





“And...?” he left the question hanging.

“How much of this have you read?” Quinna asked in a whisper. She did not want to wake the others.

He had to admit that was a question that surprised him, “All of it. Several time.”

“And nothing stands out to you?” Quinna gave Michael a look that said ‘surely you did not miss this.’

“You mean beyond the fact that everyone that has touched this file has died?” He was being a bit snarky and blamed it on the dull ache in the middle of his shoulders. “Sorry. There were a couple of things that seemed odd but nothing that really stood out to me. Mind you, reading reports is not my favorite activity. I could have missed something.”

He hunkered in to look through the file again, with Quinna. His eyes were already starting to hurt.

The corner of Quinna’s lips curled a bit. Growing up in a social circle meant she met many different people. A debutant's life had its problems but also had its perks. “Have you noticed that there are several names in the brief? But there is a name associated with several powerful positions. R’Nol. That is a Vulcan name.”

“Names? There were names?” Michael said, his voice faking surprise. Then he was serious again. “R’Nol? I got to admit that I did see it, but it didn’t set off any red flags. Why?”

“Have you looked up R’Nol? There is no one in the Vulcan registry with that name. At least no Vulcan in the last 200 years.”

He didn’t want to question how she knew that piece of information. She was Quinna Solice and she knew stuff. “I didn’t really pay any attention as I didn’t see the name in connection with anything nefarious.”

“But I have heard of the name. In my youth social circle. R’Nol was a young man who was only a fraction Vulcan. That is his Vulcan name after his ancestor. We know him as Ashton Ren.” Quinna looked at Michael.

“Ashton Ren?” Michael was truly shocked. “As in Ambassador Ashton Ren?”

“As in the Terran Ambassador Ashton Ren.” Quinna said.



Michael watched them walk away and couldn't help but smile. Then he looked at Quinna and nodded. "Ok, let's go."

Quinna took Michael's hand as they walked and she seemed to position herself a little closer to him. She looked around judging her environment, but she also took in the warmth that Michael provided. She looked for signs of heightened security, unusually paranoid people, or just off-the-wall behavior. So far things seemed status quo.

They walked slowly, cautiously across the concourse of the promenade. The area where the bombing occurred had been cleaned and repaired and was now back in full use. Michael really hadn't believed that he'd see any more clues. He just had a feeling that this was where things were going to happen.

They entered the restaurant and Michael asked for a table for two. They were seated at a table near the entrance by a cute young Bolian woman, who handed them menus and wandered away.

Michael had barely begun to peruse the menu when he felt a familiar sensation in the back of his head.

::Hello lover::

Carir! He stiffened slightly, then relaxed. His mind immediately went into the same mode that perplexes most telepaths. His was a rare talent but he could keep Carir out of his head.

Sitting across from Michael, Quinna took a look at the menu and decided on a Grakizh salad and lida fruit. She really could use a sizzling ribeye steak with mushrooms but that was not on the menu for the establishment. She looked up and straight into Michael's eyes. "Are you ok?"

Michel tried not to look up when he said softly, "Carir is here."

::Sorry about the last time. I was just caught by ... surprise::

~That makes two of us.~ Michael let the thought out.

::You must admit that you kind of deserved it::

~Perhaps.~

::Still so good at keeping your thoughts under control. Who's your new friend?::

Suddenly Carir appeared behind Quinna.

"Hello Carir," Michael said, looking up. "What are you doing here."

Carir chuckled, "What are you doing here?"

Quinna turned her head, she finally saw Carir, She wondered what it was with supermodels and women that cross Michael's path. Perhaps their beauty was an asset in places where they lack in other abilities. "Hello," Quinna said but thought 'Duh, it is dinner time.' But Quinna knew when to hold her tongue.

"Oh Michael, I like her," Carir said. "She has such naughty thoughts. And..." she paused for a moment and almost blushed, "... the things she'd like to see happen to me! I don't think that's legal on some worlds."

Quinna gave Michael a small smirk of a smile and then managed to wiggle herself with her chair around to sit next to him. She was more of a spectator wondering what would come next.

"And possessive too," Carir said gleefully. "Oh you must let me play with her when you're through with her." She gave Michael an evil look, "She does know who you are? Who you *really* are? And what you do with your women?"

"And he does it quite well, but he is not that good at sharing like he was with you." Quinna replied.

Michael looked at Carir hard and said, "She knows about me."

He could feel her try to pry her mind into the wrinkles of his and he focused his defenses. A disappointed look came across her face.

"Perhaps I can get more success from your, what should I call her... friend?" Carir said in a playful threat.

"Stay out of her head Carir," Michael warned pulling Quinna a bit closer. "Why are you on Freedom? I know you didn't come here to kill me."

Carir pulled up a chair, turned it around backwards and sat, leaning her cheek on the headrest. "No, and to be honest, I wasn't really trying to kill you. That was an accident. I was just so surprised to see you. Haven't you missed me."

Her attempts to be coy we lost on Weston. He shook his head, "Missed you? Considering the last time I saw you you tried to incinerate me with an experimental weapon, I'd say missing you was not on my mind."

"But you do think of me?" she asked.

"What brought you to Freedom?" he asked again, avoiding her question. The truth was that he'd spent time feeling a little guilty about their relationship, but he couldn't even let that thought go through his mind for long.

Pouting she said, "What else? A job."

He recognized the tone and knew he wouldn't get far with that line of questions. "Really? For who?"

"Why does it matter?" Carir asked. "Come back to the fold Michael. From what I've heard your career is over and we can use someone with your skills." She leaned in, "Bring your friend. Who knows, she might like it. You did. Besides, she'll be working for us sooner or later anyway. And I do miss you."

"What's the play?" Weston asked,

"No play for you, buddy," she said, hitting him lightly on the shoulder. "Your play would be to wait. Wait for orders. You're good at that."

Michael took a calculated risk and opened a corridor in his mental shield that led to a part of his mind. It was a box he had used when they were together. It led to feelings he could have had for Carir.

The sudden release of that sensation caught Carir by surprise. She smiled an evil smile and shook her head, looking between him and Quinna.

"You will always be Michael Weston, won't you?" she asked.

"I can't deny who I am or what I feel," he said looking at Carir in the eyes.

"Hmmm..." was all Carir would reply.

As quickly as his mind opened it closed. He looked at Quinna and shook his head. "I'm not hungry any more. Let's go."

Quinna nodded. A sudden loss of appetite was mutual at this point. She scooted back in her chair and stood. She turned to walk away, but waited for Michael.

He stood up and looked back at Carir. "See you later."

"Oh you can count on it, lover," the telepath replied.

As they walked away Michael looked at Quinna, "There's something more going on here. Keep your eyes open."

"Always," Quinna relied.



Michael was still hungry but really just had had his fill of Carir and wanted to be away from her. They stepped out of the restaurant when Carir suddenly stepped in front of them, blocking their escape.

“Why the hur...,” she suddenly stopped talking and spasmed. A hole appeared on her chest and she fell into Michael’s arms.

She looked down at the hole in her chest then back up at Michael, questions in her eyes. Then the light in her eyes died and so did she.

Instinctively he lowered Carir to the deck and grabbed Quinna and pulled her down. Suddenly the man standing behind her flew backwards back into the restaurant in a spray of blood. Michael put it all together quickly, realizing that they were now in mortal danger from a hidden sniper.

After the second victim fell to the ground there was a series of screams and people started running. Security appeared and pandemonium across the whole plaza broke out. Michael grabbed Quinna’s hand and led her through the crowd. Two more people fell around them.

“We’ve got to get off this level,” he said to Quinna.

He led her through groups of running people and made their way to the turbolift. Once inside the door closed, blocking out the screams. He pressed his hand on the control and spoke,

“Deck 1, Main Operations.”

[Deck 1 requires security clearance.]

“Get it,” Michael said a little frustrated. “Meanwhile take us as high as you can without clearance. “

=^=This is Captain Casian Dahr. Who wants access to Main Operations? ^=^=

“Captain Dahr, this is Michael Weston. It’s time we had that conversation.”

=^= In light of what’s going on at the promenade I would agree. Stand by. ^=^=

The turbolift moved quickly and soon the door opened, depositing Weston and Quinna in Main Operations.

(reply none)  
(posted by Al Muir)











Ashton was taken back a bit. Was Dahr questioning his abilities, “I have done this for a few decades now. I have been working on these trade agreements for quite some time and I know the Tholian’s reputation. Why do you, all of a sudden, feel that I am not capable of handling this one?”

Dahr raised an eyebrow at the sensitivity of the ambassador. He leaned forward and placed his elbows on the desk. He was now in strategizing mode. Others who had seen him in this position knew it was a time to worry about what his keen mind would come up with. After all, in the end, he was a warrior.

“I would not think to cast doubt on your abilities,” Dahr said. “What I cast doubt on is the good will of the Tholians. At worst, I might think that you are being a bit naive. Tholians tend to use subterfuge to claim no territory and then violently defend their position.”

He still felt the sting of betrayal for the Tholians decision to sign a non-aggression pact with the Dominion. Their involvement could have ended the war with fewer lives lost.

“As you are aware, the leadership of the Tholians has changed hands. The new Government is more open to new opportunities.” Ashton reminded him as he decided to let go of the comment over his naivety.

“I am aware,” Dahr said, standing up. “That doesn’t really make me feel less cautious. However, this is an ambassadorial station and so we will make this envoy feel welcome.”

Inside his mind he told himself, ~That doesn’t mean I’ll give them free reign. They’ll not be annexing my station.~

“I appreciate you giving me a warning, Ambassador,” he said.

Suddenly there was an alert.

=^=Captain Dahr, there is an undetected energy weapon fired on level 16 Promenade. There are 5 dead.=^=

He tapped his badge, “What? Shut the level down.”

=^=Working on it.=^=

[Captain Dahr, there are two on turbo lift 1 requesting clearance to access level 1.]

“This is Captain Casian Dahr. Who wants access to Main Operations?”

=^=Captain Dahr, this is Michael Weston. It’s time we had that conversation.=^=

Dahr sighed. Suddenly it all makes sense. In his experience there are no coincidences.

"In light of what's going on at the promenade I would agree. Stand by."

He nodded to the security officer on watch and allowed the turbo lift access. Minutes later the door opened and Michael and Quinna stepped out.

"Captain Dahr," Michael said with a nod.

"Mr. Weston," Dahr replied. "I wish I could say it was a pleasure to see you again." His eyes shift to Quinna. "Doctor Solice."

"Captain," Quinna nodded and then turned to see who was with him. "Ambassador," Quinna greeted. Her face gave away nothing as she also nodded to him to acknowledge.

The ambassador nodded to Quinna. She looked familiar but could not quite place her.

Weston looked at the ambassador, thinking about how he might be involved in this whole thing. "Ambassador Ren, nice to meet you."

The Ambassador looked over at Michael, "What is going on out there?"

Weston looked at the ambassador and then at Captain Dahr who shrugged. "Go ahead Lieutenant."

"Apparently somebody has taken an objection to me surviving the explosion and tried to shoot me with some kind of energy weapon. I got lucky when someone accidentally stepped between me and whatever they were shooting at me. We bid a hasty retreat but I know that the sniper took out at least two others."

Dahr looked over at his security officer who reported, "Reports say that there are five dead."

"I fear the scene," The Ambassador said with concern. He then looked at the pair with blood on them. Quinna had more blood on her than Michael. "Were you hit? Maybe we should get you somewhere to be checked out."

Michael looked down at his clothes and the. At Quinna's as if just realizing that they were spattered with blood. "No, sir, this was collateral blood from the other victim. We are unharmed."

Michael neglected to mention that the first unintended victim was Cair, nor did he give any more information about the reason. That was a more private conversation meant for the captain.

"Captain, we need to advise the incoming delegates that we need to postpone negotiation and not come to the station." Ren said.

“That may be premature,” Quinna said, “We should know more about what is going on before...”

“The events are undeniable. This is not a safe place. Between the explosion and the shootings right now, and,” the ambassador turned his head to look at Michael Weston, “Funny how it seems that you were there for both of those incidences.”

Michael shrugged, “I don’t think it’s funny at all, Ambassador.”

“I,” Dahr added, “am of the sound belief that wherever Mr. Weston goes, chaos is close behind, and this is not specific to this situation.”

Michael nodded, “You’re probably right about that Captain Dahr. It’s a rare and special gift.”

“A gift I’d like to return,” Dahr frowned at the man. Then he turned his attention to Ren. “I’m not sure I’d cancel your plans just yet Ambassador. Unless you were expecting the Tholians in the next hour.”

“No,” Ren replied, “however, if I contact them early enough we can move to an alternate location. As you well know, the Tholians value being people of their word and expect no less from those they have dealings with.”

“I you fo what you feel necessary, Ambassador, but I assure you that this station is still secure and safe.”

The ambassador shook his head and said, “I’ll take that under advisement.” With that he turned and left.

Before he could get another word out the security station in main ops called to him.

=^=Captain Dahr, I have the surveillance camera from the Promenade on display.=^=

He looked at the others then walked quickly out to main operations center. In the middle of the room was a holoprojector showing the image of level 16.

“Whoever it is is a pro,” Michaels said. “They’ll look to get out in a small group moving along the perimeter of the level. Focus on along those groups.”

The image shifted from one large group of people to another until something caught Michael’s eye. Apparently it caught Dahr’s attention as well. At the same time they called out, “There.”

The scan focused on a group where the crowd were all moving frantically, with the exception of one person who’s movements were much more purposeful. Before the image could close in on the person Michael saw something else.

"Is that Ariel?" he pointed to a figure moving through the crowd like a torpedo. She pointed her phaser into the crowd and fired, hitting the bag her target was carrying. It caused the person to stumble and slow down.

"Where's Andy?" Michael asked. "They were supposed to stay together."

"Good question." Quinna said as she continued to watch the screen.

Suddenly they saw Trei sprint towards her target. The image zoomed in to see the action unfold. Trei's tackled the woman. She pulled out a pair of knives and proceeded to mutilate the person, who had no time to fight back. Then Ariel raised herself up and plunged one her daggers into the persons chest.

The hood fell to the side and revealed the face of the assassin. Michael took a breath then whispered a name. "Khamel."

Dahr stepped forward. He hadn't seen such a sight in a long time. He growled orders. "Security, apprehend that woman. Secure her in the brig."

=^=Aye, Captain.=^=

They watched as a security team surrounded Ariel and bound her hands. They marched her from the promenade with Taylor following.

Quinna closed her eyes to the screen. She had to take a minute. Being a Doctor, she was used to seeing death. She was used to seeing those she knew killing others, but there was wild, primal, instinctual in the killing. Quinna something turned, "I am going down there." Quinna needed to get to Ariel before anything else could happen.

Michael nodded and smiled. He shared her desire to find out what was going on with Ariel, but there was more to this than she may realize.

While heading to the nearest exit, Quinna turned and looked around. It was then she noticed that the Ambassador left. She had been so focused that she missed out on his departure. "Where is the ambassador?" Quinna asked.

"He left earlier," Dahr stated. "Apparently he needed to make change for the arrangements for a trading meeting."

Michael took a deep breath. "A meeting with the Tholians? I couldn't help but overhear."

"We need to get the Ambassador back here. He is a part of it all." Quinna said.

Now it was Dahr's turn to look perplexed. "Ashton Ren? That statement requires some explanation."

Quinna looked over at Michael, "Lt. Weston." She said hoping he would start explaining.

"There is more at stake here, Captain," Michael said, "than you may be aware of. This is all coming to a head now. There is a movement within the Federation to annex space meant for the Romulans and give the Tholians a foothold in our government."

He produce the data card and handed it to the Trill. "This is the list of names of people who were killed or assassinated and their connection to this... for lack of a better term... conspiracy. It also shows how the transfer of power from one person to the next would make such an annexation possible."

He released his hold of the data card feeling a huge weight lift from him. "I couldn't afford to tell anyone. Every single person who was connected to this information died. I didn't know who I could trust," he looked over at Quinna, "or who I was willing to put in danger."

"Why tell me now?" Dahr asked.

"Khamel," Weston said. "She is... was an assassin. I thought she was dead. She originally worked for Section 31. But when they were disbanded I had seen a report that stated she had been killed. Now, with her reappearance, there can be a trail as to who hired her. Perhaps we can find the link."

"But who would have the most to profit from this Tholians agenda?" Dahr asked.

"Who is the one insistent about the Tholian's agenda?" Quinna asked rhetorically. "The Ambassador."

"That's quite a broad interpretation, Commander," Dahr warned, but his voice betrayed that he didn't not believe her. "Why?"

"It is a power play. All politics. This ploy with the Tholians would give the Ambassador a seat of power and perhaps even the federation's presidency." Quinna theorized.

"I might argue that that is the play for most politicians," Dahr said, shaking his head. "How do you connect him with the rest of your... conspiracy?"

"Part of the treaty being worked on will give Tholians part of Romulan Territory, The Anti-Romulan sentiment amongst the Vulcans would gain strength. Since the events leading to the death of the Romulan senate in 2379, Romulans have struggled to rebuild their society. This would put a crippling hold on that rebuild. The Ambassador does not want many to know that he

is 1/8th Vulcan and part of the Anti-Romulan movement." Quinna said. "I know all this because I like doing homework," Quinna added and shrugged.

Casian looked at Solice carefully. She had more information than she was letting on. Homework was one thing, but if the doctor on a starship had such pertinent information and he, as the CO of an ambassadorial base, did not, there was much more to know. And he didn't like being kept in the dark.

"Homework, Commander?" he looked at her with suspicion. "That is some very specific homework. Why would the CMO of the Illuminar need to be doing homework on an Ambassador? What are you not telling me?"

"I was part of the same social circles as the Ambassador. Though we were not direct friends, it was more of a friend of a friend of a friend situation. That is how I know the Ambassador is 1/8th Vulcan. He hides that part of himself from the public since he does not inherently have any Vulcan Characteristics. I also know his Vulcan name is R'Nol." Quinna said, "The documents I read referred to R'Nol quite prominently in several powerful aspects."

Dahr nodded and raised an interested eyebrow. There was more to this Quinna Solice than meets the eye. He would have to learn more about her. He tapped his comm badge.

"Dahr to Samuels, locate and secure Ambassador Ren."

=^=Captain? ^=

"You heard me, Lieutenant," he ordered. "Once you have him I have a few questions for him."

=^=He's going to want an explanation. ^=

"Tell him... it's good to want. It builds character. Meanwhile we need to restrict his access to communications and secure all docking bays."

He nodded to the security officer in ops who starting entering the codes.

"If you excuse me, Sir, I would like to see to Ms. Trei now." Quinna was worried about her friend.

Dahr nodded. He had to prepare himself for what was about to occur when he met with a most likely unhappy Ambassador. "By all means. Mr. Weston, however, I will require your services."

Michael frowned at Quinna apologetically. He wanted to check on Ariel as well. Then he turned back to Dahr, "Of course Captain."

(reply none)



Dahr was looking over the data Weston had displayed, showing the days and times of the change of power in certain government seats on several worlds. Then he looked at the table that showed the support of a Tholians incursion into space that had been clearly earmarked for the Romulans.

Then he moved on to the list of the minor clerks, all of whom had passed the information on and all of whom are now dead, including Alex Dyson and his family. The only people who knew about the events leading to the transition of power that was still alive was now of this starbase. And the one name that stood out in every step of the power transfer was that of Ambassador Ashton Ren. The evidence was daunting, but it was not, in Dahr's mind, rock solid. And he would need that before he was willing to make a major move against him. Locking him out of the stations systems was, by no means, a major move.

"Anything you want to add, Lt Weston?" Dahr asked.

Michael had gotten used to being referred to as Mr. from the captain. He knew that the Trill said that on purpose. He was now on duty.

With a sigh and a frown he said, "No, sir. I don't think that there's much to add." Suddenly Dahr's comm unit chimed.

=^=Solice to Dahr. I need security teams at my location. I just had an encounter with the Ambassador. Might want to come and get him before he wakes. ^=

Dahr looked over at Weston with a curious look on his face. Michael returned the look with his own adding a raised eyebrow.

"Dr. Solice, you certainly get around," Dahr said. "We are on our way."

He closed the channel and tapped his comm badge, "Dahr to Samuels, meet us on..." he looked at where the communication came from, "level one, corridor 3 Beta. Bring a small team."

=^=Roger that, Captain. On our way.=^=

Both Dahr and Weston headed out of the office at the same time.

(Starbase Freedom - Level 1 - Corridor 3 Beta - SFI - Lt. Michael Weston - 1910)

When they ran into the scene they both stopped short, each seeing something different. Dahr was focused on the ambassador that was laying in the floor. He moved over and knelt beside him checking to make sure he was still alive.





Solice looked up and explained,. "I was making my way to the Brig when the Ambassador here took hold of me tightly, then held that knife, to me."

He looked at the blade she pointed to and nodded.

"So I did what any self. respectable girl would do and tazed him until he peed his pants. Anyway, that is what he gets when he threatens Michael and myself. I did what I had to do."

Weston seemed to been with pride. Dahr couldn't help but smile at "self respectable girl" statement. Any respectable girl whose boyfriend is an SFI field operative. He was certain that he had taught Solice a move or two.

"Indeed," he said, meeting her gaze. "I would expect no less."

"He did remember me from our younger years. I wish I would have recorded the conversation," Quinna said regretfully.

Suddenly a voice called out behind them. "So do I, that woman is crazy. What did she attack me with?"

He forced himself to sit up, but had put his back to the wall to stay semi-vertical.

"Captain," Ren growled, "I want to press charges against that woman. She jumped me screaming that I was the head of a conspiracy and then tased me. I had to defend myself."

"Indeed," Dahr said, looking inquisitively at the ambassador. "Well you are both in luck. As this is a diplomatic station there are few areas where there are no recording devices, excluding the diplomatic levels. So whatever transpired here will have been recorded and logged by now. I will review the log of this section and see what happened for myself."

He turned and looked at Weston with a mischievous glint in his eye, "I do enjoy a good holo-novel, Mr. Weston. How about you."

Michael slipped his arm around Quinna's shoulder and fought a smile, "Intrigue, lies, attempted murder? Sounds like a scene turner."

Hank Samuels came running down the corridor with a half dozen security me. Behind him. They pulled up short and he looked over the scene.

"Interesting," he said thoughtfully. "I brought a few men as I've never heard you call for back up before. But it looks like you've got things in hand."

"Well," Dahr said, nodding at Quinna, "Dr. Solice has things in hand. We were just her back up.













“Her name was Khamel,” Weston added. “I’m not surprised that you don’t have any information on her as she’s supposed to be dead.” He sighed. “Looks like I’ve got some homework to do.”

“Given the evidence I am curious what your recommendations would be for Lt. Trei.” Quinna said.

Hank sat back and blew his breath out slowly. “In this situation? I’m not sure. So far, in my preliminary investigation, she killed an unarmed person, who was not fighting her. If Ms. Trei has more information than that she hasn’t been very forthcoming. But to be honest, I haven’t had time to interview her yet.”

Quinna nodded. “Fair enough, however please let me know when you do interview her. If charges are made, as her commanding officer I will be representing her. I will also be talking with Captain Dahr.”

Hank nodded, “Fair enough. I’ll probably interview her shortly. If you stick around you can join us.” He paused for a moment and then looked at Solice with a serious look. “You know, contrary to popular belief, security people are not always looking for someone to blame. Me, personally? I’m only looking for the truth. If Ms. Trei has a reason for her actions I will listen and take it into consideration.”

Taylor has been standing behind Solice doing a small three or four step pace. He was about to say something when Michael put a hand on his shoulder to stop him.

“It seems you two will be busy for a while,” he said. “I’m going to take young Andy here and we’ll report to Captain Sekal.”

Quinna looked behind her. “Sounds good. See you two soon.”

Michael ushered Taylor out under minor protestations. He smiled and winked at Quinna. He knew she was a woman who could handle herself.

Quinna turned back to Samuels, “Lt. I know you will be fair,” Ok so Samuels struck a little nerve when he clumped her with societal norms. She too believed that security believed in the truth but she could not say that now. But she could say, “Contrary to popular belief, I make up my own mind, and do not conform to society. Of course I will respect your professional manners in this case. I am ready when you are when you like to talk to Lt. Trei.”

Hank smiled. They had come to an understanding of each other. This could prove to be very interesting. With a sudden motion he stood up and rolled his tight shoulder.

Stepping from behind his desk. “No time like the present.” He tapped his comm badge. “Ensign Gord, escort Lt. Trei to interview room three.”









