

*Stardate 70719.1*  
USS Bellerophon NCC-74705  
*Typhon Sector in the vicinity of*  
*Federation Starbase 719*

Commander Tom Paris, first officer of the *USS Bellerophon*, was sitting in his usual seat on the bridge, to the left of the captain's chair and close to where the operations manager console was located on the upper rear deck. He was reviewing a consumables load-out report on the screen mounted between the two command arena chairs when Lieutenant Shori th'Kela stated, "Commander, there is a priority communique coming in for you from Starfleet."

"For me?" Paris asked, slightly surprised. Usually any communiques directed to the ship were addressed to the captain, K'danz. th'Kela nodded.

"Aye, sir. Encoded for eyes of executive officer only," the Andorian officer confirmed.

"Very well," Paris said, folding down the monitor screen and getting out of his chair. "Route it to the captain's ready room. I'll take it in there, Lieutenant."

Paris entered the captain's ready room, along the starboard side of the bridge. As he walked toward the desk he noted the two railroad engineer's hats sitting on the shelf amid various other mementos the captain had collected over the years and smiled slightly.

Sitting behind the desk, Paris swung the monitor screen around and activated it. After briefly flashing the emblem of Starfleet Command, the communique in question appeared and Paris began to read. Slowly a look of astonishment followed by a much-wider smile appeared on his face. Finally he tapped his combadge and said, "Paris to Captain K'danz."

"Go ahead, Tom," quickly replied the voice of (Carrie) K'danz, the starship's commanding officer.

"Captain, could you please come to your ready room? I have something urgent I need to discuss with you."

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Several minutes later, K'danz was in the ready room, sitting on the couch beneath the large forward-facing windows. She was just finishing reading the communique, and a look of surprise mixed with pride covered her face.

"Tom, you're the first officer of the *Bellerophon*. What were you expecting when you applied for a transfer to the new starbase? It's not like they need an expert helmsman!"

"I know. But Commanding Officer?!" Paris almost could not bring himself to vocalize the words. "I was thinking first officer! Maybe Strategic Operations, like Captain Harkonnen!"

"Apparently Starfleet feels you're ready to move up. Have you told B'Elanna yet?"

"Not yet. I've been trying to get my adrenalin level to drop before calling her. Do you know if her application for permanent duty aboard *Typhon-Bravo* has been approved?"

"No, but I can try and find out, and maybe push things along if needed," K'danz said. "In the meantime, congratulations, Captain." She offered her hand, but Paris merely looked at it with confusion.

"I don't think I'm getting a promotion," he finally said.

"Seems strange that Starfleet would promote you in position but not in rank," K'danz remarked.

"According to the communique, I need to have a brief with Admiral Kale sometime in the next week or so. I guess I can ask him when the time comes?"

"True. Now get on that compic and let your wife know the good news!" K'danz admonished.

\* \* \* \*

A short time later, Paris was in the small office reserved for the first officer, tapping his fingers on the desk as he waited for his wife, Lt Commander B'Elanna Torres, to respond to his hail. The emblem of Starfleet Command quickly flashed on and off the monitor screen before being replaced by the image of the half-Klingon engineer.

"*Starbase Typhon-Bravo*. Commander Torres," the woman stated before realizing the caller was her husband. A smile appeared as she said, "Hello, Tom. Why the unexpected call?"

"Hi, B'Elanna. Have you heard anything regarding your request to transfer to Typhon-Bravo permanently?" Paris asked.

"No, not yet. Why? Have you?"

"Yeah, I just received a communique transferring me to the new station," Paris replied.

"Oh, Tom! That's great!" Torres remarked.

"...As commanding officer," Paris quickly added.

"Excuse me?" Torres said in disbelief.

"Starfleet wants me to take command of the new station before it is moved to Sector 50111. I have to meet with Admiral Kale soon for a full turn-over."

"Tom, that's incredible! Congratulations!"

"Thanks. But it won't mean much if you can't get your orders to the new station as well."

"I'm sure I'll be hearing soon," Torres reassured her husband.

"Carrie has offered to expedite the process if you want."

"Tell the Captain thanks. I'll wait another 24 hours to hear back from Starfleet. If nothing comes through before then, I might take her up on her offer. Oh, Tom! This is going to be great!"

\* \* \* \*

That evening, Captain K'danz and Commander Dar were relaxing in their quarters. K'danz was going over some paperwork while Dar fiddled on a padd, verifying the algorithms of a new holodeck program his son Jacob was working on in his spare time.

"This would be so much easier if I could just make you the executive officer," K'danz mumbled to herself, though loud enough for her half-Klingon husband to hear.

"Even if Starfleet would allow you to appoint your husband as your first officer, I thought I made it clear I have no interest in putting on a red uniform," Dar said, putting down the padd and standing to move closer to his wife's desk. "What are you doing?"

"I guess you haven't heard," K'danz replied. "Tom's been given command of the new starbase when it gets moved out into the AOR."

"Given command?! I'll have to give Tom my congrats when I see him next," Dar remarked.

"Yeah. Great for him and his career. Lousy for me. I need to go look for another new executive officer."

"You've grown pretty attached to Tom, haven't you?" Dar asked.

"Tom's Starfleet record wasn't exactly sparkling clean. There are a lot of starship commanders who wouldn't have worked with him because of his history. I think I liked that rebellious streak he possesses. Not being so straight-laced made him easier to work with, but I was still able to trust he had my back. I only hope my next XO will be half as easy to break in!"

“Have you considered using Peter’s example and promote from within your own crew?” Dar asked. “You have a few qualified candidates among the crew.”

“You mean besides you?” K’danz asked teasingly.

“Most assuredly besides me,” Dar remarked with distaste. “I can think of two off the top of my head – Lt Commander T’Var and Commander Zhadesh. Both are command-qualified. Both have experience. ...Commander T’Var perhaps a bit more experience than Zhadesh.”

K’danz thought about what her husband had said for a moment. “I can’t see T’Var being interested in giving up her science division duties. Vulcans rarely aspire to command positions.”

“I’ve heard of a couple of Vulcans that were both science officers and first officers,” Dar remarked.

“I suppose I could talk to her about it,” K’danz said, having already called up another officer’s service record on her monitor screen – one operations officer by the name of Xin Zhadesh. “Zhadesh, on the other hand...” Again, K’danz grew quiet in deep thought. A few moments later, she activated her intercom.

“K’danz to Commander Zhadesh.”

“Zhadesh here, Captain,” the Efrosian officer replied a few seconds later. “What can I do for you?”

“Mister Zhadesh, can you meet with me in my ready room after you get off your next watch?”

There was a few seconds of confused silence before Zhadesh responded, “Of course, Captain. Is there anything I should bring with me?”

A subtle smile creased K’danz’s lips as she answered, “In the words of my former commanding officer; How do you look in red?”

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*Stardate 71042.5*

Vice Admiral Kalin Kale was standing on the porch of the station commander’s office aboard *Starbase Typhon-Bravo*, reading from a set of orders on a padd he was holding. To his right, Commander Tom Paris – his wife and the station’s Chief Operations Officer standing by his side – stood with an expression of pride mixed with anxiety. Filling the rest of Starbase Ops was the rest of the station’s command staff and several guests, including COMFEDFIFTHFLT Vice Admiral Penji Fil, *Starbase 719* commander Captain Cathryn Pearson, Captain K’danz and Commander Zhadesh of the *Bellerophon*, and retired Starfleet Command Admiral Owen Paris.

“To: Kale, Kalin, Vice Admiral, Commander *Starbase Typhon-Bravo*, Typhon Sector: On or about stardate 71042.5, you are requested and required to relinquish command of *Starbase Typhon-Bravo* to Commander Thomas E. Paris and resume your primary duties as Sector Coordinator for the Typhon Sector and Fifth Fleet Area of Responsibility. Signed, Janeway, Vice Admiral Kathryn, Starfleet Command.”

Kale then pressed a control on the padd, and turning to face his relieving officer, proceeded to provide an official report on the status of the starbase. Completing his status report, he stated to Paris, “I am ready to be relieved.” He then handed the padd to Paris.

“To: Paris, Thomas Eugene, Commander: On or about stardate 71042.5, you are requested and required to assume command of *Starbase Typhon-Bravo* from Vice Admiral Kalin Kale. At that time, *Starbase Typhon-Bravo* will be re-designated as Federation *Starbase 726*. Signed, Janeway, Vice Admiral Kathryn, Starfleet Command.” Paris then looked at Kale once again and stated, “I am ready to relieve you, sir.”

Kale tilted his head up toward the overhead and in a commanding voice, ordered, “Computer, transfer all command codes and functions to Commander Thomas Eugene Paris. Authorization Kale-Gamma-Two-One-Two-Alpha.”

The computer chirped a musical-sounding noise, then responded, “All command codes and functions have been transferred to Commander Thomas Eugene Paris.”

Kale looked at his relief once more, finally saying, “I stand relieved, Commander.” He then shook the new station commander’s hand. “Congratulations, Tom.”

“Thank you, Admiral. And not that I mean to be too persistent, but any word on that topic we discussed when I first met with you about assuming command?”

“Patience. That’s the word, Commander,” Kale replied, almost cryptically. “There are a few back in San Francisco who want to see how you perform in the role before promoting you to the rank of captain. If it makes you feel better, keep in mind that Ben Sisko commanded *DS9* at the rank of commander for three years before Starfleet promoted him to captain. If all goes well, you could be putting on that fourth pip in less than a year!”

Another smile formed on Paris’ lips before he said, “Thank you, Admiral. That’s good to know.” Paris then replaced Kale on the office patio and faced everyone in Ops as he said, “Ladies and gentle-beings, on behalf of the crew, I would like to welcome you all aboard *Starbase 726!*”

*To Be Continued...*