

## All My Children: A Space Odyssey

by Posse Gal Jo

SCENE: ERICA'S PENTHOUSE. ERICA AND JACK ARE ON THE COUCH, SNUGGLING IN FRONT OF THE FIRE. IT IS NEW YEAR'S EVE, THE MILLENNIUM. HOLIDAY DECORATIONS AND LIT CANDLES ARE EVERYWHERE. SUDDENLY, OUT OF THIN AIR, AN IMPOSING FIGURE DRESSED IN RED APPEARS, SITTING ON THE MANTELPIECE. HE BEMUSEDLY OBSERVES THE COUPLE WHO ARE LOCKED IN AN EMBRACE. JACK SEES THE FIGURE FIRST...

JACK: (startled) What the....

ERICA: (turning toward the mantel) Jack! Jack! (Climbing into his lap) What is it?

JACK: I have no idea. (dumping Erica on the couch and shielding her with his body as he looks closer at the motionless figure) Wait. No. It's not possible. Could it be....?

THE FIGURE LETS OUT AN IMPERIOUS LAUGH, CLEARLY ENJOYING HIS COMMAND. HE HOPS DOWN FROM HIS PERCH AND DOES A STRANGE LITTLE DANCE, SINGING A TUNELESS SONG THAT MAKES UP FOR IN MIRTH WHAT IT LACKS IN SKILL.

JACK: Oh my God. It's Q. I'd know that red unitard and tone-deaf singing anywhere. The last Star Trek convention was crawling with Q wanna-bees....

ERICA: Cue wannabees? You mean the extras? (confused) Jack, what are you saying? Cues? (looking around) We didn't miss any cues, did we? (suddenly horrified) Oh my God, Jack! You went to a Star Trek convention?

JACK: Never mind that. We have bigger problems. This is a so-called master of the universe, and what I want to know right now is, what is he doing in our universe?

Q LAUGHS, MAKING A GRANDIOSE GESTURE AROUND THE ENTIRE PENTHOUSE.

Q: Oh my puny little friend, every universe is my universe! Do you think I am limited by space or time, or producers, or set designers, or unions, or anything that consumes your tiny little meaningless microscopic minds that can only comprehend the most miniscule....

JACK: Yadda yadda yadda. I saw all those episodes. Get to the point, Q.

Q: It seems we have a rupture in the time/space continuum. It appears to be coming from points unknown throughout cyberspace. An attempt to transport you two back to a time when you were apparently -- what's the word -- happy. There are hundreds of thought waves trying to recreate that past and I, for one, am NOT happy. This was not part of the plan.

JACK AND ERICA LOOK AT HIM, PUZZLED.

Q: (exasperated) Remember Paris?

ERICA: Oh yes, of course we remember Paris.

JACK: And we always will. In fact, I'll tell you how long I'll remember Paris. After I'm dead I will still remember Paris.

ERICA: Mas oui!

JACK: Paris is our favorite memory, and the Posse's too.

Q: Yes. The Posse. Exactly! The Jackson Posse. They must be behind all of this. They are scrambling the cosmic consciousness with their incessant rantings about getting the two of you back to Paris. At first the Q found them mildly amusing, with their ramblings about marshmallows and twirling napkins and whatnot. But now they have become a nuisance, with their unfailing loyalty. A human quality I find quite tiresome, I might add. However, they have managed to raise a bit of a ruckus, haven't they. Writing those infernal letters, those endless emails. And those polls! Why, sometimes we have to put several Q on the job just to deal with the...

JACK: What do you mean, "we"?

Q: What?

JACK: You said "we."

Q: (evasive) No I didn't.

JACK: Yes you did. You said "sometimes we have to put several Q on the job."

Q: I KNOW WHAT I SAID. (beat) But I never said it.

ERICA: Q, what are you saying? (turns to Jack) Jack, what is he saying?

JACK: If he's saying what I think he's saying, then...but that can't be. Q! Tell us!

Q: There's nothing to tell. You are not privy to the master plan. Your teeny minds are incapable of handling it. Humans are bad enough to deal with. Fictional humans are impossible.

ERICA: (indignant) Fictional! I am not fictional. I am a human being!

JACK: Sweetheart, we are fictional. But our love is real, don't ever forget that.

ERICA: Oh Jackson. (They kiss)

Q: Excuse me. Omnipotent Being talking here!

JACK: Oh. Sorry. Where were we? Oh yes. Q, you referred to 'we'. Just who do you mean?

Q: Nothing. Forget it. I must go now, and try to set the universe back into order...

JACK: Q! Tell us what you're talking about or....

Q: Oh all RIGHT. You're going to find out anyway. There ARE no writers at All My Children. There haven't been for eons. A whole bunch of Q have been writing the show since Erica's third husband, and even we aren't sure who that is anymore.

ERICA and JACK: WHAT?

JACK: You've been moving us around just like real humans in a real universe, you've been using us as pawns in some sick game to make people crazy, to keep them addicted to their TV sets, to make them grow old waiting for something to happen. To keep them watching in case Erica and I ever become - what's that word again - happy?

Q: Yes, and it's been GLORIOUS. The power. The complete and total control of not just the universe, but a daytime drama! The perfect combination of real and fictional humans interacting on a daily basis. Some of them don't even know which is which anymore. It does have its downside, though. (pouting) Do you think we enjoy being referred to as The Idiots In Charge? We're quite fond of The Powers That Be, of course, because we ARE. Who else could put Mike Roy's ashes back together into an entirely new fictional human?

ERICA: I really wish he would stop using the F word.

Q: We could make it all go away, you know. The convoluted plots, the pod characters, the conflicting history. But we won't. We never will. We are the Q, and as long as we are in charge, we will write you any way we want.

ERICA: This is terrible. This is unacceptable. I don't know what to do. If you were a bear I could stare you down, but I've never met a Q before. (turns to Jack) Jack?

JACK: Don't worry, sweetheart, I'll handle this. (to Q) Q, you are despicable. This is beneath even you, playing with innocent people's emotions for years and then telling us there's nothing we can do about it.

Q: But there isn't, mon ami! The Q are in control. We can send you to the attic and never bring you back. We can change your name, or give you two names. We can change your face and call it "plastic surgery." We can make you twins. Or triplets, if we wanted. We can make you dead, and then give you more dialogue than when you were alive. You are powerless.

JACK: No, we are not, "mon ami." Erica and I will start our own show.

ERICA: That's right. Oh, Jack, that's brilliant. I can have my own cosmetics company AND my own show.

JACK: OUR show, sweetheart.

Erica: Yes, of course. Our show. It will be wonderful. The Erica and Jack show.

JACK: Yes, sweetheart, it will be wonderful. The Jack and Erica Show.

ERICA: But...

Q: And who do you think is going to create this little fantasy of yours? Neither of you can write.

ERICA: He's right, Jackson. The pens on my desk at Enchantment don't even have any ink.

JACK: (pacing) Let me think, let me think. Wait, I know. I know the perfect people to write this show.

Q AND ERICA: Who?

JACK: The Jackson Posse, that's who.

Q: Oh puhleeze. Don't make me laugh. They have jobs, they have husbands and children and cats and dogs and lives of their own....

JACK: Oh, you think so? Shows how much you know. So the Q isn't omnipotent after all, otherwise you would know their entire existence is devoted to keeping Erica and me together. The Posse will keep Jack alive forever in Pine Valley. Even if I end up as a hat rack at BJ's, I know that I will always have the undying love and loyalty of real humans.

ERICA: Me too Jack?

JACK: Oh you too, sweetheart. Absolutely. The Posse loves you too. They love me more, of course, but, well, you understand.

ERICA: Oh yes, Jack. I do. I do understand. (They hug)

Q: (disgusted) Humans! Real, fictional, they're all alike. Maddening, infuriating, and always, always wrong. Go ahead. Have your little Posse work their scrawny magic. Let them write you a fabulous wedding, deliriously happy storylines, an ecstatic future where you live happily ever after. You'll be back. You'll be begging for the Q to write for you again.

JACK: Never. Now get out before I turn you into all the other letters of the alphabet.

ERICA: Oh Jackson!

Q: (sighing) Ah well, you can't win them all. I must go. So many soaps, so little time. But first, for your unswerving tenacity -- as irritating as it is -- a parting gift. (Erica is suddenly wearing a French maid outfit)

Q VANISHES, LAUGHING.

JACK: Come here, you. (They kiss. in the background, the Eiffel Tower and fireworks appear.)

FADE TO BLACK.