

Starbase 410 Community Story part 3

Captain Brown walked out of Sickbay, still stunned at what he'd heard from Lt. Barstow and Ambassador Ke'reth. They had just recovered consciousness, but were able to give an account of what had happened. He was still absorbing the information when Cdr. Borda stopped him.

"So? What happened?"

"What do you mean what happened?" replied Leigh.

"My instruments detected two penetrations from the alternate universe in quick succession."

"How could you know?"

"Ever since that last altercation, I was asked to try and prevent future attacks. I had been making progress, but I wasn't ready for this. So what happened?"

"Admiral Jat and the Bajoran ambassador have been kidnapped. No-one else is missing, and I've got Lt. Aldous running transporter scramblers to make sure they can't return. But I think they have what they came for."

"Good God! Any idea why?"

"No idea. But we need to find them and bring them back."

"They'll be on Ramq'ul."

"What's that?"

"The equivalent of this starbase in the alternate universe. And before you ask, part of my job was to gather intelligence about them."

"So what's likely to happen to them?"

"Good question, but if they were taken then there must be a good reason. Chances are they'll be kept alive until that reason no longer exists. After that, God help them."

"So how do we get them out?"

"With difficulty. But I think I know how to even up the odds. If you care to authorise a rescue mission, that is."

"You'd better brief me as we go."

A figure marched through the shadows of the deserted, dusty street. Confident of his destination, looking like he belonged, except for the occasional pauses at the odd alley, when he glanced around in the pretence of looking down it. He was not followed. After following a circuitous route through the shanty town, he slipped through a door without knocking.

There were snores from the back room. Silently, avoiding the carefully strewn debris on the floor- or was it simply the remains of a drinking binge? – the shadow slipped through the room, past the broom carefully placed where it might trip up a trespasser, towards the source of the sound.

It was coming from under a blanket on a couch in the back room. The stranger ignored it, and turned to look behind the door. He smiled and shook his head.

Dalen Varr woke with a gun in the back of his head. "Not clever enough, friend!" whispered the shadow behind him. The gun moved away, and Varr sat up in shock, expecting the worst. The shadow picked up a lantern and switched it on.

"JB!" exclaimed Varr. "You scared the hell out of me!"

"So why did you call? Don't you keep your big mouth busy enough with your new toy?" replied John "JB" Borda, slipping half a cigar out from behind his ear and lighting it.

"That's the thing- someone tracked the satellite you made and sent a message- I thought you should see this!"

"Don't tell me, the Intendent telling us we're very naughty boys and need our wrists slapped?"

"No- better- see..." Varr activated a small viewscreen and played a recording. Now it was JB's turn to freeze in surprise. The face on the viewscreen was his own- but different, clean-shaven, and wearing a uniform of some sort.

"...I am authorised to offer food and medical equipment in return for your help in recovering our officers. As a gesture of good faith I can send a ten tonne pallet to co-ordinates you specify. At this time I cannot transport living matter or power sources should you require anything else. Please respond using the fifth harmonic of your "Voice of the Resistance" transmission, overlaid on the normal transmission."

The viewscreen went blank.

Both men were silent.

"Is this for real? Never mind- tell them to add a crate of a dozen plasma relays, three terawatt or better, and drop it in polar orbit around the second moon."

"Then what? The last time you tried sneaking up on Ramq'ul you nearly got blown out of space!"

"But with a working set of relays, the "*Sitting Duck*" won't be leaking power, and I can get the "railroad" working. If I snag their people while I'm getting our own, then hooray for our side! In the meantime, if that pallet doesn't blow when I get near it, at least we won't go hungry for a few weeks."

The "railroad" was JB's plan to hijack Ramq'ul's slaves by tapping into its own internal transporter system between the holding blocks and the ore processing plant. Timed on a shift change, it could snatch maybe fifty at once, and look like a transporter malfunction for long enough to get away.

"And if we get their people out, how do we get them back to their universe?"

"That's their problem. We have to look out for our own." replied JB. "Still, if we can get more kit, then they'll be useful. But I can't pick and choose. It's grab who I can and get out fast."

Meanwhile Madia Amme was watching Ramq'ul get smaller as the Intendant's ship sped towards Klingon space. The tight leather flight suit chafed, she tried not to think about whose skin it might have been made from. Kane stood impassively three steps away, never more, never less. Always watching. She was getting used to him being there. Unfeeling, obedient, and watchful, with his cybernetic eye feeding back to the Intendant herself. Planning an escape was out until she could get back and take Anarita with her. By which time she might have been assassinated in the Intendant's place...