

Chapter 4

“First 5 Seconds”



He stood there staring at Addie. The first 5 seconds felt like extreme fear somehow packaged with maximum exhilaration all at the same time. This was totally the opposite of what he felt during the first five seconds when they were alone together that first time. Now his stomach churned for a different reason. He felt deceived and ashamed that he could have fallen for this gorgeous woman whose country was in fact waging war on his own world. What had he been thinking? He was captain of a starship going to war and he let his guard down, or should he say his pants down? For God’s sake, he

needed to get a grip on reality. She played him! His cheeks were burning bright red. He could feel the inferno. Time appeared to stand still. There was nothing left for him to do but have her arrested. Who was this woman he made passionate love to? She looked normal...well, as normal as an alien can look to a human. The ship felt like it was closing in on him; pushing him, crushing him with a ridiculous amount of force until his heart was ready to burst. He needed to react, to say something, to do something - to do anything! But, he couldn’t move. He could only stare at the enraged face of his Lieutenant and quietly wish he was alone with her in his cabin making fierce love. He couldn’t get his body to respond. Being with her was an addiction, it was a fixation, flirtation, persuasion and riveting sensation! She had absolute control over him! Addie was indeed dangerous.

He just stood there with his mouth hanging open like a teenage boy wildly intoxicated while waiting for her to respond. He watched her closely.

Addie hissed as she walked toward the screen.

When she spoke, her words were dripping with honey, not the tasty kind but the kind that slowly runs down your body and tortures you as the sticky feeling lingers even a long time after you've showered. "Amy, how nice to see you. Tell me, sister of mine, what brings you all the way out here? Shouldn't you be somewhere with your horrible little friends causing trouble like you are usually inclined to do?"

What? Her sister? He turned back to the screen. Oh, great scot, there were two of them!? Okay, this couldn't be happening to him. Was this a prank?

The woman on the screen, who was called Amy ignored Addie and looked directly at him instead, and with a soft and seductive voice said, "Well...Captain Sarantos, it is a true pleasure to meet you. I was hoping I could come aboard and have dinner with you; there's something of vital importance we need to discuss at your convenience."

Oh, no that's exactly what he didn't need right now but her eyes for some unexplained reason held his in a trance. During this first moment between them, she was perfect and the weird story was out of this world. Sparks filled the air, but the noxious charges the connection gave off flickered about but never made a sound. He was glad it wasn't noticeable. He'd love to have dinner with Amy. Wait, was he an idiot? Why did he want to? What was wrong with him??

He looked immediately to Addie. Her eyes were narrowed and pierced his soul simultaneously sending some type of freakish signal that bordered on pure evil, or maybe it was plain old hatred or jealousy? He wasn't sure.



He stared at them both, then gathered his self-control, after all, he was the head of the starship Chicago and right now the ship sorely needed attention from its captain.

Before he could respond, Addie took control of the conversation. “Sister, there’s no reason that I can think of that you should want to board this ship, unless you have delusions of grandeur that exceed your ability and status. So, I suggest you and your friends run away before this situation gets out of control.

You know, get lost in space. Besides, isn’t that your specialty?”

Sarantos was at a loss for words, as was his crew. Everyone watched as the two women held council on the ready screen.

He cleared his throat. “Lieutenant, I assume you know this woman and it appears that you lack trust for her intentions, as do I.” He turned to the screen and addressed Amy. “If you will excuse us Amy, I’ll need to discuss this request with my crew. I’ll give you my response within the hour. Please extend my apologies to members of your crew. Do you hope to come alone or will others accompany you?”

“Captain, Sarantos, we’ll wait patiently for your consideration. I’ll be coming with the first officer of my ship if that’s allowed. I’m the Captain of this ship. We’re just more casual than most of the stuffy officers in the federation and even in my own race as well as our government officials. We have no secrets here. We all look forward to your response. Out.”

After her last sentence which sounded more like a purr, the screen went black and she was gone. Well, he certainly wasn't anticipating this type of event today. He looked at Addie like a bat out of hell. She was staring right into his eyes shattering his seniority. Wonderful, this wasn't going to be easy.

Someone cleared their throat behind him. He didn't need to turn around. It was of course Lieutenant Kitara. His day just got a little worse.

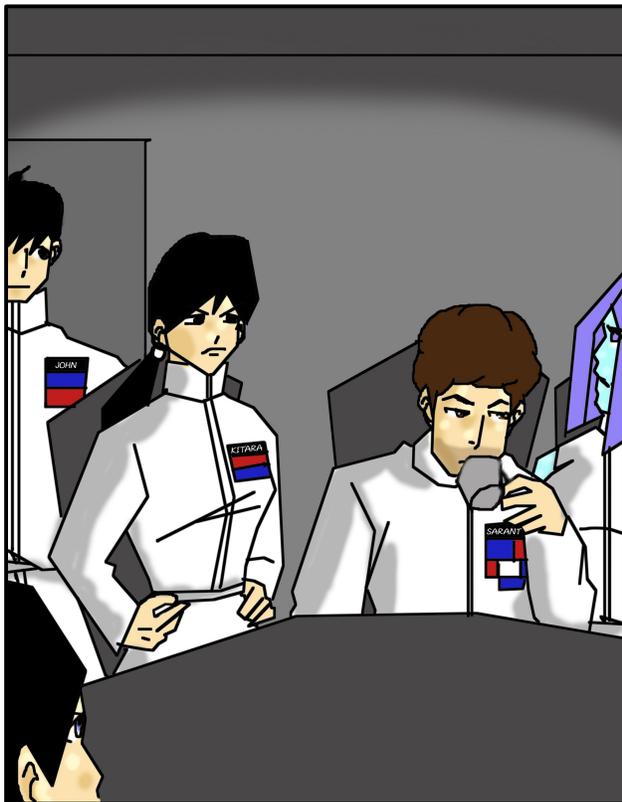
He needed some warm tea and walked quickly up to the replicator. "Black tea, honey."

The smell lifted his spirits. He'd hurried to the officers meeting lounge after giving everyone orders and now he took his rightful place in the Captain's chair. Sipping tea was always both rewarding and calming. He finally allowed himself to breathe deeply, relaxed and waited for his officers to arrive.

The first one in was Tom Flann. Even though he was a cadet, Sarantos wanted him in on more meetings. He was an interesting story because this young man had a storied history of military family running through his veins and everything that came with it - discipline, understanding of protocol, intelligence and loyalty. This young man needed to be taken under his wing and prepped for becoming a high-ranking officer one day soon in the not too distant future. He nodded politely at the boy. Tom saluted back and never said a word, allowing his Captain the pleasure of a quiet moment. He sat down near the far end of the table allowing the senior officers to sit closer to the Captain. Yes, Tom Flann was indeed observant and very conscientious. Thank goodness he was a member of this crew. He would be an asset.

He allowed himself to close his eyes and inhale and exhale slowly three more times, before once again opening his eyes.

Chief Greg Petty came in next and sat down towards the front. He'd invited him instead of Dr. Major Cleary because he'd seen Amy and witnessed the discussion firsthand. Petty had also majored in psychology and humanoid behavior patterns, while also studying complex expression and communication of many different alien races. His input could be useful. Besides, he preferred Cleary for taking the helm during this important meeting. She'd had experience aboard many ships at the driver's seat and was capable of handling even the most unexpected of situations with integrity and efficiency. He wouldn't have to worry while here. This meeting could have his undivided attention.



Soon after, Chief Candy Storm entered and close behind her was both of his Lieutenants, Stuart and Kitara. The door shut behind them but then opened immediately as the last member joined the room, Lieutenant John Baker from engineering. He nodded and sat to one side of him, allowing Addie to sit on the other side of him, of course to the disapproval of Kitara.

He took another sip of tea.

“Okay, it seems we have an awkward situation this afternoon. We know that the Satorian are already set up to go to war with many of the planets that are faithful to the federation, however, supposedly they don't know we know this. I say supposedly, because it's just that. Everyone has spies everywhere so we're hoping they aren't aware, yet. That's our clear intent here - to figure out what's going on but to also be prepared for combat if needed. The federation has previously sent out other smaller starships that were disguised as transporting cargo but truthfully had been converted into mini-fighting machines as well. Before we begin this open discussion on whether we should bring a Satorian on board this ship, mind you, one that could potentially be hostile, we need to have

a proper discussion together and review everything from every angle. We need all the information we can get. That's our main objective." He paused and sipped his tea looking over the faces of his crew members. "I want to hear from Chief Petty, first. What did you feel about the Satorian?"

"Well, Captain. It was an unusual situation for sure. For those of you who don't know, let me explain; the woman who wants to talk with the Captain over dinner has also requested that she be allowed to bring her first officer to accompany her to our ship. This woman appears to be a renegade and in control of a starship that could have been stolen. She's also a twin sister of our own Lieutenant Addie Stuart, which was a surprise for all of us."

Addie jumped in, as soon as Petty took a breath. "This woman can't be allowed on board this ship. I don't trust her! Not only has she worked relentlessly against her own kind but she's put her nose into many situations where it didn't belong. She has consistently incited small skirmishes where none existed. I vote to send her on her way with your blessing and then carefully watch your back."

Sarantos smiled. "Noted, Lieutenant. Petty, please continue."

"Thank you, Captain. Well, I have that feeling too if I'm being honest. She shouldn't be trusted. She hides something which is not surprising to all of us I believe, otherwise why else would she be here if she wasn't up to something? Something feels wrong."

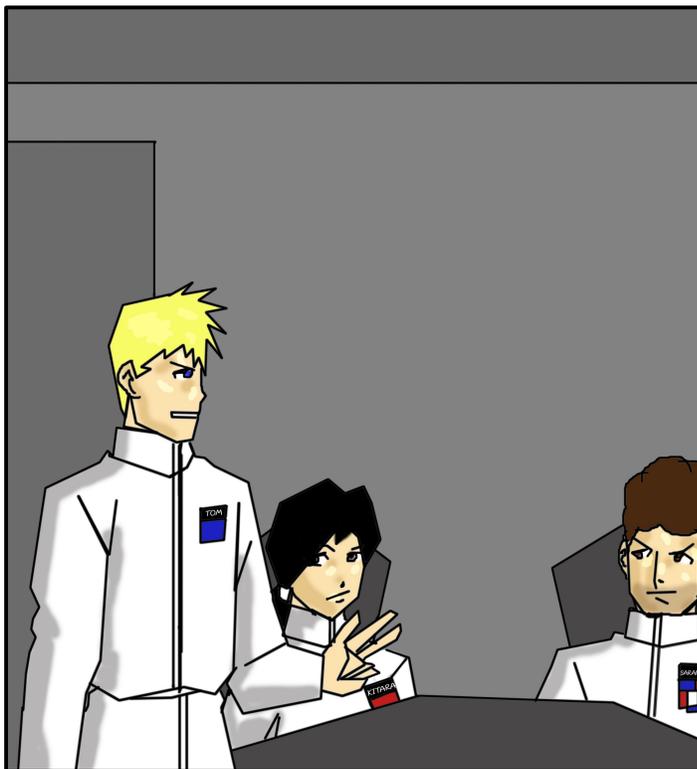
Kitara wasn't going to be outdone. "Captain, if I may intervene?" He nodded and she continued. "I feel under the circumstances, if our mission is to find out as much as we can about what's truly going on, maybe we should allow her on board but keep her under firm guard. Several people representing officers can accompany her but look like more an official escort showing her some importance. Then we can find out what is really going on. Maybe, she's willing to offer information about her real position or which side her people have chosen with this new threat. I'm not afraid of

her and I think we should compromise a bit to receive as much information as we can about this unique situation. On our ship and with all the security we have here, what could only the two of them possibly do to us?”

“Well, noted, Lieutenant. Any additional commentary?”

Tom Flann inflected. “Captain, if I may?” Everyone looked surprised at the young lad but he stared right at his Captain not shying away.

“Yes, Cadet. What do you have to say?”



“Well, sir, I saw body language too. She can’t be trusted but we do need to gather intel. If she comes on board she probably puts us at risk because she might see things she has no business seeing, in the sense of our ship being more geared for war than cargo. I’m not sure how much she would know about it but I’m assuming she has knowledge of such things and will easily pick up on it. If we take her aboard the ship and the Satorian are not really part of the war, but only small factions such as Amy’s starship are truly a part of the movement, that could lead to an actual war with the

Satorian if their government is looking for them and finds us hosting them. It could be a setup too. How accurate is our information on them even being in this war? It seems to me that we’re not sure, otherwise we wouldn’t need to be on this mission to try and figure out what’s going on. This is a clear sign of caution. The federation

obviously is not sure of the information it's already received. Deceit? Maybe, but that's why we're on this mission. We need more information."

This Tom Flann was his kind of thinker. "Great thoughts, Cadet, and you're right we don't have a final answer. That's why we're on this mission."

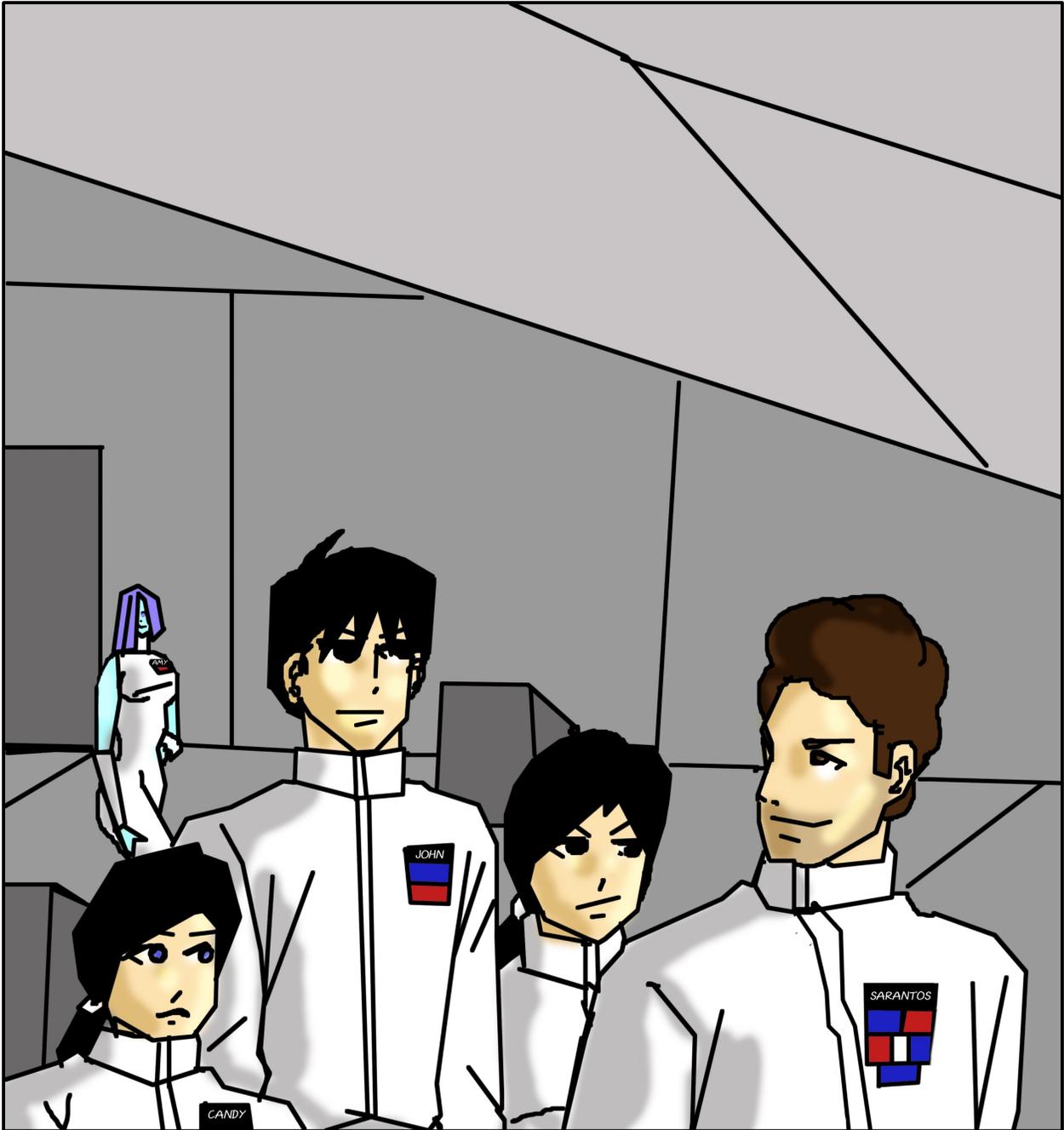
"Captain, I agree with the young Cadet. If you go on board her ship to avoid her seeing the interior of our ship, she might capture you putting the federation and the Satorian in an even more vulnerable situation. We should pass. If she has something to tell you, let her say her piece remotely and be on her way."

All heads nodded in agreement with Chief Gregg Petty, except for Kitara.

He looked her way. "Kitara, I know how you feel about this situation but I'm afraid this time we're going to have to pass and take our chances on what we find when we arrive at the planet. We need to move on. This delay and waiting to have dinner could also be a ploy to buy them more time, whether it's for her group of renegades or the Satorian race. None of it matters. We will continue on our scheduled mission."

He stood and everyone followed his lead.

As he walked to the deck of his ship, he was glad he wouldn't have to deal with this renegade and possible traitor temptress alone or at all.



He felt the presence of his officers as they all stepped out of the lift and onto the bridge of The Chicago. He knew they were all competent and he was glad for their help. They all possessed strengths that made the whole team stronger as a unit. It was here, at the bridge, that he sensed the healthy intensity of his starship, or rather, its life energy source...the heart of the ship. Engineering took care of the shell, the body but the energy to keep her going was right here. This was her core, her soul. It always excited him and humbled him at the same time.

This rare feeling gave him the sudden confidence to deal with this mysterious danger. The ship empowered him to be her captain, to say he was a captain and to stand on her bridge. It was an honor. He was proud to serve her. He was committed to protecting his ship and she in turn gave him the feeling of absolute control. Of course, that control was very delusional. Control always was but sometimes delusion created just enough strength of character to accomplish exactly what a captain needed to accomplish at any given moment.

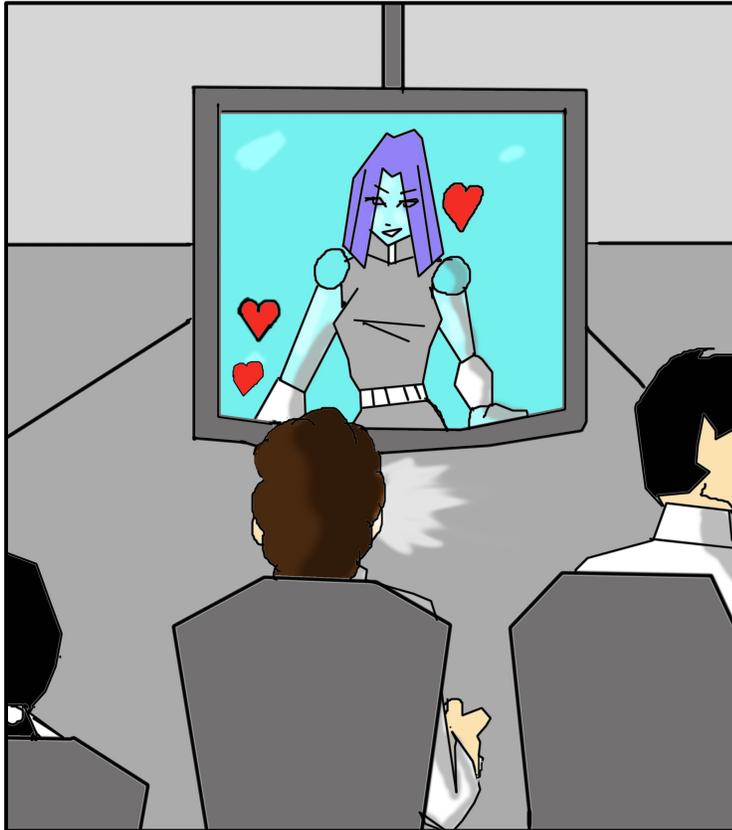
He walked with courage and took his seat as captain. His hands slid along the top of the arms that were cushioned with the perfect amount of luxury. He dismissed Major Cleary and waited for her to leave the deck. Having her on deck might be one too many officers making it appear he was more alarmed by Amy's request than he wanted to show. He didn't want that. It was now his game and his move.

Taking a deep breath he said, "On screen."

It didn't take long for the beautiful and intimidating Amy to place herself in full view of the screen. She'd changed clothes and her silky shirt showed more of her gifts than were necessary. He kept his eyes on her face, an almost impossible task, but he was quite sure it was her intention to distract him. He focused on his ship and the reassuring arms of his chair that were under his hands and fingertips. He smiled at Amy.

"Captain Amy, or whatever you refer to yourself as on your own ship of informality, I regret to inform you that our mission of delivering Federation medicines and food to people in need is on a strict timescale. Now, before you protest, I'm sure as a captain that puts her people before her own agenda, you certainly understand the strict timeframe we all work under. Although I have no doubt, it would've been a very pleasurable experience, I must sadly decline such a tempting invitation. Perhaps another time."

Her guard dropped momentarily and he saw her true intentions. Amy's eyes all at once lost their glitter and suddenly an evil inkling came out through her dark pupils and shot straight into the recesses of his heart. Although it lasted only for a split second, it was all the time he needed to confirm he made the right call.



“That’s too bad.” She overexaggerated the word bad and drew it out longer than any southern drawl he’d ever heard. She wasn’t going to give up that easy, was she? “Well, since you’re on such a tight timeline, maybe we could meet now for a quick lunch?” She winked at him and blew a kiss, clearly oblivious to the rest of the crew that surrounded the Captain.

He knew she was up to something and that she could care less about his crew. This was clearly between him and Amy.

“Thanks so much for the offer but no, unfortunately we’ve already lost much precious time with this discussion. Besides, I already had a large breakfast. He intentionally looked right at her sister Addie as he said this and smirked a devisish smirk. No one else noticed because all eyes were on the screen, waiting for her to attack or maybe just admiring some of her finer qualities. It didn’t matter to him. Once he knew it was a game between the two of them, he played along.

She realized he wouldn’t be manipulated. Her face reddened and her beauty suddenly lost its edge. Any spell she’d had on his crew was just then broken.

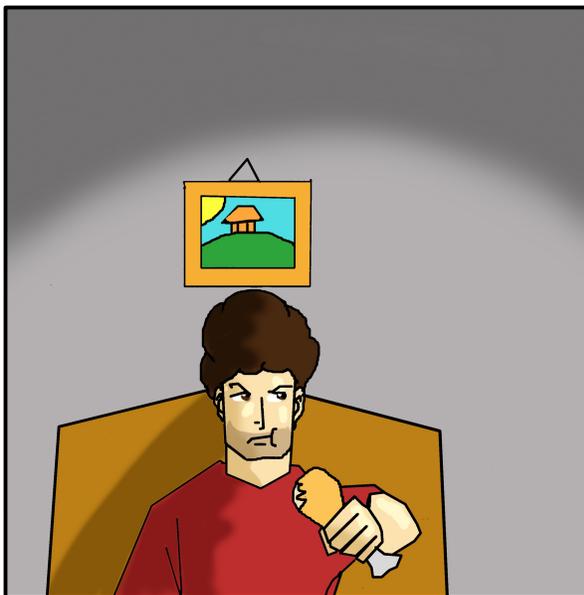
“So be it,” she said. Her words were flustered and a little too quickly spoken.

He kept his cool. “Thank you for being such a delightful lady and being so understanding. I look forward to enjoying dinner with you at some time in time as you seem to be a rather fascinating woman. I can hardly wait but, for now, safe journeys to you and your crew. Com, out.”

Tom Flann didn’t waste a moment and disconnected her immediately.

Well, done, cadet. “Engage.”

He stood up and went into his ready room without saying another word. He felt like a peacock and wanted to dance around the room, but instead went alone to the replicator and said, “Whiskey, on the rocks.”



He was eating alone in his room for the night. The day had been an extremely difficult one and now he had two women, not just any women but lieutenants on his crew who were annoyed at him and each other, and felt a little cross with his behavior. Why were they mad at him? Women. He never could understand them, yet he had a hard time refusing them. They were absolutely witches! All of them. But, they were the best kind of witches with the power to control men and even him with the toss of their head, the wink of an eye, a slight smile or an adorable little pout.

Holding men seemed easy. Men could be captivated in rapture for as long as women had the time or desire to do so.

He shoved a large piece of cauliflower into his mouth. He looked at his plate. Hell, even the food didn't taste as good without them around. That's just not fair.

This whole incident wasn't even his fault. It was a woman's fault, yet for some bizarre reason, they seemed to take her side in the matter. He drank some wine and sighed. Hopeless, that's what this was, a hopeless situation and he might as well quit thinking about it and let it go before drove him mad.

That wouldn't go over well with the Admiral. Honored Captain of a starship driven mad because of the inability to handle the female persuasion. How would that look on the Starfleet journals? Nice legacy he'd leave behind!

He finished off his glass of wine, grabbed another and laid down on his bed staring off into outer space. The stars were like women, beautiful when looked upon but holding them close could lead to any number of revelations and explosions, both good and bad. They were evasive and sometimes untouchable but their beauty was unmatched. Of that, there was no doubt. There was nothing more breathtaking than watching the stars in space in the dark quiet still of his room.

“Captain.”

Dang it. He just wanted to be left alone and wallow in his own self-pity for a while. Nothing was sacred.

“Yes.”

“We should arrive by morning, but it appears that we're being followed.”

“Must be Amy. We’ll do a rendezvous to another star system, one close to our current location. I don’t understand how she knew we were here anyway. I’m not comfortable with her knowledge of us. Notify engineering of our intention, but no one else is to know but you and Chief Petty. Is that understood, Cadet?”

“Yes, sir.”

“What’s the crew on the bridge at the current moment, cadet?”

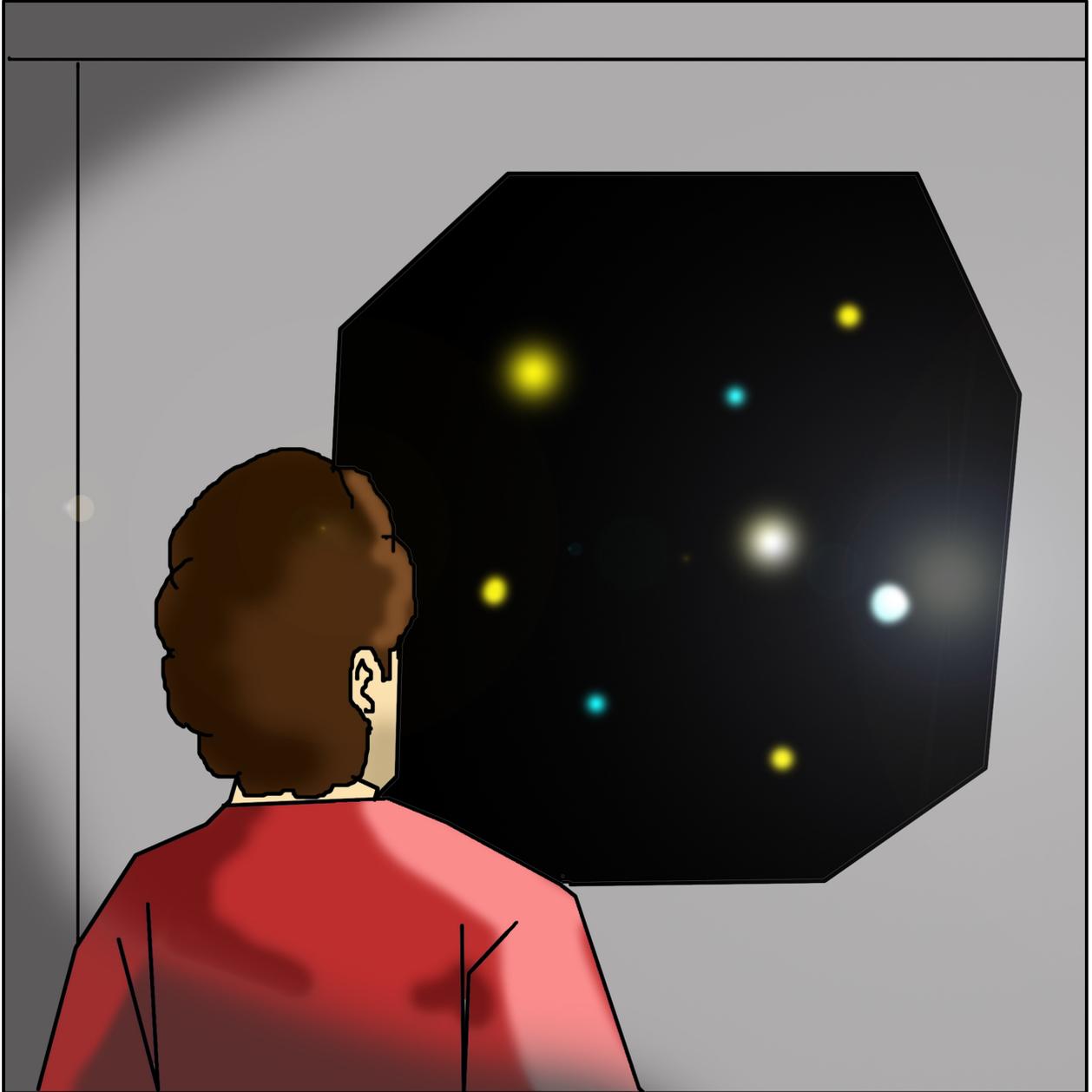
“Myself, Chief Petty and a few ensigns. A small night staff.”

“Okay, tell Petty to pull the ship around slowly or keep her facing in our direction as long as possible. Another thing, please have him lock down the communicators to the outside world temporarily. Have engineering make like it’s broken. A malfunction, nothing more. That way we can make sure no one on this ship is sending out messages to them.”

“Yes, Captain.”

“Oh, Cadet, by engineering, I mean only Lieutenant John Baker. Tell him discretion is advised. Only a couple trusted crew members. Out.”

He trusted the cadet, John, and Petty; other than those three he just wasn’t sure who he should trust anymore. Could he trust Addie?



He looked back at the stars. They seemed to shine brighter than a moment ago.

The first moment when you meet certain women could only be explained as perfect. When you're young you think it's true love though some call it infatuation. As you get older, you just know when it's right. You're not young and immature and full of raging hormones. You never expect to feel that way again. When you do, it's such a rush. He felt that way with Addie. It was crazy hard to define or forget, certainly

that's why he was in the confused state he was in. He still hadn't really recovered from their first 5 seconds together!

Everything important in life was really about those first five seconds. Learning to walk, your first friend, finishing school, your first kiss, first girlfriend, walking out onto his bridge for the first time, hell, just learning to do anything for the first time was all extremely exhilarating. There's nothing like the first time you do it for the first time!

His mind drifted back to Addie. When he first met Addie, those first five seconds were like bathing in pure sunshine and nothing could have been more magical, charming, or let's face it, supernatural. He knew she'd felt it, too.

That moment when their hearts were racing, was erotic and thrilling but difficult. When he first officially met her in the Admiral's chambers, he sensed her fever and she noticed his but they both had to exhibit self-control. Boy, that sure wasn't an easy thing to do. And when she instinctively came to his room that night, it was blameless and perfect. They'd savored every awesome moment. The seconds seemed like hours.

He couldn't stop smiling thinking about their happy ride that entire first evening. She had taken him on and was unrelenting. He couldn't lose her now because of her overzealous sister, could he? There's no way she was sinister, was there?

Addie offered a whole new world to him. It was intense, sometimes uncontrollably sensitive yet still bordering on insanity. The insanity was the most enjoyable part of it though. She was the first woman to teach him to let go of inhibitions. She freed him. It was about abandoning all the junk that floated around inside his silly little head making him think too much. That crap wouldn't let you enjoy that first five seconds. He thought of it as insanity, because his whole life was built around staying in control. Being cool, calm and collected and in control is supposed to prove you have some sort of sanity about you, right? Really? That's a bunch of BS. He was starting to think that it was in fact just the opposite. Instead, it was the insanity that

prohibited a person from being who they were meant to be in life, following along like passive sheep herded along to be clipped, because that was their assigned purpose. The bosses said it was so, because they needed the sheep for their own purpose so sheep eventually learned to do what they were told. But maybe they shouldn't do what the masses do.

He raised his hands until his arms were up over his head. These melancholy moods always ended up making him laugh until he cried and why should tonight be any different? So he did just that.

“Captain.”

It was inevitable. The interruptions. They always had wonderful timing.

“Yes, John.”

He'd known John since they were kids, so when they were in private they usually went back to their personal names. John, however was working.

“We've found a rendezvous point. A small planet that is owned by the federation and is used more as a station for exactly what you said we needed to do, drop off supplies. I'll dock quickly and I have an ensign who resembles your size and coloring. It's night, so he'll leave with a cadet of mine with several boxes. Once she leaves the ship to locate you, we'll leave. I've opened up a link so she can hear our communications with the station, believing that you'll be leaving the ship and having a drink with one of the station Majors. It's a woman, so that should prompt her even more to exit.”

“Great job. I knew I could count on you John. If you need anything else I'll be in my quarters for the evening.”

“No worries, sir. I believe we have this under control. Out.”

John Baker was the best. A loyal friend and comrade through thick and thin. He'd had his share of women during their youthful splurges, but once he found true love and experienced that first five seconds, he married her without hesitation and they had a little girl. They're inseparable now and she's one of the few wives that accompanied her husband on this mission and they even brought their little daughter, Susan, with them. He trusted them all.

When he initially heard what John had intended to do, he tried to discourage both of them from bringing Susan but they both insisted. Susan was ten and an intelligent girl, studying to be an anthropologist. Her mother was her teacher as well, so it made it quite difficult to leave her behind.

John had decided that no matter what happened on the planet, she'd remain on the ship anyway, with him. The engineer was never one to go on the away missions. He had to maintain the ship and was capable of powering it up and driving it home on his own if needed.

Typically, he'd leave one of his Lieutenants behind on the ship when they went to ground, but this time he must leave Officer Petty on board instead. He trusted him but he wasn't sure yet about either of the woman that worked so closely with him. Kitara and Addie just confused him. Keep your enemy close, as they say.

He yawned. He'd had a long day and felt exhaustion slowly taking control of his thoughts. Thank goodness, because if it didn't, his mind would race for half the night.

This was something he'd done since he was a child; think all night. The world seemed to expand within the darkness of a peaceful evening. Somehow that expansion made it easier for him to see things more clearly. Maybe it was because

for him the light always brought with it the obvious distractions of the day. Distractions were nice but his mind indulged itself during the twilight hours. It freed him. He did his best thinking in the night.

He could feel the sleep wash over him, calmly taking him as his eyes closed.



Suddenly, the swish of the door attached to his quarters could be heard gently opening. He opened his eyes and listened attentively.

Soft footsteps could be heard approaching his sleeping quarters. He slid his hand around his laser and waited in the dark. He listened again.

The whisper of material gently moving towards him was like a mellow breeze blowing the lively waters of a waterfall; he could almost feel the moisture splash softly against his face. It was subtle. He felt her essence. Only she

could bring this out in him. It was like romance floating inside poetry moving towards him. It made him weak.

His knees tingled with anticipation. His heart beat wildly. He felt like a savage with urges that were primal yet longing to be satisfied. Where was she now? He tried to anticipate where she was going. She made the thrill last and brought out the feral

side of him with such ease. Just a moment ago, he was exhausted but now he was alive!

Good vibes continued entering his body further increasing his anxiousness. That was the beauty of the game - to drive one to the edge of insanity. It was perfectly maddening. It was just what he wanted. In truth, it was exactly what he needed. He couldn't believe he went from the verge of falling asleep and the edge of exhaustion to a highly-aroused state so quickly. He thirsted for her. He longed to be satisfied. He was no longer in control.

Her inviting perfume arrived before she did. He was transported to a hillside overlooking a lake where lavender grew in purple splendor. Next to it was a flower he didn't know, something new to his senses, something untamable.

He wanted it. He wanted her. He wanted to tame her, to capture her and hold her forever in this moment, but it wouldn't be the same as the first time, would it? It would no longer hold the freedom, the reckless spirit that caused him such lust and desire. He moaned for her before she was willingly exposed to his vision.

Suddenly, there she was standing in the bedroom doorway. She blew him away.

Their eyes locked and everything in the room faded. It was just her and him alone. They were in this space together locked in time. Nothing else mattered.

She glided to him dropping pieces of her clothing as she came closer. Not throwing them but dropping them seductively and allowing them to fall sensuously and helplessly to the floor, all as she continued to smile. Her hair was up but as she finally made it to the end of the bed, her arm reached up and released the glorious purple in one swoop allowing it to fall down her back.



She was a goddess, unforgettable and in those first five seconds that he was re-living right now all over again, he couldn't help himself. He was just a little premature.

She didn't mind at all and moved her body into a very questionable position. *Really?*

That word left his mind as soon as he thought it, as she continued moving...she knew what to do. She knew what he wanted. She was so willing and able...

To hell with the first five seconds!