

FAILED VENTURES  
FAILED VENTURES  
**DISPATCHES**  
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FAILED VENTURES



GLENN MAITLAND

“Just as Bennett called for screens, the pirates unleashed a wave of energized plasma which slammed into the *Oliphant*’s secondary hull. The small ship pitched wildly off her axis and the enemy vessel jumped to warp and was gone.”

From Cor Coroli Convergence page: 31

“One afternoon while patrolling the trade routes between Argus Prime and Betazed, *Victory* was thrown off her axis by an unidentified battle cruiser. The unknown ship had warped into a position just nine hundred kilometers off *Victory*’s starboard bow and in so doing, had caused the *Victory*’s inertial dampeners to overload as a displacement wave washed over the ship. There had been no advanced warning of the enemy’s approach. No sensors had picked them up and none of the automated defensive systems had engaged.”

From Convergence page: 28



THE GREATEST UNTOLD  
ADVENTURE OF THE LOST AREA.

GLENN G G MAITLAND

# CONVERGENCE

<https://trekkiefanfiction.com/stories/convergence/>

## **DISPATCHES: FAILED VENTURES**

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[convergenceauthor@outlook.com](mailto:convergenceauthor@outlook.com)

“Dead men close no deals.”

Rule of Acquisition Number 15

## Dispatches: Failed Ventures.

The following fragments of an alien subspace message were intercepted by Starfleet listening beacon SLB 226 in the Hovian Cluster of the Maxia Sector a few years before Commander Brian Harris hijacked the *USS Sheaffe* NCC – 0564:

“...to it then then then then Kago, it's your latinum...num...num...zzzpht...”

“Grand Nagus, I have to share some news about Daimon Prac and the *Peravar*...”

“What about Prac?.....fizzzzzztttpt....”

“...I have to report that Daimon Prac and the *Peravar* were, were lost.”

“Lost? Lost, how? Lost like you can't find....”

“...popfzzzzzt...why were you and Prac operating so far from.....zzzpfft....”

“...phhhzzzzt...well, we were seeking prof prof profitable opportunities to more efficiently pay-off...zzzpffttebt...to you, Grand Nagus.....zfphtttt....”

“.....fzzzzffpht....acting as pirates....”

SLB 226 is monitored by Starbase Nine, the Sector Command Post for Commodore Pept. The base communications officer, a xenolinguistics specialist, felt the syntax of the fragmented alien transmission was interesting. Instead of discarding the badly garbled fragment she included it in Starbase Nine's daily data package. That package was encrypted and routed to Starfleet Command by way of a secure network of subspace relays which link directly to the Logistics and Strategies Compound (LSC) on Earth.

The data forwarded to the LSC by SB9 was not flagged as urgent. The request to have the fragmented alien transmission forwarded to the Communications Labs at Starfleet Command was improperly coded and never read. The data was archived and stored in the LSC secondary data servers.

At some point just prior to the events that led to the Treaty of Algeron the archived record of this intercepted transmission was deleted from the

databanks of the LSC by a Lieutenant Commander Todorokov, the facility's second in command.

# **DISPATCHES: FAILED VENTURES**

**A short story**

**By: Glenn G G Maitland.**



# TOWER OF COMMERCE

There were a hundred and seventy-eight different words for rain on Ferenginar. Dezoc rested his chin in his hands and gazed out of his office's small window on the thirty-eighth level of the Tower of Commerce and sighed wistfully. The Sacred Market Place below, the shops and lending halls of the capital city, all spread out to the horizon in a dull brown and grey blanket of uninteresting low chunky buildings. Everything was slick and muddy. Today's rain was an unremarkable frippering spray.

Dezoc had worked hard to buy his way into the Ferengi Commerce Authority. It had cost him every slip of latinum he had, but he'd managed to become the youngest Liquidator since the time of Grand Nagus Fak nearly eighty years ago. He still owed his patron more than two dozen bricks of latinum. Recently he'd prosecuted a consortium of black-market tube grub ranchers and won his patron their livestock and fields, which had greatly reduced his outstanding debt. A dramatic move from the FCA field office to the Tower of Commerce itself quickly followed. His patron, a quarter shareholder of the off-world Dabo Licensing Authority, had helped put Dezoc in an enviable position of power and earning potential as a reward for his good work.

He was just about to send down for a cup of hot snail juice when the transact terminal on his desk began flashing. Someone had just transferred two strips to the Board of Liquidators to make a call. Dezoc sat back in his plush chair and adjusted his gold-trimmed headskirt before opening a channel...

"Your transfer has been acknowledged. You've reached the Tower of Commerce, I am Liquidator Dezoc. What is your business?"

The transact-terminal's orbed viewer illuminated in glorious waves of colour and revealed a serious looking Ferengi in an Alliance uniform. The man didn't look much older than Dezoc himself, but he had a serious expression on his face and the unmistakable tattoo of a full Daimon was proudly displayed over his right brow. His lobes, Dezon noted, were well formed.

“I’m trying to reach First Clerk Trorta, tell him it’s Daimon Kago of the *Kreggie*.”

“This is Liquidator Dezoc. You don’t get to simply call the First Clerk, Daimon. Now, I’ve acknowledged your transfer of two strips and a receipt has been issued...”

“Daimon Kago. Look it up, I’ll wait.”

Dezoc growled at the man’s rudeness but knew better than to bare his teeth. He placed the stern Daimon on hold and entered the name he’d been given into his terminal. Seconds later a class three reconciliation report appeared on Dezoc’s screen. He silently tabbed through the largely redacted file and found it curious that his clearance level was insufficient to access the entire record. The account associated with Daimon Kago was set up to be automatically serviced every third quarter...

Dezoc reestablished two-way communication with the Daimon, who’d spent the last three minutes on hold listening to the latest dirges sung by the Grand Nagus’ favourite vocal artist, Mek.

“Daimon Kago, thank you for holding. Does this regard your outstanding balance of thirty-eight thousand, six hundred and four bricks of latinum...?”

“I’ve paid the required fee to contact the Tower. Now, get me Trorta, or I will personally see to it...THAT YOU’RE OUT OF A JOB!”

Dezoc put the Daimon back on hold. Mek was now singing *Golden Slugs & Latinum Bugs*, his latest hit.

# MAURUADER KREGGIE

Just outside of Hypeeria, edging upon Ferenginar's home system, the Marauder *Kreggie* held station. Kago waited in irritated silence as the somber tones of the Ulang renowned Mek flooded the bridge. Drak, Kago's navigator, happily swayed back and forth to the music at his station. Kago was about to chastise the fool when Dr. Sovas stepped out of the vertical transport lift (VTL) and scurried over to where the Daimon was standing at the ship's official transact terminal.

"I've prepared the sensor data as instructed, Daimon."

Kago turned away from the blank screen and looked at Sovas with a discerning eye. He didn't like the doctor very much, but the man commanded the highest fee in the fleet, so that was something.

"Very good, doctor. Do not transmit the package until I say."

"Of course not, Daimon. May I ask if we plan on returning to Ferenginar now, given what's happened?" Sovas stood slightly stooped with his hands clasped together just below his chin.

Before Kago could answer the doctor, the dulcet tones of Mek suddenly ended and the pinched face of the small lobed and tedious Liquidator Dezoc was back on the transact terminal's screen.

"First Clerk Trorta is with the Grand Nagus in the Chamber of Opportunity. He can't be disturbed. If you're unable to do business with me, you'll just have to absorb the cost of this call and try again at a later time."

Kago drew a long breath. He was tired of dealing with this little man. Doctor Sovas squinted and squeezed his hands together even tighter, interlocking his fingers. He'd already seen his Daimon's wrath first-hand and had no interest in seeing it again.

"Put me through, Liquidator. This concerns the Grand Nagus as much as it concerns Trorta. Do it now."

# CHAMBER OF OPPORTUNITY

Grand Nagus Hririn sat low in the Guilded Throne of Gint studying the daily market reports, the previous day's profit summary from the Board of Liquidators and dwelling on the troubling Cardassian Account. Hririn was once a fit, attractive young man of keen instinct and impeccable taste, a master negotiator and cunning businessman. Now, nearly eighty years on, Hririn was a slight and bent old man with sagging lobes and failing eyesight.

"Nagus, the Cardassian Account has fallen into arrears. We must discuss this. Gul R'aka sends word that he requires an interest-free extension to get *back-on-track*, so as to continue servicing the debt in good faith," sneered the First Clerk.

"Good faith!? Good faith? Eh! How far in arrears are they?!" asked the Grand Nagus as he rubbed his drooping brow.

"They've missed the last two payments, Nagus. At 18% interest, plus the contracted 10% penalty, that's two hundred and thirty thousand bricks in interest alone. If we foreclose on the debt, we'll want to use the Tzenkethi." Trorta handed his Nagus the report and kept any comments about entering such a risky loan with a destitute government to himself.

Hririn glanced at the tablet, then dropped it to the chamber's floor where its screen shattered and burnt out. He'd leveraged his own vast fortune along with a hefty percentage of the Treasury's "liquid" assets to arrange the eight hundred million bar loan nearly five years earlier. With interest, the outstanding amount now surpassed a billion bars. A default on the part of the Cardassians would shake confidence in the Ferengi Markets...and most certainly ruin him. The promise of opportunity was still there, but time was latinum.

"If we use the Tzenkethi we'll be lucky to see ten strips to every bar owed..." growled the Nagus absently. There was also a curious request he'd received from the Romulan female concerning the Central Command...perhaps there was something to exploit in that?

From a gold trimmed transact terminal mounted to the yellow marbled wall behind the wormwood table where the First Clerk had laid out

dozens of data tablets, came a distinctive chime. Trorta rose and answered the call quietly.

“Nagus, forgive me...”

Hrarin squinted up at Trorta.

“Daimon Kago wishes to speak with us.”

# THE KREGGIE

Aboard the *Kreggie* Kago was growing more and more enraged. Doctor Sovas had quietly summoned Togg, the First Officer, to the bridge. Togg had been Kago's close friend since childhood. Had Togg's father not defaulted on a business loan, Kago would have gone into business with Togg instead of Prac.

As it was, Togg was saddled with an outstanding business loan of several thousand bars after his father died of coronary failure and was left all but destitute before ever getting the chance to seek out opportunity and profit for himself.

"Daimon, have you contacted the First Clerk?" asked Togg, stepping off the VTL.

Kago turned to see his First Officer and friend approaching.

"Togg, your duty shift doesn't start for another six hours." Friend or not, Kago wasn't paying out overtime.

The transact terminal flashed and a request for a further ten strips of latinum appeared.

"Ten strips!?" roared Kago as he balled his fists in rage.

Togg quickly squirmed past his Daimon and entered his personal code into the transact terminal's totalizer. A happy chime sounded. The transfer was acknowledged. Before Kago could protest, Grand Nagus Hrarin himself appeared on the transact terminal's viewscreen.

Kago, Togg, Dr. Sovas and Drak all bowed and raised their hands above their heads, wrists pressed together and palms facing up to show the proper reverence to their Nagus.

"Daimon Kago...if you want to make an early installment on your outstanding debt, you don't need to bother me here in the Chamber of Opportunity, eh?"

"Grand Nagus, thank you for finding the time...psst! Psst!" Kago shewed away Sovas and Togg.

"Get to it then Kago, time is latinum!"

"Grand Nagus, I have to share some news about Daimon Prac and the *Peravar*..."

"What about Prac?" Trorta suddenly stepped into frame.

Trorta didn't need to consult any of his tablets. Kago, his partner Prac, the Grand Nagus and Trorta himself were all partners in a shared venture which had yet to pay off. Kago still had forty odd thousand bricks outstanding. Prac had a good deal more.

"The First Clerk will be silent!" roared Hrrarin from his throne.

Trorta grimaced, then turned and bowed low to show contrition. Without a word he backed out of frame. Kago shifted on his feet and looked across the bridge to where Sovas and Togg had retreated to where the Nagus wouldn't see them. The news was bad.

"Daimon Prac is nearly a month in arrears on his latest installment against his seventy-eight thousand, six hundred and...and..."

"Fifty-nine bricks, Grand Nagus," came Trorta's voice from somewhere out of sight of Kago's screen.

"...eh?! Oh. Well? What about it Kago?"

"Grand Nagus, I...I have to report that Daimon Prac and the *Peravar* were, were lost." Kago glanced over at Sovas and motioned for him to man the sciences station.

"Lost? Lost, how? Lost like you can't find him?"

Kago explained that Prac had targeted what he believed was a freighter and had been destroyed. The *Kreggie's* long-range sensors had monitored the engagement from a distance. After Kago explained that his Marauder was too far away to intervene before the alien craft destroyed the *Peravar*, he gave Sovas the order to transmit the *Kreggie's* sensor logs from the event. Sovas complied, but wondered aloud who would be reimbursing him the ten slips of latinum transferring the data directly to the Tower of Commerce had just cost him; only the official transact terminal provided legal receipts.

Grand Nagus Hrrarin sat silently, listening to Daimon Kago's account of Daimon Prac's final moments. At the simple table to the right of Gint's Golden Throne, First Clerk Trorta downloaded the sensor logs sent from the *Kreggie*. As Kago continued to explain how Prac had met his end, Trorta pulled up the contract the two Daimons had signed when taking command of their respective Marauders.

"Tell me, Daimon...why were you and Prac operating so far from established trade routes?" asked the Nagus.

“We...well, we were seeking profitable opportunities to more efficiently pay off our debt...to you, Grand Nagus.” Kago’s stomach twisted.

“You were acting as pirates!”

“Nagus! We, we were simply...”

“Do you know how much one of those Marauders cost the Alliance to build? Eh!? Do you, Daimon Kago? More latinum than you will ever see, I can assure you!”

Kago stood sullenly on his bridge. Sovas had retreated to the VTL and returned to his lab two decks below. He would address the matter of the ten slips later, when the Daimon wasn’t so...engaged.

Togg had taken the station next to Drak, but both men remained perfectly silent. There were twenty-five heavy Marauder Class ships in the Alliance Fleet...twenty-four now that Prac and his ship had been *lost*. Each ship was fifty percent owned by the Treasury, a quarter financed by the Board of Liquidators and the remaining twenty-five percent divided amongst their Daimon, and various private investors seeking a share of whatever profit any given ship might generate.

In the case of the *Kreggie* and the *Peravar*, both Daimons had entered into a high-stakes agreement with the First Clerk and the Grand Nagus himself, to control a significant portion of the final twenty-five percent of their two Marauders. The Nagus already received a rich stipend from each Marauder, being tied to both the Treasury and the Board of Liquidators. For Trorta and the Daimons though, the opportunity to reap huge dividends was unique and worth risking personal fortunes.

Trorta appeared on screen again and was seen handing a data tablet to the Nagus without a word. Hrarin examined the tablet and sneered. “Four hundred, thirty-eight thousand, six hundred and fifty-six bricks of gold-pressed latinum, Kago. Eh!”

“...excuse me, Nagus?” Kago was dumbfounded.

“That’s what you owe. Prac’s outstanding debt, plus the uninsured value of 25% of the *Peravar* taking depreciation into account, and both the First Clerk’s and my own lost investment, plus projected earnings... four hundred, thirty-eight thousand, six hundred and fifty-six bricks. Eh, seems conservative.” Hrarin smiled and licked his thick lips with a dark, rotten tongue. An opportunity might be blooming.



“That’s outrageous! That’s four hundred thousand bricks added to my...”

“Eh?! Heh-heh...no, no. That doesn’t include your debt on the *Kreggie*, that’s just what you assume now that Prac is dead! A contract, is a contract...”

“...is a contract, but only between Ferengi.” Kago finished like a school child who’d just memorized the Rules of Acquisition.

# THE HIGH-RISK SYNERGY OF OPPORTUNITY

Hrarin put the tablet aside and squinted at the primary view screen mounted across from the Guided Throne which was wired to the transact terminal. The six smaller screens displayed live market updates. Gree-worms were underperforming.

An opportunity was indeed emerging. Hrarin snapped his meaty fingers and stabbed a thick, blue-nailed finger at his First Clerk. Trorta grunted and handed the Nagus the Romulan dispatch received late the previous evening.

Kago and Prac had been lowly servicemen when they'd proposed a partnership with Trorta and the Grand Nagus. Kago had sold his family's slug juice bottling plant to raise fifty thousand bars. Prac had brought an annuity his mother had been awarded after Turta, Prac's father, had been crushed by a viewer lobbed from the Tower of Commerce; a viewer Hrarin himself had thrown through a window in a fit of rage nearly nine years earlier. The Nagus was not charged with any crime, but the Board of Liquidators ordered him to provide Turta's widow with an income for the rest of her life.

For fifty thousand bars and a suspension of the annuity, Hrarin agreed to make both men Daimons in the Ferengi Alliance's fleet. The negotiations on the shares of the *Kreggie* and *Peraver* followed. Each new Daimon got an 8% share in their ships.

Hrarin reread the request he'd been sent from the alluring Romulan female he'd met while attending a recent Dopterian Information Trade Expo on Hephaestus. She'd called herself *Dar* and said she represented a Romulan trade group. Her height and preference for wearing clothing were somewhat appalling to Hrarin, but her skill at Oo-mox was incredible. He'd given her access to his private communications channel, should she ever want to do business with the Alliance directly.

She'd made a somewhat odd request. She needed an intermediary to introduce an alien to a member of the Cardassian Obsidian Order, an arrangement for which the Central Command would be very grateful. The issue of Legate R'aka's arrears might somehow be alleviated by this introduction. Kago's failure, thought Hrarin who smiled and grunted at

Trorta to quietly contact the thirty-eighth floor, might yet be turned to a profitable end.

“Now that we have that established, Kago...Prac’s collateral is forfeit! The annuity is dissolved! Heh-heh-heh...” On the screen Kago shifted on his feet but remained silent.

*“The bigger the smile, the sharper the knife,”* thought Kago to himself as he remembered the forty-eighth Rule of Acquisition.

“You and Prac were given license to privateer along recognized Alliance trade routes and seek out opportunities in approved sectors, eh? What you’ve done is pirate and invade forbidden regions!”

Kago winced. The Nagus hadn’t had an issue with *Kreggie’s* haul from a Bolian freighter only three months earlier. Kago had targeted that ship and with Prac backing him up. They’d successfully pillaged her hold without incident. Shortly afterwards a second vessel of unknown origin arrived to render aid. Kago had left the scene, but Prac made an attack run on the scout-class vessel but found nothing of value...though the vessel’s technology was impressive.

“Some years ago, the Cardassians negotiated a substantial loan from the Treasury to finance some new warships to help stabilize their Central Command and press their interests on Bajor...eh?”

“Car-Cardassians? What have Cardassians got to do with...” Kago stammered.

“Quiet! The Cardassians owe the Treasury hundreds of millions of bricks, which they now say they risk defaulting on. I don’t need to tell you how difficult and costly it could be to collect on a bad debt from the Cardassians, eh?”

“Of course not, no, no of course not Nagus...” Kago’s mind was reeling.

Trorta nodded at Hrrarin from his desk with a broad smile on his face.

“Heh, there! I’ve annulled the annuity and seized Prac’s lands. His mother is being evicted as we speak. You owe me a lot of latinum, Kago. I’m well within my rights to seize everything you have and sell your desiccated remains!”

“Nagus! I only wanted to service my loan to you as best I could! I...I...”

“Silence! You’re going to take one man with you in a shuttle and head for Lothra Prime, where you’ll contact a hoomon named *Moddax*.”

“Hoo-hoomon?”

“The people you two idiots attacked, eh?! The people who destroyed Prac and my Marauder!” The Alliance had yet to make significant in-roads with the Hooman *Federation* Sectors.

Kago shook his head and began stammering, but before he could begin renegotiating his sizeable debt, the Nagus continued...

# HYPEERIA

The Nagus leaned forward in his seat and his old, wrinkled face filled the *Kreggie's* small transact terminal viewer. "The *Kreggie* will remain in orbit of Smeego Two. She's mine, until you've earned her back."

There were two Hypeerian moons. Smeego Two, the larger of the two, was a hollowed-out rock that boasted spacedocks and secure births for the Alliance's fleet.

At the operations station aboard the *Kreggie* several proximity alarms began to ring out. Drak reported that the Marauder *Perarr* was fast approaching with orders to escort the *Kreggie* to Smeego Two.

Kago whined and shifted from his place at the transact terminal to the forward portion of his bridge where Drak and Togg were frantically signaling the *Perarr* their intention to comply.

"Kago...Kago!" shouted the Grand Nagus.

Kago groaned and forced himself to return to the transact-terminal. "Nagus..."

"You'll do as you're told, or you'll start compiling a full audit of your personal holdings for the Board of Liquidators!" Hrarin leaned heavily on his staff and pushed himself up from the Guilded Throne so that his face blurred Kago's small viewer.

"Yes, of course Grand Nagus! I want to resolve these issues..."

"Heh! I'm sure you do! You've cost me a lot Kago, eh?!"

"Nagus, I'll have the shuttle prepared right now, I'll sign any contract you think is fair!" Kago flapped his hand towards Togg.

"Contract? There's no contract, Kago! You've already broken your contract! You'll go and find this hoomon and then you'll go to Retek City on Rondac Three and find a man called *Ligan*."

"A hoomon called *Moddax* and a Cardassian called *Ligan*?"

"That's right. I don't know who the hoomon is, but you're dealing with the Obsidian Order in Ligan, so try not to get dead, eh!?"

"Um, the uh..."

"Your debt will be dealt with in time. Now, get in that shuttle and go. I'm charging you another ten slips, by the way...for taking-up my time!" The viewer went dead.

# FAILED VENTURES

The Grand Nagus waited for the main viewscreen to go dark before gently lowering himself back onto his plush perch atop the Guided Throne of Gint, the first Grand Nagus of the Ferengi Alliance.

“Are we going to speak today in the Chamber of Petitions about the value of hedging our bets, Grand Nagus?” asked Trorta from his seat at the wormwood desk.

“Eh? Don’t be sour, Trorta. Opportunity plus instinct, equals profit.”

“I don’t see opportunity, Nagus, I see the loss of a Marauder and nearly half a million-bar shortfall on our personal investment.” Trorta nearly spat the words out of his mouth like soured eelwasser.

“Eh! That’s why you’re just First Clerk, Trorta. The Cardassians are going to start pillaging that gem of a little world, Bajor. Once they do, the latinum is going to start flowing back to us in rivers! Resource development, exclusive operating licensing opportunities, market management...it will be endless!”

“So, we’re going to take a loss on Kago and Prac in the hopes of preserving the Cardassian debt long enough to start paying the Treasury back? What about my personal investments?!”

“Eh, if you don’t have the lobes to stand tall in the face of temporary hardships, perhaps you’d be happier with a lower position. There’re openings on the thirty-second floor, I understand.” Hrarin picked up another tablet and reviewed the projections for the season’s jellied gree-worm shares.

Trorta sat silently, trying to reconcile the hole Daimon Kago had just blown in his portfolio. Risk was part of the game, but still...

“Eh...heh-heh...there’s going to be a ten percent drop-off on eel production next quarter, according to this. Put your latinum in millipede juice, Trorta. Twenty thousand strips should net you a return of eight thousand bars once the market corrects itself.”

Trorta said nothing but jotted down the tip on his personal tablet.

“This will work out long term Trorta, you’ll see. The Cardassian loan is what’s important here. Kago just sold himself to us for a bargain price.

So long as he does his job, and the Central Command follows through on what I believe they intend to do...we'll both be very wealthy men!"

