

Starbase 719  
*Typhon Sector*

“Manual interlocks to eject the reactors have failed, Captain,” B’Elanna Torres reported, her expression a mixture of shock and disbelief. “Power levels are continuing to rise at a steady pace.”

“How long until they blow apart?” Captain Cathryn Pearson asked, concerned there would not be enough time to get the entire population off the starbase.

“I can keep the station in one piece for another twenty-four hours, Captain,” Torres replied. “Beyond that, no guarantee.”

Pearson looked at Vice Admiral Kalin Kale, who was standing beside her at the master systems display, hoping her former commanding officer and present sector coordinator would be able to pull a rabbit out of his hat as he had done several times while in command of the *Sarek* many years prior. “Any suggestions, Kalin?”

Kale slowly shook his head as he said, “At this point, I think you only have one option left. And you know what it is.”

Releasing a sigh of frustration, Pearson nodded in agreement. She then touched a control on the master systems display which activated the station-wide intercom.

“All hands, this is Captain Pearson,” she announced. “We have an emergency situation. Evacuate the station. Repeat, evacuate the station...!”

Space, the Final Frontier...

## Star Trek: Starbase 719

### “An Extraordinary Day” By PJK

#### Part 2 of the Typhon Sector Crisis

*Station log, stardate 69537.3: Captain Cathryn Elisabeth Pearson, recording; Our situation has gone from bad to worse. In the days leading up to a scheduled diplomatic conference with the Tholian Ambassador, my Chief of Operations – Lieutenant Commander B’Elanna Torres – detected an unexplained gradually increasing power surge in the station’s four main fusion reactors. After spending several days trying to determine the cause of the malfunction and attempting to figure out how to correct it, Commander Torres recommended a full shut-down of the reactors, which I authorized. Unfortunately, that did not correct the issue, as the reactors – even after being shut down – continued to produce a slow but steadily increasing amount of energy, threatening to blow the station apart.*

*After recalling every available ship in the AOR to stand by in the immediate vicinity of the station, I ordered the ejection of the fusion reactors, knowing we would then have about twenty-four hours to evacuate all personnel before the emergency batteries were drained. However, the reactor ejection system also malfunctioned, and the power curve continues to climb.*

*I have now ordered the emergency evacuation of the station. I only hope we can get everyone off before the reactors destroy Starbase 719.*

On the reactor level, Commander Jeffrey Bloom – chief engineer of the Fifth Fleet flagship *USS Dauntless* – gathered the members of his engineering team together.

“We’re going to offer whatever help we can to the starbase crew to get everyone off the station, but as soon as feasible, I want all the *Dauntless* engineers to beam back to the ship,” the emotional Vulcan engineer advised. “I’m sure Chief Blackman is going to have his hands full with the transporter systems in the next few minutes, if he doesn’t already.” He then gestured for his team to move toward the nearest turbolift and head toward the station’s immense botanical garden area, where the majority of the station’s civilian populous and non-essential personnel were already mustered awaiting transport to one of the waiting starships around the station.

Lieutenant (JG) Wyatt ‘Five’ Cerilli, an operations officer from the *Dauntless* and former Borg drone that had been added to the engineering team to help Bloom and his engineers analyze the overloading reactors, began to follow the rest of his team when he noticed movement out of the corner of his eye. Five turned to see a human man wearing a bright red shirt with a black collar and gold rank stripes on the sleeve cuffs step around the corner of a side corridor. There was something familiar to Five about what the man was wearing, though he could not recall where he had seen any similar clothing before. The man quickly realized Five had seen him and ducked back around the corner again, as if not wanting to be noticed.

Five glanced at the rest of his team, who were still heading down the main corridor toward the station hub, about to ask Commander Bloom if he had also seen the strangely dressed man, but Bloom’s concentration was on the task at hand; he was already passing out assignments that would result in several dozen evacuees being beamed to the *Dauntless* along with the engineering team within the next few minutes. Five considered catching up with his shipmates before reconsidering and silently turning down the side corridor to investigate the strange sight he had noticed.

Five slowly peeked around the far corner of the side corridor, seeing the man in the red shirt kneeling down by some equipment mounted on the bulkhead, what looked like a jury-rigged transport enhancer set up on the deck next to him. It took a moment for Five to realize the man was not working on the strange equipment, but removing it from the bulkhead, and that it had been attached to a sub-system of the reactor ejection control equipment.

“Excuse me,” Five said, finally turning the corner and approaching the man, who appeared startled by the young officer’s sudden appearance. “Is there something I can help you with? Everyone has been ordered to evacuate the station and we don’t have much time.”

The strange man turned slightly in Five’s direction, and for the first time Five could see the emblem on his shirt chest – a Starfleet emblem much like his own combadge except silver in color with a spiral-shaped secondary emblem embedded within it.

“Aye, I understand we’re evacuating,” the man said, his demeanor slightly apprehensive. “I just needed to remove some one-of-a-kind equipment so it doesn’t...”

“I noted your equipment was connected into one of the reactor ejection sub-systems,” Five interrupted, taking another step closer to the stranger. “Would that have had anything to do with our inability to eject the reactor cores?”

“I’m sorry,” the man simply said in response.

“Sorry? Sorry for...?”

Before Five could react, the man pulled out what looked like an old fashioned phaser pistol, though different from any design Five had seen in history texts. The barrel of the weapon appeared to spin around, exposing a second, differently colored barrel, and the stranger depressed the trigger. A split-second later, Five fell to the deck unconscious.

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Up in Starbase Ops, one of the turbolift doors opened and a barrel-chested man with a dark mustache and goatee emerged, moving swiftly toward Pearson at the center of the room.

“The *Corsair* is prepped and ready to depart spacedock as soon as you are aboard, Cathryn,” Konstantin Harkonnen reported.

Pearson took her concentration away from the master systems display for a moment to turn and look at her husband.

“Konstantin, I want you to personally retrieve our daughters and take them aboard the *Corsair* with you. You are to depart spacedock as soon as you can clear the moorings. You are NOT to wait for me. I’m needed here in Ops until I’m sure everyone is off the station...”

“No, Cathryn!” Harkonnen protested. “We can wait for you to get aboard before we...”

“This is an order, Captain, so listen good,” Pearson interrupted back. “Retrieve our daughters, report immediately aboard the *Corsair*, and get underway as soon as you set foot on the bridge, if not sooner. I have to monitor the evacuation. I will contact you as soon as Ops is ready to be evacuated – AND NOT A MOMENT SOONER – so stand by within transporter range and await my signal.”

Harkonnen considered protesting again, but the look on his wife’s face quickly made him change his mind. “Yes, Cathryn,” was all he said. “I will await your signal.” Harkonnen then spun on his heel and returned to the turbolift.

It was not until the lift doors had closed completely that Kale spoke up. “You really should be with your family,” the admiral admonished. “I can maintain the watch here.”

“You of all people...,” Pearson responded. “I worked long and hard to be able to step up and take command of this starbase after Val’ri left. I would be neglecting my duties if I were to abandon my post now just so I could be sure my family made it off the station safely. There are many other officers aboard this base that have family here; You and Kitty. B’Elanna and Miral. How could I expect my crew to remain at their posts and do their job if I don’t do the same?”

“Point taken,” Kale remarked. “What’s the status of the evacuation?”

Pearson looked over at Commander Petersen, who responded, “The first hundred or so have beamed over to the Fifth Fleet starships that are standing by. Those ships will continue to beam evacuees aboard for the next fifteen minutes, then allow their transport systems to recycle and briefly power down while the secondary vessels – transports, cargo ships, and other civilian craft that have responded to the Retract Protocol – begin taking more evacuees aboard.”

“How are we looking on time?” Kale asked.

Petersen consulted her console for a moment before replying, “At the current rate of evacuation, assuming we don’t run out of room aboard the ships that have responded, we’re going to cut it close. Like, by mere minutes.”

“Michelle, have Colonel McIntyre prepare the escape pods in Sections R-1 and R-2.” Pearson ordered. “It’s not ideal, but if we have to we can have small groups man the escape pods and join up in nests until one or more of the starships can bring them aboard.”

“Make sure the Marines are maintaining an accurate and up-to-date crew manifest,” Kale reminded. “We don’t want to leave anyone behind by accident.”

“The first fifteen-hundred are off the station,” Petersen reported with a slight smile. “Only another eighteen thousand five hundred more to go, give or take a few hundred.”

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Several hours later, Colonel McIntyre was still in the botanical garden, overseeing the evacuation.

“Almost half the civilian population has been taken off the base, Colonel,” Major Markell reported as he consulted a crew manifest displayed on a padd. “Something odd though.”

“What’s that?” the Starfleet Marine commander asked, glancing at his second-in-command.

“Since the evac was ordered, security has reported several sightings of unidentified people being seen in various areas around the station wearing what is being described as really old Starfleet uniforms.”

“What do you mean, really old Starfleet uniforms?” McIntyre asked, puzzled.

“They’re described as similar in appearance to the uniforms in use during the late-2260’s, during the *Enterprise*’s historic five-year mission.”

“Why would anyone be wearing old uniforms like that?” McIntyre asked.

“No one knows,” Markell replied. “When any of these unidentified personnel are approached, they simply disappear.”

“Disappear,” McIntyre questioned with alarm. “You mean they beam away? Or are people hallucinating?”

“I don’t think they’re hallucinating, the reports I have seen seem too consistent, but it’s being reported that when anyone approaches any of these strangely-dressed people, he or she quickly head around a corner or into a nearby door, and by the time the security guard gets to where they should have been, they have simply vanished.”

“That IS weird, but it may just be that in their rush to get everyone here to the gardens, people are imagining things. Keep me informed.”

“Aye, Colonel.”

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Aboard the *Dauntless*, Commander Bloom was getting frantic. He was pacing wildly back and forth in Fleet Captain Koester’s ready room, watched by both Koester and the starship’s COB Chief Pono Kyman, the commander of the *Dauntless* continuing his attempt to calm his engineer down.

“You’re certain Lieutenant Cerilli has not beamed back aboard the ship?” Koester asked.

“The computer reports he never beamed back aboard, and he hasn’t responded to any attempts to contact him, either here or back aboard the station.”

“I tried contacting Five by intercom just after the Commander reported him missing, Skipper,” Kyman added. “I got no response either.”

“Well, if he were still aboard the station, Michelle should be able to locate him by his combadge signal.”

Bloom stopped his pacing for a moment as he said, “I don’t know if it’s because they’re so busy monitoring the evacuation, but Commander Petersen and Lieutenant Commander Torres both claim they cannot locate Five’s combadge signal over there. I had Lieutenant Euwess scan the station for his signal, and she was unable to locate it either. It’s as if he has completely disappeared from the universe.”

“Any chance he accidentally beamed aboard one of the other evac ships?” Koester asked.

“If he had, I would think he had enough common sense to at least contact the *Dauntless* and let us know where he is, even if he can’t get back here right away!”

Koester looked at Kyman, who confidently added, “He would.”

Koester half-shrugged his shoulders as he stated, “I’ll have Commander Kyler’s Marines keep an eye out for him aboard the ship, but until we finish our mission here, we can’t go out of our way to look for him yet.”

“Speaking of our mission, Skipper,” Kyman said, changing the subject slightly. “The ship is getting awfully crowded. Even the senior officers are starting to be doubled up in quarters where possible. What are we going to do with almost four thousand extra people aboard?”

“The answer to that depends a great deal on what happens in the next few hours, COB,” Koester replied. “If Captain Pearson and her crew can get the reactors back under control somehow, we’ll simply stick around and have a big ship’s party until we receive word that the residents of the starbase can be beamed back. If not, if the station suffers extreme damage or – God forbid – is destroyed entirely, we’ll probably be transporting our passengers either to the nearest habitable planet, which would be Woodron II, or to the Federation colony on Persephone.”

“Persephone is more than five sectors away, at the complete opposite end of the AOR, Skipper! Almost six weeks at warp seven! I really hope Admiral Kale chooses to relocate to Woodron, if it comes to that,” Kyman said.

“I sympathize, COB,” Koester remarked. “But in the meantime, we need to take aboard as many of the evacuees as we can and try and make everyone as comfortable as possible.” Koester then looked again at his chief engineer and added, “And Jeff, let me know if you locate Mister Cerilli. And if you do, find out how he got separated from your engineering team and didn’t beam back aboard the ship with you.”

“Aye, Peter,” Bloom replied. “In the meantime, I’ll be in main engineering. We’re probably going to need some extra power before all this is over.”

Both Koester and Kyman watched as the emotional Vulcan departed the ready room, the El'Aurian looking back at his CO with a worried expression.

"It's not like Five to simply disappear, Skipper. Something happened to him. But what?"

"I'm hoping he simply got caught up in helping Cathryn's crew evacuate the base," Koester replied, otherwise at a loss for words.

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*Stardate 69540*

It had been almost a full twenty-four hours since the evacuation order had been issued. The vast majority of *Starbase 719*'s residents and crew were now packed like proverbial sardines into every ship that had responded to the Retract Protocol, including all eight Fifth Fleet starships.

"It looks like we have only another thousand or so personnel aboard the station," Captain Cathryn Pearson was saying to her husband, Captain Konstantin Harkonnen, over the *Corsair*'s main viewscreen. The starbase commander looked tired – more tired than Harkonnen had seen her in a very long time – though everyone involved in the evacuation of the starbase had gone without any sleep for at least the last thirty hours.

"So you and the crew in Ops are ready to beam aboard the *Corsair*?" Harkonnen asked hopefully.

"Not yet," Pearson replied. "We're still performing one final sweep of all areas and closing off the ones the Marines have already verified empty. It will probably be another hour or so at most."

"You're cutting it awfully close, Kitty Cat," Harkonnen remarked, using his wife's nick-name. "My science officer is reporting numerous EPS conduit overloads occurring aboard the station and tells me the main reactors are on the verge of blowing apart."

"B'Elanna's holding things together over here. We should be fine. I'll signal as soon as we're ready to beam aboard."

"I have my transporter chief maintaining a lock on all of you," Harkonnen assured. "Awaiting your final signal. *Corsair*, out."

As soon as the viewscreen returned to the view of the starbase in the moderate distance, small areas along the outer hull flashing at random periods as power conduits exploded outward, Harkonnen's science officer turned in his seat to face the captain.

"They don't have much time," he said. "Less than they probably believe they do."

"If I need to, I'll yank them all over here," Harkonnen said. "But if I do it too soon, I will never hear the end of it from Cathryn, especially if there is anyone still left aboard the station after she has been beamed aboard. No, as much as I hate it, we wait for her signal before we pull everyone over here. Helm, make sure we stay within ten thousand kilometers of Ops at all times!"

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The deck in Ops shook as another power distribution node aboard the station exploded, sending hull plating tumbling away from the starbase's structure.

"We just lost power on levels eighty-nine, ninety, and ninety-two," reported Torres' assistant.

"Those levels have long since been evacuated, so I'm not too worried about them," Pearson remarked. "Only a few hundred more and we can get out of here ourselves."

"It's going to take every transporter we have in the sector to pull this off successfully," Kale said.

"Speaking of that," Commander Petersen interjected, causing both Kale and Pearson to look at the security chief with anxiety. "I have just been informed by the *Belle* that their entire transporter system has broken down. Without *Bellerophon*'s transporters, we're not going to get everyone off the station in the time we have remaining."

"Beam me over there, Captain," Torres suddenly exclaimed.

"You think you can get their system back up and running quickly?" Pearson asked.

“The *Belle* is almost a duplicate of the *Voyager*. I spent nearly seven years keeping that system up and running with no back-up from the Corps of Engineers. I can get their system back on line, at least long enough to get everyone off the station. Once we’re evacuated, we can give their system a complete overhaul, but...”

“Enough!” Pearson said, gesturing toward the transporter platform at the far end of Ops. “You’ve convinced me. Go!”

As Torres grabbed a few needed tools and stepped toward the transporter, Kale spoke up. “What about your daughter, Miral, Commander? Is she still here aboard the station?”

“No, Admiral,” Torres replied. “She beamed over to the *Belle* and her father several hours ago.”

“Good. I hope you can figure out the *Belle*’s issues quickly,” Kale remarked.

“I didn’t have any luck figuring out what was wrong with the station’s reactors. Hopefully I’ll have a better time with a transporter system.” Torres entered a set of coordinates into the console near the transporter pads, then stepped up onto the platform and nodded in the direction of Commander Petersen. “Energize.”

The dematerialization seemed to take a little longer than normal, due in large part to the non-stop use of the transport systems throughout the starbase and the interrupted power conduits where sections had overloaded, but eventually Torres disappeared from Ops.

“Can you hold my station together, Lieutenant?” Pearson asked the young officer that had replaced Torres at the operations console.

“I’ll do my best, Ma’am,” the young woman replied, her eyes betraying her fear.

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Fleet Captain Koester’s fingers were rapidly drumming on the arm of his command chair. Commander Spot had just informed him the station had only a few more minutes before catastrophic failure of the structure due to excessive energy output in the power distribution networks. The *Dauntless* herself was as full of extra passengers as could be safely transported and provided for. Now Koester was attempting to contact his wife, the station’s chief of security, and was receiving no response to his hails.

“Is our transmission being blocked by the power output?” Koester asked, glancing to his right toward the tactical console and Marine Captain Jeong-Hwan.

“Our hails are getting through to Starbase Ops, as far as I can tell, Captain,” the tactical officer replied.

“Then why aren’t they answer...?”

Koester’s question was interrupted by the face of Commander Michelle Petersen appearing on the main viewscreen. Her face was pale, her hair uncombed and mussed, her eyes sunken with exhaustion.

“Michelle! Thank God! Are you ready to evacuate Ops yet?” Koester asked with desperate hope.

“Not yet,” Petersen replied. “We fell a little behind schedule when the *Bellerophon*’s transporters went down. We still have about eight hundred Starfleet personnel standing by in the garden to beam away, but now that B’Elanna has the *Bellerophon*’s transporters back up and running, it should just be a couple more min...”

The viewscreen suddenly blinked back to the view of the starbase, where small areas along the outer hull were continuing to erupt in power overloads. “What happened?” Koester demanded to know. “Captain, get the signal back!”

“I’m sorry, Captain,” Jeong-Hwan replied. “The transmission cut off at the source.”

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“...But now that B’Elanna has the *Bellerophon*’s transporters back up and running, it should just be a couple more minutes until we can join you,” Petersen said just before she realized the subspace transmitter had ceased working. “Peter? Peter, can you hear me? Starbase Ops to *Dauntless*.” After a moment of unsuccessfully trying to regain contact with her husband, she looked at Pearson and reported, “I’ve lost contact with the *Dauntless*.”

Before either Pearson or Kale could comment, an indicator on Petersen’s console attracted her attention.

“Captain, I’m detecting a very strange reading coming from the four fusion reactors!”

“What kind of a reading?” Pearson inquired.

“I’m not sure. I’ve never seen anything like this be...”

Petersen’s report was cut off when a stranger wearing a gold-colored shirt stepped out of one of the turbolifts and raised a phaser in one hand.

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“Captain, the station’s about to blow!” the lieutenant manning the *Corsair*’s operations console reported.

Konstantin Harkonnen could wait no longer. Steeling himself for the inevitable confrontation he would have with his wife, he activated his intercom and said, “Transporter, beam aboard all occupants of Ops.”

“Captain, there’s too much interference coming from the station,” replied Harkonnen’s transporter chief. “I’ve lost transporter lock on everyone! Attempting to re-gain contact. Stand by.”

Harkonnen’s expression changed from shock to outrage to fear as he watched sections of the starbase erupt in ever increasing explosions. “Come on... Come on!” he muttered.

“Bridge, transporter room. I’m re-establishing transporter lock now. However, I’m reading several more life-signs in Ops than I was before. It could be the power overload is causing the signals to duplicate like a reflection.”

“Just lock onto every signal you are detecting and beam them aboard!” Harkonnen ordered with barely restrained anger.

“This is more complicated than it sounds, Captain,” the transporter chief replied. “If I lock onto the wrong signal we risk missing several of the crew over there, or worse, wind up beaming half a person aboard. Stand by.”

Now it was Harkonnen’s turn to drum his fingers on the arm of his command chair. A moment later a new voice cut in over the bridge speakers.

“This is Lieutenant Commander B’Elanna Torres aboard the *Bellerophon*! The station is on the verge of exploding, and if it does, it’s going to take anything within twenty thousand kilometers with it! The fleet needs to warp away! NOW!”

Before Torres had finished her sentence, Harkonnen could see the *Arizona*, *Sarek*, *Sun-Tzu*, and numerous smaller civilian craft jump into warp. Almost on the verge of panic, he jammed his hand onto the intercom control and said, “Transporter room...!”

“Energizing now!” the response replied.

Harkonnen did not even wait for report of successful transport before he turned his attention toward the helm and said, “Get us out of here! Now!” Seconds later, the Defiant-class escort followed the other ships into warp.

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The *Dauntless* dropped out of warp near the coordinates that the fleet had earlier agreed would be their rendezvous point and quickly maneuvered around to face back in the direction from which they had come. On the viewscreen the crew could see other ships, including the *Bellerophon*, *Triton*, *Besiege*, *Wildcat*, *Cassandra*, and *Erstwhile* likewise dropping out of warp.

“Did they get everyone off in time?” Setton To’Lock Arbelo, Koester’s first officer, asked.

“I don’t think so,” Koester replied, a look of shock still haunting his blue eyes. “I hope those still aboard had the chance to reach a warp-capable shuttle and escape.”

“Captain, I’m detecting...,” Spot started to say when suddenly the viewscreen filled with a bright light.

“There she goes!” Arbelo muttered quietly. As the crew watched, a barely visible circle of distortion could be seen expanding from where the starbase had been located.

“Brace yourselves, everyone,” Spot advised. “The explosion has created a subspace shockwave similar to what occurred when Praxis exploded a century ago.” Several seconds later, the *Dauntless* shuddered as the shockwave passed.

“Damage reports?” Koester inquired.

“No damage,” Lt Commander Thomas Riker reported.

“Very well,” Koester replied. “Mister Riker, hail the *Corsair*. Tell them I would like to speak to my wife.”

“Hailing frequencies open, Captain,” Riker confirmed. A moment later, the image of Captain Konstantin Harkonnen appeared on the viewer. The Russian man appeared on the verge of being physically ill.

“*Corsair*, this is Fleet Captain Koester. Can you put my wife on, please?”

“I wish I could, Fleet Captain,” Harkonnen responded. “She’s not here.”

Alarmed, Koester asked, “What do you mean, she’s not there? *Corsair* was supposed to keep an active transporter lock on all personnel in Ops! What happened?”

“Interference from the station interrupted our lock,” Harkonnen replied, his eyes appearing haunted. “My transporter chief attempted to restore the transporter lock, but he was not entirely successful.”

The look of shock had reappeared on Koester’s face as he asked, “How many?”

“By the time we were forced to warp away, only Admiral Kale had been retrieved. Cathryn, your wife Michelle, Lieutenants Markell and Amano, Colonel McIntyre... We couldn’t get them back.”

“Spot,” Koester said, turning his attention on his science officer. “How long before it’s safe to return to the vicinity of the starbase and search for survivors?”

“Now that the shockwave has passed, we can return at any time,” Spot replied in his British-accented, slightly mechanical sounding voice.

“Mister Riker, hail the fleet.” A moment later Koester addressed the ships surrounding the *Dauntless*. “This is Fleet Captain Koester. I am initiating SAR protocol. Starships *Sarek*, *Bellerophon*, and *Corsair* will accompany the *Dauntless* back to the location of *Starbase 719* and search for any possible survivors. *Besiege* and *Arizona*, remain at these coordinates and assume a defensive posture around the rest of the fleet. We will contact you as soon as we assess the situation. *Dauntless*, out.”

Several minutes later, the *Dauntless*, *Sarek*, *Corsair*, and *Bellerophon* dropped out of warp very close to where *Starbase 719* should have been. Small pieces of debris bounced against the shields of the four starship before they came to a complete stop.

“Spot, any signs of survivors?”

“Conducting a short-range sensor scan of the sector, Captain. Detecting drifting debris. Nowhere near enough to account for the entire station, but based on the size of the detonation we witnessed, I would have to assume the majority of the station was vaporized.”

“Captain!” Jeong-Hwan called out. “*Corsair* reports they have detected what they believe is a shuttlecraft at 060 mark 10, range 600 kilometers!”

Koester looked at the viewscreen, where the Defiant-class *USS Corsair* was already speeding away. Several seconds later, the *Corsair* had pulled alongside the battered auxiliary craft.

“*Corsair* to *Dauntless*,” Harkonnen’s voice said through the bridge speakers a few minutes later.

“Go ahead, Captain,” Koester replied, hope in his voice.

“No joy,” Harkonnen reported, his voice again sounding weary. “No survivors aboard. Not even any bodies. The shuttle must have been ejected from one of the maintenance bays prior to the station exploding.”

“Understood, Captain. Resume a general search pattern. We’ll give the area a good once-over before we give up all hope.”

There was a pause of several seconds. Koester half-expected one of Harkonnen’s infamous outbursts to lash out over the comm circuit, but finally a tired-sounding voice responded, “Aye, Fleet Captain.”

“Orders, Skipper?” Arbelo asked once the comm channel had closed.

“Inform the *Sarek* and *Belle* to assist with the search. Each ship will cover a quadrant out to fifty thousand kilometers. Once the search is complete, we rendezvous with the rest of the fleet. Admiral Fil has decided we should all head toward Vorte.”

“Vorte?” Chief Pono Kyman asked. “The Romulan colony?”

“The Fleet commanders received orders from Admiral Janeway about two hours before the station exploded that we were to join up with her there if nothing could be done to prevent the station from exploding.”

Koester explained. A look of sadness mixed with fatigue started to overcome Koester's expression as he added, "I need to take care of some things. The ship is yours for the time being, Exec."

"Aye, Skipper," Arbelo replied, watching as Koester crossed the bridge and entered his ready room. He then looked back at Counselor Tanzia Gera. The joined-Trill woman seemed to know what the first officer was thinking and nodded subtly before getting out of her seat and approaching the ready room door, sounding the chime. She quietly stepped inside when the door opened.

"Mister Arbelo," Lieutenant William Hyland-Faggio then said. "What's going to happen now?"

"What do you mean, Lieutenant?" Arbelo asked.

"With *Starbase 719* destroyed, what's going to happen to the Fifth Fleet? To our mission?"

Arbelo considered his answer for a moment before finally saying, "That's up to Starfleet, Lieutenant. And probably something Admiral Janeway will be discussing with the fleet leadership when we all reach Vorte."

*To Be Continued...*