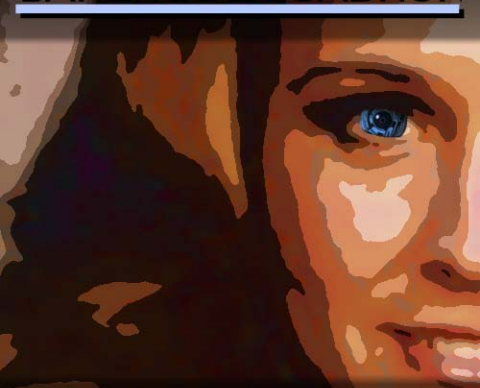


STAR TREK

BANSHEE SQUADRON



DOCTOR'S CONFIDENCE

RICHARD ADALBERT MERK

Doctor's Confidence

A Banshee Squadron short scene

Richard A. Merk



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"So, Sam... Has Captain Cross hit you up yet with his 'How the hell did an ex-fighter pilot become my Chief *Medical Officer*?' rant?"

Doctor Sam Beckett looked up from the day's medical reports with a worried expression on her normally serene face. She, Lee Carter, and Jo Schmidt were relaxing after Alpha shift, as they often did, in Sam's sickbay office. Sam pushed back her long, golden hair and said, "Why? Should I be worried?"

Jo Schmidt laughed.

Lee Carter was at the small replicator alcove at the rear of the office getting a cup of coffee. She regarded Jo with a cynical eye. "I'm guessing you got his 'How the hell did a fighter pilot become my Chief *Science Officer*' rant."

"Yup. This morning," said Jo. "We were in the turbolift together."

Beckett put down her reports, curious in spite of herself. "What did you tell him?"

Jo shrugged. "There really wasn't much to tell him. I said I wasn't a fighter pilot who 'became' a scientist. I said I was a scientist from the very start. At the Academy, I was just unlucky enough to have excellent flight scores right when the Dominion War was starting, so I got drafted. And then after Banshee Squadron was finally disbanded for the last time, I just went back to being what I had been all along, a science officer. The whole fighter pilot thing had just been a little career detour."

Fresh coffee cup in hand, Carter dropped herself into the spare office chair. "Pfft. Try a fourteen-year detour." She took a sip of coffee and waited for the reaction.

Jo made a sour face. "I got to do plenty of science-y stuff during those fourteen years and you know it. Every time we stumbled across some crazy alien contraption or creeping green jelly or lost alien civilization, right away it was always 'Jo, analyze that 21-dimensional space-time-thought discontinuity', or 'Jo, tell us everything you know about ancient Iconian metallurgy, or 'Jo, lick that and tell us what it is'."

The smile tugging at the corner of Carter's mouth grew broader the longer Jo ranted on, so she hid it behind her coffee mug.

"—I don't know what you guys would have done without me," Jo was saying.

"I suppose we would've had to do our own licking."

"Hmpf."

"But the real question is did Captain Cross buy it?"

Jo dropped her faux funk and smiled wryly. "Couldn't really tell. I think he's taking a wait and see attitude."

"Better be on your best behavior or that handsome young assistant of yours ... what's his name? Ensign Thule might suddenly find himself with a few new pips on his chest and *you* calling *him* 'sir'."

That got a general round of laughter, but Carter was quick to notice that Sam's good spirits seemed a little forced. She had a pretty good guess at the reason. Any reminder that Sam was 25% cybernetic sent her fleeing into her shell. And any inquiries about how a highly trained and expert fighter pilot could transform into a highly trained and expert Chief Medical Officer in less than a year were bound to delve very deeply into that very subject. Sam was working hard to overcome her neurosis, but she still had a long way to go.

"You want me to talk to the Captain for you, Sam?" she asked after a few moments of silence.

"No! ... I mean ... thanks, Lee. But that's something I have to do myself if and when he asks."

"Some of that's classified, isn't it?" asked Jo.

"That's right!" exclaimed Sam. "I *can't* tell the Captain, even if he asks." The lines of worry creasing her face eased somewhat.

"It was supposed to be classified from us too," Carter reminded her friends. "But you told us."

"That's different," countered Jo.

Carter let those words hang in the air a few seconds. Then, "Is it?"

Jo's thoughtful frown joined Sam's renewed concern, worried that somehow she had just put both feet in her mouth leaving her without a leg upon which to stand. "Well ... I just meant ..."

"We're not Banshee Squadron anymore, Jo. That story is over. This is the spinoff. We're part of a much bigger team now." She indicated the ship around her with an airy wave of her hand. "Nathan Cross is one of us just as much as Matthew Cross ever was."

Carter sipped her coffee, again giving her words a few seconds to sink in, then turned to Sam. "Technically, you're right. The information about your cerebral learning implants is classified, so I'm not going to suggest you tell the Captain. But I think if serving on this ship is going to work out for us, then we need to start being a real part of this crew."

She could see in Sam's eyes her words being taken to heart. Jo's too. Hell, hearing those words actually spoken out loud helped make it more real for herself as well.

They heard the main sickbay doors out in the examination room *woosh* open and shut. Footsteps approached and the captain's voice called out.

"Doctor, what do you have for a headache?"

When Captain Nathan Cross stuck his head in the office door and saw the three ladies huddled around Doctor Beckett's desk, he stopped short. "Oh, sorry. I didn't mean to interrupt your meeting," he said.

Carter set her coffee mug on the edge of Sam's desk and stood.

"Actually, we were just finished, sir." She subtly motioned with her head for Jo to follow along, and headed for the door. "Good evening, Captain."

"Commander."

Carter cast an equally unsubtle wink in Sam's direction as she left.

When the door had shut behind them, Cross turned a puzzled expression to Beckett, headache forgotten. "What was that all about?"

"Um... Have a seat, Captain," said Sam. "There's, ah... There are a few things you should know about me..."

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