

In Ops aboard *Starbase 719*, Fleet Captain Peter J. Koester was passing the time waiting for an update on his starship's repair status by talking with his wife – chief of station security Michelle Petersen – near her post at the security console. After the *USS Dauntless*' recent encounter with a collapsed singularity, the starship had put in to spacedock for several weeks for extensive repairs, in particular to the vessel's warp drive.

“How much longer do you think the *Dauntless* will be in spacedock?” Petersen asked her husband. “I'm starting to get used to you being around when I get off duty.”

“That's what I'm here to find out,” Koester replied. “Commander Torres is supposed to have my ship's status report ready for me to review this morning, and...”

Koester was interrupted by one of the nearby turbolifts opening and the station's chief of operations, Lt Commander B'Elanna Torres emerging, carrying a large padd in one hand. “Fleet Captain Koester,” she said as she walked across Ops to join Koester and Petersen at the security console. “Here's the report from the Yard Master. *Dauntless* is ready for post-repair acceptance inspection.”

Torres presented the padd to Koester, who skimmed through the report displayed on the screen before placing his thumb on the reader to confirm receipt. He then said to Torres, “I'll have Commander Arbelo oversee the internal inspections. I'll be handling the external inspection personally.”

“I'll inform the Yard Master and Captain Pearson that you have received the Status of Repairs report and will commence your acceptance inspections presently,” Torres replied before turning and heading toward the wooden doors of the station's executive officer up the stairs to her left.

“If you want to hold off, I get off duty in an hour,” Petersen said to her husband. “I can join you for your inspection tour.”

“I appreciate the offer, Hun,” Koester replied. “But I actually look forward to doing inspections like this by myself.” When he noticed his wife's curious look Koester added, “As CO of a starship, it's hard to have much time alone. I like to use these external inspections as ‘Me Time’ when I can. Clear my mind of all the burdens of command as it were. But I'll be back in time for dinner.”

“Okay,” Petersen said, still clearly a little disappointed. “I'll see you this evening.”

Koester leaned forward and gave his wife a quick kiss before heading toward the same turbolift Torres had arrived in, tapping his combadge as he walked. “Koester to *Dauntless*.”

“Arbelo,” came the quick reply.

“I reviewed the yard report, Exec. We're all set to start acceptance inspections, both internally and externally,” Koester said.

“Very good. As previously discussed?” Commander Setton To'Lock Arbelo asked.

“Exactly, Exec,” Koester replied as he entered the turbolift. “I'll meet with you in three hours, my ready room, to compile results.”

“Aye, Skipper,” Arbelo replied as the turbolift doors closed.

Space, the Final Frontier...

## Star Trek: Dauntless

### “Recollections” By PJK

Fleet Captain Koester rode the turbolift down to the spacedock section of the starbase, to an area below the regular berthing slips that surrounded the hub of the station. Entering a small dressing and preparation space, called a White Room, he removed his uniform jacket and – with the help of a couple of the station crew – donned a Workbee flight suit. Less bulky than a full EVA space suit, it provided Workbee pilots minimal protection from the

vacuum of space in case of an emergency. He then entered the alcove where the nose of the small maintenance craft was docked and climbed into the cockpit, sealing the canopy and activating the systems as he waited for the thrusters to warm up. Once he verified the airlock door between the alcove and the White Room was sealed, he backed the Workbee out of its nest and tested the maneuvering system briefly before turning the nose of the craft toward his starship across the vast open space. The *Dauntless* had been moored close to the outer hull of the spacedock in the area designated the Repair Yard instead of its usual berth to facilitate the restoration of the ship's warp drive, so it would take several minutes for the small service craft to reach the starship. As the Workbee moved closer to the *Dauntless*, Koester's mind drifted back to the day he first saw the Sovereign-class starship with his own eyes...

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Commodore Peter J. Koester took one more look at the petite brunette still asleep in the bed, laying on her side facing away, smiling slightly as his eyes followed the row of spots curving down the side of her neck and across her shoulder and disappearing beneath the light sheet that covered her body before finishing putting on his uniform. He moved around the other side of the bed, pausing to look out the window of his temporary quarters before finally putting on the grey-shouldered duty jacket. It looked like it was going to be another hot day outside. But, he thought to himself, it was almost always a hot day on Vulcan. The sound of sheets rustling drew his attention back to the bed, where his now-former assistant chief science officer was just waking up. Opening her eyes, she noticed Koester standing by the window and pulled aside the sheet, revealing that – like he had been before he showered and started getting dressed – she was wearing nothing underneath.

“You're up early,” she said as she got out of bed and moved toward him, the pair exchanging a tight hug and passionate kiss.

“Big day ahead of us, *Doctor*,” Koester said, emphasizing his lover's current title. “I have to meet with Captain Kale aboard the orbital office complex at 0830 before I make my initial inspection tour of the new ship. Want to come?”

Q's smile slipped slightly as she said, “Not to the meeting. But I'll join you for the inspection if that's alright. Besides, it'll give me time to get ready.”

“Like you actually need time to get ready?” Koester questioned. “All you need to do is slap you hand on your...”

“You know I try not to rely on my powers unless it's absolutely necessary,” Q scolded. “After all, too much hand slapping and someone could accidentally catch on to my little secret.”

“Yeah, I know, Poe,” Koester remarked. “In that case, meet me on the office complex, 0930 hours.”

“I'll be there,” Q replied before heading toward the sonic shower in the next room. Koester paused again to admire the view as Q walked through the door.

Two hours later, Koester walked down the narrow corridor from the shipyard administrative offices aboard the orbital complex to where the combined transporter station and docking module was located. Q, dressed once again in her Starfleet uniform, was already waiting for him near the airlock door of one of the available travel pods the shipyard staff used to move between the various orbiting elements of Starfleet Yards – Vulcan, also known by its official name – 40 Eridani A Starfleet Construction Yards.

“We still have a little time if you want to go and say hi to Captain Kale,” Koester suggested, pointing his thumb back in the direction from which he had come.

“I don't think that would be such a good idea right now,” Q remarked before stepping into the travel pod. Koester followed her in, activating the control to close the double doors and start the pod's systems. Koester then took a standing position next to Q right up behind the large forward window which afforded a spectacular view of the reddish-orange surface of the planet Vulcan far below as well as the half dozen drydocks and several other starships in various phases of construction. With the Dominion War still at its height in spite of Starfleet's liberation

of the Bajor Sector, the shipyard was extremely busy with repairs to starships that had been damaged in battle as well as new construction to replace Starfleet's heavy losses.

Koester released the pod's docking latches and started deftly maneuvering the small vessel through the heavy traffic of Workbees carrying parts and equipment to various points around the yard, other travel pods with shipyard personnel moving between work assignments, and small shuttlecraft filled with Starfleet personnel traveling to or from various ships throughout the yard.

"Where's our ship?" Q asked, her brown eyes looking around at several drydocks within view.

"The new *Dauntless* has been pulled out of drydock and is moored alongside Dock 7," Koester replied, referencing the small three-dimensional chart of the shipyard displayed on the pod's control console and maneuvering toward where their new command was located. "It was funny. Captain Kale was still referring to the ship as the *Illustrious* during our meeting. I kept having to correct him. He said most of the yard workers still call it that too, in spite of Starfleet re-designating the ship *Dauntless* weeks ago after the Board of Inquiry ended."

"So, do you think you're ready for a Sovereign-class starship, Pooh?" Q asked.

"The Sovereign-class may be a little bigger than what I'm used to aboard an Intrepid like the old *Dauntless* was, but I really don't think it will be all that much of a difference."

"It's not the size," Q said. "It's the prestige. After all, the Fleet Flagship is currently a Sovereign-class ship."

"I know. I just can't think of any ways it really makes that much of a difference. After all, I served briefly aboard a Galaxy-class ship, comparable in size to the current Sovereigns if not bigger, and they were believed to be the end-all of Starfleet design until they were surpassed by ships like the *Enterprise-E*."

"Pooh-Bear, dear," Q said in a mildly condescending manner, "I think you're in for a surprise. I just hope you're up for the challenge."

"Personally, I think it was more of a challenge letting our relationship move up to the next level," Koester said teasingly. "What made you kiss me like you did that day the Board of Inquiry ended anyway?"

"I decided it was time. ...While we had the time. Who knows where the future is going to lead us?" Q replied cryptically before pulling Koester toward her and planting a quick kiss on his lips. Koester looked at Q as he straightened back up, wondering if she actually knew more than she was letting on before adjusting the pod's attitude once more and starting his maneuver around the edge of Dock 7. He was about to inquire further when, seconds later, they were face to nose with an immense starship. The hull gleamed in the light of the star 40 Eridani A, and workmen in EVA suits were visible moving along the upper primary hull, still painting the vessel's new name above the building-sized hull numbers *NCC-75310*. Q looked at the expression on Koester's face and smiled knowingly as his mouth dropped open and his eyes looked almost lovingly at his new command.

"Impressed?" she asked.

"Poe, I've read every tech manual I could on the new Sovereign-class design since we received our official orders two months ago. It still didn't prepare me for... for this!"

Q moved closer to Koester, putting her left arm around the taller man's waist and leaning affectionately into his chest and shoulder. "Welcome home, Pooh-Bear," she said.

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As the Workbee carrying Fleet Captain Koester moved closer to the *Dauntless*, the pilot suddenly had an idea. Altering his approach, he maneuvered to the right, aiming almost directly toward the closed spacedoor that separated the dock from open space beyond the station. Within moments the starship was no longer visible through the service craft's canopy.

"Spacedock Control to Workbee Delta-Niner-Zeta," said a concerned sounding voice from the service craft's communications system. "You have veered off course. Is there something wrong?"

Koester activated his transmitter and replied, "Negative, Dock Control. Just want to make a bow to stern approach for my first inspection run."

"Roger that, Fleet Captain. Just be aware of any traffic in your area of the dock. Control, out."

“Roger, Dock Control. Will comply. Bee Delta-Niner-Zeta, out.”

Koester timed his approach carefully, moving within only a few dozen meters of the outer spacedock hull before slowing the Workbee to a complete stop. He then spun the craft on its Z-axis one hundred and thirty five degrees to the left. As planned, he was directly facing the bow of his ship, the same view he had that first morning he had seen her. As expected, a tingle of excitement ran up his spine at the sight of her. He smiled, unable to prevent the emotion he was feeling from showing.

After spending a short time enjoying the sight of his starship, Koester activated the Workbee’s forward thrusters and commenced with his inspection.

*To Be Continued...*