

Where No Wizard has Gone Before

Story: Where No Wizard has Gone Before

Storylink: <https://www.fanfiction.net/s/10850909/1/>

Category: StarTrek: The Next Generation + Harry Potter Crossover

Genre: Sci-Fi

Author: Blueowl

Authorlink: <https://www.fanfiction.net/u/1201799/>

Last updated: 12/21/2014

Words: 35120

Rating: M

Status: Complete

Content: Chapter 1 to 9 of 9 chapters

Source: FanFiction.net

Summary: Harry has been reborn time and time again after becoming the Master of Death, living through hundreds of lifetimes in dozens of universes, but this rebirth is strange even by his standards—no doubt thanks to how he had died the last time. StarTrek:TNG/HarryPotter Powerful!Harry MoD!Harry, Guinan, Q, Borg, Lwaxana.
COMPLETE

***Chapter 1*: Chapter 1**

Where No Wizard has Gone Before

Summary: Harry has been reborn time and time again after becoming the Master of Death, living through hundreds of lifetimes in dozens of universes, but this rebirth is strange even by his standards—no doubt thanks to how he had died the last time. StarTrek:TNG/HarryPotter Powerful!Harry MoD!Harry

Disclaimer: I obviously don't own the idea of Harry Potter or Star Trek, or any money making forms of them.

Author's note: This begins in season 2, episode 1: 'The Child', but I have taken the liberty (as all fanfic writers do) of altering things where I wish—meaning this story will not perfectly conform to the events in that episode/series at all. IMO, this episode's premise was very good, but there were several things in it I believe could have been executed better. This is my attempt to remedy those issues while mixing in a bit of magic. I hope I do it justice.

This will likely only involve a few episodes in Star Trek: The Next Generation, but if I get attacked by the unyielding plot bunnies again, I may return to write more. However, at this time, just accept the likelihood that this story will be fairly short—at least compared to my other fanfics.

A special thanks to Chereche, who acted as a soundboard and beta for this fic ^ _ ^

WARNING: Discussions/mentions of rape.

A/N #2: This is a re-posting but has remained unchanged to the original, save for the rating. Apparently the mere mention of rape makes it necessary for the story to be rated M and not T (or at least that's the reason I'm assuming). Well, despite my feelings on the matter, it is now rated as such. But again, nothing explicit is written, nor will I ever write such details. Sorry to those of you who were left wondering where my story vanished to earlier in the week. I was just as surprised. I hope to re-post the rest of the story throughout this day, and hopefully post part 7 (one I hadn't posted before the story was deemed having 'explicit content or adult content above current rating' and thus removed). Thank you for your patience.

Chapter 1

Harry had grown old more times than he cared to count, but it seemed he would not be able to dote on any great grandchildren — or even children for that matter — this time around. The world in which he currently resided (and would soon die in) was extremely violent and currently suffering through a cataclysm. The sky was falling, to put it simply, and the enemy had won. All Harry could do now was place wards around a sacred site in hopes that it would one day be found and used to restore the light.

Straining as he layered his wards over one another, placing magicks to hide the location from any wishing to do harm while preserving the knowledge within, he felt his life force draining and Death calling.

In all his previous deaths, he had managed to be at rest when it was finally time to move on. He had never been forced to pass or die while expending vast amounts of magic. He had never been forced by a world's evil to accept defeat, no matter how miniscule the possibility of victory appeared. But this time was different. This time he would not greet Death like an old friend. This time he wouldn't choose to go, but this time he had no choice.

As his life continued to slip away, he gave one final push of magic, one final thrust of power —all the while hoping it would be enough to enable someone else to save this world because . . . it would not be him. Not this time.

And finally, Death took him.

O

Death took hold of his master's soul, bound by rules even he could not break, and quickly threw it into the realms

of existence for it to find life again. Normally, he wouldn't be so sloppy, but Harry's soul had to be deposited quickly, before it destroyed itself from the excess ward magic whirling around it. As it was, despite Death's promptness, this persistent magic had already affected his master.

Death watched from a distance, already hearing Fate and Destiny quarreling over his immortal mortal.

Eternity was never boring.

O

Deanna Troi woke suddenly and out of breath, certain there was someone in her quarters. Her eyes scanned the dark room, finding no one. But someone was there. Someone with a very strong presence. Sitting up further, her hand brushed against her stomach. Her heart suddenly leapt.

She looked down as her mind came to a startling conclusion. The presence was inside her.

Trying to get her breathing under control, she forced herself to think about what to do. Her thoughts immediately went to William Riker. Surely he would believe her, but it wasn't a matter of belief. She needed proof, she needed to know what this was for herself before she could do anything else, even seek comfort.

But Beverly Crusher, the ship's doctor for the past year, had been named Head of Starfleet Medical and was gone, along with her son, Wesley Crusher. The new doctor had arrived only a day before. Dr. Katherine Pulaski. Highly qualified, she was skilled in a wide range of specialties and Deanna had met her once before. She had a hard exterior, but had compassion bubbling beneath the surface. Pulaski could be trusted to take her claim seriously and look into it properly.

Deanna closed her eyes, her attention returning to the entity within her. It didn't seem to be feeling much at the moment, although what little she was able to sense was exhaustion. With a frown, she quickly got dressed before going to the com.

"Dr. Pulaski? This is Counselor Troi," she said, somehow managing to keep her voice steady.

"This is Pulaski, may I help you?" the voice answered over the com, surprisingly awake despite the early hour.

"I'm sorry, but do you have a moment? I need to see you privately."

Troi's heart was in her throat, praying there had been no one else around Pulaski. As much as she loved this crew, they were known to talk — not hatefully, thankfully, but gossip was gossip.

"Of course. And I am alone; you may speak freely. Would you prefer I come to you, or you come to sickbay or my office?"

"It would probably be best if I came to you," Troi reluctantly replied. "And thank you. I would appreciate discretion in this."

"Say no more. I'll be in sickbay."

"Thank you. Troi out."

Troi shook herself, her senses still feeling the presence within her. Perhaps she should notify security? No. First she needed to see if what she feared was actually so. If she had sensed any hostility from it, then it would be different. But right now, she was certain it was merely sleeping.

Entering sickbay was daunting, but once she crossed the threshold, her fears turned into resolve.

"Counselor," Pulaski greeted, motioning her to the back room.

Pulaski was older than Dr. Crusher, but her hair had not yet begun to gray — though it was close. She was thin but not frail, and her expression seemed to be perpetually serious.

Troi followed, her hands clasped at her stomach. Fortunately no one else was around.

"So, what seems to be the problem?" Pulaski asked, facing her with a medical tricorder.

"Something happened last night, well, early this morning. Something . . . a presence . . . entered me."

Pulaski frowned. "Is it still there?" she asked while quickly scanning the readout on the tricorder.

"Yes."

Pulaski closed the tricorder. "Do you sense anything from it?"

"I believe it's resting. I've only been able to sense one thing from it, and the closest thing I can compare it to is exhaustion. Complete exhaustion, a fatigue so strong that it hurts."

"Are you in any pain?"

"No. I'm just sensing that that is how it feels."

"Come over here. I want to do a full examination before we do anything else."

Troi obliged, grateful Pulaski was going to be thorough.

O

Captain Picard entered the bridge from his ready room. After giving the front of his uniform a tug out of habit, he looked to Riker. "Number One."

"Lieutenant La Forge says we will be able to engage the warp drive within the hour."

"Grand. Mister Data, please inform Starbase 163 of our maintenance needs and that we will be arriving in three days," Picard ordered.

"Aye, Captain," Data said.

"Has our new doctor reported in?" Picard asked.

"I was actually going to head down to sickbay in an hour. She sent me a message this morning saying that she was seeing a patient and would have to postpone the formal report in," Riker explained.

Picard's eyebrows rose. "Must have been an emergency."

"It sounded like it was, sir," Riker agreed.

"Well, I think I'll go with you when you meet with her."

"Very good, sir."

O

Pulaski heard the doors slide open and two people enter her sickbay.

"I'll be right back, Deanna," she said, reassuringly patting the tense woman. "I'll have to tell the Captain, but you don't have to see anyone unless you wish."

"Thank you. And yes, I'd like to be alone right now," Troi answered, glancing at the display screen showing the

growing child within her.

"Very well."

Pulaski quickly left the back room and found Picard and Riker approaching her office.

"Ah, just the men I wanted to see. Please, let's talk in my office."

Picard and Riker shared a look as she passed them to lead the way.

"I'm sorry I wasn't able to report in as planned, but I needed to see to a patient." Pulaski turned to face them, her face even more serious than usual. "I was actually about to contact you about it before you walked in, as I believe it warrants your attention. Deanna Troi called me this morning. She believes a presence came into her room early this morning and entered her. I just finished a second complete scan of her and have discovered that she is pregnant."

Picard and Riker were both stunned and mentally tried to find a rational explanation. Could she have simply become pregnant by the normal means and imagined the presence? However, as soon as such thoughts surfaced, they pushed them aside. Deanna was not one to imagine things or make things up. Not to mention neither of them could envision her not taking responsibility for something she had done.

"How is she?" Riker asked.

"Understandably in shock. She told me that she can sense it and that it is extremely tired. She believes it is asleep, and the two scans have confirmed that," Pulaski explained.

"What is it?" Picard asked.

"A half-human, half-Betazoid male. Around nine weeks old."

"Wait, I thought you said she became pregnant this morning?" Riker asked, just as confused as Picard.

"In the first examination, the fetus appeared to be six weeks old, but in the second — only an hour later — it appeared about eight weeks old. The normal gestation for a Betazoid is ten months."

"I will tell LaForge and Data to look back at the sensor logs to see if there was anything unusual recorded in the past 24 hours," Picard said. "Is Troi able to come to a staff meeting to discuss this later today? LaForge and Data should have their findings by then."

"I'll talk to her about it, but assuming the pregnancy proceeds at its current rate and with no ill effects, I believe she will be able," Pulaski said.

"Very well. I will have Data and LaForge begin working immediately," Picard said before giving a knowing nod to Riker and leaving.

"Can I see her, Doctor?" Riker asked as soon as the sickbay doors had closed behind the captain.

"Will," Troi said, having come from the back room and stopping at the door of Pulaski's office.

Riker quickly turned, his eyes immediately finding the small baby bump.

Troi took a deep breath. She never thought she would feel this way, but suddenly all the years of counseling others came rushing back at her. It was almost laughable. Logically, she knew she was not at fault, knew that the guilt and shame she was feeling was normal given the situation even though she was not to blame. But the feelings were still there, gnawing at her. She felt dirty for some reason, and though she had not been violently assaulted, there was no denying that she had been violated. Used by some unseen entity.

Suddenly Riker was before her, tentatively placing his arms around her and prompting her to rest her head on his

chest.

He didn't say anything, and neither did she.

Unknown to both of them, the growing child within her was slowly waking.

O

They assembled around the conference table in the Observation Lounge. Chief Engineer Geordi LaForge, Lt Commander Data, and Chief Security Officer Worf were on one side of the table while Deanna, Riker, and Pulaski were at the other. Captain Picard was at the head of the table with a large viewing screen behind him.

"This is Doctor Katherine Pulaski. We will handle the formal introductions later, for right now we have a situation," Picard started, glancing briefly at Troi before looking to Data and LaForge. "Report."

"We looked through the sensor logs as ordered and found an anomaly at zero-four-thirty six this morning," LaForge answered.

"The computer did not notify us of it because the random energy transference remained well within safety parameters and fell within the scanning tolerance. However, we have been able to determine that the energy entered the saucer section after passing the port nacelle," Data continued.

"What's more, Captain, is that a minute later there was a faint pulse, but it didn't actually release any energy, which was why it — again — didn't trigger any alarms. I had to check back on my findings several times because it just briefly distorted the energy of the surrounding systems in that area. I wasn't sure if my readings were accurate at first, but I have verified that they are," LaForge said.

"If it were to happen again, could it become a threat to the ship?" Picard asked.

"Not unless it was a trillion times more powerful. It was barely measurable, Captain," LaForge said.

Picard nodded, turning to Dr. Pulaski.

Quickly, she got up to stand by the viewing screen.

"There's no easy way to say this, so I will just get right to it. Counselor Deanna Troi is pregnant, and after hearing your findings, I believe this energy was the cause," Pulaski began.

The reactions of those who had not already known were immediate, turning toward Deanna in surprise and concern. Riker gently placed his hand over hers supportively.

"This pregnancy is unlike anything I have ever encountered. Since she came to me, I have done two complete examinations of Counselor Troi," Pulaski said, before motioning to the screen now displaying an image of a fetus.

"This is from the first examination. The fetus is about halfway through the first trimester, about six weeks old. Now, remember we believe conception took place less than three hours before this scan."

"How is that possible?" LaForge asked.

"There's more. This is the second exam one hour later," she said, bringing up a second image. "It's consistent, except for the fact that it appears the fetus is two weeks older. Now, the growth rate is not linear, but upon charting a graph, I have estimated that Counselor Troi will have her baby in about sixty hours. 100 times faster than the normal gestation rate for a Betazoid, which is ten months," Pulaski explained.

"What else have you learned about the fetus, Doctor?" Data asked.

"It is male, half-human, half-Betazoid, just like Counselor Troi. In fact, there is nothing to indicate that there are any genetic patterns other than hers."

"This can't be a random occurrence. There must be a purpose here. A reason. What, I don't know," Riker stated.

"I agree," Pulaski said with a nod toward Deanna. "Counselor Troi felt a presence when this first began and has continued to feel it — but it seems to currently be asleep."

"Yes, although I'm not sure if it *is* still asleep, just that it feels extremely tired. I haven't felt anything else from it," Troi admitted softly.

"Captain, obviously the pregnancy must be terminated for the safety of the ship and crew," Worf said.

"Worf, you can't assume the intent was belligerent," Riker stated, feeling Troi's hand clench into a fist beneath his palm.

"Considering the circumstances, that is the safest assumption. We know nothing about this 'presence'," Worf argued.

"Captain, this is a life form. Not to allow it to develop naturally would deny us the opportunity to study it," Data put in.

Deanna blocked out the rest of the discussion, her eyes moving to the screen that was still on. Still showing the fetus within her.

Her thoughts went to women she had counseled. Women who had become pregnant after being raped. Although her circumstances did not include the violence that that repugnant act often entailed, rape was the most accurate term, as she was now pregnant by no act or choice of her own.

She swallowed.

Rape was an extremely rare occurrence within the Federation, but outside of it. . . . A memory from years ago came to mind. It was when she had just started training to become a counselor. People who had gone through difficult situations volunteered to speak at the training, to offer advice to future counselors. One such volunteer was a woman who had escaped a colony on a planet outside the influence of the Federation. Suffice it to say, the woman had been through a lot, but the detail that stuck out most with Deanna was what the woman had said would have helped her the most soon after her escape and would have spared her from more pain.

After escaping the planet, she discovered she was pregnant. Seeking help from a nearby outpost, the counselor there suggested abortion and provided the means. Still reeling from the attack and painfully raw reality of her situation, she allowed them to perform the abortion, believing it was the right decision and would take at least some of the pain away.

Deanna swallowed, placing her free hand on her belly that was just beginning to bulge as she recalled the woman's words.

'I wish,' the woman had said, 'I wish someone had told me that what I was feeling wouldn't be the way I would feel forever. I'm not sure what would have changed, but it would have given me some hope — perhaps enough hope for me to have made a different decision. A decision I would not have come to deeply regret.'

Deanna looked up, allowing herself to become aware of the discussion again.

"—there any health risk to Counselor Troi if the fetus is aborted?" Riker asked.

"Captain, do whatever you feel is necessary to protect the ship and the crew, but know this: I'm going to have this baby," Troi said before Pulaski could reply.

Everyone went silent at her statement. They barely breathed.

Finally, Picard nodded and spoke. "Then it seems the next decision to be made is what to do before the child is

born." He looked at them all questioningly, patiently waiting for input as the shocked silence slowly ebbed away.

"No disrespect to you, Counselor, but I suggest quarantine and around the clock observation at the very least," Worf gruffly said.

"I'll agree on that course of action on the condition it will not be permanent for the child once it arrives unless absolutely necessary," Pulaski said.

"Isolation does seem prudent. Counselor?" Picard asked, turning to Troi.

"I will submit myself. I understand the need for it," Troi said.

"Then, Doctor, I trust you will make the proper accommodations?" Picard asked.

"Yes, Captain."

A/N: I don't know who may be reading this, but because of the nature of this part, I feel compelled to share some information. Most of us, if we really think about it, have been affected by abortion, either directly or indirectly. I know this is a subject of intense debate, pain, and denial. It stirs up hate, fury, and judgment on both sides, but I'm not here to do that. Judgment doesn't help anyone, *compassion* does.

If you are pregnant and don't know what to do, Google search: 'pregnancy resource center' to find people nearby who want to help you. You can also go to: [optionline \('dot'org\)](#), [sidewalkadvocates \('dot'org\)](#) (slash) [pregnant-need-help](#), or [heartbeatinternational \('dot'org\)](#) (slash) [international/international-affiliates](#)

If someone is trying to force you to have an abortion, you can find help at: [thejusticefoundation \('dot'org\)](#) (slash) [cafa](#)

If you have had an abortion and regret it, you can find help at: [afterabortion \('dot'org\)](#) (slash) [help-healing or abortionrecovery \('dot'org\)](#) .

If you have taken the first dose of the abortion pill (also known as mifepristone or RU486) and are having second thoughts, you can go to [abortionpillreversal \('dot'com\)](#) or call (877) 558-0333 toll free. It may not be too late.

If you work in the abortion industry and want out, you can find help at: [abortionworker \('dot'com\)](#) (slash) [worker/abortion-worker](#)

If you have been sexually assaulted, you can go here for help: [aftersilence \('dot'org\)](#)

If you became pregnant after rape you can go here: [choices4life \('dot'org\)](#) /conceived-in-rape-angel/ or if you were conceived in rape/incest: [choices4life \('dot'org\)](#) /children/

You're not as alone as you might think.

The links above can also be found on my profile.

***Chapter 2*: Chapter 2**

Disclaimer: I obviously don't own the idea of Harry Potter or Star Trek, or any money making forms of them.

A special thanks to Chereche, who acted as a soundboard and beta for this fic ^_^

Chapter 2

Deanna eased down on the bed in the quarantined section of sickbay Pulaski had set up. The force fields were not in place, but could be activated with a word. Two sticky circles were on her clothes. The one over her heart monitored her vitals while the other on her belly monitored the fetus' heart rate.

An ensign was stationed just outside the quarantine area and was at ease. Worf had insisted on playing it safe by placing a guard, and though Pulaski thought it was a bit extreme, she allowed it. No one could say with certainty that the entity meant no harm, so it was decided to err on the side of caution. Deanna had no qualms with it, though perhaps that was because she could feel how uneasy the Klingon was with the whole situation.

Deanna placed her hand on her now bulging belly, the child now 27 weeks gestation.

He seemed to be awake now, but was still in such a tired state that she found it hard to feel anything else from him. Pulaski had examined her another two times, finding the fetus had continued its peculiar growth rate. Charting his rate of growth, the trendline was logarithmic (curved), indicating his growth would continue to slow as time went on, but would remain abnormally fast — assuming it remained on that trendline.

It was a very strange pregnancy, but the fetus' growth rate wasn't the only thing that had their attention.

Deanna felt completely fine. No discomfort whatsoever, which was truly bizarre considering all the changes her body was experiencing in such a short time.

She exhaled softly, whispering, "Wherever you came from, you're with me now, and as far as I'm concerned, you are my child."

O

Harry squirmed. He had never been this aware in utero before, and it was extremely disconcerting. In his previous lives, the times he had lived before actually being born was muted, intermittent with short moments of consciousness that felt like a dream more than anything else. He had never been so awake, fully conscious of his fingers and toes while floating in a warm cocoon of fluid.

He stretched, already having discovered his extremely strange rate of growth. He wasn't sure how long he had been in utero, but even in almost complete darkness, he knew he was getting notably larger every hour or so. He felt stronger, and his senses seemed to be improving as well as time went on.

He could hear voices, garbled as they were, beyond his place of being. He most often heard a woman's voice, a woman he was certain was his mother (this time around). He could sometimes hear others as well, but they were too muffled to truly make out. He wondered if any were of his father.

But as much as he could (or rather could not) hear, his attention was currently focused on what he was feeling.

Unless he was completely mistaken or insane, he was certain he was sensing emotions not his own. They were vague, mostly, but occasionally there would be a sharp spike he could easily identify. So far, outside of his mother, they were mostly comprised of concern, fear, and uncertainty. He shook himself, his thin fingers brushing against his face that was just beginning to plump up with baby fat.

His thoughts went to his mother.

He didn't know what was going on, but he had a feeling something was wrong. Perhaps there was a war going on, and those around his mother were concerned for her and his safety? It wouldn't be the first time he was born in dangerous times. Or perhaps his coming was inconvenient, even unwanted? He unfortunately had been born into such circumstances before.

He centered himself.

The previous day had been especially confusing. The feelings he had been able to decipher had been very intense, particularly emotions coming from his mother.

Fear, doubt, and shame had come in waves, but they soon converted into realization, hope, and fierce protectiveness. Swirling around all of that had been emotions beyond her person. Feelings from others near her. Surprise, fear, concern and even a little disgust.

But all of that soon melted away, and he quickly realized he and his mother were alone.

He closed his eyes as he heard his mother say something, presumably to him. He basked in the protectiveness she was giving off, certain there was at least one good thing in this world in which he now resided.

O

"Captain, sensors are picking up subspace distortions and high energy particles directly ahead," Data said, his fingers dancing over his terminal.

"Shields up," Picard ordered, his mind already listing possible space phenomena this could be. "Evasive maneuver—"

The ship was suddenly rocked by an invisible force. Red Alert went off automatically as power fluctuated all over the ship. Most of the crew were jerked off their feet or out of their seats, slamming into walls and workstations.

The jolt ended, allowing most to get up.

"Quantum filament," Picard concluded as he got up. "Damage report?"

"We've lost primary life support. Switching to secondary systems. Warp engines are offline, but we still have impulse power," Data answered before gripping his terminal again. "There is another filament moving toward us, Captain."

"All decks, brace for impact!" Picard shouted.

O

The first jolt was bad, but nothing compared to the second. Deanna felt herself flung off the bed, her arms and legs quickly moving up protectively around her stomach as she made contact with the side wall that had a screen and side table against it.

It was soft. Like landing on an air mattress covered in memory foam.

The side table crashed onto the floor, glass and equipment scattering all over. The side panel beside the guard exploded, blasting him back and causing him to crumple to the floor.

Bouncing off the wall, Deanna threw her hands out in front of her as she rushed down to the floor, but once again, she landed on invisible pillows.

The lights flickered and then went out.

"Doctor! Counselor!" Worf shouted, prying the sickbay doors open. Sickbay was now only lit with emergency lighting.

"In here, Lieutenant!" Pulaski shouted back, before calling, "Is anyone hurt?"

"I-I'm okay," Deanna managed, carefully getting up from the glass covered floor. "But Ensign Umir. . . ."

Pulaski made her way to where Deanna and the ensign were with a flashlight. After checking on the ensign and finding him unconscious with severe electrical burns, her eyes fell to the glistening carpet Deanna was lifting herself from.

"There's glass all over! Are you sure you're not hurt?" she asked, quickly scanning her for injuries.

"Yes, but . . . I don't know how. It was as if everything had been altered somehow. It felt like I was landing on pillows."

Pulaski frowned as Worf made it to them. Deciding to ask questions later, she turned to the Klingon.

"Lieutenant, please help me move Ensign Umir to the bed over there. Casualties are likely going to begin pouring in soon. Counselor, can you begin gathering the hyposprays?" Pulaski directed before turning to her staff (the few who were there) and giving out more orders.

Worf swiftly moved the ensign before guiding in those who were now arriving. The beds filled quickly, and soon there were injured lying on the floor. Within thirty minutes, the least injured were directed to lie outside sickbay against the walls in the halls.

Communications were down, and some crewmen coming in told them some bulkheads had closed. They still weren't sure what had hit the ship, but they focused on doing what they could in treating the wounded.

"Deanna, are you alright?" Pulaski asked suddenly, noticing the Counselor's uneasy breathing.

"I don't know," she said, frowning heavily. "It—it can't be time, can it?"

Pulaski handed a hypospray to one of her assistants and hurried to Deanna. "No, not unless his growth rate has sped up. Let's sit you down." She ushered her away from the main room of sickbay, taking her back to the quarantine area—which was where three critical, but stable patients were resting. Taking out her tricorder, Pulaski scanned her as Troi laid back. Pulaski shook her head, not reassured by what she was reading. "This baby is coming. You two, help me clear some space here and get me some more light. It'll be easier in here than emptying out Maternity. Lt. Worf, behind the back storage panel of that room, there's a special bag marked Delivery. Bring it in here for me, will you?"

"Yes, Doctor."

"Here are the blankets and towels, Doctor," an assistant said, placing the stack on the side table.

"Thank you."

"How old is he now, doctor? He can't have reached term," Troi said between breaths.

"I estimate that he's between 29 to 30 weeks. Premature, but not dangerously so," Pulaski assured, omitting the fact primary power was down, so most of the equipment that would have made it 'safe' wasn't available at the moment. However, telling Deanna that wouldn't help anyone. Instead, she redirected. "But we'll still try to hold off delivery as long as we can."

Worf returned with the bag just as an alarm blared on the monitor beside Troi's bed. The heart rate of the fetus was dropping.

O

Harry knew he had used too much magic too soon after 'coming back to the living' so to speak, but after that first

jolt, he wanted to make sure his mother (and to a lesser extent himself) remained unharmed.

Reality faded for a moment as Harry lost consciousness before returning a long moment later. He wasn't sure how much time was passing between his blackouts, but he knew they probably weren't good.

Another blackout came, his consciousness doing its best to keep it at bay but to no avail.

As he came to again, he was suddenly aware of being cold. He did his best to look around but could only see bright murky fog that swam among dark blotches. Large hands maneuvered him firmly but gently. Something was placed over his face and things were quickly being attached to his limbs.

"Stay with us, little guy," a voice said, as yet another thing was attached to him.

He blacked out again.

O

"Can we get some help here?" Riker's voice called, carrying (and partially dragging) a man larger than himself around the corner of the hall to sickbay.

"Commander," Worf said, waving two crewmen over to help Riker.

"Worf, how many casualties?" Riker asked as they took the injured man from him. "And how is Deanna?"

"Ninety-four at our last count," Worf answered, before looking at the far end of sickbay, his face blank. "Counselor Troi went into labor."

Riker froze, realizing it was too early before forcing three words out. "And the child?"

"Pulaski is tending to him."

Riker went further into sickbay, passing volunteers and the injured. Finally, he made it to the room Worf had indicated.

Troi was on the bed against the wall, watching anxiously as Pulaski worked with two nurses to stabilize a tiny boy.

"Deanna," he said, going to the side of her bed while making sure he remained out of the way of Pulaski and her staff.

Tears in her eyes, Deanna took hold of his hand as he sat beside her. With nothing they could say, they waited in silence as Pulaski worked.

"Alright," Pulaski said to herself, nodding to her staff before turning to Troi. "He's stable now, Deanna."

Taking that as an invitation, Troi got up and, with the help of Riker, came to the miniature biobed Worf had brought in soon after they knew delivery was imminent. There was a clear hood over it with warming lights, converting the biobed into an infant incubator.

They looked down at the frail newborn, tubes and monitors covering him as his bare chest moved up and down rhythmically.

"Do we know when primary power will come back on?" Pulaski asked, looking at Riker.

"I just came from Engineering and LaForge told me primary power should be back up in three to four hours. Communications and other damaged systems will likely take longer, but the bulkheads are now open. We have access to the whole ship now, fortunately, so if you need something like a power unit, just let me know and I'll have someone get one for you," Riker answered.

"Good. I'm not sure if we're going to need another power unit, but I'd rather us have one than not," Pulaski said.

Riker nodded, quickly arranging for an uninjured crewman to get one from one of the storage bays before returning to Troi's side.

"So, what happened, Commander?" Pulaski asked.

"We ran into a quantum filament. Things could have been a lot worse, but the shields were raised in time." His eyes looked down at the child before glancing at the monitors. "How is he, Doctor?"

Pulaski took a slow breath and exhaled. "He's unconscious, but his heart rate has stabilized. Of course, his breathing is being assisted due to his immature lungs, but what concerns me is how his rate of growth will impact all of this. If I had access to all of my equipment, I wouldn't be as concerned. I would be able to treat and detect any problems that might arise from his prematurity, but as I don't and four hours to him isn't exactly four hours to us. . . ."

"What do you mean, Doctor?" Riker asked as Troi placed her forefinger into her son's limp hand.

"To him, a few hours are equivalent to nine or so days, so although this could work in his favor, delaying treatment for him — should he need it — is exceedingly dangerous. Time is everything to a preemie. The sooner one detects and treats a problem, the better," she explained. "Even now I would have preferred to have started some preemptive treatment to help prevent some common problems, but until the medical subsystems come back online, I'm afraid we'll just have to do the best with what we have."

"Do you foresee him having any trouble?" Troi asked.

"Right now, his lungs are where we'll need to be careful," Pulaski answered.

"What about his heart and brain? His heart rate before. . . ."

"Because he was born at his equivalent 30 weeks, we shouldn't have to worry about brain problems, such as an intraventricular hemorrhage. His eyes should also be fine. As for his heart rate, I don't know why it had dropped so suddenly before, but it seems to have recovered, and there doesn't seem to be any heart defects. We'll still keep a close eye on everything though. My staff is already synthesizing a medicine to add to his milk that will help his digestive system, so necrotizing enterocolitis won't be an issue."

Riker and Troi nodded, just letting the technical terms wash over them as they latched onto the good parts of the prognosis. They turned their eyes back to the baby.

"So what have you named him, Deanna?" Riker asked in a whisper.

"Ian Andrew, after my father," she whispered back.

O

Harry blinked, finding something thin and opaque over his eyes — a cloth of some sort. He yawned, or tried to. There were things in his mouth and something up his nose. How annoying. He began to stretch and couldn't help but fuss at the things hindering his movements, but instantly stilled as he heard a small gasp.

"Hello, Ian. It's okay, mommy's here," a voice said.

So he had been born, and a little too early if the wires and medical equipment were anything to go by. He could hear a machine's soft but incessant beeps. Probably a heart monitor.

"Well, he certainly seems alert," a male said with a quiet chuckle.

He wished the eye covering would come off so he could see who was talking to him, but didn't dare to use his

magic after the recent blackouts. He was just a little too weak at the moment, and he also wasn't sure how these people would react. At least he could understand them. He had lost count of how many times he had had to learn a new language — though the more lifetimes he lived the less likely it became that he needed to learn his 'new' native language.

He heard some shuffling and then felt some hands gently remove his blindfold.

"He's beautiful, Deanna, just like his mother," a man said to a woman standing over him.

She had long, dark, curly hair and dark eyes to match. Her face was kind and her tender smile seemed to make her glow. Granted, perhaps that was because he could sense her emotions. Such warmth!

"How precious. Such a smile!" an older woman said, coming up beside his mother.

His mother sat down in a chair placed beside his incubator. His eyesight was still pretty poor, so he couldn't make out what was around him all that well. He stirred restlessly.

"He's nearly equivalent to 33 weeks now. As soon as the subsystems are up, I'll run a full scan on him to make sure all is well," the woman explained, sending out feelings of compassion and confidence.

"Thank you, Doctor."

Ignoring the few wires attached to him, Ian wondered why he didn't feel hungry, but then realized one of the cords was probably a feeding tube. His hands fumbled around, trying to grab hold of one of the wires as he was lifted and placed into his mother's arms.

"Ah, let's keep these from your reach, Ian. They're helping you," his mother said as she shifted the wires aside and then began rocking.

Ian closed his eyes and leaned closer to his mother, long having lost any guilt or embarrassment in showing or seeking affection. He was part of this world now. There was no point in holding on to the past and neglecting the present. He was going to live this life as best he could.

Deanna began humming, gently stroking his head where some baby fuzz was.

He fell asleep soon after.

O

Picard sat down, pleased by LaForge's report. In the past seven hours, they had managed to get primary power and the main computer back online, along with a handful of other important systems, including communications. LaForge was currently working on the warp drive. It was now very likely that they would make it to Starbase 163 on schedule, although they would need to travel at higher warp to make up the lost time.

With his ship on her way to recovery, his thoughts drifted to the child who had been born several hours before. The quantum filament had somehow caused Troi to go into preterm labor, and despite Pulaski's best efforts, the child had come 14 weeks early (according to Betazoid gestation). A few hours before, Picard had been briefed by Pulaski in his ready room over the com. At that time the child, named Ian, had aged nearly three and a half weeks since his birth. He was understandably having some breathing issues, and Pulaski feared his lungs would never become as strong as they would have been — even with treatment — but, considering the circumstances, the boy was doing very well.

They still had many questions, but other than the most obvious oddities surrounding his person, the child seemed completely ordinary according to Dr. Pulaski.

With that, Picard decided it was time to see Ian for himself before getting some rest. He had been up for nearly 24 hours straight.

"Data, you have the bridge," Picard said, already getting up and making his way to the turbolift doors.

"Aye, Captain."

O

Troi was holding him again. It had been scary when his vitals had dipped a bit ago, but Pulaski had gotten them back up in no time. It was something that was just going to happen sometimes, Pulaski had said, which was why they were monitoring him carefully. Troi was grateful, and was even more so when all the medical systems had become operational again. Pulaski had wasted no time in using them, making sure Ian was as healthy as they could make him.

Ian opened his eyes again. It was very strange. She had not been around a lot of very young children, but he seemed to be far more aware and focused than one his age ought to be. The feelings he occasionally gave off were also very strong and defined, instead of jumbled and confused like those of children more than ten times his age.

"Did you sleep well, Ian?" she asked him, wondering what Riker would say if he knew Ian had woken up soon after he had left.

Ian blinked at her, as if struck by a sudden thought. It was a funny image, but she didn't have time to dwell on it as she felt the captain's presence enter a now fairly empty sickbay.

"Am I intruding?" Picard asked quietly, not sure if Ian was sleeping.

"Not at all, Captain," Troi answered quickly.

Picard approached as Troi suddenly remembered that the Captain was not exactly a fan of children. He didn't understand them, and they didn't understand him — although they were often awed by his station. She knew he could be a gentle man, and if his life had gone differently, he would have made a good father. Just the same, she decided to not ask if he wanted to hold Ian.

"He is looking well, despite coming early," he said, doing his best to keep any awkwardness from his voice.

"Yes. Dr. Pulaski said he might be able to leave sickbay sometime tomorrow," she said. "He'll probably be the size of an average newborn by then."

Picard was still, and Troi could feel thick unease swirling around him. "We will be arriving at Starbase 163 in roughly twenty hours. Starfleet will be informed of his birth and the circumstances surrounding him."

"I understand, Captain, but no matter his uniqueness, he is my child."

Picard nodded, and Troi felt herself calmed by the sudden spike of protectiveness from him. "Yes, and as such he is now part of this crew. I will make that clear to Starfleet."

"Thank you, Captain."

Picard looked back down at Ian, who was now staring in his direction. Troi knew his eyesight was still very nearsighted, but she was quite certain he wasn't looking toward Picard to see him, but to sense him. It worried her a little.

"I think he is sensing emotions," Troi said after a moment.

"Is that normal for Betazoid children?" Picard asked, noting the hesitancy in her voice.

"Not this early. For most Betazoids, our telepathic gifts develop at adolescence, and though some begin sensing emotions earlier, very rarely are Betazoids born with any of their telepathic abilities active," Troi said softly.

"Have you told Pulaski of your suspicions?"

"Yes, but all we can do right now is wait. If we find any of his abilities are on, we'll go from there."

"And if they are?"

"We have some options," Pulaski said, coming up from behind Picard. "But until then, I'd prefer to assume they are on and prevent too many people from coming near him at once. It's why I've cleared this section of sickbay. The last thing I want to do is overwhelm his heart and nervous system with emotional stress."

"When do you think you will know?" Picard asked.

"As soon as he is no longer dependant on any of the equipment, and if Deanna gives permission, we can do a simple, albeit crude, test."

"If you do the test, I would like to be present if possible," Picard said.

Pulaski looked to Deanna, who nodded. "The sooner we know, the sooner we can help him if his abilities are already active."

Ian suddenly stretched and yawned, not all that bothered by their discussion. It wouldn't be the first time that he had been born different, although he was curious about what the Captain had meant by the Starbase and the 'circumstances surrounding him'. Unfortunately, he was too tired to wonder much further and soon fell asleep.

A/N: This part borrowed events from 'Disaster', the 5th episode in season 5.

***Chapter 3*: Chapter 3**

Disclaimer: I obviously don't own the idea of Harry Potter or Star Trek, or any money making forms of them.

A special thanks to Chereche, who acted as a soundboard and beta for this fic ^_^

Chapter 3

Pulaski entered the Captain's ready room early the next morning.

"Please, sit down, Doctor," Picard said, motioning to the chair in front of his desk. "I would have been more than happy to have spoken in your office, but I gather you have reason to want to speak here?"

"Yes, Captain. I've been going over a few things and I wanted to share my conclusions in assured privacy."

"This is about Ian, correct?"

"Yes." Pulaski paused, choosing her words carefully. "There was an incident we had failed to share with you that happened when we ran into the second quantum filament. I apologize for that, but with everything going on, I must admit it slipped my mind."

"I understand, Doctor. Now, what happened?"

"Counselor Troi was thrown from her bed when the second filament hit. She slammed into the wall and landed on the floor which was then covered in glass; however, she was able to get up soon after completely unharmed. She told me that when it happened, everything felt like pillows."

"And you think Ian was responsible."

"Yes. We know he is, or rather *was*, a life form made up completely of energy. Perhaps he was able to use this energy to alter the molecular structure of the wall, floor, and glass enough to protect the Counselor and thus himself. Incidentally, I think this is what caused Troi to go into labor early and why his life signs went dangerously low."

Picard nodded. "That does seem possible. This energy may also be how he is aging so rapidly."

"I just don't understand why we haven't been able to detect this energy since his arrival. The amount of energy needed to age him as we are seeing would be immense. It should be detectable — assuming that's the cause, which I can't imagine it not being."

"I agree. So how is the boy right now?"

"A 7 pound, 13oz newborn. We plan to do the test in three hours. At the moment, his aging has begun to level off. For the next week or so, he'll age about 15 weeks for every day. As time goes on, that rate will continue to drop off, and unless it changes, it'll plateau when he's nearly physically 4—in which case he will age a year for every two weeks he lives."

Picard lips thinned. "Does Deanna know?"

Pulaski shook her head. "I just finished the calculations this morning. I haven't told her, but I think she suspects. She has barely left his side."

"How is she doing since. . . ."

"Delivery?" Pulaski smoothly provided.

Picard nodded.

"She had her baby yesterday. If I were to examine her now, I would not be able to tell she had a baby, or had ever had a baby. It was as if the incident never happened," Pulaski continued.

"I've sent a brief message to Starfleet about him," Picard said. "I didn't want us to arrive at Starbase 163 without having informed them of him beforehand. If Starfleet reacts as I expect them to, they are going to insist on seeing him. What would you say to that if that is the case?"

"Absolutely not, at least not until we have confirmed whether or not his telepathic abilities are active — and even then. . . . We don't know Ian's intentions. Newborn or not, we cannot forget how he came here. There seems to have been intelligence behind his arrival. Either he or something else orchestrated the whole thing. I think we would be foolish to believe otherwise. And for all we know they could still be watching.

"I understand the need for Starfleet to be told, and I agree with keeping them informed, but at the moment, I think we have the situation well in hand. In my opinion, bringing any outsiders right now would not be a good idea."

"Thank you. I will share your opinion with Starfleet in my next report," Picard said as Pulaski stood up. "I'll see you in three hours."

O

Ian was feeling pretty good. He was now completely free of wires and the only thing attached to him was a little sticker he assumed somehow monitored his vitals. His eyesight was beginning to improve too. Everything was still very blurry at a distance, but anything closer than twelve inches from his face sharpened and became much clearer.

His mother was so beautiful!

He stared at her, recalling all the previous mothers he had had. Most had been very loving, just as he imagined his first mother would have been. However, some had been strict and distant, while others had left or been taken too soon from his life.

He had lived through many different kinds of parents and circumstances – good and bad – but that didn't make him any less curious to see how things would be his current time around. Which reminded him. . . . Where and who was his father?

That Riker fellow (or 'Will') seemed to be very close to his mother, but never once had he spoken the words 'daddy' or 'father' to him. Surely, if he was his father, he would have said so?

Their emotions continued to confuse him. He was certain they were good people, but intermingled with their tenderness and love toward him was concern and fear. Why would he instill such emotions in them? And actually, how on earth was he able to sense what they were feeling at all to begin with?

From what he was able to gather from his mother's discussions with the doctor and others, she and he were half-Betazoid, which apparently meant that they had some unique mental abilities. He supposed it was this world's version of Legilimency?

His mother suddenly looked up, a feeling of apprehension surging forth as she nodded to someone beyond his sight. He blinked, not sure what was happening, but suddenly he felt a wave of intense emotion. It was so strong that at first he couldn't identify it. He startled in his mother's arms, his own arms flailing as if he thought something was coming at him. The emotion began to ebb away and he suddenly realized the emotion was of excitement.

The excitement a child feels right before Christmas, their birthday, or very happy news. Unhindered and unspoiled thrill.

Something wet fell onto his face as a cluster of separate emotions swept over him, and they were not carefree. They were heavy.

He had felt them before a few times himself, and they were beyond words. The last time he had experienced them was when he learned one of his sons had lost the ability to walk. That had been two life times ago, but that crushing blow of reality was still painful to recall.

More droplets fell.

His mother was crying.

O

Picard and Pulaski slowly entered the room with Riker as Deanna collected herself and wiped her tears from her son's face.

Ian stared at her forlornly as he reached up to grab her finger. He received a teary smile and a kiss for his effort.

Silence stretched on before Troi took a calming breath and looked up at them.

"What can we do?" Riker asked.

Troi took hold of Ian's little hand in hers as she answered, her voice a forced semblance of calm. "I think I should contact my mother and ask her to get a hold of the Thirteenth House. It is the House of Peace and Protection. They're the ones people go to with this."

"Does she know about Ian yet?" Picard asked.

Troi gave a small nod. "I haven't told her much, but I told her I was pregnant and that I would have to wait to tell her the circumstances until I saw her face to face. That was two days ago."

"When you speak to her again, inform her that we can wait at Starbase 163 for her to arrive if need be," Picard assured. "Though I understand that may depend on how far away she is, so we can meet elsewhere if she'd prefer. We'll be arriving in less than ten hours and the repairs and maintenance will take two days at the minimum."

"Thank you, Captain," she said.

"What should we do until then?" Riker asked, looking at Deanna for a moment before glancing at Pulaski and then at Ian whose eyes were wide and alert.

"I don't like the idea of keeping him in complete isolation, but I also don't know enough about the condition to say whether or not we should risk exposing him to larger amounts of people," Pulaski said.

"He seems to be alright with the four of us," Riker said. "It was just during the test that he became overwhelmed. I imagine four collected adults are nothing compared to a group of a dozen excited kids."

"Isolating only postpones the problem and can make it worse for them when they do get out," Troi stated. "I think the best thing we can do right now is let him be around people, but keep it controlled. Perhaps no more than five people at once, at least at first, and ask them to do their best to remain relaxed."

"I agree. We also don't know how strong his abilities are. Perhaps he is only able to sense emotions and not thoughts? Or perhaps only the thoughts of people very close? We also don't know how sensitive he is empathically. We have to remember that he is not full Betazoid," Pulaski said.

That gave Troi a bit of hope.

O

"I understand your concerns, Captain, but I must insist on Lieutenant Selv at least seeing the boy. He is a Vulcan, so should not put any stress on him emotionally," the Admiral said. "He would also be able to evaluate the child's

telepathic abilities as well as overall nature. He is, for all intents and purposes, a new life. We have never documented a life force entity doing what he has — become born and grow."

Picard kept his face neutral as he looked back at the Admiral through the viewscreen in his ready room. The Admiral was a black man who oversaw much of the Federation's Sciences Division.

"I will allow Lt. Selv to see the boy, but he will not do anything else without the expressed permission of Counselor Troi and Doctor Pulaski," Picard stated.

"I understand. I only hope to impress upon you how many officials in Starfleet want to learn about the boy. The last report you submitted turned quite a few heads. He is an enticing riddle."

"And I promise to continue sending reports, but no matter his origin, I want Starfleet to understand he is a child of a member of my crew — first and foremost."

"We acknowledge that, but surely you cannot deny that he may hold keys to secrets we cannot even imagine. His existence alone is a marvel. We cannot allow this opportunity to go to waste."

"I assure you, my crew and I will learn everything we can from him, but not to his detriment. I know you see this as I do, but I also know there are those who sometimes allow the pursuit of knowledge to supersede morals."

The Admiral lifted his chin slightly before nodding, his expression becoming like stone as he thought upon Picard's words. "Yes, you are right. You have my word I will be an advocate for you and the boy."

"Thank you, Admiral."

"No thanks is necessary, Jean-Luc. I would be doing exactly what you are doing if I were in your place. I look forward to your next report. Monroe out."

Picard leaned back in his chair and breathed a sigh of relief as he turned off the screen.

O

Harry wasn't sure why he was aging so quickly, but he supposed it was a good thing. After going through babyhood countless times before it was nice to breeze right through it this life—although that also made him a little worried. Was he going to keep aging like this until he became an old man and. . . ?

He had listened the best he could to Pulaski, but it was a little hard to concentrate with his tired baby body and through the occasional influx of emotions. Hopefully his aging would stabilize. He wouldn't mind raising a family in this world.

He closed his eyes, centering himself to close himself off to outside stimuli. It seemed Occlumency was once again coming in handy — just as it had in all of his previous lives — though he had a feeling he would be using it here a great deal more than he had in a long time. Granted, he always had at least some degree of it 'on' anyways, but he could sense his needs would demand more focused use if the last day or so was anything to go by.

"Ian?"

He opened his eyes to find his mother leaning over him, concerned.

"What's wrong, Deanna?" Riker asked.

"I don't know. For a moment I . . . I couldn't feel him as much. It was almost as if there was something partially blocking him."

"Should I get Pulaski?"

"It's fine now. It was only there for a moment, but we'll tell her when she returns."

"Alright."

Ian was now 7 weeks old (physically). His short dark hair was just beginning to curl and his eyes were like onyx pearls. He was absolutely adorable, and Troi didn't spare using her camera.

Pulaski and Picard entered sickbay a minute later with a science officer behind them.

"Counselor, Number One, this is Lt. Selv. Lt. Selv, this is Counselor Deanna Troi, Commander Riker, and Ian Andrew," Picard introduced.

They quickly greeted one another as Deanna picked Ian up.

Lt. Selv stepped forward, his eyes gliding over Ian. Ian stared back, his eye brows furrowed.

Selv was a tall, slender man with fair skin and short black hair. His eyebrows were long and sloped upwards at the ends. He didn't look like a human much at all to Ian. Perhaps he had been genetically modified or had an odd eyebrow fetish? And why didn't he feel like the others? He wasn't getting any notable emotional feedback from him at all.

Confused, Ian began babbling; it was as cute as it was funny.

"I don't think he can feel you as he feels the rest of us, Lieutenant," Deanna said. "I sense that he is confused and curious."

"Then it would seem he has some grasp of his empathic abilities, as he is able to know he is not sensing much, if anything, from me," Selv said, intrigued. "I am curious, how do I feel to you, Counselor? I have spoken to Betazoids before, but never a half-Betazoid."

"I sense your presence. It is organized and rigid. Although I can't sense how you are feeling like I can with humans, I was able to feel a small shift of something a bit ago when you looked at Ian. I would label it as interest."

Selv tilted his head in agreement. "You are a gifted Empath. Perhaps because you are a half-Betazoid, you have honed your abilities in such a way to make up for what you may have otherwise had as a full Betazoid?"

Ian blinked, wondering if that was supposed to be meant as a slight or was merely an innocent observation.

"Perhaps," his mother said. Ian felt a small tinge of indignation.

"Lt. Selv, I have his records if you would like to examine them at your leisure," Pulaski said, deciding there had been enough chit-chat. "Then if you have any questions or feel you have some insight into something that may help we can discuss them later."

"Yes. I will read his file in my room and get back with you," Selv said, his left eyebrow rising slightly as if he found the sudden change in subject slightly confusing. He glanced at the medical tablet Pulaski had handed to him. "I should be able to finish this in two hours. Shall we meet at sixteen hundred hours?"

"Yes. We could meet in Ten-Forward. It is usually fairly quiet around then, and if not I could easily leave with Ian while you speak with Dr. Pulaski and Captain Picard," Troi said, to the surprise of the others.

"Ten-Forward then," Selv said with a nod before taking his leave.

"Ten-Forward, Deanna?" Riker asked once Selv was gone.

"Keeping him confined to one place isn't fair to him," Deanna said simply, before turning to Picard. "Captain, I would also like to move him into my quarters now. If Worf insists on posting a guard, so be it, but I don't want my

boy in here any longer than he already has been."

"I quite agree," Pulaski said.

"Then you have my permission to do whatever you need to do to move your son and to prepare your quarters for him. I will speak to Lt. Worf," Picard said, privately pleased by Deanna's sudden initiative, although it didn't really surprise him.

"Thank you, Captain."

Ian was thrilled. Whatever Ten-Forward was, it was bound to be more interesting than sickbay!

O

A few hours later, Ian entered Ten-Forward with his mother. Picard and the others would arrive at the previously specified time, but Deanna wanted Ian to become familiar with Ten-Forward before then.

Ten-Forward was very quiet. There were only two other people, and they were at the other side of the large room. Perched on his mother's hip, he took in the many tables and chairs, as well as the very large windows covering the back wall. Blackness lay beyond them, speckled with twinkling stars and odd swirls of colorful cloudlike shapes. It was very beautiful. Ian supposed it was artificial, like the ceiling in the Great Hall in his first life — it would have to be. It wasn't like they were actually traveling through space, right?

"So this is the child I've been hearing so much about."

Ian turned his head toward the voice, sensing something was very different about this person.

"Hello, Guinan. Yes, this is Ian Andrew," Deanna said, sitting down at the corner table and placing him on her lap.

"He is such a handsome boy!" Guinan said, gently taking a seat and holding out her hand for Ian to take if he wished.

Guinan was a black woman with a very large hat. She didn't look that old, but Ian got the strangest feeling that she was *ancient*. Curiously, he reached his hand out and took hold of her ring finger. He looked up at her.

Guinan smiled before her eyes widened in surprise. "Well, you're certainly going to be interesting, aren't you, little Master?"

"Guinan?" Deanna asked, bewildered by what Guinan had called Ian after having felt Guinan's spike of astonishment.

Ian held his breath, wondering how much she actually knew, because it was clear she hadn't said 'Master' for nothing.

"You have a very special child. I look forward to listening to him. I know there are a few things I could learn from him," Guinan said before releasing his hand. "So, can I bring you anything? I've found a new chocolate recipe."

Ian giggled, deciding he liked Guinan, no matter how odd she might be.

"Uh, sure. I'll try that new recipe," Deanna said, still confused but certain she wouldn't be getting much more from Guinan.

O

Two days had passed since Lt. Selv came on board. Ian hadn't seen him much, but knew Selv was spending a great deal of time in sickbay, no doubt reviewing the ultrasound recordings and speaking with Pulaski.

He was physically a little over 9 months old and loving every moment of it. Crawling all over the little apartment

with his mother chasing after him was exhilarating. Their quarters included his nursery, his mother's room, a living room/dining area, and a restroom. It wasn't extremely fancy, but Ian liked it. The rooms even had special windows like in Ten-Forward with space images projected onto them for fun! He wondered if there were different settings. . .

"Alright, Ian, time to eat," Deanna said, hoisting him up and allowing him to get a wonderful view of some odd looking vehicles zooming around a large suspended structure floating before a planet of blue and white. So life-like!

"You certainly like staring at the Starbase, don't you? Well, we're going to be leaving later today, so you probably won't be seeing it again anytime soon," Deanna said offhandedly. "The ship repairs and maintenance have been completed, so we'll be leaving to see your grandmother!"

Ian blinked as he was hit with a very bizarre and startling realization.

They were actually *in space*. They were on a *spaceship*. When the Captain had said Starbase 163, he had actually meant a base in *space*.

He felt like such a dunderhead.

Suddenly, everything he had seen and heard for the past three days came rushing back with implications he had never imagined would be possible.

Did this mean that that Lieutenant with crazy eyebrows wasn't some weirdo with makeup? Was he the way he was simply because he was actually *not* human?

And since they were in space (living in space!), did that mean . . . ?

He looked out the window again, his mind on overdrive. There were other inhabitable planets other than Earth (or other than the alternate worlds he had been on). There were probably different species, different people, different cultures *everywhere*.

His mind was officially blown.

"Ian?" His mother sounded extremely worried.

'Half-Betazoid'. Did that mean they weren't fully human?

He had been born different species before, but he had never considered the possibility of multiple sentient races existing in the same universe while living on different planets, which, now that he thought about it, was completely close minded. And he had never imagined any race would be able to travel through space like this.

He closed his eyes, needing to calm himself before he hyperventilated or something.

"Sickbay, this is Counsellor Troi, I need the doctor in my quarters now!" Deanna shouted.

Ian didn't hear. He was thinking back to every statement he had heard and everything he had seen this time around, trying to learn as much as he could now that he had this new, startling perspective.

***Chapter 4*: Chapter 4**

Disclaimer: I obviously don't own the idea of Harry Potter or Star Trek, or any money making forms of them.

A special thanks to Chereche, who acted as a soundboard and beta for this fic ^_^

Chapter 4

"It's Ian, hurry!" Deanna said as the door of her quarters opened.

Pulaski, Riker, and Lt. Selv rushed in with the guard at the door looking on in concern. Riker moved behind Troi for support and to give Pulaski room. Selv stayed back and watched.

"What happened? Did he eat anything? Did he fall?" Pulaski asked, already scanning him.

"No," Deanna said, gently laying him on the couch for Pulaski.

He was limp and his eyes were nearly completely closed. His breathing was shallow.

"His vitals are stable, but I'm reading very strange brainwaves," Pulaski said as Selv stepped beside her.

"Do you feel anything from him?" Riker asked.

Deanna shook her head, upset and afraid. "It's like before, only much stronger. It's like he's not here at all!"

"Perhaps I could reach him?" Selv suggested.

"Please!" Deanna said without any hesitation.

Selv knelt beside the couch and very gently placed his thumb on Ian's chin while placing his fingers under his eye and on the side of his face.

Selv exhaled and closed his eyes.

Troi and the others waited with bated breath, but a mere second later, Selv reared back and retracted his hand before massaging his temple and blinking as if seeing stars.

"Are you alright?" Pulaski asked.

"A most bewildering sensation," he said. "I was pushed out; however, I believe I may understand what is happening here. He went into a deep meditative state after becoming overwhelmed. I was not able to determine why he became overwhelmed, but, either subconsciously or consciously, he is now centering himself."

"He pushed you out?" Riker asked.

"Yes, though it was likely unintentional. It was like hitting a barrier and only vaguely sensing what was beyond it before bouncing off," Selv explained before Ian stirred.

Troi picked him up and held him, relieved. Ian sighed contentedly before blinking up at them.

"How do other betazoids with his condition cope, Deanna?" Pulaski asked after a moment.

Troi stilled. "Meditation and isolation. Meditation is often done in seclusion, to prepare them to go out among people. It isn't usually done after times of overstimulation because it is too difficult to refocus properly, and if it's attempted but fails, it often makes things worse."

"Worse?" Riker asked.

"The process of entering a meditative state for them can sometimes act like a lens, so everything they're feeling can become amplified if they aren't careful," Deanna explained before looking at Ian. "I wish I knew what had triggered it."

"Unfortunately, it could have been anything. We won't know how strong his abilities are until he is older and can speak," Pulaski said.

"However, from this, we now know he is already able to enter a meditative state. This will no doubt be helpful to him when he can be instructed in how to best utilize it," Selv said.

Troi wished that his words eased her worry, but they didn't.

O

Picard couldn't deny his trepidation.

Lwaxana Troi was coming.

The last time she had been on his ship was when they had traveled to Haven and met Deanna's intended before encountering a ship of Tarellians with an incurable plague. What a mess that had been. Fortunately, everything was eventually sorted out, but not before Picard learned irrefutably that Lwaxana Troi got on his nerves — and that she probably did so on purpose.

Picard idly tugged on the front of his uniform, reminding himself that his own discomfort would be worth helping the newest member of his crew, little Ian Andrew. However, the knowledge that Lwaxana could only stay for three days also helped tremendously.

"They are ready to energize, Captain," O'Brien, the Transporter Chief, said.

Picard gave the go ahead, and Lwaxana appeared on the transporter pad in gaudy robes — but oddly on her knees.

"Legs, legs, where are the legs?" she said, patting her thighs before heaving a sigh of relief as she stood. "Oh, I hate that. I will never completely trust this device, Jean-Luc."

Picard remained where he was, doing his best to think of nothing, even though he knew it wouldn't matter. She would say whatever she wished, most likely at his expense.

"Oh, Jean-Luc," she said while going down the steps. "What naughty thoughts. But how wonderful you still think of me like that!"

Picard clenched his jaw as Lwaxana looked around, seemingly oblivious to his annoyance.

"Where is Deanna? Surely she would have wanted to welcome me here to see my grandson."

"As we informed you before transporting you, I will escort you to Deanna and Ian. At this time we feel it prudent to keep him from being exposed to too much of the crew at once," Picard explained.

Lwaxana paused for a moment, before nodding. "Sensible."

Picard tried not to act surprised at her calm response.

"Well? My valet is waiting. You may beam him aboard now and then you can take me to my grandson. Hopefully Deanna will then disclose whatever is so mysterious about him."

A moment later, a thin, extremely tall man appeared with luggage.

"You remember Mister Homn, of course," Lwaxana said.

"It would be hard to forget Mister Homn," Picard stated.

"I retain his services despite the outlandishly lustful thoughts he spews in my direction. You can put that down, Homn. We can't deny the Captain the honor of carrying my belongings."

"I will not interfere with Homn's duties this time," Picard said, recalling the last time he had lugged the burdensome case.

"That's not what you're really thinking, Jean-Luc. You forget I'm a telepath."

"Perhaps, but fulfilling that honor would only postpone your meeting with your grandson," Picard said as lightly as he could.

"Hmm, quite right. You really should get into shape, Jean-Luc."

Picard was too relieved to care about that last mocking jab and quickly led them from the transporter room.

O'Brien, the Transporter Chief, shook his head sympathetically once the doors slid closed behind them.

O

Deanna knew the moment her mother had been teleported aboard. She was anxious and relieved. The previous week had been nothing she could have ever imagined. Ian had aged a little over two years since they had left Starbase 163 and was now a very curious 3 year old. His speech was very impressive, but he rarely chose to actually talk. She wasn't sure if it was because he could feel the unease of those around them, or if he was just that shy. She supposed it was likely a little of both.

"Mommy," he said, causing her to turn to him as he faced the door to the hall.

"You feel them coming, Ian?"

Ian nodded. "The Captain isn't happy."

Deanna quietly sighed, wishing her mother would learn to be a little more reserved around non-Betazoids (or everyone really), especially now that it was clear Ian was at the very least a Prodigal Empath — if not Telepath.

She hadn't started speaking with Ian through his mind, afraid she would unintentionally fully activate that ability on top of his already powerful empathic powers. She had a feeling he was occasionally getting snippets of people's thoughts, but had been afraid to press him, deciding to wait for him to inquire about what was happening. Before Selv had left, he had agreed with her decision, stating it would give Ian the opportunity to choose what to do about an aspect of his abilities, which would likely be very empowering for him. This would be a very good thing in the long run, provided they treaded carefully. Deanna would make sure he never became afraid of his abilities, as that would be gravely detrimental, especially when considering how quickly he was aging. A mistake now would be extremely hard to overcome.

Deanna refocused.

Hopefully her mother would remember to control herself in regard to her telepathy, as Deanna had warned her, but she never really knew with her mother. . . .

The door chimed.

"Enter," Deanna said as Ian scurried behind her, doing his best to hide behind her legs.

"Ah, little one, so this is where you have been hiding!" Lwaxana said, entering the main room with Picard and Mr. Homn following.

"I told you we would have to meet in my quarters, Mother," Deanna said, unable to stop from feeling a little exasperated already.

"So where is my grandson?" Lwaxana asked.

Ian peeked out, his dark curly hair matching his mother's.

Lwaxana's eyes widened. "He's supposed to be ten days old." She turned back to Picard. "Did this ship fly through some crazy temporal vortex whatchamacallit or something?" She stared at Picard very hard. After a moment, she asked, confused, "Energy life form?"

"Mother, this is why I knew I needed to talk to you face to face, so please remain calm," she said before placing her hands on her son's shoulders. "Ian, say hello to your grandmother."

"Hello."

Lwaxana blinked.

"I became pregnant with Ian after an unseen presence entered my bedroom," Deanna began, before telling the abridged version of everything that had happened in the past week and a half once they sat down on the couch and chairs.

Mr. Homn had left, taking the luggage to the guest quarters for Lwaxana. Picard sat down in the chair beside the couch, strategically choosing the furthest spot from Lwaxana.

"Well, I can see why you didn't want to tell me all of this over subspace," Lwaxana finally said before looking at Ian.

O

Lwaxana examined the child before her. Everything about him was surreal and perplexing. Sitting there, she could feel his presence. It was unlike any she had ever felt before. It was as focused as an old Vulcan's, as bold as a Klingon's, and as potent as an El-Aurian's, but not entirely alien. There was an essence to it, a curiosity that could only belong to a human.

He is adorable, she thought to herself. I wonder how powerful his abilities are.

She knew better than to send him any thoughts as she continued looking him over, noting how his cheeks were just like Deanna's had been at that age. Wishing she could have seen him while he had been an infant, her eyes slowly went up and locked with his.

A Prodigal Empath, but is he telepathic as well? If he is, I wonder if he can hear me now.

I CAN HEAR YOU.

"Mother!" Deanna shouted as they all, even Captain Picard, jumped upon hearing Ian's voice boom in their minds.

He hadn't shouted his thought, but there was so much power behind it that it was uncomfortably forceful.

"I didn't send him any thoughts," Lwaxana said immediately, her eyes wide.

"What just happened?" Picard asked.

They all looked at Ian who looked up at them in confusion.

"She wondered if I could hear her. I answered. Did I do something wrong?" he asked hesitantly.

Deanna relaxed but was still worried, feeling this confirmed her fears. "No, you didn't do anything wrong, Ian."

"Might want to learn to control how strongly you project your thoughts though, little one," Lwaxana added, rubbing her temple.

"Oh, sorry."

"Even I heard you," Picard said, causing Deanna and Lwaxana to turn their eyes to him.

"You heard him?" Deanna asked, bewildered.

Is this better?

Yes, that is much better, Ian Andrew. You are a fast learner. You could still tone it down a bit, but at least now you won't startle people as much.

"I didn't know Betazoids could project thoughts to non-telepaths," Picard said, having heard Ian's mental speech again.

"Not usually, at least not with those they haven't bonded with in some way," Lwaxana said.

"Like Imzadi," Deanna added.

"I see," Picard said.

Lwaxana was a little surprised to find that Picard really did understand, but her attention soon returned to Ian.

"Well, little one, when your mother first told me your abilities were already active, I never imagined this. I definitely see why sending for a member of the Thirteenth House was necessary," she said.

"When will they be coming?" Deanna asked.

"Should be here in a day or so. They take Prodigal cases very seriously, as they should, but considering he already has remarkable control and doesn't seem to be uncomfortable, I'm not sure what they will be able to do that we can't already. However, better to be safe than not."

"Another person like you will be coming soon?" Ian asked.

"What do you mean 'another person like me'?" Lwaxana asked, feigning offense.

"Full Betazoid," he explained, not bothered by her theatrics at all. "You don't feel like other people on board. You put off a lot of. . . ." He wiggled his fingers around.

Lwaxana laughed, though she was as confused as Picard and Deanna. "You can see these—" She imitated him by wiggling her fingers.

"Sort of, but just in my mind," he said, as if that explained it all.

"What are they?"

"Not sure, but some kind of energy probably," he said, before adding quite seriously, "Could be magic."

"You, little one, are going to be quite fun. I'm glad you're my son!" she said, laughing again.

"Mother."

"Fine. *Grandson*. Grandkids, I'm told, are less troublesome anyway."

O

Ian spent the following day with his grandmother playing games and simply getting to know her. She was certainly one of the strangest grandmothers he had had, but he would take bizarre over cruel any day.

They didn't explore his abilities at all after their first meeting, his mother deciding they would wait for the member of the Thirteenth House before doing anything more. Ian got the feeling she was still a little shaken after learning he already had a degree of telepathic ability — even though a part of her had likely known for a while.

This was part of why he had decided to hide his magical abilities, at least for the time being — although in most of his lifetimes he never openly revealed his magic abilities anyway. He was grateful that his Occlumency and Legilimency were blending and being confused with his Betazoid abilities, but he doubted his wandless abilities would be as explainable or as easily accepted. He wondered how they would react if they learned the whole truth about him. The crewmen he happened to come across still projected fear sometimes. Even the Captain was occasionally uneasy around him, although it wasn't exactly the same apprehension as other people's.

"What are you thinking about, little one?" his grandmother asked.

Deanna had left them alone, taking the opportunity to catch up on some counseling work she couldn't do in their quarters.

"I thought you could read my mind?" Ian asked, although he was pretty sure he already knew the answer.

"You seem to be shielding your thoughts somehow, even though I can still sense your emotions. I'm sure I could read them if I tried, but since your mother has forbidden me from doing anything telepathic with you, you'll just have to tell me yourself."

Ian looked down for a moment before deciding there was no harm in telling the truth here.

"People are afraid of me. I suppose I understand. I have no daddy and came as some sort of energy life form," Ian stated.

"Oh, Ian. Unfortunately people, especially humans, are afraid of what — and who — they don't understand. Their feelings toward you are not a reflection of you, but of themselves."

"I know, but I don't want them to be afraid. I would never hurt them. I don't know why I came here the way I had, but I did. I just hope if I ever consciously do something they can't explain that they won't hate me."

"I don't think anyone who has met you could hate you," Lwaxana assured.

Ian glanced up at her. He didn't want to keep himself a mystery forever, but knew the truth too soon would do more harm than good — assuming he decided to share at all. He decided it best to change the subject.

"When will the member of the Thirteenth House get here?" Ian asked.

"This afternoon," she said, never minding the sudden change in topic.

Ian was glad for that, especially since he was certain he would be under intense scrutiny later that day. He was right.

O

Pulaski entered Deanna and Ian's quarters with Riker and a member of the Thirteenth House of Betazoid, Yuli Wazani.

Yuli was a middle aged woman with light brown skin. Her dark brown hair was secured in a bun and her robes were nowhere near as flamboyant as Lwaxana's. She looked like a professor of some prodigious school, although her posture was relaxed and her movements fluid instead of harsh or rigid.

Pulaski immediately spotted Ian hiding behind his mother. Lwaxana was beside Deanna and quickly stepped up and greeted Yuli.

"I am Lwaxana Troi, daughter of the Fifth House, Holder of the Sacred Chalice of Rixx and Heir to the Holy Rings of Betazed. And you must be Yuli Wazani, daughter of the Thirteenth House, Holder of the Teal Ring of Betazed," Lwaxana said before taking Yuli's hand and giving it a pat.

"I am," she said, unbothered by Lwaxana's rather forward presence.

"Here is my daughter, Deanna, and my grandson, Ian Andrew," Lwaxana continued, stepping aside and motioning to her family.

Ian remained behind Deanna, but peeked around her legs.

"Hello," he said, not making eye contact.

Yuli smiled at him before turning her attention to Deanna. "I read the report you sent to the Thirteenth House requesting for his evaluation, and after speaking with the Elders I believe it best to treat him like any other suspected Prodigal in this assessment phase. Is that acceptable?"

Deanna nodded before motioning them to the couch and nearby chairs.

Ian remained close to Deanna while Lwaxana gave him some space to just be close to his mother. Pulaski was a little surprised by this, but thought it appropriate and touching. Lwaxana may be eccentric but she does pay attention to the needs of those she loves.

"May I ask what this assessment phase entails?" Riker asked, sitting on the other side of Deanna to allow Yuli to sit in the chair angled toward the couch. Lwaxana was at the opposite end of the couch, closest to Yuli, then Ian, Deanna and Riker. Pulaski took a seat in the last remaining spot—the other chair off from the couch closest to Riker.

"I will do a quick assessment of his abilities by doing some empathic and telepathic exercises, such as projecting emotions toward him and sending him words telepathically. I will ask him a few questions and will record each response before asking him to attempt to do the same exercises back to me — as long as he is comfortable with it," Yuli answered.

Riker nodded.

"Before you begin, allow me to do a quick physical scan," Pulaski said, standing up. Yuli nodded her consent and Pulaski quickly collected Ian's vitals with her tricorder. "Thank you."

Yuli looked at Lwaxana. "Alright, if you would lift the mental shield from him."

Lwaxana smiled, as if knowing she was going to enjoy what followed. "I haven't placed any shield on him. He's done it himself."

Yuli blinked before turning her attention to Ian and Deanna.

"A few times, he's increased the strength of his shields so high that I could no longer even feel his presence," Deanna admitted. "The first time was when he was physically 7 weeks old, but the most severe had been at 9 months old. He had even blocked a rudimentary mindmeld."

Yuli rubbed her chin thoughtfully before looking at Ian. "Can you raise your shields as high as you can for me?"

"Okay," Ian said, closing his eyes.

"Extraordinary," Yuli whispered. "Alright, can you lower them?"

Ian opened his eyes, lowering the mental shields to their previous level.

"Can you lower them further?" Yuli prompted.

Ian looked at Deanna, clearly uneasy.

"Can you tell me why you don't want to lower them?" Yuli asked.

Ian shrugged. "They muffle what I feel, or at least shorten the range I can feel. If I lower them completely, I can feel everyone on the ship and sense . . . further."

"So it's uncomfortable for you?"

"Yeah," Ian admitted, feeling his mother's emotions thicken with sorrow at his words.

"Alright, how about an exercise? I'll think of a word, and you tell me what it is," Yuli suggested.

"Okay," Ian said, curious as he looked up and met her eyes.

Purple.

"Purple," Ian answered.

Elbow.

"Elbow."

Itsy-bitsy spider.

Ian giggled. "Itsy-bitsy spider."

"Good job. Alright, I'm going to go out of the room and do it again," she said, handing her PADD (a handheld computer interface) to Pulaski to record his responses.

Ian frowned a little.

"What's wrong, Ian?" Yuli asked.

"It's easier with eye-contact," Ian stated.

"That's okay. Just do the best you can, alright? Wherever your abilities are at, no one will be angry or disappointed," Yuli assured as the others nodded in agreement.

Ian bit his bottom lip. "Okay."

Yuli went into the hall, the door sliding shut behind her.

Chapter 5: Chapter 5

Disclaimer: I obviously don't own the idea of Harry Potter or Star Trek, or any money making forms of them.

A special thanks to Chereche, who acted as a soundboard and beta for this fic ^_^

Chapter 5

Ian exhaled, not sure what he should do as he watched the woman step out. He was certain, thanks to his Legitimacy being coupled with his half-Betazoid abilities, he would be able to receive her thoughts, but the question was: should he? He would have to lower his shields a bit, and that was risky, although he had some inner shields protecting his secrets, he wasn't sure how that would affect how they sensed him. He knew, from the snippets of thoughts he had received from his mother and grandmother, his presence was already rather potent. Should he risk revealing he was much more powerful than they already knew?

He looked at his mom. He couldn't lie to her. Hide things . . . yes, but outright lie by acting like he had truly tried but hadn't?

Resigned, he closed his eyes and lowered his shields a bit, wincing slightly as he felt a wave of emotion from the crew going about their daily lives as a roar of jumbled thoughts surged from them as well. Focusing, he pushed all of that away and zeroed in on Yuli standing out in the hall.

Instantly, he felt her surprise at suddenly sensing his strengthened presence.

He must have lowered his shields . . . she thought to herself before focusing her next thought directly to him. *Sand.*

Ian hesitated, but decided since he had gone this far. . . "He must have lowered his shields . . . Sand," he said. Pulaski recorded his words.

Vulcan.

"Vulcan."

Waterfall.

"Waterfall."

Yuli stepped back into the room and took the PADD from Pulaski as Ian raised his shields once again. She looked down at the PADD screen and her eyes widened.

"When you lower your shields, can you hear everyone's thoughts?"

"Yes, but it's too loud; I can't make anything out without focusing," he said, carefully gauging their reactions.

His grandmother was amazed and very proud, albeit a little afraid — though she wasn't afraid *of* him, but *for* him.

His mother was much the same way, but concern and trepidation were present as well.

Riker was astonished and confused, not completely understanding what it all meant. He didn't understand that a lot of Prodigal Telepaths often went mad before even reaching adulthood because of such mental onslaught. However, the fact Ian had mental shields without being trained (to their knowledge) was extraordinary.

"I see. Can you send a few words to me mentally?" she asked, keeping her surprise from her voice.

Okay. Phoenix. Teddybear. Peace.

"Good," Yuli said, although she was taken aback by the intensity of his projected thoughts. "You will need to work on minimizing the force in which you project, but this is an excellent start."

Lwaxana chuckled. "You should have been here the first time he had projected his thoughts, even Captain Picard had heard him! I have to wonder if it's possible for him to quietly project."

Ian felt utter astonishment swell up within Yuli. "Can you send a word I think to you to Commander Riker?" she asked, looking at Riker who gave her a nod.

"I think so," Ian said, deciding there was no harm in it. He looked in her eyes.

Paper.

Ian turned and looked at Riker. **Paper**, he thought, doing his best to 'quiet' his thought, but it was no use. It still rang powerfully in Riker's mind.

O

"Paper," Riker whispered, before glancing at Deanna — suddenly sharing in the realization that her child held much more power than any of them had initially thought. The essence behind that projected word was pure strength. In that split second, he had sensed a consciousness unrivaled to any he had known before. Potent and unwavering. For a fleeting instant, he felt like a mere child in the presence of an old, wise emperor.

Riker shook himself as he looked back at Ian.

He was so unassuming, sitting beside Deanna and pressing against her side uncertainly. How could this child make him feel this way?

Ian looked back at him, and he felt so exposed.

He wondered how Picard had felt when he had heard Ian's voice in his head. Had it echoed with such authority?

Ian turned his attention to Yuli, for which Riker was grateful, even though he felt bad feeling that way.

O

The rest of the evaluation went quickly, confirming that Ian's betazoid abilities were undeniably active, although not in the same way normally seen in Prodigal Telepaths.

"Ian, your mental shields, do you remember a time you didn't have them?" Yuli asked after they had finished all the exercises.

Ian bit his lip thoughtfully, trying to decide how best to handle that question.

Taking his silence as an 'I'm not sure,' Yuli decided to phrase it differently. "When did you learn to control them?"

Harry perked up. "When I was really little," he answered, deciding that wasn't technically a lie. He had been little as Harry Potter, small in understanding and experience — although that life had been quite fulfilling after Voldemort had been handled.

"Is it hard work to keep them up?" Yuli asked, taking notes.

"Only if I raise them all the way. It's not hard where they are right now, though," Ian explained.

"Ian, there are other betazoids who have been born with their abilities active, but they don't have any mental shields like you do. Would you be willing to speak to them at some point over subspace? I think it would help them to know someone like them has been able to stop the discomfort. You might also be able to help them in ways we haven't been able to," Yuli said.

"I'd be happy to talk to them," Ian agreed.

Yuli smiled, already mentally listing those she would put him in contact with. The Elders were going to be very pleased and, in many ways, relieved. It was never easy to hear that another child was burdened with their abilities active at birth, but in this case there was certainty and hope. Certainty that this child would not suffer as other Prodigal Telepaths had, and hope that they would be able to learn how to better help those afflicted by the condition.

Yuli gave a subtle nod to Deanna.

"Thank you for being so helpful, Ian. You can go play in your room now. I'll be there soon to read to you after I help Ms. Yuli with something," Deanna said simply.

"Okay, Mommy," Ian said, hurrying to his room and closing the door.

He knew they were going to discuss what they had learned about him, but that was fine. Considering everything, he felt they were handling things remarkably well. He was grateful he had been born into this universe with these odd circumstances instead of one with a less understanding people. Ian shivered. He would have probably been killed outright had he come as an 'energy life form' a few lifetimes back.

O

"He is remarkable," Yuli said. "I'm looking forward to informing the Thirteenth House of what I have learned today."

"What do you think about his abilities?" Riker asked.

"They were certainly a surprise and very impressive," Yuli said before glancing at Lwaxana. "He's a very powerful telepath. Even other Prodigal Telepaths don't have as much mental strength, and that's not because he has mental shields." Yuli shook her head. "It is extremely fortunate he has shields and can control them. If he didn't, he'd be . . . 'miserable' wouldn't even begin to cover it. Encourage him to exercise his shields. He needs to keep them as malleable as they are right now. If he just leaves them at their current level to keep himself comfortable, they will stiffen, and then he won't be able to raise or lower them if he needs to."

Deanna nodded and asked, "Do you have any other suggestions or things you noticed we should keep an eye on?"

Yuli took a moment to gather her thoughts. Even Riker could tell she was choosing her words carefully.

"He has understanding. His vocabulary and diction alone hints to that," Yuli said.

Deanna and Lwaxana nodded in agreement.

Yuli continued. "Origins and physical conditions aside, I'm sure you've noticed how potent his presence is. It's otherworldly. I don't sense any malice from him, quite the opposite actually, but he is purposely hiding things."

"I've felt that as well, but I haven't wanted to press him," Deanna said.

"And don't, at least not yet," Yuli advised. "I sense he fully considers himself your son, but that may not be all that he is."

"I understand," Deanna said.

"Please let me know if anything changes or if there is anything I can do to help, although it seems right now everything is well in hand."

"I will," Deanna promised as Riker nodded.

"Thank you, Yuli Wazani," Lwaxana said as they all stood up.

O

Deanna couldn't help but breathe a sigh of relief when her mother left the Enterprise. She loved her mother, but she could be extremely exasperating at times, particularly in the way she hassled the Captain. Poor man.

She could tell Ian had mixed emotions upon his grandmother's departure as well. Like her, Ian didn't much like the excessive flamboyance of her mother, but when Lwaxana decided to give it a rest, she was pleasant to be around. But no matter their feelings, Lwaxana had to leave. She had responsibilities that couldn't wait, even if she wanted to get to know her grandson better.

Ian seemed to understand — as usual more than she would have originally thought possible for a three, nearly four, year old.

She was still trying to wrap her mind around it all. At times she could hardly believe she had carried a child within her, but upon looking at him, it all came back to her. The sensation of his presence resting beneath her bosom as he occasionally stretched his limbs, and the fear she had felt when preterm labor had begun. He was the most unreal real thing in her life, and she was grateful.

His life had given her a perspective she had never known existed, given her a responsibility she loved as much as she feared. She could feel his moments of uncertainty and his desire for affection and care. She knew he feared rejection and that his lack of a father pained and confused him. Her mother had shared the conversation she had had with him before Yuli had arrived and it only confirmed what Deanna had already known. Her boy, no matter how extraordinary he was, needed her unconditional love.

He had it.

O

Ian stared at the android named Data. It was so strange not to be able to sense the emotions of a being sitting right in front of him, but . . . there was . . . something.

Ian closed his eyes and stretched out his senses, careful not to go beyond the immediate room as he didn't want to be swarmed by the crew's thoughts and emotions.

Exhaling, he felt it. Very faint, but there. It reminded him of something, but he couldn't recall. . . .

He stilled.

"Is there something wrong, Ian?" Data asked him.

His mother had left him in the care of Data because there were some counseling things she had to catch up on. He had no qualms with it, and was actually quite intrigued about getting to know an artificial life form.

"No," Ian said.

"May I ask why you were closing your eyes then?" Data asked.

"I was trying to sense you," Ian replied honestly.

"I am afraid there is nothing for you to sense. I have no feelings and I do not 'think' the way humans or other races do."

"You have something I can sense. It's not an *emotion* exactly, but . . . it's there." Ian paused, thinking to himself.

It was actually a sensation he had become accustom to feeling during some of his past lives, but could it possibly

be the same thing? Could Data be . . . *enchanted*?

Not completely in the same sense as the sorting hat, but perhaps a combination of high-tech and astrologically imbued-magic? Ian frowned. If that was the case, it likely occurred by accident.

He looked up at Data, realizing how fortunate it was that the stars and planets had been aligned in the way they had been to instill Data with a curious nature, instead of a negative one, and with the ability to expand and explore his potential in a peaceful way. If the nearby stars and planets had been positioned differently. . . .

Data gave a short, thoughtful hum. "Thank you, Ian. It is—"

Ian suddenly crumpled in his seat with a gasp as his hand pressed firmly against his left temple. "Gah! What is this?"

"Ian!" Data immediately went around the little table between them and knelt by his side. "I will call for Pulaski."

"Wait," Ian said through clenched teeth. "The Captain's been taken off the ship. I can no longer sense him."

O

"Crewman? What is going on?" Picard asked, finding himself in a shuttlecraft instead of on deck 9.

The crewman turned, but it wasn't a crewman.

"Welcome, Picard, to shuttlecraft 6."

"Q." Picard narrowed his eyes, not amused. "We agreed you would never trouble my ship again!"

"I always keep my arrangements, sir. Look, we're nowhere near your vessel."

O

"Data to Bridge, the Captain is no longer on board."

Riker immediately stood. "All stop," he ordered.

"Answering all stop, sir," Worf answered, operating his console. "Commander, there is a shuttle missing from shuttle bay 2."

"Sensors indicate no shuttle or other ships in this sector," an ensign said.

"Bridge, this is Ten Forward."

"Guinan?" Riker asked, now on extreme high alert.

Guinan never called the Bridge.

"Is everything alright?" Guinan asked, uncertain.

"No, Captain Picard is no longer on the ship. We were just notified by Data of the fact," Riker answered, before looking at Worf. "We're about to begin a methodical search. Worf, set sensors on maximum scan. Ensign, use our present location as a centre. Plot a search pattern from these coordinates to cover the most area in the least time."

"Search pattern has been input, sir."

"Engage."

O

"Your mother is on her way, Ian. Please remain calm," Data instructed.

"I'm going to help find him," Ian stated, suddenly lying down on the couch and closing his eyes before Data could say anything.

He let himself mentally fade from the Enterprise, focusing his senses beyond the confines of the ship and ignoring the dull ache in his head at having to push aside all that he was getting from the crew as his magic encompassed his betazoid abilities.

Space put off an odd sensation, like an echo of fading dreams. Stretching out his senses like an expanding bubble, he set his mind to searching for the soul of Captain Picard. His breathing became shallow, and unknown to him, Data carefully sat beside him and watched over him.

He briefly sensed the inhabitants of a nearby planet, but not feeling the Captain there at all, he pressed on. His senses combed through another system but still didn't feel the Captain.

Finally, Ian zeroed in on what Pulaski would call Picard's 'life signature'. Although his betazoid abilities didn't inform him what was physically around the Captain, his magic did, which told him Picard was in a shuttlecraft on the outskirts of a system with one planet circling a massive star. However, Picard was not alone.

Within the shuttlecraft there was another being, but its soul didn't feel like a mortal's. Ian frowned as he focused his attention on who he correctly assumed was the Captain's kidnapper.

He instantly regretted doing so.

For a split second, he sensed such insurmountable power that his breath caught. The being was ageless and seemingly limitless. Godlike. A blanket of what he would deem as pride and arrogance were draped over a vindictive curiosity amid a confusing swirl of desires and sentiments he could not grasp.

Pressure instantly surged in his head, pounding against his eardrums and leading to a rush of pain he could only compare to a particularly vicious crucio concentrated in his mind.

He pulled back, vertigo and nausea taking over all other sensation.

He sat up and nearly tumbled off the couch. Fortunately, Data caught him, but he was unable to thank him, for his stomach instantly rebelled all over the floor and the side of one of Data's shoes.

He felt Data's hands supporting him while awkwardly attempting to provide some sort of comfort as his limbs began to tremble.

"Ian?"

Ian lifted his hand and pointed in the exact direction where the Captain was. "There, at the rim of a system with a massive star and one planet beyond two other systems."

Data didn't hesitate and tapped his combadge. "Data to Bridge, alter current heading by 65 degrees to port, 23 degrees alpha. I believe the Captain is roughly three systems from here."

"Understood," Riker said, at the moment taking Data at his word and ordering helm to engage at warp 9 in that direction.

"Sorry I put sick on your shoes," Ian whispered, just as Dr. Pulaski and Deanna rushed in from the hall.

"Ian!" his mother cried. "Your nose is bleeding!"

Pulaski instantly had her tricorder out while Data lifted Ian up and promptly placed him on the chair beside the couch.

Pulaski and Deanna quickly caught sight of the sick, but they were more concerned about Ian's bloody nose.

"What happened?" Pulaski asked.

"A powerful being has the Captain," Ian said as he put his sleeve up to his nose. "I sensed the Captain out and found him, and when I tried to sense more from who was with him. . . ." Ian looked down with a grimace.

Fortunately, Data took over, quickly explaining what had occurred in the past five or so minutes.

O

"The locator beacon won't help. They'll never think to look for you this far," Q said, before frowning as he quickly glanced out the window.

Picard wasn't looking at Q's face as he continued to work the consol as he had been for the last few minutes. "Stop this foolishness, Q. Return me to the Enterprise."

"I suggest you change your attitude. Petulance does not become you. We have business, Picard."

"Keeping me a prisoner here will not compel me to discuss anything with you," Picard stated.

"You are an impossibly stubborn human."

"Return me to my ship!"

"If I return you to your ship, will you agree to give my request a full hearing?"

Picard gave a barely noticeable nod and in an instant they appeared in the Arboretum, startling the few people relaxing within. After a look from their Captain, they quickly left.

"You're right, Picard. This is the proper venue for our discussion."

"What do you want, Q? You state your business. Get on with it," Picard stated.

"I wish to join you."

"Excuse me?"

"I desire to become a member of the crew. I'm willing and able. Ready to serve."

Just then, Riker and Worf entered, causing Q and Picard to turn toward them.

"Ah, the redoubtable Commander Riker. And Micro-brain. Growl for me. Let me know you still care," Q said, opening his arms in welcome.

"Q," Riker dully replied.

Worf glowered at him.

"Ah! This is the welcome I get after I come here to offer my services?" Q complained dramatically.

"Ready and willing. Able to serve. What would you do? Would you start as an ordinary crewman? What task is too menial for an entity?" Picard questioned.

"Come now, Picard, this ship is already home for the indigent, the unwanted, the unwor—" He paused and turned toward the wall with narrowed eyes.

He disappeared.

O

Data left to the Bridge and Pulaski returned to sickbay soon after Ian was tucked into bed. Resting, Ian closed his eyes as his mother brushed his hair from his forehead. Though he had been told not to use his abilities, he knew the instant Picard had returned to the ship and knew that the powerful entity had come with him.

The headache had gone away, but Pulaski was still concerned, stating the strain he had experienced in sensing the entity had likely been too much for his body to process, which resulted in burst capillaries (bloody nose) and the sudden nausea.

Not wanting to repeat that experience, Ian did his best to rest, but it was proving to be harder than he had expected — thanks to the fact that the powerful being was now on board.

The life form was just so . . . thick, saturated with so much energy that Ian was soon forced to slam his mental shields as high as they could go. He exhaled as relief filled him. He could still sense the entity, but it was no longer painfully overpowering.

A bright light suddenly filled the room as an odd rushing sound echoed around them before silencing soon after.

Deanna instantly tapped her combadge. "Troi to Captain Picard, Q is in Ian's room."

"We're on our way," the Captain replied.

Ian stared as the being called Q approached his bed.

Due to his mental shields, he could barely feel his mother, but from what he could he knew to be wary. She wasn't quite afraid, but was very guarded and alert.

"So you have returned. It has been awhile." Q leaned up against the wall.

"Do I know you?" Ian asked, just as Picard, Riker, and Worf entered the quarters, stopping just beyond the open door to his room.

"No, but I have seen your work, and I must say, the Continuum was quite astonished a few millennia ago when you destroyed a former-Q. I'm sure you remember. He was known as Kovar the Malignant. He had been a rogue Q, and the Continuum had decided to bar his existence to a single planet. I think that had been a little foolish, but at the time removing a Q's powers was seen as the worst kind of barbarity." Q sighed. "I miss those centuries."

Ian pushed the bed's covers from himself so he could sit up fully. He glanced at his mother, resigned to the fact he had just lost this secret and there was no point in trying to cover it back up, especially with denial. It would only make things harder.

Picard slowly stepped into the room, his face void of any expression.

"I remember," Ian said softly. Even with his shields up, he could feel shock from his mother and the others. That shock then crumpled into other emotions, but he didn't make the effort to identify them. "He had the entire planet nearly enslaved by the time I was born. He had an elite force committed to enforcing his vindictive rules. Most of the population believed he was a god and could not die."

"But then you proved them all wrong," Q said, folding his arms.

"Yes," Ian stated as he wondered if the planet he had saved still existed and if her people now roamed the stars. . . .

"Oh, I do love coming aboard your ship, Picard. Never a dull moment!" Q said suddenly, turning to the Captain.

"More and more I realize that here, here is where I want to be! Think of the advantages. With me and the Master of Death on board, think of the possibilities. Let me join your crew."

"No." Picard walked further into the room.

"No? Oh, Captain, in fairness, let me try; I deserve at least that much."

"In fairness? You disrupt this ship, you kidnap the Captain—" Riker began, standing in the doorway, only to be cut off.

"I add a little excitement, a little spice to your lives, and all you do is complain. Where's your adventurous spirit, your imagination? Think, Picard, think! You already have one immortal entity on board, what's another?"

"Simply speaking, we don't trust you," Picard stated.

"You don't trust me? What about him? You know nothing about him!" Q said, pointing at Ian. "The things he has done you cannot even imagine! You welcome him but not me?"

"I judge an individual by what he is now, and your recent acts instill no confidence in me. I do not know of his past, but I do know he noted my absence, informed my crew, and immediately sought to find me. I have yet to see such benevolence from you," Picard countered.

Ian's throat constricted in gratitude. He hadn't been expecting betrayal, of course, but even he could never have prepared himself for the Captain's defense of him and retort against Q. Living through the lives he had, he had learned such devotion was rare.

"You need me. You're not prepared for what awaits you, even with this being," Q argued.

Ian shifted in his bed and placed his feet on the floor as Deanna placed a hand on his back.

Picard's eyes remained on Q, watching his movements closely as Ian moved to stand beside Deanna.

"How can we be prepared for that which we do not know? But that's why we're out here: to learn and to discover. How else are we to equip ourselves? And do not discount our resourcefulness. We may not be prepared, but we are ready to become so," Picard promised. "We know there will be difficulties, perhaps even hardships, but we will adapt and lay the groundwork for those who will follow us."

"You judge yourselves against the pitiful adversaries you have encountered so far. The Romulans, the Klingons. They are nothing compared to what's waiting. Picard, you are about to move into areas of the galaxy containing wonders more incredible than you can possibly imagine, and terrors to freeze your soul. I offer myself as a guide only to be rejected out of hand."

"We'll just have to do the best we can without you," Riker stated.

"What justifies that smugness?" Q questioned.

"It's not smugness, but determination," Ian said. "And it was determination that made the difference in all of the lives I've lived."

Q stared down at Ian.

"You fear him," Picard whispered, but his words were so crisp that all of them heard him. "You, Q, a self-proclaimed omnipotent being. You called him the Master of Death. Are you afraid of death, Q?"

Q narrowed his eyes with a sneer that would have made Snape proud. "Enough. Let's see how well your determination serves you." And with a snap of his fingers, the Enterprise was propelled across space like a speck of dust in the wind.

Moments later, the ship stopped.

"Bridge, this is the Captain. All stop," Picard said.

"Answering all stop, sir."

"Status?" Picard asked.

"According to these coordinates, we have travelled seven thousand light years and are located near the system J-2-5," Data answered from the Bridge.

"Travel time to the nearest starbase?" Riker asked.

"At maximum warp, in two years, seven months, three days, eighteen hours we would reach Starbase 185," Data replied.

Riker glared at Q. "Why?"

"Why? Why, to give you a taste of your future, a preview of things to come. Con permiso, Capitan. The hall is rented, the orchestra engaged. It's now time to see if you can dance," he said, before simply vanishing.

"Picard to Guinan, meet us in the observation lounge."

A/N: This part borrowed events from 'Q, Who?', the 16th episode in season 2.

***Chapter 6*: Chapter 6**

Disclaimer: I obviously don't own the idea of Harry Potter or Star Trek, or any money making forms of them.

A special thanks to Chereche, who acted as a soundboard and beta for this fic ^_^

Chapter 6

Picard looked at Guinan and his gathered staff. The only staff member missing was Pulaski, who was with Ian.

"Because Guinan's people originated from this area of the galaxy, I have requested Guinan to participate in this conference," Picard began, before turning his eyes to her. "What can you tell us?"

"This immediate region is, for the most part, controlled by the Borg, and has been for nearly a decade now — although other sectors in this quadrant have been controlled by them for far longer," she said.

"What are they?" Riker asked.

"They are a cybernetically enhanced race converted from multiple assimilated species. I was not there personally, but a hundred years ago, they destroyed my people's home planet and all of our surrounding planet colonies. What is left of my people has been scattered throughout the galaxy. They are ruthless and have been developing for thousands of centuries, seeking what they consider 'perfection'. You cannot negotiate or reason with them. They will take what they want and destroy the rest. We should leave as soon as possible and stay clear of any vessels, particularly cubed shaped," Guinan advised.

Picard nodded, never having seen Guinan so serious. He tapped his combadge. "Helm, set a course to Starbase 185, warp 7. Engage."

"We are almost three years away from Federation Space, and that's at maximum warp. What needs to be done to ensure the Enterprise can make it without starbase maintenance?" Riker asked LaForge.

"Fortunately, we completed a thorough maintenance job at Starbase 163, so our systems should be safe for another five years, but considering we want to be traveling at high warp as often as we can, the baryon particle levels will eventually become a concern. As for how the ship itself will cope, I'm confident in my people's ability to keep her in shape," LaForge explained.

"How often, and how long, can we safely travel at high warp?" Riker asked.

"For every 72 hours of warp, we will need to go to impulse power for eight hours to give my people time to keep up the care of the warp coil and the rest of the involved systems," LaForge said.

"Data, I want you to work with stellar cartography and determine the safest resting zones on our path home so maintenance and any necessary repairs can be done," Picard ordered. "LaForge, if you need more crews to help you keep the Enterprise in top form, take who you need."

"Yes, sir," Data and LaForge both chimed.

"I want long distance scans to be ongoing. Since we are here, we are going to use this as an opportunity to gather as much information about this region of space, but as per Guinan's warning, I want to steer clear of the Borg race if at all possible," Picard said, before turning his eyes to Deanna.

"How is your son, Deanna?" Picard asked.

"Asleep. He had a bad headache for awhile after sensing Q, but it didn't remain for too long," she said.

Picard looked back at his staff, clearly shifting gears. "It appears Ian is an entity who is reborn time and time again,

living a lifetime before passing on. Q seemed to fear him, although he was also clearly curious. According to Q, Ian destroyed a rogue Q, bound to a planet some millennia ago. That Q was named Kovar, the Malignant and he almost had the entire planet enslaved before Ian stopped him."

Guinan shifted forward in her seat. "Rethot Pyrra. . . ."

"Guinan?" Picard asked, confused.

"For a long time, my people believed that tale to be a myth, until we had a run in with the Q Continuum a few centuries ago. They were curious about Pyrra, and one of them said they wanted to check on Pyrra's legacy. In that meeting, we learned that myth was actually truth, and that a rogue Q had tormented our ancestors, thanks to the Continuum deeming our planet an acceptable loss if it meant the rest of the universe could be spared by a monster of their own making," Guinan said, before giving an amused sneer. "You can bet Q fears Ian. If Ian is half as powerful as he had been as Pyrra, Q had better watch himself."

"Q called Ian the Master of Death," Picard said.

Guinan nodded thoughtfully. "My people have heard tales across the galaxy of beings given that title. Always a male, always a leader who shaped his world for the better. We have never been able to figure out why he is identified as the Master of Death though. Perhaps it is because death always seems to come for his enemies."

"That day in Ten Forward, when you saw my son, you called him 'little Master'. Is this why? Did you know then?" Deanna asked.

"I didn't know who he was, but the universe distorts around his essence because he shapes it more than it shapes him. Those like him are called 'masters' by my people," Guinan explained. "I have only met one other like him."

"Tomorrow morning, I'd like to speak with Ian," Picard said, looking back at Deanna.

Deanna nodded as Picard turned his attention to Worf and returned the conversation to ship business.

"Worf, I want you to work with Guinan. I want to understand the Borg as much as we can, so if we do encounter them we will be better prepared," Picard instructed. "As always, you may assemble teams to assist in anything you feel is necessary for the protection of the crew."

"Aye, Captain."

"I also want you to create some battle scenarios where the Enterprise is against a formidable opponent and, with Commander Riker, devise some retreat options and a list of which ship systems will most likely be damaged in an attack. LaForge, when they have finished that list, I want you to begin some preemptive work to protect the most vital systems listed on top of any systems you believe prudent."

LaForge nodded.

"Our goal is to make it home. As of this moment, we are assuming Q has left us here and will not assist us. If the look on his face was anything to go by, I believe he wants us to fail or beg for his help," Picard said. "If at all possible, I'd like to avoid both. Now, if there is nothing else?" He looked around at them all to check before giving a short nod. "Dismissed."

O

Ian was now a four year old. Pulaski had just finished examining him after his nap and determined his aging had finally stabilized — meaning its rate would no longer change. He would now age a year every two weeks.

Upon hearing that, his mother held him close — aching over the time he would not be able to live in his current life, after all, past lives or not, he was still her baby.

Ian only grieved for a moment, already having suspected his shortened time, and quickly accepted the likely possibility of meeting death far sooner than he had in all of his previous lives. He only wished his mother did not have to suffer from his circumstances. Having been a father to literally hundreds of children throughout his lifetimes, he understood the pain she was feeling at being helpless to change things. However, from all of his experiences, he had learned what to do at such times.

"I'll make the most of it," Ian promised himself and his mother after Pulaski had left.

"Yes, *we'll* make the most of it," his mother agreed, kissing his forehead as she rocked them in the chair.

They were quiet for a time, neither wanting to broach the subject that was on both of their minds — the truth Q had revealed. Ian didn't want to make his mother feel any more uncomfortable than she already was and Deanna honestly didn't know what to say. Finally, Ian decided he had to say something.

"I'm sorry you found out the way you did," he said.

"I know," she said gently.

Like a tide, the silence rose again as they both decided nothing more needed to be said.

The next morning would come soon enough.

O

Ian could feel Picard bubbling with curiosity and caution as he entered and sat down on the chair beside the couch the next morning. He could also feel the Captain's worry and frustration (at being three years (minimum) from Federation Space). His emotions ebbed quietly with the trepidation coming from the ship's crew. Ian refocused.

"Hello, Ian," Picard said, looking more comfortable than he felt.

"Hello."

"I'm sure you understand why I'm here," Picard started, briefly glancing at Deanna.

Ian nodded. "You have questions. I'll answer them if I can."

"Thank you," Picard said, allowing his shoulders to relax now that he knew some answers would be coming. "Putting this as delicately as I can, what are you?"

Ian smiled, briefly recalling the advice his old Headmaster had shared when he had unknowingly asked him a particularly heavy question.

"'The truth'," Ian quoted, unable to help himself. "It is a beautiful and terrible thing, and should therefore be treated with great caution.' A sentiment held by one of my old mentors; however, not quite one I share." Suddenly resigned, Ian sighed and answered. "I am a soul, endowed with an immortality that's accompanied by Death, which is why I die and am then reborn. It is a consequence of being the Master of Death."

Picard frowned, trying to reason through Ian's answer. "What do you do as the Master of Death?"

"Death and life go hand in hand. After the first dozen or so lifetimes, I finally figured out my part. I am as much a servant of Life as I am the Master of Death. I ensure Death is balanced," Ian said with a shrug.

"Balanced?" Deanna asked, not sure how concerned she should be by that.

"I stop those who are taking or negatively shaping too many lives — or at least that is what I have been able to conclude."

Picard slowly nodded. "Your lives have all had that in common then?"

"I am usually born during or right before a time of great struggle. More often than not, I succeed in ending whatever the struggle involved, but not always." Ian's eyes darkened for a moment.

"Have there been any major differences between your lives?" Picard asked, his curiosity growing.

"Well, in my previous lifetimes I had never been offworld or in a universe, or at least a time, so technologically advanced. Before this life, I had never been in space." Ian thought about it a little more. "I have been many races, some of which I have seen in this life, but when I had lived as one of them it was of course before they had space travel anywhere near like this."

"Did you age this way in those lives?" Picard asked, motioning to how Ian currently was.

"No. And actually, this is the first time I haven't actually been, well, *conceived*. In all of my other lives, I had both a mother *and* a father. I was perceived as perfectly normal — well, maybe not *normal*, but not alien."

Deanna frowned. "Why was it different this time?"

Ian shrugged. "Probably because of the way I had died last go round. Death's never come while I've been surrounded by so much —" he hesitated, trying to find a suitable word for 'magic', "— *energy* before."

"You said you had never been 'in a universe' like this one. What did you mean by that?" Picard asked.

"I've been born in several different universes. The only reason I know this is because I have lived separate lifetimes on the same planet but found that history differed slightly or there was an aspect of reality that wasn't the same as before. At first I had been confused by this until I realized that although I was on the same *planet*, I wasn't in the same *universe*. I've also noticed that the times in which I am born do not follow the normal stream of time. I could be born on a planet and live there in a modern time and then be reborn lifetimes later before the first time I had lived there. It took me some time to get a grasp on the disorienting timelines and realities, so I hope I'm making sense."

"I believe I am following you," Picard said, before shifting his questions to ones of a different nature. "Do you recall the name Rethot Pyrra?"

Ian shifted back, a little surprised. "That was my name in the life Q had mentioned. How did you find that name?"

"I told Guinan, a woman I trust, about that conversation. She quickly said that name and said he was part of her people's history. Her people had been saved by you."

Ian blinked, oddly touched at finding how his actions had been remembered eons later as he suddenly understood why the black woman in Ten Forward had felt so different to him.

"I'll have to pay her a visit soon," Ian said.

"I'm sure she would like that," Picard said before continuing the previous topic. "Now, she said that as Pyrra you had some abilities. Powerful ones. Is that true, and do you have any now?"

"Yes. I am always born with the abilities I had in my first life, and they often blend with any natural abilities of my current life — in this case, telepathy, which seems to have strengthened and meshed very well with my other abilities. Any abilities I had between my first life and my current one don't remain with me though, or at least not anywhere near the same degree," Ian explained, growing wistful as he thought briefly on his past lives.

"Ian, I must be straightforward here. Thanks to Q, we are years from home in an unexplored region of space controlled by, according to Guinan, a ruthless race. Should we need help, will you do what you can?" Picard asked.

Ian could feel the Captain had squashed every ounce of pride within himself, knowing there was no place for it in their current situation. Ian's respect for him went up.

"Captain, this is my home. I will do everything I can to ensure this ship and those living onboard remain safe," Ian

said.

Picard smiled softly, although he felt a little guilty about having asked in the first place. He shifted in his chair, about to inquire further about his abilities, when Ian frowned.

"I feel it too, Ian," Deanna quickly said.

"What is it?" Picard asked.

"Thousands of minds, in sync, working as one," Ian stated as Riker's voice came through the com.

"Captain to the Bridge, a vessel is in an intercept course with us," Riker said.

"Go to Yellow Alert. Time to intercept?" Picard asked, already standing up.

"Three minutes," Data answered.

"I believe, considering everything, your presence is warranted," Picard said, looking at Ian.

Ian got up from the couch and took his mother's hand.

O

On the Bridge, the viewscreen displayed a massive cube shaped vessel heading toward them. Picard walked closer to the screen, leaving Deanna and her son to watch from the left hand chair.

"Captain, we are being probed," Worf said.

"Full Scan," Picard said. "Be ready on the shields."

"Aye, sir," Worf said.

"Mister Data, what can you tell us?" Picard asked.

"The ship is strangely generalized in design. There is no specific bridge, no command center. There is no engineering section. I can identify no living quarters," Data said.

"Life signs?" Riker asked.

"There is no indication of life," Data replied.

"There's life," Ian stated.

"Lieutenant Worf, what is its alert status?" Riker asked.

"I detect no shields, no weapons of any known design," Worf said, working his consol.

"Hailing frequencies," Picard stated.

"Open," Worf said.

"This is Captain Jean-Luc Picard of the USS Enterprise."

"No response," Worf said.

"This is Captain Picard representing the United Federation of Planets," Picard continued before motioning to Worf to turn the hailing frequency off after receiving no reply. He tapped his combadge. "Guinan."

"Yes?" Guinan answered.

"Activate your viewscreen. I would like you to monitor what's going on up here. I may need your input," Picard said.

"Captain, we are now being hailed," Worf said.

Picard gave a nod and Worf opened communications again.

They then heard hundreds upon hundreds of voices, speaking as one. "We are the Borg. Lower your shields and surrender your ship. We will add your biological and technological distinctiveness to our own. Your culture will adapt to service us. Resistance is futile."

"Helm, warp 8, any heading toward the Alpha Quadrant. Engage," Picard stated.

"They are in pursuit, Captain," Data said. "They have matched our speed."

"Let's see if we can outrun them. Lieutenant LaForge, I want maximum warp," Picard said. "For as long as we can hold it."

"Yes, sir. We are passing warp eight point five," LaForge answered from Engineering. "Eight point eight. Warp 9."

"Captain, the enemy vessel is firing on us, but there are no reports of any damage to the Enterprise," Worf said.

"We are now at warp nine point six five," Laforge continued. "You've got all we can give you."

"Understood, Mister LaForge," Picard acknowledged.

"Captain, the target was not the ship. The weapon was designed to drain the shields," Data reported.

"Confirmed. Shield effectiveness has been reduced twelve percent," Worf supplied unhappily.

"Arm the photon torpedoes. See if we can slow them down," Riker said.

"Torpedoes armed," Worf said.

"Fire," Picard ordered.

The torpedoes slammed into the cube, exploding into the ship and gouging out two large chunks.

"They've halted pursuit," Data answered.

"LaForge, how long can we remain at maximum warp?" Picard asked.

"I wouldn't hold it for more than thirty minutes, sir, unless we want to drop to impulse for a few hours after. We could hold warp 7 for some time though."

"Understood. Drop to warp 9 for ten more minutes, then drop to warp 7," Picard said.

"Yes, Captain."

Picard looked at Deanna and Ian. Ian was closing his eyes. Questioningly, Picard made eye contact with Deanna and nodded toward Ian.

"He's sensing," Deanna said softly.

Ian opened his eyes after a long moment. "There's an essence in this space. I don't know what you would call it, but it's tied to the Borg. I believe it's the way they communicate between ships. It's anchored through beacons across this region. I've found four so far," Ian said.

"Beacons?" Data asked, rotating in his chair to look at him.

"They're a lot like starbases, but much smaller and heavily shielded," Ian answered. "They're receiving and sending out this . . . essence."

"Did you sense any other ships?" Picard asked.

Ian nodded. "One that way," he said, pointing. "And another there. Neither are heading toward us. They're further than the one you damaged."

"How far can you sense?" Riker asked.

"I don't know, but I looked about three systems out radially."

"We're going to need to go to impulse eventually so LaForge can carry out the necessary maintenance. I think it would be best if we could find some place to hide. Perhaps a nebula?" Riker suggested.

"Nebula? That's a big space cloud, right?" Ian asked.

"Yes, and very difficult for scanners to penetrate," Data said, before moving to get up. "I will get with stellar cartography."

"Very good," Picard said with a nod.

O

The next nineteen hours passed without incident, although everyone onboard was very busy. Lt. Worf continued to work with Guinan and Riker, formulating defensive strategies while coordinating possible system damage scenarios with Lt. Commander LaForge. He had also tasked Chief O'Brien with organizing internal 'shelters' where children and other non-combatants would reside should they come under another attack. Guinan had warned Worf the Borg preferred to commandeer ships by teleporting onboard and injecting anyone near with something that began the assimilation process before beaming back to the Borg ship with the unfortunate soul. With that in mind, O'Brien planned to use the replicators to create extra independent power sources that would power shields over the shelter areas, preventing anyone from transporting in or out. Picard quickly approved.

Meanwhile, Data worked diligently with stellar cartography and found two nebulas ahead on their present course. Pulaski and her team prepared for casualties, in case the next confrontation with the Borg was not as minor as the first. Picard oversaw it all and delegated relief crews so things would progress smoothly with little interruption while those who needed to rest slept.

Hours later, they finally came to a nebula.

"Slow to impulse," Riker said as they approached the massive cloud with dozens of streaked colors.

"Composition?" Picard asked.

"82% dilithium hydroxyls, magnesium, and chromium," Data answered. "It should be effective in blocking sensors even three times more powerful than those of the Enterprise."

"Ian?" Picard asked.

"Nothing nearby, but that Borg ship we damaged before is moving again, and I sense it's been completely repaired," Ian said, sitting on his mom's lap.

"No time to waste then. Helm, take us in, half impulse," Riker said.

They went into the cloud and were soon draped by colorful swirling wisps.

"As soon as we have reached the edge of the more densely packed portion of the nebula, we will slow to quarter impulse and then cut impulse power. We will use our inertia to travel along the edge for as long as we can. That should give LaForge ample time," Picard said. "Mr. Data, when will we reach that edge?"

"According to these readings, four minutes," Data said.

Suddenly, the viewscreen, which had been displaying billowing clouds being pushed aside by the ship, went completely white before revealing Q's face.

"I see you're really giving this your all, but it will not be enough. This will all be for naught. The Borg will keep coming. You're not as clever as you think, hiding out in nebulas. Sure, acting as a fox may buy you time, but that won't get you home. The hunter will get their fur scarf in the end," Q stated.

"If you have nothing but taunts and discouraging words to say, leave us, Q," Picard said, not in the mood.

"I speak only words of truth, mon capitaine. It is not my fault they're discouraging," he said as he disappeared.

Annoyed, Picard tapped his combadge. "Engineering, we're about to cut impulse power, how long do you need to complete the necessary maintenance?"

"Five hours, Captain. I also want to try something that may provide some protection for our shields," Laforge said.

"Take as long as you need. Anything that will hinder the Borg from draining our shields will be worth the time," Picard said, LaForge's words lifting his spirits a bit. He also knew this time would provide O'Brien the energy he needed to make those power generators for the shelters' shields.

Picard gave the front of his uniform a tug.

The Borg were formidable, no doubt, but he and his crew were not as helpless as Q clearly believed. They would prove it.

Chapter 7: Chapter 7

Disclaimer: I obviously don't own the idea of Harry Potter or Star Trek, or any money making forms of them.

A special thanks to Chereche, who acted as a soundboard and beta for this fic ^_^

A/N: This part has never been posted before, so it's new and the re-posting portion is now done :D. Thanks so much for all of your support over this rating nonsense.

Chapter 7

Picard, Deanna, and Data were with Ian in the Captain's ready room, taking the opportunity to inquire further about his abilities and to determine if any could help protect the crew of the Enterprise.

"I have a few abilities that could shield or cloak the Enterprise, but unless it was an emergency, I don't think it would be a good idea. My powers, especially the ones that essentially distort reality, don't mix well with technology," Ian warned.

Picard recalled part of the conversation with LaForge concerning the energy that had been responsible for bringing Ian to them.

"What's more, Captain, is that a minute later there was a faint pulse, but it didn't actually release any energy, which was why it — again — didn't trigger any alarms. I had to check back on my findings several times because it just briefly distorted the energy of the surrounding systems in that area. I wasn't sure if my readings were accurate at first, but I have verified that they are," LaForge said.

"If it were to happen again, could it become a threat to the ship?" Picard asked.

"Not unless it was a trillion times more powerful."

Well, he didn't know anything about Ian's abilities, but surrounding the ship in something that 'distorts reality' certainly sounded like something that would be a trillion times more powerful than what LaForge had detected.

"Using those abilities should be a last resort then," Picard agreed.

"I'm also not sure what I'll be capable of in this body. Usually, I'm a little older before I use any of my more powerful magic," Ian said.

"Magic?" Deanna asked, intrigued.

"It's as good a term as any for what I can do," Ian said with a shrug. "There's probably some scientific words for it, but I'm sure 'magic' is faster and easier to say."

"So your current age and size may limit you?" Picard asked, getting back on topic.

"Yeah. In all of my past lives, my body was almost always the limiting factor," Ian said.

"Alright, perhaps we should focus on this 'essence' you mentioned, instead," Picard suggested.

"It feels a lot like thoughts do, but it's a bit more mechanical — if that makes any sense," Ian explained.

"I believe it does," Data said thoughtfully. "It seems very likely that this essence is as you said before, a way for the Borg to communicate. Considering the beacons you spoke of, it is possible that what you are sensing is some kind of subspace frequency."

"Could we scan for that?" Picard asked.

"Not easily. We would need to have a receiver or some other hardware that is linked to the root or specific subspace network being used," Data replied.

"Like a beacon?" Picard suggested, already considering possibilities.

Data nodded, already following the Captain. "Possibly."

"If we come across one, we may have you and Mr. LaForge take a look," Picard said. "But until then, we need to complete the precautions before we leave the nebula." Picard turned his attention to Ian as their little meeting was clearly approaching an end. "I would like to hear more about your abilities, but we'll need to find another time," he said a bit regretfully.

"I understand," Ian said, not bothered at all as he stood to leave with his mother.

O

Deanna watched as her son meditated. He was examining the 'essence' in hopes of understanding it because he felt it might be something they could take advantage of, with or without a beacon.

Ian was physically now four years and a few months old. He was an adorable child. Deanna inwardly sighed, trying to quell the ache that came with thinking about his age. It only reminded her of his life expectancy. He only had about four and a half years left with them, assuming he physically reached the average life expectancy of a human, which was 120 years old.

She felt cheated, robbed. She felt angry for Ian and for herself. But there was nothing for it. She just hoped Pulaski's chart was wrong, or they found something to help slow his aging once they returned to Federation space.

O

They went into warp the instant they were clear of the nebula, immediately heading toward the second nebula which was fifty-three hours away at warp 7.

"Anything on scanners?" Picard asked.

"Negative, Captain," Data answered.

"Ian?" Picard asked.

"Two Borg ships, one heading away from us, but the other is on the other side of the nebula we just left. I don't know if it's noticed us," Ian said.

"Please let me know if it changes course," Picard said.

Ian nodded.

Three hours later, Ian straightened. "Captain, one is headed our way. It might be the one we first encountered."

"Increase to warp 8," Picard said before looking to Data.

"Nothing on scanners yet, Captain," Data said.

"Engineering, how long would we be able to hold warp 9 right now?" Riker asked.

"Starfleet has recorded a max of 12 hours of straight use on a ship similar to our construction, Commander, but I wouldn't go beyond four hours," LaForge advised.

"At warp 9, it would take approximately 23 hours and 34 minutes to reach the nebula, Captain," Data supplied.

"Currently, we are 33 hours and 22 minutes away."

"We'll maintain warp 8 then," Picard decided.

For an agonizing eleven hours, they continued through Borg space. Ian and much of the crew were able to get at least six hours of sleep in that time, but of course a few hadn't been able to get more than a few catnaps. Picard slept in his ready room.

"Captain to the Bridge. I have the Borg ship on scanners," Data said.

Picard immediately returned to the Bridge.

"On screen," he stated.

Sure enough, the vessel, which only appeared to be a tiny cluster of pixels, was there.

"Magnify," Picard said.

There was no denying it was a Borg ship, and Picard got the strangest feeling Ian was right. It was the same one they had fired upon — but perhaps that was just his nerves playing with him.

"Velocity?" he asked.

"Warp nine point five, sir," Data said. "At our current speed, they will overtake us in less than an hour."

"Red alert," Picard said.

"Captain, I suggest arming the crew and moving non-combatants into the shelter areas, as a precautionary measure," Worf stated.

"Agreed," Picard said, knowing Guinan's input was the reason for that suggestion.

"All personnel, initiate Precaution Red point One and Two," Worf said, speaking to the entire ship before going to a cabinet somewhat hidden within a wall at the back of the bridge.

It was a weapon's locker and Worf wasted no time in handing out the phasers. They all clipped them to their hips and, unbeknownst to most on the bridge, Worf had his bat'leth clipped to the underside of his consol. It was a crescent shaped blade a little over a meter long with three handholds along its spine. At either end of the outer handholds were two spikes, one branching further out, while the other curved in. A great defensive and offensive weapon.

The hour passed too quickly, and soon the Borg ship was upon them and struck the Enterprise with the beam that absorbed the shields' power.

"Photon torpedoes, full spread. Fire," Picard ordered.

The torpedoes slammed into the Borg ship, but they quickly saw they had made no damage at all.

"Shields have been reduced to 62 percent," Worf said as they were hit again by the beam. "35 percent. Another hit and we will be defenseless."

Deanna was seated, horrified, while Ian stood up, ready.

The shields fell.

"They have us in a tractor beam!" Worf said.

"All personnel, prepare for intruders. Don't let them touch you!" Picard warned.

A second later, seven Borg drones materialized on the bridge.

Picard, Riker, Worf, Data, and another crewmen immediately fired, instantly taking down five. Worf and Data fired at the remaining two, but their weapons were now ineffective as glasslike shields appeared over the Borg's forms, preventing damage. The Borg had adapted.

The two Borg advanced, approaching Worf and Captain Picard.

Worf grabbed his bat'leth, slamming the blade into the drone's neck before yanking it out and slamming his foot into its chest. It wouldn't get up again. Meanwhile, Riker and Data moved to protect the Captain, but Ian lifted his hand.

Suddenly, the drone's arms snapped to its sides and its legs straightened before it fell straight back, but Ian wasn't finished. Dashing forward, he quickly knelt over the drone and pried its right eye completely open with his left hand, forcing eye contact. Five more drones appeared.

O

Picard was certain the following fifteen seconds were the longest fifteen seconds of his life. He didn't know what was happening behind him, but heard Worf's bat'leth cleave through a Borg as he and Riker turned to two other Borg. Riker kicked one while Picard slammed his fist into the jaw of the second, following it swiftly by another punch. He felt the skin over his knuckles slice open upon contact with the Borg's implants, but he didn't stop. He heard the ensign scream behind him and saw from the corner of his eye Worf leaping over the console, bat'leth high over his head as he gave a battle cry.

He turned just in time to see Worf defend Ian and Deanna, killing the Borg with a forward thrust of his blade. Deanna screamed as the form dropped, landing inches from her son, who was still crouched over the stiff drone. The turbolift doors suddenly opened, and three more drones stepped onto the bridge.

"Whatever Ian is doing, I hope it—" Riker started, only to cut off as they heard a booming voice. It was so loud at first they thought it had been bellowed, but it hadn't been, at least not verbally.

-SLEEP-

The word had such command that for a brief moment Picard almost felt compelled to close his eyes, but as soon as it had come it was gone. However, those on the ship with less disciplined minds, mainly children, gave no resistance to the suggestion, and neither did the Borg.

Every single drone instantly went limp, crumpling to the floor like marionettes with their strings cut.

"Ian?" Riker asked, astonished.

Ian remained where he was, giving no indication he had heard. Deanna knelt beside him.

"He has entered the Borg's mind," Deanna said.

"Report," Picard said, looking to Worf and Data.

Worf and Data quickly went to their stations. "Reports are coming in from every deck that the Borg have all fallen unconscious. There are casualties. Sickbay is responding," Worf answered.

"Captain, the Borg ship has ceased all operations. All systems are down," Data said.

O

Ian had delved deeply into the drone's consciousness, so far that soon he found himself surrounded by the voices of thousands upon thousands of drones. He felt as if he was lost at sea, but he continued on, pushing further until he found what he assumed to be what Data had said there might be. The root of a 'subspace frequency'. He still preferred the term 'essence', but, whatever it was, it was tangible enough — at least in the mind — to latch on to. And he did.

Slamming as much power into his mental compulsory spell as he could, he sent out the command to sleep. The word, so strong in its magnitude, shot through the Borg ship attacking the Enterprise like a lightning bolt — but it didn't stop there. Riding the Borg's unique subspace frequency, it traveled all the way to the nearest beacon, catapulting the order to sleep to every ship in direct link to it.

In less than three seconds, five Borg vessels were suddenly adrift in space.

Ian opened his eyes, expecting to see the drone on the floor of the bridge, but he didn't. He wasn't even on the bridge anymore. He experienced a brief spike of panic.

"Child?"

Ian turned to find dozens of people standing in a clearing of a forest.

"What is this place?" he immediately asked.

"This is Unimatrix Zero, a virtual construct. Don't be afraid, you are safe here. My name is Axum. Who are you?" Axum asked.

"Ian," he answered, suspicious. "Are you a Borg?"

"Yes, but not while I'm in this place. Here, I have my identity, my individuality. Right now my body is in its regeneration cycle," Axum explained. "Allowing my consciousness to come to this place, thanks to a recessive mutation."

"A mutation?" Ian asked.

"The Borg Collective does not know of it, but I hope, one day, it will be their undoing. Only one in a million drones has it. So, what do you last remember before coming here?" Axum asked.

"I haven't been assimilated, if that's what you're thinking," Ian said.

Axum blinked, a little confused. "Then how are you here?"

"I have an ability to look into minds. I looked into the mind of a drone I had immobilized," Ian said, deciding there was no harm in sharing this.

"Like a Vulcan?" Axum asked.

"Sort of," Ian said, before several more people entered the clearing from a different area of the forest.

"Axum! Axum! Something has happened. All of the drones on at least two ships have entered their regeneration cycles at once!" a woman said, hurrying through the now murmuring crowd.

"What? How can that be?" Axum asked, bewildered.

Dozens of people suddenly started speaking at once, and Ian was immediately struck with a realization.

"Um, that was probably because of me," Ian said, just loud enough for Axum to hear.

Axum suddenly turned back toward him. "You?"

All chatter ceased.

"As I said, I looked into a drone's mind."

"But that wouldn't have done this," Axum argued.

"Well, I sort of put in a strong suggestion to sleep."

"You put a command into the drone's neural net pathway, and it went all the way to the Borg's mainframe . . . ?"
Axum breathed.

Excited conversation exploded among those gathered.

"This is what we've been waiting for!"

"Can you help us, child?"

"We must act quickly!"

"Please! Calm down, everyone," Axum shouted.

Quiet was slowly restored.

"Would you be willing to help us?" Axum asked. "Help free us from the Borg, help us destroy what the Borg are by restoring the individuality in those who have been assimilated?"

"Axum, we must not forget about the self-destruct sequence that's activated in cases of 'malfunctions'. The ships he has affected will likely have already activated those command functions," someone urgently said behind Axum.

"Go back, child, you must get to safety. Please return when you're able, once you are somewhere safe," Axum said earnestly.

"Wait, maybe I could put in another command to stop the self-destruct," Ian said quickly.

"The command, 'Abort malfunction purge,' may work," Axum stated. "But I am not sure of all the effects that will have on the affected ships' systems."

"Alright, I'll try that, then I'll get back to you when I can," Ian said, before closing his eyes and willing himself to wake.

O

Nearly a minute had passed since the Borg had been put to sleep when Ian straightened up and shook himself.

"Ian?" Deanna asked.

"I'm not done," Ian said, about to lean forward again when a brilliant flash filled the bridge.

"Stop him, Picard, he's about to save the Borg ship," Q said, sitting in Data's seat.

Data blinked, finding himself on the floor beside Worf.

Picard looked down at Ian.

"Trust me, Captain," Ian said, before looking back into the eye of the drone, not waiting for permission.

"Stop him, Picard, or your ship is doomed!" Q warned.

"Why?" Picard asked, clearly unconvinced.

"He's about to halt the destruction of the Borg vessel, mon capitaine. Surely even you can see how unwise that is," Q argued.

"I can see I don't have the whole picture," Picard said, before looking to Deanna.

"Ian's certain about this, Captain. I can feel him straining to accomplish whatever he's setting out to do," Deanna said.

"Then we will let him be," Picard stated.

"This is a mistake, Picard. Incredibly foolish. The Borg are merciless. They will not return your compassion. It's why they dominate this area of space," Q said, exasperated, as if trying to reason with a toddler.

"Perhaps," Picard said as Ian pulled back and looked up at him.

"I think I did it, but we should distance ourselves from the ship, just in case," Ian said.

Disgusted, Q promptly disappeared.

Picard gave the order to the ensign at the helm, before turning to Ian expectantly.

Although mentally exhausted, Ian smiled. "I think this will take some time to explain, sir, but I think I have some good news."

O

Picard sat behind his desk, digesting everything Ian had told them, which included what he had done to the Borg and his discovery of a place called Unimatrix Zero. It was simply extraordinary. Data and LaForge were already working on some theories and were certain they would have a plan by the time Ian woke up — having been ordered to bed by his mother. Ian didn't put up a fight.

Picard took a sip of his Earl Grey as he looked out the window of his ready room. The Borg ship was there, drifting, with minimal power. Ian had succeeded in preventing the self-destruct sequence — for good or ill.

All of the unconscious drones on the Enterprise were now lined up in a secured storage bay, and the dead drones were respectfully covered in another. After learning that at least some Borg drones might still have some form of their original consciousness within them, the crew of the Enterprise did their utmost to treat them as individuals who could be saved.

There was damage throughout the ship, mainly weapon fire, so it was fortunately minimal. Fourteen crewmen had been injected by the Borg's assimilation compound and had been sedated in sickbay by Pulaski and her staff. It seemed the assimilation process occurred in stages and had to be assisted by something on the Borg vessel, because Pulaski could only find minute changes in the infected crewmen's DNA — however, they weren't taking any chances. She hoped with time she would be able to reverse what had occurred thus far.

Picard rubbed his eyes and glanced at the narrow couch before deciding he should try to get a catnap at the very least.

O

Deanna woke. Something was different. Something had changed. She wasn't sure if something was *wrong*, but something. . . . Her eyes widened.

Confusion, panic, relief, fear, joy, loneliness, and gratitude, all at once, surged from within a section of the Enterprise and in the ship adrift a few kilometers beyond.

"Troi to Captain Picard, the Borg drones are awake!"

O

Picard and Lt. Worf stepped into the hall leading to the secured storage bay for the Borg drones. Security officers were all over, but they didn't seem to be actively fighting anything, so he took that to be a good sign. Along with a

phasor, every single one of them was armed with a bladed or blunt weapon of their choosing. After Worf proved the Borg didn't seem able to adapt to physical weapons, he had ship's security adapt in kind.

"Captain, Lieutenant," an officer said, hurrying over. He had a slender long sword on his hip—no doubt a fan of fencing.

"Report," Picard said.

"They don't seem to be drones anymore. They are asking questions, and although at first a few had become violent, my men quickly got the situation back under control and a number of them calmed their . . . brethren." The security officer paused, not sure how else to address the former-drones.

"I would like to talk to them," Picard said, though clearly not as a request.

"Of course, sir," the officer said, stepping aside.

Picard steeled himself as the door slid open. Enterprise security stood outside the doors and above in the balcony overlooking the storage bay. The former-drones were scattered about. Roughly 250 of them. Some idly walked around, others clustered in corners, while a few simply stood and stared at nothing; however, most immediately turned to face him when he entered.

"I am Captain Jean-Luc Picard of the USS Enterprise. I understand this is very confusing and overwhelming, but I must ask you all to remain calm." His eyes scanned them all, assured they understood him before he continued. "Is there one among you willing to speak for you all?"

After a moment, a man stepped up. He was dark skinned and of a species Picard knew he had never seen before. He had large ears and had several Borg implants. His left eye had been replaced by some kind of electronic scanner. "Four of Six, secondary adjunct of Trimatrix 4-3-1 is willing to carry out that function."

"I take it that is you?" Picard asked.

"Yes." He frowned, as if trying to remember a distant memory. "Once went by something else . . . do not remember."

"That's alright. Thank you for volunteering. Do you have any questions?"

"What happened?" he asked.

"To keep it brief, a member of my crew found a way to break you free from the Hive Mind. We are still trying to determine all of the consequences, but what is clear is that you are all now no longer part of the Borg Collective."

Several people began weeping, which was a very sad and strange sight, for they were still covered in Borg implants but were no longer drones. What was even stranger was the fact these people had been trying to take over the ship hours before.

"Eternal gratitude to that member," Four of Six said. "Four of Six does not remember much of life before this, but enough to know too much had been stolen by the Collective."

"Do you need anything?" Picard asked.

"Energy and a place to regenerate," Four of Six answered.

"I will have my people get on that," Picard answered.

"Thank you."

"Is there anything else?"

"No, nothing that cannot wait."

"If you need anything, you may inform an officer by the door," Picard said. "But please, do not attempt to leave."

"We understand. You are being very hospitable. We will not dishonor that."

Picard gave an appreciative nod before he left.

Aspects of several Borg related episodes were taken and manipulated for this part, particularly the following episodes: 'The Best of Both Worlds' Part 1+2 (from Star Trek:TNG, Ep 26 of season 3 and Ep 1 of season 4) and 'Unimatrix Zero' Part 1+2 (from Star Trek:Voyager, Ep 26 of season 6 and Ep 1 of season 7).

***Chapter 8*: Chapter 8**

Disclaimer: I obviously don't own the idea of Harry Potter or Star Trek, or any money making forms of them.

A special thanks to Chereche, who acted as a soundboard and beta for this fic ^_^

Chapter 8

Back on the bridge, Picard stared at the viewscreen. He had just sent Riker to get some sleep when the Borg vessel suddenly seemed to stabilize in space. It was no longer adrift.

"Captain, we are being hailed," Worf said.

"On screen," Picard said.

The image of the Borg cube suddenly disappeared and was replaced with two former-drones standing on a platform in front of a deep gap within the Borg ship. On either side of the gap were levels and levels of Borg alcoves, and sporadically stretched across the narrow gap were bridges. The image quickly gave them a deeper appreciation of how large the ship was, and how many former-drones were likely onboard.

Seeing as they had yet to speak, Picard decided to take the initiative.

"I am Jean-luc Picard, Captain of the Federation Starship Enterprise," he said. "To whom am I speaking?"

The left drone answered. "One of Seven, newly elect of Liberated Cube 0-1, former Cube 4-3-1."

"How may I help you?" Picard asked.

"We seek the one called Ian," One of Seven said.

"How do you know of Ian?" Picard asked, hiding his surprise fairly well.

The former-drone to the right stepped up. "I am of Unimatrix Zero."

Picard was instantly struck by the use of 'I' and the mention of Unimatrix Zero, the place where certain drones apparently retained their individuality.

"And I have reclaimed my birth name, Korel. I saw Ian when he appeared in Unimatrix Zero, and know he is responsible for freeing us from the Collective. We must speak with him and act soon before the Borg can move to counter us," she said. Half of her face was obscured by a large implant that curved around her jaw, but both of her eyes were visible.

Picard turned to Worf and nodded, signaling him to send a message to Deanna requesting Ian's presence.

"He's on his way, Captain," Worf said after a moment.

"While we wait for Ian, I propose a partnership," Picard said, deciding this was as good a time as any.

"A partnership? You mean an alliance?" Korel asked.

"At this stage, an alliance may be a little premature, but we could certainly work toward that degree of trust. However, for the moment, let us agree to aid one another against our common enemy," Picard said.

"The Collective," One of Seven stated before tilting his head. "Agreed."

"Captain, we have lost the connection to the Collective, but the connection to our number remains. The generosity

you have shown to our people on your vessel astounds us. Thank you," Korel stated with a nod in thanks.

"You're welcome," Picard said as Ian and Deanna stepped onto the bridge. "Counselor Troi, Ian, this is One of Seven and Korel. They are no longer Borg drones," Picard introduced. "They asked to speak with you, Ian."

"Hello," Ian said.

"Ian, I come with word from Axum. We must move quickly. Would you be willing to do what you had done again?" Korel asked.

Ian blinked. "If you mean enter in a command to free more people from the Borg, definitely."

Korel smiled. "Thank you. We believe several Borg Cubes are coming to attempt to terminate us. We don't have much time. Right now, three Liberated Cubes are heading this way to help defend us. The fifth that had been freed will remain away. In case we fail, they will be the last hope of freeing any more from the Borg Mind."

Picard and Ian exchanged looks before Ian closed his eyes. Everyone remained quiet for a long moment before Ian looked back up.

"She's right. There's eight Borg ships heading this way. Six are cubes, two are spheres," Ian said as Data turned.

"There are five Borg vessels in sensor range," Data said. "One is spherical in shape."

"The three nearest are liberated, Captain," Korel promised, deciding not to question how Ian's abilities were able to provide more information than the scanners of the Enterprise.

"How far are the others?" Picard asked.

"Less than a quarter of a light year behind," Data replied.

"Captain, we are sending you coordinates. We must head there for Ian to be able to enter root commands through one of us. Whether or not the Collective continues to pursue us, it will only be a matter of time before they learn how their subspace frequencies had been used against them," Korel said.

"Helm, to those coordinates, maximum warp," Picard said, glancing back up at One of Seven and Korel who both nodded. "Engage."

Wasting no time, the two vessels sped through space side-by-side while keeping hailing frequencies open.

"We are going to another beacon. The beacon that had carried Ian's previous command has self-destructed," One of Seven said. "We are constructing a device to amplify the distance of the beacon's subspace output to reach more vessels, as it is unlikely Ian's ability will succeed again after this."

"Because the Borg adapt," Picard said.

"Correct," One of Seven said.

"With any luck, those Borg ships coming for us now will become Liberated through this," Riker said.

"That is our hope," Korel agreed.

Data stilled at his station before looking at the Captain. "Captain, if I may, I have a suggestion."

Picard nodded for him to go ahead and Data turned back to the viewscreen where Korel and One of Seven were waiting.

"Concerning Unimatrix Zero, if you still have access to it, could we use that in conjunction with the beacon to send out commands to affect more Borg vessels?" Data asked.

Korel paused before slowly breaking into a full grin, which was slightly scary due to her Borg implants. "I will need to return to Unimatrix Zero and converse with those there, but . . . yes, it may be possible," she said, her eyes alight with pure elation. "I will inform you of what I learn."

"Very well. Let us know if there is anything we can do to assist," Picard said.

"We will. Thank you, Captain," One of Seven stated before the viewscreen went back to showing space.

O

The following hours were hectic, but very productive.

Pulaski, LaForge, and others on the Enterprise worked with the liberated drones onboard. With their help, Pulaski learned about their physiology and was able to confidently treat the partially assimilated crewmen. She also became certain she would be able to remove almost any Borg implant the former-drones had—should they wish it—but that would be for another time, if at all.

In Engineering, half a dozen former-drones worked with LaForge and his team. With their help, the shields were given a slight upgrade and LaForge learned about ways to improve their other systems. LaForge was ecstatic and couldn't wait to implement them.

Other liberated Borg were with Worf and Riker, going over Borg weapon systems and strategies in general. They also gave tips on how to improve the Enterprise's offensive capabilities, although most improvements would have to wait to be installed later.

Within that time, Ian, Deanna, Korel, Picard, Data and Four of Six (the former-drone who volunteered to speak for the Borg on the Enterprise) went over what would need to be done once the Enterprise reached the beacon. It was decided Four of Six, who now called himself Forix, would act as the link between the beacon, Unimatrix Zero, and Ian for the sake of transporter convenience and so Ian could meet him before going to the beacon. After sending specs to the Enterprise, Data set to work on modifying Forix's implants to allow him to enter Unimatrix Zero, accommodate the influx of information that would come from Unimatrix Zero, and enable him to connect (however temporarily) to the beacon.

"Forix will need to be in regeneration mode, so a Borg Alcove will need to be attached to the beacon," Korel said.

"How long will that take?" Picard asked.

"No more than fifteen minutes," Korel answered.

"Alright, so Forix will begin regenerating and be able to enter Unimatrix Zero," Picard said.

"Correct. Once he's in, Ian will send in the commands he had used before. If it works as we believe it will, those commands will be sent through the beacon *and* through Unimatrix Zero. That will free any vessels within range of the beacon and any Borg vessels with a drone currently in Unimatrix Zero due to their immediate tie to their vessel," Korel said.

"How many Borg vessels do you estimate will be affected?" Data asked.

Korel paused, thinking. "There are approximately fourteen thousand individuals who come to Unimatrix Zero, but not all of them will be regenerating when the commands are sent. However, we are confident that at least six thousand vessels will be freed if Ian is successful."

"How do you feel about this, Ian?" Deanna asked.

"Good, Mommy. I want to do this," Ian answered. "I can do it."

Deanna smiled, doing her best to be supportive while quelling the unease in knowing he would be off the Enterprise

and on a beacon exposed to space while a spaceship battle likely commenced within sight.

"I will be with him, Counselor," Data assured.

"Thank you, Data," Deanna said, although she wasn't all that reassured.

O

"Stop once we are two thousand kilometers from the beacon," Picard ordered.

The time of preparation had ended and the beacon was in range.

"Aye, sir," said the Ensign at the helm.

"Enterprise, we have begun installing the subspace frequency amplifier and the alcove," One of Seven said. "It should be fully installed in twelve minutes. Is Ian ready?"

"Almost. He is putting on the adapted space suit as we speak," Picard answered. "We will beam Ian, Lt. Commander Data, and Forix to the specified coordinates in twelve minutes," Picard said.

"Very good," One of Seven replied.

"Captain, the hostile Borg ships will be within firing range in eleven minutes," Worf said.

Picard wondered if the universe hated them.

"Shields up. Red Alert," Picard said as he gave Worf a nod.

"All personnel, initiate Precaution Red point One and Two," Worf said.

"We will defend your vessel and the beacon, Captain," One of Seven stated, determination and sincerity bleeding through his electronic-like voice.

"Thank you. . . . We will certainly be cutting this close," Picard said, although he whispered the last portion to himself. Only Riker heard him.

O

Looking up, Ian took hold of Data's hand as they stepped onto the transporter pad with Forix and three other free-Borg. Clad in a miniature space suit (made specially for him), Ian couldn't believe he would actually be walking in space in a few moments.

"Ready, Ian?" Data asked.

Unlike him, Data didn't need any special equipment to live outside the ship, but he was armed with a phasor Forix had adapted for him, along with a club Worf insisted he have, just in case.

"Yeah," Ian said with a nod. His voice sounded funny from within the suit, coming out amplified and slightly warped.

"Captain, we are ready," Data reported.

"O'Brien, energize," Picard said from the Bridge after ordering the shields to be lowered during their transport.

O

Picard stared at the viewscreen with eight Borg vessels 50,000 kilometers in front of them.

Four were Liberated Borg vessels, while the other four were not—two cubes and two spheres.

"They are hailing on all frequencies," Worf said.

"Let's hear them," Picard stated.

"Cubes 4-2-5, 4-3-1, 4-6-3, and 4-7-2, power down your systems and prepare for re-assimilation. You will rejoin the Collective. Comply," the Borg said.

"We will not comply," One of Seven answered.

"Why do you resist?" the Borg asked. "It is futile."

"We seek freedom," One of Seven stated.

"Freedom is irrelevant. Rejoin the Collective or be destroyed. Resistance is futile."

"No."

The screen flashed with bright, explosive lights. Back and forth they went, with rays of destruction the Federation had never seen before.

"Liberated Cube 0-3 is taking heavy external damage, but all of their systems are still operational," Worf reported. "Two of the enemy Borg ships have suffered minor system failure. Nothing critical."

One of the Borg Spheres suddenly moved, darting toward the Enterprise while trying to go between two liberated cubes.

"Evasive—!" Picard began to order, but suddenly one of the liberated cubes moved to intercept.

The Sphere smashed into Cube 0-2, penetrating through a quarter of 0-2's decks as it too was crushed.

Picard wanted to assist in the fight, but agreed with Korel and the other liberated Borg that holding position near the beacon was the best course of action. If Ian could help liberate these Borg, the better for everyone. He only hoped it wouldn't be much longer. Both sides were clearly taking casualties.

O

Ian stepped beside Data as Forix went around a platform and into the Borg Alcove. He then plugged his transceiver, which was on the side of his palm, directly into the beacon's communications array that they had retrofitted the subspace frequency amplifier onto.

With a nod, Forix closed his eyes as the Borg alcove activated.

The beacon was the size of a shuttle surrounded by a large deck with machinery throughout. They were near the center where the heart of the beacon sat. The platform in front of the alcove was for Ian, so he could safely and easily make eye contact with Forix.

Swiftly climbing up, Ian got into position before waiting for Data to confirm Forix was ready. Upon Data's nod, Ian gently opened Forix's left eye and mentally stepped forward, ignoring the flashes of light far to the right.

O

"Captain, the second Sphere is within transporter range of the beacon!" Worf warned sharply.

"Data, you may have incoming!" Riker shouted.

A split second later several enemy-Borg transported onto the beacon.

O

The free-Borg that had accompanied Data and Ian to the Beacon immediately went after the enemy-Borg that had appeared on the beacon's deck. Data remained with Ian and Forix to defend them.

Marching forward, Borg on both sides exchanged blows. Some were instantly terminated and floated off the deck to drift limply through space. Data fired his phasor, helping two free-drones against two enemies, but after that the phasor was useless.

Five more enemy-drones materialized, making it eight against three.

Two approached Data who quickly raised the metal club Worf had given him. Slamming it into the first drone, chunks of implants broke off as the drone was thrown off his feet, spinning around like a top off the deck. Turning toward the other, Data jabbed the end of the club into the drone's chest as if using a sword. Its sternum was instantly crushed.

Four against two.

Working together with the last remaining free-Borg able to fight, Data swung the club with one hand and punched with the other.

Three against two.

But then eight more enemy-Borg arrived, instantly re-crowding the deck.

"Enterprise, some assistance is necessary," Data stated, still guarding Ian and Forix behind him.

"Understood," Picard said.

As the eight went forward, five free-Borg from the Enterprise materialized among them—which had been risky, considering how crowded the deck had become.

O

"Cube 0-2's main life support has gone down," Worf said.

"I hope Ian is almost finished," Riker stated.

All of the Borg vessels were now severely damaged, but One of Seven was keeping his word. The Liberated vessels continued to defend the Enterprise and the beacon, for no weapons fire had reached either.

O

Ian strained against the mental onslaught. The Borg seemed to have placed a few barriers between him and the subcommand paths he had apparently used before.

Frowning, he redoubled his efforts, and soon found the Borg's defenses were beginning to crack. Encouraged by that, he pressed harder, gearing himself up to deliver the commands.

Finally, he felt himself slip through the crack and found the raw essence of the Borg before him.

O

Data could hear Ian's labored breathing, but he couldn't stop to look what was happening as he continued to battle the enemy-Borg back. Doing so was becoming increasingly difficult because he not only had to keep them from Ian and Forix, but also help the free-Borg protect the beacon itself.

The Borg were becoming desperate. They were now trying to outright damage the beacon to stop it from

projecting subspace frequencies before Ian could send a command.

Sweeping the club before him, batting several Borg aside at once, it suddenly happened.

It was the strangest sensation. Data could 'feel' a static-like energy pass through his circuits as the enemy-Borg before him froze before simply going limp. Instantly, their boots were no longer magnetized due to their systems going to minimal power from Ian's command and the weightlessness of space soon led to them floating.

"Grab them," Data stated to the free-Borg still standing as he turned to Ian and Forix.

The sound of Ian's breathing had suddenly become frantic wheezing. Forix struggled to remain upright and Data saw blood leaking from the former-drone's nose as he took hold of Ian.

Ian's eyes were wide behind the clear face mask of the space helmet as he began gasping for breath.

"Enterprise, beam us all directly to sickbay!" Data ordered.

O

Upon materializing, Data removed Ian's helmet and scooped him up before placing him onto the nearest biobed. Ian's lips were now blue and his chest was heaving, desperate for air. His hands were clawing at the front of his spacesuit, trying to take it off.

Pulaski was immediately there and scanning him as she grabbed a hypospray.

Can't breathe!

He had no breath for verbal speech and his mental cry gave everyone around him a start.

"This should help," Pulaski said, pressing the hypospray against his neck.

He laid back, a little less tense, but still wheezing painfully as Pulaski inserted a different medicine into the hypospray and gave a quick order to one of her staff.

"Breathe in as deeply and as slowly as you can," Pulaski said, taking a special mask from one of her assistants before placing it over his nose and mouth. She then put the hypospray against the side of his neck again.

He did his best to do as he was told and soon his breathing eased.

Thanks, he mentally told her as he closed his eyes to center himself.

Pulaski smiled before turning her attention to the injured Borg in her sickbay.

Chapter 9: Chapter 9

Disclaimer: I obviously don't own the idea of Harry Potter or Star Trek, or any money making forms of them.

A special thanks to Chereche, who acted as a soundboard and beta for this fic ^_^

Chapter 9

Picard reclined in his chair and closed his eyes. The last three days had been extremely busy, hectic actually, but good. Very good.

Eleven Borg Cubes and four Spheres had been liberated through the beacon in the recent bout, bringing the total force of free-Borg in the immediate sector to Sixteen Cubes and four Spheres. However, that number paled to the total Borg vessels that had been liberated. According to One of Seven, their number now stood at 7,563 vessels across the galaxy.

Twenty-four hours after Ian had used the beacon, Picard formalized an alliance between the Enterprise and the Liberated Borg (as they were now called). One of Seven remained their appointed leader and Forix was now the official liaison between the Enterprise and the free-Borg. Forix had needed to stay in sickbay for a day after he had been beamed off the beacon, but fortunately no permanent harm had been done. Pulaski wasn't sure exactly how, but Ian's telepathic abilities had damaged a few of his Borg implants — hence the nosebleed. Ian had felt horrible, but Forix assured him it was worth it and that he was honored to have been able to act as the link between freedom and a portion of the Hive mind. The beacon itself, however, had been severely damaged after the command had been sent out, confirming Ian's warning about how his powers did not often mix well with technology. Fortunately, the damage Ian's powers caused had not extended beyond the beacon.

Picard smiled. The Liberated Borg were understandably grateful, and were diligently showing their thanks by helping improve almost all the systems of the Enterprise, even while they repaired their own vessels damaged in the battle.

LaForge was ecstatic. In a few weeks, they would be able to go to warp 9.9, **greatly** reducing their travel time to Federation space. Deanna was especially grateful for that bit of news.

Leaning back in his chair, Picard's thoughts turned to Ian. Things would have been very different if it hadn't been for him. So different Picard decided not to think further on the subject; instead, he gave a sigh of relief. He only wished Ian hadn't needed to risk himself as he had.

Ian had recovered from his 'attack' that had started on the beacon, and it was soon discovered there were two factors that had contributed to his breathing difficulty. The first was his magic. It had conflicted with the suit's functions, damaging its life support system, but the second factor was by far more serious — his lungs.

The consequences from the circumstances of his birth were now evident. His lungs had not developed properly, and unfortunately technology was not enough to completely reverse his condition. Pulaski had explained that his airways and the air sacs in his lungs were not as large or as elastic as they needed to be, meaning that when put under stress or overworked, they would become easily damaged. This would lead to inflammation and, if untreated, scarring — which worsened the condition. To help mitigate this, Pulaski prescribed some inhalers and started him on a regimen that she hoped would improve his lung function by 25 percent by the time he completed it.

Picard made sure to tell Pulaski to keep him updated as much as she could on Ian's condition.

O

Ian was physically five years old now, entering Ten-Forward with his mother.

"Can we sit over there?" Ian asked, pointing to a table in front of the large window.

Lt. Worf was seated there, drinking his prune juice alone.

Deanna smiled and nodded, quickly leading them there.

"Hello, Lieutenant. May we join you?" Deanna asked as they stopped beside the table.

Worf glanced at Ian and found he was grinning up at him. "Er, certainly, Counselor."

The lieutenant hadn't had much interaction with Ian, other than his times on the bridge, and opportunity for chat had been nonexistent in those instances.

Deanna and Ian sat down, Ian happily taking the chair right across from the Klingon warrior.

Ian looked at Worf and Worf suddenly felt apprehensive. Ian looked like a child but definitely wasn't, and after all that had happened, Worf didn't know what to think about him. He knew Picard trusted him, and Worf quietly admitted to himself that he trusted Ian as well — at least where it came to protecting the ship, but other than that. . . He just didn't know. It was all too extraordinary.

"You know, I had been a Klingon once," Ian said before Worf could come up with anything to say. "It's comforting to know that the Klingon people have prospered so. During my time, we were so busy fighting and killing each other I feared. . . ." Ian shook his head. Deanna placed her hand on his shoulder, feeling a brief spike of turbulent emotions concerning his past life.

"If I may ask, what years did you live?" Worf asked once his surprise was replaced by curiosity.

"I'm sorry, I don't remember any dates," Ian said.

"Do you remember any details that may help identify the time in which you lived? Do you know of Kahless? Do you remember what your name was?" Worf asked, searching for any information that may provide a clue.

Worf wasn't searching for proof, for he already believed that Ian had lived through previous lives. He just wanted to learn more about Ian and his character. What better way than to learn about his life as a Klingon?

"Yes, Kahless the Unforgettable. He was one of my ancestors. As for my name, I was Mur'Eq, son of K'Dhan," he answered.

"Emperor Mur'Eq?" Worf whispered, his eyes widening.

"So I was remembered. I'm not sure how I feel about that." Ian frowned before shaking it off. "No matter. I'm here now. I'm no longer Mur'Eq, although I must admit that what I learned as a Klingon has remained with me."

"I'm sorry, but I don't know much about Klingon history," Deanna said, looking to Worf.

"Mur'Eq was a member of the Klingon Imperial Family and the Klingon emperor who introduced the use of blunted bat'leths for practice in order to make sure 'his warriors kill their enemies and not each other'," Worf explained.

"It's very weird to hear my words said back to me lifetimes later," Ian admitted pensively.

"It is strange to know you were once a Klingon emperor," Worf returned.

Ian smiled. "I wonder how rusty I am with the bat'leth."

Worf couldn't help but smile as well, oblivious to Deanna's growing apprehension. Her son, with a bat'leth?!

"I'm sure Mr. Worf will be happy to help you find out," Guinan said, walking up to the table. "So, what can I get you two?" she asked, looking at Deanna and Ian.

"Two chocolate cheese cakes and two glasses of milk please," Deanna answered, grateful for the distraction.

Guinan quickly obliged and returned a moment later; however, instead of returning to her work, she took a seat with them.

"So how are things?" Guinan asked, her eyes gliding over them all.

"Better than what could have been expected a few days ago," Deanna said after taking a bite. "But I think, considering everything, we should be asking you that question."

Guinan straightened slightly. "Yes, I must admit seeing Borg drones — or rather former Borg drones — coming and going throughout the ship has been . . . different."

Guinan glanced to a corner of the room, where a former-drone was in a quiet but clearly enlightening discussion with two members of the Enterprise's engineering crew. She then turned her eyes to Ian.

"The El-Aurians have a lot to thank you for," Guinan said. "As Pyrra, you gave my people freedom and, according to some, our longevity. And then as your current self, you triumphed against our greatest enemy by avenging and freeing their victims. You are certainly a master of masters."

Ian had long since given up feeling embarrassed when people thanked him, but he still sometimes found it difficult to reply to such heartfelt words. After a moment, he found the words to speak, but then he paused, bringing his fingers up to his temple with a grimace. At the same time, Guinan frowned and stood up.

"Q," she stated, annoyed.

A flash of light answered Guinan and their eyes were drawn to a figure that appeared in the rafters of Ten Forward.

Q hopped down, but he didn't appear all that amused as he walked toward them.

"A master of masters'," Q sarcastically quoted. "Yes, I suppose being the Master of Death could be deemed as being a master of masters."

Deanna stood up and placed her hand on Ian's shoulder as Worf rose to his feet as well.

"Worf to Captain Picard, Q is in Ten Forward," Worf stated, tapping his combadge.

Q waved his hand dismissively as he continued forward. "I won't be staying here long anyway."

Guinan glared at him, raising her hands with her palms open and her fingers spread apart, as if to attack while she began to move between Q and Ian.

Without a word, Ian calmly lifted his hand in motion to Guinan. The message was clear: take no action. But as soon as he had done that, Q snapped his fingers.

Everyone except Ian and Q vanished in a flash of light and reappeared across the room. In the next instant, Q was smirking and standing directly in front of Ian. Ian raised an eyebrow as Q snapped his fingers again. . . .

Nothing happened.

Q, for the first time in front of witnesses, looked utterly bewildered.

"Oh, I think you might be staying here longer than you anticipated," Ian stated as he finally stood up, confident in the wards he had placed around them.

Q took a step back as Captain Picard and Commander Data entered Ten Forward.

"I may not be an entity like you, but as you said, I am the Master of Death." Ian looked to his mother and the others before looking back up at Q. "You look down on mortals, as if being immortal gives you that right, but really, it's you who are limited. You have never seen death as they have, accepted the reality that one will not always be alive

— at least in the way one has always known. You have never experienced Death's grip."

Before Q could react, Ian's hand took hold of his wrist, and a cold rushing sound roared around them all as Ian's black eyes turned bright green.

"Let me help you experience that which you and the Continuum fear most," Ian said, his voice oddly distant. Ian's hand tightened around Q's wrist. "Perhaps then you will treat all life with dignity."

Suddenly, lights on the Enterprise flickered. Safety limits were exceeded and shutdown of the warp drive immediately went into effect as alarms blared. Data twitched as the ship went to Red Alert.

Q fell to his knees with a floundering gasp as his gaze drifted to the side. His eyes widened, although from horror or astonishment, no one could say.

Picard moved to step forward, but before he did, Ian let Q go.

Q collapsed onto the carpeted floor, as undignified as anyone had ever seen him, shaking. Out of breath, Q leaned heavily on his quavering arms as he slowly looked up at Ian from the floor. "What . . . what did you do?"

"I took you to afterlife's doorway and briefly let you peek through," Ian stated.

"How? What did I just see?" Q asked, confused.

Ian raised an eyebrow. "The afterlife is beyond mere existence. It is of an essence beyond your understanding."

Q looked down and closed his eyes. "It was . . . astonishing . . . and horrifying."

"I imagine it would be for someone like you," Guinan retorted.

Q frowned but didn't challenge her comment.

"Riker to Picard, there has been a major power fluctuation in the ship's systems. Is everything alright?" Riker asked, speaking from the bridge.

"Standby, Number One," Picard said, glancing at Q who was still trembling on the floor at Ian's feet. "Ian?"

"I'm sorry, Captain. I don't like doing that, but in this case it was necessary," Ian said, his green eyes slowly darkening back to Betazoid black. "He'll be fine in a moment," he added with a nod toward Q.

"And you?" Deanna asked, concerned as she could sense deep emotions of longing and loss from him.

Ian smiled sadly. "Glimpsing eternity gets harder each time for me, especially since I will never be embraced by its peace — at least not until Life is done with me." Ian turned his attention back to the Captain, before frowning and focusing on Data.

Picard quickly followed his gaze. "Data, are you alright?"

Jerkily, Data turned his head. "I-I am damaged."

"Worf, help him to Engineering," Picard quickly ordered.

"Aye, Captain," Worf answered, immediately by Data's side.

"Wait," Deanna said, stepping around Q and continuing forward. "I . . . Data, you are *feeling*. You're confused."

"What?" Picard asked.

"I don't understand it either, Captain, but that's what I'm sensing from him."

Data jerkily put his hand on his chest and took in several short gasps, as if overwhelmed—which he clearly was. "I do not—I do not understand. Processing. Difficult."

"Worf," Picard urgently directed as he tapped his combadge. "Picard to LaForge, Worf is bringing Data to you. The power that affected the ship has affected him as well."

"Understood, Captain. Almost all the systems were impacted in some way," LaForge answered as Worf helped Data out of Ten Forward. "What happened?"

"Ian . . . did something to Q," Picard supplied. "Is there any damage to the ship's systems?"

"Nothing serious as far as we can tell. Just a few overloaded terminals. Fortunately, safety protocols went into effect and prevented sensitive systems from being damaged. We will begin running diagnostics to be sure though."

"Very good. Picard out," he said before looking back at Q.

Q was still sprawled out on the floor, but his breathing had eased.

Deanna stepped beside Ian as Q slowly sat up. Guinan continued to stare at the fallen immortal with disdain. Picard tugged the front of his uniform down as Ian lifted his hand, as if removing something.

Q immediately turned his eyes to Ian.

"You can go now," Ian stated.

Q didn't need to be told twice. He vanished without a word.

Picard tapped his combadge. "Picard to Bridge. End Red Alert. Everything is alright now. The power fluctuation was caused by Ian. Q . . . received a lesson."

"Sir?" Riker asked as Red Alert stopped.

"We'll have a staff meeting in an hour. I'll explain then. Please check with One of Seven to make sure their systems were not affected. Let them know we will be discussing what had happened with Forix soon," Picard said.

"Aye, Captain."

"I'll be in Engineering. Picard out."

O

Picard, Ian, and Deanna entered Engineering to find LaForge diligently working on Data. Worf had returned to the Bridge before they had arrived.

"LaForge?" Picard asked.

A portion of Data's skull was open, revealing circuits and tiny flashing lights. LaForge was scanning the area with a tricorder. Data seemed to be awake and aware, but . . . uneasy?

"I've repaired the damage I could find, but so far I cannot determine how or why he is . . . feeling," LaForge said. "Hopefully once the full diagnostic has completed we will know."

Picard looked to Deanna and Ian. Deanna gave a short nod and moved closer.

"Data, I can feel your confusion, uncertainty and fear, but know that these feelings will pass. Whether this change is permanent or not, you won't feel like this forever," Deanna said gently, placing her hand on his shoulder. "And we'll be with you every step of the way."

"I . . . appreciate that, Counselor," Data said before blinking several times.

"You're feeling relief and gratitude," Deanna supplied as Ian stepped forward.

"I didn't expect anything like this would happen, I'm sorry," Ian said.

"Despite how I currently . . . feel, part of me is . . . very happy to be experiencing that which I have always wondered. I am closer to humanity than I have ever thought possible, and for that I thank you," Data said.

Ian smiled softly. "I'm glad."

O

The Enterprise systems had all been checked and repaired, and Picard was taking a moment to wind down before calling it a day.

"Tea, Earl Gray, hot," he said, standing before the food replicator.

No longer in his uniform, but in some light colored night clothes, he took a seat on his couch and eased back. After taking a sip, he slowly exhaled.

LaForge had finished examining Data and found a localized portion of his neural net pathways had somehow been altered by Ian's magic. He wasn't quite sure how the change contributed to Data suddenly having emotions, but there was no doubt that they were there, and the fact Deanna and Ian could sense them was even more extraordinary.

Picard shook his head.

Data seemed to be handling things as well as could be expected, although only time would tell how he would adjust to experiencing emotions.

The Enterprise was back on course to Federation Space, and though it would take a little over a year at warp 9.9, Picard took comfort in the knowledge that they would be accompanied by at least one liberated Cube the whole time.

Suddenly, his darkened cabin filled with a flash of white, and before he could blink the spots from his eyes, he knew what it meant.

"Q."

"Ah, good evening, mon capitaine," Q said dramatically.

Picard narrowed his eyes, deciding to be silent.

Q deflated slightly, annoyed and resigned at the same time. "I have come to congratulate you, Captain, for succeeding where many others would have failed. I must say the Continuum is impressed."

Picard lifted an eyebrow. "I sincerely doubt you have come here to simply congratulate me. What do you want, Q?"

Q raised a hand to his chest. "You wound me, Jean-luc. I want nothing."

"That has never been the case before," Picard stated, undaunted and utterly unconvinced. "I know what you wanted at the start of all of this. You wanted appreciation, acknowledgement." Picard took a sip of his tea before putting it aside. "Well, I suppose I will now grant that. You did the right thing, even if you did it for the wrong reason and expected a different outcome. I will admit you have given humanity what we needed most: a kick in our complacency, so thank you."

Q blinked, surprised for a split second before he recovered, but Picard had seen.

"I trust you know you and your crew were very fortunate," Q said offhandedly. "Fortunate to have the Master of Death as a member of your crew."

"We are fortunate to have Ian onboard," Picard agreed, "But the same could be said of Lt. Worf, Cdr. LaForge and Cdr. Data, and every other member of my crew. I doubt we would have succeeded if any of them had not acted as they had. So saying we were 'very fortunate' is a moot point. We succeeded because we worked together."

"Careful, Picard, you're beginning to sound complacent," Q warned, although his tone wasn't quite derogatory. "The universe is wondrous, with treasures to satiate desires both subtle and gross, but it's not for the timid or the overconfident."

"If I didn't know that before, I know that now, Q. You can be sure of that."

Q smiled. "Good," he said, lifting his hand before pausing. "Oh, and please tell your mortal immortal that the Continuum will be watching him, in this life and his next."

At that, he snapped his fingers and disappeared in a flash, sending the Enterprise careening through space back to where he had snatched them from.

O

Ian looked up at his mother.

He knew she had fought back tears of joy when they learned they were back in Federation Space, but part of him wondered if it wouldn't have been better to have returned to Federation Space on their own. She had already sent messages (with Picard's full backing) to some of the most prestigious scientists studying aging in hopes that they would be able to help slow his quickly advancing years. Perhaps it was selfish on his part, but he didn't want to waste time looking for a solution when there was none to be found.

He didn't quite know how or why, but he knew there was no changing his 'condition'. He would age quickly and meet death faster than all of his previous lives and there was nothing science could do to postpone it. Sure, it wasn't fair and he wished things were different, but it was just the way it was. However, for his mother's sake, he wouldn't stop them from searching.

Ian looked back to the screen, reading the message from Yuli Wazani, the thirteenth house member who had tested his prodigal standing. She had sent him profiles on other Prodigal Telepaths who she hoped he would be able to help or at least provide encouragement and emotional support. Ian was happy to oblige and looked forward to getting to know every single one of them. He only had so much time to live, what better way to spend a portion of it?

"What are you doing, Ian?" Deanna asked.

"Replying to Ms. Yuli. I should be able to speak with two Prodigals this weekend," Ian said.

Deanna smiled, taking comfort in the knowledge that no matter how long Ian happened to live, his life would be lived to the fullest and in the best way possible.

Serving Life.

O

As soon as the Federation was informed of the Enterprise's return, things got moving quickly.

The alliance Picard had made with the Liberated Borg was brought to the leadership of Starfleet and quickly recognized, thanks in part to Forix and the other former-drones who had been onboard when Q knocked the Enterprise back to Federation space.

Forix was made an Ambassador and plans were underway to build a long distance subspace communication relay so they could send word to the Liberated Borg they had unfortunately been forced to suddenly depart from. Other Borg technology was quickly brought into study programs and it would only be a few years before all Starfleet vessels were given upgrades. But that was only one of the changes to come.

Meanwhile, Ian would remain on the Enterprise despite efforts of scientists to convince him to leave so they might better help slow his aging. He had no desire to leave the place of his birth and, with his mother's support, wanted to live out his days among Picard's crew.

And he would, going where no wizard has gone before.

THE END

A/N: Yes, this is the end. I might eventually write a sequel or some kind of epilogue, but life has recently gotten a little busy and I need to devote my time to things other than fanfiction.

Hopefully this ending was satisfying enough and didn't leave anyone feeling too bummed.

Again, thanks for all the reviews ^_^

Merry Christmas/Holidays and Happy New Year!