Trans Ported

A Short Story from the Star Trek Universe

By Maryanne Peters

I have to say that engineering was never a strength of mine, although it is much improved now. My field was psychotherapy. No matter how far our science is advanced; no matter how powerful are our space ships, how sophisticated are our life support systems, how strong are our force fields, the human mind remains fragile. There is still need of people like me, with a background in science but that feeling of empathy, and the understanding people beyond what the readings are on our sensors.

Perhaps that should have changed more than it did, after the accident. But the failure of technology is not my field, or not even the biology of it – the idea that living matter can pass across space.

The teleportation device, simply called “The Transporter”, in common use across the star fleet. It offers a simple and efficient way of moving people from orbit to planet surface along a line of sight, even if that is interrupted but light structures. At the heart of the technology is quantum entanglement, so like all quantum physics we have to say that we do not fully understand it. That seems to be the only certainly about quantum physics – that we never will. Spooky phenomena at a distance, are still spooky, even if we have found a way to harness them into transporter machines allowing teleportation.

In its early development many years ago, there were accidents, but these are rare these days. Who knows what happened this time, when we still do not fully understand what happened before? What we know it that accidents resulted in death. It was a hazard of transportation. Death or injury has been a consequence of transport since humanity first climbed onto a horse or got behind the controls of an internal combustion automobile. Transporter technology is just too useful not to use.

Our landing party had been only 3. Somebody at the exploration base on Tandolar 3 had been exhibiting disturbing behavior so that was why I was going, and Ted Palgrave was going should restraint be required. Captain Victor Minguez joined the party when he learned that the commander of the base might be partially to blame for this woman’s disorder. He felt that somebody of authority should speak with the commander, just in case disciplinary steps were to follow.

We beamed down without trouble, and we left a couple of hours later, beamed up using the base’s transporter. There were four of us for the return trip. The young woman was in a distressed state, but my recommendation was that she leave the planet base with all its negative connotations so that I could interview her and treat her in orbit. I gave her a sedative and placed her on the plinth next to the Captain before the beam was activated.

As is usual, only a brief amount of time elapses where there is a strange but recognized feeling of merging into surrounding matter before we became aware that we had arrived in the orbiter’s transporter room. Immediately I was aware that something was out of place. The young woman was slumped on the captains transporter plinth, while her own plinth was empty, and the appeared to be a residue of biological material lying beside her. It was clear that there was a problem, and it could be a big one.

As the senior officer on deck I immediately went to my communicator and contacted the base transporter. The captain had left there but he was not with us.

I called engineering, and I called medical to examine the flesh on the plinth. Second in command Navigation Officer Sergei Lubrensky arrived at the transporter but frankly, he was in a funk. But by then I was aware that the young woman was also recovering from her sedation, and I had an obligation to ensure that she was properly quartered in my section of sick bay.

Sergei was saying - “We have to find the captain!” as I left the transporter room. I was not sure where he was going to look. I was sure that the residue would carry the captain’s DNA. He was a victim of a freak transporter accident. Not the first – not the last. It is just too important of a tool.

The sedation was ambulatory, so I walked my patient to my consulting room which has virtual reality décor to assist in calming patients. I chose the classic orchid greenhouse with running water theme, and suggested that she lay down to recover.

I had her notes on my tablet. Her name is unimportant, but she was in “General Services” at the base, which meant anything other than technical services. She was pretty and well presented, as they generally are. As a psychologist my role is technical, but as a woman who loves being a woman, I also try to present well.

Whether or not her services extended to those of a sexual nature I could not determine from her file, but everybody has the right to say no, and the right to proper treatment by those in authority when she chose to say no. There was indeed material here that put the base commander in a very bad light.

I still had my head down when I heard my patient speak - “Doc, what the hell just happened?” It was her voice, but with a slight accent that I had not heard from her before but was familiar to me somehow.

“Please don’t be concerned,” I said – it was a well-rehearsed patter. “You are safe. Just relax. We can talk when you have had time to get your thoughts together. Would you like a beverage?”

She was looking at her hands. I heard her say – “*Dios mío. Qué es esto*?”

I looked at her notes. Languages? “English only”. I had the thought then, but it seemed so far-fetched. I had not completed a physical examination because there seemed nothing out of place with this young woman. Composites had been heard of, but none arrived alive, and this could not be a composite.

“I think that I will need to look you over,” I said. “I think you had better get undressed while secure access.”

“*Puta!* What has happened to me? What is this Doc?”

“We need to find out,” I said. You need to take off your pants.”

She had the same idea. She pulled her pants down and had her hands in her underwear before I had time to look at the skin for signs of foreign features.

“It’s gone Doc. My dick has gone!” she said.

“I should check for an opening,” I said. “You need to lie back. I need to assess internal organs. This is important. Foreign inconsistent biology could bring about massive immune response trauma. You could be dead within a few hours. Lie back Vic. You are Victor Minguez, captain of this ship are you not?”

“Yea … Yes.” There was a trace of uncertainty, as if there was a part of her that did not want to admit it. She pulled off all of her clothes and lay back. Her eyes seemed glazed over as if in shock, so I used my Universal Diagnostic Instrument to check temperature and heartbeat before checking the skin by eye. The breasts were normal and natural despite being quite large. Female internal organs including a vagina were present. I could detect no foreign DNA.

It seemed like a medical impossibility. But then, my field is the mind, and it occurred to me that this was the only thing changed.

“If you are Vic, then do you have any memories other than his?” I asked.

Not for the first time, Vic looked at me as if I was a lunatic, except this time instead of his tough swarthy face, the familiar expression was on the face of an attractive young woman.

“What the fuck are we going to do?” she said. Then she stopped herself, as if understanding what I was trying to do. “I can’t think of anything. We went down to the planet - Tandolar 3, Base Equatorial 3 – to address an internal disturbance. You were with me. And Ted – is he alright?”

“It seems that only you were affected,” I said. “Maybe she crossed the floor as we dematerialized? I don’t know enough about it.”

“Who does?” she said. “So if we don’t know how it happened, we don’t know how to undo it?”

“I will check the results, but I am pretty sure that your physical form is … well, to be blunt, just a pile of sludge. I am only putting it that way because you are always telling me that is the way you like to hear things.” I was starting to qualify it because I noticed the trace of a tear. This was not Victor Minguez. He was the least sentimental man I had ever known.

Despite that, I had always been attracted to him. The psychologist in me would say that it is the fascination with man in authority, because he was hardly handsome, but he was manly in an old-fashioned way, and I always thought of myself as womanly, in an old-fashioned way.

Another physician might not do it, but because of my experience over many years, I knew the healing power of a hug, so I sat beside her of the couch and hugged her. I pushed her pretty hair away from her face and wiped away her tears.

“You always talked about solving problems and adapting to things you can’t solve,” I said.

“I used to talk that way, but now look at me,” she said. “Who am I?”

“Well, if you are the captain of this ship, you had better tell Sergei,” I suggested.

I knew that Captain Victor Minguez had a fairly low opinion of Navigation Officer Sergei Lubrensky, his second in command. They had been posted together only at the beginning of this trip, and Sergei had been found wanting. The suggestion was that he had family connections that had helped him to graduate and nursed him through a career path towards a command beyond his abilities, but if that was true why post him with Vic?

“Not yet,” said Vic. “My appearance will just cause confusion. Run some more checks, Doc. I feel weak but then I suppose I am week, and after that shit with the base commander I am still a bit uptight.”

“What shit are you talking about?” I asked. “You interviewed him about … about you, I guess.”

“He admitted what he did,” she said. “He is an asshole, but he gave in after hard questioning, and a bit of physical stand-over on my part. I suppose I won’t be doing that again. But he only admitted the half of it, what about ….?”

She stopped herself. It was clear that there were other memories. She stood up.

“Do you have a mirror, Doc?”

“On the wall in the ablution area, just here,” I replied.

She went to the mirror and looked at herself surprisingly dispassionately. She said – “Fuck. I am really very pretty, aren’t I?”

“Yes,” I said. “I always say, if you are a woman, it is better to be a pretty one.” I used to count myself as one of those, but I am older now. I still consider myself attractive, and many men think so. I found myself thinking aloud. “And it is great to be a woman.” I was not just saying that. I believe it.

“Have you got a hairbrush?” she said. “And perhaps some mascara?”

It was clear to me that Vic would not have the skills put on display in the following few minutes. She arranged her hair and applied the makeup with the dexterity of familiarity. She checked for blemishes with a feminine display of attention that was beyond Vic’s contemplation. She put her clothes back on and arranged her breasts in the garment as if she did it every day.

There was a priority buzz on my communicator.

“This is acting Captain Lubrensky,” the voice announced. “It looks like we have lost the Captain, Doctor. There will need to be an inquiry of course. Is that young woman still with you? I will need to interview her. Also the base commander is coming up. I have advised him that the Captain is lost and he wants to retrieve his personnel.”

“*Puta*,” said Vic. “I looks like I will need to assert command earlier than I would like, but there is no way I will let myself be taken back down there. Not after everything that *bastardo* has done to me …”. She stopped again, as if thinking that these memories did not belong.

It would be wrong to say that I was not fascinated by what I was witnessing. There is nobody who studies the mind who could be intrigued by the internal conflict that this accident was obviously causing. It seemed that she was Vic and yet she did have memories and recalled abilities that were not his. But there was all of his knowledge and personality. She just lacked his size and ferocious demeanor. And she knew it.

“Can you call Ted?” she asked. “It might be useful if I have somebody alongside me in this.”

I called Ted Palgrave, who was head of security and who had been in the landing team with us. Ted was several ranks below the captain on a ship that had no need of a large security complement, but he knew Vic well because they sparred together for exercise. He was a physical match for the captain, but so much larger than the woman who now claimed to be her.

He spent a few minutes shaking his head, but it was clear within a minute that everything I said, and everything that he was hearing from her mouth as well, was true.

“But this is going to be hard because you are just so damned pretty,” said Ted, half smiling but also looking genuinely concerned.

“I just need you because I am not ruffian anymore, as you can see.” Vic a little shrug and toss of the head that was of her character and not his. It was one of those “see how pretty I am” gestures that I had seen in other women, but never in a man.

“You know I’ll back you, skipper,” said Ted.

“I know you will,” said Vic. She reached out a hand and grabbed his rough mitt. If it seemed out of character for one, then Ted’s response seemed thoroughly weird. It was like he had been touched in more ways than the physical.

We went up to the con and Sergei was waiting in his lounge behind the bridge.

“Good, Ted is here as well,” said Sergei. “That is everybody who was in the transporter room. The bad news is that there was a quantity of bio-material with the captain’s DNA found on the platform beside his plinth. An unsurvivable amount. Did anybody see what happened?”

None of us had. Even four memories could not explain it. As for Vic, she sat quietly through it all.

Then the base commander from the planet surface spoke up. He said – “I am very sorry to hear about the death of your captain. He struck me as a fair and thorough man. He was on his up to tell you that he had cleared me of any wrongdoing. So clearly your intervention is over and I will say farewells on behalf of both of us, and we will both be returning to the planet surface immediately.”

“I will not be returning and neither will you,” said the beautiful young woman that Ted and I knew was Captain Minguez. “You are a liar, Sir. The report that will be filed will confirm your offending and will disqualify you from commanded. Ted, take this man into custody.”

“Aye, Captain,” said Ted, acting swiftly to place an immobilizing collar on the man.

“Who the hell do you think you are?” said Sergei with a look of shock that had held a trace of amusement until Ted Palgrave had responded with such speed.

“I may not look like it, but I am your superior officer,” she said. “The doctor here will confirm, but if you want to test me then I need only refer to something that your captain knows and no other person does, and it concern Humber 3B.”

I had no idea what the reference was, but I saw Sergei go even more pale than he was naturally, the very second it was mentioned.

“Aye, Captain,” he said.

It seemed that the only one in the room still in disbelief was the man under arrest, but nobody was concerned about him. He was soon in the brig and we were on our way, with Victoria Minguez in command.

But it seemed that I was the busiest person aboard for the return trip. I had expected ongoing counselling for the captain, but she seemed more concerned about improving her appearance that dealing with problems of the mind. We became friends more than anything else. I had never got on too well with Victor, but we now had so much in common – we were women.

It was clear to me that there was something of the troubled young woman from Planet Tandolar 3 inside the new Victoria. How else would this be so easy? She understood the functions of her body so that what seemed natural to any woman seemed natural to her. But the captain was in command which should come as no surprise to anyone that knew him. He was now her, and still in control.

For Sergei the change was more difficult, in particular because he found himself lusting after the woman who now commanded him, in a slightly perverse manner. He consulted me, but there was little that I could say beyond the usual advice given to any number of men who desire what they can never have – learn to accept.

Ted also had a few problems in adjusting to his friend suddenly becoming somebody very different, but in his case any distress was ameliorated by the affection being returned by Vicky

There are rules applying in Starfleet Command for relationships within the ranks, in particular where this might impact upon the chain of command, but for Ted and Vicky they seem to have things worked out.

Vicky says that she always admired Ted as a worthy man, and now that admiration is physical as well. Ted always respected his Captain and a man should respect a woman, but now Vicky asks that Ted take charge in some areas.

It was an accident. It was uncommon but not unheard of. But for everyone on our ship at least, it has proved a happy one.

The End

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