

## Star Trek - The Scipio Chronicles

### "Scipio's Betrayal"

By

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Captain Donovan Scipio studied the displayed sector map, which was highlighted with several ship ID tags. As he watched, more tags appeared from the far edge of the map and moved towards a red line, which indicated the border between Federation and Tholian space. They began forming a semi-circular pattern perpendicular to the border.

"That's an odd maneuver for an invasion force," said Quincy Taggart, the ship's XO.

"It would be...if they were going to invade. This is something totally different," replied Scipio. He tapped a few commands and the map changed from a top down two dimensional chart to a three dimensional cross section of space. "That's a blockade if I ever saw one. They're threading one of their little nets. But who are they expecting to catch?"

"They haven't detected us, at least not that we know of. We've been running silent as you ordered, sir."

"No, it's not us they're after. Lieutenant Bennings...train a passive scan on sector 764," ordered Scipio.

"Aye, sir." Margaret Bennings redirected the sensors and awaited the data return. "I'm picking up two Tholian warcruisers bearing for the net at warp 8.7...and a vessel of unknown configuration following them. They should reach the net in six minutes. I'm patching it through to your station, sir."

The map in front of Scipio expanded to include the neighboring sector. As it did, one of the two Tholian ships blinked out of existence. The second one increased speed to warp nine.

"They're running scared," said Taggart. "I have no love for the diamondheads, but whatever can scare a Tholian warcruiser, let alone destroy it, has my respect."

"As well you should, XO. Always give your adversary the benefit of the doubt. You'll live longer."

"They're not our adversaries, yet. The enemy of my enemy...!"

"Is still as dangerous to us as they are to our enemy," finished Scipio. "Helm, take us forward to the edge of the zone. Thrusters only."

"Aye, sir. Ahead with thrusters only," Lieutenant MacGuyver answered.

The *Agammemnon*, a Renaissance class frigate, inched its way up to the Tholian border. Every window was opaqued and every running light extinguished. The warp core was at minimal, thus keeping the glow from the warp nacelles down. All hands held still, felling that the slightest movement may cause their presence to be known to their opponents across the border. However, on the bridge, at the tactical station, Lt. Commander Elliot Nigma was hoping just the opposite.

"Time?" asked Scipio.

"The two ships will intercept the net in forty five seconds," replied Bennings.

"Ok, it's showtime. Let's see what they're up to. Put the web on the main view screen."

The ships drew closer to the net. As the Tholian warcruiser reached the web, it suddenly dove out of the way as the other ships accelerated to close the gap and envelope the other ship. They closed the net and completely surrounded the vessel with their weapons locked directly on to it.

"And that's all she wrote for them," said Taggart.

The Tholian web suddenly disappeared as the Tholians unleashed their entire arsenals on the trapped ship.

"Magnify the main view screen," said Scipio.

The picture changed to show a close-up of the battle. The Tholians stopped firing and the point where the adversary was, now contained what looked like a ship sized rock.

"Did they melt the thing?" asked Bennings.

"I don't think so," replied Scipio.

The rock seemed to glow in various areas; then, it erupted in a hail of energy balls that shot out towards the Tholian vessels. In a single volley, the Tholians were destroyed at point blank range.

"Holy Cochrane! It just wiped out an entire fleet...twelve ships with one volley!" exclaimed Bennings.

Scipio said nothing, but studied the sensor data on what just happened.

"Orders, captain?" asked Taggart.

"Stay silent. We' ll see what they do next."

"Aye, sir."

The alien ship seemed to survey its handy work and then it slowly moved off.

"Their course indicates that they are heading for the Tholian home world," reported Bennings.

"Prepare a burst transmission to command with all of the data collected. Tell them..."

"Sir!" interrupted Bennings. "They' ve changed course! They' re coming right for us!"

Taggert looked at his readings. "Captain, we have a target lock!"

"On us?"

"No, sir. On them!"

Scipio looked at Nigma. "Commander, what did you do?" he said fiercely, not appreciating a breach in his orders.

"I' m bringing them bak to us. We can' t let the Tholians have that ship."

"Stand down, commander," ordered Taggert. "You' re relieved of duty."

"I' m afraid not, commander. I am invoking Starfleet General Order Thirteen. This ship is under my command now."

"You' re an intelligence officer?" Taggert froze for a moment, not sure where his loyalty should lie at the moment. General Order Thirteen, when invoked on extremely rare occasions, gave a Starfleet Intelligence officer command over whatever resources he deemed necessary to protect the Federation in times of emergency...including starships.

Scipio, on the other hand, knew exactly where his loyalties lay. "Red alert! Helm, bearing 214 mark 86...warp seven, now! Tactical, prepare to launch a spread of photon torpedoes from the aft launchers."

The ship went into warp at MacGuyver' s touch, regardless of the coming power struggle.

"Captain, if you did not hear me correctly, I said that I was in command now," said Nigma.

"I heard you and know exactly what you said. But I am not going to turn my ship over to someone who just betrayed his crewmembers' safety. Now, you ether do your job or I will have you shot for treason. I don' t have time for games."

The *Agammemnon* entered a solar system of seven planets, the alien ship gaining on them.

"Take us to the gas giant, Lt. MacGuyver. Nigma, prepare to fire."

"Aye, sir," they both replied. Nigma reluctantly, though.

As they approached the giant, Scipio checked the tactical readout. "Take us around to the other side. Tactical, set the torpedoes to detonate in from to the hostile. Fire."

The spread of five photon torpedoes exploded just meters away form their pursuer as the *Agammemnon* crossed over the horizon.

"Hang us over the north pole. XO, I want everything but life support, impulse engines and passive sensors shut down.."

"Aye, sir." Within moments, the ship was quiet as a mouse and hidden in the giant' s magnetic field.

"Any sign that they saw us?" asked Scipio.

Bennings checked her readings. "No, sir. They are directing their attention towards the inner planets."

"Good. That will buy us some time." Scipio walked up to the tactical station and faced Nigma. "Now, commander..." He suddenly grabbed the man' s shoulders and shoved him up against the bulkhead, pinning him and knocking the breath out of him. "Why did you feel it necessary to risk the lives of everyone on board for that ship...which, by the way, destroyed fourteen Tholian warcruisers with less effort than I am exerting on you now?"

"I do not have to tell you anything, captain. You just need to follow your orders, as I am following mine," Nigma said defiantly.

Scipio pressed his forearm against Nigma' s throat and drew his face close until they were nose to nose. Nigma, although choking, couldn' t help but to stare into Scipio' s ice gray eyes, whishowed a fury that the intelligence officer never knew possible in a man.

"Tell me what I want to know."

Nigma suddenly felt a terror that he was unprepared for. His superiors had failed to mention that the man, crushing the life out of him, was more intimidating than anyone they could have recruited. He would have to recommend Scipio to the section, that is if he was still alive.

"All right," he choked. "I' ll tell you."

Scipio gave a final push to the man' s larynx and let him go. Nigma staggered and fell to his knees, gasping for air.

"Talk," ordered Scipio.

"Alone. This is for your ears only."

Scipio moved towards him, casually, but his stature screamed of threat. "We will have no more secrets, commander. Talk. Now."

Not seeing much choice, Nigma nodded and complied.

"They're called the Vendoth...an alien species from the Kalium Galaxy."

"That's impossible," said Taggert. "At warp nine, it would take thousands of years to cross that distance."

"Not impossible. They did it in less time than it takes to cross our solar system at half impulse."

"Five days? Incredible," said MacGuyver.

"About sixty years ago, the *USS Excalibur* encountered these aliens. Through a simple quirk of a computer virus, they captured one of their battlecruisers. The one chasing us is a scout. Low power compared to its big brother. Anyway, the one we have is practically useless due to the virus damage and we've been ordered to capture another with the least amount of damage possible...if they ever showed up again. And now, finally, we have a chance."

"So, you risk my ship, my crew for an alien space craft that you know could destroy us easily."

"Starfleet's ship and crew, captain. To me, you're all expendable assets in pursuit of a greater goal."

"You won't win anyone over with that attitude," said Taggert.

"This is just another assignment to me, XO. Besides, with the technology aboard that ship in Federation hands, we won't have to worry about any other race attempting to conquer or challenge us ever again. I think that is worth the lives of this crew."

The look of contempt on Scipio's face said it all. "How do you stop it?"

"We capture it."

"How?"

Nigma's face went blank.

"You don't know, do you? You have no tricks, no codes, no idea of what you are actually up against, do you? All you have is a sixty year old directive that is now looking to blow us away. And who did this order come from, anyway?"

"Starfleet. That's all you need to know, captain."

"Put him in the brig and remove all of his clearance from the data banks."

"With pleasure, sir," replied Taggert. He motioned for two security officers to take charge of Nigma, and he followed them into the turbolift.

When they were gone, Scipio went to the tactical console and replayed the visual and sensor logs of the battle between the Vendoth and the Tholians. The alien had destroyed thirteen ships in under a minute's time...fourteen in under six. The Vendoth could have easily destroyed them all initially. Why then, did they allow themselves to be put into the web...unless they were testing the Tholian's defensive capabilities. He switched to another sensor reading. There was an incredibly fast download from the Tholian ship databases to the Vendoth scout. They literally sucked the information out of the ships' mainframes in a matter of seconds. That's why they let themselves be captured, to ~~ble~~ waste their time in order to gather information. He went back to the data on the Vendoth shields. They began to strain when the Tholians attacked, but then they began transforming the energy from the weapons into the shell that enveloped the ship...a secondary shield of advanced design. Very interesting concept. How do you beat something like that, though?

Scipio touched the comm button on the console. "Bridge to Pasquale. I need you up here with your best shields tech."

"On our way, captain."

A few minutes later, Chief Engineer Christine Pasquale and one of her techs entered the bridge.

"Captain, you know Ensign Leflin, I believe."

"Yes, I snagged you from the *Cheyenne*. I hoped you were going to bring him. Take a look at this and tell me what you think." He replayed the battle and the two watched with interest.

"Is this why you put a strain on my engines, captain?" asked Pasquale.

"Good reason if you ask me," said Leflin. "What is that thing?"

"That...is a Vendoth scout ship," replied Scipio.

"Looks to be about the size of an old Constitution class, but sleeker. Where's the warp nacelles?"

"Your guess is as good as mine."

"And it destroyed, what? Twelve, thirteen Tholian warships?"

"Fourteen, actually."

"It would take a tremendous amount of fire power to get through their defenses," said Pasquale. "What the Tholians should have done was continue firing until they broke through the shell." She pointed to the screen. "See how the, what did you call them? Vendoth? See how their weapons break through the shell when they fire back? I'm guessing that it's some sort of protective secondary shield system. If the Tholians had kept up their fire a little longer, it would have cracked like an egg and they would have been a sitting duck. But, the Tholians got cocky, as usual, and let them retaliate. Now they're space dust. If you decided to fight instead of pushing my engines with a near cold start, we probably could have whipped them. Now, we're probably going to have a tough time getting through their defenses if we meet up with them again."

"They're looking for us now, but we're nicely tucked away in a magnetic field," said Scipio.

"So, why are we hiding when you normally go toe to toe with anyone who looks at you cross-eyed, captain?" asked Pasquale. Leflin held his breath when he heard the insubordinate question.

"Nigma turned out to be working for SI. He tried to take command of the ship and I didn't want a rogue element on my bridge while facing something like that. Besides, they haven't attacked us...yet."

"Nigma's a spook? Never would have figured him for one. Why the hell is he masquerading as a tac officer?"

"Unknown, but he's the reason why they're chasing us on their way to the Tholian homeworld. Now, what are your recommendations?"

"We need to hit them hard and fast," said Leflin. "Photon torpedoes won't cut it...neither will phasers."

"That seems to be all we have, Mr. Leflin. Unless you have something a little stronger you've been hiding in your closet," said Pasquale.

"Warp core breach," said Taggert, who had just returned.

"Destroy the *Agammemnon*? I don't think so," said Pasquale.

"No. We lure them to us, dump the core, and detonate it."

"And both ships blow up. Well, we probably would. Besides, they could just move away before it blows," mentioned Leflin. "But, what if we attach a small tractor beam emitter to it and activate it when the ship gets close enough to it. It will hold onto them long enough for us to remote detonate it."

"How about a shuttle's core?" asked Scipio.

"Not enough anti-matter," replied Pasquale. "It would be about as good as, say two photon torpedoes."

"And you think this would be our best chance?"

The engineers looked at one another. "Yes, sir," they replied.

"Make the preparations. We only get one shot at this."

Lt. commander Nigma popped open an access panel on one of his shoes' heels. Watching the guard closely to make sure that he wasn't watching him, Nigma pulled out a small device and placed it next to the holding cell's forcefield.

"Hey, Johnson...come here a minute, will you?"

The guard walked over to the cell. "Yeah, commander. What is it?"

"What are the chances of me escaping from here?"

"You should know. You helped install the new fields. No chance."

"Wrong." Nigma said as the device nullified the field. Johnson's eyes went wide as Nigma reached through the portal and snapped the guard's neck. Nigma then went to the computer terminal at the guard station.

"Computer...recognize voice authorization Nigma, Elliot...Alpha Gamma Seven Zero Four."

*"That command code has been terminated from this database. You are not authorized to access this terminal."*

"Computer...recognize override command Tango Tango Omega Zero Four Eight Quantum Two Zero." *Command recognized...awaiting final authorization code."*

"Computer...final authorization code: ' Section Thirty One. Enable' ."

*"Authorized."*

"Captain! We're moving away from the planet! I've lost helm control!" said Mayver.

"Weapons just came online," reported Lieutenant DeMarco, the second shift tactical officer.

"Our commands have been overridden," said Taggert. "I have no access, either."

"Computer, return control functions to the main bridge. Authorization Scipio Delta Seven Pi."

"Access denied. Control has been overridden through General Order Thirteen."

"Nigma. Scipio to security. Elliot Nigma has escaped. find him and bring him to the bridge." There was no response. "Security..."

"Comm functions are down also," reported Taggart.

"Sir, the Vendoth...they' re coming," said Bennings.

On the view screen, the small arrowhead shaped ship sped towards them.

"Maybe they' ll be friendly," said MacGuyver, jusbefore two energy balls exited the Vendoth ship.

"Are the shields up?" asked Scipio.

"Yes, sir," replied DeMarco.

"That' s a plus," said Taggart.

"Sir, we just fired four torpedoes," reported Demarco.

"Computer...activate self destruct. Authorization Scipio One One One."

"Sir?" asked Taggart.

"It' s the only way to get command back. Once I stopthe sequence, all commands should return to me."

"Hope you' re right. Computer...activate self destruct. Authorization Taggart Two Two Two."

They looked to Lieutenant Bennings."

"Computer activate self destruct...authorization Bennings Four Four Four."

"Self destruct enabled. Self destruct will initiate in thirty seconds once the final command has been given."

"Computer authorize self destruct. Enable Destruct One Two Four Enable," said Scipio.

"Thirty...twenty nine...twenty eight..."

"Computer, cancel self destruct. Authorization Scipio Four Two One Cancel."

"Twenty five...twenty four..."

"Is this one of those design flaws you hear so much about?" asked MacGuyver.

"Computer..."

Power in the bridge suddenly went out, leaving the crew in silent darkness. A red light flickered on the Ops panel, and one by one, the bridge stations came back to life.

"I have helm control."

"Get us out of here," ordered Scipio.

"Too late! Hold on!" yelled Taggart.

The Vendoth weaponry hit the *Agammemnon* broadside.

"Shields are...solid? captain, a shell has formed where our port shields were. We can' t get power through them," said DeMarco.

"Return fire," said Scipio. "Helm, turn us away from them. Engineering...prepare to dump the core."

"Aye, sir."

The *Agammemnon* banked away from the Vendoth scout while aft torpedo launchers spat out their projectiles.

"Aft view on screen." The viewer changed to show the rear of the ship and the increasingly close scout. "Range?"

"Five hundred kilometers and dropping."

"At two hundred, eject the core and go to full impulse."

"Yes, sir. They' re at four hundred...three fifty...three twentyfive...three hundred...two fifty...two twenty-five...ejecting the core now."

A shudder went through the ship as the access hatch opened and the warp core was spilled out into space below them. Moments later, the tractor beam emitter attached to it activated and searched for a nearby target. The Vendoth ship passed right over it and before their shields could repel the beam, it latched onto them for a micro-second. Long enough. That micro-second activated an auto destruct placed on the core by Pasquale. The resulting explosion knocked out the Vendoth shields entirely on its keel and buffeted the *Agammemnon* nearly out of control.

"Target the exposed area and fire."

DeMarco was already way ahead of Scipio. Every torpedo launcher released a spread of three torpedoes and every phaser bank within the striking arc also fired. The resulting damage was not what they had expected.

Although the bottom portion of the scout was ravaged and ripped off, the upper part of the hull was still intact.

"Tough ship," said Taggert.  
"Fire again," said Scipio.  
"Sir," replied DeMarco, "I've lost controls again."  
"That son of a bitch," cursed Taggert.  
"We're a sitting duck again," stated MacGuyver.  
"Maybe not...I'm getting no power readings from the Vendoth ship. It's dead, sir," said Bennings.  
"Shuttle bay doors are opening and an unauthorized launch is in progress," reported Taggert.  
"He sabotaged the ship so he could go over and claim his prize without us interfering," said Scipio.  
"Taggert, take a team to the shuttle bay and go over to that ship. He's not walking away with this one."  
"No, he's not, sir," said Bennings "The Vendoth ship is being pulled into the atmosphere. It'll be crushed before it gets too far in...and the shuttle is docking with it now."  
"How much time?"  
"I'd give it about two minutes, sir."  
As they watched, the Vendoth ship sank deeper and deeper into the atmosphere...and then was gone. Seconds after it disappeared, a tiny speck exited the cloudy layers and left the system.  
"There he goes," said Taggert. "Too bad. Do you think he got anything?"  
"Let's hope not. An attitude like that combined with technology as advanced as what we witnessed is not a good mix," said Scipio. "Let's get control of the ship again and get a new warp core out here as soon as possible. The Tholians may be looking for revenge in the wrong places."

*Captain's Log - Supplemental: Curious that Starfleet has no record of a Lt. Commander Elliot Nigma, nor has anyone in Starfleet Intelligence. Reliable sources in all departments that I have checked with claim the man does not exist. Another curiosity is that once we regained access to our computers, there was no record of him there, either. Even my personal database that had his evaluations, reports, what-have-you, bore no trace that the man ever existed. I personally inspected his quarters - which was empty - not even a hair in the bathroom sink. So the question remains. Who was he...and who did he work for? Elliot Nigma...Enigma: a mystery. I should have caught that as an oddity right away.*

*The Tholian government holds no ill will towards the Federation in this matter. In fact, they seemed pleased that we diverted the Vendoth ship from their space. This incident could possibly lead to a warmer climate between us - hopefully. And as far as the Vendoth, Nigma had also taken every scrap of sensor data that we had collected on them. All that remains of the encounter is the visual log of the battle between the Tholians and the Vendoth ship. That is thanks to Chief Pasquale, who downloaded the images for reference onto a portable data unit.*

*Only one issue remains open. Nigma. there may be no record of him, but his face is burned into my memory. I expect total loyalty from my crew. They are here to serve Starfleet, under my direction. I pride myself with the professionalism of my crew; and when one has his own agenda, or serves someone else's, then the well being of the ship becomes endangered. I will find him, eventually. And when I do, he will pay for his betrayal.*