

Q*UNIVERSAL CONSTANTS





Q-niversal Constants

Zine

2026

Credits



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The Infinite Something

Mark Me Down

The Golden Age

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Layout Design

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How Like A Captain?

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<https://archiveofourown.org/users/predawnite>

Stuck On Q

ThymelessInk

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Butterfly Effect

Artwork (Page 10, 18, 25, 26, 31)

Cover Art (Collaboration)

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The Greater Gift

Artwork (Page 4, 9, 14, 22, 29)

Cover Art (Collaboration)

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The Greater Gift

“Why all this?”

Q examined his travel companion, finding honest curiosity, delight.

Waves of nebulae caressed the shores of a galaxy no human had seen before.

Snap.

A cathedral of a civilization built upon paradigms irresistibly foreign to humanity. The time was finally ripe for Jean-Luc to accept Q's gift—magnitudes less precious compared to the beauty of Jean-Luc's body illuminated by the light of the local star, his soul illuminated by the joy of discovery.

Oh, if only Q could offer him something even half as exhilarating.

“You'll find out.”

“You keep saying that.”

A smile, then fingers intertwining.

Mark Me Down



He's *trying* to be intimidating, he really is. The trial has always been a matter of literal life and death; his people had wiped races out for failure with a simple gesture and a frosted lack of remorse. It had nurtured continuing universal prosperity - cull the stagnant, encourage the vibrant.

He's never stopped thinking that almost hilariously ironic.

... So he's *trying*, truly. And it really *would* help if the captain would stop *glowing*.

Light shimmers through his uniform sleeve as though it's transparent, a warm, rich yellow bursting out from its trappings and longing to connect, and he's *always* cursed his own curiosity.

"Show me it," he demands, practically *vibrating*, trial quite forgotten.

The captain, quite taken with it himself, quirks a brow in his direction and rolls up his sleeve.

Q almost *gasps*.

It's a sun, resplendent in brilliance; it burns and glows as though real, the former monochrome now anything but.

"... That's not..." he shivers lightly, stunned. "You *can't* be -"

"And yet there's only one new being on this bridge," Jean-Luc Picard tells him, and his ancient eyes widen to almost galactic proportions.

He remembers his beginnings, a billion years ago, so very vividly, as though they were only yesterday; a small, stark, innocent essence, wondering why in all of the galaxies his very being was branded by a monochromatic moon.

Worry not, a brother exclaims, almost caustic. *We'll get rid of that for you*.

He thinks, with all the knowledge of all the cosmos; he *understands*, and he balks.

No, he replies, afraid already of losing that purpose, that excitement. *They're my soulmate to find!*

... And here he is, all these eons on - tenacious, clever, human. He *trembles*.

"You mustn't have one." His soulmate's words are saddened, and he reads the romance of the concept within him: the stories told, the idea treasured; the heart broken and the joy of it all harshly forgotten at his own tragedy.

No more, he thinks, blinking back tears, and rolls up his own sleeve, revealing the mark he permanently suppresses when adopting mortal form.

It's drenched in silver, *ablaze*. The lights sense one another, as though bidden; a strand of brilliance fractures from the whole of each, meets in the dead centre, entwines...

A sun and a moon orbit one another on each essence, and Jean-Luc Picard smiles across at him, a man rediscovering every minute of his childhood ideology in a handful of seconds.

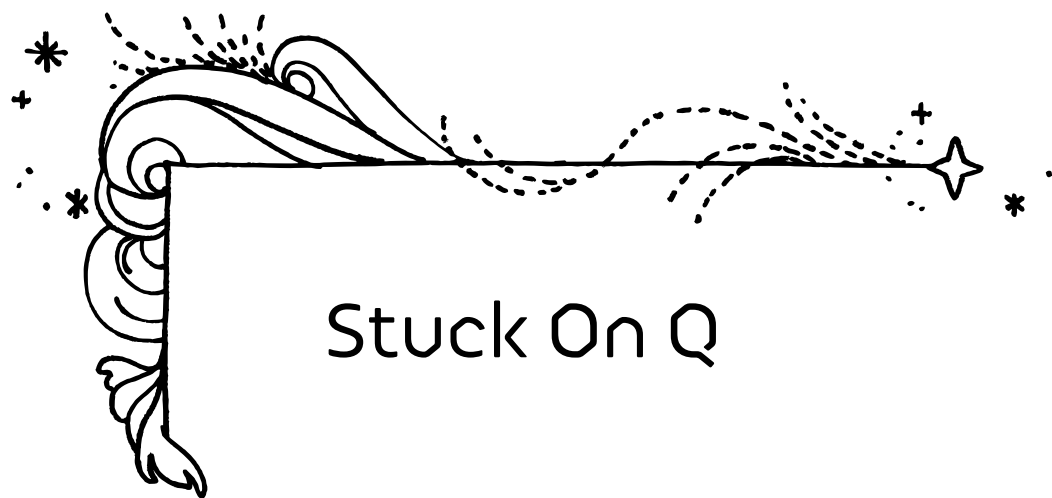
"... Nice to meet you," he murmurs, lips curling into a smile. "Perhaps you should stop threatening my ship, now."

Q blinks, and acknowledges in a euphoric burst that the burden of an eternity has been swept away on a singular moment - *finally*, he's *understood*.

... He doesn't know him. Jean-Luc Picard might be *anyone*. But he reads the thrill behind a silver gaze - *what other colour could it be?* he thinks, dizzied - the challenge, the *anticipation*, and he's fully aware: he *wants* to know him. Oh, so very much, for the rest of time.

"... Yeah," he breathes, gaze aflame. "Think I might do just that."

... To hell with the trial. They'll reconvene eventually, however lengthy the recess might be in between.



Stuck On Q

Q apparated onto the bridge with a grin, scattering certainty like stardust.

Picard crossed his arms—unimpressed, yet attracted to attentiveness. Around each other they danced as binary stars: one chaotic, one disciplined; both bound by an invisible gravity neither admitted. Q provoked trials, temptations, and impossible questions. Picard answered with principle, patience, and occasional exasperation.

Their orbits never merged, never escaped.

Across years and galaxies, each altered the other's course.

When Q finally spoke with unusual sincerity, Picard understood. Even distant stars shape their companions, illuminating paths through darkness and wonder for both traveler and trickster, forever circling onward.





The Infinite Something



When he gains omniscience, after the initial shock of *everything*, he's stunned at how much *nothing* accompanies it. There are quadrillions of beings, thoughts, desires, *lives* across quadrillions upon *quadrillions* of light years; the whole of history sparks through his neurons as though an ongoing supernova, and makes the absolute emptiness, the sheer *scale* of it, even starker by comparison.

He becomes suddenly aware that he's being urgently stared at, *talked to*.

"... *Speak to me, Jean-Luc. Tell me you're with me.*"

He faces his husband, blinking in realisation.

"I'm with you, Q," he tells him honestly; everything and its notable absence hums constantly at the back of his head, awaiting its need, but it's surprisingly gentle, tolerable — as if he'd *always* known everything, as if it had been his destiny all along.

He marvels at the very idea.

Q tucks into him and presses a tender, affirming kiss to his forehead, heaving a quiet sigh.

"Good," he whispers, eyes falling closed. "Good. You're the first, dear — we weren't sure if —"

— *you could handle it*. He hears the unspoken sentiment as clear as day: the crushing weight that slowly recedes in the wake of his relief, the burst of pride at his mental strength, and the pure love that pervades his very essence at not having to be so *desperately*, achingly —

... Oh. Oh, *stars* — or indeed, the lack thereof.

"Q?" He breathes.

"Yes, my darling?"

"... How long have you only seen the nothingness between the totality?"

The elder god stiffens, and holds him ever closer. "I don't anymore."

He feels... *complete*. At peace. *Not alone, not now*, his husband's mind understands, resplendent in wonder, and Jean-Luc could *weep*.

"You're not supposed to —" his fingers tighten in the fabric of his admiral's shirt. "I'm sorry. *Emotionally compromised.*"

With infinite gentility, Jean-Luc unfurls his fist, encases it within his own, and forces him to meet watery eyes.

"Q," he says quietly, tearfully, "*I'm with you.*"

Breath stammers for a protracted moment, and utter warmth swells within his very soul; bright, joyous... so very *foreign*.

"I'm glad." He laughs, and his voice shakes. "I'd almost forgotten that it *wasn't* all nothingness."



How Like A Captain?



The air on Telluron IV swirled thick and murky with fog. Every so often the tepid miasma coalesced into a brief maelstrom of firmer droplets. But rather than clear the fog, each new downpour only seemed to invite thicker vapours to rush into the breach. Through this fog waded two beings in Starfleet uniform. One was human, getting slowly drenched as the pair continued on their path.

The other appeared (at first glance) to be a second, slightly taller, slightly younger human in a nearly identical burgundy uniform. But, if one examined the scene closely, it would soon become apparent that this second being was *not* entirely human. For although he seemed far more dissatisfied with the presently dreary conditions than the first, he was remaining perfectly dry. Any vapours that dared to moisten this second entity seemed to suddenly shrink away, dissolving shyly back into the mist as if it were simple Brownian motion alone that had set their path. Nevertheless, this second being was keeping up a steady litany of complaints as they walked.

"This is ridiculous Jean-Luc. Why on earth are we wading through this disgusting pea-soup? Just tell me where we are going. I'll snap my fingers. We'll be there in a jiffy *and* nice and dry to boot."

Jean-Luc Picard swept a sheet of water off his face and grinned up at the



entity next to him. Unlike his companion he was clearly invigorated by the adversity of the environmental conditions.

“Think of it as an experiment, Q,”

“An experiment? What kind of experiment could *possibly* require us to get soaking wet on some entity-forsaken backwater — quite *literally* a backwater I might add — of a planet?”

“An experiment.” Jean-Luc confirmed with a decisive nod of his head. “When you manifest aboard the Enterprise, your favoured appearance is in a Starfleet uniform, with four pips,”

“Yes,” Q answered.

“Four pips typically denotes the rank of Captain,”

“Yes yes mon capitaine, *obviously*. I’d hardly want to be under-dressed in your salubrious presence. But I fail to see how this is relevant to our presently percolating state.”

“You are wearing that uniform with captain’s pips right now, as a matter of fact,”

The only noise Q made in reply to that was a disgruntled ‘*hmp*’.

“And when you first appeared aboard the Enterprise, the first costume you appeared in, as you made a point of mentioning at the time, was that of a 16th century sea captain,”

“So I was trying to find common ground. A way to communicate with an inferior species in a way your tiny mind might have been able to comprehend. I still fail to see how this is relevant—”

Q’s annoyed eye-roll was an expression amplified ten-fold by the refracting mists around him. The entire atmosphere shivering with the entity’s pent-up complaints and the fog’s own febrile attempts at following the laws of physics.

Picard however, was smiling as he cut through Q’s rather righteous tirade. He was pleased, perhaps, at the admission of any such ‘common ground’.

“I want to know how deep it goes,” Picard explained.

And that was all the enigmatic answer Picard deigned to give before he strode forward once again, disappearing into the nebulous fog with renewed

vigour. Q was left with little choice but to follow, muttering his numerous complaints at the trembling raindrops scattering urgently away before him.

The pair carried on in (relative) silence for another seven minutes, give or take a few seconds. It was just long enough for Q to begin drawing breath for another loud suggestion (that surely even one of those primitive human modes of transportation like a horse and carriage would be better than this, this muck). But just as he was about to speak, the fog seemed, ever so lightly, to lift. It was a simple, gentle parting of the clouds, like a crowd parting before a queen.

Through those gentler clouds a brightly lit sign was suddenly visible. Despite its angular Telluronian runes, the sign wouldn't have looked out of place on the kind of dockside Q's 16th century costume suggested familiarity with.

The sign was a roughly cut wooden one hanging from an elaborate wrought-iron brace above a doorway. The doorway itself the smooth, marble-like substance more typical of Telluron architecture. The sign proclaimed the name of the establishment in glowing script.



"The Captain's Table." Read Q.

"Ah, so you can see it," Jean-Luc nodded, clearly pleased as he looked up at his companion again. There was a wry smile playing across his lips. The kind of gently testing, gently teasing, drily challenging look that only a teacher — or perhaps a captain — ever wore.

"Now, the question is, can you enter?"

"What?!! You are asking me if I can enter?" Q spluttered, indigent. "Enter?" Scowling down at the human next to him, Q continued. "You dragged me all the way down here in this, this *disgusting damp*. Just to find out if *I* can open a door?"

Jean-Luc smiled fondly through Q's protestations, clearly used to the complaints and in no mood to give an easy answer tonight. He merely pondered the sign, reading it out loud again to himself before apparently segueing into another topic altogether.

"You and I have been getting on together quite well recently, wouldn't you say Q?" Picard asked.

"Well yes, mon capitaine, I suppose we have," Q replied with a faint air of

hurt, as if the idea that they had ever not gotten along was a vaguely offensive one.

"It would be fair to say that you've not merely tested and judged us, but gone so far as to show care and concern for my crew?"

"I suppose..." Q's eyes were narrowed now, deeply suspicious.

"On occasion you've even offered to sacrifice yourself for us. A gesture, in fact, not entirely unlike that classic sign of captaincy. Being prepared to go down with the ship,"

"I'm not sure I like where this is going, Jean-Luc," Q replied, still suspicious and as prickly as ever at the implication that he might actually care about the Enterprise or her crew.

"The Captain's Table," Picard read the words off the sign once more. "It is, as the name implies, a bar. A rather ordinary drinking establishment like any across the galaxy. But that is not quite all it is,"

"Oh? Let me guess," Q said in a voice simply *dripping* with sarcasm. Omnipotence could only wrest with petulance for so long once the entity's interest was truly peeked. "You think there's something special in the name. As if a sign or some micro-brained bouncer is going to keep me out of anywhere in the universe I care to enter."

Picard didn't seem perturbed by Q's continued protests. He had long grown used to his companion's nature, after all. And true to his own nature, he responded with '*Hamlet*'.

"Surely there are more things in heaven and earth, Q, than are dreamt of in even your philosophy,"

"Well, we'll see about that," Q declared boldly and then with a *snap*—



nothing happened



—there had been the snap. The shimmer in the air and the diamanté flash of light. And in an instant Picard and Q might have disincorporated but then here they were, exactly as they had been.

"*Fine*," Q said, looking at his hand in disgust and wiping it off on his



uniform as if that might erase the stain of failed omnipotence. "I suppose we are doing this your way,"

Q made much then of linking his fingers together and stretching, limbering up each and every joint that could conceivably be involved in an action as fine-tuned as turning a door knob. If one listened closely enough, the hush of the fog might still have been disturbed by mutters of 'ridiculous notion' or 'open a door!'

Uncoiling out of the stretch, Q waved his hand grandiosely towards the door and then, a hair's breadth away from the handle, there was a sudden hesitation, a change of tack from the entity. With suddenly much greater economy of motion than before, Q darted his hand back from the door to grasp Picard's own. And he stood there, looking down at those joined hands for a moment, studying them as if surprised by his own display of vulnerability. Picard met his eye then. In contrast, to Q's barely disguised jitters, Jean-Luc was calm, even serene. Not at all alarmed by the sudden physical contact between them.

"Are you ready, Q?" Picard asked gently.

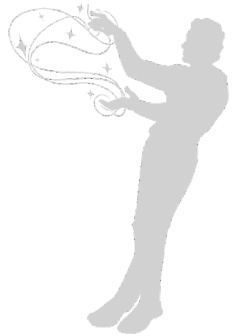
There was an almost imperceptible nod, a squeeze, perhaps, of Picard's hand, and then, hands still tightly clasped Q was reaching out with his other hand, grasping the knob and, at last, *turning* -

This time, that was all it took. Tellurionian engineering did the rest and the door swung silently open onto a scene that couldn't have been more different to the silent, mist-filled atmosphere they were currently standing in. Before them was what appeared to be a crowded wine bar, quite possibly from somewhere in France. Oaken barrels and an array of bottles were displayed behind a bar of darkly polished wood. The floors and tables too, seemed to be roughly hewn oak. But between floor and bar, a jostling, much more modern and eclectic crowded array of representatives from all over the galaxy. Presumably all captains; and all merry, bustling, and in good cheer.

"You!" A heavily accented voice exclaimed from out of the crowd. A tall Klingon pushed his way towards them, a pint of something in his left hand and a razor sharp d'k tahg dagger open in his right.

"You're new," the Klingon proclaimed. Looking Q up and down and ignoring Picard's attempts to intercede.

"I am," Q replied. Drawing himself straight, he was almost as tall as the Klingon, but not quite.



"I don't like you," the Klingon declared and abruptly upended his pint of beer over Q's head.

The amber liquid did what the fog could not, and made immediate, intimate contact with this omnipotent lord of time and space. As Q stood there, stock-still with shock, the amber liquid soaked into his hair and dripped in turbid rivulets down Q's face and onto to his shoulders. The coppery droplets coming to rest against the very four silvery pips that had granted Q his entrance to the bar.

The Klingon watched for Q's reaction, a dangerous growl in his throat. Q, disgusted, wiped the pungent liquid from his face and met the Klingon's eyes through wheat-soaked lashes. Whatever the Klingon saw in those hangdog eyes, it must have been enough. Because he sheathed his d'k tahg and threw his head back in a raucous laugh.

"I'm Peng, welcome to the Captain's table!" The Klingon clapped Q on the shoulder and turned to the bar. "Cap! We need towels, and more ale!" He called. But the bartender seemed to have noticed the fracas and was already approaching, towels in hand, as Peng wobbled off into the crowd.

"Thank you, Cap," Picard said, taking the proffered towels. "Is the fee the usual...?"

'Cap' shook his head. "Not tonight, special occasion. Your table is over there, I'll bring you your drinks in a moment."

"Thank you." Picard smiled and ushered Q towards the quiet booth that the bartender had indicated in a distant and curtained off corner of the bar. Handing him a towel as they walked. Despite the sizeable crowd in the bar, it somehow seemed to part just like the fog as they approached the corner, slowly thinning out so that by the time they sat, the table seemed a comfortable distance away from anyone else. Creating a cosily private and undisturbed spot amongst the throng. Q gave the crowd one last suspicious glare as he dried himself off. Clearly recognising (and disliking) any bending of time and space that was none of his doing.

But at last, after a long moment of staring out at the bar, Q seemed to bring his thoughts to a conclusion and turned to Picard, smiling.

"This is what you humans call a date."

"Yes, I think it is," Picard was smiling openly now too.

"Then why are we here? Seems an awful lot of effort when I could take

you quite literally anywhere in the universe you wish?"

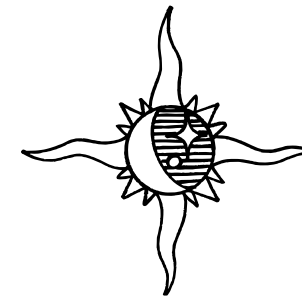
Jean-Luc didn't say anything as Cap brought over their drinks. But from the smile in his eyes it was clear that *'Hamlet'* was once more hovering behind his lips. He raised his glass in a toast instead.

"I brought you here for a drink, Q. For a conversation. On equal terms. And perhaps, for something more after that," Picard set his glass down and leaned in, crossing his arms across his chest as he looked earnestly up at Q.

"We have been growing quite close, you and I, Q," Picard said, almost shyly. "I thought perhaps it was time we had a discussion about where things are going. Somewhere like here, where we have a more even footing. If you are willing."

Q gave a disgruntled snap of his fingers. Nothing happened. But this time, Q smiled. His expression open and as shyly earnest as the expression on his companion's face. He picked up his own glass.

"You know what Jean-Luc? I think I would like that very much."



Author's Note

Inspiration for this story comes from the Star Trek book series "The Captain's Table" and specifically the second book in the series, which tells the story of Captain Picard's first visit to the bar, one of the first books that introduced me to the world of Trek novels and through that, to the idea of fanfic. The bar seems to exist in another dimension, its door capable of appearing across time and space to any ship's captain. Drinks are free, payment is provided in the form of a story.

I loved the idea of there being somewhere where Picard might be the one with the upper hand over Q's omnipotence for a change, and so the Captain's Table seemed an ideal place for Q and Picard to take that next step in exploring their relationship further...



Butterfly Effect

Long ago, the humans had started to call this phenomenon "Butterfly Effect". One tiny action or decision that had significant impact on someone's life.

Not for a single Q of the continuum did this ever seem important.

But now this Q wondered...

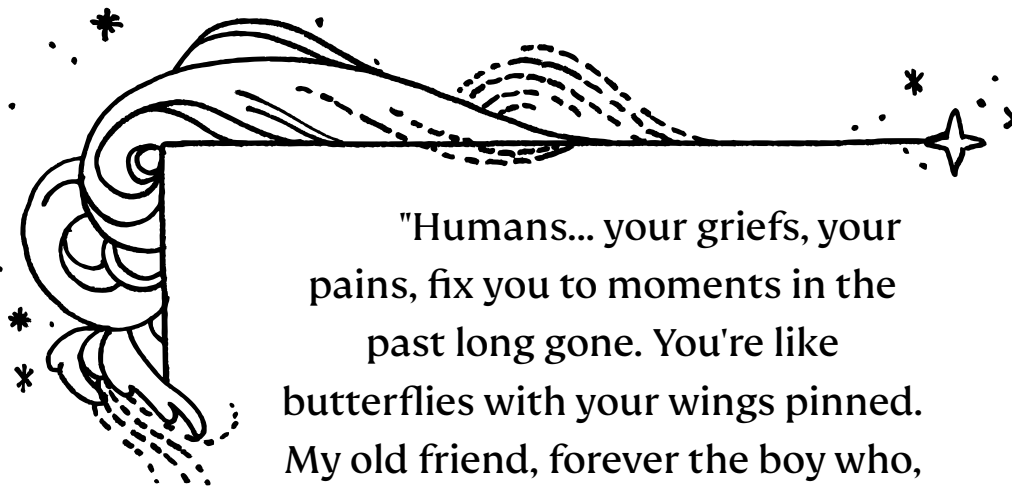
If acting differently could've changed anything.

What if he hadn't stopped the Enterprise? If he hadn't put the crew on trial?

If he hadn't tried to push their captain further to see just how human he was?

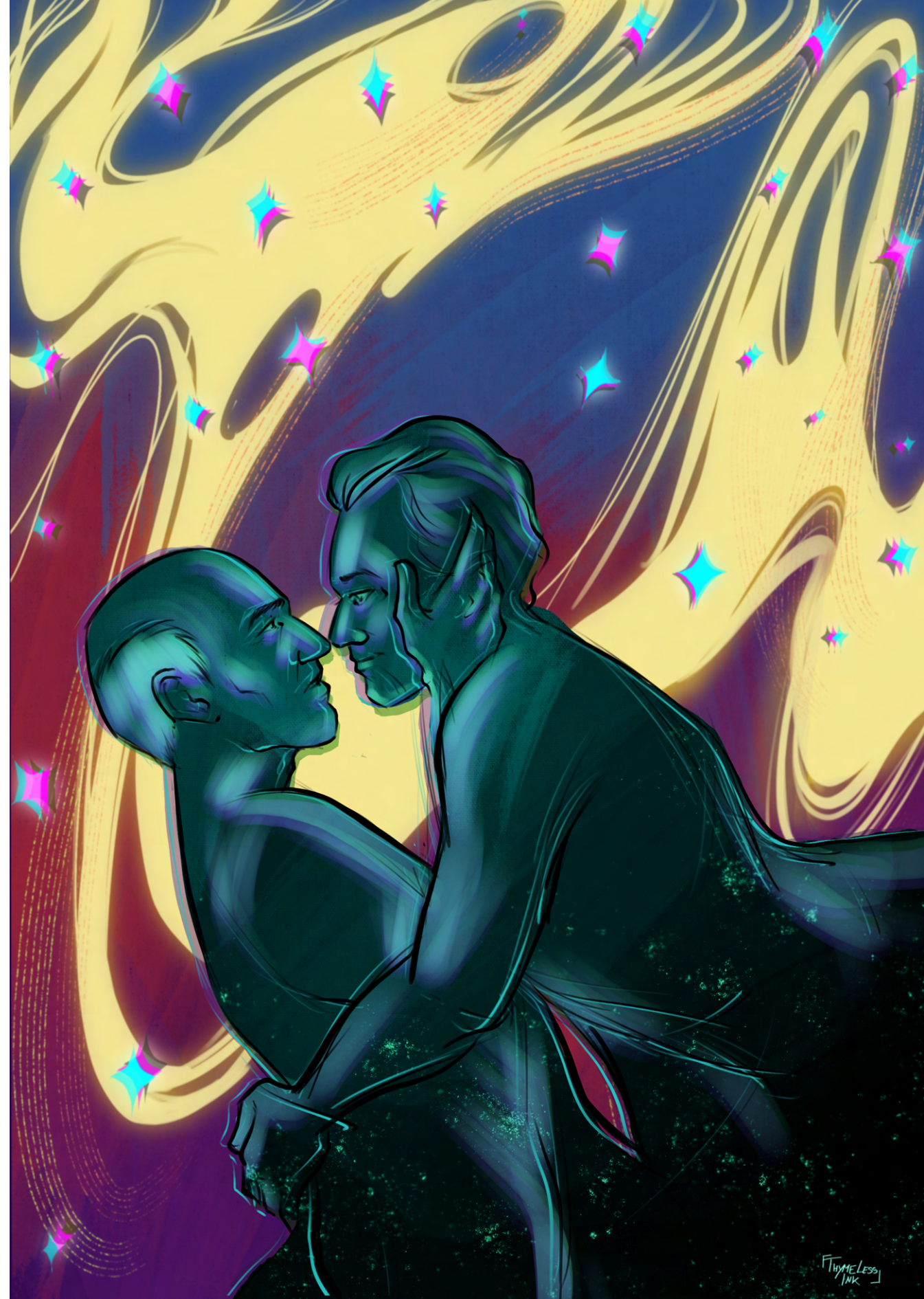
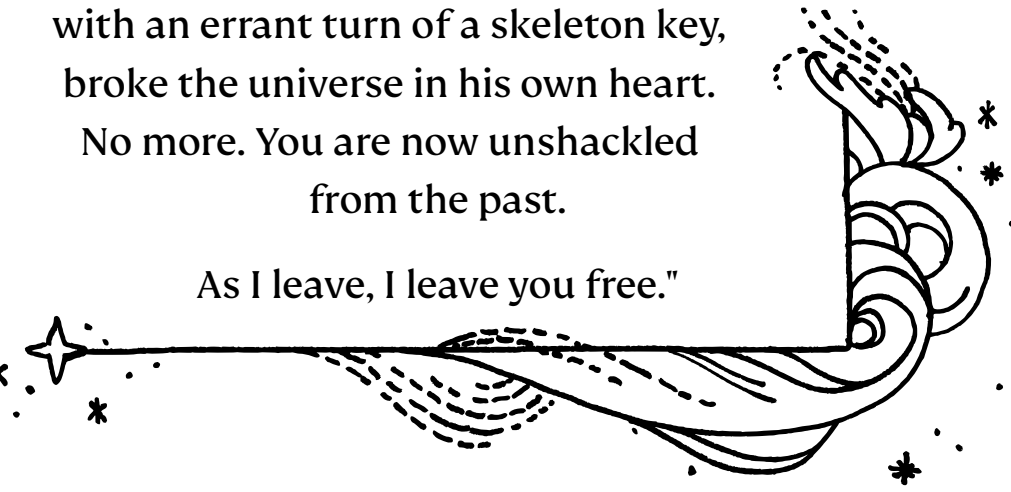
Could've any single choice of his avoided that he felt for this magnificent human what he had never felt before?

Love.



"Humans... your griefs, your
pains, fix you to moments in the
past long gone. You're like
butterflies with your wings pinned.
My old friend, forever the boy who,
with an errant turn of a skeleton key,
broke the universe in his own heart.
No more. You are now unshackled
from the past.

As I leave, I leave you free."





"You ask me why it matters. It matters to me. You matter to me. Even gods have favorites, Jean-Luc. And you've always been one of mine."

The Golden Age



‘To me, fair friend, you never can be old,
For as you were when first your eye I ey’d,
Such seems your beauty still.’ — Sonnet 104

He became aware gradually. What had once been smooth was now wrinkled; what had been dexterous was now measured; what was deep space was now a vineyard he quite enjoyed annoying his beloved by plucking random grapes from.

It was disconcerting, if he thought too hard about it. Jean-Luc Picard was indomitable, *immutable*, laughing in the face of gods until they fell irrevocably and eternally for his stoic French charms. He shouldn’t *ever* slow down, mortality be damned.

Time had always been his least favourite universal constant — he had little need of her, and she’d always been a capricious little harlot on the rare occasions he’d had to abide by her whims.

“You’re staring at me again.”

Q blinked, meeting eyes with his amused husband with a start.

“Was not,” he said with a snatch of petulance. “And even if I was, well... the view



is excellent.”

Picard laughed softly, eyes crinkling. “Oh, I doubt that,” he murmured, twisting a grape from its vine and popping it into his basket before looking back up at the god. “You’re thinking about how old I am again.”

It wasn’t a question, even though it was a discussion that had never been had — there had been more than enough instances of Q’s gentle hands across places never formerly wrinkled, curious eyes locked onto facial lines, for the conclusion to be accurately drawn.

“In a way,” Q muttered, snapping fingers: the grapevine before him transmuted simultaneously into two glasses of *Château Picard*, one of which he passed across with a wink. “It’s not *age*, darling. It’s just another facet; another way my favourite diamond sparkles. You’re still just as dashing.”

Picard smiled. “Not considering endings, then?”

“No,” the god said honestly. “Besides, I’m quite attached to my *own* little matching form.”

He rubbed his short white beard thoughtfully.

“Oh believe me, so am I,” Picard noted with an appraising gaze and a hint of mischief, to Q’s delicious little smirk. “But as we know, after an ending comes a beginning.”

“Indeed it does.”

“A beginning I’ve long since promised you.”

“Yes, you have.” Q was inspecting vines with utter fascination.

“And, thus, you shouldn’t have anything to worry about.”

The god glanced across, features settling. “I’m not worried, darling.”

“I’m glad, because you’ve no need to be.”

A mutual understanding passed between them, and Q smiled, not-worry dissipating as though a nebula’s dispersing stardust.

“Pick your infernal grapes, dear,” he told his beloved. “I’m taking you to Risa for lunch.”

Picard *beamed*. A wonderful compromise to the slower man — all the quiet beauty of the French countryside, coupled with all the joys of exploration.

“*Marvellous*. Or, and may the stars forgive me for the thought, perhaps you could just cheat and we could attend for brunch instead?”

Q’s lips melded into the most delightful grin. “Oh I truly *have* corrupted you,” he answered, laughing. “Consider it done, dearest.”

A double-snap, one with each hand, had the harvest complete and a miraculously pre-booked table half a quadrant away now comfortably sat at, luminous cocktails already present to sip on.

Q glanced over at his cheerful partner, and nodded inwardly, Risa’s pink sea’s salted breeze soft upon his senses.

Happy ending, he thought gently, content. *Happier beginning*.



About The Creators



celestialholz (or just celestialholz nowadays) has been kicking around since 2013, and has published around 2% of the Qcard fanfiction she's ever written on AO3 (some of it's also on Tumblr, in her defence.) She almost kills gods in her spare time, and drinks a lot of tea. You can find her in her duplex apartment at the centre of the Lemon Slice Nebula, where she might well be writing fic and/or meta.

Essence_stealer (or just Ess) became a Q fan at the grand old age of five and, after some convincing, finally accepted Picard as part of the arrangement. A talented writer, they are also a published author in addition to their multiple fanfics. When not sailing through a sea of stardust, they can be found haunting cozy bookshops while hiding from the horrors of the great British weather.

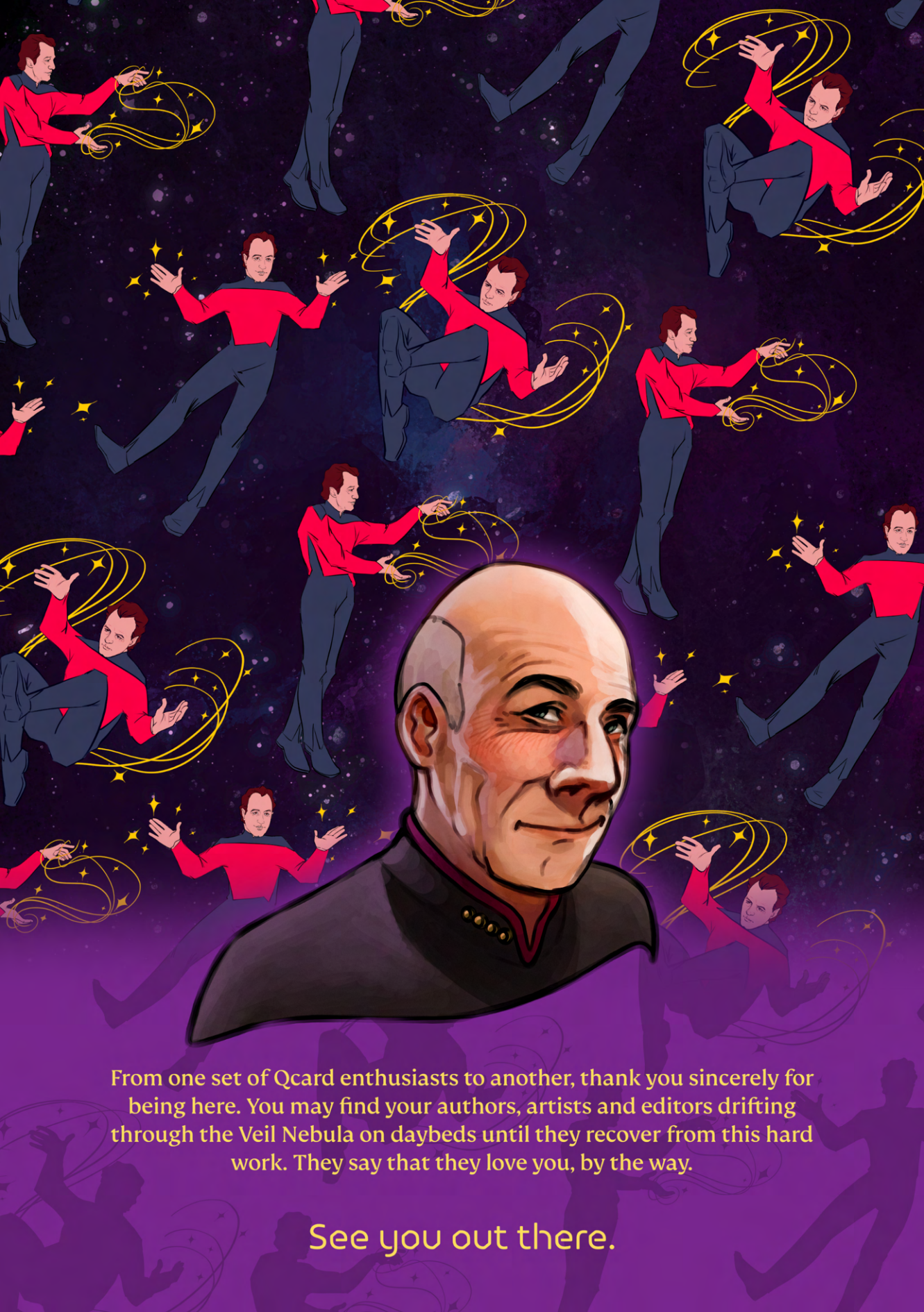
NoonDarkDuke joins us all the way from the distant galaxy of 'Down Under,' and has been living and breathing Star Trek since childhood. We may have encouraged them to make fic for this as they've never written Qcard in all their years of fandom, and thankfully they felt us mad enough to listen to.

predawnite has been a member of our little community since 2021 (September 4th specifically, or so we're told!) and is the Continuum Archivist, Holder of the Ancient Lore, and the origin of more prompts than there are stars in the sky. They occasionally dabble in writing when the whim strikes, as well as hosting some wonderful fandom events.

ThymelessInk was a fan of their native German Trek parody before finding space's best god and captain back in 2024. Another fabulous artist, they can be seen occasionally teaching the Continuum's teenagers how to manipulate space-time.

ToriSohva started their Trek among the stars in 2016, quickly falling in love with our redoubtable capitaine and his irrepressible trickster. What started out as a casual ship was hit by a rouge wave of hyper-fixation some linear time later, and the rest is history. An evocative artist and talented writer, you can find them in the closest black hole singularity to Finland, likely with several cups of tea scattered nearby.





From one set of Qcard enthusiasts to another, thank you sincerely for being here. You may find your authors, artists and editors drifting through the Veil Nebula on daybeds until they recover from this hard work. They say that they love you, by the way.

See you out there.