

Patent Medicine

an *Outpost Hope One* short novel

**written by David, Karen, Miriah, Tabitha, and Richard
edited by Richard**

Star Trek: Borderlands

<http://www.starttrekborderlands.com>

Located near the Delta Quadrant terminus of the Geroch Wormhole lies one of the Federation's greatest centers of scientific and engineering research. Sentinel Station hovers above one aperture of the Hope One Dyson Sphere; an ancient construct enclosing a white dwarf star and having an interior surface equivalent to millions of worlds. No greater engineering marvel has ever been known.

Star Trek: Borderlands is a play-by-email roleplaying community started in 1993. For more than 25 years, fans of Star Trek have come together to write their own stories of exploration, conflict, friendship, victory and defeat. Outpost Hope One welcomes anyone looking to explore the edge of human understanding in the fields of engineering, physical sciences and humanities.

This short novel is a compilation of posts from the [Outpost Hope One Posting Group](#)^{1,2}.

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¹ <http://starttrekborderlands.groups.io/g/oh1>

² <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/SentinelStation/info>

Characters

Aaku Az
Civilian
played by David

Lieutenant, Junior Grade, Arev
Security Officer
played by David

Governor Ashon-Milyo
Civilian Governor
played by Richard

Drint
Entrepreneur
played by Richard

Fenata
Attorney at Law
played by Miriah

Ensign Roberta (Robi) Hunter
Security Officer
played by Karen

Chief Petty Officer Frank Jones
Security Officer
played by Karen

Lady Margot Daraine Eloize
Heiress to the *Hespeler Beverage Company* fortune
played by Richard

Cadet-Ensign Hazel May
Science Officer, Specialty in Astrophysics and Computer Sciences;
formerly, Five of Ten, Medical Repair Unit of Unimatrix 24
played by Tabitha

Lieutenant Outanyocon
Acting Chief of Science;
Science, Officer, Speciality in Sociology
played by Richard

Doctor Saghder
Physician
played by Richard

Station
Artificial Intelligence
played by Tabitha

Damon Wood
Civilian
formerly, Unassigned Drone
played by David

Prologue

Scout Ship 510 had been sent to investigate the disappearance of another Borg Scout Ship, 612. It detected signs of a quantum singularity and was hit by something powerful enough to disable it.

The Collective attempted to activate the drones manning the ship but six of them were already dead and they were being boarded.

One drone had survived. Its nanoprobes were doing their best to repair the damage from the 8472 virus.

There was one other drone, a little boy safe for now in his maturation chamber.

#

The Borg vessel floated into range of the USS Fawkner's sensors. There had been no Borg hail and not regenerating as it should be.

Chapter One

Damon walked out school at the end of testing day eager to get home as quickly as possible.

Drint scurried from lookout to lookout.

Damon walked over to a nearby shop window as if he was interested in the wares inside. He spotted a Ferengi male lurking nearby. He knew they were driven by greed which didn't explain their interest in him. He opened the neural link ~Mum I think I am in a spot of bother.~

Hazel was alarmed. She stopped what she was doing immediately. ~What is wrong Damon?~

~I am being followed by a Ferengi.~ he informed her.

Drint stopped admire a tree, some sort of Earth variety. The humans were so wasteful. The tree didn't seem to produce fruit or sap and it's thin trunk-didn't seem remarkable. Tarkalian Rosewood. Now there was a handsome species. And rare. He realized his mind had drifted and looked to see the child still standing in the same spot.

~Where are you?~ Hazel transmitted.

Damon glanced up ~Zeke's Emporium~ he told her, returning his attention to the Ferengi standing nearby.

~Go inside the shop and do not leave. I will be there straight away.~ She had already abandoned her work and was heading to the Promenade.

Damon didn't hesitate. He opened the door to the shop and stepped inside ~I'm inside.~

Finally Hazel arrived. She noticed the Ferengi. She also saw Damon in the store. There was an angry fire in her organic eye.

"Hello there," she said, looking down at the Ferengi.

The Ferengi grinned like there was opportunity presenting itself to him. "Hello."

"Hazel May," Hazel introduced herself with a cold whisper. "You seem to be spending an awful lot of time near my son so I just wanted to let you know that, if anything were to happen to him... well the Collective could always do with more drones." She ejected her assimilation tubules into the air, not actually injecting nanites, just showing the Ferengi what she was capable of. "I hope we understand each other."

Drint appreciated the hardware that the female displayed. His lobes tingled at the possibilities. "You're part of no Collective. I do appreciate you showing me your tubules. Say, do they still work?"

"They certainly do," Hazel said, still cold. "Stay away from my son."

The Ferengi brushed that comment aside. "I will pay you a bar of latinum for every milligram of nanoprobes you can produce. Maybe as much as two bars depending on how programmable they are."

Ah. So that was his interest in Damon. Borg nanoprobes were incredibly valuable and Species 180 were famous for their obsession with currency. "Have you any idea how dangerous Borg nanoprobes are? How adaptive they are? If not stored correctly, they could assimilate the entire station and I don't feel like being responsible for that."

Drint expected his first offer to be rebuffed. He was low-balling the wholesale price but he needed to soften the female to the idea of the venture. They would spar, argue, consummate the business relationship and arrive at a profitable price. "I have a contact, brilliant programmer, designs complex anti-matter control systems. He would love to learn Borg alphanumeric code. Ever considered being a teacher?"

Hazel considered that more seriously. It sounded innocent enough and yet... "I do not trust you. Not as far as I could throw you. which is actually quite a distance, just in case you had any ideas about extracting nanoprobes without consent," she said contemptuously, turning her back on the Ferengi.

Drint spoke loudly to make sure he was heard. "Trust? I'm willing to put 10% of the value of the contract in the hands of a trusted third party in good faith as we negotiate. 12%. And I'll give 1% to orphans."

Hazel ignored anything further from the Ferengi and went into *Zeke's Emporium* for Damon. "Hey there," she said. "How about we go home now?"

Damon looked up at Hazel with a massive look of relief. "Yes, lets go home."

"He's not going to hurt you," Hazel said, loud enough that Drint could hear as they came out of the shop.

"At least, not if he enjoys his individuality." She starred at the man coldly as she lead her son past him. In spite of her manner, she was actually very worried. She could look after herself but Damon was just a kid.

Drint watched the two walk away. He'd need a new strategy. The longer he dithered, the more likely others would try to muscle in on the opportunity.

Damon held Hazel's hand as they proceeded home. ~What did he want with me?~ he asked her, opening up their neural connection.

~He wants our nanoprobes.~ Hazel told Damon honestly. ~Stay away from him.~

~I want you to make sure you're with JentoQ on your way home from school in future and please stay out of the areas where the AI can't see.~ Hazel transmitted protectively.

~Yes mum, i don't like or trust him either he's too shifty.~

~I will mention what he requested to security.~ Hazel shared.

~Asking a question isn't illegal.~ Hazel explained. "The law is complicated sometimes Damon. Sometimes even when you know for sure that someone is dangerous, there's nothing you can do until they actually do something illegal."

Damon appreciated her honesty. They had to be alert but not alarmed.

Chapter Two

"I am Doctor Saghder. You reported a shortness of breath?" asked the doctor as he entered the examination room. He had never treated Ferengi. His prices were too low to be reliable, he'd been told.

"Have you treated the Borg?" asked Drint.

"The Borg don't need doctors." Saghder passed a tricorder across Drint's chest. "There doesn't seem to be inflammation. What activity were you performing when you felt short of breath?"

"The Borg on the station." clarified Drint. "Have you examined them in person?"

"I will not answer that question." The doctor was not about to speak of his patients. "Avoid snuff and strenuous activity in low-oxygen environments. That will ensure healthy lung tissue--"

"Did you have to draw blood or other bodily fluids?" Drint looked around hoping to see a vial that might still have a few nanoprobes in them.

"Mr. Drint." Doctor Saghder was not going to entertain the Ferengi any further.

"What about the pain in my back?" spurted Drint.

"You hadn't reported back pain to the nurse." Saghder was going to give the patient the benefit of the doubt.

"I just noticed it. It could be damage to the spinal tissue. It is very delicate amongst Ferengi. The recommended treatment is nanoprobe therapy. Perhaps you have some nearby. And I could purchase some to take home." Drint was going to try everything.

"That is hardly a common therapy.

"You don't have any then? Even one or two?" Drint asked, turning to face the doctor.

"I have no nanoprobes whatsoever. Not even one or two." said Saghder.

"Great. I wasted three hours in your waiting room just to be refused treatment." Drint jumped from the examination bed to the floor. "You'll be receiving an invoice for my time."

Drint stormed out of the room.

#

Doctor Saghder thought about the odd interaction with the Ferengi fellow. The preoccupation with nanoprobes had to be related to Cadet May and her adopted son. =^=Doctor Saghder to Cadet May.=^=

=^=May here. Is something wrong Doctor?^= Hazel asked. Doctors only usually called when there was something wrong.

=^=I'd like to speak with you in my office, please.^= The doctor's voice was always calm. His vocal folds didn't work like mammalian species. It was invaluable in his profession where calmness and competency were most important.

=^=On my way doctor.^= Hazel said.

"Hello Doctor Saghder," the Cadet greeted in her own calm tone.

Damon had an intense dislike of Doctors as a whole, one too many bad experiences with the crappy old doctor on the mining colony.

"Hello Damon." The doctor hadn't expected Damon to be brought along. "Cadet May. May we speak privately?"

"Of course doctor," Hazel said. "Damon, please stay in the waiting room. Let me know if you need me, I'll just be in here with Dr Saghder, okay?"

"Ok mum," Damon nodded, took out his PaDD and got to work on his homework.

The doctor stood apart from Damon. "I was asked ~~a lot of~~ questions about nanoprobes. I understand their utility, their necessity to maintain your life functions. Have you been discussing nanoprobes as a form of therapy?"

"As a form of therapy?" Hazel asked, raising her remaining eyebrow.

"No. Borg nanoprobes are incredibly adaptable and potentially dangerous. If someone is seriously hurt and needs my nanoprobes, I would be willing to help of course," Hazel said.

"Honestly, I've never considered that as a therapy." The doctor considered the ethical implications of such a procedure. There was no medical literature he knew of regarding it. "I wouldn't know where to start."

Hazel let out a sigh, suddenly putting two and two together. "The person who enquired about using nanoprobes for therapeutic treatment, was he a Ferengi by chance?"

"Yes he was." replied Saghder.

"Persistent individual. I will give him that," Hazel said, shaking her head. "Under no circumstances is that Ferengi to get ahold of mine or Damon's nanoprobes doctor. The only 'therapy' he's interested in is lining his pockets with latinum."

"I would never consider such a thing."

"It's not you that I am concerned about," Hazel said. "I did not mean to accuse you of anything. That Ferengi is interested in mine and Damon's nanoprobes and has been anything but subtle about it. I am just concerned for Damon. I apologise for the emotional outburst."

"Does Damon realize their value? Both to his health and the lengths some may go to for their trade value?" Saghder was concerned for the child. He had lost contact with his own child when his brigade left him for dead.

Hazel shook her head. "I don't think so. The pest followed him home from school yesterday. I tried to scare him off but he's clearly quite persistent."

"That is a common trait of the Ferengi." The doctor hissed.

"I brought Damon today because he needs a blood test. He has been over-regenerating. But, given the Ferengi, would you be able to sublimate the blood immediately? I do not like to think about what might happen if he got a hold of the sample."

"Bring him in. I can run the tests immediately." The doctor wanted to put Hazel at ease. He could practically see her muscles tense. "We can use the isolation room as an added precaution."

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"Thank you," Hazel said, feeling more relieved. She felt much more comfortable knowing that the doctor was taking her seriously about Drint and would have precautions in place.

Chapter Three

Drint looked up and down the corridor and approached the door. It buzzed angrily at him. This was a Starfleet station, they weren't supposed to keep their doors locked on this level.

Station beeped again, watching Drint closely. It was not surprised at this turn of events. The Ferengi had made it quite obvious that he was interested in Hazel and Damon. It was amused by his confusion.

He ran his fingers along the edge. There should have been a button or notch or something.

"Boo," Station said, standing behind the Ferengi with a humanoid ancillary. "What are you doing?"

Drint jumped back a half-dozen feet at the interruption. "Oh. I was hoping to talk to the drones."

"Most people knock, or call or press the chime. It looks to me like you were attempting to break into the quarters of 'the drones', presumably without their consent," Station said bluntly. "Do I need to call security to explain Federation laws regarding breaking and entering Mr Drint?"

"No. This is a simply a misunderstanding." Drint started to scurry down the corridor. "I'll stop by later."

"Indeed," Station said, watching the Ferengi scurry away. It was going to have to report this to security.

Drint waited on a bench outside of the turbolift hub. His attempt to sneak into the Borg's quarters hadn't worked so he was onto his backup plan.

Hazel visibly sighed as she saw Drint. She was walking home from the Med Bay with Damon and, at the sight of the dodgy Ferengi, instinctively grabbed the child's hand.

As Drint came closer, Hazel snapped. "Go away or I will call security. Station has already told me about the *misunderstanding* you had with it outside our quarters."

"There's no need to call security," stammered Drint. "I wanted to apologize for my behaviour."

Hazel glared and tried to pull Damon past the man.

"I was not prepared for such a hard bargainer as yourself. Nanoprobes are extremely valuable and versatile. Please understand that I was merely trying to secure a negotiating position before any others made a bid." Drint smiled.

"I am not 'bargaining'. I am refusing. You clearly have a fairly poorly developed survival instinct so let me make myself crystal clear this time - stay away from my son," Hazel said angrily.

Damon did not quite know why Drint was so determined to get a hold of any Borg nanoprobes and he didn't want to know either.

Drint wasn't listening. He just needed her not to call security on him. He made sure he was in an open space with plenty of people around, he was not approaching them, keeping a lilt in his voice to allay suspicion, all of the traits he had learned on the correspondence course. "I replicated a gift for the youngster. It's a baseball. It is a human pastime."

Hazel took the ball cautiously and scanned it with the remains of her ocular implant. Then, just to be sure, she took out a tricorder and scanned it. It appeared to be exactly what it looked like, an ordinary baseball. She raised her eyebrow. "If this is some kind of bug, it's very well hidden."

"It's a genuine baseball." Drint crossed his fingers in the salute of the Junior Achievers. All Ferengi children attended to learn the skills required for adulthood.

Damon looked at the object. ~Can i have it?~ he asked Hazel opening up their neural link

~No Damon. I will get you one, I promise, but this man is not to be trusted~ Hazel thought to the little boy. She was even more annoyed now. He was trying to bribe her 8-year-old son? She took a breath. As much as she would like to yeet the man across the promenade, that would lead to her in the Brig.

"You seem hesitant to take it." Drint was watching the pair closely. He could barely control his excitement.

Damon was half tempted to take the baseball regardless of what Hazel told him, just to interact with it would evoke good memories from his pre-assimilation childhood.

"Leave him alone," Hazel said, staring piercingly at Drint.

Drint's eagerness made Hazel even more suspicious but before she could decide what to do, it slipped out of her hand.

Drint dove for the baseball and caught it before it hit the floor. The surface felt unusual through his dermal sealant. When he stood, he nearly jumped up and down.

Damon looked at Drint totally confused by the strange behaviour of the Ferengi.

Drint was about to say something but turned and scurried down the corridor.

Damon looked up at Hazel. "What was that all about?" he asked, hoping she might have some sort of explanation

"I have no idea," Hazel said honestly. "But I don't like it."

"My scans revealed nothing strange about it but once I'd had it in my hands, he seemed determined to get it back," Hazel said in confusion. The whole situation was just plain weird. "How about we go to Namche Bazaar and see if we can get you one?" she offered.

Damon looked up at Hazel and grinned "Yes please."

Drint stopped around a corner and crouched. He carefully placed the baseball into a box and sealed it. He looked around as he peeled the micron-thin, glove-like, dermal sealant from his hand.

When the three parted company Chief Petty Officer Frank Jones followed the Ferengi.

Drint's eyes opened wide and he continued moving. He couldn't risk the security officer inquiring about the stasis box. He needed to get to his quarters.

Chapter Four

Arev was sitting in his small office when he heard a knock on his door. "Hazel come in, take a seat."

"I've come to report a Ferengi. He never told me his name but Damon was concerned that he was being followed by the man after school, so I confronted him and he offered 1 bar of latinum for every milligram of nanoprobes I could produce. I refused and warned him about the dangers improperly handled Borg nanoprobes could pose but he seemed quite persistent. I assume he was following Damon for the same reason, he wants our nanoprobes."

Arev found this information about a Ferengi *stalking* Damon to be of real concern. "Forgive the somewhat naïve question, but, what could anyone want them for?" he asked Hazel.

Hazel raised her eyebrow. "They have almost endless uses; medical, military, scientific... No doubt he could make quite a profit with only a few micrograms. They could be very dangerous in the wrong hands and I'm certain the hands of that Ferengi are the wrong hands. I can look after myself Arev, but Damon is only a child and I am worried for his safety. I know there won't be much you can do right now, since the man has not actually committed a crime, but I thought it prudent to warn you of my concerns," Hazel explained.

Arev understood where Hazel was coming from. "We cannot ignore this situation. We need to keep an eye on this Ferengi," Arev told Hazel. "Station," he added.

Station's glowing blue orb appeared in the security office, sitting on the table like a lamp. "Hello Lieutenant Arev, Cadet-Ensign May," it said.

"Do you have any images of the Ferengi male Cadet-Ensign May confronted on the promenade yesterday?" Arev asked

"Yes," Station replied.

The ancillary vanished and beside the desk a still image of Drint replaced it.

"Yeah, that's him," Hazel confirmed.

Arev examined the holographic display of the Ferengi male. =/\=Ensign Hunter to my office please.=/\=

"On my way, sir," she told Lt Arev. The young security officer smiled pleasantly at the woman seated in front of the desk but her main focus was on her new boss.

"Run a check on this Ferengi male, see if we have anything on file about him," Arev told the ensign.

Robi nodded and went to her own desk to try and find out what information she could.

Robi could see a few warrants listed for Drint's questioning on suspicion of smuggling, though not of anything very valuable or dangerous. He was listed as having arrived on a commercial shuttle. She downloaded what she'd found to a padd and took it back to Lieutenant Arev.

"We will endeavour to keep an eye on this Drint character for you," Arev informed Hazel.

"I appreciate the help." At the very least, she could tell Damon that Drint had been reported, which might help set the boy's mind at ease.

Arev watched Hazel leave his office, This Drint character worried him. The last thing he wanted was for the Ferengi to cause the boy harm. At the same time he had a duty to protect Drint from Hazel.

Chapter Five

Drint looked at the tiny item through a magnifier. It was beautiful work. It wiggled and emitted faint electromagnetic signals. The real selling point was the imprint of the Borg Collective logo and the words "Made in Unimatrix One" printed below it. That was the kind of detail that people expected in a good forgery. It didn't look like he was going to be getting the real thing from the insufferable hu-mons. The doctors on the station were unbribeable and the quarters were locked and watched over by a nosy security system.

He needed to add a little extra to make sure that his forgeries would be convincing. Drint removed the baseball from it's container. The surface contained cells and secretions from the Borg female. An analysis would show that the material was not replicated and not cultured. It was the real thing. The secretions would show an array of chemical signatures unique to the Borg. It was genius!

-He was pleased with his work, no doubt about that. He had managed to cobble together enough clues to fool a future buyer. And he would turn a tidy profit. It would have been far more profitable had the Borg female agreed to sell him nanoprobes. He only needed a limited-time exclusive contract and he could retire to a pleasure planet. The Borg female had been adamant not to sell at all. It meant that the next Ferengi to come to the station wouldn't be able to secure a source of nanoprobes either. That made it ripe for the first entrepreneur to create forgeries. After all, there would be no real nanoprobes to compare to his expert forgeries.

#

Arev set out from Security to have a conversation with the Ferengi.

He pressed the buzzer to inform Drint he was there, he wasn't sure if the Ferengi was home or not

"Yes?" came the voice from inside the quarters. He had already put everything away along with the sensor dampening device.

"Lieutenant Arev, station security. I was hoping to have a word with you about what happened yesterday." he said to Drint.

"I have time now." replied Drint. He walked over to the door. It Turned out the Borg female did contact station security after all.

"Do you mind if I come in, I'd rather not discuss this in public?" he asked Drint.

"Ah. No." Drint put his arm across the entry.

Arev studied the Ferengi. "We can always discuss this in my office in a more formal manner. Cadet-Ensign May is rather concerned about your behaviour towards her and her adopted son," Arev said.

"I question the necessity to drag a law-abiding guest to this station into the security office." replied Drint. He didn't know why Starfleet security always tried to sound intimidating.

"I'd hardly call following the boy around the act of a law abiding guest." he said to Drint "What was that encounter all about?"

"The female and I were discussing a business opportunity. Nothing more." stated Drint proudly.

Arev resisted the urge to laugh. "Business opportunity, hmmm, it looked more like a brazen attempt to coerce them."

"Come now, officer. Ferengi females have been equal partners in commerce for fifty years." Drint still enjoyed his females traditional. "If she is unhappy with my negotiating tactics, she is more than welcome to file a grievance with the Ferengi Commerce Authority."

Arev could hardly believe his ears. "She has made a complaint to the station authorities. Leave the ex-Borg alone."

"I have reconsidered a business relationship with the Borg female." Drint smiled at the second attempt at intimidation. "It seems that I will no longer need her contribution."

"So you have acquired nanoprobes from a new source?" he asked, dreading the thought

"It's nothing like what you are suggesting." Drint had already tried that. Twice. "I will not approach the female nor the child."

Arev did not trust the shifty Ferengi one iota. "I shall leave you to your 'legitimate' affairs," he said to Drint.

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"Yes, you will." Drint backed into his quarters, let the door slide shut and then locked it.

Chapter Six

Drint stood at the doorway surveying his quarters. He hadn't brought much with him but he wanted to make sure he was leaving nothing behind. He pulled the handle of the large wheeled trunk behind him, looking both ways down the corridor before making a bee line for the turbolifts.

Frank had been ... lurking (there was no better word for it) near the guest quarters. After the incident on the Promenade, Ensign Hunter had tasked him with keeping an eye on the Ferengi and to inform her if Drint was 'up to something'. Tapping his comm badge Frank informed those in the security office and strolled along the corridor.

Drint pulled his trunk into the open turbolift and held out his open palm. "Sorry. This turbolift is full. You'll have to take the next one."

Frank peered inside. It didn't look full to him. In fact there looked to be plenty of room. He grinned at the Ferengi as if he was waiting for something.

Oddly enough, the turbo lift didn't close automatically behind Drint as it normally would have, it was as if it was waiting for Jones to step in... because it was.

"Docking bay. Port twelve." said Drint sullenly.

"Funny," Frank mused. "That's where I'm going. You don't mind if I tag along do you? I didn't think so," Jones added before Drint could reply.

"Have a nice day," Station said sweetly as the turbo lift opened.

"Infernal station." Drint stomped out of the turbolift. His baggage caught on the jamb and rolled over. He jumped down onto it before the security officer could react. The latch was secure. He breathed a sigh of relief. He stood up, brushed off his tunic, ran his fingers across the latinum-plated buckle. He smiled at the security officer until he realized what was in his hands. Quickly feeling his pocket, he realized it was empty.

"Genuine nanoprobes. Accept no substitutions." he read. He fixed Drint with a stern stare. "And where did you get this, might I ask?"

Not that for a moment did he believe there were any nanoprobes inside the canister. He doubted very much if Cadet May had volunteered any of her

nanoprobes to anyone - let alone a Ferengi. And nothing he had seen led him to suppose Drint had managed to steal some. If that was even possible.

Fenata had just arrived on the station wearing a prim pale-blue pantsuit, matching heels, and an ostentatious assortment of latinun jewelry. To her irritation, turbolift access was blocked by a flustered Ferengi male in some kind of dispute with a Federation security officer. She thought of the seventh and ninth rules of acquisition - Keep your ears open; and, opportunity plus instinct equals profit – and decided to intervene. "My name is Fenata, attorney at law."

Drint looked the female up and down. He liked the look of her jewelry and wondered where else she was wearing it underneath her clothing. It was oddly alluring to imagine. No. No. Females should not be clothed. "I don't do business with females."

Fenata regarded Drint with cool disdain and held her business card out to him. The Bill of Opportunities was amended in 2374. And yet, Ferengi culture lagged law. "I am registered with the Ferengi Commerce Authority, and a fully accredited attorney of Federation law. We can start by negotiating my fee."

"Fee?! You haven't done anything," said Drint with obvious disdain.

Frank hid a smile at Drint's reaction. "Well, I need to ask you to accompany me to the security office," he said.

"Me?! I haven't done anything." Drint stammered. "I want my property returned."

"Really?" Frank was skeptical "and is this your property?" he held up the canister.

"Clearly it's my property." Drint was not going to leave such a valuable forgery in the hands of Federation Security. "I demand it be returned to me."

"Oh? It says on it 'genuine nanoprobes'." The security officer leaned forward and peered closely at the Ferengi. "You don't look like a Borg to me so where did you get them?"

Fenata stood back among the growing crowd of onlookers, hand on her hip, enjoying the show. She reasoned the nanoprobes were fake and he had the lobes of a brilliant entrepreneurial strategist. What better way to convince potential buyers that the nanoprobes were real, than to get arrested for

smuggling them off-station? Of course, he'd make no profit if they didn't let him go.

"I can't reveal that. Supplier-purchaser confidentiality," stated Drint confidently.

"Right," he said determinedly. "You definitely need to come with me to the security office."

This male's scheme had potential. She waved her latinum be-ringed fingers at him and smiled coyly. "Call on me if you change your mind about retaining a lawyer."

"Wait!" Drint called after the female. He turned to the security officer. "You Federation have to allow me to confer with my lawyer."

Frank sighed. He'd been ready to clap a hand on Drint's shoulder (something he was looking forward to).

"You say you're a lawyer?"

"Recognized by both the Federation judicial system, and the FCA," Fenata repeated, proud of her accomplishment. "You say you need a lawyer?"

"I don't need a lawyer." Drint thought of Rule #47. He wasn't sure it applied to females. "I need someone to hold this luggage for me. It's locked to my bio-pattern so don't think you'll be able to peek inside. Hold it for me. That's it. I'll give you one snip per day and no allowance for expenses."

"Insufficient. I work on commission. My fee will be a percentage of your current venture," said Fenata. This was how she had garnered both profit and approval from her father in spite of being female.

Blasted female. Where did she get the lobes?! He was desperate. The canister was worth ten bars. He wasn't just going to let the Federation keep it. "That canister is worth one bar at the most. And only to the right buyer. It's hardly worth fussing over."

Oh, he was good. "I presume you've used Rule #239 to label the canister. Working on commission ensures that I work in your best interest, because when you profit, I profit. There wasn't much she found more satisfying than a good negotiation, nothing she could do in a public setting, anyway."

"Two slips, plus a modest fee to store my property." Drint didn't have the latinum in-hand yet. "And one meal per day at the Replimat."

"Thirty percent," Fenata countered, huskily. She reached out with her right hand and brushed the outer curve of his left lobe.

Drint lost himself for a moment. She was a good negotiator. Far better than he expected. "Twenty percent. And you throw in storage fees for free."

"Twenty percent," she agreed, and took the handle of his luggage, all business once again. "Your public arrest will appear to legitimize the canister's contents."

With an evil grin Jones clapped a hand on Drint's shoulder. "Right m'lad," he said "you just come along with me.

Chapter Seven

Chief Petty Officer Frank Jones had expected Drint to put up much more of a protest about being taken to the Security Office but he was rather glad he hadn't.

"I was keeping an eye on Mr. Drint here as Ensign Hunter requested," Frank began in his pedantic way. "Unfortunately, there was a little incident with Mr Drint's luggage and he dropped this." Frank handed over the canister of 'nanoprobes' which he had been carefully carrying.

Drint looked between the two security officers. He had been instructed by his lawyer to be arrested, then make a fuss. "Am I arrested yet?"

Arev looked at Drint with an added level of disgust. "You have a lot of explaining to do, Mr Drint. Care to explain what the hell you are doing with a canister of nanoprobes?"

"That canister is mine and I shall like to be arrested please." Drint held out his hands. "Cuff 'em, as the hu-mons say."

Arev shook his head. It was clearly a ploy of some sort "Why do you wish to be arrested all of a sudden Mr. Drint? You claim to be legitimate and yet now you wish to be detained?" he asked.

"It's on the advice of my lawyer."

"I don't need your lawyer friend walking you out of here on a technicality, so I ask you again what reason do you have for wanting to be arrested?" he asked Drint.

Drint looked the security officer in the eye. "Maybe I don't want to be arrested?"

"We will need to go down to science to examine the contents." Station said.

"Thank you Station." Arev said.

Drint crossed his arms. He needed to get himself arrested, freed on a technicality, and have it duly documented so he could be on his way.

Chapter Eight

"Hello Lieutenant Outanyocon," Station's orb said to the acting Chief of Science and to the only thing they had close to a Borg expert.

"Yes, Station?" The acting Chief of Science had been sitting quietly. He'd come into the possession of a curiosity and was debating his next steps.

"Lieutenant Arev has what we believe may be smuggled Borg nanoprobes. We need to verify their contents. Can we set up the equipment now?" Station asked. If Drint's nanoprobes were real they could be of great risk to all of its users.

"I appreciate your assistance in this matter," said Arev.

"A level ten forcefield?" The scientist powered up the lab's independent power source. It would generate a field to isolate the item of inspection from the rest of the station.

The spectrometer analysed the content of Drint's canister. =No functional nanoprobes found.=

"The signature is very realistic but there are no actual nanoprobes in the canister," Station said, sounding relieved. That being said, the signature alone might have been dangerous if Drint had wandered too close to Borg space.

"What to do with these things," Arev said "Are they dangerous in any way, shape or form?"

"No. They are designed, it seems, to give the impression of real Borg nanoprobes. They're non-functional. As soon as someone tried to apply the nanoprobes to a purpose, nothing would happen. I doubt a buyer would pay without some kind of demonstration." Outanyocon was a sociologist. He was more interested in how Cadet May and her son were adapting to life aboard the station. In his research, he knew of several attempts to acquire Borg nanoprobes, never successfully. It wasn't something that one could acquire 'in the wild'. Any scientist hoping to unlock their secrets would have to test out one or more nanoprobes before purchasing the lot. No one could be so gullible.

"What do you recommend we do with them?" Lieutenant Arev asked.

"Fake or not, probably best they be destroyed."

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"Yes, and I doubt Cadet Hazel May gave him consent to use her DNA as a part of his forgery either," Station added in agreement.

Lieutenant Outanyocon triggered an incineration subroutine. "Done."

Chapter Nine

Lieutenant Arev returned to Security relieved the fake nanoprobes had been dealt with.

Ensign Robi Hunter briefly looked up from the security screens as the doors opened to admit the return of the lieutenant. "Sir," she said, nodding. "He's been quite quiet," Robi added, indicating the Ferengi.

"Are you arresting me?" asked Drint.

Arev looked Drint in the eye. "No. You are free to go Mr. Drint."

"Fine." responded Drint. He held out his hand. "I demand my property be returned to me."

Arev smiled to himself. "I'm afraid your fake nanoprobes have been destroyed. Fakes or not we cannot permit them to leave Sentinel Station."

"You destroyed my personal property?!" These hu-mons had no idea what the value of those nanoprobes were worth. They'd broken the seal. Yes. He could replace the seal. He had extras. But to destroy the nanoprobes themselves?!

Arev sat down at his desk. "Feel free to talk to your lawyer on the matter if you wish lodge a complaint, but as of right now, you are free to go." he informed Drint.

Drint stared down the security officer. "Oh. I will."

Arev watched Drint leave security. "Good riddance."

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Drint sulked as he left the security office. He should never have listened to the female. He had not been arrested and they destroyed a whole canister of nanoprobes. He paused. Where was he going? "Station Computer! Is the *Margri* still docked?"

"Yes, it is." said Station.

He just wanted to collect his property and leave. "And where is the female?"

"You will need to be more specific. That describes 49% of the population aboard me," Station said.

Drint batted at the air. "The Ferengi female. Fenata. Where is she?!"

"Fenata is aboard the *Margri*." Station answered honestly.

"Ah. Good. You're dismissed." stated Drint. The nice thing about these Federation AI, they didn't expect a tip. He scurried as fast as he could to the *Margri*. It was a luxury transport. It was important to give the right first impression at his destination if this venture was to be successful.

Chapter Ten

The door opened for Drint when he reached his quarters aboard the Margri. Waiting in his room was Fenata... fully clothed. "What are you doing?"

"I've been waiting for Security to contact me." responded the lawyer.

"They let me go." responded Drint suspiciously. He looked around the room. He saw his luggage and in the bed room the luggage belonging to his lawyer. "They opened the canister of nanoprobes, figured out they were fake and decided not to press charges. I went looking for you and was told by the station's computer you were already aboard. And in my state room. You'll have to find your own."

"We're business partners." said Fenata. She leaned back on the chaise lounge. "No sense in having two state rooms aboard. I'll take the bedroom and you can sleep on the couch."

Drint was momentarily distracted. He would rather they share the bed. "You can have the bedroom. But we split the cost 60-40."

"Fine."

"What are you drinking?" asked Drint as he moved closer to the female. She was alluring.

"Romulan Margarita, no salt."

"Get me one too." said Drint

Epilogue

Lady Margot Daraine Eloize stood in the middle of bustling crowd. "The service aboard this station is atrocious."

Station's humanoid ancillary manifested. "Is there something I can do to help you?" it asked.

"Are you the station's valet program? You should have introduced yourself to me when I stepped foot aboard." The woman pointed to the hover pallet containing her baggage. "Take that to your best hotel. And book me an appointment for tomorrow morning at your Nanoprobe Spa."

"I can transport your luggage, but I am not sure what spa you are referring to?" Station asked.

"The. Nanoprobe. Spa. I find a session of massage and nanites to be very refreshing. These artificial intelligences seemed to lack any intelligence at all.

"I am sorry. I can direct you to a massage therapist but there would not be any nanoprobes involved..." Station offered. Station suspected Drint was behind this, either directly or indirectly.

"You /do/ have Borgs aboard, correct?" demanded Lady Margot. Did she really have to spoon feed the valet computer every single step? "Take me to /them/."

"That information is classified," Station responded.

"Are you refusing my request? Who is your supervisor?" No wonder she'd never read about this place in a travel magazine. It didn't even rate one star. Still. This is where the Borgs were and she was clearly an early adopter of nanoprobe treatments. They didn't even have a spa up and running yet. Gag. She would give pointers to whoever was in charge.

"My supervisor? I could direct you to our civilian governor?" Station offered.

"I believe you may have been misinformed. There is plenty of entertainment aboard for civilians and I would like to try and help you but I do not think we have what you came for."

"Not good enough." Lady Margot wanted to threaten to decompile the valet system but it didn't seem capable of understanding even a simple request. There wasn't much to decompile in her estimation.

Station was beginning to feel slightly irritable as it tried to work out what to do with Margot. She wanted a service that ~~didn't~~ did not exist, in a place that did not exist and to see people who did not exist.

#

=/=Hello Governor Ashon-Milyo. I am sorry to bother you. I have an individual in the docking bay demanding to go to a 'nanoprobe spa'. I thought I would ask for your advice.=/=

=/=Unusual.=/= The governor supposed it was his role. I will be there promptly.=/=

#

Lady Margot turned. Finally. "You're one of those Borg I was looking for. Excellent. I'm looking for a rejuvenation treatment and I've come to the source."

Aaku looked at her in disgust. "No, I am not Borg. Yes, I have an ocular implant but that is not solely the domain of the Borg," he snapped at her.

"You don't have to be modest with me." Lady Margot's voice warmed. He was not only a Borg but a striking young man. She'd have to inquire about his relationship status. "I'm not put off by your people. I suppose after all the treatments I've had, I'm part Borg as well."

"I am not Borg. I've never been assimilated," he told her once more. "It was a necessary procedure."

Lady Margot sighed. "They are all necessary procedures at my age."

"You're too young to understand. Now; the station's valet program was entirely unhelpful. Can you direct me to the Nanoprobe Spa? I had demanded to see the station's governor to complain but perhaps a short treatment so that I may look my best. Is the governor a handsome man?"

Aaku looked at her as if she was totally stupid.

Lady Margot pouted her lips. The young man was as unhelpful as the valet program.

"Hello. I am Governor Ashon-Milyo. How can I help?"

And no, the governor was not a handsome man. Governor Ashy-Whatever was a Grazerite. They were large, lumbering things with no semblance of personality. "You can start by deleting your valet computer. It was useless. It could not answer a single question.

"From whom did you hear of a spa aboard the station using Borg technology?" finished the governor.

"A Ferengi named Drint and his business associate. They sourced genuine Borg nanoprobes from this station. There are two Borgs aboard the station. I did my homework." Lady Margot calmed herself.

"Unfortunate. You have been misled. The nanoprobes were facsimiles." said the governor.

"Then how to you explain my youthful appearance and physique." Lady Margot stood. Her skin-tight clothing was layered with crêpe Georgette, an ancient human invention that made it appear that the fabric flowed across her body. She decided she didn't need a compliment from this cow of a man.

"Artificial. And it is illegal to transport nanoprobes. They are highly dangerous." responded the governor.

"You are naive if you think that illegal things are not shipped through Federation space everyday." retorted Lady Margot. She took pride in her personal art collection. "Drint is a man of means."

The governor let out a slow breath. "Madam. You have been misled and there is no other way to express my regret at your traveling all this way to learn that."

Lady Margot drew the padd from her purse. She needed to take a break from the tiresome argument with these people and things. She shared her experience through her social network, flagging Sentinel Station with a minus star, the lowest approval she could give it. Unsatisfied, she decided to minus-star the governor, the station's valet program, their security detachment and every shop on the Promenade. She was going to ruin this place's reputation.

She had been fooled. Drint had clearly misled her as to the source of his Borg nanoprobes. Clever little Ferengi. He knew there were Borgs aboard and had dropped enough clues to lead her here.

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On arriving at the docking port, she singled out the ship's valet. "You. Prepare my cabin."

The valet slumped. He thought he was rid of that terrible woman.

Lady Margot Daraine Eloize stopped at the hatch, shook the grime of the station off, and stepped aboard the passenger liner.