

Fleet Captain Peter Koester sat quietly in his quarters, reviewing the day's events. Pretty uneventful for the most part, but then with the horror of war lurking within the stars, Koester didn't mind occasional peace and quiet. And with the war against the Dominion going as badly for the Allies as it was at present, there may not be much 'peace and quiet' for a while.

Feeling somewhat hungry, Koester got up and walked over to the replicator in anticipation of a bedtime snack before joining his significant other, already asleep in bed. But just as Koester reached the replicator, he saw a flash of light out of the corner of his eye. Koester closed his eyes, hoping against hope that it was not who he suspected it might be.

"Peter. You must help me out with something."

Damn. There goes the evening.

Koester slowly turned around to confront his unwelcome guest. "Gee *Q*, you need MY help?"

"Why does she not like me anymore?"

Koester raised his eyebrows at the omnipotent annoyance.

"How should I know why *Q* doesn't like you, though I do have my suspicions? Why don't you go ask her yourself?" he said, gesturing toward the closed bedroom door.

"No," *Q* remarked with a look of disgust. "Not *Q*. I want to know why SHE does not like me anymore?"

"To which 'she' are you referring exactly?" Koester asked, confused.

"K. I mean your Lt Commander Karandanz."

"You mean Commander K'danz. And what could you possibly want with her?"

Q's face turned into a distasteful scowl as Koester corrected the name.

"And furthermore, WHY did she have to go and marry that half-breed mugato? And talk about adding insult to injury, she takes a Klingon family name." *Q* then sauntered over to Koester's sofa and flopped down, letting out a sigh. "Then to make matters worse, YOU officiated over the ceremony!"

Koester groaned, "*Q*, not to be rude, but get off my ship!"

"Oh yes, forgive me. I understand you have worlds to explore, diplomatic incidents to quell, and Dominion forces to subdue, but my problem is far more important than your petty human concerns."

"No, *Q*, your problem is not more important. At least to me."

Q leaned his head against the sofa and stared up at the ceiling. "But, you could help me if you really wanted to."

Koester began to rub his temples, attempting to subdue the headache that was already forming. He knew from reports, and from first hand knowledge, there was just no way to get rid of *Q* if he did not want to go.

"The last time you showed your face around my crew, my ship was blown up!"

"A small miscalculation on my part, I'll admit, but you're not going to hold it against me, are you, mon Capitan? After all, you got this bright, shiny, new ship out of the deal, did you not?" Koester banged his head against the replicator and sighed.

"What is it that you want *Q*?" he asked, his forehead creased with pain.

"I simply want to go and see a dear friend of mine. But, I am afraid she does not want me around anymore."

"Gee, I wonder why?" Koester's sarcasm seemed to fall short on *Q*.

"Really, Peter. I need your advice. What can I do to win her back?"

"*Q*, you cannot 'win' someone back you didn't have to start with. Besides, K'danz is happily married..."

Q let out an irritated breath.

"That is not what I mean. My intention is not to make her mine, but to..."

"Turn her into your play toy for your amusement like you do with everyone else?" Koester stated, cutting off *Q*'s sentence.

"I would never do something so lowly and crude as that, mon Capitan. Besides, she should be honored that someone such as I would even notice her at all."

Koester's headache was becoming more intense.

"*Q*, if you were anyone else, all I could say would be to go and talk to her. Tell her what is on your mind. If she does not want to see you, then you will know. However, you ARE you, so all I'll say is GET OFF MY SHIP! Now please, I would like to fix myself something to eat. ALONE."

Q's eyes sparkled mischievously and a smile began to spread across his face.

"I shall do it." And with a burst of light, *Q* was gone.

Space, the Final Frontier...
These are the voyages of the starship *Dauntless*!

Star Trek: Dauntless

“Q-story – Part 1” By CL Jacobs

Commander K’danz stretched and arose from her restful slumber. Dar was sound asleep next to her. No doubt an exciting evening in engineering on the night watch, K’danz thought to herself as she tiptoed from the bed and into the sonic shower. Just as K’danz had finished sweeping her light brown locks into a neat headband, her combadge sounded.

“Koester to Commander K’danz.”

“K’danz here,” came the security chief’s crisp reply.

“Is everything okay?” Koester asked.

K’danz was somewhat unsure as to how to respond to her commanding officer’s question.

“Yes, sir. Should it not be?”

“Commander,” Koester said, his voice sounding somewhat less concerned, “Could I see you in my ready room before you begin your shift?”

“On my way, sir. K’danz out.” K’danz then turned sharply and headed out the door to her quarters, wondering what it was that had the commodore concerned so early in the morning.

Commander Kane and Commodore Koester had just finished their morning coffee when the door chime to the ready room sounded.

“Come.”

Commander K’danz was practically running when she entered the ready room. With a quick nod to Kane, K’danz sat swiftly down in the chair next to him, practically missing the seat all together. Kane smirked with amusement and then walked over to the replicator to re-fill his cup.

“Well, I see we are high with anticipation this morning,” stated Koester, sounding uncharacteristically stern.

“Sorry sir. It’s just that I detected a bit of concern in your voice when you contacted me this morning and I wanted to make sure that everything was okay,” K’danz said, actually wondering to herself what it was that she had done wrong.

“Relax, Commander. It’s not you that has me annoyed exactly. I just wanted to make sure that your visit from *Q* did not turn into a disaster.”

K’danz sat up in her seat, a look of confusion on her face.

“The CMO never paid me any visit last night.”

Koester shook his head, realizing he needed to clarify.

“Not Commander **Q**. The entity *Q* from the *Q Continuum*.”

K’danz stared at Koester with an expression of shock.

“I never saw him,” she said. “I wasn’t even aware he was here.”

This time, it was Koester’s face that turned to a look of confusion.

“He didn’t try to speak with you?”

“No. Are you telling me you saw him? What did he want?”

“Apparently, he wanted to speak with you in regards to why...”

Koester was unable to finish his sentence before a blinding flash interrupted his thoughts. When the light had vanished, so had Commander K’danz.

“Oh, hell. Computer, locate Lieutenant Commander K’danz.”

“Lieutenant Commander K’danz is no longer aboard the *Dauntless*,” reported the computerized voice.

“This is ridiculous! How are we going to get her back?” asked Kane, his voice laced with concern.

“Well, Virg. It looks like we are at the mercy of *Q*. Again.”

“I’ll alert the bridge,” Kane stated as he was headed toward the door.

As Kane was walking out of the commodore’s ready room, Commander **Q** swiftly entered – brushing past Kane – an angry yet determined look on her face.

“Why didn’t you tell me he was here?” she said accusingly once the doors had slid securely shut.

“Because I didn’t want you getting all upset! And because I... hoped... he wouldn’t be sticking around. Besides, we have bigger problems now. He’s taken K’danz off the ship.”

Q’s hands began to tighten into fists, turning her knuckles white.

“Then there is only one thing to do,” she grumbled, beginning to move her hand in a familiar gesture.

“Q, no! I cannot risk having you leave the ship too. Besides, even you’re not sure what Q is capable of when he puts his mind to it. And besides, something in my gut tells me I don’t believe that he will hurt K’danz.”

“You don’t know that! He is an unpredictable menace, capable of wiping out whole civilizations at a moments whim, with no due regard to others. He is despicable! Let ME dosomething before it is too late! Or don’t you remember our last encounter?”

Despite Koester’s own doubts about Q, he somehow knew that in this instance, interference would be worse.

“I am asking you not to interfere, Poe. After what happened last time, I’d really prefer you kept your distance from him. Please. I don’t want to make it an order.”

Commander Q continued to pace around the room, her anger building with each step she took. Finally, she turned to face Koester.

“Fine! If that’s what you want, I won’t go after them. But if anything happens to K’danz...”

“Thank you, Poe.”

With a nod, Commander Q turned and walked out of the ready room. Koester could feel his own worries become heavier upon his shoulders as he stood in the middle of the room. He thought about Commander Q’s statement, saying to himself, “Q, you better not hurt her...”

* * *

Commander K’danz hung suspended above an endless ocean, with only Q’s firm grip to keep her from falling into the hungry waves below. The wind was cold and bitter as it whipped K’danz’s hair around her face. She looked up into Q’s face.

“Why am I here?”

Q let out a bored sigh and then said, “Is that anyway to say hello to a dear old friend?”

“You’re not going to drop me, are you?” K’danz asked, her voice starting to quiver as fear began to creep into her psyche. Q looked down at her, his expression similar to a father scolding a little child for playing in the street.

“Now, would I do such a thing?”

K’danz looked back up at Q, and for the first time, she felt scared of the god-like being. A god-like being that was not happy with her at this moment. Before K’danz could complete another thought, Q dropped her. K’danz fell, screaming the entire way down, until her body hit the frigid water. She floundered to the surface, trying to catch her breath, when a wave slammed into the back of her head, forcing her under. She fought to keep her head above water, but the waves were relentless. Her attempts to cry for help were muffled by the sound of water being sucked into her lungs. It was getting harder to breathe. The water now felt like knives stabbing her body. She needed to take another breath. There was no air, only water. It would be a cold death...

Suddenly, K’danz was back within the iron grasp of Q, suspended above the ocean. K’danz - dripping wet - shivered and looked at him.

“Anything you wish to say to me, my dear?” Q asked lazily.

K’danz found herself unable to answer, still shocked at the situation that had just occurred.

“Why are you being so cruel to me?” K’danz asked when she finally regained her voice, her bottom lip quivering from the cold. K’danz eyes started to sting from the verge of tears that were soon to follow.

“My, such a limited human response! I really expected more from you.” Q then let go and dropped her again. K’danz reached out to save herself, knowing that there was nothing she could do. And as she hit the icy water again, she felt her body flinch at the cold. Once again, she struggled to keep herself conscious and floating. Something began to grab onto her leg, pulling her under. K’danz flailed her arms wildly, but it was no use. Another gasp. Only water. Wait, there’s Dar! No. The Commodore? Then, only darkness...

* * *

K'danz eyes blinked open, bright light flooding her vision. She was warm and dry, the pain of the cold she had experienced being washed away by the light. K'danz turned her face away from the light and buried it in the warm blanket that hugged her body. She started to cry, vulnerable and unable to stop it. She felt the soft touch of a hand stroking her hair reassuringly. K'danz looked up to see *Q* looking down at her, his expression filled with concern and care. K'danz then leaned toward *Q*, allowing him to gather her in the blanket. There was soothing warmth and calm about him that seemed to chase away the bitter cold from her body. *Q* continued to hold K'danz until her body stopped shaking and her hand stopped trembling.

"Are you going to say you're sorry now?" *Q* asked quietly.

K'danz looked up at *Q* with a confused, shock and indignation on her face, as if for the first time realizing where she was.

"What am *I* to be sorry for?"

Q rose to his feet, pulling K'danz with him. K'danz looked around and realized that they were back on the *Dauntless*, standing in one of the empty cargo bays.

"Now what?" K'danz asked suspiciously.

"Since you owe me for saving your life, I propose we play a game. I'll even let you choose what game we play. If you win, I will forego the apology and simply chalk it up to your typically human bad manners. However, if I win, then you will have to apologize...my way."

K'danz suddenly felt a cold chill go down her spine as she remembered what it was that *Q* was making such a fuss about. If only she had not been so careless back then.

"Very well, *Q*. I agree to your little game. However, it will be a fair game with a referee."

"As you wish. I'll even let you choose the referee," said *Q* graciously.

"Then I choose Commodore Koester," K'danz stated.

Q rolled his eyes before answering, "Fine. What is the game?"

"Phaser-Tag. The object of the game will be to capture the others team members, numbering four on each side. Once all four team members have been captured, then the leader must also capture the other."

Q rolled his eyes again and yawned. "Why don't you just give up now? You are going to lose."

K'danz stood squarely in front of *Q*, meeting his gaze.

"There will be a few ground rules that we must agree to. That is, unless you plan on changing them as you go along?"

"The game shall be perfectly fair," *Q* stated with a sneer, and K'danz departed to report what was going on to her commanding officer.

* * *

Commodore Koester, his blood boiling, arrived with K'danz at Holodeck 3 a short time later, the two of them discussing the rules of the proposed game. K'danz then turned to *Q*, who loitered against the wall of holodiodes.

"There will be no cheating *Q*," K'danz warned, an accusatory look scrawled across her face.

"I promise it will be fair by your definition," the omnipotent being replied with a yawn. K'danz looked at *Q* suspiciously. He had to have something up his sleeve.

The holodeck program activated, and the empty room transformed into a wide open plain with various obstacles and constructs littered across it. Lt Commander K'danz took a position near her control panel, which directed the three members of her team. In the distance, K'danz observed a shuttlecraft approaching.

"That's odd." K'danz stated to herself. "I would think that *Q* would be slyer than that."

K'danz watched two teams members exit the shuttlecraft. They appeared to be of the Zalkonian race, humanoid with very distinct facial features. K'danz then issued a command to her team members waiting quietly in the brush to fire phasers at the two newcomers. Within seconds, both Zalkonians fell unconscious.

Despite the victory, K'danz felt as if it was an empty one. *Q* was making this way too easy. A silkily annoying voice filled the air around her.

"Pleased at how easily you are winning my dear?" *Q* asked

K'danz continued to watch her control panel, not wanting to be distracted by *Q*'s nonsense. Another shuttle was approaching the game area, however K'danz noticed that the shuttle was not preparing to land. Instead, the shuttle took an evasive position, bearing down on the coordinates which K'danz's team had been positioned. Before K'danz had a chance to warn her team members, a bright red beam came blazing down from the shuttlecraft. All three of K'danz's team members had been taken out in one fell swoop.

K'danz smacked the control panel. "This is ridiculous! I should have seen that one coming a kilometer away."

Another fire warning was alarming on K'danz's control panel. K'danz looked up in time to see that the shuttle was taking another aim, however this time it wasn't on a team member. K'danz jumped from the control panel as a red beam struck the entire board. The board went up in an impressive fireball, sending pieces of the panel everywhere. K'danz crawled to a nearby rocky area that provided some shelter from the shuttle's assault.

"Well, so much for fair," stated K'danz as she watched the scorched panel pieces rain down around her.

* * *

Koester continued to pace the corridor outside the holodeck, unable to believe that he had allowed *Q* and K'danz to commandeer the holodeck for one of the omnipotent being's silly games. And as for Commander K'danz...? Well, they would have a talk about this later. The commodore's pacing was interrupted by the sound of the ship's intercom.

"Commodore, message from Admiral Arrh, by way of the *USS Nautilus*," stated Lt Commander Phillip Winters from the bridge. "Shall I patch it through to your present location?"

"Please do, Commander," confirmed Koester as he moved toward the closest monitor screen. "Just what I need now," he thought to himself as he entered the security code. The distinguished round face of the Tellarite Admiral Arrh appeared on Koester's desktop view screen.

"Pete, you're looking a bit haggard. Don't tell me Starfleet is going to have to promote you again?" The admiral's eyes twinkled as he leaned back in his chair to await Koester's reply.

Koester sighed to himself. If only Admiral Arrh knew. "War never looks good on anybody, sir."

The admiral's playful smile disappeared and was replaced by a serious look as the Tellarite admiral took a deep breath. "Pete, the Dominion forces are gaining a new foothold past the front lines. The Cardassians have captured Pellios Minor."

Koester closed his eyes, remembering the words of another captain, and close friend...*we're losing the peace*. Koester then brought his focus back to the admiral.

"Does Starfleet expect to send a fleet from *Deep Space Nine* to drive them back?"

The admiral's expression became grave. "Starfleet doesn't want to risk a counterattack at this time. The sector is now swarming with Jem'Hadar attack ships."

Koester's gaze remained on the admiral. "I understand that the large Dominion shipyard at Torros III has been destroyed. That should slow them down a little."

"Unfortunately, it is going to take more than that. I need the *Dauntless* relocate to the Pellios sector and remain there in the event that the Dominion attempts to push further into Federation territory. I will be in touch. Keep yourself safe, Fleet Captain. Starfleet, out." The image of Admiral Arrh faded from the viewer.

* * *

Commander K'danz fired several shots at the shuttlecraft with her handheld phaser. The tactically placed shots were not having the desired effect.

"Figures! Leave it up to *Q* to give himself every advantage."

"Tsk, tsk, tsk. Is that the sound of a poor loser?" came *Q*'s response.

K'danz could feel her cheeks flush with anger. "*Q*! If you do not restore my control panel, I will..."

"You'll do WHAT?" came the thundering interruption. K'danz sunk lower into her shelter, knowing full well that it is impossible to hide from a creature with limitless powers. But then, K'danz was not even thinking clearly. No one in his or her right mind *threatens* an omnipotent being.

"Really, this is becoming quite dull. Let's spice it up a little."

Before K'danz had a chance to respond to *Q*'s comment, a bright light transported K'danz to a shuttlecraft. K'danz looked around and was suddenly caught off guard by the view outside the shuttle. It seemed she was no longer inside the holodeck. Through the viewport she could see the *Dauntless*. K'danz was unsure if she was still in the holodeck or actually outside the starship. She quickly sat in the pilot's seat and opened a hailing frequency as she checked to see what craft she was aboard.

"*Tarsus IV* to *Dauntless*."

"*Tarsus IV*, this is *Dauntless*," replied the voice of Lt Commander Winters. "Commander, you never received a clearance to launch. What is your current position?"

“Commander, I assure you I did not arrive in my current situation of my own free will. Request permission to land.”

Commodore Koester, after having ascertained the holodeck he was supposed to be refereeing was shut down, had rushed up to the bridge and was exiting the turbolift just in time to hear the exchange between K’danz and Winters.

“Transporter room. Lock on to the *Tarsus IV* and beam it directly to the shuttle bay,” Koester ordered as he started back toward the turbolift doors.

“Commodore, transporter controls not responding,” reported transporter chief Daniels hurried reply. “Manual controls are not functioning either.”

Koester turned, facing the view screen, which displayed the image of the Type-8 shuttlecraft *Tarsus IV*.

“Commodore, receiving a priority message from Starfleet Command. It’s Admiral Arrh again,” reported Winters as he turned toward Koester, awaiting his reply.

“Send it to my ready room, Commander.” Koester then walked with a quick pace through the doors. However, as the doors parted, he noticed a very inebriated Ensign Wallace sitting in his desk chair with a half naked female Andorian on his lap.

“Ensign! What is the meaning of this?” asked Koester agast, wondering to himself how Wallace and his... friend... had gotten into the ready room.

The Andorian giggled and slipped off the science officer’s lap as the man attempted to snap to attention. The maneuver failed and he fell flat on his face. Wallace then scurried up and attempted to walk out of the ready room, apologizing as he went.

“Forgive me, Captain Commodore, sir, but I thought that the entire snip...I mean...ship was allowed a little R&R. At least, that is what Admiral Pew, or Cue, or whatever he said his name was told me.”

“Ensign, I want you to report to sickbay immediately. After that, you are confined to quarters until further notice. Do I make myself clear?”

“Crystal, sir,” Wallace replied, clicking his heels and giving a half-hearted salute – almost falling off balance again – before he turned and attempted to head for the doors. It quickly became clear he was unable to move another step, however. The Scottish ensign quickly passed out, landing on the ready room’s daybed.

Koester hurried over to his desk and turned on his communications screen. A very annoyed Admiral Arrh filled the screen.

“Your response took longer than I had anticipated. I hope I am not interrupting anything.”

A brief image of his hands around the *Q* entity’s neck appeared in Koester’s mind before he responded to the admiral. “We are keeping busy, sir. Currently en route to the Pellios sector as you...”

“Fleet Captain, I need the *Dauntless* to head toward *Starbase 359* right away. Details will be transmitted once you have arrived.”

“Sir, I have a small dilemma on my hands at this time. While I’m sure you’re aware *Starbase 359* is in the completely opposite direction as the Pellios sector, it appears the omnipotent being known as *Q* has also somewhat... uh... commandeered the *Dauntless* for his... amusement.”

The Tellarite admiral’s face turned into a hardened scowl.

“Fleet Captain Koester, we are at war with the Dominion. A war that is not going in our favor at this moment. Whatever it takes, resolve your situation and get to *Starbase 359*. If you are not there by 1300 tomorrow, I’ll send the *Enterprise* after you! Do you understand, Fleet Captain?”

“The *Dauntless* will be there, sir.”

The connection was severed before Koester could even consider making another comment. The commodore then turned his attention to Wallace, who was now snoring quietly on his daybed. The Andorian was nowhere to be found.

“Koester to sickbay. I need two medics to report to my ready room.”

Moments later, the medics arrived, followed closely by *Q*, who gave Koester an ‘*I told you so*’ expression. But before she could speak, Commander Kane walked into the ready room as well, looking at the still form of Wallace with a puzzled expression on his face.

“What can I do for you, Exec?” asked Koester as *Q* and the medics loaded Wallace onto an antigrav gurney and pushed him out of the room.

“Sir, we have been getting reports from all over the ship in regards to crew members leaving their posts to... uh... party.”

“This has to be one of *Q*’s little games.” At Kane’s puzzled expression, Koester clarified, “The entity *Q*, not our chief medical officer. And this game is going to end immediately. We have been instructed to proceed to

Starbase 359 for what I assume is to be briefed on the next strike against the Dominion. What is the status of the *Tarsus IV*?”

“We have not been able to establish communication with Commander K’danz, however Lieutenant Johnson has been working on a way to restore control to the transporter systems.”

Koester nodded his approval, walking toward the doors with Kane following closely behind.

* * *

K’danz sat at the helm of the *Tarsus IV*, attempting to re-establish communication with the *Dauntless*, when suddenly there was a flash of light.

“You have lost my dear. Save what human dignity you have left and surrender.”

K’danz spun around in her chair to face her annoying adversary, who leveled a large phaser rifle toward her chest.

“*Q*, once again you have proven that you cannot follow the rules. Thus, our little agreement is null and void. Return me to the *Dauntless*.”

Q shook his head at K’danz. “Tsk, tsk, tsk. I have hardly broken any rules. I find it unusual for you to be such a poor loser. I would have thought better of you?”

“*Q*, by leaving the game area and transporting me out, you broke the rules.” However, K’danz’s words appeared to have fallen on deaf ears. *Q* started to pick lint off his imitation admiral’s uniform and nonchalantly flick them aside.

“*Q*! You are not listening to me!” stated K’danz, her voice raised in frustration.

The entity looked over at K’danz, his glare challenging. Another flash.

K’danz was now sitting in the captain’s ready room, across then desk from a very irritated commanding officer. *Q* was sitting on the couch in a Hawaiian shirt, sipping a drink from a coconut glass decked out with an umbrella.

“*Q*! What is the meaning of this?” came Koester’s angry sigh.

Q stood up and removed his sunglasses.

“Really, mon Capitan, you shouldn’t stress yourself out so much.”

Koester walked out from behind his desk and approached the reclining superbeing.

“*Q*, for the last six hours, you have had my crew in disarray trying to rescue K’danz when we’re supposed to be on our way to *Starbase 359*! I’ve had it! I want you to restore everything to normal!”

Q rolled his eyes

“Really, you humans are getting quite boring. Picard with his ‘Get off my ship, *Q*.’ Kale with his ‘Go play with the Romulans *Q*.’ Now you with a typical ‘Restore everything to normal *Q*.’ I’m getting quite tired of it all.” *Q* then walked over to where K’danz was seated, and folded his arms in front of him.

“Do not blame me, mon Capitan. I was only playing the game to K’danz’s standards.”

K’danz was no longer able to remain silent. The commander jumped to her feet.

“Commodore, I assure you that is not the case. You were appointed the referee! *Q* has clearly broken the rules of the game, thus I have won.”

Q huffed. “Oh, really? I took the definition of what is fair from your own puny human brain. As long as no one was hurt, it was acceptable.”

K’danz’s face began to redden.

“*Q*, you cheated. Plain and simple. Besides, you did not successfully capture me.”

“My dear, of course I did. I kept you in a shuttle craft for over six hours.”

“You were not supposed to leave the holodeck, yet you did. You cheated!” stated K’danz as she stomped around the ready room.

“Correct me if I am wrong, but so did you,” *Q* pointed out.

“What!?”

“You left the holodeck as well. Before I did, in fact.”

K’danz was about to burst. “*Q*! YOU transported me out of the holodeck. I had no choice!”

Koester held up his hands. “Uh... Excuse me...”

Q and K’danz ignored the commodore.

“And how am I going to prevent you from transporting me from one place to another when you insist on bending the rules?” K’danz continued.

“I said, excuse me,” interrupted Koester, still ignored.

“Hmmm, I see your point. Oh well, too bad. You lose,” said *Q*.

K’danz reached for a pillow from the couch and launched it across the room at *Q*, half startling the omnipotent being. He disappeared in a flash moments before the pillow hit the couch where he had been lounging, reappearing standing next to K’danz.

“How rude!”

“You cheated!”

“**EXCUSE ME!**” bellowed Koester.

Both combatants shut up and looked at the Commodore, who stood and adjusted his uniform.

“Despite the fact that I strongly disagreed with this little... game, I seem to recall that I was the one who was appointed as referee.”

“Really, Pete, you do not need to be so judgmental. Your services are not necessary.”

“But, I won!” blurted K’danz.

“Oh stop your babbling,” snarled *Q*.

“Stop acting like CHILDREN! BOTH of you!” Koester added, looking directly at *Q* when it appeared he was about to protest again. “And since you both appointed me as referee, it is MY decision who will be declared the winner of this game.”

“Me, of course,” stated *Q*.

Commodore Koester shook his head. “No.”

K’danz practically jumped for joy.

“Cheaters never win, *Q*.”

“Not you either, Commander.”

Q and K’danz both looked at Koester with a confused look.

“It is my decision that both of you are losers. Now *Q*... GET OFF MY SHIP!!”

Q looked at K’danz and then back at Koester.

“Really, mon Capitan, you sure know how to ruin everyone’s fun.”

“*Q!*” Koester snarled menacingly.

“Yes, I know. It is time for me to leave. For now...” *Q* then gave a wink to K’danz before disappearing in a flash of light. The commodore then turned to address K’danz.

“Commander, I understand that it is difficult to deal with a being such as *Q*,” he said, then mumbled just under his breath to himself, “Believe me, I understand.” He then took a step closer to his security chief and added, “However, it is time that I put my foot down. I am suspending you from duty and confining you to quarters for the next seventy two hours. If your record remains clean for six months following that, I will delete the suspension from your record. Do I make myself clear?”

K’danz nodded her head, followed by a shaky, “Yes, sir.”

“Very well. Dismissed.”

* * *

Three Days Later...

K’danz walked over to an overstuffed chair and sat down with a mug of hot chocolate with mini marshmallows, reviewing the latest news on the war front. A chime sounded at the door.

“Come.”

The door opened to reveal Commodore Koester. “Good evening,” he said. “I hope I am not interrupting.”

K’danz jumped to her feet. “Not at all, sir. Dar just left for his engineering watch a few minutes ago. Please come in. Can I get you something to drink?”

“No, I’m fine.”

K’danz then gestured for the commodore to sit down.

“Commander, I do not mean to pry into your personal life, but I am concerned about what this little game that you and *Q* participated in is really about. You and I have been friends as well as shipmates for years. I’m concerned about you.”

K’danz smiled. “He wanted me to go back with him. Another addition to his ...collection, I suppose.”

The commodore raised his eyebrow at K’danz, but it became apparent she would not explain any further.

Yet.

“Commodore,” K’danz said, expertly changing the subject. “I believe my confinement ended a half hour ago. Would you be up for a game of three dimensional chess in 10-Forward?”

The commodore got up from his seat. “After all that has happened, I’m surprised you’re in the mood for a game. But I hope you are in a mood to lose. I’m a pretty good chess player.”

K’danz laughed, catching up to the commodore as he strolled out the door.

The End