources just waiting for someone to reach out and take them. Suddenly, I sincerely hoped that B'Elanna had downloaded all the information needed to do some mining and refinement.

With things seemingly coming to a head here, I decided it was time to leave.

"T'Maz, set course for planet Janus 6, maximum warp," I ordered.

"Captain, may I ask for what reason we are we to travel there?" she asked.

I didn't exactly blame her for the question, there wasn't anything that could have reasonably prompted this decision.

"Because it's time to make some money, my dear," I answered with a smile. "A whole lot of fucking money."

XXXXX

The Flighty Temptress. In orbit of Janus 6. Alternate Reality.

On the main viewer was a rather ugly planet, reddish brown, with a thick turbulent layer of clouds slowly rotating. Just looking at it you could tell at a glance that it was most definitely not a class-M planet, perfect for life. It was class-F, geometallic, volcanic and barren. While no one would be vacationing here for the beautiful beaches and exotic locales, this planet was probably one of the most valuable in the quadrant, not that the locals seemed to realize it given my sensors showed no other ships within our substantial range.

It had taken over a week at a maximum warp of 9.95 to get here, but so far everything was as I expected once we'd made orbit around the planet, still cloaked. In fact, it looked straight out of a holographic picture taken by the original colonists before it had been built up into the planet it was in the modern 24th century in our home reality, home to tens of millions of colonists and ridiculously rich due to its vast mineral deposits.

"Neela, scan the planet as well for any evidence of mining operations, past or present," I ordered, staring at the viewscreen from my standing position, my arms crossed behind my back.

T'Maz was currently off the bridge and had been for nearly the entire time we'd traveled here, closely studying the dimensional transit technology to get us home. I'd spent most of that time

doing the same with her, but I couldn't help but want to be on the bridge when we arrived in-system, to see if my great gamble was actually going to pay off. We probably could have gone home a few days ago, but my little side trip was giving her even more time to study the technology and the underlying science. Hopefully that would make the difference.

After a minute of intense scans, Neela gave her report.

"No ships in range, no evidence of any mining operations, past or present, Gothic," she said in awe and a bit of excitement.

During the week-long trip to this planet I'd explained to my crew why we were coming to this planet, rather than returning to our home dimension at the first opportunity. Now that all the repairs to the *Temptress* were complete, B'Elanna was excited at the chance to oversee a mining operation using the Husnock technology to make the job even easier.

She'd already gleefully started making all the preparations to begin the transport, refinement, and safe storage of the material we'd soon hopefully be mining. I knew she'd do a fine job of it, having seen her do this exact same thing during her time on *Voyager* in the show, though this time it'd be even easier with the advanced technology and resources we had onboard.

The Husnock routinely sent their warships on scouting/conquest missions spanning decades, so being able to mine vital materials to keep their ship running far from their home was not only useful, it was a necessity for them, and they had developed some advanced technologies and techniques to aid them. Where that failed, well, they used slaves, but we wouldn't be doing that.

To that end they'd come up with transporter technology and protocols that could literally beam the target material out of a planetary body and refine them somewhat during the materialization process. For anything that couldn't be refined in that manner, because of a unique quality of the material or what not, or something that would be damaged or made useless by the transporter, they had advanced holography for traditional mining operations. For some of the more volatile substances that could be corrupted by advanced mining, a holographic miner swinging a replicated pickaxe could accomplish the same thing.

"Scan the surface for pergium, platinum, cerium, uranium, and dilithium deposits," I ordered, a huge smile on my face.

Looking up with a smile, she answered, "I'm detecting huge veins of those substances and more very near the surface, Gothic. The conditions on the planet's surface are inhospitable to humanoid life, but it should still be very easy to mine."

"Ha!" I exclaimed while pumping my fist in the air at this little plan working out.

This had all been a bit of a gamble, but it had paid off in spades. I had been worried another race had set up shop here and would defend this place to the death or even worse, the planet could be different in this reality and not have any valuable resources at all.

"Begin making preparations to land the ship on the surface near the best ore veins. See if historical records on past mining on this planet in our dimension tracks with what you're seeing

on scans and if so, use that information to select the best landing site," I ordered gleefully, getting a nervous nod from Neela. "Don't worry, I'll take the conn and pilot the ship to the ground," I offered to soothe her nerves. Her grateful smile in response told me that I had made the right decision.

As soon as we landed I was going to stuff this ship to the proverbial gills with every valuable substance this planet had to offer. My plan was to stuff all three of my shuttle bays to overflowing from floor to ceiling. Then, when that was full, I was going to fill every unoccupied stateroom onboard, then the holodeck, then the corridors themselves, then I'd fill up any unused space in the other rooms. I wanted the ship so heavy with riches that when we left this planet the floor plating would groan from the sheer weight of the ship. Thank the Prophets that I'd built this ship so damn overpowered and my storage vaults on my island so ridiculously overlarge. My overkill philosophy was once again kicking ass and taking names.

I wonder what the girls would say when they realized that their cut of the profit would be 1% each. They'd probably faint when they realized just how rich they would now be. T'Maz would likely refuse her cut as she was here on assignment for Section 31 and not entitled to receive payment in her mind, but I figured I'd make a large donation to some Vulcan and Bajoran charities in our names. Not anywhere near the 1% she would have gotten, of course, but still quite large.

This little adventure was finally paying off! Call me a Ferengi if you want, but having a lot of money gave me a lot more options and made things a hell of a lot easier. If it ensured my girls and I had even a slightly better chance of surviving the wars to come, then I'd proudly accept being called the greediest fucking Ferengi around.