Divergences

by WhoaNellie

Summary

**A 2004 A.S.C Award Winner**

A mishap forces the Picards, Chakotay and Beverly to work with an unusual team of allies--SG1. This story was originally posted to ASC on December 23, 2004 and occurs in the Whoa Nellie universe "Reasons of the Heart" timeline, accepting all TNG canon through the movie "Insurrection" while adding Vash (from the TNG episodes 'Captain's Holiday' and 'Qpid') onboard as the ship's chief archaeologist and a post Endgame Chakotay onboard the Enterprise as ship's anthropologist.

Notes

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Author: Whoa Nellie (whoa_nellie40@hotmail.com)
Series: TNG/Stargate (x-over)
Rating: PG-13 (some violence)
Codes: P/Vash, C/Chakotay, SG1

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A Whoa Nellie first--nothing but plot! No smut, no romance, just plot. Special thanks to Mr.
Whoa Nellie for his work on the military aspects of the story. In the Stargate Universe, this occurs in Season 4 after the episode 'The First Ones'.

Acknowledgements: Paramount owns Star Trek, Double Secret Productions owns Stargate SG-1 and Bill Gates owns the word processing program we used to blend them together.

Feedback is always appreciated, posted or e-mail.

https://sites.google.com/site/whoanelliestartrekfanfiction/

DIVERGENCES
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"Temba, his heart full," Captain Jean-Luc Picard said, ending the communication. He made some course adjustments on the control panel and set the autopilot on the Cousteau before heading toward the rear compartment. Standing in the doorway, he admired the scene in front of him for a long moment. His wife, Vash, was sitting at the table across from Beverly Crusher and the two ladies were having tea while laughing at some story being told by Beverly's new husband and the Enterprise's Anthropologist, Commander Chakotay. The four of them were returning from a conference and en route to rendezvous with the Enterprise. While the conference had been fascinating, it had also provided a welcome vacation for the two couples, a two week holiday that was about to be extended.

Vash noticed Jean-Luc and waved him in. "Hi, darling. Would you like some tea?"

Picard walked over to drop a kiss on the top of her silken head. "In a moment, first I have a surprise for you. It seems that there was an earthquake in a remote region of Tama recently."

"I didn't do it," Vash replied quickly. "I mean, that's my surprise?"

"Some ancient ruins were unearthed in the quake," he said pointedly. "The Tamarians have invited a delegation of Federation scientists to join their exploration of the site as a gesture to further our ongoing communications with them. The digs aren't set up yet, but in light of Dathon and Picard at El-Adrel, the Tamarians gave me permission to take a certain archaeologist on a private viewing of the site."

Vash squealed, launching herself into his arms in an ecstatic embrace. "Ooh, I love you."
"That is," Picard continued, "assuming that Beverly and Chakotay don't mind a brief detour before we rendezvous with the Enterprise."

Chakotay and Beverly exchanged glances. Chakotay answered for them. "Since the Captain is obviously approving this delay in our return to our duties, I for one would be interested in seeing these ruins myself."

Beverly smiled knowingly at Picard. "I don't suppose I could take any of the credit for this private tour so that my anthropologist husband would love me as much as your archaeologist wife loves you?"

Chakotay set his mug down and sauntered over to sweep Beverly into his arms. "Not necessary," he murmured with a grin. "I already love you with all my heart."

"Well then," Picard said. "That's settled, why don't we have some dinner before we reach Tama."

Hours later, Vash was in her element, carefully picking her way through the debris of the ruins on Tama. "Bev, be sure to record as much of the ruins as you can and zoom in on some of these writings. Chakotay, set your tricorder to scan for energy sources. Jean-Luc, don't touch anything and try to resist the urge to destroy this place as you are wont to do with every archaeological wonder that you touch."

Picard sighed in long-suffering exasperation at his wife's snide comment. She would never let him live down his 'litany of sins' as she referred to the list of things that he had been forced to destroy. "I do not want to destroy ancient treasures, I am forced to do so, on occasion and with reluctance."

Beverly and Chakotay exchanged amused glances. This entire trip had been a spectacle; watching the affectionate banter that passed so frequently between the Picards was highly entertaining. Chakotay's gaze remained on Beverly as she slowly pirouetted around with the recorder to capture the entire room. Her effortless grace and beauty was enchanting and he had to force himself to look back down at his tricorder readings. "It looks stable right now, but I'm not sure it'll handle a major excavation," he commented aloud.

"They'll have to install force fields to stabilize the walls before the people and equipment come in," Vash absently concurred, absorbed in her analysis.
Chakotay double-checked his tricorder readings. "I'm getting a dead zone directly beneath us," he said.

"That makes it sound like a morgue," Beverly quipped. "I'm not doing any autopsies, I'm on vacation."

"Did someone say morgue?" Vash piped up. "I'd prefer a mausoleum, but as long as this place has been abandoned, same difference and there's nothing an archaeologist likes better than old, dead bodies."

Picard made a wry observation. "Unlike your squeamish reaction to fresh, dead bodies."

Chuckling, Chakotay clarified his statement. "There is some sort of dampening field one level below us, no readings of any kind within a bubble of about forty meters."

Vash gestured flippantly. "Oh, that kind of dead zone; that's more Jean-Luc's bailiwick."

"Well, why don't we all go and check it out," Picard suggested. "Maybe you'll get lucky and there will be some bodies."

Vash blew him a kiss. "You always say the sweetest things."

Picard took the lead with a silent, meaningful look at his wife. He drew his phaser and started to gesture for Chakotay to do the same only to see him already checking the setting on his phaser. With the ladies in the rear, they cautiously made their way through the ruins to a stone staircase leading downward into darkness. Vash and Beverly aimed wrist lights in front of the men to light their way. The air became chillier and clammy as they descended into the pitch black; this part of the ruins was still buried underground, so no outside light at all penetrated. At the bottom, they swept the corridor in both directions before Chakotay pointed toward the direction of the dead zone that his tricorder was registering. They'd gone barely six meters when Picard nearly tripped over a pile in the middle of the corridor. There were more than half a dozen containers, new and obviously not part of the ruins.

"The Tamarians?" Vash suggested at Jean-Luc's questioning look.
Just then a container came flying through the air toward Picard's back. Chakotay pushed him out of the way and rolled to cover the nearby doorway with his phaser. The sound of a muffled Ferengi oath followed by agitated whispers explained the containers. Picard and Chakotay rushed through the doorway, splitting up just inside the large room and quickly locating two Ferengi in the process of picking the ruins clean of any salvageable items.

"Sovak," Vash gritted out in disgust. "This is low, even for you."

Picard gestured for her to get back out into the hall and just as he looked back he saw a third Ferengi sneaking up behind the women. He fired his phaser over Vash's shoulder, but the Ferengi ducked back into the corridor. Vash and Beverly rushed toward them and he pointed toward a large stone archway in the center of the room. The dark room was in shambles with huge chunks of stone scattered throughout the room and several of the large pillars that supported the massive ceiling laying on the floor. Using the debris for cover, the four scrambled toward the large archway. Chakotay kept Sovak and the other Ferengi in front of them busy while Picard continued firing at the doorway of the room to keep the third Ferengi from getting a clear shot.

"I can't contact the Cousteau for emergency transport," Beverly yelled over the whine of phaser fire punctuated with disruptor blasts.

Sovak pointed toward a field generator near him. "Dampening field, human, wouldn't want to be detected by scanners; but, that also means no communicators. No one will hear you die."

Picard was trying to shield Vash with his body, trapping her between himself and the archway they were using for cover. The Ferengi in the corridor had managed to slip inside the room and was moving to join Sovak and the other Ferengi, using the debris for cover just as they had. He shifted to get a better angle at the Ferengi when a disruptor blast struck near his hand. Jerking his hand away from the blast, his fingers grazed a crystal embedded in the stone just as a disrupter blast struck the archway. Instantly, a whirling sensation overtook Picard, blinding light obscuring the room and the Ferengi from his vision. The last thing he saw was Sovak coming right at them.

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"So, kiddies, any idea what we're dealing with here?" Colonel Jack O'Neill asked, wandering aimlessly around the ancient chamber. They were exploring some ruins on P9T701 that the UAV had located nine kilometers from the gate. The upper level--ground level--was in a state of decay; time and Mother Nature had taken their toll on what was once a magnificent structure. The lower level had remained relatively sheltered and intact. Most of the chambers were empty but they had located one large room nearly the size of a football field. In the center of the room was a massive stone archway covered with scribbles. The walls of the room were lined with panels that looked like Fred Flintstone's computer without any letters or numbers.
Major Samantha Carter turned toward O'Neill to give her report. "There are energy readings present and originating in this room, sir. These are machines of some kind."

Daniel Jackson didn't even look up from the console that he was studying. "Well, it's not Goa'uld. It's also not Ancient, Asgard, Tollan or any other race we've encountered."

"So that would be a 'no'," Jack summarized. "You don't know what we're dealing with." He paused under the archway.

"I know it's an alphasyllabary system of writing," Daniel said. "The form is similar to Sanskrit, but it'll take me a while to work out some of the content." He glanced at Jack who was eyeing him expectantly. "Okay, no, I don't know what this is yet. I wouldn't touch that archway if I were you, though, since what I have figured out suggests that it might be some kind of transportation device."

Jack quickly took several steps back from the archway. "Carter, you and Daniel keep working here. Teal'c, you're with me, we're going to take a look around the rest of this place."

Teal'c nodded and tightened his grip on his staff weapon, following O'Neill out of the large room.

While Sam circled the room taking energy readings, Daniel returned to translating the writing. "It's not exactly Sanskrit," he muttered out loud to no one in particular. "This may be a root language that provided the basis for Sanskrit, Dravidian and possibly Avestan."

"What kind of culture are we dealing with?" Sam asked.

Daniel stepped back to survey the section of writing that he'd been working on. Absently, he replied, "India, east Asia and, as far as Earth time periods, this appears to pre-date Sanskrit which dates back to the second millennium B.C."

Sam studied the archway. "I don't think this place has been abandoned quite that long."

Before Daniel could respond, the row of writing along the top portion of the archway began flashing. Stepping back, Carter raised her P90, pointing it toward the opening of the arch. "I didn't touch anything."
The entire archway filled with a blinding flash of light but without the plume that accompanied the formation of a wormhole. Sam reached for her radio to call O'Neill when four people came stumbling out of the archway, seemingly out of thin air. "Hold it right there," she ordered, holding her weapon on them.

Picard started to introduce himself and the others, but something slammed into him from behind and sent the four of them sprawling into a heap along with the blond woman. He struggled free just in time to see Sovak and his cronies fleeing through an open doorway. Checking on Vash and the others, he called for Chakotay to follow him and turned to chase the Ferengi.

"Whoa," Daniel pointed his zat at the group. "Just whoa. Sam, you all right?"

The radio crackled to life and Jack's voice came through. "You guys all right there? Three trolls just ran out of here; any idea where they came from?"

Vash looked around at a room that was a whole and clean version of the room they'd discovered Sovak and company looting in the old ruins. "I told you not to touch anything," she said to Picard.

Daniel reached for his radio to answer Jack. "They came from here, that archway just activated and four humans and those other three came out. Sam's got the four here covered."

Carter chimed in on her radio. "I'm not sensing anything, sir. I don't think they're Goa'uld."

Just as Sam released her talk button, O'Neill and Teal'c came sprinting into the room. Picard stepped forward to address the obvious leader of the group. "I'm Captain Jean-Luc Picard of the Federation Starship Enterprise, this is my wife, Vash, Commander Chakotay and my Chief Medical Officer, Doctor Crusher," he said pointing to each of them as he introduced them.

Jack appraised Picard and his group warily, keeping his weapon pointed squarely at Picard's chest. "Teal'c," he asked, gesturing with his head toward the four.

"I concur with Major Carter," Teal'c said. "They are not Goa'uld."

"We're human," Chakotay said. "We're from a planet called Earth."
Jack paused for a few more seconds and then slowly lowered his P90, nodding for the rest of his team to follow suit. "Well, you guys look mostly harmless," he said. "I'm Colonel Jack O'Neill, United States Air Force, Major Samantha Carter, Doctor Daniel Jackson and Teal'c." He looked at the members of Picard's party as he shouldered his weapon. "Did you say you were from Earth?"

Vash chimed in. "We were exploring some ruins on Tama just before we ended up here."

"Where exactly is here?" Crusher asked.

Jack started to say something, his face twisted in a confused expression. He paused and arched an eyebrow at Sam. "Carter?"

"I'm not sure, sir," she said.

"What do you mean by that?" Daniel asked the foursome. "Are your ancestors originally from Earth?"

Now it was Picard's turn to look confused. "Yes, and we are still from Earth; I was born in France."

"Well that's not possible," Jack said. "We're from Earth and we have the only Stargate program on the planet." He glanced over at Sam, "Right, Carter?"

"As far as we know, sir."

Picard gestured to Crusher. "Doctor?"

Beverly flipped open her tricorder and quickly scanned the other four. "Three humans and one . . . Trill, sort of."

"Explain," Picard ordered.

"He's got a symbiont in an abdominal sac, but these aren't normal Trill readings and he doesn't have the typical skin markings."
Teal'c spoke up. "I am, in fact, Jaffa."

Jack waggled his P90 at them. "Hello, remember us? What is that thing?"

"It's a tricorder." Beverly held it up for them to see. "It just scans things."

Sam moved to stand beside her, peering at the display over her shoulder. "Cool, can it detect naquada?"

Beverly shrugged. "If I have parameters to scan for, probably."

"It's a metallic element in Goa'uld symbionts," Sam explained. "If you scan the symbiont in Teal'c, I can show you."

Beverly pulled up the readings from her earlier scan and showed it to Carter who indicated the naquada reading. "That showed up in your scan also," Beverly recalled.

"Long story," Sam said intently studying the readouts. "Very cool," she murmured to herself.

Jack cleared his throat. "Major Carter?"

Sam pulled her attention away from the device. "Oh right, sorry, sir. This appears to be a scanning device; it's not Ancient, Goa'uld, Tollan or Asgard."

While that conversation was going on, Picard was using Vash's tricorder to scan the chamber. He gestured to Chakotay to check the readings.

"Quantum signature is off," Chakotay confirmed.

Picard sighed heavily, "Alternate universe."
Sam looked startled. "You've encountered alternate universes before?"

Jack had a question. "Aren't alternate universes supposed to be us, only different?"

"Not necessarily, sir," Sam began. "As you know, for every choice there is a universe where each option happened."

"Yes," Jack nodded, gesturing triumphantly. "I knew that."

Sam continued. "Well, sir, theoretically, the earlier the universes diverge, the more different they'll be in terms of their development."

"So, not us," Jack summarized.

"No, sir."

Jack pointed toward Picard. "He looks awfully familiar to me somehow. Are you sure?"

Daniel offered an opinion. "Maybe you've run across our universe's version of him somewhere."

Picard handed Vash her tricorder. "Vash, start working on translating these writings. Doctor, you stay here. Commander Chakotay and I will need to find those Ferengi; we'll have to take them back with us. Col--"

"Whoa," Jack interrupted him. "I don't know about your reality, but in mine Colonel outranks Captain."

"Naval Captain, Colonel," Picard clarified. "Besides, have you ever dealt with Ferengi before?"

"You mean those trolls?"
"Trolls bearing disrupters," Vash pointed out. She grimaced at Picard. "Do we really have to take them back with us?"

"Well you're not leaving them here," Jack said. "We have laws about littering here. Well, not here, here; but on Earth we take a dim view of litterbugs. Daniel, you gonna be able to figure this stuff out?"

"I have no idea," Daniel replied.

Vash pursed her mouth in exasperation. "Why don't you all just go play and let the archaeologist work. This looks like an abugida system similar to ancient Sanskrit so I should be able to work up a rough translation. Then you can figure out how to undo whatever it was you did."

Jack looked from Vash to Picard. "That's your archaeologist? Sweet, trade you."

Daniel wryly arched an eyebrow. "No, no offense taken there, Jack."

Chakotay spoke up. "The Ferengi are almost out of tricorder range; we should get moving if we're going to catch them."

Jack gestured to his team. "All right, Teal'c, you're with me; we'll go with the Captain and Commander here to find those fungus guys. Carter, you and Daniel work with Mrs. Picard to figure out how to send all of them back where they belong. Doctor, you just stay here; hopefully we won't need you." Here he paused and looked at Picard. "That all right with you?"

"Fine," Picard nodded.

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Outside, Chakotay indicated the direction that the Ferengi had gone. Receiving a confirming nod from Picard, he took the lead accompanied by Teal'c. The two men moved silently, even their footsteps quiet against the wind whistling through the trees and tall grass. Behind them, their respective commanding officers were alert but not as silent.
"So," Jack drawled. "Navy, huh? How did the Navy end up in space? I mean there's no water out there, just . . . space."

"Shipboard tradition and discipline," Picard replied. "With regard to space ship crews, none of the other branches of Earth military had such strong traditions surrounding living and working in confined areas for extended periods of time."

Jack flicked an imaginary speck from the stock of his P90. "The Air Force is pretty tight, good discipline and we have that whole NASA thing."

Picard was saved from the Air Force-Navy debate by an abrupt signal from Chakotay. "Report," he ordered.

"I'm picking up energy sources directly ahead," Chakotay said. "This ridge we've been climbing must have obscured my tricorder readings. The Ferengi are right in the midst of the energy source and I'm also picking up a concentration of humanoid life signs with that naquadah element."

Jack looked at the tricorder readings, pretending to understand the display. "Our initial surveys said this planet was uninhabited."

"The presence of naquadah would suggest Goa'uld activity," Teal'c pointed out.

Jack quickly scaled the remaining distance to the crest of the ridge and pulled out his binoculars. "Bet those tricycle scanners of yours can't zoom in like these babies can," he muttered softly. "Teal'c, check this out; I don't recognize anyone down there."

Teal'c took the binoculars and scanned the encampment below. "The Jaffa come from the ranks of several different system lords," he began. "I do not recognize the Goa'uld."

"Goa'uld?" Picard echoed querulously.

Jack slid down from the crest and held up a finger in the universal 'just a sec' gesture. He reached for his radio. "Carter, we've got Goa'uld activity here, so heads up."
"Understood, sir," came her rapid response.

Jack looked up at Picard and Chakotay. "I don't suppose those finger guys of yours are going to come peacefully?"

"Doubtful," Picard sighed. "We can wait here until dark, then Commander Chakotay and I will go in to retrieve the Ferengi."

"Have you ever dealt with Goa'uld before?" Jack asked. "Specifically Goa'uld bearing hand devices not to mention a whole army of Jaffa with staff weapons. I've got home field advantage here, Captain."

Picard nodded in acknowledgement. "What would you suggest?"

"We'll wait here until dark," Jack said. "Then Teal'c and Chocolate there can go in and retrieve your friends."

Chakotay raised a bemused eyebrow.

"Agreed." Picard settled onto the ground next to O'Neill.

Chakotay positioned himself near the crest of the ridge beside Teal'c where he could keep an eye on the activity in the camp. "What are these Goa'uld?"


"They are parasites who use human beings as hosts and slaves, pretending to be gods in order to keep them submissive," Teal'c explained. "I, myself, was once First Prime to such a false god."

Jack offered his water canteen to Picard. "Yeah, but Teal'c here has since had the opportunity to see his former god die . . . what, twice now, Teal'c?"
"Indeed," a brief smile flashed across Teal'c's features.

Chakotay accepted the water canteen that Teal'c offered him. "So what about the Jaffa? How are you different from other humanoid species?"

"We are bred to serve the Goa'uld," Teal'c said. He opened his shirt to reveal his pouch and briefly drew his symbiont out to display it. "We cannot serve as hosts to them so they use us to carry their spawn to maturity. Without this symbiont within me, I would quickly die; with this infant Goa'uld, I experience enhanced health, strength and a longer life than other humans."

While Teal'c and Chakotay continued talking about the history and culture of the Goa'uld and their Jaffa, Jack and Picard discussed the retrieval plan and the Ferengi.

"They won't come willingly if they think there's any profit in staying," Picard was saying. "They live by a business code that puts profit above all else."

"Well, the snake head and his pet Jaffa won't give them up willingly either," Jack said. "They don't really work or play well with others. I wish I knew what they're doing here; for that matter, what could they be talking about with those trolls? They look like they're negotiating or something. How are they even understanding each other? Do those trolls speak English?"

"It wouldn't matter," Picard explained. "Sovak and his fellow Ferengi would have universal translators just as Commander Chakotay and I do in these communicators. It can automatically translate any known language into Federation Standard."

"Sweet," Jack said. "Babel fish, I'll take a couple dozen."

Picard gestured toward the encampment. "I'm sure Sovak would agree to that in spite of the fact that he hasn't got them."

Chakotay overheard the last part of their exchange. "So what could Sovak be offering someone with delusions of godhood?"

Realization hit in an instant and the two commanding officers simultaneously tried to contact their respective people. Picard tapped his communicator several times without response from either Vash or Beverly. Chakotay also tried to contact Beverly without success.
"Daniel, Sam, come in," Jack called several times over his radio getting only silence in response. Getting to his feet, he looked at Picard. "You and me back to check on our people and Teal'c and your guy stay here to keep an eye on our friends down there?"

"O'Neill!" Teal'c hissed, holding the binoculars out. "In the camp."

Scrambling up, Picard and Chakotay strained to see the activity below while Jack viewed the scene through the binoculars. Jack swore softly and passed the binoculars to Picard. "We got us a whole new ball game," he whispered disgustedly.

When Picard saw the activity in the encampment, his fingers tightened around the binoculars. Far below, Vash and Beverly, along with the two from O'Neill's team, were being carried into camp by a contingent of Jaffa. As far as he could tell, they were all unconscious. "Merde."

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Beverly had no idea how long she laid alongside Vash and the other two. She was concentrating on not breathing since every breath--every heartbeat for that matter--sent pain radiating through her body. When Vash had started talking shop with Dr. Jackson and Major Carter, she had wandered off to explore the rest of the building. Strange, loud voices had gotten her attention and she'd started back toward the chamber where she'd left the others. Just as she entered the room, she saw several men carrying the unconscious bodies of Vash, Carter and Jackson but before she could react, one of them pointed a long weapon at her and fired it. The last thing she remembered was her chest exploding and then waking up when they dumped her body in the tent along with the other three. Her left shoulder was a mangled mess, there was extensive damage but she couldn't tell how bad it really was, the bright side was that there didn't seem to be a lot of blood loss. Stirring beside her told her that Vash was coming around. She cried out in pain when Vash's hand struck her wound.

"Bev? Is that you?" Vash asked anxiously. "I can't see anything."

"Shock grenade," Sam groaned, sitting up. "That device the Jaffa tossed into the room overwhelmed our senses, temporarily rendering us unconscious."

"And blind," Vash pointed out.

Daniel carefully felt around, trying to locate how close he was to the others. "That'll pass," he said.
"Your eyesight will come back in a little while. What's wrong with your friend? She sounded like she was in pain a minute ago."

"She is in a lot of pain," Beverly gasped. "Those Jaffa may have only stunned you but they shot me."

Sam inched toward the sound of her voice. "Did you see what they used? Can you describe it?"

"Long stick," Beverly said, "shot a burst of energy from the end."

"Staff weapon," Daniel surmised. "How bad is the injury?"

Beverly reached for Sam's hand to let her know where she was in order to avoid more painful, inadvertent contact with her shoulder. "Bad, my arm is still attached, but it's been blown open, major nerve and muscle damage in addition to massive soft tissue damage. I don't think I lost too much blood, at least not as much as I would expect for such a wound. The energy blast must have cauterized it."

"Can you regenerate it?" Vash asked. "Where's your medkit?"

"Gone," Beverly said. "The Jaffa must have taken it."

Vash fumbled for her communicator to call Jean-Luc. "Our communicators are gone, too."

"Because obviously it wouldn't have occurred to me to try calling my husband to come get me while I was laying here in pain otherwise," Beverly gritted out between clenched teeth.

"Sorry, Bev," Vash apologized. "I'm just getting up to speed here. On the upside, I think my vision is making a comeback so we can start thinking about taking a hike out of here. Talk about never a working transporter around when you need one."

Sam rubbed her eyes. "Transporters?"
Vash's explanation of their transporter technology was cut short by the arrival of several Jaffa. When they reached to drag them to their feet, she quickly turned to help Beverly gingerly to her feet before the hulking brutes did more damage to her long-time friend. She just had to protect and take care of Beverly until Jean-Luc and Chakotay discovered them missing and came to rescue them. They were all escorted to a very large, ornate tent straight out of ancient Egypt. Daniel had explained earlier about the culture of the Goa'uld so it came as no surprise that the man in the tent was dressed as an Egyptian pharaoh.

"What are you doing here?" the Goa'uld demanded, his eyes glowing.

"Well that's a very, very long story--epic saga really," Vash countered.

Daniel interrupted quickly. "Who, exactly, are you? I don't think we've met before. I'm--"

"I know who you are, Daniel Jackson and Samantha Carter of the Tau'ri," the Goa'uld said.

"And you are?" Sam prompted.

"Klorel, son of Apophis."

Daniel did a double-take before shooting an incredulous glance over at Sam. They hadn't even thought of Klorel, much less heard anything of him, since the outcome of triad on Tollana.

Klorel approached them, giving only a passing glance to Beverly but studying Vash intently. He circled her, measuring her up before stopping in front of Sam. "How did you know about the meeting here?"

"What meeting?" Carter looked over at Daniel who shrugged back questioningly.

"Where are O'Neill and the shol'vah?" Klorel asked.

"Not here," Daniel offered.
Klorel returned his attention to Vash. "Who are you?"

"Vash, daughter of my father," she answered in a melodramatic tone. The guy definitely had no sense of humor. "That's Beverly and she's hurt. If you could--"

"Take them," Klorel ordered his guard. "I will deal with them later."

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"I wonder if the Tok'ra know what Klorel's new host looks like," Sam mused aloud. She chanced a peek back out of the tent that they had just been returned to and received a warning glare from one of the two Jaffa standing guard.

Daniel helped Beverly down to lie on the ground, shrugging his jacket off to put under her head as a pillow. "I wonder what that meeting is that he referred to."

"Well," Vash commented dryly, "as gods go, he wasn't all that impressive. I've certainly seen better even if the archaeologist in me would love a chance to talk to his daddy. I'm guessing, though, that the Apophis he's referring to is another narcissistic parasite and not the figure in Egyptian mythology who was the antithesis of Ra."

"Well, Ra was another one of those parasites," Daniel said. "We blew Ra up years ago and we've killed Apophis a few times."

The tent flap being thrown open halted the conversation and Vash watched Sovak saunter into the tent. With her head held high and her shoulder's squared, she spoke in her most austere voice. "What an unpleasant surprise. What do you want, Sovak?"

"I'm sure you wish now that you had accepted my generous offer for the Tox Uthat. I would have given you your weight in gold, showered you with credits." Sovak's eyes trailed over Vash lecherously. "Your decision to double-cross me cost both of us a great deal of profit; by selling you to Klorel, I've finally managed to regain the profit I lost when the Tox Uthat was stolen from me."

"The Tox Uthat never belonged to you, you fang-toothed troll," Vash spat out.
"Details, it would have if not for your treachery," Sovak declared arrogantly. "You will pay for your past treachery with your life and your mate will regret the day he interfered with my business when he watches Klorel take you for himself."

As Sovak strode toward the entrance, Vash couldn't resist one last shot. "One of these days, Sovak, I'm going to pierce your ears." A slight hitch in the Ferengi's step was the only outward reaction to her threat. Once he was gone, she knelt down and gingerly exposed Beverly's shoulder to examine the wound. "This is getting worse and she's running a fever."

"Medkit," Beverly whispered.

Vash brushed Beverly's hair back, soothing her. "I know, I didn't see it in Klorel's tent--plenty of cool, Egyptian-looking stuff, but none of the things that they took from us."

"They're probably in the supply tent we passed on our way here," Sam guessed.

Vash stood up and looked around. "Jean-Luc will have to wait for dark to stage a rescue and that's still hours away--assuming it gets dark on this planet, but Beverly is getting worse by the minute."

Sam shrugged her jacket off and handed it to Daniel for him to cover Crusher for warmth. "So, the supply tent would be the best place to start looking."

"Agreed," Vash concurred. She used the heel of her boot to loosen the ground near the back wall of the tent. "You two stay here and take care of Bev, I'll be back as soon as I can."

Sam stopped her. "I'm more familiar with Jaffa and Goa'uld; I should go."

"No offense, Major Carter," Vash began. "I'm sure the military taught you to be stealthy, but this situation calls for sneaky and that is practically my middle name. This is definitely a 'me' thing."

Before Sam could argue the point, Vash slipped under the bottom of the tent with barely a ripple in the fabric of the tent wall. Sam shook her head in exasperation and gestured for Daniel to keep watch. "You'll be able to understand what's going on out there," she whispered. She went over to sit with Beverly to wait for Vash's return.

Outside, Vash got her bearings and carefully made her way toward the supply tent. It seemed to take
forever to loosen one of the tent stakes, but she forced herself to go slow, working it loose millimeter by millimeter. Once the line was slack, she slipped under the wall of the tent without causing any noticeable movement in the rest of the tent fabric. While it was tempting to grab weapons, the staff weapons were too bulky to easily sneak out with and she couldn't carry enough to allow them to fight their way out of the camp. She needed Beverly's medkit and hopefully she could get it back without anyone the wiser. She breathed a sigh of relief when she saw the medkit, her tricorder and the recorder sitting among the items taken from Daniel and Sam. Their communicators were nowhere to be seen, so coordinating any jailbreak with Jean-Luc's pending rescue was out of the question. She forced herself to grab only the medkit, reasoning that they would be less likely to notice anything missing if only one item was gone. Slipping back out the same place that she'd entered, she re-traced her steps, trying to get back to Beverly before the guards were onto her. She almost made it. They caught her at the back of the tent where the four of them were being held and shouted at her. Casually, she shifted the medkit behind her back and dropped it to the ground. Forcing the guards to grab her arms, she managed to kick the medkit under the edge of the tent as they dragged her away, swearing and struggling against them to conceal her action.

Inside the tent, Sam retrieved the small container that Vash had kicked in. She returned to Beverly's side, hiding the kit under the semi-conscious woman until Daniel signaled that everything was clear.

"They're taking her to Klorel," Daniel said. "We have to do something."

"There's nothing we can do for her right now," Sam replied. Fumbling with the small box, she finally figured out how to open it. "Let's just make it worth the sacrifice." She tried to rouse Beverly. "Dr. Crusher, what do I do with this thing?"

Bev tried to reach for the medkit, but her hand fell short, too weak to even reach that far. She rasped instructions to Sam, pausing frequently to breathe. With Sam holding the hypospray down near her fingers, she programmed in the proper dose of antibiotic. She didn't want to risk anesthetic under the circumstances; it would be better to remain conscious as much as possible until Chakotay came for her. Once Sam had administered the hypo, she explained how to use the dermal regenerator on the worst areas of her shoulder wound. Almost immediately, the overwhelming pain began to recede as fried nerve endings were replaced with healthy tissue. The trade-off with the dermal regenerator was that it caused extra strain on her weakened system as tissue growth was stimulated. In her current condition, she would have to limit treatments to short sessions focusing exclusively on the most severely injured areas. Her mind wandered to what was happening to Vash. "Chakotay, where are you?" she whispered plaintively; "please hurry."

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"Well gentlemen..." Jack knelt down beside a patch of soft dirt that had been cleared of leaves and brush. Swiftly, he sketched out the camp. Picard knelt opposite O'Neill on the other side of the cleared ground. "Teal'c, what did you find out?"
Teal'c and Chakotay had just returned from surveying the Goa'uld encampment. "The Goa'uld camp is heavily defended, O'Neill," the Jaffa replied. "There are at least 20 Jaffa in the camp or on the perimeter. I do not know how many patrols are in the forest."

"I took a tricorder reading when we made our closest approach to the camp", Chakotay said. "There are four large tents in the center of the camp. I scanned four human life signs, but one of them is weak and getting weaker. I have no idea who it is. I also located the three Ferengi in the camp as well."

"Commander Chakotay," Picard asked. "Where you able to pinpoint the exact location of the four human life signs?"

"Yes, sir," Chakotay knelt down and pointed to one of the figures on O'Neill's sketch of the camp. "This tent here contains our people. We do have a possible problem, though."

"What?" Picard asked

"Just before we broke off the recon and headed back, several Jaffa were dragging Vash across the compound. She was putting up a pretty big racket." Chakotay said. What gnawed at him was that Vash obviously wasn't the injured one, which meant it could be Beverly.

Picard's jaw tightened visibly as he nodded a curt acknowledgement to Chakotay. Looking across the cleared ground, he took on an air of command. "Colonel, judging from what Commander Chakotay and Teal'c have determined, I believe that our best chance of success would be to go in from the west while Chakotay and Teal'c provide cover from the perimeter. We'll head for the tent where the three lifesigns are concentrated. Once we provide them with weapons, the two uninjured individuals can get the injured person out while we go after Vash."

Jack rocked back on his heels and rested his hands on his P90. "Yeah, well, that's all well and good, Captain, but what's your Plan B?"

Picard was slightly taken aback. "Plan B? Why would I need a Plan B?" he asked somewhat incredulously.

"Because Plan A never works," Jack answered
"My Plan A always works," Picard retorted.

"Well, when you get a chance, write a few of those down for me," Jack requested sardonically. "In the meantime, we need to talk about this Plan A, which, by the way, won't work. We can't leave two of the four people in our team on the sidelines. Once we're in that camp, we'll need all the firepower we have. We should also move in teams. The two of you don't know anything about Jaffa or Goa'uld tactics." He looked at Teal'c. "Those Jaffa separating out Mrs. Picard has me a little worried. Could they be Goa'uldng her?"

Teal'c answered matter-of-factly. "It is possible."

Jack turned to Picard. "Okay. It's possible that your wife has been taken over by a Goa'uld. If that's the case, you have to accept that she's not your wife anymore. You can't get the snake out of her head once it's in. You can't hesitate or hold back; she'll have to be neutralized. If you don't, she'll kill you -- or worse."

"I understand," Picard said grimly. "We've dealt with a similar situation of crew members being assimilated into an invading force and used against us. I had to give the same order." He paused for a moment. Talk about the road to hell being paved with good intentions, this trip was supposed to be a special treat for his wife and now there was a chance he would be forced to shoot her. The knot in his stomach turned to steel. "How will we know?"

"Well, if her eyes glow, hit the ground and shoot," Jack suggested.

Teal'c responded, "On the back of the neck, a Goa'uld symbiot will leave a scar where it enters the body. If you see that scar, the person is a Goa'uld host."

"But the downside to that is that you probably won't be able to get that close to them until they're already dead," Jack added.

"So, what do you suggest, Colonel?" Picard asked, trying to stay focused on what needed to be done.

"Well, from what Teal'c and Commander Chakotay said, it looks like we have two targets. The three in the west tent and your wife in the center," he said.
"Three targets, we can't forget the Ferengi," Chakotay spoke up.

"Right, we'll grab them after we've secured our people," Jack acknowledged. "We're going to have to hit them simultaneously. We start from opposite sides of the camp. Do you guys have watches in your universe?"

"Watches?" Chakotay asked.

"Wrist chronometers," Picard explained. "Unfortunately, Colonel, our communicators synchronize time from the ship's computer, so we do not have an accurate way of measuring time here."

"Okay," Jack sighed, mentally casting around for the requisite Plan B. "Captain, do you guys have any experience in fire and tactical maneuver?"

"That is part of our Starfleet training, yes," Picard answered.

"Great," Jack said. "We'll wait until it's dark. Teal'c and Commander Chakotay will go to the west edge of the camp." He looked at the two of them as he diagrammed his plan in the dirt. "Take my zat with you. Your reinforcements are inside that tent; Teal'c, once you've secured the tent, leave the Commander there to get those three out and go after the little rodent people." O'Neil glanced at his watch. "I have 1842hrs........mark."

"I concur," Teal'c answered, looking at his watch.

"We'll get into position. At exactly 2030hrs we'll head into the camp. Stay low and try not to be seen. It will be a hell of a lot easier if we only have to fight our way out. There are guard posts on the north and northwest sides of the camp. If we quietly take those out going in, we'll have a clear run out. Don't use anything that can be seen or heard from inside the camp." He turned toward Picard. "Captain, you and I will set up on the north edge of the camp and go for the center tent. We'll find out what's happened to Mrs. Picard and I'll have a word with whoever the snakehead is that's running this operation."

"What if this Goa'uld doesn't want to talk to you?" Picard asked.
"Oh, they *all* want to talk to me," Jack answered ruefully.

Vash continued her protestations all the way through camp, stopping only when they threw her to the ground in Klorel's tent. The guards said something that sounded like ancient Egyptian—not that she knew what that truly sounded like. As an archaeologist, she was more accustomed to reading the written form so it took several minutes to discern just bits and pieces of the exchange between the Jaffa and Klorel. At a gesture from Klorel, the guards back out of the tent, bowing low. Alone with the wanna-be god, Vash opted to stand, figuring that it would give her more options. The Jaffa had told him that they'd caught her—or created her, her Egyptian was definitely rusty but 'caught' fit the context better; however, she wasn't sure if they realized that she was going back in and not coming out. Having the universal translator built into the communicator might not be the most ideal location for it. Right now she was wishing for a universal translator in her head or maybe an earplug that automatically translated things on their way to her brain.

"That was very foolish of you," Klorel said in English, approaching her. "You cannot escape from your god."

Vash shrugged nonchalantly. "Can't blame a girl for trying."

"Sassy," Klorel commented approvingly. "You will make an exquisite host."

"Women are hostesses, not hosts," she corrected him. "And I'm not really in the mood for entertaining at the moment."

Klorel caressed her face. "You are beautiful and you will be even more beautiful when you are blended and bowing in service to me."

"Don't blend me because I'm beautiful," Vash said flipping her hair and managing to brush his hand away from her face at the same time. The omnipotent one whom she was accustomed to dealing with loved nothing more than to hear the sound of his own voice. These Goa'uld were asses of a different color; they didn't waste much breath on inanity.

Klorel grabbed a handful of her hair, jerking her toward him. "Enough of your insolence," he hissed in her ear. "You will beg to worship me when I am finished with you."
In the darkness, Jack and Picard lay in the treeline at the edge of the camp waiting for the time to move in. The tedium of the wait before jumping off was always the worst part for O'Neill. The time seemed to go slower and slower as the darkness settled over the camp.

"So," Jack whispered, trying to pass the time. "What are you guys packing?"

"Excuse me?" Picard whispered back, his thoughts had wandered to Vash and what might be happening to her in the camp.

"Packing....what are you armed with?"

"Oh," Picard realized. "Just personal phasers. This trip to the ruins in our universe was a pleasure trip, we weren't expecting a fight."

"Funny," Jack mused. "That happens to me all the time." He paused for a few moments. "Phasers, huh?"

"Um, yes," Picard said, not wanting to divulge too much in a parallel universe. "I believe the original term comes from 'phased laser'."


On the west edge of the camp, Chakotay and Teal'c also lay waiting in the dark. Chakotay was trying not to think about the possibility of Beverly being hurt. The silence of his partner was not helping his mood. "So," Chakotay asked, trying to start some small talk, "you actually served with these Goa'uld?"

"Jaffa do not serve with them. Jaffa serve them." Teal'c answered.

"Anything you can tell me that could help when we go in?" Chakotay asked.
"Do not hesitate," Teal'c answered, staring into the camp. "Show the enemy no mercy for you shall receive none. They are bred to serve and to worship. Do not allow yourself to be captured. If you are, and you are fortunate, they will only kill you."

"I see," Chakotay sighed. This conversation was not going at all how he had hoped. He settled back and watched Teal'c, still as a sculpture, watch the camp.

Jack and Picard had been watching for some time. Occasionally, one of them would make a comment if there were some movement in the camp, but mostly the watch was passed in silence. Finally, O'Neill looked at his watch. "2029, we go in one minute," he informed Picard.

"Understood," Picard acknowledged. He shifted his position to be ready to make the run into the camp.

"2030, let's go."

Two dark forms silently crept out of the treeline and toward the camp. At the same time two other dark forms approached the camp like shadows from the west. As Jack and Picard approached the Jaffa outpost, O'Neill quietly drew his combat knife. Picard noticed its serrated top edge glinting in the darkness and mused how it looked almost Klingon. O'Neill crept behind the Jaffa warrior and drove the knife into the small of his back, piercing the symbiont within. The dying Jaffa let out a quiet groan and collapsed onto the ground. Jack and Picard occupied the guard's position, surveying the camp from their new vantage point.

"We can swing out to that tree on the left, then back toward the right to this outer tent, then in to the center," Jack said, motioning from the large tree standing by itself in front of them on the left, then toward the tents.

"That should prevent that other guard post from seeing us," Picard supplied, pointing to a Jaffa standing guard father to the left of the large tree.

"Right," Jack nodded. "Ready?"

"After you, Colonel."

As Picard and O'Neill were making their way toward the camp, Chakotay and Teal'c began slowly
moving in the direction of the Jaffa guard in front and to the left of them. As they approached the Jaffa, Teal'c signaled for Chakotay to begin the plan they had discussed while watching the camp. Chakotay moved around toward the right of the Jaffa. When he was almost directly between the Jaffa and the camp, he deliberately made a sound loud enough to be heard by the Jaffa. When the guard turned around to investigate the sound, Teal'c grabbed him from behind. He put on hand over the Jaffa's mouth while wrapping his other arm about the guard's neck. Chakotay ran up and grabbed the guard's staff weapon before he could fire it. Teal'c's muscular arm constricted like a snake around the helpless Jaffa's neck. After a few moments and several gurgling sounds, Teal'c lowered the lifeless body of the Jaffa to the ground. He took the staff weapon from Chakotay and attached his Zat to his belt.

Chakotay looked down at the Jaffa for a moment. "I hope he wasn't an old friend of yours. I'm sorry you had to do that, Teal'c."

"Then one of us is, Commander," Teal'c answered without emotion. "Shall we proceed?"

Further in the camp, Picard and O'Neill scouted their next move. They moved from the tree to a tent near the center of the camp. "Vash is in the next tent according to Chakotay," Picard whispered.

Jack gave a quick nod of assent. He pointed silently to a passing Jaffa and gestured for Picard to wait until he'd passed before moving around the tent and toward the center one. Once the guard had disappeared from view, the two of them crept around the end of the tent and across a small open area until they came to the rear of the center tent. Inside they could hear muffled voices, but they couldn't quite make out what was being said. Both men lay down on the ground and very slowly lifted up part of the tent fabric, trying to get a glimpse of what was going on inside. They couldn't see anything because of plush draperies hanging against the walls of the tent.

Jack gestured for them to slide under the tent and take up positions concealed by the drapes. He eased himself under the tent fabric followed by Picard, both men hidden behind the heavy tapestries. Remaining still for a full minute to listen for signs that they'd been heard, they slowly peered around the edges of the fabric and were greeted by the sight of an Egyptian harem girl. "Uh oh......" Jack said softly.

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Sam activated the regenerator to begin another round of treatment on Beverly's shoulder. "Your fever seems to be down and there's some color back in your cheeks."

Beverly just nodded wearily. The antibiotics were combating the infection and the regenerator was
stabilizing her condition, but she was still very weak.

"Someone's coming," Daniel whispered from near the entrance flap.

Sam hurriedly turned the regenerator off and gave the medkit to Beverly to conceal under the jacket covering her. Sam quickly joined Daniel over near the entrance, taking up a position on the other side of the entrance. "This could be our chance to help Vash," she whispered.

Someone was moving quietly outside the tent. Slowly the tent flap began to move. As a hand began pushing the tent flap out of the way, Daniel grabbed it and pulled, trying to bring the intruder inside to disarm him. His tactic was initially successful, the intruder came inside very quickly. Unfortunately for Daniel, the much larger intruder stopped short and yanked suddenly, pulling Daniel off balance. In a whirl, Daniel felt himself being flipped and landing on his back, staring straight up into the face of Teal'c.

"Daniel Jackson. It's good to see that you are well," Teal'c said matter of factly as Daniel tried to make sense of what just happened.

"Oh . . . hi, Teal'c," he said as he began to sit up, rubbing his back. "Glad you could make it."

Chakotay slipped into the tent behind Teal'c and closed the flaps. He briefly checked to see that no one else in the area heard anything and that the feet of the unconscious guards were not moving from where they'd dragged the bodies to the side of the tent. Turning around, the first thing he saw was Beverly laying on the ground. He rushed over, alarmed at the paleness in her features. "Sweetheart, where's your medkit?"

Beverly tried to sit up, but couldn't manage the strength. She slid the jacket off to reveal the medkit underneath. "I'm much better than I was, Major Carter has been using the dermal regenerator on the wound. Vash is--"

"Captain Picard and Colonel O'Neill are going after her," Chakotay said. Reassured that she wasn't dying, he slipped his arms under her and stood, hoisting her to a comfortable resting position in his arms. Shooting a grateful glance at Sam for her care of his wife, he nodded to Teal'c. "You can go ahead and get the Ferengi, we'll be fine from here. Major, take my phaser and use it to slice through the tent, we can go out the back way and head for the treeline."

Sam shifted the zat that Teal'c had given her to her other hand and found the weapon attached to his
waist. She nodded approvingly. "We'll use the tent for cover, that way; good thinking."

"I will meet you at the rendezvous point," Teal'c said, slipping out the front of the tent.

Sam quickly sliced through the fabric and returned the phaser to Chakotay. "Daniel, you go with the Commander and Beverly; I'm going to the supply tent for the rest of our things and theirs. As many guns and radios as the Goa'uld have gotten from us over the years, we can't let them have the technology from another universe."

Picard took in Vash's attire with a mixture of despair and disbelief. She was wearing a sleeveless, gold gown that fit perfectly with the garish, ancient Egyptian decor of the Goa'uld tent. Gleaming, metallic material clung tightly to her body down to her waist where a gauzy silk wrap skirt flowed around her long, shapely legs all the way to the gold sandals on her feet. He stepped out from behind the drape and, with his phaser set on high stun, pointed at the man dressed as a pharaoh—presumably Goa'uld.

"Klorel, look out!" Vash screamed.

Picard fired, but a shield went up around the Goa'uld and the energy bounced harmlessly off. Almost instantly he was trying to fend off an hysterical Vash who was screeching at him and fighting to take the phaser from his hand. He saw the Goa'uld raise his hand to reveal a crystal in the center of his palm when a knife flew through the air from behind him, pierced the crystal and embedded in Klorel's hand.

"Forgot to mention the personal shield thingy that these guys have," Jack explained, moving up beside Picard. "Sorry 'bout that."

"O'Neill," Klorel snarled.

Jack waggled his fingers at Klorel, his P90 never wavering from its target. "See, Captain, I told you; I'm famous in Goa'uldville. Klorel? Is that what she called you? Buddy, long time no see."

Shouts from outside the tent told them that the Jaffa had been alerted to their presence. "We have got to go," Jack said. He noticed two communicators on the table near him that were identical to the ones
that Picard and Chakotay wore so he snagged them and slipped them in his pocket.

Vash was presenting an obstacle to their exit, kicking and screaming at Picard, pleading for him to leave her with her god. Hesitating a bare moment, he checked to make sure that his phaser was set to stun. "Sorry, ma petite." As she slumped to the ground from the phaser blast, he slung her over his shoulder and got ready to follow O'Neill out of the tent.

Jack laid a blanket of fire across the compound, temporarily breaking up the Jaffa advancing on their position. He gestured for Picard to move out and tossed a couple of grenades into the Jaffa ranks before he turned to race after Picard.

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Just beyond the treeline, Chakotay laid Beverly down and opened the medkit to find the medical tricorder. He ran it over her while Daniel stood watch.

"There's nothing you can do here," Beverly said. "Although a hypospray of anesthetic would be nice."

Daniel heard something and hissed a warning, pointing his zat in the directions of the sounds. He felt Chakotay move up beside him and was a bit startled that he hadn't even heard the big man move. The two men held their weapons ready, searching the darkness. Simultaneously, they stiffened and relaxed when Picard and O'Neill appeared.

Jack nodded to Daniel and noticed that Sam wasn't there. Rustling from just behind him startled him and he spun quickly, raising his weapon before he finished turning. He lowered the P90 when he saw Carter dropping Daniel's gear on the ground, her own already secure. "Carter."

"Sir," she acknowledged his greeting. "Do we head for the gate?"

"Negative," Jack answered. "We've got to get these people back through that portal thingy."

Vash was regaining consciousness, squirming and pushing at his back to free herself. Picard tried to set her down, but she began struggling in earnest, causing him to lose his grip and she hit the ground hard. Before he could ask if she was all right, she scrambled to her feet and tried to run back toward the camp. He managed to grab one of her wrists and held her firmly, trying not to break her delicate
wrist without allowing her to pull free.

"He needs me!" Vash screamed, pounding on his chest with her free hand. "I must return to my god, Klorel."

Securing both her wrists, Picard shook her. "Vash, what is wrong with you? What did they do to you?" He looked from Sam to Daniel and finally over at Beverly, tacitly demanding an answer.

"Well," Jack spoke up. "Her eyes aren't glowing and she doesn't sound like she needs an exorcist, so I don't think they've turned her into a host. They've probably dosed her with Nestle."

"Nish'ta," Daniel corrected.

Sam offered an explanation. "It's a chemical that infects the mind and makes a person extremely suggestible."

Beverly handed her medical tricorder to Sam and weakly gestured for her to scan Vash. Studying the results of the scan, Beverly confirmed their theory. "There is a foreign chemical in her body. It's not naquadah, but we'd need to get her back to Sickbay so I could run more tests. I can sedate her--"

"We can cure her here," Daniel said.

Sam elaborated. "An electrical charge will dissipate the nish'ta in her system."

Picard eyed Carter warily. "What kind of electrical charge?"

Jack waved a zat. "A shot from one of these will do it, but it'll hurt."

Picard looked at Crusher. "Doctor?"

Beverly in turn addressed Sam, "Are you sure it won't kill her?"
Sam nodded. "One shot only stuns and we've used it to cure a nish'ta infection before in Teal'c's son. It will hurt her, but it'll cure her."

Picard's decision was delayed by the arrival of Teal'c, carrying one unconscious Ferengi and the other two in tow. He unceremoniously dumped the unconscious Sovak on the ground and, in response to Jack's raised eyebrow simply said, "he did not come willingly."

Seeing the torn expression on his captain's face as Picard looked back to Vash, Chakotay spoke up. "I'll do it, sir."

Still holding a fighting, screaming Vash, Picard sighed, "No, I will."

Jack handed Picard his zat, exchanging it for a grip on Vash's wrists. He waited as Picard activated the zat and steadied his aim. Receiving a curt nod from the captain, he released Vash and quickly stepped clear.

As soon as he had a clean shot, Picard triggered the device. Blue bolts of light engulfed Vash and she dropped to the ground in convulsions. His heart in his throat, he tossed the zat back to O'Neill and sunk to the ground, cradling her. Kissing the top of her head, he murmured softly into her silky, brunette hair, "je suis si desole, petite amie. Je suis si desole."

Excruciating pain was the first thing to seep into Vash's awareness. She moaned, feeling like every nerve ending in her body was on fire. With her body snug against the solid anchor of his chest, she took comfort from Jean-Luc's protective embrace. She tightly clutched at his jacket with one hand while she brought the other hand up to her hold her forehead. She moistened her lips and managed to croak, "ouch."

"Vash?"

Jean-Luc's anxious concern was evident in his eyes and his voice. Vash closed her eyes and took a deep breath to steady herself. "I'm fine, a little confused since this is not the last place I remember being, but otherwise fine. What about Beverly? She was badly injured."

"She's right here," Chakotay assured Vash. "I've got her and she's going to be all right."

"This isn't the most secure location, chere. We really need to be heading back to the portal site,"
Picard noted while gingerly helping her to her feet.

"I can walk."

"That's my girl," Picard nodded with approval. He was suddenly struck by two things: first, he noticed gooseflesh was beginning to cover the generous amounts of flesh revealed by Vash's risque costume; second, he noticed that the aforementioned generous amounts of flesh and risque costume had captured the attention of all of the men, including the Ferengi. Sovak, who was slowly getting to his feet, was openly ogling her. Cursing under his breath, he ripped off his uniform jacket, helped her slip it on and quickly fastened it up. With his jacket hitting her at mid-thigh, leaving her long legs exposed, she still appeared very seductive. 'At least it covers the rest of her.' Picard thought to himself.

As much as she tried, Vash could not quite hide a small smile that tugged at her lips. "Thank you for rescuing me, again," she purred. "Although I suppose it's too much to hope that swords were involved in this rescue?"

"You're welcome, again," Picard teased. "And no, sorry, chere, no Sir Guy in this report."

Vash gave a sideways shrug and, stepping back from Jean-Luc, she turned to grace SG1's commanding officer with her most charming smile. "And, thank you, Colonel O'Neill."

"Ma'am," Jack replied with a chivalrous nod, his hands casually resting on the stock of his P90.

"Well, gentlemen, it's been real but I'd kinda like to go home now," Vash commented before heading off in the direction of the portal site.

Watching her walk off, Daniel muttered, "you'd trade me for her in a heart beat wouldn't you, Jack?"

"Yep," Jack answered hearing Picard softly chuckle. He started off in the direction that Vash had taken. "So, Klorel? It was nice to see an old friend again . . . new face, though."

Daniel fell into step beside Jack. "I would still like to know what Klorel was doing here."
Sam waited for Chakotay to pick Beverly up and move out so that she could bring up the rear to watch for any pursuit.

From her position just behind Teal'c, who had swiftly taken up a point position, Vash heard Daniel's comment. "He was meeting with Kali and Bastet, they contacted him while I was with him."

"That's not a smart move on his part," Daniel noted.

Jack had a thought about their current plan. "Hey, Daniel, you guys were able to figure that stuff out, right? I mean, we can send them home once we get there."

Vash spun around, walking backward as she replied excitedly, "Mu!"

"Did you just 'moo' at me?" Jack asked.

Daniel explained. "No, not moo like a cow, Mu as in Lemuria, Pacifica or Rutas as the ancient Hindus referred to it.

Behind them, Beverly, snug against Chakotay's chest, murmured: "Thank you, Mr. Data."

"It was a continent in the Pacific Ocean supposedly stretching from the Hawaiian Islands to Fiji," Daniel continued, not hearing Beverly's comment. "The entire Pacific plate was once a massive land mass home to a very advanced civilization that pre-dates Atlantis. U.S. Naval Intelligence conducted a top secret research project attempting to locate the submerged ruins in the early 1970's. According to a James Churchward, Mu had a population of sixty three million people who lived over 200,000 years ago. They had a sophisticated system of government, disease-free and oddly, lived in homes with transparent roofs. They lived to be centuries old and could travel without the need for land vehicles."

Vash picked up the thread. "Virtually all ancient Earth religions have a basis in the beliefs attributed to Mu. The early Egyptian belief system developed by Osiris was remarkably similar to the teachings of Jesus from Christianity--the Last Words of Jesus inscribed on the cross were in the language of Mu--not a language common to the Palestine of the time!"

Daniel broke in. "Now, Jack, here's the fascinating part--"
"Oh, good because I was afraid that the rest of this was the interesting stuff." Jack commented wryly.

Ignoring him, Daniel went on. "W. Scott-Elliot wrote that the sexual exploits of the Lemurians so revolted the spiritual beings, the Lhas, that they refused to follow the cosmic plan of becoming the first to incarnate into the bodies of the Lemurians. Volcanic eruptions and massive earthquakes caused the entire land mass to sink--"

Vash interrupted him. "Wait a minute, that's not right. The Lemurians were revolted by the evil Lhas and fought a great battle against them. They succeeded in driving the evil spirits from the land, but at a great price. Their homeland, the continent of Mu, broke apart and sank into the ocean as a result of the damage from the war. Some of the survivors made it to an island in the Atlantic Ocean, founding the civilization of Atlantis while others spread across the continents; some established a great library and school in what would be known as Tibet and some ended up in India where they became the Brahman caste in that society."

Chakotay offered a theory on the discrepancy. "History is written by the victors."

Sam provided a relevant link for Jack. "Either way, they may have been the ancestors of Aris Boch's people, sir."

Daniel stumbled slightly in his excitement. "That's it! That's where our universes diverged. In our universe, the Lemurians lost their battle with the Goa'uld, and their civilization was destroyed which allowed the Goa'uld to enslave Earth and dominate the galaxy, taking humans through the Stargate to populate other worlds."

Vash followed up. "In our universe, the Lemurians won."

"And the Goa'uld were destroyed," Sam said.

Jack nodded. "Sweet."

Something nagged at Picard about their theory. "But what about the similarity between the Trill of our universe and the Goa'uld symbionts?"
"Well, you did say that those Trill of yours aren't power-hungry parasites," Jack said.

Daniel had a thought. "Naquadah! We found the fossilized remains of several Goa'uld on P3X888 that lacked any Naquadah."

That didn't quite fit for Sam, though. "The live symbionts on that planet didn't have any Naquadah either, but they were still--"

"Evil demon spawn," Jack finished for her.

"Well, maybe the aggressive ones were all destroyed and only the passive symbionts survived by forming a mutually beneficial relationship with the natives of their planet," Daniel theorized. "Different universes, different chains of events."

They arrived at the ruins and started in. Jack looked at Sam. "Okay, but does any of that help us send these people and their furniture-guys back where they belong."

"We think it was an accident that they ended up here," Sam said.

Jack shot her a questioning look. "This is one hell of a boo-boo, Major."

"Yes, sir," Sam acknowledged. "The archway seems to be a portal, a smaller version of the Stargate in effect. When you enter the coordinates of the archway you want to go to and touch the crystal, it actives a transportation beam which re-materializes you in the specified archway."

"Sounds similar to our transporter technology," Picard commented.

Sam nodded. "Based on Vash's description, yes, sir. Apparently, someone touched the crystal just as a blast from those Ferengi's energy weapon struck the archway."

Picard saw where her theory was going. "The archway activated, but without coordinates to send us to, it sent us to the same archway in a different universe."
Jack had a problem with that. "Our universe? Wasn't that just a bit convenient?"

"It wasn't really an accident, sir," Sam said. "The energy signature from those disruptors, according to their tricorder information, is synchronous with the quantum signature of this universe. Fortunately, that means getting them back to their own universe will be a fairly simple matter."

Jack flipped his hand casually. "Oh yeah, easy as pie--apple, anyway; cherry pie is a lot harder because you have to peel all those little tiny cherries and take the pits out and everything."

Sam patiently waited for him to stop before providing their plan for returning the others to their own universe. "By adjusting the frequency of the disruptor to a synchronous setting with the quantum signature of their universe, we can reverse the process and they'll end up back where they started."

Jack gestured to Teal'c. "Teal'c, keep watch up here; yell if we get company. The rest of us will head down to that arch and send these people back."

They start down the stairway toward the lower level. Picard looked at O'Neill. "You'll have to destroy the archway once we're through."

"Agreed," Jack said.

Daniel and Vash stopped and exclaimed in unison: "What?"

Picard just sighed heavily, he knew where this conversation was going--right to his litany of sins. "Vash,"

Vash snorted disgustedly. "No, don't tell me, let me guess. You can't risk it falling into intelligent hands capable of appreciating its archaeological significance, so like good military men incapable of comprehending its significance, you're going to blow it up just like you blow up every archaeological wonder that falls into your hands. The Picard Touch strikes again."

Jack shrugged. "Well the only real purposes of any military is to blow stuff up and kill people. That first one is my personal favorite, I try to blow stuff up every chance I get."
Sam had to reluctantly agree with the assessment of their commanding officers. "We can't risk the Goa'uld getting their hands on this and figuring out how to jump dimensions or else every possible universe would be at risk. The portal has to be destroyed.

Vash pointed triumphantly to Picard. "The portal at our end belongs to the Children of Tama, you can't just blow it up."

Chakotay offered a compromise. "The crystal that activates it can be removed until the Tamarians decide what to do with it."

Sovak, who had remained quiet while Teal'c was near, spoke up. "Like sell it to me."

Hearing the greed in his voice, Vash sighed and gestured at Picard. "Okay, fine, you win, blow it up."

Picard barely suppressed a gleeful chortle. "Are you actually admitting that I'm right?"

Sam walked between them and into the chamber with the portal. "I hate to interrupt what seems to be a touching moment of marital bliss, but we need to get you back to your universe and get out of here ourselves."

Chakotay set Beverly down on the floor and pulled out the medkit long enough to give her a hypospray of anesthetic. While Picard and O'Neill watched the Ferengi, he opened up his tricorder to calculate the proper frequency setting for the disruptor so that they would end up back in their own universe. With Major Carter's help, he had the frequency of the disruptor adjusted in just a few minutes. Chakotay took the disruptor to Picard. "It's ready."

Picard held the disruptor out to Jack and explained how to use it. "Just point and shoot, pretty similar to those zats of yours. After we're gone, here's how you start an overload. You'll have about five minutes after that to get out of the building before it blows. Just set it down in the archway, it'll be more than powerful enough to take out the portal and then some."

Picard herded the Ferengi into the archway while Chakotay went back over to pick Beverly up. Vash collected her tricorder and the recorder from Sam and their communicators from Jack before she joined the others in the archway. Picard did a final check to make sure everyone and everything was accounted for before he nodded their readiness to Colonel O'Neill.
Jack paused just long enough to send a salute to the naval Captain. He took aim with the weapon and fired at the archway at the same time that Picard touched the crystal. In a flash of light, all seven were gone.

Back in the ruins on Tama, Picard shot the field generator maintaining the dampening field. "Commander, beam back to the Cousteau with the ladies and the Ferengi. Try to get a lock on those containers that the Ferengi were loading up, we can give those to the children of Tama. It won't replace these ruins, but there's no reason to let them be destroyed. I'll start an overload in my phaser and be right behind you."

Vash looked around wistfully and sighed. "Another one bites the dust."

**FINIS**

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