

The Littlest Crewmember

By John Borda

"Jonborda, what are you doing?" KharlS, 3 year old daughter of b'Sel, demanded. Lt. Borda extricated himself from the conduit he was working in. KharlS had a knack of wandering off and finding him.

"Hello KharlS. What brings you here today?" "Here" was right on the edge of the saucer section of the Starbase, in one of the Jeffries tubes.

"I came to find you. Mummy's busy looking after Big Bad Wolf, and it's no fun." That was KharlS' name for the Klingon Ambassador.

"And what does His Excellency have poor Mummy doing now?"

"He makes her look at the computer all day, and she doesn't have time to play. What are you doing?"

"I'm upgrading the lateral sensor array."

"What's that do?"

"It means that we will be able to see ships that are further away."

The questioning went on for several minutes, KharlS was insatiably curious, and Borda had the patience to answer as much as he could explain to a 3-year old. Meanwhile he resumed his previous position inside the conduit and carried on the upgrade.

"Can I help you?" she eventually asked. Borda hesitated a moment- the thought of letting a three-year-old Klingon girl loose in a compartment with several million credits' worth of technical equipment, some of it classified, was not an appealing one. However, a twinge in his back told him he had been in the conduit too long.

"OK, but only do what I tell you. You're small, so maybe you can reach things I can't."

KharlS was thrilled- she'd never been told being small was an advantage before, Klingons were all supposed to grow up to be "big and strong". Borda wriggled out of the conduit opening.

"Now you-" he poked her playfully in the chest- "go inside carefully. I don't want you to touch anything, just look first."

"Why do you keep poking me?" she asked, giggling.

"Because you're ticklish!" he replied, poking her again. And because the "Big Bad Wolf" should know better than to plant a bug on his Chief of Staff's daughter's clothing, which he had just "accidentally" deactivated.

KharlS easily crawled into the conduit and sat inside.

"You see the big wires at the top?"

"These ones over here?"

"That's the ones. You see one has a red plug, one has a blue plug, and the other one has a yellow plug?"

"Yees"

"And over there on the right, you see the sockets with red, blue and yellow circles on them?"

"Yes, over here!"

"That's right. Now put the red plug into the red socket, then the blue one on the blue socket..."

"...And the yellow one in the yellow?"

"Good girl! You learn really fast!"

KharlS beamed and quickly connected the 2000-volt three phase connectors, which were so awkwardly placed that it had taken Borda several minutes to undo them when he had started. Her mother would have been furious about her handling high-

voltage lines, though the ambassador would probably have loved a look at the new upgrade modules. But neither would know.

"Well done! Out you come!"

"Have we finished?" KharIS slipped back out of the conduit.

"Almost- see this button here? Push it." KharIS activated the new sensor array. A series of lights flashed, and it gave a positive beep.

"All done now- shhh!" He put his finger to his lips, and KharIS covered a big smile with both hands.

Borda tapped his communicator badge. "Borda to Ops."

"Ops here." replied a voice. It was Laura- Jean Morris.

"New sensor array is now on-line, Laura, and I'm going off-duty. I'll leave it to your shift to start calibration. Goodnight!"

"Goodnight, John. Doing anything special?"

"I'm taking a young lady home to bed." He winked at KharIS, who was still keeping silent. Her being there was always "their little secret", though her mother always knew where she was.

"Not the same one you spent three hours with in Holodeck three?"

"The very same." He'd been introducing KharIS to the "Flotter" stories, and she hadn't wanted to leave.

"You jammy sod! And when are you going to tell us who she is?"

"Goodnight Laura!" He ended the call, and sat back, smiling. So far, he'd been winding her up for a month about his "mystery lady".

"Come on, KharIS, time for you to go home to Mummy."

"Do I have to?"

"Well, it's nearly past your bedtime. But I'll tell Mummy you were helping me if you go straight to bed."

"All right then. Can I help you some more tomorrow?"

"Tomorrow I'm off- so why don't we go and see Flotter again?"

They walked back along the corridor, talking about the adventures she'd had the last time.

The next day, Borda was "doing his rounds"- in the absence of an Engineering Officer, he'd taken over supervision of the Engineering teams, and, even when off-duty, he would sometimes drop in on them to see how they were getting along. He was dressed in a loose white short-sleeved shirt he'd picked up on Earth, and canvas trousers. He spotted a lone crewman by a control station, and had just walked past when he realised that no repair was scheduled on that console.

"Crewman, has something happened to that console?" he asked, turning. A list of the Engineering crewmembers ran through his head, but the name wouldn't come.

"It came up faulty last night, and Lt. Borda asked me to..." he trailed off as he realised his mistake, then reached for his toolbox. He'd just reached inside when Borda's foot landed on it, closing the lid on the intruder's hand.

Borda tapped his top shirt pocket, which held his communicator. "Borda to Security, intruder in secondary shield control!"

The intruder pulled his hand free of the toolbox, abandoning whatever weapon was inside. As he retreated, Borda kicked the toolbox to the other side of the room. The intruder ran for the exit, only to bounce off a force field- Security had automatically sealed off the section!

"So, just what were you doing here?" said Borda, advancing on the intruder with all the threat he could muster.

The intruder reached for his belt. Before Borda could reach him, he pressed a control!

Borda was thrown against the intruder as the toolbox he'd pushed to the back of the room exploded! Both were thrown off-balance, and Borda used this to drag the intruder to the floor, where he pinned him using an arm lock. The intruder took hold of his own jaw with his free hand, pushed a finger into the soft tissue under the ear, jerked, and collapsed. The arm lock stayed on until Security arrived and confirmed that the intruder was dead- a surgically altered Vorta!

A communicator chirped. "T'Pina to Borda, report!"

"A Vorta tried to take out the secondary shield controls, but it looks like I got to him in time. However, it may be wise to check all the defence systems, in case he planted other bombs."

"I have separate reports of explosions elsewhere on board. However, no one was close enough to see what was destroyed. Can you investigate?"

Borda started thinking of the most likely places- the primary shields!

"Use the secondary shield generators for now- I suspect one target may have been the primary controllers. And check for ships in this area, this Vorta was unlikely to be acting alone."

"Very well- carry on!"

Borda raced down the corridor towards the primary shield control room. As he entered, a burning smell hit him. He noticed a smoking hole in one of the consoles, and his suspicions were confirmed. This Vorta had known exactly where to plant his bomb so that a small charge would blow out the vital components of the shield generator.

"Borda to T'Pina"

"Yes, Lieutenant?"

"Primary shield generator is down."

"Do you know if the saboteur was able to plant any more bombs? I believe several explosions may have occurred. And we have seven unidentified ships closing on us from the nebula, it seems fortunate that the secondary shield generator is intact- we should still be able to hold them off."

The Starbase was probably over-equipped, by Federation standards, with a mixture of Starfleet and Klingon weaponry.

Borda started thinking- if an attack's coming, and I want to give them the best chance of succeeding- where do I plant my bombs first?

"Can you check the disruptor cannon banks?"

These were formidable multi-barrelled Klingon disruptors, the Starbase's primary defence.

"Wait, I'll check."

Borda waited, but started thinking about what was the shortest route to the nearest disruptor bay.

"Confirmed- the charging control circuits appear to be inoperative on all the disruptor banks. Photon torpedo launchers and phasers are also off-line."

The station was effectively disarmed!

"There's a Replimat between me and the nearest disruptor bay- disengage the replicator safeties and produce a spare charging unit for me."

"Will do- I'll get repair teams to the other units as soon as they report in, but we don't have much time."

Borda ran for the Replimat, as the Red Alert sounded on the station.

As he reached the now abandoned Replimat, a replicator port whined and a rectangular box appeared. Borda had just grabbed the box when he felt a tug on his leg and looked down.

"Jonborda, I'm frightened!" KharlS seemed lost, and she knew bad things happened when the alarms went off.

"I need to go quickly, KharlS, there's trouble."

"Don't go!" she grabbed hold of his leg.

"I have to-, " he thought for a second- "come with me." Together they ran into the service junction, then crawled into a Jeffries tube.

Borda stopped crawling and opened a panel in the side of the crawlspace. A charred mess greeted him.

"Hold this for Me." he handed the charging pack to KharlS.

He then unplugged the three-phase wiring. The damaged unit came out quickly; he then took the new unit from KharlS and mounted it where the old one had been.

Suddenly the Starbase jolted under them! The attack had begun!

KharlS screamed and grabbed at the floor grille, her small fingers easily holding on. She looked up to see Lt. Borda sprawled against the opposite wall of the tube. He didn't move, and there was blood coming from the side of his head.

"Jonborda, wake up!" she crawled over and shook him. Nothing happened. She looked back at the box that he'd been fixing, and saw the three disconnected wires. Suddenly she remembered, and reached inside the panel.

"Red and red, yellow and yellow, blue and blue" she sang to herself as she hefted the plugs, as big as her forearm, into the sockets. She completed this and gave herself a little round of applause. Then she saw the button in the middle of the box.

"Oh yes, now I do this!" Her tiny finger initialised the charging circuit on the eight-barrelled 30-megawatt disruptor cannon array.

In Ops, Commodore Jat fumed impatiently. She knew it was only a matter of time before the shields buckled, and then the station would be boarded. "Disruptor array two is online!" Laura-Jean called from her station.

"Open fire- target the lead ship first!" Jat ordered.

The lead ship burst into flame as the full power of the disruptor cannons tore through its shields! Realising that they were now vulnerable, the other six turned and fled. Only four reached the shelter of the nebula.

The next day, b'Sel brought KharlS to see Lt. Borda in the sickbay. He was sitting up on a bio-bed, a bandage round his head. KharlS jumped up beside him.

"Jonborda, are you OK now?" she asked.

"I'm fine. And KharlS, daughter of b'Sel, I hear you distinguished yourself in battle and brought great honour to your house!"

KharlS blushed- not even her elder brothers had been so honoured!

"I just finished fixing the box for you. Can we go and see Flotter today?"

Lt. Borda rolled his eyes upwards. "Yes, KharlS, lets go and play." Someday she would understand.