



NOVA TREK

4

**Janet Kirk:
Times Past
and Present**

**A NOVEL BY
MADISON
BRUFFY**

**BASED ON
CONCEPTS BY
GENE
RODDENBERRY**

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By

Madison Bruffy

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Prologue and Pre-Academy years

“Memoirs? Who the hell would be interested in that?”

The three were in the den at the Kirk Ranch. Jan’s had been the first words spoken since Tamera and Amanda had suggested the idea. Jan’s hair- which had turned silver two decades ago, reflected the room’s light as she faced her visitors.

The Captain of the *Yorktown-B* glanced at her niece. “You’d be surprised,” Tam replied.

Amanda’s right eyebrow rose in a fair imitation of her father as she moved a strain of brown hair back behind a pointed ear. “Indeed. You’ve seen and lived a great deal of history, Mother. Historians all over the Union would be interested.”

Tam smiled as she stood near the den’s door. “A few cadets might even stick their noses in a copy or two.”

Her sister gave her a cock-eyed look.

Tam's own red hair shifted about her shoulders as she traded another glance with her niece. This project had been her idea. Amanda had come to her aunt wanting her help in convincing her mother of its merit. "Would you rather some biographer you never heard of and never met did the job instead?"

"God no!" Madam President swore as she stepped away from both females. She paused before some book shelves on one side of the den as she continued. "I've read some of those biographies. They're so dry, you'd die of thirst trying to read them."

She finally walked over to the bay window, sat down in its seat and indicated places beside her. "Do you two have time for this?"

"*Yorktown's* in for updates and general maintenance," Tam stated as she sat down beside her sister. "She's going to be laid up for about a month."

“And I’ve taken the same amount of time off from Starfleet Medical,” Amanda replied as she stood before her mother and aunt.

Jan looked up at her for a moment. “I swear there are times when you are so much like your father, it’s frightening.

“Are you going to stand through all of this?”

Amanda glanced from one to the other before rather sheepishly sitting down and taking her tricorder in hand from where it had hung from her shoulder.

Jan looked from one to the other. “So where do you want to start?”

“Most biographies start at the beginning,” the doctor in the family noted.

Jan shrugged. “Well, that’s original. ‘She was born April 1, 2233 in a little log spaceship in the uncharted wilds of Iowa’.”

“Mother...”

Jan laughed gently as Tam smiled and shook her head.” Come on, Sis, “the captain urged. Then her own smile grew. “Tell us a story.”

The Union President almost did a double take at that. “You two are not going to let this go, are you?”

Tam shook her head. “Nope. You’re stuck with us for the next month.”

Jan *did* do a double take then. “God help me.” She looked from one to the other and finally nodded. “All right. But if you’re going to do it right, then you’ve got to start with Mom and Dad—I mean without them, we wouldn’t be here, right?”

She rose from her seat and led them into the living room, where the portraits of George Samuel Kirk and Maureen Fitzpatrick Kirk still hung over the fireplace on each side of an ancient black and white photo.

Amanda studied that photo for a moment. “Mother, I’ve always meant to ask—“

“Your ancestors, young lady,” Tam stated.

Jan nodded. “Jerimiah and Elizabeth Kirk. That was taken after the American Civil War—about 1865 or 66 old calendar.

“Jerimiah built this house with his own hands. It’s been remodeled and updated several times over the centuries of course, but every time, they’ve tried to preserve as much of Jerimiah’s work as possible.”

Tam tilted her head to one side. “Jan, I don’t remember. Which side was Jerimiah on?”

Jan looked over at her. “Union, I think. I’d have to look it up to be sure.” She glanced around. “I remember Dad telling me how Mom fell in love with this place the moment she first laid eyes on it.”

Amanda set the tricorder on the coffee table, allowing it to continue to record everything as she asked. “How did they meet?”

Jan sat down on the couch as she replied. “Dad had just come back from one of the first missions to the Orion border. His ship was pretty shot up. Most of the crew had injuries of one kind or

another. His were so bad, he was admitted to Starfleet Medical's in-patient care center almost as soon as his shuttle landed— and before you ask, he was a lieutenant aboard the *Missouri*.

“Anyway, Mom was working there at the time as a civilian administrative supervisor and was placed in charge of his case- scheduling his appointments and treatments and therapy sessions and so on. He was there for six months.” She smiled. “They were married the day he was released from the hospital.”

Amanda's eyebrow rose. “That was fairly quick wasn't it?”

Her mother shrugged. “Depends on how you look at it. Your father and I only knew each other for about a year before we were married. How was he when you left Vulcan?”

“He was well,” the daughter replied. “Anticipating your return.”

Jan nodded. “Well, the Federal Congress is in session for another month yet.” She glanced over

at Tam. “Who knows? Maybe I’ll catch a ride home on the *Yorktown*.”

The ship’s captain nodded. “Be glad to have you.”

“Anyway,” Jan continued,” After they were married, Mom decided to put her career aside so she and Dad could start a family. That also allowed her to devote more time to her painting- which she managed to turn into a fairly successful second career.”

“And she died in a shuttle accident?” Amanda asked.

“Yes and no,” Tam replied.

Amanda tilted her head. “I don’t understand.”

Jan sighed. “It was during my fourth year at the Academy. Mom was on her way back from showing some of her paintings at a show in San Diego. The shuttle crashed just shy of the spaceport. But what killed Mom was the fact that the engines were old and after the crash, they started throwing off Berthold Rays.”

Dr. Kirk nodded. “I see. They had no treatment for it back then.”

“She and several other passengers died from the exposure,” Jan concluded.

“While I was growing up, it was actually a toss-up for a while whether I’d become a professional artist or join Starfleet,” Jan stated. “But everytime Dad came home from a mission and told me about the things he’d seen and done, I wanted more and more to see and do such things myself. By the time I was thirteen, my choice was clear. The following year, I applied to the Academy- and was accepted. I got the notice the same day they declared the *Sundown* lost with all hands.”

“Grandfather was First Officer of the *Sundown*?” Amanda asked.

Her mother nodded. “And it would be twenty-two years before I’d see him again.”

“You haven’t mentioned your brother,” Amanda noted. “Or Aunt Tamera for that matter.”

“Thought you wanted my story?” Jan asked with a smile. “Jim was never interested in Starfleet. Agriculture, Botany— those were his main interests. He never really showed any interest in Starfleet until he found out about the terraforming projects that Starfleet supported. In fact, it was at a symposium for one of them that he met Carol— Carol Marcus. Talk about a long courtship- they knew each other for all of two years before they were finally married. It was about a month later that Jim won the appointment to head up the terraforming team assigned to Cestus III. Course, Jim and his team had to deal with the Gorn and the Metrons before they could do anything.

“Jim could be a hell of a fighter when he had to be— diplomat, too. By the time the dust settled, the Gorn agreed to allow the Human settlement as long as we shared the terraforming technology- which no one had any problem with. Seems the Gorn had several barren worlds in their territory where they were able to put the technology to good use.”

Jan shrugged. “Of course, that was before renegade Andorians and Romulan militants wiped out the colony.”

“I think we’re getting a little ahead of ourselves,” Tam noted gently. “Last we heard of you, you’d just entered the Academy.”

Jan smiled. “The Art of Misdirection, young lady. Speaking of which, have either of you had lunch yet? I know I haven’t.”

The Academy years

“...I have to admit,” Jan said as the three sat down to lunch, “That I was a little ‘wide-eyed’ when I first laid eyes on the Academy. Remember, I was fourteen— by rights, I should have been at least two years older. I have no doubt, Starfleet would have turned me down if it hadn’t been for my academic profile.”

Amanda sipped from her glass and set it down beside her tricorder. “You were classed as a ‘prodigy’ weren’t you?”

“Yes— and I’ve never liked that tag,” her mother replied. “All I knew was, that the classwork came quick and easy for me— especially History. Exploring History was almost as enticing as exploring space.” She and Tam traded glances then and something unspoken seemed to pass between them that Amanda couldn’t catch.

“So what was it like?” She finally asked.

“Hectic,” her mother replied. “Especially the first year. Not only are you dealing with classwork you never even considered, you’re also trying to adapt to that new life and existence. You experienced pretty much the same thing when you first went off to medical school.”

Amanda nodded in understanding and was silent for a moment as if lost in thought, but she didn’t say anything.

A bleeping sound filled the air and both sister and daughter followed Jan back to the den where she answered the in-coming call. “Kirk here.”

The viewscreen lit with the image of a human blond whose hair was now streaked with silver. The brace she used to walk with, leaned against her desk within easy reach. “We just received word from the diplomatic team on the Gorn home world, Madam President.”

“And?”

The blond smiled. “They’ve agreed to talks.”

“That’s wonderful, Janice. I’ll be in the office first thing in the morning for a full report.”

“Yes, Ma’am.”

“Kirk out.”

Tam looked to her older sister as Jan led the way back to the dining table. “What’s going on?”

“We’ve been trying to get the Gorn to talk about Union membership ever since Jim’s team first encountered them— but they’ve always refused. They like their autonomy too much.

“However,” Jan added as she sat back down, “that call, just confirmed that they *are* willing to talk alliance.” She shrugged. “We might be able to work out something similar to what we have with the Klingons.”

“That’d be great,” Tam noted as she picked up her fork. “That’d free up resources Starfleet could use somewhere else.”

“It would also add to our pharmaceutical and other medical knowledge,” Amanda added.

Her mother nodded. “I think once the Gorn understand what we have to offer, it’ll be a winning deal for everyone. Now, where were we?”

“Your first year at the Academy,” Tam replied.

“Not much to say about it, really,” Jan told them. “That first year I was so busy studying, I didn’t have much time for anything else. I was in classes all day and then I’d go back to my room and study till I fell asleep. Oh, I knew a few boys and once in a while, I’d force myself to go out to eat instead of grabbing something in my room, but for the most part, that first year was all studying.

“Now, my *second* year, things were a little calmer, because I knew what was going on and I had a better idea of what to expect. That’s when I met Thomas Kincaid. Good looking boy, handsome. Unfortunately, his ideas didn’t go with his looks.

“He told me that Starfleet was a man’s career and there was no place in it for a woman. We were at a restaurant. He was having steak— rare.” Jan shuddered. “How anyone can eat anything with blood still coming out of it, I do *not* know. I was

having spaghetti and meatballs. As soon as he said that, I took my plate in my hand, shoved it in his face and walked out.”

Amanda’s eyes went wide at this. “Mother—“

Tam laughed as Jan shrugged. “He was dismissed a few months later based on his psych profile.”

She glanced at her daughter as she continued. “Now, the interesting year was really the fourth year. That was the year they taught Earth history, held zero-g classes and if you wanted a command position someday, you had to take the *Kobayshi Maru* test.” She looked over at Tam. “I actually *liked* the zero-g classes. But there were some cadets that couldn’t handle it- it actually made some of them sick.

“Now that didn’t get them dismissed, but it did get them re-directed toward a ground assignment. I remember some of them weren’t too happy about that. In fact, a few even challenged the decision.”

“And what was the result?” Amanda asked.

“It was pointed out them that serving on any space-oriented post— a ship, an outpost, a starbase— made the possibility of working in zero-g’s an on-going possibility.

“All the challenges were dismissed.”

Amanda watched her mother for a moment. “Mother, again through all of this, you’ve avoided mentioning Aunt Tamera. Weren’t you at the Academy together?”

Jan cleared her throat slightly.

Tam gave a half shrug. “Yes and no.”

The doctor was clearly confused. “I don’t understand.”

It was her mother that answered. “By the time this little project of yours is done, you will.”

Tam made the effort to change subjects as they stood up and began clearing the table. “So, how’d you beat the *‘Maru?’*”

“By not fighting it,” Jan replied as they tossed their trash into the kitchen recycle chute. “The program was designed in such a way, that the more

you fought back—the more you resisted—the more ships it threw against you. Once it was clear there was no ship to save, it was just a matter of ducking and dodging until you had your ship back across the Neutral Zone.”

As they moved back into the living room, it was Amanda that spoke once more. “You received a citation for defeating the program.”

Jan nodded. “It was no big deal really. Although it would have some lingering effects later on.”

“In what way?”

They all resumed their seats and Amanda placed her tricorder back on the table as Jan replied. “My tactics instructor was Lt. Benjamin Finney.”

“Did he assault you or something?” Amanda wondered.

Jan and Tam traded glances as Jan answered. “Or something.”

Amanda cocked her head to one side as that Vulcan eyebrow she inherited from her father rose. “Mother, you are being very evasive on several points.”

Jan nodded. “And if you continue to pursue this little project of yours, you’ll find out why soon enough.”

Her daughter watched her closely for a moment. “Yes, Ma’am.”

Training flights and Trial runs

Day Two

It was lunch time when the three met up at the Ranch. Jan met Tam and Amanda at the door.

“Come on in. I’ve had the replicator make up a salad for us.” As they headed for the dining room, she looked to her sister. “Where’s Isis while you’re down here?”

“She’s in one of her cleaning moods,” Tam replied as they sat down. “She’s vowed to clean the whole cabin from top to bottom.”

“Was it that bad?” Amanda asked as she set her tricorder on the table.

“Not that I noticed,” Her aunt replied as she filled her plate. “But her sensibilities are a little different than mine.”

“So,” Jan said as she swallowed a bite of salad with ranch dressing, “Where were we?”

“Not so fast,” Tam told her. “I want to hear more about this business with the Gorn first. What are their terms for alliance?”

Madam President shrugged. “Full trade—which we have no problem with. They also want two worlds on our border. Right now, they’re in Federal space, but their environments are actually closer to the Gorn home world than any race in the Union, so we might work a deal there.

“But they also want to trade military tech—and I’m not too sure on that one.”

“What kind of military technology are they wanting?” Amanda asked.

“Improved force field generators for one,” her mother answered. “I have no problem with that one—every race has the right to defend itself.

“But they also want improved torpedoes. *That* could prove to be a sticking point, considering their aggressive natures. We’ll have to see how things go.”

She looked to Tam. “Now, where were we?”

“We were ready to start on your training flights,” Tam replied as her niece activated the tricorder.

Her sister nodded. “It’s strange. After four years in the Academy, outsiders think, ‘Well, now you’re Starfleet’. Not quite. An ensign is about the same thing in Starfleet that a grad-student is in college. Still a lot of training and learning, Granted it’s ‘on the job’, as it were, but you’re still a student.” Jan shook her head. “In fact, it was at this point, that this ‘grad student’ was almost washed out.”

Tam’s eyes went wide. “What?” with the *Kobayshi Maru* yesterday, Jan had finally gone beyond the knowledge Tam shared with her. “Why?”

“Claustrophobia,” her sister answered. “My first training flight. I was assigned to the engineering crew of the *Gold Rush*— one of the *Daedalus*-class. There was a problem with one of the systems— one of the sensor grids I think it was. Anyway, someone had to climb into the Jefferies tube to fix it and I was chosen.

“I got into the tube and started climbing. It was one of those near-vertical tubes like we had back on the *Enterprise*. The further I got into it, the more I felt trapped. It was like the walls of the tube were closing in. I couldn’t breathe.

“I came out of the tube so fast, I knocked the chief engineer off his feet. It was something my psych test had missed completely.

“There was actually, a bit of discussion about it. How could I be expected to serve on a starship if I couldn’t handle tight places? Command spent a week going back over my record— both academic and psych. They even ordered new tests and spent another week pouring over those.

“Command finally decided to pass me based on a couple of factors. One was my academic record— I was in the top four percent of my class. Two, I wanted Command— not Ship Services. So they decided that it would be highly unlikely, I’d ever end up in a Jefferies tube again.”

She met Tamera's gaze. "And what one person has, another can also have." The vague warning was crystal clear to Tam.

"But you *did* graduate," Amanda noted.

Jan nodded as they finished lunch and headed for the living room. "Just leave it. I'll toss it in the recycle chute later."

She continued as they walked into the living room. "Yes, I graduated. And would you believe that I no sooner had my diploma in my hand, than Starfleet assigned me to Ships' Services?"

"Why didn't you file a protest based on what happened aboard the *Gold Rush*?" Amanda asked as they sat down and she placed the tricorder on the coffee table.

"Because I was being assigned to a very special ship," Madam President replied. "The *Constitution*. Only the best in the Fleet were chosen to serve aboard her for her trial runs- and there was no way I was going to miss out on that."

Tam spoke up next. "I remember when I was aboard the *Lydia* with Uncle Frank— we were on

our way to help you stop the Romulan Invasion. The *Constitution* had just joined up. He called her ‘The Grand Old Lady’. He said every Post-*Daedalus* ship in the fleet owed their existence to her and the technology she pioneered.”

“He was right,” Jan replied. “Without the *Constitution*, there would never have been an *Enterprise*— and there almost wasn’t.”

Amanda looked from one to the other. “What happened?”

“Lt. Ben Finney,” Jan answered.

“Your tactics instructor?”

Jan nodded. “I said Starfleet picked the best to serve on the *Constitution*. In their eyes, going by the record, that included Finney.

“Now, one thing you have to understand. Warp drive design has changed a lot since those days. Back then, the *Constitution* carried an atomic pile that interacted with the anti-matter in order to produce the energy needed for warp speeds.

“We were a week out from Earth. We had just finished the first warp test— had her up to Warp Seven in fact. Now, the switch that connected the atomic pile to the anti-matter was supposed to be closed.

“Four hours later, the shift ended. Finney went off-duty and I came on. I ran a routine check and found that he’d left the switch open. All through the previous four hours, the energy had been building without any release. I closed the switch, alerted the chief engineer and logged the incident. If I hadn’t closed that switch, the whole ship would have blown up about twenty seconds later.”

Jan met Tam’s gaze for a moment. “The captain brought us home and a board of inquiry was convened. Everything was reviewed from Finney’s lapse to the design of the warp engine. Finney received a reprimand and became bitter after that. He never received a command. Starfleet should have realized what could happen, but there was nothing to show them what was coming.”

“They didn’t dismiss him?” Amanda wondered.

Jan shrugged. “There were those that wanted to— They warned that if Finney messed up once, it could happen again— and next time, there might not be anyone around to catch it. But the rest argued that he’d had a good record up to that point and he was entitled to a second chance. But everyone agreed not to give him any command responsibilities. So, the *Constitution*’s engines were re-designed, the trials were successful and the crew was re-assigned— scattered. The whole incident was forgotten by everyone except Finney.”

Amanda watched her mother for a long moment. “I’m beginning to suspect that it would do little good to ask at this point, what eventually happened to Finney?”

Tam smiled and chuckled softly. “Stay tuned for the next thrilling chapter.”

Her niece just shook her head in disbelief. “Mother, your life sounds more like a Human ‘soap opera’ than reality.”

Jan glanced over at Tam as she answered.
“Depends on whose reality you’re talking about.”

BLEEP!

Tam reached for her combadge in a move Jan knew very well. “Kirk here.”

“Glendela, Ma’am. I’m afraid we need you on board.”

“What’s happened?”

“Mr. Zelgan got into a fight with Lt. Commander Barrett. Lt. Commander Barrett’s in Sickbay with a broken jaw and Zelgan’s under arrest.”

Tam shook her head. “All right. I’ll beam up in five minutes. Have a full report ready when I get there.”

“It’s already on your cabin monitor.”

Tam smiled. “Kirk out.” She looked to Jan as she stood up. “She’s come a long way since she reported for duty aboard the *Challenger*.”

“What is she now?” Jan asked. “Lt. Commander?”

“Hell no,” Tam replied. “She’s a full Commander now. And a damn good First Officer.” She tapped her combadge. “Kirk to *Yorktown*, energize.”

The Middle years

Day 3

Lunchtime had become the unofficial time for everyone to gather. Jan met Tam's gaze as she and Amanda came into the house. "So what was the fight about yesterday?"

Tam sighed as they approached the dining room. "First of all, you have to understand that Lt.Commander Michael Barrett is Irish—I think he even *bleeds* green. While Mr. Zelgan is a Tellarite."

Jan's eyebrows rose. "Fiery tempers on both sides."

Tam nodded as they sat down at the table. "There was a question of how to install and calibrate one of the new upgrades to the engines. As things turned out, Mr. Zelgan was right. But Barrett tried to throw his weight around and force him to install it wrong."

“So how did you resolve it?” Amanda asked as she placed her tricorder on the table and they took turns filling their salad bowls.

“Right or wrong, Zelgan struck a superior officer,” Tam told her. “In view of the facts, I had to at least put a reprimand in his file. I also ordered Barrett to personally review the installation and calibration procedures for all the new equipment.”

Jan nodded. “Those kinds of situations are always the hardest to deal with. Both sides were wrong to some extent, so to some extent, both sides had to be punished.”

Tam nodded as she stuck her fork into her salad. “A reprimand was the least I could get away with.” She chewed and swallowed. “I may have to do something about Barrett. He’s a good engineer, but this isn’t the first time I’ve had trouble with him. I’ve got complaints on file from half the engineering staff.”

Jan stared off for a moment. “Sounds like he’s forgotten what it’s like to obey orders instead of give them.”

Tam nodded and shrugged. “Well, it’s my problem. I’ll get it figured out.” She looked to her sister. “Story time again. You’d just finished the *Constitution*’s trial runs.”

Amanda activated her tricorder as she spoke. “I was looking over the records last night. According to them, the first *Farragut* was your first post-Academy assignment. The *Constitution* isn’t even listed.”

Jan nodded as she chewed and swallowed. “I know. I’ve been trying off and on for years to get that changed. But even a Union President has trouble fighting red tape.

“See, when the *Constitution* was built, the Union did their best to keep her existence as quiet as possible. If they’d had a cloaking device back then, they would have used it on her.”

This confused both Tamera and Amanda. “Why?” the captain asked.

“You have to remember what the quadrant was like back then,” Jan told her. “The Romulans—while still hiding behind the Neutral Zone, were

still considered an-going threat since the first war never really ended. We also had very rocky relationships with the Klingons back then—remember this was before anyone had ever heard of the Organians. If they had found out we were building a newer and better starship, they would have attacked before we had a chance to lay her keel.

“So while it’s okay to talk about it now, back then, everything concerning the *Constitution* was classified. Command never added that assignment to *anyone’s* record on the off-chance a spy might gain access to the files.”

Jan drank from her glass and set it aside. “So while my record says I served aboard the *Farragut* for three years, I was only on board for *one*. The other two were the years I spent aboard the *Constitution*.”

Amanda shook her head. “It’s hard to believe any government could be that paranoid.”

“Sometimes, such paranoia is justified,” her mother replied. “But, then too, there are times when it causes more trouble than it solves.”

Tam swallowed the bite of salad she’d taken. “So anything special happen aboard the *Farragut*?”

Her sister started to shake her head, then shrugged instead. “One thing. A creature— gaseous in form— made of tri-kironium attacked us— never found out why.”

“I thought I was familiar with the periodic table,” Amanda said. “But I have never heard of that element.”

Jan shrugged again. “Don’t worry about it. No one else had either— before or since. It had some factors in common with dikironium, but there was a third molecule involved somehow in its make-up and that’s where they got the name.

“The damn thing lived on glucose. Don’t know what its native source was, but once it invaded the *Farragut*, it just drew it out of every body it touched.”

“So how’d you get rid of it?” Tam asked.

“It invaded the bridge, “Jan told her. “As soon as I saw it, I dove for the nearest weapons locker, grabbed a phaser and opened fire. How a creature composed of a gaseous existence could scream like that thing did, I have no idea. I got three shots off and it fled the ship— straight up, through the bridge’s ceiling— with no damage.

“When they checked the sensor logs later, they found that the energy of the phaser beams had scrambled the creature’s electrical essence somehow— I never did understand it all. I just knew the damn thing ran and kept right on going.”

“And you were promoted to Lt. Commander for your quick actions,” Amanda stated.

“I was promoted because I was the closest one to the weapons locker,” Jan replied with a snort. “You read the promotion citations for other people and talk to them. At least fifty percent of the time, the written record had little or no bearing on what really happened.

“Still, it allowed me to board the *Pegasus* as Third in Command.”

Tam pushed her empty plate aside. “What was the *Pegasus*?”

“One of the first scout-class ships,” Jan replied. “The scouts were not as heavily armed as their destroyer-class cousins, even though they were both built from the same basic hull. The scouts were used primarily to investigate worlds where the Union was certain there was no native intelligent life.”

Tam shook her head and spoke with a slightly crooked smile. “I’m surprised any of them got out of spacedock, then.”

“Well, they did,” her sister replied. “Sometimes, much to the regret of their crews.”

Amanda looked from one to the other. “Why was that?”

“The Union’s always discovering intelligent life no one’s ever seen before,” Tam replied. “To declare categorically that a world has no intelligent life based solely on probes or long-range

telescopic surveys is one of the highest ranking acts of stupidity.”

Jan nodded. “Several scouts were lost through various misadventures— mostly run-ins with intelligent life no one expected to find. Everytime that happened, Starfleet had to go back and revise their planetary survey procedures.”

She grew quiet after that and both sister and daughter noticed. “Mother-?”

“Jan, something wrong?”

Madam President shook her head. “Just thinking about someone I hadn’t thought about in years. I met him aboard the *Pegasus*. His name was William Davis. He was head of security. In the three years I was on board, we got pretty close.”

Tam watched her sister closely. “How close is ‘pretty close’?”

Jan glanced at her and shrugged as she rose from the table. “When I was promoted to Commander and received orders to report to the *Republic* as First Officer, he proposed.”

Amanda was unable to completely keep the shock off her face. “Proposed? As in marriage?”

“That’s usually what it leads to,” Jan replied as she began gathering up her dishes. “But I wasn’t ready. At that time, there were only two other female first officers in the *entire fleet*. I wasn’t going to turn down the chance to be number three.”

They finished clearing the remains of their lunch away and the three headed for the living room. “What did Davis say when you turned him down?” Tam asked.

Once again, Jan shrugged. “He said it was my choice. He left Starfleet soon after that. I don’t know whatever happened to him.”

Tam spoke as the three found seats in the living room. “I know from the FNF broadcast of our return after the Battle of Starbase 98, that the *Republic* was a destroyer.”

Jan nodded. “*Saladin*-class. There were three construction contracts all together. The *Republic* was the last one of the first group.”

“So what was she like?” the captain asked.

“It was a different atmosphere than the *Pegasus*,” Jan told her. “Being more heavily armed, the *Republic* was used primarily for border patrol—not too far away from where Shev was serving aboard the first *Venture* in fact. It was close enough that we were able to share shore leave.”

Amanda watched her mother as she spoke and she could see the feelings clear on her face. “You and Aunt Shev are very close aren’t you?”

“I wouldn’t have asked her to be the godmother of my children if we weren’t,” Jan replied. “We saw each other through a lot of hard times over the years.” She looked over to Tam. “Speaking of which, I got a message from her the other day. She finally made Admiral. They’ve put her in command of Starbase 19.”

“That’ll be a big change from commanding Task Force 4,” Tam noted. “But I think she’ll be glad to get away from the Orion border.”

Jan nodded. “The Orions always did stir up bad memories for her.”

Amanda cleared her throat— a human trait she never could break herself of. “Mother, you’ve done it again.”

“Done what?”

“The Art of Misdirection,” the doctor said. “We were talking about the *Republic*.”

Jan slowly smiled. “Can’t blame a girl for trying.” She held up her hand to stave off Amanda’s reply. “All right, all right. The *Republic* was under the command of Captain Harriman Nelson. He told me once that he’d had an ancestor in the twentieth century United States wet navy— submarine service. He was older than I was- almost thirty years. We spent many evenings over those two years talking about history.

“He told me he wanted to teach history at the Academy when the tour ended.” Jan grew quiet for a moment. “It’s a shame he never got the chance.”

“What happened?” Tam asked.

“The Kzinti,” Jan replied. “It was one of their failed attempts to conquer the quadrant. Their first move was supposed to be taking out the *Republic* so they’d have a clear shot at the rest of the Union.

“They sent two ships, thinking that would be enough. I was First Officer and Chief Helmsman. The Captain made them work for it- no one can say different. He held them off for nearly an hour before they took out our shields.

“Their next shot clipped us just as the Captain ordered us to turn away. It sent us tumbling- threw Captain Nelson out of his command chair and half way across the bridge.” Jan looked over at Tam. “He broke his neck when he landed.”

She paused a moment before she continued. “We were still tumbling when the Kzinti moved in to finish us off— single file, one behind the other.

“They had taken out our shields, but our weapons were still fully functional. I had managed to hold on to the helm— I had the weapons controls right under my hand. As we tumbled, they

crossed into my line of fire and I let loose with everything we had.

“It was enough to destroy the first one and knock out the shields of the second one. I called the transporter room and told them to beam aboard anyone they could find. We got their captain and first officer before their self-destruct system destroyed their ship.”

“We limped to Starbase 4 for repairs,” Jan concluded. “The Kzinti captain was officially charged with committing a wanton act of war. The Union filed a formal protest with the Kzinti and of course no invasion took place since the entire sector was on alert now.”

“And for stopping the invasion, you were promoted to captain,” Amanda stated.

“The first *female* captain in Fleet history,” Tam corrected. “Not only that, they gave you the flagship—the *Enterprise*. How the hell did you manage that?”

Jan shrugged and spread her hands. “It was a surprise to me as well. I figured the best I’d get

would be some transport somewhere. I found out later, that it was originally intended to be a publicity stunt.”

Tam stared at her in shock. “What?”

Her sister nodded. “Starfleet was catching hell from all kinds of advocacy groups about their lack of females in command positions. What better way to silence the critics than to put a female in command of the flagship?”

Tam shook her head. “I’d say they got more than they bargained for.”

Amanda nodded. “Indeed.” A moment later, her pager went off.

Jan watched her as she took the device from her belt. “I thought you said you took a leave of absence?”

“I did,” the doctor replied. “Computer? Contact this number.” She then read off a series of numbers for the house computer as she headed for the den. It wasn’t a moment later, she came back. “There’s been a passenger shuttle accident at the

spaceport. All medical personnel are being called in.”

Tam stood up and reached for her combadge. “What are the co-ordinates? I can have *Yorktown* beam you there.”

A few moments later, in a chime and a sparkle, the doctor was gone.

The Enterprise- Part 1

Day 4

Tam arrived for lunch at the usual time. But Amanda was late. Jan was pacing the floor. “The FNF didn’t have any details.”

“The investigation was just getting started,” her sister pointed out.

“That’s the problem with being President,” Jan swore. “And Grand Admiral to some extent. I’m so removed from what’s going on, there are times when I don’t get the details till the rest of the Union does.”

There came the sound of the doorbell and the door itself being opened. “Mother? Aunt Tam?”

“In the living room, Amanda,” Jan called. As soon as the younger female stepped into the room, Jan’s own eyebrows rose. “You look like you’ve been going at it all night.”

Amanda nodded. “I’ve spent most of the night in one surgery after another.”

Jan nodded toward a chair. “Sit down.”

“Mother, you know that Vulcans can go—”

“You’re only a quarter Vulcan, young lady,”
Jan reminded her. “Sit.”

Amanda looked to her aunt and Tam shrugged.
“Don’t look at me, I agree with your mom.”

The doctor looked to each of them, finally
gave in and sat down.

“How bad was the accident?” Jan asked.

“The shuttle was a total loss,” Amanda replied
as she reached for the tricorder she’d left on the
table the night before. “With the exception of two
members of the crew, every one survived—
although several needed surgery of one kind or
another.”

Tam had the next question. “Any word on
what caused it?”

Her niece nodded. “The shuttle was on its way
in from the Moon— from Delta City. There was a
meteor shower in that sector just after launch.

Apparently the shuttle took some damage before they could get their shields up.”

The captain shook her head. “The city’s sensors must’ve picked up the meteor storm before the launch. Why did they wait so long to bring their shields up?”

“Check list,” Jan replied as she stepped over toward the couch. “Despite the approaching storm, they probably followed their standard flight checklist— which probably had the shields listed as one of the last things activated. They launched and the storm caught them before they got to that part.” The President sighed. “But there’s nothing they can do about it now.”

She sat down on the couch beside Tam. “So, where do we start today?”

The captain glanced over at the doctor and smiled as she spoke. “We’re up to your favorite subject: the *Enterprise*.”

Jan smiled as she leaned back in the couch and Amanda activated the tricorder. “Well, despite Starfleet’s reasons for giving her to me, I was

looking forward to it. Rob April had her first for her trial runs, then Chris Pike had her for eight years. When he was promoted to Fleet Captain, they put her through a year of upgrades and refits before I got her.”

“That’s only eleven years,” Amanda pointed out. “With your five, there are four missing.”

“Two, ”Jan replied. “After the Battle of Starbase 98, it took sixteen months to put her back together— and then Command ended the tour a week early so they could put her in the Fleet Museum.”

“What was it like the first time you saw her?” Tam asked.

Her sister glanced at her, and then stared off for a moment. “Oh, she was a sight. She was in spacedock with all the dock lights shining on her. ‘A thoroughbred’ was the first thing I thought of. She was so shinny and bright... a diamond in the darkness. I couldn’t wait to get on board and see what she could do.

“The transporters were off-line for some reason, so I had to board her by shuttle.” She looked to Amanda. “The moment I cleared the shuttle, the first person I saw was your father. Of course as First Officer, it was his duty to welcome the new captain on board. Strong, vital, even in those first moments, there was something about him that was totally unlike any other male I’d known.

“By the time we reached the bridge for the ‘Taking Command’ ceremony, I was nervous as hell. The butterflies in my stomach had turned into dreadnaughts. Everyone was there: Spock, Bones, Scotty, Uhura, Sulu— Chekov wouldn’t join us for another year yet, same with M’ress.

“I think Scotty was the most skeptical of the lot starting out. He and Bones were the oldest members of the command crew and I have no doubts that he wondered about Starfleet’s sanity in assigning this ‘Lass’ to command the flagship.”

“But you won him over eventually,” Tam noted. “The Montgomery Scott *I* know would move Heaven and Earth for you.”

“Once he understood that I knew my way around an engine room, the ice started to melt,” Jan answered.

“I read ahead in the records last night,” Tam began.

“Eager to see how the story ends?” Jan asked with a smile.

Tam shrugged. “Your first mission would have been one of a kind if it had gone off like it was supposed to.”

Jan nodded. “To explore beyond the edge of the galaxy. Thing is, no one knew about or expected the Galactic Barrier.”

“What was it made of?” Tam asked her. “The official record’s kind of vague.”

“We never found out,” Jan told her. “Some kind of wild energy we’d never seen before. When we tried to penetrate it, it blew out half our systems and threw us back into the galaxy.”

“If Delta Vega hadn’t been nearby with its lithium cracking station, we’d still be out there, limping our way home.”

As Jan finished, she nudged Tam and nodded toward a certain occupied chair. Tam glanced in that direction and smiled at the sight of Amanda fast asleep. “So much for Vulcan stamina,” she whispered.

Jan nodded toward the door. Tam picked up the tricorder and the sisters left the room, allowing the doctor to continue sleeping.

The Enterprise- Part 2

That evening

Amanda woke a few hours later and came from the living room. Glancing around, she heard voices and followed them to find her mother and aunt sitting outside in the porch rockers. Jan smiled at the sight of her as she approached. “Well, hello, sleepyhead.”

“I didn’t realize I was so tired,” the doctor stated.

“That’s what happens when you’re running on adrenaline,” Tam noted. “Once the excitement’s over, your body says ‘now it’s time to rest—whether you want to or not’.”

Amanda leaned against the porch rail and indicated the tricorder on the small table between the sisters. “Did I miss much?”

Tam shook her head. “We were just talking about the First Federation ship *Fesarius* and her captain— Balok.”

Jan shook her head. “The *Fesarius* was the largest ship I’d ever seen— *have* ever seen— and it was all automated. Balok controlled that entire beast from one little pilot ship docked inside.”

“Your mission reports are full of...interesting characters,” Amanda noted. She thought for a moment. “There was one, I actually wondered if he really existed. Harcourt—”

“—Fenton Mudd,” Jan finished. “Oh he existed all right. Con man, thief, liar and rogue.” She smiled at the memory. “And yet, you couldn’t help but like him— even if you did want to knock some sense into him at the same time.”

She glanced over at Tam. “The best way to describe Harry Mudd is ‘an over-grown child stuck in adolescence’. He never seemed able to comprehend the danger of what he was doing till it was too late.”

“Sounds like you ran into him more than once,” Tam noted.

Jan nodded. “A few times in fact. He had a brain, I’ll give him that. Everytime I thought we

had him locked up, we'd run into him again a year or so later." She shook her head. "Part of me hopes that someone was finally able to lock him up—for his own sake." Then she smiled again. "The rest of me hopes he's still out there somewhere enjoying himself."

"According to the records," Amanda noted, "You had problems with the ship's transporter systems early on."

"Oh hell," Jan swore. "That damn thing never worked right half the time—and when it *was* working, someone or something would manage to knock it off-line or blow it up." She was quiet for a moment. "There was a survey mission early in the first year—what was the name of that planet? Oh—Alfa 117. We were there on a mineral survey and some of the ore got left on the transporter pads. It scrambled the transporter signal in such a way that after I beamed up, the damn system created a second version of me."

Tam leaned forward in her rocker. "What?"

Jan nodded. “Jekyll and Hyde— only with separate bodies. Thing is, the two of us were only half of who we needed to be in order to survive. She was wanton, primal, acted more on instinct than thought— she even tried to seduce Spock.

“We almost died before I could convince her we had to go back through the repaired transporter in order to survive.”

“What did Father say about all of that?”
Amanda asked.

“Oh he found it ‘fascinating’,” Jan replied with sarcasm dripping from her words. “Course he wasn’t the one that got split in half.”

“But you had grown closer, right?” Tam asked.

“We were getting there,” Jan told her. “I’d already learned quite a bit about him. He could play a mean game of chess— yet, I could always find a way to beat him when no else on board could.”

“Then there was Psi-2000,” Amanda noted.
“Where Father and Mr. Scott proved the cold-mix theory for emergency ignition of a warp engine.”

She looked to her mother. “There was also some kind of virus involved?”

“I’d rather not talk about that one,” Jan replied. At Amanda’s look, she added,” Some things are not for public disclosure. Let’s just say that your father and I were somewhat closer when the dust settled and leave it at that.”

The sun had set by then and Jan rose from her rocker. “In fact, I think we can just stop there for the night. I’ll see you two in the morning.”

The Enterprise- Part 3

Day 5

When Tam beamed down from the *Yorktown* next morning, she found Jan on the porch, a cup of coffee in hand. “Wanted to talk to you before Amanda got here.”

“What about?”

“Psi-2000.”

A look of disgust came to Jan’s face. “I told you and Amanda that I didn’t want to talk about it.”

“Jan, what happened is part of the record— it’s in Dr. McCoy’s medical logs. I’ve seen them— and so has Amanda by now.”

Jan gave a curt nod. “Then there’s no need to talk about it then.”

“There’s nothing to be ashamed of.”

Jan set her cup down on the rail with a *bang*. “The ship was in trouble— and all I wanted at that

same moment was to have sex with my First Officer!”

Tam came up on the porch. “The entire crew was infected with that damn virus— *including* you and Spock! How many of the crew *did* have sex? *Did* you have sex with Spock?”

Jan glared at her for a moment, then turned away. “No— but only because Scotty came in at that point and jarred us back to reality.”

“So nothing happened,” Tam pointed out. “I don’t— ”

“I almost lost the *Enterprise!*” Jan shouted. “At Psi-2000 *and* here at home!”

Tam could only stare at her for a moment. Then she shrugged. “I don’t understand.”

Jan wrapped her arms around herself at the memory and looked away. “There were those in Starfleet that didn’t want me in command of *anything*— let alone the Flagship. They refused to acknowledge the effect of the virus. They said I didn’t give a damn about the ship or the crew- all I wanted was Spock.”

She turned to face the captain. “I had to allow a Starfleet approved Vulcan counselor to mind meld with me and see for herself what the situation was before those idiots would let it go!”

Tam was silent on shock. She could hardly find words when she did speak. “...Oh, hell...”

“Mother, that is exactly what *should be* in this account.”

The sisters turned to see Amanda standing by the front door. “How long have you been standing there?” Jan asked.

“Long enough,” the doctor said as she stepped closer. “You were shouting so loud, you drowned out the sound of the transporter.” She looked from one to the other. “What happened to you is exactly the kind of historical point that we *should* include. They would never have made that kind of demand of a *male* captain— and these days, no medical professional would agree to such an act. It’s the commanding officers of that time that should be ashamed— not you.”

“She’s right,” Tam pressed. “Today, the whole lot of them would’ve been brought up on a dozen different charges— and you know it.”

Jan was quiet for a long moment. Finally, she shook her head. “Won’t do any good anyway. I think— except for the counselor— they’re all dead now.”

Tam snorted. “Then at the very least, we’ll tarnish their halos.”

Jan glanced at her and then slowly smiled as she picked up her cup. She looked to each of them as she spoke. “Have you two had any breakfast yet?”

Both of her visitors nodded and Jan waved a hand toward the front door. “Then we can talk while I have some.”

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Tam and Amanda were seated at the table— Amanda with the tricorder in front of her— and they watched as Jan joined them with a plate of pancakes, sausage, syrup and strawberries. “This is actually a luxury for me,” she told them. “I can’t

remember how many times on just the *Enterprise*, that I would sit down to a meal only to have someone or something interrupt it.” She sat down as she continued. “It was only after I was made Head of Operations for the Vulcan Sector, that I could plan on eating three meals a day.” She applied the syrup and took a bite. Then she glanced at each of them. “So, what next?”

“You’ve encountered several Union and Starfleet officials over the years,” Amanda began as she activated the tricorder.

Jan almost choked on the strawberry she’d taken a bite of. “‘Encountered’ is putting it mildly. Back then, it seemed like they had an official for everything—and they all tried to grab and use more authority than they had a right to.

“One of them almost got Spock killed by trying to throw his weight around.”

Amanda actually leaned forward in her seat. “Which one?”

“Galactic High Commissioner Frank Ferris,” Jan replied. “He was in charge of some medical

supplies we were taking to Makus III so they could be transferred to the New Paris Colonies.

“Our course took us past a quasar-like effect called Murasaki 312. Back then, I had standing orders to stop and investigate all phenomenon like it. Ferris insisted I disobey orders. I refused.

“I sent the *Galileo* to survey it. Your father was in command of the mission. The problems began when Murasaki 312’s electro-magnetic effects forced the shuttle down on the only planet in the area.

“Ferris kept butting in, trying to force me to break off the search for the shuttle. I finally had to have security forcibly escort him off the bridge and confine him to his quarters.

“We found Spock and the surviving members of his crew and still made it to Makus III in plenty of time to make the transfer.”

Tam leaned forward in her seat. “You said ‘*surviving* members of his crew’?”

Jan nodded as she swallowed another bite of pancakes. “There was a native race on the planet—

stone age civilization. Spears and leather shields. That alone wouldn't have made them dangerous, except for the fact that they were eight feet tall."

Both sister and daughter stared at Jan in shock at this. She nodded. "Starfleet placed the planet under permanent quarantine after receiving my report so the natives could develop on their own." She finished her last bite of sausage before she continued. "It wasn't long after that, that your favorite character turned up again— actually he'd been on board for a while."

Amanda was confused by this and both she and her aunt traded glances as Jan cleared the table. The doctor looked up as her mother came back a moment later. "You mean Finney— again?"

Jan nodded as she led the way into the living room. "He should never have been assigned to the *Enterprise*. The history we shared concerning the *Constitution* should have been flagged in Starfleet's systems and kept it from ever happening. But, needless to say, someone slipped up.

“He’d been assigned as the ship’s Records Officer— and he’d been on board for the previous six months.”

She sat down and continued as the others sat as well and Amanda placed the tricorder back on the coffee table. “We encountered an ion storm— the most powerful one I’d ever seen. Like Murasaki 312, part of our mission was to scan and take readings on ion storms— we even had a special sensor pod attached to the ship for that purpose.

“According to the duty roster, it was Finney’s turn to operate the pod, so I assigned him. It has to be operated from within. He knew he’d have to be quick because the pod would be picking up an increasing ion charge. It would only be a matter of minutes before I’d be forced to jettison it. Well, the time came and I did just that.

“After the storm, we couldn’t find Finney. We assumed he didn’t get out of the pod in time.

“We put into Starbase 11 for repairs and I filed a report about the storm and Finney’s death. Then Commodore Stone viewed the automatic bridge

log and told me it showed me jettisoning the pod *before* it was time to. It looked like I'd panicked and killed Finney in the process."

"Why would the logs—" Tam began.

Jan held up her hand to cut her off. "Because our Records Officer had altered the computer's programs. Spock found that out when he tested the memory banks by playing chess with the computer— and beating it four times in a row."

"If Father gave the computer an understanding of the game equal to his—" Amanda began. Then she broke off and looked to her mother to see her nod.

"We finally tracked Finney down," Jan concluded. "We found him hiding in the twin-hulls area like a rat in the walls. We beamed him out and as soon as he arrived in the transporter room, he lunged for me with every intention of breaking my neck— screaming all the time about how the *Enterprise* should have been his.

“Well, I’d had enough. I ducked his grab and planted one fist right where it would knock the wind out of him.

“He was convicted of forging evidence and conspiring to frame a fellow officer of a capital crime.”

Jan sighed. “This time he *was* dismissed from the service and sentenced to the Tantalus V Rehab Colony.”

“So ends Mr. Finney’s story,” Amanda stated. She couldn’t miss the glance that passed between her mother and aunt. “Don’t tell me,” she said. “‘To Be Continued’?”

Jan smiled in sympathy. “You’re catching on.”

“Mother, Finney is starting to sound like your personal ‘arch-enemy’.”

Madam President shrugged. “There were a couple over the years that could have claimed that title: Kor, Koloth, even Harry Mudd to some extent. But you’re right— only Finney turned out to be at the top of the list.”

At that point, the doorbell went off and Amanda volunteered to answer it. “Captain Rand. It is a pleasure to see you again.”

“You, too, Amanda. Is your mother in?”

“Yes, she’s in the living room.”

Jan and Tam both looked to the living room entrance as the two entered. Janice, using her brace with one hand, was holding a PADD in the other.

Jan was first to speak. “Something wrong, Janice?”

“No Ma’am. Just some budget items you forgot to sign.” Janice handed over the PADD as she spoke. “Senator Abok of Tollas 9 brought them to my attention.”

“I didn’t forget,” Jan stated once she saw what was on the PADD. “I’m not going to sign them. Credits— like old fashion money— don’t grow on trees. If Abok and his supporters want me to sign these, he’s going to have to find an alternate source of funding.” She handed the PADD back to Janice as she finished.

Her personal assistant nodded. “Yes, ma’am. I’ll get back and let him know.”

“You came all the way from San Francisco just for that?” Amanda asked.

“Using the office transporter, it’s not that big a deal,” Janice replied. “And it gets me out of the office for a few minutes.” She turned back to Jan. “Will you be coming in tomorrow? The delegation from Manator 10 is due in.”

Jan met her gaze. “I’d forgotten about them. Is everything ready?”

“As far as I know. I’ll check again when I get back.”

Madam President nodded and watched as her assistant and Amanda left the room. Tam slowly shook her head. “It’s a shame they couldn’t do more for her.”

Jan glanced over at her as she answered. “It’s a miracle they were able to do as much as they did. There were several times during her treatments when she almost died.” Jan sighed. “At least she managed to escape her cage— unlike Chris Pike.”

Amanda had returned from seeing Rand out and had heard her mother's statement. "You knew Fleet Captain Pike?"

"We met after his accident," Jan told her. "It was the time your father was court martialed."

"What happened?" Tam asked.

Jan looked from one to the other. "I'll tell you, but when you release this little project of yours, you'll have to edit it out."

"Why?" Amanda asked.

"Because it involves General Order 7," her mother answered. "And a planet called Talos 4."

"Pike discovered the Taloisians during his second tour. Spock was a lieutenant serving as science officer. The Taloisians are the strongest telepaths the Union's ever encountered. They can reach into your mind, take any thought you have—and make it as real to you as this house—and you wouldn't be able to escape until they let you."

Amanda just stared at her mother for a moment. “It seems incredible that they could have mental powers that strong.”

“Well they do,” Jan told her. “In fact, they became addicted to the mental illusions they could create from the minds of beings they’d captured from all over the galaxy.

“They intended to use Pike and the females on his crew to create a race of slaves to use in rebuilding Talosian society. But they found out that humans despise captivity and finally agreed to let Pike and his crew go.

“After Pike’s accident, they found out about it somehow and reached out to Spock with an offer—their way of apologizing. They would teach Pike their telepathic methods and ways so he could live his life in illusion—free of his crippled body.

“But in order to pull this off, Spock had to kidnap Pike and steal the *Enterprise*.”

“I don’t understand,” Amanda admitted.
“Which seems to be my normal state lately. Why didn’t Father tell you what he was doing?”

“Because of General Order 7,” Jan said,
“Which was created after Pike’s first contact with the Taloisans. Because of their abilities, it was decided— right or wrong— that any contact warranted the death penalty. In fact, to this day, it’s the only death penalty still on the books.

“It was only after the Taloisans explained and transmitted images telling of Pike’s first visit, that Starfleet Command dropped the charges against Spock and allowed him to take Pike to them.”

“Was that the last time anyone saw the Taloisans?” Amanda asked.

Jan shook her head. “No.” Tam looked at her in surprise. “But for now, file it away as another piece in your on-going saga.”

Amanda could only watch her mother as she spoke. She was quickly becoming acquainted with the human feeling of frustration. This project wasn’t going like she’d hoped. Instead of getting

answers, it seemed like all she was getting were mysteries. “Why am I not surprised?”

“Don’t worry,” her mother told her with a gentle smile. “It all ties in eventually.” She then glanced over at Tam. “You know who we ran into next- just a few months later? Called himself ‘Trelane’— ‘The Squire of Gothos’. Talk about a character! Although, I have to admit he was a good dancer.”

Tam just stared at her in shock.

Jan laughed gently as she continued. “While he looked human to us, he was actually an energy-based life form. A child really. He couldn’t understand that the Earth he’d been studying was five hundred years in the past!

“Things finally got so far out of hand, his mother had to step in and send him to his room!”

Jan stood up then and headed for the kitchen.

“Anyone want anything to drink?”

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“After we left Gothos, we headed on to Beta 9 to drop off some supplies,” Jan said as she came back from the kitchen with a tray and three glasses filled with an orange colored liquid. “After that, we went to Cygnet 14 for some computer upgrades.”

Amanda tasted her drink, then looked to her mother. “Tranya,” Jan told her. “Courtesy of Commander Balok. It’s pretty common all over the Union these days.”

Jan turned to Tam. “Where was— Oh, the first A.I.” She shook her head. “That thing was a nightmare— nothing at all like the second one they installed later. This thing sounded like a twentieth century marine private. ‘Yes, Ma’am’. ‘Right away, Ma’am’. ‘On your orders, Ma’am’.” She closed her eyes and shook her head. “The damn thing just about drove me crazy.” She glanced at Tam. “I had to threaten to have it court martialed and purged if it didn’t shut up!”

Tam couldn’t help laughing!

Amanda looked from one to the other. “Why didn’t you return to Cygnet 14 and have it removed?”

“By the time it got that bad, we were en-route to Earth for further upgrades,” Jan told her. “On the way, we got caught in the gravity well of a black star.”

Tam’s eyes went wide. “Oh, hell.”

Jan nodded. “You’ve heard this part before.” She looked to Amanda. “It took all of our power to break away. When we did, we found ourselves caught in a time-warp— backwards. By the time we came to a stop, we were in the year 1968— old calendar and hanging too damn low in the sky.”

“You mean orbit?” the doctor asked.

Her mother shook her head. “No. We were actually in Earth’s upper atmosphere— some place no *Constitution*-class starship had any business being.

“Before we could get oriented, we were spotted by an American fighter jet. If that wasn’t

bad enough, the damn thing was fitted with nuclear missiles—and cameras.”

Amanda’s Vulcan eyebrow rose. “Cameras? It filmed you?”

Jan nodded. “The whole thing turned into a circus. By the time it was over, we’d recovered the film, but exposed ourselves to the jet’s pilot, a base MP and the base’s head of security— one Colonel Maxwell Fellini.”

The President shook her head. “When we finally got back to the present, Command raised all kinds of hell. They put together a special task force that spent the better part of two years digging through every kind of archive they could find to make sure we’d cleaned things up.

“That’s why we have the Office of Temporal Investigations today.”

“But,” Tam noted, “They can only investigate an incident if they know about it.”

Jan looked at her sister with a cock-eyed glance. “You’ve never had—?”

Tam shook her head. “Not yet anyway.”

Once again, since these sessions began, Amanda had no idea what they were talking about.

Tam’s combadge bleeped. She and Jan traded glances as she answered it. “Kirk here.”

“Glendela, Ma’am.”

“What is it, Glen?”

“Mr. Zelgan has killed Lt. Commander Barrett.”

Tam’s eyes shot wide as she stood up.
“*What?*”

“Yes, Ma’am,” Glendela replied. “In Main Engineering— in front of witnesses.”

“All right. Beam me up.” Tam looked to the ceiling and shook her head. A moment later, she was gone.

The Enterprise- Part 4

Day 6

It was mid-afternoon before Tam could rejoin her sister and niece. Jan spotted her as she came in the door. “What in the world have you got going on aboard that ship of yours?”

Tam shook her head and held up her hands. “Believe me these last few days have *not* been normal. To top it all off, Zelgan acted in self-defense.”

Amanda’s own eyes grew slightly wider at this. “A Tellarite? Self- defense?”

Her aunt nodded. “As soon as I got back to the *Yorktown*, I went straight to my cabin and had the computer show me what happened. There’s video of all of it.

“The moment Barrett was released from Sickbay, he headed straight for Engineering, swearing and cursing a blue streak about how he

was going to— and this is a direct quote— ‘teach that fat, furry pig a lesson’.”

Amanda studied her aunt’s face as she tried to see if she was making that up. She couldn’t decide.

“So what happened?” Jan asked.

Tam paced the floor as she spoke. “He charged into Engineering shouting Zelgan’s name. Zelgan wasn’t hiding. He was right there in plain sight recalibrating the warp core. Barrett swore he was going to teach him to respect his superiors.

“There were six other people in Engineering at the time. Two of them tried to stop him and Barrett just shoved them aside. He lunged for Zelgan—who actually backed away.”

Jan’s own eyes went wide at this. “Wait a minute. A Tellarite backed *away* from a fight?”

Tam nodded. “I swear all six witnesses confirm it and it’s on film. Zelgan dodged him twice before Barrett cornered him. Zelgan had no choice but to fight back. Barrett charged, Zelgan swung one fist—

“—and Barrett landed ten feet away with his neck snapped.”

Amanda shook her head. “All things considered, for a Tellarite, I would say that Mr. Zelgan showed considerable restraint.”

“And then some,” Jan added. She looked to Tam. “But you’re the captain. What are you going to do?”

Tam shrugged and spread her hands. “I *have* to file a report. I’ll include statements from each of the witnesses, plus the computer visual record. I won’t recommend any actions against Zelgan— it *was* self-defense.” She shrugged again. “It’s all I *can* do.” She looked from sister to niece. “Did I miss anything?”

Amanda’s eyebrow rose as Jan smiled. “Not as much as we did.”

“We were just getting started,” Amanda added as she reached for her tricorder. “I had to check on my surgery patients, so I was late arriving as well.”

Jan sat down on the couch and a moment later, Tam sat down beside her. “So, we finished with the Colonel for now—“

“For now?” the doctor asked.

Jan laughed softly. “Just apply some of that Vulcan patience and things will clear up soon enough.”

Amanda gave her mother a skeptical look. “I’m starting to wonder.”

“After a month of updates and repairs— and a quick visit from the Cygnet 14 engineers— Starfleet sent us to the planet Eminiar VII with another Union official— Ambassador Robert Fox. Eminiar VII had been at war with its nearest neighbor, Vendikar, for something like five hundred years. Fox had orders to end the war.

“But after we arrived, we found that the ‘war’ was being fought by computers. It was one big—“ She looked to Tam. “What’s the word? Games on Computers?”

Tam leaned back on the couch. “I think you’re thinking of video games.”

Jan nodded. “That’s it. The only things being destroyed were people. The buildings, the technology, the society— all continued while designated people walked into disintegration booths.”

“So what happened?” Tam asked.

“Well, I beamed down with Fox and Spock,” Jan said. “And we no sooner arrived, than their leader Anan 7 told us that — by their rules of war— the *Enterprise* and her crew had been declared destroyed and he wanted me to order the crew to beam down for disintegration.”

“You’re kidding?”

“No. Of course I refused. So the three of us were held while they tried every trick in the book to get Scotty to beam the crew down— he never fell for any of it.”

Jan took a deep breath before she went on. “Well, Spock, Fox and I managed to escape our guards, made our way to their computer center and then I took great pleasure in blowing up their damn war computers.”

The captain leaned forward in her seat. “You gave them back the horrors of war. What’d they do?”

“Anan7 agreed to let Ambassador Fox negotiate a formal peace.”

Amanda studied her mother closely. “Mother, didn’t you violate the Prime Directive by destroying their computers?”

“I returned their society to what it was before they developed those computers,” Jan replied. “Plus, by that time, they were trying to shoot down the *Enterprise*. What would you have done?”

“Returned to the ship, left the star system and made a full report to Starfleet.”

Tam turned to her niece and her tone of voice had a slight edge to it. “And allow more people to die?”

“It was their choice to walk into a disintegration booth,” Amanda replied. She looked to her mother. “Correct?”

“Incorrect,” Jan replied. “Their leaders expected them to sacrifice themselves in order to preserve their mockery of a society. If they didn’t go willingly, they were tracked down and escorted to the nearest booth.”

“I see,” Amanda replied. “If they were committing suicide under duress, then your actions were correct, of course.”

Tam shook her head in disgust. “Amanda, I swear, sometimes you are just as cold as—“

“My father?”

“Yes.”

“That’s enough,” Jan declared. “From both of you.” She looked to Tam. “She raised the same issues Command did at the time. Half of them wanted to pin a medal on me for finding a way to end the war, while the other half was ready to put me on trial for violating the Prime Directive.

“They finally compromised and did neither. Then they sent us to Janus 6.”

Tam leaned back in the couch and looked to her sister. The confusion was clear in her voice. “What was on Janus 6?”

“A mining colony,” Jan told her. “With a devil in the tunnels— or so they thought.”

“Janus 6,” Amanda repeated. Then she looked up. “I remember now—from my xenobiology class. Janus 6 is the home world of the Hortas. To date, they’re the only silicon-based life from the Union’s ever encountered.”

Tam was nodding. “I remember now.” She looked to Jan. “Ensign Narlock.” She smiled. “You know he’s a captain now? He has the survey ship *Yellowstone*.” She looked over at Amanda. “They replaced the command chair with a slab of stone from his home world and a small pedestal of command controls— all voice activated.”

Jan looked at her sister in momentary surprise. Then she smiled and shook her head.” These days, you’ll find them all over the Union— in Starfleet and out. Most of them can be found working with other Union members on various mining colonies.

Their method of mining has sped up ore production on several worlds— and cave-ins! You can't beat a Horta for mine rescue operations. They can dig a brand new tunnel to trapped miners and have lunch at the same time!”

Jan could tell her comment had eased the tension. Even though they'd had them over the years, she hated family disagreements. “It wasn't long after that, that Command sent us to Organia.”

Tam tilted her head to one side. “Why? I mean why the *Enterprise*? If Command had as little faith in you as you said- “

“The old story,” her sister answered. “We were the closest ship.” Jan stepped around till she could sit down on the couch. “Peace talks with the Klingons were going nowhere and Command suspected they were using them as a delaying tactic— trying to use them to divert attention from their fleet movements. But they weren't fooling anyone. Command had the entire fleet on Code-1 alert.

“We arrived at Organia expecting to find a simple agricultural society. Spock and I beamed down and found out differently. Not long after, the Klingons arrived and Kor beamed down with his occupation force.”

“What was Kor like?” the captain asked.

“Oily,” Madam President replied. “He was more like a snake— not a true warrior like Kang. Kor played the game more for politics and power. He saw the Military Governorship of Organia as taking him one step closer to the Chancellor’s chair.

“The fleets met just outside the star system. We lost the *Saladin* and the original *Tamerlane* and two others. Kor lost his flagship and five others before the Organians revealed themselves for what they really were and put a stop to it all.”

Jan paused for a moment as she thought about that time. “Command didn’t mind— not really. In fact, they boasted that we won because we only lost four ships to the Klingons’ six.

“But, the Klingon High Command wanted a scapegoat and Kor was it. He never got the Chancellor’s chair— Hell, he never even got to sit on the council. He got assigned to some backwater outpost and the whole mess allowed Gorkon to claim the Chair.”

“And he’s been taming the Empire ever since,” Tam noted.

Jan shook her head. “Not tamed. They’re still warriors— strong, determined fighters when they need be. He’s simply found more productive ways to channel their energies through exploration and developing what they already have.”

The President was quiet for a moment. “It was around this time that Command’s views toward me started to shift a little. Grand Admiral Stryker had always been more progressive than the rest of command, but when he first took office, he had to deal with officers appointed by his predecessor. I think it finally got to the point where he secretly enjoyed watching me prove Command wrong!” She grew quiet again and Tam noticed the gentle look on her face.

“Jan?”

“Just thinking. When Stryker retired, he told me that one of the bright spots of his career, was the day he promoted me to Admiral.” She looked over at Tam. “That meant more to me than the actual promotion did.”

Tam glanced out the window and saw that night had fallen. “It’s getting late.” She looked to Amanda. “Why don’t we call it a night and pick it up again in the morning?”

“I have some appointments in the morning,” Jan told them. “I’ll be tied up till noon.”

Amanda nodded as they all stood. “Noon it will be then.”

The Enterprise- Part 5

Day 7

Once more the three gathered at the ranch, only this time, Jan threw her visitors a curve. She'd packed lunches and had three horses saddled and waiting. She smiled and looked to her daughter. "You do remember how to ride, don't you?"

Amanda gave her mother a very human cock-eyed look that didn't hide her unease. "I remember I wasn't very good at it."

Tam swung up onto her horse as she replied. "Just take it easy and you'll be all right."

The doctor's Vulcan quarter was unable to suppress her human skepticism as she approached the animal her mother had chosen for her. She was convinced this wouldn't help her or her situation. "Is this really necessary?"

“Between the ranch and the office, I’ve been cooped up for over a week now,” Jan replied.
“Your only other option is to walk.”

Amanda met her mother’s gaze and considered just coming out with the real reason for this project. Then she decided otherwise, turned, slowly took the animal’s reins and climbed into the saddle.

Tam looked to her sister. “You sure she’s your daughter?”

Jan shrugged as she led her horse toward the road. “There have been times when I’ve wondered.”

Amanda’s eyebrows rose at this, but she said nothing as she prodded her horse to follow the others.

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Jan led them across the road and into the field on the other side. They entered a wooded area and rode for another half hour before Jan reined in her horse and looked around at the clearing they were in. “I think this will do. You’ll find food in your

right-hand saddle bags and thermoses of Tranya in the left.”

Soon they were seated on a couple of fallen logs while the horses were tethered together and allowed to graze nearby.

“I remember the first time Shev came to the ranch,” Jan said as she finished eating. “It was school break— about three months after mom died. She was such a ‘city girl’— still is— that she’d never been near a horse before. But by the time break was over, she was riding like she’d been doing it all her life.”

She watched as Tam and Amanda packed their trash away. “All right, I guess it’s time to get to it.” She watched as Amanda retrieved her tricorder from her horse and rejoined her mother and aunt. “Where did we stop? Oh, I guess it’s time for the Guardian.”

“Jan, do you really want to make *that* story public?” Tam asked. “Don’t you think Starfleet’s records have caused enough problems over the

years?” She met her sister’s gaze as she spoke, hoping what she left unsaid would be understood.

“It’s all right,” Jan told her. “The academic and scientific communities have known about the Guardian for years. These days no *one* race or person can get near it. Any request for visitation requires a mixed team of scientists from at least two worlds, a Starfleet escort and at least one representative of the Office of Temporal Investigations.

“There’s also a Starfleet task force in constant possession of the star system.”

Amanda looked to her mother with clear concern on her face. “Mother, that kind of protection...it sounds like you’re describing an old-style weapon of mass destruction.”

Jan nodded. “That’s one way of putting it.” She sighed. “The Guardian of Forever. For the *Enterprise*, things started when Spock started picking up...waves of temporal displacement. He called them ‘ripples in time’. We tracked them to a previously unknown world and the closer we got,

the rougher the ride. By the time we'd reached orbit, we were being shaken pretty good. Then Sulu's helm console shorted out in his face.

“Bones was called to the Bridge and had to use an injection of Cordrazine to stabilize Sulu's heart. A moment later, we were hit by a big wave of time displacement and McCoy accidentally injected himself — the entire ampule.”

Amanda couldn't keep the shock off her face at this. “But at those levels— ”

Her mother nodded. “Paranoia, madness. He fled the bridge before we could stop him and made it to the transport room. He knocked out Mr. Kyle and beamed himself down— right into the center of all the distortion.”

She glanced at Tam and then Amanda. “I took a search party down with me— Spock, Uhura, Scotty, Rand. We spotted the Guardian almost as soon as we arrived.

“Looked like a large, flattened, lop-sided donut- but while there was dust and dirt

everywhere in those ruins, there was none—
absolutely none— on it.

“We couldn’t figure out what it was. Out of frustration, I just asked out loud, ‘What is it?’”

Jan looked up at the sky. “I’ll never forget its answer— in a deep, booming, echo of a voice:

“A question. Since before your sun burned hot in space and before your race was born, I have awaited a question.”

The President shivered. “Just thinking about it, still sends chills down my spine.

“This being—entity— was the focal point of all the time displacement. More than that— it had access to time itself— any past moment great or small on any planet anywhere. It started showing us images from Earth’s past and Spock started recording them. They were passing so fast, all the normal eye saw were blurred images.

“Then McCoy— who had been hiding among the ruins— came out, ran and jumped into the images before we could stop him. In that same

moment, Uhura had been making a report to the ship and lost contact.

“The Guardian laid it out for us: The *Enterprise*, Earth— everything we knew— was gone. McCoy had changed history somehow.”

Amanda just stared at her mother— her Vulcan calm lost in the shock on her face. Jan nodded.

“Out of all existence, only the five of us knew anything had happened— and we were stranded.

“Our only option was to follow McCoy and try to stop him from doing whatever he did. So Spock and I had the Guardian show us Earth’s past again, and using Spock’s recordings, we tried to time it so we could jump in and land wherever McCoy did.

“We ended up in the 1930’s— old calendar. It was New York City— an area called the Bowery. It was just prior to the Second World War. The United States was still dealing with the remaining years of an economic depression. We had some problems with the local law, but we got away from them.” A smile came to Jan’s face and she looked

to Amanda. “Ask your father to tell you what a mechanical rice-picker is.”

She shook her head. “Well, to make a long story short, we found out that the man running a local mission— Edward Keeler— was our focal point. Spock managed to slow down the recordings he’d made and found that Keeler had two futures. Either he’d die in a car accident of some kind, or he’d survive and become a major player in a large peace movement that would delay the United States’ entry into the coming war. If that happened, Adolf Hitler would have time to develop the atomic bomb first and use his V-2 rockets to capture the world.”

“My god...” Tam whispered.

Jan glanced over at her, then looked down at the ground as she continued. “And to top it all off, I made a mistake— a big one. While Spock was figuring all of this out, I was keeping track of Keeler by helping out in the mission. One thing led to another and we started seeing each other. Movies, dinner when we could afford it. I was watching this man— this caring man— as he went

out of his way to take care of those around him—to feed them, clothe them, to keep their hopes up— always looking toward a better tomorrow...”

She grew quiet for a moment. When she continued, her voice was a whisper. “I fell in love. For the first time in my life, I fell in love— with a man that had to die.”

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Silence settled over the clearing for a long moment. It was Tamera that final broke it. “I can’t even...imagine how torn you must’ve been.”

Jan continued to look at the ground. “In my mind, I knew what had to happen. But in my heart, I kept praying Spock would be wrong this one time.”

Even Amanda’s voice was soft as she spoke. “Mother, even if Edward Keeler had not been the focal point, even if Father had been wrong and he was meant to survive, you couldn’t have stayed. You were three hundred years out of time. How would you have explained yourself?”

Jan just shrugged. “At that time, in that era, no one was very particular about a documented past. As for the rest, I wasn’t thinking of it at the time. My main concern was McCoy.

“He showed up about a week after we did. He stumbled into the mission and Edward took him in just before closing. The drug was out of his system by then and left him so wrung out, he slept through to the following evening.

“Edward and I were just heading out to a movie, when he started telling me about this strange man— and described McCoy’s uniform.

“Spock had come out when we did and started up the street. I told Edward to stay where he was and called to him. He met me at the Mission’s doors— just as McCoy came out of them. He’d heard me call Spock’s name.”

Jan paused. “The moment was on me before I even realized it. Curious about what was going on, Edward started toward us— stepping into the street—

“— A truck came round the corner—

“—I started toward him and Spock called my name—

“—Bones started by me—“

Jan closed her eyes and wrapped her arms around herself. “I grabbed him and held on to him—

“— There was the sound of brakes—

“— And the sound of impact.”

Silence settled over the clearing for several minutes. Then Jan looked up at the sky, stood and headed for her horse. Sister and daughter followed without a word.

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All the way back to the house, Jan didn't say a word— even after they'd bedded down the horses. In fact, it was Tam that broke the silence as the three entered the house. “Are you okay?”

Jan sighed and nodded. “Yes— I just haven't allowed myself to think about Edward in a long time.” She reached the dining table and set her saddle bags upon it. She continued as the others

followed suit and began removing the remains of their lunch. “On our next mission, I actually moved up.”

“How do you mean?” Amanda asked as she set out her tricorder.

A weak smile came to Jan’s face. “My next would-be boyfriend was a god.”

“You’re kidding,” Tam declared as she threw her trash into the recycle chute.

Her sister shook her head. “Nope. The Greek god Apollo— olive wreath in his hair, toga, temple— the whole nine yards as they say. Oh, he was no real god— but I have no doubt the people of ancient Greece took his people for gods when they visited Earth.”

“What did he want?” Amanda asked as they walked into the living room.

“He said he wanted worshippers,” Jan replied. “I think he just wanted company— the rest of his people had been gone for a long time. The thing is, he went about it all wrong.

“He stopped the *Enterprise* dead in space and insisted I bring a landing party down— but I couldn’t bring Spock.”

“Why not?” the doctor asked.

“He said Spock reminded him of Pan and Pan bored him.” Jan sat down on the couch as she continued. “Once the landing party arrived, he said the he and I would give birth to a new race of gods. Said I reminded him of his half-sister Athena.”

She looked over at Tam as she sat down on the couch. “I told him that was the cheapest pick-up line I’d ever heard.”

Tam laughed despite herself.

“We were lucky Apollo didn’t like Spock,” Jan noted. “With him on the ship, we were able to get past Apollo’s defenses and destroy his power source- the temple.”

She looked off for a moment before she continued. “The end was kind of sad really.

“Once he understood that we couldn’t go back to being the simple shepherds he remembered, he stood before the ruins of the temple and spread his arms wide. He called upon the other gods that had gone before him and then he just...faded away to nothing.

“After a few minutes, the only sound was the wind through the trees.”

Jan took in a deep breath, then looked to her daughter. “A few months later, I was certain I’d sent your father on a suicide mission.”

“What?”

Her mother nodded toward the den. “Come on.” She looked to Tam as she stood up. “You’ll want to see this, too.”

Once in the den, she spoke. “Computer, access Starfleet archives— *FSS Enterprise* ,NCC-1701. Mission log, stardate 4307.1. Display Bridge viewscreen visuals.”

Jan waited till the image came on the screen. “Hold that.” She then looked to Amanda. “What do you make of that?”

“It looks like a single-cell organism,” the doctor replied. “Possibly an ameba.”

Jan turned to the computer. “Computer, state the size of the object on the screen.”

“18,000 kilometers in length and 3,000 kilometers in width.”

Tan’s shock was clear in her voice. “Not possible!”

“Very possible,” her sister corrected. “This thing was a virus invading our galaxy and soaking up *all* energy— both biological and mechanical. It killed an entire star system— and the *Constitution*-class *Intrepid* with its all Vulcan crew.” She looked to Amanda. “Their deaths gave your father such a migraine, he almost passed out at his station.”

She stepped away, leaving the creature on the screen. “It had a protective zone of darkness around it. The probes we launched died as soon as they entered its so-called flesh.

“Our only option was to send a shuttle. Someone had to go into that damn thing and send us the information we needed to destroy it.”

“Why send Father?” Amanda asked.

“His Vulcan biology,” Jan replied. “He would survive longer than any Human crew member—which meant he’d be able to transmit information longer than anyone else and fly the shuttle. An automated shuttle would drift in that thing’s body fluids—it wouldn’t be able to make the kind of corrections needed to stay on course.

“That’s the one aspect of being the Captain that I’ve always hated,” Jan stated. “Ordering people on missions where their deaths were all too likely.”

She stood before the bay windows, looking out at the sun-lit afternoon as she continued. “We launched the shuttle and Spock penetrated the creature’s outer membrane—it didn’t like that too well. It kicked something fierce.

“He started losing power almost immediately. The first news he sent back was *not* good.

“The damn thing was getting ready to reproduce. He just managed to send us the clue we needed before we lost contact.”

“So what was the answer?” Tam asked.

“All the readings were negative,” Jan replied. “The one thing that beast couldn’t handle was negative power.”

Tam nodded in understanding. “Anti-matter.”

Jan turned and returned her nod. “We prepared a probe with a magnetic bottle of it drained from the engines. Then we pulled within point-blank range and shot it right into the nucleus.”

She stared off then as she spoke. “But even as we were trying to escape with what little power we had left, my mind was on Spock. I think, it was then, that I started to realize how I was starting to feel about him—and it scared me.” She looked to Amanda. “Remember, I’d already been raked over the coals once for my assumed feelings for him. Granted, Command had gone through some changes since then, but I didn’t know how he felt.”

Jan shrugged. “Of course all of that was academic. As far as we knew, Spock was dead by now and our power was just about gone as well.

“Then the probe exploded and threw us clear—both the ship and the shuttle. The creature was gone—destroyed.

“Once we had enough power, we opened the hangar doors and brought the shuttle in by tractor beam. It was completely drained of power— we had to use the manual releases to get the hatch open.

“Spock was barely alive. McCoy got him to Sickbay and worked over him the rest of the day and night. It was almost midnight ship time before he’d admit that Spock was going to live.”

Jan looked to Amanda. “I was in the outer office the whole time. I couldn’t make myself leave Sickbay.

“Spock’s body was so drained, it was two days before he woke up— another day after that before he could even sit up without getting tired. I visited,

we spoke— but not about what I wanted to talk about. I couldn't make myself bring up the subject.

“It was another week before your father was able to resume his duties.”

She walked over to the computer screen. “Starbase 10 was the closest base. We put in for fresh power cells for the equipment that needed them, and made what repairs were needed. Starfleet surprised us with two weeks of R&R. We needed it after that mess.”

The President then glanced at the computer screen. “Computer, *Enterprise* mission archives: Image search. Tag: Doomsday Machine.”

Tam's eyes went wide as the image appeared.

Jan looked to her daughter. “You were talking earlier about weapons of mass destruction.” She nodded toward the screen. “Take a look at this one.”

Tam stepped closer for a better look, too. “Looks like a used ice cream cone.”

Jan raised an eyebrow at that. “Well, this ‘ice cream cone’ had a neutronium hull and fired a pure anti-proton beam. It sliced planets to rubble, then used the debris for fuel.”

She glanced at the screen. “Commodore Matt Decker and the *Constellation* found it first and it left that *Constitution*-class ship a drifting hulk.”

She looked away from the screen then. “Matt beamed his crew down to a nearby world- and that thing destroyed it, crew and all. He was so overwhelmed with grief and self- appointed guilt, that once back on the *Enterprise*, he stole a shuttle and flew it right down that thing’s throat. He was going to destroy it or die trying.

“The shuttle blew up inside the machine. The outer hull wasn’t damaged of course, but the inner mechanisms were. They just weren’t damaged enough to stop it.”

Tam guessed it. “You used the *Constellation*.”

Jan smiled. “We might make a ship’s captain out of you yet. The impulse engines were still salvageable. Scotty rigged them to overload. I then

sent everyone else back to the *Enterprise* and aimed the *Constellation* right at the thing.” She looked from Tam to Amanda and back as she spoke. “A moment later, that monstrosity attacked the *Enterprise* and knocked out the transporter.”

Both sister and daughter looked at her in shock. “Oh hell,” Tam whispered.

The older sister nodded. “I was riding the biggest bomb mankind ever made right into hell with no way to shut it off.

“It was the only time in my life, I felt like screaming.” She glanced at Amanda as she continued. “The *Constellation*’s saucer was half way inside the machine when they got the transporter working again.” She smiled gently. “When I arrived in the transporter room, the first thing I saw was your father standing by the console. He and Scotty both had to work together to bring me home.”

“And the Doomsday Machine?” Tamera asked.

“Since the hull was solid neutronium, we couldn’t destroy it completely,” Jan told her. “But the destruction of the *Constellation* did cause enough internal damage to shut it down. We towed it to Starbase 9.

“To this day, the boys in R&D are still trying to understand the damn thing.” Jan turned off the screen and shook her head. “Our next mission was a little different— because it didn’t start out as a mission.”

She started leading them back towards the living room as Amanda asked, “What do you mean?”

“Technically, we were already on a mission,” Jan told her as she sat down on the couch.

“Despite the Organian Peace Treaty, Starfleet continued to assign ships to patrol the Klingon Neutral Zone. We suddenly started receiving an A-1 Priority Call.”

Tam met her sister’s gaze. “Back then, that meant a disaster of the worst kind.”

Jan shrugged. “It was coming from Station K-7. The only thing we could assume was that the Klingons had chosen to ignore the treaty and attacked the station.

“But when we arrived, there was no sign of the Klingons and the station looked perfectly peaceful.”

This confused both sister and daughter. Tamera had the question. “So what was going on?”

Jan looked to Amanda. “Another one of our ‘wonderful’ bureaucrats. Nilz Baris. Union Undersecretary for Agricultural Affairs. He sent the alert for the sole reason of getting Starfleet protection for his lousy grain consignment.” She closed her eyes and shook her head. “The man was worse than Harry Mudd! He was so focused on getting his damn grain to Sherman’s Planet, he was totally unconcerned with the fact that he’d placed an entire quadrant on a War Alert!

“I felt like knocking him on his ass.”

“You didn’t—” Amanda began.

Jan shook her head. “No— as much as I wanted to. But I made sure he understood that he’d be taking the blame for mis-using the priority channels.” She sighed. “Of course then, the Klingons *did* show up— for shore leave of all things— and we had to stick around whether we wanted to or not.”

Tam leaned back on the couch. “Who was in command of the Klingon ship?”

“Kolothe,” Jan told her. “A street punk— and his first officer wasn’t any better. His name was Korax and he went out of his way to start a brawl in the station’s bar.”

She glanced from Tam to Amanda as she continued. “About this same time, maybe a little earlier, Uhura, Sulu and Chekov were off duty and taking the chance to do some shopping. Uhura came across this one shop— just a little booth really— run by an independent scout named Cyrano Jones. His main job— when he could get it— was locating asteroids for possible mining operations.

“But somewhere in his travels, he came across these balls of fur— and they *were* just balls of fur— no visible head or legs— that he called Tribbles. What he didn’t tell Uhura even as she bought one, was not to feed it.”

“Why not?” Amanda asked.

“Because feeding a tribble, feeds its reproductive system. By the time Korax started his brawl in the station’s bar, we had a rec room full of the little beasts and they were *still* multiplying!”

Tam had to laugh at that as Amanda shook her head.

“Now it started getting nasty,” Jan told them. “Somehow, Jones’ tribbles got into the station’s ventilation system and found their way to the storage compartments where the grain was stored.”

Tam’s eyes went wide. “They ate the grain?”

Jan nodded. “And died from it— the grain was poisoned.”

Both of Amanda’s eyebrows rose. “How?”

“We never found out for certain,” her mother replied. “I have my suspicions. But I never had any hard evidence to support them.

“I called everyone involved to the station manager’s office: Baris, his aide and Cyrano Jones—who arrived under guard and with an armful of live tribbles. Then Koloth and Korax came in and started complaining about the mistreatment of Klingon nationals in the quadrant.”

Tam’s confusion was clear. “What?”

“I canceled their shore leave after the brawl,” Jan explained. “Thing is, they no sooner entered the office, than the tribbles that Jones had, started making all kinds of noise, squirming around—it was all Jones could do to hold on to them. Turns out they don’t react kindly to Klingons.

“The kicker was the fact that they also acted up anytime Baris’ *assistant* came near them.”

Amanda watched her mother closely. “A spy?”

“McCoy came in a few moments later and confirmed it with a quick scan,” Jan told her.

“That gave me the chance to put Baris in his place and order Koloth out of Federal territory.”

“What about Sherman’s Planet?” Tam wondered.

“The Union sent out a new shipment of grain. It was a week late, but at least no one died from eating it.”

“And the tribbles that were taking over the *Enterprise*?” the captain asked with a smile.

Jan shrugged. “Scotty gave them to the Klingons.”

Tam’s eyes went wide. “*The Klingons*?”

Her sister nodded. “Hmm, mm. He, quote ‘Transported the whole kit-n-caboodle into their engine room, where they’ll be no tribble at all’ unquote.”

Tam closed her eyes and groaned in mock pain. “Ouch!”

Jan smiled and nodded. “Yeah, we thought so, too.”

“So what happened to the tribbles after the Klingons discovered them?” Amanda asked.

Jan spread her hands. “I have no idea— But knowing Koloth and his cut-throats, probably Death by Disruptor.” Then she checked the time. “We’ve talked all afternoon. Why don’t we get some dinner?”

“At the table, I hope,” Amanda noted as the three stood up.

“A city girl through and through,” her mother noted.

The doctor nodded as she gathered her tricorder. “Yes, ma’am.”

Opposite Views

Day 7- evening

Amanda shook her head at the sight of the steak her mother was eating- and the pork chops her aunt was cutting into. She in turn, took a forkful of her salad.

“You know you *are* three-quarters Human,” Jan reminded her. “You do need some Human elements in your food.”

“I *am* a doctor, Mother. I take the necessary supplements.”

“Supplements,” Jan muttered. “You’re not like your brother. Sarek enjoys a good, well done steak once in a while.”

Amanda just continued eating her salad. She really did not want to have this discussion.

Jan shook her head in disappointment. “Sometimes I think you try so hard to be more Vulcan than your father, that you forget what it means to relax and just live.”

Madam President looked over at the doctor. “You weren’t this closed off before you went to medical...school.” Her eyes narrowed.

“Have you been sneaking off to that damn Kolinahr temple again?” Jan threw down her fork. “*Damnit!*”

Amanda stiffened in her seat. This was not how she wanted to deal with this. A confrontation with her mother was the last thing she wanted.

Tam looked from one to the other. “What’s...Kolinahr?”

“A perversion,” her sister replied. “The one Vulcan school of thought I’ve never agreed with. The Kolinahr is the absolute, complete purging of all emotion. When it’s over, the *victims* are little more than flesh and blood computers- incapable of enjoying life.”

Amanda looked up then, facing her mother’s anger. “But Surak said— ”

“Surak said that Vulcans had to learn to *control* their emotions. I’ve read the Teachings of Surak , young lady and nowhere in his writings

does it say *anything* about throwing them on the trash heap!”

Jan leaned back in her chair. “You father considered this insanity once. I told him I married a *man*— not an unfeeling zombie. If he went anywhere near those temples, the marriage was over.”

Tam looked at her sister in shock and Jan nodded. “It was the only real argument we ever had. Spock cared enough about my views, that he never brought it up again.”

Jan looked to Amanda again. “I will not have my family reduced to soulless autons.”

The doctor looked to her in uncontrolled surprise. “You can’t— “

“As Matriarch of the House of T’Pau, I most certainly can,” Jan told her. “As it was Yesterday, as it will be through all Tomorrows, it’s decided. You will *not* go near *any* of those Kolinahr temples again. Is that clear?”

Amanda looked down at her salad bowl. When she spoke, her voice was a whisper. “I seem to have no choice.”

“Not in this,” Jan confirmed. “You can study any other legitimate Vulcan school of thought you want— except that one.”

Tam had remained quiet throughout the exchange as she realized— not for the first time over the years— how different her life had become from Jan’s. Give her a ship and she was happy. She seriously doubted she could handle the complexities of life that Jan now dealt with almost every day.

Jan took another bite, then pushed her plate away. A moment later, she left the table.

Tam watched her go, then turned her attention to Amanda. “Maybe I don’t know or understand what Kolinahr is, but I understand *her*. She always wanted what was best for you kids. Did you know the Federal Congress wanted her for Grand Admiral *before* they chose Uncle Frank? They had

to choose him because she turned it down in order to stay on Vulcan and be there for you two.

“And from what I just saw, you just threw all of that back in her face.”

Amanda swallowed. This was not going at all like she'd hope. “It was my choice.”

Tam nodded. “And from where I'm sitting, it was the wrong one.” Then she too, stood and left the table.

=/\=

She found Jan where she knew she would— on the porch, leaning against the railing and looking up at the stars. “You okay?”

“I don't know.” Madam President glanced over at her. “You've never seen a disciple of Kolinahr, have you?”

The captain shook her head.

“Their faces might as well be carved in stone for all the emotion they show,” Jan told her. “Cold, emotionless, like someone ripped out their hearts and left them alive.” She looked to Tam again.

“Love, passion—the excitement in a new discovery or the joy in a lesson well learned—all gone.” Her voice took on an edge. “I will do whatever I *have to*, to keep Amanda from ending up like that. I still have some contacts in Starfleet Command. I’ll get her transferred here—to Starfleet Medical’s main offices. Put some distance between her and those damn temples.”

“You tore into her pretty good at diner,” Tam pointed out. “Why don’t you wait a few days and see what she does first?”

Jan met her gaze for a long moment. Then she looked away and nodded.

“Why don’t we just knock off for the night?” Tam suggested. “Give everyone time to cool down? We can pick it up again at lunch tomorrow.”

Her sister just nodded. Tam turned and went back inside to find Amanda in the living room. “Get an ear full?”

Amanda’s eyebrows rose. “How do you—?”

“You’re a ‘Kirk’,” Tam replied. She tapped her combadge. “Kirk to *Yorktown*. Beam me up.”

The Enterprise- Part 6

Day 8

Lunchtime found all three at the ranch— plus a heavy silence that seemed to settle over the house.

Amanda had no sooner activated the tricorder, than the doorbell rang and she set it down to go answer it. Upon opening the door, she found a Vulcan in his mid-forties wearing a floor-length, dark grey robe. “Setok? Why are you here?”

“I could ask you the same question,” the male replied with a raised eyebrow and a stern tone. “You left the Temple without authorization. It’s taken me this long to track you down.”

Jan stepped into view— one hand behind her back. “She needs authorization to see her mother?”

Setok’s eyes never left Amanda. “You will return. Now.” His tone left no room for argument.

Jan’s own eyebrows rose. “Are you actually *ordering* her to return? Who the hell do you think you are?”

Setok reached for Amanda. A note of anger entering his voice. “You will come—”

Jan’s hand was in his face—the Type 1 phaser it held, aimed right between his eyes. “Back off. I may be seventy, but I can still drop you before you take another step.”

She spoke to Amanda without moving her eyes or her aim. “He’s been lying to you. Look at him, Amanda. Watch his jaw muscle tighten, watch him grind his teeth in frustration— see the look of hatred in his eyes?

“*This* is your unemotional disciple of Kolinahr? Do you know who I am, Mister?”

Only now, did Setok look at her. The anger and disgust no longer hidden. “Yes, I know. The Human who pretends to be Vulcan. The Offworlder that turned our traditions to trash by forcing herself into one of our most noble houses.”

Amanda could only stare in shocked silence as Jan shook her head. “Race hatred on top of everything else. You belong to that fringe group of rebels—the Ta’shak Cult.”

She spoke to Amanda. “They want to throw off the teachings of Surak and revert to the primal, emotional state the race existed in before he saved it.”

“*Enslaved it,*” Setok declared. “*The Teachings of Surak* are lies- *chains* my people are forced to wear!”

Jan watched him, her phaser never moving. “And yet, you want a woman who’s three quarters *Human* in your little rebel band.”

Her next words were for Amanda. “Shall I tell you why? Name recognition.” She turned back to Setok. “How much would the legitimacy of your following increase if you could claim my daughter among your followers?”

There was the sound of a transporter effect and two security guards from the *Yorktown* arrived with phasers drawn. “Madam President? The Captain called for us.”

Jan nodded. “This Trespasser’s name is Setok. He was trying to kidnap my daughter. He also has several out-standing charges against him on

Vulcan. Get him out of here and file every charge that applies.”

“Yes, Ma’am.” One guard replied as they both took Setok by an arm.

He started to resist- and Jan’s phaser was right under his nose. “You can walk— *or be carried,*” She told him.

At that, the guards had to drag him off the porch. Jan turned and went back inside without a backward glance. Amanda watched as the guards called the *Yorktown* and beamed away— taking Setok with them.

The doctor slowly closed the door and followed her mother back to the living room. “You have any *other* surprises you want to tell me about?” Jan asked as she returned the phaser to its drawer beneath the gramophone.

“Nice friends you have, ” Tam noted.

“I have been blind,” Amanda whispered. She looked to her mother. “I honestly thought... How could I have missed...?”

Jan shook her head as she stepped toward her. “Don’t blame yourself. On Vulcan, among his followers, Setok was in his world. There, he could control what you saw of him. But here, he was out of his element. Everything he saw was against his mind set and broke down the facade he’d built up.”

Jan reached out and gently touched her daughter’s chin, tilting her head up till she could see her face. “You don’t have to ‘out-Vulcan’ your father. Just be yourself. The other choice—” She nodded toward the door— “isn’t worth it.”

“But...I want him to...”

“Be proud of you?” Jan asked. “He *is*. Granted Spock is not the most openly affectionate being in the universe— and after thirty-six years who should know better than me? But he’s proud of you and Sarek both— and you know why?”

Amanda shook her head.

“Because neither one of you wasted your lives trying to figure out who you are. Vulcan, Human, both— neither— it didn’t matter to you— and *it doesn’t matter*.” Jan stepped away as she

continued. “Just be yourself. The rest of the universe can either agree or go to hell.”

A very weak smile came to Amanda’s face. “I can’t picture Father saying it that way.”

Tam indicated the smile with a wave of her hand. “Looks good on you.” Then she pointed to the tricorder. “Now, how about we get some work done?”

=^=

“...Neural,” Jan began.

They were seated in the living room. There was a tray of snacks on the coffee table next to the tricorder and Amanda seemed to focus her attention on the cheeses the kitchen replicator had provided. “I’ve always...liked cheese,” the doctor replied to her mother and aunt’s looks. “But it’s recognized as a mostly Human food and we weren’t allowed to have anything Non-Vulcan in the Temple.”

“How could you be in Starfleet and be restricted to the Temple?” Tam asked.

“She was a doctor with a public life already established,” Jan surmised. “Setok had to allow her to come and go within reason or there would have been questions long before today.”

Amanda shrugged and nodded as she continued to work on the piece of cheese she’d selected.

“As I was saying,” Jan resumed, “Neural. I had actually visited the planet once before, while I was aboard the *Pegasus*— one of Starfleet’s mistakes.”

Tam just stared at her. “How could they miss a population as big as that?”

Jan shrugged. “There was no pollution in the atmosphere, no signs of a transportation system, no major population centers. From space, Neural looked to be uninhabited. We didn’t pick up any life form readings till we reached orbit.”

She reached out to the tray and claimed a piece of cheese for herself. “Before you eat it all,” she told Amanda with a smile. She took a bite, chewed and then continued. “We beamed down about a kilometer from Tyree’s camp and a moment later,

the man himself came along with a hunting party. They were on their way back to camp. They were surprised to see us of course. But we quickly assured them we meant no harm, that we were visitors and wanted to learn about their people.”

“Were you still using the hand held translator back then?” Tam asked as she helped herself to the tray.

“No,” her sister answered. “The sub-dermal versions were just coming into use. Tyree’s people accepted us—” Jan smiled—“In fact, Tyree came to look upon me as a kind of kid sister. We stayed almost two weeks, learning about his people and the villagers.

“When we left, my final report strongly recommended that Neural be quarantined and left to develop on its own— and Command agreed.”

Jan glanced around at Tam and Amanda as she went on. “It was my second year in command of the *Enterprise* when Aunt T’Pel called me and told me about intelligence reports that said the Klingons were nosing around Neural.” Madam

President tilted her head slightly. “Now that I think about it, that was the only time she ever had reason to call me about an assignment.” She glanced around again. “We were ordered to Neural to find out what the Klingons were up to.”

“What was the level of Tyree’s civilization?” Amanda asked.

“Oh, about 3.5, maybe a little higher,” Jan answered. “They used hides for their clothing. Bows and arrows for weapons— at least at first.”

Tam’s eyebrows rose at this. “At first?”

Jan nodded. “When we arrived, Tyree told us that the villagers had new weapons. They called them ‘fire sticks’— we called them flint lock rifles.”

Amanda looked up from the tray and the piece of cheese she’d just selected. “That shouldn’t be possible in so short a time.”

Jan nodded again. “Agreed. But before we could figure out a plan, the villagers attacked. Two of Tyree’s people were killed...and Spock was shot.”

Amanda actually leaned forward in her seat.
“Shot?”

“In the back,” her mother stated. “McCoy had beamed down with us. He took Spock back to the ship and straight into surgery. Sulu called soon after. The ship’s sensors had picked up a Klingon life form in the village.”

“Cultural contamination,” Tam stated. “They were forcing technological advancement.”

Jan nodded. “I had the quartermaster replicate enough of the same kind of flint locks and ammunition for Tyree’s people. We took two hours to train them, then we raided the village.”

“What?” Amanda looked from one to the other. “Mother—”

“There was no other choice,” Jan told her. “We had to get that Klingon out of there before he started introducing sub-machine guns. At that, we found him in the village blacksmith shop unpacking his latest advancement.

“I promised Tyree the Klingon would be punished and we left enough weapons and ammunition to balance what the villagers had.”

Jan looked to her daughter. “I wasn’t happy with the idea then and I’m still not. But the Klingons had upset the balance and this was the only way to restore it.

“When genuine peace talks began with the Klingons years later, we found that the Neural operation had *not* been approved by Gorkon. It was part of a power play by two members of their High Council. It failed and they were executed for Treason.”

“What about Father?”

“As soon as we got back to the ship, I sent the Klingon to the brig and headed straight for Sickbay. By that time, McCoy had Spock out of surgery and settled in the recovery ward. Dr. M’Benga was there when I arrived. He had assisted McCoy—he’d interned in a Vulcan ward. He’d no sooner told me about the Vulcan Healing Trance, than he got called away.

“I stepped up beside Spock’s bed and for a long moment, I just looked down at him. Then he started to mumble. At first, I thought he was just talking in his sleep. Then he started— very clearly started— asking me to hit him.”

This confused Tam. “Why?”

Amanda answered. “Once in the Healing Trance, a Vulcan must wait until their chance of life is at its very lowest ebb— then they must struggle and fight their way back to consciousness.”

Jan nodded. “So I slapped him. He said harder. So I hauled off and hit him— several times.

“Scotty came in to check on him and started to stop me, but M’Benga came in and grabbed him— told him what Amanda just told us even as I hit Spock again.

“I hauled back to hit him again and his eyes flew open and he grabbed my wrist— in fact, he almost broke it.” She looked to Amanda. “Then our eyes met...and he nodded. He was back on his

feet in a few days and back on duty by the end of the week.”

All three looked up at the sound of distant thunder. “Storm coming,” Tam noted.

“That’s okay,” Jan told her. “It’s been a couple of weeks since we had a good rain. I hope the weather grid’s set to allow a good soaking.” She glanced around. “So...we made a brief stop at Starbase 12 to drop off the Klingon and they had orders waiting for us.”

“Mother, how could they have orders? They didn’t know you’d be coming in.”

Jan leaned back in the couch as she explained. “Back then, sub-space communications weren’t as good as they are today. We still had to rely on relay beacons and they could only boost a signal so far. So, what Starfleet would do, is contact all the starbases in and around the sector we were in and send copies of the orders to be forwarded or delivered.” She looked to Tam. “There’d be times when I would get orders that were like, copy five out of twenty.”

“So what were the orders for?” the captain asked.

“The planet Gallan,” Jan said, “had large deposits of dilithium. Starfleet wanted us to talk to them about either trading for it or acquiring the mining rights for it.

“You know as a ship’s captain, there are times when you have to wear more than one hat.” Tam nodded in understanding.

“So, Uhura, Rand, Chekov, and I beamed down and spent a week talking with them.” The President sighed. “They wouldn’t grant us the mining rights— they had *very* strict environmental laws.

“But they were willing to trade for it— as long as they did the mining. The Union had no problem with that. In fact, it was one of the easiest treaties I’d ever negotiated— before or since.

“The ones where everyone wins usually are.” Jan raised her hand. “That reminds me. We heard from the diplomatic team on the Gorn Home world yesterday.”

“And?” Amanda asked as she took the last piece of cheese from the tray.

“The Gorn have said they’re willing to forgo the torpedoes if we’ll hand over the two border worlds by the end of the year.”

This confused the captain. “Why would a naturally aggressive race like the Gorn, pass up weapons for planets?”

“Population,” her sister replied. “According to our long-range scans, there are not a lot of worlds in their territory that the Gorn can inhabit- that’s why they wanted the terraforming tech that Jim and Carol had. By last reports, they had four worlds in the process, but terraforming takes time. Those worlds need another forty years at least- and the Gorn need room now.”

“So what will you do?” Amanda asked.

Jan shrugged. “I don’t have the authority to redraw the star charts. That kind of deal requires the approval of the Federal Congress. All I can do is strongly recommend that they approve it. The Gorn need those worlds more than we do.”

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When the rain finally came, it was a drizzle and Jan scowled. “I’ve never liked drizzle. In some cases, you can stand out in it for ten minutes before you even realize it’s coming down.” She looked to her sister and daughter. “Where was I?”

“You’d just finished trade talks with the planet Gallan,” Amanda said.

Her mother nodded as she turned from the living room window she’d been standing in front of. “Once everyone had signed on the dotted line, Uhura, Rand, Chekov and I stepped onto their departure platform and I called the ship for beam up. We heard the hum begin and as quick as that—” She snapped her fingers— “We were somewhere else.”

Both sister and daughter looked at her in shock. “You were abducted?” Amanda asked.

“Right off the platform.”

“So where did you end up?” Tam asked.

Jan met her gaze. “A world called ‘Triskelien’.” She stepped away toward the gramophone as she continued. “There were three classes on Triskelien. The Providers, the Overseers— although we only saw one named ‘Galt’— and the Thralls— that was everyone else.

“The overseers saw to it that the thralls were trained for arena-style combat, while the providers placed bet on who would win or die— that was life on Triskelien.”

Tam and Amanda traded shocked glances as Jan continued. “Uhura, Rand and Chekov were selected for combat training. The providers decided that I would suit their needs best as breeding stock.”

“You’ve got to be kidding,” Amanda declared in the closet thing to an emotional outburst she’d shown.

“No,” her mother replied. “I’m not. I’ll admit that the male they selected was handsome. But he was so physically perfect, he turned my stomach.

He came into my cell and the first words out of his mouth were ‘I have been chosen for you.’

“My first word was ‘*What?*’

‘I have been chosen as your mate.’

‘Sorry— not in the market.’

‘You are not allowed to refuse.’

‘Watch me.’

“He came at me and I ducked his grab. Immediately, the Providers chimed in—‘Two hundred qualoos on the female’, ‘three hundred qualoos on the male’, ‘four hundred on the female’.”

““Qualoos’?” Tam asked.

“About the same as a credit,” Jan explained. “Evidently, Adonis wasn’t too pleased with what he was hearing. I got the impression he was the Blue Ribbon bull of the herd and all the female thralls were expected to give in to him.

“He came at me again and I landed a back-hand that threw him against the cell wall. The

Providers started in again with another round of bids— all higher and all in my favor.

“Adonis was furious. He actually screamed as he came off the wall. I spun and landed a kick in his chest that slammed him against the cell door.

“Dead silence. Evidently, I’d shocked the Providers to such an extent, they couldn’t even bid.

“At that point, Adonis lost it. Mating was the last thing on his mind. I’d humiliated him in front of his masters.” She turned to face her audience. “I could see it in his face. He wanted me dead.

“He’d expect me to go high again. So when he charged me, going for my throat, I put everything I had into one blow— and planted my fist right in the root of the problem.”

Tam squinted her eyes. “Ouch.”

Jan nodded. “He *crawled* out of the cell. I don’t think he straightened up for two days!” Then she and Tamera laughed while Amanda just shook her head.

Jan wandered back over to the window as she continued. It was raining a little harder now.

“While all of this was going on, Spock scanned Gallan from one pole to the other without finding any trace of us. Then he went back over the sensor logs and found one slight deviation—the only trace of the Triskelien transporter.

“He back-tracked that one trace clear across the Alpha Quadrant to Triskelien. By the time he arrived with the *Enterprise*, the Providers had recovered from their shock and called me to them in their underground chamber.”

She looked to Amanda. “You thought our space-going ameba was strange? These guys were just...brains.” She nodded at her expression. “Yes. There were five of them, just brains, existing in some kind of life support device with a large clear dome over them.

“I told them that with their intellects, they were wasting their time wagering on combat. I told them that if they wanted a *real* challenge, they should release the Thralls and show them how to take Triskelien and build a true society—educate

the Thralls, show them how to think and build—that would be far more challenging.

“They freed the Thralls and were getting ready to start building schools when we left.”

Jan paused. “When we beamed up to the ship, he was there.” She looked to Amanda. “Somehow, I knew he would be.”

Tam shook her head. “Jan, did every male being in the galaxy try to make out with you?”

Jan shook her head. “Not *every* male being.” Then that crooked smile came to her face. “Just the ones with good taste.”

Tam stared at her in shock for a moment, then her own smile grew and she just shook her head. Then she saw the time. Still smiling, she said, “It’s getting late. Why don’t we stop there and pick it up tomorrow?”

“All right.” Jan saw them to the door and as she started to close it, she paused. She’d only heard one transporter beam.

Starfleet and civilian transporters had different sounds for a reason— and she'd only heard the *Yorktown*'s.

She opened the door and stepped back out to see a figure standing by the porch rail over by the rockers. She'd only gone a few steps when she realized who it was.

It was starting to rain harder as she stepped up beside her daughter. "Amanda?" the doctor turned and only then did Jan see the tears. "The rain won't hide them," She said gently. "It'll only make them run faster." She stepped closer. "Why?"

"I got to thinking about the last few days— the last few *months*— and how close I'd come to ruining my life." She looked to her mother. "You said Father was proud of me because I'd found myself— who and what I was.

"But that's not true. I wouldn't have gotten involved with Setok if it were.

"I am one quarter Vulcan," Amanda stated. "And right or wrong, I'm proud of that— just as I'm proud of being three quarters Human. I'm

also thirty-two years old. Why can't I find this 'center', this 'balance' that Sarek and Father have found?"

"Neither of them just woke up one morning and declared 'I am at peace with myself'," Jan told her. "It took both of them a while to reach that point— and then a little longer to *realize* they'd reached it.

"You'll get there some day— by following your own path." Then Jan tilted her head slightly. "Setok, me— You've been looking for answers. That's the real reason for this memoirs business, isn't it?"

"In the beginning, "Her daughter finally admitted.

"And now?"

The doctor met her mother's gaze. "And now, I'm finding out more about my mother than I ever knew— and I want to know more."

Jan nodded. "Then you'd best be getting back to your hotel and get some sleep." A gentle smile came to her face. "The best is yet to come."

Amanda studied her face for a moment. “I know if I ask, you won’t tell me.”

A soft version of that crooked smile came to Jan’s face. “That would spoil all the fun.”

The doctor looked out at the rain and up at the house and it was clear she was reluctant to leave. “Mother, would it be all right if I stayed here tonight?”

The President nodded. “Come on. I’ll help you get the guest room ready. You’re welcome to stay the rest of the month if you want.”

Her daughter met her gaze. “I just might take you up on that.”

But before they could step back inside, they both turned at the sound of the *Yorktown*’s transporter, to see Tamera return. Jan watched her sister closely. “Tam?”

“I’m surprised Captain Rand hasn’t called you,” Tam began.

But Jan suddenly looked up. “Something’s happened to Spock.” She looked to the captain.

Tam nodded. “An hour ago. A heart attack. It’s been on the FNF all evening.”

Her sister’s voice was stern. “Get us to Vulcan— *Now*. ”

Tam tapped her combadge. “Kirk to *Yorktown*. Three to beam up.”

In a chime and a sparkle all three were gone.

The Enterprise- Part 7

That evening

The President spoke as soon as the three arrived aboard the *Yorktown*. “Captain, this ship is now *Union One*. You’re authorized to burn out your warp core if that’s what it takes to get us to Vulcan as soon as possible.”

“Yes, Ma’am.” Tam then turned to the crewman that had operated the console. “Jackson, escort the President and her daughter to guest quarters.”

“Yes, Ma’am.”

As the three left, Tam tapped her combadge. “Kirk to Bridge.”

“Glendela here.”

“Get us out of here, Glen.”

“Yes, Ma’am. Course for Vulcan is plotted and laid in. We’ll go to warp as soon as we break orbit.”

“Pedal to the metal, Glen.”

“Understood.”

“Kirk out.”

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A minute later, smaller craft rapidly changed course and dove clear as *Union One* broke orbit—and every regulation in the book—by jumping immediately to Warp Ten.

By asking the computer, Tam soon found Jan and Amanda in a cabin on Deck Six. They both turned from pacing the deck as she entered.

“We’re on our way at Warp Ten.”

Jan’s eyes went wide. “Ten?”

Tamera shrugged. “You said I could burn out my warp core if I had to.” She shrugged again.

“It’s one of the things that were supposed to be upgraded anyway.” The door chime sounded and she called out. “Come.”

The three watched as Isis entered in her human form. “Madam President. Dr. Kirk.” She looked to Tam. “I finally got hold of Captain Rand. She had

gone to bed early and never heard the news report. She said she would go by the ranch and make sure things were locked up before following in the President's ship."

Tam nodded. "Good."

Jan looked to her sister. "So, at Warp Ten, how long—?"

"Four, Four and a half hours, tops."

Jan shook her head as she crossed to a computer monitor and sat down in front of it. "That's too damn long. Computer?"

"Yes, Madam, President?"

"Connect me with the Vulcan Science Academy, the Medical Annex. I want to speak to Dr. Daniel Mason."

"Yes, ma'am. One moment."

The screen flickered for a moment as the computer accessed the Vulcan communications network, then the Vulcan Science Academy's medical directory and finally, Dr. Mason's personal channel. The screen cleared to show a

human male in his late 60's. "Hello? Who— Janet!"

"Daniel. How is he?"

The doctor knew there would only be one 'he' the President would be calling about. "Not good. It was one of his heart valves. He's still on the table. How far away are you?"

"About four hours."

He nodded. "I'll see that the staff—"

"No," Jan told him. "This is not the time for fancy entrances. Once we're in orbit, we'll beam directly to the hospital.

"I don't want a media circus, Daniel. Is that clear?"

"I'm afraid it's too late for that," doctor replied. "We're managing to keep them out, but the reporters have been gathering since the news broke.

"I have your number. I'll call if there are any changes."

Jan nodded and ended the call. Then she leaned back in her seat and sighed in frustration. “Well, that was next to useless.”

Tam watched her for a moment. “Shouldn’t you try to get hold of Sarek James?”

Her sister shook her head. “There’s no point yet. I’ll wait till we have something definite. The three of us worrying ourselves sick is enough.” She rose to her feet and began pacing the floor. “*Damnit!* Thirty years ago, it would have been Leonard McCoy in that operating room.”

“Any idea where he is now?” Tam asked.

“He’s a teacher in Atlanta,” Amanda said. “I took part in an exchange program five years ago that he supervised.”

“Wouldn’t do any good if we did find him,” Jan added. “Even if arthritis hadn’t ended his surgery days years ago, he’s like us— too far away.”

The door chime sounded. Tam glanced around for Isis and found the feline curled up in a chair. “Come.”

The door opened to allow Glendela to enter.
“Madam President. Doctor. I came to see if you’ll be needing anything while you’re on board.”

Jan shook her head. “Thank you, Glendela, but we won’t be on board that long. This is strictly a ‘bare-bones’ trip.”

“Yes, Ma’am.” The native of Domeclaine 9 looked to Amanda. “Have you been assigned a cabin, Doctor?”

“Yes— across the corridor.”

The first officer nodded as her golden hair shifted around ears longer and more slender than any Vulcan’s. She then turned to her captain.
“Current estimates put us at Vulcan in three hours, twenty minutes.”

Tam nodded. “See if Engineering can get a little more out of her.”

Glendela nodded once more and left the cabin. Tam turned from watching her leave to see Jan looking out a viewport and Amanda seated in a chair, staring at the floor. Her hands clasped together in her lap.

“Well, since we’ve got the time, how about another chapter in our on-going story?”

Jan shook her head, her eyes not leaving the viewport. “I’m really not in the mood, right now, Tam.”

“It beats spending the next three hours staring at the stars.”

Her sister replied without turning. “I like starrng at the stars.”

Amanda looked toward the President. “Mother, how did you and Father... I mean, what caused the two of you— ?”

Jan turned and met her gaze as she nodded toward Tam. “She wants the next story and you’re *asking* about the next story.” She closed her eyes and sighed. “All right.”

She walked over to a chair and sat down as Amanda activated the tricorder she’d held onto throughout the night’s events.” It was about a month after that business on Triskelien. Spock had been keeping his distance from everyone.

“Bones had been trying to finish up the crew physicals and he was having a fit because Spock kept ducking his.

“McCoy finally came to me told me what was going on. He told me that Spock had said— and this is a quote— ‘You will cease prying into my personal affairs, Doctor or I shall certainly break your neck.’”

Tam looked at her sister in shock. “*Spock* said that? The Spock I know said that?”

“The one and only,” Jan replied. “Once I heard that, I knew I had to see him. I had to activate his door buzzer twice and announce who I was before he’d let me in. He was standing by his desk. After a moment, he put his hands behind his back— but not before I noticed they were trembling.

‘McCoy told me what you said to him.’

“He didn’t reply. The muscles around his eyes twitched and he acted like he was in pain.

‘Spock, you’ve been called the Best First Officer in the Fleet.’

“I watched him turn away and finally decided to bring it all into the open.

‘And you know, I think, how I feel about you. Let me help.’

“He stood there in silence for another moment before he finally started talking, telling me about the Pon farr and it’s compulsion to return home and mate.” She looked to Amanda.” That’s one reason we never made you or Sarek go through any kind of betrothal ceremony. By being three quarters human, we were hoping the drive had been bred out of you. Then, when Sarek married Janet, we didn’t need to worry about him.”

Tam looked from one to the other. “Wait a minute. You’re saying that every year, Vulcan males—”

“Seven years, Aunt Tam,” Amanda explained. “It’s a seven year cycle that all Vulcan males go through once they enter adulthood. It lasts till they finally mate.”

“Being half human, Spock’s had been delayed,” Jan said. “But it’d finally caught up with

him. The ancient drives even forced him to order Chekov to set course for Vulcan.

“He told me the only way the compulsion could be brought under control was by bonding and mating.”

She looked to the cabin ceiling. “I started to offer— but he cut me off. He admitted that he’d come to care for me a lot. But he didn’t want me to submit myself to something that was ‘alien to my nature’.”

The President shook her head and glanced at Tam. “I didn’t give a damn about my ‘nature’ - or Starfleet for that matter. From what I was seeing of his condition, it was clear he’d never reach Vulcan alive.

“I knelt in front of him, took his hands in mine and raised them to my temples.”

Amanda looked to her mother in shock.
“Mother, *you forced the bond?*”

Jan pointed at Amanda as she spoke. “*No*. I did *not*. You just get that idea out of your head right now.

I can't contact another mind without a telepath's help. I offered— your father had every chance to refuse. Instead our minds began moving closer almost immediately. I remember the blood pounding in my temples as our memories blurred and blended.

“At some point, we'd removed our clothes.” Jan closed her eyes as she thought back. “I'll never forget that first time— the feel of his body against mine. Time just seemed to stand still, till Chekov's voice broke in to tell us we'd entered orbit around Vulcan.”

She looked to Tam and then Amanda. “There were a few stumbling blocks left. The first one was T'Pau. As Matriarch of the family, she had to ‘check the bond’— make sure everything was on the up and up. She'd only approved one other mixed marriage— it wasn't till later, that I found out it was your grandparents.

“T'Pau mind-melded with us and I think she was surprised. She announced that the bond was strong and sound. It was in the middle of her

welcome, that the second stumbling block spoke up.

“A female named T’Pring. Seems she was the original intended.”

Tam’s eyebrows rose. “Uh-oh. The jilted fiancée.”

Jan nodded. “And she was actually going to challenge me to a fight to the death— as if killing me was all she had to do and Spock would accept her.”

“Illogical,” Amanda replied.

“Definitely,” Jan agreed. “But T’Pring was...aristocratic. She looked down on everyone— especially ‘Off-worlders’. She didn’t love Spock. She wanted the marriage for the status it would give her as Ambassador Sarek’s daughter-in-law.

“I asked her if she had an actual, logical reason for challenging me. After a moment, she threw down the lirpa she’d taken from one of the marriage party members and walked away.”

Amanda looked over at her. “Mother, since then, have you ever...”

“Cheated?” Jan asked. “Slept with anyone else? No. I don’t believe in that. Has there ever been a time, when I wanted to hear a man laugh or joke? Yes— of course.

“Spock *does* have a sense of humor— don’t let anyone ever tell you otherwise. But if he ever came into a room, sat down and laughed till his sides ached, I’d have him committed.”

Tam smiled at that and shook her head.

A weak smile came to Jan’s face as she stared off. “Our next mission was a real hoot.”

Amanda looked at her strangely. “‘Hoot’?”

“A lark, a joke,” her mother explained.

Amanda nodded and then noticed her aunt looking at her. “What? I’ve never heard the word used like that before.”

After a moment, her aunt nodded. “I guess, used in that context, it is kind of an old usage.”

She looked to her sister. “You’re showing your age.”

Jan met her gaze straight on. “At least one of us is.”

“So what was the mission?” Amanda asked.

“Some years earlier, the *FSS Horizon* discovered a world called Sigma Iotia II,” Jan began. “This was back about a year or two before the Prime Directive went into effect. They made contact and soon after, the ship was lost in an ion storm. Only their disaster beacon with the ship’s log survived and was found.

“Starfleet wanted us to check the planet and see if the *Horizon* had caused any kind of cultural contamination.” Jan shook her head. “That’s when I realized that someone back at Command had a sick gift for understatement.”

This confused Amanda. “What do you mean?”

“We found out that the *Horizon* had left a book behind— and not just any book. This one was about the Chicago mobs of the 1930s— old calendar.”

Jan shook her head at the memories. “The Iotians had taken that damn book and rebuilt their entire society— based it on that book. Their clothes, buildings, cars, weapons, mind-set— everything. It was like going back in time without the Guardian.”

Tam could only stare at her sister in shock. “My god...”

Jan nodded. “Of course it was too late by the time we arrived to simply take the book and leave.

“The problem was, that the planet had been divided up into ‘territories’ with a faction or ‘gang’ in control of each one.

“Luckily my interest in history gave me some knowledge of the era.” She smiled. “Poor Spock never did get the lingo right.

“I had to come up with an answer that would work within the culture as it now stood.”

Tam leaned against the cabin’s desk as she spoke. “So what did you do?”

Jan leaned back in her chair as she continued. “Once I got them past the idea that I was Spock’s gun moll—” She looked to Amanda— “Don’t ask. I let them have the impression that the Union was a huge crime syndicate. It was the only kind of unified organization they’d understand. From their point of view, the Union was moving in and taking over.”

“Mother— ”

“You should know better by now,” Jan told her daughter. “What the Iotians see as ‘strong arm men’ coming in every year to ‘collect our cut’ are actually Union advisors helping them re-channel their society in more positive directions.”

Amanda thought about that for a moment. “So, basically, you made them a ward of the Union.”

Her mother nodded. “The contamination was so extensive— so inclusive— there was no other option.”

The desk monitor buzzed and Tam turned to answer it. “Kirk here.”

“Glendela, Ma’am. Revised estimates put us at Vulcan in two hours, ten minutes.”

Tam raised an eyebrow. “Speed?”

“We’re now traveling at Warp 10.3. Engineering says that’s the best they can do without blowing up the warp core.”

“Understood, Glen. Kirk out.”

She started to turn away, when the computer spoke. “Captain? There is a message coming in for Madam President.”

The sisters traded glances as Tam replied. “Put it through.” She watched as the screen lit up— but not with the face of Dr. Mason. “Sarek.”

“Aunt Tam. Is Mom there?”

“Just a second.”

Tam moved to one side as Jan came over to the monitor. “Sarek?”

“Why didn’t you call me about Dad? Why’d I have to find out through the FNF?”

The sisters traded glances as Jan answered. “I was going to call once we knew something more definite.”

“And?” Sarek asked.

“It was one of his heart valves. Last we heard he was still in surgery.”

“I’m at Starbase 10,” Sarek stated. “I can be there in two hours.”

Jan nodded. “Same here. We’ll meet you at the Medical Annex.”

Sarek nodded and his image faded. Tam then looked to her sister. “I think he’s a little upset with you.”

The older sister shrugged. “I didn’t know he was that close. His last letter had him on the Tholian border. I figured all he’d be able to do, was pace the deck.” Then a thought came to her. “How’d he know to call the *Yorktown*?”

“It wouldn’t be hard to track you down,” the captain told her. “The way we tore out of orbit probably made the news. Rand’s probably

canceling and re-scheduling appointments left and right- that would make the news. Just add the pieces together.”

Her sister nodded as she stepped away from the desk.

“In fact,” Tam continued, “You may have to deal with some ‘damage control’ as a result of all this.”

Jan turned to look at her. “In what way?”

It was Amanda that answered her. “The Union President dropped out of sight without notice. She then fled Earth on the basis of her personal needs and agenda.” The doctor met her mother’s gaze. “That’s what your critics and rivals will say.”

Jan’s voice took on an edge, “My critics and rivals can go to Hell.”

Tam shrugged as she resumed leaning against the desk. “And they’ll say that, by running off like this, you’re letting the Union go to Hell. It’s an issue you’re going to have to deal with whether you want to or not. The day you let them elect you President, you allowed them to paint a nice big

target on your chest— and your rivals are going to use every weapon they can get their hands on to take you down.”

Jan just met her gaze in silence.

The Enterprise- Part 8

Day 9

Shikar, Vulcan

The sun was just starting to clear the horizon when the *Yorktown* arrived in orbit. Jan, Tam and Amanda had no sooner beamed down to the Medical Annex, than a second transporter beam released Captain Sarek James Kirk. They had no sooner greeted each other than a group of various males and females began to approach with all types of recording devices in hand. “And the Media rears its ugly head,” Tam noted.

The reporters began shouting questions as soon as they were in range. None of the family could get a word in edgewise.

A phaser was fired.

Silence. It took everyone a moment to realize it was Sarek. He returned it to his belt as he spoke. Seemed to be the only way to shut you people up.”

Jan had to smile. He was definitely her son. Her smile faded as she turned to the mob. “I’m not here to hold a press conference. Right now, you people probably know more than I do— you usually do.” She started for the Annex, but the mob wouldn’t move. “Do you mind?” Her glare was enough to make them step aside.

As the family reached the building entrance, Sarek looked to the security guards standing on each side. “Why don’t you two try doing your jobs and control that bunch?”

As they entered the lobby, they were met by Dr. Daniel Mason. “Janet.”

“What’s the latest, Daniel?” Madam President asked.

“They had to replace two of his heart valves,” the doctor explained. “That’s why the surgery took so long. They just moved him to recovery about an hour ago.”

“Will he be all right?” Amanda asked.

“The surgery went well,” the Human doctor replied. “But we’ll know more when he wakes up.”

Jan had the next question. “Where is he?”

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Even twenty-third century technology couldn’t totally eliminate all the beeps and hums of some medical monitors.

Sarek and Amanda stayed in the corridor with Tam.

Jan stood by the bed, her eyes on Spock’s sleeping face. Her voice was a whisper. “Don’t you die on me, Mister. I won’t allow it.”

“I...was not aware...” She smiled as Spock’s eyes opened and he continued. “That one...needed permission to die.”

“In *my* family?” Jan asked. “You’re damn right you do. We’ve been going round and round with the Grim Reaper for too many years to give in, now.” She reached down and touched his face.

“Rest. When you come home, I’ll make you some homemade plomeek soup.”

“Jan...your plomeek soup...is atrocious.”

Her smile grew. He’d be all right. “I never said I could cook.”

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The *Yorktown*’s transporter beam released the family in front of the Shikar family residence. Jan looked around as she unlocked the door and led the way inside.

The house was all on one level in the Vulcan manner and Madam President shrugged as she spoke. “Wasn’t too crazy about this place when I first saw it. Having everything on one floor took some getting used to.

“But now...it’s comfortable.”

A living area was off to one side with a fireplace, while a dining area was located in front of them with sliding doors leading to a patio beyond and a hallway leading to a kitchen, den and bedrooms ran off to their left.

Stone and slate combined with wooden floors and throw rugs to create a blending of Human and Vulcan tastes.

“But you still have the Ranch,” Amanda noted.

“It’s a Family heirloom,” Jan told her. “But what you kids do with it after I’m gone is up to you.”

Amanda immediately looked to Tam—who held up her hands as if in self-defense. “I’d like to see it stay in the family, but the *Yorktown*’s my home—and any ship that comes after her.

“At least in the here and now.”

Her niece started to ask her what she meant by that, only to have her mother interrupt—deliberately, Sarek thought. “Food,” Jan declared. “I don’t know about Sarek, but the rest of us haven’t eaten since yesterday.”

Tam nodded. “Good idea. Then you can tell us another chapter.”

Jan’s cock-eyed look wasn’t faked in the least.

As everyone took their turn at the replicator and sat down at the table, Jan smiled at the sight of Amanda's salad— and the pieces of cheese mixed in among the vegetables.

“So,” Sarek said as he set his bowl on the table. “What’s this about another chapter?” The three females quickly filled him in and he shook his head, the raven black hair color he inherited from his father, catching the lights. “I picked a heck of a time to be away.”

“Well don’t worry about it,” Tam told him. She indicated the device next to Amanda’s bowl. “You can borrow the tricorder later and get caught up.” She looked to Jan. “You’d just finished up on Sigma Iotia II.”

Jan nodded as she cut the slice of ham she’d replicated. “We were ordered to Starbase 6 after that- no reason given. All we were told, was that upon arrival, the entire crew— except for the command crew and twelve others— would be removed and held in a secure area.

“It wasn’t till we arrived, that Commodore Bob Wesley came aboard and told us what was going on.” She looked down at her dish and sighed. “It was the M-5 war games.”

Sarek looked up from his salad— vegetables with pieces of turkey mixed in. “M-5? I remember reading about that thing at the Academy. That was a nightmare all around.”

His mother nodded. “It turned into one. That piece of junk slowly took over the ship section by section. It destroyed an ore carrier- automated, thank God- and killed one of my crew. By the time we reached the designated area for the war games, we had no control over it. Once we made contact with Bob Wesley’s task force, the damn thing wiped up the sector with them— it killed everyone aboard the *Excalibur*.”

“How’d you finally shut it down?” Tam asked as she forked a piece of meat loaf from her plate.

“The M-5 was unlike any other computer,” Jan said. “Its circuits had been imprinted with human engrams— its creator’s engrams. Dr. Richard

Daystrom created the systems we were already using, so he should have known what he was doing. Problem was, he was a mental case—the pressure of trying to stay at the top of his field had broken him—and that same mental state had been transferred to the M-5.

“It was left to me to convince it that it had to atone for killing the *Excalibur*’s crew.”

“What was its response?” Amanda asked.

“It shut down,” Jan told her. “The shields, the weapons— itself. It left us wide open for Bob Wesley’s task force. Fortunately, when Bob saw us hanging there, apparently dead in space, he chose to beam over instead of just destroying us. By that time, Spock and Scotty were down in Engineering pulling out every connection that made the M-5 work.”

She tilted her head slightly. “There was one thing about the M-5 that was never explained to me. It was intended to replace a ship’s crew. In effect, turning the ship into a glorified probe. How

was it supposed to carry out surface surveys- or First Contacts?”

Amanda looked around the table as she spoke. “This would have been Starfleet’s second attempt at an A.I. for the ship?”

Her mother nodded. “And so far, they were batting a thousand.”

Sarek shook his head. “You’d think it wouldn’t be that hard. It finally took them what? Three years to get it right?”

Jan nodded and sighed. She set her fork down. “I know it’s an old argument. But you simply cannot explore space with probes alone. They’re all right for preliminary surveys, but sooner or later, you’ve got to put someone on the ground.”

“Even androids can’t respond as quickly and instinctively as flesh and blood beings can.” She glanced around the table. “It took a month of reviews and boards of inquiry before they finally closed the book on the M-5. Then Command turned around and threw us a curve ball.”

“Curve ball?” Amanda asked.

Sarek almost laughed at her. “You never were one for Human sports. It’s a baseball term. Mom means they didn’t give her a straight forward mission.”

“Don’t pick on your sister,” Jan told him. “But you’re right.

“The historians all got their heads together and decided they didn’t have enough information about twentieth century Earth. Instead of requesting a visit to the Guardian, they decide to have Starfleet send the *Enterprise* back in time to the old calendar year 1968— just a few months after our accidental visit— to monitor their communications.”

Tam looked up from her food. “Wait a minute. They *made* you use the sling-shot maneuver *knowing* how risky it was?”

Her sister nodded. “With our shields up neither NASA nor NORAD could detect us. We were there about a week— still had a week to go— when we picked up a visitor.” Tam studied her sister closely and Jan returned her look with a nod.

“A visitor?” Amanda asked. “How could you have visitors in the twentieth century?”

Even Sarek was paying closer attention now.

“It’s easy enough when your visitor works for a race with advanced technology that no one in the twenty-third century ever saw,” Jan explained.

“His name was Gary Seven and while he *was* Human, his technology was anything but. He also had a companion you two have met several times over the years.”

This confused both brother and sister for several moments— then Amanda beat Sarek by a split second. “Isis?” She looked to her aunt and saw Tam nod.

Sarek also looked to his aunt. “I always thought she was just a shape changer you met somewhere in your travels.”

Tam shrugged. “That’s true— as far as it goes.”

“But all of that comes later,” Jan noted. “At this point in time, orbiting nuclear platforms were a major concern on Earth. Aim a rocket in the

wrong direction, you could knock one down and blow up several small countries.

“Mr. Seven’s superiors sent him to make sure Earth survived the twentieth century. I don’t know why or what their interests were, he never told us. But he did know about the future. He recognized Spock as a Vulcan the moment he saw him.

“The problem at this point, was the fact that we didn’t know thing one about Mr. Seven other than this Human had used a transporter of unimaginable power to travel from who-knows-where to do who-knew-what.” Jan shrugged. “The only reason we encountered him at all is because *our* transporter intercepted his beam.

“I ordered him held till we had some answers— but he used some kind of servo to knock out the guard and then beamed down to an office in downtown New York.

“Now, while all of this was going on, the McKinley Rocket Base in Florida was getting ready to launch another nuclear platform. We only found out, by chasing Mr. Seven all over the east

coast, that he was planning to detonate the warhead.”

Sarek almost choked on his salad. “*What?*”

“You heard me,” Jan replied. “The rocket launched and by the time we got back to his office, he had control of the damn thing and had it on a return trajectory.”

Amanda couldn’t keep the growing horror off her face. “He was bringing it down?”

Her mother nodded. “He *said* he needed to detonate the warhead at exactly the right height in order to scare Humanity out of this arms race. *My* problem was, I had no outside source to confirm that.

“And all this time that damn warhead was falling faster and faster.”

“Where was Dad?” Sarek asked.

“He was trying to operate Mr. Seven’s control console,” Jan told him. “But it was going to take more time than we had.”

“And?” Tam wondered.

Jan shrugged again. “I finally had to trust Mr. Seven. He set that thing off right where he needed to. It was after that, that he told us about his superiors and his mission.”

Amanda looked from mother to aunt. “But Isis didn’t come back with you then?”

“No,” Jan told her.

“Then when— ?”

“We’ll get to it,” her mother answered.

Amanda shook her head in disbelief. “Mother do *any* of the events in your life ever come to a conclusion?”

Tam laughed as Jan’s eyebrows rose. Then her older sister saw the time. “We’d best be turning in so we can be at the hospital early in the morning. Sarek, how long can you stay?”

Her son shrugged. “That depends on Dad. If he’s okay, I have to get the *Phoenix* moving. We were supposed to leave for the Orion border this morning.”

Jan nodded as she stood and the others followed. “You can stay the night at least then. You two know where your rooms are.” She looked to Tam. I’ll help you get the guest room ready.”

Tam returned her nod as she spoke. “Let me call *Yorktown* first. Glendela can take her back to Earth and resume the repairs and upgrades. Then they can come back for me once they’re done.

“Do her good to get some command time in.”

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A short while later, Sarek was in his room, seated on the edge of his bed, listening to the tricorder. He couldn’t believe what he was hearing.

“Sarek?” He looked up to see Amanda standing in his door. “Do you have a moment?”

Her brother indicated the tricorder. “Sounds like you need more than a moment. Kolinahr, Amy? Have you lost your mind?”

“I wasn’t aware that was on there,” She whispered.

“Oh, yeah. You left it on during your encounter with Setok. It was in the living room, but it was sensitive enough to record every word that was said.”

He set the device on the nightstand by the bed and stood as his sister turned away. “I thought the temple held my answers,” she whispered.

“Then you found out that Setok wasn’t even a disciple,” Sarek noted. “Why in the name of all that’s Vulcan, would you turn to Kolinahr in the first place?” Her back was to him and she didn’t answer. He stepped up behind her and only then heard the soft sounds. “Amy?”

She turned and he saw the tears. “Hey, come on. It can’t be that bad.”

She wiped the tears off and stepped away. “I don’t know...I thought I had made peace with myself- Father did, you did. I...feel pulled in too many directions. I would want to do something—like eat a piece of cheese, and a voice in my head would say ‘No. A Vulcan doesn’t do that.’ Then

I'd go to do something else and a voice would say—

“— Humans don't do that,” Sarek finished for her.

She turned to face him. “How do you do it, Sarek? Mother said that you and Father had found the Balance—the center. How? How did you find it?”

He shrugged and stepped away. “It's not something I can point to and say ‘that's the answer’.” He turned to face her. “Everyone has to find their own way, Amy. Dad took years to make peace with himself.

“We are the sum total of— not only two different races— but several generations of some pretty special people. There's no way anyone can take all of that in and expect to come out sane.

“All you —or anyone- can do— is take what works for you and ignore the rest.” He stepped toward her. “And I'll tell you something else.” He pointed at her. “You're more likely to find your answer here- in this house- than in any temple of

Kolinahr. Kolinahr is what Mom would call ‘throwing out the baby with the bathwater’.

“You need family right now— not a bunch of stone-faced monks.”

She looked up at him. “Would it be un-Vulcan to say I love you?”

He held his arms out to her. “Who gives a damn?”

She went to him.

Out in the hall, where she’d been about to knock, Jan had heard it all. Now, instead of knocking, she nodded to herself and went on to bed.

The Enterprise- Part 9

Day Ten

It was Tamera's hand on her shoulder that woke Jan next morning. "Wha- ?"

"There's something on the FNF you need to see," the captain told her. She looked to the viewscreen located at the end of the room. "Computer, on screen."

The screen lit with an FNF reporter interviewing Senator Abok. Abok was doing the talking. "...I'm not saying she wasn't a superb starship captain forty years ago— she stopped an invasion with just one ship. But people change over the years. I mean look at the current situation. Not only has President Kirk failed to sign my proposals, she practically stole a Starfleet vessel. I mean, it looks like word of her husband's condition sent her into a panic and she couldn't get home fast enough.

"Is that the kind of leader the Union needs? One that puts her personal life above everything

else? I mean she can't even keep her own daughter from running off to join some radical cult—”

“Screen off!” Jan shouted as she climbed from the bed. “*That Son-of-a-bitch!*”

Tam watched her close. “So, what are you going to do?”

Jan met her gaze, then she looked up. “Computer? Put me through to Starfleet Intelligence. I want to speak to Aunt T’Pel.”

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An hour later

The Vulcan Science Academy; the Medical Annex

The family arrived to find Spock awake. The doctors had elevated part of the bed to some extent, allowing him to assume a near sitting position. “It was, illogical of all of you to drop what you were doing and...’come running’,” he told them.

“Bull,” Jan replied. “Like Shev says, Family comes first.”

“Actually, Dad, this was just a brief stop-over for me,” Sarek said. “It all depended on how you were doing. Now that I know you’ll be okay, I need to get *Phoenix* moving.” He raised his hand in the Vulcan salute. “Try to live a live a little longer and prosper a little more, all right?” Their gazes met and he couldn’t miss the glint of humor in his father’s eyes.

The he turned to his sister. “Remember what I said.”

Amanda nodded. “In fact, I have an idea on that.” She looked to the attending doctor. “I’ve taken a month off from Starfleet Medical. I’m more than willing to see to Father’s home care.”

Sarek nodded and turned to his mother, who spoke first. “I want to see a few more letters from you, Mister. The last one had you on the Tholian border— a month away.”

“Yes, ma’am.” He then turned to his aunt. “Up for a race some day?”

Tam laughed. “*Phoenix* is only half *Yorktown*’s size!”

Sarek smiled. “The best bet’s the one you know you can win.” He tapped his combadge. “Kirk to *Phoenix*— energize.”

As Sarek transported out, Jan turned to the doctor. “When can Spock come home?”

“We will keep him for one more night of observation,” The medic replied. “He will be able to return home in the morning.” He then turned to Amanda. “If you will come with me, Doctor, I will familiarize you with the records.” She nodded and followed him from the room.

Jan looked to her sister. Tam nodded and stepped out of the room. Madam President then turned to her husband. “You scared me this time.”

That eyebrow rose. “That was not my intention.”

“You know the doctor is going to reduce your workload,” Jan stated. “At least for a little while. That’s kind of expected with things like this.”

Spock nodded. “I will simply turn my classes over to T’Pan. She is more than capable.”

“You and Amanda are going to be spending a lot of time together,” Jan pointed out. “That may end up being a good thing.” She went on to explain about the last few days. “I think Sarek gave her a good talking to last night, but if you get the chance to bring it up...”

Spock nodded. “I shall endeavor to point out to her what I have learned.”

“And what’s that?”

He reached out and took Jan’s hand. “That...this is all one needs in order to complete one’s life.”

A gentle smile came to Jan’s face. Then she leaned down and kissed him.

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The Annex’s transporter beam released Jan, Tam and Amanda in front of the house, where they found Rand waiting for them. “Janice,” Jan greeted as she opened the front door and let everyone in. “How long have you been waiting?”

“Only a few minutes,” the captain answered as they stepped into the living area. “I stored the ship at the spaceport and checked the branch office before coming here.

“Are you aware of Senator Abok’s interview?”

“Yes,” Madam President stated. “I already have something planned for him. Watch for a packet from Aunt T’Pel.”

“He has supporters, Janet,” Rand stated. “If he can rally them, he’ll be able to push for an inquiry into your actions.”

“What actions?” Jan asked.

“You practically stole the *Yorktown* instead of using your own ship,” Rand pointed out.

“The *Yorktown* was not on a mission- hell, she was in for maintenance. She was already in orbit and she’s faster than my ship. At the time we thought time was a factor. I’m not going to apologize for using the fastest means possible to reach my husband.”

Rand nodded. “That’s the basis of Abok’s attack. He’s claiming that you threw the Union’s concerns out the window when you high-tailed it to Vulcan.”

Jan shook her head. “He’s only doing this because I refused to sign his damn proposals.”

“You’re going to have to answer his accusations somehow.”

Her Commander- in-chief nodded. “I know—and I will when we get that packet from Aunt T’Pel. When you get back to the office, call Abok and tell him to get his ass here.”

Rand nodded and took her leave— she hadn’t even been to her own apartment yet.

Tam met Jan’s gaze as the three headed for the kitchen. “So, Spock’s going to be okay, Sarek is on his way, and you have plans for Abok. So, it’s time for another story.”

Jan did a double take as they sat down. “How do you get that?” She smiled gently at the sight of Amanda’s ham sandwich.

Her sister shrugged and indicated the food in front of them. “Nothing else to do except eat.”

Jan sighed. “So, where’d we leave off?”

“I believe you’d just finished the case with Gary Seven,” Amanda said as she activated the tricorder.

Her mother nodded. “One thing you need to understand. There are lots of different life forms in the universe. Not all of them are easy to spot or defend against. There are some I would have gladly gone my entire life without running into.

“Energy based life forms— and they subsist on the damnest things. The one responsible for the next mess fed on hate, anger— all the more animalistic emotions and behaviors.” Jan looked off for a moment in thought. “We’d received a distress call from planet Beta 12-A. We arrived to find the colony in ruins— and a Klingon ship nearby— also severely damaged.

“I took a landing party to the surface to investigate. It was only a few moments later, that

we were surrounded by a Klingon landing party led by then-Commander Kang.”

She looked to Tam and then Amanda. “It was the first time I’d ever laid eyes on your godfather. He was a big man— still is. He accused us of attacking his ship— an unprovoked attack. He said we were prisoners of the Klingon Empire and insisted we beam his party aboard. If there were any tricks, he’d kill fifty hostages.”

Tam looked up from her cheese burger. “So what’d you do?”

“I told him there’d be no tricks once we were on board.”

“Jan—”

“I signaled for beam up,” Madam President told them, “And I made certain Scotty knew to beam *us* up first.”

Tam relaxed and nodded. “And of course you called in security before bringing Kang’s people on board.”

Jan returned her nod. “Of course he accused me of breaking my word till I reminded him I said no tricks *once we were on board*.

“Scotty started beaming the rest of Kang’s crew over and the first group contained a surprise: Kang’s wife, Mara. She was also serving as his science officer. There were too many to put in the brig, so we had to put them in the Briefing Room. Then we destroyed Kang’s ship- it was throwing off all kinds of radiation.

“Moments later, the emergency bulkheads in the lower hull slammed shut— trapping over half the crew down there and leaving our numbers equal to the Klingons’.

“It wasn’t long after that, that they escaped from the Briefing Room.”

“How?” Amanda asked.

“Every loose object in the room transformed into swords,” Jan told her. “In fact, every phaser on board transformed as well. Once they were armed, they fought their way out.

“That got Spock thinking. Neither side had that kind of technology. Replication tech, yes— but the spontaneous transmutation of matter? No.

“He used the ship’s scanners and found more life forms on board than there should have been—*one* more life form.

“We tracked it down on Deck Seven. The only visual aspect of it was a collection of rotating lights. The moment we spotted it, it withdrew back up against the ceiling. Evidently it preferred to manipulate and feed from a distance.

“It was causing conflict and combat all over the ship. People on both sides were being hacked and cut— and then this creature was healing them and sending them back into the bloodshed again. It had turned the *Enterprise* in to a never ending combat zone.

“We had no sooner found it, Than Kang, Mara and a klingon lieutenant came down the corridor. Kang came right at me while Mara and the lieutenant went for Spock. I managed to block Kang’s sword, but a moment later, he had me

pinned against the bulkhead. Spock's neck pinch sent Mara to the deck even as he faced off against the lieutenant.

“Kang held me there— his sword to my throat. The direction of his gaze was unmistakable. He ripped my uniform half off of me-

“— and I clawed his face.

“He backed away in pain, then he saw Mara down. Thinking she was dead, he screamed, raised his sword— and I grabbed his wrist with both hands.

‘Think Kang! This animal isn’t you— Think!’ I spun him around and pointed. *‘Look! That thing’s controlling you! Fight it!’*

“Then I backed away. It was up to him. He stared at the alien as his grip tightened on his sword.

“His scream shook the bulkheads as he threw the sword at the alien— he put so much force behind it, the sword actually imbedded itself in the bulkhead— but it passed right through the Alien without touching it.

It passed through the bulkhead and was gone even as Kang dropped to his knees beside Mara. By now, Spock had defeated their lieutenant and I knelt by Kang.

‘Kang, listen to me. All the violence on board has to end. That’s the only way we’ll get rid of that creature. After that, we’ll drop you and your crew at any Klingon outpost you name.’

“He looked at me, up at Spock and then down at Mara as she woke, and nodded.”

Jan shook her head. “But it didn’t end that easily. Even a joint, ship-wide broadcast didn’t stop it. It was still several days before we got through to everyone.

“Kang was silent and moody the rest of the time he was on board—and I don’t blame him. He’d been controlled, manipulated—used—something no one, especially a Klingon likes.”

“I’ve never met a female Klingon,” Tam noted. “What was Mara like?”

“Proud,” Jan told her. “As much a warrior as her husband. But she was more willing to talk

about her people and their Empire. She and Kang were the reason I started studying everything Klingon I could get my hands on.”

The door chime sounded. The three exchanged glances and rose from the table as Jan went to answer it. She checked the scanner near the entrance, then quickly reached for the door. It opened, she grabbed her visitor by the arm and pulled her inside—

— closing the unit in the face of a mob of reporters. “What are you doing here?” Jan demanded.

Admiral Shev Ta’Laren just stared back at her. “Are you kidding me? The FNF is spreading your problems all over the Union.” She nodded toward the door. “You’ve got a real flock of vultures gathered out there.”

‘Shev, you shouldn’t be involving yourself in this.’

“You’re the closest thing I have to family,” Shev told her. “You think I’m going to stay on the sidelines while Abok gathers a lynch mob??”

Tam and Amanda had joined them while Shev spoke. It was the doctor that spoke next. “What are you saying Aunt Shev?”

“According to the FNF, Senator Abok is pressuring the Federal Congress to convene a formal Board of Inquiry into your mother’s actions,” Shev told her. “If he gets that Board seated— no matter how it goes— it’ll smear your mother from here to Orion.” She looked to Jan. “It won’t be an impartial Board— Abok’ll make sure it’s stacked with his cronies and supporters.”

Jan stepped away in shock.

Shev watched her. “Haven’t you been watching the FNF? This mess is their biggest story— they’re barely covering anything else.”

Jan shook her head. “This is insane.”

Shev stepped up behind her. “Tell me you have some plan for stopping this guy?”

“I do,” Jan answered. “But all my pieces aren’t in place yet.”

“Well you better hurry up, “the admiral told her. “Before Abok brings the house down.”

The Enterprise- Part 10

That evening

“This sure isn’t like the old days,” Shev stated as the four gathered in the living area. “Back then all we had to do was put the shields up and fire away.”

Jan met her gaze from where she stood by the fireplace. “It was never that simple.”

“It was for me. All I had to do was push a button.” The Andorian shrugged. “Now there aren’t even any buttons to push.” She met Jan’s gaze. “Why in the hell did you let them make you President? Even now, six months later, I can’t believe you wanted to be part of this insanity.”

Her best friend remained quiet.

“I have to admit,” Tam said from where she was seated nearby, “It surprised me, too.”

Amanda was next to speak up. “From what you’ve told us so far, Mother, it sounds like you

were perfectly happy as a ship's captain. In view of that, so drastic a change does seem illogical."

"Depends on your point of view," Her mother answered. "I wasn't captain of just any ship. I was captain of the *Enterprise*— the flagship of the Fleet. For those five years, I fought for respect, the lives of my crew— and for the survival of the Union as well.

"When Stryker promoted me to admiral, I could see the end coming. But it wasn't as painful as I thought it would be. I had been something damn few people had been up to that point. I had commanded a Starship- seen things and gone places no one else had.

"My memories would always be centered on the *Enterprise*. Even if I had refused the promotion and accepted another ship, it wouldn't have been the same. Times were changing, technology was changing. There'd never be another ship like my *Enterprise*.

"Even when I was the Admiral in charge of Fleet Operations for the Vulcan Sector, it wasn't

the same. The challenge wasn't there. I was too far removed. This deep in Union territory, I was just a glorified traffic controller.

“But when the delegation came to me with the offer, it was like I was waking up from a bad dream. Here was a challenge. If I were President, I'd be issuing the orders, making policy. I'd be able to...leave things better than I found them. So I accepted.”

“And you traded one kind of battle for another,” Shev noted. “And in its way, this one's just as deadly— only this time it's your political life that's on the line.” She shook her head. “I hope whatever you've got planned, pays off or you're going to have a real mess to deal with.”

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They had moved out onto the patio- as far from the reporters as they could get. Being predominantly a dessert world, Vulcan didn't offer much in the way of plant life. One of the few Earth plants to thrive here, were the cacti from the North American Southwest.

As such, the garden that the patio was part of, was a blend of Earth and Vulcan— just like the family that had built it.

“I wonder how far this mess is likely to go before it’s over?” Tam asked from where she was seated in one of the patio chairs.

Jan was seated at the deck table and shrugged. “One thing we know: It won’t be as bad as Cheron.”

“What was Cheron?” Shev asked as she leaned against the wall by the patio doors.

Amanda checked to make sure her tricorder was on as her mother met Shev’s gaze. “‘Was’ is right.

“We’d received a report about a stolen shuttlecraft from Starbase 11. We found it a few days later, drifting, leaking atmosphere. Whoever stole it, didn’t know how to fly it. We brought it into the hangar deck and found the pilot unconscious. We also found out that he was unlike any race we’d ever seen. He was half black and half white.”

“You mean mixed blood?” Amanda asked.

Jan shook her head, then raised her hand to her face and moved it to the left and to the right. “Half black, half white— literally.”

Her three visitors traded glances. “I’ve never heard of such a thing,” Tam stated.

“Neither had we,” Jan replied. “Then his pursuer showed up— Commissioner Bele of the planet Cheron. He was black and white, too— but the exact opposite to our first guest, Lokai.

“Bele was determined to take Lokai back to Cheron to be executed for inciting rebellion.”

Shev tilted her head to one side. “I don’t understand.”

“Bele’s caste was the ruling class on Cheron. Lokai’s was the enslaved, working class— all based on color.”

“That’s not only illogical, that’s insane,” Amanda noted.

“Agreed, “Jan told her. “But that was life on Cheron. Bele even commandeered the *Enterprise*

in an attempt to force us to go to Cheron.” She looked to Shev. “That was the first time I almost blew her up.”

Amanda looked from one to the other. “*First time?*”

“By then, we were within transporter range,” Jan continued. “They both fled the Bridge, and chased each other through the ship till they found the transporter room. Then they beamed down. By then, we were close enough to get clear scans of the surface.”

She looked to Tam, Shev and Amanda as she spoke. “Bele and Lokai had returned to a dead world. All we could see where ruins— centuries old. Their race had annihilated themselves— all because of color.”

Shocked silence settled over the patio— only to be broken by a chime from within the house announcing an incoming call. Jan went to answer it, turning to the viewscreen mounted above the fireplace. “Kirk here.”

The screen lit with an image of Janice Rand.
“Yes, Janice?”

“The packet’s arrived from your Aunt,
Ma’am.”

“Good. What’s the word on Abok?”

“On his way. He should be here by Noon
tomorrow.”

“Meet him at the spaceport. Bring him and that
packet straight here.”

“Yes, ma’am.”

“Kirk out.”

Jan turned from the screen as it faded to black,
to find Shev standing by the patio doors. “You
didn’t come all the way from Starbase 19 just for
me?”

The Andorian shrugged. “Ninety percent.”

“And the other ten?” Jan asked.

Shev glanced back toward the patio and then
dropped her voice to a whisper. “Sarek called me

as he passed by on his way to the Orion border. He told me about Amanda.”

Jan reached out and squeezed her best friend’s arm in thanks.

The Enterprise- Part 11

Day 11

Jan, Tam and Shev stood off to one side of the Master Bedroom as Amanda and the medical team got Spock settled in. Portable monitors were set up alongside the bed and soon the room was filled with their beeps and hums.

Jan leaned toward her sister and best friend. “I think I’m going to be sacking out in Sarek’s room for a while. Those monitors will keep me awake all night!”

“Well the reporters finally got a bite at least,” Shev noted. “They filed a running commentary all the way from the Medical Annex.”

“They’re grasping for straws,” Tam added. “If it ties into the main story in any way, they’re going to cover it.”

Jan nodded as she watched the medical team leave. “Good. That puts them right where I want them.”

“And where’s that?” Shev asked.

“You’ll see,” Jan said as she left the room.

Shev looked to Tam as they followed. “In the old days, she’d explain what’s going on. I can’t get used to ‘Madam President’ playing her cards so close to her chest.”

They joined Jan as she paused by the kitchen. “By my estimates, we have just enough time for lunch before Janice and Abok get here.” She looked to Tam. “You might even get another story.”

Tam looked to Shev. “*Now*, she wants to tell a story.”

Jan smiled as she turned from the replicator with a cup of coffee in hand. Amanda joined them at that point. “Father’s sleep. He’ll probably sleep for a while.”

“Just as well,” her mother said as everyone took their turn at the replicator. She sat down at the table as she continued. “He won’t have to listen to Abok when he gets here.

“Now, I’d just finished with Cheron, yesterday, didn’t I?” Everyone nodded. “Well, after we got back, Starfleet assigned us to patrol along the Klingon Neutral Zone.”

“Didn’t they do away with that Neutral Zone?” Amanda asked.

It was Tamera that answered. “In a way. They reduced it to regular border status about six, seven years ago. The Klingons are still not part of the Union, but travel restrictions have been gradually lifted on both sides over the years as trade between the two has increased.”

“These days, it’s almost like twentieth century Earth— the United States and Canada,” Jan explained. “There are still check points, but it’s pretty much an open border— not at all like it was back then. Gorkon was in power, and relations between the two governments had come a long way in some respects, but there was still some thawing that needed to be done.

“Back then, you didn’t even *think* about crossing the Neutral Zone unless you had

permission or a damn good reason. Remember, this was only three years after Organia. So we were still a little leery whenever a Klingon ship showed up.”

Madam President took a sip of her coffee before going on. “When we picked up the Klingon ship, it was at station keeping, just our side of the ‘Zone. It wasn’t showing any aggressive moves at all. We hailed it and found out it was Kang’s ship— a new one obviously, although it was still a D-7.

“He wanted a meeting— face to face. He promised to come unarmed— and he did. He also came alone.

“I had Mr. Therran bring him to the Command Suite, where Spock and I met with him.” Jan was quiet for a moment. “First thing he insisted on doing, was apologizing for almost raping me last time round. He said no Klingon with any honor would do such a thing.

“I told him not to worry about it. It never went beyond a ripped uniform— and besides, no one was existing under the best conditions that day.

“He told us, that he’d been tracking raiders—real ones this time. They had wiped out the Klingon colony on Clondor VI. What we wouldn’t find out till later, was that they’d also killed Mara.”

Tam leaned forward in her seat. “What? I always thought they’d had a fight or something and they’d done the Klingon version of a divorce.”

Her sister shook her head. “Her scoutship was destroyed in orbit. When Kang arrived a few days later looking for her, he found her body still floating in the debris cloud.”

The one captain in the room leaned back in her seat. “My God.”

Jan nodded. “Kang tracked the raiders’ propulsion residue as far as the Neutral Zone. But at that point he was blocked since he didn’t have the authority to carry out any kind of search in Federal Territory. He turned his sensor scans over to us hoping we’d continue the search.

“Spock checked the trail and found it led straight to Cestus III.

“We arrived too late. The raiders had wiped out the colony. Jim and Carol were dead. Hell of it was, Carol was pregnant at the time.”

“Oh, gods,” Shev whispered.

Jan was quiet for a long moment before she decided to say it. “So was I.”

Tam’s eyes went wide. “*What?* What happened?”

“It was an accident. The contraceptive had failed.” Jan closed her eyes. “I wasn’t ready. I was still living under the shadow of Command’s idiocy. The last thing I needed was a valid reason for them to take my ship away from me.”

Shev watched her close. “Jan, you didn’t have-”

“No.” Then the President met her gaze. “But I thought about it. It was Spock that suggested having the fetus removed and placed in stasis until I was ready. So that’s what we did. McCoy used one of the stasis containers from Specimen Storage.

“After it was done, I got to thinking about it—and found myself actually looking forward to starting a family after the tour was done.

“Well, as I said, we arrived at Cestus III and found Jim and Carol. We tracked the raiders—mostly renegade Andorians- to a cliff shelf outside the colony. I let Kang and his men go in first— as shock troops. Then we moved in. It was after the renegades were defeated that we uncovered the spies.”

Shev gave Jan a dirty look. “Spies? It’s never easy with you is it?”

“Sometimes I wonder,” the President replied as they rose from the table and began clearing away the remains of lunch. Jan continued as they moved into the living area. “They had both been altered. One was made over to pass as an Orion female. The Andorian leader of the group killed her before we had a chance to search them for weapons.

“The other one had been made over to pass as a Klingon male. He’d been among Kang’s crew all this time.”

“I’d be willing to wager that Uncle Kang was furious,” Amanda noted.

Jan nodded. “He nearly killed the man with his bare hands. That’s when it came together for me—why he hadn’t mentioned Mara, why we hadn’t seen her or heard from her.

“Kang had made a Vow of Vengeance and he was determined to carry it out. I talked him into questioning the man instead and using the information to track down the one that was behind the whole plot in the first place.

“Then the *Enterprise* called. Two unknown ships had appeared out of nowhere and were breaking orbit. At high impulse speeds. We left McCoy and the security detail with the prisoners and took after them.

“Spock wasn’t back on the Bridge five minutes before he had the ships identified: Romulans.” Jan looked around at everyone. “Back then, we didn’t know anything about militants. All we saw were two Romulan Birds of Prey trying to start a war between us and the Klingons.

“Kang took one, we took the other and we destroyed them both.

“It was right after that, that Kang gave me Mara’s bat’telh.”

“I always wondered where you got that thing,” Tam said.

Jan shrugged. “At the time, there was no one else to pass it on to.” She sighed. “He then set course straight back to the Empire. We tracked him and he never changed course once.

“He stood by his word and his honor from beginning to end.” She shook her head. “Not like Kor and Koloth. Those two would stab you in the back first chance they got.”

She looked to the ceiling. “It was after that, that McCoy returned to the ship and checked the science section. There’d been damage in the fight with the Romulans. A power conduit had taken damage.” She grew silent.

Shev leaned forward in her seat. “Jan—?”

“It was in Specimen Storage,” Madam President said. “The conduit exploded— taking out several storage units.”

“Oh, gods,” Shev whispered.

Jan met her gaze, then looked to Amanda. “Over the years since then, I’ve often wondered what that child would have been like— I never even knew its gender. Would there have been three children— or would you or Sarek not be here today?”

She closed her eyes and shook her head.

Tam gently cleared her throat and decided to change the subject. “Whatever happened to Kor and Koloth?”

A weak smile of thanks came to Jan’s face. “Kang told me a few years ago— I actually asked him the same question. Koloth’s ship was part of the first Targ packs assigned to the Klingon/Romulan border when the Second Romulan War started. It was lost in battle— but Kang said Koloth’s crew gave a good accounting

of themselves. They took out four militant ships before they were overwhelmed.

“Kor was a different story. Stationed on that backwater outpost, he never even heard about the war till it was over.”

Shev’s eyes went wide. “You’re kidding?”

Her best friend shook her head. “Nope. According to Kang, when Kor *did* find out, he went mad—I mean stark raving mad. He went on a rampage for two days, attacking anyone or anything that got in his way.

“They finally had to confine him and sedate him.”

Tam shook her head. “My God.”

“The biggest war that was ever likely to happen in his lifetime and he missed it,” Jan stated. “Kang said he just shut down after that. To this day, he sits in a room in a Klingon mental hospital on Qo’noS, locked away in his own mind, fighting his own, never ending Romulan War.”

Silence settled over the living area till Amanda spoke. “It’s difficult to believe that violence can be so much a part of someone’s life, that they can’t function without it.”

“That’s because you were brought up in a society where violence is only condoned as a last-ditch resort,” Jan told her. “If you had grown up on Qo’noS, you’d think differently.”

The door chime sounded. “Speaking of violence...”Jan began. “Amanda, in the den, you’ll find a portable data disc viewer lying on the desk. Bring it.”

As she left and the others stood up, Shev looked to Tam. “Why do I feel like we’re seconds at a duel?”

“Maybe we are,” the captain replied as she went to answer the door.

The Showdown

That afternoon

Tam opened the door to find Captain Rand, Senator Abok and a mob of reporters. “Janice, come on in.”

“Thank you.”

Tam met Abok’s gaze and didn’t try to hide her disgust. “Since my sister’s expecting you, I guess I *have* to let you in.”

“Your graciousness is overwhelming, Captain,” the male said as he stepped into the house.

“Enjoy it while you can,” Tam told him as she closed the door in the reporters’ faces.

He met her gaze for a moment more and then turned and moved deeper into the house.

Jan was standing by the dining area table accepting the packet from Janice. A moment later, Amanda returned with the disc viewer.

Abok cleared his throat. “Madam President—”

“Save it, Abok,” Jan replied as she opened the packet and removed the one disc it contained.

“You’ve been attacking my family for three days now. You can put it in neutral for a moment.”

She turned to the viewer and placed the disc within it. She studied the disc’s contents for a minute, looked up at Abok and then back at the viewer again. “This is better than I expected.” She finally lowered the device.

Abok tried to beat her to the punch. “If you asked me here about my interview—“

“—that and the rest of your activities,” Jan stated. “You seemed to have forgotten who’s in charge around here. Let me tell you something, Senator. By the time we’re through talking, you’re going to go back out to those reporters, apologize for everything you’ve said about me and my daughter— and resign from office.”

Abok folded his arms across his chest and looked at Jan like she was crazy. “And why would I do that?”

Shev was smiling. She leaned toward Tam and whispered, “Here it comes.”

Jan took the disc out of the viewer and held it up for Abok to see. “This disc contains the end results of a two year investigation by the SFI into *your* activities, Senator. What I just scanned, makes for *very* interesting reading.”

Abok dropped his arms to his sides, and the smart ass look that had been on his face faded.

Jan nodded. “I’m certain the FNF— or the Federal Department of Justice— would love to get their hands on this.”

“What do you want for it?” the male asked.

“I’ve told you what I want,” Jan replied. “I don’t play politics, Abok. You go after my family any way, shape or form— I go for your throat.

“Now it’s up to you. Where’s this disc going? To you— or the FNF?”

“I do what you want— and that’s mine?”

Jan nodded. “Just make it as convincing as that damn interview.”

He reached for the disc— and Jan pulled it back out of his reach. “*After,*” she told him.

Their eyes met for a long moment. Then Abok turned and headed for the door.

Shev was almost laughing. “I’ve got to hear this.”

But Jan stopped her. “No. If any of us go out there, it’ll look like he’s doing it under duress.” She looked up. “Computer? Let us hear what Abok’s saying.”

“... Just had a very positive discussion with Madam President. She has explained the circumstances under which the events of the last few days have taken place.

“The *Yorktown* was— and is— in for maintenance. As such, no mission was interrupted or compromised when the President required a vessel faster than her own.

“Through her branch office here in Shikar, she has stayed well up to date concerning Union affairs, while being able to see to her husband at the same time.”

“What about Dr. Kirk?” one of the reporters asked.

“Dr. Kirk has informed me that she did join the cult in a moment of confusion that we all stumble into at one time or another. But as soon as she found out what they were like, she quickly and wisely severed all ties to them.

“Now,” Abok continued,” This brings me to one last announcement. As you know, like Madam President, I too have family— on Tollas 9. They haven’t seen much of me over the last few years. I’ve given this a great deal of thought and I’ve decided to step down from office effective immediately so as to spend time with them.

“Thank you. That’s all.”

A moment later, Abok came back into the house.

“You missed your true calling,” Jan told him.
“You should have been an actor.”

“All politicians are actors, Madam President.”
He held out his hand. She laid the disc in it. “Is this all?”

“You saw me open the packet,” Jan told him.
“That was the only thing in it.”

He placed the disc in his belt. “Then I will bid you Good-bye.”

Once he was out the door, Amanda took a few steps in that direction then turned to her mother. “I can’t believe you let him go.”

“Did I?” Jan asked as she turned back toward the living area.

Amanda’s eyebrow rose. “‘To be continued’?”

Tam looked at her sister and laughed. “Your life isn’t a soap opera—it’s a Saturday morning serial!”

The Enterprise- Part 12

That evening

Spock insisted on joining everyone at the table for dinner. Amanda wasn't so sure, but she stayed close throughout the meal. As they ate, he listened as everyone filled him in on the events of the past week. Once they had finished, he nodded and said one word: "Fascinating." He looked to Jan. "You seem to have covered every contingency."

"But, Father, she let Abok go," Amanda pointed out.

"Did she?" Spock asked. "I suggest you re-examine the events more closely. Once you have done so, you will realize that your mother couldn't let him go, for the simple reason that someone else already had him."

He then, slowly began to rise from the table. "I am feeling somewhat tired. I believe I shall return to bed."

“Good idea,” Jan replied as she and the others stood as well. “First day out of the hospital, no one should over-do— even you.”

“I’ll help you get settled, Father.”

“Don’t be too long,” Jan told her, “Or you’ll miss the story you’ve been waiting for— where all your bits and pieces come together.”

Amanda looked at her mother for a moment, nodded and then turned to help her father.

Tam waited till the two were gone before she spoke.” I can’t remember ever seeing Spock that weak.”

“It won’t last,” Jan told her. “Give him a week and you’ll have to tie him down to get him to rest.”

Amanda returned a few minutes later. “He was practically asleep before I left the room.”

“Is that normal?” Shev asked. “I’m like Tam—I don’t remember ever seeing him like this.”

“He’s never had open heart surgery before,” Amanda replied. “That’s going to take its toll on anyone, regardless of race. So far, he seems to be

following the expected pattern for Vulcan patients. Humans wouldn't even be out of the hospital yet."

"He'll be fine," Jan stated firmly. She looked to each of them. "I refuse to believe otherwise."

She then turned and led the way into the living area. She waved everyone to seats as she sat down in a chair near the unlit fireplace. For a moment, she closed her eyes and sighed as the tension of the day drained away from her.

"All right," She began as Amanda reached for her tricorder, "We'd been re-introduced to the Romulans. After that, I told Spock our next stop was Cygnet 14 for computer upgrades and general servicing. It would take about two weeks. Scotty could handle it easy. It was then that I told him it was time we had a honeymoon. I wanted to come to Vulcan. I figured it was time his parents met his wife.

"So, once we had the ship docked, I turned her over to Scotty and we set off." She looked to Amanda. "Your Vulcan grandparents were two of the nicest people I'd ever met. They accepted me

right off— treated me like the daughter they never had- always did.

“We’d planned to leave in plenty of time to get back to Cygnet 14 before *Enterprise*’s scheduled departure. But on the day we’d planned to leave, Scotty brought the *Enterprise* to us.”

“He would have had to leave Cygnet 14 early then,” Tam noted.

Her sister nodded. “Uncle Frank had called Command. Wanted us to start patrolling his section of the Romulan Neutral Zone. Didn’t say why.

“Something else we didn’t know about at the time, was the fact that Ben Finney had used his computer skills to escape the Tantalus V Rehab Colony. Not only that, he had also hacked Starfleet’s data base and downloaded everything he could find about me— my personnel file, medical records, mission logs.

“That’s how he found out about the Guardian of Forever.”

Amanda watched and listened to her mother closely as she put the pieces together.

Jan continued. “Finney used the Guardian to go back in time to the night before the *Kobayashi Maru* test. He planted evidence that Cadet Kirk had broken into the Program Control Room in an attempt to alter the simulator’s program, He was hoping she’d be court martialed and expelled.

“But he had no idea she’d be home that night for her mother’s birthday party— with fifty eyewitnesses.”

“So the charges were dropped, “Amanda stated.

“They should have been,” Her mother replied. “But they weren’t. The investigating committee dug into it for two years before returning a verdict of ‘inconclusive’ and leaving a cloud over Cadet Kirk’s career. She had to resign from Starfleet.

“For the next sixteen years, she went on to build a fairly successful career for herself as a freighter captain. During that sixteenth year, she started having dreams— or what she originally

thought were dreams— about the life of a starship captain.

“Meanwhile, I was having similar ...visions about the life of a freighter captain.

“To make a long story short, both trails eventually led to the Guardian. It was using its powers to keep both timelines going till we could get things straightened out.” Jan shook her head. “The hell of it is, Finney condemned himself with his own actions.”

“What do you mean?” the doctor asked.

“By taking Cadet Kirk out of the picture, there was no Lieutenant Kirk to catch his mistake and close the switch to the atomic pile,” Jan explained. “The *Constitution* was destroyed, killing everyone on board— including Finney.”

“If the *Constitution* blew up,” Shev noted, “Then Starfleet must’ve put the program on hold.”

“They canceled it all together,” Jan told her. “They went with their second option.” She nodded as Shev’s eyes went wide. “An entire fleet of *Dakota*-class ships— just like the first *Venture*.”

“So what happened next?” Amanda wondered.

“The only way to fix things was to go back to that night at the Academy— catch Finney and stop him before he planted the false evidence.” Jan shrugged. “So, the freighter captain and I went back to that night.

“We found Finney in the hallway— just outside the program control room. We fought him, stopped him and brought him back. Spock had to knock him out with a neck pinch once we arrived.

“Then the freighter captain screamed in pain.”

Shev tilted her head and beat Amanda with the question. “Why?”

“The sixteen years she’d spent as a freighter captain no longer existed,” Jan told her. She looked to Amanda. “Nothing remained to support her existence. She collapsed and was fading away when I challenged the Guardian.

‘You have all the powers of Time and Space at your command. There must be something you can do.’

“She started to glow and change. When everything was said and done, a certain eighteen year old lay on the ground.” Jan looked to Tamera as she finished.

Amanda looked to her aunt in shock and watched her nod. “From my point of view,” Tam explained, “I had just arrived in the simulator. Uncle Frank and two Academy security guards came in and he told me I’d been charged with breaking into the Program Control Room. I was confined to quarters pending a full investigation. The guards escorted me toward the simulator’s hatch, I started to step through—

“—and everything was washed out in a blinding light. When I woke and could see again, I found myself in the *Enterprise’s* Sickbay recovery ward with Dr. McCoy leaning over me.”

Amanda was confused to say the least. “But, that means you’re both the same person— and two identical particles can’t exist in the same time and place.

“You should both be dead.”

Tam smiled in sympathy. “The Guardian altered my existence so that wouldn’t happen. That’s why I don’t age the same way everyone else does.”

Tam concentrated. “It also gave me another little gift...”

A portal opened at one end of the room, showing the Guardian with Jan keeling beside Tam’s unconscious form and Spock standing over the body of a human male. Jan was speaking as she looked back toward the Guardian. “Will she live?”

The guardian’s booming voice filled the room. “Yes.”

Jan reached for the large combadge she’d worn back then. “Kirk to *Enterprise*. Four to beam up. I want a security detail and a medical team standing by. Energize.”

Tam allowed the portal to close. “I can go anywhere in the past I want to— any moment, any planet— with one exception.” She nodded toward where the portal had been. “I can watch it, but that

timeline— *my* timeline— is closed to me.” She nodded toward Jan. “Jan proposed the idea of being sisters and over the years, that’s what we’ve become.” She smiled. “And now, I don’t think I’d want it any other way.”

“But the difference in your ages,” Amanda began. “Twin sisters with sixteen years between you?”

“Aunt T’Pel took care of that,” Jan told her.

Tam nodded. “According to my Starfleet records, I was visiting Jan aboard the *Enterprise* from another ship— the *Autumn Belle*, which was actually retired a week later— when we got involved in a temporal disturbance that involved the Guardian. By the time the dust settled, I had been ‘set-back’ mentally and physically, to the age of eighteen and my aging processes were slowed down as well.

“According to the records, I needed remedial classes at the Academy in order to resume my life and career.”

“And it’s been *her* life,” Jan stated. “I wanted to make sure she had a chance to finish what she started.”

Amanda looked from one to the other. “So what finally became of Finney?”

Jan met Tamera’s gaze and then looked to Shev before turning back to Amanda. “I’ll tell you, but you’ll have to edit it out of your project.

“By now, it was clear that no normal penal colony could hold him. So, from my point of view- short of killing him- there was only one option:

“I took him to Talos IV.”

Shev’s eyes nearly popped out of her head. “You violated General Order Seven *again?*”

The President met her gaze without flinching. “There was no choice. I spoke with the Magistrate and it agreed. With his unbalanced mind and knowledge of the Guardian, Finney had become a danger to reality itself.

“The Magistrate agreed to see to it that Finney was confined- that he’d spend the rest of his life lost between dreams and illusions.”

Jan continued to meet Shev’s gaze without hesitation. “The only way to stop him was to cage *both* his body *and* his mind.” She looked to Amanda. “I heard from the Magistrate one more time— about ten years ago. It just wanted me to know Finney had died of natural causes.” She looked to Shev again.” His last illusion had him as the Grand Admiral of Starfleet.”

Amanda stared at her mother for a long moment. She finally looked away and shook her head. “It’s incredible how such a diverse set of threads can be brought together into a single incident. Finney, the Guardian, the Taloisans. Until you explained, I couldn’t envision any set of circumstances that would bring them all together.” She looked to her mother. “You’re correct. We can’t reveal this story. But what was the public version of Finney’s disappearance?”

“The public record states that Finney died of old age at the rehab colony,” Jan said. “The

records were adjusted after I had a private talk with Aunt T'Pel."

Shev shook her head in disbelief. "I swear, the risks you take blow my mind." She stood and headed for the kitchen. "I think I want some dessert. Anyone else?"

"What are you getting?" Tam asked.

"I'm in the mood for lemon meringue pie," Shev replied.

Both sisters wanted some and Jan looked to Amanda. "How about you?"

Amanda thought about it for a moment and then nodded. "Make it three, Shev," Jan called.

When Shev returned and handed out the pie, Amanda accepted hers and then looked to her mother. "Mother, you've explained all of the 'pieces' except Aunt Tam's reference to Colonel Fellini and how Isis figures into things."

Jan looked to Tam. "That's actually more your aunt's story than mine."

Tam's eyebrows rose. "Passing the buck are we?"

Jan shrugged, then smiled. "Just taking turns."

The captain returned the shrug. "I guess I was a little more involved than you were."

"Slightly."

At that point, Amanda took a bite of her pie. As soon as she tasted it, her eyes went wide and her mouth puckered!

Jan tried her best not to laugh, but her smile could not be prevented. "It is a little on the sour side. It's your Grandmother Maureen's recipe."

Shev was also smiling. "If you like that, you should try sweet and sour sauce."

Amanda looked at her in surprise. "Aunt Shev, as an Andorian, how can you even—"

"You forget I was born and raised on Earth," Shev told her. "I grew up with Earth foods. Now, like you, there are some supplements I have to take— especially since I've gotten older. But for the most part, I'm just an Earth girl with a funky

skin color.” She looked to Jan and Tam.

“Everytime we go out, Therran shakes his head in disbelief because I order Earth foods instead of Andorian.”

Jan smiled and looked to Tam. “So, are you going to tell the story or not?”

The captain laughed softly and nodded. “Okay, okay. ‘A long time ago, in a—“

“Don’t you dare finish that!” Jan ordered with a laugh.

“What?” Tam asked as she laughed. “It’s more appropriate than a wooden spaceship in the wilds of Iowa!”

“But not as original,” Her sister answered.

Amanda looked to Shev. “Do you think its possible Aunt Tam may get to the story before Midnight?”

Her godmother shrugged and smiled.

“All right already,” Tam looked to Jan. “It was what? About three days after I came on board?”

“That sounds about right,” Jan told her.

Tam leaned back in her seat as she began.
“Once I had discovered what I could do, I went back to the Guardian and asked it why. It said that I and Jan wanted to explore and protect what it called ‘The Material Universe’. But there was also a need to explore and protect ‘The Temporal Universe’ and by doing whatever it did, it had given me the ability to do both— but I could only time-travel into the past. It said the future had to be forbidden to all— and I could see its point.

“I’d no sooner returned to the *Enterprise*, than Jan was knocking on my cabin door. The ship’s computer had picked up on my temporal signature. She asked me what was going on and I told her. She asked for a demonstration and I opened a portal.

“We watched the first *Daedalus* leave spacedock, saw the NX-01 encounter the Romulans for the first time, watched the *Phoenix*— the first warp ship make its maiden flight.

“I kept pushing back further and further until we were looking at the twentieth century. I

focused more and we were seeing inside the United States' main spaceport— later we'd find out it was called Cape Kennedy. A woman was working at a computer console— suddenly she was shot. Jan grabbed my hand and we jumped into the portal. But she was dead by the time we arrived.

“Next thing we knew, Colonel Fellini was standing in the door, gun in hand and aimed at us.

“For him, it had been ten years since he'd seen Jan last and I got the feeling that it was a reunion that neither of them wanted.”

Jan almost snorted. “Not hardly considering the last time I'd seen him, I landed a right-cross that left him unconscious on the floor.”

“Well, he was ready to shoot first and ask questions later,” Tam added. “He'd jumped to the conclusion that we had killed the woman and only one thing was going to change his mind:

“He wanted the truth about what happened ten years earlier. He still had his gun aimed in our direction. Jan didn't have any choice but to give

in.” Tam looked around as she continued. “He led us to a primitive simulator room where we wouldn’t be over heard and Jan laid it all out for him. When she was done, he not only accepted what she said, but stated that it made sense based on what he’d seen back then.

“He put away his gun and asked about the woman. That’s when Jan told him she’d been shot with a weapon that didn’t belong in that century.

“Then, from where he had arrived behind the simulator, Mr. Seven came into view and offered his help.”

“Mr. Seven?” Amanda asked. “This would be Gary Seven again?” Tam nodded.

The captain continued. “Introductions were made—”

“It was starting to feel like ‘Old Home Week’,” Jan noted.

“— Then Jan pointed out that the woman had been killed with a disruptor.” Tam glanced at her sister. “Who’s telling this story?”

Jan shrugged. “Sorry.”

“It was decided that Mr. Seven, Jan and I would go to his office where his computer could be used to track down that disruptor. He gave the Colonel a comm unit and we used his transporter— which is a lot quieter than ours— to reach his office in New York.

“That’s where I met Isis. She was in feline form then. It would be a while before I’d see her human form.

“Jan, Mr. Seven and Beta-5 tracked down the disruptor and it was then, that we found out we were dealing with Romulans.”

Shev looked from one sister to the other.
“Romulans on Twentieth Century Earth? How?”

Jan shrugged. “I told Aunt T’Pel later, that I assumed a mole in the government- one with access to my mission reports, which contained the Breakaway and sling-shot formulas- which, by the way, have been re-classified since then. Now you need the retina scan of the current Grand Admiral and the ruling Union President to access them.”

“There were two of them,” Tam said. “Male and female. The male had taken a bomb to Skylab. The female was at the space center.”

Amanda looked to her mother. “What was...Skylab?”

“A space station owned and operated by the United States,” Jan answered. “It had all kinds of sensors to record and analyze all kinds of radiation- including gamma ray radiation, which is a byproduct of Romulan propulsion. If Skylab were destroyed, Earth would be blind right up to the moment a Bird-of-prey de-cloaked and opened fire.”

Tam nodded and looked to Shev and Amanda as she took up the story again. “So Jan took it upon herself to tackle the guy on Skylab—“

“You didn’t have any zero-g training at the time,” Jan reminded her.

“—while Mr. Seven and I went after the female. Do you want to tell the story?”

“Just quit leaving out the facts,” her sister replied.

Tam just looked back at her. “Anyway,” she said as she turned back to Shev and Amanda,” Jan took care of the guy in Skylab— chased him off basically— and got rid of the bomb.

“Down at the complex, we found that the female Romulan was getting ready to kill the entire radiation analysis team. Mr. Seven slipped into the room to free them and she caught him. Then Jan showed up and sent me after the Colonel.

“He knew how to do things. He led me around and in a back way— and quiet. The Romulan didn’t even know he was there till he had his gun to her head and told her to drop her weapon.”

Shev’s eyebrows rose as her eyes widened. “He got the drop on a Romulan? That *is* good.”

Tam nodded and shrugged. “She didn’t listen. She tried to shoot Jan— and he shot the disruptor out of her hand even as she fired. It turned into a slug fest between her and Jan before she ran off, too.”

“So, the Romulan threat was over?” Amanda asked.

Tam and Jan both answered at the same time.
“No.”

“Although we didn’t know that at the time,” Tam added. “We said good-bye to the Colonel and then Mr. Seven, Jan and I went back to New York. Once there, Beta-5 announced that the Romulan ship had left the star system— and apparently the time period.

“So, since it looked like the fight was over, I talked Jan into taking a walk around New York before we headed home.

“I wish you could have been with us, Shev. You would have loved it. The lights, the people, the cars. We even went into some of the stores and looked around. Some of the clothing they had available was a little strange, but some of the dresses and gowns were just wonderful— regardless of the century.”

“Sounds interesting,” Shev said as she smiled ruefully. “But I think I would have stood out just a little.”

Jan glanced at Tam. “You would have been a little harder to explain than Spock’s ears.”

Tam glanced at her sister as she went on. “Well, anyway, it finally got dark on us, so we ducked into an alley and I opened a portal. It looked just like the one I’d opened on the *Enterprise*, but as soon as we entered it, I could feel a difference.” She looked to Jan. “Couldn’t you?”

Jan shook her head. “No, but then, from what you told me later, I dropped out of the picture at that point.”

The captain nodded as she stared off. “There was a pressure— resistance. Light all around in wild streaks and flashes. When it finally faded away, and I could see again, I was standing on a barren plain. Jan wasn’t anywhere to be seen— there was no one to be seen anywhere. But I could hear the surf, so I headed in that direction.

“When I topped a rise, all I could do was stare in shock. It was the Golden Gate Bridge— in ruins. It took a while, but I finally managed to

make my way into San Francisco, only to find it in ruins, too. There wasn't a single building left intact.

“Once I'd found shelter in a ruined apartment building, I started opening portals; five, ten minutes into the past. It was the same everywhere: Washington DC, London, Paris— even the smallest villages had been leveled.”

Silence settled over the living area. When Tamera started speaking again, her voice was a near whisper. “I started looking further back. But every decade was the same. Then I remembered Mr. Seven and the Colonel, so I started checking 1979.

“I started with the end of the year and worked my way back month by month till I finally reached June and then April. Those months were still alive. So I opened a portal on Mr. Seven's office— and I hit resistance again. Only it was worse this time. It was almost as if Time itself was fighting me. I finally realized that it was some kind of ‘line’ between what was supposed to be and what was. It was a kind of ‘scar’ across the timeline.

“I had to use every ounce of willpower I had to get past it.”

She looked to Jan, then Shev and Amanda. “I must’ve passed out. When I came to, I was on the couch in Mr. Seven’s office. He told me that six months had passed and that he and Isis had found me lying on the office floor.

“That’s when Isis revealed herself to me. Mr. Seven sent her to get me a glass of water.

“As we talked about what I’d seen, Mr. Seven realized that the Romulans had jumped to a point in time after Skylab had fallen on its own— solar flares were causing Earth’s atmosphere to expand. The station was due to fall out of orbit in two months.”

“Then why try to destroy it?” Amanda asked— beating Shev by only a few seconds.

“Confusion,” Tam answered. “While the authorities were trying to figure out what happened, they’d be less interested in stories about an alien spaceship attacking the planet.”

Tam was thoughtful for a moment. “I learned a lot about the twentieth century during those two months. The Colonel even taught me how to use twentieth century hand guns— that’s come in handy a few times since then.”

She sighed. “Well, to make a long story short, the Romulans arrived July 13, 1979 old calendar. Colonel Fellini provided the explosives and Mr. Seven provided the transporter. We boarded the Romulan ship. Then the colonel took on their plasma energy canon and Mr. Seven and I took out their engine room.

“Soon there were explosions all over the ship and we were caught up in a running shooting war with the crew.

“We met back in the intersection we arrived in. Beta-5 had been monitoring us the entire time, so all Mr. Seven had to do was call her name.

“The plasma energy canon went up first, then the engine room,” Tam told them. “Then the Colonel and I were back in the office just a split second before the rest of the ship exploded.”

“You said you and the Colonel,” Shev noted.

“Mr. Seven didn’t make it,” Tam told them. “Beta-5 couldn’t get hold of all three of us.” She was quiet for a moment before continuing. “He left a message for the Colonel, asking him to take over the office— and the job— in case Mr. Seven died. And the Colonel did, right up to the day he died of natural causes ten years later.

“But that was all in the future. With everything settled, I figured I’d better try to get home— find out if I had one. That’s when I asked Isis if she wanted to stay with the Colonel or come with me.

“I opened a portal— and I almost cried,” Tam stated. She glanced over at Jan. “I was looking at the *Enterprise* sailing through space as pretty as you please. I stepped into the portal—

“— and into my cabin with Jan beside me.” Tam looked around at each of her companions. “Everything was right again.”

“You got a certain bonus out of all that,” Jan pointed out. “*Ms. Fellini.*”

Shev looked to the captain. “What’s that?”

“The Colonel adopted me,” Tam explained.

“Why?” Amanda asked.

“He figured that if I was going to spend any time in the twentieth century, I’d need some kind of records to justify my existence— and he was right,” Tam told her. ‘In that time period, I’m known as Tamera Kirk Fellini.’”

Her niece tilted her head slightly. “In *that* time period. How many time periods do you live in?”

“On a regular basis, four— counting this one,” Tam answered. “I have a cattle ranch in 1780’s Nevada. I took the profit from that and set up a trust fund in the local bank. I set it up so only a direct descendant with the same color hair and the same last name could claim it.

“Then, in 1875, I presented myself to the same bank as a young lady from London England with the proper papers— all prepared by Beta-5. I claimed my ‘inheritance’ and took it back to England, where I own a house in Regent Park and set the whole thing up all over again.

“Then in 2009, as a young American girl, I presented myself at the bank— again with papers prepared by Beta-5— and again, claimed my ‘inheritance’— which, by that time, had grown to a very nice amount— and took it back to New York, where I have a penthouse.”

Jan had listened to all of this in shock. Now she laughed and shook her head. As she did so, she noticed the time. “It’s getting late, and I think there just might be some interesting developments tomorrow. So we should all turn in.”

“What kind of developments are you expecting?” the doctor asked as everyone stood up.

“You’ll see,” her mother answered. “In the meantime, it wouldn’t hurt for you to go check on your father.”

“I’ll head on back to the *Spirit of Chicago*,” Shev said as Amanda left the room. “But if it’s okay with you, I’d like to invite myself to breakfast. I want to see what you’ve got planned.”

The President nodded. “Breakfast’s at seven.”

The Enterprise- Part 13

Day Twelve

The next morning at breakfast, Jan refused to explain what she expected to happen, saying only that the computer would announce it when it did. She looked around the table, taking in the sight of Tam, Shev, Amanda- and Spock. “In the meantime,” She was saying, “We can continue on to the next story: The Romulan Invasion; *Not* a fun time.”

Shev nearly choked on her breakfast. “I never knew you had a gift for understatement. I know it started out with one of *my* most embarrassing moments.”

Amanda looked across the table at her godmother once she’d reached behind her to a shelf and activated her tricorder. “What do you mean, Aunt Shev?”

The Andorian shook her head. “I’d just arrived on board the day before. We’d just arrived at Starbase 98— Did you know they’ve retired her?

Starfleet's going to build a new one. Anyway, Fitzpatrick and T'Pel had come on board to meet with your mom— and the starbase came under attack by four Romulan ships. At that point, the new A.I. had only been installed— what? A week? Less? And your mom ordered me to turn the port and starboard dorsal phasers over to its control.

“Now, the M-5 mess hadn't been that long ago. No computer had been given control of any weapon system since then.

“It was the morning of my first day on duty, with both Fitzpatrick *and* T'Pel on the bridge- and I questioned your mom's order.” Shev looked over at Jan. “I thought you were going to throw me off the Bridge.”

“I almost *did*,” Jan replied. “We were going into battle— then on to the Neutral Zone. I needed to know how far I could trust the new A.I.” She looked to Amanda. “But Shev gave it control, and it performed perfectly, returning control when ordered. It looked like the Cygnet 14 engineers finally got it right.

“We dropped Tam off with Uncle Frank and Aunt T’Pel so she could catch a shuttle back to Earth and the Academy and headed on to the Neutral Zone.”

Jan glanced around the table as she continued. “When we arrived at the ‘Zone, we found a distortion of some kind waiting for us.”

“What kind of distortion?” Amanda asked.

Her mother shrugged. “We never had a chance to find out. A Romulan ship showed up and destroyed the cloaked ship that was creating it.*

“It was Rayannah,” Jan told them. “It was the first time we’d ever met.” She shook her head. “When I think about our little circle of family and friends, surely her life was changed more by the war than any of the rest of us. She went from commanding a Romulan ship, to being the

*Jan, Spock, Shev and Tam- along with all the officers and crew involved in the Battle of Starbase 98- are under permanent orders not to reveal the existence of the Gateway Device. Ship logs with any scan records of the four ships from another plain of existence were edited before being placed in the Fleet Archives. Even the “official account” of the battle does not contain any references to the *USS Enterprise*, *USS Saladin*, *USS Tamerlane* or the *USS Memphis Belle*.

assistant to the Union's number one ambassador, to marrying a Klingon Colonel— and having his daughter— to becoming an ambassador in her own right.” Jan shrugged. “Of course, she had to get Union citizenship for that, but it never slowed her down.”

Jan was quiet for a moment. “She had brought word of the invasion. She knew that any war would leave Romulus— and the Empire— in ruins. She knew where the plans for the invasion were kept. So, leaving Spock in command, I went with her to get them.”

Amanda looked at her mother in disbelief. “You went into Romulan Space with one of their officers?”

Shev looked to her goddaughter. “I told you she took risks.”

Spock took up the story next. “Your mother and Rayannah had no sooner left, than we picked up transmissions from Rayannah's ship. Her first officer had betrayed her; warned the outpost. Then they attacked us. We were forced to disable their

ship. Then, knowing your mother and Rayannah would most likely need help, I led a boarding party to Rayannah's ship with the intention of recovering their cloaking device for use in avoiding Romulan sensors.

“We found the device and returned to the ship— but not before one of the party was killed and I was severely wounded, which left Shev in command of the *Enterprise*. ”

Amanda looked to her godmother and saw Shev shrug. “Wasn't much for me to do, really, except follow through on Spock's plan. I had Mr. Scott install the cloaking device and we went in after your mom and Rayannah.”

“And it's a good thing they did,” Jan continued. “We'd found the information. But we got caught on the way out. We were facing a firing squad of Romulan security when the *Enterprise* arrived and beamed us home.”

Tam took up the story next. “Almost six hours later, Jan's report reached Starbase 98. As soon as Uncle Frank saw it, he placed the whole sector on

Code-1 Red Alert and called every ship in the sector— and beyond— to the Neutral Zone.

“I hadn’t left for Earth yet, so I got to tag along as his yeoman. My time aboard the *Lydia*— as brief as it was— got me credit for one training flight.”

It was Jan’s turn again. “While Uncle Frank was gathering his forces, I knew I had to buy him time. It was thirteen hours from ‘base to ‘Zone, and *Enterprise* was the only starship in position— or so we thought. I had your father and all the other non-combatants evacuated.

“While all of this was going on, Kang and his ship, the *Cho’Mar*, had been patrolling their side of the Klingon Neutral Zone on Gorkon’s orders. He’d heard rumors of a possible invasion, but his sources couldn’t pin down where. When the Romulan invasion fleet arrived, Kang came in on our side.

“I’ll tell you right now,” Jan told everyone, “If I can’t have Starfleet back-up, I’ll take Klingon

back-up anytime. We maneuvered and covered each other like we'd been doing it for years.

“I guess the Organians pegged it right.

“But it couldn't last— our luck wasn't that good. The Romulans ganged up on the *Cho 'Mar*. She'd taken a hell of a beating by the time we were able to fight our way through to her. We got Kang, Lt. Kutz— who went on to become the Klingon Ambassador— and Lt. Katz off before the Romulans destroyed her.”

The President looked to Shev. “Do you know that to this day, she's *still* the only non-union ship in the Gallery of Honor?” She grew silent after that.

Amanda was first to notice. “Mother?”

She looked up. “Just thinking. The Romulans attacked as soon as Kang and the others were on board. They knocked out our shields and we ended up fighting off boarding actions all over the ship—including the bridge.” Jan looked to Shev. “I know you had your hands full.”

The Admiral nodded. “That’s putting it mildly. They just kept coming. I didn’t think they were ever going to stop.”

“We got the shields back up,” Jan said, “But not before Lt.Katz was killed. He died fighting and he didn’t even have the opportunity to die for a Klingon Bridge.

“I’ve always regretted the fact that I couldn’t put him in for commendation.”

Jan looked to Amanda. “The battle wore on for hour after hour. Between Kang and me, we used every trick and stall we could think of— and all the while, *Enterprise* was taking a beating no one thought she could take.

“Finally, we were out of torpedoes, we were down to one phaser bank— when it worked, our port warp nacelle was scrap...and the Romulans had regrouped and were coming at us en masse.

“I only had one option left.” Jan met her daughter’s gaze. “I ordered the computer to bring the self-destruct systems on-line and stand by for

voice command activation. I didn't want to do it—but it was us or the Union.”

Silence filled the house. No one said anything as they waited for Jan to continue. She looked to the ceiling as she spoke “...We were on the brink,” She said. “The Romulans were closing in- six hundred kilometers, four hundred, two hundred—the order was on my lips. I was ready to say the words—”

She looked to Amanda...and smiled. “Then the Cavalry arrived— Uncle Frank and his task force.” Jan looked to Shev. “The final count was what? Seven hundred ships with more arriving every moment?”

Tam nodded. “Even to this day, it was the largest gathering of ships I’ve ever seen.”

“Uncle Frank held nothing back,” Jan said. She looked off at nothing for a moment. “The ‘Dogs of War’ were truly unleashed that day.”

She looked around the table. “We’d done our job. We held the line for thirteen hours— and we had the scars to show for it.

“But there was one person that didn’t appreciate our efforts: Romulan Fleet Admiral Barlok. Once he saw how the battle was going, he broke away from his fleet and came straight at us.

“This one ship had blocked his entire force—and he was going to destroy us or die trying. He fully intended to ram us. I knew if he survived the battle, he’d be back. I ordered Shev to bring us about to face him. Then I ordered the computer to shut off power to the outer edges of the saucer.”

“Why?” Amanda asked.

“Those now dead areas would create a ‘buffer zone’ between the Barlok’s command ship and the more vital sections of the saucer— like Sickbay and the computer core.

“When the collision happened I was thrown out of the command chair.” Jan shrugged. “I didn’t know anything else till I woke up in Sickbay.”

“Well, I can tell you what happened, “Shev stated. “The moment the Admiral rammed us, damn near every console on the bridge blew-out. Short-circuits, fires, we had it all. It wasn’t till we

got the main viewscreen working again, that we knew the Admiral's ship had been vaporized in the collision.

“Once the remaining Romulans saw what happened to their command ship, they ran for the Neutral Zone.”

Tam nodded. “Uncle Frank had to issue orders to the task force, telling them not to cross the ‘Zone. He let me come over to the *Enterprise* soon after.” The captain was quiet for a moment. “I’d never seen anything so torn...wounded.”

Amanda looked to her mother. “And you were promoted to Commodore.”

“I was not expecting that at all,” Jan told her. “But later, when I had time to think about it, I came to consider it a valediction.” She sat up a little straighter. “Especially later, during the board of Inquiry into the battle and the *Enterprise's* damage. There was a commodore on the board. What was his name...?”

“ ‘Moxon’.” Shev told her. “He’s one I’d never forget.”

Jan nodded. “That’s him.” She looked to Amanda. “Tried to accuse me of thinking of my ‘Legend’ instead of my crew.

“I told him what he could do with his legend.”

Shev chuckled and nodded. “I’ll say you did!”

Jan checked the time and called out.

“Computer? Status?”

“Unchanged, Madam President. There is nothing to report at this time.”

Jan frowned. “Must be on a slow boat to China.” She looked to Spock. “He wouldn’t have gone somewhere else?”

Her husband shook his head. “Highly unlikely.”

“You feel up to sitting in the living area for a while?” she asked him.

“I believe I can manage,” Spock replied with a returning hint of strength in his tone.

“It’s time for your medications,” Amanda told him. She looked to her mother. “If you’ll take him, I’ll go get them.”

As they stood, Jan offered Spock her arm.
“Jan, I am fully capable—“

“When a lady offers her arm, it takes a very rude man to refuse it,” his wife stated.

That eyebrow rose.

He took her arm.

Jan smiled as Amanda returned with the medicines and everyone headed for the living area. It took a few minutes to get Spock settled and his medications seen too, but soon everyone was seated and looking to Jan.

“Between the damage to the saucer, the warp nacelle being off-line— and all the other damage— it took two weeks to get *Enterprise* home. In the meantime, Grand Admiral Stryker had issued a mandate; *Enterprise* was to be repaired— rebuilt if necessary. “Jan shook her head. “I don’t think he realized what kind of headaches that would create.”

She looked to Amanda. “Remember when Tam was telling her story about Mr. Seven and the

Romulans? Remember I mentioned a possible mole in the government?”

“To be honest, I had forgotten about that,” the doctor stated.

“To be honest, so had I,” Jan replied. “But Aunt T’Pel hadn’t.

“We’d been home about two, three months when Scotty came to the ranch and told me that the Oversight Committee for Fleet Technology had chosen a new bridge—a different one from the one they’d selected six months earlier for routine replacement.

“Our mole had forced them to pick a design with a major flaw: a huge viewport all the way across the front of the bridge instead of the standard viewscreen.”

Amanda looked to each of the past and current Starfleet officers. “I don’t understand why that would be a problem.”

“A ship with that bridge goes into a fight,” Jan explains, “Its shields are knocked out. All the

enemy has to do is put one shot through that viewport and your bridge crew's dead."

The doctor nodded. "Now I understand." She tilted her head slightly. "How was such a bridge approved?"

Jan shifted her position in her chair as she replied. "First you have to remember that, back then, it was an entirely civilian committee—Starfleet didn't have a voice."

"Illogical," Amanda declared.

Jan nodded. "Agreed. It was only after this mess, that the President at that time agreed to appoint two retired ship captains to the committee to balance its view. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

"In order to stop the bridge from being built, I had to go on the FNF, point out the flaw and urge the viewers to let the Committee know it was a bad idea." Jan smiled at the memory. "They got so many calls, it overloaded their comm system.

“Next morning, they ‘requested’ that I pay them a visit. Just before I left, Aunt T’Pel showed up. She’d seen my interview.”

Jan met Amanda’s gaze as she continued. “She admitted that curiosity got the better of her and she started looking into the Committee. She’d found that one member—the Vulcan male—named ‘Sebol’ if I remember right— hadn’t been in the same office with his superiors in five years.” She nodded toward Shev as she spoke. “Shev brought a tricorder to the meeting, programed with the male’s medical profile. If he was who he said he was, it would remain quiet.

“It let out with the loudest *Bleep!* I ever heard. Aunt T’Pel came in right after that and arrested him for spying and espionage.” Jan looked to Tam and hoped her silent request was clear. She didn’t want Amanda to know her aunt had thrown the spy back in time a few million years! “But,” She continued, “That was just Round One. While the Committee agreed to go back to the first bridge they’d chosen, we still had other problems.”

“Such as?” Amanda asked.

Jan sighed and shrugged. “Starbase One and the shipyard attached to it, were not ready for the *Enterprise*,” Jan told her. “They didn’t have anywhere near the amount of parts or equipment needed to repair *or* rebuild her. They’d never had to deal with a reconstruction project like this before. If it had been any other ship, Starfleet would have simply decommissioned her and built a new one.

“True, over the years, the class had gone through a series of upgrades. But even taking those into account, even considering the ships under construction at the time, the parts we needed just weren’t there.

“Now, we did check around and other starbases *did* have the equipment— but shipping it to us, would have added another six months to the work schedule.”

Tam leaned forward in her seat. “I always wondered how you managed to work it out.”

Jan spread her hands. “We had to get creative— more so than usual. The *Constitution*

had taken damage too and had come in with us. But unlike the *Enterprise*, she was returned to her original status as a test vehicle and the plan was to put her through a pilot re-fit program. The re-fit program had everything we needed— and then some.

“So, with Stryker’s mandate in one hand and a list in the other, Scotty and I went shopping.”

Tam leaned back in her chair and laughed. Shev smiled and shook her head.

Jan’s smile grew a little embarrassed. “I think we might have inadvertently set the re-fit program back a few months— but they had time to order parts and wait for them. We didn’t.

“As it was, Scotty and his crew and the corps of Engineers all worked round the clock for sixteen months piecing it together and making sure it all worked!”

“And you were placed in command of Task Force 98,” Amanda noted.

“Again,” her mother said, “There were some public relations involved in that.”

“In what way?” Tam asked.

“They deliberately chose ‘The Hero of the Battle of Starbase 98’ to command the task force as a morale booster for ‘the folks back home’.” A mocking tone entered Jan’s voice. “If she did it once, she can do again.” She shook her head. “I think part of Command was hoping I’d get killed— then they’d have a martyr to parade before the crowds.

“Thankfully, I know Grand Admiral Stryker never felt that way.

“Unfortunately, being a morale booster was the main reason the task force was a joint effort between us and the Klingons— morale and to show both sides that we *can* work together.”

Jan looked down at the floor as she spoke. “I was sorry Kang had to put up with that. But, on the other hand, if it had been some other Klingon, I don’t think it would have worked. Kang and I had gotten to know each other— trust each other.”

Shev nodded. “He carried you off the bridge when you were hurt.”

Jan glanced over at her. “He wouldn’t have done that for a Klingon.”

“Don’t they believe in medical care?” Amanda asked.

“Of course they do,” Jan replied. “But they also believe that if the wounded can’t get to it on their own, they don’t deserve it. By carrying me off the bridge— and all the way to Sickbay— Kang went against his own culture and traditions.”

“He’d just lost his wife, what? Less than a year earlier?” Shev asked. “Maybe he didn’t want to lose you, too.”

Jan shrugged and looked up. “Computer, anything yet?”

“No, Ma’am. No change.”

“Damnit,” the President swore, “Where the hell is he?”

“Who?” her daughter asked.

But Jan waved the question off and sighed. “You know, the average citizen thinks that space travel’s all glamour and adventure. But it’s not.

Sometimes you could go a month or more just traveling from one assignment to the next.

“Once I got Task Force 98 back to the Neutral Zone, we went ten months and didn’t see anything except our own ships. We were hearing about action all along the ‘Zone, but for some reason it seemed to be avoiding us.”

A gleam came to her eyes then. “Then came the day. An object just on the edge of our sensors.” She looked to her daughter. “A *Daedalus*- class disaster beacon—the *Sundown*’s beacon. We back-tracked it to Tholian Space—or what had been Tholian space back then.”

She looked to Tam. “I didn’t realize it till then, but somewhere along the line, I’d come to accept the fact that I’d never see Dad alive again. I just wanted to find him—or have someone find him—just so there’d be a period at the end of it.

“Then we spotted her— caught in some kind of rip in the very fabric of space.” She met her daughter’s gaze. “And the surprises weren’t over. We were in the Briefing Room talking about how

to pull the *Sundown* out, when the bridge called. We were receiving a message—

“—From the *Sundown*!” Jan had to pause then. “When Dad’s image came up on the viewscreen, older, worry worn...” Jan’s voice faded and she had to clear her throat. “All I wanted from that moment was to get over there and find him.

“But the rip was disrupting the area. People had gone mad aboard the *Sundown*. Fortunately, the *Enterprise*’s stronger shields were able to deflect the effect. Once I’d taken a landing party to the *Sundown*, Shev extended the shields and eliminated the effects.

“We found Dad in his cabin few moments later— just as the Tholians showed up.” She looked over at Shev. “What the hell happened, First Officer?”

Shev shrugged. “There were two of them. We tried to establish contact as soon as they dropped out of warp. But they wouldn’t listen and they wouldn’t talk— they just opened fire—”

“On both ships,” Jan finished for her. “The shock of being shot at was enough to help Dad throw off the last of the rip’s effect.” Then, Madam President looked to the ceiling. Her voice broke as she spoke. “He...actually apologized for not coming home...like it was his fault.”

Amanda’s mother then looked to her once more. “Shev called us at that point. The *Enterprise* was losing power due to both the rip and the energy draining web the Tholians were building. So, we used the Psi-2000 cold start to get *Sundown*’s engines going, got her shields up and Shev used the *Enterprise* to pull us out.”

The Admiral shrugged. “More like ‘in’.”

Amanda shook her head. “I don’t understand.”

The Admiral looked to the Captain. “Why don’t you open that portal of yours and show her what we saw?” She looked to the doctor. “There’s really no way to explain it otherwise.”

Tam concentrated and her portal re-appeared, showing the *Enterprise* and the *Sundown* in that ‘other space’ they had accidentally discovered.

Amanda couldn't keep the surprise and wonder off her face. She glanced at her godmother.
“Where was this?”

“We never really found out,” Shev told her.
“To this day, astrophysicists are still debating over where in the structure of the universe this is. The most generally accepted theory is that it's a wormhole of some kind— but it's unlike any wormhole that's ever been found.”

They watched as the journey ended with the detonation of torpedoes and the ships' return to normal space like bullets being shot out of a gun—
—aimed right at the head of Starbase 98.
Amanda was unable to tear her eyes from the portal as the ships cleared the Starbase by half a meter.

“The helm console had locked up on us,” Shev explained. “The Computer was fighting it all the way, trying to get it to work.”

Tam allowed the portal to close at that point.

“Incredible,” Amanda whispered.

Jan nodded. “Course we had no time to enjoy the idea of Dad being home. We no sooner got back to Earth, than Admiral Stryker sent us out again— to Romulus.

“They’d attacked a colony on Betitor 9. The Federal Congress said enough was enough and he sent us out with the *Lydia* and the *Mara*— Kang’s ship— with orders to stop the war anyway possible.

“Rayannah and Ambassador Sarek arrived along the way with the first news we’d heard about Romulan Militants. That threw the entire war into a different light. One of their own senators— Bar’len— was behind it all. He was trying to provoke the Union into attacking the Empire and destroying it.”

“His own Empire? Why?”

“Well, first of all, it wasn’t *his* empire— it was under the Praetor’s rule. Bar’len was willing to see at least a third of his people wiped out, just so he could step in a few years later and raise the survivors from the ruins. He expected to be hailed

a hero and be named Emperor for his efforts in saving the Empire.”

Amanda shook her head and then tilted it to one side. “That’s insane.”

Jan nodded. “Definitely. We confronted both the Praetor and Bar’len in their own senate chamber. We had a shootout with Bar’len, but he managed to escape.

“The Praetor— once he understood what had been going on— immediately ended all hostilities and came to the Peace Talks on Cestus III.

“Bar’len disappeared— but not for long as your brother can attest to.”

“And so ended the Second Romulan War,” Tam stated.

The Computer spoke. “Madam President?”

Jan turned toward the viewscreen. “Show me.”

The screen lit up with the FNF logo. That was soon replaced with the image of a female Andorian reporter. “...just came in. Just a short while ago,

former Senator Abok of Tollas 9 was arrested the moment his ship touched down on his home world.

“Admiral T’Pel of Starfleet Intelligence and a local unit of law enforcement officers were waiting for Master Abok the moment he left his ship.

“The charge- which is the end result of a two year investigation by the SFI- is Treason. It’s alleged that the former senator had been meeting in secret with the Orion government.

“The details of those meetings have not been released.”

“Screen off.” Jan nodded in satisfaction as she turned away and Amanda couldn’t miss the gleam in her mother’s eyes. “Like your father said; I didn’t let him go. Aunt T’Pel already had him. Abok just didn’t know it.”

Madam President looked around the room then, taking in the sight of Spock, Tam, Shev and Amanda and then she nodded once more. “I think that’s a good point to end your little project on.”

Tam took a step toward her. “But what about Khan? And all your years as Grand Admiral?”

“There’s an old saying,” Jan told her sister. “Always leave them wanting more.” She then turned and walked out onto the patio.

Afterward:

Janet Kirk would go on to serve three consecutive terms as President of the Federal Union of Planets before the Federal Congress pushed through an amendment limiting the number of consecutive terms to two.

She left office at the age of eighty-two. But she would continue to accept occasional diplomatic missions on behalf of the Union.

As of this publication, no death notice has been issued.

END