


# Sight Unseen (Star Trek: The Next Generation)

*By James Swallow*

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An original spin-off novel set in the popular *Star Trek: The Next Generation* universe from *New York Times* bestselling author James Swallow!

In the wake of political upheaval across the United Federation of Planets, Admiral William Riker and the crew of the *U.S.S. Titan* find themselves in uncertain waters as roles aboard the ship change to reflect a new mandate and a new mission. On orders from Starfleet, *Titan* sets out toward the edge of Federation space to tackle its latest assignment: to work with an alien species known as the Dinac, who are taking their first steps into the galaxy at large as a newly warp-capable civilization.

But when disaster befalls the Dinac, the *Titan* crew discovers they have unknowingly drawn the attention of a deadly, merciless enemy—a nightmare from Riker's past lurking in the darkness. Friendships will be tested to the limit as familiar faces and new allies must risk everything in a fight against an unstoppable invader—or a horrific threat will be unleashed on the galaxy!

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## Editorial Review

About the Author
James Swallow is a BAFTA-nominated author of three *New York Times* bestsellers, including *Star Trek: The Fall: The Poisoned Chalice*, and he remains the only British writer to have worked on a *Star Trek* television show. His fiction includes the *Sundowners* series of original steampunk westerns, the bestselling novelization of *The Butterfly Effect*, and stories from the worlds of *24*, *Doctor Who*, *Warhammer 40,000*, and *Stargate*. His other credits feature scripts for videogames and audio, including *Deus Ex: Human Revolution*, *Disney Infinity*, *Fable: The Journey*, *Battlestar Galactica*, and *Blake's 7*. He lives in London.

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Sight Unseen

# One

It wasn't the first time on this assignment that he had felt like he was out of his depth. The plain fact of the matter was, the alien starship was like nothing he had ever seen before.

Recruited right out of the Tech Clutch on Selay, Ythiss had left his homeworld and clan nests to go to Starfleet Academy, and by the skins of his ancestors, he had graduated with honors. Ythiss liked to think of himself as an intelligent sentient, full of all that fix-anything attitude that Starfleet liked to encourage in its engineers. But this ship didn't conform to any kind of layout he had ever encountered, not in space or in textbooks. For starters, it seemed to be made largely of wood.

A rangy, muscular humanoid dropped out of the carved hatchway in the overhead of the corridor, falling to the planked decking in an effortless three-point landing. "Here," she said as she stood up, handing him a rope made from woven vegetable matter. "Help me with this."

"As you wish." The lieutenant blinked his large slitted eyes and cocked his serpentine head, taking up the slack she offered.

A member of the Dinac species, Guoapa was the commander of the vessel, although the duties she performed on her ship would have been the remit of a subordinate engineering officer like Ythiss on a Federation craft. When he had told her that, the canine-like female let out a barking snort of amusement. What kind of fleet gives command to those who don't have their paws in the engines? With that comment, the Selayan had immediately warmed to the alien captain, and from that point on Guoapa had insisted on having Ythiss as her assigned liaison. She hardly spoke to the lieutenant's commanding officer back on the U.S.S. Whitetree, much to Captain Minecci's chagrin, but after a while both the Starfleet and Dinac crews had found a comfortable balance for their association.

Ythiss waited for a nod from Guoapa, and they hauled together. The rope snapped taut and his earspots captured the sound of ceramic pulleys turning somewhere up inside the hatch. The lieutenant knew that their actions would—so he hoped—kick off a manual release of the intercooler vanes folded along the outside of the Dinac pinnace. Observed from a distance, Dinac ships had a beauty to them that Ythiss thought quite fetching. Sculpted to be warp-streamlined, they sported gossamer energy-collector wings that reminded him

of the great rainmoths that swarmed in the cooler months on Selay.

He hauled and did as he was told, but Ythiss was still bothered by the fact that the Whitetree had spent nearly a month with the Dinac and he was no closer to understanding the peculiarities of their faster-than-light drives. It was an odd blend of warp technology that had elements of Gorn brute-force motors, Vok'sha slip-gen engines and certain types of older Romulan systems, all in a mix that was quite unique. Ythiss found them utterly fascinating, to the point that he was spending far too much of his time on board the pinnace trying to fathom them.

When the engines had suffered a emergency shutdown, catapulting them from warp velocity in deep space, several light-years away from the Dinac home system, he was actually a little pleased. Not that the ship might be damaged—of course not—but pleased that he would have another excuse to slither around inside the drive core and get an up close and personal look at the alien tech. The Whitetree had quickly come about to take up station alongside and a repair party led by Chief Medeiros was already aboard, shoring up environmental control on the lower decks. Aside from a few bumps and bruises reported by Doctor Shull, the only thing injured so far was Dinac pride.

Heavy gears clanked into place and locked, and Guoapa gave Ythiss the bob-of-the-head gesture that was her equivalent of a thank you. The Federation's cultural survey notes on the Dinac had made it clear that the aliens were a proud species but a practical one. They had not come looking for Starfleet's help, but they had willingly accepted when it was offered. Ythiss let go of the rope and sucked in a breath. He felt more tired by the exertion than he wanted to admit; over the past few nights, the Selayan had found it difficult to rest, and he put it down to his mind being overly focused on the alien warp drive system.

The surveys said the Dinac most closely resembled a bipedal version of a Terran animal known as a fox, with short fur covering almost their entire bodies, tall triangular ears and large eyes above a pointed snout lined with small sharp teeth. Ythiss sometimes despaired of the inevitable comparisons between xeno races and fauna-forms from Earth, a direct result of the fact that a disproportionate number of Federation exobiologists were Terran-born humans. He was from a race that was most often described as cobra-like, although he had seen one of those snakes at a nature reserve on Benecia Colony and been vaguely insulted by the comparison.

However you wanted to describe them, the Dinac were a vital people with a bold spirit that Ythiss found invigorating. They were new to the galactic stage, despite having developed a more or less reliable form of interstellar propulsion decades earlier. Until recently, they had been content to remain within the bounds of their home system, but now their government had expressed the wish to become an associate member of the United Federation of Planets. As part of the first steps down that road, the Whitetree had been assigned to the Dinac as part of a technological and cultural exchange.

For their part, Starfleet was not only helping to forge an alliance with a new species, but also getting a valuable opportunity for teaching into the bargain. The Whitetree was a small Saber-class starship seconded to Starfleet Academy and the majority of her crew were midshipmen on their first cadet cruise. The Dinac mission was the ideal opportunity to expose the next generation of Starfleet officers to the kind of challenges—and wonders—they would meet after graduation.

For a moment, Ythiss recalled his own cadet cruise, and his mind wandered back to what seemed like an epoch long past.

So much had happened since then. The Borg Invasion, his experiences serving aboard the U.S.S. Titan, the

rise of the Typhon Pact and, most recently, the fallout from the assassination of Federation President Nanietta Bacco. Months later, with a new leader and a new sense of purpose in the UFP, Starfleet had renewed its commitment to exploration, and once his tour on the Whitetree was up, Ythiss hoped to return to the forefront of that endeavor. But he also understood the importance of showing the cadets that Starfleet's core strength was in its willingness to explore and make new allies, not just to exist as a defensive force.

However, none of that would happen if they couldn't get the pinnace under way again.

Guoapa was speaking into a microphone tube sewn into the collar of the multi-pocketed utility waistcoat she wore. Untranslated, the Dinac language sounded like a collection of high-pitched yaps and howls, but the tone was plain enough for Ythiss to surmise that she was giving someone orders. In response, the wooden deck beneath them gave a shudder and the craft lurched as the engines failed to start correctly. Guoapa's teeth bared in annoyance.

Ythiss opened his tricorder and took a scan, simultaneously patching into the Whitetree's external sensors. He immediately saw the problem. "There is considerable subspace particle interference in this area. It is obstructing the initiation of a viable warp matrix."

"As if the engine is choked, yes." Guoapa sniffed. "In a dozen voyages, this has never happened before. Usually, resetting the wings will free the matrix to form, and—"

The engineer-commander never got to complete her thought. All at once, braying alarms sounded down the length of the tubular wooden corridor, and Ythiss's nasal slits twitched as he detected the release of an alert scent into the pinnace's atmosphere. In the same instant, crimson warning flags unfurled across the tricorder's compact display screen as the energy readings peaked alarmingly. The sensor relay from his ship suddenly cut out.

The lieutenant's talon clacked on his combadge. "Ythiss to Whitetree, do you read me?"

A garbled mess of noise answered him, barely recognizable as a voice. Unable to pick out any words, he sprinted the short distance to a porthole and pressed his face to the glass.

As he was an inherently exothermic life-form, the temperature differential of the fluid in Ythiss's veins was negligible; but still he instinctively recalled a human aphorism about the figurative chilling of one's blood when he saw what was happening to the Whitetree.

The spade-shaped ship was falling. Out in the silent darkness, space itself had ripped open, a great wound in the void bleeding streamers of bright, violent energy. As a warp engineer, Ythiss was dreadfully familiar with the bestiary of spatial anomalies and unpleasant stellar phenomena that could affect faster-than-light vessels. The highly trained, calm and collected part of his mind registered that this was most likely a type-gamma subspace rift, of at least Magnitude Seven on the Ros-Sina-Michael Scale. The rest of his thoughts crystallized into a single, unspoken cry: My friends, my crewmates are on that ship.

The first of many gravity distortions radiating out from the rift struck the Dinac pinnace, and Ythiss felt the vessel shake and roll. He tried to pull himself away from the porthole, but he could not tear his gaze from the unfolding horror. The Whitetree's engines were surging, the glow from the impulse grids flaring brightly as the ship tried and failed to escape the savage pull of the newborn singularity. Lashes made of light whipped the outer hull of the ship and left ugly tears in their wake as compartments underwent catastrophic depressurization. Slowly, agonizingly, the Starfleet vessel began to slide back toward the raging maw of the

rift.

Behind him, he could hear Guoapa shouting commands, and where his claws touched the wall of the pinnace he could feel the vibrations as the Dinac ship failed over and over to activate its own drives and flee. Meter by meter, the Whitetree was swallowed whole by the ragged mouth of the spatial fissure, consumed along with a handful of escape pods that had ejected in hopes of breaking free of the pull. Fountains of exotic particles briefly flared into the visible spectrum, marking the instant of the Whitetree's disappearance.

The distortion waves kept on coming, pounding the pinnace's hull like storm-force breakers against a seawall. Wood groaned like a living thing and overstressed supports burst into sprays of splinters. Ythiss felt the craft lurch again as it too now began the slow, inexorable drift toward the rift's event horizon.

Lights were going out all down the length of the main corridor, and frost was forming on the ports as life support shut down. Ythiss felt a paw on his shoulder, and he turned to see Guoapa, wide eyed and desperate. "I am so sorry," she blurted. "Did we cause this?"

He was still trying to form a reply when the anomaly gave a final pulse of energy, before it swallowed itself and vanished. A heartbeat later, a last aftershock ripple of stressed gravitons pulsed out across the darkness and struck the pinnace head-on.

The wooden deck came flashing up to meet Ythiss, and then there was pain, then nothing.

When he awoke, it was dark and wintry, and the lieutenant had no way to reckon how much time had elapsed. The tricorder was damaged, many of the sensing functions ruined by the subspace discharge or from the sheer physical damage of being hurled across the interior of the Dinac ship.

Ythiss was dimly aware that he had broken some bones in his leg, but the pinnace's internal gravity had dropped, and that made it easier to manage the injury. Guoapa found him as he came out of unconsciousness, and he realized she had moved him to a different compartment. Other Dinac crew members and a couple of familiar faces from the Whitetree huddled there, keeping close together to make the best use of body heat. Breath formed bubbles of white vapor as he exhaled. The air was polar-cold, raking at the inside of his chest like knives. The deep chill made him sluggish, and Ythiss cursed his saurian biology.

"All primary systems are blacked out," Guoapa was saying, with a grim set to her ears. "Drives do not answer. Communications appear nonfunctional. We shifted some battery support packs to power life provision, but that will not last long. A span-day at best."

Ythiss accepted the bleak news with a nod and peered at the tricorder. The readings were confused. "Is this . . . everyone?"

"It would seem so. Some tiers of the ship were released to the void. No reply from them." He could sense she was maintaining a firm rein on her emotions for the good of her crew, but the lieutenant had come to know the Dinac female well enough over the past few weeks to see that she was furious at their circumstances. "So, we preserve who is here until we can do so no longer."

He nodded again. "That effect we witnessed. It was . . . external. Caused by something outside . . . both ships." His thoughts were slow and glacial, and Ythiss's scaly face twisted in a scowl.

For an instant, Guoapa's spirit seemed to lift briefly. "I feared that we might have made this thing. These

new iterations of our engine designs are still untested. We could have—”

Ythiss shook his head. “No. I think . . . we were in the wrong place. At the wrong time.” He shuddered at his own understatement. Such bland words to be the epitaph for nearly one hundred officers, noncoms and cadets. A sickly feeling washed over him as he came to the realization that he and the handful of survivors around him would soon join the lost. Either the air would run out or the cold would take their lives. Here, far between stars at the unexplored fringes of the Alpha Quadrant, rescue would never come.

The Dinac captain seemed to intuit his thoughts. “Lieutenant Ythiss. You and your Starfleet came so far to befriend us. I regret this is the result of it.”

He was finding his way toward a suitable reply when the tricorder let out a strangled bleat. Ythiss looked down at the screen. The scanner was registering a number of life-forms closing in on their location. “Guoapa . . . are you certain there were no other survivors?”

“On my world, I swear it.”

The scan returned odd, off-kilter results. Not carbon-based life. Some strain of organic the damaged device cannot read. He tapped another key, activating an overlay. There were no resonance traces from transporters, nothing to indicate another vessel out in the vacuum nearby. If we have been boarded, where did they come from?

In the corridor outside the compartment, ice-rimed wood creaked and groaned as weight settled on it. Someone was moving closer.

Ythiss pulled himself up and took a step toward the sealed hatch. “Hello?”

On the other side of the hatch, something made a sharp, metallic noise like the snapping of bones.

“So . . .” Admiral William Riker glanced over his shoulder as they stepped out of the transporter room and into the main corridor. “How many messages did it take to wear him down this time? Ten? Twenty?” He raised an eyebrow. “Fifty?”

The thin, gangly Caitian walking at his side absently pawed at his face, smoothing the black and white fur there. “I’m not certain I have the count, sir.”

Riker allowed a thin smile. “Mister Ssura, I don’t believe that for a second. You’re my aide because you know everything down to the nth percentile. I know you know exactly how many times I had to put in a call to Admiral Akaar’s office for this meeting.”

“Indeed, sir,” allowed the lieutenant, his ears twitching in apology. “But it has been my observation that my overaccuracy in certain conversational situations is off-putting to some. I am attempting to be more . . . colloquial.”

“And also you think it doesn’t matter?”

Ssura’s head fell in a shallow nodding motion. “There is that.” He gestured with the padd that never seemed to leave his grip. “It is well known that Admiral Akaar is not the most communicative of superior officers.”

“I hadn’t noticed,” Riker deadpanned. The reality of it was, the towering Capellan admiral had an entire Starfleet to run, with hundreds of vessels to oversee, the borders of an interstellar nation to patrol and a far frontier to explore. The concerns of one man—and one command—were probably quite a way down his priority list.

Still, Will Riker had hoped that ascending to the first rung of the admiralty would have made a difference—but he quickly learned that even within Starfleet’s top brass, the pecking order was as rigidly enforced as it had been between the first class and fourth class on his first day at the Academy, if not more so. He smiled again as he thought of a favorite phrase of his old friend and former commander Jean-Luc Picard: Plus ça change . . .

The corridor they followed described a circular arc around the interior wall of Starbase One, the great spindle-shaped space station orbiting high over Earth. As they continued, the bland walls gave way to a vertiginous view through great floor-to-ceiling panels of transparent aluminum. The massive space-bay of the dock extended away beyond the windows, and floating out there in null gravity were a half-dozen starships of various configurations. Most of them had the pearlescent hulls of Starfleet craft, although Riker glimpsed part of a streamlined fuselage in terra cotta shades.

Ssura noticed his attention. “From the Vulcan trade delegation,” explained the felinoid.

Riker nodded, mentally ticking off all the classes and registrations of the ships with the same care he had shown as a boy growing up in Alaska. Back then he had been poring over pages in the Starship Spotter guidebook; now he had a vessel of his own, although the Titan was elsewhere, at Utopia Planatia over Mars. Still, a little of that thrill he had felt in his youth came back to him as he watched the ships at anchor. Each one was a story waiting to be told, the beginning of a voyage as yet uncharted.

And that was why he was here: to get his own story back on track.

A turbolift took them down a few levels to the secondary docking ring and a maintenance gallery that protruded from the interior wall of the space-bay. As Riker entered, he saw the sweep of an oval primary hull out past panes of projected holographics. A large cruiser-scale ship was docked there, an older New Orleans-class vessel, and he could see workbees and shuttlepods floating over the hull, making final precruise preparations.

Riker looked away and found Admiral of the Fleet Leonard James Akaar standing like a gray-haired sentinel in the middle of the room. He was addressing two junior officers, quietly enough that Riker could not hear what was being said. One of them seemed familiar to him, a dark-haired Efrosian woman with commander’s pips on her collar, but he couldn’t place the face. At her side, a male lieutenant wearing the mustard-yellow undershirt of an operations officer chanced a look in his direction and gave a wary but respectful nod. The younger man was unknown to him, and Riker couldn’t immediately identify his species either. Humanoid, but sporting vertical lines of scales on his forehead, earlobes and throat. Riker made a mental note to question Ssura later on the two officers; as an aide-de-camp, the lieutenant’s precise and fastidious demeanor had its advantages. The Caitian was almost as good as a library computer.

As if he had suddenly caught Riker’s scent, Akaar turned his back on the man and the woman and fixed him with a cool, level gaze. “Will,” he began, without preamble. “Walk with me.”

“Sir.” Riker fell in step with the taller officer, unconsciously straightening the uniform tunic he wore with a tug on the hem.

Akaar led him out of the maintenance gallery and on to a catwalk tube that extended for a good distance over the saucer section of the docked starship below. If not for the tripolymer support struts holding clear panels in place about them, Riker could have imagined they were in the open air high above the hull, like ancient mariners atop a galleon's mast.

"The Tokyo," rumbled Akaar, indicating the ship. "She's undergone a substantial refit from stem to stern. Barely a square meter of the original spaceframe has been left untouched."

Riker nodded. The well of the Federation's resources was not infinite, and sometimes older ships found themselves serving far beyond their original projected terms of service, reinvigorated with new technologies and upgrades. The Tokyo would have been a contemporary of the Enterprise-D when her keel was first laid, and here she was decades later, about to serve again. "I know her captain. Christopher Jones. Good man."

Akaar returned the nod, coming to a halt. "He and that Andorian XO of his will be taking her out for an extended cruise. Four years, deep exploration."

Something in Akaar's tone made Riker tense. The reason he had pressed for this meeting, the reason he was here now, the reason he had always felt he had been in Starfleet, was to take on just such a mission. For a while, he'd had it, holding the center seat on Titan while the ship pushed back the frontier and went, like the old fleet maxim said, where no one had gone before.

But that had fallen away from him in the wake of the events that unfolded after the assassination of President Bacco. Maybe it was some kind of karmic revenge for all the times he had refused promotion to captaincy over the years, but Riker's elevation to flag rank had come completely out of the blue, and on some level, even after months on the job, he was still trying to process that. Becoming an admiral had been the choice of others—of Akaar and officers like him—and Riker had done his best to make the role fit.

He understood that the promotion had been about expediency, about the need for the right man in the right place at the right time. And he had taken on that responsibility, helping to bring the architects of the plot behind Bacco's murder to justice and pulling the Federation back from a darker, more hawkish path. But it was still hard to make everything connect. In all his plans for his tomorrows, Will Riker had not thought much further than the bridge of the Titan, and the love of his wife, Deanna, and daughter, Natasha.

Even now there were moments when he looked at himself in the mirror and half-wondered when this would all come to a halt. Okay, Riker. Joke's over. Give back the rank tabs.

Akaar showed no sign of smiling, however. "I gave all due consideration to your request," said the admiral, as if he could read the other man's mind. "Proposal denied."

Riker's heart sank, but he buried the reaction deep. "Just like that?"

"Just like that," Akaar repeated. "You want to put the Titan back on her original mission plan, get your ship out to the Vela Sector again and pick up where you left off." He shook his head. "No. That is not going to happen."

"Sir . . ." Riker began.

"You're not a captain anymore. You don't get the luxury of heading off to parts unknown and digging in the dirt of strange new worlds. Accept it and move on."

The blunt delivery was no less than he expected from the Capellan, but still Riker felt a flicker of annoyance at the dismissal in the words. “I told you, sir, I’ll do whatever the fleet asks of me. That’s the job, that’s the price of wearing the uniform.” He drew himself up. “But I joined Starfleet to serve to the best of my ability. And frankly, I’m not sure I can reach that when the mission is all about handshakes and trade agreements. I’m not a diplomat. I never have been. I leave that kind of thing to the people who are actually good at it, like my wife.”

Akaar made a small noise of agreement. It was the last thing Riker expected. “Interstellar relations are not your strong suit. That’s undeniable. Your report on the situation on Garadius IV made that clear. Vice Admiral Peters was not happy.”

Riker suppressed the desire to wince at the mention of the mission to the disputed planet. Dealing with the manipulative, antagonistic beings on that world had tested his patience almost to the breaking point.

“And then the recent situation with the Cytherians and that so-called ‘summit . . .’?” Akaar let his words trail off. “Something that everyone involved wants to put behind them.”

Riker colored slightly. What some barrack-room wags had nicknamed the “Takedown Incident” had not exactly been a walk in the park for the newly minted admiral. Along with officers of similar rank from a handful of other galactic powers, Riker had been coerced by elements within an ancient alien civilization to wreak havoc across a dozen star systems, and the fact that he had been used as a proxy against his will was still raw, still a source of both anger and embarrassment. It was another reason Riker wanted to get back out there, to brush off the stigma and return to where he could do the most good.

“I know you think you were promoted too quickly,” Akaar continued. “And there are others at Command who feel the same way. But what’s done is done. I chose you because I know you will do what the fleet asks of you.” He gestured toward the Tokyo again. “Jones and his crew will be picking up where you left off in the Gum Nebula. The Proxima is already on its way out there, and they’ll be taking on Ganymede’s mission.”

“You’re recalling all the Luna-class ships?” Riker frowned.

“Not recalling. Re-tasking. Part of it is political . . . One reason is that the Romulans are sending probe ships out to Vela as well. We know the Typhon Pact view the Luna ships as heavy cruisers more than explorers, and the last thing we need is to create a new way to antagonize them. Smaller ships, more of them, won’t read like a threat.” The Capellan shook his head. “The fact is, mission profiles all across the quadrant are undergoing a revision. Stem to stern.”

Riker held back a question. He had heard rumors of a change rippling across Starfleet over the past few weeks. Some were saying it was because of the undue influence exercised over the force from the president pro tem after the Bacco assassination. Ishan Anjar, the ambitious Bajoran politician who had stepped into Bacco’s shoes after the assassination on Deep Space 9, had been a key player in the very conspiracy that brought about her brutal murder. He had justified it with old, familiar rhetoric, cloaking self-aggrandizement with patriotism, claiming that Bacco’s peaceful policies would ultimately weaken and destroy the United Federation of Planets. Even though he was now in prison, Ishan’s influence still persisted in some corners. So Akaar’s putting our house in order, thought Riker.

Once again, the admiral of the fleet demonstrated his near-uncanny ability to anticipate questions before they were asked. “One day I woke up and found our best and brightest were all becoming hawks. That cannot

stand, Will. It is imperative that we show the new generation of officers and noncoms coming up after us that belligerence is not the Federation way. We are a postwar society now. What we do in the next few years will define us for decades to come."

"I understand." Riker nodded again. "We need to lead by example."

"Just so. You have proven time and time again that you can not only do your duty, but that you also think outside the box. It's a trait you've passed on to all your people on the Titan. And that is why I need you, and that ship, close at hand." His tone softened slightly. "But perhaps we'll ease back on the diplomatic missions for now. I have something else in mind." Akaar's hand disappeared into a pocket of his long uniform tunic, and it returned with a small padd. He offered it to Riker.

"New orders, sir?"

"And then some. I've given you license to shake things up a little. It does come with some strings attached, of course."

Riker kept his poker face as he paged through the orders, skimming the content for the high points. One term leapt out at him, and he read it aloud without thinking. "Sector commander . . . ?"

"It may not be the mission you want, Will," said Akaar. "But it's the one you have. Make it work."

"Aye-aye, sir." Sensing that he was being dismissed, Riker turned to walk back down the gantry, but Akaar put out a hand to halt him.

"One more thing." The Capellan inclined his head toward the maintenance gallery, where Lieutenant Ssura was waiting patiently with his paws crossed in front of him and the two other officers Akaar had been speaking to were still standing at attention where they had been left. "Two more, actually."

It was then that the missing pieces of information Riker had reached for moments before now came to him. First, that the species the young lieutenant belonged to was a race called the Skagarans, beings who shared a world called North Star with a colony of displaced humans. And second, that the woman with commander's rank was Dalit Sarai, a former Starfleet Intelligence officer who had directly aligned herself with Ishan Anjar's aggressive policies . . . and become a pariah because of it.

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