

STAR TREK

TITANS FRONTIER

BY DAVID TITLEY



A NEW CREW - UNCHARTED SPACE - A CALL FROM THE PAST

STAR TREK:
MANS FRONTIER

BY David Titley

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PART ONE

- Natasha's Quarters –

The room is in darkness when the comm. panel on the desk elevates and beeps with an incoming transmission.

NATASHA: *(mumbles from waking up)* Computer, lights. *The lights come on and Natasha walks to, and sits at, the desk.*

NATASHA: Authorisation: Riker 4476.

The computer beeps and activates showing a male whom she recognises.

RENE: Hello, Natasha. Hope I didn't wake you.

NATASHA: Well, yes, you did, but lucky for you I'm on duty in two hours so I will let you off this time.

Natasha begins brushing her long black hair.

RENE: I'm sorry, but I just thought you should know you have..

(The door beeps)

NATASHA: Err, come in.

The door opens and a man walks in.

NATASHA: Dad??

Rear Admiral Riker steps in.

RIKER: Surprise, Natasha!

RENE: Yeah, Natasha, you should know your Dad's coming to see you. I'll talk to you later.

The comm. screen goes off.

NATASHA: (*happily says*) Dad, what are you doing here? (*She walks over and hugs her father*).

RIKER: I came in person to deliver a message to you.

NATASHA: A message? (*looking surprised and confused*).

RIKER: Here, it's from Starfleet. (*He hands a data pad to Natasha who reads it silently*). Effective immediately you are no longer First Officer of the Liberty.

NATASHA: But, why?

RIKER: Starfleet has a mission and has chosen you to lead it.

NATASHA: Why me, Dad?

RIKER: Captain Bouchillon submitted a letter of recommendation to Starfleet after your last mission at Bolarus. I know all too well how difficult negotiations with the Romulans can be, but you made it seem like child's play.

NATASHA: (*smiles*) I can't believe it! (*pauses*) Me.. a Captain!

RIKER: Liberty is on its way to Utopia Planitia and Captain Bouchillon has asked me if he can be the one to officially

grant you your promotion and wish you good luck...

(Natasha looks up from the data pad at her father) and I would not miss it for the world!

- Shuttle bay -

BOUCHILLON: It is with a great honour to acknowledge that Commander Natasha Riker has performed above and beyond the call of duty on countless occasions and that she has earned the admiration and respect of the entire crew. By Starfleet's order I hereby promote you to the rank of Captain with all the rights, privileges and responsibilities.

Congratulations, Captain! *(Pins rank pip on Natasha's collar while the crew applauds).*

(Bouchillon and Natasha shake hands, then Admiral Riker and Bouchillon shake hands and crew members gather to congratulate her).

- Liberty Bridge -

HELMSMAN: Captain, sir. We're arriving at Utopia Planitia.

BOUCHILLON: Thank you, Lieutenant. Drop us out of warp.

HELMSMAN: Aye, sir.

BOUCHILLON: Bridge to Admiral Riker, we have arrived

at Utopia Planitia.

– Shuttle -

ADMIRAL RIKER: Acknowledged, Bridge. Completing final checks. Shuttle is almost ready to depart.

(Natasha walks into shuttle with a bag on her shoulder).

BOUCHILLON: Understood. Oh, and Admiral... tell Natasha... good luck. *(Shuttle leaves USS Liberty's Shuttle Bay).*

NATASHA: Dad, why won't you tell me what ship Starfleet is giving me? I should read up on the crew manifest before I step aboard.

RIKER: Relax, Natasha. She won't be ready for another two weeks and as for the crew, Starfleet has assigned only a skeleton crew. You will have to select the rest yourself and there are a lot of applicants, so choose wisely.

NATASHA: Any advice or recommendations?

RIKER: I would advise for your first officer to do like your father-in-law did: choose someone who doesn't follow orders blindly.

(Shuttle flies through shipyards).

NATASHA: Did Rene know about this?

RIKER: No, he overheard your mother and I talking about

me coming to see you and assured him that there's nothing to worry about and that its good news. But me coming to see you was supposed to be a surprise, he is just like his father...
(*Riker smiles*) Jean-Luc never did like surprises.

NATASHA: (*gasps*) Oh my God!

RIKER: There she is!

(*Natasha sees the NCC-80102-A USS TITAN*)

NATASHA: That's your ship!

RIKER: No, no, no. Need I remind you, the original Titan was decommissioned following the Battle of Arabisa several years ago? For the last two years your mother and I have overseen the new Titan's construction. She has a few advancements for a ship her size.

NATASHA: What do you mean?

RIKER: She has a class 10 warp drive with a slipstream biometric deflector.

NATASHA: Slipstream, I heard about that but isn't it unstable?

RIKER: Starfleet has designed the biometric deflector to compensate for the instabilities but it will only take you to a specific destination where a biometric array has been deployed and transmitting a specific biaxial signal. An array here will transmit another signal for your return back when your mission is complete.

NATASHA: Return from where?

RIKER: Before the Dominion War, a science vessel in the Gamma Quadrant launched dozens of biometric arrays towards the far reaches of the Quadrant to gain astrometric data and possibly make contact with other warp capable species. Eight months ago the array transmitted a signal with a message it had received. It's a distress call.

NATASHA: Eight months ago, surely they are beyond our help by now?

RIKER: That's what you're going to find out, their race is called the Marilian, and they are an advanced race but their home world is dying. Aside from that, we don't know much. They had begun evacuating their planets when they sent the message. Your mission is to open diplomatic relations and, if possible, assess the situation. Also, you will need to align the biometric array for two way communications with Starfleet and return to Federation space.

NATASHA: A diplomatic mission? So why such an advanced ship?

RIKER: Starfleet isn't in the habit of sending ships into uncharted deep space unprepared but you will be on your own, Natasha. Except for the prototype shuttles, the Titan is the first ship with this prototype slipstream drive.

NATASHA: But, still all this for a distress call?

RIKER: This was no normal distress call... it was sent on a Starfleet emergency frequency used by only one ship... The USS Maryland.

NATASHA: How did an old Renaissance-class ship end up on the other side of the Gamma Quadrant?

RIKER: You will find out when you get there but your secondary objective is to find and to bring the Maryland crew home, if possible. The ship went missing during the early exploration of the Gamma Quadrant soon after the wormhole was discovered at Deep Space 9. It was believed she was destroyed by the Dominion but no evidence of her destruction was found so Starfleet declared her missing.

(Natasha goes silent)

RIKER: Riker to Titan, requesting shuttle clearance and permission to come aboard.

FEMALE VOICE FROM TITAN: Permission granted, Admiral Riker, shuttle bay doors are open.

(The shuttle craft flies into Titan's Shuttle bay and lands, the rear door of the shuttle opens and Admiral Riker and Natasha step out. The crew are assembled and a Boatswain Whistle is sounded).

WEST: Welcome aboard the Titan, Captain Riker. I'm Commander Dylan West, *(he points to a Vulcan male)* and this is Lieutenant Tuss and this *(West points to a Trill*

woman) is Lieutenant Commander Jaylar, your new Chief Medical Officer.

JAYLAR: Hello, Captain, good to see you again.

RIKER: I take it you two know each other?

NATASHA: Yes, we were friends at the Academy. Tam is the only person I know who has even left the academy with a double major.

RIKER: Really? What did you study other than medical?

JAYLAR: Engineering. My father was an engineer but I also enjoyed studying medicines and couldn't decide so I did both. My lecturers at the academy didn't think I would be able to handle the work load but that just encouraged me to try even harder.

NATASHA: How come you're here? Last I heard you were working on Cardassia Prime.

JAYLAR: Yes, I was, but after helping the Cardassians rebuild their world after the Dominion War I transferred back to Earth for a while to work with Captain LaForge designing the next generation of starships. When the position of Chief Medical Officer came up I didn't expect my name to be considered, but here I am!

TUSS: Lieutenant Jaylar is very efficient engineer. We have been adapting the Jellyfish project designed by Captain LaForge into the Titan's systems.

NATASHA: Jellyfish?

TUSS: Captain LaForge designed trans-metaphasic shielding so that starships could enter areas of space usually lethal to both ships and their crews. It's much more advanced than standard metaphasic shielding.

RIKER: Did Geordi give you permission to implement his designs onto this ship?

JAYLAR: Well, no, but from what I understand we're going into an area of space completely unknown and we're better off being prepared for anything.

RIKER: Hmm, *(wears an expression of disapproval)*. Very well. I will contact Geordi and have him check over the final specs when you finish.

JAYLAR and TUSS: Thank you, sir.

RIKER: Ok, Natasha. I need to speak with the Corps of Engineers so I'll leave you to get started.
(Riker leaves).

TUSS: Captain, may we show you to your quarters?

NATASHA: Please, lead the way.

(Tuss takes the Captain's holdall bag and they leave the shuttle bay).

- Deck 5 -

(Natasha, Jaylar and Tuss step out of a turbo lift and are

walking down the corridor.)

TUSS: How long were you on the first Titan when your father was Captain?

NATASHA: I was born on Titan and lived aboard her until I was five when my mother and I went to Earth so she could teach at Starfleet Academy. When my father was promoted to Admiral my mother went to live on Betazed. When I was fourteen I stayed on Earth and began studying for Starfleet.

TUSS: From what I understand, you passed every exam with the highest marks and were credited for your creative techniques and strategies in command simulations.

JAYLAR: Top of our class in the flight simulator, too. We all knew you would eventually get a command of your own.

NATASHA: Well, I was promoted to Lieutenant when I graduated and my first assignment was on Starbase One reviewing starship assignments for the sector, which worked out fine for me as I met my husband Rene at my graduation and within two years we were married.

JAYLAR: Rene? You mean...

NATASHA: Yes Rene Picard, Jean-Luc Picard's son.

TUSS: Is he in Starfleet?

NATASHA: No. He and the children live on Mars working on the family vineyard.

- Natasha's quarters -

TUSS: Here you are, Captain. If you'll excuse me, I need to get back to engineering.

(Natasha nods at Tuss, then she and Jaylar step into Natasha's quarters).

NATASHA: I can't believe it! Of all the ships, my first command is the Titan!

JAYLAR: I think your father is more than happy that you got her, too! What was it he said to me, *(pauses to think)* "a ship is only as good as her captain, and the Titan deserves a Riker to command her." *(Natasha smiles)* I'll leave you to get settled in and have the rest of your things bought to your quarters.

NATASHA: Thanks.

(Jaylar leaves and Natasha looks out of the window at the many ships being built alongside her own).

- Bridge -

(Natasha is sitting in the Captain's chair reading reports when a young male approaches from the turbo lift).

EVANS: Ensign Cameron Evans reporting as ordered

Ma'am.

NATASHA: At ease, Ensign. I was just reading your service record from the USS Intrepid. It seems Captain Stevens was sorry to see you go

EVANS: I enjoyed my time on the Intrepid, Ma'am, but I joined Starfleet to explore not to patrol borders scanning for anomalies. The chance to explore uncharted space! Well, I can't wait to get started!

NATASHA: Very well, you're my new operations officer.

EVANS: *(Delighted)* Yes, Ma'am!

NATASHA: Take your station. I suggest you speak with Lieutenant Tuss about the modifications he's made to the ship's shields.

EVANS: Yes, Ma'am.

(Natasha continues to read her reports, and then a voice comes from the comm.)

RIKER: Admiral Riker to Captain Riker.

(Natasha taps her comm. Badge).

NATASHA: Go ahead.

RIKER: Captain, you're needed down in Engineering.

NATASHA: On my way.

(Natasha leaves the Bridge).

- Engineering -

NATASHA: Everything Ok?

TUSS: Captain, we have discovered instabilities within the Slipstream Drive.

NATASHA: I thought all the instability problems had been overcome. That's why the Titan had this drive installed.

RIKER: That's what the biometric arrays are for, to transmit a clear projected path ahead of the ship to avoid them, but it seems the drive's core has its own instability issues. It's something that never showed up in the prototypes.

TUSS: I believe it has to do with the deflector calibration.

RIKER: What do you mean?

TUSS: Standard warp fields are a bubble around the ship and the deflector keeps any debris in space in front of the ship from hitting it at warp speed. But slipstream is a different way of manipulating space at much greater speeds. The deflector has to be angled in order to break the quantum barrier. The idea of using a biometric array was to project a clear path and avoid phase variances.

RIKER: I see. So, what are our options?

TUSS: Theoretically, the deflector could be recalibrated to the changes in the field but I believe it would only work by

being tied into the sensor array. Once connected to the biometric array it should continuously counter any phase variances that the new drive cannot compensate for. I can begin running simulations in the holodeck right away.

NATASHA: Get started, Lieutenant.

RIKER: If this problem cannot be resolved then this mission is over before it began.

- Bridge -

(At the engineering work station on the bridge Tuss is showing Admiral and Captain Riker the simulation results).

TUSS: As you can see from the simulations, Captain, there is a 4% chance that the new calibration will fail.

RIKER: 4% is still 4%. I won't authorise a mission unless you're willing to take that chance. *(He looks Natasha in the eye.)* It's your call.

NATASHA: The ship is less than a week from complete and I have chosen my senior staff except a first officer. I will let the crew decide if this 4% is a risk worth taking.

- Staff briefing room -

NATASHA: Welcome aboard the Titan. I know this is a newly assembled crew but I have chosen you all based on

your previous experiences and reports from your previous commanding officers. So, a few introductions are in order. (*Natasha begins to point out her staff, one-by-one*). This is our Chief of Security, Lieutenant Commander Simon Parson, Operations Officer, Ensign Cameron Evans, Chief Medical Officer Tamera Jaylar, our Helmsman, Lieutenant Rex Hammond and our Chief Engineer Lieutenant Tuss.

(*An Andorian Male enters the briefing room*).

NATASHA: Ah, you must be...

SATH: Commander Sath, reporting for duty, Captain.

NATASHA: Welcome, Commander. Please, sit down.

(*Sath sits down next to Natasha*).

NATASHA: Now, the first matter to discuss is an issue we came across with the new slipstream warp drive. Lieutenant Tuss?

TUSS: After running simulations we have managed to find a way to compensate for the instability. However, there is still a 4% chance that the core could go critical when engaged.

PARSON: And if it did?

TUSS: This is an untested drive. The results of the core going critical are uncertain, but if I were to speculate I would say the ship could tear itself apart in subspace and leave parts of it spread across hundreds of light-years. Or we could be thrown out of slipstream at an uncontrolled rate of

acceleration and emerge at any random location along our flight path and the damage to the ship would be... severe.

EVANS: How severe?

TUSS: I would surmise that any of the crew that would be lucky to survive either outcome. But it is not logical to be concerned about such events as they are theorised from simulations. I calculate that it is worth the risk.

NATASHA: Nevertheless, the fact remains that there is a 4% chance that this new drive could fail and I am not willing to commit this new crew to a mission where we will be on our own unless everyone in this room agrees to proceed.

HAMMOND: I didn't join Starfleet to be squeamish over a what if. I say we go.

PARSON: Spoken like a true pilot, but I agree, if I was stuck so far from home I'd like to believe that Starfleet had not forgotten me.

SATH: What is life without chance? I'm in!

JAYLAR: I'm ready to go.

NATASHA: Very well, the ship's final checks will be complete in two days, then we will take the Titan out for a brief shakedown cruise. If all checks out the mission is a go.

SATH: Captain, what do we know about the Marilians?

NATASHA: Not much. The transmission was brief but from what we know they are humanoid and seem to be about as

technologically advanced as we are, but they are an isolated race. The region of space they occupy is surrounded by a large void, similar to a region the USS Voyager encountered in the Delta quadrant which spread to over 2,500 light-years, this void from what we understand, is bigger but we don't know how big as the Marilians have never reached the other side. What is even stranger about this is the signal we received through the array was a specific signal used by a Federation ship that went missing in 2373.

SATH: How does a ship from 36 years ago just reappear on the other side of the Gamma Quadrant?

NATASHA: That's what we need to find out, and if any of the crew from the Maryland is out there we need to bring them home.

- Bridge -

(The crew are at their stations. Natasha enters the Bridge from her ready room, and sits in the captain's chair).

SATH: Captain, the Corps of Engineers have completed their work and Lieutenant Tuss says all systems are good to go.

NATASHA: Thank you, Commander. Open a channel to Dock Control.

PARSON: Channel open.

NATASHA: This is Captain Riker of the Titan requesting

permission to get under way.

DOCK CONTROL: USS Titan request granted and god speed.

(Admiral Riker enters the bridge and sits next to Natasha).

NATASHA: Thought you were going to miss all the fun.

RIKER: Are you kidding? I wouldn't miss this for the world!

NATASHA: Helm, release docking clamps. Ahead one quarter impulse. Take us out.

(Titan leaves Utopia Planitia)

HAMMOND: We are clear, Captain.

NATASHA: Set course 215.6 and take us to warp 5.

HAMMOND: Course laid in.

NATASHA: Well, Dad, care to give the order for old time's sake?

(Riker grins at Natasha then looks at the view screen).

RIKER: Engage!

(Titan warps out of the system).

NATASHA: *(taps her comm badge)*. Bridge to Engineering, you may begin your system tests. Report to me when you're done.

TUSS (voice): Understood.

- Alpha Centauri system -

HAMMOND: Captain, we have arrived at Alpha Centauri Alpha Three.

NATASHA: Standard orbit.

HAMMOND: Aye, standard orbit.

PARSON: Captain, we're receiving a transmission from Memory Alpha Research Station. They are ready to receive Admiral Riker.

RIKER: Time to go. *(Riker looks at Natasha)* Good luck, Captain.

NATASHA: I'll walk with you to the transporter room. You have the Bridge, Commander.

SATH: Aye, Captain.

(Riker and Natasha leave the Bridge).

- Transporter room -

(Riker and Natasha walk in, Riker hugs Natasha then steps onto the transporter pad).

NATASHA: Bye, Dad!

RIKER: I'll see you soon.

NATASHA: Energise.

(Riker transports to Memory Alpha Base).

- Recreation Lounge, USS Titan -

(Hours later Natasha and Jaylar are in the recreation lounge chatting about their fond memories of the Academy).

JAYLAR: *(laughing)* I still laugh when I think about the expression on his face when he walked in his quarters and everything was gone!

NATASHA: *(also laughing)* I can't believe you managed to switch his quarters perfectly two levels up in one transport and then back again!

JAYLAR: He never did find out who did it or how. Scott told me he checked sensor logs and transporter logs and found nothing. It drove him crazy for weeks.

NATASHA: *(still giggling)* Come on, tell me. How did you do it?

JAYLAR: You really want to know? *(Natasha nods)* It was the simulator. We never moved anything.

NATASHA: What?

JAYLAR: Yeah, he had been running a simulation and thought he finished and left when really he went from one program to another. Then, at the right moment, we let him walk out of the simulator. When he noticed he was not where he was supposed to be he just thought he had made a

wrong turn in the corridors.

(Both laughing again, a voice comes over the comm.)

TUSS (voice): Engineering to Captain Riker.

(Natasha taps her comm. Badge).

NATASHA: Riker here.

TUSS (Voice): Captain, all checks are complete and we're good to go.

(Natasha and Jaylar look at each other seriously).

NATASHA: Understood. Riker to all hands, report to your stations.

(Natasha and Jaylar leave the recreation lounge).

- Bridge -

NATASHA: Commander Parson, contact Memory Alpha Base.

PARSON: Admiral Riker on screen, Captain.

RIKER: I take it you're ready, Titan?

NATASHA: As ready as we will ever be.

RIKER: The array we have in orbit is receiving a clear signal.

EVANS: We are receiving the signal and Lieutenant Tuss has already tied it into the sensor array.

RIKER: She's all yours, Captain. Good luck.

(View screen goes off).

NATASHA: Parson, open a channel, ship-wide.

PARSON: Channel open.

NATASHA: All hands this is the Captain. We're about to engage slipstream drive. Report to your designated areas. Helm, lay in our course and activate the Slipstream Drive.

HAMMOND: Course laid in, Captain.

NATASHA: Here we go. Engage!

(A Quantum Vortex appears and Titan warps into it)

END OF PART ONE

PART TWO

(Two weeks since Titan left Alpha Centauri and is travelling at slipstream. Natasha is in her ready room when the door beeps).

NATASHA: Enter.

(Jaylar walks in)

JAYLAR: Captain, do you have a minute?

NATASHA: Yes, of course, Tam come in. Sit, please. Can I get you anything?

(Natasha walks to the replicator)

JAYLAR: No, thank you, but I wanted to talk to you about the crew.

NATASHA: Computer, tea, hot.

(The replicator makes a cup of tea and Natasha returns to her desk)

NATASHA: What about them?

JAYLAR: It's only been two weeks since we left but because we're travelling at slipstream the crew can't send messages to their families - which for some of them is concerning as they won't know if we're OK. Don't forget we're doing this on largely untried technology. It's understandable for the

people at home to worry about us.

NATASHA: I understand what you're saying, I would like to let my Dad know we're OK, too, but our orders are to press on to the array. I will discuss the matter with Tuss and see if we could make a stop without affecting the drive so I can at least let Starfleet know that the drive works.

JAYLAR: Thank you. Did you get chance to speak to Rene before we left?

NATASHA: Yes, we talked for a few hours, and the kids got upset. Rene even tried to talk me out of the mission but he understands how important it is.

JAYLAR: I don't know how you manage being in Starfleet and having a family.

NATASHA: Being posted within transporter range of home for the first few years helped and I did take a two year break before my assignment aboard Liberty. Didn't you ever have a family of your own?

JAYLAR: No. I've had a few relationships over the years but my career always came first. I get too engrossed in my work so they never seem to work out.

NATASHA: Titan was designed for a crew of 350 and we are only running half capacity for this mission. You never know you, might meet someone on our next mission.

JAYLAR: Who knows?

- Engineering -

(Hours later, Natasha is talking to Tuss)

TUSS: Although the core has not given us any issues I have been detecting some mirror fluctuations within it. I would prefer to make a stop and run some diagnostics.

NATASHA: Sounds like a win, win.

TUSS: Captain?

NATASHA: It means everyone gets what they want. You can run the diagnostics and I can contact Starfleet.

TUSS: Captain, we must proceed with caution. We will be dropping out of slipstream blind and we will not know where we are exactly until we're there. We could be near planets, ships, anomalies...

NATASHA: Ok, Tuss. I understand what you saying. I'll have everyone report to stations before we drop out and raise shields to be on the side of caution.

(Natasha leaves engineering and heads to the Bridge)

- The Bridge -

NATASHA: Helm drop us out of slipstream.

HAMMOND: Aye, Captain. Dropping us out in 3... 2... 1...
(*A quantum vortex appears and the Titan reappears in normal space*)

NATASHA: Full sensor scans, Mr Parson.

PARSON: Systems are showing we have travelled 11,675 light years. I'm detecting two planets in the nearby system, both uninhabited, but there is what looks like a small probe orbiting the second planet.

NATASHA: A probe? What's it doing?

PARSON: From what I can detect its transmitting data about the planet's mineral composition and relaying the information to a location beyond our sensor range.

NATASHA: Any idea who it belongs to?

PARSON: Negative. The probe is made up of a mineral the computer cannot identify and seems to have biological circuitry for its primary systems.

NATASHA: Well at least for now we're alone. Ensign Evans?

EVANS: I have established a connection between both arrays, Captain. Communications are online.

NATASHA: Open a channel to Memory Alpha.

(*Admiral Riker answers the hail*)

RIKER: Titan? Is everything OK?

NATASHA: We're fine. We were concerned about some

readings from the core and decided to stop and run some tests.

RIKER: How was it?

NATASHA: Smooth sailings so far. We've travelled over 10,000 light years and the local neighbourhood seems quiet.

RIKER: Good to hear. Starfleet will be pleased to get an update on the Slipstream Drive.

NATASHA: We will check in again before we go back into Slipstream.

RIKER: Understood, Riker out.

(The channel closes)

NATASHA: Ensign Evans, you may inform the crew that they can contact home.

EVANS: Aye, Captain.

(A voice comes over the comm.)

TUSS (VOICE): Engineering to Captain Riker.

(Natasha taps her comm. badge)

NATASHA: Riker here.

TUSS (VOICE): Please come to Engineering.

NATASHA: On my way. *(She taps her comm. badge and leaves the Bridge)*

- Engineering -

NATAHSHA: Is there a problem, Lieutenant?

TUSS: Captain, I have good news and bad news. The good news is I found the problem in the core.

NATASHA: The bad news?

TUSS: There is no way to fix it. We're going to need to make a few stops along the way and recalibrate the core each time to compensate for the instability.

NATASHA: That doesn't seem so bad.

TUSS: That's not the bad news, Captain.

NATASHA: Then, what is?

TUSS: The new drive is failing, Captain. I can compensate for the instabilities for now but after a dozen recalibrations the drive will be too unstable to use. I've gone over the prototype shuttle flight data for the drive and they showed no signs of this problem. I believe that the ship's larger mass compared to a shuttle is causing a much greater strain on the drive.

NATASHA: Can we complete our mission?

TUSS: I believe so, but we will need to stretch out the time we're in slipstream as much as we can or we will end up making part of the return journey to Federation space under warp power only.

NATASHA: If that happens, how long are we looking at?

TUSS: We have travelled over ten thousand light years in

two weeks. At maximum warp that would have taken just over five years. Relatively speaking, the mission would take a lot longer should we fall short.

NATASHA: I shall contact Starfleet and inform them immediately.

(Natasha leaves engineering concerned)

- Natasha's Quarters -

(Natasha is talking to Rene about the Slipstream drive)

NATASHA: As long as Tuss keeps the core calibrated and we run the drive as long as possible there should be no problems getting back.

RENE: But, is it possible you could be stranded?

NATASHA: Not stranded, just delayed.

RENE: I spoke to your father a few days ago. Since your report he has been looking at outfitting another ship with a slipstream drive in case you can't make it back but he said it would take over two years before one would even be close to being ready. Starfleet is looking for other options.

(The ship shakes and red alert is sounded)

NATASHA: I've got to go *(closes the comm. channel)*

SYTH (VOICE): Captain to the Bridge.

(Natasha runs out of her quarters)

- Bridge -

(Natasha arrives on the bridge)

NATASHA: Report!

SATH: Captain, the ship was hit by an aftershock that originated from a system outside our sensor range.

NATASHA: Do we know what caused it?

PARSON: Negative, Captain, but sensors are detecting subatomic radiation in the region and the levels are rising.

TUSS (VOICE): Engineering to Captain. Subatomic radiation will prevent us from opening a slipstream vortex if the levels get too high.

NATASHA: Understood. Helm, gets us into slipstream.

HAMMOND: On our way, Captain.

(A Quantum Vortex appears and Titan warps into the vortex)

HAMMOND: We are at slipstream velocity, Captain.

NATASHA: *(taps her comm. badge)* Riker to Engineering. Status report.

TUSS (VOICE): The core calibrations were completed in time captain. All systems functioning within normal parameters.

NATASHA: Good work, Lieutenant. Riker out. *(Taps comm.*

badge)

JAYLAR (VOICE): Sickbay to Bridge.

NATASHA: Go ahead.

JAYLAR (VOICE): Captain, I have twelve crew members with radiation burns and radiation sickness. We're treating them now.

NATASHA: Understood, Doctor. Keep me apprised.

JARLAR (VOICE): I'll do my best. Jaylar out.

EVANS: What is subatomic radiation?

PARSON: Subatomic radiation effects both organic and inorganic material, deadly to us within minutes of exposure at high levels. Because it's subatomic no shielding can protect you from it.

EVANS: What causes it?

PARSON: Unknown. It has only ever been found in nebulas until now.

NATASHA: Let's hope we don't see it again.

- Captain's Ready Room -

(Eight days into slipstream and Commander Sath and Lieutenant Tuss call at the Captain's Ready Room)

NATASHA: Come in.

SATH: Captain, Lieutenant Tuss and I have been doing some

research and believe we may be able to create a network along our path enabling us to get better scans of the areas where we have stopped.

TUSS: By modifying a subspace antenna and linking it to the arrays it should give us a detailed layout of the systems for our return to Federation space. We would need to modify and deploy one for every stop we make to recalibrate the core.

NATASHA: Sounds interesting. However, not knowing what to expect at each stop is a little unsettling. This would at least give us some warning. Make it so.

TUSS: Captain, I have made some progress in the core calibrations as well. I believe we will only need to make two or three more stops before we reach the Marilian System.

NATASHA: Very good. *(to Sath)* Commander, did you complete your analysis of the system we stopped at? Any indication what caused the sudden increase in radiation?

SATH: Yes, Captain. The shock wave we encountered was the result of a solar collapse of a nearby system. The debris in the shock wave composed of components from several different planets and gas giants. The combination of all the mixed matter resulted in subatomic radiation as a bi-product.

NATASHA: Hopefully our next stop will be less eventful.

SATH: Well, we know the region has some kind of

indigenous life; that probe was quite sophisticated. I went over the sensor data and found it was not just looking for materials, it was also seeding plant life.

NATASHA: Terraforming?

SATH: In a way, yes, but using this method will take a long time. The probe seeks out planets with specific conditions and seeds basic plant life to slowly transform the planet over a period of around 300 years.

NATASHA: Interesting. Thank you both.

(Sath and Tuss both nod and leave)

-Bridge -

(Natasha is in the Captain's chair when the ship begins to shimmer with vibrations)

NATASHA: Bridge to Engineering, report.

TUSS (VOICE): Captain, we're getting power fluctuations in the deflector which is destabilising the slipstream. I'm attempting to redirect additional power to stabilise.

SATH: Better make it quick! Hull stress is increasing rapidly.

(Within minutes the ship stabilises)

NATASHA: Well done, Lieutenant. What caused that?

TUSS (VOICE): One of the primary EPS conduits

malfunctioned causing a severe energy drain.

NATASHA: Is there any way to prevent it from happening again?

TUSS (VOICE): Negative, Captain. The Slipstream requires a lot of power and its putting a lot of strain on the primary systems.

NATASHA: Understood. Do what you can. Riker out.

SATH: It would appear that Slipstream is still not yet ready for general purpose use in Starfleet.

HAMMOND: I just hope we get home.

NATASHA: You and me both. How far are we from our next stop?

HAMMOND: According to the computer we have six days, eight hours.

SATH: The first subspace array is almost ready. Tuss is running some final diagnostics, and you know how he likes to be thorough in his work.

- Engineering -

(With sixteen hours to go Sath and Tuss are in engineering working on the subspace array.)

TUSS: Hand me that hypo-spanner.

SATH: You have adjusted the power regulator 3 times now.

It's ready.

TUSS: If my calculations are off by even 3%, building this array will have been for nothing. The power to the receiver must be the same as the other arrays for them to link together.

SATH: (*taps his comm. badge*) Commander Sath to the Bridge.

NATASHA (VOICE): Riker here.

SATH: Captain Tuss has completed the array and will be ready to deploy when we arrive.

NATASHA (VOICE): Understood, Mr Tuss how long will you need to set up the array once it's deployed?

TUSS: It will take at least two days to fully align the array into the link. I would prefer to complete the core calibrations as a priority first, Captain.

NATASHA (VOICE): Agreed, Ensign Evans and Commander Sath will see to the array's deployment until the core is calibrated. Riker out.

(A Quantum vortex opens and Titan arrives)

NATASHA: (*Natasha stands up out of her chair staring at the view screen*) Is the view screen on?

PARSON: Yes Captain, but there seems to be no stars, planets... anything. It would appear we have entered a void in space.

NATASHA: It's like a space ghost town.

PARSON: Captain, long range sensors are detecting a weak distress call from a ship.

NATASHA: Where?

PARSON: Bearing 318.6.

NATASHA: On screen.



PARSON: sensors show minimal weapons complement, the hull design suggests a scout type vessel.

NATASHA: Life signs?

PARSON: Three.

NATASHA: Helm, set a course to intercept.

SATH: Captain, permission to launch the array? It is set to automatically begin deploying once launched.

NATASHA: Go ahead, and then ready an away team.

(The array is launched and Titan moves to intercept)

PARSON: Captain, the ship's life support is failing and several decks are inaccessible due to hull breaches.

NATASHA: Understood. (*Taps comm. badge*) Bridge to transporter room.

SATH (VOICE): Sath here.

NATASHA: Commander, proceed with caution. Life support is failing and several decks are a vacuum. Get in, do what you can and get back.

- Transporter Room -

SATH: Acknowledged, Captain. Sath out. (*taps comm. badge*) You two ready?

EVANS: Ready to go.

JAYLAR: Ready, Commander.

SATH: (*looks at the transporter operator*) Energise.

- On board the alien vessel -

(*Sath pull out his tricorder and begins scanning*)

SATH: Life support is at 12% we don't have much time. I'm detecting three life signs near the Bridge. Let's go.

(*The away team heads towards the life signs down the damaged corridors*)

EVANS: There, Commander! I see someone!

JAYLAR: *(uses her medical tricorder to scan the victim, A three eyed humanoid with small ears ridged down to the chin and short dark hair is sitting on the floor leaning against the wall)* He's unconscious suffering from hypoxia, second degree burns and minor trauma to his left eye. He needs immediate attention.

SATH: Beam back to the ship with him. The Ensign and I will continue searching.

JAYLAR: Jaylar to Titan, two to beam directly to sickbay. *(Jaylar transports back to Titan with the injured alien)*

EVANS: Commander, the other two life signs are heading towards us.

SATH: Set your phaser to stun. We don't know how they will react when they see us.

EVANS: Aye.

SATH: *(shouts out)* I'm commander Sath of the USS Titan! We're responding to your distress call! We're here to help you!

(A weak voice calls out)

ALIEN: Please help us.

(An alien appears out of the darkness helping his crewmate to walk with him)

ALIEN: My name is Kataya and this is Meraki. Please, we

need to leave this ship. Life support is failing and the air is becoming toxic!

SATH: (*taps comm. badge*) Sath to Titan. We have found the other two survivors. Four to transport.

(*Sath, Evans and the two aliens transport to Titan*)

- Sickbay -

(*Natasha walks into sickbay while talking to Commander Sath*)

NATASHA: So, Starfleet feared the worse when we didn't report in before we went back into slipstream.

SATH: Now that they know about the problems with the drive is the USS Odyssey still going to have one fitted?

NATASHA: Yes, but only for research and development of the drive. The Odyssey's mission has been put on hold until the drive can be perfected. (*Natasha looks at the alien sitting on the med-bed*) Hello, I'm Captain Riker of the Federation Starship Titan.

KATAYA: I'm Kataya, First Officer of the Explorer Kitu. This is my science officer, Meraki, and he is Gerri our engineer.

NATASHA: What happened to you?

KATAYA: We were searching for a new home for our people

when we came across an Ion Storm. We did our best to outrun it but it was too fast.

NATASHA: You were looking for a new home?

KATAYA: Yes. Several years ago our home world began to die when our sun started to collapse, our ships are not fast and with limited resources we built smaller ships like the Kitu to search for a new home while our people evacuate to larger ships.

NATASHA: How long have you been searching?

KATAYA: We have been searching for seven years. Our people now live on large colony ships waiting for one of our search crews to find a new home, and we're not alone.

SATH: Not alone?

KATAYA: It would seem many species in the region have lost their home worlds due to the collapse of their sun.

SATH: Any idea what's causing it?

KATAYA: No, but every time a system's sun fades the darkness grows.

NATASHA: The darkness? You mean the void?

SATH: It is safe to assume that this void is the result of these collapsing suns. But what about the planets? Where do they go?

KATAYA: They are mined for whatever resources can be gained before the sun collapses. When the sun does fully

collapse it produces a shockwave that destroys everything. The sun becomes a singularity pulling in all stellar matter and leaving nothing but the “void” as you call it.

SATH: Captain, there is a high probability that this is the cause of the Marilian distress call.

NATASHA: Do you know of the Marilians?

KATAYA: No. They're not a species I've heard of, but there are many species that have lost their homes. It's hard to keep track of them all.

SATH: Captain, I believe once the array is up and running we could use it to retransmit the Kitu distress call over a very large distance and maybe find another one of their ships.

NATASHA: Make it so.

KATAYA: Can you not help us? This ship seems very fast. Do you not know of any world that we could use?

NATASHA: I'm sorry but our knowledge of this region is very limited as our propulsion system limits our sensor capabilities.

KATAYA: I see. We appreciate your assistance, Captain.

NATASHA: You're welcome. I wish we could do more but we have our own mission to complete.

KATAYA: What is this array that your commander spoke of?

NATASHA: It's part of a network relay we're going to use to

help plot our course home after our mission is completed.

KATAYA: Be aware, Captain. There are a lot of scavengers in this region. Someone might come and take it for parts.

NATASHA: Hopefully not as we will be too far away to do anything about it. Commander Sath, please escort our guests to quarters as soon as the doctor has finished. I must get back to the Bridge.

SATH: Aye, Captain.

(Natasha leaves sickbay)

- Bridge -

(Tuss and Evans are both working at the operations station on the array's configuration)

TUSS: Captain, we have aligned the array and are ready to begin sending test signals into the link.

NATASHA: Very well, proceed. Lieutenant Parson any sign of our guest's other ships?

PARSON: Negative, Captain. I have been transmitting their distress call on all frequencies. Once the array is complete I will be able to send a much stronger signal.

TUSS: Test signal complete. The array has established a connection to the link.

PARSON: Incoming transmission from Memory Alpha,

audio only.

RIKER (VOICE): Titan this is Memory Alpha. We have received your test signal and have a stable connection.

Intriguing idea, Captain, using subspace arrays like a sensor net. We're receiving telemetry of your current position. We are detecting two vessels.

PARSON: Confirmed. Captain, sensors are extended now we're connected to the array. I believe one of the vessels is the same configuration as the Kitu. I'm relaying the distress call to them.

EVANS: I wonder who the other ship belongs to.

NATASHA: Kataya did say there were others looking for a new home. Maybe it's another scout.

PARSON: Captain, the ship has altered course and is heading this way.

NATASHA: Looks like our guest's stay will be very brief. Send the ship a message that we have assisted and found three survivors from the Kitu.

PARSON: Transmission sent. At their present speed the ships will be here in two days.

NATASHA: Tuss, is the core ready for our departure?

TUSS: Affirmative, Captain. We can leave at any time.

NATASHA: (*taps comm. badge*) Bridge to Commander Sath.

SATH (VOICE): Sath here.

NATASHA: Commander, please inform our guests that we believe we have established contact with one of their ships and they're on their way.

SATH (VOICE): Understood.

NATASHA: Also, please inform the crew that we will be entering slipstream in two days.

SATH: Will do, Captain.

NATASHA: Bridge out. (*taps comm. badge*)

- Natasha's Quarters -

(Titan is back in slipstream. Natasha is recording a log entry while stargazing out of the window)

NATASHA: Captain's log. Stardate 86620.3. Titan's first mission has so far proven that slipstream will soon become part of the Federation's propulsion technology standard, though according to Chief Engineer Tuss, extreme distances would be dangerous and the safest course of action for this type of propulsion will be more for high speed short burst travel. Unfortunately, this means our mission to the Gamma Quadrant has been more eventful than we hoped and the crew seems very much on edge. We, at least, have made some friends out here, the Unani, a race among many

crossing the void in small ships trying to find a new home when the void formed as a result of stars breaking down. After rescuing the Unani from their ship we were able to contact their people and left them to continue their own mission, I do wish we could have done more but our primary mission must take priority. Computer, end log.

(Computer beeps)



Captain Natasha Troi Riker

END OF PART TWO

PART THREE

- Recreation lounge -

(Eleven Days into Slipstream. Natasha, Simon Parson and Tamera Jaylar are in the recreation lounge when the ship shakes and shudders. Red Alert is sounded. Commander Sath's calls on the comm.)

SATH (VOICE): All hands, red alert!! Captain to the Bridge!

PARSON: Now, what?

NATASHA: We need to get to the Bridge.

(All crew members in the lounge hurry to their stations)

- Bridge -

(Natasha and Parson run on to the Bridge)

NATASHA: REPORT!

SATH: Captain, we're getting reports from all over the ship. Power replays overloads, grav plating on decks 5,6,8 and 12 off-line, four people have reported to sickbay with injuries and the warp core temperate is rising to dangerous levels!

NATASHA: *(taps her comm. badge)* Bridge to Engineering.

What's going on?

TUSS (VOICE): Captain, we're detecting subatomic particles within the slipstream vortex. It's overloading our power systems and disabling the core.

NATASHA: Options?

TUSS: The region of space we are passing through must be filled with subatomic radiation. I'm going to try firing a nadian pulse through the deflector. If my theory is correct it will repel most of the particles around the ship.

NATASHA: And if it doesn't work?

TUSS: Then we will see how accurate the simulations were.

JAYLAR (VOICE): Sickbay to Bridge, I've got casualties coming in from all over the ship and I also have a medical team trying to reach injured people on deck 10.

NATASHA: Commander?

SATH: A power conduit has ruptured on deck 9 cutting off all access to deck 10.

NATASHA: Bridge to Transporter Room, can you get a lock on the injured crewmen on deck 10 and beam them to sickbay?

TRANSPORTER OPERATOR (VOICE): Yes, Captain. Locking on ... transport complete.

JAYLAR (VOICE): We have them!

(A sudden explosion rocks the Bridge. Captain Riker and

Commander Sath are both thrown across the room. Parson runs over to them both.)

PARSON: (*taps comm. badge*) Parson to Sickbay, medical team to the Bridge!

HAMMOND: Sir, the vortex is destabilising! I'm losing helm control!

PARSON: Engineering report!!

TUSS (VOICE): Firing nadion pulse ... now!

(The ship suddenly shakes again)

EVANS: Sir! Another power overload, we have a hull breach, decompression on deck 11. Emergency force fields are holding.

HAMMOND: The vortex is stabilising, sir.

(Jaylar and a medical team arrive on the Bridge and run to the Captain and Commander)

JAYLAR: Captain, can you hear me? Captain?

EVANS: Engineering reports the core's temperature is dropping, sir. Lieutenant Tuss reports systems stabilising.

PARSON: Understood. Assist the doctor get them to sickbay.

- Sickbay -

(Three days later, Natasha regains consciousness.)

NATASHA: Where, where am I? What happened?

JAYLAR: Settle down, Captain, take it steady.

NATASHA: Aww, my head!

JAYLAR: Easy, Captain, you took quite the hit to the head!

NATASHA: What happened?

JAYLAR: You and the Commander were hit when a power relay overloaded. You suffered minor burns and a serious concussion.

NATASHA: The Commander?

JAYLAR: He was closer to the relay. He's still unconscious, his burns were more severe and also has a fractured wrist - nothing I can't treat. (*taps comm. badge*) Sickbay to the Bridge, the Captain has regained consciousness.

PARSON (VOICE): Thank you, Doctor. I'm on my way.

- Sickbay -

(*Parson arrives in Sickbay*)

PARSON: Captain, good to have you back!

NATASHA: What's our status?

PARSON: We suffered minor damage to the power systems. Tuss' work parties have repaired most of the damage. We have a hull breach on deck 11 which cannot be repaired in slipstream. Lieutenant Tuss reports we have a problem with the warp core injectors that he wants to see you about.

NATASHA: Great! (*sighs*) Anything else?

PARSON: We have accounted for all the crew except two. Their last reported location was the bio-labs, section 18, deck 11.

(*Jaylar injects the captain with a hypo spray*)

JAYLAR: Captain, I'm giving you a stimulant but I want you to return to Sickbay if you start to feel any nausea or dizziness.

NATASHA: No problem, Tam.

(*Natasha gingerly leaves sickbay and heads to Engineering*)

- Engineering -

TUSS: Captain, good to see you up.

NATASHA: What's this about the injectors?

TUSS: As the core overheated two of the matter-antimatter injectors cracked under all the pressure resulting in the injectors using more fuel to compensate for the leaks.

NATASHA: Can they be repaired?

TUSS: I cannot give an accurate report until we drop out of slipstream and I can examine the injectors thoroughly.

NATASHA: How do we stand?

TUSS: If the injectors are not too badly damaged I should be able to patch them up without any issues. We do have

enough supplies to build a new injector if we need to, but not two of them. I could fabricate additional parts to build a second if we can get some tritanium. I could cannibalise some from secondary systems but only as a last resort.

NATASHA: Titan has five warp core injectors. Can we not run on three?

TUSS: For warp drive we can, but only to warp 6.5. Slipstream needs at least four. If we're to make it back to Federation space we need five. We cannot calibrate the core enough times to make it back on four injectors.

NATASHA: How long until we drop back into normal space?

TUSS: Six days, 18 hours, Captain. We will need to stay in normal space longer this time. The core still has traces of subatomic particles in it that will have to be purged. The hull breach will require a few days work, and the injectors may not be an easy fix.

NATASHA: Keep me informed. I'll be on the Bridge.
(Natasha stops at Sickbay on her way to the Bridge)

- Sickbay -

NATASHA: How's he doing Tam?

JAYLAR: He's stable and going to wake up with a bad

headache. Other than that he should be up and around soon.
For now we're just letting him rest.

NATASHA: Good work.

JAYLAR: I have found something interesting, Captain.
When I have been treating the radiation burns from several
crewmembers I discovered that the radiation particles are
breaking down at an alarming rate.

NATASHA: What does that mean?

JAYLAR: This radiation, you wouldn't even know about it
unless what caused it happened very recently.

NATASHA: I don't understand.

JAYLAR: The first time we encountered the radiation was
just after a shockwave then the radiation levels climbed
rapidly.

SATH: It's the collapse of the stars.

JAYLAR: Commander?

SATH: Hey, Doc, Captain.

NATASHA: How's the head?

SATH: Feels like I went ten rounds with a Klingon!

JAYLAR: (*injects a hypo spray*) Here, this will help with the
pain. Can you sit up?

SATH: (Sits up) Thanks, Doc. Captain, I believe from what
the Doctor is saying that the collapse of a star is creating a
shockwave that emits this subatomic radiation at the same

time the star collapses into a singularity, pulling in all surrounding matter. It does not pull in the radiation because subatomic radiation exists as part of subspace.

NATAHSA: And since the radiation breaks down quickly, nothing is left behind resulting in the void.

SATH: I don't think this is a natural phenomenon, Captain.

NATASHA: What makes you say that?

SATH: Federation vessels have come across subatomic radiation before and it was not breaking down like we have seen here. Therefore, my guess is someone or something is behind this.

JAYLAR: But why would someone destroy stars?

NATASHA: Who knows? But if the Commander is right our mission might be too late.

JAYLAR: Too late?

NATASHA: The distress call said the Marilian home world was dying. There might be nothing left by the time we arrive.

SATH: No, Marilian's no Maryland.

NATASHA: Let's hope there's something when we get there.. If we get there.

SATH: Captain?

NATASHA: Come on, I'll tell you on the way to the Bridge. That is, if he can go. Tam?

JAYLAR: Any nausea or dizziness...?

NATASHA: Report back, we know.

(Natasha and Sath leave sickbay and head to the Bridge)

- Bridge -

PARSON: Captain, Commander, good to have you both back.

SATH: What's our status?

PARSON: Most of the ship's power systems have been repaired and with the deflector emitting the nadion pulse the ship seems to be stable.

EVANS: Engineering has reported that the second array is already complete and ready to deploy.

SATH: Lieutenant Tuss never seems to stop surprising me. I wonder sometimes if he ever sleeps.

(Six days later Titan prepares to drop out of slipstream where the engineering teams are awaiting to begin repairs)

HAMMOND: Captain, we are three minutes from our destination.

NATASHA: Understood. Mr Parson, raise shields. I don't want to take any chances in our current condition.

PARSON: Aye, Captain, shields up.

EVANS: The array is ready for deployment.

SATH: Let's see what's out there before we do anything.
Ensign?

EVANS: Yes, sir?

HAMMOND: Exiting slipstream in 3... 2... 1...

(Titan exits the slipstream vortex)

SATH: Now, there's a sight!

(The view screen shows a dozen ships in orbit around a planet)

PARSON: I'm detecting 14 vessels, a small space station and the planet is inhabited. Captain, we're being hailed by the station.

STATION: Unknown vessel, you have entered restricted space. Come to a complete stop and identify yourself. If you power weapons you will be fired upon.

NATASHA: Lieutenant, open a channel. This is Captain Riker of the Federation starship Titan. We are peaceful explorers.

STATION: Captain Riker, if you are peaceful then why did your ship just appear out of nowhere? And why are your defensive shields up?

NATASHA: We seem to appear out of nowhere because of the type of propulsion we use and our shields were just a precaution. To help ease tensions we will lower them.

(Natasha looks at Parson and nods to indicate to lower shields)

STATION: I am Controller Saylin of Pretara station. State your intentions, Captain.

NATASHA: We're here tracking a distress call from one of our ships.

SAYLIN: There are no lost ships here. My patrol ships would have detected it.

NATASHA: The signal is not coming from this system. We had to stop here to make repairs. Will you allow our ship to stay in this area?

SAYLIN: My fleet will monitor your ship closely. Providing you do not activate your shields or weapons I will allow it. Your crew is not to board any of our ships or this station without my permission. Is that understood?

NATASHA: Thank you, Controller. If you don't mind me asking, why you have so many ships patrolling here?

SAYLIN: We are on the lookout for a ship.

NATASHA: One ship?

SAYLIN: I can tell you're not from around here, Captain. Be warned, there is a ship that has been seen only by a handful of people. When the ship appears it does something to the suns and they begin to collapse destroying the entire system along with everyone in it. My ships stand ready to defend

our home. Pretara is one of just a few systems in this region that remain.

NATASHA: (*looks at commander Sath*) Looks like you were right, Commander.

SATH: Controller Saylin, do you have any information on who it is that's doing this and why?

SAYLIN: Those who have survived such an attack have only given us brief descriptions. We do not know who they are or why they are doing this.

NATASHA: We need to begin repairs to our ship. I need to ask you one more thing, Controller. May we deploy a subspace array here? It is to help us plot a course home after our mission.

SAYLIN: No, I'm sorry, but I cannot allow that. Such a device would be seen as a spy network.

SATH: Controller, please, we use these arrays in a link that reaches far across this quadrant so we can contact our home. You could also benefit from the array.

SAYLIN: And how would it benefit us?

SATH: The array has advanced sensors. If you would allow us to set up our array here we could tie in its sensor data to your station increasing your ability to see approaching vessels and giving you an early warning system.

SAYLIN: Hmm, I will consider it and I will have to contract

my superiors.

NATASHA: Thank you, Controller.

(The comm. channel closes)

SATH: Captain, if they don't allow us to set up the array here we will have to warp to another system out of the range of the Pretarans.

NATASHA: Agreed. I'd rather not make enemies so far away from home. Starfleet has always been about diplomacy. Even this far from home the Prime Directive still applies.

EVANS: Captain, why did Starfleet not build a biometric array at the wormhole to the Gamma quadrant near Deep Space Nine?

SATH: Because it would have violated the peace treaty accords the Federation signed with the Dominion at the end of the war.

NATASHA: Starfleet did contact them on the matter but the Dominion said no exceptions, ships may enter for scientific research and trade but no outposts, bases or stations including any type of arrays. Starfleet was allowed to keep the communications relay at the mouth of the wormhole as a means to contact the Dominion and any ships we have in the Gamma Quadrant.

PARSON: The Dominion have no interest in exploration.

Conquest was their only way until the war with the Federation ended. Captain, Controller Saylin is hailing us.

SATH: That was fast! On screen.

SAYLIN: Captain Riker, I have spoken to my superiors and they have granted permission for your array providing it is stationed at least fifty thousand kilometres from our world. They have warned that if it is suspected that the array is been used for military purposes it will be destroyed.

NATASHA: Please express our gratitude to them, Controller. Helm, set a course and inform Engineering to begin deploying the array when we're in position.

HAMMOND: Yes, Captain.

NATASHA: Controller Saylin, we will contract you when the array is ready to link up to your station's sensors.

SAYLIN: Very well, Captain.

(Comm. channel closes)

SATH: That went better than I thought.

NATASHA: At least they didn't say no.

TUSS (VOICE): Tuss to Bridge.

NATASHA: Go ahead.

TUSS: (VOICE): Captain, the injectors have been repaired but the damage is worse than predicted.

NATASHA: Do what you can, Lieutenant. We have discovered that there is a ship out there destroying stars and

there's a good chance it's the reason for the distress call from the Marilians.

SATH: Our next stop is the source of the distress call. Who knows what awaits us?

EVANS: Hopefully not more of the void. I would hate to think this has all been for nothing!

TUSS (VOICE): There's one more thing, Captain. There is a chance that the injectors won't get us all the way to Federation space. After examining all of them I've found all five of them are showing signs of severe decay.

NATASHA: What kind of chance?

TUSS (VOICE) By my calculations there is a 32% chance the injectors will fail before we reach our final destination.

EVANS: If they fail how long will it take to get home?

SATH: Anything from months to years.

TUSS (VOICE): The Commander is right. It would depend on where the injectors fail to how long it would take to reach home. We do have a spare injector, still, Captain, which increases our chances.

NATASHA: How long until all repairs are complete?

TUSS (VOICE): Deck 11 has been repressurised and the engineering crews are repairing the outer hull now but they say it will take them three more days to complete. My teams here will need two days to complete the injectors and the

core purge will be complete by the end of the day. I will keep you updated, Captain. Tuss out. (*Comm. channel closes*)

PARSON: Captain, we're in position and ready to deploy the subspace array.

NATAHSA: Make it so.

(*The array is launched and begins to align itself*)

PARSON: Successful launch, Captain. Hmm, strange.

NATAHSA: Lieutenant?

PARSON: I'm getting intermittent readings six thousand kilometres bearing 132.3 mark 67.

NATAHSA: On screen.

(*The view screen shows nothing*)

NATASHA: Lieutenant?

PARSON: I'm not sure, Captain. Sensors show something there then not there.

EVANS: A cloaked ship?

PARSON: That would be my guess as the readings are moving now at bearing 128.7 and its getting closer.

NATASHA: Hail the station.

SAYLIN: Captain Riker, is the array ready? That was quick!

NATASHA: No, we're getting readings of a possible cloaked ship. Is it one of yours?

SAYLIN: Our ships don't have cloaking technology.

NATASHA: Ensign, send our sensor reading to the station see if we can triangulate with our sensors and get a fix on what's out there. Controller, may we raise our shields as a precaution?

SAYLIN: Very well, Captain. I have six vessels also heading to your position.

PARSON: Captain! The ship is decloaking... its huge! Over sixteen hundred meters.

NATASHA: Shields to full! Analysis?

PARSON: The vessel is a large disc shaped hull with four tether points on the forward section, I'm detecting twenty two particle disrupter cannons and fourteen torpedo bays.

EVANS: The Pretaran's ships are firing on the alien vessel. *(The ship fires on the Pretaran's vessels causing serious damage and disabling two of them then alters course and warps out of the system.)*

SATH: What was that?

PARSON: We're been hailed by Controller Saylin.

NATAHSA: On screen.

SAYLIN: Captain, can you track that ship's heading?

PARSON: Negative, Captain, the ship cloaked once it went into warp.

NATASHA: Controller, is that the ship that was described to you?

SAYLIN: Yes, but I didn't expect anything so big!

PARSON: Captain, our sensor readings of the ship show over four thousand life forms aboard and the ship's power systems were off the scale.

EVANS: That ship was bigger than a Borg cube.

SAYLIN: How long has it been here?

NATASHA: It seemed very curious about us. It only decloaked when it realised we had detected it.

PARSON: The power requirement for their cloak must be enormous to be able to hide its power signature so well.

TUSS (VOICE): Engineering to Bridge. The array is in position and ready to link up to the station.

NATASHA: Understood, Commander Parson. Is it possible to modify the array's sensors to scan for that ship's power signature now we know what we were dealing with?

PARSON: I believe so, Captain, using the sensor data we have. I'm programming the parameters into the array now.

SAYLIN: Connection established, Captain. Sensor range has increased by 40%! Impressive.

PARSON: The array should detect the ship through its cloak as it gets close to the system now we know its power signature.

SAYLIN: Thank you. I feel I owe you an apology, Captain, I was...

NATASHA: I understand your position, Controller. If I was in your position I would be extremely cautious of visitors as well. Consider it forgotten.

SAYLIN: I have alerted our allies in nearby systems that the ship has been spotted and given them the information we have gained from this incident. In the short time you have been here you have given us more intel than we have been able to get in months. For this you have my people's gratitude.

NATASHA: You are welcome, Controller, we will remain at our current position to complete our repairs and contact our home for the next few days.

SAYLIN: Understood, Captain. I hope you find what you're looking for.

(The channel closes)

PARSON: Captain, we have a problem. I've been reviewing the sensor logs and part of our ship's database has been downloaded.

SATH: What? When?

PARSON: The alien vessel. Strange our sensors did not detect the remote access to our computer.

NATASHA: What did they take?

PARSON: Our navigational charts and...

SATH: Lieutenant?

PARSON: Everything on the slipstream drive, Sir?

EVANS: But why?

NATASHA: Whatever the reason, this has now become more serious. If they manage to create a stable slipstream drive then they are a threat to the entire galaxy.

END OF PART THREE

PART FOUR

- Engineering -

(Natasha and Tuss are in engineering)

TUSS: Captain, the work crews report the hull breach has been sealed and structural integrity is back to 100%. The core is fully purged and the injectors are as good as they can be.

NATASHA: Well done, Lieutenant. As soon as your teams have completed their final checks we will get underway.

(Natasha leaves engineering)

- Bridge -

PARSON: Commander, Controller Saylin is hailing.

SATH: Put him on screen. Controller, what can I do for you?

SAYLIN: Commander, our sensors are detecting a strange reading that has appeared at the edge our sensor range. Are you getting the same readings?

SATH: Lieutenant?

PARSON: Confirmed, Commander, it looks like a nebula but it wasn't there a moment ago.

(Natasha walks on to the bridge)

SATH: Captain, there's some sort of nebula just within

sensor range but it wasn't there a moment ago.

SAYLIN: If the readings are correct, the nebula is expanding.

NATASHA: Analysis of the nebula?

PARSON: Hydrogen, helium gas, concentrated pockets of plasma and solar flux radiation.

EVANS: Solar flux radiation? That's unusual for a nebula. We need to keep our distance from it, Captain. Solar flux radiation effects chromosomes in the body.

SATH: In what way?

EVANS: Different variations of solar flux radiation have different effects. In some cases it can cause rapid ageing, affect the ability to reproduce, or it can even cause the cells in our bodies to shut down - effectively killing you.

NATASHA: Is there any way to disperse it?

PARSON: Unknown, Captain, but controller Saylin is correct. It does seem to be slowly expanding.

NATASHA: Controller Saylin, I'm afraid for the moment we cannot offer any options for you and we need to be on our way. My people will continue to investigate the matter and will contact you through the array if we come up with anything.

SAYLIN: Thank you, Captain. Safe journey.

(View screen goes blank)

SATH: Engineering reports all systems ready, Captain.

NATASHA: Lieutenant Hammond, set a course for the distress call.

HAMMOND: Aye, Captain. Setting course and initiating slipstream in 3... 2... 1...

(A quantum vortex appears and Titan enters slipstream)

NATASHA: How long until we reach our destination?

HAMMOND: Ten days, Captain. This final stretch should put us at the biometric array in the Marilian system.

NATASHA: Let's hope for a warm welcome.

- Staff Briefing Room -

(Five days into slipstream and the senior staff has gathered)

NATASHA: It's been an eventful few couple of months and I'm proud of this crew's performance. We're not sure what we will find at the Marilian system, but someone sent that distress call on a Federation channel and Starfleet is still receiving it.

SATH: It does seem odd that the message has not changed in the eleven months since Starfleet first received it.

PARSON: One possibility is that whoever sent the transmission is no longer in range of the array in order to deactivate or change the message.

TUSS: That is one of many logical possibilities; it is also possible however that whoever did send the transmission has been killed by whatever disaster is affecting the Marilians.

NATASHA: Regardless of what has transpired Starfleet has sent us to investigate a Federation distress call and I intend to see it through. Commander Sath, Lieutenant Tuss, when we arrive at the biometric array you will transport aboard, reconfigure it to the link for our return journey and retrieve the coordinates of the distress call. Tam, if we make contact with the Marilians we might be looking at sending medical aid.

JAYLAR: Yes, Captain. I'll have my teams prepare emergency medical supplies.

PARSON: Captain, this could be some kind of trap.

NATASHA: I have thought of that. Work with Sath. I want you to begin running tactical drills with your security teams and run a few battle simulations as well.

PARSON: Yes, Captain.

NATASHA: We have five days until we arrive at the Marilian system. Let's make sure we're ready. Dismissed.

- Bridge -

SATH: Helm, report.

HAMMOND: Coming up on two hours, Commander.

NATASHA: What's our status?

PARSON: Engineering reports the injectors are running hot but stable. Sickbay reports their teams are ready for emergency response and emergency medical supplies are ready in cargo bay two. All security teams are in position throughout the ship and I have also placed a level ten force field around the warp core as an extra security precaution.

SATH: Never hurts to be too prepared, I guess.

NATAHSA: I'll be in my ready room. Commander, you have the bridge.

SATH: Aye, Captain.

(Natasha goes to the Captain's ready room)

NATASHA: Computer, begin log.

(Computer beeps)

NATASHA: Captains log, Stardate 86713.9. *(Natasha gets a cup of coffee from the replicator and sits at her desk)*. We're just two hours from reaching the coordinates of the biometric array that picked up the distress call. If we find the Maryland it will be interesting to find out how she got all the way out here over sixty thousand light years from Federation

space. Federation ships have encountered many anomalies which could have caused it - even the star ship Voyager was sent to the other side of the Delta Quadrant by a powerful alien space station. (*Natasha drinks from her cup*) The crew seems optimistic about our mission and are performing their duties admirably. Our slipstream drive has suffered some damage but my chief engineer is confident he can keep them running long enough to reach home. I must admit (*Natasha takes another sip*), I didn't think my first command would be to the far side of another quadrant. Being this far out from Starfleet has me on edge. I'm still not sure if I am ready for the Captain's chair, but if we find the Maryland then this mission will have been worth it. Computer, end log.

(*Computer beeps*).

(*Minutes away from the coordinates, Captain Riker walks onto the bridge*)

NATASHA: Helm, what's our status?

HAMMOND: We will reach our destination in six minutes, Captain.

NATASHA: Mr Parson?

PARSON: Shields are up, Captain.

SATH: (*opens a channel ship-wide*) All hands, this is the bridge. Report to code yellow stations.

NATASHA: Time to find out if we came all this way for

nothing.

SATH: I've been reading up on the USS Maryland. She was built in the early 2330's, and was present during the battle of Ankaata in 2333. Other than that she had a standard record of science and exploration missions until 2370 when she was recalled and refitted to modern star ship standards. Not long after her refit she was assigned to explore the Gamma quadrant using the newly discovered wormhole at Deep Space 9. In 2372 the Maryland, the USS Proxima and USS Sarajevo all disappeared. We believe they were destroyed by the Dominion as the Dominion Cold War began the following year.

HAMMOND: We're here, Captain. Dropping out of slipstream in 3... 2... 1...

(A quantum vortex opens and the Titan arrives at the Marilian system)

PARSON: Proximity alert, Captain. I'm detecting forty seven ships along with an outpost orbiting a nearby planet and a large nebula expanding across the system.

NATASHA: Let's see it.

(View screen activates)



PARSON: They're hailing us.

NATASHA: On screen.

EILU: I am Commander Eilu of the Marilian fleet. Identify yourself.

NATASHA: I'm Captain Natasha Riker of the Federation Starship Titan. We're responding to a distress call we received through our deep space array.

EILU: Federation? You mean Starfleet?

NATASHA: You know of us?

EILU: Yes, Captain. Our people came across your probe quite some time ago but didn't know what it was. Then one of our ships found a group of survivors on a planet claiming they were from your Federation. They recognized your probe's technology and altered its signal to send a distress call.

NATASHA: Survivors? How many? Where are they?

EILU: There are six of them living on the surface.

NATASHA: May we speak with them?

EILU: Of course, but in exchange I'm hoping you can help us.

NATASHA: Help you? How?

EILU: We had to evacuate two planets in this system as the nebula grew closer and destroyed the atmospheres of our worlds. Marilian Four is the last planet in our system capable of supporting life.

NATASHA: How can we help?

EILU: The nebula stopped expanding, but not before it caused some environmental problems. Some of our planet's water has been contaminated affecting our hydrogen power facilities. The planet is already overpopulated and more of my people now live aboard ships and this station.

NATASHA: We can send science and engineering teams to the surface to investigate and see if we can help.

EILU: Thank you, Captain. I will have to assign a security detail to your teams. Protocol - I hope you understand.

NATASHA: I would do the same, Commander. Can I speak to the survivors?

EILU: I will send you their coordinates, and the coordinates for your teams.

EVANS: Received coordinates, Captain.

NATASHA: Thank you, Commander. I would also like to invite you to the Titan, It is our custom to meet with new species and make first contact.

EILU: Very well, Captain. I shall transport to your ship in one hour.

(The channel closes)

SATH: Lieutenant Parson, you're with me. Let's go speak to the survivors.

NATASHA: *(taps her comm. badge)* Bridge to Engineering.

TUSS (VOICE): Tuss here.

NATASHA: I need you to put Science and Engineering teams together and take a shuttle to the planet surface. Their planet's water is contaminated and it's causing problems in their hydro power plants.

TUSS (VOICE): Understood, Captain.

NATASHA: I want you to transport to the biometric array and begin work there.

TUSS (VOICE): Captain, I request that Lieutenant Jaylar joins me she has some understanding of the biometric systems.

NATASHA: Granted.

- On the planet's surface -

(Sath and Parson beam to the coordinates of the Federation survivors)

SATH: *(looks at a man hammering wood on the side of a building)* Hello there.

MAN: Hello.

SATH: I'm Commander Sath of the USS Titan.

MAN: Starfleet?

SATH: Yes.

MAN: I can't believe it! It worked! You got our distress call!

PARSON: We did. May I ask who you are?

MAN: I'm Peter Andrews. I was an ensign on board the USS Maryland.

SATH: We were told there were six of you.

ANDREWS: Yes? Yes, they're in the house.

PARSON: Who else survived?

ANDREWS: Err. Well, there's Michael Hops, Samantha Rhea, Kelly Peterson, Robert Coop and T'Para.

(Parson looks at a data pad he bought with the Maryland's crew manifest displayed)

PARSON: Lieutenant Commander Peterson, Lieutenant Commander T'Para, Lieutenant Coop, Ensign Rhea and Ensign Hops.

ANDREWS: Well, we don't really go by rank anymore.

SATH: Can you ask them to join us? We need to return to Titan. Our captain will want to talk to you all.

ANDREWS: Of course! I can't believe it, we can go home!
(*Andrews hurries to the house*)

- Bridge -

(*A voice comes on the comm.*)

SATH (VOICE): Commander Sath to Titan.

NATASHA: Titan here.

SATH (VOICE): Captain, we have made contact with the survivors. They are from the Maryland, five humans and a Vulcan. We will beam up to the ship shortly.

NATASHA: Understood, Commander. Have them brought to the briefing room.

SATH (VOICE): Yes, Captain, Sath out.

EILU: Good news?

NATASHA: Very. To be honest, I wasn't expecting to find any survivors.

EILU: To find your people this far from their homes is very improbable. Do you have any idea how they got this far?

NATASHA: Not yet were still researching.

EILU: Your ship is impressive, Captain. I will speak to my

government about your proposal to open a dialogue between our people but I'm afraid its time for me to get back. I have things to attend to.

NATASHA: Thank you. If they agree my people will show you how to maintain the array. Let me walk you to the transporter room.

(Commander Eilu transports back to the station and Natasha goes to the staff briefing room to meet with the survivors)

- Staff Briefing Room -

NATASHA: Hello, I'm Captain Riker. Welcome aboard the Titan.

PETERSON: Hello, Captain. Thank you for coming for us. Your ship is incredible!

NATASHA: Thank you. Please sit down. I have a few questions for you.

(Everyone takes a seat around the table)

NATASHA: How long have you been here?

T'PARA: Thirty-six years it has been since our ship was pulled into the anomaly.

NATASHA: Please tell me what happened.

T'PARA: I was on the bridge at my science station when our

ship detected an extremely large vessel hiding behind the star in the Pekara system. When we got closer to scan the ship I discovered it was using a graviton pulse with a trilitium signature aimed at the star.

SATH: Any idea what it was doing?

T'PARA: The ship seemed to be absorbing solar energy in large quantities. When we hailed the ship it ignored us. As we approached them they attacked us. Our captain ordered to target its weapon systems only.

PETERSON: Next thing we know a solar flare struck the alien vessel. Its pulse beam overloaded and the sun imploded.

T'PARA: A subspace rift opened and both of our ships were pulled in. The captain ordered the crew to abandon ship. The last time I saw the Maryland was through the window of my escape pod. The ship was so damaged it was logical to presume that many lives were lost as many sections were open to space.

SATH: What about the alien ship?

RHEA: I saw the alien ship from my pod. It looked like it was adrift in space.

PETERSON: We all detected a class M moon nearby and headed there and managed to survive there for over thirty years before we were found.

T'PARA: I was able to couple the escape pod's transceivers together to amplify the transponder signal but no one came until the Marilians found us. We lived among them and began to settle in to our new lives until just over a year ago. They requested our help to evacuate their planets when the nebula expanded.

PETERSON: After that, the Marilians began to treat us like their own and not refugees. They even let us help them modify their hydro power systems to try and cope with the increased population.

RHEA: A year ago the Marilian government contacted us asking if we recognized the markings on a satellite that was passing through the system. They helped Kelly and I get aboard the probe. We shut down the propulsion systems and placed our escape pod's distress signal in its transmitter hoping Starfleet would hear it.

NATASHA: And here we are!

SATH: Incredible. Do you know the last known location of the Maryland?

PETERSON: The Marilians told us one of their scout ships came across it shortly after finding us. They will have the coordinates. From what they told us, Captain, there's nothing left.

NATASHA: Thank you. I will contact them for the

coordinates. Starfleet's orders are to bring you back with us if you wish, but before we can go anywhere we are assisting them any way we can with their environmental problems. Commander Sath will show you to your quarters. You all have a big decision to make, The Marilians see no issue if you wish to stay on the planet or you can come back to the Federation.

- Bridge -

(Natasha walks onto the bridge)

NATASHA: Ensign, open a channel to the station.

EVANS: Channel open, Captain.

NATASHA: Commander Eilu, this is Captain Riker of the Titan.

(View screen activates)

EILU: Yes, Captain?

NATASHA: Commander, the survivors of the Maryland have informed me that your scout ships found their ship. Do you still have its location?

EILU: I believe so, Captain. I will have them sent to your ship. Have your teams had any success?

NATASHA: We have not heard anything yet Commander, but with your permission I would like to let them continue their work while we search for the Maryland.

EILU: Very well, but there isn't much left to find from what I'm told, Captain. Safe travels.

(Channel closes)

EVANS: We're receiving the coordinates.

NATASHA: Ensign, inform our landing party where we're going and contact the array. We're going to need Tuss and Tam for this one.

EVANS: Aye, Captain.

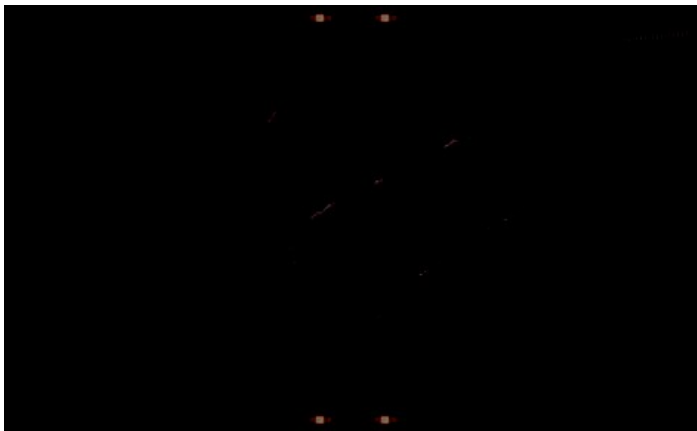
NATASHA: Helm, when they're back on board set a course for the Maryland's location.

(Tuss and Jaylar beam back to the Titan reporting their work completed and Titan jumps to warp)

END OF PART FOUR

PART FIVE

(The Titan arrives three days later at the coordinates and find what's left of the Maryland)



SATH: Analysis?

PARSON: Decks 1 to 6 on the bow are gone and decks 9 to 13 are blocked. The engineering decks are accessible, Sir.

NATASHA: Suit up, Commander.

SATH: You're with me, Lieutenant.

PARSON: Yes, Sir.

(Sath and Parson leave the bridge and prepare to transport to the Maryland in environmental suits)

- USS Maryland, Engineering section -

(Sath and Parson beam into the ship's engineering section and look around)

PARSON: Looks like one of the coolant tanks blew, Commander.

SATH: See if you can find a data terminal that isn't damaged. If we connect our power module into the power relays we should be able to download the ship's sensor data.

PARSON: I found one, Sir. It appears to be intact and the power is stable.

SATH: Can you download the logs?

PARSON: I have access, but some of the data is fragmented. The computers onboard Titan may be able to repair some of the damaged files.

TUSS (VOICE): Tuss to Commander Sath.

(Sath answers the comm.)

SATH: Sath here.

TUSS (VOICE): Commander, can you do a detailed scan of the engineering systems for me?

SATH: Of course. I'll link up my tricorder so you can download the data as I scan.

TUSS (VOICE): Received, Tuss out.

(Channel closes)

PARSON: What does Tuss want with scans of this old engine room for?

SATH: Who knows? Sometimes I think he enjoys his job too much.

PARSON: He's Vulcan. He doesn't enjoy anything.

SATH: Yes, they do. They just hide it under all that Vulcan logic.

PARSON: Do you not like Vulcans, Sir?

SATH: No, no it's not that. They just get to me sometimes with all that smug Vulcan attitude.

PARSON: I have the data, Sir.

SATH: Ok. *(opens a comm. channel)* Sath to Titan.

NATASHA (VOICE): Go ahead, Commander.

SATH: Captain, we have downloaded the ship's sensor data and we're ready to beam back.

NATASHA: Good to hear, Commander. Prepare for transport.

(Sath and Parson transport back to the Titan)

- Bridge -

EVANS: Captain, what is to become of the Maryland?

NATASHA: Starfleet's directive is clear on ships adrift that cannot be salvaged; we're to destroy her.

(Sath and Parson enter the bridge)

SATH: We have uploaded the data into the ship's computer, Captain. The Maryla...

(The ship shakes hard with the sound of explosions)

SATH: Shields up! Red Alert!!

PARSON: Captain it's the alien vessel. It's decloaked off the port bow and opened fire.

NATASHA: Evasive manoeuvres. Return fire!

PARSON: Firing phasers.

EVANS: Captain, shields are down to 42% and we have hull breaches on decks 8, 12, 16 and 17.

PARSON: The enemy vessel's shields are at 94%. I'm looking for a weakness but nothing so far.

SATH: Lieutenant, concentrate your fire just above the thruster's exhaust vent. That relay connects power to the ship's sensors.

PARSON: Target locked. Launching torpedoes.

NATASHA: Report.

PARSON: Their sensor array has been damaged, Captain. They can't get a lock on us.

NATASHA: Get us out of here before they get it back online.

HAMMOND: Aye, Captain. Setting course for the Marilian System.

(Titan warps out of the system)

NATASHA: What's our status?

EVANS: We have casualty reports from multiple decks, Captain. We have lost aft phasers, long range sensors, and primary power to decks 12 to 18.

NATASHA: *(taps her comm. badge)* Bridge to Engineering. Bridge to Engineering, respond.

EVANS: Captain, there's a hull breach in Engineering. I'm not reading any life signs in that section.

JAYLAR (VOICE): Sickbay to bridge.

NATASHA: Go ahead.

JAYLAR (VOICE): Captain, I have Lieutenant Tuss and six others from Engineering here with severe injuries.

NATASHA: Understood. Riker out. *(taps comm. badge)* Commander Sath, I need you to organise the repair teams.

SATH: On my way, Captain.

(Sath leaves the bridge)

NATASHA: Lieutenant, I need you to go over the Maryland's sensor data see what you can find out about that ship. We were lucky to escape this time. I doubt we will be so lucky next time.

PARSON: Aye, Captain.

NATASHA: Keep are shields up until we reach the Marilian system, Mister Parson you have the bridge.

(Natasha walks to the turbo lift)

PARSON: Where are you going, Captain?

NATASHA: Sickbay.

(The turbo lift doors close)

- Sickbay –

(Natasha walks into sickbay and asks a nurse where Dr Jaylar is)

NURSE: She's in there, Captain *(She points towards the ship's surgery)* with Engineer Tuss, I don't think they will be out for a while Ma'am.

NATASHA: How many were injured?

NURSE: We have twenty two crew here. Three of them have critical injuries, including Engineer Tuss, and we also have medical teams spread throughout the ship.

(Suddenly there's a scream from surgery. Natasha and the nurse run in.)

NATASHA: *(Finding Jaylar on the floor with another doctor helping her up)* Tam? Are you OK?

JAYLAR: Captain, I'm sorry.

NATASHA: Sorry?

JAYLAR: There was nothing I could do, his injuries were too severe.

NATASHA: No... *(Natasha looks over Tuss)*

JAYLAR: *(tears in her eyes)* He was so nice to me when I

first came on board, we had become friends. It's not fair!

NATASHA: *(with a quiet voice)* It never is. *(Natasha walks out)*

- Bridge -

PARSON: *(taps his comm. badge)* Parson to Riker, I need to speak with you. I've found something you need to see.

NATASHA (VOICE): I'm on my way to the bridge.

PARSON: Understood, Parson out. *(taps his comm. badge)*
(Natasha arrives on the bridge)

NATASHA: What have you found?

PARSON: Captain, I've been going over the sensor logs from the Maryland. The computer could not repair all of it but we now have some detailed scans of the alien vessel.

NATASHA: Detailed scans? How did the Maryland get detailed scans?

PARSON: The ship was scanning even during the battle. The scans show that a malfunction in the ship's graviton pulse triggered by the weapons fire destabilised the sun's core breaking down all fusion. The alien ship was struck by a solar flare, disabling it. Within seconds, the sun collapsed forming an unstable singularity which both the alien ship and the Maryland were pulled into. The Maryland's sensors

were still running scans and at this point the alien's shields had failed allowing detailed scans.

NATASHA: Do the scans show how many crew members made it off the ship?

PARSON: The logs show twelve escape pods were launched, Captain.

NATASHA: Twelve, then where are the other six?

PARSON: Six were launched just before the ship entered the singularity - their escape pods would not have survived the gravitational forces.

NATASHA: The Maryland barely made it through.

PARSON: This is the most interesting part, Captain. The alien ship's internal environmental composition, hydrogen, helium gas, plasma and solar flux radiation, sound familiar.

NATASHA: The nebula!

PARSON: And the life forms aboard, Captain, they're anionic energy based life forms. The sensor logs of their ship show that the ship produces the nebula and I believe that's why it is collecting energy from the suns.

NATASHA: They're transforming space because they cannot survive in ours.

PARSON: It seems both the ship and the life forms are able to move through the altered space at incredible speeds.

That's why we saw one of these ships in the Pretara system,

Captain. It's the same one. It's possible it's been following us, maybe even trying to stop us.

EVANS: Stop us how? When we were in the Pretara system it flew right by us without firing a single shot at us.

PARSON: They were being pursued by the Patrol ships and they did access our computer's information, including the slipstream specifications.

NATASHA: When we first came into the Gamma Quadrant we had to leave quickly after the shockwave and the increase in subatomic radiation.

PARSON: I believe that was the alien ship's attempt to make us leave, Captain. I am only speculating but after their engagement with the Maryland they probably see all Starfleet vessels as a threat as the Maryland was able to fully disable their ship unintentionally by using their own technology against them.

NATASHA: Why did they want the slipstream technology?

PARSON: Curiosity as to how we escaped their attack, I guess.

HAMMOND: Captain, we will arrive at the Marilian system in two days, twenty one hours.

NATASHA: Very well, Lieutenant. Have you found anything that will help us defend against that ship?

PARSON: Only that the ship's shields are weakened for a

short period of time when they decloak due to its sheer size.

NATASHA: It's a start. Keep at it.

PARSON: Captain? Are you alright? You seem distracted.

NATASHA: We've lost Lieutenant Tuss. There was nothing the doctor could do.

(Parson looks down saddened by the news)

EVANS: Captain, Commander Evans has reported in. Eight people are unaccounted for and the engineering teams should have structural integrity stable within the hour.

- Titan arrives at the Marilian System –

EVANS: Commander Eilu is hailing us, Captain.

NATASHA: On screen.

(View screen activates)

EILU: Captain, what happened? Do you require assistance?

NATASHA: Commander, inform your patrols the alien ship is in the vicinity. We barely escaped.

EILU: I will inform them immediately. What's your status?

NATASHA: We have multiple hull breaches, a few primary systems offline and we lost eight crewmen.

EILU: I'm sorry to hear that. Please contact me if we can be of any assistance.

NATASHA: Thank you, Commander. Riker out.

(Channel closes, Sath enters the bridge)

SATH: Captain, repairs are progressing slowly as decks 12 and 13 are completely inaccessible, cutting us off from half of the ship. We have managed to get engineering repressurised. We beamed in repair teams and they are sealing the hull breaches now.

NATASHA: Damage?

SATH: The warp core's force field held so the core is undamaged. However, the plasma coolant tanks were damaged in the attack causing the injectors to overheat when we escaped.

NATASHA: Meaning?

SATH: I'm sorry, Captain, the injectors are so damaged I don't think we can risk attempting slipstream. Best we can do is warp 7. The biometric deflector was also damaged but that can be repaired.

NATASHA: I'll inform the crew.

(Titan remains in orbit over Marilian Four conducting repairs while on alert for the alien ship)

- Natasha's quarters -

(Natasha is talking with her father on the comm. panel)

NATASHA: I'm sorry, Dad. I.. I'm not ready for command.

RIKER: No, Natasha, I'm sorry, I'm the one who sent you out there. This is my fault.

NATAHSA: *(crying)* I just wanted to make you and Mom proud of me.

RIKER: We will always be proud of you, no matter what. I will contact the families of the lost crew. I know Tuss' family. I will speak to them personally. He was a promising engineer and a good friend.

(A voice comes over the comm.)

KELSAR: Doctor Kelsar to Captain Riker.

NATASHA: Go ahead, Doctor.

KELSAR: Doctor Jaylar failed to report for duty sir. When I went to find her I found her unconscious in her quarters. We're treating her now in sickbay.

NATASHA: I'm on my way. I've got to go Dad.

RIKER: Natasha, remember, command isn't just about giving orders. It's about making hard decisions and being able to keep going even when everything pushes against you. The strength of a Captain is to lead others to push back against the unknown and to overcome it. You will know when you're ready. Don't try to do everything, Natasha. You chose your crew for their experience. Give them a chance to show you what they can do and they will learn to trust you as their commander.

(Natasha is cheered up by her father's words)

NATASHA: I will, Dad. Bye!

(Channel closes, and Natasha goes to Sickbay)

- Sickbay -

NATASHA: How's Tam?

KELSAR: She's regained consciousness.

NATASHA: What happened?

KELSAR: Just before Lieutenant Tuss died he grabbed Dr Jaylar's head. I quickly helped pull her away and then she screamed and fell to the floor. We thought nothing of it as people sometimes do strange things when their bodies are shutting down.

NATASHA: Obviously, it wasn't that simple.

(Riker moves over to Jaylar who looks up at her quizzically.)

JAYLAR: No, it wasn't. I have been seeing flashes of images but I can't make sense of them.

KELSAR: She's suffering the effects of a Vulcan mind meld, Captain. I've given her a dose of lexorin to alleviate the symptoms but I can't do any more without causing neurological damage.

NATASHA: Do what you can, Doc. You're Acting Chief Medical Officer until further notice.

KELSAR: Aye, Captain.

- Captain's Ready Room -

(Natasha, Sath and Parson are discussing their situation)

SATH: Repairs will take at least another week, Captain. The Marilians have sent us some food supplies in exchange for medical supplies and our science team managed to find a way to begin reversing the nebula's effects on their water supply, but it will take a few months before it is fully reversed.

NATASHA: What caused the problem?

SATH: The solar flux radiation caused a mutation in protein strands of the planet's underwater plant life which then began to multiply. Once our teams identified the specific strand they were able to synthesize a treatment.

PARSON: I've gone over everything we have on the alien ship, Captain, and the only real weaknesses it has is its vulnerable shields when it decloaks. Also, its targeting array is limited - although its weapons are powerful the ship is not designed to fight off a major attack from multiple ships.

SATH: That would explain why it has not engaged the ships at Pretara or Marilian. They're guarded from attack due to the size of their force.

NATASHA: So, strength in numbers. Shame we're so far from Starfleet.

PARSON: Maybe we don't need Starfleet, Captain. If we tell the Marilians what we have learned we may be able to organise a counter offensive to stop this ship from destroying more systems and killing billions.

SATH: The ship does seem intent on attacking anyone who approaches and ignores all communications, but we may be able to get their attention.

NATASHA: How would we do that?

SATH: By using their tactic of attacking us when were on our own, Mr Parson said they don't like us much after their conflict with the Maryland.

PARSON: I was only speculating, but it might work, Captain.

NATASHA: OK, let's contract the Marilians first and see if they think it's worth a try.

- Bridge -

(Natasha is talking with Commander Eilu)

EILU: I'm sorry, Captain, but from what you have told me my people are safer with the fleet protecting our home. If the fleet were to leave we risk endangering everyone on the

surface.

NATASHA: Commander, we're not asking you to commit your entire fleet, just a few ships to...

EILU: I'm sorry, Captain, you have my answer. I will not risk the lives of my people. I'm sorry.

(Channel closes)

SATH: So much for that.

EVANS: What do we do now?

NATASHA: For now we continue repairs. I'm open to any suggestions. Commander Eilu seems to believe that while his fleet is here his people are safe. As soon as the Nebula expands in this direction again it could destroy this world. We cannot help them on our own and we cannot head back to Federation space with damaged injectors.

(Everyone is silent)

NATASHA: Commander, let me know when all repairs are complete. You have the bridge.

SATH: Yes, Captain.

(Natasha leaves the bridge)

- Staff Recreation Lounge -

(Natasha is sitting staring out the window at the stars trying to think of a solution. Jaylar walks in and sits by her)

JAYLAR: Natasha?

NATAHSA: Tam, should you be out of sickbay?

JAYLAR: Being a patient in my own sickbay is driving me crazy and first chance I get I'm having it redecorated.

NATASHA: *(laughs)* That bad, huh? Seriously, though, how are you feeling?

JAYLAR: It comes and goes. I can make sense of some of it.

NATASHA: Like what?

JAYLAR: I keep seeing images of the warp core and the injectors. Other images just flash in and out and I get the feeling they mean something.

NATASHA: Engineering was important to Tuss so it's understandable that they mean something.

JAYLAR: No, I mean, I don't think this was an accident. I think Tuss meant to give me these memories.

(T'Para overhears the conversation and walk over to them)

T'PARA: It is possible that he gave you some of his memories, Doctor. Vulcans are able to pass on memories before they die so it can be taken back to their families. We call it our Katra.

NATASHA: Can you help her?

T'PARA: I believe I may be able to help you make sense of the memories through a mind meld.

JAYLAR: I already have the memory of three Trill hosts before me and now I have a Vulcan, too? *(She looks*

worried) What would I have to do?

T'PARA: Nothing. I would initiate the meld and guide you through the memories. Would you like me to try?

JAYLAR: Tuss wanted me to have these memories and I want to know why.

(Jaylar agrees and T'Para mind melds with her)

- Captain's Ready Room -

(Natasha is at her desk reading reports when the door beeps)

NATASHA: Enter.

(Jaylar and T'Para walk in)

JAYLAR: Captain, with T'Para's help I know what the memories mean.

T'PARA: It seems Tuss was working on alternate options prior to the attack.

JAYLAR: There may be a way to restore the ship's engines!

NATASHA: How?

JAYLAR: Tuss had the away team scan the Maryland's engineering systems including its warp core injectors. Injector technology has not changed much in the last fifty years, and with a few modifications they should be compatible with the Titan's systems.

NATASHA: Would they be able to get us all the way back to Federation Space?

JAYLAR: No, they weren't designed to handle the amount of pressure from the slipstream drive long enough to get us home.

T'PARA: There maybe another option, Captain. Federation space is over sixty thousand light years away, but the wormhole to the Bajoran system is only thirty three thousand light years away.

NATASHA: We have no way of getting to the wormhole. The Dominion would not allow us to put a Biometric array in their space.

T'PARA: Commander Sath told me after the Cold War the Dominion do allow science ships, Captain. A ship would not be able to produce a biometric signal over such a long distance continuously but it could transmit one pulse, precise timed, for us to detect and home in on.

JAYLAR: There would be no margin for error, Captain. We would have to allow for time to recalibrate the core between each stop, and we will be unable to contact Starfleet. If we miss our window or the slipstream malfunctions along the way we will lose the signal and be stuck at warp speed only to get back to the wormhole.

NATASHA: How long would it take to remove the injectors

from the Maryland?

JAYLAR: I would need to connect a portable power unit to the release mechanism before I can open the locking controls, then normally about two hours to safely disconnect them, but in an environmental suit it will take longer.

NATASHA: Who said you're going? You should be in sick bay.

JAYLAR: I am a qualified engineer as well as a doctor and now I have Tuss's memories it makes me the logical choice.

NATASHA: Logical choice? Now you even sound like Tuss!

T'PARA: Although she has his katra, Captain, she is not ill. She has the memories of two engineers. Being a Trill gives her the unique experience of dealing with memories of another.

JAYLAR: There is no one else on the ship that can get this done as quickly as me. Please, Captain.

NATASHA: No. For now you're still adjusting to these memories and I'm not authorising any away mission for the time being.

T'PARA: If not Jaylar, Captain, then I would be the next logical choice.

NATASHA: I have a feeling that ship would return long before either of you would be finished. We need to find a way to keep them distracted. I'll have the senior staff meet

in the briefing room in one hour. T'Para, I would like you and the others from the Maryland to join us.

T'PARA: What help could we be, Captain? To us, Starfleet was over thirty years ago.

NATASHA: My father taught me a “Captain’s strength is to lead, but a leader must rely on the experience of those under their command and not to try and do everything alone.” It is your experience, T'Para, and the experience of my own crew working together that will see us through.

T'PARA: Unconventional, but logical. I will inform the others.

NATASHA: And T'Para, when this is all over if you decide that you would like to come back with us I thought you should all know that I will be recommending to Starfleet to have you all reinstated.

T'PARA: Thank you, Captain.

(T'Para and Jaylar leave)

- Staff Briefing Room -

NATASHA: I have called you all here to see if we can figure out a way to retrieve the warp core injectors from the Maryland. The problem is time. It will take too long to retrieve the injectors before the alien ship finds us.

PARSON: We could lead them away and send an away team by shuttle craft.

NATASHA: I have thought of that option but on our own the risk that we could be disabled or even destroyed is too high. The alien ship is too much for Titan to take on alone.

PETERSON: Maybe we don't have to, Captain. The Marilians won't help us, but what about the Pretarans?

SATH: Even at maximum warp they are too far away to help us.

PETERSON: Not if we can make two small journeys in slipstream. I've been looking at the specifications of the slipstream and it is possible for more than one ship to share the same slipstream vortex.

JAYLAR: But our injectors are badly damaged they can't achieve slipstream velocity.

PETERSON: By cannibalising working parts from each one and a little patching up I think we could get three of them working again.

JAYLAR: And we have a spare one in storage, technically. We could reach the Pretarans, Captain.

NATASHA: Can we get there on four injectors?

JAYLAR: If they work, yes.

NATASHA: Does anyone else have any other suggestions?

COOP: Captain, I have experience with the Maryland's

engineering systems I would like to be part of the team to retrieve the injectors.

NATASHA: Very well.

PETERSON: Captain, T'Para was one of our most experienced shuttle craft pilots. I believe she would be best suited for the mission as well.

NATASHA: T'Para, think you can handle it?

T'PARA: Of course, Captain.

NATASHA: OK, let's get to work. I will contact the Pretarans and see if they would be willing to help.

- Bridge -

SATH: I have controller Saylin for you, Captain.

NATASHA: Controller.

SAYLIN: Captain, I wasn't sure if we would hear from you again. Did you find what you were looking for?

NATASHA: Unfortunately, we found more than we were counting on.

SAYLIN: I don't follow.

NATASHA: We were attacked by the same vessel that attacked your patrols. We have discovered they are responsible for the creation of the nebula you detected. It is bigger here and it stretches across the quadrant like a

corridor for the alien ship to travel through.

SAYLIN: But why would anyone create a nebula with dangerous radiation?

NATASHA: They are anionic energy based life forms. The radiation seems to benefit them. Their ship absorbs energy from stars and uses it to expand the nebula.

SAYLIN: The nebula here has gotten larger. Are you sure this is all one ship?

NATASHA: Yes, the power signature is a perfect match.

SAYLIN: Then the ship must be stopped before they expand the nebula to Pretara. Or worse, destroy our sun.

NATASHA: I was hoping you would say that because we need some assistance.

(Natasha explains the plan)

SAYLIN: Agreed, Captain. If you are able to repair your injectors I will assemble a small fleet. That ship must be stopped. See you soon, Captain. Saylin out.

(Channel closes)

NATASHA: Let's hope it will be enough to stop that ship.

SATH: Lieutenant Jaylar asked to speak to you, Captain. She's waiting for you in Engineering.

NATASHA: Tam, you wanted me for something?

JAYLAR: Yes, Captain. With the help of Kelly and T'Para we have managed to reconstruct a fully functional injector. Looking over what we have we should get three fully working ones and with the one in storage, we will be good to go. But that's not why I wanted to see you. Kelly has an idea which may give us an element of surprise.

PETERSON: Captain, I've been examining how the ship uses a Quantum Vortex to enter slipstream.

NATASHA: Yes, by using the biometric deflector.

PETERSON: Yes. The ship fires a biometric pulse to form a vortex and all matter in front of it is pulled in like a gravity well.

NATASHA: That's right.

PETERSON: I believe it's possible to create the vortex's gravitational pull without breaking the slipstream barrier.

NATASHA: What good would that do?

PETERSON: If we reinforce structural integrity and keep the engines in full reverse I believe we can anchor the ship for a short period and all matter around the ship will be thrown in front of the ship into a gravity funnel.

JAYLAR: Without breaking the slipstream barrier it would be a high speed launcher, using everything around us as a projectile.

NATASHA: What are you thinking, like an asteroid belt?

JAYLAR: Better. A star.

(Natasha looks shocked)

JAYLAR: Call it poetic justice, Captain. Using the one thing they want as a weapon against them.

NATASHA: How close would we have to get to the star?

PETERSON: For this to work I would say, within the corona.

JAYLAR: The trans-metaphasic shielding that Tuss and I installed was designed for the harshest environments that normally a star ship could not enter - including the alien ship. With all the solar interference they shouldn't even see us.

PETERSON: The only problem is we won't be able to see them, either. We would need the Pretarans to not only keep the ship distracted but also keep transmitting the ship's location. If we miss they will know what we tried to do and won't fall for the same trick twice.

NATASHA: Sounds like a plan. When the injectors are complete we will head to the Pretara system. We can't go ahead with your plan unless they agree to it.

END OF PART FIVE

PART SIX

(After twelve days in slipstream the Titan arrived back at Pretara. Controller Saylin has transported to Titan to discuss a plan of action)

- Staff Briefing Room –

SAYLIN: I don't see what chance our ships have against such a large vessel. Our last engagement resulted to two of our ships critically damaged and we didn't even slow them down.

SATH: We now have detailed information about their ship and its defences. We know where to concentrate the attack.

PARSON: Our best chance for success is to target the ship's sensors and blind them, but we also need to keep them from leaving.

SAYLIN: Even if you're right and we manage to disable it, the ship is so large we couldn't possibly have enough firepower

NATASHA: My team have come up with another option. It's risky, but the chances of defeating the alien vessel are much higher.

SAYLIN: I'm listening.

PARSON: We wait for the ship to begin absorbing a star's energy. Your ships will engage them as a distraction while we move into position within the star's corona.

SAYLIN: Fly into a star! That's not possible, is it?

JAYLAR: Our ship is equipped with shielding that allows us to survive within such an environment for a short time.

PARSON: From within the star we can use a gravity funnel and use the star's core like a weapon. The energy blast should disable the ship.

SAYLIN: If you can do this then why do you need us?

PARSON: Once we're in the sun our sensors will be useless. We won't know the location of your ships or the alien vessel.

SATH: We need your ships to transmit targeting coordinates or we could easily miss, or worse, hit one of your ships.

SAYLIN: I cannot give you an answer right away. My people want this ship stopped, but they might say no to your proposals. I will do what I can and inform you of their decision.

(Controller Saylin stands up and he is escorted to the transporter room)

SATH: What happened to the small fleet he promised?

NATASHA: Politics. He believes action must be taken but his superiors need to be convinced.

SATH: We did give them access to the array to extend their sensors. Maybe that offer in itself will be enough for them to listen.

PARSON: What do we do if they don't help us?

NATASHA: Then it's back to the drawing board. Return to your stations. For now all we can do is wait.

(Everyone stands up and returns to their stations)

- Bridge -

PARSON: Captain, we're receiving a hail.

NATASHA: That didn't take long.

PARSON: It's not from the station. We're being hailed by one of the cruisers. Audio only.

NATASHA: Open a channel.

BERAKA: Titan, I'm Captain Beraka of the Cruiser Curi, My battle group has come to join you against the ship that attacked our patrols.

NATASHA: I was not aware your people had decided to join us yet.

BERAKA: The bearcats are politicians, Captain. None of them have ever served in space and they have no experience in dealing in interstellar matters beyond trade disputes.

NATASHA: Do you believe they won't help us?

BERAKA: I have friends among our government leaders. The decision is split and without full cooperation from all parties they will not.

NATASHA: Then, how can you help us?

BERAKA: My crew know the threat this ship poses and the expanding nebula. We have seen it and know if we do not act we will lose Pretara.

PARSON: Captain, we're receiving another hail.

MARSON: Captain Riker, I am Captain Marson of the Pretaran destroyer Remal. We also have come to assist.

SATH: Nice to know were not short of volunteers.

NATASHA: Thank you, Captain, but are you both aware of what we're planning to do?

BERAKA: Only brief details but enough to know what will happen if we do nothing.

MARSON: Regardless of the government's decision, we are ready to do what needed to protect Pretara.

NATASHA: Very well, I will contact you both after I hear from them. If they do decide to help us they might assign more ships to aid us. Titan out.

(channel closes)

EVANS: Looks like we're doing this after all.

SATH: Captain, I have their ships on sensors. Captain Beraka's cruiser with five patrol ships and Captain Marson's

destroyer.

EVANS: With six ships and the Titan, the odds of us succeeding are still slim.

PARSON: Captain, we may be able get another advantage.

NATASHA: Go on.

PARSON: Using scans of the Pretaran's ships we could attach portable sensor arrays on them to generate sensor ghosts.

SATH: Making six ships look more like twenty!

PARSON: Precisely, Commander. This would give the ships a greater chance of survival.

NATASHA: How long would it take to set up?

PARSON: We would need to set up at least four emitter arrays on each ship. I would say: two days work.

NATASHA: Get started on the emitters. Ensign Evans, send a message to the other ships of what we have in mind along with both of our attack strategies.

EVANS: Yes, Captain.

(several hours pass with no word from the Pretarans)

SATH: Maybe they're not going to answer, Captain.

NATASHA: Diplomacy requires patience, Commander. I must admit I'm starting to get the feeling they're not going to help us.

PARSON: We're receiving a hail, Captain. It's Controller

Saylin.

NATASHA: On screen. (*view screen activates*)

SAYLIN: Apologies, Captain. It seems your proposal caused some disagreements among our leaders.

NATASHA: What have they decided?

SAYLIN: For the moment their answer is no, but some of the arguments seem to have swayed them a little to continue the debate.

NATASHA: So, what can we do?

SAYLIN: For now my superiors will not order anyone to commit to such a mission.

NATASHA: What if they volunteer?

SAYLIN: I doubt you will get anyone to volunteer to what is nothing short of a suicide mission, Captain. That ship has caused a lot of fear since it passed through our system almost undetected. My superiors believe for now our best option is to patrol and protect Pretara.

NATASHA: That's what the Marilians said. Thankfully, some of your ships have already offered to assist us and we can't stay and wait any longer for your government to decide. We know the ship has been operating near the Marilian system. If we wait too long they could move on to another area beyond our range and we will have missed our opportunity to stop them.

SAYLIN: I'm sorry, Captain. Without my superior's authorisation I cannot help you, I'm sorry.

(Channel closed)

NATASHA: Ensign, contact Captain Beraka and Captain Marson. Inform them we leave in two hours.

EVANS: Understood, Captain.

NATASHA: Commander, have engineering teams report to Lieutenant Parson and start installing the emitters. I want them ready before we go into slipstream.

SATH: Understood, I'll have Jaylar begin calibrating the deflector to compensate for the battle fleet.

NATASHA: Very good. Also, begin running battle simulations of the battle plan. Make sure we have not overlooked anything.

SATH: Yes, ma'am. Ensign, begin mapping out search patterns starting from the Marilian system. We will need to locate the ship as soon as possible.

EVANS: Yes, sir.

(Two hours later)

SATH: Captain, the fleet have reported they are ready and engineering is set for slipstream. I contacted Commander Eilu and told him were bringing company.

NATASHA: Very well. Helm have the fleet move into position and take us to slipstream.

HAMMOND: The fleet are moving into position. Course laid in and initiating slipstream in 5... 4... 3... 2... 1...

(A large quantum vortex opens and the fleet warp in)



HAMMOND: All ships have successfully entered slipstream, Captain. We should arrive in the Marilian system in eleven days, 22 hours.

(Jaylar enters the bridge)

JAYLAR: Captain, I've increased the coolant flow to the injectors to increase their optimal performance but I do not recommend we attempt to use the slipstream again until we can replace them.

NATASHA: So, if we can't get the injectors from the

Maryland....

JAYLAR: Then we will only be able to travel home at warp speed. With the damage to the injectors already I would estimate our best warp speed would be no more than warp 7.

NATASHA: Which is not an option for our lifetime.

PARSON: Captain, the Remal is reporting power issues with the new emitters. Permission to beam over?

NATASHA: Granted.

(Parson leaves the bridge and returns a few hours later)

SATH: Have they agreed to either of our plans, Captain?

NATASHA: Not yet. They are running simulations, trying to see which outcome will have the greater chance of success with the least amount of casualties.

SATH: Our simulations show the solar attack would have a better chance of success over a direct assault.

NATASHA: Solar attack?

SATH: Lieutenant Parson came up with it. It seems an accurate enough description to me.

PARSON: I can change the name if you prefer, Captain.

NATASHA: *(Smiles)* Solar attack it is, Lieutenant.

JAYLAR: Captain, with your permission I would like to help Sickbay prepare medical supplies for the Pretaran ships.

They seem built more for tactical missions than medical.

NATASHA: Go ahead. I'll be in my ready room,

Commander the bridge is yours.

SATH: Aye, Captain.

- Captain's Ready Room -

NATASHA: Computer, begin log.

(computer beeps)

NATASHA: Captain's log, stardate 86810.4. My first assignment as Captain was supposed to be a rescue mission and here we are preparing for battle against a ship designed to destroy star systems and reconfigure space. *(Pauses)* My first mission has already got me walking a fine line with the Prime Directive, having ships join us in battle volunteering to defend their homeworlds may see me explaining my actions when we get home, but to save the lives from dozens of worlds, billions of lives, from this nebula then I will accept the consequences. *(Pauses)* When I joined Starfleet I was taught that our primary mission was to seek out life, not destroy it. Our mission was to respond to a distress call caused by a growing nebula created by that ship that shows no remorse towards killing billions. We found the survivors of the Maryland and completed our secondary objective, but we're not leaving the Gamma Quadrant to the fate of that ship. Being a Captain is about making the hard decisions and

to lead others against the unknown. Well, Dad, you were right.... and I'm ready. Computer, end log.

- The Marilian System -

(A quantum vortex opens and Titan arrives with the fleet)

NATASHA: Commander, coordinate a search pattern with the fleet. We will use this system as a staging area until we find them.

PARSON: Captain, we're being hailed by the station. It's Commander Eilu.

NATASHA: On screen.

(view screen activates)

EILU: Captain, nice to see you made it safely. I need to request that your fleet keeps its distance from ours. Our forces are on alert after the Rellains sent out a distress call two days ago. Our scout ships went to investigate but the system is gone.

NATASHA: Did your scouts detect any ships in the area?

EILU: No, Captain, but they did detect high levels of radiation.

SATH: Captain, the ship may still be nearby.

NATASHA: Commander, this is what warned you about. That ship will destroy system after system until everything and everyone is gone. We have only seven ships, will your

people not help us stop it?

EILU: I'm sorry, Captain. My orders were clear.

NATASHA: Very well, Commander. If you cannot help us could you provide a star chart of the nearby systems and the coordinates of the Rellain system?

EILU: Very well, Captain.

PARSON: Coordinates received, Captain.

NATASHA: Helm, relay them to the fleet and set a course.

HAMMOND: Course laid, Captain.

NATASHA: Engage!

(Titan and the fleet warp out of the system)

- Rellain system -

PARSON: Captain, I'm not picking up the ship on sensors but there are traces of subatomic radiation. They were definitely here. Captain Beraka is hailing us, Captain. Audio only.

BERAKA: Captain Riker, my science officer has found a trail leaving the system. There are traces of both subatomic and solar flux radiation.

NATASHA: Lieutenant?

PARSON: Confirmed, Captain. Although it is decaying quickly it should increase the chances of finding the ship.

NATASHA: Helm, set a course to follow that trail and have

the fleet begin searching the nearby systems. Hopefully, we can find them before they attack another one.

(The fleet begins to break up to search nearby systems. The Titan continues to follow the trail)

- Zeta Capulus System –

HAMMOND: Entering sector three of Zeta Capulus.

PARSON: Running sensor sweep.

EVANS: Ten days of scanning and still no sign of the ship.

PARSON: According to the star charts provided by the Marilians the next system is a binary star system inhabited by a species called the Aquarii.

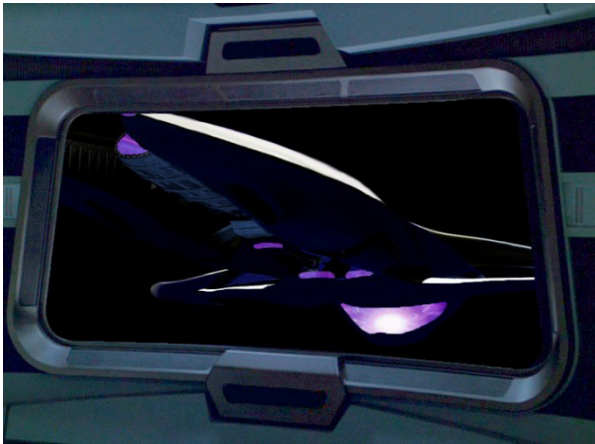
EVANS: Aquarii?

PARSON: According to the information they are known for trading in construction materials.

SATH: Sounds interesting. Perhaps we could resupply.

NATASHA: That's if we have anything worth trading with.

PARSON: Proximity alert, Captain! A ship is approaching at warp. It's the Curi, Captain Beraka is hailing us.



The Curi

NATASHA: Captain, we weren't expecting you.

BERAKA: I have called for the fleet to rendezvous here, Captain. It seems our long range transmissions are being monitored.

NATASHA: What makes you say that?

BERAKA: After searching two systems and reporting nothing there we moved on but my crew reported some odd readings on long range sensors shortly after we left. We completed our scans and doubled back. The Shemia system was gone. Fearing the worst we went and rechecked the Remidian system and it, too, is gone.

SATH: You think they are attacking systems after we report

them clear to avoid us?

PARSON: That would mean, Captain, they know we're looking for them. I'm detecting more ships, Captain. The fleet is arriving.

EVANS: Captain, if we know they're monitoring them can't we not lure them in?

NATASHA: You read my mind, Ensign. That's exactly what we're going to do.

SATH: We use this system as bait.

NATASHA: We head to the Aquarii system and transmit that the Zeta Capulus is clear. If Captain Beraka is correct they will be right behind us.

SATH: That will give us the opportunity to use the solar attack.

PARSON: Captain Marson is hailing us.

MARSON: I take it we're all here for a reason.

NATASHA: Yes, Captain. Captain Beraka may have just provided us with a way to catch the alien ship by surprise.

(Natasha explains the plan and the fleet warps to the Aquarii system)

- Aquarii System -

HAMMOND: We have arrived in the Aquarii system, Captain.

NATASHA: Understood, Lieutenant Parson. Send our transmission.

PARSON: Aye, Captain. Transmitting.

SATH: And now we wait.

(One hour later)

EVANS: Our long range sensors are getting some anomalous readings from Zeta Capulus. I've seen these reading before, Captain. The energy reading matches what we detected when the alien ship decloaked in the Pretara system.

NATASHA: Sounds like our alien ship. Hail Captain Beraka and have him send a scout ship for confirmation.

PARSON: Aye, Captain.

NATASHA: Helm, lay in a course for the Zeta Capulus star itself. We need to enter the corona before that ship detects us or this may have all been for nothing. It's likely we're only going to get one shot at this, so let not screw this up. Ensign, have the trans-metaphasic shields on standby.

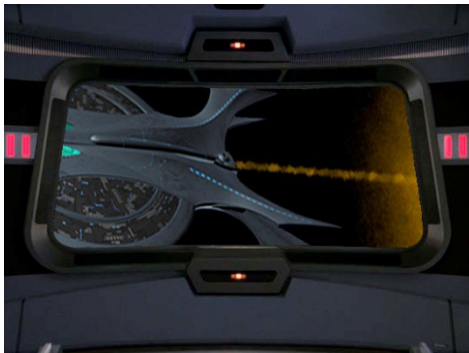
EVANS: Ready on your order, Captain.

NATASHA: Contact the Curi and the Remal. Tell them to target the ship's engines. We need to keep them stationary if we're to get a clean shot at this. Secondary targets are weapons and sensors.

PARSON: Understood, Captain. Transmission received and acknowledged.

EVANS: Captain, we've received a video transmission from the scout ship.

NATASHA: On screen.



SATH: It's been following us the whole time!

NATASHA: Battle stations!

(Red alert sounds and the crew prepare for battle)

NATASHA: Contact the fleet, we're going in! Have T'Para ready with her team in the shuttle. We need them to launch before we reach the star's corona. Helm, engage!

HAMMOND: Aye, Captain!

(Titan and the fleet warp to Zeta Capulus)

END OF PART SIX

PART SEVEN

- The Bridge -

(T'Para, Coop and Peterson are ready in the shuttle bay as Titan Warps to the Zeta Capulus star)

HAMMOND: Captain, we will arrive in two minutes.

NATASHA: *(taps her comm. badge)* Bridge to shuttle bay.

T'Para, are you and your team ready?

T'PARA (VOICE): Affirmative, Captain. We are prepped for immediate launch as soon as we drop out of warp.

NATASHA: Acknowledged, standby to launch.

HAMMOND: Thirty seconds, Captain.

EVANS: Transmetaphasic shields will activate as soon as the shuttle is clear.

PARSON: All stations report ready, Captain. I have the solar vortex portals programmed in.

HAMMOND: Dropping out of warp, Captain.

NATASHA: Shuttle bay, you have a go.

T'PARA(voice): Launching shuttle, setting course for the Maryland. Good fortune, Captain. T'Para out.

(channel closes)

EVANS: Shuttle is away. Raising shields.

HAMMOND: Entering the star, Captain.

EVANS: The shuttle has gone to warp. The Pretaran fleet is engaging the alien ship. We're losing sensors, Captain. I relayed the ship's last known coordinates to the helm.

HAMMOND: Altering our positioning. Aligning with the ship's last known position.

SATH: We're receiving transmissions from the fleet. Two patrol vessels have been damaged but are continuing to engage. The ship is concentrating its weapons on the Remal. Captain Beraka is trying to disable its weapons array.

NATASHA: What about the alien ship's engines?

SATH: Beraka's fighters are attacking the ship's engines but the ship has increased its shielding to protect them.

PARSON: Perhaps a defence strategy to escape?

HAMMOND: We're coming into position, Captain.

SATH: We have not received an update for coordinates yet, Captain.

NATASHA: Try and signal the Curi. Tell them we need new coordinates.

SATH: I'm trying, Captain, but there's a lot of interference from the star. I can't tell if they received our transmission.

PARSON: Captain, there may be another way to get a bearing on the ship's location but I would not recommend it.

NATASHA: Why not?

PARSON: It would mean flying further into the star in an

attempt to locate the alien vessel - which could severely damage the ship.

NATASHA: What good would that do?

PARSON: With our sensors not working I believe our only way to locate them is by finding the graviton pulse.

EVANS: How do we do that?

PARSON: The graviton pulse will have a trilitium signature, something that shows up on sensors easier when set. Normally, sensors do not scan for it as it's so rare.

EVANS: Would we detect it through all this interference?

SATH: It's worth a try. Otherwise, we're just sitting here blind.

NATASHA: See what you can do.

PARSON: Recalibrating sensors.

EVANS: I think it's working. I'm picking up a faint trilitium signature bearing 255.9 mark 135.

NATASHA: Helm, alter course.

SATH: Captain, I'm still monitoring the fleet's transmissions. The Remal has been disabled, three of the Curi's fighters have been destroyed and the Curi is under attack.

NATASHA: We're running out of time.

(The ship suddenly shakes)

HAMMOND: We're almost in position, Captain.

EVANS: Sensors show the graviton pulse is dead ahead of us, Captain.

PARSON: Captain, shields are down to 76%. We can't stay here much longer.

NATASHA: Hold your course, Mr Hammond.

(The ship continues to shake and shudder hard)

PARSON: Shields down to 58%.

NATASHA: Ensign!

EVANS: We've found it, Captain. Triangulating the source.

PARSON: Shields at 49%. Hull temperature is rising.

EVANS: Got it!

NATASHA: Helm, align the ship.

HAMMOND: Adjusting pitch. Ready, Captain!

NATASHA: Fire!

PARSON: Activating the Solar Vortex.

(Titan anchors itself into position and activates the slipstream vortex, the ship shakes hard as sparks shoot from controls)

EVANS: Power relays are overloading all over the ship. We've lost life support on decks 3, 5, 6 and 10.

NATASHA: Evacuate those decks. Mr Parson, report!

PARSON: Powering down the vortex, Captain. I suggest we make our way out of the star. Shields are at 38% and the hull temperature is exceeding tolerance.

NATASHA: Helm take us out. Arm weapons in case we missed the target.

HAMMOND: Leaving the corona, Captain.

EVANS: Sensors are coming back online.

PARSON: Captain, the alien vessel!

(The alien vessel is displayed on the view screen showing heavy damage)

PARSON: Captain Beraka is hailing us, Captain.

BERAKA: Captain, I don't know how you did it but nice shot! We lost contact with you once you had entered the star.

NATASHA: What's your ship's condition?

BERAKA: We have suffered minor damage, but the Remal is adrift and three of my fighters were lost. The alien ship appears to be disabled. Its graviton pulse shut down when you hit it.

NATASHA: Commander, what's the status of the alien ship?

SATH: Sensors show power fluctuations all over the ship. The graviton pulse weapon has been damaged but their primary weapons array is still functional. But they're not firing...

EVANS: Maybe we gave them something to think about?

PARSON: Captain, I'm detecting a large build-up of trilitium energy within the alien vessel. I believe they're preparing to fire.

NATASHA: Divert all power to shields! All hands brace for impact!

(The alien ship fires a trilitium torpedo)

NATASHA: What happened?

PARSON: We were not the target, Captain.

(A shockwave hits the ship knocking the crew to the ground)

EVANS: Captain, sensors show the star is collapsing.

PARSON: The alien vessel is altering course and powering up its warp drive.

EVANS: Captain, the star will collapse in less than a minute!

NATASHA: Lieutenant, lock on to the crew of the Rimel and beam them aboard. Tell the fleet to retreat out of the system. Helm, once we have them get us out of here!

HAMMOND: Aye, Captain.

(Titan and the fleet warp out of the Zeta Capulus system as the star collapses into a singularity)

NATASHA: Status report!

PARSON: We have the Rimel's crew safely aboard.

EVANS: Captain, I'm detecting the alien ship's warp trail. We must have damaged their cloak.

PARSON: Orders, Captain?

NATASHA: Helm, lay in a pursuit course. We cannot let them get away. Contact the fleet. Tell them we're pursuing the ship.

PARSON: Aye, Captain.

SATH: Captain, we have sustained a lot of damage and the Curi is not much better. How can we stop them?

NATASHA: I believe if we don't act now no one will ever be able to stop them. Right now their ship is damaged and they're running. They collapsed that star in order to escape and lose us.

EVANS: Their weapons are still functional, Captain.

NATASHA: We were able to blind their sensors for a short time on our first engagement. Could we do that again?

EVANS: Yes, Captain, but it would only blind their sensors for a moment.

PARSON: A moment may be all we need.

NATASHA: Lieutenant?

PARSON: The damage from the solar energy we fired has caused a hull breach along the ship's port side, exposing the solar hydrogen storage tanks.

SATH: How can we use that?

PARSON: If we can disable their shields, I can lock on to the trilitium on board their ship and beam it to just outside the tanks.

EVANS: and if we puncture the tanks and detonate the trilitium....

NATASHA: It was cause a singularity that would tear the

ship apart.

PARSON: Exactly!

NATASHA: Contact the Curi and inform them of what we have in mind.

EVANS: Captain, the Curi just dropped out of warp.

NATASHA: What? Hail them.

(The view screen activates)

BERAKA: Captain, our warp drive has gone offline. It seems we suffered more damage than we originally thought.

NATASHA: Captain, we were just about to contact you with a new battle plan.

BERAKA: Until my ship's engines are repaired I'm afraid we're out of the fight.

NATASHA: Helm, alter course to intercept the Curi.

HAMMOND: Yes, Captain.

NATASHA: We stand a better chance with both our ships in the fight. Ensign can you predict the alien ship's course?

EVANS: Their course trajectory shows they're heading for the Erakis system.

SATH: What's in that system?

EVANS: The Marilian star charts show it's a heavily populated system with a blue supergiant star.

NATASHA: How long till they reach the system?

EVANS: Five hours, Captain. Due to the alien ship's damage

I don't believe they can achieve any faster than warp 6.5.

NATASHA: At least that buys us some time. Lieutenant, have the Remal's crew beamed to the Curi, I'm sure they can assist with their repairs more than we can. (*taps comm. badge*) Bridge to Engineering.

JAYLAR (VOICE) Jaylar here.

NATASHA: We have less than five hours to complete what repairs we can and catch up to that ship. What's our status on repairs?

JAYLAR: We have bypassed most of the power relays, Captain, and life support has been restored on decks 3 and five.

NATASHA: What about the shields?

JAYLAR: I should be able to get the shields back to 95% by the time we get there.

NATASHA: Understood, Bridge out. (*taps comm. badge*) Ensign, contact the shuttle and inform them of what has happened. I'd like an update on their progress as well.

EVANS: Aye, Captain.

NATASHA: Commander, you have the Bridge.

SATH: Yes, Captain.

(*Natasha walks to the Captain's Ready Room. Three hours pass*)

PARSON: Bridge to Captain Riker, please report to the

Bridge.

NATASHA (VOICE): Acknowledged.

(Natasha walks onto the Bridge)

NATASHA: What is it, Lieutenant?

PARSON: Two ships have dropped out of warp and are hailing us. Captain, they're Marilian!

NATASHA: On screen.

O'HAGAN: Captain Riker, I'm Captain O'Hagan of the Duran. We've come to assist you against the alien ship. We monitored your battle at Zeta Capulus and the ship captains at Marilia started talking. It seems our orders from Commander Eilu didn't sit well with the fleet. He has now been relieved of his position as Fleet Commander and several of our leaders have been removed from power through a vote of no confidence for their lack of acting in the people's best interests.

EVANS: Just two ships?

O'HAGAN: Unfortunately, the change in government leadership has caused a few incidents to occur and the fleet's security forces are busy maintaining order. Myself and Captain Ting set out to find you.

NATASHA: Captain, I must say your timing could not be better! We're preparing to go after the alien ship once our repairs are complete. The ship has suffered heavy damage

but is still functional. We disabled its ability to absorb energy from stars but if we don't act soon they will repair the damage and begin again.

O'HAGAN: Our ships are not the most powerful but they are fast. I'm sure we can give them a good fight.

NATASHA: We leave in just under an hour. We plan to attack the damaged sections of their ship. If you can keep their attention away from us we should be able to destroy them.

O'HAGAN: We will do what we can. O'Hagan out.

(Channel closes)

NATASHA: Ensign, any word from the away team?

EVANS: Yes, Captain. T'Para reports they're almost done and will be under way shortly.

NATASHA: Have them head to the Marilian system. We will rendezvous with them there once we've taken care of business.

PARSON: Captain, the alien ship is approaching the Erakis system. If we don't leave soon it might be too late.

NATASHA: What's the status of the repairs?

EVANS: Deck ten is still without life support and shields are at 93%. Engineering reports our best speed is warp 8. Other than that we're good.

NATASHA: Very well. Contact the fleet and set course for

the Erakis system. Maximum warp.

HAMMOND: Course laid in, Captain. ETA, twenty-two minutes.

NATASHA: Ensign, will we reach the system before the alien ship?

EVANS: Negative, Captain. They should reach the system in approximately 16 minutes.

(Titan and the fleet warp to the Erakis system)

SATH: We have to act fast before they destroy the system.

NATASHA: Arm all weapons. Target their engines first. We cannot let them escape again! Contact the Curi and have them target the ship's weapons array while Captain O'Hagan and Captain Ting draw their fire.

PARSON: Yes, Captain.

NATASHA: Mr Hammond, do what you can to evade them, but keep us on their port side.

HAMMOND: Yes, ma'am.

NATASHA: *(taps comm. badge)* Bridge to Engineering.

JAYLAR (VOICE): Jaylar here

NATASHA: We will be arriving at the Erakis system shortly. Do what you can to keep weapons and shields online.

JAYLAR (VOICE): Understood.

NATASHA: Riker out.

EVANS: Captain, the alien vessel has reached the system.

NATASHA: Helm, increase power to the engines.

HAMMOND: We're already at maximum, Captain.

NATASHA: Push it.

HAMMOND: Aye, Captain. Increasing to warp 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4, 8.5.

(Titan begins to vibrate and shimmer)

HAMMOND: 8.6, 8.65, 8.7

JARLAR (VOICE): Engineering to Bridge. The injectors can't handle this. Captain, we have to slow down!

NATASHA: Hold your speed, Lieutenant.

PARSON: Engineering is venting plasma coolant from the warp nacelles to prevent the core from overheating.

EVANS: Coming up on Erakis, Captain.

NATASHA: Helm, drop us out of warp. Prepare to engage!

PARSON: Acknowledged.

(Titan arrives at Erakis with the fleet)

EVANS: The alien ship is dead ahead. They're altering course. It looks like they're preparing to make another run for it!

NATASHA: Let's not give them the chance this time. Fire!

PARSON: Firing phasers. Launching torpedoes.

EVANS: The Curi is firing on their sensor array, Captain. The alien ship's engines are losing power.

NATASHA: Keep firing, Mr Parson.

PARSON: Direct hit to their warp nacelle! Their warp drive is offline. Captain O'Hagan is continuing to attack their shields but Captain Ting's ship's weapons have taken heavy damage. They're falling back to make repairs.

(Titan is hit by weapons fire)

NATASHA: Report!

EVANS: Shields down to 78%. Captain, impulse engines are offline. We're on manoeuvring thrusters only.

PARSON: The Curi has taken damage, Captain. Their shields are failing.

(Titan is hit with another volley)

EVANS: Shields down to 49%. We've lost forward weapons.

NATASHA: Come about! Fire aft weapons. What's the status of their shields?

EVANS: Their shields are at 68%.

PARSON: Our weapons are not having enough effect, Captain.

NATASHA: Bridge to Engineering. We need impulse engines now!

JAYLAR (VOICE): It's no good, Captain. The primary plasma conduits have been ruptured. It will take hours to repair.

(Titan shakes with more fire from the alien ship)

EVANS: Shields down to 31%. Captain, we have casualty

reports coming in from all decks!

PARSON: Captain, I'm detecting multiple vessels entering the system! We're been hailed!

NATASHA: On screen!

(View screen activates)

CASELLI: Captain Riker, I'm Commander Caselli, newly appointed Commander of the Marilian fleet. I'm sorry we're late. Your shuttle arrived in our system and informed me of what was happening. We got here as fast as we could.

PARSON: Captain, the Marilian fleet is engaging the alien ship. They have ceased their attack on us.

NATASHA: Then let's not just sit here, fire everything we've got!

EVANS: Alien shields are failing, Captain.

NATASHA: Can you get a lock on the trilitium?

PARSON: I am attempting to do so, Captain. I have a lock.

NATASHA: Do it!

PARSON: Transport in progress.

EVANS: The trilitium has been beamed to within ten metres from the storage tanks.

NATASHA: Mr Parson, take them out!

PARSON: Torpedo away!

NATASHA: Tell the fleet to retreat. Helm get us out of here!

(the torpedo detonates and the first shockwave hits the Titan)

EVANS: Shields failing and we're losing hull integrity. A singularity is forming.

NATASHA: Now, Mr Hammond!

HAMMOND: Engaging warp drive.

(Titan warps out of the system as the alien ship is crushed by the newly formed singularity. Together, their fleet arrives back at the Marilian System. Natasha is talking to Commander Caselli on the view screen)

NATASHA: We can't thank you enough, Commander.

CASELLI: No, Captain, it's I that should thank you. If it was not for you, your crew and the Pretarans, we could have lost Marilian because of our government's arrogance. You showed us and the other systems that cooperation like you have in your Federation is far stronger than just protecting our own. The people of Erakis have already been in contact and thanked us for defending their world and I'm told trade talks have already begun. After the loss of so many systems, there's no way of telling but this could be the beginning of an alliance.

NATASHA: I'm glad we could help, Commander. What is to become of Commander Eilu?

CASELLI: He has been removed from the military and will have to stand trial along with some of our former leaders. His failure to report the corruption within our government

has cost him dearly. It will be some time before our people accept the new government but for now we seem to have peace.

NATASHA: Your people will be able to stay in contact with the Federation using the biometric array, and besides, it would be good to keep in touch. Our injector repairs are almost complete and we will soon be on our way. The Pretarans are eager to get back home.

CASELLI: Please extend my gratitude to Captain Beraka. I regret the loss of their ships and hope we can work together in the future.

NATASHA: Only time will tell, Commander.

EVANS: Captain, sensors show a drop in solar flux radiation within the nebula. It appears to be dissipating.

PARSON: Perhaps without the influence of the alien ship the nebula can no longer sustain itself.

SATH: And the altered space is beginning to return to normal.

CASELLI: If that's true then maybe one day we will regain our lost home.

PARSON: We're receiving another hail, Captain, from the array.

NATASHA: On screen.

ADMIRAL RIKER: Titan, good to see you in one piece. We

received your message and have completed the modifications to the Odyssey. She will be en route to the wormhole at Deep Space Nine soon. Once through she will transmit the biaxial signal at the specified intervals. She will arrive and begin transmitting the first signal at the specified times that I'm sending to you on a sub channel.

NATASHA: I just hope T'Para's calculations are correct.

JAYLAR (VOICE): Engineering to Bridge.

NATASHA: (*taps comm. badge*) Go ahead.

JAYLAR (VOICE): Injector repairs will be complete within the hour.

NATASHA: Excellent work! Inform me when you're ready.

Riker out. (*taps comm. badge*) It will take us almost two weeks to reach Pretara, then we will wait for the Odyssey's signal. If our calculations are correct it will take us eight weeks to reach the wormhole from the Pretara system, requiring just one stop. Jaylar is not sure if the injectors will get us there before they burn out but we will do our best.

ADMIRAL RIKER: Understood, Captain. See you soon.

Riker out. (*channel closes*)

CASELLI: Looks like this is goodbye, Captain. I wish you and your crew a safe journey! Good luck. (*channel closes*)

(*Once the injectors were repaired, Titan and the Pretaran*

ships entered the quantum vortex. After a brief stop at the Pretaran System the Titan picked up the Odyssey's signal and continued on course towards the wormhole)

NATASHA: (*taps comm. badge*) Bridge to Engineering. Status?

JAYLAR (VOICE): One of the injectors has failed, Captain. The slipstream vortex is becoming unstable. I've flooded the injectors with coolant but it's had little effect.

HAMMOND: Captain, we're eight minutes from the coordinates.

JAYLAR (VOICE): We don't have eight minutes, Captain. Either the injectors will fail or explode.

NATASHA: Helm, prepare to drop out of slipstream.

EVANS: At least we made it this far.

HAMMOND: Ready to drop out, Captain.

EVANS: Captain, Engineering has just shut down power to the warp core and rerouted its power to the deflector.

NATASHA: Engineering, report!

JAYLAR (VOICE): Sorry, Captain! No time to explain, just hold our course.

NATASHA: Understood. Helm?

HAMMOND: Less than four minutes, Captain.

PARSON: I'm detecting a power overload in the deflector

array.

JAYLAR (VOICE): Routing additional power to the containment fields.

PARSON: Deflector containment at 115%. Power relays are holding.

HAMMOND: Coming up on the coordinates, Captain.

NATASHA: Bring us out.

HAMMOND: Aye, dropping out of slipstream, Captain.

(Titan emerges from the quantum vortex)

SATH: Where are we?

PARSON: Sensors show we are on the edge of the Irdan system. We are where we're supposed to be.

NATASHA: Scan the system.

PARSON: I'm detecting a ship near the coordinates of the wormhole, Captain.

NATASHA: Thank God! On screen.



PARSON: It's the Odyssey. We're being hailed.

BENSON: This is Captain Benson of the Odyssey. Welcome back, Titan. We were starting to get worried.

NATASHA: Captain Benson, it's good to see you. We've suffered some damage to the engines. Can you assist?

BENSON: Understood, Captain. We will lock on a tractor beam and tow you to Deep Space Nine. Admiral Riker is waiting for you there.

NATASHA: Thank you, Odyssey. Titan out.

(Odyssey and Titan travel through the wormhole and dock at Deep Space Nine for repairs, Natasha makes her way to the airlock which opens)

- Deep Space Nine –

NATASHA: Dad!

(Natasha runs to her father and hugs him)

RIKER: I'm so proud of you. Come on, you can tell me all about it.

- Quark's Bar –

RIKER: Your first mission is going to have Starfleet officials busy for a while. Not only did you complete your mission but you made first contact with several new species and established long term contact for Starfleet. Not bad for your first command.

NATASHA: Once the Titan is repaired what happens next?

RIKER: Your first job will be to escort an Admiral back to Earth. You need to contact Admiral Quinn to answer a few questions about your mission.

NATASHA: That was to be expected.

RIKER: As for the Titan, she's being sent on a reconnaissance mission along the Romulan border.

NATASHA: Why the Romulan border?

RIKER: What do you know of the Iconians?

NATASHA: They were an advanced race that used gateway

technology but became extinct 200,000 years ago.

RIKER: Turns out they're not extinct after all. While you were gone the Federation and the Klingon Empire agreed to a cease fire. During the official discussions on Khitomer an Iconian appeared and killed all the High Council members.

NATASHA: So, what does Starfleet want to do?

RIKER: Titan is to go to the Iconian homeworld near the Romulan Border and report its findings back to Starfleet.

- Natasha's quarters, USS Titan –

NATASHA: Captain's log, stardate 87031.1. We are en route to Earth after a long stay at Deep Space Nine due to much needed repairs. After discussing my actions in the Gamma Quadrant with Admiral Quinn they have let the matter drop for now and I'm to remain in command of Titan. *(pauses)* I'm looking forward to our next mission at the Iconian homeworld, but before we head out we have to say goodbye to those we lost on our mission to the Gamma Quadrant and a personal goodbye to a new friend, Lieutenant Tuss. My father says that every captain must at some point face losing people under their command. I just didn't expect it to be so

soon. I would like to say it will never happen again, but that's not possible as Starfleet's objective is to explore the unknown, to seek out new life and new civilizations, to boldly go where no one has gone before.

THE END

STAR TREK

TITANS FRONTIER

BY DAVID TITLEY

The year is 2409

Commander Natasha Riker-Troi has serving aboard the USS LIBERTY on a diplomatic mission to Beloras.

Natasha joined Starfleet at a young age wanting to follow the footsteps of her parents Admiral William T. Riker and Deanna Troi. Born on the USS Titan when **her father was captain, she grew up seeing her father in command** and dreamed of one day being in Starfleet.

At the age of five she moved to Earth when her father was promoted to Admiral and lived there until she graduated from Starfleet, during her cadet years she excelled to top of her class earning her the rank of lieutenant when she graduated at Eighteen

At the age of twenty Natasha was promoted to Lieutenant Commander for outstanding performance, at twenty four she had earned the rank of Commander but she turned down her assignment to take a break in her career and spend time with her family.

In 2406 she accepted a position as first officer of the USS Liberty.

