

# Star Trek: DS9 \*(Co-op fic with YunieXTidus)

By nextguardian

Submitted: April 18, 2011

Updated: June 8, 2011

*Takes place during the early seasons of DS9. Trekkies, unite and comment!*

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# 1 - Baptism by Fire

-Baptism by Fire

It was a gray San Francisco morning. There was a low fog hanging over the Golden Gate Bridge at this early hour. For most, this was a good day to stay in bed, propped up with a good padd. However, for one eager young ensign, this morning gave him a burst of energy.

Daniel Holmes loved a challenge. And if there was a good one out there, Deep Space Nine was a good bet.

It had been under Federation control for only two years, but it had done a lot to stabilize the war zone that was Bajor. Income from the Bajoran Wormhole hadn't hurt, either. But there was a lot to be said for a race that had peace, but not a whole lot of idea with what to do with it. Their so-called 'provisional government' was more a hindrance than a help at times, and spoke clearly to the people that no one knew just what would make for a good permanent government.

Getting up with energy for the first time in a long time, it made Holmes feel really, truly alive. To look at him, you would see the picture of Stafleet. A young-looking twenty-two year old with thick brown hair on top of a face that held inquisitive eyes and high cheekbones. He was on the small side for height, but made up for it with how he carried himself. Even those who hated to see such a young man rise so quickly had to admit that they could put their trust in him.

There was just that one incident.

**I should never have been commended for that. I managed to save only three lives out of more than one hundred fifty, not counting that alien ship. I wish people could forget that. I wish / could forget.**

Commendations, a promotion, and a chance to rise quickly. All things Holmes wanted. But not for what he did. His role had been just prevalent enough to warrant attention; he was never conceited enough to feel like he was a hero. The problem was, other people did, and they never let him forget it.

But maybe, in a place so ridden with problems, he COULD forget. There were bigger fish to fry, and the accomplishments of some rookie phaser jockey might just go unnoticed. And with the distraction of doing so many different jobs, he might just be able to forget himself.

On DS9, Holmes would be working in many different capacities, learning from many different people. He'd resisted the urge to read up on them, having long learned that first impressions of people you cannot hope to change are best learned first hand. These people weren't an enemy he was out to destroy; they were colleagues, and he'd have to find a way to work with them.

That knowledge secure in his mind, he put on his uniform, straightened the pip on his collar, and made sure his boots shined. The thing about first impressions was that you weren't only making them about

other people; they were also observing you.

Going to his terminal, Holmes locked it down to prevent anyone from using it. He scooped up his Starfleet-issue duffel bag, slung it over his shoulder, cast a last look into his apartment, and shut the door. He hoped to shut the door on his old life as well. The *Guardian* was his past; Starfleet Academy was his past. His future lay ahead, and it began on Deep Space Nine.

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The shuttle ride took more than twenty-four hours. Holmes had read every padd he could find, took inventory of his belongings again and again, and then finally retired to his quarters. It seemed like he was just about to fall asleep when the door chime shook him out of his trance.

"Come in," he called, getting up and straightening his uniform. Good instincts, as it turned out. It was a superior officer on the other side of the door.

"At ease," said the tall man. "May I come in?"

"Yes, sir. Can I get you something, sir?"

"No, thank you, ensign. I've just come to give you a quick run down of the situation on Deep Space Nine."

—

"...So, you'll report to Commander Sisco at first, but he may direct you elsewhere. You'll have a chance to make command decisions; to learn science and medical skills; to reinforce your security skills; and to learn about engineering. You, however, will not have the opportunity to work on your piloting skills. At least, not often. That said, I would like you to take the helm for the rest of this trip. Should we run into any issues, you'll be in command, and I'll be observing. You may not ask questions of me unless you wish to relegate your authority. I can advise you, however, in a command capacity."

Holmes flinched inwardly- he'd hated any kind of driving on earth, and he'd been studiously avoiding piloting. The commander of the shuttle wasn't going to let him off the hook, either. Holmes had known this had been coming.

"Understood."

--

If the other cadets could see him now, Holmes would have been mortified. He was sweating already and they were only going at half-impulse! He was definitely out of his element at the helm. But it was part of Starfleet that could not be avoided.

"Deep Space Nine is on scanners. No anomalies or spatial rifts detected... I'm reading a number of vessels. Bajoran, Federation, and..."

The officer at OPS looked up, were etched on his face. Aside from Holmes and the Commander, there was only the rookie cadet at OPS. He looked uneasy, and it took a nod from Holmes to get the young man to finish his sentence.

"-and Cardassian."

Holmes stood up from the center command seat quickly. He was uncomfortable sitting there with a higher ranking officer on the bridge as it was. This was his excuse to get up and move.

“Mr. Larson, bring us to yellow alert. Do they have their shields raised?”

Larson checked, immediately responding with a “ Yes, sir.”

Holmes rubbed his chin, forcing himself not to look at the Commander.

“Hail DS9. Put it on main viewer.”

After the happy chirp that signaled a successful comm link, Holmes drew himself up to his full height and addressed the Bajoran woman on screen. She looked hassled and tired, as if under stress.

“This is the Danube-class vessel *USS Hudson*. Do you need assistance?”

Holmes could hear the sound of klaxon alarms in the background. But this flashing red light that went along with a red alert status gave him the answer he needed.

“We’d appreciate that, *Hudson*. We are dispatching one of our own runabouts to assist. The Cardassian vessel has been hijacked by angry Bajorans. We would like the vessel disabled, not destroyed. They have taken Cardassian hostages.”

Holmes nodded. “Acknowledged, DS9. We will establish a commlink with your runabout and the Bajorans on the Cardassian vessel.”

After a terse nod, the Bajoran woman broke the commlink. Holmes nodded to Larson, who patched him through to the Cardassian vessel. At the same time, a hail came from another runabout.

“Put them both onscreen. Split the screen and overlay tactical on the bottom.”

“Aye, sir.”

On the left side of the screen there was a Starfleet vessel. Holmes could see three people on board. The one addressing him was a thickly built male wearing the black in gold tunic of either engineering or security. The pips on his collar ranked him at lieutenant. One of the others had her back to Holmes, so all he could see was a long, dark-haired ponytail. The other man was medical personnel, judging by the pips on his collar and the medkit at his feet. He gave an amiable smile and nod.

“*Hudson*, this is the *Rio Grande*. Are you receiving us?”

“We are receiving you, *Rio Grande*. I am Ensign Holmes. We have the Bajorans on subspace. Will you allow me time for negotiation?”

“Affirmative, Ensign. But if talk fails, we’ll begin tactical maneuvers in 2 minutes.”

“Understood. We have you patched in.”

Holmes gave the commander a look, asking silently if he wanted to take control. The commander raised

his eyebrows and gave Holmes a curt nod, indicating for him to continue. Holmes nodded slightly in return, conveying that he'd heard the unspoken order. He had already transferred helm controls to the command station when he first took the conn.

"Commander Graves, take tactical. Have phasers and shields on standby. Prepare to activate on my mark."

Graves swiftly took the tactical seat at the front right of the runabout. With a few swift taps, he had powered up the defensive capabilities of the Hudson.

"Mr. Larson, break subspace silence. Hail the Cardassian vessel."

A tall Bajoran male stood uncertainly in front of the screen.

"What do you want?" He demanded in a gravelly voice.

Holmes clapped his hands behind his back. "My name is Ensign Daniel Holmes. I'm here to ask you to power down your shields and release the Cardassian hostages."

"Why would we want to do that? We have no quarrel with you, Federation. We would regret having to open fire on you."

"Yes, that would be regrettable. But I have no wish to fire on you, but you need to show me some good faith."

"Why do we need any 'good faith'?"

"You are outnumbered, and even if you weren't, firing on your allies is not a wise course of action. Now, I understand your position, but -"

The commlink was terminated. Immediately, Holmes ordered the shields raised in the weapons powered.

"Beginning evasive maneuver Delta-four. Mr. Graves, target their shield generator and weapons array. Phasers only."

The dragonfly shaped Cardassian ship was soon under fire from both Federation runabouts. The Rio Grande aimed for propulsion, immediately crippling the ship's ability to go to warp.

Not to be outdone, the Bajoran terrorists returned fire. The Hudson was rocked by disruptor burst on its starboard side.

"Shields at 86%!"

"Our phasers are striking non-vital areas. Their shields are at 92%."

Holmes turn the problem over in his mind while the Rio Grande drew Bajoran fire. This runabout was ill equipped for a fight against the Kelvin class Cardassian ship. Even two against one the runabouts might be overmatched. That left tactics.

“Mr. Graves, continue to aim for their shields. Give me a one second phaser burst, followed by a photon torpedo. When the torpedo reaches the edge of their shields, I want you to detonate it.”

Graves raised his salt and pepper eyebrows -this was a rather obscured trick, but in this situation it was probably the most solid tactic they could rely on. The theory here was that the phasers opened a small hole in the shields, or at least weakened them. The shockwave of a torpedo being destroyed before detonation should do massive damage. The gamble here was that this could lead to full destruction of the enemy ship.

The torpedo detonated spectacularly in a shower of phaser fire and fragments of metal. The Bajoran commandeered ship rocked. It's shields had taken a pounding just now. The situation being what it was, with destroying the ship not yet being an option, they couldn't risk giving full strength to the assault. But at the same time, they couldn't hold back very much or they would be destroyed instead.

“Their shields are down!” Larson's voice came from OPS.

“Can you detect any Cardassian life signs?”

Larson studied his readings for a moment, then looked up to meet Holmes' eyes. “Yes, sir. I have six Cardassian life signs.”

“Get them out of there, Mr. Larson. Send three to the Rio Grande and put the other three on our ship behind a force field.”

Holmes looked to the view screen.

“Did you copy that, *Rio Grande*?”

“We copy, *Hudson*. We're prepared to receive three Cardassians.”

Holmes walked over to Larson's station, looking at the readings. The Cardassians materialized in the back. They were bound at the wrists and unconscious. They were all bloodied or otherwise injured. At a glance, Holmes estimated their injuries were non-fatal. Good. They didn't have a medic on board, and he hadn't yet covered that in any sort of detail in his command-track training.

“They're dead in the water, sir,” Larson informed Holmes, sounding both proud and worried. Holmes offered him a smile and a pat on the shoulder. He was only a few years older than the cadet, and had been in his place not too long ago.

“We still need to retake that ship... Hail Deep Space Nine and ask for them to beam security personnel to us. How many Bajorans are on that ship?”

“...About a dozen, sir.”

Holmes eyes danced as he had an idea.

“Contact Deep Space Nine and have security arrange cells for twelve incoming prisoners. We're going to beam them directly into the brig. Give security a minute to-”

“Sir, they’ll have shields in a few seconds!” Larson interrupted.

Holmes made a snap decision. He had no time to think about the words bursting from his lips. In one motion he grabbed a phaser and stepped over the unconscious group of Cardassians.

“Beam me over to the Cardassian ship. We can’t risk firing on them again; they’d never survive it. I’ll lower their shields from inside. The second the shields go down, I want you to beam them to the station’s brig.”

Holmes stepped onto the transporter pad.

“Energize.”

--

Holmes materialized just outside of the bridge. He could hear movement and guessed that there were maybe six on the bridge. Engineering was likely to be equally populated. So which way to go...

**Engineering is more vulnerable to sabotage. I could always blow a conduit or something down there.**

**Engineering it is.**

He jogged down the corridors as quickly as he dared. Luckily, on a ship of this size there would be little chance of accidental you running into a Bajoran. It was more likely that he would find them and get the drop on them.

**There’s no sign that they’ve detected me. Their internal sensors must be down. Best to keep them off my trail.**

Just then, a Bajoran stepped off a turbolift. Holmes was equally surprised, but his phaser was already drawn and he took the Bajoran down with a shot to the chest. Moving quickly, Holmes stripped the man of his weapons. He looked at the turbolift, and decided to send the Bajorans a little surprise.

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Former Major Dugan watched his people rapidly try to regain control of the ship. This was his first time on the bridge of a Cardassian ship as anything but a prisoner. He had known that this act of desperation would warrant retaliation, but he thought for sure that Deep Space Nine’s runabouts would be no match for Cardassian warship. Apparently, he was just as guilty of underestimation of the Federation as the Cardassians were of the Bajorans.

He needed to rally his troops quickly. There was already talk of surrender. And I just would not do. Not after all they’d done to get this far.

He heard the sound of the turbolift coming in was looking forward to some good news from the engineer he had just sent down surveyed the damage.

When the turbolift doors opened, however, they at first glance appeared to be empty. As one of his officers walked over to investigate, he saw the contents of the turbolift and began to shout a warning.

Too late. The object in the turbolift exploded, throwing his officer tumbling end over end backward into

the bridge.

When the dust cleared, the turbo lift had exploded in a fantastic shower of sparks and debris. The twisted remains of the phaser set to overload sat innocently in the middle of the damaged equipment. Several key relays had been damaged, causing a cascade effect through the systems. There would be one opportunity to stop the effect.

“Are internal sensors functioning?!” Dugan demanded. He knew his crew had been frazzled by the external attacks and the internal sabotage both, but he expected them to push that aside as he had.

“No sir, we’re working blind!”

Stifling a curse, Dugan headed to engineering. Being a terrorist, he knew the most vulnerable points of a ship were almost always in engineering and he would have bet his best earring that that was where the saboteur was headed.

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Holmes peaked cautiously into engineering, withdrawing his head just in time as Bajoran sidearm fire threatened to decapitate him. Holmes fired a few shots blindly into the room. He had only a survival knife and a Bajoran sidearm to work with, sense his phaser had given its life to take out the turbo lift.

**There’s too damn many of them. But maybe I can distract them.**

Holmes held to tricorder out and used it to scan for essential ship systems. He needed to do something to draw them out of engineering without actually shooting them. Having never used a Bajoran weapon before, he wasn’t sure he had it on its stun setting.

The ship rocked suddenly, but not violently. Some part of Holmes registered that they had locked on to with a tractor beam.

**Good. That’ll give them something else to think about while I finish my business. They’ve got shields, but no weapons or propulsion if my readings are correct. That leaves them in a very compromising position.**

Hearing shouts of attack, Holmes ran down the corridor, narrowly avoiding a throng of angry Bajorans hot on his heels, sidearms at the ready.

He turned a corner and ran right into another Bajoran. This was the one who had been on the view screen. Holmes felt a fist connect with his jaw. He crumbled, but managed to tackle his opponent at the knees.

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Dugan brought an elbow down on Holmes’ back. Holmes grunted, twisted, and drove a knee into the Bajoran’s kidney. That allowed him to get free and take two strides, but Dugan’s foot lashed out and caught Holmes. His world swam as he hit the metal-plated floor nearly jaw first. He tasted copper in his mouth and felt a gash on his lip. He rolled over on his back and kicked both feet out, hitting the Bajoran in the sternum. He rolled over and took off from a crouch, but was immediately tackled by another



Bajoran. No sooner had he fought that one off than another one piled on.

A pistol phaser was at his head, along with three others at his back. Holmes held his hands up, gulping.

“You’ll make a fine hostage for the ones we need to replace,” Dugan told him in a surprisingly kind voice. “We don’t wish you harm, Federation. All we want is this ship.”

“You’re going about this all wrong. I don’t know how you got control of this ship, but you aren’t going anywhere. Even with hostages. Your ship is crippled. And if you take me hostage, the entire Federation will come down on you. But if we work together, we can end this crisis”

Dugan could almost agree to the logic in that statement. They were outnumbered, outgunned, and nearly defenseless. In two minutes, main power would be offline. Not to mention the tractor beam that was persistently trying to lock onto them.

**Now is the time to become martyrs. If we self-destruct, then no one will ever know how many Cardassians we killed. We’ll send a message to Bajorans everywhere that they no longer need to cower. They are a free people, and the destruction of this ship will prove it!**

-

This was bad. Holmes knew he had to do something. But with three weapons trained on him, how could he escape.

One Bajoran collared him and dragged him up from the ground, hauling him to his feet. Holmes gave him a nod of gratitude. He saw a console off to the side, and decided to gamble. He feigned a weariness that he didn’t actually feel in any way, and slammed shoulder-first into the console, managing to look dazed. His Bajoran ‘friend’ helped him up again. As he did, Holmes stole a glance at the console.

**That phaser overloading did more damage than I thought. In one minute, they’ll be out of power. And I’ve got most of the crew here, guarding me. Which means they can only be fixing the problem from the bridge. How can I use this?  
For now, I’ve got to keep him talking.**

“Your shields are up, so you can’t beam me out. Why don’t you try negotiating? I’ve still got my commbadge on...”

Dugan nodded to Holmes, allowing him to tap his commbadge.

“Holmes to *Hudson*.”

Graves’ voice came back across the slightly static-y line.

“We hear you, Ensign. Go ahead.”

“I’ve been taken hostage by the Bajoran group. They’re going to negotiate terms for my release. I planned to escape, but there’s just too many of them. However, I recommend moving at least 100,000 kilometers away, as their engines may be unstable, if my tricorder readings are correct. Either way, their ship is heavily damaged. We all may need an emergency beam out, if we’re all to survive. And-”

“You’re wasting your time, ensign,” Dugan cut in. “I’m aware of the countdown to main power failure, too. And your delay tactic won’t work.”

Holmes put on a look of innocence. “I’m doing what I can to ensure the survival of my people. Which is what you should be considering, too.”

**Amatuer. He just told them about the weakened state of their ship. I was wondering how to communicate that.**

“Here are the terms, Starfleet: This ship will self-destruct unless you move out of transporter range within twenty seconds. Move- now!”

Holmes’ jaw dropped in utter surprise. “What do you gain from that? You lose the ship; your men; and you take no Cardassians with you! There’s not even any honor in that!”

The Bajoran closed his eyes. “No. But we earn a place in history. As martyrs.”

He wheeled around to head back to the bridge, leaving Holmes without any good answers to the question of survival.

**I had planned to take one of his men hostage until I could be beamed out, but it’s obvious he doesn’t care about that. I need to do something...in twenty seconds, their shields will drop.**

There was one option that Holmes could see.

“Holmes to *Rio Grande*.”

“This is O’Brien; go ahead Holmes.”

“Are you carrying a doctor, Mr. O’Brien?”

“Yes, we are.”

“Good.”

The line cut out, but not before the cry of battle was heard by the crew.

“Damnit, we need that shield down now!” O’Brien swore, his big fist slamming against the console.

“I may have an answer, Chief,” Lt. Jadzia Dax said, calmly but efficiently. “We can run a pulse along our own tractor beam and into their shields. That should disrupt them long enough for a transport.”

O’Brien considered the idea, noting it’s merits quickly, but just as quickly noting it’s downside. Which was:

“Who do we transport? We’ll only get one shot. We either get the Bajorans or we get the human.”

This was the time when all anyone could do was bow their heads. Starfleet Academy taught you to never leave behind your comrades. But they also taught you that good relations with other species were the only thing the Federation has to truly rely on. In this case, deserting the twelve Bajorans to save one Ensign would have cast a large shadow on Bajor’s budding entry into the Federation.

Chief O'Brien made the call. "O'Brien to *Hudson*."

"*Hudson* here. Go ahead."

"Prepare to transport the Bajorans on the Bridge. We'll handle the group near Engineering."

"..." A heavy pause, followed by; "Understood. On your mark, *Rio Grande*."

O'Brien readied the transport controls. "Dax, is the pulse ready?"

She nodded once, firmly. "Yes, chief."

"Fire."

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Another blast rocked the embattled ship, sending showers of sparks flying as consoles ruptured. Holmes had been lucky- he was in the middle of four Bajorans, all of whom took the brunt of the explosion. He checked on them, noted that they would live, then ran for the bridge. He was ready to die, but that didn't mean he'd roll over and accept it if he didn't have to.

He didn't notice the Bajorans disappearing in his wake.

-

The last shockwave sped up the cascade effect. Dugan turned to see Holmes enter the bridge. He fired his weapon, singing Holmes' thick brown hair as the young Ensign combat-rolled to the cover of a bulkhead.

That was the last thing Dugan would see as a transporter beam seized him.

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Holmes got up, wondering what had happened. He was alone.

"THIRTY SECONDS UNTIL CRITICAL OVERLOAD. AUTO-DESTRUCT INITIATED."

The cold, dispassionate Cardassian computer sounded Holmes' death knell. He exhaled, happy to have completed his mission. But he was going to die on a cold, foreign bridge. He looked at the last working console, to call up the image on the view screen. He cursed.

"Graves' to Holmes. Respond!"

"Holmes here," Dan responded absently.

"Holmes, you've got to get out of there! That ship is going to explode. Lower the shields and let us transport you off!"

Holmes tone was low and regretful as he informed Graves that "I can't do that. We're too close the

station. If the ship explodes now, it'll take DS9 with it. I'm going to pilot it away with maneuvering thrusters."

Holmes was already doing that, as the computer told him that he had ten seconds to live. Ten seconds to save two thousand innocent lives.

**If you have to go, that's the way to do it.**

Without thinking, Holmes diverted power from shields into thrusters. He pushed the ship as hard as he dared. He heard it creak with protest in the last few seconds of it's life.

**100,000...200,000...300,000 kilometers. That's the best I can do. Anymore and I'll blow the ship myself.**

A console directly above his head exploded, and a piece of metal flying hit Holmes hard enough to knock him out.

-

The explosion was movie-violent. The stars themselves seemed to shudder as the Cardassian warship exploded from the inside out, sending debris hurtling in all directions. There were hardly even trace elements of the ship left.

Robert Graves swore mightily, thumping a hand against the command chair that had been recently vacated by the man who had given his life to save a group of terrorists. Graves had lost friends and even new recruits before. But never to save the lives of terrorists!

"Set a course for Deep Space Nine, Mr. Larson. We'll...we'll report in person. I'll go collect Holmes' personal effects."

Larson stiffened his face, although a tear or two betrayed his efforts.

"Aye, sir. Plotting a course and laying it in. Half-impulse."

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The light were too damned bright, Holmes thought. Was this death? Heaven? Hell? Somewhere else?

Then he smelled a strong disinfectant and felt a just-barely-uncomfortable bed beneath him. It wasn't hell; it was a sickbay.

He sat up with a start, but plopped back down as that hurt far too much. He repeated the gesture, this time slowly. Gradually, he made it to a sitting position without much nausea, and a dull headache.

"Where-"

"You're on Deep Space Nine," came a soothing voice. Holmes squinted, looking toward who was speaking to him. He recognized him as the doctor from the *Rio Grande*.

"I'm going to make it?" Holmes asked.

"How do you feel?"

"Like hell."

"That's a sure sign you'll live," the doctor chuckled. "I'm Julian Bashir; Chief Medical Officer."

"Ensign Daniel Holmes; I was just assigned to Deep Space Nine when all hell broke loose out there." Holmes stood up, offering his hand to Bashir. "Thank you. You saved my life, I assume?"

"Oh, heavens no!" the Doctor exclaimed. "Actually, you have Chief O'Brien and Lieutenant Dax to thank for that. Between the two of them, they managed to localize your commbadge and beam you out. Now then, if you're feeling up to it, your crew is waiting. I daresay they were near tears. You must be well liked."

--

Graves had shaken his hand stoically, informing Holmes that he had a bright future, and that he would put him down for another commendation.

Larson was more shy, but Holmes made sure to go out of his way to shake the cadet's hand and tell him that his future was equally promising.

"Just learn from my mistake," Holmes had said. "Don't get yourself blown up and you'll be okay."

After all that was said and done, Holmes was summoned to Ops. Bashir offered to walk him up, and Holmes gratefully accepted. Deep Space Nine was big, and the company was welcome, even if Holmes had known where he was going.

What awaited him was a small group. The first to meet him was Major Kira Nerys.

"I wanted to thank you for saving those Bajorans. I can assure you they'll be dealt with on Bajor. It...means a lot to have someone go out on a limb like that."

Holmes managed a tired smile. "It was my pleasure. Right up until that explosion thing."

They laughed for a moment, then Kira backed off with Bashir. Next Holmes met with the two who had saved him.

"Glad you were in one piece when we got ya," O'Brien told him while shaking his hand. "We weren't sure we caught you in time."

"Thank you again for taking the risk to save me. I owe you one already, Chief," Holmes intoned, amused.

The last one waiting for him was Lieutenant Dax. Holmes drew in a breath and straightened up. "It seems I owe you on as well, Liutenant."

**And boy, do I not mind a bit! If you've got to owe someone, then this is the way to go!**

"Call me Jadzia," she offered. "I'm glad you made it, Daniel. Welcome aboard."

His old girl shyness suddenly front and center, Holmes fumbled over his words at first, but finally managed to spit out a coherent sentence.

"Thank you. It's good to be here. I look forward to working with you."

At that moment, the doors of a raised office swished open. A large African American man bounded down the steps, a wide grin on his face.

"Ensign Daniel Holmes, I presume?"

Holmes drew up formally, hands behind his back.

"Yes, sir."

"At ease, Ensign. Let me welcome you aboard. I hope you enjoy your stay here on Deep Space Nine."

Holmes gave a courteous nod. "I'm sure I will, Commander. Thank you."

"I insist you join me for dinner later, after you've rested. Not to brag, but I've never had anyone walk away from one of my meals unsatisfied."

"I'll show him to his quarters, Benjamin," Dax offered. "Then I can come back and help you and Jake get ready for dinner?"

Sisco grinned. "Looking for an invitation to dinner, old man?"

Dax smiled back, and Holmes' breath caught in his chest.

"Always, Benjamin."

With that, Dax led the way out of Ops. Holmes was too tired now, but he was certain he'd be talking with this lovely female again.

**I've just pitted my wits against terrorists. This challenge will be far more interesting. I think I'm going to like it here.**

## 2 - "Carpe Diem" (Part 1)

Benjamin Sisko could tell that his new ensign was used to standing on ceremony. He had arrived for this informal dinner party in uniform, with his boots and commbadge absolutely shining from careful attention and maintenance. In one way, it did Sisko's heart good to see a young man so passionate about his career. But it was a bit of a concern that the younger man didn't seem to when or even how to relax. Sisko had seen more than one young officer get tired of Starfleet quickly after being gung-ho and doing too much, too soon.

On the other hand, it did seem that Daniel Holmes had other interests as well. More than once, his eyes wandered to the very pretty lieutenant sitting diagonally across from him.

**I wonder if the old man's noticed yet?** Sisko wondered in amusement. It was still somewhat awkward for him to think of Dax as a female. But all the same, it would be healthy for her to have a man in her life.

"So, how do you like my dad's cooking, Ensign?" asked Jake Sisko. He flashed a winning grin at Holmes. It made Benjamin Sisko smile. He had asked Jake to be extra nice to the newest member of Deep Space Nine's team, but he knew he'd needn't have worried. Jake was a friendly boy without any prodding. And it seemed that Holmes was close enough in age that Jake felt comfortable enough to talk with as though they were equals. Sisko worried for brief moment that Holmes might take that as an insult. Some officers tended to demand respect, sometimes at the cost of their integrity. Again, Sisko's worries were for nothing as Holmes genuinely seemed relieved that Jake had spoken to him in a normal way.

"It's delicious. No, that's doing it an injustice. It's beyond delicious," the young ensign assured his host. "Oh, you can call me 'Dan', by the way."

Jake grinned at the display of familiarity. At that age, boys tended to look up to their older counterparts as role models. Sisko felt that Jake would probably learn a lot from Holmes in that regard and could do worse for a male influence.

"You've really outdone yourself, Benjamin," Dax added, happily munching on grilled chicken and salt potatoes.

Sisko smiled widely and waved his arms expansively across the table.

"Between the compliments and the polished boots, I'm inclined to think that you two are lobbying for promotions."

"I almost broke out the dress uniform," Holmes admitted around a sheepish grin. That earned a round of laughter from everyone. "But if that was an offer to be promoted..."

The renewed laughter nearly drowned out the sound of the door chime. Still laughing, Sisko got up to answer the door. His laughter failed pretty quickly when he saw who was on the other side.

“Can I help you, Quark?” the Commander asked, allowing disdain to drip into his voice.

Without waiting for an invitation, Quark bustled in.

“Actually Commander, I’m here to meet the new guy.” Quark scanned the room and quickly settled on the one unfamiliar face. With a sharp-toothed grin, he strode over as fast as his little Ferengi legs could carry him.

“Ah, you must be the new fellow all my customers are talking about. Well, let me just say that you, my friend, are *very* good for business!”

Holmes stood up politely, hands behind his back at first, though he did offer his hand for handshake once Quark finished talking. Quark took it, albeit briefly. Hyoo-mans weren’t creatures he liked to touch. Their lobes weren’t quite prominent enough for them to be trustworthy. They made wonderful business patsies, though.

“ Well, I’m... glad I could help?” Dan stated\questioned. His eyes wandered around the room, silently asking how he was supposed to react to this. He had, of course, been ‘warned’ about the Ferengi at the academy, but this was his first time dealing with one in person.

Sisko seemed a little put off by the Ferengi’s impromptu visit. He snapped his fingers suddenly. “Let me guess, Quark - rule number 121?”

Quirk seemed a little taken aback, but recovered quickly. “Rule of Acquisition Number 194, actually. ‘It’s always good business to know about a new customers before they walk in the door’. But that was close, Commander. You must have been studying.”

Turning his back on Sisko, leaving the Commander with his index finger raised and his mouth open, ready to start telling the Ferengi off, Quark faced Holmes again, a greedy grin spreading across his wide face.

“So, a hero, eh? And this isn’t your first time?”

“Actually-” Holmes began to protest, but Quark cut him off.

“Details, details-” Quark said, waving a dismissive hand. “What’s import is that the *others* perceive you as a hero. And your modesty will just add to my profit! Er, your respect, I mean.”

Putting his arm around Holmes’ shoulder, he guided him toward the door.

“How about coming down to the bar and talking about your heroic exploits? I’ll give you a good price on drinks-”

“Quark!” Sisko demanded, a dangerous edge to his voice.

“Commander, it’s rude to interrupt!” Quark managed to sound disgusted, causing Sisko’s temper to flare even more. But Quark ignored that and continued.

“Now, what was I saying?”

Sisko seized the diminutive Ferengi by the shoulders. “You were just leaving.”



Before the Ferengi could protest, he found himself being pushed through the door into nearly into Major Kira. She caught him around the shoulders, but almost as quickly threw him off. It was no secret that Kira was no fan of Quark's, and that was further evidenced by the look of revulsion on her face as she touched him.

"Good evening, Major."

The Ferengi's comment went ignored as Sisko's gestured for Kira to come in. Quark bustled by, unconcerned about the Major's flippancy attitude, though he did take an extended look at her backside as he retreated back to his bar.

"I'm sorry to intrude, Commander," Kira said apologetically. She'd known that this was just meant to be a small gathering, and that Dax had wormed her way in by setting the table (and being an old friend of the Commander's), so she wasn't offended she was excluded. She'd been busy elsewhere anyway, as someone had to run the station.

"Nonsense, you're always welcome here. Now, what can I do for you, Major?"

"Actually, I came to see Ensign Holmes."

"By all means," Sisko said invitingly. "It seems you're popular tonight, Dan."

Holmes strode across the room and stopped in front of Major Kira, standing formally.

"Yes, Major? How can I help?"

Kira seemed excited as she told Holmes "I've just been in contact with the provisional government on Bajor. They wanted me to pass on their thanks for the way you handled the situation with those terrorists. They've transported me this, and asked me to pass it on to you."

Nodding his thanks, Dan took the intricately wrapped box. He made sure to stare at it appreciatively before opening it, but it was more curiosity than manners that caused him to remember that bit of etiquette.

Beneath the gold paper decorated with the Bajoran home world insignia lay a lacquered box also distinguished by the beetle-like Bajoran symbol. The lid was bound to the box by a black cord. At Kira's encouraging nod, Holmes removed the cord and pulled the top off the box.

Inside the box, laying on a bed of small, polished black stones lay a thin gold necklace, weighted down by a platinum amulet. The amulet was oval in shape, and was distinguished by a small circle on the top through which the chain was threaded.

"It's beautiful!" Dax exclaimed as Holmes pulled the pendant out, allowing it to dangle from his hand. Its heavy weight reminded him that doing the right thing didn't come without a price at times.

"It's the medal that Bajor awards two non - Bajoran recipients. It used to be called the 'Alien Friends of Bajor' award, but it lost that name after the Cardassian occupation. 'Alien' seemed too impersonal, so now it's called the 'Bajoran Ally' award. Only a handful have been awarded since the end of the

occupation. One of the other recipients, in fact, was Commander Sisko.”

It was clear from the expectant tone in Kira’s voice that this medal meant a lot to either her personally or to Bajorans in general. Either way, Holmes was beyond flattered to receive this award. But he was also exasperated.

**So much for my quiet entry to Deep Space Nine.** he mused. But who could stay mad at receiving such a commendation from a race that had (understandable) trust issues?

“Major, I’m honored. It really means a lot,” he gasped in awe. A smile crept over his face. It was a very real gesture, despite his reluctance. He liked Major Kira already, and if her beleaguered people were going to show him trust, objecting would be stupid and impolite, and Holmes was neither of those things. “Will you pass on my thanks?”

Kira inclined her head, still smiling. “Of course.”

With that, Kira left. Holmes looked at the medal, a smile creeping across his face. “You know, I didn’t joint Starfleet for the kudos,” he told them. “But it is nice to get them.”

Dax put a hand on Holmes’ shoulder as he admired the medal. “Congratulations, Daniel. You earned that.”

Holmes gave a thin smile, not sure if he appreciated Dax’s hand on him or the medal more. “Thanks...but I’m not sure. I mean, I was there, and I helped and everything. But you and O’Brien got me out; Commander Graves knocked down their shields; Cadet Larson got me onto the ship in time to sabotage them...”

He ran a hand through his thick hair, grimacing a little.

“I don’t know, I just don’t want to come across as a big hero. Especially being new, I don’t want everyone thinking that I’ve got...you know...a big ego or something. Or that I throw myself into dangerous situations for the thanks.”

He dropped his hand, giving a small laugh. “And now I sound ungrateful.”

“No, not at all,” Dax assured him. “I totally get where you’re coming from. Curzon didn’t like the spotlight being on him like that very much either.”

“Curzon?” Holmes questioned, wondering why the other dinner guests were chuckling.

And with that, talk of Dax’s previous identities and more well-earned compliments about Sisko’s cooking filled the room, and Holmes forgot all about his trepidation. He felt like he was being accepted, and that’s what he really wanted all along. So he settled in and enjoyed his colleagues and friends. He decided to make sure to do more good things so that he could come back for another meal.

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The next day was Holmes’ official first day on duty. He had met everyone except for the Chief of Security, Odo. And boy, was Holmes curious about him.

“A Shapeshifter?” he had asked incredulously while tapping keys on his console. “I didn’t know there were any. Huh. I’ll have to meet him.”

Kira looked over Holmes’ shoulder briefly, nodding at the data on the screen. She transferred the readings she needed to a data padd. “Just don’t gawk at him. Odo doesn’t like being on display.”

Holmes handed Kira another padd. This was one full of mindless inventory work he’d done to get himself acclimated to the ship’s systems. The Cardassian-Federation-Bajoran hybrid that was Chief O’Brien’s work in progress took a little getting used to.

“You know him well, Major?”

“You could say that. I’ve known him for years. Since the occupation.”

Holmes finished one more bit of work, then closed his terminal’s connection. “I’ve finished downloading the sensor and security logs from the *Hudson*. If it’s okay, Major, I’d like to run them down to Odo. It’ll give me a chance to meet him, and something to talk about when I do meet him.”

Kira nodded her consent, smiling a little at the enthusiasm. It reminded her a bit of herself during her days as a Bajoran Resistance member. She’d always been gung-ho herself.

Sisko stepped out of his office as Holmes was walking by. Holmes politely nodded and continued on his way to the turbolift. Sisko fell into step behind him.

“Where are you headed, Dan?”

“Security, Sir. I’m delivering some logs from the *Hudson*.”

“Do you mind some company? I’m on my way to inspect the *Hudson* now. Chief O’Brien has been doing a maintenance overhaul on her since the skirmish.”

Holmes stepped to one side on the narrow lift. “Promenade,” he told the computer. He took up his formal posture, back straight and hands clasped behind his back. “I’m a little surprised that Starfleet Command had us keep the *Hudson*.”

“Mmm,” Sisko agreed. He was looking over a data padd as the turbolift sped down to the Promenade. “I would imagine that they’re having us hold onto it for security reasons.”

Sisko looked up to find Holmes deep in thought. Sparing him from asking, he informed Holmes that “It took two runabouts to take down one Cardassian ship. This will give us four, and increase our odds of holding out.”

“That’s a good advantage of the *Danube* Class,” Dan noted. “The small crew compliment, I mean. I think that, at any given time, we could muster enough people who are on-duty to use six runabouts.”

The turbolift reached the promenade, and Sisko stepped off the turbolift into the hustle and bustle of the average morning crowd. The station was a lively place even at off hours, though most of the more popular attractions were closed in the morning. Sisko noted that Quark was serving a ‘special Bajoran breakfast’ today. It might be worth it having Odo look into that, to be sure that Quark wasn’t selling synthehol this early, or that one of his shady, clandestine meetings wasn’t taking place. Sisko could

swear that Ferengi was worth a security log by himself.

The two officers nodded cordially, then broke off in separate directions. Holmes slowed his pace down a bit, taking in the view. So many different races to look at; so many of them a mere footnote in a textbook or an offhand reference by a professor. To see them in person was awe-inspiring. It made Holmes remember some of what he loved about Starfleet.

His curiosity slaked for the moment, Dan redirected himself toward the security office. The twin glass doors hissed open on his approach, granting him access to the office occupied by the station's security chief, Odo. Holmes was curious in spite of himself -what would the shape-shifter look like?

What greeted him was a humanoid form with pale skin and slicked back blond hair which framed a face that was almost human, but not quite so. The skin was unnaturally smooth and abutted by two smooth, featureless, vaguely ear-shaped appendages. The relatively tall body was covered with a Bajoran military uniform.

"Can I help you?" came a gruff, gravelly voice. Holmes snapped to attention, realizing he was guilty of the one thing he'd meant not to do.

"Yes, actually. I'm Ensign Daniel Holmes. This is my first day on duty here, and I'd hoped to meet you, since I'll be working under you as part of my command track training."

Odo gave Holmes an appraising look, probably similar to the local Holmes had given him. With a nod of his head, Odo gestured toward the collection of data pads that Holmes was juggling in two overloaded arms.

"Are those for me, Ensign?"

Looking at his load as though surprised, Holmes managed a dim nod before handing over the whole kit and caboodle.

"Yes, sir. These are the sensor logs and security logs from the *USS Hudson*. Starfleet is allowing us to keep the runabout for security reasons. Chief O'Brien is getting the ship an overhaul from the damage it took in the skirmish with the Bajoran terrorists. I'm headed there now, if you'd care to come along and inspect the security measures."

Odo was already looking through the pads, scrolling through the data within rapidly and exchanging them nearly as quickly.

"That won't be necessary, Ensign."

It was a moment before Holmes belatedly realized that the conversation was over. He was more than a bit taken aback by the sudden, rather rude dismissal before he realized that he probably had it coming from gawking like an idiot. The worst part was that Holmes was unsure as to how to correct his faux pas. He was getting the idea that apologizing out right wasn't the right course to take with the enigmatic security chief. So, unsure as of what else to do, Holmes muttered 'Nice meeting you' and exited as gracefully as he could.

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Miles O'Brien had been at work on the same runabout for nearly 8 hours. It hadn't taken too much

damage, but it was underpowered in its defensive systems and needed a major overhaul. Chief O'Brien was to his elbows in engine grease and discarded bits of conduit, but this was what he lived for. His work was his life, sometimes at the expense of his home life. As understanding as his wife Keiko could be, she needed her husband around. And with a young daughter, a beautiful little girl named Molly, O'Brien couldn't let his work completely dominate his life. No matter how great the temptation.

He was so engrossed in his work, making mental calculations and the like, that he missed his giant boss walking calmly toward him.

"How's it going, Chief?"

O'Brien started to reply, but banged his head comically on the console he was parked under. He emerged, rubbing his aching forehead. He'd gotten more bruises working on this Cardassian bucket o' bolts than in all his other years in Starfleet combined.

"About as expected, sir," O'Brien reported, wiping his hands on a rag he kept for just such occasions. "She's a fine piece of machinery, but she needs more power. Maybe another phaser bank or two. I'm using the *Hudson* as a test subject for work I plan to do on other vessels. So far, so good."

All of a sudden, with no warning, a conduit above O'Brien's head exploded, raining fragments down on the two men. More hazardous was the console blowing up in O'Brien's face, and the fire that started. Fire Suppression systems were off-line apparently, as the ship only gave an audio warning about the fire.

Sisko grimaced, preparing himself for pain as he reached through the growing fire to pull O'Brien out. The fire ate through his uniform quickly and began licking his arms and chest with orange flames. No one could accuse Benjamin Sisko of being a coward.

Ensign Holmes was just entering the landing pad when he saw the fire through the doors of the airlock, which had sealed off once the fire was sensed by the station's sensor array. Holmes didn't have an override code yet. So instead, he tapped his commbadge:

"Holmes to Infirmary! Medical Emergency on Landing Pad C! Beam out Sisko and O'Brien now!"

*"Bashir to Holmes. We can't get through the airlock seal! You have to override the lockout!"*

"That's a negative, Doctor. I don't have a command code yet!"

Holmes wondered why Sisko hadn't ordered the station to allow the airlock doors to open. He looked over, finding Sisko beating furiously on the glass part of the airlock door. The glass was decorative, with an actual force field in place over it.

"Holmes to Bashir! Speak your command code-"

Holmes put his commbadge right up to the control panel that was blocking his access to the runabout. "-now!"

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Odo surveyed the scene with his critical eye while Major Kira plowed through the damage, extinguishing small fires with a fire extinguisher.

“What a mess!” she exclaimed, cursing as she stubbed her toe on a piece of burned console casing.  
“What on earth caused this?!”

Odo surveyed the airlock doors, making a sort of growl sound of discovery.  
“Either the station was damaged when the Cardassian ship exploded...”

A pause. Kira hated it when Odo got lost in thought in mid-sentence. But it was such a ‘humanoid’ thing to do, it made her smile despite her annoyance. Most of the time, anyway. Right now, with O’Brien’s life in danger, it wasn’t amusing at all.

“...Or what?” she prompted him.

Odo held out a small bit of what looked like a timer.

“Or we have a saboteur on our hands. A saboteur who uses Bajoran resources.”