

Space, the Final Frontier...

These are the voyages of the starship *Bellerophon*!

Star Trek: Bellerophon

“I’d Still Like a Vulcan...” by PJK

The doors to the ready room swished open and Commander Dar, the half-Klingon chief engineer of the Intrepid-class starship *USS Bellerophon*, stepped inside. Behind her desk, his human wife, Captain (Carrie) K’danz, sat reading a report from her first officer while sipping from a cup of hot tea.

“Tom is reiterating his difficulty organizing the science division duty roster again,” K’danz said without even looking up.

“And you know why as well as I do,” Dar responded as he walked over to the nearby replicator and ordered himself a synthale before sitting down on the couch under the forward windows, tossing a child-sized striped engineer’s cap that had been laying on the seat onto the top of the nearby table. “I know you’re still finding it difficult to deal with the fact that T’Ashara is gone, but you need to put in for a replacement crew member, Carrie, and soon.”

“I know,” K’danz said, finally looking over at her husband, her expression changing to one of sadness. “It’s just that T’Ashara and I served so many years together. I still can’t believe she’s really gone.”

“She sacrificed herself to save us all. She would be disappointed in you for not honoring her sacrifice and moving on.”

K’danz looked at her husband in silence for several moments. Finally, she started nodding her head slowly before saying, “I suppose you’re right. This ship needs a new chief science officer.”

“Lieutenant Reynolds will be happy to hear that. He’s been pulling double duty for the past three weeks,” Dar remarked.

“I’d still like a Vulcan there, if possible,” K’danz said. “I got used to having T’Ashara at the science console.”

“That would be up to the Starfleet Bureau of Personnel, but if one is available, I’m sure they would take your request into consideration.”

K’danz nodded once more before pressing the intercom control on her desk.

“Bridge, this is the Captain.”

“Yes, Captain?” replied the voice of Efrosian chief operations officer Xin Zhadesh, the current Officer of the Deck.

“Put me in touch with Starfleet Command, via *Home Plate*,” K’danz ordered. “I need to speak with BuPers.”

“Aye, Captain,” Zhadesh replied. “I will route the communication to your ready room as soon as it is established.”

“Thank you, Lieutenant,” K’danz said.

* * * *

Several weeks later...

“Captain, sensors are detecting a vessel traveling at high warp on an intercept course with us,” reported Starfleet Marine Captain Michael C. Drake from his position at tactical.

“Have they identified themselves?” K’danz asked, turning to look over her right shoulder at the Marine officer.

“Receiving their subspace transponder signal now. Identity: Federation fast courier. They’re making warp 9.9 and should intercept us in eight minutes thirty seconds.”

“Sounds like our new chief science officer has finally arrived. Mister Drake, have Commander Paris and Lieutenant Reynolds meet me in the shuttlebay in five minutes.”

“Aye, Captain,” Drake replied before informing the *Belle*’s first officer and assistant chief science officer of the new crew member’s arrival.

“Mister Zhadesh,” K’danz said as she stood up and started moving toward the turbolift. “You have the conn.”

“Yes, Captain,” the Efrosian man said as he turned his ops console over to another crew member and stepped down to the center of the bridge. “Helm, slow us to half-impulse.”

* * * *

Several minutes later, K’danz, Tom Paris, and their assistant chief science officer Milo Reynolds stepped into the main shuttlebay. As the doors swished shut behind the trio, the atmosphere retaining field illuminated and – seconds later – the shuttlebay door rolled upward. Through the now-open door could be seen a small vessel – bigger than a standard shuttlecraft but smaller than a runabout – with warp nacelles on each side almost as large as the hull itself. Paris whistled appreciatively before saying, “That’s one overpowered hotrod. I wonder what it would be like to pilot one of those?”

“Considering you are only one of two known people in all the universe to have attained the speed of warp 10, I would think you would be less impressed, Commander,” Reynolds remarked as the courier vessel maneuvered into the shuttlebay. “After all, these little courier ships can only maintain near-transwarp speeds, somewhere in the range of warp 9.9999.”

“Still might be fun,” Paris remarked to Reynolds as the courier touched down on the deck and powered down its propulsion systems. A moment later a door in the hull just forward of the starboard nacelle’s Bussard collector opened and a Vulcan woman with short dark hair wearing a blue-shouldered sciences uniform stepped out, followed by what appeared to be the courier’s pilot wearing a flight suit and carrying several pieces of luggage, which he placed on the deck just forward of the ship’s nose before returning to his vessel.

The Vulcan woman stepped toward the waiting trio of officers and pulled a small padd from the folds of her uniform, presenting it to Captain K’danz as she stopped in front of the human woman.

“Lieutenant Commander T’Var, reporting for duty as ordered, Captain,” she said.

K’danz accepted the padd and quickly reviewed the orders displayed on it before looking at T’Var and saying, “Welcome aboard the *Bellerophon*, Commander. I hope you had a pleasant journey to reach us out here beyond the Typhon Expanse?”

“I would have found the voyage more relaxing were it not for the cramped conditions aboard the courier craft, Captain. While Vulcans can make do in nearly any situation, spending three weeks in a vessel barely larger than a Type-8 shuttle with no privacy beyond the small head and sonic shower unit was almost intolerable. I have not been able to meditate properly since we departed. At least I had my novels to pass the time.”

“What kind of novels, Commander?” Paris asked after introducing himself as the starship’s first officer.

“While most Vulcans would find my extracurricular interests a waste of time, I developed a fascination with Earth literature of the detective fiction genre while attending the Academy, Commander,” T’Var replied. “Sherlock Holmes, Hercule Poirot, Dixon Hill, Miss Marple, Philip Marlowe... even on rare occasions the Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew.”

“Interesting,” Paris remarked. “And somewhat unusual from my experience with Vulcans.”

“Then I would suppose I am not one of your typical Vulcans, Commander,” T’Var stated neutrally yet still managing to sound as if she had been insulted. K’danz then introduced T’Var to Lt Reynolds, who promised to bring his new superior up to speed on everything regarding the science department.

“It’s a good thing Starfleet assigned another Vulcan to head our department,” Reynolds remarked after offering T’Var a traditional Vulcan salute. “I’m still trying to figure out how Commander T’Ashara organized our filing system. It follows no pattern I’m aware of.”

“I was told I was replacing T’Ashara before I departed Earth,” T’Var remarked. She addressed her next sentence directly to K’danz as she said, “I can see from your expression that T’Ashara’s passing has upset you. I grieve with thee, Captain. I was a third year cadet at Starfleet Academy when the crew of the original *Arcturus* returned for retraining. I shared several science classes focused on modern technology and computer systems with T’Ashara. We became acquainted during that semester. I was saddened to hear of her passing.”

“Thank you, T’Var,” K’danz said, trying to retain control of her own emotions for a moment – and surprised they were so evident in her facial expressions – before saying, “Lieutenant, would you please help the Commander with her luggage and get her settled in?”

“My pleasure, Captain,” Reynolds said as he grabbed one of the bags from the deck and started leading the Vulcan woman toward the corridor. “As chief science officer, you will be serving the Alpha watch once you’re ready to assume your duties.”

“I do not anticipate it will take too long, Lieutenant,” T’Var replied as the doors started shutting behind the pair. “I have heard you have been standing double duty since T’Ashara’s passing, and I do not wish to make you wait any longer than necessary.”

Paris watched the doors close before saying, “She seems very... Vulcan. Except for the interest in detective fiction. I wonder if I can get her to participate in a Dixon Hill holonovel some day?”

“Perhaps,” K’danz remarked as she turned slightly toward the exit door. “Perhaps you can get her to play in one of your Captain Proton simulations too?”

“That I seriously doubt,” Paris said with a smile. “I couldn’t even get Tuvok to set foot in the holodeck for one of those programs back aboard *Voyager*.” Paris’ face quickly lost the smile and turned serious as he then asked, “Orders, Captain?”

“Get that thing out of my shuttlebay so we can get back to our assigned mission,” K’danz said, indicating toward the courier ship with her thumb over her shoulder. “The sooner he’s clear the better.”

“Aye, aye, ma’am!” Paris agreed with one last longing glance at the courier before he fell into step beside his captain and the pair walked out into the corridor. “Consider it done.”

The End