

Star Beagle Adventures Episode 8: South Side of the Sky

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Star Beagle Adventures Episode 8: South Side of the Sky

by [LordRobertBruceScott](#)

Summary

The Beagle Task Force travel to the south side of the sky.

Notes

Throughout this episode, snippets of lyrics are quoted. These are from the song, "South Side of the Sky" by Jon Anderson and Chris Squire. The song first appeared as track 4 on "Fragile", the fourth album by the progressive rock band, YES, 1971, Atlantic Records.

Episode 8, Scene 1: Gateway



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 8: South Side of the Sky

Scene 1: Gateway

8.1

Gateway

“Gorgeous!”

While Commodore Yui Song had disapproved, she had to admit that a diplomatic mission with the potential of not one, but three first contact situations, merited the presence of a command level officer. And she wasn't about to go risking her octogenarian neck hanging by rope and piton from miles-high, snow drenched mountains above the cloud line on an alien planet on which the only habitable zone was above roiling lower layers of clouds.

This was a job for a ship's captain, and Captain Ronald Howard, XIV was the person for this job. Captain Rhonda Carter would have been quite happy clambering about in this mountain range, but she was, by her own admission, more fighter than diplomat. Skip Howard, for all his strangeness, was a smooth hand with new people.

At Howard's request, his rescue party included the U.S.S. Escort's second officer, Lt. Cmdr. Vranran zh'Kathar, Ensign Tos th'Taahrit from the U.S.S. Mako's security detail, 2nd Lt. Emily Li from the U.S.S. Mako's engine room and one of the denobulan planetologists, Cetris Rye, who was also a mighty singer. These party members had been chosen because they were avid mountaineers.

The party was rounded out by a squad of United States Marines under the command of Captain Osollaa sh'Zhiathis, which meant that all three of the andorians in the task force were on this mountain with him. There was good reason for this: Andorians were not only naturally great mountain climbers, but well adapted to cold weather climates.

The other marines on this mission were 2nd Lt. Iov Pushkin, who, like Captain sh'Zhiathis, had grown up in Alaska and had climbed Mt. McKinley while in high school, as well as Sgt. Tammy Glick, and Privates First Class Tim Cho, Sean Young, and Elven Washington.

PFC L'Kath, the marine unit's sole vulcan, remained with Beagle Shuttle #2, the shuttle Dr. Uto had equipped with medical diagnostic equipment. This small, regular service shuttle was landed in the only spaceport in these mountains, located miles away from the City, which was only reachable by an uncertain mountain trail. Spacecraft were not welcome anywhere near the City.

“Yes sir, it is,” agreed Pushkin. The young marine officer was the first to join Captain Howard into the pass onto the south face of one of a vast range of mountains.

It was a sight that would make even avid mountain climbers a little depressed. The beginning of a journey deep into a forbidding mountain range. A search and rescue operation too windy and tempestuous for a shuttle. Shuttles could not fly in the area at all, nor could transporters be used due to a large energy dampening field that blanketed this part of the mountains. The presence of this dampening field impacted the equipment choices for Howard's party.

But it was also a sight of austere beauty. A double sunrise over mile after mile of mountain peaks rising out of a cottony bank of clouds. And the colors were like nothing on Earth. Something either in the color of light from the twin suns or the chemicals in the ice crystals, something created soft halos of color over each mountain top that were barely visible, but gradually changed with parallax.

Somewhere in these mountains was a city with survivors from the climate change that had killed nearly everything below those clouds several thousand years ago. And the people of that city had only achieved faster than light travel after that great cataclysm.

Somewhere else in these mountains was a downed spacecraft with visitors from another world. Visitors whose distress signal had been picked up by the Beagle task force. Visitors who would be welcome if they could make it to the City, but could expect no rescue from there.

And throughout these mountains was rumored (according to the information that had travelled with the distress signal) to live yet another indigenous species - a people who were familiar with space travel but were not themselves space travelers and were of various temperament toward space travelers. A people who had lived in these mountaintops for hundreds of thousands of years.

Frost giants.

And now Captain Skip Howard and his rescue party stood at the gateway to this world.



SBA Episode 8: South Side of the Sky - Scene 2: The U.S.S. Arizona

Chapter Summary

The river can disregard the cost...



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 8: South Side of the Sky

Scene 2: The U.S.S. Arizona

8.2

The U.S.S. Arizona

Pel had not left her quarters since her ordeal with an oeast religious cult, which had led to her losing the prosthetic ears that had, up until now, disguised her as male. She had few visitors, but those who did visit her, or more specifically, those she allowed to visit her, each had an impact. Captain Skip Howard. Premiere Emeritus T'Eln. Dr. Bettes Uto. Dean Sakura Nakamura Holland. Lance Corporal Petra Spitze.

She was profoundly depressed, but far from suicidal. She was just stuck. There was no way back. There was no way forward. So she was drifting.

It was in this state that Commodore Yui Song found Pel. Considering how devastating the blow to her was, Pel had composed herself to accept her most important benefactor. Yui Song felt just a little dirty as a result, considering her purpose for this visit.

“We need to talk about your shuttle,” Yui started.

“I was planning to move into it,” Pel responded. “You don’t have room to carry it within this ship. I know that’s why the Bluebird is flying with the task force when it should really be berthed onboard. I’ve been thinking that the time may have come for me to leave, anyway.”

“You would be terribly missed, Pel,” Yui replied. “You’ve become more than a friend to many of us. We have actually come to depend on you.”

“I am not giving up my shuttle,” said Pel. “Any ambition I have left... You don’t know what ownership of a ship, even a slow one, means to a ferengi...”

“I have a business proposal for you...” Yui was getting around to her plan. She didn’t know why even the language of business made her feel a little dirty. If this worked, it would be good for both Pel and the task force.

Ferengi ears weren’t really capable of it, but it seemed that Pel’s ears perked up. She smiled for the first time in weeks. “A business proposal? There might be hope for you yet, Star Fleet.”

Pel’s smile made Yui Song feel much better. The elderly flag officer smiled in return and started to relax a little. “The configuration of your shuttle makes it useful to us. It is much better designed for carrying large payloads than any of our shuttle fleet, even the Bluebird. It can carry a much larger, heavier payload and its design makes loading far more efficient. All that and it’s a little smaller than the Bluebird. Small enough to fit into the Escort’s shuttlebay, which neither the Bluebird nor the Puppy can do.”

“But it’s slow,” Pel rejoined. “Maximum speed is warp 2.5. And as you said, none of the task force’s ships has room to carry it unless the Bluebird or the Puppy travels separately.”

“This ship could make room for it,” Yui responded. “But that would involve disassembling three of our regular service shuttles. Here’s my proposal... I would like to lease your shuttle for the next four years.”

“And how do you propose to reimburse me for that lease?” Pel asked.

“That space frame is capable of easily and safely traveling at warp 6. With some reinforcement, it could be made safe for warp 8. And with parts from the shuttlecraft we would have to disassemble, we could improve the engines to that point. And arm the shuttle with Star Fleet standard weapons and shields. At the end of four years from this date, Star Fleet will return the shuttle to you, complete with these upgrades.”

Pel sat up with interest as the commodore explained this proposal. “Ferengi are discouraged from admitting this under any circumstances, but that is a tremendously advantageous deal. What if the craft is destroyed, or lost, or damaged beyond repair? Do you have sufficient authority to

provide me a replacement?”

“There is some procurement authority that comes with my rank. A Star Fleet captain would not have that much authority. But a Fleet Captain does, which is my actual rank,” Yui replied. “Of course, while your shuttle is under Star Fleet commission, we will have to remove your portrait and the name from the vehicle. But we can re-apply that painting before returning it to you.”

Pel touched her ears. “I like that portrait. But I’m not sure it’s, well, that it’s really a portrait of me, anymore. So what will you name the shuttle while it’s under Star Fleet commission?”

“I did a little research. There is a storied, appropriate name that is not currently in use. I included, in my last report to Star Fleet, a request to reserve the name for my use in case you agreed to my proposal...” Commodore Yui paused for a moment:

“The U.S.S. Arizona.”

SBA Episode 8: South Side of the Sky - Scene 3: Tall Tales and Hot Grelbet

Chapter Summary

Were we ever warmer on that day...
A million miles away...
It seemed from all of eternity...



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 8: South Side of the Sky

Scene 3: Tall Tales and Hot Grelbet

8.3

Tall Tales and Hot Grelbet

“Jelllear over there, she actually saw it. Watched it go down.”

It was impossible for Captain Howard, or any of the other away team members traveling with him, to determine whether the voice that emanated from underneath a mountain of cloth, fur, and other materials that might have been hides, belonged to a male or a female. Or indeed, until it spoke, that there was actually a person under that pile of material at all.

Neither he, nor his party had expected to come across a village, with low, snow-covered buildings squatting neatly on either side of the main path leading down from the gap they had walked through that morning. It wasn't much of a village - a dozen tiny houses and one larger, public house, which Howard and his party had entered, only to find three mounds of textiles, each of which, apparently, had some sort of person underneath.

The person who had spoken was one of two sitting at a table near the door. The other mound, which, apparently, contained someone named Jelllear, was alone at a large table near the back of the room.

Most of Howard's party had entered the public house, leaving only two marines outside to keep watch. Marine Captain Osollaa sh'Zhiathis set up a staggered 2-hour rotation so that every hour, one of the marines would be replaced.

A cup of some sort emerged from the mountain of clothing at the back of the room and waived at Captain Howard. A voice also emerged. “Welcome to Jelllear House. Sit. I'll get a fire going. You're welcome to sleep on the floor. I'll trade you hot grelbet for whatever stories you can tell me.”

Oddly, it seemed that pile of textiles was able to shift her focus visibly to the other two who were sitting closer to the door: “Derp, Culby, get up, feed the fire, and get some grelbet going!”

The two mountains of textiles, who, apparently, went by the names Derp and Culby, got up, revealing that they also had, at the very least, two feet each, which could be seen underneath the shuffling mounds of fabrics. There were, in this simple shack, only two rooms, one of which turned out to be the privy. The fireplace was something that appeared very much like a Franklin stove and was located in the center of the room.

On approaching the stove, both piles of textiles were shed to reveal smallish humanoids with black skin and azure blue fur. Both were somewhat smaller than the average human and in build and facial feature not unlike a gibbon - if an unusually large gibbon. One retrieved a large pot that had been hanging from the ceiling, dropped a few dark gray cubes into it, then placed it on top of the stove underneath a tap that came down from the ceiling. She opened the tap, allowing water to drip into the pot.

The other used a tool somewhat like a poker, but with an insulated handle, to open a door into the stove, revealing glowing embers inside, then used a similarly insulated shovel to shove a few dozen orange crystals into the fire, causing it to blaze up brightly.

Within a minute, this caused water to run freely from the tap, filling the pot on the stove, and also significantly warmed the room, causing Captain Howard and his away team to shed their heavy, winter clothing.

Jellear also shed her mountain of textiles. “We haven’t had an excuse for a proper fire in months. And a proper fire is a place to tell stories. Tell me a story, then I will tell you the story you want to hear. Not that there is a lot to tell. But then, you aren’t from around here, so there are a lot of other things you should probably know before you go looking for that downed spaceship.”

A series of knocks at the door heralded the entry of another villager. “You might as well bring your sentries in from the cold,” Jellear continued. “Now that we’ve got a proper fire going, all the villagers will be coming in, bringing food and drink. They will want to hear your stories too. You’re the most exciting thing that has happened around here in, well, probably years...”

Captain Skip Howard was a decent story teller, and he regaled the village with a version of the Beagle Task Force’s misadventures at the Oulheadry, leaving out details about Pel’s gender, but giving exciting, blow-by-blow accounts of each of the matches, which had the villagers on the edges of their seats. He described the appearance of the Golden Champion (and the accompanying Golden Darkness) while glossing over that both were products of the task force...

The hot grelbet turned out to be something similar to a mixture of strong ginseng tea with tomato soup with a strong hint of bacon - an odd combination - but wonderfully warm and revitalizing after the cold trek through the high mountain pass.

“Your turn,” Captain Howard said. “We will stay here tonight and tell as many stories as you can stay awake for, but I really need to know about the ship you saw going down.”

“There’s not much to tell about that, but a lot you need to know,” Jellear replied. “Day before yester, I saw a small space ship pass over Lichter Ridge. They were going really fast and they made it really far into the mountains before they lost power. Must have been a very advanced ship. They went down on the south side of Torlochter, which is just behind Thelochtor, the largest mountain you can see from here. There’s no safe passage around the west of Thelochtor and barely any to the east of it, but if you go round the east side, then round the east side of Torlochter, which is just behind it, somewhere down there you’ll find that ship. I’m amazed that you received a transmission from them. It must have been a very short transmission.”

Captain Howard nodded. “About three tenths of a second. But that was enough time for them to give us their location, situation, and some background on who they are, where they were going and a few hints about the culture and the locals.”

“Compressed data from computer to computer,” Jellear opined, to the surprise of Howard and his away team. “Just because I live in the back of beyond doesn’t mean I’m ignorant.” Jellear smiled. “In better days, I worked on computer systems in the City. Until the purple started to get even worse and chased everyone else out. We all still go there. They allow anyone to stay in the City for four days a year. But no more than that. The City is for the purple.”

“So maybe you have an idea why our equipment is not working?” Howard asked, displaying a non-functional tricorder.

“Same reason that ship crashed,” Jellear replied. “The purple do not tolerate any high technology outside of the City. This entire mountain range is blanketed with a dampening field. If you had brought your space ship beyond the docking port on the other side of Gateway Pass, it would have crashed, too...”

SBA Episode 8: South Side of the Sky - Scene 4: The Lower Way

Chapter Summary

Dig deeper to somewhere we could lie...



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 8: South Side of the Sky

Scene 4: The Lower Way

8.4

The Lower Way

A massive snowstorm had completely obliterated the eastern trail. Not that there was much of a trail there to begin with. Now, in its place, was a wilderness of snow, sliding off of mountain sides and piling up in valleys, making it impossible to determine which bit of snow might have firm ground or rocks underneath and which was just piled on top of more layers of snow.

From the midst of this snowy landscape, three hoses snaked into the sky. They were nearly invisible as the tubes were translucent. At the base of these three hoses, what had been a flat snowscape developed a dome that rose steadily, sloughing off the snow to reveal a translucent blue fabric. The dome began to rotate a few degrees clockwise, then a few degrees counter-clockwise, faster and faster, causing more snow to fly off the fabric while simultaneously causing the hoses to twist and retract.

As the edge of the dome cleared the snow, gloved hands appeared and gradually, first three andorians, then the marines, then finally Captain Howard, the denobulan planetologist Cetrus Rye, then the junior engineering officer from the U.S.S. Mako, 2nd Lt. Emily Li, emerged. The tent was of andorian design... It was actually two tents that had been linked. It took about 20 minutes for Li and Lt. Cmdr. Vranran zh'Kathar to collapse and bring the tents up out of the snow.

Only the andorians were able to walk on the snow instead of sinking into it, so the entire group stayed close to the campsite while zh'Kathar and Ensign Tos th'Taabrit scouted out the trail.

Privates First Class Tim Cho, Sean Young, and Elven Washington followed with shovels, throwing layer after layer of snow over the side of the mountain to their left. By the time the other party members followed, the remaining snow had been compacted enough to walk on. 2nd Lt. Iov Pushkin led this group, followed by Captain Skip Howard, Cetrus Rye, and 2nd Lt. Emily Li. Sgt. Tammy Glick and Captain Osollaa sh'Zhiathis brought up the rear.

The trail had nearly disappeared under the snowfall and frequent stops were required to allow zh'Kathar and th'Taabrit to dislodge large drifts, creating cascades of snow down the east face of Thelochtor. After nearly four hours of hard slow slogging across this terrain, Tos th'Taabrit said something in his native language. The universal translators, like the rest of the electronic equipment, had succumbed to the dampening field, and Tos, who had grown up on the forest moon of Avradega, and Cetrus Rye, who had grown up on a small farm on the denobulan homeworld, were both having difficulty communicating due to their very limited grasp of English.

“What was that?” asked 2nd Lt. Iov Pushkin.

Lt. Cmdr. Vranran zh'Kathar, at the front of the line, suddenly realized that the marines had no hope of understanding th'Taabrit's warning. “Be very careful and stay to your right! The path is narrow at...”

Just behind Privates First Class Elvin Washington and Sean Young and just in front of Pushkin, PFC Tim Cho stepped on a patch of snow that was unsupported by the path and had been destabilized by the two in front of him traveling over it. The young marine screamed and scrambled wildly, trying to keep his footing while sliding inevitably to his left.

“Cho!!!” Pushkin lunged forward in time to grasp Cho's coat, only to be pulled over the side with him as the snow gave way under both of them.

“STOP!!”

Captain Howard's shouted command was enough to keep PFC Young from lunging after them. Some snow fell away from under Young's feet and PFC Washington pulled him back onto the trail. Howard held his arms out to his sides to prevent anyone behind him from trying to assist.

"No one moves! And be quiet!" Howard ordered.

It took a few heartbeats for the importance of those orders to sink in. "Silence!" Howard ordered again, this time in a very hushed tone.

"Captain sh'Zhiathis, can you hear them?" Howard asked.

"I think they stopped falling..." the marine captain responded from the back of the line. She then shouted: "PUSHKIN!!! CHO!!!"

There was some indistinct shouting in reply.

"They're too far down for us to be able to make out what they're saying," sh'Zhiathis said. "We'll need to use code, sir."

Howard nodded. "Everyone flatten against the mountain to your right. sh'Zhiathis, can you make your way up to me?"

The marine captain carefully skirted around her first sergeant, then around the young engineer from the U.S.S. Mako and the denobulan planetologist to stand next to Captain Howard. She knelt in the snow along with him, looking over the side and made a few loud barking noises, all variations of the word, "Taata." A moment later, a faint series of shouts were heard in reply.

"They're having to shout together to be heard," said sh'Zhiathis.

"How strong is your telepathic ability?" asked Howard.

"Not bad for an andorian, but I'm no mind reader."

Howard took off his glove and placed his hand on the marine captain's neck. "Try to signal me and I'll synchronize with you."

"I'm not just using Morse Code, sir," sh'Zhiathis said. "We use Bajoran Battle Language."

"Captain, I have 28 United States Marines in my care," Howard replied. "I know BBL."

sh'Zhiathis looked at him in surprise, shook her head slowly, then nodded. "Of course you do, sir."

It took a few tries, but after a moment Howard and sh'Zhiathis were shouting the word "Taata!" at various lengths and intervals in unison. And far below, the joint voices of Cho and Pushkin were responding. All that made it back up from them was the short "a" vowel sound (as in "that".) But it was sufficient to carry the coded messages up from far below.

PFC Elvin Washington translated quietly for the two andorians in front of him. At the back of the line, Sgt. Tammy Glick did the same for the benefit of 2nd. Lt. Emily Li and, to a much lesser extent, Cetris Rye.

"They're not seriously injured," Glick whispered. "Apparently they have found another trail down there. They're saying they can see a pass to the other mountain and also what looks like some debris that might be from that downed spaceship."

After some intense discussion shouted in code, sh'Zhiathis turned to Howard. "I should go down to them. We might be able to get down there safely using rope and piton."

"I better climber," said Ensign Tos th'Taabrit, in broken English. "I go."

"Is he the better climber?" asked Howard.

sh'Zhiathis nodded. "Tos has much more experience than either zh'Kathar or me. But he can barely speak English. And he won't know what to do when he gets down there."

"Pushkin will," Howard replied. He then turned to the junior security officer from the U.S.S. Mako: "Ensign th'Taabrit, I won't order you to go, but if you volunteer, I will give you the assignment."

th'Taabrit gleamed and nodded, his antennae oddly moving opposite to his head movement. "I go."

"Translate for me, Captain," Howard said, "I want to be certain he understands my instructions." He turned his attention to the young andorian ensign: "I want you to set up rope and piton so that the rest of us can climb down safely. Pushkin and Cho probably cleared out any snow that could fall on their way down, but take careful note of any loose snow and route around it so we don't bury them in an avalanche. Once you've done that, climb back up and explain the route to Captain sh'Zhiathis here. She will explain to the rest of us how to safely get down there."

SBA Episode 8: South Side of the Sky - Scene 5: Teaching Fashion

Chapter Summary

Move forward, was my friend's only cry...



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 8: South Side of the Sky

Scene 5: Teaching Fashion

8.5

Teaching Fashion

“Okay, the robe has kind of a... maybe a vulcan air to it?”

Lance Corporal Petra Spitze was visiting Pel in her, now, slightly less sparsely furnished quarters. Pel's quarters now included a large bookcase filled with a small number of very large books and a large reading stand with a very large book that was nearly as large as the small ferengi who owned it.

In response, Pel turned the pages of the large volume to find a drawing of what appeared to be a ferengi female wearing something that looked vaguely like the robe Pel was wearing. It was a rather primitive drawing.

“Okay, maybe I had to fill in some of the details...”

Pel and Spike both looked at the picture again.

“Okay... maybe all of the details...”

“I think you got the color sort of right,” Spike observed. “Charcoal number 2.”

“Beats current ferengi female fashions,” Pel rejoined. “Or should I strip?”

Spike laughed. “Snarky and ironic suits you so much better than mopey and hurt.”

Pel assumed an injured look. “What do you mean by that?”

Spike looked taken aback for a moment, then realized Pel was joking. Spike smiled. Made an amused noise.

“So what have you learned about the Teachers?”

Pel walked to the bookcase, tapped each of the books on the spine. “All mythology written at least a hundred years after my people left. More contradictions than there are sentences. Apparently they were a martial arts cult. They were the only ones in their culture allowed to use weapons, strike with their hands and feet, own property or wear clothing. Outcasts from ferengi culture. Who knows how they made it all the way to the Oulheadry nearly fourteen hundred years ago?” Pel shook her head. “More mysteries than answers at this point. They built the heart of Roundabout Station, established the Sacred Games, took thousands of slaves, gave the oeast warp technology, set up the caste system with themselves in charge of everything. Then, for no apparent reason they just... poof...” Pel snapped her fingers, then spread her fingers and raised her hands. “Vanished like smoke in a strong wind.”

“And they dressed in robes,” said Spike. “So are you going to start learning their fighting style? Become the badass ferengi... um... Nun?”

Pel shrugged. “I’m trying it on. I’m trying a lot of things on. Skip seems to think I’m a professor. Song thinks I’m still a businessman.” Pel laughed again. It seemed like ages since she had felt light hearted enough to laugh. “You know why I haven’t let anyone see me other than you and Song, and Skip, and Sakura, right?”

“Because our names begin with the letter "S"?” Spike offered. She smiled. “I suppose you’re going to reveal you’ve been female all this time, since no one seems to be bringing you any prosthetic ears.”

“Yeah, I’m going to reveal myself for who I am. Who I really am.” Pel sighed. She looked up at Spike with a serious expression for the first time. “Any idea who that person might be? Because I really don’t have a clue.”

SBA Episode 8: South Side of the Sky - Scene 6: Wreckage

Chapter Summary

The warmth when you die...



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 8: South Side of the Sky

Scene 6: Wreckage

8.6

Wreckage

There was no power because of the vast power dampening field covering the entire mountain range, so the large rescue team from the Beagle Task Force had to use chemically powered glow torches to explore the interior of the second largest part of the wrecked space ship.

“Fairly primitive warp drive system, Captain,” reported 2nd. Lt. Emily Li. “My best estimate based on what we’ve found of the nacelles and the warp core is this ship was probably rated for warp 5 with a flank speed somewhat short of warp 6. But the EPS routing is really interesting...”

“War ship?” asked U.S. Marine Captain Osollaa sh’Zhiathis.

“I think so,” Li responded. “Heavy shielding around the warp core, lots of battery systems in-line to both the shield emitters and the particle beam weapons. More closely related to disruptors than phasers. From the spare parts, heavy duty disruptors. Probably fairly close in fire power to a Dominion Scarab-class patrol ship.”

“We were fortunate to bring along an engineer with a side-hustle in mountaineering,” observed Captain Skip Howard. “Well done, Lieutenant. Let’s rejoin the other group. It appears the ship broke largely in half. I think the part they went to investigate contains the bridge. Maybe we’ll find some evidence of the crew there.”

“There is evidence of crew here, sir,” reported Private First Class Sean Young. “It doesn’t look very hopeful. At least two crew members suffered extensive burns in the crash, enough to be fatal to any species I’m aware of. But their bodies have all been removed.”

As they stepped out of the broken engineering section, Howard, Li, Young, and sh’Zhiathis shut off their glow torches to conserve the chemical supply. The denobulan planetologist, Cetrus Rye, and Sergeant Tammy Glick had been keeping watch outside. It was a rough 10-minute hike to rejoin the other group at the larger surviving part of the wreckage. PFC Elvin Washington and Ensign Tos th’Taabrit were standing watch outside.

Lt. Cmdr. Vranran zh’Kathar and 2nd Lt. Iov Pushkin were just emerging from this wreckage, followed by PFC Tim Cho.

“I’d say this ship was designed for battle, sir” zh’Kathar observed as Howard and his party walked up. “The layout of the bridge, weapons storage...” She brandished a rather nasty-looking particle-beam carbine of some sort. “Those...” she used the scavenged carbine to point at a large disruptor cannon hanging brokenly from its mount on the side of the ship. “There were 12 of those, and those were the smaller cannon. These people were armed to the teeth.”

“Let’s not jump to conclusions about their culture,” Captain Howard advised. “They may simply have come from a rough neighborhood. Did you find any evidence of survivors?”

“Fairly good evidence of at least two casualties, lots of blood,” Pushkin reported. “But no bodies living or dead. Someone got into that bridge and carted them off.”

“How are you so certain of that, Lieutenant?” Captain sh’Zhiathis asked.

“We followed their trail into the bridge,” Pushkin replied. “Doorways were ripped open with something like a pry-bar to make room for something very large to get in there. Larger than this ship was designed to accommodate.” He pointed to the opening his group had emerged from. Metal plates appeared to have been peeled back like a banana peel. “Whoever these people were that retrieved these bodies, they were

very large and able to exert a whole lot of torque.”

“Frost giants,” Howard opined. “There was some mention of them in the distress call. Or that’s how it got translated. I hope they’re friendlier than the frost giants from human mythology.”

“Frost giants?” exclaimed sh’Zhiathis and zh’Kathar in unison. Lt. Cmdr. zh’Kathar translated for Ensign Tos th’Taabrit.

“I certainly hope they’re not the frost giants from andorian mythology, either,” Captain sh’Zhiathis said.

“Well, if we’re going to do what we came to do and rescue these people, it looks like we’re going to find out,” Howard concluded. “The distress signal indicated a crew of 8. So if 2 died in the engine room and another 2 on the bridge, there could still be 4 survivors.”

SBA Episode 8: South Side of the Sky - Scene 7: They Might Be Giants

Chapter Summary

The sunshine, in mountains sometimes lost...



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 8: South Side of the Sky

Scene 7: They Might Be Giants

8.7

They Might Be Giants

The rescue team spent the night in what was left of the bridge of the alien vessel. There was no indication that anyone had returned to the craft following the snowfall of the previous night and too little daylight left to begin the search for the remaining aliens. Radiation levels were too high in what was left of the engine room, but according to the radiation tags carried by each team member, were safe in the bridge section.

Ensign Tos th'Taabrit and Sgt. Tammy Glick were on watch when Captain Skip Howard joined them in the hour before dawn. Glick made a slight hissing sound and brought up her bullpup, pointing the automatic projectile weapon at something that was moving in the snow a few dozen meters away from the wreckage the team were sheltering in.

Captain Howard brought out a flare gun that was tucked inside his cold-weather coat. Ensign Tos th'Taabrit was armed only with a can opener - a kind of cross between a hand-axe and a hammer.

Something was definitely out there. It stopped moving. Then two more joined it.

"They can see us," Howard said in a conversational voice. "How about we get a look at them?"

Howard fired a single flare up into the sky, lighting up the entire area.

The three figures were all very white and dressed in layers of white and gray fabrics. They were all about 6' tall, but were far broader across the shoulders, their heads significantly larger than human heads. All three were armed with large, heavy spears. They reacted in panic at the appearance of the flare above them, bringing their arms up to cover their eyes.

"I need the marines out here armed and ready," Howard shouted back into the ship. "The rest of you, strike camp and get us ready to move!"

Before the three interlopers had recovered from the appearance of the flare, all six marines were lined up, in twos.

"Keep your rifles lowered until I order otherwise," said Captain Osollaa sh'Zhiathis. "No one shoots before I give them a warning shot."

"Hold off on that warning shot, Captain," Captain Howard ordered. "I think my flare made our point adequately." Howard turned toward the denobulan planetologist and said something in his native language. After Cetrus Rye responded, in Denobulan, Howard then turned to 2nd Lt. Pushkin. "Lieutenant, could these fine young gentlemen have ripped open those doorways with the technology you see present among them?"

The three spear wielders were now involved in a quiet, but intense argument with one another that involved some spear shaking.

"They wouldn't have needed to, sir," Pushkin replied. "They could easily have fit through those doorways."

"Can anyone tell me what our planetologist derived about our visitors?" Howard asked.

"Juveniles," said Captain sh'Zhiathis.

"Cave Dwellers?" asked Sgt. Tammy Glick.

“Both correct,” Howard replied. He holstered his flare gun. “Marines, at ease. Let’s lower the temperature here.”

In response, the 6 marines allowed their bullpups to hang from the clips on the front of their coats, each resting an arm on their carbine, which was how they generally travelled and rested.

A moment later, the first of the three large interlopers very slowly laid his spear in the snow and stepped back a few steps. After another short discussion, the other two followed suit.

“Lieutenant Commander zh’Kathar, you are checked out on the bullpups, correct?” Howard asked.

“Yes sir,” the andorian 2nd officer from the U.S.S. Escort responded.

“Captain sh’Zhiathis,” Howard turned toward the leader of the marine contingent. “I need one big, strong marine with me who can carry me back if things go badly out there. The rest of you, stay put and remain very calm. Their parents are not far off. I’m reasonably certain we’re being watched.”

“Private First Class Elvin Washington.” Captain Osollaa sh’Zhiathis pointed to the largest of the marine contingent. “Surrender your bullpup to Lieutenant Commander zh’Kathar and escort Captain Howard.”

The African American private was a little taller and considerably broader than 2nd Lt. Pushkin. He unclipped the automatic rifle from his coat and handed it, barrel up, to Lt. Cmdr. zh’Kathar.

Captain Howard walked forward. PFC Elvin Washington took up the position he had been trained to when walking with a superior officer, one step to the right and a half-step behind. They moved at a relaxed pace toward the large aliens. “Mr. Washington, if we get in trouble here, I’m relying on you to bring me back to our group. Preferably alive.”

“I will do that, sir.”

“Good man.”

Howard stopped about a meter from where the spear lay in the snow. He regarded the broad-shouldered alien in front of him. To the trained eyes of a biologist, there were several markers that indicated he was looking at a very nervous juvenile... the relative size of the head, hands and feet to the rest of its body... the downy, not fully developed feathering on the arms, shoulders, lower legs and the top of its head. The quick play of emotions across its face.

Very slowly and calmly, Howard knelt and picked up the spear, grasping it just behind the leaf-shaped head. The entire spear was made of steel. The leaf end was carefully decorated with well-worn carvings. It was quite heavy. He walked very slowly, holding the spear out in front of him, leaf end pointed over his shoulder and presented it back to the young giant, then stepped back once the giant received the weapon from him.

“Really big ones coming in from both sides, sir,” said PFC Elvin Washington.

“Signal our team to hold their ground and remain at ease,” Howard replied. “They’re not coming in hot. They’re coming to parlay.”

“How are we going to communicate with them?” Washington asked.

“The kids had a good start with the spear thing.” Howard took a deep breath. “Here’s hoping their parents are equally eloquent.”

SBA Episode 8: South Side of the Sky - Scene 8: Executive Consultant

Chapter Summary

A river, a mountain to be crossed...



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 8: South Side of the Sky

Scene 8: Executive Consultant

8.8

Executive Consultant

“Oh no... This can't be good...”

Pel stepped away from the door to allow her three visitors, Commodore Yui Song, Dean Sakura Nakamura Holland, and Lance Corporal Petra Spitzte, to enter her quarters. The presence of so many people in her room emphasized just how small her studio accommodations were.

“You will recall that we did not include your room and board in our lease agreement for the U.S.S. Arizona,” Yui Song started. “We will need to come to a separate agreement about that...”

“I recall,” Pel replied. She wasn't bitter about the commodore's hard line on that particularly hotly negotiated point. In the end, Pel had to give in on it because the elderly Chinese woman was holding all the cards and she knew it. Pel had been somewhat impressed to watch a human driving such a hard bargain.

“Part of this separate arrangement will require a change in your accommodations,” Yui continued.

Pel was instantly flustered. “But this is the smallest single accommodation on this ship. Do you seriously want me to bunk in with some of your crew?”

“Let's take a walk,” Dean Nakamura Holland suggested.

Pel reflexively touched her ears.

“Not to worry,” Commodore Yui added. “I had my security detail clear a few corridors. So it will just be the four of us.”

“Why do I get the feeling I'm about to be asked to walk the plank?” Pel muttered.

“Probably because you are,” Spike whispered, very quietly.

“I heard that!” Pel said to Spike.

“I know,” Spike replied, with a smile.

Pel was surprised when Commodore Yui ordered the turbo lift to carry them to Deck 3. She walked out onto a deck completely void of personnel except for the quartet of women exiting the lift.

“We haven't used it much, due to the presence of the Beagle and its facilities,” Commodore Yui said. “But the Mako, like all second generation Intrepid class ships, has a conference center.” She opened a door into a very large room. Portable tables and chairs were lashed to the walls, leaving a very large, open space, currently outfitted with exercise mats.

“Well, we've been using it primarily as a fitness center, although there are other fitness facilities on this ship,” Yui continued. “One very large

room that can, with movable walls, be sectioned into 5 separate rooms, 2 of them larger, 3 of them smaller. Commander Bates has kind of held this facility back from you. But after some discussion, we believe it would be helpful if you were to, along with your scheduling of the holodeck, add scheduling for these facilities to your portfolio. I would also like for you to continue your management of the marker exchange system..."

"I am going to need some office space to manage all of this," Pel remarked.

"Funny you should mention that," Sakura said.

"The U.S.S. Mako has 9 consular quarters," Yui continued. "Follow me..." She led the other women out of the conference center. "4 of those quarters, along with mine, are located on Deck 2 and are reserved for the executive officer, operations officer, ship's counselor, and the coxswain. The 5 located on this deck are deliberately kept vacant for visitors. Admirals, ambassadors, visiting VIP in general."

Yui Song opened a door into a large stateroom that included a breakfast nook, separate bedroom and a large living room with two couches. She walked to another door, which led to a separate office.

"This one is kind of a personal favorite. It has windows directly aft and also to aft port and starboard. All with rather stunning views. And, like all consular quarters, it has an office with a separate entrance so that you can conduct business without interrupting the privacy of your quarters."

"My quarters?" Pel looked around. She had never had quarters like this anywhere. Not even her apartment on Ferenginar. "What's the catch?"

"Scheduling facilities, the marker exchange," said Yui Song.

"An economics curriculum and classes," added Sakura.

"Representing the business interests of the task force with new trading partners," Song added.

"And at least one major publication annually..." Sakura smiled.

"Trader Pel, Banker Pel, Teacher Pel, Booking Agent Pel, Writer Pel all rolled up in one?" asked Pel.

"How about executive consultant?" Commodore Yui Song asked. "We will make crew available to do a lot of the leg work on scheduling and tracking the exchange..."

"Students to help design the coursework and take on some of the teaching. Research assistants to help you with publications," Sakura continued.

"Don't get me wrong, it's a lot of work," Yui said. "But you've already been doing much of it on an unofficial and unreimbursed basis. It makes sense to turn it into a business arrangement and negotiate out the details and conditions."

"Which would include this." Pel spread her arms out, gesturing at the large, consular apartment.

"As I had indicated, our separate arrangement will require a change in your accommodations," Yui concluded.

SBA Episode 8: South Side of the Sky - Scene 9: Lost in Translation

Chapter Summary

A snowstorm...
A stimulating voice...



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 8: South Side of the Sky

Scene 9: Lost in Translation

8.9

Lost in Translation

The frost giants were well named. The two adults who had joined the three juveniles were both well over 11 feet tall and were impressively broad. They were also conspicuously well dressed. Like the juveniles, they wore heavy tunics over shorts that left enormous, muscular, well feathered forearms and lower legs uncovered. They were armed with projectile weapons that might as well have been cannon and knives that would give a broad sword an inferiority complex.

Both their clothing and their weaponry were extremely well made, with evidence of detailed craftsmanship requiring a large variety of tools.

They did not try to communicate verbally, but employed an intuitive gestural language, with which they first invited Captain Skip Howard and Private First Class Elvin Washington to share a drink with them (clear water from a single, beautifully made bone cup that was passed around.) They then invited the rescue party to follow them.

The giants were able to move through the rugged, snowy mountain landscape with ease and much faster than the Beagle's party.

"At least three more are following us at a distance," Lt. Cmdr. Vranran zh'Kathar reported as she returned PFC Bishop's bullpup to him. She kept her voice down.

"We are probably being led to a dwelling of some sort," Howard responded. "Advise everyone to not say anything of consequence. These people are evidently sophisticated. They can probably interpret the marine's sign language as well. Be very careful what you say to one another."

zh'Kathar relayed the captain's warning back to the others following them.

The cave of the frost giants was no rough cave. A long, built out entranceway and dozens of rooms had been built out from the mountain, using large, pentagonal pieces of stone that were neatly fitted in a complex pattern. The roof slanted back into the mountain and was clearly designed to divert avalanches and falling stones away from the front of the building and off to the sides, which both sloped sharply away. The rock piles below evidently served as quarries for more stone for building.

Everything about this building spoke clearly of an advanced culture of craftsmanship and technology. Even with their gigantic size and strength, the giants could not have accomplished this architecture without significant building machinery.

Captain Skip Howard tapped a code onto Captain sh'Zhiathis' shoulder. She, in turn, dropped back through the line, passing the message along to the other marines in tapped code: "Remain silent and listen carefully."

They followed the giants into an antechamber that was clearly designed for receiving visitors, with an area for removing snow from their clothing and shelving for storing packs and gear.

"This bracing is genius!" Cetris Rye exclaimed, running his hand over one of the main pillars in the center of the room. "Such beautiful buttresses..."

"Silence, please," Howard said, very quietly.

Captain Osollaa sh'Zhiathis put her hand on Howard's shoulder and squeezed, using Bajoran Battle Language to communicate: "They're talking about us. Our communicators are offline, but I can understand them."

Howard nodded.

After a few moments, an elderly female giant, dressed in elegant robes, entered the antechamber. Her feathering was mostly dark gray, but most of her body was covered by her robes. “Welcome, strangers. What were you seeking in these mountains?”

“I am Captain Ronald Howard, XIV,” Howard responded. “We received a distress signal and traced it to the wrecked ship where your children found us. We came to rescue the survivors and return them to their people.”

“Only two of those survivors remain,” the elderly giant woman responded. “There were 9. The other 7 died of their wounds. And I do not have much hope for the survivors. They all suffered from extensive burns as well as exposure to the cold for nearly an entire day before we were able to find them and bring them back here. We have done the best we can for them. You may visit them, but you must leave your weapons in this room.”

Captain Howard turned back toward his team. “Lieutenant Commander zh’Kathar, you are in command in this room. Keep everyone calm and safe. Lieutenant Li, Ensign th’Tabriit, surrender your weapons to the lieutenant commander. You’re with me. Cetris, I want you with me as well. Stow any weapons you might be carrying in your pack and leave your pack here.” Howard removed a type 1 phaser from his belt and stored it and his flare gun in his pack.

Captain Osollaa zh’Zhiathis pointed to two of her marines: “Pushkin. Washington. Leave your weapons here and join Captain Howard’s escort.”

As Captain Howard, the two junior officers from the U.S.S. Mako, the denobulan planetologist and the two largest and strongest marines followed the giants deeper into their settlement, Lt. Cmdr. Vranran zh’Kathar turned toward the marine captain. The two andorian women couldn’t have been more different. zh’Kathar was tall and lean, her Star Fleet uniform taut across her lithe figure. sh’Zhiathis was much shorter and far more muscular than usual for an andorian. Her U.S. Marine uniform covered her in layers of gray and brown camouflage that shrouded her movements.

“How did Captain Howard know they would have their own universal translator?” zh’Kathar asked.

Captain zh’Zhiathis smiled in response. “I suspected too. Remember that innkeeper the first day after Gateway Gap? Our equipment was non-functional there, too. So she must have had her own UT system somehow shielded from the dampening field. If they had one in that rinky little inn...” sh’Zhiathis gestured to the magnificent architecture of the ante-chamber. “Then surely these guys would.”

SBA Episode 8: South Side of the Sky - Scene 10: Fine Old Cannibals

Chapter Summary

Were we ever warmer on that day...



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 8: South Side of the Sky

Scene 10: Fine Old Cannibals

8.10

Fine Old Cannibals

“Your distress signal indicated you had a crew of 8. But our big friends here told us there were 9 of you.”

The alien that Captain Howard was addressing had three eyes. The compound eye in its forehead that was different from the other two. A very short third arm that protruded from its chest ended in a hand with two thumbs and three fingers which kept clutching reflexively. Two short, stubby antennae toward the front of its skull moved slightly while a longer, single antenna from the back of its head remained focused on Captain Howard.

It was lying in a bed far too big for it, in what was clearly a medical facility. A similar, but significantly larger alien lay in the next bed. Breathing, but otherwise showing little sign of life.

Two other large beds were empty, but neatly made. There was little evidence of electronic devices, but a vast chemical lab in an adjoining room was visible through a transparent wall. Cetris Rye and 2nd Lt. Emily Li were fascinated with the giant chemistry lab and the three masked, giant chemists.

The strange, clearly wounded alien made several swallowing motions before answering Captain Howard’s question. Its voice was a high, thin shriek.

“Eight crew. One regent. We were to deliver her. She lives!” The odd alien pointed with one of its hands, most of which was in a cast. “She lives on this world. She has hallowed this land with her feet.” The alien lapsed into some sort of weak coughing. Its left hand reached out, clutching for a glass of water. Howard placed the glass in its hand and the alien took a few drinks that quelled its coughing. It reached out and grasped Howard’s uniform with its right hand, pulling itself up, focused intently on him:

“If she dies, this world dies with her.” The alien released Howard’s uniform and fell back into the bed, clearly exhausted. It stirred momentarily to speak again, but gave up with a wheeze.

“They are dying. We do not know how to save them. They were all terribly wounded,” explained the elderly giant.

“Don’t trust them!” the alien managed. “They are cannibals! They will eat you! They ate us!”

The elderly giant sighed. “We do not eat our own dead. That causes genetic problems that would damage our children. And you have nothing to fear from us, Captain Ronald Howard, XIV. We brought four of them here alive and tried to save all of them. But they were too badly wounded. And their physiology is too strange. We did not eat their dead. I do not know if it would be safe.”

“Is there a reason he is saying you are a cannibal?” Howard asked.

“We tried to feed them some of our food. They wanted to know what it was. We eat the purple. And they eat us,” she added.

“You hunt each other?” Howard asked.

“They leave their dead out for us. We bring them ours. Food is not plentiful in these mountains. And we are safe food for each other. Our last common ancestor died out more than 700 million years ago. Apparently not too long after it first crawled out of the ocean.”

Howard nodded as if this were perfectly normal. “I would like to bring these two back to my ship. And the remains of the others. We have very good doctors. We might be able to save them.”

“They would never survive the trip back to your ship.”

“Is there anywhere nearby we could take them that would be outside of the dampening field?”

The elderly giant pondered only for a moment. “The closest would be Gateway Pass, which is the way you came in. That would be a four day journey.”

“I suppose there isn’t any chance we could convince the purple to lower part of the field so we could take them out?” Howard could tell what the answer was before he finished the question.

“I don’t think they would know how to do it even if they wanted to,” their elderly host replied. “Long ago they had a space program and they would take down part of the field for their launches. But those that wanted to go have all gone and they very rarely return. And while the City has far better medical facilities than we do, and the purple have better doctors, they would not lift a finger to save anyone who is not their own.”

“Would they allow me to use their medical facilities to save these people?” Howard asked.

SBA Episode 8: South Side of the Sky - Scene 11: Separate Ways

Chapter Summary

Were we ever warmer on that day...
A million miles away...
It seemed from all of eternity...



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 8: South Side of the Sky

Scene 11: Separate Ways

8.11 Separate Ways

Grazwella, the elderly giant woman who had welcomed Captain Skip Howard and the rescue party to the home of the giants, emerged from the hallway, followed by Captain Howard, 2nd Lt. Emily Li, Ensign Tos th'Tabriit, and the denobulan planetologist, Cetriz Rye, with Private First Class Elvin Washington and 2nd Lt. Iov Pushkin bringing up the rear. They were followed by two pairs of giants, each pair carrying between them a stretcher that had been adapted to carry a dying alien, each encased in a housing designed to keep them at a comfortable temperature.

Washington and Pushkin and Li and th'Tabriit assisted these bower-carrying giants by deploying collapsable legs that were built into the stretchers, allowing the giants to set the stretchers down. As they were doing this, two more giants entered the room - one of them was one of the spear-carrying juveniles who had first encountered the Beagle task force's rescue party at the wreckage of an alien ship a few days earlier.

"Lieutenant Commander zh'Kathar, I need you to return to our shuttle and report in to the task force. Let them know what our status is, then remain with the shuttle. We will be returning to Gateway Pass by a different route. Our hosts have agreed to help us take these two survivors to the City and attempt to engage the assistance of the purple."

As the captain of the U.S.S. Beagle was talking to the 2nd officer of the U.S.S. Escort, the denobulan planetologist carefully placed two large, heavy packets into Captain Osollaa sh'Zhiathis' pack. Iov Pushkin tapped a code against the marine captain's arm, using code to pass along an order from Captain Howard.

sh'Zhiathis signaled her understanding with a quick hand signal, then addressed Howard: "Captain, I want a veteran with you. Washington, you with me. Glick, you're with Captain Howard."

Sergeant Tammy Glick, a small black woman in her 30's who dyed her hair blonde, exchanged places with the large young private.

Captain Howard's party departed first.

The two andorian officers, one Star Fleet, the other a United States Marine, spent some time discussing the route back to Gateway Pass with their guides, a pair of giants, who turned out to be father and son, both named Thoma. Sensibly enough, the father was Big Thoma and the son, Little Thoma. The marine captain went over a number of hand signals with the giants so that they could have a functional communication, as the giants' universal translator system would no longer be available once they left the building.

After they left, the two giants led the way, followed by the three marine privates, Elvin Washington, Tim Cho, and Sean Young. The two andorian women brought up the rear. The air wasn't quite as cold as it had been two days earlier, when they had arrived.

"So what was all that stuff Cetriz Rye was putting into your pack?" Lt. Cmdr. zh'Kathar asked.

"Undeveloped negatives. Old fashioned film photography," sh'Zhiathis responded. "Cetriz is an aficionado of an antique art form. He's been recording our entire journey. Hopefully, he'll manage to photograph the City as well. He managed to do all that without anyone noticing. I didn't realize what he was doing. And I'm trained to spot stuff like that."

“And here all this time I thought he was just a big dumb doofus,” zh’Kathar laughed.

“That’s his game. A little bit of goofiness, some awkward conversation and boom, no one is paying any attention to him anymore, and he can get away with pretty much anything.” About 30 meters ahead of the andorians, the youngest of her marines briefly lost his footing in some loose snow and was caught by PFC Washington. “Steady up there, Cho!” Captain sh’Zhiathis shouted.

zh’Kathar shook her head, made an amused noise, and hoisted her pack. “So how many languages do you think Captain Howard knows? At least one of those snuffly tellarite languages... Apparently some denobulan... Bajoran Battle Language...”

“Golic, th’lingn Hol, and American Sign Language,” sh’Zhiathis added. “And Lindanen.”

Vranran zh’Kathar was surprised. “If he knows our language, why did he ask you to translate for Ensign th’Tabriit?”

“Tos is from Avradaga,” sh’Zhiathis explained. “They speak a variant. He was watching my antennae to make sure he understood.”

Lt. Cmdr. zh’Kathar laughed. Her antennae moved quickly and subtly.

“Just because Captain Howard doesn’t have any antennae doesn’t mean he couldn’t read that,” the marine captain responded. “I know other humans who could. Including Major Carter.”

“Yeah, what’s the deal with her and my captain being first cousins?” asked zh’Kathar. “They’re very different hues of pink.”

“They share a grandfather. Their fathers are brothers. I’ve met them. They’re both a very light pink, like Rhonda Carter.” Osollaa sh’Zhiathis shrugged with both her shoulders and her antennae. “But Janet’s mother is a very dark pink. The humans call it black. Apparently skin color is a big deal for them. Or it used to be.”

“Humans,” zh’Kathar opined. She made an amused noise.

SBA Episode 8: South Side of the Sky - Scene 12: Snowstorm

Chapter Summary

A snowstorm... A stimulating voice...



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 8: South Side of the Sky

Scene 12: Snowstorm

8.12

Snowstorm

“I am very sorry, Captain Ronald Howard, XIV, but you need to leave today. You really need to leave now.”

Vispir Druiliad Zeriand was nothing short of astounded that she actually cared. Or that she really was sorry. She was as pure purple as anyone could ask, giving her a much elevated status in a society where color really mattered. Her fur registered at 738.5 Terahertz (THz), making her the perfect purple. It was a color that occurred in 1 among every 15,000 purples. Any person whose fur registered below 688 THz or above 789 THz (effectively black) was not purple and was not allowed to remain in the City for more than four days.

Blues were relegated to various villages throughout the mountains. Other colors rarely survived a few days as the mutations that made their fur fall out of the blue range tended to accompany other, very debilitating mutations.

“I thought we were allowed four days in the City, Vispir,” Howard replied. “We’ve barely been here for two.”

“Captain, you require four days to journey to Gateway pass,” Zeriand responded. “A storm is coming and if you are not under shelter when it arrives, you will not survive. If you leave now, your party should be able to reach Gateway village before the snowstorm. And your hosts need as much time to return to their home.”

“And our patient?” Howard asked.

The male alien had died moments before they had arrived. Howard and Zeriand had learned much about their anatomy by conducting an autopsy. The much larger female remained comatose and had been laid out on a bio-bed that included a vast array of diagnostic equipment, which, while not as advanced as federation medical facilities, provided far more detail than had been available in the home of the giants.

“She will die within the next several days. I will report her death on the fourth day so that if she lingers, she will not be cast out into the snow. I am going so far beyond my authority...”

“Is there no chance we could save her?” Captain Howard already knew the answer.

The color of Druiliad Zeriand’s eyes mirrored the color of her fur. Her face and hands were black. She placed a hand on Howard’s shoulder, led him to a chair. Sat down next to him. “Captain, it takes years to train and test a Vispir. You have the knowledge. More knowledge than I. As much as you have learned about this alien, I have learned so much more from you. But being a Vispir is as much skill as knowledge and even if I could train you in the techniques of operation, you would not learn those skills in time to be able to try to operate on our patient. And she would not survive any operation at this point. All that is left for her in her current state is death. We both value the concept of death with dignity.” Zeriand squeezed Howard’s shoulder. “The time has come to save your own life, the lives of your people. And the lives of the frost giants who brought you to this place.”

Howard looked down for a few moments. Then looked up into Zeriand’s eyes. “I wish I could spend more time with you, Vispir. I really have learned so much in two short days. I was told that the purple were unlikely to help, but you have done everything you could within the laws of your people. I will never forget it. I hope to meet you again, someday.”

Zeriand stood up with Howard. “The civic guard will escort you to the northern gate, Captain. I must stay here with our patient. I will be here until the end. Two days ago, I could not have imagined doing this for an alien. But you would do it without hesitation.” She rolled her head

back and forth in a gesture that wasn't immediately clear to Howard. "Be safe, Captain Ronald Howard, XIV."

"Farewell, Vispir Druiliad Zeriand," Howard replied.

As Captain Howard, 2nd Lt. Emily Li, and Ensign Tos th'Tabriit were escorted through the covered corridors and sidewalks of the City, they were joined by 2nd Lt. Iov Pushkin, who had been escorting the denobulan planetologist, Cetrus Rye, around the City. They met the frost giants at the northern gate, where the giants had decided to wait.

Howard addressed the chief sentry of the civic guard who were escorting his party. "Can you tell me why the City has the four-day rule?"

"Purples are not to mingle with blues," the sentry replied.

"And the giants?" Howard asked.

"They are our food. We are theirs," the sentry replied, shortly. "They come here to bring us their dead and to collect ours. Do you spend time talking to your food?"

Both the sentry and Captain Howard fell silent until they were at the gates. Just before they exited, the sentry spoke again. "You may spend another two days here if you wish to return. We will have many stories to tell about you. You are very strange people."

During their two days in the City, Sgt. Tammy Glick had spent most of her time with the giants, learning their gestural language.

After a day of travel, the party was joined by the guides who had accompanied Lt. Cmdr. zh'Kathar's party back to Gateway Pass, Big Thoma and Little Thoma. Grazwella and the other four giants stopped the party at an intersection at which a smaller trail split off toward the east. She engaged Sgt. Glick in a conversation by sign language.

"Here we part ways," Sgt. Glick translated. "The storm approaches quickly. If it comes upon you before you can find shelter, dig in as deep as you can and try to ride it out. The weather is warming, which means that storms this time of year tend to last 3-5 days."

Big Thoma landed a giant hand on his son's shoulder and gave him instructions. He turned to Howard and started signing. Again, Sgt. Glick translated. "I will accompany you as far as Jellear House. We should be able to get there ahead of the worst of the storm. You may have to wait the storm out there. Even if you could get back to your spacecraft on the other side of Gateway Pass, you will not be able to fly out through the storm. Jellear House might be a better place to wait."

SBA Episode 8: South Side of the Sky - Scene 13: Native Soil

Chapter Summary

And melt in the sky...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)



The Star Beagle Adventures

Episode 8: [South Side of the Sky](#)

Scene 13: [Native Soil](#)

8.13 [Native Soil](#)

“I really hope we don’t have to shoot our way out of this.”

This was how Commodore Yui Song greeted Captain Skip Howard as he joined her on the bridge of the U.S.S. Escort.

After the snowstorm had blown over, due to the emergency in the space over what Howard and his rescue team had come to refer to as the Purple Planet, Yui had boarded the Escort and Captain Rhonda Carter had dived the smallest and sturdiest of the three capital ships of the Beagle Task force deep into the atmosphere to collect the shuttle with the rescue team.

“Okay, so what is with all these... Did these people give a name for themselves?” Howard asked.

“The Holy Lands,” Carter and Yui responded in unison.

“These Holy Landers,” Howard continued. “What is their damage? Why do they have 27... Did they say what those ships are?”

“No,” said Carter.

“...27 of those holy scarabs in orbit?” Howard finally asked.

Commodore Yui was clearly annoyed. “They keep going on about losing contact with a Holy Regent and demanding to know whether her feet met the soil of that planet down there.”

“I take it the Beagle and the Mako are on yellow alert?” Howard asked.

“Shields up, weapons hot, as are we,” Rhonda Carter replied. Her tight, small figure was poised on the edge of her captain’s chair. “These Holy Landers are acting like they’re ready to start a holy war.”

“If it’s a fight, Senek and Dutchie will find other things to do and leave the fighting to Sakura,” said Howard. “Which is something she’s good at.”

“Krank is with her,” said Carter.

“Who is captaining the Mako? Bates?” asked Howard.

“Jason is also a cool hand in a fight,” Yui Song replied. “The main reason I keep him around. He doesn’t like being XO and is pretty much useless for everything else. But when there’s a fight, I’d rather have him center seat than anyone else on my crew. Even myself.”

“Well, the one Holy Lander I spoke to said their queen had “hallowed this land with her feet”.”

“That sounds hopeful,” Yui mused.

“I wouldn’t be so certain,” Howard replied. “He also said that if she died the planet would die with her.”

“Well, we don’t have a mandate, or even any authority to protect these people.” Yui watched Howard closely. His expression made it clear he did not like her ruling.

“Clearing the atmosphere now, Captain,” said Master Chief Bill Waller, the Escort’s coxswain, from the pilot’s station.

“Are you ready?” Carter asked.

“Let’s talk to these people,” Howard replied.

The U.S.S. Escort came up underneath the U.S.S. Beagle and the U.S.S. Mako, forming a triangle, surrounded by small, vicious-looking warships. The visage of these on the Escort’s screen was replaced with a view of a living female alien, very similar to the one Howard had abandoned in the City. She seemed to glow with an inner, bluish light.

Her two small, stubby front antennae were vibrating. Her two eyes were red and glowing. Her third, compound eye sparkled like some sort of dark jewel, sometimes a shiny black, sometimes crimson, sometimes a dark blue. The third antenna that came up from the back of her head, remained focused on Captain Howard.

“I am told you went to rescue the holy regent, I am Holy Regent.”

“I am Captain Ronald Howard, XIV. I tried to save your regent. She was comatose when I first saw her. Your spacecraft had wrecked on the surface.”

“How did one of our ships wreck when trying to land?” the regent asked.

“The only habitable portion of that planet is a mountain range, which has inhospitable conditions for landing,” Howard replied. “They attempted to land the craft in an area that was not prepared for landing instead of one of the two cleared space ports. We would not fly our craft in such inhospitable conditions. We landed at a space port and walked in to find them. If we had flown where they did, we would have wrecked as well.”

“Captain Ronald Howard, XIV,” the alien started. “Did our holy regent hallow the soil of that planet with her feet?”

Howard waited a moment, then took a deep breath. “No. She did not.”

“How can you be so certain?”

“Holy Regent, I walked on that planet for 14 days. I walked on snow. I walked on city streets. I walked on the floors of houses. I never even saw the soil of that planet. Your ship was buried in a snow bank. We entered the craft in order to rescue your people. Even if your holy regent had been able to walk out of her ship, her feet would not have touched soil. But she was carried out. I tried to save her. There are two different species of intelligent creatures living in those mountains. People from both of those species helped me. But she was too badly wounded from the crash. We could not save her.”

The alien’s expression seemed, somehow, to darken. “The Holy Regent never hallowed that soil.”

With that, her visage disappeared from the Escort’s screen, to be replaced by a view of part of her fleet of war ships.

Gradually, one ship after another broke formation, then glided away.

Commodore Yui was visibly relieved. “How did you know how they would react?”

“I didn’t,” Howard admitted. “I just told her the truth.”

“You told her part of the truth,” Yui rejoined. “You made it seem as though you were there when that alien was carried out of their ship. We both know that isn’t true.”

“I gave her the Cliff’s Notes version...” Captain Skip Howard made an amused noise. “I did not imply. I just allowed her to infer. Captain Carter, thank you for the rescue and for your hospitality, but it’s been a long assignment under rough conditions, and I’m really looking forward to a hot shower and a soft bed. By your leave?”

“You know you are welcome to bunk down here,” said Rhonda Carter.

“Hot shower. Soft bed,” Howard replied.

“Permission to disembark granted, Captain.” Carter smiled.

Commodore Yui Song landed a hand on Howard’s shoulder. “Sleep well, Skip. You’ve earned it. Oh, by the way, what was the name of that city?”

“The City,” Howard replied.

“Just the City?” Yui asked.

“There were refugees from all over the planet. They all wanted to name their last city after wherever they had come from. So after years of arguing over the name, they had just been calling it the City all that time and eventually, it just stuck.” Howard stifled a yawn.

Yui Song patted Captain Howard’s shoulder. “Hot shower. Soft bed.”

“Yep.” Howard turned to leave.

On his way to the bridge exit, Howard was overtaken by another cavernous yawn that required a full body stretch before he could make it through the door.

South Side of the Sky

Chapter End Notes

This is the final scene for Episode 8.

The adventure will continue in Episode 9: Long Distance Runaround.

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