

## Flight of Fancy

### By Robert Lydford

Lucretia Nax woke, with a start, and turning over sharply, dislodged a stack of Navigation Pads from her duvet. 'Computer, what time is it? She asked slipping on her dressing gown. 'Oh seven thirty three hours.' The computer replied. 'Computer, I'd like some toast and coffee. No, on second thoughts, you better make it an orange juice. Coffee makes me edgy.' She took her food from the replicator, burning her fingers on a piece of hot toast. She cursed, and then caught herself, mid swearword. Computer, can I link this station's computers to those aboard the Lady Luck?' A few seconds passed then the computers female voice spoke from a grill set in the wall. 'Affirmative, station computers, are compatible with those aboard the vessel listed as the Lady Luck.'

'Nax to Lady Luck, commence pre-flight checks on primary, secondary and tertiary systems. Let's see what these Starfleet grease monkeys, have done to my little ship.' She said as she buttered her toast. Another screen showed her, the prices on the Ferengi stock exchange. She smiled, as she felt Nax planning their next move. She also heard Ezri's words of wisdom. "Don't let the symbiont, lead you astray, be your own person." She wanted a reason, to leave the station, just so she could fly her own ship. She even considered going back to Risa, though she couldn't, quite see its appeal, after all, she had money, and wasn't really in the mood to gamble. After all even when she was winning fair and square. She still felt somewhat guilty. And the Orion colonies were way too dangerous for a young girl to visit alone. Vega Prime, was pretty all year round, and had beautiful lakes and mountains. Perhaps she could go there . . .

After showering and replicating a pale purple utilitarian-pocketed jump suit, she dressed and wandered out onto the promenade. All around her the station was coming alive, alien traders of every hue passed Pads among themselves as they argued prices, Station Security, tried to look inconspicuous, and almost managed it. Of course, she was hardly noticed as walked towards the station's bar. The pun named Drift Inn. There in a dark corner sat Daimon Norko, a Ferengi trader that she recognised of old. 'Hi Norko, what's happening?' The Ferengi looked startled. Then angry showing his crooked piranha toothed smile. Lucretia was a little scared, but somehow Nax reassured her, telling her to sit still. 'Why don't you be a good little girl, and go and play with a doll?' Nax spoke through her. 'Come on Norko, I'm too old for dolls, unless that's all your selling these days.' The Ferengi's eyes widened. 'How dare, you insult the great Daimon Norko, I should have you slapped for you insolence.' Nax smiled through Lucretia, a somewhat disconcerting smile. 'Listen here you bat-eared Pumpkin! Do you want to make a profit? Or just sit there, insulting me? The Ferengi's eyes narrowed as if trying to recall a distant event. 'Orlan Nax?' He asked, in disbelief. He lowered his voice as a pair of the Stations security officers passed them. She smiled.

'Nax certainly, but Orlan is dead, I'm Lucretia Nax. But I'm still ready to trade.'

'But I thought all lives for a Trill, had to be a new start.' The Ferengi whispered its crooked teeth making it sound like a sibilant hiss. 'This is Nax, you're talking to.' She found herself saying confidently, but the host part of her felt like an unwilling and somewhat scared participant in this forthcoming adventure. She also felt strangely energised. She was going to take her ship out, for the first time, since her joining. All she had to do was request that she was allowed out by herself. I mean what right did anyone have to stop an eighty-year-old, almost a teenager, from using her own property. She'd convinced herself. Now she had to convince someone to let her leave the station. The Ferengi glanced left and right. 'All you've got to do is collect a package from the planet Kezari two, and return it to me here at the station.' Nax found herself asking, how much, as she wondered about the packages' contents. 'It's just some trade samples.' Norko continued. Lucretia laughed.

'I may look young.' She snapped. 'But I didn't come down in the last meteor shower.' What's in the box? Then we talk latinum. The Ferengi hissed. 'It's just some computer files.'

'Stolen?' Nax asked. Norko grinned. 'Have you ever visited Kezari space?' Nax inquired. Norko shook his head, as she spoke. 'The Kezari would make Klingon pirates look downright friendly. If I get caught in Kezari space, I'll more than likely end up on the menu. They've been known to eat those who trespass in their territorial space. Did you know that?'

'How about, I give you twenty bars of Latinum, for your safe return with my package.' He grinned. She laughed. 'Thirty bars of Latinum and I'll bring you your package.' She heard her self ask.

'Twenty two!' The Ferengi said with a smile. She laughed, as she heard an insulting remark arrive unbidden in her head. Then standing up, she knocked back the last of her orange juice. 'Where are you going?' Norko asked, aggressively. Nax looked back . . .

'When you're ready to pay the price I'm asking. Give me a call. And with that she walked away. Norko stood up and left the Bar. As he strolled out into a crowded, promenade, past a Turbolift and then right towards the doors of the luxurious Astria Hotel. People screamed as a single rifle blast split the air. People threw themselves to the ground, as Starfleet officers pulled their Phasers and started to sweep the area with Tricorders. Minutes passed and sirens wailed, as Dr Tomac of Vulcan touched the blood with his fingers, and then wiping them on a small sterile cloth, he placed them on the Ferengi's neck. Pronouncing the Trader dead . . .

Poor Lucretia, a young girl literally in two minds. One her own, the other an eighty-year-old rogue. She wandered down a corridor; her head was down as she stumbled into Major Madia Amme, the Bajoran Ambassador. Madia recovered quickly, and halted Lucretia, by the shoulders. 'Where is Lucy going in such a hurry?' The Major asked. It was hard to talk down to a little girl, who seemed both sixty plus years older than herself, and still of an age to be in school. 'I'm sorry, I've a lot on my mind.' Madia smiled, 'I find talking about my problems often helps.' Lucy told her, all that had happened that morning. 'Why didn't you just file a flight plan? And take your ship to Bajor. I could have arranged your travel permits.' She said caringly.

'I needed excitement; the quietness here is driving me crazy.' Madia smiled, at the young girls' words.

Excitement! If you wanted that, I could have spoken to Ambassador Ke'reth, and got you permission to visit Kronos. Anything is better than trying to set up a risky deal with someone you've never met.'

'I know Norko!' She protested. Madia shook her head.

'Orlan Nax may have known Norko! To him, I'm afraid you're just a little girl. Playing with someone else's reputation. As they spoke Lt. Martin Myers, Head of Station Security approached them flanked by two security officers. 'Excuse me Ambassador, We'd like to speak with Lucretia.' Madia looked at him coolly, 'May I ask what this is about?' Martin stepped forward.

'We have reason to believe, that Lucretia, may have been involved in the Murder of a Ferengi Daimon.' They both looked shocked. Part of Lucy wanted to cry; another part of her was outraged at the suggestion. 'I've never killed anyone!' Nax Protested. 'Never' 'I'm afraid.' Lt. Myers said, as he looked at her. 'That I'm going to have to take you in to custody. The Major protested, but there was little she could do . . .

The doors to Admiral Jat's office opened slowly. Lucy entered the room cautiously. Her throat was dry. Then she gasped as the Ferengi she knew as Daimon Norko, stood up to greet her. 'What's going on here?' She demanded. Admiral Anarita Jat stepped away

from the window, and gestured for the younger Trill to sit. 'I'm sorry we had to use you like this; it's just that Norko here is a deep cover agent for Starfleet Intelligence.' Lucy gasped. 'When he arrived on the Station he let it be known that he thought that the Orion Cartel were after him. So we started to look for a way to expose any Cartel members, and extricate our field agent. We didn't know that you would recognise him. I'm afraid he had to risk using you to improvise a convincing cover story.' The Ferengi sat forward in his chair. 'I'm sorry about using you, I made up a mission, that would both intrigue you, and one that you wouldn't immediately agree to. I really didn't realise that I had been an acquaintance of your previous host. At that moment Ke'reth walked into the room a black gun case in his hand. The Klingon sat down and placed the case on the floor beside his chair. Anarita nodded to him. 'I could have been killed, out there!' Nax complained. Anarita smiled. 'It's a risk that we all face, from time to time.' I asked Ke'reth here to shadow you, and make sure nothing serious happened.' She stared at Ke'reth, then back to the Admiral. 'I never even saw him!' Lucy said, a stunned expression on her young face. Ke'reth smiled.

'That's what the Admiral wanted; she told me that Starfleet had already intercepted the assassin sent by the Orion Cartel. So once you were safe. I made the expected hit, on the Daimon here. A small plastic bag full of Ferengi blood placed within his jacket, with a tiny explosive charge. My Disruptor rifle on Heavy stun activated it. Add to this a Starfleet Doctor, who had been given orders to pronounce him dead at the scene for all to hear. I'm afraid the Admiral directed this little play, to allow us to catch a couple of the Cartels members' Anarita smiled.

'To continue the Ambassador's metaphor. We didn't realise that someone was going to wander onto the stage at the last minute. Lucy just sat there in disbelief.

'In all my years, I've never been so scared. You people are mad! You know that?'

Anarita nodded. 'Sometimes, out here in deep space. We have to play by a rather eclectic set of rules. Sometimes that means using the tools at your disposal.'

The doors opened again, this time Lieutenant Myers entered, and snapped to attention. 'Report Lieutenant!' The Admiral said with a business like tone. Lt. Myers gave his report.

'We got them Sir, all three members of the Cartel, one of them is telling everything he knows in exchange for a new identity. That's once he's served the agreed reduced sentence.' The Admiral stood up. 'Congratulate your team Lieutenant. You all did very well, under a difficult set of circumstances.' Lucy shook her head. 'Hey! What about me? I didn't ask to be involved in this plan! Where's my compensation?' She snapped. Anarita handed her a Pad. 'As you can see, a large portion of the reward money for your assistance in the capture of two members of the Orion Cartel, has been paid into your account here at the station.' Nax grinned. What's this contract, written on this Pad?'

'You have a ship for hire, and a desire to travel. Starfleet Command, has given me permission to offer you a civilian shipping contract, allowing you to run your shipping business from this station.' Nax nodded.

'It's strange, only this morning I wanted adventure. Now, I feel like I'd like to sit somewhere nice and quiet.'