

*"It sometimes happens that a man and a woman meet and instantly recognize the other half of themselves behind the eyes of each other. Even their voices are familiar to each other's ears, like a remembered chord of music. These are two who immediately sense the unalterable fact that they have been--are--and must always be."* Linda Goodman's *Love Signs* (Harper and Row, Publishers, 1978).

## *Twin Souls*

"The next time you need to see a patient that is potentially unruly, you *will* have a security escort. Is that clear Dr D'Arcy?"

Holding my aching wrist as I was being escorted back to SickBay, he continued his lecture. "It amazes me that you doctors aren't injured any more frequently. Further more..." He stopped and looked at me, "I'm lecturing, aren't I?"

"Yes, Lieutenant Devlin, you are. Whilst I appreciate your concern, I can do without the lecture. I am over eighteen, you know," I told the very blonde, handsome officer.

He paused and looked at me, "So I've noticed Doctor, so I've noticed."

"I'm sure you have, Lieutenant." I stopped in front of the Sickbay door, "I'm sure I'll be safe now. Thank you for escorting me to Sickbay though I'm sure I was able to do so under my own power."

"Doctor, I couldn't do that! Supposed another patient jumped out and injured your other wrist. How would you do your job?"

I pretended to mull that over, "Too true."

"Besides, it's all part of the personal service."

"Indeed? Personal service?"

"Absolutely."

"I'll be sure to let the others know about this 'personal service.' Now, if you would excuse me, I have work to do." And on that note, I walked into Sickbay.

\* \* \*

## *Before the Stellar Wind*

The damage to my wrist wasn't anything major (just my pride was injured) and I was able to get quickly back to work. As I came out of surgery, Lisa called to me, "Hey, Arcadia, look what came for you!"

I walked towards her, eyeing the vase with the single yellow rose. "Secret admirer?" she asked.

"I don't know. Is there a note?" Lisa handed it to me.

*[Will you marry me?]*

I read the note to Lisa with a very puzzled expression. "I'm not sure who sent this. No...wait, I have an idea." I went over to the comm link and placed a call. When Lieutenant Devlin finally appeared, I asked, "Wouldn't you like to have dinner first just in case we aren't compatible?"

He thought for a moment, "If you insist." He then flashed the warmest smiled I'd ever seen. "I'll pick you up at 1800 hours."

"I'll be waiting." I closed the comm link just in time to hear Dr Glenn bellow, "Halone, D'Arcy! You're late for a meeting. Get in here!"

\* \* \*

I took the opportunity to check one last patient chart before he took my arm and guided me out of sickbay. As we walked down the corridor, I commented to him, "I'll say this much for you, Lieutenant Devlin, you're prompt."

"Thank you, Madam," as he responded with a mock bow.

"So, where are we going?" I queried.

"I thought we could do with some privacy. Roy is busy this evening, so we can eat in my quarters without being disturbed."

I thought about this and debated whether or not to go through with our first date. I quickly made a decision, "Sounds delightful."

\* \* \*

We covered quite a bit of territory during dinner, and discovered we had many mutual interests, hopes and desires. I found him to be a most fascinating man. I took the precaution that afternoon before our date to make some discreet queries. The results and dinner confirmed my original feelings.

*Before the Stellar Wind*

"Tell me what you're thinking?" His slate-grey eyes were softly illuminated by the candlelight.

"I was thinking how much I have enjoyed this evening. And how much I've enjoyed your company."

"The feeling is mutual." He took my hand and pressed it firmly between his for several moments, "You are truly the most beautiful woman I have ever met."

I felt myself blush. It is unlikely he noticed as my skin colour is quite dark. I then laughed, "My mother once commented that my father said that female Vaegan pheromones were quite powerful. My mother replied it must be the pheromones of our own family are very powerful because my grandfather made the same remark to grandmother."

"Really?" he asked.

"Really!" I responded.

\* \* \*

We spent the rest of the evening enjoying each other's company. I suddenly stopped and looked at him, pushing his ponytail away from my face, "I know you've studied Vaegan language and culture, but how much do you know about Vaegan female anatomy?"

Visibly taken aback, "You mean, you've never--"

"Desmond," cutting him off, "My studies and my work were more important than--"

He put his hand to my mouth, "I didn't mean to imply...I mean, you're such a lovely woman. Your deep green eyes, your lovely brown skin and your long, silky black hair..." He grabbed my hand and kissed it to hide his embarrassment.

"Desmond, love, just because I've chosen to remain celibate doesn't mean I wouldn't be adverse to the notion. Opportunity simply hadn't presented itself to me... until now."

He didn't say anything for a while. I began to think that I'd gone to far, when he spoke in a gentle voice, "You'd be willing to--?"

Cutting him off, "Of course. I'll make an appointment tomorrow."

*Before the Stellar Wind*

"Oh, that's splendid...I mean... I--"

I laughed, "I think I know what you're trying to say." I looked at the chronometer, "It's getting late and I have an early surgery scheduled. Walk me back to my quarters?"

He quickly regained his composure, "I'd be honoured."

\* \* \*

"Thank you for seeing me on such short notice, Doctor Glenn."

"Delighted Arcadia. What can I do for you?"

"I noted in your c.v. that you've worked with Vaegans."

"That's true." He paused a beat and looked right at me, "Tell me, does this have anything to do with that young man who sent you the flower and took you to dinner last night, one Lieutenant Junior Grade Desmond Newlin-Devlin?" he asked with a twinkle in his eye.

I smiled, "News travels fast, doesn't it? Yes, it does."

"News travels fast indeed. The surgery is quite simple as you know. In fact, I can do it this afternoon. You'll only miss one day of work. Will that do?"

I nodded as I carefully considered the fact that the man who sat before me is known throughout the ship as 'Sarah's Beast,' yet, the man that I see is not only the CMO, but someone with great compassion, I considered as he prepared the paperwork.

"Yes. Thank you sir."

He stopped and looked at me, "You'll need someone to be with you this evening unless you'd prefer to spend your recovery time here in sickbay."

"I believe he'll be willing to stay with me."

He nodded, "Excellent."

I rose and left the office to give Des the news.

\* \* \*

"Here she is, Lieutenant Devlin."

"Thank you, Doctor Grant."

*Before the Stellar Wind*

Desmond looked at me with a worried expression. "How do you feel, Arcadia?"

I smiled through clenched teeth, "A bit sore and a bit tired."

Claudia grinned at me and then to Desmond, "As I was starting to tell you, Lieutenant Devlin, make sure she rests." Claudia stopped to beam at me, "And Doctor Glenn reminded me to tell you to remember, no sex for several days, no matter how well you feel." She paused and pointed looked at me then looked to Desmond, "She needs time to heal. If anything comes up in the Security Department, call us and one of us will stay with Arcadia."

I smiled again at Claudia who smiled back and gave me a hug as Desmond began to propel me out of Sickbay, "Just repaying some of the kindness you've shown us in the past, Arcadia."

Desmond stopped pushing long enough for me to thank Claudia again and then resumed pushing me to my quarters.

\* \* \*

It took me no time to get back into a normal routine. I was busy with a patient chart when Lieutenant Junior Grade Fokker's current lady, Novana, came to see me one morning.

"Doctor D'Arcy, may I have a moment?"

"Certainly. Step into my office."

"Thank you. I know you're busy, so I'll come right to the point. Roy and I are becoming really serious and we'd like to spend more time together."

As she continued to prattle on, I mentally calculated the odds as to how long she and Roy would stay together. I took into consideration Roy's previous track record and decided to give it one week. I interrupted her because it was clear she was no where near the obvious point of her visit.

"I assume that what you want is for Desmond to move in with me since I have private quarters."

She was visibly relieved, "Exactly. Think old Des will go for it?" She then noted the look on my face and quickly added, "And you, of course."

## *Before the Stellar Wind*

"Of course," I added dryly. "I'll discuss it with him when we have lunch. Anything else I can help you with?"

"No, I ...I've taken enough of your time." She gathered up her datapadd and scurried out the door.

*Honestly Roy, I thought, Where do you find them?*

\* \* \*

As my quarters barely had adequate room for one person to live reasonably comfortably -- this meant that there really wasn't enough room for two to live miserably.

"Good thing we don't have a cat," Desmond commented as he stuffed one more shirt into the closet.

"Why so?" I asked as I moved yet another container to a new corner.

"There's no room to swing it." We both laughed as our eyes swept the room and noted that almost every square inch of it was occupied with something.

When we finished stowing away his gear, he pointed to a silk box by the bed. "Arcadia, what's in this box?"

I was rather surprised by his question, after all, he studied Vaegan language and culture and he even knew about the sexual incompatibility between Humans and Vaegans.

"My mother gave it to me. It's a traditional gift for a mother to give a box to her daughter when the daughter reaches sexual maturity." I waited before continuing in hopes of seeing a glimmer of recognition in his eyes. Since I didn't see one, I pressed on, "The box contains those items that a mother feels her daughter needs to have a satisfying relationship."

Desmond's eyebrows shot up and his mouth formed a wordless, "Oh?" Amused by his apparent discomfort, I walked over to the box and brought it back to him. I opened it and watched Desmond's eyes grow larger and larger. He hesitated then picked up the well-worn leather cuff. He held it up and looked at me questioningly. Before I could answer, the comm link went off. We both rushed over, nearly knocking the other over.

"Desmond, are you there yet?" the voice rang out as an image appeared. Since I didn't know who this was, I assumed it was for Desmond.

*Before the Stellar Wind*

"I'm here Max. What's up?" replied Desmond.

"The old man's calling an emergency meeting and wants--" Max stopped abruptly as he spied the cuff that Desmond was holding.

"I'll be right over." Desmond snapped the link off and then realized that he was still holding the cuff. He quickly gave it back to me, grabbed his jacket, gave me a kiss and whisked out the door.

"Have a good day!" I yelled after the blur.

\* \* \*

I felt as if I was floating on a cloud. I started to feel chilly and assumed it had started to rain judging from the rumbling sounds from. My discomfort became more apparent as I began to slowly wake myself from the post-orgasmic ecstasy. The distant rumbling became louder until I realised that this wasn't thunder but Desmond cursing in the loo. Desmond is quite eloquent when he chooses to intone blaspheme. He finally emerged and came over to the bed. I propped myself up on one elbow, took one look at him and laughed.

"Dammit Arcadia, stop laughing and just look at me!" He bellowed.

As my eyes slowly took in every square inch of his body, I began to take stock of his complaints. He was full of scratches and was beginning to show a number of bruises. His lip was split and I noted a very distinct bite mark around his neck. I paused to heave a mock sigh as I swung my legs over the side of the bed.

"Desmond, love. It's not as if I didn't warn you about this." I rolled over to the other side of the bed and grabbed an ancient tome. "And it's not as if I didn't supply you with adequate reading material on the subject." I peered down at the book, *'All you Wanted to Know about Vaegan Sexual Practices But Where Afraid to Ask (Especially Terrans!).'*"

He snatched the book away from me and rifled through the pages. I looked up at him and I began to wipe away the blood from his cheek. "What you're looking for is on page 240." He grunted and found the page. After reading it for a few moments, he looked down at me. He was obviously in a bit of pain from the wounds, but also his pride was hurt.

"You'd think I'd know better than to push as much as I did." I nodded in solemn agreement as he spoke. "But you're part human, I never expected you'd still react as a Vaegan woman would."

"I beg your pardon, Sir?" I responded. "The very fact that I had to have surgery--"

## *Before the Stellar Wind*

"Yes, yes, I know, especially when you tried to warn me. It's my foolish Cymru pride getting in the way again. I thought I could handle you." He stepped over to the mirror and once again inspected his wounds.

"Now do you see why the box that my mother gave me was so important? It wasn't all for show." I replied as I rose from the bed to put a gown on. I went over to my desk and picked up my med-kit. "Let me fix those lacerations of yours. I certainly don't want to start any talk around ship." He grimaced as I dabbed at the wounds.

When I was finished, he looked up at me and sighed, "Arcadia, I'm ready to listen. When do we start?"

"A week, I'd say. It'll take you that long to recover. And we'll take it slow. What's the rush, we have all the time in the world."

\* \* \*

<BONG!>

*Lieutenant Shane Burns, Senior Pilot*

I can remember it as if it were only yesterday rather than a year ago. I can still hear the resonance of the ship's bell. The memorial service consisted of the chiming of the carillon and then the Chaplain read off the name of the dead.

<BONG!>

*Ensign Fortune Muras, Wing Pilot*

As I gazed around the almost empty room, I tried to remember the good times we had together. I was taken back to the time when we were first married. I smiled at the thought of the wedding and the fact it was in the style of Betazoid nuptials. I found myself amused at Desmond's discomfort when I told him that it was fine with me to have the wedding in the nude. I do believe that was the first and last time he'd ever gotten so intoxicated and made such a rash pledge in front of his mates.

I went over to my desk and gazed at the holodisk of our first anniversary party. Desmond gave me his beloved ancestral sword that night. I remember being so overcome that I cried. He wiped away my tears and told me not to cry as it dulled the bright green eyes he loved so much.

<BONG!>

## *Before the Stellar Wind*

### *Lieutenant Junior Grade Llasa Sunon, Lead Pilot*

My thoughts then turned to that fateful day of the "One Year War" when the wounded swept into sickbay like waves pounding against the shore. As the senior staff surgeon, I was extremely busy, never knowing who my patients were. My only thought was to do my best and make them well. I remember finally taking a much needed rest and coming back on duty. The CMO called me into her office and then told me that I had done the best I could, but Desmond was dead.

I thanked her and went back to work; her words having no immediate effect on me. When I finally went off duty and back to our quarters, I suddenly realised that Desmond was never coming home again.

<BONG!>

### *Lieutenant Junior Grade Gemini Zane, Wing Pilot*

That vision faded to the present time as I wiped my eyes and again looked about the room. I noted that all my gear was packed away and awaiting transfer to the *Gilles de la Tourette*. Now that I've passed the Bridge Officer's test, I can now finally leave behind my life in the medical field and start a new one as command officer and administrator.

Claudia, bless her, was on personal holiday and spent it assisting me getting everything packed up for the transfer. All of Desmond's belongings were shipped back home to Portmeirion to his family. I wrote to each of his family members: his mother Nydia, his father Rafferty, his sister Shelagh and her daughter Hyacinth and his brother Murdock each received with the letter one of Des's personal effects. The rest will be held in storage. Nydia assured me that she would personally take care of the enshrinement as I was unable to do so. I just hope that eventually I shall be able to--

<chirp!>

The door chime interrupted my thoughts. Claudia walked in with a cart and we began to move my packed gear on to it. I told Claudia that I would meet her at the transporter room as I watched her guide the cart out the door. I gathered up all that was remaining and, as I walked out of the door of our now empty quarters, my thoughts turned to the one bell and one name that I shall never forget for as long as I shall live...

<BONG!>

*Lieutenant Desmond Newlin-Devlin, Assistant Chief of Security.*

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*Before the Stellar Wind*

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