

Author's Note: This story takes place in the days following "All's Fair..."

Captain's personal log, stardate 52952.1:

As the year nears its close I've been reflecting back on all the major changes that have occurred in the last twelve months. It's been just over a year since my Intrepid-class Dauntless was destroyed and the resulting court-martial that followed. This was followed by the launch, shakedown, and quick commissioning of this new Sovereign-class Dauntless in the midst of the Dominion War and our many adventures since, the most recent of which has resulted in the loss of our starship's chief medical officer and my dearest companion, Commander Lotus Q.

Star Trek: Dauntless

"New Faces, New Places" By PJK and Christine Tromba

Fleet Captain Peter J. Koester, commanding officer of the *USS Dauntless NCC-75310*, rounded the corner of the corridor on deck sixteen and quickly approached the doors to sickbay, his intended destination. As the doors parted before him and he stepped inside the medical section, even after a whole year it still amazed him somewhat how similar this sickbay was configured compared to the facility on his previous command.

As his blue eyes casually glanced around, he noticed a crew member on one of the biobeds, a nurse checking him over with a medical tricorder. The commodore nodded at the member of the crew, drawing a slight smile, happy to be noticed by the ship's CO.

Stepping into the office of the chief medical officer, Koester was about to say something when he noticed the unfamiliar crewman sitting in the chair. Koester hesitated at the doorway until the man's blue eyes looked up at him and he said, "How may I be of assistance?" For a reason the commodore could not place, the man seemed very familiar.

"I'm looking for... uh... Counselor Sutherland," Koester stammered, unable to shake off the strange feeling.

"Counselor Sutherland is located in the surgical ward," the crew member with salt & pepper-colored hair informed Koester politely before returning his attention to the half-dozen padds spread out on the desk before him. Koester nodded his thanks, running one hand quickly through his own salt & pepper hair before walking over to the surgical ward of sickbay, throwing a curious glance back over his shoulder as he went.

The commodore found Sutherland working with the ship's EMH program, apparently inventorying equipment in the surgical suite. The Emergency Medical Hologram, whose original program had been salvaged from the previous *Dauntless* before its violent destruction the previous year, nodded in a very human-like gesture to Sutherland, informing her of the CO's presence.

"Captain!" the half-Betazoid woman exclaimed with a smile. "What brings you down to my sickbay?"

"I was... uh... coming to check and see how you were handling the transition... Adding the CMO's duties to your own responsibilities as ship's counselor?"

"I'm handling it pretty well, in my opinion," Sutherland said, walking over to a nearby replicator. "Coffee?" Koester nodded and Sutherland continued to speak after she ordered two drinks from the wall mounted unit. "At first the combined paperwork and scheduling between the two jobs was a touch overwhelming, but I've managed to pull everything together with a little additional help." The counselor handed the steaming cup of coffee to her commanding officer.

"I noticed you had a new face here," Koester said between sips of the strong brew. "I thought I had at least met and reviewed the service records of everyone on board, but I don't think I've ever met the crewman sitting in your new office."

"Sitting in my...?" Realization dawned on Sutherland's face. "Heck, did I leave him running?"

Sutherland rushed out of the surgical ward toward her new office. Koester and the EMH followed close behind. Koester arrived at the office doorway just in time to hear Sutherland say, "Computer, save data and end EMS program." He watched in amazement as the vaguely familiar-looking man behind the desk faded away.

"EM... S?" Koester asked in confusion.

“Emergency Medical Secretary,” Sutherland commented. “Designed and programmed by Lieutenant Johnson and myself. He’s the only way I’ve been able to keep up with the backlog of paperwork the two jobs have thrust upon me.”

“Clever, Counselor,” Koester admitted. “I have to ask though. Did you base the program’s design on anyone in particular? I thought he looked a little familiar.”

“Based on anyone?” Sutherland questioned back. “No. I just gave a description of what I needed to Mister Johnson and he compiled the program.”

Koester shrugged, and then said, “Well, I’m glad to see I’ve put the job of CMO in capable hands.”

Sutherland’s pleased smile turned into a sly grin as she added, “I’m actually glad you came down here, Captain. It saves me the trouble of sending for you. You see, while reviewing all the medical records, the EMS pointed out to me that you’re overdue for your annual physical.”

“Well... you know... it’s been a busy year, with the war and all,” Koester stammered, subtly moving toward the exit of sickbay. “I can see you’re terribly busy right now, Kethry, and I wouldn’t want to interrupt you. I can always come back another time, you know, when you’re less busy...”

“Now, now, Captain,” Sutherland said with a widening grin as the EMH blocked Koester’s retreat and she took out a set of medical testing instruments from a nearby supply drawer, a few of which seemed perhaps a century or two old. “You know I’ll always clear my schedule for you!”

The End