

## Chapter 8

### *“Every Single Day”*

Captain Sarantos felt like himself again. It'd been only two weeks since he and Charlie, the therapist, started meeting in the Creative Room for private sessions to help treat his depression, caused by the ship moving through a dead zone. Though the first one was sexual, every session after that involved staying fully clothed. The situation scared the heck out of almost everyone on board the ship. As the Captain, he felt responsible for their well-being and this predicament was so bizarre that he had a hard time adjusting to the heavy responsibility that came with such an unusual situation.



He felt disconnected from Starfleet command, and that made him feel naked, creating a draft in his emotional state. Meeting with Charlie in the Creative Room turned out to be cathartic. It was the only place they ever met after their first session there. She was so damn sexy and sometimes they just talked and sat naked on a summer beach, alone with the wind blowing their

hair and the waters lapping at their exposed flesh. It was therapeutic for him because there was no pressure involved and he could relax and just be who he was — and he was Sarantos, a guy born on the planet Okura. Sometimes he even brought his guitar and would write songs, as Charlie sat back and laughed and on rare occasion, assisted. He wasn't in love with Charlie but was learning much from her tapping into his inner self, for that all-important self-improvement, compassion and acceptance that haunts every perfectionist from birth.

It was taxing dealing with himself, but Charlie made it fun to look at Sarantos - son, Captain, and a friend from a very different angle, a more pleasing and accepting analysis of his soul, not a damaging one. By not being angry at others or himself and what life threw at him, she taught him to put aside excuses and just focus on results. She taught him to forgive himself. He stopped believing that he couldn't.

Charlie was like a geisha girl, someone who had many skills to offer, some hidden and some obvious. Because of her brilliance, he was healing. He felt different. He stopped being hard on himself. The inner guilt that was crushing stopped yelling. The greatest talents in history are the ones who failed the most. She was teaching him that to walk out onto the field of life was not enough.

Playing the game with everything you had, every single day was the most important part, and particularly how he played the game. He had to be immersed in it, without drowning. Only the power of focus would drive him into action, not just once in a while, but every single day.

He smiled as he walked down the corridor to meet Addie for breakfast. He felt alive and slept well for the first time in a long while.

In the two weeks he'd been in sessions, nothing significant had happened aboard the ship, nothing of interest, and nothing happened again between him and Charlie. It was a one off, and now he enjoyed the freedom of accepting who he was. Once he accepted the fact of his sometimes over stimulated sexual attractions, he gained control, leaving insecurities behind him. He focused on his love for Addie and not just the sexual attraction, but the person she was, the purity in her soul. Just when he thought things could not get better, now they shared a more intimate relationship on a personal, sexual, and professional level... intoxicating.

He was glad there were no longer any bumps hitting the ship, no strange behavior by the crew members, and that helped clear his psyche, but he still wasn't sure where the ship was headed. Now though he learned how to allow that to roll off his back.

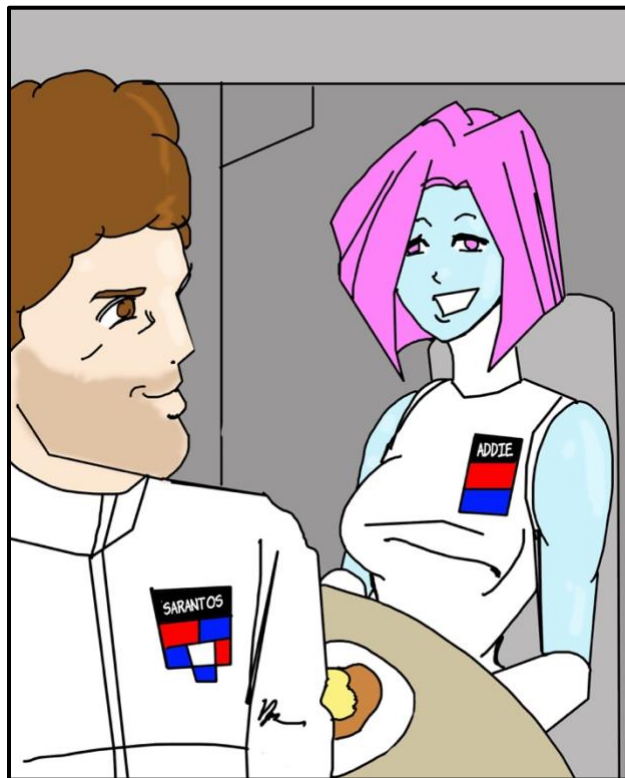
No more head games. He could concentrate on his crew and staff, making him a better Captain.

His mind wondered as he walked. Waiting for rescue is being a victim and being a victim keeps you powerless and keeps you waiting. He would never wait again.

John offered to fill in for the Doc on the Deck one night when he spotted a station that would take another three days to get to. Sarantos could only hope that the residents were friendly and had some supplies they could use.

He tried every night to contact the Admiral, but to no avail. He stopped stressing over it but continued to try.

Sarantos entered the Diamond Room and waked over to his favorite table. Addie was waiting. He had plenty of darkness inside of him, he just refused to dwell on it.



His attention to fine details were increasing with each session. Loving Addie seemed more beautiful and richer in happiness.

The smile she gave him caused slight creases by the corner of her eyes, and one side of her nose wrinkled in the cutest fashion; that look was priceless. He captured a photograph to store in his memory. Exposing her girlish charm always brought warmth over his heart. A charm that belonged hidden inside a sophisticated but serious lady, and slid in behind the warrior trained woman, but

that secret girlish charm exposed more of the woman he loved deep inside the curve of her womanly body. He didn't need to tell her he saw it there, but it was part of what made him so in love with the lady in front of him.

He took her hand. It was soft, strong, delicate, and manicured to perfection, hiding the fact she trained daily to kill. She wore the confidence of a queen, the heart of an angel, the mind of a strategist, and the soul of Buddha targeting an underlying ancient wisdom. She was a leader that wasn't afraid to give orders and win. He sat down across from her and smiled. How could he not?

“So, Sarantos, I'm loving the new you, and I have to say, it's the first time I've felt like we could get married one day and work it out,” Addie said. Her voice pulled on his ear.

He thought about what to say. The old Sarantos would have blurted out something inappropriate like, ‘oh, thanks, for that, the first time? And what does that mean we can work it out, I always thought we could,’ but that was yesterday, and this is today.

Instead, he laughed reaching over and taking her hand in his saying, “Beautiful Addie, when you sleep, you are so unaware of the beauty that radiates outward. I know how you feel my love. I was a wild flower, oh, a jealous wild card, but now, I appreciate the beauty of us together and us apart. Sometimes our best decisions are the ones we don't make at all. I think we don't have to get married to be one. I'm okay with it either way, and I don't mean to sound indifferent about us, but I think you understand where I'm coming from. I just want to be with you. Whatever feels right to you works for me.”

That felt good to say, and he was a little shocked that he believed it and the words felt right.

Her head tilted. Her eyes were smoky, bedroom eyes. She drank him in and when she spoke, her words were dripping honey that made him quiver.

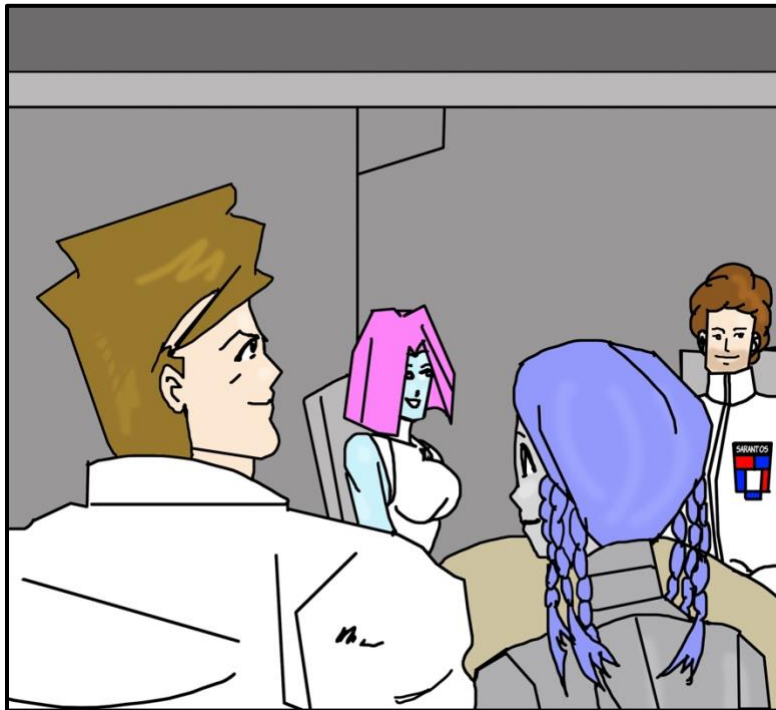
“Oh, my darling Sarantos, my Captain. The new more confident you, is oh so seductively enticing. You make me want you more than ever. I love a secure man, and yes, I agree, we need not get married to be one,” Addie said finishing her comment with a lick of her lips.

Sarantos wasn't sure if it was the lick or the way she stretched out the words as sexy and slow but that last sip of champagne dribbling onto her lips from a golden goblet shook him to his core.

With that thought, the food was being set in front of them.

“I hope you don't mind, Sarantos, but I ordered for us,” said Addie.

“Sure, no problem.” He used to be so personal yet distant, but now nothing seemed to bother him.



“Look over there, it's Sergeant Block and Charlie. Oh, how sweet they are,” said Addie.

He glanced over at the door and Block and Charlie were headed their way. He was glad Block could now have a life outside of work and did not have to worry about babysitting him every moment of every day.

“Good evening, you two,” said Block.

He and Charlie looked happy together. They made a great couple. When Sarantos started seeing Charlie, on a professional level, she and Block started dating, and he had to say the man was beaming like a morning sunrise every time he saw him after that whether he was alone, or with Charlie. It just didn't matter.

“Same to you Block, so glad you have some time off for a change. I heard your Captain's not driving you crazy anymore.”

“Yes, Captain, it's true,” Block said winking.

Addie said, “Well, off you go, you two. Have a wonderful night, and I'll see you back on shift next Friday, right Block?”

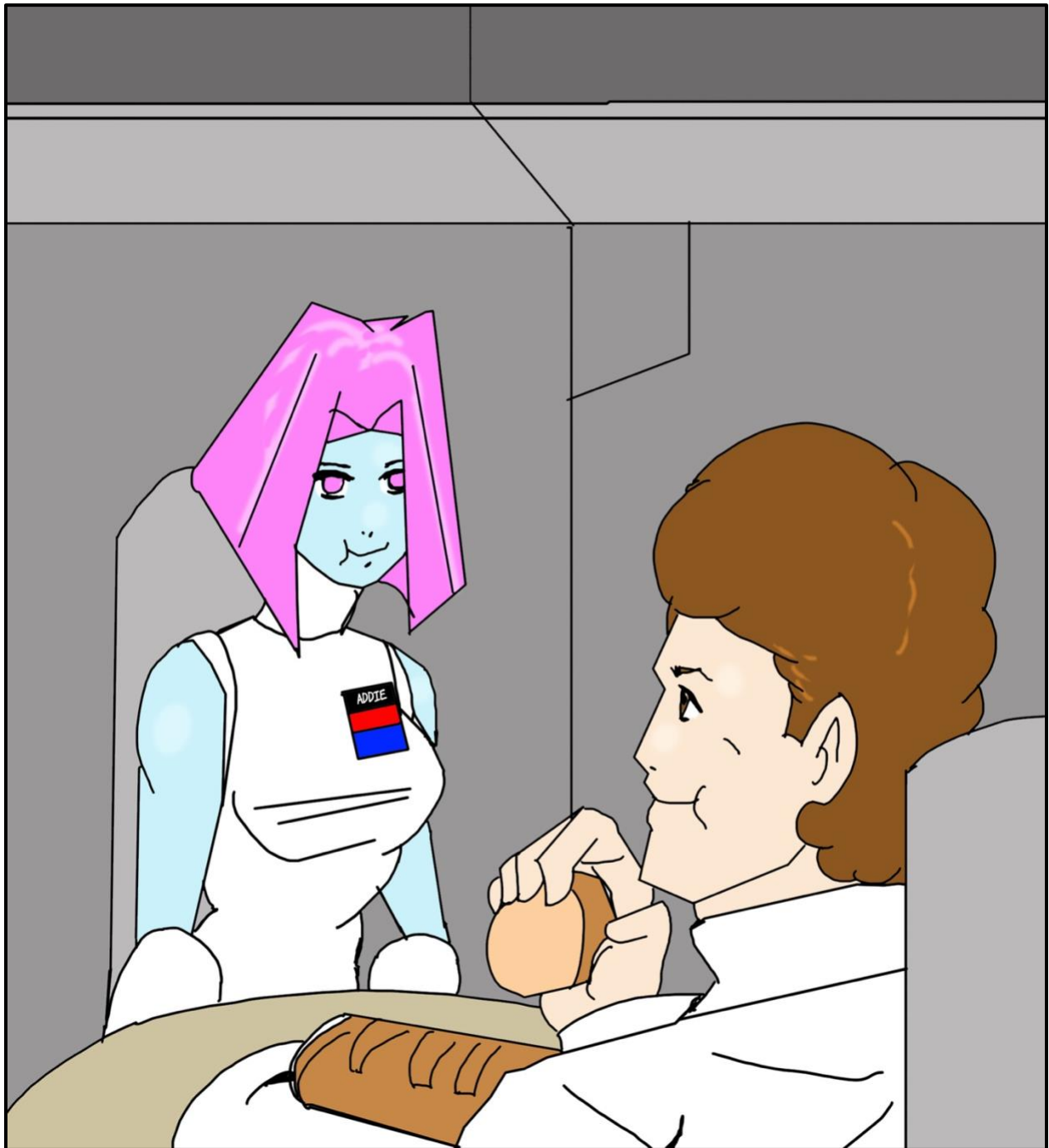
Block said, “Yes Lieutenant you will, and thanks for the break.”

Addie smiled, “You deserve it after dealing with this high maintenance human.” She pointed to Sarantos, and they all nodded in agreement, including Sarantos.

“You both have a nice night,” said Charlie nestling into Blocks arm and leading him to another table.

Addie grinned and took a strand of a vegetable called chard from the planet Earth. Cut up into small pieces and sauteed in olive oil with sweet potatoes, onion, peppers, and an exotic vegetable called qwee, known for its delicate flavor similar to some squashes but infused with a sweet chocolaty taste, introduced to the crew by Matt Blume of the Morlaian race. Matt had gained a small garden of the rare plant last time he'd visited his home planet. They cultivated it in the green room along with many other edible plants from around the quadrant, making their supply a continuous one. Sarantos never had eaten it this way before, but he'd enjoyed it in many dishes

prior to today. That's why Addie had ordered it. She'd been encouraging him to try it made in this fashion for some time.



Sarantos took a bite, and said, “I have to say this dish is delicious and it’s very tasty.”

“It’s one of my favorite dishes,” said Addie, taking another bite before breaking off a piece of homemade bread. “Oh, Sarantos this bread is so soft, and I’m in the mood for a melt in your mouth experience,” she said.

He loved watching her enjoy meals. His mind would become preoccupied with the typical Sarantos stuff - sex, what to do about the ship, how to be a good Captain, fear of the unknown, and how his ship was doing today. But for now, he was a new man, born again, if you will.

The soreness of his body seduced him. He’d been mind-wrapped in himself. Charlie help him recover. Sarantos felt normal. He even worked out longer than usual in the Creative Room, pressing the sweat, until his shirt was drenched. The workout had detoxed his body.

He smiled over at Addie, remembering he’d even starting thinking Addie was a threat to his life at one point, a burden of sorts. It was not just her but everyone was a threat. Therapy though helped him learn you get what you give, and he was learning to give more of himself to others in many aspects.

Sarantos said, “Did you hear there’s a space station about 2 days out?”

“Yes, I’ve upped security already, just in case someone tries to board the ship prior to our arrival. Do you think it’s wise to stop there, Captain?”

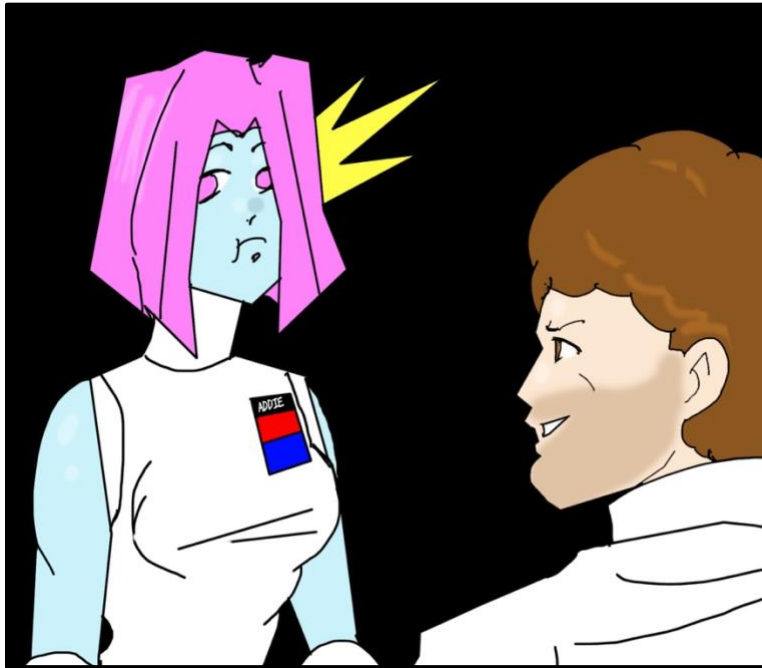
“Yes, I think we might get some supplies. I hope they’re not war hungry. I’m glad you set up a solid security protocol and high alert?”

Addie lifted her eyes and grinned. “Oh foolish, Captain. I have already ordered high alert status beginning this evening.” Her glance went past him and focused in a space



not there. “Captain, I’m glad we could notice a space station in this dark nightmare of a quadrant, but aren’t you concerned that my sister will be there?”

“Yes, I am, if I’m honest. I still do not understand why the Federation sent us here on this mission with a bare crew and it concerns me. The fact I can’t get a hold of the Admiral is very alarming. We’ve gone too far, I’m afraid.”



Her smile lit up the room. “Well, then Captain, even more fun for us lovers. Exploration and conquest!”

He giggled and when it reached her ears, she raised her eyebrows, twisted her mouth, and continued eating.

Matt came over and sat down pouring himself a glass of a dark bold wine he’d brought to the table with him. He closed

his eyes and sipped slowly before letting out a long sigh.

Sarantos looked at Addie who shook her head, not sure what was up with Matt.

“Matt? You okay, buddy,” asked Sarantos?

Addie spoke up. “Yeah, is there anything we can help you with, Matt?”

Sarantos had never seen his friend look defeated. Something was amiss.

Matt kept his eyes closed and said, “No nothing anyone can do. We’re all out here and in this black void together.”

Sarantos sat back and drank some champagne. Looking over at Addie wasn’t helpful, because she just shrugged and continued to eat. The last place you want to work is the eating establishment. You want to be on the beach, playing volleyball in the sun, experiencing life with the radio on. Poor Matt.

“Well, that’s an understatement, Matt. How long did it take you to figure that one out?”

Sarantos hoped the humor would bring him out of his dark shell, but it didn’t work.

Still keeping his eyes closed Matt said, “Not long, Captain, not long.”

“Sorry, Matt, maybe we need a party to lift your spirits after we check out the Star Base? Although we will be on high alert while we’re there, make a list of things you need or want to get while we’re docked. If there’s no threat and if the opportunity arises, it’ll help break the monotony.”

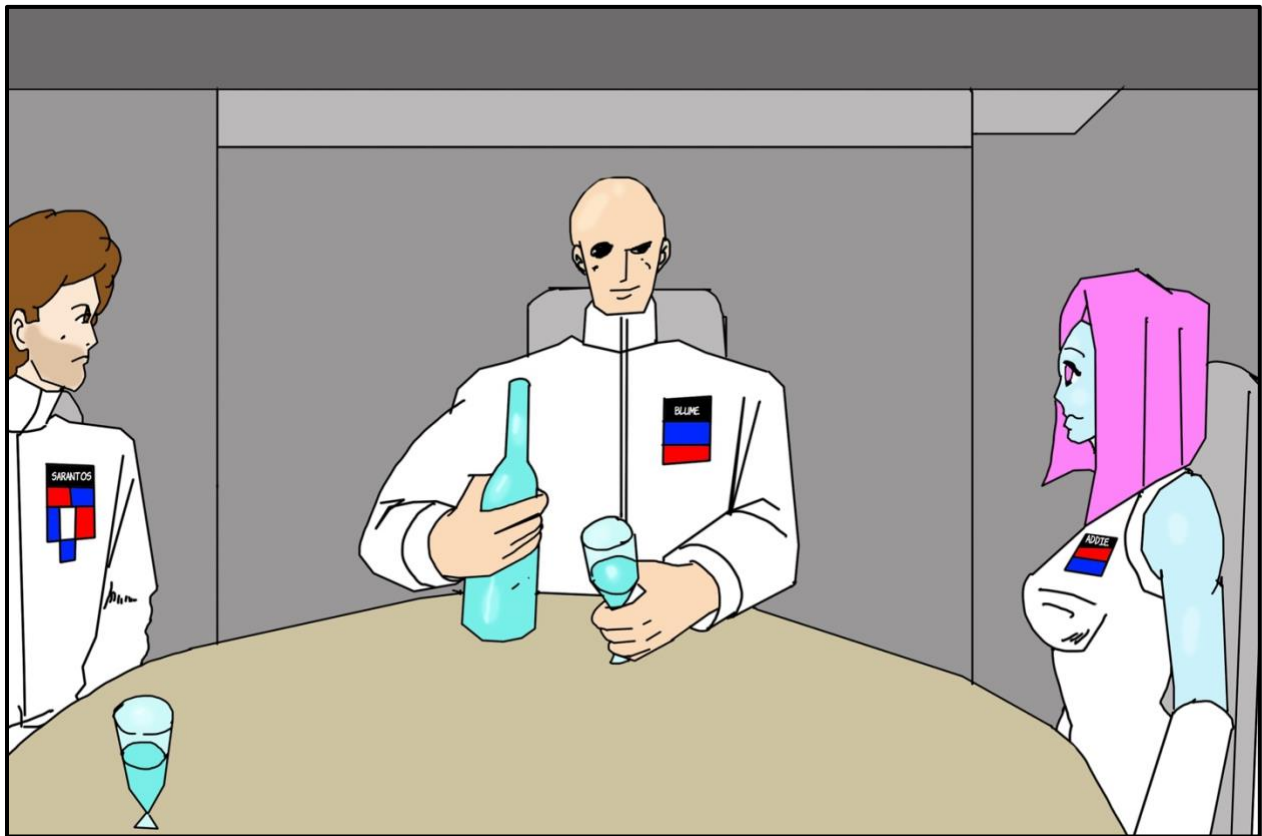
Addie joined the conversation. “That’s a great idea, Captain, not the party, but checking for supplies. Does the Doc know we’ll be hitting a station?”

“Yes, I informed her and it thrilled her, but that’s putting it mildly. I wasn’t sure if she was joyful because of supplies or just the relief of finding another form of life out here in this blackness.”

Matt looked grim, and said, “Well, we might not want to jump to conclusions about accepting any form of life. We can’t possibly imagine what this quadrant could hold, can we, Captain?”

Addie jumped in with an animated and a stressed voice before Sarantos could answer Matt. “He’s right, Sarantos we don’t know what we are running into. We only have a small crew. Although Sonny’s crew are of the highest caliber, we still should ride the wave of caution on this one. That space station could hold thousands of threats, and by that, I mean fighters. We have no idea if they are friendly, much less offer supplies. They could just board our ship and take our supplies.”

“True, Addie,” said Sarantos as he took a bite and finished chewing before speaking again. “Maybe, we should consider bypassing it altogether? I’m not sure anymore, because you raise some thoughtful arguments.”



Matt nodded and poured himself another drink.

Sarantos never remembered his friend being so glum. He had to think before he spoke, because as Captain of this starship it was his responsibility to keep the ship

and crew safe. A hundred times or more he thought about turning back, because he could not understand what they were doing there. No one else could do what he could, no one else was the Captain. You want to be great every single day. He had to lead the team and show them what it took to be great. They were a team!

He decided. “I think we’ll check it out and put all precautions on red alert.”

Matt continued to nod, but his tongue was pushing hard against his jaw causing the skin of his cheeks to protrude. It was obvious he didn’t approve, but he got a more vehement response from Addie.

Her voice was loud, as her eyes protruded from their sockets. “Captain? I feel we need to hold a meeting and hear all the officer’s opinion on something so crucial before you go off on your own tangent. Wouldn’t you agree that’s more prudent of a decision?”

His face felt warm. He started coughing on his food, until he took a drink of lemon water that Matt always placed on the table with each meal. Thank God for that.

“Addie, that’s strong advice. We can do that, but don’t you think everyone’s a threat and you get what you give back?” She’d rather be hated for who she is than loved for who she's not.

Her face went back to normal, losing the angry distorted features. Funny, he’d never noticed her face could be twisted into a demonic grimace. She was stunning. Who would’ve thought?

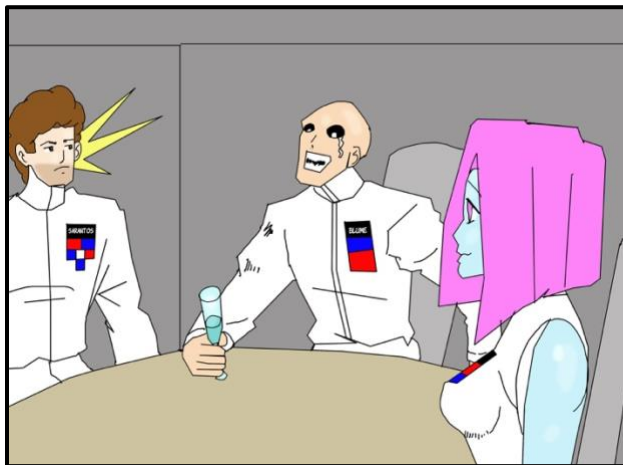
“Sarantos, as much as I love you, I’m kind of tiring of the power of focus you’re showing every single day. I know you’re seeing a therapist, but really? Consider that we have no backup out here... none! It’s just us and the darkness. The void that

hasn't been too good to us. We've no idea where we are going, much less what we're doing here, and as Head of Security, I think what I believe should be of the highest priority, don't you?"

Oh, boy, he did it now. He was just looking at all angles and posing questions. It was a threat. He didn't mean to challenge her as Commander of Security. Sarantos knew she was right, but no one else could do what he could do as Captain, and that was listen attentively to all the ideas, questions and sides. The final decision was his - it was his job.

"Addie, you've been an amazing Head of Security. As usual, you're right again. I'm not just saying that because I'm sleeping with you", he offered playfully. "We'll meet. I encourage and value everyone's opinion, and yours will carry the greatest weight, but I'm the Captain of this starship and the final decision will be mine. I expect the crew to come up with alternatives, and or ideas that will put our security and pleasure on a somewhat similar arc. Remember that nothing is permanent, not even us. We have to be careful."

Matt spoke up. "Well, that sounds fair enough, Captain. We can document our close encounters, since we are the first ones documenting this part of space. So far, there isn't much to document. We could all die out here doing nothing, so at least this is something, I guess I'd vote yes."



Addie raised an eyebrow and said, "Is that yes based on your current suicidal tendencies, Matt?"

Matt nodded and said, "Maybe so, but I'm drowning here and need something to wake me up and pull me out from under the tidal wave so I can feel alive again, at least until I'm killed, even if it's

for a few seconds.” Then Matt started laughing hysterically. Between outbreaks of insane laughter and tears, he managed to explain what made him laugh. “Not even if it’s for two minutes every single day!”

His outburst even drew a smirk from Addie.

She threw her arms into the air. “I give up with you two, but I will still voice my opinion at the meeting, Captain.”

He never doubted that, not for one moment.

Their loud voices and crazy chuckling drew the brief attention of the other guests. He wondered what the doc would vote. She would surely approve, just for the same reasons as Matts.

He changed the topic. “Great meal, Matt.”

That seemed to set Matt off again into a fit of laughter. Sarantos grew concerned. His friend’s mental state might be closer to the edge than he thought.

“Yes, Captain, great meals from your old buddy, every single day!”

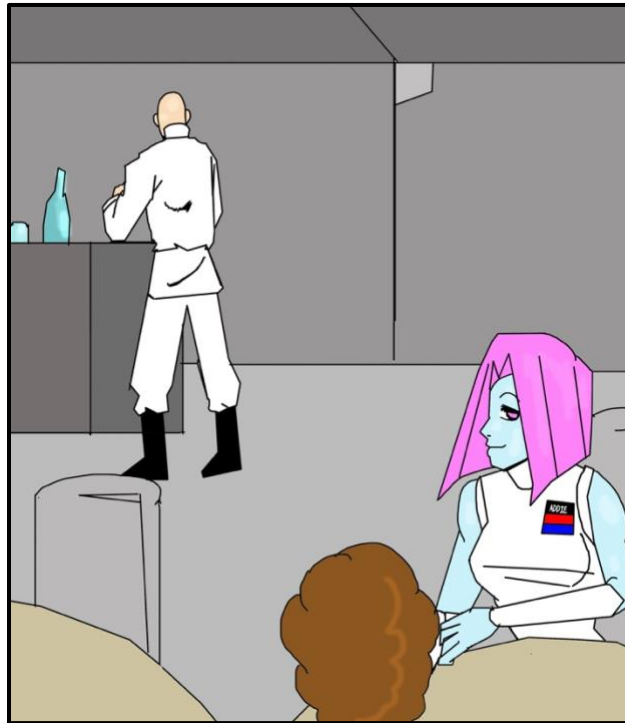
Sarantos shook his head. This was not going away soon.

Sarantos said, “For starters, Matt you’re not old and yes, your food is great every single day!”

Addie burst out in a fit of amusement. Matt had been laughing so hard for so long that he had to grab onto his side as he stood up.

Matt said, “Thanks for that, you two, I needed a good laugh.”

Sarantos said, “We are desperate to serve you for a change my friend. Glad to be of service.”



“Maybe we should take this show on the road,” Addie said with tears sliding down her cheeks giving her a glorious sheen.

Matt could no longer take it. He threw up his arms and walked back to the bar still holding his side. The only thing worth doing is for others.

Finally, curiosity got the best of Block. He got up and came over to check on the Captains table. He approached with caution. “Captain, Lieutenant? Everyone

okay over here?”

Sarantos said, “Yes, Block thanks for asking, but everyone’s a comedian these days.”

Block looked stumped. “If you say so Captain. If it’s not some sort of weird possession or alien control, I’ll just go back to my table and finish my meal with my hot date.”

The Captain said, “No, no alien control, but possibly possession.”

Block grinned, and meandered back to his table, while turning and looking behind him every third step, which made Sarantos laugh.

It felt satisfying to laugh. The rest of dinner went smoothly, in fact, the rest of the evening was dynamite. Addie came back to his room. They made passionate love for hours. What charged her? Maybe it was the fact he said she was right several times that evening, but whatever the reason didn't matter as much as the outcome, and what an outcome!

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He heard Addie moan next to him as he twisted over pulling her close, kissing her lightly on the forehead.

“Morning, beautiful,” he said.

Her face was radiant. “Morning, sexy.”

Sarantos said, “You’re the one who’s sexy.” He stared back at her like a teenager in love for the first time, giddy but unapologetic. “We’ve got the meeting in an hour. No time for breakfast, just a shower and coffee.”

She moaned again. “Ok, fine my love, let’s get something after the meeting. I worked up a considerable appetite last night. I might replicate one of those apples from Earth, it’s quick and easy and enjoyable.”

He nodded and jumped out of bed, pulling her naked body up with him. Since the new him was more observant, he’d memorized every detail of her body down to her pinky. Shiny, smooth, firm, shapely, and delicate. That was Addie. The morning is a time to dream, and he wanted to dream big.

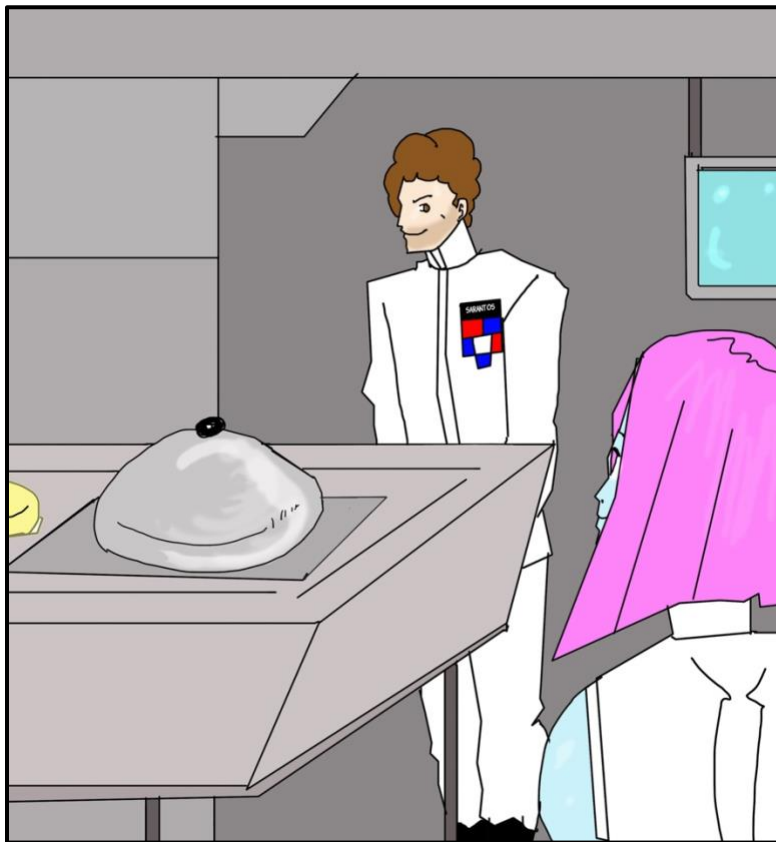


He moved towards the shower and turned on the water. Sarantos allowed her to get in ahead of him, before stepping in. The water steamed the glass. There was something about the scales on Addie's skin that rippled and glowed with a moving shimmer as the water trickled down her inviting body. He wanted her. He always wanted her in the shower, and she knew it. She never resisted.

They stepped out and dried off after some steamy lovemaking, but now they'd have to hurry.

She grabbed an apple on the way out the door. As they made their way to the meeting room, Sarantos kept stealing glances. She was like a drug he could not give up.

They'd arrived a little early. Thank goodness.



Sarantos walked up to the replicator. "Two coffees black."

The relaxing aroma filled the room. He handed the first one to Addie and watched her as she sat down and sipped it. The look of enjoyment expanded across her face. He no sooner sat down and sipped on his own when Matt burst in with his hands full of food and two helpers following him with drinks and more food.

Sarantos and Addie looked at each other and smiled.

“You read my mind, Matt,” said Addie.

“Well, I thought this meeting might get wild and wanted to bring some things that might keep it calmer. A full belly always makes for a more productive meeting when it’s the first thing on the agenda in the morning.”

“Great idea,” said Sarantos. “Addie’s starving this morning so you’re a lifesaver.”

“Glad to hear it.”

They had several trays - one of at least five different exotic fruits, one overflowing with soft bread, a bowl with two different colored cream cheeses, a clear bowl with washa (breakfast salad with nuts and feta cheese), and several pots of freshly brewed coffee. As soon as they were placed on the table, another assistant came in with a tray of smoked salmon and another tray of thinly sliced brosh (a high protein from Sarantos world that was a fiery vegetable with a meaty texture). This was a feast for kings. Not to mention another tray appeared within seconds with lemon and lime water to help wash everything down.

“Matt, you are amazing,” said Addie.

“I know,” said Matt.” Thanks to the two of you for helping me feel better about myself yesterday.”

Well, that was one way to meet the moment. A lot of good people that he could count on surrounded him.

Addie attacked the salmon. She wasn’t waiting for anyone, it was a casual setting. No one would dare stand up to her, anyway.

Once everyone arrived, Sarantos peered around at his group of friends and colleagues: John was there with Margaret Stone, both from engineering. Stone can get along with anyone and had communicational skills second to none. Sonny was there, along with Charlie. Brel, Addie and Addie had brought along Chief Stone Drake, being her right-hand man. Along with Brel, this was a powerful trio. Matt, of course had to be there. The Doc came with Shawna Dawn, the OKurian that was now a regular part of her medical crew. Sarantos had even invited Walt, the OKurian handyman because of his intelligence and his special ability to understand the entire function of the crew members and how they interacted with the ship. Chief Petty, because of his psychology and humanoid behavior skills was a key ingredient. It was a good team.

They were chatting and eating, waiting for their Captain to start the meeting.

“Thanks for coming, I know we all understand the situation thrust upon us. Well, today we will decide how to meet the moment, when it arrives. I look around me and realize we’re all we got today. It’s us, we are the questions and the answers. One plus one equals us. We will decide our course of action, make a game plan and execute what we all agree upon. Once we agree on a plan, we must trust our decision. Even if some of us disagree, it’s vital we stay united and not join the fray. We cannot allow whoever is at the space station to make us the prey. Our decision on this day, will help us win the day. And we will do this together.”

Addie jumped right into the fire. “I think we should go around it as far as we can. We should avoid it for security reasons. Let’s remember where we are. There’s no rescue for us. Matt called us explorers at one point. That’s what they designed this ship for, not for combat. It limits us and what we can put in place to protect us.” She sat down and drank coffee nodding her head.

“Fair enough,” said Brel sipping coffee then continuing. “However, I know it’s risky, but what else are we doing out here? We don’t know. If someone like myself goes in there and checks it out, we might find out if it’s something we should pursue or not. Even bypassing them is risky. They might spot us and hunt us down. Either way

we could be done for, at least my way we'll know what we're facing. We won't be guessing."

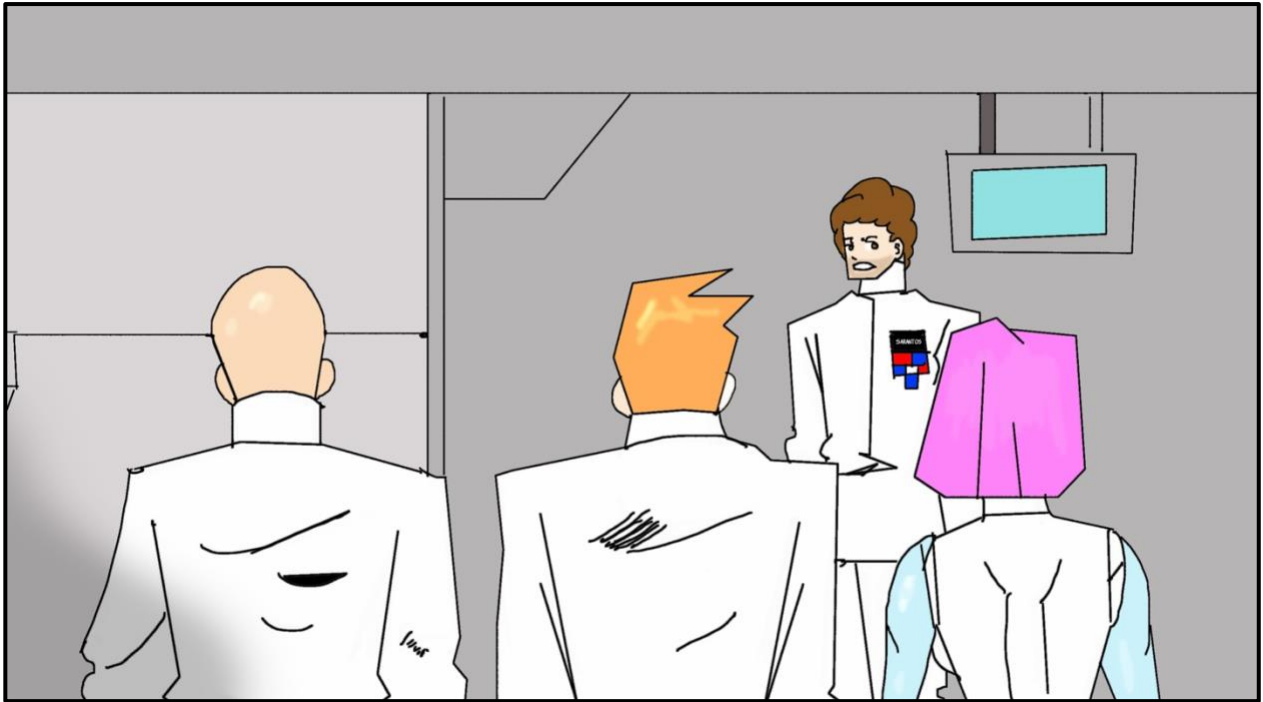
The room erupted in yays and nays. Arguing was now the center of attention in the room with nothing gained.

Sarantos tried to hear the pros and cons while drinking his coffee and eating a slice of soft bread, cream cheese and salmon. He listened staying calm while the heat was on. Keep the poise in the noise. That thought sang in his head, making him smile as he thought it would make the perfect chorus for a song.

After another 15 minutes of back-and-forth, the Captain stood up and said, "I've been listening to all of your comments. I've considered all pros and cons. Although you all presented valid arguments, I'm siding with the explorers. We will check it out. That's my final determination, but now we have to decide if Brel's way is the way to go, Matt's, or I heard Petty also had a reasonable idea. So, let's now probe all ideas on ways to explore this new sector that they have thrown us into. Let's try to make the most of a bad situation. Yes, it's dangerous, but Starfleet is not for the weak of heart or mind. We are here to learn and learn we shall for good or bad."

His mood was courageous. His calm was contagious and appeared to spread to everyone else around him. They were all together now, as they followed his final decision. Ideas were flying across the table. The discussion was cordial.

Sarantos became a legend in a blink of a second, something everyone wanted him to be and something everyone in this room wanted to see. Though he had been a Captain for many years and had led many successful missions, this was different. This was a whole new level of leadership.



Great people do things before they're ready. But once they are ready, they do great things and become legends...