

The fog started rolling into San Francisco as the sun set over the Pacific Ocean. Several workers wearing protective clothing were operating large phaser arrays, disintegrating debris from a building undergoing demolition. The building was being demolished in sections. It was one of the older buildings on campus, and had served several purposes over the course of its existence: originally designed as a dormitory, the building had been renovated to be administrative offices for several decades before more recently being used for storage. But the building – more than a century in age – had finally outlived its usefulness and was to be replaced by a new set of modern up-to-date dormitories for the students.

One of the workers aimed his phaser array at a block of granite that comprised part of the building's foundation. Depressing the trigger control, the wide beam enveloped the granite block and, after several seconds, it glowed bright blue before disappearing entirely. It was then that the construction worker realized the block beneath the one he had just disintegrated had an opening on the top.

Moving closer to the granite block, the worker realized it must have been the building's original cornerstone. The Earth year '2283' was carved into the stone. Curiosity overcame the worker, as he remembered stories of time capsules being locked away within the cornerstones of buildings of the past. Peering over the top of the block, he was surprised to realize there was indeed something hidden inside the cornerstone. It appeared to be an elaborately carved wooden box.

Excited by his discovery, the worker reached inside the granite to remove the box.

Across the campus quad, the sound of a scream – sounding both terrified and in great pain – echoed through the air, sending several students running toward the sound.

Space, the Final Frontier...

Star Trek: Personal Logs

“One Foggy Evening” by PJK

Personal log, stardate 68564.0: Vice Admiral Kalin Kale recording;

My wife Kitty and I have arrived back at Starbase 719 in the Typhon Sector. Since it appears things are on track for me to assume the position of Sector Coordinator for the Fifth Fleet Area of Responsibility come the end of this year, I am visiting what will be my command post to make sure no unanticipated complications arise. And besides, it is a good excuse for Kitty and I to get out of San Francisco and the tedious politics of Starfleet Command for at least a few weeks.

The turbolift opened up into Ops, and Vice Admiral Kalin Kale of Alpha Centauri stepped out. He glanced around the open control room, where the day to day operations of the immense Ournal-class starbase were conducted. Two of the consoles near the center of the room were manned by officers that Kale recognized from previous visits as Commander Michelle Petersen – the base's chief of security and wife of one of the Fifth Fleet's starship commanders, and Lt Commander B'Elanna Torres – chief operations officer and, likewise, wife of another of the fleet's first officers. Kale nodded to the half-Klingon woman when she glanced in his direction, evidently curious as to who had exited the turbolift, then headed toward one of the lifts that would take him to the upper level of Ops, where the office of Rear Admiral Val'ri Raijah – current sector coordinator and commander of the starbase – was located.

“Admiral Kale,” Torres said, stepping toward the Centauri man. “Welcome back to *Starbase 719*.”

“Thank you, Commander. Good to be back,” Kale replied, not really interested in getting into small talk with the crew of Ops at the moment.

“I hope you don’t mind me asking, Admiral,” Torres continued, oblivious to Kale’s mood. “Did your father or grandfather happen to attend the Academy in the 2280’s?”

“My father was an oceanographer working on research on the plant Argo. He was never a member of Starfleet,” Kale replied before what Torres had said finally settled in his consciousness. “Wait... 2280’s? Why do you ask?”

“Michelle and I were just discussing a news item that arrived during the latest broadcast,” Torres replied, gesturing toward a monitor screen on the operations console. Kale followed the engineer back to her station, where he started reading a news article about the demolition of one of the old dormitory building on the grounds of Starfleet Academy and a startling discovery.

“According to the news, one of the construction workers working on the demolition of the building disappeared a few nights ago. As they were investigating his disappearance, they found a wooden box inside the cornerstone of the building being demolished,” Commander Petersen explained. “The box was carved with the inscription ‘K. Kale – Class of ‘86’ on it. We thought perhaps it was an ancestor of yours?”

Both starbase officers noticed that Admiral Kale’s face had gone white, as if he had seen a ghost.

“No...!” he whispered. He then turned and headed back toward the turbolift.

“Admiral, I thought you were here to meet with Admiral Raijah?” Torres questioned.

“Later!” Kale growled back. “I must see Cathryn, right away!”

As the turbolift swished shut behind the admiral, Petersen and Torres exchanged puzzled looks.

* * * *

The door chime to the quarters Captain Cathryn Pearson, the starbase’s executive officer, shared with her husband – the starbase’s strategic operations officer – sounded. Pearson looked up from where she was trying to feed Katerina, one of her two young twin daughters. She placed the little girl back into a highchair alongside her twin and stepped toward the door, activating the monitor screen next to it to display the identity of her visitor. She was surprised to see Admiral Kale standing outside and looking quite agitated. Touching a control on the opposite side of the door, the egress slid open.

“Admiral Kale! What brings you here this...?”

Kale stepped into the entry hall and said, “Cathryn, do you remember back when we were attending the Academy?”

“Of course,” Pearson replied, inviting Kale into the living room of her quarters and offering him a seat, though the admiral appeared too restless to sit down. “I was so glad when they opened up that additional training to us. Being a quartermaster never suited me, though it at least provided the opportunity for Val and myself to develop a close friendship. I much preferred the training I underwent to become a ship’s historian, but the stuff they taught me later about security and tactics was much more to my liking.”

“No, not the re-training we received when the *Arcturus* and her crew first arrived in the 24th century,” Kale clarified. “Our original Academy training. Do you remember that spring semester when several cadets and one of the teachers went missing?”

“Vaguely,” Pearson admitted. “It was a long time ago.”

“I’ll never forget,” Kale said with conviction. “Spring of 2283. My freshman year. And you were a second-class midshipman if I remember correctly.”

“Like I said, a long time ago,” Pearson remarked. “And yes, now that you bring it up, I do remember that semester. One of those missing cadets was a friend of mine. I probably would have come close to failing my intro to Federation economics class if it weren’t for her help. Why are you bringing this up now?”

“I was just up in Ops,” Kale explained. “Two of your crew on duty there told me they found my box.”

“Wait! What?” Pearson said, trying to understand. “Who found your box? Found it where?”

“According to the FedNet news report, the Academy is in the process of demolishing the dormitory that was under construction back in ’83. I was among the cadets who hid the box in the open cornerstone of that building just before it was sealed. We were sure it would never, EVER be found!

“Why are you worried your box has been found? You didn’t hide evidence of cheating or anything like that in it, did you?” Pearson asked.

“No. What we buried in there was related to the disappearances of all those people,” Kale replied before seeming to calm down slightly. “But you’re right. It’s been a long time. Over a century!” He looked at Pearson, his brown eyes almost pleading as if for absolution. “After all this time, it’s HAS to be dead, right?”

“Dead?” Pearson questioned. “Who... or what... has to be dead? Kalin, you’re confusing me!”

“Maybe I should start this from the beginning?” Kale remarked, finally taking a seat on the edge of Pearson’s couch. “It was my first year in the Academy, but I had managed to make friends with one of the upperclassmen in your class...”

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Campus of Starfleet Academy

San Francisco, Earth

Spring 2283

Midshipman 4th Class Kalin Kale entered his dorm building. He was going to change into his PT gear for an exercise session at the gym, but the crowd gathered around a door at the far end of his dorm room floor caught his attention, and he walked down the hall to see what the fuss was about.

“It’s kinda cute... in a creepy sorta way,” a female human cadet just inside the door was remarking.

“Where did you get it?” another cadet asked.

Kale recognized the voice of one of the third year cadets, a human male named Kellogg, as he said, “I captured it on Denobula during my training cruise. I noticed it was hanging out along the edges of the camp we set up, and seemed a little hungry, so I started to pass it little bits of rations from time to time.”

Kale finally managed to press through to crowd to see what everyone was talking about. Just inside the dorm room door, inside a terrarium on the top of a desk, was a small creature about the size of a kitten that looked like a cross between an Earth frog and an insectoid-like alien creature that in early Earth cinema was known as a xenomorph.

“It’s not dangerous, is it?” another female cadet asked Kellogg. “Regulations forbid dangerous animals in the campus dorms.”

“It eats a lot, but it’s not dangerous,” Kellogg assured. “I don’t think it even has teeth.”

“That’s what they said about tribbles, but look at all the trouble they caused along the Klingon border,” Kale remarked as he leaned down for a closer look at the alien creature. It seemed to stare back at him with lifeless eyes and let out a deep croaking sound.

“It took us more than a week to get back to Earth after I brought Michigan back aboard the Republic,” Kellogg assured.

“Michigan?” Kale asked, looking at the upperclassman with curiosity.

“That’s what I decided to name him,” Kellogg replied. “As I was saying, it took a week to return home. I’m sure if he was dangerous, we would have seen some sign of it by now.”

Kale remembered he was due at the gym in just a few minutes, and he still needed to change his clothes. He left Kellogg’s room behind as he headed for his own. “What does it eat?” he heard another of the cadets ask as he walked away.

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Two days later, Kale was returning to his dorm room with his roommate, a Tellarite named Gral, when he noticed a movement out of the corner of his eye.

“What is it Kale?” Gral asked when he noticed the Centauri stop and look quizzically at a shadow near the door to the maintenance room.

“I thought I saw...” Just then, Michigan scurried out of the shadows and bolted down the hallway, disappearing into an open doorway near the far end.

“What on Tellar was THAT?!” Gral asked, his porcine eyes wide with shock.

“I think it was Cadet Kellogg’s new pet. But it wasn’t Kellogg’s room it just darted into,” Kale said. He then turned back down the hall and knocked on Kellogg’s door. It opened a moment later.

“Hey, Cadet Kellogg, did you...,” Kale started to say before he realized it was Kellogg’s own roommate, the Andorian Cadet Tholas, who had answered the door. “Hi, Tholas. Is Kellogg here?”

“No,” Tholas replied in the quiet way common among Andorians. “In point of fact, I have not seen Cadet Kellogg in almost two days.”

“Well, if he happens to come back, could you let him know that his new pet is loose in the dorm building,” Kale said. Tholas turned and looked at the terrarium, his expression revealing he had not noticed the cover of the transparent cage was sitting open until Kale had mentioned it.

“I will be sure to do so,” Tholas replied with a nod. “I fail to understand his reason why, but I have noticed Kellogg has developed a fondness for the creature since he returned to Earth with it.”

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Several weeks later, Cadet Kellogg had still not returned, though no one could find any evidence of any foul play. The boy had simply disappeared without a trace. In the meantime, two additional cadets – one of whom lived in the same dorm as Kale and Kellogg – had been reported missing as well.

In the Academy cafeteria, Kale was carrying his lunch tray toward one of the tables with several open seats. He noticed most of the cadets sitting there were upperclassmen – mainly second and third year cadets – and asked permission to sit down. One of them, a brunette third year human female cadet Kale had shared an extension course lecture on engineering developments of non-humanoid societies named Pearson, nodded and gestured for him to take a seat. As he started eating his lunch, Kale listened to the conversation going on around him.

“Did you hear Professor Bernathi is among the missing now?” one of the other cadets asked.

“Bernathi?!” Pearson repeated with surprise. “I just had a class with him on Tuesday! Do they have any idea where the missing have gone?”

“The astrophysics department has been performing a series of tests to determine if some sort of subspace anomaly is responsible,” another cadet said.

“Subspace anomaly?!?” Pearson responded with disbelief. “No anomaly could exist on the grounds of Starfleet Academy without setting off a dozen alarms!”

“It’s got to be something else behind the disappearances,” Kale remarked between bites of his sandwich.

“Such as... Cadet?” one of the other upperclassmen asked, his tone sarcastic.

“Well, maybe some alien life-form is responsible?” Kale suggested, putting down his food. “Kellogg brought that creature back with him from Denobula. And both Gral and I saw it loose in the dorm right around the time Kellogg disappeared.”

“But Kellogg’s pet was so small!” protested Pearson. “How could it possibly be responsible for Kellogg’s disappearance.”

“And if the pet is loose in the dorm, how does that connect with the other disappearances all over the campus?” another upperclassman asked.

“Why don’t we try and find Kellogg’s pet?” Pearson asked. “At least once it’s back in its cage, we can be sure it’s not behind these disappearances. Who’s with us?”

There were a few half-hearted hands raised to join Pearson and Kale. Moments later, the cadets departed the cafeteria in search of Kellogg’s mysterious pet.

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Several hours later, after the sun had set, only five of the cadets – Kale among them – were still searching. They had borrowed a medical tricorder from the Academy infirmary and had determined nothing out of the ordinary was still located within the dormitory building where Kellogg and Kale both lived. The search had continued across the Academy grounds and the dispirited cadets were almost ready to quit when the tricorder signaled that it had detected an alien life-form reading in the basement of Challenger Hall, one of the larger lecture hall buildings.

The small group tried to be as silent as possible as they crept down the stairs toward the basement.

“The tricorder says it’s right below us,” Kale said, pointing at the stairs beneath their feet. One of the other cadets, a freshman like Kale, leaned over the rail to look under the stairs.

“Looks like some kind of storage space under there,” the human boy said. “Might be hiding inside.”

“Oh, the poor thing is probably terrified and hungry,” said Thiria sh’Rene, an Andorian female second-year cadet with a tone of sadness and compassion. “Who knows how long it’s been since it last was fed?”

The cadets quietly crept down the remaining stairs and turned toward the storage space underneath. Aside from the little light getting in through the half-open door, the space was dark and it was impossible to see inside.

“Yeah, it’s in there,” Kale remarked, consulting the tricorder screen again. “Anyone think to bring a flashlight?”

“Oh, come on, are you scared or something?” Midshipman 2nd Class Malcolm Foxwell asked, pushing past the Centauri cadet and into the door of the storage space. “It’s just a little pet that...” Foxwell paused, narrowing his eyes as he looked toward the farthest corner of the storage space. “Yeah, I think I can see its eyes reflecting in the darkness.”

“Maybe we should get one of the superintendants?” Thiria suggested.

“No, I just need to grab it before it...,” Foxwell said just before lunging for the creature. Suddenly the small space was filled with an unearthly sound, like the wind that precedes the arrival of a severe tornado, and Foxwell began to scream.

“AHHHHH!!! IT HURTS!!! IT HURTS!!! Somebody, HELP ME!!!”

“FOXWELL!” Thiria screamed just as the other human male cadet bolted down the hall and toward the nearest exit.

With a mixture of fear and disgust, Kale watched frozen with horror as he could see Foxwell’s boots turn over and over, then slowly be drawn into the darkness inside the storage space.

“We have to do something!” he cried.

“It’s too late...,” Thiria said, watching the readout on the tricorder as it indicated one of the life readings beneath the stairs suddenly ceased.

“That’s GOT to be why so many people have gone missing!” Kale said. “We need to capture it! Or kill it, before it kills anyone else!”

“How?” asked Cadet Dering.

Kale looked at his two fellow cadets, his face suddenly looking determined. He turned toward the storage space door.

“No, Kale! It will kill you too!” Dering shouted.

“I don’t have a deathwish,” Kale remarked, slowly nearing the door and, carefully reaching inside, pulled it shut. He slid the bolt with a loud click, locking the door.

“We cannot simply leave it in there,” Thiria remarked. “It will surely find some way of escape.”

“I have no intention of leaving it in there,” Kale said. “But we need some items to make sure it will never escape again.” Kale handed the tricorder to Dering and said, “Monitor the creature. Make sure it doesn’t find some way out of there we aren’t aware of. Thiria, I need your help.”

“Where are you going?!?” Dering asked, a look of fear on his face as the other two cadets made their way toward an exit.

“I need to get something from my room,” Kale said. “And from the practice range.”

“The practice range?” Dering said with confusion.

Minutes later, Kale and Thiria were running across the campus quad, past where a new dormitory building was being built, and into his own living quarters. Inside his quarters, Kale searched around in his closet.

“What are you looking for?” Thiria asked.

“A gift my father gave me when I was accepted into the Academy,” Kale replied as he threw several uniforms onto the floor. “I hate to lose it, but it’s the only thing that might... AH! Here it is!”

Kale emerged from his closet with an ornately carved wooden box.

“This comes from the tranor trees in the Exkendarun province on Proxima Centauri Prime,” Kale explained as he led Thiria back out the door. “Here on Earth they are known as Iron Trees for the strength of their wood.”

“I think I know what you plan to do,” the Andorian girl said as the two started to run across the quad again. “But how do you plan on getting the creature into the box safely?”

“That’s where I need your help,” Kale said as the two approached the Academy phaser training range. Once there, Kale had Thiria distract the watch officer on duty as he snuck into the weapons storage area. It took several minutes, and he was almost caught once when one of the phaser locker covers fell off with a bang, until Thiria really turned on the charm and kept the watch officer from investigating. Kale flashed her the thumbs up as he passed the watch office.

Several minutes later, Kale was back in the basement of Challenger Hall. He half-expected Dering to be gone, but the second-year cadet was still keeping a keen eye on the tricorder readings.

“Is it still in there?” Kale asked as he approached, almost causing Dering to jump out of his skin.

“From these readings I’m seeing, it almost looks dead. Nearly no heartbeat. Respiration down to one breath every five minutes. I hate to say it, but I think that little bugger is having a nap following a hearty meal.”

“Well, if all goes right, it will be napping a little more permanently,” Kale remarked.

The Centauri started moving toward the bolted door when the sound of rapidly approaching footsteps on the stairs above caused Kale to fear they had been caught by campus security. A moment later, Thiria appeared on the stairs, looking down on her two fellow cadets.

“How’d you get away?” Kale asked with confusion, expecting the Andorian would have spend more time in the company of the range watch officer, if nothing else but to reduce any suspicions against her.

“I reminded the lieutenant that fraternization between officers and cadets was punishable by six months in the brig and a reduction in rank,” Thiria replied. “What’s the plan?”

“Simple,” Kale said. “I open the door, shoot the creature, and we bury it somewhere for the rest of eternity.”

“Sounds like a plan,” Dering remarked.

“Dering, make sure of where the creature is located in the storage space,” Thiria ordered her fellow cadet as she approached Kale and the door. “Kale, you stand ready with that phaser that we’re all probably going to be expelled for stealing. I’ll unlock and push open the door.”

Kale adjusted the setting on the phaser, one of the new type 2 pistols he had only handled once several months earlier on the range, then nodded to Thiria.

“The creature is huddled in the far end beneath the lowest stair,” Dering confirmed.

Thiria put her hand on the locking bolt, and slowly slid it open. Kale activated a flashlight he had grabbed from the range as well and pointed it at the door in the direction of where the creature was supposed to be. Thiria nodded and Kale nodded in reply. With a shove, the Andorian pushed open the door. The light immediately illuminated the creature, curled up in the far corner of the space. As Kale took aim with the phaser, one of the creature’s eyes opened and glowed with reflected light from the flashlight. The creature started to bare its teeth and the small room started to fill with the wind-like sound again. A second later, that noise was replaced by the sound of a phaser beam.

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Several minutes later, Kale, Thiria, and Dering were walking back across the quad.

“What do we do with it?” Dering asked. “Turn it into security?”

“Are you kidding?!” Thiria asked incredulously. “We just stole a phaser from the practice range! If we turn the creature’s body in to security, they’ll know we were the ones who stole the phaser and we’ll all be expelled! I say we throw it in the ocean and be done with it!”

“Truthfully, I’m not sure I used the phaser completely correctly,” Kale remarked. “I’ve only used a phaser once before, and I never fired it before. If I didn’t actually kill the creature, throwing it in the ocean could revive it and it would escape to wreck further havoc.”

“Then what should we do?” Dering asked.

“I... I’m not sure,” Kale admitted as he looked around the landscape, his eyes settling on the nearby construction site. “But I may have an idea...”

Thiria’s eyes followed Kale’s gaze, settling on the cornerstone of the building under construction. “You don’t mean...?”

“They’re holding a dedication ceremony tomorrow morning. The cornerstone will be sealed, for as long as this new building stands!” Kale opened his box, looking one last time at the alien creature laying inside. He then placed the stolen phaser inside the box as well and closed the top. He then motioned for his fellow cadets to remain where they were as he passed through the perimeter fence and stepped up to the open cornerstone. Moments later he placed the ironwood box into the dark corner inside the stone and quickly stepped away.

The next morning, the Academy command dedicated the new student dormitory, sealing the cornerstone with another massive block of Terran granite. And while an extensive investigation was conducted, Starfleet never found any evidence of who was responsible for the break-in and theft of a phaser from the Academy practice range nor recovery of the missing phaser, and no trace of the missing cadets and professor were ever found.

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Stardate 68564.2

Starbase 719

Captain Cathryn Pearson looked at Admiral Kale with incredulous disbelief.

“You mean to tell me you think this... this long-dead creature is responsible for the disappearance of a construction worker on the grounds of the Academy?” she asked.

“I’m afraid so,” Kale admitted with a nod. “And no one on Earth has any clue what they are dealing with! I need to get back there and capture that alien creature myself!”

Pearson looked at Kale skeptically, then said, “Personally, I think you’re on a wild goose chase, but if you really feel you need to be back there, I’ll help however I can.” Pearson stood up and touched the intercom on the wall of her quarters. “Pearson to *USS Corsair*.”

“*Corsair*,” came the quick reply. “What can I do for you, my love?” asked the voice of Pearson’s husband, Captain Konstantin Harkonnen.

“Konstantin, ready the *Corsair* for immediate departure,” Pearson ordered.

“Aye, aye,” Harkonnen responded, a tinge of puzzlement in his voice. “Destination?”

Pearson looked once more at Kale, whose own features look – if anything – even more worried than when he had arrived at her quarters. She then said, “San Francisco, Earth.”

To Be Continued...