

Things Left Undone

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The Year is 2382. The Borg are defeated, and the Typhon Pact sits at the Federation's door. Despite this, Starfleet continues its promise of Exploration, sending the USS Endalla and its Intrepid crew into the Gamma Quadrant.

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0 - Prologue

The year is 2382. The Federation, still picking up the pieces after the devastating invasion by the Borg a year ago, is now facing a new threat calling themselves the Typhon Pact. Despite this, President Bacco continues to make good on her promise that Starfleet's original mandate of exploration will continue. The USS Endalla, Captained by Jonathan Reynolds, will set out into the unexplored regions of the Gamma Quadrant. Her crew, many of whom still dealing with the loss of loved ones and places they called home, steel themselves as they are asked to leave a Federation facing uncertainty, to seek out new life and new civilizations, to boldly go where no man has gone before.

Somewhere in the Gamma Quadrant...

The rain poured all around her as she ran across the open field before her. The man she was chasing was, for the moment, keeping out of her reach, which was just serving to infuriate her even more.

Amanda Harrison had been hunting him for the last five years, tasked by Starfleet Intelligence to bring him to justice for the high crime of treason after he provided the Dominion with vital information that lead to the deaths of ten thousand, one hundred and forty-three marines and Starfleet personnel.

The surprise attack on Orias III was supposed to go off without a hitch and speed up the eventual assault on Cardassia Prime. Starfleet's Eighth and Ninth fleets were to secure the system, while the 112th and 5th Starfleet Marine Corps divisions secured the surface and its valuable duranium mines.

Initial defenses were light, and the system was secured with in the first few hours. Half way through the landing operations, that was when things went to hell.

A Dominion fleet was using the corona of the systems O-type star to conceal their presence and ambushed the fleet in orbit.

Amanda watched in horror as flashes appeared in the sky above her as she listened to the frantic communications. The blood drained from her face when the call came out from the fleet commander to retreat, leaving the eleven thousand marines without support, and no hope of retrieval.

But that wasn't the end of their troubles. The Dominion had used the planets kelbonite deposits to hide the presence of a Breeding facility, and the forty-five thousand Jem'Hadar that were now making their presence known.

It took three months for Starfleet to rescue them. Three months of brutal combat. Three months of cold, bitter winter. Three months of waking up to find the person next to you had frozen to death in their sleep. Three months of starvation as supplies dwindled. If there was a hell, Amanda remembered thinking at the time, it had frozen over and its name was Orias III.

When the war ended in 2375, dominion intelligence records from the war began to surface. The Orias III

disaster was the result of the battle plans being leaked days before the invasion by a Marine 1st Lieutenant named Richard Baker.

Amanda didn't know what to think when she heard the news. What hurt was that she had been betrayed. Betrayed by a Marine that she served with throughout the war. Baker was her unit's intelligence officer. In the captured intelligence record, it revealed that the Dominion using its Orion Syndicate connections had captured Baker's sister and used her as leverage to obtain any intelligence they could. It was just the universes sadistic sense of timing that they were about to mount an invasion when the dominion started pressing him for information.

To Amanda's knowledge at the time, Baker was listed MIA after the battle. She remembered waking up one morning and he was nowhere to be found. At the time, she thought he had just wandered off and committed suicide, as some marines had done as the bleak situation continued on. But the report said something different. Baker was extracted from Orias and transported to an Orion colony where they were holding her sister.

In 2377, Starfleet Intelligence, acting on information that Baker had been spotted on Vega IX. Amanda followed him across the breadth of the Federation, and eventually into the Gamma Quadrant, where his luck had run out. After a brief dogfight in orbit of a Class-M moon orbiting a gas giant, she had forced him to crash land.

"I've had enough of this!" Amanda yelled as she stopped and aimed her rifle, shooting Baker in the knee, causing him to crumple to the ground.

"What are you going to do now? Kill me?!" Baker yelled over the droning roar of the rain.

"No. A death like that is too good for you, traitor. You're going to pay for your crimes!" Amanda said as she wiped the water from her face, secretly glad that the rain was covering up the tears brought about by her adrenaline fueled rage and the voice in the back of her head screaming for her to pull the trigger.

In the distance, a bright light flashed. At first, she thought it was lightning, but the thunder never came. Then she found herself surrounded by a dozen armed aliens.

"Drop your weapon!" one of them called out. Amanda lowered her rifle and slung it across her shoulder by the strap.

"I'm Captain Amanda Harrison of the Starfleet Marine Corps representing the United Federation of Planets. I'm apprehending this criminal to face justice." Amanda started to explain.

"Really now?" the one who ordered her to drop her weapon said in response.

"If there's an issue with how he will be treated, I assure you that he will not be harmed, and that the federation has no capital punishment." Amanda continued, eliciting a laugh from the alien. The hair on the back of Amanda's neck started to tingle, just like it had done countless times before right before things were about to hit the fan.

"That would be just fine if I was a representative of my government. Sadly I'm not, and really don't

care.” The alien said apathetically, raising his hand to point at her. Instantly two of his men raised their rifles and opened fire before Amanda could do the same. Two bolts of crimson energy struck her chest and she crumpled to the ground.

Barely conscious, the last thing she saw was the butt of a rifle slamming down on her face.

1 - Chapter One

January 12th 2382

Toronto, Canada

"Th... ime is... evn hundred hours."

"Huh? Wha..." Marion Andrews asked, drowsy and not quite awake yet, let alone even wanting to get out of bed.

"The time is now 0700 hours and 40 seconds." The computer said in response.

"Alright, alright, I'm up, I'm up." She said, swinging her legs over the side of her bed then sliding her feet into her bright pink slippers that were most likely too fuzzy for some peoples tastes, but they suited her just fine.

Getting up at this time wasn't her normal routine, but being on leave for the last month in between assignments had gotten her to slip into habits that she thought were kicked while at the academy.

"Hot chocolate, warm, double sweet with a dash of mint." She instructed the replicator walking across her Toronto apartment. "Computer, are there any messages for me?"

"You have one message from Admiral Richard Hatch, Starfleet Department of Personnel."

"An Admiral is contacting me?" she asked herself, confused but still enjoying her morning vice. "Play back the message."

"Good day Ensign, I'm Admiral Hatch from the Starfleet personnel office. Sorry that it's taken a while to find you a new posting, looks like I got one for you though..."

"Hatch... where have I heard that name before?"

"...if you could come down to San Francisco tomorrow morning, say around eleven, we can go over the details. Oh, if you speak with your mother before then, tell her I'll have her winnings sent over soon as I get my hands on a bottle. Hatch out."

Marion snapped her fingers as soon as it dawned on her that the man was in her mother's academy class, and that her mother, even though she retired almost five years ago, still played poker with her former classmates.

"Way to clean out an admiral mom, I'll be piloting a mining freighter for the rest of my career."

* * *

San Francisco, USA
Starfleet Headquarters

"How's the Endalla coming along?" Admiral Hatch asked, tinkering with a padd reclining in his office chair.

"Just waiting for senior staff to arrive, which is why I'm here, I guess. I'm also still looking for an Alpha Shift helmsman, Lydia suddenly deciding to not reenlist after her maternity leave left me in a bind." Captain Jonathan Reynolds confessed.

"I heard about that, but it's understandable though, few mothers choose to raise families on starships. This brings me to why I asked you here." Hatch began to explain, pressing a control on his desk. "You can send her in now Mike." He told his secretary, and then looked towards his office doors.

They slid open and a young woman in her mid-twenties with red hair, piercing blue eyes and a confident demeanor to match, entered.

"Ensign Marion Andrews reporting as ordered, sir." She stated formally.

"Thanks for coming Ms. Andrews; again, I'm sorry it took as long as it did for an opening to come up, but it just so happens one recently came to my attention last night while your mother... got the upper hand on me in poker." Hatch said, and then gestured towards Jonathan. "This is Captain Jonathan Reynolds, Jon, your new helmsman."

"You're Vivian's daughter aren't you?" Jon asked.

"Yes sir." Marion answered with a small smile on her face.

"I served with your mother on the Trudeau before she made XO on the Damocles. I take it you're a good pilot?" Jon asked.

"She takes after her mother. Better even." Hatch interjected before Marion could answer.

"Alright, good enough for me; welcome to the crew of the Endalla." Jon said, shaking Marion's hand.

"Slight problem though, there's one last thing to take care of. Alpha shift requires a Lieutenant Junior Grade Officer or higher." Hatch explained, handing the padd he was working on to Jon, who looked it over, nodded, then handed it back getting a small box in return.

"Ensign, front and center." Jon ordered, and Marion stepped forward and snapped to attention. "Based on the recommendation of Starfleet Command, I hereby promote you to the rank of Lieutenant Junior Grade, with all the rights and privileges entitled to that rank, and assign you as Chief of Flight Operations, USS Endalla effective immediately." Jon said, affixing a half pip to her collar.

"Thank you sirs." Marion said with a bit too much emotion in her voice. "When do I report?"

"The Endalla launches in a week, I expect all senior officers to be on board in three days." Jon

answered.

"I'll be there. If this is all, I have to get back to Toronto to get packing... And to kill my mother." She joked half-heartedly.

"Now, Lieutenant, don't be too hard on your mother. She didn't have too much to do with this." Hatch said, trying to defend his friend.

"Sir, I understand that you're a friend of my mothers, but she promised me that she would never use her influence to help me advance my career." Marion said a little defensively.

"All she did was let me know about an opening on the Endalla before I would have found out this morning when I got in today. As for you getting the posting, and the promotion, it was Captain Riggs, who was also at the game I might add, who put your name forward for the post, and his glowing recommendation and your exemplary performance evaluations that earned your promotion. I think what you should be doing is sending your former CO a message."

"Well... I..." Marion stammered, embarrassed, and taken aback by how highly her former Captain thought of her. Then she just smiled.

"Dismissed, Lieutenant." Admiral Hatch instructed.

"Rich, what have you gotten me into?" Jon asked.

"If she's anything like I remember when she was a kid, you're in for a treat."

"I'm sure; now, I've got an idea on who I want for my XO. He's a Marine Major, James Scott." Jon said, continuing on with the meeting.

"I know of him. Pike Medal of Valor with Clusters, Federation Medal of Honor, four Purple hearts... Man's a hero."

"If he's not available, that's fine, I have some other ideas."

"No, he's available; in fact he's all yours. Trick is convincing him to take the offer. Since the end of the war he's accrued quite a disciplinary record," Hatch said, calling up his record on a padd. "Two counts assaulting a superior officer, disorderly conduct causing public nuisance, and being intoxicated while on duty."

"What would cause someone to slip like that?" Jon asked.

"Man lost most of his squadron during the Borg Invasion, including his brother who was expecting a child with his wife; and his XO, a close friend, has been doing spook work for Intel for the last five years. Needless to say, I'm guessing he's taking recent events pretty hard."

"I guess I have my work cut out for me. If you could get the paper work ready, I'll see what I can do about convincing him." Jon said after a moment of consideration.

"Don't hold your breath, Jon; I don't want to have to put this on you. When you go see him, let him know that since he's refused every offer before this one, and if he doesn't take this assignment, he can expect to not have a career by the end of the day. Hero or not, I can't afford to have officers who behave like he has recently." Hatch said dryly, honestly wishing he didn't have to say it.

"Where is he?" Jon asked.

"His current assignment is Earth Space Dock Fighter Command, Commander Air Group. But it's my understanding he is currently residing in the stockade for that second assault charge." Hatch explained. "I'll have the paperwork sent to you within the hour; you got a shuttle to catch."

2 - Chapter Two

The walls were your standard Starfleet gray sheet metal. Very utilitarian, but what could you expect from a military organization. It was larger than some of the other brigs James had seen in his career, perks of this being the Federations largest space installation he guessed. But this time it was different, and that was what was grating him.

He was on the wrong side of the force field.

Whatever possessed him to punch out Commander Richards, over a hand of tongo no less, was escaping him, and so was relief from the pounding of the warp core breach of a hangover currently going on in his head.

But here he was, sitting in the stockade, seriously wondering if this was how his career was going to end, in disgrace. Few were as decorated as he was, and even fewer still were better pilots, all of whom he could count on one hand.

"Sorry to interrupt what seems to be a life changing realization that hitting a superior gets yourself in the brig, you have a visitor." The security officer said with an aura of smugness about him.

"He may be in the brig, Lieutenant, but he out ranks you, and you will show the respect that the rank deserves. Understood?" Jon said, walking in the door.

"Aye, sir."

"Good, you're dismissed." Jon ordered, having just met the man, he had already lost his patience with him.

"Sir, regulations do not permit me to leave my post while a prisoner is detained."

"Are you deaf Lieutenant? I said you're dismissed. As in get out." Jon said with an icy edge to his voice, which was promptly obeyed. Once he was out of the room, Jon stood in front of the force field and looked at the man inside.

"Something I can do for you Captain?" James finally asked, wondering if his day was about to get any worse.

"I'm just wondering what would cause a man, such as yourself, to spiral into a pattern of behavior like you have." Jon responded.

"Well, if you're here, you must have read my file. It's all in there, which should explain everything. Hope you didn't skip over my after action report from the Second Battle of Chin'toka, good reading." James said with a smirk.

"You can cut the crap, Major. I'm here to make you an offer, one that I don't think you're going to refuse." Jon said, folding his arms in front of his chest, which were until this moment behind his back. It was then James noticed he was carrying a padd.

"If you're going to offer me something, the least you could do is introduce yourself. You have me at a disadvantage at the moment." James countered, not being affected by the ultimatum at all.

"I'm Captain Jonathan Reynolds, USS Endalla. What I'm offering you is the opportunity to be my Executive Officer." Jon told him, but just before James could respond, he interrupted him. "I'm not finished Major. If you don't take this offer, your career in Starfleet is over." Jon said, holding up the padd he was carrying. "I have the papers for a Dishonorable discharge right here; all it needs is the authorization from an officer of Command Level to finalize it, which would be me."

James just laughed, which surprised Jon just as much as it did himself. He didn't know why he was laughing, must be the stress getting to him, or it could just be the hangover. Whatever it was, he had a choice to make.

"If it gets me out of this cell, I'll take it, sir." James said, straightening himself up.

Jon smiled, then walked over to the security station and deactivated the field and James stepped out.

"When do you want me to report?" James asked.

"Tomorrow, Utopia Planitia, Dry-dock eight."

"I'll be there. If you'll excuse me Captain, I need to get into a shower, and then start packing." James said, walking out the door. He stopped for a moment to look at the security officer who had a perplexed look on his face.

James pointed at the center of the man's chest, causing him to look down, to which James brought his hand up to tap his nose, then shook his head and laughed.

3 - Chapter Three

En Route to Utopia Planitia

"Mom, you didn't have to come with me." Marion said with a twinge of annoyance.

"Nonsense, my daughter got her first senior staff posting and I'm not going to take a look at the ship she's serving on? You don't know me too well." Vivian Andrews said, causing Marion to roll her eyes in embarrassment as she noticed that other people on the transport were staring in their direction, some of them Starfleet officers, which meant they could be crewmates.

"Mom, I know you've toured a Luna-Class starship before, the Endalla will be no different." Marion pointed out.

"Sure it will; the Endalla is one of the first Luna-class starships to be launched after the whole Borg mess. That and I'd like the chance to see Captain Reynolds again, it's been too long."

"Attention passengers, we'll be arriving at Utopia Planitia shortly, please make sure you take all your carryon luggage with you." Announced the pilot over transports inter-com.

"Look, there she is!" Vivian said pointing out the view port.

Still residing inside the shipyards dry dock, the Endalla floated silently in space. She had a Saucer reminiscent of the Sovereign-Class. Above the saucers aft attached to two support pylons resided the ships interchangeable mission module. Fanning out from the drive section towards the aft were two pylons each sporting their own warp nacelle.

"Mmm-Mmm. She is a beaut." Vivian noted.

"Yeah, and in two days, I get to fly her." Marion said, with the widest smile her mother had seen on her in years.

"Make sure my luggage gets transported to my quarters." Marion told the ships quartermaster.

"What about that?" He said, motioning to what resembled a box covered by a cloth.

"Oh, him? I'll be taking Bruno there myself." She said; matter-of-factly, getting a puzzled stare from the man.

"Vivian!" someone yelled out, and Marion turned to see her mother hugging another woman with

Captain Reynolds standing next her with a young boy sitting on his shoulders.

"It's been too long Lindsey. And you, Jon, still looking good. See, I told you that you had a catch here, didn't I Lin."

"Something she reminds me of on a daily basis." Jon said dryly, taking the young boy off his shoulders.

"This isn't Andrew is it?" Vivian said, getting down to the boys level. "The Andrew I knew was what, five? Six?" she continued, teasingly.

"I'm Eight now." Andrew said, proudly mimicking the same stance as his father.

"Who's this?" Lindsey asked, looking in Marion's direction. Then it dawned on her. "You can't be little Marion from the pictures Viv's shown me." Lindsey said.

"This is Lieutenant Marion Andrews, the Endalla's Chief of Flight Operations." Jon said introducing her. "Lieutenant, this is my wife Lindsey, and my son Andrew."

"It's a pleasure to meet you both." Marion said, shaking her hand.

"What's in the box?" Andrew asked, pointing at what was under Marion's arm.

"Bruno? Oh, you don't want to see him. He eats little boys. Very scary." Marion said, smiling wryly. Then she got down to his level and pulled the cloth off of the cage, revealing a small hamster with black and white fur sleeping in a corner.

"He's not scary, he's just sleeping." Andrew said laughing.

"Captain, moment of your time." An officer said, walking up to Captain Reynolds.

"Sure, what is it?" Jon said.

"Commander Sugimoto is telling me that the main helm is continuing to go out of sync with the navigational computer. She said you'd like to know right away." Commander James Scott reported.

"That again? I hope this doesn't post pone our launch." Jon said, obviously annoyed. He then turned to his wife. "Hon, I got to go see to this."

"Captain, if I may, she's our new Conn officer... Miss Andrews, correct?" James said, getting a nod from Marion. "You look like you're catching up with a friend. The Lieutenant and I can take care of this."

"Very well." Jon said, and then paused. "Where are my manners? Miss Andrews, this is Major Scott, ship's XO."

"Mom, can you make sure Bruno gets to my quarters?"

"Sure Cally." Vivian said, taking the cage from her.

“Cally?” James asked, sounding confused.

“Short for my middle name, Callista. It’s my mom’s nickname for me.” Marion explained, her face turning slightly red from embarrassment.

“Alright then, if you’ll follow me, Lieutenant.”

After a short walk there were inside a turbolift.

“Bridge.” James ordered. “So, you’re a pilot.” James said breaking the silence he knew would turn awkward.

“Yes...” Marion said, not knowing where this conversation was headed.

“You a good one?” James asked.

“I’d like to think so.” Marion answered. “You a pilot?” She asked after a short pause.

“Damn good one. How’d you guess?”

“You’re Major James Scott; you were awarded the Medal of Honor at the second battle of Chin’toka. Pretty much every Starfleet pilot knows who you are. You’re techniques are required learning at the academy now, my class was one of the first to be taught.” She told him.

He just looked at her, seeming mildly amused with himself. “You’ll do.” James finally said just as the doors opened up onto the bridge.

“Ah, Major,” A Japanese woman said, noticing James walking out of the turbolift. “Oh, you must be Marion!” she said wearing the smile of someone who wants something. “I’ve been itching to pick your brain when I saw that you replaced Lydia’s spot.”

“What would a chief engineer talk with a pilot about?” James asked, puzzled somewhat.

“And you call yourself an XO! Don’t tell me you haven’t read her personnel file? Aside from being a pilot, she’s a computer systems specialist.”

“I’m not that smart...” Marion said sheepishly.

“You turned down a scholarship at the Daystrom Institute, sweetie, you’re as smart as they come. Don’t cut yourself short. Anyways, I’m Akira Sugimoto, Chief Engineer and Second Officer.” She finally said, shaking Marion’s hand.

“The Major said you were having a latency issue with the main Conn and the nav-com?” Marion said, not skipping a beat.

“Really odd one too, checked everything I could think of, fiber lines are fine, diagnostics on both

systems read nominal. I'm about to rip my hair out over this." Akira said, rubbing her temples with her hands.

"Have you checked the Gel-Pack in the Conn?" Marion asked flatly. Then Akira's eyes widened with realization.

"It couldn't be." Akira said getting down underneath the console.

"I guess it's worth checking." Marion said kneeling down and handing Akira a spanner.

"What's worth checking?" James asked.

"It's a rare manufacturer's defect. One in a hundred thousand Bio-Neural Gel-Packs fail prematurely. Quality testing doesn't weed them out, and it only comes to light when put through extended use." Marion explained.

"Yep, you were right. Look here," Akira said pulling herself out and on to her feet. "It's already turning grey. Hey, Brett! Go get a gel pack from the stores and get it installed in the Conn ASAP."

Marion looked around the bridge, taking in her surroundings, wondering what was in store for her.

4 - Chapter Four

Halee Valco's heart was racing in her chest as she guided people on to the transport she was ordered to get safely off the planet. Despite the utter chaos of what was going on around her, the same thought kept creeping back into her mind. She kept remembering the first days of her assignment on Aldebaran as the Starfleet Liaison officer to the colony's local law enforcement. How she thought that this beautiful planet, with the stunning city of New Mekkah, and its peaceful inhabitants would equal another boring assignment.

For that, she blamed her father. Being the daughter of a Rear Admiral had sounded a death knell on any postings that she would consider 'cool' or 'interesting'. She had hated him for that; In fact, they hadn't even spoken for a year since she came to Aldebaran, but all that changed a week ago when her father visited her. Of course this visit was of an official nature since Aldebaran housed a Starfleet medical research facility, but he somehow worked it into his schedule to visit his daughter.

That was when Halee did the last thing he expected her to do: She thanked him. If it wasn't for the influence he used to get her assigned to this backwater peaceful world, she would have never had the chance to meet Sarah.

Halee had met her responding to a vandalism report at a local school. Some kids were painting graffiti on the school building, but when she got on scene, not only had the children in question been apprehended, but Sarah had them all cleaning the building by hand while giving them a lecture on taking responsibility for their actions.

"Seems like you have everything well in hand." Halee had said, which made Sarah laugh.

While taking her statement Halee found out that Sarah lived in the apartment building across the street from her. Aside from her colleagues at work, she had no one she would call a friend, and an almost non-existent social life. So having someone to know outside of work served as a welcome respite from the tedium that had become her daily life. Of course, if you asked Sarah, the only reason she keeps Halee around is to make her laugh.

Over the next few weeks the two developed a quick friendship which helped Halee's bitterness over her assignment evaporate. Then one night while sharing tea watching the sun set into the horizon, Sarah reached over and held Halee's hand and smiled, and after a few moments, they shared a kiss.

Halee was happy. Truly happy. She had found someone she loved. She had a beautiful world that she had begun to consider has home, and she didn't want anything to come between that.

That's when Halee had decided that she was going to leave Starfleet and settle down on Aldebaran. This decision didn't come lightly either. All she had ever wanted to do was be a Starfleet officer and follow in her father's footsteps. Halee thought it was fitting, and rather ironic that she would stop doing that on a planet whose name means "he who follows" in Arabic.

And then the Borg came.

“Ken to Admiral Valco...” his comm. badge chirped, causing him to swallow what was eating hard.

“This had better be important Lieutenant, you’re interrupting the lovely dinner my daughters girlfriend has prepared.” He said, annoyance creeping into his voice.

“Sir, we’ve just gotten reports that a Borg ship is headed our way, they’re eight hours out.” Lieutenant Ken reported.

Halee had read the recent news reports, as well as the Starfleet security briefings that weren’t privy to the public. And what she read chilled her to bone. Whole planets glassed, and there was little that could be done to prevent it. But just this morning the latest report had the Borg three weeks away at high warp. Things must have gotten very bad, very quickly.

Sarah grabbed Halee’s hand and looked at her with worry in her eye.

“How far is the nearest Starfleet ship?” Her father asked.

“Twelve hours at best speed. Hold on, something’s happening... Sir, the Talarian Third Fleet just warped into the system, they’re offering assistance with evacuation.”

“Alright, get in touch with their commander; let them know I’ll be co-coordinating the evacuation from city hall, get ready to beam me directly there.” He said, and then turned to his daughter. “Lieutenant, get down to the local precinct and get as many officers as you can to lead people to the closest open area or roof top that can support a transport.” He ordered, and then gave her a hug. “Now go.”

Things went pretty quickly after that. Halee had grabbed Sarah and led her to the police station where officers were already showing up, some with their families. On Sarah’s suggestion they gathered as many people as they could at the school’s soccer field.

When they got there two Talarian transports were waiting already loading people on board. Off in the distance Halee could see smoke rising from some unseen building, but put wondering what had caused it out of her mind and focused at the task at hand.

She helped people into the transport, telling others to toss whatever they had brought with them away aside from essentials like food and water because space was limited. With the transport almost full she told the pilot to start getting ready to lift off when something caught the corner of her eye.

A Skycar had just collided with another in midair and the wreckage was falling to the ground. Directly at them.

“We have to go, NOW!” Halee yelled at the pilot who had already seen what was going on because the transport was beginning lift off as soon as she said it. Before she closed the hatch, a straggler was running up to the transport screaming for his life. Halee reached out and grabbed his hand as the transport lifted off the ground.

Unaware of what was going on, the pilot began to pick up speed, making pulling the man into the transport impossible. To Halee's horror; he slipped out of her hand.

"Hatch is sealed, let's get out of here." Halee told the pilot grimly.

Out the cockpit window Halee saw a green streak of light fall from the heavens and a blinding flash filled it moments later. The pilot screamed for everyone to hold on as he banked the craft into a steep climb. Halee lost her grip and fell towards the rear of the craft, hitting the floor hard.

And then she woke up screaming.

"Halee, sweetie, It's alright, it's just a dream." Sarah told her, quickly holding her. "It's just a dream." She repeated, as Halee wept into her shoulder.

5 - Chapter Five

*Chief Flight Officer's Log
Stardate 59077.47*

Well, this is it, it's been almost a month since we launched and we're heading out on our exploratory mission. What's unique about what we're doing is we're headed into what little we've explored of the Gama Quadrant. Sure, we know plenty of what's on the Gamma terminus of the Bajoran wormhole, including what little the Dominion did give us in terms of star charts did help somewhat, but that's on the other side of the quadrant, leaving about ninety percent of it uncharted.

What makes today special is we're going to be passing into uncharted space. The last ship that was out this way was the Cerberus, I don't know why I'm taking this personal, but Mike was at the helm when she was out here, and now that he's gone, it's kind of hard not to think of him when something that reminds me of him...

Come on Marion, get it together.

"Computer, end recording." Marion instructed, wiping tears from her eyes. "Save for further revision."

She looked over on to her dresser and saw Bruno looking at her, having crawled half way up the wall of his cage. "Yeah yeah, I'll get you a carrot." She told the little creature, dropping a small carrot into his cage where he didn't even wait for it finish hitting the ground before setting upon it like a ravenous beast.

She stopped a moment and picked up a photograph of her and Mike at Marion's graduation from the academy. Things were simpler back then, she thought looking at the smiles they both had. The Dominion War had just ended; the Borg hadn't yet tried to invade. She gently placed the photograph back where she had it wearing a sorrowful smile, then headed towards the bridge.

Over the last month, Marion had developed a routine. She would leave early for her shift in order to go over the evening shifts sensor readings with the Endalla's chief science officer, Amber Fox. The two quickly hit it off and had become quick friends, sharing similar interests, as well as being highly skilled in computer sciences. Marion knew she was good, and although she wouldn't admit it, she knew that Amber was better.

As she exited the turbo-lift onto the bridge, she was greeted by a smiling woman handing her a cup containing a steaming liquid. Marion knew it was her morning vice, a cup of hot chocolate just the way she liked it, she quickly took it and gingerly took a sip, enjoying every bit of it.

When she first met Amber, she was a bit unsettled with her. Amber is a tall African American woman in her early thirties. She wasn't the prettiest woman you would ever meet, but she had that girl next door charm. What was unsettling was the burn scars she had on the left side of her face and on her left hand. Marion guessed that the scar went further then what wasn't covered by her uniform. Amber explained that it was an injury she sustained while stationed on Betazed when the Dominion invaded and occupied

the planet. During the initial planetary bombardment, the building across the street from the café where she was eating breakfast burst into flames as it was shelled from orbit. She spent the remainder of the occupation in a coma, only to wake up in waning months of the war. She had always been a confidant person, so she decided to keep the scars.

"You ok Marion?" she asked. "You look like you've been crying."

"I'm alright. And yes, I was, a little." Marion explained. "You know the last ship that was out this ways?"

"The Cerberus?"

"Yeah. A very good friend of mine served on her. He was at Risa when the Borg attacked." Marion said quietly, staring into her hot chocolate. She remembered watching the Federation News service report about it. It was like all of the other planets that were attacked. The planet would be bombarded from orbit until nothing was left of the surface but molten glass, and what few survivors managed to escape, did so at the cost of Starfleet vessels buying them the time they needed knowing full well what that meant. "So, what do you have in store for us today?" Marion asked, changing the subject.

"I wouldn't mind hearing this too." Major Scott chimed in, nursing his own cup of coffee. "What, don't let me stop you, you were going to bring me what you thought was cool anyways, thought I'd see what else we were missing." James said with a sly smirk on his face.

"Major, I would never withhold any information from you." Amber said defensively. Marion just looked on, stunned.

"I'm just joshing you commander, I did the same thing back during the war." James said with a chuckle. "Anyways, what's out there?" he asked.

"Well sir, there's an Emission Nebula about two light-years from our current heading. The gravimetric readings we're getting from it suggest that there may be a proto-star nearing the end of its current stage in its life cycle." Amber explained, handing him a padd with the details.

"Well, I'd classify this as 'cool'. I'll run this by the Captain when he comes on shift." James told her.

"Major, I think we'll have to put the Nebula on hold, I'm picking up a distress call, audio only." Lieutenant Halee Valco, the Endalla's chief of security.

"On speakers L-T." James said, nodding in her direction while sitting down in the center chair.

"We are the Reezen people. Our planet is facing immanent ecological disaster. A derelict starship is on a collision course with our planet. It is emitting high amounts of radiation and we are unable to get near the ship to alter its course due it being outfitted with heavy weaponry, and our own weapons have thus far been unable to penetrate its defenses. Please help us."

"Message repeats after that. There's some rudimentary sensory data embedded in the transmission."

The bridge fell silent and all faces were looking at James for what to do. This made him nervous as all hell, but he managed to keep that from surfacing. This would be his first command decision since taking the first officer post on the Endalla.

“Lieutenant Andrews, alter course to intercept and go to warp nine. Commander Fox, go over the sensor data and see if you can come up with something to counter act the radiation.” James ordered; he then turned to Halee at the security station. “Contact them back on their frequency and inform them that we’re on our way and that we’ll do what we can.” James then tapped his comm. badge. “Captain Reynolds to the bridge.”

* * *

“What do we have, people?” Captain Reynolds asked, addressing his senior staff.

“The ship in question, which is similar to a large tramp freighter, is emitting large amounts of theta radiation,” Amber began; “Our sensors are unable to penetrate the interference from this distance, but my guess is that its holds are filled with large amounts of antimatter waste.”

“Tactical options?” Jon asked Lt. Valco

“I would advise against destroying the ship outright, it would spread the waste throughout the system and would eventually reach planet side.” Halee answered.

“I take it the amount of radiation would interfere with tractor beams?” Jon said, directing the question to his Operations officer, a young Bajoran woman named Li Essa, who at that moment was more focused on the padd in front of her than the meeting that was taking place. “Ensign Li...” he said, finally causing her to look up and fidget in her seat.

“Sorry, sir, you’re right, we wouldn’t be able to get a stable lock with this much radiation.” She said, finally.

“Anything else you would like to add? You were pretty focused on that padd.” Jon pointed out, sensing an idea forming in the Ensign’s mind.

“I think I might have a way to move the ship out of its current course.”

“I’m all ears, ensign.”

“We can’t lock on to it with tractor beams, destroying it is out of the question, and with this amount of theta rads transporters are out. I’ve been looking at the schematics that we were given, and it’s similar to a class of Bajoran cargo ship that fell out of use during the occupation.” Essa said, taking a deep breath. “It fell out of use because of a sensor blind-spot in its aft ventral quarter, it gave the Cardassians a way to approach undetected and disable the ship and steal its cargo. If I’m right, we should be able to approach with a shuttle craft and get a team aboard via EVA.”

“Are ya daft, lassie?” Said the ship’s doctor, Commander William Macmillan. “The radiation would overcome’em in minutes.”

“I wouldn’t say that just yet Mac; James, don’t the new Marine combat hard suits have radiation protection?” Jon mentioned to his first officer.

“Yeah, should give us, I don’t know, ten to twenty minutes before we start frying.”

“If that’s the case, I’ll prepare some Arithrazine treatments, should take care of any radiation poisoning.” Doctor Macmillan said.

“Alright, James, take a two man security detail and an engineering team aboard, Miss Andrews, you’ll pilot the shuttle. Get on board and alter its course.” Jon ordered.

6 - Chapter Six

Author's Note: During the chapter, Akira uses the Japanese word 'Nandatte'. It translates into 'What/Why?', and is normally used as an exclamation.

Akira sat on the warp nacelle of the shuttle craft, staring at the helmet to her EVA suit. She noticed she started to tap her right foot involuntarily at a rapid pace, the sound of which caught James' attention.

"Oh come on Aki, don't tell me you still don't like EVA work." He said, poking fun at her.

"Like? Jim, you know I hate it. You ever see one of these suits fail?" she said, her frayed nerves showing in her voice.

"Yes." James said flatly, with a haunted look in his eye. "But that's not going to happen. You can't let those thoughts win in your head. Focus on your job, and your training will take over. You'll be fine." He continued, taking her hand and helping her up.

"Major, we're ready." Marion said, poking her head out of the aft hatch of the shuttle.

"Alrighty, let's get this gong show on the road." James said, directing his voice to the two man security detail, Michel and Kristoff and two of Akira's engineering staff, Brett and Kestrel.

It didn't take long for the shuttle to get to the freighter's location, prompting Marion to power down the majority of the shuttles power, and maneuver into the ship's sensor blind spot using chemical thrusters, and with the finesse of a seasoned pilot, she pulled a perfect 180 degree turn to face the aft hatch towards the freighter and still keep the shuttle's speed matched so as to not fall behind.

"Major Scott, we're in position and I'm sealing the cockpit, good luck." Marion said, looking back as the away team was putting on their helmets and checking each other's gear as a force field came up separating the front section.

James then came up behind each of them, did one final cursory check and attached an umbilical cable to each of them, and then to himself. He turned to the cockpit and gave a thumbs up. Marion activated a control and the aft hatch opened up, exposing them to the hard vacuum of space.

James lifted up his arm and counted down from three with his fingers. He could have just used the comm. system in their suits, but Akira just guessed that old habits die hard. "Once a Marine..." she said, sounding amused with herself. All she got in response was an obligatory 'oorah', followed by James jumping from the shuttle, bringing everyone else along with him.

Moving in space is an odd sensation. Without any outside stimuli, like air moving along your skin, it can seem like you're not moving at all. It also gave another sensation: Helplessness; and that chilled Akira to the bone. Anything in space is governed by Newton's Third Law of Motion where everything that is moving continues to move until acted upon by an outside force. Ordinarily, if James misjudged his jump,

even by a little, they would miss the freighter and drift off into space forever, but in their case, that wouldn't happen. They would simply drift into the firing solution of the freighters weapons and be vaporized instantaneously.

Luckily, that wasn't the case, and they were able to get onto the outside hull safely. Getting inside the ship would be the hard part.

James lifted his head up (in actuality, down, since directionality is merely a perspective) from the aft section to where sensors had picked up an access hatch, and then promptly ducked back down faster than Akira had ever seen him move just as a particle beam zipped through the area where his head had been moments before.

"Well, this complicates matters." James said, taking a deep breath. "There's a turret protecting the access hatch, and it's got one hell of a sensitive motion sensor." He explained, taking his phaser rifle off his back. "Any ideas?" He asked.

"Yeah, Brett, help me get this section of hull plating off." Akira said, quickly setting to work uncoupling the section of the hull.

"What are you thinking, Aki?" James asked.

"Well, if I'm right, we should be able to use this as a distraction, giving you enough time to shoot the turret."

"What makes you think this turret will shoot it? What if it's tuned to biologics?" Michel, one of the security officers pointed out, trying to blow a stray tuft of hair that had fallen in front of her eyes.

"We don't. Either we try this, or we just have to all shoot it at the same time and risk being shot." James said before Akira could respond.

"Aye, sir." Michel said, swallowing hard.

"That should do it, get ready." Akira said; gingerly helping Brett and Kestrel maneuver the large section of hull plating into position as James, Michel and Kristoff readied their rifles.

Thankfully, much to Akira's ease of mind, the plan worked and the team was able to get inside the ship.

Akira pulled herself up off the last rung of the latter, switched on her helmet light and pulled out a tricorder.

"Most of the ship appears to be powered down." She explained. "What appears to be the bridge is four hundred meters to the bow, engineering is just ahead. Make sure you stay in the central corridor, you don't want to get too close to the cargo holds."

"Alright, Michel and Brett, head to engineering see if you can get some lights on in this place, rest of us will head to the bridge and see about moving this tub." James ordered.

Akira followed closely behind James and Kristoff who quickly checked each hallway branching off from the main corridor with precision. Eventually they reached the bridge, if you could call it that. It consisted of two consoles along the port and starboard walls, and a helm console in front of a central captain's chair. Akira walked up to the helm and sat down, as she did so, the whole room came to life, light filling the room and all the consoles turning on.

"Something doesn't seem right." She said, typing away on the console.

"What is it?" James asked with concern in his voice.

"There's no lock on the helm controls." She said, puzzled. "I just brought us to all stop, and that should bring the weapons offline."

"Commander, what do you make of this?" Kestrel asked from the starboard station, which she recognized as an engineering status display.

"Nandatte?" Akira blurted out under her breath.

"What's wrong?" James quickly asked, now on full alert. James had known Akira since the Academy, and he knew that she only said something in Japanese when she was frustrated, or things were about to head south.

"It's the power draw from the sensor grid, its way above what should be, even for federation ships. It looks like someone configured it to mask something, I'm bringing it offline now." She explained. When she did so, her wrist mounted suit computer beeped, demanding her attention. "James... The radiation, it's gone." She said, seriously confused, but before James could respond, the status display started to light up like a Christmas tree.

"That doesn't look good." James pointed out.

"Power from the impulse engines is being rerouted into the main drive core, and at this rate it's going to overload, we only got a few minutes." Akira said, frantically working the console to see what should do to stop it, but to no avail.

"We're getting out of here." James said, tapping his suits wrist computer, activating its comm. system. "Away team to Shuttlecraft Azuma; beam us out of here."

"But the radiation..." Marion began to say, only to be cut off.

"Just do it, then get as far away from this ship as you can." James said being taken by the transporter beam. "s you can."

"Already on it sir." Marion said as everyone lurched to the side as she peeled the shuttle away at maximum impulse. A few moments later, the shuttlecraft rumbled as the freighter exploded. "What happened?" Marion asked.

"I don't know, but I intend to find out." James said flatly.

7 - Chapter Seven

Captain's Log

Stardate 59078.56

We have entered orbit of the Reezen home world after responding to their distress call concerning the possible environmental disaster from the crashing of a freighter laden with radioactive material.

But here's where things take an odd turn. The away team, lead by Major Scott, quickly solved the issue only to discover that the radiation was in fact a hoax, a clever use of the freighter's sensors that managed to fool even our sensors into thinking the ship was saturated with theta radiation. When this was discovered, the ship's engines began to overload necessitating the quick retrieval of the away team and destruction of the freighter.

Something doesn't seem right about this. Not at all.

A diplomatic representative of the Reezen people will be coming aboard to discuss the situation. Major Scott will be greeting him in my stead as I will be in sickbay attending to personal family matters.

I am noting the actions of Marion Andrews, Lieutenant Junior Grade, Chief Flight Operations Officer, USS Endalla. She showed quick thinking and supreme skill leading to the safe recovery of the away team and positive mission outcome. I am attaching mission data as well as all relevant logs.

End Log.

"Laura, you really need to calm down. You accepted this posting because I was going. You knew you were going to be called on to start diplomatic talks with new cultures." Kestrel said to her sister.

"I know, I know." Laura said walking out of the bathroom wearing a robe, then taking the towel off that she had wrapped around her head. "It's just I've never... what?" she asked, having noticed that her sister was staring at her, trying to keep a straight face and not laugh.

"It's nothing... ok, fine, short hair? Really? When did that happen?" Kestrel said, chuckling then getting a wet towel thrown in her face.

"Look, just because we're twins doesn't mean that we have to have matching hair styles." Laura spat out quickly. "And you're not helping!" she added.

"Look, ok, I'm sorry about the hair thing. You'll be fine. You're damn good at your job! Hell, you've brokered trade deals between people who would rather be ripping each other's throats out." She said, trying her best to be reassuring. "Look on the bright side; I took most of the work out of it." Kestrel added with a wry smile.

"Really? What did you do? I don't see another trained first contact specialist in the room."

"I only helped avert an ecological disaster that would have spelled certain doom for millions. They should love me." Kestrel pointed out as sarcastically as she could.

"Fine, thanks for the pep talk, now get out, I gotta get dressed, and don't you have to go be a grease monkey somewhere?"

* * *

"So, big day." Akira said, standing next to James in the Transporter room.

"Why are you here, Aki, you don't need to be here..." James said, rolling his eyes.

"What do they look like I wonder?" Aki postulated with a playful smug tone.

"You know, for a Starfleet Officer, you sure don't act like one..."

"I know for a fact that you're a fantasy novel fan. What if they look like Dwarves, like from that famous novel, what was it called?"

"Lord of the Rings." James replied, rolling his eyes yet again.

"Yeah, that one, just think about it, short stout little men, sporting a beard that makes a Tellerite want to be polite."

"The minister has signaled he's ready." The transporter chief noted, James turned to him and gave him a nod, and he worked his controls to activate the device.

"You have my Axe..." Akira said, imitating a deep male voice.

"Oh, for the love of..." James began to say, turning to where Akira was standing, but only found the doors to the transporter room closing. "Defense Minister Shack, welcome aboard the Endalla." James said, doing his best to fight off the frustration on his face while shaking the man's hand as he stepped off the Transporter pad. "I'm Major Scott, first officer. I apologize that Captain Reynolds couldn't greet you himself, he's currently attending to family matters that couldn't be avoided."

"That is quite alright Major, among my people, family is very important. Now, I must say that device you used to bring me up here, what did you call it?" he asked.

"Transporter."

"Yes, that's it, very fascinating technology. Very... exhilarating." Shack continued.

"A person never forgets their first trip through a transporter. I still remember my first trip from when I was a small boy." James said, remember the experience, it gave him goose bumps just thinking about it. "If you'll follow me, I'll take us up to the observation lounge."

"You have a very impressive vessel, Major. From what I saw from our sensor scan... it looks very

formidable.” Shack noted walking with James.

“The Endalla is one of Starfleet’s newest deep space exploration vessels, in fact she’s only been out of dry-dock for a little over a month.” James explained.

“Exploration? Our scans showed powerful weaponry.” Shack said with a curious tone to his voice.

“Starfleet’s primary mandate is peaceful exploration and to meet new races, such as yourselves, but we are a military organization, and should the situation require it, we are prepared to defend ourselves and others.”

“I think I like you Major Scott. You’re not a government official; they would have danced around that issue. You were frank with me, and that’s something I miss from my time in the service.” Shack noted, crossing his arms behind his back. “Major, may I ask a question?” he asked, pausing for a moment to smile at the irony of what he just asked. Both he and James laughed at the same time, and James motioned to him to continue. “I have noticed the different colors of your uniforms, what do they signify?”

“Different departments, specialties. Red is for Flight Control, Tactical Operations and Command; Gold is for Operations, Ship Security, and Engineering; Teal is for Sciences and Medical.”

“And your uniform? What is your word for it... green?” Shack inquired.

“I’m a member of the Starfleet Marine Corps. Remember when I said that Starfleet is a Military Organization? Well, we’re the tip of the spear. We serve as the heavy combat arm of Starfleet as fighter pilots, such as myself, and infantry combat operations. When all diplomatic options have been exhausted, we’re called upon to defend the Federation.”

“So, you’re not a naval officer, but a soldier.” Shack noted. “What prompted you to take this posting; it seems like a drastic change.”

“Well... at first I was given a choice, either take this posting or face a discharge, which is a story for another time, but now that I’ve had time to think about it, I think I agreed to take it because I honestly wanted a change. When I lost my brother last year, I started to realize that I’ve seen so much death and destruction, and wrought just as much of it personally, and that I was sickened with myself, and I wanted to contribute to something that didn’t cause someone to suffer.”

“That’s very noble of you. Among my people, you would be commended.” Shack said, as the turbolift doors opened onto the access hallway rear of the bridge leading to the Observation Lounge. When they entered, they were greeted by Captain Reynolds having a conversation with the Endalla’s chief diplomatic officer, Lieutenant Laura Stevenson, but what caught James’ attention was his larger than life grin.

“Captain, last time I saw a smile like that was on my brother’s face. Nine months later my parents had to add a new name to our yearly Christmas card.” James noted. Jonathan just crossed his arms and continued smiling.

“Congratulations sir.” James said, shaking his Captain’s hand.

"I'm sorry, but have I missed something?" Shack said. James' eyes widened as he realized that he had forgotten his guest for a moment.

"I apologize, Minister Shack, this is Captain Reynolds." James quickly said, Shack nodding in acceptance while shaking the captain's hand.

"My wife and I just received some pleasant news; she's expecting our second child." Jon explained.

"Captain, that is wonderful. *Atrast nal tunsha*." Shack said, placing his fist on his chest and bowing his head.

"This is Lieutenant Stevenson, our chief diplomatic officer." James introduced.

"Pleasure to meet you, Minister." She said giving her head a nod.

"Thank you, now, if you'll have a seat, we can discuss this morning's incident." Jon said, gesturing to a seat to his right at the head of the conference table.

* * *

"There was no radiation? How can that be?" Shack asked, obviously confused.

"As far as our chief engineer can figure out is that they modified ship's sensors to give off false readings, then hooked the sensor grid to the impulse reactor and cranked up the power." James explained.

"Do you have any idea who would perpetrate this kind of hoax?" Jonathan asked.

"There can only be one group with the resources to pull anything like this off." Shack said, taking a deep breath, wishing he was wrong. "Twenty cycles ago, when I was General in the defense force, I helped start a revolution. The government in power was a brutal dictatorship under the guise of a monarchy. We were facing a severe drought in our farming sector for the third cycle in a row and things were looking very bad, but the Regent refused to relax his isolationist policies so we could bring in much needed food to avert a famine." He explained. "After we removed him from power and exiled him and his followers from the main land, we installed a democracy; I resigned my commission afterwards and vowed never to seek high office to quell any concerns that there would be a military controlled government. We've known nothing but prosperity ever since."

"Exiled?" Laura asked.

"All of our people live on the largest landmass on our planet. There is a smaller continent in the southern ocean and smaller groups of islands, but no one lives there because it is difficult, but not impossible to grow food because of the frequency of severe hurricanes. The alternative to exile would have been mass executions, which would have changed nothing." Shack explained further. "Over the last twenty years, they have been trying to overthrow the government, calling the bombings and

assassination attempts a continuation of the so called 'war' that we started when we removed him from power."

"I'm sorry, minister, but who is 'he'?" Laura asked.

"My apologies. As I told Major Scott before we met, family is very important to our people. When a member of one's family is exiled, it is tradition to excise everything about them from our lives, including mentioning their name. Regent Shackaza is my brother. He's been leading a so called 'Government in exile' for the last twenty cycles, but they're nothing more than petty terrorists."

"Do you suspect that they could do anything again like they did today?" Asked the Captain.

"I don't believe so, today's incident is the first time they've used such a tactic, and where they got the resources for this venture, I don't know, but I will be speaking with my intelligence director as to why we didn't know in advance. Rest assured Captain, even our Flag-Ship pales in comparison with the Endalla. I don't think your ship is in any danger, nor do I think they will try something like this again, at least not in the foreseeable future."

Jonathan began to say something when he noticed an ensign in sciences blue walk in and give Laura a padd, who quickly looked it over, and gave an impressed whistle.

"What is it?" he asked.

"The geology department just completed scans of this systems asteroid belt. It shows abnormally large Topaline deposits."

"What's special about our asteroid belt?" Shack inquired.

"Topaline is an element widely used in our life support systems. We just recently suffered a massive invasion by a species known as the Borg, which left many planets devastated and uninhabitable. There is a high demand for the mineral for the construction of refugee habitats." Laura explained.

"We normally don't have any mineral interest in our asteroid belt due to its low volume of heavy metals that we use in our ship construction, I would have to confer with our Trade Minister, but I think we can come to an agreement. You helped us in our time of need, the least we can do is assist you in yours." Shack said.

8 - Chapter Eight

The floor was cold and hard. It was cold and hard yesterday, and it was like that when she was thrown in to this room almost... *I lost count.* Amanda realized, allowing a small smile to creep across her face for the first time since her capture. Imagine that.

Five years undercover work, traveling thousands of light years, finally catching up to the man she was sent to capture, and then have it all go to hell because she let her guard down. Just thinking about it made the hair on her neck stand up and her head fill with rage. *How could I have been so stupid, letting my guard down like that.* Amanda chastised herself.

Movement out of the corner of her eye caught her attention; she turned to see the door open and one of the guards walk in, put a chair in the center of the room.

"Get in the chair." He demanded.

"Good morning to you too." Amanda said, summoning enough strength get into a sitting position leaning against the wall of her cell. The effort left her winded and her brow covered with sweat. "Sorry, best I can do, given the circumstances and all. You know, you guys not feeding me enough and all." She said with a snide smile on her face.

"It's alright, let her sit there for this session." A second man said.

"You know, after all our little chats, you still haven't told me your name." Amanda said to the interrogator who 'visits' her every day.

"And yet, I know yours. Amanda Laurie-Ann Harrison. Captain, Starfleet Marine Corps, United Federation of Planets, service number SFMC-892-81-4C."

"Very good, you get a cookie." She said in response, letting her head lean back and her eyes to close. *I'm too tired for this bull shoot.* She thought.

"Tell you what. You tell me what I want to know, and I'll tell you my name, and I'll get you some better food. It doesn't have to be like this."

"You can ask, but I'm not going to give you the lock codes to my runabout."

"Oh, but I think you will. You see, our computer experts were able to get some systems working on your quaint little vessel. We were able to get into your computers library files and another system called a Replicator." He continued. "Would you like to know what we found?"

"Why not." She said, rolling her eyes.

"We were perusing your species biological databanks. You're a very interesting species, not all that dissimilar then us, but our chemical tolerances on the other hand, well, we couldn't be more different.

We found an interesting chemical, your scientists call it 'sodium thiopental'."

Amanda's eyes widened at this, realizing just what was about to happen.

"It has a rather interesting history; it's been used to execute people, help trauma victims get over fears, but most interesting to us at least, is its use as an interrogation tool. Apparently it has the effect of lowering higher cortical functions, making the subject more pliable to pressure." He finished with a smug, satisfied grin on his face. He turned to the door and snapped his fingers.

Two guards and another in what she guessed was a lab coat walked into the room. The first two roughly picked her up with little effort and put her in the chair and tied down her wrists and ankles. The one in the coat stepped forward pulling a device similar to a hypospray and applied it to the nape of her neck, and then the world started to spin.

He leaned in close to her ear and whispered.

"Thought you might like to know, my name is Shackaza, and I'm about to get what I want."

* * *

"We have the code. After we used that drug we found in their computer files, she gave it up almost willingly." Shackaza told the man from a small computer screen.

"Excellent. Do what you can with the vessel, learn everything you can about it, it will prove to be useful. There's been a complication in our plans. An alien vessel arrived and foiled our attack with the freighter. What's worse is that they are her people. I'll do what I can to stall them, they found a mineral in our asteroid field that is valuable to them, and they're willing to negotiate for it, it will be difficult to maintain my cover if I turn down a beneficial deal."

"Don't worry about that, we can come up with a plan if the situation needs it. Now if I'm not mistaken, you have a meeting to get too." Shackaza said with that smile of his.

"Creepy *cripat*." The man swore. He reached over and pressed a button on his desk. "Marza, send the Federation representatives in."

"Yes, trade minister."

"Greetings, I am Minister Shantz. It's a pleasure to meet you." He said, lying through his teeth.

"Likewise, Minister." Laura said with a nod, then motioned to her left. "This is Lieutenant Commander Fox, Endalla's Chief Science Officer."

"What can the Reezan people do for the Federation?" Shantz said, not wasting any time.

"During our initial scans of your system when we were answering your distress call, my geology team notified me that your asteroid belt contains a mineral called topaline. When refined, it becomes a transparent substance that has the structural strength of dense metals and alloys. We primarily use it in

the construction of habitats for new colonies and terra-forming projects." Amber explained.

"Earlier this year, the Federation and its allies came under attack from a race of cybernetic beings known as the Borg," Laura started to explain.

"I have heard stories, but to our knowledge our people have never encountered them. Is it true that they capture people and enslave them?" Shantz asked, honestly wanting to know more.

"The Borg assimilate entire civilizations, adding them to their collective. The Federation has thwarted every attempt they have made to conquer us, always at great cost. Several years ago, one of our starships called Voyager dealt a crippling blow to the Borg Collective by destroying their primary Trans-warp hub, their means of traversing the galaxy in hours in what would normally take decades using conventional drive systems. Afterwards, time past and we believed that the threat from the Borg was behind us. We were wrong. The Borg returned, first in a massive ship the size of a small moon to attempt to destroy the Federation's capitol, Earth. When that attempt failed, the Borg came en masse with the intent that what they could not assimilate, they would destroy. Entire worlds were destroyed, billions lost their lives, and even more left homeless." Laura explained. "The topaline that your people could provide us would go to help those misplaced."

"I'm sure we can come to an agreement for mining rights, but from what you have told me, you require a large quantity." Shantz stated plainly.

"As well as sharing with you the refining process of the mineral for your own uses, I think we can offer you something more valuable." Laura started, looking over at Amber and giving her a nod.

"We would be willing to share our weather control technology that can in time, stabilize your planets weather patterns leading to increased crop yields, as well the reduction of severity and frequency of major weather events like the hurricanes that frequent your planets southern hemisphere." Amber explained in detail. "Here are technical specifications showing how the weather technology can be applied to planets, which I'm sure your scientific advisors would want to look over before anything is agreed upon." She continued, handing over a padd.

"That is a very intriguing offer. I don't for see any issues, but I must first bring it before council for ratification." Shantz said, leaning back in his chair. "Please, report back to your superiors, you should hear back from us before the end of this day's session."

"Thank you for your time Minister." Laura said with a respectful nod before both women leaving the office.

Shantz stood to face the panoramic view of his office window with a sour expression on his face. Then a thought came to him that put a grim smile on his face.

Sitting down, he activated his comm-unit, careful to route the call through secure lines.

"Two contacts in one day, minister, you're getting brazen in your old age. I take it something happened during your meeting." Shackaza said, faking an amused tone.

"Yes, I can't do anything about these Federation aliens, their offer is just too good to pass up, I must bring it before council. But I do have a plan. Tell me everything you have found out about their transporter technology..."

9 - Chapter Nine

Things Left Undone - Chapter 9 by ~aceman67

Chapter Nine
James leaned on the window frame and stared out into space, watching as stars flew by as the Guadalcanal traveled at superluminal speeds. He toyed with a small leather box in his hands, spinning it. Inside was a gold oak-leaf, the insignia for his new promotion to Major. He turned around and sat on the frames ledge, reached up and removed his Captain's bars from his neck, replacing it with the oak-leaf from the box.
"Permission to speak to the Major, Sir!" Amanda said with a sarcastic tone, and an equally sarcastic salute.
"Don't look so cheerful, 'Mandy, they got one for you too." James said, tossing her the same box his leaf was in, which now had his old Captain's bars inside. She opened the box and stared at the small piece of tin inside.
"I just got our orders. Admiral Valco wants me in the CIC during the battle. I won't be going groundside with you. Platoon's all yours now." James said matter-of-factly.
"Sawbones said that' Well... shoot." Was all Amanda could say.
"You can say that again." James replied, holding up his hand to stop Amanda, knowing full well that she'd say it again, which got a smile out of her, only to have it fade when she noticed he wasn't returning it.
"James. What's wrong" she asked, taking a seat next to him.
"I've just been thinking. We've always been together. Boot, OCS, flight-school. Hell, it's a miracle we've survived this long in this damn war." James replied. "If things on Orias go as planned, this war could be over soon. I was thinking about the future. About us."
"What about us" Amanda asked, unable to hold back the nervous tone that crept into her voice.
"Amanda... I..." James tried to say, but Amanda stopped him by putting a finger over his lips, and moved in to kiss him.
"Come with me." She said quietly, taking his hand and led him down the corridor.
James' eyes opened with a start. He looked over at his chronometer on his end table, and then started to rub the sleep out of his eyes when he saw it was only three in the morning.
"Milk, warm." James ordered from the replicator, getting up from his bed. Holding his beverage, he walked over to the window in his quarters. Below him was the Reezen home-world. The *Endalla* was passing over the dark side at the moment, and James marveled at the way the planets city lights spiraled out like spider webs made by spiders back on earth.
Letting a sigh escape from his lips, he walked over to the small couch facing the window and sat down, and started to wonder why he was dreaming about Amanda. He hadn't seen or heard from her in almost six years. She was trapped on Orias for three months, and James' duties kept him from visiting her while she recovered in the hospital, and Starfleet intelligence had already sent her off on whatever mission she's been on these past years when he actually got the chance.
By the time the view from his window showed the sun rising on Reezen, James had already fallen back asleep...
"Where the hell did they come from!" Admiral Henry Valco yelled.
"They must have masked their presence in the sun's corona, sir." James said, ducking under a hail of sparks as the lighting above him overloaded.
"Well, it doesn't matter where they hid now; they're tearing the fleet apart." Henry said, his voice seething with anger. "Give the order to stop troop landings, we're retreating to fall back beta."
James felt his face turn cold as the blood drained from it, and only stood there for what seemed like forever to him. The Admiral's next worked snapped him back to reality.
"Give the

order Major! Now!"
"Guadalcanal to all ships, cease landing operations, recall all fighters, and retreat to fall back beta, repeat fall back beta, full retreat. We'll be back." James said, glaring at Admiral Valco, unable to hide the vitriol from his eyes.
James awoke to shooting pain coming from his hand. In his sleep, he had crushed the glass his milk was in and it was now bleeding badly. He quickly ran to the head and grabbed a towel and carefully wrapped his hand in it, then made his way down to sick-bay.
"What th'hell ya do to your hand, laddie" Dr. Macmillan asked, as he started to remove the shards of glass from his hand.
"Fell asleep with it in my hand. Had a bad dream I guess." James said, not wanting to talk about it.
"You too, huh. Understandable, tis'been six years since that nasty business on Orias." The Scottish doctor said, pulling the last shard from his hand and started to use the dermal regenerator. "Good news is, ya won't need surgery." He said with a smile. "Take it easy for a few days."
"I didn't know you were at Orias." James said getting up from sitting on the biobed.
"Aye. Planet side. Hey, don't beat yer self up. Admiral Sawbones dealt you a shootty hand, forcing you to give tha order." The old doctor said, trying to cheer him up.
"Thanks, Doc."

10 - Chapter Ten

Three days later...
First Officer's Log
Stardate 59117.01

I'm pleased to report that trade negotiations with the Reezan's for mining access in their system were a success. Our Diplomatic officer, Lieutenant Laura Stevenson, expertly obtained a vital trade treaty that will greatly benefit the reconstruction and relief efforts.

To celebrate the occasion, the Reezan government has invited some of the senior staff for a formal dinner.

The Reezan Minister of Education has also extended a personal invitation for the Endalla's resident school teacher, Ms. Sarah Elbaz. Lieutenant Stevenson is briefing her on federation diplomatic protocol before tonight's festivities.

Now I just hope my dress blue's still fit, the collar has always been a little tight...

End log.

"You know, your official logs should be more professional..." Akira said with her trademark amused smirk crossing her face while tossing the Padd from which she read the log back onto the coffee table where she found it and leaned back on the couch next to James.

"What and yours aren't?" James said playfully, nudging her on the shoulder with his elbow while he polished his dress uniform boots. "Or did you forget that it's my job to read them all?" He continued, turning his head to find her staring at him with a smile from ear to ear. "What?" he asked.

"I'm just happy." She responded.

"Oh; what about?" James asked, putting one boot down on the table, and moving on to the next.

"You... me. Us. I'm just happy. You make me happy." She said, resting her head on his shoulder. "The last month has been great." She admitted, and then paused. "Bet you didn't know I thought you were a hunk at the academy, did you?"

"Uh... no." James said, slightly flabbergasted.

"Oh, it's alright. I never let on. Personally, I thought you and Amanda were together."

"You needn't have worried, we weren't. Least not then."

"What? James, we shared a dorm room, she thought the world of you." She said quickly. "Wait, what? What do you mean not then?"

James put the boot he was polishing and leaned back, letting out a sigh as he did. "The night before Orias, just after we got our orders, we spent the night together." James said, wincing at the memory. "Leaving them there was the hardest thing I've ever done. Anyways, after we retook the planet, Amanda had to spend a lot of time in the hospital, for what I don't know. She didn't take any visitors, not even her sister." He continued, getting up and walked over to his dresser. "Four months later, I get a letter. An honest to goodness, hand written, paper letter." He said, taking the letter out of a small keepsake box, handing it to Akira.

Jimmy, I don't know what to say, other than sorry.

Sorry for not talking to you.

Sorry for keeping things to myself.

Something's come up, S.I. wants me to do something, and I can't say no. Not to this. It's way too important, and I can't explain why.

Hell, I shouldn't even be writing this letter.

Just, please understand.

I don't know when I'm going to get back, but I promise when I do, I'll explain things.

Thanks for understanding,

Mandy

"That was five years ago. I haven't been able to get anything out of my Intel contacts. You'd think someone with an Intelligence Star commendation would be able to get something, anything." James said, downtrodden, sitting down hard on the couch.

Akira looked at the piece of paper in her hands. She noticed the mended rips in the paper, and the flattened wrinkles from when it had been crumpled. She could only start to guess what had gone through James' mind when he got this letter.

"Hey, we both know how tough Amanda is. I've never known her to quit. She'll turn up." Akira said, putting an arm around him while swinging her legs across his lap, embracing him in a hug which was returned. "It'll be ok..." She said softly.

They stayed this way for a time.

* * *

"And here she is, the lady of the hour!" Jon said, beaming with pride when Laura walked into the small transporter room followed by Sarah, which was quickly filling up with people wearing dress whites and elegant evening gowns.

"You did an amazing job, Laura." Lindsey Reynolds said, shaking the young lieutenant's hand. "Oh my..." Lindsey said with a small gasp that made everyone in the room turn towards the door.

"You can say that again." Sarah Elbaz quietly.

There, with a look resembling a deer caught in a ground-car's headlights, stood James in full Marine Corps dress blues, holding his Cover under his right arm, and resting his left hand on his ceremonial Mameluke sword's hilt.

"What?" James finally said nonchalantly after recovering from the awkward silence his entrance created, only to let a slight grin slip onto his face.

This only caused Akira to shake her head and laugh, who had been waiting outside the transporter just out of sight.

"You couldn't help but show off, huh fly-boy." Akira said, chuckling to herself as she made her way down the corridor for the turbo-lift. This left the room in an awkward silence, which was thankfully interrupted by the transporter chief.

"The Reezan Parliamentary Palace has signaled that they're ready to receive us." The young red headed petty officer stated; the name of whom was escaping James at the moment.

"Thank you, Chief Williams." Jonathan said, stepping up onto the transporter platform while helping his wife up the steps in her evening gown.

"You know Major, I don't think Halee will mind if you escort me this evening." Sarah said with a smile, walking up to James, who was already on the platform, extending her hand for help up. She took it then pulled him closer so she could whisper without being overheard. "Although, I think Akira might." She said knowingly with a wink.

"Aki is going to have a field day when she hears that I've been used as arm candy." James groaned quietly, taking his position on the transporter Pad.

Sarah just smiled.

"Energize Chief." Jonathan ordered.

The small group found themselves standing on the rear steps of the Palace, overlooking the expansive garden below. It was filled with carefully sculpted trees and bushes, many of which covered in blossoming flowers in color combinations James didn't think were possible.

"Would you look at that..." Sarah said, hooking her arm in James' after he donned his cover. James looked up and saw a stunning star field, accentuated by the Reeza's two moons wreathed by a purple and pink nebula. "Seeing this from the ship just doesn't do it justice..." she said, stunned. "It just seems brighter down here."

"My wife tells me it's because of the excess ionization in our atmosphere from our frequent oceanic storms. Acts as a lensing effect, intensifying the colors." Minister Shack said walking up the stairs to greet them.

"You must be Ms. Elbaz, it's a pleasure to meet you. I'm Lynn'zyn, Minister of Education." The woman next to Shack said with a formal curtsy, which Sarah emulated quickly, having been caught off guard.

"Captain! This must be your wife." Shack said enthusiastically.

"Lindsey Reynolds, It's a pleasure Minister." She said, emulating the same curtsy she had just seen.

"Your husband told me the wonderful news. May your child be as beautiful as you." He said smile, placing his hand on his chest and bowing his head. "Now, enough with this formality! This is a celebration! Let us go toast to the future of our two peoples!"

* * *

"Team one and two, are you in position?" Shackaza said. On the console in front of him, he saw notifications that the teams he had infiltrate the Military's space-dock facility months ago, where the Reezan Flagship was docked, undergoing routine maintenance, where ready.

He swiveled his chair to face the heavily armed team assembled on the small craft the human had called a "Runabout".

"We're going to use this ships 'transporter' to place you on the *Steadfast Valor's* bridge." He told them. "There should only be maintenance teams on board. Kill them, then let the strike teams aboard and get the ship ready to leave dock."

"Sir!" the team shouted in reply.

Shackaza smiled, then turned to activate the transporter, and the team was on the *Valor's* bridge.

* * *

"Commander, I'm picking up what looks like transporter activity on the Reezan space station." Ensign Li reported.

"I thought they didn't have transporter tech, is it us?" Akira said, turning the bridges center chair to face ops.

"No sir, and they don't. These readings are clearly Starfleet transporter signatures." Li said, double checking her console.

"Sir, the vessel docked there is leaving the station." Halee reported from tactical.

"Li, hail the away team. I got a bad feeling..." Akira ordered.

"Scott here." James responded.

"Sir, something hinky is going on up here. We're reading Starfleet transporter activity on the Reezan space station, and a vessel is leaving it."

"Major, what's going on?" Shack said, his voice being picked up over James' comm-badge.

"I'm not sure Minist---" James managed to say before being cut off. Akira quickly turned to ops.

"We're being jammed, scanning for source... It's the Reezan ship!" Li reported with shock in her voice.

"They're firing on us!" Halee reported, her hands racing over her tactical station to bring up shields, automatically triggering the red alert.

"Marion, take us out of orbit, evasive maneuvers!" Akira ordered, just as the ship was hit, causing the deck to buck under her feet, sending her flying out of her chair.

* * *

James ducked under crimson phaser fire behind an overturned table. He returned fire when he could with the miniature type one phaser he had hidden in his boot. Turning to Shack, whose face was contorted in rage as he returned fire from the pistol he retrieved from a fallen guard. James saw that rage's source several feet away. Shack's wife was lying motionless, a smoking burn smoldered in the center of her chest.

They had been cut off from the other guests at the party, the gunmen had managed to flank James and Shack and went after everyone else, while another group kept them pinned where they were.

Then the worst happened, everyone who had beamed down with James from the *Endalla* were transported away, leaving the two of them to fend for themselves.

11 - Chapter Eleven

Things Left Undone - Chapter 11 by ~aceman67

Ten hours earlier...
Kestrel awoke to the sun shining in through her cabin window as the *Endalla* continued its orbit around Reeza. Stretching, her arm brushed over the hair of sleeping man next to her. She rolled over carefully so she could face him, slowly running her fingers through his jet-black hair. His eyes slowly opened and a smile spread across his face.
"Morning Kris." She said, matching his smile with one of her own.
Kestrel met Kristoff Chernienko six months ago when the *Endalla* was still under construction. He was assigned to Utopia Planitia as part of increased security after the Typhon Pact had arrived on the scene and tensions started to rise and espionage became a real threat.
She would pass him almost every day as she arrived for her shifts at the dockyard. At first, they would only exchange nods, then polite hellos. Eventually Kestrel asked if he wanted to go get lunch. During their meal, she found out that Kris, as he liked to be called, joined Starfleet initially as an engineer, but moved to security during the closing months of the Dominion war.
Over the coming days, Kestrel found she enjoyed his odd, somewhat frank sense of humor. Especially his insistence that any important technological innovation was 'made by Russians first!'; which was always said with an authoritative tone, that too the uninitiated or those who didn't know better and that he was feeding you a line of bull, would have a hard time disagreeing with him.
The days lead to weeks, and Kris and Kestrel continued to share their daily lunch, which lead to occasional dinners, and drinks on the weekends.
Akira, the dock foreman at the time of the *Endalla's* construction, finally cornered Kestrel one day and flat out told her that if she didn't get her act together and ask 'that silly ruskie' out, she was going to have him reassigned so she could have one of her engineers focus back on her work.
So she did.
Weeks turned to months and she moved in to share his apartment at the Utopia Colony on Mars. As the launch of the *Endalla* loomed closer, and much of the engineering staff who built the ship were chosen to serve on her, Kestrel was thrilled when she found out that not only was her sister chosen as diplomatic officer, but Kris was joining as part of its security force.
"Morning to you too." He said softly in return, leaning in and giving her kiss on the nose, which elicited a small giggle. "Hey, I'm going to ask you a question, and its important."
"You can ask me anything you want." She replied. He reached down and took her hand in his, bringing it up and gave it a soft kiss.
"Will you marry me?" he asked, in a somewhat familiar tone. Like when he's trying to convince you that Russians invented anti-grav plating. But the seriousness and intensity in his eyes washed any thoughts that he was kidding out of Kestrel's mind.
And it scared her.
She jumped up from under the covers, started to pace the room, only to stop and turn to face him. She let out a nervous laugh.
"As much as I enjoy you walking around like that, you should put this on." Kris said, reaching down and tossing her robe at her, the same one she had let slide off seductively the night before. "And you still haven't answered me."
She tied the knot of her robe's belt and looked at the man in front of her. The more she thought about it, the more the idea cemented itself in her mind. He made her happy, as much as she made him happy. She loved him and she could not imagine anything different.
"Of course I will!" She said, falling into his arms on the bed, embracing him in a passionate

kiss, which he happily returned.[br][br]When they parted, Kris made his way over to his dresser and pulled a small box, and handed it to her. Inside was a small gold ring with a small red jewel inset on it. Kestrel could see that it was not a valuable jewel, but she could tell from the smile and look of pride in Kris' eyes that it was very dear and important to him.[br][br]"This ring has been in my family for generations, passed from mother to son since the early 1800s. We honestly don't know how old the ring is." Kris explained, letting out a small laugh. "Before my mother passed, she gave this to me. She said 'Kristoff, I want you to find a girl who makes you happy, and when you do, you give her this. Then you make her happy.'" He said, wiping a tear from his eye. "Kestrel, you make me happy. More happy than I've ever been in my life, and I love you for that. I can't picture not being with you." He continued, taking the ring and placed it on her finger, and leaned in to kiss her again.[br][br]When she opened her eyes, she saw the time on Kris' chronometer on his bed stand, and it caused her to panic.[br][br]"We're late for our shifts!" Kestrel exclaimed.[br][br]"It's alright! I cleared it with our respective boss-ladies. We got an hour, and I can think of something more 'productive' we could be doing with our time... don't you" Kris hinted with a wild grin on his face.[br][br]* * [br][br]Akira was leaning back on her chair in her office just off the floor of main engineering, a glass of Trixian Bubble Juice, the child's drink being her guilty pleasure, in one hand, and reading a padd with shift reports in the other. As she read, the words of which were starting to blend in together as the banality of her job started to get to her. Putting her drink and padd down, she got up and stretched her arms behind her, when out of the corner of her eye she saw Kestrel figuratively glide past her office window with a beaming smile on her face. Akira quickly grabbed another padd from her desk and walked out into the center of engineering, nodding to engineer Brett Cruise, who quickly disappeared out a door.[br][br]"Alright, listen up everyone; I've got an important announcement. Those of you who served with me on Utopia Plantia can probably guess what is coming, so this is for you new people. We have a promotion to take care of! Most C.O.s like take care of these things privately and with dignity. I, however, like to single out and embarrass my grease monkeys." Akira stated loudly, eliciting laughter from everyone. "Stevenson, front and center!" she ordered, and Kestrel took her place, rolling her eyes, but still unable to hide her smile.[br][br]"Lieutenant Junior Grade Kestrel Stevenson, Damage Control Specialist, U.S.S. *Endalla*. As of Stardate 58561, 0900 hours ship-board time, by order and approval of Starfleet Command and your superior officers; you are here by promoted to the rank of Lieutenant, and assigned as Deputy Chief Engineer, with all the rights and privileges therein." Akira stated formally. "Kestrel, you came to me a wet behind the ears academy graduate, and I've watched as you became a brilliant and quick thinking engineer. You've earned this." She continued, pulling a small gold pip out of her pocket, and attaching it to Kestrel's collar, replacing her half-pip. Akira then turned her head and nodded to Brett, who had returned with a tray of Sake glasses, and started to pass them around.[br][br]"Kanpai!" Akira toasted loudly, tossing back the glass of rice wine, followed by the same from everyone else.[br][br]"Thank you, everyone. This day just keeps getting better." Kestrel said, blushing furiously and brushing an errant lock of her auburn hair out of her face with her left hand, which caught the eye of Brett Cruise.[br][br]"Now, you are going to tell us why you walked in here on cloud nine, right" He joked, eyeing the ring on her hand.[br][br]Kestrel froze, the eyes of fourteen engineers now locked on to her. She looked at her hand and smiled.[br][br]"Kris proposed to me this morning." She said quickly in one breath, followed by everyone cheering.[br][br]* * [br][br]"Brett, take a look at the impulse reactor's deuterium flow rate, adjust it by oh-point-six." Kestrel said, going over the readings on Master Systems Display table before her in main engineering.[br][br]"On it boss." Brett replied with a smirk. Since her impromptu promotion this morning, he had taken to calling her 'boss', and it was starting to wear on her.[br][br]"Brett, you gotta stop calling me that." She mock-scolded him, shaking her head.[br][br]"Sure thing, Lieutenant Chernienko." Brett said, quickly ducking under her swing that was meant to lightly smack him upside the head.[br][br]That was when things went to hell. The red alert klaxon sounded mere seconds before the deck bucked

under everyone's feet. Over Kestrel's shoulder, a frightful scream ended abruptly with a dull thud on the deck.[br][br]"All Hands, battle stations!" sounded Akira's voice over the ship's intercom.[br][br]"Carol!" Brett yelled, running over to the officer's still body, her neck bent a wrong, sickening angle. Brett looked over to Kestrel and shook his head, letting her know she was dead.[br][br]"Ok..." Kestrel began, taking a calming deep breath to steel herself, then let her training take over. "Drag her into the office and join damage team 2." She told Brett, quickly turning to the rest of her staff scrambling to react to the situation unfolding around them. "zh'Kiba, divert power from non-essential systems and let Operations know it's available." She ordered as the deck bucked under her again, sending her to the deck. Her mind screamed in pain as her arm gave way with a wet crack.[br][br]* * [br][br]"Report!" Akira ordered, pulling a lock of hair out of her eyes only to see her fingers covered blood. The Reezan ship had fired two volleys from its main weapon, a particle beam cannon that ran the length of the ship, before they could move out of its line of sight.[br][br]"Shields down to eighty-three percent, sensors show our phaser fire is causing similar damage." Halee responded.[br][br]"Good, keep firing. Marion, keep us out of the firing solution of their main gun." She said turning towards Li at operations. "Damage report, ensign." [br][br]"EPS conduits blown out on decks seven and ten; damage control teams responding. Engineering reports one fatality." The young Bajoran reported.[br][br]Akira's brow knitted into a scowl as she contemplated their next move. "Marion, bring us around to..." she said, pausing to work the command chair's armrest console, "one-four-eight, thirty-five degree incline and increase speed to one-third impulse. Valco, ready torpedo salvos fore and aft, target their weapons and shields with ventral phasers, fire when you have lock." [br][br]In Akira's mind she pictured the ship pulling to port and making a torpedo run on the Reezan ship. On the view screen she saw red balls of light streak towards their opponent, then felt the deck under feet vibrate as the aft torpedo salvo launched. [br][br]"Ventral shields down to sixty-two percent." Halee reported.[br][br]"Bring us about to starboard, full axis rotation; bring our dorsal weapons to bare. Auxiliary power to weapons, target their engines!" [br][br]The *Endalla* banked to the right, rolling itself to fire its dorsal phasers, which arced towards their targets, one of them finding their mark on the enemy ship, causing one of its engines to explode, fishtailing the vessel so its bow had a clear line of sight at the *Endalla*. [br] [br]Then it fired.[br][br]"All hands; Brace! Brace! Brace!" Akira screamed after slamming her hand down on the intercom control. The ship rocked violently, sending everyone to the deck as sparks and flames erupted from blown out consoles, filling the bridge with acrid smoke as the lighting failed.[br][br]Akira rolled on the deck groaning, the wind knocked out of her, making getting up even that much more difficult. "What happened?" She called out into the darkness.[br][br]"We took a direct hit to our starboard nacelle strut. By the Prophets! It's been sheared clean off! It's adrift eight hundred meters aft, looks to be intact." Li reported. "Damage reports coming in... Main power is at thirty-one percent. Weapons, shields and propulsion are all offline; structural integrity is down to fifty-six percent but engineering reports that they've tied the holodeck power systems into the SIF to stabilize it." [br][br]"And our friend out there?" [br][br]"In pretty much the same shape we are. They've lost main power and life support is minimal. They're appear to be dead in the water." Halee responded.[br][br]"Bridge to Sick-bay, status." Akira asked as she pulled herself into her chair as Marion and Amber managed to get the emergency lighting working.[br][br]"*Burst'n at th'seams lassie, I've got two dead, three more critical with plasma burns and more broken bones and concussions than I can count. I'll get back to ya.*" William reported.[br][br]"Engineering, what can you give me." Akira asked.[br][br]"zh'Kiba here, Brett just dragged Kestrel to sickbay. We lost Carol. I don't even know where to begin. We've stabilized the SIF, and teams are working on getting main power back to full. Damage control team one is suiting up in hazard gear to go inspect the nacelle strut where we just stopped leaking drive plasma." The Andorian zhen reported.[br][br]"Good work, I'll be down there when I can." Akira said in praise.[br][br]"Commander, Kestrel did good. She kept us together despite breaking her arm in the second hit." [br][br]"Acknowledged." Akira said, smiling.[br][br]* * [br][br]"Keep applying the

dermaline gel." William told a nurse as he moved on to his next patient.
[br] [br]"Doctor, he's convulsing!"
The nurse called out, holding on to the burned man's shoulders to keep him on the
bio-bed.
[br][br]"shoot. A blood clot went into his brain, twenty milligrams of lectrazine." He ordered,
immediately having a hypospray handed to him, which he applied to his patient's neck. The convulsing
slowly stopped, followed by the bio-bed's readings bottoming out.
[br][br]"Cortical stimulators doctor" the
nurse asked.
[br][br]"No, the damage is too severe, there's nothing we can do. Time of death, 1845
hours." William stated, turning to see Kestrel being brought into sickbay.
[br][br]"Kris!" she screamed,
trying to get away from Brett who's trying to keep her from running into the busy
sickbay.
[br][br]"Lieutenant. I'm sorry..." The doctor started to say, as Kestrel slumped to her knees in
shock as her world came crashing down around her.