

STAR TREK JELICO

The Price Of Peace



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written by Christopher Michael Dalton

Star Trek – Jellico – The Price of Peace
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Edited by Sean O’Keefe
is published by TrekkieFanFiction.com
Cover by Sean O’Keefe using Grok
Cover titles by Edelweiss O’Keefe

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Historian's Note

This episode begins towards the end of the events depicted in the two-part episode 'Chain Of Command.'

The Price of Freedom is eternal vigilance.
John Philpot Curran - 1790

U.S.S. Enterprise
NCC-1701-D
2369 AD

Ever since Captain Edward Jellico arrived on the *Enterprise* to assume temporary command during both this crisis situation and top secret mission, he had been hard pressed.

He had ordered the crew of the Federation flagship to juggle too many assignments at once and was not willing to let anyone have any breathing room to get one assignment done and go the next task.

The crew was experiencing the tension from their new captain. Various personnel spoke to their department heads who then communicated their problems to the starship's first officer, Commander William T. Riker and the starship's counselor Lieutenant Commander Deanna Troi. Unfortunately, Jellico did not want to hear those problems as he wanted the crew to prepare the *Enterprise* in case they get into a battle with the Cardassian Empire and become embroiled in a war.

However, at the same time, a lot of the crew wondered if Jellico was thinking properly because he was making all of these changes in a short time because he had dealt with the Cardassians for so many years. From the crew's point of view, Jellico was making them out to be the worst threat the Federation had ever seen and encountered.

Jellico consulted with Chief Engineer Geordi LaForge about having someone fly a shuttle to lay mines in order to drive the Cardassians out of the McAllister Nebula. It would be difficult as they would be flying practically blind and yet still have to attach them to the ships' hulls.

The blind African-American chief engineer had informed Jellico that Will Riker was the best man for the job.

This did not sit well with Jellico who really did not want to confront Riker after he dismissed him from his duties. He did not like Riker and thought he was a bad first officer. No doubt Riker did not like Jellico and thought he was a bad captain.

The thought had come to him that Riker was not alone in that assessment. On a subconscious level, he was aware that even back on

the *Cairo* there were many who did not think of him fondly. Unpleasant reflections aside, he had promoted Lieutenant Commander Data as the new first officer because the gold-skinned android was compliant.

These thoughts tumbled around in the newly installed captain as he wandered around the airy, pristine corridors of the *Enterprise* en route to the Ten-Forward lounge. As he stepped through the doors, he realized he did not know what he was doing in the spacious room since he had only been in it once where the change of command took place. He looked around the empty room and saw only unfilled tables and chairs. In the distance, he saw the McAllister Nebula through the observation windows. Its beauty had been marred by the evil it had contained, and he could not appreciate its natural colors and vortices.

“Can I get you something, Captain?”

Jellico turned around and saw the ship’s bartender, Guinan looking up at him with her usual serene smile. To him, it was unsettling.

“Kind of quiet tonight?” he noted.

“It has been very quiet for the past several days now,” the El-Aurian bartender stated. “With all of the crew becoming very busy and getting everything ready in preparation for what might be a second war with the Cardassians.”

Jellico bristled at the mere mention of the crew basically working around the clock – in four six-hour shifts – and not having enough time to relax.

Is everyone against me, including the ship’s bartender? Jellico thought to himself. And am I that much of a demanding captain?

Jellico had thought that but then immediately decided that it was for the best that he was making all of the decisions and the changes in case there was an eventual second war with the Cardassian Empire. *Didn’t they understand he had their best interests in mind?*

“You think I am riding the crew too hard and going overboard, are you?”

“Yes,” Guinan calmly stated. “I think you are.”

Here comes another confrontation, Jellico thought. I just cannot catch a break.

“Guinan, right?” he asked.

She nodded.

“Look, the Cardassians could blow this ship apart and ignite another war,” Jellico continued. “I made all of these changes because I wanted the crew ready in case we do go to war. The Cardassians are not going to be friendly and let us be on our way even if they don’t like what we have to say.”

Guinan nodded and counteracted. “I know this, but I also know that you are making the Cardassian race to be an unstoppable enemy. So much in fact that the entire crew have questioned if you are thinking straight for this mission.”

Her words offended him. “I don’t think you entirely understand,” Jellico responded. “I have dealt with the Cardassians before. They do not care about playing nice. They do not care that the crew and I are having problems seeing eye to eye. What they care about is getting what they want by *any means necessary*. It really could come down to a war between the Federation and their Empire. Us and them.”

Guinan thought for a moment about the words she was about to use. “Captain, how much do you know about this ship and its history?”

Jellico was not entirely certain where this specific conversation was going.

“The *Enterprise*?” Jellico asked. “Not much.”

“How much do you know about their missions?” Guinan elaborated. “What the crew has encountered during the past six years?”

“Not entirely much,” Jellico confessed. Her question had caught him off balance, a situation he did not find endearing. “I really don’t know where this conversation is going.”

“On their first mission to Farpoint Station,” Guinan explained. “This crew encountered the Q Continuum. Have you ever encountered them before?”

“No, I have not,” Jellico said, flatly.

Guinan nodded. “Well, the Q Continuum sent one of their members to the *Enterprise*. A member I had encountered once before. This particular member of the Q was sent to try and judge humanity

for being a savage, child-like race. He was also sent to test them to determine if humanity had evolved past that self-destructive stage.”

Jellico nodded as he continued listening. He had to admit, he found this tale fascinating.

“Then a few months down the road,” Guinan continued. “The *Enterprise* was sent to another *galaxy* after a warp drive experiment had gone haywire and was then sent back here to the Milky Way with the help of an alien intelligence. Specifically, back to Federation space. This ship could easily have wound up in the Delta Quadrant.” It was a thought she kept to herself as she was well aware of the dark forces in that corner of their galaxy.

“Sounds like it was quite a mission,” Jellico noted.

“It was,” Guinan concurred. “Then about six months later I came on board and helped open up the Ten-Forward Lounge. Sometime after that, the same member of the Q Continuum returned and sent the *Enterprise* and her crew to the edge of the Alpha Quadrant. An area where they encountered the Borg for the first time.”

Guinan paused for a moment and then continued her account of what happened in that incident at the J-25 solar system. “Q had thought that it would be a good test for the *Enterprise* crew since Captain Picard thought they were ready to encounter more interesting life forms they had not previously encountered.”

The dark-skinned and dark-haired El-Aurian bartender paused again and looked out of the observation windows and then back at the gray-haired captain. “They barely survived their first encounter with them. It took Captain Picard’s asking Q for help that saved this ship.” She locked eyes with the captain. Her tone completely serious, she asked: “Have you ever encountered the Borg, Captain?”

Jellico shook his head, skeptical about where this conversation was going. “No, I have not,” was all he could say.

Guinan took a deep breath. “A year later the crew of the *Enterprise* encountered the Borg a second time,” she continued. “And that was when Captain Picard was captured by the Borg and assimilated into their collective. The crew had seen him transformed into one of the Borg drones. Because of Captain Picard’s knowledge and experience as a Starfleet captain, the Borg were able to use that

tactical experience and strategic information to annihilate thirty-nine Federation Starships and kill thousands of people. If it had not been for this crew under the leadership of Will Riker, the Borg would have assimilated the Earth and ended both the human race and the Federation all at once.”

Unreasonably, Jellico found the need to defend himself. “Look, I was not anywhere near Wolf 359,” he retorted. “I was dealing with the first phase of the armistice with the Cardassians. What is your point?” Jellico’s tone was a little sharp, but that did cause Guinan to back off.

“My point, Captain,” Guinan replied. “Is that this crew has been through and encountered a lot worse. They have been through far more deadly encounters than the Cardassian Empire. The Cardassians and their empire are nothing more than small potatoes compared to the Borg...” she involuntarily shivered at the mention of their name “...and the Q Continuum putting humanity on trial.”

Guinan looked Jellico in the eye, capturing his attention and not letting it go by force of will. The captain was beginning to understand this woman’s faculties. “When the crew of the *Enterprise* encountered the Borg that second time, they knew what their captain expected of them. Captain Picard did not pile a list of demands on them to the point where they were stressed and hated him. They all kept a cool head and prepared the starship the best they could under Captain Picard’s leadership. He praised them and gave them support and encouragement.”

Jellico straightened up his uniform as it began to feel a little too tight on him.

“When Captain Picard was assimilated by the Borg, William Riker was field promoted to captain. I spoke to him about letting Jean-Luc go because the intelligence that was trying to obliterate the *Enterprise* was not their captain. It was something else, something twisted. Something evil. Although Will Riker heard me out, he did not give up on his captain. With the help of the crew, he was able to rescue Jean-Luc and help him sever ties with the Borg Collective. He and the crew of the *Enterprise* were able to save their captain, the Federation, and prevent the Earth from being assimilated. It was because of Will

Riker's leadership that they were successful. You and I would not be having if this pleasant conversation now if he and his crew were not successful."

Guinan pressed forward with the icing on the cake that Edward Jellico did not want to hear.

"So, let me tell you something straight up," she finished. "Whatever kind of problems that you are having with Riker and whatever kind of friction you are having with this crew is *your limited personality*. You are causing it by not hearing them out. Without listening to your senior officer staff and the rest of your crew, you are creating your own issues; not them. If this crew gets through this mission, and they will, you are going to have a lot of repair work to patch up, should you continue on as their captain. That is going to be a more difficult task for you to deal with and face than dealing with the Cardassians."

Jellico was bristling. He was not accustomed to having a civilian telling him what to do or should do. He was tempted to snap back at her, yet her countenance, her presence, gave him pause to consider. Grudgingly, he realized she had made a valid point. Especially when it came down to the aftermath of this crisis and the unforeseen future.

With a great feat of will, he collected himself, forcing calm, and looked at Guinan. "I can see why Jean-Luc thinks so highly of you. He told me so himself before he, Doctor Crusher, and Lieutenant Worf left on their mission."

"He should think so highly of me," Guinan stated, with a little smile. "I am over five hundred years old and have had more experience in life; more experience than you have. Excuse me." Abruptly, she got up and walked off, leaving Jellico to himself in the spacious crew lounge.

Repair work, Jellico thought to himself.

He immediately decided that the first person he needed to fix things with was Will Riker. Even though Jellico did not want to face him. He would not even be surprised if Riker did to him what Mackenzie Calhoun he once done during an issue; an issue that landed

Jellico with the nickname of ‘One Punch Jellico’ – one of many uncomplimentary monikers that Jellico received over the years.

Nevertheless, he knew he needed Riker’s assistance to pilot the shuttle and lay down those mines, since the crew had stated that he was the best person for the job.

Confronting Riker was not going to be easy, given his resentment which he knew was reciprocated – and not by the Commander alone. The crew Riker led followed him out of loyalty to a man who had led them through Hell. He had to admit that he had been a credit to the name *Enterprise* – even if he couldn’t stand his command style.

Their resentment was the price he paid for his efficient and demanding style of commanding a Federation Starship.

Jellico exited Ten-Forward and proceeded to speak with William T. Riker.

“Well... Now that the ranks are dropped, Captain, I don’t like you either. You are arrogant, and closed-minded. You need to control everything and everyone. You don’t provide an atmosphere of trust, and you don’t inspire these people to go out of their way for you. You’ve got everybody wound up so tight, there’s no joy in anything. I don’t think you’re a particularly good captain.”

“Good riddance to bad rubbish.”

Not only did that last statement prove that he could not set things right with the first officer of the *Enterprise*, that last negative description directed at him from William T. Riker certainly struck a nerve.

No doubt a very negative sentiment shared by everybody else among the *Enterprise* crew.

Especially one from another crewman in passing that was low enough but loud enough for the straight steel gray-haired (which was combed carefully over the thinning spot on the back of his head) Federation starship captain to hear. One that involved someone tossing and jettisoning Jellico out of the nearest airlock like refuse without the benefits and protection of an environment suit.

Even though he had listened to Guinan's advice, Jellico knew it was all a moot point now. He would not continue as the *Enterprise's* new captain. He would return to the *Cairo* and continue as that ship's master.

The mission had been a success. The Cardassians had filed out of the nebula, ejecting their weapons pods as demanded. There was no way they were going to even try to remove the mines Riker had so expertly laid on their hulls. They were checkmated, and they knew it.

To add insult to injury, Riker had been welcomed back aboard ship as a returning hero by the crew. Their loyalty to him had gone up another notch. It was proving a ladder he could not hope to even climb.

After the Cardassian starships had acquiesced to their demands and left, Captain Edward Jellico called down to Sickbay for the returned Captain Jean-Luc Picard's status. He had not been pleased when one of Doctor Crusher's assistants had answered, telling him that his CMO would get back to him when she was finished with her patient. Displeased with this apparent flaunting of his current authority, and brushing aside his counselor's warning, Jellico got up and marched down to Sickbay himself.

After he left, a smirking Commander William Riker took the command chair and Counselor Deanna Troi sensed a deep satisfaction from Lieutenant Worf above at tactical.

They had all known what would happen; and happen it did.

Ten minutes later, a seething Jellico returned, stared at everyone on the bridge with obvious displeasure, and had immediately gone to the captain's ready room. Riker had not even had time to get up out of his seat.

Less than an hour later the gory details of the story of the Crusher/Jellico confrontation had been all over the ship. One that left a very sour taste in Jellico's mouth – and plenty of icy stares directed at him by the crew of the *Enterprise*, along with a few curses and some very colorful and nasty expletives.

In his mind, by all accounts, he was known to be a fine Federation Starship captain with unconventional methods and effective results in some circles.

But in others, his efficient and demanding style of command also branded him with the reputation of being a stern and unpopular taskmaster.

A tyrannical form of command equal to that of the historical British Naval Sea Captain William Bligh.

The evidence: he was often accused as being the type of person that was constantly “hovering” over the officers he commanded.

His reputation had also earned him the uncomplimentary nicknames of ‘One Punch Jellico’ and ‘Jelly in the Belly’. The former description in reference to an incident with Captain Mackenzie Calhoun many years past. One he gave little thought to and certainly did not like being reminded of.

It was another of many thorns in the backside of Edward Jellico.

An hour later, after stewing in his own juices, Jellico placed the last of his young son’s drawings into the box on the desk. His son, being a very gifted and very talented artist, always helped Jellico calm down and defuse. If anything, his young son’s work helped him through some rough patches. If his son chose to pursue a career as an artist instead of one in Starfleet, that was fine by him. He encouraged his son’s artistic talents and wanted him to be happy in whatever career field he pursued.

After completing that task, Jellico took one last look around the captain’s ready room. The room was bare except for the plant in the corner. Ship’s Maintenance would be putting the fish named Livingston back in the wall tank after he left. He had already made the arrangements.

Things just had not worked out. It was a pointless mission and a total waste of time. It was all a trap the Cardassians set up from start to finish – and three Starfleet Officers walked right into it (at the behest of Command). The end result being one of them being tortured in violation of the Celtris III Convention all to extract the tactical information about Minos Korva they could glean.

Jellico scanned the spacious ready room, deep in reflection. He would be glad to return to the *Excelsior*-class Federation starship *Cairo*. His own ship. And like all of the *Excelsior*-class starships, one of the workhorses of the Federation Starfleet. Hard as he had tried, he had never been able to establish a solid working relationship with the crew of the Federation flagship; the *Galaxy*-class Federation starship *Enterprise* crew.

The problems had started almost immediately, even before Picard left, with Will Riker. After that, they escalated faster than Jellico would have thought possible. Frictions had appeared, subtly reducing the efficiency of an otherwise first-rate starship crew.

For the past several days the *Enterprise* crew had been groaning under the weight of Jellico's strict interpretation of Starfleet regimen. Drills, shift changes, efficiency tests.

He had been appointed to deal with the Cardassians while Picard was sent on some secret mission that – even though no official announcement had, and would probably never would be made about it – had obviously failed badly.

Jellico sighed. He was supposed to be some kind of expert on negotiating with Cardassians. The only way that some could see that this could possibly be considered true was that he *acted* more like a Cardassian than any other starship captain. That trait and his refusal to adapt to the needs of the *Enterprise* crew certainly did not do him any favors during his temporary command of the Federation flagship.

It had been his mistake, Jellico solemnly decided as he stared out at the passing stars through the captain's ready room's viewport. Picard habitually assigned the bulk of the *Enterprise's* administrative duties to Riker. He should have realized immediately what would happen when he took over. The problems between him and the commander could have been predicted. Perhaps he should spend more time researching the people he was about to work with in future...

And the ship's doctor...

Jellico grimaced. Thinking about their confrontation made his teeth hurt. He had read her report; she had finally deigned to log one. Beverly Crusher had been quite thorough. She detailed every single injury inflicted upon Picard. The Cardassians had been unusually sloppy about covering up their misdeeds this time, but Jellico was not too surprised. Their overconfidence was one of their weaknesses. They reminded him of the Romulans. It had already forced them to withdraw from several systems in the sector, and it had set them back at Minos Korva as well.

Doctor Crusher had been very thorough in her description of their confrontation in Sickbay as well. Including and up to telling him that she would have him removed from Sickbay by security if he did not leave. She had looked up and referenced all the Starfleet regulations pertaining to the bounds of her authority in her Sickbay and where it took precedence over the captain's. This would ensure that her report would be forwarded all the way to the upper levels of Starfleet Medical and then back down the chain to his CMO on the *Cairo*. Crusher had headed Starfleet Medical for a year, so she would know exactly where to send it. Jellico did not

look forward to Dr. Lolita Jean Smythson's reaction when she read it, and the smug smile the beautiful half-Filipina, half-Caucasian woman of sixty would be wearing. Smythson was a superb CMO, but hard-headed when it came to getting her way; she would not have needed to look up the pertinent regulations to compose a report like Crusher's. She knew them by heart.

He paused in his reflections. Perhaps he had misjudged things from the beginning and had actually been set up for failure. He wondered for a moment if there was someone in Command who had it out for him. It was a thought he should return to when he was home on the *Cairo*.

Looking at the chair, he was surprised by how much authority Captain Picard ceded over to Riker. This was this ship's seat of power, he would never have expected it in an officer of Picard's caliber to share his authority. But having discovered that, he had not modified his plans as he should have.

Jellico knew now he should have come down hard on Riker from the very beginning so that the man would have known what to expect. He had given Riker too much leeway, too much freedom in the beginning, so when he started to make serious demands on him, the first officer had balked.

Jellico had to admit, Riker could certainly give as he could get. When he had swallowed his pride to ask the commander to fly the mission, the young man had chewed him out – royally. Now, after his conversation with Guinan, he realized that the man had faced down the Borg and not flinched. A man who had been the captain of this vessel and still surrendered it back to Picard upon his return.

Why hadn't the man taken another commission considering his elevation to captain? It wasn't as if the fleet wasn't in need of commanders after the rout at Wolf 359. The man remained a mystery to him,

Jellico straightened and picked up his box. It was too late now. It was bad water under the bridge. He turned and left the ready room empty.

Edward Jellico silently fumed to himself as he completed packing up his things, grateful that this 'shit-show' of an assignment on the *Enterprise* was at an end. Why Starfleet Command considered this to be the flagship of the Federation, he had no idea. Officers here acted like this was a luxury liner rather than a Starfleet vessel. Officers out of uniform

while on duty! A crew that cannot even handle the concept of a four-shift rotation!

He knew the problem started at the top. Jean-Luc Picard was a fine captain, but the French native obviously coddled this crew. Either that or he delegated way too much power to his first officer. A first officer who was so happy serving on Starfleet's flagship that he turned down three commands of his own! That should have told him everything he needed to know about Will Riker. The man was obviously more interested in living a comfortable life than actually serving in Starfleet!

And Riker has the nerve to say that he does not inspire people?! What the hell does he think Starfleet is? Some Kumbaya organization where the captain who schmoozes with his crew gets the most done? The crew is not supposed to follow his orders because they are *inspired*; they are supposed to follow them because he is the goddamn captain!

But no, apparently, the crew of the *flagship* does not understand the concept of the chain of command! The only one who seemed to have any concept of how Starfleet works was the android, Data. Now, *there* was an upstanding officer! He did not complain that things could not get done. He *found* ways to get them done! Why Data was not the ship's executive officer to begin with, he had no idea.

Later, when it was time to disembark, he got the sense that the crew could not wait to get rid of him. Which was fine, because, frankly, he could not wait to leave. These people had done nothing but butt heads with him the whole time he was there! Why should he care if he did not have their respect. They sure as hell did not have his!

Jellico breathed a sigh of relief when he stepped onto the transporter room pad with his belongings and was beamed back on the *Cairo*. He could tell that the *Enterprise's* transporter chief – a ruddy-faced auburn-haired Irishman by the name of Miles O'Brien – was also happy to see him go, too. No doubt a sentiment shared by the flagships' entire command staff and crew.

U.S.S. Cairo
NCC-42136
2369 AD

Finally! I'm home!, he thought to himself, as he re-materialized onto the *Cairo's* transporter room chamber pad.

Nodding to transporter room chief behind the console, Jellico exited into the corridor and headed into the turbolift nearby. He entered the car and let out a short, exasperated breath.

"Bridge," he spoke aloud.

The turbolift's computer responded and it ascended toward the main bridge. He was so glad to put the entire incident behind him and hoped to forget about it.

As the turbolift doors parted, Jellico made his way to the bridge where he was suddenly met with the usual 'Captain Is On The Bridge' announcement and something else entirely different.

A round of applause from the bridge crew.

He stood there, stunned for a moment. After all the struggle on the *Enterprise*—the back and forth, the arguments, the insubordination—here was a Federation starship crew that actually *valued* him.

Suddenly, the weight he was carrying disappeared and his heart seemed to swell up in pride and gratitude. As well as a small smile spreading across his face.

"Carry on, everybody!" he replied.

Of course, he would never tell them how touched he was.

But he would never, ever, forget what this crew did for him.

He looked over at his first officer, Commander Leslie Wong. "You have the conn, Commander. I will be in my ready room."

"Aye, sir," the beautiful, raven-haired Asian woman acknowledged.

Leslie Wong could tell that her captain had been through an ordeal on the *Enterprise* and with the Cardassians near the Badlands. Whether or not that information about what happened would be revealed or Jellico would discuss it later, she did not know. Her commanding officer would bring it up in his own time.

Jellico was deep in thought as he sat behind his desk in his ready room. He crossed his arms and glared at the whole room, his mouth settling into an almost-permanent frown.

The recent events made him recall a certain incident involving the Cardassians from a couple of years past.

A very unpleasant one at that.

*Alcatraz Island
San Francisco, California
2367 AD*

The rainy February afternoon certainly reflected Jellico's mood and train of thought. The sun was hidden by thick clouds, and fog was starting to roll in off the ocean, mixing with the misty rain to make a bleak view.

Whoever said that Jellico looked annoyed when he was awake had hit the proverbial nail on the head. Disturbing thoughts about what he had heard about an old friend and fellow Starfleet officer whirled hotly in his mind.

It could not be true. There was no way Benjamin Maxwell could be guilty of what they're accusing him of. The man was one of the finest captains out there. There was no way he went rogue. However, on the flip side, the man who arrested him, Jean-Luc Picard, was also a fine officer who was not known for making rash decisions. So, if he had Maxwell arrested, then he had to have one hell of a hell a good reason.

So, Jellico was left with a situation that could not be true yet had to be.

Which was why he was back on Earth at the Starfleet detention center in Alcatraz. Jellico chuckled to himself bitterly. When most captains take a vacation, they go to Risa or Wrigley's Pleasure Planet. Not him. No, he goes to his friend's court martial. But it could not be helped. He had to be there. He also had to hear the truth from the horse's mouth, which was why he was at Alcatraz. Reluctantly, he rang the door chime to Maxwell's dorm. He tried again twice before he finally heard "Come" from the other side.

Jellico entered the room and found his friend just sitting there at the desk. The monitor was not on, he was not holding a PADD. Maxwell was just sitting there, staring at the wall.

When it became obvious that Maxwell wasn't going to turn around to see who entered, Jellico finally spoke up. "Ben."

Ben Maxwell turned his head in surprise. Sharply, he asked, “What the hell are you doing here? I thought you were on the *Cairo*?”

“I took some leave so I could see you.” Jellico explained. When Benjamin Maxwell simply harrumphed and shook his head, Jellico pressed on. “Ben, I need to know what happened out there.”

“What? You didn’t read the sterling report from Starfleet Command?” Maxwell asked bitterly.

“I did.” Jellico answered. “I want to hear your side.”

“Since when does anyone care about *my* side?” Maxwell sneered. “A bunch of lousy, sanctimonious bureaucrats. They don’t know a goddamned thing about what’s going on out there! Sitting in their lofty offices, not a care in the world. Most of them probably never even met a Cardassian!”

“Ben, there are plenty of officers in...” Jellico began to say before he was interrupted.

“Please!” Maxwell blurted out as he stood up. “They weren’t there! They didn’t face those people the way we did! They have no idea what those lousy goddamned Cardies are capable of!”

Jellico stood in silence for a moment, stunned by the level of hatred he heard in Ben’s voice. Finally, he spoke up. “So, what happened, Ben? What exactly happened?”

“The Cardies double-crossed us! That’s what happened!” Maxwell yelled. He then pointed a finger at Jellico. “You should’ve never signed that armistice! You should’ve known they’d never honor it!”

A bit perturbed, Jellico responded, defensively. “What were we supposed to do, Ben? Stay at war forever? There had to be an end to it!”

“An end to it.” Maxwell said, bitterly. “There’s no ending it with those people! All they live for is war! Conquest is all they care about!”

Jellico was taken aback by the level of poison coming from Maxwell. This was the man who saved a Cardassian’s life on Setlik III, yet here he is spouting racist language.

Jellico took a breath and tried to reason with him. “That’s not true. The Cardassian culture...”

Maxwell interrupted again, growing angrier by the second. “Don’t tell me about Cardassian culture! Those people are butchers! I saw them open fire on unarmed civilians at Setlik III, I’ve heard the stories of them torturing Starfleet officers for information! So, so don’t tell me about Cardassian culture!”

Jellico held his hands up in surrender. "I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I just want to know what happened. So, from what I've read, you destroyed a Cardassian station in the Cuellar system."

Maxwell shook his head. He added. "It was a military supply port!"

"And you had proof of this?" Jellico asked.

"The supply ships running in and out of the sector is proof enough! There's no way that station was used for scientific research. Not that close to Federation space!" Taking a breath, he added. "No, they were licking their wounds and waiting for a chance to strike. I'm sure of it!"

"Did you convey your concerns to Command?"

Maxwell shook his head and said, disdainfully. "Bunch of mealy-mouthed bureaucrats. They would not know common sense if it jumped up and bit them in the ass. I told them my suspicions when that station was first created. You know what they said? They understood my concerns and would keep an eye on the situation but without *proof* nothing could be done."

"That is a fair point." Jellico countered.

"So, we are supposed to wait for the Cardies to come barreling into Federation space before we do anything?! What the hell is wrong with you people! Lives are at stake for God's sake!"

Jellico took a breath to clamp down his temper which was starting to rise. "So, you took it upon yourself to act."

"Once I saw all those supply ships coming in and out of the sector? You sure as hell bet I did. Because I *knew* I was right. There was no way those supplies were for scientific research." With disgust, he added, "And I knew Starfleet was not going to do a goddamned thing, so I stepped up in order to save Federation lives!"

Jellico was getting a clearer picture of what happened, but he didn't like it. "So, you took it upon yourself to destroy the station then entered radio silence."

"I didn't have a choice! It was only a matter of time before the Cardies broke the cease fire. Anyone with half a brain could see that! I had to make sure the threat was contained!"

Jellico sighed, trying to wrap his brain around what he was hearing. "And the two ships you destroyed? God, Ben, we're talking six hundred and fifty people!"

“That warship fired on us!” Maxwell said, angrily. “You can ask Picard, he’ll tell you, if the coward does not decide to lie! THEY fired first! NOT ME!”

“And the supply ship?” Jellico countered, his voice calm.

“That supply ship was carrying weapons. Any goddamned fool knows that!”

“But you had no proof.” Jellico challenged.

“THEY’RE CARDASSIANS! WHAT THE HELL PROOF DO YOU NEED?! IT’S THEM OR US! I HAD NO CHOICE, GOD DAMMIT!! THIS IS WAR!! I HAD NO CHOICE!!” Suddenly, Maxwell grabbed the chair next to him and flung it across the room.

“Ben!” Jellico yelled, alarmed. Rushing over to his friend, who was breathing heavily and staring at the ground, Jellico guided him to the bed and said calmly. “Ben. Sit down. I’m sorry. I’m sorry. I should never have brought it up.”

Unfortunately, Ben did not seem to register Jellico’s presence at all. He just sat there, eyes dazed, muttering something so softly that Edward couldn’t hear. He mentally kicked himself. His selfish need for answers just added to Ben’s pain. Rattled, Jellico left to find the warden who assured him that Ben was being taken care of and receiving the best psychiatric care. That was some comfort though it seemed too little, too late.

Jellico decided that he was right. The Ben Maxwell he knew could not have done what he was accused of.

But this was not the Ben Maxwell he knew. This man was broken. He just hoped it was not irreparable.

Edward Jellico returned from that disturbing and painful memory. At last report, he learned that Ben Maxwell was still confined at the Alcatraz Rehabilitation Center; still hospitalized and undergoing psychiatric treatment and evaluation.

He let out an exasperated sigh and shook his head in disgust.

The Cardassian Empire had hurt and brutalized many. Especially in their clash with the United Federation of Planets and Starfleet.

And the latest incident with the Cardassians and Minos Korva certainly reinforced that painful fact.

An incident that started when Jellico and the crew of the *Cairo* had come across a Cardassian starship carrying a cargo of raw materials

and other resources that would have led to the development of metagenic weapons.

An incident that led to a series of chain events that led up to what nearly happened concerning Minos Korva and the failed strike force mission. Plus Jellico's unhappy experience on the *Enterprise* and the clash with the flagship's senior command staff.

Nechayev should have sent the Cairo in instead of the Enterprise, Jellico thought resentfully. But, no, she wanted a show of force! And look what nearly happened!

Jellico may have acted grumpy and abrasive on occasion – personality traits that had given him the reputation of being an especially domineering and uncongenial commanding officer, as well as radiating arrogant unpleasantness and tension – but he got results and knew what worked and what did not.

It had been an interesting tour of duty on the starship *Cairo* these past few weeks.

Most of it involved some skirmishes with the Cardassian Empire.

In all honesty, it was a miracle that those minor border skirmishes – if one could call those fiery military clashes that – did not escalate into and ignite another war between the Federation and the Cardassians.

At Campagna Station, the U.S.S. *Cairo* picked up Wong. Captain Jellico welcomed his new first officer in one of *Cairo*'s transporter rooms and immediately told her of their current assignment at the time; to patrol the Cardassian border in the Solarion system. Already, Wong was a bit perplexed by Jellico's command style, particularly his use of four-shift rotations instead of the usual three.

A Cardassian starship was detected nearby, but it only skirted the edge of the system. Wong had grabbed Jellico from his ready room and he chastised her for not contacting the Cardassians, as was standard procedure. Wong explained she was not sure about the protocols.

"I don't want excuses, Leslie," was Jellico's response.

Jellico opened a subspace channel to the Cardassian ship, commanded by one Gul Zarkat. Zarkat claimed to be in the system for scientific purposes. Scans from Jellico's Bajoran science officer Sim immediately confirmed that Zarkat was not lying and that he indeed commanded a science vessel, albeit a lightly armed one.

At that time, Wong did not feel comfortable with Jellico, having been chewed out in front of the bridge crew twice, while he openly praised the Bajoran science officer.

After that experience, Wong planned to transfer off the *Cairo* at the mission's end.

Following modifications to the *Cairo*'s sensors, the science officer discovered that the seventh planet in the Solarion system had a funky orbit that took it past the eighth planet. So, while the Cardassian ship was outside the latter, it was inside the former, and according to the treaty, the Federation border was the outermost planet; the Cardassians were violating the treaty.

Jellico confronted Zarkat about the treaty violation and ordered him to withdraw, but Zarkat rebuffed him. The Cardassian ship headed to Campagna Station and started attacking it. The *Cairo* arrived and managed to disable the Cardassians' engines.

Immediately following that brief confrontation, Zarkat surrendered.

Later, Wong delivered an inventory of the Cardassian ship's cargo to Jellico's ready room. It seemed they wanted to capture Campagna Station and use its resources to research metagenic weapons. Jellico complimented Wong's work and her adherence to protocol.

Unfortunately, it was also the beginning of more serious issues regarding the Cardassians, the establishment of the Demilitarized Zone, and the Federation Colonists who rebelled against the former two subjects.

The latter becoming a group of rebels known as The Maquis.

Starfleet Headquarters
San Francisco, California
2369 AD

Captain Edward Jellico walked furiously through Starfleet HQ on his way to see his superior – Admiral Alynna Nechayev – who gained a name for herself by negotiating a peace treaty with the Cardassians. A treaty that in Jellico's opinion was one of the worst treaties ever conceived.

"Captain Jellico. To what do I owe this honor?" Admiral Nechayev said with that cold smile of hers that said she could care less about what he wanted.

“Admiral,” he said, all business. “I’m here to talk to you about this treaty with the Cardassians.” he began. “It’s a mistake. We’re giving them way too much.”

“I concur that it is not an ideal solution, but concessions had to be made.” she demurred.

“Concessions, yes. But abandoning our citizens to the Cardassians?”

“That’s not what we’re doing, and you know it. The treaty clearly puts the colonies in the Demilitarized Zone – it’s neither Federation or Cardassian territory.”

“Yes, but the Cardassians aren’t going to abide by that.” he said in earnest. “I know the Cardassians – they value strength. Giving up those colonies puts us in a position of weakness. The Cardassians have lost all respect for us now.”

“I disagree.” she said plainly. “Both the Federation and the Cardassian Union gave up the rights to their colonies in the Demilitarized Zone. I think we found an equitable solution to a very complex, and may I say, drawn out negotiation.”

“The only thing we’ve succeeded in was putting our citizens in danger!”

“Don’t be absurd, Edward.” she said in her dismissive tone. “It’s called the Demilitarized Zone for a reason. Our people are in no danger from the Cardassian government.”

“Admiral, I know the Cardassians. They’re not going to honor their end of this agreement. They’re going to start harassing our citizens the first chance they get!”

“I’m afraid I don’t share your cynicism, Captain. The Cardassian government is not going to incite a war by violating the treaty.”

“Well, of course, they’re not going to be obvious about it! But believe me, they will find a way to arm their citizens and there won’t a damned thing we can do about it!”

“Don’t be ridiculous. You act as if these colonists have no recourse.” she stated. “They’re free to leave. In fact, Starfleet offered to help in them in the evacuation process. They refused.”

Jellico grew more frustrated. “I know, but these people – most of these colonies were founded decades ago. These people have built communities – they don’t want to lose that!”

“These people have been apprised of the situation. They know that by agreeing to stay in the zone, they forfeit Federation protection. If they want to take a risk by staying, well, frankly Captain, that’s their prerogative.”

What a bitch, Jellico thought to himself. Out loud he said, “What if we renegotiate the treaty? This time with me there. I know the Cardassians. I’ve been at the table before with them. I know to deal with them.”

“Absolutely not.” Nechayev stated. “Do you know how long it took us to finalize this treaty? I’m not going to throw it out just because some people are unhappy with the terms.”

Of course, she doesn’t want to renegotiate, he thought to himself. *That treaty’s her baby. She’s not going to admit it was a bad deal and she’s definitely doesn’t want to share credit for a new one.* Out loud he exclaimed, “We’re talking about Federation citizens!”

“No. we’re talking about a group of people who were given a choice – leave and remain under the protection of the Federation or take the risk by staying in the DMZ. They made their choice.”

“Well, can we at least send someone down there to help? I mean you can’t just throw these people to the wolves! They need someone to advocate for them. Some kind of Starfleet liaison.”

Nechayev sighed. “While I disagree that we’re throwing them to the wolves, it does make a certain amount of sense to send a Starfleet officer to the DMZ to act as an attaché to ease the transition.”

“Yes!” Jellico said, excited to have made some kind of headway. “An officer who can help these people function under the terms of the new treaty!”

“I can agree to that.” Nechayev said. “In fact, since you consider yourself the premier expert on Cardassians, I’ll leave it you assign someone for that position. Unless you’d like it?”

Ignoring her little jab, Jellico sighed. “If you don’t mind, Admiral, I’m very happy on the *Cairo*. However, if you’d like, I can find a suitable officer for the job.”

“Fine.” she said, as she picked up a PADD. “You’re dismissed.”

Jellico immediately went to work finding a suitable attaché. It had to be someone with experience with the Cardassians. After a search, he found the perfect person – Commander Cal Hudson.

“How’s it going, Cal?” Jellico asked his attaché over the comm link.

Cal Hudson answered with a disgusted look on his handsome, brown face. “As great as ever. We’re having to set up curfews now because of the random violence against our people. The Cardassian government is obviously violating the terms of the treaty by attacking our people.”

“You know that, and I know that. Unfortunately, the Cardassian Central Command has disavowed any knowledge of these attacks.”

“Cardassians lying. Imagine that.” Hudson muttered, sarcastically. “Isn’t there something Starfleet can do? We have people suffering here.”

“I know, Commander. I’ve spoken to Admiral Nechayev several times. Unfortunately, she’s reluctant to rock the boat by violating the treaty.”

“She’s worried about *us* violating the treaty?” Hudson asked, incredulous. “What about the Cardassians?”

“Like I said, Central Command disavows any knowledge. They’re claiming that it’s either a fringe group of Cardassians or perhaps the colonists themselves.”

“They think the colonists are attacking their own people?” Hudson exclaimed. “To what end?”

Jellico sighed. “To discredit the Cardassians and nullify the treaty.”

“That is the stupidest thing I’ve ever heard!”

“Believe me, Commander. I totally concur.”

“So, there’s nothing Starfleet can do?”

Jellico let out a breath. “Admiral Nechayev did recommend forcefully removing the Federation colonies in the zone.”

“Forcing people from their homes? Since when does the Federation remove people by force?”

“Trust me. That’s the same thing I told her.”

“Sir, these colonies didn’t just spring up overnight. Some of these were settled decades ago. There are people who’ve spent their entire lives on those planets. People who’ve worked hard to build a life way out here in the frontier, far from Federation space. Starfleet is willing to just discount all of that by throwing them out?”

“You’re preaching to the choir, Commander. I told Nechayev it was a bad idea. Frankly, I have a better idea – offering the colonists incentives to leave.”

“Incentives? Like what?”

“Oh, don’t know. Offer them land on another planet. Or a job off-world, or...”

“You want to pay these people off?” Hudson interrupted.

“No.” Jellico glared. “I’m talking about giving them a compelling reason to leave. There has to be a way to get through to these people.”

“Get through to these people?” Hudson repeated. “Sir, with all due respect, I think it’s time we stop straddling the fence.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“It means we can either honor this treaty or respect the rights of our citizens. We can’t do both.”

A few weeks later, Cal Hudson resigned his commission and joined the Maquis – a group of freedom fighters determined to protect their homes from the Cardassians at any cost.

Jellico felt a pang of guilt over the younger officer. After all, he selected the man for the assignment. He put him a position to decide between Federation colonists and Starfleet. Years earlier, Jellico would’ve branded Hudson a traitor – a disgrace to his uniform. However, now he totally understood why the Commander did what he did.

After all, he lived with these people for months, he had seen they were suffering. A part of Jellico wanted to follow suit – march into Nechayev’s office and tender his resignation. But really – who would he hurt by that? The Federation isn’t going to change their policy just because he resigned. They’re going to continue to do whatever the hell they want. Plus, it’s not like he could just drop everything and join the Maquis on principle. He has a family – a wife and a son who need him. Was he really willing to throw away his entire life just on principle? No, it’d be asinine, and he wouldn’t accomplish a damned thing.

No, the smart move is to stay where he was and hope he can work inside the system to resolve the problem.

Unfortunately, the problem just got worse – with the Maquis labeled as terrorists and enemies of the Federation. It was ridiculous! But did Nechayev listen to him? Of course not. After all, she could not admit that her treaty was flawed – it was the colonists who were unreasonable. For weeks, Jellico sent reports to Nechayev detailing the violence in the zone. He thought he made some leeway when she agreed to tighten security at the perimeter of the border by implementing forced vehicle inspections. Unfortunately, the violence in the colonies continued, so Jellico came up with various incentive programs to try to convince the colonists to leave, Nechayev, however was not interested in appeasing the Maquis.

As a result, all of Jellico's ideas were swiftly shut down.

Finally, six months after Hudson resigned his commission, Jellico was summoned to Nechayev's office.

"Captain. First, I would like to commend you on your tireless work dealing with the Cardassians. After all, as architect of the original armistice, you were instrumental in fostering relations between our two peoples."

Okay, he thought to himself. *She is buttering me up for something.* Stoically, he said, "Well, thank you, Admiral. I just did my duty."

"Don't be modest, Captain. You are one of the few officers who've had successful dealings with the Cardassians. In fact, I say, you have a unique glimpse into their mindset."

"Well, it's just simple profiling." he said, somewhat modestly. "Military strategy is all about knowing one's enemies."

"Yes. Unfortunately, I wonder if you are starting to lose that objectivity."

"Excuse me?"

"I think it's possible that you're becoming too attached to your profile. That you're seeing deception from the Cardassians that is simply not there."

Okay, he was angry now. She was getting rid of him. "Admiral, with all due respect..."

Nechayev stood up and cut him off. "Deep Space 5 is in need of a new commander. The position requires a flag officer so I'm recommending that you be promoted to admiral and assigned there."

Jellico stood there dumfounded. She was getting rid of him, just not the way he thought. "A promotion? To admiral?"

“That’s right. I believe you’ve earned it.”

He wanted to tell her that she could stuff that promotion where the sun does not shine. But to be honest, he always saw himself as rising up the ranks and this was too good of an opportunity to pass up.

Besides, he was never going to make any headway on the Maquis situation as long as Nechayev was in charge. As far as he was concerned, Nechayev was a narcissist who thought her imaginings were as real as the sun.

So, he caved and accepted the promotion, telling himself that perhaps he can do some good in his new position.

This station does not need a flag officer; Admiral Edward Jellico thought to himself for the one hundredth time. It could easily be commanded by a captain or commander—as MOST stations were. No, the only reason this station had a flag officer was that Nechayev needed incentive for Jellico to leave the Cairo and take this posting. And I fell for it! he thought bitterly. Then he realized that was not actually true. He knew from the start why he was being promoted. It was obvious--Nechayev finally got tired of him complaining about the Maquis situation in the DMZ and shipped him out here in the edge of Federation space to get him out of her hair. But no, he didn’t care. She dangled that shiny little promotion right in front of him and he grabbed it.

Deep Space 5 was of little strategic importance. Its only neighbor was the far-reaching Thallonian Empire. A very xenophobic race, the Thallonians had no interest in relations with the Federation. Federation ships were forbidden to cross into Thallonian space, and any citizen of the Empire was forbidden to cross into Federation space. Jellico had heard stray stories of Thallonian subjects seeking asylum in the Federation. However, since the penalty for that was so severe—the death of the subject’s entire family—few tried.

Jellico sighed and shook his head. There was no use being morose. He made his choice. All he could do now was make the best of it. He was *not* going to be one of those commanders who lets things get lax because he was disillusioned with his posting. No, Deep Space 5 may not be of strategic importance, but he sure as hell was going to run it as if it was!

Jellico spent that first year getting the station up to specs. Sure, there were many on the crew who thought he was being a hard-ass type, but it had always been that way. People either liked his command style or hated it. Frankly he did not care. He was the commanding officer, if people did not like his style, then that was their problem.

After all, he did not join Starfleet to make friends.

2372 AD

Jellico's diligence paid off when a rebellion left almost all of the Thallonian royal family dead. Suddenly, that region of space became what some called "the new frontier". Personally, Jellico likened it to the Wild West. With subject worlds left on their own, lawlessness ran rampant and hordes of refugees from the former Thallonian Empire found their way to Deep Space 5. With the fall of the Empire, this unimportant station in the middle of nowhere became pretty damned important. Armed with a sense of purpose that he hadn't felt since he left the *Cairo*, Jellico threw himself into his duties and became more of a taskmaster than before.

Meanwhile, two starships, based out of Deep Space 5, were sent out into this "new frontier" to render any aid necessary. One of those captains—Mackenzie Calhoun—would end up being a thorn in Jellico's hide.

The more Jellico dealt with Calhoun, the more it amazed him that the man made it through Starfleet. He was a complete maverick who acted as if Starfleet rules and regulations were mere guidelines. He should have been drummed out of the service years ago and there's NO WAY he should've been given command of a vessel! It became abundantly clear, to Jellico that the only way Calhoun survived this long was because he had friends in high places—the most notable being Jean-Luc Picard. Jellico couldn't understand that. Picard was one of the most respectable officers out there. Why on Earth does he vouch for these officers who have no concept of the chain of command?

It did not take long for Jellico to tire of Calhoun's "cowboy diplomacy" and after one antagonistic meeting, he alerted the captain that he was recommending he be removed from duty. The person who saved Calhoun from Jellico's wrath wasn't Picard. It was Calhoun's first officer, Elizabeth Shelby.

After asking to speak to Jellico alone, Shelby began. “Sir, I think it’d be a mistake to remove Captain Calhoun from this sector.”

“Frankly, Commander,” he responded harshly. “I don’t care what you think. The decision is mine.”

“Yes, of course,” she responded in that calm, reasonable voice of hers. “But Captain Calhoun grew up in this region. He knows these people and how to handle them – a lot better than any other captain out there.”

“Being from this region does not give him the right to run roughshod over Starfleet rules and regulations.” He argued. “We have protocols in place for a reason!”

“Yes, sir,” she said. “And in most cases, they work. However, this isn’t your normal, civilized area of space. I’ve heard you say it before – it’s the Wild West. And in the Wild West you need someone like Captain Calhoun.” She paused, then continued. “You say the captain practices ‘cowboy diplomacy’ and you’re right, he does. However, it’s exactly that style that the people in that sector respect – a anything less they’d conceive as weakness.” She then drove her point home. “Sir, you may not agree with the captain’s methods, but you have to admit, he’s gotten results.”

“So what?” he countered. “Suddenly the ends justify the means?”

“In this case, maybe they do,” she replied, pointedly. “Admiral, if I thought for a moment that Mac, I mean, Captain Calhoun, had crossed the line, I’d relieve him of command myself. But I have been by his side through every one of these missions and while his methods are unconventional, I’ve seen nothing that would warrant him being removed from this sector. In fact, his style is exactly why he should stay.”

“Commander,” he said. “Don’t you think it’s possible you’re letting your personal feelings color your judgment? I mean, you and the captain did go to the Academy together and, from what I understand, you...”

“Sir,” she interrupted, abruptly. “With all due respect, any romantic feelings I had for Captain Calhoun left a long ago. My opinion of his performance is based *solely* on my experience as a fellow officer.”

Jellico looked at her askance. He didn’t quite buy that, but on the other hand she did make a compelling point. No matter how much he loathed Calhoun’s methods, not to mention his disrespectful attitude, he did get results.

So, Jellico relented. Which is not to say he didn't get angry at Calhoun again – he did, often! However, every time he was angry at Calhoun, it was Shelby who talked him down by giving him succinct, reasonable, clear minded arguments for Calhoun's actions. No, he may not have respect for Calhoun as an officer, but he had a lot of respect for Shelby, whom he considered a model officer, and if she could vouch for his actions, then Jellico could accept that.

2373 AD

As Jellico dealt with the Thallonian sector, the threat of a war with the Dominion loomed large in the background. Seeing an opportunity for a potential ally, Jellico took a brief leave of absence from Deep Space 5 and traveled to Cardassia to try to convince the newly formed civilian government to ally with the UFP against the Dominion should it be necessary.

During a lull in the proceedings, Jellico heard a voice behind him. "You know, it won't last."

He whirled around and saw a familiar face—Gul Kuvet, one of the few female guls in the Cardassian military.

Jellico gave a polite smile to the official who helped him draft the Federation-Cardassian armistice years earlier. "Gul Kuvet. It's a pleasure to see you again."

"Likewise, Captain."

"It's Admiral, now," he corrected. Getting down to business, he asked, "Now, what were you just saying?"

Kuvet took a deep breath. "I was saying that this government won't last. Sooner or later, I predict sooner, the military will retake control—with the public's blessing—and this meeting of yours will be for naught."

Jellico bristled. "Sounds like you're hoping for it to fail."

She shook her head. "Not at all. But I know my history. Cardassian citizens will support a government that keeps their bellies full and their minds at ease. Historically, the Detapa Council has failed to provide that, which is why the military has ruled for so long."

Jellico crossed his arms. "Well, maybe this time will be different."

"You don't believe that," she scoffed. "You see the same things I see—a Cardassia that has been locked in conflict with the Klingons for

over a year.” She glared at him, proudly. “If the military had been in charge, this war would’ve been over a LONG time ago.”

“Gul Kuvet,” he said, sternly. “I’m not here to discuss Cardassian/Klingon relations. I’m here because we have a much bigger threat to worry about!”

“Yes, we do,” she conceded. “Which is exactly why you should be discussing this with the military, NOT the Detapa Council.

Jellico’s annoyance was growing. “Gul Kuvet, I can’t bypass the established government just because YOU don’t like them!” Suddenly, a troubling thought occurred to him. “Wait a second,” he said quietly, but with urgency. “the military’s not planning to...”

Kuvet interrupted. “No.” she said, adamantly. “At least, not yet. I’m simply warning you that this council does not have the respect of the military or much of the populace. Many are unhappy and it’s only a matter of time before they make their voices heard.”

Jellico sighed. He didn’t want to admit it, but he knew she had a point. He was a student of history too, and Cardassia wasn’t going to change overnight. At least not in the present galactic climate. However, that really wasn’t his problem; the Dominion was.

“Gul Kuvet,” he replied. “I appreciate what you’re saying. I do. But right now, all I care about is getting an ally against an enemy I know is coming. Now, if I could go straight to the military, I would, believe me. But as a representative of the Federation, I am obligated to deal with the legitimate government, which like it or not, is the Detapa Council.”

Kuvet sighed. “I understand. I just wanted to warn you that the political climate here could change at any time.”

Unfortunately, Kuvet was right. Mere months after Jellico made an alliance with the Detapa Council, it became moot when, thanks to a backdoor deal by Gul Dukat, Cardassia became a member of the Dominion. That revelation was hard for him to get his head around. Why would a proud people like the Cardassians allow themselves to be subjugated like that? It made no sense! Yes, Dukat talked about Cardassia returning to its former glory, but Jellico knew that was a load of bullshit. Was it possible that the entire Cardassian military was so beaten down that they fell for his line of crap? He often thought about Kuvet. She

openly admitted that she had no love for the Detapa Council. Did she support Dukat's coup? He liked to think she had more sense than that, but what did he know? After all, he never saw Cardassia's entrance into the Dominion coming.

Not surprisingly, Cardassia's entry into the Dominion was a death sentence to every Federation colonist who lived in the Demilitarized Zone.

"I guess you heard about what happened in the DMZ?" a not too happy Jellico asked Nechayev as soon as he saw her.

"Yes." Nechayev answered. "It was very unfortunate."

"Unfortunate??" he bellowed. "Thousands of people are dead because of that damned treaty! Don't you feel the least bit guilty for that?"

"No, Admiral. I don't." she said, in her annoyingly calm fashion. "Those people died as a result of their own stubbornness. They had ample opportunity over the past three years to leave and they continually refused. Frankly, I don't see what more we could've done."

It took every ounce of Jellico's being not to unload on Nechayev. Thousands of Federation citizens dead and she *still* could not admit the treaty was a mistake. All of his adult life, Jellico had been proud of the work Starfleet had done and was doubly proud to be a part of it. Unfortunately, from this point on, there was a stain on Starfleet's pristine reputation and a cynical Jellico wondered if Starfleet would ever get back to what it was.

2374 AD

The war that everyone knew was coming finally arrived. With the war's less than stellar beginning, it was obvious that Starfleet was going to need every Starbase and deep station on high alert—making repairs and supplying the Fleet. Jellico fully expected that, with his experience with Cardassians, he would be transferred to Starfleet Command. However, Starfleet disagreed. After all, Jellico ran Deep Space 5 like a well-oiled machine and they could not lose that, not in wartime. Of course, that is not to say he did not have any ideas on how to fight the Cardassians. He did and he would periodically contact Admiral Ross on a secure line to give his input. Practically all of Jellico's ideas were well received.

Unfortunately, they were not good enough and week after week the Federation/Klingon fleet sustained heavy casualties. Jellico lost a lot of friends. However, the loss that hit hardest was his old ship – USS *Cairo*

– under the command of his former first officer, Leslie Wong; assigned to patrol the Romulan Neutral Zone, Wong and her crew paid frequent visits to Deep Space 5 which was not that far off from the zone.

Tragically, nine months into the war, the *Cairo* was believed to have been ambushed and destroyed by Dominion forces who had crossed Romulan space to attack her.

Afterwards, Jellico stood there staring out the viewport on the promenade. Goddamn Romulans and their goddamn nonaggression pact he fumed to himself. They used to give us flak EVERY TIME we entered their space. Now there is a war on, and they let the Dominion SWOOP in any time they want!

Suddenly, he heard a voice behind him. “Admiral?”

He turned to find Elizabeth Shelby there. She glanced down and continued. “Sir, I heard about the *Cairo*. I’m sorry. I know it must be hard.”

He shrugged it off. “This is war, Commander. These things happen.”

“I know sir. But the *Cairo* was your ship. And Captain Wong, well you...” she paused, as if she did not want to finish that sentence.

So, he finished for her. “I recommended her for that promotion.” There was a pang of guilt in his voice. He knew it should not be there, but it was.

Shelby continued. “I did not know Captain Wong very well, but the few times I met her—she seemed like an excellent officer.”

“One of the best out there.” he responded with pride. “Never complained, never questioned orders. She put her best effort into everything she did. Recommending that she be given command of the *Cairo* was the easiest decision I ever made.”

And now, she and the *Cairo* are gone, he thought bitterly. They were both jewels in the night, forever having their light snuffed out by the Dominion.

He sighed. *Stop feeling sorry for yourself, Jellico*, he chided himself. He turned to Shelby. “Elizabeth, I appreciate you trying to make me feel better. I do. But it’s unnecessary. Leslie Wong and the crew of the *Cairo* gave their lives for the defense of the Federation. To me there is no greater calling. They should be celebrated, not mourned.”

Shelby gave a small smile. “I agree, sir.”

Jellico remained there alone a few minutes after Shelby left.

The strategist in him knew something had to change – and soon.

Despite the Romulans having entered the war against the Dominion, victory was far from certain. In fact, the pessimist in Jellico thought defeat was the more likely outcome. However, that is NOT something you want a flag officer to say so he kept his pessimism to himself. As the war dragged on, Jellico knew they needed to think outside the box. Starfleet had lost many of their best people already, they needed a fresh perspective.

So, he suggested that they bring in someone who had fought against the Cardassians before. They needed a strategist who might be able to provide insight into Cardassian battle strategies. That someone was his friend Benjamin Maxwell. Jellico was one of the many officers in Starfleet who felt that Maxwell deserved more credit for being right. Yes, he went about things the wrong way, but he was absolutely right about the Cardassian's duplicity. Jellico argued that Maxwell should be brought in as a consultant. Command's response was "we'll take it under advisement" which was Starfleet-speak for "we're not going to do it."

So, "this insane war" as Jellico called it to himself, continued until it just – *ended*. Just like that. All that fighting, all those lives lost, and a Founder just decides: "We're done. War's over". Jellico had read enough military history to know that's not how things were done but there it was.

"A penny for your thoughts." he heard his wife, Nancy, asked as he sat there sulking in his quarters.

"Cardassia." he replied.

Nancy shivered. "It's unimaginable."

"Eight hundred million dead" Jellico muttered, still unable to wrap his head around it.

"Well, you know, you lie with wolves..." Nancy began.

"Still, it happened," Jellico snapped, testily. He took a breath. "Sorry. This whole war has gotten me turned around." He leaned back and continued. "When this war started, I thought 'THIS is what I joined Starfleet for.' To protect the Federation against its enemies. The Dominion threat seemed to validate every decision I made throughout my career." He shook his head. "I was so sure I had them pegged. I *knew* the entire Cardassian race. I was sure we could get them to side with us against the Dominion. I mean, a people like that—there's no way they'd

let themselves be subjugated by a conquering force. They were too proud, too arrogant for that.” He chuckled bitterly. “Then someone like Dukat comes and shows me what an idiot I am.” He sighed heavily. “Maybe I should just retire.”

“And do what?” she asked, in a slightly challenging way.

He shrugged. “I don’t know. Maybe go into music like my Uncle Ron.” He looked at her and smiled. “I am a pretty good guitar player.”

Nancy smiled and shook her head. “Please! You’d be bored out of your head!” She got serious and leaned forward. “This wasn’t your fault, Eddie. None of it was. So, you didn’t accurately predict how the Cardassians would react. That doesn’t make you an idiot. It just means you’re not psychic.” Reacting to his eyeroll, she added. “You’ve done *a lot* of good work here on this station. You should be proud of that.”

Afterwards, Jellico realized she had a point. Over the past four years, he and his crew *had* done a lot of important work, first for the sector, then in support of the war effort. He should be content with his successes instead of focusing on a failure, which, technically, was not his.

Cardassia burning. He had seen the images, and they shook him to his core.

In a way, the Cardassians brought it upon themselves, and they paid for it in spades.

He could not say that he was sorry that the Cardassians had their very hard downfall. It served them right.

Hopefully, the Cardassians that survived learned a very hard and valuable lesson from their pride, arrogance, foolishness, and utter hubris.

In the back of his mind, Jellico doubted it.