

Previously in Star Trek: The Proud Few;

In 2368, near the start of the Klingon Civil War, Private Michael Drake and his platoon of Starfleet Marines from the Federation Embassy on Qo'noS are assigned to infiltrate the Capital City's old quarter to locate and retrieve an operative from Starfleet Intelligence, who Drake is surprised to discover is his former martial arts instructor and mentor Lin Fau Chang, just as a violent confrontation between Klingon gangs appears ready to start.

*Qo'noS, Homeworld of the Klingon Empire
Market Square*

“Walc! Get your team over here!”

2nd Lieutenant Joshua Collins and his team were surrounded. They tried to avoid one oncoming gang from the rear; only to have another one arriving from another direction. And without much preparation, not caring who their enemy looked like—or even what clothing they wore—they drew their disruptors and opened fire.

There was no choice now. Collins ordered his marines to defend themselves.

“Take cover!” The Luna born platoon leader ordered as his men took up fighting positions—whether behind a large object or a dead animal carcass. His team, consisting of squad leader Sergeant Tamara, Bolian Corpsman Loc, Corporal Rawlins, Private Hector Gonzales and Private Michael Drake, along with the man he had been deployed to retrieve, Starfleet Intelligence officer Lin Fau Chang. The entire unit was unable to obtain a transporter lock and beam out of hostile territory, having been informed by the commander of the embassy guard, Major McGregor. The Klingon gangs were preparing an all-out assault on the embassy, waiting for the complex's defenses to lose power. These bandits, through outside aid (most probably the House of Duras) had been planning this incursion for some time.

Doc Loc took aim with his rifle, and fired a blast at a charging Klingon wielding a bat'leth. He then fired another one at a gang member with a spear, and took out a third with a disruptor rifle, as the attacker attempted to plant himself into firing position. Corporal Rawlins took out a photon grenade—and as soon as he activated the device, tossed it several feet away at another armed group. Within seconds, an explosion went off, sending Klingons flying through the air.

Facing the other direction, Lieutenant Collins and Sergeant Tamara attempted to fend off another oncoming group. One Klingon managed to break away from the crossfire. Holding his yan sword, he ran to where Sergeant Tamara was positioned. As the Klingon closed in on her, Tamara rose to her feet and used her rifle against the striking blade, parrying it. Deflecting the blade to the side with her weapon, the Japanese NCO then shoved the butt of her rifle into the Klingon's face before sweeping the adversary's leg with her foot, taking the enemy down. The gang member tried to get up, just in time for the Starfleet Marine to slam him with the butt of the rifle again. Another gang member entered the fray, arena raising his bat'leth and executing a downward strike. Tamara used the same technique with the rifle, parrying the blade away. She then delivered a karate front kick into the assailant's body. Then by taking the rear grip of the firearm, she swung it across the Klingon's head, like a martial arts tonfa club, taking out the enemy. She quickly brought the muzzle back out and returned fire at another Klingon. Alongside Tamara, Lin Fau Chang and Michael Drake faced off against several Klingon attackers, engaging them in blade-to-blade combat. The Chinese martial arts teacher and his former student successfully defeated their adversaries.

Nearby, Collins faced-off with a knife-wielding combatant. The opponent knocked the platoon leader's rifle away. The marine then tried to use his disruptor pistol, when the Klingon grabbed the wrist Collins was holding it with. The same time the lieutenant grabbed the wrist holding the d'k tahg. Both fighters were now locked with each other in a death struggle. Collins felt the overpowering strength of the alien warrior. Then, the might of his foe weakened; the young officer noticing his opponent's eyes widen. He had received a mortal blow from behind. The enemy warrior fell to the ground. As he dropped the body, Lieutenant Collins noticed a small disruptor hit in the back of his foe.

The Klingon gang members turned around, only to be struck down by rapid phaser fire. They attempted to retaliate only to be taken out quickly with several rapid blasts, from what appears to be coming from a Starfleet Squad Support Phaser Weapon, or SSPW.

“Thank you, Staff Sergeant Walc!” Collins complemented to the Tellarite platoon sergeant, as he and the rest of Bravo Squad took up positions where the rest of Alpha Squad stood.

“Thought you were gonna say, ‘what took you so long?’” the muscular, pig-faced marine asked Collins in his arguing manner.

Collins answered in his traditional custom, “The thought did cross my mind!” He saw his platoon sergeant nod in agreement.

Approaching to where ‘Doc’ Loc and Corporal Rawlins happen to be, Lance Corporal Henry Ferguson, or ‘Tex,’ placed his SSPW upon a fallen concrete structure, extending the weapon's bipod in place before opening fire at the rest of the opposing gang.

“Everyone's all here now!” Collins addressed the rest of the unit. “Commence firing, fire at will!”

The rest of the teams, which also included Private First Class Vance Haden, Jr. and Silverman, obeyed. Collins turned to the Private as he asked, “Haden, you got that isometric disintegrator?”

“Copy, sir!”

“Use it!”

Haden set his phaser rifle down. On his shoulder was slung a large pack. Setting it down, he opened it before starting to piece together the components. The long-tube, isometric disintegrator was in place. Using the scope to target the gang members a few yards away, as they used cover to fire their disruptors, the Starfleet admiral's son took aim

“Ready!?” Collins checked on his subordinate.

“Yeah!”

“Do it!”

“Fire in the hole!”

The Starfleet Marines near him took cover, as Haden fired his high-powered weapon. The blast took out the entire gang emplacement. Haden checked the scope. His weapon had done its job.

“Clear!”

Collins surveyed the area. The gang that had attacked them were now out of action. Their part in the Klingon Civil War was over.

“Fan out!” Collins told his marines. “Make sure there’s none hiding behind those crates!”

Sergeant Tamara led some of the grunts out to check out the area as Collins joined Walc nearby and both Slater and Kirby maintained watch at the rear. The platoon leader, before conferring to his second-in-command, noticed something else happen. As Doc Loc pulled out a hypospray. Corporal Rawlins had been seriously wounded in the final assault, and was not responding.

“What happened, Doc?”

“He took a direct disruptor hit to the chest, sir.”

“Will he...?”

Loc examined the corporal’s injuries. Several indication sounds beeped out from his tricorder until the one long tone indicating ‘flatline’ told the marine Corpsman...

“He’s gone, sir.”

Collins took a moment to reflect on this sudden loss. Corporal Rawlins was the first casualty in his unit, under his command.

“Tag him, and bag him, Doc.”

“Aye, sir.” Loc complied, as he removed a Starfleet-issued body-bag from his pack.

The platoon leader then turned to Walc. “Any news from the embassy, Sergeant?”

“Still nothing, sir.”

Collins looked over to the street ahead. He could hear from a distance still more armed gangs approaching.

“We gotta get out of here... Any ideas?”

Drake spoke, as he pointed to a tall structure, “We could head over to that building just half a klick away.”

Lin Fau Chang added, “The Black Tower, which the Private and I used to use as a test of bravery.”

“...Heights that is, sir,” Drake added. “The thing’s taller than the Empire State Building on Earth.”

Private Hiram Silverman, who had grown up in New York, looked over to Drake, trying to disagree.

“How do you know it’s taller than the Empire State Building?”

“Cause Lieutenant Chang and I climbed up the exterior of it years ago?”

“Do you think the gangs may already be there?”

“Most unlikely, Lieutenant Collins,” Chang informed him. “The Klingons consider the Tower a sacred place. Even some of those gang thugs would think twice before desecrating such a place in an armed skirmish!”

With no other available option, the Starfleet Marine officer had to make a decision.

“Alright, marines!” Collins rounded everyone up. “Let’s just get there before the Klingons down here give us an honorable death! Let’s move!”

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...Anytime, anywhere!

Star Trek: The Proud Few

“Gangs Of Qo’noS” by David Kingsbury

Federation Embassy

“What are they waiting for?” Private Jake Kurland manned his firing station, as he looked on behind the wall. Below, several armed Klingon gangs kept shouting battle chants and curses at the defenders. They hoped to frighten or psyche them into submission. “Why don’t they just shut up and bring it on?”

Kurland’s fellow marine comrade, Qullad, speaking through his native Ligonian accent, noticed their actions, as he also noted the periodic crackling in the defensive shield surrounding them. “Right now I think they’re waiting for something to happen.”

The marines and the security contingent were well aware of the slow power drain, caused by an unknown source. The last thing the officials wanted was an army of bandits and thugs sacking and pillaging the embassy, leaving no traces of life behind once

they were through. Now everyone was on alert status. All non-essential personnel had been sent to secured areas deep beneath the building. At the same time, teams of engineers and technical experts were busy trying to restore full power.

Major McGregor looked over with his field glasses taking a look at the war-frenzied gang members. He could see the look in their eyes; as if glowing red like a rabid wolf, with drool foaming from its mouth, teeth widening--ready to launch itself at any moment at an unintended victim, ripping it to shreds. The older commanding officer had seen Klingons before in their fighting frenzy. But these were not the honorable warriors he was used to encountering. It looked like a very bad imitation of that 20th century movie, *Braveheart*, McGregor thought.

Captain Sholvok, the commander of Bravo Company, moved up next to McGregor, also looking at the scene a few blocks away.

“Status report, Captain?” McGregor requested, as he lowered his field glasses.

“All perimeters and defense positions are manned, Major,” the Vulcan reported. “Roving patrols are stationed within the compound. I have posted guards at all high level areas.”

“What about those portable transporter inhibitors?”

“They are in place, sir. If the gangs have transporter devices, they will not be able to beam one member into this complex.”

“Unless the shields are down and the gangs charge in to knock the devices out as they send an infiltration unit into the operations center.”

McGregor looked over at the gangs once more.

“I don’t know what’s worse, Mr. Sholvok: facing an armed group of punks, or possibly facing a powerful family that doesn’t like us that much.”

“If you mean the Duras Family. Their illogical and dishonorable actions could threaten the security of the Federation.”

“And one source of proof is out there...,” McGregor pointed his eyes toward the horizon overlooking much of the Klingon city. “...And we can’t get to them.”

Inside the operations center, Starfleet Intelligence Commander Lance was overseeing his control operators attempt to restore power levels to normal. Most of their attempts met without success. Power was still being drained at a slow rate. Monitors and viewscreens remained somewhat fuzzy; even the Hogh Council broadcast had gone dark. All that everyone could do was hope for a miracle. Nearby, a few armed marine and security guards were posted around the room. All of them carried phaser rifles and other vital equipment. The control personnel were also armed with phaser pistols. They were ready in case the gangs managed to break in.

“Sir!” the ensign, who had monitored the gangs’ movements earlier, called out.

“What is it, Ensign?”

“Sir, I’m getting a faint coded message coming in on subspace...Starfleet frequency!”

“Display it on screen if you can!”

The ensign nodded to the enlisted man operating the console. A partial message started to display on a small viewscreen, but the static from the inference jammed most of the text. The two Starfleet officers examined as much of it as they could before the static covered the screen, the transmission lost.

“That’s all there is, Commander. I almost could read it, but with the distortion interfering, only barely. If the transmission is authentic, which we were unable to concur, it would appear that Starfleet believes the Romulans are supplying the Duras Family.”

Commander Lance had sent operative Lin Fau Chang to ascertain any evidence if there was a Romulan connection in this conflict.

Chang may be right, Lance thought. Still no word from him, or the marine platoon sent to find him. With the transporters offline, there was no way to beam them back. Shuttles were out of the question. And there were reports of gang members having commandeered several transport vessels prepared to shoot anything within their flight path. Meanwhile, the ensign continued.

“Starfleet is sending a blockade of starships to prevent any Romulan vessels from crossing the Neutral Zone.” He turned to discern anything else he could make out of the message, but could only add, “I am afraid that was all we were able to receive from them.”

“I wonder if they are even aware of what’s going on here?” Lance looked toward a partially lit display screen, where Captain Sholvok and Major McGregor were observing their marines nearby. “It won’t be long before the power drain will subject the Embassy to a full-scale massacre. ...Or worse, if Gowron loses this war.” Commander Lance then took a look at the system scanners. “Any luck on locating the cause of the virus?”

“Nothing yet, sir.”

* * *

Somewhere within the Capital

The clash between the Red Targ and the Iron Hammer was only a diversion for the real plan—while other major gangs (names unknown to most Klingons) were still at each other’s throats, literally.

“Why do we wait when I have men ready to attack?” Yeto, the leader of the Red Targ, yelled into his communicator on his wrist. He was speaking to his primary supporter, Tol’dak. Yeto had gathered many of his followers, had agreed to this plan; as did T’Kar, the leader of the Iron Hammer. Both sides formed a mutual pact according to the instructions of their benefactor, who was in turn receiving aid from Lursa and B’Etor—in hopes they would destroy Gowron’s forces in the conflict that was taking place throughout the Empire.

“It won’t be long, I assure both of you.” Tol’dak informed them.

“You told us that your virus would weaken their shields easily!” T’Kar of the Iron Hammer stepped up. He was even more impatient than his counterpart.

Tol’dak explained, “There are many of you! They have few! Once their defenses are eliminated, you will have no trouble overwhelming the guards, and anyone else in your way.”

“You think so?” T’Kar asked, beginning to doubt their benefactor.

“Believe me, T’Kar. Once all power is gone, they won’t have a chance. And Starfleet will not be able to do anything about it once the Duras have achieved victory. The Empire will deny this incident, claiming it as an act by petty thieves and criminals.”

“Watch what you say!” Yeto warned Tol’dak, even though it happens to be true. There were no honorable warriors among the gangs. They were all fighting for either Gowron or the Duras. No matter.

Tol’dak told them, “They have only an hour. Your time is near.”

“Very well!” T’Kar agreed. “We will wait. But do not disappoint us!” The communication was ended.

* * *

Platoon leader’s log, stardate 45022.4: 2nd Lieutenant Collins recording;

Cut off from the embassy and surrounded by the various street gangs, our platoon has finally reached the Black Tower, a very high-rising structure where, according to Private Drake and Lieutenant Chang, a young Klingon warrior will test his bravery in overcoming what some of us humans often experience, a fear of heights. Choosing the internal route up a narrow set of stairs, we’re heading up to the observation level located on the top. We’re also keeping an eye out for gang members, just in case.

The Black Tower was a two hundred story building built of black metal with a fifteen meter tall spire on the very top. Without using antigrav devices or transports, a fearless warrior would scale the outside of the structure all the way to the top of the spire. Under the circumstances, the marines of 2nd Platoon did not have time to try out this ‘act of bravery.’ They were using the stairwells inside to reach the uppermost level, cautious in case someone else was inside.

Private Walt Slater and Private Sarah Kirby took point, with Drake and Gonzales backing them up. The rest of the unit followed. After what seemed like hours and thousands of steps, the platoon approached one more level leading to the final set of stairs. This must be the observation tower, Drake thought to himself. It was almost like they were heading up to take on an evil dictator. Would have loved to take on both Lursa and B’Etor single-handedly, Drake imagined. He had heard that one of them was a real flirt!

“Clear!” yelled Slater.

“Clear!” added Kirby. The rest of the team moved up. In their way now stood a set of blast doors. Drake walked over to examine the obstruction.

“I don’t remember blast doors being here.”

Walch, the Tellarite platoon sergeant approached, acting in his traditional criticizing manner. “You’ve probably been away for too long to be an authority on the tourist attractions of Qo’noS, Private.”

“He’s right, Staff Sergeant,” Chang said as he moved up next to Drake. The Chinese operative also examined the door. “This thing shouldn’t even be here.”

“How can you tell, Lieutenant?” Collins asked.

“This entire structure, even though sturdy enough, is centuries old. That door...,” Chang pointed out, “...is fairly new.” He looked down over at the side plating. “I would have to say no more than two to three months old.” Chang also noticed something else, as he scanned with his tricorder. “I’m also getting something else here, Lieutenant.” The intelligence officer motioned for the platoon to quiet down. Once there was silence, the marines also started to recognize sounds coming from beyond the blast door.

“I’m detecting computer controls, monitoring systems.” Chang shook his head a little. “Gowron’s gonna have a targ when he finds out this sacred structure is being used for a communications center.”

“Let’s confirm that.” Joshua Collins began to issue instructions. “Drake, scan the interior for any booby traps and other devices. Silverman, get your equipment.”

“Aye, sir.”

As the New York native headed over to get a device that would help unlock the door, Drake finished his scans.

“No devices detected, sir,” Drake reported.

“Alright, Silverman, get ready,” Collins signaled.

“Set, Lieutenant.” The young tech genius placed a device over the control panel to the right of the doors and activated the controls, unlocking them. A loud clanging noise could be heard. “Done.”

“Drake, check it out,” Collins ordered the young marine as he headed in to scout around once the door opened.

“Lieutenant Collins,” Chang said. “Mind if I tag along with the Private?”

“Just make sure you stay in one piece, Lieutenant.”

Chang nodded and followed Private Drake into the room. As they entered, they encountered a series of controls and other devices. It was a small control room. Along the walls hung several bladed weapons... But what caught Chang’s eye was a large Klingon-made stone portrait of a warrior in standard-issued battle armor. Lin remembered this particular warrior from four years earlier.

“Who is he, sifu?” Drake asked, noticing the look of recognition on Chang’s face.

“His name was Korris; a renegade Klingon. Several years ago he and a several co-conspirators commandeered a Talarian freighter which they used to destroy a Klingon battle cruiser. While I was on the *Enterprise*, we rescued him and his men. Shortly after arriving aboard, Korris tried to steal the ship and later attempted to blow up the dilithium crystal chamber. Lieutenant Worf was forced to kill him.”

“So that’s the one, huh?” Drake remembered one of his letters from Chang, during his sifu’s previous assignment on the *Enterprise*. “This Korris seems as dishonorable as the entire Duras Family.”

“He was loyal to the Duras until his death.”

Indeed, Korris had been a secret ally to Councilor Duras. But when Korris was killed aboard the *Enterprise*, Duras had covered any evidence in connection with the renegade’s small rebellion--until Lursa and B’Etor took over the family name.

“And still is...,” a voice said from behind a nearby console. Chang and Drake immediately turned to face a young Klingon male wearing civilian-clothes. Suddenly the sounds of the blast doors closing filled the space. Drake and Chang watched as the room sealed, locking the rest of the marines out. Chang and Drake were now trapped.

“If you served aboard that Federation ship that my father died on, then I have also his murderer’s associate to put to death.”

“What are you talking about?” Chang demanded.

“Once I finish you, Starfleet,” Tol’dak threatened, “I will ask the sisters to hand over to me the former security chief of the *Enterprise* as well.”

Former security chief? Chang thought. Could the Duras Family have captured Worf?

Tol’dak drew out what appeared to be a weapon. Drake responded and aimed his rifle. But before he could fire, the Klingon swung something long and knocked a piece of equipment onto Drake’s head, knocking him out. Chang drew out his disruptor, but Tol’dak knocked it away. The intel officer now took out his mek’leth.

“Nice moves! Must be advanced weaponry training,” Chang noted the traditional instrument that Tol’dak drew. It was a targwhip. Made of the skins and hide of a targ, the targwhip acted just like an Earth bullwhip. Wielded by an expert, the effects of this Klingon weapon could be most devastating. Tol’dak took out a yan from his sheath with one hand then swung the targwhip around with his other, in an attempt to frighten the Starfleet Intelligence officer. However, Lin Fau Chang drew out his own whip-like weapon, a sectional kung fu chain whip; an elegant weapon used in the Chinese martial art. Chang swung it around in several directions, readying himself for the confrontation. Tol’dak had been wrong in judging some humans in their fighting abilities. He should have listened to how two Klingon assassins had failed to kill Worf’s second cha’dich two years earlier.

Both combatants slashed at each other with their whips. Flashing, jumping, and evading each time, as if in an old-Earth kung fu movie. Each fighter matched one another in weapon and ability; hoping to exploit a weakness to end this contest with a killing blow. Chang received a few strikes from Tol’dak’s animal-hide whip. The Chinese expert in kung fu returned the favor with several blows on the Klingon. A last stroke from the targwhip was quickly entwined by Chang’s metal version, and with a sharp tug, Chang quickly disarmed his adversary. Tol’dak and Chang immediately charged at each other with their blades, clashing metal against metal, while executing several mok’bara positions. Chang parried one attack, countering with a punch. Disarming his enemy, the Chinese officer then exchanged a series of martial hands strikes, kicks, and sweeps.

“Where did you learn to fight like a Klingon, human?” Tol’dak furiously demanded to know, having seen techniques similar to his own in addition to the Starfleet operative’s maneuvers. Chang decided to mock his adversary.

“Why don’t you ask the son of Mogh! Perhaps he can give you a real fighting lesson?”

“I don’t acknowledge murderers or traitors!”

“Mogh’s name was cleared!” Chang replied as he grabbed Tol’dak when his opponent tried to strike him with his arm. “And your daddy was hardly Klingon warrior material either!”

“You pa’taq!”

“Want at it again?!” Chang pushed him back. “Fine!”

Tol’dak grabbed him and took him down to the ground, grabbing him in a restraining move. “The Federation alliance is dust! The Duras will triumph!”

“You know, for an honorable warrior species...you talk too much.”

Chang twisted his body in position and tossed an overreacting, infuriated Tol’dak to the side. The Klingon landed on the stand that held the stone portrait of his father, knocking it to the floor, where it shattered to pieces. Chang rolled out of the way as the statue of Korris fell hard onto Tol’dak’s head, crushing it.

Chang immediately got up, turning to Private Michael Drake, who was groggy but had awakened from unconsciousness. “Are you alright, Michael?”

“I’m okay.” Drake held his head with his hand. The marine looked over to where the stone portrait now rested on Tol’dak’s head. “What happened here?”

“Like father, like son, I guess you could say,” Chang commented as he went to help Drake open the blast door. The rest of the detachment of 2nd Platoon entered. Lieutenant Collins stepped in to the observation area.

“Are you guys okay?”

“We had a bit of a run-in with an animal product.” Drake looked over his shoulder to where Tol’dak’s body lay. Collins did not bother asking specifically; he would wait for a more detailed report later.

“Sir!” Private Hiram Silverman, the tech expert, called out. Both the lieutenant and Staff Sergeant Walc, Private Drake and Lieutenant Chang headed to where Silverman was standing. The marine was scanning with his tricorder.

“What do you have, Private?” Collins asked.

"I can see why that Klingon was so intent on keeping us out of here," Silverman said as he looked at the screen on the scanning device. "From what I can make out of this, this stuff's got some Romulan technology into it. Somewhat sophisticated by the way the instruments have been programmed..."

Lieutenant Collins interrupted, "Just give me a short version, Marine." Silverman went to the immediate answer.

"I know why the embassy can't get a transporter lock on us. They've been bombarded by a computer virus." Private Silverman looked at the tricorder alongside the Klingon computer displays. "From the little Klingonese I know, the Federation complex has suffered a series of power shortages. Some of their defenses are still holding, but not for long."

"With those defenses weakening," Chang added, "the gangs could overrun the complex."

"Can we shut the virus down from here?" Collins wondered.

"Not here, Lieutenant." Silverman looked over to the panel. "This is just technical information from an outside source."

"Romulans?" Walc guessed.

"No." Chang corrected, adding information from what he had gathered during his mission. "From some of the intel that I gathered, the Romulan operatives were able to pass on a virus to the Duras, which they would have to install in their Klingon database and deliver by broadcast."

"A Klingon Bird of Prey?" Collins guessed.

Chang said, "Probably one of the few available warships the Duras currently control; keeping most of the Romulans out of the loop."

"And when our people try to figure out the source, the gangs will already be on top of them, literally," Drake added.

"...Giving Lursa and B'Etor—with Romulan support—a chance to decide the ultimate fate in the Federation-Klingon Alliance," Chang noted. "That's the reason I tried to get back when all hell broke loose."

"Anyway that we can create a feedback that could help nullify this virus...a counter-agent?" Collins looked over to Silverman.

"I think I can come up with something with the data we have."

"Go to work."

Silverman nodded, activating his tricorder and checking the readings, which he used to analyze and develop an anti-virus to transmit and deactivate the alien virus which a hidden Klingon ship had transmitted to the embassy's computer systems.

"Can I be of assistance?" Chang asked. Collins nodded, tilting his head to where Silverman began to work on the counter-virus. Chang moved next to the private. As they worked, Private Kirby, one of the guards that Collins had posted at the open blast doors, entered the room. Her expression looked anxious.

"Lieutenant," she said to her commanding officer. "We've got company!"

"More gangs?" Staff Sergeant Walc guessed.

"Looks like it, Sarge," Drake muttered.

"Get Slater and Ferguson inside, then seal the doors!" Walc barked.

"Yes, Staff Sergeant!" Kirby obeyed.

"...So much for keeping things sacred!" Gonzales remarked, referring to the Black Tower itself. "What's next? Klingon graffiti all over the walls?"

Haden and "Tex" quickly closed the blast doors. Collins turned to Silverman, who was still downloading a counter-virus, waiting for the transmission to finish before it could take effect on whoever was broadcasting the virus.

"How much longer, Private?"

"Give me a few minutes and I'll bring that Klingon ship down!"

"We don't have a few minutes!"

Silverman took the news to heart; but the progress bar indicating the downloading was still taking its time. At the door, the enemy combatants were now trying to ram it down from the other side, while the marines held their rifles in position.

"They don't give up, do they?!" Slater remarked as he aimed his rifle toward the heavy doors.

"Well what do you expect, Walt...?" Private Kirby asked. "They're Klingons!"

Gonzales commented, "Got any Metal tunes to inspire us, Mike?"

"I got some Ozzy Osborne in my pack!" Drake joked a little.

"Keep cool, guys!" Collins assured them.

Lin Fau Chang moved over to the control panel. He looked at the set of controls and located one particular switch. Without hesitation, the Chinese officer activated it. Silverman looked at the indicator line, and was surprised to see the speed with which the download quickly accelerated; the counter-virus had initiated.

"I got it!" the New Yorker shouted. That was what Collins and the rest of the members of the platoon wanted to hear, as the gangs continued their attempt to break through the blast doors. Lieutenant Collins headed over to Silverman's station.

"Is it going into effect?"

"Yes, sir," Silverman informed his CO. "I just located the Bird of Prey that is broadcasting the virus. Taking it out right now."

"Any attempts by the Klingons to block the counter-virus?" Chang inquired.

"If they try to, they'll be too focused on trying to recloak their vessel."

"Got a point there," Collins commented as he and Chang, followed by Silverman, joined the others and readied themselves for an incoming fight. Near his platoon leader, Drake heard a comm signal coming from his badge.

"Lieutenant! I'm getting a transporter signal!"

"Confirmed, sir!" Sergeant Tamara acknowledged.

“Everyone!” Collins informed his unit. “We’re ‘dusting off’ now!”

Weapons still drawn, the marines of 2nd Platoon were quickly surrounded by the dematerialization of the transporter. Their physical forms disappeared in the glimmering beams. Just as the Starfleet Marines and the intelligence operative escaped, the gang members broke down the doors and quickly entered. The warriors searched the room, only to find a control consol that had been tampered with and a dead Klingon leader - Tol’dak, son of Korris—his hold on the gangs now crumbled.

* * *

High in orbit, an old D12 class Bird of Prey, one of the ships loyal to the Duras from Captain Larg’s squadron, was suffering a few technical malfunctions. As crewmembers scrambled to redirect most of their power to the vital systems to keep the ship from crashing onto the surface, the captain began to swear. His curses were heard all over the bridge--typical Klingon behavior. Already at the same time as the gangs were losing the element of surprise against the Federation Embassy, the Duras Family has suffered heavy losses following Chancellor Gowron’s latest offensive. Defeat appeared inevitable. These bands of street thugs, with no major support from the powerful family, would now be en route to either Ruha Penthe or the demon Fek’lher’s domain.

“Sir!” The captain turned to the communications officer who had spoken. “Kurn’s squadron is entering the system! And I am also getting an urgent message from Lursa and B’Etor!”

The Klingon captain swore again. Now he had two more troubles! Rescuing the would-be leaders of the Empire and trying to avoid Kurn’s squadron... All in very little time.

“Keep the ship cloaked!” he scowled at his crew. “And have the transporter chief prepare to beam Lursa and B’Etor aboard. Then warp us out to rendezvous with the rest of Larg’s fleet in the Mempha sector!” According to the information he received from his intelligence officer, Larg’s forces were regrouping at the site of the recent battle, what was left of the forces loyal to the Duras Family now mostly decimated or on the run. Members of a proud House, hoping to lead the Empire into a new era, would now become fugitive outlaws, their chance at glory quickly fleeting

* * *

Federation Embassy

They made it.

--Having lost only one of their own in the street battle, the marines of 2nd Platoon made it back alive...with the Starfleet Intelligence operative in tow. Michael Drake took a deep breath seeing the sight of a Federation transporter room. At least for a brief moment; unsure if the Klingons might still try to breach the complex’s defense perimeter. Lieutenant Collins hoped that Private Silverman’s counter-virus was not quickly countermanded. But the ‘Lunar Schooner’ had faith in Hiram’s technical know-how.

As the troops stepped off of the transporter platform, their superiors, Major McGregor, Captain Sholvok, and Commander Lance, supported by a team of Starfleet medics and other Starfleet personnel, greeted them.

“Sorry it took us so long,” McGregor apologized to his marines. “Somehow, just now, we managed to restore our systems.”

“I know,” Collins said. “By accident, we stumbled across the source of your power drain and eliminated it.” The marine officer looked over toward Lieutenant Chang. “Mister Chang will debrief you all on some of the information he had collected.”

Commander Lance stepped up to Lin Fau Chang. The Chinese Starfleet Intelligence field agent took out a small device from his tattered robes.

“Here’s the information, Commander; actual proof that the Duras are secretly working with the Romulans.”

“At least that will add to the rest of the information,” Lance said.

“...Rest of the information?” Chang inquired.

“A Starfleet armada under the command of the *Enterprise* just intercepted a Romulan convoy trying to cross the Neutral Zone, forcing it back to their own territory.”

“No kidding?”

“The tide of the civil war has turned. Gowron’s fleet are about to launch a final assault on the Duras Family’s forces.”

“Did you get...?”

“Shields are at maximum.”

Having overheard his sifu and his commanding officer, Private Drake looked over to Hector Gonzales.

“Looks like the gangs are going to be outnumbered,” Drake commented.

Gonzales added, “And totally outgunned.”

Major McGregor turned toward the rest of the unit.

“Marines, if you please.” The older officer could hear the disruptor sounds outside the building. “The fireworks have begun.”

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Marine's personal log, stardate 45025.4: Private Michael Drake recording; We've managed to secure the embassy. News of the forced Romulan withdrawal near the border, and Chancellor Gowron's victory, has allowed his troops to round up the gangs and restore order. The danger is over...but like every small conflict, it came at a cost. During our skirmishes with the gangs, we suffered one casualty: Corporal Victor Rawlins. His body will be returned to Starbase with us, where a memorial service will be held, then transported by the starship Lexington back to Earth, where he will be buried in his hometown of Chicago.

Drake and his friend and squadmate, Private Hector Gonzales, walked along the wall of the embassy complex. Both men, now in their "surface operation blacks", carried their Type III phaser rifles and other equipment--having shed their Klingon attire since returning to the embassy--en route to the transport that would take them off Qo'noS and back to Starbase 24, along with the body of Corporal Rawlins. The two marines talked with each other as they passed a number of engineers, service technicians, and embassy personnel.

"Gowron's got a big task ahead of him, now that the Duras Family is no longer a threat," Gonzales said to Drake.

"For now at least," Drake said as he turned toward his young Hispanic comrade and nodded in agreement. "I have a feeling the Duras sisters will try and retake the Empire again. And I wonder if they've now got a personal grudge against certain members of Starfleet?"

The 'certain members' Drake was referring to were Captain Picard and the crew of the *Enterprise*, especially Lieutenant Worf, the Klingon security officer and adversary of Duras, and probably anyone else who ends up in their way--meaning also a bunch of Starfleet Leathernecks.

"How's your sifu, by the way?" Gonzales asked.

"Haven't heard from him since we returned from our mission. His position with Starfleet Intelligence doesn't give him much free time. But I'm sure he'll check in on me later on. He always does." Gonzales shook his head a little.

"Well, Michael, we made it through one piece of history in the Federation text books."

"Well, Hector, this is what we signed up for. Got through one adventure; more coming our way."

"Semper Fi!"

The End