

“Now entering the Maret system, Captain.”

Captain Kaja Rebel stood up from her command chair and walked closer to the viewer, gazing at the binary star system on the viewscreen.

“What are the sensors reading?” Rebel asked Lt Commander Alexander Davion, her Betazoid ops officer.

“Two class-M planets. One is showing indications of an industrialized civilization.”

“Very good,” Rebel said with a smile. “Lieutenant Quace, set course for that planet. Approach with caution.”

“Aye, Captain.”

Suddenly, Rebel found herself lying unceremoniously on the deck. On the screen, stars rushed past at an incomprehensible rate.

“What’s going on?” Rebel demanded as the red alert klaxon sounded throughout the *USS Genesis*. She struggled to get back into her command chair.

“Unknown,” replied Krystah, the half-Klingon security chief, who also struggled to remain standing at the tactical console.

“We’re out of control!” yelled Commander Valquis.

Space, the Final Frontier...

These are the voyages of the starship *Sarek*!

Star Trek: *Sarek*

“Re-Q-nion” by PJK

With special guest stars: The crew of *USS Genesis NCC-2617*

Captain’s log, stardate 48570.7:

USS Sarek is transiting the Widion Rift, a stellar nursery where we are observing the formation of at least twelve new stars. The latest crew evaluations place the crew at ninety eight percent efficiency, and Lt Commander N’Vorda is still playing around with our new toy, the cloaking device we obtained from the Romulans, and making adjustments to its field to better hide us visually and from sensors when required. Kale, out.

Kalin Kale, commanding officer of the Galaxy-class starship *USS Sarek*, relaxed in his seat in the ship’s lounge, Nine/Ten Forward, with some of his closest friends among the crew. Around the long table sat Yu-Fen M. Cosna, the ship’s first officer; chief of ops Setton To’Lock ‘Monster’ Arbelo, civilian ombudsman Val’ri Raijah and her husband Lieutenant Sylvan Xaran; ship’s counselor Kethry Sutherland; Lieutenant Jo Ann Tredworth, and Lieutenant (JG) Larry Harcue.

Kale glanced over between sips of his synthale to look at one of the tables near the large viewports. There Charissa Xaran, Val’ri and Sylvan’s six year old daughter, was easily beating Commander Cosna’s eight year old son Shawn in a game of kadis-kot.

A laugh from Arbelo brought Kale’s attention back to his own table. The group was still awaiting the arrival of fellow officers T’Veer and Penji Fil. The festive mood was due to the fact that the crew was finally getting a chance to relax and take a breather for the first time since the *Sarek*’s recent encounter with the Borg. The mood was diminished slightly by assistant chief engineer V’Pier N’Vorda’s voice on the intercom.

“Captain, this is the bridge. We’re receiving a distress signal.”

“Source?” Kale asked as he rose from his seat.

“A ship, bearing 226 mark 70. Range: twenty five billion kilometers.”

“Change course to intercept. Increase speed to warp five. I’m on my way up.”

Upon arriving on the bridge with Cosna and Sutherland in tow, Kale ordered the message the *Sarek* had received to be replayed.

“To anyone within communications range...” The female voice sounded familiar to Kale, but he could not immediately place it. “...This is the Federation starship *Genesis*. We are disabled and adrift. If you can assist, please respond.” Kale’s jaw dropped open as he suddenly realized where he knew the voice from.

“Mister A-ZuRQuIL,” Kale ordered to the tall Capellan warrior standing at the tactical post. “Hail them!”

“You’re on, sir,” A-ZuRQuIL responded.

“Kaja? Kaja, this is Kalin Kale aboard the *Sarek*.”

“Kalin! Kalin Kale?!? Don’t take this the wrong way, I’m glad to hear your voice, but what are you doing in the Beta Quadrant?”

“Ahh... Kaja? I don’t quite know how to break this to you... Umm... Welcome to the Gamma Quadrant?”

There was dead silence over the speaker for about thirty seconds.

“You’re kidding,” Kaja Rebel finally replied, deadpan.

“I’m afraid not. We’re minutes away from you. We’ll see if we can figure this out together when we get there.”

On the viewscreen, the familiar shape of another Galaxy-class starship grew in size until vessel's name and the hull number were clearly visible. Most of the external lights on the *Genesis* were dark, and the glow of the warp nacelles, normally a dynamic blue, were a dull copper color. The ship drifted slowly. *Sarek* eased up next to her sister-ship.

In *Sarek's* transporter room three, Ensign Ron Giacobbe set the coordinates to beam T'Veer's engineering team over to assist their *Genesis* counterparts. Kale strode purposefully into the room.

"Mister Giacobbe, beam Captain Rebel here please."

"Yes, Captain. I've received the signal that *Genesis* is ready to transport."

"Energize."

The transporter hummed to life, and on the platform the form of Captain Kaja Rebel materialized, along with two members of her crew.

"Welcome aboard the *Sarek*, Captain," Kale said formally, then stepped up to give his friend a hug. "I haven't seen you since the last time we docked at *DS9*. What are you doing in the Gamma Quadrant, in my neck o' the woods?"

"I wish I knew. Kalin, this is my first officer, Commander Valquis," Rebel indicated the stern looking Klingon woman in the red Starfleet uniform, "...and Lt Commander Krystah, my security chief." Kale performed a Klingon salute for the two women.

"Captain?" T'Veer, who had been standing off to the side of the room with her staff, interrupted.

"Oh... Yes. Commander T'Veer and her staff would like to assist your engineering crew. With your permission, of course."

"By all means, please," Rebel replied.

T'Veer and her staff mounted the platform as Kale escorted his three guests to the observation lounge.

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In the lounge, Kale, first officer Cosna, security chief Penji Fil, and assistant engineer V'Pier N'Vorda listened as Rebel and her crew relayed the story of how the *Genesis* unexpectedly lost control and found themselves in the Gamma Quadrant.

"I never would have believed we were even in the Gamma Quadrant if we didn't bump into you, Kalin," Rebel explained. "Our sensors are down along with most of our other systems. We had no navigational data to let us know where we are."

"Is it possible you ran into some previously undiscovered wormhole?" suggested Lt Commander Cosna.

"Unlikely. It had none of the usual indications associated with wormholes. And the Doppler shift on the passing stars indicated we were at least in warp-speed if not moving through real-space. That was no wormhole," Rebel replied.

The discussion was interrupted by the intercom.

"T'Veer to *Sarek*."

"Go ahead, Commander," Kale replied.

"Working with Commander Atraydees' staff, we have restored eighty percent power to the *Genesis*, including navigational sensors. More than enough to get underway."

"Very good, T'Veer. Return to the *Sarek*. Kale to bridge. Plot a course for the Bajoran Wormhole. As soon as the *Genesis* reports they are ready, accelerate to warp two."

"Aye, sirrrr," purred Ensign Pr'n Kes' reply.

* * * *

An hour later, after the two ships had started on their week-long journey toward the Bajoran Wormhole and Valquis and Krystah had returned to the *Genesis*, Captain Rebel was sitting with Kale on the *Sarek's* bridge.

"I still don't understand how we got all the way here, literally on the other side of the galaxy!" Rebel said. T'Veer, who had been monitoring her engineering displays at the rear of the bridge, turned and walked toward the horseshoe.

"Logic suggests that it was not a natural phenomenon at all. Circumstances – and our own experience – point to the intervention of *Q*," she said.

"I was thinking that myself," Kale said with a groan.

Suddenly, there was the sound of a single pair of hands slowly clapping from the alcove of the observation lounge hallway. Everyone on the bridge turned to look at the man standing there.

"Well done. I was wondering how many years I would have to wait before you finally figured it out."

"Not again," muttered Kale.

"You know him?" Rebel asked.

Q, dressed in the uniform of a Starfleet admiral, stepped out of the shadow and stood close to Penji Fil at tactical.

"Why can't you leave us alone?" Fil demanded to know.

"Because I like you," *Q* replied with a smile.

"Gee, I wonder what would happen if he hated us?" Cosna muttered under her breath. *Q* glared in the direction of the *Sarek's* first officer and snapped his fingers. With a bright flash of light, Cosna suddenly turned into a Terran parrot, her feathers red and black much like the uniform she normally wore, sitting on a meter-tall perch.

"AWK! ...Hated us. Hated us... AWK! AWK!" the parrot squawked. Then just as suddenly, the bird returned to the human form of Yu-Fen Cosna.

"Are you alright, Number One?" Kale asked.

Confused, Cosna replied, "I'm fine, except for a sudden craving for salt crackers." Rebel's eyes were wide with amazement.

"So you're *Q*? The one I've read so much about?" she said.

Q, suddenly with a feathered musketeer's hat in hand, made a formal bow and said, "None other, m'lady." At that moment, the turbolift doors parted and out stepped Lt Tredworth.

"Captain, I'm..." she started to say when she saw *Q*, immediately turned around, and walked right back into the turbolift.

"My, my," said *Q*. "I wonder what's eating at her?"

"That's it!" Kale shouted, attracting everyone's attention. "What in the universe could you possibly want now, *Q*?"

"To save you some trouble, and perhaps your miserable lives."

* * * *

In Kale's ready room, Kale, Cosna, and Rebel listened while *Q*, who stretched out on the couch, explained why he had brought the two starships together.

"As I've often told others, including my good friend Jean-Luc, it's dangerous out here. Especially to you lower life-forms."

"*Q*," Kale said angrily, "we've been through all this before."

"You've encountered this *Q* before?" Rebel asked.

"Twice," Cosna answered with disdain. "The first time he abducted our civilian ombudsman and trapped her on the holodeck."

"I was merely giving her new perspective on life," *Q* injected.

"And the second time, he transported the entire ship into the Romulan Star Empire," Cosna finished.

"Left us in orbit of Remus, no less!" Kale added.

"A nice touch, I thought," *Q* said with a smile. "Especially since you dared me to play with the Romulans after our first encounter."

"...And abducted another member of my crew, the same science officer you saw earlier, placing her in the middle of the bridge of a nearby warbird," Kale continued to explain.

"She got you a cloaking device, didn't she?" *Q* said defensively. "Not to mention a pair of interesting Romulan throwbacks."

"Let's cut to the chase, *Q*," Kale said, anger brewing in his eyes. "What do you want?"

"To tell you the truth, as I said before, I've grown to like you. So I thought I would help. Because what you're about to encounter only one ship alone would not survive." And with a flash, *Q* disappeared.

"Great," muttered Cosna.

"What do you think he means?" Rebel asked.

"It's going to take several days before we reach the wormhole," Kale sighed. "And we're in for an interesting week."

* * * *

The next two days passed uneventfully. Both ships, traveling at the damaged *Genesis*' top speed of warp three, maintained yellow alert the entire time. The crews were starting to get on edge, but nothing indicated any imminent danger. And *Q* had not again reappeared.

Aboard *Sarek*, Kale was discussing a plan with his chief engineer.

"T'Veer, is it possible to extend our cloaking shields to cover the *Genesis* as well. I would be willing to extend our voyage a day or two if we can both get to the wormhole cloaked."

"Lt Commander N'Vorda has still not been able to completely tune the cloaking device with our shield generators completely to his liking yet, but I will endeavor to implement your idea, Captain," the Vulcan replied.

Kale returned to his center seat. Reading from a padd displaying the *Genesis*' current capabilities, his attention was momentarily diverted by security chief Penji Fil.

"Captain, incoming message from the *Genesis*."

"On screen." The viewer blinked to the near mirror image of the *Genesis*' bridge.

"Kalin," said Kaja Rebel as she relaxed in her own command chair. "I'd like to invite you and your senior staff to dinner aboard the *Genesis*. Tonight at 1830 hours?"

"That would be great, Kaja. I'll inform my staff. See you in a few hours."

"Till then. *Genesis*, out."

* * * *

The *Sarek* senior staff; Kale, Cosna, T'Veer, Fil, Arbelo, Counselor Sutherland, the Bajoran Doctor Rasa Palin, civilian ombudsman Val'ri Raijajh, science officer T'Ashara, and Shawn Clove – Cosna's young son – were being escorted to the *Genesis*' holodeck one for dinner by Captain Rebel's chief engineer, Kenton Atraydees.

"Commander T'Veer," the NuAlphan man said to the *Sarek*'s half-Vulcan engineer as she strolled through the corridor. "I must thank you again for all your assistance in getting our main engines back on line."

"No thanks are necessary, Commander. I was only doing the logical thing. I would wish to be assisted myself, were I to find the *Sarek* in a similar situation."

The holodeck doors parted at the group's approach, revealing a formal dining room similar to the one at Starfleet Command, and the *Genesis* senior staff, who had gathered inside, rose to greet their fellow officers. Most started mingling with their counterpart from the other ship. Penji Fil at once joined fellow security officer Krystah, whom he had formed a friendship with since some

members of the crew had met briefly at *DS9* the previous year. After drinks and before-dinner conversation, many started sitting down to eat from the buffet that had been set up along one wall.

"I have T'Veer looking into the possibility of extending our cloaking shields to cover your ship," Kale said to Captain Rebel as he started piling food on his own plate. "We'll have to travel slower, but if it works, it will take the strain off of your engines."

"Thank you, Kalin. I curse *Q* every minute that we're here. Why would a being do this to other sentient life forms?"

"No one has been able to understand the *Q*. The closest has probably been Captain Picard of the *Enterprise*. The purpose of bringing you and your ship here is probably nothing more than for his own amusement." As the evening continued, both senior staffs continued to converse, the *Sarek's* crew catching up on events occurring in the Federation that they had yet to hear about, including the latest gossip, the recent disappearance of the Intrepid-class starship *USS Voyager* during a mission in the Badlands near the Cardassian border. Then the intercom sounded.

"Valquis to Rebel. Sensors are indicating a very large ship, type and origin unknown, currently five light years away but it will cross our present course very close to us," the *Genesis's* first officer reported gruffly. Kale and Rebel looked at each other anxiously.

"*Sarek* crew, report back to the transporter room," Kale ordered. All members of both crews, some still holding food or drinks, looked at the Centauri officer.

"Now!" Cosna shouted, bringing everyone back to their first duty of being Starfleet officers. Everyone rose and started scrambling to their assigned sections. As the senior staff hurried through the corridors, Kale tapped his combadge.

"Kale to *Sarek*. The *Genesis* has detected a large vessel ahead of us. We're on our way back. Slow to warp one and sound general quarters."

"Aye, sir," responded N'Vorda. "Our long range sensors have likewise detected the vessel. I was about to contact and inform you."

"Stand by to beam us all back aboard, Mister N'Vorda."

Shortly after the *Sarek* staff beamed back, Kale entered his bridge.

"Commander, can we extend the cloak over *Genesis*?" he asked the shape-shifting assistant chief engineer.

"No, sir," N'Vorda replied. "If we try, we'll blow the ODN connection and power conduits, and then it will be useless to us as well."

"Damn," Kale muttered. "Penji, hail the *Genesis*."

"*Genesis* here," responded Rebel's voice.

"I'm sorry, Kaja. We can't cloak you. But don't worry. We are going to remain very close by."

"No problem," Rebel's strained voice replied.

"Captain, unidentified craft is now three light years distant," reported Arbelo from ops.

"Have they scanned us?"

"No indications we've been scanned."

"Mister Fil, engage the cloak. Sound red alert."

"Aye."

And with a hum, *Sarek* faded from view.

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"The *Sarek* is gone," reported Davion.

"Kalin's still there. I can feel him," Rebel stated.

"You're empathic ability, Captain?" Valquis asked.

"No. I just know people like Kalin Kale. When he says he'll be close, he's close." The bridge remained silent for a moment, the only sound that of the normal background noises, until broken several minutes later by Krystah.

"Unidentified vessel has altered course. They are now on a direct intercept course with us."

"Red alert!" ordered Valquis.

On the screen, though still a great distance away, the alien vessel was already visible.

"I'm reading that object as ten times larger than the *Genesis*," reported Davion with disbelief.

"Could that be a Borg vessel?" conn officer Quace asked.

"Unknown, but unlikely," responded Krystah. "There are none of the usual Borg indicators." By now, the huge misshapen ship was filling the main viewer.

"Slow to impulse," Rebel ordered.

"Slowing..." Quace started to say when suddenly the entire ship shook.

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On the *Sarek*, the bridge crew looked on helplessly as the *Genesis* was captured in a powerful tractor beam.

"Will a maximum phaser strike weaken it?" Fil asked.

"Unlikely," responded Arbelo. "That beam has five times the strength of the Borg tractor we encountered recently."

"What is that? It looks like a hundred ships all stuck together," Cosna commented.

"That's exactly what it is."

The crew whirled around to see *Q*, dressed again in a captain's uniform, lounging over the arms of the command chair. Immediately Fil leaped over the rail to confront the intruder, even knowing whatever he did would be useless.

"*Q*!" Kale said warningly.

"Watch the screen, Kalin, my young friend," *Q* said, straightening in the chair. "This should be entertaining."

Kale turned to watch. At the sound of *Q*'s snapping fingers the *Genesis* seemed to blast away from the huge alien craft, only to be caught by another tractor projector fractions of a second later. *Q* demonstrated this again five more times. Each time, the *Genesis* was caught easier than the time before.

"See? Even I can't help them right now," *Q* admitted.

Slowly, her engines straining to the breaking point, the *Genesis* was being drawn toward a huge bay in the alien craft.

"Somehow they can sense my powers and compensate for the effect," *Q* said. "They are called the Benj. Originally inhabitants of a planet halfway across the quadrant, only five thousand of them survived a supernova that destroyed their system centuries ago. Those survivors fled in a ship not much larger than your own. Desperate to survive, the remaining Benj started capturing any artificial artifact – probes, useless space-junk – they happened across in their travels and used it to enlarge and improve their own vessel. Those artifacts eventually included manned spacecraft. And the Benj now number over five hundred thousand."

"So that's why it looks like a graveyard of lost ships," Cosna whispered.

"Funny you should use that word, Mickey, my dear," *Q* said. Cosna frowned at the entity's use of her middle name, something reserved only for the best of her friends. *Q* continued as if he did not notice or care. "If the crews of the ships they capture aren't 'true life-forms,' by the Benj's definition of the term – meaning like the Benj in all respects – they are either used as resource material – meaning food – or simply jettisoned alive from the ship as waste material."

"And the Benj definition of a true life-form?" Kale asked with dread, watching the gap between the huge world-ship and the *Genesis* slowly decrease.

"The Benj are insectoid, Kalin. Not bipedal primates like yourself. But maybe Captain Rebel's crew will be real good and the Benj won't notice the difference." *Q* started chuckling at his own joke. He elbowed Fil, who just glared at him. "Get it? Bee good? Heh, heh."

Kale walked right up to *Q*, glared at the omnipotent being directly in the eyes, and said, "*Q*, if you don't get that ship out of danger in the next thirty seconds, I will see to it that all the Federation's research and development is concentrated on a project to capture you and hold you as an exhibit in a zoo!"

"Well, if you're going to get testy," and with a flash, *Q* vanished.

"Now what are we going to do?" Cosna asked.

"Don't worry, Number One. I'm convinced that *Q* was truthful when he showed us he can't just snap the *Genesis* out of harms way. I just wanted him out of my hair." Kale turned to face the viewscreen where the *Genesis* was still being drawn into the Benj world-ship.

"Alright, people," he said, clapping his hands twice for emphasis. "I want ideas, and I want them now."

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"Power drain down to sixty six percent," Davion reported.

"We broke free several times for a few moments before! Find out what we did and let's put our all into it to escape this tractor beam!" Rebel ordered.

"Captain, I'm afraid we didn't cause those breaks. I don't know what did, but we can't duplicate it, not even for a split second." Rebel's stomach felt like it dropped to her feet. A wave of nausea almost overwhelmed her.

"Engineering to bridge!"

Down in engineering, the *Genesis* crew was running to and fro, checking gages and trying to coax more power from the warp core. At the chief engineer's station, Kenton Atraydees frowned at the display on his monitor.

"Rebel. Go ahead," came the reply over the intercom.

"Captain, we have a major problem. The strain this tractor beam is exerting has caused our dilithium crystal to fracture. It's only a hairline fracture right now, but if it cracks wide open, we'll lose all warp power. I have to decrease the strain."

"Hold it together for just a few moments longer, Engineer. One way or another, this will all be over soon."

"Aye, Captain," Atraydees said with a sigh. "Engineering, out."

"One way or the other, Captain?" said Valquis with undisguised contempt. "You know very well how this will end, and I say let's die on our feet rather than live on our knees!"

"Captain!" shouted Krystah from behind. "Torpedo incoming! Bearing 190 mark 1!" On the screen the red flash of a photon torpedo was perceived as it flew past the *Genesis*' saucer and struck the alien ship directly on the tractor beam emitter. This was followed by several other torpedoes striking all the other emitters that had been used during *Q*'s short demonstration of his own helplessness.

"By Kahless, where did those come from?" Valquis demanded.

A grin spread on Rebel's face.

"The *Sarek*! Kalin can fire torpedoes while cloaked!"

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“*Genesis* is free and starting to move away from the Benj ship at one-quarter impulse,” reported Fil.

“Number One, did you notice that a couple of torpedoes were targeted by the tractor beams before they struck the emitters?” Kale asked his first officer. The Asian woman nodded.

“That gives me an...” Kale’s sentence was interrupted by Arbelo.

“Another tractor has locked on the *Genesis*! They’re being pulled in again.”

“Damn !”

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“Negative response on helm,” Quace reported. “They’ve got us again.”

“Captain, *Sarek* is decloaking to starboard,” Krystah reported.

On the screen, the other starship could be seen fading into view and breaking formation, coming around the edge of the world-ship. Hatches on the *Sarek*’s outer hull slid open and mega-phaser turrets flipped out into position. The *Sarek*’s heavy firepower began assaulting the world-ship’s surface.

“What are you doing, Kalin?” Rebel muttered to herself.

“Captain, the tractor has disengaged. We’re free again!” reported Davion.

“Helm, get us away, fastest possible speed!”

“Oh, no!” Krystah cried out.

As the starship banked away, on the screen could be seen the reason for the alien’s sudden lack of interest in the *Genesis*. The *Sarek*, having made a nuisance of herself and displaying her more valuable systems, was now locked in the midst of a tug-of-war with the alien’s tractor beam.

“Helm, belay that last order. Orbit the alien vessel. Stay close to the *Sarek* but don’t make it easy for them to catch us again,” Rebel ordered.

“Aye, sir.”

“Krystah, open hailing frequencies. I want to talk to Captain Kale.”

“Frequencies open,” the Klingon-human hybrid responded.

“Kalin, what are you doing?” Rebel asked.

“We’re a little busy at the moment, Kaja. Can I get back to you a little later?” replied Kale’s stress-filled voice.

“Kalin, we’ve already fractured our dilithium crystal trying to escape. You’re not going to be able to hold them off any better.”

“Kaja, get your ship out of here. If they capture you, your entire crew will die horribly. *Q* says these beings kill any other life-forms they encounter that aren’t insectoid in nature.”

“While I admit you’re starting to bug me, what makes you think your crew is any more likely to survive than mine?”

“Kaja, get your ship away. That’s an order!”

“As soon as you make admiral, I’ll take it under advisement. In the meantime, we’re going to help. Krystah, target the tractor emitter holding the *Sarek* and fire!”

The duel buildups of phased energy followed the curve of the emitter banks and upon meeting near the front, fired on the Benj emitter. The tractor, rather than blowing to pieces as expected, merely changed targets and once again started dragging the damaged *Genesis* closer.

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“Okay, let’s try this from a different angle,” Kale commented. “Mister Kes, plot a course that will safely circumnavigate around the Benj ship at full impulse without any danger of hitting *Genesis*.”

“Aye, sirrrr,” the female Caitian replied. “Plotted and laid in.”

“Engage!”

The *Sarek* started a spiraling course toward the alien vessel that soon smoothed out to a circular plot almost two hundred kilometers from the surface of the Benj world-ship.

“Fire torpedo!”

Fil pressed the trigger and a torpedo flashed out of the forward tube, spinning inward toward the huge ship. Halfway to target a tractor beam leapt out, grabbing the tiny anti-matter detonator and pulling it without trouble into the surface of the ship, where it exploded, causing some minor damage to the outer structure.

“They’re not too particular about what they try to capture, are they?” Kale commented.

“*Q* did say they were desperate for survival,” T’Veer remarked. “Perhaps that desperation has caused them to be less... choosey in what they use to save their world.”

“Too bad the torpedoes can’t carry a larger anti-matter charge,” Cosna commented, studying the hole the size of a small shuttlecraft the last torpedo had made in the Benj ship’s side. Meanwhile the *Genesis* had managed to gain some distance but was again held by a tractor beam. Then Kale’s eyes suddenly widened as understanding dawned.

“Monster, how large of an explosion do you estimate it would take to disable that ship?” Setton To’Lock Arbelo consulted his console displays.

“According to sensors, an anti-matter charge of one hundred and fifty isotons would do it without completely destroying the ship,” the hybrid Terran-Vulcan-Efrosian man said. “Far too large for a torpedo, or even a full spread of torpedoes to accomplish, assuming we could target them all in the same place.”

“T’Veer!” Kale exclaimed, suddenly whirling to face his chief engineer. “Can you rig a shuttlecraft to carry an anti-matter charge of that size?”

T’Veer’s face remained passive for a moment as she computed formulae and mass computations in her head. Finally she answered, “No, Captain.” Kale’s hopeful expression fell flat. “I’ve computed the size of that much anti-matter, plus all the equipment we would need to maintain the magnetic bottle while loading and maintaining such an amount and it far exceeds the size and weight limitations of our shuttles.”

“T’Veer, come on! I’d be willing to sacrifice the our runabout if it may work.”

“The power curve is just too great, Captain. Even for a runabout. We could only hope to safely transport a core with a yield of approximately eighty isotons.” Kale returned to staring at the *Sarek*’s sister-ship on the viewscreen.

“Only half of what we need,” he muttered. Then suddenly a smile spread on his face. “HALF of what we need!”

“No, Captain,” T’Veer said, anticipating his next request. “We only have enough equipment available to modify one shuttlecraft for such a purpose. We can’t do two, nor do we have the anti-matter to spare for such a pursuit.”

“T’Veer, we may have the equipment to modify only one shuttle, but so do they!” He pointed at the *Genesis*. T’Veer contemplated the idea.

“A logical assumption. If they can spare the effort.”

“How long would it take?”

“Approximately fifteen point two two six minutes if both Commander N’Vorda and I work together.”

“Make it so! *Sarek* to *Genesis*. Hold on just twenty more minutes. Relief is coming!”

* * * *

“Just twenty minutes? But Kalin...,” Rebel started to protest. Then realizing the futility of pressing the matter, hit the intercom button instead. “Mister Atraydees, can you keep power up at present levels for another twenty minutes?”

After a few seconds, Atraydees replied, “That’s a rough affirmative, Captain. But not much longer than that. Another fracture has formed in the crystal. We have less than an hour before it shatters.”

“Acknowledged. *Sarek* says relief is on they way. And I hope it gets here soon.”

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In the *Sarek*’s main shuttlebay, the magnetic bottle had just been delivered and was standing alone at the rear of the type 6 shuttlecraft *Molly Pitcher*.

“How long until we can install the bottle, Greg?” T’Veer asked her assistant, using his human-sounding nickname.

“Just a few more adjustments, Commander.” N’Vorda moved his hand next to the new equipment the two engineers had installed in the rear of the shuttle and his fingers stretched out, fitting into small gaps in the device to make the minute adjustments that would ensure the starship’s safety when the time came to launch the little ship. “There! Now, let’s load the anti-matter.”

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Fifteen long minutes passed, the news not getting any better, as the *Genesis* was slowly pulled toward what looked like a docking bay of some sort where scanners had already revealed equipment capable of dismantling the starship to be waiting for the tug-of-war’s inevitable conclusion.

“*Sarek* to *Genesis*,” came Kale’s voice over the speakers.

“Go ahead, Kalin,” Rebel replied, some relief in her voice.

“*Sarek* is currently spiraling in toward your position. We intend to become the target of their attention. When *Genesis* is released, assume a safe trajectory and have your engineering staff implement the plan we’re now transmitting to you.” Rebel rose and looked at the readout screen next to Valquis’ seat.

“You’re joking,” she said as she read it.

“Not at all,” Kale replied. “We’re coming in. Be ready to move away on our mark. Three... Two... One... MARK!”

The *Sarek* swooped down, phasers and mega-phasers firing. As hoped for, the tractor beam let the *Genesis* loose and turned on the *Sarek*. Under Rebel’s orders, the *Genesis* assumed *Sarek*’s former orbit around the Benj world-ship.

* * * *

“Crewman, what are you doing?” V’Pier N’Vorda asked as he walked over to the man who was fiddling around the base of the captured Romulan cloaking device.

“Just tracing a power surge... sir,” the crewman with the dark receding hairline and wearing a gold-shouldered engineer’s uniform replied.

“Well, hurry up. We’ll need everyone at alert stations as soon as they launch that shuttle.”

The crewman looked up.

“Yes, I know,” *Q* sneered.

* * * *

In *Genesis*’ shuttlebay two, the final steps of Kale’s plan were being completed.

“Containment is holding steady,” Atraydees said, checking his tricorder, then showing it to Rebel. “Press this button, and you have a seventy five to eighty isoton anti-matter detonation.”

“Very well,” Rebel said, subtly inching away from the type 6 shuttlecraft designated the *Abacab*. “I’ll be on the bridge. We launch in five minutes.”

“Alright everyone!” Valquis yelled at the top of her lungs. “Clear the shuttlebay! Assume alert stations!” And with that order, the crew cleared out, leaving the *Abacab* alone in the center of the shuttlebay.

* * * *

“Main shuttlebay to bridge. The *Pitcher* is prepped and ready for launch,” T’Veer said over her combadge.

“Very good, Commander. Open the bay door. Launch the shuttle in three minutes from my mark. MARK!”

The huge door of shuttlebay one slowly rose upward. Since no one was in the bay, the deck was depressurized, and the small craft sat exposed to open space. Meanwhile, aboard the *Genesis*, shuttlebay two’s door likewise slid upward. The blue glow of the atmosphere retaining field casting a ghostly glow on the *Abacab*’s viewports.

* * * *

“Launch!” ordered Kale.

* * * *

“Launch the shuttle,” ordered Rebel.

* * * *

From the rear of both starships emerged the shuttlecraft from their respective bays. The *Abacab*, under remote from Lt Commander Davion’s ops panel, maneuvered in place to fly parallel to the *Sarek*’s *Molly Pitcher*. The twin type 6 shuttles slowly made their way toward the huge conglomerate of vessels and parts that made up the entire world of the Benj. Then, as hoped for, the tractor suddenly turned off the *Sarek* and captured the easier targets the pair of shuttles presented.

* * * *

“Move us away!” Kale ordered.

“Follow the *Sarek*! Full impulse!” Rebel said.

* * * *

Within moments, the two shuttles entered the Benj world-ship’s open maw.

“Mister Fil...”

“Mister Atraydees...”

“...DETONATE!”

For a moment, nothing happened. Then the Benj world-ship turned slightly and started following the two fleeing starships, its speed gradually increasing.

"T'Veer," said Kale, desperation tingeing his voice. "Why...?" Kale's words were cut off as a bright light formed in the Benj ship's capture bay. Suddenly a third of the vessel blew apart, chunks of metal and whole cannibalized ships flew off in every direction. Cheers sounded on the bridges of both starships.

"Benj ship is still in pursuit," reported Arbelo. "But sensors indicate they have no tractor beam capability anymore."

"So they'll just chase us until someone runs out of steam first," commented Cosna.

"And with the damage the *Genesis* has sustained, I can guess which of the three of us that will be. What can we do to break off the pursuit?"

"Why not engage your cloak?"

The voice made Kale, Cosna, Arbelo, and Kes turn to look at the tactical post, where instead of Lieutenant Fil, *Q*, dressed in the security chief's uniform, stood watch.

"I'm getting tired of this, *Q*!" Kale warned.

"I went to all that trouble to see that you get a cloaking device, Kalin," *Q* scolded. "I would think you would at least use it."

"And leave the *Genesis* helpless? I can't do that!"

"Do I have to explain EVERYTHING? Just cloak them too."

"And how do you propose I do that?" Kale responded.

Q sighed as if explaining how a rattle makes noise to a baby.

"Like this, of course." And *Q* pressed a control on the tactical console.

* * * *

The Benj were closing in on their quarry when suddenly, and quite unexpectedly to the insectoid species, the two smaller ships faded from view. Utterly disappointed, the Benj slowed, then resumed their former course while they started to repair the damage caused by this sorry and pointless affair.

* * * *

"What did you do?" Kale asked. By now, communications had been established between the two starships, and the *Genesis*' bridge crew was listening in to the conversation.

"I arranged to cloak both ships," *Q* answered smugly.

"I recall you saying you could not assist us," T'Veer pointed out.

"Tut-tut. I said I could not SAVE you. I said nothing about not working on your equipment so you could save yourselves. I knew two of your pathetic brains together could do what one could not." Both Kale and, on the viewscreen, Rebel frowned.

"Why?" Kale demanded.

"Why? Why? Why? That's all anyone ever asks me. Why did I make Riker a *Q*? Why did I have to prove Jean-Luc and Vash actually cared for each other? Why did I abandon Vash in the Gamma Quadrant? Why did I make Raijah a full Vulcan for a day? Why did I abduct Tredworth? Never 'How are you, *Q*?' 'How are you feeling, *Q*?' 'What's new in your life, *Q*?' Always 'Why? Why? Why?'" Kale crossed his arms across his chest and started tapping his foot. *Q* sighed a defeated sigh.

"If you really must know... As you are aware, I've devoted a rather considerable portion of my vast intellect to studying humanity as a whole. It would be a shame to waste some of my best case studies so uselessly. A waste of my precious time..."

Q winked at Kale.

"...And certain raw materials."

"*Q*...", Kale started to say.

"I know, I know. Get off your ship. How predictable."

Q walked over to the lounge hallway doors in the corner of the bridge. Taking in the entire crew present, as well as Rebel's crew on the main viewer.

"Remember Kalin, and you too my dear Kaja. Be careful. You never know what monsters lurk in the dark."

"*Q*...", started Kale. "Considering my ship was heading in this general direction even before the *Genesis* appeared here, and we probably would have encountered the Benj alone..."

"And lost," *Q* interrupted.

"...And lost," Kale admitted. "Well... Thank you."

Q's expression turned to one of surprised gratitude for a split second before his sneer returned and he said, "Hey, don't get the idea in your tiny little primate brains that I might actually like you or something." *Q* then suddenly disappeared in a flash of light to be replaced by a very confused Lieutenant Penji Fil.

"What happened?" Fil asked, looking around to get his bearings.

"Nothing, Mister Fil. You were simply just... well... se-Q-uestered," Kale said with a smile.

* * * *

A week later, without any further problems, the two starships approached the terminus of the Bajoran Wormhole.

“Although it was unexpected, and a bit harrowing at times, it was nice to see you again, Kaja,” Kale said.

On the viewscreen, the blonde human woman smiled.

“Maybe next time we get together, it can be for shore leave and not fighting for our lives? Lord knows I could use some shore leave right now! Thank you, Kalin. My best to your crew,” Rebel said.

“And mine to yours,” the Centauri captain replied as T’Veer stepped up to Kale’s side.

“I do not understand how he did it, sir” the half-Vulcan engineer said. “Q tapped directly into the anti-matter pods to provide the power to cloak both ships, but as soon as we were well out of the Benj world-ship’s sensor range and decloaked, the connection was broken and none of my engineers nor I can figure out how to duplicate it.”

“Don’t bother, T’Veer. At least the Federation is now aware of the Benj, without any mysterious ship losses. Maybe Q really does care about us?”

Pr’n Kes, Counselor Sutherland, and Lt Commander Cosna all looked at each other.

“Nahhh,” they all said in unison.

* * * *

As the ships slowed near the wormhole, another ship with Federation markings patiently awaited their arrival.

“Captain, we’re receiving a hail,” reported Krystah.

“On screen,” Rebel ordered.

“Boy, turn our back for one minute and you disappear! It’s about time you got here,” said Admiral Cheryl Marlan, commanding the *USS Nightwing*, in a mock-serious tone. “Welcome back, *Genesis*. We’re here to escort you home. There’s a drydock in the Alpha Quadrant with your name on it.”

“Thank you, Admiral,” said Rebel with a smile. “It’s nice to know we were missed. And good to know we’ll be getting home.”

* * * *

The *Sarek* stood by as the *Genesis* and *Nightwing* maneuvered around and entered the wormhole. With a final casual salute to his friend, Kale ordered a new course entered into the helm, and the *Sarek* quickly turned to once again explore the unknown!

The End

The origins of this story go back to near the beginning of the fan club chapter USS Sarek. In command of the New York City chapter of The Federation: A Star Trek Fan Association at the time, I had chosen several other chapters from the Federation roster and written letters of introduction, intending to open lines of communication and friendship with fellow fans in other parts of the country. Of the several chapters I wrote to, only the Florida chapter USS Genesis NCC-2617 responded to my hails.

*Friendships were formed between the Genesis and Sarek crews, mainly between counterparts; my chief of security becoming pen pals with Genesis’ security chief, engineer to engineer, captain to captain, etc. After several months of correspondence, it was decided I would write a mutual adventure for the two starships – with the input of the Genesis crew – to be published in both the Sarek newsletter, **Wormhole Warble**, and the Genesis’ newsletter. The story was completed in late 1994 and a copy was mailed to the Genesis’ captain in Florida.*

*Unfortunately, the story never got published in **Wormhole Warble** before my enlistment in the US Navy began in January 1995. The story finally appeared almost a year later in a special fanzine issue called **Sarek Synopsis** during the 1995 holiday season. And while correspondence between myself and the Genesis’ captain continued for some time into my Navy enlistment, both crews eventually lost touch as the Sarek fell apart as a fan club chapter in early 1996.*

“Re-Q-nion” was the last USS Sarek story written (“A Fond Farewell” was written a couple of months prior to the conception of this mutual Sarek/Genesis adventure when it was known I would be leaving New York and the command of the Sarek) before the chapter was deactivated a little more than a year later, until “Return to Duty” was written in the year 2000.

~Cap’n Pete