

Star Trek:
The Legend Continues

“The Calm Before the Storm”

By
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Prologue

- Dentarus VI, near the edge of Federation Space

The dimly lit corridor had a rather ominous atmosphere to it, with the few shadows present dancing around to make fleeting images of passing nothing.

As he silently groped his way down the hall, guiding himself along one of the passage's walls, he tried in vain not to trip over anything that obstructed his way on the darkened floor. Twice, though, his feet got caught on something, and twice he lurched forward in a sudden panic until he had regained his balance.

Behind him, reverberating through the stony halls, were the loud, fiendish grunting sounds of his pursuers. He did not know who they were, only what they were. And from what little he understood about them, he knew only that he had to get away.

As he continued to blindly fumble his way towards the opposite end of the passageway, his head began to fill with so many thoughts that he felt like it would explode at any moment.

This had been his life's work, his dreams brought to carefully planned out fruition. He had spent three long years following his instincts on this mission, and now the invaders that were chasing him threatened everything that he had yearned for.

His body was screaming for air, begging for a chance to stop and cool down. Ignoring the more pressing desire to get away from the hunters behind him, he skidded to a halt and doubled over at the waist. Straining to take in a deep breath, he realized that he could not go for much longer.

The growls again echoed off the walls from behind him, so he reluctantly cut his rest short and forced himself to keep running.

The light at the end of the tunnel drew closer, until finally, he stumbled into the antechamber where he had spent countless hours studying. Torches lined the far wall, giving this intermediate room much more light than the gloomy hallway that he had madly raced through.

Knowing that he could not stop for another moment's rest, and spurred on by the sounds of the hunters growing closer, he dashed across the room and into the next passageway.

There was only one single source of light in this tunnel, and it was all the way at the end. The entire path between him and the light was completely pitch dark. No longer using the wall as a guide, he sprinted towards the light.

He knew the layout of this underground compound unlike anybody else on his team. He had studied each hallway, each room, each chamber, with dedicated practice until it was imbedded in his head.

He knew that when he made it to the other end of the hallway, the main chamber, and the rear exit that would be his saving grace, would be just beyond. Something was seriously wrong, however, for when he reached the light, he came face to face with a solid rock wall.

Frantically trying to figure out why a stone wall was in a place where just hours before, there had been an opening into the large chamber beyond, he groped his hands all over the face of the wall.

Somewhere deep inside, he was holding out hope that the wall was merely an illusion, and that by waving his hands in front of it that it would disappear. He had no such luck, however, as the stone wall continued to block his only escape.

From the darkness behind him, a loud grunt announced that he was out of time. He spun around and backed up against the wall, fear seeping into every pore of his body.

In the darkness, the grunt sounded again, but the source of the noise was still just outside the small circle

of light from the torch on the wall. It seemed to him that they were just standing there, just out of sight, staring at him.

With a sudden intensity and power, a muscular green arm shot out of the darkness and wrapped its four clawed fingers around his neck. As the massive hand closed even tighter around the base of his neck, the creature lifted him off of the ground by several feet.

His feet dangling uselessly below him, the unrelenting strength of the beast was now choking him. As the last of his air slipped away from him, he thought to himself that he had never even seen the fiendish creature's face. Never knew the exact identity of his killer, or even why he had been the target of such a deadly hunt.

His head lolled to the side, and he was dead.

It was at that moment that Doctor Jonathan Hopper shot upright on the cot that was his makeshift bed. Sweat drenched him from head to toe, and his clothing stuck to his skin.

A dream, he thought. It was only a dream. He laid back down for a moment to catch his breath and try to cool down. With a lazy arm, he reached up and wiped the perspiration from his forehead and cheeks.

He glanced up at the small chronometer that was strapped across his wrist and was mildly disappointed to see that it was still the middle of the night. He had not been able to sleep through a full night in weeks, having had his sleep interrupted by nightmares like the one he had just had.

Hopper closed his eyes, determined that he would at least try to fall back asleep. A noise at the foot of his tent got his attention, and he reopened his eyes to see what it was.

The flap to the tent flew open, and a head popped in. It was his assistant, Eric McGavers.

"What is it, Eric?" he groggily asked.

The McGavers kid was young, much younger than the doctor himself would have guessed upon first sight. Nonetheless, Eric had served him well over the last three years.

"Sorry to disturb you, sir, but something is happening inside the main chamber. I think you will want to come see..." the blue eyed youth replied.

His curiosity piqued, Doctor Hopper swung his legs off of the cot and reached over for his work clothes. With a quick tug, he had pulled on a pair of pants and an overshirt.

Eric was waiting for him outside the tent, and they quickly walked towards the entrance to the long tunnel that would take them to the underground chamber.

As they passed the last of the tents, the tunnel entrance loomed before them. Without faltering a step, Hopper grabbed a torch from one of the other members of his team who was there to meet him at the foyer entrance, and entered the mouth of the long tunnel.

"What's going on?" Hopper asked, speaking to Eric.

"I don't know, sir. The watch came and woke everybody up, said that some kind of machinery began running down there..."

"How long has it been?" Hopper asked.

Eric shrugged his shoulders in response. "Maybe twenty minutes..."

They fell into silence as they paced each other step for step, walking as quickly as they could towards the anteroom leading into the main chamber.

The images from the nightmare flickered through his head, as he remembered running down this same hallway in dread of what was behind him. As a reflex, he glanced back over his shoulder, expecting to hear the monstrous noises of the lurid animals that had been chasing him.

Shaking off the images, he returned his mind to the present. It was absurd of him to fear the creatures that were portrayed on the inner walls of the chambers ahead, because he had no idea whether or not they were the aggressive hunters as his dreams had portrayed.

Then again, he knew very little about the mysterious race that had built this massive underground complex, and fear of the unknown is cause for any creative imagination to inflect its own terrors on an unfamiliar topic.

Doctor Hopper and his team of scientists had been here for over three years now, analyzing every inch of these underground ruins. Searching for answers as to who built it, and why it was abandoned. They had scrutinized and studied all of the diagrams and illustrations that filled the walls of the inner sanctuary, deciphering the alien language that was scripted in various places.

Over all, Hopper was extremely excited about the progress they had made in their research here. They had learned more information about this species than had previously been known.

As they reached the second hallway, which linked the smaller antechamber to the much larger main chamber, they began to hear the low mutterings of a crowd of people from inside.

When they rounded the corner, a cacophony of whispers assaulted their ears as Doctor Hopper stared around at the faces of his entire team. The people stood there, in awe, and he began to see why as the crowd parted.

Along the far wall of the chamber was a set of monitors and computer screens that were set into the rock face. They had always been there, since the day the research team had arrived -- but for the past three years, those screens were dark, nearly camouflaged to the color of the stone around it. Inactive and useless, they had not been able to bring those computer systems to life for study.

Now there they were, the screens brightened and the computer running. It was as if some magical force had come during the night and flipped a mighty switch, causing all of the technology thought to be long dead to turn on.

All across the monitors was the same alien script that was inscribed on the walls like graffiti. There was a distinctly low humming sound coming from within the wall as the alien technology whirred and operated after so many years of inactivity.

Slowly, and with as much awe as the others, Doctor Hopper approached the monitors. His eyes widened as he began to mentally picture the things he was seeing.

He turned to the side and motioned to the young assistant who had followed him down here. "Eric, go get one of the optical recorders..."

Apparently, one of the other team members had already thought of that, and had one waiting. Eric handed the small tricorder like device up to the doctor.

Hopper turned the recorder towards the monitors, and activated it. Everything that was being played out across the screens was being invariably logged into the research records. They would be analyzed later when the research team had time.

After a few moments, Doctor Hopper turned to face the crowd who had worked so well for him over the last few years. He had grown quite close to them, having worked in such close quarters with them.

"This is a great breakthrough, people. I don't know how or why these computers have been reactivated, but this information should give us some real valuable insight. We've all done some very hard work, and this..." he said, lifting up the recorder, "...might prove to be our big payoff!"

A round of cheers went up around the crowd. Hopper turned to Eric and handed him the recorder.

"Take this up to the data storage unit," he ordered. The boy complied and took off at a trot back towards the surface.

Hopper cruised through the crowd of people, talking excitedly with them about their newest discovery. He shook a few hands, even hugged a few people.

After a short while, he made his way to the front of the crowd again and lifted up his hands. "Folks... Folks! We've all had a long night, and it will be an even longer day tomorrow. Let's go get some more rest, and then we'll celebrate tomorrow..." he said.

Another round of cheers went up, and Hopper smiled. He was overjoyed at the morale of his people and the fact that after three years, they were still enthusiastic about their mission.

He turned away from the crowd, the smile still on his face, and took a step back towards the tunnel. Before he could take another step, however, he was stopped dead in his tracks.

There, standing in the doorway not two feet in front of him, were three brutish looking creatures. A head shorter than the doctor, they were bulky and muscular, covered from head to toe in leathery green skin.

A sudden chill of terror went straight up Hopper's spine, as his gaze solidified and his eyes glazed over. He recognized them immediately from the illustrations on the wall...

Their horrendous lizard-like features sent a wave of fear through the crowd of scientists, and the room fell silent instantly.

Hopper cleared his throat, sensing that he should say something to the people who had constructed this place.

"I am Doctor Jonathan Hopper, and my team represents the United Federation of Planets..." he started.

Before he could finish, the lead creature's arm shot up in a blinding flash of motion and closed its claws around Hopper's neck, squeezing.

For some reason, John Hopper was not surprised when the creature lifted him up off of the ground by several feet and he took his last strangled breath looking at that nightmarish alien face.

Chapter One

As the furious strength of the wind blew past the clear bubble canopy, Damien Tyler sat unimpeded in the aircraft's cockpit. Looking from side to side through the glass, he admired the spectacular view down below him.

From the altitude he was flying at, everything on the ground below looked inferior and minute, with a decided lack of detail. Just splotches of color splattered across the endless horizon.

The sky was a bright blue, with the sun high overhead shining down on the world below it. Glinting slightly from the reflected light, the canopy was tinted a dark shade to reduce the glare of the blaring sun.

Damien worked the controls of the antiquated aircraft to bring the smooth P-51D Mustang into a steep turn to the left, as well as dropping the nose down to decrease the altitude.

The steady and rhythmic vibration of the plane's engine was rather relaxing, and Damien liked to joke that it was also a great therapeutic treatment.

Leveling his flight, he continued to drop his altitude as he angled down towards the planet's surface. As he began to come closer to the ground, the scale of objects began to increase and more detail started to reveal itself.

It is so beautiful out here, I could just keep doing this all day, he thought to himself. Flying was one of his favorite activities, and he had always been very passionate about this particular plane.

Unfortunately, Damien thought, it is time to set this "bird" down. He nosed the aircraft down into a tight dive, sending the plane careening even faster towards the ground below.

Through the canopy, he identified the small gray lines standing out against the horizon that marked the short landing strip. Almost as if he were being a stunt pilot, he waited until the very last moment to pull the nose up and cease the dare devil dive.

As he once again leveled his flight, only a few hundred feet up off the ground now, he lined up the aircraft with the landing strip. Cutting the engine's power down to fifty percent, he started to make the final adjustments before landing.

He reached over and flipped a switch that caused a steady whir to sound from somewhere below the aircraft, and Damien knew that the two main landing gear wheels had been lowered to the landing position.

With practiced ease, Damien set the plane down on the runway, and slowly reduced his speed to a comfortable, safe taxiing speed.

After a few moments of taxiing, he finally stopped the airplane on the parking tarmac, activating the brakes and toggling the switch that would turn the engine off.

Undoing his seat harness with one hand, he reached up with the other hand and slid the canopy backward to open it. Standing up, he threw his left leg out of the cockpit and found the ladder that was attached to the side of the aircraft.

Climbing down the ladder to the ground, he turned and found the man who he had become best friends with over the last several months waiting for him.

Commander Bren Kylan, second in command of the starship *Endeavor*, was standing there with a big smile on his face. "Have fun up there?" he quipped.

An equally big smile spread across Damien's face, and he walked over to his first officer. "Always. I love flying in my free time..."

Bren nodded his head at the aircraft. "She's a beauty..." he commented.

Damien looked back over his shoulder at the sleek plane he had been in no more than 5 minutes ago. "Yeah, I like to think so. P-51D Mustang -- 800 horsepower Rolls Royce dual-cam engine, retractable landing gear, six wing mounted machine guns. It was one of the most powerful and maneuverable aircraft in the early 20th century, during the World War II era."

Bren smiled even bigger listening to his captain rave on about his 'toy'. "I was just coming to tell you, sir, that we're about to arrive. I thought you might like to know..."

"Excellent, thank you," Damien replied. "Computer - End Program and exit..."

The computer complied with a shrill beep, and the scene behind them with the plane and the small airstrip disappeared. The familiar orange grid blocks of an empty holodeck were all that was left, and the triangular exit doors appeared in the side wall.

“Captain’s Logs - Stardate 53451.7”

“We are set to arrive at Dentarus VI in just a few short minutes. We were supposed to rendezvous with the transport ship *USS Feeb* to take aboard some new additions to the crew as well as five Valkyrie class fighters, but my first officer has informed me that the *Feeb* would be a little bit late. In the meantime, we also have some supplies to deliver to the archaeological teams on the planet’s surface. I am looking forward to seeing first hand what the archaeologists are doing, since archaeology is another passion of mine.”

Lieutenant Tarinn Jaral, the Bajoran officer stationed at the ship’s navigation station, called out over her shoulder. “We’re approaching the planet’s coordinates, sir.”

Captain Tyler nodded. “Take us out of warp, and set us into standard orbit,” he replied casually. After his rare trip to the holodeck this morning, he was rather relaxed and calm.

“Standard orbit achieved, sir,” Lieutenant Jaral answered back.

Captain Tyler looked to his left, where his executive officer was sitting. “Did the *Feeb* say how late they would be?”

Commander Kylan shook his head negatively. “They said that it wouldn’t be more than an hour, but they didn’t exactly guarantee me that either..”

The captain scowled in reply. He didn’t like having to wait, but of course, he had no choice. “Well, at least we can get those supplies down there.” He fell silent for a moment, considering what to say next. Turning in his chair, he looked back at Ensign T’Shanik, the solid Tactical officer he was getting to know rather well. “Hail the planet..”

T’Shanik did as she was told, but a second later looked back up at the captain with a hint of surprise on her face. “There’s no response, captain.”

A bit of concern crossed over Captain Tyler’s face as he stood up out of his command chair. “Open a channel..”

T’Shanik responded almost immediately. “Channel open, sir.”

Looking out towards the main view screen, situated at the very front of the bridge, Captain Tyler stepped forward as he started to talk. “This is Captain Damien Tyler of the Federation Starship *Endeavor*. Please respond..”

Silence answered him back. He glanced back at T’Shanik, who shook her head to indicate that there was still no response from the planet. After checking her board twice over, she returned her gaze to the captain.

“Sensors indicate that their communications equipment is not functioning,” she explained.

“Why would they turn off their means of communications?” Commander Kylan wondered aloud.

“I don’t know. Number One, take a small away team down there. Deliver the supplies and ask whoever is in charge to contact me..” Captain Tyler ordered.

Commander Kylan stood up out of his chair and began walking towards the turbo-lift. Over his shoulder, he threw out two names. “T’Shanik, Willis - you’re with me..”

Ensign Devon Willis swiveled out of his chair at the OPS station and followed the first officer and T’Shanik back towards the back of the bridge.

Just before they boarded the turbo-lift, Captain Tyler looked back towards the three departing officers. “Commander, better take phasers just in case..”

Acknowledging the captain’s request, Commander Kylan nodded in return. “Aye, sir.”

Three energy patterns appeared on the planet’s surface, and as the transporter beam began to dissipate, the three person away team began to coalesce.

They took a second to look around and take in their bearings. Directly in front of them, a few meters distance, was a long row of oblong white tents. To their left was a large cavernous looking opening in the side of a rock hill.

Very few trees and shrubs dotted the landscape, and the ground was a dull green in color.

The most obvious thing that all three noticed almost right away was the definite lack of people inhabiting the camp.

Ensign T’Shanik pulled out her tricorder and began scanning the area.

“Commander, this is odd - I am only detecting one human life form anywhere near this encampment..”

“Does that cave entrance lead anywhere?” Commander Kylan asked.

She checked her tricorder. “Affirmative. It leads down into a series of chambers in subterranean

spaces... The tricorder cannot penetrate beyond the first chamber..."

Commander Kylan took a moment to postulate a theory. "It's possible that the crews are down in the chambers and we just can't detect them from here."

The first officer led the way over to the mouth of the cave, and peered in. Shrugging his shoulders, he started down the dark pathway into the cave.

Ensign Willis stopped just short of the cave entrance and let out an indecisive groan.

Commander Kylan turned on his heel and stared out at the young, black officer. "Is there a problem, Ensign?"

Nervously, Ensign Willis nodded his head. "Yes, sir. Respectfully request to stay up here and check out the surrounding area..."

"Why, what's wrong? Don't tell me you're scared of the dark?" Commander Kylan gibed.

"No, sir. I am claustrophobic..." Ensign Willis explained.

"Oh. Okay, stay here then. Check around, see if you can find anything. We'll be back in a few minutes..." the first officer replied.

"Thank you, sir..." Ensign Willis replied.

Commander Kylan nodded his head in response. "Come on, T'Shanik. Let's go find these people..."

T'Shanik and Kylan trudged deeper into the dark tunnel, moving at a slow pace, being careful not to hit their heads on anything. The tunnel continued on for about twenty meters before opening up into a small room.

Consulting the tricorder, T'Shanik reported her findings to the commander. "My readings indicate this is the antechamber to a much larger chamber, but I still cannot find any life signs..."

Signaling his understanding with the curt nod of his head, Commander Kylan pressed on into a much shorter tunnel. Not nearly as long as the first, it did not take them long to reach the main chamber.

As soon as they rounded the corner into the chamber, a disturbing sight caught their eyes - the crumpled form of a man in work clothes lying on the floor a few feet away from the doorway.

They rushed over to the man's side and knelt down. T'Shanik ran the tricorder over the limp body, only to come up with a negative report. "His neck is broken in 4 places, and the tricorder indicates that he died from asphyxiation. His trachea has been crushed!"

"Can you get an identity on him?" Commander Kylan asked.

She checked the face of her tricorder again. "This was Doctor Jo Nathan Hopper, the senior archaeologist in charge of the research team..."

"What do you think?" he asked the Romulan ensign.

She thought about it for a half second before responding. "It appears that Doctor Hopper was murdered..."

"Yeah, but by who or what? And more importantly, why?"

Chapter Two

Captain Tyler was not happy to hear the report that he was now getting from Commander Kylan on the planet below. The demeanor of Commander Kylan's grave face on the view screen was setting the tone for the situation they now faced.

"Is it possible that the doctor's injuries may have just been an accident of some sort?" the captain asked.

"*Anything is possible, captain, but T'Shanik is convinced that he was murdered, based on the way his wind pipe is crushed. There is also a scar on his neck that resembles a handprint of some sort...*"

"Any other bad news?" Captain Tyler asked.

Commander Kylan looked to either side of him, then back at the captain. "*There is one other thing - our tricorders indicate that there is one human life sign in the vicinity, but we haven't been able to locate it yet.*"

"I'll have some security crews beam down to your location to help you search. Bren, I want you, T'Shanik, and Willis to investigate what happened down there. Search the inside of the chambers, the tents. If the doctor was murdered, there has to be a reason why. And I want to know what happened to the rest of the people that were down there. They can't simply have vanished..."

The first officer nodded his head in understanding. "We'll get right on it."

Lieutenant Jaral broke into the conversation. "Sorry to interrupt, captain, there is a vessel entering the system... It's the *Feeb*, and she's hailing us," she reported.

Captain Tyler pointed a finger at her. "Hold that thought, Lieutenant. Keep me updated on your progress, Commander. Endeavor, out."

Again he pointed his finger down at the Bajoran officer seated at CONN. "Onscreen," he said simply.

In rapid-fire succession, the screen changed from the image of Commander Kylan, to the planet, and then to another officer. The rotund man was bald and heavysset, but wore a Starfleet uniform nonetheless. The uniform was, however, in complete disarray. It was unbuttoned almost all the way down to the middle of his chest, and it was stained and dirty in places. His face was disheveled with an unkempt beard, and his thick mop of hair was growing long and wild.

"This is Captain Tyler of the *Endeavor*, so nice of you to join us..." he said.

The man smirked in short reply and shifted his bulky mass more to the side of his chair. "Sorry," he retorted. His attitude stunk heavily of disrespect, but Tyler dismissed it. "*Lieutenant Commander Boone, at your service.*" Along with the continued attitude, he spread his hand out in a motion that mimicked giving honors to a member of royalty.

Captain Tyler was sure that he could only take so much of this man's disposition. "Well, Lieutenant Commander, looks like we're having a bad day..." he commented softly.

"*Look, I'm here to drop off your men and fighters, then I'm out of here. I hate making runs this far out, so don't make my day any worse with your high-and-mighty sarcasm...*" Boone stated, contorting his face in the semi-angered state of annoyance.

Tyler chose to ignore it, for now.

"*I'll be in orbit in...*" Boone started to say, then checked a panel to his right and out of screen before continuing. "*...15 minutes. The Valkyries will offload as soon as I get there, and they will maneuver over to your shuttlebay. And that'll be it for me...*"

T'Shanik was lost in thought. Upon the commander's request, she had wandered down into the depths of the seemingly endless maze of passages and chambers.

From what she could tell, the markings and illustrations on the walls, as well as the incomprehensible alien script, belonged to some unknown alien race. She found it intriguing that the walls were marked up with so many illustrations, that it seemed as if every pertinent piece of information concerning this race had been recorded here.

She had found several of the illustrations to be the most interesting. For instance, there were a few complex pictures inscribed onto the stone wall of faces...alien faces. And there were still others that looked so primitive, that it was hard to believe they were both done by the same people.

She could not make heads nor tails of it though, so she had made sure to record everything she that could with her tricorder. She had high hopes that if they took the recorded images back to the ship for analyzing, that a lot of the mystery would be cleared up.

Commander Kylan was searching one of the tents when he heard an excited voice come running up, calling his name. He popped his head out of the tent just in time to see Ensign Willis charging up with a small black box in his hands.

"Commander, I found this in a data storage box over on the other side of the hill. I think it's an optical recorder..." Ensign Willis managed to spit out, breathless.

The first officer grabbed the box and turned it over in his hands. "Very good ensign, that's exactly what it is. This might have something that could help us..."

Thrilled that he had contributed something important towards the mission, Ensign Willis continued on, gasping for air. "There was also a few data storage cards in that box. Should I get them as well?"

Kylan looked up and stared past the ensign. "Yes, go get them and bring them to either me or T'Shanik."

"Aye, sir," the ensign replied. He turned on his heel and eagerly took off towards the other side of the hill.

Just before Commander Kylan was about to return to the inside of the tent, he watched as two security personnel came over the crest of a knoll on the other side of the camp. In their arms, draped like a limp rag doll, was the form of a man.

He rushed over to where the security personnel were and instructed them to lay the man down on the ground.

Kylan retrieved his tricorder from his belt clip and ran the instrument over the insensate man. He

appeared to be young, blond hair and blue eyes. There was a dark red slash along his right cheek. Although the tricorder could not match his identity, it reported that the boy was not seriously injured.

"What happened to him?" Commander Kylan asked of the two security personnel.

One of them stepped forward. "We spotted him hiding in some trees. When we approached him he panicked, and he hit his cheek and head as he fell out of the tree."

Behind him, he heard the approaching footsteps of someone, so he turned to look. Both T'Shanik and Willis were coming up from different directions. Willis has several data cards in his hands, and T'Shanik was carrying her tricorder.

Once they were all standing together, Kylan made a quick decision. He tapped his communicator. "Away team to Endeavor, 6 to beam up...and alert Doctor Llalik that we have a medical emergency," he said.

In response to the request, all six people standing there were enveloped in the transporter energies that whisked them away from the planet.

The ready room doors parted at the captain's permission, admitting a man of average height and build. The officer, wearing a flight uniform with gold trim, strode into the room and came to an abrupt halt just in front of the captain's desk.

Taking a momentary liberty to hand a PADD across the table to Captain Tyler, the officer popped to a very rigid attention. "Lieutenant David Akers, reporting for duty as ordered, sir!" he barked.

With the way the taut, middle aged man was standing, he resembled a brick wall -- rigid from head to toe, unyielding. His eyes were focused on some point above and behind the captain, and he stared straight ahead into seemingly nothing. He had not even made eye contact with the captain when he first entered the room.

Now that's discipline, Captain Tyler thought. Guess I'll just have to break him of that, he chuckled to himself.

Captain Tyler read through the PADD files thoroughly; the transfer orders, personnel files, technical information on the Valkyrie's, and more.

When he finally looked up at the officer before him, he sat back in his chair. "At ease, Lieutenant."

The rigid stance of the lieutenant eased a little bit, but not completely. Captain Tyler hoped that Akers was not the kind of officer who was so rigid that he would become a problem with the other members of the crew.

"Relax, Lieutenant, have a seat. This isn't an interrogation. We like to take it a little easier out here," Captain Tyler chided. "Where are you from?"

The lieutenant swallowed hard before answering. "I come from Mars Colony, sir."

"Oh, well, welcome aboard the *Endeavor*," the captain replied. "I'm sure you will like it here. What's the status of our Valkyries?"

Without hesitation or thought, Lieutenant Akers replied, "All fighters are fully operational and combat ready. We just came from the practice range in Sector 136, and all of my pilots have logged over 300 flight hours now."

"That's good news. So you have a crew complement of 5 officers?" Captain Tyler asked.

"That's correct, sir. All of them are excellent pilots and are ready for anything..." the lieutenant replied.

Captain Tyler set the PADD down on the desk and looked Akers straight in the face. "From this moment on, your flight squad will be called Alpha Team, and you will report directly to either Commander Kylan or myself. If you need anything, contact Ensign T'Shanik and she will make sure you get it."

"Understood, sir."

Captain Tyler swiveled in his chair for a moment. "Computer, what time is it?"

The female voice of the computer took a moment to answer. "The current time is 13:40."

"Alright, Lieutenant. I am holding a senior crew meeting in the conference lounge in twenty minutes, and I want you there. In fact, you will attend all senior staff meetings unless I tell you otherwise," Captain Tyler stated.

"Yes, sir."

The Chief Engineer, Lieutenant Vincent Lewis was the last senior officer to arrive in the conference lounge. As he took his seat on the backside of the table, Commander Kylan shot him a disapproving look.

"Okay, let's get started," Captain Tyler said at last. "Who wants to start?"

Perhaps he felt guilty about being late to the meeting, or maybe he was just overexcited to make his report, but Lieutenant Lewis volunteered to go first.

“Okay, Vinny. What do you have for us?” the captain asked, referring to the engineer by his commonly used nickname.

The engineer stood up out of his chair. “I was able to upload the images from the optical recorder and the data cards that were brought back to the ship. Unfortunately, the large majority of the information contained on them was corrupted and missing. I did manage to get a little bit, though.”

“The aliens who constructed the complex on the planet is a race known as the Vendoth. I cross referenced the name in our database, and found a few files on them, but all of the were Classified, and I could not access them.”

“Classified? By whom?” Commander Kylan asked.

Pausing for a moment to reflect on the question, Lieutenant Lewis took a deep breath. “Starfleet Intelligence... I did find mentions of a few scattered encounters with this race, but everything about the encounters was kept strictly confidential.”

“Why would they classify that information?” Lieutenant Jaral asked.

“Let’s not try to pursue questions that we can’t answer right now. Vinny, tell us what you were able to find out about this race,” Captain Tyler said.

The engineer reached over and touched a small button on the table in front of his chair, activating the small screen in the wall at the opposite end of the table.

“The Vendoth are from a region known as the Kalium Galaxy. The first recorded evidence of their presence in this galaxy was circa 2293, when the *USS Excalibur* ran into three of their ships. The details of that encounter were not available. Apparently, there have been several more encounters over the years since then, the most recent of which was earlier this year.”

“The complex below was designed to be some sort of colony for this species, and it had been established for 72 years. Within the last five years, however, all of the Vendoth colonists died out.”

Captain Tyler arched his eyebrows. “Were you able to figure out why they perished?”

Vinny nodded his head. “Yes, sir. Apparently, the Vendoth are susceptible to a low-grade radiation that is produced by the core of our galaxy. Over time, their physiology couldn’t handle the strong doses of radiation anymore.”

Doctor Saren Llalik chimed in from her side of the table. “We’re familiar with that form of radiation poisoning. A cure was developed for it 8 years ago...”

Lieutenant Lewis waited until she was done before continuing. “There is one other thing that I think you may find interesting, captain.”

“Go ahead,” Captain Tyler prodded.

“The scientists who we’re working below have been able to translate 75% of their language based on the scripts found inside the chambers. It is still a little bit sketchy to me, but within one of the files I found, there is a set of coordinates and a mention of another Vendoth settlement near here. They were suffering from the exact same radiation poisoning...”

Captain Tyler remained silent for a few moments. He turned to the doctor. “Doctor, do you think that the cure can be used for the Vendoth?”

She shook her head. “I can’t be sure without understanding more about their physiology, but I’d say it’d be worth a try...”

Commander Kylan shot a glance over at Ensign T’Shanik. “What else did you find on the planet?”

T’Shanik swiveled in her chair to face the first officer more directly. “Nothing. Sensors do not detect any other life forms, except for the human we brought aboard earlier. There is no trace of the other scientists...”

That reminded the captain. “Speaking of which, doctor, have you gotten a chance to speak to our survivor yet?”

“No. He’s still in a coma induced by shock...” the doctor replied. “But I will let you know the moment that changes.”

Captain Tyler exchanged a momentary glance with his first officer, and an unspoken message was understood between them.

“Alright, Vinny - I want you to transfer what we have of the Vendoth language into the Universal Translator. Jaral, get those coordinates from Lieutenant Lewis and plot an immediate intercept course, maximum warp. T’Shanik, I want to prepare the ship for any contingency. Take us to Yellow Alert for

starters.”

From the looks that he was getting from the crew, Captain Tyler picked up on the trepidation that they were feeling.

Captain Tyler looked around at the officer’s faces, one -by-one. “Whoever these Vendoth might be, they are dying out there, it would be in the Federation’s best interest to come to their aid.”

Chapter Three

Todd Statler was truly taken aback. He had never once set foot on a starship until the previous day, and he was shocked at the sheer magnitude of it. Oh sure, he had seen starships, from a distance.

Based on stories that he had heard from other people, he had made a pre-formed opinion of starships, and it was not a good one, either. He had always heard that starship duty was boring, cramped, and uninteresting. After nearly twenty-four hours, he had found those assumptions to be quite in the wrong.

The living quarters that had been assigned to him were anything but cramped. Spacious, comfortable, and better than he had ever expected to see in his lifetime. He had made good use of the replicator by now, and for the first time in years had enjoyed a good sonic shower.

He had made a trip down to the crew’s lounge and enjoyed a few drinks, while meeting some of the other members of the crew. He had also enjoyed a quick game of darts with one of the guys he had met. His little self-guided tour of the ship had also taken him down to the holodecks -- a prize of technology he had not expected to find.

When Todd returned to his quarters, he was satisfied that he was going to like it here very much. As he now relaxed around in his own little living space, and the computer was playing his favorite music, he couldn’t think of anywhere else he’d rather be than on a starship.

His door chime sounded. “Come on in...” he called out.

The doors slid open, and Lieutenant Akers came walking in, followed by the rest of the gang.

Todd was new to the team, had only been flying with them for about 3 weeks, but the others had been a team for years. That sort of made him feel awkward around them, being the “new kid on the block”. True he was just out of the Academy, but he felt deep down that he was the best damned pilot among them.

The only woman on the team was Valerie Duquella, whom Todd had fallen deeply in love with the first time they had met. She was a tall thing, with jet black hair extending down past her butt. At that moment, though, it was put up into a ponytail that looped around behind her head. What Todd loved the most was how her emerald green eyes sparkled in the light.

He had told her endlessly, though, that she needed to smile more often. She always went about her business with the most tense composure, almost as if she were a Vulcan or some facsimile of.

Then there was David Akers, the most experienced pilot among them and also their boss. At first, Todd had thought that David was a real hard ass, concerned with nothing except his ambitious rise to the top of the proverbial ladder. Always hard core about his service, and his standards. As he had gotten to know the man better, however, his opinion softened.

David was not a very talkative man as it was, but Todd was quickly getting used to the strong friendship that was developing between them. In retrospect, he had realized that the reason David was so tough as a leader was because he was seriously interested in improving the abilities of not only himself, but also the pilots he flew with. A bonafide desire to be the best, and fly with the best.

And Todd respected him for that.

Of the other two pilots in the group, Jason Garcia and the Bolian from Atmus III, Cho, Todd could only say that they were loyal. Both of them were introspective and quiet. It had seemed to Todd that the only thing those two men did well was fly, because neither had been very openly pleasant towards Todd.

He didn’t think it was because he had done a nything wrong to them - quite the opposite, actually. Todd reasoned that the motives for their distance from him was because he was so fresh, inexperienced. It had taken them their whole lives to be assigned to this team, and Todd had been given the post right out of the Academy.

The four pilots walked right on in to Todd’s quarters, as if they belonged there. This was a concept that Todd was still getting used to - the ability to keep everything open and unrestricted amongst themselves.

David sat down in the chair across from him, and the others stood behind him.

David stared at him for a moment before starting. “We’ve got some business...”

Captain Tyler was sitting on the couch in his ready room, reading through the material that Engineering had provided him concerning the Vendoth.

It was the information before him now that had been translated from the alien scripts on Dentarus. He was fascinated to learn more about this mysterious alien race that had apparently been in this region of space for hundreds of years, and only a few contacts had been made with them. Not to mention that those contacts were immediately put behind an iron curtain, classified by the upper echelons of Starfleet.

Tyler was so interested to find out that the entire history of the Vendoth in this region, along with information about their languages, physiology, culture, and so much more, was illustrated on those chamber walls. Not all of that had been translated by his crew yet, but what had been uncovered was intriguing.

Starfleet records had listed that this alien race was from the Kalium galaxy, which was so far distant to the Milky Way that it didn't even show up on astrometric charts of any kind.

There were thousands of questions running through his head at the moment, none of which seemed to be answered by the translations. For instance, how did these Vendoth get so far from their own galaxy? Was it an advanced technology that their own 24th century levels couldn't even fathom? Or was it some sort of spatial portal that inevitably brought them here?

His reverie was momentarily broken as someone approached the outside of his door. "Come..." he mouthed, keeping his focus on the PADD in his hands.

The doors opened with an audible "hiss", and someone walked into the room. The captain didn't even bother to look up, because he knew exactly who it would be.

"This stuff is so fascinating, Number One... Have you read through this?" Tyler asked.

Knowing just what the captain was talking about, Commander Kylan sat on the other end of the couch. "I read a little bit, captain."

Finishing the paragraph that he was on, he set the PADD down on his lap and looked across at the commander. "What's up?"

"What did you think about our new crew members?"

"Well, I only met the flight leader, and he seems to be..." Tyler started, then dipped his head and chuckled out loud. "We need to work on him a little bit," he declared.

Narrowing his eyes a little bit, Commander Kylan used his eyes to question the captain's reason for that statement.

"Well, he seems so -- tense, for lack of a better word," Captain Tyler finally explained.

"Most pilots are," Commander Kylan replied. "Have you been down to inspect the fighters yet?"

Tyler shook his head negatively. "No, haven't had a chance. I've been sitting here for the last few hours reading over this information about the Vendoth. By the way, what's our ETA to those coordinates?"

Commander Kylan shifted his leg. "We'll be arriving in something over six minutes. What's the plan when we get there?"

Tyler thought to himself for a quiet moment. "I'm not sure yet. I guess first we'll hail them, make a good first contact. Then, I guess we'll try to inform them of their illness, and offer them the cure."

"Doctor Llalik notified me that the cure can be administered in several different ways. Depending on the size of the colony, of course."

"I'm still curious to find out what the hell happened to those other archaeologists," the captain mused. "And why was Hopper murdered..."

"I notified the institute that Hopper worked for, and they're sending another team to Dakorus within the week," Commander Kylan stated.

"Good man," Tyler responded, slapping his first officer's leg. He stood up and walked over to his desk, where he sat the PADD down. "Can I get you something to drink?"

Commander Kylan shook his head. "No, sir, but thanks."

The captain stepped over to the far wall where the replicator was. "Coffee, sweet and black," he ordered.

Within seconds, a white mug materialized on the replicator pad filled to the brim with a dark, steaming liquid. As he lifted the mug off the pad, he ended up spilling some of the hot coffee down his trouser leg and on the floor.

"Ahh..." he spit out, stepping back as if his shins had just been assaulted by a wild targ. "Now that's what I call hot..." he muttered.

Commander Kylan stifled a laugh as he watched his captain clumsily carrying the full coffee mug back

towards the couch, trying not to spill any more.

“Captain, I just wanted to...” Commander Kylan started to say. A stern look that was suddenly shot his way from Tyler stopped him mid-sentence.

“Will there ever come a time, when you can talk to me and call me just Damien? Or will it always be the ‘Yes, sir - No, sir’ routine?” Tyler demanded.

A slight grin crossed the commander’s face. “Sorry, sir... I mean, Damien. Just not used to the whole ‘being friends with my commanding officer’ routine. You know Captain Tyrelle didn’t utter two words to me outside of an order?”

Tyler nodded his head. “I can understand. Tyrelle was a great commander, knew his job well. But he never picked up the quality of being a people person.”

“Must’ve missed that class at the Academy, huh?”

Captain Tyler was nodding his agreement when the communicator chirped.

“*Captain, we’re about to drop out of warp at the coordinates specified...*” came the voice of Lieutenant Jaral.

Cutting the conversation short, the captain and first officer stood up and began walking towards the bridge.

As soon as they had crossed through the ready room doors onto the control center of the ship, Captain Tyler ordered - “Take us out of warp. T’Shanik, full sensor sweeps...”

The two command officers went directly to the command center of the bridge, as the tactical officer obeyed the instruction of her captain. Commander Kylan took his seat, but the captain opted to remain standing.

“Sensors detect a planet to starboard, sir, class N - 300 kilometers...” T’Shanik reported.

“Helm, plot a course for the planet and put us into a standard orbit. T’Shanik, scan the surface...” the captain instructed.

It took a few moments for sensors to complete its scan. “I am detecting over 3,000 life forms...but I am not getting a clear reading on them,” she sputtered.

“Not surprising. Remember that this species is new to us, so the computer is not going to recognize them just yet. Has the Vendoth language been added to our database?” A curt nod from T’Shanik acknowledged that it had been. “Good -- open hailing frequencies...”

When the signal had been passed between them that the hail had been established, the captain stepped forward.

“My name is Captain Damien Tyler, in command of the starship *USS Endeavor*. I come as a representative of the United Federation of Planets on a peaceful mission...”

The salutation that the captain had just offered was met with an odd silence. He took another step forward and tried it again.

“This is Captain Damien Tyler of the Federation Starship *Endeavor*, we wish to communicate with you...?”

T’Shanik cleared her throat behind them. “Still no response, sir... no, wait. I am getting a response, but it is in text only. It will take a moment for the translator to get a fix on it...”

After a second, the translation appeared on the panel and she read it aloud. “It says - ‘Dying!’”

Hold on guys, we’re coming to help, the captain thought. He turned and glanced down at Commander Kylan. “I am going to lead the away team...” he commented.

The first officer stood up suddenly. “I don’t think so, captain. We don’t know what to expect down there - they could be hostile...”

Captain Tyler held up his hand to silence the objection. “It would only be fitting for the commanding officer to make contact with a new species that holds honor as one of their main cultural foundations. Anything else, and they might be offended. You’re in command until I return,” he said.

“But, captain, I...”

As Captain Tyler strolled back towards the turbo-lift he shot back over his shoulder. “That’s an order, commander.”

“Aye, sir.”

Doctor Llalik met the away team in the transporter room with a medical kit hanging over her shoulder, a hypospray in her hands. Captain Tyler had chosen to include Ensign T’Shanik, Lieutenant Galen, Ensign

Willis, and Lieutenant Devereiux, the ships biologist, on the away team.

‘I’ve got a preventative measure prepared so that we can protect ourselves from any possible cross contaminants that might be down there,’ Doctor Llalik explained, as she politely inoculated each of the crew with the hypospray.

‘Expecting us to come back with a cold?’ the captain quipped.

‘Well, class N worlds typically have high amounts of free floating viral strands. I don’t know what exactly might be down there, but this is just a defense against some of the more common ones...’ she explained.

After everyone had gotten their ‘shot’, they regrouped and stepped up onto the platform. On each person was a phaser and tricorder, which had become standard gear for most away team missions.

Captain Tyler tapped his communicator. ‘Tyler to Bridge. We’re going to keep an open line of communication with the ship. Monitor our progress and if anything happens out of the ordinary, transport us out immediately...’ he said.

Somewhat annoyed at having to stay on the ship while his commanding officer beamed down into a potentially very dangerous situation, Commander Kylan acknowledged with a slight snap. “*Understood...*”

The captain looked across at Lieutenant Parker, who was standing behind the controls of the transporter. ‘Energize when ready, Lieutenant.’

The tall transporter chief nodded his head in understanding, and immediately set to work on the controls. After a few moments, his two fingers slid up the face of the control panel.

Six points of light appeared and solidified into the forms of the away team members. A quick moment was spent looking around them at their surroundings before tricorders were pulled out.

They were standing in what appeared to be a city square, with buildings on every side of them. The more modern setting that they were standing in resembled nothing like the ancient atmosphere of the ruins they had seen on Dentarus.

On every side of the away team stood small, yet striking alien creatures that merely glared at them. They were almost as tall as Lieutenant Devereiux, who only stood five and a half feet tall. They resembled large lizards standing on their hind legs - not as scaly, but certainly with a rough look to them.

Although small in stature, they were massively built, with a musculature that screamed of ‘strength’ and ‘power’. Their faces had a level nose with slit nostrils, and the tops of their heads stood out with prominent spikes. Their eyes, deep set into their bony skulls, glared at them with an air of hatred.

As if in unison, the crowd began to close in around the six officers, so Captain Tyler took the opportunity to establish the first contact. He stepped forward and began speaking. ‘Greetings... I am Captain Tyler of the Federation starship...’ he began to say.

Before he could finish, he noticed that a few of the creatures closest to him exchanged surprised looks between them, and then shouted in a loud cry to the others. ‘D’ktha’secf’t’hsem’astdo’ktau’j’kot!’

At that moment the crowd surged forward in a flash of green and attacked the away team. Surrounded and way outnumbered, they were easily disarmed and taken captive.

Chapter Four

Commander Kylan was furious on the bridge. ‘Red alert,’ he shouted, and as an afterthought. ‘Keep the shields down... Transporter room, get them back, now!!!’

Through the communicator relay, Lieutenant Parker’s strained voice came back, nervous. “*I can’t sir, they’ve erected some sort of energy field that prevents me from getting a solid lock on them,*” he explained.

‘Damn! Lieutenant Lewis to the bridge, now!’ he yelled. Normally he wouldn’t have been this agitated, but now he was majorly concerned with the safety of the away team.

He turned and stalked over to Ensign McAlevy, the junior officer who sat at OPS in the absence of Ensign Willis. ‘Can you track the away team?’

‘Barely, sir, but I do have them on sensors...’ she replied.

‘Good, keep an eye on them, make sure they’re still alive,’ the commander ordered. He whirled around and stared up at Ensign Jackson, who was T’Shanik’s replacement at tactical. ‘Scan the surface - find the source of that energy field that’s blocking our transporters. I want to be able to destroy it if we have to...’

The turbo-lift doors opened, and the chief engineer walked out onto the bridge into the storm that was brewing around Commander Kylan.

'Lewis - the way team has been taken prisoner. There is some sort of energy field blocking the transporters - find a way to get through it, around it, under it, anything. And do it quick!' he ordered.

Somewhat surprised at the sudden shouting he had inadvertently walked in on, the engineer wasted no time in trotting over to the aft engineering station and getting to the task at hand.

Commander Kylan turned and angrily faced the main view screen. 'DAMN!' he shouted.

Besides for some minor bumps and bruises sustained during the crowd's attack on them, the away team was otherwise unharmed. Several armed Vendoth warriors had led them, under heavy guard to a holding cell not far from their beam-in spot.

The tricorders, phasers, and the medical kit had been confiscated, but for some odd reason, the Vendoth had not taken the communicators off of their uniforms.

They were forced to sit in the room, with six menacing Vendoth warriors standing in front of them, training their weapons on them. Too intimidated to talk to each other, for fear of being shot, each of them sat there in silence.

The captain, however, had other agenda's in mind. He leaned over and whispered to Ensign Willis, who was seated next to him. 'The universal translators must not be functioning...'

The ensign did not reply, because he too, was scared of being killed by the obviously aggressive creatures watching them.

Captain Tyler was not about to just keep quiet, though. He stood up and slowly stepped forward, hands in the air to indicate that he was not looking for trouble.

'We are not here to fight you. We are here to help you. Do you understand?' he said.

The closest Vendoth guard merely stared him down, and leveled the business end of his weapon at the captain's chest. 'Hde`rya`c`dfeyih`ajes`hc`deprs,' it responded.

A slight humming sound became audible from the weapon, and the captain assumed that it was charging up to fire, so he took the message and sat back down quickly.

The guard backed down, and the weapon lowered to its original stance.

He leaned over and whispered to T'Shanik, who was closer to him now than Ensign Willis was before. 'And I thought I was having a bad day before...'

'So, you're saying that you can interrupt the energy field somehow?' Commander Kylan repeated, glowering back up at Lieutenant Lewis.

Visibly gulping from the angry gaze being shot in his direction, Lewis responded. 'Yes, sir. I've located the building where the energy field is being controlled from. I can configure the main deflector dish to emit a variable pulse beam that will interfere with the energy field. It won't work for a long time, but all we need is a few seconds to lock on to the away team and beam them out...'

'Get on it...'

Commander Kylan ordered. 'McAlevy, get ready for the signal from Lewis. As soon as he is ready, I want you to lock on to the away team and get them out of there...'

'Yes, sir.'

An ominous warning signal from the tactical panel got the attention of everyone on the bridge. 'Sir, I've detected a ship leaving the planet's surface. thirty seven seconds to intercept - should I raise shields?'

'No, not yet. We have to wait until we get the crew back...'

the commander shouted back. 'How much longer, Lewis?'

The engineer hated to be rushed, but he still was not ready. 'I'm working on it, commander...'

'Better work on it faster,' Commander Kylan jabbed.

A few tense seconds was followed by the excited shouting from tactical. 'INCOMING!'

The bridge rocked from the impact of an unseen weapon.

'Return fire!'

'I've got it commander! Initiating pulse beam now!' Lieutenant Lewis reported loudly.

The Bridge reeled again from another weapons impact, and Ensign Jackson called out a short damage report. 'Shields at 57%!'

Another few seconds flew by, and Commander Kylan watched intently as Ensign McAlevy worked her control panel with lightning quick hands. She looked over her shoulder. 'I've got them, the away team is back aboard!'

'Raise shields... evasive maneuvers!' Commander Kylan ordered.

Before the order could be carried out, another blast hit the ship and knocked everybody sideways.

Lieutenant Jaral fell out of her chair at the helm and began screaming loudly, holding her left leg.

Commander Kylan jumped over her and slid into her spot at the navigation station, punching in orders for the ship to engage in an elusive pattern. Hoping to evade further damage to the ship, and knowing that the shields were probably very close to failing, he knew that they could not stand too much more abuse.

What the hell kinds of weapons are they using? They took our shields down to 57% after only two shots, he thought to himself. He pushed the thought aside as he continued to fly the ship.

As the bridge rocked yet another time, the turbo-lift doors opened and deposited Tyler, Willis and T'Shanik onto the bridge. They immediately fumbled their way to their stations.

"Report!" Captain Tyler shouted as he made his way down to the command center.

T'Shanik regained her position at the tactical panel, and began reading off a situation report. "Shields are down to 12%, phaser arrays have been damaged and are non-functional, torpedo bays are still loaded and ready... we have a hull breach on deck 3, but it has been sealed off..."

A forceful explosion went off close to the ship, and one of the side bridge panels exploded in a display of light and smoke. Pieces of the panel fell to the floor, with exposed circuitry hanging out. A small fire burned inside the remains of the wall, but for the moment it escaped notice by the rest of the crew.

"Captain, our shields are solidifying!" T'Shanik exclaimed... "and failing..."

Knowing that the shields were almost completely gone, the captain looked down at his first officer sitting at the helm. "Get us out of here, Number One!"

Commander Kylan had a sudden idea. "Captain, I'm taking us towards the star..."

"Can you get us there?" the captain asked.

"Yes, sir..."

"Good, take us into the corona - if we can't shake them, we'll try to confuse their sensors and lose them inside the star..."

Another blast hit the escaping ship, which lurched forward from the impact. The crew fell forward from the brunt of the explosion, and Commander Kylan hit his forehead on the panel in front of him.

T'Shanik reported from tactical. "Shields have failed, hull breaches on decks 7 and 11, auxiliary power being rerouted to the shields..."

Kylan sat back up and found that his left eye was blinded by the steady stream of blood now rolling down his face. With a shaking arm, he reached up and wiped the blood out of his eye so that he could still see what he was doing.

"Entering the corona now..." he shakily reported.

Suddenly, the onslaught from the pursuing vessel stopped. "T'Shanik?" the captain hollered.

"Sir, the Vendoth ship is no longer firing. And they're not pursuing. They've stopped short of the corona..."

Captain Tyler nodded his head. "Good. I don't think we can hide in here forever, so let's get a plan of how we're going to get out of this. T'Shanik work on getting the shields back up..."

He looked down and noticed the open wound on his first officer's head. "Commander, get down to Sickbay right now..." he ordered, looking around to see who was on the bridge behind him. Finding two of the junior officers standing at the back of the bridge, he bellowed their names. "McAlevy, take the commander to Sickbay. Jackson, take the helm."

Ensign McAlevy helped the commander out of his chair and supported him as they walked back towards the turbo-lift. Ensign Jackson immediately slipped into the navigation station.

"Sir, I haven't been trained in navigation..." he stated simply.

Captain Tyler merely shook his head. "Hopefully we won't need you to do anything too complex. You know how to set a course and engage, right?"

The uneasy ensign nodded his head in response.

"Good, then you'll have to do for now. T'Shanik, what's our friend doing out there?"

She checked her panel. "Still holding back, sir."

Lieutenant Lewis called out for attention from the back of the bridge. "Captain, I have an idea..."

Captain Tyler turned and rushed back to the back of the bridge to stand next to him. "What is it?"

He pointed at the screen of his engineering terminal at an image of the Vendoth ship that had chased them. There was a blue circle around the ship's image, which identified their shields, and in one particular spot was a red patch.

"When the Vendoth weapons hit our shields, they somehow became solid, like a crust of some sort. And as they continued to hit that spot, the crust crumbled and left us vulnerable. Well, their shields are

operating the same way. Solidify, then crumble... I noticed that when we hit them a few moments ago, this spot here was weakened in their shields into that shell like matter.”

“And?” the captain said, prodding him on.

“Well, if we hit that spot with our weapons, I believe we can break through that spot just long enough for me to neutralize the Vendoth...”

“How?”

Lewis turned and faced the captain directly. “Remember when the doctor told us that the Vendoth are susceptible to low-grade radiation? Well, if we weaken their shields enough, I believe I can use the transporters to transmit a series of high level radiation bursts onto their command bridge...”

Captain Tyler picked up on where the engineer was headed. “Thus making them either sick or killing them... and giving us time to escape...”

Lieutenant Lewis nodded his head. Captain Tyler slapped a hand onto the engineer’s shoulder. “Good job, Vinny. How long until you’re ready?”

“I’m ready when you are...”

Captain Tyler turned around and peered at Ensign T’Shanik. “How are the shields looking?”

“Back up to 7%... We will probably only be able to withstand one hit before they go back down again...” she replied.

“Well, I don’t plan on sticking around long enough for them to hit us more than that. Transfer all power to forward shields and prepare a quantum torpedo salvo - lock them on to the weakest part of their shields,” he ordered as he walked back around to the command center. Still standing, he looked down at Jackson.

“Let’s do this... Take us out of the corona, full impulse... T’Shanik prepare to fire...”

The order was carried out, and the *USS Endeavor* nosed its way out of the stars corona on a death-wish course towards the Vendoth ship.

“Torpedo’s locked on!” T’Shanik cried out.

“FIRE!” came the adrenaline -pumping shout from Captain Tyler.

Almost simultaneously, the Vendoth ship fired its weapons, and a ball of energy surged towards the *Endeavor*. A salvo of gold glowing quantum torpedo’s arced away from the ship on their course towards the attacking vessel.

As the bridge experienced an intense explosion of light and shaking, T’Shanik screamed out from her panel. “Shields failing... Direct hit on the Vendoth ship!”

“Now or never, Lewis!” the captain shouted.

“Energizing now!” came the reply from the engineer.

A few silent seconds went by without anything else happening. The aggressor had, for the moment, ceased its assault on them. As the Vendoth ship grew threateningly closer on the view screen, it started to drift sideways in a downwards list.

The enemy ship disappeared from the screen as the *Endeavor* sailed past it in its escape trajectory.

“Is it working?” the captain demanded.

“Yes, sir. I detect no activity on their bridge...” T’Shanik replied.

“Jackson, set a course out of here... warp 8...engage, now !”

After a few tense moments, with the inexperienced officer sitting at the navigation controls trying to figure out how to set the course, he finally gave a little shout of success.

The stars on the view screen began to contort and stretch, and the ship jumped into warp speed. Saved by the bell, and by the Jackson, the captain thought.

Jackson looked back at the captain, who just smiled down at him with an approving look. “Good job, ensign.”

“Thank you, sir. I set the course back to Federation space...” he admitted.

“No, change your course heading... We’re going straight to Earth - I want to report this incident directly to Starfleet Command...”

“Captain’s Logs - Supplemental”

“At warp eight, we’ll be arriving at Earth in two weeks, although I wish we could get there a lot sooner. I have a lot of questions for Starfleet as to why they kept information about the Vendoth secret. It could have saved me and my crew a lot of trouble. I have engineering crews working

around the clock to perform damage control efforts. Commander Kylan has a nasty scar on his forehead, and Lieutenant Jaral suffered a broken leg, but both will recover.

These Vendoth are a very dangerous threat to the security of the Federation, second only to the Borg and the Dominion. I don't understand why they were so aggressive towards us, but I guarantee that it would be a disaster if they decide to attack the Federation now. I only hope that somebody at Starfleet Command already knows about this threat, or we're all going to be in a lot of trouble! This attack on my ship could very well be the 'Calm Before the Storm'."

THE ENDEAVOR'S CREW



Name: Damien Tyler

Rank: Captain

Race: Human

Born: 2340, Earth, Panama City

Age: 35

History: Fresh out of the Academy, Ensign Tyler first served aboard the *USS Benson* as navigation officer in 2362. Almost a year later, he was promoted to Lieutenant (JG) and began a short stint as shuttle pilot for Admiral Benson stationed at Starbase 9.

In 2364 his three year tour of duty ended and he returned to Earth to be with his fiancée, Rebecca. Several months later, however he received orders to return to Starfleet. This was, apparently, the end point of his relationship with Rebecca as they have not spoken since. When he returned in late 2364, now Lieutenant Tyler was re-stationed to the *USS Kitty Hawk* where he spent the next 4 years impressing superiors and progressing up the ranks to Lieutenant Commander. LTCDR Tyler was then approached by Starfleet Intelligence to be recruited into their ranks. At this point, Tyler's actions were not recorded due to being Top Secret in nature. In 2372 he resurfaced, having been assigned to the *USS Midway* as First Officer. By the time he reached the *Midway*, Tyler was now a Commander.

During the Dominion War, Fleet Admiral Ross called on Commander Tyler for his intelligence experience for a special mission aboard the *USS Endeavor-A* in 2375. At the end of the mission, the commanding officer of the *Endeavor* had been fatally injured during a battle with a Dominion warship, and had been incapacitated. For his actions during that mission, Commander Tyler was given a field promotion to Captain and offered command of the *Endeavor-A*, which he gladly accepted.

On Stardate 52950.6, Captain Tyler was abducted from the *Endeavor* by the entity known as "Q". Much of what happened while Tyler was gone with Q is not known, but he was returned to the ship a few hours later unharmed.



Name: Bren Tyrone Kylan

Executive Officer

Rank: Commander

Race: Human

Born: 2344, Earth

Age: 31

History: Commander Kylan has only served on two vessels his entire career.

Starting out on the *USS Jemison*, he served there for 8 years, rising from the rank of Ensign to Lieutenant Commander. Due to outstanding performance during an away team mission on planet Narel III, in which he saved the lives of 8 Starfleet

personnel, he was meritoriously promoted to Commander. When a spot came open under Captain Tyrelle on the newly commissioned *USS Endeavor-A* in 2375, Commander Kylan was pushed by his comrades to take it. Reluctantly, he accepted the post.

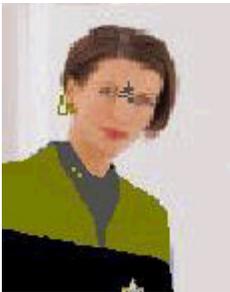
In 2375, Commander Kylan participated in an away team mission to the Cardassian Outpost on Setlik III, where he aided the Cardassian Resistance in overthrowing the Jem' Hadar stationed there



Name: Saren Llalik
Rank: Lieutenant Commander
Chief Medical Officer
Race: Human
Born: 2346, Starbase 210
Age: 29

History: One of the youngest chief medical officers in the fleet, Saren Llalik was also chief medical officer onboard the *USS Tremane*, receiving the post at the record rank of Lieutenant (JG) and only 24 years old. The post was well deserved, however. Saren Llalik graduated at the very top of her class at

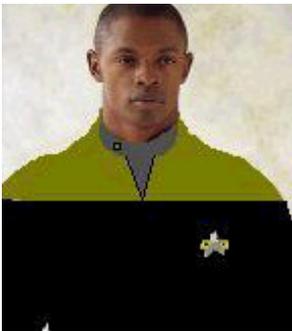
Starfleet Medical and has quickly gained the respect of nearly the entire medical profession as an officer who has a profound understanding of the medical trade. She has written many papers on Bio-prosthesis' s and maintains a strong interest in pursuing medical treatments for new diseases. She has also served onboard the medical ship *USS Mercy*.
Saren is married and has two young children.



Name: Tarinn Jaral
Rank: Lieutenant
Conn Officer
Race: Bajoran
Born: 2346, Bajor
Age: 29

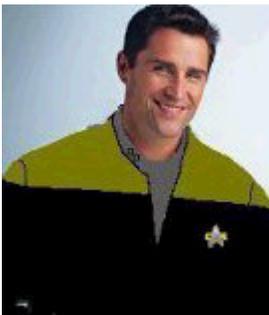
History: Tarinn grew up in the Cardassian Labor Camps on Dentarus II, which has hardened her spirit. She can be a little rude sometimes, but it is merely an outer display of strong will. When the *USS Defiant* freed the members of her labor camp, she immediately decided to pursue a career in Starfleet. She excels in martial arts

and combat techniques, which made her the ideal candidate for security chief. Ultimately she was passed over for that assignment, and instead picked up the navigation duties.



Name: Devon Willis
Rank: Ensign
OPS Manager
Race: Human
Born: 2353, *USS Mantrell*
Age: 22

History: Ensign Willis is now fresh out of the Academy, class of 2357. His first assignment is the *USS Endeavor* as OPS Manager.



Name: Vincent "Vinny" Lewis
Rank: Lieutenant
Chief Engineer
Race: Human
Born: 2348, Earth
Age: 27

History: A young, brash officer, Vincent Lewis is an outstanding member of the engineering team. While serving aboard his first vessel, the *USS Discovery*, Ensign Lewis managed to stop an implosion which threatened to rip the ship apart. Known as "Vinny" to his friends, Lewis is well versed on all starship functions and has studied the blueprints for each class of ship in the fleet. His

attention to detail and ability to improvise to get a job done has proven to be Lewis' strength. He received the transfer from the *Discovery* to the *Endeavor* after showing his skill in the engineering department.



Name: T' Shanik
Rank: Ensign
Tactical Officer
Race: Vulcan
Born: 2352, D' anok Outpost
Age: 23

History: Very little is known about T' Shanik' s origins or background. Her Starfleet record indicates that she is Vulcan, but occasionally she has been known to make very uncustomary shows of emotion. She has tested as expert in 5 different forms of martial arts, self defense, and hand-to-hand combat. She regularly participates in competitions across the quadrant, and has received multiple awards since her 18th birthday. Her ability to learn the tactical fields competently have gained her much respect from her Academy instructors. This is her first assignment. In 2375, she led an away team from the *USS Endeavor-A* comprised of security officers to the Cardassian Outpost on Setlik III, where they came to the aid of the Cardassian Resistance attempting to overthrow the Jem' Hadar soldiers stationed there. The mission was a success, needless to say.



Name: Alexandra Kai
Rank: Lieutenant
Ship' s Counselor
Race: El-Aurian
Born: ?, ?
Age: ?

History: Very little is known about Alexandra' s origins. She does not let on as to her age, or birthplace -- only that she is El Aurian and "older than you think". She has a very good talent at "listening" to people, and being able to interpret and solve problems. She has a way of making people feel at ease. A common trait with all El-Aurians, she also has an unusual sense that extended beyond normal linear space-time, giving her the ability to somehow predict when the timeline is not correct. At times, she seems to be somewhat telepathic, but she denies any ability as such.



Name: Galen
Rank: Lieutenant
Science Officer
Race: Bolian
Born: 2347, Bolarus
Age: 28



Name: Frank Parker
Rank: Lieutenant
Assistant Engineer
Race: Human
Born: 2341, Mars Colony
Age: 34

History: Born on Mars Colony, Lieutenant Parker is of German descent and has the accent to boot. He was disappointed that he was passed over for the Chief Engineer' s spot, but soon relented in favor of a younger, more energetic person. He seems content to perform only half as well as tests indicate he should. Lieutenant Parker has tested at almost genius levels, but continues to maintain only a mediocre performance in terms of his service to Starfleet. He has served on 7 different ships: *USS Tripoli*, *USS Endeavor* (original), *USS Enterprise-D*, *USS Adelphi*, *USS Kearsarge*, *USS Gorkon*, and the *USS Venture*

THE U.S.S. ENDEAVOR

