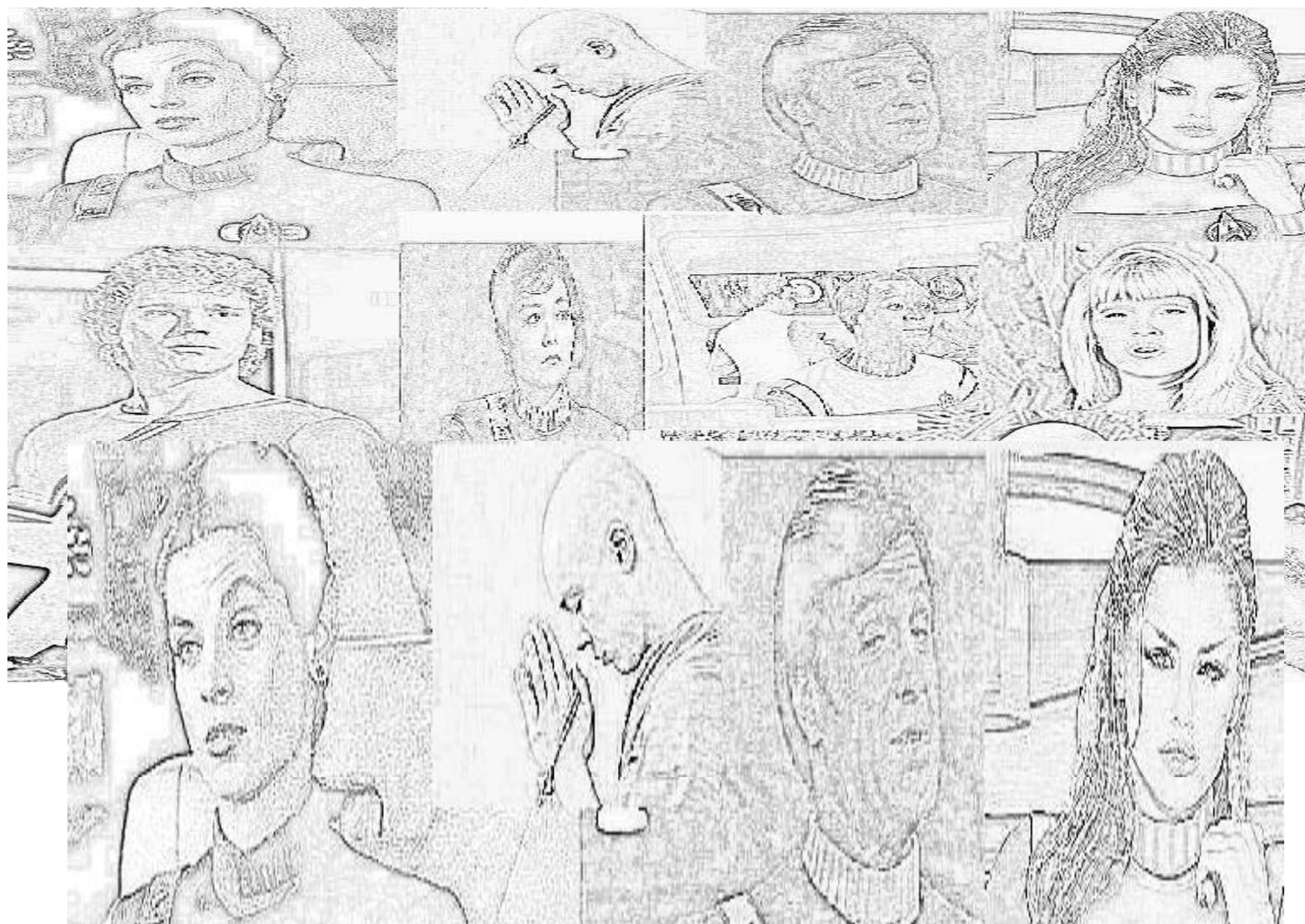


STAR TREK: *GRISSOM*

Actus humanus, Actus hominis



IN THE 23RD CENTURY

IT IS THE YEAR 2285. THERE IS UPHEAVAL IN THE ALPHA QUADRANT WITH NEWS OF THE BATTLE OF THE MUTARA NEBULA REACHING THE CITIZENS OF THE UNITED FEDERATION OF PLANETS.

CAPTAIN SPOCK IS DEAD. THE USS ENTERPRISE (NCC-1701) IS REASSIGNED TO THE GAMMA HYDRA SYSTEM AND THE KLINGONS ARE MAKING VEILED THREATS ALL ALONG THE BORDER WITH THE NEUTRAL ZONE.

IN THIS ATMOSPHERE OF PARANOIA AND SUSPICION, ONE SHIP, THE USS GRISSOM (NCC-638) IS ASSIGNED TO UNDERTAKE A MISSION OF THE UTMOST SECRECY. UNDER THE COMMAND OF CAPTAIN J.T. ESTEBAN, THE GRISSOM WILL UNDERTAKE THIS MISSION IN THE SPIRIT OF STARFLEET. NONE OF HER CREW SUSPECT IT WILL BE THEIR LAST MISSION....



Chapter III

Actus humanus, Actus hominis

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 arrives at Cinera Base, a Deltan research colony in the Epsilon Mynos system, in search of former Project Genesis Xenologist, Clive Saunders. What they find is a Deltan project supported by unknown figures within Starfleet, ostensibly looking for a 'control agent' for Deltan pheromones, but delving into development of biological weaponry. They also find 'Terlis' a Deltan who had developed incredible enhanced mental powers, who kills both Commander Solak, ships XO and Head of Security, Lieutenant Paul Hewson.

USS GRISSOM (NCC-638)

"Captain's log, stardate 8151.7, the Grissom remains at anchor at Cinera Base, in the Epsilon Mynos system. Following the tragic loss of Commander Solak, Commander Ottair is acting as my XO. She is overseeing repairs to the Deltan 'Serene Wind Class' vessel. I have asked her to make the appropriate adjustments to the crew schedules to ensure sciences and security continue to function smoothly. The two Klingon personnel who arrived from Rura Pente are currently in our brig, following medical attention. The



Grissom is also temporary home to 48 former prisoners of Terlis housed in our cargo bays, much to the displeasure of my Chief of Operations, Graav. We await the arrival of the U.S.S Tempest (NCC-1852), a Miranda class starship that will transport the former prisoners to Starbase 67, freeing Grissom to continue on her voyage to the Genesis Planet.

On a broader note, Starfleet command reports they have been contacted by Admiral James T.Kirk, who advises the recent Federation-Klingon conflict was orchestrated by the Excalbians, who engineered the entrapment of Organia and the Organians. The Excalbians and Organians have disappeared and the Federation and Klingon Empire are free to chart their own course.

The viewports from the staff briefing room looked out on to the asteroid that housed Cinera Base. From here, the myriad lights looked like a lattice of pearls, shining brightly against the dark hue of the minerals that composed the asteroid. Between the base and the asteroid, Commander *Stephanie Ottair*, newly appointed XO of the *Grissom*, observed the shuttles *Chaffee* and *McAuliffe* as they ferried large bulk supplies to the Deltan habitat area. She turned as she heard the door to the conference room open behind her, and saw Lieutenant Commander *Christopher Chattman*, Lieutenant *Lars Thorsen* and the Tellarite Operations Chief, Lieutenant *Graav* enter the room. *Ottair* overheard their animated conversation as they entered; they were talking about the latest exploits of *James T. Kirk* and the crew of the U.S.S. *Enterprise*. The trio quietened as she turned.

"Gentlemen, come in, I know you are busy and this will not take long." *Thorsen* stood at attention with his hands behind his back, *Chattman* shifted uneasily on his feet and *Graav* had the grumpy demeanour and stance typical of his race.

Ottair took six data pads from the conference table and handed one each to *Thorsen* and *Graav* and four to *Chattman*. She then perched herself on the edge of the table before continuing.

"Gentlemen, as acting XO I am making several required changes to the crew assignments, so as to ensure operational efficiencies continue without Commander *Solak* or Lieutenant *Hewson*."

Whilst *Graav* and *Chattman* exchanged a look of surprise at *Ottair's* coolness in regard to the recent murders of *Solak* and *Paul Hewson*, *Thorsen* did not even flinch. *Ottair* continued speaking.



“With the imminent arrival of the *Tempest*, it is time to concentrate on our future mission to *Pacifica*. *Thorsen*, you will continue to cover ship security as well as security ops until Lieutenant *Casas* arrives aboard the *Tempest* to assume Lieutenant *Hewson*’s duties. Your data pad contains all the reports you will need to bring him up to speed on inventories, etc, etc. You will also orientate him to the ship and crew.”

“Very good Commander. If I may, I’m required by the Captain on *Cinera Base*, but thereafter I will get straight to it.”

Ottair nodded in the affirmative and *Thorsen* quickly took his leave.

“Lieutenant *Graav*, I understand you would like to complain about your cargo bays being full. This will not be an issue with the transfer of our passengers to the *Tempest*. I can assure you that your bays will be yours again, and I am certain, if you have your way, ordered and pristine, by 20.00 this evening. Please ensure that the supplies and provisions utilised in the current scenario are catalogued and noted. You will get your chance to replenish them at *Pacifica*, liaise directly with the Starfleet facility there.” *Graav* grunted in affirmation. *Ottair* was an orderly being for a human, and a woman of her word. She had promised him a return to order and perfection and he was happy with that.

“Thank you Lieutenant, you may go about your business,” said *Ottair*, turning her attention to *Chattman*.

“Lieutenant Commander, the Captain has requested a new science officer, but until the post is filled, you will be covering this in an acting capacity.” Before

Ottair could continue *Chattman* interrupted, “you have got to be kidding me. That’s something I’m ill prepared for and the workload with all the preparation for *Genesis* is humungous. Don’t even go there.” He shifted uneasily on his feet. *Ottair* rose

calmly from her perch on the table and stood directly in front of *Chattman*, at 5’8 she was nearly as tall as he, so she had direct eye contact as she spoke.

“There must be some confusion Mr. *Chattman*, but I was under the impression that your rank was LIEUTENANT COMMANDER. If you are saying you are incapable of the responsibilities associated with that rank, then I am happy to demote you. Is that what you are saying?”

She looked *Chattman* directly in the eye. He held her gaze for a moment, and then looked at the floor.

“No, Sir, I apologise, it was an unseemly outburst, and I assure you it will not happen again.” He raised his head to stare



in her eyes. She noticed he seemed to be 'the old' confident *Chattman* again. *Ottair* was tough, but she knew when to be fair also. She turned her back on *Chattman* and gazed out the viewport again. "I'm glad we understand each other *Chattman*, and I know you will rise to the challenge of your new role.

Chattman thought about speaking but then held his tongue and left. She heard the door swish closed behind him. What was going on with *Chattman*? Most unusual behaviour on his part, he was normally a consummate professional.

In the three berth bunkroom she shared with her colleagues, *Kara McLoughlin* sat on the edge of her bunk, sipping a mug of tea, replicated Irish breakfast blend, similar, but not quite the tea her grandmother had given her in Dublin when she was a child. Opposite, sitting on her bunk brushing her long black hair and softly humming to herself, was Ensign *Rachel Wood*. In his bunk, facing *Kara's*, ensign *Brian Childers* lay reading the latest book from the batch of hardcopy novels he had purchased at Starbase 67. He was an avid collector of original paper print books and beneath his bunk there was a pile of them littering the floor. He had been explaining the novel to *Kara*, it was set in the period of earth history known as the 'cold war' and involved a British secret agents adventures. *Childers* was enthused by the novel, but to *Kara* the secret agent sounded like a masochistic chauvinist. *Rachel Wood's* humming became louder causing *Brian* to lift his head from his book.

"That sounds beautiful *Rach*, would you sing it for us?"

Rachel put her hairbrush on her bunk and stood, "it's the song which tells the story of *Robert Emmet*, my mom used to sing it to us back in Cardiff, she was Irish. "I thought you were Welsh through and through, just goes to show, the Irish get everywhere," teased *Kara*.

Childers sat up on his bed now. "Sounds melancholy *Rach*, but beautiful."

"I was just thinking about *Paul Hewson*, and this song talks of a fallen hero, I suppose it came to my mind. Poor *Hewson*," said *Rachel* sadly. *Kara* and *Brian* sat silently. Then *Rachel* stopped speaking and threw back her shoulders, and began to sing in a beautiful Soprano voice:

Oh! breathe not his name, let it sleep in the shade,
Where cold and unhonoured his relics are laid;



Sad, silent, and dark, be the tears that we shed,
As the night-dew that falls on the grass o'er his head.

But the night-dew that falls, tho' in silence it weeps,
Shall brighten with verdure the grave where he sleeps,
And the tear that we shed, though in secret it rolls,
Shall long keep his memory green in our souls.

Standing outside the open bunkroom door, pressed against the wall, was the slim figure of Specialist *Aabin*. He listened to the rich soprano voice of *Rachel Wood* and to the sad, desperate nature of the lyrics. Hot tears streamed down his face, and he began to sob uncontrollably. He bit his lip to try and hide his sobs; he mustn't be seen like this. But he couldn't move. It was here *Christopher Chattman* saw him as he rounded the corner, chiding himself after his encounter with *Stephanie Ottair*.

Chattman quickly moved back out of site. Shit, this was all he needed now, he'd have to go back the other way to cargo landing bay 1. Still, *Aabin* had been on the *Cinera* landing party at *Chattman's* own heeding, and he had witnessed *S'Raazh* and *Solak* assaulted in front of him, and *Paul Hewson's* awful death. *Chattman* risked a peek around the corner, *Aabin* was a mess. *Aabin*, in his attempts to stifle his crying, had bit his lip so hard he was bleeding heavily. Applause came from the enlisted bunkroom as *Rachel Wood* finished singing. *Aabin* couldn't keep his sobs in any longer, but he suddenly gave a start as a voice he longed to hear spoke softly but firmly to him. "*Aabin*, come with me, quickly." *Aabin* followed *Chattman* to the turbolift still sobbing but gaining control. *Chattman* didn't speak. They exited one deck up opposite the mess hall and *Chattman* turned left quickly and walked towards the officers' quarters, stopping at his own door. He entered and *Aabin* followed him inside.

"Computer, lights," said *Chattman* and turned to face *Aabin*. *Aabin* flung himself on *Chattman*, hugging him fiercely, wrapping his arms around him, crying uncontrollably. *Chattman* hugged him firmly, not tenderly or in a romantic way.

"Go on kid, cry your bleeding heart out, let it out, let it out."

Aabin was shorter than *Chattman* and his head lay on *Chattman's* shoulder as he cried. *Chattman* kissed the top of *Aabin's* bald head and held him tighter. He wondered for a moment why he had kissed *Aabin*, but then he closed his eyes, held *Aabin* even tighter and then he too, began to softly cry.



Rebecca Sato had been leaving her quarters and had noticed *Aabin* entering *Christopher Chattman's* just before the door closed. She thought about it for a minute, then decided to file that one away under 'mind your own business *Becky*'. Life was too short for gossip.

CINERA BASE

Standing in the vast hydroponics vault of Cinera Base, *Captain J.T. Esteban* watched the figure of Lieutenant *Lars Thorsen* materialise beside him.

"Welcome *Thor*, I've concluded my meeting with Deltan representative *Ryben*, but wanted to walk Cinera Base one last time before I leave."

Thorsen fell into step beside *Esteban* who was already on the move. *Esteban* spoke as he walked.

"Darn weird this, darn weird, no clues as to who in Starfleet was working, or at least sanctioning *Terlis*. Are we sure no Starfleet personnel were victims of *Terlis*?"

Thorsen easily kept *Esteban's* brisk pace, "we exhumed 18 partially clothed bodies, five Andorian, two Elysian, four Orion and six human, with no signs of Starfleet rank or insignia on the clothing of any. We also exhumed one Romulan female."

Esteban paused in his walking and turned to *Thorsen*.

"Where did *Terlis* procure himself a Romulan? Must have been Rura Pente."

He continued walking and *Thorsen* followed. They walked through an open door into a vast antechamber where the now free Deltans were sorting out recently harvested crops from the Hydroponics vault.

"What about the communications log from *Terlis*, any further clues?" queried *Esteban* as he paused to accept an apple from one of the Deltans, who proffered it with a smile as *Esteban* walked past.

"Logs indicate there were direct communications between *Terlis* and somebody at Starfleet Command, but I cannot trace it any further," replied *Thorsen*. *Esteban* stopped again.

"I know somebody who can help with that," and he bit into the apple.

He began to walk toward the elevators leading to the Habitat areas. "Ok *Thor*, prepare your records for handover to Captain *Martin* and her security team when *Tempest* arrives. Now, let's keep moving. I personally want to see every bit of this installation before I leave."



They entered the elevator and the walkabout continued.

U.S.S. ENTERPRISE

Lieutenant *Saavik* came to a halt outside the now unoccupied quarters of Captain *Spock*. On Admiral *Kirk's* orders, a security detail stood outside the room, as they had every day since the captain's death. They had only left their station during the recent mission at Organia and even then, only briefly. Admiral *Kirk* had requested *Saavik* meet him at her mentor's quarters. That in and of itself was an unusual request, but given her recent experiences concerning the admiral, it was something to be expected.

Saavik acknowledged Cadet *Richardson*, one of the security officers-in-training she knew from one of their classes, and entered the darkened room. As her eyes adjusted to the lighting, she noticed Admiral *Kirk* standing by the table with *Spock's* Vulcan Lute in his hands. He turned when he heard the doors open and graced her with a tight, almost sad smile. *Saavik* came to attention.

"He's not gone, as long as we remember him," *Kirk* quoted. He strummed the lute, making a dischord, and then put it back on the table. It was obvious the man was still grieving for his missing friend. "At ease, *Saavik*."

Saavik came to stand at ease as well as she could around a senior officer.

"You know, *Spock* was very proud of you."

"Sir?" The young Vulcan / Romulan was clearly confused.

Kirk continued to gaze around the room, distracted. "*Spock* saw you going far. Maybe even surpassing him one day."

Saavik looked intently at the admiral, not sure of what she should say next to him. It took a few seconds for something appropriate to come to mind.

"I shall also miss him, Admiral. It was a privilege to serve under him."

Kirk sat in the small chair of Vulcan design beside the table, lost in his own thoughts.

"*Saavik*, your work here has been nothing short of exemplary. You're going to make one hell of a fine science officer. If I haven't told you that before, I'm telling you now."

"Thank you, sir."

"Your performance has brought you to the attention of *Harry Morrow* himself. He's ordered your assignment to a scientific mission to the Genesis Planet. I'd like to take the *Enterprise*



back there, but we're required to remain in this quadrant for now. Hopefully, I can catch up later."

Saavik watched *Kirk* pick up the lute and strum it again.

"Sir, I will go wherever Starfleet feels I am needed and my talents could be used to their utmost. I am, after all, here to learn, explore, and as you yourself would put it, 'to boldly go where you have not gone before'."

Kirk rose and walked over to *Saavik*, placing his hands on her shoulders. She didn't react.

"Why, *Saavik*, was that a joke?"

"I was not attempting to be humorous, Admiral. It is not my forte. I shall endeavour to attempt to tell a joke if you wish."

Even with all *Kirk* was feeling, he let out a light chuckle.

"I believe there's hope for you yet, *Saavik*."

He turned to leave but stopped just short of the door, as if remembering something.

"My son, *David*, is going with you on your little trip to Genesis. He's on his way from Regula 1 to rendezvous with us as we speak. *David* was helping Dr. *Marcus*—er, I mean his *mother*, but somehow, he got himself assigned to your mission. You kids have fun and enjoy."

What could he mean by that? *Saavik* thought. Does it mean he could know that *David* and I have become lovers?

Kirk strode out of the room, leaving behind a puzzled *Saavik*. She stood looking at *Spock's* abstract painting of Mount Seleya that hung on the deck ward wall. So she was going back to Genesis after all and she would see *David Marcus* again. Her heart thumped hard against her ribcage at the mere thought of him. She was in love and happy, if she were to admit to such emotions. She was certain Mister *Spock* would have approved of her choice to be unique.

"Fascinating," she said aloud, taking in the décor one more time before turning abruptly and leaving the room.

USS GRISSOM (NCC-638)

Dr. *Elizabeth Seipeál* picked up her cup of coffee and put her feet up on Dr. *Vindi S'Raazh's* desk, slipping off her surgical clogs. *Vindi* sat opposite, legs crossed, drinking a herbal tea.

"I'm whacked *Vindi*," said *Seipeál*, "I've been promising myself these five minutes since yesterday."

S'Raazh put her mug down and twiddled her thumbs. She was used to having *Muggle* in her lap, and now, with empty hands, was fidgeting.



"You and the team have done a marvellous job *Elizabeth*," said *S'Raazh*. "*Saunders* is recovering well, *Terlis*' victims are all in good health physically, if not psychologically, and the crew seem to be coping."

Seipeál continued to sip at her coffee. "I have the medical records of all of the individuals we rescued from *Terlis* ready for transfer to *Tempest* when she arrives. I'm actually more concerned about our own crew at the moment."

S'Raazh raised an eyebrow in an inquisitive manner, "care to elaborate?"

Seipeál took her feet off the desk and sat up.

"I'm concerned about Specialist *Aabin*, he had been homesick lately, but this incident with *Terlis* has left him fragile."

S'Raazh hissed, "it wasn't an incident *Elizabeth*, he 'mind raped' the boy, he could have destroyed him."

Seipeál wasn't surprised at *S'Raazh*'s venom; she too had almost lost her life at the hands of *Terlis*.

"I'm actually concerned about *Kara McLoughlin* myself, if I'm honest," continued *Vindi*, her rage calming "what is it with young people nowadays *Elizabeth*?"

A surgical clog narrowly missed *S'Raazh* as *Seipeál* flung it across the table.

"I'M YOUNG, you blue skinned meanie!"

They both laughed.

"Speaking of young people," said *Vindi*, "I really must contact *Dawn Matthias* aboard the *Lexington*, she's just been made a Lieutenant Commander. She'll be busy as a bee as CMO, but *Lexington* is in Spacedock 1, so I should be able to catch up with her."

Seipeál nodded, "she really was a star pupil of yours *Vindi*, how did you ever become so close?"

Vindi stopped laughing at that. "It's a long story, remind me to tell you sometime."

DELTAN VESSEL, SERENE WIND CLASS

Kara McLoughlin was sweating. The environmental systems were not the top priority in the works to stabilise the warp core aboard the Deltan vessel. *McLoughlin* was working directly with Commander *Stephanie Ottair* on repairing a fracture to the dilithium matrix chamber. *Ottair* was in her white engineering radiation suit, her long dark black hair caught up in a bun. The suit was thick with grease and dirt following their recent climb through the innards of the vessel. *Kara* had to admire *Ottair*, she



worked relentlessly, personally supervising her repair teams, chiding but guiding. She seemed to be everywhere at once.

Ottair wiped her brow with her sleeve, "the vessel will be operational soon, we can then focus our teams on reviewing life support, repairing environmental controls and restoring power to their bridge from the auxiliary control room. I am pleased with our progress."

She turned to *Kara*, "*McLoughlin*, you have worked hard. Your problem is that you must learn to listen before you question. Questions must be thought about before you speak, so you do not say the first thing that pops into your head. The first thing is not always the correct thing, N'est-ce pas? And you must remember, in Engineering, we are a team, vous êtes **jamaïs** seul."

Before *Kara* could answer, *Ottair* handed her a water flask, and she took it, drinking deeply and gladly.

"Thank you Commander, I will try to think before I talk, so to speak. I have enjoyed working with you today."

"And I you *McLoughlin*, et maintenant, let us continue, non?"

USS GRISSOM (NCC-638)

The red alert klaxon sounded suddenly throughout Grissom and caught most of the crew unaware. *Christopher Chattman* fixed his collar and turned to look at *Aabin*, who was rousing from sleep on *Chattman's* bunk.

"Red alert, you better get to your station," said *Chattman* as he left his quarters and traversed the short distance to the bridge.

Chattman entered the bridge and *Bacari Jata* moved from the centre seat.

"*Christopher*, a Klingon vessel has appeared from warp, we are identifying type, but the Captain is down on Cineria Base and Commander *Ottair* is on the Deltan vessel, you are the highest ranking officer."

Chattman was calm, relaxed, his old self.

"Raise shields, put Grissom between us and the Deltan vessel, it's in the line of Klingon fire. All crews to battle stations. Get me the Captain."

Within seconds, *Jata*, who had moved swiftly from navigation to communications, had *Esteban* on channel.

"Sir, a Klingon vessel has entered the system, type not yet identified, I have put Grissom between it and the Deltan base and Vessel. We can lower shields briefly to transport you."



"Do so, Lieutenant *Thorsen* and I will standby," said *Esteban*. "Advise Commander *Ottair*, to get her teams together and prepare for transport also."

"Aye sir" replied *Chattman*.

Aabin climbed from the bunk and fixed his uniform jacket, which was crumpled. *Chattman* had laid him on the bunk and held his hand until *Aabin* must have fallen asleep. It had been a good sleep. He felt relieved and refreshed. *Chattman* was a good man, an honest man, someone to look up to. Someone it would be easy to fall in love with. He smiled to himself. Then he quickly left *Chattman's* quarters and made his way to his emergency station.

Esteban entered the bridge, flanked by *Thorsen*. "Status *Chattman*?"

"We have confirmed it is a Klingon Batlh class shuttle, long range shuttlecraft used for transport and VIP missions, tough to Klingon standards and armed with a disruptor bank under the prow," said *Chattman*, "alone it poses no threats to our shields."

"The trouble with Klingons is, you never know exactly if they are alone," said *Thorsen*.

Brian Childers arrived on the bridge followed by *Stephanie Ottair*.

"*Childers*, open a channel to that ship," said *Esteban*.

Childers slid into the seat vacated by *Bacari Jata* and complied quickly.

"Klingon vessel, this is Captain *Jonathan T. Esteban* of the Federation science vessel U.S.S. *Grissom*. You are in violation of Federation Space. You will stand down your vessel immediately. State your intentions."

There was an immediate reply, which *Childers* put on the main viewer. An older Klingon visage drifted into vision, with greying hair, and many notable facial scars.

"Greetings to you Captain *Esteban* and to your noble crew. I am *Krah1* of the house of *Reshtarc*. I have come seeking two of our Klingon warriors who were dispatched to this hive of Deltan Baktag!"

"The warriors to whom you refer are in our brig Mr. *Krah1*. Strictly speaking they are prisoners of war, being this far inside Federation Space," said *Esteban*, taking the centre seat without averting his eyes off the main viewer.

"Ghay'cha'! The conflict has ended Captain, and we have come for our warriors. The Organians are gone, we must forge a new path."

Esteban signalled to *Childers* to cut the audio link. "Interesting, a Klingon who wants to talk, not fight."



"It might have something to do with the fact that we have him outgunned Sir" intoned *Thorsen*, "he's hardly in a position to make demands."

"Sir, Klingons are not cowards, regardless of our armaments, if they had to, they would fight. The Klingons are no longer technically prisoners of war, as the recent conflict is over," said *Stephanie Ottair* as she turned from the bridge engineering station, "and until there is a replacement for or a political move to replace the Organian Peace Treaty, we really are, on our own."

Esteban looked at *Ottair* incredulously.

"Commander, you never fail to surprise me, *Childers*, put the audio back on."

"Mr. *Krahl*, we will release your warriors to you on the proviso that you immediately make a course for Klingon territory. We will report your position to Starfleet Command, and you will be tracked by Federation listening posts and vessels until you leave Federation Space."

"Qu'vatlh! I want my warriors and to be back at Rura Pente within one of you standard Earth days. We will give you transport coordinates for our warriors. QaPla '!"

Krahl's image faded from the screen.

"That was far too easy," mused *Esteban*, "those Klingons have got the scent that something's up. *Thorsen*, escort our Klingon guests to the transporter room. *Childers*, inform Starfleet command and all listening posts of the shuttles course for the Klingon border and let Captain *Martin* and her crew know to expect the Batlh shuttle coming their way."

Thorsen left the bridge to organise the Klingon warriors' release.

Esteban stood and made to leave, "Commander *Ottair*, as soon as the Klingon vessel is away, finish the repairs to the Deltan vessel. Ask Lieutenant *Graav* to speed up supplying Cinera Base and get our shuttles back aboard. I want to be ready to leave when the *Tempest* arrives."

He turned and left.

An hour or so later, *Jonathan T. Esteban* sat in his personal quarters, relaxing in his old chair. He had just informed *Mark Atkins* of the death of his partner *Paul Hewson*, having been unable to contact him before now. *Atkins* had taken it badly. *Esteban* felt for the young man, he knew them both well, and had married them. The breaking of the news of *Solak's* death to his wife *T'Ping* had proven far more straightforward. *T'Ping* had asked no questions other than that she requested to know when would *Solak's* body be returned to Vulcan. *Esteban* had informed her that his body would be transferred to the U.S.S. *Tempest* and move onward from there.



His reverie was broken by *Childers*, "Sir, encoded message from Starfleet Command for you, it's Admiral *McKnight*."

Esteban sat up. "Put him through please *Childers*."

The handsome features of Admiral *Alexander McKnight* appeared before *Esteban*. He was one of *Esteban's* oldest and most trusted friends. *Esteban* smiled to himself, he literally was the oldest, having been born in the Earth Year, 1976. In his third year at the USAF Academy, he was on home leave in 1998 Montana when he and his siblings (*Michelle* and *Jason McKnight*) 'mysteriously disappeared'. Instead, an alien transporter, discovered by the USS *Enterprise* under Captain *Robert April*, had brought the trio into 2250. When they found out that they could not get back to 1998, all three underwent re-orientation and education to adapt to life in the 23rd Century. *McKnight* and his wife *Angelica* were both close friends of *Esteban*, and had been very good to him after his divorce. They were also the only people, along with *Lawrence Styles* and *Jeffrey Pierce*, who knew of his relationship with *Vindi*. Who knew, and approved and supported him.

McKnight was the Chief of Staff to Starfleet Command.

"*Alex*, I am very, very glad to see you," said *Esteban*, "how are things there at Headquarters?"

Admiral *Alexander McKnight* smiled at his old friend. He was sitting in his office with a panoramic view of San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge behind him.

"Doing just peachy, *Jon*, for an admiral. God, I can't wait to get out of this rat race." "How's that?"

"*Jon*, I've been involved in running Fleet operations, creating battle plans, and the like. You name it, I've done it. All I want is out on a field command again." "Then you've gone through with it?" questioned *Esteban*.

"You'd better bet that antique dollar you've got stashed away. As of this morning, I've put in my papers for a voluntary demotion to captain. Tried to get some indication on how the wind is blowing but no dice. Everyone clammed up."

"Why is it you would fight to be a captain again? *Angelica* approve of it?" queried *Esteban*.

"*Angie's* behind me one hundred ten percent. She's just got a plum assignment on the *Lexington*, as communications officer" replied *McKnight*. "That's great. Won't be long before she has a command of her own" said *Esteban*.

"She's happy. There's nothing that compares to being out among the stars. You're luckier than you know."

Esteban laughed. "That's a matter of perspective. I would trade you if I could. To change the subject, I presume you read



the information *Thorsen* sent you?" *McKnight* nodded.
"I have. I know you can't say much, but I'm aware of your mission. *Harry Morrow's* taken the lead on Genesis on President *Turner's* executive order. Not that I have any heartburn with it; *Harry* can have it. What I know of it already is enough to make my hair go grey."
"Level with me. How bad is it?" asked *Esteban*.

"B-A-D. There's so much secrecy, plotting, collective covering of collective asses and other crap going on around here, it's unbelievable. And I'm in the middle of it all "replied *McKnight*. He obviously wasn't happy with the situation.

"Do *Jeff* and *Larry* know what's happening?" ventured *Esteban*.

"You know damn good and well I can't discuss Genesis with either of them. They don't know about it and that's the way it's got to be. There've been too many leaks on this project already. I fully expect the Times to break the whole story before long."

Esteban leaned into the monitor. "I understand, *Alex*, but just having you watching my back makes me feel more secure."

Now it was *McKnight's* turn to laugh, "well if my request is granted, I'll be watching your back from the bridge of a starship, not here in purgatory."
"I'll cross my fingers and everything else." A chime sounded. "I think the others are ready to join us."

Esteban's monitor split into three screens, and the images of Captains *Lawrence Styles* and *Jeffrey Pierce* materialized next to *McKnight*.

Pierce spoke before anyone else could, "*Jon*, I was saddened to hear of the loss of *Paul Hewson*, I served with both him and *Mark Atkins* aboard the *Potemkin*. I've already sent my condolences to *Mark* and to *Paul's* parents."

Esteban could see *Pierce* was speaking from his conference room aboard the *Hathaway*. The *Copernicus* Shipyards were clearly visible through the large panoramic windows. Worker bee craft and suited technicians were putting on the finishing touches to the newly minted *Constellation Class* ship.

"Thanks *Jeff*, *Hewson* always spoke very highly of you, he'll be a great loss to our crew" said *Esteban* solemnly.

From his own vantage point in a suite on *Spacedock* in Earth orbit, *Lawrence Styles* spoke, "this is *Starfleet*, these are dark times, he knew what he was taking on when he signed up."

Pierce rounded on *Styles* instantly, "Ok *Larry*, we all know what we signed up for, but that doesn't diminish *Hewson's* death. It's easy enough to comment from *Spacedock*."



There was no love lost between *Pierce* and *Styles*, both having competed for the Captaincy of the *Excelsior*, with *Styles* having secured the position. *Pierce* was not bitter; he knew the *Excelsior* was a longshot when he put in for it. His attitude had always been if you want something, you have to go for it whatever the odds. He disliked *Styles*' leadership style, which was overbearingly officious. *Pierce* felt many were more deserving than *Styles* to receive the plumb assignment of the 'Great Experiment'.

"There you go again *Jeffrey*, flying off the handle at the slightest thing," said *Styles* with a raised voice. *Pierce* replied coolly "We've all signed that dotted line, we all know what we've signed up for but that doesn't mean we dismiss one's sacrifice out of hand because of it."

Before *Styles* could reply the calm voice of *Alex McKnight* interjected, "gentlemen, come, we are hardly being of help to *Jon* if we spend his valuable time arguing amongst ourselves."

Styles merely grunted, but *Pierce* replied, "of course, you're right *Alex*, apologies *Jon*. I've read the information that you had *Thorsen* forward to us. This all looks very suspicious to me. *Alex*, have you any clue as to who in Starfleet was communicating with this *Terlis* character?"

McKnight replied, "no clue *Jeff*, I've been tick tacking on the quiet with *Thorsen* directly. I've ascertained that the signals came to Starfleet Command in the vicinity of the Presidio, but thereafter it fades."

"The air shuttle port is smack dab in the middle of the Presidio, which means it could be from a shuttle, or an individual on the move" said *Pierce* "like looking for a needle in a haystack."

"Exactly *Jeff*, but I'll have operatives on the case to see if we can establish anything," said *McKnight*.

Pierce was smart and he could ascertain there was something other than the *Terlis* situation going on between *McKnight* and *Esteban*. "I'm sorry to be blunt gentlemen, but is there anything else I need to know about? if there is any way I can help..."

Esteban spoke now, "*Jeff*, I know that I can rely on you, and I know I can rely on you too *Larry*," he added as an aside to *Styles*, "but what I need to know now is if notice anything out of the ordinary going on in the fleet, or should you hear of anything that mentions *Grissom*, either directly or indirectly."

Styles spoke, "you can count on me *Jon*, now if you gentlemen will excuse me, I've an engineering vacancy to fill."

Styles' image faded abruptly.

"I'm going to have to go too, *Jon*, I'll be in touch, I'll keep you posted and I've got your back," said *McKnight*.



"Thanks *Alex*, give my best to *Angie*, and tell her she owes me a game of Tennis!"

McKnight signed off and *Jeff Pierce* said quietly, "*Jon*, something's bothering you, I know you far too well for you to conceal it. If it weren't for you I wouldn't be in the big chair. I want to help, just say the word and it is done."

Esteban smiled. He had sponsored *Pierce*, who he had taken under his wing early in *Pierce's* career. *Esteban* prided himself on his ability to nurture raw talent and he knew *Pierce* would (and had become) an excellent officer. Hathaway was lucky to have him.

"*Jeff*, you know I would ask for your help if I needed it. Just keep your ear to the ground and your eyes open for anything out of the ordinary. Take care my friend, and talk soon."

In the Hathaway conference room, Captain *Jeffrey Pierce* watched the viewscreen dim as *Esteban's* image faded. He knew *Esteban* well, something was wrong, something other than the incident at Cinera Base.

He turned to the communications console, "Commander *Lara*, please join me in the main briefing room, I have something I wish to discuss."

Juan Casas saw the transporter room of the *Grissom* come into view as he materialised on the transporter pad of the main transporter room. The *Tempest* had arrived barely an hour before, but Captain *Esteban* was anxious for *Grissom* to be away as soon as possible, on her voyage to *Pacifica* and onwards. *Casas* couldn't understand why Admiral *Morrow* had assigned him to *Grissom*, what could be so important about her mission to *Pacifica*. This was going to be even more boring than Starfleet Command. As he finished materialising on the platform he saw a tall blond man in a security Lieutenant's uniform waiting for him.

"Welcome aboard Lieutenant *Casas*, I am Lieutenant *Thorsen*, Security Ops" he said.

Casas proffered his hand, but *Thorsen* turned and started walking. *Casas* grabbed his kit bag and followed.

"*Casas*, we have much to talk about, ship's operations, security protocols, manifests, reports and the small matter of our mission."

Casas kept pace with *Thorsen*, "nothing too exciting I hope," he said sarcastically.

Thorsen entered the turbolift and as the doors closed, turned to *Casas*, "I think it's *time* to tell you about Project Genesis."



NEXT TIME ON STAR TREK GRISSOM: GRISSOM FINALLY CONTINUES HER VOYAGE TO PACIFICA, BUT THE JOURNEY WILL NOT BE UNEVENTFUL. DON'T MISS **THE PRICE OF VIRTUE.**

Actus humanus, Actus hominis

DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF CILLIAN

Plot: Seán Paul Teeling & Melissa Wilson
Script: Seán Paul Teeling
Script Consultants: Joseph Bonice and Brad Hathaway
Editor: Melissa Wilson

STAR TREK GRISSOM PRODUCTIONS ESPECIALLY THANK:

- ◆ Adrian Howard Jones
- ◆ Joseph Bonice
- ◆ Brad Hathaway
- ◆ Brian Childers
- ◆ Dan Wilson
- ◆ Jonathan Rofeta
- ◆ Michael Hudson
- ◆ Michael Liebmann

