

Stardate 71310.7
Federation Starbase 726
Sector 50111

The Buckingham-class starbase was nearing full operational status, and eight Federation starships – the *Dauntless*, *Sarek*, *Sun Tzu*, *Spock*, *Bellerophon*, *Triton*, *Broadsword*, and *Corsair* – and two allied Morain patrol ships were present for the official commissioning of the new space station.

Aboard the station, Commander Tom Paris was walking with Fleet Commander Vice Admiral Penji Fil and Captain James Mees of the Starfleet Corps of Engineers, making sure the station had not received any notable damage during its transit out to Sector 50111 and verifying all required systems prior to officially assuming command.

“Once this station is considered operational and the starships resume their normal mission, you’re going to be a long way from anywhere,” Fil remarked to the recently assigned station CO. “Think you’ll be able to handle the isolation, Commander?”

Paris laughed abruptly before replying, “Admiral, there will be over five thousand crew members aboard this station once it’s fully operational. Hardly the isolated posting of a deep-space communications relay. And besides, it means I get to spend at least the next few years living with my wife and daughter. Trust me, after so many years of starship duty, I think I could become very enamored with what you call ‘isolation,’ Admiral.”

“Just making sure you aren’t having any second thoughts, Commander,” Fil remarked. “Your reputation labels you as someone who craves speed and adventure. I never pictured you as someone who would settle for a stationary posting with no helm console.”

“Believe me, Admiral, I’ll find a hobby or two to keep me busy while I’m here,” Paris assured. “I’ve actually been thinking about designing and building a new and improved version of the Delta Flyer like we built when I was still aboard the *Voyager*.”

As the trio neared the turbolift at the end of the corridor, Captain Mees presented a padd to Paris and said, “It appears everything checks out as expected, Commander. You have a good station here. Best of luck in your new command.”

“Thank you, Captain,” Paris said as he reviewed the information displayed on the padd.

“I just need your thumb-print at the bottom,” the captain remarked, pointing at the exact spot. “With that, the station is all yours.”

“I’ve never taken responsibility for something so large or expensive before,” Paris remarked as he looked around at the bulkheads. “Do I really want to do this?”

“Really, Commander?” Captain Mees chided. Paris smiled and placed his thumb on the requested spot. Mees then took the padd and handed it to Fil. “You too, Admiral.”

“So if anything happens to this starbase after I enter my confirmation?” Fil asked.

“Starfleet will bill you in monthly installments for the value of the station. Don’t worry, we can work out an easy payment plan.”

A half-smirk appeared on Fil’s lips before he too placed his thumb on the padd and verified the final check-out of *Starbase 726*. “Congratulations, Gentlemen,” Captain Mees said. “You have yourselves a new starbase.”

Space, the Final Frontier...

Star Trek: Fifth Fleet

“The Reformation of the Fleet” By PJK

A Typhon Sector Crisis Story

Vignette H – Starbase 726

Commander B’Elanna Torres had been put in charge of organizing the celebration marking the official activation of *Starbase 726*. She had been compiling information on everything she would need and everyone among the crew willing to lend a hand since before the starbase departed the Typhon Sector.

The biggest problem she was finding was space. After almost eight years assigned to *Starbase 719*, she had gotten used to having the immense botanical garden available for all-hands events. But this Buckingham-class starbase – though still capable of housing a crew of more than 5000 beings – lacked any large internal areas big enough for the entire crew not on duty to gather in all at one time, short of the station’s docking area. And she doubted her husband – station commander Tom Paris – would want to gather the entire crew in a vacuum environment open to space, even if they had enough EVA suits for everyone aboard.

The station’s promenade was big enough to hold everyone, but the design of that section of the station was a large circle attached beneath station’s central pylon below the levels where the crew quarters and science labs were located. While it had large windows that provided spectacular views of the area of space surrounding the station, less than a quarter of the promenade could be seen from any point within it at a time.

Her last hope was the station’s incomplete recreation area, located within one of the circular modules attached to the arms of the space station, where only a handful of shops, restaurants, and other amenities were already located. The rec area itself was a large circular space three decks tall and was intended to be easily re-configurable. Several small shops had been constructed around the perimeter while the base was in operation as *Typhon-Bravo* in the Typhon Sector, leaving an open area in the middle – intended for future construction – that felt very similar to a small town’s central square.

“It’s going to be tight, but I think we can get most of the crew, VIPs and dignitaries in here,” Torres said to herself before turning around in a full circle to look at the area. Her eyes fell upon one storefront in particular, the business it held still in the process of moving in. “You have GOT to be kidding me!”

Torres stormed across the open area to the front of what appeared to be a bar and restaurant still under construction. The sign above the main door was already installed, and it read in large, friendly letters, ‘*Quark’s Too!*’ “How did that slimy toad get approval to open a business here?” Torres wondered to herself. She entered the establishment, intending to voice her opinion to whatever management was present, but stopped short just inside the door.

The main bar and most of the furnishings were already in place. A few of the shelves were stocked with exotic-looking bottles, while two workmen were installing a pair of replicators. There were two gaming tables along one wall, and the upper level held several more tables and chairs evidently intended for dining. But it was the people working inside the establishment that most surprised the Operations Chief.

Torres had expected the employees or contractors building the place to all be Ferengi, as was common with any Ferengi-owned business. But what she saw was a mixture of Tellarite, Bajoran, Deltan and human workers. One of the humans noticed Torres standing in the door and stepped over to greet her.

“Good morning, Commander. I’m Wayne Powers, the manager. What can I do for you?”

“I noticed the sign outside, and assumed this business was being set up by that weaselly Ferengi with the bar on *Deep Space 9*,” Torres replied. This prompted a smile from the manager.

“I’m sorry. My Uncle Darrell thought it would be amusing to open a new bar under the name ‘Quark’s Too!’ Especially after what happened aboard *Starbase 719*,” he said.

“Your Uncle Darrell?” Torres questioned. “How does he know about what happened when Quark visited *719*?”

Again, the human man smiled before saying, “You probably know my uncle better by his nickname – Shifty.”

Realization suddenly dawned on Torres as she recognized the name of the proprietor and bartender of the Bastogne Lodge back on *Starbase 719*.

“Shifty owns this place too? But why the name Quarks?”

“He considered calling this place the Lodge Annex when he first signed the lease for the space,” Wayne Powers replied. “But he didn’t like the sound of it. Said it didn’t roll off the tongue in just the right way. Then he remembered his encounter with the Ferengi bar owner.”

“He better hope the Ferengi never hears about this place, or he’s likely to get sued!” Torres commented.

“Nah! Uncle Darrell has that covered,” Wayne replied. “He did some research. Determined that when the Bajor system joined the Federation after the Dominion War, the Ferengi registered a copyright on the name ‘Quark’s Bar, Grill, Gaming House and Holo-suite Arcade.’ However, he never bothered to copyright ‘Quark’s Too!’ And Uncle Darrell now has a letter from the Federation Copyright Office stating the name ‘Quark’s Too!’ is unique enough to receive its own copyright. So, Uncle Darrell did.”

Torres guffawed, covering her mouth with her hand. It was not many people who could successfully put one over on a Ferengi businessman. Finally she said, “Well, it looks like you’re getting pretty close to opening up the place. I think I know what bar is going to become the crew’s favorite watering hole aboard THIS station.”

“Uncle Darrell will be very happy to hear that, Commander. Now, if you will excuse me, the sooner we can get everything set up, the sooner we can open.”

“I’ll let you get back to it,” Torres agreed, heading back out the door, in a much better mood than she had been when she first entered the rec area, determined to let her husband know about the new business opening aboard his station.

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Commander Tom Paris was sitting in his office in Ops, his hand folded together atop his desk. Though he had technically been in command of the new starbase for five months, the majority of that time had been spent in preparation to move the station and the almost four months it took actually relocating the station from the Typhon Sector to Sector 50111, followed by two relatively easy weeks in final preparation to activate the station and its mission.

Now the weight of the fact that *Starbase 726* was his first true command, and that the mission before him was actually about to begin was pressing down on his shoulders like a physical weight. He took a deep breath and released it slowly, intending to head out into Ops and ask for a status report when the chime at his office door sounded.

“Come,” he said, unsure if he preferred the interruption or not. The glass and metal door slid open and an older woman wearing the uniform of a Starfleet admiral stepped into the small room.

“Hello, Tom,” she greeted, looking around the tiny space and appearing thoroughly unimpressed.

“Admiral Janeway!” Paris exclaimed, getting out of his chair to greet his former commanding officer with a brief hug. “I wasn’t aware you would be here for the activation ceremony!”

“I had the opportunity to hitch a ride aboard the *Corsair*, so I pulled rank,” Janeway remarked. “A lot of the Brass at Starfleet consider you a protégé of mine since *Voyager* returned to the Alpha Quadrant. I couldn’t let you assume your first command without my personal congratulations.”

“Thank you, Admiral. You being here means a lot to me,” Paris replied, offering Janeway a seat. “I just hope I can live up to your expectations.”

“You had a few road bumps in your career,” Janeway said. “Hell, even I’m not sure how you went from Lieutenant demoted to Ensign, then promoted back to Lieutenant before Harry ever received his second pip! But you were a good officer and – at times – an excellent crew member. And the years have seasoned you, I think.”

“Seasoned. Just the word someone my age wants to hear,” Paris remarked with a smirk.

“I think this promotion to commanding officer is a good fit for you at this point in your life, Tom. I think you are going to do well. And it won’t be too long before you’re wearing another pip on that uniform.”

“I hope so. Ever since we returned from the Delta Quadrant, I’ve dreamed of one day having a command of my own, but I always pictured a small starship like the *Voyager* or *Bellerophon* in my mind. Not a starbase with a crew of five-thousand plus people under me! I think the reality is just starting to hit me.”

“Understandable,” Janeway commiserated. “All I can tell you is, when things get tough, take a deep breath, step back, and look at your problem from a new angle. Then ask yourself, ‘WWJD?’”

“W... W... J... D...?” Paris asked, puzzled.

“What would Janeway do?” the Admiral replied with a smile.

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Stardate 71321.8

Sector 50111

Over 4500 people were gathered within the recreation area of *Starbase 726*. With the exception of numerous dignitaries and VIPs like the station command staff, Admirals Penji Fil, Kalin Kale, and Kathryn Janeway, and the senior officers of the Fifth Fleet starship visiting the starbase – all either seated on the small stage built against the outer bulkhead or in chairs directly in front of the stage – the majority were crowded together standing shoulder to shoulder in two tight groups with an aisle separating them.

On the stage, Vice Admiral Penji Fil was talking about the history of the Fifth Fleet, from its re-activation upon the commissioning of *Starbase 719* to the present expansion of the Area of Responsibility and what those changes meant to the fleet and those serving within it.

“To this point, the Fleet has had to rely on a single starbase at the so-called entrance of the AOR – a relatively narrow area between the Typhon Expanse and the Kairn Empire, and one Federation colony – Persephone – located in Sector 50112 to provide supplies, sustenance, and opportunities to relax and unwind between difficult missions. But this logistical limitation has also meant that Fifth Fleet starships were somewhat limited in how far they could go. With the activation of this new starbase, Fleet starships can extend the reach of the Fifth Fleet through numerous new sectors – seeking new life and new civilizations, fulfilling the Starfleet Charter established two hundred and thirty-four years ago! To go where no one has gone before!” Fil paused briefly to allow for some applause. As the applause subsided, he continued, “Ladies and gentle-beings, the commander of *Starbase 726*, Commander Thomas Paris.”

Paris – whose concentration was elsewhere momentarily – appeared almost surprised to hear his name. With an embarrassed smile, he got up from his seat on the stage and replaced Admiral Fil at the podium.

“Crew of *Starbase 726*, crew members of the Federation Fifth Fleet, dignitaries, and guests; greetings.” Paris then activated a padd he had carried to the podium and started reading from it. “To: Commander T. Paris; You are ordered by Starfleet Command to activate *Starbase 726*, located at designated coordinates within Sector 50111, Fifth Fleet Area of Responsibility, here-after referred to as the Vongi Sector.” Paris glanced over at Admiral Fil, silently mouthing the words, ‘*Vongi Sector?*’ Fil simply shrugged, not having had any input into the naming of that area of space. “The Admiralty offers congratulations on your new assignment,” Paris continued reading, “and wishes you and your crew the best of luck in your ongoing mission. Signed, Janeway, Vice Admiral Kathryn, representing Starfleet Command.” Paris took a moment to look down into the audience, smiling briefly at Admiral Janeway, who was sitting in the front row right next to Fleet Captain Peter Koester. He then shifted his attention to his crew gathered beyond the seated dignitaries and ordered, “Crew of *Starbase 726*, by order of Starfleet Command, bring the station to full operational status.”

“Yes, sir!” the entire starbase crew responded. A handful of them near the back departed the rec area, rushing to nearby duty stations to ceremoniously man them, though the majority of the crew remained where they were – shoulder to shoulder. A few seconds later, the lighting around the rec area changed slightly – brightening in darkened areas as the shop signs of already-established businesses all lit-up. Finally, the voice of Operations Chief B’Elanna Torres came over the station-wide intercom.

“Attention all hands, this is Starbase Operations. *Starbase 726* is active and operational.” A round of loud applause quickly filled the rec area. As the applause again subsided, Torres could again be heard saying, “This starbase is open for business!” This prompted a new round of cheering and applause.

“Ladies and gentle-beings,” Paris continued as the celebration waned. “Fifth Fleet Commander Vice Admiral Penji Fil.”

Fil returned to the podium, congratulating Paris on the successful activation of his new command and shaking the human’s hand. The Catullan admiral then addressed the audience once again. “As you all know, since the start of the Fifth Fleet’s mission in 2386, our starships have charted and explored twenty-four sectors of space along the Alpha and Beta Quadrant border. We now take this opportunity to open ten more sectors within the Alpha Quadrant to exploration by our starships. With this new frontier available to us, we hope to increase the Federation’s knowledge while making contact with heretofore-unknown civilizations who we hope – like the Morain and the Sagions – will become new allies and partners. Commanders of the Fifth Fleet...” All the starship captains present for the ceremony stood up, ready to receive their orders. “...You are hereby authorized to commence exploration of Sectors 50117 through 50126. Good luck, and may the Great Bird of the Galaxy guide you.”

“Yes, Admiral!” the seven starship commanders replied in unison.

Fil continued his remarks for several more minutes, then finally concluded the ceremony. Paris stood up once more to dismiss his crew before asking the Fleet commanders and dignitaries to stick around for a few more minutes. Once the majority of those who had been in attendance were gone, Paris gathered Admirals Fil, Kale, and Janeway, along with Koester, Parker, K’danz, Arbelo, Baber, Tomkins, Foxwell, and Pearson and their senior officers present as a group.

“Who knows how long it will be before we all have a chance to gather together like this again, if ever,” the station commander remarked. “I would like to invite you all to join me in a special toast to mark the occasion.” He then pointed across the way to the rec area’s lone bar – still not officially open for business.

“Have they even opened yet?” K’danz wondered aloud.

“I made arrangements with the manager to loan us his back room for the occasion,” Paris replied as he led the way across the space and through the doors of Quark’s Too!

“Welcome, everyone,” Wayne Powers greeted from just inside the door. “If you would please follow Commander Paris back behind the bar.” He then said to Paris, “Your wife sent a message that she would be down here momentarily, as soon as a qualified watch relief reached Ops.”

“Thank you, Wayne,” Paris responded as he led the group behind the bar and through a door hidden behind shelves covered in various bottles, into a room nearly as large as the public storefront. A long table with food lined one wall, while drinks and alcohol bottles of every description sat atop another. After Commander Torres had arrived, everyone grabbed their preferred libation and gathered near the center of the room, where Paris said, “To the success of *Starbase 726* and the mission of the Federation Fifth Fleet!”

“To success!” everyone repeated before either taking a sip of their drink or draining their shotglass.

Following the toast, Fleet Captain Peter Koester made his way over to *USS Triton* CO Captain Amanda Tomkins, who he noticed was standing and talking with another captain with whom he was unfamiliar. “Amanda! I was surprised to see the *Triton* all the way out here when we arrived with the station in tow. Will your ship be taking part in the initial exploration of the new sectors too?”

“Yes and no,” Tomkins replied before introducing her companion. “Fleet Captain Peter Koester, commander of the Fleet flagship. Captain Henry ‘Hank’ Foxwell, commander of the *USS Broadsword*. His ship and the *Triton* have volunteered for and been placed on special assignment. We’re here to perform some last-minute personnel transfers before that assignment begins.”

“Special assignment?” Koester questioned. “Doing what?”

“Pretty much the same thing you will be doing, Fleet Captain,” Foxwell replied. “Just a lot further away.”

When Koester seemed confused by the response, Tomkins clarified, “You remember the mission the *McAuliffe* was on a few years ago?”

Koester nodded his head, being familiar with the deep-space exploration mission the starship his wife had previously been assigned to had performed.

“We’re going to be continuing the *McAuliffe*’s mission,” Tomkins explained. “*Triton* and *Broadsword* will still technically be assigned to the Fifth Fleet. However, we are going to be exploring space along the border of the Beta and Delta Quadrants. Perhaps even as far as the galactic edge.”

“A mission like that would take at least three or four years, I would think,” Koester remarked. “Most of it being out of direct communication with Starfleet or the Fifth Fleet!”

“Admiral Fil stated Starfleet expects the mission to last no less than five years. But he is confident that two starships working together will have a greater chance of success – and returning home in one piece – than just one.”

Koester glanced across the room to where Admiral Janeway was talking with Commanders Paris and Torres and Admiral Kale before remarking, “I think someone could argue that a single starship could survive an extreme deep-space assignment by itself as long as it was under the right captain.”

Tomkins glanced at the admiral and nodded, then continued, “*Broadsword* and *Triton* are scheduled to depart twenty-four hours after all the other starships here – except the *Corsair* – begin the exploration of the new sectors. Admiral Fil wanted to keep the fanfare at a minimum.”

Koester raised the bottle of ice-cold blue Romulan ale he was holding as he said, “I wish both of you and your crews the best of luck. Send me a communique from time to time to let me know how things are going.”

“We’ll keep you up to date, Peter,” Tomkins promised.

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Stardate 71326.8

Vicinity of Starbase 726

Vongi Sector

Captain Setton To’Lock Arbelo exited his ready room and crossed the bridge, stepping up to his command chair in the central arena. “Status, Commander?” he asked of his first officer.

“Ship is manned and ready. All consumables re-supplied. Engineering reports propulsion is ready to answer all ordered speeds.”

A subtle smile played at the edges of the Terran/Vulcan/Efrosian captain’s mouth as he sat down in the center seat and looked around at the crew members manning each station around him. It still impressed him just how big and spacious the bridge of his new starship really was.

“This is the beginning of a grand new adventure,” he remarked. “Just think of how few people in history have been in our place – looking out toward an unexplored horizon.” Arbelo paused to let his words sink in slightly before adding, “It’s a blank slate ahead of us. Let’s enjoy this opportunity!”

Arbelo returned his attention to the viewscreen ahead of the conn and ops positions. On the screen, the utter blackness of space lay ahead.

“Mister Hooks, request permission to depart *Starbase 726*,” Arbelo ordered.

“Aye, sir,” the operations officer replied. A moment later, he added, “Starbase Ops has granted *USS Spock* permission to depart, and wishes us luck. We will be the first Federation starship to enter Sector 50117.”

“Very well,” Arbelo acknowledged. “Helm, lay in course 280 mark 0. Speed: warp six. Warp speed at your discretion.”

“Course 280 mark 0 plotted and laid in,” the helmsman, Lt Commander Peck reported. “Entering warp speed.”

Slowly at first, the Odyssey-class starship *Spock* moved away from *Starbase 726*. Then its warp nacelles brightened a dynamic blue, and the *Spock* jumped away with a thunderclap and a flash of white light.

...The human adventure continues...