

## Season 1 - Episode 3: "Demons in the Shadows"

### Novelization by Crist

#### **Cast**

Captain David Jellico – Captain U.S.S. McKenzie, Played by David Jellico

Doctor Darum Bains – Medical Officer, Played by Darum Bains

Ensign Phoenix Gallant – Helmsmen, Played by simiteen

Lt. Daniel Crist – Tactical/Security Officer, Played by Crist

Ensign Sydona V'Krull – Engineering Officer, Played by Talon

A few hours ago David had finished talking with Starfleet Command. He had received orders to leave Starbase 10 and head for the farthest reaches of the Neutral Zone.

McKenzie's crew complement was not complete as a few of the newly transferred crew members had still not arrived. However, Starfleet considered that for the assigned mission the current personnel was enough. After the recent events on the McKenzie and the crew reassignments the fleet had experienced, Command thought that a survey/investigation mission would help stabilize things out.

At that point, traveling at cruising speed, their destiny was still a few hours away. So David decided that it would be a good moment to explain the mission to the Senior officers.

David tapped his comm-badge: "This is Captain Jellico, all senior officers please report to my ready room for mission briefing."

David seated on his chair within the Captains Ready room and reviewed the mission information.

#### **=Sickbay=**

After the training simulation on Starbase 10, Bains was ready to get underway. The McKenzie was a small ship, but at least it was fast and had a good Sickbay. It seemed that most of the crew had been reassigned, but everyone was friendly.

"This is Captain Jellico, all senior officers please report to my ready room for mission briefing."

Well it was time to go. At least this mission wouldn't stop in the middle. He was already on his way in the turbolift and Darum walked out onto the bridge and into the captain's ready room.

"Good morning captain, how are things?" inquired the doctor.

"Hello, Mr. Bains, please take a seat. We will begin once the rest of the senior officers report." Said Captain Jellico.

David started the screen up in order to show a map of the area they were to enter. Meanwhile he initiated some small talk with the Medical officer. That would help him get to know the man.

"So, how do you find the Medical Bay on this ship?" Asked the Captain.

"This is my first posting but the medical bays I have seen in simulations and during my time at Lotus Fleet Academy were just as good as the one here. So what do you think of the ship captain?" replied Bains.

As David and the Chief Medical Officer were talking, Morosh Junyo, the Grazerite Chief Science Officer in functions, entered the ready room.

"I hope I am not late, Sir. I was checking the sensor array for the upcoming mission" said the young Lieutenant.

"Don't worry Mr. Junyo, we are still waiting for the other Senior Officers. Please join us" answered the Captain trying to make the Lt. feel comfortable.

The Science officer took a seat next to David and left on the table several PADDs he was carrying. He seemed to be prepared for everything and had wanted to bring all the information he could need.

Meanwhile, David and Darum continued their conversation...

"Well, the McKenzie could surprise one by its reduced size but we have to consider its virtues. It's got far more maneuverability than any other ship in Starfleet and a firepower that's the envy of almost any bigger ships. So, I find it very exciting to work on this ship."

**=Bridge=**

"This is Captain Jellico, all senior officers please report to my ready room for mission briefing."

Phoenix sighed at the helm. He glanced at the PADDs that crowded his work station in despair. When it became apparent that he was stuck with his position aboard, he had made a last-ditch attempt to get as much information on flying as he could. His efforts came a little too late. He had only been able to gather info on the basics when, the McKenzie was sent on his mission.

And like all Defiant-class vessels, there was no holodeck to practice his flying on. He wished he had asked Mark for some flying lessons, but the truth of the matter was that he was confined to Sickbay for most of the journey to Starbase 10 due to the injuries that he had sustained on his first mission on the Sapentia. He glanced at his right hand, and involuntarily shuddered when he remembered his near collision at the beginning of the mission.

Since he was new, he had been undocking the McKenzie as slowly as possible. All was going well, until his bio-synthetic hand twitched, causing the McKenzie to suddenly go forward, with the Sapentia, of all ships, directly in

their path. They were mere meters away when Phoenix corrected their course, dodging the Sapentia by a hair, and nearly giving everyone a heart attack.

He shook the memory off before heading for the ready room. Upon arrival, he noticed the Captain, the ship's doctor, and Chief Science Officer were already here. Besides the Captain, Gallant had yet to actually meet the rest of the crew since he was so busy studying. He did his best to hide his foul mood, and walked up to the Captain. "Ensign Gallant, reporting in, sir."

David acknowledged the new FC officer entering the room. "Please, Mr. Gallant take a seat. We are about to begin."

David decided that now was a good moment to introduce the other members to each other. Presentations were made for each one of the present crewmen so that when the Security Officer arrived they would start with the mission briefing.

### **=Crew Quarters=**

Crist walked to his quarters, opened the door and stuck his head in, "Hey there, finding everything ok James." Crist said.

James Hughes, a new Security Officer under Crist's command, looked up and responded, "It's small Sir, but should manage. I still feel uneasy about starship life, you know me."

Crist laughed and said, "Well once you get you space legs, you'll never want anything else. Let me show you around the ship."

Hughes nodded and the two made their way through the ship. About an hour through the tour, the two made their way to Deck 2, the Armory.

"Well Hughes I'm going to put you in charge of the Armory, as well as in charge of Security for the Gamma shift, I hope that's ok." Crist said.

Hughes responded, "Sure Sir, I think I can handle that."

The two made it to the Armory and entered, there they could see Shran.

"Ah, this is Thy'lek Shran, he's in charge of the Delta shift. O and he's in charge of Security team Blue, I forgot to mention you'll be in charge of Team Red. The teams will be deployed when or if there's a Red Alert, if not then it will be business as usual." Crist said.

Hughes responded with a smile, "Well, I knew you first why can't I be leader of the Delta shift."

Crist laughed and said, "Well, you weren't on the ship first."

The two laughed and Shran spoke up,

"Sir, the refit has been completed," he turns to Hughes, "I'm sure we'll enjoy working together, Lt. Crist has told me a lot about you."

Crist smiled and then said, "Well Hughes, just one more place to show you, Shran good work here."

Crist and Hughes then left the Armory and headed to Deck 1. As they stepped out of the turbo lift onto Deck 1, a message came over the comm.,

"This is Captain Jellico, all senior officers please report to my ready room for mission briefing."

Crist said, "Darn, we'll need to finish this up fast."

The two made their way to the Bridge and once there Crist began to show Hughes the Tactical station. It was on the right side of the bridge, between the helm and science console. After a few minutes showing Hughes the controls, Crist patted Hughes's shoulder and said, "Stay here, and look over the controls a bit more, just don't blow anything up."

While smiling, Crist left the bridge, and headed to the Captains Quarters/Ready room. Once there, Crist entered and said, "Hey guys, sorry I'm a little late had to show my new Security officer around, not to mention the recent refit."

After Crist entered the ready room, he was followed closely by the Chief Engineer Officer, a Tiburonese male with the name of Caltesh.

Once introductions were made, David turned the screen on. It showed a map of a star system located near the Romulan Neutral Zone. David started his briefing: "Sirs, Starfleet has rushed us to leave Starbase 10 without a complete crew and has sent us on a research mission."

"Two weeks ago the USS Cassini, a Nebula class surveyor, detected a faint but continuous energy signature coming from the Metariah system. The long range scans of the scientific ship identified the signal as artificial in origin. Further scans showed it to be a strong ionization not previously detected in the system. Unfortunately the Cassini could not take the time to study it in more detail as they had to continue its travel to the Typhon nebula."

"The presence of this signal in that area is strange as the Metariah system has only one habitable planet, Metariah III, occupied by a pre-industrial era civilization. Located just outside Federation territory and about 2 ly off the Neutral zone (in our side), the Metariah system is characterized by the high density of dust particles in its space. This is the result of it being a system of relatively new formation in which matter has still to aggregated around bigger forms. Heavy on small asteroids and full of heavy metals. The Metariah system is difficult to navigate. If we have on account that it doesn't have any other geological, strategic or scientific interest, it is understandable that the area is not trafficked."

"For those reasons, Starfleet Command thinks that it is unusual for this signal to be there. The initial survey of the system that was made 76 years ago was brief and not very detailed, due to the navigational hazards and the scarce interest the initial scans caused. The recent report has caused Starfleet Exploration Division to reassess its interest and send a ship to investigate. As the McKenzie is a small and maneuverable ship, it has been decided to send it to clarify the origin of that signal."

At this point, David waited for a little bit to allow the other officers to make questions before continuing with the briefing.

Phoenix stared in open horror at his commanding officer for a few moments before hiding it. Although his face was back to neutral, on the inside he was seething. Since it was Starfleet, who assigned them the mission, he couldn't blame Jellico for this unfortunate turn of events. Due to his lack of experience and ability, Phoenix would be forced

to appoint his Assistant Chief to flying, while he would have to stand in the background and watch. The thought of doing nothing for an entire mission infuriated him, but he had no choice.

David saw the reaction of his Flight Control Officer to the navigational hazards they were going to face in the Metariah system. He was aware of the problems the young Ensign was having being just transferred from Tactical to this new position. For this reason he decided to reassure the young man.

"Don't worry Mr. Gallant, we will move carefully once inside the Metariah system. You won't have to dodge asteroids or anything like that. It's more a problem for the scientific officer who will have problems with sensors. Anyway, Ensign, if we need to perform some dangerous maneuver, I will help you. Remember that I am a Former FC Officer."

Having said that, David resumed his briefing:

"Ok, so Mr. Junyo, I want you to start taking scans of the area as we approach it and you would like to review the previous data of the Cassini to make the necessary adjustments to our sensors. I don't expect any miracles given the circumstances but just try to get the best resolution we have."

"Mr. Gallant, we still have a few hours until the Metariah system. I can help you if you have doubts about your new position. I am at your disposal."

"Mr. Bains, please review the data about the Metariah III civilization just in case we have to visit the planet."

"Ok, people. Our mission is to approach the system and try to determine the origin of this signal. Who knows? Maybe we will have our First Contact situation."

"If you don't have any questions we can consider this briefing over." The Captain finished.

"I don't have any other questions sir. I would like to meet with some of the medical crew members now so I can explain the situation." Replied Bains.

"Of course, Mr. Bains, talk to your personnel." The Captain responded.

As no other question arisen, David dismissed his colleagues and started to analyze the data gathered by the Cassini. The sensor data were insufficient and did not give much regarding the origin of the signal. It was artificial, that was for sure, but it's nature escaped the study.

A few hours passed which the crew used to do their assigned duty. In a couple of hours, long- range sensors would be able to gather preliminary data of the system...

### **=Sickbay=**

After the meeting, Bains went and addressed his crew. Most were young and only a few weren't humans. The Doctor had already met most of the crew and was having some fun around the ship. After finishing the briefing, the crew went back to their posts and Bains spent the next few hours getting Sick Bay ready.

### **=Captain's Ready Room=**

Several hours later, David was still in his ready room when his comm-badge beeped:

"Junyo to captain Jellico. Sir, long range sensors have picked the strange signal the USS Cassini detected. It is certainly artificial, like some residual ionization. For the moment I cannot determine it's origin but I can say that it comes from the third planet in the system."

David thought for a moment before answering: "Ok, Mr. Junyo. Continue with your scans. Try to gather as much information as you can. I am on my way."

The Captain continued with his reading as it would still take some time before they reach the Metariah system.

Later the ship finally reached its destination and David left his room and entered the McKenzie's bridge. There he found all his bridge officers. He checked the ship's status and position. The defiant class ship was holding position just outside the marginal star system.

"Ensign Gallant take us in the system. Be careful with the bigger asteroids and coordinate with science to get good navigational data."

"Lieutenant Junyo, continue your scans of the area."

The McKenzie entered the Metariah system and soon it was evident the high particle density of the area. Small asteroids the size of a nut floated everywhere while some bigger rocks appear on the sensors from time to time. The space was filled by fine dust that caused interferences on the sensor array making navigation and obtaining scans quite difficult. It was like swimming on a dense pool of floating powder and dust.

"Mr. Junyo, can you get more information about the origin of the signal?", asked David to the Science Officer.

"I cannot determine its cause but I can assure you that the signal comes from the third planet. To be precise it is generated on a specific spot on the northern area of the main continent" answered the Grazerite.

The McKenzie approached the planet and soon it had established a high orbit above it in order to get better scans.

After a few moments the Science Officer provided his input:

"Sir, the signal is detected at some point a few kilometers below the surface of the aforementioned area. Far from the pre-Industrial settlements I am detecting, on a deserted area. However I am detecting a series of caves and underground spaces there."

"In addition, that analysis of the atmosphere reveals high radioactive levels on the entire planet and strong winds. The use of transporters will not be possible."

David thought for a moment about the harsh conditions of the planet before addressing his crew:

"Lieutenant Crist you will lead an away team to the surface to investigate those signals and the caves that seem to lead to it. Assemble an small security detachment."

"Mr. Junyo, you will accompany them and try to determine the cause of the signal."

"Mr. Gallant, you will take a shuttle and transport the members of the away team to the surface of the planet. Stay with them until the investigation is finished."

"Mr. Bains, I would like you to inoculate the members of the away team against radiation. You will also accompany them to monitor their condition and give a biological point of view of what you find.

"Mr. Crist, I will leave the security details to you. Depart as soon as you can."

David remained on the bridge of the McKenzie while most of his senior staff were preparing to be deployed on the surface of Metaria II.

He was studying the sensor data the science officer had gathered and trying to determine the purpose and origin of the strange signal. It was clear that the signal came from some place underground that was probably reached via the caves he had detected. However its origin was still a mystery.

Bains proceeded to inoculate the officers, once done he quickly grabbed a med kit, a phaser, and a tricorder. He then went to the shuttle bay.

As Crist was leaving the Bridge, he turned to mention something, "Sir might I remind you that this ship only carries 4 class 10 shuttle pod, which can only carry 4 people."

At Lieutenant's Crist comment, David decided that the away team would only be composed by the Chief Security Officer, Ensign Gallant, Lieutenant Junyo and Lieutenant Bains. That way the away team could be dispatched using only one shuttlepod.

After saying that Crist left the Bridge and headed for the armory, once there, he grabbed a hand phaser and tricorder, and proceeded to Deck 3, Shuttle Bay 3. He entered the shuttle bay and met up with the doc, Darum Bains.

"Hey there Doc, looks like we need to wait on the other two."

**=Bridge=**

After the smooth ride through warp, piloting through the system had been a nightmare for the new flight officer. Thankfully, with a little help from the navigation system, he'd managed to get the McKenzie into a stable orbit above the target planet.

Phoenix had hoped that the worst was over. The Captain quickly shot that idea down when he ordered for him, personally, to pilot a shuttle down to the surface. He had no idea where the Captain was finding this incredible amount of faith in his abilities, but Phoenix would do his best to fulfill his orders.

When he reached the shuttle bay, he briefly nodded to the two officers already there before hurrying into the pilot's seat. Once there he alternated between memorizing the controls, praying for good luck, and wishing Mark was there to help him out.

Finally Lieutenant Junyo, the last member of the away team, entered the shuttle bay, and with the arrival of the last officer, the mission could begin.

"Ok guys lets head down" Crist said.

The four officers boarded the shuttle pod and were ready to go.

“Crist to Bridge, were all here and are ready to depart.” Crist said.

"Mr. Crist, you have permission to leave. Be careful and good luck." Said Jellico.

Crist smiled and looked to Gallant, "Ok Ensign, take us down."

Gallant returned the smile, all the while thinking, Famous last words. He put away the PADDs he was studying before contacting bay control. "This is shuttlepod one to control. We're ready to launch."

"This is control to shuttlepod two, acknowledged. We're opening the bay doors now. Good luck."

We're going to need it. Carefully, he lifted the shuttle off the launch pad before slowly heading into open space. Once clear of the ship, he inputted their destination into the computer. Everything went smoothly until they reached the planet's atmosphere. That's when things got bumpy.

### **=Bridge=**

After that David seated on the Captain's chair checking the away team's progress. The bridge was occupied by junior officers now that Ensign Gallant and Mr. Junyo had also left it for the shuttlebay.

"Mr. Crist, you have permission to leave. Be careful and good luck."

Now he could only wait...

### **=Shuttle Pod 2=**

The atmospheric entry, itself, went smoothly, but when they entered into it, the strong winds immediately made its presence known by crashing into the pod with enough force to knock it off course.

Gallant sprung into action by making a new course to compensate and even use the wind to their advantage. All was going well, when his right hand spasmed, sending the shuttlepod into a nose-dive. Suffice to say, his passengers weren't happy about it.

The McKenzie's Chief Science Officer, Mr. Junyo, saw how the surface of Metariah III looked, on the approached of the shuttlepod. At least this is how he perceived it from the upper atmosphere of the planet. This feeling disappeared once the vessel entered the lower atmosphere and the strong winds of the planet caused the shuttlepod to shake violently.

He gripped the sides of the chair to avoid falling to the floor and prayed that it would soon end.

A few tense seconds later the shuttlepod reached a lower attitude where the winds where not so strong. Mr. Gallant headed the ship towards the caves' coordinates where they would land to start their research.

The ride became a bit bumpy, thought Crist had been though worst, remembering his run in with pirates, as he left Earth for Starbase 10, a few months ago.

Gallant's heart began to race faster, as the surface came closer. Working as fast as he could with only one hand, Phoenix managed to pull out of the dive before a collision occurred. The rest of the flight went well, but he didn't

dare relax, until they finally landed at the target site.

### **=McKenzie=**

Meanwhile, things aboard the McKenzie were starting to get bored. They had just nothing to do except from waiting the away team members report. David entertained himself trying to reconfigure the sensor array to counteract for the interference in the entire Metariah system.

'We won't see anything until it hit us' thought David. 'Let's hope the rest of the senior staff have more luck than us.'

### **=On the surface of Metariah III=**

After the shuttle had landed, Bains got into an environmental suit. The tricorders were not picking up much about the terrain so they would have to be careful. Darum clumsily picked up a med kit and headed outside where the Science Officer was waiting.

Crist stepped outside. He was wearing an environmental suit which made everything difficult, walking, seeing, and getting his bearings. After a short look around.

Once outside the shuttlepod, Mr. Junyo, scanned the immediate area. He quickly confirmed the high levels of radiation present on the planet. This same radiation also caused all the Tricorders to work at a reduced efficiency which resulted in poor data.

At least he was able to confirm that the caves ahead lead continued underground and that the origin of the signal was down there.

"Lieutenant, I have confirmed the point of origin of the signal. It's under us, about 2 km underground. I suggest we enter this cave to get there" said the Science officer to Mr. Crist.

Crist looked at where Junyo was pointing, and said, "Ok, lets see what's down there folks."

Mr. Junyo and the rest of the away team entered the caves. Although the environmental suits were not necessary they would provide more protection against the radiation. They made movement inside the caves clumsy and on more than one occasion they slipped on the wet surface of a rock.

The cave was full of fungi and other microbial life whose colonies tinted some parts of the rock wall of strange colors. Soon it was clear that the cave continued deep underground and the Starfleet officers walked for several minutes.

"Lieutenant Crist, we are getting closer to the origin of the signal. It's intensity is growing as we get more deep. Now I can get a better resolution and my findings are...strange. I am detecting low levels of Surinam's ionization which is pretty curious as those are only produced by disruptor weapons generators."

Crist looked up and responded, "Well, guess we're getting closer."

As they progressed deeper into the caves the interference got greater. Eventually the tricorders wouldn't respond properly and just about everything was shutting down as they approached the source of the radiation. Even though the scanners weren't working, you could tell there had been a change in the rock formations. The Environmental Suites were shutting down as well and beginning to become very heavy. Before long the away team would start

feeling the effects of the radiation and Bains would have to give the order to evac. 'Lets just hope it's around the next bend.' Darum thought to himself.

The members of the away team continued deeper into the caves feeling the effects of exhaustion. The interference levels have been growing gradually as they walked down the tunnels. The Science Officer was getting tired when he noticed something:

"Lieutenant Crist, I am picking a big opening in the tunnel ahead. It seems that we are reaching a big room or something."

Crist responded , "Good, lets take cover and see what's going on here."

The away team proceeded with caution and slowly turned a corner that lead to the aforementioned room. Of the things they could expect, what they did find was not among them. In front of them opened a colossal underground cave that run down for 40 meters and another 20 up. It was filled with machinery, working machinery array like a factory. The electronic equipment hummed continuously and one could see several humanoid forms operating them. The machines seemed to be insulated against the radiation that flooded the planet and where the cause of the interference that had been detected by the USS Cassini. They were controlled by several computers monitored by those humanoids which seemed to wear environmental suits that protected them from the long term effects of the radiation.

The Science Officer, studied the readings of his tricorder. After a few moments his face changed and showed a great deal of worry.

"Mr. Crist, if my low resolution scans are right, those machines are building components for Starship disruptors...and those people down there are Romulans."

With that revealed, Crist was a bit disturbed, but attempted to shake it off, for the sake of the rest of the officers. Crist finally spoke up and said, "Well, we found what we came here to find, any ideas on what to do next."

The revelation caused fear and confusion to the Starfleet Officers who were starting to fathom the implications of it. True, that the Metariah system was outside the limits of the established Romulan Neutral Zone, in unclaimed territory by neither the Federation or the Romulan Star empire but that the Romulans had established a secret weapons facility was cause for worry. They had grown too bold or too desperate...

### **=En-route to the McKenzie=**

It had only been a few days since the attack on Starbase 10 before Sydona was reassigned to the McKenzie. Seeing that a position needed to be filled, the Klingon Hybrid was given orders to head out to the McKenzie's position to fulfill her assignment.

Sydona had never set foot in a Starship strictly built for combat...but she did a major crash course study on the ships layout, systems and weapons load-out and was impressed. Not wasting any time...she used her travel time to the McKenzie to familiarize herself with the engineering layout. Within a matter of hours... Sydona was beamed aboard.

The Ensign tried her best not to feel like a fish out of water, but it couldn't be helped. Sydona noted the Spartan conditions of the ship in relation to the normal amenities found on other federation ships...but she told herself that it was her Human side "Dona" that was not comfortable. It was time for her Klingon side "Syd" to take over.

After being beamed to the McKenzie and placing her things in her quarters she was sharing, she took her own tour of the ship. She made sure she hit all the key locations before hitting Engineering. Upon entering the room where she will be spending most of her time, Sydona looked around and took in all the sights around her. The engineering staff...the few that were there, continued to work at their post. Sydona walked in and took a crossed leg seat near the warp core and closed her eyes. A few officers saw this action and were perplexed.

“Umm...excuse me, Ensign? It's best that you don't sit near the warp core.” Lt. Davis said.

Sydona placed a finger on her lips, silencing the senior officer. “Quiet Sir. Trying to listen to Kenzie here. She's telling me something.”

“Telling you something?” Davis asked.

“Yes. You can find out a lot about how the ship is just by listening to her as she runs. Seems like she's not up to peak efficiency.”

A look of frustration crossed Davis face. “Oh really? Well...why don't you show me Ensign. I'd love to see this.” Davis said with a loud tone, getting everyone attention in the Engineering room.

Sydona hopped to her feet...towering over the Lieutenant. With all the eyes of the room focused on her, the Klingon Hybrid walked over a nearby console. She took a quick glance at the station before her before turning towards Lt. Davis and entering the needed adjustments. At that moment...a female computerized voice filled the room briefly.

“Power Coil coupling recalibration complete. Efficiency rating: 110%”

The Lieutenant was speechless, as for the rest of the Engineering team. Sydona smiled as she walked by her senior officer...patting him on the shoulder as she passed. “Not every problem will present itself visually. It's the little things that lead to bigger problems. In short, when Kenzie speaks...you should listen. But you already knew that...right?”

With a confident stance in her stride, Sydona left Engineering and headed back to the Mess Hall when she received a communications from the Captain.

### **=McKenzie Bridge=**

Meanwhile, David was on the bridge of the McKenzie. He had been studying the interference present in the system but unable to diminish it's effects on the ship systems, he decide to contact his new engineer:

"Jellico to Ensign V'Krull. Please report to the bridge."

“Roger that.” Sydona said as she passed the Mess Hall to head to the turbolift.

“Bridge.” Sydona said

The turbolift quickly got the ensign to the nerve center of the ship. The Klingon Hybrid stood at attention before Captain Jellico.

“Ensign V'Krull, reporting for duty Sir."

David saw the Human/Klingon hybrid enter the bridge. She headed directly to the Captain and introduced herself:

"Ensign, I am sorry for not taking the time to welcome you to the ship. Starfleet Command put us in a hurry with the current mission and wanted us to leave Starbase 10 as soon as possible. I hope you get comfortable in your new post and get to know the ship soon."

"For the moment I am going to assign you a task. As you know this system contains a unusually dense particlefield in it. The dust, small asteroids and such, together with the radiation on the planets of this system are interfering with our systems, specially Transporters. I would like you to study this problem and try to get functional transporters. The members of the away team may need a quick extraction and I want to be able to provide it."

"Don't worry, I don't expect a miracle but try something anyway."

"I'll get right on it Sir." Sydona said as she immediately left the bridge to head for Engineering. Mulling over what was said to her...and the seriousness of the situation, Sydona tried her best to clear her mind and focus on the task at hand. The Klingon Human hybrid was on the move as soon as the doors opened. With a determined look on her face, many officers stepped out of her way...clearing a path for her. Once inside Engineering, Sydona reached for her left wrist to pull off a hair-tie or scrunchie as her Mother would call it and put her hair in a ponytail as she heading to one of the Engineering consoles. Lt. Davis made it a point to approach her.

"Excuse me...just what are you doing now? You're not even authorized to be here!" Davis said.

"Look, I got orders from the Captain to find a way to counteract the particle field, find a stop to the ships systems from going to hell in a hand basket and find a way to fix the transporters. In short...let me get to work Sir." Sydona responded firmly.

Davis not only stood his ground, he approached Sydona...directly in her face. "Back away from that console and leave before I forcibly remove you from this room."

A gleam flashed in Sydona's emerald green eyes as they locked with Lt. Davis. With a sly smile, showing her teeth with her fang-like canines...the Klingon hybrid didn't move a muscle. "Go ahead if you think you can Mr. Science officer."

One of the female ensigns in the room quickly made her way over to the two officers. Her blonde hair swaying behind her with padd in hand, she finally stepped in between them. Her body position was facing Lt. Davis, as if to block Sydona from getting to the senior officer. The brave ensign can feel the tension in the Klingon hybrid's body as she backs up into her, trying her best to use her own body weight to move Sydona who is an immovable object at the moment. Before Lt. Davis could react...she held out the PADD she was holding. "Davis...Sir, her orders are from the captain directly. Also...according to those orders...you're to go to the bridge as well. Besides...I don't think it's best to upset a Klingon. Especially Ensign V'Krull from Starbase 10."

Sydona raise a brow at the statement, as if to wonder the implication. Before she could respond, Davis started to back up.

"Starbase 10...and a recent transfer. You're one of the engineers that survived the Romulan attack. I...didn't know..." Davis said.

"And now you do. I'm going to get back to work now. Sir." Sydona replied, suppressing a growl.

Science officer Lt. Davis made a hasty retreat from the room, leaving the rest of the engineering staff, Sydona and the ensign that prevented an altercation in the Engineering room. "That was close. Davis needs to learn to back off sometimes. Then again...we are all on edge." The young ensign said as she turned to face Sydona. "Ensign Summers. Jenny Summers. Welcome to the McKenzie."

Sydona closed her eyes and breathed out slowly. Quelling her anger, she finally opened her eyes. "Thank you Summers. Hopefully that won't happen again. I'd hate to have to hurt him. Trying to be good for once."

Jenny smirked as she walked over to the nearest console to check the sensor readings. "Right. Good girl. Sure you are. Since the Captain has put you on this...here's what we got. There are gamma and thorium particles in the field. Also...the debris in the field are also generating magnetized fields which will prevent us from going to warp."

"Hmmm...okay. The gamma and thorium particles are probably the culprits in what's affecting the ship. We could vent some plasma from the nacelles..." Sydona said.

"Which would ionize around the ship and neutralize the gamma and thorium particles, thus preventing further systems degradation." Jenny replied, smiling.

Nodding in agreement, Sydona smiled. "You got it. Let's get cracking on that first, then we'll work on the transporters."

Ensign Summers turned to everyone in the room, brushing a few strands of hair from her face. "You heard the woman!! This takes priority people!! Move!!"

The Klingon hybrid and Human ensign began working on configuring the nacelles for the plasma vent.

The sounds of bleeps and chirps from the various console filled the room as the men and women in Engineering continued their work. Sydona moved from station to station, monitoring the amount of plasma venting from the nacelles. Jenny seemed to glide and flow around the room...checking the ionization levels outside the ship.

"C'mon baby. You can do it Kenzie. Don't let Mama down." Sydona said as she watched the displays.

Jenny laughs softly at Sydona's words. "Baby? Getting a little attached aren't we?"

Sydona smiles as she continues to work, still watching the displays before her. "I do remember one Starfleet officer saying something along the line of this: If you treat her right, she'll always bring you back home."

Jenny's fingers tapped away at her console, adjusting the sensor output to get an accurate reading. "Hmm, I guess you have a point. Makes me think of the U.S.S. Voyager. Now that was a test of ship and crew right there. Don't know if I would have survived a journey like that."

"Summers, in a situation like that...you need to have faith. Faith in your Captain, your crew, and yourself. This ship can be thrown in the same situation, at anytime. That's the chance we take being out here." Sydona responded as she gave the thumbs up to boost the decompression rate.

"Faith is something most don't have these days. Anyway...ionization level is at 75 percent. We need to push the vent rate up." Jenny said.

Sydona quickly made the adjustments, frowning the entire time. "Damn it...I'm redlining here! Kenzie can't keep this up for too much longer Summers!"

"Don't give me that Syd! The ionization saturation is at 90 percent!! 20 more seconds and we have it!" Jenny makes a final tweak to sensor output and mumbles softly. "C'mon Kenzie...you can do it girl!"

The next 20 seconds felt like 20 minutes. Time seemed to slow down as Sydona barked out orders to the other crewmen in the room to make sure that the vent flow could be sustained. Suddenly...a familiar female computerized voice cut through the tension of the room like a phaser through cloth.

"Ionization complete. Gamma and Thorium particles around the ship have been neutralized."

"Now that's what I'm talking about! Good job all. One problem down at least. Now judging from what's going happening on the bridge...best work on the transporters." Sydona nods in acknowledgement to the crewmen in Engineering, who in turn nod back, smiling and generally pleased with the work they have just accomplished.

"You guys keep me posted on the status of the ships systems. They seem to be fine now...but that might change in a matter of moments. I have some Transporters to get online." Sydona made her way to the door, and as it opens...she turns to Jenny. "Hey Jen, are you coming Ms. Sunshine? We still have some work to do."

The officers and crewmen in the room paused, everyone turned to look at Ensign Summers to see her response. Jenny gazes back at the Klingon hybrid with a blank expression. Sydona stood in the doorway with a hand on her hip, grinning. Jenny finally breaks her composure and chuckles, walking toward Sydona.

"Sure thing Syd, Klingon Warrior Queen." Jenny said.

"You know...I have beaten a few up for using the name Syd." Sydona replied, smiling.

"Thing is: I know you like me...so that won't happen." Jenny said with a sly but playful expression.

Sydona sighs as she runs her hand over her pulled back hair. "Great. You have me figured out. You do realize I have a rep to maintain."

Jenny playfully punches Sydona very lightly on the arm. "Don't worry, I won't tell."

The two Ensigns smiled as they walked briskly to their next task: Getting the transporters online to help the Away Team.

### **=McKenzie Bridge=**

Meanwhile, on the Bridge, David was relieved to see some improvements with the problems caused by interference in the system. Sensor performance had improved a little bit but it was still far from optimal. Nevertheless, David ordered the assistant Science Officer to scan the planet again and try to get better results...

### **=Romulan Weapons Factory, Metariah III =**

Lieutenant Junyo continued to scan the Weapons facility they had just found. His scans confirmed what they saw so it was time to do something:

"Lieutenant Crist, we need to gather more information about this facility if we want to tell Starfleet this. We must determine if this group of Romulans works alone or if they represent the Romulan Empire. I suggest we go down and hack that terminal over there. The facility has a great degree of automation and we could sneak our way past the technicians and access the computer. What do you think?"

Crist thought it over for a moment and nodded. "I Agree, but only two of us, the other two will stay up here, just in case things go wrong, besides, it's easier to sneak 2 past, then 4. Junyo, you and I will go down, Bains and Phoenix, you'll stay up here, if anything goes wrong you'll be giving us covering fire as we head back."

The team nodded with understanding of the plan, Crist and Junyo began to make their way down, making sure they won't be noticed. Bains and Phoenix stayed, looking over the factory and paying close attention to their comrades.

Bains watched the others go off. He would have to recall the team in a while.

After Crist and Junyo made their way down they hide behind a piece of machinery, waiting for a Romulan to pass. After he passed, the 2 officers finally made it to the computer. Crist told Junyo, "Ok, make this quick, and try not to set off an alarm."

Mr. Junyo connected his tricorder to the computer. After some adjustments he was able to enter the Romulan network. At first the security was not specially hard, probably because the Romulan's felt quite safe in this isolated star system. However as Junyo tried to access more sensible information the computer security grew tighter.

The seconds passed and the science officer had problems in hacking the terminal. After a few minutes and seeing that he was unable to access more secure files, the Grazerite addressed the security officer:

"Lieutenant, I have partial access to the computer. I have downloaded information that suggests that this facility belong to the Tal Shiar or at least is commanded by an active Tal Shiar agent called "Rafek". It seems that they have been working here for 5 months and once completed they send the Starship disruptors to a star system under the name of "Lonarias", where a Starship facility is located. The curious thing is that this star system is not in Romulan space but in unclaimed territory, near the Typhoon Expanse."

"I have downloaded a few details more but I am not able to get any further. We should leave now."

Crist turned to face Junyo, as he was on the look out for any Romulans. Crist nodded and said, "Ok, lets get out of here."

Crist and Junyo made there way back up to the cliff, where they met up with Bains and Phoenix. As the team made there way back to the surface and back to the shuttle pod, Crist thought to himself that he was glad they didn't set off the alarm, because it's most likely that they would need to go back in to disable the factory.

After traveling though the cave for many minutes, the team finally made it out. Crist was relieved that they were out, the whole time traveling though the cave, he keep looking back, making sure they weren't being followed. The team walked up to the pod, and boarded it.

Once on the shuttle pod, Junyo's Tricorder started to beep. The Science Officer's eyes widened when he saw the reading on the device: "Lieutenant, it seems we have triggered an alarm as several Romulans are approaching the shuttle. We..."

Junyo could not finish the sentence as several disruptor shots hit the shuttledpod. It was not enough to do severe

damage but they surely didn't want to give the Romulans time to fire again.

"We got to take off now!" shouted the Grazerite.

Bains ran for the shuttle and pulled out his phaser. Looked like it was still working. Running inside the pod he turned and caught a Romulan straight in the chest. Distrupter fire just missed Darum and caught part of the shuttle.

"What the!" Phoenix exclaimed before prepping the pod before takeoff. *Just once, can I have a mission without the life-threatening danger?*

After the last man arrived on the shuttle, Phoenix closed the hatch and flipped on the shields before heading straight to the *McKenzie*.

=McKenzie Bridge=

Meanwhile, on the McKenzie David was reviewing the progress of the modifications when the assistant science officer shouted to him:

"Captain, 2 D'Deridex Romulan Warbirds are cloaking around us! They are charging weapons!"

David could not believe what he saw and for a second he froze. Quickly he recovered himself and took his seat:

"Quick, raise shields, prepare weapons and initiate evasive maneuvers!"

"Jellico to away team! We have 2 Romulan Warbirds on our tails, you have to get here on the double!"

=McKenzie Transporter Room 2=

The sound of the ship going into Red Alert echoed throughout every corner. Sydona quickly looked over to her fellow officer Jenny as they briefly paused due to the new found turn of events.

"Seems like we got company. This can't be good." Jenny said.

"Really? Tell me something I don't know. Seriously Sunshine...this is bad. Talk to me Blondie...any luck with the targeting lock?" Sydona asked as she continued to work on the Pattern Buffer.

Pulling her long blonde locks away from her face, Ensign Summers frantically worked her console. With her eyes fixed on the displays...she finally responded to Sydona amidst the bleeps and chirps filling the room. "With the limited usage of the deflector dish...the only way we can get can get a lock on the away team is by narrowing the band emission."

Flipping her own long hair to one side...the Klingon hybrid finally looks up to her human co-worker. "Okay. But the only way that's going to work is if we boost the signal. And even then...we'd definitely need to be close in order for the transporters to work. Even with Ionizing the area around the ship."

"Well...I've told the engineering team to run the warp field generator coils out of phase just like you requested so we can actually sustain a warp field in case we need to..." Jenny said.

"Get out of here quick. Nice. Now I've recalibrated and synched the pattern buffers. We'll more than likely need to

boost power to the transporters as well as move into a closer range if we want to get the away team on the ship." Sydona responded.

Jenny pauses for a moment as if she was thinking. Sydona went back to work on the Pattern buffer...making final adjustments. Sydona snapped her fingers and held her hand up. Jenny grabbed a Decoupler near her and tossed it to the Klingon, which she caught.

"Thanks Summers. I think that about does it. The Transporters are ready." Sydona said as she moved to the console nearest to her.

"If we have to boost the power to the transporters..." Jenny said in a questioning tone.

"I know. Shields and Engines are going to take a hit in the power department. Keep in mind: Kenzie has the size and maneuverability advantage. Might take some split second timing...but it can be pulled off." Sydona said reassuringly to the Ensign.

"I hope you're right." Jenny said as she checked the EPS power distribution grid.

"I hope so too, or it's going to be a short voyage for all of us." Sydona tapped her combadge. "V'Krull to the Captain. We have the transporters online. If we need to beam the away team...we're going to need to be as close to them as possible. Long range beaming is out due to the debris. Shields and Engines are working within optimal parameters."

#### **=Shuttle Pod 2=**

"You have to be kidding me." Phoenix muttered to himself. Sure enough, as they exited the atmosphere, dead ahead were the Warbirds giving chase to the Federation vessel. "Captain, this is shuttlepod two. We're off-planet and in need of pickup. If need be, I can warp at us out of here and rendezvous at a rally point. But I can't go to warp, until we're clear of the system. And I don't need to remind you that we're no match for a warbird. Orders, sir?"

#### **=McKenzie Bridge=**

On the McKenzie's bridge people rushed from one place to another as the ship dodged several shots from the Warbirds. David issued several orders to his crew members but his main worry were the members of the away team. Suddenly the ship rocketed under the fire of the Warbirds.

Then he heard the message from Ensign Gallant. The gravity of the situation was evident and the fact that they could not use transporters in a normal way make things worse. The report from Lt. V'Krull left David with no many options so he issued the orders:

"Conn, head the ship to the upper reaches oh Metariah III'a atmosphere. We are going to pick them up. In addition that will make the warbirds's torpedoes unusable and give us some space to maneuver as they have no atmospheric capability."

"Jellico to Gallant! Don't jump to warp speed, just get to the higher layer to the atmosphere and we will transport you out of there!"

Then David addressed the relief Tactital Officer:

"Ensign! Redirect all power from weapons to shields and Structural Integrity Field. We are going to be shaken up."

### **=Shuttle Pod 2=**

"Simple enough," Phoenix whispered to himself. "We've already reached the edge of the atmosphere awaiting pick-up."

Right after that, he put every bit of spare power together and threw it into shields. He glanced back at his passengers. "I suggest you prepare yourselves. This could get bad."

As the shuttlepod headed straight to the approaching McKenzie, Phoenix glared at the Romulan warbirds that fired on his ship. He wished he was still a tactical officer and wanted to fire upon them. If only this shuttle came with some real firepower. At least, I could program it to act like a decoy when we vacate it. They'll probably destroy it anyway. Phoenix briefly thought about staying on board and using a ramming maneuver to buy the McKenzie time to escape, but the Captain would never let him do it.

This idea led to another one that brought a devious grin to his face. Working quickly, he programmed the shuttle to follow a set of instructions after he pressed a certain button. This will do just nicely as a decoy and maybe even do some damage. He just finished it when he noticed the McKenzie lowering its shields. Immediately, and against every fiber of his instinct, he dropped his shields. As soon as he saw the familiar white glow of the transport, he quickly pressed a button before being completely removed from the shuttle.

### **=McKenzie Bridge=**

David saw the shuttlepod through the viewscreen. It grew bigger as the McKenzie entered the upper atmosphere of the planet. The Warbirds approached slowly and continued firing but their lack of atmospheric capability didn't allow them to get any closer.

Soon they were within transporter range and it was time to beam them away:

"Jellico to V'Krull. If you can perform an engineering miracle with transporters now it would be a great time. Beam them now!"

### **=McKenzie Transporter Room 2=**

The stress from the atmosphere entry began to put pressure on the structural integrity fields, but due to the evasive maneuvers being executed, the crew of the McKenzie felt every single shake and jolt that rocked the ship. Hearing the words from the captain over the com, Sydona took a deep breath and began to focus on the task at hand.

"Damn it! Please tell me that's a fresh out of the Academy grad at the Conn. If he keeps pushing like this I'll have to take the Inertial Dampeners offline." Sydona said as she scrambled to the large console in the back of the transporter room.

"Do I need to remind you? Two Romulan Warbirds?" Jenny replied sarcastically.

"I know that Sunshine. Again...size advantage. We should be flying circles around them. Besides...I just got the data make up on this atmosphere...we cannot be hanging around long." Sydona said as she began triangulating a lock on the shuttle and the away team.

“I know...between all of the particle ionization effects we've do so far and the gaseous compounds in the atmosphere...it could have some long term system effects.” Jenny said.

The two female officers watched their displays carefully as they worked making sure their calculations were as accurate as possible...as well as keep tabs on the status of the ship. Blinking lights and a warning code flashed before the Lieutenant's eyes.

“Not now Kenzie. Don't do this hon...” Sydona sigh as she quickly taps on her console...trying to make adjustments.

“Losing power to the SIF. Down to sixty percent. Not good at all...” Jenny said nervously as she heard the latest update from engineering.

“V'Krull to Engineering, cut some of the power going to the Inertial Dampening field and shields, then route it to the Transporters and Structural Integrity Fields.” Sydona said as she prepared the transporters for transporting the away team.

Upon hearing the orders given, Ensign Summers paused and pushed her long blond locks from her face, mentally reminding herself to start wearing it up. “Syd...have you lost your mind? This isn't a Galaxy class starship. A few well place Disruptor blast and that's it. We need those shields.”

The Klingon hybrid just smiles slyly, not bothering to look at the Ensign. “Two things Dear. One: How are we going to get the power needed to beam them onboard? Two: Unless there has been some major breakthrough that I missed out on...how are we going to beam them through the shields? Especially in this atmosphere?”

“Alright. Got me there. Just got a signal from the bridge. Now or never.” Jenny said.

“Lovely. Let's get our crew back on Kenzie.” Sydona glides her hand gently across the top of the console and speaks softly. “Kenzie...Momma needs you to bring the boys back. We only got one shot baby. Don't let me down. Jen...give the signal to drop the shields.”

“Shields have been dropped. Gamma and Thorium particles are increasing. Twenty percent. Thirty percent.” Jenny relayed.

“Energizing.” Sydona said as she started the transporting process. The shimmers of light began to materialize on the transporter pad...only to start fading away.

Jenny started to get slightly agitated. “We're losing them!! Too much atmospheric interference!!”

“Like hell we are. Boost power to the Transporter and remodulate the annular confinement beam. We got a lock on them and I'm not losing it or them.” Sydona said with the utmost determination.

Sydona and Jenny worked diligently at the long Transporter console, trying their best to get the crew to materialize. The moments seems to drag on as the two officers seem to do figurative battle with an unseen invisible force, unwilling to release its grasp on the federation officers.

“More power Summers!! Just a little more!” Sydona barked out to the Ensign.

“One hundred percent!! One hundred Ten!! One Twenty!!! Anymore and we'll fry the Phase Transition Coils!!” Jenny

yelled back, eyes fixated on her displays.

Sydona frantically worked her console...fingers moving as fast as humanly possible. With her last few entries...the shimmer of lights on the transporter pad begin to fade away.

"No. Not today..." Sydona bypassed the Auto-sequence lockout and reinitiated the process. In a matter of seconds...the shimmers of light returned...and the Away team materialize on the transporter pad. Both officers breathed a sigh of relief, knowing that they accomplished their task.

"Nice. Got the Away team back and no damage to the transporters. Gotta love that." Jenny said, smiling.

"Agreed. Nice work Sunshine. Couldn't have done it without you." Sydona replied.

"Glad to be of service, Lieutenant." Jenny said as she pointed to her display. Sydona walked over to view the display as well. With a look of surprise on her face, she stared back at Jenny and mouthed the word "Lieutenant". The shorter blonde Ensign just nodded and smiled back...as if she was given a gift at a surprise party.

Phoenix let out a sigh of relief and hoped that the shuttle had done its part well.

At that very moment, one of the members of the away team cleared his throat...as to get the attention of the female officers. Regaining their composure...both women walked from behind the console and stood at attention before the away team. Sydona slipped back into her regular demeanor and decided to break the ice first.

"I'm Chief Engineering Officer Lieutenant Sydona V'Krull, this is Ensign Jenny Summers. I've heard how you all like to have fun while you're out, but some of you just don't know when to get back. Besides...the Captain wasn't too happy you all broke curfew."

"If this is the Captain's way of punishing bad behavior, I assure you have no intention of breaking curfew ever again!" Phoenix responded in a lighthearted manner. "If you'll excuse us ladies, duty calls." Phoenix nodded to the the two women who saved his life before running full speed toward the the bridge.

Bains stepped off the transporter pad and began to leave the room. "Bains to Sick Bay, replicate emergency supplies, prepare for casualties. Send a field medic to the bridge and another to engineering on the double. I want a report A.S.A.P. Keep a small crew in Sick Bay and send the rest throughout the ship. I'll be arriving in a minute." Snapped Bains over the com.

### **=McKenzie Bridge=**

With the news about the successful retrieval of the members of the away team, David could continue with the next problem:

"Jellico to Junyo ,Crist and Mr. Gallant! Please come to the bridge. We are in the middle of a crisis and I need my Senior Officers."

David noticed that the news from the transporter room had alleviated the tension on the bridge officers. But now it was time to continue working as they still have not escaped from the Romulans.

"Ok, we have our crew members. Now let's get the hell out of here!"

"Conn, plot a trajectory along the upper atmosphere of the planet and bring us to the other side of Metariah III. Then engage maximum impulse speed and get us outside the system. Continue with evasive maneuvers."

Then he addressed the Operations officer:

"Ensign, send a encrypted message to Starfleet Command. Tell them that we have been attacked by Romulans and that we are coming back."

Crist arrived on the bridge. He walked behind his station and told Lt. Jg Shran, "Sharn I'll take over here."

Shran nodded, got up and walked off the bridge to go to his duties. Crist sat down and made sure the shields were up and checked the weapons, he turned and said, "Shields at 67%, phasers are online, torpedoes tubes are loaded, and Hull armor generators on standby."

He turned back to his console and waited for orders.

=Shuttle Pod 2=

Devoid of its human passengers, the pod locked onto one of the warbirds and activated its warp engines. Of course, there was no way it could escape the system, but that was never the purpose. Unfortunately for the warbird, the Captain had ordered that, while still moving at impulse, that the ship briefly angled toward its target to fire its torpedoes. It just finished the maneuver when the shuttle activated its warp engines, and against all odds and doing more damage than Phoenix had hoped for, smashed straight into the Romulan's bridge. Now, out of control, the disabled ship headed toward the planet's surface.

It could've been saved had the other Romulan ship broken off pursuit to come to its aid. Alas, desperate to keep their secret safe, the other Romulan captain ignored the ship, dooming it to destruction.

**=McKenzie Bridge=**

Phoenix arrived on the bridge. He headed for his station. He was about to relieve the flight officer there, when he glanced suspiciously at his right hand. I can't take that risk. To the surprise of his fellow flight officer, he merely stood next to the station, and gestured for him to stay at his post.

"Use the asteroids for cover. Take advantage of our maneuverability." He ordered. He glanced at the readings. "Why is there only one warbird?"

"The other is destroyed, sir," a bridge officer replied.

"Destroyed? How?" Phoenix asked.

"Crashed into the planet after the shuttle rammed them. I guess it was your handiwork."

Wow! I'm only on my second mission, and I've already single handedly destroyed a Romulan warbird. Good start for my career. Now all we need to do is get out of here alive.

He watched the view screen, as the asteroids passed right by them. They were still too far in-system to go to warp.

With the senior officers on the bridge the fight continued. The McKenzie maneuvered using the asteroids as cover

while trying to get out of the system. It would only take a few more seconds for the small ship to be able to engage warp speed but the Romulans were determined to destroy the Federation ship that had discovered their secret facility.

"Lt. Crist keep all power redirected to impulse engines and shields. We've got to gain a few more seconds of shield power in order to escape."

Then David addressed the Operations officer: "Ensign! continue calling the nearest Federation starbase. We will need some help to scare the Romulans of our tails and prevent them from pursuing us."

Now only the combined efforts of the Senior crew members could help us survive...

'Almost there,' Phoenix thought to himself. "We'll clear the area in five seconds," he announced. Thanks to the asteroids, the McKenzie hadn't suffered a hit in some time. Now if they could jump to warp before the Warbird cleared the field, they'd be safe.

"I want maximum warp speed, destination: Starbase 10," Ensign Gallant ordered his assistant chief flight officer. Soon, they were clear of the system's obstacles. Phoenix held his breath, while the last coordinates were inputted. After course corrections were finished, the McKenzie jumped to warp.

He breathed a sigh of relief. At max warp, there was no way the Romulans could catch up now. He nodded to the flight officer, and finally took over the station. So, in my first mission, I had to deal with a zombie plague. In my second one, I had to deal with two Warbirds firing on us. What could possibly happen in the next one?

With the McKenzie under way towards Starbase 10 the officers on the bridge could again relax a bit. Sensors confirmed that the remaining Warbird was not pursuing them so the danger was gone.

Later the away team members debriefed the Captain about their findings on the underground facility on Metariah III. The sensor readings and the information downloaded from the Romulan computers would be key in proving the existence of this facility to Starfleet top brass. It would be they the ones who would decide what to do now.

After the meeting, the Captain would have to prepare his own debrief with all the gathered information. But even with that, he would have time to relax a bit and gather his thoughts about his new position.

### **=Sickbay=**

The doctor felt the ship go to warp. They hadn't taken much fire yet by the looks of it and they were still at red alert, but heading somewhere was a good sign.

### **=McKenzie Bridge=**

After several hours the McKenzie arrived to Starbase 10. Soon David and security officer Daniel Crist were debriefed by Starfleet Intelligence through subspace relay.

Meanwhile repairs on the Defiant class starship had begun and in a few days the ship would again leave the starbase to resume its duties. That time would allow the newly assigned crewmembers to get used to their ship.

David's first mission as Captain of the McKenzie had been tough but at least they had discovered important information. He hoped the next mission to be quieter.

THE END