

A Crack in the Looking Glass

By Robert Lydford

Sirens sounded, running feet clattered, and Disruptor cannons were readied as the the I.K.V. Diplomacy dropped from warp. The Nightfire Nebular that almost encompassed Starbase four one zero, had been dangerously active of late. It was an area of space that could be treacherous at the best of times. But for the last four days it had excelled itself. Burning a bright, almost spectrum red. The Ambassdor's Vessel was returning from a supply run to Bajor. The Mission had been uneventful and Ke'reth had spent a little less than a week delving into Bajor's beautiful Cities. . .

Only to return to an almost blinding wall of scarlet fire. B'sel his Chief of Staff moved to stand beside his Command chair. "She snapped to attention as he looked up at her. Then handed him a Padd. "It's not good news, we'll have to go around the ramqul Nebular." Ke'reth cursed, almost under his breath.

"That's going to put us three days behind Schedule." She nodded. "Unless!" She looked back, from glancing at the Nebular on the view screen. "Unless?" She repeated.

"Unless we find a weak point and try to slip through."

"I wouldn't advise it. I spoke with Commodore Jat, This morning. She gave me a list of Vessels caught in the Phenomenon. You have the list before you." Ke'reth activated the Padd. And watched as line upon line of Klingon text that was B'sel's notes, flashed before him. . .

U.S.S. Liberator - Akira Class, Damage to port Nacelle, Impulse drive and plasma manifolds. . .

N.S.P. T'Paric - A Vulcan Toh'veak Class Science Vessel. Main sensor array crippled, Navigational deflector almost destroyed. An Electromagnetic pulse from the Nebula ripped through their shields like they weren't there, and wiped out six months worth of notes from their computers. . .

An unknown Ferengi Vessel is also claiming damages. But that's not the worst of it, there's also a shuttle with Lieutenants John Borda and Jenessa Blake aboard. It's been missing for the last couple of days, they had been out repairing a sensor buoy on the edge of the Nebular. . .

B'sel almost fell to the the floor as a bolt of light lanced out from the Nebula, pitching the Warship sideways. Thankfully the Command chair broke her fall as she yelled out for an explanation. Ke'reth's eyes widened the Nebula was gone. Worst of all. So was the nearby Starbase. . .

Ke'reth tapped at his controls. "I don't get it!" He growled. As he watched a battered Cardassian space station turning slowly before him. "How could a nebula throw us all the way back to Deep Space Nine? His thoughts were interrupted by a face appearing on the Screen. A Cardassian Face. "This is Empok Nor, to unknown Alliance Vessel. Identify yourself. Ke'reth spoke quickly thinking on his feet, as he altered his ship's Ident codes. "This is the Alliance Warship Havok, Six months out from Kronos. Demanding docking clearance." He switched off the Com-link. "B'sel's eyes widened, I have a bad feeling about this!" Ke'reth took a deep breath. . .

"What do you know about the Mirror Universe?" He asked. She stifled a gasp.

"Only what I've read in intelligence reports. Oh Kahless! You don't think. Do you?" Ke'reth nodded reluctantly.

"I think the Nebular has cracked the 'Looking Glass'. His hand tapped his Padd. bringing up a picture of a corrupted Trefoil and Cardassian bird symbol. We'll need one each, for

ourselves, and we better pin one to each member of the Bridge crew.

The same ugly grey Cardassian face reappeared on the Screen. “ This is Empok Nor, Control, to unlisted Alliance Vessel. We have no schedule for your Arrival. Ke’reth smiled as he stood up, his pin now in place. “Are you Challenging Sub-Regent Kre’moQ. Why I ought to tear your rotten head off, for your incompetent insolence!” B’sel nudged him, as the screen went blank.

“I think your overdoing the villain act.”

“You think, I should tone it down a little?” He asked. She moved her hand in front of his face and brought her finger and thumb to an inch apart. “Just a little.” He smiled, as the Cardassian reappeared on the screen. “Docking Clearance, upper pylon three. You’ll be escorted to the Intendant’s Office upon arrival. - Empok Nor, out. . .”

“Now you’re in trouble!” B’sel, warned sarcastically.

“You mean we’re in trouble.” She winced. “I’ll need my Executive Officer with me.” She glanced at him locking eyes for a second or two. He nodded, smiling a dangerous feral smile. . .

The Station was dark, and not just dimly lit, it seemed oppressive and close. The Cardassians. liked the heat, Ke’reth didn’t. Guards - some Klingon others Cardassian or Bajoran worked together, adding to their feelings of unease at the wrongness of it. . .

The intendant was a Bajoran woman, her clothing was black, in stark contrast to her blond hair. She sat behind her desk, a handsome Klingon guard stripped to the waist was massaging her neck and shoulders. “That’s enough Kral.” She ordered. He nodded, as he backed away. “But don’t go too far, I may need you later.” He smiled his compliance. “I’m feeling a little tense.” She said coquettishly, as she swung

slowly left and right on her swivel chair. She then sat up straight, as Ke’reth stepped forward. Her eyes widened. Perhaps in recognition. “Well, well, well!” She smiled dangerously. “They say we all have a double, somewhere.” Ke’reth stared at her. But soon recovered, and began a dangerous game of verbal sparring. “Yes. And yours, is a compassionate, honourable and deeply religious woman. For whom I hold a great deal of respect. The Bajoran woman stood up a flash of anger in her eyes, that was soon reigned in. “Ho dare you, come here and lecture me on honour! You lied to get here!” Ke’reth smiled. “What makes you think, I won’t have you both killed for your treachery?” Her hand touched a panel on the desk, as a door opened and a Warrior entered. His red hair seemed unkempt, and his manner was almost bestial. But the likeness was unmistakable. B’sel stopped herself from gasping. “This is my pet ‘Kane.’ Kane serves his Mistress well. Don’t you Kane? Perhaps in time you’ll both come to serve me too.” Ke’reth removed her pale hand from his cheek. “It will be a cold day in Gre’thor!” Ke’reth cursed in Klingon. She smiled an odd smile, almost wistful in nature. “That’s very funny, Captain!” Ke’reth’s eyes narrowed, giving her a look that few men walked away from. “Kane said the very same thing.” She looked back at the creature she’d renamed Kane. “Just before he murdered his family. Just about, where you’re standing.” A low growl escaped ke’reth’s lips. Kane seemed pensive, the Intendant mocking. “It was quite brutal, I found it all very distressing.” B’sel looked startled as her hand instinctively hovered a quarter of an inch from her blaster. “Bitch!” Ke’reth snapped. Kane lunged forward, Ke’reth turned on him and snarled a deep throated snarl, that no sentient creature should have been able to make. A sound of pure bestial anger. And for the first time ever, Kane backed down without a fight. . .

The Intendant looked shocked, but recovered her composure well, as she

dismissed Kane from the room. "You should keep that thing, on a leash. He might try to bite someone." Ke'reth snapped. The intendant smiled, Compassionately. "We could get rid of him, if you would agree to work for me." B'sel looked shocked as Ke'reth smiled. "Mmmmm. . . Me work for you!" He grinned as he rubbed and held his chin mocking the actions of a man deep in thought. "It's a nice idea, but I'm afraid, that I'll have to turn you down." The Intendant rested her hand on his shoulder. "I could make it worth your while, you could live like a Prince." Ke'reth laughed, but his eyes didn't show any signs of humour. "What! Until I upset you! Then I get a free trip to your butcher's shop surgeon and get my mind f**ked, with an implant." The Intendant looked shocked. "Thank's! But no thanks! I like my mind how it is, flaws and all"

"It doesn't have to be like that." She said softly. "Kane's not the man he was, You could replace him. I like your fire! Your spirit, your strength."

"Until, I speak out of turn you mean, or think for myself."

"Then why are you here?" The Intendant asked. B'sel by now, had had enough of this Verbal sparring. She pulled a Padd. from her belt and activated it handing it to the Intendant. spoke in a no nonsense manner. "I believe you have recently captured a Federation Shuttlecraft." She was interrupted in mocking tones from the Intendant. "There's no Federation here, you must be mistaken." And with that, the Intendant turned back to her desk. "I didn't give you leave to turn your back on me, woman." B'sel snapped turning from Diplomatic Aide to Soldier in one fluid motion. The Intendant smiled that same sarcastic derogatory smile, that B'sel wanted to rip from her face, and feed it to her. "Have we lost your friends, it's a big station. Perhaps they've found a new Occupation in Ore Production." Ke'reth stunned the woman with one her guards own painsticks that had been torn from his startled grasp as B'sel shot two others. . .

Meanwhile. . . Down in the bowels of the Station John and Jenessa formulated a plan of escape. His face smeared with dust and sweat. As someone who'd worked as a Asteroid miner, he was almost used to the heat and the hard work. But it was the biting pain of the welt from the Cardassian lash that only served to tighten his resolve. He resisted the urge to rub it as they spoke. "Jenna." He used the shortened version of her name as they huddled behind an ore trolley. Her dark eyes flitted up to meet him. smeared grime showed that she'd been crying. "We're leaving tonight." Her eyes widened. "Have you gone mad?" It was a rhetorical question, but he answered it anyway. "Perhaps he answered, but I need a hot bath. And I don't think we'll find one here." She nodded "But how, do we get back?" He wiped his dry mouth and mopped at his brow. "I'm sure, that what we passed through is a two way street. I scanned the Nebular as we fell through it, and if my calculations are correct. There was matter from both sides of the Dimensional rift present." She pulled back her hair, from her eyes glancing up to the raised platform, and it's Cardassian guards. But they seemed not to see her. "If you're right how do we reopen the fissure we'd need a massive output of of power. I don't think the type nine shuttle has enough energy in it's phasers to do the job. You'd need an Antimatter explosion. . ." She paused, "You've got to be kidding." He shook his head. "The slightest miscalculation and we'd be spread wafer thin across across half this system." He nodded excitedly as he spoke. "But! If we get it right. We'll be Heroes. Imagine the story we could tell. Why The General's tales of front line daring do, would pale almost into insignificance, by comparison. We'd even be able to hold our own with some of the Ambassador's wildest stories." She jumped as as an explosion rocked the balcony above them sending the Cardassians. sprawling over the railings. "Kane?" She whispered over the Klaxons wail.

"I Don't think so." John yelled out, I think this, has all the hallmarks off a Ke'reth rescue. . .

Back on the Starbase. . . John was holding court, while telling his tale. “- Then the at the last possible moment the Ambassador beamed us to his Bridge as the Shuttle exploded, under fire from his cannons, tearing open the phenomenon. and here we are, Back home. Since then the Nebular has settled down. . .”