

CAPTAIN'S LOG

USS ODYSSEY

NCC-97000

UNITED FEDERATION OF PLANETS





EPISODE GUIDE

<i>Introduction</i>	2
<i>Prologue</i>	4
<i>EPISODE ONE: "Toxic"</i>	8
<i>EPISODE TWO: "Plato's Cave"</i>	11
<i>EPISODE THREE: "Border Dispute"</i>	14
<i>EPISODE FOUR: "Briefing on Narendra Station"</i>	19
<i>EPISODE FIVE: "Imminent Collision"</i>	23
<i>EPISODE SIX: "Infinite Combinations"</i>	31
<i>EPISODE SEVEN: "Pod Things"</i>	44
<i>EPISODE EIGHT: "The Edge of Honor"</i>	53

Introduction

This document represents the journal of a series of solo and group sessions played using the Star Trek Adventures (STA) roleplaying game rules and supplements published by Modiphius Entertainment.

I am running a campaign in the Modiphius Shackleton Expanse supplement, tracing the progress of a Picard-era *Odyssey*-class starship and crew from post-refit launch from Earth through their exploration mission in the Expanse. The campaign is therefore planned as a combination of existing mission briefs, adventures and supplements, all placed in a loose but logical order to establish and maintain continuity. I do play sessions in a group (live or online) when I can (the missions are treated largely as “one-shots” when played with a group), but the majority of missions in this journal are solo, using Modiphius’ Captain’s Log solo play rules when necessary, but often just “winging it” with the core STA 2e rules.

As of 12/20/2025 the document consists of eight episodes representing three adventures (of varying length) and roughly ten real-time months of play (I don’t get to play nearly as often as I’d like...). I currently have 25 adventures planned in the entire campaign, and that number is likely to increase with new Modiphius publications and online sources. For example, I have purchased but haven’t yet read Modiphius’ new Five Year Missions by Marco Rafalà, but I assume at least some of them may be useful in this campaign. I’m also looking forward to interspersing the planned campaign with material from the Exploration Guide, but we haven’t even really started exploring much of the Expanse as of this writing. (Stay tuned...)

The content takes two basic material forms: some text is in the form of the traditional “log entries” we are accustomed to hearing on television, while other entries are written in “play script” dialogue fashion, under the conceit of a “fight recorder” keeping records, or some such technology. Frankly, it also often represents the distinction between when I had time to journal versus when I just needed to move things along. Character names and titles are generally provided the first time a character speaks, but subsequently simply referred to by (usually last) name.

The campaign is set more than a year after the events depicted in the third and final season of the *Picard* TV series, with some major “head-canon” adjustments, the largest of which is this: In my STA universe, the “Romulan Free State” and “Ni’Var” do not exist, and the Romulan Star Empire remains as strong, vital and mysterious as ever.

While I like the Federation/Klingon alliance, especially as depicted in *DS9*, I didn’t like the idea of turning a second major TOS-era villain species into allies (however tenuous) as a function of yet another planetary disaster. Felt too “derivative” and mildly “lazy” of the showrunners, to me - it made for good characters and television, mind you, but I liked the inscrutable, scheming nature of the original Romulans, and wanted to maintain them as an “enemy” polity to be avoided, feared, and confronted in my game(s). The Borg Reclamation Center might exist, under the premise that the Borg have been as much of a threat to the Romulans as they have been to others, but I haven’t established that in actual game play yet. The implication is that Spock’s YNG-era unification mission was unsuccessful, but I don’t have Romulus subsequently exploding and causing a diaspora of refugees, etc. in my head-canon.

Another departure from canon is the *Odyssey* herself. In my universe, the class is the largest spaceframe produced by Starfleet, and there are only about a dozen vessels of the class in service at the time the campaign begins. In canon the spaceframe is actually several years old by *Picard*’s third season, but I’m considering it a relatively new design in my campaign, including the quantum slipstream drive (installed in the latest refit). My conceit is a throwback to the original Constitution class vessels, which were presumably limited (at least at one point) to about a dozen ships.

The rest of what is depicted in *Picard* is considered part of this campaign's canon, including the Dominion/Borg attack on Earth, the destruction of both the Enterprise-F and Spacedock, and the re-dedication of the Constitution-III class *Titan* as the *Enterprise*, with Seven-of-Nine in command. (I was actually both pleased and bummed by the fact that the show gave command of that ship to Seven, because I was originally thinking of making her my first officer aboard *Odyssey*. And I suppose I could still have done that, but I like to try for a certain level of consistency with at least major plot points from the shows and some other source material, and within the boundaries of my own head-canon.)

Many of the *Odyssey* crew names and species in this campaign were inspired by my STOL characters, but a couple of characters are inspired by those found in one of my favorite Trek RPG adventures of all time, [A Doomsday Like Any Other](#), written c. 1986 by Christopher E. Williams *et.al.* for the FASA game. True Treknards will catch several TV show homages and Easter eggs, such as Miral Paris serving as first officer. I don't know (or care) how that kind of thing corresponds to/conflicts with any continuity for that character established in novels, fan fiction, etc., but her age would be about right, and I like the tie-in to the TNG/VOY era. I haven't done much with her character yet. My thinking is that she serves as the commanding officer of the *Aquarius* escort when that is deployed, but we haven't done that yet in game.

The Prologue exists to introduce player characters and NPCs, as well as paying tribute to one of my favorite Trek tropes – the departure of a starship from Spacedock, and the sequence of orders and procedures that are followed in that process. In *Episode Four: "Briefing on Narendra Station"* readers familiar with the [Shackleton Expanse](#) campaign guide will note the almost word-for-word lifting of Admiral Hebert's welcome subspace message to the captain, but I have heavily edited General Kargan's "welcome" to reflect the backstory that I created for Morgan, which includes him having been a human participant in a major Klingon *bat'leth* competition (another TNG nod) and the development of a friendship between Morgan and Kargan. This relationship is used with some effect later in the campaign.

I have credited mission sources and authors whenever possible. There are also a few illustrations sprinkled throughout, most "lovingly ripped" from the internet, although I have tried to credit the artists if they are identified. At least some of the pictures are captures from a ship and crew I maintain on the *Star Trek Online* MMORPG (STOL). I have also noted in the episode titles whenever I used AI (generally ChatGPT, very heavily edited) to help with additional adventure outlines. (I try not to do use AI too much, but sometimes I am simply lazy...)

If anyone cares to know more about me personally, I am 60 years old, having been an unabashed and avowed Trek nerd for at least 52 of those years. I have been playing and game-mastering RPGs most of my life, starting with the first edition of *Dungeons & Dragons*. I am a professional non-profit fundraiser, currently working for an organization providing programs and services to those living with mental illness. I am also an amateur (community theatre) actor and director with more than 120 productions to my credit. My favorite Trek series is TOS, but I have to say that SNW is a very close second. Fave character is Captain Liam Shaw from *Picard*. (I had a photo op with Todd Stashwick at a con last year, and he's a very cool dude.)

I hope you enjoy reading this as much as I enjoyed creating and playing it. Thank you for taking the time.

--Don Bernardo

Disclaimer: This is a work of fan fiction based on and including material derived from a role-playing game licensed by Paramount. The author of this work will neither seek nor accept compensation for it. Any trademarked names are used in a fictional manner; no infringement is intended upon the copyrights, patents, etc. of Paramount Pictures/CBS Studios, Modiphius Entertainment, or anyone else.

Prologue

PERSONAL LOG – CAPTAIN DONAL MORGAN STARDATE 78983.10¹

By order of Starfleet I have assumed command of USS *Odyssey*, NCC-97000, currently in Spacedock awaiting final refit and certification for space flight. We have been assigned to the 20th Fleet under the command of Admiral April Hebert at Starbase 364 (Narendra Station) as part of a four-ship flotilla which will engage in the most extensive exploration of the Shackleton Expanse conducted by the Federation to date.



Source: Star Trek Online

With the appointment of Commander Miral Paris as my first officer, I have filled all command staff assignments. Our post-refit shakedown cruise will include traveling to Vulcan to bring Commander Paris aboard. We will then activate the ship's slipstream drive which should take us most of the way to Narendra Station. It's not much of a shakedown, but both ship and crew have impressed me with their readiness, and Starfleet is anxious for us to begin our first exploration mission.

My chief helmsman is a young lieutenant junior grade named Daniel Chung. I knew Danny's parents – they both served in Starfleet and were tragically killed in the destruction of the Starfleet recruiting facility last year at the hands of the Borg/Dominion alliance. Danny seems to have bounced back from the loss, and (as he told me) is eager to "steer a ship as far away from Earth as possible." I'm glad he'll be with us on *Odyssey* – he's a crackerjack pilot and navigator, and his family would be proud if they could see him now.

Ops is manned by a seemingly-capable Bolian lieutenant named Bandar with whom I never served, but my chief engineer is quite familiar to me: Lieutenant Commander Arex Paupaub, a Tellarite who was my assistant engineer aboard the *Sovereign* several years ago. On *Sovereign* Mr. Paupaub was referred to as "The Boar" with equal parts affection and respect, and more than a little fear. He tells me he's eager to get his paws on the *Odyssey's* quantum slipstream drive.

I requested and received two other officers from the *Sovereign*: Lieutenant Commander Dyrach B'sov, an Andorian who will serve as chief tactical and security officer, and chief science officer Lieutenant Commander Audra Odan, a joined Trill. Rounding out the command crew will be a Vulcan, Commander (Doctor) Storan. I've never had a Vulcan chief medical officer before – the Vulcans are not traditionally known for their empathy, but Doctor Storan seems to have Sickbay running very efficiently and effectively, and I've yet to hear any complaints from the crew about his bedside manner (or anything else). I've also been assigned a Betazoid communications chief, Ensign Telavi, recently graduated from the Academy.

I don't know much about the other ship commanders in the flotilla. The USS *Bellerophon* is an *Intrepid*-class cruiser commanded by Captain Jefferson Blackmer. His service record is steady, if unimpressive. I've never met him. This will be his first deep space assignment.

The captain of the *Akira*-class USS *Thunderchild* is slightly more familiar to me, Captain T'Shira. I met her once on Vulcan, and we conversed briefly about tactics. She is a veteran of the Frontier Day attack – while

¹ Each stardate increment = 33% of a day (8 hours). 3 increments = 1 day. 1,095 increments = 1 year. (Decimals indicate 1/10th of a day, or c. 2.5 hours.) I've attempted some consistency with this throughout the campaign, but math is hard...

her ship was assimilated along with most of the fleet, T'Shira was able to regain command just before the *Enterprise-D* destroyed the Borg cube. *Thunderchild* itself has seen significant action against the Borg prior to T'Shira assuming command, including helping to repel the 2373 Borg attack on Earth. If we encounter the Borg in the Beta or Delta Quadrants, it will help to have an experienced hand at *Thunderchild's* helm.

Admiral Janeway tells me that I was selected for this command in part due to my significant experience with the Klingon Empire and culture, Narendra Station being a joint-Federation/Klingon station. Both polities are eager to further explore the Shackleton Expanse. In fact, a Klingon vessel will be added to our flotilla at some point, but for some unexplained reason the Klingons seem to be dragging their feet determining which of their ships will ultimately be assigned to the task force.

That has to be irritating the heck out of General Kargan, the Klingon co-commander of the starbase. We're old friends. I served with him briefly aboard the USS *Sutherland* while he participated in the Starfleet/IKDF Officer Exchange Program – in fact, it was Kargan who encouraged me to participate in the program myself the following year. I encountered him again a year later when I defeated him – but just barely – in the finals of the Forcas III Bat'leth Competition, and we drank ourselves to near-unconsciousness together afterwards. Sometimes I can still feel that particular bloodwine hangover. It will be good to see Kargan again, and I'm eager to work with him. I don't recall having met Admiral Hebert, the Federation co-commander.

Starfleet has largely recovered from the Borg/Dominion attack on Earth last year, and after serving primarily military and defense assignments for the last several years, it will be good to set out on a true exploration mission. It occurs to me that this will be my first pure space exploration mission since joining Starfleet. I've been brushing up on first contact regulations and protocols and the Prime Directive, as well as studying the technical manuals on the *Odyssey* class and the other flotilla ships. The *Odyssey* class is the largest spaceframe in the Fleet, and I'll basically be in command of a small city in space, with more than 2,000 crew members.

We're scheduled to leave Spacedock in 48 hours, so it's time to conduct a final walkabout of each department, and I have scheduled a final pre-launch briefing and review of our mission orders with the command crew.

Computer, end recording.

PERSONAL LOG – ENSIGN ALIA TELAVI, CHIEF COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER, USS ODYSSEY NCC-97000 STARDATE 78985.6



I have been equal parts excited and terrified by the prospect of being given my first assignment upon receiving my Starfleet commission: a deep-space exploration mission aboard an *Odyssey*-class starship heading to the Shackleton Expanse! I'm still kinda trying to figure out how I got here, but the story is straightforward enough:

We had a guest speaker during one of our last classes before graduation: Captain Donal Morgan, who had just received orders to assume command of *Odyssey*. The topic of the lecture was supposed to focus on practical applications and challenges presented by the Prime Directive, but the enthusiasm of my classmates for hearing more about the captain's upcoming mission derailed that plan within the first few minutes.

Responding to a question, Captain Morgan described his philosophy of first contact scenarios and landing party composition. He mentioned that he was still in the process of recruiting his command crew, and he noted that one position he had yet to fill was that of a chief communications officer.

At that, several eyes turned to me, even though I wasn't the only Communications major in the room. I raised my hand for a question:

"Captain, these days most starships rely on the bridge Operations Officer to handle communications functions. You're planning to have a comms specialist on your bridge?"

He replied, "Yes. In fact, I'm interested in finding someone in the Fleet – or perhaps among you midshipmen – who has some telepathic ability, perhaps even a Betazoid."

At that, almost ALL eyes went to me. If the captain noticed that, he didn't show it.

He continued, "You see, in first contact situations the very first moment of interaction with an alien species can evolve into either a peaceful exchange or very hostile conflict – and either one can happen in not much more time than it took me to say this. I think it would be very helpful to have someone on the team who can provide a basic assessment of the intent, attitudes and emotions of the alien individual or collective being approached without resorting to or waiting for scans which might not be possible given the circumstances.

"I'd like to be able to assess the level of threat quickly, if necessary, and take more appropriate cautions if warranted. Knowing the motivations of your alien counterpart can inform your own approach and decision-making, and in the worst case scenario of a subsequent attack it can help you be better prepared to deal with that."

Lots of heads around the room nodded, even while many gazes remained focused in my direction.

Then the captain chuckled, and he said, "Why? Do you know anyone who meets those specifications, Cadet?"

At that point I wanted to melt into my seat, but I managed to return the captain's look and say, "Yes, sir, I do!"

"See me after class," he said.

The conversation in the hallway was brief. Captain Morgan said, "Cadet Telavi, I know who you are, and I've reviewed your Academy records. I didn't come to guest lecture this particular class at random. How'd you like to join us as *Odysey's* chief communications officer?"

I replied, "Deep space is a huge dream of mine, sir. But I'm sure you have many cadets and officers to choose from."

He said, "I do. And I have plenty of commanders and lieutenants on my command staff, some of whom have been with me on other assignments. But for this position I'm looking for a fresh face – an ensign, someone whose experience doesn't yet cloud their impressions or judgement. As I told you in class, I want my communications chief to advise me absent any preconceived notions. And your particular telepathic abilities can provide me with an edge in first contacts, as I also said.

"So how about it, Ensign? You wanna come explore some new stars with us?"

And the rest, as they say, is history...

**BRIDGE FLIGHT RECORDER TRANSCRIPT – COMMAND BRIDGE, USS ODYSSEY NCC-97000
STARDATE 78991.35**

CAPT. DONAL MORGAN, COMMANDING OFFICER: All stations, status report.

LT. CMDR. AREX PAUPAUB, CHIEF ENGINEER: Impulse engines nominal, warp engines powered and standing by, quantum slipstream drive functional.

LT. CMDR. DYRAH B'SOV, CHIEF TACTICAL AND SECURITY OFFICER: All tactical systems nominal and on standby.

LT. CMDR. AUDRA ODAN, CHIEF SCIENCE OFFICER: Scanners and sensors functioning and reading five by five.

LT. BANDAR, CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER: Ops is nominal.

LT. (j.g.) DANIEL CHUNG, CHIEF FLIGHT CONTROLLER: Flight controls nominal, maneuvering thrusters standing by.

MORGAN: Very well. Ensign Telavi, please ask Spacedock to open the “garage.”

ENSIGN ALIA TELAVI, CHIEF COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER: Aye, Captain. Spacedock this is USS *Odyssey*, requesting authorization to depart.

SPACEDOCK CONTROLLER (*on comms*): *Odyssey* this is Spacedock. You are cleared for departure. Spacedoors opening.

MORGAN: Clear all moorings, stand by maneuvering thrusters.

BANDAR: Spacedock reads all moorings clear.

MORGAN: Thrusters, Mr. Chung.

CHUNG: Thrusters at station keeping, sir.

MORGAN: Ahead half thrusters. Take us out, Danny.

CHUNG: Aye, Captain. Ahead half.

BANDAR: We have cleared Spacedock, Captain, and are free and clear to navigate.

MORGAN: Excellent. Mr. Chung, engage impulse engines and plot a course – best speed to Vulcan. Standby warp drive.

CHUNG: Course plotted and laid in, sir.

PAUPAUB: Warp drive at your discretion, Captain.



MORGAN: Punch it, Danny.

CHUNG: Aye, sir, engaging at Warp Nine.

MORGAN: Commander B'sov, you have the conn. I'll be in my ready room.

CAPTAIN'S LOG – STARDATE 78992.6

Odyssey is *en route* to Vulcan and should arrive in about three-and-a-half days at present speed. Ship and crew performing well.

CAPTAIN'S LOG – STARDATE 79001.1

Commander Paris has been collected from Vulcan, and is settling into her duties. Per Starfleet orders we are now under way to Narendra Station in the Shackleton Expanse to meet with our flotilla. Under normal circumstances this trip would take more than a month, but with the *Odyssey's* quantum slipstream drive we can arrive in the station's sector in only 30 minutes. After that, we'll need to recharge the drive for about 12 hours before we can make another quantum jump.

I'm considering cruising through the sector at warp instead of making the second jump in-sector. It will require another four or five days travel at maximum warp to reach Narendra from the terminus of our slipstream, but we're not required to be on station for several more days, and a nice, leisurely cruise would give the crew even more of a chance to settle in as we travel through deep space. But we need a good test of the slipstream drive, so we'll forgo the indulgence this time.

EPISODE ONE: "Toxic"

(PDF, *Mission Briefs: Disasters*, by Tilly Bridges and Susan Bridges, Modiphius 2021)

CAPTAIN'S LOG – STARDATE 79005

While traveling in slipstream past the Paulson Nebula, the *Odyssey* received a distress call from a Federation shuttle which is apparently trapped just inside the center of the nebula. Science Officer Odan has informed me that the area consists of highly reactive gasses which will interfere with our scans, communications and transporters, not to mention shields, so *Odyssey* won't be able to enter the area safely. Tractor beams will be similarly ineffective. Our *Aquarius* escort may also be too large, so Engineering is working on outfitting a rescue shuttle with reinforced shields. Commander Paris and Doctor Storan will crew our shuttle.

CAPTAIN'S LOG – SUPPLEMENTAL

The rescue team was successful in reaching the shuttle and establishing a docking link. The shuttle's lone occupant was a Trill who identified herself as Bizek Hox, a scientist. Doctor Storan was successful in stabilizing Doctor Hox sufficiently to begin the return trip to *Odyssey*, and the abandoned shuttle was destroyed by a matter/antimatter imbalance that Commander Paris was not able to circumvent. The moment our rescue shuttle exited the nebula a Romulan scout ship decloaked and advanced on the shuttle, weapons and shields armed. *Odyssey* is moving to intercept.

**FLIGHT RECORDER TRANSCRIPT – COMMAND BRIDGE, USS ODYSSEY NCC-97000
STARDATE 79005.1**



Source: *Star Trek Online*

MORGAN: Red alert. Intercept course, Mister Chung.

CHUNG: Aye, sir. Romulan vessel range 50 kilometers and closing.

MORGAN: Mr. Bandar, position of the shuttle?

BANDAR: Sir, the shuttle is 30 kilometers and closing off our starboard bow, bearing zero-two-zero mark three, heading towards us at maximum speed.

MORGAN: Transporter room, stand by with a lock on each shuttle passenger, in case this goes south. Ensign, open a channel to the Romulans.

TELAVI: Channel open, sir.

MORGAN: This is the Federation Starship *Odyssey* calling the Romulan vessel. We are on a rescue mission. Please do not interfere. Disengage with our shuttle immediately, or you will be fired upon.

TELAVI: No response, Captain.

MORGAN: Distance between the Romulans and the shuttle?

BANDAR: 18 kilometers and closing, Captain.

MORGAN: Romulan vessel, I repeat: This is the U.S.S. *Odyssey* on an intercept course. You are operating illegally in Federation space and threatening our shuttle. Disengage and stand down immediately or we will open fire. This is your final warning.

[silence]

MORGAN: Close the channel, Ensign. Range to target?

B'SOV: 15 kilometers, Captain.

BANDAR: Sir, the Romulan has opened fire on the shuttle.

MORGAN: Has the shuttle been hit?

ODAN: Negative, Captain. Commander Paris is flying a very effective evasive pattern.

MORGAN: Are they in transporter range yet?

BANDAR: Negative, sir.

MORGAN: Dammit. Dyrak, target the Romulans. I want a full spread of quantum torpedoes on my mark.

B'SOV: Torpedoes armed and ready, sir.

MORGAN: Fire!

B'SOV: Torpedoes away and on target. (pause) The Romulan vessel has been damaged and is moving off, Captain. They've cloaked and gone to warp.

MORGAN: Good shooting, Commander. Morgan to Commander Paris. What is your condition?

PARIS (*on comms*): The crew is all fine, sir – thanks for the help. We have recovered Doctor Hox, who has sustained serious injuries. Doctor Storan is tending to her now. Minor hull and engine damage to the shuttle, but we're still flying and en route to *Odyssey*.

MORGAN: Transporter room, lock onto Doctor Storan and our guest, and transport them directly to Sickbay. Number One, bring the shuttle home.

PARIS: Aye, sir. Shuttlebay One stand by for recovery.

CAPTAIN'S LOG – STARDATE 79005.65

Doctor Hox was sufficiently stabilized in Sickbay that I was able to question her in a limited way. Based on what I was able to piece together from her statement, it seems that the Hox symbiont was considered a high-value target for the Romulans. Dr. Hox is unable (or unwilling) to explain why.

I reported the incident to Starfleet Command, and the Federation lodged a protest with the Romulan Star Empire. The Romulan response was...predictably less than satisfying, stating that they had no knowledge of the scout ship's activities in Federation space. I leave the rest to the diplomats, but for now it does not seem like further hostilities are on the horizon.

Odyssey is now en route to Starbase 157 where we will transfer Doctor Hox before returning to our course for the Shackleton Expanse and Narendra Station.

EPISODE TWO: "Plato's Cave"

(Strange New Worlds, pp. 22-36, written by Marco Rafalà)

CAPTAIN'S LOG – STARDATE 79008.75

Starfleet Command has once again routed us off our course to Shackleton. After transferring Doctor Hox to Starbase 157, we have been sent to resupply Outpost 10, a remote Federation archeological outpost located on Tanghal IV, a world on the fringes of the Azure Nebula. I have notified Narendra Station of the additional delay.

CAPTAIN'S LOG – STARDATE 79011.3

We have assumed standard orbit around Tanghal IV, an Earth-like planet in the throes of an ice age. For the last five years it has also been home to a team of Federation archeologists and paleoclimatologists. Their last report indicated a remarkable find beneath the ice: a collection of this world's crop diversity stored in a kind of "doomsday seed vault." Our mission is to resupply and check in on the outpost's personnel.

The outpost is led by Doctor Jannick Stoltz, a renowned Federation archeologist responsible for discovering the remains of several ancient civilizations. My Trill science officer reports that the most recent previous host to her Odan symbiont, Norri Odan, was well acquainted with Dr. Stoltz and his work, having accompanied him on one of his many expeditions.

CAPTAIN'S LOG – SUPPLEMENTAL

The outpost has not responded to our hails, and scans show no life readings anywhere on the planet, including the outpost. There are no power readings from the outpost, and the internal temperature is -52, suggesting life support has failed.

Commander Odan has also determined that the outpost's schematics do not match those reported by the library computer. There seems to be a new section positioned precisely over the excavated seed vault. This new section is about five months old, which coincides with the discovery of the seed vault as detailed in the outpost's reports. This is not unusual in and of itself, since the outpost has a modular design that can be changed to meet the needs of the mission. But sensors also detect a massive structure underneath the seed vault, shaped like a missile silo and registering a very faint, intermittent power signature.

I am obviously concerned by the lack of life signs and the apparent condition of the outpost. A landing party consisting of myself and Commanders Odan, Storok and B'Sov will investigate.

CAPTAIN'S LOG – SUPPLEMENTAL

The door mechanism to the outpost's control center was fused by what looked like a phaser blast. We forced our way inside only to discover Dr. Stoltz's frozen and lifeless body, sitting at a computer terminal and with a power cable tightened around his neck. It appears to have been murder, but there have been no other signs of violence thus far. Nor have we found any other life signs or casualties in the outpost complex.

We needed to restore power in order to access the outpost's computer logs, so Engineer Paupaub beamed down with the necessary equipment. While he worked on the reactor we were attacked by an automated security drone but managed to destroy it without injury to the landing party. Mr. Paupaub repaired the reactor, and the outpost computer started broadcasting a variety of recordings simultaneously, and with increasing volume. Commanders Paupaub and Odan were able to shut down the simultaneous playback, but

noted that their efforts seemed to be opposed, as if someone with remote access was working against them. I ordered the *Odyssey* to upload the outpost's data logs for further study.

There continue to be no life signs aside from that of the landing party. In the computer logs we isolated a recording by Dr. Stoltz in which he reports that all outpost personnel are dead, but he offers no cause aside from some "voices" which "never stop" – obviously referring to the computer playback. He also noted that "there is something else here, buried in the ice." My science officer reports no known pathogens in the air, so absent any other evidence we will simply need to keep searching.

CAPTAIN'S LOG – SUPPLEMENTAL

We have heard what sounds like the cries of a child, but tricorders still register no life signs, nor any interference that would inhibit our scans. We remain alert for more of those security drones as we approach the seed vault, which is the apparent source of the sounds.

CAPTAIN'S LOG – STARDATE 79011.5

The away team is back aboard *Odyssey* after a harrowing and not entirely successful mission.

Following the child's cries, we passed thru the seed vault and discovered what seems to have been a kind of "doomsday shelter." We found a second control center and a computer file describing a self-proclaimed "entrepreneur" named Tanner Cole, who constructed the shelter to protect himself and about 150 residents from the imminent meteorological facing the planet – but only for the "right price." We also encountered three more security drones but were able to destroy them.

On a lower level, presumably Mr. Cole's laboratory, we found a massive computer server connected to more than 100 humanoid-shaped devices that seemed to be stasis pods. Cables connected each pod to the server, while strapped into four surgical chairs were the bodies of Federation science personnel – all dead, with skulls opened and electrode arrays implanted within. The wounds mirrored those which appeared on the back of Dr. Stoltz's head.

Commander Odan and Dr. Storok were able to determine that the server was a quantum computer far more powerful than those used in the remainder of the outpost. The computer had its own self-perpetuating power source, which explains the faint readings we previously obtained. Dr. Storok theorized that the server had somehow uploaded the consciousnesses of the Federation science team, merging them with those of whatever entities had been uploaded before. The result was the creation of an insane machine consciousness that sought additional personalities in order to attempt to sort itself out, but this process obviously failed.

At that moment, a voice issued from my communicator – a very cold, machine-like voice that stated the machine had control of the *Odyssey*, and that we must comply and agree to be assimilated into the server, or additional personnel from the ship would be brought down to suffer the same fate. I was able to contact the *Odyssey* briefly, and Commander Paris reported that the ship was at Red Alert. Shortly after uploading the outpost logs, the ship's computers began "going haywire" (to use Commander Paris' words) with some sort of virus controlling key systems. The ship was on backup life support, but could maintain orbit without power for two to three hours if necessary.

The machine voice assured us that our crew was healthy, but said the machine had the ability to bring other crew members down to serve its purposes if we refused. As if to prove its point, Ensign Telavi materialized in the server chamber, stating that *Odyssey* had received orders from me to have her beam down. She also

reported sensing multiple “presences” nearby, concentrated in a very specific space that coincided with the location of the server tower.

While it seemed unlikely that Commander Paris would readily agree to transport crew members to the surface one at a time, I did not want to risk exposing more *Odyssey* personnel to danger. The machine ordered and us into a holding room just off the server tower and locked us in.

It became apparent that we could communicate verbally with the machine entity, but it was only able to reply by displaying words on any nearby LCARS monitor. I managed to convince it that we might be able to help determine what went wrong with the original consciousness downloads of the Tanghal civilization, and it agreed to release two *Odyssey* crew members to conduct an investigation. Commanders Odan and Storak volunteered. Through computer text, similar to that used by the machine consciousness, my crew members were eventually contacted by a young boy, apparently the son of a technician of the shelter complex. He was never meant to be saved, but after the shelter’s wealthy residents had entered the complex and were assimilated by Cole’s machine, his father broke into the complex and somehow uploaded his son’s mind into the server. The boy’s mind was the last one uploaded, but after he was discovered by the consciousness of Tanner Cole, Cole gassed the facility, murdering all the remaining employees and their families.

Commanders Storok and Odan were able to isolate a backup server and load the boy’s consciousness into it as a method of protecting him from “Cole” or the merged machine entity. Meanwhile, Mr. Paupaub was able to override the locking mechanism on the door of the holding room in which we were trapped, and we were able to rejoin the other members of the away team.

After convincing the boy that he was safe from harm, he reported that he was able to purge the outpost virus from the *Odyssey*’s computers, and a surge of energy issued from the computer terminal we were using to communicate with him. He expressed profound guilt at what had happened, and knowing that he would never be able to assume a corporal body again, he begged us to destroy the server, including him and the corrupted machine consciousness.

Commanders Paupaub, Storok and Odan attempted to determine a way to save the boy’s consciousness, but were unfortunately not successful. At the boy’s pleading, and on my authority and command, Paupaub located the server’s primary motherboard and deactivated it, disconnecting all power sources. He also unplugged every stasis pod from the main server.

Commander Odan believes the age of the server to be somewhere on the order of 10,000 years old. We believe that Tanner Cole was able to convince the approximately 150 wealthy survivalists who joined him in the shelter to upload their minds into the central server in order to preserve themselves against a time when they could be restored to their bodies, presumably after the planetary crisis had passed. However, none of the stasis pods were active when we arrived, and each one contained the decayed remains of a humanoid. In the meantime, the many consciousnesses in the server merged and were driven insane by isolation. The system seems to have been trying to inhabit a new corporeal entity by tapping into the members of the Federation science team when they discovered the shelter.

We regret that we were unable to comply with Starfleet’s General Order Two which generally prohibits the killing of intelligent life forms, but we were unable to determine how to remove and isolate the individual consciousnesses in the server. Even if we had been successful in that, the only available bodies in which such consciousnesses could be implanted would be *Odyssey* personnel, which was obviously not an option even if it had been possible. Deactivating the server and thus terminating the consciousnesses within (including that of the technician’s son, restored to the main server at his insistence) was therefore our only option.

The computer virus that infected *Odyssey* was purged, as the boy promised, along with any historical data developed by the science outpost team. Now that any danger has presumably been neutralized, I recommend that Starfleet and the Federation Science Council dispatch a science vessel to further study this server complex and the civilization that constructed it. However, I strongly recommend that any future science teams avoid restoring power to the central computer server, or any other data storage devices that are discovered. While we believe that we have neutralized the machine entity, we cannot be 100% certain that a dormant aspect of the consciousness has not sheltered in some backup server, in much the same way we isolated the boy's mind.

Commanders Paupaub and Odan have asked for a day to restore systems and ensure that the virus has indeed been removed from *Odyssey* before we resume our course for the Shackleton Expanse.

EPISODE THREE: "Border Dispute"

(These Are The Voyages, pp. 22-36, written by Andrew Peregrine)

CAPTAIN'S LOG – STARDATE 79013.4

Our travel to Shackleton has been delayed yet again. We are now *en route* to the Romulan Neutral Zone near the Lambda Hydrae system after receiving an emergency subspace transmission from Admiral Janeway at Starfleet Headquarters. It appears that one of our ships, the U.S.S. *Nightingale* (a Nova-class science vessel), has suffered a navigational error and entered the Neutral Zone by accident. The Romulans have already fired on the *Nightingale*, crippling her on the wrong side of the border, and are claiming that the ship is forfeit and the crew are prisoners of war.

Among the briefing files the admiral sent was the last communication from the *Nightingale*, clearly a distress call:

This is an S.O.S. broadcast on all Starfleet frequencies. This is Commander Alison Lewis of the Federation starship Nightingale to any nearby vessel. We have entered the Neutral Zone by accident, and have been intercepted by a Romulan warbird which has engaged us. Captain Blake was killed in the initial attack, and we have lost main power. Warp drive is offline and most ship systems are down with the exception of life support. Repairs are underway, but most of our Engineering crew are casualties. The Romulans have declared us prisoners of war, and stated their intention to transport us to Romulus for trial once their own ship is repaired.

It is not clear why we did not intercept this distress call before it made its way to Starfleet Command, but Commander Odan assures me that any number of regional subspace phenomena could be responsible. Regardless, Admiral Janeway has ordered us to assist and defuse the situation however we can. However we are also under strict orders to avoid crossing the Neutral Zone ourselves, as the Romulans have thus far maintained their forces on their side of the border.

This increased Romulan activity is a concern, and Starfleet has ordered us to obtain any information that might explain it and help us to both shore up our defenses and avert another war.

CAPTAIN'S LOG – SUPPLEMENTAL

We've arrived at the designated coordinates near the Neutral Zone and established communications with both the *Nightingale* and a Romulan D'Deridex class warbird, the IRW *T'Varen*, under the command of a Romulan named Mheven. I attempted to assure her that the *Nightingale's* incursion into the Neutral Zone was a

navigational error, but Commander Mheven was not receptive. It appears that both vessels were damaged in the exchange, and Mheven reiterated her intention to take the *Nightingale* and her crew as spoils of war.

Nevertheless, she did agree to allow us to maneuver within transporter range (without crossing into Romulan space, of course) and beam engineering and medical crews to the *Nightingale* to render aid. Commander Paris beamed over with three away teams consisting of Commander Paupaub, Lieutenant Bandar, Doctor Storan and some additional engineering, medical and security personnel.

My Betazoid communications officer, Ensign Telavi, reports sensing a significant amount of anxiety on the Romulan commander's part, as if she is stalling for time – likely time to repair her ship. Perhaps I can parley that anxiety into an advantage for us, in future discussions.

The *Nightingale's* current ranking officer, Commander Lewis, has verified that the ship strayed into Romulan space due to a legitimate navigational error. The ship is as badly damaged as initially reported, and our crews are working together to repair her. More than half her crew were killed, including Captain Laura Blake who was found in her quarters slumped against her computer console. For some reason, she successfully initiated a command lockout of all ship systems except life support. Commander Paupaub is not confident that he can reverse the lockout, even with Commander Lewis' codes, but he and Lieutenant Bandar are working on it.

We are working somewhat against the clock, as we assume that the Romulans will resume their aggressive stance once their own ship has been repaired. The *Odyssey* outmatches the *T'Varen* tactically, but our orders against crossing the Neutral Zone will prevent us from engaging directly. Commander B'Sov is maintaining active scans of the region to avoid us being surprised by another Romulan vessel.

FLIGHT RECORDER TRANSCRIPT – COMMAND BRIDGE, USS ODYSSEY NCC-97000 STARDATE 79013.9

MORGAN: Ensign Telavi, open a channel to the *T'Varen*.

TELAVI: Aye, sir. Channel open and Romulan Commander Mheven is standing by.

MORGAN: Onscreen, please. Commander Mheven, thank you for allowing our repair crews to transport to the *Nightingale*.

MHEVEN, COMMANDER OF IRW *T'VAREN*: It matters not, Captain. Once my vessel is repaired, we will take the spy ship in tow regardless of who is aboard. Your crews will be prisoners of war, and—



Source: *Star Trek Online*

MORGAN: Yes, yes, I understand your intent, Commander, but I'd like to offer an alternative.

MHEVEN: I'm listening.

MORGAN: Allow us the chance to repair the *Nightingale* and bring her back into Federation space. We will not repair her weapons or defensive systems until she is back across the Neutral Zone. You can make your own repairs, and we can both simply withdraw without this escalating into interstellar war. (pause) It sounds like a bargain to me, Commander. What do you say?

MHEVEN: Your proposal is not without merit, Captain, except that I have strict orders about how to dispose of Federation spy vessels.

MORGAN: The *Nightingale* was not conducting spy operations. It is a small science craft with limited weaponry. Really, Commander, if we were planning to launch an invasion, don't you think we'd send a larger ship? Or, y'know, maybe a fleet?

MHEVEN: You DID send a larger ship! YOU are here!

MORGAN: Of course we are – but only in response to our distressed craft. Commander, I don't know what your losses were during the exchange of fire, but the *Nightingale* lost half her crew, including her captain. Let's both walk away before we can't anymore.

MHEVEN: I honestly wish I could agree to your terms, Captain, but my orders are clear. Our own warp drive was incapacitated in the attack, but we will have weapons, shields and transporters operational very quickly. Once we do, I may provide you with the courtesy of enough advance warning that will enable you to remove your own rescue crews, but the *Nightingale* and her remaining crew are my prisoners.

MORGAN: That doesn't make any sense. You have to know that we will destroy the *Nightingale* ourselves before we allow the vessel to be captured.

MHEVEN: My tactical officer assures me that is quite impossible.

MORGAN: You'd be surprised, Commander. Please don't test this theory. *Odyssey* out. Commander Odan, I want fixed scans on that warbird, and regular reports on their own repair progress. I want to know the moment *before* they fix their weapons, shields, tractor beams or transporter systems.

ODAN: Aye, sir.

MORGAN: Morgan to Paris. Commander, make sure every *Odyssey* away team member is armed and accompanied by security personnel. The Romulans may try to board the *Nightingale* before we can move her out of range. If any Romulans beam aboard that ship, your orders are to defend the vessel. If you can't defend her, figure out a way to destroy her.

PARIS (*on comms*): Acknowledged, Captain. Self-destruct is non-operational--

MORGAN: OK, Miral, but you've got to figure out a Plan B. Understood?

PARIS: Aye, sir. We'll get to work. Paris out.

MORGAN: Morgan to Commander Paupaub. What's your estimate on getting the *Nightingale's* propulsion systems back online?

PAUPAUB (*on comms*): Captain, it's a right royal mess, over here. I can't even give you an estimate yet. And forget about weapons and shields—

MORGAN: You CAN forget about weapons and shields, Commander. I want you to focus on the ship's engines. If we can move the *Nightingale* back to our side of the Neutral Zone we might just be able to avoid this conflict.

PAUPAUB: Aye, sir. Paupaub out.

MORGAN: Maintain red alert and put the *Aquarius* on standby alert, in case things go south.

BANDAR: Aye, sir. *Aquarius* crew to your ship on standby alert. I say again, *Aquarius* crew, man your ship and maintain standby alert.

CAPTAIN'S LOG – STARDATE 79014.6

Our repair race with the Romulans has entered its second hour, with neither side making any apparent progress. I'm a little surprised that we haven't seen any other Romulan ships – indeed, we've detected no external communications from the *T'Varen* at all.

I am also curious to understand how quickly the warbird intercepted the *Nightingale*, which was barely across the Romulan side of the Neutral Zone before hostilities began. Finally, how was a Starfleet *Nova*-class ship able to cause significant damage to a Romulan *D'Deridex* class warbird so easily? It's almost as if the Romulans were stalking the *Nightingale*, but approached and fired upon her before raising its own shields – which would be a foolish mistake by any starship commander. Unless there was a reason...

CAPTAIN'S LOG – SUPPLEMENTAL

While repair efforts continue on both sides, Doctor Storok has made a potentially-disturbing discovery: It was originally assumed that Captain Blake died when a bulkhead collapsed in her quarters, causing a traumatic head wound. However, Doctor Storok believes he has found evidence that the captain died of asphyxiation, marks on her neck are consistent with strangulation. Captain Blake's body has some other wounds which are consistent with physical combat, only some of which might have been explained by the bulkhead failure.

The doctor believes the evidence supports the theory that there is or was a murderer on board the *Nightingale*. I have put all security and away teams on alert to be watchful for any suspicious activity among the *Nightingale* crew.

Commander Paupaub has reported another curious discovery: Having restored power to the ship's navigation systems, he and Mr. Bandar have observed that the *Nightingale* was deliberately placed on the course that sent her over the Neutral Zone, and that there was nothing wrong with navigational control. Upon investigating the navigational sensor array itself, my engineers determined that someone deliberately rearranged the system's isolinear chips to lengthen the scan cycle, which may have prevented the *Nightingale* bridge crew from knowing that they were in Romulan space.

Mr. Paupaub believes the *Nightingale's* impulse engines will be repaired within the hour, meaning that we can maneuver her back to Federation space – hopefully before the Romulans can do anything about it. I remain puzzled by the fact that we still have not encountered any Romulan reinforcements, nor have we detected any external communications from the *T'Varen*. Why aren't they calling for backup?

Commander Odan has conducted a more thorough scan of the *T'Varen* which confirmed at least one of my suspicions: The Romulans did not suffer the extensive damage that they claimed. Upon detecting our scans, Commander Mheven hailed us to demand that all *Odyssey* crew remove themselves from the *Nightingale* within the hour, and that any Federation personnel remaining aboard the ship after that time would be taken as prisoners. I do not understand what they are waiting for.

Commander Paupaub informs me that Captain Blake's computer lockout cannot be circumvented until the *Nightingale's* computer core has been fully reset. He believes the ship's impulse drive will be repaired before then, but if the *T'Varen's* weapons are active the Romulans will destroy *Nightingale* the moment we try to move it. I have ordered acting Captain Lewis to conduct a more thorough scan from her location, but the ship's scanners and sensors remain partially damaged. Lewis was reluctant to dedicate repair teams to the

computer core versus weapon repair, but she responded to my pulling rank and giving her a direct order. Her acting science officer, Lieutenant Tellek, was equally eager to have the core repaired.

CAPTAIN'S LOG – SUPPLEMENTAL

A sudden explosion in *Nightingale's* engineering section took the ship's impulse drive back offline. While repair crews mobilized, security detected an attempt to launch a shuttlecraft. Commander Paupaub was able to lock out the *Nightingale's* main shuttlebay doors and tractor the shuttle back into launch position. There was one Starfleet crewmember aboard: Lieutenant Tellek. Doctor Storak conducted a full examination of the lieutenant and was able to determine that Tellek is not Vulcan, but Romulan.

I believe the diplomatic tables have turned.

FLIGHT RECORDER TRANSCRIPT – COMMAND BRIDGE, USS ODYSSEY NCC-97000 STARDATE 79016.9

MORGAN: Ensign Telavi, open a channel to the *T'Varen*.

TELAVI: Channel open, sir. The Romulan commander is standing by.

MORGAN: Commander Mheven, perhaps you would care to explain the presence of a Romulan spy aboard a Federation starship?

MHEVEN: I have no idea what you're talking about.

MORGAN: Of course not. His name is Tellek, and he is posing as a Vulcan member of the *Nightingale's* crew. He's got a fairly lengthy Starfleet record, so I can only conclude that he has been a long term sleeper agent of the Romulan Star Empire. He is currently in our custody.

MHEVEN: Captain, this dialogue is pointless. You have less than twenty-five of your Earth minutes to evacuate your ship's crew from the *Nightingale* and withdraw.

MORGAN: No, I'll tell you what's going to happen instead, Commander: You are going to lower your shields so the *Nightingale* can beam your agent to you aboard the *T'Varen*. In exchange, you are going to allow the *Nightingale* to cross back into Federation space unharmed, and all vessels will withdraw peacefully.

MHEVEN: This man is not a Romulan agent –

MORGAN: Save it, Mheven. He's a Romulan, and there can be only one explanation for why he is even aboard the *Nightingale*. Whatever sensor data the ship has obtained can't be more valuable to you than a highly-trained agent. Besides, the ship's computer core is damaged, and accessing that data will be impossible for some time. Assuming we don't blow it up, first. Or were you after something else?

MHEVEN: Bah, it is no matter. *[Communication ends.]*

ODAN: Captain, the Romulans are charging weapons and targeting the *Nightingale*.

MORGAN: Screw my orders; we're going in. Mr. Chung, close the distance to the Romulan vessel, full impulse. Weapons and shields at maximum.

CHUNG: Aye, sir. Estimated time to intercept, two minutes.

TELAVI: Captain, Commander Paris is hailing us from the *Nightingale*.

MORGAN: Onscreen, Ensign.

PARIS (*on comms*): *Odyssey*, do not cross into the Neutral Zone. We have restored impulse engines and are making our way across the border, taking evasive action from the Romulans.

MORGAN: Belay that helm order, Danny – hold position, maintain weapons and shields.

ODAN: The Romulans are firing.

CAPTAIN'S LOG – SUPPLEMENTAL

The Romulans were unsuccessful in destroying the *Nightingale*, thanks to the expert piloting of Commander Paris and the engineering skills of Commander Paupaub and Lieutenant Bandar. The ship made it back across the Neutral Zone without suffering further damage, and the Romulans did not pursue, probably having assessed that they were outgunned by the *Odyssey*.

Mr. Paupaub was eventually able to restore warp power and enough systems to get the *Nightingale* operational, and acting Captain Lewis set course for Starbase 234 to effect further repairs. We were unsuccessful in obtaining more information from “Lieutenant Tellek,” including his Romulan name, but he will be transferred to Fleet Security at the starbase, and they will process him accordingly.

Odyssey is preparing a quantum slipstream jump that should take us right to Narendra Station, where we can finally begin our exploration mission.

EPISODE FOUR: “Briefing on Narendra Station”

(adapted from the *Shackleton Expanse Campaign Guide*, Modiphius, 2021)

SUBSPACE MESSAGE PACKET

TO: COMMANDER, USS ODYSSEY NCC-97000

FM: STATION COMMAND, STARBASE 364

STARDATE 79025

ADMIRAL APRIL HEBERT: Welcome to Narendra Station, Captain Morgan. I am Admiral Hebert, joint commander of Narendra. My apologies for sending this pre-recorded message, but I'll be rather pressed for time at the moment of your arrival on station. You and your crew were assigned to the 20th Fleet under my command, but you will not be added to the standard fleet rotation. As you know, your mission will be focused on exploring the Shackleton Expanse itself.

Your mission priorities are to increase our knowledge of the Expanse beyond the polities we have already encountered. But your secondary mission is to find, identify and (where possible) secure any and all Tiliikaal technology you encounter. Our resident civilian chief scientist, Doctor Taliaferro, will have much more to say about that during your briefing.

You won't be going alone. As you may know, I pulled the strings I needed to ensure that we got not one, but three vessels assigned to this mission. Very shortly our Klingon allies will be sending at least one warship, which may already be on station by the time you arrive.

Briefing's tomorrow morning at 0730, and we've arranged a small informal reception for you and your senior officers tomorrow evening, along with the command crews of the other ships in the flotilla.

I'm glad you and the *Odyssey* are here, Captain. See you tomorrow. Hebert out.

GENERAL KARGAN: Morgan, you unmitigated *petaQ*! When I heard that your ship was assigned to the Expanse, I howled with laughter. Finally, a starship captain who will spar with me, and drink bloodwine with me afterwards!

I am not so far removed from the command chair of the *Pagh* that I have forgotten the thrill of a new assignment and the challenge of being among the first into the unknown reaches of space. But make no mistake, the Expanse is not for the timid, and this assignment is not for the weak. Your Federation scientists believe there are disturbances and phenomena within the Expanse that require further study. Fine. I have no interest in such things unless they prove to be a threat to the Empire, our alliance, or this station. In that order.

But I have issued a request to Chancellor Martok to send me a proper warship and captain to support this project. While you manage the scientific portion of the mission, we will defend and fight whatever *Ha'DIbaH* dare to interfere. Rest assured we will defend you like an alpha targ defends its newborn, mewling brood.

Enough. There will be more time for talk later, and there is bloodwine to be consumed. I will try to save some for you.

Kargan out.

BRIEFING ROOM TRANSCRIPT, JOINT STATION COMMAND OFFICE STARBASE 364 STARDATE 79035.5

ADMIRAL APRIL HEBERT, JOINT COMMANDER,
STARBASE 364: Welcome again to Starbase 364,
Captain.

MORGAN: Thank you, Admiral.

GENERAL KARGAN, JOINT COMMANDER,
STARBASE 364: Morgan!! *HoS II' Dalo'Ha'chu'*
(trans. "You are a total waste of energy!")

MORGAN: General Kargan, *Dejpu'bogh Hov rur qabllj!* (trans. "Your face looks like a collapsed star!")



Source: *Shackleton Expanse Campaign Guide* (artist not credited)

(MORGAN butts heads with KARGAN, and the two laugh and clasp arms in welcome.)

HEBERT: I wasn't aware that the two of you were acquainted.

KARGAN: Forgive me, Admiral, for not mentioning that sooner. This *petaQ* served with me aboard the *Vor'cha* in the Officer Exchange Program. Then a year later he compounded the insult by besting me in the championship round of the *bat'leth* competition on Forcas III. He is the greatest HUMAN warrior I have ever encountered!

MORGAN: And you have grown old and fat, General. I hear this station has a passable Klingon training facility. I'm looking forward to cutting a few of those extra pounds from you in the *bat'leth* ring.

KARGAN: *HOOOO-HO-HO-HO!!!* It is indeed good to see you, my friend. Welcome!

MORGAN: General and Admiral, may I present my command crew?

HEBERT: Welcome, everyone. We can continue with the pleasantries at tonight's reception, but for now please take your seats so we can begin the briefing.

Some quick introductions: To my left is Captain T'sira of the *USS Thunderchild*, and next to her is Captain Jefferson Blackmer of the *USS Bellerophon*. To General Kargan's right is Captain Akul of the *IKS Mupwl'*, which just joined the task force yesterday.

General Kargan and I have agreed that operational control for any joint operations of the flotilla will be granted to Captain Morgan, as senior captain and the commander of the task force's largest vessel.

AKUL, COMMANDING OFFICER, *IKS Mupwl'*: What?! My ship and crew have been dragged to the karg's ass end of the galaxy to protect some Starfleet brats, and now I am expected to take *orders* from one of them?!

(KARGAN rises from his seat, grabs AKUL by the shoulders and lifts him over the back of his chair, throwing him to the deck.)

KARGAN: You *PETA'Q!!* This "Starfleet brat" holds more honor in his little finger than you have earned throughout your miserable life! When he speaks, you will *obey* as if the words were coming from my *own* mouth. Do you understand?! Or shall I find *another* commander for your pathetic vessel who *can* follow orders?

AKUL: ...I understand, General.

KARGAN: Now apologize and swear your allegiance and obedience to Captain Morgan, before I allow him to cut out your tongue and feed it to you.

MORGAN: That is not necessary, General –

KARGAN: Of course it's necessary, and you know it. *Well*, Akul?! Do not keep the captain waiting.

AKUL: Captain Morgan...I...apologize...and promise to defend your ship and crew as if they were my own. On my honor as a Klingon.

MORGAN: Your service is accepted, Captain. See that you adhere to your oath.

KARGAN: Oh, he will...

T'SIRA, COMMANDING OFFICER, *USS THUNDERCHILD*: Now that we have the introductions and posturing out of the way, may we continue with the briefing?

HEBERT: Excellent idea, Captain. Everyone please sit back down. Thank you. I'd like to turn the briefing over to the station's chief science officer, Doctor Helena Taliaferro.

TALIAFERRO: Thank you, Admiral. Ladies and gentlemen, this is a map of known space in the Shackleton Expanse, noting the systems and planets that have been charted with varying degrees of detail. You have all received reports including most of the research that has been collected on the various factions we have identified to date, but we expect that there are hundreds of others in the Expanse – perhaps thousands. Given this, we find it curious that neither the Federation nor the Klingon Empire have significant experience with any species residing in the Expanse, especially since it is possible that more than a few of them are warp-capable.

Per my recommendations to Admiral Hebert and General Kargan, each ship in the task force will be sent on exploration trajectories resembling the curved fingers of a hand. Because Starfleet is concerned about the extent to which the Romulans have already explored the Expanse, *USS Thunderchild* will take this “northward” track, with these subsequent courses followed by *Bellerophon*, *Mupwl’* and the *Odyssey* on this southern-most track.

BLACKMER: Doctor, if the Romulans are such a concern, why not put *Odyssey* on the track closest to the Neutral Zone? She’s our largest, best-armed ship.

HEBERT: I’ll answer that, Doctor. As large as the Expanse is, its entire charted width is within range of *Odyssey*’s quantum slipstream drive, so the *Odyssey* can respond to any challenges or distress calls from any of the other vessels in the flotilla almost immediately. Meanwhile, we want Captain Morgan and his crew focusing on exploration in the eastern sectors of the Expanse.

MORGAN: That makes tactical sense to me. We’ll never be more than twelve hours away from any of your positions, even if we have to fully charge our slipstream drive before engaging it. And far sooner than that, in most cases.

T’SIRA: Doctor, if I may, I am curious to know more about the Tilikaal. Do you have any additional research not included in our briefings that would help us to positively identify their culture and technology?

TALIAFERRO: The short answer is “no,” Captain. You have access to all the data we have compiled.

KARGAN: Let me reinforce what the Admiral has said about the Romulans. If the technology possessed by these so-called Tilikaal is as potent and powerful as has been suggested, it is imperative that Romulans not be permitted to find and exploit it.

MORGAN: They would probably say the same about us, General.

HEBERT: Without a doubt, Captain, but General Kargan is right. Both Starfleet and the Klingon Defense Force have expressed profound concerns about what little we’ve learned about the Tilikaal, and we need to progress beyond rumor and folklore and assemble some hard data.

TALIAFERRO: There are many questions to be answered: Did the Tilikaal even exist? Do they still exist, in some form? Was their technology really so advanced? Do any artifacts from their culture exist, and if so do any of them pose a threat to the Alpha Quadrant? If so, how can such threats be mitigated? Can their technology be harnessed and used to benefit society?

T’SIRA: Lofty questions, Doctor.

TALIAFERRO: You’re all here to help us find the answers, Captain.

HEBERT: Captain Morgan, as senior do you have any initial orders for the flotilla?

MORGAN: Not yet, but we'll meet soon to establish some operational protocols and procedures for remaining in contact – not the least of which will be (as I understand it, Admiral) a tertiary mission to place subspace communications relays along our respective flight paths?

HEBERT: That is correct. We have dedicated a section of the station's manufacturing capacity to building additional relays. When you have distributed all of your relays, simply return to the station for resupply. Otherwise, follow your established exploration track and stay in touch with each other.

I've deployed the rest of the 20th Fleet between the Expanse and the Romulan Neutral Zone, especially given the increased Romulan activity we've seen. Just remember that the Shackleton Expanse is *not* Federation territory, and the normal rules of engagement for dealing with Romulan incursions of the Neutral Zone do not apply in this region. They have as much right to explore the Expanse as we do.

KARGAN: Bah! If it were up to me, we would simply kill Romulans on sight.

HEBERT: Which is why it is *not* up to you, General. I will remind each of you to re-acquaint your crews with the Prime Directive, which of course is firmly in force throughout this assignment. You may even want to brush up on the Temporal Prime Directive, since the subspace disturbances that have been charted in the region could have an impact on space/time.

T'SIRA: Mapping those disturbances is another aspect of our mission, is it not?

HEBERT: Yes, Captain. Mapping and avoiding them, of course. Doctor Taliaferro has provided you with as much data as is available on them.

TALIAFERRO: To summarize, the disturbances generally take the form of gravimetric or tetryonic eddies, but some of them can be quite large and unstable, and very dangerous. Keep your sensors active to detect them at all times. Ships and crews have been lost to them with very little warning. I personally suspect that these anomalies are one of the reasons that any space-faring species in the Expanse may have avoided extended space travel, but that's speculation on my part.

[At this point Dr. Taliaferro conducted a lengthy and detailed scientific briefing on everything known about the region's subspace anomalies. The briefing has been redacted from this log.]

HEBERT: I think that's as much as we need to cover right now. We'll see you all at tonight's reception. In the meantime, return to your ships and continue your preparations. All flotilla vessels will depart in two days. Dismissed.

EPISODE FIVE: "Imminent Collision"

(PDF, [Starbase Adventures](#), written by Tony Pi)

CAPTAIN'S LOG, STARDATE 79041

With our preliminary briefings and the welcome reception complete, I was about to authorize station shore leave for the crew when I received an order to report to Station Ops.

**BRIEFING ROOM TRANSCRIPT, STATION OPERATIONS, STARBASE 364
STARDATE 79041**

HEBERT: Good morning, Captain Morgan. I know the task force isn't scheduled to depart until tomorrow, but we have a situation.

KARGAN: An asteroid has somehow eluded the station's long range sensors, and is now on a collision course. It will strike the station in five hours unless something is done.

HEBERT: We think this will be an excellent opportunity for the task force to begin joint operations, so we're sending all four vessels out to intercept and divert the asteroid. You are authorized to destroy it if necessary.

T'SHIRA: What is the composition of the asteroid?

HEBERT: Doctor Taliaferro's science team hasn't had enough time to study it in any details, but the scans that aren't being deflected back indicate a very dense mineral composition of kelbonite.

MORGAN: Do we know how the object slipped past the station's sensors, not to mention those of our starships? *Odyssey* hasn't reported anything to me.

KARGAN: You can trust that I will be having a *detailed* conversation with Doctor Taliaferro and her department on precisely that topic. It's possible the kelbonite is somehow responsible. Regardless, the *Mupw'l* is already on her way to intercept. She was already prepped and ready, and just left 15 minutes ago. Get to your ships and follow her out. Stop that asteroid at all costs. The station's weaponry might be able to handle it, but we can't afford to have too much space debris surrounding the station. So go blow it out of the stars.

MORGAN: Morgan to all *Odyssey* personnel. Station leave is cancelled, and I am recalling all personnel to the ship. Activate all transporters for immediate crew recall. Ensign Telavi, notify all task force ships to make ready to depart, and ask Captains Blackmer and T'Shira to join me on *Odyssey* for a quick departure briefing.

**BRIEFING ROOM TRANSCRIPT, USS ODYSSEY NCC-97000
STARDATE 79041.2**

MORGAN: OK, everyone, we have an inbound asteroid on a direct collision course, and station command wants the task force to deal with it. Our Klingon friends are about 20 minutes ahead of us, but I want to review some basics before we leave. Commander Odan, what can you tell us about the asteroid?

ODAN: Not much more than the starbase's science section has provided, sir. The asteroid is large enough to destroy the station upon impact. Composition is not fully known, but the surface seems to be largely of kelbonite, which deflects most scans and sensor probes. This may also explain why neither the station nor our ships detected it earlier.

CAPTAIN T'SHIRA: My science officer concurs. This will also interfere with our phasers. If we are forced to destroy the asteroid, photon or quantum torpedoes will likely be required.

MORGAN: Warp five approach, and let's put *Thunderchild* on *Odyssey's* port quarter upon intercept, with *Bellerophon* on the starboard. Agreed? Good – let's get to work! Morgan to Transporter Room 1, stand by to return Captains T'Shira and Blackmer to their ships, site-to-site transport when ready.

**FLIGHT RECORDER TRANSCRIPT – COMMAND BRIDGE, USS ODYSSEY NCC-97000
STARDATE 79041.8**

CHUNG: We're almost at the intercept point, Captain.

MORGAN: Very well. Morgan to task force – drop out of warp and proceed at maximum impulse. Where are our Klingon friends?

B'SOV: I've got nothing but the asteroid on my scanners, Captain. If they beat us here, they're cloaked.

MORGAN: What the hell for...? Ensign, open a channel. Morgan to *Mupw'l*, report status.

B'SOV: Klingon bird of prey now decloaking aft of the asteroid, sir.

TELAVI: They're hailing us, sir.

MORGAN: Onscreen.

AKUL: Good of you to join us, Morgan. We tried to destroy the asteroid with our disruptors, but the beams were reflected away. I am not certain the object can be destroyed with conventional weapons. Tractor beams are also useless.

MORGAN: Then we're going to have to get creative. Try punching it with some photon torpedoes and report back. Commander Odan, can you give me anything more?

ODAN: Sir, I'm not entirely sure we're dealing with a natural asteroid.

MORGAN: Explain.

ODAN: I am detecting some very small power readings at one end of the object that could be signs of a propulsion system. And the asteroid seems to be making some evasive course corrections designed to shake off the Klingon vessel.

MORGAN: Course corrections?

ODAN: They are very leisurely, but they seem deliberate. This seems to be a vessel under power, Captain.

MORGAN: Let's test the theory further. Morgan to task force – take station to either side of the *Mupw'l* and maintain pursuit. Maintain scanning as well. We may be dealing with a vessel, rather than an asteroid. Mr. Chung, lay in a direct intercept course but reduce speed to one-half impulse.

CHUNG: Aye, sir, one-half impulse, and we are on a direct course for the asteroid. Collision in ninety seconds.

TELAVI: Klingon vessel reports their photon torpedoes had limited effect on the asteroid.

MORGAN: Crap. Okay. Danny, stand by to peel off, but let's keep playing chicken for a moment.

ODAN: Time to impact sixty seconds...Captain, the asteroid is changing course to evade us.

MORGAN: Stay with her, Danny.

CHUNG: Aye, sir. Maintaining course and speed.

ODAN: Time to impact...Captain, the asteroid continues to change course. Time to impact now 45 seconds...

MORGAN: OK, Danny, I think we've proved the point. Take formation behind the asteroid with the rest of the task force. Audra, what are you thinking?

ODAN: That asteroid is definitely under power of some kind. And the course adjustments suggest that there is an intelligence of some kind controlling it.

MORGAN: I know our scanners are useless, but is there any indication of intelligent life on the asteroid's surface? Structures, mechanisms, atmosphere, any signs of life, anything?

ODAN: No, sir, nothing that we can see. The asteroid has no atmosphere on its surface. I am still reading the propulsion energy that I detected before, but I can't see any mechanisms or structures of any kind near the energy readings. Or anywhere else on the surface, for that matter.

TELAVI: Captain the Klingons are hailing us once again.

MORGAN: Onscreen. What do you want, Akul?

AKUL: What are you waiting for? Why are we not blowing this thing out of the stars? My crew grows impatient.

MORGAN: Well, your crew can stand by. I am considering our options.

AKUL: Consider quickly, human, because this object will hit Narendra Station in less than four hours.

MORGAN: I am aware of the situation, Captain, and I will inform you of my decision when I have made it. Until then stop bothering me and stand by for your orders. *Odyssey* out. Audra, will the kelbonite interfere with a transporter beam?

ODAN: Yes, sir. Transporters may be able to beam down, but maintaining scanner lock on our away team would be impossible, so we'd be unable to beam them back up.

MORGAN: Then it sounds like a shuttle mission. Since our scanners are useless, we're going to have to go down to the asteroid's surface and see what we can learn there. Commander Paris, I'm gonna take this one myself – you have the con. Audra, you're with me. Morgan to Main Shuttlebay, please warm up a Type 11 shuttlecraft and standby to launch. Ensign, ask Doctor Storan and Commander Paupaub to join us with EVA suits and full gear. Please inform the other flotilla captains of our intentions and tell them to stand by, maintaining course and speed while our away team works. Then...I'd like you to join us on the away team, Ensign. Meet us in the shuttlebay.

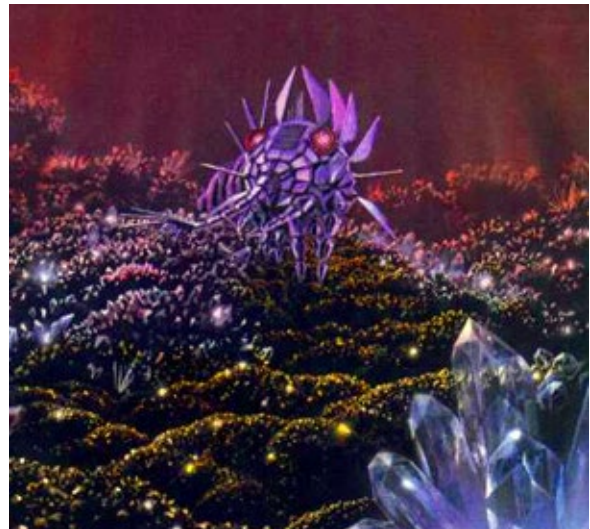
**PERSONAL LOG – ENSIGN ALIA TELAVI, CHIEF COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER, USS ODYSSEY NCC-97000
STARDATE 79041.9**

My first away mission as a Starfleet ensign was to join the captain, Doctor Storan, and Commanders Odan, Paupaub and B'Sov to beam down to the surface of an asteroid which was on a collision course with

Narendra Station. Commander Odan thought the asteroid was under some kind of propulsion and control, but hadn't detected any life signs.

The shuttle landed without incident, and we finished suiting up and exited. The surface was very crystalline in nature, with powdered crystals forming the base (rather like walking on rock salt), and sporadic crystal structures seemingly growing from the ground like trees. The crystal material was reflective, but did not radiate any energy of its own – probably due to the high concentration of kelbonite. Captain Morgan ordered the doctor to stay with the shuttle while the rest of us fanned out and scanned the surface with our tricorders, which turned out to be just as futile as using the ship's sensors.

Suddenly one of the larger “crystal trees” nearby started to glow, and shards of the crystal moved to reveal an opening in the “tree.” From this opening five creatures emerged. They were roughly human-sized, but round and faceted, almost like a crystal – clearly silicon-based life forms, like the Tholians. They propelled themselves using four locomotive cylindrical structures that looked like legs. Three other similar but smaller appendages grew from the creature's head, atop which there were two bulbous eyes that glowed with an unknown energy. The rear of the creature's round bodies were covered in crystal fan-shaped appendages that moved randomly, almost like the antennae of an Andorian. The creatures maintained no visible equipment or technology of any kind, and I didn't get any immediate telepathic impressions from them.



The creatures surrounded us slowly. They made no threatening moves toward us, but each of them began waving their head tentacles rather frantically. They made no sound, aside from the sound of their body fans waving and colliding with each other lightly, which made a sound like fragments of glass being dropped on the ground. The captain ordered us to hold our ground and to keep our hands away from our phasers.

If the aliens were trying to communicate with us, we weren't getting anything from the universal translators. I suggested that perhaps their tentacle movements were a form of communication, but I couldn't figure out how we could go about interpreting it until Commander Paupaub suggested connecting some kind of visual interface to a translator. We had the *Odyssey* beam down a portable hologram projector, tied that in with a combadge, and using a tricorder as a control unit we began to get some readings on the alien movements.

Communication was very rudimentary and slow at first, but improved as our jury-rigged translator “learned” the visual language of the aliens, who called themselves the “Rg'von.” It became very obvious that they were agitated, and Captain Morgan was initially concerned that they were angered by our presence, but they made no hostile movements towards us at any time.

I reached out with my Betazoid telepathy to the creature who seemed to be the leader or spokesperson, but could only sense agitation and desperation. We eventually realized that the Rg'von were agitated for two reasons: First, they understood that the asteroid was on a collision course with our space station, but they had no idea how to change their primary course, which was set when their vessel was launched – the ship was controlled by an automated system over which the surviving Rg'von no control.

Secondly, the Rg'Von told us that their ship had been attacked several days ago by a vessel of unknown origin, and that following the attack a device of some kind was discovered embedded on the surface of the asteroid, near the propulsion ports we detected earlier. The Rg'von believed the device to be ordnance of

some kind, and feared that it would explode if not removed or deactivated. Captain Morgan offered to help if possible, and the creatures gestured for us to follow them into the crystal “tree” they had emerged from.

The tree contained a platform, made of crystal, which was obviously a type of turbolift. It slowly descended deeper into the asteroid, picking up greater speed as it moved us through the bowels of the asteroid through brilliantly-lit crystal tunnels before stopping at a ledge. We hopped off the platform with the Rg’von, and were escorted into a huge crystal chamber that contained a massive piece of alien technology that Commander Paupaub immediately identified as their propulsion system. He followed one of the Rg’von to something that looked like a crystal table, into which the Rg’von inserted two of its head tentacles.

At this, a hatch opened nearby leading into another chamber – but embedded into the ceiling of this chamber was a long cylindrical tube. The Rg’von nearby grew increasingly agitated when this hatch was opened. Commanders Odan and Paupaub were able to determine that the device was indeed a torpedo of some type that failed to detonate upon impact.

Speaking of impact, we have four hours until the asteroid (or does it qualify as a ship?) hits Narendra Station, so we’re trying to determine the next best steps.

AWAY TEAM MISSION TRANSCRIPT –USS ODYSSEY NCC-97000

STARDATE 79041.9

LOCATION: ASTEROID SHIP, APPROACHING STARBASE 364

MORGAN: Okay, people. What are our options?

ODAN: Captain, now that we are beneath the asteroid’s surface layer of kelbonite, and I have calibrated the tricorder to the presence of the Rg’von, I can scan the rest of the asteroid. There are approximately 300 individual Rg’von aboard, all residing below the surface.

PAUPAUB: We don’t know when or if this torpedo will detonate. I think we should try to disarm it.

B’SOV: I agree, but it won’t solve the problem of the asteroid’s course. It’ll hit Narendra Station in four hours if we don’t find some way to divert the asteroid.

MORGAN: I share Commander Odan’s suspicions that this isn’t an asteroid. It’s obviously some kind of space vessel, perhaps a generation ship designed to convey the Rg’von away from some disaster and to another world where they can settle.

B’SOV: The asteroid altered its course slightly to avoid our approaching ships. Won’t it simply swerve to avoid the starbase, when the time comes?

MORGAN: Problem is, we can’t count on that happening. If this IS a ship, it may have been launched long before Starbase 364 was even built, and whoever built it may not have known to account for the starbase when plotting their course. Commander Odan, can you give us any indication as to the age of this vessel?

ODAN: Not with any precision, but some of the mineral content and soil composition suggests an age of at least 500 years. Possibly more.

MORGAN: Yeah, I think we’re onto something. I’m still betting this is a generation ship. Audra, contact *Odyssey* and ask them to help you determine the asteroid’s point of origin, as well as any possible destinations beyond Narendra Station. Ensign Telavi, try to speak with the Rg’von leader again. What does it

know about the asteroid's destination? If that's too complicated a question, just ask it why it is here – why the asteroid exists.

TELAVI: It says “we are running” or “we are fleeing” – I’m not sure which. It says many have died, but their “founders” (my word – not the creature’s) have told them they will find a “paradise.” It keeps repeating that, sir.

MORGAN: That’s good enough for me. Okay, as I see it, we have limited options: One, evacuate the asteroid and destroy it before it reaches the station. Two, do nothing and hope the asteroid changes course in time. I’m leaning towards option one. Thoughts?

B'SOV: We shouldn't wait – we need to destroy it.

PAUPAUB: Me too. My question is how do we destroy it? We could try to rig the torpedo to explode once we've evacuated the Rg'von.

TELAVI: But we can't use our transporters. How will we evacuate them?

MORGAN: First, let's be sure that the Rg'von are WILLING to be evacuated. Ensign, start talking to them and explain our thinking. I want to make sure they understand and agree. I don't want that torpedo detonating while we're still performing the evacuation. Commanders Odan and Paupaub, get to work on disarming it. Commander B'Sov, update Doctor Storan back at the shuttle and tell him to coordinate a landing zone nearby for the evacuation.

B'SOV: Aye, sir.

MORGAN: Morgan to *Odyssey*. Commander Paris, we have decided to evacuate the asteroid of the beings that inhabit it. Notify the task force to activate all available shuttlecraft and converge on a staging area near where our shuttle has landed. We have enough room and resources on the *Odyssey* to house everyone, but we'll need every shuttlecraft in the flotilla to perform the evacuation quickly. Fire up the *Aquarius* and get her in on this too, Commander – everything that moves and can carry passengers safely. There's not enough time to study the aliens and set up simulated housing in the holodecks with the proper atmosphere, but get whatever climate and atmospheric telemetry you can from Ensign Telavi and Commander Odan and make whatever arrangements are possible for the care, feeding and comfort of our guests. Use the cargo bays, secondary Sickbay – any and all available and necessary spaces. All vessels stand by to initiate evacuation procedures on my order.

PARIS: Aye, Captain.

ODAN: Captain, the creatures are silicon-based, but their climate needs are not as extreme as those of the Tholians, for example. They do not require breathable air, but it should not harm them. Therefore we shouldn't need to make any major atmospheric adjustments to accommodate them.

MORGAN: Excellent. Morgan to *Mupw'l*. Captain Akul, I know your ship doesn't carry many shuttles, so instead of helping with the evacuation I'd like you to cloak your vessel and establish a guard patrol and perimeter around the asteroid. It was apparently attacked by an unknown enemy a few days ago, and if that threat returns, I want your ship positioned at an advantage to defend us.

AKUL: Acknowledged.

TELAVI: Captain, the Rg'von are eager to evacuate, and I am sensing feelings of deep gratitude from them. They seem to be in agreement with our plan, and I sense no resistance.

MORGAN: Well, at least we don't have to argue with them in order to save their lives. Morgan to all task force vessels. Initiate evacuation transport protocols immediately. How are you two coming with the torpedo?

PAUPAUB: It's a challenge, sir, since we're unfamiliar with the technology. I think it's going to take some time – probably 30 minutes or so.

MORGAN: Keep working.

**PERSONAL LOG – ENSIGN ALIA TELAVI, CHIEF COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER, USS ODYSSEY NCC-97000
STARDATE 79042**

Commanders Paupaub and Odan were able to disarm the torpedo, and we successfully evacuated all of the Rg'von to the *Odyssey* in plenty of time to destroy the asteroid safely away from the station. It required the combined photon and quantum torpedoes of all three of our vessels to destroy the asteroid. Now we have time to study and learn from our new friends, while station command determines the best disposition of the refugees.

Telemetry was unable to establish a point of origin for the Rg'von, and given their apparent lifespan of about 200 years, there were at least three generations of Rg'von who preceded the one we discovered. Only the leaders fully understood that they were on a ship that was taking them somewhere, but none of them seem to know their ultimate destination. Our own analysis didn't provide more information.

Medical has thoroughly examined the creatures, and while they are silicon-based like the Tholians, there are significant genetic and other biological differences that don't suggest a relationship – at least not a direct one. Starfleet will try to identify an appropriate planet where the Rg'von can be safely and comfortably relocated.

Captain Morgan was pleased with our success, and added a commendation to my file for translating the Rg'von language. He remains concerned with identifying whatever aliens attacked the Rg'von, and is working with Admiral Hebert, General Kargan and others in Station Ops to review sensor logs and anything else that might provide a clue.

My first away mission was successful!

EPISODE SIX: “Infinite Combinations”²

(Star Trek Adventures Starter Set Campaign Booklet, written by Michael Dismuke, Meric Moir and Al Spader)

CAPTAIN’S LOG, STARDATE 79067.5

Starbase 364 has received an urgent distress call from the independent floating city of Cressida, a resource-gathering collective on the gaseous world Kizomic IV. Creatures of unknown origin have attacked, causing casualties as well as compromising the city’s superstructure. Admiral Hebert has ordered the *Odyssey* to respond, and we are *en route* under the quantum slipstream drive.



When we arrive, we will have only a few short hours to evacuate the city’s 600 inhabitants before the structure fails entirely and sinks into the crushing gravitational depths of the planet. Our first order of business will be to set up pattern enhancers and then direct the inhabitants to the beam-out sites. I’ve gathered the command crew for a quick briefing.

BRIEFING ROOM TRANSCRIPT –USS ODYSSEY NCC-97000 STARDATE 79067.7

MORGAN: Good evening, everyone. Our mission is pretty straightforward: evacuate the City of Cressida, a floating city above the gaseous surface of Kizomic IV. Commanders Odan and Paupaub have been studying some data released by the Cressidans, so why don’t you both tell us what you found?

PAUPAUB: The city itself is a reasonably-small structure – more of a “village” than a “city,” held aloft with massive antigravitational units with multiple power relays and redundancies specifically designed to prevent the structure from losing altitude. It’s populated and operated by a private resource-gathering collective of some kind. The distress signal suggested that some kind of alien attack has damaged the facility beyond repair, and the population has requested evacuation.

MORGAN: Is there any telemetry data to suggest that the facility might be saved?

PAUPAUB: Unfortunately no, the administrators of Cressida have been unable or simply haven’t seen fit to provide sufficient information. They claim “security concerns.”

MORGAN: I don’t know why they’re being so proprietary about a facility that’s about to crash into the surface, but let’s assume for the moment that they have good reasons. Audra, what can you tell us about the planet and its lifeforms?

ODAN: The planet is technically Class-J but it has an unusual geology, geography, and atmospheric conditions. It consists of five different layers, the first being a layer of basically Class-M atmosphere that is breathable for most, including the humanoids on the facility. This layer, of course, contains the floating city. The next layer consists of a caustic liquid substance of some kind, which is suspended over a layer of

² ED. NOTE: This was originally played in an online group session in which the players only went thru the first of the adventure’s four chapters. I regret not getting further into it, especially because I wanted to see how the Urotoxa NPC would interact with the crew – but we simply didn’t get that far in game play. Subsequent chapters from the Starter Set Campaign Booklet may be revisited in future sessions.

metallic material which forms the surface. The final layer is the planet core, which consists of heavy elements. The overall environment will interfere with our transporters to some extent, so we will need to employ pattern enhancers to get all of the inhabitants to the ship quickly.

The population of Cressida is humanoid, but I do not have much data about them. They have warp capability and do some minor trading – mostly in rare earth elements and gasses – with neighboring planets, but they do not have sufficient vessels currently in orbit that can handle the population. There are nearly 600 individuals currently on the facility, but they are not native to the planet.

There is, however, a second species living in the planet's liquid layer that may be indigenous. They are aquarian, and swim in the caustic liquid environment. We don't know how many of them there are, and we've seen no evidence of structures, but that was just using long range scan. The Cressidans haven't been any more forthcoming about this species than they were about their engineering, but there is sufficient evidence to suggest that this species is a pre-warp civilization.

MORGAN: Which means the Prime Directive applies.

ODAN: Possibly, but there's another concern: It can't currently be determined with any accuracy whether the Cressida facility will fall into areas occupied by this other species. We don't know if they are at risk of harm. Again, we haven't seen any cities or other structural communities on the surface but we may not be close enough to detect them. We also don't know enough about any atmospheric requirements they might have beyond the composition of the liquid in which they live, so that's going to complicate any rescue of the natives that we might need to undertake before the station fails.

MORGAN: You and Mr. Paupaub keep watch on that situation, and keep me posted. Commander B'Sov, what do we know about the attackers?

B'SOV: Next to nothing from a tactical standpoint, Captain. We know nothing about their size or strength. They apparently arrived from some kind of "fold" in space that appeared below the city. They devour just about everything, but they seem to damage inorganic materials more rapidly than organic ones. They were described in one report as "plant-like" in composition, but that doesn't tell us much aside the fact that they don't seem to be using any additional technology like energy weapons. We can assume their attack is the cause of the failure of the city's antigrav units, but even that's speculation.

ODAN: The rift the attackers came from is called a "trimetric fracture," a breach in the spacetime continuum which allows matter to pass between dimensions. It's considered a naturally-occurring phenomenon, but there have been no successful efforts to artificially replicate such a fracture using Federation technology.

PARIS: So we don't know if the attacking creatures intentionally "steered" themselves to the Kizomic system, or if they just got randomly dumped there by the anomaly and started eating whatever they found.

MORGAN: Commander, how are the preparations to receive the survivors going?

PARIS: We're ready, sir. We've activated rescue protocols, and all transporter rooms are running mass-beamup drills. Accommodations have been secured in all available crew quarters and cargo bays, and we can activate the holodecks if needed. But Captain, do we know where we are taking them, after we rescue them?

MORGAN: An excellent question, Commander. Frankly, Admiral Hebert didn't have much in the way of suggestions and she has given me some discretion here. I guess we'll ask them where they want to go, and

take it from there. But let's focus on rescue preparations for now. Doctor Storan, medical department status?

STORAN: All Sickbays have been activated and are standing by for any casualties.

MORGAN: Excellent. I want all ship's craft standing by as well – including the *Aquarius*, *Miral*. If we run into any interference with the transporters, we're going to want a Plan B. The moment we drop out of slipstream, get them launched and on-station to take over the evacuation if necessary.

PARIS: Aye, sir.

MORGAN: Commander Paupaub has received a basic ground plan of the city, and we've divided the facility into four evacuation zones. These will be coordinated by Commanders Paupaub, B'Sov, Odan and myself, with each of us leading two teams of security, engineering and medical officers. Your task is to get the pattern enhancers set up and establish transporter links quickly, then coordinate the evacuation of your assigned areas.

Unless *Aquarius* is needed, Commander Paris will stay aboard the *Odyssey* and coordinate each team from the ship. Doctor Storan will join me, but will be ready to beam to any areas with casualties along with the appropriate medical personnel from the ship or shuttles. Ensign Telavi, I also want you with me. You're my best chance of communicating with the aliens quickly and seeing if we can convince them to stop attacking the city, if we encounter them.

Everyone remember that this is a facility under attack, and we don't know much about what we're dealing with. That said, I don't want any of the Cressida population scared by an overabundance of force, so for now I want everyone armed with phaser sidearms only. Commander B'Sov, please be ready to call down more "lethal" equipment if ordered. You take my meaning?

B'SOV: Perfectly, sir.

MORGAN: Commander Paupaub, after the evacuations in your quadrant have been initiated, and assuming there is time, I want you to dig into the technology of the structure and see if there is any way to salvage things. If we can keep the facility from falling onto the planet, it might make negotiations with either of the local species easier.

PAUPAUB: Captain, we've estimated that once we arrive we'll only have five hours before total structure failure.

MORGAN: Understood, but I'd like you to try if there is time.

PAUPAUB: Of course, sir.

MORGAN: Danny, what's our ETA?

CHUNG: We'll be out of slipstream in nine minutes, sir.

MORGAN: Okay, any questions? Then let's get to work and go save some folks!

SHIP'S LOG, USS ODYSSEY NCC-97000
STARDATE 79041.7, FIRST OFFICER MIRAL PARIS REPORTING

Our away teams met with almost immediate attack by the aliens. Commanders Paupaub and Odan were both wounded but remain conscious and ambulatory. A few other crew members received similar minor injuries, but no one has been transported back to *Odyssey* at this time, and all attackers have been repulsed. Captain Morgan's team has made contact with the facility administrator, and the Captain is hoping she can provide more information that will help us determine the best course of action.

Unfortunately, our original estimates of the time we have to perform the rescue have proven optimistic, and instead of five hours we only have two hours before Cressida goes into total structural collapse. We have activated all small craft, and I am assuming command of the *Aquarius* to join the airlift.

MISSION TRANSCRIPT – "ALPHA TEAM," USS ODYSSEY NCC-97000
STARDATE 79041.7
LOCATION: CRESSIDA FACILITY, KIZOMIC IV

STORAN: Captain, this is Administrator Veda Damaad. She is responsible for the Cressida facility.

DAMAAD: Captain, thank you and your ship for rescuing us from this...infestation!

MORGAN: We're not there yet, Administrator – what can you tell me about the aliens who attacked us?

DAMAAD: They came from nowhere several days ago, and started attaching themselves to everything in sight. They replicate quickly, and now they're everywhere! They eat everything they touch, and a group of them has attached themselves to our gravitational devices and we're all going to die unless you do something!

MORGAN: Stay calm, Ms. Damaad. We're doing what we can. Please excuse me for a moment. Morgan to Paupaub. Have you had any luck getting to the city's engineering section?

PAUPAUB: Not yet, sir. We've been pretty busy getting the pattern enhancers set, but we're almost there. I found someone who can lead me to the antigrav machinery, so we'll head there shortly.

MORGAN: Good. Please keep me posted. Morgan out. Administrator, what can you tell me about the beings that we understand live in the planet's liquid layer?

DAMAAD: We generally leave each other alone, Captain. We trade in the atmospheric gasses that emanate from the liquid, but our operation has virtually no negative impact on the planet, so the Kizomans leave us to our business.

MORGAN: Are there any Kizoman communities down there that we need to be concerned about?

DAMAAD: To be honest, Captain, we just don't know.

PARIS (*on comms*): Paris to Captain. Sir, one of the city domes is about to break off from the structure!

DAMAAD: There are still evacuees over there!

MORGAN: Morgan to *Odyssey* – priority transporter lock on anyone aboard the falling dome!

TRANSPORTER CHIEF (*on comms*): I'm sorry, Captain, but there is too much interference. I'm reading ten life signs, but I can't get a lock!

MORGAN: Morgan to Paris. Commander, what's your ETA to the dome?

PARIS: About 30 seconds, sir. Lieutenant Chung is at the helm, and we think we can get there before everything falls apart.

MORGAN: Good luck, Miral. Can you get a lock on us?

PARIS: Affirmative, sir.

MORGAN: Then two to beam up. Energize.

**FLIGHT RECORDER TRANSCRIPT – COMMAND BRIDGE, USS ODYSSEY NCC-97000
STARDATE 79041.8**

DECK OFFICER: Captain on the bridge!

MORGAN: *Odyssey* to Paupaub. Have you been able to reach the engineering section, Commander?

PAUPAUB: Negative, sir, there's too much structural damage to the facility. All of the survivors in my sector have been evacuated, and we are preparing to return to the ship.

MORGAN: Very well. *Odyssey* out. Science, I want a complete scan of the planet surface below the liquid layer. I want to know if there are any structures or anything that might be hit by that falling dome.

SCIENCE OFFICER: Scanners and sensors are still receiving significant interference. We can make out some life forms in the area, but none that should be impacted by the dome's trajectory. We see no structures in the area, either.

MORGAN: That's a relief – for now. Administrator Damaad, how many entities are living in that liquid layer?

DAMAAD: We don't know that either, Captain. Some have estimated as many as a million, but that may not be accurate.

MORGAN: Do you communicate with them?

DAMAAD: Not regularly. Like I said, we pretty much leave each other alone. There is a device in my office tied to a translator, but we haven't had need for it since we arrived – years ago.

MORGAN: Why didn't you mention that before? Let's go to back your office and use it.

DAMAAD: We can't, Captain. My office dome is the one currently falling into the atmosphere. The liquid is quite caustic – you can't even survive down there in EVA suits for more than ten or fifteen minutes, and shuttles don't last much longer, so we don't bother trying.

MORGAN: All right. Mister Bandar, what is the status of the evacuation?

BANDAR: The only evacuees remaining are on the falling dome section. All away teams have returned to the ship. All shuttles are returning except for the *Aquarius*.

MORGAN: Excellent. Can we get a tractor beam on that thing?

BANDAR: No, sir. And even if we could achieve a lock, which we can't due to the gasses, I'm not confident in our ability to hold the platform aloft once we did.

MORGAN: Dammit. *Odyssey* to Paris. Commander, what's your status?

PARIS: We're on the deck, sir, and we've got the evacuees. We have some minor injuries. Dustoff in 15 seconds.

MORGAN: Doctor Storan, have a medical team standing by in the *Aquarius* launch bay.

STORAN (*on comms*): Acknowledged.

BANDAR: The *Aquarius* has left the platform, and not a moment too soon. The dome is falling into the atmosphere.

MORGAN: Onscreen.

BANDAR: The dome has ripped away from the rest of the structure, and is falling. Estimate the remainder of the structure will fail within approximately one hour.

MORGAN: Are we sure there's nothing below that will be damaged by the falling city?

BANDAR: As sure as we can be, Captain.

MORGAN: Morgan to *Aquarius*. Danny, that was some nice flying. Well done.

CHUNG (*on comms*): Thank you, sir.

MORGAN: Get back home. *Odyssey* out. Okay, let's secure from red alert. Maintain standard orbit. Administrator Damaad, you might want to attend to your citizens. This security officer will show you the way to the crew decks and cargo bays where they are currently housed. We also have suitable quarters set aside for you. Go check in with your people, and I'll be down shortly for a conversation.

ODAN: Reporting for duty, sir.

MORGAN: Good job down below, Audra. How are you feeling?

ODAN: I'm fine, sir. Dr. Storan patched me up quickly. Those aliens were brutal, though.

MORGAN: Have we learned anything more about them?

ODAN: I think they are barely sentient, Captain. They may even work as a hive mind, like the Borg, but less organized.

TELAVI: I agree, sir. I didn't have time to get any detailed impressions from them, but I didn't detect any outright malevolence. In fact, I didn't sense any complex emotions from them at all - I got more of a sensation of deep hunger.

MORGAN: They were clearly trying to chew their way thru the facility. Audra, I'm still interested in the beings who live in the liquid atmosphere. I want to make sure they're okay, but I'm not comfortable approaching them without more information. I'm going to get cleaned up, then I'll interview our guests. Ensign Telavi, you're with me. Commander Odan, you have the bridge, but I want you to try to break thru the scanner interference and get me more intel on the Kizomans – and on the rift aliens, while you're at it. Anything you can learn might be useful, Audra.

ODAN: I'm on it, Captain.

CAPTAIN'S LOG, STARDATE 79041.85

With the destruction of the Cressida facilities, it's time to see to the survivors and try to determine if the remaining entities on the planet surface require any aid in advance of the total destruction of Cressida. I'd also like some answers about where the aliens are coming from, and why they seem to be attacking this planet.

FLIGHT RECORDER TRANSCRIPT – MAIN CARGO BAY, USS ODYSSEY NCC-97000 STARDATE 79041.9

MORGAN: Doctor Storan, casualty report?

STORAN: No fatalities, sir, and only a few major or even minor injuries. My medical team has been able to handle the workload quite easily.

MORGAN: Excellent. Carry on.

STORAN: Aye, sir.

ADMINISTRATOR VEDA DAMAAD OF CRESSIDA: Oh, Captain Morgan – there you are. Thank you again for saving my people; we are very grateful, but I must ask another favor: I must commandeer one of your transporters. Your assistance in this matter is greatly appreciated.

UROTOXA: You selfish, spoiled slug! People are dying in the fluid strata and you want to divert more resources away? Please, Captain - Starfleet is known for its altruistic spirit. These creatures aren't just attacking Cressida, they're also attacking the indigenous Kizomans below. I understand you're here to evacuate the city, but can you please spare some weapons to arm the Kizomans so they can protect their homes?

MORGAN: I didn't realize there were any Nausicaans on Cressida – in fact, I wasn't aware of any Nausicaan vessels currently on station around Kizomic. You are...?

UROTOXA: My designation is Urotoxa. I lead an archeological expedition studying the Kizomic people and their technology. Captain, the creatures which attacked Cressida are also invading the other planetary layers, They are a peaceful species, and have no weapons with which to defend their home. You must provide suitable armaments immediately, or the Kizomans are lost!

DAMAAD: Captain, this is all very interesting, but time is of the essence and I must have access to a transporter!

MORGAN: We'll discuss that in a minute, Administrator. Urotoxa, I'm afraid furnishing weapons – or any technology for that matter - to a pre-industrial society is against our laws. What precisely are the conditions down there?

UROTOXA: The fluid layer is mostly liquid hydrogen but with enough chlorine to make it corrosive. There isn't much time, Captain. That city will fall into the planet layers shortly, and untold numbers of Kizomans will probably die!

MORGAN: Do you know how many native Kizomans there are below?

UROTOXA: Millions, Captain!

MORGAN: OK, so far more than we can evacuate. Our resources are stretched pretty thin as it is. Administrator, what do you need with a transporter? If you have something you need to recover from the city structure, perhaps we can accommodate you.

DAMAAD: We have mined a rather large quantity of eisillium – a rare element normally found only in comets, but it is recoverable from the gas layers of Kizomic. Our stockpile is small, but valuable, and it's stored on one of the remaining platforms. You must allow me to transport it to your ship before all is lost!

MORGAN: I'm sure one of our transporters can handle the job, Administrator. Just give my security chief the coordinates, and –

DAMAAD: No! I must handle the transport myself. The mineral is very volatile, and can be damaged by transporter during re-materialization if it's not done correctly!

MORGAN: Both of you please excuse me a moment while I consult with my officers. Commander B'Sov, Ensign Telavi, join me over here for a moment, please.

TELAVI: Captain, she's lying to you! I could sense –

MORGAN: I know, Ensign. Eisillium is not that unstable. The question is, what does she *really* want with a transporter?

B'SOV: I think there's only one way to find out, Captain.

MORGAN: Agreed, Commander. Administrator Damaad, my security chief will escort you to a cargo transporter that can be used to bring aboard your minerals.

DAMAAD: Oh, THANK you, Captain –

MORGAN: You will conduct the transport under her supervision, and that of one of our transporter technicians. I'll ask my science officer to join you.

DAMAAD: Oh, no, Captain, that won't be at all necessary...

B'SOV: I'm afraid we must insist, Administrator. Starfleet regulations do not permit civilians to operate ship equipment except under certain urgent circumstances –

DAMAAD: This IS urgent!!

B'SOV: - and Starfleet personnel must supervise such operations whenever possible.

MORGAN: And if 'fleet regulations didn't require it, I'd still prevent anything from being transported aboard my ship without supervision by a member of my crew. Certainly you understand that, Administrator?

DAMAAD: Very well. I'll need a little time to prepare –

MORGAN: Prepare what, Administrator? We can arrange for your use of the transporter almost immediately.

DAMAAD: Yes, but there are containment and storage protocols to be arranged. I'll need a few minutes.

B'SOV: Simply use one of the wall communicators or desk consoles to contact me when you are ready, and I will be happy to meet you in a transporter room.

MORGAN: Thank you, Commander. Please proceed. Captain to senior staff: we'll convene in the Briefing Room in five minutes. Urotoxa, please follow me.

**FLIGHT RECORDER TRANSCRIPT – BRIDGE BRIEFING ROOM, USS ODYSSEY NCC-97000
STARDATE 79042.01**

MORGAN: Ok, everyone, I need information and options. Urotoxa, we can't simply provide armaments to the Kizomans. That would be a direct violation of the Prime Directive – our highest general order. In fact, it's not entirely clear to me that any interaction with them whatsoever wouldn't violate the Prime Directive.

UROTOXA: Captain, the Kizomans are already aware of the Federation and your technology. The miners have been interacting with them for years.

MORGAN: Yes, but there's a huge difference between "interacting" with a pre-industrial culture and arming them with phasers. Mr. Paupaub, what is the status of the remains of the Cressida mining platform?

PAUPAUB: The entire structure will descend into the planet's gas layers in 53 minutes, sir. There's nothing we can do to reverse it.

PARIS: Can we destroy it? With ship's weapons, I mean.

PAUPAUB: Of course, but I wouldn't advise it. We wouldn't be able to control the debris created by destroying the platform, and we still don't even know if the section that just fell did any damage to anyone below.

ODAN: Agreed. Scanners and sensors have not been able to penetrate the first gas layer, and we don't know what kind of structures or communities might be in danger down there.

PARIS: Well, doing nothing is not an option.

TELAVI: What if we contact them, and warn them to evacuate and stay away from the areas that will likely be affected?

MORGAN: That's a good idea, but there's not much time for them to react, even if we're successful. Mister Paupaub, could we destroy as much of the platform as possible, and calibrate our tractor beams to contain and deflect most of the debris away from the surface?

PAUPAUB: Possibly, sir, but it will require some careful coordination between Helm, Tactical and Engineering.

MORGAN: I have every faith in each of you. Put a plan together and be ready to execute in ten minutes. In the meantime, we can't keep flying blind up here. On my authority alone, we will take a shuttle down below the gas layer and investigate the condition of the Kizomans. I'll command the shuttle myself, accompanied by Commander Odan, Ensign Telavi and Doctor Storan.

B'SOV: Captain, request permission to accompany –

MORGAN: Denied, Dyrah. I need you on the bridge coordinating the weapons. Commander Paris, you have the con. Wait until our shuttle has cleared the city, then you may proceed as planned, and at your discretion.

PARIS: Understood, sir. We'll take care of things up here.

UROTOXA: Captain, I would also like to accompany you, if you'll allow it. Perhaps I could be of some help.

MORGAN: Thank you for volunteering, Urotoxa. Welcome aboard.

PAUPAUB: Captain, the gas layers are quite corrosive. I estimate that you'll have less than an hour before shuttle systems start to fail. We don't have time to modify it to provide increased shielding. I also recommend that all shuttle crew wear EVA suits, but those won't last more than 15 minutes in full exposure.

MORGAN: Understood, and so ordered. Thank you, Mr. Paupaub. Stations, please, everyone - let's get to work.

**FLIGHT RECORDER TRANSCRIPT – SHUTTLE MAYWEATHER / USS ODYSSEY NCC-97000
STARDATE 79042.05**

ODAN: Starting our descent into the first gas layer. Prepare for turbulence.

MORGAN: Start scanning. What's down there?

ODAN: Stand by...Captain, I'm reading some structures ahead. They're attached to the peaks of some calcium-like material that may be issuing from whatever serves as the planet surface.

COMPUTER VOICE: Warning...shuttle integrity at 92% and decreasing. Estimate 48 minutes to total system failure.

MORGAN: That looks like a reasonably-sized city...the lights are evidence of electricity or some kind of power. I don't see any signs that they're under attack...

ODAN: Captain, I'm reading a life form of immense size on the other side of the city! It's approaching that large structure in the center of the city. I am scanning...it seems to be some kind of amalgamation of several of the alien creatures...some kind of symbiont life form...there are several other smaller life forms moving to intercept the creature – I think those are the indigenous Kizomans.

MORGAN: Alia, what are you sensing?

TELAVI: Sir, I can't get any impressions from the creature beyond malevolence...and a hunger...the Kizomans are determined to defend themselves.

MORGAN: Urotoxa, do you know what this thing is?

UROTOXA: We think this is some kind of mineral-consuming predator, but we don't know its origins. They have been preying on the Kizomans. They assemble into this collective form when threatened.

MORGAN: Let's see if we can help the Kizomans out. Set shuttle phasers on low power – I'd rather avoid hurting it, but let's see if we can get this creature's attention. Descending...

COMPUTER VOICE: Warning...shuttle integrity now at 87% and falling.

MORGAN: Hang on, folks – this is gonna be a bumpy ride.

**FLIGHT RECORDER TRANSCRIPT – COMMAND BRIDGE, USS ODYSSEY NCC-97000
STARDATE 79042.05**

PARIS: Commander B'Sov, target the Cressida platform with a full weapons spread and prepare to fire on my order.

B'SOV: Full spread, aye, Commander. Awaiting your order.

PARIS: Engineering, are we ready with the tractor beams?

PAUPAUB: As ready as we can be, Commander Paris.

PARIS: Mr. Cheung?

CHEUNG: Helm ready, Commander.

PARIS: Okay, let's make it happen. Helm, close the distance to the orbital platform. Stand by to fire...and fire!

B'SOV: Phasers and torpedoes away.

PARIS: Engineering, stand by...

B'SOV: Direct hit, Commander. The platform is destroyed, and debris is falling.

PARIS: Mr. Paupaub, you're on!

PAUPAUB: Deploying tractor beam. Commander B'Sov's targeting was excellent...there are very few platform fragments left to grab onto...Bridge, we have everything we can get.

PARIS: Very well. Lieutenant Cheung, take us up gently...let's get this debris into space where we can deal with it more easily.

CHEUNG: Ascending...we're back in standard orbit, Commander.

PAUPAUB: Tractor beam holding.

PARIS: Excellent. Stand by to disengage tractor. Tactical, target the remaining debris with phasers and let's clean things up.

B'SOV: Target locked.

PARIS: Fire phasers.

BANDAR: We have successfully destroyed the platform debris, Commander.

PARIS: *Odyssey* to shuttle *Mayweather*. Captain, the platform has been completely destroyed. We're not reading any significant remaining debris, and we have resumed standard orbit.

FLIGHT RECORDER TRANSCRIPT – SHUTTLE MAYWEATHER / USS ODYSSEY NCC-97000 79042.05

MORGAN: Excellent work, Miral. Stand by – we're doing some shooting of our own.

ODAN: We've hit the creature...no effect...it's still heading for the Kizomans.

MORGAN: Increase phaser power. Let me come around for another pass, and we'll try nudging it harder.

ODAN: Direct hit...still nothing, Captain...but I'm detecting a concentration of gradons within the creature. Gradonic radiation may be what the creature feeds on.

MORGAN: Ensign Telavi, are you getting any impressions from the creature?

TELAVI: Just a...hunger, sir.

MORGAN: OK, then let's feed it. We might be able to generate a gradonic radiation surge from our engines and focus it into a beam with which we can lure the creature away from the Kizomans.

ODAN: That could work, Captain. If you work on configuring the engines, I'll modify the phaser emitter to contain the gradonic beam.

STORAN: Captain, I'm reading a group of Kizomans moving towards the creature. They appear to be armed with rudimentary polearms of some kind.

TELAVI: I'm sensing a great deal of determination from the Kizomans.

MORGAN: We'll have their backs in a moment. Engines are ready for the pulse, Audra. Do you have the confinement beam ready?

ODAN: You may fire when ready, sir.

MORGAN: Discharging the radiation pulse, and firing!

ODAN: The creature is moving towards the beam.

MORGAN: Let's lure it away from the population areas.

TELAVI: Then what, sir? What's to keep it from going right back?

MORGAN: I don't want to have to kill this thing, but we may have no choice. Is there any chance we can transport it into a cargo hold on *Odyssey* and...I don't know, tranquilize it or put it into stasis?

STORAN: That may be our only option, Captain.

MORGAN: *Mayweather* to *Odyssey*. Commander Paris, have Mr. Paupaub prepare a cargo hold or shuttle bay – heck, use a holodeck if you have to, and recreate the planet's atmospheric conditions. We're bringing aboard a guest. As soon as he's ready, have Mr. Paupaub beam the creature into the holding area.

PARIS: *Odyssey* reads, and Engineering is on the case, sir. Commander Paupaub estimates he can have a holding area ready in 20 minutes.

MORGAN: That should give us enough time to move "Tall, Green and Ugly" away from the Kizoman community. Is it following our gradonic lure, Audra?

ODAN: Yes, sir!

CAPTAIN'S LOG, STARDATE 79043

MORGAN: We successfully removed the creature from the planet surface, and Mr. Paupaub has rather creatively repurposed a holodeck to satisfy its atmospheric and nutritional requirements. The Naussican archeologist Urotoxa turns out to be the cause of the alien invasion. She had developed a sensor that detects and amplifies minor space fabric breaches, and the device caused a trimetric fracture – essentially a dimensional portal between our universe and that of the creatures, which Science Officer Odan has classified as a "Bryozoan." The creature was an amalgamation of a dozen or more smaller creatures, attracted by the radiation emanating from the gas layers of Kizomic IV – ironically, in much the same way that Administrator Damaad's miners were. Urotoxa's device was disabled by my engineers, and has been confiscated.

Damaad has also been confined to quarters pending charges: Mr. Paupaub and Commander B'Sov discovered that Damaad's insistence on gaining control of a transporter was merely to sell use of the device to her colleagues to secure their personal belongings from the Cressida platform.

As for the creature itself, we will be unable to replicate the precise dimensional rift that brought the Bryozoans to Kizomic, so we'll be taking them to Narendra Station for further study and possible relocation.

The remains of the Cressida mining platform were sufficiently contained so as to not represent a danger to the indigenous Kizomans. We do not believe our interference and defense of the planet represents a violation of the Prime Directive or any other Federation or Starfleet regulations, so I believe this was the best possible outcome.

We are *en route* to Starbase 364 and are about to engage the quantum slipstream drive. All systems and crew are nominal.

EPISODE SEVEN: "Pod Things"

(PDF, [Starbase Adventures](#), written by Tony Pi)

CAPTAIN'S LOG, STARDATE 79065

MORGAN: The crew has enjoyed a few days of leave on Narendra Station. I have been summoned to Admiral Hebert's office for what I thought was *Odyssey's* next assignment. Instead, I have been asked to help address a problem being experienced by a Pakled vessel currently docked at the starbase.



Source: Daystrom Institute Technical Library, www.ditl.org

BRIEFING ROOM TRANSCRIPT, JOINT STATION COMMAND OFFICE STARBASE 364 STARDATE 79065

HEBERT: Thank you for joining us, Captain. I think you've met station security chiefs, Lt. Commander Dovel and Lieutenant Kahbel.

MORGAN: Of course.

HEBERT: Then I'll get right to the point. We have a Pakled trading vessel, the *Gorlom*, docked here at the station, and the ship's captain has lodged a complaint about something missing from their cargo hold. But he's refusing access for any kind of investigation because he doesn't trust Klingons.

MORGAN: Can't you simply send some non-Klingon security personnel to investigate?

DOVELI: We tried that, Captain, but Captain Hebert doesn't trust any of the station's security officers. Apparently the concept of a "blended Starfleet/Klingon force" makes him uncomfortable.

HEBERT: I informed him that he doesn't get to select which of my officers he interacts with, and that his problem won't be addressed unless he permits access, but he's refusing to budge. Normally I'd simply ignore his complaint until he becomes less recalcitrant. But your presence here may make him more comfortable. Would you look into this and report back to Security?

MORGAN: Happy to, Admiral. I assume I shouldn't mention that I have a half-Klingon first officer, and several other Klingons on the *Odyssey* crew?

HEBERT: Tell Commander Paris to stay at home. I forget - is your security chief human?

MORGAN: Andorian, Admiral. Lieutenant Commander B'Sov.

HEBERT: Of course. Well, I don't think Captain Hebert has any prejudices against Andorians, but I suppose we'll see. Of course you have full authority and access to any station resources you might require. Report your progress directly to Dovel and Kahbel, and hopefully this will be an easy matter to dispense with.

MORGAN: Do we know the specific nature of his complaint?

KAHBEL: The *peta'Q* refuses to provide any details to our officers.

MORGAN: OK, then let's see if I can make any better progress.

CAPTAIN'S LOG, SUPPLEMENTAL

MORGAN: I've asked Commanders Odan, B'Sov and Paupaub to join me at the *Gorlom's* airlock. I trust we'll be able to get to the bottom of this matter quickly.

DOCKING PORT 12, STARBASE 364 STARDATE 79065.2

MORGAN: Captain Hebormog, this is Captain Donal Morgan of the Federation starship *Odyssey*. I am here to investigate your complaint.

HEBORMOG: I told you people, no more station security! I demand an independent investigation!

MORGAN: Captain, precisely how "independent" can you expect the authorities be aboard a deep space station? I'm afraid I'm your last chance, sir – station security will wash their hands of your complaint if you remain uncooperative, so I suggest you open this airlock and allow me aboard so we can discuss your problem.

HEBORMOG: Oh, very well. Opening now.

MORGAN: Captain, please allow me to introduce you to a few of the officers I have brought along to assist me: Lieutenant Commanders B'Sov, Odan and Paupaub.

HEBORMOG: Fine. This is our cargo master, Grimph. Tell him what happened, Grimph.

GRIMPH: We have been transporting some very special seed pods to the station with the understanding that a Ferengi merchant was interested in acquiring them at a very favorable price. But the pods went missing shortly after our arrival!

HEBORMOG: We must have the gourds back, Captain.

ODAN: May we inspect the hold, Captain?

HEBORMOG: Yes, of course – this way.

CARGO HOLD, PAKLED MERCHANT VESSEL GORLOM STARDATE 79065.2

GRIMPH: Here is where the pods were stowed away for transport.

ODAN: My tricorder is picking up some residual plant DNA, but I'm not able to identify the plant species. What sort of gourds were these, Mr. Grimph?

GRIMPH: We don't know, exactly.

MORGAN: From where did you acquire the seeds?

HEBORMOG: I don't remember. They've been growing down here in our hold for months. I was just thrilled that someone was finally interested in purchasing them.

B'SOV: You don't have any records, bills of lading, nothing?

HEBORMOG: We're a merchant vessel, not an accounting firm!

MORGAN: We'll address your shipping practices and Federation regulations later, Captain. When was the last time someone saw the gourds?

HEBORMOG: I don't know! I told you, the damned things have been taking up space down here. We've gotten used to working around them. It was only when we went to collect them that we realized they've been stolen.

B'SOV: Captain, is it possible they were simply misplaced?

HEBORMOG: Listen, I run a pretty tight ship! OK, our record-keeping may not be up to code, but we've searched the entire ship from stem to stern. Nothing! Captain Morgan, what are you going to do about this theft?

MORGAN: Our first task is to determine whether a theft has actually taken place.

HEBORMOG: Taken place?! Of COURSE a theft has taken place! The plants were in our hold, we found a buyer, we brought them to this station, and now they're GONE!

MORGAN: Calm down, Captain, and we'll try to get to the bottom of this.

PAUPAUB: Captain Morgan, I'm reading some residual transporter activity here. The pods may have been beamed away.

GRIMPH: Against our cargo hold inhibitors? Not a chance.

PAUPAUB: My reading are not subject to interpretation, sir. Have you transported anything else on or off the *Gorlom* in the last two hours?

GRIMPH: No.

B'SOV: Has anyone else come aboard between the time you reported this incident and our arrival?

HEBORMOG: No.

PAUPAUB: Then it stands to reason that the plants were transported off the ship, despite your inhibitors.

HEBORMOG: Impossible!

MORGAN: A famous fictional Earth detective once said, "When you have eliminated all which is impossible, then whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth." I'd like Commander B'Sov to review your logs and security records, while Commanders Odan and Paupaub continue to study the scene for more information. After that –

[SOUNDS OF EXPLOSION, SHIP SHUDDERS]

PAKLED COMPUTER VOICE: Warning – warp core breach imminent.

MORGAN: What the hell...?

HEBORMOG: Captain to Bridge. Report!

VOICE: I don't know, sir – there's been an explosion of some kind in engineering, and we're on a breach countdown.

HEBORMOG: How much time?

VOICE: No more than eight minutes.

HEBORMOG: Captain Morgan, I insist that you remove your crew while my engineers lock this down.

MORGAN: Captain Hebormog, your vessel endangers the starbase, and I am assuming authority over the situation. Take us to your engine room, immediately. Starbase Security, this is Captain Donal Morgan of the USS *Odyssey*. There has been an explosion aboard the *Gorlom*. Release all docking clamps and tractors immediately, and we'll guide her away from the station.

HEBORMOG: Our propulsion systems are all inactive for servicing. We'll never be able to move the *Gorlom* far enough away from the station!

MORGAN: My ship is orbiting the station – she's not docked. Morgan to *Odyssey*. Commander Paris, can you maneuver to reach the *Gorlom* within the sixty seconds?

PARIS: Yes, I believe so, sir. What do you need?

MORGAN: We've got an imminent warp core breach going on here, Commander. We're gonna try "The Riker Maneuver." Get *Odyssey* over here and get a tractor beam on us. Once you've established a lock, spin the ship and drop the tractor, using centrifugal force to fling the *Gorlom* on a trajectory way from the station. Follow us just in transporter range and get a lock on all personnel aboard. If we can't lock down or eject the warp core, we may need an emergency beam-out. Got all that?

PARIS: Understood, Captain. We're on our way.

**BRIDGE FLIGHT RECORDER TRANSCRIPT – COMMAND BRIDGE, USS ODYSSEY NCC-97000
STARDATE 79065.2**

PARIS: Mr. Bandar, lock tractor beam on the *Gorlom*. Helm, stand by for a fast rotation, 120 degrees to starboard.

BANDAR: Tractor beam locked.

PARIS: Go, Mr. Chung!

CHUNG: Rotating 120 degrees starboard.

PARIS: Release tractor.

BANDAR: Tractor off.

PARIS: OK, Lieutenant, let's follow the *Gorlom* in, nice and easy. Get us within 40,000 kilometers and keep us there. Stand by forward shields in case this thing goes south.

FLIGHT RECORDER TRANSCRIPT, PAKLED MERCHANT VESSEL GORLOM STARDATE 79065.2

GRIMPH: Here's our engine room.

MORGAN: Commander Paupaub, see what you can do.

HEBORMOG: Captain, I really must protest at this –

MORGAN: No, Captain Hebormog, what you really must do is stay the hell out of the way. Why is this entire engine room covered in water?

B'SOV: Sir, my tricorder is reading an unusually-large volume of tetryon particles contaminating the water.

PAUPAUB: Same for the water on the consoles. It's almost like there was a tidal wave in here. The engineering controls are all wet.

MORGAN: Are we in any danger of exposure?

B'SOV: No, sir – the concentrations are too small to affect us. But the radiation is definitely present.

PAUPAUB: I can't reverse this core breach, so we're going to have to eject the entire core.

HEBORMOG: You can't! We'll be dead in space.

MORGAN: We'll ALL be dead in space if we don't. Proceed, Commander.

PAUPAUB: Aye, sir. Ejection initiated – everyone out!

CAPTAIN'S LOG, SUPPLEMENTAL

MORGAN: The *Gorlom's* warp core exploded fifteen seconds after ejection, but there was no collateral damage and we were able to safely tow the ship back to a docking clamp at Narendra Station. Preoccupied with finding a new warp core for his ship, Captain Hebormog was kind enough to identify his potential customer for the gourds as a Ferengi named Zem. I've called a command staff briefing to determine our next steps.

BRIEFING ROOM TRANSCRIPT, USS ODYSSEY NCC-97000 STARDATE 79065.3

MORGAN: Nice work aboard the *Gorlom*, Commander Paupaub.

PAUPAUB: Thank you, sir. I still don't understand what caused the breach. The *Gorlom's* maintenance logs were pretty complete, and their warp core was in good working order. Not perfect, but satisfactory.

MORGAN: Audra, have you been able to make any sense of the readings that Commander B'Sov got from the tetryon radiation in their engine room?

ODAN: Not much, Captain. The water was contaminated with the particles, but how they got there is a mystery, since tetryon particles initiate from subspace. We didn't detect any subspace rifts, or any similar anomalies nearby. Dr. Taliaferro aboard the station confirms.

MORGAN: Captain Hebornmog claims that the gourds he was carrying were stolen, and we found evidence of a transporter. Could a transporter beam cause a reaction with the tetryons that could lead to the warp core breach?

PAUPAUB: Possibly, under certain precise conditions, but it's impossible to say whether that happened here.

MORGAN: Commander B'Sov, what information exists on the *Gorlom's* Ferengi client?

B'SOV: Nothing notable or unusual, Captain. Zem seems to be a simple trader dealing in unusual plant life. There is no record of any criminal or suspicious activity. He first arrived at Starbase 364 about two years ago, aboard a shuttle that he owns. No record of any other vessels registered in his name.

MORGAN: Well, absent any other information, I think we need to find this Zem and hope that he can fill in the blanks for us.

B'SOV: Zem's shuttle is listed as berthed in Shuttle Bay 7.

MORGAN: You're with me, Commander. Please call station security and ask them to order a limited security lockdown while we track down Zem. Ask them to send two officers to meet us at Shuttle Bay 7 and stand by. Everyone else, thank you, you're dismissed. By the way, Miral and Danny, you executed that tractor maneuver perfectly. When I have a chance, I'll send Will Riker a message to tell him that we've perfected his stunt.

SHUTTLE BAY #7, STARBASE 364

STARDATE 79065.3



MORGAN: As they say in the holovids, "This must be the place." Readings, Commander?

B'SOV: I'm not getting any life signs, but I am reading a trace amount of tetryon radiation emanating from within the Ferengi shuttle.

MORGAN: I think the hatch is here. (Metal noise)

B'SOV: There's no point in knocking, Captain. There's no one aboard. Here comes station security – and General Kargan.

KARGAN: I was bored, so I came down to see what you Starfleet people are up to. Morgan, I've put out an alert for Zem with orders that he is to be apprehended but not harmed. No one has seen him yet.

MORGAN: Thanks. I'd like a guard posted on this shuttle bay, which is why I called your officers down.

KARGAN: So ordered. If the Ferengi appears, notify both your superiors and Captain Morgan immediately. Understood?

STATION SECURITY OFFICER: Absolutely, General.

KARGAN: Security has reviewed some of the feeds from the station's security cameras. Zem was spotted ducking into a maintenance hatch near the shuttle hangers, but the video timestamp was scrambled, so that could have been any time.

MORGAN: We'll want to take a look at that footage, but first Commander B'Sov and I will try questioning some of the vendors in the Galleria. Zem wasn't buying those plants without a profit motive, so maybe he tried to arrange to sell them somewhere on the station.

GALLERIA LEVEL, STARBASE 364
STARDATE 79065.4

OVRO T'LAN, BOLIAN COMPUTER PARTS DEALER: Starfleet! What a pleasure! I always cooperate with proper authorities... and especially Security.

MORGAN: Excellent. Then you'll be very cooperative in telling me if you've had dealings with a Ferengi named Zem.

T'LAN: "Zem...?" Hmmm..."Zem," you say?

B'SOV: The captain did not stutter. Have you dealt with the Ferengi?

T'LAN: Deal? No, no, I merely *declined* his offer. He wanted to trade... gourds. Actual gourds. Claimed they were 'interspatially enhanced.' His words. I last saw him heading toward the cargo elevators—Deck 9. He was in a hurry, muttering something about moisture reclamation fees.

MORGAN: You know, interfering with a Starfleet investigation is a rather serious criminal offense. This is a nice booth – it'd be a pity to have to shut it down...

T'LAN: I've told you everything! I didn't want Zem's gourds, and I haven't seen the Ferengi since!

MORGAN: What else did he offer you?

T'LAN: All right...he also offered to throw in some kind of metallic object. A canister of some kind. But I shooed him away from my booth and I haven't seen him since! I swear!

B'SOV: Captain, let's try this courier's booth. Perhaps Zem tried to ship the gourds somewhere.

MORGAN: A Lurian...they don't talk much...not sure we'll get anything useful out of him, but it's worth a try.

B'SOV: Have you transported anything for this Ferengi recently? Has he approached you at all?

MORGAN: What's that he's holding up? A transport residue capsule? Did Zem drop this?

B'SOV: I'll scan it. Captain, I'm reading traces of Ferengi DNA embedded in some transport residue.

MORGAN: Zem had to be here recently for there to be transport residue.

B'SOV: Sir, the merchant is pointing towards the external docking gantries.

MORGAN: We know Zem has his own shuttle, but he might reasonably conclude it's being watched. Morgan to Station Security.

KAHBEL: Lieutenant Kahbel here, Captain. What do you need?

MORGAN: Two of your security officers are currently guarding Shuttle Bay 7. I'd like you to have them hang back out of sight from the bay entrance. I don't want to scare our quarry off.

KAHBEL: Acknowledged. Kahbel out.

B'SOV: Captain, that Andorian merchant is trying to get our attention.

MORGAN: Lead the way, Commander.

SURA-DAL, ANDORIAN SPICE MERCHANT: You seek the lobed one. Many do.

MORGAN: Have you seen him recently?

SURA-DAL: Of course. Zem tried to sell me his 'waterless water.' A ridiculous claim... until one of his gourds *absorbed* half my humidity trays. He ran when I demanded compensation.

PARIS (voice): *Odyssey* to Captain Morgan. Sir, we're reading several small subspace micro-rifts throughout the station. They come and go, on various levels.

COMPUTER ALARM AND VOICE: Warning...station atmospheric containment has been compromised. Damage control teams to the following levels...

MORGAN: Thank you, Commander, but station personnel seems to be on top of it. I trust that nothing similar is happening aboard *Odyssey*?

PARIS: Not yet, sir. Commander Odan is monitoring.

MORGAN: Very well. Morgan out. Morgan to Ops.

LIEUTENANT ORLOK, CHIEF ENGINEER, STARBASE 364: Lieutenant Orlok here, Captain. We're a little busy at the moment, but what can I do for you?

MORGAN: My ship is reading subspace rifts forming inside the station. Do you require any assistance?

ORLOK: Negative, Captain. Our damage control teams are currently adequate to the task. However, they are reporting a very strange phenomena: Whatever causes the rifts leaves behind a large quantity of water when they explode and dissipate.

MORGAN: We may have observed a similar effect aboard the *Gorlom*, Lieutenant.

ORLOK: The rifts seem to be sensitive to power sources. Each new rift appears closer and closer to the station's main fusion generators. I don't need to tell you how catastrophic an explosion there will be.

MORGAN: Certainly not. I'll leave you to your work, Lieutenant, but feel free to contact *Odyssey* if you find yourself needing a few more hands.

ORLOK: Thank you, Captain. Ops out.

MORGAN: We're running out of time. We need to know the nature of these plants and where to find them.

DOVELI (voice): Security to Captain Morgan.

MORGAN: Morgan here, Lieutenant.

DOVELI: Sir, we've found the Ferengi called Zem. He was in an EPS conduit on Deck 12, trying to remove parts.

MORGAN: Keep him there, Lieutenant. I'm on my way.

**EPS ACCESS NODE 1217, DECK 12, STARBASE 364
STARDATE 79065.4**

DOVELI: We've got him over here, sir. He keeps muttering about "watery explosions."

MORGAN: He's definitely our man, then. Mister Zem, I am Captain Donal Morgan of the Federation starship *Odyssey*. I am trying to track down some material that has proved hazardous to this starbase, and everything points to you.

B'SOV: We already know you struck a deal with the Pakled traders. We also know that the merchandise was transported off the Pakled ship before payment was arranged. You are responsible.

ZEM: No! No! I didn't do anything! I'm trying to help save everyone!

MORGAN: What do you know about these gourds? Are they responsible for the subspace rifts?

ZEM: I didn't think they were dangerous! I thought they were...portable storage units! Desert people love water! I was gonna sell them back to people on Xuloi IV. It's a desert planet, you know. Profit on both ends!

MORGAN: Portable storage units don't cause subspace rifts.

ZEM: Well, apparently they do when they are transported. The dematerialization beam did something to the energy matrix surrounding the gourds. They didn't rematerialize where I intended – they were scattered all over the station, and I couldn't find them all! I was scrounging for materials to make a stabilization field to prevent the rupturing when your goon squad stopped me.

[station shudders]

COMPUTER VOICE: Warning...subspace energy discharges on EPS Power Distribution Level. Damage control teams to EPS Power Distribution Level.

ZEM: Agggggh!

MORGAN: I think you finally understand how serious this is, Mr. Zem. I'm placing you under arrest pending charges for attempted theft and transporting dangerous material.

ZEM: But I didn't transport them – the Pakleds did! I mean...I suppose I DID literally transport them...but –

KARGAN: I will take personal charge of this one, Captain. Do not worry, Ferengi. If Starfleet is finished questioning you, we will take good care of you. Security, take him away.

CAPTAIN'S LOG, STARDATE 79065.7

MORGAN: The station's science and engineering teams were able to track the subspace fields being generated by the gourds which enabled them to anticipate rift materialization to enable the deployment of containment fields which kept both the subspace discharge and the resulting water from causing any damage. Once those fields were isolated, it was a reasonably-simple matter to transfer unexploded gourds to stasis containment for further study.

There was a temporary inconvenience when the station engineers were forced to shut down the fusion core to prevent the progress of the subspace rifts, but power was restored within fifteen minutes. There were no injuries of any kind experienced on the station, although I'm told a Klingon engineering party got very nearly washed down a corridor when a large rift exploded directly in front of them. Klingons do not generally like to be wet, but no permanent harm was done.

I asked Admiral Hebert for permission to take one of the subdued plants aboard *Odyssey* (which we did by shuttle – NOT transporter) so that Commander Odan could take a crack at examining it. Her initial analysis suggests that the water resulting from the explosion of the unstable gourds comes from a subspace manifold where tetryon particles naturally form. There are water reservoirs in those manifolds which breach into normal space in the rifts before the explosion occurs. Despite the fact that the Ferengi, Zem, didn't really know what he was dealing with, he may have been at least partially correct in suggesting that the gourds are purposefully designed to store water in subspace. If they do originate from Xuloi IV, and if that is indeed a desert planet, the people there may have designed them to store water extra-dimensionally. Something in the Ferengi's transporter beam may have interfered with the Xuloi technology to cause the reaction in the gourds.

The station's science officer, Dr. Taliaferro, concurs with Commander Odan's initial analysis, and believes that the transporter modification also causes the gourds to be drawn like magnets toward power sources where they can absorb energy. Detonation is apparently caused by the gourds absorbing too much energy, as they did in the *Gorlom's* engine room.

Admiral Hebert and General Kargan have both expressed their appreciation for our assistance. The ship is now preparing for our first actual assignment within the Expanse. But first, General Kargan and I have planned a session in the bat'leth ring in the station's Klingon training facility.

EPISODE EIGHT: "The Edge of Honor"

(Homebrew, adapted from material obtained from a ChatGPT prompt)

KLINGON TRAINING FACILITY, STARBASE 364 STARDATE 79067.2

MORGAN: Starting without me, General?

KARGAN: Morgan, you belligerent targ! No, I thought it best to arrive early and practice some forms before we duel. You damned near decapitated me the last time.

MORGAN: Well, I think we can do better than this room setting, don't you? Computer, execute "Morgan Bat'leth Arena Number 3."

KARGAN: The smoking braziers is a nice touch. You have more than one bat'leth training program?

MORGAN: I have seven. Working on an eighth, actually,

KARGAN: Ho-HO...! I should have known. What do you say to a “no honor held back” match? I have some personal shield belts here.

MORGAN: Well, did we come here to spar, or did we come here to screw around? I'm in.

KARGAN: Excellent. Ready? Begin!

[sounds of clashing blades, chirping signal]

KARGAN: HA! One to me!

MORGAN: It appears I am out of practice.

KARGAN: Too busy designing combat holos and not enough time spent using them.

MORGAN: Again.

[sounds of clashing blades, chirping signal]

MORGAN: That's more like it.

KARGAN: Show me how you did that. I haven't been disarmed like that in years.

KAHBEL (voice): Station security to General Kargan. Please report to Operations immediately.

KARGAN: *Hu'tegh!* This is Kargan. I am busy! What do you want?

KAHBEL: General, one of the members of the High Council delegation has been attacked! Please report to Operations.

MORGAN: I didn't know there were members of the Klingon Diplomatic Corps aboard the station.

KARGAN: We've been keeping it quiet for security reasons. Kahbel, who was the target?

KAHBEL: It was Lord Kavok himself, General. He is alive but in critical condition in Sickbay. Admiral Hebert requests your presence in Operations.

KARGAN: Stop mewling, you *petaQ* - I'm heading there now! Morgan, join me. This could get interesting.

MORGAN: Let's get cleaned up and go.

STATION OPERATIONS, STARBASE 364
STARDATE 79067.3

ADMIRAL HEBERT: General, we have a problem –

KARGAN: I've already spoken with Lieutenant Kahbel –

HEBERT: I'm afraid this goes far beyond the attack on Councillor Kavok. Where were you three hours ago? Station logs have you in your quarters.

KARGAN: That is correct. I was resting in preparation for my sparring session with Captain Morgan. What is the meaning of this line of questioning?

HEBERT: Doctor N'Ria estimates that the attack occurred approximately three hours ago. A Klingon bladed weapon was used, and very few even knew he was on the station.

MORGAN: Forgive me, Admiral, but Klingons comprise nearly half the station's complement. A Klingon weapon is hardly evidence of the attacker's identity. Hell, I own several such weapons, and I'm not even Klingon.

HEBERT: Of course, Captain. However, General Kargan's command code was used to gain access to the Counselor's quarters. He was stabbed immediately afterwards.

[clank of metal on deck]

KARGAN: Here is my *dk'tagh*. Test it. Test all the weapons in my personal collection, if you wish. You will find nothing.

HEBERT: Let me be clear, General. I do not think you are guilty of anything, but we must investigate this. I have disabled all of your command codes, and I'm going to ask you to confine yourself to quarters for the time being while we conduct the inquiry.

KARGAN: This is not acceptable! I *insist* on being allowed to participate in the investigation and eliminate this stain on my honor.

HEBERT: That is not possible for reasons which should be obvious to you, General. I'm sorry. However, it occurs to me that someone with an appreciation for Klingon culture might be uniquely positioned to resolve this. Captain Morgan, may I call on you once again?

MORGAN: Of course, Admiral. I should remind you that the General is a friend, and I cannot claim to be objective.

HEBERT: No, but I still think you can be trusted to find the truth of this, Captain. Again, I do not doubt the General's innocence. I'd like you to prove it by finding the true perpetrator.

MORGAN: Understood, Admiral.

HEBERT: Lieutenant Kahbel, what is it?

KAHBEL: Admiral, we have found some security footage that you need to review.

HEBERT: Onscreen here, please.

KAHBEL: It appears to show the General accessing a restricted weapons locker. Here, he takes a *dk'tagh* from the rack...

MORGAN: That's not a Klingon.

KARGAN: It is certainly not *me*.

HEBERT: What do you mean, Captain?

MORGAN: This person has gone to some trouble to impersonate the General. The uniform and cloak are correct, but the height, build and gait are all wrong. Look closer.

KAHBEL: The General's codes were used to access this locker, as well as Lord Kavok's quarters.

KARGAN: *PetaQ!* I will feed on your heart for this!

HEBERT: Restrain the General! Kargan, I must insist that you *stand down!* We will get to the meaning of this. Captain, please escort the General to his quarters. Kargan, I trust that I do not need to send along additional security...?

KARGAN: ...No, I will cooperate. Come, Morgan, let's get this indignity over with.

[turbolift doors open/close]

MORGAN: Deck Twelve. You can trust me to get to the bottom of this, Kargan.

KARGAN: I will trust no one else. What is your next move?

MORGAN: After I drop you off, I'm heading to Sickbay to see if the Counselor is healthy enough to talk. What can you tell me about him?

KARGAN: He is Kavok, Son of Drex of House Mo'Kai.

MORGAN: I'm not familiar with that house.

KARGAN: It is a house of no great consequence, but it is politically opposed to the Chancellor, and Kavok has managed to worm his way onto Martok's council. He is shrewd – a clever strategist, and therefore politically dangerous. Martok sent him here on a fact-finding mission, probably just to get him off Kronos and out of his hair for a while. His job is to evaluate the Starfleet/Klingon cooperation on Narendra Station.

MORGAN: Hardly a matter controversial enough to motivate someone to murder him.

KARGAN: No, but his House is not aligned with Martok's – or mine, for that matter. Which unfortunately gives *me* such motivation.

MORGAN: Someone is obviously trying to frame you.

KARGAN: Find him, and bring him to me. I will deal with this stain on my honor directly.

MORGAN: You know I can't do that, Kargan.

KARGAN: This is a Klingon matter, Morgan, and is subject to Klingon law.

MORGAN: This is a joint Federation-Klingon station, Kargan, and I shouldn't need to remind you of the regulations and protocols. You wrote half of them. I promise I will keep you posted, but you must not interfere with this investigation in any way. Swear that you will conduct yourself appropriately.

KARGAN: Very well. Go, and do not fail me. *Qa'pla!*

KLINGON WARD, MAIN SICKBAY, STARBASE 364
STARDATE 79067.3

MORGAN: We've not met, Doctor, but I am Donal Morgan, commanding officer of the USS *Odyssey*, and Admiral Hebert has asked me to investigate this attack.

N'RIA: Yes, Captain, so I've been informed.

MORGAN: What is the counselor's condition?

N'RIA: Lord Kavok has been stabbed three times and lost a considerable amount of blood. I was able to repair all of the wounds, and none of his major organs were directly involved. I expect him to make a full recovery, but he will require several days of rest here in Sickbay, and probably a few more in his own quarters before he can resume a regular schedule.

MORGAN: It was suggested to me that a Klingon *dk'tagh* was used.

N'RIA: The wounds are characteristic and unmistakable – two smaller incisions from the ricasso blades, on either side of the far deeper puncture from the main blade.

MORGAN: Do you have any evidence that might lead to the attacker? Any trace DNA, anything?

N'RIA: None. The only other thing I can tell you is that the attack came from behind. Two of the wounds are in the upper back, and one near his kidneys.

MORGAN: Is he conscious?

N'RIA: Quite. You may visit with him – but briefly, please, Captain.

MORGAN: Thank you, of course. I just need to ask him a few questions...Lord Kavok, I am Captain Donal Morgan, commanding USS *Odyssey* attached to the 20th Fleet on station here at Starbase 364. I've been assigned to conduct an investigation into your attack. Can you tell me what happened?

KAVOK: Nothing of much value, Captain. I have been replaying the event in my mind, and can come up with very few details.

MORGAN: What do you remember?

KAVOK: I finished a meeting with my aides and dismissed them, then went to my bed chamber.

MORGAN: Your meeting was in the outer suite?

KAVOK: Yes.

MORGAN: And you did not leave your suite between the time you dismissed your aides and went to bed?

KAVOK: Correct.

MORGAN: So the attacker had to be already planted in the bedroom. How long was your meeting?

KAVOK: Short – no more than ten or fifteen minutes.

MORGAN: How much detail can you remember about what happened when you moved into the bedroom?

KAVOK: I moved towards the dresser to remove my medals and sash, and I was stabbed from behind. I must have lost consciousness almost immediately, because I remember nothing more.

MORGAN: You did not see your attacker at all? There is nothing you can tell me about him?

KAVOK: Nothing, Captain. But he was efficient, and knew something about Klingon anatomy. He knew, for example, that one blow would not be sufficient to bring me down. I'm told it took three. But do not make the mistake of thinking this attack was meant simply to kill me. It was meant to silence me and prevent my assignment from being successful.

MORGAN: Why?

KAVOK: I am here on an inspection tour with orders from Chancellor Martok to review the state of Klingon/Federation cooperation aboard Narendra Station.

MORGAN: I'm aware of that. Why would someone want to silence you?

KAVOK: There are those in the Empire who are not pleased with the progress of this "experiment," and want to withdraw all Klingon presence from this station.

MORGAN: Are you among them?

KAVOK: I have not made any judgement as yet. I have not had time to conduct my investigation. You might ask yourself, who would stand to lose the most from my ruling that Klingon participation in the Narendra project should come to an end?

MORGAN: The "Narendra project," as you call it, has been going on for three decades. Gowron himself approved it. I think it unlikely that Chancellor Martok would decide to abandon it.

KAVOK: We shall see, Captain. Now if you do not mind, I feel the need to rest.

MORGAN: Of course. I'll visit you again when you are stronger. Doctor N'Ria, I have ordered security guards placed outside the recovery ward. The counselor may have his own security detachment as well.

N'RIA: Of course, Captain.

MORGAN: Morgan to Station Security. Please ask all of Lord Kavok's aides to meet me at the security office in thirty minutes. Morgan to *Odyssey*. Commander Paris, please ask Commander B'Sov and Ensign Telavi to meet me at Station Security right away. And ask Admiral Hebert to send a copy of the station's security logs to you for analysis.

PARIS (voice): Acknowledged, Captain.

SECURITY COMPLEX, STARBASE 364
STARDATE 79067.3

MORGAN: Commander B'Sov, I'd like you to go search the counselor's quarters. Give them a full scan and report any findings to me here. I'm sure Station Security did a sweep, but I'd like some independent verification of their work.

B'SOV: Aye, sir – on my way.

MORGAN: Ensign, you and I are going to question the counselor's aides. Stay alert for any impressions of deception that you obtain. I believe someone is trying to undermine both General Kargan's authority and the entire Federation/Klingon alliance – at least here on Narendra Station.

TELAVI: Understood, sir.

SECURITY ENSIGN: Captain, the Klingon diplomatic team is here, asking for you.

MORGAN: Send them in, Ensign. Please be seated. I am Captain Donal Morgan of the USS *Odyssey*, on station here at Starbase 364. Admiral Hebert has asked me to lead the investigation into the attack on Counselor Kavok.

K'TARA: We are sure that the station's security officers can handle this, Captain.

MORGAN: For the purposes of this investigation, you will consider ME station security, and I require your cooperation. And you are...?

K'TARA: K'Tara of the House of Mo'Kai, special assistant to Lord Kavok.

MORGAN: What is your name?

BA'KTOR: Why are we submitting yourself to this human's questions?

MORGAN: Because if you do not, I will kill you where you stand.

TELAVI: Captain...

MORGAN: Quiet, Ensign. Do you hear me, *petaQ*?! What is your name?

BA'KTOR: I am Ba'ktor. This is Kah'mor.

K'TARA: Ba'ktor, sit down. The sooner this is over with, the sooner we can continue our assignment.

TELAVI: Captain, may I speak with you for a moment, outside?

MORGAN: Very well, Ensign...now, what is it?

TELAVI: I didn't mean to interrupt you, sir, but I thought you should know that I cannot read K'Tara at all. She is blocking my telepathy somehow.

MORGAN: What about the other two?

TELAVI: They seem normal, sir. They are annoyed, but they also fear you a little. Your “Klingon diplomacy” was quite effective.

PARIS (voice): *Odyssey* to Captain Morgan.

MORGAN: Here, Commander.

PARIS: Sir, Mister Bandar has analyzed the station logs. There is nothing abnormal in the security logs, but the station’s holodeck logs seem to have been tampered with.

MORGAN: In what way?

BANDAR (voice): Captain, a Klingon encryption overlay has been placed over the standard security codes. It carries some of General Kargan’s identifiers, but not enough to be his genuine personal code.

MORGAN: So Kargan did not activate these particular codes himself?

BANDAR: Correct, sir.

MORGAN: Excellent work, Lieutenant. Commander Paris, please relay this information to Admiral Hebert, and convey my recommendation that the General be released from house arrest immediately.

PARIS: Aye, Captain. *Odyssey* out.

MORGAN: OK, let’s find out what’s going on with this Klingon...Ba’ktor and Kah’mor, you are dismissed. Report to Lord Kavok immediately.

BA’KTOR: What about--?

MORGAN: I have more questions for K’Tara, here. Do you have a problem with that?

BA’KTOR: Uh...no.

MORGAN: Excellent. Now, K’Tara...who or what are you? You clearly aren’t Klingon.

[scuffling sounds]

MORGAN: Morgan to Station Security. Security alert: Find and detain the Klingon diplomat K’Tara. She may not be Klingon, and she is armed and dangerous. Notify me as soon as she is located.

SECURITY OFFICER (voice): Aye, Captain.

[alert claxon sounds]

CAPTAIN’S LOG, STARDATE 79067.4

MORGAN: The individual known as K’Tara escaped by pulling a phaser on Ensign Telavi and me, and stunning the ensign. She is largely unharmed, but I sent her to the station infirmary to get checked out. Released from his house arrest, General Kargan has joined me and Admiral Hebert in Station Ops.

**MAIN OPERATIONS, STARBASE 364
STARDATE 79067.4**

HEBERT: You are unharmed, Captain?

MORGAN: Yes, Admiral. My communications officer suffered the worst of it, but I'm informed that she'll be fine.

KARGAN: You said she sensed something wrong with K'Tara?

MORGAN: She was totally unable to obtain any telepathic impressions whatsoever, which is unusual for a Betazoid. Even if the subject has somehow blocked access to specific thoughts, memories and so forth, typically a Betazoid can at least sense their presence. Ensign Telavi could read nothing from her.

HEBERT: So she isn't even Klingon?

KARGAN: Telepathic abilities are unusual among my people. At present I am more interested in how this individual was able to escape from our security station.

KHABEL: General, I assure you –

HEBERT: There will be plenty of time for questions and recriminations later, Kargan. Let's focus on finding K'Tara and figuring out what she's after.

MORGAN: I think another interview with her boss is in order.

KARGAN: I will come with you. If he will not speak, then I will...extend his stay in Sickbay. With my fists.

**KLINGON WARD, MAIN SICKBAY, STARBASE 364
STARDATE 79067.4**

MORGAN: Counsellor, your aide K'Tara has been up to some very suspicious "extracurricular activities." What can you tell me about her?

KAVOK: She is a very junior member of our household, and was only recently assigned to my delegation.

MORGAN: How long ago?

KAVOK: Not more than two months. Where is she?

MORGAN: We don't know. She escaped while being questioned, but she can't get off the station. We have everything locked down, and security teams are searching.

KAVOK: If she is a traitor, I assume she will be dealt with accordingly.

KARGAN: You can rest assured on that score, Counselor. In the meantime, we need to know what her objective is.

KAVOK: I have no way of knowing that, General.

MORGAN: Okay, let's back up. Restate the purpose of your visit to Narendra Statrion.

KAVOK: Chancellor Martok sent us here to evaluate and report on the current state of Klingon/Federation relations here on the station.

KARGAN: Why?

KAVOK: I do not question my instructions, General. I only follow them.

KARGAN: No matter. I have already dispatched a message to Martok. He will clarify his intent.

MORGAN: We won't receive a response for a day or two. Who or what might benefit from disrupting your mission, Counselor?

KAVOK: I have no way of knowing that either, Captain.

KARGAN: Your house is not aligned with the Chancellor. Why was this assignment given to *you*?

KAVOK: I hold no animosity against Martok. My house may not be in his favor, but I am a duly appointed member of the High Council. Why should the Chancellor not entrust me with sensitive matters?

MORGAN: I'll ask again, Counselor, Narendra Station has been operational for many years. Of what use is such a survey mission to either Martok or the Empire?

KAVOK: It is not for us to question the orders of the –

KARGAN: Spare us, Kavok. Do not expect me to believe that your presence here is out of loyalty. You received orders. From whom, specifically?

KAVOK: They were transmitted to my office by that of the Chancellor.

MORGAN: So you didn't actually speak to Martok or anyone else about this assignment?

KAVOK: No – only my aides. If you are implying that the message was falsified, you can be sure that my aides authenticated it before giving it to me.

MORGAN: No, I don't think we can be sure of that, Counselor. Not at all.

KAHBEL (voice): Security to General Kargan. General, we are reading unusual power spikes in Holodeck 4. Someone seems to be trying to override security protocols on one of Captain Morgan's training programs. The signatures on the codes being used are identical to the false ones identified by *Odyssey*. Security teams are already responding.

KARGAN: Secure that holodeck! No one goes in or out until we arrive. Kargan out.

**KLINGON TRAINING FACILITY, STARBASE 364
STARDATE 79067.4**

KAHBEL: The holodeck won't open, sir. Security overrides are not working. We're also getting reports from throughout the station: Klingon warriors are appearing and attacking anyone in sight in several critical locations. They're making use of the emergency medical holographic emitters.

KARGAN: I will try my command codes, but I am not optimistic. Whoever –

MORGAN: Actually, it's working. Somebody give me a phaser.

KAHBEL: Here is a disruptor, sir.

K'TARA (voice): Welcome, gentlemen. Please, come in! You will not find me here, but you are welcome to witness the fate I have planned for this station.

KARGAN: Who are you, and what do you want?

K'TARA (voice): You will not be alive long enough to worry about such details, General. Defend yourselves!

PERSONAL LOG - CAPTAIN DONAL MORGAN STARDATE 79067.6

K'Tara modified my own Klingon bat'leth training program, removing all safety protocols, and also managed to replicate holographic Klingon warriors in various strategic locations in the station, including Operations. General Kargan and I managed to fight off the "Klingons" in the holodeck. My phaser was, of course, ineffective, but fortunately my program includes several weapons racks from which the General and I were able to obtain bat'leths to fight the holograms. I'm pretty sure Kargan was enjoying himself.

I broadcast a general alert throughout the station. K'Tara's tampering was effective but unsophisticated, and security was able to lock down all of the EMH emitters, eliminating the threat from the holograms, while Commanders Oban and Paupaub remotely isolated the virus and purged it from the station's systems.

Meanwhile, unbeknownst to us, K'Tara managed to hijack a docked merchant ship and escape, but not before triggering some biological scanners in Station Ops. Commander Odan reviewed those scans and was able to determine that K'Tara was not a Klingon at all. Audra rates the probability at about 78% that K'Tara was a Lethean. If true, that would explain why Ensign Telavi was unable to read K'Tara telepathically, as well as K'Tara's ability to steal a ship with relative ease.

The merchant ship was able to escape in all the commotion. We didn't even know it had been appropriated until after it warped out of the area, and even if we'd known, *Odyssey* was busy helping us lock down the station. I considered ordering the *Aquarius* launched to give chase, but the merchant ship's warp signature was obscured by one of the Expanse's famous "washboard" distortions, making it impossible to track.

Lord Kavok will return to Qo'nos once he has fully recovered, to launch an investigation into how his office was infiltrated by the Lethean. Our assumption is that K'Tara – or whatever her real name is – sought to destabilize the Federation-Klingon alliance, at least here in the Expanse, but we have no hard evidence as to her true motives. Hopefully the fugitive can be caught. Martok, of course, later confirmed that he did not order Kavok's mission to Narendra Station.

When things settled down, Kargan and I returned to the holodeck to complete our training session. His comment was, "Next time, Captain, try not to let station-wide conspiracies interrupt our training!" My reply was, "I'll take that under advisement, General – right after I embarrass you in the ring. Defend yourself!"

I held my own, but I am now very sore.