With the birth of a new century begins a new legend

STAR TREK - LOTUS FLEET

MAIDEN VOYAGE

The First Voyage of the Starship Lotus

STAR TREK - LOTUS FLEET

USS LOTUS : MAIDEN VOYAGE

SEASON 1 EPISODE 1

DRAMATIS PERSONAE
(By order of appearance)

Nova as Admiral Nova
Niomo as Lieutenant Niomo Lire
Redshirt as Admiral Redshirt
Garrison as Lieutenant Commander John Garrison
Hyperdrive as Ensign Ty Hyperdrive
Kirkpatrick as Doctor Sean Kirkpatrick
Athos as Admiral Crowl

Roleplay session from
September 2008 to October 2008

Novelization by
John Garrison

Edited by
Niomo Lire & Kheren

Cover by
Calderwood and Kheren

NOTE FROM THE FINAL EDITOR:

Aside from the usual correcting of spelling, grammar and punctuation and the occasional completing of sentences and paragraphs required by editing such novelizations of text-based roleplaying, the editor of this final version had to correct several historical and factual discrepancies from canon and adjust the story to the Lotus Fleet Roleplaying timeline which was defined years after this story was played.

By the time this story is supposed to be happening (2408), many elements of the original story were inaccurate and had to be corrected. Among other things:

-Romulus had been destroyed by the Hobus supernova in 2387. Therefore, Ambassador Spock and Picard could not have been on Romulus, They were relocated on one of the new worlds claimed by one or the other factions pretending to legitimacy of ruling the shattered Romulan Star Empire.

- Ambassador Spock disappeared from our reality by the time of the Hobus catastrophy. His presence here was nevertheless maintained, as a few other later LF stories continued to use him as a background character nevertheless. A future story within the LF universe is planned that will eventually explain why he is still accounted for in our universe twenty-one years after his official disappearance.

- Worf was not a captain anymore in 2408 but a general and high ranking official within the House of Martok and the Klingon Empire.

- A succession of confusing references to the USS Umpqua and then to runabouts between PCs and NPCs was resolved by making it all become the same event, the coming of the Umpqua to Starbase 10, heralding the next RP ship's coming within the story and so building LF universe continuity as well.

- The Lotus was described as firing phasers while under its ablative regenerative armor which, according to canon, is not possible, as the replicated plating covers the entire hull, therefore the phaser strips right on it. The battle scene was altered with torpedo volleys as their tube's ports can open with the armoring active, as seen in VOYAGER's final episode ''Endgame.''

With these adjustments taken into account, the reader can now here enjoy the very first, pioneering effort of the early Lotus Fleet members in starting the text-based Star Trek RP we are all enjoying so much nowadays.

We all stand on the shoulders of those first players. Enjoy this, the very first adventure in the Lotus Fleet Star Trek universe.

This, is how it all began.

Chapter 1 : A walk to the future and beyond

''The time is 0530, the time is 0530...''

"Computer; disables alarm and reset. Raise illumination five levels," Admiral Nova mumbled barely awake.

Stretching, he rose from his bed, rubbing his eyes and clearing his throat.

Walking over to the replicator, "Coffee Black" he requested.

As the cup materialized on the replicator's output tray, the comander of Lotus Fleet, the elite division of Starfleet, lifted it carefully so as not to spill a single drop. Smelling the soothing aroma that has alowed him to start every morning off on the right foot, he sipped from the cup.

"Almost as good as the real thing," he said with satisfaction.

Looking out the porthole, Admiral Nova could see Earth and most of Europe.

"I never get tired of seeing that beautiful planet."

Turning to his desk, he sat down and began reading through personnel logs.

Trying to find the right crew for the right starbase is not going to be easy, he thought.

There where so many applicants that where well trained and well qualified, especially in science and technology, that in the last twenty years had gone from theoretical to near active use fleet wide. He wished that he could simply take them all.

After all, he did have to fill an entire Starbase.

Sitting back in his chair and rubbing his eyes, the Admiral set the PADD down on the desk.

"Computer; status of USS Lotus, Registry Number NCC - 74910," he requested.

As the computer began reporting on the status of the Lotus, Admiral Nova decided that simply getting a report was not enough. He had to go and see it for himself.

Leaving his quarters, he proceeded down to the nearest Turbo Lift, passing several Officers on the way and nodding to several. As he approached the Turbo lift, several Officers exited, most likely fromthe nightshift and were returning to their own quarters.

"Deck 34," he announced to the Turbo Lift computer.

As the Turbo Lift swooshed from deck to deck, he started to feel a sense of excitement. Since coming aboard Star base 74 and seeing the Lotus, he had been looking forward to walking around and getting a feel for the new flagship of Lotus Fleet.

The USS Lotus was an Intrepid Class ship... by name... But, after the return of the USS Voyager and thirty years of research and development, in comparison, the Lotus was a much more advanced form of the Intrepid Class ship. All in all, the superstructure of the ship had not changed; however, what was on the inside was something far different than all her predecessors of the same class.

Suddenly, the turbo lift came to a stop and the doors opened.

As he began walking towards the dockingbay, he could see the underside of the Intrepid Class ship's saucer section. The external lights still appeared to be off; however, he could just barely make out the lettering on the hull due to the glow coming off of the envelopping interior of the Starbase. As he began walking down the long corridor to the main docking port of the Lotus, he found himself becoming increasingly excited. Trying to decide where to go first, the Admiral decided that engineering is the first place that he wanted to see. After coming aboard the Lotus and traveling to deck 11, he walked through the double door leading into the heart of the ship.

"Admiral on Deck!" a young Ensign yelled out.

"Carry on!" Admiral Nova replied.

As he began walking towards the warp core, the ship's Chief Engineer approached him.

"Sir, I was not aware that you would be coming by. The ship's not..." the medium-sized, dark-haired man started to say as he motioned everyone to get back to work.

"Don't be concerned, Lieutenant... Lieutenant Lire, isn't it? I was getting a report this morning and decided that I would much rather see things in person. This was not scheduled." the Admiral assured the Chief.

"Aye, Sir" the Chief replied.

"So... How are things going? Have you finished the installation of all of the ships systems?"

"Yes, Sir; we are actually preparing to bring the main computer online and most of the subsystems." ,explained the Lieutenant.

"Very good. Has the ship received its complement of quantum torpedoes?" asked the Admiral.

"Those will be installed on Tuesday, Sir."

"Very well. You've done a wonderful job here, Lieutenant."

"Thank you, Sir!"

As Admiral Nova left main engineering, he decided that the next location he would go see was to be the bridge.

As the doors to the Turbo lift swooshed open, he stepped out onto the Bridge of the USS Lotus. Looking around, he suddenly heard an Ensign to his left yell out:

"ADMIRAL ON DECK!"

''As you were,'' he replied.

Walking over to the captain's chair, he sat down and tapped the comm button.

"Admiral Nova to all Lotus Fleet crew members; please begin moving your personal effects to crew quarters. All Civilians are now authorized to begin boarding. The USS Lotus will depart for Starbase 10 within the next seventy-two hours."

He made a pause before adding:

"Bridge to all department heads; please report to my ready room at 1400 hours for our mission brief. Admiral Nova out."

*   *   *

As the command staff began trickling in to his ready room, Admiral Nova walked over to the replicator.

"Coffee, Hot" the Admiral requested.

As the cup materialized, the last of the senior staff entered the room. Picking up the cup, he turned to his crew.

"Thank you all for coming on such short notice. Unfortunately, there is no other way to put this so I'll get right to it. Starfleet Command has informed me that the situation between the Romulans and the Klingons is not going well since the Hobus supernova destroyed the Romulan homeworlds... and the Federation is stuck in the middle. While the Klingons have long been allies, Starfleet Command believes that a fractured Romulan Empire is much more of a danger to the security of the Federation then an all-out conflict with the Klingons. Hopefully, we won't have to find out. General Worf and his crew have been dispatched to the Klingon homeworld to try and quell some of the unrest and, hopefully, prevent them from further incursion into Romulan Space. I've been told that Ambassador Picard and Ambassador Spock are in Romulan territory however, trying to salvage relations with the Empire since the Hobus catastrophy turned it into an apprehended interstellar civil war zone.; should things begin to really fall apart, they may need to leave in a hurry."

As Lieutenant Niomo, the ship's Chief Engineer, listened to the briefing, he shifted uneasily in his seat. As he heard Admiral Nova talk about their first mission, he could feel his face turn red, especially when the Admiral spoke of retrieving Picard and Spock along with trying to escape the Romulan homeworld...He could only hope that his superiors would help him along the way.

"After we have safely arrived at Lotus Fleet headquarters and transported the rest of Lotus Fleet's Command Staff and Civilian members there, continued Nova, the USS Lotus has been ordered to begin scouting missions along the Federation, Klingon and Romulan Borders. At this time, we are not authorized to engage either side unless otherwise fired upon first. Over the next several weeks, Starfleet Command will be sending three additional ships to Lotus Fleet. However, 2 out of the 3 are still undergoing refits and Staffing. The 3rd is the USS Umpqua, will be arriving within the week. The Primary mission for the USS Umpqua is to act as Academy Training ship however in situations where we are in need of reinforcements this Nova Class ship can be pulled to assist as needed.''

Nova looked at them all in turn.

''Everyone, I can not stress enough to each of you the sensitivity of the situation. One wrong move can send the Federation into an all-out War, a war that will place Lotus Fleet right on the front lines.''

He stood up.

''Now you all have your orders. Please begin preparing each of your departments for departure. DISMISSED."

Niomo stood, picked up his PADD, walked to the Admiral and stood at attention.

"Lieutenant Niomo Lire reporting, Sir! All engineering sections have reported in. Warp core running at nominal levels, power transfer grids are running at optimal efficiency. I have also created a report of engineering's readiness, should you require, Sir. Also, I would like to request that we test the variable geometry systems of the pylons before we make our first jump to warp. Just in case... Sir."

"At ease Lieutenant Lire. Glad to have you aboard. The Lotus is a newly built Intrepid Class ship, so I'm afraid that you'll have to keep a closer eye on some her systems more than for a ship that is well seasoned. As we leave spacedock, I'll make sure you have the time that you need to do all of your system checks."

As the Admiral quickly glanced over the Lieutenant's report, he could see that, in the short time he has been aboard, he had managed to accomplish diagnostics on some systems that Starbase Engineering had said wouldn't get done for another three days.

"Well, everything looks in order here. I will give this report a closer look. Please prepare the ship for departure."

As Lieutenant Niomo left the ready room, Admiral Nova followed shortly after with coffee in hand. Sitting down in the center chair he settled in and tapped open the main hailing frequency.

"USS Lotus to Starbase Control." The Admiral announced.

"Lotus this Starbase Control. We are reading you."

"Star base Control; permission to leave Spacedock."

"USS Lotus; permission granted, you may proceed to space doors 3."

"Thank you, Starbase Control. Lotus out.''

Focusing his attention to his bridge crew, Nova glanced over his right shoulder at the tactical station.

''Mister Garrison, set off Condition Blue.”

"Condition blue off, aye aye, Admiral."

“Ensign Hyperdrive; release all mooring cables and detach magnetic interlocks. Proceed with thrusters only. After we have cleared the space doors, proceed to Full Impulse.

''Aye, Sir.''

''Bridge to engineering; after we have left spacedock, please conduct all necessary pre-warp tests."

"Aye Admiral," Niomo responded and then called over one of the Ensigns nearest to him. "Make sure the matter and antimatter injectors are reacting correctly... I don't want to drop out of warp midflight because we're about to explode."

Pointing at another crewman, he stated:

"We are going to be testing both the geometry of the pylons and the teradyne output levels. Last time it was checked, the Lotus was running at three thousand five hundred er second. I want to see how much farther we can push her. Prepare to record any stress on the bulkheads as the nacelles move."

Finally, he turned back to his console and began reviewing the diagnostic reports of the EPS relays and then prepared to be alerted by the Conn that they were safely away from the station.

As the ship began to slowly move away from its docking ports, a small hum from the thrusters engaging could be heard throughout the ship.

"Helm, take us out." the Admiral ordered

"Aye, Sir. Approaching spacedoors in thirty seconds."

"Very good. Let's go ahead and take a look at it. On Screen."

As the USS Lotus came into taxying position, just ahead of the refited Intrepid Class ship was one of the newest of Starfleet's ship classes, the Cheyenne. It had only just come into service but was already causing a stir among ship captains, mainly because the ship served as a modern version of the Constellation Class, to be used as a deep space exploration and border control ship. Like the old constellation frame, it was been outfitted with four nacelles rather than the traditional two; this way, if some of the nacelles were damaged, there were backups to help bring her home. This design carried the weapons array of a Sovereign class battleship, although with a lesser torpedo count, but still could hold its own in a fight without question.

As the Lotus slowly passed through the giant doors, a sudden glistening of light passed across the hull of the brand new Intrepid Class ship.

"Sir, we have cleared the space station and are now going to full impulse," Ensign Hyperdrive announced.

"Very well, helm. Come to course 248 mark 15," Admiral Nova replied.

"Aye Sir."

As the ship went to full impulse, Admiral Nova tapped the comm. Button

"Bridge to Engineering; we have cleared spacedock."

"Initiating Pre warp test Bridge.''

*About damn time...*thought the chief engineer. But all he said was:

''Ok people, look alive. We are going to first run a test on the geometry of the pylons to make sure all systems are green. We will then test the core in a short six second burst. I want all systems to be running at optimal levels."

A few minutes later, Niomo initiated the warp core test procedures. As the core began to hum with the sound of matter-antimatter annihilation, his screen began to show the pylons connected to the nacelles move.

"Pylons have achieved warp position, Sir. No stress or anomalies detected."

"Thank you, Ensign," Lieutenant Lire said before turning to the other members, "Ok, disabling the field coils...Ok...test initiating."

The warp core's readings came up on a console next to Niomo and an Ensign read off the numbers.

"Sir, the core is running at three thousand five hundred and sixty teradynes per second."

"Ok. Computer, reset nacelle pylons and reinitiate the warp field coils."

The computer bleeped in acknowledgement. Hitting his comm badge, the chief engineer reported:

"Engineering to Bridge. All warp core tests complete, Sir. We are not running at optimal efficiency, but I'll work on it. We should be running perfectly by the time we have our next mission. We are ready to engage warp drive at your command."

"Very well Chief. Prepare to go to Warp" Nova replied."Helm, Set course for Starbase 10 and engage."

Niomo turned to his Ensign and said:

"Come here and monitor the energy outflows from the primary EPS conduits. I am heading to the Bridge. Carry On."

The ensign saluted Lieutenant Niomo and sat down at the console. Niomo turned towards the turbolift and walked to the doors. Upon entering he stated "Bridge." and leaned against the wall as the turbolift began heading up.

"Admiral, we are receiving a transmission from Starbase 10 requesting our ETA. Also, Star Base 74 just sent a message informing us that Commander Little will be delayed."

"Mister Garrison; transmit the following message to Lotus Fleet Headquarters on an encoded subspace frequency. Starbase 10, USS Lotus will be arriving within the week to deliver personal and supplies, Lotus Out"

As Niomo waited for his turbolift to get to the bridge, his stomach reminded him that he had just gone a day without any food.

"Computer, Stop. Deck 2, please."
Moments later, the turbolift doors opened on deck 2, a few feet away from the mess hall's doors. Niomo stepped out and walked into what everyone took the habit of calling Ten Forward... even if it was neither looking forward nor on deck 10, as was the case on the so famous Galaxy class USS Enterprise. But the trend still was there among many new officers awed by the former Federation flagship's legend. As Niomo walked into their own so-called Ten Forward, he could smell the other off duty crew member's freshly replicated food. Niomo walked over to the replicator and stood for a second to make a decision.

"Hm...Blueberry Pie."

The computer bleeped in acknowledgement and began replicating.

What Niomo saw though, was not pie.

In front of him materialized something that could only be described as... disgusting. It looked like a dead burned purple slug the size of his head.

He quickly hit the dematerialize command on the replicator's console.

"Blegh!" he burped out hitting his combadge. "Lire to Engineering. I'm in the mess hall, and there seems to be a *small* problem with the replicators. I didn't get what I asked for... Have there been any complaints?"

"No, Sir. No complaints so far. Though... weren't you going to the Bridge? I didn't know on duty officers could take breaks, heh."

"Enough Ensign. Assign team 5 to run a level 1 diagnostic on the replicator systems. I think it may be a problem with the voice recognition program... but we'll see. I'm heading to the bridge; I'll let the Admiral know."

Niomo tapped off his combadge.

"Let's try again. But this time on manual." Niomo examined the control panel and keyed in his selection. The replicator hummed and began to beam in an item.

A type 2 phaser.

"Oh, yeah, thats totally pie. dammit. Computer, dematerialize the item in the replicator."

Turning around, Niomo said:

"Everyone, can I have your attention please. Did any of you get or see anyone order something from the replicator and get something totally different?"

A few hands went up as a blue shirted ensign stood,

"Yes, Sir. I asked for a steak and I got a potato. I asked again and I got a chicken leg. I settled with it. Tasted pretty good."

A few other crewmen stated the same type of "I asked for one thing and got another, but settled for the new item." Niomo put his hand to his temples.

"Ok. Next question: Why did no one report anything?"

The blue shirted ensign answered first again,

"Well, most of us just figured that the ship was new and needed some time to get everything working."

"Ugh. Thank you all. Return to your food and enjoy."

Hitting his badge again, he said:

"Lire to Engineering. I've got a few reports of people not getting what they want. Assign Team 3 to analyze the power grid on deck 2. Team 5 is still on the replicator systems. Also, have Team 6 run a level 4 diagnostic on the Transporters. Finally, take Team 2 with you and run some DML-DQL tests on the main computer. I'm off to the bridge."

Niomo turned to the door and walked into the turbolift.

"Bridge"

The lift quickly rose one deck and the doors wooshed open. Niomo quickly set his eyes on the Admiral, made sure he wasn't busy and approached him.

"Admiral...We may have a problem. I was just called to Ten Forward....the replicators aren't working properly. At all. I have my repair teams running diagnostics on any systems that could be causing the problems. Replicators, transporters and some of deck 2's power grids will have to be taken offline for analysis.''

he sighed before continuing.

''I also have a few people looking into the main computer's input and output database recognition systems. Estimated diagnostic time is around three hours. I'm sorry, but I don't know how long the power grid will be down, or how long the tests will take. I haven't worked with an Intrepid's systems before. My best guess is four hours for the transporters and six hours for the main computer. The computer will be fully functional during this time, but the other systems will have to be taken offline. The power grid on deck 2 *should* remain operational, as I can redirect power from other decks. Once we figure out what's wrong, we can either try to repair it here or wait until we reach Lotus Fleet headquarters."

"Very well Lieutenant. Apparently the Lotus First Officer will be arriving at Starbase 74 shortly so she will be taking a runabout from there and meet us at these present coordinates. While we are waiting for the runabout, please begin all necessary repairs, anything thats not complete by they time the Commander gets here, will have to wait until we reach Starbase 10."

Nova lifted his eyes to the front end of the bridge.

"Helm, bring us out of warp and maintain position."

He then turned back to his chief engineer.

"Lieutenant Lire, I trust that I will not have any difficulty getting a cup of coffee when I need one, will I?"

"Well. If by coffee you mean getting anything from a lugnut to a cooked animal from the Delta Quadrant, then yes, you are fine. I've got most of the engineering staff on call working on it. We'll get it fixed. In the meantime, we can dip into our rations...Insta-caf doesn't taste as good, but it's better than getting a cooked rat, Sir. I will keep you apprised of our situation."

Once dismissed, Niomo walked over to the enginnering station and began tracking the progress of the ongoing diagnostics.

I wonder if it is affecting more than just Deck 2...

Hitting his combadge, he said outloud:

"Lire to Sickbay, Come in."

"Kirkpatrick here. I was just about to contact you. Our EMH seems to be on the fritz. He's been coming on and off for the past few minutes. I've checked his program and from what I can see there doesn't seem to be a problem there. Is there trouble with the power grids?"

"Please state the nature of the... Please state the natu..." could be heard in the background.

"Ugh. Not what I want to hear doc...There seems to be some problems with a few systems. I'll add the EMH to our to-do list. Do me a favor, try to replicate something. Anything. I just need to see if our replicator problems are shipwide. Let me know once you have your results. Lire Out."

Hitting his badge again, he called out:

"Bridge to Engineering. Call up all off-duty Engineers. I am assigning team 1 to analyze the power grid on Deck 5. Team 4 gets to run a level 1 diagnostic on the EMH program. All other engineers are now assigned to monitor any power fluctuations the ship has. Lire Out."

Down in sickbay, Doctor Sean Kirkpatrick, the Chief Medical Officer of the newly commissionned lotus Fleet flagship, walked over to a replicator.

"One PADD."

He tapped hit combadge, staring at what had materialized; a glass of Andorian Ale.

"Kirkpatrick to Lieutenant Lire. I did what you requested regarding the replicators. I wasn't aware that PADDs came in a liquid form. Sorry to inform you that the replicators here also seem to be malfunctioning."

"Thanks doc...I'll come down in a bit to analyze the doctor's program...Lire out."

Sean dematerialized the ale and returned his attention to the distraught EMH.

"Lire to Ensign Biggs. Please meet me in Sickbay. I need your holoprogram specialty."

"Aye, Sir, be there in a second."

Niomo stood up, went to the turbolift and proceeded down to deck 5.

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After about two hours of scanning through lines of code, Niomo and Ensign Biggs were finally able to figure out why the EMH refused to boot.

"Doc, we've found the problem with the EMH. apparently, his program never got passed the input subroutine...Which leads me to believe that the main computer has an error in its output commands. Interesting... Anyway, Biggs will work on the EMH while I head back to Engineering. He should be finished within the hour."

Niomo left Biggs to fix the problem while he returned to Engineering. Once he arrived, two engineers approached him to report on their diagnostics. Most of the systems seemed to have the same problem the EMH had.

Niomo sighed and turned on his comm.

"Engineering to Bridge. Admiral, this is Lire. It seems that there's a problem in the output commands in the main computer. I'm having my teams bypass the controls that are in error, but it's not something we'll be able to completely fix until we can get to a starbase. I'll be running a diagnostic on the weapons and shield systems, just in case we need them, but it seems that only voice activated systems, like the replicators and EMH are affected... so I doubt that weapons and shields are damaged. But of course, it never hurts to make sure we wont die from overexposure to photon torpedoes..."

The chief engineer's report was interrupted by the tactical chief's voice:

''Admiral; incoming secured transmission from Starfleet Command, Sir.''

"Very well, Ill take it in my ready room. Chief Lire, do your best, Nova out. Mr. Garrison, please notify me once the runabout has arrived. I want to get underway again as soon as humanly possible."

Nova rose from his command seat and headed with rapid steps to his office. Sitting down behind his desk, he activated the screen on his computer terminal.

"Admiral Redshirt, what can I do for you?"

"Admiral Nova, we have a problem." immediately started the squared-set officer on the small screen. "I just got out of a briefing on the current situation out in the Neutral Zone and, apparently, things are getting worse. On top of that, Starfleet Intellegence believes that the Romulans might have snuck into Federation space.''

Nova was not surprised by the updated report. He was well aware that, during the Dominion War, a sensor net had been built by the Dominion within the Argolis star cluster. The USS Defiant had then been dispatched there by Admiral William Ross and destroyed critical portions of the net. However, Starfleet Intelligence had believed for a long time afterwards that the Romulans were attempting to reactivate the sensor net for their own purposes, which would give them unprecedented sensor data on ship movements in the Klingon Empire, the Cardassian Union and Federation Space.

Looks like their fears was well-founded... silently guessed Nova. And Redshirt said as much.

''Here's the deal. Just about everyone who could provide us with additional info on the Argolis Cluster is either dead or turned into some deity. Admiral William Ross passed away a few years ago; records show Commander Jadzia Dax is dead and Captain Benjamin Sisko is still officially missiong in action. But there is still one more person who can help us.''

After a brief pause, Redshirt did not explain further but instead said:

''Starfleet has ordered us to look into this matter further. Also, we need some delicate information on Argolis. We have been instructed to make contact with General Worf on Q'onos. Starfleet doesn't want to go through the channels on this because they don't want to tip off the Klingons just yet.''

he sighed.

''I am moving up my departure from Earth and have put my Academy lectures on hold... again. Once I can round up a skeleton crew for the Umpqua, we'll begin preparations, so that we can depart as soon as Captain Crowl and his officers gets here. I want to be out at Starbase 10 as soon as possible. We have alot of work to do. I'll see you soon, Admiral. Redshirt out."

Chapter 2 : Niomo's Headache

Wiping the figurative sweat from his brow, Niomo sat back in his chair.

"Computer, Time."

The computer bleeped in acknowledgement and responded: "1540 hours".

Niomo sighed. The new commander would be arriving in twenty minutes. His people had finally finished all of the diagnostics of the weapons and shield systems, all condition green. But he couldn't help shake the fact that the ship was damaged in some way, even if it had just launched from spacedock. Once the Lotus would arrive at Starbase 10. he would sit down with the Admiral and the chief of security and talk about the possibility of sabotage. A main computer shouldn't have this many bugs in it, unless it's a prototype....and a very poorly tested prototype.

He sighed again. There was little proof that there was any sabotage...Niomo would put it in his personal log, just in case something else came up which would reinforce his belief.

No need to waste anyone's time...

His console flashed an alert as the computer began to speak:

"Alarm time reached, 1550 hours."

Turning off the console's alert, Niomo said:

"Thank you, computer."

Niomo hit his combadge and stated:

"Engineering to Conn. All diagnostics are complete and we are ready to go to warp as soon as the new commander arrives. I am on my way to the bridge; I just need to stop at my quarters. Lire out."

Niomo entered the turbo lift and arrived at Deck 9 moments later. He greeted a few crewmen and entered his own room. Unfortunately, he had had little time to set much of his personal items up in the room. sitting down at his desk, he looked at his computer console and tapped a few commands. Bringing up his personal logs, he took a few minutes to go over his words and then recorded his thoughts about the ship and its problems. After finishing, he went back to the turbo lift.

"Deck 1, Bridge"

The computer chirped in acknowledgement.
As the lift started to go up, Niomo could tell something was still wrong.

A few minutes later, the doors opened up on deck 2.

Looking around to make sure no one was waiting for the lift, Niomo concluded that there was a problem with the turbo lift's voice recognition program. Niomo quickly pulled out the turbo lift's manual processor and entered deck 1 into its system. The doors slowly shut and the lift raised one more deck to finally reach the Bridge. The doors slowly opened and Niomo took a quick look around the bridge to make sure the new commander was not there. Seeing that he was early, Niomo proceeded to his station and waited for the new commander to arrive.

Not far from him at the tactical console behind his own engineering station, Lieutenant Garrison called out:

''Bridge to Admiral Nova.''

"Go ahead" the Admiral Replied.

"Admiral, the runabout is approaching tractor range."

Very well. As soon as Commander Little has come aboard, please inform her that I would like to see her in my ready room.''

''Aye, Sir, Garrison out.''

Looking over to Lieutenant Lire, Garrison quietly approached the chief engineer.

"Lieutenant, I believe the various problems all over the ship may be due to sabotage and I believe the perpetrator may be on board. I recommend that constant scans should be performed all over engineering. I will be down shortly to investigate any malfunctions still occurring.''

Meanwhile, standing up from behind his desk in his ready room, Admiral Nova began to assess the current situation as it had been delivered to him by Admiral Redshirt. As he approached the replicator to get another cup of coffee, he began to wonder whether or not this new ship and her new crew were ready for what was ahead...

"Hmm, Only time will tell what a slippery slope we tread," he said to himself.

Suddenly the replicator went to work and a tub of butter materialized.

With a sigh, the Admiral manually instructed the replicator to dematerialize the item. He then orders a cup of black coffee manually. After grabbing the hot cup, the Admiral Left his ready room.

As the doors slid open, he saw Lieutenant Niomo Lire hard at work at the engineering station. Sitting down in his chair, the Admiral brought up a center computer console and access shuttlebay 1. The Runabout has docked and the ship's first Officer had arrived.

'' Mister Garrison; patch me to the Umpqua.''

''Channel open, Sir. You have Admiral Crowl.''

"Admiral Nova to Admiral Crowl."

"Crowl here.."

"Admiral Crowl, please make your way to rendez-vous with us as fast as possible. You are aware of our current situation I gather."

"Yes, Admiral Nova. We have already arrived on board and are beginning our departure checks."

"Very well; have a safe trip and give Admiral Redshirt my regards."

"You too, Sir, and good luck."

"Admiral Nova out."

On the small, compact bridge of the science vessel USS Umpqua, the short but powerful frame of Admiral Crowl straightened in the seat next to the command chair.

"Captain Imperator; short-handed and pressed for time as we are, you will have to take the helm yourself. Begin pre-flight sequence." he ordered.

"Pre-flight complete; ready for launch."

"Admiral Crowl to Starbase flight control. Requesting permission to launch."

"Permission granted. Good luck.''

'"Open space doors. Bring us to cruise mode."

"Aye sir; navigational deflector online, long-range sensors, structural integrity field, and inertial dampening systems configured for warp speed. All systems on-line." Captain Imperator at the helm announced.

"Setting course for Starbase 10, maximum warp. At warp 8, we will be able to reach Starbase 74 in approximately eight hours."

Moments later the compact Nova class starship exited the confines of starbase 74 and quickly went to warp heading back to the headquarters of Lotus Fleet at the heart of the Hromi sector, closest to both Klingon and Romulan borders.

At the same moment, on the USS Lotus, things were also starting to move again.

"Admiral Nova to Command staff; please report my ready room for our mission brief updates."
"Helm, resume course to Star base 10, Warp 6."

"Aye, Sir, Warp 6, Course plotted."

"Engage" the Admiral ordered.

As Admiral Nova stood to return to his ready room, Niomo and Garrison followed.

Shortly after the ship's new first officer arrived.

"Ah, Commander Little, welcome aboard. Now let's get started, ''

Admiral Nova relayed the information to his command staff, what had been told to him by Admiral Redshirt. He could tell each had concerns but would do their duties just the same.

"Alright everyone, we will be arriving at Lotus Fleet heardquarters soon so, get to it."

As everyone left, Commander Little approached the Admiral.

''Sir, I apologize for arriving late. The USS Englewood was delayed by a dispute between some Nausicaans transports and a Ferrengi cruiser."

"I understand, Commander. Everything worked out for us anyway. We needed to stop and make some minor adjustments to the ship. Commander, have you ever been into Romulan territory?" Admiral Nova suddenly asked, shifting subjects without so much as a pause.

"No, Sir." She replied

"Well, I am a bit concerned about Ambassadors Picard and Spock. And considering their past, even if there was danger, I doubt the two of them would admit it. So, I want you to take a Delta Class Shuttle and head to Rator III where the new Romulan government is seated... well, the one faction currently posing as a stable and legitimate one. When you make contact with Picard and Spock, please inform them of our current situation then remain with them until they have addressed the Romulan Senate... or what is left of it.''

"Yes, Sir, I'll leave right away." Commander Little replied with excitement.

As the two of them left the ready room, the commander headed for the shuttle bay and Admiral Nova returned to the captain's chair.

Turning to Niomo Lire at his right he asked:

"Chief, have you managed to check the universal translator, considering we have been having all of these voice recognition issues. I would hate to get in a situation going into Klingon space where the UT failed and I told a Klingon that his mother was a Targ. Also Chief, unfortunately, we are not going to have the time to stop for repairs. So, once we arrive, transport all necessary equipment and additional personal over to the Lotus. You'll have to make the repairs to the ship on the fly."

"Good idea, Sir. I'll start working on it immediately. As for the repairs...I focused on warp dynamics. I can only do so much on the computer before it gets too complex, but I'll see if any other engineers know the systems. I'll also work with the science chief.''

Niomo then lowered his voice.

''Also, I have been thinking that all these problems may not be a coincidence. Lieutenant Commander Garrison also thinks something is up. I'd hate to say it, but... what if the ship was sabotaged?"

After a few seconds, Niomo spoke again at normal volume.

"Anyway, I will get working on the UT and then start rounding up the computer geeks to see what we'll need from Starbase 10."

The chief engineer returned his atention to his station to begin organizing his repair teams, to run diagnostics on the translator matrix and to begin making lists of parts required for the main computer's repair.

He hit his badge on the left side of his chest.

"Lire to Astrometics. Chief, are you there?"

"Aye, Niomo. What's up?"

"Well, we're having a problem with the main computer. Any chance you or anyone in your department would be able to help us sort through all the code?"

"I think I could spare a few people, including myself. I'm assuming we'll be picking up parts and equipment from Stabase 10?"

"Yeah, that's correct," Niomo responded. "Do me a favor; head to engineering with your team and work with my people to see what parts we need."

The science chief laughed,

"Haha. Look's like I need to save your ass again. Reminds me of exam time at the Academy. I'll gather my team and report to engineering asap. Astrometrics out."

Niomo sighed and reported that there would be incoming science officers to engineering.

Getting Niomo's attention, Garrison signaled him to come over to his station. As Niomo approached him. Garrison explained:

"We should activate a force field to all access panels to prevent any further tampering by an intruder if one is on board. Lieutenant, can you provide me with a list of the damaged systems and, while you are at it, assist me in checking out the malfunctioning systems? If this is sabotage, we must stop the saboteur before we patrol Romulan or Klingon space."

"John, my teams are already working with Science to get the computer fixed. The easiest way to describe the damage is simply: anything with voice command is damaged. Communicating with the computer still seems to function fine. I've been able to record logs and get timers fine. But ask to replicate something or try to use a turbolift and it goes haywire. The simplest fix right now is to just input all commands manually. I've already run scans and diagnostics of the shields and weapons. They're in perfect working order. In my professional opinion, we shouldn't have a problem if we need to patrol the border. We'll just need to do a little more than normal to get around the ship. I'll establish level 1 force fields around the Main Computer and level 5 force fields around any primary system access point. The only people who will have access to disable these fields for a short period will be the people in the repair teams. Should be no more than fifteen people."

"Good; please keep me informed.I'll be checking for any abnormal sensor readings such as a personal cloak here at my console on the bridge," Garrison replied.

"I wasn't aware that any race had developed personal cloak. Usually the power consumption and size of the generator makes personal versions impossible at this time. Either way, I need to get to work. See you later."

Niomo returned to his console and began to make arrangements for Cargo Bay 2 to hold all of the equipment they would require for making repairs.

<p align="center">*   *   *</p>

Finally, when the USS Lotus entered sensor range of Starbase 10 inside of sector 201, known as the Hromi sector after the star cluster found there, a comm message came in.

"USS Lotus this is Starbase 10. We read you on our sensors and estimate ETA to be one point five hours; can you confirm."

"Starbase 10, this is Admiral Nova. Yes, we will be arriving in approximately one and a half hour. Please be advised that the ship will need to not be docking with the starbase. Unfortunately, all supplies and Personel will need to transport over. Please contact my Cheif Engineer; he will supply a list of equipment and supplies needed to make repairs to the Lotus."

 "Oh.. Hello, Sir. USS Lotus, please confirm.. did you say, repairs?"

"Yes Starbase 10; apparently, we are having an issue with our main computer."

"Very Well Lotus, Star Base 10, out."

The Admiral then opened intraship channels.

"Bridge to all hands; the Lotus will be arriving at our new home away from home in aproximatly ninety minutes. Please prepare for transport to the Starbase."

Turning partly to his chief of security, he then ordered:

"Mister Garrison; please inform security that I want every person transporting to the Starbase accounted for."

"Aye, Aye, Sir" Garrison replied.

Niomo was just rubbing his temples in frustration when his comm bleeped.

"Lieutenant Lire, this is Starbase 10. Admiral Nova says that you are having trouble with your main computer and that you are in need of supplies."

"Aye, Starbase 10. It seems that any voice recognition input to our computer gets scrambled. We should be in transporter range within the next ninety minutes. I will transmit the manifest of the supplies we need to make repairs. Is that acceptable?"

"Yes, that's fine, Sir. Please transmit any supply manifests you require, ASAP. We have some industrial replicators, should you require any large materials."

"Affirmative, Starbase 10. Manifest transmitting....now. USS Lotus out."

Niomo entered the command to transmit the supplies' list that the Science Chief had requested, along with a few extra items Niomo needed for any extra emergency repairs. He tapped his finger impatiently on his console. For a new first officer to not get to the bridge on time...

Hmm. oh well.

He didn't have time to goof off, like the commander apparently did. Niomo stood and returned to Engineering without seeing anyone of importance. He decided to return to the bridge in an hour and then help oversee the supply transfer in cargo bay 2.

As the USS Lotus approached the starbase, Ensign Ty Hyperdrive, the ship helm officer, carefully maneuvered the ship into transporter range.

"Sir, we are now in position to transfer, crew and supplies to and from the Lotus.''

"Thank you, Mister Hyperdrive. Mr. Garrison, please see to it that all supplies and personnel have been transferred over to Starbase 10."

Again Nova activated communications throughout the vessel.

"Bridge to all hands; we have arrived at Star Base 10 and will begin off loading those individuals and supplies that will be remaining at Lotus Fleet headquarters. Please coordinate with your section leaders for instructions on where you need to be."

He made the briefest of pauses before ordering:

"Bridge to transporter rooms; you may begin transporting all personnel when ready."

Again, he paused to receive aknowledgement before resuming his series of commands.

"Bridge to Cargo bays; Starbase 10 is standing by, ready to receive and transfer supplies."

he then turned towards his chief engineer.

"Chief, once all supplies have transferred to the Starbase please begin transferring the additional equipment and personnel over that you need. We will leave as soon as you are ready."

his gaze then shifted back to the navigation console a few meters in front of the command well he was sitting in.

"Helm once, Engineering has signaled that all transports and equipment have been completed. Set course for the Klingon homeworld."

he did not turn his head when he added:

"Mister Garrison, send an encoded message to General Worf, informing him of our situation and our ETA."

As all departments replied, Ty Hyperdrive input all the next set of coordinates.

Niomo Lire at that moment looked around at all the incoming cargo the Lotus needed to function over the next few weeks and months. He spotted the Science chief and walked over his station behind the command well.

"Hey, bro... Which ones are ours?" the science officer asked Niomo.

''Which ones are four square meters?''

"Those two."

Niomo called over two members of the repair team and and ordered them to get down to the main cargobay and transport the equipment to the main computer room and then to gather the repair teams to begin work with the science chief. He finished saying that he would be there shortly.

After the repair cargo was being removed, Niomo waited for the remaining cargo to be transported on, after which he contacted the bridge giving them the all clear to head towards the rendez-vous with General Worf.

After receiving word from engineering, that all of the cargo had been transferred to the ship, the Lotus set course and engaged at Warp 6 for the Klingon homeworld. Hoping that General Worf had managed to get through to the High Chancellor, which seemed much more likely than him trying to convince his son, who sits on the High Council that Klingon incursions into Romulan space were a mistake.

As the Ship passed into Klingon space, it was almost certain that they would be intercepted by a Vor'Cha class destroyer. These ships had seen many years of service since the Dominion War, but it was not likely that the Klingon ship would try to pick a fight with the newest Introduction to the Intrepid Class design, despite the degrading relationship that now looms between the Federation and its long Ally.

The Intrepid Class ships would have been phased out long ago had it not been for Voyager's return to the Alpha Quadrant, which resulted in the introduction of many new designs and technical features. Some of the refits of this class included a complement of seventy-five photon torpedoes, thirty-five quantum torpedoes and fifteen transphasic torpedoes. With additional upgrades in power distribution and efficiency, the ship also had the newest designs in ablative hull armor technology, including the revolutionary regenerative armor system. Unfortunately, the larger ships of the Fleet had not been outfitted with such a technology due to the tremendous amount of power needed to generate such a defensive measure... but the Intrepid Class almost seemed as though it had been designed for it.

Thirty years of technological advancement can make a huge difference.

Chapter 3 : To slay a Dragon

As the USS Lotus traveled through Klingon space, suddenly two Klingon battle cruisers de-cloaked behind.

Without warning, they simultaneously fired a graviton burst.

Suddenly, as the Lotus fell out of warp, the two Klingon ships reversed course to intercept... just as a Third decloaked eight thousand meters of the port side of the ship.

"ALL HANDS RED ALERT!" Admiral Nova yelled.

As the ship suddenly came to life, shields and weapons came on-line.

"Damage Report!" he ordered. "Mister Garrison, hail those bastards! I want to know why we where fired on! And why didn't we pick them up on sensors? Helm, Maintain a defensive pattern!"

As the two remaining Klingon ships came into range, they began to charge weapons.

"Hailing Frequencies open, weapons charged and ready, armor deployed, Admiral!", Lieutenant Garrison replied.

"This is Admiral Nova of the USS Lotus. Why have you fired on my ship?"

Suddenly a large male Klingon appeared on screen.

"I am Commander Krog of the house of Merth. You will stand down or you will be destroyed!"

"Commander I wont ask you again: WHY have you fired on a Federation ship? We are your allies!"

"YOU ARE NOT AN ALLY OF THE KLINGON EMPIRE! And as long as the Federation chooses to protect the Filthy Romulans, my family will guard the Klingon borders from the likes of the Federation and their Romulan spies!"

"Commander, are you not aware that the Chancellor himself has been to Romulan space to discuss peace for all our peoples?"

"THE CHANCELLOR IS A FOOL! MY FAMILY WILL NEVER ALLY THEMSELVES WITH ROMULANS!"

As the viewscreen suddenly shut off, the ship shook violently from the impact of disrupter fire hitting the hardend shell of the Lotus' Armor.

Niomo was examining the subprocessors of the voice recognition systems in the main computer room when the ship was jolted.

A general message went out as the lights dimmed to Red Alert status. Niomo regained his balance and pointed at the Science Chief:

"Keep working, I'm going to the bridge. Lock the door."

Niomo ran out of the room, the door sealing behind him as he took a turbolift to the bridge. Niomo quickly walked over to the engineering station and asked the crewman there for a sit-rep.

"Sir, we are under attack by three klingon ships. They hit us with a graviton pulse, were dead in space."

"Thanks. Go to your battle station."

Niomo sat down at his station, awaiting commands.

Becoming increasingly frustrated, Ensign Hyperdrive turned to the Admiral.

''The klingon ships seem to know our defensive patterns, Admiral! I'm attempting to randomize our defensive patterns, but its not doing any good on thrusters.''

Looking over to Lieutenant Niomo, Nova asked:

"Chief, how long before our impulse and main power are restored?"

"Sir, the pulse disrupted the plasma in the core, causing all the EPS conduits feeding from the core to fuse. Downtime is approximately thirty minutes to replace them. Thats the best I can do. Impluse is online, but running off emergency power. I suggest we keep our power levels as low as possible. I have already cut any non essential combat systems. I'd say we have twenty minutes of power before we need to start making more serious cuts. Ive got our best people working on the conduits."

Niomo turned to his console and began scanning the lists of systems seeing what he could lower outputs.

"Mister Garrison, ordered the Admiral then, target the weapons system of the lead ship and Fire when ready."

"Phasers inoperative with armor deployed, Sir. Firing quantum torpedoes!"

This was the only inconvenient from the armoring system the ship used. The replicators on the hull produced plating that covered the entire hull, including all phaser strips, leaving only open ports like shuttlebays, airlocks and torpedo tubes still usable.

Fortunately, torpedoes where the heavy armament of any Starfleet vessel... even if limited in quantity. And they had greater range than beam weapons.

"Enemy shields down to eighty percent. Our shields down to ninety percent and the armor hasn't even been scratched."

"Open a channel to the USS Daq quv chaH, and inform General Worf of our situation."

After firing another volley of torpedoes, Garrison opened a channel as ordered.

''The Daq quv chah is answering, Sir. General Worf says he will attempt rendez-vous with the Lotus as soon as he can, Admiral."

The diminutive Intrepid class refit shuddered as much from its own torpedo launch as from enemy fire.

"One Klingon ship disabled ,Admiral!" Garrison announced with excitement.

"Helm, do the best you can and keep them in our weapon arcs. With the armor up, our arc of fire with torpedo tubes is limited!"

''Admiral, I've set my station to automatically make course adjustments to keep them in our sights; but, until we are warp capable again I can't guarantee anything." admitted Ty.

Niomo's screen flashed an alert as his attention was drawn to the combat system power levels.

"Sir! The shield generator lost fifty percent of its power when the torpedoes were fired! The drop for torps is too quick to do anything about. Garrison, make your shots count. We're a bit defenseless when we are firing. I really don't want to damage the main armor if we don't have to; it's too tough to repair on the move. I can't cut any other general system power unless you feel like you can breathe carbon dioxide."

Examining possible solutions to the power situation, Niomo decided to try something.

"Sir, It's possible that i could cut power to Impulse every time we fire. I'm not sure what else i can do without those EPS conduits online"

Looking over to Niomo, Garrison said:

"Lieutenant Niomo, Im setting torpedoes to act as mines so we don't have sudden power losses... but I'm not promising anything. Oh, and see if you can somehow drain some power from the disabled ship."

"There is no way to drain power from one ship to another without a direct line connecting them. I'll deal with the power problems; make sure the armor doesn't get too damaged."

"Deploying various torpedoes, Admiral."

Suddenly, the Klingon vessels fired its disruptors at the torpedoes.

"The Klingons have apparently found a way to counter the mine tactic."

As the Lotus continued to exchange weapons fire with the two remaining Klingon ships, the Lotus continued to be out maneuvered as they continued to cloak and decloak at will

"Klingon vessels have cloaked again,Admiral."

As Lieutenant Commander Garrison continued to beam photon torpedoes into space, he quickly detonated them within close proximity of the klingon ships. The process wasn't accurate and it did require a bit of finesse, but he was managing to hit them.

As two Klingon ships decloaked, Garrison quickly fired an active volley while one of the ships was still transitioning and thier shield were coming online.

"Another Klingon vessel disabled ,Admiral," Garrison announced.

Suddenly with only one Klingon battle cruiser remaining, the two ships came face to face. As they paused for what seemed like hours two K'vort class Bird of Prey cruisers decloaked and entered flanking positions around the last Vorcha class vessel.

As the Lotus settled into position, facing the one remaining Vor'cha class battle cruiser and the two newly arrived birds of prey, the Admiral sat back in his seat, taking in the situation while formulating a plan that would ensure their survival.

The K'vort class birds of prey did not offer much to the battle, especially since the Lotus had already managed to severely damage and disable two Vor'chas. It was likely that the captain of those ships were allies of this family and had decided to join the battle for the sake of glory. Tactically, it was a good plan; strength in numbers always helps...but not today.

"Sir, I am receiving a hail from the USS Piedmont! She says that she is coming to assist..." Suddenly, Garrison looks distraught as he finished: but they wont be hear for another ten minutes."

"Thank you, Mister Garrison."

"Lieutenant Lire, transfer all the power that you have to the structural integrity, take it from all non-essential systems, and life support if you have to. Helm, on my mark, I want you to pass within twenty-five meters of the the Vorcha's dorsal section; and, as we cross above their hull, I want you to vent drive plasma."

It was unlikely that the Klingons would move to avoid the Lotus; they would see the gesture as a desperate attempt to ram them rather then pass, and would gladly accept the damage if only for the opportunity to drive this battle further into hand to hand combat.

"Mister Garrison; as we come into range, targets forward tube on the bridge of the Vorcha and fire a series of transphasic Torpedoes; aft tube at the Birds of Prey. Once we have cleared the Vor'cha battle crusier, continue firing torpedoes at their Impulse manifolds. Then fire a concentrated burst at the plasma stream we left behind. Helm, once we've cleared the battle cruiser, set a course away from the Klingon ships, best possible speed. Once Tactical and Engineering have signaled, you may proceed."

Aye, Sir! I'll show those ships who's more maneuverable!'' Ensign Hyperdrive replied.

As Garrison and Lire both signaled, Hyperdrive set course directly for the Klingon battleship.

As the USS Lotus narrowly missed the top of the Klingon ship, the nacelles began to vent drive plasma which settled across the top of the enemy ship's hull. Targeting the bridge of the Vorcha, Garrison fired a first volley at the Klingon ship. As the Lotus passed over it, Garrison fired a single photon warhead; the blast ignited the drive plasma, causing a concussive blast that disabled the dorsal shielding of the ship. He then fired on the impulse engines, rendering her dead in space.

He then switched over to both of the Birds of prey and fired a volley of transphasic torpedoes at each of the ships.

Suddenly, one of the birds of prey exploded, while the other began to spin out uncontrollably towards the now disabled Klingon Battlecruiser. As the two Klingon ships collided, from the outside it was obvious that main power was knocked offline and the two ships laid there, dead in space.

Lire was busy taking power from every system he could find as he saw explosions on the view screen. He sighed a sigh of relief as he saw the remains of the battle.

"Sir, I am taking armor offline and replacing it with low level shields. I suggest we refrain from any more combat until the core can supply us with power. Our emergency batteries are almost empty. We're already taxing the system with phasers on standby. I have increased power to the sensors, just in case any more klingons decide to drop in. Twenty-five minutes until the EPS conduits are replaced. Sir, until we can get warp back online, I suggest we find a nice moon to hide behind."

What a shakedown run this is turning out to be, he mused, but then said:

"Also, Sir, I cannot raise the team in the main computer chamber on Deck 8. Should we send security to investigate?"

As the USS Lotus limped away from the battle, Niomo began working on a way to get main power back on line. Admiral Nova looked over to the Lieutenant.

''Lieutenant, let me know as soon as we are ready to get underway. Helm scan for the nearest object that will best mask our signature. I dont care if its a nebula or what, just get us out of here. Mister Garrison, what is the status of all of the Klingon ships? also keep an eye on those sensors, let me know if any ships come into the sector. Please send an encoded message to General Worf and inform him of our last known position and that we have taken serious damage. And inform him that, once he arrives, we will make contact. Also what is the ETA on the Piedmont?"

Niomo nodded in acknowledgement.

"Aye Sir. Garrison, send a security team to Deck 8. I will grant them access into the room."

Niomo took the phaser from its compartment in his station and procceded to Deck 8.

He arrived quickly and awaited the security team.

Once the team arrived, Niomo tried to raise the Science Chief one last time, but when he did not get a response, he took out his phaser and prepared the team to move in.

Niomo moved next to the control panel and input his command code to unlock the door. A minute later, the door slowly slid open and Niomo stood dumbfounded.

Twelve bodies were scattered around the room, one of which was Niomo's friend.

"Oh God..."

Tapping his badge, he forced himself to report:

"Admiral...This is Lire. The computer repair team is dead... I suggest we lock down all major control panels, post security at the entrances to all major rooms and restrict all off duty crewmen to their quarters. I suggest contacting the next in line science officer...They've just been promoted i think. I'm going to stay here and see what I can do for the computer. The security team will stay in this room until the repairs are complete."

Next, he tapped his comm again.

"Engineering, this is Lire. The computer repair team is dead. Go through the service log and see which crewmen have the most experience in computer system diagnostics. Have them report to Deck 8; security will escort them to our workplace."

Niomo hit his badge once again.

"Doctor Kirkpatrick, are you there? We have some work for you. Twelve deceased crewmembers."

"Twelve, Lieutenant? What happened? I'll dispatch a medical emergency team to your location, they will be there shortly! In the mean time, please find out what's going on! I would rather have an empty sickbay if at all possible. We will try to find out what killed them."

Niomo picked up a tricorder and got to work as some engineering crewmen began to trickle in.

The Chief Medical Officer of the Lotus looked at his Nurse, Ensign Myla, through the glass wall of his office and motionned her over.

"Find out what deck Lieutenant Lire is on and get a medical emergency team assembled Ensign, we've got work to do. I'll make the necessary preparations for possible autopsies; We have to find out what killed them all."

"I'll get a team together right away, Sir. Computer, locate Lieutenant Lire."

"Please state the nature of the medical emergency."

Ensign Myla turned around to find that the Emergency Medical Hologram had activated, thanks to the still malfunctioning computer.

"I suppose we might use your help..Try to locate him manually, Doctor."

Kirkpatrick found the chief engineer's location by way of the computer console on his desk.

"He's on Deck 8 at the main computer core."

"I'll get the team there as soon as possible," Ensign Myla answered.

Meanwhile, on the bridge of the flagship, Ensign Hyperdrive's voice rose in alarm.

''Admiral! I don't know how, but all navigation is somehow being routed through to somewhere on deck 5!

"What? Isolate the source!" nova ordered then struck his chest communicator: "Bridge to security! Intruder alert on Deck 5!"

Without waiting for any aknowledgement, he shouted then:

"Computer! Reroute all command functions and controls to Deck 1 and Lock, Authorization Nova Tango Zeta Two Eight!"

Almost in the same breath he shifted again to speaking through his combadge.

"Lieutenant Lire, is there any indication on how they where killed?"

"I really didn't look, Sir."

Niomo looked over the former Science Chief's body.

"Sir, it looks like they have some type of burn marks at the points of impact... I'm a warp core Specialist, not a surgeon. The medical team probably can tell you more."

The voice of Doctor Kirkpatrick came to him just then:

''Chief, anything you can see on the bodies about how they died?''

"I dont know doc. I barely passed my medical classes at the academy. The medical team probably will be able ID the damage type. All I can see is that there are some hardcore burns. Looks like some type of plasma burn."

Niomo returned to work on the main computer, which the original team had progressed well. Niomo estimated that they had completed sixty percent of the repairs since they had left Starbase 10. Niomo was then contacted by engineering to be informed that the repairs to the core were almost complete; ten minutes remained.

When the medical team arrived, one medic by the name of Ensign Nomel was first to assess the situation.

"It looks like there was an explosion from a plasma charge in here from all of the burns.."

"And Lieutenant Lire was right, they're all dead," confirmed Ensign Kor.

Lieutenant bar leading the medical team was scanning one of the bodies when he said:

"Not so fast, Ensign... this one here ... he's still alive! Hurry on and get him to sickbay!"

"Nomel to Transporter Room 1! I need a site-to-site transport to Sickbay!"

And barely had patient and medic arrived in a shower of psrkles that the computer voice blared out:

"Intruder Alert, Deck 5."

"Just what I need... Kirkpatrick growled. Ensign, seal those doo..." as he saw them before him.

"So much for the doors. Let's get him onto the surgical bed."

Ensigns Myla and Nomel got the patient onto the surgical bed as Doctor Kirkpatrick procured the appropiate equipment together.

"Ensign Myla: four ccs of kelotane and then start with a myelin regenerator; he has severe tissue and nerve damage but we should be able to repair it."
Without lifting his eyes from his patient he asked Niomel:

"Is he the only one to survive?"

"I'm afriad so, Doctor. The rest of the team is working on getting the remainder here."

"We can handle this, Ensign, thank you. Go help the team finish."

Ensign Nomel headed out of sickbay and back to the emergency medical team's location while Kirkpatrick and Ensign Myla began treating the injured science Lieutenant.

<center>*   *   *</center>

"Computer, set standard orbit"

As the computer of the Delta class shuttle acknowledged the order, the little ship quickly gained speed and turned sharply.

"Commander Little to Ambassador Picard; come in."

After only a couple seconds, the Ambassador responded, Commander Little quickly realized that she was about to have the opportunity to not only meet but as well as work with two legends was about as a reward as anyone could ask for in their career.

"this is Picard, I am reading you," the raspy but confident voice replied.

"Sir, I was sent by Admiral Nova to relay important information to you and Ambassador Spock, and to ensure of both your safety, should you be required to leave."

"ah, yes, very well. I am transmitting our cordinates now."

"thanks, Little out."

"Computer, prepare to beam me to these coordinates."

As the computer beeped in acknowledgment, Commander Little picked up a phaser and a few other standard supplies.

"Computer, begin transport."

As the Commander was beamed down to the cordinates that Ambassador Picard had given, a series of processes suddenly came to life aboard the shuttle. Suddenly, the ship was dark except for an active console on the navigational display.

Materializing on the surface of the Romulan-occupied planet, Commander Little saw across the courtyard where Ambassadors Spock and Picard where sitting, speaking with a young female delegate. As the delegate withdrew and began walking back towards the senate chambers Commander Little approached the two men.

"Ah, Commander Little I persume. Please meet Ambassador Spock''

"Yes, Sir. It is an honor to meet you both. I read and heard so much about both of you."

Spock raises his eyebrow in typical Vulcan fashion. But his words betrayed his Human half all too well:

"Already Implying exactly how old we are I see, Commander?"

"Well.... um no, Sir.... I, um, meant no..."

Picard smiled.

"If there is anything that Spock still has not mastered all these years, as you of course implied Commander, it is of how to tell a joke."

"Commander, if you dont mind, we should get going. We have to address the New Romulan Senate shortly, and I am afraid that in our advanced years it takes us a bit longer to get to where it is we are going."

As the two men began walking towards the Senate building, Commander Little struggled to keep pace with the two men. Entering through a series of security checkpoints, Commander Little was forced to surrender her phaser but was otherwise allowed entry into to the building.

As the two Ambassadors and Commander Little entered the senate chambers, they where lead by a Romulan guard to the row nearest the Chamber Floor.

Just then, a Romulan senator stood and the room grew quiet.

"The Senate calls to order these continued proceedings. The Senate Recognizes Ambassador Picard and Ambassador Spock of the United Federation of Planets."

As the two men rose from their seats and walked out on to the main senate floor to address the senate and all those that where present, Ambassador Picard Clearsed his throat.

"Thank you, Primus," Picard replied. Turning to the group of delegates, Ambassador Picard began his speech.

"fifty years ago, I stood as a Captain in Starfleet on the floor of the first Romulan Senate on Romulus, as i stand now on the new floor of the revived Romulan senate, addressing..."

As the Ambassador continued to speak, it was obvious that he managed to lead the group in attendance through a series of emotional ups and downs.

"So, Senators, in closing; just as the Enterprise and her crew fought valiantly side by side with the crews of Romulan warbirds, I ask you today to please consider your relationship with the Federation and its allies. To stand with me and come to some sense that even if there is any reluctance on your behalf, that all should place themselves in the shoes of my former tactical officer, General Worf, who, after his great loss, found it in his heart to right what was wrong and then recognize the Honor in which your former and fallen comrades had fought during that fateful battle."

As Picard and Spock bowed to the senate, a small group of Romulans clapped.

"Order! Order! we have order at these proceedings," the Primus yelled out.

As the two Ambassadors departed from the room, Commander Little quickly stood to join them. Again, passing through a series of security checkpoints, the Commander was finally returned her phaser. The three individuals left the building and a crow saw then that a crowd had gathered just outside. Some people where obviously in celebration of the two men's presence while others looked outraged by their presence. People from both groups suddenly overwhelmed the guards and the two men found themselves surrounded.

As Commander Little attempted to clear a path to the street, a Romulan emerged from the crowd and took aim at Ambassador Picard.

Leaping for the weapon, Commander Little grabbed the arm of the gunman just as it was firing. The two fell silently to the ground as the crowd quickly dispersed and Romulan Guards returned order to the area.

Standing up, Ambassador Picard reached to assit Commander Little but was surprised to see red blood covering the would-be Romulan Assasin. T

Then, suddenly, the Commander reached out with one bloody hand.

"Ambassador..."

"lay still, Commander, it's going to be ok."

Spock looked at a guard.

'' Call for a Doctor immediately."

But then, before Commander Little could be transported to a nearby hospital. she had passed away.

"We should inform her Captain... and I am afraid that the situation has become too dangerous for us to remain here." Picard explained

"Agreed", Spock replied.

*   *   *

Niomo was working as fast as he could, but his knowledge of the computer was too limited to be of any help. He told the other engineers to remain and continue working. He was going to check on the warp core.

Upon arriving at the core, he saw his repair team in action. There were parts all over the ground surrounding the core, with men and women working above them.

When an Ensign noticed the Lieutenant enter, she walked over, saluted and gave him a SitRep.

"Sir, we've just about finished the repairs to the conduits. It should be only a minute or so before we can activate them. They are finishing up the final placement and power distribution checks now..."

The ensign was cut off by the hum of the warp core. The repairs had been completed.

"Well, Sir. I guess we are done."

"Thank you Ensign. You and your teams can go off-duty. Good work."

The Ensign walked away as Niomo hit his comm.

"Lire to Nova. Sir, we've finished the repairs to the core. We are restoring all power distributions to normal levels. I've increased power to the warp drive and engines, just in case you want to get us back on our time table. Just as a precaution, I would not just immediately try to go to warp 9. i'd start with warp 5, then warp 7, then warp 8 and then warp 9. Also, repairs to the computer have restarted. They are about sixty-five percent complete. Should be done by the time we reach our destination. Lire Out"

Niomo looked around his engineering room and staff. the Lotus was a good ship with good people. He'd fit in fine.

He walked over to the terminal and made a note in his log stating that all involved engineering crewmen deserved some type of honor for finishing the conduit repairs an hour and a half early. maybe next time he wouldn't fudge repair time to make their chances of survival go up.

*   *   *

Tthe USS Piedmont suddenly warped into the system where the damaged Klingon ships floated dead in space.

"My god!, how many ships where there?" the captain gasped.

"Five, Sir, it appears that four are disabled with heavy damage to their main power grid and and one ship has been totally destroyed." the Tactical Officer replied.

"Send a message to the Klingon High Council, informing them of the situation and that the crews of those ships will be in need of... attention. Is there any sign of the Lotus?"

"Negative, Sir"

"Scan for any Federation signatures, I only hope we are not too late."

"SIR! I am receiving a hail... Its the Lotus, approximately eight million kilometers away near that Asteroid belt."

"Helm, set course. Put the Lotus on screen. This is the USS Piedmont, I am Captain Wright."

"Captain, its good to see you, thank you for your responce. We are transmitting you our exact corrdinates now." Admiral Nova replied

"Admiral, are you in need of any help?"

"We have main power back online but we would appreciate any cover that you might be able to give us just in case any other Klingons decide to give us any trouble."

"No problem, Sir, we will stay with you, Piedmont out."

"Security to Bridge, We have the intruder in custody,. It appears a Klingon managed to sneak aboard. We dont know which ship he was from. He is currently being held in the brig, Sir."

"Thank you Security, bridge out."

Nova then looked over his shoulder at the tactical chief.

"Lieutenant Garrison; inform the Piedmont that main power has been restored. And inform general Worf that we are back underway and will meet with him shortly."

"Sir, we have a message coming in from the Piedmont. They have been ordered to Rator III to retrieve Ambassadors Spock and Picard... and... Sir... Commander Little has been killed."

"What? How?"

"Information is still sketchy but it appears that there was an attempt on Ambassador Picard's life."

As he heard the distressing news, the admiral Slouched in his chair.

" Very well.. Thank you... Helm, Warp 6... Engage."

Standing up, the Admiral went into his ready room.

"Admiral, the Piedmont acknowledges and is preparing to go to warp: General Worf says he will rendez-vous with us in thirty minutes."

Then, the chief of security stood rigid at attention.

"Sir; permission to go interrogate the Klingon?"

''Permission granted, Mister Garrison, I want to know what that Klingon was up to.''

As Admiral Nova stood to go into his ready room, a comm came in from both Admiral Redshirt and Admiral Crowl.

"Ill take them in my ready room, Lieutenant."

''Aye, Sir, Garrison replied.

Walking over to the replicator once back alone in his office, Admiral Nova keyed in manually for a hot cup of coffee. Sitting down at his desk, he tapped a button on the computer termnial. suddenly the image of Admiral Redshirt replaced the Starfleet logo.

"Admiral Nova, so good to see you. How is your mission proceeding?"

"Not wellé I'm afraid the crew overall has held up very well, but the Lotus has taken quite a beating. We have only recently been able to restore main power and get back on course to meet up with General Worf, and hopefully try to find some sort of peaceful solution to this issue. Apparently, the house of Mort is not all that pleased with the Federation's involvement with the Romulans. To be honest, I cant blame him.''

He made a pause before resuming his thoughts outloud to his fellow admiral.

''You know, over a hundred years ago, Spock helped to bring peace between the Federation and the Klingons. After the Kithomer Accords, it seemed that a new era of peace and prosperity was going to sweep the Federation. Of course, relations between the federation and the Romulans broke down after the arrest of their ambassador involved in the conspiracy to derail those peace talks, but that's the price that we had to pay. Now, it seems that History is going to repeat its self... and I must wonder; if the Federation does side with the Romulans in the name of interstellar peace, can we expect our long time allies to remain at our side?"

Nova sighed.

''At any rate, the USS Piedmont is heading for Rator III to retrieve Ambassadors Picard and Spock... and Commander Little's body.''

The commanding officer of lotus Fleet again stopped for only a second and then continued to discuss mission details with his Executive Officer and his Academy Commanding Officer who's own face now has joined that of Redshirt on the small screen from the bridge of the USS Umpqua en route to their headquarters.

''Admiral Redshirt; after we have met with General Worf, I'll contact you with additional details with what he knows about the Argolis Sensor Array.''

Then, all three stated discussing plans over the unfolding recent events.

*   *   *

Security Chief John Garrison walked to the brig area after grabbing a phaser and then deactivated the force field of the cell to enter and come face to face with the Klingon prisoner inside.

"How did you get on this ship?"

The klingon stood defiantly and did not answer.

"What is your name and from what house do you hail from?"

"House Korl will not stand for this! As long as the Federation is allied with the Romulans, houses of the Empire shall not aclnowledge any alliance with the Federation!"

"Houses! what houses?"

"I will not reveal them to you: soon enough, it won't just be houses; for you will face the entire empire!"

"The Chancellor does not stand for your rebellion, your houses stand alone."

"The Chancellor will see our view; or another Chancellor will!"

"Im done with you, but trust me, I'm sure the Chancellor will have plans for you."

Garrison then turned away and started to walk out of the cell. But then, The Klingon belowed:

"Qa'pla!''

And charged him.

John spin kicked the Klingon and gave him an uppercut. The klingon grabbed the Lieutenant Commander's throat and started choking him. Straining, Garrison reached for the klingon's shoulder...

Successfully, he gave the Klingon a Vulcan Neck Pinch.

"I knew those lessons in the holodeck would come in handy eventually."

So saying, John walked out and reactivated the force field then tapped his combadge.

"Admiral, Garrison here. I'll send you a padd on the interrogation ASAP."

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *</p>

Chief Medical Officer's Log: Supplemental.

Eleven Crewmen have been killed in the sabotage attempt of the main computer room, but we were lucky enough to have one survive. He was treated for severe plasma burns and neural damage with usual medicinal treatments and is expected to make a definite recovery.

As he made his log, the mentionned survivor, Lieutenant Aldric, regained consciousness on the biobed and tried to prop himself up.

"Easy Lieutenant..." Kirkparick said.

"Ugh.. What happened?," Aldric weakly said as he rolled over on his side.

"You were in an accident in the main computer room. You're alright now but you need to stay in Sickbay for further treatments."

Aldric said nothing as he lied back down on the biobed, his right leg bent at the knee.

Nurse Myla attended to the Lieutenant as Doctor Kirkpatrick walked over to the console on his desk and started sending a medical update to the bridge. The report included the name and autopsy data of all eleven deceased crew members and the current medical status of the one surviving crew member as he was being treated for severe plasma burns.

"The Lotus' first mission and she's already causing me trouble, the doctor said to himself. " Intruders, Explosions.. What next, a ship-wide plague?"

He finished sending his report and laid back into his chair for a moment before getting up and returning his attention to Lieutenant Aldric.

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *</p>

Niomo looked over the repair log as he let out a long sigh. His repair teams had finally completed their assignment. The computer core was finally repaired, and all voice commands were properly active again.

The Lotus was about an hour away from their destination. Niomo was glad to see that they had finished with some time to spare. He dismissed the repair team, giving them the rest of their shifts off. After the teams were gone, he sealed and locked the jefferies tubes into the core and the main entrance.

He then proceeded to the turbolift. It was time for a cat nap.

"Deck 9, Section 12."

The computer bleeped in acknowledgement and, moments later, Niomo appeared on Deck 9. Niomo smiled to himself for a job well done and walked into his room. He turned on his terminal and recorded a personal log of the day's events. With his time remaining, he grabbed a few minutes of shuteye, and then reported back to the bridge, ready to see what would happen next.

As he stepped onto the Lotus' command deck, the voice of helmsman hyperdrive brought immediately his attention to the main viewer.

"General Worf's ship is within visual, dropping out of warp, Sir."

"Admiral, the Daq Quv Chah is hailing us." then added security chief garison back at his post from his brief visit to the brig.

"On screen," ordered Nova as he came out of his office to stand in front of his command chair and face the white-haired, somber countenance of an imposing klingon high-ranking officer.

"General Worf, thank you for meeting with us. I apoligize that you had to be pulled away from your meetings. If you could beam over to the Lotus, we have quite a bit to talk about."

"Very well, Admiral; I will beam over momentarily."

"Thank you, general. We will try to keep this short."

As General Worf beamed aboard the Lotus, the Admiral met with him privately in his ready room.

"Worf, it good to see you again."

"Likewise, Admiral."

"Can I get you anything?"

"No, I am fine, thank you."

As the Admiral sat down behind his desk, he motioned for Worf to have a seat.

"General, Starfleet Intelligence believes that the Romulans might have snuck into Federation space."

"What? How is that possible?"

"Well, part of our next mission is to find that out, but it gets worse. During the Dominion War, a sensor net was built by the Dominion within the Argolis Cluster. Records report that the USS Defiant was dispatched by Admiral Ross to destroy critical portions of the net in those days. However, Starfleet Intelligence now believes that the Romulans are attempting to reactivate the sensor net, which would give them unprecedented sensor data on ship movements in the Klingon Empire, the Cardassian Territories and Federation Space."

"Yes I am aware of this Sensor net. It has been some years since I have thought of that experience..."

Worf went to the main computer and accessed information about the sensor array.

"These are the coordinates of the array; what's left of it at least. The hard part, however, is how to best deal with the gravimetric distortions inside the star cluster where it is located."

"Well, General, I think we need to get underway. Thank you for coming; your information will be very helpful."

As Captain Worf left the ready room to return to his ship, Admiral Nova returned to the Captain's Chair.

"Helm, Set course for Lotus Fleet Headquarters, Warp 6"

"Aye aye, Course set Admiral"

"Engage."

THE END