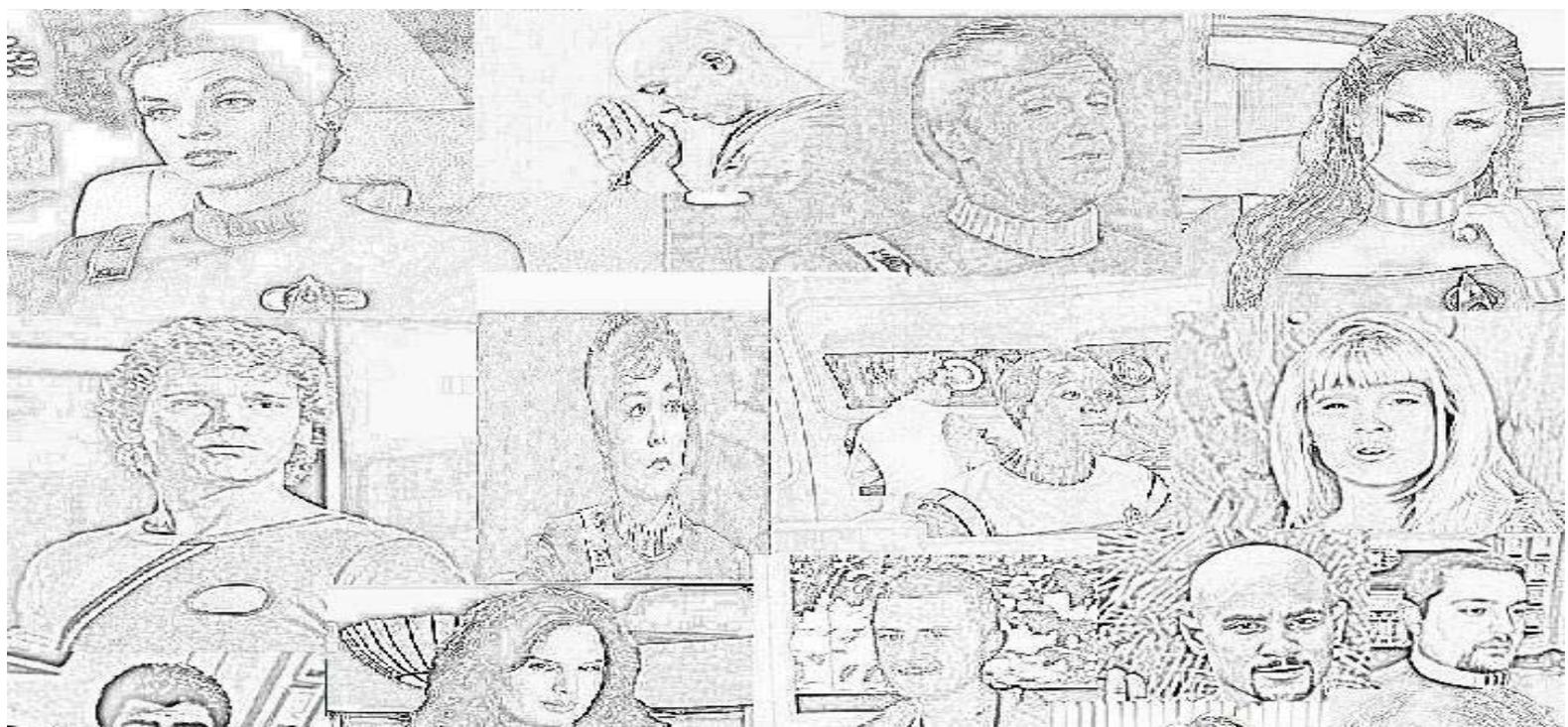
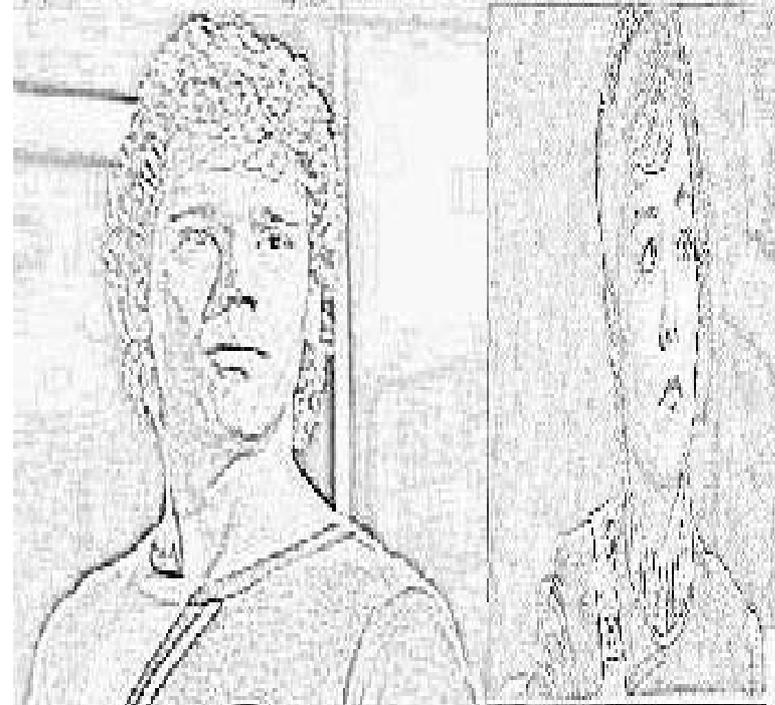


# STAR TREK: *GRISSOM*

*Oderint dum Metuat*





# CHAPTER II

## Oderint dum Metuat

### Previously on Star Trek Grissom:

Following the *Khan Noonien Singh* incident in the Mutara Nebula and the death of *Captain Spock*, there is an aura of menace in the Alpha quadrant. With the *USS Enterprise* (NCC-1701) reassigned to investigate the disappearance of the *USS Gallant* in section 14 of the Gamma Hydra system, *Admiral Harry Morrow* assigns the *USS Grissom* (NCC-638) to investigate the newly formed Genesis Planet.

*Grissom* departs Starbase 67, with orders to collect specialist advisor on marine biology *Michael Liebmann* PhD from his research centre on planet Pacifica.

### USS GRISSOM (NCC -638)

*"Captain's Log, supplemental. Grissom is one day out from Starbase 67, enroute to Pacifica as per orders of Starfleet Command. The majority of the crew are as yet unaware of the exact nature of our "Genesis" mission and the requirement for silent running after we depart Pacifica with Dr. Liebmann. Aware of this, I have asked Lieutenant Chattman to encourage all the crew to contact their loved ones and families ashore, in as subtle a manner as possible. In his own inimitable fashion, Chattman has organised a 'Morale Day', with each of the crew being assigned a five-minute communication allocation, and has tied this into the naming ceremony for our new 'Von Braun' type shuttle. This, at least, should ensure our crew speak to their loved ones and buoy morale, before we head out for the Mutara sector, and the unknown. In the interim, Lieutenants' Hewson and Thorsen, ships security and security operations respectively, will rejoin us shortly from their recent*



*visit to Galen IV, as part of a Starfleet wide security seminar on establishing security parameters for new colonies”.*

Finding a quiet place on an Oberth class starship was never easy. *Christopher Chattman* had arranged for two temporary communications booths to be installed in the computer core on deck four, and each of the crew dutifully reported to the deck ten minutes before their allocated communication slot. Most of the crew were delighted by the unplanned and uncharacteristic gesture of a “Morale Day” by *Captain J.T. Esteban*, but not *Lieutenant, junior grade, Rebecca Sato*.

*Rebecca* was part of the select few who had been shown *Carol Marcus’s* ‘Project Genesis’ presentation, and was in little doubt that the *Grisson* was heading into uncharted and dangerous waters. As she entered the computer core and took up one of the communication booths, she smiled across at crewman *Aabin*, a Deltan with whom she was friendly and had often discussed music with. He nodded in acknowledgement of her smile and entered the booth opposite.

*Rebecca* entered the booth and indicated to *Lieutenant Chattman* at bridge communications three decks above, that she was ready to be connected to her husband *Robert Igoe*.

The view screen in front of her leapt to life, and as the visage of her husband appeared in front of her, she saw that he was sitting in a communication booth with a view of Earth behind, so she reckoned he must be ashore in Spacedock.

*Robert* was assigned as a *Lieutenant Commander* in Engineering aboard the *USS Excelsior* (NX-2000), or the great experiment as she was called in Starfleet. The potential development of transwarp was something that the Klingon Empire was not best pleased about and the mere rumour of it had led to angry representations from their ambassadors.

That was why *Excelsior* was hidden in Spacedock, ready for her final trials.

“Honey!” *Robert* beamed at her, “am I glad to see you! I’ve missed you,” he exclaimed as he leant into the console and put his hand out to touch her image. *Rebecca*



put her hand out to touch his, all those sectors away, and found herself relaxing.

"How are things on *Excelsior*?" she asked.

*Robert* sat back in his chair, "things are going great honey, *Richard Hawkins* is a great guy to work for, and he's a fantastic engineer and a helluva guy. I'm really going to be sorry to see him go. Guys like him don't grow on trees. But enough about work, how are you? How are things aboard the *Gruesome*?"

*Richard* laughed aloud at his own joke, and *Rebecca* joined him in the moment, it was a little in-joke they shared with *Christopher Chattman*, the "USS *Gruesome*."

"Fine *Bobby*" she replied, "*J.T.* ordered this "Morale Day" and here we are having our little chat, great idea really."

*Robert* could read in his wife that she was troubled by something and pressed her, "Ok *Becky*, what's up, what are you worried about, is everything alright aboard ship?"

*Rebecca* was uncomfortable and tried to change the subject, "just not feeling too well *Bobby*, think it might be the extra shifts I've been pulling lately, I'm tired."

He smiled reassuringly at her and seemed to accept her answer.

Bound by protocol and secrecy, she could hardly tell him that they were off to the *Mutara* sector, to the recent scene of the attack on the *Enterprise*, and that they were going to investigate a planet that had fully formed in the last weeks, a planet that was restricted and not yet general news.

*Robert* broke the silence.

"Look *Becky*, I realise that things didn't go according to plan on our last vacation, but I had to leave early by order of *Styles*. I'll make it up to you."

It was her turn to reassure him now. "*Bobby*, I love you, I understand, hey I'm a Starfleet officer too you know?"

She reached out to the screen again. "Look, I'm really going to have to go, I don't want to exceed my five minutes. I'll contact you when we're in orbit of *Pacifica*."

He looked sad, forlorn, like a little puppy dog with those big brown eyes and youthful demeanour, his shock of curly dark hair and his perfect features. She had fallen in love with him at first sight.



“Ok, I’m going to have to move it too,” he said, and she could see the tears in his eyes, he was such a soft touch, despite his 6ft 3 muscular frame. She pretended not to see the tears and smiled at him then blew him a kiss.

“Goodbye sweetheart.”

*Rebecca* gathered her thoughts, adjusted her uniform jacket, and then stood and exited the temporary booth. Outside, waiting to use the booth was an unfamiliar face, an engineering cadet according to her uniform.

“Hello, sorry for the delay, I’m *Rebecca Sato*,” said *Rebecca* as she offered her hand. The cadet took her hand and shook it firmly.

“*Kara McLoughlin*. Just came aboard at Starbase 67.”

“Ah, one of the *Enterprise* transfers, I trust our humble little Oberth can live up to the reputation of the *Enterprise*,” laughed *Rebecca*.

*Kara* became serious, “I lost good friends in the Mutara Sector, *Lieutenant*, and I don’t ever want to go back there, now if you’ll pardon me, I’ve a call waiting.” *Kara* moved to enter the booth.

*Rebecca* felt herself flush. This cadet didn’t want to go back to the Mutara sector, and that was exactly where they were heading she hoped *Esteban* would inform the general crew of their mission shortly; all this subterfuge was annoying, and not her style.

*Esteban* exited the conference room and walked the short distance to the main bridge. *Solak* stood and vacated the centre seat as *Esteban* entered; he nodded in acknowledgement and sat down.

“*Jata* set a course for the Epsilon Mynos system. *Childers*, bring our speed up to warp factor five. *Chattman*, can you arrange for the senior staff and bridge crew to meet in the conference room in 30 minutes? I understand *Lieutenants’ Thorsen* and *Hewson’s* shuttle has docked, ensure they are in attendance.”

*Chattman* acknowledged and began to contact the requested crewmembers as *Esteban* walked to the science station and stood beside his XO.

*Solak* turned in his chair and raised an eyebrow in enquiry, “Our change of course is sudden *Captain*, no



doubt related to your latest conversation with *Admiral Morrow*.”

*Esteban* nodded and spoke quietly, “all this tooting and froeing is becoming a joke *Commander*, at this rate, we’ll get to the Genesis Planet by 2287!”

*Solak* remained impassive but replied, “*Captain*, Starfleet obviously wants us in the Mutara sector as fast as is possible, so any diversions are obviously, to their mind, important diversions.”

Security Ops Divisional Head, *Lieutenant Lars Thorsen*, entered the turbolift on deck 2, to find it occupied by *Stephanie Ottair*. She stood with her hands clasped behind her back, as ever alert and ready.

“Ah, *Lieutenant Thorsen*, I see you have returned from your excursion to Galen IV, how was your field trip?”

*Thorsen* suppressed a smile; this attempt at conversation was practically convivial for *Ottair*, who was renowned as the ice queen of *Grissom*.

“It was educational, *Commander*, the opportunity to look at a potential colony site first hand is always interesting from a security perspective. It was good of the *Captain* to allow myself and *Lieutenant Hewson* the time to participate in the process.”

*Ottair* shifted her stance and replied, “Given the proximity to Starbase 67, it was most logical. I take it *Captain Esteban* has appraised you of our latest assignment?”

*Thorsen* nodded. “Yes, we received the ‘Genesis Presentation’ via encoded transmission from *Chattman*, and are both fully versed in our mission.”

The turbolift arrived at deck 1 and they exited together, walking toward the conference room. They entered to find their colleagues already seated. *Thorsen* was warmly welcomed back by *Sato*, *Chattman* and *Jata*, whilst *Dr. S’Raazh* ordered him to attend sickbay for a post Galen IV mission medical ASAP. They took their seats as *Esteban* entered the room, followed by *Solak* and Lieutenant *Paul Hewson*.

*Esteban* took his seat and began. “Firstly, welcome back *Thorsen* and *Hewson*. Now, to business.”

*Esteban* leant forward and clasped his hands together, leaning on the conference table. “As you are aware, we have diverted from our course to Pacifica, and



are now heading for Epsilon Mynos. Starfleet Command are most insistent that we have *Drs David Marcus* and *Clive Saunders* aboard the ship as specialist advisors for the Genesis mission, in addition to *Dr. Liebmann*.”

*SoTak* spoke, “the presence of *Dr. Marcus* is eminently logical, given his close involvement in the Genesis Project. *Dr. Saunders*, however, is essential for what reason?”

*Esteban* continued, “*Saunders* was an associate of both *Drs David* and *Carol Marcus* and was instrumental in the initial stages of the Genesis Project. It is felt by Starfleet command that together with *Dr. Liebmann* and our own team, they will provide the expertise required to provide optimum information on the newly formed Genesis planet. *Marcus* is to be transported to meet us by a Federation Starship, but *Saunders* was to rendezvous with us in his own craft. However, yesterday, *Saunders* and his team disappeared whilst on a mission in the Epsilon Mynos system. Their last known heading was toward a Deltan research colony called ‘Cinera Base’.”

“It is unusual for Deltans to leave the home system, unless for specific roles such as Starfleet, however, I have yet to hear of an off world Deltan research centre” interjected *Dr. S’Raazh*, “I will pull what data I can on any such projects from the Medical database and liaise with Starfleet Medical on this.”

“Thank you Doctor” said *Esteban*, “my first course of action is to head for this Cinera Base and enquire as to any sightings of *Saunders’* team. *Thorsen*, look into the specifications of *Saunders’* craft, I believe it is of a ‘Navi’ long-range shuttlecraft type.”

“That shuttle class is quite robust, Sir, and warp capable,” replied *Thorsen*, “but I’ll look into it in more detail.”

*Esteban* turned to *Chattman*, “You might talk to Specialist *Aabin*, he’s Deltan, and should be part of any landing party to Cinera Base. Have an informal word and see if he has any insight into what his people are doing all the way out here.”

“Of course, Sir” replied *Chattman*, “I tend to meet him in the gymnasium, so I’ll catch him there.”

*Esteban* stood up and went to the window, looking out at the stars as they sped by at warp speed. “Very well, you all know what to do, let’s get to Cinera Base, find *Saunders* and get back to our mission. Dismissed.”



*Esteban* heard the crew exit but felt a presence remain. He turned. It was *Lieutenant Hewson*.

"Yes *Paul*, what's the problem" asked *Esteban*, a little irritated at *Hewson's* failure to dismiss himself.

"*Captain*, if I may, I'm a little concerned that our security may not be as tight as it should be, given our current mission parameters." *Hewson* stood at attention, unflinching in his opinion.

"Go ahead " said *Esteban*. He had learned to take *Hewson's* advice and respected his opinion.

*Hewson* continued, "I would like to run security drills, have arms locker inventories and have engineering run diagnostics on our shields and defence fields. I also suggest checking our phaser banks and our photon torpedo inventory and running some drills. I know these drills were carried out last month, but given our mission parameters. What I mean Sir, is we don't often have recourse to weaponry, but that's not to say we won't. That's it Sir." *Esteban* walked over to *Hewson* and put his hand on his shoulder, "wise counsel *Lieutenant*, I'll leave it in your capable hands and I'll advise *Commander Ottair* to assist you in your endeavours. Now, this time, you ARE dismissed."

"Yes sir." *Hewson* saluted and exited.

*Esteban* smiled to himself, *Hewson* was efficient and thorough. With him in charge of security, he felt confident that all would be well on this mission.

*Aabin's* mind drifted as he ran at a fast pace on the treadmill. Here in the gymnasium, he could, if only for a brief time, let himself be at peace with his emotions and his feelings, his endorphins could be released and he would not be harming any of his fellow crewmates. It was tough being in control all of the time, especially as he was sharing with eight other crewmates in one of the enlisted bunkrooms, but he was experienced at controlling his pheromones and his unique Deltan physiology. He reflected on his earlier communication with his sister *Li-Eth*. She was sad at his absence from Delta IV.

As he ran, his mind drifted back to their last morning together on his home world, before he had left to rejoin Starfleet...

The water that cascaded down the rocks into the shimmering pool below had split the rainforest like a



gaping green mouth on an elaborate fountain. *Aabin* had cleared the pure waters from his eyes with his two hands. His sister, *Li-Eth*, had sat by the edge of the pool with her feet dangling lazily into the water. *Aabin* saw her look at him as he emerged from under the water, having dived in from the top of the waterfall. He had smiled. *Aabin* remembered how he had felt, and knew at that time how much he would miss Delta IV; the glorious pinkish-orange sunsets over the rainforests of Celembia and the sounds of the crashing waves on the shores of Telerinda. It was so calming there. It wasn't until *Aabin* left to explore the universe with Starfleet that he realised how special life was on Delta; the animals, the flowers and - especially - the people made for an experience that stimulated the six senses.

Life out here, the mysterious and busy universe outside, was so flat by comparison. A thought tickled *Aabin's* mind: perhaps it would be a good thing he had only signed up for a couple more years. He belonged on Delta IV.

*Li-Eth* had sensed the thoughts and pheromones from *Aabin* and knew there was melancholy under the smile he presented. There were no secrets between Deltans, especially siblings. *Li-Eth* had regarded her brother with her dark brown eyes as he waded across to join her; the water ran in rivulets down his smooth head as his streamlined body easily parted the water. Language extended far beyond words with the Deltan people; thought and pheromones played an equally important part, perhaps even more important.

Unlike *Aabin*, *Li-Eth* had never chosen to leave Delta IV. Why would someone want to leave paradise?

*Aabin* had effortlessly pulled himself onto the cool mossy bank at the side of the pool. The training as a crewman in Starfleet had honed his already impressive physique, matched by that of his sister. On Delta IV, physical and mental abilities had evolved for thousands of years longer than most races in the known universe. The empathic and pheromone systems had evolved alongside the Deltan emotional intelligence. The result was the naturally calm, balanced Deltan attitude, which made them appear older and wiser than their years would suggest.

*Aabin* had sat himself down next to his sister and stared out across the pool, the sunlight from the turquoise sky sparkled across the rippling water like diamonds. The sun had warmed his skin and the breeze



refreshed him. This was a moment that had not required words; they would only fall short at a time like this. Deltans liked the company of other Deltans; the enriched emotional experience was reassuring.

*Aabin* had packed his jumpsuits and boots that morning: a sign that he was going to return to Seyann for a shuttle back to Starfleet. His climate knowledge was needed again and the *Grissom* had requested him.

As *Aabin* had regarded *Li-Eth*, he had noticed a tear on her face. The two then embraced and shared their grief at parting, the pain of separation beyond quelling by even the hope of later reunion. *Aabin* had known he would have to experience the sadness of his parents later at the house, when *Beleah* - his mother- finished preparing the traditional goo-Tara'eh 'meal of parting'. This final meal with his family would be the final act in a ritual begun the evening before. *Aabin's* father, *Lor'tu*, would help *Aabin* with his case to the Transporter pad at Chin'aila.

That time with his sister would be the most important time for *Aabin*. She had been his bedrock for so long, his confidante and his friend. Even the clearest communication channel would be a poor substitute. For now, here on the treadmill, he would enjoy the vivid memory of that last morning in paradise, the warm sun comforting him under the bluest sky with the sister he would miss the most.

*Aabin* smiled to himself and drifted once again to that sunny morning on Delta IV..

Suddenly he lost his momentum and fell backward on the treadmill.

But he didn't fall far. Strong arms caught him as he tumbled and he turned to find himself looking into the beaming smile of *Christopher Chattman*.

"Whoa there *Aabin*, you have to concentrate on the old treadmill, don't let your thoughts wander too much."

*Aabin* felt his pheromones surge at the physical contact, enhanced by his memories of home, and he reached out to disentangle himself from *Chattman's* grip with unfortunate results.

As his hands touched *Chattman's* bare arms to pull away, his pheromones raged, exacerbated by the closeness of *Chattman* and his body heat. *Chattman's* smile turned into a look of surprise and then shock, as the rush of pheromones from *Aabin* to himself overwhelmed his body. He



fell backward now, landing on the cushioned floor with a thud.

*Aabin* stood looking down at him, afraid to help for fear of making the situation worse with his touch. *Ensign Wood*, working out on a rowing machine just opposite, had witnessed the incident and ran to assist *Chattman*.

*Chattman* sat up with *Wood*'s assistance, "Thanks *Rachel*, I'm fine, just got a bit of a shock."

*Wood* helped *Chattman* to his feet, "Well, my old man always said it was 'hard to kill a bad thing'" she teased.

"Only my pride is hurt *Rachel*, but thanks anyway," said *Chattman*, dusting himself off. He looked over at *Aabin* who sat huddling himself on the treadmill, the poor kid looked upset.

*Chattman* gestured to *Wood* to leave them be and made his way over to *Aabin*, who almost murmured to himself, "*Lieutenant*, I am so, so sorry, that has never happened before, I was lost in thoughts of home, I didn't mean to offend.."

*Chattman* sat down on the treadmill beside *Aabin*, "Don't worry about it *Aabin*, you stumbled, I caught you, end of story."

*Aabin* turned to look at *Chattman*, and *Chattman* was surprised at the intensity of his dark eyes.

"Forgive me, again I apologise," he held *Chattman*'s gaze.

Now *Chattman* found he was again disorientated as he found himself lost in those dark eyes, in that handsome face, in...

"...Ok then, let's hit the showers and then you and I need to have a talk about a place called Cinera base," *Chattman* said and stood up rapidly.

Fifteen minutes later, both *Aabin* and *Chattman* sat in the Deck 1 Mess Hall, sipping on sparkling water.

"No *Lieutenant*, I have never heard of this 'Cinera Base' but that does not mean that my Government has not sanctioned off world research. We do have research outposts on our two moons, Seyann and Cinera 'proper', where we interact with other species, but I'm not aware of anything further out." He then leaned forward and lowered his voice in a conspiratorial manner, "of course, it *could* be 'classified' which makes it all the more



intriguing. I would welcome the opportunity to participate in any landing party visiting 'Cinera Base'.

*Chattman* also leant forward, "Thank you, *Aabin*, and please, call me *Christopher*. There's no need to be formal off duty."

*Aabin* gave *Chattman* a hesitant smile. *Chattman* smiled back, again drawn into the handsome face.

How long they stared at each other seemed irrelevant, as they just sat there. *Aabin* felt his pheromones rush again as he looked at *Chattman* and took in his pleasing features. He felt comfortable and relaxed. *Chattman* was still smiling at him, so he reached out and laid his hand on *Chattman's*. There was a jolt of almost electrical intensity and *Aabin* felt his mind reach out to *Chattman's* and sensed him reaching back. *Aabin* felt himself give in to the sensations, but then remembered his oath of celibacy and abruptly removed his hand. *Chattman* and *Aabin* both exhaled and seemed to recover from their reverie.

*Chattman* now seemed embarrassed; he looked around and noticed some cadets whispering to themselves at a table opposite.

"*Aabin*, I think I'd better be clear, I'm not 'that way' inclined if you take my meaning," he said, flushing as he spoke.

*Aabin* nodded. "Of course, Lieu.. *Christopher*, I never presumed as such. Again, I apologise for my behaviour."

*Chattman* straightened his off duty shirt, stood and turned to go. "I'm glad we understand each other, *Aabin*. Be ready to take part in the landing party when we arrive at Cinera Base."

*Chattman* turned and left the Mess Hall. He really should put in a call to *Danielle Hunter* and let her know how much he had enjoyed their recent assignation. That Deltan kid was really messing with his mind. Maybe Deltans were more dangerous than they looked.

## EPSILON MYNOS SYSTEM, CINERA BASE

Further across the sector, the thoughts of how dangerous a Deltan could be were foremost on the mind of *Clive Saunders*. *Saunders* turned his head painfully to the left, straining against the restraint at his neck,



squinting at the light in the laboratory through bruised and swollen eyelids. He mentally checked himself from head to toe. A haze of red covered the vision in his left eye; he was obviously haemorrhaging in the cavity.

He was lying supine on a clinical examination table, naked and restrained at the neck, arms, legs and waist. His left arm was broken, he could feel the shaft of his femur protruding through his leg where he had been beaten earlier and he could feel a sticky substance at the back of his neck and on his hair, obviously blood. He had difficulty breathing through his nose, so he figured that too was broken. 'Physician, heal thyself' was a mantra that was not going to help him now. That Deltan bastard had been pretty thorough in his systematic beating of *Saunders* when he had struggled against his captors. He heard the portal open again and the Deltan was there again. He heard the cold voice speak.

"*Dr. Saunders*, welcome back to the land of the living, are you prepared, at last, to be cooperative?" The Deltan moved closer and looked down at *Clive*, smiling with a thin smile, "Your colleagues were far more cooperative, it is just a pity they were so... 'fragile'."

He traced a finger down *Clive's* abdomen and *Clive* flinched.

"ou astard," *Clive* tried to articulate, but his jaw wouldn't move as he willed it to, it too must be fractured "wher ar *Tawnnny* n *Tara*?"

The Deltan walked away, *Clive* strained his head to keep him in his line of vision as he began to enter data at a workstation.

"I'm afraid, as I said, your colleagues were less than resilient, and are dead."

*Clive* pulled with all his remaining strength against the restraints and let out an inhuman scream. The Deltan ignored him completely and continued at his workstation. *Clive* sobbed; he could not believe that *Tawney* and *Tara* were dead. Only yesterday they were happily chatting about their search for the Aldean civilisation. The restraints held him tight, he could not move, he let himself fall back to recover his strength.

The Deltan finished what he was doing and came back toward him, "so now, *Dr. Saunders*, we will have a little more cooperation, yes? After all, as they say 'Resistance is Futile' and with that the Deltan laid his hands on *Clive's* bare abdomen and the pain began again.



## USS GRISSOM (NCC -638)

*Esteban* stood on the main shuttle bay turntable on deck 3, adjacent to the new Von Braun type shuttlecraft, which he had piloted aboard from Starbase 67 yesterday. Most of the crew were in attendance, apart from those on duty in the core areas of engineering and the bridge. The group of fifty or so crewmembers stretched back in the direction of cargo bay 4. *Esteban* murmured to *Chattman* who stood beside him, "Okay *Chattman*, this was your idea, so let's get this over with."

*Chattman* duly signalled the watch officer who piped the attention signal, bringing the buzz of conversation to an end. *Chattman* spoke when silence descended,

"Okay people, welcome to the Shuttlebay, and without any further ado, I hand you over to our *Captain*."

*Esteban* stepped forward. "Thank you, *Lieutenant*, and thank you for organising this 'Morale Day'."

He climbed up the side entrance steps of the shuttlecraft to ensure he could be seen and heard.

"It is traditional aboard starships to name our shuttles after people or events of significance or import. As you will know *Virgil Ivan Grissom*, more widely known as *Gus Grissom*, was one of the original NASA Project Mercury astronauts and a United States Air Force pilot. He was the second American to fly in space. *Grissom* was killed along with fellow astronauts *Ed White* and *Roger Chaffee* during a training exercise and pre-launch test for the Apollo 1 mission at the Kennedy Space Centre. He was a recipient of the Distinguished Flying Cross and, posthumously, the Congressional Space Medal of Honour. For those of you who are aboard a while, you will know our shuttles are named for those noble starfarers who perished in their missions, such as our third shuttle, '*Scobee*', named after the leader of the doomed Challenger mission. *Chaffee*, *White* and *Scobee* were all astronauts who died in tragic circumstance while furthering the exploration of space. In continuing this tradition, and in honouring the noble men and women who have died in these circumstances, the new shuttle will be named after *Sharon Christa Corrigan McAuliffe*."

*Esteban* raised the bottle of champagne he held in his hand and smashed it soundly on the shuttlecraft hull.



"I name this ship '*McAuliffe*', and may the road always rise up to meet you."

The shuttlebay erupted into shouts of joy and thunderous applause. The crew began to disperse into smaller groups, talking among themselves.

*Esteban* turned to *Chattman* and *Solak*, who stood at the bottom of the steps, "Well done *Chattman*, this has certainly given morale a buzz. It's been a good day all round." *Chattman* smiled in acknowledgement and left to join the general melee.

"We will shortly be arriving at Cineria Base *Captain*," ventured *Solak*, "it should be a routine enquiry. The Deltans usually prove helpful in most matters, if they know anything about the location of *Dr. Saunders*, they will endeavour to aid us."

"Yes *Commander*," replied *Esteban*, "I'm not anticipating any problems. I've read the profile on *Saunders*. Bit of a cowboy by all accounts. He was part of the Genesis Project team until he had a falling out with Starfleet, so he's probably just proving he's a maverick, making us come to him rather than rendezvousing with *Grissom*."

*Solak* looked at *Esteban* impassively, "I too, have read his psychological profile, and regardless of his affinity for ancient earth western fiction, I likewise feel he may prove.. difficult."

*Esteban* began to walk, "*Commander*, I'm about to take dinner in my quarters. If you would care to join me, we can discuss *Saunders* in more depth."

*Solak* nodded. "That would be acceptable, *Captain*, we may be able to gain more insight into his character."

Together they exited the main shuttlebay.

## PLANET PACIFICA

*Michael Liebmann* stood on his office balcony, looking out over the expanse of the blue sea as the sun began its inexorable descent in the sky. It was a beautiful vista, but not one he could enjoy, preoccupied as he was with the delay in the arrival of the *USS Grissom* to collect him for the Genesis mission. At first he had been excited about the mission and had packed hastily, throwing instrumentation and clothing into cases



haphazardly; but now that the *Grissom* was delayed, he had unpacked and repacked methodically, and his keen razor sharp mind had begun calculating. Genesis was going to be the 'next big thing' and he was determined that his name was going to be right up there. *Carol Marcus* may have dreamt up the project, but he, and he alone, was going to put it on the map. There was sufficient distraction in the Galaxy with all the rumblings with the Klingons, and *Kirk's* latest exploits, to ensure that he had the opportunity to snatch this right out of *Marcus's* hands.

But he had other considerations more pressing, such as his own comfort. The sun finally sank beneath the waves and he walked back into his office. He could smell something cooking from the living quarters of the old building downstairs, which meant that the 'maid of all work' *Natille*, was back from her trip to the mainland. This old temple building had been a ruin on this deserted islet when he had discovered it about two years ago. *Harry Morrow* had ensured that Starfleet provided the necessary funding to make it just as *Liebmann* wanted. Oh yes, *Harry* boy owed *Liebmann* more than a few favours. He had operated creatively within the Prime Directive on more than one world for Starfleet, on more than one occasion.

As he dressed for dinner, *Liebmann* continued along his train of thought about his own comfort. The Oberth vessels were notoriously small, and he had no intention of sharing a stateroom with any other individual or being. He had already told *Harry Morrow* as much when *Morrow* had communicated with him to advise of *Grissom's* sidetrip to collect *Saunders*. *Liebmann* knew of *Saunders*, but had never met him. He would have to assess him as a potential threat when they did finally meet. So, that was his accomodation sorted.

Now, whether or not to bring *M'Pursong*? Leaving her here meant that everything would run like clockwork and that all would be ship shape when he returned from the Mutara Sector. However, how long the initial mission would take was an unknown, and he did not like the idea of having to cater for his own needs when he was shipboard. *M'Pursong* could deliver his meals to his quarters, take notes, ensure he had what he needed from ships stores. Yes, yes, perhaps he would take *M'Pursong* along afterall.



Happy with his decision, *Liebmann* finished dressing and made his way down the stairwell to the lower level. He could smell some ronta roast and salivated at the thoughts of the meal to come. As he entered the dining room, *M'Pursong* greeted him with a bow of her head, "Greetings, *Dr. Liebmann*, I believe you will enjoy *Natille's* repast this evening. I also have a complete dossier on *Clive Saunders* and *David Marcus*, as per your request."

*Liebmann* smiled to himself. "Excellent, *M'Pursong*, please, please, sit with me and we can discuss both gentlemen over our meal."

*M'Pursong* sat opposite him, and the long night began.

## USS *GRISSOM* (NCC -638)

*Rebecca Sato* sat opposite *Dr. S'Raazh* in her office in sickbay. The Doctor sat with her Pomeranian canine *Muggle* on her lap, petting him as he sat there, enjoying her attention. The lights were low in the office area and Mozart's Clarinet Concerto played softly in the background, a reflection of the Andorian's love of classical music.

"No, *Becky*, I don't tend to think of my makeshift office as small, merely 'bijou'," laughed *S'Raazh*. "Now, as to your physical today, yes, I can confirm you are well, in fact you have never been better. You are pregnant."

*Rebecca's* face conveyed her surprise to *S'Raazh* who continued, "in fact you are nine weeks pregnant and in very good physical condition."

*Rebecca* slumped back in her chair, her face a mixture of confusion and happiness.

"Our last break together, when *Bobby* was called back to the *Excelsior*, that must be, that **has** to be it. This is a terrible time for us both career wise, we never planned on starting a family at this stage, but... but, I couldn't be happier," and *Rebecca's* face broke into a broad smile.

*S'Raazh* put *Muggle* on the table and leaned forward to take *Rebecca Sato's* hand.

"You may not have noticed because we have been busy since we embarked on our voyage to Starbase 67. I would



advise that you might perhaps keep this to yourself until you reach your first trimester, but of course, your husband will be delighted to know.”

Rebecca nodded in agreement, “I know *Bobby* will be thrilled, but I won’t be able to contact him until *Pacifica*, darn it. The sooner we get there the better!”

Shortly after *Sato* left sickbay, *Kara McLoughlin* entered. “I’m here to take *Muggle* for his walk, *Dr. S’Raazh*,” said *Kara*.

*S’Raazh* looked at *Kara* from head to toe, giving her a quick once over. She noted bags under *Kara’s* eyes, limp hair, dry lips, pallor, and a slight slouch to her stance, definite signs that she was exhausted. Making an issue of finding *Muggle’s* leash gave *S’Raazh* the opportunity to engage in conversation.

“You have not slept *Kara*, do the nightmares persist?”

*Kara* had told the Doctor of her recurring nightmare since the battle of the *Mutara Nebula* when she had had her physical yesterday. *Kara* slumped down in the chair so recently occupied by *Rebecca Sato* and rubbed her eyes,

“I’d be a lot better if you would give me a sedative Doc, then I could sidestep the nightmares.”

*S’Raazh* handed *Muggle* to *Kara* and lifted *Kara’s* chin with her hand to look into her eyes.

“I prescribe exercise, young Lady, and to talk to someone, me, a friend, anyone. This nightmare will not be overcome by escaping to the arms of *Morpheus* with a sedative. Now go on, get walking, and you know where I am if you need to talk.”

As *Kara* and *Muggle* exited sickbay, *S’Raazh* went to her computer terminal and looked at the record on the screen. Scrolling down the page, she stopped at an entry on *Kara McLoughlin’s* family:

*Parents Kate and Michael McLoughlin were lost in action aboard Starfleet Monitoring Station Epsilon 9 in 2271, which was destroyed during the V’Ger incident. McLoughlin and twin brother raised by grandparents...*

The file continued on. *S’Raazh* read about behavioural problems and a disciplinary infraction in *Kara’s* first year at *Starfleet Academy* which had seen her held back during her training. This young woman certainly had many issues. *S’Raazh* sighed and went to talk to her



colleague *Dr. Seipeál*, excusing herself for a momentary break. She exited sickbay and made her way toward the main corridor on deck 4 where *Kara* liked to walk *Muggle*. Perhaps she would walk for a time with them today, and talk, or maybe just listen. *S'Raazh* sighed, how often she had argued as to the need for counsellors aboard Starships. But nobody listened.

A few hours later, *Lars Thorsen* stood in front of the viewer in the main conference room, briefing *Esteban*, *Solak*, *Hewson*, *Thorsen*, *S'Raazh* and *Ottair* on the Deltan research colony, 'Cinera Base'.

"The base is on an unnamed asteroid which the Deltans renamed 'Cinera' after one of the moons of Delta Four. After much digging around, and clearance given by *Admiral Morrow* at your request *Captain*, I have discovered that the base construction was assisted by Starfleet, so the layout and schematics are similar to a Federation Tactical Asteroid Base..."

"But who in Starfleet would have ordered the assistance on this project, Deltan colonies are not the norm, nest-ce-pas? I find this encroyable!" interrupted *Ottair*, before *Thorsen* could continue.

*Esteban* shifted uncomfortably in his chair, "I'm in agreement with *Commander Ottair*, *Thor*, any clues as to who authorised this?"

"Sir, I believe the order came from *Grand Admiral Stephen Turner*, but due to the current difficulties of the *Enterprise* in the Gamma Trianguli system, I have been unable to contact any of his staff," said *Thorsen*, "but, I am trying."

*Thorsen* continued with his presentation and began to go into the technical data and schematics of the Asteroid Base. *Ottair* and *Hewson* input as required and *Esteban*, in an unusual manner for him, felt his mind begin to drift.

This order of *Grand Admiral Stephen Turner's* to assist the Deltans' with a hush-hush project was just the type of shenanigans that rattled *Esteban's* cage. He and a few of his likeminded friends and colleagues watched for irregularities such as these, and in effect, kept each other informed of the politics from which they were so far removed at the front line. Yes, regardless of the secrecy of the Genesis Mission, *Esteban* was going to have to talk to his friends within the 'group of four'. Between himself, *Jeff*, *Alex* and *Lawrence*, they might be



able to get to the bottom of what was going on within Starfleet.

A hail from *Christopher Chattman* interrupted the ongoing discussion.

"Bridge to *Captain Esteban*, we are entering the Epsilon Mynos system."

"We're on our way *Chattman*," replied *Esteban*. "Thank you *Thorsen*, your research should prove invaluable, now let's move."

As the *USS Grissom* entered the Epsilon Mynos system and dropped from Warp, the crew were ready for action and the ship was already on Yellow alert. *Esteban* sat in the centre seat; *Solak*, *Chattman*, *Hewson*, *Jata* and *Sato* were all at their stations and *Dr. S'Raazh* stood at the rail behind the *Captain's* seat whilst *Thorsen* positioned himself at the science console adjacent to *Solak*. All eyes were focused on the forward viewer.

*Esteban* spoke, "secure from warp speed *Lieutenant Sato*. *Hewson*, maintain Yellow alert until we can ascertain the situation."

Despite his best efforts, *Chattman* had been unable to raise Cinera Base on any channel and *Esteban* was jumpy. The bridge door slid open with its usual swishing noise and *Commander Stephanie Ottair* joined *Dr. S'Raazh* at the rail.

"Captain, long-range sensors are detecting another vessel between us and Cinera Base," said *Solak*, "it is a Deltan vessel, Serene Wind Class, approximately two thousand kilometres out from the asteroid housing the base. Scans are being hampered by a radiation leak from the warp core. The vessel is adrift and appears to have suffered damage. I shall endeavour to compensate for the radiation."

*Esteban* rose from his seat and made his way to the science station, "take us in slowly *Lieutenant Sato*, *Thor* what have you got for me on the Serene Wind Class?"

He moved to look at *Thorsen's* console. *Thorsen* stood back and showed the screen to *Esteban*, and *Hewson*, who had moved to join them.

"The vessels of the Serene Wind Class are normally used for diplomatic missions by members of the Federation as well as quite a large percentage being used as luxury liners. It's warp nacelle design harkens back to older, Vulcan annular warp drive systems, with the large circular warp field coil housing set back from the sleek



main hull by a pair of large booms and although the two-nacelle system is a Federation standard, Deltan shipwrights prefer this system on non-Starfleet vessels of their species, having refined the technology and weighed in favour of it for aesthetic reasons as well.”

*Thorsen* began to point out sections on the screen with his finger, “at the end of the boom structure is a large pod that contains the starships impulse drive units and additional engineering sections, and a long turboshaft in each boom connects the pod to the rest of the vessel. A common misconception among ship engineering enthusiasts is that the bridge sits atop the sail tower of the *Serene Wind*, but this is not the case, the bridge room is actually at the base of the sail tower and just forward of it, while the tower itself is both sensory array and the location of a large sail bridge and conference area that is used by diplomatic personnel in ships of the *Serene Wind* class that are utilized for this function.”

*Hewson* whistled to himself, “she sure is a beauty. No weapons capability, a ship of peace and beauty.”

“I’ll worry about the aesthetics later Lieutenant,” chided *Esteban* as he returned to look at the forward viewer.

*Solak* turned in his chair, “Sir, I have managed to penetrate the radiation effect on sensors. I have detected two life forms aboard the vessel, both are Klingon, both are fading.”

Shock reverberated across the bridge crew, with the exception of the unreadable *Thorsen* and the Vulcan, *Solak*.

*Esteban* spun around.

“RED ALERT, raise shields, all crews to battle stations!”

He made his way to the centre seat as the red alert klaxon sounded ship wide. The flurry of activity throughout the *Grissom* was amazing, as the crew ran to their stations with a fluid but practiced movement.

“*Hewson*, scan for cloaked Klingon Ships, we might have a Bird of Prey out there,” *Esteban* spoke over the Klaxon.

“All short and long range sensors are proving negative Captain,” replied *Hewson*, “but I suggest we keep a safe distance from the *Serene Wind* until we can run more scans.



*Esteban* turned to communications, "*Chattman*, contact Starfleet Command and inform *Admiral Morrow* directly of our situation. *Sato*, full stop and hold position, somebody turn off that damn Klaxon but maintain RED ALERT. *Solak*, identify the location of those Klingons so we can beam them aboard."

"The radiation leak from the warp core precludes transporting the Klingons to *Grissom* Sir," advised *Solak*. "Additionally, we have no way of knowing how injured they are, their life signs are fading fast."

*Esteban* responded instantly "*Thorsen*, get a team together, secure that ship, and get me those Klingons ASAP."

*Chattman* interrupted, "Sir, incoming transmission from *Admiral Morrow* wanting to speak to you immediately."

"On screen *Chattman*," said *Esteban* as he moved to face the main bridge viewer. The image of *Admiral Harry Morrow* appeared on the screen, he looked haggard and tired.

"What is the situation as regards the Klingon presence, Captain?"

"Admiral, we are sending a security ops team to recover the two Klingons, apparently they are alive, but barely. Our sensors show no other vessels in the area, but we are on Red Alert," said *Esteban*.

*Morrow* frowned, "this isn't good, *Jonathan*, *Admiral Kirk* and his crew have just destroyed a secret Klingon military installation in a wormhole in the Gamma Trianguli system and *Emperor Kahless* is screaming for war with the Federation. *Grand Admiral Turner* advises it may just be a skirmish, but we are, as of now, on a war footing."

Shock reverberated around the bridge for the second time in as many minutes as *Morrow* continued, "*Grissom* is to secure the Klingons, question them and find out what the hell they have to do with the Deltans. You are also to secure Cinera Base and find out where *Dr. Saunders* is. His involvement in the *Carol Marcus* Project means he shouldn't fall into enemy hands."

*Morrow* looked at *Esteban* knowingly, not mentioning Project Genesis in front of the other crewmembers.

*Esteban* stood to attention.

"Orders received Sir, and completely understood."

*Morrow* acknowledged this with a nod, "*Morrow* out." The screen returned to the view of the Deltan vessel. *Esteban* spoke as he walked back to *Solak*'s science



station, "*Jata*, as soon as *Thorsen's* shuttle is away, set course for the Cinera Base asteroid. *Sato*, get us within transporter range. Commander, the Doctor and Lieutenant *Hewson* are to accompany you to Cinera Base. Take Specialist *Aabin* along. Get prepped, I'll meet you in the transporter room in 10 minutes."

*SoTak* nodded and turned to leave, the Doctor and *Hewson* followed behind.

*Kara McLoughlin* was tense and agitated. The red alert klaxon had made her jump out of her skin. The sound made her immediately think of the ambush of the *Enterprise* by *Khan* and the death of *Peter Preston*. She found she was shaking and could not stop herself.

The other engineering crew stood at their posts, awaiting further orders. Sweat was visible on several of their brows. The ship wide communication signal sounded and was followed by the voice of *J.T. Esteban*.

"This is the Captain speaking. Starfleet Command has informed us that the *Klingon Empire* has threatened war on the United Federation of Planets. As of this moment, you are to consider yourself on a war footing. Maintain your posts and await further orders. *Esteban* out."

The previous nervous silence was broken by a burst of conversation as the Engineering crew began to talk excitedly and nervously about *Esteban's* announcement. In the midst of this *Commander Stephanie Ottair* swept into main Engineering. The chatter ended instantaneously.

*Ottair* looked at the assembled engineering team one by one.

"You people have work to do, what are you waiting for, move it!"

"Thank you *Chattman*" said *Esteban* as he finished his ship wide announcement.

"No problem Sir. Lieutenant *Thorsen* confirms his shuttle is enroute to the Deltan vessel," replied *Chattman*.

*Esteban* tapped *Chattman* on the back, "good, well done all, keep in touch with him at all times on an open channel and keep trying to raise Cinera Base."

*Esteban* turned to view the asteroid containing the base as they neared it, yes, it had definite Starfleet



involvement, right down to the superstructure by the looks of things.

"Sir," interrupted *Chattman*, "I have a transmission coming in from Cinera Base, very weak, but I can boost it."

"Do so *Chattman*, put it on viewer," said *Esteban* as he turned to look.

The visage of a handsome Deltan male appeared, he looked to be middle aged, but with Deltans you could never tell. He was clad in a purple sash of some description and appeared to be speaking from an operations level. He bowed his baldhead and spoke.

"Starship *Grissom*, we are receiving your hail. I am *Terlis* of Delta IV. We are most pleased to see you."

*Esteban* moved nearer to the viewer.

"I am *Captain Jonathan T. Esteban*, Commanding Officer of the *Grissom*. We are in this system looking for *Dr. Clive Saunders*, who was last known to be heading for your base. However, we have discovered a drifting Deltan vessel with Klingons aboard, and you have not answered our hails. Can you explain any of this?"

*Terlis* joined his hands together as if in prayer, bowed his head and spoke in a melodious voice.

"Captain *Esteban*, our support vessel was stolen one solar month ago by a group of Scavenging Pirates, among whom were Klingons, Gorn, Orions and others, there was little we could do to stop them. We have no weapons. They took much of our supplies, many of our women and children and injured many of our men. We attempted to halt them with a makeshift repulsor blast from our communications array, but it was destroyed and they escaped. We had only finished temporary repairs to the array when we noticed your vessel approaching. Perhaps you can tell us if our kindred are alive and well on the *Serene Wind* vessel?"

"We have dispatched a shuttle to establish the situation on board the vessel. In the interim, did you meet *Dr. Saunders*?" asked *Esteban*.

"No vessel apart from the brigands came here Captain, we are a long way out, and this is a dangerous area. Unfortunately, perhaps your *Dr. Saunders* may have fallen prey to these villains. But I digress, Captain, we have wounded, we have no supplies, we need maintenance. May we beg of you your aid in this troubled time?"

"Transmit landing coordinates and we will dispatch a landing party to assess your need. *Grissom* out." *Esteban*



signalled for *Chattman* to close the channel with a gesture of his hand.

“Commander *Solak*, did you get all that?” he asked.

In the Transporter room *Solak*, *Hewson* and *Dr. S’Raazh* had been watching the Deltan on a viewer, “yes Captain, his explanation is plausible and would explain the Klingon presence.”

*S’Raazh* actually snarled, “I’d like to hear the Klingons side of the story. Still, they do have wounded and we can help”.

*Esteban* joined Specialist *Aabin* enroute to the Transporter room. As they walked together he said, “Specialist, I’m trusting you can help us to help your people, whilst helping to establish what the hell they are doing out here.”

“Sir, I will certainly endeavour to do my best,” replied *Aabin* and then remained silent.

*Esteban* entered the Transporter room and beheld *Dr. S’Raazh*.

“What the hell are you playing at Doctor, what is that mutt doing here?”

*Dr. S’Raazh* held *Muggle* tighter in her arms.

“Captain, *Muggle* is here for a very specific reason. No offence intended *Aabin*, but Deltan physiology has a strong effect on humans, and an even stronger effect on Andorians, given our warrior like nature. The presence of a pet cat or dog has been shown to lower stress levels, adrenaline levels and maintains a healthy diastolic and systolic blood pressure. *Muggle* is here to protect the away team from an entire colony of Deltans. Whilst Specialist *Aabin* and *Solak* are protected, or given some protection by their very race, *Lieutenant Hewson* and myself are not so fortunate.”

Before *Esteban* could reply, *Solak* spoke “Captain, the Doctor is correct, the presence of the canine may offer some limited protection, but will protect her to some extent”.

*Esteban* turned to *Rachel Woods* at the Transporter console, “Wood, four and a half to beam down”.

## DELTAN SERENE WIND CLASS VESSEL



The shuttle named '*Chaffee*' finished her docking manoeuvre in the main shuttle bay at the base of the pod section of the Deltan vessel.

*Thorsen* turned to his team.

"You have your orders as discussed: Alpha Team, secure the bridge at the base of the sail tower. You have the schematic. Download the ships log and transmit directly to *Grissom*.

Beta Team, make your way to main engineering and restore power.

Omega, you and *Doctor Seipeál* are with me. The Klingons are on Deck C, near the crew quarters. Let's get them stabilised and questioned ASAP."

With that, *Thorsen* hit the ramp release.

"Go, go, go!" and the teams sped into the darkness of the docking bay, illuminated only by their torches and the flickering emergency lighting.

## CINERA BASE

The landing party materialised in a cavernous hangar, full of packing crates, storage containers and space tugs, the main hangar of the base. Two cargo tugs and an anti-gravity lifter stood parked in an alcove to the right of the landing party and behind them, the vast emptiness of space stood separated from them by the thin curtain of a force screen.

The lighting was intensely bright. *Hewson* surveyed their surroundings with a quick glance, "doesn't look like brigands ran through here, none of the packing crates are disturbed and those tugs are neatly parked, no carbon scoring from any hostile fire either. This is the first point of entry to the base for any major force."

"I concur, *Mr. Hewson*," said *Solak* as he drew his phaser, "set phasers for stun."

There was a noise of screeching and a set of double heavy-duty doors began to open with a rhythmic thud. The landing party turned to face the doors as *Terlis* entered flanked by four other Deltans, all of whom were dressed in the same type of garment as *Terlis*, a combination of a sash and a sarong. Despite the bright colours of their raiment, the other Deltans, three men and a woman, kept their heads lowered and looked at the floor. *Terlis* moved forward and held his hand in the traditional Vulcan salute.



"Welcome Commander *Solak*, *Dr. S'Raazh* and *Mr. Hewson* and a special welcome to *Aabin*, son of *Lor'tu* and *Belea*, to Ciner Base."

*Solak* raised an eyebrow, "indeed *Terlis*, and how do you know our nomenclature?"

*Aabin* stepped forward, a pained look on his face, "because he read my mind Commander, he invaded my mind, I don't know how, but he violated me."

*Terlis* smiled with pursed lips then turned to *Aabin*, "as you violated this *Chattman* creature without his permission? Do not seek to lecture this one on violation. We are much the same you and I."

*Aabin* flushed but did not speak. *S'Raazh* placed *Muggle* on the floor and began to scan the area with her medical tricorder.

"Commander *Solak*, the pheromone levels in this vicinity, coming from *Terlis*, are off the scale, these Deltans are petrified with fear, he's exuding fear."

*Aabin* stumbled forward as if struck, "fear and hate, Doctor, fear and hate, they hate him."

"Cease this now, *Terlis*," said *Solak* impassively, "or we will open fire."

*Terlis* laughed and raised a hand in *Hewson's* direction.

"I must apologise Commander, but you will do no such thing, you will yield to my will, or you will die."

*Hewson* convulsed at the gesture and fell to the floor. *S'Raazh* was at his side within seconds, she checked for a pulse but looked up wide-eyed.

"*Solak*, he's dead!"

As she said this, *Aabin* fell to his knees, clutching his head and screaming in pain, curling into the foetal position. *S'Raazh* looked from him to *Solak*, who stood with his hands hanging limply by his side. He was muttering incoherently and drooling as *Terlis* approached him.

"Yes Vulcan, try to resist, I have looked forward to a strong mind to challenge me, but you will succumb, just like the rest."

"Stop it, let them go!" yelled *S'Raazh* as she ran toward *Terlis*, swinging at him wildly. The Deltans behind *Terlis* remained immobile as with lightning speed, he grabbed *S'Raazh* by the neck, lifting her bodily from the floor.

"Oh Doctor, I'm afraid your friends on the *Grissom* cannot help you now, the ore in this asteroid will



prevent intense scanning and we have raised our shields. You and your landing party, are now mine.”

*S’Raazh* felt her cervical vertebrae crunch under her own body weight. She was helpless, and she didn’t even know why *Terlis* was doing this. She felt herself slipping into unconsciousness. It would all be over soon. Her last thought as she blacked out was simply, ‘Jonathan.’

## USS GRISSOM

*Christopher Chattman* listened intently to the progress reports from *Lars Thorsen’s* team as they progressed through the Deltan vessel. *Esteban* stood beside him.

“Any word from the landing party *Chattman*?” he enquired, clasping his hands behind his back to hide his impatient fidgeting.

“No sir, something is interfering with our communications.”

At the science station, *Ensign Brian Childers* turned his attention to his instrumentation.

“Sir, the asteroid seems to contain an alloy which is hampering our transmissions and scans, but it did not affect our Transporter beams earlier, most unusual.”

As *Esteban* made his way to *Childers*, the voice of *Chattman* rang out.

“Sir, *Lieutenant Thorsen* on channel, he says it’s urgent.”

*Chattman* put the transmission on bridge audio. The calm voice of *Lars Thorsen* came across the bridge speakers.

“Sir, *Thorsen*. We have the Klingons, get our people out of there, they are in deadly danger.”

*Esteban* whirled round, “Transporter room, get our people out of Cinera now!”

The voice of *Rachel Wood* came back, “Sir, I can’t, something’s blocking me.” *Childers* looked up from the science station, “Sir, they just raised shields.”

*Esteban* went straight to *Hewson’s* weapons console, “*Chattman*, I’m locking phasers on those bastards, I’m going to punch through those shields. Send repeated message to *Terlis*, ‘release Starfleet Landing Party or suffer the consequences’.”



## CINERA BASE

Vibrations rocked the hangar bay as the *Grissom* fired repeatedly on Cinera Base, impacting heavily on its shields. *Terlis*, holding *S’Raazh* in his grip as she lost consciousness, turned to one of the Deltans at his side.

“Go to the operations centre, tell our people there to divert life support from the holding pens to the shields, communicate to *Grissom* to cease fire or we will kill *all* of their landing party.”

Unnoticed in the midst of the struggle in the landing bay, a small black Pomeranian canine stood behind a packing crate. It didn’t like transporters and felt quite ill. It was looking forward to some exercise. What was the bald one doing to its owner? She seemed to feel sick too.

*Solak* remained an incoherent mess while *S’Raazh*, held high in the air by *Terlis*, lost consciousness. *Terlis* turned slowly to *Aabin*.

“Oh *Aabin*, do not worry, you shall be happy to serve me soon. You will hate me. But you will serve me. And you will be made to love me in all ways. Your life is now mine.”

Suddenly *Terlis* grimaced in pain and let out a shout. He looked down at his ankle to the source of the pain as the black canine, which belonged to the doctor, sank his fangs hard into his Achilles tendon. He kicked out and the canine flew across the floor, hitting a packing crate with a satisfactory thud and a yelp. *Terlis* smiled to himself, the black pest would be dealt with later. He turned again, straight into the phaser of Commander *Solak*, who shot him at point blank range. *Terlis* dissipated into atoms, *Solak* had taken time to change his phaser setting to kill, taking no risks. *Solak* then collapsed on top of the fallen body of *S’Raazh*. With *Terlis*’ death, the Deltans moved, running from the hangar. *Aabin* scrambled to his feet, reaching for *Hewson*’s communicator that lay near his body.

“*Grissom*, this is *Aabin*, please, please help us, help us.”



## USS GRISSOM

Five hours had passed and by Earth Standards, it was early in the morning. *Thorsen* and his team scoured the planetoid and found dozens of captives from many alien races, all in varying states of physical and mental deterioration. Among them they had discovered a severely wounded *Clive Saunders*.

*Thorsen* had found holding pens, vivisection laboratories, testing laboratories and rooms that had unknown use but looked frightening. His team also found the bodies of *Saunders'* companions *Tawney Anderson* and *Tara Chambers*. Both women had been brutally abused before death.

*Thorsen* stood before *Esteban* in the conference room. Captain's yeoman, *Arunie Fernando* moved slowly in the background, collecting the ships logs which *Esteban* had left for her to process. The young Sri-Lankan girl kept her eyes averted and her movements quiet, she had no wish to disturb the Captain at this terrible time. This entire situation was frightening her. Taking the logs, she nodded at *Esteban* who acknowledged her by catching her eye briefly, and then she took her leave.

"From what we can ascertain sir, the Deltans followed *Terlis* to this colony to examine ways to control or negate their pheromones, to make their off world travels easier for them. They were a 'cult' of sorts. The spokesperson for the Deltans, *Ryben*, says that Starfleet helped with this development, but he is unsure who or why. We are currently examining all the records from the installation, but this will take time. *Chattman* is poring through everything and noting any references to Starfleet."

"But what about the Klingons?" asked *Esteban* wearily.

*Thorsen* continued, "about six months after they arrived here, *Terlis* began to experiment on his own people, his mental powers seemed to grow following an experiment he carried out on himself. The Deltans tried to stop his work, but he effectively controlled them with little effort, adjusting their pheromone levels to make them docile. Twelve months ago, *Terlis* contacted the Klingons, asking for live specimens and promising a



biological weapon in return. The Klingons gave him prisoners from their penal world, Rura Pente. When he attempted to experiment on the Klingons who brought the prisoners to Cinera Base, they stole the Deltan vessel and attempted to escape.

“That is the type of fear he engendered, even in Klingons. The Klingons made good their escape, but according to *Ryben*, *Terlis* had booby-trapped the warpcore in case of just such an event. When the core leaked but did not breach, the vessel was not destroyed and the Klingons were left stranded and injured. The situation continued to get worse until the arrival of *Saunders*, which brought us into the equation. That concludes my report Sir.”

*Esteban* stood, his shoulders slumped, and Good Lord but he felt drained.

“Thank you *Thor*. Send this full report to *Admiral Morrow* immediately. When you have done that, copy the report to *Admiral McKnight* at Starfleet Command, *Captain Pierce* on the *Hathaway* and *Captain Styles* on the *Excelsior*. Encrypt it to them and make it ‘for their eyes only’ retinal lock.”

*Thorsen* flinched, “Sir? Is it wise to copy the report?”

*Esteban* looked at him. “You have your orders Lieutenant.”

*Thorsen* stood to attention. “Yes Sir.”

*Esteban* entered the overcrowded main sickbay. The Medical Staff had also established a secondary sickbay in the Deck 2 Gymnasium to look after the freed prisoners and injured Deltans. *S’Raazh* stood beside the unconscious body of *Clive Saunders*.

Turning to *Esteban* as he entered she said, “he’s fine, he’ll survive, I’ve operated and stabilised him”. She averted her eyes from *Esteban* and turned back to look again at *Saunders*. *Esteban* noticed the dark blue welts coming up on her neck, the cobalt base of her blood giving them their blue hue.

“*Vindi..*” he murmured.

She moved away from him. “Not here Jon, not now.”

He followed her to her office, “Muggle?”

She softened somewhat at that, “he’ll live, broken pelvis, but he’ll live. *Alex Whittaker*, the nurse



specialist looked after him. If it wasn't for that ball of fur..."

*Esteban* squeezed her hand and exited.

The scene in the Gymnasium was pandemonium, with injured bodies everywhere. *Esteban* entered and made his way to a screened off section, to be met by *Dr. Elizabeth Seipeál*.

"How is the Commander?" he enquired.

*Seipeál* shook her head, "I'm afraid not good, Captain. The Deltan effectively lobotomised his higher brain function, he now has no movement and he is falling into a vegetative state. How he managed to fire that phaser is beyond me."

*Esteban* moved past *Seipeál* to the trolley on which *Solak* lay.

"I can sense you, Captain. I am attempting to hold onto my higher function, but am failing. Captain, we Vulcans have a facet to our beings called a *Katra*, our pure mental being, our soul. My link to this has been severed, Captain, by *Terlis*. I have chosen to allow myself to die. I do not wish to be a shell. You must respect this as I respect you."

*Esteban* put his hand on *Solak's* arm, "Commander, I am so very, very sorry. I truly am."

*Esteban* felt his control slipping. *Solak* merely replied, "there is no time for sorrow Captain, you must complete your mission. Live long, and prosper."

*Esteban* brought the turbolift to a halt between decks and let out a cry of inhuman rage as he punched the walls repeatedly. He had lost two good men today. *Solak*, whom he had only just met, and *Paul Hewson*. Jesus, he had married *Hewson* to his partner *Mark* only two years ago. Now he would have to break the news of *Paul's* death to *Mark*, who was serving aboard the *U.S.S. Potemkin*.

Furthermore, he had evidence of seeming Starfleet involvement in some sort of potential biological weapons facility; two Klingons who were now effectively prisoners of war, given Kahless recent declaration; a bunch of aliens requiring medical and psychological help and a colony of bewildered Deltans, 136 at Thorsen's last count. God, he'd almost lost Vindi.



He restarted the turbolift; it was time for action, not reaction. The boys should be in receipt of *Thorsen's* report by now. He was prone to paranoia, he knew, but something very wrong was going on in Starfleet. Here, on the frontlines, things like this might get missed. But he was onto something, he was sure of that and darn it, he was going to pursue it.

## TO BE CONTINUED

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NEXT TIME ON STAR TREK GRISSOM: THE REPERCUSSIONS AND AFTERMATH OF THE HAPPENINGS AT CINERA BASE, AND ESTEBAN TURNS FOR HELP TO CAPTAINS' LAWRENCE STYLES, JEFFREY PIERCE AND ADMIRAL ALEXANDER MCKNIGHT. DON'T MISS **HOW LONG SHALL A MAN LIE IN THE GROUND ERE HE ROT?**

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# *Oderint dum Metuat*

**DEDICATED WITH THE GREATEST RESPECT AND IN LOVING MEMORY OF MAJEL BARRETT RODDENBERRY, WHO BOLDLY LED NURSING INTO SPACE**

Plot: Seán Paul Teeling & Melissa Wilson

Script: Seán Paul Teeling, Adrian Howard Jones & Melissa Wilson

Editors: Michael Liebmann & Melissa Wilson

### STAR TREK GRISSOM PRODUCTIONS ESPECIALLY THANK:

- ◆ Adrian Howard Jones
- ◆ Darren Rosetta
- ◆ Joseph Bonice
- ◆ Brad Hathaway
- ◆ Brian Childers
- ◆ Dan Wilson
- ◆ Jennifer Cole
- ◆ Jonathan Rofeta
- ◆ Michael Hudson
- ◆ Michael Liebmann
- ◆ Nick Cook
- ◆ Rob Caves
- ◆ Clive Saunders



