

(Defense Platform 7 - Level 5 - Arcade - FO Sienna Williams-Verin, CTO Lt(jg) T'Mur, SFI Michael Weston- and Blackford Oaks - 2029)

(USS Illuminar - all decks - Automated alarm - 2030)

(USS Illuminar - Deck 3, section 7 Gamma corridor - CSO Lieutenant (jg) Jatón Alyl - 2031)

(USS Illuminar - Main Engineering, Deck 11 - Engineer Ensign JG Tycho Alantar - 2032)

(Defense Platform 7 - Level 5 - Arcade - CTO T'Mur- 2032)

(Defense Platform 7 - Level 5 - Arcade - CMO Lt Quinna Solice - 2034)

(USS Illuminar – Deck 14 Security Office Chief of Security Lt (jn) Keung Lee- 2035)

(Defense Platform 7 - Level 5 - Arcade SPA LT JG Ariel Trei - 20.35)

(Defense Platform 7 - Level 5 - Arcade - FO Sienna Williams-Verin, CTO Lt(jg) T'Mur and SFI Michael Weston- 2036)

(USS Illuminar - deck 1 - Bridge - 2/O LCDR Dieter Gregory - 2039)

(USS Illuminar - Deck 6 - Outside science lab 3 - SO PO3 Hercules Devers and Steven Hammonds - 2040)

(Defense Platform 7 - Level 5 - Arcade - CMO Lt. Quinna Solice/ Fiona- 2040)

(Defense Platform 7 - Level 5 - Arcade - CTO - T'Mur- 2041)

(Defense Platform 7 - Level 7- Detention Center - CMO Lt. Quinna Solice - 2042)

(USS Illuminar - Deck 6 - Outside science lab 3 - Dr. Gaillus Penn and Doctor Teller, SO PO3 Hercules Devers and Steven Hammonds - 2043)

(USS Illuminar - Deck 6, Science lab 3 - Engineer Ensign JG Tycho Alantar - 2045)

(USS Illuminar - Deck 6 - Outside science lab 3 - Dr. Gaillus Penn and Doctor Teller, SO PO3 Hercules Devers and Steven Hammonds - 2045)

(Defense Platform 7 - Level 5 - Arcade - SPA LT JG Ariel Trei-2046)

(USS Illuminar - Deck 1 - Bridge - 2/O LCDR Dieter Gregory - 2048)

(USS Illuminar - Deck 6 - Lab 3 - Dr. Teller, SO PO3 Hercules Devers - 2050)

(Defense Platform 7 - Level 5 - Arcade - SPA LT JG Ariel Trei - 20.50)

(USS Illuminar - Deck 6 - Science lab 3 - Engineer Ensign jg Tycho Alantar - 2051)

(USS Illuminar - Deck 6 - Science lab 3 - Dr. Gaillus Penn - 2052)

(USS Illuminar - Deck 6 - Science lab 3 - CO - Captain Sekal - 2053)

(USS Illuminar – Deck 14 Chief of Security Office – Chief of security Lt (jn) Keung Lee - 2053)

(USS Illuminar - Deck 4- Personal quarters - Tamas Laredo and Luma Lenai - 2054)

(USS Illuminar - Deck 6 - Science Lab 3 - SO PO3 Hercules Devers - 2054)

(USS Illuminar - Deck 6 - Science lab 3 - Engineer Ensign jg Tycho Alantar - 2055)

(USS Illuminar - Deck 6 - Science lab 3 – Chief of Security Lt (jn) Keung Lee – 2100)

(Defense Platform 7 - Level 5 - Arcade - CMO Lt. Quinna Solice - 2100)

(Altair System - Interdiction Platform 7 - Command Deck - Lieutenant Able Breckenridge, Commodore Adam West, Lieutenant Quinna Solice - 2101)

(USS Illuminar - Deck 6 - Science lab 3 –Dr.s Gaillus Penn and Teller/Captain Sekal – 2101)

(USS Illuminar - Deck 6, Science Lab 3 - CSO Lieutenant (jg) Jatón Alyl - 2102)

(USS Illuminar - Deck 6, Science Lab 3 - Dr Teller- 2104)

(USS Illuminar - Deck 6 - Science lab 3 –Dr.s Gaillus Penn and Teller – 2105)

(USS Illuminar - Deck 6 - Science Lab 3 - SO PO3 Hercules Devers - 2105)

(USS Illuminar - Deck 6, Science Lab 3 - Engineer Ensign jg Tycho Alantar - 2109)

(USS Illuminar - Deck 6 - Science Lab 3 – Chief of Security Lt (jn) Keung Lee - 2110)
(USS Illuminar - Deck 14 - Conference Room - Chief of Security Lt (jn) - 2110)
(USS Illuminar - Deck 14 - Conference Room – Chief of Security - 2211)
(USS Illuminar - Deck 14 - Conference Room –Dr.s Gaillus Penn and Teller – 2112)
(USS Illuminar - Deck 14 - Conference Room – Chief of Security Lt (jn) Keung Lee – 2115)

(USS Illuminar - Deck 14 - Conference Room – Drs. Gaillus Penn and Teller – 2120)
(USS Illuminar - Deck 14 - Conference Room – Chief of Security Lt (jn) Keung Lee – 2125)
(USS Illuminar - Deck 6 - Science lab 3 –Dr.s Gaillus Penn and Teller – 2126)
(Altair System - Interdiction Platform 7 - Detention Center -- CMO Lt. Quinna Solice/ Prenea 2130)
(USS Illuminar - Deck 14 - Conference Room – Chief of Security Lt (jn) Keung Lee - 2140)
(Defense Platform 7 - Level 7- Detention Center - Commander William Hardy (Outrider 1) - 2140)
(Defense Platform 7 - Level 7- Detention Center - CMO Lt. Quinna Solice - 2042)
(Defense Platform 7 - Level 7- Detention Center - Commander William Hardy (Outrider 1) - 2143)
(USS Illuminar - Deck 14 - Conference Room – SO PO3 Hercules Devers - 2145)
(USS Illuminar - Deck 6 - Science lab 3 –Dr.s Gaillus Penn and Teller – 2146)
(Defense Platform 7 - Level 7- Detention Center -SFI Michael Weston and CTO Lt(jg) T'Mur - 2147)
(USS Illuminar - Deck 14 - Conference Room – Chief of Security Lt (jn) Keung Lee – 2150)
(Defense Platform 7 - Level 6- Central Hub - Commander William Hardy (Outrider 1) - 2150)
(Defense Platform 7 - Level 7- Detention Center - Prenea Alyl/CMO Quinna Solice - 2151)
(Defense Platform 7 - Level 7- Detention Center - SFI Michael Weston, CTO Lt(jg) T'Mur, CMO Quinna Solice - 2152)
(Defense Platform 7 - Level 7- Detention Center - Cargo Pilot Prenea Alyl - 2153)
(Defense Platform 7 - Level 7- Detention Center - CTO - Lt(jg) T'Mur - 2154)
(USS Illuminar - Deck 14 - Conference Room – SO PO3 Hercules Devers - 2155)
(Defense Platform 7 - Level 4 Central Hub - Commander William Hardy (Outrider 1) - 2157)
(Defense Platform 7 - Level 4 and moving up- Central Hub - SFI Michael Weston, CMO Quinna Solice - 2158)
(Defense Platform 7 - Deck 1- Commander's Office - Commander William Hardy (Outrider 1) -- 2200)
(USS Illuminar - Deck 14 - Conference Room Chief of Security Lt (jn) Keung Lee -- 2200)
(Defense Platform 7 - Deck 1- Commander's Office - SFI Michael Weston, CMO Quinna Solice - 2202)
(USS Illuminar - Deck 14 - Conference Room - SO PO3 Hercules Devers - 2205)
(Defense Platform 7 - Deck 1- Commander's Office - Commander William Hardy (Outrider 1) - 2205)
(USS Illuminar - Deck 3 - VIP quarters - Drs. Gaillus Penn and Teller, Ensign Bohb and Tamas Laredo - 2230)

(USS Illuminar - Deck 6, CSO's Office - CSO Lieutenant (jg) Jatou Alyl - 0800)
USS Illuminar - Deck 3 - VIP quarters (The Bahamas) - Drs. Gaillus Penn and Teller, Ensign Bohb and Tamas Laredo- 0810)
(USS Illuminar - Deck 3 - VIP quarters Chief of Security Lt (jn) Keung Lee - 0815)
(USS Illuminar - Deck 3 - VIP quarters (The Bahamas) - Drs. Gaillus Penn and Teller; Ensign Bohb, Tamas Laredo - 0817)
(USS Illuminar - Deck 6 - CSO's Office - Drs. Gaillus Penn and Teller - 0822)
(USS Illuminar - Deck 6- CSO Office - Drs. Gaillus Penn and Teller- 0824)

=^= Viper one we have incoming at 247 mark 45. Chount shows 6 bogies. ^=

=^= Viper one copies ^= Switching his com ^= You want High or Low Snoopy? ^=

=^=Is there a High or Low ground in space? I'll go low.=^=

He peeled off and his ship dropped at full speed. His own sensors picked up the readings of the ships and displayed them on his HUD. Six ships in a diamond formation. Interesting. Whatever's in the center of that formation, it had to be important. He watched to see that there had been no change in the formation since his maneuver.

Montero kicked in the engines and headed high and to the right of the formation. The ships stayed in their formation, not changing direction or speed. Something didn't feel right in Montero's mind. 'Computer, scan ships for lifesigns.'

=^= No lifesigns detected ^=

~Great~ Montero thought.

=^= Viper 2 it's a trap. These are drones. ^=

Vic spun his ship on its axis, bringing his front cannon in line with the drones. Having them on the bias, he triggered his cannon and was rewarded with two of the drones becoming inactive.

=^= Splash two ^=

=^= Viper 1, Viper 2 we are detecting warp signatures coming in behind you. ^=

The remaining drones turned their vector and began to fire in an easy pattern to avoid. With a thought Arthur turned the ship on its axis and fired, reducing the two outside drones to sparkling scrap.

=^=Watch your 6 Raid.=^= he warned. Then he turned his attention to the new arrivals. These ships were different. There were only four, but they flew differently. That was when he noted the lifesigns. ~That should make it more interesting.

=^=Heads up Viper 1, the new arrivals are alive.=^=

=^= Copy that Viper 2 ^= Vic replied ^=No more shooting fish in a barrel=^=

Arthur knew better than to completely discount the two remaining drones but the new ships require to most of his attention. "Computer, monitor the remaining drones."

[Affirmative.]

Then he watched as the four ships split into two groups of two. ^=I've got the pair on the left.=^=

Then Corday followed his marked ships. He pinged them on his HUD to show as purple markers while the drone ships were blue and the other pair red. He needed to be sure he monitored Montero's progress. He didn't want to leave his wingman in the lurch.

As he launched his ship forward the HUD showed his quarry make a sudden change of direction and head directly back towards him.

Vic watched the aspect change of their targets, =^= Mars is down =^= Vic called over his comm. He hoped Snoopy had read about the battle of Donatu V. It was one of many skirmishes between the Federation and the Klingon Empire. A Larson-class ship, the USS Midway, commanded by Commander Doolittle, was caught by surprise by a Klingon warship. Outgunned and underpowered, Doolittle changed the battlefield by using the gravity well to catch the Klingon vessel which allowed Doolittle to release a barrage of photon torpedoes and its three phaser banks. Having to divert power to its shields, the Klingon vessel succumbed to the irresistible force of nature and burned up in the planet's atmosphere. Unfortunately the Midway was destroyed a few years later, all hands lost.

Vic shook his head and looked in the HUD. He started to pull up in a Herbst maneuver, =^= Viper 2, you have the lead. I am coming up on your right side. =^=

Vic's ship started up in an arc. At the top of the arc, he lifted the nose of the ship which slowed his speed before he began the descent phase, Snoopy's ship on Vic's left. Coming in at this speed, he'd catch up with Snoopy in time to clean up any misses his wingman had.

The biggest problem most pilots had with dog fights in space was their lack of awareness of up or down. To be honest, there was no up or down in space. No drag to slow you down. No gravity, well, barely perceptible gravity coming from planets that were often too far away to be of any help in your flying. Once a pilot let go of those things, the impossible became a logical choice.

When Montero arced his ship, Arthur suddenly accelerated towards the two ships coming straight at him. With a thought his ship suddenly dropped four meters. He repositioned the ship so that it was still traveling forward. By the time the ships had registered his sudden drop he was already accelerating "up" firing his photon cannons.

One of the ships exploded. The second was able to make a quick move and his shots impacted on their side shielding. His sensors showed minimum damage but it was moving at an awkward angle. Corday caused his ship to roll left and fell in behind the second ship, closing in for a kill into the engines.

Suddenly his proximity alert went off and without thinking he peeled off to the right as one of the drone ships had launched itself at him as if it were a guided torpedo. It was a good reminder to keep an eye on those drones.

=^=Viper 2 to Viper 1. Keep an eye on those drones. They're using them without energy weapons. It makes them harder to track automatically.=^=

=^= Copy. I've got your six. ^= Vic replied, as he fired his forward cannon at the drone ship. He was rewarded with a satisfying explosion. Checking his scanner, he got a bearing on Snoopy and entered into a low yo-yo to get back on Snoopy's right. Two of the attackers were coming at his wingman while two remained at the edge of the fight, waiting for an opening.

=^= Viper 2, take 'em on the left and on your lead, let's go into a high yo-yo, show these boys how to fly. ^= Vic said, a gleam in his eye.

=^=Roger that.=^= Corday replied.

With that he gunned his ship forward then turned the ship at an angle to take it Out Of Plane with the attackers. One of the attackers turned to come across his side angle. Then 'Snoopy' did a hard loop and came bearing down on the dorsal view of the ship, firing. The ship broke in half and exploded.

Energy beams swept across his view as the second ship had turned into his maneuver. It wasn't a clean shot, and he was able to roll away from the attack.

As Snoopy rolled away from the attack, the second ship tried to match Snoopy's roll, but was going too fast. As the ship shot by where Snoopy had been, it entered Vic's firing range. The man fired his cannon and caught the enemy's left engine. Not a fatal shot, but one that disabled the ship, resulting in another enemy down.

Two ships still were at the edge of the combat zone, while the second pair was getting teed up for their run at Raid and Snoopy.

=^= Two down, four to go ^= Vic said. ^= Coming in without much imagination ^=

=^=Yeah, but it reminds me of an old saying, ^= Corday said. ^=If something seems too easy then you're missing something. That's the real time to worry. Keep your eyes open and stay alert.=^=

=^= That was the amuse-bouche for this meal. I think the salad course is next. ^= Montero quipped.

Sure enough, two more of the fighters peeled off from the pack to start a speed run towards Snoopy and Raid. They were clearly hoping to take the two with a speed attack.

Raid rolled to the right, dancing his fighter to give the enemy as little cross-section as possible. These two were another distraction, it was the two holding back that were the prize. Looking at the incoming fighters, he laughed, they were going to try to herd the two of them towards the waiting fighters. This was something that was taught in the first months of flight school. Of course it was a pretty easy thing to avoid if the attackers didn't do it just right.

=^= Git along little doggie ^= he called out. ^=You want lead Viper 2 ^=

=^= Negative Viper 1 ^= Arthur replied ^=You have the angle. Take the lead.=^=

Montero grinned as he started to accelerate his fighter. He started to corkscrew as the rate of closer increased between him and the two fighters. He was committed to putting Snoopy's controls to the test. His computer started warning him of the incoming fire, but Raid ignored it.

He checked his heads up display. The two fighters were doing what he wanted. As he got to the point of no return, he pulled out of the corkscrew and shot straight up while releasing two micro torpedos at each of the attackers.

Montero smiled as the torpedoes found their target. A bit of showboating, perhaps, but the control really made it possible. As he was patting himself, virtually, on the back, warning alarms started sounding. Damn, he thought. Rookie mistake as he saw the incoming torpedoes from one of the two remaining fighters. He started throwing his fighter into a crazy pattern working to avoid the torpedoes.

Cordey watched as he saw the two incoming torpedoes heading straight for his wingman. Montero's move was spectacular but it left him wide open to the remaining ships. He cut his ship back across the plane of attack and with a thought sent fire from his phase cannons. One of the torpedoes immediately exploded. The second turned in time to follow its targeted ship.

=^=I've got you Viper 1. Cut hard port then come straight at me. When I say now drop on your z axis about ten meters.=^=

The two ships went head to head briefly like a game of chicken. ^=Drop ... now! ^=

Viper 1 suddenly fell from his visual scan and the torpedo speed directly at him. His cannons fired and he flew through the wash of the explosion.

=^=Nice team work gentleman.=^=

A familiar voice came through their headsets. Arthur cringed slightly as he realized who it was, and that the programs AI was able to duplicate his flying style.

=^=All right Jester, let's light 'em up.=^=

Montero heard Snoopy's call and on his mark, he dropped his fighter with a thought. The explosion of the torpedo washed harmlessly over his fighter. Checking on his wingman, he flipped his fighter to take up position on Snoopy's left.

The voice filling his headset was a taunt. No way. ^= Viper 2 who the hell programmed this sim? ^=

=^=Well, that would be me. But the use of the AI makes the program, shall we say, unpredictable.=^=

He paused, ^= Time to take the King and his court Jester down. ^=

'Snoopy' loved 'Raid's' confidence. To be honest, in this program, he'd only defeated Viper and Jester once, and he kind of had to cheat to do that. He didn't think that right now was the best time to pass on that piece of information.

=^=Let's go get 'em tiger.=^=

Vic looked at the two fighters facing them. Knowing who they were made it more interesting. He ran through options before hitting on the idea. "Viper 2, we've going to cross the T."

He paused before explaining, "I want you to drop towards the planet, while I speed towards them. If this thing is as fast as you say, I'll be able to prevent them from getting a lock on me. But you can be damned sure they will follow me. My job is to bring them to you, so that as I pass over you, we cross the T, and you should have a clear shot to straff their underside."

~At least that's the plan~ he thought to himself, ~You still got it Raid, let's do this~

He pointed his fighter between the two opposing fighters. Without waiting for Snoopy's confirmation, he started to accelerate, "Time for a game of chicken," he said.

The fighter jumped forward and Vic began to accelerate toward the foes. He kept maneuvering the fighter to prevent a lock-on. The rate of closure of the fighters was almost 0.6 impulse. Vic fired his phasers to distract them before flipping his fighter on axis and started accelerating away. It was a risky move to expose his aft to Jester or Viper, but baiting them, he was hoping the AI would have them press the attack.

Arthur smiled. It was a good plan, and something he hadn't tried before. He watched as Montero's ship sped straight towards the attacking ships. With a thought his ship suddenly dropped several hundred meters, taking him out of the line of sight. He watched his tactical display and realigned the ship and waited.

He watched as Montero's attack, swift and furious as it was, easily evaded. But he could also tell that there was no leading his shots. He was only goading them into following him. Which was working. He turned and came back the way he had gone. But the ship was as agile as he had promised. And to be honest, Jester and Viper had made a mistake.

Suddenly he brought his engines on line and charged his cannons. As the two ships came into range he slid towards them, guns blazing. Jester's ship suddenly burst in a momentary fireball and disappeared. Viper, on the other hand, had not been caught as off guard as he had hoped and managed to only take strafing rounds along his port engines. The engines flared out, but not before he turned and lined up his own cannons on a surprised Snoopy.

As the tone of his weapons lock took hold Arthur closed his and muttered, "Oh crap."

Vic cheered as one of the ships blew up, "Good shooting Viper 2," he called as he flipped his fighter around in time to see his wingmate get lined up by the second fighter. ~Shit~

He commanded his fighter to military speed in an effort to impose his fighter between Snoopy and Viper. "Do a warp micro jump Viper 2. That should freeze his targeting computers cause ya can't hit what ain't there."

Then she turned to Weston and said, "Then we shall go here, if they have tacos."

Weston choked back a snort and smiled, "Well, let's find out."

He led the group through the entrance into a darkened establishment with a variety of smells, most of which seemed of questionable origins. He walked up to the hostess and said, "Excuse me, do you serve tacos here?"

The hostess turned around and all you could see were here pearly white teeth, "Are you kiddin' darlin', the cook's cry if someone orders his taco plate. Best tacos this side of the galaxy."

Michael recognized the voice, even with its thick drawl. He kept his face passive as possible as his eyes adjusted to the lack of light and then able to see the features of the woman's face. Fiona!

Without alarming the others he simply said, "Table for five,"

"Why sho 'nuff hit stuff," came the fake drawl, "right this way."

She led the group to a large table and seated them. "Would y'all care for something to drink?"

Michael held a chair for Quinna and tried to somehow alert her to the hostess. T'Mur held a chair for Sienna and kissed her on the cheek as she sat.

"Something is wrong with Mr. Weston," she whispered in Sienna's ear.

Sienna sent a feeling through their link that said she was aware. She was a telepath and she had caught that something was wrong. ::I don't know what it is though, but Quinna does. I promise to behave with Mr. Weston. I'm doing my best.::

Quinna sat close. She smiled as she looked up to see the hostess. Quinna reached for Michael's hand. She turned to Sienna, "Taco's huh? It has been a while since I had a good taco, but you know a nice juicy hamburger dripping in cheese would be great, but messy." Quinna knew that their mission became increasingly more difficult, though she was really not surprised.

Sienna did something she rarely did with other people and touched Ariel Trei on the top of her hand. ::This just became complicated. Follow Quinna's lead.:: Sienna ordered then broke the contact. To anyone else it looked like a friend handing a menu to another friend.

"You know, it has been such a long trip, I think I may like to go freshen up a bit, anyone care to go with me?" Quinna stood and looked around for the ladies' room. This in turn would give Quinna an idea where the exits are located.

T'Mur looked confused, "I have never comprehended the need for women to attend to their bodily functions in groups."

Weston nodded, as a second set of explosions rang out. He smiled and looked at the camera placement and then the panel. ~Good plan T'Mur.~. He moved quickly and hit the panel which quickly opened. With a gesture he waved Verin into the tight passageway. He quickly followed her in and closed the panel.

They were in perfect darkness briefly, before he fumbled for his PADD and turned on a flashlight. The area suddenly lit up to show a tight space between the wall and a central column. The good news was that there was a ladder that led down the column to where they wanted to go. The bad news was that he could not see that far down to see an interface panel.

"Looks like we climb down a bit," Weston said as he slid along the wall to the ladder. "Watch your step Commander."

His own foot slid a little off the edge as he spoke. He gave Verin a look that said, "Don't do that," and then took a grip of the ladder, turned around on it, and began his descent.

Sy looked down and shivered. She couldn't see either and there was a real fear. This wasn't her ship, it was enemy territory. She began to climb down, needing to break the connection with T'Mur in order to handle going down. When they reached the bottom of the ladder, she was glad that both of her feet were on somewhat solid plating.

Michael panned his light around to light up the level. It didn't take long for him to locate the access port of the computer core. It was a small, locked box that looked like it was going to give them a little trouble. He hummed around the box as he inspected the locking mechanism. He took a deep breath and rubbed his jaw in thought. Finally he reached into his bag and pulled out a small rectangle.

With a clang, he attached the device to the side of the box and tapped the face to turn it on. The face lit up and a series of controls appeared. He began to input some information then stepped back.

"This should only take a minute or so to get the box open," he told Verin. "Then we can attach this," he pulled another device from his bag that looked like a PADD, "information retrieval device, and you can work your magic with command codes."

True to his word there was a tone from the locking mechanism and the door popped open. He quickly attached his small computer to a pair of wires and accessed the station's computer. Moments later he was able to locate the secure data files. This was where his access ended.

Turning to Verin he stepped back and said, "You're up Commander."

Sienna moved over, and began tapping the codes in. She was the daughter of the head of the academy and the head of StartOps, her clearance had temporarily been upped to get the information that they needed. She finished up and moved so that Weston could get in.

Oakes heard the explosions, and knew that had to mean that Weston was going to make his move. It would be interesting to see if he kept up his end of the agreement. While he would hate to kill him, if that is what it took, that's what he would do.

He checked his equipment and headed off towards the access for the computer core interface. It was only there that Weston could do the job properly. Upon reaching the access door, he flashed his fake Star Fleet Security credentials to the two security guards at the door. "Routine surprise inspection fellas," he said nonchalantly.

The senior one nodded, and pointed to the lock. Here Oakes submitted to the biometrics scans before the device displayed a keypad. He looked at his PADD and entered the authentication code displayed on it. The green lights lit up indicating success.

Throwing the guys a salute, he walked through the door. Moving to the command console, he entered a completely different set of codes, to turn off the sensors in this space. No need for a record if he had to kill a man. Getting caught on tape was never good.

His communicator chirped. What horrible timing.

=^= Hardy here, I trust all is going according to plan ^=

Why did command staff have to check up on everything, especially at the most inopportune time.

=^= It is. A satisfactory outcome is in store. ^=

Sighing, Oakes took his communicator off and left it on the console. Moving to the right, he found the secure door to the computer core. Taking a deep breath, he entered his special code and the door opened up. He could hear voices. Perfect.

Entering the room, he slowed his breathing down and tried to walk as silently as he could. Coming around the side of the pillar, he leveled his phaser at the two people there. "Michael Weston, what an unpleasant surprise, and who's your catch of the day?"

Sienna looked up and cursed internally, reaching out to T'Mur who was still very close mentally, ::Trouble, Love. May need rescuing, can you have Luma check that she has a lock on all of us? I don't want to trust to Weston to get us out of here.::

::There is something interfering with the transporter lock system. I am on my way.Be ready to go when I get there.::

Weston looked over and gave a half salute to the intruder, "Blackford Oaks. Wish I could say I was surprised." He stepped away from Verin towards Oaks. Over his shoulder he said softly, "Keep working. Get the file open and copy everything onto the drive."

Sy turned her head to work the computer as she spoke under her breath, "T is on her way, they've blocked us on transporters." Sy did something else while she was there, she opened a hidden, secured connection between the station and Luma, then deleted her traces. If they couldn't get the data off, Luma could take it. Slowly, but she could.

Then he turned his attention back to Oaks. "Did you finally find a cause important enough to you, or that paid you enough money? And this is of no importance to you."

"Indeed. Did you tell her what happened to your last date? Or Fiona?" he asked.

Michael kept walking slowly forward, "You... have no idea what happened with Fiona. I seriously doubt she would have told you. And yes, she knows that (name) tried to kill me. It was part of the job."

"How are you coming on our deal? Roanoke is very eager for you to complete the task."

Michael shrugged, "Well, since I haven't been given any directives yet, I guess it's going exactly as expected. Did you have anything to say about that? I assume you're working for, or with, them. I mean, you're not a true believer are you?"

Sienna finished and slipped the drive free. She touched Weston's wrist, "T is on her way to us, and I have the data. Sy broke the connection, pulling her fingers off Weston's wrist."

Weston nodded, barely perceptibly. It was time to go, but Blackford Oaks was a whole new wrinkle. His involvement meant that something serious was about to go down.

Oakes chuckled, "Oh, I gave up believing a long time ago, after the job on Santos III went south. Spent three months on the run from our own people. No, I stick my neck out for no one. This is another job, one that I'm getting well paid for."

Oakes tossed an isolinear chip to Weston. "Here, I'm just the courier, you can deliver this to the target and your debt will be paid. If not, there will be unpleasant consequences."

Weston looked at the chip with curiosity. Clearly it wasn't coated by some contact poison, otherwise Oaks wouldn't have tossed it with his bare hand, and Weston would probably be already dying. Unless it was some kind of retrovirus. However he didn't think that likely. Too unreliable, Finally he shrugged and pocketed the chip.

"And that's it?" Weston asked. "What next?"

"That's it Weston. Do this and walk away, your debt paid. And you'll never see me again." Oakes replied

"It can't be that easy," Weston said. "It's never that easy with you Blackford. There's a reason things went sideways on Santos III. You were careless, and it cost lives. I'm not sure how you ever came back from that. I'm sure you did something very... questionable, morally, for somebody with questionable morals."

"Pot, meet kettle," he replied. "You, of all people, are the last to judge me. Now, when that is inserted and the data delivered, we'll know."

“And your girlfriend, back there. We’ll be watching,” he said. “Good to have you back, Weston,” he said as he turned to leave the space.

“Oh, one more thing,” he said, “A parting gift if you will.” Oakes set his phaser to overload and dropped it to the floor. “Your deaths will serve the greater good,” he said, stepping through the doorway and closing it behind him.

Weston moved quickly to the door. It was, of course, locked. The high pitched whine of the overloading phaser began to drill a hole through his skull. He reached down to pick it up. Suddenly he felt a hard shove from behind and went sprawling.

He looked back to see the dark figure of T’Mur pick up the phaser. Her fingers moved in a blur as she disarmed the phaser and pulled out its charged cells. He could smell the flesh of her palms burning from the overheated cells.

Tossing the cell and phaser to the side she looked at Weston, then went over to touch Sienna.

::Are you well?::

Sienna inspected T’Mur’s hands, the pain of her mate’s burns going through her, “Where is Quinna?” She demanded, frantic with worry for T’Mur. The burns were not terrible and would be easily healed once they got back to Quinna.

::I’m all right. That was too close.:: Sienna looked up to T’Mur, holding her tightly to her body.

“I am uncertain,” T’Mur admitted. “We were separated and I left Ariel Trei to find her while I came for you.”

“Let’s get out of here.” Sienna spoke, “Let’s get off this corrupt piece of trash.”

T’Mur nodded, “Although I do not agree with the classification of this station as... a piece of trash, I agree. We should probably make our way back to the Illuminar. It appears you have accomplished your mission.”

Michael unceremoniously picked himself up and brushed off his clothes. He stepped past the two women and took his PADD from Quinna.

“Then by all means, ladies,” he said, gripping the ladder. “We’ll have to go up to get out.”

At that he began to ascend the way they came. T’Mur stood next to the ladder and moved Sienna to the rungs.

“You first,” she insisted. “I’ll make sure you don’t fall.”

Gregory paced the bridge like a caged animal. Things were going on that were out of his hands, and all he could do is watch and wait.

He stopped at Operations and leaned over to view McFry's work. The kid was coming along with the program, but not fast enough for his taste. Next chance he had, he was going to run some hackathon sessions to improve his teams skills. In this day and age, everyone thinks their computer systems are safe, the Binars have done a good job with ensuring that. However, there are the occasional report of a vulnerability in a system.

"Anything?" he said.

"Not yet, Sir." came McFry's reply.

Gregory walked and scanned the Master Systems display. All the information he needed, at his fingertips. The boards were green.

"Tactical, report," he called out as he moved back to sit in the command chair.

Just then McFry broke in, "Sir, transporter one has been activated."

Gregory tapped his comm, "Transporter One, Mr. Kud, report."

=^= Sir, the transporter just activated itself. Cycle is finishing now. I have Lieutenant Trei and Commander Verin. ^=

"Noone else."

=^= No Sir ^=

"Science, I want a lock on Doctor Quinna immediately. And Mr. Weston as well."

"Working on that Sir," Ensign Nye said. "I am encountering unusual interference in trying to find their signal, much less lock on."

Gregory shook his head. Too much power to scan that station would be a hostile act and the federation was one big family. Damn it.

"McFry, can you access the station's internal sensors?" he called out.

"Not without alerting the station to our actions, Sir." McFry replied.

This was the part of command he didn't like. He had gone through many simulations to help address this type of situation, most importantly how to act with incomplete information.

Quinna turned to see Fiona standing behind her. "What do you want?" Quinna cried when asked. "I don't have time for you."

Fiona smiled a feral smile like she was planning on eating her, "Sweet cheeks, you are going to need to make time for me. After all, Michael may still want you when we're through."

Quinna asked. "Do you know where they are? What have you done, Fiona? Where are my friends?"

The woman chuckled a little, "What a curious little kitty you are. So many questions. Do I know where Michael is? Always? The others? I can only assume that they, like you, are responsible for the confusion going on around the station right now. I haven't done anything... yet. But the night is still young."

Quinna grew tired of this woman. "Look, I get it, you love him. He left you. It is hard not to fall for him." Quinna said and then added, "Look around, this chaos is not me."

Fiona couldn't help but laugh, "Love Michael Weston. Granted, we had a good time when we were together." She saw the hackles raise in the other woman. "A real good time. But people like me and Michael, we don't fall in love. We have moments, then we move on."

"You are not going to let me go until we talk so let's talk." Quinna started, "What do you want to talk about? Wait hold on, let me guess...Michael." Quinna was putting the pieces together but was not tipping her hat.

"What do you think is going to happen the moment he gets reinstated? The first dangerous mission that comes along, he'll be off. Maybe you'll see him again a few years later. Maybe never. If you hold on to him he'll slowly die of boredom. That's just who he is. I'm doing you a favor sweetie."

Fiona really knew how to hurt, but Quinna knew that she was right. He would leave and she would still be devastated even though she knew he was going to leave, "Fiona, why are you here? It is not because of him." Quinna speculated

"I thought you realized," Fiona said, "I'm here for the job. And right now," she paused with a smile, "the job is bringing down Sekal and the Illuminar. And if I can bring Michael into the fold, well that's a bonus. The real question is, what is the Illuminar after way out here?"

Quinna ignored the question. She was sure that Fiona knew why they were here. "So you have been hired to kill Sekal. But you are not willing to get your hands all bloody, or I might have seen you sooner. Probably would have put 2 and 2 together when we met on Betazed. You hired Sanchez to perform the task but he failed. You now have someone else in line to perform the deed. You have been following us since the first assassination attempt." Quinna said, putting the puzzle pieces together.

Fiona raised her hands defensively, "Oh no, my job is not to kill Sekal. If he were to die it would make my job easier. But his interference with the people who hired me has raised some hackles. So we're

here to ease their tensions. But Michael's involvement has complicated matters. It would have been easier before."

"Now you have someone else to complete the job. You told him that you would give him the evidence that would exonerate him if he did." Quinna said with a sullen face, "You are going to free him."

"Oh that was a legitimate offer," Fiona said. "I have the proof that his unreliability is a false accusation. The source of that information would appreciate Michael's help. I am simply the messenger for that transaction."

"I think we are done here," Quinna announced. "We had our talk. Time for me to go." For the first time in her life, Quinna really wanted to kill this lady but knew better.

Fiona bobbed her head back and forth, "Yeah, well... that is not how I see it. I'm afraid that I am not convinced of Michael's dedication to our cause. So I need a little... leverage. He has grown quite attached to you sweetheart. So I think, until we're done here, I will have to hold on to you."

She stepped forward and drew a small hand weapon, "if you would be so kind as to come with me."

Quinna wondered if she did make Michael vulnerable now. "You really think that you can use me as leverage over him? I guess you do not know him as well as you thought."

Fiona shrugged, "This can be easy, or this can be hard. And trust me when I tell you that I can easily carry your unconscious body through this station without drawing any attention to myself."

"Well since I have a choice, let me think about it," Quinna said. "Lead the way," Quinna said. She thought that knowing where Fiona was, Quinna knew she was not interfering with the others. "Where are we going? The Roanoke?"

"Silly rabbit," Fiona mocked, "Roanoke is not a place. And the people that you are talking about are not particularly interested in how I conduct my business, only that I get the job done."

"So who are you working for? Who controls you?" Quinna asked.

Indignant, she looked at Quinna's back as they walked back down the arcade, "Nobody 'controls' me. However, the people that hire me are of no concern to you. Worry about your own circumstance, dearest Quinna."

With that, she gave her a little poke in the back with her weapon to urge her to keep walking. After a minute they came to a door that appeared to be a utility closet. "Stop right there."

She reached around and put her hand on the plate to open the door. As the door opened she gave Quinna another gentle urging. "Inside, if you please."

He paused, "And Michael Weston is with them, so our operative is making the approach with the package he is supposed to deliver. Once he's successful, the Illuminar will no longer be a problem nor will Mr. Weston."

West frowned and shook his head, "Do you really expect Weston to cooperate? Our analysts have a different scenario. Weston's a Boy Scout. He wants to do the "right thing" but he's misguided to the point of disillusionment. Weston was disavowed for a reason. If your operative had done their job he'd be dead already." He walked away shaking his head muttering to himself, Michael Weston. The man's going to be the death of me."

Then he turned back to Breckenridge. "Your tracking them? Where are they now?"

Breckenridge stepped behind his desk and entered a few commands. "Huh, this is odd." he said. "It seems they have split up or they returned to the Illuminar. I only have tracking on two of them, their doctor, a Lieutenant Quinna Solice, recently promoted to 3rd officer. And a Lieutenant Ariel Trei, daughter of one Deltron Trei."

"Computer where are Lieutenant T'Mur and Comander Verin, both of the Illuminar," he said.

=^= Lieutenant T'Mur and Commander Verin are not on the station ^=

"When did they leave?"

=^= There is no record of them leaving the station ^=

Beckenridge looked surprised at that, and didn't want to turn to face the Commodore. He thought he had everything in hand when it went sideways.

West's frown deepened, as if that seemed possible. "I see you are completely on top of things Lieutenant. What was all the hullabaloo earlier?"

"It must be a glitch in the sensors sir," he ran his fingers over the controls starting a level 1 diagnostic on the internal sensors.

The door chimed again, and Breckinridge called out angrily. "Not now." he said.

The door opened, "Sir, I have security here with Lieutenant Quinna Solice. She was seen near the are of the disturbances, and brought her to you."

Breckenridge looked at the Commodore. He pointed to a chair, "Bring her in and sit her here. Have security stand outside in case we have to proffer charges against her.

Quinna walked into the office, her hands bound behind her back, "Commodore? What do you mean 'charges'" Quinna looked confused. "Sir, what is going on?"

"What were you doing in an off-limits part of the station?" Breckenridge demanded.

"Off limit area? What are you taking about?" Quinna said. "I saw no signs. Am I am suspect in anything?" Quinna had a teardrop out of her eye, "I wish someone would be clear with me."

"This is what we are trying to establish, Lieutenant," Breckenridge replied. "Things don't seem to add up, so we will be holding you while we continue our investigation."

"If you are charging me with something I want my rights to my captain and my legal council" Quinna said as she was still crying.

He chuckled at her demands. "Let me point out that you do not have any rights at the moment. You are on an interdiction platform that has separate rules. We are considered under war zone rules. So we can hold you without due process or any of the niceties that you think you can call on."

There was something. Quinna thought there was something wrong with this situation. "Then why am I here and not in a cell?"

West stood in the background, leaning against the wall, watching the interrogation. This doctor was playing Breckinridge for a fool. She knew something. But she also knew she wasn't in a restricted part of the station. What did she know? Her tears were crocodile tears, and they weren't doing anything to soften his heart. He wanted to see how well Weston had prepared her. But he needed to wait until Breckinridge completed his part of the drama.

"Oh, rest assured you will be in one soon enough, and once we have collected our evidence, you will be transferred to the Valiant, who will take you to a more permanent home." Breckenridge said. "What brings you and the Illuminar to restricted space?"

"I am just the doctor, I don't know. I came because the ship came. All of the Illuminar crew because the ship came here." Quinna said, "Look, do you think I have these restraints taken off?"

"Are you telling me that the 3rd officer of the Illuminar has no idea why you are here?" Breckenridge asked

"Well, I had a medical emergency during a staff meeting. I was knee deep in brains at the time. And well, I was told I was going to get a break. Beam down and enjoy myself. I was hoping I was going to get something special from Well you don't want to hear about that, so you? Quinna replied. She secretly was having a little fun.

Breckenridge walked over to the chair, and released one of the loops holding her hands together. He moved it to the side and secured it to the arm of the chair. "Better?" he asked sarcastically.

"Let's start again, why are you here?" Breckenridge said

Quinna's hands swung around and she rubbed her wrists. "Thank-you much better. We are here because someone was attacked on our ship. Sanchez is dead. Diane was stupid. Now I am here." The look on her face went from defiant to stern.

"Who was Sanchez? Diane?" Breckenridge asked, "And why should I care?"

"Because I have proof. They came from here." Quinna said. "And I have the proof on who ordered them here." Quinna hoped that she could buy enough time so that the others would be home safely.

Breckenridge stared at the woman. He began to speak when he noticed the Commodore had stepped forward. West had heard enough of name dropping and idle threats from both sides.

"Young lady," the commodore began, "I want you to be very careful about what you are saying. You are making some very incriminating statements. As well as statements that put you in a difficult position. Let me make this clear, so there are no secrets between us. This conversation is being recorded. Do you understand that fact?"

"I understand. Unless you are going to arrest me, I think I will be going." Quinna said.

For the first time since he arrived the commodore smiled, "I like you. You've got spirit. But I'm afraid you misinterpret this meeting. And I rarely act simply because I like someone or something. I would simply like to know where your friends are, and what you have been up to."

"At this point anything I say cannot be used since it was said before I was told I was being recorded." Quinna took a step and stood face to face with the commodore. "I will not say anymore until I consult with my Captain and my JAG representative."

Now West chuckled, but it was not a sound of mirth, but rather a dangerous noise. "My dear Doctor Solice, again you misunderstand. The recording is not for possible prosecution. It would be evidence to explain your actions posthumously."

The tall, white haired commodore pulled a chair over and sat in it. He put his elbows on his knees as he leaned in.

"Imagine my surprise as one of the command staff of the great USS Illuminar, under the great Captain Sekal, hero of Bajor, comes here to Altair, professing to be an associate of known criminals, indeed, even involved with the assassination attempt of her own captain. Why, I would feel it would be my duty to bring such a person to justice. But she, of course, would not come along quietly. A fire fight ensued, even Lieutenant Breckinridge was injured, and sadly, try as we could to prevent it, said officer was killed during the chaos. What a scandal it would cause. And the only evidence is this inadmissible video recording. Or is it?"

West pulled out a PADD and worked on it for a few moments then turned it around. He displayed the screen to Quinna and hit the play button.

[I want you to be very careful about what you are saying. You are making some very incriminating statements. As well as statements that put you in a difficult position. Let me make this clear, so there are no secrets between us. This conversation is being recorded. Do you understand that fact?

I understand. Sanchez is dead. Diane was stupid. Now I am here.]

“A very interesting development, no?” West sat back and watched.

“Fine, you win.” Quinna lifted her hand in the air as if she had given up. “If this is the way you are going to play this then fine. Kill me.”

West blinked, astounded by what he heard. “Good Lord woman, whatever made you think we wanted you dead. Oh no, that is not the case. It is a matter of what you want. We are not the bad guys here. I’m fact,” he pulled out a small device and released the restraining device completely, “you are neither under arrest nor being detained. I can clearly see that you are no danger... to anyone. Well... other than that poor woman that you left hanging in that utility closet.”

He tapped the PADD and showed a video of Fiona’s death and Quinna searching through her clothes.

“Ouch,” West said, “that might be a little hard to explain to your CO and the JAG. But by all means, let’s bring them in on this, shall we.” He tossed her comm badge to her.

“So I see how you conveniently neglected to show the footage where she was holding me with a weapon and about to throw me in. Her death was unfortunate, and purely accidental. Forensics will attest to that,” Quinna finally took a seat, crossed her legs and placed her hands on her thighs. The data rod she found was conveniently at the bottom of Trei’s boot. “As for searching her, she took something that did not belong to her. I wanted it back, but did not find it.”

West shrugged his shoulders. In his mind it was an act of disrespect. “You have a great deal of faith in forensic science. Do you know what real power is Doctor? Real power comes from the control and distribution of information. Forensic scientists can find anything they want, but I doubt that is what will be in the official report. The only conclusive evidence is that you killed that young lady, for some data device that you now have in your possession.”

“Really, you think I have a data rod in my possession? You searched my bag. You found nothing.” Quinna said. “Should I open my blouse so you can check my bra?”

West smiled an unnerving smile, “I really don’t care about the location of the device. You could have stored it somewhere deep in the recesses of your body. The video I have is of you retrieving the device. Not having it only makes it look worse on you. Have you discovered what was on it? No, you really haven’t had the time, have you? Another unimportant detail.”

“Well then I am not important to you.” Quinna interrupted.

“You are more important than you realize, my dear,” West said. “You might be one of the most important people to us.”

“Why is that?” Quinna needed him to educate her on that.

West just smiled and turned back to Breckenridge. "She knows nothing," he said, "and is far more useful to us as she is right now than any other way. Once we can show the flaws in the Illuminar's command structure the rest will be simple."

"I am the flaw. And I see me every day." Quinna kept her wits going.

"Shall I have security take her to holding, Sir?" Breckenridge asked.

"I thought we were having fun," Quinna said. "I am sure you suspect that I already know, but I want to hear you say why I am important to you."

West completely ignored Solice, continuing his conversation with Breckenridge.

Quinna stayed calm, but raised her voice when speaking, "If you are going to use me, you should not ignore me."

"Well, Lieutenant," West asked, "in your opinion what should we do with the intrepid doctor? Let her go or detain her?"

"Detain her, Sir," he said. "She is just a pawn, but pawns can become queens. It might be good to use her disappearance as a way to implicate and or discredit the Illuminar command structure."

"Pawns are often sacrificed for the good of the game. And there is no one to miss me." Quinna reminded them.

Breckenridge shook his head, "And yet a pawn can take down the King, if played properly, and that is what I want to use you for," he replied.

"Enough," West finally interjected. "Are you telling me Sekal won't miss his Chief medical officer, or his third officer? Don't think us stupid. And of course there's always the eternal Boy Scout Michael Weston. I'm almost certain he'll miss you. But we can just put your theory to the test. Take her away. I tire of her drivel. And where is my asset? Is he ready to be moved?"

Breckenridge nodded, "Yes, Sir," he said. Pushing the intercom, "Send in security."

The two security officers came in and snapped to attention. Breckenridge looked at them, "Take her to the brig. She is being held for violation of the station protocols."

The security men moved to stand in front of Quinna. "Stand up and put your hands behind your back please," one of them said. Once she was secured, they stood on either side of her, with the one on the right gripping her elbow, moving her along.

Breckenridge watched them go, and as the door started to close, "Sir, the Outrider program has been a success. I will take you to it so you can evaluate our progress."

(reply none)

"These calculations and diagrams," Ned explained, "look like they've been trying to harness the power of a white hole."

Dusty looked over, "That's just a legend. There's no such thing as white holes."

"No," Ned corrected, "they're not a legend, just theoretical. But it looks like they may be trying to prove, not only that they exist, but if they do, how they can be used. Brilliant."

Dusty was the least scientific of the group and was already disinterested in the conversation. He walked through the lab looking for anything that might constitute a danger but wasn't seeing anything. Lucky was looking at the table in the middle of the room. It had bits and pieces of what appeared to be some kind of apparatus, but they didn't seem too threatening either.

When he backed up his hip hit something and a small box fell to the floor and began to hum.

"Damn it," he said under his breath.

"Careful Lucky," Dusty said. "Make sure everything is exactly where it was."

Lucky nodded and picked up the box. It was warm to touch and vibrated in his hand. He turned the box over and noticed a series of buttons and dial, and a small readout. He moved to put the box back on the table as his finger slid across one of the touch sensitive buttons.

Suddenly there was a blinding flash. The box fell to the table and the hum died off. A few minutes later Dusty called over to Ned.

"I'm not sure what Lee was looking for, but I'm not seeing anything," he said.

"Yeah, me either," Ned agreed. "Let's go. It's quitting time anyway."

The duo turned and headed out the door. Dusty turned back and looked into the room with the odd sensation that something, or someone was missing. Then he shrugged it off. Science labs often made him feel that way.

"Want to get something to eat?" Dusty asked his partner.

"Yeah, I'm starving," Ned replied.

Dusty laughed, "You're always starving. You know, we should ask Lee about getting a third member of our team. It sure would speed up the work of these investigations."

"You're right," Ned said. "We can put in a request tomorrow. Just the two of us makes me feel like something is missing."

The door to the lab closed and Dusty relocked it. The box on the counter lay there, inert, and completely harmless.

As a final defense that explosive could be launched from the station, the warhead was designed to penetrate to the depth of the reactor through the layers of self-maintenance machinery and detonate. The resultant explosion would, according to calculations, incinerate the entire system along with anyone and anything within it.

Outrider 1 interfaced the clip of a conversation with Able Breckinridge in which the Lieutenant had stated he would rather launch the explosive rather than be taken by Federation forces. Why? Because he knew that the resulting trial, demotion and imprisonment would destroy his hope of a future.

Outrider 1 who had assumed the name and rank of Commander William Hardy stopped and turned toward that inner core. He placed his other hand on that wall as though trying to feel the power and menace that lay behind it.

Why would a sentient being be willing to sacrifice their own life and the lives of many others for a failing cause? Because truth be told Roanoke was such, the numbers of its adherents had dwindled to a small fraction of its former strength and those few left were scattered. Commander Hardy as he was now known was also aware of a renewed push by Starfleet Intelligence to round up the remainder. What had precipitated that?

A Captain that had been on its hit list had his ship now in orbit around this very station. Had he somehow been tipped off to their existence or was he as theorized merely following the Commodore and investigating his activities?

Was Roanoke worth such a sacrifice of men and materiel? The Federation at large had repudiated the efforts of that organization. They had opted to return to exploration over lethal defense. Had they chosen rightly? Were peaceful overtures and diplomacy preferable to subjugation?

On one hand it espoused weakness to form greater strength through the whole but alliances could be fragile. The recent past was a case in point. Armed might could yield greater dividends in the long term though many lives would be lost in the unfolding events. Yet in the end if all went as planned Earth in its aftermath might enjoy hundreds, perhaps thousands of years of peace. No more besieging alien races, no more death and destruction to its heartland.

But was it right, morally and ethically?

The Professor, his sire had believed in its aims and had included in his data banks terabytes of writings to that effect. In the last month however this sentient unit had read and ingested that much and more that ran counter to it. In essence each side could be considered propaganda. Which however could be considered correct? Which was more humane? More ethical? And what role did religion play in the outcome?

Were there higher powers like the Q or even a single creator who would judge the Federation on its motives and actions?

Earth had millenia of warfare in its history? Why had it turned from that to peace? Had that change of outlook insured the integrity of its species or doomed it to eventual destruction?

Quinna stopped for a second and turned to Michael and T'Mur. "Someone should help her."

Weston looked at the cell with a female Trill standing by the security field. "What do you want to do?"

"I have to go. I need to know. He did not kill me, Hardy went against orders and released me. I will be ok." Quinna took off.

Michael stalled, looking at this Prenea Alyl. The name sounded oddly familiar but he couldn't place it at the moment.

"I'm not sure what you want," he said to the prisoner. "But Quinna has dealt a hand and I need to go after her. If I can I'll come back for you."

With that he left the room to follow Quinna, leaving T'Mur with the prisoner.

"Prenea Alyl," T'Mur said with a raised eyebrow. "We have a Jaton Alyl on the the Illuminar. I am not particularly familiar with family names with Trill, however I get the idea that there's a connection."

(reply Prenea)

Meanwhile Michael ran and quickly caught up with Quinna, trying to watch a man from the shadows.

He put a hand on Quinna's leg to get her attention. "What are you doing?" he asked, his voice carrying his frustration and concern.

"Don't you think it is weird that an officer would release me, out of the blue?" Quinna said. "Watch, there is something about him. Tell me I am wrong." Quinna challenged.

Michael shook his head, "There's no denying, it is odd. What did you say this guy's name was? Hardy? Like the station CO?"

There was a spark of a memory going through his head. Hardy? Hardy? What did he know about Hardy? "What are you thinking?"

"Do you not trust me? I am telling you. There is more." Quinna insisted. "And I am going to go find out."

Michael smiled at Quinna, "Of course I trust you. But it would help to know what we're looking for."

Quinna turned and looked directly into his eyes, "I am not sure just yet. It is a gut instinct. You get those moments. You did when you initially trusted me. I am asking you to take a leap of faith in me and come on."

The SFI operative took a deep breath, and said, "I'm with you. But if things go south, we need to fall back on Rule 1."

He had been making the climb to the office slowly.

The staircase wound around the central hub tightly but the wall opened up at every deck to a corridor or staging area. His eyes traveled to the promenade as it came into view and every being, their positions and destinations were instantly cataloged in his memory bank. The few shops here were an eclectic mix and rarely busy. Business here within an interdicted zone were tightly controlled and owners had to go through a rigid process of checks and recheck before gaining permission to open a shop. And if you were caught engaging in shady activities? If you were lucky you might have time to gather your belongings before you were shipped off. Security to put it mildly was intrusive.

Having a data bank to process could be compared to a human with an eidetic memory with instant recall of all past experiences, food eaten, books read, and music heard along with the time, day, what you were wearing, who you were with and what they were saying if they were a distraction.

The data he had downloaded into a portion of the stations memory bank were then past memories.

He stiffened and pulled up short as this computation rose to the surface. The action wasn't android-like but that's because a subroutine triggered that mimicked Hardys behavior. What information may have been overlooked that could incriminate them? What data might someone find who was combing the computer system? What might they stumble upon?

Plans made with Lieutenant Breckinridge, Roanoke codes, names of operatives and contacts... well those were just a few. He didn't know the names of all but the ones he was aware of were integral to the operation.

He broke into a run up the stairs, had he actually been human he would have been cursing as he climbed the last 3 decks. He never slowed down since as a mechanism he never tired, the micro-fusion cells that provided energy merely compensated for the increased amp and voltage draw and maintained it until he arrived at deck 1 and headed for his office.

He needed to interface the system in his office and check to see if anyone had accessed the files.

Because like his predecessor Data he had a finite memory bank and to make room to store more information some had to be backed up to an external drive. The information pertaining to Roanoke was crucial therefore he never wiped it from his own memory but the original data was backed up in event it was lost due to a catastrophic system failure due to say... damage as an example.

He reached his office and was through the door in a flash, not once did he turn his head to see if he was being followed.

Why would anyone be following the Commander of the station after all, what reason could they possibly have?

(Reply: Weston, Solice iyw)

(Posted by Charles G)

please. But what if..this is just an if.. I order you to run such a team..would you do it? You are free to speak your mind, Mr Devers. I shall not think of anything less of you."

Devers shrugged. He swallowed his annoyance at the dig the Chief has made about not thinking less of him. He was a highly trained member of the security team, was one of the leaders within the NCO ranks, and one of the best at hand to hand combat. Only a weak leader makes a comment like that.

"Sir, I don't know what you mean about extra training sessions, as it seems we are doing the standard training that is required of all security personnel. Or are you referring to the fact that the NCOs get together every morning for training and exercise. We've been teaching different hand-to-hand combat techniques, for example, so that people have multiple different skills to call on. We have even had a few officers come to learn to improve their skills."

"With respect, Sir, I will comply with all legal orders given to me by the chain of command. I will lead any team you ask me to. What I am objecting to, Sir, is this idea of creating a Rapid Deployment exaction team on the fly with no prior team training. For a team to be effect in that role, they need to practice, practice and practice so every member of the team knows what the others are doing. Who takes what wall, who's first in the breach, etc. Saying it is so, and trying to deploy something like that now is a pipe dream. As I recall, the Marines practice that sort of team training and it takes several months to build a functioning unit," he paused.

"You want me to go onto that defense platform and rescue our people, I can handle that mission, and I'll bring them home safely. But don't call it a rapid deployment force until you actually build these teams and get them training. More to the point, those team members will need to be taking off rotation so that they can train and get good at those skills. If you were more clear as to your objectives, Sir, perhaps the rest of security would be able to execute more efficiently.

Thank you," said Lee. "As for the tactical battle suits. I thought about that. Yes, indeed you have to be certified and trained in wearing such a suit."

Devers nodded, "Which, you may recall, I am. Having been one of the first on the Illuminar to begin training with them."

"However it occurred to me it not might not be a good idea to be wandering around in a tactical battle suit aboard D7,s a Federation facility especially in a covert operation. Such a suit would inappropriate for enclosed limited spaces. I don't really accept that wearing a tactical battle suit is a solution. There's too much reliance on the technology," Lee said

"Sir, then why bother mentioning them. We are Star Fleet security forces, not the Marines. Battle suits, HALO jumping and the like are for the Marines. We're not supposed to be a front line fighting force, but the men and women here can hold their own. None of us are clamoring for more technology, Sir, as it does slow us down. I'll take my phaser, my baton and my wits. " Devers replied.

"I prefer as Security Officers, we use our skills and tactical experience not to mention our senses to adapt to potential hostile environments..what is it..to develop our situation awareness. To quote a

Teller ran his fingertips over the chips then wiggled his fingers as he chose one. Slowly but surely he drew one and replaced one of the chips in the array. This process repeated over and over until they met with a satisfying chirp.

Teller closed the panel as their program started to run. The temperature and humidity began to increase. The furniture disappeared, to be replaced by a beach by the ocean. Comfortable chairs sat facing the water, with a table between the chairs.

The sounds of reggae music played in the distance as Teller sat down and took one of the drinks and sat back in the chair, "Darmok and Jalad on the ocean," he said.

The Benzite had disappeared into his room and came out a moment later. He had changed his outfit and was now wearing a pair of Bermuda shorts and a tacky print shirt with palm trees and hula dancers on it.

He was carrying a second, similar shirt and offered it to Teller. He then sat down in the other chair, picked up his own drink and sat back. He lifted his glass to his partner and chuckled, "Mr. Roark and Tattoo on the island,"

Teller donned the shirt and raised his glass.

As Penn took a sip of his drink the door chime rang and the door opened. The large, looming figure of Bohb filled the doorway. He looked over at the Klingon guard with a mixture of curiosity and disdain.

"I think I can manage," Bohb said dismissively, then stepped into the room. When the door closed he instantly began to perspire.

He looked over at the duo sitting in comfortable looking chairs, drinking tall drinks with tiny umbrellas stuck in them.

"Changed the environmental settings a little?" he asked.

"We are on vacation," Penn offered, looking over at Teller.

"John McClane to Komarov, Axel Foley in Beverly Hills," he replied.

Bohb chuckled, "And here I thought you'd been locked out of your computer controls. I'm assuming you've reset the replicator controls?"

Penn lifted his glass as if to say cheers.

Bohb loosened his collar and walked over to the replicator station. "Pina Colada," he looked over at Teller who was smiling welcomingly, "in a coconut shell, non-alcoholic please."

He turned around to find a spare seat sitting across from Penn and Teller. Bohb walked over and straddled the chair.

"You want to tell me what happened?" Bohb asked.

Teller nodded. "Kira at Bashi. The beast at Tanagra. Darmok and Jalad at Tanagra. McGuyver with a knife. Marvin, the Martian, observing Earth. Jack, his face blank. Peter Parker in Queens. Gilligan on the island. Shaka, when the walls fell. Archimedes in the bathtub. The Professor with a coconut. Hawkeye in the OR. Fermi offers a wager. Darmok and Jalad on the Ocean. Kitten pacing in the window. Barney Fife with his bullet. Kentra braving the ocean. Zinda, his face black, his eyes red."

He took a small box off his belt and handed it to Bohb.

Bohb's mouth opened and closed, but he couldn't get words to come out. Suddenly the voice of Penn broke his daze.

"I couldn't say it any more succinctly," Penn said, looking at Bohb.

"I bet," Bohb shot back. Then he looked at the box, and his fascination with the technology trumped his confusion at Teller's words.

"What did he say this box did?" Bohb asked Penn.

"Wasn't it clear?" Penn replied. "It's a personal deflector device that we were testing. It can absorb and diffuse almost any energy weapon." He rolled his eyes at Bohb. "Weren't you listening?"

Now Bohb was fascinated, "And you were testing it with a phaser?"

"Clearly," Penn sounded exasperated. "Why else would I be shooting at my best friend with a phaser at level 6?"

"Level 6!" Bohb cried. "What happened!"

"Apparently it caused a feedback that... well.. tickled."

Bohb couldn't help himself. A burst of laughter burst out of him that sounded like a howl.

Teller cocked his head to one side, "Jack Byrnes to Greg Focker. Egon to Veckman in the ballroom. Harley Quinn with the ray gun."

The door chime rang and the door opened. Temas gave a strange look at the Klingon guard and entered. "Well that's interesting." Then he turned his attention to the trio in the room.

"Carrie, to Mr. Big. At the park." he said standing up. "Hawkeye to Quoc. "Garth Brooks and Captain Morgan. Limes in coconuts." Teller stood by the replicator and pushed some buttons as the new visitor entered the room.

The Temarian held out a large glass of a fruity looking liquid with a smile in his eyes and his mind full of merriment and jocularity. The Betazoid couldn't help but smile and took the glass, emanating a feeling of gratitude.

"Thanks," he said. He took a sip of the drink then suddenly coughed. He was certain there was more to the drink than fruit juice, although it did have a distinct fruity flavor to it.

"Wow!" he said looking at the glass a little more carefully. Then he looked around the room. "You guys seem to have made yourselves comfortable in your solitude."

Penn laughed and lifted his glass to drain it. "Well why should we be uncomfortable. If we're on vacation, then we should relax. Don't you agree?" Then he turned to Teller and said "Peter Beller and Rachel Jansen at the luau."

"The luau," Teller replied as he took a pull on his drink. "Hawkeye and Trapper John," he said. Pointing to Bohb, he said, "King Kong on Skull Island." Cocking his head to one side, he looked at the newcomer, "Dumbledore to Draco."

Penn shrugged his shoulders and turned back to the newcomer, "And who are you, exactly?"

Temas took another sip of the strong drink and cleared his throat, "Oh, I'm Temas Laredo. I'm Luma Lenai's bond mate, and part time ship's counselor. I'm here because Luma wanted me to check on you two."

Penn gave him an aha look and turned to Teller, "No, Harold to Maude."

"So, if I might ask, what have you two been up to?" Temas asked.

Bohb stood up and slurped down the rest of his drink, handing the shell to Teller.

"It might be faster if I explain," the Magellan said. "First of all the doctors have devised a personal deflector device about the size of my hand." He held up his huge hand. "They were testing it with a hand phaser, without making the proper clearances and wound up confined to quarters because Lee was irritated with them. Does that sum it up?" he asked, turning to Penn and Teller.

Teller spoke "Sokath, his eyes opened." he agreed

"Well you did skip the whole part about him depriving us of our basic civil liberties, including food and drink." He lifted his glass in salute then drained it.

"You seem to have overcome that problem," Laredo noted. Then he played with his collar, "Is it hot in here?"

"And humid," Bohb answered. "Apparently Penn and Teller went to the Bahamas, or some tropical island."

Temas took a longer drink from his glass, getting used to the after bite. "So I see. And you Lieutenant?"

"Please," Bohb held up a hand, "in the Bahamas it's just Bohb. And I was asked to come and find out what they were working on by Commander Gregory. Apparently they were confined before anyone really knew what was going on in that lab. Not sure anyone still does."

"I was wondering the same thing," Temas admitted. He finished his drink and smacked his lips. "That's pretty good juice. Can I have some more?"

Teller obliged by pouring more of the drink for Temas, "Jimmy Buffet at Margaritaville." he said before topping off his partner's glass as well. Turning to Bohb, he pointed to the empty coconut, "Holmes. The man and his lady?" he asked.

Looked at his empty cup, then back at Teller. His intention was clear. He wanted everyone to relax. ~Sometimes you have to say, what the hell.~

"Go for it," Bohb said, catching on to some of the references earlier. "Hawkeye to BJ at the still."

Teller looked at Penn, "Sokath," he said, pleased and filled Bohb's coconut, handing it back to the Magillan.

Bohb turned to Temas, taking a drink of his vicinity flavored drink, eyes wide as he neglected to make it alcohol free, "So Mr. Laredo..."

Temas held up his hand, "Temas, since we're in the Bahamas."

Bohb nodded, "Temas... you seemed to be a man on a mission when you came in. What were you wanting?"

He took another long drink from his "fruit punch" and then looked at them all as the alcohol began to take an effect. "Lumina... I mean Luma was concerned that someone on the ship has disappeared. The problem is that nobody is missing from the ship's roster... roster. She thought you may be able to shed some light on the matter."

Bohb pulled up a chair, "You better sit down boy, before you fall down."

Temas sat down waiting to hear if they had an explanation. Penn looked at Teller.

"The Invisible Man, after the treatment. George Bailey after meeting Clarence."

Teller looked at Penn. He began to write some equations in the sand at his feet, "Egon to Veckman. Slimmer, the ghost. Zuel returns to New York, the Staypuff Marshmallow man." He said, puzzled.

Penn shook his head and went to the replicator, returning with another drink for both of them.

"Annie to Franklin Roosevelt.."

Jaton rubbed his temple. "Clear's one word for it. Clear as mud. I didn't grow up on Earth or immersed in its culture. Neither did I grow up on Tamar or Benzar, before you decide to change tack." Jaton leaned over the desk, and locked Penn with a menacing stare.

"You will give me a full explanation of what you were doing in the lab and why you didn't inform the science staff or command beforehand. You will do so immediately in Federation Standard with no flowery metaphors or cultural references that you know I won't understand. Otherwise..." Jaton's gaze drifted to Teller, his eyes narrowing. "Dr. Johnson, when Blackadder burned the dictionary."

Penn stared at the Trill before him blankly, having had no idea what he just said. His initial assumption was that he had suddenly had a form of a stroke and was no longer capable of making coherent sentences. Then he realized he was trying to speak Tamarian, but with no particular frame of reference the words were meaningless. He looked at Teller who seemed to be having a similar thought. There was a evil glint of humor in the Tamarian's eyes. Penn held up a hand and touched his own chest.

Looking at Alyl he scrunched up his face, which isn't easy for a Benzite to do, and said, "What?"

Penn began to speak at Alyl, as one might a child, "Look son, I will attempt to make this as clear as possible. First of all, you have made some radical assumptions, as have everyone in a leadership position, since this whole thing began, with the sole exception of Captain Sekal. You all seem to think that we have a military, or at least a Starfleet protocol background. We do not. No, we do not know or have any knowledge of what, how did you phrase it, time shifts start on this ship. Since we have come aboard we have not met anyone else from the science department, other than a brief conversation with a Vulcan - T'Shalaith was her name, until right now. There has been no schedule set to follow, so we simply implied that as long as we get our work done then the when did not matter. A most logical way to do science, if you ask me."

He looked at Alyl and shrugged, "Surely you don't believe that science works on a schedule do you? I won't even talk about what the words time shifts mean to my friend here."

"Secondly, we didn't inform anyone as our work was incomplete," Penn noted. "We have a lot of projects in the work, and we don't like to get people too excited until we've had real results. I guess I could ask you, why have you not asked what we are doing in all of the time we've been on board? What do you imagine we've been doing?"

He didn't wait for any reply. The question was basically rhetorical. Who in their right mind didn't understand time shifts in quantum mechanics. So he continued.

"As for what we have been doing in our lab," he emphasized the word "our", "has been working on projects within the realm of quantum physics. Should I explain the nuances of quantum physics to you? You do understand basic quantum physics don't you? Well, if you think you understand quantum physics, you really don't understand quantum physics. But that's a conversation for another time. Let me know if I go too fast, maybe you should take notes."

Suddenly Penn was at the Benzite Science Academy, teaching incoming neophytes to a whole new world that was about to open to them.

P'Rah had been stuck on solitary duty. He was happy for something new. "I'm here. What's going on?" P'Rah knew nothing.

"The Chief wants us to search these quarters. It's the home of those two crazy scientists that were playing phaser battle in their lab. Chief grounded 'em real good, but we don't know why they were doing what they were doing," he paused. "I need someone who has a nose for finding hidden things. I'm a knuckled ragger, not to elegant when it comes to searching, so hoped your unique skills would help me."

"My skills are catlike I can see what I can do."

Just then another security officer approached. Devers recognized him as crewman Suwubt. "Can I help you crewman?" he asked in his NCO voice.

"Sirs," he began.

Devers held up his hand. "Crewman, what have we told you. P'Rah and I work for a living, you don't call either of us Sir. Try again."

"Sorry Petty Officer, the Chief sent me to help you search the quarters," he said.

Devers looked at P'Rah. "Excellent, crewman. I need you to go to engineering and get the left lateral uv scanner module. And make sure they give me the kniffling pin this time!"

The creman looked at him with a suspicious eye. "Sir," he began as Devers gave him a wilting look. "NO questions crewman, I need that now, so on the double. Run. Take the Jeffries tubes, they are faster. Go."

Devers watched as crewman Suwubt started running towards the closest Jeffries Tube.

Turning to P'Rah, "I don't need a rookie messing up our search, not sure what the Chief was thinking."

He entered his security code and the door opened up. The two security officers were hit by the smell of fruit juice and alcohol along with hot, humid air. Peering in, they saw a beach with some chairs, and water lapping at the sand.

P'Rah looked around. "Who's quarters are these? I am not much for scientists but I like these guys." He was impressed.

"Doctor Gaillus Penn, a Benzite and a doctor Teller, a Tamarian, the ones who speak in metaphors and I have no clue what he said the one time I heard him talking to the Chief. It did piss off the chief. I don't know how they are."

Devers walked into the room, and stopped in his tracks. Sitting there was a Magillan in uniform. "Um, excuse me Ensign," he said. "We were sent to search this room on orders of Chief Lee. We didn't know anyone was in here."

Bohb had just gotten his entire uniform together, but it was still hanging a little awkwardly, which made the Magillan feel a little self conscious. He quickly stood up and began to straighten himself up.

"Who me? ... Uhhh," Bohb stammered as he pulled himself together, "Engineering officer Ensign Bohb. Wait a minute, who are you? And what are you doing in here?"

"Sir, I am petty officer 3rd class Hercules Devers and this is petty officer 3rd class Praha. We have been tasked to search this room on orders of Chief of Security Lee. May I ask, sir, why are you here? I was told these rooms were on lockdown? In fact, where did this beach come from? The chief ordered the scientists locked out of the computer systems. He was quite mad at being disturbed yesterday."

Bohb ruffled at the first comment, the sat back down in a backless stool. "Let me address your questions in reverse order. First of all, I really can't say where it all came from. I can only imagine that the good doctors reprogrammed their replicators and environmental controls. They are quite intelligent you know, and that really would be that difficult."

He stood and faced the security man, "Secondly, Petty Officer Devers, I was sent here by the second officer, Lt. Commander Gregory," he could throw names around as well, "to find out why they were firing a phaser in their lab. I just happened to hang around for the party afterwards. I was told to come, I was not told that there was a time limit, so I ... what is the phrase... hung out. They are quite fun to be around. Although they are very serious about their work."

He watched Devers to see his reaction, "And finally, when did we turn into a police state where security can enter a person's quarters, without due cause, and go through their personal belongings. That is NOT the Starfleet I signed out for."

Devers paused at the comments from the Ensign. When the 2nd officer's name was mentioned, Devers shook his head. Here was another command power struggle about to begin, and who always gets caught in the middle of those.

The Magillan finally raised the issue of due cause. Not being a lawyer, he fell back on what he sort of remembers from his training, "Sir, a ranking officer can, in the case of a clear and present danger, search any quarters to ascertain the level of he threat," he paused, "If you are raising an objection, I will return to the Chief and let him sort it out."

Bohb considered his proposal for a moment. He imagined how he would feel if someone went rummaging through his belongings simply because he irritated Chief Lee. He considered himself a good judge of people and these people were his friends.

"Do you know Doctors Penn and Teller, Petty Officer? They are not a danger to anyone. So I believe I am raising an objection. Please go back to Lieutenant Lee and have him provide evidence of their danger, and then he can ransack MY quarters. Until that moment I will defend their honor, and their rights."

Devers stood ramrod straight, "Sir, yes Sir. I will tell Chief Lee what you have said."

