

(USS Illuminar - Counseling Suite - COUNS Alaya Hammons, CPO Steven Hammons, COUNS Temas Laredo, 3O/CMO Cmdr Quinna Solice, and SFI Michael Weston - 1600)



Arthur opened the comm, "Snoopy to flight we are ready to transfer to Raptor on your mark.

=^=Roger that, Snoopy, you are clear to launch. Hope you fighters enjoy their new home.=^=

=^=Copy that. Should be back soon to help move the rest. Out.=^=

He changed the channel to include Vic. He tapped the controls and the fighter shot out of the Shuttlebay into space.

[Wheeeeeee!] was the cry from Lucy.

Snoopy shook his head and reported in, "I am clear of the Illuminar. Raid?"

"Raid copies," Vic said, "Raid is clear as well. Course is 135 by 291. Switching to Mars Flight control."

"Mars control, this is Maverick-2 requesting a flyby."

=^= Negative Maverick-2 the pattern is full. ^=^=

Vic nodded, knowing there would be some early morning sortee's being flow by the trainee's. Flipping his mike, "What do you think Snoopy? Shall we show the colors?"

Snoopy chuckled, "Well you know what they say, no guts no glory. Time to bust the tower?"

"You know it," Vic said, "Do you want the honors?"

Arthur smiled, "I've never been in the brig before."

Vic smiled "Its not so bad," he replied.

With that Arthur fired his engines and brought the fighter to the edge of the Mars atmosphere. With a sharp turn he skipped across the atmosphere. His heat shields began to glow as alerts sounded in the cockpit. He silenced the alerts and pushed the engines to full impulse.

He could only imagine the panic occurring inside the Mars flight control tower.

Vic locked in the coordinates and checked his radar. It looked quiet as he punched in the controls. He should be using his computer, but right now, some only back of the seats flying was needed.

Following Snoopy's trajectory, he skipped off the Martian atmosphere behind Snoopy's fighter. Another glowing heat shield. He waited for Snoopy to make his break, and he followed with a nice Chandelle. He knew some poor pilot was getting into his ship to give chase.

Vic moved to his fighter to within a meter of Snoopy's, off his left wing. As Mars control came into sight, they rolled to the side, exposing their still glowing heat shields to the control tower. When they were less than a kilometer away, they both flipped a switch releasing blue and silver smoke, the Illuminar colors, filling the thin Martian atmosphere.

=^=Maverick-1, Maverick-2. You are ordered to land immediately. Follow the escorts coming to intercept ^=^= came a voice over their com channels.

He leaned against a wall with a small bag in his hand, wondering who was responsible for making sure all of their possessions got transferred to the Raptor. The command crew and

other officers started to filter in and they all greeted each other, pleasantly as they waited for the appointed moment.

And then they were summoned to the pad and Tegian took a free space, took a deep breath and felt the familiar and somewhat unpleasant tingle as he was transported aboard the Raptor.

(USS Raptor - Deck 4 - Transporter Room 1 - CEO, Lieutenant Jg Tegian Pex - 0606)

Tegian held back and let everyone step off the pad ahead of him, preferring to follow behind everyone and take his time in absorbing the details of their new ship, even if it was temporary. The vibrations of the ship, even when it wasn't moving, was different from the Illuminar.

The Captain seemed to expect them all to follow, so he did, although he was itching to find Main Engineering and gain access to the specifications he couldn't get last night.

As they reached the Turbolift, the Captain dismissed most of them. "Understood, Captain." He watched the command staff take the turbolift as he turned to face his ACEO. "Ensign Ssvresh, please meet me in Main Engineering in 30 minutes." Tegian paused. "Consult with the computer in your quarters as to where that is."

Tegian waited for the turbolift and waited for the others with him to step in. "I presume we're all going to our rooms?"

(Reply Any)

Tegian addressed the Turbolift. "What deck are Officer quarters?"

[Senior Officer's Quarters are on Deck 3. Executive Officer's Quarters are on Deck 2.]

"Deck 3, please."

He looked at Ensign Ssvresh and Ensign Khatri. "I don't know that your quarters are on deck 3, but we can check."

(Reply Any)

(Posted by Keith)

[illegible]

(Mars - Utopia Planitia - Base Transporter Hub - CO, Captain Sekal - 0559)

The transporter officer was adjusting the touch screen controls as the command crew and senior officers gathered around the pad. Commander Solice was in attendance, having been released overnight after a notable cooling off period. Commander Verin stood with Sekal as his gaze traveled over the rest. Lieutenant Commander T'Mur, Lieutenants Pex and Trei, Major Murphy and 2nd Lieutenant Temerity were to one side while Ensign Khatri, Assistant CSO and Ssvresh, Assistant CEO stood with them. The transporter had been configured for all. Two individuals were absent, Commander Gregory who was now beyond reach and Lieutenant T'shalaith who been transferred off while at Mars. Sekal had been notified by Admiral Winters via communicator of the transfer, she had specified that an able veteran had been called up to temporarily run the department in her absence until another Chief Science Officer could be selected. Being over the staffing of the ship she was well within her authority. When asked who, she had been evasive, saying that he had been recommended by the head of Scientific

Research and Development and was already aboard. He had been notified to report to the Captain after their arrival.

Lieutenant Bohb and Counselor Laredo were in the second group and the Magellan bore the liquid crystal device carrying the being of pure energy known as Luma'lenai.

"Captain, the ship signals ready sir."

Sekal stepped onto the first pad and waited for the others to step up..

(Reply: All)

He glanced around, noting that all had taken their places then faced the officer. "Energize."

The familiar feeling of molecular deconstruction caused a tingle which spread throughout his body and the light faded then blurred before brightening again.

(USS Raptor - Deck 4 - Transporter Room 1 - CO, Captain Sekal - 0605)

The chamber came into focus, an azure lower wall with a light grey upper color scheme that nearly matched the silver of the Illuminar inset by a scarlet door. To the right stood the transporter chief behind the console. As the whine faded then died she stepped out from behind it. "Welcome aboard Captain. Doctor Gralen said to tell you that he is at your disposal whenever you are ready. Your things as well as those of your command crew and senior officers have already been sent to your cabins."

"Thank you Lieutenant, notify Doctor Gralen that I will meet him in the Ready Room in two hours."

"Aye sir."

With the others in tow he stepped through the door. The hallway was half again as wide as that on the Illuminar allowing three to walk abreast easily. The corridor alone immediately gave a perception of size beyond what they were accustomed. The blue topped by silver/gray walls was repeated here as it would be elsewhere on the ship. An Ensign in security colors stepped forward to greet them.

"The turbolift is this way, follow me please sir." Sekal nodded and matched his pace as he preceded them to the left. They passed five doors before the security officer turned in. Sekal stopped outside the door and turned to the others. "Commander Verin, and Commander Solice, Lieutenant Commander T'Mur with me."

(Reply: Verin, Solice, T'Mur)

He waited for them to pass before addressing the others. "You are free to check on your assigned quarters before going on duty at 0800. There will be a departmental briefing in the conference room at 0800 tomorrow. I expect all to be prompt in attendance, including our marine contingent. That is all."

(Reply: Pex, Trei, Murphy, Temerity, Khatri and Ssvresh)

He stepped into the lift and the door closed behind him. "Deck 1, Bridge."

(Reply: All)

(Posted by Charles Gatling)

[illegible]

(Mars - Utopia Planitia - Base Transporter Hub - CSec/Tac - Lt Commander T'Mur- 0600)

T'Mur looked around at the group assembled and noted the similar bleary eyes the Sienna had. Clearly, there had been little sleep since the report to board the Raptor. She had seen many of them on the Illuminar, closing out projects or gathering equipment that they thought they would need. Although this was not supposed to be a permanent move, one never knew. And who knew who would be caring for the Illuminar in the meantime?

A pang of guilt rang through her as she was unable to keep her promise to Luma. She had promised to personally ensure her safety. However, the captain was adamant about the command crew arriving as a unified front, which was logical. That didn't mean that she was completely helpless. She had done the next best thing. She had put Lt. Dogan on the protection detail. At first, the Brikar balked at the detail, stating that it was his job to protect the captain. T'Mur reminded him that she was with Sekal, and would take care of that if Dogan would take care of Luma. She trusted no one else. Dogan had nodded his agreement and had been in the presence of the LACD ever since.

When they were notified that the ship was ready for them Sekal stepped onto the transporter pad. Sienna was right beside him, and T'Mur was next to Sienna. She let her hand graze across Sienna's and sent her a thought.

::I find this exhilarating.::

She noted Sienna's effort to maintain her composure.

When everyone was on Sekal ordered the transport to commence, and she could feel the tingle of the transporter effect take hold.

(USS Raptor - Deck 4 - Transporter Room 1 - CSec/Tac - Lt Commander T'Murl - 0606)

When they came out of the effect T'Mur noted how similar the ship looked to the Illuminar, and how different. The transporter chief came from behind her console, which looked quite different. It was a holographic interface. T'Mur had spent time studying the specs of the devices and found them... intriguing.

They all followed Sekal out of the transporter room and into the corridor. The first thing T'Mur noted was the smell. It was antiseptic. It did not have the... lived-in smell that the Illuminar had when she arrived there. It also did not have the scent of roses. She wondered how long it would take Sienna to rectify that situation. It wasn't a permanent home, but it was home for now. They stopped at the turbolift and Sekal addressed the group.

"Commander Verin, and Commander Solice, Lieutenant Commander T'Mur with me," Sekal ordered.

“Aye, sir,” T’Mur replied automatically and stepped onto the turbolift as he ordered the others to settle into their billets and be on duty by 0800. T’Mur looked at Sienna, considering that this

was going to be a long day. She wondered if she should reset the ship's chronometers for a Vulcan day, just for today, then decided against it.

Sekal stepped into the lift and ordered it to the bridge. They all rode in silence, the only sound was the hum of the lift. When the lift stopped the doors opened and T'Mur stepped off. There were some crewmen already there, working at stations.

“Captain on the bridge,” she barked.

Everything stopped and the crew all came to attention. T'Mur took in her first sight of the new bridge and there was only one word that could describe how she felt. Awe.

(reply Sekal, Verin, Solice, any)  
(posted by Al Muir)

[illegible]

She felt the familiar tingle while beeing beamed over the Raptor. She mentally noted the meeting tomorrow at 08.00. She looked over at Zara and gave her a knowing nod. This was routine for her but is probably foreign to her. Ariel was willing to help Zara get used to the routine. She will talk to her later but for now she needed to get to quarters and rest. She left the transporter room to find her quarters.

(Reply none)  
(Posted by Edward)

[illegible]

Tavay missed the party and spent her time to herself. Meditation and exercise help her mind and body to be ready for the next mission. Of course, there was the odd game of Solitaire and poker. She baited her time before she could board. She wanted to board as quickly as possible so she could get the lay of the ship.

Since she was part of the bridge pool team, she also wanted to get a grip on all the controls on the ship. She needed to be ready.

At 0600, Tavay was in the Transportation hub. She was one of the first to report and her berth was assigned. The lower deck officer made her way to her spot. She was ready to dump her bag and explore.

When she made it to her assigned area, she noted that someone was already occupying her spot. Tavay then verified her Berth number with the one listed to the side. She poked the figure. "Hey there. Is it comfy in there?"

(Reply Shaw)

"I believe you are in my assigned spot." Tavay stood there stoic. A tight long braid slipped over her shoulder as she leaned over to look at the invader in her space.

(Reply Shaw)  
(Posted by Kris B)





(reply Temerity)  
(Posted by Murphy)

Ssvresh had made the most of the opportunity to be out of the close quarters and confinement of shipboard life. After a quiet period spent away from his crewmates, he had reunited with the senior officers for transport to their new posting: the USS Raptor.

After transport, the Captain had given them leave to check their quarters before the start of the 0800 duty shift. Ssvresh had lingered, content to wait whilst others in more of a rush had surged for the exit. Following behind, Ssvresh adjusted his kit bag on his shoulder and began walking towards crew quarters.

[illegible]

Sekal took two more steps then stopped to look about. There were five officers who had been engaged in diagnostics at various consoles, at the call they had turned and snapped to attention.

As they relaxed he allowed his eyes to roam. The Inquiry class nearly rivaled the Galaxy and Sovereign in sheer size and the control center was similar in overall area. There were two points of departure from those however in that in the center was a single command chair and the seats for the consoles which wrapped around its periphery were not immediately evident. This class of vessel was created for conflict and an offensive force in battle against enemies of the Federation and the perks or frills of those other classes were absent.

There were two consoles on each side of the main viewscreen. Aft of them were doors, the one on the port side leading to the Ready Room, they had just exited the lift door on the starboard side. Directly to the right of the command chair and beside the starboard lift door was the station for the first officer. The four closest to the viewer were single use stations while those to the command chairs sides and aft were split and could be manned by two. Four tactical consoles could be manned at once due to the multi-targeting fire control system.

Helm and navigation occupied their accustomed places forward of the command chair which was set on the upper level, those maneuvering systems were on the lower. The carpet for the deck was short and dark blue, the partitions and cabinets below the stations was a light, sky blue upto halfway up then the silvery grey color extended from that point to the ceiling.

The outside station screens were high with many readout sections and the lighting strips above were wide and bright.

"Carry on." The crewmen from tactical, engineering, helm and operations relaxed.

"Aye sir, welcome aboard." The highest ranked, a Lieutenant, junior grade in security, spoke then all returned to their duties as the CO continued moving across the bridge to the Ready Room.

Quinna stood behind the group. With her usual PADD in hand she felt like she was on automatic. Familiar faces filled her view as well as some new young ones. She was eager to get to sickbay and check out the facilities.

T'Mur waited at the side of the lift as everyone exited. Then she took a wide path to the tactical station and watched as the technician made some adjustments in the panels. The tech stopped and looked up at her from the floor.

"Lt. Commander," he said.

"Ensign," T'Mur replied, "I would like a copy of the installation and adjustment logs for the station when you get a chance."

"Absolutely, I will get them forwarded to you when I complete this adjustment."

T'Mur nodded and she moved back to the group. She fell into step beside Quinna. She really hadn't had time to check in with her recently. The reconnection with Sienna had taken much of her time, then the preparation for the move.

"How are you feeling?" she asked in a quiet voice.

Quinna nodded her head, "I am ok." she really felt like she had no other choice in the matter. She knew how to fake it until she could make it.

T'Mur raised an inquisitive eyebrow, but remained silent. When Quinna was ready to say more, she would.

Sekal's eyes were taking in every detail as they crossed to the port side. Illuminar was still pristine but familiarity noted imperfections that were cropping up over time. Raptor was new and while small imperfections were there one had to look closely as well as know WHAT you were looking for to spot them. It was to be hoped that the things that were not seen were working perfectly.

Sienna smiled as she silently surveyed the Bridge. She was enjoying the aura she was sensing - their people were curious, hopeful and excited in taking out a new ship. It made her so happy for the ship to be launched. She remembered the happiness and worry when the illuminar had launched. She nodded, taking it all in. She found herself looking for her station, with bright

[Berth 0912 has been assigned to Ensigns James Shaw and temporally assigned to Ensign Tavay]



"Thank you, Ensign. I hope your quarters are satisfactory. I don't think the other shift leaders are aboard just yet, but I wanted to ask you to start reviewing the specifications of this ship and get to know it. I'll call a meeting at 1400 for all of Engineering to encourage our team to wander this new ship and get familiar with it. And, we're going to need to book as much holodeck time as we can to run drills in maintenance and repair of the different critical systems of this ship as they're different from the *Illuminar*. Can you please look into scheduling for the three shifts?"

(Reply Ssvresh)

(Posted by Keith)

[illegible]

(USS Raptor - Deck 1 - Ready Room - CO, Captain Sekal, Commander Sienna Verin, Commander Quinna Solice and Lieutenant Commander T'Mur - 0615)

Sekal walked through the door which slid open before him. To his left was the ships' sideboard with four objects lying atop it. The anelurian crystal lay beside its base and the dark matter phaser beside its display mount. He would arrange them properly later. The replicator for the room was inset into the wall beyond.

He passed the couch against the right wall and the two chairs before his desk. The wall coloring was silver gray above sky blue and the padding of the chairs azure which continued the color scheme throughout the ship. The sideboard was of burnished oak as was traditional and the frame of the chairs, couch and desk were the same.

He stepped behind the desk and was speaking as he stopped.

"Computer, initialize." The pause lasted only a few seconds.

[Working. Identification required.]

"Sekal, Captain. ID #1495386."

[Identification accepted. Voice print match. Biosignature and command code verification.]

A square lit up outlined in yellow on the desktop, he placed his hand on it as he spoke. "Code 45 gamma, 33 blue, 9 alpha."

[Command code accepted. Biosignature match. Welcome Captain Sekal. Terminal personalization available.]

He gestured to the chairs. "Please be seated."

T'Mur stood at the door watching Sekal set up his computer. She looked around the room noting the color scheme and the boxed decor. Sekal would have this looking like his office in short order.

Quinna cautiously sat as she looked back. Truth be told, she would have liked to have been the one in the back. Her curiosity as to what would be coming next was about to reveal itself, she hoped. She looked around and started missing Dieter. Then she remembered that she was still angry with him. But immediately suppressed that thought.

Sienna followed, one of the last in. She moved to stand near T'Mur, brushing her hand against her mates'. She wanted to sit on the couch, but anxiety said be near her mate. She really wanted to hold her hand. Sy's eyes drifted to her friend, Quinna. Well, Sy wasn't sure they were still friends. She would try to fix that. Sy was glad that Dieter had taken the kids and left the ship, she hoped they would survive. The nightmares that had haunted her had returned, the memories of the Xenolithe were bothering her. They needed to do the scouting.

Sensing her mate's duality of needs, to be with her, and to be near Sekal, she followed Sienna and in the chair next to hers. This was a senior staff meeting, and she wondered why she had even been asked to be present. She had presumed it was because of a security matter. Besides, she had switched duties with Dogan. He was tending to Luma and she Sekal.

Sekal took his seat last. "It is time to fill you in on our objectives." He looked toward the replicator. "Number one would you prepare some drinks please?"

Sienna rose and ordered orange juice, coffee and scones. Carrying the tray back, she poured the orange juice for the vulcans, the coffee for her and Quinna and grabbed a blueberry scone. Sy offered the coffee cup to Quinna with a worried smile. She was worried by what was coming.

Quinna waved her hand as she passed on the offered coffee, "No, thank-you."

He placed his hands on the desk, his fingers interlaced. "Command has placed a classification of Alpha 1 on the priority of this mission. They have spared no details to place the most competent crew aboard to see it to its successful completion. I am aware that some liberties have been taken in that area." He looked directly at Quinna.

(Reply: None yet)

(Posted by Charles, Mel, Kris and AL)

[illegible]

(USS Raptor- Deck 1- Ready Room - CO, Captain Sekal, Commander Sienna Verin, Commander Quinna Solice and Lieutenant Commander T'Mur- 0625)

Quinna looked directly back at the captain, “It is all resolved.” She said with a monotone voice.

"Not quite." He noted. "At the recommendation of Vice-Admiral Aimee Bracken of StarFleet medical you will be taking on a limited duty during this mission. The counselor and Dr Kylee will monitor your participation. I believe the archaic term for this is light duty. While we gain the benefit of your experience and knowledge at the expense of your medical leave we will not be overusing you."

Quinna was taken a back. Did she just hear him correctly? With a calm confirmative tone Quinna verified in her terms, “So I am here as an advisor capacity only? With Commander Gregory gone, I assumed that I would be taking on his responsibilities.”

"Negative. You will be continuing as third officer and chief of medical with some restrictions, similar to Commander Verin's restrictions last mission. It has been decided to fill the role of second officer due to the loss of Commander Gregory; Lieutenant Commander T'Mur will be filling the position while on the Raptor."

Quinna took a back glance at T'Mur. It was then she realized..."Of course, it is, at this point, best for the mission and the crew." Quinna saw the logic of it all. So why was she not excused from the meeting at this point?

T'Mur was as surprised by the announcement as Quinna. She heard her friend acknowledge the logic of the situation, but her vocal inflection did not match her words. It was difficult to gauge how she should react based on the doctor's incongruity.

"I will endeavor to fulfill the obligation to the best of my abilities," she said. "And hopefully we can be able to support each other, Quinna. I know I will need your help."

"I will not let you down," Quinna replied not knowing what she actually can do.

Before Sekal got into the heart of the command crew briefing, Sienna quickly spoke, "One Admiral demanded we take someone who is supposed to be the FO when this ship sails as 2/O. One Admiral kept making commentary about my mate's fitness for command. " Ah the simmering anger still there. "The Captain put his boot down, rather firmly, on that particular bit of shenanigans" Sy moved back to her place, seated with her mate. She glanced over as Sekal began speaking.

"Secrecy for this mission has been absolute as you know due to the fact that preparations for war are ongoing." He held up one hand to forestall questions for the moment. "Fifty years ago the Federation was at war with an alien race called the Xenolithe and the carnage that accrued from it was considerable, hundreds of thousands died on both sides and the fleet was severely weakened. The civil war resulted within the vacuum caused by the conflict as Admiral Rodrigo Doenitz seized power. Because of this, details of a coming conflict with them have been highly classified."

T'Mur was aware of the Xenolithe, in that she had heard of them during her time in the academy. But there had been no confirmation by any of the instructors, nor had there been any information in the academy's database. She had chalked it up to the human propensity towards a... boogeyman. Now she knew why she was at this meeting.

Quinna needed to go back in her memory. She had heard of this outside of the traditions of the classroom. She could not put a finger on it but was sure that she would remember when she was busy doing other things.

Sienna's reaction was visceral - these beings terrified her. She tried to cover it with a quick sip of her black coffee. She was tired and running on fumes, but this was important, and she had an idea that she wouldn't be sleeping anytime soon.

"Why do we believe that war is coming?" He picked up his drink and took another sip. "Shortly after launch the Illuminar encountered Q, Lieutenant Commander T'Mur is the only one here who was not on the ship at the time and he has meddled in our affairs a number of times since but in that original encounter he imparted to Commander Verin some psychic abilities. One of those was precognition, we believe, an ability to foresee future events. At one point she had an experience, a vision perhaps. She brought this to Ambassador Mias, a noted telepath as you are aware and he positively identified them as being that enemy. Ambassador Mias had encountered these creatures before, Commander Verin has never seen them."



Sienna nodded, "The visions were bloody and graphic that I saw with Q's 'gift'." She made air quotes. "I saw what seemed like monsters tearing through Starfleet ships. I saw living ships screaming for freedom. I felt Luma's pain as one of the Xenolithe ripped her from the core of a ship I did not recognize at the time and take her from us. The Admiralty made it very clear that this was never to happen. We are to perform evacuation drills where Teras, one of our pilots - the Admirals were leaning towards Montero and Cordey - familiarize themselves with the path and steps to remove Luma from the core and get to the Hillary and escape with her while we provide a distraction."

The Captain nodded. "Our preparations have been ongoing since that time. We have made strides in technology to strengthen the fleet and gain technical superiority while working to gain or strengthen ties with allies. Command has decided that it is time to see how close our enemies may be. We will be backtracking the same route of invasion the Xenolithe used before in the most advanced attack vessel in the StarFleet armory to determine if they are, at this time, an imminent threat."

"And if they are a threat?" T'Mur asked. Quinna was about to ask the same question.

"This is a scout mission only, we are not to engage in battle unless forced to do so. We will be entering the Typhon Expanse to determine if they are there and no more. Those are our orders as they have been laid out to us. Are there questions over what I have covered so far?"

T'Mur knew how that kind of scouting mission typically went. The Borg was a prime example. Originally they had been a tool used by the Q Continuum to teach the Federation that they were not alone, and that they were not prepared. That nearly cost the entire human race their very existence.

"Captain, do we have any information on the Xenolithe?" T'Mur asked.

"Computer display file 3058, classified briefing." He spoke as he sat back, lifting his arms from the desktop.

The image of the Xenolithe appeared above the desk and rotated slowly to give everyone a good view then was replaced by a view of a Nageri, one of the slave ships.

"This file contains everything we know about the Xenolithe, including some graphic video and I will make it all available to you along with the record of the briefing. Another thing, a veteran of the war between the Xenolithe and Federation will be accompanying us, Commodore Tahl. He will be along as an advisor only. We will make use of his experience as we find it logical and beneficial."

He had thrown a lot at them. "Are there any more questions?"

"What about our Federation allies?" Quinna started, "Do they know anything or has there been any chatter between them?"

"Discussions between member worlds are ongoing at the very highest levels only in order to maintain secrecy."

"And our non-member allies?" From what Quinna is interpreting, this could ultimately become something bigger than the Dominion War in a short amount of time, if they are not careful.

"Such as the Klingons?" He asked in reply. "Command is drafting a communique to send to their high command on the hazard pending our findings. While we take the warning as well verified we can not use it as a basis for warnings to other entities who will wish to see the evidence."

Sienna spoke up, "The Xenoliths may not be a threat as of yet, but the Admiralty believes a threat is imminent, hence the shuffling of a tried and trusted command crew and a ship that has big enough teeth we can use to escape. This is not just a shake down cruise for a new ship, this has the potential to ignite a war. We will be holding a briefing once we leave UP's dock. We secured permission to share the graphic videos from the previous encounters with security and the marines. As the Captain said, we are under the highest security. Once personnel report aboard, there will be NO outgoing transmissions or transport off the ship without the approval of the people in this room."

“Got it.” Quinna responded as she made vague notes on her PADD. She wondered how much their resident spy already knew.

“Understood,” T’Mur echoed. She looked at Sienna and sent a comforting thought through their connection. She knew that her mate had been hiding something from her, and now she knew what it was. She also believed that there was more to her concerns that has been discussed in this meeting. The will have a more private conversation when they have time.

Sekal stood up. "Luma is due aboard soon and I must speak with Doctor Gralen. Any who wish to accompany us are welcome but it is time to make our way to the primary computer core. This meeting is dismissed. You may review the transcripts of the briefing at your leisure. The departmental meeting is tomorrow at 0800."

As the others filed out he spoke. "Computer, idle setting." Followed closely by activating his communicator. "Doctor Gralen meeting me in the primary computer core."

=^= Yes sir, on my way. ^=^=

Having done that he followed them out, he would arrange his office later.

(Reply: Any)

(Posted by Charles, Mel, Kris and Al)

[illegible]

(USS Illuminar - Deck 5 - Primary Computer Core Access - Lt Bohb, Lt Cal Dogan and Temas Laredo - 0630)

Bohb had spent a sleepless night in the Computer Core. He had tried to go to sleep but he could not get his brain to shut off. His biggest concern, at this point, was the fact that he had not overseen the modifications of the core access on the Raptor. The ship had way too many secrets that they were going to have to uncover. He, of course, had spent a lot of time already going through his holodeck schedule, and which systems he wanted to know first. He had already decided that the propulsion system was the most important.

Temas entered the room full of smiles. He had spent the evening with Luma in his head and it left him... influenced by her abundant joy.

"Morning Bohb," he said.

"Good morning Tamas Laredo," Bohb tried to match his exuberance, but it was a little too much for the Magillan. "Are we all ready to do this?"

"I am," Tamas replied. "Luma is a little nervous still, but also a little excited."

"Understandable," Bohb replied. "I think we're ready to go"

He lifted the LACD from its stand and draped the chain across his neck. As they stepped out of the Core Access Cal Dogan was waiting for them. He stood in front of Bohb and held out his hand. Bohb gave him a look and then decided the argument wasn't worth it. He handed Luma's container to the Brikar and the trio headed to the Shuttlebay

(USS Illuminar- Deck 9- Main Shuttlebay - Lt Bohb, Lt Cal Dogan, and Tamas Laredo - 0630)

"I have procured the shuttle Achilles," Dogan informed them as they entered the bay.

"Achilles?" Tamas asked. "The Greek hero with a single weakness?"

"Indeed," replied Dogan. "But beyond that he was impervious to harm. I thought it appropriate."

Tamas turned to Bohb and whispered, "I wonder what Cal would consider our single weakness."

"Rest assured," Dogan said without looking at his companions, "it would not be me."

They entered the Achilles in silence.

Dogan positioned himself in the back of the shuttle and Bohb settled into the pilot's seat. Tamas sat next to Cal and Luma. After Bohb did his preflight he opened a comm channel.

"Shuttle Achilles prepared to exit the Shuttlebay," he said.

=^=Roger that Achilles. You are cleared for launch.=^=

Bohb tapped the controls and the shuttle lifted off the deck plating and eased out of the Shuttlebay exit. Bohb brought the shuttle around to take a good view of the exterior of the Raptor.

"Do you two want to see this?" Bohb said, a little excited.

"I'm good," Dogan replied with complete disinterest. He didn't really care what the outside of the ship looked like.

"I'm interested," Tamas said. He clambered up to the cockpit and sat in the copilot's seat. He took a moment to take in the sight with awe. Then he closed his eyes and opened his mind to Luma, giving her her first view of her new "skin".

(reply Luma)

Bohb brought the shuttle to the bow and lined it up for docking in the forward-facing Shuttlebay. He opened a channel.

"Shuttle Achilles to the Raptor. We are on approach to the Shuttlebay."

=^=Affirmative Raptor. We have you in range. Approach and dock. You have the ball.=^=  
Bohb smiled, "Roger that. Achilles has the ball."

With that he flew the shuttle into the bay and made a perfect landing.

"Achilles to Illuminar, we have landed on the Raptor," Bohb report.

=^=Roger that, Raptor. The Achilles has been officially transferred to the Raptor.^=

Bohb closed the channel and then opened a new one.

“Bohb to Sekal, Luma is now on board the Raptor. We are headed to the computer interface now.”

(reply Sekal)

Bohb powered down the shuttle and the trio left the shuttle to head to the computer core access station.

(reply Sekal, Luma)  
(posted by Al Muir)

[illegible]

Ssvresh would have preferred quarters nearer to the engine-room, but even on this simple practicality the larger scale of the Inquiry-class vessel was felt. She was bigger than Illuminar and an altogether different energy flowed through her superstructure.

On walking into main engineering, Ssvresh was relieved to find a fairly standard Starfleet architecture – work bays arrayed around a central chamber housing the main warp core. The core itself pulsed with the gentle ‘at rest’ rhythm of a starship waiting, and the Selay Ensign found himself hypnotised for just a moment before remembering himself and approaching Lieutenant Pex.

“Reporting as ordered, Sir.”

(Reply Pex)  
(Posted by MCD)

[illegible]

A middle aged Betazoid was waiting beside one of the standing terminals in the chamber which was packed with instrumentation. He was wearing spectacles and his thinning hair was going to gray. He gave a crisp bow to the group and smiled.

"Captain and crew, welcome to the USS Raptor. I'm Doctor Holis Gralen, not medical no..." he gave a brief chuckle. "... PHD'S in high energy particle physics and quantum mechanics. I've just been assigned to the ship as chief science officer." His eyes twinkled as he looked toward

Sienna and bowed. "Commander, Lieutenant Commander welcome." His eyes had swiveled to T'Mur.

"Commander Sienna Verin and Lieutenant Commander T'Mur,..." Sekal introduced them. "My first and second officers."

Sienna stepped forward to make it clear that this was her love, her mate that this strange male was staring at. "Our Second Officer," Sienna spoke pleasantly, but heat in her tone, "Is Lt. Cmdr T'Mur, my wife." She gave Holis a fierce smile.

=^= Bohb to Sekal, Luma is now on board the Raptor. We are headed to the computer interface now.=^=

He answered the communication. "Acknowledged. We are waiting in the primary computer core access."

Sienna made a happy sound, "I really hope Luma likes the bigger skin. I wonder how long it will take her to spread through the bigger connections. Tamas said that she was excited and nervous all night. Ahem. Luma wants to make the engines go vroooooom." Sienna could not help giggling, enjoying Luma, even when there were clashes and she decided someone needed a 'time out'. "Oh. I need to have Lt. Greywolf bring the 'Time Out' Shuttle aboard." Sy put the thought into action and hit her commbadge "Lt. Greywolf, do me a favor and go back aboard the Illuminar to bring the 'Time Out' Shuttle aboard. Luma is likely going to need it and the devil that you know..."

=^= Yes sir. I'm about to launch the Edmund Hillary. I'll arrange for the other. Greywolf out. =^=

"Oh?" Holis asked. "A time out shuttle?" He gave the Captain a confused look.

"Luma'lenai, a non-corporeal being is being transferred into the primary computer." Sekal continued. "She is very fastidious concerning proper etiquette, primarily good manners and comportment."

Holis' eyes got big as he considered the implications. "Ooh! This is something I want to see. When did you acquire her? Is there anything I can do to help?"

Sienna took a deep breath and her voice was ice cold, "We did not acquire her. She is a thinking, real being, and the crew of this ship love her and her quirks."

Holis chuckled. "You misunderstand me commander, perhaps the proper way to say it would be when you became introduced to her...", He leaned back against the console. "..., at any rate I'll observe unless you find my presence here distasteful. You seem not to be very happy with me." He smiled again. "You are much like your mother." His dark eyes glinted. "I'm far older than I look and a 52nd fleet veteran. I'll say no more right now."

Sienna blinked, "Thanks, I think. My Mom's pretty amazing. "I didn't realize you might know her. I'm sorry I got my hackles up. Luma's pretty important to us. People think she's something like Data, an artificial being. She's not. She's as real as you and I." Sienna wasn't going to go into the truth of Luma's extraordinary abilities.

"I don't doubt the truth of that." Holis made himself comfortable with his mind carefully shielded. Commander Verin had been hostile and aggressive from the first introduction for whatever reason. Oh well. He shrugged and settled in with anticipation. He wasn't a powerful telepath, more like average, his brain tended much more to intellectual pursuits than expanding his mental repertoire. And little did the Captain know just how familiar he was with their forebears.

T'Mur stood in the background watching the interactions between Sienna and Gralen. Sienna had taken immediate offense to a phrase that he had used. T'Mur had learned long ago about how the imprecision of people's language caused a myriad of problems. Penn and Teller may be troublesome to comprehend at times, but the use of anecdotal references did eliminate misinterpretation of meaning, once you recognized the reference.

Moments later the door to the Primary Core Access opened and Dogan stepped in carrying Luma. He was followed by Bohb and Tamas. Nodding to his immediate supervisor he held out the container holding Luma.

"One Lenai, delivered as requested," Cal said.

T'Mur relieved the Brikar of his "burden" and said, "Thank Lt. Dogan. Please wait outside to ensure we remain undisturbed."

Dogan nodded/bowed, "Ma'am." Then he turned and exited.

Bohb had already set to work, inspecting the interface. Looking over his shoulder he said, "Who was responsible for setting the harmonics of the interface for the exchange?"

Sekal walked to the central core and a panel attached to it. "This control..." he pressed a yellow lit button and a panel opened, a framework rose from it. "... the temporary habitat snaps into it. Once it is in place it will retract back into the panel and Luma will be free to transfer her consciousness into the mainframe. When the time comes to extract her she merely has to return to it and once the transfer is completed it will extend for retrieval. The entire process is automated."

Holis was peering intently at the receptacle. "She actually bonds with the computer..." It wasn't a question, it sounded as though he were musing or recalling a distant memory.

Sekal spoke to him over his shoulder as Bohb placed the habitat. "Pure thought and consciousness doctor. Luma will become one with the ship in time through the computer system. She feels pain when the ship, her skin is damaged and is highly protective of those aboard her. Dr. Riven Mias finds her to be delightful."

"As do most who come to know her," Bohb added, as he watched the LACD disappear inside the machinery. He began to scan the mechanism to check the flow of power. The power coupling wasn't particularly necessary as his battery could probably power a good portion of the ship, although he did not want to test that theory with Luma's essence in play.

"Riven?" Holis gave a pleased laugh. "The old coot! The greatest mind healer of our time and a great friend as well. He never told me she was on your ship."

Sekal turned to face him. "Luma's existence is highly classified, he would not have revealed the knowledge unless he found it to be necessary."

[illegible]

(Edmund Hillary - Pilot Cockpit - Flight Ops/Conn - FSXO, Lieutenant Tempest Greywolf - 0645)

As flight squadron executive officer it had been up to her to coordinate the exchange of craft from the Illuminar to the Raptor. Two in the department other than pilots were currently on Illuminar managing the transfer ship side. Tempest had already done the preflight checks and was preparing to decouple when the comm activated.

=^= Lt. Greywolf, do me a favor and go back aboard the Illuminar to bring the 'Time Out' Shuttle aboard. Luma is likely going to need it and the devil that you know...=^=

"Yes sir. I'm about to launch the Edmund Hillary. I'll arrange for the other. Greywolf out."

That changed things but could be managed, she commed flight Ops. "T'shar, have Jelani prep the Leif Erikson after I cast off. As soon as I drop off the Edmund Hillary I'm coming back aboard to take her over."

=^=That's in addition to the fighters, correct?=^=

"You've got it."

=^=Roger.=^=

"Checks are done. I'm ready to depart."

=^=You are cleared for launch sir. Decoupling.=^=

There was a vibration that swept through the aeroshuttle as the clamps were detached. Tempest gave the engine a bit more power then activated the ventral thrusters for a short burst which pushed the craft away from the ship. The line of the lower hull of the saucer section was broken as the yacht detached and emerged.

Tempest was watching the controls closely until she had well cleared the hull then dove down and away from Illuminar before banking away from the ship and dock, she was well within the window given by space port control and there was no traffic in the area though a lot of chatter was coming through the comms now as she changed over to fleet monitoring.

She had time so she continued to gain distance as she held the turn until Illuminar came into the forward viewer. The ship looked dead nestled into the dock which wasn't a sight she relished and she gave a grimace. "We'll be back girl, we'll be back. Don't worry." Having made her goodbyes for now she turned about and ramped up the thrusters, impulse wasn't needed for a journey this short.

Illuminar was the first ship of the line she had piloted and would always be her first and favorite and she was going to miss her until their return. It felt like abandoning an old friend.

(Edmund Hillary - Pilot Cockpit - Flight Ops/Conn - FSXO, Lieutenant Tempest Greywolf - 0653)

As she rounded the curve of the dock her jaw dropped, the first thing that hit her was the scale. "Damn!"



Illuminar was nestled up to a repair bay on the back side while Raptor was on the far side from it and took up not one but two new build slots. Her breath caught after the exclamation.

Raptor was freaking huge! Nearly twice as long as Illuminar and proportionately wide and tall and the saucer section was poised like a hooded cobra forward of the warp pylons. Starfleet had completely departed from the detached secondary hull starting with the Galaxy class and this ship looked like what it was, a descendant of that engineering philosophy as the saucer swept down into it. The ship looked as powerful and lethal as she had been told it was.

The Edmund Hillary coasted well away from its starboard side as she moved forward and her practiced eye was picking out details. Phaser strips had been replaced on this class with phaser cannons which could cover a wide arc and had overlapping fields of fire. The two aft torpedo tubes were mounted below and between the impulse vents.

Having the shuttlebay forward was a large departure in design and it felt strange to take the Captain's yacht to berth in one. The Hillary wasn't used to that as it has always filled in its berth in the lower hull but space had been cleared for it and the fighters. The shuttlebay, despite the size of the ship hadn't been designed for so many craft and there was no secondary bay. Adding the Leif Erikson hadn't been calculated but she assumed there would be space, taking aboard visiting craft would have to be carefully controlled.

The aeroshuttle finally came around and she swung to face it, the shuttlebay was wide with a pronounced porch before it with a torpedo launch tube on each side. She leveled the Hillary with it and did a double take, there were four more torpedo tubes below.

"Holy hell!" The Raptor was loaded for bear! Not designed primarily for exploration, this was a warship.

She opened the comm. "Raptor flight control, this is Lieutenant Greywolf bringing in the Edmund Hillary."

=^=Copy that Lieutenant, Hillary is cleared for landing, bring her in. Berth 5, lighting it for you.=^=

She goosed the aeroshuttle forward until it cleared the awning and passed through the shimmer of the force field. Beyond was the bay and one of the berths on the left was outlined with lit glowstrips so she made for it.

"Aligning with the berth and setting down." She fired thrusters and maneuvered until the board lit green showing her in position then gave short, fast bursts of the ventral thrusters until it bumped against the deck. "Hillary is down."

=^=Welcome aboard. Technicians enroute to secure her.=^=

"Roger that." Tempest began powering down the impulse engine which had barely been used at more than idle. "I'll be in shortly. We have another shuttle to bring over."

=^=Another one? We haven't got the fighters aboard yet and have our own shuttles. I recommend leaving it aboard Illuminar.=^=

"Negative. First Officer's orders. We can swap out a type 8."

Quinna closed out the computer and took hold of her PADD. She made her way to bed where she started reading her notes for pending mission. She wished she had more information. What she really wanted was to talk to Michael and hear about his day.

(USS Raptor - Deck 6 - Crew Quarters - SO CPO P'Rah and Hercules Devers - 0705)

(U.S.S. Raptor - Deck 17 - Passageway - Marine - 2LT Charles Temerity - 0731)

As directed by Major Murphy, as the Marines arrived aboard the U.S.S. Raptor, they were sent to Deck 17 (or Marine Country). This was one of the few times Charles decided that rank should have some kind of privilege. With that in mind, he took it upon himself to assign rooms. The two largest rooms (Condos) he had set aside for MAJ Murphy (Marine Commander) and CPT M'Melar (Intelligence) as they were the two senior ranking. From there, the rooms that were the next size down (large one-bedroom apartments) went to the Second and First Lieutenants along with the First Sergeant and the four platoon sergeants. From there the small single bedrooms (one bedroom suite) went to the junior NCOs with the junior enlisted getting studio apartment

style rooms. What surprised Temerity was that they still had rooms to spare. While he planned top down, he gave out rooms lowest ranking and working up the chain with the idea that a leader should see to the troops first.

“Listen up, Marines! We have our own Mess Hall on this deck. Once you toss your gear into your room, go feed your face and then put your shit away. Myrmidons, Gunny Rembrandt and I will conduct room inspections after the 1400 leaders meeting.” He said to the Marines as a whole. Followed by a series of sounds of acknowledgement to his directives.

[illegible]

Penn looked around the lab one more time to make sure that they hadn't left anything of importance... or danger. They had left direct orders that all of their equipment had to be physically moved to the Raptor as some of their experiments would not survive the transporter process, and a couple might actually prove to have disastrous results to subspace if molecularly disassembled in a carrier wave. There had been grumbling, but they stood their ground. The last thing they needed was Lucky Day on a larger scale.

He walked over to Teller and said, “Kate McAllister to Peter McAllister about Kevin.”

“Samantha, her nose wiggling,” Teller he chuckled. He looked at his latest fascination, a double pendulum. He appreciated the chaotic movement of the device and watching it, he’d clear his mind for more detailed calculations.

All of the rest of the equipment was packed in Star Fleet issue cases. Teller had disassembled the still with reverence, each piece packed for the short trip, not sure how careful the stevedore's would be.

“John Bigbooté at Yoyodyne. Buckaroo Banzai and the electric shock.” He motioned around the room before shutting down the computer interface.

He patted his friend on the shoulder, “Stevenson. Robert Louis Stevenson,” he said, “Darmok and Jalad on the ocean.”

(USS Raptor - Deck 6 - Science Lab 5 - Esteemed Scientists - Dr. Gaillus Penn and Dr. Teller-1100)

Traveling to the Raptor by shuttle to watch over their cases, the two scientists finally made it to the Raptor. While Penn was directing the placement of the various cases, Teller began downloading their unique computer shorthand into the computer memory banks. His eyes sparked with glee as the still and bar were wheeled in. Shoving the men away, he took ownership and rolled them to the corner where he began to carefully unpack the important equipment.

When the last case was delivered Penn started pushing the men out the door. "Thank you for your services, gentlemen, but we have it from here."

"Are you sure you don't want any help unpacking, doctor," a petty officer said. "Some of this stuff is heavy."

"Stuff!" bellowed Penn. "Stuff?! Are serious, young man. This is not "stuff". This is all highly sophisticated equipment that, if you even touch it wrong could end your existence in this universe." He thought it important to keep the Lucky Day incident fresh in everyone's memory, even if they had no idea what it was.

The petty officer looked to see what Teller had been unpacking and looked at Penn, "Sphisticated?"

Penn, with shove, replied, "Very."

With that the door closed and Penn pulled out a box and put it beside the door entry mechanism. He pressed a small button and a red light come on. A moment later it flashed green. With a look of satisfaction he pulled the box from the wall and moved over to his partner. He had been carefully setting the pieces of the still in the order in which they needed to be attached.

He put a hand on his shoulder and said, "Johan Wolfgang Goethe, in Slazberg."

(Reply none)

(Posted by Al and Tim)

[illegible]

(USS Raptor - Deck 19 - Tactical Offices - SFI Office (Catagena) - SFI - Lt. Michael Weston -0900)

Weston stepped into his new office and looked around. It was, as expected, quite barren. He actually was comfortable the way it was. There was a desk to the side with computer station by it. Lastly there was a table against a wall that held a box with his belongings from the Dungeon.

He had always been amused by the name others had given his office on the Illuminar. It was quite fitting as it was in the lowest level of the ship, and few really knew what horrors occurred in it. But now his office was not in the bowels of the ship. It was not centrally located either. He had become part of the tactical department. What next? Strategic Operations? He laughed at himself. ~Noooooo, I don't think so Michael. Stick to what you know best.~

He went to the box and rooted through it for a moment. Then he pulled out the one item that he would never have had on display as field operative. It was a holo-image of Quinna, smiling at him. An image he had captured of her soon after their first meeting... before everything else. Smiling at the image he moved over to his desk and set it on the back corner.

As he stepped back he chastised himself for the self indulgence. Just having that image put Quinna in a certain amount of danger. Displaying it was almost foolhardy. Once his enemies discovered her importance to him she would become a target, or worse, a pawn. He moved to tip the image over, but couldn't bring himself to do it. He would have to take his chances.

"You're getting soft buddy," he told himself.

His finger fished around in his pocket and touched the data chip that the Director of SFI had given him. He pulled it out and shrugged his shoulders. No time to start work like the present. Sitting down at the computer station he put the disk in the access port.

[Access denied]

Michael frowned, "Computer, access all files of Michael Weston. Access code gamma epsilon 579 alpha 01."

The computer processed the order then repeated, [Access denied.]

~Damn it!~ His access to SFI records had been denied since his burn notice. He'd hoped he'd have gotten some access, but clearly he was still in the outs with SFI, as far as anyone other than the director was concerned.

He fished back into his pocket and pulled out his gold card. He inserted that into a second slot and tapped in a series of code commands. He sat back and waited. Three minutes later the computer beeped.

[Access granted.]

He smiled and withdrew the gold card. He pocketed it again, knowing that now he had the access he wanted... and more.

"Display the data from the disc," he ordered.

Suddenly the screen came to life, displaying images of the Xenoliths in battle. At first Michael watched with interest, then in horror. What the Xenoliths were capable of doing was... incredible. But what they were able to withstand was frightening. Then there was video detail of the Xenolith ships. The Negiri. They seemed near indestructible. Finally there was a video of a lone fighter craft. It seemed to be doing a kamikaze run. At the last minute it shifted directions and vented plasma as it turned away. Spinning on its access it turned and fired into the plasma ball and the screen flashed, then went blank.

"What the...?" he said, cursing under his breath. "What happened next?"

"What happened next, Mr. Weston," a voice said behind him, "has never been discussed in over forty years."

Michael spun out of his seat and turned in a combat stance to face an aging Zakdorn. He did not relax his stance, but looked at him with curiosity.

"I apologize for entering your office without knocking," the Zakdorn said, "but you really will want to upgrade the locking system on your door. It wasn't even a challenge."

"Who are you old man?" Weston asked threateningly.

"Ahhh," the Zakdorn said, "I am Commodore Tahlmari. Strategic Ops... retired... sort of."

"Retired?" Michael questioned, starting to relax his stance.

"Semi," Tahl said with a chuckle. "Apparently I'm a little too old to be any use in the fleet. It's a young man's universe."

Tahl limped over to a chair, and Michael finally noticed the cane he used. The Zakdorn sat down and took a deep breath. "Everyone seems to think old means useless, but they're way too nice

to tell me that so I've been allowed to keep a rank that holds no real authority, and do a job that nobody else has wanted to do. And that was, keep track of the Xenoliths. Now am all useful and stuff." He chuckled.

Weston had never met a Zakdorn like him. They were typically a serious and dour people, devoid of fun beyond playing outlandishly complex strategy games. This one seemed positively jolly.

“Are you sure you’re a Zakdorn,” he asked.

Tahl burst out into a peel of laughter, “My friend, I am one of a kind, as Zakdorns go. And I will leave it at that.” There was no need to bring up his Moroni syndrome, of Bob. “I see you managed to break through the access code and see what we’re up against. I figured you would. Your reputation precedes you. So I thought you would be a good place to start. I am here to help.”

“Well,” Michael said, “I have questions.”

Tahl chuckled again, “I’m sure you do. Get me a glass of cold apple cider, and we can chat.”

Michael nodded and moved over to the replicator. “Apple cider?”

“My wife introduced me to it a long time ago, and I got a taste for it,” Tahl said. “It is a reminder of her.”

Michael brought the glass over and handed it to Tahl. “Commodore Tahlmari.”

“Please, just Tahl,” he said taking the glass. “Only my homeworld calls me Tahlmari, and well, let’s just say we’re not on speaking terms and leave it at that.” He took a sip of the sweet cider with closed eyes and smiled. “Mr. Weston, I think Alexandra would have like you. You have a ... vibe about you.”

"Call me Michael," Weston said, "and I guess that's good."

“So you have questions?” Tahl said. “Ask away and let’s see how smart you really are.”

(reply none)

(posted by Al Muir)

[illegible]

(USS Raptor - FO's Office - FO Commander Sienna Verin - 1000)

Sienna had just made it into her office when she had a tirade from Mars Flight Control. From what little that Sienna had managed to understand in the unrelenting torrent of words, several of the fighters had ignored Mars Flight Control and had shown off. Viewing the recording, Sienna was amused, though she had covered her reaction. She had to have words with those idiots, that much was true.

=^= Quartermaster. Can you send a gift basket to Commander Jane Riley in Mars Flight Control - an apology from the Captain. =^= Sienna knew her job - this would be taken as an appropriate bribe, and the official record would be forgotten. Idiots. She needed to come up with an appropriate punishment.

=^= Commander? ^= He asked in suprise.

"More of the crew are being idiots about having their leave cut short and I need to placate the woman."

The Quartermaster laughed, =^= I have the perfect wine. I'll take care of it. =^=

Sy shook her head as the connection was broken. This Quartermaster, this guy was excellent and seemed to understand. Now to spank her naughty pilots. But dang, their flying was amazing and Sy was damned proud.

But they were still idiots.

"Lt. Greywolf, I just had the most amazing rainfall of words from Mars Flight Control. I'm sending an appropriate present to the Commander, have you dealt with your naughty boys?"

=^=Not as of yet, Commander but it's priority one.=^=

"Will it be good?"

=^= Yes, Ma'am. ^= Tempest replied proudly.

"I leave it in your capable hands then. Them boys did some damned good flying. I sent the non-existent recording to you." Sienna cut the connection and finally allowed herself the release of howling with laughter. She made sure to save the recording. Her Brother would enjoy the flying; if he'd been out there, Trip would have been having fun too...and protecting his buddies after as Sienna was doing.

(reply any)

(posted by Mel)

[illegible]

(USS Raptor - Deck 12 - DCO Ensign James Shaw - 1100)

James was dragging this morning. After the late night, or early morning followed by the rude awaking by one of the new crew members. The Raptor had been quiet with only a small crew running the checks on the system. Now it looked like an invading army.

His team was on Deck 12, familiarizing themselves with the ins and outs of this deck. They were running a speed drill moving from point to point as quick as they could while in their protective suits and carrying their kits. They were hot, but if this was an actual emergency, they would be protected.

Zixx was in the lead as they moved through the superstructure from the Main Deflector Control System to the Antimatter tanks. Once they passed the tanks, they would take the Jeffries Tube up to deck 11.

Zixx made it to the ladder and started up. V'loth was second and Savu third. Shaw was the the last on the ladder.



As he started climbing, he heard some banging. "Lookout below," Zixx called. Looking up, Shaw saw a tool kit falling down towards him. How it missed V'loth and Savu was dumb luck as it bounced off one side of the tube and then the other.

Suddenly, the kit hit a cap and knocked it off. As the cap fell, white foam started pouring out of the nozzle that was revealed.

James took it full in the face, fortunately his suit protected him from the worst of it. The ladder became slippery and he lost his grip. Sliding down, he hit the deck and slide out into the main hall. Looking up, covered in white fire suppression foam, was an audience looking quite surprised.

(reply any)

(Posted by Tim)

[illegible]

(U.S.S. Raptor - Deck 17 – OIC Office - Marine - 2LT Charles Temerity - 1350)

As with all things done in the military, time was an interesting creature to say the least. If you are early, then you are on time; if you are on time, then you were late; and if you are late, then you are screwed. As a platoon sergeant, Charles attended all leader meetings with his platoon leader; with that in mind, he had Gunnery Sergeant Sonja Reddington attend the meeting with him. When they arrived, he was glad to see the other three platoon sergeants there as well.

Sonja Reddington was an Amazon of a woman standing at just over 185cm and weighing in at almost 91kg at five percent body fat with bright fiery red hair and a Celtic complexion. She could be calm and collected and moved with a ballerina's grace and she could be one of the single most fearsome foes anyone could have to deal with. She wasn't the best when it came to firearms, let alone simply good, but she excelled in knife-fighting and had the record to back it up. In 15 years in the infantry, she had racked up almost 75 confirmed kills (60 of which were with bladed weapons). And Charles was glad she was on his side.

(Reply: Murphy, Any)

(Posted: Charles Raschen)

[illegible]

(USS Raptor -- Sickbay -- Deck 5 -- CMO/3XO Commander Quinna Solice -- 1435)

After an extended nap in her quarters, Quinna was now standing in the sickbay of the Raptor. She was looking around with the crew unpacking supplies. She walked over to Stev. There were many things she needed to discuss but all in due time.

“Dr. Kyllee,” Quinna said quietly. “We need to talk.”

(Reply Kyllee)

Quinna took a deep breath, “Look you know I am not ok. I know I am not ok, but I have to suck it up. This is what I am proposing.” Quinna started, “You are in charge of the medical aspect of sickbay, take on the daily activities and such.”

(Reply Kyllee)

“If you agree I will take on the administration. Reports and such. You can take the CMO office here and I will be working in my quarters, I will come in only in case of an emergency.” Quinna said.

(Reply Kyllee)

“What does sickbay still need to be ready to go?” Quinna asked.

(Reply Kyllee)

(Posted by Kris B)

[illegible]

(USS Raptor - Deck 5 - Sickbay - ACOMO - Dr. Kyllie Stev -1436)

Stev Kyllee had been in the fleet, well one fleet or another, for a long time. His experience on the Rhyne's had slight transposed him out of time by about 20 years. But the equipment on *this* ship was way beyond anything he had dreamed up. He had his nose buried in the PADD with the instructions of the biobeds and he was fascinated by them. He couldn't wait to try them out.

"Dr. Kyllee," Quinna said quietly. "We need to talk."

Stev jumped slightly, startled, nearly dropping the PADD, “Sweet mother of....”

He looked round, grasping the PADD and then smiled. "Quinna! You should see this stuff."

Then he saw the look on her face and sobered up. "Are you ok?"

Quinna took a deep breath, “Look you know I am not ok. I know I am not ok, but I have to suck it up. This is what I am proposing.” Quinna started, “You are in charge of the medical aspect of sickbay, take on the daily activities and such.”

He wasn't sure what was going on here, and looked at her with concern "What do you mean?"

"If you agree I will take on the administration. Reports and such. You can take the CMO office here and I will be working in my quarters, I will come in only in case of an emergency." Quinna said.

Stev shook his head, “That is *not* what I told the Adkiral you needed, Quinna.”

“What does sickbay still need to be ready to go?” Quinna asked.

"It needs its Chief seeing patients," Stev said, looking at her with a mixture of irritation and concern. "But if you mean supplies, we're still taking inventory. Once we know what we have, we'll know what we need."

He looked at his boss and said, "Look Quinna, as your doctor, and as your friend, I really think you need to stay in sickbay. Light duty does not mean no patients. I know what I'm talking about here."

(reply Quinna)

(posted by Al Muir)

[illegible]

Her reply was calm and, if nothing less, emotionless. He knew that she had already turned her emotions off. That too was an easy out, for now.



(Reply: Murphy iyw, Any)  
(Posted: Charles Raschen)

[illegible]

James was tired. It took his team almost three hours to clean up the fire suppression foam and repair the damage that the falling toolkit had caused on Deck 12. It was quite a mess. Fortunately nothing was too horribly damaged and the repair was pretty easy.

He had filed his report of the incident with his training officer and hoped that was the end of the situation. After getting cleaned up and checking his suit, he came down to the holodeck and started up his program "The Parting Glass," which conjured up a traditional Irish pub, complete with dart hall and a small stage. The name was derived from a classic Scottish song, adopted by the Irish. After today, James needed some home away from home time.

James sat on a stool sipping his drink and waiting for his turn. His opponent had just finished his throw leaving himself with 134. James was at 140 points and needed a good throw (triple 20, triple 16 and a double 16 to end). He picked up his darts and stepped to the line. He let the first dart fly and \*thwak\* he hit a triple 16. Concentrating, he took aim and let the second dart fly. It landed just outside the triple 20 ring. Making a quick calculation, he needed 72 to close out and no way he could do that one one dart, especially since he had to double out.

Taking aim, he threw the third dart and hit the triple 19. He walked up to retrieve his darts and marked his score, 15 points left.

His opponent threw his darts in quick success and closed out the game. James shook his hand and headed back to the main bar while the next person stepped up to play darts.

There was a band playing some classic songs. The crowd was joining along in the chorus.

The singer motioned to James to come on stage. Not shy, he stepped up on the stage and pulled out his penny whistle, joining the band.

The song finished and the singer motioned to James to take the microphone. He nodded to her. "This song is about the Monto, which was the largest and most famous red light district in Europe in the late 19th century to the middle of the 20th century. It eventually was shut down."

He turned to the band who started playing, and James began to sing, his rich tenor filling the room. "

Well if you got a wingo. Take her up to ringo. Where the waxies sing o all the day.  
If you've had your fill of porter, and you cant go any further give yer man the order "Back to the Quay"

And take her up to Monto, Monto, Monto. Take her up to Monto, langeroo, to you."

The crowd began to stamp their feet and joined in the humorous song.

(Reply any, IYW)  
(Posted by Tim)

[illegible]

(USS Illuminar - Counseling Suite - COUNS Alaya Hammons, CPO Steven Hammons, COUNS Tamas Laredo, 3O/CMO Cmdr Quinna Solice, and SFI Michael Weston - 1600)

Alaya and Steven had arrived first. The Counseling Suite was Alaya's home, although she was more diplomatically focused and often did behind the scenes negotiations when the Illuminar was headed into potentially bad locations. But this, this was hard. Alaya had known that something bad had happened. She was a strong telepath, and she lived with Leeza. So when the scuttle-but that the Captain's yacht had returned without Leeza and Commander Gregory, Alaya had waited. She had asked Luma for more information but Luma didn't know anything either.

Clutching Steven's hand, Alaya sat on the extremely comfortable couch, and cursed it's comfort. She didn't want to be comfortable. Alaya wanted to hurt, and she wanted to do that hurting in a private place. Looking up as the other's entered, the blue haired betazoid's haggard face and tear streaked eyes said she knew that the child that she had been beginning to accept was gone.

Steven's face was a mask, the rumor mill had already been grinding hot and heavy since the return of the captain's yacht and the showdown on the bridge. Luma didn't have to say anything, the tongue of at least one of the bridge crew had already been wagging. He flexed his hands and shifted in his seat as he sent a heated look toward the door.

Temas entered the chamber from his office to find the Hammons sitting together. He had received the same warning from Luma. Trouble was brewing, and the feeling he got from Steven concerned him. So much anger.

"Steven, Alaya," I... it's good to clear up the news and not work off of rumor and innuendo." Tamas spoke as he entered.

The haggard look on Alaya's face said it all. "I didn't know that I had bonded with her, but I guess it was inevitable. I felt her die, Tamas. She was there one moment and then was not. I..what kind of parent was I for not knowing she had snuck off...again?" This had been Alaya's reasoning since she sensed it, since she realized that the child that they were trusted with had outwitted them again. She turned back inwards, shielding her thoughts from Tamas. She couldn't calm her mate down, and she couldn't handle her emotions.

The worst part was that no one thought they needed to know until this..whatever it was going to be. A fiasco perhaps. Alaya didn't want to think like an adult. She wanted to scream and rage as well.

Temas nodded, "Leeza was her own person. She was a three year old with the input of a symbiont that had lifetimes of experience. I understand what you're saying, but it really was not a reflection of you as a parent. Leeza was a ... rascal."

The words that Temas spoke washed over Alaya as Quinna and Michael made their arrival.

Quinna had wrapped her arm around Michael's arm. They were each other's strength. She looked at him as they walked. She had a data chip in her hand. But not sure why she brought it. She felt like she needed something. "Are we sure we are ready for this? I am not but with you I will be." Quinna said, "Say the word and we can just leave." Quinna was still dealing with her loss and still had that empty feeling. She was comfortable with Michael but she had not been with anyone else.

Michael shook his head, "No, they need this and deserve this." His mind was a fool with his loss. In one fell swoop most of what he cared about had just... disappeared. His friend, his child, and Leeza, the sister he had come to love as much as himself. He knew what the Hammons deserved. And it was much more than they were going to get.

He reached up and put his hand against the door chime. The door opened and they stepped inside.

Quinna took in a deep breath and stepped in with Michael. She looked to see Steven and Alaya and then she looked at Temas. "Hello, everyone." Quinna said.

Alaya looked up at Quinna then back down at her hand, clutching Stevens. Her grounding. This was Temas' territory, he was orchestrating this.

Michael noted how the room was set up. Steven and Alaya were sitting in a pair of chairs, side by side. There were three other set. One across and one on each side of them. It was a very strategic setting. The first move was Michael's. Sit across from the Hammons and face them, or sit next to them and try to come together. He led Quinna to the seats across from them.

Quinna noticed that Alaya turned her eyes away from her. Quinna sat in one of the pairs of chairs. Her stomach was starting to not feel so good. She looked for a focus in the room. Something she could look at. She straightened up and vowed not to let out any emotions. She gave Michael an extra tight squeeze on his hand. A million things were going through her brain. 'What do I say?', 'Should I say something?', 'I am here to support Michael.' Quinna turned her head to look at him. Like her, no one could see his pain. No one but Quinna.

Temas was not surprised by Weston's choice, but had been hopeful of a different one. "Michael, Quinna, thank you for coming. Perhaps you should start the conversation."

Michael nodded. The look from Steven spoke volumes. But it was well deserved. He sighed and then started.

"First, let me say that Leeza had *not* been invited along," Michael said, "but like always she seemed to know what was going on with Dieter and wasn't going to be dissuaded. None of us knew what was going on in Dieter's head. We all just knew he was hurting and wanted to help."

He stood up and began to pace behind the chair. The words started to come fast and he could not stop them.

"When we arrived at Deep Space 9 we somehow got taken into the wormhole of the prophets. Aggie was there with them. First they took..." He stopped to choke back his emotions. "First they took the baby. Just reached out and she was gone. No concern to how it would affect Quinna." He looked at his partner and a tear tried to fight its way out. He fought it back.

Steven glanced over at Quinna, something needed to be said before this went any further. "I'm sorry ma'am to hear about this, I really am. I have no clue as to how deep those feelings are running right now. We both want you to know how sorry we are and if you ever need anyone to talk to..." His voice had trailed off as he looked back toward Weston.

Quinna looked at Steve and back to Alayna. She nodded. "Thank you. I'm..." Quinna was a bit relieved. She had assumed that things were going to be more heated and accusatory than compassionate. She is still working through the rawness of everything.

Michael looked at Steven and Alaya, gratitude in his eyes. He recognized the look he received, not quite as welcoming. He was used to that.

He continued his story, "Then they said that Leeza was out of time. That she had to go with them. If she didn't she would surely die. I know it's a little hazy on detail, but it was all so surreal. What do you say to a god who says that to save her life you have to lose her now."

"A god? You're kidding right? Who made them \*\*\*\*ing gods? Who gave them the authority to play god? Why the \*\*\*\* are you even condoning them playing god with other people's lives? They're \*\*\*\*ing aliens. An advanced form of alien sure but they are no more gods than Q!"



Steven snapped to his feet and gripped the back of his chair, turned and threw it with all his strength into the bulkhead behind them leaving a scuff mark then rounded on Weston. "You dare call those \*\*\*\*ers gods after what they did to Quinna? And they just waltzed off with a toddler! Stole her clean as a whistle. How dare you deign to give those deviant sons of \*\*\*\*\*es that kind of authority, Bajoran religion be damned!"

Quinna jumped with Steven's outburst. It too her by surprise. He was the opposite of what she was. Quinna softly almost inaudibly spoke, "please, don't."

Michael nodded and looked into the eyes of the infuriated man before him. Instinctively he went into alert, but he refused to defend himself. If Hammons decided to start hitting him he decided to let him. It was no worse than he'd been doing to himself.

"Yes," Michael said plainly, "I did just that. Maybe it was the shock from the baby, maybe it was the realization that wherever she went I knew she was with Dieter. Maybe it was simply the look on her face as she pleaded with me to let her go. It was as though she just... knew it was what needed to happen. But yes, I just let her go."

"Yeah! A three year old should know what's best for herself, right? Isn't that why she was placed with someone who would take care of her rather than a gaggle of uncles who let her steal rides on the Captain's yacht? Thank the real God the captain has shut that \*\*\*\* down! But not before the damage was done." Steven was standing directly in Weston's personal space now, his face scarlet.

Michael had little to say to that. It was indeed the reason he didn't take on Leeza himself. He had known that his lifestyle was not conducive to raising a child. But the three of them had pretended that they were still on the Rhyne the whole time. And for most of that time it was just the two of them, after Dieter was injured.

He didn't look away. He was almost daring Hammons to hit him, wanting him to. That way his body would hurt almost as badly as his heart did. He could feel Steven's breath on his face. The flames of his emotions burned at him.

"Okayyy," Teras said, stepping forward, "let's just take a moment."

He had already known Michael's feelings. Although he was a master of masking them under his bravado, and his rare ability to keep most telepaths from sensing them, he was, at this moment, a man on the edge. As was Steven. But he could sense no real urgency to violence. Only the anger and loss.

"Maybe we should hear from the ladies?" he suggested, as a cooling off period.

Quinna was trying hard to hold it in. She knew she needed to hold it together, she had no choice but he just attacked the one she loved. And though she knew that Michael could completely handle himself, Quinna had to now say something. She quickly stood, but almost regretted it. She was now face to face with Steven. "I am sorry for your loss. I came in here knowing that you blamed Michael," Quinna leaned over to look at Alaya, "and me for this. But we are all suffering here. Leeza may be the reason why we are here and the only one you care about but she is not the only one that was lost. If you have something to say then say it, but don't take our heads off while doing it." To no surprise. Quinna lacked the emotions that she normally would have had prior to this. Quinna stepped back to take her seat again.

Alaya sat there and listened to Quinna's plea for understanding. "Leeza did what Leeza wanted. We tried. But Gregory and you, Weston, enabled her. You gave her access to the ship that a 3 year old shouldn't have and she used that enablement to do as she wished. The Captain gave her to me and Steven to balance the 3 Uncles. But, Leeza didn't want to be with us, not really. She gave us no real respect." Alaya was going to say more but Quinna needed to speak and the Counselor in her allowed it.

"I am sure we all know that Leeza did not like me. She would sneer at me. She always found ways to keep Michael and I apart. But there was a different side of her. A more mature and decisive side. More of what you would see when a total blending between host and symbiot. Michael was right on what he said. I was not conscious most of the time but when I was, I saw it." And a tear, an emotional sign, fell down Quinna's cheek as she put a hand on her empty belly. "We are all grieving parents here." Quinna looked for her focus. She needed get her emotions under control.

Michael slipped a supportive arm around Quinna and gave her a squeeze. She was working hard to hold herself together, and being exceptionally brave. It only broke his heart just a little bit more.

"We might all be grieving, and I am sorry they took your child too Quinna. But I felt the moment they tore Leeza from this reality. I felt her die." Alaya looked up at Weston, "I do blame you. Gregory was incapable of thinking, and when you realized Leeza was aboard you should have turned that damned ship around and brought her back to her home. If you had done that, she wouldn't be gone. What the blessed hells am I supposed to tell the Trill Authorities? The ones that demand quarterly reports?" Alaya stood up, going to Steven and putting her hand on his shoulder.

"To you, Leeza was a child, to Steven and I she was a daughter; but to the Trill authorities Leeza was an experiment that should have been terminated and the symbiont returned to a more suitable host. The agreement was that as long as her body continued to adjust to the symbiont, that she stayed alive." Alaya was concentrating on work, on the one problem that she could think about rather than the pain of losing a child. Alaya was disassociating to handle the grief.

Hammons felt the hand on his shoulder but it didn't calm him down, he was well past furious at the whole situation. He had doted on Leeza when given the chance and those had been few and far between. She had bonded with the men that had been on the Rhyne with her and spent all the time she could with them. Steven hadn't been given a fair shot. And would never get another.

At that point, with the verbal lashing that Quinna took, Quinna fears were realized. She was to blame. Quinna lost her focus piece. But she could not find it. She started breathing heavily to keep from having a breakdown. Her hands trembled. She held onto Michael.

"I envy you," Quinna choked out. "The brief moment you got to spend with your daughter and I am sorry. It is all my fault you do not get to have more. I was selfish to only think about myself these days, instead of thinking about getting everyone else instead. I have no excuses. I have this though," Quinna tossed the data rod she had been carrying on the table. "I do not know how or why but I have a message, I want you to see. And I know I don't have rights to ask anything any longer..." Quinna started to choke up. She was trembling now. "...I do not wish to be around when it is played and I would not like it to go past this room." Of course she was talking about the message from Dieter.

Steven glanced at the data rod then back to her and nodded. He then stepped away from Weston before giving him a hard look. "I don't know why Quinna is taking blame for any of this but I do know one thing. You had best stay out of my sight for a while. At this moment all I can think of is giving you the beating of your life for taking Leeza along on a joyride to relive old times and I won't be forgetting it anytime soon. The only reason I'm not taking you apart right now is that she doesn't need to see it in the state she is in."

Michael shrugged, "I am where I am Steven. And if that's what you want, you can have it. I won't deny it to you." His gaze didn't waver. It wasn't defiance that reared its head but resolution.

He'd gotten used to being hated, but in the past he had always known that he did what he did for a greater good. Even now, he knew that what happened with Leeza, painful as it has been, was for her best interest. He only hoped that one day they'd see it too.

"Quinna is... a woman with her own mind and makes her own choices," he said. "Sometimes even I can't fathom her reasoning."

Alaya glanced over at Quinna and was alarmed by what she saw. "Quinna needs several weeks of leave, and a personal series of therapy tailored to her. This has obviously brought up a lot of issues in her that need to be resolved. As being involved... I am not a good choice for Quinna's continued care. But you Weston, I blame for Leeza's death." Alaya took a deep breath and stepped into Weston's personal space and aimed a punch for his right chin. She put her weight behind it, intending it to hurt. Steven had thought that he'd be the one to hit Weston. Alaya was shocked by her behavior. How much of this anger was Stevens?

Weston saw the punch coming. He steeled himself for it. It had good weight and follow through. She'd obviously been taught to punch. But she didn't really have to skill or strength to knock him back. His chin absorbed the blow and twisted his head back. He could feel the muscles in his neck strain slightly, and the welt that already started to form.

Quinna looked with wide eyes. As she could feel the punch through Michael.

He looked into Alaya's eyes, defeated and accepting of her anger and hatred.

Temas was taken by surprise by the sudden surge of animosity and violence that came from the woman he'd come to admire and respect.

"Goddammit Weston! You were supposed to be the adult there. P'Rah's a playboy, Dieter wouldn't've known responsibility if it'd smacked him in the face. Quinna was pregnant. Why didn't you... You know what?" Alaya sighed and the emotion just went out of her. "I know why you didn't. You guys thought you had the perfect family built up." Even the bouncy blue curls that Alaya was so proud of looked lank and disheveled. "And now it's all -gone-. What the blessed goddess do I tell Trill?"

Uncaring of Steven's support, Alaya collapsed against the wall and slid to the floor. The look in her eyes was haunted. She looked exhausted. Alaya had always known that being part of the Fleet would change her, she had never anticipated this scenario. Alaya was past reasoning.

Michael looked down at Alaya and said plainly and coldly, "You tell them exactly what happened. Due to my reckless decision making and carelessness Leeza has gone to where she is no longer their problem."

He paused and then looked at the data rod, "But know this, that Leeza is safe, and loved, and..." he fought to maintain his own composure, "no longer their problem. If they wish to exact some punishment out of me, I will accept that as well."

Hammons glanced at the data rod with fury in his face. "Maybe that makes you feel better Weston, use it all you want but I won't forget."

Michael sat back in his seat, all energy left him. What more could be expected? Now, all that was on his mind was taking care of the one person left in his life. The one person who still didn't hate him. And much like Alaya, he couldn't figure out why.

The pain and torment in the room was almost more than Temas could handle. He could feel Weston's self isolation and his own heart felt for him. He could feel Quinna's desolation and loss, hoping he could help her through that. He could feel the anger and betrayal in both of the Hammons and understood how they felt.

They all had a chance to speak, but nobody was ready to listen. There was just too much pain. He had hoped that in their gestalt that they could help each other through their respective pains. But it appeared that what they needed, more than anything else, was time.

Quinna stood, "That is enough!" Quinna put a massaging hand on Michael's red cheek. Things have lost control and it was time to bring it back to the proposed intent. "Let's get a few things cleared. As for leave, not happening. I am going to be around. I have already implemented a new recovery plan. Apparently you did not check the message I sent to the counseling team. Secondly, Leeza is not dead. Forgive me for not knowing all about Betazoids... about the range of your senses. I don't understand." Quinna held Michael tight. "Please watch the video message on the data rod." Quinna started to lean against the back of Michael's chair. Her hands touching him. "I cannot seem to make things better. Hate us all you want. But promise you will watch it." Quinna pled, "and no more physical attacks."

Steven reached for and snatched up the storage device then pulled Alaya up with him, supporting her limp form while he glared around the room. "I'll watch it but that doesn't mean I'll believe it. This sounds like some sort of propaganda from the wormhole aliens. At any rate I'll form my own opinion. It's time to leave my love." His eyes locked with Quinna. "You still don't

understand. How could I put any blame on someone who's gone through such a loss?" He shook his head.

Quinna leaned over and whispered into Michael's ear, "I cannot stay for much longer." It was much more of mental fatigue than physical fatigue."

"Goodbye counselor." Steven snapped as he walked Alaya from the room.

Quinna looked at Michael and Temas and then followed them out the door by herself. “Wait.” Please wait a second.”

Steven stopped as he closed his eyes but he turned anyway and looked at her. "What doctor? What more is there to say?"

“Look, believe us or not, I don’t care. Call me a liar to everyone, go for it. But please take what you see with an open mind.” Taking a deep breath, “The wormhole aliens took my family, my child, one of my best friends, along with Leeza, but that recording... I cannot put my finger on it but there is something there.”

Steven's anger dissipated suddenly, leaving behind only sadness. "Look, I don't know why you keep wanting to take part of the blame but I don't blame you and I'm not calling you a liar. I'm calling the wormhole aliens liars, demagogues and scum. That's what I'm doing. I'm glad it brings you some sort of peace."

“Oh, don’t get me wrong. I am insanely hurt and jealous, and you will see why. I may never be at peace again.” Quinna turned and went back into the office and let them be.

As the door closed Temas could be heard saying, "I'm glad you stayed. We should talk."

(Reply: None)

(Posted by Al, Kris, Charles and Mel)

[illegible]