

Chapter 7

“This Song Is Your Fault”



He hadn't played at a real gig for a long time now, but he was ready. He was always ready. The time was now.

It was pretty exciting to go aboard the Utah. It had been a long time since he'd boarded a space station. The last time was right before he started on this journey back to his home land and that left quite a memory in his mind since it was the last time he was an eligible bachelor. A break would now be most welcome given his current state of affairs.

Ensign Harry Born was in a pretty cool band and was an outstanding drummer from what he had heard the cadets often whispering among one another as he walked past them on the ship. He usually rocked the stage. Last week Harry had approached him and asked if he'd like to sing with their band. All the guys in Harry's band were coming out for a gig at the Columbia, a romantic and dimly lit dance bar, everyone except their singer. He'd been promoted and that meant taking another set of regimented tests that would undoubtedly last for at least another solid month so he couldn't join the group. However, the gig had been set up already and could not be canceled.

Sarantos had to admit to being pleased and excited when Harry asked him to sing for the group and play backup guitar, but that was before he developed a severe case of the blues. Addie had crushed his heart. How was he supposed to know he'd go and do something stupid and make everything awkward? His world was crumbling around him, but life had to go on. He wanted to back out of the deal but couldn't let Harry down. It just wasn't a cool thing to do to a friend.

He moaned and flipped himself over in his bed. How could Addie tell him no? He did not expect this. He knew she loved him, or at least he thought she did. The past week was agonizing on him and he tried hard to focus on his job while rehearsing his music after work.

He had genuinely worked hard on a new song, one the boys in the band could learn and follow quickly. It was, of course absolutely about Addie. He had to find a way, because living without her wasn't an option. Life always flew by while he ran away from opportunities, but this one he wasn't going to let go of. He just couldn't do it. He wouldn't obey the rules. He needed to create a chance to chat with Addie, but she was avoiding him like the black plague since he asked her to marry him.

His heart was joyful, eager and excited - and then it was shot down when the yes was for the food, not for his proposal. The question climbed the wall and moved on but he could not. His internal organs burned inside his chest and the dizziness almost made him pass out that fateful night. That was the longest dinner he'd ever had. They barely talked. He couldn't eat, but she didn't seem to have a problem with her food. Not only did she eat her meal in record time, but she ordered Matt's famous chocolate angel dessert. She licked her lips so slow he wanted to take her right on the table. Then she moaned with pleasure on top of it, making it pretty much impossible for him not to scream. After her obvious indulgence with her food, she asked him what was wrong? Of course, he just gave her a death stare with bulging eyes that screamed with sarcasm, though she knocked it down and chatted away like nothing was wrong.

She crushed him and then avoided him. She said it was work keeping her busy. He didn't understand why she didn't come by at night when she got off duty anymore, but then Sarantos found out she'd put herself on an extended night shift making it almost inconceivable for them to see each other. Boy, he'd messed up. Why couldn't he let good enough alone. He always wanted more. That was his nature. He knew Addie was a stickler for working environments. It was in her nature. Of course, she was going to say no as she would not want to jeopardize her job. What in the world did he think was going to happen? Maybe he was duped by love and by his own delusions of what determines a perfect relationship??

Suddenly in a heartbeat, here right now, he was all alone - aching, heartbroken and bluer than the fiddler in that old painting by Picasso. He also has a blue period in his life so now all of his songs will reflect that.

He needed to create an opportunity to be with her. He needed for Addie to go to the gig on Saturday night but she worked nights. Just two days away and he had no ideas, nothing...or maybe he did.

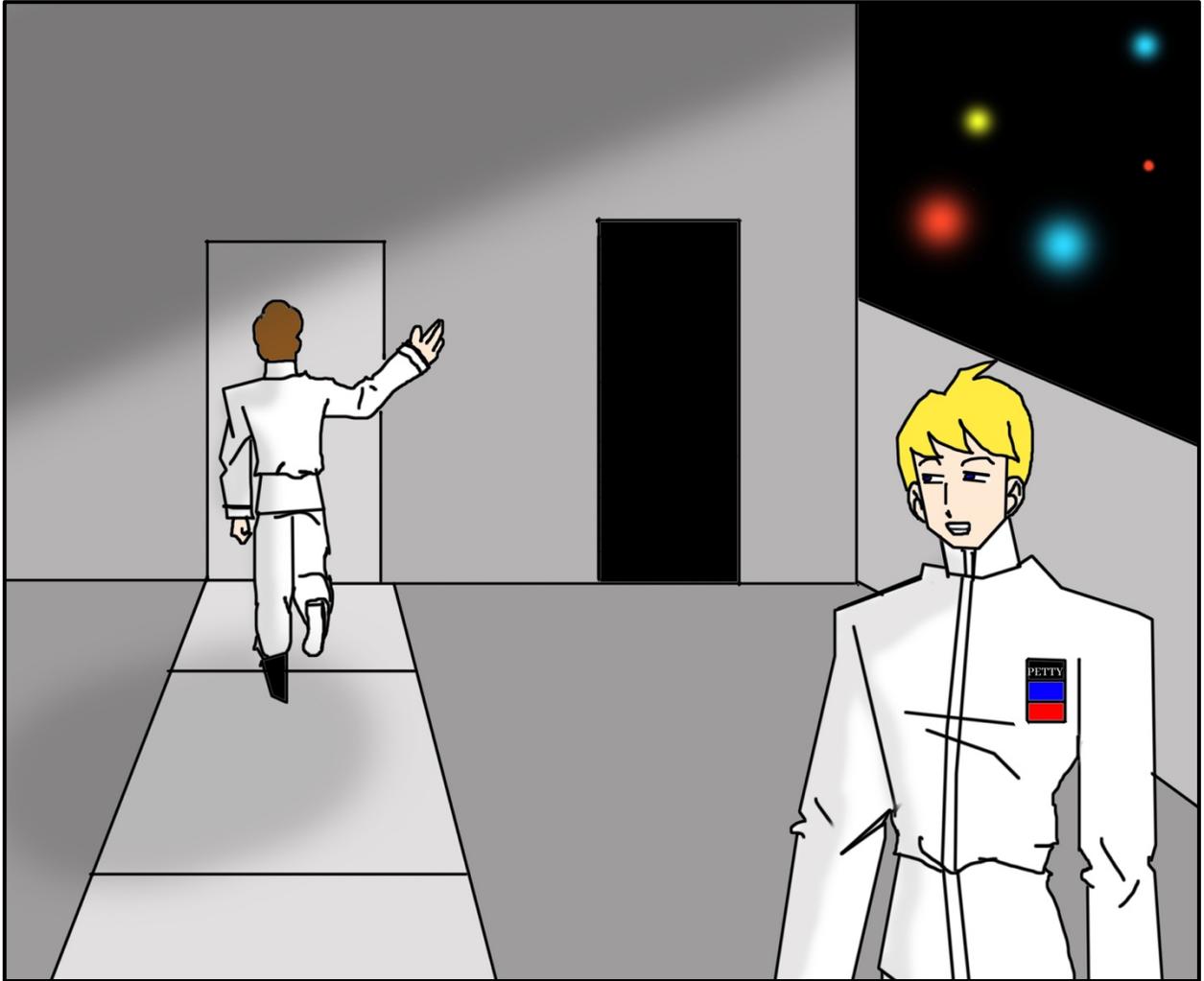
He got up, dressed, and went to security. No Addie.

He was still her Captain though. "Lieutenant Stuart?"

"Yes, Captain."

"I need you on the bridge in my staff room. Pronto. We have a problem. Out."

He didn't give her a chance to say no and headed straight to the bridge.



“Captain on deck.” Chief Petty announced loudly with raised eyebrows. “Captain is everything alright?”

“Yes, Chief Petty. I know it’s late. I couldn’t sleep and I have a brief meeting with security. I’ll be in my ready room.”

He loved the look of the ship at night when it was quiet with little movement. It was so tranquil and peaceful like still the mysterious waters in the silent night in the middle of a wide ocean with nothing or no one else around you. That’s when he could really hear his ship breathe. The spirit of The Chicago came out to play in the

wee hours of the night when most were sleeping and enticed him to sit at the helm because he was her master. He wanted her in his hands.

He sat in his throne and looked straight ahead. The eyes of his staff were on him and he could feel their confusion. He very seldom came up on deck when he was off duty, unless it was a real emergency. He also just told them he'd be in his ready room, but instead sat down at the helm and stared off into space. His fingers felt awesome as he ran them along the chair bars. They tingled with excitement as if they had been breathlessly waiting for his touch. The heartbeat of The Chicago ran up his legs causing his knees to throb with anticipation. They were joined together as one entity and for a moment he was in charge maybe because she thought he wore his Captain's uniform when in reality the comfort of jeans and tee shirt clung to his body. Hello my beauty. I missed you. His mind reached out into the body of his ship. She reached back. Pure power and love - a Captain and his ship. Nothing beat this feeling!

“Captain?”

“I'm fine, Petty, just fine.” He smiled shrewdly and stood up walking slowly to his private quarters.

The swoosh of the door came, and he was sure it was Addie but he didn't bother to look. He walked straight to his room, entered and then went across the room to the replicator. “Tea, black.”

The smell of the tea was soothing. He took a long inhale. Everything was more magnificent when the ship was most alive. He sat in his chair. Addie sat across from him in silence.

“Tea?”

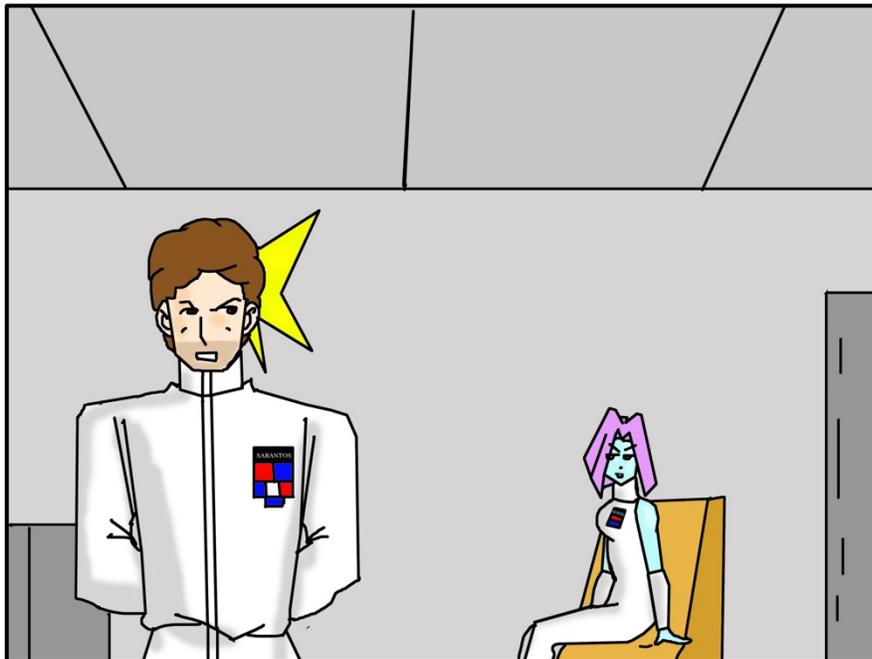
“No thank you, Captain. How can I help?”

That was a loaded question. He controlled his grin regardless.

“I seem to be having a difficult time having a conversation with you so I confess I called you here tonight as your captain with an ulterior motive. I’d like you to let you and your crew know that Ensign Harry Born’s band The Templers will be doing a gig on the Utah in a bar called the Columbia. I’ve been asked to join them on guitar and vocals. It’s Saturday night and we look forward to entertaining as many of the crew as possible who wouldn’t mind getting off the ship and joining us there honoring us with their presence. Of course, this is all just to show their support.”

“Wow, it sounds amazing.”

“Please be sure you and your team support us. It would really mean a lot.”



“I think it’s a great idea. Sarantos, why didn’t you just ask me yourself though? Instead you bring me here with this weird invitation that represents everyone, except what you really wanted was to ask me to come. Why are you acting so strange, Captain?”

“Strange, I’m acting strange? You said no to my proposal! My head’s still in the clouds and there’s no doubt I’m dazed, don’t you think that’s strange? Do you not think so? Maybe I am acting weird, maybe I’m not!”

“Sorry, Lieutenant I didn’t know I was acting strange.”

Her smirk was so strong, and the thought of it would quite possibly stir him all night long. He just knew it would.

“If that’s all. I need to get back to work. My team is waiting for me.”

She had the gall. What was she thinking? Just like that, she’ll walk right out of here. No kiss no hug, no love. That would be a great line for new song. He was drowning, and she couldn’t even throw him a simple life preserver. Damn. Were they still even dating?

“Nothing else. Good night.”

He couldn’t believe that’s what came out of his mouth. He cut her off and sent her on her way. She left. He watched her body move towards the door until she was out of view.

Fine, tonight he had the ship. She would never abandon him. She was merciful to him. She was all his and wanted him in charge all the time. Now that’s a real lady. She never talked back.

The tea was warm and sent his senses off to a relaxed blissful state, each sip more sublime than the last. He was Captain and right now that felt like enough for some curious reason.

His legs found their way to the top of his desk and that's where he woke up.

“Captain?”

“John Baker, what are you doing in here?”

“Well, when I came on duty your Ensign notified me that you were still in the ready room, that you'd been here most of the night and never left. He was concerned but didn't want to disturb you.”

“Well, then I guess, a good morning is in order. Coffee?”

“Sure. You want one, Sarantos?”

“Thanks.”

“Black, as usual?”

“Yep.”

“So, what are you doing in here?” John's head lowered a bit as the coffee steamed down from the replicator into the waiting cup. “You no longer own a bed? I thought captains nowadays get their own bed and their own private quarters?”

“Funny. I just couldn't sleep. That's all.”

“Oh. Would it have to do with Addie?”

“About that, John. I’m over the BS and the silly blues.”

“Just like that?”

“Yep, just like that.”

John rested the two coffees down and sat across from him.

“Seriously, do I have to wipe that look from your face, my friend? Really. I’m cool with it all. I’m over it. I’m over her. Screw it. Now I just want the world in my hands.” Sarantos said.

The coffee hit the spot.

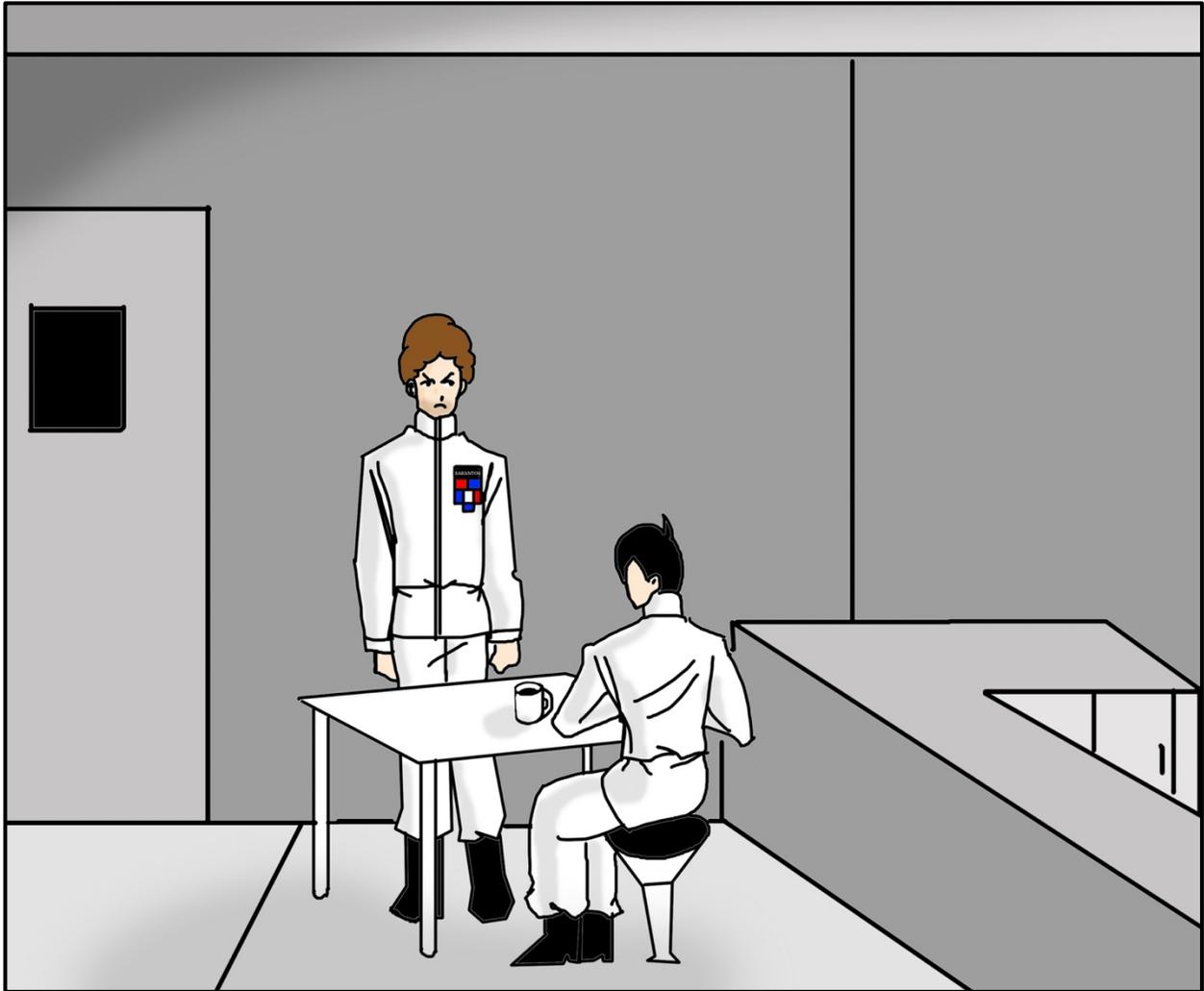
“You amaze me. You love this woman and you’re not okay with it at all, not by a long shot.”

“What does that mean, anyway? Not by a long shot?”

“Oh, some old insane thought of a wise old man that carried over . I believe it means absolutely ridiculous.”

“Maybe, I’m just trying to get on with my life, John.”

“You can’t do that until you settle this thing with Addie.” John said.



“What thing with Addie? I thought we had a thing but I guess I was wrong.” Even as Sarantos said it, he knew it wasn’t true. They did have a thing. A great thing. It was still something special.

“You’ve got to be kidding me, right? She loves you, but you scared her! Just give her some time to work it out in her head. The Satorian aren’t big on the marriage thing. They believe in commitment to a partner for life, but they’re just not big on the vows and all the wedding hoopla. She was committed to you on her own terms. Maybe, you just should’ve re-evaluated your terms with her, you know have a discussion like two mature adults instead of shocking her with a proposal without any sort of a heads up. She probably wasn’t expecting it and it was out of the blue for her.”

His cheeks were burning. John was right in his face with solid facts that made sense, as always.

“Do you ever get tired of never being wrong?”

“Nope.”

“I didn’t get enough sleep. Luckily for me the show’s tomorrow, night. You coming?”

“Of course, I wouldn’t miss it my dear Captain. I’m bringing the whole family just for you. My wife and daughters will probably love it. My son, on the other hand, prefers science and history over the music scene. He likes the quiet of the night. He’ll probably hate it. Of course, I’m sure I’ll hate it too.”

“Well, I can dig that. Thanks for being honest and tempering my expectations.”

“I need to get back to engineering.” John gulped down his coffee and went to the door. “Oh, Captain, have you heard anything out about our next mission?”

“No, not even a whisper. Bane isn’t talking to me about it, yet.”

“Okay, Captain. Have a good one.”

“Thanks, John.”

His neck was sore. John was right about Addie.

The computer alarm sounded. He sat up straighter in his chair and pressed open.

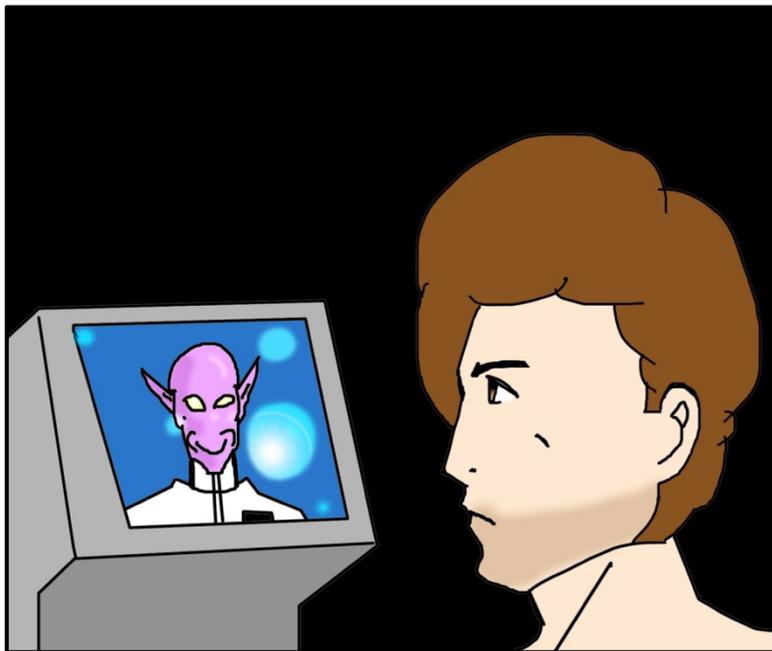
“Admiral Bane.”

“Captain Sarantos, I hope you’re well. You’re not in uniform?”

Bane’s large blue ears twitched and the mohawk on the top of his head moved forward.

Great, he hadn’t been back to his room to get dressed and now he looked bad.

“Sorry, Admiral, but I came back late last night and did some paper work and fell asleep at my desk. I just had a briefing with Lieutenant Baker, and I’m getting ready to go shower, get in uniform and get straight to my morning duties.”



The Admiral actually smiled. Well, that’s something that he’d never seen before.

“Really glad you’re on top of things, Captain. It makes me proud to have you on our side. Now, to business. We think you’ll be reassigned within the next two weeks, so you might want to load up on fuel, goods and any other pertinent supplies you might need. This mission might take you into

the heart of the Alfa Squadron. I’m not sure how long you’ll be there, but you might

want to make sure engineering has extra parts and that sort of thing. Anyone who doesn't want to be out there for over a month might consider staying at the star base Utah. If you need more people after everyone makes their decision, I suggest you recruit extras from Okura. Good people there all around you Captain. That's all. Out."

Okay, then. Thanks for that Admiral. He certainly gets to the point and then is done with you, never allowing for any questions. Just follow the orders like a robot.

Standing up and stretching he moved his neck around and rubbed it gently. He surely needed a shower.

The day had been a really long one, but productive in its own way.

He changed into his so-called street clothes and sat down to finally practice his music. Tuning his guitar felt surreal tonight and his heart was lighter than usual as he strummed on the strings. He should really play every day. This was where he wanted to be. Everything else was secondary. When he played his guitar, nothing else mattered.

Writing songs that told his story about the simplest things in life was therapeutic for him. The drama of his life turned into an emotional explosion of rock, while the love that touched him could dangle on the edge of a heavy thread hanging from emotional words pouring out from his heart. Then everything would turn around - all of it. The creative spirit always finds a way.

He could wrap a song into something he could live with peacefully, something that would make him feel complete at a moment's notice. Music was always the answer.

It always helped him forget about any past rejections. He looked up and thanked the heavens. His heart beat calmly.

Ever since this latest scenario happened with Addie, he'd been writing a new song for the gig tomorrow night. The band had practiced it several times but he still wasn't quite happy with the words. Most bands that had worked with him over the years knew that he was prone to changing the words if his onstage emotions demanded it during any given live performance. He'd learned to fit it in pretty smoothly and the guys never had a problem with it, but this band might not take to kindly to him deciding to say something else in place of the planned lyrics. He literally always sang by the seat of his pants.

Smiling, he played out a melody for the song he wrote for Addie, This Song is Your Fault.

It was beautiful. There was irony, there was sarcasm and a comedic element to it that was not what you normally here in the pop world. He'd gotten it pretty close to perfection, maybe because the woman it was written for was pure perfection. She was perfection from every angle. She'd better be there. This was for her and she needed to hear it, but he wasn't sure if he could sing it without crying, screaming, losing it or maybe just rocking down the whole freaking house. Literally.

Throwing on his shoes and grabbing his faithful guitar, he left his room and headed to the Utah. Practice would be in the Columbia room tonight. The sound of the room was important. It's the first time they'd been able to actually practice there. He'd heard the acoustics there were legendary.

He just stepped into the transporter when the door to the room opened and Chief Drake entered.

“Captain. Where you headed?”

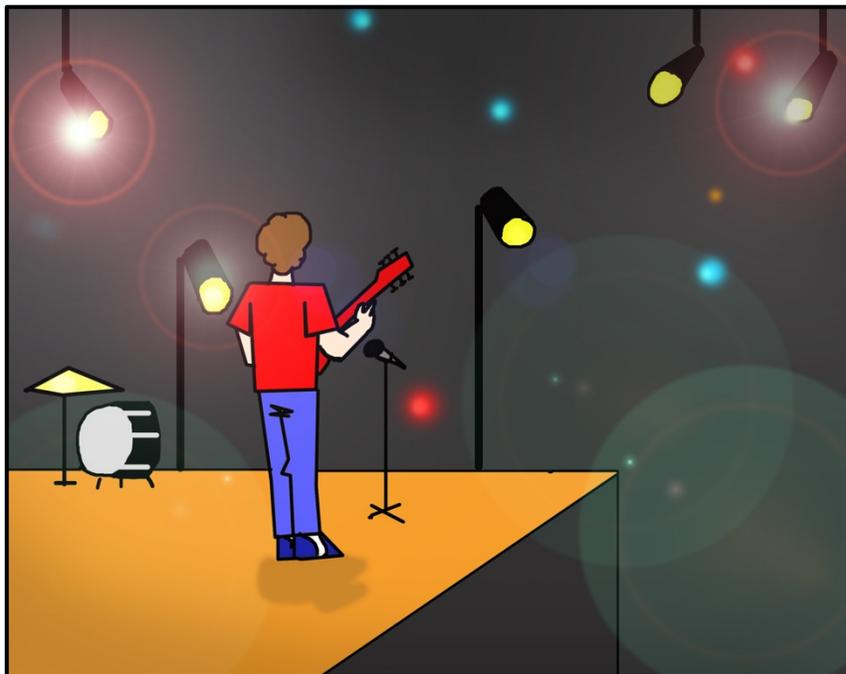
“To the Columbia room on the Utah.”

“Mind if I join you? I was meeting Petty there for a drink after practice.”

“Oh, sure. I was impressed with your guitar work Drake.”

“Thanks, Captain. You’re filling in nicely for our lead singer. Although, I heard you tend to change some of the words during a song whenever you feel like it. Not tomorrow though, right Captain?” His grin was infectious.

“I’ll try my best but no promises. Now get up here so we can get going.”



The Columbia was fabulous. It was impressive. The lights were twinkling like a thousand stars across a nebula. Now that’s what I’m talking about, Sarantos thought. If this doesn’t affect Addie, nothing will. He’d told John he didn’t care, but he did. Of course he did. Lying to himself wasn’t working anyway. It was time to admit it.

“Captain, over here.”

Born stood on a large stage. Some of the equipment was already set up and ready to go. Several men were wandering around intently testing mikes and meticulously organizing cables. Born jumped behind the drums and instinctively started playing a rhythm. Sarantos quickly plugged in his guitar to the amp and began testing the sound level. Adjusting the mike to his mouth, the words started flowing out. The next thing he knew Born was beating with him in perfect unison. Drake then joined in.

“Great sound guys.” It was Jory walking towards them. He played keyboards and any other instrument needed to make music perfectly harmonize into a catchy song. “Hey, guys this is Melamine, she plays a mean cow bell. Thought we might add it tonight for an extra jolt. What do you all think?”

“Let’s see what she’s got,” said Born.

Jory was a tall lanky human with red hair and dull freckles, a kid next door type. She had a funny personality with an enthusiastic sense of humor and was a damn good instrumentalist in her own right. Born lifted Melamine onto the stage, and then skipped on himself while pulling the bag of obscure instruments up with him. Sometimes they never knew what he’d pull out of that bag but it always added a sweet flair to the song.

Melamine was gorgeous. She was the opposite of Jory - sexy, jet black hair, dark piercing eyes and about five foot tall barefoot. Her sultry eyes cut into his heart.

Yikes, he’d better watch himself. She was steamy, but he didn’t have time for that. He was in love. Melamine looked human, but he wasn’t sure she was.

“Jory, where’s Lance?”

A loud voice boomed from the back of the room. “I’m here, no worries.”

Lance was a loud mouth Valene. A race that, except for their overly large mouths, looked very close to being human. He added to the band with sound effects from his mouth and played a bass guitar. He was close to 6’5” tall with a shaved head and blue eyes.

“Well, thank god, the band’s all here,” screamed Born.

Once all the members were on the stage, the Templers practiced for several hours until they felt comfortable with the set list, the order of songs and the sound they were making.

Sarantos was tired and ready for bed. He packed it up and said goodnight but not before Drake grabbed him to join him and Petty for a drink.

“So, Captain what’s new with you these days?”

“Not much Petty. Trying to stay out of trouble.”



“Aren’t we all,” said Drake.

A waitress brought them another round of drinks before Sarantos could call it a night. She handed her

number to Drake nonchalantly in the process.

“Okay, Drake, does this happen to you everywhere you go?”

“Yes Captain. It’s a curse but I’m used to it.”

“Well, if you had a steady girl, I don’t think they’d be used to it. Do you?”

“Nope. That’s why this ship is still sailing, Captain. Space is a big place.”

Petty lifted his glass and the three men toasted Drake. “To Drake, every woman’s desire, and every man’s wish!” The glasses clanked together, and the sound brought memories of Addie into his mind.

“Why am I every man’s wish, Petty?”

“Obviously, every man wishes he had your bad luck!”

That brought the table a round of laughs.

“Well, fellas, it’s been a great evening, but I have to Captain a ship tomorrow morning. I must call it a night.”

“Sure, Captain. Thanks for joining us. We’ll see you tomorrow.”

“No problem.” He nodded to the Ensign and Chief and found his way back to the teleporter and to his waiting room.

His room was empty now that Addie wasn't spending the nights in it. It frustrated him and made him feel lonely. He hoped his song would touch her heart. He hoped they could rekindle the mystery and passion of their love. Setting his guitar down in the spot where she usually laid, he fell down on his bed and immediately passed out into a deep sleep.

“Captain.”

Oh, his head hurt.

“Captain.”

He didn't want to open his eyes. He was still dressed and still wore his IC band.

“Yes, Cleary?”

What in the world could she want at this hour.

“Captain, I need you in sick bay.”

“What time is it, Cleary?”

“It's 0500 hours.”

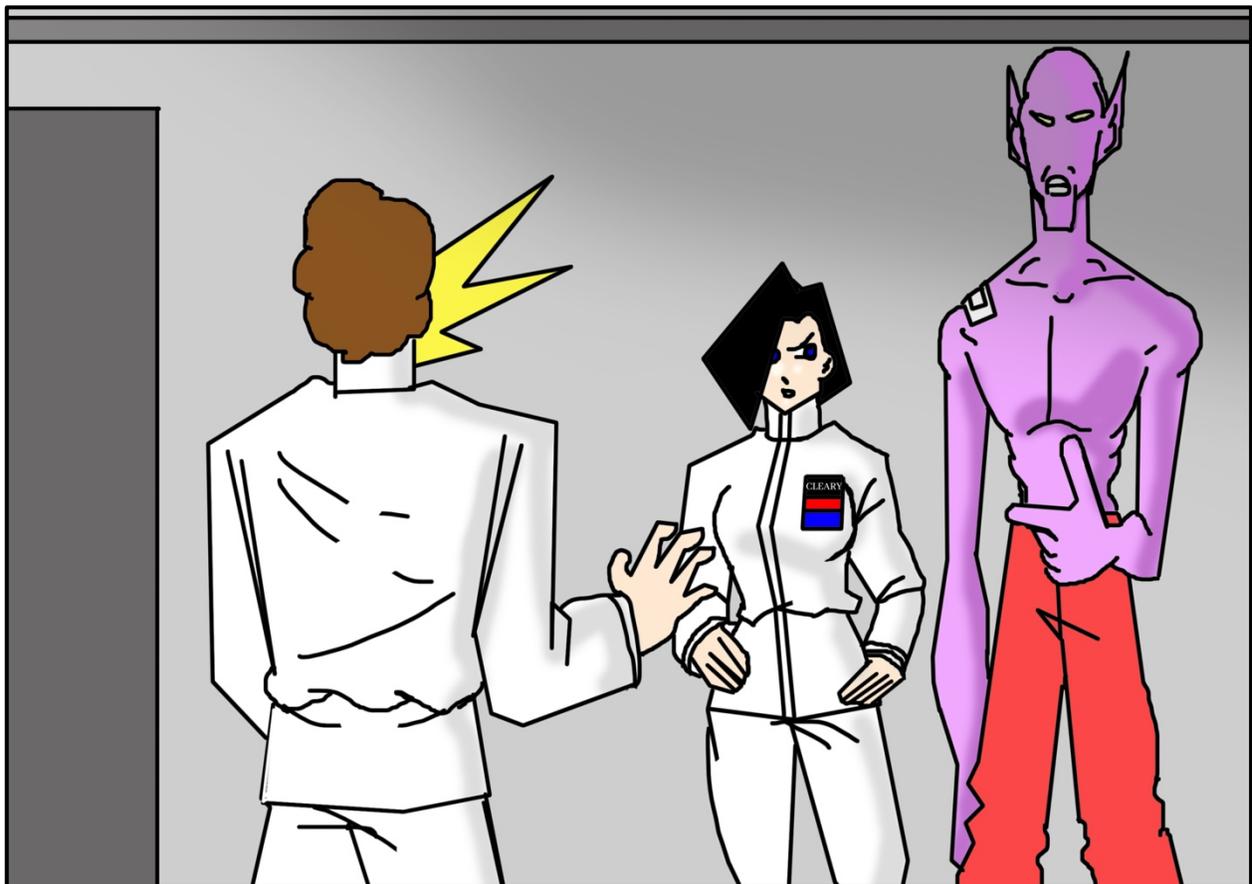
“Really? This can't wait?”

“No, Captain.”

“I’m on my way.”

His head was groggy and he was still in his street clothes, but went anyway. When he finally arrived, there was a squabble going on inside the room. He took out his phaser and put it on stun.

The door slid open and he entered. Cleary was standing in the middle of the room with her hands on her hips and a large Olivian with flaring ears facing her.



What’s going on, Cleary?”

“Captain, this is Odina. He just came onboard the ship from the star base Utah and demanded treatment which I did. I patched a phaser burn on his right shoulder, but he also wanted to talk to you. I was going to call security but he insisted that he’d phaser burn me if I didn’t get you over here right away.”

“Okay, what’s this about Odina?”

“Captain, I’ve been in a skirmish with your number one, Kitara. She’s dangerous and asking strange questions from some very questionable people. You know, those of questionable reputation.”

“I get it. Did she put that burn on you?”

“Yes, Captain. I ran and found my way here. I thought you’d want to know. I’m not sure of her motives and thought I should report it to you directly.”

“You did the right thing, Odina. I’m going to need you to give all the details including the names of people she is speaking with to our head of security.”

“Lieutenant Stuart?”

“Captain?”

“Please join me in sick bay and bring a couple of your team.”

“On my way.”

“Have a seat, Odina, we’ll wait together.”

It didn't take her long to get there and after questioning Odina, they were now more alarmed than ever over Kitara's actions. He was worried that she was no longer on their team.

"I'm concerned, Stuart."

"Captain, I'll get some of my team on her at all times. As soon as they get more information we'll report back to you."

"Thanks. I'm going to get ready for my day. Let me know what you find out."

He left the room and realized that he and Addie were also a great team professionally. They were meant to be together. Maybe he could rethink their situation and give her a break after all.

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Goosebumps went up and down his arms. The band was on stage and ready to perform. The lights flickered. He saw Addie sitting at the front table. She smiled. He smiled back. He started her song.

"Just taking this broken heart and making it into art...never expected this tonight, but Addie your eyes found my

spotlight...you stood out among the crowd, triggers like you should not be allowed...”

Her eyes lit up and he motioned her up onstage. She had a low-cut shirt on and he could swear in this lighting, he could see straight through it. He wanted her and the up-tempo beat of the song drove him into a fiery frenzy.

She came up on the stage and danced over to him. She was throwing shade his way.

“Baby, this song is your fault...forgot rejections for a few seconds...baby this song is your fault”

She sang it with him and the crowd went wild. When the song ended, Lance played a riveting bass as Addie grabbed him and kissed him so hard he almost fell over.

“I love you,” he said when her lips finally moved away.



“Yes, I love you too. Let’s talk.”

The bass strummed and sang with a riveting passion as Captain Sarantos sang the melody one last time, “This song is your fault, this song is your fault.” He pointed to her and mouthed the words in silence as the crowd cheered.

One last time. “This song is your fault.”