

Second Chances By Martin Ford

Captain Leigh Brown of the USS Rage stood at the Ops desk on Starbase 410. He could hear nothing except the reassuring gentle rhythm of the warp core, providing life in the freezing vacuum of space.

He disliked the graveyard shift. The only one in this part of the massive station, kept company by the automated computer systems. Nothing happened at this time of night – ever. He gazed absentmindedly through the stations' viewer at hundreds of thousands of stars. Around 01:30, he heard female voices, singing in a tuneless unity. The words were roughly similar but the voices sang to different tunes. He became aware of the lift coming up to the bridge from the promenade level. The voices became louder as the lift drew closer. He turned to see Jeanette, qu'bang, b'Sel and Madia Amme half fall, half stumble onto the bridge.

"Lo" Amme beamed.

"Hello," Leigh replied. "Been celebrating something?"

"Yesh. It's the ancient Klingon festival of wood" explained qu'bang.

"Festival of wood? Never heard of it!"

"Neither have I" giggled b'Sel, "but it's a good reason to get drunk!!"

"Whysh the room spinin'?" Jen asked.

"S'not," replied qu'bang. She paused "well, so 'tis. How'd ya do that Cap'n?"

Before he could reply, a blinding white light flooded his mind. The next thing he was aware of was sitting at a Romulan conference table, with all the 40 officers. Scanning the room, he took in high ranking Romulans, Cardassians, Ferengis, Vulcans and more Starfleet personnel. The Romulans seemed to be running the meeting. A Commander from Romulan Intelligence was in mid flow.

"....incursions into our united territory continue. This war has decimated us all, but those miserable scum won't even hold talks with us, let alone sue for peace. We need to upgrade our efforts now."

She sat abruptly. A Vulcan, familiar to Leigh, stood.

"Thank you T'Pau. It is the view of the Vulcan ruling council that we support our Romulan cousins. We trust others will follow suit." He returned to his chair. Commodore Jat took the table.

"Thank you Ambassador Spock. We appear to be in total agreement and war is unavoidable. If this is the case, I suggest we begin with an attack on the Imperial Klingon Starbase Gre'thors Sentinel." Nods of consent came from everyone at the table. "Then I declare this conference closed."

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"May your blood scream!" bellowed Ke'reth

"May you encounter Kahless in your dreams!" countertoasted the General, equally loudly. The two battle-hardened warriors butted heads with enough force to kill a human. Then they threw back their heads and howled with laughter. The drinking went on for the rest of the night, concluding with a high percentage of the Klingon crew snoring loudly in various places throughout the rest of the station.

Early shift on the I.K.S. Gre'thors Sentinel began right on schedule, despite some major hangovers.

To an observer, all there was to see was a normal mushroom like base, What couldn't be seen was the IKV Hegh qaD, the IKV Hammerblade, the IKV Dragonfist and the Ambassadorial IKV along with seven Bird of Prey D12 class, the largest class, under Lt.

Colonel qu'bang as part of her elite Whitestorm unit. These ships were all under the Generals command, as this was a military operation.

"General." Ke'reth's face appeared on the IKV Hegh qaD's viewscreen.

"nuqneh, Fleet Captain." No favouritism. This was war.

"My contacts at the Embassy have informed me of a task force approaching at warp 8 from the enemy territory."

"Maj."(good). The General nodded slowly. "Your dual role serves the Empire well. Qapla."

"Qapla." Ke'reth's face was replaced by the stars.

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"USS Rage to USS London"

"Go ahead, Leigh" Anarita sat on the Galaxy class bridge.

"Hello. Just checking in and advising that we will be in striking range in 30 minutes."

The Commodore beamed. "Excellent. It's going to be a great feeling to finish this awful business."

On the USS London were Major Madia at tactical, Jen Warran at Ops, T'Pina by Anarita in the X.O's seat, John Borda at engineering, Dave Canning at the helm and Quek in Ten Forward. They were ready for anything. The two ships flew parallel and headed up the rest of the task force.

Before long they arrived at the space station. Scans showed the base shields raised and business as usual. With the impressive ships to her stern, the Commodore ordered the Klingon surrender. Her reply was the mighty Vor'cha of Lt. Colonel LoDnI, the IKV Dragonfist decloaking off her starboard bow, firing three torpedoes into the USS London's body.

"Shields down to 29%" said Jen.

"Understood. They're playing hardball. Back up. Then Madia, full phasers to the Vor'cha nacelle."

"With pleasure," smiled the Major.

Seconds later, the rest of the Klingon ships shimmered into view and the station opened up its heavy cannons. The Klingon ships were easily outnumbered, but the powerful station armament their surrounding of the Starfleet Alliance balanced things out.

A massive all out firefight ensued, with ships on both sides dogfighting, bursting into plasma balls with heavy losses all round.

Suddenly, Jen said "T'Pina the stations overheating from the weapons systems. They're going to do a Praxis on us!!"

T'Pina was typically cool. "Then I suggest we fall back - now!!"

"Aye aye Ma'am" John slew the huge ship around.

"Anarita, check the viewer!" shouted Leigh across from the USS Rage. Everyone looked up. The station was visibly glowing.

"Oh my God! Get us the f..." before she finished, the Klingon station warp core blew with the fury of a star turning super nova. No one escaped.

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There was a blinding flash, and Captain Leigh Brown of the USS Rage stood at Ops on Starbase 410. He could hear nothing except the reassuring rhythm of the warp core providing life in the freezing vacuum of space. Somehow, things seemed wrong. When he heard four drunken women singing in the distance, the hairs stood up on the back of his neck; he broke into a cold sweat as the voices grew louder as the lift approached towards him.

“Oh my God.....”

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THE END