

The Adventure Continues...Escape By Tom Hudspeth

The first thing Lt. Cdr. Saryena Remora did when she was given access to the Sacagawea's computer was to remove the lockout on the sensors.

"Balor, please inform whomever should be told, that we are about to test the sensors." Saryena said.

Balor turned away from the sensor console to speak to his superiors. Saryena quickly tied into a nearby computer network and searched for her crewmates. She knew she only had a few seconds, and this might be her only chance to affect their escape. Balor had been correct when he had said she couldn't send a signal for help, but if she could make it so someone else could....

Balor returned. "We have permission to do a test sweep of the short range sensors, passive only at first."

"Very well." Saryena activated the passive sensor array. The Sacagawea's passive sensors detected every nearby source of energy and displayed them on the console monitor. At the same time, a side display brought up the results of her unauthorized search. Saryena glanced in Balor's direction, he was looking at the main screen and the data displayed there.

Saryena said, "I'll try to see if we can glean a little bit more out of the sensors."

Saryena knew she was taking a chance as she worked the controls to both sharpen her sensor data and work on finding her mates. She glanced at the list. As she already knew, Jeanette, Brian and John were in prisoner's cells. S'ena wasn't listed and Madia Amme was in guest quarters. Saryena diverted the sensor data to Madia's quarters.

Then she looked at the sensor data. The Sacagawea was in a close orbit to an asteroid. The asteroid appeared to be hollowed out to make a space station, but it was putting out massive amounts of power in some type of shielding. Saryena wondered why the pirates would put out so much power if they were hiding. The energy output would give them away unless they could hide it somehow.

"A cloaking device." She said in astonishment.

Balor's head snapped around. "Enough! The sensors work fine. Turn them off."

"But we haven't checked the active ones yet." Saryena said.

"And we won't today, for what are now obvious reasons. Guard! Take her back to her cell. I am finished with her for today."

Saryena quickly erased her handy work as she shut down the sensors. Maybe she had done enough.

Madia Amme woke suddenly to the sound of her computer beeping. She rushed over to look at it. It had always been a one way source of information before, unresponsive except for requests for entertainment. Now it beeped, and displayed sensor readings. Madia sat down and started to study the readings. Just as quickly as it started, it stopped.

Madia quickly checked the computer log. Yes! The information had been recorded. But Madia wasn't as interested in the data from the sensors, as she was in the message coding. She broke down the data message, looking for the codes that would allow her access to the main computer. At last, she had a way to access the main computer, now she could work on getting them all out of here!

“Report!” Captain T’Pina said as she arrived in Ops. Her limp was more pronounced than usual, and she seemed to lean on her cane a bit more, but her eyes were steady and clear and she demanded attention.

“The station has entered some kind alternate space.” Morris said.

“Sensors report nothing beyond the outside of our inverted polaron bubble shielding.” Shepherd added.

“Moments before we slipped into this continuum, Three appeared to have knowledge of it’s occurrence. She halted all departures and warned orbiting ships away from the station. She then activated the shielding.”

“What is our current station status?” T’Pina asked calmly.

Morris replied, “The station and crew are all in one piece. All the instruments are functioning correctly. It appears that what ever is happening outside has not affected anything inside the poleron bubble.”

Shepherd said, “One trading ship didn’t make it past the edge of the shields and was cut in half. Fortunately, the engines were outside the shields, while the habitat section was inside. The crew and passengers were beamed off immediately and rescue crews are towing the ship in now. There are currently 37 ships still in parking orbits around the station. All are on high alert, but none are trying to leave.”

“As you can guess,” Morris said, “We have been inundated with calls from all the embassies and most every other person who thinks they deserve to know, asking what is going on. I have set up a recorded message telling them to please clear the channels for emergency communications. It hasn’t worked very well. Mostly, I’ve been too busy to talk to anyone.”

T’Pina went over to the communications console and keyed in the station wide announcement, “This is Captain T’Pina to all station personnel. I am declaring an emergency as of 1923 hours. Off duty personnel report to your emergency stations. Any unauthorized use of station resources, such as communications, replications or power allocations will be punished under the regulations governing station emergency management. In short, do not call Ops unless it is an emergency. All that the station replicators will now produce are emergency rations and parts. Holodecks are now off line until further notice. Understand this, if you want to know what is going on, look out a window. We will inform you of any changes as soon as we can. Captain T’Pina out.”

T’Pina turned to the two ladies. “We need answers and we need them now, let’s review the logs.”

Commodore Anarita Jat was working the sensor console, while the young Klingon warrior watched over her shoulder. While Anarita cursed the Klingon sensors, Jat was fondly remembering the simplicity of their use. They had basically one purpose, and that was to find the target, whether the target was a planet they wished to orbit, or an enemy they wished to shoot. Currently, Anarita was trying to target impulse engine exhaust from over a week ago.

Captain K’iHqas strode over to the sensor station and asked, “What have you found?”

“I have found two things,” Jat told her, “One, Klingon sensors are far inferior to just about anybody else’s in the quadrant.” K’iHqas glared at her. “And there are four traceable leads which could be our pirates ion trails leaving here.”

“Put them on the main viewer.” K’iHqas ordered.

Anarita displayed the four trails on the main screen of the bridge and got up from her chair. She and K’iHqas walked up to the viewer and whispered to each other.

“This is the best I can do with your sensors and by the time a Federation ship arrives, even these readings will have disappeared.” Anarita told K’iHqas.

“Then we only have time to follow one of these four trails, but which one?” K’iHqas mused.

“The biggest one was probably laid down as a decoy. The least two are the size of medium ships, probably used to pick up any cargo jettisoned and carry fighters.”

“The Sacagawea was towed away at warp speed,” K’iHqas said, “It would take a large ship to accomplish that task. Well, two trails left. One sure to be a decoy, and the other sure to be our prey.”

“My suggestion? Follow the next to largest one.”

K’iHqas looked at the display for another minute, though she was more lost in thought than studying it. At last, she turned and walked to her command chair. Sitting down in it, she said, “Set course to follow the largest sensor trail.”

“But...” Anarita started.

“No, Starfleet, you have been sitting in your nice, safe, soft, comfy chairs too long. You are good with puzzles, I’ll give you that, but a warrior knows the hunt, and we are a ship full of warriors. My gut tells me that the prey is over confident. He has worked hard to hide his spore, but he is still impressed with himself. He has gotten away too many times, and now, he uses your own impressions to trick you. I have hunted targ with my bare hands. I have smelled them in the dirt they trod on. I have seen their passage in the waving of the branches. These pirates, they too are crafty, but now, we have their scent. Set the course helm. Commodore, you have proven useful at the sensors. Please continue to instruct my warrior there, he will become the better for your assistance.”

The Klingon bird-of-prey, the IKV Dragon Fist, leapt into action for the first time in a week, streaking away, following a trail of gas dispersed over a week ago. Like a hound, it turned and backtracked, continuing to follow the spore of its prey. Eventually though, the trail stopped.

“That is it Captain, the trail ends here.” The young sensor operator said.

“That’s it then, we followed the wrong trail and now the Sacagawea is lost.” Jat said quietly to K’iHqas.

“Helm, project a course ahead from this position based on the track we have been following. Are there any planets or other stellar phenomenon that the pirates could use as a base of operations?” K’iHqas asked.

“No Captain, there is nothing but empty space for 50 light years.”

“Maybe, if we turn back, we can still follow the other trail.” Jat suggested.

“No, Commodore, this is the place, or somewhere close by. Our prey has just gone to ground. All we need to do is wait. Have patience.”

K’iHqas turned to her crew. “Rig for silent operations. Passive sensors only. Cloaking device on.”

“But captain, with the cloaking device on, we will be defenseless, and the energy stores will be depleted in less than 24 hours.” The warrior at the helm said.

“Then pray I change my mind, or the pirates show themselves, before the time is up! Carry out your orders!”

S’ena knew the code to open the door to her pen, now she just had to convince the three Orion animal women to join her in her escape. Logical discussion wouldn’t work, and trying to bully them would also show limited results. She had to make them want to leave the den.

Suddenly, it came to S’ena, pheromones! That was her ticket to controlling the other women. By emitting pheromones, she could influence them into doing what she wanted. But pheromones only transmitted emotions, which emotion should she use to get them to leave? Fear? They would cower in the pillows. Rage? They would turn on

themselves and her. Lust? Yes! They would have to seek a mate, which meant they would have to leave the pen.

S'ena began to think lustful thoughts. Strangely, she got the most reaction out of thinking about Brian Starr. She almost lost her concentration. Why should she think lustful thoughts about someone who she had never done anything more than hug? Yes, she wanted to have their relationship go farther, but she had done a lot more with others in the past. Maybe it was because all of her past relationships had been superficial, fun, but with no deep commitment. Well, she thought, whatever worked.

And it was working, kind of like a feedback circuit, like when you get a microphone too close to the speakers. The more pheromones she put out, the more lustful she felt. It was affecting the other Orion women as well. They started to display themselves, standing up and moving as if to music only they could hear. As each felt more lustful, each emitted more pheromones, which made them even more lustful.

I better get us out of here before we can't leave, S'ena thought. She input the codes to the door lock. The door opened to the hallway, and S'ena led the three women out. She said, "Ladies, there are men down this way." The three eagerly followed her down the corridor. The smell of their lust permeated the areas around them as they traveled. Anyone who happened upon the smell would react the same way. Hopefully, they wouldn't run into anyone before they got to where S'ena wanted to go!

At the intersection where S'ena had seen the guarded door, she stopped. "All right girls, we need to look our best." She glanced around the corner. Two guards stood right where she knew they would be, and they appeared to be effected by the pheromones, glancing nervously at each other. "Show time!"

S'ena confidently rounded the corner with the other three in tow. The guards, already desirous of women, immediately saw them. To give them credit, they did hesitate a second before dropping their weapons and rushing the women. S'ena dropped them both with well aimed chops to the neck.

The three glared at her as if betrayed. "Bring them along, we don't have enough men yet." She told them.

While the others dragged the unconscious guards, S'ena input the same code as she used to get out of her pen. She wasn't sure it would work, but gambled on the laziness of guards galaxy wide. Sure enough, the door opened. S'ena and her crew entered the room where another Orion sat at a console. He looked up, then reached for his disrupter. With a wave of her hand, the four women surrounded the lone technician. Quickly, the pheromones worked on him and he lowered his disrupter. He grabbed one of the women and they went off into a corner.

S'ena dismissed the rest of them, and what they were doing, and concentrated on the console in front of her. The controls were all in Orion! Oh, if only she had studied her Orion written language better. She struggled to remember what she could. The board appeared to run some kind of transmitter. Massive power flowed through it, but there wasn't any input, so it couldn't be a communications device. It actually seemed to be running a kind of shield generator. Perhaps, she could use one of the shield harmonics to transmit a message!

S'ena began to adjust the shield controls to produce a harmonic signal on a Starfleet distress frequency. It would appear as a maladjustment to the casual observer at the console, but to any Starfleet ships nearby, it would scream HELP! The problem was that they would have to be very close. The stronger the harmonic, the more chance that she would be caught!

Yarda entered the bridge on his asteroid starship base. He looked over the people there. His bodyguard took up a position near the door behind him. Several

Orion technicians were working at their consoles, obviously wishing to appear busy, even if they were not. Yarda approached the sensor operator. He took a moment to look at his finger nails before asking, "What is the status on that Klingon ship that stopped nearby?"

"It disappeared shortly after it arrived. I think it left." The sensor tech answered.

"Did you see it leave?"

"No, sir, but it has not been detected for 12 hours now."

"Are you aware that Klingon ships have cloaking devices much like ours?"

"Yes, but this was a small ship, I don't think it could stay cloaked this long."

"That is why I'm in charge and you work for me," Yarda said in a bored voice. "I happen to know that the Klingon Birds-of-prey can stay cloaked for up to 24 hours if they conserve their energy. Speaking of cloaks, what is the status of ours?"

"It has been on for a week and is showing signs of deterioration. We have had to monitor it constantly. Even now, I am detecting an odd harmonic."

"Well, fix it! I do not want our Klingon friend to find us."

"Yes sir. We need to turn it off soon so we can perform maintenance on it."

"Wait another 14 hours. Our Klingon will either have shown himself by then, or else he is really gone." Yarda then began an intimidating tour of the other consoles.

"That is odd," The sensor tech said to himself.

"What is it?" Yarda asked, returning to the sensor station.

The tech looked up, surprised and horrified that he had spoken out loud, and that Yarda had heard him. "I, I, I'm not getting any response from technician Harot." He stammered. "He is down in power control for the cloaking device."

Yarda pressed a button on the console comm. device. "Security to cloaking control immediately."

Just off of Starbase 410's Ops was the briefing room. In the briefing room was a long smooth polished table with cleverly concealed computer displays hidden beneath it's dark surface. At the head of the table sat T'Pina, rigid and formal. Around the table sat all of the current department heads that could get there.

Lt. Laura-Jean Morris entered and sat down. She said, "Medical sends it's regards, but they need everyone down there for the emergency."

"Very well, we will start without them." T'Pina said. "Please summarize what we have found out."

"At 1914 hours, Three, our automated space traffic controller, stopped all incoming and outgoing space traffic. She then issued a warning to all orbiting craft that they had five minutes to depart the area, if they could. Five minutes later, she activated the Inverted Polaron field around the station. Thirty seconds after that, we entered this space."

Lt. Commander K'SQqwa SuDs'qan'ya, head of station security looked confused. "You programmed your hologram to do all that?"

"Well, in emergency conditions, Three has the ability to do all of that, but no emergency had been declared, and sensors didn't pick up a thing to indicate we were about to be transported here."

"So," T'Pina said, "We are left with this puzzle. How did Three know to take emergency procedures if there was no evidence of an emergency?" T'Pina stood up and looked out the window where there was nothing to see. "Logic dictates that since there was no clue to tell Three about an impending emergency, that Three is the cause of the emergency."

"But how could Three have moved us into this, this, nothing?" Morris asked.

"And how do we get her to take us back?" K'Sqqwa asked.

Suddenly, to everyone's surprise, stars appeared outside the window.

A young voice hailed them from the speakers. "Shepherd to T'Pina. We have returned to normal space."

"Well, shall we go find out where we are?" T'Pina asked.

Memory Alpha was a massive library containing all of the cultural and scientific information of the United Federation of Planets. Each member planet sent everything about itself to Memory Alpha to be stored in its memory banks for the enlightenment of future generations. Selected great minds of the universe came to learn all the latest information they needed to create wonders.

Memory Alpha was built on an asteroid in 2269, and it could house over 10,000 scientists with over 8,000 private laboratories and briefing rooms. It was protected by Starfleet's finest, but control was run by civilians selected for their expertise in the libraries main functions. For a scientist, it was a dream assignment, but for a young ensign who joined Starfleet to see the stars, it was pure hell.

All that changed one day, when out of nowhere appeared a giant "Guardian Class" space station. Ships around both the station and Memory Alpha departed as fast as they could. The sudden appearance of the space station, which was not designed to move from place to place, sent a panic through the asteroid. Shortly after it appeared, the space station started to download all of Memory Alpha's information. In its place it substituted the records from the space station. It apparently needed the extra memory to store Memory Alpha's records.

Naturally, the Memory Alpha personnel tried to stop the transmissions, but they soon found their own computers rebelling on them. They also tried to hail the traveling space station, which they could read 410 from its side, but the station wouldn't respond. A shuttlecraft was sent out, but its passengers were beamed back and it was destroyed. The scientists debated what to do while the Starfleet personnel ran around trying to stop the flow of information.

At last, the information stopped flowing. Not because the Starfleet people had done anything, but because Starbase 410 had downloaded everything. The station hung in space for about four hours, then disappeared again, leaving the people of Memory Alpha puzzled.

Once again, T'Pina and her department heads were in the briefing room, but this time, they had more information to go on.

"We now know that this is not a natural phenomenon. The station appeared in a specific place and took actions we had no control over." Morris said. "What's more, we know that Three is directing those actions, either consciously or while being controlled by another entity."

"Captain, I've looked over everything that could have been programmed into Three, but I can find no way that she should be able to move the station like this." Shepherd said.

"The very fact that we are moving through space by Three's directions would indicate that it is possible, Ms. Shepherd," T'Pina said, "it is just that we do not know how. We need to find out why Three is doing this, Who is controlling her and how can we stop her from doing it."

"Three has been largely unresponsive." Morris said.

"Perhaps she is too busy with this space travel." K'Sqqwa said.

"That may be her Achilles' heel then," T'Pina said. "We need to work on a way to either isolate or turn off Three. Then, perhaps we can get her to talk."

When the guards arrived at the cloaking power control room, S'ena and her girls didn't put up a fight. S'ena acted as dumb and confused as the rest of the girls. As they were being taken back to their pen, Yarda stopped them and looked at S'ena.

"If I didn't know better, I'd say you were behind this." He pulled her chin up to look at her. "Are you getting paler?"

S'ena's heart froze, but she continued to give him a blank stare. She thought, I'm just a dumb girl, I'm just a dumb girl.

Yarda released her. "Never mind, I will find the guard who let you out and have him punished. Take them back to their cell."

S'ena looked back at Yarda as she was being taken away, but he was already talking to a technician.

"Can you fix it?" Yarda asked.

"Only if we take the cloaking device off line for two hours."

"Impossible! We still don't know if that Klingon ship is gone."

"Then the best I can do is keep it going like it is for one more hour, then it will collapse whether we want it or not. Once it collapses, I don't know how long it will take to fix. If you allow me to take it down for 10 minutes, I can extend that to two days, three tops. Yarda, it needs maintenance."

"Very well, I will give you your maintenance time. But only after I know the Klingon is gone. I will not give away all that I have established here without a fight." Yarda pulled out his communicator and said. "Fighter control, prepare to launch all fighters. Engine room, prepare for warp travel."

If there was one thing Anarita Jat hated the most, it was waiting. She had been loitering on the bridge for over 18 hours now. She almost wished she had K'iHqas' ability to remain calm. Anarita paced the small bridge for a while, then found a seat on a re-enforcement beam. Anarita hated waiting.

"Captain, I have found something odd." The comm. officer reported.

Both K'iHqas and Anarita perked up. "What is it?" K'iHqas asked.

"I have an unusual signal to noise ratio on a Federation distress frequency. It is too strong to be noise, but will not resolve into anything else."

Anarita and K'iHqas both came over to the communications console. "Can you pinpoint where it is coming from?" Anarita asked.

"No, I can only give you the general direction where it is coming from."

"I have got it!" said the young sensor operator Anarita had been working with. "It is originating from below and to the port. I believe it to be from a source not more than 50,000 miles away. If we could have the helm fire a short burst from the starboard thrusters, I think I can verify it's exact location."

K'iHqas looked at the warrior, then looked at Anarita. She was clearly impressed with the young warrior's ability to find the difficult signal, but she didn't want to thank Anarita out loud for the training she must have given him.

"Helm," K'iHqas said, "Do what he suggests."

Barely perceptible, but clearly evidenced by the movement of the stars on the main viewer, the Dragon Fist moved to port.

"Yes, I have it now, bearing 330 by 250 at 34,055 miles."

"Are you sure?" K'iHqas asked.

"You could fire a torpedo at it!" the young warrior smiled.

"Weapons! Make it so! Fire a torpedo!" K'iHqas said.

"Firing torpedo!"

The cloaking device disengaged and the nose of the Dragon Fist glowed an ominous red. Out of its launcher spouted a red ball of fire that streaked towards the coordinates.

"You realize, if you are wrong, I will kill you." K'iHqas told the young warrior, and then turned her back on him to watch the display. Behind her, she could hear him swallow.

At the correct area, the torpedo detonated with a flash. Nothing happened. K'iHqas turned toward the sensor operator angrily.

"No, wait!" Anarita said.

Before them, as if wavering under water, an asteroid slowly came into being. Slung to either side of the asteroid were massive warp nacelles.

"It was cloaked!" Anarita said.

"Battle stations! Weapons and shields up!" K'iHqas was in her element now with a foe to destroy.

"I count 43 small fighter craft and 3 medium sized craft." The sensor operator said. "One of them is the Federation starship we have sought!"

Anarita went over to the comm. station and told the warrior there, "Send out a call to every ship in the area. Tell them we have found the pirates!"

Brian, John and Jeanette had been awakened and taken to the starfighter bay without any explanation. They were told by the guards to get in the first starfighter they could reach, as they only had 60 seconds before the outer hatch opened and they were launched into space, with or without a ship!

Brian and John were relieved to see that they were being taken to the same hanger bay where they had fixed the two starfighters not to blow, but then they realized that Jeanette was with them! There were only two safe starfighters! They couldn't tell her which ones were safe either, the guards were too near.

Brian and John looked at each other and nodded in silent agreement. Jeanette would be taken to a safe starfighter. She watched them and said, "What? Did I miss something?"

The hatch opened and people started running out into the bay. John and Brian directed Jeanette towards the small sleek starfighter John had been working on, while they hurriedly told her.

"The starfighters are rigged to blow up if you are hit, or if you try to make a break for it." Brian said.

"I've fixed this one so it won't blow if you run, but don't get hit!" John told her.

"But what about you guys?" Jeanette said.

"Don't worry about us, we have two more starfighters ready as well." Brian lied. "Just hurry!"

As they approached the sleek starfighter, a large alien tried to pull them away. John and Brian fought him off while Jeanette got in and secured her hatch. After making sure she was safe, Brian told John, "Go! Get in the other fighter!"

"But what about you?"

"That's an order! Move it!"

As John moved off to the large fat starfighter Brian had fixed, Brian decked the alien he was fighting. The alien dropped unconscious to the floor of the hanger bay. Brian looked around. He had no clue how much longer he had. He could see John in his starfighter. There were two starfighters left at the end of the bay. Brian didn't hesitate as he picked up the alien and headed for them.

Brian could see John watching him with concern as he ran past carrying the heavy alien. How much time did he have? Brian wondered. Would he make it? Brian slipped into the "One".

Time stretched out and became unimportant. Brian reached the first starfighter and placed the alien in it. The outer launching hatch began to slowly open. As Brian strapped the slowly waking alien in to his seat, he could feel the air rushing out past him towards the air lock. Brian hit the canopy close button on the first of the two starfighters and started towards the last starfighter.

The air was thinner now, but what was left threatened to drag him out into space. Brian reached the boarding ladder of the last starfighter. He couldn't breathe, in fact, the last bit of air in his lungs was emptying out in to the growing vacuum. Brian climbed the side of the starfighter, and fell into the cockpit. In the calmness of the "One", he searched for the canopy close switch. No two starfighters had been the same, but one could assume that the needs of the humanoid pilots would be similar. The canopy close would be placed either on the right or the left, near enough to be actuated by someone out side. Brian looked under the canopy seal ledge. Sure enough there was a red switch. Brian pulled it.

Time still seemed slowed as Brian waited in the ever-thinning air. If he had found the correct switch, and it worked, all he could do was wait. Brian began to think about what it would be like to die in a vacuum. His lungs were already empty, and his eardrums were about to burst. His eyes were trying to leave their sockets. He could feel blood crawling slowly down his nose.

The canopy closed with a thin hiss. Air rushed into the starfighter's cockpit and the systems started up. Brian gulped the air as he struggled with the seat harness. Suddenly, he was pushed back as the starfighter was catapulted out into space.

Great! Brian thought, I'm in a flying bomb and it has no inertial dampeners. Out of the frying pan and into the fire.

Fortunately for Saryena Remora, she was on the bridge of the Sacagawea when the trouble started. The first thing she did was deck the guard. As he fell to the floor, Balor cried, "What are you doing!? We will both be killed for this!"

"I'm saving our collective butts. Now sit down and stay out of my way!" Saryena told him. "Computer, recognize Lt. Cmdr. Remora. Code Charlie Nine Theta Two"

"Code accepted. Lt. Cmdr Remora, Starfleet active duty status. All command codes are now cleared for your use." The computer said.

"You are Starfleet!" Balor cried!

"Don't worry, I have a plan." She lied. "Computer, initiate intruder alert condition gamma. Gas the rest of the ship!" Saryena looked at Balor. "You're in good hands with Starfleet!"

Saryena turned towards the helm and asked the computer, "Do we have mobility?"

The computer replied, "Negative, it will take 10 minutes for the fastest automated cold start."

"Get on it then. What about weapons or shields?" Saryena asked.

"Weapons are available and shields will be operational in one minute."

"Darn, that is a long time in a space battle." Saryena said. "Can you re-route transporter control to the science station?"

"Yes, complying now."

"Balor, if you want to make any kind of life for you and your family, I suggest you start beaming prisoners out of the pirate base and onto this ship.

"All starfighters launched, Yarda." An Orion crewman reported.

"Good, have them attack the Klingon in our standard pattern. His energy reserves must be low after staying cloaked so long. If we can batter him down, we can take him." Yarda looked at the crewman and said, "Have the fighter support ships back off, but stay in range to pick up our fighters and take our prize when they are done. Meanwhile, prepare for warp speed."

"By your command."

"Oh, and put a tractor beam on that old Federation ship. I want to take it with us."

"All starfighters, implement attack plan alpha as per your training." A voice told Brian. On his console, a counter started to count down while his flight direction display showed the same square boxes he'd seen before. His starfighter was beginning to drift off of its projected flight path. Shortly afterwards, pain began to emanate from his seat. Brian quickly brought the starfighter into line. How was he going to stay alive, while still not firing at innocents? He still had no idea who they were going up against, but if they were against the pirates, they were not necessarily on his side!

The counter reached zero, and the flight path indicated he should start his approach. He had a little room to maneuver in the flight path, at least he could hope to dodge incoming fire. Brian was suddenly reminded of the space fight in which he was captured. How many others had been in the same position as Brian was now? Who was over on the ship they were attacking? Was it Brian's turn to vanish in a fireball of escaping gasses and debris?

As the little starfighter swung around and dove in for the strike, Brian could tell that the target was a Klingon bird-of-prey. On his console, the green flashing light was flashing faster and faster. Soon, Brian knew it would turn red and he would either have to fire at the bird-of-prey or feel mind numbing pain. Brian knew he couldn't fire on the Klingon. The flashing green light was about to change.

Brian pulled the trigger.

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Aboard the Klingon Bird-of-prey, IKV Dragon Fist, the deck shook with incoming fire.

"They must train their pilots poorly," Captain K'iHqas told Commodore Anarita Jat. "That last one fired too soon."

"Should I return fire Captain?" The weapons warrior asked.

"No, keep firing on that asteroid spaceship. Target its engines. If it goes to warp, we may lose it." K'iHqas answered. She turned to Jat again. "The closest ships that can help us are hours away."

"We must stop these pirates, no matter the cost." Jat said.

"I understand you Commodore, but I am low on reserve power and this is an untested crew."

"Then," Jat looked her in the eye, "Perhaps today is a good day to die."

Madia Amme keyed in another computer sequence and her room door opened at last. She was free and she had a plan, out the door she raced. She knew now that the asteroid she had been imprisoned on was warp capable and it was under attack. All she needed to do was sabotage the engines long enough for rescue to arrive. She laughed to herself, she was good at that!

The first guard she saw never knew what hit him. Her flying kick landed solidly on his back and his head made a satisfying thump on the wall. She stopped long enough

to slip into his shirt and to grab his disrupter rifle. While she would never hope to pass herself off as an Orion, perhaps the shirt would give the other guards pause long enough for her to stun them. Disposing of the body in a nearby room, she continued towards engineering.

Just shy of main engineering, Madia crawled into a Jeffries tube leading up. Through a ventilation shaft, she could see into main engineering. Below her, she could make out some control consoles. The warp core pulsed slowly across the room. A slight breeze blew warm air up into her face from another vent opening below her. Madia thought, the main control console must be right under me. The warm air must be from the control circuits. If only I had a way to take them out.

She backed away from the vent, her disrupter digging into her side. Of course! She thought, I've got a perfect bomb right here!

Madia set the disrupter to over load and lowered it down the shaft by its shoulder strap. Quickly, she crawled backwards out of the ventilation shaft and down the Jeffries tube. If only she had enough time to get far enough away to avoid the blast!

As she crawled out of the Jeffries tube and turned around, she found herself facing two guards, both with their disrupters pointed at her!

"This area is secure!" Madia boldly lied. "Let's go on to the next check spot."
The guards looked confused.

"Get on then!" She pushed past the two guards. "Follow or stay, but I've got more maintenance tubes to check."

She almost made it to the corner when she first heard the whine of a disrupter. She didn't glance back as she broke into a run. A blast hit the wall beside her as she dove for cover around the corner in the hallway. She was halfway down the corridor when the disrupter she had set on overload went off. Her body was picked up by the rush of air and thrown forward along with the rest of the debris.

The blast was felt all through the asteroid. On the bridge, one of the engineering crewmen said, "Yarda, something has happened down in main engineering."

"Tell me something I didn't know," He said calmly, "Like our status?"

"It appears to have been an explosion." The engineer replied. "It has disabled our main engineering controls. Warp drive is off line. I can not raise anyone in engineering to tell us any more."

"Please go down there and find out what is happening." Yarda sounded annoyed. "And report back when we will be able to go to warp."

The engineer ran from the bridge.

Yarda turned to his second in command, Pog, and told him, "Please, increase power to the shields. It appears we are not going anywhere for a while."

Starbase 410 started to rapidly appear in different places in the galaxy. It didn't seem to follow any set pattern. Alpha quadrant, Delta quadrant, Gamma quadrant, Beta quadrant, the errant station visited them all. It would appear in normal space, transmit a single message, wait for an hour, and then slip back into nonspace.

In the briefing room near Ops, Captain T'Pina listened to the debate.

"At least we were able to transport most of the civilians off the station when we appeared near Bajor." Lt. Laura-Jean Morris said.

"Yes, Deep Space 9 was very helpful, though I bet it was crowded by the time we left." Lt. Commander K'SQqwa said.

"I don't understand all this bouncing around," Ens. Laura Shepherd said. "That last stop, we sent a signal to a protostar in the Delta quadrant."

"And the stop before that was just outside a nebula in the Beta quadrant." Morris said.

"Lt. Morris," T'Pina said, "Please list the planets we can positively identify."

"We have already visited Mab-Bu VI, Triacus, Zetar, Medusa, Bajor, Organia..."

"Wait!" K'SQqwa said, "What was that last one again?"

"Organia, supposed home planet of the Organians who imposed the Organian Peace Treaty of 2267 between the Federation and the Klingon Empire."

"Yes, we almost beat you then," K'SQqwa said absentmindedly, his mind putting the pieces together. "The Organians are non-corporeal beings. Do any of the other places we have been to have connections to non-corporeal life?"

"Checking," Shepherd said. "Yes, several have been confirmed or suspected of having, or being once inhabited by, non-corporeal beings. Bajor's wormhole is said to be populated by the non-corporeal prophets."

"And Lt. Cdr. Warren's aunt visited a protostar in the Delta quadrant in 2371!" Morris said. "The corona of the protostar contained sentient photonic beings!"

K'SQqwa slapped his hand down hard on the table, making everyone but T'Pina jump. "That explains it!"

"You propose an interesting theory Lt. Commander K'SQqwa," T'Pina said. "Perhaps you'd like to enlighten the rest of the room in a more subdued manner?"

"Sorry Captain," K'SQqwa said. "The last couple of weeks, the station's computer has been rifling the Astrometrics data, with special interest in places we have encountered non-corporeal life." K'SQqwa leaned forward. "I propose that this station, and Three in particular, has been taken over by just such a creature."

"But for what purpose?" Shepherd asked.

"I think," T'Pina said, "That it wants to find its way home."

"Computer, time until engines are ready?" Saryena Remora asked.

"13.5 minutes until engines can be used." The feminine voice of the Sacagawea's computer replied.

"Balor, how is the prisoner rescue going?" Saryena asked.

"I have isolated all of the Orions in the shuttle bay and transported all the prisoners I could locate to the habitat decks. Most of them have succumbed to the gas still present there."

"I want you to make a special effort to find Bajoran and Human life forms and beam them straight to the bridge. I'm going to need help to pull this off." Saryena ordered him. "We'll need to keep the shields down until we know we have all of the prisoners we can get out. Surprise is still on our side." Saryena was worried, would they be discovered before she could take action, or save her friends?

Ignoring the starfighters that swarmed like gnats, the Klingon bird-of-prey, the IKV Dragon Fist, swung in towards the pirate base. Her nose glowed briefly red and a fireball flew from the torpedo launcher located just below the bridge. Twin streaks of light flashed from her wing tips as she raced past the asteroid ship's defenses. Around her, only the enemy starfighters could keep up.

On the bridge, the crew was buffeted by the hits from the starfighters.

An angry Klingon warrior turned from his weapons console and cried, "Captain! A direct hit to our plasma injectors! Our shields are down to 34%. Allow me to target some of these single ships! The others will back off."

K'iHqas leapt from her command chair and approached the weapons officer. "If my orders are not to your liking, I can relieve you of your duties and your life! I said

target the pirate base only! Do you understand?" K'iHqas glared at him while fingering her dagger.

"Yes, my captain, pirate base engines and weapons systems only." He said in a subdued voice.

Jat drew K'iHqas aside. "We must find a way to disable that base of operations soon."

"I am aware of that, Commodore, but her shields are still too strong for us to inflict much damage. If only we had a second ship, or could divert power from the shields."

"Captain," the sensor operator said, "I have isolated two starfighters that have begun to attack their own fellows. They have disabled 5 starfighters already."

"Captain," the Comm. officer interrupted, "I am receiving a communication from one of the starfighters."

K'iHqas looked amused. "Well, put it on."

"...repeat, this is Lt. John Borda of Starfleet to Klingon bird-of-prey, please respond. Do not fire on Starfighters designated 18, 23, or 37."

"John, this is Commodore Jat speaking from the IKV Dragon Fist. What is your situation?"

"Commodore Jat? Good to hear your voice. All three designated craft are manned by Starfleet personnel. Unwilling combatants man the rest of the starfighters. The starfighters are all rigged to blow up if we do not follow orders. We have been able to disable some by aiming at the engines. Starfighters 18 and 23 have had their auto-detonation receivers rendered inoperative. 37 is still hot. Request permission to join you."

"No!" K'iHqas replied. "Continue on your current course of action. We need you to try to take out as many of the starfighters as you can while we concentrate on the pirate base. Do you understand?"

"Commodore?" John asked.

"Do as Captain K'iHqas suggests, Lieutenant. Good Luck!" Jat replied.

"That is all of the prisoners I could get a transporter lock on. There are no more to rescue." Balor told Saryena.

"Darn! They have to be there somewhere. Keep looking!" She told him.

Suddenly, the turbolift door opened and in walked two of the prisoners, a Bolian and a huge alien Saryena didn't recognize. At least they weren't Orions, she thought as she reached for the disrupter she had confiscated from her now unconscious guard.

"Peace we come in!" Shouted the alien. He stood easily over 8 feet high and was bald. In his hands he carried, not a weapon, but a small furry animal. "Lou led us here. Buroo I am and Lou this is." He held out the furry creature for inspection.

The Bolian came out from behind Buroo and said, "I was the captain of the Orange Pasture, a Bolian merchantman trading ship. We have come to find out if there was anything we could do to help."

"Fine, I can use the hands. Man the Engineering console. Buroo, what can you do?" Saryena said.

"I around look, tell you when I find." He answered.

"Try environmental control. We are going to have to wake up some more people if we are going to fight in this ship."

Madia Amme stirred and coughed in the dust around her. The corner of the corridor had protected her from most of the blast. Still, she would need some anti-radiation treatments if she lived through this. She pulled herself up and leaned on the wall. Just a minute of rest, she thought to herself as she coughed again. She took a

few steps toward the end of the hall, toward Engineering. "I have to finish what I started." She said to her self as another wave of dizziness passed over her.

Brian Starr sat in his cockpit. He continued to fly around the bird-of-prey, firing too soon or too late to hit it. He had noticed John and Jeanette's starfighters moving independently of the attack pattern, taking out other starfighters as they went. If only there were a way to disarm the auto-destruct on his starfighter.

Between fly bys of the bird-of-prey, Brian had been figuring out the controls in his starfighter. What was missing? What could he do to take out his starfighter from inside the cockpit? He had to find a way! In all of the controls, there wasn't one marked fuel dump. In a Star Fleet vessel, it would be marked "Core Ejection". One of the things he had noticed was an emergency energy pod release, whatever that meant. Could it be the same thing? There was only one way to find out.

Brian tore at the control panel. It lifted up, thanks to someone only tacking it down with a few fasteners. The Orions rarely checked on their slaves work, and often interrupted the very same repairs. Under the panel, wires and glowing fiberoptics were wrapped in bundles leading in and out of the switches in the control panel. Sure enough, the wire Brian needed was capped off.

Pain started to grow in Brian's chair. He had spent too much time prying up the panel and was starting to wander off course. He corrected, and went back to work under the panel. The pain started again, but this time Brian ignored it. He almost had the connection he needed...there, the emergency energy pod release switch had power and glowed a menacingly bright red, as if to say, "Don't touch me!"

Brian pressed it anyway. He heard a loud ka-thunk and his cockpit went dark. All power was gone, even life support! Brian looked out of his view port to see where he was going. In the distance, right before him, was the pirate asteroid ship. Brian began to think he should have listened to the switch, he was headed straight for the asteroid!

"Yarda, the guards report that all the prisoners are missing."

Yarda looked at the guard captain that had reported to him and said, "How can all of the prisoners be missing? They must be someplace. How did they escape from their cells? Are they running around the corridors of my ship? Where are they?"

"They did not escape their cells, and they are not in the corridors."

"Then they are still in their cells?" Yarda asked.

"No, sir, they aren't anywhere."

Yarda gave out a heavy sigh. This is what I get for hiring lowest bidders, he thought. "Sensors, scan for life signs. Tell us where the prisoners have spirited off to."

"Yes, Yarda." The Orion sensor operator spent a minute looking at his console, then reported, "I can not find them anywhere on the base."

"See, I told you," the guard captain said.

"But I do read a large amount of life forms on the Federation scout craft we currently have orbiting the base."

"There, see," Yarda said, "That is where they have gone. Now please go and recapture them."

"Yarda, I suggest the guard captain hurry, the Federation scout vessel is powered up and ready to leave."

"What! I thought we hadn't fixed its computer yet! Put a grapples beam on that ship and prepare to board her again! I will not lose that ship!" He turned towards the guard captain. "Well, go!"

The guard captain ran out the door.

Yarda walked over to the weapons console. "If they power up their weapons, shields or engines, blow them out of space." He told the Orion sitting there.

"But Yarda, what if some of our people are over there?"

"Then they have failed me for the last time. If I can't have that ship, no one can."

The Adventure Continues.... Part 25

Captain T'Pina leaned heavily on her cane in the empty holodeck. It was getting more and more difficult to forget the constant pain she felt. Her Vulcan mental exercises were not enough anymore. She could feel her grip on her emotions weakening more everyday. It was only a matter of time before she could no longer perform her duties aboard Starbase 410. Logic dictated that she would have to give up her post and return to Vulcan for treatment soon. But not today, she thought as she straightened up, there were lives depending on her tight emotional control and logical deductions.

Lt. Commander K'SQqwa and Lt. Laura-Jean Morris entered the holodeck. Their faces lit by a portable light pole in the center of the large black walled room.

"Captain," K'SQqwa said, "Everything is ready. We may begin whenever you are ready."

"Lt. Morris, do you know of something that will lure our friend here? She has been uncommunicative so far." T'Pina said.

"I believe I may know one or two things that might excite her." Morris answered.

"Then, Commander K'SQqwa, please open a line to Three." T'Pina ordered.

K'SQqwa went over to an access panel in the archway and opened it. Inside, he replaced a computer chip he had removed earlier. He turned and nodded to the others. "Channel open."

"Morris to Three."

Silence filled the room.

"Three, please respond."

Still no answer.

Morris turned toward T'Pina and said, "This next part might get more dangerous."

"Continue, Lieutenant." T'Pina ordered.

"Three, I have knowledge that may pertain to your current search. Something not in the Starfleet records. Something I learned before I joined Starfleet about a lost group of energy based beings."

A pleasant, feminine voice asked, "Please provide more information."

K'SQqwa nodded his head no. Three was only accessing the audio circuits.

"I'm sorry, I can't just tell you the information. I must show you. That is why we have come to the holodeck. You must see the information. You must feel it. Access your hologram and download it to this location."

"There is a 78 percent chance you are lying to me in order to gain access to my programming."

"Three, you were programmed with emotional responses. These responses were necessary to enable you to communicate with humanoid life forms. You can tell that they are a form of communication, can't you?"

The voice seemed to hesitate. "Y-yes, most humanoid life forms use unspoken emotional responses to aid in the exchange of ideas."

"Then you see why you must appear here so that I can give you the information you seek."

"Very well, but only for a short time. The dimensional bubble we are currently traveling in will quickly become unstable without constant monitoring."

Near Morris and T'Pina a form began to coalesce, slowly, as if building itself. When it finally appeared, it was a figure of a young woman in loose civilian clothing. She was thin and slightly shorter than average, with flowing black hair hanging halfway down her back. Her shirt was modestly buttoned up, but her layered skirt consisted of several types of thin translucent material. Three had a light brown tan indicating a Mediterranean or Native American heritage. "Please provide me with the information." She said.

T'Pina looked at K'SQqwa. He nodded yes. "Do it." T'Pina said.

K'SQqwa pulled a computer chip out of the arch.

"Undo what you have done. Give me back access to the main computer." Three said.

"No." T'Pina replied calmly.

Three's eyes suddenly went wild. A hologram started up in the room. Everyone was standing on an open, grassy plain, but they had little time to look around as fierce winds whipped about them. In the distance, they could see a tornado approaching, its base a good half a mile wide.

"Captain! Three has overridden the safety protocols and locked us out of the system!" K'SQqwa yelled.

"Undo what you have done. Give me back access to the main computer, or you shall all perish." Three said in a god like voice that filled the air.

T'Pina struggled against the wind to approach the girl. When she stood face to face with Three, she said, "Your actions are very illogical. You will lose the information you seek. You will lose your home."

Three looked T'Pina straight in the eye. "Give me the information."

"No." T'Pina turned her back on Three and started to walk away.

Suddenly, the storm froze all about them. Twigs and grass hung in the air. High above them, an old lady on a bicycle was suspended in mid air, near her hung an old wooden farm house. The dark funnel stood only 100 yards away, towering into the sky.

Three fell to her knees in the grass. She covered her face with her hands, and they could hear her crying. Three looked up at T'Pina with tears streaming down her face. "Please, for thousands of years I have sought my birthplace, looked for others like me. If you know where I can find them, I beg of you to tell me."

T'Pina knelt down to the girl. "I will tell you why you have not found your people when you return this station to where it belongs."

"You don't understand." Three said. "I am part of this station now. I can't leave."

T'Pina stood up. "That is the price for my information. You have disrupted the lives of thousands of people for information you could simply have asked us for. You can search the galaxy as long as you want, but I guarantee, you will never find another like yourself without the knowledge I have."

Brian Starr watched with a fascinated horror at the rapidly approaching asteroid. He knew that he was actually the one moving toward the asteroid, but from his frame of reference, it appeared to be closing in on him. It filled his view port from one side to the other. He could make out scars and craters, both ancient and new.

Like several times before, since Brian had dumped his power cell, he tried his thrusters. Still no response. He could not avoid the certain death that his powerless starfighter plummeted towards. He could not even call for help. Brian had considered death many times. As a youth on Avalon, he had to learn to fight, first with his hands and body, then with weapons and powered armor. Many times, he almost died, but with the inexperience of youth, he brushed them aside. In Starfleet, he had fought on ships and in hand-to-hand situations. The ship battles were quick and brutal. You could go

from fine to dead in a micro-second. Space allowed no mistakes, and many friends had died. But Brian had lived and learned from the experiences.

Brian had thought about the ways he could die, most during some form of combat. Fast and instantly was his preferred way, but he knew he could be fatally injured and go slowly and painfully. But he had never considered he would die perfectly healthy, sitting in a dead starfighter flying toward an asteroid. He always thought that if he were to die, at least he would have some control over the situation, not powerless to do anything.

At least he hadn't had to fire on the Klingon bird-of-prey that was attacking the pirate base. That had been the reason he had dumped his power cell. The pirates couldn't punish him for not shooting now, that was a relief.

He could see the Klingon ship every once in a while. It was taking quite the beating from the pirate base's disrupters. Brian thought it couldn't take much more. It might even be a race to see if the Klingon blew up or Brian smashed into the asteroid first. Brian went back to watching the asteroid. He wanted to think that his actions had somehow saved the Klingon ship. He didn't want to see it destroyed before his death.

Instead, he thought of S'ena. Her face appeared before his eyes. Beautifully she hung there. Brian regretted now his decision not to pursue her. They had been friends on their first assignment, the U.S.S. Judith A. Resnik, some years ago as ensigns fresh out of the Starfleet Academy. Brian had kept his distance, never letting her know his true feelings for her. Some kind of macho love from afar thing, he guessed. Still, when the other guys had pressed her, she had soon turned a cold shoulder to them. Like moths to the flame, men found it hard to resist her charms, but she wanted a friend, not a lover. So Brian had been her friend. Now, he guessed, that was all he would ever be. He idly wondered if she would remember him and if she would mourn his passing. Could he have ever been more than her friend?

The starfighter cockpit was getting colder and the air was getting staler. With no power, there was no life support. A lot of heat dissipated from the transparent canopy. Brian considered slipping into the "One", a meditative state the people of Avalon had developed over the years separated from earth, but decided not to. What was the point to conserving his air and stretching out his perceptions. He had about a minute to live anyway. Brian felt a tingling sensation and he became almost dizzy...

...as he appeared on the bridge of the Sacagawea.

"Brian! Take the command! I've got to get down to Engineering." Saryena Remora told him.

Brian stared at her in amazement. One second he was dead meat, the next in command of a starship.

"Are you alright?" Saryena asked him.

"I'm, I'm fine." Brian stammered. He suddenly smiled at her. "I'm great!" Brian rushed over and gave Saryena a hug. "I'm gonna live!"

"Not if I don't get down to Engineering," She told him.

"But how did you know I was in trouble?" He asked.

"Balor was scanning the area for prisoners and found you, now I really need to go."

Brian collected himself. "Right, go ahead. I'll take care of things here." Brian turned towards the Bolian at the engineering station as Saryena entered the tubolift. "What's our status?"

Jartan told him, "We have some power but have yet to raise shields or power weapons. Our engines are still off line. We have been using what power we do have to search for prisoners and transport them to the ship."

Brian looked over at Balor, who was at the science station. "Do we have everyone off of the pirate base?"

"No, there are some places I can't get sensor readings from, the sensors are just too old fashioned. But I do have everyone I could find."

"Keep looking, but transfer power to the shields. We need to protect the people we have on board. The last thing we need is a boarding party of Orions."

Madia Amme found her way to the party room. The guests were still there smoking and talking. When she entered, two Cardassians glanced in her direction. She felt an urge to leap upon them, but knew she had other duties that needed to take precedence. She had entered the blown up engineering room of the massive asteroid turned starship, and using what controls still worked, set the warp core to breach. She only had a few more minutes to find her people and get off the station. Finding Yorda was a way to accomplish that task.

She grabbed the first person she could reach and asked, "You! Where do I find Yorda?"

He gave her a blank stare. "I have no idea where Yorda is."

Madia looked at his companion. "Where will I find Yorda?"

The man swallowed and said, "I suppose you'll find him on the bridge."

"Where is the bridge?" Madia demanded.

"I sorry, I don't know." He said.

Madia looked at the two Cardassians. They would know, she thought. With their tiny little militaristic brains, that would be one piece of information they would be sure to find out. Madia approached the pair.

"Tell me where the bridge is and I'll spare your lives."

The first turned toward the other and said, "Did you just pass gas? I thought I heard something."

"No," said the second, "But a diversion has just presented itself for our afternoon enjoyment. Look, a Bajoran pleasure girl."

"She's kind of dirty." The first replied.

"I like 'em dirty."

"You like 'em anyway you can torture them."

"You object?"

"No, I just like to torture them more when they start out clean."

"Bajorans are never clean, just look at this one."

Madia had had enough. She leapt at them both. She caught them by surprise at mid shoulder and the all three went down in a bunch. Madia quickly recovered and kicked the first one. "Dirty huh?" she said, ignoring the fact that she was covered with dust from the explosion in engineering.

She rounded on the second one, who had just recovered his feet. Two fast punches to the stomach had him bent over. "Pleasure girl, huh?"

The first one came at her from behind, but she moved to the side at the last second and he ran into his friend. Madia grabbed one of the smoking apparatus and swung it down on their heads. "Torture, huh?"

As she looked down at the two unconscious Cardassians, she said, "I guess you didn't know where the bridge was after all."

Suddenly she could hear the speech of a computer. "This Holo-program is ending due to the current demand for power. Please prepare for program termination."

The parties disappeared followed by the Cardassians. Then the furniture and the other things flickered out of sight. The walls were the last to go, replaced by black tiles with red hexagon shapes running through them. There were three exits, all open.

At first Madia was surprised. This whole time, the party had been a holo-program made to make Yarda seem more impressive and powerful. Then she thought, perhaps the computer was still monitoring the room. "Computer, location bridge." Madia shouted. "The bridge is located on deck three, section 21." The computer answered. Madia ran out the door.

"Yarda, I have shut down the holo-simulation and transferred the power to the weapons systems." Pog, Yarda's second in command, told him from the power control board.

"Good." Yarda replied. "What is the status on the boarding party to recapture the prisoners?"

"Guard Captain Orn reports he is unable to board due to the ship's shields." Pog said.

"What?" Yarda turned angrily to the weapons operator. "I told you to open fire the second they tried to raise their shields."

"They only just raised them, and at a rate much faster than anticipated. One second they had no shields and the next, they had them."

"You have failed me for the last time." Yarda pulled out a disrupter and shot the weapons operator. His body consumed itself in a flash of orange light and was gone. As Yarda holstered his weapon, he said, "Get someone up here to replace him."

"Yarda, I have engineering on line." The nervous communications technician said.

Yarda approached the comm. station. "Engineering, report!"

"Yarda, someone has rigged the warp core to breach. Without their codes, we can't stop it."

"Then eject the core and power up the back up nuclear reactors." Yarda told the engineer.

"We can't, we tried. All of the circuits are dead."

"Very well, I expect you to find a way to resolve this. That is what I pay you for." Yarda told him before he cut off the comm. channel.

"Gentlemen," Yarda announced, "Something has come up and I am needed elsewhere. I will return momentarily."

"We all heard him Yarda." Pog said. "We are not being paid to die at our posts like scruts. That warp core is going to breach and I, for one, am getting into one of the escape pods."

"So am I." Someone else said.

"Me too." Another added.

Yarda pulled out his disrupter and pointed it at Pog. "This is against your contract. The Syndicate will never let you get away with this. You will pay with your life."

"Die now or die later? I choose later, thank you very much." Pog said.

"Fine, now it is then."

Pog leapt towards Yarda as he began to pull his trigger. The disrupter was swept aside and flew across the room. As Yarda and Pog fought, the rest of the bridge crew ran out the door.

The Sacagawea took a heavy hit and everyone flew around the bridge. Brian pulled himself up to the helm and yelled, "Get me that bird-of-prey! I need to speak with her captain!"

Someone yelled from the general direction of the comm. console. "I've got them!" Brian couldn't see whom through the smoke.

On the main viewer, a Klingon warrioress and Federation Commodore appeared. "KiHQaS! Commodore Jat!" Brian was surprised to see them. "I need covering fire to give us time to get this ship moving! We have almost all of the prisoners aboard, and can't engage engines unless we have time to transfer power to them. Currently, we are using all of our power to keep the shields up against the pirate disrupters."

Commodore Jat stepped forward. "We will do everything we can to aid you, but we have sustained heavy damage ourselves and we must stop the pirate menace to this sector."

"Wait!" KiHQaS barked. "If I save your ship, it will cancel my blood debt to you!"

Jat looked at KiHQaS in surprise. "Blood debt?" Jat said to herself.

"Yes! Whatever! Just do it! There are innocent lives at stake." Brian replied.

"Agreed!"

The main viewer returned to the starfield and the pirate base.

On the IKV Dragon Fist, Captain KiHQaS ordered, "Bring us around and in between the pirate base and the Sacagawea."

Jat said, "We can't take that kind of beating for very long."

KiHQaS turned toward Jat and said, "We will have to, it is a matter of personal honor now."