

“Reveille! Reveille! Up all bunks!”

The Captain groggily opened his eyes as the lights in his quarters came on suddenly. He looked at the chronometer on the wall. Only two hours since he had gone to bed.

“What the hell...?” Koester started to say before he was cut off by the intercom.

“Turn to! Commence field day!” ordered the familiar voice of First Officer Virgil Dylan Kane.

“Not again,” groaned Koester to himself. “This is the third time this month!”

Slowly, Koester pulled himself out of bed, walked over to his desk, and pressed the intercom.

“Mister Kane,” he said.

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On the bridge of the *USS Dauntless*, Lt Commander Virgil Kane was just zipping up his greenie coveralls when the captain’s voice sounded over the speakers.

“Yes, Skipper?” he answered.

A few seconds passed, but Koester did not continue.

“Captain?” Kane repeated with more urgency. Still Koester did not respond.

Most of the bridge crew were watching Kane, when suddenly, almost violently, **Q** looked away toward a nearby bulkhead.

“No!” she said, almost shouting, then quickly got up from her post and ran off the bridge. As the turbolift door closed behind her, Kane spoke into the air.

“Computer, what is the location of Captain Koester?”

“Captain Koester is no longer aboard the *Dauntless*,” replied the computer’s unemotional feminine voice.

“Where could he have gone?” asked Ship’s Counselor Kethry Sutherland almost meekly.

Space, the Final Frontier....

These are the voyages of the starship *Dauntless*.

Her ongoing mission:

To Seek, To Chart, To Explore,

Slipping the surly bonds of Earth,

Going where none have been before!

Star Trek: Dauntless

“Revenge” By PJK & Donna ‘Q’ Rossi

Captain’s log, stardate 50150.8, First Officer Kane recording in absence of Captain Koester:

It appears our Commanding Officer has disappeared from the ship. How, we are still trying to determine. In the meantime, I have instituted full scale searches both aboard the Dauntless and in our immediate sector of space. I have assigned our newly reported Science Officer, Lt T’Cah, to search with ships scanners while Ensign Dar leads a search of the Primary hull and Ensign Nate Johnson a search of the Engineering sections.

Kane, out.

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Q burst into her quarters and collapsed on the deck, the doors swishing shut behind her. She groaned in pain.

“Worse than cramps,” she commented through gritted teeth as she doubled over again. Her intense pain was interrupted by a beep from her combadge.

“First Officer to Commander **Q**. We need your assistance on the bridge.”

"I'm a..... little..... (groan).... incapacitated," she barely replied.

Kane paused, then said, "Lotus, are you alright?"

"First of all, I told you never to call me Lotus!" She barely contained a scream before continuing. "And second... No, I'm not alright!!"

As she said it, the pain suddenly subsided and **Q** slowly stretched out, laying flat on her back on the deck. She rubbed her abdomen close to where her symbiont was implanted. "Never in all our years," she said to herself.

"**Q**, we have one crisis already," said Kane over the intercom. "We can't afford another one. Report to sickbay."

"I'm fine," **Q** said, but was quickly interrupted.

"That's an order, Commander."

Q rolled her eyes, rolled over, and slowly stood up.

"Very well," she responded before tapping her combadge to close the circuit. She straightened her uniform and slowly walked out of the cabin.

* * * *

Ensign Ethan Othello entered the sickbay and walked over to the bed where the holographic doctor hovered over Commander **Q**.

"How is she, Doctor?" Othello asked.

"Out of pain, for the moment," the bald-headed holographic projection answered. "I can find no medical reason for the pain she experienced."

"Computer, end program," Othello suddenly said, and instantly the doctor faded from view.

"The search parties are still looking for the Captain," Othello told **Q**. "They aren't going to find him."

Q looked at Othello. "You felt it too?" she asked.

"How could I not? It hit me like an ultimatum."

The two sighed simultaneously.

"Can you get the Captain back?" Othello asked. **Q** shook her head.

"I'm not even sure where Peter is."

"So what do you intend to do?"

"I'm not sure." **Q** sighed again. "I may have to go to the last resort."

"You don't mean...?"

"I'll have to arrange a meeting with the Exec."

"No!" Othello protested. "You can't do that! It will jeopardize everything we've been working towards."

"What else can I do? I can't let Peter die. I can't... AHHHHHHHH!!!!"

Othello gripped **Q**'s arm, drawing some of the pain away from her.

"Why is this happening to you? Why are you in such pain? Is it the symbiont?"

"No," **Q** managed between gasps. "I'm feeling what Peter's feeling."

"Good Dieties," Othello muttered. "How?"

"Through the bond we share. I'm feeling what he's feeling..... Wherever he is."

"Break it!"

Q looked at Othello, puzzlement in her eyes.

"The bond," Othello said. "Break it! If you don't feel the pain, you'll be able to think more clearly. You'll be able to help the Captain without revealing yourself."

"Can't," **Q** responded. Now it was Othello's turn to look puzzled. "We don't know how the bond formed. I didn't create it, it just... happened. I can't just break it. It's beyond my ability."

"You can't just..."

"Ethan, let me deal with this on my own. I'll be alright."

* * * *

The ready room doors swooshed aside, admitting Kane and **Q**. The First Officer offered his Assistant Science Chief a seat, then he himself sat behind the Captain's desk.

"How are you feeling?" he asked.

"The pain comes and goes," she answered truthfully. "The EMH says I'll be okay though."

Kane nodded, then added, "So why did you need to see me so urgently?"

"I need to tell you something. Something that concerns the Captain's..."

Q suddenly stopped, her brown eyes taking on a faraway look. Kane looked at her in bewilderment. In her mind, Q could swear she heard Peter Koester's voice, and that voice was talking to her.

'No, Poe,' Koester's voice said, sounding like the whisper of someone in great pain. 'If you tell them what you are, you'll lose everything you have. Everything you've worked all this time for.'

Q's mouth opened, as if she were about to speak. Kane leaned forward in expectation. But the voice in her head continued.

'That's what he wants!' And in a brief flash, she saw a face. Not Koester's face. Or the face of Kane, who still sat in front of her, waiting expectantly. She suddenly knew who she was up against. And what she had to do.

"I just remembered, there's something I need to do, Virg," Q said, making an excuse as she stood up. "Can we reschedule this? Thanks. I'll see you later."

Q quickly walked out the doors. Kane walked over and watched the Trill dart across the bridge and into the turbolift, shaking his head as the doors closed.

"She can be so strange sometimes," he muttered to himself.

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Q walked into her quarters, this time a determined look on her face, her eyebrows curved in anger.

"I have you now," she said to no one in particular. "And this time I'm not going to be so nice."

She stood in the center of her quarters, kissed the palm of her right hand, and slapped it against the seat of her pants. In a bright flash, she vanished.

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Q appeared in a bright nothing. White for as far as the eye could see in all directions. As she stood there, she felt the presence before she saw it.

Q spun on her heels to suddenly face Captain Peter Koester, her Commanding Officer and closest friend. The Captain, barely conscious, was suspended in the air a few meters above the plain Q stood upon, almost as if hanging from an invisible cross, completely naked. His half open eyes slowly focused on her. "Pooh!" she said.

"Leave," Koester whispered. "Get out of here, Poe. You're giving in to him!"

Before her eyes, Koester suddenly turned literally inside out. Organs and bone glistened in the ethereal light, and Q fell to the 'floor' again in intense pain. The pain quickly subsided, and Q looked up to see Koester, again whole, suspended in the air, moaning softly.

"So, it does work both ways," a strong male voice said. "My hope had been to simply attract your attention. That I'm causing you such pain is an added bonus."

Q slowly stood and turned to face the familiar sounding voice. "You!" she said, her own voice like venom.

The man bowed formally before Q in mock politeness.

"It has taken me a thousand years, but I'm back!" he said. Q's eyes narrowed with anger.

"Your quarrel is with me, Quixote. Send him back," she said, indicating Koester.

"Yes, my quarrel is with you. But as you learned when you had me ejected from the *Continuum*, I'm not above using my friends." The fellow Q smiled evilly. "...Or yours."

"What do you want, Quixote?" Q asked.

"Why my dear Q, isn't it obvious? I've spent the last thousand years rebuilding my powers for one purpose and one purpose alone. To exact my revenge on you. It was by chance I learned of your.... 'special connection'... to this mortal. That was when I decided that rather than simply destroy you, I'd do to you what you did to me. Take away everything you have."

Quixote's smile grew. Q felt like simply punching out a few of his teeth, but knew how pointless the exercise would be. Quixote had grown powerful. Much more than Q ever believed he could a thousand years ago.

"I almost had you," Quixote chuckled. "You'd either tell your secret and lose all the respect and authority you spent two hundred years among the mortals building, a position no other Q has ever attained.... Or your bond-mate will die. Personally, I don't think you could live with either."

Q wanted nothing more than to place her hands around Quixote's neck and squeeze, but that likewise would have been useless. Then her attention was drawn by Koester's sudden scream.

"He's dying, you know," Quixote taunted her. "He can't take much more of this either. Make your choice. His life....? Or yours?"

The anger built up within Q, but she calmly, quietly responded, “I’m going to do what should have been done a thousand years ago.” But before Q could do anything, Quixote quickly waved his hands, and everything changed.

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Q’s eyes took a moment to adjust to the sudden and unexpected change in light. Now she was in actual sunlight, riding a dark brown horse, a helmet on her head, a shield with a large red cross emblazoned on it strapped to her arm.

Surrounding her, marching on foot, were gathered dozens, perhaps hundreds, of children, most dressed similar to what she now found herself wearing, little more than peasant clothing and rags. They carried various forms of bladed weaponry. All seemed to be of mid and eastern European heritage, and most were no taller than the petite Starfleet Officer.

Before she had a chance to question her unfamiliar surroundings, a large army of men came running toward her group. All were of eastern European and Middle Eastern background, mainly Ottoman Turks. Within moments, the two groups converged, and the massacre began.

With her intimate knowledge of history, Q quickly realized where she was. Or rather, when. The Children’s Crusade, Earth’s late 12th century.

Almost before she could realize it, one man broke off from the Ottoman army and lunged straight for Q. She jumped off the horse, slapping its flank to quickly move it out of the way, and drew her own short sword. She had no trouble recognizing Quixote beneath the heavy black eyebrows and beard.

If this is how it was to be, literally fight for the life and soul of Peter Koester, so be it. Q ran toward Quixote, her sword held high.

The two clashed, bare metal striking against bare metal as they parried and thrust, both beings looking for a weak spot, a dropped guard, to strike a blow. And around them the screams of children and men filled the air.

Q managed well against the physically larger Quixote, but the fallen Q was good. Maybe too good. Almost a thousand years of practice and rage came out as he pounded Q back further and further. Her arm ached from the strikes her shield was absorbing and it was obvious that Quixote would soon overpower her.

Then she fell, tripping over the lifeless body of another young Crusader, and her shield went flying across the battlefield. Quixote tossed his own shield aside and poised his sword to strike a killing blow, but could not help gloating at Q, now as helpless as he had been so long ago.

“It is almost too easy,” he mocked. “You didn’t even provide a challenge, Q. Now I will not only make you suffer, but your bond-mate as well, before I eliminate him.”

Q gritted her teeth, seeing her only opportunity, and flung the short sword at Quixote. The sudden movement caught the fallen Q completely by surprise, having expected Q to give up the fight, and he could not react quickly enough. The short sword embedded itself in Quixote’s stomach, and his face filled with both rage and pain. He slumped forward, but never struck the ground. In that instant, both he and Q disappeared in a bright flash.

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She was still outdoors, this time bright blue sky above her and the smell of an ocean filling her nostrils. Totally confused, she warily looked around at her surroundings. She sat on the teak-wood deck of an ancient steel warship in the same sitting position she had fallen into on the battlefield of far-eastern Europe. The ship was apparently at anchor in a large, enclosed harbor overlooked by high, green mountains to the north. An island covered by buildings and an airfield was close along the starboard side of the ship. She stood up, finding herself wearing bell-bottom blue trousers and a light blue dungaree shirt, a floppy and well worn white hat covering her long brown hair. She noticed a large clock face on one of the buildings on the nearby island, and hoped the time might give her some clue to her surroundings. The time was 7:54 AM.

Q looked out across the harbor at the other ships moored at various moorings. Based on the designs she recognized, she guessed they belonged to the American Navy, vintage somewhere between 1920 and 1950. The ship she herself was on, as well as the one behind and the few she could see in front were obviously battleships. As she walked closer to the harbor side of the ship, a bugle call sounded throughout the vessel’s public address system. Ignoring the music, she leaned over the port side railing trying to get better bearings on her location and could see a much smaller ship was tied alongside the battleship she was aboard. She read the name *Vestal* on its stern.

Standing straight again, she watched as another sailor in a dress white uniform carried a folded flag past her and attached it to the flagpole at the fantail of the battleship. As he attached the flag to the rope on the pole, the distant humming of engines could be heard rising over the mountains she had seen to the north.

Q felt a sinking feeling in the pit of her stomach, and it even seemed her symbiont twitched within her abdomen. As a bands music could be heard coming from the battleship aft of her, the national anthem of the United States, she watched as wave after wave of bright silver and dark green planes flew over the mountain tops, splitting into multiple flight groups which started heading into different directions to strafe, bomb, and torpedo the various ships and nearby airfields.

She did not have to see the large red circles on the attacking planes to know the date. Sunday, December 7th, 1941.

The Zeros, Vals, and Kates formed up, soon launching torpedoes and bombs into the ships below. Very quickly, the decks around her filled with other sailors shooting machine and anti-aircraft guns trying to knock the Japanese planes out of the air, and suddenly the air was filled with the huge concussion of an explosion as the *USS Helena* blew up, heavily damaging the *USS Oglala* next to it.

Q looked around, trying to spot her adversary, not knowing what to expect or where he would appear from, when suddenly the deck around her was strafed by bullets from a low flying Zeke. Q watched as the plane flew overhead. It took her a moment to realize that the markings on the wings were not the typical Japanese symbol of the Rising Sun. Rather, it displayed a large red O with a line coming off one quadrant of it, turning the red sun into a big red Q. When a sailor who had been manning one of the nearby machine guns at the aft edge of the deck suddenly jumped overboard into the oil slicked waters of Pearl Harbor to avoid the shots of another passing plane, Q quickly manned the gun, scanning the skies with her eyes, looking for that one particular Zero. She did not have to search long. Even as her long brown hair came loose when another nearby explosion blew her hat off, sending strands across her face, the Zeke turned and started a strafing run right toward her. Despite how tired she felt, barely able to stand, she stood her ground. The Zeke opened fire, machine gun bullets blasting wooden pockmarks out of the deck. She too fired her machine gun, tracking the bright green plane as it passed overhead and beyond. She felt a sting in her right leg and looked down to see blood welling through her dungarees. Likewise, as the Zero pulled up and banked to the left, smoke appeared from its engine cowling. Q continued to shoot, despite the pain which shot through her body, and soon the Zero began to lose altitude. Q smiled as she watched the plane dive toward the waters of Pearl Harbor, but suddenly both she and the plane flashed out of existence.

A moment later an armor-piercing bomb dropped through the forward deck of the ship she had been aboard, penetrating the ammunition magazine below, and within moments the *USS Arizona* lay on the muddy bottom, over a thousand of her crew still entombed below.

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Q realized she was half blinded in the subdued lighting of where she now found herself. Her arms were still held up in the air where they had held the handles of the ancient machine gun, but now they held some other piece of equipment against a wall. Her leg still hurt badly, and she was more exhausted then she had ever felt in her life.

As her eyes adjusted to the light, somewhat familiar surroundings focused into view. She found herself standing in the corridor of a starship, the design of which seemed to indicate a 2260's time frame. She looked down, expecting to see blood pouring from her bullet wound to her leg and was more shocked to find herself wearing a red miniskirted female Starfleet uniform, which confirmed her estimate of the date. Her leg was not physically injured despite the continuous pain. Q reminisced that she had not seen a uniform like the one she now wore in many years.

"Okay, where exactly am I now?" she whispered to herself as she started looking around for a place to sit and rest for a moment. She knew that if Quixote was true to form, she would not have long to rest. She did not wait long at all.

Almost immediately the klaxon sounded and red alert lights flashed all around the ship. A voice from the bridge quickly announced, "Battlestations! Battlestations! Klingon cruiser approaching off the port quarter. All hands man your battlestations!"

That one announcement told Q exactly where she was. At almost any other time before or after, the approach of a Klingon warship would elicit at most the raising of shields and a yellow alert. Only during the early stages of the war quickly cut short by the Organian Incident would full battlestations be manned. She was aboard one of the many ships near the Klingon border in 2267. Backed against the side of the passage, she warily eyed each person that passed, trying to spot the familiar features of her adversary within the crowd. Then the ship

shuddered. The shields were absorbing hits from the Klingon vessel's disruptors. From the feel of things it was apparent this was not a very large ship she was aboard, probably no more than a scout class, and the shields would likely quickly drop.

No sooner had **Q** thought this when suddenly an explosion occurred down the corridor, followed by a frantic announcement.

"Forward shields have failed!"

Almost before she could react, six red transporter beams materialized in the corridor. The Klingons had boarded.

The six Klingons stood for a moment, their dark complexions offset by the ship's lighting. As she had expected from the time period, these Klingons looked more human than people of the 24th century were accustomed to. Each had a bat'leth, and once they had gained their bearings, five ran off to do what Klingons like best. Hand to hand combat. The sixth, however, slowly turned to face **Q**, who had been behind his back, and smiled evilly at her.

Quixote.

The fallen **Q** stalked forward toward **Q**, the bat'leth in his hand raised in the en'garde position, but this time, unlike the Crusades or Pearl Harbor battle, **Q** was at a distinct disadvantage. She had no weapon at hand.

Quixote smiled wider, his dull and uneven Klingon teeth bared in an almost animal-like expression. **Q** backed slowly down the corridor, not taking her eyes off the approaching enemy lest he strike unexpectedly. Also unexpected was the materialization of a couple more Klingons directly behind **Q**.

Seeing one last desperate chance, **Q** kicked out with one high-topped boot, connecting squarely in the lower back of the nearest Klingon, sending him sprawling into the bulkhead beyond. She swung herself around, grabbing the downed warrior's weapon just as Quixote lunged, his own blade striking the deck at the exact spot she had been standing a split second earlier. **Q** raised her own bat'leth in a protective stance, not quite sure of the proper method of using the sword, and feigned an attack of her own.

Quixote was taken by surprise. He started retreating back, **Q** coming after him with blow after blow, pushing the former *Continuum* member along the curved hallway. Quixote made some half-hearted attempts to regain the upper hand, but it was obvious from his expression that his stomach hurt him as much as the agonizing pain in her leg hurt **Q**.

"More of a challenge than you planned?" **Q** mocked through gritted teeth. "I'll never let you beat me!"

Quixote laughed, then said, "Even if I lose every battle, I still win the war. With each passing moment, your precious bond-mate slips closer to death, thanks to you. Each moment is pure agony. His soul is mine. Face the facts, **Q**, you're beaten!"

Q refused to give-in, despite the fact she knew Quixote was right. She could feel Koester's life ebb through the bond the pair shared. That each pain she suffered, he suffered ten-fold. That her own exhaustion only drained him further. She had to end this soon or they would slowly drag each other down.

Feigning another attack toward Quixote's head, the fallen **Q** reacted exactly as **Q** had hoped. He raised his bat'leth high, intending to block her blade, when **Q** dropped to the deck, sweeping her own bat'leth through a low arc that met Quixote's knees. The taller adversary dropped, a scream of pain filling the corridor, as **Q** spun to a standing position and used the momentum of the bat'leth to raise it high and bring it back down. She stopped, the blade point mere millimeters from Quixote's throat.

"It ends here, Quixote," **Q** growled.

"Maybe it ends here," Quixote said with a grin. "But it is not even the beginning."

And before **Q** could react, as Quixote started to laugh, they both again disappeared.

* * * *

The two appeared in nothingness. But a totally different nothing than where **Q** had first confronted Quixote. No light. No life. No anything. Pure, simple nothing. She was dressed once again in her blue shouldered Starfleet uniform, he in a flowing white robe.

Both foes were exhausted. Both weak. Both on the verge of defeat, the edge of victory.

And through it all, she could feel Koester's life slowly ebb away, his heartbeat growing slower and slower.

"Where are we?" **Q** demanded.

"The very beginning of eternity," Quixote replied. "No distractions. No aid. No hindrance. Just you... and me. The way it was meant to be!" Quixote laughed and launched himself at her. The two grappled, lightning flaring from where their hands met.

“You may be omnipotent,” Quixote said through a clenched jaw, “but I’m stronger. He will die. And you will die with him.”

“If I die, I’m taking you with me!” Q replied. But inside she could feel herself weaken. There was not much more she could take, and Q knew Koester could take even less.

“Not likely,” Quixote said. “I can feel how weak you are. Your bond-mate is mere breaths from death. And you will follow him soon.”

‘He’s right,’ Q thought to herself. ‘I can’t take any more.’

As the two foes continued to grapple, Quixote forcing Q onto her knees, Q made the decision to give up and allow Koester to survive. As she was about to spread her arms to accept a death blow from Quixote, a more familiar voice sounded in her head.

‘Poe!’ And with a final pulse, Koester’s heartbeat stopped.

For a brief moment that could have lasted half a second or half a million years, the two foes paused. Then Quixote smiled. And drawing on a strength she had never felt before, Q stood, forcing Quixote first to his own knees, then flat on his back, crushing the being into a smaller and smaller mass. Quixote screamed in pain and horror, not believing what was happening. Nothing he did could save him.

“I should have done this a thousand years ago,” Q growled. “Saved Peter a lot of pain and myself a lot of trouble.”

Quixote suddenly realized his once immortal life was for the first time in mortal danger. He begged and pleaded for his existence.

Q held the tennis ball sized mass that was Quixote in the palm of her hand. She contemplated the mass.

“You wanted to live? Then you should have left me, and my bond-mate, alone.” And with a final effort she crushed the mass between her hands. The nothingness erupted in a blaze of light, energy, and matter. And with a satisfied smile, she rested a moment and watched the universe form around her in the aftermath of the Big Bang.

“Hmm.... Who would have guessed?” she said softly to herself.

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The flash appeared in the Captain’s quarters, dimming into the forms of Q and Peter Koester. The Captain, alive but unconscious, was dressed in the sleeping clothes he had been wearing when he was so rudely awakened. Q, herself very weak, placed Koester down on his bed. She looked at him a moment, studying the pained expression on his face. She leaned over, kissed him gently on the lips, then whispered into his ear, “No more pain.”

Q stood up, straightened her uniform, and leaning against the side of the corridor, slowly made her way to sickbay.

Back in the Captain’s cabin, Koester suddenly opened his eyes, stood up from the bed, and groggily pressed the intercom on his desk.

* * * *

“She can be so strange sometimes,” Kane muttered to himself. Suddenly the Exec was startled by the sound of the Captain’s voice.

“Mister Kane?”

Surprised, though pleasantly, Kane answered, “Yes, Skipper?”

“Exec, this ship is self cleaning. We do not need, want, nor require field days. If you schedule one more field day, I’ll secure your liberty for two months! I need my rest! I feel like I’ve been through hell and back!”

“Uh.... Yes, Skipper. Welcome back.”

“Back? What do you mean back? Look, just let me get some sleep, okay, Exec?”

“Yes, Skipper. Are you in your quarters?”

“That was a stupid question, Exec. Of course I’m in my quarters!” and Koester closed the comm circuit. Kane looked at Othello, who was manning the helm. The helmsman merely shrugged.

“Computer,” Kane said. “Is the entire crew on board?” A moment passed.

“All crew members are accounted for,” the computer responded a moment later. Kane shrugged his shoulders and tapped his combadge.

“First Officer to Ensigns Dar and Johnson. Call off your search. The Captain has been located.”

“Where was he?” Johnson asked.

“His quarters, apparently,” Kane responded. “Did anyone think to check there?”

“Of course,” replied Dar. “At least..... I think so....”

“Nevermind,” Kane sighed. “Just return to your regular duty.”

“Aye, sir,” both responded.

Kane moved to take the command seat when another voice sounded through the intercom.

“Sickbay to bridge. This is the EMH.”

“Go ahead, Doctor,” Kane responded.

“I just wanted to inform you, Commander Q has just reported to sickbay. She is weak but is now resting comfortably. She should be fit for duty again in a day or two.”

Kane’s eyebrows crossed, but he replied, “Thank you, Doctor.” Othello simply looked up from the conn and smiled.

The End