

Stardate: 2445.12.28

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(USS Exeter – Personal Quarters – Ensign Janice Hammerfield– 0755)
 (USS Exeter – Bridge - CO, Captain Trip Williams- 0800)
 (USS Exeter - Personal quarters - Tac/Sec Ens.(Sg) Stan More -08:01)
 (USS Exeter –Ready Room - Ensign Janice Hammerfield - 0814)
 (USS Exeter –Ready Room - CO, Captain Trip Williams- 0815)
 (USS Exeter –Ready Room - CTO/3O Lieutenant Sg Ravok 0816)
 (USS Exeter –Ready Room - Medical Officer, Ensign JG Heinrich Kruse, M.D.- 0817)
 (USS Exeter –Ready Room - CSO Lt Jg Erin Cortez - 0817)
 (USS Exeter –Ready Room - CO, Captain Trip Williams- 0845)
 (USS Exeter - Captains ready room - Tac/Sec Ens.(Sg) Stan More - 08:46)
 (USS Exeter – CSO Office - CSO Lt Erin Cortez - 0917)
 (USS Exeter – Science Lab - SO Ens.(Sg) Stan More - 09:18)
 (USS Exeter - CSO office - SO Ens. (Sg) Stan More : 09:25)
 (USS Exeter - CSO office - CSO Lt Erin Cortez- 09:27)
 (USS Exeter – Personal Quarters – CFO – Lieutenant – Ire Williams - 0932)
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 (Risa– Airspace over Suraya Bay, - ACTO, Lieutenant Cade Blackwell - 10:00)
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 (USS Exeter– Bridge - Science Officer, Ensign Chris West - 10:00)
 (USS Exeter - Personal quarters - COO LTjg Paul Sleeford - 10:00)
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 (Risa– Temtibi Lagoon - ACEO, Lt. JG Alistair Brightwood and Physio Lt(jg) Cerise Blake - 10:04)
 (Risa– Airspace over Suraya Bay, - ACSci Ensign Senior Grade Adala Michaels - 10:05)
 (Risa– Airspace over Suraya Bay, - ACTEO, Lt. JG Cade Blackewll and ACSO Ensign Senior Grade Adala Michaels - 10:05)
 (USS Exeter – Bridge – ACEO Lieutenant Janice Hammerfield– 1015)
 (Risa transport control - COO LTjg Paul Sleeford 10:15)

[illegible]

Mission: Auld Lang Syne

Day:01

[illegible]

(USS Exeter – Personal Quarters – Ensign Janice Hammerfield– 0755)

“Forty one... two... three... four,” Janice said in sequence doing some sit ups in the corner of the room, “...Fifty”

Drawing a deep breath and wiping some sweat off her brow with a nearby towel she grabbed a small weight and started to do some arm curls with them to give other parts of her body a chance to rest. As the message came through she continued her before shift routine.

=^= Attention all crew, we have arrived at Risa. The Exeter will be at minimal staff for the remainder of our sojourn here. If you will be using accommodations on the surface, please be aware of what times and dates your shifts are. I understand that we are here for vacation, but we do need some staff to make sure that our baby stays running to perfection. All crew are free to head to the surface at 0900 hours. Please be patient when using the transporters. There are only so many of them and 500 of us. Thank you. ^=^=

“I don’t think that will be a problem here,” she huffed resting the weights on the bed beside her. She had a full shift to do for the day regardless so the transports would hopefully be all free later in the day if she felt like taking a trip down.

=^= Captain Williams to Lieutenant Ravok, Lieutenant Cortez, Ensign Hammerfield, Ensign Kruze, please report to my ready room at 0815. ^=^=

Taking a quick breath to not sound exhausted she leant over to her desk and tapped her comm badge, “Yes sir,” Getting to her feet she cut her workout short opting for a quick shower before heading to the bridge.

(USS Exeter – Bridge - CO, Captain Trip Williams- 0800)

As the Exeter arrived in orbit around Risa and made her way towards the docking port where she would be secured for the next week, Trip sighed and smiled. While he wasn't looking forward to the Archaeological conference, he was looking forward to some rest and relaxation time. He was hoping the crew would enjoy it too. They needed it.

As he ran his hands through his hair, he took a deep breath, then opened a ship wide channel.

“Attention all crew, we have arrived at Risa. The Exeter will be at minimal staff for the remainder of our sojourn here. If you will be using accommodations on the surface, please be aware of what times and dates your shifts are. I understand that we are here for vacation, but we do need some staff to make sure that our baby stays running to perfection. All crew are free to head to the surface at 0900 hours. Please be patient when using the transporters. There are only so many of them and 500 of us. Thank you.”

(Reply by any who wish to react to the news of arrival from wherever they are)

Trip then tapped his commbadge, “Captain Williams to Lieutenant Ravok, Lieutenant Cortez, Ensign Hammerfield, Ensign Kruze, please report to my ready room at 0815.”

(reply Hammerfield, Ravok, Kruze, with your reactions, but not to trip as he closed the comm.)

Tapping the commbadge again, “Ensign More, sorry for the delay on the decision on transferring you from Tactical to Science, I know I said three days, but it got lost in the shuffle of diplomatic relations and administrative work. But I have finally come to a decision, even though its three weeks later than I stated. Please meet me in my ready room at 0845. Captain out.”

(reply More with reaction)

Trip then stood up and smiled at Ailynn. “Commander you have the bridge.”

(reply Ailynn iyw)

With a joyous whistle Trip made his way to the ready room.

(reply Hammerfield, Ravok, Kruze, Cortez, More, Ailynn iyw, people reacting to arrival iyw)

(USS Exeter - Personal quarters - Tac/Sec Ens.(Sg) Stan More -08:01)

Risa! Some of the best coral reefs outside Earth's oceans. Plus some incredible fish species in the Alpha Quadrant. More was excited. The Captain still had not approved his transfer yet.

But never mind. Stan was sure it would be aloud. He had high hopes. His comm. badge chirped.

=^="Ensign More, sorry for the delay on the decision on transferring you from Tactical to Science, I know I said three days, but it got lost in the shuffle of diplomatic relations and administrative work. But I have finally come to a decision, even though its three weeks later than I stated. Please meet me in my ready room at 0845. Captain out."=^=

"Aye sir aye" Stan said.

Before he left Stan gave Lillian his dog , a good luck tummy tickle. Then went to see the Captain.

(USS Exeter –Ready Room - Ensign Janice Hammerfield - 0814)

Taking the opportunity to tail one of her colleagues in who had also been called she quickly made her way in, "Captain,"

"Lieutenant Ravok, Lieutenant Cortez, Ensign Hammerfield, and Ensign Kruze, thank you all for joining me. I'll be brief. I have been very impressed with your work of late, and it is time for me to show my appreciation and admiration." Trip stood up and walked from his desk chair to the front of his desk where four small boxes were located.

"Now then, as I call your name please step forward." Trip grabbed the first box.

Quietly she listened to all and waited to be addressed.

"Ensign Senior Grade Janice Hammerfield."

"Sir," she said stepping forward slightly.

"Ensign Hammerfield, to date, you are the only officer serving under me that has ever attempted to turn down a promotion. You have humility, compassion, and a love for your fellow officers."

"Thank you for understanding why," she nodded her cheeks blushing slightly. It was not a common experience for her to really have such words associated to her.

“Janice Hammerfield, I hereby promote you to the rank of Lieutenant Junior Grade and to all the rights and privileges therein. I also promote you to the position of Assistant Chief Engineering Officer. Congratulations Lieutenant.”

A little shocked she done her best to hold back a smile to keep her professional demeanour, “Thank you sir. You’ll get nothing but my best to keep the ship running.” Taking a step back she waited until Trip had finished.

“Now then, you are all dismissed.”

Turning she left the ready room and moved to the side of the door waiting for it to close. She looking up at Kruze, “I guess that means more work for us then,” A small smile escaped her now.

(reply any)

(USS Exeter –Ready Room - CO, Captain Trip Williams- 0815)

Trip smiled at the assembled officers.

“Lieutenant Ravok, Lieutenant Cortez, Ensign Hammerfield, and Ensign Kruze, thank you all for joining me. I’ll be brief. I have been very impressed with your work of late, and it is time for me to show my appreciation and admiration.” Trip stood up and walked from his desk chair to the front of his desk where four small boxes were located.

“Now then, as I call your name please step forward.” Trip grabbed the first box.

“Lieutenant Senior Grade Ravok Shara.”

(reply Ravok)

“Lieutenant Ravok, since I’ve met you, you’ve been a loyal and dutiful officer, always willing and ready to serve. Fiercely loyal, fiercely protective, any moment where I have had to discipline you has not been out of actions totally unbecoming of an officer, but rather deep seated protective instincts. You have been an exemplary officer and an even better friend.”

(reply Ravok)

“Ravok Shara, I hereby promote you to the rank of Lieutenant Commander and to all the rights and privileges therein. Congratulations Commander.”

(reply Ravok)

“Lieutenant Junior Grade Erin Cortez.”

(reply Cortez)

“Lieutenant Cortez, I don’t know you as well as I probably should, and there are times were I think you might be a bit....unique. However, what is true is that you have shown dedication, hard work, determination, and have always done your best for this crew.”

(reply Cortez)

“Erin Cortez, I hereby promote you to the rank of Lieutenant Senior Grade and to all the rights and privileges therein. Congratulations Lieutenant.”

(reply Cortez)

“Ensign Senior Grade Janice Hammerfield.”

(reply Janice)

“Ensign Hammerfield, to date, you are the only officer serving under me that has ever attempted to turn down a promotion. You have humility, compassion, and a love for your fellow officers.”

(reply Janice)

“Janice Hammerfield, I hereby promote you to the rank of Lieutenant Junior Grade and to all the rights and privileges therein. I also promote you to the position of Assistant Chief Engineering Officer. Congratulations Lieutenant.”

(reply Janice)

“Ensign Junior Grade Heinrich Kruze.”

(reply kruze)

“Ensign Kruze, you have only been with us a short while, but your performance has been exemplary. I also know that Lieutenant Cortez owes you her life.”

(reply Kruze)

“Heinrich Kruze, I hereby promote you to the rank of Ensign Senior Grade and to all the rights and privileges therein. I also promote you to the position of acting Assistant Chief

Medical Officer. You still have much to prove, but I have faith in you. In time that acting will come off and you will be a full ACMO. Congratulations Ensign.”

(reply Kruze)

“Now then, you are all dismissed.”

Trip then smiled as the newly promoted officers left his office. This was one part of the job he did enjoy.

(reply Hammerfield, Kruze, Cortez, Ravok)

(USS Exeter –Ready Room - CTO/3O Lieutenant Sg Ravok 0816)

Trip smiled at the assembled officers.

“Lieutenant Ravok, Lieutenant Cortez, Ensign Hammerfield, and Ensign Kruze, thank you all for joining me. I’ll be brief. I have been very impressed with your work of late, and it is time for me to show my appreciation and admiration.” Trip stood up and walked from his desk chair to the front of his desk where four small boxes were located.

“Now then, as I call your name please step forward.” Trip grabbed the first box.

“Lieutenant Senior Grade Ravok Shara.”

Ravok stepped forward, his stride was hesitant.

“Lieutenant Ravok, since I’ve met you, you’ve been a loyal and dutiful officer, always willing and ready to serve. Fiercely loyal, fiercely protective, any moment where I have had to discipline you has not been out of actions totally unbecoming of an officer, but rather deep seated protective instincts. You have been an exemplary officer and an even better friend.”

" Thank you." Ravok said quietly.

“Ravok Shara, I hereby promote you to the rank of Lieutenant Commander and to all the rights and privileges therein. Congratulations Commander.”

" Thank you Sir. Ravok said and stepped back in line. This promotion was the one he was waiting for. At this rank we could take the official bridge officers test thus allowing him to be offered a command of his own if starfleet needed it. Yet this promotion didn't have the magic of the other ones. He watched as the others received their promotions, genuinely happy for them.

“Now then, you are all dismissed.”

Ravok stepped to the side letting the others walk out before him. Giving Trip one last look he left the ready room.

(reply none)

(USS Exeter –Ready Room - Medical Officer, Ensign JG Heinrich Kruse, M.D.- 0817)

Heinrich nervously assembled in the ready room. This was the first time the Captain had directly asked to see him. While he was not aware of any demerits, any summons struck his suspicions. But when Trip smiled, those suspicions fell away.

“Lieutenant Ravok, Lieutenant Cortez, Ensign Hammerfield, and Ensign Kruze, thank you all for joining me. I’ll be brief. I have been very impressed with your work of late, and it is time for me to show my appreciation and admiration.” When the Captain reached for four boxes, he was able to put it together and beamed with pride.

“Ensign Junior Grade Heinrich Kruze.”

“Yes sir,” Heinrich said as he stepped forward.

“Ensign Kruze, you have only been with us a short while, but your performance has been exemplary. I also know that Lieutenant Cortez owes you her life.”

Heinrich looked to Erin and said, “I was only following orders and did my best Captain.”

“Heinrich Kruze, I hereby promote you to the rank of Ensign Senior Grade and to all the rights and privileges therein. I also promote you to the position of acting Assistant Chief Medical Officer. You still have much to prove, but I have faith in you. In time that acting will come off and you will be a full ACMO. Congratulations Ensign.”

He did not expect to have risen through the ranks so quickly, but he also hadn’t expected to save a life on his third day on the job. Starfleet was turning out to be dangerous business, but full of opportunity and adventure. “Thank you sir, I will not let you down.”

“Now then, you are all dismissed.”

Acting Assistant Chief Medical Officer Heinrich began to walk out.

(Reply any)

(USS Exeter –Ready Room - CSO Lt Jg Erin Cortez - 0817)

Standing in the ready room with the assembled officers, Erin took a second to look around. ~I can guess why they are here... but me? Surely not...~ she thought to herself as the Captain called Ravok forward and promoted him to Lt Cmdr. Erin smiled widely as her close friend, her brother received his new pip. Her heart swelled with pride. She knew that the events of the last few weeks had weighed heavily on him. Losing Nesha, the fight with Ire and nearly losing her. Her mind filled with happiness which was suddenly punctuated with her name being called.

“Lieutenant Junior Grade Erin Cortez.”

“Sir.” she remarked as she stepped forward and stood to attention.

“Lieutenant Cortez, I don’t know you as well as I probably should, and there are times were I think you might be a bit...unique. However, what is true is that you have shown dedication, hard work, determination, and have always done your best for this crew.”

“Thankyou Sir.” she replied, wondering what the heck was about to happen.

“Erin Cortez, I hereby promote you to the rank of Lieutenant Senior Grade and to all the rights and privileges therein. Congratulations Lieutenant.”

“Thankyou... very much Sir. I will do my best.” She received the new pip and stepped back. Glancing at Ravok, she smiled widely at him and turned her gaze back to the front.

“Ensign Kruze, you have only been with us a short while, but your performance has been exemplary. I also know that Lieutenant Cortez owes you her life.”

Heinrich looked to Erin and said, “I was only following orders and did my best Captain.” Erin smiled to him as mouthed a ‘Thankyou’.

“Heinrich Kruze, I hereby promote you to the rank of Ensign Senior Grade and to all the rights and privileges therein. I also promote you to the position of acting Assistant Chief Medical Officer. You still have much to prove, but I have faith in you. In time that acting will come off and you will be a full ACOMO. Congratulations Ensign.”

“Thank you sir, I will not let you down.”

“Now then, you are all dismissed.”

As they filtered out of the office, Erin felt the new pip on her uniform and sighed happily. The last few weeks had weighed on them all. Even though she no longer needed counselling, she had found herself still keeping one appointment a week. A chance to make sure that she was okay and for her, she found it cathartic. For so long she had tried to deal with her issues by herself or with some hokey way. Now, she had realised that she couldn't do that anymore and had relished the chance to be who she was. Not always striving to be strong but strong enough to know and admit when she needed help.

As she entered the turbo lift, she leant against the cool wall and smiled to herself. ~Risa... shame i'm flying solo on this one. Still, all i can do is go and enjoy the sunshine and the beach. Jimmy's missing out on the bikini but, one day...~

(Reply None)

(USS Exeter –Ready Room - CO, Captain Trip Williams- 0845)

“Ensign More, thank you for meeting with me, please have a seat.” Trip smiled as Stan entered his office.

(reply More)

“I will be blunt with you ensign. You're conduct as tactical officer left much to be desired. Your love and care to protect this crew was evident. However you tended to act imprudently, rashly, and overzealously, to the detriment of those around you and to your career.”

(reply More)

“However, you have shown a willingness to improve, take feedback, and show that you are more than just your mistakes, and for that I commend you.”

(reply More)

“The truth of the matter, after reviewing your request and your career in tactical, one thing is certain. If you continue in the tactical department, your career may be much shorter than either of us would like. The good news is, its still early enough to fix, still early enough to get back on the right track. So I am granting your transfer to the science division, effective immediately.”

(reply More)

“I expect you to be an exemplary officer, and that your shenanigans are behind you. I can’t keep moving you from department to department, hoping that somewhere along the way you find the right fit or you figure it out. I want you to excel here Stan, but there is an old adage to where I come from, you got to know when to fish or cut bait. I expect you to be a model officer, and I hope that the next time I call you in here is for a promotion or to name you an ACSO, but we’re not there yet. We could be though, and consider this a fresh start.”

(reply More)

“Now then, go enjoy your vacation. Dismissed.”

(reply More)

(USS Exeter - Captains ready room - Tac/Sec Ens.(Sg) Stan More - 08:46)

Once he pressed the door chime and was called in. Stan walked in.

Ensign More, thank you for meeting with me, please have a seat.” Trip smiled as Stan entered his office.

“ Aye sir.” Stan said

“I will be blunt with you ensign. You’re conduct as tactical officer left much to be desired. Your love and care to protect this crew was evident. However you tended to act imprudently, rashly, and overzealously, to the detriment of those around you and to your career.”

“ Once again sir. I fully apologise for my actions.” Stan said with his head bowed.

“However, you have shown a willingness to improve, take feedback, and show that you are more than just your mistakes, and for that I commend you.”

“ Och thank yee sir.” Stan said

“The truth of the matter, after reviewing your request and your career in tactical, one thing is certain. If you continue in the tactical department, your career may be much shorter than either of us would like. The good news is, its still early enough to fix, still early enough to get back on the right track. So I am granting your transfer to the science division, effective immediately.”

Stan felt like jumping from his seat and hugging the Captain. Finally finally he could go to the department. That he had always wanted to be in. Science!!! At this moment he could kiss Trip. But held off.

“ OCH thank ye sir thank ye!!!” He said bouncing up and down in his seat with glee.

“I expect you to be an exemplary officer, and that your shenanigans are behind you. I can’t keep moving you from department to department, hoping that somewhere along the way you find the right fit or you figure it out. I want you to excel here Stan, but there is an old adage to where I come from, you got to know when to fish or cut bait. I expect you to be a model officer, and I hope that the next time I call you in here is for a promotion or to name you an ACSO, but we’re not there yet. We could be though, and consider this a fresh start.”

“ Thank you Thank you sir this is great news great news. Don’t worry this time I’ll nay muck things up. Och Science..... sorry I am so excited.....you have no idea what this means to me.....thank you once again sir...” Stan said.

“Now then, go enjoy your vacation. Dismissed.”

“ Aye sir.....once again Thank you!!!” More said with the largest smile on his face. It was humanly possible to have.

If he had been a dog at that precise moment. His tail would of wagged so much. Stan would of flown out the door.

(Reply , None)

(USS Exeter – CSO Office - CSO Lt Erin Cortez - 0917)

Having received the news that Ensign More was transferring to her department, Erin sat in her office reviewing his file. ~Interesting Character. He should be a good fit here. We need a botanist. ~

Tapping her Combadge, Erin spoke, “Cortez to More.”

(Reply More)

“Ensign, please come to my office at your earliest convenience. I state earliest as i am sure you want to go to the surface and i have a date with the beach and a drink with a little umbrella in it.”

(Reply More)

“Excellent. Cortez out”

(Reply More)

(USS Exeter – Science Lab - SO Ens.(Sg) Stan More - 09:18)

Slowly Stan squeezed the air balloon at the end of the tube. A large droplet of liquid swelled at the end. Then dropped onto the plants soil. It had been a few days but the Lapageria had done exceptionally well. He had downloaded all Erin would need. To keep the plant good and healthy. Shoots where beginning to show. He smiled , the plant would be flowering soon. He checked the climbing framework was properly attached to the pot.

=^=“Cortez to More.”=^=

“ More here ma’am how may I help ye today?” He said happily

“=^=Ensign, please come to my office at your earliest convenience. I state earliest as i am sure you want to go to the surface and i have a date with the beach and a drink with a little umbrella in it.=^= “

“ I can come straight away. Plus I have a wee friend to introduce to you.”

=^= "Excellent. Cortez out" ^=^=

"Come on my wee pretty one let's introduce yer to your new mother." Stan said lifting the pot containing the plant.

(USS Exeter - CSO office - SO Ens. (Sg) Stan More : 09:25)

When he pressed the door chime and was allowed in. More slowly walked into Erin's office. He placed the plant on her desk and took a step back.

"Sorry for the delay ma'am. This is our friend here's first visit outside the Lab." Stan said

(Reply , Erin)

Stan handed her a PADD.

"This has all the instructions ye will need. She's been watered so there is no need to repeat that for a day. Plus I gave her a good feed so she is good to go for a few days. One thing though once the flowers come through. She would like a visit to the Arboretum. So the insects can Pollinate her ." Stan said

(Reply , Erin)

(USS Exeter - CSO office - CSO Lt Erin Cortez- 09:27)

Erin smiled at Stan and he walked in her office and then her eyes saw he plant in his arms.

“ Sorry for the delay ma’am. This is our friend here’s first visit outside the Lab.’ Stan said

"Is that?" Erin gasped.

Stan handed her a PADD.

“ This has all the instructions ye will need. She’s been watered so there is no need to repeat that for a day. Plus I gave her a good feed so she is good to go for a few days. One thing though once the flowers come through. She would like a visit to the Arboretum. So the insects can Pollinate her .” Stan said

"You... how? I've tried for so long..." Erin glanced at the plant on her desk and sighed happily. The memory of the aroma from her family's farm where the flowers grew in the yard filled her nostrils and she sighed happily.

(Reply More)

"Thankyou. Seriously, Thankyou Ensign. Oh, whilst I remember... I received a communique from Starfleet. We have a returning crewmate joining our team. Ensign Adala Michaels. "

(Reply More)

"She'll be meeting us on Risa. I'll arrange a meeting with you all. Call it a science department drink. A get to know you drink."

(Reply More)

(USS Exeter – Personal Quarters – CFO – Lieutenant – Ire Williams - 0932)

Ire stood in front of his view port looking at the world of Risa slowly spinning below him. He knew that the crew were excited in going down to the surface and spend some time off the ship. He understood the reason why the crew wanted to spend time off the ship. Part of it he supposed was that Risa was a holiday planet as well as the deaths of the others would have the crew wanting to escape the same normal routines of the ship. He was not that way inclined and he did not specifically like being down a gravity well. Even though Risa was spectacular he was planning on spending most of his time in orbit. He might go down some time over the days that the ship was here but not right at the moment. That was why he had reduced the department to minimum staff and got a many people off the ship as possible. It would also stop his people look at him whenever he entered a room. Gossip travelled at warp speed and everyone knew that something had happened in the Captain's Ready Room between Trip, Ravok and him self even if no one know the exact details. He was getting irritated by the side glances he had been getting when they did not know he was looking so getting as many off the ship and would help his mood greatly.

He tapped his comm badge.

"Lieutenant Williams to Ensign Tiar."

(Reply Tair)

"Ensign Tiar before you head down to Riza. I would like to know how many shuttles we have that need their mandatory flight check after their routine maintenance cycle?"

(Reply Tair)

(USS Exeter – Flight Deck – Ensign Junior Grade, Isra Tiar - 0935)

" Lieutenant Williams to Ensign Tiar. "

She tapped her combadge "Ensign Tiar here, yes Lieutenant ?"

“Ensign Tiar before you head down to Riza. I would like to know how many shuttles we have that need their mandatory flight check after their routine maintenance cycle?”

She glanced down at the PADD in her hand. It didn't surprise her that he seemed to know what she was doing.

"Working on it right now Sir. I'll send it to your PADD once I am finished." she paused and continued. "I won't be going planetside Sir, I will be staying on board. Too much work to get done around here.

Truth be told, she had no desire to be anywhere else. Vacation or not. These ships, she thought as she gazed around her were her life.

(Reply Robbie, Any)

(USS Exeter –Personal Quarters – CFO – Lieutenant – Ire Williams- 0937)

=^=Working on it right now Sir. I'll send it to your PADD once I am finished=^=

=^=I won't be going planetside Sir, I will be staying on board. Too much work to get done around here=^=

“Understood.”

Ire closed the comm channel and scooped the PADD of nightstand beside the bed. He glanced down at the PADD and saw the list it was not many. It was not like he oversaw the Void Hunters Squadron anymore which had nine fighter and one shuttle. They had to be ready for action at a moments notice. The Exeter needed her support craft in working condition, but it was not like they were going to be used in combat often. He paused for a moment thinking about how many times the runabouts had been used and gave a slight shrug. In the last few outings with the Exeter, he had flown the Runabout Brocken Bow in anger so maybe that was incorrect.

He skimmed the names on the list and found the Brocken Bow. She had, had an overhaul of her impulse engines. He nodded to himself as he made the request for the Brocken Bow to be readied for launch. He tossed the PADD onto the bed and pulled his flight suit out of the cupboard. He methodically got dressed making sure that everything was fitted into place and that all the seals were fitted properly as he had known from experience that a leak on a flight suit would be deadly if he had to evacuate the Runabout in a hurry.

Once he was happy that everything was in place, he picked up the PADD and his flight helmet and walked out of his quarters.

(Reply Any)

(Risa– Airspace over Suraya Bay, - ACTO, Lieutenant Cade Blackwell - 10:00)

The name of the game was adventure. That is why Cade found himself in a shuttle flying over Suraya Bay while wearing a specialized gliding suit. Cade was grounded, solid, resting his entire being in reality and the mission in front of him. One vulcan crewman once referred to him as rather boring for a human. When Cade was on duty, he was all about business. But out of uniform, the secret life of Cade that most didn't know is that he was into extreme sports. Once he could get out of the uniform and relax, it was all about how far he could push his limits. This was why he found himself hovering over the bay getting ready to jump out of a shuttle and glide down to the bay below, where he would hover over the water, flying like a duck before landing on the shore.

“Alright Cade, It's almost go time.” He said to himself as he looked at his fellow jumpers, getting pumped for the jump.

(reply any who want to jump)

(Risa– Temtibi Lagoon, The Overlook - ACEO, Lieutenant Alistair Brightwood- 10:00)

Alistair Aloysius Cortez was doing one of his favorite things in the world, laying in a hammock and reading a book. He was the son of academics. He grew up in the shadow of institutions like Oxford and Cambridge. His parents wanted him to be an academic, but he wanted to be an engineer. So he became one. But even though he preferred nuts and bolts to philosophy and grammar, he still loved learning, loved reading. He loved the idea of it all, the idea of a different world, and different reality, the adventures of the heroes. He enjoyed transporting himself into the literary classics. Not just through holonovels, but classic novels. It was one thing to roleplay, but he loved opening his mind to the words on the page and

create a reality in his head. Sure he could be out flirting, but that wasn't his style. Besides, there was someone he wanted to talk to, he just didn't have the courage to speak to her. He was attractive, so he was told, but he still had trouble talking to girls he found attractive. He didn't have the same confidence as the heroes of his novels.

He laid in his hammock reading the 19th century classic *The Count of Monte Cristo* enjoying the perfect weather of Temtibi Lagoon. The planet's weather control was configured so it never rained in the region containing the lagoon. Its water was warm, and the wind smelled sweet. The hills around the lagoon contained hot springs. But Alistair was content in his havok, at the overlook, wondering what it would be like, to truly be a confident swashbuckling hero bent on romance, justice, and revenge.

(reply any who want to interrupt)

(USS Exeter– Bridge - Science Officer, Ensign Chris West - 10:00)

Chris West was a hard worker. He was driven. He wanted to do the best he could and be the best he could be. He was a boxing champ at the academy and worked out and trained as much as possible to get there. His study of Biology fitness served to help him get his training techniques down to, well, a science.

He should have been on Risa, partying, and frolicking with the rest. But Chris didn't want to get overlooked. The science department was getting crowded and he wanted to stand out. There was only one way he knew he could stand out, take some of the duties while folks were relaxing. Work overtime, work hard, get noticed. It was the Chris West manta, come early, work hard, stay late. Sure enough even on vacation he was going to do his best to show that he was willing to but in the time to excel.

(reply any)

(USS Exeter - Personal quarters - COO LTjg Paul Sleeford - 10:00)

Standing in the lounge Sleeford looked around the room, it could do with a tidy up, a job for later this week. Walking to the mirror he looked at himself, the shirt seemed too loud, and the shorts showed the scarring on his left leg, something he was still self conscious about even after all this time, walking to the replicator he collected a pair of aviator sunglasses and slipped them on, running his hand through his hair he took a deep breath. He felt giddy like a teenage boy going on his first date. He'd not seen Katie since their dinner on DS9, nearly three months ago. Grabbing his deck shoes he slipped them on and headed for the closest

transporter room, nodding to the crew members he past on the way, hearing a wolf whistle he turned to see a couple of young petty officers form science with their heads cocked to one side smiling, Laughing he turned full circle like a cat walk model and waved as he turned the corner and entered the room.

Standing in the short queue, Sleeford [laced his hands in the shorts pocket and nodded to the transporter chief.

Trellwe looked up from the panel to see the boss standing there looking like a ,well he didn't want to say in his native language there'd be no polite way of saying it.

"Mr Sleeford what are you doing going to a fancy dress party or trying to show up the ship by dressing like a multi coloured blob".

Laughing Sleeford leant against the console, "Trellwe, if you weren't on duty I'd give you a shift just for your cheek. Enjoy your R and R, when you get off shift. "

Stepping onto the platform he waited for the pad to fill and the process to begin to beam the party down to down to Risa.

(Reply none)

(Risa– Temtibi Lagoon - Physio Lt(jg) Cerise Blake - 10:01)

Cerise wasn't in herself, a lonely person, she liked the people around her but she was also content with her own company. For a long time, she'd dreamed of this lagoon, she'd seen pictures of it, and it had been used as a scene in a couple of her favourite holomovies. Now, though, she was alone, and here.

She slipped off the light dress that she was wearing, and straightening her figure hugging white swimsuit, she carefully waded out into the cool water, gentle ripples bubbled across the surface from a waterfall on the far side, and Cerise gasped as the water reached her waist. Leaning forward, she swam carefully gracefully around the lagoon for a few minutes, before deepening and strengthening her strokes, swimming quicker, more purposely and stronger than before, eventually reaching the waterfall, where she stood up, and allowed the water to cascade onto her shoulders.

She smiled happily to herself, and then unabashedly began to sing, an untrained voice, carrying pleasantly across the lagoon.

The warm sun, dappled on the surface of the pool, and stepping out of the waterfall, still singing happily to herself, she squeezed her hair out, and swam gently toward the small beach, where she picked up her bag, dried her face, legs and arms, and then sat gracefully on the towel.

(Reply Brightwood)

(Risa- Temtibi Lagoon - ACEO, Lt. JG Alistair Brightwood and Physio Lt(jg) Cerise Blake - 10:04)

Alistair looked up from his book long enough to see that he was no longer alone in his corner of the overlook. He wasn't certain if she sat next to him because she recognized him, or just because it was random. He hoped that it was on purpose, because she found her gorgeous, not in a creepy way, she just glowed.

But Alistair didn't know how to talk to girls. Machines, sure, but he didn't know how to say hello. Which was odd, because while he was gangly, skinny, and weird looking as a kid, he grew into his body. A glow up as it were.

~Well should I say something. I mean, what's the worse that happens. She leaves I guess/~
He thought to himself.

"Umm, hey, how's it going?" He asked not knowing whether to look her in the eyes or look in his book, and somehow without knowing it his eyes were locked awkwardly to where it could be wrongly interpreted he was staring where he shouldn't be staring.

Cerise looked up, she hadn't noticed the beach's other occupant. She smiled gently, "Hey there. I'm so sorry, I didn't see you. Didn't mean to interrupt your quiet reading."

"It's ok. I just finished a chapter anyways. Good time for a break."

“You’re on the Exeter aren’t you, Cerise Blake, I’m the Physio on board.” She smiled, not minding the company

~She doesn’t even know who I am....great...Well par for the course Brightwood, par for the course.~

“Yes, one of the Assistant Chief Engineers.Alistair Brightwood.” He smiled. ~Don’t tell her we’ve met. Even though we have. Guess, she doesnt remember me. Ok, but at least she’s talking to you. Or you could read again. Fight or flight Brightwood.~

“Welcome to paradise Cerise.”

“It’s amazing, I know that we haven’t been on board all that long, comparatively, but it feels lovely to just switch off. Wait wait...I remember you. I’m so rude, you were at Ash’s Halloween thing. You were dressed as...” She looked strained... “remind me..?”

“As a musketeer, Athos to be precise. The leader. Many think it was D'artagnan, but he was just a recruit, sure was a point of view character, but Athos, he was the heart, the leader.”

~Great Brightwood. You sound Dull.~

“That was so cool. I remember.” Cerise said smiling.

“If I remember you were the only one there dressed as a witch...that wasn’t dressed super provocatively.”

“I hate provocative...” She sighed, her heart sinking slightly “I...I’m far from a prude, but...just not my style.” she looked at the bubbles float over the lagoon. “I mean, arms and legs out here or on the beach is okay...but skin on show at a party hosted by the bosses wife? Na-ah.” she laughed gently.

“I wouldn’t know. While I’ve been told that I am considered good looking, I grew up a nerd. Sweater vests and vintage bow ties. My roommate at the academy was a fitness nut, and forced me to work out with him every day. Then I became a creature of habit. Didn’t want to mess with what was making my engine run. It’s hard to read on a treadmill, but I figured out. Do you like reading?”

~Do you like reading? What’s next, are you gonna tell her you like her hair~

Her mood settled, it was nice just to be spoken to, about something, about nothing. It was just nice to be spoken to rather than just hit with cheesy chat up lines. “I try, but I always find other stuff to do. Back at school I wasn’t the academic in the strict sense of the word. I learned Math and science because of gym, but the rest sailed me by a bit. Since I graduated, I read where I can, but I’m either running classes or treating sprains and stuff to soft tissue.”

“As pretty as you are, you were probably a cheerleader. That’s an american thing right? I mean I’m surprised you aren’t wearing a revealing bikini as pretty as you are.” He paused. “I like your hair.”

~Brightwood, you idiot, what is wrong with you. What did you say? Uggh, this is why I don’t talk to girls.~

Cerise looked at him puzzled. “Erm...Thank...you? It’s not something I worry much about anymore. I appreciate the compliment though.”

“Sorry, I’m not good at conversation. Books, yes, engines, yes, a lecture on quantum mechanics, I could get tenure at oxford with my lecture style. But talking to sentient beings...it’s my kryptonite.”

“Superman! I got that one. Science was never my strongpoint, not physical science anyway, I did units in natural sciences, Biology mostly, because of the gymnastics. I never did cheer team.” Her face drifted away. “Long time ago.” She smiled.

“Once, I thought if I thought of all people as robots, I might be able to talk to them better. But my counselor advised me that I should think of people as machines.”

“Not bad advice, I mean, it’s a biological machine right? Just that everyone’s programming is different.

“So are you waiting for your boyfriend?”

She blushed, and her heart sank again. “Not my thing.” Cerise said simply, trying not to be dismissive.

“Oh, sorry my bad, your girlfriend?”

She shook her head. “I don’t mean this the way it will come out, but I didn’t mean I wasn’t straight, I meant that the whole dating thing isn’t me.”

“Oh...” he said, wheels turning. “Well I guess its not for everyone. I’m a rookie at it myself. I dated a girl for two years in the academy, but it was....awkward to say the least. So I get it. Bad breakup?”

She half nodded, her walls coming up again. “Bad break...you might say that yeah.” she smiled slightly awkwardly. “So you mentioned awkward? At the academy I mean?”

“Oh yeah, I met her in an elective on warp theory. She was out of my league. Vulcan. She was writing her graduation thesis on logic and the human romantic drive. Counseling major. I didn’t know the whole time that she was only dating me as an experiment. I dressed in pink shorts because she asked politely. Needless to say, her excuse for lying to me for two years was that it was, ‘most logical’. Funny thing is, I probably would have stayed with her even after all that. Self esteem wasn’t that great.”

“Yeah that would have knocked you down. How horrible for you.”

“But my counselor said, use it as fuel to be happy with who you are and own who you are. So I’ve been on a period of discovery ever since. It’s why I grew a mustache.”

“And very decadent it is too.” She smiled, looking out across the lagoon again, briefly, then back toward him. There was a gentle, shy innocent quality about him that she liked in a person. “So you’ve shared your story, Only fair that I do too right?”

“I’ve learned that while fair is fair, sometimes its ok for people not to share, especially if sharing would cause the person pain. Kind of like an energy transfer, just because I transferred energy from node A to B, doesn’t mean node B has the ability or the capacity to transfer energy back or elsewhere.”

She nodded. “I see the logic.” giggling gently, she carried on. “Poor choice of words all things considered.”

“I guess, what I mean is it’s your call.”

“I see your point. “In that case I’ll give you a date...” she blushed. “Not that kind, sorry.”

~Damn it!~ Brightwood thought to himself. He was excited for a brief moment. “Would be too awkward anyways, you with your not wanting to date, and me being the poster boy for illogical human romance.”

“Riker High School, graduating class of ‘37. What you do with that information is...up to you.” She sighed. “Sometimes pain is what we need to move forward.” She smiled warmly.

“I’ll file it for a rainy day. If you want me to know what happened you’ll tell me. While I love to read, and may get lost people watching, I try my best to pry. I mean my thesis was on Engineering Systems and the Protection of Personal Data.”

She nodded, interested. “Well out of my depth, but there’s crossover with quantum? Like...digital safely and locks and stuff.” She laughed. “Look at this airhead trying to sound like she knows what’s going on.”

“Airheads are one of my favorite earth candies.” He replied then mentally facepalmed.

She laughed. “You are such a goof, you’re cute when you’re embarrassed. I think your moustache blushes.” She winked at him.

“Yes, she thinks I’m cute.” He paused.... “Umm did I just say the inside thought outloud?”

“Yeah totes. Your brain/mouth filter needs an engineer.” She smiled.

“Umm excuse me,” He said awkwardly grabbing his things, “I think I need to go.”

“Hey...there’s really...” she watched as he stood up.

“I...just..ummm.” He tried to grab his personal computer device and accidentally dropped it on her chest. “Umm just keep it.”

Cerise was puzzled, to say the least. Sure, she had a lot of issues, but could speak to and be around people, but she’d never seen anyone quite as...

She picked up his computer off herself, and standing up, with a stretch, passed it back to him, with a puzzled look. “It’s okay, no harm done.”

He took the phone back and awkwardly smiled. “No, no, I acted like a fool. Embarrassed myself. I’m sorry.” His face was beet red.

Cerise was confused by the sudden awkwardness. It was obvious by the occasional glances, that he’d eyed her up, and she actually didn’t mind that, he’d even understood when she’d said that a date was a no go.

“I would say I’m not always this awkward, but its because I normally, umm, keep to myself and don’t talk to....well...yeah.”

“I understand.” she said.

“Would it be more awkward if I left, or more awkward if I sat back down?”

“Tell you what. Secret third option. I’m starting to get cold, and hungry.” she pulled her dress back on, “I’ll leave you to your peace; it was me who disturbed you.”

“No, I’m the weirdo...”

Shaking her head, she cut him off. “It’s fine.” she pointed to the hammock. “Sit. relax. I need food anyway. Honestly.” She shrugged and smiled gently.

“Oh. ok.” ~You fool. You ran her off. Well, I guess, it was just a little crush. No biggie. You’ll survive.~

Cerise reached behind her neck, and pushing her chest forward slightly tightened the knot at the halter neck of her dress. “Hopefully I’ll see you round.” She smiled. ~why did I just do that? I totally just shoved my...toward... I need beer.~

“Yes. Well I’ll be around. Staying at the Red Tiki Resort. If you’re headed that way, give me a heads up.” He said with a confidence of which the origins he was unsure. He smiled and then sat back down on his hammock.

Cerise slipped on her sandals, and then walked slowly away, utterly ashamed at herself.

(Reply none)

(Risa– Airspace over Suraya Bay, - ACSci Ensign Senior Grade Adala Michaels - 10:05)

Adala had been looking forward to time off, relaxation. Well to her it was relaxing. She already had plans that would keep her busy while on Risa. If she survived this jump. Who was she kidding. She was hyped for this. She looked around her and shook her head. At least she wasn't alone in this foolishness.

Her gaze moved to Cade and she nodded slightly, mouthing silently "Let's do this."

(reply Cade, Any)

(Risa— Airspace over Suraya Bay, - ACTEO, Lt. JG Cade Blackewll and ACSO Ensign Senior Grade Adala Michaels - 10:05)

"Let's do this."

"Have you ever done this before?" Cade asked as he grabbed his helmet.

Adala laughed and shook her head before fastening her own helmet. "This is a first for me. I needed to see if I get the same rush as I get from my rock climbing."

"Could be a long way to the bottom or fast, depending on how things go."

"That's what makes it so much fun. The unknown factor."

"Could be dangerous. But then again, isn't that your modus operandi?"

Adala thought ~Hell yes~

"Of course it is. If I am going to live I am going to live on the edge and try to enjoy it along the way."

"Looks like we're over the jump zone. Do you want to go first?"

"Ladies first?" she laughed as she stood, back to the doorway, gave Cade a mock salute and allowed herself to fall out of the doorway with a yell.

~I can't wait to be on the ground.~ Cade thought to himself as he readied himself by the doorway. "Allons-y!" He said as he jumped from the rear door of the shuttle and then let the currents take him as he flowed over towards Adala.

"So why did I suggest this as an activity again?" He said to her over their helmets comm system. "I feel like I'm gonna die.""

Adala bit back a laugh at his words in her helmet. "You'll be fine.... Oh and I am not sure why you suggested this? Pushing the envelope? Wanting to see why I enjoy things like this?"

She grew silent as she took time to enjoy the view.

"I guess. This better not be like your scuba diving holo program where I was almost eaten by a shark."

"That was a holographic shark. It wouldn't have hurt you."
She laughed as she remembered the look on his face.

Cade then spread his arms and legs allowing the wind to get underneath the wing folds attached to his arms and legs and much like a flying squirrel began to glide over to Adala.

"I guess I knew you were gonna do it and this way I can make sure you don't get killed."

Adala glided along beside Cade, moving her arms and legs slightly so they 'just touched'

"How are you going to keep me from getting killed if you're up here with me?" She glanced over at him and winked.

"Catch me if you can"

With a small shift of her arms and legs her body dove downwards, her cry of exhilaration following.

"You forgot about simple physics Addie." Cade said with a smile as he positioned himself to follow her down.

"Only means I will land on you and squish you." came her reply

"Simple gravitational acceleration. I'm heavier, with greater mass, therefore I will have a greater rate of acceleration." He then turned and waved at her as he passed her.

She laughed as he passed, she shifted her body once more and deepened the dive, following him.

"This is beautiful" she said as she took in the view once more. Her heart beating hard in her ears. This is what she lived for.

"I mean I guess. But I think I'll be much happier when my feet are on the ground."

She shook her head as she moved to his side once more, allowing their fingers to touch as she glanced over at him.

“You know what sounds great right about now?”

“What’s that?” she asked

“Ice cream.”

Laughing at his response. “What flavor?”

“Oh, I dunno. Cookies and cream. Or a peppermint. Or rainbow sherbet, which isn’t ice cream, but still delicious. Or, what about butter bean. Or I could just get a Piña colada. Its cold, sweet, blended, and has alcohol.”

“I’ll take the Piña colada.”

He felt her fingers and thought about taking her hand, but he didn’t want to mess up their free fall.

“That’s if I don’t throw up first.”

“I wouldn’t suggest that.” she laughed as she relaxed and enjoyed the rush, the physical rush, the pressure of the air flowing over her, the freedom she felt.

“Relax and enjoy this.”

“I am relaxed. It’s my stomach that’s not relaxed.” He said with a chuckle. I think we’re 100 meters from the landing zone. Should reach the target zone. Your HUD display should give you a path. Don’t want to miss the target.”

“Don’t worry I won’t miss it.” Her attention now on the job at hand. .. landing safely.

“Closest to the middle wins?”

“You’re on.” With a slight shift of her body she moved into position for the final descent.

“So,” he said as he began to slow his descent while she moved forward. “Are you staying on ship or at one of the resorts?”

As Adala was moving faster, Cade was hoping that a slower descent would allow him to have a better shot at landing at the middle, and not losing his breakfast.

Adala shifted her body slightly “I’m staying on Risa. What about you?” As much as she enjoyed the ship this was vacation ... wasn’t it? She thought.

“Ship. I uh never got around to booking a hut, or room, or bungalow, or what have you. Plus I’m 6’5”, sometimes hotels don’t have a bed long enough and it’s awkward trying to sleep. Plus, my bed on the Exeter is super comfy.”

For a brief moment the vision of him laying on one of the ‘short’ beds at the hotel made her smile. She kept her thoughts to herself though as she turned her focus on her dive.

“Be careful, you’re going in hot and you’ll be at the landing zone in less than a minute.”

“I’m ok.” she said as she shifted, one last time to slow her descent and get into position for the landing.

Cade was still a little bit behind, going in as slow as possible. According to his HUD display, he was going to land in a perfect bullseye in approximately 30 seconds.

“Alright Addie, show me what you’re made of.”

Adala watched her display and slowed, she’d land, a second or two behind him and off center. She didn’t care, the fun part was coming to an end. The dive itself. But Cade was right, feeling the planet beneath her feet would be welcome too.

Within moments Cade landed in the center and began jumping like he had won the superbowl. “Take that daredevil girl.”

Adala had just one second to shift and her body collided with his, causing them both to fall to the ground. She landed on top of him. She laughed as she pushed herself up to gaze down at him.

“Nice catch.”

“I’ll always be around to catch you Addie.” He said with a smile as he propped her up. “Sorry that sounded awkward.”

Adala laughed and got to her feet.

Cade then took off his helmet and smiled. “That was fun, but I think I’m gonna stay on the ground for a bit.”

She removed her helmet and shook out her hair “That was a blast” It amazed her how alive she felt after things like this dive. Each one made her appreciate life and those who she kept close, and wanted closer, she thought as her gaze fell on Cade.

“So...ummm...what now?”

Adala shook her head. “How about that ice cream?”

“I think there is a stand up a head.” Cade handed his helmet to the attendant and then took off the glide suit. Underneath he was wearing an unbuttoned hawaiian shirt, some board shorts, no shoes. It was evident by his attire that Cade never missed a workout. “I hope they have waffle cones.”

Adala slipped out of her own glide suit, her attire a pair of short shorts and a tank top. She also had no shoes. “Who’s buying?” she asked as she moved to his side. She gave him a once over and before he knew what was happening she kissed him.

Catching her once again as the 5’2” jumped into the arms of the 6’5” Cade to kiss him, he kissed her back. “Umm, that was unexpected.” He said with a smile.

“Is that a complaint?” she asked as she wrapped her arms around his neck.

“No just a surprise.” he said. “Though I’ve been wondering when and if you’d get the hint.”

She pulled back to gaze into his eyes. “I’m not that dense.”

“I’ve liked you since we hung out on Deep Space Nine together. But I was never sure if you liked me back, or you just needed someone to do crazy things with and I didn’t want to risk our friendship.”

“You are exactly what I want, what I need. I may be crazy, do crazy things, risk my life at the drop of a hat. But you keep me grounded and make me happy.”

It felt good to finally get her feelings, her thoughts out.

“Well then, maybe I need to rethink my lodging for the week, now that I have a reason to stick around on the planet.”

Adala laughed. “I am sure they can find an extra long bed for you.”

“So how bout we get some ice cream and then maybe tonight, you and I go on a proper date?”

“I like the sound of that.” the smile on her face, the thudding of her heart in her chest now not from the thrill of anything but the new unknown that was before her.

(reply none)

(USS Exeter – Bridge – ACEO Lieutenant Janice Hammerfield– 1015)

Having her engineering kit strapped to her side Janice walked onto the bridge and removed her tricorder from its holster. One by one she took the opportunity to examine each of the stations around the bridge as part of routine maintenance. It was probably the best time to do it while it was quiet as to not inconvenience too many people. Moving over to the science station she looked at the Ensign, “Excuse me – do you mind if I nip in to give this the once over please,”

(reply West)

“Just some routine checks,” she said kneeling down and prying off a panel to reveal the inner circuitry. Holding out her tricorder she slowly started to scan the insides for any parts that might be coming close to be replaced. “One of those things best to do when its quiet.” Pulling some of her hair back from her face she looked up at the man for a second before returning to her scans, “Ensign West? Isn’t it?”

(reply West, any)

(Risa transport control - COO LTjg Paul Sleaford 10:15)

The scene around Paul changed, the grey muted tones of the ship where replaced by the bright colours and sounds of Risa, stepping off the platform, he made his BBC way to the map on the wall. Tracing a route through the streets he nodded.

Walking out Paul squinted and screwed up his eyes, pulling the sunglasses out of his shirt pocket he placed the on his head.

Setting out at a gentle pace Paul walked through the main town, crossing a square lined with stalls he saw several of the crew browsing for trinkets, stopping at one he examined the goods, selecting a couple of nice pieces of jewellery he had them placed in a gift bag.

Standing outside the medical facility Paul removed his glasses and walked up the short set of steps, entering the cool shade he approached the desk, stopping behind an elderly couple.

The receptionist spoke without looking up, “Can I help you?”

Smiling Paul replied, “ I’m here to see Doctor Jamison “

“Do you have an appointment, she can’t see you without one you know, this isn’t a starship medical facility you know. What was it too much to drink!!”

Paul smiled, “No not yet, but I think Katie will see me.”

(Reply Jamison)

(USS Exeter – Bridge – ACEO Lieutenant Janice Hammerfield and SO Ensign Chris West–1017)

“Excuse me – do you mind if I nip in to give this the once over please,”

“Sure,” Chris replied looking up. “Not like we’re going anywhere. I’m just here because they need a body or two on the bridge. What are you doing anyways?”

“Just some routine checks,” she said kneeling down and prying off a panel to reveal the inner circuitry. Holding out her tricorder she slowly started to scan the insides for any parts that might be coming close to be replaced. “One of those things best to do when its quiet.” Pulling some of her hair back from her face she looked up at the man for a second before returning to her scans, “Ensign West? Isn’t it?”

“Yes, West, Chris West. I’m sorry, but I’m drawing a blank, I don’t think we’ve actually met, ummm...”

“Janice Hammerfield,” She said sticking her head into the open panel to take a good look about inside. “You’d be surprised how dirty things can get in here.” With one hand she reached back to her dangling engineering kit, flicked it open and removed a small device to start cleaning some of the parts, “Mostly dust.”

“Ah thats it, Janice, for some reason I was thinking Janet.”

“I get that alot,”

“So Janet, why’d you decide to stay on ship working instead of being down there in paradise?”

Pulling her head back out for a quick gasp of air she looked up, “Janice - There’s a lot to do and most of the things I need to get on with are a lot easier when people aren’t on the ship - saves time - less intrusive.” Ducking back into the gap she began finishing cleaning it up. “I presume you will be heading down at some point?”

“Honestly....” he paused. “Probably not.”

“No?” she replied back a bit confused as to why he wouldn't take the opportunity.

“The science department is crowded, and it seems like the only way to get noticed around here is to do something either incredibly dumb or almost die.” He paused. “No offense meant. I know the stuff with, well her, was harrowing. But I’m not talking about you anyways.”

Janice paused for a moment from the work she was doing then continued cleaning up the last bit of residue on the circuitry, “Its ok - I understand. I assure you that neither is the type of attention you really want.”

“I don’t want to get lost in the shuffle you know. I’ve always been noticed, and here, I’m in the background. So I’m just gonna work my tail off and get a reputation as a hard worker. Then when the next Exeter Class ships launch, whenever that is, maybe, maybe I’ll get a chance on one of them, to break out from the crowd here.”

“With an attitude like that then I would expect nothing less,” she said supportively closing the hatch on the control panel then sealing it, “Sometimes i find that it’s less about the person and rather who that person knows. If you were looking for that maybe make sure that whoever is going to be putting the next one together knows of you. Then let the pieces fall into place.”

“Yeah, thats never been my style. I guess. I’m just used to being the alpha, the top dog. And turns out I’m just one of the pack.”

“I’m sure things will work themselves out,” she gave him a friendly tap on the shoulder as she slid her tools back into her engineering kit before making a further enquiry, “I was told that you are quite the boxer?”

“Yeah, I am. Honestly, could have made a career of it. Maybe not been the best, but I could have made a dent, no pun intended. But I wanted to be in Starfleet. I wanted to have a larger purpose in my life.”

“That's quite a talent,” she nodded dusting her uniform off slightly in the process.

“I still box though. It focuses me, gives me clarity.”

“I've been meaning to ask you about that actually but things have been a bit busy,” she said a bit shyly.

“Wait really?” Chris asked. He was curious as to the why.

“The counselor suggested that something like that might help me work out some frustration and recommended that I ask you about maybe helping with that - if you have time - I understand if you don't want to.”

“Teach someone to box. Yeah, no, that I will definitely make time for. Just give me a when and where.”

“I get off about 1800 and if you're not heading planetside I'm good anytime,” she smiled back hearing that he was willing to take the time out of his day for it.

“Tell you what, meet me in the gym at 1830, ready to work out. I'll see what I'm working with, get a good session in. See what you can do. How does that sound?”

“That sounds great,” she said excitedly, “I'll see you then. Thank you Ensign,” Nodding she tucked her engineering kit under her arm and moved onto the next station.

“Yeah. See you then.” Chris said to himself as he looked at his console. “Something to look forward to.”

(reply none)

(USS Exeter –CMO Quarters, CMO Lt Gabe Vespers.- 1030)

Gabe was packing up his bag for shore leave, four days recouping and away from his duties as CMO, finally a chance to unwind properly after the last few weeks. He looked at the brochure from Risa and had knew he definitely didn't need to get a Horga'hn Ronnie would probably end him if he picked one up.

His mind flashed back to Ronnie telling him to get laid, he needed to clarify where things were going with them, he was terrible with women and knew he was going to mess things up eventually. The unexplained love she had for him was odd, but then Ronnie was odd. Although only a short time he had come to learn that anyone connected, however remotely, with the Bracken Clan had strange pasts and complicated histories.

Sighing he looked at the doors and the windows, this was now his life trapped on a flying tin can. Fight, injure, fix repeat, his mind continued going back to Ronnie's words about Frontier medicine, he wanted to stay but he wanted to go.

The internal battle raged every day within him he had big plans for himself, big dreams and the skills to achieve them but this life, this slow continuous road seemed to drag him down.

He'd thought about ending it, a phaser blast, too messy. A miscalculated prescription too obvious. An open airlock too slow. Risa proved an opportunity, a space away from so many eyes.

Looking at his reflection in the windows Gabe snapped out of it and smiled trying, as always to keep the dark thoughts at bay, he had done so well. Clipping the neuro chip back in place under his collar he activated it, with so many empaths around it was lucky he had figured out how to block the thoughts, his snappy attitude was enough mostly to throw people off the scent but the neuro damper stopped anyone picking up on his constant deep thoughts.

If people knew the real him they would give him even more distance than the grumpy Gabe got, but he was tired, tired of trying to hold it all together. Ronnie was lucky she had never spent the night, or rather he was lucky, lucky to not have to explain the process.

"Vespers to Bracken"

(Bracken)

"Sis, since we're here for a few days I wondered if you would like to spend some time together Gabe and Ailynn not Dr and FO."

(Reply Bracken)

(USS Exeter – Deck 9 study room - FO Cmdr Ailynn Bracken - 1031)

Ailynn was pretty much in hogs heaven.

She'd grumbled about having to attend the conference at Risa at first, but then as she'd glanced over the course material, she'd found herself fascinated by it. That had been a couple of weeks ago, and she'd found herself sliding back into what she loved doing almost more than anything else. Reading, learning new things, picking apart threads of research.

=^=Vespers to Bracken=^=

“Bracken.” She answered the call.

=^=Sis, since we're here for a few days I wondered if you would like to spend some time together Gabe and Ailynn not Dr and FO.=^=

Ailynn found herself smiling, the thought of spending some time with Gabe, actually just doing something together, and doing something, rather than their relationship just being as FO and CMO, was a nice one.

“Sure, that will be lovely. I have a few hours where I'm stuck elsewhere, but it would be lovely to hook up and do something.”

(Reply Gabe)

“Sure, whatever you have in mind, sounds lovely.”

(Reply Gabe)

(Risa– Suraya Bay, The Feather Monkey Bar - ACFO, Lt(jg) Trinity Frost - 1050)

Trinity was sitting in a particularly strange circle of hell. She sat back in her chair, an ice-cold beer in hand, with the gentle breeze coming off the sea running through the burning auburn of her hair. This wasn't the source of her discomfort. It was the leering. She was wearing a small skirt over her bikini, but one or two of the males in the bar seemed to think that that gave them the right to keep bugging her.

"That's a fabulous bikinini, it'd look great on my be...."

Trinity removed her glasses, her dragon green eyes flashing in annoyance. "You do not want to know what will happen if you finish that sentence." She cut across him.

"I bet you can't guess what it is I do." He slurred back to her.

Sighing, she lifted up her aviator shades, and wished she hadn't, he looked terrible. So she put them back over her eyes. "Oh...let me guess...you're a pilot maybe?" she sighed.

"Yeaah! Thassit! M' a pilot."

"You must be really really brave." She answered dryly.

"Yeah, brave." Though his nerve had gone, the auburn haired girl wasn't reacting like he'd expected, her tone of voice was all wrong. "I'm on the large shuttles at the moment, but the next step is the fast craft, like the valkyrie."

Trinity sighed. He was a dreamer. “Well...good luck...they can be hard on the newbies.”

A puzzled look was her reply.

“At flight school.” She elaborated. “When I was there they made life excruciatingly hard on the noobs.” She looked at him, or more correctly, tried not to, and drained her beer.

“You’re...?”

“Rated low level fast attack on all the fast craft that we run; also rated mountainous and extreme weather Search and Rescue.”

“I...” He turned to the bar and saw another bikini-clad figure, one that Trinity knew well.

“I wouldn’t.” Trinity said gently. “You are seriously barking up the wrong tree with that one. She’ll be far less impressed by your line than I am.”

“She’s?” He mumbled, the wind clearly taken out of his sails.

“Electronic Warfare Officer. Now leave us alone, and go and wash. You stink.”

Shuffling away, to rejoin his friends, he shook his head, deflated. Trinity walked up the the bar, and after ordering another beer, leant back against it, next to Ronnie, who was holding a daiquiri.

“Save me.” She said.

(Reply Winters)

(Risa– Suraya Bay, The Feather Monkey Bar - ACFO, Lt(jg) Trinity Frost and ACFO, Lt(jg) Ronnie Winters - 1053)

“Save me.” She said.

“Well I would, but you aren’t my type sweetheart.” Ronnie smiled, turned and faced her good friend Trinity Frost. They had met in the academy, although Trinity was a five years older than Ronnie, they had similar personalities. Their time in the fighter wing together allowed them to bond and they both worked in the same department. Not quite drinking buddies, but definitely shopping buddies.

“We all like having fun, and you know, going out for drinks, and to pull, but really...ugh.”

“Vultures are out in full force huh?”

“I don’t mind some charm, but...” she sipped at her beer. “How are you doing anyway? You here waiting or just passing time chilling?”

“Honestly, I have plans with Gabe later. Rock climbing. But I figured I’d get some beach time first. Figured I’d start the day with a drink? What about you? Did what’s his name ever get back to you, it’s been months.”

“That’s the thing. We’d had a pleasant evening, had a few drinks, I’ll admit, but every time we pass, like on Bridge duty, he just nods, and it’s like he doesn’t remember second base.”

“What was his name Benjamin Weatherstone?”

“Benedict Weatherby. He’s kinda cute, in an understated way...his loss though. I don’t chase.”

“No shit. Trinity don’t hunt, she just waits for her prey to come to her, and then rawr.” Ronnie made a clawing motion, like a cat.

Trinity laughed. “Not called the Honey Badgers for nothing you know.”

Ronnie laughed, “So what do you have planned for the week off?”

“Honestly very little. I need to see Greta. She was there for me when no one else was. I owe her. Before you arrived I think. I’m going to try to catch up to her later. Beyond that, I’m not sure.”

“Yeah, I’ve kind of not spoken to her since...well...”

“Me either. I’ve just not had time.”

“I mean, we weren’t really close, and Ire is our department head. So I just...don’t know if I want to get involved. You know.”

“Best way. I feel bad like I say because Greta is a friend. When I arrived on Mars, I’d been held back. Never given enough hours to get the ratings I needed for Peregrines and Valkyries. Greta helped me out, made sure I was never short on hours. Became squad leader just after that.”

“No I get that. You guys were both Squadron leaders, I was the bossman’s aide. Different relationship. I was the person you went to if you needed his signature. Not the one you took out for drinks.”

“Damn, now I feel guilty.”

“I didn’t mean it like that. But you know what I mean.”

“I do...” Her eyes twinkled, “It was personal actually,” she said. “You were a threat due to your unearthly beauty...” SHE laughed

“That sounds so high school.”

“Pilots are highschool sometimes.” she smiled.

“I know. I guess I was jealous too. I thought we were becoming good friends in the academy....and then well....yeah, so I’m glad the fighter wing allowed us to become shopping buddies again. It’s just, at the wing, it was different. But on the Exeter, we’re equals. And Lieutenants.” She said with a smile.

Trinity smiled back. "You're right. We ran in different circles for a bit. You were hanging out with a bloody Admiral for crying out loud." she laughed. "Related to the FO of all people." she said winking. "But yeah, we're good now, not that we ever weren't."

"I mean I feel for Greta, I do. Breakups are hard. But Ire is our boss lol. Not sure there are manuals for that. Plus as grumpy as Ire has been. Staff meetings have been tense since he got out of the brig."

"Yep. you noticed that too?" she sighed. "Never mix business with pleasure. "Times I have it's turned out to be...not the best of ideas." she smiled. "I wouldn't want people not to be allowed to hook up, but it takes a certain kind of...not sure what the word is."

"Yeah. I mean. Gosh, I see now why the CO and FO are with civilians."

"Makes a lot of sense. Even then, takes a special Civvie."

"And @\$%& imagine Gabe's surprise when he realized he was dating the captain's daughter."

"Say what now?" Trinity snapped her head round.

Ronnie paused as she realized what she said. "Umm. Sorry that was just a dream from last night."

"What time did you start drinking?" Trinity asked, raising an eyebrow. Her mind however put a couple of thoughts together and filed them away.

"Look...not here. And I've had four in the last hour. I'm bar hopping."

"Good girl. Trying to drink your way all down the strip then?" she laughed. Though her face fell and she nodded.

"Please. Not a word."

"Ronnie..."

"Please..."

"Sssh. Walls have ears. We lost touch...I wasn't a great friend, but did I ever let you down? We can talk later when we're sober and alone." she sighed. "I have a cabin with a hot tub..."

"Trinity, you skank. Shut up." Ronnie laughed.

"Joiking aside. It's all good. You can trust."

"Thank you for...well." Ronnie raised her glass "to us."

Trinity raised her beer and clinked the side of Ronnie's Daiquiri glass. "To us."

(Reply none)

(USS Exeter –Ready Room - Exeter CO, Captain Trip Williams, Lexington CO, Captain Jimmy Hart, 1st Fighter Wing of Mars FSCO, Commander D.J. Alexander, Hood FO, Lt. Commander Chris Hart, Exeter SOPS, Lt. JG Billy Alexander - 11:00)

“Come in,” Trip said as he he heard the chime of his door. He was wondering who could possibly be coming in, as most of the crew had already gone down to Risa for some fun and relaxation. He thought for a moment that it could be Ash, but he told her he’d meet her in their quarters before going down.

As the door opened, four men dressed in red uniforms. It was Billy, Billy’s brother D.J., his cousin Jimmy, and Jimmy’s brother Chris.

“Sup fool,” Chris said entering the room. The four male Williams cousins made their way to the couch area as Trip got up and followed.

“Seriously Trip,” D.J. chimed, what are you doing here, it’s Risa, you have a hot wife. Get out, get crunk.”

Trip laughed, “I plan on it, soon, just finishing up some paperwork. Plus I have some stupid Archaeological conference to go to.”

“We know, it’s why we’re here, we got asked to go to the same conference,” Jimmy smiled.

“Yo, Jimmy,” Billy spoke up, “When did you get the captain pip.”

“Oh yeah, they needed a CO for the USS Lexington, she launches in two months. Just got named. Then I heard you were coming to this conference, and they wanted me to attend one, so I decided to crash.” Jimmy replied.

“And can you believe it?” D.J. said laughing, “I got tasked to replace him on Mars with the fighter wing, because why not go for a Williams cousin trifecta. So I’m here for vacation before starting the new job. The missus is already on Risa getting settled into a condo for us. No conference for me.”

“What about you Chris?” Trip asked.

“Conference as well. I’ve been named First Officer of the USS Hood. Also launching in two months. But also piggy backing on a trip to Risa.”

“Well #\$%& meQ!” Billy said with a laugh. “This is what I get for being the slacker cousin. Jimmy is a Captain, D.J. has the fighter wing, Chris is a First Officer, Sy is a First Officer, Trip is a captain and I’m still Lt. JG, Billy Alexander, Captain’s Bitch.”

The five men began laughing.

“Oh come on, I’m not that bad.” Trip smiled.

“You brought me on as Strategic Operations, and now you have me running Gamma Shift, up all night.” Billy said with a smile.

“But at least you’ve got the bridge during that time.” Trip replied. “Would you rather still be Remae’s Aide?”

“Would be a lot safer.” Billy retorted.

“Give it time little brother,” D.J. chimed in, “Your experience here will be invaluable. But I told you, you should have worked harder at the Academy. You were smart enough to do it. You just didn’t apply yourself. You still might end up with a desk job, but this will make you more, assignable.”

“I know,” Billy grumbled towards his brother.

“Listen, Trip, we’re gonna get out of your hair and make our way back to the planet. But we wanted to check in.” Jimmy said standing up. “Go be with your hot wife.”

“Hot and pregnant.” Billy said giggling.

D.J. looked at his brother with a look that said, stop being a dumb ass.

“Yeah, well I guess I’ll be seeing y’all around.” Trip said with a smile.

“Oh and Trip,” Jimmy said as he and the others made their way to the door. “Don’t tell Erin I’m here. Gonna make it a surprise.”

“Fair enough.” Trip replied with a smile, “Fair enough,”

(reply none)

(Risa– Suraya Bay, The Feather Monkey Bar - ACFO, Lieutenant Ronnie Winters - 11:00)

Confidence. If there was one thing that could be accurately said about Veronica Kadayia Winters is that she was confident. She knew who she was. She knew who she wanted to be. She was comfortable in her own skin, with her own body. Let the haters, hate, let the admirers, admire. She didn’t care. She had gone through hell to try and find a new life, to change the future. What she had was better than what she would have had in her own time. She had a family, she had her mom and dad, she had a future. But she hadn’t changed her timeline, she just managed to be in a diverging one. Whether hers diverged from this one, or this one diverged from her, she didn’t know. She just knew that she was happy. Happy, confident, and free.

She walked to the bar with a skip in her step. Her hair was tied back into a ponytail. She was had a pair of aviator shades and was wearing a black bikini. She could have had a small robe, or some shorts, or a tank top on her. But she didn’t care. She was in paradise and she thought she should dress the part.

She walked up to the bar with a confident strut and sat down and ordered a strawberry daiquiri. Sure it was early, she didn’t care. It was paradise and paradise was supposed to be fun.

(reply any who wants to join)

(Risa– Suraya Bay Resort, Botanical Gardens - Counselor, Ensign SG Jack Roberts - 11:00)

Quiet, the botanical gardens were quiet, and Jack loved that. He loved being away from the noise of the ship, the humm of the engines. He liked the sound of the birds chirping, the feather monkeys running around, and just the smell of the flowers. It was a place of refuge. His job meant that he spent much of his days helping others, but he knew he also needed self care. He needed time for himself. He needed his own place to recharge. Thankfully he was certain the botanical gardens would get the job done.

(reply any)

(Risa– Suraya Bay- Beach Front – Ensign - Arbor -Security Analyst – Lieria - 1104)

Arbor was standing on a beach, the cliffs rising high behind him and the sea lapping a meter away from his bare feet. He was wearing a louse long sleeve linin shirt with knee length cargo shorts. He looked up at the sun feeling its heat and radiance shining down on him. He had felt so much better since he had transported down. Feeling the fresh air and being on a planet surface with wildlife and nature rather than in the confinement of a star ship. The Exeter's arboretum helped but there was nothing that beat being this side of a gravity well.

=^=Arbor are you there=^=

“Yes Lieria. I am in the exact spot where you requested.”

=^=Brilliant hang on a moment=^=

He paused for a moment as the whine of transporters sounded beside him. He turned to see Lieria materialise beside him she was wearing a bikini with a sarong around her waist and holding a towel. He looked at her for a moment as she wobbled and then fall backwards onto the sand.

He stepped over to her, offered his and pulled her into a sitting position.

“Well, that did not go exactly as I expected.”

“What do you mean.”

“Looks like the epic battle between me and gravity has a defiant winner this time.”

He nodded as he watched her sigh.

“I had wanted to be up right for a little bit longer than a few seconds.”

She smiled and looked out over the sea.

“But this is a beautiful place.”

He nodded.

“Yes, it is. This is not the first time you have been to a beach.”

She rolled her eyes at him.

“Yes of course it is. There are beaches on my home world that are just as beautiful as this and I also went to some when I was at the academy. I just would have liked to been able to stand and walk to the sea. That’s why I have been doing the exercises.”

“Exercises?”

“Yes, I have been building my muscle strength. I know that I will never be as mobile as you heavy worlders.....did you not realise?”

He looked at her and shook his head.

“Why do you think I was eating so much food all the time.”

“I assumed that you just enjoyed your food?”

She laughed.

“Ow Arbor you do have a lot to learn about woman.”

“I am not that bad. I am not some sapling new to the world.”

She paused for a moment.

“How old are you.”

“By your measurement of time. I am 140 years old.”

“140 years....well you don’t look a year over 40.”

“Thank you that’s very kind of you.”

She grinned.

“If you would be a gentleman and help me up. I have not spent all this time working out to sit on the sand all day. There is a sea with my name on it.”

He nodded and helped her to her feet. With a little support he helped her into the water until it was knee high.

“You don’t want to go for a swim?”

“No, I think I will stay on the beach and enjoy the sun.”

“Okay your loss.”

She pushed off from Arbor and dived in swimming out through the gentle rolling waves. He watched her for a moment with a huge grin on her face before turning and headed back to the

shore. He spotted Ensign Trujillo lying under an umbrella and gave a friendly wave as he sat back onto the sand.

(Reply Trujillo IYW, any)

(Risa– Suraya Bay, Powerboard course - Yeoman, Ensign Thea Helms - 11:15)

Thea was lined up wearing board shorts and a tank top. She was excited. It wasn't surfing, but the powerboards were close enough. They were like surfboards, only they hovered over the water and used the wake created by the boards' hover device to create a wake or waves to surf off of. Risa also had a course that was fun to race on.

The hawaiian surf goal would have preferred to paddle out and surf the normal way, but the weather control machine hovering around Risa made it so the waves were perfect for the beach and romance, not necessarily surfing. So it was the next best thing for her.

As she readied her board and headed towards the water, she looked around. There were a bunch of people on the beach, scantily clad, making out and laughing. She sighed. There were no amount of romance novels or silly rom coms that could fill the gap that was missing in her life. Real romance. She was jealous. Which is why she needed to get on the water. Once she was on the powerboard, she knew, all that would matter was her, the waves, and the freedom.

(reply any who want to join in)

(Risa– Suraya Bay, Beach front- OPS Officer, Ensign Santiago Rodriguez Trujillo - 11:15)

“La Vida es una cosa preciosa, y gracias a Dios, nos dio el cuerpo físico.” Santiago said to himself as he walked along the beach front admiring the beauty of creation, both physical and natural. Santiago was a flirt, he was cocky, he was a regular Don Juan and Risa was a dream come true.

New girls to meet, new girls to date, and who knows, maybe he'd find the one who could finally tame him. Either way he knew he was going to have fun. The weather was great, the water was clear. He found himself a little spot next to an umbrella and laid down on the beach chair under it. He placed his towel underneath his head and his sunglasses over his eyes. He was wearing an unbuttoned hawaiian shirt and black board shorts. The world was his oyster and it was an all you could eat buffet.

(reply Any)

(USS Exeter –Ready Room - CO, Captain Trip Williams - 11:30)

As Trip gathered his things to leave the ready room and head down to Risa, he couldn't help but reflect about how lucky he was. He had an amazing wife, a child on the way, and his relationship with his "daughter" was doing fine. Ronnie would never be "his" daughter. She was the daughter of an Ash and Trip from a different timeline. But she was still genetically his child, and he had grown to love her as his own, which was odd given that they were genetically the same age. However that only helped their bond as they could level with each other. He had even taken her out to the holodeck to play catch and in private, she called him dad.

Because of that, because of his learning how to be Ronnie's dad, it helped him to be a better captain. He felt more seasoned, less the age he was and more the age a captain should be. He was becoming more confident in his abilities to lead. Of course it was no surprise. Growing up he was told two things, that he was a leader, and that he was going to make a great dad. Its probably because of those traits that Ravok and referred to him as Papa Trip. Still being there for Ronnie helped to better understand his role in the professional development of his crew. He wanted to see them grow, get promoted, get new jobs. Part of his job was to get them there.

He was excited for his cousins to have their promotions, and was excited that within a few months there would be two more Exeter class ships out in Space. He knew Jimmy would be the Captain of the Lexington, but he wondered who would be the Captain of the Hood. At that moment he received a hail on a private channel.

=^=Captain Williams, my name is Captain Rigoberto Sanchez, with Starfleet Operations, I hope this isn't a bad time.=^=

"Not all Captain Sanchez, what can I do for you?"

=^=Well, its more of a professional courtesy. Would you say that Commander Ailynn Bracken would be a good captain?^=

"Of course."

=^=Good. Then this just means we were right. She does have experience with this class after all. Then here is the courtesy, we would like to offer her the position as commanding officer of the NCC-1703-D USS Hood. Before we made the offer we wanted to let you know first, so you aren;t got off guard.=^=

“I appreciate the courtesy.” Trip said nodding. This was huge. She would do well.

=^=Well then Captain, we will send you the details, since you’ve known her for a long time, why don’t you deliver the offer to her. I think that might be a special moment.=^=

“Thank you.”

=^=Enjoy Risa captain. Sanchez out.=^=

The hail ended and Trip stood up. ~Well, it was fun while it lasted.~

(Reply none)

(Risa– Suraya Bay Resort, Pool area - Spc Comp ops ACOO Ensign Sg. Zot & Ops Ensign Rylee Page- 1157)

Walking together Rylle and Zot decided to spend some time relaxing poolside.

" This looks like a good spot." Zot said.

Wearing a light t-shirt and skirt, Rylee smiled at him. "It does. Hope those seats are clean."

Zot bent down and focused his eyes on each seat. His visual range, adjusting accordingly.

" Both seats appear to have been recently sanitized. I believe we are safe ." Zot responded.

Sitting down, Rylee lay back on the chair and sighed happily. The warmth of the risian sun was something to behold and she closed her eyes for a brief moment to enjoy it.

Zot sat down in his chair and laid back.

" This is nice. If I were able to sleep I would be sleeping in no time at all." He laughed.

Opening her eyes, she smiled at him, "I could fall asleep but I might just change a second. " She stood and took off her t-shirt and skirt. Wearing a one piece, silver swimsuit underneath, she stretched. "Now that feels better."

" Looks better too." He quickly remarked with a smirk.

Turning round, Rylee put her hand on her hips and gave him a look. "Oh really? You counting my spots again, mister?"

" Last night I counted 309 I would however like to confirm that count . I am sure I could find a few more." He said reaching over , placing a hand on her thigh and chuckled.

Smirking, Rylee nodded, "Well, it's a good job I got us a condo down by the beach. Nice and..." she leant in and whispered in his ear.

Zot listened as she whispered.

Suddenly a loud splash of water hit them both.

"Son of a..." Rylee exclaimed.

Zot looked at the pool.

" So how was the splash?" The young man asked emerging from the water. It was Lieutenant Alexander the nighttime bridge supervisor.

" I'm glad you are enjoying yourself Sir, but you have soaked not only myself but my partner as well. " Zot said.

(REPLY BILLY)

"You are as graceful as a baby elephant doing that, Billy. " Rylee said, shaking the water off her.

(reply Billy)

(USS Exeter –Personal Quarters - CO, Captain Trip Williams, FO, Commander Ailynn Bracken, and Dir. R&SE, Ashlyn Williams - 12:00)

“Sorry I’m late sweetie, had some random business come my way.” Trip said as he entered his quarters.

Ashlyn looked up from the book that she’d been reading and Layla jumped off the couch from where she’d been sat next to her, and ran across the room tail wagging.

“Hey there girl, you ready to go run on the beach,” Trip said petting Layla.

Layla sneezed and wagged excitedly.

“I hope waiting wasn’t a problem?”

“No problem at all sweetie.” Ash answered, “What kind of business? Can you say?” She’d learned to read Trip’s face when it came to things he could speak about and things that he couldn’t.

“Apparently a bunch of my cousins decided to crash our vacation and wanted to stop by.”

“Oh? I hadn’t realised that they were anywhere near here. The Williams’ crashing Risa are they? Oh deary me. Who’s turned up?”

“Jimmy, D.J., Chris. Fun times. They just gave the Lexington to Jimmy and Chris is going to be the FO on the Hood. Two more months and there will be two more Exeter class ships out there.”

Ashlyn glowed, she was so proud of her extended family. Even more so that it was Trips father that had designed the ship.

“Hey, do you know if Ailynn is still on board?”

“I think so.” She answered. “She was in the study area when I saw her last, reading up on the topics for that conference you two have to sit through.” She smiled, and giggled. “You know what she’s like. A look of fierce concentration on her face. Why do you ask?”

“Can you keep a secret? They’re offering her the Hood.”

“Really? Oh my! That’s amazing, I’m so proud of her. Of all of you of course.”

“Yeah, I just don’t know if I want to lose her ya know.”

Ashlyn nodded. “I understand. She may not accept it, she’s a very very complicated girl. She’d ace it of course. You can never tell with Ailynn.”

“It’s her choice, and I want her to both take and turn down the offer at the same time.”

“I understand, and she’d take that as the highest compliment that you could give her.” Ashlyn smiled, standing up and stretching her back. “She mentioned that she’d booked a cabin, a ways down from ours, so she won’t be staying on board the ship. If you want to catch up with her before we head off, that’s fine, I need to finish packing a few things.”

“Yeah, what are you packing?” he said with a wink.

Ashlyn blushed, and winked teasingly. “Steaks and beer.”

Trip went up and gave her a big kiss. “I love you so much.”

Ashlyn kissed him back. “Love you too. Now get out from under my feet while I finish up.” She winked.

“Fine, but we should invite Ronnie for dinner while we’re here. I think she wants to spend a day with you too. Before you know it, our lives will be screaming and diapers.”

Nodding, Ashlyn replied. “I’ll message her. There’s a couple of people that I want to entertain. Ailynn and Caity too, we’ll have a get together on the beach.”

Trip smiled and tapped his commbadge. “Captain Williams to Commander Bracken, please drop by my quarters ASAP.”

=^=On my way...if I can find that top that goes with the..never mind. I got it. Be right there. Bracken out.=^=

While he waited Trip began looking over his duffle bag, making sure that he packed all the shirts that Ash liked, and a couple other ensembles for her benefit.

A few moments later Ailynn was on her way to Trip and Ashlyn’s quarters. She’d finished in the study hall a while ago, and had gone back to her own quarters to pack. She hit the chime when she reached the door.

“Enter.” Trip said as he finished packing.

Ailynn stepped into the lounge, greeting both of them, and also Layla who had run up to greet her. She was still wearing her uniform, she hadn’t had a chance to change yet.

“Looks like you aren’t yet read for fun.” Trip said as he finished buttoning up his linen shirt. He didn’t mind not wearing a shirt around Ailynn. He liked showing off his muscles. Plus it wasn’t the first time Ailynn had seen him without a shirt.

“Yeah...That’s what I was looking for when you called. What do you need? Hey Ash are you okay?”

“Fine thank you honey.” Ash replied passing through the room.

“She’s glowing. According to my cousins, I have a hot wife.” Trip said with a smile.

Ailynn smiled. “They’re not wrong. Good genes. Cousins? I’m not with.” Ailynn replied puzzled.

“Yeah. Jimmy, D.J., and Chris are all here. Jimmy and Chris are attending the same conference. D.J. and his wife and kid just wanted a vacation.” Trip said looking under the couch. “Babe, do you know where my sandals are?”

“Closet, second shelf up, left hand side.” Ashlyn called out from the bedroom.

“Thanks dear.” Trip then went to the closet and took out his sandals. “Jimmy was promoted to captain and named CO of the Lexington. D.J. is taking over the fighter wing. Chris was just named FO of the Hood.”

“Those are the new ships on the Exeter class. I saw the list in the Fleet communique. You must be crazy proud of all this. Any clue who they have in mind as CO of the Hood? Barker, C’lel?”

“Lynn,” Trip said with a sigh. “You might want to take a seat.”

“Last time you told me to sit down you promoted me to FO.” She said sitting down. “Actually that’s a lie, the last time was when you told me Ashlyn was pregnant. What’s up?” Her brain was still buried in archaeology.

“So, about the CO of the Hood. They wanted someone who had familiarity with the Exeter Class. Maybe not someone with the most command experience, but had familiarity with the ship. And well.... Do I need to keep going or have you figured it out?”

Ailynn blushed. “Are you serious? Me?”

“Congratulations Lynn, she’s yours if you want her.” He handed her a PADD that was on the coffee table. “Your orders are here. You’d be promoted to captain. But they do allow you the opportunity to turn her down given your relative greenness.”

“Trip...This is...” She blushed, “Me? This is going to take some thought. I want to of course, but There’s so many reasons not to....” She read the PADD. “How long do I have to reach a decision?”

“They need to know by the first of the year. The whole crew is set up. You won’t get to pick your senior staff. I read your orders. They wanted to ask you earlier, but they wanted to give the two of us some, I dunno, chance to breathe before making the ask.”

“I understand, and thank you Trip.”

“I’ll transfer Caity of course.”

She blushed. “I’ll need a good Director of R&SE.” She winked at Ash. “seriously though, I’ll give this proper thought, Your backing means a lot.”

“Real talk?”

“Shoot.” she answered simply. “You know I’ll not take offense.”

“I’m gonna miss you. I don’t know if Keira or Ravok will ever really be able to replace you. But that’s not it. Honestly, I’m just used to your face. And I feel guilty as hell. I want you to turn it down, but at the same time, I want you to take it because you deserve it. But I just, it

was hard enough being separated from Sy after being around her for 22 years, its gonna hurt losing you too.”

She nodded, a lump forming in her throat. On a whim, she pulled him into a hug. “I haven’t said yes yet, but if I do, I’ll never be able to express my gratitude to you for convincing me to take up the FO post. I’ll miss you, you oaf.”

“You’d be a fool to say no. You never know when the next opportunity will come by.”

“I know.” She pulled away. “Rest assured I will make the right decision for me.” She smiled gently, her heart unsure whether it was sinking in fear or soaring with pride. “I’d better go finish packing.”

“Yeah. I’ll see you down there. The opening reception is at 1700 hours.”

“Thank you Trip. I’ll be there.”

She stepped away, and left the room, aware of a sudden weirdness between them; as if everyone was steeling themselves for a decision that would forever change all of their destinies.

(Reply none)

(Risa– Suraya Bay Resort, The Great Buffet- Head Nurse, Ensign Violet Drake- 12:00)

It was lunch time and Violet was starving. Sure she was happy to be in paradise, which was why she was wearing flip flops, cut off jean shorts and a bikini top, with sunglasses perched on her head. But she was most excited for the all you could eat buffet with food from all over the galaxy. That was one of the main reasons she was excited for the stay on Risa, and the only reason she got a room at the Resort. It was also the reason why she worked out like crazy. She loved to eat.

Plus eating was important. In her time working in medicine she knew that often times people would work and skip eating, and when they didn’t eat, they got cranky, weak, and weren’t themselves. She was a huge advocate for eating, responsibly of course, as part of mental and

physical health. Of course she also just loved an all you could eat buffet, especially when they had sushi.

As she approached the buffet she smiled.

“Jackpot.”

(reply any)

(Risa– Suraya Bay Resort, Volleyball Court - Lexington CO, Captain Jimmy Hart - 12:00)

Jimmy walked past the different groups playing volleyball and smiled. It gave him a sense of nostalgia. Volleyball was the most frequently played sport amongst the fighter wing on mars. There were a few beach volleyball pits near the hangars for the pilots and crew to hang out and relax.

Once the conference was over he was going to need to get his brother and cousins together for a game or two. They could do Harts vs Alexanderds with Trip judging. Or They could challenge someone to a game of 5 vs 5. Either way, volleyball would need to be played.

Right now he just wanted to take in the sights. Eventually he would need to track down Erin and say hello. Especially because there was something very important he needed to ask her, though that question could wait just a little bit longer.

(reply any, erin iyw)

(Risa– Suraya Bay Resort, Pool area - Strat OPS, Lt Billy Alexander - 12:00)

“Cannonball!” Billy shouted as he jumped into the pool trying to create biggest splash he could. He was a goofball, plain and simple. A loveable oaf and that was ok. If there was one thing you could say about Billy Alexander was that he was unabashedly himself. While that might be annoying to some, no counselor who ever gave him an eval had anything negative to say about his knowledge of who he was and how he, exercised that.

As he entered the water and sunk to the bottom, he just enjoyed the coolness of the pool water, the feeling of weightlessness and the joy of letting loose. He was excited that his brother was there with his nephew, but at the same time it increased his sense of jealousy. All these successful cousins all around him, and he just wasn't there. But while he wasn't as successful as driven as they were, there was one thing he had as advantage. He was the best at knowing when to relax.

He surfaced and his head popped out of the water and he looked around and asked, "So how was the splash?"

(reply any)

(Risa- Suraya Bay Resort, Pool area - aACMO Ensign SG Heinrich Kruze - 12:00)

Heinrich reclined poolside, PADD in hand. This unexpected vacation would be an incredible opportunity to catch up on reading. A friend had suggested he read Zhuangzi awhile back, and he figured he now had a chance to dive in. Heinrich was not the most philosophically minded, he preferred to read history (you know, things that actually happened), but his friend told him Zhuangzi would help open up his mind and conceive new possibilities. He also figured it would give him a better sense of ancient China, which he liked reading about from time to time.

Heinrich read Zhuangzi recounting a dream he once had. He dreamt he was a butterfly fluttering about happily not a care in the world. In the dream he had no idea he was Zhuangzi. But when he woke up he suddenly came back to himself, he was Zhuangzi again. But, he said, " Now I do not know whether I was then a man dreaming I was a butterfly, or whether I am now a butterfly, dreaming I am a man." ~That's silliness,~ Heinrich thought as he read the passage. ~We know what reality is because it feels real. What is he on about?~ But then he remembered what his friend said about conceiving new possibilities.

"Cannonball!"

There was a huge splash. Water covered the PADD and Heinrich felt wet enough that he may as well had just jumped in the water. He looked up to see the culprit. Billy's head popped out like a shark's fin. "So how was the splash?"

"Good one, Billy!" Heinrich called out. "You got me drenched. How's the water?"

(Reply Billy)

(Risa- Suraya Bay Resort, Pool area -SOPS, Lt. JG Billy Alexander and aACMO Ensign SG Heinrich Kruze - 12:05)

“Good one, Billy!” Heinrich called out. “You got me drenched. How’s the water?”

“It feels absolutely amazing. Like almost everything here, it’s perfect.”

" I'm glad you are enjoying yourself Sir, but you have soaked not only myself but my partner as well. " Zot said.

Billy turned and saw Zot and Rylee Page.

“That’s the point of the cannonball. Maximum damage.”

"You are as graceful as a baby elephant doing that, Billy. " Rylee said, shaking the water off her.

“That means I did it right.” He said pulling himself out of the pool. He then nodded at the couple allowing them to go on their way and then went over to Kruze.

“Alright Special K, how's the reading?”

Heinrich hated being called Special K. “Oh, it’s pretty good. Right now he’s talking about a dream he had when he was a butterfly. But he’s not sure if he dreamt he was a butterfly or if he’s a butterfly dreaming he’s a man. Kinda trippy, don’t you think?”

“I guess. Usually I just dream I’m a big ole black bear sleeping all day.”

Heinrich laughed, “What if you’re just a big black bear dreaming you’re Billy?”

“Seriously though, we’re at a resort, you just gonna read pool side all day. At least put a horga’hn out.”

“A whoga’hn?” He asked.

“You seriously don’t know what a horga’hn is?”

“Not many people from Alpha 5 travel this far.”

“A horga’hn is a statuette that serves as a fertility symbol on Risa, and represents the Risian symbol of sexuality. They say that to own one is to call forth its mystical sexual powers. If you put one out publicly it means that you want jamaharon, a mysterious and pleasurable practice native to Risa. Though I’m not sure what jamaharon actually is.”

“I’m here to rest, I don’t think I’m ready for whatever adventures a whatcha’hn might get me into.”

“Not too much trouble. If I wasn’t dating Jaelle, we might get into trouble. But as I have a girlfriend and she could kill us both without blinking, we can’t get into that much trouble.” Billy chuckled.

“That is certainly a risk I wouldn’t want you to take.”

“But seriously anything is better than a book.”

Heinrich paused, seemingly deep in thought. “I suppose I have read enough for today.” He made a sly smile, “Did I tell you about the dream I had last night?”

“Were you a butterfly.” Billy said laughing, “Or even worth a moth.”

“No, not a butterfly. I never get those flying dreams.”

Billy looked around, “Why don’t you tell me on the way to the bar. Maybe they’ve got something resembling chicken wings,”

“Alright.” Heinrich got up and they walked along the pool. “So I dreamt I was a shark. Tell me, was I Heinrich dreaming I was a shark, or am I shark dreaming I am Heinrich?”

“Well that is an interesting philosophical question. Because if you were the shark, dreaming you’re Heinrich, then why do I myself have agency?”

“How do I know you have agency? Perhaps you’re just a figment of my imagination!”

“You can say you just imagined it. But I feel like I have free will, agency. So how do you explain that Shark boy.”

Heinrich hated being called Shark boy. “Maybe this is all a dream.”

“It also presupposes Sharks have the ability to dream and a rational soul.”

“Perhaps we imagine it as such in this dream world, but in the real world sharks do have rational souls! Maybe they have a whole shark civilization. They could have shark hospitals, shark armies, shark super heroes. Vigilante sharks roaming the streets fighting crime. And one of them is dreaming of this world. Which is far more boring.”

"Yeah because sharks don't have boobs." Billy said with a laugh.

“That explains it! I’m dreaming for the boobs!”

"Say we're just sharks dreaming. Do you think being a shark is better?"

“Hmm...” Heinrich was surprised that he was stopping to consider the question. As a doctor he, generally, dealt with practical matters. Someone has the flu, someone has a tummy ache, someone had a limb blown off. But a shark, unlike him, would be free. “If you’re a shark you lose a tooth and it grows right back. Pretty neat.”

“I think it would be too limiting. I mean, I dunno, man. Say being a Shark is real, and that is all we have. I think I'd much prefer the dream of being Billy than the reality of being a shark.”

“No, man. Being a shark would be awesome.”

“Are you familiar with the 20th century writer C.S. Lewis?”

“Nope,” Heinrich said, “never heard of him.”

“My gramps used to read us his Chronicles of Narnia series. In one of the novels, the Silver Chair, there is one character, who is just an absolute pessimist. They are in an underground kingdom and an evil witch is trying to convince them that the underground kingdom is the reality, and the surface a dream. He had a monologue that I find so poignant, and honestly, I think reminds me to stay grounded in reality no matter how much I get lost in a fantasy world.”

“Do you remember the monologue?”

Billy smiled. “One word, Ma'am, One word. All you've been saying is quite right, I shouldn't wonder. I'm a chap who always liked to know the worst and then put the best face I can on it. So I won't deny any of what you said. But there's one more thing to be said, even so. Suppose we have only dreamed, or made up, all those things-trees and grass and sun and moon and stars and Aslan himself. Suppose we have. Then all I can say is that, in that case, the made-up things seem a good deal more important than the real ones. Suppose this black pit of a kingdom of yours is the only world. Well, it strikes me as a pretty poor one. And that's a funny thing, when you come to think of it. We're just babies making up a game, if you're right. But four babies playing a game can make a play-world which licks your real world hollow. That's why I'm going to stand by the play world. I'm on Aslan's side even if there isn't any Aslan to lead it. I'm going to live as like a Narnian as I can even if there isn't any Narnia. So, thanking you kindly for our supper, if these two gentlemen and the young lady are ready, we're leaving your court at once and setting out in the dark to spend our lives looking for Overland. Not that our lives will be very long, I should think; but that's a small loss if the world's as dull a place as you say.”

“That's a good speech.”

“So say I am a Shark dreaming I’m Billy, and I just made up Starfleet, this uniform, this calling. Well I much prefer this life, this adventure, the duty, the honor, the meaning behind our task, behind our mission, to whatever weird Shark adventure I might get up to.”

“Maybe it’s because I’m new here, but I’m thinking you find Starfleet a lot more adventurous than I do.” They had just arrived at the bar and Heinrich leaned on the counter. “Hey, I’ll have a romulan ale and my friend here will have a...” “Dude, Romulan Ale, this early. Man you’re gonna be knocked the #@\$\$% out.” Billy snickered. “I’ll just have a margarita.”

The bartender went and returned with their drinks.

“I mean, I grew up in this you know. Both my parents, officers. My dad is from a Starfleet family, so was my mom. One of my maternal ancestors was a captain during the war against the Romulans in the 2160s. It’s in my blood. I know what the Federation is supposed to be. That’s the dream world I’d love to see. The Federation back to its glory.”

Heinrich took a sip of his ale to make sure it was to his satisfaction. “So what you’re saying is you’re like a shark in water.”

“What do you mean?”

“A shark lives in water, though it doesn’t know it’s in water. It breathes the water, it can move because it’s in the water. The water makes it free. And Starfleet is your water. You live it, breathe it, would likely die without it. It makes you free.”

“Yeah, its weird. I love this, I need this, but I’m a slacker, my grades were average. But I need this.”

“You’re born for this, man.”

“You know I had a conversation with my cousin Trip the other day, you know the Captain. He was the salutatorian of our class. Super smart, driven, captain at 23. But he could walk away from this at a moments notice, be ok, this isn’t his water. I may never get higher than Lt. Commander, probably have a desk job for ever. But this is my water, I just don’t think I could walk away.”

“Well, for our sakes let’s hope the Captain doesn’t walk away too soon.” Heinrich drank a little more of his ale.

“What about you, what is your water. Where does Shark boy live?”

“Heh, that’s the thing.” Heinrich stopped to choose his words carefully. “The shark is free because of the water. I don’t know if I have a water. That’s me.” He laughed. “Always a fish out of water.”

“So you’re saying you feel shackled?”

“Not precisely. Just... out of place. And you’re never really free until you find your place. I thought medicine was my place, and maybe it is. I’m pretty good at it. But until I figure that out I’ll always be constrained.”

“That sounds exhausting.”

“Hey man, that’s life.” He took another drink of his ale. “It’s a good thing I don’t have to work tonight.”

"No shit, bud. No shit." Billy raised his drink, "Cheers."

Heinrich raised his drink. "Cheers!" And he drank probably too much.

(reply none)

(Risa– Suraya Bay Resort, Volleyball Court- CSO Lt Erin Cortez & Lexington CO, Captain Jimmy Hart - 1202)

"Of all the volleyball courts in all the universe and you had to be walking in the one."

"Well technically I was here first." He said with a laugh.

Smiling, Erin bit her lip a little and grinned, "Without wishing to sound ungrateful for this rather nice turn of events, what are you doing here?"

"Umm, its kind of a surprise."

"Oh... a surprise?"

"I found out a week ago that I'm taking over the Lexington as her first CO. Then they said they wanted me to attend a conference of my choosing. When I saw Trip was coming here, I signed up. A little birdie told me the whole crew would be here, so I thought I'd surprise you and tell you the good news in person."

Erin smiled widely, "You... wow. That's amazing, Jimmy. Congratulations." She walked to his side, took his hand and smiled up at him. "Why do I sense there's more to this?"

“Umm yeah, about that.” He said as he put his hand behind his head. “I’ve got a lot more freedom with the Lexington, both in where I can go and...” he paused. “Who can come with.”

looking at him, Erin could see a question on his mind, something he was trying to ask. "Jimmy, spit it out. Just say what you are trying to say. Although if you are trying to poach any of my staff...." She replied, winking at him.

“Erin, would you...., I mean, I know you love the Exeter and all, but I was wondering, if you’d come aboard the Lexington as Chief Science Officer. Trip says you’re doing well with the change, and selfishly it would mean we could spend more time together. Give this a real go.”

Erin looked at him. ~oh.... Oh I was not expecting that.~ she thought to herself as she took a breath. "Oh... You're asking me?"

"If you want to move to a duty station where we could see each other every day. Yes."

"I... that's a surprise. Do I need to answer right now?"

"Take your time. I'm asking you to leave your life. To take a chance on something that may not last. But I think my confidence is evident in bringing you on."

"I wouldn't be dealing with you I take it?"

"You'd deal mainly with the FO."

"It's... something to think about. " She replied honestly. Part of her was thinking about whether she could do it, leave her life, walk away and take that leap.

Jimmy paused. "Forget. This won't work."

"What... this offer?"

"I can't date an officer on my crew. Just thinking about it. I just...forget. It only works if you come on as a Civilian consultant. I..I can't ask that of you."

"Jimmy, can I be honest?"

"Always."

She looked at him and smiled, "You offering this to me... it's a big decision either way. I won't lie and say I'm not considering it. The Exeter is my home. I have built a life there."

"I know, and it's great. I love that your life doesn't revolve around me. Is independent of me. You have your own life and dreams."

"However.. you are a part of that life. We've not been dating that long. Part of me wants to run away into the sunset with you. But part of me is saying is it too soon?"

"I mean yeah. I just hadn't thought it through. I mean, being closer, would be a better way of seeing if it could work you know. But yeah. Its so rushed, I hadn';t thought it through."

"Listen, I'm not saying no. I'm not saying yes either. I'm asking for time to consider it. Also, selfishly, part of me is also wanting some time with you. Just us."

"Well, Tommy is on Mars." He said with a smile. "Look I've got some work I need to do here, but I'll let you know when I'm free."

"Definitely." Erin smiled.

"Got to run, but, dinner maybe?"

"Dinner would be good. Don't work too hard though." She replied and kissed him softly on the cheek. "Now, go do your work, Captain. " She winked.

Jimmy nodded and went on his way.

Watching him walk off, Erin smiled. ~all work and no play... well maybe later.~ she grinned and headed towards the beach.

(Reply none)

(Risa- Suraya Bay Resort, The Great Buffet - SO Ens.(Sg) Stan more - 12:09)

Stan had heard that there was some fantastic flora growing around and on top of some of the cliffs on Risa. But he was not sure about going climbing on his own. It was said that Adala

Michael's was a good rock climber. He had tried to contact her but got a recorded message. Not wanting to be nosey or interrupt anything. He left a message for her.

“ Adala this is Stan. How does some rock climbing interest you? If it does please call me back.”

The smell of something delicious entered his nostrils. Licking his lips Stan followed the scent.

Sushi. Stan had never had it before. Checking first which was ok for a curious human from Scotland to eat. He picked a few trout and salmon delights but mostly vegetable based. After all if he was going to go rock climbing later. A unhappy tummy could spoil things.

(Reply , Michael's)

(Risa– Suraya Bay Resort, ACSci Ensign Senior Grade Adala Michaels - 12:15)

Arriving back at her quarters after a day out she found a message from Stan.

“ Adala this is Stan. How does some rock climbing interest you? If it does please call me back.”

~ Rock climbing .. of course ~ She thought to herself.

{5 minute later)

Adala found herself standing in the door of The Great Buffet and looked around. She was making the most of her time on Risa, to do things and experience things that the holodecks couldn't provide.

She laughed to herself seeing Stan and walking over to him.

"Fancy meeting you here."

She motioned to the chair across from him.

May I?"

(Reply Stan)

(USS Exeter- by DuBois personal quarters - FO Cmdr Ailynn Bracken and 9D Manager Caity DuBois- 12:15)

Ailynn knew she was late. She strode down the corridor wearing her beach clothes, a new bikini covered by a pair of short shorts, her top covered by a sleeveless crop top, and her favourite pair of vintage look rock chick sunglasses on her head. Her long legs, now bare, carried her down the corridor at a good pace.

Over her shoulder she carried a beach bag with a few things stuffed in, she'd had a few things sent ahead. Feeling rather guilty, she was also really excited, she'd given Caity very little detail, only instructions to pack for a few days.

She reached Caity's door and hit the chime.

Picking up her bag, Caity walked out of her bedroom and dumped it on the table. Not knowing exactly what Ailynn had planned, she had packed something for pretty much every eventually barring snow.

Dressed in a light cotton dress, she looked around her living area and made sure she had everything. Hearing the door chime, a smile crept over her face, "Enter."

"Hey baby, its me I'm so sorry I'm late."

"Get yourself in here, late woman."

The door opened, and Ailynn held her arms open wide a huge grin on her face. "Ta-da! Will I do? Good enough for you to be seen with?"

Caity loomed at her, her breath caught in her throat as she nodded, "oh yes. I hope I meet your approval?"

Ailynn wrapped her arms around Caity and kissed her. "You look amazing." She sighed happily. "I have so much to tell you, but first I've been kind of naughty. I haven't told you anything. Have I?"

"What have you done, missy?" Caity asked, her hands on her hips.

"Did you see the pictures that I sent you of the resort?" She asked subtly.

"Yeah.... Where is this going?"

She held Caity's hands and smiled gently. "I've booked us one of the executive beachfront cabins. Sunsets, private pool, you name it."

"Oh you did, did you?" Caity grinned and kissed her cheek, "So whilst you get to go have fun at that conference, I'm to be the little woman at home preparing food am I?" She winked.

Ailynn blushed and laughed. "I'm gone for 4 one hour sessions about archaeology." She rubbed Caity's nose with her own, "there's a couple of bars just a short walk away. You won't miss me."

Caity smiled softly, "I won't know what to do with myself. Who knows what mischief I will get up to?:"

"I hope that's okay, I want to make up for the last few weeks. Besides, there's something I need to share with you. Shall we?" She held out her hand to walk with Caity toward the transporter.

Taking her hand, Caity looked at her. "Sharing... that sounds both nice and slightly ominous. But there is nothing that you need to make up for. What happens out of your control. "

"Let's get to the surface and find a glass of something, we can chat and then have a late lunch?"

"Sounds perfect." Caity replied, as they walked towards the transporter room. "Although I do have a slight confession. Rather more an admission than anything else."

"Oh?" Ailynn asked, puzzled.

As they walked into the transporter room, Caity looked at Ailynn and sighed, "You are going to hate me for this one. Either that or think that I am a bit on the crazy side."

Ailynn nodded to the transporter chief. "To the coordinates set for me please.

"I wouldn't think you were crazy..." she looked at Caity. "Well a bit, but lovely crazy."

(Risa - Suraya Bay Resort, Cabin - FO Cmdr Ailynn Bracken and 9D Manager Caity DuBois-12:25)

"I must be to take you on. " She replied with a wink as room changed and the warmth of the Risa sun began to hit her skin. Taking a deep lungful of air, she sighed,

"Okay, you really want to know my deep secret?"

Ailynn nodded, finding herself suddenly on edge. "Yes?" She answered shyly and quietly.

,

Caity looked at her, "I am a chronic overpacker."

"Okaaay?"

"I'm not kidding. I think I have an outfit here for every occasion barring Major snow expeditions."

Ailynn smiled and pulled her close to her side as they walked toward the cabin. "We're here for like...a week, how much stuff did you bring?"

"This is one bag... of a few." She grinned. "I have two others in my quarters. But hey! At least I come prepared. You never know if you might get invited to a high society dinner and need a little black dress."

Ailynn smiled and laughed gently, "crazy chick. This is us, what do you think?" The 'cabin' was the epitome of brochure perfection, a large private deck overlooking the sea.

Caity looked at the cabin and her eyes grew wide. "This... just for us? I... you can't be serious..." she stopped and looked at Ailynn, "What did you break?"

"Pardon me?"

"Sorry, my uncle always bought my aunt flowers when he broke something or treated her when he broke something big."

"Sensible chap " She agreed. "Nothing is broken." She stood behind her and wrapped her arms around Caity's waist.

Leaning her head back onto her, Caity sighed happily. "So does this mean we get our own cabana boy to serve us too?"

"Hmm. Well you said you had everything so I figured you had the uniform?" She giggled teasing.

"Maybe I do?" She giggled. "Maybe that's for another night."

Ailynn smiled. "Daftie." She sighed happily. "Drink?"

"Most definitely." Caity replied as she set her bag down. " So tell me, does this place come with all the features or am I going to have to break out my camping and wild living experience?"

"All the features are upstairs. It is crazy beautiful." She opened a bottle of sparkling white, and poured them both a glass, handing Caity's to her.

Taking the glass, Caity took a sip and smiled.

"Yeah...so before we get settled and snuggly I need to talk to you. Seriously I mean." Her manner switched from her playful to her serious side.

"And here it is. What's the big thing?"

"Trip spoke to me. You know I told you there's two more Exeter class ships launched?"

Caity nodded and then tilted her head, "Wait.... hold up.... Am I getting promoted?" She replied with a grin. "Sorry, am in holiday mood. Go on."

Ailynn sighed. "That's the thing. I've had the offer of the Captaincy of the USS Hood."

"Kind of guessed it was you." Caity replied, her tone now more serious as she sat down. "You don't know what to do, do you?"

Ailynn shook her head. "No." She sat down next to Caity. "I have got absolutely no bloody idea, and that scares me."

"Hey, change doesn't need to be scary. We all go through it. But I can understand what you mean. You don't know what path to take... can I ask a question?"

"Baby, you don't need to ask permission. You're my girlfriend not my yeoman."

"Speaking of him, you did give that poor guy some time off right?"

She nodded. "I made him promise no more rabbit cups."

"Okay, I know some about bajor and the religion there. Not as much as I should... have you asked the prophets for guidance?"

She shook her head. "I haven't had chance. Only found out about it an hour ago."

"Then, maybe you should. If you are asking me what to do... that's another story. "

Ailynn nodded, and leaned on Caity's shoulder, then looked up at her smiling. "I'm so happy that you're so centred. You keep me grounded you know."

"Oh I can be crazy. You don't think I can?"

Ailynn smiled a gentle laugh. "That wasn't a challenge." She sat back in the sofa slightly and sighed happily. Running her fingers gently down Caity's spine.

Shivering slightly at her touch, Caity turned to face her, "Play fair, missus."

"What do you want to do? Walk the beach? Get food? You have me until about quarter to 5."

"Oh well I am honoured. Beach it is. I didn't squeeze myself into a bikini for no reason. "

"Lets go paddle then, I'd like to get some sun. There was a little beach bar that way too."
Ailynn said happily, pulling off her t-shirt and shorts.

"Stripping infront of me already? This trip had taken a turn." Caity smiled.

Ailynn blushed at the remark, a gentle, happy smile on her face. "I was talking about you to grannie, you know, dad's mum. I was worried about...about my job and committing to you when I could be dead tomorrow you know?"

"You told your family about me?"

"Of course." Ailynn shrugged. I told her that I worry that you'll get that call. She said that it wasn't my thing to worry about, but your choice to make." Ailynn held out her hand and slipped her arm around Caity's waist.

"Wise woman that Granny of yours." Caity responded.

"So...Nice surprise? Are you happy?" Ailynn asked gently, her manner suddenly shy.

"I could be anywhere. Doesn't matter. I got clothes for any occasion." She replied with a grin, taking her hands in her own. "Not just that but, I got a good view right here." She continued, looking into Ailynn's eyes.

"Flatterer." Ailynn replied quietly, her heart skipping. She leant forward and kissed Caity's cheek, then whispered nervously in her ear, unsure how the words would sound.

"I love you."

Sighing happily, Caity smiled, "I love you."

The door closed behind them as they walked happily toward the gentle surf.

(Reply none)

(Risa- Suraya Bay Resort, Beach- SPC Armory chief PO2 Sytuk-1440)

Sytuk had been waiting for the chance to walk the sands of a real beach. The Risian sun burned bright and warm. Sytuk beamed down to the surface wearing a cloak to help block the sunlight from hitting his Reman skin. With the hood over his and uv resistant glasses he walked along the beach. He sniffed the fresh air of Risa feeling immense relaxation as he exhaled, he turned towards the water and made his way past the people who were walking on the beach . With each step his excitement grew.

He stops at the water, watching it rush in as his feet then retreating. Crouching down he placed his hand in the warm waters. He smiled softly while looking at his hand in the wet sand. The experience was beyond anything the holodeck could offer. The fine grains of the wet sand sifted through his hand.

Finally the moment he had been waiting for. He removed his glasses and looked out onto the Risian water. His vision was flooded with intense light. He could feel the pain burning inside his skull. Yet he refused to look away.

After a few moments he couldn't bare the discomfort any longer and he placed his glasses back on.

Standing up quickly he turned around and slammed into someone knocking them to the ground.

" Hey man watch where you're walking " The young man said , quickly jumping to his feet. Sytuk looked at him.

" I'm sorry. I wasn't paying attention."

" Wait , you're a Reman? " He asked.

" Yes "

" I didn't think Remans came to places like Risa." The young man said.

" We don't. " Sytuk replied.

The young man looked over at his group of friends. " My name is Kalen ,we were about to hit the falls and do some extreme jumping. You should join us."

Sytuk looked at him. " Jumping off the falls ?"

" Sure why not people do it all the time. " Kalen answered back.

Sytuk looked at the group of friends.

" Yeah. I'll come along."

He said following Kalen and his friends.

(reply none)

(Risa– Suraya Bay, West beach-CO Captain Trip Williams & CTO/3O Lieutenant commander Ravok - 1500)

Trip was running along the beach with Layla, trying to get a bit of a workout in before the conference. He was wearing running shoes, so as to not burn his feet, gym shorts, but no shirt. He was in paradise and was going to show off. As his muscles gleaned in the sunlight and Trip smiled looking forward, knowing that people were admiring, but trying to be cool and not acknowledge it, he was taken by surprise when something came out of nowhere right in front of him. Shocked, confused, not sure what to do, Trip lowered the shoulder and barrelled through the obstacle almost on instinct.

As soon as the surroundings of the transporter room disappeared, Ravok felt like he was hit by a ton of rocks as he fell to the sands of the Risian beach. During his transport he landed right in front of Trip.

“Ravok, you alright man? What gives?”

Standing to his feet and brushing the sand off of his uniform. " You ran faster than our calculations Captain, I'm sorry."

“You could have just called. Who is on the bridge?”

" I left the bridge with Ensign McGinty for the moment. I need to ask you a question."
Ravok responded as he looked out at the ocean. The cool breeze from the water blowing on his face.

“Like I said before, you could have just called.”

Ravok looked back at Trip. " I could have , but I need to ask a personal favor. I think it's better to ask in person."

“Ok? I mean, but you could have told me you were coming. Would have saved you some pain. What’s the question?”

" Well, I wanted to know if you or Ash or both could watch Rayna tomorrow night?

I trust the two of you and I don't want to leave my daughter in the care of a hologram if I'm planet side.”

“I mean....well....I guess....” Trip said not sure what to say, “It’s just, this is kind of our last vacation before Drew and well I was kinda hoping to well....”

Ravok raised his hand. " I'll return the favor. "

“Look, you’re working hard, you want some freedom. I get it. Ok, you have my yes, but before I commit, I want you to ask Ash. I need to finish this run, shower, and then get ready for the conference. But if Ash says its ok. Then yeah, I guess we’d love to watch Rayna.”

Ravok laughed slightly. " Checking in with the wife ?" He asked Trip jokingly

“I may be the Captain, but she’s the boss.”

Ravok smiled. " When Drew is born you have a baby sitter whenever you need it. This really means alot to me. Typically I'd ask Ne..." He stopped at a loss for words and took a deep breath turning his gaze to the sun lit waters. " Nesha. She always wanted to see a beach ,a real beach." Ravok smiled half heartedly.

" I'm sorry "

“Hey...look...it’s been hell getting here. Alright. It hasn’t been a month. It’s ok to be sad.”

" Yeah." He said turning back to Trip.

Trip then gave Ravok a bro friendly slug to the arm. “But if you think for one minute, that the sap, make Trip feel bad because my cousin is dead so he’ll watch my kid is gonna work one me. You’re probably right.”

" Then my plan worked." Ravok laughed.

“Listen, check in with Ash, I think she’s somewhere around here, and if she says yes, then we’ll make plans to stay in and watch a movie or something. And I promise not to expose your child to nudity, alcohol, or other debauchery.”

" Yeah , I wouldn't want to have to teach your son to curse you out in Romulan." Ravok said playfully.

"He's my kid. He'll figure out how to curse me out on his own."

" Speaking of kids and all. I've meaning ask and I feel crappy that I haven't gotten the chance too, but how are you all doing? Is he kicking yet? " Ravok asked for a moment trying to talk to Trip as a person and not the youngest captain in starfleet

"Good. Yeah. Just anxiously waiting. He's fiesty."

Ravok laughed " That's good."

"Anyways, I have to run. Literally run. And I can feel my heart rate dropping so need to get back to it. But we should catch up."

" Me too I have a ship to watch, while everyone else has fun in the sun."

"Check with Ash. Then tomorrow come by early and we'll hang."

"Will do" Ravok gave a nod and walked away. He tapped his comm badge. "Exeter Transport me to Ashlyn Williams' current location and don't beam me right in front of her I already slammed into the captain."

Trip nodded, checked his pulse and began running again.

=^= Standby for transport ^= with those words Ravok left the beach.

(reply none)

(USS Exeter – Gym– ACEO Lieutenant Janice Hammerfield and SO Ensign Chris West–1830)

Walking into the gym Janice had taken the opportunity to head back to her quarters to get more appropriately dressed for it. Sporting a tank top and a pair of shorts with her com badge attached to the bottom right leg.

It wasn't the first time she had been to the gym on the ship but more often than no she preferred doing her routine in her quarters more privately. Looking about she spotted ensign West and moved over to him, "Howdy - how's your day been?"

"Good, It's been good," Chris said as he walked up to her. He was wearing the standard Exeter physical training gear. It was a grey tank top with Exeter written across the front. The shorts were science/medical blue with NCC-1672-C written on the left leg. "How's your day?"

"It's been a full day," she nodded glad that her shift was over, "but i can't complain i get more done when people are off ship."

“Yeah. I’ve been up here all day, just finding whatever I could to keep myself busy and productive, and noticed.” He said with a laugh. “Haven’t made it down yet. What about you?”

“I’ve had no trouble with that - there's always something that needs checked or fixed,” she gave a smile pulling out a small band to pull her short hair more neatly up behind her head and away from her eyes.

Chris nodded. “So what do you know about throwing a punch?”

“Only what we went through in basic really. My main focus in training was self defence and marksmanship. I imagine the self defence class cares little for the rules of boxing. Given my relative size and weight they put more emphasis on technique and manipulating my opponent's movements to give me an edge. They were typically open handed - grabs - throws and holds. Straight up brawn - I'm more likely to get steam rolled.”

“Well that’s the thing, boxing isn’t straight up brawn, its also technique. Not just upper body, but the whole body.”

Janice looked a bit puzzled, “I gathered there would be a bit of that - i think i was expecting more force - after all the objective is to put the other person on the floor from a punch,”

“It’s like, like a machine ya know. Everything working as one, gears, and pistons, circuits and what have yous. Engaging the mechanism and firing on all cylinders.”

“I see,” the aura of confusion lifted from her mind, “Less about how one part work and more the whole in unison,”

“Stamina is important. I don't have a knockout punch, wish I did. But I can outlast anyone, so most of my bouts were one by decision and not knock out. Footwork is important. Keeping the hands up, and using your legs to throw a punch. But my guess is more than anything you just want to hit a bag?”

“Understood - I’m sure that would get rid of a lot of frustration but anyone can hit a bag. I’d rather learn to hit a bag properly at the same time,”

Chris smiled, “So do you want to warm up first or do you want to get down to business?”

“We can get right to it - consider this girl pre-warmed up already. Some I much rather do in my own quarters. If I come down to the gym I want to make sure it's all for work otherwise I'd just be stuck warming up the whole time I'm here.”

“Well you just saved yourself about five minutes of jump rope.” He chuckled.

She moved over and picked up the rope placing it in front of her and gently lifting her heels off the ground. With a sharp flick of her wrist she started the rope spinning round as she jumped over it with short sharp bounds until Chris gave the impression for her to stop.

“Why don’t we go over to the bag and you throw a punch, let’s see what we’re working with.”

“Right...” Janice drew in a breath to relax her heart rate from the skipping. Moving over to it she took a step forward with her left foot turning her partially side on. Raising her arms up so her fists were in line with her eyes but forearms spread widely as she took a swing at the bag with her right arm moving her weight from back to front.

"Good, let's see that again, but this time get some good hip rotation going."

Lining up again Janice pulled her arm a bit further back twisting her hip round a bit more. Her first landed center of the bag, “ugrfff” Pulling back again she repeated it.

“You okay Janice?” Chris asked. “That um urgff sound didn’t sound good. We don’t want to pull anything.”

“No its ok... just making sure I put my weight into it. There's only some much there,” she threw another punch and grunted again and another. “Unless im not supposed to be doing that?”

“No, you want to put your weight through it, I just don’t want you to pull anything.”

“I see,” Janice took a slightly more relaxed stance now and threw a few more punches into the bag alternating between her arms. Looking at the bag she landed a hit on it then another, “This bag needs to start leaking sand soon,” she joked.

“Let’s take a break why don’t we. Hydration is key.”

She took a breath and wiped her brow a bit, “Sure thing,”

Chris handed her a bottle of water. “So Janice, if I can ask, what drives your punch. I mean what demon are you trying to exorcise.”

Taking the bottle she popped the lid and took a quick drink, “Thanks. What drives it. Right now it’s me being angry with myself. You know what I see when I look at that bag - a mirror.”

“I get that.” Chris nodded. “I’ve been there.”

“I would be naive if I thought it was only me,” she took another small sip from the bottle and sat it down beside her.

“So cut me off if I’m prying too much, but why are you angry with yourself? Is it the red hair?” Chris laughed a little bit at his joke.

“You’re damn right - if only i through of changing it to blue,” she jested back, “It not so much me now - It’s past Janice. All the mistakes, the what if’s and the could haves. You know?”

“The shoulda, coulda, wouldas.”

“That’s the one - It’s not the person i want to see anymore and it makes me angry seeing that person. I know i can’t change that - but i’m hoping this helps.”

“We could always go replicate some blue hair dye and color your hair. Give you a fresh look.” Chris laughed.

“I’m sure if i did my mom would never forgive me. I can hear it now: ‘Why did you do that?’”

“You’re a grown ass woman, who cares if you dye your hair. I mean eventually the color fades.”

“In truth I like it the way it is - less on the looks more on the actions. That's what we are punching out,”

“Isn’t that the truth though. We may love what we are on the outside, but struggle with who we are on the inside. What we’ve done, or what we weren’t able to do.”

“Indeed... at least this way i dont need to sit and look into a mirror i cant break,” The last few weeks had been rough on her but with some counselling throughout the trip to Risa she was starting to feel more normal.

“Give the bag a name, whether it be a trait, or a past sin, or a mistake, and just beat the crap out of it.”

“Do you still need the bag in one piece?” she looked up at him almost with a devilish smile.

“We can always get a new one.”

Moving back up to the bag she jumped a couple of times between her feet and started to punch it slowly and methodically to begin with before each swing became a little faster and more aggressive.

“Faster, let it all out. All your regret, in this next punch.” Chris said with all the intensity of a coach.

Squinting her eyes she took in a deep breath and pulled her arm right the way back. Following through she pushed right into the bag, “arghhh.” At that she stopped and panted a bit her first still planted into it. A moment passed and her body relaxed a bit dropping her arms back to her side.

“How’d that feel?”

“Much better”, she panted, “You didn't major or minor in psychology did you?”

“No. I was an angsty teen who needed focus to stay out of trouble. Didn’t have the best home life. Boxing gave me solace. Boxing was my way out.”

“I don’t think i can personally relate to that but i certainly seen a few get dragged into security every now and again,” she pondered for a moment, “I wonder what they would have been like if they had some proper outlets,”

“Well that’s what the multiverse is for right.” He smiled. “We are the product of our past, of our environment, and all it takes is one moment, one person, one activity to change us for the better or for the worse.”

Janice gave a quick sigh, “I guess that is true,”

“Now then you want to keep going, or are you feeling good?”

“Much better... any tips to go with the boxing at the moment though?” she enquired.

“Just keep with it. Next time we might work on footwork and hitting a moving target. If you know, you want a next time that is.”

“I would like that... thanks for the lesson,” she smiled feeling a lot better about herself now.

“Any time,” he said smiling. “You know, if you ever wanted to head down to the planetside, I might not be opposed to going with.” Chris said with a smile. “Just food for thought.” Chris nodded and then made his way out the door.

Janice nodded over to him as he left and gave a small wave as she moved over to an exercise bike for a quick cool down before returning to her quarters.

(reply none)

(Risa– Red Tiki Resort, The Laguna Bar and Grill - ACEO, Lt. JG Alistair Brightwood and Physio Lt(jg) Cerise Blake - 19:04)

It had been a long day, but it was relaxing. Alistair had finished at least two novels and gotten a slight tan. He was hungry however, and after heading back to his room and changing into khaki linen pants and a light fabric hawaiian shirt, blue with green turtles all over, he made his way down to the bar for a drink and maybe something to eat.

He was tempted to put a horga’hn out out of scientific curiosity, but as much as he was curious, it wasn’t his style. He preferred more structured experiments.

Sitting down he asked the bartender for a large water and a gin and tonic and perused the menu to see what looked tasty.

Cerise had had a lovely afternoon, after a beautifully cooked lunch of fresh Risan Sea bass, and a green salad; followed by a beachside tai-chi session that she’d stumbled across, she’d had a nap in her room, a nap that had admittedly turned into a full on sleep.

After a shower and change, she’d pulled on a dress that she’d picked up months ago, but had never worn, a figure clinging rich blue halter neck, that plunged down her back. She was terrified to wear it, but had fallen in love with the dress, and figured that now was the time to wear it. No one would be looking at her anyway.

“One please.” She said to the waiter, “If you can’t fit me in that’s not a problem.”

“We’ll find you somewhere ma’am, she said pleasantly. “Over here, it’s near the bar, but that only means a quicker drinks service.” She smiled.

Alistair took a sip of his Gin and tonic and saw a familiar face. He was still feeling embarrassed from their previous encounter. His face turned red and he tried to hide.

Looking at the next table over she smiled gently at the occupant. “Alastair...How are you?”

“Oh Cer...Cer...ise” He stuttered. “So good to see you.”

“Good to see you too, you look refreshed.” She said carefully, with a gentle smile.

“You meeting anyone?”

“No one to meet.” Cerise answered. “All of my acquaintances have partners. I don’t know many people, just Ash, Ailynn, Trip, and you.”

~Me?~ Brightwood asked himself.

“Surely you aren’t so lonely that you avoid your coworkers.”

Cerise looked pensive for a moment. “Not intentionally, I tend to be a solitary bod, Most of my work I’m on my own, I’m not exactly part of a team in the same way a nurse or Doctor is. If I’m doing a treatment or a class I’m going solo. I’m not lonely, I talk to people, but...”

“But...?” Brightwood asked inquisitively.

“I have issues really opening up to people. Letting them in, you know?” she smiled.

“Not uncommon. Totally natural.”

“Look, It’ll be nice to talk to you, but I don’t want to shout across two tables?” She ventured gently.

“Well you could, umm join me if you want.”

Cerise smiled, and lifted herself up from the chair, and slunk over. “That’s kind.” she said sitting down.

“My mum always said, better to eat dinner with a stranger, than to eat alone. At least then you give the impression of importance or something posh like that.”

“That sounds sweet. The stranger might have been lonely all day, and a tiny gesture could lift their whole life up.”

“Perhaps, but my mum was very into appearances. Being alone gave the impression of being less or a loser yourself. Mum didn’t want any of our family appearing as insignificant or unimportant. Posh Oxford types and all that.”

“Ah. I see.” she nodded, she’d known a few like that.

“I never cared much for appearances, probably because mum cared too much.”

“Please forgive me...you keep using the past tense? I’m sorry to ask...don’t answer if you don’t want.” Cerise asked gently, a genuine tone of concern.

“She’s alive. We just don’t talk much anymore. My dad and I do, every so often. She was....well her family were landed, going back centuries. Members of the old British House of Lords. So even though the titles are gone, the attitude remained in her family. She did not want Starfleet for me. She didn’t even like engineering for me. I was supposed to be a great philosopher, teaching at Oxford, and lecturing across the quadrant. Starfleet had lost its prestige, not as important. We had to keep up with the neighbors. The neighbors were all posh, and I became a grease monkey. She even picked out a potential spouse for me, but I wanted freedom and choice. So I went to Starfleet, and she...well... hasn’t forgiven me for ruining her image,”

“Ouch. I’m sorry to hear that truly. At least my parents still speak to me...mostly.”

“I...” he paused a single tear. “She was overbearing at times, but she was also...sweet. I miss my mum. I should...I should call her, while I can.”

Cerise nodded. “You never know what will happen, tomorrow could be too late.”

“Sorry you were saying about your parents.”

“They...had ideas for me, now; they were ideas that I wanted too, they pushed but weren’t pushy.” She sighed. “Do you have your little device thing? Can I get videos on it? May I”

He pulled his personal communication device and handed it to her trying his best not to drop it on her chest a second time.

“Here you go.”

“Thank you.” She tapped a few things into the search. “If you’re ordering, I’ll have the same as you.” She smiled gently toward the approaching waitress.”

Alistair smiled, “Another gin and tonic for me please,” he said, feeling as if he needed more gin to talk to the pretty girl. “And an order of the Risian Tropical Pizza.” It was a flat bread pizza with a honey glazed oil base, cheese, fresh onions, tomato, cilantro, and something resembling an apricot/mango salsa. Seemed odd, but he heard it was tasty.

“Here.” She passed over the device, it had a video of a gymnastic tournament from what seemed like a million years ago.

“Look at you in your little gymnastic costume. I bet it gave quite the wedgie.”

She blushed, and giggled. “You have no idea.” She was glad that he’d relaxed enough to be able to be a tiny bit cheeky.

He watched the video intently. “You seem to be enjoying yourself, and good. The spins of your routine, a well oiled machine if you ask me. Pardon the engineering parlance.”

“Good analogy to be fair. I was on the verge of being the best. Probably was the best.”

“Why did you stop?”

“I said I knew Ash and Ailynn. I was at school with them, and I was super competitive. After a while the competition doesn’t leave you, I became horrid, and overbearing. I was a bully, of the worst kind. Teased Ashlyn for not being pretty enough. Yeah...now the Captain’s wife...and I was vile to her.”

Alistair didn’t say a word. He just sat there listening intently.

“Night of the prom, I got in a car with someone...didn’t know they’d been drinking.” Cerise could feel a tear welling. “Another girl, who was just a cute, innocent kid, excited to be suddenly in with the cool kids you know?”

Alistair nodded his head.

“There was a crash. She was killed. I was badly badly injured. Took me a year to be able to walk again properly, and longer to be what I am now.” She sighed. Taking a deep sip of her drink. “So yeah...a lot of me died. The competition, the bully, the horrid person I was. Left me rightfully with all the memory, the pain. It’s why I don’t often let people close anymore.” She looked at him and shrugged.

“You know, people are a lot like Starships.”

Cerise looked up. He was still talking to her. He hadn't jumped up and bolted. "Oh? How so?"

"Take the old Constitution class." He said as he took his personal electronic device, laid it on the table and brought out a holographic display of the NCC-1701 Enterprise on the date it launched in 2245. "See this is how she looked when she launched under then Captain Robert April."

She nodded. "Okaaay?"

"Then," He said changing the image, "This is how she looked in 2257 under Christopher Pike. Notice how the skeleton is the same, but there are slight cosmetic upgrades, same with system upgrades."

"I see."

"Then here we have Kirk's enterprise in 2265 and then his Enterprise in 2282. Again, same skeleton, but different cosmetics."

"I never realised that they were quite so different."

Alistair then pulled up a side by side display of all 4 versions of the NCC-1701 Enterprise. "So here we have the evolution of one single ship, one class of ship. From launch to destruction. The skeleton never changes, who she was at the core never changed. But the cosmetics changed as technology approved. The interior changed. The systems changed. As we gained new tech, the ship was refitted over time. Time and again. Changing for the better. Every time she was damaged, as long as she was salvageable, they fixed her and made her better."

“That’s a quite a poetic analogy.” Cerise said, a few things slotting in her mind.

“You were damaged, you underwent a refit. The skeleton of the Cerise that was is still there, but the Cerise that is, is changed from the experience, and from a systematic standpoint, not the same. She’s better. Cerise 2.0.”

“I like it, the more you describe it the more profound it becomes.”

“Like I said, mum wanted me to be a philosophy professor.”

“I suppose it’s like the axe of my grandfather?” She sipped her drink again.

“Oh?”

“Over the years It’s needed a new handle, because the old one broke, or a new head, because the old one got rusty and wouldn’t hold an edge; but it’s still the same axe the my grandfather wielded.”

Alistair nodded, “Like the ship of Theseus?”

“Exactly that, we are the sums of our experiences.”

“I hope you don’t mind that I ordered a pizza to share rather than individual dishes.” Alistair said changing the subject. He enjoyed the conversation but he was afraid of it getting too deep.

“It’s perfectly fine. I don’t tend to eat much bread and carbs anyway.”

He nodded. He wanted to say, Hey I can tell by how shapely and perfect your body is. But he knew that was not appropriate to say.

“Mind if I pay you a compliment without you getting flustered?”

“I can try not to get flustered.”

“You’re not like others. I can talk to you, and when you talk to me you look at my eyes...mostly.” she winked cheekily. “And that’s lovely.”

“Well, the eyes, they eyes tell you everything you need to know. It’s like, if you want to know how a system is doing, you run a scan or use a tricorder. The eyes give everything away. So why wouldn’t you focus on them. Especially when they are so clear.”

“That’s wonderfully poetic...in a...sciencey way...” she smiled.

“Erm, sorry, umm yes. Right, less poetic, more toxic man, shall I stare at your breasts?” Alistair then began laughing. “Sorry, I’m trying to make a joke but I’m not that humorous. Not intentionally.”

She was shocked slightly that he'd had the guts to say what he had, but it made her laugh. "You're a daft one. You should relax like this more often. It's lovely company."

"It's probably the gin. The alcohol is probably making things more relaxing."

"It has that habit doesn't it. Gin on an empty stomach is possibly why I opened up so easily. Not that I regret it."

The waitress then came by with their pizza and smiled. "Oh we were out of real gin. It's synthehol. Sorry for over hearing. Just thought you should know. We can get you some real alcohol if you'd like."

Alistair shook his head, "No that's quite alright." The waitress smiled and left and Alistair then turned to Cerise, "Guess now I know I don't need alcohol to talk to you."

She blushed deeply, a colour clashing horribly with her dress. "Erm...wow. I...I guess not..."

"Probably for the best. I guess I can be myself around you." Alistair took a bite of the pizza. It was tasty, tangy, sweet, fruity, and spicy. He liked it.

"Is it warm in here? My face is on fire..."

"Oh is it...something I said, or the pizza, are you allergic to anything?"

She shook her head. "I'm fine...just a little embarrassed. I guess it's my turn to try to throw a gadget down your top yeah?" she laughed as she finished the sentence.

“If it helps, we could always get some real alcohol. I hear Risa has their own version of tequila.”

Cerise blushed. “Did...Did you just ask me out for drinks?”

“Ummm.....no...because...you don’t date...and I’m sorry for crossing your boundaries....I respect you and your choices.”

She smiled. “Funny thing about boundaries...If you look on maps none of them ever stay still...I don’t mind being on my own, but that doesn’t mean that is someone comes along who I can talk to that I can’t...be asked out...on a really tentative basis?”

“So are you asking me out for drinks?” Alistair smiled.

“Lets eat, then we can find that bar”

“Sure. careful though, the pizza is spicy.”

Cerise nodded. “Carbs, spicy and alcohol. I’m going to need such a detox...” She chuckled gently as she bit into the pizza.

(Reply none)

(Posted by Mark and Will)

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