

Quadrant and stayed there until it was over. They went where business was good and not covered in blood or death. My family did everything they could to stay out of the weapons trade. Honestly the first time I set foot on Earth, even though I'm human, was for Starfleet Academy orientation."

"I was the exact opposite. I had never set foot off of Earth until we were assigned to Mars Base's restoration. You said that you don't have a specific area of research that you are interested in? Are you looking to go into administration and run the department? If that is a desire, we can see about command courses." Sienna smiled brightly.

"No, I don't want to be in administration, sir, I just haven't had the opportunity to really do my own research. I'm glad that they thought I was worth being here, but I spent the last year on the USS Oklahoma City doing grunt research for the CSO. I am Xenanthropologist, I care about discovery. Not sure I am special sir, but I will give you my all."

Sienna nodded as she listened. "All right. Ensign Skashe Winters is currently in charge of the department and will see to your orientation and further training. Ask him to arrange a meeting with Luma'lenai and Counselor Laredo. As an anthropologist, you can assist the Betazoid government in recording the history of the Lenai." Sienna's grin was almost predatory. Something about this young Ensign's meekness bothered her. Luma would sort it out. That was one of the things she was good at.

"I hope my answers haven't been disappointing." He said sheepishly.

"Not at all Ensign. You seem a bit unfocused, but you have potential and Admiral Winters will be the first to tell you that she is never wrong. She started her career as a Counselor and became a Captain, and she likes to encourage and develop that potential."

Alistair nodded.

"I would like you to take the next six months and really consider what you want out of your career. The Illuminar has several talented scientific minds aboard. One of the Captain's particular pet projects is that he wishes to improve the technology of the fleet. Lt. Bohb is in charge of our research division, and the eminent scientists Penn and Tellar are also creating havoc. If research is not your forte, and trust me, for all that I'm a botanist, and I spear headed the development of the trill vaccine, research is not my cup of tea."

"It's not that its not my cup of tea, sir, I'm such a meticulous note taker, ever since I was 12, that my family figured I'd be an accountant. Rather its..." he paused. "The CSO on the OKC wasn't necessarily the most focused CSO, he was an older guy around 50 who had basically loafed his way through the down decades of the fleet, and because of his seniority lucked into his position. We weren't the most focused place to work. He got sent on mandatory retirement, I got sent here. If I seem unfocused sir, its because I haven't had a reason to be focused for a year." ~Well that was direct. ~ Sienna's grin had disappeared as she listened to this young man dissect his previous experience. It wasn't as if there were not a lot of those sort of career officers, it was why command had changed to the Civil War Officers, and the young were being encouraged to step up and lead the fleet.

"Understand this, Ensign. Our Captain is a vulcan who insists on the proper department of his officers. Also understand that he is one of the most lenient and understanding Vulcans you will

"Ensign Winters, have you noticed anything unusual?" T'Mur asked.

A hint of a smile touched Celiste's lips, "Indeed, Commander. I was concentrating on using low powered sensors due to the potential for higher powered scans of triggering something latent. I had ascertained that there was no form of life currently, but that isn't meshing with some of the things that I'm seeing."

"I've been scanning and am detecting no sign of organic material." T'Mur said. "Even the ground we are walking on seems completely comprised of inorganic material. No insect life, not even bacteria or residual traces that anything had once been alive."

"That isn't unusual considering the spatial proximity and how long this place has been abandoned. I would like to go chisel a piece of the stone out and run it through a comprehensive analysis to ascertain a time frame but this place was abandoned at least a thousand years ago." Celiste paused a moment, "There have been many incidents of something called the crystalline entity that ravaged planets and left them in this state. However over time, those planets recovered if left alone. Whatever caused this destroyed everything organic and left the place to rust. What I am sure of is that these people did not use base 10. I think it was base 3 as a basis for their numeral system. But, I'm not an anthropologist."

Next to her, Cadet Rhyssa Williams, the engineering cadet, spoke up, "I think that Ensign Winters is correct about going with low powered scans. This place feels asleep, technologically." Tiburonians were often called the psychics of engineering for their leaps of intuition. It was the reason the very crude and rough around the edges Cadet was with the team. "Like it is waiting for the key to wake it up. Sorry. Not very scientific but I can't tell much more without being in there."

The team approached the giant sized door and both young women stared up at it.

"That is something one doesn't see every day" MacGuyver said on greeting. "Not sure, exactly, how we opened the door, but it is open. Orders?"

"Proceed," T'Mur said, "with caution."

Rhyssa had opinions on how that door had opened but she wasn't going to state them. She was here to help, not lead. But her fingers itched to find some sort of control panel and play with it. This was the Tiburonian holy grail. Rhyssa split up from Celiste and headed over to MacGuyver.

"Orders Sir?" The Tiburonian cadet's eva suit was grey tinged with orange stripes to indicate that she was in training and her eva helmet was the color of a pumpkin to indicate that she was a danger to those around her due to inexperience in a hostile environment. Celiste was stuck in one as well and the orange was brighter than her flame-hair.

Celiste switched to a larger, tablet style padd with an external sensor wand like the medical staff used. "I'm reading... well it's difficult. There is some sort of interference. It's a low level radiation source, which won't harm us as long as we stay in our EVA suits. Three levels down and two, no, four triangles to the north-west. I wasn't able to take in the sheer size of these triangular vaults from the outside sensor readings. It's like something wanted to deliberately obfuscate the readings."

She looked around at the array of panels that seemed to be coming to life. Lights flashed in a sequence, almost as if they were trying to communicate with them. The remainder of the team filed into the chamber as she pulled out her tricorder and began to scan.

“Fascinating,” she said to herself. Then she heard the sound of machinery that seemed to be waking up, as if from a dormant state. Then there was voice. A calm and welcoming voice.

[Welcome, visitors. I am the guardian of this place, the keeper of knowledge that spans the ages. Your arrival has been long awaited.]

Shaw was the first to reply, “We come in peace, seeking knowledge and understanding,”
[Your quest for knowledge honors us. You stand within the halls of history, where many have sought answers to the universe's greatest mysteries. Let us explore these ancient secrets together.]

T'Mur raised an eyebrow and looked at the others. She took a deep breath and stepped forward.

“Guardian, I am Lt. Commander T'Mur of the starship Illuminar. We represent a Federation of United planets whose goal is to explore and meet new people in peaceful discourse.”

[Welcome Lt. Commander T'Mur of the Federation of United Planets. We welcome your peaceful discourse. What do you wish to know?]

“Apologies Guardian,” T'Mur said realizing the mistake in her introduction. “We represent the United Federation of Planets.” There was a slight hum as if the computer acknowledged her correction. “Can you tell us who built this place?”

[Yes... I can tell you that.]

T'Mur sighed, now realizing her questions will need to be more exact. “Who built this place?”

[We were built by the creators.]

“And who are the Creators?” she asked.

[The Creators are those who created us, and this place.]

T'Mur sighed again. “Guardian, where are the creators?” she asked.

[They are... gone.]

“Gone?” T'Mur asked, tilting her head slightly to the right. “Gone where?”

There was a prolonged pause when the computer replied, [Just gone. Do you have further information that you care to request?]

Clearly, this line of questioning had come to an end. They were no closer to knowing who built this complex than they were when they entered, but at least they appeared to be intelligent and willing to share. She turned to look at the others as her Vulcan ears barely received a strange

As he moved around the compound he heard a strange scratching sound. It was soft, at first, but grew slightly louder, steadily. He hit his comm badge.

“Sit rep marines,” he barked. “Anyone else hear anything?”

One by one the marines checked in as everyone checked in nobody mentioned any sounds. Until check-in point four.

=^=Hang on L.T., I think a do hear something. A clicking. Low level. Getting louder. Sounds kinda like a chirp now.=^=

“Squad move in to checkpoint 4,” Temerity ordered.

=^=Oh my God!=^= came the next call. ^=They’re everywhere. They’re...=^=

The communication stopped. Temerity began to run. What he saw... surprised him. There was no sign of the marine. What there was was a dark patch on the ground, and it was moving. It was moving towards him.

He unslung his phased rifle and began to fire into it. The black patch separated and then flowed back together, apparently unphased. He fired again with a similar response. He switched the setting to a high energy beam and cut a swath through the patch.

Moments later the rest of the squad appeared and started firing with him. The black patch split and separated into four sections. Each section headed towards a different marine.

It didn’t take long for whatever was being decimated to be replaced and now four separate patches were moving towards four separate marines. They continued to fire with little result.

As the patch got closer to him Temerity could make out black dots in the patch. On closer inspection they weren’t just dots. They were some kind of insect-like creature. A slight panic set in and the marine pulled out an explosive hand grenade and tossed it into the middle of the patch. The insects crawled over the metal device, ignoring it until it exploded.

Black spots of insect remains flew through the air, still moving. The remainder stayed focused on their quarry. Temerity looked up in time to see the patch by Henderson crawl up his legs. He screamed as his legs suddenly collapsed. He fell to the ground and was immediately engulfed by the patch. A moment later the screaming stopped.

As the insects got closer he could get a better view of individual ones. They were small but had extremely powerful looking mandibles and bright red eyes.

“Team retreat,” he called out but it was too late. The bugs were moving too fast.

Another marine was overtaken and disappeared in black covering, screaming. His rifle was not being effective as a rifle so tried to strike at the bugs with the butt of the gun. Some bugs were struck, but not killed. They crawled over the rifle, but did not consume it.

One of them jumped onto his gloved hand and immediately began to consume the organic parts of the suit. More joined it and all that was left were the metal rings of the joints. Once through the cloth they began to consume the flesh of his hand.

He listened to the philosophical discourse between Ariel Trei and the new Operations officer, Torvak. They seemed to be having a bonding moment over them both being Klingon hybrids and the nature of the universe. Deep stuff indeed. Then Galk joined them. Bohb was slightly amused by the little Klingon conclave they were forming.

Dr. Quinna had said that he was the best scientist for the job. He had his doubts about that, but he was excited at the prospect of pulling apart some of the alien technology to see how it works. He wondered how he might be able to incorporate it into Federation tech. He promised to endeavor to do his best.

He looked at the EVA suit that he was wearing. It fit a bit tightly, hugging him in places he'd rather not be hugged, and riding up a little in his back end. It was far preferable that his body exploding from a sudden decompression from lack of air pressure, or suffocation for lack of breathable atmosphere, but it was still not comfortable. He shifted in his seat, trying to loosen the tug between his buttocks.

He looked over at Pex who appeared to be much calmer than he was. Perhaps his symbionte had already been through something like this.

"How are you doing, Tegian," Bohb asked. "What do you think of this ringworld?"

(reply Pex)

Moments later the pilot called for Solice and Pex and his friend disappeared to the fore section of the shuttle. Bohb sighed and sat back, being left to his own thoughts. Then he heard his name called out. He stood up and gave a tug at the trouser section of his EVA suit and moved to the front, squeezing in with Pex, and Solice.

"Yes ma'am." he said looking at Solice. "You called?"

Solice explained about the strange energy signatures from the surface of the ringworld, near where Piripi and chosen to land. "Let's get some atmospheric readings and make some suggestions before landing. That energy signature could be almost anything. Hopefully, it is not harmful."

Bohb nodded and stood over the science station of the shuttle. He began to scan the surface of the structure finding the energy that Piripi had found. She was correct, it was odd. The energy wasn't simply being given off. It seemed to be moving in a pattern. Then he recognized the pattern. He ran the numbers to be certain, but he was. It was a reverse fibonacci sequence. His eyes widened.

"Commander," he called to Solice.

(reply Solice)

"That energy signature," he said. "I believe it's an invitation. Look at this pattern, almost spiraling to that point. It's... guiding us. It must have picked up the energy from our subspace scans and activated some kind of automated system. I wouldn't be surprised if a set of tractor beams activated us and pulled us into a landing position."

(reply Solice, Pex, Piripi)

