

Michelle Petersen carefully aimed the phaser at the locking mechanism and depressed the trigger. The hand phaser whined briefly and the lock evaporated, allowing Captain Konstantin Harkonnen and Fleet Captain Peter Koester to thrust open the gate and open the main entrance of the Bastogne Lodge.

Captain K'danz and Commander Paris from the *USS Bellerophon* and Captain Jo Ann Parker and Commander A-ZuRQuIL from the *USS Sarek* had joined the first away team to board *Starbase 719* after its mysterious reappearance; Admirals Kalin Kale and Penji Fil, Koester from the *USS Dauntless*, and Harkonnen from the *USS Corsair*, to find out exactly what had happened to the station and its crew when they apparently vanished – thought destroyed in an explosion of the station's fusion reactors almost exactly a year earlier.

Many months worth of dust covered the tables, chairs, and bar within the Lodge, and several of the guests started brushing off chairs as Harkonnen slipped behind the bar and entered a code into a keypad located near one of the replicators that revealed a hidden chiller and liquor cabinet beneath the bar. Opening both the chiller and cabinet, Harkonnen lifted out several bottles of varying color, from green Aldebaran whiskey, to tan Saurian brandy, to bright blue Romulan Ale.

"I thought Val'ri took her stash with her when the *Pariah* left the station?" Harkonnen remarked, lifting one of the blue bottles toward the light and studying it.

"She did," Pearson confirmed, grabbing a couple of the bottles off the bar and carrying them over to the tables that Fil and Koester were moving closer together. "I've been keeping her old hidden stash stocked for special occasions since she left," she added with a smile.

"You've been holding out on me, Kitty Cat," Harkonnen admonished playfully as he grabbed a bottle that had caught his eye and carried it over to where everyone was gathered.

"Excuse the mess in here," Pearson said to those gathered at the table. "Shifty locked this place up when the evacuation was ordered and things have been so crazy for the last six months we never bothered coming down here and opening it up for any reason."

"Six months?" Captain Parker asked. "Captain Pearson, *Starbase 719* has been missing – actually thought to have been destroyed! – for almost a full year!"

"So Admirals Fil and Kale explained to us," Pearson said as her husband, Konstantin Harkonnen, pulled a couch from along one wall over closer to the tables and she sat down next to him, each now holding their drinks as she cuddled into the Russian's shoulder. "That would explain where your new starbase came from. Tiny little thing."

"You don't know the half of it, Cathryn," Kale remarked.

"I guess it's a good thing Starfleet hadn't started building a new Ournal-class starbase on the same spot where we emerged."

"You can thank the Federation bureaucracy for that," Fleet Captain Koester remarked, one of his arms around his own wife Michelle Petersen's shoulders while he held a glass of Romulan ale in the other. "You guys were barely gone a day before Penji wanted to start building a new base here."

Admiral Fil seemed flustered for a moment over being accused of wanting to start construction on a new starbase in the Typhon Sector so quickly after so many friends had been lost, but Captain K'danz simply asked, "So what did happen here aboard the station during the evacuation?"

"As you know, I was waiting until the absolute last moment to evacuate Ops in the hopes of getting as many of the crew off the station as possible," Pearson began to relate...

Space, the Final Frontier...

## Star Trek: Starbase 719

### “A Tale Twice Told” By PJK

A Typhon Sector Crisis Story

*Stardate 69540.1*

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 Lieutenant Jinny Erikson.

“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,” Erikson replied, her eyes betraying her fear.

Things remained very busy in Ops for the next several minutes as the crew monitored the evacuation. Slowly – too slowly in Pearson’s opinion – the numbers were decreasing, but it seemed like it would still not be quickly enough. The captain glanced nervously at the power output readings coming from the main fusion reactors, still steadily climbing.

“Captain, Commander Torres reports she has the *Bellerophon*’s transporters back on-line and ready to continue the evacuation,” Petersen reported several minutes later. “She requests permission to remain aboard the *Belle* just in case they have problems again.”

“Permission granted,” Pearson replied. “As long as we can get everyone off ASAP!”

“Captain, we’re being hailed by the *Dauntless*,” Lieutenant Erikson reported before Pearson could return her attention to the evacuation.

“I can talk to Peter all he wants once I get everyone off the station,” Pearson replied, almost growling back at the young lieutenant.

“They’re being pretty persistent,” Erikson remarked. “I think their captain wants to talk to Commander Petersen.”

Pearson glared across the master systems display at Commander Petersen and said, “Michelle, he’s your husband. Do you want to take care of this?”

“I’ll impress on him how preoccupied we are, Captain,” Petersen replied before activating the monitor on her security console. The image of the security chief’s husband, Fleet Captain Peter J. Koester, sitting in the center seat of his starship’s bridge appeared.

“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 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, another 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. Before anyone could react, the man fired at each crew member. They all fell beside their stations, stunned into unconsciousness. The man then pulled a small device off the belt beneath the back of his shirt and flipped it open. The device made a tweeting sound as the cover flipped open.

“This is Kirk,” the man said. “The main operations center is secure. Unfortunately, there were still some of the crew here. I wasn’t anticipating that, had to knock them all out. Looks like they were waiting to try and get everyone off the station before they themselves evacuated.”

“We’re on a strict time table, Cap’n,” a voice with a strong Scottish brogue replied through the communicator as the turbolift doors Kirk had emerged from opened again and several more men wearing red shirts joined him in Ops. A few of them moved to key control consoles and opened panels to access the equipment inside. The other two assembled what appeared to be transport enhancers at each corner of Ops and activated them, causing a barely perceptible hum to fill the space. “Unless those ships out there manage to beam everyone aboard in the next thirty seconds or so, the crew left behind will be goin’ on a little trip with the rest o’ us. Have you downloaded the new operatin’ system yet?”

Kirk stepped over to the master systems display and pulled open a panel on the side. He then removed another small device that he was carrying on the back of his belt and, like the engineers around him, connected it into an open slot on the panel. Almost immediately, the display screens started changing, their graphic displays being replaced by something different.

“Yes, Scotty,” Kirk replied. “The new operating system is re-writing and re-configuring the main computer.” He watched as each of the consoles around Ops began to change their console configurations and displays. “It looks like the virus you designed is working as planned.”

“At least somethin’ is working as planned,” the Scottish voice remarked. “If my false energy overload indications had worked like they were supposed to, th’ crew would have evacuated this station a week ago an’ we’d be in th’ clear! Now we’re in a race with the clock before th’ transition occurs.”

Kirk quickly stood and looked around when he heard an unfamiliar sound. Several of the other men likewise paused and watched as the lone male member of the original Ops crew began to dematerialize in what was evidently a transporter beam.

“Why did the ships only beam one of them out, sir?” one of the engineers asked.

Kirk looked around the space, his eyes settling on the new equipment the men had placed in each corner.

“I think our transition boosters are blocking their transporter lock,” he remarked. “Which is probably a good thing, since they may have grabbed one or more of us by accident if we hadn’t activated them. We need to get back to the ship right now, before they manage to break through the interference. There are still a few things on the checklist that need to be finished before the transition.” He glanced at an energy reading on the new engineering display as it gradually crept higher. “We haven’t much time.”

Kirk and each of his men pulled back their right sleeve, exposing a device strapped to their wrists, and pressed a green button on it. The air around each man shimmered like a fun house mirror, and the men disappeared as if space had folded around them. The men had barely disappeared when Captain Pearson started to stir, moaning slightly as she regained consciousness.

“What...? What happened?” she asked before noticing Commander Petersen on the deck not far away. “Michelle!”

Pearson crawled over to the security officer, who was also waking up. “Did you see him?” Petersen asked.

“See who?”

“The man wearing the old Starfleet uniform. A gold one.” Petersen stood as quickly as her pounding head would let her and moved to activate the intruder alert before realizing her console no longer appeared as she was used to it. “What in hell happened?”

“I’m not sure,” Pearson replied as Lieutenant Erikson also woke up and pulled herself to her feet. “It looks like the LCARS interface has somehow been over-ridden. But how could...?” She looked closer at the new displays on each console and said, “The displays look familiar. I think I remember displays like those aboard a couple of the ships I toured in the Fleet Museum the first time I attended the Academy. But how...?”

“Captain,” interrupted Erikson. “Where’s Admiral Kale?”

Pearson started looking around, for the first time noticing the new devices standing in each corner of the space.

“And where did those things come from?” she asked.

“Maybe that strange man in the gold uniform brought them?” Petersen surmised. “But where did he go?”

“We need to get out of here! Now!” Pearson stated as she activated her combadge. “Pearson to *Corsair*. Emergency beam-out from Ops!” Everyone waited for the familiar tingle of the transporter that never came. Finally Pearson said, “*Corsair*, this is Starbase Ops. Do you read me?”

Petersen then attempted to use her own combadge, but with the same results. “It appears our communications are still jammed, Cathryn,” she said.

Pearson glanced at a chronometer that was still displaying the correct station time and realized what should have happened already.

“According to our previous calculations, the fusion reactors should have exploded by now. If Kalin is gone, maybe the *Corsair* or one of the other ships managed to lock onto him before the interference took full effect. Either way, the fleet has to have warped away by now.”

“They’ll come back as soon as they realize the station hasn’t exploded, won’t they?” Erikson asked hopefully.

“I’m sure once they know something has changed, at least one of the ships will...,” Pearson started to say when the four mysterious pieces of equipment around the perimeter of Ops started flashing red lights and emitting an alarm-like sound.

“What’s happening?” Petersen asked, feeling like the deck had dropped out from under her, a sensation of nausea almost making her vomit. Ops was filled with a bright light that seemed to grow increasingly brighter...

Then everything went dark!

\* \* \* \*

The sound of retching could be heard from one corner of Ops just before the emergency lights kicked in at low level. Petersen looked over to where Lieutenant Erikson was standing, bent forward, arm against the bulkhead supporting herself, a small puddle slowly spreading at her feet.

"I tried to make it into the head, but the door wouldn't open," the young engineer said apologetically as she wiped at her mouth with the sleeve of her uniform.

"With main systems down, none of the doors will open," Pearson remarked, taking several deep breaths in the hopes her head would stop spinning. "What just happened?"

"Unknown," Petersen replied.

Suddenly there was a sound of power kicking in, and normal lighting returned to Ops, followed by all the consoles rebooting. Within seconds, everything appeared to be functioning normally except...

"All the displays on my console look strange," Petersen stated.

"It looks like the old computer operating system Starfleet used from the 2240's up to the early-2270's," Pearson remarked, looking at the new master systems display and touching a few of the new controls experimentally. Her confidence grew as she started seeing data displays corresponding to the controls she believed she was pressing. "All this had been phased out years before I entered the Academy, but some of the older equipment still used this system. But why is it running our computer system now? Where's LCARS?"

"A better question; HOW is it running our computer system?" Petersen asked. "Our isolinear optical readers were built to run on LCARS. Any other operating system should be causing the main computer to crash!"

"Lieutenant," Pearson said to Erikson, who was still standing to one side, embarrassed about what had happened when the lights went out. "I need a full status report! Power systems; life support; defensive systems! I think we may have just been attacked. We need to know what... and who... we're up against!"

Erikson quickly took a seat at the main operations console, and after taking several seconds to figure out how the controls now worked, began a rundown of station systems.

"What do you think happened, Captain?" Petersen asked, moving closer to Pearson and speaking in a low voice. "We obviously didn't explode. Was the appearance of run-away power levels a ruse to make us abandon the station? Have we been captured?"

"I don't know, Michelle," Pearson replied. "If we have been invaded by some unknown alien force, I would think they would be here, holding us hostage at least."

"Captain," Erikson interrupted. "If I'm reading these status reports correctly, it looks like we have basic life support throughout the station. Everything is currently running on batteries. No turbolift network. No transporters. No shields. Reactor systems are shut down."

"Well, at least we don't have to worry about being blown...", Pearson started to say when a strange ringing sound started coming from the transporter at the far end of Ops. Gold swirls and sparkles coalesced into the forms of six men all wearing red uniform shirts. Two carried rifle-type weapons at the ready. The other four held strange looking phasers with duel barrels that could spin to expose either the stun or kill settings. The men raised their weapons before any of the starbase crew could react. The three women surrendered without a fight.

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An hour later, Cathryn Pearson was sitting behind the desk in her office on Ops upper level, one of the security guards that had beamed into Ops standing just inside the door watching her. Her captors had informed her that Commander Petersen and Lieutenant Erikson were currently isolated in the briefing room nearby, and that the three of them were the only members of the starbase's crew not currently located inside the station's botanical garden section. When Pearson inquired what was to become of the majority of the crew that was still aboard, she was told that they were all currently locked in the garden, unable to access any other areas of the starbase, but would otherwise remain unharmed until after the senior officer aboard was briefed regarding what was happening.

A short time later a young man with brown hair who appeared to be in his late-twenties and wearing a variation of the gold-colored command division shirt she was familiar with from her time as Ship's Historian aboard the old *USS Arcurus* stepped into the office, ordering the guard to step outside. Up close she could see the uniform shirt was covered by a subtle pattern of small Starfleet delta emblems.

"Hell of a day isn't it?" the young man remarked as he stepped toward the desk and offered his hand. "I'm James T. Kirk. Captain of the starship *Enterprise*. I understand you're the commander of this starbase?"

Pearson did not bother trying to stifle the brusque laugh that emerged from her throat. "You're what? Twenty-four? Twenty-five?" she asked.

"Twenty-six, actually," Kirk replied.

"I was a Ship's Historian back in the day," Pearson explained. "Even IF I believed we had somehow been thrust back in time – which I don't, by the way – I know for a fact that James Kirk didn't earn his first command until the age of thirty, and wasn't given command of the *Enterprise* until he was thirty-three! Whatever you're trying to pull here, you need to do better research to pull it off. You didn't even get the uniform right, and Kirk's five-year mission is one of – if not THE most – famous Starfleet missions on record!"

Kirk looked down at his uniform shirt, as if wondering what was wrong with it, before looking back at Pearson with a very serious expression.

"I'm afraid I don't know your name," he said.

"Pearson, Cathryn E. Rank: Captain. Assignment: Commanding officer, *Starbase 719*," the woman replied as if being interrogated by an enemy.

"Captain Pearson," Kirk said, sounding quite serious and sincere. "The Federation is in serious danger." Again, Pearson gave a skeptical expression. "So serious that the entire Federation is in danger of collapse. Are you aware of the existence of other realities parallel to your own?"

Pearson was now puzzled by the sudden change of topic. "Of course. Starfleet proved the existence of mirror realities over a century ago. What does that have to do with your capture of my starbase?"

Kirk pulled a nearby chair over and sat down across the desk from Pearson as he replied, "The Federation... MY Federation... is in such severe danger right now that we have had to look beyond our own reality for help. And you were the first parallel reality we found – that we could enter, that we could transition people and equipment across the barrier separating our universes – that we believed might be able to help us!"

Pearson sat in shocked silence, dozens of thoughts jumbling around in her head. Just over a minute earlier she was absolutely sure a group of unknown individuals with a faulty knowledge of history had taken advantage of the crisis aboard her space station in order to board undetected and take control. Now she was unsure what to believe.

"Are you telling me we... my entire starbase and everyone aboard... are no longer located within our own reality? How is that possible?"

Kirk looked around the office, his eyes settling on the samovar atop the nearby table and pointed at it. "May I?" he asked. Pearson nodded, still in shock. As Kirk fixed himself a cup of tea in a traditional Russian tea glass and holder, he started to explain.

"Several months ago, Starfleet vessels encountered an unknown, unidentified, and very powerful entity entering Federation space," he said, returning to the seat and sipping from the tea cup. "We lost two starships before Starfleet was even aware of the unknown vessel's approach. Once it was detected, attempts were made to communicate with the vessel, but it never responded except to attack and destroyed whatever approached without warning. Once the vessel entered core Federation space, it approached several populated planets. Within hours of entering a system, we would lose contact with the planets of that system. Within days, both Andor and Tellar were destroyed, their populations decimated!"

The story sounded familiar to Pearson. A powerful and unstoppable alien vessel capable of destroying not only Starfleet ships, but entire planetary populations!

"The Borg!" she whispered.

"Excuse me?" Kirk asked.

“In... my reality,” Pearson said, suddenly more open to the idea that she and her space station had actually been dragged into an alternate universe somehow. “What you are describing sounds like the Borg Collective. A cybernetic race originating in the Delta Quadrant of the galaxy that has ‘evolved’ by capturing and assimilating other species and their technology. They have proven nearly unstoppable on several occasions. But in my reality, the Borg did not learn of Earth or the Federation until the mid-24<sup>th</sup> century. If you’re actually Jim Kirk and you are twenty-six years old, that makes the current year here in your reality...”

“2259,” Kirk confirmed.

“That’s more than a hundred years before the Borg reached Earth in my reality,” Pearson remarked, her voice betraying a sense of awe.

“After destroying Tellar, the vessel... the Borg, if that’s what you call them, set a course toward Earth,” Kirk continued. “Starfleet massed an armada and intercepted the vessel near Wolf 359. More than three-quarters of the fleet was destroyed, but somehow the remaining ships managed to attract the attacker’s attention and draw it into a different direction away from Federation core space. What was left of Starfleet decided to regroup at a new base of operation far enough away from Earth that the planet would remain safe, which brought us out here into unexplored space, what according to your records you refer to as the Typhon Sector. Unfortunately we had no base from which to operate out here, and with neither the resources nor the ability to build one, we were forced to look at other options.”

“Which is what brings us into the picture,” Pearson said flatly.

“Exactly. My engineer had developed a device originally intended to be used as a weapon against this attacking vessel – the Borg as you call them. It didn’t work as designed, but instead gave us the ability to look into other parallel dimensions instead. We soon came across your starbase, and thought it might serve our purpose as a base of operations.”

“So without a word you simply kidnapped us?” Pearson said accusingly. Kirk raised his hands in a gesture of submission.

“That was not our intention. Scotty, my engineer, developed a new device based on his original equipment design that he hoped would be able to transfer both matter and energy across the dimensional barrier, similar in many ways to our transporter. Our intent was to create a situation that would cause you to abandon this station by causing power level readings that would make it appear your station was going to explode, and then once everyone was gone, we would transition the station across the barrier where we could use it as our new base of operations, and all of you in your universe would be none the wiser. Things didn’t work out exactly as planned though.”

“No kidding,” Pearson said deadpan.

“First of all, the barrier between universes in this sector of the galaxy was not like anywhere else Scotty had studied. He referred to it as ‘almost the consistency of Swiss cheese,’ as if holes had been poked through it too many times.”

Pearson thought back to the arrival of the *IMV Pariah* several years earlier and the spate of trans-dimensional incidents that had occurred in the Typhon Sector in the time since then and figured there must be a connection. Meanwhile, Kirk continued with his explanation.

“We had to experiment to determine the power requirements involved and to focus our control. During one of his early experiments, Scotty managed to lock onto a shuttlecraft in your universe and attempted to transition it into ours. It was meant to serve two purposes: prove his theory and the technology he had invented to accomplish it, and bring someone across that we could then explain our situation to and send back in the hopes you would be cooperative, maybe even helpful. But something went wrong. Scotty was able to transition the shuttle out of your reality, but he lost track of it within what he refers to as the multi-verse. It did not reach our reality, and to the best of his knowledge it didn’t return to your universe either.”

Pearson was shocked by the fact she recognized Kirk’s story. Starbase *Shuttle 17*, with several crewmen including the husband of then-base commander Val’ri Raiajh aboard, disappeared while traveling back to the starbase. It was several months before Dr. Sylvan Xaran had been discovered in a shuttle escape pod in space near the planet Bel-Terra a full sector away, dying from severe radiation poisoning, and relating a fantastic tale of the shuttle having somehow been pulled into an alternate reality from which the others found no escape. Xaran’s death

– both apparent and later actual – had severely affected Admiral Raijrh both emotionally and physically for the final weeks of her command of the starbase.

“With no way of asking permission,” Kirk continued, “Scotty devised a way of creating micro-wormholes that would connect with your base’s main power generators and make it appear like your reactors were beginning to overload. The intent was to make you all want to leave while we were able to send a few engineers through the barrier to prepare the station for its transition. I think Scotty was too subtle, because it took far longer than we figured for your crew to react and the transition occurred before all of you managed to get off, obviously.”

Pearson stared at Kirk for several seconds before finally saying, “Just for the sake of argument, what would happen to your Starfleet if we refused to let you use our starbase as your base of operations against the Borg?”

Kirk’s face took on a very serious expression. “We’re down to a couple dozen starships right now, including my *Enterprise*. Just about all of them are damaged to some extent, many of them severely. Without your base, we don’t stand a chance against these Borg, or whatever you call them. After Starfleet is destroyed, this vessel will turn its attention back toward Earth and billions more will die!”

“And were we to agree to help you? You brought us here. If we can help you defeat the Borg, can you send us back?” Pearson asked hopefully.

“Scotty would be more knowledgeable on the possibility of being able to do that,” Kirk admitted. “But if it can be done, and you can help us defeat this menace, then yes, I will do everything in my power to make sure you and your starbase are returned to their rightful place.”

Pearson smiled a mirthless smile before saying, “I need to consult with my crew, starting with Commander Petersen and Lieutenant Erikson who you’re holding in the briefing room, but I think I can say we have ourselves a deal.”

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A short time later, Pearson was gathered in Admiral Kale’s office on Ops upper level with her most senior officers still aboard the station, including Petersen and Erikson, head of the Starfleet Marine Corps battalion Colonel Sean McIntyre, and science officer Lt Commander Makia Kyman. The latter pair had been among the station crew still located in the botanical garden when the entire starbase was pulled into the alternate reality. There were, however, no representatives from the station’s medical department, since all infirmary patients and their caregivers had been among the first evacuated from the base. Pearson had just explained the entire situation to her present crew, including the fact that Admiral Kale had apparently been beamed away at the last moment by the *Corsair* or another of the Fifth Fleet starships according to Kirk. As expected, there was a mixture of anger, shock, sadness, and frustration.

“They literally abducted us against our will!” Commander Kyman was saying. “And even if we had managed to completely evacuate the entire base, this supposed-Captain Kirk admitted he and his cohorts were going to steal our space station with or without us on board! Why should we be willing to help them now?”

“I asked myself that exact question when Kirk told me his story,” Pearson replied. “The answer is, without our help, this reality’s Starfleet is going to be utterly destroyed, and very likely the entire Federation will fall soon afterward. I considered what we might do in similar circumstances. What could have happened if the Borg had discovered the Federation during the 2260’s instead of reaching Earth just before the *Arcturus* reappeared, after Starfleet had already been warned of their existence and abilities? And take into consideration that if we refuse to help, we’re still stuck here anyway. We can’t get ourselves back to where we’re supposed to be, at least not before the Borg reach this sector. And if this reality’s Starfleet is destroyed, this starbase attempting to defend itself without any aid is doomed. At least if we help, and we manage to hold back this invasion by the Borg, we have a chance of seeing home once again!”

The other members of the crew nodded their heads in agreement. Kyman looked like she was going to offer another arguing point, but reconsidered. Just then the office door chime sounded. “Come,” Pearson called out.

The door swished open and Captain Kirk walked in, followed by a young man wearing the red-shouldered Starfleet uniform of the starbase’s correct era with small tech implants attached to his face and hands and another

dark-haired man wearing a red uniform shirt of Kirk's era Starfleet. "I think I've located something you may have lost," Kirk said, gesturing to the young man behind him.

"Lieutenant Five, reporting for duty, ma'am," the young man stated, addressing Captain Pearson.

"Lieutenant, you're from the *Dauntless*, aren't you?" Commander Petersen asked, recognizing the young officer from her husband's crew.

"Yes, Commander," Wyatt Cerilli replied.

"What are you doing here?" Pearson asked.

"I'm afraid that's my fault," the third man replied in a heavy Scottish accent. "Your Lieutenant here came across me when I was workin' on preventing you from dumping your reactors during th' evacuation. I didn'a know what to do with him, so I brought him home, so t' speak."

"The Starfleet personnel here have small devices that allowed them to cross the barrier between realities individually when it was sufficiently weakened," Cerilli explained. "When I accidentally came across Mister Scott near the reactor compartment, he stunned me. When I woke up, I found myself in sickbay aboard his starship. Mister Scott explained the situation they are in, so I helped them transition the station across the barrier."

"Aye, without the lad's knowledge of the internal structure o' your base, we might o' risked rippin' off whole sections or destroyin' the entire starbase when we pulled it through. He has an excellent knowledge o' engineerin' principles..." Scotty leaned a little closer to Pearson and Petersen as he added, "Though I'm a little uncomfortable with the idea o' havin' mechanical devices implanted into my body."

Pearson restrained herself from explaining the lieutenant's Borg implants, as she did not know how Kirk's crew might react were they to find out the young man had once been a drone of the Collective that now threatened to destroy their Federation.

"I also have something you might want to see," Kirk said, holding up a data chip.

"What's that?" Pearson asked.

"Footage and sensor data of what we're up against," Kirk replied. He gestured toward the door and said, "Scotty installed a chip reader to your main console in Ops. We can view this on your main viewscreen out there."

"Let's take a look at what we're facing here. See if it's a single cube or something we haven't seen before," Pearson said, getting up from her chair and following Kirk out the door, followed by the rest of the crew. Everyone made their way down the stairs in front of the office door and found places to stand where they could view the main screen above Ops while Kirk slipped the data chip into the slot on a new addition to the master systems display.

The main viewer lit up, displaying a bright blue energy cloud. Most of the starbase crew regarded the image with curiosity, but the blood drained from Pearson's face.

"This is some kind of energy field surrounding the invading vessel," Kirk explained. "Sensor readings show it to be composed of twelfth power energy, and it measures almost a full two AUs in diameter."

"That's as large as the Earth's entire orbit around the sun!" Makia Kyman exclaimed.

"At least three Starfleet ships have penetrated the energy cloud," Kirk explained. The image changed to the view of some indescribable vessel, seen in incomplete bits and pieces. "The nearest we can estimate, the vessel at the center of the cloud measures more than ninety-seven kilometers in length, and is estimated to be in the range of one hundred times the volume of this space station. These images were recorded by three starships that managed to penetrate the energy cloud, but were never heard from after that. We're not sure what the Borg are doing with..."

"It's not the Borg."

"What?" Kirk asked, turning toward the voice that had spoken. All eyes in Ops were on Captain Pearson.

"I recognize that vessel," Pearson explained. "It's not the Borg. In fact, it's not even an alien vessel, technically speaking."

"What do you mean, Captain?" Erikson asked.

"When I was young, years before I joined Starfleet, there was a news program my family and I watched all about an incident that had occurred. A vessel of unknown origin surrounded by a large and powerful energy field had approached Earth. It had already destroyed a trio of Klingon battle cruisers and one of the monitoring stations

along the Neutral Zone. The vessel was called *Vejur*, and it turned out to be a living, sentient machine that came from Earth.”

Kyman was already attempting to access the library records as Pearson spoke, but was having some difficulty due to the change in the computer’s operating system. It took some time, but eventually she found the file information she was looking for.

“Earth year 2273,” Kyman recited. “The *USS Enterprise* was rushed out of drydock following an eighteen month refit and overhaul to intercept an intruder spacecraft that was eventually discovered to be the *Voyager 6* space probe, launched from Earth in the 1970’s. The records are unclear exactly how, but it appears Captain Kirk...” The science officer glanced sheepishly at the young man standing in front of her before adding, “...The Captain Kirk of our reality and his crew assisted the sentient machine entity in fulfilling its programming and evolving beyond our plane of reality.”

“So the Captain Kirk of our universe banished this *Vejur* or *Voyager* or whatever from our reality and now it’s here in this reality wrecking havoc?” Petersen asked.

“More likely this is just this universe’s version of *Vejur*, not the same one encountered in our reality, that has somehow managed to return to Earth about ten or fifteen years ahead of time,” Pearson replied.

“Great!” Scotty exclaimed, clapping his hands together once loudly. “So if you know how they stopped this beastie in your reality, it should be a simple matter of looking up what was done and doing it again here!”

“I hope it’s that simple,” Kirk remarked. “Because according to our best estimates, it should be here in this sector in less than a month.”

*To Be Continued...*