

Stardate 71025.4
Federation Starbase 719
Typhon Sector

It had been a quiet morning in Starbase Ops aboard Federation *Starbase 719*. Station first officer Commander Michelle Petersen was standing near the Master Systems Display console, talking to the man sitting at what had been – until just a few short months ago – her own watch station at the security console.

“I noted you updated the training schedule, Commander,” Petersen was saying to the station’s new security chief, Lt Commander Darran Wynter.

“I noticed several of the new transferees had not completed their indoc training,” Wynter replied. “In fact, there were a few who had not even started...”

The security chief’s report was cut off by Lieutenant Jinny Erikson, the new chief of operations. “Commander, long range sensors are detecting a vessel on approach at warp 5, bearing 185 mark 1, range five light years.”

“Can you identify?” Petersen asked as she turned back toward the master systems display, where a depiction of the space station showed the approaching vessel. Meanwhile, Wynter was training his own sensors on the approaching ship, ready for any contingency.

“Configuration matches our records for a Federation starship; Odyssey-class,” Erikson reported. Then a look of confusion appeared on her face. “I thought the *Sun Tzu* was currently operating in Sector 50101? What are they doing...?”

“That’s not the *Sun Tzu*,” a voice from overhead said. Everyone in Ops looked up to see Captain Cathryn Pearson – the station’s commanding officer – descending on one of the lift platforms. “That’s one of the new starships being assigned to the fleet. The *USS Spock*. And according to the reports I recently received, one of our old friends is in command.”

Space, the Final Frontier...

Star Trek: Fifth Fleet

“The Reformation of the Fleet” By PJK

A Typhon Sector Crisis Story

Vignette G – USS Spock

Fleet Captain Peter J. Koester, commander of the Fifth Fleet flagship *USS Dauntless*, was standing by the window in his ready room, a mug of coffee in one hand. The *Dauntless* was moored in her usual slip inside the spacedock of *Starbase 719*, and from where he was standing the captain could see the spacedoor in the distance start to part, as they opened for an approaching vessel. Based on recent fleet updates, Koester suspected he knew which ship was entering spacedock, and he was excited for the ship’s new captain.

Sure enough, as soon as the spacedoors were fully open, the narrow bow of the new starship started passing through. The lines of the vessel were very similar to his own Sovereign-class starship – from the oval-shaped primary hull, to the closely connected engineering hull, and the long, tapered warp nacelles. However, the newer starship was longer than his own by more than 300 meters, taller by almost 60 meters, with a split neck connecting the primary hull to the engineering/secondary hull, and while it could not be seen from the current angle, Koester also knew there was a second smaller vessel very similar in design and purpose to the Defiant-class escort docked at

the aft end where the *Dauntless* had her secondary (Marine Corps) shuttlebay. The new Odyssey-class was among the largest in Starfleet's inventory, and with the addition of this new starship, there were now two of them assigned to the Federation Fifth Fleet. Even from the distance separating them, Koester could make out the letters and numbers painted across the other ship's bow. **U.S.S. SPOCK NCC-97212**. Koester tapped his combadge, saying, "Koester to bridge."

"Bridge. Commander Kyler," came the quick response.

"Exec, once the *Spock* is moored, hail her captain and send my compliments please."

"Aye, Skipper," Commander Kyler Saya, the half-Bajoran/half-El-Aurian first officer replied.

A short time later, the ready room door chime sounded, and Koester called out, "Come." He was now sitting behind his desk, reviewing crew reports as Commander Kyler stepped in.

"Captain Arbelo returns the compliments and asked if you would be interested in a tour of his starship?"

"I doubt we'll have time in the next week or so," Koester replied, checking the upcoming fleet schedule. "The *Sun Tzu* and *Sarek* are due to arrive back at the station within the next 24 hours. Once both ships are here, we're going to be conducting several safety and mission briefs so we can get *Starbase 726* moved out to its new permanent position as easily and routinely as possible. I know Commander Paris will be happy to have his new command where it's supposed to be."

Kyler looked thoughtful for a moment.

"Something on your mind, Exec?" Koester asked.

"Just thinking, sir. First we had the *Sarek* as part of the fleet. Now we have the *Spock*. Anyone else in that family going to have a starship named after them?"

"You have to admit, Commander, the descendants of Solkar have had pretty impressive resumes through the centuries. It's no wonder the Federation names starships after them."

* * * *

48 Hours Later...

The commanders of the four largest Fifth Fleet starships, their first officers, and – in the case of the *USS Dauntless* – the senior enlisted advisor were gathering in one of the briefing lounges within the spacedock hub between where the Sovereign-class starship and the brand-new *USS Spock* were moored.

"Aside from a tour in the construction yard, I don't think I've ever been a part of moving anything as large as *Starbase 726*, Skipper," Chief Pono Kyman remarked as he, first officer Kyler Saya, and Fleet Captain Koester entered the lounge and made their way toward several chairs set up near the front of the room.

"Starfleet was able to move the base out here to the Typhon Sector with little trouble, COB," Koester remarked. "I don't foresee us having any..."

Koester's sentence was cut off by the arrival of two officers wearing the red-shouldered uniforms of command. Koester did not recognize the younger of the two, but smiled as he easily identified the other man and moved to greet him.

"Monster!" Koester called out, then appeared to correct himself. "I mean, Captain Arbelo! Welcome back to *Starbase 719*."

"Thank you, Skip... Fleet Captain," Arbelo quickly corrected himself as well, returning Koester's offered handshake.

"How was PCO training?"

"Boring," Arbelo remarked as he and his own first officer joined Kyler and Kyman near the chairs. "They had us driving the simulators at the Academy for almost a month, and not one scenario was anywhere as exciting or challenging as a single week aboard the *Dauntless*." Arbelo then turned to Commander Kyler and, realizing she was no longer wearing the gold-topped uniform of a security officer, offered the petite woman his hand and said, "Congratulations on being appointed first officer of the *Dauntless*, Commander." He then introduced his own first officer, Commander ch'Vaigyaanik Tohakeet of Andoria.

“Looking forward to becoming part of the Fifth Fleet,” Tohakeet remarked softly, as was customary among her people. “The Captain has told me about several of your adventures.”

“Not embellishing too much, I hope,” Koester remarked with a wink toward Arbelo.

As the conversation continued, Captain K’Lith Baber and his first officer Commander Jim Mariner of the *Sun Tzu* and Captain Jo Ann Parker and Commander A-ZuRQuIL of the *Sarek* joined the others in the lounge. A few minutes later, they were joined by Commander Tom Paris and Andorian Lt Commander Thelev th’Sonne of *Starbase 726*, Captain Cathryn Pearson of *Starbase 719* – who was hosting the briefing – and Starfleet Corps of Engineers Representative Captain James Mees. The latter two stepped up upon the raised dais at the end of the room.

“As you are all aware,” Captain Mees began, “our plan is to move *Starbase 726* from its present location adjacent to *Starbase 719* to its permanent position within Sector 50111. To accomplish this warp-tow, we will utilize your four starships – the largest and most powerful in this area of space – to tow the starbase to its new location. Before we get into the details, do any of you have any questions?”

Fleet Captain Koester stood up, partly raising his right hand. The representative of the Corps of Engineers nodded at him, and he asked, “I was present when *Starbase 726* was first towed into the Typhon Sector. It took six starships at that time – four to tow and two to steer from behind. Can this be safely accomplished with only four starships?”

“Fleet Captain... Koester?” Koester nodded. “I was aboard the lead ship and supervised the evolution that moved the starbase out here. We used six starships in that instance because – as you may recall – three of them were of the older Excelsior-class, and therefore not as powerful as modern starship designs. According to all the calculations and computer simulations I have run on my way back out here, two Odyssey-class, and one each Sovereign and Galaxy-class starship should be more than adequate to successfully warp-tow and navigate *Starbase 726* to its permanent home.”

As Koester sat back down, satisfied by the answer, his former first officer Captain Arbelo stood up.

“Captain, my crew is relatively green, and I must admit that as far as being a starship captain, so am I. Will we have the opportunity to practice this evolution before attempting it in real life?”

“Of course, Captain,” Mees replied. “For the next week or so, we will be linking the holodecks of all four ships involved so your bridge crews may simulate the evolution and work out any kinks that may arise prior to moving the station for real. Of course, that will require moving the *Sun Tzu* and *Sarek* into spacedock to hook up the umbilicals to allow such a link, but that should be no issue.” He glanced at Pearson, who nodded in agreement. “Any other questions or concerns?” There were none. “Very good. The timeline will occur as follows...”

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Following the briefing, which took several hours and covered the warp-tow procedure in excruciating detail, all four ship command staffs began to make their way to the station’s recreation area and their favorite watering hole, the Bastogne Lodge. As they approached the central turbolifts, Koester tapped his combadge, saying, “Captain Koester to Lieutenant Arbelo-Eeta.”

“Arbelo-Eeta here, Captain,” replied the voice of one of Koester’s science officers.

“Find a duty relief and please join us in the Bastogne Lodge, Lieutenant. Your father would like to see you.”

“Aye, sir. On my way!” the young officer’s excited-sounding voice replied.

A few minutes later, several tables had been pushed together within the main room of the Bastogne Lodge, quickly covered with various appetizers and drinks – alcoholic, syntheholc, and neither. The Fifth Fleet crew who had attended the briefing were joined there by Pearson’s husband and the Sector Strategic Operation Officer Captain Konstantin Harkonnen, Koester’s wife and *719*’s first officer Commander Michelle Petersen, and the previously invited Lieutenant Annika Omnia Arbelo-Eeta.

As the group began to eat and drink, the conversation ranged from discussions of the recent briefing, the upcoming warp-tow, continued stories about the station’s time in an alternate reality, and crew transfers. It was

during one of the latter discussions that Lieutenant Arbelo-Eeta asked her father, “When do I get to move aboard the *Spock*, Dad?”

Arbelo looked at his daughter, whose expression changed to one of confusion. He then asked, “Have you submitted a transfer request?”

“No,” the young woman with the age-old Trill symbiont implanted in her abdomen. “I just assumed once you were back in the AOR with your new ship that I would be going with you.” A look of concern began to appear on her own face.

“Neither Captain Koester nor I can do anything unless and until you submit the request,” Arbelo explained. “Neither of us can assume you want to relocate without a formal request. You have to remember, even though your body is only seventeen Earth years in age, because of the knowledge and experience provided by the Eeta symbiont, you were given a special dispensation to become a full-fledged Starfleet officer. You cannot just move from ship to ship on a whim.”

Arbelo-Eeta looked the other direction toward Fleet Captain Koester and, with her look of concern growing, said, “Please, Captain?”

“As your father said, Lieutenant, a request of this sort needs to be routed through the proper channels and be approved,” Koester replied. “If you were to leave the *Dauntless*, I need to be able to requisition a new crewmember to fill your billet. And that requisition needs to be submitted BEFORE you transfer off the ship.” Koester then glanced at Arbelo’s face, a concerned look of his own. “However, I’m not sure your father would even want you aboard his ship.”

“What do you mean?!” Arbelo-Eeta cried.

“My own daughter – like you – is now a Starfleet officer. Once she received her commission, I knew I didn’t want her serving under me aboard my own ship, where I might be forced to issue an order that could result in her being hurt, or perhaps even killed! That’s why Gem serves aboard the *Bellerophon* instead of the *Dauntless*. Perhaps your own father would rather not be put into a situation like that either!”

“I hadn’t really thought about it, to be honest,” Captain Arbelo remarked before looking back at his daughter.

“Something to think about,” Koester admonished.

* * * *

Stardate 71066.7

“Ship in position, Captain,” reported Lt Commander Peck, the *Spock*’s recently-transferred helmsman.

“Very well,” Arbelo replied before turning to face one of his new science officers. The large, open design of the Odyssey-class bridge caused him to have to look over his right shoulder to see the science console. “Stand by to activate tractor beam.”

“Tractor beam standing by,” the Caitian Lt Commander Ckathel Brightslay confirmed, looking up at the raised command arena. Arbelo then activated the intercom on the arm of his chair.

“Bridge to engineering.”

“Engineering. Commander Alston,” replied the starship’s chief engineer.

“We’re about to lock tractors on the starbase. I need you to coordinate with the engineers aboard *Dauntless*, *Sun Tzu*, and *Sarek* to make sure we don’t over-stress our tractors by one ship being too fast or too slow.”

“I already have a dedicated communications and data circuit open between all the ships involved in the evolution, Captain,” Lt Commander Mallory Alston reported. “Systems are reading nominal. Prepared for all speeds up to warp six.”

Arbelo started doing the calculations in his head, realizing that the voyage to move the starbase at that speed was going to take just over sixteen weeks. “This is going to be a long trip,” he remarked to himself.

“Well, the sooner we start, the sooner it ends, Captain,” Commander Tohakeet remarked from her seat to the captain’s right.

“Captain,” announced the *Spock*’s tactical officer, Lieutenant Roosevelt Paul. “We’re being hailed by the flagship.”

“On screen, Lieutenant,” Arbelo ordered. A moment later, the main screen image changed from the view of space ahead of the *Spock* to the familiar design of a Sovereign-class starship bridge. At the center of the image, Fleet Captain Koester sat in his center seat, Vice Admiral Fil in the seat to Koester’s left.

“*Dauntless* to all ships involved in the relocation of 726. I have received clearance from Commander Paris to lock tractors on his station and commence the evolution. All vessels check in with Starbase Ops aboard 726.”

“Lieutenant, report to 726 Ops that *USS Spock* is prepared,” Arbelo ordered his tactical officer.

“Aye, sir.” A moment later, Paul reported, “All ships have checked in. *Starbase 726* reports they are standing ready.”

“Very well. Mister Ckathel, lock aft tractor beam on the designated target area of *Starbase 726* and calibrate for warp-towing,” Arbelo ordered.

A hum could be heard throughout the large, open bridge. Seconds later, the pitch of the hum rose slightly – almost imperceptibly. A moment later, Ckathel reported, “Tractor beam is engaged and rigged for warp-tow.”

Out in space, the four starships had activated their tractor beams. The two *Odyssey*-class starships, being of equal power and ability, were side by side a few hundred meters apart – the *Spock* to the left, *Sun Tzu* to the right – with their beams targeting positions on either side of the wide dock section of the base. The *Dauntless*, positioned above and slightly ahead of the other three ships, had attached its tractor to a target atop the docking section just beneath where Starbase Ops was located. Finally, the *Galaxy*-class *USS Sarek*, positioned beneath and closest in to the starbase, was targeting the lower section of the base where crew quarters, numerous docking airlocks, and an elaborate deep-space telescope were mounted.

“Helm, coordinate with the helmsman of the flagship. Proceed at will,” Arbelo ordered.

“Aye, Captain. All helm stations are interlinked. Accelerating to one-quarter impulse in five... four... three...”

A few seconds later, all four starships activated their impulse engines. It took a moment to overcome inertia, but soon the Buckingham-class starbase was slowly moving.

“Course to new starbase location coordinates laid-in,” Peck reported. “Slowly increasing speed to full impulse.”

Over the next several minutes, the starbase and four accompanying starships were moving faster, eventually reaching one-quarter the speed of light – or 270 million kilometers per hour.

* * * *

Several hours later, the turbolift doors on the starboard side of the bridge swished open and Arbelo walked out.

“Status?” the captain requested, returning to the bridge after having made his post-watch tour of the decks.

“All systems show nominal,” Tohakeet reported. “We’re coming up on the warp entry point in...?”

“Three minutes, thirty seconds,” offered the helmsman.

“Sounds like my timing was just right,” Arbelo remarked as Tohakeet moved from the center seat to her regular one to the right and allowed the captain to sit down. “Helm, reverse view on the screen.”

The helmsman acknowledged and touched a holographic interface control floating above her console face. The main viewer blinked from the stars ahead – the underside of the *USS Dauntless* being just visible at the top-right corner of the viewer – to a view of the starbase the ships were towing, the movement of the stars in the background barely perceptible.

A timer on the helm console counted down the seconds until all four ships would activate their warp drives simultaneously. “Thirty seconds to warp speed,” Lieutenant Tracy Hopper stated, marking every five seconds as it passed. “Twenty-five... Twenty... Fifteen... Ten... Nine... Eight... Seven... Six... Five... Four... Warp engines activating... Two... One... Entering warp!”

Anyone with any experience aboard starships recognized the strained sound the warp engines were making as they propelled not only their own starship but also the larger starbase into faster-than-light speed. Each vessel's warp field configuration had been modified so the warp bubble being generated would likewise surround sections of the base structure. However, the added strain was taking a toll on ship's systems.

"Settling in at warp six, Captain," Hopper reported nearly a minute later.

"Shields are holding at seventy-five percent normal maximum output," the Bajoran Lieutenant Kann Vuho, the on-watch engineering officer added. "Ship's structural integrity field is down by five percent."

"Will she hold together, Lieutenant?" Arbelo asked, no real concern in his voice.

"If everything goes according to plan, yes, sir. She will."

* * * *

Captain's log, stardate 71225.7:

We are just over halfway to Sector 50111, and so-far the warp-tow of Starbase 726 has gone entirely according to plan. I have sensed some stress among my new crew after more than eight weeks of constant mid-warp travel while towing the starbase and the strain it is putting on some ship systems, but I anticipate we will not see any trouble before reaching our eventual destination.

Arbelo, commanding Spock, out.

"Approaching mid-point correction in ninety minutes," Peck reported from his position at the helm.

"What sort of correction, Lieutenant?" Captain Arbelo asked.

"The tow ships and base must come left five degrees prior to entering the Beta Harlane star system or we risk running our cargo into an errant asteroid or comet," Peck replied.

"While I'm not sure Commander Paris or his crew would appreciate being called 'cargo,' I'm believe they would rather not be run into an asteroid," Arbelo replied with a smirk. "Carry on, Commander."

* * * *

Aboard *Starbase 726*, Commander B'Elanna Torres was referencing a status display, a look of concern on her face.

"Something wrong, B'Elanna?" Commander Tom Paris asked, having noticed and recognized the expression on his wife's face as he stepped out of his office.

"Systems are indicating uneven stresses on station support members due to the tractor beams," Torres replied, transferring the data to the Master Systems Display at the center of the room. "According to Captain Mees, the targeting positions were chosen based on the outputs of each ship's tractor beams and the relative strengths of each system and the station's support members."

"What is it you're seeing exactly?" Paris asked, looking at the indicators on the MSD.

Torres pointed at one of the stress indicators as she replied, "This indicates the *Sarek's* tractor beam is not pulling as strongly as the other three. It appears the power levels are slowly decreasing over an extended period. As a result, the station is experiencing more pitch than was calculated for as the upper sections swing toward the *Dauntless* slightly before their automated system backs off on power level and the station swings back. If it continues without correction, the station could potentially start to tumble end over end. If THAT happens, the starships automatically cut off their tractors and the station drops out of warp and – more than likely – breaks apart."

"Contact Captain Parker. Have her make adjustments to their tractor beam so we don't get delayed – or killed – before we reach Sector 50111," Paris ordered.

* * * *

Aboard the *USS Sarek*, Commander Sonia Gomez was monitoring warp core temperatures when the intercom whistled.

“Bridge to engineering,” said the voice of Captain Jo Ann Parker. Gomez reached over and activated the intercom.

“Gomez. Go ahead, Captain.”

“Commander, the crew aboard the starbase is reporting they are reading decreasing output levels on our tractor beam and it’s starting to cause the base to pitch. Can you run a level two diagnostic on the tractor systems?”

“Keep in mind, Captain, the *Sarek*’s almost a quarter century old. Not to mention a highly decorated war veteran! I’m sure some of her systems are feeling their age, especially after being active for more than eight straight weeks,” Gomez remarked.

“I understand that, but if the tractor beam gives out on us at warp, it could be severely detrimental to the starbase and her crew,” Parker said.

“Understood, Captain. I’ll start the diagnostic right away.”

An hour later, Commander Gomez was standing in the captain’s ready room. Captain Jo Ann Parker sat in her chair behind her desk, while her Capellan first officer, A-ZuRQuIL, sat on the couch below the painting of Ambassador Sarek of Vulcan.

“The diagnostic shows the primary cooling system is not operating as efficiently as it was originally designed to,” Gomez was explaining. “Maintenance logs indicate the *Sarek* was badly damaged in the area of the lower tractor emitter during the Dominion War. The shipyard where the repairs were made evidently cut some corners in their attempt to get the ship quickly back in service.”

“Which was all for naught,” A-ZuRQuIL remarked. “Starfleet decided to upgrade the ship into a three-nacelle battleship, then stopped the refit halfway completed when the war ended.”

“However it happened, the lower tractor emitter is on the verge of overheating as a result. Current temperature reads ninety-two degrees Celsius,” Gomez explained. “I can attempt to repair it on the fly. However, ideally, is there was any way we could drop out of warp and deactivate the tractor beams for a few days? Give the systems a chance to cool off while I work on them. Maybe give all the crews an opportunity to relax as well? It HAS been eight weeks at a status equivalent to yellow alert since we left the Typhon Sector, after all.”

“Starfleet is hoping to have the starbase in position as soon as possible,” Captain Parker remarked. “But I’ll contact Admiral Fil and see if he will approve...”

Parker was cut off as the *Sarek*’s helmsman cut in over the intercom. “Captain, we’ve reached the mid-course correction point. Ship is turning to the left. And we’re getting some strange readings on the...”

Without warning, the *Sarek* lurched forward, sending Gomez tumbling to the deck and almost knocking her head against the table beside the couch.

“What just happened?!” Parker demanded to know, gripping her desk tightly to keep from being thrown from her chair before getting up and heading toward the bridge. A-ZuRQuIL helped the chief engineer back to her feet and both rushed to follow the captain.

Commander JoAnn Tredworth was getting up out of the center seat as Parker approached. “Our lower tractor beam emitter just quit,” Tredworth explained. On the viewscreen, Parker, A-ZuRQuIL and Gomez could see the stars were no longer streaked, indicating the ship was no longer traveling at warp. “The other three ships managed to drop the station out of warp safely, but their safety overrides kicked in and the tractors all released the instant they reverted to space-normal. The station is currently drifting on course 002 mark 2 at the equivalent of one-half impulse!”

“Captain, on current course, *Starbase 726* will enter Beta Harlane’s outer asteroid field in less than five minutes!” the Romulan mission specialist Karandar stated from the Science III console.

“Is there anything we can do?” Parker requested.

“With our tractor beams currently out of commission? No, Captain,” Karandar replied.

* * * *

Alarms blared around the bridge of the *USS Spock*, and Captain Arbelo felt the momentary lag as the ship's inertial dampers tried to respond to the sudden increase in weight the ship was towing.

"Helm, request all-stop!" Arbelo shouted over the klaxons.

"All-stop authorized by the flagship. Dropping out of warp in three... two... one..."

All three starship still attached to the starbase with tractor beams dropped back into normal space. As the warp streaks collapsed back into pinpoints of distant light, a new alarm sounded. "Tractor systems have automatically shut down due to overload and extreme stresses."

A moment later, the main viewer was darkened by a shadow passing over the starship. Seconds later, *Starbase 726* passed into view, slowly tumbling as it moved off toward the right.

"Captain, the starbase is on a collision course with several nearby asteroids!" Lieutenant Ckathel exclaimed.

"Helm! Parallel course!" Arbelo ordered without hesitation. "Move us into optimal tractor beam range!"

"Captain, the tractor beam system is in auto-shut-down. It's going to take at least five minutes for the system to come back on-line!" Ckathel reported.

"Time until the starbase impacts the asteroid?"

"Four minutes, forty-five seconds."

Arbelo pounded his fist against the intercom as he shouted, "Bridge to engineering! I need the tractor beams back in less than three minutes!"

"No can do, Captain," chief engineer Alston replied. "It would take longer to swap out the isolinear chips in order to override the safety protocols than it would to just let the system re-set itself."

"Commander, if we don't get control over that starbase in the next couple of minutes, every being aboard the station is going to die!"

There was silence on the intercom for several seconds. Finally Alston's voice returned as she said, "I have a theory, Captain..."

* * * *

Aboard the *Dauntless*, Admiral Fil rushed out of the turbolift onto the bridge, where Koester was already consulting with Lieutenant Annika Arbelo-Eeta and Major Jeong-Hwan on what could be done to restore the starship's tractor beams.

"What happened?" Fil demanded to know.

"The *Sarek*'s tractor beam gave out," Koester remarked. "We managed to slow the station enough to prevent catastrophic break-up of the structure, then we maneuvered out of the way just in time to avoid a collision with the station. But now the station is tumbling out of control directly toward the nearby asteroid belt."

"Can we lock back onto the station and either slow it or change its course?"

"Safety protocols prevent the tractor beams from being used for five minutes after an overload like this," Koester explained. "We're trying to figure out what other options we have at the moment."

"Captain!" shouted Lt William Hyland-Faggio at the helm. He was pointing at the main viewscreen. "Look!"

On the screen, the *USS Spock* was maneuvering around the tumbling station, apparently trying to get in front of it.

"What is Monster trying to do?" Koester asked, his eyebrows knitting in concern.

On the screen, the *Spock* completed its maneuver, positioning itself directly between the mass of the starbase and the asteroids drifting in the distance. The starship then slowed slightly, allowing the station to catch up to it.

"He's going to let the station crash into him!" Fil exclaimed in alarm.

“Captain, the *Spock* has shifted all shield power to aft,” Lieutenant Arbelo-Eeta informed from the science console.

On the screen, the shields of the *Spock* began to glow with a blue ethereal light as the starbase made contact with them. Almost immediately, the station’s tumbling slowed.

“Monster is using his ship to physically slow the station down!” Koester said, now understanding what the other ship was trying to accomplish. “Bill, can we maneuver in there and give them a hand?” he then asked his helmsman.

“It might be a little tight, but I think I can get us in there,” Hyland-Faggio agreed.

“Major Jeong-Hwan, shift primary shields to full aft,” Koester ordered, resuming his seat in the command chair. “Bill, bring us around.”

By the time the *Dauntless* had maneuvered around the bulk of *Starbase 726*, the *Spock* had ceased the station’s tumbling motion. With both starships acting in concert, the station was slowed to a halt well away from any of the asteroids. Both ships then shifted their shields around and began to push the station with their bows – *Dauntless* above, *Spock* below – until the station was completely out of danger. By the time the two starships had completed the maneuver, the tractor beams aboard the *Sun Tzu*, *Dauntless*, and *Spock* were restored, and they were able to bring the station to a complete stop.

* * * *

Captain’s log, stardate 71233.9:

Repairs to the Sarek’s tractor systems are complete, and the crews of Starbase 726 and the other three starships have had a couple of days of rest after a harrowing course-change attempt nearly resulted in disaster. We are about to resume our transit to Sector 50111 with the starbase in tow, a trip that is expected to take another seven weeks and an odd number of days, assuming nothing else goes wrong. But after our exciting little episode, I am hoping the rest of this trip will seem routine by comparison.
Arbelo, commanding Spock, out.

Captain Setton To’Lock Arbelo, his first officer Commander ch’Vaigyaanik Tohakeet, and Vice Admiral Penji Fil were sitting in Arbelo’s ready room, each holding a drink in one hand.

“Congratulations, Setton,” Fil was saying. “If it weren’t for the quick thinking and actions of you and your crew, *Starbase 726* would have been destroyed and the mission of the Fifth Fleet seriously curtailed.”

“Just doing my job, Penji,” Arbelo replied modestly.

“You and your engineer were thinking way outside the box,” Fil responded. “You risked not only the station but your own ship had your shields not held. It would have looked very bad for me if we lost a brand-new starship, not to mention an entire starbase before it even reached its designated coordinates. You have my personal thanks. Not to mention a commendation for original thinking in your record.”

Arbelo blushed a slight tan color at the praise he was receiving. “I’ll be sure to pass your thanks on to my crew.”

“You can do a little more than that,” Fil said, raising his glass as if proposing a toast. “Once the new station is in position and operational, you and your crew are authorized two weeks R&R before you resume your mission. Then the *Spock* will be the first of the Fifth Fleet vessels to begin exploring the newly opened sectors.”

Arbelo leaned across his desk, clinking his own glass with Fil’s and saying, “Thanks, Penji. We all appreciate that.” He then tilted the glass toward his first officer and added, “The beginning of an entirely new chapter.”

“Boldly going where no one has gone before, eh, Captain?” Tohakeet remarked before downing her own drink in a single swallow.

A smile played at Arbelo's lips as he got out of his chair and walked over to the nearby replicator. "Computer, sunglasses, dark lenses." A second later a pair of black sunglasses materialized on the shelf. Arbelo picked them up and returned to his seat, to the confused looks of both Fil and Tohakeet.

"What do you need sunglasses for, Setton?" the admiral finally asked.

Arbelo slipped the glasses on, his smile widening, as he replied, "The future is looking so bright, I gotta wear shades."

To Be Continued...