

Final Flight of the starship Venture

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Final Flight of the starship Venture

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Summary

In the chilling depths of space, the USS *Venture*, the last starship built at the legendary Utopia Planetia, faces an unforeseen threat. As Captain McAllistair and his resilient crew grapple with their sudden circumstance, they confront the brutal reality of a powerful enemy intent on their destruction

Notes

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Gamemaster's Note: This is following the end of the Borg war, when we were about to introduce the Breen into the game. This short story was written to describe how the Breen made contact with Starfleet. What was interesting was that many of the players had 'friends' aboard the *Venture* and used that to spark a rallying cry. This particular conflict was especially amazing considering the amount of time spent battling the Borg.

Captain Franklin Joseph McAllistair was not a man of an imposing nature. In fact, when compared to the he-man specimen he had as an executive officer, he was downright scrawny. But in Starfleet, and especially in a fleet where strategy and intelligence were the proper forebears of survival, the captain of the USS *Venture* had quite an abundance of both.

"Status, Number One?" asked McAllistair from the center seat on the bridge. His tone was inquisitive. The *Venture* had been assigned to patrol the Beerax system, on watch over the dead world, following the eradication of all life by an artificially created virus.

Lieutenant Commander Kristopher Llewellyn turned from being hunched over the operations console. His expression was ever the same, dispassionate and void of any emotion. It was Franklin's guess that he had Vulcan blood in him. Unlike other starships, where the executive officer was held in esteem and the captain had an image to maintain, it was very nearly the opposite on the *Venture*. "Sensors indicating something of a problem, sir. I have the engineering department presently investigating the dilemma."

"Oh?" the captain asked with interest. A problem was far from the bored days of patrolling. "Do tell."

Llewellyn completed his half-turn toward the captain, approaching his customary seat on the bridge and sitting down. "Considering our proximity to Rihannsu space, if the glitch actually turns out to be a cloaked vessel..." He deliberately allowed his voice to trail off to make his point.

"Then we would have a considerable problem on our hands. Standard procedures, Number One. Take us to yellow alert," finished Captain McAllistair. "Don't take too long with the sensor diagnostic, but let's not keep ourselves out in the open. Prepare to engage the cloaking device."

The ship's computer sounded off as the executive officer engaged the heightened state of readiness, "Attention all hands; yellow alert. All stations, set condition yellow. This is not a drill." The second shift of personnel were en route to their duty stations as the alarm sounded. It had been over a month since the ship had seen a state other than condition green.

Sitting at the operations console, Lieutenant (junior grade) T'Nera made the necessary power requests to engineering. "Cloaking power allocations report ready, sir."

"Thank you, Leftenant," he said, in his British tones. "Cloak the ship."

Outside, the *Venture* shimmered and faded from the view of space until the starfield was unbroken.

Inside, Lieutenant T'Nera reported, "Cloaking device functioning within accepted parameters." Then the report returned on her console, "Engineering reports the diagnostic results indicate no malfunction."

Kristopher Llewellyn chose that moment to state, "Then it is a vessel." He turned to look to his captain for orders.

"Maintain yellow alert, but break orbit. Take us to twenty-two klicks out, and go to stationkeeping on the thrusters. Make like a hole in space," Captain McAllistair ordered. His hands flexed nervously along the arms of his chair. "Rig for silent running, observe radio silence until we learn more." Any communications might give away their position, of course he knew this.

"Aye, aye, sir," Commander Llewellyn rose from his seat. "Helm, break orbit. Ease us nice and slow to twenty-two klicks out at one quarter impulse power."

Ensign Ffocus, the Ferengi helmsman, gave a quick nod, "Aye, sir. At that speed, we will arrive in five minutes and fifty-two seconds."

"Acknowledged, Ensign. Tactical, report all contacts."

The tactical officer was an Andorian female, part of a large clan on one of the surviving Andorian colony worlds. She held her rank and position with a lot of pride, and it showed in her actions and word. Lieutenant Commander Telenia made a few choice stabs at her console to pull up the latest sensor readout before reporting, "Just the anomaly, sir. No other contacts."

Captain McAllistair rose from his seat, as he always did when he played out the waiting game. He was an impatient man overall, but he knew how to force patience onto himself; he proceeded to pace. It drove everyone on the bridge crazy, although T'Nera would never admit as such.

"Engineering to Bridge," came the silken tones of the chief engineer over the intercom. Lieutenant Brenda Janoski was among the most popular members of the crew, a complete and utter beauty. Many of the male members of the crew (and some of the females) found her so attractive, that the Ten-Forward Lounge was always packed with off-duty personnel when she found time to visit. Beyond beauty, she was charming and knew how to use it to her advantage.

"Bridge. Go ahead, Lieutenant," said Llewellyn, on the captain's behalf. When the captain was pacing, it was important to let him mull his thoughts over.

"There's something weird going on down here," began Janoski. "The Bussard collectors are picking up some rather large amounts of hydrogen out there. More than your typical day out in space."

T'Nera called out, "Confirmed, sir."

"The anomaly is getting closer," reported Telenia. "I would say it's following."

"Increase to full impulse power and prepare to disengage the cloaking device. Sound red alert," said the captain, not wasting any time.

"Aye, sir. Sounding red alert," nodded the exec, as the klaxon wailed. "Not worried about hiding anymore, sir?"

"Not if we're found out, Number One. I would hate to get hit with shields down," the captain replied, returning to his seat, glad to no longer be waiting. He addressed the helm, "Alter course to heading one-eight-zero mark zero. Bring us about."

Ffocus replied in the affirmative as T'Nera reported the new power allocations on standby.

"Disengage the cloaking device and raise the shields. Arm all weapons, and load all tubes with the best quantum torpedo we've got," continued the captain's orders.

As the cloaking device revealed the ship's location, Telenia said, "Shields are up, weapons armed. Loading all tubes with type-four quantum torpedoes." She ran another scan, "Anomaly is directly ahead, within weapons range."

"Open hailing frequencies."

"Hailing frequencies open."

"This is Captain Franklin McAllistair of the Alliance starship *Venture*," said the captain. "You are in violation of Alliance spacefaring law. Disengage your cloaking device or we will open fire."

The silence on the bridge spread out, until only the sound of the bridge consoles filled the air. Telenia stated the blindingly obvious, "No response."

"I say again," McAllistair tried once more, "this is the Alliance starship *Venture*. Decloak and prepare to surrender your vessel."

"Nothing," said Telenia.

"Yes, I know, Commander!" McAllistair nearly hissed.

"No, sir. I meant to say, it's gone. Sensors aren't reporting the anomaly, or any other contacts. My board is only showing the planets in this sector."

"Are you certain, Commander?" the captain pressed.

"Yes, sir."

McAllistair passed his fingers over the skin of his chin for a moment, in thought. "To quote a famous admiral, this is damned peculiar. Let's err on the side of caution, Number One. Stand down red alert, but keep us on yellow alert for the time being. Keep the shields up and let's proceed to our next patrol waypoint. We'll see if our friend out there is real or imaginary."

"Aye, Captain. Helm, lay in a course for the Cardassian border at waypoint alpha. Warp six."

Brenda Janoski knew it before the doors to Ten-Forward even slid aside to admit her entry. It was packed. But this time, it wasn't due to her presence, as she found out. There seemed to be something of a commotion going on in the center of the crowd assembled in the lounge. Everyone's attention seemed to be on something.

She ordered a drink from the bar, making sure to check her hair in the reflection behind the bartender. Her raven-like hair was done up in a French braid, her looks were definitely on for the night. But it would seem that her charms had gone unnoticed so far. When her drink arrived, she turned to approach the crowd of people gathered, and forced her way through with a few gratuitous rubs in the right places to get their attention. She was shameless. "Excuse me," she said in her coy little voice.

Seated in the center of the crowd was the ship's operations chief, Lieutenant T'Nera, and the commanding officer, Captain McAllistair. Their fingers were moving quickly, back and forth in a speedy motion. McAllistair's mouth was open, with his eyebrows fluttering up and down. T'Nera, to her credit, seemed to actually be enjoying the encounter. Her eyebrow raised upward, almost on tempo. Both of their breathing seemed rather erratic, especially the captain's.

Brenda's reaction was immediate. "Oh my God..." She smiled devilishly as she spoke, sipping from her drink and unable to turn her attention away from the display before her.

A few moments later, McAllistair cried out suddenly and somewhat breathlessly, "Yes!"

He had won.

Brenda looked at the crewmembers surrounding her, as some credits exchanged hands and perhaps some favors. The crowd broke up, many of them stopping to pat McAllistair on the back and offering words of congratulations. "Way to go, Cap'n." "That was incredible control, sir."

T'Nera was disappointed, and it showed, despite her Vulcan heritage. Brenda understood all too well, approaching her and placing an encouraging hand on her shoulder. "Ah, don't beat yourself up over it, Lieutenant. There will be other times to get even."

"Perhaps," said the Vulcan. "Before Captain McAllistair, however, I never had a problem of attaining victory."

Janoski offered, "Yeah, he's a real piece of work, eh? Typical."

McAllistair offered a hand to T'Nera, after removing the finger sensors from them. "Excellent match, Lieutenant. I am, of course, at your disposal for a rematch."

"You may expect a challenge soon, sir. I have never lost at Strategema before," replied the operations chief.

"To everything, there is a first time, Lieutenant," smirked the captain, quoting once again.

"As you say, sir."

Brenda and the crowd seemed to move away from the table, and she approached the bar. "That's something you don't see everyday," she said to no one in particular.

Then things returned to normal.

"Hey, beautiful. Going my way?"

Fingertips pounded against the controls in the science lab with practiced skill. Lieutenant Commander Llewellyn was hunched over the console, yet again. It was his custom, as the executive officer. He doubled on board the *Venture* as the chief of sciences, so the science lab was his only real sanctuary aboard the ship. Logs of sensor information passed before his eyes at a rapid pace, but he wasn't reading them word for word, but looking rather for a pattern in the logs.

Even though he was technically off-duty, he continued in the laboratory for well past his normal sleeping period. His quarry eluded him until...

Telenia enjoyed the moments she spent in the command chair on the bridge of the *Venture*. It was a testament to her service record and her performance to be entrusted to sit in the captain's stead when he was off-duty.

"Report," she said, every twenty minutes. It was a time-honored tradition among her people to keep her bridge crew on their toes. With the earlier trouble they had in the Beerax sector, she felt a greater need to be ready for anything.

"We are maintaining our course to the Cardassian border at warp six. Our estimated time of arrival is forty-five minutes and seventeen seconds," said the helmsman.

"Operations reporting all systems normal, at this time."

"There are no sensor contacts. We are at yellow alert, running shields by the captain's order."

"Engineering reporting warp engines within normal parameters. No problems, here."

She nodded, and opened her mouth to speak when the officer at the tactical station called out, "Ship decloaking to stern!"

Telenia shot upward from the chair, as if the seat were wired to the warp core directly. "Man battlestations! Captain McAllistiar to the bridge!" Actually, she only got out the captain's name as violent vibrations shook the bridge suddenly as the direct hit struck the hull. She found herself at her knees, turning her head to bark out orders. "Evasive maneuvers! Give me an identification on that ship!"

The helm officer had already returned to his station, entering in a prearranged evasive sequence. "Aye, Commander."

"Unknown configuration, Commander," reported tactical. "That hit was pretty serious, sir. We've got reports of hull breaches on decks twenty through twenty-four. Cloaking device inoperable. Impulse engines destroyed."

"By the gods, were our shields up?!" Telenia screamed in frustration.

"Hang on!" called operations.

Llewellyn was in the adjacent corridor when the second attack struck the ship. It was so violent that he hit the upper bulkhead before being slammed down onto the deck. He felt his leg breaking soundly, and screamed out in pain.

Brenda materialized into chaos. Using her padd, she didn't risk traveling through the corridors and arranged a site-to-site transport in short order. Main engineering was a mess. Her assistant recognized her form and rattled off the damage report, citing that whoever they were, the shields had no effect against their weapons.

The master situation monitor showed the tally of damage across the ship. Hull breaches seemed to be smattered across every deck, now. She turned around to see the injector panel explode behind her, and the plasma coolant began to leak into the engineering compartment. As the isolation doors came down immediately and trapped some of her staff behind them to die, she stared at them, stunned.

"Shit."

Blood streamed down her face, she brought her arm up to wipe away at it. She had the bridge, and there was no sign of the captain.

"Prepare to return fire! Get me a target lock and load all tubes with cobalt devices!" Telenia was pissed off. "I'll be damned if they take this ship on my watch!"

Tactical had already exploded, killing the officer manning it. All of those functions had been rerouted to the operations console. "I have a target lock, sir."

"Fire!" she screamed.

The phasers and torpedoes shot out from the aft quarter of the *Venture*, striking its target true.

"Direct hit, moderate damage to their forward shields," said operations. "Incoming fire from hostile target!"

Telenia heard the weapons strike the hull, and then felt the pressure on the bridge change. She looked up as the dome of the bridge exploded inward and then outward. The last thing she saw, was the droplets of her blood spilling out before her against the field of stars. The last thing she thought was, I'll be damned.

"Unable to comply," said the computer. "Destination unreachable."

McAllistair looked up in shock inside the turbolift, "I said, take me to the bridge."

"Unable to comply," said the computer. "Destination unreachable."

"Why is the destination unreachable, computer?"

"Location no longer viable."

"Take me to the battle bridge. Upon arrival, localize command functions to that location."

"Acknowledged."

"That last hit destroyed the bridge, Lieutenant!"

Brenda was a little distracted, working to keep the core from breaching. Despite all of the rocking back and forth, she managed to get into a pressure suite and manually began repairs on the coolant system. "Keep calm and focus on your job, mister! Alter our course for the nearest starbase as best you can," she said from within her suit.

"I'm trying, but the computer is saying that those functions aren't available from here. Someone... it's the captain! He's still alive!" The overjoyed nature of his voice was echoed in the engineering compartment. Salvation was at hand.

The chief engineer continued to make her repairs. A few more seconds and the core will be good enough to get them to safety. "Good. Get back to work!"

The battle bridge was unmanned, the captain noted. "Backup bridge crew to the battle bridge!" he called out. "Computer, automate functions by voice command presently. Damage report."

"Working... hull breaches on all decks. Weapons are at sixty-three percent functionality. Shields at full power. Cloaking device inoperable. Impulse engines destroyed..."

"Cancel report. Computer, our shields... are they up?"

"Affirmative."

"Present course?"

"Heading zero-four-five mark zero-three-three, warp six."

"Alter course. Head for the Badlands."

"Course altered. Brace for impact."

The hull shook once more, the captain clung to his chair tightly, or risk being thrown across the bridge.

"Warning," intoned the computer. "Matter injectors damaged severely. Estimated five minutes to a warp core breach."

"Computer, eject the core. Authorization: McAllistair-alpha-one-one-zero-one-niner."

"Authorization accepted. Core ejection sequence initiated."

"Warning," said the computer, through to her suit. "Warp core ejection sequence initiated. Clear the area."

Brenda looked up at the core in a panic, "Oh no!" She looked toward the isolation door and pounded upon it, "Beam me out of here!"

Her crew, tossed about like pebble in a can suffered major injuries. Her assistant was dead, and the rest of the crew were trying desperately to operate the transporter remotely. And then, the bad news was made know to her.

"Transporters are damaged beyond repair, chief." The ensign sobbed, "I'm sorry, sir!"

The core dropped downward behind her suddenly, and she felt her suit lift in the air as the vacuum and the air pressure blew her into the shaft, down and out through the bottom of the ship.

She still had limited communications, so she used it wisely. "Computer, this is Lieutenant Brenda Janoski, chief engineer. Uplink to the *Venture* and release the antimatter containment bottles into space." Trying to adjust her view toward the enemy vessel, she smirked. "Nothing like a field of antimatter to ruin a bad guy's day..."

"Warp core ejection sequence completed. Estimate one minute seventeen seconds to warp field collapse."

McAllistair was still alone on the battle bridge. "Engage the backup fusion generators and continue firing on the enemy vessel. Launch the marker buoy and distress beacon."

"Acknowledged. Buoy away. Beacon active." The computer continued, "Attention. Antimatter containment has been released."

He looked around, as if he could see the antimatter trail behind him. "On who's authority?"

"Lieutenant Brenda Janoski."

"McAllistair to Janoski."

"Unable to comply. Communications systems destroyed," said the computer.

The ship rocked again, this time the hit felt as if the ship was broken in half.

"Computer, report!"

"Severe hull damage on decks twenty-five through thirty-six. Aft quarter exposed to space. Life support malfunctioning, switching to backup systems. Estimate four minute to life support failure."

"Then we're finished. Status of our weapons?"

"Weapon effectiveness at zero, systems heavily damaged."

McAllistair sighed, sitting in his chair. "Very well."

"Attention. Enemy vessel locking transporters on all decks."

He looked up, "NO!" Looking around frantically, he grabbed a phaser from the tactical station and prepared to defend what was left of his ship.

The enemy transporter beam appeared before him, and before he could get a shot off, he felt a blade enter his rib cage and rush upward. Falling

backward and firing wildly, he was dead before he hit the ground.

"Computer, this is... Lieutenant... Commander... Llewellyn." He was gasping for breath as he crawled along deck four. "Engage... auto-destruct... authorization... Llewellyn epsilon... four... two one... five."

"Unable to comply. Orders involving command functions are no longer accepted from your location," said the computer.

"Where... are they... accepted from?"

"Battle bridge."

Llewellyn dragged his broken legs toward a turbolift as quickly as he could. But he only made it four feet before the loss of blood claimed his consciousness.

Uninjured and moving quickly through the corridors, T'Nera led a very small group of crewmembers through the Jeffries tubes from deck ten to the battle bridge. The computer reported that the main bridge had been destroyed. She heard a few unknown voices as she climbed upward toward deck eight and stopped, bringing her hand up to signal silence to her ragtag group of survivors.

The voices were artificial and high-pitched. She couldn't make out the language at all and looked down. Adjusting her phaser, she poked her head up through the open hatch and looked out. There, before her, were two enemy soldiers. The external barrage had ceased and the boarding parties began, but it was obvious that this pair of hostiles were simply guarding the access juncture to this deck.

Quietly adjusting her phaser, she fired twice, striking her targets with deadly accuracy. Without waiting for the result, she ducked down the ladder a bit to avoid the return fire. When there was none, she listened for the audible thumps of two bodies. When she didn't hear that, she poked her head up to see what happened.

Phaser scorch marks were visible on the chests of both soldiers. Soldiers who were not dead or on the ground, but in fact, very much alive. Armor, she thought logically. Her curiosity made that her last thought, however, as the beams from their weapons struck her head with equal accuracy.

"Unable to comply. Turbolift system damaged beyond repair," said the computer, with its calm tones. It was the sweet voice of the computer that brought him back to consciousness.

Commander Llewellyn looked behind him at the trail of blood, wincing at the pain of broken legs and crawling around on the deck.

The footfalls of people caught his attention, not knowing if the ship had been taken, he collapsed on the deck at an angle to simulate his death. Hoping whoever it was would rush on by or recognize him and lend him aide, he closed his eyes to prevent him from flinching. Remaining still, he felt and heard the footfalls approach.

They stopped.

Without opening his eyes, he heard an artificial voice speak in a language he had never heard before. While trying to understand, he didn't realize that the soldier and his companion were very much aware of his lifesigns. While trying to understand, he felt a blade enter his back, causing him to stop trying and begin screaming. Feeling the blade rush up, his heart was ripped open. He felt his body go limp just before the dark tinge at the edge of his vision began to swallow his sight.

The *Venture* was no longer the gallant starship that floated off the shipyard at Utopia Planetia, the last starship to be constructed there before the Borg came. The *Venture* was sustaining environment only through the good grace of its hull. Visible breaches could be seen, like a block of Swiss cheese, while the aft quarter was entirely at the mercy of deep space. The mighty nacelles, which once propelled the vessel at great speed, were silent, dark, and totally useless. As the last signs of life were extinguished aboard her, the enemy ship did not complete the destruction of the Galaxy-class starship, but instead recalled its boarding parties and allowed the ship to drift through space.

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