

LOTUS STARBASE

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"Knowledge is knowing a tomato is a fruit; wisdom is not putting it in a fruit salad."

-- Miles Kington



LOTUS FLEET:: AN AUTHENTICALLY DEDICATED STAR TREK COMMUNITY

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Message from the Fleet Admiral's Office

Greetings members and friends of Lotus Fleet.

My focus for this issue will be on the proposed upcoming new Star Trek series set to debut in early 2017. There seems to be information being announced regularly as CBS scrambles to assemble a team for this yet developed show. I'm going to hodgepodge some of that information along with a few thoughts here in hope that it will foster continued dialogue among our members regarding this series.

One reason this new series is not coming out during this 50th anniversary year of the franchise is due to the release of the third reboot Star Trek movie: *Star Trek Beyond*, which beams in on July 22, 2016. Apparently Paramount wanted CBS to wait six months until after the movie's release before airing the new series. But this is not the only complication or concern.

In addition, during the Television Critics Association, new CBS Entertainment president Glen Geller opened up to *Slash Film* about the new Star Trek TV series (*the first in more than 10 years after Star Trek: Enterprise went off the air in 2005*) being developed over at CBS for their streaming service, CBS All Access: their digital subscription service.

However, Geller had some interesting things to say, including the fact that the series, spearheaded by Kurtzman and being developed for CBS All Access, was NEVER going to be developed for the broadcast network.

"It was always designed for a streaming service. I'm just thrilled we get to be part of the launch. We'll broadcast the launch. I'm not sure about the plans creatively for new characters."

Geller also added that CBS and CBS All Access are so separate that he himself has absolutely nothing to do with the new Star Trek series!

"I don't have anything to do with it. It really is for All Access. While the network will be broadcasting the pilot, I actually can't answer any creative questions about it. I'm looking forward to seeing the new Star Trek. I think it's going to be an exciting project."

Okay.... So CBS it would seem is basically just the facade for the launching of the premiere and the subsequent bait-and-switch for this new pay online affiliated network who will carry the remaining episodes. Too bad that 50 years later, CBS still doesn't truly believe in the staying power of Star Trek. (*remember Lost in Space was chosen over StarTrek, even though the Trek pilot was shot in 1964*)

Having already partnered up on the Star Trek films with J.J. Abrams, Alex Kurtzman as mentioned will step in as executive producer for the CBS show. He'll tackle the project without his usual collaborator, Roberto Orci, instead partnering up with Heather Kadin (*the development head at Kurtzman's production company, Secret Hideout*).

Bryan Fuller will join Kurtzman as the co-head of the new Star Trek, having come full circle after beginning his career as a writer for Deep Space Nine and Star Trek: Voyager.

Then Fuller, who will co-create, produce and serve as showrunner of the upcoming series just announced the news that Nicholas Meyer (*director of Star Trek II: The Wrath Of Khan and Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country*) has joined the show's writing staff and will be a consulting producer.

After which another announcement came that the upcoming Star Trek series has recruited Federation royalty into the production as Roddenberry Entertainment President Eugene "Rod"

Roddenberry, son Star Trek creator Gene Roddenberry, has joined the series as an executive producer along with Roddenberry Entertainment COO Trevor Roth.

So will it be possible with Nicolas Meyer and Rod Roddenberry now a part of this team, that the series may have a chance to exist within Gene Roddenberry's vision and within the prime universe? Who knows... but perhaps since the Abrams' reboot is part of Paramount's movie franchise, this CBS offshoot will stick to the original timeline... if only to avoid a confrontation with Paramount. One can always hope.

Then onto further speculation... Although the legendary creator of Star Trek passed away in 1991, data from 200 floppy disks he owned were only recently recovered, as announced by Drive Savers. While it's not yet clear exactly what was found on the disks, the company hinted that it could contain story ideas or even scripts for the upcoming show. Hopefully, ones better than The Omega Glory! ;-)

The only thing that seems certain is that this will involve an all new cast. Ship? Who knows... but it has been conveyed that the show "will introduce new characters seeking imaginative new worlds and new civilizations, while exploring the dramatic contemporary themes that have been a signature of the franchise." Hmmmm... This is quite generalized.... and certainly open to interpretation, but that is no surprise considering that nothing apparently has been written let alone decided specifically about the series. I just hope that they have the sense to hire additional talented science fiction writers who will tell character driven stories. That there will be an emphasis on substance and not flash and special effects like we've seen in the reboot. This wish list goes on...

So everyone... please chime in and offer your ideas and suggestions for this new series while it is still being developed. Perhaps we can help to steer this new series into a positive direction.

Jeff T

Admiral Jeff T
Fleet Commanding Officer



Top 10 'Star Trek' Technologies That Actually Came True

"Beam us up." It's one of the most iconic lines in television history. It's something often heard in the hit science fiction television series "Star Trek" and all of the television shows and movies that followed.

The transporter essentially dematerialized a human body at one point only to rematerialize it in the transporter bay on the ship. Somehow, it broke down atoms and molecules within the body -- scattered them through the vacuum of space without losing a single one from point A to point B, then voila, that person re-emerged out of thin air. Sounds pretty cool, though impossible, right? But what if there was such a device?

The truth is, you can forget about a transporter. No one has been able to realize such a concept. But that doesn't mean some of the ideas that seemed far-fetched when the show debuted in 1966 haven't become a reality. In this article, we feature the top 10 technologies from Star Trek that actually did come to fruition, listed in no particular order. Some of them may surprise you.

10: Transparent Aluminum (Armor)

The fourth installment of the original "Star Trek" movies is perhaps the most endearing to fans. The crew returns to modern-day Earth. Kirk, Spock and the rest of the gang ditch a Klingon Bird of Prey spacecraft in the San Francisco Bay after narrowly missing the Golden Gate Bridge while flying blind in a storm. You may remember the scene -- but how many of you remember Scotty introducing transparent aluminum for the first time?

In the flick, Scotty traded the formula matrix for transparent aluminum -- a huge engineering advancement -- for sheets of plexiglass in order to build a tank to transport the two humpback whales (George and Gracie) to the Earth of their time. The claim was that you'd be able to replace six-inch (14-centimeter) thick Plexiglas with one-inch (2.5-centimeter) thick see-through aluminum.

It may sound impossible, but there is such a thing as transparent aluminum armor or aluminum oxynitride (ALON) as it's more commonly known. ALON is a ceramic material that starts out as a powder before heat and pressure turn it into a crystalline form similar to glass. Once in the crystalline form, the material is strong enough to withstand bullets. Polishing the molded ALON strengthens the material even more. The Air Force has tested the material in hopes of replacing windows and canopies in its aircraft. Transparent aluminum armor is lighter and stronger than bulletproof glass. Less weight, stronger material -- what's not to like?

9: Communicators

Whenever Captain Kirk left the safe confines of the Enterprise, he did so knowing it could be the last time he saw his ship. Danger was never far away. And when in distress and in need of help in a pinch, he could always count on Bones to come up with a miracle cure, Scotty to beam him up or Spock to give him some vital scientific information. He'd just whip out his communicator and place a call.

Fast-forward 30 years and wouldn't you know it, it seems like everyone carries a communicator. We just know them as cell phones. Actually, the communicators in "Star Trek" were more like the

push-to-talk, person-to-person devices first made popular by Nextel in the mid to late '90s. The "Star Trek" communicator had a flip antenna that when opened, activated the device. The original flip cell phones are perhaps distant cousins. Whatever the case, the creators of "Star Trek" were on to something because you'd be hard-pressed to find many people without a cell phone these days.

In later incarnations of the "Star Trek" franchise, the communicators evolved to being housed in the Starfleet logo on the crewman's chest. With the tap of a finger, communication between crewmembers became even easier. Vocera Communications has a similar product that can link people on the same network inside a designated area like an office or a building by using the included software over a wireless LAN. The B2000 communication badge weighs less than two ounces and can be worn on the lapel of a coat or shirt and allows clear two-way communication. It's even designed to inhibit the growth of bacteria so it's suitable for doctors [source: Vocera].

8: Hypospray

The creative team behind "Star Trek" found spiffy ways to spice up some activities we endure on a day-to-day basis. Take medical treatment, for example: Not many people enjoy getting a flu shot, and in "Star Trek," inoculating patients was one of Dr. Leonard "Bones" McCoy's primary duties. It seemed not an episode went by that Bones wasn't giving someone a shot of some sort of space vaccine. But what was more fascinating was the contraption he used.

Hypospray is a form of hypodermic injection of medication. A hypospray injection is forced under the skin (subcutaneous injection) with high air pressure. The air pressure shoots the liquid vaccine deep enough into the skin that no needle is required. The real-world application is known as a jet injector.

Jet injectors have been in use for many years. In fact, the technology predates "Star Trek." Jet injectors were originally designed to be used in mass vaccinations. Jet injecting is safer (no needles to pass along infectious disease) and faster in administering vaccines. Similar in appearance to an automotive paint gun, jet injection systems can use a larger container for the vaccine, thus allowing medical personnel to inoculate more people quicker.

7: Tractor Beams

When NASA needs to make repairs to the Hubble Space Telescope, astronauts have to be specially trained to get out of the Space Shuttle for extravehicular activity. They also have to learn how to work within the confines of their space suits, with thick gloves on. Wouldn't it be nice to just bring the telescope inside, where repairs wouldn't be so challenging and dangerous?

In science fiction, space ships including the Starship Enterprise snatch each other up using tractor beams. In some cases, large vessels have a tractor beam strong enough to prevent smaller vessels from escaping the gravitational force. So is this science even plausible?

Yes and no. Optical tweezers are as close as you're going to get to a legitimate tractor beam on current-day Earth. Scientists have harnessed small lasers into beams capable of manipulating molecules and moving them with precision. Optical tweezers use a focused laser to trap and suspend microscopic particles in an optical trap. Scientists can use optical tweezers to trap and remove bacteria

and sort cells. Optical tweezers are used primarily in studying the physical properties of DNA.

While the beams used in optical tweezers aren't strong enough to dock the space shuttle to the International Space Station, it's a start in that direction.

6: Phasers

"Set phasers to stun" -- another oft-heard command given to the Enterprise crew. The crew often relied on the stun setting of their fictitious weapon of choice known as a phaser. Armed with a phaser, Kirk and his colleagues had the ability to kill or more desirably, stun their adversaries and render them incapacitated.

Actually, stun guns have been around for some time. In fact, electricity has been used for punishment and to control livestock as far back as the 1880s. But it wasn't until 1969 when a guy named Jack Cover invented the first Taser that the stun gun was most realized. The Taser fails to kill like the phaser did, yet, it packs enough of an electrical punch to render its victim disorientated, if not completely incapacitated.

Unlike the phaser, the Taser and other stun guns must come in physical contact with the target in order to have any effect. Tasers take care of this by projecting two electrodes, connected by wires, which attach to the target's skin. Once in contact, the handheld unit transfers electricity to the target, thus having the stun effect. Stun guns with stationary electrical contact probes are somewhat less effective because while they have a similar effect on the target, you have to be much closer (within arm's length) in order to zap your target.

Something more along the lines of the phaser may be in development. Applied Energetic has developed Laser Guided Energy and Laser Induced Plasma Energy technologies that are said to transmit high-voltage bursts of energy to a target [source: Applied Energetics]. In other words, these pulses of energy would stun the target and limit collateral damage. So a true phaser may soon be a reality.

5: Universal Translator

Imagine if no matter what country you visited, no matter what the culture, you could understand everything the indigenous people were saying. It sure would make traveling easier. Take that thought to another level like say, if you were planet hopping like the crew onboard the Enterprise. Fortunately for Captain Kirk and his peers, they had a universal translator.

The characters in "Star Trek" relied on a small device that when spoken into, would translate the words into English. Guess what? The technology exists for us in the real world. There are devices that let you speak phrases in English and it will spit back to you the same rhetoric in a specified language. The only problem is, these devices only work for certain predetermined languages.

A true universal translator like the one on the show may not be a reality, but the technology is available. Voice recognition has advanced considerably since its inception. But computers have yet to be able to learn languages. Computers would be able to theoretically gather the information much faster than a human brain, but a software program is dependent on actual data. Someone has to take

the time and expense to put it together and make it available, which is probably why these systems focus on more popular languages.

4: Geordi's VISOR

When "Star Trek: The Next Generation" thrust the love of everything "Star Trek" back into popular culture, the quirky Mr. Spock and crass Bones McCoy and others were supplanted by a new cast. One of the most popular characters on the new show was engineer Geordi LaForge.

What made Geordi unique, perhaps even mysterious, was his funky eyewear. Geordi was blind, but after a surgical operation and aided through the use of a device called VISOR (Visual Instrument and Sensory Organ Replacement), Geordi could see throughout the electromagnetic spectrum. Though it may sound far-fetched, in reality, similar technology exists that may someday bring sight back to the blind.

In 2005, a team of scientists from Stanford University successfully implanted a small chip behind the retina of blind rats that enabled them to pass a vision recognition test. The science behind the implants, or bionic eyes as they're commonly referred to, works much the way Geordi's VISOR did. The patient receives the implants behind the retina, then wears a pair of glasses fitted with a video camera. Light enters the camera and is processed through a small wireless computer, which then broadcasts it as infrared LED images on the inside of the glasses. Those images are reflected back into the retina chips to stimulate photodiodes. The photodiodes replicate the lost retinal cells then change light into electrical signals which in turn send nerve pulses to the brain.

What it all means is that in theory, a person with 20/400 sight (blind), due to the loss of retinal cells from retinitis pigmentosa, can obtain 20/80 sight. It's not good enough to pass the driving test (normal vision is considered 20/20) but it's good enough to read billboards and go about your day without the aid of a seeing-eye dog.

3: Torpedo Coffins

In the second instalment of the "Star Trek" movie franchise, the beloved Mr. Spock, played by Leonard Nimoy, died after saving the Starship Enterprise from certain disaster. The movie culminated with the crew firing Spock's corpse out of the torpedo bay in a coffin shaped like one of the ship's weapons, the photon torpedo.

Believe it or not, you too could be laid to eternal rest in your own Federation-approved photon torpedo casket. OK, it may not technically be Federation-approved since there is no such thing as the United Federation of Planets (UFP) but the coffins are, in fact, very real.

Designed by Eternal Image, the "Star Trek" coffin was slated to be available early 2009, but is still not for sale as of this writing. The price is yet to be determined. If the fan would prefer to be cremated, the company also plans to offer a "Star Trek" urn as well.

2: Telepresence

In 1966, the idea of interacting with each other while separated by the void of space seemed as farfetched as, well the idea of being in space. That's precisely what the idea of telepresence is.

Telepresence is more than just video conferencing. The visual aspect is important and immersion is vital. In other words, the more convincing the illusion of telepresence, the more you feel like you're there.

In 2008, AT&T teamed up with Cisco in delivering the industry's first in-depth telepresence experience. The key to Cisco's TelePresence is the combination of audio, video and ambient lighting working together. These telepresence kits are designed to mirror surroundings and mimic sounds so that users on each side of the video conference will feel as though the images on the screen are in the same room with them. For instance, the people in boardroom A will see the people on the screen in boardroom B as though they are sitting across the table from them. The ambient lighting and room features are constructed to mirror each other. Sure, these telepresence kits are much more advanced than anything drummed up on "Star Trek," but perhaps that's because the show sparked our imagination so many years ago.

1: Tricorders

How many of you remember that instrument Mr. Spock used to always carry over his shoulder, especially when the crew (usually consisting of only Spock and Captain Kirk) first surveyed a new planet? That was a tricorder.

One of the more useful instruments available to "Star Trek" personnel, variations of the tricorder (medical, engineering or scientific) were used to measure everything from oxygen levels to detecting diseases. Often times the tricorder gave an initial analysis of the new environment. So, what's the real-world tie-in? NASA employs a handheld device called LOCAD, which measures for unwanted microorganisms such as E. coli, fungi and salmonella onboard the International Space Station [source: Coulter]. Beyond that, two handheld medical devices may soon help doctors examine bloodflow and check for cancer, diabetes or bacterial infection.

Scientists at Loughborough University in England use photoplethysmography technology in a handheld device that can monitor the functions of the heart. Meanwhile, researchers at Harvard Medical School have developed a small device that utilizes similar technology found in MRI machines that non-invasively inspect the body. Using nuclear magnetic resonance imaging, this device would be sensitive enough to measure samples of as few as 10 possible infectious bacteria. This kind of sensitivity (800 times more sensitive than sensing equipment currently used in medical labs) could revolutionize the way doctors diagnose disease [source: Mick].

(Source: Josh Briggs at <http://entertainment.howstuffworks.com/10-star-trek-technologies.html/>)





Greetings Fleetmates! Admiral Kheren reporting from Starbase Lotus!

Much is happening in our role-playing universe as the year starts. Here are samples of our ongoing adventures:

USS HORIZON: Priorities

"Gentlemen...unleash hell," was Redding's only remark.

Not knowing if the Klingon boarders had what they wanted or how they would react to the news that they also had people on it, the risk that they would simply destroy the freighter now was too great to allow them the opportunity to do so.

"Fire the Wild Weasel at your discretion, Mister S'Tron."

"Torpedoes away!" announced Gray.

There was a sudden vibration and some distant booming from somewhere under their feet. On the viewer, what appeared at first as a big blob of blueish light split into five distinct stars that flew faster than any ship towards the incoming Klingon ships, right over the saucer section of the Ptolemy class freighter. And then the Birds of prey did a very peculiar and unexpected dance; as the foremost crippled one dragged itself backward to regroup with the other two, those moved swiftly in line right behind it.

"What the..."

The Strategic Ops officer understood just as he wondered about the maneuver; but still he couldn't believe it. At so short a distance and so close for such fast moving projectiles, the ships movements confused their tracking sensors and, before they could compensate and correct their course, they all impacted the first warship.

One standard quantum torpedo was more than enough to level a city; on a ship with minimal shields, five of them left only a thin cloud of sparkling dust, glowing vapors and remnants of antimatter radiation. When the blinding detonation subsided, there was no trace left of the crippled Klingon destroyer.

And none at all of any of the other two.

"That was...inspiring." Redding said in amazement. But there wasn't time to be awestruck. "Mister S'Tron, dim the lights and launch the weasel, weapons stand by to acquire new targets."

He was fairly sure they had re-cloaked.

"Manual targeting on standby, all weapons hot," Lieutenant Gray spoke in a hushed tone.

"Can we get a status update on Carmilla's team? Are there still Klingons on board?" They knew if the Klingons had what they wanted, then they were sneaking off under cloak.

"Wild weasel launching," the Vulcan confirmed first. "Transporter room reports boarding is underway."

He spoke in a whisper as lights dimmed and all systems but the most essential were put offline. With the modified shuttle emitting the equivalent of a star ship's power signature, reducing theirs as much as possible would ensure the lure would be convincing enough. That was also the reason why Gray targeted without active instruments; a target lock would be detected and betray their true location.

For several long, tense seconds, all was deadly quiet.

Then, on their viewer, two raptor-shaped vessels appeared in a converging pattern and fired torpedoes at the instant they became fully visible. But the two torpedoes were not aimed at the Polaris but several hundreds of thousands of kilometres in front of it.

"Ready to fire!" Gray managed to murmur despite his excitement at the fleeting opportunity they had created the moment the two destroyers appeared.

What detonated was the wild weasel they had launched for just this purpose. Both barely de-cloaked Birds of Prey were now still raising shields, torpedo tubes not yet reloaded and offering both their flanks to them.

"Fire all batteries!"

Redding's lips were drawn back in a tight smile, he lived for these moments, outwitting his opponents and turning it to an advantage. During his command of the Klingon scout ship Terren Koth, he often refused to engage his cloaking device in combat unless directly ordered to do so, declaring it a handicap that only poor commanders needed to rely upon, routinely quoting the old saying that 'striking from the dark is the way of an assassin, not a warrior.' While this made a powerful impression on his crew, the other commanders in his battle group complained and challenged him on it constantly.

But no one on this ship challenged him now... nor the Champlain, as the Polaris fired. A phaser beam shot out also from the front arc of the freighter, adding its power to the escort vessel against one of their assailants.

"Port target suffered heavy damage to starboard weapons array shield emitters and wing armor plating," reported Irksos from the sensors following the powerful phaser beams and pulses the Polaris weapons poured out on both Birds of Prey. "Starboard target port hull is breached, plating gone and impulse engines damaged. They are recloaking."

"Coming around the Champlain so as to draw their fire away from it," the Andorian helmswoman added as the form of the freighter was swept away to offer an unobstructed view of the wounded Klingon ships turning away and fading.

"They're running away!" engineer Jeonghun exclaimed out loud.

"Target locked!" exclaimed Gray without any further restraint as they had fully revealed themselves. He knew the lock would be lost in the next second.

"Continue firing until disabled or destroyed, preferably the former." He said with slightly less enthusiasm in his voice, he disliked shooting at a wounded fleeing target but regardless of how wounded they were as long as they had an active cloak they would remain a threat. "Issue a surrender signal, not that I think it will matter regardless if they're Klingon or not..." He would in fact be disappointed if they accepted.

"They're still jamming all frequencies, Sir," S'tron reported as the Polaris phasers struck again.

They had barely cloaked and the targeting computer helped Gray make a perfect evaluation of their possible speed, direction and orientation. Seemingly firing at empty space, the orange streaks of lights from the phaser strips and drops of fiery energy of the cannons illuminated starkly the silhouette of the two Klingon destroyers. They both reappeared as one exploded from receiving direct fire to its warp core; the other warped away, leaving duranium, deuterium and plasma behind like a wounded beast limping away, broken and defeated.

"Jamming has stopped," the Vulcan ops officer announced. "All decks report no damage or casualties. USS Champlain's condition now stabilized and secured for the moment but their invidium leak and damage still need to be addressed."

"Second enemy ship destroyed, third one moving away again under cloak," Irksos confirmed from her science station. "Last bearing was..."

She stopped then, frowning, her soft, dark features frozen in obvious perplexity.

"Sir... in the direction this Bird of Prey seemingly took, long range sensors are picking up... disturbance in the local area. Too far to make a clear identification as the nearby emissions of the Azimuth Horizon are causing much interference but... but it seems to be local cyclic distortions of space-time."

"Like what we find in the Azimuth horizon anomaly itself?" wondered engineer Jeonghun.

"Not exactly; this one seems cyclic like the emissions of a pulsar... and it is not a sensor echo from the anomaly," Irksos said, anticipating the Edoan's train of thought. "There is no space anomaly in this area of space... but there is... something... there are gravitational waves consistent with the presence of a planetary-sized body... but there is no star system located there and still, this is where those distortions come from."

"And where our friendly Klingons flew away to," mused Gray."

USS LOTUS: The Stars be My Judges

Captain Felez folded his hands together.

"Let us begin, shall we. Although it has not been made common knowledge, most of us know about the disappearance of the Horizon's sister ship, the USS Diamond Star from its dock at Utopia Planatia a little over a month ago."

He looked around the room at their expressions. While not true empaths, Efrozians were capable of picking up and accurately reading bio-impulses in living organisms. The only limitation was they had to be within two meters of their subject. But it was no surprise to Felez that the assembled personnel already knew this news, seeing as a sector wide hunt followed directly after the ship's disappearance.

"Lesser known is the fact that, two days ago the Diamond Star inexplicably reappeared over Utopia Plenitia in almost exactly the same condition it had left in with the exception that its primary and secondary memory cores were wiped of the entire event."

He again looked over the reaction of his officers to this news, his eyes stopping momentarily on Rogers, his face and eyes remained without hint of emotion.

"Were you already aware of this, Mister Rogers?"

The half-Romulan engineer shifted slightly in his seat and set his half empty cup of coffee onto the

table in front of him, looking back up into his captain's eyes.

"Yes, Sir. As you may well know, scuttle-butt is faster than transwarp. An old acquaintance of mine at Mars informed us yesterday."

Glancing slightly at the doctor nearby, David Rogers returned his gaze back to Captain Felez.

"By us, I mean the Lotus base engineering commanders, Sir. Standard gossip, although by today I suspect the entire base is whispering theories across whatever beverages they're consuming."

"Ships don't usually go on a stroll by themselves..." Doctor Elliago Nasaro-Myth stated with a frown on his handsome Deltan countenance. "At least not since the life form emergence from the computer core of the USS Enterprise D and the running away of the AI controlled USS Nemesis. So... does Starfleet have any clue who did it, how and why?"

Rogers got up and returned to the replicator for a second cup of coffee while the Deltan spoke. Once it had materialized, he returned to his seat and sat himself and the cup down. Glancing once at the doctor, David added to his facts. "Yes Doc, and there was also the old M-5 multitronic unit, back some one hundred forty years ago. It became self-aware and destroyed a Federation ship. But the Horizon class uses Bioneural systems, just like most every other star fleet vessel now."

Picking up his coffee for a sip of the still steaming beverage, David continued to address Nasaro-Myth's last statement.

"We should be able to figure out the 'How' at Utopia Planitia. As to the 'Who' and 'Why', well....that may have to wait until the 'How' is determined."

"The ship yard is our first stop." Felez added in. "The Diamond Star has been placed in a secured dock and is currently undergoing a rather severe sensor sweep. But so far, it seems we can rule out any idea of rogue AI as a motivation. No, this one is the oddest case I've ever heard of."

He took a drink of his fish juice.

"To say it was an inside job is to state the obvious, but the situation is baffling. At best guess a small team of infiltrators or possibly even traitors within the Federation stole the newest, largest Federation Lotus class vessel in operation out of the most secure shipyard in the Federation, and all without setting off a single alarm I might add." He gestured with his off hand as he went on. "And the only apparent point to the greatest theft in Federation history? A joy ride, perhaps to prove it can be done."

The Deltan doctor smiled as he spoke, but there was no amusement in his eyes and much seriousness in his tone.

"Even Undines or changelings would have had a hard time doing it with the quality of biosensors and the experience with such beings we now have. Equally, sentient holograms would not be able to operate unchallenged for long on a starship, especially on such a new and state of the art design its birthing facility and at the very heart of Federation space no less. Moreover, the Diamond Star if I recall is the testbed of the Lotus class; those starship testbed platforms are the only ships already mostly automated so as to allow even a small team of technicians and engineers to make it operational for such testing, isn't that so Commander Rogers?"

Elliago resumed his thoughts after a moment.

"So, full knowledge of Starfleet engineering protocols, security measures and starship operations of Utopia Plenitia in particular and Sector 001 both. Also, fully automating such a large vessel, especially without raising any suspicion or alarm and leaving no trace in computer banks, sensor records or security systems inside and outside of the ship speaks of extraordinary technical knowledge, experience and expertise. And after all this, the perpetrators allowed such an invaluable prize to return undamaged to Starfleet; a very peculiar act from a mere thief or spy... Thus, an inside job is not only the highest

probable assumption; it is the only one that makes sense, short of genuine magic. This should considerably narrow down the list of suspects."

He gazed at Rogers and Felez in turn before finishing his deduction.

"Even before the who, the how should be the simplest one to find out, especially with an engineer of David's caliber and an experienced starship commander like you, Captain. And my scientific expertise with life forms may help identify any new threat we might not have yet encounter that could have unforeseen capabilities to accomplish such a feat. As for the why... Someone needed a powerful starship capable of speeds and range beyond standard starship capabilities; it is certainly no coincidence that the only fully operational transwarp vessel was selected, especially considering that it was certainly the most well-guarded and the only one of such vessels available for full automation. Someone wanted to go quite far very fast and complete his objective before Starfleet could marshal enough resources to find them and stop them. Whatever that objective was, it had to be done quickly and without incriminating the perpetrators beyond what was strictly necessary, as the return of the ship intact seems to point to."

Now amusement crept into his dazzling purple eyes.

"If I didn't know better, I would conclude this has all the marks of Captain James T. Kirk assisted by Captain Data and a couple of Bynars."

"Interesting points, Doc," David interjected casually. "And I might add to your list! Captain La Forge for one. Last I heard though, he was commanding the Challenger. Data's brother Lore, although I have not heard of his ... regaining? ... full awareness. Not to mention, any highly competent engineering officer in Starfleet, the Klingon Defense Force. Romulan Tal Shiar springs to mind."

David thought a bit more about adding on the suspect list. Adding to the list would prolong the investigation. Not that he himself was above suspicion. And certainly not because he didn't want to be found as the guilty party.

USS McKENZIE: Dance With The Devil

Having been on route for a few weeks, the crew of the McKenzie had become more familiar with their stations and, more importantly, with each other. As Captain Riker and Commander Schyssyllyss ran drills and paired the crew against each other, the teamwork and competition seemed to be paying off.

This day was like any other day during their patrol as the crew manned their stations and all seemed to be routine. As Riker thumbed through a PADD reading a series of reports, the routine was broken by a confused Lieutenant JG Simmons.

"What the hell?" Simmons mumbled to himself.

Hearing the comment, Riker placed his PADD down and almost simultaneously turned to face Simmons as Lieutenant Argyle and Commander Schyssyllyss did the same.

"What is it, Simmons?" Riker asked inquisitively.

"Sir... for a brief moment, there appeared to be a communication on sensors."

Pressing a few buttons, Simmons continued to work the ops station as he continued.

"Yes Sir, it is. It appears we received part of a Starfleet encoded transmission."

"A part? Was it not directed at us?"

"No, Sir, it would appear not. It was a very direct and narrow subspace band."

Before Simmons could continue, Riker interjected.

"A signal like that is short range. Helm, bring us around to the location of the message, we might be able to pick up more of it."

As the McKenzie's engines hummed, the ship turned back around towards the location of the message. Simmons waited for the brief exchange to end and then continued.

"It does not appear to be directed at us, Sir. As I was saying, it was a narrow and directed subspace communication. The only reason we picked it up was because it intersected our flight path, and I happened to be running the broad spectrum analysis checks on comms."

Gently punching Commander Schyssyllyss in the arm, Riker smiled.

One in a million chance of that, must be our lucky day."

The Saurian completely ignored the punch unfelt through his thick, scaly skin, but not the voice of his captain, even if hearing was not among his good assets.

"Or theirs; sensors report no other ship within at least several parsecs. Such a short range call and this weak and this brief would not have been received by anyone else."

As Riker returned his attention to Simmons and the Operations stations, Simmons continued to work the console.

"Sir, it appears to be very narrow. It was clearly sent on a specific channel. Wait... that is interesting..."

Simmons frantically pressed more buttons.

"Captain, it appears this message is coded level 10."

"Coded level 10?" Lieutenant Argyle said surprised.

"This means this message was definitely sent from a Starfleet vessel or facility," flatly stated the red and blue scaled XO of the McKenzie, "and it is not a routine transmission. But there are no Federation facilities or vessels in the nearby area. Both Starbase 23 and Starbase 157 are twelve light years away, just as far from us as Starbase Lotus is."

"A coded level 10 message is for Captain and above. It would be in violation for any of us to attempt to read what is on that message."

Glancing down almost sarcastically at his rank pips, Riker smiled.

"Captain and above eh? Well, good thing we have one of those on board."

Changing his tone to a more serious one though, Riker continued.

"Who would send a coded subspace communication this far out? And on such a narrow band? Simmons, I am going to need you to work with Mister Argyle and get that message decoded as quickly as possible. Ensure the encryption is decoded, but I will read the contents and brief everyone accordingly."

With a nod Argyle walked over to the ops station and began to work with Simmons on decoding the mysterious message.

"Mister Simmons," then asked Schaele; "do you have the exact point of origin for this transmission?"

"Not exactly, Commander; it came directly from the direction of the Paulson nebula."

The saurian's ovoid head bobbed from side to side before he looked back at his commanding officer.

"The heavy interference from the nebula would block or at least distort a signal, especially one this weak, despite the narrow band. But again, sensors do not register anything in that specific direction... unless they would be inside or on the other side of it."

USS ALSEA : A Little Border Dispute

"Have a seat, Commander."

Once Oseno Jureth was seated in front of him, Fleet captain Allen Samji lost no time with further pleasantries. Somewhere from his starbase commander's desk, he manipulated controls that turned the wall behind him into a tri-dimensional representation of the entire Federation. The image moved at a dizzying speed towards the right end where the blue-tinted stars representing the member worlds of the United Federation of Planets met two thick lines, one colored in red on the right and one green on the top. The red one was labelled "Organian Peace Treaty Zone" while the green one read "Federation-Romulan Neutral Zone".

"Commander, the impossible has happened; out there, a world petitioned the Federation for admittance, support and protection, formally giving solemn oath to abide by the Federation's charter, articles and laws. That world is called Unroth IV... in Romulan space."

Letting that sink in, Samji remained silent while behind him the star chart went beyond the green line to light up a star system. In the Onias sector, the Unroth star system flashed barely a couple of light years away from the one light year thick treaty zone core-ward from Starbase 23; so close yet so far.

"It's been barely twenty-three years since the Hobus subspace supernova shattered the Romulan Star Empire, destroying both Romulus and Remus, it's capital worlds. Since then, several self-appointed Praetors and even Empresses have vied for control and power over the surviving *Rihannsuu*; but, as of now, there is no central government that can speak for the whole people beyond the Neutral Zone or ensure the peace and prosperity that was once theirs... but they still have their taste for conquest."

He pointed with his thumb over his shoulder to the pulsing light on the projected map.

"We know little if anything of the exact situation. Those Romulans out there are most probably under the crossfire of several factions wanting the rich resources of their star system.; gas giants rich with methane, hydrogen and helium, rocky asteroids overflowing with mineral deposits including dilithium crystals, huge ice comets full of water and organic compounds, a large M class world with a still thriving culture and industry that was spared the worst of the catastrophe and the ensuing civil war... until now. The Empire is still reeling with no central government... and with the Klingon Empire nearby smelling the blood of a wounded prey, no wonder such a world desperately seeks allies. But to ask for *our* help, now that is more than desperate, to say the least."

He crossed his hands on his wooden desk to look straight in Oseno's eyes.

"Morally, the Federation is bound to offer help and assistance to anyone in need... but that would mean crossing the Neutral Zone, a peace treaty that had prevented war for the last three hundred years; a treaty clearly stipulating that any ship or instrument crossing the zone, for whatever reason, would instantly put both powers into a state of declared war. War is not a moral endeavour... but is the Treaty still valid when there is no official Romulan government to uphold its end of the

bargain? Diplomats are still debating the point... while cloaked Romulan warship may already be inside Federation Space."

Samji sighed.

"Politically, the Federation cannot ignore either a call for membership, especially from *there*. Having a Romulan world join us would possibly entice others to do so. Territorial gain here is not the real issue, but rather convincing the Romulans to finally sit down and talk seriously about peace and possibly collaboration between us; an end at last to centuries of mistrust and tension. Unroth IV might very well do for us and the Romulans what the Praxis disaster did to open relations between us and the Klingons, back in the mid twenty-third century. But, on the other hand, the territorial dispute is certainly going to come up with a Romulan world asking to join the Federation. Wars have started for less."

He stood up, turning to face the image and look at the display, hands at his back.

"Strategically, Unroth is the ideal foothold inside Romulan space to monitor their activities... as well as the Klingon Empire. Us being there in force would be a powerful deterrent for any faction with belligerence on its mind... even the Klingons with border worlds now in striking distance of us from two fronts. But the Romulans, those who do not ask for an alliance with us, might now see this as an advantage for them..."

The starbase commander suddenly turned to face the Bajoran commander again.

"Not responding to this situation would risk antagonizing any other would-be allies within the remnants of the Empire and kill any hope of a future rapprochement between our two people. But response will also antagonize those who already eschew that possibility among them. And it might just be a trap to lure us into conflict. We would need to send a task force there with a full diplomatic corps so that all eventualities could be adequately faced; alas, Starfleet is still slowly rebuilding from the Last Borg War and is stretched pretty thin between the Romulan shattered empire, Klingons making aggressive encroachments, Kzinti warclans wanting to go on the hunt again, Cardassian terrorists prowling the Ferengi Alliance, the Dominion stirring up..."

Samji sighed again.

"We must send a ship out there, but we can only send one ship... and we must send with it an experienced, resourceful crew... and a captain well-seasoned in diplomacy as well as warfare and able to know the difference and necessities of the two; one that can get the right results the right way."

As he finished, he bent over to put his hands on his desk. Behind him, the star chart and the whole wall disappeared and became a transparency showing the vast interior of the immense starbase. Right in the foreground floated a sleek, arrow-shaped starship with no less than four warp nacelles. On the top of the triangular bow stood out in bold letters her name.

USS ALSEA

"We hope you would accept to be that starship commander... Captain Jureth Oseno."

Jureth looked at the vessel with a glint of both familiarity, and fondness in his eyes. The Alsea had been for all intents and purposes his first command. He had been forced into the role somewhat reluctantly by events during the Azimuth Horizon crisis. Then on top of that, he had been forced to face down not only the Romulans, led by one Empress Sela no less, but the Undine and, in the end,

the Klingons as well. Some would say he had done the job admirably, even superbly, though he attributed his success to the help of the officers around him and a timely rescue from Captain Tom Paris then in command of the Horizon.

All of that aside, the Prometheus Class vessel had been his, for a time, and in the end he had been disappointed to have to give her back to Captain Rachelle Rivers. Now, he was being offered command of her again, and the chance to take her on a mission of vital importance to the Federation, one that could usher in a new era with a long time enemy just as the Azimuth Horizon mission had done with the Undine.

What was it Kirk had said? "Don't let them promote you. Don't let them transfer you. Don't let them do *anything* that takes you off the bridge of that ship, because while you're there... you can make a difference."

Right here, right now, this was *his* ship, and *his* chance to make a difference.

"I accept, Sir," Oseno replied. "I couldn't very well let anyone else take her out there. Has the rest of the command staff been assigned or will I need to select them as well?"

If Samji was relieved or expected the Bajoran's reply, he gave no sign. But he nodded appreciatively.

"As Captain, it is of course your prerogative to assemble the crew you feel best suited for your ship. However, any transfer of currently assigned officers has to be approved by me. Shuffling personnel is not conducive to building up the sense of camaraderie and belonging starship life and duty require. So please look over available personnel before thinking about cannibalizing the fleet."

He wanted the comment to make it light but the seriousness of it prevented that.

"I must tell you also that we are not overflowed with experienced officers for key positions, especially with several commanders like you being so swiftly entrusted with a captaincy. I have therefore personally selected who would best act as your first officer."

He tapped his combadge.

"Would you care to join us, Commander?"

On the other end of the comm channel, a deep, rocky voice answered with a grunt.

"Hmmpff, no... But I don't want to give you the excuse to remove my pips so..."

There was a shimmer in the air and the telltale tone of a transporter confinement beam, followed by the materialization of a stout, dark shape in the black and grey uniform of Starfleet. A red collar gleaming with three golden pips was barely visible between the thick, curly dark mane fusing itself with the large bushy beard devouring almost all the black leathery face lifted towards them, making the squinting grey eyes flash like photon blasts.

"Captain Jureth Oseno, allow me to introduce you to your Executive officer, Commander Marksus Sangliar. Commander, this is Jureth Oseno, captain of the USS Alsea, your new commanding officer."

The dark Tellarite walked over to them with the typical rolling gait of his portly species, the four thick fingers of each hand intertwined at the small of his back as he stopped to stand right in front of the Bajoran to look him up and down as he rocked on his heels.

"Great, a kid. Is your mommy okay with you going out to play?"

Oseno had heard both of Sangliar, an officer of superior reputation, and of the manner in which Tellarites communicated, so the insult didn't faze the Bajoran much though coming from anyone else it might have. Jureth wasn't one to hurl insults, but he did his best to reply in the spirit

of the discussion.

"Probably not," he admitted with a smirk, remembering his mother's pointed objections to his desire to join Starfleet; "but I thought I'd see what kind of trouble I could get into anyway. Perhaps you can lead the negotiations with the Romulans XO."

"Why, don't have the stomach for it?"

"Been there done that... besides, the Romulans can be rather disagreeable, so you'd fit right in."

For a moment, it looked as if the stout alien would burst with anger like an exploding grenade, eyes becoming mere slits, teeth gnashing, skin turning darker if that could even be possible... and then, a huge smile spread on his face.

"I like you. You've got a bigger belly than your skinny frame and soft face would let anyone believe. I heard of you, about how you faced Romulans, Klingons and Undines. I wanted to know if you were just lucky; now I know you are that good."

He stood straight, but this time with no hint of his demeaning attitude showing anymore. He spoke as much to him as to Allen Samji.

"Commander Marksus Sangliar, reporting as Executive Officer and Captain of Engineering of the USS Alsea, Captain Sir."

All of you, Fleetmates, can enjoy those stories and those already played by many of our ships and crews since the launch of the fleet in 2008. Go into our role-play section of our website, into our starship RP section and look into our ships archives to get all the novelized stories already made by members like you over the years. And you can follow the current stories sampled above on our RP website as they unfold through the talented efforts of our current players.

Better yet, you may even join us! Everything you need to know about our RP universe, rules and tools are available under the role-play site and in our role-play section on the main site.

Are you one to dare boldly go where no one has gone before?

Time to find out!





And now, back to your regularly scheduled grind.

The winter event is over. The anniversary event is over... Now what??

Well, you still have lots to do and look forward to in Star Trek Online. Especially now on the verge of a new season and skill tree revamp! If you haven't read the blogs about that, save yourself some headache and read them when the new skill system goes online.

EVERYONE will get a free respec, but I urge you to do your homework first or you will be unhappy with the results. As your new Operations CO, and with my equally new XO, Jureth, we hope to keep you engaged and excited to spend your time with us here in Lotus Fleet. Keep your eyes peeled for events to make a comeback now that the hectic holidays and downtime are over and people are back in the swing of things.

Being that this is a MULTIPLAYER game, I encourage you all to get out there and play with Fleet or Armada mates; they could have valuable insights and you could make some friends too!

Our esteemed Admiral Athos will continue on as the In-Game Fleet Project Supervisor, and will be slotting projects for us all. He has been doing an amazing job at it since Fleet Holdings were introduced, and we are all very glad he has agreed to keep helping out.

As you log in the game to do your dailies or whatnot, I urge you to please visit the Academy and spend just a few minutes talking to the Andorian, Vulcan, Tellarite and Personnel Officer there to get all the free common duty officer assignments they offer. This is one of the easiest ways to get recruitment XP, and the commons would greatly be appreciated in helping to complete our Starbase so please, spread the word! These are ALWAYS needed, and what usually holds us up from completing projects. Also, as you contribute to the fleet, keep track of your lifetime contributions across all your alts. When you reach a milestone that coincides with our fleet builder awards, please PM either myself or Jureth, so we can recognise you for your efforts with a new medal!

On an unrelated note, if you ever have any questions about the game, items, mechanics, theory crafting, skills, ship builds... anything, please drop me a line, I would be happy to help you and make the game more enjoyable.

That's all for now, see you out there!

Vice Admiral Battle Lion



STO Tips and Tricks by Vice Admiral Battle Lion

Tactical space bridge officer abilities

This post will be about the tactical space bridge officer powers, and their uses.

Beam fire at will:

Broadsiding is currently the best way to get the most DPS. Beam fire at will is the key to this. Run as high a level of this skill as you can, and have 2 of them. Having more than 2 beam abilities is a bad idea due to the way the cool downs work. You could also have one beam overload, and one fire at will if you want, but BFAW spam is really the way to go for beam DPS.

Tactical Team:

Everyone should have at least 1 copy of this skill on their ship. It balances your shields, improves your damage, removes tactical debuffs and clears hostile boarding parties and Borg assimilate ship. Almost everyone has 2 copies of this skill so they can cycle it as much as possible. Some people slot 2 very rare conn officer duty officers (TAC team variant) to reduce the cool down on tac team, so they only need one. This power is mandatory in game for people who like to survive or do damage or both. Because of the power of most other tac abilities, it's not worth having any rank of tac team OTHER THAN ensign. TT2 isn't worth it because you could have an attack pattern instead, or a beam/cannon skill.

Beam Overload:

A good skill if you don't like aggroing everything in sight with BFAW. Better for the less survivable builds. There's actually a neat build involving this, there is a duty officer (energy weapons officer) that has the ability of "30% chance: All other attacks ignore 20-35% (depending on rarity) of target's shields for 4 sec". This is kind of neat if you have 3 of them slotted, and are using directed energy modulation. Talk about shield bypassing!

Torpedo High Yield:

Pretty basic, pretty effective...if you use torpedoes. HY vs TS (high yield vs torp spread) is basically the same decision as overload vs FAW...how much aggro do you want? In general, AoE damage is more effective, but ultimately it's however your build works.

Torpedo Spread:

TS3 can shoot out an incredible amount of torpedoes. In my opinion, and depending on the torpedo used, it can out damage HY3. But again, it's all about how your build works. My torpedo ship has grav well, so i like to have AoE attacks to take advantage of the clustered enemies.

Target Subsystems:

Generally, not worth it. There are so much better tac abilities than these. They are fairly useful if you are building a drain ship....but most drain ships are science, and have these built in. Don't slot these.

Attack Pattern Beta:

Amazing in PvE, absolutely useless in PvP. It can be cancelled by tac team, which literally everyone has and is using as much as possible. NPCs don't do that though, so this can really put the hurt on them. It's usually a good idea to run the LT version of this skill, so you can use a higher skill of CRF/CSV/BFAW. Only worth slotting 2 attack patterns because of shared cooldowns. While this skill is active, every enemy you damage will get the APB debuff. If you are using BFAW, that means basically everything gets debuffed. This debuff can stack, and anyone shooting at that target will reap the benefits. Very good as a team damage helper. If you are a DPSer and you don't have this, reconsider.

Attack pattern Delta:

Actually not that bad. This skill will cause the same amount of damage resist debuff as Beta, but only on targets that are shooting at you. So you have to decide which one to use, based on how your build works. If you are the tank and pull all the aggro, this is a good skill for you, because it ALSO adds a damage resist buff onto you or an ally, which is really nice.

Dispersal Pattern Alpha:

Not good. Mines in general are not that great. Only kinetic based ships should even have them. This deploys small clusters of mines in 2 groups. Not as good as DPB.

Dispersal Pattern Beta:

Much better mine attack. I actually use rank 3 of this on my kinetic ship. Rank 3 deploys 16 mines in a starburst net kind of thing. If you're going to use a dispersal pattern, this is the one to use.

Cannon Scatter Volley:

Fantastic skill. AoE cannon damage. Nothing more to say really. A little bit more geared to PvE than PvP. Up to you though really if you want to use it instead of CRF.

Cannon Rapid Fire:

Another great skill. Run as high a rank on this and CSV as you can, it only gets better as the rank goes up. More for spike and single target dps.

Attack Pattern Omega:

This is a great Swiss army knife skill. It does a lot of things. First, it buffs your damage. It also buffs your damage resistance. It increases your flight speed and turn rate. It increases your defense, and it gives you immunity to teleport AND movement debuffs (it can break a tractor beam) it's very good to have in PVP and pretty good to have in PvE as well. It won't do as much damage as APB in PvE, but it can get you out of trouble.

Fleetwide Meetings:

(check the site Calendar for your local time)

Occurs every: 3rd Sunday of month - every month UTC - 5 hours [DST]

This is our Fleet meeting to discuss Lotus Fleet business, events, and other important information.

Afterward, the meeting goes "unofficial" and unrecorded into a round table, where anyone may have a chance to speak; i.e. ask questions, present ideas, etc... This is the social aspect of our meeting and provides an opportunity to get to know everyone involved in the Fleet even better.

Think of it as our Fleet's Ten Forward

Each meeting will be held on TeamSpeak 3. Please download and install TS3 following this guide:

<http://www.lotusfleet.org/viewtopic.php?f=34&t=55>

Also, please RSVP so that we know who is planning to attend, and indicate if you will be bringing a guest.

Invited: Everyone



Awards, Promotions and Organ Donations

New Members:

None

Promotions:

None

Longevity:

Lieutenant Constantine: 3 months

Lieutenant-Commander Arina: 9 months

Lieutenant(j.g.) AlexSomers: 2 years

Commodore Josh Vincent: 5 years

Fleet Admiral Jeff T: 5 years

Lieutenant(j.g.) Father Hensley: 6 years

Lieutenant(j.g.) mindblade: 6 years

Fleet Captain Vladan: 6 years

Admiral Evshell: 6 years

Lieutenant(j.g.) binhawkins: 7 years

Provisional Rear Admiral SACKeen: 7 years

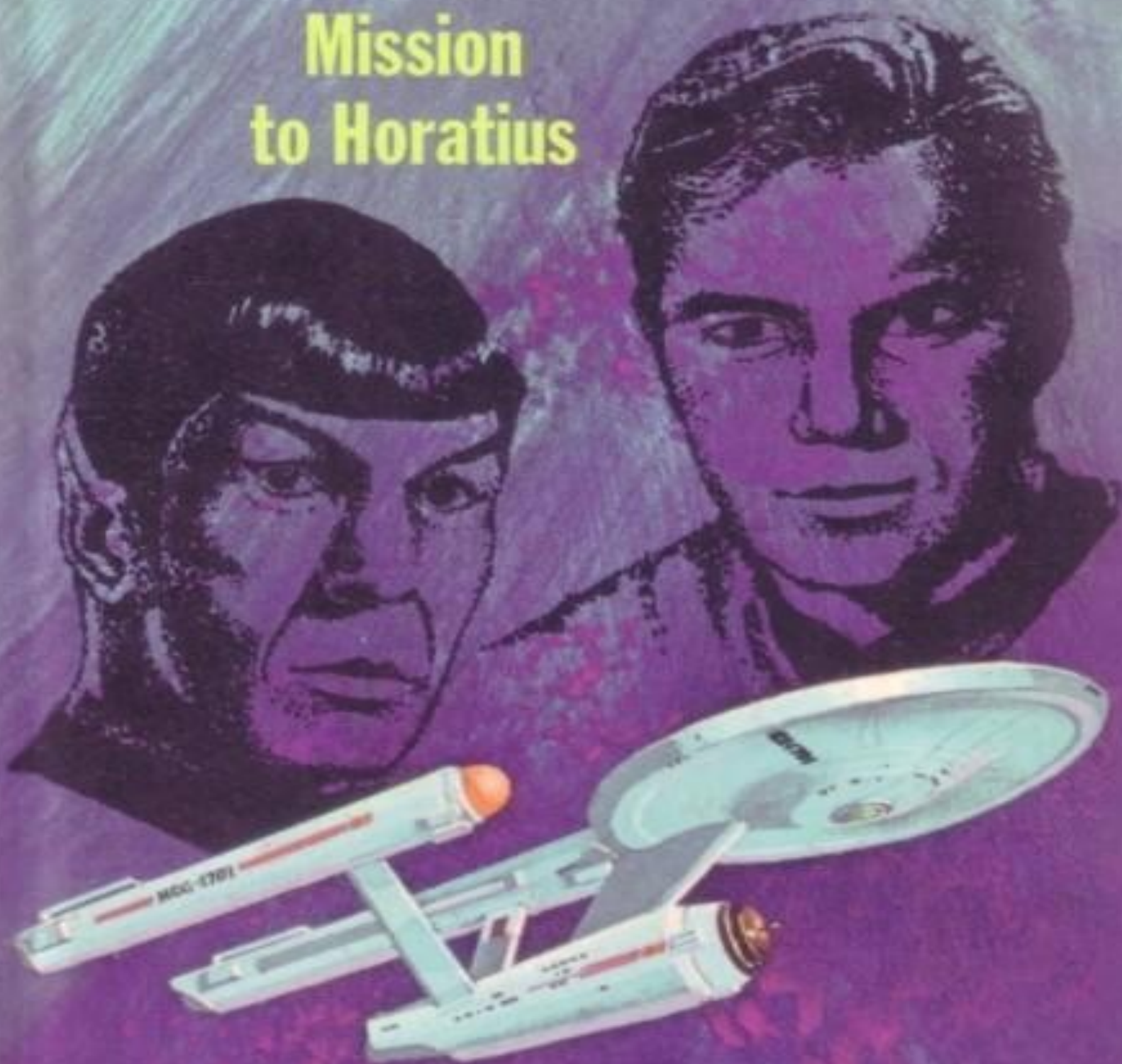
Provisional Rear Admiral Joester: 7 years

Provisional Rear Admiral Crist: 7 years



STAR TREK

Mission to Horatius



AUTHORIZED EDITION

9. MICKEY AGAIN

Captain James Kirk was sprawled in his command chair, staring unseeingly at the bridge viewing screen, when Dr. McCoy approached from the elevator.

Kirk looked up and smiled. "Well, Bones, you should be happy; at long last you have your wish. We're on course to the nearest star base. Mission accomplished, as always when the *Enterprise* is involved."

McCoy said grumpily, "I suggest you have Commander Spock reset your watches, Jim."

Kirk frowned. "How do you mean?"

"I mean that Nurse Christine Chapel and I have forty men and women in stasis, and the number is increasing steadily."

"Forty! In deep sleep? Have you gone completely around the corner, Bones? We won't be able to work the ship."

McCoy said grimly, "Jim, it's the only thing we've been able to hit upon, and we're going to that extreme only with the more severe cases. Half this ship's complement is showing the preliminary symptoms of space cafard. How long it will be before Nurse Chapel or I makes a mistake and underdiagnoses a serious case is in the laps of the gods. One cafard-crazed crewman running berserk through the ship and the mental contagion will spread like a forest fire, Jim. The whole ship could fall apart within the hour."

Kirk, as well as every other person on the bridge, was staring in dismay at the ship's doctor.

Kirk said, "What are the symptoms? How can you tell if a man's about to go over the edge, Bones?"

McCoy looked him straight in the face. He said very slowly, "That tic in your left eye, Jim. You've been under too much strain for too long. I suggest you come to the sick bay for a checkup after your watch is over. Rank has no privileges so far as cafard is concerned."

James Kirk slumped slightly in his command chair as though very tired. He shook his head wearily, as if attempting to reject what the other had just said.

A messman from the steward department came around with coffee. Kirk wanted none, but McCoy took a cup and sipped at it.

He said, "How did the landing of young Grang come off?"

Captain Kirk stirred and said, "Fine. We launched one of the shuttlecraft and hovered above the entrance of the Wolf clan cave. Then, using the loudspeaker, we gave them the full story, puffing up Grang to the skies and letting it be known that through his efforts the raiders will never again be seen. They welcomed him as though he were a Greek hero straight out of Homer."

Ensign Chekov entered from the elevator and was unable to repress his chuckling.

Kirk looked over at him. "Someone has managed to find something humorous on the *Enterprise* these days, Mr. Chekov?" There was a seldom heard tone of irritation in the voice of Captain James Kirk.

The younger officer wasn't put off, however. He said, "Yes, sir. It was Mickey, sir."

"Mickey!" Sulu blurted out from his helmsman's chair nearby.

Lieutenant Uhura said, "The rat? See, Sulu, I told you he'd turn up again."

Ensign Chekov was explaining to the captain. "Taylor and I saw him running down a corridor, sir. It was very funny. He wasn't exactly running—he was kind of dancing along. We almost caught him for Sulu, but he got away."

Dr. McCoy's cup clattered and his coffee spilled over, unnoticed. "Dancing!" he snapped.

Chekov looked at him in surprise. "Sure, Doc. He danced along. Sometimes he even kind of got up on his hind legs."

Dr. McCoy darted for the elevator.

Kirk, astonished, called, "Where are you off to, Bones?"

"The sick bay!" the other called over his shoulder and was gone.

Kirk grunted. "All this obsession with space cafard. I'm beginning to suspect Bones has a case of it himself."

Sulu's face was white.

Kirk noticed the stricken expression. "What's the matter with you, Mr. Sulu? Has everybody on this bridge suddenly gone around the bend?"

Sulu blurted, "*Plague!*"

"What are you talking about?" Kirk demanded.

"Sir, back when Mr. Spock first told me that Mickey wasn't an exotic alien life form, but merely a rat originally from Earth, I looked the subject up in the library. I read all about rats, sir. Back in the old days on Earth rats carried bubonic plague. When they have it themselves, they act queer. Sometimes they seem to dance."

Kirk snapped, "Lieutenant, give me the sick bay on the intercom at once."

"Aye, aye, sir."

The sick bay faded in. Dr. McCoy was bent over a computer hood, Nurse Christine Chapel immediately behind him. There was a feeling of tension in the air.

Kirk barked, "Well?"

McCoy looked up into the screen and ran his tongue over his underlip. "Bubonic plague," he said. "Also known as the black death, from the dark-colored spots of blood under the skin which accompany it. In the past the disease caused the deaths of millions, particularly during the Middle Ages when it is estimated that three-quarters of the population of Europe was wiped out in one epidemic. It was caused by the *Bacillus pestis*, which is transmitted by the rat flea. Its symptoms include vomiting, diarrhea, hemorrhaging, swelling of the joints, and discoloration of the skin. The disease lasts from one to thirty days and is usually fatal. It has been completely unknown in the Federation planets, having disappeared from Earth in the late twentieth century. The vaccine was always effective, according to my records here."

Kirk said, "What does it all boil down to, so far as the *Enterprise* is concerned, Bones?"

McCoy's face was wan. "If that elusive rat is carrying bubonic plague, Captain, I...."

"What if he is? We'll just have to give the whole crew shots for —"

But McCoy was shaking his head. "Captain, there hasn't been a case of plague on Earth or any of the Federation planets for centuries. I haven't any vaccine."

There was a long, pregnant silence. Not an officer or crewman on the ship's bridge made a sound.

Finally Kirk said softly, "What will we have to do, Dr. McCoy?"

"We've got to destroy that animal. How much longer is the cruise to last, Captain?"

"Possibly three months, now that we're finally on our way back."

Dr. McCoy took a deep breath and said, "If any of us ever expect to see our homes again, we must find Mickey. We may all be dead before the *Enterprise* ever gets back to the Federation, but even if we aren't we'll never see our homes again until that rat is eliminated."

Kirk scowled. "What do you mean by that?"

"I mean there hasn't been any bubonic plague on any Federation planet for centuries, and most certainly nobody from the *Enterprise* would be allowed to land until the ship was pronounced free of danger from it. We'd be quarantined, Captain."

"Holy smokes!" Chekov blurted. "This gets serious!"

Captain Kirk's eyes went to Sulu. "Mr. Sulu, undoubtedly you know more about this ... this Mickey, as you named him, than anyone else. The responsibility is yours. Requisition any men or equipment you need. Your orders are to *get that rat!*"

Sulu came to his feet "Aye, aye, sir."

Spock said, "Just a minute, Captain."

"Well, Mr. Spock? Comments?"

"Captain, a short time ago Dr. McCoy announced that he now had forty of the ship's personnel in stasis as a precaution against cafard. The *Enterprise* is understaffed, particularly in Mr. Scott's engine section, where they're working on a round-the-clock basis trying to keep the ship's engines in shape to provide us with as high a warp factor as possible."

"Your point, Mr. Spock?"

"I don't see where Mr. Sulu is going to find the manpower for his search."

McCoy spoke up in the intercom screen. "Cafard is based on monotony and boredom carried to the ultimate extreme. I don't think men searching the ship with their lives at stake would be subject to boredom. I'll release my patients from stasis."

Kirk said, "Very good, Doctor. But just one other thing. Can't you devise a new vaccine, or whatever, in the sick bay laboratory to handle this potential plague epidemic?"

McCoy looked at him testily. "I can try, Jim. However, I might point out that I have been warning you for many months that the supplies of the *Enterprise* are depleted far beyond the point that makes sense. Not just engine room supplies and steward department supplies, but medical supplies as well. But there's another problem."

"Yes?"

"Jim, in the ship's library computer banks would you expect to find under the heading of engineering, or whatever, a description of a wheel and how to build it?"

Kirk didn't follow him. "A wheel?"

"Yes. A common wheel. Man has been making wheels since shortly after he emerged from the caves. It's been a problem we solved thousands of years ago."

"I don't get the connection, Bones."

McCoy said impatiently, "Captain, the problem of bubonic plague was solved centuries ago. Nobody's interested in it anymore except historians, perhaps. To make it short, Jim, there is no information in my medical computer banks dealing with bubonic plague." His face faded from the screen.

Kirk turned worriedly to his first officer. "Mr. Spock, if you please, check the ship's central library computer banks for any and all information on the Middle Ages disease, the bubonic plague. You might also cross-check under the black death."

"Yes, Captain." Spock bent over his hooded screen.

Kirk touched a button on his command chair. "All hands. This is the captain. Now hear this. The ship is in a condition of emergency alert A small animal brought aboard as a pet has been lost somewhere on the ship. It is now reported that it is most likely carrying a virulent disease, once known as plague. Dr. McCoy has revealed that even if we can avoid an epidemic which would decimate the ship's complement, we would be placed in quarantine upon arrival at the nearest star base. If the *Enterprise* is successfully to complete this mission, the rat, Mickey, must be found and destroyed."

With the assistance of all hands, Sulu went about Operation Mickey with an efficient thoroughness. The briefing room was set up as command headquarters of the search. To the extent possible, the search teams were assigned to the areas of the ship they knew best Engine men combed the engineering section; "deck" men searched the main saucer section of the vessel; the storage compartments, galleys, and mess halls were given a thorough going-over by members of the steward department.

All crew members were issued clothing which could be tied tightly about the cuffs and even at the collar-protection, it was hoped, against the rat flea and its deadly bacillus.

Every square inch was explored. Sulu's men progressed from one compartment to the next, searching each room with a care that would have made impossible the hiding of a cockroach. After each compartment was searched, its spacetight doors were locked, nor were they allowed open again until there were several other safe compartments between it and the balance of the unsearched ship.

Operation Mickey went on ruthlessly, carefully. It began in the nose of the ship, covered the bridge, and combed back toward the stern and then down into the engineering section.

The work had the full cooperation and sympathy of the entire ship's company. Gambling was taboo in space, but it was known that there was a pool among the crew on just when Mickey would bite the dust. One of the ship's clerks even instituted a bulletin, which was broadcast over the intercom every half hour, on the progress of the search. Interest peaked.

In the wardroom Lieutenant Uhura, down now to two strings on her guitar, began the composition of "The Saga of Mickey the Space Rat" She left the last stanza incomplete, explaining that it was reserved for the final fate of Mickey.

Finally Sulu emerged onto the bridge, attired in the uniform of the search, cuffs tied tight, phaser pistol at his belt. He approached the captain's command chair and came to attention.

"Eh?" Kirk said. "Got him at last, huh? Where was he, Mr. Sulu? I imagine down in one of the food storage holds."

Sulu moistened his lips. "Sir, we searched every compartment in this ship."

"I know you did, Mr. Sulu. It was a fantastic job in its thoroughness. It's unnecessary to go into details. Where was the little beast?"

"We didn't find him, sir."

Captain James Kirk shot to his feet "What!"

Sulu said desperately, "Captain, I have one last plan that simply can't fail."

Kirk stared at him. "What do you mean?"

"Well, sir, it might seem a little unorthodox, but Mickey couldn't possibly escape."

"Very well, Mr. Sulu. But this seems to be taking a ridiculously long time. Get on with it."

Sulu hesitated. Then, taking a deep breath, he said, "Sir, my plan is to saturate the ship with chlorine gas."

"Chlorine gas!"

"Yes, sir," Sulu said. "The whole ship. Every compartment, every room, every nook and corner, every cranny, with chlorine gas."

Spock said, "Most interesting. Why chlorine, Mr. Sulu?"

Sulu looked at him. "I checked with the chief engineer. He has the materials to manufacture a sufficient quantity of chlorine. Also, it's heavier than air. It will sink into every crevice on board."

Ensign Chekov snorted, "It isn't bad enough that we're threatened first with space cafard and then with bubonic plague. Now Sulu wants to gas us."

"That will be all, Mr. Chekov," the captain said curtly. And then to Sulu, "Let's have the rest of it."

"Sir," Sulu said doggedly, "the whole crew can be put in space suits and remain in them for three hours. In that time we can fill the ship with gas. Nobody knows where Mickey's managed to hide himself, but, wherever it is, the gas will get him. After three hours we can blow the ship clean with the ventilating system and it will be safe to discard the space suits."

Kirk looked at Spock. "Comments, Mr. Spock?"

Spock's face was thoughtful. "Captain, it seems fairly reasonable to me. Not only, ah, Mickey, but any rat fleas he carries would be susceptible to chlorine, a most deadly gas of the halogen family, once used in warfare. And, as you know, our other alternatives are rapidly disappearing. Neither Dr. McCoy nor I has been able to locate anything in our library banks that would help us fight the disease."

"Which amazes me," Kirk muttered.

"Not at all, Captain. We can find historical references to bubonic plague, but, as the doctor has pointed out, there is no call for a description of the black death and its cure to be on file. It has long since been conquered and is now medically unknown."

Kirk turned again to Sulu. "Very well, Mr. Sulu. Make the necessary arrangements. You have my go-ahead."

So they donned their space suits, the intrepid personnel of the pride of the Starfleet, the U.S.S. *Enterprise*, and they deluged their ship with the deadly green gas. They saturated it. They let the gas soak into every corner and crevice for three full hours; then they blew the ship clear.

When officers and crew climbed from their suits, all over the vessel, they looked sheepishly at each other. It had been a long fight, and they had won, but somehow they weren't proud of the victory. They knew that somewhere, in his remote hiding place, Mickey was dead, but they found little satisfaction in the fact. It was as though a respected adversary had been conquered, and conquered by superior weight of numbers, by trickery, by double-dealing, not by honest warfare.

A toast was drunk to Mickey's passing in the captain's quarters, and similar ones through the junior officers', noncommissioned officers', and enlisted men's messes. All listened respectfully when Lieutenant Uhura sang over the intercom the last stanza of "The Saga of Mickey the Space Rat."

Which should be the end of the story of Mickey — but isn't.

With the passing of Operation Mickey, the ship drifted back into its routine and, in a week's time, except for the occasional nostalgic conversations about Mickey, the little rodent was forgotten. Lethargy was again the word, and the monotony of space travel once again flung its drab coat over the *Enterprise*.

Between watches Captain James Kirk drifted one day into the sick bay. His eyes went about the three-room complex, noting unhappily that all the beds in the sick bay proper were occupied.

Dr. McCoy straightened up from the electronic microscope over which he had been bent.

Kirk motioned with his head at the men in the beds. "Stasis again?"

The doctor nodded wordlessly.

"As many as before?"

"There soon will be."

Kirk said, "We're only a month out. You'd think that the prospect of the mission finally being over would hold them."

"It's been too long, Jim. Much too long."

"You think we'll make it?"

"I don't know. One bad case to start it rolling and we'll have had it, Jim."

There was a roar from the corridor beyond. Both Kirk and the doctor spun, eyes wide in dismay. Was this the all-out case of cafard they had been dreading?

"What's that?" the captain rasped, heading for the door.

The shouting continued, and now they could begin to make out the words.

"Mickey! Mickey!"

At the door Kirk exclaimed, "They've gone off their rockers!"

The doctor was immediately behind him.

Yeoman Janice Rand came hurrying up, her face flushed with excitement. "Captain! It's Mickey. They saw Mickey again, down in the ship's chapel. He's alive! Mickey's *still alive!*"

"Don't be ridiculous!"

But she was gone, darting down the corridor toward the sounds of excitement.

The captain looked at Dr. McCoy, his mouth slightly open.

"But he *couldn't* be alive."

It was all-out warfare now. Before, the campaign against Mickey had been pursued coldly, carefully, and without passion. The rat had been a potential danger, a threat to the whole ship, and was to be destroyed ruthlessly. Even so, there had been considerable sympathy for the little rodent.

Now it was different. An emotional crisis seemed to seize upon every man and woman aboard. The time and interest of everyone, from ship's officers to messmen, were devoted to the finding and destruction of Mickey. Groups, pairs, and solitary hunters roamed the ship at all hours, haggard and red-eyed, but armed to the teeth and seeking the elusive diseased rat.

The situation was a deadly serious one now. They were nearing their destination and they needed desperately to land, to escape the confinement of the starship. They needed to see their families, their wives, their sweethearts. They longed to see blue sky above them, to sprawl on beaches, swim in the sea, hike the countryside, ride, climb, run free of all limitations on space. The very thought of being confined indefinitely under quarantine against bubonic plague drove them to frenzy.

Mickey was flushed thrice in the first week. He escaped desperately each time, the roars of the hunters behind him.

In the second week of the wild hunt for him he was knocked down by half a dozen phasers on stun effect when he ventured into an ambush in storage compartment eight. He was quickly rushed to the ship's waste matter converter. The men who had approached and handled him were rushed to the sick bay for immediate decontamination.

Somehow it didn't seem real. It didn't seem possible that Mickey could be dead. Like the lives of his legendary foe, the cat, Mickey the Rat's lives had seemed all but endless.

That night Lieutenant Uhura was compelled by celebrating shipmates to write a final stanza to her saga, but when she took up her guitar to sing it, one of the two strings remaining went *ping*.

She made a woeful face in disgust

"One string left," she said. "Well...." She stood up, folded her arms, and began doing a takeoff on the shuffling walk of a Chinese woman playing a single-stringed instrument.

Lieutenant Chang, laughing, said, "This is *too* much. We've got to get back now, if only to buy new strings for Uhura's guitar."

AFTERMATH

They were within hours of star base touchdown.

Captain James Kirk sauntered along the ship's corridors, his face thoughtful. He reached the quarters of his first officer and knocked. When Spock's voice answered, he pushed his way in, still meditative.

Dr. McCoy was seated there. Obviously he and Spock had been in deep conversation.

The Vulcan came to his feet. "Ah, Captain. Are we soon to go into orbit?"

"A couple of hours or so, Mr. Spock." The captain looked at Dr. McCoy. "I figured out where Mickey was hiding," he said.

Mr. Spock's eyebrows went up. But Dr. McCoy said, "Oh? I thought you might. How?"

"Several little items that didn't quite jibe. For instance, supposedly plague has been unknown on Federation worlds for centuries, but it was on a Federation planet that Sulu acquired Mickey. Then, too, if the animal had the disease, how did he live aboard for so many months? Why didn't he die of it? And the way Mickey kept turning up just at the crucial time, when you needed something to get the crew's minds off their frustrations."

Kirk turned his eyes to Spock. "It never occurred to me to doubt your word when you said there was nothing in the ship's library computer banks on the cure for bubonic plague. Of course there was. Those banks contain all the information compiled by man down through the ages, including how to cure diseases now forgotten. But, of course, if Bones was to pull off his scheme and keep the crew's mind off cafard, he had to have your cooperation."

Spock said mildly, "A very interesting predicament, this danger of space cafard. I was happy to work with the doctor."

Kirk looked back at Dr. McCoy. "Where did you have him hidden? In the sick bay?"

"Most of the time." The doctor nodded. "When the ship was being gassed, I had him in an oxygen tent. While Sulu was searching the sick bay compartments, I had him tucked inside my tunic."

"You must have had a bit of trouble teaching him how to dance."

"A bit. Something to occupy my off-hours." McCoy twisted his face wryly. "Even a doctor is subject to cafard if he gets bored enough."

Captain James Kirk looked at the two of them wryly. "I suppose I should have something to say about discipline, and about a starship captain being hoodwinked by his first officer and ship's surgeon. However, I can't think of anything." He turned to go.

Dr. McCoy said, "One thing, Captain."

Kirk half-turned. "Yes?"

"Jim, *please* don't allow us to get into this spot again. I don't know *how* I'd ever keep cafard from hitting the ship next time."

The End



KIRK & GORN



REDSHIRT



KIRK



SPOCK

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