

*Captain's log, stardate 60975.3:*

*The Dauntless has entered the Phi Virginis star system, where we will conduct a bio survey of the system's second planet, a class M world not unlike Earth's Stone Age. We expect this survey to last almost two weeks.*

*Meanwhile, I'm hosting a small gathering.*

*Koester, commanding Dauntless, out.*

Several people were assembled around the dining table in the captain's quarters. On one side the starship's first officer, K'danz, sat with the arm of her husband, the half-Klingon chief engineer Dar, wrapped around his wife's shoulders, sitting next to Penji Fil, the starship's Ambassador at Large, all three laughing at the story Pono Kyman was telling about an adventure he had on Earth during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

On the other side of the glass-topped table sat the crimson-haired ship's counselor, Tanzia Gera, who passed glasses filled with some exotic fizzing beverage to Phillip Winters, the Chief Operations Officer and Setton Arbelo, Winter's Ops Assistant, while on the couch across the room Science Officer Alasdair Wallace was telling Doctor Justin MacMillan, the newly assigned Chief Medical Officer, about his collection of historic Scottish battle holodeck programs.

On the floor between the couch and the dining table, Gem Koester, the captain's teenage daughter, and Emma Foster, one of Gem's closest friends aboard the starship, played a game of Kal-Toh with Arbelo's young daughter, Annika Arbelo-Eeta. The little girl with the Trill symbiont implanted within her was proving harder to beat than the teenagers had anticipated, due in part to the decades of experience the symbiont granted her.

"Smell's good, Peter," K'danz commented as the captain stepped toward the table, carrying a large steaming pot in his hands. "What is it?"

"An old family recipe," Captain Koester replied as he placed the pot full of what looked like lifeless Klingon racht covered in a blood-red sauce in the center of the table.

"Oh boy! Spaghetti!" Gem exclaimed, jumping up off the floor and rushing to a seat at the dining table. As the remaining guests likewise seated themselves, the captain assumed his customary seat at the head of the table as he passed a set of serving tongs to Dar.

"Tell me if we run low. I can always replicate more," Koester said as he passed his plate to the left, a large pile of the pasta and sauce quickly placed upon it.

"What is this drink, Pete?" Winters asked, carefully sniffing at his glass as the food continued to be passed out. The bubbles caused his nose to wrinkle. "It doesn't taste like anything I've had down in 10-Forward."

"That's because I stored this pattern in my personal replicator," the captain replied, accepting his plate back from Dar. "It's a recipe I got from Captain Adams aboard the *Providence*. A soft drink called Vanilla Coke."

The conversations continued on and off as everyone started eating dinner. In mere minutes the large pot was empty and, as the plates soon followed suit, the group started drifting from the table to the various chairs throughout the quarters, where the captain had his daughter pass out cups of coffee, raktagino and tea.

"Are you alright, Carrie?" the captain asked as he joined his guests in the living room, noticing the thin film of sweat that covered the First Officer's face. "I hope my cooking hasn't made you sick?"

"Just feeling a little warm," K'danz replied, wiping her brow with the back of her hand. "Probably just the raktagino."

"Do ya want me to take a look at ya, Commander?" Doctor MacMillan asked, leaning toward K'danz.

"Thanks, Doctor, but I'm sure I'll be okay," the Exec replied.

Space, the Final Frontier...

These are the voyages of the starship *Dauntless*!

Star Trek: Dauntless

"Death Threat" by PJK

“Away team to *Dauntless*,” said the voice of Commander T’Ashara through the bridge speakers.

“*Dauntless*. Go ahead, T’Ashara,” Commander K’danz responded after a brief fit of coughing. In the days since the *Dauntless* had arrived in the Phi Virginis system, the First Officer’s mild fever had progressed to bouts of coughing. Even a visit to sickbay had not determined the cause of her sickness, but K’danz continued to insist she was fine and remained on duty.

“Commander,” reported T’Ashara’s voice. “We have placed the covert sensor grid around the native village on the eastern shore of the southern continent as planned. Once we have placed the relay satellite into orbit, the grid will convey periodic reports of the progress the tribe is making to the Federation Science Council. In the meantime, the away team will continue the flora survey we started in the western plains.”

“Thank you, T’Ashara. (cough) Maintain regular check-ins every (cough) hour unless (cough, cough) something happens,” K’danz replied, trying to cover her mouth as she spoke.

“Are you well, Commander?” T’Ashara asked, concern emerging through her Vulcan tone.

“Just feeling a little (cough, cough) under the weather,” K’danz answered.

“That is illogical, Commander, as the environment aboard a starship is monitored by computer, there is no weather,” T’Ashara commented.

“(cough, cough, cough) I’m just sick, T’Ashara,” K’danz clarified just before a major coughing fit started, preventing the first officer from being able to take a breath. Within seconds, K’danz pitched forward out of the command chair and onto the deck.

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In the captain’s ready room, Captain Peter Koester was talking with his wife, the security chief aboard another Federation starship, via subspace.

“The *Dauntless* doesn’t have any new orders beyond this mission,” Koester said. “I’m hoping Starfleet will return us to Sector 001 for crew rotation, in which case we might be able to get together. What sector is the *McAuliffe* operating in?”

Commander Michelle Petersen’s response was interrupted by the sound of Lt Commander Setton To’Lock Arbelo’s excited voice over the shipwide intercom.

“Medical emergency on the bridge! Emergency medical team report on the double!”

A look of concern covered Captain Koester’s face as he said to Petersen, “Something has come up. I’ll call you back later. Love you.”

“Love you too,” Petersen replied just before the monitor turned black and Koester rushed out onto the bridge where Doctor Kay and two nurses were already hustling out of the turbolift with a gurney. Kay rushed to kneel down beside K’danz, who appeared to be unconscious, and started scanning her with a medical tricorder.

“What happened, Monster?” Koester demanded to know as he watched the medical team from near the science console where he would be out of the way. Arbelo walked around the helm console to stand beside the captain, his eyes never leaving K’danz’s prone form.

“She started coughing uncontrollably. When I turned around to ask if she was okay, she was already slipping out of the chair.” The Vulcan-Terran-Efrosian man shook his head slowly before saying, “She’s very ill, but just didn’t want to admit it.”

As the two nurses carefully lifted K’danz’s body and placed it on the gurney, the captain took a step toward Doctor Kay.

“How is she, Doc?”

“I need to get her down to sickbay. She’s breathing normally again for now, but she needs care,” Kay replied.

“Just to play it safe, I want all the crew members that work closely with Commander K’danz to submit to a physical as well. Especially her husband. If she has something contagious, it could spread throughout the ship if we’re not careful.”

“Aye, Captain,” Kay said as he joined the two nurses pushing the gurney into the turbolift. “I’ll have the CMO keep you up to date.”

Koester watched as the turbolift doors swished shut, then exchanged a look with Commander Arbelo.

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“How is she, Dar?” Captain Koester asked as he and his teenage daughter, Gem, stepped over to where the chief engineer sat next to the biobed where his wife lay unconscious, one hand holding hers.

“Doctor MacMillan has her in an induced coma, for her own safety, and last he told me, he still doesn’t know what is causing her sickness,” the half-Klingon man replied. “But if he can’t find a cure soon, there isn’t much hope she will survive.”

As the captain and Dar spoke, the sickbay door swished open once again and Rear Admiral Penji Fil stepped in, carrying a small vase filled with flowers from his homeworld of Catulla, which were similar to Earth roses except that the petals were silver in color. The admiral placed the vase on a small table next to the head of the biobed, then walked around to join the others already there.

“How is she?” Fil asked, echoing the captain’s earlier question. But before Dar could reply, Doctor MacMillan stepped out of his office.

“Admiral Fil, I was just about to contact you,” the doctor said in his thick Scottish accent. “Tis a fortunate coincidence you’re here.”

MacMillan joined the small group gathered around K’danz, then addressed the captain.

“I’ve analyzed blood samples from the entire crew, as you ordered, Cap’n, and compared the results to a sample of Commander K’danz’s blood, which allowed me to isolate the cause of the Commander’s illness, a virus I’ve never before encountered. I’ve also discovered there is one other person aboard the ship who is carrying that same alien virus.” He looked at Fil as he continued, “You, Admiral.”

“You mean I’ve got this disease too?” Fil asked, shocked that of all the people who worked closely with the starship’s first officer, it would be himself that also caught whatever virus was apparently killing her.

“No, fortunately,” MacMillan said. “But you are carrying the virus in your bloodstream, which indicates you were exposed to it. And it’s not communicable, which means both you and the Commander each picked up the virus from wherever it originated.”

“Then why haven’t I gotten sick?” Fil asked.

“To put it simply, Admiral, you’re not human,” MacMillan replied. “Whatever this virus is, it appears that it is only fatal to humans. It looks as if it remains dormant in Cattulans.”

“Any idea where it came from, Doctor?” Captain Koester asked.

“No’ yet, but now that we have identified another infectee, I can backtrack their medical histories and try to determine that.”

Without another word, MacMillan left the group gathered around K’danz and returned to his office to research the virus’ origin.

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*Captain’s log, stardate 60989.0:*

*The crew has begun wrapping up our survey of Phi Virginis II in anticipation of leaving the star system at short notice. I have to admit, my own enthusiasm for this mission has cooled since Carrie’s collapse. The worst part is the waiting, not knowing when, or if, a cure for her condition may be found. In the meantime, Doctor MacMillan and his staff continue to work around the clock trying to determine the virus’s origin.*

*Koester, commanding Dauntless, out.*

“Doctor!” shouted Nurse N’gale, rushing into the sickbay lab where Doctors MacMillan and Kay were working on an experiment that was hoped might lead to an inoculation for the mysterious alien virus that infected the starship’s first officer. “I’ve found a medical record that indicates the same symptoms Commander K’danz is experiencing.” The female nurse handed a padd to the Chief Medical Officer, which he began to peruse.

“My God!” the doctor finally exclaimed before tapping his combadge. “Chief Medical Officer to Captain Koester. I need to see you in sickbay right away.”

“I’m, on my way, Doctor,” the captain quickly replied.

Several minutes later, Captain Koester and Lt Commander Dar, whom the captain had invited to join him, stepped into sickbay, where MacMillan, Kay and N’gale were again scanning K’danz and taking blood samples.

“You found something?” Koester asked, disappointed to see his first officer was still unconscious on the biobed. Even Dar’s hopeful expression quickly faded.

“We’ve located another human Starfleet officer that was infected with the alien virus,” MacMillan said. “Do you know an officer named Mickey Cosna?”

“I’ve heard of her, but we’ve never met, in spite of the similarity of our names,” the captain replied. “Why? Has she gotten sick like Carrie?”

“Actually, Captain, she’s dead.”

The pronouncement caused both Koester and Dar’s faces to drain of color.

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Captain Koester had called Dar, Admiral Fil and Chief Pono Kyman, the starship’s ‘Chief of the Boat’ to an impromptu meeting in his ready room.

“According to records, Commander Mickey Cosna, who had retired to the Manzar Colony in 2374 to raise her son Sean, died just over three years ago after developing the same symptoms Carrie has displayed, a disease the colony medical experts had never before encountered,” the captain told those around him.

“I served with Mickey back aboard the *Sarek*,” Fil commented before realization dawned on him. “So did Carrie!”

“But so did T’Ashara and Monster, but they’ve tested negative for the virus,” Koester said. “I’m sure whatever is the cause of this virus, it has something to do with the missions of the *Sarek*. We just need to figure out what other common events happened to the three of you.” The captain then turned to the chief and said, “COB, I want you to coordinate with Mister Arbelo. I’m removing both of you from the normal duty roster while you both review the *Sarek* logs. Concentrate on away missions, since anything that happened aboard the ship itself would probably have infected the entire crew. Compile a list of missions that included all three officers.” He then looked back at the admiral. “Penji, I need your ambassadorial skills.”

“Anything I can do to help Carrie,” Fil replied.

“Now that we’ve narrowed down the origin of this virus to the *Sarek*, I need you to pull some strings at Starfleet Command. Get us *Sarek*’s original crew medical records so we can cross reference our facts. Anything we can do to narrow down our field of focus.”

“Consider it done,” Fil said, immediately standing up and heading to his office to make the necessary calls.

“In the meantime, remaining in the Phi Virginis system isn’t going to help Carrie any.” Koester tapped the intercom button on his desk top. “Bridge, this is the captain.”

“Winters. Go ahead.”

“Phillip, set course for Bajor. Maximum warp.”

“Aye, aye.” A moment later he reported, “Course is plotted and laid in. Breaking orbit now, Skipper.”

“Thanks, Phillip,” the captain said as he touched the intercom once more. He then looked at the cheerless expression on Dar’s face and added, “Don’t worry. She’s not going down without a fight.”

“I know, Skipper,” Dar said with a slight sigh. “If nothing else, she’s a fighter.”

“Sickbay to Cap’n Koester.”

“This is the captain. Go ahead, Doctor.”

“I have some bad news, Cap’n,” Doctor MacMillan reported. “Commander K’danz’s condition is getting worse. Based on the current progress of the virus, she has less than a month left to live, perhaps six weeks at the outside if we monitor her condition very closely”

Koester unconsciously glanced at Dar as MacMillan spoke. The engineer’s face became very rigid, as if he struggling with holding in his emotions. His flushed skin made his underdeveloped Klingon forehead ridges stand out more than the captain had ever seen before.

“Thank you, Doctor,” Koester said, again pressing the intercom before looking his Chief Engineer in the eyes. “We’re going to do everything we can to save her, Dar. Rest assured.”

“I know, Captain. I know.”

*To Be Continued...*