

I am a Jedi, like my father before me.

My name is Nate. The last of a millennium long family line. Jedi who have served the Republic from its beginnings to the best of our ability. I am also among the last of my Order, wiped out of existence by Palpatine and his corrupt New Galactic Order. I have joined with the Rebel Alliance to defeat this scourge. At last, we shall have our revenge.

Space, the Final Frontier...

These are the voyages of the starship *Dauntless*!

## Star Trek: Dauntless

### “Rebel Without a Cause” By PJK

From a story outline by Peter Koester and Nate Johnson

*Captain’s log, stardate 52280.7:*

*We are now one month out of spacedock, and our new Dauntless, the Sovereign-class NCC-75310 is performing well above expectations. All systems are at peak performance, and our shakedown tests have proceeded ahead of schedule. Enough so that members of my crew have been able to take advantage of some unexpected free time before we rejoin the war effort.*

*Koester, out.*

Lieutenant Nate Johnson, newly promoted to chief engineer of the brand new starship *Dauntless*, approached the doors of Holodeck 4, a folded tricorder in one hand, a leather strap and what looked like a metal rod in the other, and an almost childlike grin spread across his face. He was wearing a large robe that covered all but his head and the brown leather-like boots he wore. As he stopped before the holodeck’s control panel, he glanced covertly first in one direction up the corridor, then down the other, before placing the tricorder into a slot on the panel.

“Computer, install new holodeck program Johnson SW-One into the buffer for Holodeck 4. Run program,” the lieutenant ordered.

A series of chimes sounded from the control panel, then the pleasant feminine voice of the ship’s computer announced, “Program had been installed.” Another chime sounded and the voice added, “Program complete. Enter when ready.” The large heavy red holodeck doors to Johnson’s left slid open.

Johnson peered into the open doors, and smiled even more broadly at what he saw. Dropping the robe from around him just inside the control arch, revealing light, loose fitting clothing - tan and brown in color - he hooked the metal rod onto his belt and placed the leather strap like a headband around his forehead.

“Too busy to join me today, huh Chief Kyman?” Johnson chuckled to himself. “You’re going to be sorry you missed this!” And he strode into the holodeck, the doors sliding shut behind him.

Johnson could hear the holodeck illusion fill in behind him as the doors seemed to disappear, replaced by a section of rocky cave wall. Almost immediately a man came running up to Johnson.

“General,” the soldier said. “Juliet Base just reported they were tracking a fleet of Imperial star destroyers coming out of hyperspace within the system just before we lost contact with them.”

“How close is the fleet to the planet, Lieutenant?” Johnson asked, getting into the part of a Rebel Cell Commander. As the soldier consulted his datapad he held in his hand, Johnson took the moment to look around at the setting.

The engineer had bought the holodeck program, a simulation based on the “Star Wars” celluloid films of Earth’s late 20th and early 21st centuries, from a vendor during their recent stop at *Starbase 223*. With the *Dauntless* likely to be sent into the increasingly hostile action of the Dominion War very shortly after they completed

their shakedown cruise, he knew there probably would not be another good chance to try out the program for a long while, so he had quickly replicated a costume and hurried down to the holodeck the first chance he got.

Looking around, he could see a group of X-Wing fighters and airspeeders parked at the ready in the large hanger facility, as well as the semi-open control arena off to one side. Astromech droids and other more-humanoid robots could be seen scurrying around the entire Rebel base. He wished he could spend a little time exploring the setting, but knowing the 'Star Wars' films as well as he did – his interest piqued by his starship's encounter with a holographic Star destroyer almost two years earlier – he figured he would not have enough time.

"We believe the Imperials may have already landed troops on the surface, General," the soldier replied to Johnson's question. "Orders, sir?"

Johnson chuckled to himself. The program was getting right into the action, just as he had hoped.

"Have the pilots man their fighters, and sound the general evacuation. Load up all the transports and prepare to abandon Gamma Base."

"Yes, sir!" the soldier responded with a salute then went running off in the direction of the control room. Within moments, the alert klaxons sounded. Johnson ran his hand along the metal rod clipped to his belt, actually a prop lightsaber for the part he was playing, and started walking deliberately toward the control room himself.

"Imperial Walkers sighted in grid sector 9!" alerted the base loudspeaker. Immediately, several X-Wings and airspeeders took off to intercept the approaching menace.

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The ready room doors swished open and Fleet Captain Peter J. Koester, commanding officer of the *USS Dauntless*, strode out onto the bridge, taking a look at the people manning the various stations and smiling to himself.

At the helm sat Lieutenant K'orlan - half-Klingon, half-Romulan, and no nonsense - who put the ship through a predetermined course for testing various helm and maneuvering systems. To his left at ops sat Lt Commander Phillip Winters, recently promoted to chief operations officer after the death of Commander Russell aboard the previous starship *Dauntless* and the reassignment shortly after that of Russell's assistant, Lieutenant Shawn Natchez. Winters, with his ever-present tan satchel, was tapping at a personal padd and checking over the console.

Striding toward the upper area of the new bridge, Koester stopped momentarily to chat with his new chief science officer, the former chief engineer of the previous *Dauntless*, Commander Jeff Bloom.

"How is everything progressing?" Koester asked the emotional Vulcan.

"I'm still getting used to the new systems, Commodore," Bloom said stoically, then looked up at Koester with a glint in his eye. "But the hardest part is remembering not to put on the damn gold shirt when I get up in the morning. I still don't know why Mister Kane or Q couldn't have kept this job."

"You'll get used to science blue soon enough, Jeff," Koester teased. "And you know with the training Mister Kane received before our launch that he's strictly a command qualified first officer now, and I needed Q down running sickbay since we lost Doc among the transfers. After the two of them, you are the most qualified to run the science department."

"Yeah, I guess so," Bloom huffed, then returned to the job at hand. "Running level 2 diagnostics on the lateral sensor array."

Letting his crew return to their jobs, Koester took the last few steps up toward the central command seat, which was currently occupied by a lovely lady also wearing blue.

"I'm ready to take back the big chair, Counselor," Koester said.

"Yes, Commodore," ship's counselor Kethry Sutherland responded as she stood up from the chair, and with great flourish, pulled out a kerchief and dusted off the seat before presenting it to Koester with a grin.

"I relieve you," Koester said chuckling.

"I stand relieved," Sutherland replied, also smiling, and took her own seat to Koester's left.

"Hey, Skipper," said the voice of the ship's first officer, Commander Virgil Dylan Kane, no longer sporting his beard and now wearing the red shirt of a command division officer underneath his duty uniform jacket as he stepped out of the turbolift, a padd in one hand, and sat in his own seat on Koester's right. "I realize that just before that incident at the Alpha Karnarsey system you were promoted, but I was sure it was only to Fleet Captain?"

Koester nodded, then explained, "Well, Captain Kale had started calling me Commodore back during those last few days aboard the old *Dauntless* to prevent confusion between the two of us. And since my family has a long history in the service, and so-called fleet captains were often called Commodore back in the late 20th century, I

figured I would continue to use the title. Purely unofficial of course.” He pointed toward the padd Kane held. “What have you got for me?”

Kane handed Koester the padd he had been holding as he nodded, and answered, “I finally got in touch with the right people back at *Utopia Planitia*, and they managed to pull a few strings. *Dauntless* has been reserved some dock time next week to remove that manual steering column you despise so much.”

Koester smiled as he unconsciously glanced toward the spot on the deck where the most redundant piece of equipment ever installed on a starship was stowed.

“Very good,” he said. “Helm, as soon as the last series of maneuver tests is complete, lay in a course for Mars, warp factor 6.”

\* \* \* \*

The Rebel Base was a wreck. Computer consoles and equipment littered the ground. Damaged and destroyed airspeeders and X-Wings sat burning in the main hanger. And Imperial Stormtroopers had invaded the base.

Nate Johnson, last Jedi and leader of this Rebel faction, was among the last of his cell to be heading toward the evacuation transport, Imperial thugs close on his heels. Using his lightsaber to deflect blaster bolts heading toward him, and his innate control of ‘The Force,’ thanks in no small part to the sensor web built into the headband he wore for the holo-program, were all that kept him from being captured, or as close to slaughtered as the mortality failsafes in the holodeck would allow.

“Man, this program is the bomb!” Johnson said to himself as he ran up the gangplank of the last remaining Rebel transport sitting idle near the base. “Last man aboard! Punch it!”

Johnson watched tensely through the nearest viewport as speederbikes circled the transport and Stormtroopers began to hurriedly construct a mounted turbolaser cannon within the hanger.

“Get us out of here!” Johnson shouted, adrenaline pumping through his bloodstream.

“Lifting off!” one of the pilots shouted back, and the Transport leapt into the air, leaving the jungle-covered planet far below. Not taking the moment to relax, Johnson hurried up to the cockpit of the transport. He knew they did not call this program ‘Star Wars’ for nothing. The worst was yet to come!

\* \* \* \*

“Hey, Xenon, where do you want this coffee?”

Lieutenant (JG) Dar, the half-Klingon, half-human diagnostic engineer, walked across the huge, open space of main engineering toward the pair of legs that protruded out from an access conduit under one of the smaller control consoles.

“Just put it anywhere, Dar,” Xavier ‘Xenon’ Adosh’s muffled voice said from out of the conduit. “I’ve almost got that phase variance locked down and I don’t want to let up just yet.”

“Yes, sir,” Dar replied as he placed the steaming mug on top of the console above Xenon’s legs, and glanced around at the engineering space. He had gotten used to the roomy but comparatively small engine room on their Intrepid-class predecessor. This multi-leveled engine room was enormous by comparison, with the large matter/anti-matter intermix core and its coolant towers dominating the center of the space.

“Hey, Dar!” Xenon called out once again from the conduit. “I think I’ve got it down here. Can you get me a sonic spanner please.”

“Sure thing, Xenon,” Dar replied, quickly retrieving the tool from a locker and handing it to Adosh’s extended hand. The hand and wrench disappeared into the conduit for a moment, and soon the triumphant sound of Adosh’s voice could be heard.

“That did it! Power grid should be up to 105% of standard specs.” A hand again reached out of the conduit, grasping the edge of the console, and pulled Xenon out of the conduit and onto the engineering deck. A smile was evident on the young human engineer’s face. Dar offered a hand to Adosh, but Xenon shook his head and reached back up onto the console to lift himself up. However, rather than the firm grip he had expected, Adosh’s fingers brushed against the side of the mug Dar had placed there a few minutes earlier, sending the hot liquid inside splashing onto the console, all over Adosh’s uniform, and into the open conduit. Sparks burst out of the exposed circuitry that had gotten splashed.

“Damn! Computer, damage report!” Adosh demanded as he stood up, accepting a hastily offered rag to wipe off his uniform.

“Power levels have fluctuated in various non-essential systems,” announced the computer. “Warning: Mortality failsafes have been disengaged in Holodecks 2 and 4. Holodeck subsystems have been compromised.”

“Is anyone using either holodeck?” Adosh inquired.

“Holodeck 4 is currently in use.”

“Engineering to Holodeck 4,” said Dar after he tapped his combadge. There was no response. “Engineering to Holodeck 4, this is urgent! Please respond!”

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“How long before we can make the jump to lightspeed?” Jedi Knight Johnson asked the pilot at the controls of the battered Rebel transport. The ship jolted again under fire from a nearby Imperial-class star destroyer.

“The navacomputer was damaged by that last attack,” the pilot announced. “We’ll have to compute the trajectory manually.”

“We’ll never do it in time,” the grim faced co-pilot muttered as he watched another TIE fighter zoom them from above. “The star destroyer is locking a tractor beam on us.”

“Divert all power to weapons and the hyperdrive,” Johnson ordered, then stood to join the gunners back aft when suddenly another turbolaser blast from the star destroyer pounded into the small transport vessel, knocking the lights out and sending a weakened bulkhead crashing down on top of him. The last thing he saw before unconsciousness overtook him was the shadow of the huge Imperial vessel darkening the viewports of his transport.

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“Engineering to bridge,” sounded the harried voice of Lieutenant Adosh over the intercom.

“Bridge. Kane,” answered the first officer.

“Exec, we may have a problem. A minor accident in engineering has caused the mortality failsafes in Holodecks 2 and 4 to disengage. We can’t reset the failsafe without shutting down the program currently running in Holodeck 4, but there’s no response from within the holodeck.”

Koester looked at his Exec for a moment, then turned toward Winters at ops.

“Can we shut it down from here, Mister Winters?”

“No, sir,” Winters replied after consulting his panel. “All overrides have been compromised. The only way to shut down is to let the program run its course.”

“Commodore, I would recommend removing any living persons who may be in there right now. With the failsafes overridden, there’s no telling what could happen to whoever’s in there,” suggested Jeff Bloom.

Koester again glanced at his Exec, who got up from his seat.

“I’ll go down there, Skipper,” Kane said.

“Alright, but be careful, Exec,” Koester advised.

Kane nodded, then quickly entered the closest turbolift.

“Deck eight, Holodeck 4,” he ordered, and the turbolift quickly complied. Moments later the doors opened again onto deck eight and Kane walked over to the nearby doors of Holodeck 4. The Exec glanced at the control panel, blinking the words ‘Program Johnson-SW-1 currently running’ before saying, “Computer, end program.”

“Unable to comply,” the computer responded.

“Well, so much for the easy way,” Kane grumbled. “Computer, I wish to enter Holodeck 4.”

“Program complete. Enter when ready.”

The heavy holodeck doors slid aside, revealing a well lit yet austere corridor. Kane stepped into the program, and was startled when two human-looking men in dark gray-green, crisp, definitely military uniforms turned the far corner and spotted him.

“You! Stop right where you are,” one of the men said in a slightly British-inflected accent while the other drew a nasty looking hand gun from a holster on his waist.

“Aww, hell!” Kane muttered as he slowly started to back out through the still open holodeck doors and into the *Dauntless* corridor beyond.

“Halt!” the Imperial officer shouted again, this time closely followed by the exclamation point of a laser bolt. Kane dove out into the corridor and watched with relief as the doors slit shut between him and the pursuing Imperial officers.

Dusting himself off and straightening his uniform as he stood, the human-turned-Bajoran Starfleet officer commented to himself, “I’m pretty sure I recognized the setting. And there’s only one way I know of to enter that

program without sticking out like a sore thumb.” And he quickly headed toward his quarters and the replicator within.

\* \* \* \*

Nate Johnson woke up with a pounding headache in total darkness. A heavy weight compressed his body and it took both his physical strength and the aid of ‘The Force’ to move the shattered bulkhead off of himself.

Slowly kneeling to get up off the deck, he noticed the bodies of the pilot and co-pilot slumped in the control chairs under the viewport. He inspected them a little closer and confirmed his suspicions. They were killed by blaster shots to the chest. Not a pleasant way to die.

Looking out the viewport, his second suspicion was confirmed. His transport was being held in the docking bay of the Imperial star destroyer that had pursued them. His vessel had been boarded. Most likely those Rebels not killed resisting the boarders had been captured and were now held aboard the Imperial vessel. He had to free them. Somehow!

Johnson unclipped the lightsaber from his belt and held it lightly in his fingers, ready for anything. His mastery of ‘The Force’ told him there were at least two people still alive aboard the transport besides himself, but were they Rebel or Imperial? He quietly made his way back along the corridor toward the cargo bay.

Peering around the corner, he noted his quarry. Two Stormtroopers stood around a computer access, attempting to obtain the information contained within the computer. There was the possibility they could extract the location of the Alliance fleet, and the Jedi could not let that happen. Igniting his lightsaber, he quickly rounded the corner, his battle cry startling the two Imperials into inaction long enough for him to cover the distance between them. With his first swipe of the laser-blade, he cut the two Stormtroopers in two before either could so much as unholster their own weapons. With his second swipe, he wrecked the computer, forever hiding the vital information inside.

Glancing around to make sure he was now alone, Johnson deactivated his lightsaber and returned it to his belt, just as he noticed the hole cut into the side of the cargo bay where the Imperials had boarded the ship. He used the very same access tube to gain entry to the huge Imperial starship.

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The holodeck doors slid open once again and Commander Kane strode in. However, this time was different. It was not Commander Virgil Kane of the Federation Starfleet, first officer of the *PCU Dauntless* that strode in. Rather, it was Commander Virgil Kane of His Imperial Majesty’s Star Fleet, officer aboard the *Imperial Star destroyer Revenge*. Impeccable gray-green uniform with a commander’s insignia perfectly mounted on the left chest, officer’s cap pulled low over his eyes, black boots spit-polished to mirror perfection. He was the very image of a proper Imperial officer. With the knowledge gained from a reference program he loaded onto a padd hidden in the folds of his new uniform jacket, he made his way to the star destroyer’s bridge.

Meanwhile, hidden in a small security anteroom located just off that same bridge, Nate Johnson, Jedi Knight, accessed the vessel’s internal security monitors, attempting to find his captured Rebel comrades in order to free them.

On the various monitors he could keep an eye on certain sections of the ship. One monitor showed the star destroyer’s main bridge, with what looked like the ship’s captain nervously talking to the Sith Lord, Darth Vader. He would have to avoid the bridge at all costs, Nate thought to himself. On another monitor he watched a platoon of Stormtroopers practice drills and maneuvers in a large, empty cargo area. On a third, paydirt! Prisoner cells holding the surviving members of his Rebel unit. Now he only needed to find the exact location of those holding cells.

Johnson was about to slip back out of the anteroom when the picture on another monitor caught his attention. He sat back down and stared at the monitor.

Pictured on the small screen was an Imperial officer, somewhat short in stature but of regal bearing, who walked down one corridor. The officer reached the end and started turning left, then paused for a moment, looking confused and glancing down the passage to the right. Johnson stared in puzzlement as the officer removed some strange flat device from under his jacket, glanced at it, then looked around nervously for a moment while he returned the device to its hiding place. The officer straightened his jacket, then regaining the regal air, started moving down the corridor to the right.

What Johnson had witnessed seemed odd enough. What bothered him more was the strange feeling of familiarity the officer evoked in him. It was doubtful he had ever met the officer, having never in his life had any

dealings directly with the Imperials. Were a Jedi to have revealed himself to the Empire would mean certain death! Perhaps the man he had seen was a traitor to the Alliance, someone he had worked with closely in the Rebellion who actually had been spying. Perhaps the very person responsible for the Imperials locating his hidden Rebel base that very day!

Either way, he deserved to be watched more closely, and if Johnson knew a star destroyer's layout as well as he believed he did, the officer in question was heading toward the bridge. Toward Johnson's own position. And the traitor, if that is what he was, would be easily dealt with.

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Kane walked as inconspicuously as he could through the passageways of the holographic star destroyer. From time to time he would encounter other Imperial officers or subordinates, and would make the same inquiry.

"Has there been a so-called Jedi captured with the last group of Rebels taken prisoner, and if so, where is he held?" The answer was always no.

"If anyone claiming to be a Jedi is found, he is to be captured but not harmed," Kane ordered. "And he is to be brought directly to me."

\* \* \* \*

"How is it this Imperial knows I'm here?" Johnson asked himself incredulously. "He must be strong with the Force. That makes him even more dangerous. First I must free my fellow Rebels and give them a chance to escape. Then I'm going to have to deal with him!"

Using his Force power to make sure no one was around to observe him, Johnson quietly slipped out of the anteroom and stealthily moved toward his goals.

\* \* \* \*

Moments later, the five captured Rebels who were still alive were free and heading toward the closest of the star destroyer's hanger bays to steal a shuttle and escape into hyperspace. Johnson now had to deal with the last remaining threat to his and the Rebellion's safety. The mysteriously familiar Imperial officer.

Johnson hid along one of the most direct routes toward the bridge, knowing eventually the Imp would have to pass him. As the minutes passed, half a dozen officers and soldiers passed the hidden Jedi. None noticed him.

As expected, however, the sought-after officer soon turned the corner, heading directly toward where Johnson hid. The rest of the corridor was empty. There would be no better time!

The officer stopped in the middle of the passage, once again removing the mysterious object from under his jacket to look at it. Johnson took the opportunity to move unheard into the passage, grabbing the Imperial officer around the neck from behind. He ignited his lightsaber in front of the man's face.

"You look familiar," Johnson said, studying the man's silhouette. "Have I tried to kill you before?"

"Nate! Thank the Prophets you're alright."

Total confusion overwhelmed Johnson. How did this Imperial know his name? He froze momentarily, the saber blade still held below the Imperial officer's chin.

"Why? So you can torture and kill me yourself?" Johnson finally managed to taunt.

"Come on, Mister Johnson, we have to get out of here so we can get this program shut down. There's been an incident and the failsafes have disengaged. Stop fooling around."

"The only thing that will be going around will be your head when it rolls across the deck," Johnson said menacingly. "But first I need to know why you're so interested in me? How you know I'm even here?"

It suddenly struck Virgil Kane that his new chief engineer was not kidding around, not simply staying in character. Johnson was actually likely going to try and kill him. There had to be something he could do to get out of this situation. Ingrained Starfleet self defense training automatically kicked in.

Grabbing the arm Johnson held tightly around his neck, Kane planted his feet firmly on the deck and flipped the unprepared 'Jedi' over his shoulder, catching him completely off guard, and sending the lightsaber clattering down the corridor while Johnson slammed hard on the deck. Johnson flipped over and kneeling, looked with shock at his adversary. Kane assumed a defensive stance but held his hands open in a gesture of nonaggression.

Using the 'Force' afforded him by the sensor band tied into the holodeck systems, Johnson flung pieces of loose equipment at Kane, sending the costumed Starfleet officer ducking for cover and giving Johnson the

opportunity to reclaim his Jedi weapon and flee down the long, empty corridor. Kane, still a little dazed by the unexpected attack from the equipment, gave chase. A chase cut short by the decent of a blast door triggered by the quick slash from Johnson's saber.

Kane slid to a halt, slamming his fist on the metal of the obstruction in frustration.

"I'm going to need help," The Exec said to himself. "But how without endangering anyone else I bring in on this?" Thinking for a moment, he suddenly realized his location.

"Computer, activate the EMH!"

Almost immediately, the bald headed holographic doctor appeared in the corridor, his Starfleet uniform quite out of place in the austere Star Wars surroundings.

"Please state the nature of..." The holodoc paused, a look of confusion covering his face as he gawked at Virgil Kane's appearance. "Has Starfleet authorized another uniform change I am not aware of, Mister Kane?"

"Computer," interrupted Kane. "Outfit the EMH with the uniform of the Star Wars Imperial Medical Corps."

A chime acknowledged the order, and a moment later the holodoc's Starfleet uniform shimmered into the black military uniform of the Empire similar to Kane's.

"How are you feeling, Doctor?" Kane asked the hologram.

"As well as can be expected, considering the method of my unexpected transfer to the new *Dauntless*. I still don't understand why my program was downloaded to isolinear chip in such a hurry."

"Doc Dourden said to tell you to consider it a good-bye present just before he was transferred to *Starbase Diego Garcia*, though he had hoped to gloat about it to you himself."

The holodoc nodded at the sentiment, then asked, "And why is it we are dressed like this?"

Kane explained to the doctor that they were on a holodeck in a program being run by Lieutenant Johnson, and that something went wrong with both the program and with the engineer.

"Let me access the medical record database," the EMH said. "Sickbay automatically records the vital signs of all holodeck participants in case of an emergency." The holodoc seemed to pause for a moment before his expression changed to one of more concern.

"According to the datalink, Lieutenant Johnson was knocked unconscious moments after the mortality failsafe failed. Normally the computer would have prevented such an occurrence or shut down the holodeck when it happened," explained the EMH. "Based on this data and the behavior you described, it seems to me that Lieutenant Johnson is exhibiting the classic symptoms of amnesia. You said he thought you familiar?"

"Yes," Kane nodded.

"I believe encountering other people he is familiar with may break the amnesia. But with the mortality failsafes off, I do not recommend bringing in anyone else. I don't think even you should be here."

"Someone has to supervise this situation, Doctor," Kane said. "But I think I know how to bring in other people without endangering anyone else."

\* \* \* \*

Johnson, still in the mindset of a Rebel Jedi Knight, rushed down the corridor, trying to avoid detection. As he rounded another corner however, he came face to face with a new Imperial officer. Another Imperial officer with a familiar face. The face of Xavier 'Xenon' Adosh.

Johnson reignited his lightsaber, the bright blue blade swinging out and slicing through Adosh. Without looking to assure himself the foe was vanquished, Johnson took off running again, more confused than ever. Behind him, the holographic image of a diced Adosh faded away. A few seconds later, Virgil Kane came running past the same spot, upset that his 'help' had not appreciatively slowed the amnesic engineer nor helped restore his memories.

Johnson slowed at the next corridor intersection, the computer controlling the holoprogram alerting him to another's presence at the intersection through the sensor web headband, though he himself believed it was the Force. He slowly rounded the corner to come face to face with another Imperial officer, this one with the likeness of Jeff Bloom, his former department head, pointed ears and all. Bewilderment overcame Johnson.

"Uh... S... Sir?!" Johnson stuttered, unable to comprehend what was going on inside his mind. Unable to cope, he fell back on the only thing he knew, that Imperials were the enemy of the Jedi, and using his Force power, threw 'Bloom' up against a bulkhead, knocking his head hard against it. He watched as the body slid, seemingly unconscious, to the deck, and slowly backed away down the corridor. Kane turned the nearby corner just in time to witness this and see the hologram of Bloom also fade away.

"Damn!" he cursed. "Time to pull out the big guns, I guess, and hope it works."

Johnson was now fleeing madly through the star destroyer, his hope of escape overshadowed by the emotional response to flee from the confusion he was feeling. He turned corner after corner, corridor after empty corridor, until he was finally confronted by one more Imperial.

To Johnson's shock, he had come face to face with the Dark Lord of the Sith himself. The cyborg Darth Vader!

Vader took several steps toward Johnson, the labored sound of his breathing filling the corridor. Johnson raised and ignited his lightsaber, knowing how futile the gesture was against what he was now facing. And in fact, with just a subtle flick of his wrist, Vader caused the lightsaber to be ripped from Johnson's hand and flung away down the corridor, well out of reach.

It was at that moment that Kane and the EMH rounded the corner a dozen meters behind Johnson. The EMH started to move toward the frozen 'Jedi,' but Kane held the holographic doctor back for a moment.

Vader moved closer to Johnson, his own lightsaber still not ignited, and paused only two meters away. The Sith Lord seemed to regard the 'Jedi' curiously for a moment before he raised his arms and – to Johnson's utter surprise – began to remove the helmet that guarded his visage.

First the upper section of the helmet was removed, dropped uncaringly to the deck. Next, the upper face mask was peeled forward. A morbid curiosity prevented Johnson from moving or fleeing. As Vader's hands lowered the mask away, the face of the Sith Lord was finally revealed. And his face was Peter Koester's.

"Mister Johnson, stand down," the Koester hologram said firmly to the still stationary Johnson. A flood of unnamed emotions filled Johnson's being. Johnson's hand moved out to his side, and the lightsaber he had been disarmed of came flying back into his grasp – barely missing both Kane and the EMH. Igniting it once again, he raised his saber high, to strike before the feelings incapacitated him further.

"Stand down, Mister Johnson!" 'Vader' repeated authoritatively.

Confusion overwhelmed Johnson, until momentarily replaced by a fleeting memory. Johnson lowered the saber slightly, his face taking on a pained expression.

"C.... Captain?" he whispered.

Without warning, Kane was upon him, reaching up and grabbing the control band from around Johnson's head. Under the impression of being attacked, Johnson swung around, fully intending to slice his attacker in half. The laser blade halted mere centimeters from Kane's ribs. Johnson stared hard at Kane.

Then the lightsaber shut off.

With a loud clunk, Johnson dropped the hilt to the deck, and fell unconscious into the waiting arms of Virgil Kane. Kane looked at the hologram of his commanding officer, still standing a few meters away in the black armor of the fictional Sith Lord before it too faded away like the others. Then he spoke.

"Computer, exit."

Almost immediately, an arch with doors beyond them formed in the side of the corridor, and the doors slid open, revealing the warm, welcome corridors of the Federation starship *Dauntless*.

"Kane to sickbay, I am bringing in Mister Johnson. He is currently unconscious after suffering an accident on the holodeck."

"Understood," responded Lotus **Q**, now the starship's chief medical officer. "We'll be standing by."

Hefting the unconscious chief engineer in his arms, Kane carried Johnson down to sickbay.

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Nate Johnson woke up in sickbay, the smiling face of his doctor, **Q**, looking down at him.

"What happened?" he asked, partly sitting up in bed.

"You had an accident on the holodeck, Lieutenant," **Q** explained. "You suffered from a severe concussion and partial amnesia."

As **Q** explained the situation to Johnson, the sickbay doors swished open and Koester, Kane, Bloom, and Adosh walked in. All smiled to see Johnson awake and appearing more or less normal.

"How long was I out for?" Johnson asked.

"You've been asleep here for almost two days," **Q** said. "But your scans read normal and I should be able to release you to light duty in about another forty-eight hours. You should be back to full duty status within the week."

**Q** walked away to enter the latest scan results into Johnson's med file, while the other four officers surrounded the prone engineer.

"What happened to me?" Johnson asked.



“Well,” offered Q as she returned to the group. “From what I can determine based on the computer records linked to you, the program malfunctioned, and when you were knocked unconscious, the first impressions you received when you woke up formed reality in your mind.”

“And what happened to the program once I was taken out?” Johnson asked.

Kane explained, “Once you were gone, the computer assumed you were a casualty of the scenario and the program simply ran its course. The surviving Rebels got away to fight again another day. And then the holodeck program shut down.”

“And now, thanks to you,” added Q, “I’ve got an EMH that says he wants to keep his Imperial doctor’s uniform instead of reverting to his normal Starfleet uniform. I told him emphatically No!”

“And what about the holodeck? And my program?”

“We had to reinitialize Holodeck 4 to erase the programming glitch,” Xenon informed. “Everything is working fine now.”

“How do you feel?” Kane asked. “How much do you remember?”

Johnson’s face took on an unpleasant look, and he said, “I had the strangest dream. I was on a huge ship battling all sorts of evil villains.” He looked toward Adosh. “And you were...” Then he looked toward Bloom and Koester standing on the other side of the biobed. “And you, and you and...” Finally he turned back toward the first officer. “And especially you....”

Johnson was silent for a moment, until he added, “But I’ve come to find that what they say is true.”

Everyone surrounding Johnson looked confused.

“And what is it they say?” Kane asked.

Johnson looked up at the first officer, much more normal looking now in his gray topped, red shirted Starfleet uniform and dangling silver Bajoran earring on his right lobe, as he said, “There’s no place like home.”

**The End**