

(Kal'Shar - Gertin District- Free Lands - Skipta the skeptic- 1455)

[illegible]

Skeese

The

The

Once

Michaela

“Be

aware that I will be going to this Illuminar, the ship sent from the United Federation of Planets tomorrow. We can hold the Council again once I return.”

He

could see the shocked faces on the others but did not let them voice their concerns. He was still Admiral and this decision was his. The others would have to voice their concerns in private.

“Since

there is nothing further discuss I adjourn this meeting.”

“Admiral,”

Da'han immediately said standing, "I would have a word, in private."

Skeese

hung his head in resignation, then turned to Michealla.

"If you'll excuse me Ambassador I will have someone accompany you back to the Hall of Greeting. This might take a while."

(Reply

Michaela)

(Posted

by Al Muir)

[illegible]

(Kal'Shar- District 3 Peliar- Athid Weir - Sec'or 2 of the Keeper Clan, Geehoff- 1347)

Geehoff listened as Lo'san came to understand the actuality of the Keepers' situation and voiced the job of the clans of Kal'Shar.

"While those who keep the ship have lived shut away within its skin," he said, looking up at Geehoff, "the Colonists have ventured forth from the heart driven by hunger. You are the Keepers of the oath of travel and they the keepers of the old knowledge. Knowledge from those who die is of little use to us."

"Indeed," Geehoff nodded, remembering the day of his Oath. It was a proud day for his family. It was before the accident, and before his family had died. First his father in the accident, then his mother from the slow silent death. "We still keep the oath. We still care for Kal'Shar. It is more difficult now, without the Engineering Clan. But we have not forgotten nor neglected our duty. And first and foremost of those duties was to get the colonists to their destination. You may have little use for the knowledge of the Colonists, but our people will need it when we arrive at our new world. Wherever that will be."

"Our purpose and our future, Lo'san," Geehoff said.

Geehoff hadn't really put much thought into what would happen after their arrival at New Sharlaya. What use would the Colonists, or the Gathers for that matter, have with the Keepers of the ship. The ship is going to be lucky to make it that far. Another five years. And then what. What will befall Kal'Shar. What use will the Keepers have in this new world. How long before the Colonists think that Sharlayans will want to travel to new worlds and see their neighbors. It was a sobering thought. Perhaps sharing the new world would see a need for the Se'cor, but what about the Admiral, the Captain.

He looked over at Ariel and realized that he had revealed more about himself than he had intended. Then he looked over at El'iana, and saw a gleam in her eye. Instinctively he wanted to wipe the wetness away. Instead he smiled at her and touched her hand. Then he took another bite of cheese.

(reply Lo'San, El'lana, Trei)
(posted by Al Muir)

"Do you any more questions about me?"

He turned to Geehoff. "All of this time we believed the Keepers had abandoned us to our fate. Your coming was good as I have seen that this is not so. While those who keep the ship have lived shut

away within its skin the Colonists have ventured forth from the heart driven by hunger. You are the Keepers of the oath of travel and they the keepers of the old knowledge. Knowledge from those who die is of little use to us."

(Reply: Geehoff)

Lo'san sighed deeply. "Our trust is to keep them fed and we have done so to our detriment. Still some of them have sickened from hunger as we and have died as have we. I shudder to think of what would happen should any link fail. Without the Keepers we would drift in space eternally having no home. Without the Gatherers the Colonists would not exist for they have grown dependent on us and are unable to insure their own survival. And without the Colonists our journey across uncounted cycles would be for naught."

(Reply: Geehoff)

The Chief shrugged. "Their minds are keen while their bodies have grown soft and unused to hard labor. On the day we reach our journeys end they will depart. Sometimes I wonder at their goals, will they take all as custom and the ancient codex demands or will they leave us behind? They worship the heart since it is their way of traveling the last short distance to the home to be and I fear they shall be loath to bring in others to its hallowed halls. Yet the heart cannot feed them, only watch them perish."

(Reply: Geehoff)

(Posted by Charles G)

[illegible]

(USS Illuminar -- Sickbay -- Deck 5 - Science Ens. Penny McTaggard 09:23)

Penny was in love.

Mason moved closer to Penny and took her hand . He proceeded to hold her wrist with his fingers. He was taking her pulse. “Your pulse is racing.”

~ That's not all yer gorgeous hunk of male skin and muscle ~ She thought.

“ Oh?” She said aloud

He then placed his hands on her cheeks and looked into the eyes, “Your eyes are all clear. Ms. McTaggard, I declare you fit as a fiddle, but you tell me, is there anything I need to look at.” Mason waited

~ Me naked ~ She thought.

“Nay.” She said aloud.

Penny knew it was what the counsellors called the Florence Nightingale syndrome. Where a patient fell in love. With the Doctor/Nurse tending to them. If Penny had met Dr Quincy in different circumstances.

She would probably of never given him a second glance. But here in sickbay were she had nearly died from radiation poisoning. Dr Quincy was a golden ray of sunshine.

“ So can I leave sickbay now?” She asked

(Reply , Quincy)

(Posted by Norman 🐻)

[illegible]

The last cycle had been quite stress for the Admiral. After the council meeting he met with each of the council members individually. They wanted to continue to voice their concerns and ask when the help this Illuminar was planning on providing would begin, and how they would prioritize its distribution. By the time he was done there was a huge pain growing behind his eyes that matched the one in his back side. He was lucky that he made it back to his dwelling before he simply passed out on his bed.

He had done little else the remainder of the day or this morning. He wanted to be well rested and prepared for this journey. He had absolutely no idea what he was in for. In his entire life he had never been further than a surface walk away from Kal'Shar. Now he was about to embark on a trip that would take him to virtually a brand new world and see things that he never thought possible. He felt quite giddy.

Part of the evening he had spent with Rhysee. They talked about a great many things, from what was expected of the Captain if something unforeseen happened and Skeese did not make it back. That would make him the new Admiral. Skeese knew that his son was up to the task, but he wanted his son to be sure of it as well. After his son left his dwelling Skeese spent time talking with his mate. He cursed her for not being there to see this momentous occasion, and he cried, missing her and wishing she could be there to go with him.

Now, standing in front of the vessel that was designated to take them to the Illuminar he never felt so alone. The one thing that he looked forward to was seeing Genesse when he arrived. She had been his singular comfort since the passing of his mate. Neither of them were any good at being alone. Both had too many ghosts of their past haunting them, and they often found comfort from those spirits with each other. Their trysts were the worst kept secret on Kal'Shar, but Skeese and Genesse continue the façade that nobody knew. The sneaking around was half the fun. Although Skeese felt guilty about the betrayal of his love.

The people of the Illuminar had built a connecting tunnel from the entrance of Kal'shar to the entrance of the "shuttle." Riven Mias and Michaella had met him at the Room of Decisions. They exchanged pleasantries and then said a few things that he really hadn't paid much attention to. His mind was already wandering to what he could possibly experience on this adventure. They all walked together through the halls, greeting those who came to wish him well. It was as if he were getting sent off to an afterlife. It was a little disquieting.

Once they arrived at the entrance chamber and Skeese saw the tunnel, he realized the amount of work that these people were capable of in such a short time. It was the first time he began to really believe

that they could do what they had promised. It just all seemed so fantastical. He looked to his son, impressed looks on both of their faces.

The door of the shuttle opened and Captain Sekal stepped out and walked down a ramp. Skeese smiled and stepped forward to greet him. "Vulcan," as he had been made aware was his race. Skeese was being flanked by two of his own Se'cors, and a Federationer he recognized but could not recall the name. Riven and Michaela hung back.

"Admiral Skeese may I present my senior officers who will be accompanying you to the Illuminar. My Executive officer Commander Verin and Lieutenants Alyl from science, Gregory from Operations and Dr. Solice who has oversight of the medical department. Ensign Lee from the security department will be overseeing your safety while on the ship."

Many of the titles were lost on Skeese, but the names were starting to come easier to him. They weren't that much stranger than his own peoples. He rolled them around in his head before he spoke them out loud. With hands down, palms out, he bowed to each of them in turn.

"Commander Verin," he spoke carefully, "I am uncertain as to what an ... executing officer is, but I must assume you either execute those not following directions, or execute the orders of your captain. I hope it is the latter."

(reply Verin)

He nodded to Alyl, and took in the spots on the side of his head, "Lieutenant Alyl, I would be interested to see what your science is. We have many scientists in our Colonists, but have not seen what they have produced recently."

(reply Alyl)

He smiled when he saw Gregory, because at least he understood Operations. "Lieutenant Gregory, I have a great appreciation for your Operations. Perhaps you could speak with my own operations people some time. We have much to learn from each other."

Skeese moved to greet Lee. Lee looked different than the others, and he wondered what alien race he was from. "Ensign Lee, let us hope we won't require your services at this point of interactions."

(reply Lee)

Finally he approached the Doctor. He had met the young healer earlier and greeted her with a smile. "Dr. Solice, a pleasure to see you again. I definitely hope we won't need your services today. And I hope that Healer Genesse has not been in your way. She does tend to get a bit exuberant."

(reply Solice)

"The flight to the Illuminar will be a short one," Sekal stated, "followed by a tour of the ship then a banquet in your honor served up by one of our chefs onboard. If you care to spend the day aboard we have VIP rooms available."

Skeese was literally overwhelmed. The words were almost foreign to him. He understood, to an extent, VIP, he had read about such things in a manual when he took over as Admiral. But since they hadn't really had much interactions with others before the Federation, these niceties had not been practiced in generations. The thought of spending the entire day away from Kal'Shar was a bit unnerving, but perhaps it was the respite he needed. A banquet, he could only imagine, was probably a much grander an event than he was able to produce on Kal'Shar. And from his conversations with Michaella he was intrigued to try out this thing called chalk-o-latt, especially on something she called iced cream. What did she call it? A sunny day. The juxtaposition of the words promised for new taste.

"I look forward to seeing you ship Captain Sekal," Skeese said. "It will be the experience of, well, my lifetime anyway." He looked over at Michaella and continued, "And I am truly interested to try some of the foods that your Ambassadors have spoke so highly of."

Sekal ushered Skeese towards the shuttle. Before stepping towards it he turned the Sec'or 1 standing next to him. "Tell my s., Captain Rhysee that he need not concern himself. I have trust in these people and will contact him when I have a chance." He looked at Sekal for acknowledgment of that statement, and received a simple nod.

As they walked up the ramp Sekal began his tour of the shuttle, explaining the name given to it, and that all of their shuttles were named after explorers.

"Exploration of our galaxy is a driving tenet of Star Fleet," Sekal concluded.

Skeese nodded and smiled, "So are all of your ships named after historical figures. Who is this Illuminar and what did he explore? Our ships name is much more... practical."

(reply Sekal)

As Sekal spoke he led them into the ship and to a row of seats that looked more soft and comfortable than anything he had ever sat on in his life. He slowly lowered himself into a seat and drew a breath as he sank into the cushion. His eyes were wide as he sat back in to the seat. Then he closed his eyes for a moment as he reveled in the newness of the comfort. He opened his eyes and leaned across to the Captain and whispered, "How can I get one of these seats for Kal'Shar." Then he chuckled.

(reply Sekal)

Skeese watched as the others filed into the cabin and took their seats. Then Sekal tapped the insignia on his chest and spoke into it. He had seen this happen before but suddenly understood the significance of the act. It was not just a salute but a way to activate their communications. On such a small device. Incredible.

"Lieutenant Grey Wolf all are ready," Sekal announced. "Prepare to leave Kal'Shar."

Skeet's stomach lurched a little when he heard those words. Prepare to leave Kal'shar. He wasn't sure if he would ever truly be prepared for that. Suddenly a female voice sounded in the intercom system.

=^=Welcome aboard to the Admiral and our diplomatic corps. The Hillary will be lifting off shortly, all passengers prepare for takeoff. If you're new to the ship you will find the webbing for the seat restraints to the right on your seat, pull it across your body and buckle it on your left. The harness will adapt itself to your frame. All passengers to remain in their seats during the flight. There are observation windows in the hull I will be opening after liftoff."

Skeese followed the directions of the voice, he assumed was said Lieutenant Grey Wolf. Once he was secured he noted that three people came to check his status. He knew he wasn't sophisticated, but the directions were pretty simple. The next thing that happened, however, removed all sense of irritation. The ceiling over his head pulled back and revealed a vision of star specked space. Noticeably, in the middle of the view was a white object that must be the Illuminar.

Suddenly there was the sensation of pressure as the ship leapt off the hull of Kal'Shar, which just as quickly disappeared. Skeese had never felt the sensation of inertial displacement before, beyond what he normally would have felt in a transport vehicle in the ship. He could feel a slight lurch in his intestines, but soon managed the feelings.

He leaned over to Mias with a smile. "I cannot imagine doing that every day. It was frightening and exhilarating at the same time."

(reply Mias)

Skeese had completely lost track of time as he watched the ship get closer and closer. He was sure that the pilot had maneuvered his approach so that the view would have maximum impact. She had been correct. He was awed at what he was looking at, knowing that it was man made only made the sense of the accomplishment that much greater. As they moved parallel to long tubes that seemed to emanate power he asked, "What are those?"

(reply any)

The transport then made it's way under the ship, if you could call it under since in space there was little difference between up and down. Then a bright light came out of the ship and coated the shuttle. It rocked a little, and then smoothly went inside the ship. A few moments later it had settled onto the deck, the light switched off and another light shone across the entrance of the hall they were in with other shuttles.

=^=The Hillary is now docking. Welcome to the USS Illuminar. She's the Federation's newest class of ship and the brainchild of her Captain and commanding officer. May her service be long and distinguished. Once the docking bay has pressurized we will be opening the hatch. I hope you enjoy your stay.=^=

Skeese almost laughed as the words did really match the moment. It didn't take long until the hatch opened and the officers of the Illuminar filed out of the ship. Once they were out Sekal helped Skeese from his restraints and they left the ship. Skeese stumbled a little, feeling a little unsteady, but soon regained his footing, and stepped down the ramp. He waited at the end of the ramp for a moment

before he took the largest step of his life. One onto another ship. He knew that from this moment on his life would never be the same.

(reply everyone)

(posted by Al Muir

[illegible]

(USS Illuminar -- Sickbay -- Deck 5 - Medical Examiner Mason Quincy -- 09:29)

“Nay.” She said aloud.

Though Mason normally works with the idea, he could see certain indicators of the living. He was playing it cool.

“ So can I leave sickbay now?” She asked

“Only on one condition,” Mason said as he tapped a few things on a PADD.

(Reply McTaggard)

“When we have some downtime, you have drinks with me.” Mason could not help himself.

(Reply , McTaggard)

(Played by Kris)

[illegible]

(USS Illuminar - Sickbay - Deck 5 - Science Ens. Penny McTaggard - 09:30)

Penny was not so sure anymore about her feelings for Dr Quincy. She'd once had a friend called Morag. Who had also nearly died but had been saved by a doctor. Just like Penny she had also gone all girly over him. Unfortunately Morag's fiancé was not to pleased. He gave the poor doctor a Glasgow kiss (head butt). Morag saw what a complete ass the doctor was and the infatuation ended.

“Only on one condition.” Mason said as he tapped a few things on a PADD.

As she gave the supposedly handsome man a closer look. She began to realise that this guy was too full of himself. For her personal taste.

~Don't tell me yer want a kiss from my ruby lips! ~ she thought

“ Oh.” She said aloud

“When we have some downtime, you have drinks with me.” Mason could not help himself.

~ Och yer so full of yer self are'nt yee. You bampot . Nay doubt ye look at yer self in the mirror every time yer see a wee lassie. To compare ye good looks against hers. Well Penny McTaggard is nay trophy!~ she said.

(Reply , Quincy)
(Posted by Norman 🐵)

Sekal nodded then made his way to the airlock and into the corridor. Skeese followed him into the bright and orderly passage. The first thing he noticed was the brightness, the second was the smell.

He took a deep breath through his nose and smelled... clean. Not antiseptic clean, but a general cleanliness as if it had never seen true dirt.

"Admiral!" shouted a voice down the corridor. It was Genesse, running down the corridor, which was a polar opposite of what he was already observing. She was smiling and waving, her long silver hair flowing as she ran. Her pace slowed down just as she reached the group.

She glowed like a child as she stepped up and threw her arms unceremoniously around Skeese. "This place," she said breathlessly, "this place is amazing. The things these people have, the things they can do. They're miraculous. Granted they could use a good Healer, but their doctor is very good, And now you're here. It is so good to see you."

Her words came out so fast that Skeese had trouble getting all of the information. He smiled back at her, also happy to see her. She was the closest thing an Admiral could have as a friend.

"It is good to see you too, Genesse," Skeese said. "Captain Sekal is going to take me on a tour of the ship. Why don't you join us. Perhaps you can see something new."

Genesse looked at Sekal with wonderment, "May I?"

The Vulcan nodded. "Of course. Please follow me. Our first stop will be the engine room which is the lowest deck and from there we will stop at others before reaching the bridge."

The color scheme of the walls of the corridor were the same throughout the ship, cobalt blue at the base and platinum up to the ceiling of the deck which was a light grey. Their steps took them to the turbolift. Inset into the walls on each side at eye level were the roses Sienna had made small environmental enclosures for. Completely self contained with the necessary atmosphere and soil. The nutrient composition and moisture, humidity, temperature and radiant emissions were tightly regulated. These were Terran roses, blood red and fully open.

Genesse looked at the flowers and her eyes grew wide. She had never seen plants that had been grown for any other purpose than eating. But these clearly had a different purpose. She looked at the Admiral and then at Sekal. She wanted to touch them.

"What are they for?" she asked.

Sekal stopped and turned, seeing her eyes on the flowers he glanced at Sienna then turned his attention back to the healer. "They are strictly ornamental and used for decoration. Emotional beings find such things pleasant and I believe... soothing." He then crooked an eyebrow at her.

She nodded and smiled, "I would have to agree with them. They are lovely. Are they throughout all of the ship? I don't remember seeing them before. Are they on every deck?"

"Genesse," Skeese admonished, "please, if we fill our time with questions about decorative items we may not have time to see more important things."

"Genesse shook her head, "Dear Skeese, these are the important things."

"Commander Verin had roses placed outside the turbolift on every deck. Each deck has roses from different worlds within the Federation though Altair IV strictly speaking is not a member world. It does however lie within Federation space. You will see those on deck six. There are a variety of colors and strains. I am certain she would be willing to introduce you to all of them."

Sienna had stayed quiet as she accompanied the party, but she perked up as Sekal spoke about Luma's requirements of roses which were her passion. There were now other botanists aboard that assisted her in tending to them. "It would absolutely be my pleasure, Healer. I can also gift you starters of any that you particularly like. I am a botanist by trade and the roses were requested by one of our crew members who is very special to us. We will be visiting the arboretum as well, which is a miniature park." Sienna fairly glowed as she talked about her passion. "The Illuminar is a prototype and currently the only one of her class, and we are the only ship in the fleet to have the roses near every turbolift."

Gregory hung to the back of the group, allowing the Captain to conduct the tour. He had grabbed a PADD off the shuttle and was trying to discreetly check for project updates and data. So far, it appeared that Security had several distribution sites setup and functioning well. The Engineering teams were continuing their work to assess the full extent of the damage. The work from the day before revealed there were a lot more issues than initially suspected.

He wondered if he could slip away from the tour and get back to the real work of the day. Gregory knew this was part of the job, but it was clearly going to be one of those days where he would be distracted from the work at hand.

As they approached the turbolift, he sent a discrete message to Engineering that the VIP party was on the way.

Skeese smiled as he watched Genesse's face glow when Commander Verin explained about the roses. It had been a long time since she had had any opportunity to show any joy in the last six cycles, and he wanted her to revel in the moment.

"Really," Genesse exclaimed, "you would allow me a sample of my own to grow. I would have to get the materials I would need from the Gatherers. Perhaps I could even find a little plot to grow them in one of the weirs. What do you think Skeese? Would the Gatherers allow such an endeavor?"

Skeese chuckled, "I think we might be able to convince them. If the... roses... will grow in the soil in the weirs."

The door to the turbolift opened and Skeese made a move towards it. He was anxious to keep going on the tour. A slight fatigue was setting on him, but he knew that this was not the time to rest. The excitement was just a little overwhelming.

(USS Illuminar – Deck 11, Main Engineering – To be filled in - 1005)

The blast doors to Main Engineering opened exposing the beating heart of the ship. The control room they entered was manned by two technicians who were overseeing the routing of power to the ship.

Through the expansive viewing windows the warp core could be seen. A red guardrail on this level circled it in a kind of catwalk.

The thrum and hum of the ADP-02 engine fabricated to meet the specifications for the new crystal drive was running currently at low power as the impulse fusion reactors were carrying the load of propulsion and ship power needs. The warp reactor was active however and could be called upon within minutes.

"This is the warp core for the ship which enables us to traverse space at faster than light speeds." Sekal said, he turned his head and noted the Sharlayan's widened eyes. Blue lights linked to diagnostic and monitoring circuitry were blinking around its circumference. "It has been modified from the older standard dilithium drive to use the new crystals. It generates far more power while using less antimatter fuel and the reaction is increased in efficiency by 86%." There was a depth of data that went with that but saying more would be unwise as well as overload the Admiral's understanding.

Being in the engineering section of the ship left Skeese a little uneasy, considering the condition of his own. It was amazing though to see that the engine that powered such a ship was so compact. It paled in comparison to the nuclear engines of Kal'Shar. But this "warp core" had more power than all of the engines of Kal'Shar. Many of the words that the captain used were so foreign to him. But he could infer the meaning of his words.

"Faster than light?" he said rhetorically. "Fantastic. There had been writings mentioning faster than light drives that had been experimented on, but were not found to be feasible. The physics of approaching light speed creating mass was too daunting. But I am no scientist. I wonder what one of our Colonists could do with this sight."

"What is ... dilithium and antimatter?" Genesse asked, her natural curiosity emerging.

Sekal turned to her. "Unfortunately I can not say anything more now. In the future your people may use and understand these technologies but at this time such knowledge is restricted."

Skeese nodded and understood. They had already had the conversation about this "Prime Directive" and how too much information could have a negative affect on their society. He had agreed, although he must say that his own curiosity was piqued.

"Come Genesse," he said trying to distract her from her disappointment, "look at how fantastic it all looks. Even before, this engineering has wonders that our own could not even fathom. 86% power increase. With that kind of power perhaps even Kal'Shar could be pushed past light speed."

He laughed at his own joke, hoping to diffuse the sudden tension that had arisen. He went over to the barrier keeping them from getting closer to the engine and reached out to touch the metal jam. Closing his eyes he could feel the thrum of power pulsing through the ship. He remembered the first time Genesse had allowed him to feel the pulse of a patient, and the feeling was similar.

"Genesse," he called over his shoulder, "come and feel this."

The Healer followed his lead and lightly touched the wall. A broad smile spread across her face. "It is as if it were alive."

[illegible]

The next stop was home to the biochemistry and physics labs as well as the Arboretum. The CSO would be making the introductions. The Arboretum was essentially a park in miniature with a wide variety of plant species including shrubbery with large spreading palm like trees on the periphery. More species of roses were in evidence as well as other flowering plants.

Genesse froze for a moment, then continued to reach out. If she was going to grow these then she needed to know all about them. The beauty, and the beast. She gingerly touched the bud, feeling the soft satin on her finger tips. Then she ran her fingers carefully down to the stem. She could feel the points of the thorns poke into her fingers, but refused to pull away. She gripped tighter until...

Skeese nodded, "Of course." He was taking great pleasure in see the Healer who had suffered so much, take such pleasures herself.

Jaton saw the look Sekal had given him, taking his cue. “Now if you’ll permit me, admiral, I would be delighted to show you our science labs.”

Jaton took the lead and walked to the far side of the arboretum and through the doors. The corridor on the other side was abuzz with activity, his team eager to get everything ready for transport to the Sharlayan ship.

"This is the main hub of the science section of the Illuminar, with everything state of the art. It might be a bit more Spartan than the rest of the ship, but most labs in the Federation are. But I would like to point one thing out that sets us apart."

Skeese wondered about the terminology... Spartan. What did that refer to? That everything was clean and orderly? It did appear to be so. However the words "set us apart" caught his interest and he grew excited to see what the science department had in store for them.

He led the group into the main foyer area, and indicated the portrait above the couch opposite the main entrance.

"This was painted by one of our civilian artists at our home base on the planet Mars. It depicts a human scientist named Carl Sagan, one of the greatest minds of Earth's 20th century, some 500 years ago."

Skeese looked intently at the painting. It seemed almost alive. The eyes were so contemplative, perhaps looking 500 years into the future. Did he really "see" what would become of his people and the future they had created.

"You'll also note the inscription below. It reads 'Imagination will often carry us to worlds that never were. But without it we go nowhere.' It is from one of his greatest works, by the name of 'Cosmos.' I like to remind my staff to meditate on it every now and again, as it goes to show that what we can achieve within these walls is truly boundless if we can dream it."

It was Genesse who spoke next. "Such inspirational words. I wonder if the artists and scientists of the Colonists would share it. They are good people, but I wonder if they have forgotten what their purpose is, or what our future could be."

Skeese turned from the painting and looked at Alyl, "Does your science department work together with your artists in your creations? Everything I've seen on this ship has an almost artistic quality to it."

"Generally we don't, but I believe that art can teach us a lot about how we should live, and I think a lot of the crew would agree with me. As you can see this ship is replete with art and other accoutrements that are not standard on Federation ships, but we believe help serve a certain function in improving our quality of life."

Gregory listened to the description of the science labs and the question by Admiral Skeese about artists and scientists collaborating together. He was reminded of an ancient text by a man Hofstadter. There he discussed physics, philosophy and mathematics while weaving the stories around three famous men and how systems like the mind, like music, like art can become meaningful as they are built up from 'meaningless elements.' He'd read it at university. Perhaps it was time to read it again.

"Sadly," Skeese replied, "Kal'Shar was designed for functionality over time, and not for its esthetiques. All of the art that we have has been preserved for and by the Colonists. It will all be revealed when we arrive at our new home. I have seen images of Sharlayan art, but I have some time before I can truly lay eyes on it."

"Quite obviously." Riven noted having heard the exchange. "The timing is up to the Diplomatic Command of course but once all hurdles are cleared it will be coming."

[illegible]

Before the doctor could say any more about her interpretation of the data Skeese stood back up and the table powered down automatically.

“There will be time for that later,” Skeese agreed.

Genesse proceeded to introduce Skeese to all of the medical staff that she had come to know over the past day. But her mind was still on the readings that she saw, and they were disconcerting to say the least. Periodically she would look over and see the doctor watching Skeese with an eye of concern. They would most assuredly have to speak on this later.

[illegible]

(USS Illuminar – Deck 1, Bridge– Tour Group- 1042)

"The Command/Control center of the starship." Sekal said simply as they exited the turbolift. "Manned by only the finest of Starfleet's officer corps."

The viewscreen showed the oncoming starfield with a slice of Kal'Shar on the starboard side. Even at 2,000 kilometers it looked incredibly large and remained steady on the screen due to the ship's exact match of Kal'Shar's speed.

Genesse was the first to react to the site of Kal'Shar in the view screen. She walked towards it, mesmerized. She looked over her shoulder at Skeese and then to the Captain, and back to Skeese.

"It looks so...," she couldn't quite find the word until, "... unimaginable. I have never seen it from the outside, not really."

Skeese had seen the exterior of the ship many times on “walks” but from this distance it was very formidable. The size did not diminish that inside was an entire world. His keen eyes could pick up the sites of some of the damage that had been caused by the explosion of the reactor. It spread over a vast area of the ship.

Then he began to look at the other stations. The sounds of the Command Center were almost musical. There were high tones and low notes of the sensor readings and console displays. It was almost entertaining. Very different from the control center of Kal'Shar, which was virtually silent most of the time. It only made noise when he went in there to check on the conditions of the ship,

"It is all so incredible, Captain Sekal," Skeese finally said. "Your ship is amazing and your crew outstanding. I am certain that you are proud of them."

"Pride is an emotion that is unnecessary." The CO noted. "My officer corps is efficient and as capable as those on any ship in the fleet and they are still learning and continuing to grow. In time they might perhaps become the best in the fleet. This is not an emotional assessment but made by use of logic." From a member of his species this was as close to a statement of pride as you were going to get with the exception of the V'tosh ka'tur or Vulcans without logic.

Skeese looked at Sekal with narrowed eyes. This Sekal was a strange one, talking about not having an emotional response. Then he laughed.

“Well you’ll excuse me if that doesn’t sound like pride to me,” he said. “I think pride is as logical a response one could make when you are aware the your crew can improve and that you have no doubt that they will succeed “

He looked around the room and caught Genesse's eyes, "Wouldn't you agree healer.'

Genesse suppressed a giggle. It had been a long time since she had seen Skeese be playful with someone. The past cycles had made him a serious and almost dour. When his life mate passed it only exacerbated his mindset and nearly eliminated all humor from him. He had been... difficult. She was the only person that he would even speak with outside of his orders. So she was appreciative of the time and opportunity that these people have allowed him to find himself.

(Reply: None)

Posted by

Charles Gatling. (Sekal, Tempest, Riven)

Al Muir (Skeese, Genesse)

Melinda Gatling. (Sienna)

Kris Bailey. (Quinna)

Spencer O'Dowd (Jaton Alyl)

Tim Bushnell. (Dieter Gregory)

[illegible]

(USS Illuminar – Deck 4 – Explorers Lounge, Captain's Dining Room-- 1100)

Jaton stood in the vestibule as officers began to gather for the admiral's reception. He was fidgeting with his sash, trying to make sure it was perfectly straight.

“How did this thing get so wrinkled so quickly?” he muttered to himself.

Ensign Tycho Alantar had his head up and his attention fully in the moment. He liked getting lost in his work and hobbies, but a party was all about being in the mix and the moment, even a fancy dress deal like this. His dress uniform was crisp, a little tighter than standard uniform, but nothing uncomfortable. He preferred loose, but if it had to be tight, at least it showed off his physique in a flattering way. Before he'd gotten dressed in formal attire, he'd fixed his long hair and beard, weaving in some tastefully matched ribbons and hair dongles bearing various marks of runic origins. Their silver caught the light and lent his appearance something slightly otherworldly. He'd refrained from adorning other pieces of regalia he owned, as his accolades weren't supposed to be on display here, though he'd considered them carefully.

The stocky engineer laid a finger on Lt. Alyl's shoulder and quipped with a grin, "They measure us at the Academy, and never change the size of our dress uniforms. You lost weight is my guess." Of course, Tycho was being jocular, but he winked and plastered a grin in his face to make it clear.

Jaton chuckled. "And you don't want to know how long ago that was," he replied. With a little bit more fiddling, he finally wrestled the sash into submission. He gave it one more smoothing, making sure everything was in the right place.

"How do I look?" he asked Tycho.

Tycho tilted his head and gave a discerning look, "Some would say you look, fabulous dahling," he gave the word a dramatic flare and gave his hand a flick in the air to punctuate it. "Me, eeeeh, passable." He grinned as he gave the hand signal that meant nothing so much as 'wishy washy'. Humour was a natural language for the engineer, but he'd learned how to tone it up or down over the years. He was certain some of the best Klingon jibes wouldn't do well in this crowd, unless he saw Grak (forget his name???). The security man had made a name for himself on that training exercise and Tycho had been itching to toast him properly. He scanned those gathered, looking for faces familiar and some recently met, while he went and selected a drink..

Ariel walked into the room in her dress blue uniform. She preferred the dress blues over the dress whites for obvious reasons she has stated many times before. She looked like a lit candle in the dress whites with her red hair. She took a seat at the main table near the middle. She made herself comfortable waiting for the event to begin.

The table was covered with a white linen cloth. Ceramic plates and goblets of crystal were at each place setting and the silverware shone. The room, heretofore unused sparkled and gleamed. The chairs were likewise unused, upholstered in a glossy black. There was room at the table for ten.

Sekal took his place, standing at the head of the table. As the honored guest Admiral Skeese was invited to take the chair to his immediate right, and Gennese took the seat next to him, Riven to his left. Sienna took the seat to Genesse's right and Dr. Solice took the seat beside her. To Riven's left, Michaela, to her left Lieutenant Alyl. Lieutenant Gregory to Alyl's left and Ensign Lee to Quinna's right. At the foot of the table stood the highest ranking member of Skeese's retinue.

Skeese looked at the fancy table setting and almost felt embarrassed at the paltry setting that he had provided for his guests. However, these people seemed to have unlimited resources. However if the table setting gave an indication of the food that was about to be served then he knew he was in for a treat. Then he looked around the room at the people. Once again he could not get over how... clean they all looked. He had never seen so much white. Unlike his own ceremonial uniform, which was dark brown with gold buttons, theirs were white with bright colors on their lapels. He knew that those colors had significance and wondered what that significance was. He could feel the excitement of his Healer as she too watched the gathering crowd.

Genesse kept squirming in her seat, full of anticipation. It had been a long time since there had been such a gathering on Kal'Shar. The last was when Skeese became Admiral. Now that had been a gathering that the Healers had to nurse many through the recovery. She looked down to see some of the Illuminar officers seeming to scrutinize the place settings,

Lee felt slightly uncomfortable in his dress uniform as he rarely wore it and the worrying fact that he spilled something on it. Mind you the banquet looked like a pretty impressive affair as he picked up the crystal goblet to and flicked the glass to hear the sound. He put it down again, picked up a ceramic plate, turned it over to see which company made the plate. There was nothing. He looked up to see Quinna looking strangely at him. "Where I came from on Earth is a city called Stoke-on-Trent. It was a

well known pottery town at one time. Any local person would always look at the plate to see who made it.”

“I can understand that, but not at the table.’ Quinna said. “So what did you find?” Quinna asked.

“Then I guess it is not pfaltzcraft then.” Quinna smiled in reply.

(NRPG: Pfaltzcraft made Star Trek dishes. Here is the ebay URL https://www.ebay.com/b/Star-Trek-Pfaltzgraff/29493/bn_7023301569 Yes I have some.)

RPG:

The decor was not limited to the CO's private dining chamber as every table in the Explorer's Lounge outside the door was just as exactly set. This was the first formal hosting of visiting dignitaries and every officer was invited to take part in the festivities. Chef Glassmaker was cooking everything by hand, nothing replicated including the drinks of which there was a variety. He had neglected to inform the Captain of the menu preferring his creations to be a surprise but had promised the fare would be his best six course meal. He had also bemoaned the fact that there were not the proper ingredients for a seventh.

"Please be seated." The Vulcan watched as all settled into their chairs while he remained standing.

At the Captain's word, Tycho made his way to a seat, positioned himself comfortably with his drink - a tall, cold citrus like drink that he assumed was either from a Federation world he wasn't familiar with, or direct from the Sharlayans; either way, it was a delightful tease to his palate and he sipped as his attention stayed on Captain Sekal.

Sienna took her seat, wanting to scratch the itchy parts of her uniform but refrained from doing so. She smiled at the Admiral and hoped that Glassmaker remembered that she was allergic to earth alcohols and if they were being served would need vulcan or betazoid wines. The yeoman who was serving at the table asked her quietly for her drink preferences and Sy quickly reminded the young woman not to serve her terran alcohol. She spoke to the Admiral and Gennese, "I play a traditional Betazoid flute and am a singer as well. Once the meal is concluded it would be my pleasure to play a few pieces for you."

Genesse beamed and Skeese smiled at her. "It would be our honor to hear your musical talents. It has been a long time since I've heard Sharlayan music played live and miss it dearly. The Colonists are often loathed to share what they have."

"Shush now Admiral," Genesse admonished, "this is a celebration. We have no need to discuss the issues of Kal'Sahr right now."

Skeese acquiesced, "You are, as always, correct. I forget my manners sometimes."

Quinna sat and crossed her legs. She was lucky that her grandmother insisted on learning etiquette. She turned and watched the admiral as he sat. She looked at the side panel where she stashed an emergency cardiac med kit. Quinna stuck with water as her beverage. She was overly cautious.

Gregory took his seat. This was the first formal dinner on board the Illuminar, and while on Deep Space Nine, he didn't rate high enough to get invited to any of the shindigs that occurred on an all-together too frequent event. An evening at Quarks was more his style.

Yes, they practiced these at the Academy, but never with the bar so high. He measured the distance from his chair to the door, just in case he was needed elsewhere. Now the food was going to be top notch, but duty called and tugged at him. He had silenced his comm badge and the PADD, but could still feel the vibrations as messages kept rolling in.

With a wan smile, he looked up as the server came over. Much as he would love to partake, he ordered a Bolian Tonic Water, with a twist.

Jaton took his seat next to Gregory, noticing his uneasy mood. Without looking over, he spoke to Gregory, sotto voce. "My parents loved to entertain as I was growing up. Just follow my lead and we'll get through this."

Gregory nodded, "It's more that this is taking away from the primary mission of getting the Sharlayan ship shape and Bristol fashion. Just anxious to make sure things are not missed. Hence the tonic water, helps calm the nerves. The lemon is for flavor," he replied softly.

Sekal was about to speak when the Chef appeared at his side and whispered in his ear, he gave him his full attention then nodded in reply. Chef Glassmaker then slipped a small glass containing a deep blue liquid beside his place setting as well as a tall glass of fizzling water then made his way quickly from the room. A lot had been said in that short conversation.

The Vulcan made sure he had everyone's attention before beginning. "We have honored guests among us as everyone is aware, Admiral Skeese and other representatives of the Sharlayan people. Their journey has been long and difficult yet they have shown great courage and perseverance to make their way to Federation space. While I am certain the Admiral himself would wish to share in this moment with all of his people we of StarFleet of the United Federation of Planets would like to take this opportunity to welcome Admiral Skeese as leader of his people tasked with transporting this group of pioneers to the Alpha Quadrant and by extension all of the people of Kal'Shar."

He lifted the glass of blue liquid and looked at it critically for an instant before raising it to shoulder height and away from his body. "A toast to the Admiral and his people is in order. May their travel's end see them to their new home in safety and may they look with fondness upon we who greeted them." Having spoken he lifted the glass to his lips and downed it.

Skeese watched as the people all picked up glasses and he returned the gesture. He noted that Captain Sekal's glass had a different liquid. Perhaps his people required a different sustenance. He looked warily at the liquid in his own glass then took a sip. It has a sweet, pleasant, fruity taste, with a slight after bite. It was an intriguing taste. Then he stood up.

"Thank you Captain Sekal," Skeese began. "Our trip has been long, and fraught with obstacles, but the Sharlayan people have been, if nothing else, resolute. In my tenure as Admiral of the Keepers of Kal'Shar I have had many difficult decisions to make. However, becoming friends with the people of

the United Federation of Planets, and the Clan of the Illuminar has been one of the best decisions I have ever made. So I propose a... how did you call it... toast."

He raised his glass and looked around the room trying to remember the process he had just observed, "A toast to the People of the United Federation of Planets, and to the ideals for which they unselfishly share. To the clan of the Illuminar and their equally unselfish sacrifice to help a people that they know so little of. It says a great deal of their commitment to their desire to be a positive force in the universe. And most of all, a toast to friendship. Friendships that are, and those that are still to come," he looked over at Mias, raised his glass and took a deep drink.

He sat down and looked at Genesse who beamed. He nodded and then sat back in his chair. A wave of weariness moved through him, but he forced himself to smile and look around.

Tycho raised his glass, very familiar with toasting practices from parties held back home, a melting pot - as some called it - of Klingon largess and competition, Romulan statesmanship and guile, and Federation tolerance and inclusion. When his meal was served he handed his empty glass and asked for something else to sample, specifically whatever the chef's recommendation for each plate, he was very open to new things. Others often would tell the server only if they wanted changes, but in the engineer's experience, chefs were often overlooked.

The first course was brought in a large tureen upon a wheeled dolly. Chef Glassmaker removed the lid allowing the steam to escape spreading its contents aroma about the room. The flat surface held a number of ceramic bowls of a match to the plates. He then deftly used a ladle to draw from the container without spilling a drop while an assistant ran the bowls to those around the table.

The Captain was given a bowl with different contents that the chef had brought with him. He took a sip of the fizzy water. "Carbonated mineral water I believe. Interesting."

"Ladies and gentlemen, a soup with an infusion of chicken stock from Earth and Erd fowl from Vulcan. Lightly seasoned and combined with a puree of vegetables from Earth. You will note a hint of spice as well, not overpowering but in harmony with the palate. Bon appetit."

With that the chef rolled the dolly from the room to serve the others.

Riven lowered his head to breathe in the delightful aroma then took a spoon in hand. There were bread sticks included on a small plate. The soup played a mild and melodic note on his tongue then departed down his throat leaving a spicy tingle behind.

"Oh, delightful." He beamed as he took up one of the sticks. "What did he bring you, Captain if I may ask?"

"Vegetable soup with a bean broth." Sekal replied.

Skeese took in the aroma of the soup and closed his eyes. The twang of guilt returned knowing that his people would not have a meal such as this for a long time. He had no idea what a chicken was nor an Erd, but they did smell delicious. He figured that they were some kind of livestock. Their own edible livestock had been in short supply for many full cycles. He couldn't remember when he'd last tasted

any kind of real meat. He put his guilt away and tasted the broth. It was very spicy, by his own standards, but not unpleasant. When he looked at the captain's bowl he saw that as something he would be able to have on Kal'Shar. Then he noted that Genesse was having trouble eating her soup.

She looked at him and noted his concern. "I'm afraid it is a little too rich for my taste. She looked longingly at the simpler broth of the captain. "Do you think, Captain Sekal, that I might have what you are having?"

"Of course." He recalled the chef who apologized profusely to Genesse then brought her a portion of the vegetable soup and waited until she had tasted it.

The Healer looked at the bowl and breathed in the aroma of the seasoning. She lifted the spoon to her lips and slowly took a taste of the soup. The broth was delightfully light and tasty. There were several unusual looking vegetables that she tried individually first. There was a sweet orange vegetable that she particularly liked. Then she took a spoonful and tasted the mixture as a whole.

"This is wonderful," she whispered to the captain.

Chef Glassmaker bowed then quickly removed the offending bowl to ready the next course.

Gregory looked at the soup. He knew this was a formal dinner for the Admiral, but his body was telling him it was lunch time, and that meant a class ploughman's lunch. Guess it was an upside down day today.

Ever the keen observer, Tycho noted the look on Mr. Gregory's face, "Something wrong with your soup, sir?" He was half joking, but he'd been across from too many dojo training partners to miss the hungry face staring at not enough food. He asked in order to be polite, had Deiter been Klingon, he might have grunted something to the effect of 'eat, more follows.'

"Not at all Ensign," Gregory replied. "Just a difference of opinion with the current time. I'm not used to eating such a rich or large meal at the noon hour."

Ens. Alanatar smiled and said, "Six courses, sir. Guaranteed to fill you up by night's end. If not, I know a couple of the Chef's team from helping with the resources and technology issues, I'll make you my best Canadian French Toast." Between replies, he enjoyed the soup. The spice finally founded a memory to compare, and it was a cross between wasabi and allspice, leaving a warm afterglow that went well with the white milk-like drink that had appeared with the soup.

'Thank you Ensign, your offer is appreciated,' he paused, "Its just after such a rich and heavy meal that Chef is surely prepared, it is hard to focus on the work at hand, when all the blood is centered in the digestive system, leaving little for the brain," Gregory said, "And there is much to do still."

The second course was a salad as expected, crisp spinach leaves mixed with a diverse variety of greens, cherry tomatoes, radish sliced paper thin along with chopped nuts and tiny pieces of fruit to give it a hint of sweetness.

Now this looked more like a meal that came directly from the weirs. In fact, some of the vegetation looked very much like something the Gatherers would have provided and Skeese wondered if they had Sharlayan items in it. It was a fresh taste that reminded him of the last time he ate with Kar'del.

Jaton picked up his salad fork and took a bite of the salad. The freshness popped within his mouth, a welcome surprise. "Well I'd say the chef is really pulling out all the stops. I'll eat my hat if this was made of replicated ingredients. Meat we can't exactly keep on a starship effectively, but a splashout on non-replicated fare is always welcome."

Sienna found herself laughing softly at Jaton's remark, "There is always real food kept freeze dried aboard a starship, specifically because of events like this." Her dark eyes sparkled as she ate.

The freshness of the salad counterbalanced the soup nicely, the textures being as much a part of the experience as the flavours. Tycho noted the drink that came along hinted at the soup, but announced the fruit from the salad. An astute observer would notice the beginning of a thread to the story of this meal. He responded after wiping his lips to ensure no food flecks were stuck in his freshly groomed and plaited beard, which touched his chest if he ducked his head just enough, "Chef has been talking to me about some hydroponic options for us. The Sharlayan generation ships need to recover once we clear the radiation, so farmland will still be precious and we're looking at upgrading our systems and theirs in tandem."

Gregory shook his head, "The major issue for the Sharlayan's is the power. Their agriculture depended on an artificial sun that has been running at 50% power, as best estimates. This reduced the productivity of the crops, in turn reducing what they could use to feed livestock. It is a vicious cycle."

"What is needed is fast growing crops to get rapid harvests in, and setting up a good hydroponic system might negatively impact the water balance in the ship." Gregory turned to Jaton, "Any luck seeing how well the Brassica and Quadrotriticale will grow?"

"Not yet. I've got the department working on it right now though. I'll need to check in with them about that tomorrow."

"We still have four days before the relief ships can be here. Once those supplies are unloaded, that should hold them for a while. However, we all know that people want to be self-sufficient, and growing their own crops are critical. I look forward to hearing about that work, Mr. Alyl."

The 3rd course was where the meal began to pick up steam. The chef plated 3 thin slices of braised beef, baked for six hours until it was fork tender, medium in the center and topped sparingly with cracked black peppercorns and a light au jus sauce in a small saucer. The meat had been stored in a special refrigeration unit in the galley to which only Glassmaker himself had access and was kept for just such a formal occasion.

For the Captain, eggplant baked until it had formed a sear with a crisp bread crumb topping and lightly spiced.

Skeese was starting to enjoy the presentation of the meals. He found the chef to be quite entertaining with his excitement over what he had prepared. He had always known that most eat first with their

sense of smell. And his nose was dining well. It smelled wonderful. And this juice of the meat smelled incredible. He watched the others and noted what they were doing and copied by dipping the meat into the juice and tasted the morsel.

The admiral began to notice the theme with the differences in the captain's meals. He noted that all meat items had been removed. He was only eating vegetation, and began to wonder if it was a preference or a requirement. Perhaps these Vulcans are all vegetarians. Why was that?

The beef practically melted on his tongue and the jus gave it a burst of extra flavour, with that hint of spice coming back, this time in the form of peppercorn. After he'd finished the first, he grabbed a warm piece of bread and spread butter on it, dipping the meat before placing it on the bread. He smiled, there was a comfort food if ever he had one, he'd have to cajole Chef into making him some other time.

"The Admiral has the right idea," Gregory said quietly before doing the same thing. Nothing quite like warm bread, good meat and butter. "Now this is more like it, more like the Ploughman's lunch. Of course, that is a single course, not a symphony of seven."

Course number four consisted of a plump filet of white fish wrapped around an equally plump stalk of asparagus with three more asparagus spears present. The fish was tender and flaky and basted with a buttery sauce with a hint of lemon. The asparagus was astonishingly tender for such specimens and yielded readily to a fork.

For the Captain a slice of Dasha, the vegetable was similar in size and consistency to a turnip but milder and with a creamy texture. Topped with chopped parsley and roasted.

This course offered Skeese the first course that he truly did not enjoy. The odor of the ... fish... turned his stomach a little. The taste was so unfamiliar that he could not eat more than a taste. He did not want to say anything so he would not insult the chef, who had clearly spent a great deal of time and took such pride in his meal. However, the green spears were very good. These might be something he'd be willing to introduce to the Gatherers to see if they would or could grow them. It would be sad if their soil would not support them.

Sy kept her eye on the Admiral and smiled at him, aware that Luma was 'watching' the guests with great care. "Asparagus comes from the Human homeworld of Terra or Earth. I can get you some starters if you would like."

Skeese smiled at the First Officer. "That would be excellent. Hopefully I can convince one of the Gatherers to have a go at growing them."

Sienna's smile was like sunlight coming out from behind a cloud. "Do you not have aquatic animals for food? That is what this fish is." Her tone was curious but not rude. "I have foster siblings from all over the known universe and my two youngest Bajoran siblings will not touch fish. So you will not need to worry about fish with the relief supplies from Bajor."

Different cultures used different utensils, and if Tycho wasn't enjoying gagh, he preferred chopsticks, but he held the cutlery in the old style fork always in the same hand. Some people got flustered, but a tool

was a tool, and a fork was a tool, so he mastered it along the way and now was enjoying the fish, asking for a small side dish of the sauce. The dish was perfect, he just really liked the sauce.

Number five was a dish with a small scoop of sorbet surrounded by sliced strawberries.

"To cleanse the palate before dessert." Chef Glassmaker introduced the dish before leaving to plate his final offering.

Cleansing a palate sounded like something one would do a piece of the working engine. However Skeese looked over at Mias and watched as he took a tiny mouthful of the frozen, fruity mixture and put it in his mouth. The taste was surprisingly refreshing. He looked over at Genesse to see how she was handling all of this food. She looked as full as he felt. He couldn't help but hope that this meal ordeal was nearly at an end.

The last course was a slice of three layer double chocolate cake, the icing was semi-sweet and not so rich as to be overpowering. Chef Glassmaker smiled as the last at the table were served. "A favorite of the First Officer I believe. Please enjoy."

At last, the much anticipated chocolate. Skeese had hoped to be able to savor this moment, as Michaela had built up this moment so well. However, he had already eaten so much that even looking at what looked to be, such a tasty treat was almost more than he could bear. He wondered if the chef would be insulted if he asked to take it with him to eat later.

Finally he steeled himself up to pick up his fork and sink it into the moist food. He put the morsel into his mouth and immediately regretted it. It was all he could do to not spit it back onto the plate. The taste was indescribable. It sent a wave of revulsion through his body that he had to work to not display. However, he did suddenly drop his fork on the plate, with a clattering.

In an attempt to be gracious he simply said, "I have not eaten so much food in one sitting in a long time. Perhaps I should stop before I am unwell."

He put his fork down and sat back in his chair, allowing the wave to pass. He could see Genesse look on with concern. She'd been giving him a strange look ever since they were at the medical center of the ship. He waved off her concern, as he watched her put a mouthful of the desert into her mouth and roll her eyes in enjoyment.

Sienna hastily put her fork down, leaving her cake sitting alone on the plate. She took a deep breath and stood, "Excuse me." She quickly left the room to speak to a yeoman and returned with a bag and a hardened case that contained a more traditional metal earth flute.

Taking the single seat before a microphone, she removed the wooden flute and blew a pure tone, then ran up and down scales lightly, almost like a bird chirping in spring.

"The first piece is simply called Spring. It is a traditional Betazoid piece played at the celebration of the flowers. Dr. Mias can explain the religious aspects if any are interested." Sy put the flute back to her lips and began to play. The piece was lively and bright, around six earth minutes in length.

As the song drew to a close, she lowered the traditional flute and blinked back tears as that piece always affected her. She accepted the glass of cold water from the yeoman and tilted her head towards Sekal. Did he want her to play another piece?

(Reply: Any)

Charles Gatling- Captain Sekal, Dr Riven Mias, Chef Edwin Glassmaker
Melinda Gatling- Commander Sienna Williams-Verin, Luma'lenai
Spencer O'Dowd- Lieutenant Jatón Alyl
Tim Bushnell- Lieutenant Dieter Gregory
Edward Engel- Lieutenant Ariel Trei
John Tsang- Ensign Keung Lee
Lorenz Winterhoff- Eng (jg) Tycho Alantar-
Al Muir- Admiral Skeese, Healer Genesse-
Kris Bailey- Lieutenant Quinna Solice

(Sharlayan Generation Ship, Kal'Shar- Surface- Engineering Bunker- Engineering Cadet Oda Berr-1105)

"Ah, Cadet, I was just reading through the specs on that foam again. I must say, well done on the discovery."

"Credit given where due, Cadet," Alantar replied. "You may not have invented it, but you brought it to our attention. That kind of thinking is valuable in the fleet. Stay on your toes and find things your co-officers miss. No ship runs on one person alone."

Berr looked at the Lieutenant wagging his fingers in some strange, and comedic manner and smiled. He was sure that it was funny in some way, if he knew the reference. He nodded back and repeated his thanks. Suddenly Alantar turned and started to walk away.

"Walk with me a moment, Cadet, I need to get my suit from the office."

Berr followed the engineer and was amazed that they were able to erect a structure that even had an office. Rank hath its privilege he told himself. In true Bajoran minimalistic style he would not have thought to do that. Although that may be the the mindset of his caste. He watched at Alantar donned the protective suits.

"I'm asking this of everyone, Cadet," Alantar began. "I'd like to know how you're experiencing the hot zone. Dr. Solice can use that data, and if we learn enough, there's always the possibility of improving on our ability and efficacy inside."

Berr nodded and thought of the best way to respond. "To be honest, sir, it was bearable. The heat around the nuclear core was a bit intense. I know that I lost a couple of my fellow cadets early into the project, but they have already been treated and released from the medical facilities. I checked on them first when I resurfaced. I believe that once the foam is dispersed that the tolerability will be much better. We've removed the damaged fuel rods. Once the decon is complete we can remove the damaged engines. That should bring the radiation levels down to a nominal amount and we can work over longer periods. It's just a lot of grunt work after that."

(reply Alantar)

"Sir," Berr continued, "I would like to request to be part of the engine reconstruction team. As I understand we will be transforming these fission engines into fusion generators, that will produce a much greater amount of energy, in a much safer manner."

(reply Alantar)

(posted by Al Muir)

[illegible][illegible]

(USS Illuminar – Deck 1 – Conference Room –Federation Ambassador at Large- Dr. Riven Mias– 1805)

Riven yawned slightly before the meeting started as he wondered what it had been called for. The Lieutenant was radiating concern while the others appeared as wrung out as he felt including Sienna who was coming to the end of her watch. The Vulcan CO however was quite predictably unreadable. ~I'll never understand how they do it, it's unnatural.~

"Good evening Captain, Ambassador. I apologize for asking to this meeting after the activities of today, but we are at a crossroads and some decisions have to be made."

And that was the beginning of the road down the rabbit hole. Most of what he was going over was none of his interest as the officers of the ship were brought up to speed on the current status of the Sharlayan asteroid/generation ship. Gregory's concern seemed to spike at the mention of the atomic engine powering Kal'Shar's internal systems. ~Not good, no not good.~

"Now we come to the crux of the matter. With all this information we've learned and the state of the Sharlayan reactor, I would propose that we convert the Sharlayan reactor to a fusion based system."

Riven gave a small sigh as he continued. ~This couldn't be easy could it? But what can one say about an energy generator nearly one thousand years old. Very few civilizations with much higher technology last half that time.~ The benefits of fusion power were a moot point, all that mattered was that they were now treading near the edge of what he had been sent here for.

"I'd also propose we put some automatic alerts such that if something goes wrong, Star Fleet would be notified." The Lieutenant finally finished the briefing while metaphorically handing Riven a live photon grenade.

"Sir, Mr. Ambassador, my concern is this. Does this violate the Prime Directive? I have been wrestling with this question all day."

The Betazoid mind healer and Ambassador when called upon leaned forward over the table. The chimes on his sandals shifted slightly while the charms in his white hair caught the light and glittered as he moved.

"That is a valid concern and I understand now why I was asked to sit in on your briefing." Riven rolled his head slightly, loosening the tightened muscles at the base of his neck.

"First let's return shall we to the mission briefing I gave here and work outward from that. Number one: The Sharlayans are not a warp capable species but they are space faring. Two: Their destination is a now uninhabitable planet within Federation space. Three: The Federation made the decision to extend to them the same courtesies they extended to the Fabrini. Four: Their new home if it is amicable to both parties will be sharing a world with a Federation member species. Five: That means technologies will be made available to them as their society evolves. Six: The instructions were clear and I stated them in this very room. They were to be exposed to only such technology as was necessary. Let's leave that for a moment and I'll come back to it."

He leaned back in the chair with a resigned expression. "The issue of the Prime Directive is always a sticky one as well as divisive. It has been handled in varying ways over the years and its strictures are often debated. Everyone has it seems a different stance on the issue though in first contact situations we must speak with one voice. And finally interpretations of the Prime Directive often are polar opposites."

He stood to his feet. "According to the strictest interpretation the Illuminar has already broken the Prime Directive in its humanitarian effort to keep the Sharlayans alive. Kai Hetel Krevi was already perhaps aware of this. What did you tell her Captain?"

Captain Sekal crossed his arms, his expression unwavering. "That the Illuminar was on a diplomatic mission and the inhabitants of the ship were in danger of starvation."

"Then she doesn't know but that doesn't exempt her as she actively participated."

He placed his hands on the table and leaned forward on them. "Look ladies and gentlemen what I think doesn't matter, only the latitude I am allowed to extend and my personal opinion on it doesn't count. I'm not here to debate whether a civilization should be allowed to die because they aren't warp capable. And had it been me I would have done the same. Ultimately it boils down to this, if we are going all in on the Prime Directive it's already been violated but we are not. Why? Because StarFleet and the UFP have preemptively weighed in on the matter and have given myself and this ship latitude in dealing with the situation."

He waved a hand. "When the full report is read and digested i don't doubt someone is going to cry a river of tears over it but the UFP set it in motion. Synopsis: We can have a debate over the Prime Directive some other time, it isn't needed here."

(Reply: Any)

"What is germane to the discussion is... is changing their atomic reactor out for a more technologically advanced power source absolutely necessary? Can their current system be nursed long enough to get them to their destination Mr. Gregory? If not then a refit IS absolutely necessary, if it can make it then it's not. You are the one with the facts and figures. What is your educated and informed position?"

(Reply: Gregory)

"Yes, yes you've already said as much. The next question is this... cleanliness and efficiency aside could their reactor be replaced in kind and if so how long would it take? This is an important question since the length of time and resources needed are in the wheelhouse of your commanding officers not mine and I will accept their recommendation."

Riven then sat down and chuckled. "And don't think me contrary or antagonistic in this. I needed to get my position and the position of the UFP on record officially."

(Reply: Gregory, any present)

(Posted by Charles G)

[illegible]

(USS Illuminar – Deck 1 – Conference Room –COps Lieutenant Dieter Gregory– 1810)

Gregory listed intently as the Ambassador spoke, reviewing the mission briefing before digressing to a dialogue between the Captain about the supplies arriving around Day 9. The Bajoran relief supplies will be critical as the Illuminar's stores are stretched to their limits at the moment.

The Ambassador cut to the quick, ""What is germane to the discussion is... is changing their atomic reactor out for a more technologically advanced power source absolutely necessary? Can their current system be nursed long enough to get them to their destination Mr. Gregory? If not then a refit IS absolutely necessary, if it can make it then it's not. You are the one with the facts and figures. What is your educated and informed position?"

“Mr. Ambassador, based on the data that we have obtained from measurements of the current system, we are facing several major failure points. There is extreme metal fatigue, both from the age of the metal and the constant flux from the radiation. The electronics that monitor the reactions are also old and failing, which impacts the possible control and monitoring of the reaction.”

“It is my recommendation that the current system cannot be repaired as it is, and attempts to do so will more than likely result in a failure of the whole unit sooner rather than later. The system needs to be completely replaced.”

"Yes, yes you've already said as much. The next question is this... cleanliness and efficiency aside could their reactor be replaced in kind and if so how long would it take? This is an important question since the length of time and resources needed are in the wheelhouse of your commanding officers not mine and I will accept their recommendation," the Ambassador replied

Riven then sat down and chuckled. "And don't think me contrary or antagonistic in this. I needed to get my position and the position of the UFP on record officially."

“As you know Mr. Ambassador, the federation has not worked with fission reactors, except in remote laboratories. Can we synthesize new components, most probably, yes. However, without more details about the system we would have to do testing to make sure we didn’t cause other issues. It might take a week or so for us to get it right, assuming that the information we need is in the logs that Ensign Matrix has been working on.”

“Since we work with fusion reactors all the time, we can have the system properly sized and installed inside of 48 hours. We have all the parts and the system will be self-contained so the Sharlayan’s will not need to touch it. As I mentioned, we can attach a secondary backup system and emergency signal notification as well.”

"Captain, your thoughts Sir?"

(Reply Sekal)
(Posted by Tim)

[illegible]

The Vulcan had been monitoring the discussion between Gregory and the Ambassador closely. Riven was very much a contradiction in terms. He was an old friend of his father as well as former subordinate officer so the Betazoid had extensive experience within the fleet. The mind healer also had impressive credentials in his chosen profession and was a priest of the Betazoid diety besides. He could easily be

seen as eccentric by his choice of clothing and comportment and dismissed out-of-hand by those who didn't know him well. That would be a grievous error. Dr. Mias had a keen mind and extensive intellect, was a galvanizing speaker and was well able to think of a problem from all perspectives to find a solution. That trait could no doubt be traced to his time in the fleet.

“Since we work with fusion reactors all the time, we can have the system properly sized and installed inside of 48 hours. We have all the parts and the system will be self-contained so the Sharlayan’s will not need to touch it. As I mentioned, we can attach a secondary backup system and emergency signal notification as well.”

“Captain, your thoughts Sir?”

"I disagree with some of your points Mister Gregory however your foundational verdict is sound. Having some engineering expertise myself we could recreate the Sharlayan reactor quite easily with a deviation of no more than .02 percent, well within tolerances. Atomic power is old technology, highly understood and easily replicated. Materials are not a factor as we could use what we needed from the Sharlayan ship. However..."

He looked about at those assembled. "As the Lieutenant has pointed out there is the issue of the time scale. A week to fabricate and assemble the reactor on that scale is an optimistic estimate, I myself calculate a minimum of ten days. The Illuminar has already been tasked with at least one week of work here, a considerably longer time period than originally planned. To extend that by another ten days is untenable as the ship is required for other duties."

He turned his attention to Riven. "As a former member of StarFleet I am sure you can understand my position on the matter. Exchanging the Sharlayan reactor in kind is unworkable due to the time scale therefore we will be installing a fusion reactor in its place if you have no objections."

Riven screwed up his face in a false frown. "Drat I was having fun on Kal'Shar." Then he laughed. "Seriously I see your point Captain. Time is indeed a precious commodity."

He then turned to Sienna. "You have been quiet this whole time Commander, do you have anything to say before I render my verdict?"

(Reply: Sienna)

(Posted by Charles G)

[illegible]

(Deck 1 – Cops Office– COps Lieutenant Dieter Gregory – 2000)

Gregory had finished reviewing the data for the conversion to fusion power. He also had reviewed a report from engineering about a cadet, Oda Berr had come up with a needed solution to the decontamination issue. It was going to be tested tomorrow and if it worked, they could synthesis large quantities to clean the whole engineering space. If that worked, the engineering teams would no longer be constrained to only 2-hour shifts, which will speed up the work tremendously.

"Computer, being recording. Chief of Operations log, stardate 2445.10.18"

“After extensive discussions, approval has been given for us to replace the Sharlayan Fission reactor with a fusion based system. Both the Captain and the Ambassador have signed off on the plan, so I have been retooling the proposed work.

One of the major hurdles remaining was the radiation levels in the engineering space. With this new proposal, we'll be able to remove the old reactor totally that will reduce the levels dramatically. A possible solution for the rest of the decontamination was been developed by a bright engineering cadet and will be tested tomorrow. There is cautious optimism that this solution will be the one we need for this operation.

I continue to be impressed with how the crew of the ship has responded to this crisis. Every department has a role in getting the Sharlayan's space worth and prepared for their final journey. Of course, once this is done, we do need to finish the cultural survey to find a suitable spot for them to settle. But that is a problem for another day."

"Computer. End recording."

It has been a long day, and he needed some time to relax. Standing up and stretching, he headed towards the turbolifts and to the Officers Lounge.

[illegible]

(Deck 4 – Officer Lounge (The Prancing Pony) – COps Lieutenant Dieter Gregory – 2030)

Entering the O-Lounge, he looked around to see small groups of his crewmates around tables, playing cards, having snacks and just relaxing. It was good to see that with all the hard work, they still remembered to take some downtime. Something he'd have to practice so that the job didn't kill him.

Gregory walked over to the bar, and grabbed a stool. “Bolian Tonic water with a twist,” he ordered.

The glass was quickly put in front of him. He squeezed the lemon into the tonic water, closed his eyes and took a sip. The first sip of Bolian tonic water was always refreshing. Helped settle the nerves. He turned his chair around as the bartender, a mysterious woman named Reolra, placed a plate with Gladst and Pipius claws on it. “Go ahead Mr. Gregory, something new to try. It’s Klingon,” she said with a smile. “K’jonew of House Mo’Kai taught me how to properly prepare the Pipius claws. It’s all in the marinade. A bit of Hajjlaran, some Kreetassan spice, and just a hit of nutmeg.”

Gregory chuckled, “Well then, how can I resist that invitation.”

Taking a bite, his face started turning red. “What... What... what is the heat?”

Reolra smiled, “Hajilaran. I might have to use less.”

"It's hotter than any Curry I've ever had," he panted as tears came to his eyes, "But its good..."

“Here, try it with this dip. It’s made with Zilm’kach fruit and cream from Targ milk.”

(Reply, any if they wish)
(Posted by Tim)

[illegible]

>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>DAY 7>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>
(Deck 10 – Shuttlebay – COps Lieutenant Dieter Gregory – 0700)

Underneath his carefree exterior, Gregory was a man of deep passion and had a special spot for ceremonies. Especially those that honored people who had made the ultimate sacrifice for the greater good. He'd had a few debates about the concept of sacrifice in his philosophy courses at the academy. As a scientist, he knew what he could see, what he could observe, what he could measure. However, death was something of a mystery. The Sharlayan Engineers, ill equipped, with no solid knowledge, rushed into the metaphorical fire and had done enough that although the chamber had been vented to space, they stopped a runaway nuclear reaction that would have destroyed the Sharlayan ship and all aboard. The end of a civilization that has spent over 900 years traveling to their promised land.

Although they were not a federation member, Gregory had submitted the six engineers for the Starfleet Medal of Commendation. He was sure that was going to cause a kerfuffle at HQ, depending on if the Captain decided to forward the recommendation onward.

He had cleared the use of the Shuttlebay with flight ops, and arranged for a missing man formation to be flown. Since it was ill advised to move the caskets to the torpedo launchers, he was able to get a couple of engineers to attach small chemical motors to the containers, that would power the bodies away from the ship and onto their final voyage.

Using the two Workerbees, the six caskets had been taken out of the storage facility and placed outside the ship, beyond the Shuttlebay forcefield.

There were a handful of people on the shuttlebay floor as Gregory walked to the head of the assembly. Mostly crew from operations, as it was easy for the Chief to get his team where he needed. There were a few security guards, ones who had stood as an honor guard over the bodies while arrangements were made.

He hated his dress uniform, but solemn occasions called for formality, and this was one.

As he walked to the head of the assembly, the Bajoran Ensign Yorva, standing off to the right called out, "Company Attention."

The assembled men and women came to attention. Gregory made a sharp about face. "Parade rest," he said.

He paused. "We honor their sacrifice and commit their names to memory."

As the assembly snapped to attention, raising their hands in salute. Gregory started to read the names off.

“Dl’aney, daughter of Shaene. Engineering Clan.”

“Order, Arms.” came the command from Ensign Yorva. Gregory executed an about face, so he was facing the Shuttle bay opening.

The music changed to Taps. Twenty four notes, played slow and solemn. As the last note echoed in the Shuttlebay. Gregory turned around, "Company dismissed."

(Deck 10 – Shuttlebay – Admiral Skeese and Healer Genesse – 0715)

Skeese had no idea what to expect when he found that Lieutenant Gregory had planned a send off ceremony for the Engineer Clansmen that had been retrieved from the accident site. Most of the bodies were unidentifiable, between the destruction from the explosion, the burning from the fire, and the decomposition caused by the radiation. Those bodies had been disposed of, as they had been to

dangerous maintain, and there was no point to a ceremony to memorialize them at their juncture. However, with the reluctant cooperation the Colonists had agreed to design and erect a monument to the fallen when they arrived at New Sharlaya.

Seeing Gregory dressed as he was at the banquet was impressive. He clearly was not comfortable in the dress uniform, but he felt that it was important, so he and his staff had made the occasion a special event. The seven engineers that were able to be honored at this time had been placed in a, for lack a better way of putting it, container with tubes attached to the sides. Skeese was not completely sure what was going to happen.

The ceremony was so different than a typical Sharlyan passing ceremony. Those that went on were usually interred in a land plot to become part of the organic soil in which plants grow. There was great sentimental value to the food from that land. It was as if those that no longer were sustained those that still were. It was a celebration of the life that had been led, rather than a mourning of a life that was no longer. After the interment was often a celebration, with fermented juice, and good food, followed by music and dancing.

However this ceremony was almost the opposite. There was no function for the dead in this world. They were boxed and disposed of, but they were remembered, and that was what was important. He watched as Gregory proceeded over the ceremony, listening carefully to the names as he announced them. Then he finished and watched as rockets fired on the sides of the containers and shot the bodies into the empty space.

Genesse gasped at the sight of the dead heading out of the Shuttlebay, an into the vacuum. A tear fell down her from her eye. Partially for the loss of the families who would never be able to celebrate over the toils of their kindred in the soil, and partially at her own impotence to prevent so many deaths that preempted this event. However, she was a Healer of the Keepers, and passing was inevitable. She had had to come to that realization early in her life, even before becoming a Healer.

She watched as a group of shuttles flew by. They had formed an open triangular shape, like the videos of migrating birds she had watched. Then the shuttles went up and away as if saluting those that had left the ship. It was quite spectacular and she wondered of its symbolism.

Suddenly music began to play. It was not celebratory music but a sad, low tune. It made the listeners think about the life lost. Skeese thought about the events around the loss, and his own decision to close of the area locking those that were still alive inside. He justified the decision to himself by saying that those still in there were already dead, but their bodies just didn't know it. But screams and the pounding on the walls still ring in his ears, six cycles later. He could hear them now in the tones of the music.

"Company dismissed," Gregory ordered, and the group of attendants turned and dispersed.

Skeese walked over to Gregory and got his attention.

"I would like to thank you for honoring those of the Engineering clan," he said. "They deserved to be honored. It was very different than we are used to, but I am not certain how we could have honored them any differently. We are honored by your presentation."

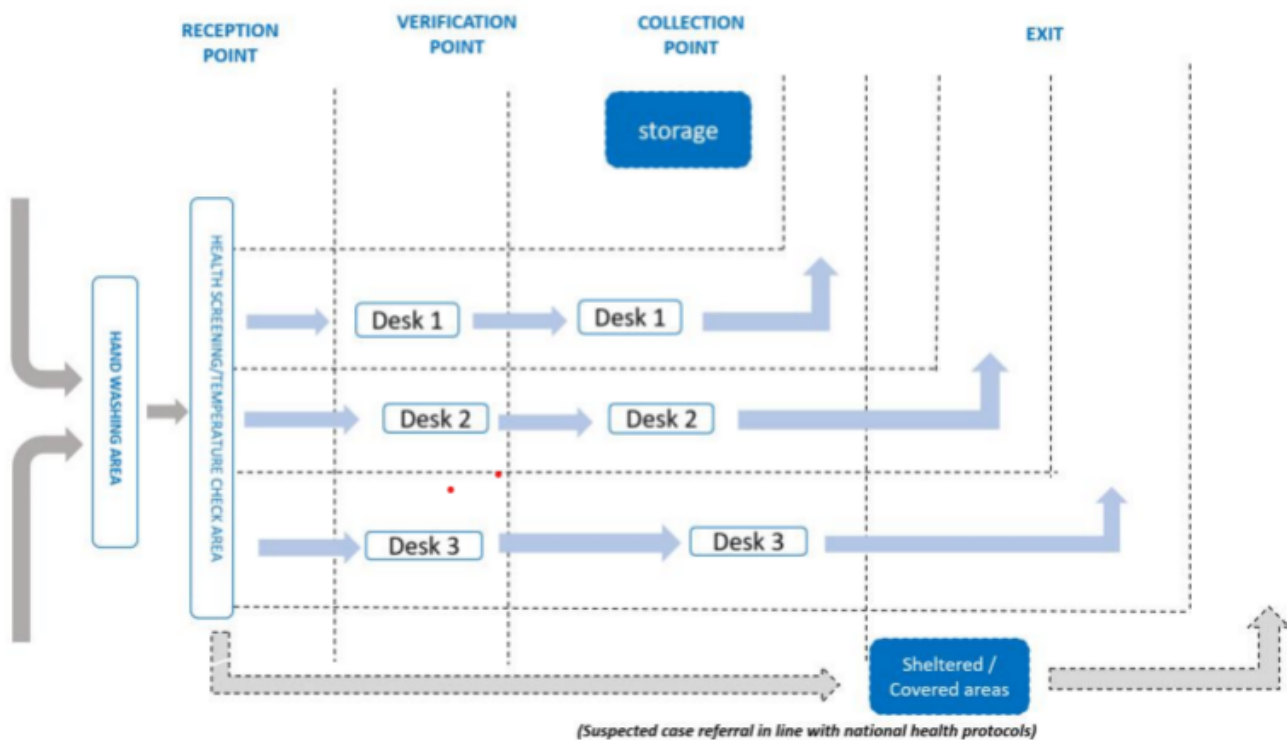
Sample Daily Ration	
Ingredients	Nutritional Value
400g of maize, rice/bulgur 60g of legumes 25g of oil (vit. A fortified) 50g of fortified blended foods (corn-soya blend) 15g of sugar 15g of iodized salt	Energy 2,100 calories Protein 58g Fat 43g

We will register all households when they arrive at the distribution centre. This will consist of, family's size, name of the head of household, the number of members who are male and female, their age (0-5, 5-11, 12-17, 18-59 and above 60), and their specific needs.

If registration is not feasible then we will need to work with community leaders to identify individuals who should be prioritized for distributions, as well as individuals and families who have not yet been assisted. We will scan all households to avoid duplication and to prevent fraud at the reception centre. So how will the distribution

Lee pressed more buttons on the screen to reveal the layout for one of the distribution centres. "You all have these in your briefing packs.

LAYOUT: QUICK AND EFFICIENT FOOD DISTRIBUTION, MAINTAINING SAFETY NORMS



"Generally all the commodities for a group of families are given to a representative of the group or to representatives or heads of each household. Shift leaders will organise the hosts at reception and security officers will be on hand to help and maintain crowd control as well dealing with potential issues. Any trouble makers to be dealt with quickly and swiftly. There will be monitors with vital information for those who have gathered at each centre.

"Those with specific needs, are called into the reception area first. Everybody else including special needs will be verified against the distribution list and scanned. Only verification will they enter distribution area. After verification, they enter the distribution area. They receive the items to which they are entitled and sign for them. Ideally, they also receive a receipt; if ration or entitlement cards

have been issued. Households or individuals who cannot be verified against the list should be directed to the litigation centre for a decision and counselling. Do not take decisions in the reception area because it can delay or obstruct distribution. We should have the volunteers to help carry the commodities of those who have specific needs. That includes children, those with disabilities, the old, infirm, sick, injured, It is important to address queries and concerns as they arise and to do so fairly, both to avoid discrimination and disruption to distributions. We will Install a complaints monitor at the distribution centre, so that anyone can report instances of fraud. In case of illness, they should be referred to the medical stations for screening”

Lee stopped talking as people around the table were making notes and wondered if he covered everything that required. There shouldn't be any questions as everything was explained in the briefing packs. Nevertheless he then said. "Any questions..observations? If not, dismissed."

(reply any)

(posted by John)

[illegible]

The Vulcan stepped to the observation window and looked out. There were several officers taking their meals here at separate tables so there was no conversation to speak of though now and again one would address another. Alpha shift had taken their break for lunch at ten o'clock and those from beta shift would be trickling in for another hour.

His eyes were looking outward to the starfield though his mind was turned inward. Within two hours the freighters were due to arrive from Bajor and the work of unloading them would begin. The work was proceeding apace on the Sharlayan asteroid ship thanks to the efforts of all hands but his thoughts were not on these things.

In the not so distant past the ships of StarFleet had been homogenous. Vulcans had manned their own ships as well as had Andorians and Terrans. Vice-Admiral Saleke had not been the first commanding officer of a ship of mixed species, far from it. There had been many before him. Some in the past had pointed to the successful integration of Commander and later Ambassador Spock onto a human vessel, the Enterprise as impetus for the fleet to become of melting pot of cultures. And the fleet had profited greatly from it. Having Vulcan logic, Andorian ferocity, Tellarite ingenuity and human instinct and insight, their ability to adapt to almost any conceivable situation had strengthened the whole.

It hadn't been without its challenges as Vulcans had of necessity been forced to adapt to the asynchronous activities of illogic and brash action. This had been a difficult period for those so immersed in the tight weave of the fabric of logic to be exposed to discordant input. But his race had adapted, slowly but inexorably. Vulcan sensitivities had been built up over thousands of years, such was not easily overcome.

No his father had not been the first to command a Federation starship of mixed species but to his knowledge Sekal had been the first son to follow in his father's footsteps and the evolution of thought and mindset from one to the other could be easily calculated. His mother had been much of the reason for this as she was a diplomat and a well received one to his understanding. From his father he had seen modeled the rigorous attention to detail and breadth of understanding, his insight into the inner workings of the Federation's foremost interstellar institution. From his mother insight and understanding into the motivations of other species and how to interact with them on a continuing basis. And his time with both had condensed those lessons into experience, experience that had led him on this path.

His own scientific and engineering achievements would no doubt have garnered notice within the fleet and led him in another direction. But melded together all had crystallized into the being he now was. He understood he wasn't as approachable as one of the emotional species, he was a Vulcan after all and his people's strict codes were the foundation of his being but even so he could see with clarity what most other Vulcans could not, the being behind the illogic and emotional displays. And because he could see these things his behavior had evolved to meet them on a more equitable footing. Saleke himself had begun that process and Sekal was continuing it. This was a natural and evolutionary process that those confined to his homeworld could not conceive of.

In two hundred years would those Vulcans who ventured into space on behalf of the Federation be unrecognizable to those who chose to remain on Vulcan? A logical question.

"Ahem."

His head turned as the introspection ended with the interruption.

"Pardon me please Captain but is there anything you would like me to cook for you?" The Chef Edwin Glassmaker was almost wringing his hands in nervousness at disturbing him.

Sekal turned more fully toward him. "What would you recommend?"

The Danish cook brightened at the question. "I am accomplished at many of the recipes from your homeworld as you know sir and there is one dish I have been wanting to make for you. Highly tasty as well as nutritious. You of course have your own preferences but I guarantee you will like it. A vegetable pie in a flaky crust with my own twist if you will, a creamy sauce seasoned to perfection. If you would be so kind as to allow me to craft it I assure that you will not be disappointed." The chef had been 'talking' extravagantly with his hands while speaking.

The reply carried no hint of condescension, no berating him for the illogic of his statement that a Vulcan could be 'disappointed', a notable reaction from a human who expected one thing but did not receive it. Sekal had never tasted this dish, how then could he be disappointed by it?

"Very well. I accept your recommendation."

The chef nearly danced in delight. "Have a seat please sir and I will whip it up for you. I will work quickly believe me, you are late for your dinner and I'm certain you are hungry. Will you be eating in your private dining room again?"

"Again?" Sekal did not consider himself above his crew and ate in the common dining area. "You are perhaps referring to the banquet you served for the Sharlayan Admiral."

"Yes sir." Edwin smiled. "That's the first time your dining room has been used. It really warmed it up if you'll pardon the observation sir. That's why it is there and you have been neglecting it. It's a shame to have such a fine, quiet room go to waste."

Sekal gave him a curious look. "You are ascribing sentience to a chamber?"

"No sir, I'm bemoaning the lack of use of a feature of the ship set aside for your personal use." Chef Glassmaker leaned forward conspiratorially. "Captain the crew knows why you don't use it and they really do appreciate the gesture sir. Believe me they do. But at the same time they don't understand it. A commanding officer has earned such amenities and they feel they are to blame that you snub it. You are the Captain. You should use those things set aside for you."

Sekal turned his head toward the doors to the room in question on the other side of the lounge then back to the human. "I do not understand. How could they be in understanding of my reasoning yet be confused by it?"

The chef shrugged. "It's a human thing sir as well as StarFleet tradition I have heard. And humans stand by tradition. It's based on respect."

He shook his head slightly in wonder. "Very well then I will take your dish in my dining room and give consideration to your counsel."

"Thank you again Captain you won't regret it." Glassmaker scurried off quickly to the kitchen to begin preparing the meal.

Sekal turned back to the viewing port. The freighters from Bajor would be here in less than two hours. Commander Verin was on the bridge and would take care of sorting out the logistics which had already been agreed to. He would be available if needed. Checking on progress before 0200 would be counter-productive since unloading wouldn't begin until tomorrow morning. Those logistics, getting them into position, assigning teams, preparing the Sharlayan gatherers for distribution, landing one of the freighters and starting the unloading process took time even when faced with advanced technology.

There was one item however he would be watching closely, the arrival of a new officer. One that would add even more diversity to his crew. Having a Ferengi among the staff would no doubt be ... "stimulating."

(Reply: Any)

(Posted by Charles G)

[illegible]

Keung Lee had programmed a scenario to test his tactical movement and shooting ability. He was using a ASP 8 mm, a scaled-down model of the classic Smith and Wesson Model 39 with a few

gentle recoil, plus it was easily concealable, extremely reliable and even had an ammunition indicator. He was carrying in his hands now, extended ahead of him and held low in a standard shooting grip.

The main entrance led into an open hall, with short corridors leading off from right and left. Furniture was minimal: they could be used for some cover, but not ideal. A staircase led up from the main hall into a landing, which opened into a long corridor running the breadth of the house.

He instantly realized that the program had placed him in the upper corridor of the building, with no windows or cover. He stayed closed to the doorway which opened onto the landing, but making use of cover from the passage. He looked carefully over the edge of the door frame, trying to reconnoitre the situation downstairs when-

Two ear-splitting explosions racked through the building, followed by the chatter of automatic weapon fire. The space next to his head was hacked by the impacts of enemy bullets, sparking and bursting on the metal bulkhead, and narrowly missing him with their ricochets.

He spotted a darting figure moving through the dust and smoke from the explosions, and instinctively raised his pistol to shoot. The trigger clicked once but nothing happened. He pulled again, more from instinct than thought, and again the weapon did not respond.

Lee glanced down momentarily to check the slide on the pistol, whilst half-ejecting the magazine, and to his further surprise, neither worked. The slide remained firmly immobile, and the magazine ejector also refused to budge. It took him another precious second to realize his pistol was now little more than a paperweight: it could not be malfunctioning from mishandling or neglect, so it would most likely be part of the test-

Another explosion came from below, followed by a fresh chatter of bullets. Damn. The team below were starting to move up - Lee could hear their footsteps as they ascended, and in a few seconds they would be upon him. He knew what they would do: a stun grenade through the door, perhaps smoke, then spray the corridor with hot lead, nailing anything still standing. His back-up weapon, an Andorian throwing dagger, was not very useful in a gunfight - and once it was literally thrown away, he'd be even more defenceless.

Move! Lee dashed up the corridor, making toward one of the rooms that lined the passage. If there was an opening in one of the rooms, he would at least no longer be trapped in a cul-de-sac. Thankfully the upper level appeared unoccupied by anyone except himself, and he charged into the first room on the right.

He made for the windows, still holding the useless ASP, but mid-way across the room, he noticed a familiar object on the side table. A partially disassembled SIG-Sauer P227 with a spare ammunition clip, which looked like it was fully loaded. Tossing his useless firearm aside, he instantly began to reassemble the weapon from sheer muscle memory, checking once more that the magazine was loaded

It took less than four seconds as he assembled the P227 with fluidity, feeling the satisfying click as he cocked the weapon this time and seeing the first round entering the chamber. He was already moving as he completed the cocking motion, twisting his body until he was hard against the side of the door.

If his attackers followed standard clearing procedure, they would attack with stun grenades first, then charging in after the grenades had done their disorientation, firing as they went. Lee reckoned that their initial fire would be random and wild, as surprise and speed was of the essence. He would have to respond with accuracy and deliberation.

He held the firearm out in a classical shooter's position, aiming squarely at a point in the middle of the doorway about two-thirds of the distance up from the ground. That would approximate chest height for a human target, and maximize his own chances of getting a hit.

A small, metallic object clunked into the room, rolling for a second before it stopped and detonated. Lee closed his eyes, looking away without lowering his shooting grip, avoiding the worst of what the stun-grenades were intended to do: the blinding effect from the flash, although there was nothing to stop the rolling thunder that seemed to shatter through his cranium, gripping his head like a pair of iron clamps squeezing hard. A harmonic two-note buzzing rang in his ears, the chord blotting out all other sounds, even the sharp report of his own pistol as he fired, out of instinct, in three pairs of rapid double-shots.

The first attacker through the door held a deadly semiautomatic carbine in his hands, tucked under his left arm, and Lee's first burst caught him in the chest..

As he fell forward, the next two bullets hit the second attacker under the chin
Through the noise and smoke, Lee had shot the first two assailants charging through the door.

Yet the second assailant's final death produced a final reflex. At the point of death, he did not release the weapon but fired half a burst as he fell, burra burraburra, the spray of bullets coming dangerously close to Lee. He felt the sting of a bullet cutting a shallow furrow along the flesh above his left arm, and another swishing past his ear.

Lee was already moving, for staying still in such situations was certain death. He stepped over the bodies, avoiding the slick wet liquid which had begun to pool on the ground. In the doorway, he paused for a second, ears still straining to hear beyond a dull, harmonic buzz. Nothing.

Lee moved back down the corridor, hand going to one of the stun grenades on his belt. He saw the third figure as it emerged from the doorway: he must have entered through the window behind him, in some sort of sneaky enveloping pincer movement. He fired two more shots at the target at the door, whilst at the same time dropping the activated grenade on the floor in front of him, and neatly giving it a backheel to send it tumbling down the steps behind him.

The third figure went down, and stayed down, even as he could feel the compressed blast wave from the grenade behind him. He put a third round into the prone figure just to be sure, then turned his attention back to the stairs.

The fourth person was splayed across the lower steps, completely motionless, but a fifth person was struggling with multiple injuries, toward the bottom of the stairs. The stun grenade was not designed to be lethal, but this character must have had the bad luck to take the blast full-on in the face.

Still partially deaf, Lee saw that the target's hand still moving, creeping toward a dropped firearm. Standing one step up, the Lee raised his weapon: from this range, less than a metre, it was just a formality to finish the exercise.

He did not hesitate: he aimed and fired. The last opponent was hit square in his chest and felt backwards, dead before hitting the floor. It looked like he had gotten them all. Well, at least it was a change from co-ordinating and organising the distribution programme.

(reply none)

(posted by John)

[illegible]

It has been a busy few day, between getting to know some of the Sharalayn people as he helped distribute food and supplies. He even got to doing parts of his workout over on the ship, in the fields. It was nicer than the holodeck for a change. Some of the lads he had met the first night even tried to copy his moves.

The NCO's had been keeping to the morning schedule, and the strange sleep schedule had him dragging during the training. Much to his dismay and the gentle ribbing of his peers.

Today was a rest day. The supply ships were expected to arrive today, so the Chief had as many as could stand down to prepare for the shipments.

Posts still had to be manned, of course, so Devers was on the bridge at his post practicing the time-honored tradition of sleeping while standing. Not quite asleep, but in a state of standing relaxation.

He hoped it would be a quiet shift.

(Reply any on bridge, as needed)
(Posted by Tim)

[illegible]

Reea sat in the mess hall of the civilian freighter, looking out the window. She wasn't eating, but she was there, because other than the bridge, it gave her the best view of their destination.

Back home on Ferenginar, Reea had a brilliant mind for business. By the time she was fifteen, she had acquired quite a bit of profit. Quickly becoming bored, she searched for a new challenge. Through a series of bribes and payoffs, she found herself meeting the right people that enabled her to be accepted into Starfleet Academy.

Reea originally wanted to be a doctor, but once she began her studies, she discovered that learning about the psychology of different races, would help her be a better negotiator and more shrewd in

business. To make herself more valuable as a Starfleet officer, in addition to counseling, she was also certified as a paramedic. Ready to venture into space, she was assigned to a hospital in Ireland, on Earth.

Knowing she had to make a good impression, Reea did her work to the best of her abilities. Happily, a position on a starship became available and it was given to Reea. She didn't know the full story, but after the long trek from Earth to Bajor, she was supervising a shipment of supplies being sent to the USS Illuminar, where she would be posted.

Having dropped out of warp, the Forlorn Hope was on its final approach to the rendezvous point. Smiling, Reea got up and headed out of the mess hall. Soon, she'd be on a starship!

(reply any)

(posted by Renee Bishop)

[illegible]

(USS Illuminar - Bridge - FSXO, Nav/Conn- Lieutenant (jg) Tempest Grey Wolf- 1432)

"Lt. Grey Wolf, please inform the Forlorn Hope and the Hope Reborn where to place themselves spatially. You are in charge of navigation."

The Cherokee woman replied crisply. "Understood Commander." Then brought up the navigational overlay on her helm viewer. The inbound freighters were maintaining a 1,000 kilometer distance between them and were currently 1/4 light year out.

She keyed open a navigational frequency for communication between the three ships.

"Illuminar to incoming freighters Forlorn Hope and Hope Reborn please verify copy of this transmission on subspace channel one, one, five."

=^= Forlorn Hope here Illuminar on course. Estimated arrival time 10 minutes at speed. ^=^=

=^= Hope Reborn here Illuminar. Same ETA. ^=^=

"Forlorn Hope reduce speed and take up station 2 kilometers from Illuminar and the Sharlayan ship. Transfer of personnel will commence first and be completed before you move in for unload. Copy that order."

=^= Order confirmed. Reducing speed and will take up station at point delta 2 kilometers from Illuminar and Sharlayan ship. Personnel transfer will take place followed by stand by for unload orders. ^=^=

"Orders confirmed Forlorn Hope. Hope Reborn maintain distance of one quarter light year until you are called in for unloading operations. Estimated time for unload currently at 46 hours."

=^= Hope Reborn copies slowing to maintain our distance. Standing by for unloading orders. Matching speed Illuminar. We'll be waiting for the all clear. ^=^=

"Illuminar confirms receipt of transmission."

She turned to the FO. "Commander Verin Forlorn Hope is en route for personnel transfer, eta 18 minutes. Hope Reborn maintaining a distance of one quarter light year."

(Reply: Verin, any)

(Posted by Charles G)

[illegible]

Sienna had been instructed that the first of the freighters would be arriving in the next fifteen minutes. What she had not been informed of until that moment was that the freighter would be bringing a new crew member to the Illuminar.

"Lt. Grey Wolf, please inform the Forlorn Hope and the Hope Reborn where to place themselves spatially. You are in charge of navigation." Sienna waited for a reply from the head of their flight operations before continuing with her orders.

(reply iyw Tempest)

She hit her comm badge next, "Mr. Lee, the freighters will be within distance in the next quarter hour. Please implement your plans to begin the transfer and distribution of the relief supplies. Please coordinate with Ambassador Mias and allow him to make the initial contact with the Sharlayans."

(reply Lee)

"Thank you Mr. Lee. Commander Verin to Ambassador Mias - the freighters are due to arrive in the next quarter hour. Would you please be so kind as to tell the Captain and Admiral of the Sharlayan ship and have them coordinate with Mr. Lee and his security team." Sienna realized that she should probably have done those two calls in reverse order, but she was learning on the job and would remember for future situations.

(Reply Riven Mias)

Sienna leaned back in the seat as her orders were carried out, then she smiled "Commander Verin to Captain Sekal, the first two freighters are coming into our vicinity and we have a new crew member reporting aboard. I will get her settled in before heading off shift, Sir. I have already informed Ambassador Mias and Mr. Lee to begin the process of transferring and distributing the supplies. Do you have any other orders, Sir?"

(reply Sekal)

Sienna nodded, and when that connection closed, Sienna rose, stretching. It was past her lunch time. She glanced around the bridge and nodded towards Lt. Grey Wolf, "I will be in the Ready Room. Please have Ensign Reea report in to me there once she is beamed aboard."

(reply Tempest, Sekal, Lee, any)

[illegible]

"Are you a Keeper?" The child asked breathlessly.

"No I'm not as a matter of fact. And why are you out and about so late?" He asked.

The presence of other minds nearby became clear as he opened his telepathic senses. He turned his eyes about but shadows from the trees appeared to be hiding the beings.

The voice of the child deepened and he realized he had made a mistake in the darkness because of the slight figures of the Sharlayans.

"And yet you are no Gatherer either. I can hear it in your voice."

The other minds were closing in, his eyes flicked about seeing the shadows of the moving figures.

::Sienna I think I may be in a bit of trouble.:: He sent just before the figure on the road stepped forward and he was given a blow to the head causing him to lose consciousness.

(Reply: Sienna)

(Posted by Charles G)

[illegible]

(Distribution centre, Asteroid surface. Assistant Chief of Security Ensign Keung Lee - 1435.5)

Keung was accompanied by his four duty shift leaders as he walked the group through one of the distribution centres reminding them about the procedures for organising the distribution of food. There were a few people in the centre finishing off setting up the resources.

His commbadge buzzed. It was from FO Commander Sienna Williams-Verin

"Mr. Lee, the freighters will be within distance in the next quarter hour. Please implement your plans to begin the transfer and distribution of the relief supplies. Please coordinate with Ambassador Mias and allow him to make the initial contact with the Sharlayans."

"Acknowledge, Commander." Said Lee. "Everything in place and ready to go."

"Thank you Mr. Lee."

Lee turned to the group. “Acknowledge. Lee out. 2 He turned to his team. “Okay. Its rock and roll time. You have your orders. Inform your teams to get ready. In the meantime I go and find Ambassador Mias in the meantime to get the Sharlayan’s mobilised to unload the relief supplies”

(reply none)

(posted by John)

[illegible]

(Kal'Shar - Gertin District- Free Lands - Skipta the skeptic- 1455)

Skipta looked at the figure crumpled at his feet. “Good job alerting us Memni. This is one of the strangers walking at will around our land. Trying to seduce us with strange and foreign food. Worse foreign ideas. The people have been pure for generations, until now.”

“It is a plot on the part of the Keepers, I am sure of this Skipta. Think back to ten turns ago and how things were then, and the tensions between the clans and the keepers.”

“Yes, Pekshana, your reminder is timely. But now, we must do something with this one.”

“Bring a pole. We can carry him to the cave.”

Quickly a pole was brought and Riven was bound to it. The men marched down the road to a trail off to the side, barely visible unless you know it was there. The path sloped downward, and ended at an opening in the rock.

In a few minutes, the men were inside a cavern, rough stairs led both up and down. The room was about 15 feet in diameter, and there was a small running pool of fresh water. They put Riven in a corner, sitting up with his back against the wall.

"Now what Skipta?" one of the men asked.

“Now we wait Dakruss, now we wait. I am sure the keepers will come looking. And then we can demand answers. Get our fair share. “

“U’Cole, go to the spot to watch. Whistle like the T’kec bird if you see anyone coming. Fo’zoba will spell you in a hour.”

(Reply, Riven, others)
(Posted by Tim)

[illegible]

The arboretum on deck 11 was a popular place for many of the crew who wanted to relax. It was a place where trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants, fruit and vegetables seeds were cultivated for scientific purposes as well as the provision of food sources for the ship's galleries. There was a large lounge where people could relax and a gallery which serves fresh food as opposed to using a replicator. Keung Lee found that the Arboretum was one of his favourite places on the ship mainly because it avoids the feeling of working in an enclosed 'tin can' for long stretches of time. Not that Lee suffered from claustrophobia. There were few people around at this time of day. Lee had ordered a gammon meal with fresh vegetables and a mug of tea. He took his tray of food and was finding a table when he noticed a couple of crew members watching something on a wall monitor. One of them saw Lee and waved him over.

Lee recognised the crew members as Ensign Mary De Vera and Ensign Luis Lim both science officers. "Hi chief" greeted Mary "Come and join us. There's something on the Federation news service that might interest you."

"Oh yes?" said Lee who was curious about what item might interest him as he joined the couple and place his tray on the table. "What is it?"

"It's a programme called 'Science Today. They discussing the concepts of time. You are interested in time travelling..after all you are one." Smiled ensign Lim

"I wouldn't call myself a time traveller. Rather a displaced temporal refugee. At least that was what described to me when I first came to this century!! I hardly call myself unique" explained Lee, laughing. That was true..Keung Lee wasn't unique, He wasn't the only one who had found himself in this century. There been other such people who arrived through time either through anomalies when space time continuum split and the effects of put into cryosleep. "So what's the feature about then"

"Its an interview with Professor Stephen Battenburg. He's a well-known cosmologist and author but he is known for his work on faster than light propulsion such as trans warp technology. He's also interested in temporal issues." Pointed out Mary.

She waved to the monitor where Lee recognised the interviewer, presenter Billie Scott-Duckworth who was interviewing a thin grey haired man who he presumed to be Professor Stephen Battenburg. It seems like the interview had going on for a while. So Lee started to watch whilst eating his food.

"You talked about the use of a particle accelerator in your work." Said Billie. "For the benefit of our viewers, could you explain what is a particle accelerator?"

"It's a machine that accelerates elementary particles, such as electrons or protons, to very high energies. It produces beams of charged particles that can be used for a variety of purposes such as applied physics, medicine, and industrial processes. "explained Dr Battenburg. "Well, in our warp drive research we accidentally discovered that the technology developed had produced a rather fascinating by-product effect. Our experiments opened up a temporal distortion or a rift in the space time continuum. Our research concludes that not only we have the ability to travel through space beyond the speed of light but it just might be possible to travel in time using the technology of our particle accelerator. It could be possible to adapt the particle accelerator to enable a human being to move close to the speed of light. Say for example, Billie you are sent through to the particle accelerator. For someone like me who is looking in several years would be possible but to you it would seem to last only a few days. By the time you stepped off the accelerator, you would be younger than the rest of us."

"That would do for me..the ultimate eternal youth treatment" laughed Billie as she flicked her long hair.

At that point, Lee stopped chewing as he concentrated on the interview.

Dr Battenburg continued "In a way, time travel is possible. There are particles called pi mesons. They don't live very long because they disintegrate after mere millionths of a second. When they are sent through the particle accelerator at nearly the speed of light, the affect is astonishing. Their lifetimes

expand dramatically. It appears these particles are traveling in time, or in relation to other particles, they are moving more slowly.”

Billie sat back smiling. "To have the opportunity to travel in time..that would be incredible

She turned back to Dr Battenburg. “I would like to ask you about the possibility of using the accelerator for time travel. I would love to back to a time to say ..like 80 million BC, to experience a world without humanity. And to see dinosaurs. Or to go back to Athens to interview Plato and Aristotle when they alive.

“Quite” said Dr Battenberg

(reply none)

(posted by John)

[illegible]

(USS Illuminar Deck 11 Arboretum Assistant Chief of Security Ensign Keung Lee 1510)

“Actually, there is a question I would like to ask. If time travel is possible. Would we not have bumped into a bunch of observers from the future at critical junctures in history?” ask Billie

Dr Battenberg smiled and nodded. “Mmm. I thought about that. What you have describe is known as the Fermi Paradox. In June 28, 2009, physicist Stephen Hawking carried out a scientific experiment which was meant to answer this question once and for all. He brought snacks, balloons and champagne and hosted a secret party for time travellers only – but sent out the invitations only on the next day. If no one showed up, he argued, that would be proof that time travel to the past is not possible. The invitees failed to arrive. “I sat and waited for a while, but nobody came. But you imagine if multiple time travellers could upset the possibility of a fixed and consistent timeline!”

“Actually, talking about paradoxes.” said Belie as she got into her strived. “Suppose I shoot a sabretooth—in Asia, I suppose—which was originally slated to eat a human. Won’t that change the whole future?”

“No,” said Dr Battenberg. “You see, it’s rather as if the time continuum were a mesh of tough rubber bands. It isn’t easy to distort it; because if the band will snap back to its uh ‘former shape.’” Likewise, if I killed a sheep in the Middle Ages, I wouldn’t wipe out all its later descendants, maybe all the sheep would still be there, unchanged down to their very genes in spite of a different ancestry. All the sheep would be descendants of all the earlier sheep. Time would compensate you see.. In the same way ... oh, suppose I went back and prevented President John Kennedy from being assassinated. Unless I took very elaborate precautions, it would probably happen that someone else did the shooting and the assassin got blamed anyway”

"I have heard of the grandfather paradox" Asked Billie "Could you explain that"

The grandfather paradox is that would arise if a person were to travel to a past time. The name comes from the idea that if a person travels to a time before their grandfather had children, and kills him, it

would make their own birth impossible. So, if time travel is possible, it somehow must avoid such a contradiction.” Explained Dr Battenberg.

“You have mentioned about concepts of time. I want to ask you that in your research, have you discovered a way to actually travel through time

“Only through theories.” Dr Battenburg leaned forward with a twinkle in his eye “Mind you if I did tell you I built a time machine..you can imagine the ratings!”

There was a pause as Lee could see Billie with her mouth open in surprise.

Dr Battenburg started laughing “Oh your face, Miss Duckworth”

Billie joined in laughing before turning to the camera “Well. I’m afraid we ran out of time. Join us again next week on ‘Science today.’”

(reply none)

(posted by John)

[illegible]

(USS Illuminar - CO's Ready Room, Deck 1 - FO Commander Sienna Williams-Verin - 1510)

Sienna had retreated to the Captain's Ready Room and replicated herself a quick lunch of earth vegetables, hummus, pita breads and a glass of apple cider. She ate quickly and neatly, being informed once Ensign Reea has officially beamed over. Cleaning up her dishes and replacing them in the replicator, Sienna moved herself to the very comfortable couch and waited, her eyes closed as if in meditation. What she was doing in reality was communing with Luma'lenai, finding the way that Luma perceived spatial bodies to be intriguing. Sienna was very close to the Lenai, considering the non corporeal entity to be one of her closest friends of her adult life, a stark contrast to the first interaction that the two had experienced.

It did not come as any sort of surprise when the chime rang out. Sienna opened her dark betazoid eyes and spoke calmly, "Come.". When Reea had entered, Sienna indicated for the woman to take a seat beside her.

"Ensign Reea, I am the First Officer, Commander Sienna Williams-Verin. I was not informed that you would be accompanying the freighters, but I am pleased that you have arrived. Do you have your transfer orders?"

(reply Reea)

"Excellent. Currently we are on a diplomatic and relief mission with a cultural survey aspect to it. I will fill you in on it after we talk a bit. Please tell me about your training. When did you graduate the Academy?"

(reply)

Sy nodded along as she listened. "We currently have several counselor types aboard. Dr. Quinna Solice is our CMO, and you will be under her auspices. She will be pleased to have another medic aboard." Sienna sent a quick smile to the Ferengi woman. "Lt. Ariel Trei has some medic training and is also an assistant counselor. She is a mixed heritage betazoid and klingon. And lastly we have the fully betazoid counselor, Lt. Alaya Ravenstone-Hammons. She has a specialty in diplomacy rather than personal counseling. Your duties will be whatever Dr. Solice wishes, but you will also be pulling bridge shifts and taking on counseling patients. If you have any issues, feel free to come to me." Sienna paused for a moment. "We also have a Betazoid mind healer aboard, Ambassador Riven Mias. I suggest you find some time and meet him soon as you will be working closely with him for the cultural survey I mentioned earlier."

Sienna looked up, "Any questions so far?"

(reply Reea, any)

(posted by Mel)

[illegible]

(USS Illuminar - CO's Ready Room - Counselor Ensign jg Reea - 1511)

Reea rang the door chime to the captain's ready room; she was there to report in to the FO. Normally, something like this would cause a new officer to be nervous, but she wasn't. Her first starship assignment was a huge event for her, but because of her past, Reea wasn't nervous at all. Her experience in business with people that were powerful, and even dangerous, made meeting her FO not intimidating at all.

"Come."

Hearing the female voice, Reea stepped inside, filled with confidence. An attractive Betazoid woman motioned for Reea to sit beside her. Reea was surprised the meeting was casual, but she didn't show any outward reaction.

"Ensign Reea, I am the first officer, Commander Sienna Williams-Verin. I was not informed that you would be accompanying the freighters, but I am pleased that you have arrived. Do you have your transfer orders?"

"Yes, ma'am." Reea handed a PADD to the commander.

"Excellent. Currently we are on a diplomatic and relief mission, with a cultural survey aspect to it. I will fill you in on it after we talk a bit. Please tell me about your training. When did you graduate the academy?"

"When I first started my classes, I wanted to be a doctor, and maybe a CMO someday, but after several weeks, I found counseling to be more suited to me. I'm fully qualified in the field. To broaden my skills, I'm also certified as a paramedic I just graduated this past spring, but I worked in a hospital on Earth before being assigned here.."

The commander talked about some of the key medical personnel on board.

"Your duties will be whatever Dr. Solice wishes, but you will also be pulling bridge shifts and taking on counseling patients. If you have any issues, feel free to come to me."

Reea nodded, a smile on her face Bridge shifts! She was already looking forward to that unexpected privilege.

As the FO continued, Reea was surprised to learn there was also a Betazoid mind healer on the ship. She had heard of them, but never met one.

"Any questions so far?" said Williams-Verin.

Reea had questions, but some were about her quarters and settling in, while others were about the upcoming cultural survey. She could ask for a full briefing from the commander, but Reea enjoyed researching and learning for herself. Still, not asking something, probably wouldn't look good.

"I don't have anything to ask right now," said Reea.

She went with not looking good. Inwardly chiding herself, she would need to work on not coming across as confident and knowledgeable as she actually was.

(reply Williams-Verin
(posted by Renee Bishop)

[illegible]

Lee resumed his eating again in thought. If it was possible to go back in time, would he do it? It's been twenty years living in this time and he was used to the culture of this time. His thoughts were interrupted by Mary.

“Do you mind if I ask something personal”

“Go ahead.” Said Keung. He knew what Mary was going to ask. He was used to people asking questions about his experiences of being out of his own time..serious questions, sometimes downright amusing .”Let me guess..you want to know what was it like back in the 21st compared to now..Right?”

Mary slipped her drink and nodded.

Keung took his cue from Mary and also sipped his drink

"Well... it was different, that's for sure. Compared to now... life was obviously restricted to living in one area because of the problems related to travel technology... no faster-than-light systems, just atmospheric flights. I once lived in old London... it wasn't as big as we know it now but the place was... er... compact, if you see what I mean! Ground vehicles ran on internal combustion techniques so there was pollution and uncontrolled weather. Times were uncertain and different groups sought their own alternative lifestyles and some extreme trying to achieve it through crime, terrorism and war!! I read some history books about life in the late 20th/early 21st century. To be honest with you, most of it is

absolute rubbish and inaccurate. I've started writing about it from my own perspective but nothing worth publishing. You're talking to a man who was a history teacher and had distinguished military career and mentioned in dispatches. Then ended up in the 24th Century only to be told in not some many .that I was a non-entity!! Everything that I experienced was practically useless in this era!!"

Lee paused, glancing at Mary “I actually had a nervous breakdown for several months...not surprising really...the medics gave it some long sounding term..but not coping with changes in new time and culture. I think I prefer to call it – culture shock!! Anyway counsellors helped me through it. To look at it as new opportunities. New changes and challenges. Not everyday I can make a fresh start in life..erase any mistakes!!”

She listened intently and said, "I've studied that time period some and particularly liked the clothing and have replicated some Jeans-they're pretty comfortable. But I'm what would have been called a geek then."

"Actually a geek would have been the wrong term to use..I can't exactly remember the term." Keung mused.

"Perhaps Tom boy would be more fitting." She laughed.

“Just think if I had the ability to time travel..not only to go home but to go a bit of exploring for historical reasons not to mention the commercial opportunities.” Declared Lee and started laughing as he looked at the shocked faces of the two scientists when he mentioned...commercial opportunities.

(reply none)

(posted by John)

[illegible]

She took a table looking over the Sharlayan ship. It was a nice view of stars and the asteroid together. She waited for Reea to join her for their conversation. She went to the ladies room to make sure she emptied her bladder. She returned to the table to wait for Reea. She ordered a large bowl of those nutty beetles to snack on while waiting for her.

(Reply Reea)
(Posted by Edward)

[illegible]

Jaton was wiped. It had been a busy several days, but finally he had some time to himself. He was looking forward to a fair few days off, even if there wasn't the time nor opportunity for shore leave. But he was determined to make the most of it and was looking forward to running some nice and relaxing holodeck program at some point over the next couple days.

As he walked into the lounge, he spotted Gregory sitting on his own, PADD in hand. He chuckled to himself as he walked over to him.

"One would think that PADD was surgically attached to your hand."

"It does seem that way, but we have the Bajoran freighter to unload and checking on the engineering teams progress. Of course, I'm also busy studying for my command test, so it's never a dull moment. Heck, I've not even had a chance to work on SPOTS. At least I'm getting my running in." Gregory replied.

"Why don't you join me? I'll put the PADD away and try to relax," the man said, waving Jatón to take a seat.

"I'll be glad to," Jatón said with a smile as he sat down across from Dieter. "If only to see if you can actually relax."

Gregory chuckled as he put his PADD down, "I relax when I rock climb, that is relaxing. But enjoying a meal with a colleague is a close second."

"So what's on the menu tonight?"

Gregory shook his head, "That's a good question. I could go for a good Uttaberry Crepe, but that is dessert first. As the great 20th century Earth philosopher Rodger Waters once wrote, 'How can you have any pudding if you don't eat your meat.'"

He paused, not knowing how much Jatón knew of Earth rock bands. It was an inside joke, still good 500 years later, as was the music when listened to in the holoprogram.

"Why don't we try something from your homeworld, Jatón. What is a Trill delicacy?"

"Well I suppose that means we should start with some meat, if we're to appease that philosopher," Jatón said, oblivious to the joke. "Most Trill are vegetarian these days, but I do like some good meat myself."

The waiter came by at that minute, and Jatón turned to him. "Two orders of Shatori mussels, with a side of spiced galzak," he said with a smile.

"Coming right up," the waiter replied.

"Nothing wrong with vegetables in my book. They can be downright tasty in a stir fry or curry, but this sounds like an adventure," Gregory replied.

Jatón smiled. "I'll be happy to take you on an adventure anytime. Especially if it gets you to relax and unwind. I've been worried about you the last few days. You've been wound tighter than any spring."

"With the lives of 10,000 or so in the balance, can't leave anything to chance," Gregory replied.

Jaton nodded. "I suppose, but you can't forget about yourself in the meantime." He reached out and gently grabbed Dieter's hand.

Gregory squeezed Jaton's hand. "Have you ever thought of going into counseling? I appreciate your concern," he said, "But I'm ok. We're almost over the hardest part and with the food arriving, the distribution teams are doing their thing."

Jaton let out a small chuckle and shook his head. "It's funny you say that, because while I haven't thought of it, I've spent so long in counselling for my own issues that some of it must've rubbed off."

He sat in silence, his hand still holding Gregory's. His thumb moved back and forth, softly caressing the human's hand. "This is nice," he said after a moment.

Gregory nodded, "It is actually good to sit down and just relax for a moment. I admit I've been catching the occasional food when I could, and been drinking all too much tea."

"I've not been to Trill yet, tell me more of your homeworld, Jaton."

Jaton smiled. A somewhat pained smile as thoughts of his home were still twinged with pain and sadness. "That's a complicated question," he said, withdrawing his hand.

"It's a beautiful world, covered in verdant jungle and home to an ancient society, but that's something you can read in any guidebook." Jaton took a moment to collect his thoughts.

"I was part of the mission that helped welcome Trill back into the Federation. It was the first time I'd been home in more than 26 years."

"But, that was years ago," Gregory said.

"That's just the thing. Biologically speaking, I'm 30, but chronologically I'm 55. I first joined Starfleet in 2417, and was killed later that year. Next thing I remember I'm waking up in the medical ward at Utopia Planitia, 25 years having passed. I can't explain what happened."

Gregory stared at Jaton, "You are here now, so that's a plus. Clearly the universe in its infinite wisdom felt you were important enough to keep around. The why may never be known, but if you want help trying to figure it out, I'm ready to help."

Jaton nodded. "I know that this is probably a lot to take in. Are you okay?"

"When you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth," Gregory replied. "You are here, talking to me. You are flesh and blood," he said squeezing Jaton's hand. "That is enough truth for me."

The waiter arrived with the food, placing the plates in front of the two officers.

Saleke had received a communication from T'Kess earlier in the day that she would have time from her duties for a three day visit. It was good that she was on her assignment to the UFP Ambassadorial

facilities on Earth. Her shuttle had already departed and was en route placing her arrival at approximately 2200 hours. The Vulcan looked around the office to satisfy himself everything was in place before leaving. The crystal revolving above the display base given to him on the Hades and once again in his possession was in its customary position upon his desk.

A beeping alert caught his attention before he could turn for the door. He reached over and keyed the comm on the desk.

"Saleke here."

=^= Admiral a communication for you from Luma'lenai. ^=

Curiosity crossed over his features like a wave. "Interesting. On screen."

A large monitor on the wall to the right of the desk lit up as he turned toward it.

"This is Saleke, Luma. What is the purpose of this communication?"

Luma's true form as a snowflake like crystal entity showed and it turned towards where he was. Luma had learned that her small ones liked to be able to see each other.

=^= My Saleke. ^= her greeting was warm and full of emotion. ^= My Saleke is aware of what our Sekal has the skin doing? Luma desires to know why entropy to an entire culture is preferable to assisting it. My Saleke will explain this 'Prime Directive' and why entropy is courted instead of helping life flourish. ^= A long pause. ^= Luma does not understand and My Saleke is Luma's fatherly figure and review of texts has taught Luma that fathers explain the unexplainable. ^= The regard of the Lenai was turned entirely on Saleke.

His demeanor showed puzzlement. "Are you reporting that Captain Sekal is withholding assistance from the Sharlayans? His reports would appear to suggest otherwise."

She paused for a moment, ^= No. And this is not a 'report'. This is Luma asking for reasonings. Why can we not move them to their new place? So more of their people do not court entropy? Why do we make them wait an additional five of their years in a ship that is dying? ^= What Saleke knew of Luma's past spoke to why this was such an important, maybe even a crises for the Lenai. She was terrified of another race being destroyed for frivolous reasons. ^= Luma does not understand this 'Prime Directive' ^= She repeated again.

"Ah." The Admiral spoke now understanding. This would not be a short conversation so he rounded the desk to his chair and sat down as he carefully considered his words.

"What you ask would appear simple but it is complex much as the Prime Directive is complex. Firstly consider the logistics of moving upwards of twenty thousand beings out of their homes on such short notice Luma. This would be a tremendous undertaking under the most ideal circumstances but even more difficult now. In its prime StarFleet could have undertaken this task but at this point in time with the fleet in its initial expansion we do not have the resources."

=^= We could outfit better engines, or tow it to where the asteroid needs to go? ^= The Lenai asked hopefully.

"The introduction of a higher form of engine is subject to restrictions and Ambassador Mias has the authority to authorize it but only if necessary. As for towing... while the Illuminar is an immensely powerful ship it would appear the Sharlayan generation ship is too massive to move about with its tractor beams. The limitations are due to the durability of key components."

Luma growled softly, a sound that she did not make often, only when truly frustrated did the Lenai show that they had been the dominant predator on their homeworld eons ago. ^= It could be towed. It would require multiple ships but it could be done. The stress could be mitigated by a triangular configuration. Luma did the modeling. But it would take at least two weeks due to the slow nature of balancing the forces against warp speed. The Republic would take most of the mass due to its size vs engine output, with the Exeter taking the weakest place. Luma would have to be in control of the drives of all three ships in order to keep us balanced or we would tear apart the Sharlayan ship and likely some of ours too. But adding additional ships is just too risky to further spread the load. Luma is not sure she could control more than 3 in the type of constant rebalancing that would be required. ^=

"The Exeter is unfortunately on mission and unavailable and being that the Republic is the most powerful vessel in the fleet it has been earmarked for high hazard combat operations and defense. To change its mission parameters will require a quorum of the Admiralty and the acquiescence of the CinC and will take a considerable time period."

"The Prime Directive itself is the product of lessons learned over centuries. Consider this, a race of beings is in its primitive phase, conflict and wars are rife over resources, food, land and perhaps slaves. What if higher technology is introduced to such a culture? What if their wars fought with spear and arrow is now fought with phasers and photon grenades? What about intercontinental warheads or orbital stations? The introduction of higher technology to a civilization that is unready for it can destroy it and bring about entropy for an entire species."

=^= These people are not at war and are dying because they have been in the void for too long and their home is failing. How many will court entropy before they reach their new place? ^=

Saleke nodded. "That is where the Prime Directive fails and why the Federation has made the decision to grant leniency in regards to their situation. I along with the rest of the Admiralty have been following developments there. Were the Prime Directive strictly followed in this instance they would be left to starve as their ship failed and their lives would be extinguished however that is not the case. Supplies are being delivered so that they will not die from hunger and their ship is being repaired so that they will arrive at their destination. The resources of the UFP will not be stretched to the breaking point and should something catastrophic happen elsewhere we will be able to respond to it. The management of resources comes with a price."

Luma's voice seemed sad, ^= Many of their young would make valuable members of the Star Fleet that is being rebuilt. Is it possible to send them a teacher so that when they reach their new world they are not lost as anachronistic? ^= This truly mattered to the Lenai. She cared too much about life and would do anything to avoid death. ^= My Saleke, Father... Luma is not good at obeying orders. If the

Federation would choose for them to die? Luma is not sure that she would be able to stand the heartbreak.=^= She was the epitome of an emotional being.

Saleke's face registered mild surprise at her use of the word father in context. For the last of these statements there was only one answer. "The cultural survey will tell us how soon we may expect Sharlayans among the ranks." He paused for a moment, regarding the Lenai and noting her concern. "You will not be asked to consider that decision now however I can make no promises concerning what the future may hold. I will do what I can to keep you from such a conflict in the future."

She stayed quiet for a moment, =^= We can send them a teacher? So that when they arrive in five of their years they will not be too out of step with the current reality? =^= Something curious about the way she asked this.

He nodded. "That is a logical request and the details for such are being considered even now."

(Reply: None)

Posted by Charles Gatling (Admiral Saleke)
And Melinda Gatling (Luma'lenai)

[illegible]

Jaton and Gregory strolled into the holodeck. Jaton looked around at the empty room.

“Such a simple room, so many possibilities,” he said. “So what program should we run?”

Gregory chuckled, "One of my climbing programs wouldn't be too relaxing, I suspect." He paused and thought for a minute. "I know. Relaxation is the name of the game. Computer, run Niwa No Yu."

Gregory looked pleased with himself. “This is one of the oldest, most famous onsen complexes in Japan. The baths use natural spring water from natural hot springs. They are restorative and relaxing. Additionally they have Finnish saunas. One of my favorite ways to relax after a hard day. Do they have sauna’s on Trill?” The man seemed giddy.

The black and yellow walls disappeared to be replaced by a calm garden setting. A path led to a door. As the two men entered through the door, a young woman greeted you. Gregory bowed to her. “Hello Yura-san.” he said .

“Welcome back Dieter-sama, it is a pleasure to have you return. And you bring a friend?” she asked.

“Yes, this is Jatón Ayl. We are looking for some relaxation. Things have been busy at work.”

“Yes, very good Diter-sama. A pleasure to meet you Jatón-sama,” the woman said. “I would recommend a hot bath before partaking of the sauna, which I know is a personal favorite of yours.”

Gregory chuckled. "You know me too well. Is Seison available today?"

"I will check for you."

Gregory turned to Jaton, "Seison is the most amazing masseur I have ever met. He knows reflexology, among other things, and by the time you've been worked over by Seison, you'll have no troubles or worries at all."

"Gregory-sama, Season is indeed free. As is Yaeko. Shall I book you a double session?"

"What do you say Jaton?"

"Well then, if we're at this onsen, I guess that means in your mind this is a date," Jaton said flirtatiously.

"Amicitiae nostrae memoriam spero sempiternam fore," Gregory said with a sly smile.

Jaton chuckled. "I'd be delighted to book a double session with you. Lead the way."

Gregory led Jaton through a set of doors to a changing room. There were two lockers open, with each officer's name on them. "Here, it is customary to wear a bathing suit. At the real location in Tokyo, it is a co-ed facility, although there are single sex sections as well."

Pulling out the 'suit', he held it up to Jaton, "Not that these cover much, my friend. But a custom is a custom."

Jaton pulled out his suit as well. "Well, not to worry. I've spent enough time at the beach. I don't mind showing off. Especially if I think you might enjoy the show."

On that note, Jaton pulled off his uniform's jacket and shirt, and stowed them in the locker. He was used to being bare-chested, but there was something especially exciting about it this time. Following that he sat and pulled off his boots and socks, stowing them carefully as well.

"I'll give you the chance to turn around if you want," he said to Gregory, standing and placing his thumbs inside the waist of his pants.

"We're all men here," Gregory replied, as he continued to undress as well. "I, for one, am not shy. Or don't you remember the betazoid wedding on Mars?"

"Oh yes, I nearly forgot," Jaton said as he took his trousers down. "Then again, I didn't go naked to that. I was in dress uniform. As I am now." He pulled the suit on and posed. "How do I look?"

Gregory looked at Jaton, "The spots do indeed go all the way down," he said with a smile. "You are indeed a fine specimen of a Trill, quite easy on the eyes." the man said.

"As are you," Jaton said as he looked Gregory up and down. "Well, a fine specimen of a Human that is," he chuckled. "So now what?"

“Now we go to the bath to soak. Once that is done, we’ll take a Sauna to sweat out the toxins in the body before we take a cooling bath. From there, we go for our massage workout. And at that point, we should be fully relaxed and not want to go back to work,” Gregory said as he headed out of the locker room to a room with a pool-like arrangement

“Sounds wonderful. I’m hoping that you won’t be willing to go straight back to work after this,” Jatón said as he followed him out to the bath.

The room itself was pretty empty, and Jatón was happy to see that they would mostly have the room to themselves. He was feeling like Gregory might be interested in him, but he wasn't exactly sure yet. He decided to bide his time and wait for the right moment to make his move.

Jaton walked over to the steps and waded down into the pool. "Oh the water is wonderfully warm. Heavenly!" He took a seat on the far side of the bath, and motioned to Gregory. "Come on in, the water's great!"

Gregory walked into the pool enjoying the heat of the water as he made his way to sit next to Jatón. "Let the tension of the day flow out and all those muscles relax," he said.

Jaton slouched down a little bit as he let himself relax, and moved up a little to sit a little bit closer to Gregory. “Sounds like a plan.” He then placed his arm around Gregory.

Gregory moved closer to Jatón, “There, is that better?”

“Listen,” Jatón said, a bit nervous as he felt his heart rate jump, “I feel like we might be on the same wavelength here, but I wanted to be sure before I make a move. But I like you. And I was wondering if I can kiss you.”

(Posted by Spencer - Jatón Alyl and Tim - Dieter Gregory)

[illegible]

-----END TRANSMISSION-----