

STAR TREK GRISSOM



CHAPTER 95
FAITH



Faith

By Adrian Jones
(2012)

The hour of the wolf sees their faces return to haunt me. I wasn't there for them when they had their throats slit; it doesn't stop their pleading eyes haunting me. When the nightmares finally leave me, I find myself questioning the decisions that have brought me to this point.

Should I have rushed to get Genesis ready? Did I need to use proto-matter? What will we find when we get to Genesis? Will I be able to keep my secret in light of what we do find?

Excerpt from the Private Journal of Dr. David Marcus

Prologue

Research station Regula One, Mutara Sector *Stardate 8014.4*

Often referred to as Marcus Labs, the Federation research station had spent two years working on a dream. This dream was a secret one, its beginnings cloaked behind the veil of Starfleet Command since the Taurus Reach missions at Starbase *Vanguard*. After a successful proposal to Starfleet Command to move the project onto the larger Stage Two, Starfleet Command at San Francisco despatched the *Miranda* class U.S.S. *Reliant* under Captain Clark Terrell to the station. There had been projects in the past that had been conducted under a similar veil of secrecy: the *Manhattan* project of the 1940s and the *Have Blue* stealth project of the 1970s were just two examples.

The Mutara Sector was a backwater region tucked away in the underbelly of the Federation, away from prying eyes. The Mutara Nebula gave a convenient excuse for having a research base there; however the work being done there was for something far different to stellar research.

"There can't be so much as a microbe on the planetoid you find or the show's off" said Pavel Chekov to Captain Terrell, imitating the drawl of Doctor Carol Marcus. The captain couldn't help but laugh. The two of them had heard the same refrain from Doctor Marcus all the way from being dispatched to the station up until their arrival there.

"I think we got the message, don't you Commander?"

"I spent five years on the *Enterprise* looking for life, now we have twelve months to find somewhere totally without any; it shouldn't be hard."

"You know life always finds a way; polar ice caps and volcanic springs have life."

"Too true; if life can survive in the wastes of Siberia, it can survive anywhere."

The two officers shared another grin as the airlock door opened from the *Reliant* into the spacious reception area of *Regula One*. Doctors Carol and David Marcus were standing ready to welcome the new arrivals. Chekov noted how young David Marcus looked for a doctor of bio-molecular physics; for that matter, Chekov didn't know much about bio-molecular physics except it was a relatively new field of science. He was a young doctor, but then it wasn't that long ago that Chekov was a young ensign.

David Marcus was a lanky twenty-three year old and fidgeted as he stood with his mother at the airlock.

"You know I get nervous when we have dealings with the military. I still don't understand why you had to bring them in on this."

"Because you would take over a century with a shovel to dig the caves that we need to proceed onto phase two," Carol countered long-sufferingly. "Besides, we need a starship to do this."

"That's still no guarantee that they won't take what we have achieved so far and use it for their *own* ends," David snapped.

"Oh David, you really need to relax about Starfleet; just because they perform the role of the military when they *have* to, it doesn't *make* them the military. Not in the sense that you see them."

With the sliding open of the airlock doors, the conversation came to an immediate, awkward end. Carol Marcus smiled warmly to greet the arriving officers, surreptitiously elbowing David in the ribs to remind him to smile too.

* * * *

U.S.S. Grissom

Stardate 8202.4. Seven days to arrival at Genesis planet. 03:30 hours.

David Marcus raised his head from the sweat-soaked pillow; sleep was eluding him once more. He awoke to find himself in Lieutenant Saavik's cabin. Her bunkmate, Lt. Rebecca Sato, was on the graveyard shift.

"What's wrong?" Saavik asked gently. It didn't seem to matter what time of day it was, the Vulcan lieutenant was ever-alert.

"Too much on my mind; we are nearing Genesis and I have nothing but tests and preparations plaguing my thoughts."

"Is that all?" Saavik probed, knowing the answer before she asked.

Marcus' head dropped. "Ghosts, Saavik. Ever since I left Regula One they've never left me. Jedda, March, Madison: they were all a part of the Genesis project from the start; they were there for all of the decisions made that led us to this point. And they were murdered for it."

Saavik could see the pain in David's eyes. This wasn't unexpected; post-traumatic stress was a common occurrence after experiences like the one David had been through at the hands of Khan Noonien Singh.

"You are never alone, David. If you want to talk about this then I am here."

Doctor Marcus managed a smile and wrapped Saavik in his arms. There was indeed much on his mind, and some of it he hadn't – and couldn't – share with even Saavik.

* * * *

08:00 Hours

David Marcus stood at the head of the room full of the Grissom's science team. His beanpole frame lent his appearance the awkwardness of youth, yet the assembled group had come to know that he had one of the sharpest minds of anyone on the ship. Word had passed round quickly that this was the son of Admiral James T. Kirk and his sharpness of intellect backed this up.

He looked down the room at the core team: Dr. Michael Liebmann; Dr. Clive Saunders, onetime lover and colleague of his mother Carol Marcus; his own beloved Lt. Saavik; and the young Welsh cadet, Rebecca Wood. Also present was a rather sulky and recently demoted Lt. Christopher Chattman; present, but still recovering from the recent viral outbreak aboard Grissom.

"Good morning." The young doctor greeted his peers in his usual casual, uncertain manner. "With our initial probe now entering the Mutara Sector and coming within scanning range of the Genesis Planet, this briefing is to ensure that we are as ready for this as possible, as well as to answer any questions you might have."

The screen changed from the standard Project Genesis logo – consisting of a moon morphing into a green, fertile world – to a slideshow of the project so far.

“Today is the fruition of Stage Three of the Genesis Project. Originally it was intended to be worked up in stages from a laboratory test to a small asteroid location until the final detonation of the torpedo on a lifeless moon or other planetary body. As you are all aware, the torpedo was stolen by terrorists and subsequently exploded in the Mutara Nebula.” Marcus paused, bowed his head and spoke again. “Many friends and colleagues died at the hands of these terrorists, so we owe it to them to see this project through to completion.”

There was a general nodding of heads and unspoken agreement amongst all in the lab. The screen changed to show long-range scans of the system.

“We have seen from the scans taken by the *Enterprise* that a fair chunk of the Mutara Nebula has been reconfigured into the programmed planetary matrix by the Genesis Wave. It was planned that this would reconfigure a planetoid into a like-for-like configuration with the addition of life, rather than to convert a gaseous nebula into said form. As far as the initial scans we conducted from the *Enterprise* show, the planet has a stable crust with a core structure that seems to have plant life-forms already, as intended.”

Doctor Liebmann interrupted at that point, making reference to the PADD that had, until then, lain untouched in his lap.

“You are certain, Doctor Marcus, that there was only plant life on Genesis?”

“Absolutely, with the possible exception of primitive life that may have come from the torpedo itself. We designed the Genesis matrix to form the supportive planet, with the botany to produce the food and atmospheric conditions from which we wanted animal life to be introduced later.”

Liebmann again referred to his PADD, “And yet the scans from the *Enterprise* have shown, what could be determined to be the first signs of life detectable from the initial readings. I would also remind you that Admiral Kirk fired the coffin of Captain Spock at the Genesis planet. Have you factored in what a torpedo containing Vulcan DNA will do, should the unformed gravity and atmosphere not have burned it up?”

The questions were coming thick and fast from Liebmann. David could feel his cheeks burn at the rebuke directed at his father, but he didn't let it affect his delivery.

“In answer to your questions; the Federation Science Council felt that the scans from a battle-damaged *Constitution* class starship were less than reliable – hence the reason we are out here and under the direction of Admiral Morrow. As for the decisions made by Admiral Kirk, I suggest you take it up with him when we get back to Starbase 67.” Marcus then changed tack, “if I may continue?”

Liebmann nodded.

“As you can see from this computer simulation, we expect there to be interference from the planet due to the residual Genesis wave, adding to the possibility of long-range erroneous readings that I have just mentioned. We can expect there to be plant life and primitive animal life-forms. The planetary conditions should have stabilised enough for a landing party; the best way to get results will be to get a team onto the surface as soon as possible—”

“Once we have ascertained the planet is safe to do so, Doctor Marcus,” interjected Captain Esteban, as he entered the room quietly and sat at the back of the group of scientists, effectively reigning in the young scientist’s enthusiasm.

“Erm, yes, absolutely Sir,” stammered Marcus, always nervous around the senior brass. “The studies shall be conducted in the following phases: Phase One will be the initial scan of the planet – which we are about to do today. Phase Two will be a detailed scan of the planet that we will conduct upon our arrival. Phase Three will be a small, initial landing party assigned to ensure the surface conditions are safe and suitable for follow-up teams. Mr Thorson and his team will ensure the safety of the team and give pre-mission briefings. Once the initial team has confirmed the planet is safe enough, the main teams will beam down.”

* * * *

U.S.S. Grissom– Sickbay

To the Sickbay staff the beeps and chimes of the medical equipment monitoring patient vital signs were muted to background murmurs as they went about their tasks. Sickbay’s sole occupant, however, was beyond hearing them – at this point.

Others had been infected by the virus from the mysterious outbreak after the recent incident with the Tarellians. However, Chief Petty Officer Sohrab Saberi was a fighter, a survivor. Two of those others had unfortunately died, Specialist Liisi Tamkivi and Petty Officer Absalon Jensen, but Sohrab was hanging on, battling the microscopic enemy that was still raging through his veins.

“Are you still fighting Sohrab?” asked the Voice.

“I haven’t finished my mission yet.”

Sohrab could just about make out a shape in the darkness - a woman. She was the source of the voice.

“Your mission? You know that Allah alone decides when you are finished.”

“If it is His will.” Saberi was always a man of few words, but this voice was so familiar, so trustworthy.

“Do you know why you are here, Sohrab?”

“I felt ill, feverish and then I must have passed out.”

The Voice changed tack. “You never really talked about where you were from.”

Sohrab’s thoughts flew back to his origins. Masjed Soleiman had been the site where the first petroleum exploration in the Middle East had been granted. That same oil had led to the near-destruction of the Middle East and rest of the world during the Third World War. The city had escaped destruction and had grown in size to occupy the niche between the Zagreb Mountains. Sohrab had been one of the half-million people living in the city in the late 23rd Century.

“I don’t like to remember those days. It was so long ago,” Sohrab declared. “I was a fortunate young man; I found the woman of my dreams when I was at school,”

Even in the twilight world of a coma, Sohrab smiled.

“Her name was Pari and she had eyes that were warm and dark.”

“How did you win her heart?” asked the Voice.

“I wooed her with poetry and, when I was old enough, I asked her father for her hand in marriage. We were wed a few months later at the local mosque, friends and family from both sides were present and the celebrations were memorable. Truly Allah was most kind to this humble servant.”

“Your relationship was truly blessed with both of you deeply in love,” the Voice added, prodding Sohrab to continue. “During the first year of your marriage, you enlisted in Starfleet Academy. Your passion for your wife was matched only by your dedication to your training, specialising in security operations.”

“And then Allah blessed me with a son, Kaveh.”

“You made sure that you spent as much time on leave with your wife and son as you could and hoped to be assigned somewhere where your family could be close by,” recounted the Voice.

Fate had other things in store.

“It sounds so good, Sohrab. How did it go so wrong for you?”

* * * *

Regula One Station - The Past

Regula One

Scientist's Log.

Dr. David Marcus recording.

Stardate 8057.2

Whilst the Reliant has had a few possible positive results in their quest for no life, work has continued tirelessly here at Regula One. Preparations continue for stage two of Genesis: scaling up the laboratory-sized experiment to planetoid size. My thoughts are skipping ahead to the third stage. Whilst I have been able to scale up a device – Genesis Beta – ready for the second test, my calculation for the tertiary device show that to create the biodiversity needed for a stable biosphere of planetary proportions requires a much greater complexity of basic bio-flora. I have scoured the data banks from the Vanguard records and have yet to find a satisfactory answer.

The meetings on Regula One had been a routine fixture of life on the science station. Since the recent completion of Stage One of the Genesis Project in the lab, Stage Two was now well underway. Manipulating matter on desktop scale was one thing; on the scale of the cavern being prepared by Starfleet Corp of Engineering was another thing entirely. The success of Stage One had new ramifications: the reasons behind Genesis and the implications of ‘playing God’.

Carol Marcus sat at the head of the table as usual, a cup of coffee steaming gently by her hand. Her lips contorted into a wry smile as she read through the PADD in her left hand.

“Lieutenant Commander Henderson reports that the cavern preparations are running ahead of schedule. It seems the visit of the U.S.S. *Melnikonis* has raised his optimism even higher than normal.”

“As long as the military don’t try to take Genesis away from us,” replied David Marcus.

“Ever the cynic,” jested Jedda, with a smirk. “I think that Starfleet are satisfied to dig for us for a time, and steal Genesis *later*.”

Chuckles erupted from many of those assembled around the table and David’s cheeks reddened with embarrassment. His mother gently waved down the laughter so that the meeting could continue.

Next to Carol Marcus was Clive Saunders. The mousey-haired doctor worked closely with Dr Marcus and his relationship with her was one of the worst-kept secrets on the station. Saunders was unhappy with the involvement of Starfleet in the Genesis Project, but accepted it was the only way to get the cavern dug.

“Stage One, whilst impressive, brings us to the point that we can delay no longer; we must address the ethical implications of Genesis.”

“The facts are plain,” Carol pointed out directly, “the Federation needs more M class planets for colonies and farming planets. We cannot keep relying on discovering planets that are *almost* right for our purposes. There are too many that are also shared in claim by the Klingons, the Gorn, the Tholians – and that is just for starters.”

Vance March nodded, causing his foppish dark hair to shudder. “So what we are doing this for is to turn planetoids that are unclaimed and unwanted into new planets for colonising and feeding the Federation?”

Jedda couldn’t resist the real ethical question: “What about playing God? Our project is a secret for now but once it is made public knowledge there are bound to be complaints. Creating life – and we are talking animal life as well as plants – goes against most religious credos and the beliefs of dozens of Federation member worlds. Not to mention the potential military applications...”

Jedda caught the gaze of David Marcus in unspoken agreement.

Carol sighed quietly to herself before launching her response. “Look at nuclear fission; Doctor Oppenheimer is often quoted as being ‘Death, the destroyer of Worlds’, but the truth is that nuclear energy later helped to reduce the carbon emissions of Earth in the 21st Century during a time when the changes in the climate threatened starvation and the swamping of Pacific atolls. Invention is neither good nor evil; it is the application of that discovery that decides that.”

“But the radioactive legacy of the technology is still being cleaned up today,” Jedda responded.

“It comes from not having been prepared for the technological leap,” Carol responded confidently, then added with a wry smile, “It reminds me of the discoveries in the Taurus Reach that led to this project. We have had almost twenty years to prepare ourselves for Genesis.”

“What about the involvement of Starfleet? Assigning the *Reliant* to this project just strengthens their hold. Surely a Federation Science Council vessel such as the *Michaux* would have been a better choice?” David Marcus couldn’t help but voice his concerns.

“Starfleet has the resources and the experience in dealing with unknowns such as those the Genesis Project include at this time” said Doctor Carlos Lomax, who was always a proponent of Starfleet. The Mexican botanist had worked on the *Hermes* class scout *Diana* before *Regula One*. He had argued from the start for Starfleet to run the Genesis Project. “Have you forgotten how the Taurus Reach project almost ended in failure more than once? The Tholians, the Klingons and the Shedai—all of them cost lives in the research at the *Vanguard* station. Had Starfleet not been handling the research then *none* of us would be here now.”

David Marcus betrayed his feelings through his body language; his folded arms and stern look announcing his strong disagreement with the comments of Dr Lomax. Lomax hid his feelings behind his moustache.

“When does Captain Terrell reckon that the *Reliant* will be ready to conduct the implementation of Stage Three?” Jedda broke the silence, deciding to change the topic from Starfleet involvement to the actual timescale for the project.

Carol Marcus naturally re-assumed the mantle of project manager “Assuming Stage Two is conducted in the next twelve months then we can look to around Stardate 8450 for the detonation of the device itself.”

“Also assuming we can fit all of the data we need to into the torpedo computer,” David joked.

“It will fit. Just,” observed Saunders. “I have run my calculations through with Commander Solak on the *Reliant*. Besides, if anything more is needed I can guarantee it will *not* fit in the *Reliant*’s torpedo tubes!”

* * * *

Genesis Planet **Six Days until the arrival of the U.S.S.Grissom**

The sun rose over the azure skies of Genesis, bathing the flora in gentle yellow light. The idyllic Eden-like paradise woke up as the life-giving warmth bathed the plants, providing them with photosynthetic energy. Interrupting the floral utopia was the glinting black metallic cylinder with red characters on the side reading “*Mark VI photon torpedo*”. The artefact of Starfleet lay where the gravitational fields in flux had deposited it some weeks beforehand.

Far above the surface of Genesis another product of Starfleet arrived above the planet; this was the probe sent ahead by the *Grissom* to act as pathfinder for the scout ship. The Class 8 probe itself was a modified photon torpedo casing with a compact array of sensors placed where the warhead would have been. A torpedo was used for warp-capability and range, but also limited the amount of scanners that could be installed. The probe whirred into life and began to scan, transmitting the data back to the *Grissom*.

* * * *

U.S.S. Grissom science labs

“Receiving telemetry from the probe,” announced Lt.Saavik.

The screens around the laboratory came to life with information.

“All probe arrays online and transmitting,” Liebmann concurred, “and first information on atmospheric coming in.”

“Pressure and atmospheric composition are M class,” Marcus said as he typed furiously on his keyboard both from excitement and fear of what would now be discovered, “which closely mirror the Earth samples we used in the matrix.”

“Did those samples include vegetation?” Liebmann queried.

Marcus used his fingers to enlarge a section of the display from the sensor readings.

“Photosynthetic action detected on the planet surface—fascinating,” observed Saavik placidly.

“Plant life—fantastic!” Marcus enthused, caught in the moment.

Liebmann frowned as his fingers worked nimbly on the keyboard.

“Atmospherics appear to be interfering with some of the data collection – there seems to be multiple thunderstorms on the planet that are creating a natural jamming effect on the sensors. Some of the data just doesn’t seem to make sense, but I am sure it is just meteorological phenomena.”

David Marcus’ heart was in his throat. *Is he detecting thunderstorms and atmospheric or is that residual protomatter activity* he thought with deep anxiety. Attempting to throw up a smokescreen, he offered, “Perhaps it is residual effects of the Genesis detonation?”

“Unlikely but a possible explanation; we shall have to study this further when we get closer as we have no frame of reference for a Genesis wave of this magnitude,” concluded Saavik, studying the incoming data like a hawk.

“Gravimetric data suggests 1.01 times Earth standard. As for the ‘lightning storms in space’ theory, the interference could be more likely due to localised disruptive influences in the whole Mutara sector from the creation of the Genesis planet itself,” offered Clive Saunders, breaking his silence at the back of the lab.

The lab doors opened as Captain Esteban walked in.

“Not interrupting you am I? I thought I would come down to the lab since you have neglected to give commentary to the bridge – it makes us feel a little left out,” he joked.

“Sorry Captain, not wanting to hog all the information. Just trying to get our facts together before reporting it to you in full,” said Liebmann.

“The science stations on the bridge may have been insufficient for the information coming in, and far too crowded for all the scientific crew required,” observed Saunders. “Besides, we can always pipe the information up to the bridge.”

“That’s my point,” said Esteban, “in all this excitement you all forgot to press the ‘send it all up to the Captain’ button. How is the planet looking? Does it look like we can proceed as planned?”

“It looks great so far, Captain,” Marcus said, quite thrilled at the results.

“What Doctor Marcus means is that the preliminary data suggests an M class planet with atmospheric conditions suitable for a landing party, and the first indications of plant life as well, Captain,” Saavik reported concisely.

“Very good, Lt. Saavik and I want a full report—from all of you—on my desk by zero eight hundred hours.” Esteban gestured at all of the assembled scientists as he made his point of inclusion. “Carry on.”

Esteban exited for the bridge almost totally before stopping the closing door with his hand. “Oh and somebody press the intercom button for the Bridge from time to time please.”

Liebmann had continued uninterrupted, scanning the atmospheric interference. Marcus sensed something was amiss and walked over to his station.

“Have you found something?”

“I’m just looking at the atmospherics. Something keeps bothering me. I feel like I have seen this someplace before—I just can’t place it.”

Marcus knew he had to say something to put Liebmann off the scent. “With all the re-runs of Genesis data we’ve all sat through, it’s probably originating from there.”

Liebmann, tired from the recent adventures aboard Grissom, paused for a second before replying, “I’m sure you’re right.”

* * * *

U.S.S. Grissom—Sickbay

The stillness of Sohrab’s comatose body in an equally quiet Sickbay belied the intense mental activity taking place on a plane still not detectable by even 23rd-century medicine. Somewhere, the Security crewman continued his dialogue with the Voice.

“It was after graduation, aged nineteen years old that I was approached discreetly by Starfleet Security.”

It wasn’t hard to have an unnoticed conversation with a young Shiite on that day; whilst his classmates drank to excess and partied hard, the dedicated Muslim dutifully abstained from the forbidden alcohol and politely declined the ‘flesh and loud music show’ for quiet contemplation of his success. Just as his thoughts were turning to his future and his family’s role in that future, he was aware of being joined by a couple of figures who were doing their best not to stand out.

“That is the day the Orion Syndicate entered my life.”

The Orion Syndicate: the so-called Shadow Empire that spread across much of the Alpha and Beta Quadrants. Most knew of the existence of the Syndicate, but few realised just how far they had permeated into even the Federation. Saberi was now one of the few that did know, and he had paid the highest price for that knowledge.

“What did they ask you to do?” the Voice asked gently. Saberi was beginning to realise he knew this voice.

“It was supposed to be a routine mission,” Saberi began. “Federation Security had been working with Starfleet to compromise Orion Syndicate operations within the Federation. Despite the best efforts of

Federation Security and the dedicated forces of the Starfleet border control force, the vast area of frontier space had proved porous to the efforts of the Orion Syndicate. The best tactic to counter this was to use double agents within the organisation to tip off Federation Security and Starfleet on how best to stop the illegal activity.”

Double agents were a tactic used on Earth many times. During the Troubles in Ireland, in the late 20th century, agents were implanted into the IRA to gain intelligence on upcoming operations. More recently, the Romulans were the consummate masters with spies and double agents. Being an agent was a dangerous occupation and death was a strong probability and far worse was more likely if they were discovered by the Syndicate.

“So Starfleet had a double agent within the Syndicate. What was your role?”

“I was selected from the enlisted graduates to recover the agent from the Syndicate and escort him safely to testify for Federation Security at the Federation Council. Like the others, I was selected because I was unknown to the Syndicate.”

“So they could not compromise you?” the gentle voice probed.

“That was the plan. What we did not know was that it was a flawed plan. The Syndicate had eyes everywhere.”

“Did your mission succeed?”

“It did. Allah protected us from several attempts to kill both the agent and the rest of us. We survived them all and delivered the agent to the council. The information they gave about narcotics, people-smuggling and other illegal activities saw much of the Orion activity in the Federation exposed.”

Up to that point, Starfleet had restricted resources to counter the Orion shadow empire. With two Cold Wars in full flow on the Romulan and Klingon borders, the focus had to be there. As with Earth in the 1990s, it was only when the attention was moved elsewhere that the extent of the problem became known. Monoceros-class scout ships could be used to track signals traffic but it was organic assets – spies – that brought in the best information.

“But they caught up with you in the end?” A note of sorrow entered the Voice.

“Yes.” Even in comatose, Chief Petty Officer Saberi could not find the words for the next horrors. “They did.”

“Tell me what happened. Memories cannot hurt you here; they can only set you free.”

“They waited for several weeks until I was visiting my family in Masjed Soleiman. I beamed into the central transporter station before walking up the hill towards my home. I was just within sight of home when the comms channel opened on my communicator.”

“They wanted you to hear, for you to pass on the story.”

“The house burst into flames. I could hear them screaming in my ears. I ran to my home but the doors were locked down. I screamed at my communicator for them to be beamed out of there.”

“They jammed the transporters.” The Voice acknowledged.

"I grabbed the doors, tried to pull them open. I pulled until the flesh burned on my fingers and I could pull no more."

"The killed your family in revenge for the hurt you brought on the Syndicate."

He could hide no longer from the memories. They had haunted him for almost a decade.

"My Pari, my Kaveh; they burned to death as I listened. They used my home's own security systems to lock them in and then they murdered them."

The pain of the memories came back to Sohrab. He remembered the pain in his sides from running the distance to his house; the hoarseness of his throat as he shouted for Pari and Kaveh.

"...and you blame yourself?" the Voice gently probed.

Saberi remembered the shutters were closed on the windows and the doors were locked. The flames pierced the slits they could find until the rafters burned through and the roof caved in. He remembered his tears burning on his scorched hands as he collapsed to his knees.

"It was my fault; I killed them. I couldn't save them when they needed me."

* * * *

U.S.S. Grissom— Captain's Quarters

"Computer, dictate message:

"To Crewman 1st class Leena Tamkivi from Captain J T Esteban commanding U.S.S. Grissom. It is my sad duty to inform you of the death of Crewman 1st class Liisi Tamkivi in the performances of her duties. I understand this comes at a hard time while you wait at a Starbase to catch up with this mission following your own illness. Accept my apologies that I am writing this for sending later as the classified nature of this mission prevents any non-vital transmissions at this stage in our mission.

In light of the death of your sister I am hereby...erm..."

Esteban paused.

"Ah damn it! Computer delete last message. Why do my letters always sound so damn lame?"

"Command not understood." Computers never understood rhetorical rants, even when they came from the captain.

For the fourth time that day, Esteban had erased his letter of condolence; the words were just not coming. Although it had been a busy time since the deaths on his ship from the mysterious outbreak, he had been far too busy to write to the families of those who had died. *Too busy? Or just afraid of writing the words that confirm that the people I'd promised to protect are dead,* he thought.

He had only just gotten to know this crew with it being such a last minute mission to get to Genesis and study it before anybody else does. *Such a simple mission, on paper,* he thought.

The crew had been thrown together from those who hadn't been on leave, supplemented by the inexperienced cadets from the *Enterprise*, and the experienced – and security-cleared – crew transfers from the *Reliant*.

The crew had begun to bond, but as much from the circumstances that had been thrown on them than from the length of time together. The incident with Terlis at Cinera, The Ch'ramaki hostage situation, the Tholian attack, the Romulans and the viral incident had all side-tracked the mission of the *Grissom* and now threw doubt on whether there was enough crew left to complete the job. And Esteban knew it.

Conversations with Casas and Thor had confirmed what he had already feared: that there was going to be a short-fall in the security detail for any landing party to Genesis. Although that was a later, less-important aspect of the mission to perform this time, there may be the need to beam down. If they did, Esteban wanted the security detail there: by the book.

He looked up again at the images on the screen of those he still had to cover in his messages of condolences: Liisi Tamkivi and Absalom Jensen. Tamkivi was a twin, her sister being unable to board the mission after catching that bug on her last mission. He now had to find the right words to say that her sister, her twin, was dead not due to a security situation or a fire-fight but because she caught a virus and died. *What do you say? Just what can you say?* he thought.

He leafed through her personnel file for only the third time or so since she had joined his crew. The Estonian security operations specialist had been a specialist in every sense of the term; she had been competitive with her sister Leena since childhood and that had been extended into the Starfleet Academy Enlisted Program and her subsequent career. It reminded him why Thor had picked the twins for his team: she was a climber, sportswoman and a fighter – just what they could have done with at Genesis. If there was a tight spot, she would have got them out of it.

As a commanding officer, Esteban knew that there was always a very real risk he could lose some of his crew; but on this mission, with its top secret and controversial nature, there was a risk that maybe all of them would be sacrificed on the altar of science. The need was for a first class science vessel for the Genesis mission, not one of the older *Hermes* class, but an Oberth. Any larger vessel might provoke interest in their activities; the small 80-crew scout might elude that curiosity.

And now Esteban's thoughts turned to Absalom Jensen. Absalom had been more than just a crewmember: he had been the captain's steward. Whereas with Tamkivi, Esteban had seen her occasionally each day, the young Dane had been the one to wake him every day with his cup of coffee. The smile from the young fresh-faced petty officer had been infectious and was guaranteed to get him smiling right from the start. Jensen had made sure Esteban had been the cheery untroubled captain people had known from before. Sure a successor had been appointed straightaway—a captain is far too busy dealing with matters of the mission and the crew to worry about polishing his boots—but the truth was that the replacement wasn't the same. He was sure that Petty Officer Running Wolf was as efficient and skilled as Absalom was. The truth was he missed his steward; this wasn't just a role that you filled overnight.

Esteban hadn't been to Denmark, but the stories that his steward had told him whilst bringing breakfast in the morning were enough to flesh out the people and geography of Aalborg where he had grown up. The profile reminded him that Absalom had served on larger ships like the *Wasp* and *Electra*, as well as the routine of Starbase 13 where he had first met the young Dane.

At that moment, as the *Grissom* captain looked at which obituary to write first, the chimes of his intercom stopped him. He pressed the receiver button.

“Go ahead.”

“Captain Jeffery Pierce is on subspace hyper-channel for you, Sir.”

Despite the early hour on Grissom time, Pierce must have spoken to Harry Morrow about the situation, Esteban mused. “Put him through, Lt. Childers.”

The screen flickered to life with the grey-bearded commanding officer of the nearly-completed *Constellation* class U.S.S. *Hathaway*. Behind the captain, Esteban could see a mixture of Starfleet personnel and Copernicus Fleet Yard workers moving crates and zero-gravity sleds with pieces of equipment ready to be installed on the new star cruiser.

“I hear from Admiral Stoneridge that you may be having a few spots of bother,” Pierce quipped. “I thought I’d give you a pep talk.”

Esteban nodded at the melee behind Pierce. “Looks like you have your own organised chaos behind you, Jeff. How’s the ‘Other Great Experiment’ coming along?”

“She’ll launch on time, we’ve received orders from Admiral Stoneridge to proceed to Regula 1 Spacelab, and so we’ll be in the vicinity should you ‘need us’. That’s all the top brass are telling me so far. I, however, have surmised that you are going to the Genesis Planet, No need to confirm it or deny it Jonathan, let’s say no more on your mission for now’. A silence hung in the air. Esteban, already aware of Hathaway’s assignment to Regula 1 from his regular briefings with Admiral Morrow, merely nodded.

Sensing that Pierce was more clued in than he was meant to be, Esteban signed slightly then continued with his former protégé and old friend “the trouble is that Starfleet likes to detour their Starships to deal with other things. With this mission especially, we really needed to keep a low profile and to get to where we are going as quickly as possible: perform our scans, do our landing parties and get the heck home. That’s the trouble with being so far out on the rim and Starfleet being kept so busy by what the Klingons or the Romulans are up to.”

Pierce nodded in agreement with his friend as he listened to the *Grissom* captain venting his opinion. He knew that J.T. couldn’t word it anything more than off-the-record with Harry Morrow, but Pierce knew that Esteban was right and that the *Grissom* had been side-tracked maybe once-too-often for her own good.

“Thing is, J.T., you need to take a breath and complete your mission. We both know that there have been forces manipulating your mission all along. Spies go hand-in-hand with the type of mission you are undertaking and you have to ask yourself whether or not your mission has been compromised.”

Esteban spoke more freely now “I know, Jeff. There have been too many coincidences with viral outbreaks and Tholian attacks—not to mention the fact that we may have an intruder aboard. I just get the feeling there have been leaks and that, before this mission is over, this ship and her crew might all pay the price for those leaks.”

The troubled look on both captains contained a shared understanding of what Esteban was referring to. The viral outbreak on the *Grissom* had been unsettling for the crew and the various attacks on the ship both from within and without had left them all distracted from their primary mission—and that he couldn’t allow.

“You look like you are about to put in a request, J.T.”

Esteban nodded, making his trademark haircut quiver “I certainly am. One of the crew who died—Liisi Tamkivi—was a twin. Her sister is currently recovering on Starbase 13 from an illness she caught on her last mission. I have the unenviable task of telling her that her sister died in the recent viral attack. I think that having her on-board the *Grissom* after this mission is complete, and after what has happened will be both inappropriate for Leena and for the *Grissom* crew. I cannot expect that to have an identical twin walking around reminding them of their dead colleague. She’ll make a hell of a security operations specialist for you, Jeff.”

The *Grissom* captain pressed a button, sending the twin’s details to the *Hathaway* commanding officer. Pierce thumbed down the resume, nodding with agreement.

“Assigned to science station tango-eight-five and U.S.S. *Newton*, a sharp-shooter, good unarmed combat specialist, climber *and* a marathon runner. It seems you are sacrificing an ace card here, J.T. But I understand why. I’ll give her some time to heal and then give her a call for you.”

“Thanks Jeff. Oh and you can tell Larry Styles when you see him next: I’ll send him a postcard from Genesis.”

* * * *

Regula One Station – The Past

*Secure bay four.
Genesis torpedo development workshop.
Stardate 8118.4*

This was the heart of the secrecy surrounding Project Genesis. Regardless of the late hour, David Marcus and Clive Saunders were working on the internal systems of the large silver torpedo. For Marcus it was an opportunity to broach the proto-matter issue with Saunders, without the distraction of his mother.

It was make or break time.

“I have a solution to the scaling up issue,” Marcus suggested tentatively.

“Oh? And the solution is...?” queried Saunders from behind the torpedo, causing him to pause for a second from his data inputting.

“Proto-matter.”

“Proto-matter? Proto-matter, David?! Is this some April Fool joke that you couldn’t wait until April to play?”

Saunders did not sound very happy with the idea. It was time for David to reason with him.

“Think of the issue at hand, Clive: we cannot scale up the methodology of the smaller-scale experiments. Not without exploding something the size of a large freighter, not a torpedo. What we need to introduce is a basic building block for the Genesis wave to work from.”

This stopped Saunders in his tracks to address the issue.

“Every ethical scientist has questioned the use of proto-matter. You are dealing with a substance that can almost be defined as a basic form of life to create more life with.”

“Which is the same argument humanity addressed about stem cell research two hundred years ago. Look at the discoveries that were made as a result,” Marcus countered.

“But it is ‘dangerously unpredictable’. After the accidents on Station Hydra Four and other smaller-scale university accidents have seen it placed on the list of highly restricted substances. How would you even get hold of any?”

Marcus shrugged. “I know there have been accidents, I know there have been deaths and genetically wounded people from previous use of proto-matter but it is the *only* way I can think to overcome the limitations of our current design. It will take a decade of development to work around these issues—if ever.”

“You are prepared to risk your life and the lives of an entire planetary ecosphere to move this project along?” questioned Saunders coldly.

David Marcus paced angrily in an agitated state. “The over-population problems of the Federation are present now—and it will only get worse. Our advancement of medical technology means that humans live to one hundred on average. Many people live until one hundred and thirty and beyond. The resources of Earth and many other core planets cannot cope with the rapidly multiplying population. Disease and war used to curb our numbers but Cochrane and Archer brought those to an end too. The truth you need to accept, Clive, is can we find planets and build *colonies fast enough* to emigrate to?”

Saunders prepared his thoughts for a second before he answered.

“You are right in saying that we have population problems, but we have lived with these issues for centuries. A decade here or there shouldn’t make much of a difference.”

“Would Stephen Hawking, Sir Richard Burton or Sir Walter Rayleigh have held back?” countered Marcus. “No doubt someone else would have made their discoveries, but then we would have different names to place with those discoveries. This is our chance to stand on the shoulders of Oxonian giants.”

Saunders gave it more thought. He didn’t like it, but he was used to breaking the rules himself from time to time.

“So how do we get hold of some proto-matter?”

* * * *

Ch’ramak newly conquered world

Stardate 8202.3

Battlefield Commanders log, Lieutenant Koroth reporting.

I must report that my units have continued to subdue the pathetic resistance of these farming petaQ! Their futile resistance forces have easily been subdued by our armoured anti-grav units; I find it reassuring that our disruptors have been barely used, with our bladed weapons proving to be the most effective means of

controlling this mewling population. I have had no requirement at this time for additional soldiers and our casualties have been negligible.

It was raining again. Did it always rain on this Kahless-forsaken planet? It had been weeks since the full might of the Klingon assault force had arrived at the planet and demanded the unconditional surrender of the world to Klingon forces in the traditional style—the summary execution of the leaders. The resistance from the Ch'ramaki people had indeed been futile with tractors and other farming equipment proving to be a poor adversary to anti-grav tanks and the disruptor cannons of Birds of Prey that could swoop in and eliminate such momentary distractions.

Koroth had led the first troops into the capital city and had successfully killed the police and army units that he had found. Word had it that General Chang was pleased with the initial success of Koroth and his unit and that a battlefield promotion to Commander was in the offing. Koroth knew this would lead in the short term to a larger scope of operations under his command and later for his own fleet of ships. His family lineage had ensured his glorious position in the vanguard of the assault, along with his brothers in different locations globally, and this family perk would guarantee that he would have every opportunity for glory and honour.

The cities had quickly fallen to the Klingon forces with nothing on the planet able to resist the onslaught of the Birds of Prey which would be sent if the resistance grew too fierce. Off-worlders had quickly been identified and either removed or slaughtered along with the resident population, depending on the world of their origin. The Klingon High Council wanted this to be as much a propaganda success as well as a military one.

A Klingon bekk approached Koroth swiftly, stood to attention and saluted.

"I bring greetings from General Chang, sir. He ordered me to give you these."

The bekk held out his hand and nestling awkwardly in the gauntlet were two rank insignia.

"It appears my battlefield promotion to commander was more than a rumour—break out the blood wine for all off-duty solders!"

"Yes Sir!"

The bekk saluted and rapidly departed to carry out the new orders.

Koroth decided the best course of action would be to execute the next phase of his stratagem and push forward to the next village. As he approached the command tent there was an explosion and a fierce wall of heat threw him to the ground. Koroth took a second or two to raise his slightly-groggy head from the ground to take stock of what had happened. Wet mud slowly dripped off his face and beard onto the watery ground beneath, now spattered with blood. The tent was now scorched tatters and half-dozen officers lay scattered about the broken command map desk.

Instinctively Koroth drew his d'k'tahg and prepared for an ambush. His instincts were right.

Two Ch'ramaki with knives charged from out of a nearby ruined building, mirrored by amateurish battle cries from the opposite side of the street with a middle-aged man with a spear-like farming implement came at the large form of the newly-minted commander.

Koroth could feel the heat and rush of blood in his ears as the warrior's cry sounded in his mind. He charged the twin knife-wielding attackers, side-stepping the first and slitting the throat of the second. As blood rhythmically pumped from the neck of the dying man, Koroth then shifted his weight to move the surviving attacker's locked arm to shift him into the way of the spear. With a sickening wet sound the spear punctured the second Ch'ramaki to nearly a metre depth. Koroth let the man go with the farm tool wedged deep in place to face the now weaponless Ch'ramaki man.

Orders in Klingon had by now brought reinforcements but Koroth waved them to stay back. He wanted to kill this man himself. Honour dictated that Koroth lose his knife which he let drop to the floor.

The farmer knew he could not escape and levelled a look of defiance at the commander.

"Leave our world. We used to supply food and grain to many worlds as well as yours. You should not take it all out of greed."

"Too late, it is ours now," Koroth replied.

The man looked nervous, knowing that his fate was sealed for attempting to kill the remaining Klingons in the tent. He had signed up to attack the intruders only after having witnessed previous atrocities by this Klingon commander against the people of the nearby villages. Farms had been cleared out and people executed as a demonstration of the futility of resistance.

Alcohol had given the farmer the courage to go as far as he had today. Fear had now sobered him up but it was too late for him.

The farmer instinctively charged at Koroth for making his comment, trying to beat the commander with savage punches raining down on the Klingon.

Koroth relished the defiance for a moment before using his bulk to hurl the farmer from him physically, dashing the man to the muddy ground. Koroth's armoured bone structure had shielded him from most of the pain whereas the rest simply acted as a stimulant for Koroth to fight back. Out of either desperation or rage, the farmer got back to his feet to again attack his Klingon oppressor.

The commander swiftly overpowered the farmer using his huge size and the skills which he had been taught in the dojo. Unlike his older brothers, Koroth had not had private tuition in the fighting arts but the son of the Chancellor was not going to be taught by an amateur either.

Koroth manoeuvred the farm worker's arms out of the way and turned the man round, positioning himself for the kill. He then snapped the unfortunate agricultural worker's neck with a sickening crunch, all of the life draining from the farmer in a second. Koroth discarded the body like an unwanted puppet.

"Perhaps there is some potential with these pathetic people after all," he commented to no one in particular.

Koroth turned his attention to the destroyed command centre where his team were being treated for blast injuries. A round of Klingon howling at the skies had the surrounding Klingons joining in as one of those warriors had joined their ancestors in Sto-Vo-Kor.

"Report!" Koroth ordered.

“Sir, four confirmed dead with another three injured. The explosive was made using fertiliser,” a young bekk reported.

“Who was on guard duty?” Korothe demanded to know.

“I was,” another bekk replied.

Korothe picked up a nearby disruptor rifle and vaporised the hapless bekk.

“I will not tolerate failure in others, nor will I accept it in myself.”

With that, Korothe discarded his commander’s rank insignia onto the muddy ground.

“I am not fit to wear that rank yet,” he clarified. Then turning to his men ordered: “Search the houses, bring one hundred civilians to the central square and then execute them. Make sure these people know the cost of resistance will be higher than they can imagine.”

Korothe then turned to the command table to plan the next part of his campaign. *We will have to be more careful in the future, the people are getting ambitious,* he thought.

* * * *

U.S.S. Grissom– Sickbay

Still in the darkness of a coma, Saberi felt the pain of his losses as freshly as the day it happened. His heartbeat still rang loudly in his ears, reminding him he was still alive, just.

“Your heart was broken that day. What did you do after?” the Voice asked.

Saberi remembered being taken to one side by his commanding officer. He felt empty, torn apart and helpless in the rage and sadness that consumed him.

“I requested an extended leave of absence to return home.”

“Did they find out who betrayed you?”

In several flashes of images that covered months, Saberi remembered the deep-level investigation that followed the deaths of his family and others that had been on that one mission. He recalled the witch hunt, the charges being levelled to several low-level Starfleet and non-Starfleet personnel. He hadn’t been able to attend the trials, just watching the highlights.

“An investigation led to an arrest of several Orion spies, one who had penetrated a low security Starfleet facility and hacked into personnel records. “

“You felt justice was done?”

Saberi remembered the feelings of anger and revenge, and then the knowledge that these feelings would not bring back those to him that meant so much.

"My heart did not care for justice; justice would not return my beloved family to me," Saberi replied with sad honesty.

"They sent you to Nirvana Colony for counselling..."

Nirvana Colony was the Starfleet facility for those who were mentally affected by their experiences on or off duty. There were a number of levels of treatments from relaxation spas all the way up to counselling or even surgery, in the cases of traumatic brain injuries. For many, this was the place to come to after hard missions – and certainly not as a sign of weakness. However it did not always cater for the needs of those who went...

"Talking about it with a stranger in cold terms did not help me. I needed to rest my heart."

"Did you feel suicidal?"

Saberi had a flashback to times that he had thought, just for a second, of ending it all. Those moments tended to be brief seconds when he was alone.

"My faith carried me through."

The voice took a moment to address that last statement.

"Your faith? Shia Islam has survived the declaration many times that it has been superseded by rationality and science."

The Voice was making the point that since the time of the Industrial Revolution on Earth, that the enlightenment that brought had replaced faith with reason in many individuals. Whereas in the time of Galileo people were tried as heretics when they declared science over religion, times had changed. From the twentieth century onwards, churches and mosques alike had been pulled down or found new uses as people turned away from religion for science. Many times people had said religion was dead, but still it fulfilled a purpose that science could not.

"Islam brought science to the West all the way to Spain, before being driven back. Science might provide an explanation for events and what we see in life, but it does not address the spiritual needs of the heart. Those needs are still with us and that is why the Federation still has billions of religions and beliefs. Those needs never left us; they just grew as our understanding of the universe has grown."

Saberi recalled how wars had been started in the name of religion but how it had been zealots twisting the words of religions that had started those wars. Many times people of different faiths had fought over which version of the truth was the right one. By the twenty-third Century that question did not matter as much as long as you believed your faith was your own and that others were entitled to disagree.

"Your faith took you home?"

"I returned to my parents' house in Masjed Soleiman. I thought that their wisdom could pull me through. I found that seeing the burned-out shell of my home brought back the pain."

Sohrab recalled how the time back at home was hard. Many old friends wanted to look him up and talk about the fire and how they had helped. The painful reminders simply served to isolate Saberi, eventually even from his parents.

“So how did you end up at the mosque?” asked the Voice.

Saberi now started to recognise the identity of that voice. He knew that it was someone whom he had spent a lot of time with since being on the *Grissom*, and it was not a medic.

“It did not take too many weeks before the anger I had saved up inside me exploded out at my parents. I did not mean disrespect to them; I just could not keep it inside me anymore.”

“It had poisoned your body and needed to be released,” observed the Voice.

“I couldn’t let all of it go; it was *my* fault that they had died. *I* had put them into harm’s way.”

The feeling of guilt was simply too strong. Despite every rational reason why the blame was not his, Sohrab still felt responsible.

“If it wasn’t you that had defied the Orions, it would have been another. You were doing what was right,” the Voice soothed.

“I felt guilty and had to leave my parents’ house. I wandered through the city for what felt like days until I heard the call to prayer.”

“You went inside?”

“I sat at the back, feeling that my presence somehow tainted those around me. I did my best to keep myself to myself but I soon learned I still had many friends. After prayers I stayed behind to talk to the mullah.” Saberi sounded a little less pained after remembering how he started on the road to recovery.

“What did he say, Sohrab?”

“He reminded me that all things happen for a reason. That it is Allah that decides when it is our time. He said that Allah admires the steadfast and that I had shown great strength in coming to the mosque for help. After that we prayed together and spent a great deal of time talking.”

“And this helped you?”

“I was able to return to my father and at last tell him how I felt. After talking to him and to the Mullah, I felt the calling to go on the Hajj to Mecca.

Mecca; the holiest place for the Islamic faith and the Hajj was the pilgrimage to the tomb of Mohammed. This was one of the tenets of Islam that every able-bodied Muslim must make the journey at least once in their lifetime. Saberi had planned on making the trip later in his life, taking his wife and son with him. That day never came. Despite all the wars in the region, Mecca had somehow survived the destruction and had a timeless feel. There were hotels and optional temporary facilities that each pilgrim could make use of over the course of the pilgrimage. For Saberi the trip was a poignant one.

Saberi continued. "It gave me the time to consider my thoughts and then I knew I was ready to return to Starfleet and resume my duties."

The Voice let that resolution of the story stand for a moment before asking:

"Then why do you still feel guilty?"

Sohrab paused, thinking over an answer.

"Because I still feel the guilt. No matter how far I have travelled and all of the starbases and Starships I have served on, I still feel the loss of Pari and Kaveh and would do anything to be with them again."

Again a pause, as if the voice were thinking of the right words to use.

"You could be with them now."

"Only if Allah wishes it."

"I could tell them myself. If you have a message for them, I will take it – as long as you can do something for me."

Like a viewfinder coming into focus, the other figure had become sharper in appearance over the course of their "conversation". Saberi could now recognise the enlisted Starfleet uniform and the blonde hair.

"Liisi; I didn't realise it was you."

Tamkivi smiled as her form coalesced. "It didn't matter who I was, just that you spoke your heart. It is time now for you to choose, Chief: do you give me a message for your wife and son, or do you deliver the message in person and go to them?"

An eternity seemed to pass as Saberi considered the options. He knew this was one of the most important decisions of his existence.

"Tell them... tell them I am sorry and that I love them. If Allah wills it, I will see them again in Paradise."

Tamkivi nodded, understanding that her former chief was not coming with her to the undiscovered country.

"Then tell my sister that I love her too... and I will always be with her."

The beeps of medical equipment grew louder, intruding on their conversation. Beginning to drown out his heartbeat.

"Nurse, he's coming round!"

Saberi's eyes flickered open. He knew at once that he was alive.

"Tamkivi?" he croaked.

He followed the eyes of Dr. S'Raazh at his query to a bed across from him with the sheets drawn up over it. At that moment he knew that he had passed the soul of Liisi Tamkivi for one last conversation.

As soon as he was back on his feet, he knew what he must do.

* * * *

U.S.S. Grissom- Science Lab **Five days to arrival at Genesis**

Clive Saunders had left Project Genesis after he realised that Genesis was viable and was being potentially taken over by Starfleet. He'd thought David would object harder than he did, since this was the horse the younger scientist had been flogging since day one of Starfleet's involvement.

"I left the project the minute Starfleet was involved—and I thought you would do the same!" shouted Saunders.

"And what? You thought that Starfleet would just promise not to use the technology that we all developed together? Are you that naive? And I thought I was the young child in the laboratory?!" retorted Marcus.

"Only you and I knew that it would require proto-matter to act as the building blocks from which to begin" replied Saunders.

"Starfleet would have figured it out in the end."

"But they would have had the ethics to have drawn the line there" barked an irritated Saunders.

"Would they, Clive? Because there are orders coming from the admirals at the top that suggest to me that Genesis is exactly what they want. Bending the rules is something my father the admiral does—don't you think the other top brass will do the same?"

"Liebmann might primarily be interested in marine biology but he isn't stupid, David. It won't take him forever to look at the readings from the probe to work out that we used a forbidden substance to boost the torpedo. And that's if Saavik doesn't beat him to those conclusions. You know that all we should find are plants and basic life forms—anything more will pique their curiosity. Starfleet loves mysteries – so they can dig away and find out the answers!"

"If they don't know what they are looking at then there are a dozen explanations for what they find," Marcus countered, "and since we have never created a whole planet with a biosphere before then they don't know what to expect and your ranting and funny moods are only going to alert them to the fact that something is wrong."

"What's to stop me telling them?" Saunders challenged.

"Simple, Clive, I point out to them that it was my idea and that you endorsed it, and that you also aided in designing the chamber in the torpedo precisely for the protomatter. So you will be destroying both our careers. Not just mine." Marcus threatened calmly.

Saunders was incredulous. His colleague, his friend, was blackmailing him. "It's all a question of proof David. And you have none—"

"A question of proving what?" interrupted a familiar American accent from the doorway.

Saunders' equally calm response was interrupted by the arrival in the laboratory of Liebmann, Saavik, and Ensign Wood. The hairs on the back of Marcus' neck rose.

"We were discussing the potential results from the probe and what the implications are for what we will find."

Saavik calmly added, "A good scientist always talks of evidence, not proof."

"The probe's findings are inconclusive at best; the radiation from the atmosphere has compromised half of the scanners. We'll have to wait to see what is in the primordial oceans when we get there in five days ourselves."

"I still do not understand why there are still spikes of biogenic energy after this time" Saavik stated.

"Perhaps the reactor from the *Reliant* interacted in ways we haven't theorised yet?" offered Marcus.

"I've been looking at those waves on my tricorder in my cabin and I'm not so sure," Liebmann disagreed, "the subspace displacement effect from the dilithium should have only produced short-term effects. It looks like something else, something I've seen before but cannot put my finger on."

* * * *

Genesis Planet –The Future

Stardate 8210

Preliminary U.S.S. Grissom landing party

David Marcus was not entirely focussed on the idyllic flora through which Saavik and he now walked. He had addressed Saavik's observations of the proto-life forms on Spock's coffin as being shot from the Enterprise; her comments on how they had evolved so quickly was an issue he knew he could no longer lie about.

The further they walked into the rainforest, the more life forms they had been encountering. Protomatter had indeed solved the complexity issue, but the unpredictable nature of the substance had meant that it created life forms quicker than expected. Whilst that supported the theories of Darwin and others, it also meant that the use of protomatter could not be denied.

I did what I did to ensure this project was successful, he rationalised. Science leaps forward with theory, experiment and discoveries. This was another such step, like Neil Armstrong on the Moon over three hundred years earlier. The name Marcus would stand alongside those of Einstein, Surak, Newton, Te Plana Hath, Cochrane and Hawking. He would join the ranks of scientists who had stood on the shoulders of giants. This wasn't playing God; this was being human.

It was on a diff top overlooking the forests of Genesis that the time for secrets ended.

"Time for total truth between us...." said Saavik.

* * * *

U.S.S Grissom – Crew Quarters – five days from Genesis

Chief Petty Officer Sohrab Saberi sat in his bunkroom. He was still on medical leave until the doctor was happy that he had regained his strength. He knew in his soul what he must do after his ordeal, and the soul he'd passed by.

What he did now would cost him his career. He knew that. He was confident however that his previous experiences at espionage and as a double agent with Federation Security gave him all the information and knowledge he needed to make a hidden encrypted transmission.

He did not want to get anyone else into trouble, but, by hiding his transmission within genuine communiqués from Lt. Childers, the senior Comms officer, he felt he could reasonably take the risk, without causing trouble for himself or Childers. Having being comatose for a number of days, and unaware of everything that was going on, Saberi had no way of knowing that Lt. Chattman had been carefully monitoring all transmissions. He equally had no way of knowing that the senior security crew were aware that there might be an intruder aboard and were monitoring every channel for the merest hint of any unauthorised transmissions. Ignorant of this, he made his unsanctioned communication.

The picture shimmered into focus. It was Starbase 13, where they had left behind a member of their crew: Leena Tamkivi. Leena was identical in appearance to her sister in every way. From the tear-stained eyes, he knew she had received a condolence message from Captain Esteban. For a second, Sohrab thought he was back in that vision.

"I got your message, Chief. It said that it was important for you to talk to me."

"I did not want to take up your time, Leena. I know that you need privacy but I had to deliver a message to you: Your sister told me to tell you that she loves you."

Saberi then spent a short time talking to Leena, trying to convey in words the experience that he had; how he felt he had spoken to Liisi and how she had worked through some of the demons he still held onto. The two of them shared tears and stories of the twin.

"I wish I had gotten to know you, Chief. It sounds like she got to know you in the end."

"I wish I had gotten to know her more, but least I was able to honour her last request to you."

Leena nodded.

"Chief... Sohrab, I won't be joining you on the *Grissom*. The counsellor says it would be a bad idea both for me and for the crew there; I would be a constant reminder. I'm glad, however, that I got to talk to you... and thank you."

"The honour was mine, Leena."

As Sohrab Saberi finished his communication, a small alert sounded two decks below in the deck 4 subspace transceiver bay. A figure slowly approached the tracking device on the transceiver, which he had only recently placed there. The man cross-checked the unauthorised transmission on his tricorder and noted that the transmission had been made by Lt. Brian Childers. *Lt. Thorsen will be most interested in this,*

thought Lt. Juan Casas to himself, as he reset the tracking device and downloaded his readings to the main security database, *most interested indeed.*

The Voyage continues in 'Per Ardua, Ad Astra' Star Trek Grissom Chapter 10 – coming soon!

Additional material by Andrew Browne
Editor Andrew Browne
Cover artwork by Sam Wich
Star Trek Grissom created by Seán Paul Teeling & Melissa D. Wilson
Star Trek Grissom is produced by Black Wall Productions



Disclaimer:

Star Trek and all related products and trademarks are copyright and the sole property of Paramount Pictures. The use of anything Star Trek related in the stories and art on this site is not intended to be an infringement on Paramount Pictures property rights. Star Trek Grissom is purely non-profit related and a fan continuation of the 23rd century Star Trek story begun by Gene Roddenberry. Image use is intended to be consistent with fair use rules under United States copyright law.