

**Disclaimer: I own nothing related to or part of Star Trek.**

## **The Adventures of Augment Gothic**

### **Chapter 27**

#### **The Hill Provinces. Bajor.**

The fifteen Cardassian soldiers in their makeshift camp below were drunk, literally on kanar in those stupid-looking curvy bottles, and metaphorically, on their own self perceived power over the helpless native population of Bajor.

We were in the middle of nowhere in this desolate province and these Cardassians were far from the protections of their base, but also far from the watchful eyes of their commanders, who, *officially*, weren't supposed to allow this kind of thing to happen, but who could claim ignorance of their men's' bad behavior. Of course, most commanders otherwise supported their men letting off some proverbial *steam* as long as they didn't know about it. Being stationed on Bajor was a shit job in their minds, so why not take a little local primitive pleasure from the helpless native populace.

Lying on the ground naked, covered in bodily fluids and showing acute signs of mistreatment were five Bajoran girls, probably ranging from 10-15 years old, some quietly sobbing to not attract their rapists' attention and some catatonic from the gang rape that they had experienced at the hands of these Cardassian monsters. The same monsters who were now cheering and jeering and dancing around their little campfire while drinking their thick, syrupy kanar and listening to some god awful Cardassian music.

These little girls had likely been abducted from their homes in a nearby village, their parents more than likely murdered to keep the noise of their protests down and remove any potential witnesses to their crimes, though they'd likely suffer little consequence even if they were caught. Once these monsters had extracted every bit of sick pleasure they could out of their unwilling flesh these little girls would likely be shot in the head and dumped in a shallow grave, or vaporized entirely once they were done with them.

Even in the unlikely event that they survived this night, they would have nothing to go back to. Most in their unfortunately common situation committed suicide to escape this wretched life, in the hopes to be reunited with their family and the Prophets. It was all so depressingly common. Some, however, took that pain and rage and hate and fanned it into a burning inferno and joined the Resistance, becoming some of the group's most ruthless and bloodthirsty killers. You could always tell who those were.

It was yet another tragic bit of evil perpetrated on a planet and a people that had thousands of similar (though forgotten) stories over the last fifty years.

What they didn't yet realize was that by accident, or fortune, or the divine meddling of the Prophets, a human Augment and his team, who had been scouting out the area for an attack on a supply convoy that would be coming through these hills in a few days, had stumbled upon their makeshift camp in the middle of nowhere. Once upon a time that team had stepped in, despite the risk to the upcoming mission, and showed these men who the real monsters were.

Once upon a time...

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Looking through a rifle scope had a funny way of narrowing your perception of the world and not necessarily in a good way, which is exactly why a spotter was almost always paired with a sniper in modern 21st century warfare. That narrow view had to be paired with a wider view for the sniper's safety and to keep the big picture in mind. Thankfully, the exographic targeting sensor wasn't a fixed optical scope with such a narrow and unchanging view of the world that blinded the sniper to nearly everything else around them. With a bit of clever manipulation, you could change the view in a myriad number of ways that wasn't limited by direct line of sight.

My thumb reached up to the large semi-depressed wheel, outlined in pale white glowing radiating lines, that would interact with the functionality of the targeting sensor which was currently mounted on the upper rail of my prototype rifle that I had painstakingly designed. The wheel felt good under my thumb with an anti-slick rubberized coating and raised lines. Each minor rotation of the wheel, or button press, could zoom in or out or rotate the view entirely in 3-dimensional space, providing a little silent haptic feedback, like a click, with a bit of vibration to indicate that I was actually doing something.

I wasn't sure what to call it. A multi-wheel? Settings wheel? Selector wheel? Targeting wheel, considering that's what I was using it for at this moment? Whatever, I'd decide later.

The doing *something*, in this case, was manipulating the smallish holographic view from the targeting sensor, currently displayed above my rifle about where I'd be looking into an optical sight. I was currently zooming in and out on my targets, rotating around the makeshift campsite, the glowing red reticule in my eye providing copious amounts of sensor data and blinking when a target body was in my sights.

To keep myself in that cold detached state necessary for the hunting master sniper to succeed, I carefully avoided looking at the naked Bajoran girls I felt pity for, though I was aware of their position in relation to my targets, currently off to the side of their bacchanal.

'Now, which low hanging fruit should I pluck first?' I thought with a grin, before I decided the passed out drunk Cardassian, lying face up on the ground and away from his fellow rapists, would be an ideal target.

Sighting in on his forehead from above him, I let out an unexpected chuckle at the sheer nostalgia the ridiculous sight brought me. This Cardassian obviously had some immature friends, just like I had once had and had served with in Iraq and Afghanistan, who never could resist drawing stupid shit on the face of their drunk-off-their-ass unresisting friend's face with their equivalent of a marker. The Resistance had their fair share of jokers too.

The pictures of several dicks drawn on the man's face would have been pretty funny in virtually any other situation, but this wasn't exactly a night of harmless fun, like binge drinking in a barracks made of particle board in Iraq while we alternated lamenting on missing home and celebrating our awesome masculinity...and how *badass* we were. No one was hurt there except ourselves.

Letting out a half breath and going completely still, I slowly, gently, *almost caressingly*, squeezed the trigger, just like I had once been taught so long ago. It wasn't strictly necessary given how my advanced rifle actually worked compared to a traditional rifle from my time, but that was no reason to abandon the fundamentals.

Sitting in a dilapidated house, five miles away from this 'rape camp', a tritanium bullet was shot from the shortened rifled barrel of my prototype weapon, gyroscopic forces stabilizing its flight, when a microtransporter locked onto it, dematerialized it, and then materialized it again inches away from the unsuspecting forehead of a passed out drunk rapist Cardassian soldier. The jacketless supersonic tritanium round, having lost none of its velocity during transport, continued on its flight path to blow apart the upper half of the Cardassian's head like an overripe melon dropped from a third story window. Its journey was only stopped by the hard ground of Bajor, where it buried itself deep in the native soil before being forced to a stop.

"One shot, one kill," I whispered unnecessarily, given I was five miles away from my target, before my thumb went to the targeting wheel and zoomed out, satisfaction clear in my voice.

My target's out-of-the-way location and the incredibly loud music meant my kill had gone unnoticed for the moment, which was definitely a stroke of luck since the rifle's loud retort was transported as well. This moment, for some reason, distinctly reminded me of a sniper scene from some WW1 or 2 movie that I had seen once in my old life.

My rifle had a removable five round magazine built-in about where you'd expect it on a traditional rifle. The quiet whine of a Federation style micro-replicator signaled another tritanium round had been created and materialized automatically in the corresponding slot on the bottom of the magazine. During the design phase, I came to the conclusion that it'd be much more efficient to have a magazine of ready-made rounds rather than have one replicated after each shot.

Unfortunately, there were no more easy to kill, kind of out of the way, passed out drunk Cardassians to kill. Fortunately...well, nothing about this situation was fortunate...but one of them had decided to pull one of the girls off the side of the clearing for a private rape and was

raping her doggy style, which meant the girl would be harder to accidentally shoot as the man's body was higher than hers. His death just became my first priority.

Lining up my next shot, I twisted the wheel to angle the shot up and away from the struggling girl and pulled the trigger. The tritanium round went through the back of the Cardassian's head like a hot knife through butter. The nearly headless Cardassian dropped onto his victim and poured a waterfall of blood on top of her, who, unsurprisingly, screamed her motherfucking head off in shock. I couldn't blame her, though it did, unfortunately, alert the rest of the camp to something going on. She didn't look older than 10.

Quickly lining up new targets, I targeted down and into the chest of a Cardassian who had fallen to the ground in surprise at the scream, and fired. Then another who was going for his weapon. Then another and another who had gotten hold of their weapons and were firing indiscriminately and blindly into the surrounding woods and hills.

Some had even taken off, running away from the battle when they panicked at having no idea where they were being attacked from. I gleefully shot those in the back, but missed on several occasions as they tripped over roots or dodged around trees in an unpredictable manner and I was forced to carefully adjust the targeting. Transporting was done between two fixed points, but my ultimate target was moving. In those cases, I had to project and predict the flight path of my bullet once the transport was finished since it was easier to fire quicker that way than zoom in on the specific target.

Before a minute had passed, all fifteen Cardassians were dead or dying and I let out a sigh of satisfaction. All of the Cardassians were dead, though 2 of the 5 Bajoran girls were dead as well. While I had quickly dispatched any Cardassians who got the bright idea to take a hostage as a shield against their unseen attackers, the blind firing on full auto by these panicked and terrified soldiers had resulted in some friendly fire deaths, which was great for me, but also the deaths of two of their victims in the chaos.

That was not exactly ideal, but this was a learning experience, after all, in a no stakes environment. I had already learned several valuable lessons on how best to use this weapon.

"Computer, pause program," I commanded aloud, in the privacy of my own holodeck on my private island, which instantly paused the prototype weapon field testing I was doing. "Give me a recliner to lay down in."

I dropped unceremoniously with a groan into this decadent and ultra-comfortable recliner and propped my feet up. The holographic copy of my prototype weapon lying across my lap.

This entire fucked up scenario had not been woven whole cloth from the depths of my fucked-up imagination, but was actually based on a real experience that Kira, Lupaza, and I had had during our preparation for the supply convoy mission. That mission felt like it had happened a lifetime ago. I obviously was not alone during that encounter, or had this weapon in my possession, but I

felt like it'd make a good testing ground for my new weapon. I was an excellent holo-programmer, after all, so why not use real missions from my past to test it out as well as learn how to best use this new weapon. My neural interface helmet had been ideal to get all the details I remembered into the new program.

“Computer, begin continuous record dictation, titled ‘Field Test 1 using TR-116 functionality only with micro-transporter displaced targeting using exographic targeting sensor,’” I ordered, before I began recording my thoughts and impressions from this field test. “Overall, I’m very pleased with my new weapon and its displaced targeting functionality. The advanced chemistry of the tritanium bullet propellant coupled with the advanced rifle butt with built-in inertial dampers meant recoil was extremely low. Perhaps too low. At times I was uncertain if I had actually successfully fired at all. Recommend adjusting damper to allow a bit more recoil to be felt by the user to indicate successful firing.”

“Without loud music at the destination, the gunshot, sound and all, would likely have alerted my targets. Perhaps I can slow down the fired bullet to subsonic velocities to minimize retort or perhaps adjust transport to eliminate the noise? Or add some kind of noise canceling function? Perhaps a suppressor equivalent of some sort before transport? More research is required on how to go about that, and ultimately how it would lower target damage,” I spoke aloud with my head comfortably back on the recliner, looking up at the ceiling while in deep thought, knowing the computer would record everything I said.

“The multi-wheel or targeting wheel or whatever I’ll come to call it, was easy to use. The anti-slick rubberized coating on the surface, the ridged lines, the haptic feedback all worked very well under these circumstances for some smooth operation and control of the exographic targeting sensor. That said, if I hadn’t experienced the perfection of mental control via the neural control interface on my ship, I wouldn’t realize how awkward this style of interface is in comparison,” I complained with a sigh. “Recommend, when actually possible, integrating the targeting information into the HUD of the armor with direct mental interface through implant, maybe?? Direct mental interface would allow for much more seamless control of the targeting sensor, especially when my targets realize that they’re being shot and start erratically running all over the place.”

“The range was good. Displaced targeting and transport at five miles range proved to be no issue with onboard sensors and the Collector power cell to meet the power demands. An aerial drone, with onboard sensors and relay, could drastically increase the range of this targeting. The hidden subspace link from the Section 31 probe would be a good start,” I mused aloud, glancing up at the ceiling of this shell of a home I was in, before I had an inspiration. “The Minoasian database would certainly provide some advanced drone technology that could be paired well with the targeting sensor.”

“In the end, fifteen targets required twenty-four bullets to eliminate. Dynamic target acquisition, once my targets became aware that they were being hunted and began running/moving in an

unpredictable manner, required continuous adjustment with the multi-wheel which slowed things down considerably and accuracy dropped accordingly. Direct mental control of targeting would certainly help, but perhaps there is a way to write an auto-targeting program, akin to the way a starship's computer automatically calculates targeting solutions? The auto-targeting program could directly interface with the exographic targeting sensor in a kind of 'auto aim assist' like you'd see on a video game on easy mode," I speculated aloud. "That shouldn't be that hard. Those programs already exist on starships and this kind of targeting would be much simpler than that. Plus, this is a software upgrade, rather than hardware."

I closed my eyes for a moment.

"It has occurred to me that I've left a lot of fucking physical evidence behind. A few might be mangled beyond recognition, but I bet you anything that a lot of those bullets are relatively intact and just lying around waiting for someone to analyze this scene of carnage after the fact."

"Computer, provide me with the sensor output of a Federation tricorder, and several species' equivalent device, of the campsite."

With that command several floating screens appeared in midair that I manipulated.

"Just as I thought," I reported with a sigh. "It's patently fucking obvious that tritanium bullets were used given how many stayed completely intact in trees, in the ground, in bodies, etc. Given how few species use projectile weaponry anymore and how poorly kept secret the design for the TR-116 rifle was in the Federation, it'd take next to no time at all to figure out exactly what kind of weapon was used. Perhaps I should add a gram of molecular solvent to the internals of the tritanium round? It shouldn't be too hard to design it to release the solvent upon impact to disintegrate the bullet so as to leave nothing behind. It'd probably even do damage to the target if the kinetic impact didn't do the job on its own, either through poisoning or damage to tissue. Interesting. Recommend research on this area and potentially other bullet designs; why stick with just a hunk of metal? Is antimatter replicable? I don't actually know, though I doubt it. A microgram of anti-matter could result in a huge explosion. Perhaps more feasible explosive type ammunition could be designed?"

"Moving on, while the micro-transporter signature is extremely faint, in an environment like this with no other signatures to drown it out or cover it up, it's detectable. The signature might be lost if enough time passes, but a clever investigator could figure out that there were multiple transporter signatures present. This trick only works if people don't realize I'm doing it, otherwise they'll come up with countermeasures. Recommend looking into ways to hide the transporter signature, maybe with a radioactive pulse, or saturating the area with a more traditional signature, like multiple nadion or disruptor discharges?"

"Guess it's back to the drawing board for now, though more field testing, under different combat conditions, would provide more useful data," I said while getting up from my recliner.

"Computer, end dictation."

It was time to do more CQC work and test this rifle out in a more traditional manner.

Gripping the rifle close to my shoulder, it felt very comfortable. I had a large hole for my thumb, an enclosed trigger, and a comfortable and secure grip for the rest of my hand. My left hand comfortably held the long 'barrel' of my rifle. The top portion was where the tritanium bullets were discharged from, but the bottom part of the barrel was longer, and had an attached, triangular emitter module with a circular aperture in the middle that would allow me to fire antiproton, nadion, or disruptor style pulses or continuous beams.

I certainly didn't have a badass weapon the last time this situation had occurred, but I found myself rather excited to do it again. Killing rapist Cardassians and sending them to their equivalent of hell was always a joy in itself. And I found myself curious if I could rescue the kidnapped Bajorans by myself this time with no casualties with this far more advanced weapon in my hands.

Kira, Lupaza, and I had managed to rescue all the Bajoran girls the last time around. Let's hope I could do it again, this time all by myself.

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### **Section 31 Ship. Name Classified. Bajoran Space.**

Yet again, I found myself summoned aboard this cloaked Section 31 ship and in the office of Sloan, my enigmatic handler, and the highest 'ranked' member of Section 31 I had ever met. From the show I knew that at least a few admirals were involved with or worked in coordination with Section 31, but I had never met any operative or person who was higher in the organization than Sloan. Talk about clandestine. Even the organization's command structure remained a complete mystery to me, even with all my extra temporal knowledge to call upon.

I subtly took a deep breath, while my eyes scanned the room.

Yet again, I noted and was unsurprised by just how neat Sloan's office was, and how utterly lacking it was in the form of any personal touches that suggested connection, even though I knew for a fact that the man had a wife and child somewhere in the vastness of the Federation. There were no decorations or artifacts of his career, no pictures of family or friends, no awards or commendations, nothing to indicate a hobby, and of course no fish tank with a lionfish languidly floating around. Not a hint could be found anywhere in the room as to who this man was beyond his job and even that was largely a mystery. I had to wonder if Sloan even had a personality of his own, or if he considered even the hint of one as a possible vector for subversion and attack and thus was not allowed.

If I didn't know any better, I would have assumed that this was a guest office that he had just started using or only rarely used, but my nose told an entirely different story. The scent of him in the room was present and strong, present even in a way that a starship's environmental life support systems could not entirely erase.. He had inhabited this office for weeks or months, at

least. That made sense to me. With the Collector threat on everyone's minds, he'd be more effective if he stayed mobile and ready to jump onto the scene at a moment's notice.

Rather than wait to be invited to sit I simply sat down on the guest chair facing Sloan and patiently waited for him to start talking. Even his chairs were boring and not very comfortable; if there was a Federation standard for boring office chairs, this would be it. I had the sneaking suspicion that it'd probably be the first replicator pattern under 'starship office chair' in the Federation database.

"I have a mission for you that I think you'll like," Sloan said without preamble or greeting. "One suited to your unique interests and talents."

I quirked an eyebrow, "Really? I'm surprised there is a mission that you want me on that would be worth the trouble you went to explain my absence from the station. I'm not exactly a mysterious and unknown Resistance fighter anymore who can go missing for a few weeks with no one batting an eye. As a well-known public figure now it's rather hard to do my own thing and leave the system."

"The resource expenditure was deemed acceptable," Sloan answered succinctly, before the man picked up a standard Federation datapadd from his desk and passed it to me with little in the way of fanfare.

I quickly scanned the mission details with all the speed an Augment of my caliber was capable of. The information it contained was intriguing and disturbing to say the least. A secret Cardassian military base not far from Bajor, one unknown to Bajoran intelligence, had recently taken delivery of biological sample containers filled with an engineered bio-weapon. That was bad enough, but the virus that made up this weapon was very familiar to me. Section 31 was exceedingly thorough and very good at what they did so I immediately recognized the genetic sequence that they had appended to the intelligence report.

It was near identical, as best as I could tell, to the disease/sickness which the Cardassians had used on the Bajorans in the ghetto towards the end of the Occupation. Near identical, in genetic terms, though, could mean a world of difference and my studies hadn't really delved into this area of knowledge all that much. The spoon-heads had unleashed that virus as a test upon certain parts of the planet and then had offered a cure to any Bajoran willing to enter an off-world work program. It had been purposely designed to appear like a natural illness, but it was anything but. Had the Occupation gone on longer, I suppose it would have been deployed more widely but they just hadn't had the time and I had killed the project's main researcher and stolen much of his data.

Of course, the Bajorans I'd encountered hadn't realized or known that the virus was anything but natural, and the Cardassians hadn't tried that trick too often during the testing phase. Most of the test subjects had either died from the virus itself or been eliminated afterwards in various ways to keep the news from getting out. The version of the virus that I had encountered had been far more deadly than projected, and thus its artificial nature was more apparent.



The Cardassians had, understandably, also been rather concerned that the virus could mutate to become infectious to the Cardassians themselves. Maybe they were comfortable now with the data that they had collected and had successfully altered the virus to mitigate that risk? Or perhaps the lure of the wormhole itself had overridden their common sense and they were willing to bear the risks of discovery and the infection of their own people. Maybe a few Cardassian deaths, people of little to no importance, of course, would actually sell the lie. Nothing would surprise me at this point. Desperate/greedy/jealous people did crazy shit at the best of times.

"We have received reliable intelligence, confirmed by multiple independent sources and assets, that the Central Command intends to deploy this bioweapon on Bajor, infecting the population with this disease in the next few weeks," Sloan informed me in the same tone one would use to discuss really pleasant weather. "While it has been designed purposely to appear natural in its origins and propagation, and thus is not a highly lethal weapon, like a nerve agent, for instance, it is highly infectious and will spread quickly. A significant number of Bajorans will die as a result."

I grimaced at the effect that this would have on Bajor during this precarious time of recovery.

"The Bajoran Provisional government is doing their best with the resources they have, but 50 years of Cardassian Occupation is not easily undone," I responded, trying to be realistic about the chances of Bajor weathering a crisis like this, even with external help. "The chaos and instability a worldwide pandemic like this would cause would likely collapse what government they now have."

"Yes, our analysts and predictive models concluded the same," Sloan replied, matter of factly. "Your thoughts on what might happen next?"

"I couldn't predict what would happen if that unifying source of stability was removed. Fear and despair makes people do crazy things, it is very likely that Bajor would rescind the Federation's invitation to administer the station and wormhole. The planet could easily descend into a more xenophobic and isolationist mentality," I freely shared my thoughts. "If the bioweapon is successfully deployed, will the Federation offer humanitarian assistance? That would shore up Federation support."

"Yes," Sloan responded, obviously having expected my question. "As a non-member ally of such strategic importance, the Federation would offer as much assistance as possible, but rendering assistance could become impossible if anarchy and violence on the planet results or the Cardassians return quicker than we could respond. The Federation Council has no stomach for renewed hostilities with the Cardassians."

Tribalism, anarchy, violence, all were likely from what I'd seen in the show. And color me not at all fucking surprised that the Federation Council lacked any balls whatsoever.

If this bioweapon was used, I actually had the research notes from its development along with a cure for the virus, at least for the version that existed at that specific point in time. Who knew that Kira's misadvised and self-appointed mission to rescue her childhood friend/boyfriend

would pay such long-term dividends? How *suspiciously lucky* for all of us if the worst should come to pass. Was this again the work of the Prophets manipulating events to their liking?

Assuming that the virus had *not* been heavily modified or improved, or a different strain used altogether, it should be relatively simple for someone of Doctor Bashir's caliber to create a cure, especially with the head researcher's development notes and experimental data in hand. That was a big assumption though. Section 31 was good, but they weren't perfect as history had shown, so the Cardassians may have a completely different version of the bioweapon at this point. Thus, the cure I had may only be marginally effective now.

Even assuming the cure I had worked, though, the distribution to an entire planetary population, especially one without a planetary transporter network, would be a massive undertaking, and would require a huge number of ships, time, personnel, and resources. If the Provisional government collapsed and the planet descended into anarchy, multiply the difficulty of that undertaking many times over. And that was assuming the virus didn't mutate into something more deadly as time went on, which was always a concern for something like this.

Perhaps the Cardassians were planning on something and needed a distraction, or they intended to offer a cure to Bajor in their time of need, something they miraculously had from the medical knowledge they'd accumulated during the Occupation, or this could be plain and simple revenge. This neatly explained why the Cardassians had been so quiet lately, though, if this had been in the works.

In the end, it didn't really matter. I couldn't let this disease strike Bajor; it would ruin all of my hard work to rebuild the place and throw all my future knowledge out the proverbial fucking window. Bajor was my home now too.

Section 31's interest was obvious. Yes, Federation resources would be strained to the limit providing humanitarian aid, but the true threat to the Federation's long-term strategic interests was in Bajor's Provisional Government collapsing, the planet falling into total chaos, thus preventing them from Federation membership. The Federation could easily lose their claim to the wormhole if that resulted and some puppet government the Cardassians propped up in the aftermath of this crisis told them to leave, possibly letting the Cardassians openly return to regain control of Bajor and the wormhole itself, which was the real prize. The Cardassians in control of Bajor and more importantly, the wormhole, would be a direct threat to the Federation and its interests. I guarantee you that that motivated Section 31 far more than any other potential reason.

"Are you asking me to take my ship and destroy this military base?" I asked dubiously.

Even for an Augment of my great skill, even with all the advanced technology I had to call upon, including a military-grade cloaking device, that would be a very tall order for my relatively little ship. It might have been possible if I had a large Collector-style power cell aboard my ship to power a large antiproton weapon to orbitally bombard the base, but I still hadn't sourced the material required to create the red matter. If I ever encountered a Collector ship in the future, I was already planning on looting the fuck out of it, stealing any power cells they had lying

around, including any red matter that might be onboard, now that I actually knew what to look for.

My armor's utility belt had a micro replicator installed that could produce transporter tags whenever I wanted now for more efficient and effective looting. I had learned that lesson after being forced to leave several choice pieces of loot behind.

"No," said Sloan with a shake of his head. "I already have a special operations team and a ship standing by to conduct a ground assault. I want you to go with them. My primary purpose for offering you this mission is to give you a chance to observe a Section 31 special operations team in action, to familiarize yourself with the personnel, especially their weapons and tactics and overall methodology. A team like this is exactly who will be called upon to face the Collector threat in the future. Your extensive experience fighting the Cardassians will be invaluable on this mission in particular and I think you'll work well with the team I'm sending."

This sounded very interesting, though it sounded like I would mostly be an observer on this mission. Color me intrigued.

Section 31 were the ruthless killers hidden in the shadows, carrying the bloody daggers that eliminated the threats to the Federation. They weren't heroes by any stretch or traditional definition, but they were the ones, in my opinion, that kept this Federation utopia from being destroyed by the harsh realities of an uncaring galaxy.

I could only wonder what kind of tamed *monsters* Section 31 had in their ranks to qualify as a 'Special Operations Team.'

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### **Section 31 Ship. Name Classified. Bajoran Space.**

While a small group of people might know about the secret existence of Section 31, I doubted that many realized just how much in the way of resources the organization personally commanded. They had far more than a few agents spread across the galaxy. From my own first-hand observation and my knowledge from the shows, they appeared to have their own state-of-the-art capital ships, which had cloaking devices, some sort of long-range stealth transporters based on unknown technology, and as I was now learning, their own special operations teams for black operations.

As the turbolift took Sloan and I to the ship's shuttle bay, Sloan explained a little about the elite special operations team known as 'The Cleaners.' To my ears they sounded like Section 31's versions of a highly trained and effective black ops team, the kind of people who specialized in doing the dirty deeds a government often requires, but could never publicly acknowledge, like torture, interrogation, demolition, and various wet works, like assassination. It was the kind of team that no government would ever admit to having, but all needed at various points if they wanted to survive. Given the sheer size of the Federation's territory and the alpha quadrant itself, I'm sure there were many such teams stationed all over the quadrant waiting for clandestine orders.

As I learned more from Sloan, I found their code name rather apt, as it seemed to me that they did clean up a lot of messes across the galaxy. They were the boogeymen you pointed at messes and they cleaned up those messes with ruthless efficiency. Of course, I'd have to see them for myself before making any real judgments, though I was sure they were a cut far above the rest and highly effective at their jobs. Section 31 didn't tolerate anything else.

As for why I was meeting them, The Cleaners had been tasked with the mission of destroying this Cardassian base before their tailored bioweapon could be deployed on Bajor, potentially destabilizing the planet and the Federation's tenuous hold on the wormhole itself. Not only did I have skin in that game, but Sloan wanted me to observe them at work and familiarize myself with their weapons, methods, and tactics as I may be called upon in the future to work with them on various missions. In this case, they were to deal with a direct threat to Bajor and long-term Federation interests.

When the door to the turbolift opened I saw what I guessed to be a heavily modified runabout-class ship. In the first few seconds of viewing this ship I noticed several curious things. The most important of which was that no effort had really been made to hide the significant modifications that had been made to this ship. Given the culture and intense paranoia of Section 31, you'd assume they would want the ship to appear like a factory standard Runabout with absolutely nothing interesting or different about it from the thousands of others scattered around Federation territory. The fact that they hadn't made that effort suggested that this ship too had a cloaking device of its own.

The next thing I noticed were the modified engines and nacelles. As someone who had increased the top warp speed of his ship, I recognized an upgraded engine when I saw it. The weapons had similarly been upgraded and the ship's hull was armored. The mission module, interestingly, was the personnel transport version, rather than a laboratory. It reminded me of the large spaces in an armored APC from my old world, a large space meant to safely transport heavily armed soldiers and equipment into active hot zones.

As I moved towards the side of the craft I couldn't help the grin and snort that escaped me. Someone with decent artistic skill had painted a naked humanoid woman on the hull. Now that was very *un*-Starfleet and quite anachronistic. Though I had seen various aircraft in Iraq and Afghanistan with similar art emblazoned on them, it had a very old world, WW2 vibe about it.

It was both comforting and a stark reminder that this group was very different from their counterparts in Starfleet.

"Gothic, this is Yates," Sloan introduced. "He leads the Cleaners."

There were no formal ranks within Section 31. On paper the secret organization answered to a few Starfleet Admirals in the know, in practice, it didn't really have an overall recognized leader. It actually reminded me of the Bajoran Resistance in how it was set up. An independent, decentralized, distributed command and control structure meant you could take out whole swathes of the organization and it could still function and rebuild from the ashes.

It was a curious thing to realize that Section 31 was set up like a terrorist organization, using a structure that would see it last the test of time even if enemies, both internal and external, set themselves mightily to destroy it. I imagine, quite like the Resistance, that they robbed the shit out of their enemies, stealing technology and assets, to keep themselves going even if the Federation should one day cut them off from active funding and I was just assuming they got funding from the Federation. For all I knew, after 200 plus years they probably had more money than they knew what to do with and taking money from the Federation came with too many strings attached to it.

Yates was a large human, as best as I could tell, well-built and rather plain looking, with short dark hair and brown eyes. Unlike any other human I'd seen in this future time, he actually wore armor, but of a type I'd never seen before.

"Good to meet you," I greeted while giving Yates my hand to shake.

Yates gripped it very tightly and began to shake it slowly, his cold eyes locking with mine with laser-like focus, searching for *something*. A lesser man would have looked away from those eyes, instincts honed over millions of years instantly recognizing a true predator, a natural born killer, even if they wouldn't necessarily realize that on a conscious level. I let my eyes change from the mask I typically usually wore in polite society, to the face that I wore on missions during the Occupation, when I was often bathing uncaringly in the fountain-like spray of arterial blood after I had beheaded a Cardassian soldier.

He must have seen the change in my eyes because he squeezed my hand so hard that I wondered if he was trying to break a few fingers. Not that he could as I was far more durable than he was. Should I squeeze his hand till his weak baseline human bones snapped like twigs?

After a few more tense moments, his eyes softened with the recognition, respect, and wariness that a fellow predator gives to another, his grip becoming more normal.

"Oh, you'll do just fine here in the Cleaners, General Gothic," Yates said as he let go of my hand, a large smile on his face now. "I just wanted to make sure that you were up to the job at hand, not that I ever truly doubted it. In preparation for the mission the team reviewed some Cardassian surveillance footage from one of your raids during the Bajoran Occupation, to get a sense of your tactics and style. Your sword work beheading those Cardassians was a thing of beauty, the look of terror on the faces of their squad mates was priceless! It took the fight right out of them."

"Thank you, that was the point after all," I explained, not at all bothered by his words. It was actually quite nice to find someone who appreciated my unique style. "The Cardassians ruled Bajor through terror. I just wanted to give them a taste of that as well."

"You've got a few fans in our group, General," Yates responded.

Sloan was already heading back to the turbolift.

"I'll leave this in your hands gentlemen," he said placidly before going out of sight, as if we weren't just talking about brutally beheading Cardassian soldiers. What a strange man.

Once Sloan was gone I turned back to face Yates.

"Come with me," he instructed. "It's time to outfit you with your weapons and armor."

There was no need.

"Not necessary, but thank you. I have all the weapons I'll ever need on my ship," I told Yates.

"And as for armor, this is all I need. Both weapons and armor are my personal designs," I offered proudly.

Given how unusual and distinct they were, there really was no point in hiding that fact. I had made both impervious to sensor scans and any attempt at reverse engineering either my weapons or armor would result in them either exploding or vaporizing critical components.

With that I mentally ordered my armor's systems to discontinue making it appear as if I was in my standard Bajoran Militia uniform so that Yates could see me in my armor's natural state, the surface looking like a slowly moving silvery chrome-like fluidic alloy. My girls had told me a few times it was near hypnotic to stare at. The vambraces and my personal omnitool on my left arm were modular and could be removed, but were still covered by my armor's imaging systems.

The armor was close to form fitting, showing my well-defined musculature to perfection, except for a codpiece looking shell over my junk. My armor wasn't as bulky as what he was wearing, as I prioritized speed and ease of movement, but it was clear that I was well protected from head to toe. In battle, I would mentally deploy the head piece to protect my head, which had multiple configurations. One configuration had glowing red eyes, like red hot coals, to look extra sinister.

The face had slots for eyes and nose, but the eyes were actually optical sensors that had different sensory modes, including one that allowed me to look through walls, and the nose itself had an advanced filtration system to take in air from my environment. In the event of being spaced or a deadly airborne toxin or poison being detected, the air filtration would shut off entirely and internal oxygen would only be used. An air scrubber and recycler meant I would never run out. At one point I had considered exclusively using my own air during combat, but cutting off one of my senses entirely seemed like a very bad idea.

"Damn... you designed this yourself?" Yates asked in awe, taking it in intently. "Hold on a sec," Yates instructed, tearing his eyes away after a few moments of watching the fluidic alloy languidly move about.

When he returned he was holding a rifle?

"Have you got one of these?" he asked me, a smile in his voice.

The man was holding an honest to God TR-116 Projectile Rifle, only it looked as if it had been modified to be a proper sniper rifle, with all its formerly shiny parts matted to prevent it from being easily spotted. This rifle had an advanced electronic scope and Yates showed me how it came with a collapsible bi-pod stand and internal gyroscopic stabilizer which allowed the shooter to steady the weapon for truly long-range shots.

"Now where did you get that?" I asked in surprise, not thinking anyone in the Federation really used or saw the value in projectile weapons any longer, a weapon that would let you do some truly long-range shooting from a safe distance. These guys definitely didn't think like the rest.

Rather than answer Yates suddenly and playfully threw the rifle at me; I caught it in mid-air. I then proceeded to quickly and expertly field-strip the unloaded weapon checking for cracks or defects and other modifications that had been made to its original design. Finding none beyond the scope and the stabilizer, I reassembled the weapon in seconds. This made Yates snort in amusement.

I knew all about the TR-116 Projectile Rifle and could put it together in my sleep after having holographically assembled and disassembled it a hundred times over when I had integrated a stripped-down version of it into the Gothic type antiproton rifle, which was carefully stowed back in my ship. It seemed they hadn't yet come up with the idea of adding a micro-transporter, micro-replicator, or exographic targeting sensor into the rifle's design. I certainly wasn't going to clue them in if I didn't have to. An advantage that only you had and knew about couldn't be prepared for ahead of time.

"Okay, get a load of this," he said.

Yates led me to a wall and after pressing a button I got to see where these Cleaners kept most of their weapons.

"Now this is a blast from the past... actually, from your past!" Yates joked, indicating he had been briefed on my temporal origins.

He then presented me with what seemed to be a minigun. The kind used in a few action movies I'd seen back in my time. Like Predator and Terminator 2. Yates soon began to feed me info on the weapon, but something quickly got my attention. There was no large external ammo belt around to feed this ravenous beast. Which was something I quickly enquired about.

"No need for one," he replied with a big shit eating grin. "To keep the minigun loaded with ammo, I hooked it up to a micro-replicator system. There's an autoloader and an advanced cooling system so you don't need to lug around a lot of 30mm rounds for the gun."

So, they *had* actually figured out the micro-replicator trick. Maybe the space savings on the TR-116 wasn't considered significant enough or perhaps they just wanted to preserve its functionality in an energy dampening environment, like it had originally been designed to do? Given I had integrated the rifle into an already large weapon system, every little bit of space savings was needed and I had mostly given up on the need for it to operate in an energy dampening field. That was an incredibly rare and unusual circumstance and I could always replicate weapons from my time if needed.

The Cleaners (and ostensibly Section 31) must have access to alien power sources far smaller and more powerful than what could be produced by the Federation because there was no way Federation tech could supply the power needs of this beast. I used Collector micro-singularity power cells to power my weapons and armor systems, so it made sense that other groups might

have had the same idea. I wondered what sort of alien tech these guys used or how Section 31 had gotten their hands on it. The galaxy was vast and there were any number of ancient, long gone advanced civilizations that might have left some advanced technology behind that they'd gotten ahold of and kept to themselves. An ace in the hole like that was oftentimes the difference between victory and defeat.

"Why use such an outdated weapon?" I wondered, though I had my suspicions. "I mean with the amount of energy you'd need keeping that gun supplied with newly replicated ammo you could just go around vaporizing people."

There was no reason, beyond the extreme power demands, that you couldn't have a six barreled cycling phaser or disruptor rifle. A weapon like that, if handled correctly, could destroy entire crowds of enemies. My own rifle had a full auto mode when set to pulse discharge, instead of continuous beam, but even then it wouldn't have a discharge rate comparable to that badass looking minigun shooting out large bits of metal at supersonic velocities.

"Most people in this day and age can understand and intellectually accept the idea of being vaporized; it's very clean and it's very quick, leaving nothing behind to agonize over, or inspire fear or terror. That's something they can accept on some level. They have a much harder time accepting the sight of someone being ripped apart into bloody chunks of unrecognizable dead meat on the floor, something that is very messy, very loud, and something that leaves behind quite a horrifying sight," Yates replied with a bloodthirsty grin. "Even the hardest and most bloodthirsty Klingon warrior will pause when they see their friends getting mowed down by this baby."

Ah, just as I suspected. This weapon was meant to be a weapon of terror, of psychological warfare, as much as it was a weapon of war, meant to kill your enemy. I could absolutely respect that; beheading Cardassians wasn't just for fun, it was to inspire crippling fear in my enemies. A fearsome reputation could win battles before they even started.

"I like the way you think, Yates!" I answered passionately. "That's the same philosophy of terror I used on the Cardassians."

Maybe I should look into creating my own version? I bet I could do it better. As Yates placed the gun down and tapped his chest I had to wonder if he knew that bit about the Klingon warrior first hand. Had he mowed down a lot of Klingons? As far as I knew there hadn't been any known conflicts or battles with the Klingons in the past several years, official or unofficial.

"This armor has several features you should know about," he explained. "Now it doesn't do fancy imaging and textures like yours, but it does have some tricks."

By pressing a button on this wrist band, he made the suit he wore change color.

"Black is the default," he explained. "The others are preselected camouflage schemes selected for their versatility in most planetary or artificial environments."

The normal black color disappeared, to be replaced by a mottled woodland camouflage scheme. Seconds later, the armor changed color once again, this time to a sort of desert tan.



He then turned invisible, well, sort of. I was reminded of the Predator movie once again. And I had to wonder if these guys got some of their ideas from old movies, like I did. My invisibility was far superior. It had undergone an upgrade with the principles I had learned from my recently acquired Klingon cloaking device. Firing my rifle and handgun in antiproton mode disrupted it, obviously, as the discharge visibly left the cloaking field, but a fired and transported tritanium round would allow me to remain cloaked though the rate of fire was very slow compared to the other modes.

"The armor scans the environment, then changes the patterns and colors on the armor to best match its surroundings," Yates said as he reappeared, "but its effectiveness is degraded when you're in bright light or moving rapidly. There's a sort of shimmer effect. It also has a retractable head piece with built in communications over a tight subspace channel so the team can communicate during missions. I'll share the frequency we'll be using for this mission on route to the planet. All other mission details are need-to-know and will be shared during the mission itself."

While I'd be wearing my own armor on this mission, as I'd worked too hard on it not to, it was important for me to know the capabilities of the people I'd be fighting alongside with. Friendly fire accidents occurred when you didn't know things like that.

Perhaps we would have discussed things further and/or I could have protested this need-to-know bullshit, but this was when more people arrived.

The Cleaners turned out to be a four-person squad, though I suspected that they'd once been five, but had lost someone recently and that I'd been brought in as a convenient temporary replacement.

Before me now stood the single largest example of an Andorian male I had ever seen. A Vulcan with a downright scary expression on his face, which was in stark contrast to the normally dispassionate mien they usually wore. A Tellarite, who I guessed to be some sort of tech expert, judging by all the advanced tools he carried on his person. Last of all, there was a beautiful human woman who just screamed *dangerous* and *scary* to me. Seemed as if Section 31 recruited all kinds of oddballs and aberrations, just like myself.

They were all wearing bulky armor that made them seem more like Star Wars clone troopers than citizens of the Federation. They also carried an odd collection of weapons, obviously chosen by each person's unique preferences and combat style. Much like how I did. The one weapon fits all philosophy Starfleet used always seemed idiotic in the extreme to me, though I certainly understood it from a procurement, maintenance, and repair efficiency perspective that any large organization like Starfleet has to pay attention to. The obvious efficiency of a standard weapon was unneeded in a small team of special operatives and might actually even be detrimental to their overall combat effectiveness.

"Cleaners, this is Gothic," Yates introduced. "He'll be coming with us on the next mission to observe and familiarize himself with our methods and tactics and may offer assistance or fight with us as he desires. You'll be further briefed on route, now get on the ship."

Guess these guys didn't screw around.

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### **Landing Zone. Cardassian Planet.**

"We're a go for mission!" shouted Yates before he slapped the ramp release button once the cloaked runabout had touched down softly on the planet.

In the airtight confines of the ship, it didn't matter how loud he was, once we were on the planet we would need to be quiet and stealthy to avoid detection, though we were quite far away from the base.

With smooth motions obviously borne of practice and experience, the Cleaners unbuckled their five-point harnesses (color me impressed!) and quickly advanced down the still-lowering ramp in a staggered formation, their weapons at the ready. Clear fields of overlapping fire, coordinated movement and defense, no chit chat whatsoever. I was *impressed*, these guys acted like a professional military unit, which in this galaxy was a rare sight indeed.

I followed behind the group sedately, scanning the environment with both my senses and my omnitool's advanced sensors. From the moment I arrived on Section 31's ship, my omnitool had been in continuous active operation recording everything in its range. The night was pitch black, the only light in the sky from distant lightning.

"Clear," said two Cleaners near simultaneously as they spread out from the landing site.

"Clear," said yet another Cleaner.

"Clear," growled the seemingly perpetually angry Vulcan.

That Vulcan guy was downright worrying. He seemed to be angry at everyone and everything. Maybe he was one of those ultra-rare Vulcans whose emotional suppression systems had never taken. Section 31 must be giving him an outlet for some truly epic homicidal urges and rage. He had stared at me unblinkingly during the entire trip here, which had taken *hours*. It was pretty disturbing and I had kept my hand on my sidearm the entire time.

"Deploy the netting," Yates ordered over our short-range internal comm frequency. No sound was heard outside the confines of our armor.

A few of the Cleaners nodded at the order and jogged over to the shuttle. Opening the special compartments in the wings, they took out rolls of some sort of advanced mesh netting. Within minutes, the shuttle was completely covered by it. My guess was that the stuff was designed to hide the ship from sensors as well as visual identification from a distance. We'd been cloaked the entire way here, but perhaps the cloak was too power hungry to be used when the ship was landed or was imperfect when deployed in a complex planetary environment. A ship in space was probably far easier to cloak than here on a planet with tons of local variables to account for that were constantly changing. I was getting quite an education during this mission, including sensor scans from my omnitool and armor systems.

Normally I'd ask about such things, but the Cleaners were very professional and maintained strict mission silence unless it was mission critical information that needed to be disseminated through our active team commlink. Yates seemed decent enough, he even smiled, but his team wasn't the chatty type, even during the transit here. Aside from the scary Vulcan, the Andorian bodybuilder seemed to be mute, and the Tellarite was twitchy as all hell. I wondered if he was on some kind of drugs. As for the human woman, she just sent alarm bells ringing through my head. She had to be incredibly high up on the hot/crazy scale.

A woman is allowed to be crazy, as long as they are at least equally hot. Ideally, you want a woman to be above the diagonal line, indicating that they are hotter than they are crazy. However, this woman, while undeniably hot, had *crazy eyes*, so it definitely seemed like she was on the wrong side of that line. A little crazy and very hot and you had a great time coming your way, but this kind of crazy... well, you didn't fuck with or stick your dick in that level of crazy, lest it get chopped off in your sleep. With the exception of if you were pulling a James Bond and intended to kill her immediately after, then you got a pass.

I had a feeling that I'd soon find out how high up on the crazy scale they *all* were and this was coming from a guy who used to behead Cardassians as a way to inspire fear.

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### **Wilderness. Cardassian Planet.**

We hadn't landed too close to the spoon head military base. In fact, so far we'd quick marched in total silence for about 15 miles while going around a mountain and we still weren't even halfway there. However, we had run into a Cardassian patrol. Which I'd seen get butchered in a well-executed ambush by the Cleaners. Only one of them actually falling to my rifle.

While they weren't anywhere near as fast as an Augment like me, or as smart, or as strong, or as handsome, they certainly were lethal and professional motherfuckers who didn't show a moment of hesitation in efficiently and ruthlessly wiping out that patrol. It was all *ice-cold* efficiency, as if killing these soldiers was as emotionally significant as placing a replicator order. I was left wondering if their fighting style reminded me of my own simply because it was so brutal and matter of fact. If so, no wonder people freaked out after seeing me in battle. The fighters in the Bajoran Resistance were certainly as brutal at times, but they had decades of hatred for their enemy to work out and a thousand tales of horror to fuel that hate. For the Cleaners, this was just a job and they were like ruthless surgeons in applying violence to end lives in pursuit of achieving their mission objectives. Again, I found myself impressed.

The Cleaners hadn't killed all the spoon heads in that patrol, though. They'd left one alive to interrogate. I had been under the impression that Cardassians had training to resist things like the Vulcan mind meld. Either this wasn't always the case with run of the mill soldiers versus someone like an Obsidian Order operative or Gull, or the scary Vulcan was just a lot more powerful and ruthless than the others of his kind. I suspected it was a combination of all three. He broke the Cardassian in short order into a whimpering sobbing baby.

"How many troops are stationed at the base?" Yates asked calmly and succinctly. It was always a good idea to keep the questions simple and succinct during an interrogation and for the interrogator to keep calm and collected, especially if the prisoner was not.

There was no delay before the answer came, his voice filled with tears and terror.

"There are about two thousand troops stationed at the base," the broken Cardassian soldier practically sobbed.

"Who is the base commander?"

"Gul Mantrid."

"How many vehicles are there?" Yates questioned.

"We have lightly armored vehicles. I don't know how many for sure, perhaps 3 in total."

Well, that did not sound good. Armored vehicles *and* a base complement of 2,000? The Cardassians were the only race I'd encountered so far that had a reasonable idea of what made up a proper military force. They actually had armored weaponized support for their troops and weren't too worried about overall losses in order to achieve mission objectives. They'd send out two thousand men with armored support if it meant victory over us.

"What kind of vehicles?" Yates asked briskly.

Again, there was no delay.

"Two light scout transports. One armored troop transport," we were told.

Hmmm, I'd seen such vehicles before on Bajor. While there were certainly plenty of men stationed here, maybe they were still trying to hide the base's true purpose by not giving them better heavy equipment and weapons. Both transport types had been present in Prefect Dukat's convoy that we'd hit. They were decent, but not terribly impressive vehicles of war. I'd seen enough of them destroyed during the Occupation to know that they were semi-fragile targets and not nearly as fast as they really needed to be. Maybe the base's purpose was so narrow they weren't really expecting many from the garrison to leave the base's perimeter?

As for the armored troop transport, the armor would be light compared to what the armies of my time used, and not itself heavily armed, but still any armored support was worth worrying over given our smaller numbers.

"Do you have any prisoners?" Yates asked next.

"No. We do not have any prisoners."

I had no idea why Yates even cared. We couldn't take any prisoners with us and he hardly seemed the type to worry about civilian losses. Section 31 was very much an 'ends justify the means' type of organization. Perhaps he was worried about the Cardassians using living shields. They weren't above such things. Or maybe they were worried that the presence of prisoners

meant that they were doing some on-site testing of the bioweapon and thus the potential for accidental release was there. That seemed far more likely, in my opinion.

"What kind of defenses does the base have? Defenses for space and ground-based assaults," Yates asked.

The mission briefing Section 31 had prepared for us had all this information, with varying degrees of certainty, but a professional soldier always sought intelligence confirmation when the opportunity presented itself. Many, many highly skilled soldiers had lost their lives to bad intelligence or changed circumstances on the ground that no one knew about.

"To protect against an orbital strike there are four heavy disruptor batteries arranged in a rough circle around the Main HQ, with 100 meters of space between the HQ and each battery. To supplement our disruptors, we have two heavy torpedo launchers per battery," we were informed.

'*Well, fuck me,*' I swore in the privacy of my thoughts, having hoped the dossier had been wrong. 31 hadn't had a high degree of confidence on the base's defenses from orbital attack, but it was suspected to be quite high, which was why a ground assault had been viewed as the better avenue of attack. That was some *serious* firepower.

I'd seen Starfleet bases defended by only a single phaser bank. The Cardassian Central Command had cheaped out on the heavy vehicles for their men, but had obviously felt it a worthwhile expense to protect the base from space-borne threats. It made a certain sense, few powers would choose a ground-based assault on such a large garrison over a clean and efficient strike from space these days. The Federation certainly didn't have the balls these days.

"Against a ground assault, we have four watch-towers each armed with a heavy disruptor cannon," was what the broken and now sobbing Cardassian said next. "Each tower is located approximately 200 meters from the Main HQ. There is a force field around the base."

This base design was pretty standard Cardassian military doctrine, but usually the watch towers just had soldiers with rifles in them. A heavy disruptor cannon was pretty unusual.

"Anything else?" Yates demanded to know.

I couldn't see how things could get any worse.

"Yes, the entire base is protected by a minefield that remains dormant when we Cardassians move about," the spoon head told us. "But if they detect any other form of life they detonate."

So, an advanced minefield keyed to only detonate when it detected non-Cardassian DNA. Apparently I'd been wrong. Things could actually get worse, because that hadn't been in the briefing. The Cardassians had dedicated quite a lot of resources to defending this base and had toed the line on just how far they could go for what was supposed to be a secret military installation. It suggested they didn't give a shit who found out about it later on, as long as they got back control of Bajor.

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## **Base. Cardassian Planet.**

The Cardassian office known as Gul Mantrid was walking beside his second in command, Gil Lian, who was currently giving his superior the base's daily status report, when a lightning bolt streaked out of the pitch-black sky. Mantrid ignored this, but Lian couldn't help feeling as if something was wrong. He'd had a bad feeling for hours now and couldn't shake it.

"Gul Mantrid, Gul Dams wishes to speak to you," a lower ranking officer informed them.

After a barely perceptible nod to the soldier Mantrid strode down the corridors of the base, passing by many armed guards standing at attention along the way to the communications room. Given the top-secret nature of their mission, this was the only communication terminal on the base capable of communicating off-world. Any other signals sent with sufficient power were detected, blocked, and ruthlessly investigated.

Security had been beefed up considerably in the last few weeks in anticipation of the arrival of the first batches of the new bioweapon. No chances were being taken and no expense was spared to protect it while in transport.

Those filthy Bajorans would pay dearly for what they had done to the Union, for making them look like fools, but not for too long, perhaps just long enough to plunge the entire planet into chaos and destabilize this new 'Provisional Government.' A few hundred thousand slow agonizing deaths should do it. Then the Cardassian people would benevolently and generously offer a potential cure to what everyone would think was simply a natural illness that had plagued Bajor 'for decades', one that the Cardassian people had supposedly found a cure for during the time of the Occupation. If things went according to plan, the Cardassian military might soon be back on Bajor and thus have the foothold it desperately wanted near the wormhole.

The moment the doors hissed shut behind him the Gul moved to the door's keypad. His fingers were a blur as he keyed in his own personal command code with an ease only practice could bring. Now the door would only open again if he entered the proper code. Any incorrect attempt at entering the code would raise an alarm that would bring the attention of Mantrid's most loyal guards to the door, one of which was always nearby. They would shoot anyone trying to get in, no matter who they were.

Satisfied that no one could now penetrate the security of his private sanctum, the Gul turned to face the viewscreen embedded in the wall. The viewscreen flickered to life even as built-in sensors scanned him. If his DNA and bio-readout didn't match the profile already stored in the system, a base-wide alarm would sound and the room would be filled with a very deadly gas. Not a normal Cardassian security protocol, but being a Gul with command of his own base came with certain benefits and Mantrid was paranoid to a fault and didn't trust anyone else with his base's overall security.

Now that all the requisite protocols had been followed, the computer finally released the communications lockout on the viewscreen. Static flickered across it momentarily as the connection was stabilized over dozens of lightyears thanks to the many subspace booster stations

and relays scattered throughout Cardassian space. The decryption algorithm and secure handshake took even longer to complete its work.

The face of another Gul appeared. The face of Gul Dams.

"How go the preparations for the mission?" Dams asked with no perfunctory greetings.

Mantrid smiled.

"They are going exceedingly well," Mantrid answered, feeling happy at being able to share the good news. "The containers arrived just a day ago on a special transport, while under heavy guard, by an escort of three Galor-class warships."

Perhaps that had drawn some attention from the many powers that routinely monitored Cardassian fleet movements, but the true purpose of such a movement should still be secret. The cover story to explain the movement was that of a training exercise. The deployment of the bioweapon had to go perfectly. It was a required component of many larger plans already in play; if this failed many other plans would have to be scrapped as a result and heads would literally roll. The Central Command did not reward failure lightly, much less the Obsidian Order, who would make your entire family disappear for a perceived failure.

"Was there any trouble?" the Gul on the screen asked tersely.

"No, Dams," Mantrid replied. "There was no accidental release on route. All 12 of the weapon containers arrived with their seals perfectly intact and their locks have not been touched. They will not open until I personally unseal and set the timers for deployment. There was also no unexpected ship traffic in the vicinity or sensor sweeps."

The bioweapon had not been designed to affect Cardassians and controlled testing on condemned prisoners and traitors had proven that, but it wasn't easy to create perfectly controllable and predictable bioweapons, as history had shown time and time again. Viruses had a nasty habit of mutating, especially when large enough numbers were exposed to it. With the number of disgusting accidental Bajoran/Cardassian offspring that had been created during the Occupation, only a deluded fool would not acknowledge that the two species' physiologies were close enough to merit extreme caution in a situation like this. And Mantrid was not a fool.

"Excellent. I trust that there will be no accidents with the weapon as you are preparing it for loading into the torpedo casings. The deployment must go exactly as planned or the virus might spread too quickly and too many Bajorans will die."

Mantrid was confused.

"Dams, are you feeling concerned for the Bajorans?" questioned the Gul with a sneer in his voice.

"Fool!" The Gul on screen yelled. "If too many Bajorans die too quickly it will draw more attention to that Sector than we wish. Starfleet might deploy an entire fleet in an attempt to quarantine the planet and the artificial nature of this disease could be exposed. It needs to appear entirely natural! We only want to make the Bajorans desperate enough to accept our aid,

regardless of our price. Once we are back on Bajor they will never be rid of us again and we will have access to that wormhole and eventually total control of it."

There were many plans already formulated by the High Command, several already in progress, to return to Bajor and the stable wormhole the system possessed. This was just one of them, but they were all meant to increase the power of the Union. This mission had to go perfectly. So much depends on it. The wormhole was the most valuable strategic asset in all the quadrant. They would have never left the planet if they had known it was there! How Dukat kept his head on his shoulders was beyond him. The man must have powerful supporters and/or equally powerful blackmail to still be alive after such a catastrophic failure.

"Now do your damn job!" Dams commanded, despite not having a higher rank required to issue orders to Mantrid. "The stolen ship meant to deploy the weapon will arrive at your location in a matter of hours; everything must go perfectly. The Central Command will tolerate no mistakes."

Dams wondered if it would have been wiser to send the ship directly from Cardassia Prime to Bajor, but with an escort of other stolen ships to further hide Cardassian involvement. Unfortunately, there was a lot of movement on the border at the moment. Many eyes would be watching that direction; hiding Cardassian involvement long-term would be near impossible under those circumstances.

Mantrid was in no mood to be insulted further so he closed the subspace channel with a sneer and quickly left the room, hoping that a walk around the base would soothe his nerves.

The Gul walked to the turbolift that would take him to the base's Command Center. With a low hum the turbolift rose and within seconds he was within his Command Center.

After stepping out of the lift Mantrid looked around the room, which was lit up by the numerous touch panels and a few other minor light sources.

The base's Command Center was laid out much as a starship's bridge would be, with one major difference. Instead of a single viewscreen set into the wall at the front of the bridge, commonly denoting the front of the ship in most designs, the Command Center instead had a bank of angled windows running the entire circumference of the center, allowing visuals of the entire surrounding base. In overall effect, the Command Center most resembled an old-fashioned Air Traffic Control Tower from Earth's late 20th century, not that the Gul was aware of that historical fact.

A suddenly intense white light blinded the Gul for a moment before crashing thunder filled the air.

"What was that?" he asked nervously.

For a moment he'd feared they were under attack from orbit. That simply wouldn't do, like Gul Dams had said, everything had to go perfectly.

"Oh, nothing more than some thunder and lightning, sir," Gil Lian answered. "Environmental conditions on this planet are ideal for the frequent formation of large storms."



Due to the night's pitch blackness and the driving rain that washed down the surrounding windows in thick, seemingly solid sheets, visibility was practically non-existent, despite the base's lighting.

"I can't see anything out of these windows. I doubt the guard towers are faring any better," the Gul complained. "How is sensor resolution? Have they been affected by these conditions?"

"We are having some intermittent problems with the sensor output," admitted the Cardassian who was working the base's main sensor board. "We suspect it's due to the ionizing interference caused by the lightning storm; the weather on this planet can be very intense after all."

Upon hearing this, the Gul tensed up, Dams' words ringing in his ear. If this mission failed for any reason he knew he would be better off putting his own disruptor in his mouth and pulling the trigger, rather than be tortured to death by the Obsidian Order. That organization did not respond well to their carefully laid plans being disrupted by failure.

"This would be the perfect time to attack us, when visibility is near non-existent and our sensors are being affected by all this interference. We are at our most vulnerable," he reasoned aloud, staring out into the night from the command center's windows. "Raise the alert level! I want more guards placed around the base with orders to report anything even remotely out of the ordinary."

His order was soon followed.

**XXXXX**

### **Wilderness. Cardassian Planet.**

"I'm in," the Tellarite tech declared gleefully as a graphical representation of the base appeared on his small computer, indicating he had successfully hacked into the base's defense net. "I now have control of all the base's networked defenses."

Wait, what?

"Wait a minute, how the hell did you accomplish that?" I asked in an incredulous voice, though I doubted I'd get an answer.

I was exceedingly experienced and skilled at hacking Cardassian computer networks from my time on Bajor, but their cyber security was exceedingly good on average. For a secret base like this, the data security was probably a cut above the rest.

I imagine this was the result of extremely specialized equipment and some seriously hardcore hacking, assuming Section 31 simply hadn't received/stolen the base's access codes from somewhere ahead of time. As I'd learned during my recent stint as a pirate, Section 31 had managed to acquire some very high-level access codes somehow.

"Looks like the base commander decided to foolishly standardize the override codes for the entire defensive network to make it easier to control from one central program," I was told,

which made me want to facepalm. "But this won't take care of the guards in the watchtowers or the troops in the garrison."

Cardassians never were very bright, *especially* when they let their arrogance override their good sense. The base commander, Gul Mantrid, was probably yet another example of a control freak Cardassian commander who didn't even trust the men under his command, always assuming that he knew better than them and was the smartest man in the room.

"Alter the programmable minefield's detonation parameters so that they only detonate upon detecting Cardassian DNA. Turn on the heavy disruptor cannon's auto fire mode and set them to fire on them as well, then shut down their internal comms. We need to create as much chaos and disorganization as possible, so that they can't use their superior numbers on us," Yates ordered. "After that you can take out their main power."

Executing Yates' orders didn't take long, which spoke of this Tellarite's skills and some solid mission planning.

"Done," the tech expert reported.

I had a thought.

"This base must have a main power reactor," I reasoned. "Why not simply overload it if you have control of their systems?"

The reactor was always overloading in the shows.

"Mission parameters require that we destroy the base prior to exfil, to hide our involvement and tactics. Current plan is to make it look like a reactor overload, but our priority objective is to capture their new bioweapon," Yates told me.

Wait, what? Why wasn't I told this shit earlier? Why wasn't I told a lot of this earlier?! Section 31 and their need-to-know bullshit. I know I was only meant to be an observer on this mission, but fuck, was it necessary to keep me this in the dark? What nefarious motives might Section 31 have here?

After some quick thought I realized that there was no reason to be all that concerned about them wanting to capture this new weapon. Sure, Section 31 might very well want it for themselves to possibly use against the Bajorans, should Bajor ever kick out the Federation and deny them access to the wormhole. But, it could also be required for further study, in order to develop a perfect antidote or inoculation in case the Cardassians decided to use this bioweapon again in the future. Just because this particular plan may be thwarted, didn't mean the bioweapon couldn't be used in the future, just with a different deployment. A Cardassian visitor to the station in the future may just infect a few Bajorans and normal travel between the station and the planet could see it deployed. It'd be much, much slower, with a whole lot left to chance, but it was possible to be done that way. No, it was much better to have a sample of the bioweapon and a perfect antidote developed before that possibility could happen.

Besides every projection Section 31 ran was still predicting that the Bajorans would join the Federation in less than 10 years after all. Even my future knowledge said that that was true if things proceeded like in the show, even with the Dominion War. It just wouldn't make sense for them to release the bioweapon on their own and destabilize Bajor and potentially risk losing the Federation's control over the only known stable wormhole in the quadrant. This would only hinder Starfleet's efforts and the Federation might even withdraw from Bajor leaving it open for the spoon heads to come back, or the Federation might end up spending massive amounts of resources trying to aid Bajor leaving other worlds more vulnerable.

Also, while I still had a cure, the cure I had was from the time of the Occupation, when they were presumably still testing it, so who knows how it might have been changed or been improved since then. The cure I had might not even work now, therefore it might be a good idea for me to enter the base and grab any information I could on the disease and anything else that caught my eye in their database. If I could find out how it had been changed, assuming it had, then I could ensure that a new cure was made that I had full control of. Given my rank and influence it would be a simple matter for me to find a Bajoran doctor to do the work for me separate from Section 31.

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### **Base. Cardassian Held Planet.**

Mantrid had only himself to blame, but instead of actually accepting fault and dealing with the situation, he decided to blame his second officer and shot the Glinn in the head for treason, hoping the summary execution would restore some semblance of order and respect for his authority. Not that this effective demonstration of his resolve and power had actually been noticed in the sheer chaos that had engulfed his base.

The trouble had all started when main power had failed without any warning or reasonable explanation, which meant the perimeter shield, which was an incredibly power intensive system, had fallen as well. Sensors and internal communications had also been disrupted. It was still pitch-black outside on the planet, only intermittently lit up by the bright flash of lightning. Once he finally realized that this was very likely a prelude to an attack on the base, he could do little without main power. Without power for the sensors, he was effectively blind to the developing situation.

He had many men under his command, though, and might still have some left for all he knew, so he'd sent a messenger to the barracks with orders to send all the troops out to meet whatever kind of attack this was. It didn't matter if they were prepared or even dressed as long as they could fire a weapon. The weapons had been ordered to be set on stun since the Gul wanted captives for a private interrogation session or two to find out where the information leak had come from and who ultimately was behind this attack.

With a two-thousand-man garrison, the attackers should have been totally overwhelmed. Only someone had screwed up, *badly*. The minefield had malfunctioned, resulting in several dozen loyal Cardassian soldiers being torn apart by advanced programmable anti-personnel mines.

While Cardassian soldiers were of course the bravest in the galaxy, they weren't so brave/stupid that they would charge across minefields, at least not without orders to or guns at their backs to encourage them to follow that particular order.

While the mines did surround the perimeter of the entire base and would limit his men's movement, this still wouldn't have been much of an issue since the watchtowers had spotlights and weapon turrets with independent power supplies. Once the attackers were spotted, and thus they had viable targets, the heavy disruptors would destroy them. However, the Glinn had proven his incompetence again as the heavy disruptors, which ran off an independent power source, inexplicably began targeting their own troops and massacring them.

Not wanting to get killed in clumped groups the men had tried to spread out, only to then start setting off the mines again, and to make matters worse, the attackers had started firing on the troops as well. The mines, for some reason, were not going off for *them*.

Mantrid couldn't see the guns used, but he could hear them. From the incredibly loud reports, it sounded as if someone was using old fashioned projectile weapons, but with a truly insane rate of fire. No civilized government still used such barbaric weapons.

The Gul lifted his disruptor pistol and started moving slowly across the command center. By now the fighting was starting to die down, either his men had rallied and had defeated the attackers or they were all dead.

If they were all dead, then it was up to him to save the day and prevent this debacle from getting any worse. Gul Mantrid *would* defend this base with his life, he would defeat the invaders and ensure that the bioweapon was deployed as planned for the glory of Cardassia!! Doing so would make him a hero of the Cardassian people, more so than he already was. Women would adore him and many more sons of Cardassia would wish to follow him into battle--

SNAP.

Mantrid's last thoughts were of glory and heroism, but his last action in life was to die cowering in the dark while his men died gruesomely by the hundreds, his neck having been unceremoniously snapped by a human with ridiculously abnormal strength. He died unloved, unmourned, and forgotten by all.

Given all that was going on, no one even noticed him die. No one really cared since practically everyone was already dead or in the process of dying truly horrific deaths at the hands of monsters.

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### **Base. Cardassian Held Planet.**

"I'm in position," I reported over the team comm channel.

I stepped over the body of the spoon head officer I had just killed, a Gul if I wasn't mistaken, probably the commander of this entire base, and entered the command center as the lights came back on and the computers started coming back online.

My objective was to download as much information about the bioweapon and its planned usage as possible, using a small computer and codes I'd received from the Tellarite tech expert. I had to move quickly as the Section 31 special ops team planned to blow this entire place up and go home.

The computer simply needed to be hooked up to the spoon head machines. I didn't understand why this was needed since they'd been able to take control of the base's defenses from a distance. I suppose it didn't matter at this point, perhaps the defense net control systems and the base's database were on two different systems?

What *was* on my genetically enhanced mind, which was most assuredly wandering while the information was slowly downloading, was that about two thousand highly trained Cardassian soldiers had just been killed, in a very short amount of time, at the hands of essentially five fucking people, even if one of them had been a badass Augment like myself.

Sure, a lot of that had only been possible because they'd suborned the minefield and the auto targeting disruptor cannons, but I'd now seen what Star Trek tech could do when put into the hands of incredibly ruthless and dangerous people who were unstable and cold-blooded killers even by the standards of my fucked-up time. People who didn't have a single bit of restraint in how they got the job done, including committing freaking *war crimes*.

Some of the things they'd used... *fuck me*... and I thought I was a ruthless cold-blooded killer. Not that I wasn't rather impressed by it all.

They had what looked eerily similar to an American M-32 MGL 6-shot grenade launcher, but far more advanced and with a range and accuracy that the weapon from my time could only dream of. That weapon had certainly not been part of the weapons demonstration I'd been given. This launcher certainly hadn't fired anything as mundane as grenades, however, but rather gas canisters.

I was pretty damn sure that the gas grenades they'd fired all over the base and into practically every building, which had dispersed a low hanging fog-like gas, had been filled with some sort of nerve agent specifically tailored to be lethal only to Cardassians. We all had walked through it with no issue, but there was certainly nothing natural about the hundreds of Cardassian corpses strewn all over the ground with blood having oozed out from their eyes, noses, ears, and mouths. It had been like a WW1 battlefield out there, gas and all, but with men being gunned down by rapid firing auto-targeting fixed turret weapons as they ran across active minefields that only targeted Cardassians. Add in some barbed wire and rat-infested trenches and the image would have been complete.

I'd fought during the bloodiest, most terrible battles of the Occupation. I'd liberated work camps, including the Gallitep labor camp, blown up warehouses, killed many enemy soldiers and I'd played pirate where I killed the crew to the very last man. I was a *boogeyman* to many of my enemies. But I'd *never* seen death like this. This was serious, unequivocal war crime-type shit, no kidding.

And it's not to say that I even truly condemned the Cleaners for using these tactics, especially when the Cardassians were numerically superior to us by an absurd amount. The fucking Cardassians we were killing were part of a plan to deploy a fucking bioweapon on Bajor, so there was a bit of poetic irony in using such weapons to kill them first. If I could have gotten away with it during the Occupation, I might have done the same, but the risks of escalation were far too great, especially when there would be no way to cover up the use of such weapons.

The Cardassians on this base hadn't died cleanly via precise phaser fire; we'd gunned them down brutally or let their own defenses slaughter them to the last man. They'd screamed, they'd cried, they'd begged, and they'd *exploded* into pink mist, leaving body parts *everywhere*. Some had even trampled each other to death in an attempt to escape the slaughter; some had even put their weapons in their own mouths to escape the chaos and their despair on their own terms.

My antiproton rifle did terrible things to their bodies.

If not for my Augmented mind, which alternately allowed me to turn off my emotions or increase my aggression, among other things, I figured that I'd be curled up into a ball right now while sobbing and near catatonic.

*And I fucking hated the Cardassians!!*

On the plus side, if there was such a thing in this fucked up situation, this had given me a fabulous opportunity to live fire my new weapons, both my antiproton rifle and handgun. I had a stupid amount of real time data to look through now.

My weapons worked better than I could have ever hoped for and frankly I think my killing them was a mercy compared to being mowed down by a mini-gun that never ran out or dying horrifically from a nerve agent. I'd tried both discharge settings, pulse and continuous beam, making short- to mid- to long-range shots, used the various sensor modes on my rudimentary HUD (that I still needed to talk to Data about), shot through walls with my orthographic targeting sensor, and even made some truly epic long-range kills by beaming fired tritanium bullets inches away from the foreheads of hiding and cowering Cardassian officers.

My weapons' antiproton beam/pulse didn't cut, per se, it was more akin to annihilating the matter of their bodies, but not cauterizing the surrounding flesh. Getting shot with an antiproton pulse was like a God took an ice cream scoop to the body, or maybe it was better to describe it like someone had transported away a huge chunk of your chest and with that chunk missing all the blood just fell right out of you. At a high enough setting, it was like the body just burst or exploded into pieces. The mundane armors a few of the Cardassians had worn hadn't even stopped the effect.

With all the rapid fire from the minigun mowing down Cardassians, I'd been inspired to also go full auto with my rifle and handgun, something I was taught to never do in my military service. Of course, ammunition and accuracy concerns were not exactly the same anymore. Both weapons fired like a dream and the custom grips felt perfect in my hands no matter how much it fired. Even after a full minute of auto fire on my rifle, probably 300 pulse discharges, the weapon's Collector power cell only showed the capacitors were half discharged and pretty much

remained steady there with the cell's continuous recharge rate. It was beyond my wildest expectations and my armor's sensor suite recorded everything for later review and analysis.

I'd even tested my new 'power sword' which I'd managed to design to hold a continuous antiproton edge. It didn't matter what the material was, heads, limbs, vehicles, reinforced doors, it cut through them all with virtually no felt resistance. It wasn't a lightsaber, but it was pretty fucking close. I relished the next opportunity to go blade-to-blade with a Klingon wielding a bat'leth. Wouldn't they be in for a huge fucking surprise when I cut through their blade and cut them in two perfectly sliced pieces, their blood and guts falling out of them like a waterfall? That was, admittedly, extremely messy. Cauterizing the cut pieces would be much cleaner, but you couldn't argue with the psychological effects.

An audible beep notified me that the download was complete. I took a moment to transfer all the information they had on the bioweapon to my own version of the omni-tool, which was a much more advanced design I'd improved upon since making the original prototype that would be soon available to buy. No doubt I'd be raking in the profits from the sales, and that would make Quark happy since I intended for him to serve as my Ferengi agent for a small percentage of the deal. I had an upcoming meeting scheduled with the Grand Nagus himself who would be negotiating the manufacturing and distribution deal for my new technology on behalf of a large manufacturing concern in his portfolio.

While I had full access to this extensive database, I took the opportunity to download the design schematics and any associated replicator patterns for the base's disruptor batteries, the heavy torpedoes and launchers, the disruptor cannons, and the base's shield generators. Since this secret base had all of these assets/weapons and they needed to be maintained and serviced here largely separate from the normal supply and repair infrastructure of the Central Command, the designs were in this database.

The real gem were the semi-abbreviated design schematics for the Galor-class warships that were involved in the transport of the bioweapon, especially its shield frequencies and configuration. In the event that it had been accidentally released and the infected crew didn't scuttle their ships on command, the local base needed the designs for the ship and shield weaknesses if necessary to destroy them. I guess they were concerned with Cardassian infection. It was evil and wonky Cardassian logic, but I'd take it. Having these design schematics would make destroying that ship type in the future much easier since I'd know the weaknesses of the class and just where to target them.

I turned to leave when three Cardassians, who looked like they'd had a *really* bad night, came charging and yelling into the command center of the base from different entry points, their rifles being brought to bear on me. I spun on the spot and gunned them down with both arms outstretched, one hand firing my handgun the other firing a new weapon I'd recently designed and built and integrated into my armor systems.

I'd been inspired by the wrist mounted plasma repeater weapon of the Kull Warriors in the Stargate franchise, which was on my list to make into a holonovel, and the wrist mounted blaster of the B2 Super Battle Droid of Star Wars. My left vambrace now sported three hidden discharge

ports to rapid fire small, but deadly disruptor bolts at high speeds. My initial thought had been to use antiproton beams once again, but I figured mixing up the energy type would be smart. The bolts were small, but oh so many, and though it had a limited effective range of 15 meters, were exceedingly deadly considering its high rate of fire. This weapon could only be fired through a mental command and by clenching my fist in a specific way. It had the benefit of being always there on my wrist and not immediately recognized as a weapon at all.

All three Cardassians dropped dead moments later, two with holes in their chest from my anti-proton pistol and one smoking and partially ripped apart by the dozens of disruptor bolts he'd been shot with. My first live combat test fire of my 'wrist blasters', as I was calling it these days, was a smashing success.

With another beep indicating that my download was complete, it was time to get the fuck out of here. Who knows what the Cleaners would do if I didn't make the rendezvous. Though I had a lot of respect for how effective and deadly they were as a team, despite how frightening they were, I actually missed the calm predictability of the standard Starfleet types, and that was really saying something.

I had initially wondered why the Cleaners were so insistent on blowing this base up after we were done, but after seeing the tactics and weapons they'd used to wipe out this base, I no longer wondered, *I knew*. If anyone saw what happened here today, what we'd done and how we'd done it, there'd be widespread panic and outrage and the Cardassians would certainly view this as a declaration of war considering how many galactic treaties had been violated in this attack. The Federation itself would never tolerate what we'd done today, much less the other powers. The use of the nerve agent alone would see us hunted down by both sides.

If the Bajoran people knew what we'd done today, they'd probably be appreciative and grateful for what we'd spared them from, despite the war crime tactics.

The Federation sheep, too, in their blissful ignorance, would sleep much better tonight not knowing and never realizing what dark deeds the tamed monsters were doing on their behalf to keep them safe from the cold, harsh realities of this galaxy.

Even a boogeyman like me was having a hard time believing it.