

Space, the Final Frontier...

These are the voyages of the starship *Arcturus*!

Star Trek: Arcturus

“Chances Are...” By Nadine B. Sacks & Michael Martinez

The following was excerpted from the personal logs of Lieutenant Val’ri Raiajh. Although some portions of the log are available to be viewed by authorized members of Starfleet, the following was not. This was one adventure that was better left unshared.

The incident in question was not reported to Starfleet or Commodore Johnson, commanding officer of the USS Arcturus. It had been virtually forgotten by both members involved until the following worked it’s way into the computer network aboard the Arcturus.

* * * * *

Isaiah Ben’taarch Tammuz had just finished his second shift of duty as prosthetics engineer aboard the *USS Arcturus NCC-1807* and was about ready to head over to the rec deck in hopes it would help him relax. Perhaps he would run a program of ambient Efrosian background sounds to help him in his transition.

Just as he was about to leave the lab, he was hailed over the intercom by the starship’s acting-first officer, David Maddox Jr., “Ensign Ben’taarch?”

Ben’taarch stepped over to the wall panel and activated the comm unit.

“Ben’taarch here.”

“Ensign, please report to Commodore Johnson in his ready room in fifteen minutes, and please ask Lt Raiajh to join you.”

“Yes, sir. On my way. Ben’taarch, out.”

Ben’taarch quickly left the medical section and headed for the quartermaster’s office to see if he could find Val’ri Raiajh there. Upon arriving, he was greeted by Raiajh’s assistant, Cathryn Pearson.

“Hi, Ike. What have you been up to?”

Ben’taarch was starting to realize there was no way of getting around everyone on the ship calling him ‘Ike.’ Ever since Commander Bael, the starship’s Chief Science Officer and a fellow Efrosian, started calling him Ike, the entire ship had picked up on it and followed suit.

“Just looking for Val’ri. The Commodore wants to speak with us.”

Pearson turned around and screamed into the air, “Hey, Val! Ike’s here to take you to see the Commodore.”

Lt Raiajh stepped out of the supply locker, where she had been inventorying spare parts, and said to Pearson, “Do me a favor. When I return, remind me to teach you a little bit of etiquette. A being usually does not scream another’s business into the air unless they are a Tellerite. Doctor Arcadian has assured me you are not.”

“Sorry. Anyway, why are you so angry? There’s no one here except you, me and Ike.”

“And the Tellerite in the office next door. Remember, the walls have ears when he is around.”

“I’ll remember next time.”

Knowing they were pressed for time, Ben’taarch spoke up.

“Val, the Commodore wants us in his ready room in five minutes.”

“Then let’s go. He is not to be kept waiting.”

* * *

When the pair entered the ready room behind the bridge, Commodore Johnson was already there, sitting behind his desk.

“Please sit down. We have much to discuss,” the Commodore said. As Raiajh and Ben’taarch sat down opposite Johnson, the Commodore continued, “Mister Ben’taarch, as I’m sure you are aware, there is a conference on *Starbase 35* this week about prosthetics and artificial limbs. Since you are the prosthetics specialist aboard this vessel, I feel you should attend.”

“Thank you, sir. I feel honored that you should think of me.”

“That’s not all,” Johnson added. Before I decided to send you to this conference, I spoke to Dr Arcadian about this. She also feels you should attend the conference, but not alone. She suggested that Lt Raiajh go with you.” That caused Raiajh to speak.

“Excuse me, sir. My training is not in the medical field. I would have no way of helping Ensign Ben’taarch control his telekinetic powers if they should suddenly, as you would say, ‘switch on.’”

“I brought that up to Dr Arcadian as well. She feels that a psionic buffer would be more effective than any medical treatment.”

“In other words, sir, something like the old Terran phrase, ‘...soothing the savage beast?’”

“I am not a savage beast!” protested Ben’taarch.

“I did not say you were,” Raiajh assured. “I was merely quoting a Terran proverb...”

The last thing Commodore Johnson wanted was a shouting match in his ready room.

“Enough! There will be no arguing here. Also, please try not to bicker too much in the shuttle on the way to the conference. Understood?”

Both officers replied, “Yes, sir.”

“Very well. You are to depart in one hour. Report to the shuttlebay before that for preflight. Once you are clear of the *Arcturus* we have to warp to the Romulan border. Things are getting tense there. We’ll pick you up at the drop-off coordinates in one week.”

“Aye, sir. Should I tell Braacht to assume my duties until I return?” asked Raiajh.

“Is there a problem with your assistant, Mister Raiajh?” Johnson asked.

“No, sir. I simply do not want another foul-up like the last time.”

Johnson simply looked at Raiajh before saying, “Let her do her job. If she fouls up, Braacht will take care of her.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Very good. Dismissed.”

* * *

Traveling between the *Arcturus* and *Starbase 35*, Ensign Isaiah Ben’taarch and Lieutenant Val’ri Raiajh were piloting the shuttle *Starchaser*, trying to pass the time by talking about what was happening in their respective departments and instead still not quite seeing eye to eye. Raiajh, a hybrid of both the Deltan and Vulcan species, sat bundled in a thick parka, complaining how cold the environment inside the shuttle was, while Ben’taarch, who originated from the ice-planet Efros, kept complaining that it was typically too warm for him. After a while, Raiajh decided to stop complaining about the cold and simply stare out at the inky blackness of space. One second it was there, the next it was replaced with what appeared to be a midafternoon sky on a rainy autumn day on Earth. The next thing Raiajh realized was she and Ben’taarch were no longer sitting in a shuttlecraft, but rather some kind of ground vehicle. The only things that did not seem to change were the two Starfleet officers themselves.

“What the...?” Ben’taarch exclaimed, followed by an assortment of Efrosian curses before he quickly set about looking for something that would stop the... whatever it was they were riding in. When his foot hit the pedal near the floor, the vehicle started to spin, finally stopping when it hit a pole. Looking around, the two found the way to exit the vehicle, stepping out onto the grassy embankment. It was then that Ben’taarch recognized the vehicle as a 20th century Terran automobile. No one was around to see the pointed-eared woman and the man with long, snow-white hair and cold, ice-blue eyes, which they considered lucky. Looking around inside the car, they eventually found an old-fashioned newspaper entitled ‘The Toronto Sun,’ with a date of October 31, 1968 printed on the front page.

“Lucky us,” Raiajh said, “to somehow wind up on Earth in the late 1960’s on, of all days, Halloween.” When Ben’taarch looked at Raiajh questioningly, she explained, “A day when many people dress up in elaborate costumes to celebrate an ancient holiday. Anyone we encounter will believe we are simply wearing costumes.”

After exiting the car once again, this time inspecting the damage inflicted by hitting the pole. One of the car’s tires had been knocked off its rim.

“Ike, I think I found some damage here,” Raiajh said. “The rubber wheel that keeps the automobile off the ground fell off its holder.” The Efrosian could not help but laugh.

“Didn’t you take Terran history at the Academy?”

“No, Ike. I attended the Academy annex on Vulcan,” Raiajh replied.

“Sorry. I didn’t mean to laugh. Anyway, it seems we have a problem. The rubber wheel is called a tire and its holder is called the rim.”

“Pardon me, Ike. The ‘tire’ here seems to have fallen off its ‘rim.’ However, there does not seem to be any damage to the ‘tire.”

Ben’taarch sat down in the grass next to the car and wiped his brow. It was about sixteen degrees celsius, and the more Ben’taarch perspired, the colder Raiajh felt.

“You’re going to have to find what they called a gas station and get that tire fixed. I don’t know how far I could walk in this heat.”

“Ike, you may be warm, but as for me, I wish it were about twenty degrees warmer.”

“At least you won’t faint from heat exhaustion.”

“That is true, and we do not wish to cause any problems while we are here until we can figure out how we got here and how we can get back to our own time. Tell me what I have to say, I do not wish to appear ignorant.”

Ben’taarch briefed Raiajh for almost fifteen minutes on what to say, then sent her on her way with the tire.

* * *

As she walked down the road, Raiajh met up with some people who made humorous remarks about the heavy jacket and woolen cap she wore, but she said nothing to them, simply continued to walk. Then, about forty five minutes after leaving Ben’taarch and the automobile, she came across what she had been seeking, a gas station.

The attendant, who had been helping a customer inside the garage, had long blonde hair. It was not until she got closer that Raiajh realized the attendant was male. She fought hard to control her pheromones, a byproduct of her half-Deltan heritage, before he saw her. She let the tire fall in front of her and waited, still fighting to bring her pheromones under control.

The attendant finished with the first customer and came over to Raiajh when he noticed her. He could not have been more than eighteen years old, and he had what could be described as a stupid grin on his face. Whether from her pheromones or just the way she was dressed, Raiajh could not tell.

“Hi. What can I help you with?” the attendant asked.

“My friend and I got into a small accident a few kilometers down the road, and the ‘tire’ came off the ‘rim.’”

“Why don’t you come inside? You don’t look too comfortable in that heavy coat.”

Raiajh followed the attendant inside and spoke as she took off the coat and hat she was wearing. Only her command-white turtleneck and pants remained of her Starfleet uniform, having decided it would be best to leave the rest of her uniform in the vehicle.

“Do not mind my ‘costume.’ My friend and I were on our way to a party.”

The attendant looked at Raiajh, noting her pointed ears and upswept eyebrows.

“What are you supposed to be?” the attendant asked as he started working on the tire.

“I’m... um... an alien from outer space.”

“Very convincing costume,” he said as he pulled the tire back off the machine that put the rubber back onto the rim and filled it with air. “Well, I’m finished with the tire.”

Raiajh started rummaging through her coat pockets, as if searching for money she knew she did not actually have, as Ben’taarch had instructed her.

“It would seem I have left my money back at the car. Is there another way I can pay you for your help?” Consciously or unconsciously, Raiajh found herself releasing pheromones again. The stupid grin returned to the attendant’s face.

“Perhaps there is,” he replied.

* * *

After Ben’taarch had sent Raiajh off with the tire, he moved away from the edge of the road to sit under the shade of a nearby tree. For the first few minutes he simply took in his surroundings, but quickly started to bore with the waiting. After an hour and a half, he started to wonder what happened to Raiajh.

Ben’taarch really began to worry when Raiajh had not returned after more than four hours. It had grown dark and the temperature was dropping to a much more tolerable level, just above freezing. But before he had a chance to decide if there was anything he should do, an automobile drove up behind Ben’taarch and stopped. Raiajh and a human male with messy blonde hair stepped out. Then he realized that Raiajh’s dark hair was also messed up and she seemed a lot more relaxed than usual. Ben’taarch believed she appeared drunk.

“Hi, Ike,” Raiajh said with a slight smile. “I got the tire fixed.”

“And it takes over four hours to fix a tire?” Ben’taarch asked, getting up from his seat and approaching the newly arrived vehicle.

“Well, I was speaking to this nice...”

Ben’taarch was getting impatient and did not want to hear it.

“Don’t tell me any stories. You both look like you did a little more than talk.”

Raiajh started to laugh, an uninhibited, uncontrolled laugh.

Yes, Ben’taarch thought. She is definitely drunk. Then he noticed the bottle of cola she was drinking.

The attendant, not wanting to get into any trouble, placed the repaired tire on the ground next to the strange visitor’s car, excusing himself as he offered his goodbyes before returning to his car and driving away. Meanwhile, Ben’taarch worked in silence to get the repaired tire back on the car. Once he was done, he and Raiajh got back inside, turned the vehicle around and drove back the way from which they had come.

Soon, the blackness of the Terran night sky was quickly replaced by the inky blackness of the stars surrounding *Starbase 35*. In the distance, the Federation starbase filled the front canopy.

Raiajh looked first at Ben’taarch and then at the chronometer on the control panel. Less than a minute had passed aboard the shuttle. Then Raiajh looked down at her hands, where she noticed the empty cola bottle. Suddenly a wave of vertigo overcame her. She rushed to the back of the shuttle, vomiting into a space-sickness bag she grabbed from a storage bin just in time. Ben’taarch placed the shuttle on auto-pilot and gave Raiajh a shot from the shuttle’s first aid kit to help her recover from the effects of the cola, letting her lay down on the rear passenger couch before returning to the pilot’s seat to commence docking at *Starbase 35*.

* * *

Back aboard the *Arcturus* a week later, Raiajh made her way back to her cabin, which she shared with Cathryn Pearson. She walked into the room, stopping dead in her tracks just inside the door. In front of her was a holographic projection, one of Pearson’s three-dimensional music vids.

The frequently played images had never caused Raiajh to pause before, knowing she could simply walk right through it to proceed to her bunk. This time was different.

She recognized the guitar player performing in front of her. It was the gas station attendant. Twenty years older, hair shorter, but definitely the same person.

Pearson paused the image and started at Raiajh.

“You look like you just saw a ghost.”

“Perhaps I have,” Raiajh whispered.

“Have you seen this vid before? The band was called Rush.”

“No, just this person with the guitar.” She stared at the paused image for a moment more before finally saying, “Never mind. He just reminds me of someone I once knew.”

“If you say so,” Pearson said. “I’ll just leave you alone for a little while.”

Pearson quickly left the cabin. Once she was gone, Raijah sat down on the edge of her bunk and ordered the computer resume playing the recording. As she watched the image, she smiled to herself and said, “He got his wish,” as she remembered that day in Toronto.

* * * * *

Epilogue: After the shuttle returned, both officers aboard were examined and found to be in perfect health. Although Chief Medical Officer Athena Arcadian found high levels of sucrose in Lt Raijah’s system, she did not say anything because she felt everyone needs a release from tension every now and then.

The End