

The newly launched starship *USS Arcturus NCC-1807-A* was two days out of starbase, and Vice Admiral Eric Johnson had only now found the time to review the new records of the personnel that had reported aboard. It would be very interesting to see these new officers interact with a crew figuratively old enough to be their grandparents.

To his delight, Johnson noticed that most of them were seasoned officers with many years of experience under their belts. With all these new people, and their long records, Johnson also knew it would be a while before he would be finished. He also knew it would be better to tackle the task now while he had the time. Space proved to be adventuresome in the past, and one never knew what to expect next. Especially now.

Johnson keyed the ninth record onto the screen and nearly fell off his chair, for what he saw was impossible. The admiral rubbed his weary eyes and focused on the name of the newly assigned Marine commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel A. Carey Copeland.

'This can't be,' Johnson thought to himself. Copeland died back in the 23rd century. He had viewed a recording of the incident in question himself before his original *Arcturus* had become lost in time. This record among the newly arrived crew assignments had to be a joke. There was just no way...

Johnson turned away from the terminal and punched the communications control.

"Send Captain Solak to my quarters, please," he requested quite calmly, considering the shock. He did not wait for a response before deactivating the intercom. Continuing to review the file, he read the records under Copeland's name. It was almost exactly as he remembered, with few additions to explain the Marine officer's presence in the present, let alone in the land of the living. The records were definitely Copeland's, and Johnson decided this was definitely a sick joke. It had to be. Even if Copeland did survive the battle, the odds of him being propelled into the future and assigned to this ship...

The hissing sound of the door pulled his thoughts away from the computer to his first officer. Solak had been good friends with the late Major Copeland. While the average Vulcan did not participate in jokes, Johnson knew that Solak was not the average Vulcan, and possibly not above the occasional prank.

"Solak," Johnson began. "Have you reviewed the new personnel records?"

"Yes, Admiral," Solak responded unemotionally.

"Then you are aware of a Lt Colonel A. Carey Copeland being listed among those records?"

"Yes, Admiral."

"And have you met the officer in question?" The Vulcan arched his eyebrow and looked strangely at the admiral.

"Certainly, Admiral. Just as you have on many occasions. Have you not spoken to him yet since he came aboard? He specifically requested assignment to the *Arcturus*."

"So you're telling me that this is the same Copeland that commanded our Marine contingent aboard the original *Arcturus*? The same Copeland that brought that stupid dog on my ship? That flew around drunk in a fighter with Doctor Arcadian? That buzzed my bridge?"

"Yes, Admiral," Solak replied, still no hint of emotion on his face. Johnson's eyes widened.

"That's impossible!"

"On the contrary," Solak corrected. "If it were impossible, Mister Copeland would not be present."

"And this is not a joke?" Johnson half-asked, half-stated.

"Vulcans do not joke, Admiral."

Admiral Johnson sighed audibly. Copeland's presence was an impossibility, regardless of what Solak might think. There was only one way at this point to find out if there really was an officer named Copeland on board the *Arcturus*. He once again called the operations officer on the bridge.

"Lieutenant, have Mister Copeland report to my quarters, please."

"Copeland, sir?" Lieutenant (JG) Setton To'Lock Arbelo inquired, sounding unsure.

"That's what I said, Mister Arbelo."

"Aye aye, sir." A few moments later, there was a knock at the door, an old tradition dating back centuries, and the stout, young-looking Marine entered, stopped two paces short of the admiral's desk, and saluted smartly.

Johnson studied the man standing before him in silence for a moment. It **was** Copeland; or at least it appeared to be. Though it had been more than a year and a half since – from Johnson's perspective – he had last seen Copeland, the man standing in front of him was the same height, had the same hair, the same eyes, the same face, the same smart-assed grin. It was like seeing a ghost, but something just wasn't right. Perhaps it was the fact that he looked about half a decade older? Or maybe it was just his imagination playing games?

"Sir, Lieutenant Colonel Achilles Carey Copeland, reporting as ordered, sir!" the Marine stated, then grinned again. "I was wondering when you'd get around to the personnel records. Miss me, sir?"

"You're Copeland?" the admiral stated in mild disbelief.

"I hope so, sir," the Marine replied. "I'm wearing his underwear."

"I don't believe you," Johnson said. The Marine looked strangely at his superior, the cocky grin gone.

"You don't believe I'm wearing underwear, sir?"

"No," Johnson replied with a hint of frustration in his voice. "I don't believe you're really Copeland."

"What do you mean, you don't believe I'm me, sir?" Copeland asked, genuinely confused.

"How do I know you're not an imposter?" the admiral asked.

"I... uh... I don't know?" Copeland replied defensively. "Trust me on this one, sir. I know I'm me. Ask me anything! Oh, I've got one! Remember the chocolate cake that you and Admiral Ackermann got really sick after eating because it was made with

chocolate laxative? If I wasn't me how would I know that? Because I was in on it! Is that proof enough?" Copeland looked pleadingly at the Vulcan still standing nearby. "Come on, Solak. Tell him it's me!"

"Admiral," the Vulcan began. "Based on my personal knowledge of and previous relationship with the Lieutenant Colonel, I can assure you that this is indeed A. Carey Copeland."

Johnson turned to face Solak, saying, "Would you give me a one hundred percent guarantee that this person is not simply a very good imposter?"

"Why would anyone wish to impersonate someone who was reported dead over three-quarters of a century ago?" Solak asked in return. "In addition, where would they be able to learn his mannerisms?"

Johnson thought for a moment, then addressed the Marine. "Go down to sickbay and have them perform a complete genetic scan. We should still have all of Copeland's vitals on record, since I insisted the entire database from the original *Arcturus* be transferred into the computer core of this new ship when it was launched. If you're really who you say you are, then that will be the final proof. Solak, make sure he goes."

"Aye, sir," Solak replied as he turned and escorted Copeland toward sickbay.

"Geez," Copeland muttered sarcastically to himself as he exited the quarters. "Welcome back, Copeland. Glad to see you're not dead, Copeland. Some welcome!"

Space, the Final Frontier...

These are the voyages of the starship *Arcturus*!

Star Trek: Arcturus

"Send in the Clones" By A. Carey Sperling

"So you were floating around in space for all that time?" Dr. Athena Arcadian, the *Arcturus-A*'s chief medical officer inquired, amazed by Copeland's whole story.

"Yeah," Copeland replied. "I'm lucky I'm still alive. Even cryo systems have been known to fail after so long. They located my pod about six years ago, drifting near Beta Rigel. After I was found I went back to Marine OCS again and caught up on modern technology, much like you and the rest of the crew did back at the Academy. Once I finished re-training I reported to an assignment at Fighter Weapons School on the Moon. A few months ago I heard about the *Arcturus* having been found, and I couldn't believe it! When I found out you guys were back in space, I immediately submitted a request to switch positions with Lieutenant Colonel Moffet, who wanted to instruct at Top Gun, and here I am!" Copeland quieted for a moment before he looked at the doctor and said, "Hey, is this going to take long? I'm supposed to fly in an hour." Arcadian looked over the bio-scan she had just completed of her long lost friend. The entire process seemed like a waste of time. Of course it was Copeland. His DNA report proved it beyond a doubt! However, there was still something that just did not seem right. Arcadian reviewed the Marine's bone scan once again, and was amazed at what she now noticed.

"What happened to your knee, Carey?" she asked slowly.

"I smashed it, remember?" Copeland replied. "Why? What's wrong with it now?"

"Have you noticed anything strange about it?" Arcadian asked.

Copeland thought about it for a moment, then nodded. "You know, it really hasn't been bothering me lately. Didn't notice until you mentioned it. That's not bad, is it?"

"No," Arcadian quickly stated. "It's not bad at all. Just strange. According to this scan, your knee is completely healed. Actually, it's more like you were never injured."

Copeland shrugged. "It's strange," he finally commented. "But I'm certainly not going to argue with it. That knee's been a pain for too many years. Strange or not, I'm glad it's better."

"Yeah," Arcadian agreed. "Me too." The doctor then pulled out another scanner and activated it as she said, "Let's just take a few more scans and get the results into your record and you'll be done."

* * *

Johnson leaned back in his ready room chair and looked up at Arcadian after reviewing her report. His knee was a give-away. It wasn't Copeland after all. With all the technology of this new century, it may be possible to fool scanners and DNA tests, but this imposter had overlooked one detail, and that was his crucial mistake.

"So, it's not him then," Johnson said to the two other crew members in the ready room. "It's not really Copeland. The knee proves it!"

"God, you are so paranoid," Arcadian laughed. "Of course it's really him. Look at the DNA scan."

"What if he has some method of fooling the scanners?" the admiral suggested.

"Admiral," Solak interrupted. "It is not possible to fool a DNA scan. Based on the positive identification made in sickbay, I must agree with Doctor Arcadian. He is Copeland and you are paranoid."

“What about the knee?” Johnson asked both his first officer and chief medical officer. “Serious injuries like the one our Copeland suffered can’t heal so completely! How would you explain it?”

“He was in suspended animation for seventy five years, Eric,” Arcadian remarked. “We still don’t understand all of the biochemical interactions involved with cryo. It’s quite possible that his body was able to heal itself completely while he was in hibernation. Radiation can also cause strange medical phenomena. He could have been exposed to all kinds of radiation while he drifted through deep space that might have healed his knee? Anything’s possible.”

“Possible, but how probable?” Johnson asked.

“The probability of his knee having completely healed while in space is far greater than the possibility of him being an imposter,” Solak stated impassively. “I assure you, Admiral. He is Copeland.”

Johnson took a deep breath and let it out slowly. The data was there, right in front of him, and according to Solak, it was undeniable. Both of his senior officers swore the man that had come aboard the *Arcturus* was Copeland, but Johnson still could not make himself believe. Something was still wrong, and Copeland’s knee only intensified his suspicions. He had no justification for his beliefs aside from the one anomaly, and therefore no reason to react. He had to accept the facts as they had been presented to him, at least for the time being.

“Thank you for the report and analysis,” he told the two. “I’ll keep them in mind.”

“Indeed,” said the Vulcan as he turned and left the room. Arcadian paused and looked back at Johnson through the doorway.

“You still don’t believe it, do you?”

“I saw him die.”

“You watched a holo of his fighter going down. There’s a difference. You should really put your emotions aside and look at the facts. It’s him. I’d bet my life on it.”

“Let’s hope you won’t have to,” Johnson said grimly.

* * *

“SURPRISE!!!” echoed throughout Hangar Bay 3. Copeland nearly hit his head on the wing of his fighter as he jumped, truly surprised. He turned around to see David Maddox, Briana Lithir, Vespasian Trent, and several others from his past.

“Welcome back to the world of the living,” Maddox announced.

“You guys!” Copeland laughed as he shook his head. Leave it to his old crew to get all sentimental. He walked over to Maddox and shook hands vigorously when he noticed the loud whining of a dog. He turned toward the noise and his mouth dropped open wide. Lithir smiled as she released the dog’s leash, and the animal bounded happily over to his true master.

“Rusty!” the Marine exclaimed happily as he gathered the large German Shepherd into his arms. The dog whined excitedly as he proceeded to bathe Copeland with doggie kisses.

“We have a lot of catching up to do. Why don’t we take this to a more appropriate location?” Maddox suggested.

“Bar?” Copeland asked.

“Bar!” Maddox replied. The two headed toward the doors with the dog, the rest of the welcoming committee either following or returning to their stations.

* * *

The next few days aboard the *Arcturus* were business as usual, but Admiral Johnson remained suspicious of Copeland. An inquiry to Starfleet Command only seemed to back the Marine’s story further. According to the official reports, just as Copeland had stated, his fighter had been shot down by Orions just weeks before the mission when the *Arcturus* disappeared during its attempted time-warp to the past. Copeland had managed to eject his escape pod at the last moment, but debris had apparently blocked any detection of the pod. Unfortunately, in the heat of the battle, the pod was damaged and its transponder never activated and no one had noticed it among the debris. The pod was lost and drifted through space for over seventy years until it was discovered, quite by accident, by the *USS Pathfinder* in 2363. After being successfully revived, Copeland was returned to Earth, where he attended Marine Corps OCS for a year, taught for five more at *Lunar Station Miramar*, then requested transfer to the *Arcturus-A*. It all checked out. The facts were all there. Yet the admiral still refused to believe it.

Johnson sat in his ready room a few minutes before the department heads were scheduled for their weekly briefing in the observation lounge. The Colonel would be there representing the newly embarked Marine contingent. He had read the report from Starfleet several times already, but there was something that still gnawed at him. Something about the man claiming to be Copeland just did not feel right to him.

Several minutes later, Admiral Johnson was in the observation lounge with the rest of the senior department heads. Johnson heard each officer speak, providing updates on ship status and crew readiness. However, their words had no meaning to him. The admiral was too busy observing Copeland, waiting for one mistake to prove he was right in his suspicions. He did remember to nod politely as he heard each department head speak, and when he was sure the reports were finished, he smiled and asked for any questions or comments. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the senior Marine officer spoke up first.

“Yes, Lieutenant Colonel?” Johnson asked.

“We’re getting mighty formal these days, sir,” the Marine commented. “You used to call me Copeland.”

Johnson nodded in agreement before saying, “That’s what I used to call the Major.”

Copeland laughed in disbelief at the admiral’s words. “Oh my God! I can’t believe this! You still don’t believe it’s me, do you? What is the deal?”

David Maddox, the chief of security, cut in and asked, “Who do you think this is, sir?” He gestured toward his friend, and was acknowledged by Johnson with a stern glare.

“Okay,” Copeland said, standing and addressing the entire group. “Show of hands here. Who thinks that I’m an imposter? C’mon, don’t be shy.” He looked around the lounge with an exaggerated glance to see no hands raised. “There, you see, sir? You’re outvoted. Everyone else knows it’s me!”

“And in the late-20th century,” Johnson countered, “most of the population of Asia thought that Khan Singh was a swell guy.” The smile quickly left the Marine officer’s face.

“You have my records,” he stated slowly, emphasizing each word. “You have my retinal scans, fingerprints, voice-prints, DNA comparison, and my medical exam backs it all up, sir. What more do you want? Blood?? I’ve given that, too! And I could pull some of my old tricks, but I’ve grown up a lot since you’ve seen me last and I’d much rather not. So you tell me, Admiral, what’s it gonna take to make you believe who I am?”

The admiral crossed his arms calmly and said, “Nothing is coming to mind..., Colonel.”

Copeland looked shocked for a split-second before his expression hardened.

“You asked for it then,” he said, his eyes never leaving Johnson’s face. “This is war! My pranks against your paranoia. We’ll see who wins.” Then, without another word, Colonel Copeland turned away from the table and stormed out of the lounge.

* * *

Vice Admiral Johnson was beginning to grow tired of the Colonel’s little pranks, even though it had only been a few days. It seemed the colonel was going all-out to prove himself, but why – Johnson wondered – did he feel it so important unless the admiral was right all along?

The admiral entered a turbolift and began to recap in his mind the string of tricks that had occurred thus far; There was the pillow full of shaving cream the same night as the senior staff meeting when the colonel had ‘declared war,’ the bucket of water propped up over the shower in Johnson’s quarters, the whoopee cushion on the command chair, the hot sauce in his lunch – Johnson was still not sure how the Colonel had programmed the replicator to pull that one off – and others he just could not remember. It was almost enough to drive him to drink!

The turbolift doors opened and Johnson stepped over to the entrance of the ready room. Copeland... no, the Colonel, was really starting to get to him, and he wondered what he would do next. He did not have long to wait.

As soon as he entered the ready room, Johnson could hear a familiar rhythmic thumping noise coming from behind his desk. He turned his chair slowly to confirm his suspicion. Rusty, the German shepherd, sat happily in his chair, tail wagging faster at Johnson. The dog moved over toward him and licked his hand while Johnson surveyed the room for damage. At least – it appeared – the dog was better behaved now than when he had first been brought aboard the old *Arcturus* almost a century earlier.

“I don’t believe this,” he said to no one. “I just don’t believe this. I’m going to have to kill him. Now I’m talking to myself too! Just great!” Johnson turned to activate the intercom on his desk in hope of summoning the brash Marine to come retrieve his pet when unexpectedly the red alert klaxons began to blare a collision warning throughout the ship. Ignoring the dog for a moment, Johnson quickly rushed out onto the bridge to find out what was happening. He could not believe his eyes.

The admiral watched, fists clenched tightly, as a Wasp-class fighter with Starfleet Marine Corps markings landed gently on top of the bridge directly next to the dome window over its center. The hatch opened and the Colonel, clad in his EVA flight suit, climbed out of the cockpit and stood proudly on the window, waving to the bridge crew. Johnson could see his mouth moving, but there was obviously no sound through the vacuum of space.

“Arbelo,” Johnson said with a gesture toward the Terran/Vulcan/Efrosian officer. The former communications officer sitting at ops keyed the controls, and Copeland’s voice filled the bridge.

“Hi-ya, Admiral,” Copeland said cheerfully. “By the way, you missed a spot up here.”

Copeland kneeled down, huffed twice – fogging his face screen temporarily – and wiped a small spot on the dome with the elbow of his suit.

“Colonel Copeland,” Johnson began with forced calmness. “Get your fighter back in the hanger bay immediately and report to my ready room... Now!”

“Do you believe it’s me, sir?” Copeland asked, looking triumphantly down at him.

“We’ll discuss this inside,” Johnson replied. “Get in here now.”

“Then you believe me?”

“COPELAND!!!”

“Sir, yes, sir!” Copeland said with a wide smile before saluting the crew, then climbing back into the fighter and flying directly toward the landing bay.

* * *

Everything was quiet on the bridge during Delta shift, the ship’s mid-watch. It always was. Lieutenant (JG) Clayton M. Abernathy XV sat nervously in the command chair and looked around the bridge. It was only the second time he was standing watch as Officer of the Deck outside of a simulation, and the first time unsupervised. He never actually believed he would be in his current position quite so soon as a command trainee, but the *Arcturus* and its core crew were strange to begin with. It was no wonder they had strange policies.

Abernathy knew that his current position was temporary, scheduled to last only one week before the next command trainee would take over the bridge watch and he would be transferred back to standing watch at the conn during Delta shift again. Then, next month, he would be assigned to operations... or was that engineering...? He always forgot. The watch bill rotated Abernathy around constantly in order to get a feel for all of the departments aboard a starship so when he finally attained a command of his own he would have a good understanding of what everyone aboard a starship does.

He thought about doing something like a log entry, just to break the monotony, but was too afraid to touch anything. He could ask for present sensor readings, but he felt funny about doing that since they were just going to be the same as they had been for the last three hours, and asking again would only make him look dumber than he felt. No, things would probably be just as uneventful as usual. It was Delta shift. The ship was asleep, and that was the only reason he was sitting where he was, so the important people could sleep and take over during established 'daytime' hours when most of the action – it seemed – took place.

Abernathy yawned, then stretched, trying to make his nerves relax somewhat. Then he heard an unexpected noise from behind. He turned around in his seat and watched the science officer on duty – T'Sendra he was pretty sure her name was – make adjustments on a scanner, then turn herself to face him.

"Lieutenant," the Vulcan said. "I'm picking up a weak signal from within this sector. The signal frequency matches what we have on record being used by late-23rd century design escape pods. I surmise there may be one in the vicinity."

"Can you put it on screen?" the command trainee asked. Abernathy had not yet served in the sciences division, and therefore had no clue as to the sensor's range.

T'Sendra nodded, then turned back to her console. Seconds later the image of a late-23rd century style escape pod appeared on the viewscreen. Abernathy began to wonder if this situation would warrant waking Admiral Johnson for.

"Can you tell where it originated from?" the lieutenant asked next. "it could just be space junk floating all the way out here."

T'Sendra touched more controls on her console and the image zoomed in. The registry **NCC-1807** was clearly visible on the side of the pod along with other writing that was still too small to make out.

"According to the sensors, it appears to be the escape pod of a fighter craft assigned to the original *USS Arcturus*," T'Sendra reported. "And Lieutenant, there are weak life-sign readings on board."

There was no longer any question about it. Abernathy had absolutely no power to make any further decisions in regard to the current situation. The adrenaline began to surge through his body.

"Helm, all stop. Mrrrow," he then said hesitantly to the Caitian officer manning ops. "Contact the Admiral and tell him what we've found."

"Aye, sirrr," the Caitian replied. "I hope he wakes well."

* * *

"Admiral on the bridge," Abernathy announced as he gladly turned over the command seat to its rightful owner. He stood beside it and waited for the admiral's orders.

"Anything new, Lieutenant?" Johnson asked as he ascended the short flight of stairs to his seat.

"Yes, sir," Abernathy answered instantly. "We have determined the pod is from a Wasp 1-class fighter that had been assigned to the original *Arcturus*. According to records, the serial number of the pod we were able to make out was assigned to a ship lost in battle in 2288. Sensors indicate the pilot inside is still alive, though only barely. Aside from the *Arcturus* registry, the only other identification marking, which should come into view shortly, are the pilot's rank and callsign beneath the canopy."

"What does it say?" Johnson asked, peering closely at the image of the tumbling pod on the viewscreen.

"I believe it says 'Major Trouble,'" Abernathy replied.

The Admiral froze for an instant at the mention of the name. Abernathy had to be wrong. Major Trouble had been Copeland's callsign back in the 23rd century, but Copeland was aboard the *Arcturus-A*, his own lost escape pod having been found six years earlier. They had just gone through this whole process a week ago and he was now coming to accept the Colonel was the real Copeland that he knew nearly a century before.

There was only one explanation in Johnson's mind. Obviously the pilot could not be Copeland! Another pilot must have flown Copeland's fighter and also been lost during the battle against the renegade Orions. But if that was true, then whose fighter was Copeland flying during that battle? And why were they not flying their own ships?

"Are you certain, Lieutenant?"

"Yes, sir," Abernathy replied.

"Increase screen magnification to maximum," the Admiral ordered. A moment later the screen zoomed in on the slowly tumbling escape pod. Johnson waited the several seconds for the port side of the pod to come into view. Once it had, there was no doubt about whose fighter it had come from. The name painted directly beneath the canopy in thick black letters was clearly 'Major Trouble.'

"T'Sendra, I want to see what the pilot inside looks like."

"Aye, sir," the Vulcan woman responded. The image focused on the canopy, and Johnson stared in shock at the screen. The pilot lay inside the cocoon of his escape pod, his face tinged blue and his eyes shut. If it were not for the life-signs detected by the scanners, the admiral would swear the man was dead. His helmet had a large crack along the top and what looked like frozen blood on the side of his face and a large bruise confirmed injury. The pilot's helmet bore a name along the brow; Major A. Carey Copeland. Even in his apparent state of suspension, the admiral recognized the Marine officer, and chills began to run up and down his spine.

If the man in the escape pod they had just found was Copeland, then who was the man aboard the *Arcturus*? Or if the man in the escape pod was an imposter, who was that person and what was his purpose? The situation was tense, but Johnson's mind began to work on the solution.

"Transporter," he began after tapping his combadge. "Lock onto and beam the pod currently drifting off our port bow into the main hangar bay and keep it in an isolation field." As the transporter operator acknowledged the order, Johnson looked at the operations officer and said, "Mister Mrrrow, have Doctor Arcadian and Commander Maddox report to the main hangar bay – ASAP! Also have all aux craft flights – including Marine fighters – cancelled until further notice. Take care of it." Johnson then punched another button on the arm of his chair and said, "Captain Solak, report to the bridge immediately." Finally he looked at Abernathy and said, "Until Solak arrives, you continue to have the conn."

"Aye, sir," the lieutenant replied, sitting back down in the command seat as Vice Admiral Johnson walked down to the turbolift doors and left the bridge.

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Dr. Arcadian looked at the tricorder readings she had just obtained from the small life pod and shook her head slowly. The pilot inside was not only in suspended animation, but was severely injured as well. The bruise on his head, which had been visible through the canopy, was the least of it. He also had a concussion, and she guessed that his cracked helmet was the only reason he was still alive at all. On his left side he had sustained a broken arm and several cracked ribs in addition to the second and third degree burns on both forearms. The pod's cryo systems had probably kicked in immediately after ejection in order to save him. It was a mess, and the pilot, whomever he was, needed to be in sickbay.

"We can't keep him here, sir," Arcadian informed Johnson, who had been watching over her shoulder as she made her initial examination. "The pod is very old and has been exposed to micro-meteoroids, radiation, and cosmic rays for close to eighty years. Those life support systems can fail at any time, and the pilot is in bad shape. He needs medical attention."

"That's a huge security risk," Maddox commented. "Not only don't we know who this pilot is, but it's obvious that he is an imposter trying to impersonate a member of our crew. I think that we should secure an isolation room in sickbay so this guy doesn't have free reign of the ship, assuming we even let him out at all."

"David," Arcadian argued. "He's injured. He's in no condition to do anything. Even if he is an imposter, he's no threat in his present condition. But if he dies just because we left him in there, we'll never know which one is the real Copeland. And we need to know."

"Didn't we just cover this?" Maddox asked with exasperation. "The Colonel is the real Copeland, and you agreed with me! This guy is an imposter, and he probably would have killed someone if whatever happened to him hadn't happened. I say we just leave him in there. He deserves to die."

"We don't know that for a fact," Admiral Johnson interjected. "Right now, under the present circumstances, we really don't know which Copeland is the real one. But if the man in the escape pod is the imposter, I want to know what his motives are." Johnson turned to his chief medical officer and said in a formal manner, "Doctor Arcadian, you will secure an isolation room and have him beamed in as soon as your medical staff is ready. Mister Maddox, your job is to stay with the Colonel and not let him out of your sight. If he's the imposter, he won't try anything with you around. Keep him occupied. I don't care what you do, but keep him away from this shuttlebay and sickbay. And don't breathe a word of this to him. I'll be on the bridge. I want to know as soon as the pilot is conscious."

"Aye, sir," both Maddox and Arcadian said simultaneously before both set out to perform their assigned duties.

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'Imposter my ass,' Maddox thought to himself as he strode angrily down the corridor. 'I know Copeland better than just about anyone else on this ship. The one in the pod must be the imposter. Why are they even bothering with this? There's only one Copeland, and he's probably in his office right now. In fact, the real Copeland and I will probably be slaughtering Romulans on the holodeck in about an hour.'

A few minutes later, Maddox entered Copeland's office down near Hanger Bay 3. Just as he suspected, the Tamurilian sat at his desk, reviewing the latest efficiency reports for his troops. He approached, and saluted, an archaic gesture that Copeland still insisted his Marines use. Copeland looked up and, seeing Maddox, returned the salute and gestured toward the chair facing the desk.

"Well, look who the cat dragged in," Copeland said with a smile. "So, Maddox, when are you going to find the key to your brain and rejoin the Corps?"

"I am a Marine, sir," Maddox replied as he sat down opposite the colonel. "I'm a reservist now. They asked me to head up the security department here, so I accepted a fleet billet. I guess it takes a Marine to run things smoothly in security."

"Yeah, I'll buy that," Copeland said. "What's up? What brings you down here to the bowels of the ship?"

"Not much. I thought you'd like to participate in a little engagement on the holodeck? I figured you and I ought to be able to handle a platoon of Romulans. What do you say? You can easily justify it as training."

Copeland looked at the efficiency reports one last time, then cleared the viewscreen on his terminal.

"Computer," he instructed. "Inform anyone who needs me that I'll be on Holodeck 2 for the remainder of the morning. And that, unless it's an emergency, I don't want to be disturbed."

"Acknowledged," the computer's feminine voice replied.

Maddox stood and grinned, clapping his hands in anticipation. "Let's go kick some Romulan butt!" he exclaimed.

* * *

Dr. Arcadian watched her new patient carefully now that he had been freed from the life pod. So far he appeared to have suffered no ill effects from the suspended animation, but his other injuries were severe, and the combination of that plus being 'thawed out' could easily kill him.

While he remained sedated and asleep, Arcadian had run the same medical tests that Johnson wanted done on the Colonel when he first arrived aboard the ship, and the results were the same. This man, too, was genetically Copeland. However, unlike the Colonel, this Copeland's knee still exhibited evidence of the old injury.

A signal above the bio-bed told her that her patient would be regaining consciousness soon. As ordered, she notified the Admiral. Johnson appeared almost immediately and asked for a status report on her patient.

"I ran those genetic tests on him, Eric, and you're not going to believe what I found."

"I'm almost afraid to ask," Johnson commented. "Let's have it."

"It's Copeland," Arcadian said. "I double checked everything, and everything matches what we have on record. DNA, gene sequence, retinal scan, everything! Right down to the knee injury this time."

"You're absolutely sure?" Johnson asked.

"I'm positive," Arcadian replied.

"That's what you said about the Colonel." Arcadian shrugged.

"I was positive then, too." She looked down at the man still asleep on the bio-bed and added, "There are other possibilities, you know."

A soft groan from the pilot on the bed instantly attracted both senior officers attention. They watched Copeland's eyes flutter open, then look around. His gaze stopped at Admiral Johnson, and he began to speak.

"Commodore," he rasped softly. "Gotta report... These things... They found me... Took me out of my pod... Stuck me with needles... Don't know what they wanted... Put me back in space when they finished... Dying... don't want to die..."

"You're safe, Copeland," the admiral gently assured him. "You're going to be fine. Do you remember what they looked like?"

Copeland strained to remember. "Ugly... like vultures..." His eyes seemed to see something that was not actually in the room and his face took on an uncustomary expression of fright. "Get 'em away...! NOOOO!!"

Copeland started thrashing around on the bio-bed, Johnson straining to hold him down until Arcadian managed to press a hypospray to the Tamurilian's neck and injected him with a sedative. He quickly drifted back into sleep.

"That explains a little," the doctor stated.

"He was cloned?" the admiral asked unsurely. "But why would unknown aliens want to clone Copeland unless they had some purpose in mind?"

"Perhaps they just wanted a test subject?" Arcadian suggested. "Why test a potentially dangerous procedure on themselves when they came across a perfectly good specimen floating around in space?"

"He was injured," Johnson countered.

"Beggars can't be choosers," Arcadian remarked.

"I find it hard to believe that these aliens plucked Copeland out of space and cloned him just for giggles and grins. This might be an even greater security risk than Maddox had imagined."

"So what are you going to do, Eric," Arcadian asked. "The Colonel hasn't done anything wrong. There are no laws against being a clone. He may not even be aware of the fact that he IS a clone! Genetic testing can't go into the mind. We'd need a telepath to determine if he has any ulterior motives in mind, and the Federation has laws against probing into someone's thoughts without permission."

"There has got to be some way to tell," Johnson countered. "Meet me in my ready room in fifteen minutes. Between you, me, and Solak, I think we can come up with a viable solution. In the meantime, compile the medical data on both Copelands. Maybe that can shed some light on the problem."

* * *

Precisely fifteen minutes later, Johnson, Solak, and Arcadian were gathered in the Admiral's ready room.

"No luck on the medical files," Dr. Arcadian informed the admiral and the ship's executive officer. "Except for the missing injuries on the Colonel, and the slight age difference of about half a decade, they're identical."

"Wonderful," Johnson sighed. "So there is no way of knowing what the Colonel may be up to until he tries something?"

"You are, of course, assuming there is some hidden reason for the clone to exist?" Solak stated. "As I believe I stated when you originally had suspicions about Colonel Copeland, why would someone want to clone a pilot thought dead for over half a century? If there is some hidden intent, wouldn't it have been more logical to leave the Colonel at Miramar Station, which is in closer proximity to Starfleet Command, than aboard an exploration vessel?"

"Unless the purpose is more personal," Johnson countered. "What if he's after someone on board? He didn't exactly transfer here through the normal channels."

"His method of requesting transfer was not all that unusual."

"That doesn't change the fact that he might be after someone on my ship. Or perhaps even the ship itself."

“Give me a break, Eric,” Arcadian snorted. “It’s not like you’re in command of the *Enterprise*, the flagship of the fleet! Now you’re just being ridiculous. I’m sure both of them are on the level.”

“And what if you’re wrong?” Johnson asked, looking intently at the medical officer. “It’s part of my job to be paranoid. This could be a very serious problem.”

“There is a solution,” Solak said reluctantly. “With the Colonel’s permission, it is possible for me to search his mind for hidden intentions. Since he is of human stock, there would be no way for him to successfully hide such intentions, should they exist.”

Arcadian looked at the admiral. “If he agrees, will you finally give this whole thing a rest?” she asked. Johnson nodded slowly in agreement, then summoned Maddox.

* * *

“I wonder what he wants?” Copeland remarked to Maddox as the pair headed toward the Admiral’s ready room. David Maddox shrugged his shoulders, though he suspected the actual motive.

“I don’t know, but it sure ruined a great battle. Lousy timing! And what have you been doing while you were posted at Luna Station? You were running through that field like a gazelle. I actually had trouble keeping up.”

“Oh,” Copeland replied, “I forget to tell you. Athena says my knee’s cured. It’s great. I can do anything on it now.”

Maddox looked down at his much shorter friend and asked, “Did she tell you how it got healed?”

“No, but you know what? I really don’t care.”

The pair entered the turbolift, and waited silently for it to arrive on the bridge. When it stopped, the two exited and walked down to the entrance to the ready room. “Do you have any idea what this is about?” Copeland finally asked. Maddox looked away and shook his head, hoping his friend would not sense he was lying. He apparently did not. “Well, there’s only one way to find out,” Copeland remarked as the two entered. Whatever had been the topic of conversation was suddenly cut short, and all three of the people sitting in the ready room looked directly at Copeland.

“What did I do now?” the Marine asked defensively.

“I want you to agree to undergo a mind scan with Solak,” Admiral Johnson ordered coldly.

“What?!” Copeland responded angrily. “You want me to do what?? I can’t believe this!” He looked up at Maddox, hoping to find an ally in his argument as he continued, “Now I have been real good about all of the other crap that you’ve put me through, but this it! Give me one good reason...”

“Carey, just humor me,” Johnson said.

Johnson’s use of his preferred given name stopped Copeland in his tracks. The Admiral had never called him that before. He looked into his eyes and saw a graveness he had not noticed there before, and he slowly nodded his head.

“Yeah, ok,” the colonel said quietly. He then looked at his friend Solak and asked, “It’s not gonna hurt, is it?” Solak shook his head as he began to approach the colonel. Solak raised his hand, and Copeland stiffened as the Vulcan’s hand touched his face. Both of their faces went blank for several minutes as the others watched silently, almost afraid to breathe. Finally, Solak broke the touch and faced Admiral Johnson.

“There are no ulterior motives,” he confirmed. “He did not attempt to hide anything from me.”

“Now will someone finally tell me what’s going on?” After a few long moments of silence, Dr. Arcadian spoke.

“There is no easy way to tell you this, so I’ll just come right out and say it. While Copeland was drifting through open space in cryo, some unidentified alien species retrieved the ejection pod out of space, and for some unknown reason made a clone of him, replicated the escape pod and then put both the original and copy of Copeland back out into space. From what we have been able to determine, you’re the result of their experiment.”

“So, what are you trying to say?” Copeland asked.

“You’re not the original Copeland. You’re a clone,” Arcadian replied. The colonel’s mouth dropped open wide.

“Whoa!” he exclaimed. “I’m a... a what?”

“A clone. An exact genetic duplicate...”

“Yeah, I know what a clone is,” the colonel spat. “And I’m not one of them. Come on, Dave. We’re getting out of here.” Copeland motioned to Maddox and began to leave the room.

“Carey, sit your butt down and listen!” This time it was Arcadian who used Copeland’s given name.

“No!” Maddox sneered, suddenly injecting himself in the conversation. “You’re all crazy! The guy you have isolated in sickbay is the clone if anyone is! We’re sick and tired of your garbage, and we’re going back to the holodeck!”

As Maddox now started heading for the door, Copeland froze, then looked at the Admiral, then Arcadian.

“What guy you have isolated in sickbay?” he asked. “I want to know what is going on, and who this other guy is, and why you think I’m some clone? I think I have a right to know what’s going on as it directly affects me.”

“I’ll tell you what’s going on,” Maddox exclaimed, not yet out the door. “They found some imposter floating around in a replica of your fighter escape pod last night, and they’re convinced that it’s you and you’re just a clone.”

“Mister Maddox,” the Admiral stated calmly but coldly. “You are dismissed. Report to the ship’s counselor, immediately.” Maddox turned, punched the door control, and stormed out of the ready room.

“Is this true?” Copeland asked slowly. Arcadian nodded. “How do you know he’s the original and not me? I mean, wouldn’t I know if I was a clone? I don’t feel like a clone. I can’t be a clone! Prove to me I’m a clone!”

“Remember your knee injury?” Arcadian began softly and Copeland nodded. “It’s not that you healed completely. A clone wouldn’t have the old scars or injuries of the original. That’s why you also don’t have that scar you on your back from playing in the

scatsball tournament at *Starbase 22* anymore. The other Copeland we found this morning has all of the old scars you remember having, but apparently don't have anymore. You are both genetically Copeland, but you're obviously the replica."

"The clone," Copeland said unemotionally. "That means that I'm nobody. My life has been bullcrap!"

"Carey," Arcadian said as she tried to console the colonel as he turned to leave the room. "That doesn't make you any less of a person...!"

"Just leave me alone," Copeland responded as he continued out the door without even looking back.

* * *

Later that day, Arcadian and Johnson were back in sickbay. Major Copeland had re-awakened and was more coherent than earlier, so the pair tried to find out more about what had happened to him.

"Do you have any idea about what happened to you?" Johnson asked.

"No clue, sir," Copeland replied. "All I can remember was punching out of my Wasp when that Orion ship locked weapons on me and fired. The Wasp was too badly damaged and on the verge of exploding. The next thing I remember was waking up in some sort of lab with these... these creatures hovering over me. I'm a soldier, not a scientist or doctor. All I know is that they hooked some sort of scanner up to my head and took samples of my blood and other tissues. I could feel them accessing my memories and experiences. I really can't even guess why, though I would assume it was to learn about Starfleet's tactics and defenses."

"We think we know why," Johnson said carefully, knowing about the Major's explosive temper and having experienced some of it not that long ago. "But you have to try to remain calm and listen to the whole explanation."

"Yeah, sure," Copeland agreed, trying to sit up more straightly. "What did they do to me?"

"You were right about them taking samples," Arcadian confirmed. "The aliens apparently used these samples for an experiment in genetics, and created a duplicate of you."

Major Copeland laughed softly, looking back at Johnson. "Yeah, ok, sir," he said with a disbelieving tone. "Where's Kira, by the way? Can I see her?" he then asked, referring to the female Orion who had been first officer of the original *Arcturus* at the time of the battle in which Copeland had been lost.

"Probably out laying half the quadrant, kid," a drunken voice slurred from the door. Copeland, Arcadian, and Johnson all turned to see the drunken Colonel leaning against the door frame, a nearly empty bottle of Saurian brandy in hand. "So you're it, huh?" the colonel continued as he moved closer to the bed. "You're the real deal."

The slightly younger Copeland's mouth dropped open wide as he saw the duplicate of himself shuffle toward him. The Commodore was not kidding after all! Standing right in front of him was a clone of himself, and he was awestruck. "That's impossible," the major whispered unintentionally. "You're me!"

"Like hell I am!" Colonel Copeland slurred angrily. "I'm not you, and I'm glad! Just 'cause I have your genes doesn't make me you. Just makes me look like you. ...Unfortunately."

"What the hell is that supposed to mean?" the slightly younger man exclaimed.

"Face it kid, you have a lot of growing up to do," the colonel continued. "I know, because I had to as well. I busted my ass for six years now, so don't think I'm gonna step aside for you. I earned my place here. ME! Not you!"

"Alright, Colonel," Johnson stepped in, positioning himself between the two Copelands. "You made your point. Why don't you go sleep it off?"

"I knew it!" the younger Copeland suddenly shouted. "You're here to take my place! You son of a bitch! I'll kill you before I let that happen!"

"You lost your place when your fighter was shot down," the elder Copeland sneered. "I earned my place here! I'm the one who struggled through OCS again, not you! I earned an instructor slot at Top Gun while I spent five years waiting for a Marine billet aboard an explorer to come along, not you! You probably don't even know what year this is, so even if you WERE qualified for MY position, you couldn't take it. You have to catch up with 24th century technology, kid. You've been out of the picture for over 80 years. And you know what? You won't be able catch up because you can't even read good!"

"Alright, Colonel," Johnson cut in again. "That's enough! Go sleep it off now. Don't make me call security."

Colonel Copeland snorted a chuckle. "Who you gonna call, sir? Maddox? He's with ME. He believes in ME, not you." The colonel looked past Johnson and directly at his younger counterpart. "And definitely not YOU!" He gestured with the bottle toward the younger man, then staggered closer to both of them. "And you know what else? The rest of the crew is with me too." Admiral Johnson had had enough. He placed himself directly in front of the clone Copeland and glared as he crossed his arms. The admiral stood a good fifteen centimeters taller than the colonel. He hoped that his height and the man's drunken state would be enough of a deterrent. If not, the younger man's high-gravity upbringing would allow him the ability to toss the admiral aside like a rag doll if he so chose.

"I am giving you three seconds to turn around and leave sickbay, Colonel," Johnson stated in slow, firm tones. "Or I will personally hall your ass down to the brig. One..."

"If I weren't stuck in this bed right now, I'd toast you," the Major finally spat at the drunken clone. "I'm not afraid of you."

"You should be," the colonel calmly replied.

"TWO...! And I suggest you keep your mouth shut, Major, or you'll be joining him," Johnson threatened.

Colonel Copeland staggered back toward the door and supported himself against the frame.

"Ah, you're not worth it anyway," he remarked over his shoulder. "In a few days, they'll all see just how worthless you are!" The colonel took another long drink from the bottle, finally emptying the contents, then promptly passed out in the doorway. Johnson

breathed a sigh of relief. The situation was temporarily diffused without anyone getting hurt as Arcadian and several orderlies lifted Colonel Copeland and carried him back toward his own quarters.

“So what’s gonna happen now?” Major Copeland asked Johnson as the admiral turned back to face him. “He’s in and I’m out? How is this gonna work? I’m not giving up my position for some clone! And what did he mean when he said this is the 24th century?”

Johnson did not answer Copeland at first. The situation was not fair to the Major at all. His position on the ship was effectively gone, and the Colonel was right about one thing. Copeland would have to be updated on modern technology and Starfleet rules and procedures just like they all had in order to be of any use to anyone. It was also equally unfair to the Colonel. He did work hard to obtain his position on board the new *Arcturus*, and while he had been aboard only a short time, he had been doing a fine job so far. Even if he wanted to, how could Johnson justify bumping Colonel Copeland out of his position just because the ‘original’ had turned up out of nowhere? Yes, space was full of surprises, but this was one he could have done without.

“We’ll sort everything out when you’re well enough to return to duty,” Johnson finally answered. “For now, the Colonel will retain his position. When you’re ready, then we will re-evaluate you to see just how badly you need to catch up. Once you have, we’ll place you back on the duty roster.”

“In other words, sir,” Copeland sneered, “he’s in and I’m out.”

“We’ll discuss this further once you’ve rested. I think you will understand better in the morning.”

“Yeah, right,” Copeland grumbled as he lay back down and turned away.

* * *

David Maddox sat cross-legged on his bed for hours as he continued to fight this battle in his mind. He had spent some time with the ship’s counselor, but it only made it obvious to Maddox that he too was a part of the imposter’s plot. Counselor Valtirr had tried for what seemed like ages to brainwash him into believing that the imposter in sickbay was the real Copeland he had known eighty years earlier. But he was stronger than the conspirators. Their attempt to brainwash him did not work. It only made him more certain the imposter was part of some greater plan!

What was the plan, anyway? Was he after the real Copeland? The Admiral? Some dignitary that may happen to come aboard the *Arcturus* at some future date? Perhaps even the ship itself? If the imposter had already gotten to the ship’s counselor, than how many other crew members were also traitors? Would this imposter brainwash others to follow him?

“Not me!” Maddox spat to himself. “He’s not fooling me. I’m gonna put an end to this whole plot right now! No traitor is going to do anything on my ship!”

Maddox began to pace around his quarters as he formed a plan of action against the imposter. One thing he decided was that he could not uncover the plot alone. He would need help. And he knew just the person to see.

* * *

Lt Colonel Copeland woke up to find himself in his own bunk in his quarters. He tried to remember everything that happened the night before and cringed at the memory. He certainly did not hide his feelings when he confronted the other Copeland in sickbay. The Admiral must be pissed.

He got up, stretched, then moved over to look at himself in the mirror. He did not look like a clone – or did he? What does a clone look like? He wondered if, aside from his knee, he looked different on the inside. He also wondered if he would be considered only six years old.

As he showered and shaved, he wondered about the events of his life and of the memories he had that were obviously no longer his. Should he just forget about them? His love of Tae Kwon Do came from Copeland. He could perform the moves just as well as ever, perhaps even better without Copeland’s knee injury, so did that not make it his own passion too?

His hatred of Romulans came from the death of Copeland’s sister Holly during the *Challenger II* incident. Should he no longer feel remorse over her death? He knew he would never change his feeling about the Romulans.

And how should he feel about Copeland? He was upset that his identity was gone, but in actuality he recognized that he was different from the younger man. He had changed over the past six years and Copeland had nothing to do with it.

He knew that Copeland would resent him, but what could he do? He had not asked to be a clone. It was not his fault.

As he thought about it he realized it was not Copeland’s fault either. Handling this was going to be rough, but maybe they could help each other out?

The Colonel knew that both of them were affected by the death of Copeland’s brother Mitch, and genetically speaking he shared Copeland’s blood. That made them brothers too, did it not? He would have to help what was now his little brother through this difficult time. Maybe it would help himself too.

The Lt Colonel then dressed in his uniform and reported to his office for duty, taking Rusty and the only four holo-photos he still owned with him. The office door slid aside at his approach and Copeland entered to find David Maddox sitting behind his desk, a phaser clutched tightly in his hands.

“Thank God! You’re finally here!” Maddox exclaimed. “Get the door, quick!”

Not sure what was happening, Colonel Copeland shut the door and sat in the chair across from his friend, eyeing him carefully.

“You look like crap, Dave,” he stated slowly. “Didn’t you sleep? How long have you been here?”

“All night,” Maddox answered quickly. “It’s urgent. There’s something going on aboard this ship. Something big! And I need your help to stop it!”

“What are you talking about?”

“The imposter!” Maddox insisted. “He’s planning to take over the ship. He’s already brainwashed the Admiral and half of the command staff. They tried to get me last night. We’ve got to stop it now!”

Copeland began to get a stinking feeling in the pit of his gut. His friend was talking crazy. There was no imposter, and he knew that no one on board would try to get him without him getting them first.

“Dave,” he said as he exhaled sharply. “Calm down and start from the beginning. Who tried to get you last night and what did they do?”

“Vaitirr,” Maddox answered quickly. “He tried to brainwash me into believing you’re some kind of clone!”

The Colonel sighed softly under his breath. “I am a clone, Dave,” he admitted. “I’m a duplicate. A copy. Deal with it. I’ve got to.”

Maddox’s heart began to pound in his chest. His palms began to sweat and his mind raced. *‘They got to him too,’* he thought to himself. *‘Even Copeland thinks he’s a clone! I’ve gotta get out of here! Gotta stop this plot!’*

“Yeah,” Maddox said as he slowly stood up and moved toward the door, sticking close to the wall, facing Copeland the entire time. “Whatever you say, buddy…”

“Sit down, Dave,” Copeland implored. “I’m not through.” But before he could say anything else, Maddox darted to the door, slammed the controls, and disappeared into the corridor.

“Ah, crap!” Copeland swore as he signaled a Marine alert. He timed the men as they hurried into the training area, and they did not disappoint him. Once the troops were assembled, the colonel stepped out of the office and addressed the assembled strike group.

“This is not a drill,” he began, sounding more angry than concerned. “Security Chief Maddox is armed and loose aboard the ship. Set your weapons on stun. Your orders are to find him and detain him. I shouldn’t have to remind anyone here that he’s extremely dangerous. Do not harm him unless you absolutely have to. Dismissed!” He watched the Marines quickly begin their search, then left for where he believed to be Maddox’s most probable target.

* * *

“What are you doing here?” the Major sneered as he once again tried to sit up. Dr. Arcadian made sure he remained flat in his bio-bed.

“I came to check on you,” Colonel Copeland lied. “I wanted to see how you were.”

“Yeah, right,” the Major retorted. “Why don’t you get lost. I don’t wanna see you.”

Colonel Copeland looked at the chief medical officer, hoping for some help, but Arcadian only nodded slowly in agreement. The colonel subtly shook his head. Arcadian, sensing something more than hurt feelings was wrong, nodded and moved around behind Major Copeland. When the major was not looking, she injected him with a sedative. In seconds he was back asleep.

“What’s going on, Carey?” she asked quietly. However, before Copeland could respond, the doors to sickbay swished open and Maddox stepped in, phaser first.

“Freeze!” he barked to everyone. “Move away from him!”

“What in hell are you doing?” Arcadian shouted. “Are you crazy?”

“I said move away from the impostor! Don’t make me shoot you as well!”

Arcadian looked over at Colonel Copeland. The colonel nodded reassuringly at the doctor, and as Arcadian began to back away slowly, Copeland stepped directly between Maddox and the unconscious Major.

“Give me the phaser, Dave,” he said calmly but firmly.

“No!” Maddox snapped. “Don’t make me shoot you!”

“What is it you’re planning to do, Dave?”

“I’m going to kill the imposter and save the ship. I don’t want to hurt you! Now MOVE!”

“I’m afraid I can’t do that, Dave,” Copeland replied. “There’s no imposter. That is the original Copeland. I am Copeland’s clone. That’s the way it is. Now put down the phaser.”

“Can’t you see?” Maddox’s tone of voice was becoming desperate. “They’ve brainwashed you into believing that story! They’ll brainwash everyone! I’ve got to stop this! I’ve got to stop him!”

Colonel Copeland tried to take a step closer to his friend, but Maddox thrust the barrel of the phaser toward him. Copeland slowly raised both hands in compliance and returned to his original position. He then glanced over toward Arcadian, who while Maddox had been distracted, had entered the CMO’s office and alerted the bridge about the situation in sickbay. A moment later, several Marines and Ship’s Counselor Ian Vaitirr were standing in the doorway behind Maddox. The security chief took no notice of them. To him, only the ‘imposter’ mattered.

“Dave,” Colonel Copeland began again. “Major Copeland has been confined to that bio-bed the entire time he had been aboard this ship. His injuries are so extensive he can’t even sit up. So you tell me how he’s doing everything you claim he’s done? How he’s managed to brainwash half the crew?”

“Maybe he’s only part of it!” Maddox answered confidently. “Maybe the mastermind of this whole affair is someone else? All I know is this; no imposter – no plot! Now MOVE!”

Colonel Copeland thought about the man asleep on the bed behind him. *'I'm about to stick my neck out for you,'* he thought. *'You better not forget this!'* The colonel then straightened up and stepped right up to Maddox, the tip of his phaser touching the chest of his uniform.

"You want to kill him, Dave? You'll have to kill me first."

Maddox stood there, his phaser pointed straight at his friend's heart for what seemed several tense minutes. He needed to kill the imposter, but not his best friend. Maddox's hands began to shake.

"What's it gonna be, Dave?" Copeland asked. Maddox continued to stand there as he thought about what to do. The imposter was not hurting anyone yet, but how much time did they have? The needs of the many...

Maddox's arm stiffened as he prepared to press the trigger.

"David, NO!" Arcadian shouted in horror.

Maddox turned his head to look in the doctor's direction, and Copeland pounced; a quick right cross to the jaw knocking Maddox to the deck unconscious. Copeland quickly bent down and grabbed the phaser out of the cataleptic security chief's hand and disarmed it.

"Thanks, Athena," Copeland sighed, turning the weapon over to one of the other Marines. "We owe you one."

"No problem," Arcadian replied, equally relieved. She turned to the other Marines and ordered, "Put him in the psyche ward. Make sure he doesn't have anything he can hurt himself with." Both Arcadian and Colonel Copeland watched as their sick friend was taken away for treatment.

* * *

A few days later, Major Copeland was feeling much better, now that most of his injuries were healed. He had seen all of his old friends, at least the ones who were still alive and aboard the *Arcturus-A*, except one. He had asked several times about David Maddox, but the only answer he was given was that Maddox was sick and could not see him. He hoped that Maddox would get better soon.

The major had just sat down to access the library computer and see just how much catching up he had to do when he heard the doors open and someone enter sickbay. He turned around only to find himself standing in the doorway. The major stood up to face the new arrival and crossed his arms defiantly, waiting.

"Can I come in?" the clone asked.

"I don't care," Copeland replied, hoping the cheap imitation would just go away. He did not.

The clone sat down on the chair next to the bed and put four holo-graphs on the cover. They were holos of Copeland's family and Kira, the green Orion woman who had been first officer of the old *Arcturus* back in the 23rd century.

"They're yours," the clone explained. I made copies of the family one, and Mitch's, and Holly's. You get the originals."

"Thanks," Copeland said, picking up and looking at each one fondly.

"Listen," the clone continued. "I didn't mean what I said the other night. I was drunk, and I was a little upset. I want to say I'm sorry."

Copeland nodded to him, then continued to look at the pictures. He was amazed they were still around, and even more so that the clone had returned them to him.

"I kind of acted like a jerk too," he finally admitted. "I don't want to be replaced."

"Yeah, I know, but whether you wanted it or not, it was going to happen anyway. If not by me, then by someone else."

"I guess," Copeland replied.

The clone wiped his sweaty palms on his uniform pants and tried to think of the right way to say what he felt. Finally he just said, "I can help you out if you want. I mean, if you think about it, technically we're brothers. Brothers look out for each other, right? So....what do you say?"

Carey Copeland looked up at the clone and for the first time since he had been rescued, he smiled.

"Ok. Brothers."

The two shook hands and formed the first bonds of brotherhood.

"But what do I call you?" Copeland asked. "We can't both be Carey. And I'm sure you don't like the name Achilles any more than I do."

The clone thought for a moment before a name popped into his head from the past, and he knew it was right.

"Call me Jim," he said. "James Eric Copeland, in honor of the first guys in Starfleet to give us a break."

The End