

Previously on Star Trek: Sarek...

When the USS Sarek is recalled to the Alpha Quadrant, Captain Kalin Kale is promoted to the Advanced Starship Design Bureau at Utopia Planitia Fleetyard and his former starship is assigned to patrol the Cardassian Demilitarized Zone for three months under the command of Commander Yu-Fen M. Cosna before returning to Utopia Planitia where Cosna will join Kale's design team and the starship will be turned over to the command of the starship's current chief engineer, T'Veer.

Three months later, the starship is heading back to Sector 001.

And now, the conclusion...

Captain's log, stardate 48918.5:

The Sarek's patrol of the Cardassian Demilitarized Zone has ended and the ship has received orders to report to Utopia Planitia Fleetyards for a minor systems upgrade. While there, I will step down from command during a ceremony that will promote Chief Engineer/Executive Officer T'Veer to Captain and assign her to the command of this ship. While my new posting under the Sarek's former commander, Captain Kalin Kale, at the Essex-Class Development Project is certainly a step up in my career, I am beginning to feel what Kalin must have felt when he left three months ago. I will miss this ship and crew. And despite the misgivings I had when I joined this ship back in early 2370, I feel I will never find another crew to take the place in my heart that this crew now occupies.

Ship and crew are at full readiness. Lieutenant (JG) Kes has reported we should arrive in Sector 001 within five days.

Cosna, out.

The bridge was bustling with activity. Everyone was busy but the commanding officer, who sat in the center seat, a look of sadness on her face.

Commander T'Veer, who had been sitting in the first officer's seat to the right of the captain, had been trying to ignore the emotional display, but to no avail.

"Captain, what is bothering you?" she asked Cosna.

After a moment, Cosna stirred, looking at T'Veer

"Hmm? What? Oh, I'm sorry, T'Veer. It's just... well, I've been thinking about the impending time when I will have to leave the ship."

"But you have known for three months that you were being reassigned. Why do you let it bother you now?"

"Because, for three months, we were busy. Patrolling the DMZ. Stopping unauthorized ships. Searching for illegal weapons. We even had to chase down that Cardassian freighter and take it into tow. We had things to occupy our minds. Now.... all I can do is think about the upcoming ceremony when I will step down."

"What would prevent you from thinking unpleasant thoughts?"

"I don't know. Maybe if I go down to a holodeck or..."

The young commanding officer's thought was cut off when Lieutenant Arbelo at the ops position attracted her attention.

"Captain, sensors are registering some kind of artificial object moving directly across our present course."

"What is it?" asked Cosna.

"From what I can tell, it appears to be a... probe of some sort."

"Mister Kes," said Cosna to the Caitain helm officer at the conn. "Slow to impulse, put us on a parallel course with the probe."

T'Veer turned to Cosna.

"Are you certain you want to start investigating this now? We could simply take note of the probe's course and speed and inform another nearby Starfleet vessel to investigate."

"Hey," Cosna replied, "it's something to keep us occupied. Besides, how long could it take?"

"Captain," said science officer T'Ashara, who was sitting at the aft Science I console. "The probe is emitting a low level scan of the *Sarek*. It is transmitting back along a route roughly equivalent to the course that the probe itself took getting here."

"Triangulate. Find out where this probe originated," ordered the young Asian woman as she stood and walked toward ops. As she did, Arbelo turned towards her.

"Captain, universal translator is picking up and deciphering a message from the probe."

"On speakers."

A somewhat garbled sounding mechanical voice emerged from the bridge speakers talking in stuttering Federation standard.

"Greeting to outworlder. We am the inhabiter of the second planet of the Qualen star. We am inviting you, who are obviously travelers among stars, to visit planet ours. Approach station *Lyrans 5* and greet us. End message. Message repeat... Greeting to outworlder..."

As the message again repeated, Cosna looked at the ops panel in front of Arbelo.

“Monster,” she said. “Have you found where the probe originates?”

“Yes. The star system listed in Federation records as Sigma 2-9. Five planets. Charted in 2358 but never explored.”

Cosna looked at her first officer. T’Veer raised her eyebrow in reply. Cosna then turned to Kes at the conn.

“Lieutenant, set course for the Sigma 2-9 system, warp three. Mister Fil, contact *Utopia Planitia*. Inform them we may be delayed by a day or so.”

“Captain, do you believe we should go off our schedule?” asked T’Veer. “After all, we have a ceremony to attend.”

“T’Veer, Starfleet isn’t going to hold the change of command ceremony without us. And besides, the mission of this ship is to contact new civilizations. We have a previously unknown civilization that’s asking to be contacted. We can’t just ignore it.”

“Perhaps we could have Starfleet send another ship to...”

“T’Veer, please. Let me have this one. I’m not going back to the Gamma Quadrant like you are. It’s my final week of command. Who knows if I’ll ever get another opportunity like this! I need to do this!”

“Your need is an emotional one. But I suppose we could ‘check things out’. Agreed.”

“Mister Kes, has the course been entered?” asked Cosna.

“Affirrrrmative, Captain.”

Signaling with her fingers, Cosna ordered with a smile, “Engage!”

Space, The Final Frontier...

These are the voyages of the starship *Sarek*!

Her ongoing mission: To seek new life. To contact new civilizations.

To Boldy Explore the Unknown!

Star Trek: Sarek

“A Fond Farewell – Part 2” by PJK

This story is dedicated to the original Senior Staff of the Federation Chapter *USS Sarek NCC-72075*, without whom the starship *Sarek* would have been no more than fragmented ideas in the back of my mind.

Thanks guys, for providing the Wormhole to let a starship FLY!

The *Sarek* entered the Sigma 2-9 system, now being catalogued as the Qualen star system, three Class III probes preceding her.

“Now receiving telemetry from probes,” reported T’Ashara.

“Report,” ordered T’Veer.

“Five planets in the system. Planet five is a gas giant with rings, Class J, diameter 54,241 kilometers. Planet four is terrestrial, Class E, no life.”

Arbelo then continued the report. “Telemetry from Probe 2 is reporting planet three to be Class K, no evidence of life. Planet one is Class B, with a surface temperature of 2500 degrees Celsius.”

“Probe 3 is now approaching planet two,” said T’Ashara. “Reading a Class M environment. Oxygen/Nitrogen atmosphere, slightly higher oxygen content than Terra. Indications of artificial satellites and space stations in low orbit. Numerous spacecraft in the vicinity of the planet and its three moons.”

“Dis must be de place!” remarked Arbelo with a smile.

“Mister Fil, open a hailing frequency to the planet,” ordered Cosna.

The frequency chimed and Fil nodded to Cosna.

“Greetings inhabitants of the planet Qualen II. This is the *United Starship Sarek*, representing the United Federation of Planets. We received the invitation from the probe you sent toward the galactic core and wish to open relations with you.”

Cosna waited a moment. Nothing happened.

“I repeat,” Cosna finally said again. “This is the *USS Sarek*. We received your probe’s invitation and wish to make contact.” Again, nothing happened, until Arbelo called for the captain’s attention.

“Mic, five of the Qualen spacecraft that had been traveling between the planet and their second moon have altered course to intercept us.”

As Cosna leaned over to look at the indications on Arbelo’s console, Fil announced, “We are receiving a reply from one of the approaching ships, Mic.”

“On screen.”

The main viewscreen changed to the view of a humanoid male, looking about forty Terran years of age, his mouth covered by some form of breathing apparatus. His green hair and light blue complexion looked strange on the screen.

“*Sarek* - please - stand - by - while - your - language - is - translated ,” said a mechanical sounding voice. The being on the screen could be seen working various controls on the panel he faced.

“Greetings, United Starship Sarek. I am Philton First Level Mox Tronna Grebbeck, Commander of the Legion. I welcome you and your...”

The being looked at something on his controls. His eyes went wide momentarily.

“...Your IMMENSE vessel to our home world.”

It was obvious from the Commander’s tone that he was impressed by the size of the Federation ship. He continued.

“Please bring your ship to our *Lyrans 5* station where we can greet you properly Commander United Starship Sarek.”

Cosna spoke.

“This is Commander Yu-Fen M. Cosna, commander of the starship *Sarek*. We accept your invitation.”

The Legion Commander showed some embarrassment at having mistaken the ship’s name for that of its commanding officer. He cut the visual connection, and the screen returned to the external view, which showed the five Qualen ships now in formation around the *Sarek*, escorting her back to their planet.

“Captain,” said Counselor Kethry Sutherland, pulling Cosna slightly to the side, “I just thought you should know. He was pleased to see us. Maybe too pleased. And that pleasure grew when he realized how large our ship actually is. Not the reaction you would expect from a previously un-contacted civilization who have no real idea whether we’re in fact hostile or not.”

Cosna glanced at the screen showing two of the shuttlecraft sized Qualen ships that were escorting them.

“What else should they feel? They invited us.”

“I know, Mic. But it is still not what I would expect. Experience has shown me that most new species react with at least a little fear. Even Earth was suspicious when the Vulcan survey ship first landed in Montana over three hundred years ago.”

Again Cosna glanced at the tiny ships on the screen, saying to Sutherland, “I’ll take it under advisement,” as she returned to the command chair.

The trip to the *Lyrans 5* station took almost half an hour at the speed the Qualen ships travelled. The *Sarek* maneuvered into a parking orbit and was surrounded by many other seemingly curious ships.

“Parrrrking orrrrrbit established, Captain,” said Kes.

“Captain,” said Fil with concern, “I’ve lost contact with decks thirty two through thirty seven.”

“What?” asked T’Veer with concern as she rushed up to the engineering display at the aft stations.

“What’s wrong?” asked Cosna.

“Unknown,” replied Fil. “Could be some sort of natural interference from the planet I suppose.”

“Captain!” now exclaimed Arbelo. “I’ve lost all readings on decks twelve through fifteen in the saucer section.”

“Captain, internal scans are not working,” informed T’Veer.

“That’s it! Go to yellow alert!”

“But, Captain. What about ourrrr docking with the Qualen space station?” asked Kes.

“We’ve got a problem to deal with first. Mister Fil, contact the Qualen’s and tell them...”

The viewscreen blinked. The face of the Commander of the Legion, Mox Tronna Grebbeck again appeared.

“To the crew of the *United Starship Sarek*. We hereby claim your ship as our own in our effort to expand the Qualen Hegemony to the stars. As is usual with the ships we claim, you and your crew will be omitted from this plain. We thank you for your cooperation and look forward to your company in the next plain.” The screen blinked back to the image of Qualen II.

“What is that supposed to mean?” asked Arbelo.

“It means upgrade status to red alert. Mister Fil, issue phasers to all crew members.”

The alert klaxons sounded as Fil started handing phasers from a storage locker to everyone on the bridge. Suddenly, the klaxons went silent.

“Captain, I’m reading some form of knockout gas filling decks eight through twenty in the stardrive section,” reported T’Veer.

“I’m reading transporter traces in the battle bridge,” said Fil.

Before Cosna could react, a somewhat familiar hum started in the corner of the bridge. Five outlines started forming.

“Defend the bridge!” shouted Cosna as six phasers pointed at the materializing forms.

Fil fired first, his beam hitting the first of the enemy troops to completely materialize. But it was obvious that the aliens expected this and the others ducked, firing in return. Kes, the closest of the bridge crew to where the aliens materialized attempted to get up from the conn and fire her phaser, but was stopped mid-stride when one of the blue-skinned aliens fired a blast of something at the fleeing Cait. She fell to the deck, frozen in place by the alien weapon.

Another group of aliens beamed in on the rear portion of the bridge. Cosna, realizing her crew was outnumbered, ordered a retreat from the bridge.

The remaining *Sarek* crew started heading toward the one remaining turbolift, the aliens close behind. As the doors started closing, Cosna could see the two Vulcans, T’Veer and T’Ashara, fighting their way toward the observation lounge hallway, passing into the doors. But to her shock and sorrow, the last glimpse she had was of T’Veer going down under the blast of the alien’s disrupter.

The small group of Cosna, Arbelo, and Fil made their way down to deck four, and exited the turbolift. Touching the nearest panel, Cosna said, “Override protocol, Cosna-Delta-Omega-Niner. Override and disconnect all command and engineering functions.”

“All command and engineering functions are now disconnected. Only a clearance Alpha-2 or higher can reinstate functions,” the ship’s computer reported.

“Come on,” Cosna ordered.

The trio made their way along the corridor, here and there hearing the sounds of crew being hit, and some even killed, by the alien's weapons. They entered a Jeffries tube intersection and made their way down to deck six. Exiting the tube, Cosna was horrified to see the sight that greeted them.

A number of the starship's civilian complement – including three children – were hung upside down from the corridor ceiling, obviously dead. Another dozen or so lay along the sides of the corridor. Arbelo took out his tricorder and scanned those laying on the deck.

"They're alive, Captain, though barely. The Qualen's must have used their knockout gas here."

"The Learning Center!" Cosna shouted. "This way!"

The door to the ship's school opened sluggishly at their approach.

The school area had been expanded in the last year to make room for the Starfleet Academy Annex to train newly contacted beings from the Gamma Quadrant to become Starfleet Officers. The horror was evident on all three faces when they entered the Annex. The Command-Division Lieutenant – Bill Toreth – who taught the classes, and three of the four alien students from parts of the Gamma Quadrant present in the room were dead, their heads decapitated. Cosna rushed next door to where the primary school classes were held, her heart in her throat.

In the primary classroom, she found Val'ri Raiajh slumped over on the front desk. Her class of twenty primary school children were literally piled in a corner. Cosna fell to her knees, tears starting to flow down her face.

Arbelo and Fil entered the room, Fil moving to comfort Cosna, Arbelo scanning the pile of children. To his surprise, all the children were still alive. He started moving them off of one another so they would not suffocate each other, when they heard Raiajh moan softly.

Arbelo continued checking the children while Cosna and Fil moved over to the slowly-waking Raiajh.

"Aliens...," she moaned again. "Killed... Academy Annex group... wanted to kill us all.... Leader was distracted by.... will... willk..."

Odd colored blood seeped from a wound in Raiajh's neck. Fil applied pressure while Cosna retrieved the classroom's first aid kit and applied a healing agent to the Vulcan-Deltan woman's wound.

"Captain," called Arbelo. "I've found your son."

Cosna finished what she was doing with Raiajh, allowing Fil to complete the job of bandaging the wound, and joined Arbelo. On the deck lay the unmoving form of her seven year old son, Shawn Clove. Cosna felt the young boy's neck, and was relieved to find a weak though steady pulse. She hugged the boy for a moment before gently returning him to the deck and returning her attention to the matter at hand.

"Penji, is there a way to seal off this area of the ship so that no one can enter without authorization?"

"Yes."

Suddenly, a young girl entered from another room of the school. She paused by the door, a look of utter fear on her face, before starting to run toward the front desk. "Mommy!" she cried.

Fil caught the little girl, whom Cosna recognized as Charissa Xaran, a close friend of her son's, before she could run into Raiajh.

"Take it easy, Charissa," said Fil. "Your mommy will be alright."

"Can Val'ri take care of herself and the children now?" Cosna asked.

Raiajh's eyes opened at the mention of her name. She gazed at Cosna unsteadily.

"I... I think I... can, ...Captain."

"OK. Val'ri, we're going to seal off the learning center. That way you and the kids will be safe. We also are sealing the Annex.

"I... can understand that."

"Stay safe."

Cosna, Fil, and Arbelo left the learning center. Fil pressed his hand against one of the wall panels.

"Computer, seal off deck six, section B-9 through D-12, and initiate quarantine forcefield."

"Your request is a command function and cannot be initiated without proper authorization."

"Computer," said Cosna. "Command authorization Cosna-Alpha-One-One-Six-Theta-Nine. Proceed with section seal-off and quarantine."

A hum sounded from the bulkhead next to the trio.

"Seal-off and quarantine are in effect for deck six, sections B-9 through D-12."

"Come on!"

The three started heading to where another Jeffries tube could lead them to the battle bridge. As they rounded a corner, they were suddenly in the sights of a weapon.

"HALT!" shouted the tall warrior.

"A-ZuRQuIL! It's the Captain and me," said Fil urgently.

The Capellan warrior slumped against the bulkhead of the corridor, obviously glad the group were his allies. Cosna noticed the blood stain on the side of his robes and covering a portion of his honor sash. Fil noticed the two Klingons on the deck behind him.

"A group of ten of the aliens ambushed us here," A-ZuRQuIL explained while Arbelo applied a clotting agent to his wound. "They blasted half of Private Kazh's body away before we were even aware of their presence. I killed two, and Lieutenant Kro'Toth killed another. They started to flee toward intersection C-2 when Kro'Toth and Cadet Ga'gh Shuukveldlaan from the Academy Annex chased after them. I would have joined them had I not been unable to move."

“Where are Kro’Toth and the Cadet?” asked Cosna.

“I do not know. Neither have returned, and I lost communications ability just before the aliens ambushed us.”

Arbelo finished what he was doing and said, “That’s the best I can do for now. It will probably leave a scar.”

“A warrior is nothing without a few scars, Little One.”

“Can you join us? We’re heading to the battle bridge.”

“A power cat could not keep me from your side.”

The four officers started off once again toward the entrance to the Jefferies tubes when a shout sounded behind them. They whirled around and saw three of the blue-skinned aliens running down the corridor toward them. Catching them unprepared, Fil shoved the other three officers into the turbolift they stood next to and shouted, “Deck eleven!”

Cosna, Arbelo, and A-ZuRQuIL tried to prevent the turbolift from leaving as Fil fired his phaser at the approaching enemy, blasting one into non-existence before another caught him in his own weapon’s blast. The last thing the Captain saw before the doors closed tight was Fil’s body dropping lifelessly to the deck.

“We must go back!” shouted A-ZuRQuIL.

“Inadvisable, Captain,” said Arbelo. “They would no doubt be waiting for us.”

The doors opened on deck eleven, where the three cautiously walked out into the corridor.

“I thought you wanted to go to the battle bridge?” remarked A-ZuRQuIL.

“We can’t go by turbolift. These Qualens know how we get around in them, and one of the first places they captured was the battle bridge. We have to sneak there.”

They started walking down the corridor, flinching and aiming their phasers at every little noise. Finally, while passing one set of doors, they heard a familiar sound.

“Pssst!”

Cosna looked around. Then she saw the human finger gesturing to them from between a set of slightly opened doors.

“In here,” a female voice whispered. The door was pushed open, revealing one of Fil’s security guards, Ensign Carrie Karandanz. The three entered the room, actually someone’s quarters, and Karandanz reclosed the door.

“I was able to hide in here when the aliens pumped knockout gas onto this deck,” Karandanz explained, holding up an emergency breathing pack. “While I was waiting for it to clear, I managed to rig the monitor to spy on the enemy on the bridge.”

The group looked at the wall monitor, which showed a group of fifteen of the Qualen on the bridge. The tallest one in the center Cosna recognised as Mox Tronna Grebbeck.

“I cannot access anything, First Philton,” one of the subordinates said to Grebbeck.

“You fool!” Grebbeck said, slapping the back of his hand across the subordinate’s face. “How can you not access anything. This IS the spaceship’s main control interface. You MUST be able to get into the computer. YOU MUST!”

“Philton, we have suppressed all resistance aboard this starship,” reported another Qualen that walked out of a turbolift. “We should have no problem omitting the remaining groups.”

Another Qualan spoke up after having tried to access ops, finally almost thrusting his fist through the panel.

“Philton, has it occurred to you how many alien beings there must be on a vessel of this size?”

“Hundreds, of course. But we caught them unawares. They will be of no concern to us.”

‘That’s what you think,’ thought Cosna as she watched the screen in fascination.

“But what about the pockets of resistance that still exist? We have no more Shorna gas to quell them.”

“Do you not have detector devices? Do you not have your freeze guns and heat-rupters? Hunt them down. Consider it sport, as our ancestors did. They are nothing but animals. ...Animals that aid our journey further into the galaxy, but animals by our standards none-the-less.”

Cosna noticed A-ZuRQuIL’s expression grow ever more angry, his fists clenching and unclenching over and over.

On the screen, the first subordinate again approached Grebbeck, blood dripping down his chin. He had been seemingly listening to what Cosna assumed was a communications device.

“Philton, Team Dren reports they have detected another pocket of resistance. There are four of the aliens holed up on deck eleven, in one of the living quarters.”

The report alarmed all four of the *Sarek* crew. Arbelo took out his tricorder and scanned the area surrounding the cabin they were hidden in.

“Trouble, Captain. I’m reading twenty Qualen closing in on our location.”

“Suggestions?”

Karandanz looked at A-ZuRQuIL, her superior.

“The full frontal approach?”

“Agreed,” replied the tall warrior.

The two security officers started resetting their phasers. A-ZuRQuIL turned to the others, saying, “Set your phasers to level seven.” He consulted with Arbelo’s tricorder. “Five are stationed at the closest spoke intersection. Another ten equally stationed between the intersection and the turbolifts at each end of the corridor. The last five are slowly approaching our location. Let’s give them a welcome they won’t forget.”

A-ZuRQuIL and Arbelo positioned themselves on each side of the door. Arbelo nodded at the Capellan, who counted down from three.

The two officers pulled the doors open and ran out, shooting along the way. The counter-attack completely surprised the approaching Qualen, all five of whom quickly no longer existed.

The four officers made their way down the corridor, A-ZuRQuIL took point, followed by Cosna and Arbelo, Karandanz covering the rear. The remaining fifteen Qualen followed quickly behind. As the quartet passed through a security point in the corridor, Cosna blasted a sensor on the ceiling, causing an airtight door to activate, sealing the corridor and separating the Starfleet officers from the Qualen. Arbelo scanned with the tricorder.

“They can’t get through. They’re trying to find another way to get around to us. I predict they may find another way within five minutes. And we can’t just seal off all the airtights, or we’ll just trap ourselves.”

“Agreed. We have to find another way.”

They started off down the corridor. As they passed the entrance to holodeck one, they found another fellow crewmember coming from the opposite direction. Arbelo recognized the tall officer as the Efrosian diagnostic engineer, Lt Commander D’Nld Chaaz’N. He limped toward the quartet of officers, a phaser in his hand.

“They’ve... got... engineering...,” he gasped between heaving breaths. “They... suddenly... beamed in...” He slumped against the bulkhead, trying to catch his breath.

“What happened down there?” asked Cosna.

After a moment, and with Chaaz’N breathing a little easier, he answered, “I was up on the deck thirty five level around the intermix chamber, checking the deuterium flow, when about two dozen blue-skinned aliens suddenly beamed into the main engineering compartment, firing at anyone they saw. The assistant chief engineer, Commander N’Vorda, was able to catch two of them by forming longer arms and wrapping around them, but two others blasted him with some sort of freezing weapon. The last I saw before I escaped through the maintenance hatch to level thirty four, Commander N’Vorda was laying on the deck completely frozen. I don’t know if he or anyone else who was in engineering is alive or dead.”

“How did you get up here?” asked A-ZuRQuIL.

“Mostly through the Jefferies tubes, with those... those monsters close behind the whole time.”

“There goes our idea to get to the battle bridge through the tubes,” grumbled A-ZuRQuIL.

As if to punctuate the security officer’s statement, a howl from around the curve of the corridor announced the presence of the Qualen.

“Quick! In here,” shouted Cosna, indicating the door to holodeck one.

As the door opened, the group started to run inside the empty holodeck. Unfortunately, not everyone was fast enough, as Chaaz’N – the last to try and rush through the door – was caught full in the back by the blast of a freeze-cannon, followed immediately by a Qualen disrupter beam. The frozen officer exploded into millions of pieces, scattering all over the deck like a destroyed statue.

“Computer, emergency override! Lock door to holodeck one!” shouted Cosna as the heavy doors shut.

“Holodeck one is now locked,” announced the unnervingly calm computer voice.

The ten Qualen soldiers outside the holodeck started firing their weapons at the now-locked doors, with little effect. One of the Qualen then took out a commulink.

“First Philton, this is Nevar Third Level Lexona. We have trapped four of the crew in a room that scans say has no other exit, but we cannot get into the room with the present firepower.”

“I understand,” replied Grebbeck’s voice. “I will arrive shortly with more troops. We must capture one of the senior controllers of this space ship alive and make him tell us how to access this *United Starship Sarek*’s computer system. Stand by.”

A few minutes later, Philton First Level Mox Tronna Grebbeck and twenty more of the Qualen troops, the whole group together representing over ninety percent of the occupying force, arrived at the holodeck doors. They started setting up their disrupters on mobile stands for an organized barrage.

* * * *

“They’re amassing a barrage,” reported Arbelo, monitoring the tricorder. “I read thirty-one alien life-form readings on the opposite side of the door. Estimate the door will give way within five minutes.”

“Five minutes. That’s not long, is it?” remarked Cosna. “What would Kalin do in a situation like this?” Nobody knew.

“What’s the problem, Mic?” asked a familiar sounding voice.

The four officers spun in surprise, their phasers aimed at the lone figure standing behind them.

“Hold it!” shouted Cosna as she recognized the man. “Kalin, what the heck are you doing here? You left the ship three months ago!”

“In the literal sense, I’m not here. I’m a holographic interface based on the new Emergency Medical Hologram that was programmed by Captain Kale for you to refer to in stressful situations.”

“Well, this certainly qualifies.” She glanced at the others around her. “Boy, it was nice of him to tell me about this, wasn’t it?”

“Tell me what’s going on. Maybe we can figure something out.”

Suddenly, the sound of the disrupter barrage started.

* * * *

“We are almost through, First Philton,” informed a Qualen soldier to Grebbeck. The blue-skinned alien smiled.

Then, with a squeal and clunk, the heavy doors parted. The Qualen stormed into the room two by two, until half of the soldiers were inside. Assured of his safety, Grebbeck entered through the blast-damaged doors.

Cargo containers lined the walls and were stacked in piles around the large grey room. Filling the opposite wall was a huge door that seemed to separate the bay from the vacuum of space. The cargo bay looked deserted. But Grebbeck knew better.

“Search the room. The four inferiors must be hidden here somewhere. And when you find them, bring the highest ranking one to me. The rest you may kill at your leisure.”

The remaining fourteen soldiers left the corridor, joining their brethren in the bay in search for the Starfleet officers. Then without warning, the door they had entered from closed and locked, sealing them inside. The Qualen had not yet gotten over their shock when they were again surprised by the fifty security officers who stepped out from behind the containers, phaser rifles trained on the Qualen.

“Drop your weapons and kick them away,” ordered A-ZuRQuIL, who stood near the exterior cargo door with Cosna and Kale. Some of the Qualen lowered their weapons to the floor, kicking them out of reach, drawing looks of surprise and resentment from those who still held on to their disrupters.

A-ZuRQuIL took a step forward, aiming his phaser at the closest Qualen soldier, and again said, “Drop your weapons or we will fire!”

“These animals have no backbone and only crave peace and friendship,” said Grebbeck. “Pay them no mind. They will not kill.”

When no other soldier relinquished his disrupter, A-ZuRQuIL fired, vaporizing the soldier he aimed at.

“Security officers, if the aliens do not surrender on the count of three, open fire, power level eight.”

The Qualen began to look nervously at one another, then at their First Philton, who stood, arms crossed, a look of shock on his face at the unexpected loss of the soldier. Grebbeck had, of course, expected the loss of a handful of his soldiers upon the initial claim of the alien vessel, but had figured the inferior aliens would not kill once assured of the Qualen superiority, much as had occurred in the past with previous claims. He had never before encountered inferiors willing to extend such resistance.

“One...”

A few Qualen dropped their weapons, kicking them toward the Starfleet officers.

“Two...”

More Qualen did the same, leaving only four soldiers still armed.

“Three...”

The final four dropped the disrupters and kicked them out of reach. Grebbeck looked with scorn at his now captured army and slowly raised his hands in a gesture of surrender.

Arbelo and Karandanz came out from behind cargo pods on each side of the bay, the Vulcan/Efrosian/Terran officer joining Cosna and Kale, their phasers trained on the surrendered soldiers. Karandanz and A-ZuRQuIL collected all of the abandoned alien weapons and had the soldiers kneel on the deck, their hands behind their necks, where the Federation officers cuffed them.

Mic Cosna walked warily toward Grebbeck and thrust one of his own commulinks into his hand. With the barrel of her phaser less than an inch from the tip of his nose, she said to Grebbeck, “Contact your remaining troops and tell them to surrender.”

Grebbeck’s eyes narrowed, but he complied. The remaining four Qualen, who had been on the bridge still trying to access the ship’s computer, damaging a number of console panels in the process, threw their weapons into a turbolift as ordered, which whisked them away to the farthest point on the ship.

Cosna looked at the First Philton.

“Why?” she growled with contempt. “We accepted your invitation. We offered friendship. Why did you have to do this to us?”

“I need not answer questions from an inferior like you. The only reason for the existence of other species in this galaxy is to provide the Qualen, beings of superior intellect and reason, with the technology to colonize the stars. It is the destiny of our master race to inhabit all the planets of the galaxy,” said Grebbeck. And the scariest part was he believed what he was saying.

“You lure other space-traveling races to your planet so you can acquire their technology?”

“That is their only purpose for existing.”

“Boy, do you have a thing or two to learn about the galaxy,” Cosna remarked. “Mister A-ZuRQuIL, Mister Karandanz, escort our ‘guests’ to their new quarters.”

“With pleasure.”

Leading the bound Qualen out into the corridor, Grebbeck turned and shouted back to Cosna.

“First tell me HOW? How did you hide all these troops in here and we did not detect them? How did you get these weapons? I MUST know.”

Cosna smiled. “Quite simple, really. Computer, end program and shut down holodeck one.”

Around them, the cargo bay dissolved into the shiny black walls of the holodeck. Along with the cargo pods, barrels, and drums dissolved the fifty security officers and their phaser rifles. Grebbeck looked on in total disbelief.

A-ZuRQuIL poked his phaser barrel into Grebbeck’s back, urging him forward.

“Come on, Mister Master-Race. Some superior intellect. Heh, heh, heh.”

* * * *

Captain's log, stardate 48945.9:

With the Qualen situation behind us, the time for healing and recovery has started. A census of the ship has determined that 134 crew and civilians were killed by the invading Qualen. Counted among the casualties are Lt Commander Chaaz'N and Lieutenant Warren Littlefield of engineering, Lieutenant Toreth – the Dean of our Academy Annex – and three of his cadets, and Ensigns Patrick Weaver and John Runningbear, as well as three members of the Klingon Defense Force platoon assigned to our security department.

Seriously injured were Commander T'Veer, Lt Commander V'Pier N'Vorda, Lt Commander T'Ashara, Lieutenant Penji Fil, and Klingon Lieutenant Kro'Toth, as well as civilians Val'ri Raiajh, and Barrett Rooney. Triage units have been set up in the main shuttlebay and shuttlebay three, caring for the hundreds of injured members of the crew. Thank God that Shawn was not seriously injured. Just cuts and scrapes from the rough handling the Qualen gave the children in the Learning Center.

After restoring control of the ship and consulting with Starfleet Command, the Merrimac and Hornet have arrived at Qualen II, where all native Qualen were returned to their planet from their moonbases and space stations, and all their spaceships destroyed. Marker buoys and a Neutral Zone have been established around the Qualen system, quarantining the 'Master Race' from the rest of the galaxy.

This incident has answered the ongoing mystery behind close to two-dozen ships declared missing in this sector over the past one-hundred and fifty years. It's a wonder Starfleet has not had any previous encounters with the Qualen before. Hopefully we have prevented any future tragedies.

Sarek is now entering the Terran system, a week late, but in one piece. I look forward to a planet-bound life, at least for the time being.

Cosna, out.

With nothing much else to do, Cosna spent the last few hours of her duty shift reading the last few chapters of "Foundation and Empire". The familiar sight of the colored bands of Jupiter's atmosphere alerted her to the fact that the ship had entered the Sol system and was rapidly approaching their destination. She placed a bookmark where she left off, and placed the book under her arm as she strode out onto the bridge.

The red planet of Mars with its two unusual-looking moons was fast approaching on the main viewscreen.

"Monster, has *Utopia Planitia Yards* contacted us yet?" asked Cosna.

"Affirmative. They have teams standing by for scheduled upgrades before the *Sarek* returns to the Gamma Quadrant. They will be contacting us again to perform the docking maneuver in twenty two minutes."

Still looking at the screen, with her hands clasped behind her back in a pose very reminiscent of Captain Kale, Cosna spoke to Lieutenant Fil.

"Mister Fil, please call Lieutenant Commander N'Vorda to the bridge."

"Yes, Captain."

A few minutes later, V'Pier 'Greg' N'Vorda stepped out of the aft turbolift. The shapeshifter, in his usual humanoid form, walked over to the tactical station. Though he currently looked no worse for wear, Doctor Rasa had said the shape-shifter was very lucky to still be alive after the Qualen attack.

"You called for me, Captain."

"Greg, I want you to command the docking procedure."

"Excuse me?" N'Vorda said.

"Come down here and command the docking at *Utopia Planitia*."

"But... but... I don't think..."

"You wish to be executive officer eventually, do you not, Mister N'Vorda?" asked T'Veer, who still sported an arm sling from the broken bone suffered during the Qualen takeover.

"Yes, but..." Seeing there was no winning this fight, N'Vorda complied. He walked down the ramp to the lower bridge level and took his place where Cosna had stood. Cosna meanwhile stepped over to the command chair and sat down.

N'Vorda turned to Penji Fil at tactical and said, "Mister Fil, open hailing frequencies to the Yards."

"Aye, sir. Hailing frequencies open."

N'Vorda cleared his throat, causing a strange slurping sound.

"*Utopia Planitia*, this is the starship *Sarek*, ready for docking maneuver."

On the screen, the huge starbase orbited 13,634 kilometers above the spot where the Viking II Lander touched down on the Red Planet almost a full 400 years earlier.

"*Sarek*, this is *UP Fleetyard* control. You are cleared to dock."

The spacedoors of the station slowly opened to admit the starship.

"Lock on," ordered N'Vorda.

The human ensign who replaced the still-recovering Lieutenant (JG) Pr'n Kes at the conn pressed a control. The indicator on his board signaled green.

"Systems locked," reported the ensign.

N’Vorda looked around the bridge, checking all the necessary stations that would be used during the docking. All seemed to check out. Finally, he spoke again.

“*Utopia Planitia*, you have control.”

“Affirmative, *Sarek*. You will be docked in Slip Nine. Prepare to lock mooring lines and umbilicals.”

“Thank you, Fleetyard Control. *Sarek* out.”

The *Sarek*, under control of the starbase’s computer, slowly entered the dock complex, turning slightly as she entered, and faced into Slip Nine. As the ship came to a full halt, the mooring tractors locked her into position while the docking tube linked into the dorsal docking port, connecting the external power umbilical as well.

“Well done, Commander,” T’Veer complimented. “There is hope for you yet.”

“Bridge to all stations,” said N’Vorda into the intercom as the final interlocks clicked shut with a metallic clang. “We are now docked. Stand down all decks and stations. Thank you. Bridge, out.”

Cosna stood and walked over to the still-slightly nervous engineer.

“Very nice, Mister N’Vorda. I couldn’t have done better myself.”

She offered her hand, which N’Vorda shook with gusto, his arm almost liquefying and shaking around. Then turning to face the intercom pickup, she said, “All hands, this is the bridge again. All essential crew members, remember the ceremony in Nine/Ten Forward this evening. To all the rest of you, I thank you very much. You are the finest crew I have ever served with, and perhaps the finest crew in all the Fleet. Cosna out.”

* * * *

Cosna and T’Veer exited a turbolift on deck six and walked into the transporter room. Once inside, T’Veer dismissed transporter chief Ron Giacobbe, while Cosna opened a channel to *Fleetyard* control.

“Control, I’m locked onto your transporter. Ready to energize,” said Cosna.

“Acknowledged, *Sarek*. Transporters at your discretion,” said a female voice.

Cosna nodded at T’Veer, who energized the controls. A lone man materialized on the platform.

“Permission to come aboard,” said the new arrival.

“Granted,” said Cosna with a broad smile. “Welcome back, Captain Kale.”

Kale, wearing the new standard Starfleet jumpsuit, similar to the uniforms Starfleet had issued aboard starbases for the last few years, stepped down from the platform and hugged his former first officer. Cosna returned the hug. Kale then turned to the engineer and offered his greetings. Kale then turned back to Cosna and said, “So, Mic... What have you done to my ship?”

“YOUR ship?”

“Well, when I left her three months ago, she still had a full crew and was in perfect operational condition.”

“We had a little... incident, Captain,” offered T’Veer.

It was Kale’s turn to raise an eyebrow this time, but quickly turned serious.

“I read your report. I’m glad you managed to regain control of the ship. How’s Shawn?” the captain asked.

“Doing well,” answered Cosna, remembering the young boy’s reaction when he finally woke up in sickbay after the Qualen had been dealt with, screaming at the top of his lungs about monsters. “He and a majority of the children will have to see the counselors from time to time, but he’s doing alright.”

The three started walking into the corridor toward the VIP quarters Kale would be using for the next 24 hours. Along the way, various crewmembers would say, “Good morning, Captain Kale,” or “Welcome back,” or “Good to see you again.”

“We’ve got the basic ideas down ‘on paper’ for the new class ship. I’ve been working closely with Doctor Leah Brahms on the engine core and warp coil design modifications,” Kale said to Cosna as they walked. “The team you will be heading is going to be in charge of the primary hull basic configuration, designated Beta Team. You have 20 people working under you.”

They reached a turbolift and the door snapped open suddenly.

“Oh, now where was I?” asked Kale. “Ahh, yes. T’Veer, are you looking forward to tonight?”

“Time passes at the same rate whether I anticipate an event or not. Longing for the event to occur will not make it happen any faster.”

Kale turned to Cosna.

“You know,” he said, thumbing a finger at the engineer. “I missed her.”

* * * *

A crowd was gathered on the lower level of Nine/Ten Forward. A podium had been set up in the center of the room. The group mingled with one another, some talking about the recent tragedy, some about the ceremony about to occur, others just general chit-chat.

The soft chime of the ship’s bells brought everyone’s attention to the podium, where Fleet Admiral Alynna Nechayev stepped forward.

“Commander T’Veer, please step forward,” the Admiral said.

The tall Vulcan woman, dressed in her best dress uniform, stepped up to the podium where she stood at ramrod-straight attention. Nechayev then read from a padd in front of her.

“To Commander T’Veer: For outstanding service to the entire Federation and especially the *USS Sarek* over the last two years, you are hereby promoted to the rank of Captain, effective immediately.”

A small spackling of applause started around the room as Captain Kale stepped forward and placed a new round gold pip on T'Veer's collar. Commander Yu-Fen Mic Cosna then stood and walked to the podium, shook the Fleet Admiral's hand, and took the padd from her. Cosna cleared her throat, then spoke into the podium's vocal pickup.

"To Cosna, Commander Yu-Fen M., Acting-Commanding Officer of *USS Sarek NCC-72075*: Effective immediately you will relinquish command of the *USS Sarek* to Captain T'Veer, after which you will report to *Utopia Planitia Starfleet Yards* and take command of Beta Design Team of the Essex-Class Development Project."

Cosna replaced the padd onto the podium, and smiled and nodded at T'Veer.

"Computer," said Cosna.

The computer bleeped in acknowledgement.

"Transfer all command and override protocols to Captain T'Veer. Authorization Cosna-Alpha-One-One-Six-Theta-Nine."

"All command protocols are now under the authority of Captain T'Veer," the computer voice replied.

Cosna turned around, shook the Vulcan Captain's hand, and stepped down from the podium. As she did, a full round of applause began. Cosna slowly walked through the crowd to Kale, who was back standing next to the bar. He noticed the tears welling in her eyes, reached out and hugged her.

As Captain T'Veer started making a speech at the podium, Kale took Cosna's hand and the two quietly walked out of the lounge.

"By the way, Kalin," Cosna said as the lounge doors slowly slid shut behind them. "What other holodeck programs did you install that you haven't told me about?"

The End