

Tech-Witch

By Robert Lydford

Kana sat in her Quarters as she played with China her pet black rat, caring for this small creature took up much of her off-duty time. But she wouldn't have it any other way. Almost a month had passed since the Imperial Klingon Vessel Proud Vengeance had left the Starbase. She popped a piece of fruit in her mouth, and smiled to herself as a somewhat curious metal creature entered the room. It was Box. Box was, as his name suggested Kana's Toolbox. It had taken her a while, but she'd finally finished building him around two weeks earlier. Box stood on four feet and had a pair of red scanning eyes; it was one of the few ways to tell which way it was facing, as its sides were almost completely taken up by drawers full of tools and commonly need spares such as micro-fuses and trans-data links and the occasional light bulb. She'd also equipped him with a pair of manipulator arms concealed within a front panel, and a miniaturised sensor-suite that was much more advanced than any Tricorder. Its top concealed a fold-up lid that when it was raised, became her laptop style engineer's computer. The door chimed. She smiled as she put China back in her multi-tiered cage, and then called out for the door to open. In strolled K'Taal, the Vengeance's new Chief Science Officer. He rested lightly upon a cane held tight against his leg. Some Klingons would have considered his disability a weakness. But Kana had seen otherwise. The cane contained at least one blade, and K'Taal had hinted at other modifications located within its shaft.

'Sorry to disturb you Kana.' He said. 'But I'm going to require a more powerful energy feed to the sensors. I've been looking over our internal plans. It seems my late predecessor wasn't using this vessel's scientific sensors at their full capability.' Kana smiled at his words. 'This class of vessel has the most advance sensors in the Klingon Fleet.' She said, as K'Taal shook his head, as he handed her a padd. 'I don't doubt it, but those are tactical sweep sensors for military purposes. I'm talking about scientific sensors.' Kana smiled as she glanced over the padd. 'I'm aware of that! Your Ke'reth gave me his welcome aboard spiel, when I signed on, as his Chief Science Officer. "A new ship for a new age, more than a warship." Kana looked up from K'Taal's padd. 'This looks doable.' She said changing the subject. K'Taal smiled. He'd expected more resistance from her. 'I'll assign a crew to it, as soon as I've had the time to consider your proposed upgrades.' K'Taal nodded. Kana stood up and tapped the screen above her desk and called up some schematics. 'We have several Delta series scientific instrument pallets imbedded within the hull. Up to now, we really haven't had much use for them. But they're there.' Kana's chair contained a gyroscopically steered Repulsor-lift drive that allowed it to hover. She moved to her main computer and gestured for K'Taal to come closer. 'Is this your own design of computer?' He asked, a note of respectful curiosity evident in his voice, told her that he was impressed. Kana smiled it was nice to find a ridgehead; she silently admonished herself for the racial slur. Who shared anything close to her knowledge of Computers. 'Ke'reth indulges me, with some very advanced toys.' She grinned.

'This is a Kre'nal class, super computer isn't it?' He asked; her smile widened. As you probably already know from studying our systems, we use four Kre'nal class computer cores linked through a custom built server with bio-neural circuitry and an advanced artificial intelligence system. This is the brain of the Vengeance.' Kana announced as a three-dimensional holographic female

Klingon face made up from a green-lit grid pattern, appeared before them. K'Taal this is De'laH, De'laH; this is our new Chief Science Officer K'Taal. The green tinged face was undoubtedly attractive, as its circuit textured face turned to look directly at him. 'Greetings K'Taal after all the hours you've spent searching through this ship's systems since coming aboard, I'm more than a little surprised that you didn't activate me earlier.'

General Ke'reth sat on the Bridge, his eyes seemed fixed on a small screen set within his chair's armrest. With b'Sel spending more time on the Planet Romulus he'd spoken to Bajoran Ambassador Madia Amme aboard the Starbase. and inquired about an Officer transfer program, between their peoples. Madia had smiled, she even knew of just the woman, a Bajoran Lt. Commander with both shipboard and battlefield command experience, and what's more, she had spoken fluent Klingon since she was around ten years old, after her Parents had been rescued from Cardassian soldiers by a K't'inga class cruiser around twenty years before. Her name was Ahnah Jerran. She had recently told Madia, that she not had found life on the Starbase fulfilling, and had requested a transfer, Up to now. Madia had been at a loose end as what to do with her. But Ke'reth's offer of an exchange program and his recommendation of a Senior Marine Drill sergeant by the name Rakahl, to continue with the training that Ke'reth had started with her guards a few months earlier. This temporary exchange of Officers, was a solution that to her, seemed to be Prophet sent.

Ahnah had previously told Ke'reth, that she had been an angry teenager. She'd hated the Cardassians for what they had done to her people. She'd wanted to fight, but her father and mother had instead escaped into the badlands, to avoid the war. She'd felt guilty somehow, guilty for leaving her people, for running, for being a Bajoran. She felt shame in her parents for running, for their cowardice, she hadn't understood why.

After being rescued by the I.K.V. Hov'etlh (Star-blade). Her parents had despaired, Ahnah had started drinking, training, brawling and living with the younger Klingons aboard Captain M'bok's cadet training ship. She'd admitted to him, that M'bok and the other Cadets had knocked off some of her rough edges, and given her back her sense of self, and of course the discipline that she'd desperately needed.

Ahnah entered the Bridge; she'd left her hair down, and now wore the armour of a senior Bridge Commander.

Ke'reth turned his chair to face her. 'How was your morning training session Commander?' She smiled at his question, as she snapped to attention. 'Very satisfying General.' She replied. 'It's been many years since I've felt this well, My bat'leth teacher says if I keep improving he may enter me for the Master class at the K'Kella Games.' Ke'reth nodded appreciatively. 'He's also asked our CMO to work out a new diet for me, to help me build up my strength and muscle bulk.' She continued. 'Then Ahnah, take your place.' 'Thank you Sir.'

De'laH's face appeared on the bridge; on a screen set above the main viewer. 'General, we are now leaving known space, we are currently cruising at warp eight, all systems within standard operating parameters.'

'Ask K'taal to come to the bridge.' Ke'reth said. A few minutes later K'Taal and Kana entered the Bridge. Ke'reth gestured for Kana to take her place beside him in the mission specialist chair, which rose up telescopically from the raised dais of the command platform. K'Taal came to attention, somewhat reluctantly Ke'reth smiled. K'Taal knew, that having to follow orders wasn't something he'd ever been good at. He often called himself a rogue Klingon, and his record had shown that he'd had more than a few problems with authority, some of them ending in fatalities. But He was the sort of man Ke'reth found himself grudgingly admiring; he'd spent the last few years living in the wilderness of a small planet on the fringes of Klingon space. K'Taal had a warrior's heart. And in Ke'reth's opinion he was also arguably the best Science Officer inside or outside the fleet.

'Helm increase speeds to warp nine, K'Taal how are your sensor upgrades coming along?' K'Taal smiled. 'I should soon be able to perform my duties to the best of my abilities, Sir!' Ke'reth nodded. 'That's the by-the-book reply. Now let's here yours?' He asked.

'Kana and I have several more days work to bring them up to my expectations. I find it hard to believe these systems were never brought online.' Ke'reth nodded.

'That's the kind of candid answers I expect of my crew. Nothing good ever comes from a crew; too scared to tell me what I'm doing wrong.'

'Aye Sir!' K'Taal said, somewhat ironically.

Lt. Khalen spoke up from the helm. Sir, we're entering the Shar'nahl expanse. According to my files we'll soon be entering an area of space that no Klingon ship has ever explored.' Ke'reth nodded.

'Well K'Taal; it looks like a good time to check out your sensor modifications.' K'Taal nodded as he walked briskly to the aft bridge science station.

Ke'reth looked up. 'De'laH; Do you have anything in our files on the area ahead of us?

A few seconds passed before the computer smiled. 'We have a single long range sensor scan, from a Klingon observation post near Klach D'kel Brakt out near the Romulan border. It detected three class 'M' planets at extreme range around pair of binary stars, three years ago. No more information currently available.'

Ke'reth stood up and moved to the front of the command area. 'He coughed a little theatrically, to get everyone's attention. 'Crew of the Vengeance, I can now reveal to you the true nature of this mission. Klingon deep sensor scans reveal what we believe to be a crashed Borg sphere, sensors reveal that its trans-warp drive is believed to still be intact. Six months ago a Klingon unmanned probe swept the crash impact area on this Planet, that Imperial Intelligence has designated as Krindor three. This was before the probe

ceased transmitting. This planet seems to only have primitive level humanoid life signs. We are of course aware that the Borg can remain in an inactive state for many years, that's why upon arrival scout teams made up of Black Dagger troops will beam aboard in small groups and destroy the Power-nodes, and remove their vinculum effectively eliminated their ability to communicate and regenerate, before slaughtering any remaining Borg in their alcoves.'

Ke'reth waited for a moment to let his words sink in. 'For what we are after is a far greater prize than personal honour. I want The Tran-warp engine, that powers it.' Ke'reth's bridge officers looked a little concerned, but there was a palpable air of excitement aboard the Vengeance.

Three days later Kana and K'Taal sat and talked, in one of the Vengeances cavernous cargo storage bays. The walls around them had been rigged with Nano-inhibitors; a pair of large power generators had also been installed, ready to take the Borg Trans warp engine. The capture and installation of a Borg engine was one of the reasons that K'Taal had agreed to sign aboard the Vengeance. It seemed to Kana that he had been working on the same problem from different ends.

One - the building of a ship capable of the incredible stresses of Trans-warp travel.

Two - how to utilise the Borg nanites to install the engine and support systems without them effecting the surrounding vessel.

'We're almost done here.' Kana said, as K'Taal tapped the Force field Generator with his stick. 'We should be able to hold the Borg nanites within this area.' She nodded.

'There's nowhere else for them to go; no other system within this ship is linked to this room.' She smiled proudly as she spoke. K'Taal went through a checklist. 'We've re-rigged the gravity generators, lighting and life-support systems, and connected the systems to a series of shielded sensors.' Kana stood up. 'We've done well, but we can't afford to be complacent, where the Borg are concerned.' K'Taal nodded. 'I've been working on these Nano-killers for almost ten years.' K'Taal snarled. 'No Borg system that they were ever introduced to ever lasted more than five minutes.' Kana smiled. 'I've read your paper, the one that you sent to the Imperial Science Directorate.' He spat.

'Damn fools!!!'

'So they turned you down!' She snapped. 'They knew that your experiments were all done under laboratory conditions'

'Untrue!' He retorted. 'I used my killer nanites on four captured Borg drones, sold to me by a Ferengi trader.' Kana sat up.

'And?' She asked

'Came this close to killing off the Borg, and leaving the biological parts unharmed.' He said gesturing with his forefinger and thumb an inch apart.

'And the Empire still turned you down?' Kana said as he continued.

'They said that my research had no currant military applications. That the Empire was ploughing all it's resources into rebuilding the fleet.' Kana smiled.

I told them that they could be installed into a new type of weapon. But the fools wouldn't listen.' Kana stood up, and turned to face him. 'That was before I explained the benefits to Ke'reth and he had me contact his brother Kaven.' She explained. 'Kaven was in charge of the team that built the Vengeance's hull, and he tells me, that theoretically this ship's hull and shielding could do what no other Klingon ship could safely do; survive repeated trips at Trans-warp velocities.' K'Taal sat down and placed the tip of his stick at his feet. 'Then let's go and get this engine.' He snapped. 'You've got something to prove to the Empire?' She asked. 'Too damn right.' He grinned. Can you think of a better way to rub the Empire's face in it.' 'Scientific curiosity?' She ventured. He snorted. 'You're a little naïve, for a genius!' He snarled, as he took a piece of preserved meat from a pouch within his armour. He bit into it and offered her some. 'No thanks.' She countered. 'I don't eat meat.' 'You don't know what you're missing.' He laughed, with his mouth full. 'Neither do you, I'm about the only person here, who's even close to being on your wavelength, and Ke'reth needs us to work together on this.' He said. K'Taal shook his head. 'But who is he doing this for?' 'The Empire, or His own Honour?' 'That's a little unfair.' Kana snapped back, as Box Kana's almost sentient walking toolbox wandered in and stood before them; there was a soft click as a panel on its top rose up revealing its screen. Ke'reth's face appeared on the screen. 'How's it going, you two?' He asked. 'Were doing, fine Sir.' 'Great I'll need you both Suited and booted, we're going down to the planet's surface in a little over 14 hours, I suggest you both get some sleep.'

Under the cover of her cloak, the Klingon Command Cruiser Proud Vengeance slipped into orbit, around a verdant green and blue planet, swirled with wisps of white cloud.

14 hours later. Ke'reth stepped of the Turbolift dressed in the full armoured black bodysuit and cross bandoleers and belt of the Black dagger trooper. Kana and K'Taal met him on the way to the transporter room. They were also dressed in their black suits. Kana was followed by Box. K'Taal now wore a heavy-duty utility belt lined with scientific instruments. L'Sar entered the room followed by ten of her Black Dagger troopers all dressed alike in their black suits each wore a holster on his right hip and a dagger on his left. They also carried a variety of rifles, and a Bat'leths each with a non-reflective black finish upon their backs. Ke'reth acknowledged her with a nod. 'This is my scout team I've put five hundred men on standby, once we've done the recon.' Ke'reth nodded, as he gestured for them to take their places on the troop transporter.

Ke'reth spoke as he checked the transporter settings. 'Let's hope they're not needed.' L'Sar smiled.

'That Borg ship could still be active!' Ke'reth nodded, at l'Sar's warning, as Kana stepped forward. 'Unless the explosion killed them all.' She said hopefully.

'Which is unlikely!' K'Taal said as he lent heavily on his cane. 'The scans you and I took of the sphere shows it to be around eighty percent intact.'

'And if it is intact to that degree.' Kana said reticently. 'We're going to be facing the Borg.'

'We've also scanned the surrounding area, the local settlement is powered by a generator capable of running a warp core.' Kana said.

'But the generator seems to be inactive.' K'Taal added.

'Then we'll have to go and see if there's anyone home.' Ke'reth said coldly. 'No one deserves to live under the Borg.'

The planet Krindor three; just after nightfall, Shadowy figures moved stealthily; barely visible against the native foliage. Ke'reth made a series of short gestures with his hands; his team took the orders and moved out to search the area, ahead of them where a series of large tan coloured domes. Ke'reth activated his optical implants thermal vision sensor and scanned the area. Two men stood by an entrance in the settlements outer wall, each was lightly built and at least two metres tall, dressed in pelts and carrying bows. Kana sat down beside him, and removed a small notebook from her belt, and in purple ink she scrawled him a message. **2 Men at the gate, armed with bows, l'Sar wants to know if she should take them down.** Ke'reth shook his head and gestured for them to wait. l'Sar sat and smeared her face with black camouflage paint. Kana slowly opened her Tricorder. Something was odd. She showed it to Ke'reth. The settlement was lit with oil lanterns, when she could detect a redundant power generator within the grounds. Ke'reth tapped a series of commands into his wrist-guard. The message to wait for his signal was flashed up inside the visors of his troopers. The guards at the door were chatting quite loudly, there was something oddly familiar in their language; it almost sounded like...

'Time to take a risk.' He whispered as he slowly slipped off his bandoleers, and un-strapped his Holster. Kana scribbled on her pad. **What are you doing?** By the light of the half open Tricorder she saw Ke'reth mouth the words 'Trust me.' She shrugged.

Ke'reth rolled slowly sideways; as he arrived at the stony path he stood up slowly. One of the guards had seen him and raised his bow. Ke'reth gestured hands open palms up, for him to remain calm. The man spoke slowly it was a language, if not a dialect that Ke'reth knew well, it was Romulan, or at least it sounded like Romulan, the accent was strange, and some of the words they spoke were more similar in their sound to high Vulcan. But the language was defiantly based in Romulan. Ke'reth struggled to remember an old fable that his uncle Korsh had told him as a boy, something about a lost Romulan Colony. A group of dissidents who had escaped about 100 years after the Vulcans had settled on Romulus. Ke'reth spoke softly, in Romulan. 'I come in peace!' He cursed himself for the cliché, but it was all he could think of, that covered this situation. l'Sar sat back in the

long grass and gave her troops their commands with a series of hand gestures. She told them to move slowly back around ten metres, where the native grasses offered them better cover.

Ke'reth was escorted into the camp to see the leader of this settlement, a woman the locals called the Pri-mahk. She looked to be a little older than Ke'reth, but with Vulcan and Romulans it was often hard to judge their ages by their appearance alone. 'Ke'reth spoke to her in Romulan.' She smiled. 'I am Adala Pri-mahk of the Rhi-ani. Are you here to our Summoning?'

'Summoning?' Ke'reth asked.

'We asked the senders of the Sky-watcher machine for help.' Ke'reth quickly cottoned on to what she'd meant. 'The Probe?' He asked. She repeated the word a little uncertainly. 'Our Elders said that it should be shutdown. They said, that if it stopped speaking to us; then the gods would send help.'

These people seemed primitive, but their surroundings seemed to show awkward signs of discarded Technology. This and the way she spoke piqued his curiosity. 'But our Priest cast disagreed.' She continued. 'They said that the outsiders had been sent to punish us for our sins.'

'Outsiders?' Ke'reth asked.

'Have you not seen the metal men?' The Borg, Ke'reth thought, they must mean the Borg. This mission had just become a little more difficult. 'Their metal world fell on our world.' They're talking about the sphere's crash landing. He thought. 'They have captured the souls of the other villagers, turned them all to metal men.' She said sadly. Ke'reth covertly tapped the communicator pin on his sleeve. The sound almost made Kana jump. She could now hear Ke'reth speaking. A woman's voice spoke in Romulan. She heard Ke'reth reply. The Translator in her sleeve pin rendered it into Federation standard for her.

'Have you come to help us?' She asked. Ke'reth smiled.

'Ke'reth knew that claiming to be a godsend was a risky ploy, but he wanted to get his hands on the Borg technology that had fallen on this seemingly primitive world. 'I have brought help.' He said quietly. It was then that she stepped forward and embraced him, Her forehead rested against his, as a mark of respect. She recoiled slightly, at his ridges, before touching his brow with her fingertips. 'Are you a Klingon?' She asked, innocently. Ke'reth smiled. 'Yes!'

'Our chronicles tell us, that Klingons are great warriors.'

'It has been said.' He replied, as he led her back to the open doorway.

'Troopers here!' He ordered, as warriors seemed to appear from the bushes, as an angry looking old man emerged from the tallest of the domed buildings wearing a black cloak and skullcap. 'More Strangers Pri-mahk?' He said angrily, as the Black Daggers entered the compound.

'Jalpa, remember your manners!' The Pri-mahk snapped.

'The Gods will crush us, for involving outsiders.' Jalpa retorted.

Kana's eyes flicked over the side of a building, there was a small lantern hanging from a bracket. She reached up and unhooked it, turning it over in her hands, as she started to unscrew the base as a number of settlers began to arrive. She rummaged in her belt and took out a power-cell. The lantern

shone out its bright light, causing the natives to jump. "That's better." She said, as she re-hung it.

She turned back to see the horrified faces of the crowd. "What?" She asked. Jalpa stepped forward and angrily demanded to know what she'd done. Kana looked startled. She glanced at Ke'reth for support, as the crowd started to split into those who looked angry, and those who just looked puzzled. "All I did is replace its power-cell. It's no big deal." She explained, apologetically.

It was then that she first heard the word Aafosja. Her translator threw up two words whose terminology seemed to clash. Technology and Magic, though the translation seemed more to be that of tech-witch.

The old man stared at Ke'reth then gave Kana a look she could have really done without. "Inquisitor Jalpa!" Adala snapped. "You forget your place." "On the contrary Pri-mahk! The metal men are a sign of the technology that we've moved away from, is here to destroy us." Kana made a covert gesture with her index finger, around her ear, indicating, that she thought that the inquisitor was a little crazy. She thought she saw Ke'reth's lip twitch into a brief smile.

"Heed my words Pri-mahk!" The old man said angrily. "People will not stand for these outsiders and their tech-witch." And with that, and a whirl of his black floor length cape he departed indignantly, back towards the building from which he came.

K'Taal lightly tapped Kana's ankle with his stick as he lent close enough to her to whisper in her ear. "Well, he's a bundle of laughs!" Kana nodded. "Hard-line Religious type." Kana replied. "They're not known for the sense of fun." "I think he likes you!" K'Taal said somewhat sarcastically.

As they spoke, a number of men wearing dark red hooded shoulder capes over their right arms dispersed the crowd as the Klingons were escorted into a large three-storey building. "Please forgive Inquisitor Jalpa!" The Pri-mahk apologised. "We all have our problems, and he's mine." Ke'reth smiled as he unbuttoned his collar. "Religious type?" Ke'reth asked. "

"He and his followers, I'm afraid. They have the majority in our Council of Elders. That makes him a dangerous man, I'm afraid."

"I thought you were in charge?" Ke'reth asked. She smiled.

"I will be if I can win the election at the next full moon and take a second term."

"Full moon?" The Klingon asked.

"We have an election coming up for the position of Pri-mahk. I've held the position for the last seven years. But Chief Inquisitor Jalpa is the religious leader of our Kemal'va or Religious cast. Over the last few years he has become more powerful. He blames Technology for our problems, and the arrival of the metal men almost ten years ago. Well it was just the occurrence he needed to attempt his coup." Kana stepped forward, Adala looked worried. Kana adjusted her belt defiantly. "All I did, was fix a damn lamp!" She explained. "No reason for him to get his panties in a bunch!"

'He outlawed the use of our power generators.' Adala explained. 'His men enforce the law in quite a brutal fashion. He has gained so much power in the last few years, that the people fear him. Most of the enforcers work for him.'

'The red cloaks and hoods?' I'Sar asked. Adala nodded.

'I take it, that he blames you for the metal men too.' Ke'reth asked.

'I was Pri-mahk of the Rhi-ani, when the Metal men arrived. He took it as an excuse to start preaching his anti-technology propoganda.' Anyone who stood against him was arrested and put on trail, for crimes against the Sky God. Some he had killed, others just vanished.'

Adala turned to a younger woman beside her. 'Food for our guests.' She said, as the woman nodded before leaving the room. 'No meat for me!' Kana called after the woman.'

'Tell me of the metal men?' Ke'reth asked. The Pri-mahk took a deep breath as a man brought ceramic jugs of a clear amber liquid into the room. Ke'reth's Tricorder screen told him that it wasn't poisonous; in fact it tasted like some kind of wine. K'Taal took his with a flourish and raised it to Kana with a wink. It was definitely alcoholic; Kana had decided, but its strong fruity taste was quite pleasant. K'Taal turned to I'Sar and her black dagger troops who seemed to be enjoying this unexpected bonus.

When they first arrived their world crashed into ours. Inquisitor Jalpa told us that the Sky God had warned him in a vision that these metal men should be left alone. Then a few weeks later we heard that outlying settlements had been raided. There where no bodies to be found. Then a woman from She'ta the next town to this; saw her man, and he hadn't recognised her. She said that he looked pale and ill, and was working for the metal men.'

'We call your metal men the Borg.' Ke'reth informed her, as food started to arrive. Kana smiled to see much of it was of a vegetarian nature. 'Adala saw her looking at the food. 'It's not much I'm afraid, Most of our hunters have been arrested for attempting to leave the dwelling zone.' So we only have meat from domestic animals to live on; that and locally picked nuts, fruits, berries and grasses.'

Kana smiled. 'Talking of fruits and nuts, where's Mr. Sunshine?' Adala looked confused. 'Mr. Sunshine?' She asked. She then smiled. 'Oh, you mean Jalpa.' Kana nodded.

'He must be at the temple, with his followers.' She answered.

'Best place for him.' Kana smiled as she ate from a plate of sweet yellow fruit. 'He is a dangerous man!' Adala warned. 'I greatly fear for your safety, while you're here.' Kana smiled, as a question that had been bothering her for a while crossed her features.

'Pri-mahk?' Kana asked. The woman looked up. 'Does everyone here have a problem with technology?'

'Not at all, some of us have technology, things belonging to our ancestors. Some were broken others just ceased to work. Many were seized by Jalpa's men.' Kana smiled. 'Perhaps I can help.'

'Are you really Aafosja?' the Pri-mahk asked. 'I prefer the term engineer.' Kana replied.

Then you may be able to help us.' The woman said. Kana smiled as she touched a panel on the back of her wrist guard. 'I'll get my tools.'

In the gloom outside the settlement a pair of red lights lit up in the darkness, as Box awoke. The guards looked a little startled as Box ambled past them, while wishing them the cheery good evening in archaic Romulan. The Pri-mahk looked surprised as Box strolled in and stood beside Kana's chair. Kana wiped her hand on a piece of cloth hanging from her belt. Inside Box's top drawer where a pair of purple coloured engineer's coveralls and a pouched tool belt, Kana smiled. 'What's this little job?' She asked.

Kana was led down into the basement of the building where she'd been eating followed by Box; K'Taal picked up his plate and followed them. A door slowly opened, and they were led down into a deep rough hewn tunnel, that seemed go on for a hundred metres or so, before coming to a large metal door with a computerised entry interface. One of the Pri-mahk's bodyguards who had travelled with them opened the door. Kana smiled at the smell within the room. This was more like it, the room was a hanger, and at its centre was a Starship undergoing repairs. The vessel was Saucer-shaped, and must have been more than 200 metres in diameter. Kana smiled as she tapped her sleeve pin 'Ke'reth, you should get down here! We've got a new situation.'

A few minutes later Ke'reth and l'Sar arrived, in time to see a loading door on the vessels underside open downward, forming a ramp. An older woman with greying hair, and dressed in oil stained blue-grey overalls under a ragged grey cloak came down the ramp.

'Who dares awake OsiaH the Aafosja?' She almost howled. Then her voice changed. 'Adala, my daughter, who are these people?'

'They have offered their help to rid us of the metal men.' The old woman walked among them as Box shuffled forwards. She looked startled. 'What is this?' She asked as Kana stepped forward and once again raised the lid, and to pull out her tool belt the old woman smiled.

'So you're an Aafosja?' She asked. Kana nodded, she still didn't like the tone of the word, but this reverence for engineers, which was initially a little odd, was beginning to appeal.

The old woman spoke as Kana ran her finger around the edge of the vessel. 'Why didn't you just leave when the Bor-... metal men arrived?' Kana asked, correcting herself mid sentence. OsiaH Smiled. 'This ship is broken. She has no power. We tried using solar collectors a few years back, but they vanished.'

'Stolen by the metal men?' Kana asked. 'I would say that it was Jalpa's men.' Adala said mournfully,

Kana walked over and whispered in Ke'reth's ear, then turned and smiled. 'If you help us, we can help you.' The Woman smiled.

'How?' She asked. 'And why?' Kana opened boxes lid as his screen lit up. 'Box, show her the Vengeance.' An image of the I.K.V Proud Vengeance appeared on the screen. 'Your Ship?' the woman asked. Kana nodded. 'Biggest and best in the fleet, and we have a spare power generator that you can have, if you can help us get some equipment from the metal men's ship.'

Adala Pri-mahk of the Rhi-ani, and her mother OsiaH the Aafosja excused themselves as they entered the ship to speak privately, leaving the Klingons alone.

Kana sat down and started to remove her armoured boots and black body armour changing into her work clothes and purple steel capped boots. She seemed happier with her tool belt slung low around her waist.

K'Taal stood before her, and handed Kana a purple hair band. 'You're going to give them one of our power generators?' He asked. She nodded. 'If they help us get that Borg Trans-warp assembly. Yes!' K'Taal tapped his stick irritably on the stone floor. 'We're not the Federation.' She smiled at him. 'Living alone, must have killed your sense of honour, we don't just steal and run, we're not Ferengi.' K'Taal's hand fell to the long curved blade in the scabbard on his hip. Ke'reth stilled his hand. 'Knock it off you two! We need to keep cool heads on this one.' Kana lowered her own boot knife.

'We can supply one of our base generators, we carry a couple of spare ones.' Kana said with a smile. 'We'll also need some power-link feed cables and some heavy duty power-cells, I'll also need a work crew.' Ke'reth nodded as K'Taal turned to face him. 'Problem?' Ke'reth asked. 'No, I'm just not in the mood to hang around here any longer than is necessary. We should grab the Borg engine and leave.' Ke'reth smiled. 'Until I saw this.' Ke'reth said pointing at the alien vessel. 'I thought like you, but, I've been thinking, that if we help these people, by offering them an escape route. Perhaps they can tell us why the Borg has attacked all the other settlements. But have left the one settlement that seems to have advanced technology. I'm intrigued, that's all.' A slight grin appeared on K'Taal's lips. 'When you put it like that.' He said tapping the nearest of the saucers support struts with his stick. 'It is an intriguing question, one perhaps worthy of further investigating.'

The door of the saucer lowered as the two women came back down the ramp towards them. 'We have decided to accept your help.'

Three hours later most of the people within the settlement, had retired for the evening to observe Jalpa's curfew. Kana had taken a room near the Aafosja's hut. She sat on the bed, and read from a hard copy printout of the list of spares and repairs that the saucer needed, a list that Box had provided. She was beginning to feel a little tired as she read from the technical details of the saucer. She put the stack of papers down and loosened her collar as she lay down upon the bed.

A couple of hours had passed when Kana was awoken by a noise downstairs. She rolled of the bed and was halfway towards Box and the relative safety of the small Disruptor that lay within her tool-belt, when her door seemed to explode inward. She cried out as she felt the splinters enter her forearms. She covered her eyes, as a pair Inquisitor Jalpa's heavies charged in and arrested her. She tried to fight them off, as one of them put a sweet smelling cloth over her nose and mouth, the room spun before going dark.

The next morning Ke'reth was informed that Kana's room had been turned over, and Kana was missing. He didn't take it well. But a strange humourless smile came to his lips, as he crushed the ceramic cup he'd been holding in the palm of his hand. 'K'Taal get back to Vengeance and scan for a mix of Klingon and Human DNA, I want her found now!' l'Sar bring down a fifty-man search squad, fully equipped. 'Jalpa has just made it personal!'

Kana's head spun like a Bloodwine hangover, her stomach felt knotted, and there was an odd cotton wool taste in her mouth. She felt the Klingon within her well up, and her fists tightened, as she could hear knocking noises outside her cell. She stood up, on the third attempt and staggered to the window. Her wrist guard was missing. She cursed herself for not putting up more of a fight. She managed to pull herself up to the window, then wished she hadn't, for outside were three men stacking wood around an upright pole in the town square.

Kana looked down at her feet, as she kicked at the dirt floor. She then remembered something as she pulled off her left boot and removed the heavy heel. Inside was a pair of miniaturised multi-tools. She was just about to try them on the door when she heard footsteps approaching from outside she replaced the tools within her heel and slid it closed.

K'Taal brought his computer online and called up Kana's Medical records. There on his screen was a rotating graphic showing the double helix of Kana's DNA. He then fed it to the computer and commenced a scan, for her life-signs. He then tapped his sleeve pin. There was a dark spot on the sensor-scan. Why would a technically backward people have a sensor-dampening field? 'Ke'reth from K'Taal.' He heard Ke'reth's voice answer.

'This better be good K'Taal.' He said.

'There's a sensor black spot, on our scan. It's about three Kelicams from your position.'

'I thought you'd been upgrading our sensors?' Ke'reth snapped.

'I have.' K'Taal said. But I was just inquiring if we could use our tight beam punch-sensors?' Ke'reth sighed. 'That sensor might be able to see through the sensor black spot. But if they have equipment capable of monitoring tight-band sensors, they' know that we're on to them?' Ke'reth warned, as he sat back in his chair. 'K'Taal, hold off, until you hear from me. Uh, and while you're there, I'll need my Hover-bike beamed down to just outside this location, and my black-ops kit from the main armoury. Ke'reth out!'

A few minutes later, Ke'reth left the room and ran through the long hallway, before finding himself outside. He arrived just in time to see a black transport case arrive. Ke'reth removed his glove, and held his palm against a flat black glass panel on the box. There was a click as the box opened.

Kana lay back and pretended to be unconscious, as the man entered. It was as he tried to lift her he felt a scratch on the side of his throat, as a micro-fine needle retracted into a silver ring on the underside of her little finger. The man fell across her. 'I hope you get a headache as bad as the one you gave me.' She snarled. As she stood up another guard arrived. She felt her anger rise as her route of escape was blocked.

Ke'reth crept into the yard, and crouched by a low wall, as he took a thin telescopic blowpipe from his belt and loaded it with a pellet containing a fast acting anaesthetic. Pttoooooo, came the sound as the guard touched his throat and keeled over. Ke'reth then opened his case and removed his sniper's rifle, within seconds he'd assembled it and was taking aim. His thumb moved the power slider to heavy stun, as his black-gloved finger pulled back against the trigger as he fired a trio of blasts. Three more guards fell among the wood that they were stacking. Ke'reth smiled as he stepped up on to the pile of logs to retrieve a purple wrist guard that had been nailed to the centre stake above the pyre.

Kana stared at the man as he came toward her. He raised his hand to grab her, she stepped back as he lent forward to grab her, overextending himself. She swiftly moved forward and grabbed his hand. The man looked startled as Kana pivoted on one hip and threw him over her shoulder, as she turned a third man appeared in the doorway and raised his crossbow towards her. She raised her hands slowly, and then smiled, as a black-gloved hand silently snaked out and snapped the bow from the man's grasp as it fell to the ground, Ke'reth caught the man around the throat from behind cupping his mouth and preventing him from calling out. he then applied a close approximation of a Vulcan nerve pinch.

Kana smiled as Ke'reth entered the room. 'What kept you? You're hardly a white knight rescuing a damsel.' She asked mockingly. Ke'reth removed his hood allowing his copper red hair to fall around his shoulders. 'Before making your next witticism you should see what's being built out there in the yard?' He said with a wry smile. 'Oh yeah!' She replied sarcastically. 'Shades of Salem circa 1692.' Ke'reth smiled. 'Believe me, It's not that funny, they were going to spit roast me.' She said trying to explain the stake to him. 'I did get your obscure historical reference Chief.' Ke'reth reached down to remove a cloak and hood from a fallen guard, as he did so, Kana dropped down beside the man. Under the cowl Kana noticed the piece of star shaped metal sticking through the back of the man's baldhead. 'Borg!' She mouthed. Ke'reth nodded. 'It makes a kind of sense.' He whispered as he checked the corridor with was clear, using a flexible fibre-optic scanner connected to an LCD screen mounted on the back of his wrist guard. She looked at him for an explanation. 'I wonder why the Borg would allow the only settlement that we've seen to have usable technology alone?'

'I've been thinking along the same lines.' She said with a shrug. Ke'reth reapplied his hood, and shouldering his pistol he moved ghost-like into the corridor. Kana followed. It was as they moved down the corridor that Kana caught movement in her peripheral vision. It was Inquisitor Jalpa standing inside a Borg alcove as a pair of Borgified locals attended him. She hesitantly tapped Ke'reth on the shoulder, the big Klingon spun on the spot to face her. She pointed to the door that stood ajar. He glanced into the room and nodded. 'Proof if proof were needed.' He whispered, breaking into a loping run.

Outside a pair of men wearing enforcers cloaks barred their way Ke'reth dropped to the ground as his booted foot caught the nearer of the two men in the ankle, flooring him, He then spiralled up and with a round-house kick, he hit the other man in the stomach, knocking the wind from him. A few seconds and the use of a pre-prepared hypospray later. They ran for the edge of the compound using the cover of shadows from the nearby buildings. He quickly led her to some bushes where he'd stashed his hover bike, under some broken branches.

K'Taal sat back in his chair, with a sigh of relief as a pair of Klingon Bio-signs emerged from the sensor black spot. 'Qapla!' He said to himself.

As the bike tore through light scrubland towards a copse of stunted looking trees a blast of energy tore past them, narrowly missing Kana's right ear. Ke'reth smiled as he heard her curse. 'Hey, moron, if I wanted another piercing in my ear, I'd ask for one.' She said pulling a pistol from Ke'reth's backpack; she turned back at the hip and returned fire at the pursuing men. The first was incinerated by the blast. She reset the pistol. 'Do you have to set these things so high?' She asked.

'I've seen Borg shrug off Disruptor fire from three Disruptors at once.' He said, as he ducked and weaved around trees and bushes. 'I take it that was a yes.' She replied aiming on another man and taking him down.

After finding a quiet area a few minutes ride away from the town, and its unsavoury woodpile. Ke'reth parked the Hover-bike under a tree and helped Kana down. She hugged him briefly, as he pulled out a large ground sheet and laid it before her. 'We'll nap here till morning before going back to the settlement. With any luck Jalpa will head back there, if he decides to go looking for us,' She nodded as she lay against the warmth of the hover-bike as Ke'reth laid a woollen blanket taken from his bikes pannier over her.

As the night slowly turned to dawn, as the Hover-bike roared into the village, past a long low building Kana saw the first children that she'd seen within the settlement. Several of them just stood there staring at them as they arrived. It seemed that Jalpa's men had been around looking for something, and awoken many of the villagers.

Ke'reth stepped off the bike and startled a little girl who shrieked, at his masked appearance. He reached up and pulled it off, as Kana caught up with the little girl and tried to put her mind at rest.

Pri-mahk Adala Ke'reth said running into the building. The young woman looked up. As did her circle of advisors. 'What is the meaning of this interruption? She asked. Ke'reth moved towards her lowering his voice. 'I've just come from a large building on the outskirts of a nearby town.' Adala shrugged, as Ke'reth continued. 'Your beloved Chief Inquisitor was going to burn my Engineer at the stake.' She looked shocked. 'Is she okay?' Her tone betrayed the woman's concern. Ke'reth nodded. 'Thankfully yes, she was already attempting her own escape.'

The next day had arrived, and the second sun was climbing lazily into an azure blue sky, as Kana directed several men to set up the recently arrived power generator. She was watching as Box translated the contents of the alien computer into a mixture of Klingon and Terran displays as Kana checked the Saucer.

l'Sar stood on a hillside gazing at the top two thirds of the Borg sphere sticking out from the torn up ground. She then turned to the dark skinned man beside her. 'Kral, take your men set up a partial perimeter on the far side of the Sphere. Don't engage the enemy unless you have to.' The man slapped his fist against his chest in salute, as he moved briskly over to a unit of around thirty men. She then tapped her sleeve. 'Ke'reth from l'Sar!' Ke'reth tapped his com-pin. 'Go!' Ke'reth snapped.

'We have located and surrounded the Borg sphere, awaiting further instructions.' Ke'reth smiled. 'Hold position, and await further orders, Ke'reth out!'

He then turned to the woman beside him. 'Pri-mahk!' He said using her title. 'Can we have a word in private?' She looked up at her guards and then gestured for them to leave. Kana re-entered the room carrying three metal balls on tripod stands, which she placed around them. Adala looked a little confused. 'Audio dead-zone.' Kana explained. Kana smiled, she was used to explaining herself. 'Sound is just a vibration of the air.' She explained. 'This device sets up a counter vibration in the air outside the energy field that I'm setting up.' Adala nodded. 'So no one can hear us outside this triangle?' She asked. Kana smiled. 'That's right.' Adala turned to Ke'reth. 'You are a little over cautious.' She mocked. Ke'reth gave her his best diplomat's smile. 'I find that I live longer that way.' She nodded. 'Besides.' He continued. 'I believe that Jalpa has either a spy or some manner of record and transmit device, perhaps even both within your settlement.' She looked a little shocked. 'Jalpa is a pain, but why would he use technology, he is anti Technology; he's a deeply religious man.' Kana sat down and helped herself to some fruit, which she peeled with her boot knife. 'You didn't see Jalpa plugged into the Borg data-net.' Kana said as she ate some of the sweet bred that they'd provided her for breakfast.

'I can't believe he would work with the Metal men, I mean these Borg you speak of.'

'He wouldn't have been given much of a choice.' The Borg steal people as well as Technology.' Kana explained through a mouthful of fruit.

'I believe that these Borg, are after your ship.' Ke'reth said coolly. Adala's eyes widened. 'I think that they want to get off this planet as much as you do.' 'Then why not just take our ship, they outnumber us, and have superior weapons.'

'That's not their way!' Kana said wiping her knife blade on a cloth hanging from her belt, and returning the knife to her boot. 'They need to take over people's minds to learn from them; they need your mother's knowledge to fly that ship.'

'My mother!' She gasped.

'Don't worry about your mother.' Ke'reth said, with what he hoped was a reassuring smile. 'I had K'Taal take your mother back to my ship on the pretence of her selecting the equipment she needed to get the saucer space-worthy.' Adala broke protocol and gave Ke'reth a hug. 'Thank you!' She said. Her hug was interrupted by Ke'reth's pin bleeping. 'Yes I'Sar?' He called out. 'Inquisitor Jalpa, has just arrived at the sphere. What do you want us to do?' Ke'reth stroked his ridges.

'Hold position, we're on-route.'

'Ke'reth to Vengeance Beam up my bike and send down one of our Scavengers same coordinates as the bike.' Adala showed concern.

'Your friend Jalpa has gone visiting his Borg friends.'

'What's a Scavenger?' She asked.

As Kana deactivated the sound dampening devices as Ke'reth opened the door.

'That's a Scavenger he said proudly.' In front of them was a large armoured vehicle made up from a series of elongated bubble shaped tubes supported by six huge all-terrain tyres. Kana stepped inside and stowed the sound blocker devices in a floor locker, before strapping herself into the pilot's chair. Her fingers flicked over several switches as the engines came on-line. Ke'reth helped a nervous Adala into a chair and strapped her in with a wink. 'You'll love this!' Kana said, as she pushed a heavy lever forward into the drive position. The giant wheels started to turn as Kana increased power. A series of Holograms appeared as an overlaid display on the forward viewscreen. Box who had entered the Scavenger just behind them, and was now wired into the vehicle's Navigation computer. Kana smiled. 'Let's go get what we came for.'

As the scavenger roared along the cart tracks Kana took the vehicle off-road, it was as they broke through a tatty collection of small trees, that a six man Borg scout unit seemed to step out in front of them around two hundred metres ahead. Kana armed the cannons and started to watch as the power levels rose. Ke'reth stopped her. 'Run them down, it will make less noise.' Kana smiled as she shifted into high gear, as the startled Borg were scattered like tenpins. A couple of them were crushed beneath the wheels. 'Whoa, road-kill!' Kana said, as she powered the engines back down to cruising speed. As they drove on, there was a loud clang from above them. Ke'reth unhooked his restraint straps and picked up a bat'leth from the wall mounted weapons rack. There was a hiss as a Borg cutting beam came through the roof. Ke'reth smiled, as he opened the rear loading doors,

slamming the startled Borg that had been holding on to the rear of the vehicle against the ground, as it fell away and lay immobile in the dust behind them. Ke'reth backed away from the door as a female Borg swung down from the roof above him entering the vehicle. Her face was pale and strangely impassive as she raised a cutting tool towards him. Ke'reth parried the blow with his blade. The woman's face was partially obscured by a black metal plate with a blue-lit sensor where her right eye should have been. Ke'reth whirled around lopping off her arm in a shower of sparks as the claw that had replaced her other hand rose up and grabbed his bat'leth. As they struggled the lamp above them blew out, as a Borg cutting laser penetrated the hull severing a power cable that fell into the vehicle and swung between them. 'We've lost the power-feed to our turret gun!' Kana called out. As Ke'reth swiftly reached out and made a grab for the insulated part of the swinging power-feed. 'It's alright I've got it!' He said touching the power-feed against the metal of the bat'leth that was now in the Borg's metal hand, causing the plate on the back of her head to explode in a shower of sparks. Her partially decapitated body stood there twitching. Another Borg appeared at the front viewscreen, and raised a circular spinning cutter. Adala shrieked as Kana slammed on the brakes sending the Borg on the front of the vehicle sailing backwards through the air. The momentum caused Ke'reth to grasp at the now inactive power-feed, to maintain his balance. He took advantage of the situation and brought his boots up to slam against the now headless Borg's chest as he kicked her backwards through the open rear door of the vehicle, before closing it. 'Steady Chief!!!' He yelled. 'You almost lost me, back there!' 'Sorry Sir, we had unwanted passenger.' Another clang came from the roof of the vehicle. 'I think we still have one.' Ke'reth reached up and opened the vehicle's top hatch. He narrowly avoided having himself decapitated by a laser-cutting beam. Ke'reth grabbed the arm and spacing his feet on the top rung of the ladder he pushed the Borg backwards. As he swung his D'k tahg knife up at the Borg's throat, only to have it blocked. Ke'reth was then pushed back as he tripped, falling backwards against the turret. He rolled sideways just in time to avoid having a cutting laser drilled into his ridges. Luckily for Ke'reth a misspent childhood combined with many years training in the martial arts, had left him with an almost instinctive flair for brawling. He brought his feet together and kicked out hard into the Borg's chest, sending it sprawling. As it fell its metal claw latched onto the barrel of the main cannon to prevent it from falling from the speeding vehicle. Ke'reth stood up as the Borg pulled itself back to its feet, and swung for him, almost knocking him back into the open hatch. Ke'reth touched his lip; he could taste his own blood in his mouth. Ke'reth's hand fell against the handle of his fallen D'k tahg knife. He hid his smile as he lay there and groaned. The Borg stepped forward to survey its work, when Ke'reth lanced out and stabbed the Borg in the back of its knee. The Borg became unstable as Kana drove through some trees causing the branches to scrape the Scavengers hull. Ke'reth pulled his blade out, and rolled to his right against the round of the hull, as the V-shaped fork of a large branch caught the Borg by the neck hanging him, and leaving him swinging in the breeze like some macabre mobile.

Ke'reth dropped back into the vehicle, and closed the hatch, as he spat a mouthful of blood into the corner of the cabin. Adala looked worried. 'Are you okay?' She asked. He smiled. 'I'm fine, how far to the Borg ship?' 'Another fifteen minutes.' Kana replied. Adala tried to dab a cloth against Ke'reth's lip, which was beginning to swell. He grinned at her. 'It probably looks worse than it is.' He jested.

His Com-pin was bleeping; in the earlier excitement he must have missed it. He tapped his pin. 'Yes l'Sar, what is it?'

'Ever kicked over a Pherza-wasp nest? Came the cryptic reply.

'The Borg?'

'Oh yeah!!! It's Borg central out here. We're holding them but we've taken casualties.'

'How many?' He asked.

'43 dead at least twice that many wounded, I've called down extra troops to contain them. But they're becoming immune to our Disruptor fire.' Ke'reth smiled as he spoke into his communicator. 'K'Taal, how are my assault riffles coming along?' He heard a snarl on the other end. 'I'm still replicating them. I can send you about two hundred, just tell me you want them?'

'Send them to l'Sar's position.' Ke'reth ordered.

l'Sar looked up, as the Scavenger arrived. 'About time!' she said as the rifle filled crates appeared beside her. She started to give out orders both gestured and verbal; to have the projectile rail-gun's with their K'Taal designed loads taken to the frontline troops. She turned as Ke'reth arrived beside her. She smiled through a facial bruise, and a split lip that showed him that she'd seen some action herself. The several dead Borg at their feet gave a grim silent testament to her prowess as a warrior. 'Snap!' She said pointing from her lip to Ke'reth's. He nodded. 'Wear it with pride!' He told her, as a Naval ensign handed him a Heavy projectile rifle. He passed one to Kana and another to l'Sar. 'Let's go get what we came for.' He yelled as he cocked his rifle.

Kana called for Box, She'd need her tools. It was as she checked her rifle, and placed it atop Box, a voice that sent an Icy Chill through spine called out through a loud speaker. 'Adala, Pri-mahk of the Rhi-ani! God's judgement is upon you. You who have sinned against the Sky God shall feel his wrath!' It was as he spoke Kana saw a blue flash beside her. She turned to see that Adala was holding the gun she'd laid on top of Box. She looked up just in time to see Jalpa fall as the tiny Nanites took his Borgified body apart from the inside. Adala looked stunned. 'What have I done?' She cried.

'Saved him!' Kana answered.

Adala looked up through her tears.

'Once the Borg have you, there's no turning back. You're dead from the moment of infection.' Kana tried to explain. She was a little taken aback to see a woman who looked so Vulcan, crying.

l'Sar charged forward, making every shot count, as she took out her fury on the Borg. She smiled as she watched the projectiles peel through the Borg Drones. Killing them before they could analyse the weapon being used against them, and therefore leaving them fatally vulnerable. K'Taal beamed

down beside her, a strange silver tube resting against his shoulder. He smiled as he aimed for a large group of Borg, standing upon a nearby hillside and fired. The shot landed at their metal feet bounced and rolled, before falling open. 'What the Grok was that?' I'Sar snapped. K'Taal lent towards her, resting on his cane. 'Revenge on the bastards who almost crippled me!' He snarled as the Borg standing on the hill started to fall over. 'I call it a Nano-bomb! Good for around a minutes worth of destructive mayhem, it destroys anything electronic or inorganic, then it simultaneously terminates all of its Nanites.' I'Sar smiled approvingly. 'I like it!' 'Kana helped me finalise the design. I'm beginning to like the way she thinks.' He said, firing his weapon at another group of Borg.

A couple of Klingons had set up a large tripod mounted cutting laser to open the hull of the Sphere. Kana stood and directed them. K'Taal arrived behind her; he sniffed the air. 'You don't smell cooked.' He joked. 'Laugh it up K'Taal.' She replied. 'I was almost barbecued a la Borg.' She then looked at the smoking launcher he was holding. 'You got it finished?' She asked. He nodded. 'The computerised weapons lab on the Vengeance is a marvel. The best pattern Replicators that I've ever seen.' he said as she smiled. 'I told you that Ke'reth indulges us with all the latest toys.'

Kana fired a volley of rounds into the opening that had been recently cut, the jagged edges still glowed a dull red from the heat of the cutter.

I'Sar ran up and tossed a smoke grenade through the hole, then dived in after it, a few seconds later after a series of bangs thuds and crunches a dead Borg was thrown out through the hole. I'Sar put her head out of the sphere. 'You coming!' she asked. One of the Marines helped Kana and Box up through the hole.

She took a look around at her new environment. Kana smiled. 'Okay boys, remember your briefing, Take out the ceiling mounted power nodes. Then clear your area, and move on to the next. When you find the Vinculum let me know, then find and secure the Trans-warp drive for removal. K'Taal and I will do the un-plug.'

Ke'reth arrived at the outside of the Sphere, with another crate of freshly replicated rifles. Picking out one for himself, and putting his arm through the shoulder strap he let it hang at his waist, as he handed out rifles to some of the young warriors around him. 'Go get yourself some honour!' He yelled. The young warriors cheered, as they entered the sphere.

Kana and K'Taal moved slowly through the dimly lit cavernous interior of the crashed Borg ship. Ahead of them a man, or at least something that was probably once a man stepped out and raised his power-claw. K'Taal dropped it with a double tap. 'Haven't had this much fun in ages.' He laughed. 'Are you sure it's not revenge?' She yelled above the sound of echoing gunfire. He grinned as he blasted another Borg; it stood there immobile for a few seconds before the Nanites separated it from its power supply. 'Oh yeah!

It's revenge, at least in part.' He said. Kana gestured up at the power Node, as she removed a small disk from one of Box's drawers and threw it toward the power node. It glowed blue briefly as it clamped itself to the ceiling before exploding within a forcefield to contain the blast, destroying the node. 'Nice work!!!' K'Taal said admiringly.

Another Borg rounded the corner, as Kana dropped to one knee and fired. A blue green energy shield appeared against the Borg's chest deflecting the round. Kana gave K'Taal a worried look. 'They're nothing if not adaptable.' He said removing his curved jungle blade from his belt. He then jabbed his walking canes dagger tip into the Borg's thigh, and as it struggled to remove it, he slipped around behind it and slit its throat. Kana tapped her sleeve pin. 'We could have a problem here, some of them are adapting to the Nano-rounds.' Ke'reth spat at the ground. 'Ok Kana, I've had several reports of the same. Some suggest trying to catch them in a crossfire.' Kana smiled. 'Okay, we'll try that.' She turned to see K'Taal stab at another power node with his cane, causing it to shower him with sparks. 'Glad I brought this, he said as he turned around and slammed it at least six inches deep into a female Borg's throat as she stood immobile in her alcove.'

Kana knelt down and raised Box's lid and connected its sensors into the sphere, a few seconds later she was accessing the Borg ships internal sensor net. 'K'Taal!' She called out. 'Can you come over here a minute?' He looked up from butchering a Borg drone. He was waving a drone's arm at her. 'What do you want that for?' She asked grimly. 'This looks like its fitted with an access coder, we'll need it to gain admittance to what ever passes for an engine room on the lousy wreck.' She nodded as a series deck schematics appeared on Box's screen. 'We're in!' She said as Box retracted its link cables from the Borg interface. 'Great!' He said reloading his rifle. "Lay on MacDuff." Kana smiled.

'Shakespeare?' She asked.

'Macbeth, Act 5 scene 10.' K'Taal said. 'If memory serves.' He added.

'We've lost a lot of people, here today!' She said bitterly.

'I just hope this damn engines worth it.' He replied. She lowered her head as if in prayer, before speaking. "Be this the whetstone of your sword, let grief convert to anger: blunt not the heart, enrage it" He smiled.

'That's Malcom's line from Macbeth, Scene 4 act 3.' He said with a grin. She smiled as they set off for the engine room.

Ke'reth stood within an empty alcove. A young female Borg lay dead at his feet. 'Kana, have you found that Engine yet?' She looked at K'Taal as she replied. 'Not yet Sir! But we're close.' She heard him sigh. 'Is there a problem?' She asked. 'We may have company.'

'Company?' She asked.

'Some fool allowed the circuits around the Vinculum to send out a distress call.' She looked down.

'How long do we have?'

'Unknown! But I suggest we all move a little quicker.'

'Understood!' She said.

'I've started sending some of our injured troops back to the Vengeance.'
K'Taal smiled. 'Can the Vengeance handle a Cube?' She looked up.
'In theory yes, but she's untried.'
'Then we better get that engine.' K'Taal snapped as he pressed the palm of a Borg drone against a panel on the wall. The door slowly opened revealing the Trans-warp drive assembly.

Ke'reth tapped his com-pin. 'KIHQaS!'
'Here Sir!' The woman replied.
'Keep your eyes open, we could have some company real soon.'
'Aye Sir!'
'Ahnah Jerran!'
'Here Sir!' The young woman said from the command chair.
'If a Borg ship arrives, you're to drop K'Taal's ship and the Wraiths to pick us, and the engine up. Then attempt to make your escape.'
'Run?' She asked.
'You're to keep any Borg vessel that arrives busy. Do you understand?'
'Understood Sir.'
'Use the cloak; engage the enemy re-cloak run and repeat. It's the best tactic we have for defeating a cube.'
K'Taal using his cane levered open a panel, and helped Kana roll into a slot under the Engine mounting. Sitting beside Box he started handing her tools as the sound of gunfire filled the corridor outside.

As Kana worked at freeing the engine, KIHQaS watched her tactical screen. She almost jumped as Trans-warp conduit opened before her spitting out, not a cube, but a smaller rectangular shaped Borg Scout ship. Ahnah found herself offering up a quick prayer to the Prophets, as the Scout approached them on an intercept heading. She looked up. 'Okay Deploy the Wraiths and K'Taal's ship, Send them down to the planet, Then Cloak and run at helm's discretion; then stop and change heading, then line us up for an attack on the Borg vessels Port side aft quarter.'

Ke'reth heard of the Borg's arrival before switching to Kana's frequency. 'Kana, we need that engine.' She took a spanner out of her mouth to answer the call. 'Little busy here Sir! What's the rush?'
'We have a Borg scout buzzing around the Vengeance.'
'Tell them to engage the enemy with the Iso-kinetic cannons. Until the Borg's cloak drops, then have KIHQaS switch to De'laH's battle mode. She'll give them the best advice on tactics.' Ke'reth nodded.
'I'll pass your message on. Tell me as soon as you have the engine ready for transport.'
'Aye Sir!'

The Proud Vengeance decloaked behind the Borg ship. Both its Iso-kinetic cannons spat forth their neon blue fire. The Borg ship shook as the Klingons cheered. Someone at the rear of the bridge, started to sing the battle anthem Sons of Kahless. KIHQaS joined in on the chorus, as she fired again. The Borg ship started to turn. KIHQaS tapped the button that lit up the usually dark side of her console, where the controls for most of the battle systems were

located. She raised the heavy battle shields, and brought the secondary warp core on line to power the Vengeance's multi-frequency rotating shields. De'laH lit several buttons as suggestions. KIHQaS pressed them all as they lit. A blast from the Borg bounced off their shields. **'We are the Borg. Resistance is Futile! Your vessel will assimilated, and your uniqueness will be added to our own! You will live to serve the Borg!'** KIHQaS tapped her com-link. 'Like Gre'thor I will!' She snarled. 'Why don't you come and assimilate this!!!' She yelled as the gun towers on the Vengeance rose up from concealed points within its hull. She fired and fired again. 'Borg vessels shields down to eighty percent.' She called out as the Vengeance was rocked. Ahnah Jerran joined in on the third verse of Sons of Kahless, as the Vengeance slipped under cloak. KIHQaS spoke. 'Our Vessels have made it safely to the planets surface.' Panels slid back on the Proud Vengeance's hull as a pair of eight barrelled quantum torpedo launchers slid forward into their firing position, as a pair of red targeting triangles appeared on the main screen. Suddenly the Vengeance decloaked, and opened fire, its torpedoes tearing into the Borg ship causing a number of green flashes to cross its hull. The Vengeance slipped back under its cloak.

Kana smiled as she freed another of the six clamps that held the engine in place, just two more to go. K'Taal knelt beside her feet, holding a flashlight as he monitored the power levels on Box's screen.

Again the Vengeance decloaked, and opened fire, its torpedoes tearing into the Borg ship, this time KIHQaS simultaneously fired the main Disruptors causing a line of bright green flashes to cross the Borg ship's hull. The Vengeance then slipped back under its cloak. A blast hit them under cloak, causing them to rock. 'Borg vessel's shields are down to thirty-eight percent our own are holding at a little over sixty percent' Ahnah looked up.

'Hit them again. I want them destroyed by the time the General returns!' KIHQaS smiled, at Ahnah's command. 'With pleasure!!!' This time she ran her finger across a row of buttons in the manner of a concert pianist causing them to light up in turn. The Vengeance decloaked at around thirty kilometres from its prey. This time all her weapons spoke at once, in an orgiastic opera of destruction. Disruptor blasts cut into the Borg's hull as Quantum Torpedoes exploded within the gaps created. Then the neon blue of the Iso-kinetic cannons fired again. 'Borg ships engines appear to be off-line. I'm getting minimal readings from its weapons.'

'They'll try to regenerate.' Ahnah said. 'Load up a pair of full charge Tri-cobalt torpedoes, we're going to finish this battle here.' The Bridge crew seemed to hold their collective breath as KIHQaS made a series of targeting adjustments as a warning about Tri-cobalt charges lit up on her screen. She disregarded it, and fired twice.

Kana felt a sense of relief as the final clamp disengaged. She wiped her brow and then her hands as she crawled out. 'We've got it!' Prepare to beam it out of the sphere, and into the cargo hold of K'Taal's ship. K'Taal looked up at the engine as he hugged Kana. 'Well done Chief.'

'Congratulate me when we're back on the Proud Vengeance.' She said patting his arm.

Ke'reth wiped his brow, as he handed his depleted rifle to the female ensign standing beside him. 'What are you removing from the Metal men's ship?' Adala the Pri-mahk of the Rhi-ani asked. 'The Heart of the beast!' Ke'reth replied.

'That's what you came for isn't it?' Ke'reth nodded.

'I admire your Honesty.' She said.

'If you still want my help.' Ke'reth said. She smiled.

'I will need to consult the remaining Council of Elders.' She replied. 'But I think without Jalpa and his metal men, that most of us will wish to stay, this is my peoples' home after all.' She said with quiet pride.

'Then can I offer you some technology to help you?'

'Such as?' She asked.

'Prefabricated dwellings, Food and Patten Replicators to make tools and clothes. ' She smiled, I think they would me most useful, if you have time to wait, I shall put your offer to the Council of Elders.'

A pair of Tri-cobalt charges slammed into the Borg scout ship, for a second or two they seemed to have been ineffective then there was a green flash followed by a blast of orange fire and debris, as the Borg ship was blown to pieces. A cheer went up upon the Vengeance. Ahnah piped the cheering to Ke'reth via an open com-link channel 'Scratch One Borg ship Sir!' Ke'reth smiled

'Qapla' Ahnah!' She smiled as she could still hear the crew cheering.

Ke'reth took a deep breath, as he gave his orders. 'We'll be returning in a few hours, put the Vengeance into a standard planetary orbit and stand down from red alert. ' Then as soon as everyone is clear, lock weapons on the Borg sphere down here, and destroy it.'

'Aye Sir!'

Ke'reth sat at a table and slowly drank from his wine tankard. Kana sat across the table from him. She had China her pet rat on a small collar and lead, at her feet. 'Ke'reth smiled as she played with her little black furred friend.' We all have our own ways to douse the fires of battle. He thought as he swigged down his wine. 'A Darsek for your thoughts?' He asked. She glanced up. 'Hhmm!' She asked.

'Your thoughts?' He repeated.

'Just enjoying the evening air Sir. A girl and her rat.' It was as they spoke OsiaH the Aafosja and her daughter Adala Pri-mahk of the Rhi-ani, left the Council hut. 'How did it go?' Ke'reth asked standing up. 'Well!' She said. You're looking at the new Pri-mahk of the Rhi-ani, and my mother has been given the title of Minister of off-world affairs. Kana put China back in the travelling cage mounted atop Box. 'Congratulations!' She offered.

'Thank you.'

'So you'll be finishing the Saucer?' Kana asked. 'Without Jalpa and his drones, it shouldn't take long.' Kana smiled. 'As you are the new Minister for off-world affairs I, I mean we.' Ke'reth corrected himself. 'The crew of the Proud Vengeance have a present for you.'

'What is it?' OsiaH asked. Kana tapped her sleeve. 'K'Taal, is the Rhi-ani's aid package ready for transport?' There was a pause, before K'Taal answered. 'Oh yes, I was just checking off the items on the list. Twenty flat-packed modular habitats, four solar power generators, six large food Replicators, two pattern Replicators four full med-kits, one subspace radio, and spares. One set of thirty solar collectors.' OsiaH hugged her daughter. 'You've been very kind. Thank you!' The older woman said, as she hugged both of them in turn. Ke'reth smiled. 'Oh and we'll leave the damaged Scavenger, I'll have Kana patch up the hull and reconnect the weapons array.' They glanced at each other. 'Just in case you need it.' He continued.

Three days later, the Klingon vessel Proud Vengeance floated in deep space as Kana entered the bridge. She was grinning. 'K'Taal and I have just finished our final checks on the Trans-warp drive. We've run around thirty computer simulations.' Ke'reth nodded. 'And?' 'Ready when you are Sir!' Ke'reth gave her a wink. 'Set course for the Starbase.' Kana walked over to the communicator on Ke'reth's command chair and pushed the switch. 'Okay K'Taal, let her rip!!!'

Saturday afternoon, Admiral Anarita Jat and Commander Steven Woods sat within the Command and Control Centre of Starbase 410. When a dark-haired woman wearing a Security Ensigns uniform, and seated at the Tactical consol looked up. 'Sir!!!' Both officers looked up.

'I could be wrong, but I'm picking up a subspace rift opening, out beyond sector three of the Nebula, I think it's a Trans-warp signature.' Anarita's eyes widened, as she glanced at Steven, as a message came through to the Starbase on the primary Klingon Channel. 'Take a look at your screens.'

'Admiral, it's the Proud Vengeance, She appears to have emerged from Trans-warp.'