

Somewhere in the Gamma Quadrant near the sixth planet of the Theta 317 System

The Theta 317 system was quiet. The view from space near the sixth planet was amazing and, had there been anyone there to see it, would have been considered breathtaking. As the planet serenely orbited its twin suns, time suddenly seemed to stand still and the space near the planet folded in upon itself in a massive distortion. For a brief instant, it appeared as though the system suddenly inhabited the same space as two other distinct star systems. During that brief instant, a quantum energy matrix formed near the planet and two small shuttles emerged from its center, followed closely by two starships. The two shuttlecraft exited the matrix at precisely the same moment and disappeared into warp as the distortion suddenly changed. The two starships exited the matrix a fraction of a second apart and only the smallest moment behind the shuttles. As each of the ships left, the matrix released a massive pulse of quantum energy and shortly after the last ship exited; the matrix collapsed and disappeared as suddenly as it had formed.

The subsequent peace would not last, however, and seconds after the collapse of the quantum matrix the quiet system erupted as the two starships joined in battle...

Space, The Final Frontier...

Star Trek: Personal Logs

“Arrival” by Kevin Fossett

The bridge of the Federation starship USS Sarek

The Vulcan woman stared at the view screen, which displayed the serene star field through which she was traveling. It was an almost picturesque view, somewhat different from the one she was used to seeing in the Alpha Quadrant, though not unpleasant. That, Commander T’Veer decided, was the reason she liked it. In spite of her dominant heritage’s famed unemotional demeanor, her human half loved exploring new places and meeting the people they found there. The *USS Sarek* had started its mapping and exploration mission to the Gamma Quadrant three weeks earlier and they were due to transmit a preliminary report on vessel status in forty eight hours. So far, she thought, things looked promising.

“Excuse me, Commander. I’m getting some very strange readings on long range sensors that I think you should see,” reported the night-shift ops officer. As she began to move to the ops console to take a look, the ship began to shudder violently. At the same time, every alarm, indication and instrument on the ship suddenly activated, flickered three distinct times, then went dead.

The QFFH Ror’Kaan

The human piloting the *Qatar Frigate Ror’Kaan* knew he was in trouble. Even though he had managed to damage the enemy vessel’s shields, weapons, and maneuvering thrusters, his frigate was no match for the heavy battle cruiser currently bearing down on him. He had managed to hold it off long enough for the other survivors to escape in the two remaining shuttlecraft, but he was quickly running out of options. His ship shook violently as he barely managed to dodge most of another salvo from the cruiser’s main batteries. If that cruiser made it back and reported where the captives had escaped to... No, he could not let that happen. His face showed almost no expression as he began entering a series of instructions into the defense systems and navigational computer. The computer immediately chimed a dozen different warnings about unsafe system configurations and imminent overloads. Meanwhile the heavy cruiser was reloading and attempting to close to point blank range. If he could only keep them from getting a solid lock for a few more seconds...

USS Sarek

About five seconds after the quantum disruptions, ships systems started coming back online as the automatic re-initialization sequence ran its course.

“What in the galaxy?! ...Engineering, is there a problem down there?” Commander T’Veer asked as she quickly changed direction and headed for the bridge engineering station. Before she could get an answer and even before she finished crossing the short distance back up the ramp to the engineering station, the ops officer reported again.

“Commander, I believe the systems failures we just experienced were caused by whatever was responsible for the strange readings I was getting just before the shutdown. Sensor logs show that we were hit by a series of three quantum energy burst wave-fronts. The source appears to originate from the nearby system designated as Theta 317. Commander, I’m now reading a strong temporal distortion and a series of massive energy discharges in that system. The focused nature of the discharges is consistent with weapons fire, however, there are no known weapons powerful enough to generate a signature of this strength at this distance.”

“Are long-range sensors picking up any ships in that system?” T’Veer asked.

“No, Commander,” the ops officer responded. “I have no indication of any ships currently in or recently near that system.” T’Veer thought hard about that one. The situation was starting become interesting, if not more than a little puzzling, but it was not over yet.

The Ror’Kaan

The human pilot of the *Ror’Kaan* gave the ships instruments one last check before activating a control on the command console and sprinting out of the control center. Just over six seconds later he secured himself into the life pod of his own long-since-destroyed shuttle. The life pod was now encompassed by a Qatar shielding probe which quickly auto loaded itself for immediate launch. Everything was now on automatic and all he could do was hope that the shields of the probe would be able to withstand the impending blast. With one last check to ensure he was properly secured, the man activated the life pod’s auto-distress beacon and braced himself. That was the signal to the frigate’s computers to execute the final instructions he had programmed just moments before. The computer immediately launched the probe and began an overload buildup in the forward weapons array, primary reactor, and subspace engines. It then whirled about its pitch access, took one final reading on the position, course, and speed of the battle cruiser, made a minute course adjustment, engaged its engines, and fired its primary weapons array. The effect was instantaneous. The primary weapons of the advanced frigate, backed by the inertia of both ships, tore a hole through both the primary and secondary hulls of the cruiser almost exactly at the forward most point of its longitudinal axis. Less than two nanoseconds later the mass of the frigate itself, traveling just under eighteen times the speed of light and accelerating, impacted the first intact bulkhead. Even before the kinetic energy of the collision began to disperse through the cruiser, the frigate’s primary reactor and subspace engines exploded in overload. The subsequent quantum wave front from the explosion tore through the entire length of the cruiser eradicating everything in its path. The cruiser’s reactors and engines added their own destructive power to the event and the result was more devastating than anything ever experienced or even imagined by mankind. Destructive energy raced through the entire system. The two planets closest to the explosion were instantly converted to slowly expanding clouds of vapor, every other planet in the system was reduced to a molten sphere, and the system’s twin stars began to collapse. The Qatar were an extremely advanced race with technology that was millennia beyond anything in existence and their shielding probe had been designed to fly through a neutron star at low warp speeds without sustaining damage. However, it was not designed to dissipate the massive amount of energy it was now exposed to. The shields flared and began to buckle. As fate would have it, this was exactly what saved the life pod within the probe. The shields finally buckled at such an incredible rate that they were actually inside the hull of the probe before they began to disperse. As the probe itself vaporized, the resulting energy created a small null in the quantum wave front allowing its energy to dissipate outward carrying the shield energy with it. The null area collapsed in the tail end of the wave front and the compression wave sent the life pod tumbling. The life pod was then struck by the reverse shockwave of the phenomenon and came nearly to rest, tumbling slowly in space with its occupant unconscious and seriously injured.

The Sarek

Captain Kalin Kale, commanding officer of the *Sarek*, came barreling out of the turbolift door, a robe covering his sleeping clothes.

“What in hell are you doing to my ship, T’Veer?” he asked as he moved to where the starship’s officer of the deck was standing near the engineering station.

“Trying to determine that now, Captain,” T’Veer replied. “The ship was hit by a trio of quantum energy burst wave-fronts that...”

“Commander!” interrupted the officer at ops. Both T’Veer and Kale looked in the man’s direction. “Long-range sensors just detected an incredibly large explosion inside the Theta 317 system. According to sensors the explosion was consistent with a massive warp core breach. However, energy released from the explosion was off the scale. The computer indicates the energy released was greater than that of a neutron star supernova by several factors of ten,” the science officer reported in disbelief. T’Veer was still trying to comprehend an explosion of that magnitude when the operations officer cut in once again. “Commander, I am now picking up a signal the computer identifies as an auto-distress beacon.”

“Auto-distress?” Kale questioned, moving down the ramp to look over the ops officer’s shoulder. “How can that be?”

Analyzing,” the ops officer said. “There’s not enough signal strength for a positive identification, but it’s definitely a distress call. The signal is coming from somewhere inside what is left of the Theta 317 system..... And Captain...!” The officer looked up at Kale with an expression of amazement. “It’s on a Federation frequency!”

“Impossible! We’re the only ones out this far right now!” Kale remarked.

T’Veer quickly decided it was time to take action as she headed back to the command chair.

“Yellow alert. Helm, set a course for the coordinates of that distress beacon. Ahead warp five and engage.”

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The *USS Sarek* dropped out of warp in the Theta 317 system just over eighteen minutes later – just enough time for Kale to change into a duty uniform and return to the bridge – and began scanning for the source of the distress signal and possibly some clue

as to what had caused the quantum pulses and the explosion they had detected. Lt(JG) Penji Fil, the tactical officer, was first to make a preliminary report.

“Captain, I’m picking up a large debris field dead ahead. Sensors cannot identify the type of material making up the field... Curious.”

“What is it, Penji?” Kale asked from his seat in the command chair.

“The objects making up the field are generating chroniton radiation and decaying at an incredible rate. This debris field will be completely gone in less than fourteen hours.”

“Captain, I have a lock on the distress signal,” interjected Lt(JG) Setton To’Lock Arbelo, the operations officer now on duty. “It’s on a bearing of 116 mark 8 at a range of eighty-five thousand kilometers. The computer identifies the signal as the auto-distress beacon from the Federation shuttle *Arguilus*.” Arbelo turned in his seat to look at the captain. “Kalin, there is no shuttle by that name in the current registry.” Captain Kalin Kale pondered that information for a moment, the name striking a familiar chord, before he began giving orders.

“Search the Federation database for any information regarding ships of that name recorded as lost. Mister Kes, set an intercept course for the source of that signal, full impulse and engage. T’Ashara, are you getting any life form readings?”

“Negative, sir,” responded the Vulcan science officer from the console behind Kale. “I am... Wait... I am now detecting a very faint life sign at the signal source. It appears to be human. Captain, at the current rate of decay, the life pod will lose structural integrity in less than three minutes.” The captain made a quick decision.

“Transporter room,” Kale said after activating the intercom on the arm of the command chair. “Lock onto the life pod being tracked by sensors and transport the occupant to sickbay as soon as we’re in range.” He pressed another control and then said, “Sickbay, this is the Captain.”

“Sickbay, Doctor Rasa,” came the quick reply.

“Doctor, I’m having a life pod survivor beamed directly to your location. Coordinate with the transporter chief and engineering to beam whoever it is into a class one containment field. Until we know what we’re dealing with, I want every precaution taken. Bridge, out.” He then said to his bridge officers, “Penji, launch a series of class one probes. I want all the information we can collect so we can try and figure out what happened here. T’Ashara, continue scanning the area for the cause of the anomaly we detected and the explosion. Try to recover some of that wreckage for analysis, and keep me informed. I’ll be in sickbay. T’Veer, you have the conn.”

As T’Veer nodded and moved back into the center seat, Kale entered the nearest turbolift and disappeared.

* * *

The senior staff officers of the *USS Sarek* were in the briefing lounge to discuss and analyze the strange events of the past 24 hours. Lt Commander T’Ashara was the first to give her report.

“Preliminary analysis of the debris field and extrapolated explosion patterns indicate a probability of greater than eighty six percent that more than one ship was involved in this incident. Initial data from the class one probes as well as our scans of the area revealed residual energy patterns consistent with highly focused and immensely powerful weapons fire. Unfortunately, the combination of the quantum energy bursts and the subsequent explosion make it impossible to determine trajectories, targets, or sources of this weapons fire. In addition, the probes have gathered a great deal of data on what remains of this system.” T’Ashara ran her fingers over a small control and two holograms of the system appeared over the center of the table.

“The first representation is a compilation of the data gathered during our initial mapping of this area as the *PSV Hudson* passed through the sector one week ago, taken from the stellar cartography database. The second is the system as it appears now.

“That’s impossible!” Lt Commander Yu-Fen M. Cosna exclaimed. “There are two whole planets missing! And the binary star system has collapsed into dwarfs!”

“Not impossible, I fear,” T’Ashara replied. “We are seeing it with our own eyes as well as our sensors and probes. The energy from the explosion completely destroyed the fifth and sixth planets and effectively decimated all nine of the remaining planets in this system. Data from the probes shows that over half of the planets have experienced a reduction in mass as well as molecular compression. Every remaining planet in the system absorbed enough energy to revert to a molten state and most of them are still less than stable. And as Commander Cosna said, the system initially revolved around twin stars. One was a red giant orbited by a white dwarf. These stars underwent the same energy absorption and molecular compression cycle as the planets in the system, and we now see an extremely hot and unstable blue dwarf orbiting a neutron star. No known scientific phenomenon can explain how this could happen. The fact that any material from either ship survived an explosion of this magnitude suggests extremely advanced material design – well beyond anything we have ever encountered. On a more disturbing note, all of the wreckage recovered from the debris field has completely decayed into nothing, which I would have previously said was scientifically impossible. We have almost no data on the material remains of either ship except that all of the debris seemed to have been affected by some sort of extreme temporal anomaly.”

Lt(JG) Setton To’Lock Arbelo, the chief of operations then added, “We recovered the auto-distress signal unit and flight data module from the life pod and were able to get a partial download before we lost them to the decay process as well. The unit positively identified its parent vehicle as the 23rd century Federation heavy shuttlecraft *Arguilus*. What little data we’ve been able to reconstruct from the data module shows an initial activation date sometime in the Earth year 2302. The internal chronometer of the module must’ve gone haywire after that, because we got subsequent indications randomly reading anywhere between the Earth years of 1520 BCE and 4106 AD. There was also no record of the event which caused the destruction of the *Arguilus* and no explanation of why it had been outfitted with a life pod in the first place.”

“But Monster,” interrupted Captain Kale. “I would think it wouldn’t be too unusual for a shuttle to have a life pod. After all, the Marine fighters aboard the *Arcturus* did! That’s how Major Copeland managed to survive. And a fighter craft is smaller than the average shuttlecraft.”

“A fighter is different, Kalin,” T’Veer explained. “Their cockpit is designed to separate in an emergency and become a self-contained escape pod. But shuttlecraft do not have such an ability designed into them.”

“Okay,” Kale said. “What else have we learned?”

“Our investigation of the Federation database has only raised more questions,” Arbelo continued. “There is a record of a shuttlecraft by the name *Arguilus* existing in the year 2302, but it listed no details: no pilot, no mothership, no point of origin... None of the usual information pertaining to ships known to be lost. There wasn’t even a ‘missing, presumed lost’ in the file and that is something no one aboard has ever seen.”

“What about our guest? How is he?” Kale asked.

“On the bright side,” said the Bajoran Dr. Rasa Palin, “our ‘guest,’ as you put it, though still unconscious, appears to be well on his way to a full recovery. He was suffering from three broken ribs, some fairly serious internal injuries, and several minor contusions probably sustained when the life pod was buffeted by the explosion that destroyed the ships you detected, but he has a strong constitution and has started healing faster than anyone I have ever treated. His bodily functions did appear to be suffering from acute temporal displacement, however.”

“Acute temporal displacement?” Kale questioned.

“His internal clock appeared to be completely out of synch with our place in reality and he is adjusting to our time much slower than I had hoped,” Rasa explained. “Readings on his condition indicate temporal fluctuations of several hundred years, perhaps more. I would say from the readings I have that he has been exposed to some sort of severe temporal trauma, but I have no indications of the source of that trauma. His medical record holds even fewer answers than the life pod did.”

“Medical records?” Cosna asked. “How do you have medical records for him?”

“When I ran his DNA through the personnel database, to my complete surprise I received a hit in the system,” Rasa said.

“So we know who this man we rescued is?” Kale asked.

“Yes... and no,” Rasa replied cryptically. “All I received was a file that contained a restricted access number similar to those used for sealed personnel records and a name – Sean Elliott McIntyre.”

* * *

Kalin Kale read the orders on the padd for the fourth time and then stared hard at the man lying in the diagnostic bed in front of him. Kale did not like leaving mysteries unsolved, especially so soon after starting his new assignment in command of the *Sarek*, and the man lying before him was one big question mark. He had received a joint message from Starfleet Intelligence and the Office of Temporal Investigations with additional orders attached from the Commander in Chief of Starfleet herself less than one hour before. He and his crew had apparently stumbled onto something a lot bigger than a missing 23rd century shuttle pilot. He had been ordered to turn his starship around and drop his ‘guest’ off back at *DS9* by the most expeditious means, then proceed directly to rendezvous with a ship carrying the Temporal Investigations debrief team through the wormhole. When he questioned the necessity of such a detour, he was informed it was either follow his orders or be immediately removed from command of the *Sarek*. Kale had even contacted an old Academy acquaintance who might have had connections to TI in an attempt to find out just what he was dealing with. The answer he got from Starfleet had been simple and direct. Whatever he was dealing with was classified “...significantly higher than Level Blue...” and the sooner he forgot all about it the better off he would be. Kale had not liked that answer at all, but he was sure HQ had its reasons. Besides, Kale had never heard of a classification level higher than ‘Blue’ and his experience told him anything classified that high could only mean trouble for himself and his new crew. He was due to brief the senior staff on their abrupt change of orders in five minutes, but there was one thing left to do first.

“Computer, initiate security protocol Kale-romeo-one-one-seven-alpha-four-nine.”

“Security protocol authorization recognized,” the computer responded.

The captain continued, “Delete all references to patient; name: Sean Elliott McIntyre, and replace said records with John Doe, then delete all files related to subject and event identified as Theta 317 Incident.”

“Acknowledged. Files deleted,” the computer replied a few seconds later. Kale watched the name listing on the biobed display change to indicate ‘Doe, John,’ then, with a last look at his mysterious guest, headed toward the briefing lounge.

To Be Continued...