

## Mission: In the Vanguard

Day: 8-9

Stardate: 2446.06.27-28

## Day 8

(U.S.S. Raptor - Deck 5 – Holodeck 2 - Marine - 2LT Charles Temerity - 1940)

(USS Raptor - Deck 5 - Holodeck 2 - 20/CSEC/Tac - Lt Commander T'Mur- 1945)

(USS Raptor - Deck 5 - Holodeck 2 - Marine - 2LT Charles Temerity - 1950)

(USS Raptor - Deck 5 - Holodeck 2 - 2O/CSec/Tac - Lt Commander T'Mur - 1951)

(USS Raptor - Deck 5 - Holodeck 2 - 2O/CSec/Tac - Lt Commander T'Mur- 1956)

(USS Raptor - Deck 5 - Holodeck 2 - Marine - 2LT Charles Temerity - 2000)

## Day 9

(Alpha Eridani System- USS Raptor - Deck 1 - Bridge - CO, Captain Sekal and Galk of the Imperial House - 0920)

(USS Raptor - Deck 1 - Ready Room - CO, Captain Sekal and Galk of the Imperial House - 0935)

(USS Raptor - Deck 1 - Ready Room - CO, Captain Sekal and Galk of the Imperial House - 0955)

(USS Raptor - Deck 1 - Ready Room - CO, Captain Sekal and Galk of the Imperial House - 1015)

(USS Raptor - Deck 5 - SecO, Lieutenant Galk - 1045)

(USS Raptor - Deck 5 - SecO, Lieutenant Galk - 1050)

(USS Raptor - Deck 5 - CMO/3O Commander Quinn Solice --1052)

(USS Raptor--Personal Quarters/Office -- Deck 6 -CMO/3O Commander Quinn Solice --1100)

(USS Raptor--Personal Quarters/Office -- Deck 6 - SecO, Lieutenant Galk --1103)

(USS Raptor--Personal Quarters/Office -- Deck 6 -CMO/3O Commander Quinn Solice --1105)

Day: 8

Stardate: 2446.06.27

(U.S.S. Raptor - Deck 5 – Holodeck 2 - Marine - 2LT Charles Temerity - 1940)

Charles was walking through various decks of the Raptor in, what had come to be recognized as, his typical civilian attire. Denim jeans with a casual button-up shirt, dark grey vest, Frock style dark grey jacket and tall boots with his pant legs tucked in. He looked like a cross between a 19th century cowboy, and an 18th century pirate. He had developed this idea that even if one looks at the same thing yet alters the angle, one may gain a new perspective on an old sight. And that was why he was walking about the ship; simply looking for public access windows that look out into space and perhaps see aspects of the ship itself.

He knew that he could call up the sights he wanted via any holodeck, but the view never truly seemed real to him that way. Intellectually, he knew it was the same but not quite. He wanted a 'true view' of the outside of the ship while he gave serious consideration to some thoughts that had come to him over the last couple of days. Predominantly, how to fight and kill an Xenolith.

As much as none of them wanted to admit it to anyone, let alone to themselves, the members of the Raptor's crew were out sized and out classed by the Xenolithe when it came to close quarters combat. According to the information passed on to Charles and his fellow Marines, only solid razor-sharp blades could do any real damage. Energy weapons effect was laughable at best. They needed something that could cause a maximum amount of damage with the use of kinetic energy. The problem was modern weaponry didn't have what was required, but ancient weaponry did. Specifically, the late 20th century weapon known as an AA-12 fully automatic shotgun with a 50-round magazine. It had all the power Charles felt he needed, plus it was loud enough to cause any telepath to lose concentration. If it can be used to breach doors in the twentieth, it can be used to get through Xenolithe armor. And for a backup firearm, the 44-magnum Desert Eagle, which happened to have enough heft to double as a short club if need be.

His second problem was how to sell his idea to the Fleet folks. Major Murphy regularly gave him enough leeway to make things happen, which Temerity always appreciated, but T'Mur was the opposite of that coin as were many of the Starfleet personnel he had come into regular contact with. He already had a gut feeling she would shoot down his idea for two reasons. The first being how much kick and noise each system produced when firing them. The second he felt certain would be because it was simply his idea. A lot of that Charles had to admit was his own damn fault.

Then he had a really bad idea. He entered the nearest holodeck and called up his favorite ocean sailing program with smooth seas, and a 5-knot breeze. Had the two weapons systems called up with the various types of ammunition both could fire and adjusted the safety settings so full effects of the recoil, sound, and kick of the firearms. He even adjusted the noise dampeners so the shots could be heard outside the closed holodeck door. He knew it would draw attention, and for when it did, he had the entrance set to only allow command staff personnel and Marine officers entrance.

Once all that was done, Charles decided it was time to vent some frustration by launching rounds down range at some Xenolithe targets so the computer could do its thing and analyze the data to see if his hairbrained scheme was worthwhile.

(Reply: Any)

(Reply: Any)

(Posted: Charles Raschen)

(USS Raptor - Deck 5 - Holodeck 2 - 20/CSec/Tac - Lt Commander T'Mur- 1945)

The report of the loud noise coming from the holodeck had not been overestimated. From the moment T'Mur stepped off the turbo lift T'Mur could hear the crack of something reverberate off the wall. A look of curiosity swept across her face as she walked towards the sound. When she stood outside the holodeck she looked at the control panel, noting the changes to the ambient sound dampeners.

Reaching out she touched bulkhead around the panel. ::Luma, show me the interior of the holodeck, please.::

She could feel Luma's warmth enter her and then the telepathic vision of Temerity firing a projectile weapon into Xenolithe, with an ocean background. She looked at the dustments that had been made. Clearly the marine was looking to gain somebody's attention. Now he had it.

::Reset the the ambient sound to it's original setting, please::

The sound of the weapon firing suddenly muffled and the corridor was silent, with the exception of the typical sounds of people passing down the hall. She stepped up to the door and a beep signified he presence. The door opened and the the sudden sound of the gun fired rang out. The Vulcan stepped in and the door closed behind her.

T'Mur stood behind Temerity and watched as the weapon he fired found its mark. The projectiles, bullets as she recalled, ricocheted off the armor. But the ones that hit flesh of the Xenolith sunk in and left green marks of oozing liquid. It was an interesting display of what is possible.

“Computer, freeze program,” T’Mur ordered.

Two Xenloithe assailants suddenly froze, and Temerity stopped firing. When he turned to look who had called the cease to his program T'Mur nodded.

“Mr. Temerity, I, and the rest of the ship, would appreciate not turning off the ambient sound dampner so that it disrupts the normal operations of the ship. Otherwise your privileges will have to be lessened.”

(reply Temerity)

“May I ask what you are doing?” she asked.

(reply Temerity)

(posted by Al Muir)

(USS Raptor - Deck 5 - Holodeck 2 - Marine - 2LT Charles Temerity - 1950)

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Two Xenloithe assailants suddenly froze, and Temerity stopped firing. When he turned to look at who had called a pause to his program, T'Mur nodded.

“Mr. Temerity, I, and the rest of the ship, would appreciate not turning off the ambient sound dampener so that it disrupts the normal operations of the ship. Otherwise, your privileges will have to be lessened.”

"It's nice of you to finally show up, and with your ever-present ultimatums." Temerity said.

“May I ask what you are doing?” she asked.

"Well ma'am, I've been running some experiments." He started as he handed her a rifle that had a 50-round magazine attached. "This is an AA-12 automatic shotgun that fires 12-gauge rounds as solid slugs, hollow point with and without white phosphorus filling, jagged hollow point again with or without white phosphorus filling. With the buffer, it produces 5-10 psi against the shoulder. And produces enough noise to cause even disciplined telepaths to lose focus."

He then held up a pair of large handguns, "These are .44 magnum Desert Eagle semi-automatic pistols that can fire the same basic types of ammunition only in a different caliber and much smaller capacity magazines and are also decidedly loud." He then laid them back on the table and held out some hearing protective earmuffs. "Throw some rounds down range and see what you think. Also, ma'am: if you decide you want to be rid of me, you will never have a better opportunity. I am unarmed, and the safety protocols are turned off in here." He then stepped away from the table.

(Reply: T'Mur)

(Posted By: Charles Raschen)

(USS Raptor - Deck 5 - Holodeck 2 - 20/CSec/Tac - Lt Commander T'Mur- 1951)

"It's nice of you to finally show up, and with your ever-present ultimatums." Temerity said.

Temerity's barbs were lost on the Vulcan as she tried to decipher what he meant. "I was unaware that you had been waiting for me, Lieutenant. I did not receive an invitation to your program. Perhaps there is a problem with the Raptor's internal communications system. He explained that he had been firing some projectile weapons. He handed her a rifle as he described the weapon. She felt the weight of the rifle and noted the circular drum magazine. She brought it to her shoulder to feel the stock against it. It was quite light in her Vulcan hands, estimating about 7.5 kgs.

“And produces enough noise to cause even disciplined telepaths to lose focus,” he said to conclude his demonstration. T’Mur raised an eyebrow curious as to the research behind that statement.

Temerity went on to explain about the hand guns. As he talk her eyes narrowed so she could examine the details of the weapons. Once he put the pistols back on the table he picked up a device and held it out to T'Mur. Looking at the shape of them she realized that they must be ear coverings.

“Throw some rounds down range,” Temerity said, “and see what you think. Also, ma’am: if you decide you want to be rid of me, you will never have a better opportunity. I am unarmed, and the safety protocols are turned off in here.”

As he stepped away from the table she looked at him clearly confused. "Why would I throw the rounds down range. Would it not be more beneficial if I fired them from the weapons?"

(reply Temerity)

Getting the idea she checked the shotgun and put the ear muffs on. Then she looked at the marine and added. "And if it had been my intention to "be rid of you" I have manners that would

be easier, less messy and completely untraceable to myself. Rest assured, that is not my intention.”

Finally she turned down the range. "Computer, activate program."

Suddenly a Xenolithe appeared about 50 yards away. T'Mur lifted the rifle to her shoulder and pulled and released the trigger. To her surprise there was almost no recoil. Her shot, however, completely missed its mark and an object beside the attacker exploded. She frowned as the Xenolithe closed in.

This time she pulled the trigger and held it for a fully automatic mode to activate and let out about six rounds explode out the barrel. Now she could feel the recoil. As the Xenolith got closer the the rounds began to explode on its chest until it disappeared.

She dropped the shotgun onto the table and picked up the pistols as two more Xenolithe appeared. She spun, dropped to a shoulder roll, and came up to her knee squeezing the triggers in succession. The smaller weapon had much greater accuracy, and she noted that the smaller projectiles had deeper penetration into the Xenolithe.

“Halt program,” she called out.

The Xenolithe dissolved and T'Mur place the pistols on the table. The recoil from those had been greater than the shotgun. As she released the pistols she noticed how her palms tingled. T'Mur looked at Temerity, "An interesting choice of weapons. I see the advantage over phasers with the Xenolithe. However, I do prefer the smaller hand guns. I believe they were more accurate, and the smaller projectile would have better penetration into the resistant armor and skin of the Xenolithe."

(reply Temerity)

(posted by Al Muir)

(USS Raptor - Deck 5 - Holodeck 2 - 2O/CSec/Tac - Lt Commander T'Mur- 1956)

T'Mur looked at Temerity for a moment then said, "I would be interested to see how they performed against the actually targets. However, my research has shown that the most effective weapon has been a bladed weapon."

She reached into the hidden pockets of her tunic and withdrew a pair of 12 inch, narrow blades that she had taken to wearing. She tossed one to Temerity so he could feel the weight and the balance. They only weighed 18 ounces but the blade was made from layers of folded high-carbon steel with folded in layers of duranium, making it lightweight and surprisingly strong. With a small flurry of slices through the air she prepared herself. "Activate Xenolithe program."

A Xenolith warrior appeared and T'Mur moved towards it. The creature attacked and the Vulcan slipped by the attack. She turned back, dropped to a knee and rolled behind the attacker. She slashed out at the back of its knee and the blade separated the lower leg from the upper leg.

The Xenolith disappeared and was replaced by two. They hacked and slashed at the Vulcan who danced around their attacks. It was a ferocious display when she ducked under a strike and

drove the blade up through the shoulder joint. The Xenolith squealed as T'Mur turned the blade to go through the rest of joint.

With its good arm it struck at her abdomen with its claws extended. T'Mur caught the hand with both of hers, leaving her vulnerable from the other attacked. She reached up for the hanging blade, pulled it out and sliced into the Xenolithe's neck. She spun around in time to thrust the thin blade into the face of the incoming creature.

"Program halt," T'Mur ordered. She looked at Temerity, controlling her breath. "Care to try?"

(reply Temerity)

(posted by Al Muir)

(USS Raptor - Deck 5 - Holodeck 2 - Marine - 2LT Charles Temerity - 2000)

The Xenolith disappeared and was replaced by two. They hacked and slashed at the Vulcan who danced around their attacks. It was a ferocious display when she ducked under a strike and drove the blade up through the shoulder joint. The Xenolith squealed as T'Mur turned the blade to go through the rest of the joint.

With its good arm it struck at her abdomen with its claws extended. T'Mur caught the hand with both of hers, leaving her vulnerable from the other attack. She reached up for the hanging blade, pulled it out and sliced into the Xenolithe's neck. She spun around in time to thrust the thin blade into the face of the incoming creature.

“Program halt,” T’Mur ordered. She looked at Temerity, controlling her breath. “Care to try?”

Charles reached under the back of his uniform jacket with both hands and pulled out a matching pair of knives with blades that measured 9.25 inches (23.5 cm) long and 1.5 inches (3.8 cm) wide. He tossed one up, caught it by the blade, and then held it out to T'Mur handle first. "Care to give this a try?"

(Reply: T'Mur)

"Program continue." The Marine declared and another three Xenolithes appeared. He then turned and dropped his blade on the table and grabbed up the shotgun and fired six rounds killing three of the monsters. He then dropped the rifle and grabbed his blade and ran toward the third. He then dropped down and slid between the creature's legs, cutting deep at the upper thigh near the groin of the beast. As it dropped, Charles took his blade and ran it up to the hilt at the base of the Xenolithe's skull before he declared, "End Program!"

The fallen bodies vanished, and his blade clattered to the deck. The Marine bent down to pick up his knife. As he straightened up, he felt a spasm in his back and clutched at the pain. He then stretched his back and there were a few loud pops and cracks as the pressure was released, "And that is why I prefer ranged weapons. Getting old is painful, plus I am not much for hand-to-hand to begin with."

(Reply: T'Mur)

“Ma’am, I hate to admit that you are better than I am at hand-to-hand, and yet, you are. These days I fight more like a pirate than a Soldier. As for the shotgun, with minimal practice and more familiarity you can easily be an expert.”

(Reply: T'Mur)

(Reply: T'Mur)

(Posted By: Charles Raschen)

(USS Raptor - Deck 5 - Holodeck 2 - 2O/CSec/Tac - Lt Commander T'Mur- 1956)

Charles held it out to T'Mur handle first. "Care to give this a try?"

T'Mur resheathed her own blades and took the offered knife. It was a little shorter than hers but weighed a little more. She balanced in her hand then dropped her shoulder to slice up, then switched to slice down. It flowed fairly easily, but the weight made it seem mildly off balance for her.

“Intriguing,” she said and handed it back to Temerity.

Temerity then dropped the blade and continued the program with his shotgun. That was not as impressive as the moment he picked up his knife and sliced up the final assailant, and drove the blade to the hilt into its skull.

“End Program!” Temerity called out.

He turned and stretched his back, his face indicating some discomfort. "And that is why I prefer ranged weapons. Getting old is painful, plus I am not much for hand-to-hand to begin with."

"Indeed," T'Mur replied, "I was not aware that you were that old. However, my research has shown that ranged weapons have been less effective with the Xenolith. Although, to be honest, I have no research into the use of projectile weapons. I will be interested to see their effectiveness on the real thing, if the opportunity arises."

“Ma’am, I hate to admit that you are better than I am at hand-to-hand, and yet, you are. These days I fight more like a pirate than a Soldier. As for the shotgun, with minimal practice and more familiarity you can easily be an expert.”

T'Mur nodded, "I will take that under advisement. Perhaps I will have members of my security team come to you for some training, if there is time."

(reply Temerity)

With a nod of her head she turned to leave. As she approached the door she turned back. "Please remember my request about the ambient noise dampeners."

She turned back and exited.

(reply Temerity)

(posted by Al Muir)

Day: 9

Stardate: 2446.06.28

(Alpha Eridani System- USS Raptor - Deck 1 - Bridge - CO, Captain Sekal and Galk of the Imperial House - 0920)

He had been awakened early and notified that the Og'shu had arrived. After dressing he had met the newcomer in transporter room 1. Galk was as he had seen him last on Borath, an even more imposing specimen than before he had disappeared at the machinations of the being known generally as Q. The two had talked a little during the turbolift ride, joined there by two escorting security officers. Sekal trusted that his former officer meant no harm but as head of the Imperial House he was essentially a visiting dignitary. Command had approved the short diversion because of this. They stepped out onto the bridge enroute to his ready room.

"What I have to say will not be done quickly." The Klingon rumbled.

Sekal glanced at him. "Then they may rendezvous with us at our next waypoint. The mission we are on is considered of high importance.. With your permission?"

At Galk's nod of assent he spoke up. "Transmit the coordinates of deep space four to the Og'shu."

"I will confirm the transit with them from the captain's ready room." Galk followed.

(Reply: Any)

The two had stopped, they took another step then halted as the lights on the bridge went out briefly before coming back on dimly. A spotlight shone then on the expansive deck before the forward viewscreen. Four beings were there wearing black pants and white t-shirts. Gold chains dangled from their necks and wrists. One wearing a wide brimmed hat stepped out and raised his hands.

"Hit it!"

Two were ebony skinned like the one who picked up what appeared to be a turntable and began moving it back and forth as a musical beat started up brimming with bass, the turntable made a discordant note which rose and fell and created a counterpoint to the beat. The other dropped to the deck and began spinning on his back followed by rolling to his feet in a crouch along with other gyrations including hopping forward to balance on one hand and then the other before popping back to his feet as the one with the hat began chanting, his skin was light complected and his voice was familiar.

"Beings out in space with a mind for fun,  
Taking out a warship for the federa...tion,  
Running out a ship and doing it right,  
Looking ahead and spoiling for a fight,  
Look here boys and I'll show you how it's done,  
Loaded with torpedoes and a very big gun,  
Look at humanity showing their stripes,  
A truly savage race and spoiling for a fight"

Sekal was striding forward past astounded officers, Galk right behind him.

"Q! What is the meaning of this?"

Q swept the hat from his head in a flourish as the beat continued.

"Another new ship mon capitán! This calls for a celebration!"

He snapped his fingers and a flute of champagne appeared in everyone's hands. "Champagne is traditional as I understand it. Besides, you have been reunited with your former officer who I took great pains to remove from the timeline."

"You plan to send me back?" Galk grated. "I will fight you."

Q laughed gaily. ""Completely unnecessary, the paradox has been resolved. Besides, I appear to have a powerful, new faction opposed to it. Not that it matters but there's no need for them to tilt at windmills unnecessarily. I am satisfied."

Sekal went to place his hands behind his back then remembered he was holding a long stemmed flute of golden liquid. Q snapped his fingers again then began drinking from the flute that appeared. "Ah, delicious. Don't you think so Mister Galk?" He asked after lowering it.

Galk tentatively took a sip, not trusting the being then smacked his lips. "It's not terrible."

"An excellent review from a less refined taste."

"I ask again Q why you are here."

"And I told you." Q replied smugly. "I had to drop by since you are taking out the first of humanity's new breed of warship. And make a toast to a return to their savage roots. Like always you return to what you know. Resorting to force when you see no other way. And it is fitting that you are inclusive of Klingons who are equally as savage."

"If you know anything Q then you also understand that we are left with little choice."

Q made a gesture and the rap group disappeared, the music stopped and the bridge lights returned to normal.

"This is what I understand Captain. When your species has reached the pinnacle of evolution killing other beings in mindless savagery becomes unnecessary. Until that time you remain a primitive and barbaric culture."

He drained the contents of the flute and it disappeared. "In the meantime you partake of the grapes of wrath. Adieu."

He gestured then disappeared, leaving them holding flutes of champagne and with memories of the spectacle.

(Reply: Any)

(Posted by Charles Gatling)

"Have a seat please."

The security guards hovered outside the doors of the ready room, having not entered. Sekal took his seat as Galk sat down on the opposite side of the desk. The sideboard near the entry had been arranged by Doctor Gralen shortly after the briefing several days before. He hadn't requested permission and gone straight to it as Ensign Khatri had sat down. Holis had recognized the crystal and display disk immediately and set it up with practiced hands, after all Holis had been the one to gift the original to Saleke over thirty years ago. The display disk bearing the colors and superscription of the USS Hades had been returned to his father's possession after Riven had replaced it with one tailored for the USS Illuminar. The anelurian crystal was the original minus a small chunk, little more than a facet which had been made into a pendant for Vexhalia Jordaan to use to house a portion of Luma's consciousness during her infrequent departures from the ship. That is until herself and commander Peters had left for personal reasons.

"Do you require anything to drink?"

"No." Galk had an intense look on his face. "I would prefer to get to the reason for my being here." Galk had already communicated with his ship and it was following the Raptor to deep space four. Galk's half empty flute and Sekal's full one had been dropped off on the sideboard upon entry.

Sekal nodded. "Then please begin."

The klingon leaned forward. "I was sent back forty three years to three years before the federation civil war and was there until my death during it. I served aboard the USS Alamo and the ship was destroyed while attempting to scuttle an anti-matter trawler to keep it from falling into enemy hands."

That caused a raised eyebrow from the vulcan. "Yet you said you had just returned from a battle."

"Yes, a battle in Sto-Vo-Kor."

Sekal's head took on that curious tilt. "The klingon afterlife?"

"I am aware this sounds like the ravings of a madman." Galk growled. "Fully aware, yet I gave my word you would hear the tale. And I can give you a name that will corroborate it should you wish. This is a name I cannot verify from the Empire. Captain Henre` Lebeau, USS Alamo."

Sekal nodded. "Computer, check listing for Captain Henre` Lebeau."

[Checking registry for Lebeau, Henre', Captain.]

He settled back as he waited, it took only seconds.

[LeBeau, Henre` . Born stardate 2368, 04, 02. Place of birth, New Orleans, North American continent. Graduated starfleet academy stardate 2290, 08, 04. Original commission aboard USS Brophy. Assigned to USS Alamo as commanding officer stardate 2402, 05, 18.]

"Stop." Sekal looked at Galk who nodded.

"Computer, USS Alamo senior officer listing for stardate..." he looked at the klingon.

"2406.11.28"

"For 2406.11.28."

[Retrieving. Nelson, Paul, Lieutenant, engineering. Galetta, Kurette, Lieutenant, conn, operations. Simon, Jeffrey, Lieutenant, medical. Humphries, David, Lieutenant Commander, Tactical. Galk, commander, first officer.]

"Stop." Sekal looked intently into Galk's eyes for a moment then continued. The klingon didn't flinch from his gaze.

"Final disposition of the USS Alamo."

[USS Alamo, registry number NCC 45238. Ship reported lost with all hands stardate 2406.11.28. 52nd fleet database confirms ship destroyed that stardate in battle with USS Nimitz.]

The Vulcan's brows lifted at the name of the ship, and the date ...

"Senior officer contingent of the USS Nimitz on that stardate."

[Retrieving. Zzt, Lieutenant, Engineering. Casely, Paul, Lieutenant, tactical. Vishtimon, Saleke, Lieutenant, science, second officer. Troi, Kestra, commander, first officer. Sash, Devan, commanding officer.]

The vulcan leaned back into his chair as Galk looked thunderstruck.

"Current surviving members."

[Vishtimon, Saleke, Vice-Admiral, StarFleet scientific research and development. Family members...]

"Stop."

Galk's face had gone ashen and he struggled to speak for a moment. "I had no idea."

Sekal shrugged his shoulders. "Other survivors."

[None. All other senior officer complement of USS Nimitz, stardate 2406.11.28 reported deceased.]

Sekal placed his elbows on the desktop, an intrigued expression on his face. "Fascinating. You died in battle against the most storied 52nd fleet ship and its captain."

"And if we had won?"

"I would not exist." The Vulcan laced his fingers. "Has your present undergone any changes?"

"No." Galk growled. "Everything I've seen and heard is the same. Nothing has changed. It makes no sense. According to every known temporal law my presence there should have changed my future."

"Perhaps..." the scientist had set his brain to the task. "And perhaps not."

"What do you mean?" Galk had a puzzled expression.

"Quite simply, the only possibility of causing no change to your future and everything surrounding it is that your presence there was necessary. In essence, you had to be sent back in time, failing to do so would in itself have changed events."

Galk shot to his feet. "Are you telling me that Q sent me back in time to fulfill my destiny? That if he had not done so all I have known would no longer exist in its current form?"

Sekal cocked an eyebrow at him. "Affirmative." His eyes lifted toward the door at the chime.

(Reply: Any)

(Posted by Charles Gatling)

(USS Raptor - Deck 1 - Ready Room - CO, Captain Sekal and Galk of the Imperial House - 0955)

Galk had begun pacing about the room. "I find it disquieting that Q's interference in my life may have been necessary and that it might be perceived that I am some way in his debt."

"It is not that simple."

The klingon stopped. "Why?"

"This might have been played out on many other occasions. How are we to be certain that ours is the original timeline? This may be an echo repeated hundreds of times. This is all theoretical but we are not aware of the paradox which he claims, only that it existed. After the first iteration the future, your past and present would have settled into its current form."

Galk growled and shook his shaggy mane. "I have no head for theoretical science which is why I am a warrior."

Sekal shrugged. "As for the confrontation on the bridge, Q mentioned another faction, one that opposes displacing you from the timeline and quite logically was the one that returned you. I am of the mind however that the paradox he was referring to was caused by your time displacement and necessitated a repeat of the procedure."

"You really do have potential Sekal, I will give you that much. It's too bad that due to a limited life span you will never reach it."

Both spun their heads toward the couch to find Q sitting there.

"I take it then that my theory is correct?"

"A lucky guess." Q gave a smile. "Mr. Galk here existed in two forms, one in the physical and the other a free energy state. Both could not coexist perpetually without unraveling the fabric of reality as I stated."

"So you displaced him in time to seal the barrier but another intervened and brought him forward..."

Q held up a hand to stop the Vulcan then shook his head as though trying to explain something to a toddler. "You forget where he claims to have been. The others transferred his energy state back to within a physical form which they created. It wasn't bad work I must admit. And it solved the paradox, his future is now laid out before him unfettered."

"Who are these others which you are speaking of? My debt is owed to them."

The being gave Galk a sly smile. "Your cultures have encountered them before, that is all I will say. I leave the rest a mystery to you."

"Others? Many or few?"

"Ah, ah, ah!" Q waved a forefinger. "No more clues. I've said all that I'm going to say."

"In my experience you have never lacked for words."

Q's eyes twinkled as he addressed the vulcan. "Humor Sekal? Or are you trying to goad me into saying more? You forget how long I've been around. When your civilizations were crawling through primordial slime I was already in existence."

"Why have you returned then?"

"To give you a warning." His face got very serious. "You aren't as prepared as you believe yourselves to be. And before you dismiss it I remind you that I proved as much to Jean Luc."

"By whistling for the Borg!" Galk snarled. "Your role in that is well documented."

"That is your spin on the tale. I facilitated a meeting but it was the Borg who took it to the next level. I don't need to lift a metaphorical finger in this one as your history proves."

Q then stood to his feet. "I leave you now to consider the destructive cycle you are in. There is a way to break it."

"By ascending?"

At the Q's surprised expression Sekal laced his fingers once again. "I have heard the term. Perhaps one day our species will be ready to take the next evolutionary step."

Q gave the captain a calculating look. "Perhaps you will."

With that he departed.

Galk walked back to the chair and sat down. "There is another thing I came here to discuss."

(Reply: Any)

(Posted by Charles Gatling)

(USS Raptor - Deck 1 - Ready Room - CO, Captain Sekal and Galk of the Imperial House - 1015)

"What is the other matter?" He watched Galk sit then lean toward him with an intense look.

"It is time for me to return to the crew."

The vulcan said nothing immediately but studied his face as though to ferret out its secrets. "Mr. Galk, your commission is still active, leaving you open to return and you are also welcome on this crew but I must ask why." It made no sense. "Ariel Trei left the ship for a very short leave, only to turn the setting up of the house over to her father. That house is small in size and stature within the Council and the Empire at large. But you..."

He stood to his feet and walked to the sideboard. "... you have captured and reconsolidated the largest and most influential house in the Empire and in power you are second only to the Chancellor. The political ramifications of you serving aboard a Federation starship are considerable not to mention you command the flagship of your house. To step down from such a command to serve on my security staff is unprecedented as well as illogical. In addition you have just returned from a disorienting experience."

"I understand your concern." Galk rumbled as the Vulcan picked up the flutes and turned. "My situation is very different from that of Lieutenant Trei yet it is also much the same in some ways. Like her, my father will lead the house in my absence and I trust him implicitly. I had also notified him that this day would come."

Sekal passed the klingon the half empty flute and returned to his chair, setting his own down on the desk before taking the seat. "You have answered the how of your intent but not the why." He then picked up the slim, crystal container and raised it to his lips.

"I understand you want answers, I would as well." Galk tipped the glass and consumed its contents with a swallow then placed it upon the desktop after giving a subdued belch due to the gas escaping from suspension.

Sekal took a sip, noting the dry, fruity tones and the crispness given by the nitrogen bubbles. The liquid hadn't warmed up quite yet and it wasn't flat though that couldn't be far in the future.

"My search for true honor was what led me to the Federation. Klingon honor had once included elements found among humans in bushido, chivalry and others. Honor and loyalty to one's lord, fealty to their culture and respect and protection to those under their care. The imperial house had once embodied all of those and was the torch bearer for the Empire. That was lost with the death of Kor and the dissolution of the house under Gowron and later Martok and Eshag. The Empire had been losing its way for quite some time even before then and concentrated exclusively on battle and conquest to the point that the weightier aspects of honor were ignored. Even Kor, as influential as he was, was unable to blunt it."

Sekal took another, longer sip as he listened while Galk laid out the full tale, this was something he had sometimes considered but never asked outright.

"I studied those elements closely after coming to the Federation, knowing that one day, when I was ready, I would issue the challenge and should I be successful would need to implement them."

Sekal lowered the flute. "And have you been successful?"

"I have laid the groundwork." Galk grunted. "I have reordered my forces to protect imperial house interests, instituted reforms and discipline within the ranks as well as a comprehensive training program and begun building infrastructure to expand my reach. Jos is aware of my goals and will ensure that they continue, he is also quite cunning and capable of acting as an impediment to Morek's expansionist agenda."

"From your own words it would appear that there is still much to be accomplished?" The vulcan noted.

"That is true but it will take time. The construction facility I've ordered to be assembled will take a year and a half to complete and after that we will be strengthening our reach. One of the greatest generals within the empire will be monitoring and directing our defenses until I return."

"More of the how but you have still not answered my question completely Mister Galk. Why?"

Galk made a disgusted face as the vulcan raised the glass again. "Pardon me captain for being unclear. I still have much to learn and since the incident I need to clear my head. Overseeing the house is not conducive to clearing my head, to the contrary I've found myself exhibiting an aggressive mindset and my father has had to talk me down upon occasion. I need to follow rather than lead for a time and return to my center."

"There is a well known term for those who have gone through a traumatic experience and are dealing with its after effects. Before you return to duty I require a visit to Counselor Laredo to determine your fitness. I foresee no issues but a baseline must be determined."

"I understand sir which is why I had planned on a protracted visit before a final determination."

Sekal finished off the beverage then stood to his feet. "Welcome back Lieutenant. Once you have been cleared for duty you will be briefed on our current mission."

(Reply: Any)

(Posted by Charles Gatling)

(USS Raptor - Deck 5 - SecO, Lieutenant Galk - 1045)

This ship was as large on the inside as it had appeared from the exterior. A ship of war, armed to the teeth and with corridors that appeared to stretch into the distance. The turbolift had deposited him not far from medical and outside the Counselor's office. Galk had first gone to the cabin assigned to him on deck 3 and changed. He was now wearing his security uniform and pips as well as communicator badge. Why was the vulcan commanding an Inquiry class and upon what mission? Questions for later which Sekal had promised to answer. For one like Galk, a warrior born, it promised to be to his liking.

He stopped outside the door to Temas Laredo's office, looked about and rumbled then rang the chime, stepping in as the door slid open.

(USS Raptor - Deck 5 - Counselor's office - SecO, Lieutenant Galk - 1048)

Even the office was larger than that on Illuminar by almost half. The klingon was certain that there were many more such spaces that weren't listed on the deck plans for the ship that he could access for the simple reason that they had not been assigned and were therefore not labeled.

"Counselor." He rumbled and stopped, his eyes taking in the furnishings of the suite. "The captain has sent me here for an evaluation prior to returning to duty."

(Reply: Temas)

"I prefer to stand, thank you." He crossed his arms and watched the betazoid through beetled brows. "I have done my share of sitting as of late and would rather be active. I'm ready to find something rigorous to be involved in."

(Reply: Temas)

"What are your questions counselor? Ask them so that I can be on my way."

(Reply: Temas)

(Posted by Charles Gatling)

(USS Raptor - Deck 5 - SecO, Lieutenant Galk - 1050)

Galk stepped back into the hallway and looked around in annoyance, Counselor Laredo had gotten an unanticipated call and been unable to continue the evaluation. Since it had been ordered by the captain as a prerequisite for returning to duty he was in limbo for now and mildly irritated.

Taking a deep breath and turning for the turbolift he saw the CMO emerge and started toward her.

"Commander Solice, are you available?"

(Reply: Quinna)

He stepped up to her. "The captain has ordered a psych evaluation before I return to duty and the Counselor is inconvenienced. You are a licensed counselor are you not?"

(Reply: Quinna)

"Good." He gave a sharp sigh. "If you have the time, I do as well. The sooner I get back into my duties the happier I will be." The Klingon's face was somber as always with no hint of a smile but no gloom either.

"Thank you doctor."

(Reply: Quinn)

(Posted by Charles Gatling)

(USS Raptor - Deck 5 - CMO/3O Commander Quinn Solice --1052)

Quinna thought a routine would help her focus on what she still had and not what she was never going to have again. She was a few minutes behind today but she needed to make her walkthroughs. With coffee in hand, she was about to enter the counseling suite.

"Commander Solice, are you available?"

"Depends on what you mean about available." She gave a sly smile and then looked at the seriousness into his eyes, "How can I help you, Mr. Galk?" Quinna asked

He stepped up to her. "The captain has ordered a psych evaluation before I return to duty and the Counselor is inconvenienced. You are a licensed counselor are you not?"

Quinna wondered where this was going, "Yes. I am." Technically she was more than that, but why quiver over the technicality?

"Good." He gave a sharp sigh. "If you have the time, I do as well. The sooner I get back into my duties the happier I will be."

She was not sure if her heart was in it but how could she say no? She gave him a small smile and nodded yes.

"Thank you, doctor."

"Tell you what, I am not keeping an office here but We can do this in my quarters. Would that be fine with you?"

(Reply Galk)

(USS Raptor--Personal Quarters/Office -- Deck 6 -- CMO/3O Commander Quinn Solice --1056)

Quinna offers Galk a seat and a drink. She herself sat in a chair after Galk had chosen his. "I have to apologize. I have been a bit out of it lately, so tell me your story."

(Reply Galk)

(Posted by Kris B)

(Posted by Charles Gatling)

(USS Raptor--Personal Quarters/Office -- Deck 6 -CMO/3O Commander Quinn Solice --1100)

Quinna sat and listened to Galk's story. It seemed to Quinna he had quite the recent adventure. When he mentioned Q, she started to realize how much that being has an influence on the crew. She was not sure if she should feel relief or left out with it came to the Q.

"And that is where everything went insane, I died in a clash with a ship upon which the captain's father served..." he took a deep breath, "... which I just found out. Those things that happened while alive have been confirmed by him."

The next came out in a growl. "After my death is very much fresh in my mind. I have a lifetimes worth of memories, foes killed and battles won which now mean nothing because they didn't happen here but in Sto-Vo-Kor."

“Are you sure about that?” Quinna asked.

He held up a hand. "I'm certain. The memories are too fresh. When I appeared once again in this timeline I had been dead for forty years."

"You look very good for a dead man." Quinn started, "I want to go back to what you said about having no meaning because they happened in Sto-Vo-Kor. Am I correct in assuming that Sto-Vo-Kor is not the same for you anymore?"

(Reply Galk)

“You mentioned Q. How can you be sure if you were in Sto-Vo-Kor and not some Q sick version of purgatory?” Quinna asked.

(Reply Galk)

(Posted by Kris B)

(USS Raptor--Personal Quarters/Office -- Deck 6 - SecO, Lieutenant Galk --1103)

“You look very good for a dead man.”

Galk shrugged his shoulders in reply.

"I want to go back to what you said about having no meaning because they happened in Sto-Vo-Kor. Am I correct in assuming that Sto-Vo-Kor is not the same for you anymore?"

"Not the same? Hardly." He gave a fierce rumble. "Sto-Vo-Kor is the place of the honored dead, the warriors who died great and honorable deaths. To gain glory and acclaim in such a place is beyond an honor."

"You mentioned Q. How can you be sure if you were in Sto-Vo-Kor and not some Q sick version of purgatory?"

Galk stiffened and gazed back at her blankly for an instant. "Preposterous!" A sudden thought hit him and he rose from the chair, turned his back to her then took two steps before clenching his fists at his sides. "Insane as the idea may be it does have some merit." The words came out in a growl. "Henre' LeBeau sent there as well as the arrival of Eshag! Honorless pe'taq that he is. He should never have taken a place among the honored dead!"

(Reply: Quinn)

He spun around. "Q's machinations are impossible to unravel. He sent me back in time because my presence in the past caused a paradox in the future. How does such a thing come about?

Then when others restore me he laughs it off saying my future is now open. There is no way of knowing what is in his mind or to what depths he may stoop."

(Reply: Quinn)

He grimaced and slapped the side of his head. "The very thought makes my head hurt. If Sto-Vo-Kor then I have cemented my legacy and when I return I will expand upon it. But if not, if an illusion then it was still a stimulating experience." He threw back his head and laughed at the thought. "It was glorious."

(Reply: Quinna)

(Posted by Charles Gatling)

(USS Raptor--Personal Quarters/Office -- Deck 6 -CMO/3O Commander Quinn Solice --1105)

At this point, Quinn did what she did best. Listen. Apparently, she poked the bear.

He spun around. "Q's machinations are impossible to unravel. He sent me back in time because my presence in the past caused a paradox in the future. How does such a thing come about?"

Then when others restore me he laughs it off saying my future is now open. There is no way of knowing what is in his mind or to what depths he may stoop."

"All I know is hearsay and what Starfleet required us to learn. Personally never had the pleasure of meeting him, but from what I understand, his games are cruel and try to hit you where it hurts. Your life, your family, your faith." Quinn tapered off from there.

He grimaced and slapped the side of his head. "The very thought makes my head hurt. If Sto-Vo-Kor then I have cemented my legacy and when I return I will expand upon it. But if not, if an illusion then it was still a stimulating experience." He threw back his head and laughed at the thought. "It was glorious."

Quinna smiled. "It seems as if what happened has been turned into something positive in your life. That is never a bad thing.:

(Rely Galk)

"I actually see nothing here that would keep you from doing your duty, and doing it to the exemplar performance as always." Quina was ready to sign off on Galk.

(Reply Galk)

(Posted by Kris B)

End Compile

## End Sample