

# When Stars Collide



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INTRODUCTION: The *U.S.S. Thunderchild* observes space's deepest passions.

"Keep a safe distance," Captain Diego Raymon absently motioned to the helm. His glowing eyes never left the viewscreen where an impressive display of power and energy tugged and pulled at the fabric of space and time around them. He tugged absently at his black stubbly beard, unaware of the symmetry.

Outside the safe confines of the *U.S.S. Thunderchild*, two massive stars were spiraling towards each other in a passionate courting ritual. At least that was the poetry of the scene as it struck Raymon. The stars' radiative warmth bathed the space around the Akira class starship in growing warmth.

"Stellar love-making," he mumbled, and then straightened his command jacket, as he realized he'd spoken his thoughts out-loud. Commander Stella Allison shook her head of red curls gently and smiled at the hopeless romanticism of her Captain.

She looked on at the scene outside with a simple scientific awe – they could be witnessing the birth of a new solar system when these two stars merged. If enough stellar mass would be thrown out in their eventual collision, a sizable accretion disk might form, from which planets could distill.

Regardless of the outcome, they were small, insignificant witnesses to something unique, beautiful, and amazing.

"Steady!" Raymon crooned to the helm as he felt some vibrations in the deck.

The two stars spun into each other with increasing velocity as their dance picked up the pace. Soon, they were blurring into

one great ball of light – their energy was terrifying and suddenly Raymon didn't feel they were far enough away.

“Be prepared to go to warp,” he whispered, as if to himself, and then said more loudly to the helm, “I want Warp 1 on my command, should the ship be endangered!”

“Aye Sir!” Ensign Bayrun practically yelled in answer, “Warp on your command, Sir!” She hovered her hand dramatically over her panel in anticipation for the command.

Commander Alison rubbed her ear. “Not so fresh, Ensign,” she said, irritably, “we’re all right here.”

“Yes, Sir!” Bayrun answered loudly, and then caught herself, proceeding in a lower voice. “Understood, Sir.” Her ears were practically glowing in embarrassment, but soon she was too absorbed in the tension that was drowning everyone else on the bridge over the impending event.

And then it came. Raymon winced as the bridge lit in dazzling light before the screen polarizers adapted. He shielded his eyes in the glare, trying to catch sight of what was happening. Outside, the two stars flared more brilliantly than a thousand suns as they touched and then fell into each other. A surge of powerful radiation blinded everything for light years with their brilliant radiance. All of space was one hot, white illumination – It was ablaze!

Suddenly, alarms sounded on the bridge stations.

“Sir, gravity waves!” Lt. Ansmo cried from the Ops Station, recoiling his Andorian antennas in fear. The *Thunderchild* rocked forward and to port on massive ripples that were cascading out into the fabric of space from the stellar collision. The ship tossed up and down in the colossal gravity swells. They were an order of magnitude larger in amplitude than the predictions! The starship buffeted and bucked in the storm as Raymon struggled to his seat.

“Get us out of here!” he bellowed.

Ensign Bayrun could barely reach her console as she tried to steady herself with it. She tapped the command. But the ship ignored her and the deck continued to shake uncontrollably.

“Where’s my warp, Ensign?!” Raymon cried.

“Sir...we can’t construct a stable warp field!” She cried above the alarms and the shuddering of the bridge.

“Captain,” Lieutenant Ansmo yelled, “We have an approaching energy wave bearing 210, mark 120!” Raymon didn’t wait for the visual.

“Ensign, turn us into it!” he ordered and then bellowed to whomever was listening. “Shields and Deflectors to maximum!”

Onscreen, Raymon saw the starfield spinning as the ship plied its thrusters and came around to its new heading. A blinding glow filled the view – a cosmic inferno. There before them, and closing fast, a rippling spherical bubble of highly energetic radiation and matter reached out to touch them.

“Steady!” he soothed. “Keep us level!” The *Thunderchild* was still rocking a little but compensating better at handling itself in the gravity waves.

“Impact in 10 seconds!” Ansmo reported, and then he turned with renewed concern. “Sir, I’m detecting dense energy pockets in that wave!”

“Ensign, Bayrun!” Commander Allison barked. “You heard the man! Keep us collision free!” Bayrun was white as a sheet, but she plied her hands across the controls, mapping a path as best she could through the pockets of condensing gasses detected by sensors and dust too dense for the deflector to handle.

Lt. Ansmo turned and clutched his chair as he read off the remaining time. “Three...two...one!”

The *Thunderchild* shuddered. And then it plowed into the storm. The shock shoved the ship up, pitching it nearly vertical.

Everyone on the bridge felt instantly like they’d gained a thousand pounds – squished into their seats by the force of the acceleration as the inertial dampeners struggled to keep up. The surging, flaring wave carried the ship backwards, almost rolling it over in a somersault as it bore it along in its race for the cold, unknown realms of space.

“Get our heading back!” Raymon bellowed. “Full impulse power!”

“Aye...Sir!” Bayrun faltered – desperately focusing her mind back on her station. She played her hands across her screen and righted the ship, pointing proudly into the wave. “Full impulse now, Sir!” she yelled above the noise.

The *Akira* class starship fired its engines and pressed full force unto the wave, straining against the cosmic turbulence.

“Large mass bearing 10 degrees to starboard!” Ansmo reported.

“I see it!” Bayrun replied, blowing her tousled hair out of her eyes. Up ahead on screen, a dense pocket of hot “something” rumbled towards their starboard quarter. She plied the controls and the *Thunderchild* banked away from meeting it, shearing through the blustery inferno outside – the deflector practically burning out trying to carve a safe passage ahead through the tempest.

Ansmo turned again. “Dense pocket bearing 320 degrees to port!” he cried. Bayrun nodded, her shoulders as high on her neck as they’d go from the stress.

“Alright, my little darling,” she whispered to her console, “just budge a little to starboard like a good little starship.” Ansmo glanced at her quizzically, but she ignored him. The *Thunderchild* responded and banked away from the collision, weaving the slalom through the approaching dangers ahead.

And then, the wave of energy, gas, and debris weakened – and then suddenly, in a moment, it passed behind and beyond them. Complete and total calm swept over the bridge. Suddenly, all eyes fixed on the screen.

In awe, Raymon rose from his seat. There, before them, the new star was glorious in its radiance – more brilliant by the condensing gasses and dust that was precipitating into orbit. Clouds were literally forming before their eyes! Stark shadows and warm light brought them to life.

The crew was awash in euphoria and joy – bathed by the beauty and the adrenaline still soaking their bodies. They were witnessing the beginning of a new solar system! This was the conception of new stellar life! The sight was mesmerizing.

“And the two...shall become one,” Raymon quoted breathlessly.

Allison nodded. "Beautiful!" was all she could find in words to say, and then added before she could catch herself, “What a day to be alive!” Raymon turned to her and smiled with silent understanding. It was a sharable moment – one that united everyone in the same wonder and awe.

"Indeed, it is," he said quietly, as if he didn't want to wake a sleeping child.

He felt reborn. They all did – renewed in purpose. The great war was over, new life was spawning in the galaxy, and now Starfleet was returning to its charter mission – exploration and discovery. It was time again to get out "there" and see what no one had seen before – at least from a safe distance! The Universe was filled with powers too great for anyone made of dust to tame or master!

He sat back in his seat with exhilaration spilling through his face.

“Ensign Bayrun!” he called.

“Yes...Sir?” she replied distractedly, caught out from her own reverie in the beautiful cascading dance of matter and energy outside. Raymon smiled.

“Ahead one quarter impulse power, if you please,” he ordered. “Let’s tour the nursery, shall we?”

“Aye, Sir,” Bayrun nodded with a guilty smile.

The *Thunderchild* banked and disappeared behind a billowing cloud of vapor, chasing wafting shreds of atmosphere that flew and swam in orbit around their new home – one tiny, newly conceived solar system that would inherit the galaxy from older ones when they neared their end, as they one day would.

Raymon grew quiet at the thought as through his mind, ancient words of wisdom came – words his great-grandfather often recited to him when he was too young to understand:

There is a time for everything,  
and a season for every activity under the heavens:  
a time to be born and a time to die,  
a time to plant and a time to uproot,  
a time to kill and a time to heal,  
a time to tear down and a time to build,  
a time to weep and a time to laugh,  
a time to mourn and a time to dance,

a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,  
a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,  
a time to search and a time to give up,  
a time to keep and a time to throw away,  
a time to tear and a time to mend,  
a time to be silent and a time to speak,  
a time to love and a time to hate,  
a time for war and a time for peace.<sup>1</sup>

How the Dominion War had taught them all about the hard hand of life and the brokenness of existence! They had seen just how bad things could get.

Thank God, it was time again for birth, planting, healing, building, laughing, dancing, gathering, embracing, searching, keeping, mending, speaking, loving, and for peace. And for these virtues they would fight and defend, if ever again it came to it!

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1 Ecc 3:1-8, The NIV Bible