

STAR TREK

BANSHEE SQUADRON

Pay and Pay and Pay...



RICHARD ADALBERT MERK

Star Trek: Banshee Squadron
Pay and Pay and Pay...

Richard A. Merk



An "Inimitably Superfluous" Publication
Temecula, California
Visit us on the web at: banshees.merknet.com

A story about nothing.

It was very late in the *Rocinanté's* artificial day/night cycle. Absolutely nothing interesting had happened today. West had spent the day watching the stars slowly creep aftward as his ship plodded along a particularly slow and dull stretch of the Serenity sector along the outlying streamers of the Briar Patch.

Actually, that was the norm for space travel, never mind the romantic dime-holonovel adventures of brave Starfleet captains zooming through the stars rescuing green Orion damsels in distress and applying the bootprint of justice to the buttocks of Klingon evil.

Just never quite happened like that.

Well, not usually. Sometimes though, but that was another story...

In everyday reality, the galaxy was big and empty when you got right down to it, and getting from one place to another was really boring.

West had finally put the controls on autopilot, and now lay in his bunk reading an old PADD. Since Maxine Vasser had left, he found himself just lying around more often than he remembered.

The book was an old work of fiction by an ancient Earth author by the name of George Lucas. The story was set in the far distant past, in a different galaxy altogether, yet West was intrigued that a human of 400 years ago could invent so many concepts that were a reality in his own real life. The Millennium Falcon's 'hyperdrive' wasn't exactly warp drive, but it was close enough. Blasters were almost phasers. Wookies were almost Klingons...

He thought that Lucas' fictional society was a bit elitist compared to the Federation, with its atheistic, communistic bent, and that the Jedi espoused Deathism a little too vigorously, but he didn't let it bother him for more than a few seconds. He had a life, after all. Sort of. A visual of Max's face flashed across his eyes.

He wondered if somewhere out there in the multiverse, someone was writing books or even just cheesy fanfic that resembled his own life...

He applied an old adage: "Life imitates art." Undoubtedly, if he searched the *Rocinanté's* databases long and hard enough, he would be able to locate works of fiction written long ago that resembled his own life and experience.

Gromit chirped, rousing West from his melodramatic thoughts.

West craned his neck to look toward Gromit's cage. The tribble's food dish was empty and Gromit was inching his way up the smooth side of the plastic enclosure.

"Criminy! I can't believe you ate all those jelly doughnuts already!" said West, shaking his head in disapproval.

Gromit chirped haughtily in reply to West's rebuke.

"And don't take that attitude with me, mister," groused West moodily, slumping back in his bunk. "I've put up with it for two years now and I think it's about damn time it stopped."

West turned his head, pointedly ignoring the tribble and tried to continue reading. He flipped the pages, though not really paying attention, mumbling under his breath. "I should have listened to my father... He said, 'Never let a tribble save your life. They'll never let you forget it. They'll make you pay and pay and pay...!'"

He raised his voice. "Well, I've paid!" He cranked his neck back to face the far wall of the small cabin where the tribble cage sat. "So just let it go!"

Gromit had a contrary opinion, of course, and he ignored the large noisy biped, continuing to climb the wall of his cage. He reached the top, but found any further progress blocked by the big duranium brick West had put on top to keep Gromit from popping the lid open.

Gromit screeched his indignation.

West smiled with the ultimate satisfaction of finally having gotten the last word, and turned back to his PADD.

The small, dim light on his night stand flickered, interrupting his reading. Annoyed, he reached over and smacked the lamp base a couple of times, and it came back on. He returned to his book.

...A young naive pilot was about to attack the enemy's giant round space station. He was zooming along a narrow trench along the surface of the space station, trying to use his magical powers to hit a target that was not much bigger than a womp-rat, whatever that was. The young pilot was

closing on his target, enemy fighters were closing on the young pilot, the fate of the entire galaxy hung on whether or not he hit his target. He squeezed the trigger and...

...the lamp went out!

"Oh, for the love of...!" cried West. He heaved the PADD across the room in blind frustration to hear it smash into a thousand pieces, and just lay in the dark for a few moments trying to calm himself.

"I need a new lamp."

He got up and made his way with deliberate calmness to the door.

Gromit snickered from within his cage.

As West walked out of his cabin, he was muttering, "...Pay and pay and pay..."

Holding his nose, West wended his way through the maze of odious yorna berry crates crowding the *Rocinanté's* cargo hold to the aft compartments.

He arrived at the starboard specialized cargo hold and the transporter pad therein, and sat down at the small console. He switched the transporter to 'replicator mode', called up the parts catalog on the console's viewer, and queried the computer for small desk lamps. It obediently began showing them to West one by one. He flipped back and forth through the selection a few times and finally settled on a lamp that struck his fancy.

He pressed the 'Replicate' button and watched as the machinery hummed to life. Unimaginable energies were awakened and focused on this small room. The transporter pad glowed for a few moments, and when it powered down, a small new lamp sat on one of the terminals. West stood and walked over and picked it up. He gave it a quick once-

over to make sure it was okay, then headed back to his cabin.

As West re-entered the *Rocinanté's* cabin and the door slid shut behind him, he immediately noticed something was wrong. Gromit's cage was still where it belonged; the lid was shut and the duranium brick was still on top holding it shut, but the cage was empty.

"How does he *DO* that?!?"

"Pay and pay and pay...."

