

FROM THE AVENGER LOGS...

LOVE IN THE LAB

By Ann Marie Reilly

"You could have given me warning, Uncle," I said.

"I thought you said he was the best virologist around," Uncle Walter replied, rather smugly.

"And you did say you had a problem onboard with a virus."

"Yes, I said that. But you could have told me you were going to have him transferred to the Avenger. Don't I at least deserve some consideration?"

"OK, then, niece, what is it with this one that upsets you so?"

His brogue went through me, like it always does. My Uncle knew my answer before I did. "He's just so.....so.....obnoxious at times," I drawled.

"And you have it bad for him, right?" Damn, Uncle Walter could read my mind sometimes.

"No, I don't," I said.

"You are lying to me, niece. But, I'll let it go for now. Is there a message for Aunt Kay?" The look on his face irritated me beyond measure. I love my uncle, but sometimes I'd swear he was a full-blooded Betazoid, instead of a gentle human male from Ireland.

"Just give her a hug and kiss from me," was all I could say, as tears welled up in my eyes. I love them both so much. Uncle Walter is Admiral Walter Reilly, an attorney in Star Fleet with a lot of political pull. Damn it.

"I'll be in touch soon. Take care, my dear little one." He walked out of my quarters and headed for the shuttle waiting in the bay. He is a short little leprechaun, with the bright blue Reilly eyes, and a killer smile. No wonder my Aunt Kay loves him so much—he's a cutie. They have been married for nearly 50 years, and are totally devoted to each other. I want that for myself someday.

I turned away from the door, and tried to steel myself for the meeting that was to come with my new virologist. My memories flooded my brain. I hadn't seen him in nearly two years. I remember every inch of him, that funny look on his face when he's deep into his research, the scent of his cologne, his laugh, the way he used to hold me. I've tried to erase him from my mind, and until today, I thought I had. That is, until my uncle came aboard for a brief visit and to advise our captain of the personnel transfer. Sure, he could have used subspace communications, but that's what makes my uncle so special, the personal touch. Yippee for his "personal touch."

"Doctor, please report to my ready room on the double," I heard Captain Maldonado paging me.

This will be good, I thought, as I headed out of my quarters and down the hall toward the turbo-lift.

I steadied myself and entered the captain's ready room. "You bellowed, sir?"

"Yes, Doctor. You do know who's been transferred onboard, right?" He is a very nice man, as honorable a captain as anyone could ask for. He always has the crew's best interests at heart. I trust his judgment and I trust him totally.

"Yes, my uncle just left me. We have a virologist now. We can isolate this stupid thing infecting my patients. And maybe even find a cure." I was clipped and short with him. My New Orleans drawl thickened as I spoke, the way it always does when I get nervous.

"It was totally unexpected. You needed help in the lab, I understand. You and Rhionnah are having so much trouble isolating this one."

"Well, I'm sure I cannot figure out what's happening, sir." I'd been pulling double shifts with my pathologist, trying to find out what infection had come aboard. Seemed that we had a nasty virus with us, and I was unable to do my job properly. I was frustrated and angry. And I had complained to my favorite uncle about it. My uncle had stepped in and tried to "fix" things.

"He's in the lab now. He wanted to get right to work. I didn't think you would mind." The captain is such a courteous and thoughtful man, I thought sarcastically. That smile on his face told me that my virologist was feeling the same things I was, and Captain Maldonado could see it. I wanted to smack my captain then and there for being such a smarty-pants. Call it mutiny, I don't care. He needed taking down a peg or two. I decided to let his wife do it. I'd speak to her later.

"Thank you, sir," I said. "I'll get right down there and see what he is up to. Probably breaking stuff, knowing him," I grumbled half under my breath. I left the ready room. I wasn't too ready for this.

Instead of the lab, I went to the officers' mess. I needed a cup of tea and time to prepare myself. Lord Gor, our security chief, was sitting at a table, his large hands wrapped around a mug of something steaming.

"Tea time, huh?" Gor growled, as he watched me make my drink.

"Yes."

"English breakfast?"

"No. Irish breakfast. It's stronger"

"Must be having an interesting day, Doc." Gor was another sarcastic-mouth, like me.

"Whatcha got, Gor?" I asked as I took the seat opposite him. It smelled like warm milk with cinnamon sprinkled on top. I recommended it as a sleep aid to him about a week ago.

"What you ordered, doc." Gor looked at me. He looked very tired.

"Are you sleeping yet? I'm worried about you."

"No, not much these days." I knew he had caught the virus, and he looked terrible.

"I want to see you in sickbay today. You need to rest and I'm sure you aren't doing your best on duty." I knew this would get him, because Lord Gor had immense pride in his duties. He'd come to sickbay, I knew he would.

"Very well, doctor," he said wearily, finishing his mug. "Yes, it was warm milk, and it hasn't worked all week."

"I'm sorry about that. I have help now to isolate this virus."

We'll get to the bottom of it, Gor, and you'll feel better real soon. I promise. Have I let you down yet?" My drawl thickened again. I reached over and touched his hand. I didn't do that too often, because it could make him very uncomfortable. He covered my hand with his free one. Well, there is a first time for everything, I thought.

"See you later," he said, as he rose unsteadily from the table. I took a sip from my mug. I really needed this.

Gor took a step toward me. I looked up. He was so tall, and I had to crane my neck back to see his face. He leaned down and kissed my cheek. "Thanks for trying to help me," he said, and rushed out of the galley. I love Lord Gor, and I can see right through him.

Yep, first time for everything.

After I drank my tea, I went to the pathology lab. My assistant was there, working hard on someone or something. Her assistant, Sebastian, was at his usual post, working furiously prepping some slides, his eyes ever watchful. I felt very safe with Sebastian around, and I was glad the Rhionnah had brought him with her. He was an excellent doctor, and a very dutiful bodyguard. Sebastian also made a mean whiskey sour. I enjoyed his company. He rarely spoke. With us two women around, he rarely got the chance.

"What's doin', Ri?"

"More samples in the microscope. Trying to find out what's infected us." Rhionnah turned to me. She was a lovely gal, with long brown hair and beautiful green eyes. There was 12 years between our ages, but she had become my best friend. She was the best pathologist in Star Fleet, a wunderkind.

And she was as stumped as me.

"It seems we have acquired some help in virology," I said.

"I know. It's....him."

"Yes, it is. Can't you sense anything?"

"You know, with two half Betazoid doctors, you'll be in real trouble around here. No more dirty thoughts for you!" Rhionnah could be irritatingly correct at times.

"Yes, I know," I grumbled. "Where is he? In the other lab?"

"Yeppers." She had picked up some of my words. That was one of the clean ones.

"OK, Sebastian, make a hole and let me by." I steadied my nerves and left Pathology.

As the lab door opened, I saw him. He looked well, I thought. Tall, broad-shouldered, muscular, those gorgeous gray-blue eyes, the grin that never leaves his face firmly in place. He sat at a lab table, hard at work. My heart skipped a beat. I was back on Starbase 18 again.

Back then, I was on my first Star Fleet assignment. I was an excellent doctor but I sought something more. Alien races fascinated me, and I was a master in caring for several different species. I sought out a way to put my talents to good use. I entered the Academy at the age of 31, an old lady. I graduated 3rd in my class, but I was one hell of a doctor. I was assigned to Starbase 18 when I was 34. I met Imhotep there. He made my heart skip the first time I saw him. He was half Deltan and half Betazoid, and he excelled in virology. He was gorgeous, funny, witty, and smart. I got weak every time he looked at me. I also got mad at him when he

was, as I call it, stupid. He loved to raise my Irish temper. He loved my Cajun cooking as well. We became the best of friends.

Took over a year for him to do it, but I still haven't forgotten the first time he kissed me in the main shuttlebay. He asked permission, then took me in his arms and kissed me gently. I was so glad my back was up against a shuttle, because I wouldn't have been able to stand up after that kiss. We began to spend our off-duty time together, and eventually, we fell in love. Two more years passed and I was transferred to the Avenger. I didn't realize how much he meant to me, and I missed him so much.

I blinked and shook my head to clear it. Before I knew what was happening, he was holding me. "I've missed you," he breathed into my ear. His arms encircled me. I was home again, where I belonged.

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