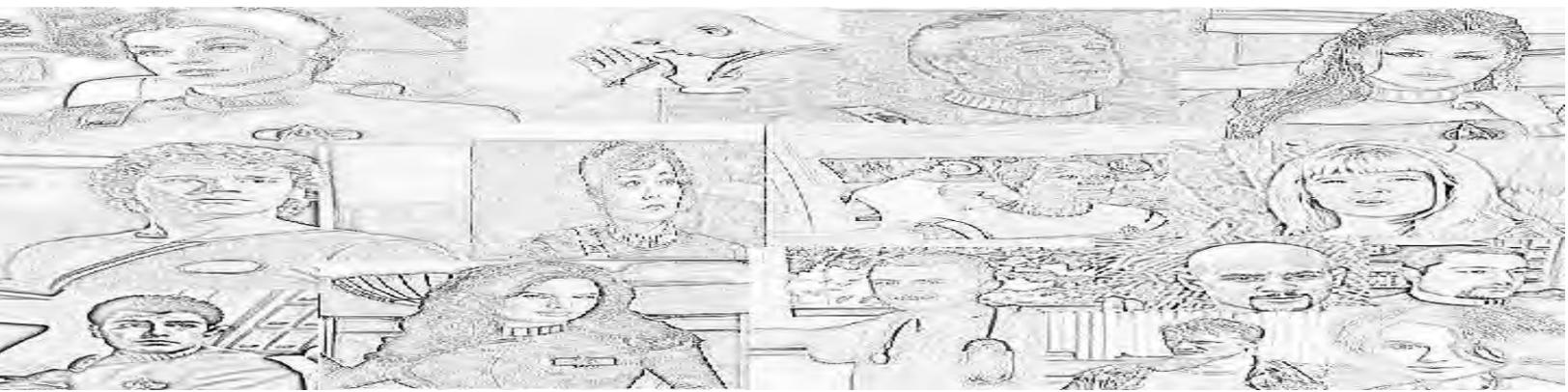


# The Stars My Destination

Prose Chapter 6 of the U.S.S. Grissom Saga





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*My name is Paul Hewson, and before I died, my life was filled with love, laughter, friendship, and above all else my duty as a Starfleet officer.*

*It's an odd thing to look back on the world, to watch those I left behind. Each is in their own way so brave, so determined and yet so very fragile. Determined to venture out, but afraid of what they'll find when they get there, or who they'll have to compete with. Competition – it means different things to different people. But whether it's a friendly rivalry or a fight until the end, the results are the same, there will be winners and there will be losers. Of course the trick is, to know which battles to fight. You see, no victory comes without a price.*

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## **U.S.S. Grissom, Crew Mess**

“Clearing a path for your black queen? Stephanie, you’re very predictable” said Lieutenant Lars Thorsen, as he observed Commander Stephanie Ottair making her next move in their game of tri-dimensional chess.

“For somebody who is so quiet in company, you have an awful lot to say when silence is required, Thor” replied Ottair dryly.

“I do my best thinking when we have our nightly chess game. It’s useful to use you as a sounding board while I’m simultaneously thrashing you at chess.” replied Thor. “Again.”

Ottair lifted her eyes from the chessboards and looked at Thor with a feigned look of confusion. “Oh, I’m sorry, Thor. I didn’t realise I was losing. I’ll just take your queen then, to make me feel a bit better.”

Thorsen looked back at the board. “Nice move. So, have you noticed the developments between Chattman and Aabin? I’ll be having your other bishop now, thank you.”

Ottair narrowed her eyes in concentration. “You’re welcome. Chattman and Aabin. You must think I am completely blinkered, because you’d need to be, to miss the chemistry between those two. Rebecca Sato says it's all Chattman can do to control himself.”

Thorsen watched Ottair as she scrutinised the board. “Chris Chattman is heterosexual. Wasn’t he dating that bar owner on Starbase 67 a while back? I think any one of us would be in trouble if we got involved with a Deltan.”

Ottair moved her knight out of Thorsen's line of attack, offering up a pawn as a potential sacrifice in its stead. "Would we? I'm not so sure. There's something more than pheromones going on there. And speaking of hormones and pheromones, how are things between you and Ensign Gerber?"

Thorsen took Ottair's pawn and awaited her next move. "Oh, you know. Okay, I suppose."

Ottair moved again, this time moving her queen to protect her king. "No, I don't know. It's been two months now. You know, she's crazy about you. Are you still trying to work up the courage to ask her out?"

Thorsen observed the board once more. Since his king had not yet moved, castling was an option. "I think she just wants me for my body. She has a bit of a reputation."

Ottair laughed out loud, drawing stares from crew at other tables in the mess hall. "Are you calling Gerber a slut?"

Thor looked up distracted from the game "No! Of course I'm not. Keep it down, people are staring". He hastily made a move with a remaining rook.

Ottair continued. "She's educated, beautiful, intelligent, and caring. She likes you, you like her. You don't need to be an engineer to do the math!"

Thor nodded in acknowledgement. "I know. I was going to ask her out, but then we lost Hewson at Cintera Base. It just felt wrong. Not the right time. I miss Hewson. He was a good friend."

Ottair reached out to touch Thor, but then thought better of it and made another chess move instead. "Check. I know you were close and we all feel Hewson's loss, especially the Captain. But you have to move on. And Ensign Gerber won't be around forever. I hear Nurse Murphy has her in his sights."

Thor reacted with a look of surprise. "Murphy has? Really? That information changes my tactical approach to Gerber somewhat. I'll have to be more direct."

Ottair gave Thorsen a satisfied look. "Excellent. You won't be sorry. I expect FULL details of how it all goes. You should go see Gerber now."

Thorsen nodded. "I will, when we finish this game."

Ottair broke into a grin. "We already have. Checkmate."

## **U.S.S. Grissom, Gymnasium**

Having Christopher Chattman as a gym buddy was both wonderful and horrible at the same time, thought Rebecca Sato. Wonderful because he was an ex-rugby player and incredibly healthy and fit. Horrible, because he was a tough taskmaster.

“Come on Becky, ten more sit-ups and you’re at the magic 100. Keep it up!” said Chattman as he squatted by Rebecca.

“You-are-such-a-slave driver-Christopher,” Becky gasped between breaths. “And-what’s-worse-you-love-it.”

“...and 99, and 100. Okay, time out,” said Chattman.

Sato sat up and exhaled deeply. “I’m going to hit the showers and grab something to eat. I am starving. I have this craving for some prawns on banana bread”. As soon as she had said it, Sato regretted it.

“Aha, I was wondering how long you were going to take to tell me about your ‘happy event’ ” he laughed.

“You knew?” queried Sato as she towelled down.

Chattman continued talking as they walked towards the showers. “Not drinking at Starbase 16. Visiting Dr. S’Raazh every other minute. Worrying about contacting Robert. *That* especially. You were so depressed when the recorded messages weren’t delivered. But relax, Becky, your secret is safe with me.”

Sato sighed, “Oh Christopher, I’ve been longing to tell you, you’re my best friend, but I wanted to tell Robert first. I guess it’ll have to wait until we get back from the Mutara sector.”

Chattman nodded. “I’m afraid it will, Becky. The Captain is furious with Childers for not sending out a message buoy at Pacifica to deliver our recorded messages. He said he was so busy he simply forgot. Our old man says it shows lack of initiative. Anyhow, forget that for now. So, who else knows you’re expecting?”

Sato sat down on the locker room bench. “Vindi S’Raazh, you. and Dr. Clive Saunders.”

Chattman was incredulous. “SAUNDERS? Are you for real? You hardly know him. How does he figure into the equation?”

Sato stood and began to undress. “He figured it out on Pacifica.”

Chattman scrutinised Sato closely. “Is there something going on between you two?”

"Leave it, Christopher!" Sato snapped. "You're hardly in a position to lecture me, sniffing around Aabin like you are."

"Thanks, Becky, thanks so much. Nice to know you're there for me. Enjoy your shower!" Chattman stormed out of the locker room.

"Christopher! I'm sorry!" shouted Sato, but he was already gone.

Chattman was halfway to his bunkroom when he realised he had not showered and was still in his gym kit. He was drawing smiles from the crew he met in the corridors. HIS bunkroom, it made him laugh. His officer's quarters were now in the hands of Drs. Saunders and Liebmann. And he was sharing with Aabin. Thank God he was sharing with Ensign DeLonghi, too. Sharon DeLonghi was a breath of fresh air and a necessary buffer between both him and Aabin. He had lain awake all last night looking over at Aabin. If DeLonghi hadn't been there in the 3-berth bunkroom, he was unsure of what might have happened.

He reached his enlisted bunkroom and entered. "Oh, Aabin, I thought you would be on duty, sorry to interrupt".

Specialist Aabin shifted uncomfortably on his bunk. "Oh, Christopher, I swapped my shift with Specialist Rasputin, he needed to have free time tomorrow to assist in the preparations with the climatology team. I'm afraid I'm 'home' for the evening. You haven't showered?"

Chattman looked down at his sweating form. "Obviously. I'll take a shower now. If you wouldn't mind giving me some privacy."

Aabin blushed. "But of course, I actually think I might go for a drink. Non-alcoholic of course. I wouldn't want to be in the way."

Chattman put his hand on Aabin's shoulder as he passed him by, deliberately making contact with Aabin's bare shoulder. He felt Aabin control his pheromones but still felt a familiar thrill of excitement "Thanks, Aabin. I appreciate the space. For the record, you're never in the way".

Aabin touched Chattman's hand, carefully controlling his hormones but blushing more than ever. "Thank you Christopher. I'll, I'll go get that drink".

The door closed behind Aabin, and Chattman stared after him for a moment. Moments later he was standing in an ice cold shower.

## **U.S.S. Grissom, Deck 4**

Kara McLoughlin found she actually enjoyed wandering around Deck 4 of the Grissom. There was a service corridor running 360 degrees around the deck, leading to life support, waste recycling, the ventral phaser bay, the main computer core, main engineering and sickbay, to name but a few areas. The space was the biggest on the ship, and afforded Kara and Muggle, Dr. S’Raazh’s canine, the time to wander at their leisure, with little chance of being met or interrupted. Kara looked along the corridor as Muggle moved ahead, sniffing here and there. The little Pomeranian was jet black, and when he moved too far ahead, he disappeared into the gloom.

Areas such as the waste-recycling corridor, automated as it was, did not require full lighting, to conserve precious energy. As Kara approached the subspace transceiver bay, she heard Muggle begin to bark furiously up ahead. She ran to catch up. The little dog was standing at the door of the subspace transceiver bay, barking furiously.

“Muggle, stop that this instant, there’s nobody there” said Kara. Muggle stopped barking but growled menacingly. “At least, I think there’s nobody there” said Kara, aloud, as she approached the door. It slid aside and she stepped inside, but Muggle slipped by her and ran past the structural integrity field generator and began barking again. Kara heard a noise. There was a loud crash of something falling and in the light she saw Rachel Wood.

“Rachel, what the hell are you doing down here in the dark, you frightened the life out of me, and Muggle”.

Wood looked pale and confused. “Nothing to concern you Kara I was merely checking the structural field integrity at source, as requested by Lieutenant Bowman in Engineering. You got a problem with that?”

“No need to get antsy with me Rachel. Muggle, stop barking!” Kara had to pick Muggle up because he was barking so much. “I don’t know what you did on Muggle, but he’s holding a grudge. I’ve never seen him so upset,” said Kara as the little dog trembled in her arms, not barking now, but reverberating with a low growl.

“I’ll let you nursemaid the dog, some of us have work to do, so if you’ll excuse me.” And with that Rachel Wood shot by Kara and the growling Muggle.

“You don’t look well Rachel, you should stop by sickbay when your duty roster is over” Kara shouted after Rachel, but the Ensign merely nodded and left the compartment. With Wood gone, Muggle stopped growling and seemed to relax. “Now that is just weird,” said Kara aloud. “Come on Muggle, let’s get you back to Dr. S’Raazh.”

## U.S.S. Grissom, Crew Mess

Aabin sat at the table alone, staring out as space warped by. He was so lost in his thoughts he failed to notice Juan Casas standing in front of him, until he picked up his reflection in the window. "Oh, Lieutenant Casas, I did not see you there. You startled me".

Casas sat down opposite Aabin, a broad smile on his face. "I apologise, Specialist Aabin. Now, can I join you?" The Spaniard sat down and sipped from his mug.

Aabin smelled coffee. "Ah, of course Lieutenant. I was just thinking to myself, so please excuse me for not noticing you."

Casas made himself comfortable. The background chatter in the mess from the other tables was very relaxing, and Lieutenant LaForge was playing something on his guitar at a table in the corner. The day shift was over and the crew were relaxing.

"I find the entire crew to be very friendly, but then again, Grissom is only a small vessel. I'm finding it hard to get through to Lars Thorsen though. I say white, he says black," said Casas, as he sipped his coffee.

Aabin looked away from the mesmeric effects of the warp trail outside the window and looked at Casas directly. "Oh, sorry. Were you talking to me, Lieutenant? I drifted away again" said Aabin, drinking from his glass of water.

"I was talking about Lars 'Thor' Thorsen. He is constantly arguing with me, Aabin. May I call you Aabin? And I think it is because I am not this Paul Hewson," said Casas, quite irritated.

"I had not looked at it from that point of view, Lieutenant Casas. And please, call me Aabin, by all means."

Casas nodded. "And call me Juan. Maybe I'm being paranoid, but I'm sure Hewson left a pretty big gap to fill, maybe I should try to be more like him?"

Aabin smiled. "I have always found sir, in the first instance, it is best to be yourself. Otherwise you might forget who you are".

Casas laughed heartily "Are you being humorous Aabin? And here I thought Deltan's were Vulcan-like in their own way."

"Not at all, Lieutenant Casas..." began Aabin, but he was interrupted by a shadow looming over their table. It was Christopher Chattman, in off duty civvies, looking very angry.

"I thought I might join you for that drink Aabin, but I see you haven't exactly been lonely!" snarled Chattman.

“Christopher, what are you talking about?” began Aabin, “I have no idea what you mean.”

Chattman hit the table with his fist, drawing hushed murmurs from the mess hall. “Sure you do! Playing pheromone ping-pong with Casas now, aren’t you?”

Casas stood abruptly. “I object to your insinuations, Mister, and I’m not very happy with your attitude either. Apologise to Aabin now”.

Chattman threw a chair aside and leaned very close to Casas. “Back off, amigo, this is between me and Aabin.”

Casas stood quiet still. “Mr. Chattman, I can break your arm in four places without even thinking about it. Stand back and calm down.”

Chattman moved forward and pushed Casas toward the window with a shove, but Casas righted himself quickly and lashed out. Chattman fell with a thud as Casas’s right hook connected with his face.

Aabin leapt to his feet. “Christopher, my God, and Lieutenant Casas, what is this violence for, why did you do that?” he turned to help Chattman sit upright.

“He asked for it,” said Casas. “He needs to be taken in hand.”

Chattman moaned. “What hit me?”

Aabin cradled Chattman’s head. “Relax Christopher, on this occasion, I can use my pheromones to take the pain away.”

Chattman stood up. “Lucky punch, Paco. You won’t be so lucky next time!” he spat at Casas.

“You asked for it, *amigo*. If you’re so possessive of Aabin, why don’t you just admit it to yourself?”

A crowd was gathering. “You bloody bastard!” shouted Chattman.

“STOP THIS NOW!” boomed the voice of Commander Stephanie Ottair. She swept into the mess and stood between both the Englishman and the Spaniard.

“Chattman, get to Sickbay now, let Doctor S’Raazh take a look at that eye. Casas, a word in private. The rest of you... haven’t you something else you should be doing? If not, I can use the help in Engineering!” The crowd dispersed.

Aabin ran after Chattman. “Christopher, are you ok? Let me help you to sickbay.”

Chattman turned on Aabin. "This is your entire fault, Lieutenant. Why can't you just leave me alone? I mean it, Aabin. You say you want to be with me, but then you're off flirting like a dog in heat as soon as my back's turned."

Aabin felt a wave of anger erupt from himself, and began to cry tears of anger and frustration. "I did no such thing! Why are you so horrible to me all the time? I'm fed up of crying on your account. Take a long hard look at yourself Christopher, I hope you like what you see, because I certainly don't!" Aabin turned and ran.

Chattman looked after him. "SHIT!" he thought.

In the Conference Room, Lieutenant Juan Casas was getting a dressing down from Stephanie Ottair.

"I know Chattman is being a royal pain in the ass, but that is no excuse for hitting a fellow officer."

"But Commander, he hit me first!" protested Casas.

"Irrelevant," said Ottair, coolly. "As I heard you yourself point out as I entered the mess hall, you are able to break his bones because you are a trained hand-to-hand combatant. You could have stopped him by restraining him."

Casas nodded and blushed. "You're right, of course. It's just the way he treats that Deltan kid annoys me. I'd never treat my girlfriend in that manner."

"Again, irrelevant Casas" replied Ottair. "You should have known better. I'll have to mark this in my log. Now go ahead, get out of here."

Casas left the conference room. Ottair turned and looked out the window. This entire situation with Aabin and Chattman was becoming untenable. Perhaps she should ask the Captain to transfer Aabin off Grissom altogether, but that would be unfair. Transferring Chattman was not an option at this time. What to do? She would discuss it with Thorsen over their next chess game, then approach the Captain with a solution. Until then, there was no need to bother Esteban; he had enough on his plate.

## **U.S.S. Grissom, Bridge**

The Grissom continued at warp speed to proceed toward the Mutara Sector. Captain J.T. Esteban sat in the command chair, listening to the routine humdrum of the bridge noises and low chatter of the bridge crew. Finally, they were on their way to rendezvous with the Enterprise, to collect Saavik and Marcus, and then on to a mission of science and exploration.

“Captain, I have Admiral Morrow on channel from Starfleet Command,” said Lieutenant Brian Childers, interrupting his reverie.

“Transfer to my ready room,” said Esteban. He swiftly moved to his ready room and activated the viewer.

“Jonathan, I have an update for you,” said Morrow. “I’ve spoken to Admiral Kirk and advised Enterprise of the rendezvous coordinates for the transfer of Dr. Marcus and Lieutenant Saavik. Dr. Marcus is aboard Enterprise now. Finally, your mission is coming together.”



Esteban nodded. “Finally. We’ve had too many incidents for this ‘man of science’ to stomach on this journey. We’ve already passed the Mutara sector on our way to Pacifica, I feel as if we’re yo-yoing back and forth. So, is there anything else we should be aware of?”

Morrow’s brow was furrowed. “Our monitoring stations on the Tholian Assembly border have noted increased activity in the area. Mainly Tholian scout vessels. Given the proximity of the Mutara sector to the Tholian Assembly, it is only natural they are curious as to the recent incident there.”

“We’re passing quite close to Tholian space ourselves,” said Esteban. “I’ll step up our monitoring, but let us know if there are any incursions over the border.”

Morrow nodded in affirmation. “Of course. We’ll be in constant touch. We’ll talk after you rendezvous with Enterprise. Morrow out.”

Esteban hailed the Bridge. "Childers, have Thorsen, Sato, and Casas report to the Bridge. I want senior crew on duty for the next few hours as we skirt the Tholian assembly," said Esteban. "Increase frequency of sensor scans, both fore and aft, and update Lieutenant Thorsen also. I'm heading to Engineering, so I'll inform Commander Ottair directly".

"Yes sir, I'll organise this immediately," replied Childers.

## **U.S.S. Grissom, Sickbay**

"I'm not going to be able to remove the bruising unless you stay still, Chattman" said Dr. Vindi S'Raazh, calmly. "So, can you kindly sit still!" She attempted to put the dermal regenerator back near the raised bruise on Chattman's left eye.

"That's enough, Doctor. The bleeding has stopped, it feels fine!" snapped Chattman.

"Indeed, but the bruise is still there," said Vindi. She turned and put the regenerator down. "Look, Chatmann, I know what's wrong with you is probably more than a physical thing. If you need to talk..." but she was interrupted by Chattman.

"So you can gossip about me like everyone else? I HATE this ship!"

Vindi stood back. "Computer, play Track 3-S'Raazh, Chill Out Music Album 6." The lights dimmed and gentle music played softly in the background.

"What are you doing?" queried a confused Chattman.

"Taking, as you humans might say, a 'chill pill.' I have taken the Hippocratic Oath, Chattman, so whatever you say stays with me, alone."

Chattman relaxed somewhat. "Ah, I see. You're playing at Counsellor now."

"Oh, Christopher dear," laughed Vindi. "You must be telepathic."

Now Chattman was more confused. "What? What do you mean?"

S'Raazh continued. "I am part of a group of Starfleet doctors and health care professionals who have put a submission into Starfleet Medical advocating the placement of counsellors on ships. All too often, the troubles that crew meet on these long voyages are those of the mind, and if you like, the spirit. Not crude matters of the flesh."

Now Chattman was interested. "Neat. Any idea as to when it will become a reality?"

"It may take years, Christopher, generations even, but we're working on it". S'Raazh put her arm on Chattman's shoulder. "For now, I'm afraid you're stuck with me."

"I trust you Doctor S'Raazh, you know I do," said Chattman quietly. "I just don't even know what's right or wrong anymore. Are Aabin's pheromones affecting me still?"

S'Raazh took a seat. "I think you're a good man, Chattman. And I have to be honest, I know the initial effects of Specialist Aabin's pheromones caused you discomfort, amongst other things. But my diagnosis is that the pheromones have long worn off. What you are experiencing now are your feelings."

Chattman's head sagged, he sat on the chair limply. "I guess... I guess that's what I am afraid of," said Chattman.

"I know," agreed S'Raazh.

A hailing frequency interrupted the conversation. "Senior Bridge Officers, report to the Bridge," came Childer's voice.

## **U.S.S. Grissom, Bunkroom of Ensign McLoughlin, Ensign Wood and Lieutenant Childers**

Aabin entered the dimly lit berth shared by Kara McLoughlin, Brian Childers and Rachel Wood. Wood was sitting in the corner, reading from a data pad.

"Sorry to interrupt, Ensign Wood, but you said to call in if I ever needed anyone to talk to," he said.

Wood whirled around. "Did I say that? I mean, I did, didn't I. What can I do for you Specialist?"

Aabin was confused, seeing Wood was not best pleased at his presence. "Oh, if you would prefer to be alone Ensign Wood, I quite understand, please forgive my intrusion."

Wood seemed to tense, then relaxed somewhat. "Oh, don't mind me Aabin, just a bit preoccupied. So, what's the problem?"

Aabin sat on the bunk opposite Woods and began to speak. "I think I have developed feelings for someone, but they don't seem to know how to take it, or me, for that matter".

Wood nodded. "I see. Well you've come to the right person for advice. In my experience, and I have had much of it, there is this mantra to follow. I like to quote the old Earth saying. *Love is a temporary madness. It erupts like an earthquake and then subsides. And when it subsides, you have to make a decision. You have to work out whether your roots have become so entwined together*

*that it is inconceivable that you should ever part. Because this is what love is.'* Wood's eyes glistened in the half-light. "So tell me, Aabin, are you in love?"

Aabin was a bit puzzled as to how Wood, who he knew was a bookworm, suddenly had this wealth of knowledge on relationships, but her words sank in. "That is quite profound Ensign, thank you for sharing it." Wood smiled. "It is, isn't it? I'm certain that you will make this person realise how you feel."

"Thank you for taking the time out to listen to me, Ensign Wood." said Aabin. "Your poetry has given me, as you humans say 'food for thought'."

Wood smiled. "I'm happy to help you out, however I can. Just remember, you owe me a favour. I will call on you someday, and you will help me in return."

Aabin sensed a threat in Woods voice. "I would be happy to assist you."

"Good to know," said Wood. "Now move along little one, I've work to do".

Aabin left the berth confused as to Rachel Wood's behaviour.

## **U.S.S. Grissom, Main Engineering**

"So Stephanie, if you wouldn't mind taking the bridge, I'm going to take the opportunity to have that physical that Dr. S'Raazh been chasing me for. It should be routine," said Esteban.

"Of course, Captain, my pleasure. I'll make my way there directly. I trust the Doctor will go easy on you."

Esteban groaned. "Are you kidding me? She calls me a slave driver, but that woman puts Genghis Khan in second place when it comes to being bossy."

"Well Captain, as I said. Enjoy."

Esteban exited Engineering. Ottair took a few moments to cast an eye over the matter-antimatter mix chamber and then handed over to Lieutenant Charles. "All is in order here Charles. I'll be on the Bridge". She left Engineering and began to walk toward the nearest turbolift on Deck 4. Suddenly, she sensed the ship drop out of warp as the lights went out and the emergency lighting came on. She made her way to the nearest comm panel.

"Ottair to Bridge, we've dropped out of warp, what the hell is going on?"

Christopher Chattman's voice replied over the comm. "Commander, all the ships' energy seems to have been drained, inexplicably, I have no idea what's going on. I can't locate the Captain."

"I'm making my way back to Engineering. Bear with me. In the meantime secure the ship, and go to Yellow Alert," replied Ottair. Ottair arrived at engineering to find her crew working efficiently.

"What's going on Lieutenant Charles?" she asked.

Charles was efficient in his reply. "All our power was drained in one fell swoop, causing the warp engines to go offline. I've no idea what caused it, but we're sitting dead in space. I'll have auxiliary power back on line in the next 10 minutes".

Ottair acknowledged this with a look of approval. "Excellent, Charles. Let me look at the diagnostic. Hmm, hmm..." Ottair was speaking to herself now. "The plasma injectors are firing out of sequence... the plasma isn't getting into the warp field coils. Okay, take the injectors off line and resequence and recalibrate them. I'll be on the Bridge."

## **U.S.S. Grissom, Bridge**

Christopher Chattman sat at the Science station, trying to make sense of the readings he was getting. Nothing made sense. He was most concerned. What if they were under attack? Where was Aabin?

The forward Bridge door opened and Stephanie Ottair appeared. "Sorry I took so long. I had to climb from Deck 4; all of the turbolifts are down. Report Chattman.

Chattman spoke from his scanner. "I'm picking up a residual energy field aft of the ship. It's as if we detonated something."

Ottair swung around. "Engineering, Charles, I need auxiliary power yesterday."

"60 seconds Commander. Actually you should have it right about... now," said Charles, as the auxiliary power came online.

"Sato, bring us about, 180 degree axis," Ottair said to Rebecca Sato, at the helm. "Full scans to the area of the energy field, Chattman. Mr. Jata, raise shields."

Chattman continued his scans and Ottair turned to Childers. "Childers, can you locate the Captain?"

"I have him on internal scan, Commander. He's in Turbolift 2, between Decks 3 and 5, all the lifts are still down," replied Childers.

"Ottair to Engineering. Charles, what's up with transportation? Why isn't it restored?"

The voice of Lieutenant Charles replied, "Sorry Commander, we have *partial* auxiliary power, but to recalibrate the plasma injectors and get the mains back online, I have to take replicators, transport, transporters, the majority of the comms system, and weapons offline. I can maintain life support, primary shields and communications between engineering and the bridge, which I've prioritised. I've started the process of recalibration, but it'll be at least an hour".

"Shit!" said Ottair to herself, but audibly. "Ok, Charles, you've got 30 minutes".

Chattman turned to Ottair. "Commander, the energy signal is definitely Tholian, some type of subspace mine".

"The Captain mentioned the Tholians when he was in Engineering," said Ottair. "Continue wide sensor sweeps Chattman, I need to know if any Tholian vessels are about. They must be in the vicinity".

"I can't believe they laid a minefield in Federation Space," said Rebecca Sato. "Unless they were looking to stop us, specifically. Could Genesis have leaked to the Tholians?"

"Anything is possible Rebecca," said Ottair. "Childers, pull up a schematic showing our crew locations aboard Grissom".

Childers complied. "Our crew are scattered around Grissom, most are at their posts following yellow alert, several, like the Captain, are trapped in the turbolift system. I read one canine, one Andorian, and 2 humanoids making their way to the Bridge via Jefferies Tube 6. It's Dr. Saunders and Dr. Liebmann, they're with Dr. S'Raazh and Muggle."

## **U.S.S. Grissom, Deck 8**

"Why I let you gentlemen drag me down to the Science Lab is beyond me. I should have stayed put in sickbay to await the Captain. Only 3 decks to climb to the Bridge from there," said Vindi S'Raazh, as she climbed the ladder from Deck 8 to Deck 7.

"Madam, I would remind you that I am the one who is carrying your rather unappreciative dog," panted Michael Liebmann, as he climbed with Muggle tucked into his jacket. "Not an easy task when trying not to fall. Why this animal had to come with us is a mystery to me."

"Stop whining, Liebmann" said Clive Saunders, from his position ahead of the others on the ladder. "We drew lots as to who carried Muggle, and you lost, fair and square".

"I have my doubts as to the fairness of drawing lots," moaned Liebmann. "But what can have caused the power to drain? It was most irritating, just as I was showing our dear Dr. S'Raazh my theory on protomatter exponential growth." Liebmann panted as he climbed. "YOUR theory?"

said Saunders sarcastically. “Don’t make me laugh. I’ve my own theory as to where **you** got **‘your’** theory from”.

“Gentlemen, as the only medic on this ladder, and with 6 decks to go, may I suggest you stop talking and keep climbing. Besides, Muggle hates heights.”

Silence reigned for a few minutes as the group continued to climb. At Deck 5, Muggle looked out of Liebmann’s jacket and then began to whine.

“Madam, your dog is most irritating,” snapped Liebmann.

Saunders could not help himself. “Oh, we all know you’re more of a cat person, Libby, given your wonderful relationship with M’Pursong.”

Liebmann was exerting too much to do anything but sigh, “Please, just for once, stop talking Saunders”.

As Vindi S’Raazh reached Deck 4 she took a breather. “Yes, please, on this occasion, I agree with Dr. Liebmann. Please concentrate on the job at hand.”

Liebmann reached Deck 4 and took a breather also. “Thank you, Dr. S’Raazh”.

Saunders laughed. “Sure, I’ll keep it quiet for the moment, but once we get this mess sorted out, the gloves are back off.”

“I’d expect nothing less, Saunders,” said Liebmann, as he began to climb once more. I’m going to head to Sickbay from here, in case I’m needed, I’ll take Muggle” said S’Raazh. “Just keep straight on for the Bridge”.

## **U.S.S. Grissom, Turbolift 1**

“It is no use; I have tried everything I can think of, even some tricks I’ve never tried before. There’s no way to contact anyone and this lift is going nowhere,” said Lars Thorsen as he stood away from the turbolift control panel. “I need to know what is going on out there. I don’t like being without intelligence!” he said, slightly more agitated than normal.

From his sitting position on the floor, Nurse Seán Murphy replied, “Ah well, if you can’t get us out of here with all your training, then nobody can. Might as well get comfortable.”

“I’m thinking of options Murphy, you might do the same,” said Thor coolly.

"Grand, Thor, but I'm a nurse, so I'm looking at this from a different angle. We have no idea if life support is going to go, we're stuck in this bloody lift shaft and you're using valuable oxygen standing up there. Sit down and think quietly".

Thor sat down. "You're right, of course".

"I know I am," said Murphy.

"By the way, I asked Ensign Gerber out on a date earlier. I know she was interested in you at one point, but she said yes. I thought it only fair to let you know."

"Ah, I see," said Thor. "It's really none of my business, but thank you anyway for letting me know."

"Not a problem," said Murphy.

"Thank you. I'll get back to my thinking," said Thor.

"You do that," said Murphy.

Thor sat and focused on getting out of the turbolift. Gerber had been a possibility of romance, but he was a Starfleet officer, and right now his priority was to get back in the game.

## **U.S.S. Grissom, Bridge**

As Liebmann and Saunders entered the Bridge, there was an air of organisation around which emanated from Commander Stephanie Ottair. Ottair looked up from the science station where she was talking quietly with Christopher Chattman, as they approached.

"Gentlemen, unless you know anything about the Tholians, you really aren't of any help to me here," she said.

Liebmann spoke. "Actually, I was involved in looking at the accumulated data on the Tholian Assembly from a xenobiological viewpoint while stationed on Earth. It was based on the data accumulated from Federation encounters with the Tholians on stardates 2152 and 2268. I therefore suggest I may be of some assistance."

"Indeed," said Ottair. "Work with Chattman at his station and see what you can find on Tholian weaknesses. What about you, Saunders?"

"I'm a xenobiologist first and foremost, whilst Libby is primarily a marine biologist. Commander, I'll work with both him and Chattman."

Ottair nodded. "Get to work then. Jata, get to the arms inventory and issue landing party communicators to all Departments aboard. We'll use them to re-establish communication until the primaries are back online."

As Bacari Jata moved to follow Ottair's orders, Chattman called out. "Commander, I'm detecting movement from aft sensors. Two small vessels. Scans indicate they are Tholian patrol craft."

"This is not good. Sato, maintain shields. Engineering, Charles. Ottair here. Tell me when primary power is back online. I said 30 minutes, which means you should be nearly there by now."

Lieutenant Charles voice sounded stressed. "Commander, I said an hour, which by my reckoning gives me another 25 minutes. There's nothing I can do to speed it up."

Ottair was still cool. "Tell that to the Tholians. What's the status on getting the weapons back online and still recalibrating the warp plasma injectors?"

"Sorry Commander, we're too far gone for that. I'll have your primaries online in 23 minutes, as per my schedule," said Charles.

"I'm sure you'll do your best as always. Childers open a channel to the lead Tholian vessel. It's time to take the initiative."

## **U.S.S. Grissom, Deck 4, Arms Locker**

When Bacari Jata arrived at the main arms locker on Deck 4, he found Lieutenant Juan Casas and Specialist Aabin already there, along with Cadet Kara McLoughlin.

"McLoughlin, Aabin, you should be at your posts!" said Jata, reprimanding them.

"Relax Mr. Jata. I ordered them to accompany me to the weapons locker. What the hell is going on?"

"Tholians, Lieutenant," said Jata. Jata, the Senegalese Petty Officer First Class, Navigation, commanded his team with quiet respect. Nothing ever seemed to faze him.

"Now that McLoughlin and Aabin are here, we can take advantage of them. Distribute hand held communicators to every department. I'll take this deck down, you two take the upper decks," he said to McLoughlin and Aabin.

"And everyone take a phaser, just in case," said Casas. "I've no idea where Lieutenant Thorsen is, but we have to expect the worst."

"You're right of course," said Jata. "Let's go people".

## U.S.S. Grissom Bridge

"Still no answer to our hails, Commander" said Childers.

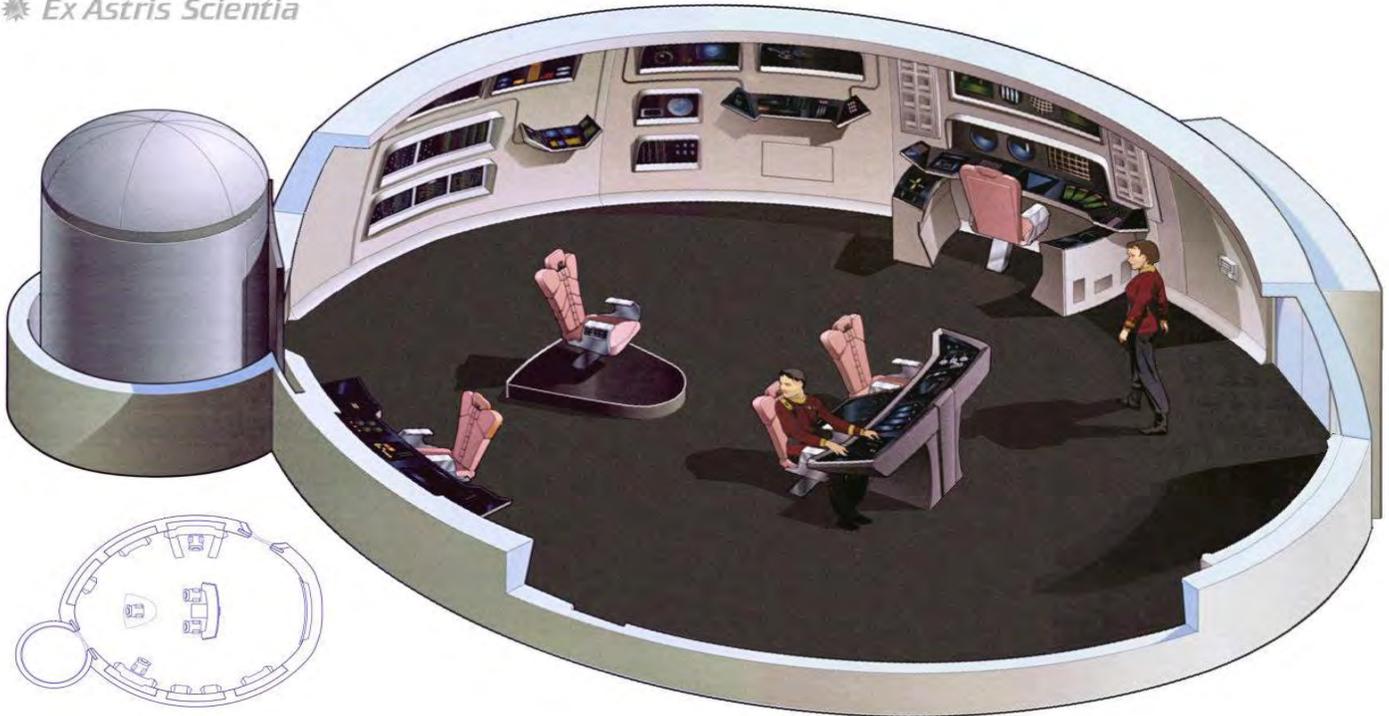
"As Tholians are sound frequency sensitive, I suggest that we send a barrage of high frequency noise at the lead ship, using the main deflector for amplification. That'll get them," said Saunders.

"Good thinking, Saunders," said Ottair.

"I'm on it Commander" said Childers.

A high frequency burst of static came over the speakers. Childers smiled. "Captain, we have caught their attention."

✦ *Ex Astris Scientia*



The viewscreen came to life and a Tholian appeared, the reddish colour beneath its carapace suggesting fluid or field motion. Some of its six legs appeared on the screen. It clicked and chirped loudly as it looked upon the bridge of the Grissom.

"It's says we are incapacitated and are to surrender to the forces of the Tholian Assembly. 'Your vessel is now ours'," translated Childers.

Ottair spoke directly to the Tholian on the screen. "I am Commander Stephanie Ottair, First Officer of the U.S.S. Grissom. Your vessels are in clear violation of Federation Space. If you leave now, this incident can be overlooked."

There was more high-pitched squealing, "I think it's... it's laughing, Commander" said Childers. The squealing continued. " 'Prepare to be boarded', " said Childers.

"Commander, they've opened fire," said Chattman.

"Red Alert! Evasive manoeuvres!" shouted Ottair.

"I'll do my best, but on auxiliary, it won't be much," said Sato, even as her fingers moved deftly over her control station. The Grissom tilted on her axis, but weapons fire from both Tholian ships hit her port nacelle.

"Shields at 20 percent, Commander," said Chattman. "There's another volley coming in".

"Brace for impact!" said Ottair. The bolts of energy struck the port nacelle again and Grissom rocked.

"Shields are down," said Chattman. "Minimal damage to all decks". The crew braced for another attack but nothing came.

"They aren't firing, they want us intact. They must want something, and the only thing I can think of is the Genesis information," said Ottair.

The computer voice boomed out, "Intruder Alert! Intruder Alert! Intruder Alert!"

"Commander, I should point out that although the Tholians are from a hot Class C world they can live for a short time with minor discomfort in a Class M environment," said Liebmann.

To echo the sentiment there was a transporter effect and three Tholians materialised on the Bridge in front of the main viewer.

"And, of course, they could wear environmental support suits," he continued, with some sarcasm, as he noted the strange carapace type extra shell covering the three Tholians.

A blast erupted from a Tholian weapon, narrowly missing Ottair, but its trajectory proceeded past her, hitting the science station, showering Liebmann, Chattman and Saunders in sparks.

Saunders ran past Liebmann and made his way quickly to the Communications station. "Childers! Full frequency high-sonic reverb, on all speakers, all spectrums, quick as you can!"

Childers moved quickly and the bridge speakers erupted in noise. The Tholians seemed uncomfortable and distracted, but not incapacitated.

"I'm lowering the Bridge temperature drastically," shouted Liebmann from the Science station. "Even with their suits on, it might have some effect."

Ice crystals formed on the bridge instrumentation as the temperature plummeted rapidly and the Tholians began to increase the volume of their strange voices. "They'll have to leave or die," said Liebmann.

True enough, the Tholians vanished in a transporter effect.

"Good work Gentlemen," said Ottair. "Chattman, lower the temperature shipwide".

"I can't Commander, we only have localised control" responded Chattman. "And, Commander," he said more urgently now, "sensors show a large Tholian boarding party on Deck 4".

"Engineering, they're making for Engineering!" said Ottair.

## **U.S.S. Grissom Deck 4**

The sound of a firefight echoed around the area of the Engineering Diagnostics Workshop, as the Tholian boarding party attempted to get past a temporary blockade of work trolleys, gurneys and furniture piled together by Lieutenant Juan Casas, Specialist Aabin, Cadet Kara McLoughlin and four members of the security team.

"Add more bulk to the barricade, men!" shouted Casas. "McLoughlin, Aabin, concentrate your fire on the glowing spots at the top of their torso."

"I take it you mean their eyes?" shouted McLoughlin over the phaser fire.

"Just do it!" shouted Casas. "We can't let them reach main engineering."

The Tholians retreated slightly, but continued firing. "Lieutenant Casas, some of the Tholians have disappeared, they may have gone aft to come at us from the other side of the deck," said Wood, between phaser shots.

"Some of you men go port and aft and head them off," shouted Casas to the Security team.

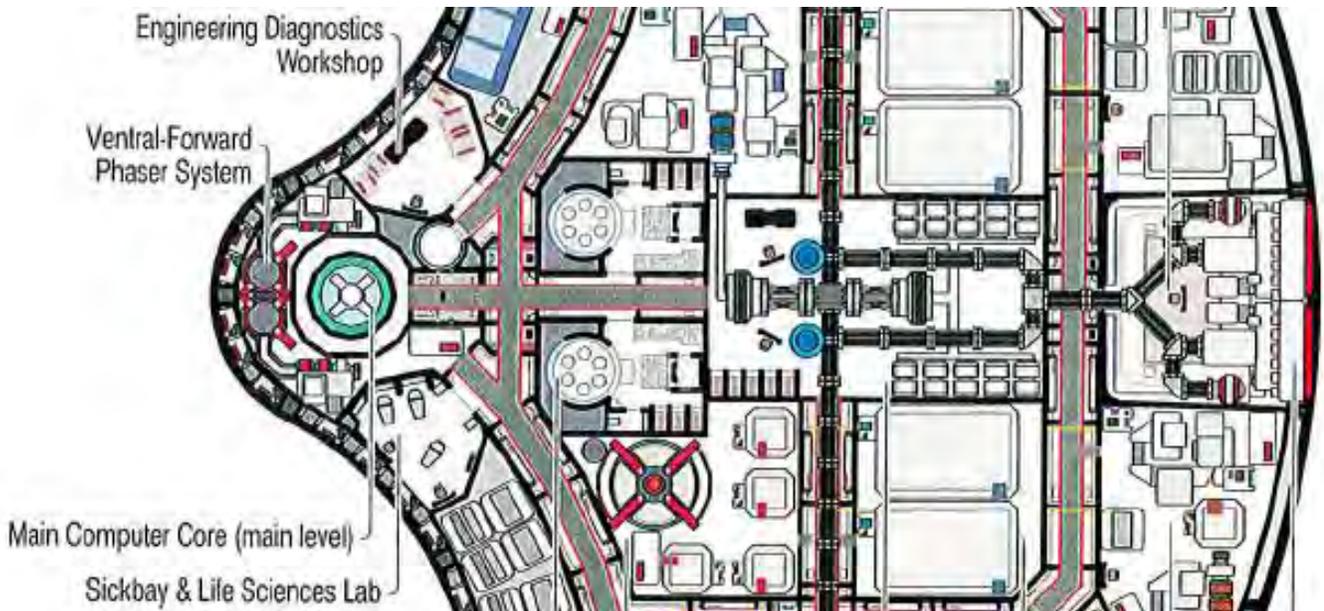
"Aabin, check in with Engineering, see if they are okay."

Aabin stood from behind his cover of a smouldering workbee and turned toward Engineering. “Of course, sir,” he said, but suddenly he was hit in the back by a blast from a Tholian, who had darted back out from the corridor ahead.

“Aabin!” screamed Kara McLoughlin, as she watched the young Deltan fall to the floor.

The phaser fire increased. “McLoughlin, Sickbay is nearby, get him there now. Me and my men will hold off the Tholians!”

As Kara turned to help Aabin, she was aided by the returning Bacari Jata who was coming from the direction of Engineering.



“I’ll carry him, McLoughlin. Get to Engineering and make yourself useful. They can use your help!” he said.

“Aye, sir,” said McLoughlin, and ran toward the nearby Main Engineering.

As Jata entered Sickbay, he saw that Dr. S’Raazh was busy tending to wounded Security men. The dog, Muggle, was barking furiously and running around. S’Raazh looked up as he entered. “Get him on the ICU bio bed and get his tunic off,” she said calmly.

Jata moved to comply. He looked shocked as he passed a hospital gurney. “My God, Ensign DeLonghi!” he said. “I’m afraid she’s dead, but we can’t worry about that now” said S’Raazh.

"Just stay lying down, Ensign Gerber. You have a mild concussion. I must look at Specialist Aabin."

Jata stood back. "I'll contact the Bridge," he said, flipping out his communicator. "Bridge, Jata here."

Ottair's voice came over the comm. "At last, report Jata".

Jata replied, "Lieutenant Casas and his men are in a firefight with Tholians who are attempting to take Engineering. I've sent McLaughlin to help out. We have wounded here in Sickbay. Ensign DeLonghi is dead and Specialist Aabin was shot by the Tholians."

Jata heard a shout from the bridge, it was the voice of Lieutenant Commander Christopher Chattman. "Aabin, is he alright?"

"Chattman, get back to work, we have no time," rebuked Ottair.

The calm voice of Vindi S'Raazh came across the bridge speaker. "I'm stabilising Aabin. I'll take care of him, Chattman, you have my word." She hesitated. "Commander Ottair, where is the Captain, is **he** alright?"

"Stuck in a turbolift" said Ottair. "But he's safe!"

Vindi allowed herself a sigh of relief. "At least he's out of harm's way. Commander, you have to stop this now. The fighting is dangerously close to sickbay and I can't move the wounded right now."

"We're working on it," said Ottair. "Jata, keep this channel open and keep me posted!"

"Aye, Commander," said Jata.

"Lie still Aabin, I promised Chattman you'd live, so you're going to live," said S'Raazh, as she began to attend to Aabin's wound.

## **U.S.S. Grissom, Main Engineering**

Lieutenant Paul Charles paused to wipe the sweat from his brow. As Kara McLoughlin entered the main engineering deck, she saw him at the plasma injectors with Specialist Rasputin attempting to help him. She raced over to help.

"Ah, McLoughlin, good, somebody who knows engineering. If you can isolate the off axis field generator for me, I should be able to finish the warp plasma injector resequecing".

"Of course sir, I'm here to help," said Kara.

Moving swiftly, Charles and McLoughlin worked side by side.

“Ok, this should be it,” said Charles. “Initialising injector restart in 3, 2, 1...”

With a flash of blue energy, the plasma injectors leapt into life.

## **U.S.S. Grissom, Bridge**

Rebecca Sato nearly leapt from her chair.

“Stephanie! The mains are back online!”

The bridge lighting came on full.

“Well done, Charles,” said Ottair, almost to herself.

“Childers, give us full shields and defensive screens. Sato, bring us about to face the Tholian vessels. Chattman, open fire on both Tholian vessels, full photon torpedo spread.”

“Aye sir!” said Childers, Sato and Chattman as one.

Chattman took the weapons station, once manned by his dear friend Hewson. “Torpedoes away Commander.”



They watched the screen in unison as the photon torpedoes detonated against the hulls of the Tholian ships.

“Their shields are down,” said Childers. “Tholian Patrol Craft are not heavily armed.”

"I know that, Childers" said Ottair. "Chattman, lock phasers and target their disruptor banks and web generators. They may be Scout Ships, but together they can still pack a wallop!"

"Phasers locked in, Commander," said Chattman.

"FIRE!" said Ottair. The phaser banks of the Grissom lashed out, and the Tholian vessels were hit squarely.

"Their weapons are offline," said Childers. "Commander, the Tholians at Main Engineering must have beamed out before we could raise full shields. They're gone".

"Commander, the Tholian vessels are moving off in the direction of the Tholian Assembly," said Sato. "Should I pursue?"

"Don't be ridiculous!" screamed Liebmann, across the Bridge. "We just made it out of this mess by the skin of our teeth, and there may be more mines around".

"I concur with Dr. Liebmann, if not his hysterical screaming. This is one battle I choose *not* to fight," said Ottair.

"Childers, ship wide communications link now," said Ottair. Childers complied and Ottair spoke. "All crew, this is Commander Ottair; we were boarded by, but have repelled, a Tholian attack force. Report to your team leader or section head immediately. Section heads, perform a head count and report in to Lieutenant Childers at the Bridge ASAP. Captain, if you hear this, please come directly to the bridge. Commander Ottair out." Ottair closed the channel.

"I need to know what price we paid to win this particular round. Childers contact Enterprise, advise them of this incident and that we need assistance. We will maintain our position until they arrive. Chattman, full scans for any more spatial mines, let's clear a path for Enterprise. And please turn up the Bridge temperature, it's freezing in here!"

"Commander, I got your call, you seem to have everything in order," came the voice of Captain J.T. Esteban, as he exited the turbolift. "I'll take a full report in my ready room. Chattman you have the Bridge."

"Aye, sir," said Chattman.

As Ottair and Esteban left the bridge, Chattman used the comm. "Sickbay, this is Chattman, I was just wondering..." but before he could finish, Chattman was interrupted by the voice of Dr. S'Raazh.

“Specialist Aabin is stable, Lieutenant Commander Chattman. Now if you don’t mind, I’ve work to do.” Chattman found he had tears in his eyes. “Of course. Thank you. Thank you, Doctor.” Aabin was alive.

Rebecca Sato shivered at her console. “Get that temperature up quickly, Christopher, I’m really feeling the cold,” she said.

Clive Saunders draped his jacket around her shoulders and gave her a reassuring squeeze on her left shoulder as he did so. “Here Lieutenant, have my jacket, we wouldn’t want you catching a chill,” he said, before turning and leaving the bridge.

## **U.S.S. Grissom, Deck 4**

Rachel Wood moved quietly and quickly along the port side of the deck. As she turned a corner she was confronted by Juan Casas and a group of her crewmates.

“Ensign Wood. Report. Did you encounter any Tholians on your way forward? A small group of them were heading aft before we restored power. The group we were in a firefight with managed to beam out” explained Casas.

Wood seemed hesitant. “Ah, yes, there are a number of Tholian bodies back down the corridor, about four, I guess...” she ventured, before continuing rapidly, “but I have no idea what happened to them. When I heard them coming, I hid in a Jefferies tube.”

Casas spoke “Okay. I’ll have my men check it out. In the meantime, you should report to Lieutenant Charles in Engineering, they need all the help they can get.”

“Aye, sir,” said Wood, and walked away.

A male Cadet appeared around the corner from the direction that Wood had come. “It would appear that Wood was correct, Lieutenant Casas. There are four Tholian bodies present, but all seem to have been dismembered. Not a phaser mark on any of them.”

“Dismembered?” asked Casas incredulously. “How can that be? We have no race on our crew capable of that. How can Wood not have heard anything?”

The male Cadet merely smiled. “I think you are correct on both counts, Lieutenant. I find the entire incident most suspicious.”

Casas took out his communicator. “Casas to bridge, I need a xenologist down on Deck 4, aft section 3. ASAP.”

The voice of Michael Liebmann came back. "Sounds intriguing. I'll be there directly, Lieutenant, I'll collect Dr. Saunders on the way." Casas turned to the Cadet who had spoken to him, but he had disappeared.

## **U.S.S. Grissom, Transporter Room**

### **4 hours later**

As the Transporter effect faded, Dr. David Marcus and Lt. Saavik found themselves looking at Rachel Wood at the transporter console, and the imposing figure of Lars Thorsen.

"Dr. Marcus, Lt. Saavik. I am Lieutenant Lars Thorsen, Special Ops. The Captain needs to have a final talk with Admiral Kirk, before we move off, and asked me to welcome you both aboard."

"Thank you Lieutenant. I think my Father will want to know all about your incident with the Tholians. Hope Enterprise hasn't kept you waiting?" said Marcus, as he stepped down from the transporter platform.

Thorsen grunted to himself "We were not in any serious danger, this is a competent crew. I believe Enterprise will scout the border to prevent any further incursions whilst we continue on our mission".

Saavik spoke "Your understanding is correct Lieutenant. The Enterprise will pursue the matter of this incursion of Federation space by the Tholian Assembly. Is the Grissom badly damaged?"

Thorsen shook his head. "Minimal damage. They were only trying to incapacitate us, obviously looking for information".

The doors to the transporter room slid open and Clive Saunders appeared. "David!" he exclaimed, and hugged David Marcus heartedly. David Marcus hugged him back. This man had played an important role in his life and that of his mother for over 2 years.

"Clive, it is so good to see you, you have no idea how good it is to know you're aboard".

Clive released David from his hug. "You have your Mother to thank. Believe me, if the start of this voyage has been anything to go by, we're in for a bumpy ride!" Saunders then turned to Saavik. "And this beauty must be the lovely Lieutenant Saavik. I've heard so much about you from young David here".

Saavik blushed and seem flustered. "You have?".

David Marcus interrupted. "I was merely telling Clive what a wonderful Science Officer you will be, Lieutenant".

“Amongst other things” teased Saunders.

Lars Thorsen now interrupted “If this little party is over, Lieutenant Saavik you are to report to the bridge. Dr. Marcus, if you will follow me, I will show you to your quarters”.

## **U.S.S. Grissom Captain’s Ready Room**

“Thanks for the good wishes, Jim. And thank you for Lieutenant Saavik. Hopefully, we can all get together when this mission is over. Esteban out”.

J.T. Esteban turned from the viewscreen and spoke to Commander Stephanie Ottair “If anyone can scare the Tholians back across the border, Jim Kirk is the man for the job”.

“I don’t doubt it Captain” replied Ottair. She remained quiet and took another sip of her coffee.

Esteban stood. “Stephanie, I know you’ve briefed me, and logged your report, but I want you to know, your actions today were commendable. You repelled a boarding party and kept this ship in one piece against a hostile force”.

Ottair shook her head “Thank you Captain, but I’m afraid my victory came with a price. Ensign DeLonghi is dead, Specialist Aabin is still not out of danger, and we have 6 injured crewmen”.

Esteban walked to the window and looked at the Enterprise as she moved away. “I know. And DeLonghi’s death, no more than that of Hewson and Solak, weighs on me heavily. But she died doing her duty. I knew Ensign DeLonghi, Sharon, quite well. She was an excellent Ensign, and her sacrifice was not in vain. If she hadn’t alerted Lieutenant Casas to the Tholian incursion on Deck 4, they would have taken Engineering”.

“I understand Captain, it just doesn’t make it any easier” said Ottair. “In effect, DeLonghi was a pawn I had to sacrifice to check the Tholians. I’m not particularly proud of the analogy, but there you go.”

Before Esteban could reply the comm went “Bridge to Captain Esteban, we are ready to move off, sir” came the voice of Lieutenant Rebecca Sato.

“Thank you, Sato, resume course to the Mutara sector, ahead warp factor five” he said, to which Sato replied “Aye sir”. Esteban turned to Ottair. “I’m heading for the bridge, I’m sure they need you in Engineering. Stephanie, you did good”. Ottair rose.

“Thank you Captain, I’ll be on my way”. She left, leaving Esteban wondering just what would happen next.

## U.S.S. Grissom Sickbay

Specialist Aabin lay on a bio bed, his life functions monitored continually. The door to the ICU area opened and Dr. S’Raazh and Lieutenant Commander Christopher Chattman entered the bay.

“As I was saying, Chattman” said S’Raazh, “Aabin is in a coma which I have induced to help him recover. He is intubated, and cannot speak, but he will be able to hear you. The Tholian weapon burnt right through his thorax, narrowly missing his heart, and there was substantial haemorrhaging. The coma will reduce his systolic and diastolic blood pressure and allow the blood vessels time to heal”.

“He will be alright though, won’t he?” ventured Chattman.

“That’s what I just said. I’ll leave you two alone” said S’Raazh as she exited.

Chattman stood beside Aabin’s biobed and breathed deeply. He then slowly took Aabin’s hand in his own. “Aabin, it’s me, Christopher. I’m sorry for what I said earlier. You know I didn’t mean it. Please get better. You were right about me. You were right.”



*My name is Paul Hewson. Nothing is forever. In a fight until the end there is always the risk of loss and defeat. There is always the danger of oblivion.*

*When my friend and colleague Stephanie Ottair played her games of chess, she was ruthless in her steely determination to win. Every pawn was expendable, every move made without hesitation. During the Tholian Incident of 2285, she learnt something about the price of victory. Sometimes, the loss of a pawn can take the satisfaction from the win. Sometimes, the winner can lose.*



## ***The Stars My Destination*** **Chapter 6 in the U.S.S. Grissom Saga**

Plot: Seán Paul Teeling & Bodo Hartwig  
Script: Seán Paul Teeling  
Editors: Melissa Dyke & Bodo Hartwig  
Formatting and Design: Rick Pike

*The authors acknowledge the monologues from the ABC-TV series 'Desperate Housewives' as inspiration for the Hewson prologue and epilogue.*

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<http://hiddenfrontier.com/>

