

Birthday Honours

By Ann Thomas

Anarita Jat sat quietly in her shuttle. Hidden in an asteroid belt waiting for... She wasn't sure what but apparently she'd know it when she saw it.

She was getting too old for all this secret stuff. After all the years she'd been with Starfleet Intelligence you'd think the old buzzard would trust her. But no. Admiral Thomas operated on a need to know basis. That made life very difficult sometimes. She was fed up with having to leave at a moment's notice – get her stealth shuttle out of the shuttle bay without anyone seeing it. All she really wanted to do was to go home to Starbase 410. (How long had she thought of it as home?)

Well the war with Dominion was over and they'd come through it, but not without casualties. She sat there reminiscing about the previous years – The years that had passed since she took control of that giant spinning top known as Starbase 410.

It was a joint venture between the Federation and the Klingon Empire. An experiment really, to see if a multi-race station would work. A place that had different races' Embassies and a deep space Academy. A place of diplomacy and tact. Diplomacy and tact – that was a laugh. Ambassador Ke'reth assured her that there was a Klingon word for diplomacy. She chuckled to herself. It was probably a word that meant shoot first and ask questions later, still so far it had mainly been the other way around. She liked the Klingons, a bonus from her previous host, Anturun. He'd been a great friend of Curzon Dax. They'd been drinking partners although Anturun wasn't the womaniser Curzon was.

Anarita smiled to herself, she'd become great friends with Curzon's successor, Jadzia, a beautiful woman with a lovely nature, long black hair and a feisty attitude to life. She'd married a Klingon, the Starfleet Officer Worf. He'd been devastated when she was killed by Gul Dukat and the Par Wraiths of Bajor. Anarita had visited DS9 several times. She remembered the time she'd gone with Major Madia Amme, the Bajoran Ambassador to Starbase 410. They'd had a great party with Jadzia and Madias' friend, Kira Nerys who was now in charge of DS9. That night in Quarks was something to remember, quark had 'acquired' a couple of bottles of Romulan ale. That stuff could knock your head off. They'd teased the men, cleaned Quark out at Dabo and Jadzia had wiped out the Ferengi at Tongo. Poor Quark, the look on his face alone made it worthwhile.

Anarita sat forward. A red light was blinking on the console in front of her. Long range scanners activated. She checked the console and the screens but could see nothing. The light went out. Just another glitch. The shuttle was very sophisticated and virtually undetectable but, like her, it was getting on. She checked the Stardate, good grief it was her 50th Birthday. What a way to spend it, sitting in an asteroid field alone waiting for something to happen she should be on Starbase 410 celebrating. Mind you there would be some close friends missing. Sadness shadowed her face as she thought of qu'bang the Klingon warrior bonded to the General. She'd been killed during an attack on her squadron by the combined forces of the Breen and the Jem Hadar. She'd gone down fighting as hard as she'd lived. She'd quite pretty for a Klingon woman, small and dainty but you didn't mess with her. She'd been quite a fighter and then there was the General to contend with. You didn't mess with his woman and she'd seen the results of those that had tried – not a pretty sight. She grinned as she remembered the time they'd managed to get him into an EVA suit and clamped to the outside of the Starbase to cool off. Of course she'd lost the General as well now. He'd become her 1st Officer when dear old T'Pina had gone to teach part time at the Vulcan Academy and to be near the treatment she so desperately needed for her injuries. She missed the old Vulcan, they'd been close friends and she'd been so efficient until her illness interfered with her duties. So Starbase 410 became the first Federation establishment to have Klingon non-Starfleet 1st Officer. K'batlh had gone to Borath in retreat to deal with his loss.

His replacement was Leigh Brown formerly of the USS Rage. He was very young but would soon toughen up. Especially after he'd dealt with the Embassies a few times.

Ambassador Ke'reth's Chief-of-Staff could be quite difficult at times, very stubborn and liked to get her own way. Mind you that wily old fox Ke'reth could be a problem at times. Always trying to find out things he wasn't supposed to know. Cdr. John Borda had told her how he'd found a 'bug' on b'Sels youngest child KharlS. Still she didn't think that anyone else would've made such a good Ambassador as Ke'reth, she was glad she'd negotiated with Gowron for him. He was a good man to have beside you in a battle. Very mystical for a warrior but a trained killer when needed.

Then there was K'iHQaS. What was she going to with her now that the General had gone? She liked the Klingon woman but it didn't do to let her know that. It wasn't that she was violent just clumsy and impetuous. She spoke without thinking and almost caused a diplomatic incident between Bajor and Ferenginar when she called Grand Nagus Zek a randy little Troll. She had a heart of gold but only the General could control her when she was upset. Let's face it an angry Klingon her size needs controlling. Anarita supposed that K'iHQaS was still out patrolling in her Vorcha the Dragon Fist taking retribution on the Breen and Jem Hadar for the death of her friend qu'bang.

Thinking of K'iHQaS and the diplomatic incident made her think of Major Madia Amme. A short fused Bajoran resistance fighter who found diplomacy a bit hard at times. She'd become very fond of the Ambassador both as a friend and almost in a motherly way. She was orphaned at an early age and fended for herself on Terak Nor running errands for Quark and keeping her younger sister Onna looked after. She trained in finance on Ferenginar after the occupation. She could get a bit uncontrollable at times but she was a hard worker with a caring nature and a great sense of humour. She got on well with the other Ambassadors as well.

Anarita sighed deeply. Apart from these damn missions she was content with her place in the fabric of things. She had a good team working for her, people who'd become close friends from all planets and species. She'd have to have a word with...

"RED ALERT, RED ALERT!" said the computer "Cloaked ship off the port bow." Anarita sat up alert and ready. What the hell was a cloaked ship doing there? She wasn't supposed to be detected in this stealth shuttle. Was this some kind of advanced technology?

"Identify ship computer."

"Vessel is IKV Diplomacy, now decloaking." Anarita breathed a sigh of relief, what did Ke'reth think he was doing?

"Good Afternoon Admiral" said the face grinning at her, "permission to beam 2 aboard."

"Of course" replied a puzzled Anarita, "come on over." She watched as two large figures materialised on the transporter pad.

"What the Hell are you doing here?" she asked Ke'reth and K'iHQaS, "and don't touch anything." Ke'reth grinned at her as K'iHQaS moved towards her.

"Sorry about this" she said in her gruff voice as she pressed a hypospray against Jat's arm. Anarita reached for her phaser as the room spun around and she collapsed into Ke'reth's arms.

"I don't want to be around when she comes to," said K'iHQaS.

"Nor me" muttered Ke'reth.

"I don't know why Admiral Thomas picked us for the job."

"Right Lt.Col lets fly this into the Diplomacy shuttle bay. Oh and you'd better restrain her in case she comes round too quick."

Anarita opened her eyes warily. What in the world was going on? Was she being kidnapped? By Ke'reth!!? She tried to move and found herself strapped to the bed. She appeared to be in the Diplomacy sickbay.

"I'll kill him" she muttered to herself, "the traitorous..."

"You're awake then," said a voice from behind the screen.

"What the bloody hell do you think you're doing" she yelled.

“Promise you won’t attack me and I’ll free you” Ke’reth said as he came into the room still grinning.

“Alright” said Anarita. She certainly didn’t intend keeping her promise to the turncoat pirate.

“Once a pirate always a pirate” she thought. She sat slowly up and as her head stopped spinning stood up.

“Feeling better?” he asked.

“Yes you B*****d.” she said lunging at him. He caught hold of her, spun her around and she found herself imprisoned within his arms. She tried to kick him but he managed to immobilise her feet.

“Temper, temper” he tutted, “now if you promise to behave I’ll take you up to the bridge. Okay?”

“Okay” she muttered. She followed Ke’reth’s massive frame confused because there was no feeling of hostility on the ship.

“On forward view screen” he snapped. He stood behind Anarita who gasped when she saw what was on the view screen. The Dragon Fist and the USS Rage and strung between them a banner that said,

HAPPY BIRTHDAY ANARITA JAT 50 TODAY

“Happy birthday Anarita” Ke’reth whispered in her ear. “Have we got a surprise for you.”

“You didn’t have to tell the whole universe did you?” she replied, eyes still fixed on the flashing lights on the banner with the flashing nebula in the background and Starbase 410 silhouetted against the fiery anomaly, it was quite a sight.

“Beam the Admiral to her quarters” he told the computer, “you’ll find clothes and an escort. See you at the party.” Anarita felt the tingle of the transporter beam as she disappeared, then materialised in her quarters.

Madia was waiting for her and on the bed was a flowing, shimmering, gold gown.

“Oh it’s beautiful” she breathed.

“Glad you like it” said the Major. Anarita hugged her.

“Amme, I only realised it was my birthday just before Ke’reth arrived.”

“Hurry up and change,” said Amme “we’ve got a party to go to.” Anarita showered and put on the gleaming dress.

“You look stunning,” said Madia and she handed Anarita a box. Inside was a beautiful necklace and earrings.

“Tessarian sunstones – very rare,” said Madia. Anarita put them on and against her speckled skin they seemed to take on a life of their own.

They took the Turbolift to the promenade where once again Anarita gasped in wonder. Everywhere she looked were gold banners, balloons and streamers. All announcing that she had reached 50. There were people everywhere, all in dress uniform, her own crew and officers, T’Pina, Chancellor Martok, Worf, Admirals Ross and Thomas, Kira Nerys, her Ambassadors all congratulating her. Admiral Thomas stepped forward and held up his hand.

“Admiral Anarita Jat. You see here today people who have come from all over out galaxy. We have come today not just to celebrate your birthday but to honour your 30 years in Starfleet. Many of those years spent alone and undercover for Starfleet Intelligence. On behalf of Starfleet Command I would like to present you with the Christopher Pike Medal of Valour. Congratulations.” He pinned the medal to her gown and handed her a framed certificate. “The good news is you have just completed your final mission. I know you no longer wish to go on missions, so we will leave you in peace to run your Starbase.”

“That’s the best birthday present I could have,” she said smiling broadly, “Thank you.”

“Now,” said Ke’reth and Madia, “lets party!”

