

“We repeat, *Arcturus*, this mission is priority one!” said the grim image of Admiral Simmons on the bridge viewscreen. “The terrorists have stated that if their demands have not been met within five of their days, ninety-five standard hours, they will detonate the anti-matter reactor complex north of the Capitol City. The results will contaminate the entire northern hemisphere, including the Federation colony on the western continent. You’re the only ship we’ve got that can reach the system before the deadline.”

Vice Admiral Eric Johnson, commanding officer of the *USS Arcturus NCC-1807-A*, stood up from his command chair and walked down the trio of steps toward the viewscreen, but otherwise reacted little to the change in orders.

“The government of Orthid IX has asked for Federation assistance to negotiate a peaceful resolution,” she continued. “Particulars of the matter are being transmitted now.”

Johnson looked down toward his operations officer. Lieutenant Commander Kalin Kale of Alpha Centauri looked up at his commanding officer and confirmed, “We are receiving.”

“As far as the Orthidian government is concerned, you are now Ambassador Johnson. Do anything short of violating the Prime Directive, and Starfleet Command and the Federation Council will back you one-hundred percent. Starfleet, out.”

The screen returned to the familiar view of the stars. Johnson turned to his waiting helmsman, Lieutenant Galen DuLac, and ordered; “Set course for the Orthid system. Increase speed to warp seven.”

“Estimate arrival in two days, eleven hours hence, current speed,” reported DuLac.

“Acknowledged,” replied Johnson. “Commanding officer to senior staff members. Meeting in the observation lounge in ten minutes.”

Space, the Final Frontier...

These are the voyages of the starship *Arcturus*!

## Star Trek: Arcturus

### “Gamma Bound - Part I” By PJK

Around the observation lounge table sat Kale, Security Chief David Maddox – who had recently returned to duty after a mental breakdown, Starfleet Marine Corps Major A. Carey Copeland – who had likewise only recently returned to full duty status, Chief Medical Officer Athena Arcadian of Alpha Centauri, Deltan Ship’s Counselor Ian Valtirr, Chief Engineer Briana Lithir of Cygnet IV, Chief Science Officer Bael T’olos Dagon San-Demetos from the planet Efros Delta, and Vulcan First Officer Solak, with Vice Admiral Johnson sitting at his usual place at the head of the table. He nodded to Kale, who started explaining the situation to his fellow officers.

“A terrorist group, consisting of members of a minority race of Orthidians native to the western continent and its surrounding islands, has been bombing major governmental buildings in the capitol city of Othran. Using small spacecraft they have even attacked military installations. A few days ago they captured and are now threatening to destroy the planet’s largest power complex, an anti-matter reactor just one-hundred kilometers north of Othran, within thirty-six hours of our estimated arrival time.”

“What is it they demand?” asked Maddox.

“The complete and total removal of the Federation colony,” replied Kale. “No other compromise.”

“We have our job cut out for us,” remarked Dr. Arcadian.

“No one said it would be easy. But we have to safeguard lives,” stated Johnson. “Both Federation citizens and the population of the planet. The away team will consist of myself, Dave, Athena, and Bael. I’ll also need a yeoman and one other security guard as part of the away team. I’ve been granted Ambassadorial status. We’ll negotiate, see what these people are really after.”

Johnson turned to his stolid security chief, and said, “Dave, I want you to assign one of your people and a yeoman to the team.”

“Aye, sir,” replied Maddox, as he checked the padd in front of him. “Rotation places... Ensign Lamont and Yeoman Ku at the top of the duty roster.”

The mention of Petty Officer Mickey Ku’s name drew Kale’s attention. Soon after the two had met upon her posting to the original *Arcturus* all those many, many years ago, a friendship – and eventually an on again-off again relationship made difficult by the fact he was an officer and Ku was among the enlisted crew – had grown between them.

“Is this away team a logical idea, Admiral?” inquired Solak.

“The Radine faction has sent word to the Orthidian government that they agree to a meeting,” informed Kale.

“As to whether this action is logical...?” Johnson looked squarely at his Vulcan first officer as he stated, “If anything we do can stop the violence, then logic be damned, we’re going to do it. Any questions?” Johnson scanned the room with his eyes. There were none. “Very well. Meeting dismissed.”

*Captain's log, stardate 47012.6:*

*We are still over a day and a half away from Orthid, but already I have butterflies in my stomach. I still don't know if I can resolve this situation. I'm a starship commander, not a damn diplomat. The faction wants the Federation off Orthid IX. The Orthidian government and the Federation insist the colony should stay. The faction has the power – and perhaps the will – to destroy the colony, and the entire planet, if they don't get what they want.*

*No wonder I didn't join the Diplomatic Corps. Maybe a quick game of chess will calm my nerves?*

*Johnson, commanding Arcturus, out.*

The Vice Admiral walked into 10-Forward, nodding to the bartender, and made his way to the windows. He glanced out, admiring the familiar rainbow streaks flash past the viewports. He spent a moment gazing out at the stars, then glanced around the room. 10-Forward was not quite as full as normal. The crew was busy preparing for their mission. He then noticed Kalin Kale sitting by himself, reading what looked like an old style book with large, glossy pages, what was once known as a magazine. Johnson walked over to where Kale sat.

“Unusual seeing someone reading printed material,” commented the Vice Admiral.

Kale looked up, and upon seeing it was his commanding officer, stood. Johnson motioned with his hand for Kale to sit down again.

“It's just an old, and I do mean old, magazine about rock and gem collecting,” explained Kale, showing the magazine's cover. “Originally printed in the early 21st century before World War III. Somehow it made its way out to the Vega Colony where I...” Kale then suddenly remembering his manners. “I'm sorry, sir. Would you like to sit down?”

The Vice Admiral nodded, pulled out a chair, and sat.

“I'm in the mood for a game of chess. Would you care to play?” Johnson asked. Kale agreed. Johnson then motioned to one of the waiters, asking for a game board. The waiter complied, placing the board between the two opponents. Johnson activated the game and holographic chess pieces appeared in place, ready to begin. As the two players calculated their opening moves, Johnson asked, “What do you think of the situation we're about to get into?”

“Difficult at best,” said Kale as he offered the first move to Johnson. “I've researched the situation since our briefing. The Radine, as this faction of the Orthidian race is called, are very similar to your planet's American Indians. They were forced off their land by the planet's government and that land was ‘given’ – in their eyes – to off-worlders. I must admit, if I was in their place, I would probably feel the same. The question is, according to the records, the colony was established twenty years ago. Why are they suddenly resorting to violence now?”

Johnson winced as Kale captured one of his bishops. Kale looked up at Johnson, an apologetic look in his eyes. “Don't worry,” said Johnson. “We're dropping the ranks for this game.” Kale smiled. “...Unless you beat me, that is,” Johnson finished with a grin. After a moment, the Vice Admiral turned serious. “But you are right. Why now? Why not when the government appropriated the land? Why not when the Federation built the colony on that land?”

Johnson thought for a moment, in the meanwhile capturing Kale's rook. The move left his queen unfortunately vulnerable. Kale hesitated for a second, then took Johnson's queen with his own. Johnson rolled his eyes, but continued the game.

“Kalin, I want you to look deeper into this situation. There's something we're not seeing here.”

“Yes, sir,” said Kale. “I'll get right on it... Check.”

Johnson looked quizzically at the board.

“Boy, my game is off,” he said, moving his king out of danger. “But you won't be leaving just yet.”

“But, sir,” said Kale. “I should get right to work. Check and mate,” he added as he moved his queen into position, trapping Johnson's king hopelessly. “I'll see you on the bridge, sir,” Kale said, standing up, taking his magazine, and nodding to the Vice Admiral. “Thanks for the game.”

Johnson just sat at the table, simply looking at the Tri-D chess board, only slowly shaking his head from side to side.

\* \* \* \*

Later on the bridge, Kale reported to Johnson that he had made little progress.

“So far, I've only been able to confirm all the incidents reported to us, including one bombing within the Federation colony.”

Solak, the *Arcturus'* Vulcan first officer, walked over next to the Vice Admiral near the Ops position.

“I've calculated the odds of completing this mission without bloodshed at 1,235,326.05 to one,” he said. Johnson was about to comment when Maddox interrupted.

“Sir!” said the security chief at the tactical position. “I'm picking up a small ship on long range sensors. No identification, no known configuration. But it seems to be on an intercept course.”

Johnson turned to Solak. “Were we to receive an escort?”

“Not to my knowledge, sir,” replied the Vulcan.

“Mister Kale?” Johnson asked his ops officer.

“Nobody told me, sir,” the Centauri replied, checking the sensor readings on his panel.

Two ensigns popped out of the forward turbolift, looked at the CO, and said; “No one told us either!” before the lift doors closed again and the two disappeared.

“Yellow alert!” ordered Johnson, who turned to look at his first officer. “Just to be on the safe side.”

“Most logical,” responded the Vulcan.

On Maddox’s tactical screen, the small ship reacted to the *Arcturus*’ raising of her defense screens.

“Unknown ship has altered course slightly. It will still pass within one-thousand meters, port side, at present course and speed,” reported Maddox.

“Keep me informed,” ordered Johnson.

A few minutes had passed when Maddox reported, “The unidentified ship is turning onto a new course. She’s returning back toward the Orthid system, but by preliminary estimates, she’s not heading back to Orthid IX.”

After tracking the small vessel a few more minutes, Solak ordered, “Stand down yellow alert.”

Meanwhile, down in the starship’s school classroom, Val’ri Raiajh reacted uncomfortably to the tension on the bridge.

\* \* \* \*

The *Arcturus* slipped into standard orbit and was immediately surrounded by Orthidian security craft, so ordered to protect the Federation Peacemaker’s ship.

“Open hailing frequencies,” ordered Johnson.

The frequency chimed and Maddox nodded to Johnson.

“This is the Federation starship *Arcturus*, Ambassador Johnson speaking.”

“Our greetings, Ambassador,” said a voice over the bridge speakers. “This is Minister Probo, government negotiator for the conference. The meeting is to be held in the Annex of our Great Hall at what will be 1400 hours your ship time. All parties involved planetside have agreed to arrive simultaneously.”

“We agree as well,” said Johnson. “That gives us half an hour to prepare and beam down.”

“I must warn you though,” said the Minister. “You should keep your vessel’s shields up. Some of the terrorists do not want this conference to proceed, and may take out their displeasure on your ship.”

\* \* \* \*

A half-hour later, in transporter room four, Johnson gave his final orders to Captain Solak.

“The first round of talks will probably take all day,” he said, as the away team mounted the transporter platform. “I’ll check in at regular intervals, every ninety minutes.”

The Vulcan nodded his head slightly.

“When we’re ready to beam back aboard, I’ll use the chess code, knight’s gambit,” finished Johnson.

“Aye, Admiral,” said Solak. “As you Terrans often say, good luck.”

Taking his place on the pad, Johnson turned to the transporter chief and ordered, “Energize.”

\* \* \* \*

On the bridge, Kale sat at one of the aft bridge science stations and continued to pour through raw data.

“Computer, open interface to main public computer database, Orthid IX government complex two,” he said.

“Working...,” the ship’s computer replied. “Unable to comply. Government complex two destroyed two planetary days ago by terrorist bomb activity.”

“Redirect to nearest interface complex,” Kale ordered.

“Working... Computer interface enabled through Orthid IX Othran City Museum of Science, emergency government core.”

“Good,” Kale commented. “Computer, request readout on all information regarding the Federation colony within the past twenty-five years.”

“Working,” the computer replied.

“Sir,” said the tactical officer to Captain Solak as the Vulcan entered the bridge from the aft turbolift. “Orthid orbit control requests we move the ship to a new parking orbit for security purposes.”

“Make it so,” Solak nodded toward Kale.

“Aye, sir,” Kale responded, returning to his usual post at ops. “Computer, compile and store requested information under the file ‘Kale3.’”

\* \* \* \*

“Talks are going slow,” said the tired sounding voice of Vice Admiral Johnson. “The Radine are adamant that the Federation leave Orthid IX, the government is adamant that the land was annexed and leased to the Federation, legally and in accordance with the majority government’s wishes...” The Admiral paused. “And I’m adamant that I have a splitting headache. I hate playing diplomat.”

“Perhaps Doctor Arcadian can suggest a remedy,” suggested Solak.

“They refuse to even listen to anyone else,” Johnson sighed.

“I was referring to your headache, Admiral,” the Vulcan said, dryly. But Johnson’s reply was drowned out by the ship’s sudden shudder and the lieutenant at tactical shouting.

“Orthidian security craft Delta-Four has exploded, sir! Incoming torpedo from 259 mark 6!”

“Re-establish contact with the away team,” ordered Solak.

“Communications are being jammed,” replied Kale.

“Performing evasive maneuvers, attempting to clear away from remaining security craft,” reported Galen DuLac from the conn. The torpedo narrowly missed the starship, striking instead the smaller security ship below her. The craft blew apart, pieces striking the *Arcturus*’ shields and draining them slightly. The intruder vessel then fired an energy beam at the fleeing starship, its green glow enveloping the shields.

“Shields are being drained,” the tactical officer reported. “Down to seventy five percent... Sixty five percent... Fifty percent...!”

“Compensate,” Solak ordered.

“Power drain is too great!” shouted Briana Lithir at the engineering station behind tactical. “Shields will be down in five seconds!”

“Helm, plot a course...,” Solak started to say, walking over to where DuLac sat at the conn.

“Torpedo, incoming!” interrupted Kale.

“Shields are down!” shouted tactical.

“Engage, now,” said Solak, but not in time. The torpedo struck the *Arcturus*’ unprotected hull. The ship immediately listed to port and console panels all over the ship overloaded, throwing sparks or exploding.

On the bridge, Solak lost his footing and his head slammed into the bulkhead below the ship’s dedication plaque. He fell to the deck, unconscious, green blood pooling on the deck from the gash in his forehead.

“Bridge to sickbay. Medical emergency on the bridge,” Kale said into his combadge as he rushed over and checked the Vulcan’s vital signs.

“There she art!” shouted DuLac, pointing at a modified security ship that drifted slowly across the viewscreen.

“They know we’re hurt,” the tac officer grumbled as he helped Lithir off the deck.

Kale turned to look at the small ship on the screen. *‘How could such a small ship leave us so defenseless?’* he thought, then aloud added, “They’re maneuvering in for the kill. They think we can’t fight back.”

“They’re not far wrong. What are your orders, sir?” asked the tac officer.

“Huh?” Kale asked.

“Captain Solak is incapacitated. You’re the senior officer on the bridge, sir,” replied Tac.

Kale looked to where the medical team that had quickly arrived was just placing the unmoving form of the ship’s first officer onto an anti-grav gurney. A lump formed in the pit of his stomach.

\* \* \* \*

Val’ri Raijah was just entering the quarters she shared with her husband, Sylvan Xaran, the one place a civilian was to go during a battle, when she was struck by strong emotions and feelings of conflict. The concern emanated from the bridge. Val’ri hesitated a moment, hovering in the doorway, then made up her mind and started up toward the bridge.

\* \* \* \*

“What systems do we still have?” Kale asked.

“Phasers are off-line. We have one photorp armed and in the tube, but we have no target lock. If you can get me some straws, maybe I can make up a few spit-balls for you,” the lieutenant at tactical responded. “Best we can do for at least five minutes.”

“This will be over in less than five minutes, Lieutenant,” Lithir commented.

Kale studied the screen for a moment. The rogue was drifting into attack position, not even bothering to maneuver on thrusters. They were too confident.

Then he saw the answer.

“Lieutenant,” he directed to tactical. “On my mark, fire.”

“But sir, we can’t even aim!” the tactical officer whined.

Kale looked at the officer manning tactical hard. “When I say fire, ...then fire!”

He returned his gaze to the screen, as Lieutenant (JG) Setton To’Lock Arbelo appeared out of the turbolift and took Kale’s place at ops. He hoped he was not wrong, but if he were, none of the crew would live to know it. The rogue ship continued to move slowly across the screen.

“On my mark...,” said Kale. “.....Fire!”

The torpedo shot from the launch tube and arced across space. The rogue, taken by surprise, attempted to react, but it was already too late. The torpedo impacted against the craft, sending the ship spinning planet-ward. It released an escape pod before entering the atmosphere and burning up.

Kale stared at the screen a moment before inquiring, “Damage report.”

“Weapons and shields are both off-line. Warp drive is down. Impulse systems at fifty percent norm. Secondary systems are all on backup, reported the Terran-Vulcan-Efrosian Arbelo. “Damage control parties are reporting to their assigned sections.”

“Commander, we’re being hailed from the surface,” reported the officer at tactical.

“On screen,” said Kale.

The view changed to that of a lone humanoid, orange skinned, with dark brown, almond shaped eyes. Brown blood ran down the side of his face. Smoke appeared to billow from the wall in the background behind him.

"*Arcturus*, I'm Minister Probo," the Orthidian said. "We've just had a terrible calamity. A bomb detonated at the negotiation site just after the Radine left the table. During the confusion, the Radine party returned, armed, killed six people, including two of your crew, and took all the others, including Ambassador Johnson, hostage."

"This is Lt Commander Kalin Kale aboard the *Arcturus*, Minister. A rogue security craft, most probably under the control of the Radine, destroyed your patrol craft assigned to protect our starship and heavily damaged the *Arcturus* with a power draining weapon. We've received many casualties, including Captain Solak. I'm currently in acting-command."

"Commander," Minister Probo said, a very sad look crossing his features as he received the news. "The terrorists have demanded that your starship leave now or they will kill all the hostages within the hour. They reiterate their intention to destroy the power complex within two days if their demands are not met."

"Minister," said Kale. "We'll pull out of orbit in order not to provoke the Radine and then see what we can figure out to resolve this situation later. We'll keep in touch. *Arcturus*, out."

Kale tuned and looked at the young helm officer. "Mister DuLac, set course for the far side of Orthid X. But make it look like we're leaving the system. And take us out at maximum impulse," Kale ordered.

"Aye, ... Lord Commander. Accelerating to full impulse."

"Mister Arbelo, I had saved an information file earlier. Please send it into the ready room," Kale asked of the hybrid officer at ops.

The turbolift doors opened, and a Vulcan-looking woman in civilian clothes stepped out and entered the ready room right behind Kale.

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In the ready room, a puzzled Kale crossed behind the desk, but offered a seat to Raiajh as he sat down.

"Val'ri," said Kale, the puzzled look refusing to leave his face. "What are you doing up here? I realize you once had a Starfleet commission, but civilians aren't allowed on the bridge, especially during an alert condition."

The Vulcan-Deltan raised her right eyebrow in a typically Vulcan expression, and started to explain.

"I do not normally tell others of my abilities, and in fact have kept it quite well hidden from Vice Admiral Johnson, but I am in fact a very strong telepath. I sensed your concern during the battle with the rogue ship, and considering the circumstances have come to offer my help.

A shocked expression crossed Kale's face, fighting with the puzzled expression, and finally overpowering it.

"Offer... accepted," Kale stammered. "We are now..."

"...On course to hide behind Orthid X," Raiajh finished for him.

"Ahh... yeah," said Kale, suddenly remembering the previously mentioned telepathic abilities. "Could you hold back on the mind reading, please. It's unnerving."

"As you wish, Kalin," she replied, nodding her head.

After a moment, Kale remembered what he went into the captain's ready room for. He called up the file on the computer screen.

ALL DATES IN BOTH STARDATES AND ORTHID DATES:

STARDATE 25249.6 - 12 MACH 6429: WESTERN CONTINENT ANNEXED BY ORTHID GOVERNMENT. RADINE RACE RESETTLED ON NORTH AND NORTHEAST CONTINENTS.

STARDATE 25962.3 - 16 ORCH 6429: RADINE FILE OFFICIAL PROTEST. NO FOLLOW-UP.

STARDATE 26366.1 - 29 ROCH 6430: UNITED FEDERATION OF PLANETS LEASES WESTERN CONTINENT FROM ORTHID GOVERNMENT. COLONY ESTABLISHED.

STARDATE 46967.3 - 1 MACH 6445: FEDERATION COLONY SCIENCE COUNCIL REQUESTS PERMISSION TO CONDUCT ARCHEOLOGICAL DIGS IN NATIVE ANCESTRAL BURIAL GROUND.

STARDATE 46967.7 - 3 MACH 6445: ORTHID GOVERNMENT APPROVES ARCHEOLOGICAL DIGS.

Kale stared at the screen. Could it be that simple? he thought.

"It is a strong possibility," said Raiajh. Kale glared at her.

"I apologize," she said.

"Computer, date of first Radine terrorist strike against the government or Federation colony," Kale inquired.

"Stardate 46968.0: Radine faction bombs Orthidian Science Center."

"My gods," Kale thought aloud. "For twenty years, the Radine do nothing after being forced off their land. But when their ancestral burial grounds are approved for archeological expeditions, they start attacking the next day!"

Raijah nodded. "The one thing Vice Admiral Johnson and the others were not seeing."

At that moment the intercom beeped, and Galen DuLac's voice announced, "Lord, we are in orbit of Orthid X. Holding at station keeping opposite thy planet Orthid IX."

"Thank you, Galen," replied Kale. "Please signal what senior staff we still have aboard that I'm holding a meeting in the observation lounge in five minutes."

"Aye, Lord."

\* \* \* \*

A much smaller group gathered around the table this time. Kale sat at the head of the table, a look of determination creasing his brow. Next to him sat Counselor Valtirr. Formerly a medical doctor, the Deltan was appointed ship's counselor after the original *Arcturus* emerged in the 24th century and her crew had undergone retraining. Next was Briana Lithir, the ship's equine-like Cygnian Chief Engineer, her long mane-like hair still mussed from the fall she had taken on the bridge. Next to the engineer sat the Vulcan-Terran T'Veer, Lithir's capable assistant. Opposite T'Veer sat Lieutenant Idrisu, another Deltan and a close friend of Kale's, filling in for the now-missing chief science officer, Baael T'olos Dagon San-Demetos. Finally, immediately to Kale's right, Lieutenant Setton To'Lock Arbelo, or 'Monster' as he was affectionately called due to his unique heritage, a mixture of Vulcan, Efrosian, and Terran.

"I wonder if he suffers from hot and cold flashes?" Kale remarked when he first met Arbelo, a joke he quickly regretted. The man was in fact a genius, and a real asset to the crew.)

At the far end of the table sat Val'ri Raijah, not normally a member of the command staff.

"I've asked Val'ri to join us for this meeting," Kale said to the others, some wondering why the former Starfleet officer and current civilian teacher was attending this meeting. "It has... come to my attention, shall we say, that she could prove invaluable to my plan."

"We are currently holding station keeping on the far side of the planet Orthid X," started Arbelo, "and have been keeping sensor emissions to passive only. As far as we know, the Radine think we're gone."

Kale turned to Lithir.

"Briana, can you rig a Type 6 shuttlecraft with a six-person transporter capability within thirty minutes?" he asked.

"It is... possible," she hesitated, turning to look at T'Veer.

"I believe it can be done," T'Veer confirmed.

"Do it," Kale ordered. "Before we broke orbit, tactical managed to find what we believe to be the primary base of the Radine terrorists, based on where the escape pod from the ship that attacked us landed on the surface. I will take a small away team by shuttle, and attempt to beam to the area. Briana, I'll leave you the bridge."

"Yes, Commander," she responded.

"Don't you think this is a little foolhardy, Kalin?" Idrisu asked. "You'll get yourselves killed."

"These aren't the Ssani," said Kale, referring to a race the *Arcturus* crew had encountered in the past. "They won't kill just because they've been found out. I think they will listen. And I believe I know what they really want to hear."

The others looked at each other, all but Raijah wondering what Kale meant.

"I want the away team to consist of myself, Val'ri, Idrisu, and Monster. I'll also need a shuttle pilot and two security guards," said Kale.

"I am an experienced pilot," offered T'Veer.

"Alright. You're on the team," said Kale.

"I'll assign the two security guards," said Idrisu.

"Fine. We meet in the main shuttlebay in thirty minutes," ordered Kale.

As everybody stood and began to leave, Kale approached Lithir.

"Briana, I want to make one thing crystal clear. No heroics," said Kale. "I know we've already lost two people, and maybe all six. I'm willing to risk a few more lives because I think I have the answer. I'm not willing to risk the ship. If my team fails, if we lose contact, no rescue missions."

"If you're in trouble, I'll do my best," Lithir said with mild annoyance.

"You'll do what I ask... what I order... please," said Kale, a disarming look in his brown eyes. "Take the ship out of the system and get word back to Starfleet. We don't know how many more of those toys the Radine have. *Arcturus* cannot survive another attack by that energy drainer."

Lithir looked like she was about to protest, thought better of it, and finally just agreed. "Aye, sir."

Kale started walking to the bridge, when Lithir called to him.

"Kalin, if Centauri believe in luck, the best of it to you," she said.

Kale smiled at her, turned, and let the door swish shut behind him.

\* \* \* \*

Work was finishing on the shuttle as the team arrived. Val'ri Raiajh still wore her civilian clothes, but a Starfleet combadge was attached to her blouse. Two officers in gold security uniforms entered the bay and walked over to join the team. Arbelo noticed who one of the men was and immediately recognized him. He walked over, extending his arm to shake his hand as he approached.

"Penji," said Arbelo. "What are you doing here? The last time I checked the roster, you were still in communications."

Ensign Penji Fil, a Catullan, smiled at his former communications chief and explained, "During my time back at the Academy, I studied in the security section. It seemed a good idea since communications falls under sciences in today's Starfleet and doesn't have its own division anymore. I'm a fully trained security officer now."

"Welcome to the team," said Kale as he gestured the group into the shuttle. Once all were aboard, the shuttle was cleared for launch, and they started toward Orthid IX. The trip took several minutes, during which time Kale explained the whole plan to the rest of the team. All agreed the idea had merit.

"We are in standard orbit, and as expected, the shuttle is too small for ground sensors to register. Neither the Orthidian government nor the Radine know we are here," reported T'Veer.

"Okay, team," said Kale. "Let's get going."

The away team stood in the back of the shuttle, and Kale gave the order to T'Veer, "Energize."

\* \* \* \*

On the surface, Idrisu opened his tricorder and scanned.

"Indications of a camp one-half kilometer to the east. No other population centers within twenty-five kilometers."

"Any life-forms nearby?" asked Kale.

"No humanoids close enough to read," said Idrisu.

Kale nodded, and indicated to the team to proceed east. Almost half-way to the reported encampment, Arbelo's tricorder beeped. He opened it and scanned.

"Humanoid life-form readings, approaching from the east. Three. Orthidian physiology. Looks like we've stumbled upon a scouting party," he reported.

"How close?" asked Kale.

"Very," reported Raiajh, her face a look of total concentration. "They are not aware of our presence yet. I will convey to them our peaceful intent."

A few moments later, three Orthidians, their orange skin covered by tattered clothes, almond eyes showing their fatigue, broke through the brush and approached the team.

"You are of the Federation," they said, stating more than questioning. "We know, somehow, that you mean no harm to us. But can you really help our people?"

Kale glanced at Raiajh, an impressed look on his features, before saying, "We can, if you will take us to your leaders."

"We will," one of them replied.

\* \* \* \*

Fifteen minutes later, Kale's away team stood before the two leaders of the Radine rebellion. They had already been told that Ambassador Johnson and his group were being held at that very camp, and perhaps they would be released if what was said of the team by the scouts was true.

Kale ordered Idrisu and Fil to go with a young Orthidian boy and confirm the condition of Johnson and his group. As the two left, Kale turned toward the Radine leaders.

"I am Lieutenant Commander Kalin Kale, of the Federation starship *Arcturus*," he said. The older of the two Orthidians spoke.

"I am Chonar. He is Thallin. We lead the combined peoples of the Radine," he said.

"I have been looking into the situation your people are protesting. I know why you have suddenly resorted to violence. It is because you fear the desecration of your burial ground," said Kale, causing a look of surprise on the two leader's faces.

"You know of our plight!" Thallin said incredulously.

"Then you believe we can negotiate a real and mutual resolution to all of this?" asked Kale hopefully.

Chonar stepped closer to the man from Alpha Centauri, and looked deep into Kale's eyes. Finally, a wide smile crossed the older Orthidian's features.

"Yes. We can," he said.

\* \* \* \*

The next day, back aboard the *Arcturus*, which had since returned to orbit of Orthid IX, Johnson walked over to Kale. The ops officer was sitting at his usual place at the ops console.

"I was out of it for a while, Kalin. What I really want to know is, what did you find that broke the Radine's reluctance to negotiate?" Johnson asked.

Kale turned the ops seat around to face the others on the bridge, including Solak, who had the just returned to duty status, and began to explain.

“The key was the fact that the Radine did nothing about their land for twenty years. Sure, they filed a protest a few months after their race had been relocated, but nothing after that. I believe the Radine actually preferred the place where they were relocated to for its more fertile lands and temperate climate. I also found out in our talks with Chonar and Thallin that the Radine always believed they would one day regain their ancestral lands, and the Radine are nothing if not a patient race.”

“Then why did they suddenly resort to violence?” asked Solak, a bandage partly blocking his right eye.

Kale explained, “Because, the Federation scientists had stumbled across the Radine burial ground. A rarity, because all the other cultures on Orthid IX cremate their dead. The scientists asked the government to approve archeological digs there...”

“And that’s when they started the bombings,” finished Johnson.

“The next day they destroyed the Science Council building. The headquarters of the council that had approved the dig,” Kale said.

“Well, just about everyone is happy with your solution,” said the Vice Admiral. “The Federation will close off the burial grounds as an historic landmark, then expand the colony to be able to take in as many of the million-plus Radine that wish to return to their homeland. The Radine are happy to be a part of the society instead of being shunned as outcasts by the other Orthidians because of their beliefs and practices, and the government is happy that the Federation will maintain a presence on their planet.”

“Sickbay to bridge,” said the voice of Dr Arcadian over the intercom. “Would you please have Commander Kale report to sickbay.”

“I’m on my way, Doctor,” Kale said in response, turning out of the ops seat. “...With your permission, Admiral?”

Johnson nodded his head and Kale walked to the turbolift. As Kale disappeared behind its closing doors, a concerned look showed on Johnson’s normally stolid face. Solak walked beside Johnson, his hands clasped behind his back, likewise looking at the turbolift doors, then glancing at Johnson.

Kale entered sickbay, and was directed by a nurse to the CMO’s office. He passed Maddox, laying on one of the diagnostic beds, a wound to his left arm being treated by one of Arcadian’s staff. He entered the office, where Athena Arcadian sat behind her desk. In one of the chairs was Ian Valtirr, the ship’s counselor.

“Please sit down, Kalin,” said Arcadian.

Kale sat, and as Arcadian started to talk, he could see she was having difficulty with what she had to say.

“You know, of course, that our diplomatic talks were just a ruse to capture important Federation hostages, Kalin,” she said. “The bomb used to create the diversion worked too well. Before we realized it, the Radine were knocking us helpless with disrupters. Ensign Lamont tried to stun a few of the terrorists before he was captured. One fought back with deadly force. During the melee, both Lamont and... and Petty Officer Ku... were killed.”

The news struck Kale like a meteor dropped from orbit.

“Mickey..... is..... dead?” he mumbled. Kale could not believe what he was being told.

“Yes, I’m afraid so,” Arcadian confirmed.

Kale and Ku had become very close since the latter had joined the crew of the original USS *Arcturus*. Their on and off relationship was tolerated by the command in spite of the general restrictions Starfleet maintained regarding romantic liaisons between officers and enlisted. A tear started to make its way down Kale’s cheek. He turned slightly away from the two doctors, afraid to let the image he was presenting show.

“We knew how close you were to her,” said Valtirr. “We knew you needed to find out from us personally, not from some report. My deepest sympathies, Kalin.”

Valtirr looked at Arcadian, his eyes saying what needed to be said. They were sure Kale would eventually come to them later for support, but for now, the two rose, granting Kale a moment alone to grieve.

\* \* \* \*

A few days had passed. The *Arcturus*, still in orbit of Orthid IX, held a memorial service for her lost comrades. Soon after, life aboard the ship slowly started to return to normal. Maddox had returned to his post on the bridge, his short stint in Dr Arcadian’s hands over.

Vice Admiral Johnson was conveying his report to Admiral Simmons. Her pleasant face and salt and pepper colored hair filled the main bridge viewscreen.

“The Federation Council is very pleased with your resolution of the problem, Eric, and in fact, a freighter is now on its way to the Orthid system with material to begin work on expanding the colony to include the Radine,” she said. “There is talk they may even become Federation citizens one day, whether the rest of the Orthidians do or not.”

“Thank you, Admiral, but as my report states, it was a combined effort, lead by Mister Kale, that brought about the compromise,” said Johnson. “Without him, my team, and perhaps the entire planet, would be dead.”

“Yes, Eric. So your report has led me to believe,” Simmons said. After a moment’s pause, the Admiral began to talk again.

“Lieutenant Commander Kalin Kale,” she said. Kale looked up from his console.

“Yes, Admiral,” he replied in surprise.

“Please stand,” Simmons ordered.

Kale got up from the Ops seat, taking a place near the center of the bridge.

“Lieutenant Commander Kalin Kale, for actions above and beyond the call of duty, in the service of saving the Federation starship *USS Arcturus* from attack by hostile enemy spacecraft, and a mutually beneficial compromise which has brought the terrorist activity on the planet Orthid IX to an end, Starfleet Command does hereby promote you to the rank of Captain, and assigns you the duty of command of a starship, effective this stardate 47013.2.”

Kale almost fainted as he listened. Yes, he expected there would be a commendation or award of some kind, but not this!

“Congratulations, ...Captain,” the Admiral continued. “Your new orders are being transmitted to you now. Your new command awaits you at station *Deep Space Nine*.”

Johnson, smiling broadly, offered Kale his hand. Despite the act being considered an insult on his native world of Proxima Centauri, Kale accepted the gesture.

“Congratulations, Kalin,” Johnson said. “...Or should I say, Captain Kale.”

The shock still had not worn off. Kale stood at the center of the bridge, a crooked smile on his face.

Johnson turned to DuLac. “Well, Galen. What do you say we get the Captain here to his ship?”

“Aye, Lord,” the young Avalonian replied.

“Break orbit. All ahead, warp five,” ordered Johnson, who then gestured to Kale to give the next command.

Kale looked at the stars on the screen, a bright new future ahead, and ordered, “Engage!”

*To Be Continued...*

*Authors Note: Anyone who has been reading the Fifth Fleet Stories Archive in chronological order might wonder why some of the minor plot points of this story seem a little out of place or incongruous.*

*This story was originally written in 1993 to start the transition of several established characters from the USS Arcturus NCC-1807-A to the newly commissioned USS Sarek NCC-72075. Many of the characters making the transition were minor characters only making what could be called ‘cameo appearances’ or as background filler in many of the Arcturus stories that had been written prior to 1993. In fact, while several stories aboard the Arcturus-A were in the planning stages, the vast majority of them were never written before several of the crew split off to form the USS Sarek. These characters – like Penji Fil, Setton To’Lock Arbelo, T’Ashara, and T’Veer – never got their chance to be ‘center stage’ aboard the USS Arcturus.*

*This story was written long before some of the others that take place earlier in the timeline, such as “The End - Parts 1 & 2,” and as such, was used to ‘introduce’ these formerly minor characters who were going to be filling much larger roles as main characters and department heads aboard the new starship. As a result, there are a couple of scenes in this story and the immediate few that follow that might make it seem like shipmates who have been serving together side by side for several years have not seen or interacted in any way with each other in a very long time.*

*In the editing of these stories for the updated Fifth Fleet Stories Archive, I tried to subtly change some things to fit in with established chronology, but some scenes were harder to ‘cover up’ than others. The Fifth Fleet crew hopes you will enjoy our adventures anyway as we explore... Where No One Has Gone Before!*

*~Cap’n Peter*

*February 2015*