

Star Trek: Augustus

The Parallax Incident Book One:

Navis Mortum

by Ross Manuel©

Captain's Log, Stardate 47703.9. The Augustus has diverted at maximum warp from our patrol route to respond to an automated distress call originating from the USS Concordia. Like the Augustus, the Concordia was tasked to patrol along the Cardassian Demilitarized Zone. The distress call stated that all five hundred officers and crew of the Excelsior-Class ship are either dead or have abandoned ship. This close to the border, neither outcome is ideal. Lieutenant Sovan has been able to determine that there has not been an increase in Cardassian fleet movements that may reflect an armed incursion across the border, but with so many unknowns, I have ordered the Augustus to remain at Yellow Alert.

Captain Rachel King paused her log to peer out the viewport in her day cabin. Off the *Augustus*' port quarter sat the darkened shell of the *USS Concordia*. Not far from the ship was a smaller *Antares* Class Freighter in a similar state. Raising an eyebrow, she finalised her log and straightened her red and black jumpsuit. Moving her black fringe out of her eyes, she proceeded to the bridge.

"Status report," she ordered, her thick Australian accent reverberating off of the bulkheads as she crossed the command deck to assume her centrally mounted command chair.

Lieutenant Sovan looked up from the tactical console, his features the image of Vulcan stoicism. "Captain, the distress signal is correct. I am not detecting any viable biosigns on board the *Concordia*."

Rachel frowned. "What about the freighter?"

"Also negative. There also appears to be significant weapons damage to the freighter's warp engines. The energy signature matches the *Concordia*."

Standing, the Captain studied the image projected on the viewscreen, "So the *Concordia* disabled the freighter and then went dark herself," she muttered before turning to face the elegant, statuesque officer seated to her right. "Ex, lead an away team over to the *Concordia*. I want to know what the bloody hell happened over there."

Commander Lyra Urquan stood and tapped her combadge to issue the order. "At once, Captain." As the Zikarian officer crossed the deck, Ensign Lefter at the conn turned his chair to face the centre of the bridge.

"What about the freighter, ma'am?"

Rachel rested her chin on the palm of one hand, "Run its IFF tag so we can see what flag she flies under. If need be, we'll slap a salvage claim on her, but I want to get to the bottom of this."

Six pillars of bluish-white light materialised on one of the *Concordia*'s unpowered transporter pads. The room bore similarities to the *Augustus*' main transporter room, except that it was in near darkness. The only light appeared to come from yellow emergency panels.

Lyra Urquan frowned. Delicate, feathery plumes over scarlet eyes furrowed as she stepped off of the transporter pad. She noticed how

stale and heavy the air felt. “There’s something wrong. The main computer should have detected our arrival and restored main power.”

An engineer behind her removed an inspection torch from his toolkit and activated it, “It’s possible that there is something preventing that from happening. I should head to engineering.”

Lyra nodded before gesturing to Sovan, “Go with T’Kural, I don’t want anyone on their own over here.” The two Vulcans nodded before approaching the transporter room door and manually forcing the door open.

Turning to the rest of her away team, she looked to the only other woman on the away team, “Doctor, is it just me, or is there something off with the atmosphere here?”

The *Augustus*’ Chief Medical Officer removed her medical tricorder and withdrew its scanner. After several passes of the air in front of her she scrutinised its readings. “The air here is denser than what is considered normal for Starfleet vessels. The air also contains a number of nutrients and enzymes not usually encountered.”

Lyra raised a feathered eyebrow, “Anything hazardous we need to know about, Megan?”

Doctor Megan Jenkins returned her tricorder to the loop on her belt before shaking her head, “The only risk we have is the CO₂ scrubbers are offline. At this rate we have roughly ten days of useable oxygen before we start having to worry about hypoxia setting in.”

The executive officer nodded before gesturing to a security officer. “Go with Dr Jenkins, Ensign Gregories. Head to sickbay. Hopefully, Megan, there is something there your counterpart left for us that might explain what happened.”

Doctor Jenkins nodded before turning to the mountainous security guard who was in the process of removing emergency beacons from a nearby equipment locker. “Shall we?”

After the two left the transporter room, Lyra turned to the sole remaining security officer. “Come, we are heading to the bridge.” Tapping her combadge once she opened a channel to the rest of the team. “Keep in contact. Report in the minute you find any members of the *Concordia*’s crew. We will meet back at the transporter room in an hour.” After a series of confirmations she exited the room, trailing the security guard behind her.

Lyra’s footsteps echoed off the deck-plates as she led Petty Officer Franklin towards the bridge. She had spent her early career on *Andromeda*-Class Frigates, which had the same general configuration as the *Concordia*, but this was far from a pleasant homecoming. The Commander didn’t like the situation in front of her as she panned her palm beacon across the deck. The ship was quiet and she felt as if she was a Terrestrial grave-robber, disturbing the eternal resting place of some ancient civilisation. The darkness seemed to swallow the light from their beacons, casting long, ominous shadows that seemed to play tricks on the eyes.

As the two walked, Lyra grew concerned that there was no sign that the crew were ever aboard the ship. There was nothing to indicate why the ship was empty. She was about to turn to the petty officer when she felt something knock against her boot, skittering across the metal deck, coming to a stop against the bulkhead. Stopping, she panned her beacon down onto the source of the noise. The frown she wore since coming aboard deepened.

“What was that?” Franklin commented as Lyra crouched to pick up a small metallic device roughly the length of her thumb.

Scrutinising it, she withdrew her tricorder and started scanning, “It’s a Sarium krellide power pack designed for a phaser rifle. These aren’t meant to be outside the armoury, and this one’s depleted.”

Franklin’s eyes widened. “There are plenty of regulations against the dispersal of phaser rifles, That means the crew were in a firefight - severe enough to warrant their distribution,” he commented as Lyra’s combadge chirruped.

“Urquan here.”

“Commander it’s Sovan. We have reached engineering.”

Lyra stood, dropping the power pack, “Have you found any trace of the crew?”

There was a pause. “So far we have not found any members of the *Concordia* crew.”

Lyra swore under her breath.

“But we have found the course of the power outage.”

Nodding absently, Lyra pointed to a nearby door that was wedged open. “What have you found?” she asked before the two entered the room.

“Commander, both of the *Concordia*’s fusion reactors have been taken offline and the warp core has been damaged irreparably. T’Kural believes that it was conducted by someone with extensive knowledge of ships’ systems.”

Panning the beacon around the room that appeared to be a junior officer’s quarters, Lyra could see that the room’s normally requisitioned couch was hastily placed in the centre of the room, directly across from the door. Crouching once more, she noticed

another stockpile of power packs and an empty med kit. “Someone like the *Concordia*’s engineering crew?”

“That is one possibility being entertained by Engineer T’Kural. Shall I have him attempt to restore power?”

Standing once more, Lyra dropped the empty kit. “Not yet. This ship was disabled for a reason. I’d like to know why before we power her back up.”

“Understood, Sovan out.”

Lyra turned to Franklin who was still milling around near the open door, his attention fixated on something the Commander couldn’t see. “Let’s get to the bridge. I want to know what happened here.”

Megan Jenkins looked down at the readout on her tricorder. The doctor pointed her palm beacon at a nearby door. “Sickbay is through that door, can you give me a hand with it?”

Ensign Gregories nodded before approaching the double doors then prying open the control panel to access the manual controls underneath. After replacing a series of isolinear data chips and pulling an actuator control lever, the two doors slowly opened far enough for the lithe doctor to squeeze between them.

Like the rest of the ship, sickbay was dark and unpowered. Megan removed her medical tricorder from her belt and started scanning the room. “Nothing’s online here. Not even reserve generators,” she muttered as Gregories managed to force the doors fully open.

“That’s not right. Even if main power is offline, the sickbay backups should last four weeks at minimal power, and the *Concordia* has only

been off the grid for a week..." the security officer stopped as Megan approached an occupied biobed, "Ah Doc, what's that?"

Her shrug was absorbed in the darkness as she placed the tricorder's scanning device over the biobed's clamshell, "They're dead. Human, by the looks of it." She tapped her combadge, "Jenkins to Urquan. Commander, I've found something down here in Sickbay."

There was a brief pause before Lyra replied, she sounded out of breath. "Why am I not surprised? We haven't made it to the bridge yet. With the power out we have to climb up through the Jeffries Tubes."

Handing the beacon to Gregories, Megan attempted to perform a cursory inspection of the body, "I've found a member of the *Concordia*'s crew on a biobed. Human, looks like they're in security. By my estimate they have been dead for about four weeks."

"That can't be right. No sickbay would leave someone dead that long out of the morgue, especially since the ship hasn't been quiet that long."

Megan nodded before gesturing to Gregories to help her force the clamshell open, "I don't know what to tell you, that's what I'm seeing in front of me, I can try and perform rudimentary autopsy if you like, but I'd like to beam the body to the *Augustus* for further study."

"Do what you can here. Until we know just what has happened over here, I don't want anyone heading back to the *Augustus*. Urquan out."

The Doctor shrugged before turning to face Gregories, who under the light of the emergency beacon was starting to turn a subtle shade of green. "Well you've just volunteered as a medical examiner. There should be a portable power pack in the equipment room as well as a basic surgical kit. Can you get them for me?"

Gregories nodded before quickly moving, as if unwilling to be near the dead body.

Megan shrugged before crouching beside the officer's face, "Now you are going to tell me why they left you out here."

The body Doctor Jenkins discovered was only the first one, the away team found.

Lyra forced a floor-mounted access hatch open, allowing Petty Officer Franklin and herself access to the *Concordia*'s bridge. As they stood on the command deck, Lyra's heart sank. The captain's chair, normally in a place of authority atop a central elevated command dais, lay discarded near the rear turbolift. Each console and station was a pile of smashed circuitry.

"What the hell happened up here?" she commented while panning the beacon around the bridge.

"It looks like a battlefield," Franklin remarked as the two started hearing the sound of something wet hitting the deck plates opposite them.

Lyra pointed her beacon towards the source of the noise before carefully approaching it. A red and black uniform was torn from neck to navel. The skin underneath was mottled and split in a similar state, showing a cracked and splintered ribcage. The deck was covered in blood and thick globs of meat. Four gold pips were clearly visible through the gore. A terrified expression was permanently etched onto a weathered face. Lyra tapped her combadge. "Urquan to *Augustus*, we've found the remains of Captain Dalton. He's been mauled by something we've yet to locate."

There was a brief pause before Captain King replied, “Have you found anyone else?”

Lyra panned the beacon around the bridge once more, “Negative, Captain. He’s the only one on the bridge Ma’am, but Doctor Jenkins found another body in Sickbay that she wants to beam over for study.”

“If Doctor Jenkins can find no evidence that the body contains anything that is a threat to the *Augustus*, I see no issue with her doing so. Have you found anything that may explain what happened to the rest of the crew?”

Lyra made a gesture to Franklin to relay the message.

“Not yet, ma’am, but with no main power or internal sensors, it’s been difficult getting anywhere. Ensign T’Kural reports that both fusion reactors and the warpdrive are forcibly offline.”

“Do what you can, Commander, I’ll arrange for Davis to send over a repair team. *Augustus*, out.”

“Well, that’s not normal,” Megan remarked before removing an inspection probe from the open chest cavity in front of her. A third of the length of the probe was covered in a thick, viscous, black liquid. A cough opposite her caused the doctor to frown as she placed the probe in a collection device. “Gregories, if you’re going to throw up, please go into the other room, I don’t want you contaminating my field.”

“Sorry, ma’am,” he replied as Megan’s combadge chirruped before Petty Officer Franklin relayed Captain Kings instructions.

Megan looked over to her tricorder and then to Ensign Gregories, before tapping her combadge. “*Augustus*, two to beam directly to

sickbay. I want a level five containment field in place before I beam over.”

“Understood, Doctor.”

Megan looked over to the Ensign. “Gregories, meet up with one of the other teams.” She tapped her combadge, “*Augustus*, energise.”

Six bluish-white pillars materialised in the *Concordia*’s main engineering, illuminating the expansive chamber momentarily before being replaced with six yellow-uniformed crewmen.

Lieutenant Sovan stepped forward as four engineers picked up the small piles of engineering supplies at their feet. The two security officers that accompanied them checked their phasers. “Gentlemen, your primary objective is to restore enough power to allow access to the main computer and internal sensors.” The engineers nodded their understanding. Sovan turned to the security guards adding: “While you will be joining me in searching this ship for the remainder of the crew.” The security officers nodded before Sovan turned to T’Kural, “I will leave engineering to you.”

“Understood, Lieutenant, I believe the phrase, ‘good luck’ is warranted.”

Sovan nodded, “Likewise, Ensign.” Turning, the security chief led the security detail out of engineering.

T’Kural looked to the engineers, cabling and toolkits under arm, “Let us get to work. Our objectives are in this order: Main computer, internal sensors, air purification. The air quality on board is not satisfactory.”

“Sir, what’s the status of the fusion reactors?” one of the engineers asked as the team broke up to start tackling the issues of a disabled starship.

“The fusion reactors are non-functional. The cause is as yet unknown. It appears the *Concordia*’s crew disabled them intentionally, we will have to use emergency generators to restore partial functionality to the ship.” T’Kural started distributing padds containing assignments, “Move out.” The engineers nodded before dispersing.

Lyra crossed her arms, staring out at the stars through the window as the sound of recirculating air suddenly sprang to life. It was at that point that she realised just how quiet the *Concordia* had been. Turning back to the centre of the bridge, the only other sound on the quiet bridge was the sound of Petty Officer Franklin coughing. She noted that he had been doing that since the away team had beamed aboard. “Greg, check in with Doctor Jenkins, I don’t want you coughing up a lung.”

The petty officer shrugged slightly, “Ma’am, Doctor Jenkins beamed back to the *Augustus* an hour ago, but I can try and find something in sickbay...”

He was cut off by a loud, bone-chilling noise that echoed through the ship. The sound was animalistic, raw and numerous. It reverberated from the bowels of the *Concordia*, gaining strength before reaching the bridge.

“Urquan to Sovan. Please tell me you heard that?”

“Commander, if you are referring to the unknown sound that appeared to originate in engineering. Then yes.”

Lyra suppressed the feeling of embarrassment before responding, "Standby, Sovan." Tapping her combadge once more, she said, "Urquan to T'Kural, report." The Vulcan engineer's response was garbled, incoherent then went dead. Frowning Lyra turned to Franklin while tapping her combadge again to reinitialize the connection. When it went unanswered she reopened her connection to Sovan. "Lieutenant, recall your security team. Something is wrong in Engineering. T'Kural appears to be having communications difficulties, I want you to investigate, Urquan out."

Ensign T'Kural turned a corner. In one hand he carried a hydrospanner. Pressing himself against the nearby bulkhead, he looked down at the jagged tear to his tunic, the wet patch of bright green Vulcan blood staining his uniform where his combadge had once resided. Had he not been an adherent to the teachings of Surak, he potentially would have been afraid at what happened in engineering.

The sound of something dragging against the deck caught his attention. Looking down the corridor he had turned on to, he could see an Andorian shen step out of a nearby office. T'Kural tightened his grip on the spanner as the Andorian aimlessly looked around the corridor. Even in the low lights he could see mottled patches of blue skin appearing through a dishevelled engineer's jumpsuit. One of her two delicate antennae perched within her matted white hair was missing, the thick blue rivulets marring her vacant expression and clouded eyes suggested it had been sheared off. Her head hung at an odd angle as if to compensate as she shuffled towards him. Her left arm hung useless while her right ended at the elbow.

The Vulcan engineer slowed his breathing as she approached. The vacant stare looked beyond him to the bulkhead. T'Kural had seen this

before in engineering: the absent, unfocused gaze and knew that he wasn't safe. Remaining as still as he could he watched as she ambled closer, until she crossed in front of him. Stopping, she turned to face T'Kural, a low, guttural noise forced its way through dry lips, pulled taut against teeth. When he didn't respond she shifted her weight and emitted a high pitched wail before lunging at him. T'Kural acted on instinct and brought the spanner down hard. A sickening crunch was immediately followed by a heavy thud as the Andorian hit the deck.

Around him, the deck appeared to come alive as other animalistic noises joined the cacophony. Turning on a booothel, T'Kural headed off in attempt to get off the deck. In front of him a pair of human engineers, members of his own repair crew, emerged from an access tunnel, both appearing worse for wear as he approached. Slowing, he held the spanner tightly as their relieved expressions turned to terror as they started gesturing behind him. Stealing a moment to look behind him, he immediately saw the Andorian shen standing behind him. Before he could react to the situation she raised her arm in a rapid movement. T'Kural's head hit the deck with a sickening thud. His body landed in a heap beside it a moment later.

Captain Rachel King looked up from her command chair as the security station behind her started beeping erratically. "Report."

The security officer manning the terminal checked and rechecked her instruments before looking up. "Ma'am, active biosign readings on the *Concordia* have increased. There are now nearly a hundred viable lifesigns aboard."

Rachel raised an eyebrow in surprised disbelief, "That can't be right, our scans were intensive. Open a channel to the away team."

The security officer frowned, “Ma’am, there seems to be localized interference originating on the *Concordia*, I am attempting to compensate.”

“*Augustus*...receiving...distorted.” While the message was garbled, the angelic voice of Commander Urquan was clearly evident.

Frowning, Rachel stood from her command chair. “Commander, what’s your status?”

“Something’s happening...can’t tell what...sensors are still down.”

“We’re beaming you back, standby for transport.” She looked to the security officer. “Isolate and beam the away team aboard.”

“Captain, the signal is deteriorating. Transporter room two is reporting that they cannot isolate the away team from the other biosigns.”

Rachel thumped her open palm, “Dammit. Commander, do what you can, we’ll try and get you out of there.”

“...Will do...” The connection went dead.

“Captain? *Augustus* are you reading?” Lyra tapped her combadge only to get the customary three blip sound of a failed connection. “What is going on?” she asked absently. The only response was a haggard, wet cough belonging to PO Franklin. He was sitting miserably on one of the chairs that ringed the outer wall of the bridge. “Franklin, how are you holding up?” she asked while keeping a safe distance from the young man.

Looking up, the petty officer gave her a thumbs’ up, opening his mouth to respond before succumbing to another coughing fit.

Shaking her head, Lyra tapped her combadge once more, opening a channel to Sovan. "Lieutenant, have you located T'Kural?"

There was a brief pause before Sovan replied, his voice lowered, "Ensign T'Kural is dead, Commander. We have also found four members of the engineering detail, also dead. We have found no trace of the others."

Lyra swore, "Any idea of what killed them?"

"Unable to determine, the ensign was decapitated and the detail was eviscerated. There is evidence of defensive wounds, but it appears that they were overrun."

Resting her chin in her palm, the commander mulled over what she was told. Before she could respond, she heard movement at the front of the bridge. Turning slowly, she cast her gaze on the disembowelled body of the *Concordia*'s captain. The corpse was twitching slightly as if trying to reassert control of disconnected limbs. His mouth, once open in an expression of shock was gaping open and closed as if trying to draw oxygen into absent lungs. Lyra swallowed hard before drawing her phaser from its holster. "Standby, Sovan."

Warily approaching the struggling corpse, Lyra drew her tricorder and was surprised by the readings. Despite the obvious damage sustained to the ship's captain, the device was detecting an increase in electrical activity. Staring at the writhing body, she failed to notice the commotion that was occurring on the opposite end of the transmission. "Something isn't right here, the body of Captain Dalton is moving," she commented absently. From the other end of the transmission, Lyra could hear the high pitched whine of a hand held phaser, recapturing her attention.

"That does not appear to be an isolated incident. We are encountering members of the *Concordia*'s crew that appear to have been reanimated.

We attempted to make contact with them with no success. Crewman Danthers was attacked while exiting Engineering. Phasers on stun setting appear to have no effect.”

Lyra recalled the discovery of phaser rifle charge packs on her sojourn to the bridge. “The crew of the *Concordia* made the same discovery. Make your way to the armoury, we’ll meet you there.”

“Understood, Commander, Sovan out.”

Raising her phaser, Lyra increased the power setting so the green energy bar turned red, sighing, she looked at the writhing body of Captain Dalton as it tried to move. “I’m sorry. May the Ancients grant you peace,” she commented in traditional platitude before firing the phaser. The high energy beam struck the captain square in the chest. He convulsed slightly before becoming still once more, smoke slowly wafted from the burn mark in his torso. Keeping hold of the weapon, she turned to Franklin, “Come on, kid, let’s get going.”

Franklin nodded slowly before pulling himself to his feet. As Lyra headed for the floor mounted access hatch, she could see Franklin’s bloodshot, sunken eyes. “We’ll get you out of here, okay,” she commented reassuringly before dropping to the deck below. The Petty Officer followed soon after, drawing his own phaser in the process.

Lyra quickly moved down empty corridors, their destination committed to memory. She held her phaser in one hand, emergency beacon in the other. All around her, she could hear animalistic wailing, like the ship had finally woken from hibernation. She suppressed a shudder as she approached a Jefferies Tube access panel. Without access to internal sensors, she had no way of knowing what was behind the panel, or what was lurking through the rest of the ship. Stopping, she turned to face Franklin who was two compartments behind her, gradually making his way to her. He looked exhausted, unable to

mount the stamina to keep up. "When we get to the Armoury, you can rest there until we can get off this tub," she commented before opening the panel. She shared a relieved glance with her counterpart at its empty state, but when she started descending, she noticed that the rungs of the ladder were wet and sticky.

The two travelled in silence for one deck. Lyra stepped out to stand on a horizontal access tunnel as Franklin followed behind her. As he stepped out, he started coughing, the act causing him to lose his balance. Lyra quickly grabbed him by the collar of his tunic and pulled him towards her. A clattering echoed through the tube as her emergency beacon fell to the bottom of the ladder-well. The pair shared a glance before the clattering was answered by an inhuman howl. Lyra stole a moment to peer over the side of the ladder well to the black swirling abyss at the base of the ship. The distance seemed to play tricks on her vision, until she realised that the swirling was real. The beacon managed to illuminate the bottom of the ladder, and the sea of distorted bodies located at its base. "Out of the tube, now!" She breathed quickly before opening a nearby access panel. Without checking beforehand, the pair exited into the corridor. At the next junction was a group of *Concordia* crewmembers. They appeared to be feasting on something large wearing a mustard coloured tunic. Their sudden emergence caught their attention long enough for a handful to drag themselves to their feet and shamble towards them.

Lyra turned the opposite direction and broke into a run. She could hear Franklin panting behind her. Behind them the shambling mass was closing the distance between them.

Her communicator burst into life. "Sovan to Commander Urquan. Ma'am, the security command centre has been overrun, Ensign Peconte has been killed and Crewman Danthers is starting to show signs of the infection."

Lyra swore as she turned a corner unsure of where she was heading. “Tactical analysis Sovan,” she barked between breaths, pausing long enough to squeeze off a single shot into the oncoming mass. The ruby beam struck a deformed Tellarite in its swollen jaw, severing the muscles on one side. The inertia spun the crewman, sending him to the deck.

“We need to abandon ship, I suggest proceeding to the main shuttlebay. Scans conducted before we came aboard showed all support craft accounted for.”

Lyra could hear phaser fire coming from Sovan’s position as the Vulcan kept on the move. Behind her she could hear Franklin wheeze and slow down. She stopped momentarily to assess the situation. The Petty Officer was falling behind. He waved at her to keep going before turning to face the mass of bodies, pointing his phaser, he started firing between retching coughs. Even as bodies fell, more filled their place.

Lyra nodded once before uttering a silent prayer for the protection of his soul and continued running. “Sovan, agreed,” she said as she passed a compartment identifier. “I’m close to main shuttlebay, I will see you there.”

As she ran down the corridor, she could hear the whine of phaser fire slow before a human scream filled the deck. Closing her eyes to block out the noise she continued running. Ahead of her she saw an access panel open violently. Pointing her phaser, she waited until she was in range before pulling up as Sovan crawled out. The Vulcan almost did the same before recognising her. “Commander, Shuttlebay is not far. We must hurry as we are not alone.” A metallic scraping echoed from the Jefferies Tube as they started running once more.

Ahead of them the large double doors of shuttlebay sat partially ajar, an antigrav cart sat wedged between the automated doors. Pausing,

Sovan slowly slid into the hangar before signalling for Lyra to continue. The Shuttlebay sat untouched in front of them. Lines of support craft sat unpowered facing a large blast door, the only protection to the hard vacuum of space.

“We need to get the door open,” Lyra commented before pushing the cart out of the way and helping Sovan push the doors closed.

Sovan nodded. “I’ll head for the control tower,” he offered.

Lyra nodded as she headed towards one of the closer shuttles.

As they split up, the pair could hear scraping against the internal door. Lyra tried to banish the sound from her memory as she moved from one shuttle to another. To her dismay each one had its deuterium supplies drained. Looking up at Sovan she made a hand signal to re-join her. The Vulcan gestured to the door. Casting a quick glance at the internal door, she noticed that it started to glow and the muted hum of energy weapons could be heard. “Well, as if they couldn’t be more horrifying.” She muttered as Sovan joined her. “So what do we do now?”

The Vulcan paused, “It appears that our situation is untenable,” he muttered as the air behind them shimmered. In its place was a pair of EVA suits and a padd. Lyra gave Sovan a confused expression before they approached the suits. In large yellow letters were the words **[Speed is the key, put these on and find cover]**. Shrugging Lyra started donning the cumbersome garments.

Just as the two reached the safety of the control room a heavy wrenching could be heard as the external blast door was slowly opened. The tell-tale blue aura outside suggested a tractor beam. The two officers shared a glance as what atmosphere remained vented into space. The sudden change of pressure caused the weakened internal door to buckle before emergency generators restored atmosphere. Once

the blast door was fully open a single Starfleet Shuttle entered. It wheeled on its axis and put down with its nose pointed to space. As the internal doors finally gave way the shuttle's rear door opened with a silent thud. Standing in the cargo deck shoulder to shoulder were six personnel in vacuum sealed EVA suits. They each raised their phaser rifles and fired in long sustained volleys cutting down the incoming *Concordia* crewmembers. Once the torrent reverted to a trickle, the figures stepped onto the flight deck, gesturing for Lyra and Sovan to join them.

Once the two were on the deck, an internal microphone clicked, "Commander, Lieutenant. Captain King sends her regards, now if you would please step inside. The *Gaius*' internal sensors are reporting additional contacts incoming."

Lyra nodded before the strike team slowly withdrew back to the shuttle and stepped inside. As the cargo door raised, the team leader approached the two officers, a pair of hyposprays in his hands. "Courtesy of Doctor Jenkins."

"Hang on this departure is going to be bumpy," called the pilot from the cockpit.

Lyra looked past the cargo deck to see the dividing door closed, a slight hum informed her that the deck was sealed from the rest of the craft. To highlight the pilot's words the shuttle lurched before breaking free of the *Concordia*.

"Commander, Captain King for you, patching it through."

"Commander, what's your status?"

Lyra could hear the concern in her captain's voice. "Captain, Sovan and I are the only survivors," she replied as the security team started performing checks on each other's suits.

There was a pause before Rachel replied. "I'm sorry to hear that Commander. I want a full debrief when you are out of decom. *Augustus* out."

Once the channel closed, the strike team leader approached. "Ma'am, you and Sovan need to strip out of your suits so that we can administer the anti-virus. The rest of us will be beamed out of our suits. The two of you will be beamed straight to the quarantine site that Doctor Jenkins has set up in Cargo Bay Three. The *Gaius* will then be destroyed with the *Concordia*. Understood?"

Lyra nodded before the two started stripping their gear.

Captain's log, supplemental. On my order, the USS Concordia, shuttle Gaius, and the Freighter Parallax have been destroyed. It is regretful that the Concordia and Parallax are lost with all hands, and all bar Commander Urquan and Lieutenant Sovan perished on the away mission, but I am convinced that the threat posed by this lifeform that took control of the crew of the Concordia cannot be allowed to spread. I have transferred the final logs of the Concordia to the Gorkon and the Augustus has resumed her previous course. I hope that the crews of those ships can finally find peace.