

"Warning...Proximity Alert...Collision Imminent."

"Shut up, you stupid computer! I'm trying to fly here!" yelled Miriam Coy.

The Sparrow class stunt flyer skimmed less than a meter over the asteroid's surface as Coy concentrated on her mark, just under a kilometer away. At six hundred KPH, the flyer was there in a second.

Coy pushed hard on the controls, sending the flyer into a dive. The asteroid's canyon was immense compared to the small ship. In a vertical dive, she skimmed the canyon wall just as closely as she had the surface. Suddenly, she jerked the control stick to the right, causing the ship to corkscrew into a tunnel opening barely larger than the flyer. Zigzagging throughout the cavern, missing jutting rocks by inches, she finally exited the asteroid on the opposite side. In one final act of bravado, Coy swept the flyer under a small rock bridge and out into space.

Pushing the engines to maximum, the Sparrow shot towards the landing bay of Mars Station. Just before entering, Coy decelerated; and, in slow motion compared to her flight, settled the flyer gently on the pad. Miriam cut the engines, switched off the systems and let out a breath.

Seated next to her, the Starfleet flight instructor still gripped the armrests of his chair, his knuckles whiter than snow.

"So, did I pass?" asked Coy cheerfully.

"Uh huh," was the only sound he made.

Star Trek - Adventure

"Honor Above All"

BY

JOSEPH GATCH

Silence...in the depths of space, there is only silence. Even as energy surged forth from the vacuum of space, there was only silence. Swirling greens and white marked the presence of the vortex, which originated from a point far more distant than anyone had conceived possible. When the battlecruiser slipped from the vortex, there was only silence. The vortex then closed in silence. Without a trace...without a sound.

The ship's sensor arrays scanned the area, making no sound as they swept back and forth. Without warning, without sound, the huge cannons tracked an unseen object and opened fire...in silence.

The Bre'el class heavy cruiser erupted in a ball of flame as its cloaking device stopped functioning. Inside, the Klingon warriors who had not had the chance to act, died without cause...or honor. Their dying screams were heard by no one, as the ship and crew were obliterated. For they say that 'in space, no one can hear you scream'. The silence blankets all, as the last burning ember of the Klingon Battlecruiser *Ch'paq* was snuffed out in the vacuum of space.

The Vendoth cruiser then moved off in continuance of its mission...in silence.

Captain's Log: Supplemental - It's been nice being back in the hub of the Federation after tours of duty on the fringes of space. The constant conflict that we have been encountering has taken its toll on the crew and the ambassadorial visits to Federation worlds have been a pleasant change of pace. We have crossed over into Klingon Territory to inspect and gather information from science buoys and probes that have been collecting data on solar winds and gravitational eddies in the Mk'chr Star Cluster - a navigational nightmare for the Klingons for the past two centuries. We will be analyzing the data in order to chart the safest passage through the cluster. Ships having to circumnavigate the cluster add at least a week's travel time for the faster starships and up to two to three weeks for merchant and private vessels. This is an important survey for the future of trade between the Klingon Empire and other governments, one, which will also favor the Federation in the long run.

Miriam Coy stretched her arms over her head and yawned. "This is sooooo boring! Why do we need these probes anyway? Just turn me loose and I'll find the quickest way through that thing. These Klingons

just don't know how to navigate."

"Have you ever gone through a cluster like that before?" asked Ledak.

"No, that's why I want to do it...the challenge. Ledak, you don't know what you're missing, hiding behind your facts and figures. Life is meant to be lived with risk involved. There's no fun in knowing what you're up against every second of the day. Facing the unknown that's why we're out here."

"We would also like to be able to report back about the unknown. We can't do that if we're smeared across a rogue asteroid or fried on a pulsar," said Jacob Rhodes as he exited his ready room.

"You're getting soft in your old age, Jake. You would have loved a run like that back in the academy."

"That was before they started deducting repair costs out of my paycheck. And remember...I'm two years younger than you. How many of the buoys do we have left to collect?"

"Five more, sir. The topography of the cluster is seventy-five percent finished. I will be able to produce a complete three-dimensional model once all of the data has been retrieved," reported Ledak.

"After this, we will have the entire Klingon Empire at the touch of a button. No more unknown out here, Miriam. You'll have to find it elsewhere," said Lieutenant Commander Anderson.

"Can't we get assigned to the Gamma Quadrant? Our quad is getting too boring. We're explorers, right? Let's explore. We can't find new places just hanging around the old neighborhood," said Coy.

"We did that," said Anderson. "And the Jem' Hadar nearly conquered us. Don't be in too much of a hurry to find new friends...or enemies."

"Humans should stay where they are at," hissed Slithek. "They cause too much trouble in the galaxy."

"From the mouth of the Gorn to deaf ears. The Q entity said the same thing and we're still out here causing trouble," said Rhodes.

"Sir," interrupted Elema, "I am receiving a faint transmission. Interference from the cluster is too great to get a complete lock on it. It sounds like a distress call...no, several distress calls. They are all overlapping. I will attempt to clean it up."

Seconds later, a translated version of a Klingon distress call came over the loudspeakers. "...*too powerful....fleet destroyed....retreat*"

"Did I just hear right, lieutenant?" asked Rhodes. "I could have sworn I heard 'retreat'."

"That is what I heard as well, captain."

"Run it through again. I want that entire message. The translation must be off. I have never heard a Klingon order a retreat."

"Who are they fighting?" asked Coy.

Rhodes held up a finger for silence as they listened again. This time, an almost full message came through.

"Bath no' to High Council. Request all defense ships to converge on Sector 268. This invader is too powerful. My fleet is destroyed....ordering retreat until reinforcements arrive."

"Sector 268 is ten light years from our position," reported Slithek.

"Get us out of the cluster and engage at maximum warp. As soon as we're clear, notify Starfleet and we'll see if they know anything about this."

Goran, commander of the Klingon Destroyer *noH ghargh*, screamed in pain as a green four fingered hand clamped over his skull. The Klingon fell to his knees as the powerful digits compressed; and soon, purplish blood trickled down Goran's face from the ruptures in his skin. With an echoing 'crack', the Klingon's skull caved in.

Ch' Lok' meh, VenQa' of the Vendoth Fleet, kicked the cadaver free of his hand. He shook the Klingon gray matter from his fingers and looked at the corpse in disgust.

"Unworthy opponents, these Klingons. They said that they were honorable, but they cry out like all the other pathetic species I have encountered and fought. If these are the best warriors this galaxy has to offer, then conquering it will be child's play." He turned to his subordinates, who looked at their commander with pride. Ch' Lok' meh was considered a rogue by many of his peers in the Vendoth Fleet. He took a twisted pleasure in proving his superiority and in a way, his crew felt that he should. His tactical and battle prowess were unmatched by other species. He regretted not being able to give battle to the starship that had destroyed a protectorate ship in their home galaxy. The *USS Dragon* - a Federation starship from this galaxy defied Vendoth law and started a rebellion on one of the Vendoth's acquisition worlds. They would be dealt with in time, however it is required that the rest of this 'Federation' be taught a lesson in non interference before they become too troublesome. "Have we made contact with the main force?" he asked.

"No, VenQa' . There has been no indication of their presence, as of yet," replied Ch' Lur' ka, his VenQe' and also his younger sibling. "Our trajectory had changed when we suffered the surge in our engine core. I estimate that we have exited the vortex sixty light years from our projected path and arrived twenty hours early."

"Sh' mekt! These travel vortices are worthless! But, now we have a head start in conquering this sector. We are the vanguard now - to us go the spoils of war!"

"Jacob, we' re not sure what is going on out there. Contact has been lost with several ships and outposts." Admiral Alynna Nechayev consulted her terminal. *"Reports are slowly trickling in, but no one seems to know who' s responsible for albf this. Until we get positive ID, we have to assume the worst."*

"An invasion of this magnitude without us knowing about it is incomprehensible. Someone would have to have seen this coming, or at least know who' s involved," stated Rhodes.

"Until we do, give whatever assistance you can to the Klingons. They' re our best allies and if they are taken out of the picture, then we' re going to be next. Starfleet out."

Rhodes turned off the monitor. "Great. Blind as a bat and deaf as a door nail, as grandpa used to say."

"Captain? We have a visitor," said Claire Anderson over the comm.

"I' ll be right there." Rhodes left the officer with a very bad feeling in his gut.

"Captain Kurel' s ship, the VaQ Targ, has just come along side of us. He wishes to come aboard and meet with you personally," reported Claire.

"Swell, they had to send him, didn' t they? Very well, send him the coordinates and I' ll meet him in transporter room two," Rhodes said as he headed for the turbolift. As the doors opened, Major Don Goddard stepped out. "Don, you' re with me."

"All right," he replied as he did an about-face into the lift. "What' s the situation?"

"Several starships and bases are out of communication, and we have a very bad unknown kicking the hell out of the Klingons right now."

"Any ID, yet?"

"None. I' m hoping Kurel can answer that one. He' s beaming aboard now."

"Kurel? You two didn' t have a good encounter last time."

"No, but if he wants to talk to me in person, there' s a good reason for it," said Rhodes.

"Probably just wants to finish breaking your teeth."

"It was a cheap shot, and you know it."

The lift stopped and the pair moved towards the transporter room. When they entered, the klingon captain still stood on the pad. There was a slight hesitation before he threw a data PADD in Rhodes' direction.

The captain caught it and looked over the information.

"The p' taks call themselves ' Vendoth' ," Kurel said.

"Vendoth? That sounds familiar," said Goddard.

"One ship?" asked Rhodes.

"They destroyed a cloaked patrol vessel along our borders. They then proceeded to wipe out every Klingon ship and outpost from there to here. They are systematically trying to prove their superiority...and will soon reach Qo' nos. Our weapons are proving ineffective against their shielding. Some form of ' shell' keeps appearing where our weapons strike, and by the time we break through that, their shields are once again at full strength."

"Sounds like a problem. What has the empire come up with so far?" asked Rhodes.

"Nothing. We have been stopped at every turn."

"So, why have you come here personally? You could have told all of this to me over the comm channel."

"They are far more sophisticated than we are. The High Council did not want to risk them intercepting our communications."

There seemed to be more, so Rhodes pushed a little.

"And?"

"My brother was the captain of the Ch'paq - the border ship they destroyed. He died without honor and I must avenge his and his crew' s deaths before they can enter Stovokor. This is a matter of honor, above all else."

"I see. And?"

"Your reputation is growing as a warrior...even in our empire. Our last encounter proved that you are an honorable man, regardless of our differences. You are a formidable opponent and I depend on that when I ask you to fight by my side."

Rhodes felt some enjoyment in hearing these words from someone who was determined to kill him only a month ago. Still, he showed no expression.

"Kurel, I don't relish having to help you, personally. But this is for the benefit of our governments. We'll coordinate and stop these monsters...if only for your brother and his crew."

The Klingon thumped his chest with his fist. "Qapla' ." Then, he touched his communicator. *VaQ Targ, jol ylchu' .*

When the Klingon was gone, Goddard smirked at Rhodes. "You really enjoyed that."
Damn right, I did," answered Rhodes as he left the room.

The senior staff was gathered in the conference room. Rhodes was making some last minute notes on a PADD when Anderson leaned over his shoulder. "Don't look so worried," she whispered as she picked up a second PADD in front of him.

"Does it show that much?" he responded.

"I'm getting good at reading you. The others see it, too. This is going to be bad, isn't it?"

"Yeah, it's bad. We're going to need a miracle to get through this one."

Anderson took her seat and Rhodes stood up. He turned on the wall monitor, displaying three ships they hadn't encountered before.

"Over eighty years ago, the *USS Excalibur*, under the command of Commodore Walter S. George, encountered these alien ships. The meeting was devastating to say the least, and for some reason was deemed classified to the fullest extent." The picture switched to a single ship, same style as the previous three. "Close to twenty years ago, the *USS Rutledge* encountered a similar ship which was attempting to destroy the Tzenkethi homeworld. Again, the encounter was classified." The picture changed again, showing a swirling vortex and a ship of the same design exiting. It immediately fired on an unseen object which then exploded. "This was picked up by one of the Klingon observation posts near the Federation/Klingon border. The limited sensor readings show spatial and temporal properties emanating from the portal. It looks to be a highly sophisticated transwarp conduit - but displayed a much higher energy signature than anything the Borg could even hope to produce. Wherever these ships are coming from, it's not in our neighborhood." Rhodes paused a moment. "Our latest figures show that this single ship has destroyed fifteen Klingon Battlecruisers and three outposts - by itself. The information the Klingons have provided shows that the alien's strength comes primarily from their shielding, but their weapons are what bothers me. These things are nasty. Their weapons turn our shielding into shells...almost like they freeze the energy until it cracks from the impact. Their shields seem to work in the same manner, but instead of being a hindrance, the shell acts as a bandage until the power is restored. It's as if they create armor from our own attack.

"At each past encounter, it seemed there was only destruction on their minds. We can only assume that this is still true, judging by their current actions.

"They call themselves 'Vendoth' and I have a feeling that this is not the last time we hear their name. Review the material and let's see if we can find a way to stop these bastards. Dismissed."

Coy, Ledak, and Elema sat in the Ares Room, looking over the information given to them on the Vendoth.

"I don't see a thing," said Coy. "I'm a pilot, not an *alyat*. All I can do is hit them with the ship."

"You may have to do that, lieutenant," said Ledak. The Benzite placed his padd on the table. "A starship accelerating to warp at the time of impact with another ship will most certainly obliterate both objects. Not to mention the subsequent explosions that would result from the failure of their anti-matter containment systems. It would be quite a spectacular..."

"Ok, I get the point. The only thing I'm good for is steering the ship."

"Well, yes. That is your job, Miriam," said Elema.

Coy shook her head. "You two really deserve each other, you know that?"

"We're coming up on the remains of several ships...all klingon," reported Lt. Evan McCraig, the second shift operations officer.

"Any signs of the Vendoth?" asked Rhodes.

"Nothing so far, sir...wait. Sensors are picking up a fleet, bearing 317 mark 45. It's them."

"Red alert. Take us to them and put me on an open hail."

"You're on, sir," said McCraig.

"Vendoth ship. This is the *USS Adventure*, representing the United Federation of Planets. Your actions are unwarranted and will not be tolerated by our governments."

The screen changed to the view of a dimly lit bridge. A very ugly green skinned alien appeared. His eyes were dark and set under a protruding brow which curved around its eyes. The rest of its face was flattened, two nostril slits adorned the 'nose' area and huge jaw bottomed out its face. Several spiked 'quills' stood out from the sides of its head, while a small ridge line bisected its forehead. The green leathery skin looked weathered. The only adornments were small red beads at the ends of what were assumed to be long mustachios from the sides of its mouth.

"*Kl' thg' setch' osemek. th' syoue' slour Mk' perisek' ghyr? chP dvrchja*"

"What was that?" asked Rhodes to McCraig.

"Sounded like gibberish. The UT is having a hard time making sense of it. I'll run it through again."

"*Federation? Our prey has come to the hunter. I am going to enjoy killing you.*"

"I liked it better without knowing what he said," muttered Anderson.

Coy, Ledak, and Elema entered the bridge and took their stations.

"Whoa! Who's troll boy?" asked Coy.

"That's a Vendoth," replied Anderson.

"Eew. Do we know what it wants?"

"It wants to kill us," said Rhodes.

"That sucks. Permission to ram the ship down its throat?"

"Not yet, Miriam. We have to see what we're up against here."

"Well, we had better see it quick, because they are coming right for us," stated Ledak.

On the view screen, an ominous looking ship, bristling with cannons and menace, left the Klingon ships behind and headed straight for the *Adventure* and *VaQ Targ*.

"Fire..."

The ship rocked and pitched upwards hard as an energy bolt struck the shields. Coy fought to regain attitude control as another hit struck their underbelly. Slithek had no chance to fire the weapons.

"Shields are almost gone," reported Slithek.

"Auxiliary power to the shields!" yelled Rhodes.

"No good! There is something impeding the energy flow!"

"What?" yelled Anderson.

"The energy has solidified. We cannot send power through it."

"Just like Kurel said. Any word on how he's doing?" Rhodes asked as another bolt struck home.

"They are faring as well as we are," said Elema.

The ship rocked again.

"Shields are gone on the port quarter," reported Slithek.

Rhodes suddenly felt sick to his stomach and then found himself in a darkened room. The only illumination was a yellow/green glow emanating from control panels. He realized that this must be the bridge of the Vendoth ship when a massive hulk stirred in a central seat. Rhodes kicked himself mentally, realizing that he hadn't armed himself at the outset of the battle.

What did these people have against the Federation that they wanted to kill the first person they saw?

"*QI' yaH*"

A glint of reflected light flashed past Rhodes' head, and a Klingon *qutluch* embedded itself in the alien's left shoulder.

The Vendoth laughed, at least Rhodes thought it was a laugh, and pulled the blade free. He licked the orange blood from the blade; and, in a movement Rhodes didn't even see, rocketed the knife into the Klingon's foot and deckplate.

The Klingon howled in pain and fell to one knee, trying to rip the dagger free.

Rhodes noticed finally that it was Kurel, and out of respect for Klingon honor, held his ground. This was not a time to be compassionate in either alien's eyes.

"*Que' Ichur' mck' ruotheal ja' vujbre.*"

Rhodes heard the words, but for the life of him, and his UT, couldn't understand. A large index finger

and thumb plucked his comm badge from his chest, placed something on it and then replaced it. The Vendoth had moved so gracefully, Rhodes didn't even see it approach.

"I see the true warrior between the two of you. Or is it the true coward?" This time, Rhodes understood. These aliens were advanced enough to adapt to Federation technology easily - which means we're children to them.

Rhodes looked at the Vendoth square in the...cranium? He turned his gaze downwards. They were shorter than he was. Heck, Miriam was taller than this guy. The captain didn't say a word. He just sized up the Vendoth captain as it walked around the Starfleet officer. For the bulk of the alien, he had a grace which was unheard of. Rhodes barely heard his footsteps.

The Vendoth reached down and pulled the blade free from the Klingon's foot. In the same motion, he knocked Kurel flat on his back.

"Klingons are a foolish race. Easily beaten. Their tactics are two dimensional - brute force...win with numbers and weapons. Your friends await you in Stovokor." He waved his hand towards a corner, where several Klingon bodies lay in a heap.

This guy is sick, thought Rhodes...and he knows Klingons. Study your opponent. That's what he's been doing. By the time he reaches the homeworld, he could just walk in and take over without much problem.

"Human, you are why I am here. We will show you the price of your insurrection."

This was getting interesting. "And what insurrection is that?" asked Rhodes finally.

"I have wanted to test my mettle against your dragon, but was ordered to join the fleet instead. You will have to do."

Dragon? What the hell was he talking about? The only known contact with these aliens was with the *Excalibur* and *Rutledge*. And there were no dragons except in fairy tales.

"Harriman will wait for our return. Then, he will be dealt with as well."

Whoever this Harriman dragon-guy was, he must know something about how to defeat these beings. Rhodes filed it away for future reference. Right now, he had more immediate concerns. If he didn't come up with something fast, his ship would be dust.

"Can't the filters get rid of this dust?" yelled Coy over the klaxons. "It's ~~gort~~ hard to breathe in here!"

"Why did they stop firing? Did they just want the captain?" asked Elema. The Rho' shledan smoothed back the feathery scales on her head, knocking away the dust particles that collected there.

"Engineering! Give me a report!" yelled Anderson. "Elema, cut those alarms!"

"I am trying, commander. The circuits are fused somewhere!"

"Bridge! We're picking up the pieces down here, but it's mostly cosmetic! We still have power and once we get rid of those blasted scabs from our shields, we'll be good to go!" Ivanov said.

"Slithek! Can you find a way past their shield..!?" The alarms stopped. "Shields? That's better," Anderson said while rubbing her ears.

"We need a clear shot. Every time I attempt to lock on to their ship, they jam the targeting sensors and threaten us with their cannons."

"It's like they're daring us to make a move."

"So, what do you want?" asked Rhodes. "You've obviously been having fun whipping the Klingons. I'd hate to be in your shoes now that you have them ticked off. They won't stop until you're dead ten times over. This is a matter of honor with them now. You killed Kurel's brother, now he's ready to rip you to shreds. Me, I'm here because the Klingons are our allies and any threat to them is a threat to us. So, it all boils down to 'what do you want'?"

Ch' Lok' meh padded ~~ovto~~ Rhodes and looked up to meet his gaze. Rhodes, in return, tried to extend his height in order to be more intimidating.

"I want to see if you Federations are worthy opponents. My people value submission by those who deserve our retribution. I, for one, value a challenge. There is no honor in winning over an inferior adversary. Victory is a hard fought battle. Only then the warriors shall prevail. I have studied your Dragon's logs, that were taken from its database. Your military history shows that you are a dangerous adversary. I wish to meet these 'Borg', which are made reference to so many times as well."

"I wish you'd meet them, too," muttered Kurel.

"You want a duel," stated Rhodes.

The Vendoth twirled his right mustache as his eyes sparkled. "Yes."

Rhodes looked around at the bodies strewn about. He' s already fought hand to hand with the Klingons, space battles were a moot point also; but only head to head fleet engagements.

"It just so happens that Kurel is one of the best klingon strategists in the empire. I' m not so bad myself." He could hear Kurel begin to protest, so he waved him off with a flick of his hand.

"Return us to our ships and you will have your duel. You couldn' t ask for worthier opponents."

"Where is that shell located?" asked Anderson.

"Theirs or ours?" returned Elema.

"Theirs."

"On their starboard quarter. The Klingons hit them a few times when they turned to engage us."

Anderson scanned the ship using Ledak' s station "It' s on the outside."

"Commander?" asked Ledak.

"That shell, or patch, or whatever you want to call it is on the outside of their shields."

"Yes. That is why the Klingons are having a hard time penetrating it. By the time they do, the shield has regenerated."

"Then we don' t give them time."

"Did you receive a blow to the head, commander? You are not making sense."

Anderson moved to the tactical console and tied into the transporter controls. "Gotcha, you bastards. Slithek, on my command, open fire on that shell with everything we have. Anderson to transporter room two...in about one minute, you' re going to be able to get a lock on the captain. Beam him directly to the bridge when you do."

"Acknowledged."

Anderson moved around to the center seat and sat down. She accessed transporter room one controls from the chair display and looked around the bridge.

"What are you doing?" asked Coy slyly.

"What did you do when you were a little girl and skinned your knee?"

"Cried like a Benzite in a desert?" replied Miriam. Ledak shot her a disdainful look.

"What was the first thing you did when you had a scab on your knee?"

Understanding crossed Miriam' s face. "I ripped that sucker right off and ~~put~~ it on my sister."

"That is disgusting, Miriam," stated Elema.

"Yes, but accurate, well almost, to what we' re going to do," said Anderson. "We' re going to rip that scab with our transporters and agitate their wound. Miriam, prepare to go to warp, any direction...give us some distance. Diédre, hail the Klingons, coded message, ' prepare to beam out their captain as wdl ."

"Aye, sir." They said in unison.

"Ivanov, are you ready down there?"

"We' re waiting for your signal, commandr."

"Let' s get the captain then."

"You think that I am foolish, human. That I would let you go that easily. I have no doubts that I am your superior..."

"Then let us go and prove it," taunted Rhodes. "Unless you' re afraid you might losé"

His reply was a backhand across his jaw, which sent Rhodes flying across the bridge. Dazed for a moment, the captain shook it off and stood up. He felt a trickle of blood on his lower lip, but didn' t wipe it. His dealings with Klingons and Gorn had taught him much about showing weakness to an enemy.

"Vendoth are never afraid," stated the VenQa' .

"You need a lesson in civility, sir."

The spikes on the sides of Ch' Lok' meh' s head stood out. How dare this inferior stand up to him. He found this human' s defiance pleasing. Maybe the klingon and he would make excellent adversaries.

Before Ch' Lok' meh could speak what he was thinking, his ship rocked violently.

"Report!" he barked at his VenQe' .

"Our shield armor has been taken away! The aft shield is exposed and weakening! We are returning fire."

The VenQa' whipped his head back to Rhodes and Kurel.

"Now, you will see why it was a mistake to tangle with us," Rhodes said with a smile. He waved to the VenQa' as independent transporter beams whisked them from the bridge.

Rhodes materialized on the bridge of the *Adventure*, Kurel on his.

"Warp speed now, Miriam!" ordered Anderson as she vacated the center seat. Rhodes replaced her and checked his readouts. "Alter course, bearing 218 mark 65, increase to warp nine."

"Aye, sir."

"The Vendoth are pursuing, sir," reported Slithek. "The Klingons are chasing the Vendoth."

"What is he doing?" Kurel asked to no one in particular. "The coward is running! Give chase!"

"Mk' char star cluster, dead ahead, sir," said Miriam.

"You had to use that word, didn't you," said Anderson.

"Status on the Vendoth?"

"They are falling behind, but their weapons are still accurate," said Elema. This was punctuated by a shudder as one of their energy bolts struck their shields.

"Return fire, aft torpedo...full spread," ordered Rhodes.

"Their shields are holding," reported the gorn. "The only vulnerable spot is their aft quarter. The Klingons are firing upon it now."

"Good. Miriam, do you think you can get behind them?"

"Not like this. Their pilot is too good. I can't lose them in open space long enough to get on their tail."

"Well, there's your chance coming up," Rhodes said, indicating the star cluster.

Miriam cracked her knuckles like a pianist preparing for a long difficult piece. "Time to separate the girls from the Vendoth."

Anderson gave Rhodes a 'what the hell are you thinking' look.

"Well, she's not bored anymore," he whispered to her.

Claire punched the intership comm. "All hands, hold on. Miriam's driving."

Three ships tore into the Mk' char cluster at high warp. The *Adventure* suddenly stopped as it dumped out of warp. The Vendoth stopped close behind and the Klingons even closer.

Analyzing the sensor readings, almost instantaneously, Coy weaved the *Akira* around the stellar bodies, trying to lose the Vendoth. She dove and spun, making everyone near a view port sick to their stomachs, but the Vendoth kept on them.

"Sir, the klingon ship is breaking apart. They suffered too many hits from the Vendoth," said Slithek.

"Beam the survivors over."

"We need to drop shields."

"Pull us around and put the Klingons between us and the Vendoth, Miriam," said Rhodes. "We'll use them as a barrier."

The ship suddenly spiraled around and headed straight for the Klingons. As soon as they were past, Rhodes ordered, "Now!"

The shields dropped, ten klingon warriors materialized and the *VaQ Targ* exploded as the Vendoth plowed through it without hesitation.

Kurel snarled at Rhodes. "We wanted to die with honor, not with cowards."

"You're welcome," Rhodes said cheerfully. "Miriam, what's going on?"

"Bastards won't let me lose them. I can't get behind them."

"Aft shields are gone," said Slithek as the ship vibrated from a rain of energy.

"Miriam, we're running out of time," said Anderson.

"You want time? Let's see if they know this one," muttered Coy. Her fingers danced over the controls and the ship began approaching one of the larger stars in the cluster. Elema's eyes went wide when she looked over at Coy's display.

"You are going to warp this close to a gravity well?" she asked horrified. "ARE YOU NUTS!?"

"Your syntax is getting better, Diédre," said Coy with a smile. "Slithek, all power to the forward shields. Watch and learn, folks...and hold onto your baldrics Klingons and gorn. We're going for a ride."

Everyone on the bridge braced themselves and watched, as if in slow motion, Miriam's finger touched the warp activation key.

The *Adventure* shot to warp nine point five immediately, kicking up a solar flare as they shot past the star.

Then, they stopped.

Over half the inhabitants of the ship were thrown forward into walls, furniture, other people.

"You wanted us behind them. Here we are," said Coy smugly, folding her arms in triumph.

"There' s another starship! We have help," said Anderson pointing at the screen.

"Miriam, I could kiss you," said Rhodes as he realized what she had done. "But, I won' t. That'us, LC. And our moment of Zen is here."

The past version of the *Adventure* suddenly disappeared, replaced by a solar flare. The Vendoth ship was struck by the tip of the flare, sending it momentarily out of control. The solidified shields enveloped the entire craft and blackened from the heat generated by the star.

"Watch this," said Anderson as she began peeling away the armor with the transporters.

Rhodes stood up and said a single word. "Fire."

The *Adventure* unleashed its full compliment of phasers, quantum torpedoes and tri-cobolt torpedoes. A continuous barrage of energy impacted on the exposed Vendoth battlecruiser, and in moments, it erupted in a ball of flame and debris.

The Klingons broke out in a rising yell that caught the bridge crew off guard. The warrior' s call to the dead, announcing the arrival of their avenged warriors to Stovokor ended and Kurel grabbed Rhodes, squeezing him in a bear hug.

"My brother is avenged! Honor is restored to his name! You are welcome in my house any day, Rhodes."

"Thank you," Rhodes gasped as he took his seat. "Miriam, get us out of here."

Captain' s Log: Supplemental This is not how I had envisioned this mission to turn out. Instead of a peaceful charting expedition, we nearly lost our allies to an invader who we know little about. If records hadn' t been classified, we might have been better prepared for this enemy. Starfleet will want to know about this encounter as soon as possible, but the cluster is still interfering with communications.

We transferred Kurel and the rest of his crew over to the IKC Kirk, which had followed us to do battle with the Vendoth. They were less than pleased that we denied them their own victory. They don' t want to admit it, but I have a feeling that they were glad to see the Vendoth destroyed before they arrived.

Honor...The Vendoth wanted the honor of conquering an empire by themselves - and they very nearly did it. The Klingons fought for the honor of their dead and their own sense of being. What honor did I fight for? I ask myself that question whenever I encounter species like these. What is it that makes me honorable? Duty? Compassion? Loyalty? Or is it because I have no choice. Is it ingrained in me so much that I do it without thinking? My actions are what makes me honorable, at least I would like to think that. I' ll let history make that decision, as Zephram Cochrane once said. There are some things we should not worry about. Right now, I don' t need anything more than filing reports."

"Captain to the bridge."

"Report," Rhodes said as he exited his ready room.

"We' re receiving a fleet wide priority distress signal, sir," stated Anderson.

"What location?"

Anderson swallowed hard. "It' s Earth, sir. The Vendoth Fleet is massing outside of the Sol System."

Rhodes sat down in his chair. My God...a whole fleet of those things! "Set course for Earth, maximum warp. Contact the Klingons. Tell them that if they want another shot at the Vendoth, they have another chance."

The whole bridge was silent.

"Engage. And may the wind be at our backs."

THE ADVENTURE CREW



Captain Jacob Rhodes
Born: April 5th, 2345
Place of Birth: New Chicago, Mars
Academy Class: 2367
Assignment: Captain *USS Adventure*

Jacob Rhodes, son of Tyler and Mary Rhodes, was born in the Mars colony of New Chicago. He entered Starfleet Academy at the age of 17 - one year earlier than most applicants due to high academic marks in high school. His aptitude for problem solving gained him a spot in the Engineering Program at the Academy. However, he was unsatisfied with that aspect of Starfleet and switched to the command track at the suggestion of Admiral Brand.

During his time at the Academy, Rhodes, a loner by habit, was befriended by a fellow cadet and pilot, Miriam Coy, who was later to become his chief helmsman aboard the *Adventure*.

Immediately after graduating from the Academy, Rhodes was assigned to the *USS Kyushu*, which was later destroyed at the battle of Wolf 359 against the Borg. One of fifteen survivors, Rhodes was then assigned to the *USS Enterprise* by the request of Jean-Luc Picard and helmed during the night watch. It was during the battle that Locutus of Borg noticed impressive evasive and tactical maneuvering of the *Kyushu*. He later learned that Rhodes was at the helm during this time.

Rhodes stayed aboard the *Enterprise* for a year before being promoted to lieutenant and became the Operations officer aboard the *Crazy Horse* where he was observed by Admiral Nechayev, who then took an interest in his career. During an away mission, Rhodes had defied orders and conducted a rescue operation by flying a shuttle down to the surface of a planet in the midst of an ion storm. He successfully rescued the stranded away team, who would have died if it weren't for his intervention. He received both reprimand and commendation for his actions. Coincidentally, Nechayev's nephew was one of the landing party. It was during this time that Rhodes became romantically involved with Elizabeth Travers, an engineer aboard the *Crazy Horse*. Both accepted an assignment aboard the *Valley Forge* in 2373. Rhodes was promoted to Lt. Commander and made second officer of the ship. The *Valley Forge* became involved in the second Borg attack on Earth, suffering minor damage and then was assigned to the Federation/Cardassian border just before the outbreak of the war with the Dominion. In 2375, during a battle with Jem'Hadar warships, half of the *Valley Forge's* crew, including the captain and first officer, were killed or wounded. Rhodes was given a temporary field commission to captain due to the lack of command line officers. He took command of the *Valley Forge* for the rest of the war. During the battle, however, Lizzy Travers suffered life-threatening injuries and was transported to Starfleet Medical for intensive care. She fell in love and married a doctor who was treating her.

In 2376, Rhodes was reduced/promoted to the rank of commander and offered command of his own ship - the *USS Adventure* NCC-64871, an Akira class light cruiser.

His first mission took him to the Doruth System, deep inside of Cardassian Territory, where he was to find the cause of several ships' disappearances. The mission ended when the inhabitants of Doruth Four initiated a weapon that destroyed their solar system. It was at the end of the mission when his chief medical officer, Abbey Waylon, who was under the influence of an alien parasite, attacked the senior staff with a phaser rifle. Rhodes received numerous wounds, but his security chief, CMO Russell Highland, had thrown himself in front of Rhodes, protecting him from the phaser barrage. Receiving blame for the destruction of the system, Starfleet sent the *Adventure* into Gorn space to act as liaison to the empire. He also received the first Gorn in Starfleet, Slithek, as his replacement for Highland, who died saving the captain. In Gorn space, the *Adventure* stopped a Borg attack with the use of a version of the weapon that destroyed the Doruth System.

Early in his career on the *Adventure*, Rhodes was vexed with the problem of Tari Markert, an Independent News Service reporter who boarded the *Adventure* by staging an attack on her shuttle. She gave a disfavorable report after the Doruth Incident, blaming Rhodes for the destruction of the planet. She then stowed away aboard ship while in the Gorn sector. It was later that she realized that Rhodes was more than

just a story when news of the *Adventure*' disappearance in the Morpheus Drift reached her. She then traveled to Mars to break the news to his parents, posing as his girlfriend. During the relief mission on a Klingon world, Rhodes and Markert were kidnapped by renegade Klingons. It was then that they cleared the air about their feelings for each other and parted on decent terms.

In an epic battle with an alien race from another galaxy, the Vendoth, Rhodes and the *Adventure* teamed up with several other ships of the fleet to engage the menace, successfully stopping them from destroying Earth. In the process, however, a Vendoth bombardment of Mars killed his parents, shortly after the *Adventure* left the planet to join the main force at Earth. Much to his dismay, Rhodes considered leaving Starfleet, until an omnipotent alien showed him what he would be missing if he did. *Author' s note:*The alien, although not identified, was once befriended by Rhodes' mother when it was injured. As payment to her, the alien decided to help her son through a hard time as well.

Rhodes' resolution with the Vendoth came when the *Adventure* once again met up with a Vendoth Dreadnought in the Gamma Quadrant. He was sent into a flying rage when the Vendoth Ven' qa told him that he would kill his parents once he reached Earth. Rhodes had to be pulled from the Ven' qa' s body after pummeling it into a pulp.

While on a quick survey mission in his yacht in the Gamma Quadrant, Rhodes crash landed on a planet where he was found by Ariz Nendaar, a Ciminii, who was a leading scientist on her world. Rhodes was then taken from her care by the government and dissected and put back together again using primitive tools. He was rescued in the nick of time from an inquisition and brought Ariz with him to the *Adventure* where she has been a trusted friend and advisor at times.

It was later in that year that the *Adventure* encountered clones of Khan Noonien Singh and his band of genetic supermen, developed by a scientist who wanted to experiment with the full potential of genetic engineering. During the final battle with Khan, who was growing mentally unstable, Rhodes' first officer, Claire Anderson, was critically wounded and taken to Starfleet Medical for intensive care. Rhodes had the tough job of finding a suitable replacement and settled on a native of Aegyptus Eight named Ammun Ra, who has proven invaluable during their current mission of returning home. The *Adventure* had entered an unstable wormhole while in warp, and ended up a year away at high warp from Federation space.

Rhodes was modeled after Horatio Hornblower, the template used for Kirk. I wanted him to be a young commander, who was going through his trials while in command of very difficult missions. His character has grown in the past three years and will continue to grow in the future. The Jacob Rhodes Action Figure was made from the body of Commander Riker and a Fox Mulder X-Files action figure head. His likeness is also close to that of actor Bill Campbell of *The Rocketeer*, who was also a guest on *ST:TNG* as the outrageous Okona.



Commander Claire Anderson
First Officer
Born: July 6th, 2340
Place of Birth: Chichester England, Earth
Academy Class: 2363

Commander Claire Anderson, a native to Chichester, England, Earth, can trace her Starfleet roots back to the beginnings of the organization. As an only child, she felt obligated to carry on the family tradition and with all intention of rising above ranks previously held by her ancestors -

commodore being the highest.

Anderson felt that by taking the first officer' s position aboard a new ship, whose captain only held the rank of commander, would boost her experience levels over those of her competitors.

Her last assignment aboard the *Potemkin* ended abruptly during the final battle to liberate Cardassia when her ship was lost in a collision with a Jem' Hadar suicide ship.

Her father, who was in Starfleet for only a short time, objected to Claire' s decision to join. He felt that she had the potential to becoming a great violinist with London' s Symphony Orchestra. ' She had a talent that she shouldn' t have wasted' , he said. Instead, she made her mark in Starfleet and he was proud of her, nonetheless.

During a duck blind away mission, Claire witnessed first hand a nuclear holocaust and was transported away just before she too was incinerated. That mission left a scar on her psyche, which she has yet to get

over. During a battle with the clone of Khan Noonien Singh, she was critically wounded and has had to be placed in stasis fields in order to heal while the *Adventure* is lost in the farthest reaches of the Alpha Quadrant.

The character of Claire Anderson was created with a long lost pen pal in mind. I wanted her to be English and her first name was taken from Claire Whitehouse of Chichester, England (if anyone knows her, tell her to drop me a line). The last name was taken from Gillian Anderson of X-Files fame, whose action figure head adorns the body of Counselor Troi.



Lieutenant Commander Diédre Elema
Operations Officer

Born: Third Rotation during the Harvest of Elinoor
Place of Birth: Mir'ahtor Province, Rho'shleda
Academy Class: 2371

Diédre Elema (pronounced Dee-ay-drah Ee-lay-mah) -

One of the few of her race, the Rho' shledans, to venture off of her home world, Diédre Elema felt that home held nothing for her. She learned of Starfleet through traders and decided to join for self-fulfillment.

Her skin is covered in fine copper colored scales, which give a luminescent quality to her appearance. She is efficient to a fault and only speaks when she has something to say. Her voice also has a watery sound to it due to the presence of fluid in her vocal chords. This has the effect, when her species sings, to have an almost soothing hypnotic effect on other species. Diédre has long fought the feeling of being an outsider - she is her species only representative in Starfleet. Shortly after joining the *Adventure*, she began having feelings for Ensign Ledak, the science officer. Originally, she was drawn to him by his intelligence, but after spending more time with him, found him physically attractive as well. After being initially rejected by him for ancient cultural reasons (he was ' promised' to a mate on Benzar), Ledak was persuaded by the crew to give her a chance after she proclaimed her love to him after he was injured during a battle with the *USS Charon*. Making the true odd couple, their relationship is serious but she was told by Dr. Waylon that their DNA was incompatible. During the *Adventure*' s refit time, Diédre brought Ledak to her homeworld to meet her family, who rejected him as an outsider. It was only after her persistence and Ledak' s heroic rescue of a child and finding cure for a plague that was destroying a link in the Rho' shledan food chain, that her mother grudgingly admitted defeat and welcomed Ledak.



Commander Sergei Ivanov
Chief Engineer

Born: August 6th, 2334
Place of Birth: New St. Petersburg, Russia, Earth
Academy Class: 2356

Lt. Commander Sergei Ivanov, a twenty-year veteran of Starfleet, has served aboard 14 classes of starship in his career. A perfectionist by nature, Ivanov is determined to work on as many starships as possible before his retirement and has memorized the schematics of every one he' s been on. When he does retire, he has ambitions to rebuild an old Daedalous class starship from the early 23rd century. In 2377, after the Vendoth incursion, his great uncle Admiral Pavel Chekov, retired, presented him with a gift of a Daedalous class *Adventure*, which he had found in a scrap yard. While accessing the engineer' s logs, Ivanov found a message from himself - over two hundred years old. In order to find the answer this enigma, the *Adventure* sought out clues, only to find the Daedalous *Adventure* trapped in a temporal rift. Ivanov saved the ship and crew while risking his own life to do it. Several years ago, a plasma conduit had erupted in a critical section of the Wellington' s impulse drive. Taking the initiative and knowing that the ship and crew were at stake, Ivanov patched the conduit with a temporary seal without using any protective gear. His hands were burned beyond repair as a result. At the time, Starfleet Medical was experimenting with prosthetic limbs based on Lt. Commander Data' s physiology. Sergei was one of the first recipients of the medical technology and opted to leave the synthetic skin its

original white pigment as a ' badge of honor' . He also received the James Kirk Medal of Bravery for his actions. Ivanov' s character was inspired by Pavel Chekov, Montgomery Scott and the Russian cosmonaut in ' Armageddon' "This is how we fix things in Russia!" Nothing has been established about Sergei' s personal life other than his relation to Chekov (his grandfather' s sister' s husband), but more will be developed as the series goes on.

The Ivanov action figure was created with the head of a ' Virus' Steve Barker action figure head and a Data body. I didn' t paint the hands originally and came up with the back-story as a result.



Chief Medical Officer Abbey Waylon
Ship's Doctor
Born: 2320
Place of Birth: Nidir
Academy Class: 2345

Chief Medical Officer Abbey Waylon, a Nidiri native, had spent her entire Starfleet career on the farthest edges of Federation Territory. Every time a new colony was established, Waylon would request a posting on the new frontier. Fifty-six Earth years old, the doctor looks as if she were eighteen. She has no remarkable claims to fame in the field of medicine, only that she is willing to travel deeper and deeper away from ' civilization' . When the posting of CMO aboard the *Adventure* came up, Abbey - for reasons divulged in "Fear and Trust" - requested an immediate transfer. Due to her extensive knowledge of xenobiology from frontier living, Rhodes felt that she would make an excellent addition to his crew.

Abbey was born to two convicted criminals on the Nidir polar ice cap penal colony. Her mother died early on and she was raised by her father who used her to forage for food in tight places. A naturally intelligent girl, Abbey was the first to escape the colony, mainly due to the lack of a tracer implant - the government didn't know that she existed. Abbey floated across an ocean on an ice slab and barely reached the mainland before her food and water ran out. Starting fresh, Abbey learned quickly in her new environment, choosing medicine as her career field. Once she had enough experience, she booked passage on a transport ship and worked her way into Federation territory where she applied to Starfleet Medical. Dr. Waylon, wishing to get as far away from her past as possible, kept moving from colony to colony until she was infected by a hostile parasite. When faced with what the parasite had made her do, she chose to study it instead of running from the problem. Abbey's history has just recently been developed and will continue to be developed in later stories. The character idea, at least the physical appearance, was based on Chiana of *Farscape*. The Abbey Waylon action figure was created with a Final Fantasy action figure head (character unknown) and a Troi body.



Lieutenant Miriam Coy
Chief Helmsman
Born: June 9th, 2344
Place of Birth: San Francisco, Earth
Academy Class: 2367

"Miriam Elizabeth Coy is the best pilot I have ever had the pleasure of serving with," stated Jacob Rhodes. Her ' seat of the pants' flying style may scare most people who have flown with her, but she has performed maneuvers with ships that would impress even the designers. Rhodes felt that she was the only choice to be his chief helmsman on the *Adventure* and pulled in many favors to get her assigned to his command - against the advice of many admirals.

Coy befriended the young Rhodes at the Academy and the two have been compatriots ever since. A small woman at 5' 4", Coy has shocked many people with the volume and authority of her voice when she yells. She is a free spirit and lives life on the edge-just like her flying style.

Miriam has no luck with her superiors. She would most likely be grounded by Starfleet by now if it weren' t for Jake' s insistence that she helm the *Adventure*. She is constantly trying to get some thrill out of her flying, much to the chagrin of Commander Anderson, along with the rest of the crew. But, it is her skill that usually gets the ship out of tight spots. Her mood is usually playful until someone gets her upset, which she

then ' gets loud' . She has a soft spot for the captain, although it is closer to kinship than lust. Based after no one in particular, I wanted Miriam to be the comic relief of the series and the loose cannon on the bridge. She is one of the more fun characters to write and has versatility in situations. The Miriam Coy Action figure is made from the head of a Resident Evil Ada Wong action figure and a Counselor Troi body.



Ensign Ledak
 Science Officer
 Born: 2355
 Place of Birth: Benzar
 Academy Class: 2375

Ensign Ledak, a native of Benzar, joined Starfleet to follow in the footsteps of a fellow Benzite named Mendon. His former commanding officer, along with the crew, had a low tolerance for Ledak' s meticulous reports and straightforwardness. In essence, they

gave him away to the first ship that would have him. Rhodes, on the other hand, felt that Ledak' s attention to detail and ability to cut through the fat, so to speak, was ideal for a science officer under his command. Ledak has a long way to go socially, and must learn to loosen up around his fellow officers. Ledak has proven his worth time and again. He has found numerous solutions to difficult problems, including the workings of the Doruth weapon that destroys metals at their molecular level. Ledak takes life too seriously and can be considered the ' nerd for the future' , always carrying a recorder along with him and analyzing that which others would usually enjoy. After being injured during a battle with the *USS Charon*, Lieutenant Diédre Elema proclaimed her love for him. He rejected her on grounds that he was promised to another Benzite, as his culture dictated, but was persuaded by the crew to give her a chance. With the help of the bridge crew, gifts were given to Elema through ' mysterious' means. He later asked her to be a ' potential mate' during a news cast by Tari Markert. Ledak met Diédre' s family during the *Adventure*' s refit time. Although her father accepted him, Diédre' s mother refused to let go of her xenophobia. It was only after Ledak rescued a child from a fey' la and finding a cure for a plague that was ravishing the fey' la main food source, did she finally accept him. While being one of the more difficult characters to write for, he is a fun character nonetheless. His straight man attitude compliments Miriam' s levity, while balancing Slithek' s ferocity with his passiveness. He has been ' seeing' Diédre Elema romantically, although how those two date is anyone' s guess. Ledak is due for a promotion, but I never seem to fit it in to the story line. Eventually, he will get his due. The Ledak Action Figure is created with a Benzite TNG head and a Data body.



Ensign Slithek -

The first Gorn to serve in Starfleet, Slithek had once been a member of the Gorn Imperial Guard, an elite warrior caste of the Gorn military. Dishonored by his people when he refused to destroy a convoy, which had accidentally entered Gorn space, he was faced with exile or join Starfleet when negotiations had opened up between the two governments. Slithek had chosen Starfleet, not knowing that he would be assigned to the very ship that would be sent into Gorn territory to represent the UFP. Still in exile, Slithek has chosen to join willingly the crew of the *Adventure* in his

permanent assignment of Tactical/Security chief. Although a brilliant soldier and captain in the Gorn fleet, Slithek was humbled by his exile and knows his place in the Starfleet hierarchy. Rhodes, knowing full well of his capabilities, has been giving Slithek more and more command assignments, hoping to restore the Gorn's pride. Slithek has paired up with Ledak, keeping an eye on him in times of trouble as well as consulting with him on tactical issues. He has a fondness for crab legs, which he discovered while on Earth. The choice of a Gorn security/tactical officer came after trying to keep the storyline 'real' with the untimely death of CWO Russell Highland. I also wanted a character who could rival Worf and Zak Kebron in fierceness and strength - which he showed in the battle with the Vendoth. The Gorn have always been a favorite character of mine and I wanted to develop the race in my stories.

THE U.S.S. ADVENTURE

